

Federal Highway
Administration, Western
Federal Lands Highway
Division

Snoqualmie River Road EIS

Winter 2004

Forest Highway 29

Volume 2, Number 1

Project Planning Underway

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road (Forest Highway 29) provides the only public vehicle entryway to 109,000 acres of the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and is a primary access point for the Alpine Lake Wilderness Area. The road, also known as Lake Dorothy Road, begins at Interstate 90 (Milepost 34) near North Bend, Washington and continues along the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River.

The Federal Highway Administration, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and King County, is proposing to improve the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road. The proposed project will modify 10.8 miles of roadway between milepost 1.4 (near the west end of the couplet) and milepost 12.1 (the Middle Fork Trailhead). Actions may include widening the roadway, where needed, to create two standard width travel lanes; improving unsafe curves; replacing failing culverts; replacing a bridge; improving fish-passage and paving the road surface.



One of the many scenic views located along the project corridor

Project Activities

In the Fall and Winter of 2003, you may have seen crews working on the roadway gathering:

- geotechnical information of the roadway
- supplemental survey data for roadway design and stream analysis

Upcoming field work to be completed during the Spring and Summer of 2004:

- Wildlife surveys for Federally listed Threatened or Endangered Species, USFS Sensitive Species and other wildlife species.
- Botanical Surveys for Federally listed Threatened or Endangered and USFS Sensitive plant species, and to identify general habitat conditions.
- Analysis of stream crossings to assess fish passage concerns.
- Noise monitoring to determine baseline noise conditions (especially near the lower couplet).
- Various site visits with regulatory agencies.

These surveys will be conducted to provide information about natural resources that may be present within the project area. This information will be used as a baseline to compare the potential effects of construction and operation of different project alternatives on existing natural resources.

Attend the upcoming Open House!

Thursday, March 4, 2004
4-8 p.m.

Mt. Si Senior Center
411 Main Avenue South
North Bend, WA

Get additional information
by visiting the project website:
<http://www.mfsnoqualmie.org>

Project Partners:



Federal Highway
Administration,
Western Federal Lands
Highway Division



King County



US Forest Service



Middle Fork
Snoqualmie River, EIS
(Forest Highway 29)

Matthew Joerin
FHWA - Western Federal Lands
610 E. Fifth Street
Vancouver, WA 98661

Attend the
upcoming
Open House!

Thursday, March 4, 2004
4-8 p.m.
Mt. Si Senior Center
411 Main Avenue South
North Bend, WA

Project Timeline

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Identifying Issues / Concerns				
Existing conditions inventory Assessment of Issues	Summer & Fall			
Developing Alternatives				
Technical analysis Alternative concepts development		Winter & Spring		
Evaluating Alternatives				
Technical analysis continued Conduct Studies/Alternative Evaluation		Summer & Fall		
Draft EIS				
Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Statement		Fall	Winter & Spring	
Select Preferred Alternative				
Public Hearing Select Preferred Alternative			Summer	
Final EIS				
Preparation of Final Environmental Impact Statement			Summer & Fall	
FHWA Record of Decision				Winter

NEPA - What is it?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is a federal law that makes sure that government gives proper consideration to the environment before constructing a major structure such as a new road, airport or building. Public participation is an important part of the planning process under NEPA. To comply with this law, the Federal Highway Administration will be preparing an environmental document to assess the impacts of improving Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road. A first step in this process involves "scoping" efforts with the public and other agencies. Scoping is the process through which project officials listen to ideas and concerns of people and agencies affected by the project and identify a range of alternatives and issues needing further study. Scoping ensures that people have a voice in the process when a proposed project affects them. There will be several opportunities along the way for public input and review of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road EIS. The entire process culminates in a Record of Decision (ROD) in Winter 2006.

Why?

The Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road (Forest Highway 29) is the only public motorized access to the Middle Fork Valley, a popular recreation area located less than an hour from over one million people within the Seattle metropolitan area. The valley provides a wide range of recreation experiences, putting heavy demand on Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Road.

