

SKYE PARK PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

COMPANY NAME: City of Whitefish, P.O Box 158, Whitefish, MT, 59937

PROJECT: Construction of Pedestrian/Bike Path Bridge, aka/Skye Park Pedestrian Bridge

PERMIT OR LICENSE: Easement

LOCATION: The proposed bridge site is located crossing the Whitefish River in the City of Whitefish, Montana approximately 750 feet southeast of the outflow of Whitefish Lake, in the SW1/4, SW1/4, SW1/4 of Section 25, Township 31N, Range 22W, P.M.M. (See attached Vicinity Map)

COUNTY: Flathead

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: [] Federal [**X**] State [] Private

Clarification: State of Montana owns the navigable river low water to low water. City of Whitefish owns land on the river banks, above the low water mark.

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:

As an extension of its' existing pedestrian/bike path system the City of Whitefish plans to construct a foot bridge across the Whitefish River northeast of Birch Point Drive extending northeast to Woodland place street Right-of-Way. Bridge construction will consist of two new single span steel bridge sections supported on conventional spread footing abutments and one pier. Construction of the new abutments will include integral retaining walls and trail extension aprons at each end.

The footbridge will consist of two single, free span sections of 40 and 180 feet respectively. The sections will connect on a pier employing similar construction techniques as detailed for the abutments. No footings or piers will be placed in the river channel.

The existing ground at the proposed abutments consists of natural slopes between 3 and 4 percent in the construction zone on the south side of the river. The existing ground at the proposed abutment consists of natural slopes between 12 and 15 percent down toward the river in the construction zone on the north bank. Based on existing site conditions, lean clay, silty sand & sandy silt, and clayey gravel with sand will be encountered in footing excavations. This excavation material is not suitable for use as structural fill but may be used as general site grading fill. Groundwater is expected to be below the anticipated depths of footing and utility excavations.

The existing soils below the proposed bridge approaches will be excavated and replaced with the high-quality, granular fill. A woven stabilization fabric and geogrid will distribute and spread new footing loads to an overall footprint approximately 19 feet x 34 feet for each abutment. Geogrid and fabric would also be used during the backfilling phase to strengthen the structural fill. This internal reinforcement would also be incorporated into the design and construction of the abutment walls. Due to the proposed geometry and the internal reinforcing, slope stability will not be an issue. The abutment and structural fill designs are based on the findings of the "Report of Geotechnical Investigation - Proposed Skye Park Bridge, Whitefish, Montana" by T, D & H Engineering.

All surface and groundwater will be protected with the use of "Best Management Practices". All surface disturbances will be encompassed with silt fence and straw wattles or fiber rolls will be used as a secondary measure to eliminate erosion or runoff issues.

Access to the north side of the main span of the Skye Park Bridge site would be via Oregon Avenue Right-of-Way south to the site. Access to the south side of the Skye Park Bridge site would be from Birch Point Drive Right-of-Way then north to the site. Additional trail is proposed to be constructed on both ends of the bridge. Both spans of the bridge and additional trail associated with the project will be located on City of Whitefish Street Right-of-Way, on Lot 2 of the Birch Point Landing Subdivision, which is also owned by the City of Whitefish, or on Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad Right-of-Way. Access to the bridge spans will be across City of Whitefish property on the north side and will be across City of Whitefish property and BNSF Railroad Right-of-Way on the south side of the Whitefish River. Access across BSNF property was permitted previously in 2013. The path was permitted in an amendment to an existing permit for paths BNSF had granted in 2005.

There would be no fuel storage at the Skye Park Bridge site. All fuel for equipment will be brought in by a fuel service truck as needed.

Temporary construction power would be supplied by a portable generator.

Any solid waste generated at the Skye Park Bridge site will be removed by truck and disposed of at the existing Flathead County Landfill located approximately five miles south of Whitefish along US Highway 93.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

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

a. Letters sent/agencies notified:

Letters were sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State Historic Preservation office, Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Services, and the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in June, 2014 regarding environmental impacts that may occur from construction of the footbridge. Replies were received from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, State Historic Preservation office, Department of Natural Resources.

