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REVISED **RECORD OF DECISION**

REHABILITATION OF THE GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD GLACIER NATIONAL PARK FLATHEAD AND GLACIER COUNTIES, MONTANA

Submitted Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332 (2) (c)
(and where applicable, 49 U.S.C. 303) by the
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Western Federal Lands Highway Division

1. DECISION

The Western Federal Lands Highway Division (WFLHD) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that the decision made in the March 2004 *Record of Decision, Rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun-Road* (referred to as the **WFLHD ROD**) has changed. The newly selected alternative is Alternative 3H. Alternative 3H is a hybrid of Alternative 2, *Priority Rehabilitation* and the previously selected course of action, Alternative 3, the *Shared Use Alternative*.

2. BACKGROUND

The WFLHD ROD was based on studies and analysis done by the National Park Service (NPS) for Glacier National Park (GNP or the Park). These include:

- The *Going-to-the-Sun-Road Rehabilitation Final Environmental Impact Statement* (NPS, June 2003, referred to as the **FEIS**) and
- The *Record of Decision, Rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun-Road* (NPS, November 2003, referred to as the **NPS ROD**).

Collectively, these documents will be referred to as the **NEPA Documents**.



The Rehabilitation of the Going-to-the-Sun-Road (GTSR) is being developed as part of the Park Roads and Parkways category of the FHWA Federal Lands Highway Program, which is financed by the Federal Highway Trust Fund. The NPS is the lead agency and WFLHD is a cooperating agency in addressing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for this road repair project. In addition to being a cooperating agency, WFLHD provides the NPS technical support and construction services, including the design and the construction of the proposed improvements.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The NEPA Documents evaluated four alternatives. Alternative 1, the Repair as Needed/No Action alternative, assumed no change in current rehabilitation efforts, visitor improvements, and mitigation. Rehabilitation was estimated to take 50 years under this Alternative. Alternatives 2 and 4 included similar rehabilitation efforts as Alternative 3 (the preferred alternative). The major difference between alternatives was implementation time and cost. Transit and visitor use improvements to mitigate impacts also varied by alternative due to the varying level of work occurring per year.

Alternative 2, *Priority Rehabilitation*, was estimated to take 20 years for selective rehabilitation, with no visitor development mitigation and limited improvements to visitor use facilities in comparison with Alternatives 3 and 4. Due to the duration for the entire reconstruction, there would be some continued road deterioration, potential loss of historic features, and potential damage to natural resources. Compared to Alternative 3, Alternative 2 included fewer visitor improvements, lacked an extensive visitor transit system, and was projected to have greater impacts to the local economy.

Alternative 3, *Shared Use*, was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS. Construction duration was based on balancing continued visitation on the road while allowing for the quickest repair possible. The estimated time for completion of the rehabilitation was 7 to 8 years. Alternative 3 was also identified as the environmentally preferred alternative (as defined in NEPA Section 101) in the NEPA Documents.

Alternative 4, *Accelerated Completion*, would complete the repairs as quickly as possible by suspending traffic. The projected time to complete repairs under this alternative was 6 to 8 years. It was not selected due to projected reduction in visitation and impacts to the local economy.

4. SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The selected course of action for the rehabilitation of the GTSR is Alternative 3H. However, in the March 2004 WFLHD ROD, Alternative 3 was selected. Due to a delay in available funding and potential changes in future funding, the timeframes associated with Alternative 3 cannot be obtained. With Alternative 3H, rehabilitation is scheduled to begin in 2007 or 2008, and complete restoration will take anywhere from 7 to 20 years, depending on funding levels.

However, WFLHD and the NPS, in partnership with local, state and federal officials, are committed to completing the GTSR repairs in the soonest time possible and as close to the 7 to 8 year duration associated with Alternative 3.

Chapter 2 of the FEIS describes the following features for all Alternatives: *Scheduling and Funding, Traffic Management, Transit Service During Rehabilitation, Operations and Maintenance, Visitor Use Improvements, and Mitigation*. Chapter 2 also lists actions common to all alternatives in the following categories: *Proposed Rehabilitation Work by Segment, Road Rehabilitation Techniques, Vegetation Management, Construction Staging During Rehabilitation, Material Sources, Traffic Management, Visitor Access During Construction, and Mitigation Measures*.

While Alternative 3H was not specifically identified as a separate alternative in the FEIS, the impacts associated with it were analyzed in the NEPA Documents, which were available for public comment. The rehabilitation and mitigation for Alternative 3H will be similar to Alternative 3 as described in the NEPA Documents. However, Alternative 3H differs from Alternative 3 primarily in scheduling and funding since the improvements may take longer than 7 to 8 years as the project's duration is dependent upon funding. Hopefully the duration will not be much longer than 7 to 8 years, but if funding levels are below levels needed for early completion, duration may near the 20-year timeframe associated with Alternative 2. Therefore, the selected Alternative 3H is a hybrid of Alternatives 2 and 3.

