



# U.S. Highway 93 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)

Issue 3 May 2002

US 93 SEIS

<http://www.skillings.com/US93SEIS>

## SEIS Project Alternatives and Process Update

## Inside This Issue

At the direction of the Policy Oversight Group (POG), established for this project by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and consistent with the findings articulated in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), new roadway corridor options to the east and the west of the existing US 93 alignment were considered. A multi-phased effort was undertaken to develop and screen a wide range of alternatives in the Ninepipe segment of US 93.

The first phase of the screening process occurred between 6/13/01 and 7/25/01, with input from the Advisory Committees established for this project. Using base maps depicting the locations of important environmental features, numerous preliminary corridor alignment options were identified to the east and west of the existing US 93 highway. These preliminary corridor alignment options were presented for public comment during two open house events held July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in the City of Ronan and a public meeting in Charlo November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001, at which a public opinion survey was taken.

Over 72% of the attendees voiced their opinion that improving the existing US 93 highway would provide the greatest benefit to the Valley. Numerous attendees stated their objections to the potential closure of the existing US 93 highway if a new east or west corridor alignment were developed.

The preliminary corridor alignment options were further analyzed during several workshops conducted with CSKT staff from October of 2001 to February of 2002 to develop more refined corridor locations and potential lane configurations for the east, west, and existing corridors. The CSKT workshops resulted in eleven options that were carried into a preliminary analysis to determine generally the beneficial and/or

adverse effects on traffic of a relocated highway corridor either east or west of the existing US 93 highway.

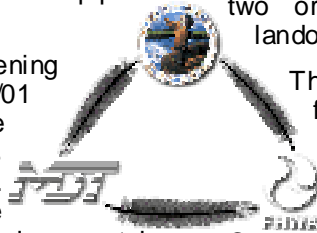
Another important element considered during the evaluation of corridor alternatives was the assumption that the existing US 93 highway must remain open as a state highway. This assumption was based on a legal opinion provided by MDT's legal section which states that the state can not abandon a highway or right-of-way that provides access to private landowners if two or more objections by those landowners are made to the state.

The following environmental factors were also considered for both the east and west alignments during the corridor screening process:

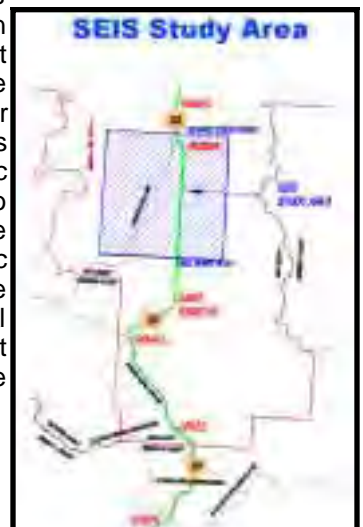
- Community Character
- Socioeconomics
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Ecological and Physical Environment
- Wildlife
- Construction/Operation/Maintenance Costs

After considering all of the evaluation factors, the three governments Technical Design Committee (TDC) is in the process of recommending that a new highway in either an east or west corridor does not appear to be practicable and should be considered for elimination from further examination in this SEIS. This recommendation is based on the high public costs resulting from the legal requirement to maintain the existing roadway for travel, the strong sentiments voiced by the public against a new highway corridor, and the substantial adverse impacts to the natural and built environments that would result from a new highway on the alternative segments.

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## The Spirit of Place



# US 93 SEIS

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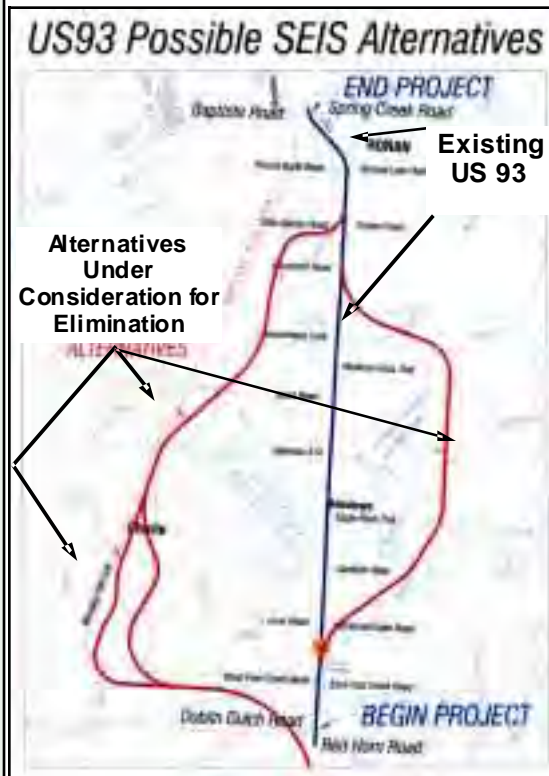
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## Map of Initial US 93 Alternatives



The consultant team and technical representatives of the three governments are developing additional alternatives for this project with a focus on improving the existing highway.

