

**Index-Galena Road Milepost 6.4-Milepost 6.9
Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) Meeting Minutes/Recap
July 6, 2011 U.S. Forest Service Skykomish Ranger Station**

Attendees

Twenty people attended the IDT meeting at the Skykomish Ranger Station, including representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Snohomish County Public Works (SCPW). See attendee list on pages 7 and 8 of this document.

After the meeting, attendees also visited the proposed project site at its downstream western terminus in proximity to Milepost 6.4. This provided an opportunity to look at the area that would be affected by the project and to see the damaged existing roadway. Several attendees walked along the staked centerline and were also able to view the proposed locations for geotech borings that would occur later in the summer.

Meeting Minutes-A summary of the agenda items is provided below.

1. Introductions

The IDT meeting started with a round of introductions in which everyone identified themselves, their agency affiliation, and their role in the project. A meeting agenda handout was provided to attendees, along with several exhibits that included the following:

- A 30% design plan set showing the proposed project plan and profile. This document was included in the project's recently approved Design Report, and was used to help illustrate how the proposed project footprint would impact the land area in the alignment. The profile illustrated the cuts and fills that would be associated with the proposed alignment.
- A document summarizing federal agency roles and responsibilities for the two federal agencies based on past communications between the USFS and FHWA.
- A list of proposed discipline/specialist reports that would be prepared to satisfy both FHWA and USFS NEPA requirements
- A preliminary Purpose and Need document that summarizes the purpose and need of the proposed Index-Galena milepost 6.4 – Milepost 6.9 project.

In addition to the handouts, a large exhibit showing the approved alignment was hung on the wall. This is the exhibit that was also used at the May 31, 2011 public meeting.

2. Meeting Purpose

Following introductions, Crilly Ritz facilitated the meeting and initiated meeting discussion by stating that the primary purpose of the meeting was to formally initiate the NEPA process for the proposed Index-Galena Road Milepost 6.4-Milepost 6.9 project and that the primary objective of the meeting was to reach general agreement on what documentation would be prepared, and to identify the general framework for document preparation and submittal, and other processes. He identified that he would be the overall environmental contact /lead for the NEPA effort for Snohomish County. Eric Ozog, Realty Specialist with the USFS identified himself as the overall lead/contact for the USFS in providing support to the NEPA effort.

Trevin Taylor, Environmental Engineer with WSDOT Highways and Local Programs for the Northwest Region, stated that another key objective of the meeting would be to reach agreement that the approved alignment described in the Design Report is the preferred alternative. After a brief discussion regarding the alignment, the USFS and FHWA affirmed that the alignment described in the Design Report is the preferred alternative and that this will be the alternative that will be reviewed in all specialist/discipline reports prepared for the project.

3. Agency Roles and Responsibilities

Consistent with past determinations, FHWA will be the lead NEPA agency and the USFS will be a cooperating agency. FHWA will work with WSDOT to perform the NEPA tasks and approvals that will be required for NEPA approval of the project. These documents would be prepared to be consistent with FHWA and USFS requirements. As reports are prepared they will be submitted by Snohomish County to Trevin Taylor at WSDOT for internal 30-day WSDOT review. After WSDOT review, reports would be sent to FHWA and USFS for their review. Once reviewed by USFS and FHWA and needed revisions based on FHWA and USFS comments are incorporated, the reports would be finalized and would be available for public review.

After discussion of NEPA documentation levels, FHWA proposed that a NEPA Documented Categorical Exclusion (Doc CE) be the approach taken on the project. The USFS stated they would agree to a Doc CE provided FHWA has an appropriate CE category that is legally defensible. This documentation would provide the level of information required for FHWA to make a decision on approval of the proposed project and would also provide the level of documentation required by the USFS to determine Forest Plan consistency and make a decision on granting a roadway easement through a Letter of Consent. Sufficient documentation that complies with the requirements of both agencies would be combined with a rigorous public involvement strategy to keep the public and various stakeholders informed. It was decided that further discussion of NEPA documentation requirements would continue between FHWA and the U.S Forest Service after the IDT meeting. *After extensive inter-agency discussion subsequent to the IDT meeting, FHWA determined that a NEPA Environmental Assessment (NEPA EA) would be required for the project.

