



Introduction

The Fernan Lake Road Safety Improvement Project is back on track! The need to improve Fernan Lake Road has been discussed and debated since 1996. Last year, we completed preliminary scoping and determined that the project could possibly have significant environmental impacts. Many of you participated in that process.

We are now entering a new phase – the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS – to evaluate potential impacts, identify mitigation measures, and select a route alternative.

The project partners are the East Side Highway District (ESHD), the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (FS), and the Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

This project update on recent activities and explains the process and schedule.

New Project Management Team

Federal Highway Administration's New Management Team

Design Operations Engineer- FHWA

Mr. Karl Gleason will be replacing Ms. Victoria Peters. Mr. Gleason has a Bachelors degree in Civil Engineering and Masters in Forestry. He worked a number of years with US Forest Service (USFS), counties and has been working in design with FHWA for the last 7 years. Mr. Gleason is a registered Professional Engineer.

Project Manager- FHWA

Mr. Sajid Aftab, Project Manager, will be replacing Ms. Christy Darden.

Mr. Aftab has a Masters and Bachelors degree in Civil Engineering. He has worked as a project Engineer for more than five years in the construction field on different FHWA projects in several states. He joined the A/E Design Team in year 2001. Currently, Mr. Aftab is managing four different A/E design projects.

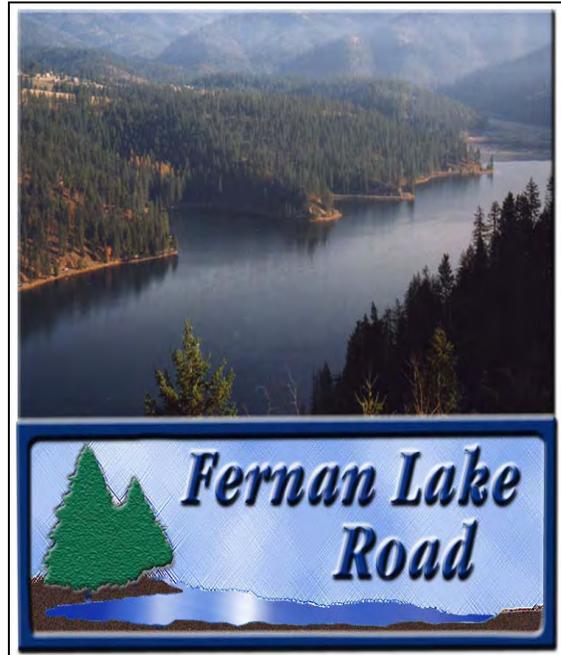
Mr. Gleason and Mr. Aftab each bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences in design, construction and management areas.

David Evans and Associates:

Western Federal Highways Lands of Federal Highway has contracted out the EIS work to a renowned consultant, David Evans and Associates out of Bellevue, Washington.

Victor L. Salesmann, PE
Senior Project Engineer

With 20 years of experience in the Northwest, Mr. Salesmann specializes in the integration of community policies and transportation. He has worked directly with Federal Agencies, State Transportation Departments, and numerous city councils. Throughout his career, Mr. Salesmann has demonstrated an ability to connect and commit teams and organizations to projects, as well as identifies and addresses the challenges faced by agency staff and diverse stakeholders.



**Ronald J. Bockelman, Environmental
Project Manager / Senior NEPA Specialist**

Ron Bockelman has an M.S. in Ecology and 30 years experience conducting inventories of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, managing natural resources for desired future conditions, assessing the environmental impacts of proposed actions and existing operations, and preparing technical reports and documentation, his NEPA experience includes roads and highways, railroad spurs, multi-state telecommunication utilities, transmission lines, USDA Forest Service timber sales, and military training exercises in forest lands.

Project Scoping

As required by law, the first step in the new phase was scoping, to identify all of the issues and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS. Scoping began with the publication of the Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register in October 2000. Letters were sent to interested agencies and individuals in May 2001, and a scoping meeting was held on June 20, 2001. Comments on the scope and contents of the EIS were accepted until July 19, 2001.

Project Objectives

As we have seen, there are a variety of issues and concerns that need to be addressed by the project. The overall purpose of the project is to improve, reasonably and cost-effectively, the safety of Fernan Lake Road while minimizing adverse impacts to sensitive environmental resources. Project objectives were determined based on the needs identified in the scoping process. The following objectives carry equal weight in evaluating alternatives and selecting an appropriate course of action.

Transportation Objectives:

- Improve overall National Forest access from Coeur d'Alene.
- Improve safety for current and future travelers (signs, striping, guardrail, etc).
- Provide a roadway width and surface that will adequately and safely serve existing and projected traffic.

Maintenance Objectives

- Make roadway improvements that would reduce maintenance costs.
- Repair roadway deficiencies to reduce the frequency of necessary maintenance.

Environmental Objectives:

- Repair unstable side slopes to reduce erosion and maintenance costs.
- Avoid, minimize or mitigate short-term and long-term adverse environmental effects and protect sensitive species and habitats.
- Correct roadway drainage problems to extend the life of the roadway and protect adjacent water bodies.

Land Use and Recreation Objectives:

- Provide off-road parking for the safety of recreational users.
- Minimize right-of-way acquisition, particularly through private land.
- Design improvements that are consistent with the Kootenai County Area Transportation Plan and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan.

Alternatives

FHWA and the partner agencies have explored a wide range of alternatives to meet the project objectives. In addition to the “No Build” alternative (in which no improvements would be made), alternatives for improvement of Fernan Lake Road and alternative route corridors have been identified. In coming months, FHWA would like to request your opinions and comments on our efforts regarding alternatives.

Narrowing the Range of Alternatives

In the near future during the public Open House Project Scoping Meeting we will be asking you to rate the Alternatives in terms of how well they met the project objectives. Over the next few months, FHWA and the partner agencies will be completing a similar exercise. The goal is to identify a reasonable range of alternatives to evaluate more fully in the EIS. You can expect to hear about the results of this effort at the end of the summer.

Project Schedule

Since we are preparing an EIS on the proposed project, we are following a longer, more formal and more detailed process to identify and analyze impacts of project alternatives and select one to implement. It is anticipated the Draft EIS will be ready for your review by January 2004. Our upcoming newsletter will discuss the project schedule more in detail.

Thank You

We would like to thank the public and our partners for their continuous support of this project. We look forward to working with you in the future and bringing successful road projects to your community. Have a great summer and drive safely.



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