Project objectives include:

- Improve road safety for current and future travelers
- Reduce road maintenance costs
- Provide safe access for recreational, emergency and law enforcement use that is consistent with Agency Plans
- Maintain and preserve the residential character of the couplet area
- Preserve the natural habitat and the visual and water quality
- Improve fish passage and reduce sedimentation of the river
- Minimize off road vehicle use within riparian and sensitive areas
- Complete improvements in a reasonable and cost effective manner.
- Improve the recreation infrastructure

All improvements must be consistent with the applicable guidelines from the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Plan and applicable King County plans and ordinances.

See project website for the full Purpose and Need Statement

Issues & Challenges - What We Heard at the Last Open House

The scoping Open House was held on November 19, 2003 at the Mount Si Senior Center in North Bend, Washington. The purpose of this open house was to:

- Gather comments, issues, and concerns regarding the proposed project
- Provide basic project information on the EIS process
- Offer an opportunity for face to face discussions about project issues between project team members and the public

More than 1100 meeting notices were mailed to interested and impacted parties. Advertisements and notices were placed in the Issaquah Press and Snoqualmie Valley Record. Media releases were distributed to area media outlets in Seattle and eastern King County.

Thirty-nine participants attended the meeting and a total of 22 comment forms were collected.



Public Scoping meeting 11/19/03

Themes Emerge From First Open House

Here are the topics that generated the most discussion at the November 19 open house:

- Road Safety – speed limits, road width, signage, limited site distances
- Nuisance Uses – street racing, uncontrolled shooting, illegal activities
- Access – high use areas, closure of some areas
- Recreation – parking, river access, campgrounds and day use, use numbers
- Resource Protection – construction disturbance, road width and surface material