The USFS indicated that it also supported FHWA as the lead for Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) compliance, but that as the land manager for the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie

National Forest the USFS would want to coordinate on consultation such that Joe Neal, the Skykomish District Ranger would be identified as a contact person as part of the consultation process with Native American tribes. This would ensure that the USFS government-to-government responsibilities are carried out as part of the project. The USFS will perform the field survey for Section 106 and prepare documentation. It was determined that further clarification of specific tasks and other details associated with Section 106 consultation would be addressed in follow-up discussions by Trevin Taylor with Jan Hollenbeck, USFS Archaeologist and with Trent deBoer, archaeologist with WSDOT Highways and Local Programs.

4. Project Purpose and Need

The handout describing the project's purpose and need was reviewed briefly to determine if there was general agreement with the project purpose which states:

“The purpose of the proposed Index-Galena Milepost (MP) 6.4 to MP 6.9 project is to re-establish roadway connectivity to maintain essential travel. Essential travel includes re-establishing access for property owners with land holdings in the North Fork Skykomish River valley upstream from the town of Index, re-establishing vehicular access for emergency service providers to these properties, re-establishing public recreational access to the North Fork Skykomish River valley, and re-establishing administrative access for the U.S. Forest Service to manage their lands located in the Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest.”

There was general agreement on the project's purpose to re-establish roadway connectivity to maintain essential travel. Suggestions were made on minor text revisions. The purpose and need statement will be transmitted to both federal agencies for further refinement. Other elements of the Purpose and Need Statement that provide background information on the need for the project and a summary of the project description will also be refined as needed during project development as more complete information becomes available.

Break-A 15-minute break was taken prior to initiating the discussion of Specialist/Discipline Reports.

5. Specialist /Discipline Reports

Discussion of the proposed project design features occurred prior to starting discussion of the Specialist/Discipline Reports. The discussion included using the exhibit on the wall and the 30% design plans for illustration. Discussion of project design features was also interspersed during the discussion of individual specialist/discipline report requirements. Some of the key design features and issues are summarized below:

Design Speed-Current design calls for 40 MPH design speed. The posted speed would be 35, same as the existing road. **Roadway Cross-Section**-The roadway cross-section would have 11-foot driving lanes, 4-foot paved shoulders, and 4-foot filter strips for dispersed stormwater conveyance/quality treatment. The preferred alignment currently proposes 10% walls but may include a higher percentage to address USFS comments to reduce the project footprint to minimize the impacts on riparian reserves. The U.S.

Forest Service has Northwest Forest Plan standards and guidelines that direct that road construction impacts in riparian reserves areas be minimized through project design. Snohomish County will also check to see if there are other ways to reduce the footprint through additional design deviations from adopted roadway design standards. More will be known after geotechnical investigations occur later this summer about the extent of walls. **Removal of Roadway**-The existing damaged roadway would be removed as part of the project. The existing roadway alignment would be used for riparian restoration mitigation including re-vegetation where feasible. **Stormwater Conveyance/Treatment** One of the biggest challenges will be to disperse roadway stormwater runoff due to the project area topography. In addition to topography constraints, the project desires to avoid constructing stormwater ponds given the relatively pristine forested context of the project area and the visual impacts that would result from their installation. **Construction**-Staging areas are not known at this time. Their location will need to be identified and their location coordinated with the USFS to ensure that they are included in studies, and determine if a special use permit(s) would be necessary.

