

Bonnerr's Ferry US 95 South Hill Report



December 2014

Project Partners

Sonoran Institute
LOR Foundation
Boundary Economic Development Council (BEDC)
Project for Public Spaces
Charlier Associates
Alta Planning + Design

Project Participants

Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)
Idaho Smart Growth
Idaho Walk Bike Alliance
City of Bonners Ferry staff and residents

About New Mobility West

New Mobility West (NMW) provides communities across the Rocky Mountain West with the tools and resources necessary to become stronger, more prosperous places through building smarter transportation systems. NMW offers technical assistance to communities in this region looking to generate real, on-the-ground progress with targeted issues and opportunities at the nexus of transportation planning and community development. Beyond their local impact, these assistance projects create models that inform and inspire smart transportation and land use throughout the region.

This report is the product of a collaborative effort between NMW team members and the partner community that was selected for technical assistance through the program. It provides an overview of the project's goals, process, outcomes and recommended next steps.

NMW is an initiative administered by the Sonoran Institute, a non-profit organization that inspires and enables community decisions and public policies that respect the land and people of western North America. Information about the New Mobility West technical assistance program can be found at www.newmobilitywest.org/community-assistance



BOMMINERS FERRY

Project Background & Purpose

- 1.1 Project Background
- 1.2 Project Purpose

1.1 Project Purpose

New Mobility West Project

Goals & Objectives

The Boundary Economic Development Council (BEDC) applied for assistance through the New Mobility West program to develop a plan to address the following goals and objectives in the South Hill area of Bonners Ferry (See Figure 1.1).

Plan Goals

- Improving pedestrian safety and access
- Relieving congestion, potentially by improving local access and circulation or by shifting trips to walking or biking
- Maintaining the small town character of the city.

The project focused on the following objectives:

Plan Objectives

- Laying the groundwork for a productive relationship and partnership between the City of Bonners Ferry and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD).
- Identifying opportunities to improve access and circulation in the local areas through which Highway 95 passes.
- Identifying opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and access along the corridor, with a focus around the middle and high schools.