## Ronan Design Visualization



4-Lane Option 1

## Ronan Design Visualization



South Option 1



4-Lane Option 2



South Option 2



North Option 1 & 2

## US 93 EVARO TO POLSON CORRIDOR NEWS

### Design firms under contract for US 93 Corridor

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) announced late April that all of the design firms for the U.S. Highway 93 project between Evaro and Polson have been selected.

"The signing of the design firms for the Highway 93 project is an exciting step for the state of Montana," said Governor Judy Martz. "In addition to building a safer, more respectful highway for all users, we are providing a great stimulus for our economy. I couldn't be more pleased."

Now the process moves forward to design and construction, based upon approval of funding. Right-of-way acquisition has been underway for some time.

"The signing of all eight design firms marks the beginning of construction on a project which has been underway for over a decade," stated Skillings-Connolly Project Manager Gerald E. Smith, PE. "We've got the best team in the business working on this project – Entranco (Helena), Allied Engineering Services (Bozeman), WGM Group (Missoula), Robert Peccia & Associates (Helena), Thomas Dean & Hoskins (Great Falls), Stahly Engineering & Associates (Helena), Carter-Burgess (Salt Lake City), and Stelling Engineers (Great Falls)."

The US-93 corridor between Evaro and Polson has been divided up into eight projects, with each design firm working on a unique portion of the corridor. "There will be evidence of people working out in the corridor over the coming months such as survey crews, geotech work (soil borings), and underground utility location," stated Smith. "We really want to alert drivers to be extra careful as work crews will be exiting and entering the roadway, on foot conducting surveys, and moving about the corridor."

"The Tribes are pleased to see the Highway 93 project steadily progressing. The signing of the eight design contracts is a big step toward the many steps needed to complete this special and unique highway project," stated Fred Matt, chairman, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

"The Memorandum of Agreement between MDT, FHWA and CSKT was a big step forward, but it was just the beginning. The signing of eight design firms marks the start of the work that will make the shared vision in the MOA a reality," said Janice Weingart Brown, Montana Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration.



### SEIS Project Schedule



**MAY 2002**  
PUBLIC MEETINGS  
MAY 14 & 15

**JUL 2002 - MAR 2003**  
DEVELOP DRAFT  
SEIS

**MARCH 2003**  
PUBLISH SEIS

**APRIL 2003**  
SEIS PUBLIC  
HEARING

**JUL 2003 - NOV 2003**  
PREPARE FINAL SEIS

**DEC 2003**  
COMPLETE SEIS  
PROJECT

### Ronan Alternatives

A Ronan bypass is no longer being examined as an alternative. The Ronan City Council is on record as to their opposition to the highway by-passing Ronan, thereby eliminating that option. Corridor alternatives remaining under consideration in Ronan include:

- two options for a 4 lane alternative on the existing alignment
- a couplet alternative with two options utilizing the existing highway as a one-way 2 lane northbound roadway and west first street as a 2 lane southbound roadway.

The options vary in width, alignment, median treatment, bicycle accommodations, provisions for parking, and buffer / landscaping areas.

Design visualization for the alternatives currently under consideration in Ronan will be on display at the upcoming open houses.





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## Public Open Houses on May 14 & 15, 6:00 - 9:00 PM!!!



The US 93 SEIS Project team is excited to announce two upcoming open houses on May 14 and May 15 from 6:00 - 9:00 PM on both nights. The May 14 Open House will feature the broader issues related to the entire Ninepipe area and current project alternatives and road alignments presently under consideration in the corridor.

The May 15 Open House will focus primarily on issues specific to the Ronan area, and will provide details on current road alignments in Ronan.

Both events will be held in Ronan at the Sacred Heart Parish Hall located on 321 Round Butte Rd. All are welcome and encouraged to attend one or both events. Visit our project website for more information at:

<http://www.skillings.com/US93SEIS/>

**The Sacred Heart Parish Hall in Ronan is  
ADA compliant.**

**To arrange accommodations for  
persons with disabilities, please call:**

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