Specialist/Discipline Reports

A list of 14 reports was developed for the IDT meeting discussion. Following is the list with comments as applicable:

- 1.) **Geology and Soils** The project's geotech on-call consultant will prepare this report using both available background resources/mapping and specific onsite information based on field work and geotechnical investigations. They will use the FHWA/WSDOT template and guidance provided in the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM Manual).
- 2.) **Groundwater** Same as above.
- 3.) **Wetlands** To be prepared by SCPW Environmental Services staff biologists following guidance in WSDOT EPM manual. There is one large wetland located at the east end of the project that has extensive surface inundation/ponding early in the year. In addition, there are several seep/slope wetlands located along the alignment. These will be delineated and surveyed beginning in mid-July. Information generated in report preparation will also be used for preparing a Snohomish County Critical Areas Study and for Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permitting. Site conditions may dictate that all wetland mitigation occurs at an offsite mitigation bank. The project would develop mitigation consistent with regulations that require mitigation sequencing (avoid, minimize, compensate).
- 4.) **Floodplain** The intent is for County staff in the Surface Water Management (SWM) Division to prepare this report. This may change depending on staff availability. While the new roadway alignment is up and out of the floodplain, removal of the existing roadway occurs within the floodplain floodway and floodplain fringe. This report is expected to show net benefit by removing the roadway out of the floodplain. This document would also use information generated as part of the project's hydraulic analysis. The report will be prepared using the FHWA/WSDOT template and guidance provided in the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM Manual). The report's information will also be useful for the project's submittal for Snohomish County Flood Hazard Permit review/approval.

- 5.) **Surface Water** Same as above, the intent is for SWM to prepare this report but this may change. This document will be prepared using the FHWA/WSDOT template and guidance provided in the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM Manual). In addition to identifying streams in the project area, the report would identify the project's proposed flow control and water quality treatment that would mitigate for the project's impervious surface and associated runoff.
- 6.) **Water Quality** Same as above, with a greater focus on water quality.
- 7.) **Wildlife** At the suggestion of WSDOT/FHWA, the content that would have gone into the preparation of the Wildlife report as identified in the WSDOT EPM will be provided in the BA prepared for Section 7 ESA consultation and in a Wildlife specialist report that would be prepared following guidance requirements provided by the USFS. (*See BA related text under Other at the end of the meeting recap.*) The **Wildlife Specialist Report** will double coverage of Threatened and Endangered species that will be provided in the BA (this includes Grizzly Bear, Gray Wolf, Marbled Murrelet and Spotted Owl in addition to the usual fish species) and would cover **Forest Plan** species (includes discussion of Sensitive Species, Management Indicator Species, Terrestrial Survey to include Survey and Manage Species (mollusks), and Neotropical Migratory (Executive Order) species). A determination of consistency with the Forest Plan would need to be part of the report. The report would not need to provide viability and trend analysis. The BA would also cover critical habitats and Essential Fish Habitat.
- 8.) **Fish** Similar to Wildlife, this report would be a **Fish Specialist Report** prepared to follow USFS report guidelines rather than a report following WSDOT EPM requirements. In addition to covering ESA-listed and Forest Plan fish species, and a determination of consistency with the Forest Plan, this may be the best document in which to cover the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Objectives, and evaluations related to Riparian Reserves. These logistical details will need to be figured out as report preparation begins.
- 9.) **Vegetation** This report will be a Botany Specialist Report prepared to follow USFS report guidelines. The field work and report will be completed by the USFS. As of now there are no threatened and endangered species listed for the project area. Invasive plant management is one of the issues that will need to be addressed, potentially starting to treat invasive weeds prior to construction, to be consistent with the USFS 2005 Invasive Plant EIS. Other issues include re-vegetating with native species after the construction is completed on both the proposed new alignment and in the existing roadway alignment. The USFS recommended collecting seeds from native plants in the immediate vicinity and having a local nursery grow out the plugs; takes about a 1-year lead time.
- 10.) **Historic, Cultural & Archaeological Resources** The field survey and report preparation will be completed by USFS. Report preparation will need to comply with Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) reporting requirements. The project vicinity historically had a mining railroad followed by road on which the existing roadway alignment was constructed. In addition to mining there also has been historical logging. There are no recorded sites located in the roadway alignment. It is anticipated that there will be little to no cultural