A joint application was submitted to DNRC, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the City of Whitefish Planning Department in July of 2014. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has investigated the site, and has determined the project will not be disturbing existing wetlands and has issued a 404 permit. Other agencies are still in the processing phase of permitting at this time.

The Whitefish Planning Department has received the joint application and the permitting process is currently underway. It is dependent upon the successful achievement of the permanent easement from the Montana State Land Board.

b. City Public Involvement:

A Public Meeting was held in February, 2014 at the City of Whitefish City Hall Council Chambers. Path and bridge exhibits were displayed and information provided to the public. Comments were accepted and considered from both the public and the City Council.

c. CTEP Environmental Checklist:

An Environmental Checklist for the footbridge is pending approval of the proposed easement from the Montana State Land Board and will be submitted to CTEP in near future.

d. MEPA Public Scoping Process:

The public scoping process for the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) was initiated for the section of the Whitefish River over which the proposed footbridge will extend. The City of Whitefish and DNRC were contacted and advertisements were placed in three local newspapers during October inviting public comment (30 day comment period) regarding compliance with MEPA for the footbridge across the river. The Daily Interlake & Flathead Beacon published the legal advertisement on October 1, 8, & 15. The Whitefish Pilot published the advertisement on Oct 8, 15, & 22. A public meeting inviting public comment regarding compliance with MEPA for the footbridge was conducted on Oct. 28, 2014 at City of Whitefish City Hall Council Chambers.

No public comments were received.

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

No governmental agencies other than those mentioned above have jurisdiction, and all necessary permits are referenced above.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A – No Action, do not build the footbridge and adjacent bike/pedestrian path.

Alternative B – The permanent easement be granted by Montana State Land Board for the construction of a footbridge over State Waters. This alternative will result in the construction of the proposed footbridge.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

N = Not present or No Impact would occur.

Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).

N/A = Not Applicable

<u>III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</u>	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACT AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are soils present which are fragile, erosive, susceptible to compaction, or unstable? Are there unusual or unstable geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	[Y] The site is geologically characterized as consisting of Pleistocene-aged glaciolacustrine and glaciofluvial deposits of lean clay, silty clay, silt and fine sand. Locally, these soil types are typically thinly interbedded and occasionally varved. A Geotechnical Investigation was conducted and report prepared by TD&H Engineering for this project. Copies of the report are available for review. There are no unusual or unstable geologic features. There are no special reclamation considerations.
2. WATER QUALITY,	[Y] The Whitefish River is adjacent to and flows through the site.

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<p>QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>Drinking water will be hauled to the site and all toilets would be portable for use during construction.</p> <p>There is no potential for violation of ambient drinking water standards because no chemicals would be used during construction. The Whitefish River is not used as an immediate drinking water source and the project because of its' surface nature will not add to contaminant levels or degradation of groundwater quality.</p> <p>The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department is in the process of reviewing the project relative to the Montana Stream Preservation Act. We expect The 124 Permit will specifically waive the requirement to obtain a Department of Environmental Quality 318 authorization for short term turbidity since the project is not expected to create turbidity in the river.</p>
<p>3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>[Y] Some dust or particulate would be produced by hauling, placing and compacting of aggregate and structural back fill. Because the scope of the project is minimal the overall effect would be deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Project specifications require the Contractor implement dust abatement measures during construction. No other air quality issues are expected.</p>
<p>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be significantly impacted? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[N] Native grasses and sedges will be disturbed during construction. Because of the minimal scope of the disturbance it is not significant. All disturbed areas will be reseeded to native vegetation prior to completion of the project.</p> <p>There are no rare plants or cover types present.</p> <p>A search of the Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) database found that there are no known threatened and endangered or sensitive plant species growing in the proposed permit area.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N] Most wildlife species within the area have been found to be transient or migratory. Considering the development adjacent to the site only minor wildlife traffic has been verified or sighted.</p>
<p>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?</p>	<p>[N] A search of the NRIS database found that there could be threatened and endangered animal species in the area. The grizzly bear and Canada lynx are listed in Flathead county as threatened or endangered. Some might be found on or near the proposed construction site although because of development level in the area it would seem unlikely. There have been no actual sightings of any of the species in the project area.</p> <p>The bull trout is listed as a threatened/ special status species. Since the construction sites are located completely outside the river it is unlikely to provide any negative effect on bull trout habitat.</p> <p>The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has reviewed the project site. No</p>

