



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Idaho Division

File: NH-2390 (134)
NH-2390 (135)

3050 Lakeharbor Lane, Suite 126
Boise, Idaho 83703-6217
208-334-1843
Idaho.FHWA@fhwa.dot.gov

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May 2, 2008

Reply To: HFO-ID

Ms. Pamela K. Lowe, Director
Idaho Transportation Department
P.O. Box 7129
Boise, ID 83707

Attention: Roy Jost, Acting Environmental Section Manager

RE: US-93, I-84 to SH-25, Finding of No Significant Impact

Dear Ms. Lowe:

The FHWA has determined that the widening of US-93 in Jerome County, from I-84 to SH-25 will have no significant impact on the human or natural environment. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project has been made and is enclosed.

Our FONSI determination has been made in accordance with 23 CFR 771.121 and is based upon the September 14th, 2007, Environmental Assessment (EA) and supporting documentation, the Environmental Evaluation Summary attached to the FONSI, and the public input received.

Please send a notice of availability of the FONSI to affected Federal, State and local agencies.

Sincerely,

Ed Miltner
Bridge/Operations Engineer

Enclosure(s)

E-Mail cc: hartman, ingram, jperry, blanchard
ITD Ken Ohls, Connie Jones

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**MOVING THE
AMERICAN
ECONOMY**

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for

**US-93, I-84 to SH-25
JEROME COUNTY, IDAHO
Project No. NH-2390(134) & NH-2390(135)
Key No. 7800 & 7801**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that the Proposed Action (Project) will not have any significant impact on the human or natural environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the attached Environmental Assessment (EA), which has been independently evaluated by the FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the environmental issues and impacts of the proposed Project. It provides sufficient evidence for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope and content of the EA.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase transportation safety for all users and to increase roadway capacity. To improve safety along the corridor, the Proposed Action consists of widening US-93 along the Project corridor to four twelve foot through lanes, two lanes in each direction with a divided median. Each side of the roadway will have eight foot outside shoulders. The median will be sixteen feet and left-turn lanes will be constructed at intersections. Between the I-84 ramps and the future 500 South Road, three twelve foot through lanes in each direction will be constructed to accommodate the additional traffic in this portion of the corridor. Elements of the Proposed Action are discussed below:

- Modified Type III access control is the current standard for multilane highways. Under this current standard, access is limited to county roadways at one-half mile intervals. Access will be provided to properties that already have access onto US-93. In some locations access will be limited to right-in and right-out access to be consistent with the divided median. Frontage roads may be constructed as needed to access future development and to consolidate existing accesses. It is envisioned that these roads will be built and maintained by property developers and included in the County Planning and Zoning approval process.
- The right-of-way for the Proposed Action will generally be a minimum of 300 feet wide. There are a few locations where the right-of-way will be less in order to avoid impacting existing buildings or adjacent historic properties.
- There are various existing public road intersections with US-93. The Proposed Action will include improvements to the existing roadway intersections. It will also include consideration of future options to install

traffic signals at each of the public road intersections with US-93. Traffic signals may be installed when the level of service at intersections and signal warrant analysis confirms they are needed and funding is available.

- Improvements to the Eastern Idaho Railroad (EIRR) crossing will be made independently by the EIRR at the same time as the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) will be constructing highway improvements on US-93. ITD will coordinate with the EIRR during design to ensure that an improved railroad crossing is constructed that meets standards at time of design.
- The Proposed Action includes the construction of a paved shared use trail on the west side of the highway. No trail improvements are proposed north of the SH-25 intersection as part of this Project. The paved trail is proposed to be 20 feet in width and will meander along the west side of US-93.

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, it has been determined that the Proposed Action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human or natural environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). This finding is based on the following:

1. The finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the Proposed Action. The finding is based on evaluating the effects of the action based on technical studies performed in support of the EA; these were used as supporting information for Chapter 3 and are documented in that chapter of the EA.
2. There will be no significant effects on public health or safety. Within the project area, between the 200 South Road and the SH-25 intersection, the average fatal accident rate is above the statewide average. The deaths have been attributed to failing to yield and passing through the intersections. There were also a high number of rear end crashes and turning crashes that resulted in injuries but not death. As discussed in the EA, the traffic analysis demonstrates widening US-93 from two to four lanes will accommodate future traffic to 2030. Widening the roadway will reduce congestion and therefore reduce the potential for rear end crashes. The Proposed Action also includes a 12-16 foot wide median, and left and right turn lanes at intersections. These improvements will be designed in accordance with AASHTO design guidance and will improve safety by reducing rear-end, head-on, right-angle, and other types of crashes. In addition, the Proposed Action will incorporate Type III access control and restrict intersections to one-half mile intervals which will also improve traffic flow by controlling turning movements and minimizing conflict points along the corridor, which will further improve the safety of the roadway. Eight foot shoulders will be constructed which will provide a location for disabled vehicles to safely pull-off the highway. A separate shared-use path will provide a means for alternative modes of travel in the corridor and will reduce the potential for pedestrian and

bicycle related crashes. In addition, the existing Eastern Idaho Railroad crossing will be improved; therefore reducing the potential for train-vehicle crashes.

