

## 7 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

A Public Involvement Plan has been developed to identify key goals, objectives and methods for this process. The public has had numerous opportunities to participate throughout the project including attending open houses, public workshops, breakfast meetings, and/or submitting written comments. A comprehensive list of the public involvement and meeting summaries and notes are available at [www.itd.idaho.gov/Projects/D2/](http://www.itd.idaho.gov/Projects/D2/). Details of the stakeholder, agency meetings and public comments are on file at the Idaho Transportation Department District 2 office.

A multitude of public involvement activities and tools were employed as listed below:

- Press Releases-38 Press Releases were used to announce public meetings
- Breakfast Meetings-32 Breakfast Meetings were held between 2006 and 2009 to provide a forum for the public to get project updates, learn about the environmental analyses and to ask questions.
- Newsletters-32 Newsletters were distributed between 2004 and 2007. The newsletters included project updates, feature stories, technical information and next steps.
- Project Video-A video was shown during the public scoping meetings in 2005 to introduce the project purpose and need. It was made available on the website and continuously updated on the project website.
- Project Brochure-A project brochure was produced in 2006 and updated in 2010. It provided the public with an overview of the project, including its background, components and the opportunities for public participation.
- Public Meetings were held between 2004 and 2006
  - Public scoping meetings were held November 3 and 4, 2004 to obtain preliminary input from the public regarding problems, solutions and possible alternatives. There were approximately 500 attendees and 300 comments received.
  - Alternative Alignment Workshops were held on January 19 and 20, 2005. These workshops presented a range of possible alternatives and alignments to the public based on previous input and analysis. There were approximately 200 participants and 550 comments received.
  - Public Open House Meeting-An open house was held April 13, 2005. The meeting presented results from the Alternative Alignment Workshops and showed the next steps for the project. There were over 100 attendees and 27 comments received.
  - Public Open House-Additional open house meetings were held January 18 and 19, 2006. The 11 initial alternatives (No action and 10 Action Alternatives) were presented for public input. ITD's recommendations for alternatives and environmental studies were also presented. There were approximately 600 participants and 695 comments received.

- Community Presentation/workshops and Interviews were held throughout the project development.
- Information Kiosks-Mobile kiosks were placed at two public locations to provide project information and to collect public input between November 2004 and June 2005.
- Community Impact Assessment-This study included three days of completing community member interviews, questionnaires and all day drop-ins, which were compiled in 2006 and updated in 2011. See the Community Impact Technical Reports.
- Fact sheets and handouts were developed when detailed information about a particular issue was needed for distribution to a wide audience or for meetings.
- A Project Website was developed and is maintained for the project duration. It is available at [www.itd.idaho.gov/Projects/D2/](http://www.itd.idaho.gov/Projects/D2/). The website provides the public with information including progress updates and public involvement activities and allows questions to be raised or comments to be made. The website is updated continuously with milestones, press releases, relevant project materials, reports, and comments collected.
- Property owner meetings and stakeholder interviews were conducted throughout the project development process

Stakeholder interviews were conducted at two stages in the environmental process: during initial scoping, and during the development and evaluation of potential alternatives. This enabled ITD and FHWA to gain an in-depth understanding of community issues, values, and constraints regarding the proposed action. During the initial scoping, interviews were conducted with local elected and appointed officials, community transportation and planning officials, and business owners in and near the study area. Stakeholder interviews were conducted during the development and evaluation of potential alternatives. These were documented in the scoping report on file at ITD District 2.

Federal, state, and local agencies and The Nez Perce Tribe representatives that would have an interest in the project participated in the scoping and development of alternatives. The agencies reviewed and provided input on goals and the purpose and need statement, assessed the transportation needs for the corridor, evaluated and reviewed screening methodologies, and provided input on a range of alternatives. Coordination meetings were held with the agencies to explain the process, define the agencies' roles, and to solicit feedback at various stages in the development of the proposed action.

The Nez Perce Tribe reservation boundaries are located south of the project area and do not occur within the project study area. The Nez Perce Tribe was consulted with throughout the development of the project. They were provided copies of all the cultural resource documents prepared for the project. In addition, the ITD District Administrator has been meeting with the

Nez Perce Tribe quarterly since 2002 to discuss ITD District 2 projects, which included US-95 Thorncreek Road to Moscow. ITD has a Memorandum of Understanding with SHPO and the Nez Perce Tribe. See Appendix 1. Key Agency Correspondence and Forms. Tribal consultation meetings occurred on the dates listed below:

- December 9, 2004
- September 8, 2005
- December 8, 2005
- March 9, 2006
- November 27, 2006
- March 26, 2007
- February 27, 2008
- July 14, 2008
- November 13, 2008
- March 12, 2009
- June 11, 2009
- December 10, 2009
- February 11, 2010
- April 15, 2010
- October 14, 2010
- August 22, 2011
- March 1, 2012

Public and agency comments received during the public involvement process were used to identify the range of reasonable alternatives and to identify environmental issues to be evaluated. The summaries of the public involvement opportunities are posted on the project website and located at the ITD District 2 office. The major themes of the public concerns included:

- Opposition to western alternative due to noise and visual effects to University Arboretum and effects to historical and residential properties
- Opposition to the eastern alternative due to possible effects to Paradise Ridge.
- Support for the eastern alternative because it is an ecologically sound and cost-effective alternative and because it is the safest and shortest alternative.
- Support for the central alternative because it uses less undeveloped land and causes the least effect to the community and wildlife. It is also the closest to current route.
- Support to improve the existing highway because it is the least costly. Passing lanes could be added and Reisenauer Hill could be modified to reduce hazards.
- ITD has not been clear in showing how the eastern and western alternatives would be seen from the city of Moscow.
- Safety and efficiency should be the most important criteria used in selecting an alternative.
- The public needs to attend the upcoming public hearing to voice input and ask questions.

