

U.S. 95 Thorncreek Road to Moscow Matrix Evaluation Criteria – Definitions

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) evaluated all proposed alternatives based on criteria developed with input from the public and by an interdisciplinary team of resource agencies, including the Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Idaho Fish & Game and the Idaho Transportation Department.

This handout provides a definition of each criteria.

Length

The number of miles of the alternative/alignment

Meets Purpose and Need

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a purpose and need statement. The purpose and need of a project is an important part of establishing a basis for the development of the range of reasonable alternatives required in an Environmental Impact Statement. The purpose and need also assists with the identification and eventual selection of a preferred alternative.

The purpose and need for the Thorncreek Road to Moscow project is:

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to improve public safety and increase highway capacity on US 95 between Thorncreek Road, south of Moscow at MP 337.200 and Moscow at MP 343.982.

Need

Within the project limits, US 95 does not meet current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Standards (widths, clearzones, grades and sight distance). Additional concerns include high accident locations and insufficient highway capacity.

Public Involvement

Public involvement is important to ITD and to the environmental review process. The public has been involved in developing the evaluation criteria and identifying the alternatives/alignments being studied.

- **November 2004, Public Meeting** – The public identified issues and concerns important to them when selecting an alternative/alignment. ITD included these issues and concerns in the evaluation criteria.
- **January 2005, Alternative/Alignment Workshops** – The public provided input on six alternative/alignments proposed by ITD. Input at the workshops resulted in the addition of four alternative/alignments to be studied.

- **April 2005, Public Open House** – The public had the opportunity to review and provide input on the 10 alternative/alignments that have been evaluated.
- **Ongoing** – Public comments have been received by ITD via email, mail and phone at the monthly breakfast meetings. ITD has taken many direct actions based on this input.

Meets Design Standards

To meet current design standards, the following two design criteria will be used:

- Minimum radius
- Maximum percent of grade

Safety

The estimated number of accidents per year based on a safety analysis conducted by the Idaho Transportation Department. The results were derived using the current ITD “Safety Evaluation Instruction Manual.”

Right-of Way

The total number of new and existing acres ITD will purchase or currently retains

Total Construction Cost

The estimated amount it will cost to build an alternative/alignment, not including right-of-way costs

Archeological (acres within probable occurrence areas)

NEPA directs ITD to assess the effects of its actions on cultural resources (archaeological and historical sites). This is accomplished by conducting a study to determine if probable archeological and historical sites may exist within a specific project area. If sites are found to exist, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff will assess and determine the importance of these sites and evaluate the potential effects the project actions could have upon them. In the preliminary studies for this project there was no SHPO determination.

Historic (Number of Sites)

NEPA directs ITD to assess the effects of its actions on cultural resources (archaeological and historical sites). This is accomplished by conducting a study to determine if archeological and historical sites exist within a specific project area. If sites are found to exist, the State Historic Preservation Office staff will assess and determine the importance of these sites and evaluate the potential effects the project actions could have upon them. In the preliminary studies for this project there was no SHPO determination.

Wetlands and Waters of the U.S.

NEPA requires ITD to identify wetlands and waters of the United States. Wetlands and waters of the U.S. are defined as areas that have appropriate surface or ground water, wet soils and established wetland plants; or rivers,

streams or tributaries that have a defined bed and bank channel. Wetlands and waters of the U.S. are identified as jurisdictional or non-jurisdictional by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Project impacts will require permitting and mitigation.

Wetlands Acres

Acres of wetland affected

Tributaries – Number of crossings and Linear Feet

Actual number of stream channel crossings and number of linear feet of stream channel affected

Number of Regulatory Floodway and Floodplain Hits

Actual number of regulatory floodways or floodplains that an alignment crosses or intersects as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), August 15, 1980.

Threatened and Endangered Species

NEPA requires ITD to assess project impacts on Threatened, Endangered and Proposed fish and wildlife species. In Idaho, threatened and endangered species are listed by county by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The species listed for this project are: Canada lynx, gray wolf, bull trout and steelhead.

Hazardous materials

NEPA requires ITD to survey the project area for known hazardous material locations. Items commonly found in the project area include: above and below ground fuel tanks, agricultural chemical storage, asbestos and lead-based paints.

Socio-Economic

For this project, the socio-economic study assesses the potential of a route to increase property values, induce development within the project area based on the possible improvements, and change the pattern of growth.

The study included the area one mile south of Moscow and along the rest of the corridor.

Environmental Justice

NEPA requires ITD to ensure that impacts to minority and low-income populations are not disproportionately high

Number of Displacements/Relocations

The number of homes and businesses displaced and/or relocated

Noise

NEPA requires a noise analysis on all projects constructing new travel lanes. An assessment has been performed to identify the number of noise receptors (homes and businesses) affected by a particular alignment.

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis helps determine how a person's view and perception may be impacted by a proposed alternative/alignment

Prime Farmland Impact Rating

NEPA requires ITD to consider impacts to prime farmland to determine which of the alternatives will have the least impact on agriculture

Conservation Data Center Species

NEPA requires information on project impacts to state sensitive species that are not listed under the Endangered Species Act, but are listed as vulnerable or imperiled by the Idaho Department of Fish & Game's Conservation Data Center (CDC). The species studied for this project were the long eared myotis (*Myotis evotis*) and pygmy nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*).

Conservation Data Center Plant Survey

NEPA requires information on project impacts to state sensitive species that are not listed under the Endangered Species Act, but are listed as vulnerable or imperiled by the Idaho Department of Fish & Game's Conservation Data Center. The species studied for this project were Jessica's Aster (*Aster Jessicæ*), Palouse milkvetch (*Astragalus arrectus*), green-band mariposa lily (*Calochortus macrocarpus* var. *maculosus*), broad-fruit mariposa lily (*Calochortus nitidus*), Palouse thistle (*Cirsium brevifolium*), Idaho hawksbeard (*Crepis bakeri* ssp. *Idahoensis*), Palouse goldenweed (*Haplopappus liatriformis*), ample monkey-flower (*Mimulus ampliatus*) and Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*).

Ungulates

NEPA requires that ITD evaluate impacts on key wildlife species and habitat in the project area. The initial species identified for consideration under this project were: white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*), and moose (*Alces alces*).

Climate

NEPA requires ITD to evaluate the existing condition or potential condition for winter weather and surface conditions at the high elevation points of the existing and proposed alternatives/alignments for U.S. Highway 95. The weather conditions of most concern are precipitation, fog and ice.