3. There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
 - Historic or Cultural Resources. The Proposed Action will have no significant impacts to historic or cultural resources along the corridor. They will be avoided, except for the linear sites that cross the corridor (canals and the railroad tracks). All impacts to cultural resources are considered a *No Adverse Effect* by the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and will not detract from the qualities that make them eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Park Lands. There are no park lands within the project corridor.
 - Agricultural and Farmlands (prime farmlands). The Proposed Action will require the conversion of 47.8 acres of agricultural land that has been designated as prime farmland. The U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service has indicated that these impacts are not significant. Agricultural productivity will not change.
 - Wetlands and Waters of the U.S. There are no jurisdictional wetlands within the Project corridor. However, the canals, laterals, and ditches are considered Waters of the U.S. as they eventually flow into the Snake River. A total of 45 square feet of non-jurisdictional wetlands will be impacted by the Proposed Action. Mitigation for impacting these 45 square feet of non-jurisdictional wetlands is the preservation of 500 square feet of fringe wetland area along Almo Creek in Cassia County (part of the Snake River Basin). FHWA has found that there is no practicable alternative for avoiding construction in the wetlands within the project limits, and that the Proposed Action includes all practicable measures to minimize harm to wetlands which may result from such use.

In addition, the Proposed Action will have no significant effects on surface water, floodplains, groundwater, and sole source aquifers. There are no natural streams, rivers, or 100-year floodplains in the Project area. The Proposed Action will temporarily impact irrigation canals, laterals, ditches and irrigation ponds. ITD will minimize these impacts by:

- Coordinating with land owners prior to construction, and
- Ensuring that all irrigation facilities will remain in operation during construction of the Proposed Action or be relocated prior to any disruption of an existing facility

The Proposed Action will not impact groundwater. The Project is located within the Eastern Snake River Plains Aquifer (ESRPA). As documented in the EA (see section 3.14 Water Resources), the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) has reviewed information provided by ITD for this project and has approved the Proposed Action.

- Wild and Scenic Rivers. There are no rivers within the project corridor.
 - Ecologically Critical Areas. There are no ecologically critical areas that will be impacted by the Proposed Action.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. The Proposed Action will displace one residence and possibly one business. They will be compensated in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Act. The Proposed Action does not result in any disproportionately effect to minority or low-income populations (Environmental Justice). Also, the Proposed Action is consistent with existing and planned land uses along the corridor and noise impacts are not significant. The Public Involvement process showed strong support for the project from local residents.
 - Existing and Planned Land Uses. The Proposed Action is consistent with Jerome County plans and the Jerome County Commercial Overlay Zone. A total of 54 acres of land will be acquired for additional right-of-way. Land uses will continue to change from largely agricultural uses to commercial and industrial uses; this conversion is consistent with Jerome County's re-zoning of the corridor as a Commercial Overlay Zone.
 - Noise. Increased traffic volumes will result in eight noise receptors to be at or exceed ITD noise criteria of 66 dBA.
 5. The effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The ITD has an established experience with similar projects involving this type of roadway reconstruction and widening project.
 6. The Proposed Action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects because the project is consistent with local and statewide transportation plans. The Proposed Action is not expected to have a substantial effect of the level or pattern of development outside of the project area and is consistent with the Jerome County Commercial Overlay Zone.
 7. The Proposed Action will not result in cumulative adverse impacts when considered in combination with other past or reasonably foreseeable actions. The Project addresses the need for reducing future congestion along US-93 and for increased safety.
 8. The Proposed Action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, structures, or objects list in or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places. Further, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office has agreed with FHWA's finding of *No Adverse Effect* for all cultural resources along the corridor that are impacted by the Proposed Action.
 9. Technical studies indicated that there are no threatened or endangered species or any critical habitat within the project corridor. FHWA has concurred that the

Proposed Action will have "no effect" on any of the currently listed Threatened & Endangered species as part of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (June 1, 2007 – see Appendix C of the EA).

10. The Proposed Action will not violate Federal, state, and local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.



Federal Highway Administration

5-2-08

Date