- ITD has not altered any of the three proposed alternatives after extensive public input.
- The Giant Palouse Earthworm was petitioned to the U.S. Department of Interior for listing on the Endangered Species Act; however, the earthworm was not listed. The Earthworm's habitat is within the scope of this project and should be included in ITD's environmental analysis.
- How did ITD draw their conclusions from the public meeting comments?
- Did ITD include all comments received from the public in their analysis?
- What is the time frame for a decision? How would the public be notified of the decision?
- How many miles would a five-lane with center turn lane alternative be?
- How many miles would be turned over to the Latah County Highway District?
- Has ITD conducted a storm water analysis?
- Bird watchers on the Palouse submitted a petition with 14 signatures that opposed moving US-95 near Paradise Ridge, specifically opposing the E2 alternative.
- A second petition was submitted by a separate group, with 361 signatures opposing the E-2 Alternative.

There was a 45-day public comment period during which oral and written testimonies regarding the DEIS and alternatives were collected. A public hearing was held during the public comment period.

## **7.1 Public Involvement Since DEIS Publication**

### **7.1.1 Public Hearing**

A public hearing was held to provide the public with information regarding the project, the alternatives and impacts in compliance with 23 CFR 771. The public hearing was held at the Best Western Plus University Inn in Moscow Idaho on January 23, 2013 from 2:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

The hearing included an open microphone session to allow the public to provide their comments to the attending public. The public was also able to provide comment through comment forms, and verbal testimony to a hearing officer. Staff and subject experts were available to provide information regarding the project, existing conditions, resources, and impacts. Public information materials included maps with the alignments overlain, informational displays on the resources, alignments and processes. The DEIS, Technical Reports, project brochure and video were also available.

The public hearing was advertised by sending press releases to the local newspaper, posting information on the project website, sending out letters to stakeholders and the general public and through other media such as radio.

### **7.1.2 Notification of DEIS Availability**

#### ***Federal Register Notification***

An official notification of the DEIS availability was placed in the Federal Register on Jan. 4, 2013. This notice marked the start of the comment period, which ended on February 25, 2013 and was extended to March 25, 2013.

#### ***Letter to Elected Officials***

ITD sent a formal letter to 16 local, state and federal elected officials on December 21, 2012 announcing the DEIS comment period, the public hearing and a summary of the project and the Preferred Alternative.

#### ***Property Owner Letter***

ITD sent letters to 104 property owners, utility companies, tribes and other local groups. The property owner letter invited the public to the hearing, provided a list of DEIS viewing locations and directions for giving comments.

#### ***Mailing to Stakeholder Database***

ITD mailed a packet of information to 795 stakeholders who have been involved in the project since 2004. The mailing contained a DVD with the full-length DEIS, supporting technical reports and a video. It also contained a paper copy of the Guide to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which highlighted key findings from the DEIS.

#### ***Agency Notification***

State and federal resource agencies received a copy of the DEIS by mail as indicated in the DEIS Appendix 3.

#### ***Legal Advertisement***

An advertisement appeared in the legal notifications of:

- The Lewiston Tribune—Wednesday and Thursday, January 16 and 17, 2013
- Moscow Pullman Daily News—Wednesday, January 16, 2013

### ***Display Ad***

ITD designed and placed large advertisements in the news sections of local newspapers on three occasions:

- Display ad #1: Announcement of DEIS availability, viewing locations and public hearing (December 30, 2012)
- Display ad #2: Announcement of public hearing (January 9, 2013)
- Display ad #3: Announcement of public hearing (January 21, 2013)

All three ads ran in the Moscow Pullman Daily News and the Lewiston Tribune. Display ad #1 appeared in the Saturday/Sunday edition of the Moscow Pullman Daily News, which was dated December 29 instead of December 30.

### ***News Releases***

News releases were sent to local print, TV and radio media in the weeks before the hearing and the day of the hearing.

### ***DEIS Guide***

ITD printed a 16-page Guide to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in a brochure format. The piece gave an easy-to-read overview of the project, roadway alternatives and the DEIS. It included color maps of each alternative and page numbers for key sections of the DEIS.

### ***DVD and Project Video***

Along with the DEIS Guide, ITD mailed a DVD to every person on the project database. The DVD included a seven-minute video regarding the history of the project, the process of developing the environmental document, and important points about each of the roadway alternatives.

### ***Website***

The project website included basic project information, the DEIS, technical reports, public hearing information, the project brochure, news releases and the project video. This website was updated following the DEIS hearing.