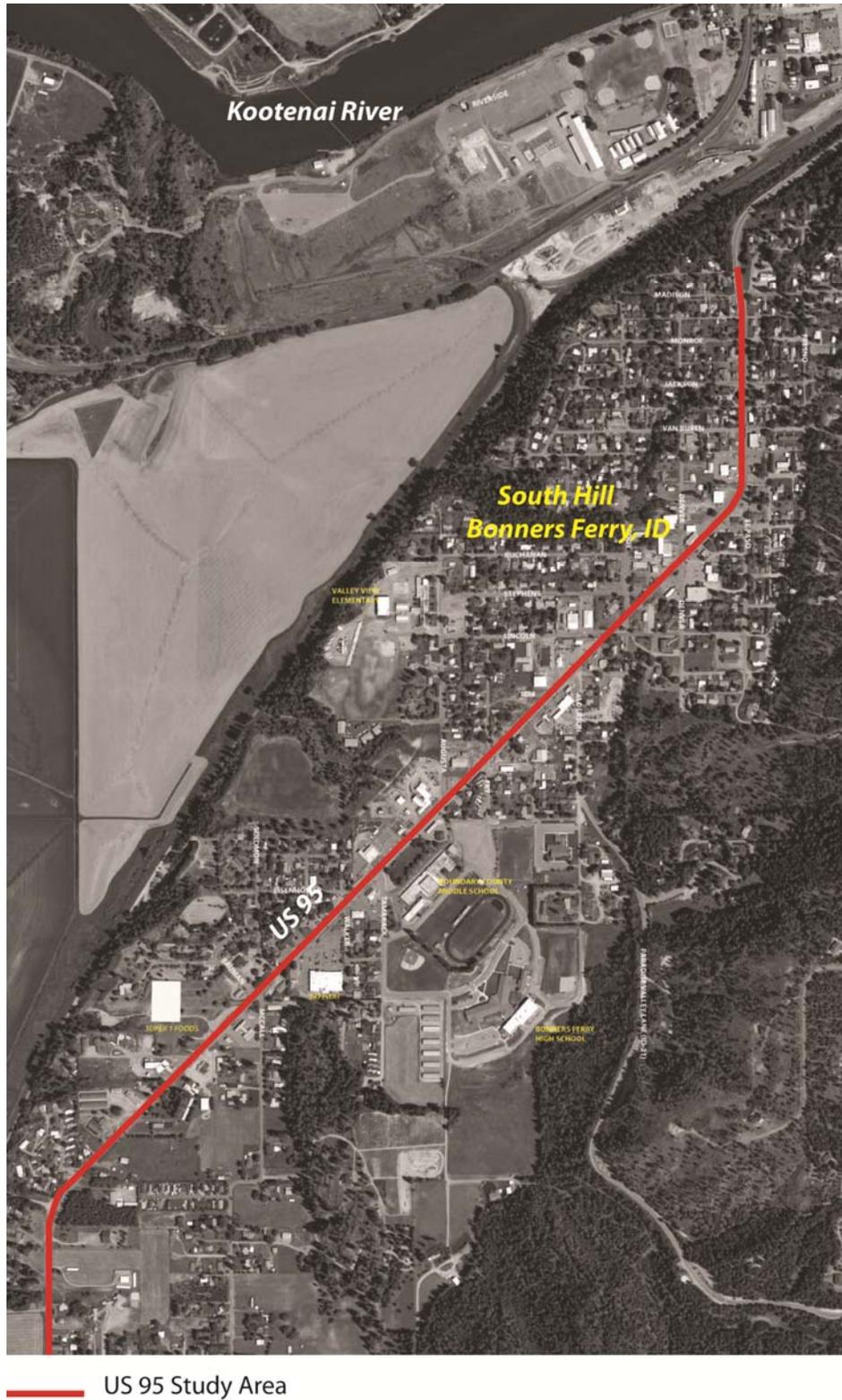


Figure 1.1 – US 95 / South Hill Study Area, Bonners Ferry, ID

Key Activities

Representatives of the Sonoran Institute, the Project for Public Spaces, Charlier Associates, and Alta Planning + Design, in conjunction with the BEDC and the city of Bonners Ferry, held a 2.5 day site visit (October 20th-22nd) to meet the BEDC's goals and objectives. The report summarizes all activities and lays out the plan.

Activities during that time are identified in Figure 1.1. Attendance at all events was quite good, with 15-25 people at all activities. Attendees are listed in Appendix A.

Report Components

The activities identified in Figure 1.2 directly informed the development of this plan. The report includes the following chapters:

Background, History & Purpose (Chapter 1). This identifies past planning efforts, as well as the purpose and activities undertaken as a part of this planning effort.

Issues & Opportunities (Chapter 2). Based on the discussions from the Walk Audit and in Working Sessions 1 and 2, this chapter identifies key issues and opportunities for meeting the project goals – improving pedestrian safety and access, relieving congestion, and maintaining the small town character.

Recommendations (Chapter 3). This chapter contains the team's recommendations for (a) a strategic approach to US 95 and (b) improving community network connectivity.

Next Steps / Action Plan (Chapter 4). This chapter presents a matrix of short-, medium-, and long-term actions that Bonners Ferry can take to move forward with successful projects on US 95 and in the South Hill area.

Site Visit Activities

- Walk Audit
- Community Kick-Off Workshop
- Site Tour
- Working Session #1 – Objectives & Expectations
- Working Session #2A - Issues + Solutions: Vision for Highway 95/Main Street
- Working Session #2B – Issues + Solutions: Walking, Biking, and Connectivity on Highway 95/Main Street
- Working Session Debrief
- Closing Open House + Team Presentation

Figure 1.2. Site Visit Activities

1.2 Project Background

Planning History

Over the last two decades, there have been several planning efforts examining transportation in Bonners Ferry along US 95 and in the South Hill area (see *Figure 1.2* next page). The key studies are:

- 2002 *Connection: Strategic Development System for Bonners Ferry* by Tom Hudson Company.
- 2009 *City of Bonners Ferry Transportation Plan* by David Evans & Associates.
- 2013 US 95 Corridor Study by ITD

Key findings and recommendations of these studies are listed in *Figure 1.3*.