Like Alternative 3, Alternative 3H will include an expanded transit system during construction to reduce congestion and delays. The entire transit system will be similar to that described for Alternative 3, and it will be implemented as needed based on the level and intensity of construction activity over the duration of the project and the availability of funding.

Unlike Alternative 3, Alternative 3H has no pre-determined number of transit buses that will be obtained and operated. The number of buses obtained and used will be based on achieving a 30-minute maximum headway at the transit stops. Using this performance-based objective allows for flexibility to meet the transit needs associated with possible changes in funding levels and resulting project duration. The number of vehicles, size of vehicles, and number of stops will be designed to meet this 30-minute headway requirement.

WFLHD and the NPS are continuously making efforts to secure funding in hopes that the entire rehabilitation under Alternative 3H will be completed as close to 7 to 8 years, like Alternative 3. However, should funding be reduced to levels closer to Alternative 2, the sequencing of the rehabilitation will be established to address the priority needs for along the GTSR, as described for Alternative 2 in the FEIS.

The GTSR is a National Historic Landmark (NHL). As discussed in the FEIS (p.186) for Alternative 2, the deterioration associated with taking 20 years to complete the project could have moderate to major impacts on historical features that make up this road corridor. Therefore, historic properties are at greater risk of deterioration with possibly longer rehabilitation durations. If funding levels are reduced, the rehabilitation effort will be sequenced to focus on addressing the most critical needs as quickly as possible to mitigate any further deterioration of the road and its historic features. The effects to historic resources with

implementation of Alternative 3H will be between impact levels of Alternatives 2 and 3 as described in the FEIS. Overall, the project would still provide beneficial long-term impacts to rehabilitating the historic features of the GTSR.

The total cost of Alternative 3H will be similar to Alternative 3. However, rising fuel costs and inflation will very likely increase this total estimate of the rehabilitation.

The net annual economic impact for Alternative 3H will be somewhere between the impacts for Alternatives 2 and 3, depending on the overall duration of the entire rehabilitation. With the changes in the spring suspension dates from mid June to July 4 as summarized in the NPS ROD, the net annual economic impact for Alternative 3H will range between \$5.6 million per year as associated with Alternative 3 to \$5.2 million per year as associated with Alternative 2. For each year the construction period is extended, the estimated \$5.2 to \$5.6 million per year impact will still occur. This estimated impact is not adjusted from 2003 for fuel and inflation cost increases.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

As summarized in the NPS ROD, Alternative 3 is still the environmentally preferred alternative. However, because of delays in funding and uncertainty of future funding levels, Alternative 3 cannot be achieved with any certainty. Subsequently, Alternative 3H is selected as it most closely resembles the features and mitigation of Alternative 3, and it will be implemented in the shortest duration possible as funding allows.

5. MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

The NPS ROD summarizes the measures to minimize harm for the rehabilitation. With the selection of Alternative 3H, WFLHD concurs with all measures except for some modification to the transit. The NPS ROD states that the transit system will consist of 14 vehicles operating at 30-minute intervals and serving approximately 17 stops along the road.

Like Alternative 3, Alternative 3H will implement an expanded transit system during construction to reduce congestion and delays and impacts to visitors and businesses. The entire transit system will be similar to that described for Alternative 3, and it will be implemented as needed based on the level and intensity of construction activity over the duration of the project and the availability of funding.

Unlike Alternative 3, there is no pre-determined number of transit buses that will be obtained and operated with Alternative 3H. The number of buses obtained and used will be based on achieving a 30-minute maximum headway at the transit stops. Using this performance-based objective allows for flexibility to meet the transit needs associated with possible changes in funding levels and resulting project duration. The number of vehicles, size of vehicles, and number of stops will be designed to meet this 30-minute headway requirement.

6. CONCLUSION

Alternative 3H provides the best balance of meeting the project need and objectives as described in the NEPA Documents in the best manner possible given uncertain funding levels. This has been determined after thorough review and assessment. The analysis described in this document, together with the analysis previously summarized in the NEPA Documents, adequately and accurately addresses the need, environmental issues and impacts of the proposed project (per 40 CFR 1500-1508; 23 CFR 771.127, et al.). It has also been determined that the NEPA Documents provide a full evaluation of the potential effects of Alternative 3H since it is a hybrid of Alternatives 2 and 3, with a corresponding blend of features and impacts. This revised decision incorporates all practicable measures to minimize environmental harm that could result from implementation of the selected action, given potential variations in funding.

The revised decision has been made in cooperation with the NPS, the lead agency on this project. WFLHD and GNP will continue to work in cooperation to ensure all applicable regulations are met.

Per CFR 771.127 (b), this revised ROD will be sent to the same parties who received the FEIS. Additional public newsletters and public or agency meetings will be issued or conducted as needed.

Based on the above information, WFLHD selects Alternative 3H for rehabilitation of the GTSR.


RECOMMENDED BY:



Terri L. Thomas
Environmental Manager

9/15/06
Date

APPROVED BY:



Daniel D. Donovan, Acting Division Engineer
Western Federal Lands Highway Division
Federal Highway Administration

9.15.2006
Date