

West Fork Road Public Meeting July 15, 2013

Facilitated by Carbon County Commissioner John Prinkii and Greg Gifford of the Federal Highway Administration.

Community Members Present: Julius Pilati, Pat Thompson, Denis Elo, Jim Dickson, Grant Barnard, Robert Daniels, Mitzi Vorachek, Jim Vorachek, Chris Benton, Kathy Benton, Jeff Schmidt, Bill Foisy, Tom Manuel, Kim Hunter, Lois Jacobson, Barb Beck, Mark Brajcich, Shirley Overton, John Overton, Joanne Blyton, and Angela Newell.

Greg Gifford discussed project design elements; the project design is currently at 70% completion. The first section of the project up to Bannock Trail will have 11' driving lanes with 4' shoulders; the section from Bannock Trail to the Ski Run Road will have 11' driving lanes, with 1' shoulders.

The County will soon begin negotiating with landowners for right-of-way acquisition. There are six (6) properties that will be affected by the construction; all other construction will take place in the existing county right-of-way. Federal right-of-way acquisition rules require all properties to be identified and appraised prior to the County's offer. After the offer is made the County will negotiate with landowners to determine the final price of acquisition.

Funding for the preliminary engineering will be paid for with Forest Highway carry over funds; these funds will also pay for part of the construction cost. The remaining construction costs will be paid for under Map 21 transportation authorization act. Map 21 requires matching funds or in-kind services for 13.42% of the project costs. The County has not yet determined how they will match the construction funds.

The project schedule has been adjusted as follows:

Summer 2013 – Summer 2014 – Right-of-Way offers, negotiations, and acquisition
Summer 2014 – Final Design Completion
Fall 2014 – Project advertised for bid
Spring 2015 – Fall 2016 - Construction

To address pedestrian and bike traffic, an alternate route bike path along Palisades Campground Road is being considered. Design standards for this potential trail have not yet been specified. The route would go along the south side of Palisades Campground Road and through the Forest Service along the Close Road where it would tie back into the West Fork Road. This route is also being considered as an alternate travel route during construction to minimize the construction time and to provide local access and access to emergency traffic during construction.

Greg and Angela will try to coordinate to put design plans on the County website so that the public has access to them.

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John Prinkki worked with Joann Blyton during the last legislative session to try and obtain a grant for matching funds from the state. The bill was passed in house but failed in Senate.

The West Fork Road was designated as a major collector road in May 2013 and the State Transportation Committee is reviewing the County's request to designate the West Fork Road as a State Secondary Road which will make it eligible for state funding. John believes that the Committee supports the project and hopes that the State can provide some of the matching funds.

Under the program, once a project agreement is signed the funds are designated for three years; this time frame gives Carbon County another chance to request funding from the legislature. Resort tax revenues from Red Lodge Mountain will also be used for matching funds.

Julius Pilati asked about where right-of-way right of way needs to be acquired. John indicated that it would be on the lower portion of the road and confirmed that Carbon County is committed to reaching an amicable agreement with affected landowners.

JoAnn Blyton asked what would happen to the project in the worst case scenario where no funds were provided by the State and the County cannot provide the required match. Greg stated that the project would be scaled down to a level to match available funding. A scaled down project would focus on the 1000 ft that was not included in the most recent construction project.