Key Findings / Recommendations

- US 95 underpass from casino to downtown (2002)
- Two-way center turn lane + sidewalk on one side in South Hill (2002)
- Create median sanctuaries at crosswalks (2002)
- No bypass needed (all)
- Vehicle Level of Service (LOS) is good along the highway, and will remain so (2013)
- Vehicle LOS is poor on side streets (2009/2013)

Figure 1.3. Past planning efforts – key findings

Current ITD Project

For the current planning and construction effort, ITD has approximately \$5.4 million earmarked for US 95 for a 2018 construction date. The initial project identifies a full rebuild of US 95 from just south of LaBrosse Hill Street north to Madison Street, and a full width mill and inlay from Madison to US 2.

There is a short timeframe for the community to get involved and help ITD determine the final direction of the project. The Boundary Economic Development Council (BEDC) should continue to serve as the point of contact with ITD, keeping up with the process and asking to review and comment on the project charter.

The key decision to make at the moment is a preferred cross-section. ITD currently is proposing a “tight” 3-lane cross-section (40’ curb-to-curb, 6’ sidewalk on east side), based on the 2003 construction from Walker Lane to Alderson Lane. The recommended cross-section (see Chapter 3), expands on this cross-section, but will require the acquisition of additional right-of-way, a process that will have impacts on private businesses along US 95.



Issues & Opportunities

2.1 Issues

2.2 Opportunities

Table 2.1. Community Identified Issues

Location #	Identified Issue
1	<p>These are all <i>general issues</i> related to the corridor.</p> <p>US 95 Bypass. A bypass of the South Hill area of Bonners Ferry would remove pass-through traffic from the current highway corridor, but would do little to benefit local circulation, especially given that most traffic through the corridor is local. A bypass would be much more costly than reconstruction of the existing corridor (by at least an order of magnitude) and there is no reasonable expectation that much funding could be brought to bear on such a project anytime soon.</p> <p>Local Connectivity and Access. Side streets in South Hill experience congestion at the intersections with US 95. This is due to the incomplete, local street network, the lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the presence of offset intersections and angled intersections that result from a diagonal corridor crossing a rectilinear local network.</p> <p>Future Commercial Development. The community is seeking advice about whether additional commercial development along the corridor should be encouraged in the South Hill area, or whether it would make sense to encourage future development to locate further south along the corridor.</p>
2	<p>Right-of-way acquisition. A US 95 cross-section with 3-lanes + planting strip + sidewalks would require more width and acquiring land.</p>
3	<p>Driveways / access management. There are a significant number of driveways along US 95 for local business access. There is a need to consolidate access to reduce side-street congestion and improve safety.</p>
4	<p>School traffic issues. Local traffic and school bus circulation related to the schools in South Hill is affected by the incomplete local street network, which forces local school access trips through the congested intersections and onto US 95.</p>
5	<p>New development. A new subdivision has been proposed in the area and there is no plan yet for how subdivision streets would be laid out or connected into the local network.</p>
6	<p>Roadway Geometry. The intersection of the side streets with US 95 often occurs at an angle, making safe and confident navigation of the roadway difficult for all users.</p>
7	<p>Stormwater drainage. Stormwater drainage must be addressed throughout the corridor. Open ditches (rural cross section) along US 95 are a safety hazard. In some areas the highway drains onto adjacent sidewalks. There are no provisions for collection or treatment of surface flows from the highway, with possible water quality implications for the Kootenai River.</p>
8	<p>US 95 crossings. The layout and design of current pedestrian crossings along US 95 discourages walking and presents safety hazards for pedestrians, an issue of heightened importance around the school campuses.</p>

2.2 Opportunities

Along with the issues discussion, community members also identified a number of opportunities presented by a US 95 project. These opportunities are identified by number in Figure 2.2 below and discussed in greater detail in Table 2.2 on the following page.

