

Welcome to the Thompson River Road Open House



Why is this road being studied for improvement?

Lolo National Forest and Sanders County originally proposed the Thompson River Road project to the Tri-Agency. The Tri-Agency, consisting of the Western Federal Lands Highway Division, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Montana Department of Transportation, selected the Thompson River Road as a potential project because it met key project evaluation factors.



What will the proposed improvements accomplish?



1. Provide permanent public access to the National Forest and to other public lands adjacent to the public road for the purposes of administration, utilization and enjoyment of those lands.
 - Establish access that is adequate to accommodate vehicles needed for forest management and fire suppression.
 - Provide continued access for developed and dispersed recreation opportunities.

- Provide access that is safe, efficient, convenient, and will improve mobility for area residents and the traveling public.



- Improve river conditions and habitat for fish by utilizing the best portions of a dual road system, improving road drainage, eliminating road surface sediment, and decommissioning unneeded segments of the road system.



- Encourage rural economic development opportunities within the local area by attracting visitors and improving access.



Who is preparing the Environmental Impact Statement ?



The Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) is designated as the lead agency and is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The WFLHD administers the Federal Lands Highway Program in cooperation with other Federal land managing agencies. These programs provide access to and within national forests, national parks, Indian reservations, and other public lands by preparing plans, letting contracts, supervising construction facilities, and conducting bridge inspections and surveys.

How long will the EIS study take?

The first year is spent scoping issues and developing studies. The overall purpose of the studies is to identify areas that should be avoided due to environmental, historical, and / or community impacts. Once those areas have been identified, preliminary alternatives for eliminating the dual road system will be developed and presented to the public for feedback; this will take place over the next two years. The following two years will be used to evaluate the alternatives and select the preferred alternative.

How long will the EIS study take?

<i>Project Timeline</i>	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Identify Concerns	All Year					
Social, Economic, and Environmental (SEE) Studies	All Year	All Year	All Year	To Fall		
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)				Fall	Spring	
Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)					Summer to Winter	
Record of Decision (ROD)						Spring

How has the public been involved and what have you heard from them?



The project team has held numerous public meetings to discuss the project with interested persons. Many comments have been received at these meetings and through other communication. Five key themes have emerged as shown on the next few slides.



What we are hearing from the public

1. It makes sense to eliminate the dual road system because it will:
 - Restore stream riparian areas
 - Reduce sediment into river
 - Eliminate approximately 40 miles of road



What we are hearing from the public

2. Do not pave the road. Paving the road could :

Harm wildlife / Increase traffic / Increase speed

Encourage development / Increase fees of State leases



What we are hearing from the public

3. Be aware of the following concerns from the Copper King and Snider residents:
- Road is already too close to our homes
 - No safe place to walk
 - Access could be a problem



What we are hearing from the public

4. Maintain current access to adjacent tributaries.



What we are hearing from the public

5. Improving the bridges is a good idea.



What studies are being conducted?

The following elements are areas of concern for which studies are being proposed:



Fish, Wildlife & Plants

- Threatened & Endangered species: identification of and impacts
- Lolo National Forest Sensitive species: identification of and impacts
- Noxious weeds

What studies are being conducted?

Hydrology

- Floodplains & Wetlands: delineation, inventory, historic channel study to aid in potential restoration of hydraulic connectivity and wetlands/riparian areas
- Water quality: impact of sediments and nutrients to Thompson River



What studies are being conducted?

Air Quality:

- Impacts of dust and airborne sediments

Cultural Resources:

- Botanical inventory of plants traditionally used by native people.
- Cultural resource inventory of sites, features and landscapes.

Community Impacts:

- Economic analysis
- Mobility and access: traffic and destination studies.



What is the purpose of this meeting?

To gather comments, issues, and concerns regarding the proposed project, and to help us answer following questions:

- Who owns the roads?
- How are the roads used?
- What access is needed?
- How does the public feel about eliminating the dual road system?
- **Please take a few minutes to visit with the project team, view the exhibits and provide written comment.**



Thank you for coming tonight.