resources located in the steep slope areas and that the greatest chance of finding cultural resources will be in the more level areas along and in proximity to the alignment. An **Area of Potential Effect (APE)** will be developed by SCPW relatively soon and will be coordinated between WSDOT/FHWA and USFS before submittal to SHPO and initiating Section 106 consultation with Native American tribes. SCPW will provide GIS shape files of the alignment to assist with the Cultural Resources work (and work in other disciplines). The proposed APE process discussed would have FHWA initiate the APE. Trent de Boer of WSDOT would coordinate with the USFS archaeologists Jan Hollenbeck and Carl Burdick to develop the list of tribes that would be consulted with as part of the Section 106 process. *The APE was circulated by WSDOT on August 22, 2011.

11.) Social and Economic (including Environmental Justice) SCPW will prepare this report according to WSDOT EPM guidelines. It is anticipated that filling out the *Social & Community Impacts Decision Matrix* located in Appendix G of the *WSDOT Local Programs Environmental Classification Summary Guidebook* will provide most of what is needed for Environmental Justice documentation. This could be supplemented with Census data information and other economic related information that is available. Recreation Tourism is one potential area to assess.

12.) Land Use (& Recreation) SCPW will prepare this report according to WSDOT EPM requirements and will coordinate closely with the USFS Recreation Specialist to ensure that all recreation issues are adequately addressed. Further USFS coordination would also occur to ensure that all Forest Plan land management allocation standards and guidelines, and other land use issues are identified and addressed. While there are no designated campgrounds or formally designated recreation areas along the roadway alignment there are some issues that will need to be addressed. These include informal dispersed campsites located in proximity to the existing roadway and proposed alignment, use of the river for whitewater rafting and kayaking, designation of a substantial portion of the project area as a Recommended Recreation River, and location of the road in relationship to future planned trail locations associated with the Wild Sky Wilderness. Sharon Love of FHWA determined that there are 4(f) issues due to the proximity of the proposed project to these potential and existing recreation features. The importance of these issues will need to be determined and the appropriate level of 4(f) documentation prepared to address the issues. (It was also noted that there could be 4(f) issues associated with historical cultural resources if any were found along the alignment). An adverse effect determination would require the project to evaluate alternatives that would avoid the effects in a feasible and prudent manner.

13.) Public Services and Utilities SCPW will prepare this report according to WSDOT EPM guidance. Utilities are not present in the project area but services such as fire and emergency services are provided to private landowners. Currently fire fighting and other emergency service providers are limited to using the Beckler River Road and Jack's Pass to access the upriver Index-Galena Road locations beyond the wash out. This access route has increased the response time , is

available only seasonally from late May to October, and is difficult for emergency vehicles to negotiate.

14.) Visual Quality SCPW will prepare this report according to the WSDOT EPM and will use technical resources available through its staff Senior GIS Analyst. SCPW will coordinate with the USFS to determine applicable USFS visual standards.

Other

Section 7 Endangered Species Act Consultation

SCPW will write a Biological Assessment (BA) to determine potential effect of the proposed project on listed, proposed and candidate, threatened or endangered species and their habitats. The County is preparing the BA on behalf of FHWA. The BA review by WSDOT and the Services will be facilitated by the FHWA ESA Webtool. WSDOT will work on facilitating USFS access to the webtool to enable USFS review of the document.

Environmental Commitments

Due to the length of the meeting, discussion did not occur on preparing an **Environmental Commitments** document. SCPW proposes to prepare a document that summarizes the environmental commitments that will be assumed by the project (mitigation, regulatory requirements, construction BMPS, etc.). This document would be prepared to be consistent with the WSDOT EPM guidance and supplemented as advised to reflect USFS requirements.

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