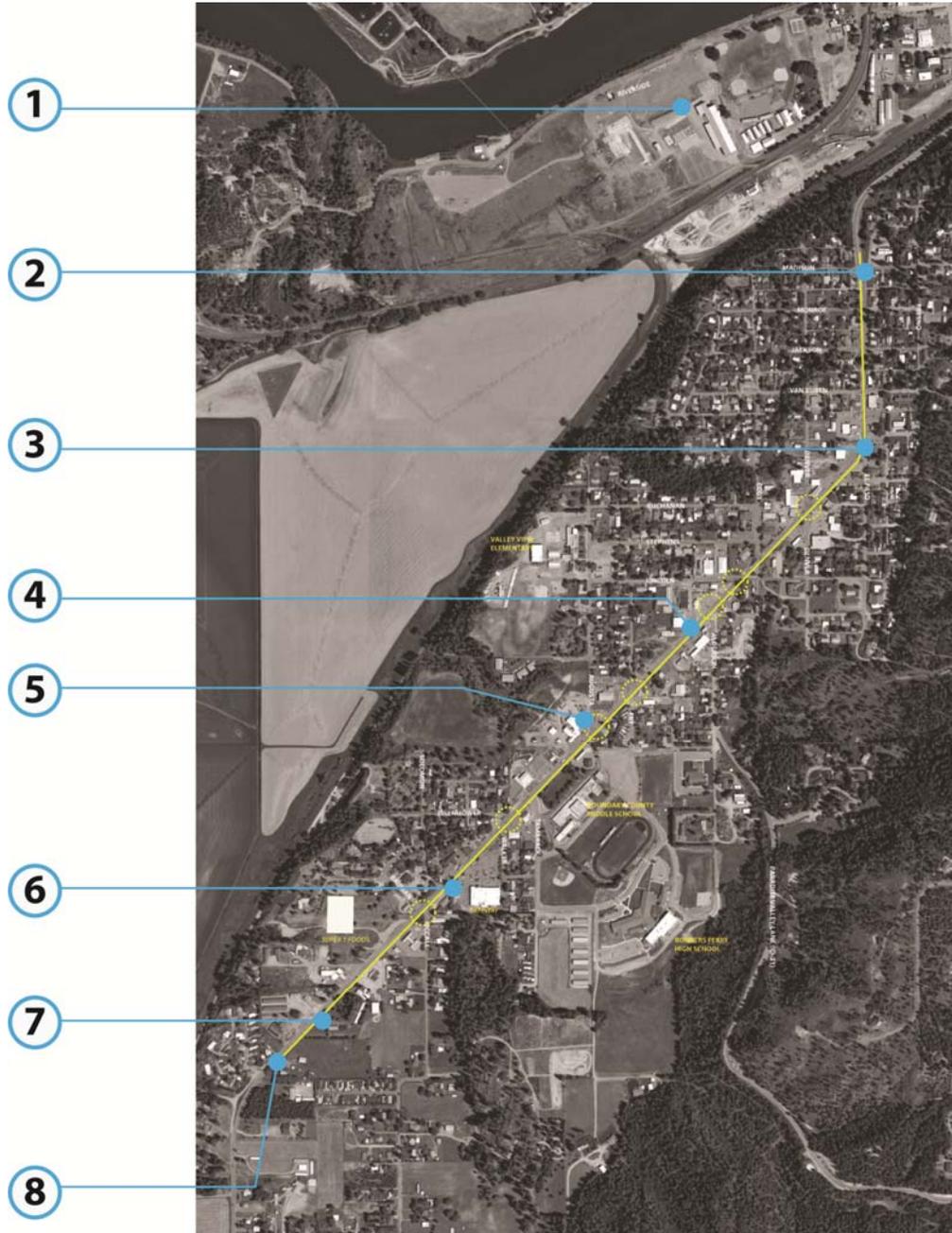


Figure 22. Identified Opportunities

Table 2.2. Community Identified Opportunities

Location #	Identified Opportunities
1	<p>These are all <i>general opportunities</i> related to the corridor.</p> <p>Visually pleasing. Developing a consistent cross-section with curb and gutter, new pavement, additional sidewalks, lighting, and plantings would make the corridor more attractive.</p> <p>Consumer-friendly retail. Retail establishments in the corridor could be made more customer-friendly by providing for access by all modes and by providing left turn access throughout the corridor.</p>
2	<p>US 95 Crossings. Improved crossings make active transportation an easier choice. An overcrossing near Jefferson or Madison could also serve as gateway treatment while providing a safe crossing for residents (especially kids) to access the city pool.</p>
3	<p>Cross-section / Separation from traffic. A consistent cross-section (see Section 3.1) with a planting strip/furnishings zone for light poles and other vertical infrastructure would improve safety and appearance of the corridor.</p>
4	<p>Driveways / access management. Reducing the number of driveways and consolidating driveways would improve safety while reducing congestion/queuing.</p>
5	<p>Roadway geometry. Where possible, reorient angled intersections to meet US 95 at a right angle, and realign streets to form four-way intersections, improving safety and circulation.</p>
6	<p>Support active transportation / New sidewalks & crosswalks. Adding new sidewalks & crosswalks could improve walking and bicycling conditions, making it easier and safer to support and choose active transportation in the community.</p>
7	<p>Stormwater drainage. A new US 95 project could provide the opportunity to update stormwater drainage throughout the corridor through piping the drainage and burying open ditches (rural cross section) along US 95.</p>
8	<p>Gateway treatments. Gateway treatments would be possible through this project and could serve as an identifier for Bonners Ferry as well as a transition from a rural highway to a Main Street.</p>