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	wetlands will be impacted by the project.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] Correspondence with State Historic Preservation Office indicated no known cultural areas of concern exist in the area proposed to be disturbed. The contractor would provide protection for archaeological and historical sites if they are discovered in the construction area.
8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	[Y] The proposed site is and will be visible from residences located in the Birch Point residential area. The construction site will also be visible from the residences on Oregon Avenue and Woodland Place. However, construction will be an extension of an existing path system which is already visible to those residents. The construction phase will be of short duration to minimize the noise and there will be no excessive light. Two similar existing footbridges across the Whitefish River are widely considered to be an enormous community asset.
9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area?	[N] The project will not place demands on any limited resources in the area.
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N] No nearby activities would affect the project.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] The project will not add to human health and safety risks. The project is expected to benefit human health and safety since it will provide a means for the public to exercise and travel by foot and bicycle in an area segregated from vehicular traffic and its inherent dangers and pollution risks.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] The proposed project would not affect industrial, commercial or agricultural activities or production.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[Y] It is expected the project will create 2-3 jobs although because of the short duration of the project they would not be considered permanent.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N] The project will have negligible affect on the State tax base and tax revenues. The project will generate additional revenue for the State in the form of land use fees for the State

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

	Land under the footbridge and within the low water marks of the river.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?	[N] There is no anticipated need for any increased government services that would result from this project. The project will relieve pedestrian traffic on nearby roads and may therefore help create less need for police traffic control.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[Y] The project is a part of the City of Whitefish Trails Master Plan. City of Whitefish Zoning Ordinance and Critical Areas Ordinance are in place. The project conforms to all plans noted.
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	<p>[Y] Recreational access to and on the Whitefish River should be considered across the subject area.</p> <p>Completion of the project will provide additional recreational opportunity for the residents of Whitefish and surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed bridge project is designed to provide access across the river while maintaining a clear travel path over the river commensurate with the other bridge spans crossing the Whitefish River in the area. Calculations were conducted to insure the project will not obstruct passage on the river.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the Montana Fish & Wildlife Commission approved the Whitefish River Petition Administrative Rule restricting the Whitefish River to electric motors or manually powered vessels between the BNSF trestle and the JP Bridge. Considering the proximity of the proposed project to the BNSF trestle it is unlikely the proposed project will degrade any recreational opportunities on the river.</p>
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	<p>[N] During construction, employment generated by the project is anticipated to be relatively small and most employees will be recruited from the local area. It is anticipated that most employees will reside within a short commuting distance.</p> <p>After construction, the project will not generate additional populous.</p>
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] No disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities will occur due to this project.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] The project will enhance the quality of life in the area by providing more access the natural river environment.

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21. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Are we regulating the use of private property under a regulatory statute adopted pursuant to the police power of the state? (Property management, grants of financial assistance, and the exercise of the power of eminent domain are not within this category.) If not, no further analysis is required.	[N]
22. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Does the proposed regulatory action restrict the use of the regulated person's private property? If not, no further analysis is required.	[N/A]
23. PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Does the agency have legal discretion to impose or not impose the proposed restriction or discretion as to how the restriction will be imposed? If not, no further analysis is required. If so, the agency must determine if there are alternatives that would reduce, minimize or eliminate the restriction on the use of private property, and analyze such alternatives.	[N/A]
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N]
EA Checklist Prepared By: Douglas A. Peppmeier, P.E.; TD&H.Engineering	

25. Alternatives Considered:
Alternative A: No Action, do not build the footbridge and adjacent bike/pedestrian path.
Alternative B: The permanent easement is granted by DNRC for the construction of a footbridge over State Waters. This alternative will result in the construction of the proposed footbridge.
26. Public Involvement: A legal notice was published October 1, 8, 15, 22, 2014 notifying the public of the proposed project. A public meeting was conducted at Whitefish City Council Chambers on October 28, 2014. No comments were received.
27. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department, City of Whitefish, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
28. Cumulative Impacts: Proposed project would have beneficial impact on Whitefish community.
- 29. Significance of Potential Impacts:** There will be little to no effects on the environment as a result of this action.

