

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Montana DOT Highway 7 Expansion Easement and Land Use License
Proposed Implementation Date:	2015
Proponent:	Montana Department of Transportation
Location:	T5N-R58E-Sec 36
County:	Fallon County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Montana Department of Transportation has filed an application with the DNRC for the purpose of expanding its current right of way in the section mentioned above. This expansion is for the accommodation of widening and alignment of State Highway 7 located approximately 14 miles south of Baker, MT. This project is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2015.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

DOT has completed the right of way application form 302 which is recognized by DNRC through the MOU existing between the agencies. The MDOT has completed and approved a Programmatic Categorical Exclusion for the project. DOT has contacted the current surface lessee and informed them of the project.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

None

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A- Approve the easement right of way application.
Alternative B- No action.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Alternative A- Some soil disturbance would take place as the right of way is expanded. The soils in the area are composed of Shallow, Thin Silty and Silty soils. These soils are not fragile or compactable.
Alternative B-No Impact

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Alternative A- Pollutants and Particulates may be increased during the construction phase of the project. After the completion of the project pollutant and particulate levels should return to normal. Increase in pollutants during construction should be negligible.

Alternative B- No Impact

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Alternative A- Where the construction takes place there may be disturbance to the vegetation cover. The current plant community in the area is comprised mostly native species. Current Species on the site include but are not limited to Western Wheatgrass (*agropyron smithii*) Green Needlegrass (*stipa viridula*), Little Bluestem (*schizachyrium scoparium*), Needle and Thread (*stipa comata*), Threadleaf Sedge (*carex filifolia*), Blue Grama (*bouteloua gracilis*), Sandberg Bluegrass (*poa secunda*), Prairie Junegrass (*koleria pyramidata*), Crested Wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) and Smooth Brome (*Bromus inermis*). The proponent will be required to reseed the affected area to a native grass mixture upon completion of the project.

Alternative B- No Impact

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Alternative A- There may be very minimal effects on any animal habitats within the boundaries of the project construction. Wildlife that inhabit the project area include antelope, deer, coyotes, migratory birds, rodents amphibians and reptiles. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed during the construction of the project. After completion of the project there should be no lasting impacts to these species.

Alternative B- No Impact

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

Alternative A- A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program Database did not show any evidence of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species within the area of the proposed project. The proposed project is not located within Sage Grouse core, connectivity or general habitat

Alternative B- No Impact

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Alternative A-Upon inspection of the parcels by the Eastern Land Office staff no significant findings were noted on these parcels. A search of the TLMS database does not show any historical or archeological sites in the project area. Due to the small scope and previous disturbance no significant impacts should occur.

Alternative B- No Impact

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Alternative A- The current easement would increase in size by approximately 11.99 acres. The temporary Land Use License for construction would encompass another .18 acres. There would be no lasting increase to noise, light or viewshed due to the project.

Alternative B- No Impact

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

Alternative A- No significant impact

Alternative B- No Impact

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Alternative A- Any construction work would be completed by trained professionals. There are inherent risks involved in the heavy construction industry and the workers accept risks as an occupational hazard, and proper safety training can mitigate safety risks. This project should increase public safety by widening of the roadway and removal of hazard areas.

Alternative B- No Impact

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Alternative A- It would have a positive effect on Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production.

Alternative B- No Impact

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

Alternative A- This project has the potential to create jobs with further development possibilities.

Alternative B- No Impact

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

Alternative A- No Significant Impact

Alternative B- No Impact

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Alternative A- This will provide income for the trust in the form of the purchase of a permanent easement. The amount is \$9592.00 or (\$800.00 per acre) for the right of way easement as well as a temporary land use license fee of \$300.00 (\$150.00 per year).

Alternative B- No Impact

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Scott Aye	Date: 2-10-2015
	Title: Land Use Specialist	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative A

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The granting of the requested right of way easement upon state owned trust lands for the proposed State Highway 7 expansion and realignment should not result in nor cause significant environmental impacts. The predicted environmental impacts have been identified and mitigation measures addressed in the EA checklist. The predicted impacts will be adequately mitigated through the construction and reclamation plans. The proposed action satisfies the trusts fiduciary mandate and ensures the long term productivity of the land. An environmental assessment checklist is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Chris Pileski
	Title: ELO Area Manager
Signature: /s/ Chris Pileski	
Date: 2-10-2015	