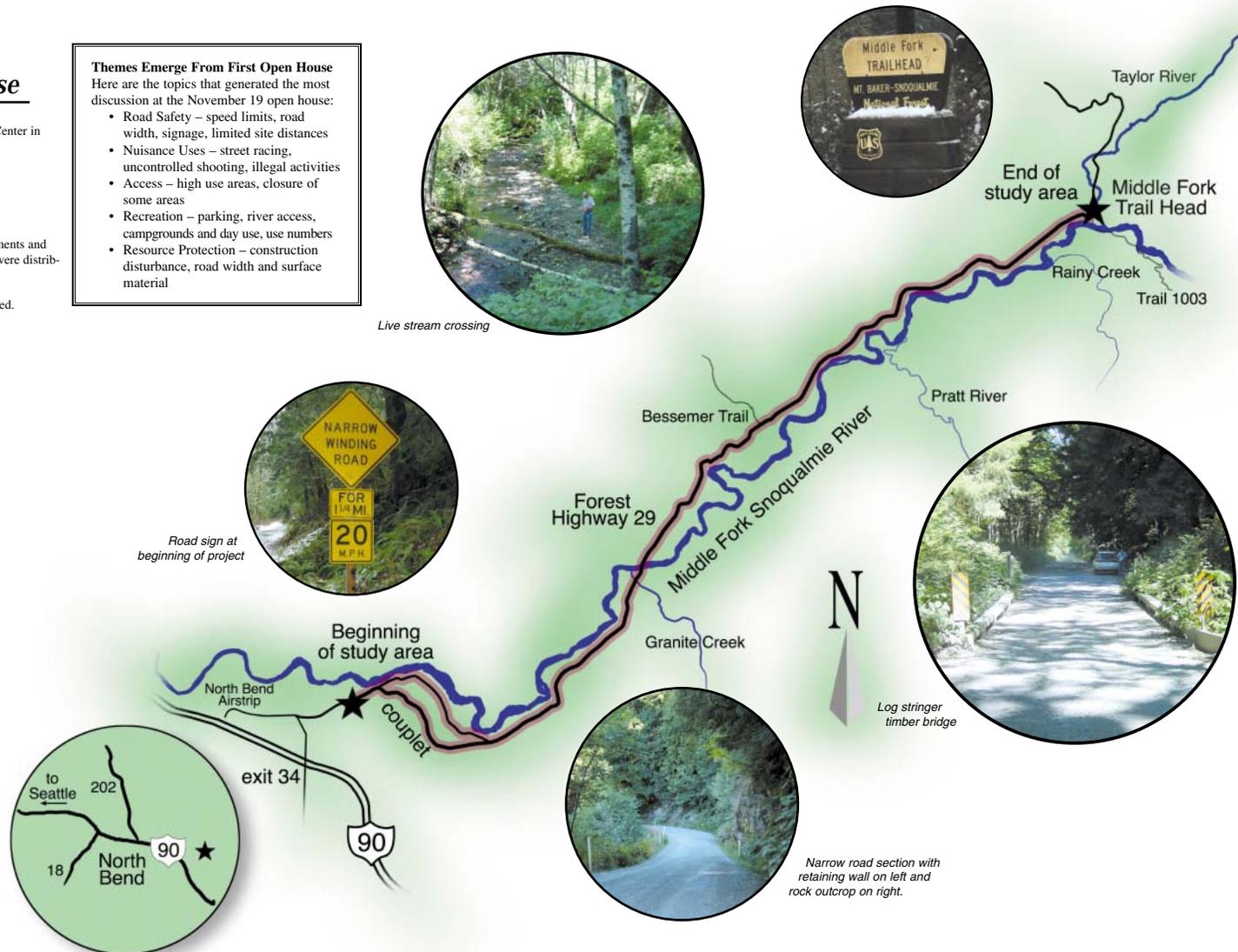
Live stream crossing



Road sign at beginning of project



End of study area
Middle Fork Trail Head



Log stringer timber bridge

Narrow road section with retaining wall on left and rock outcrop on right.

Project Development Where are we going?

This project began several years ago and has collected a considerable amount of public comment and input regarding the proposed improvements. This information has been reviewed and incorporated into the current planning process.

Planning Steps

1. Conduct previous planning efforts
2. Compile and review previous public comments and input
3. Research existing conditions
4. Project Introduction/Scoping
5. **Public Meeting - Scoping**
6. Develop Purpose and Need Statement
7. Identify possible improvement alternatives
8. Selected Alternatives Review
9. **Public Meeting - Alternative Screening** ← We are here
10. Conduct Studies and Alternatives Evaluation
11. Evaluation and Identify Feasible alternatives
12. **Public Meeting - Alternative Evaluation**
13. Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
14. Conduct DEIS Hearing/Open House
15. **Public Hearing - Draft Environmental Impact Statement**
16. Comment Period
17. Prepare Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)
18. Comment Period
19. Prepare Record of Decision

How to get involved with this project:

- 1 Fill out the enclosed comment form and return to us at the address provided
- 2 Get on the project mailing list by emailing mfsnoqualmie@fhwa.dot.gov
- 3 Send comments to Matt Joerin, FHWA Project Manager, at 610 E. 5th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661
- 4 Attend the next public meeting

Get additional information
by visiting the project website:
<http://www.mfsnoqualmie.org>

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is this project needed?

This project is needed because:

- A. Use of the road is expected to continue to increase.
- B. Sections of the road are too narrow for two-way traffic.
- C. It is the only access to a large popular recreational area.
- D. Poor drainage conditions are present.

2. Who is conducting the study and how long will it take?

The project lead is the Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Project Partners include the US Forest Service and King County. Affected communities, which will be actively involved, include the city of North Bend along with King County.

A team of private engineering and environmental firms has been assembled to complete the Study and resource work.

The Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled to be finished by 2006.

3. Has the WFLHD already decided what they are going to do?

No. The Western Federal Lands Highway Division has identified problems with the current road. The public involvement process for the Environmental Impact Study will identify potential solutions (alternatives), study and analyze the proposed alternatives, and finally identify and recommend the "Preferred Alternative". The "No-build Alternative" will also be considered throughout the process. This alternative would keep the road in its current state.

4. How will the alternatives be identified?

Alternatives will be developed through a process of combining information gathered from the public with technical studies. Potential impacts are very important considerations in the development and evaluation of alternatives. Studies will be conducted on environmental resources including: wetlands, wildlife, vegetation; cultural and historic properties; businesses, homes, and recreation areas.