Recommendations

3.1 Strategic Approach to US 95

3.2 Community Network Connectivity

3.1 Strategic Approach to US 95

Key Elements

There are three key elements to the strategic approach to US 95. Those elements are:

- Working with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) on the proposed 3-lane cross section of US 95 in the South Hill area
- Continue working on the long-term bypass concept
- Addressing local connectivity in South Hill (Section 4.2)

Working with ITD

Following a public process in 2002, ITD installed an approximately 1/2-mile section of new roadway and sidewalk for US 95. That portion of US 95 was installed within the existing right-of-way of 50'. The cross-section is shown in Figure 3.1.

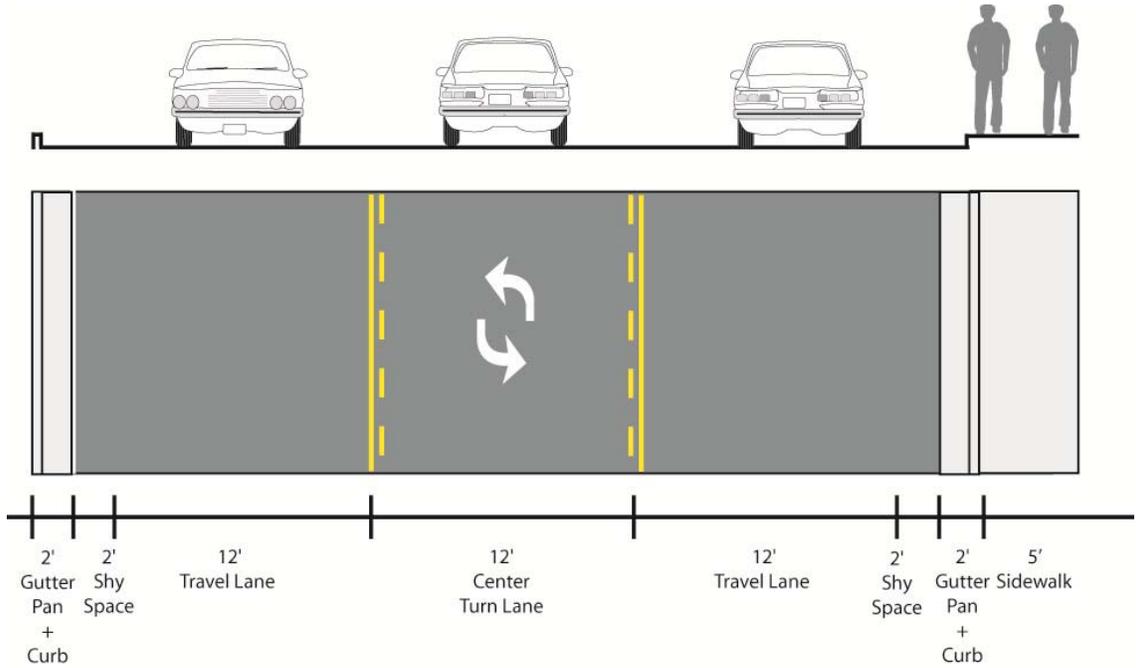


Figure 3.1. US 95 cross-section: Walker Lane – Alderson Lane

For the current planning and construction effort, ITD has approximately \$5.4 million earmarked for US 95. The initial project would provide a full rebuild of US 95 from just south of LaBrosse Hill Street north to Madison Street, and a full width mill and inlay from Madison to US 2.

There is a short timeframe prior to final design for the community to get involved and help ITD determine the final direction of the project. The Boundary Economic Development Council (BEDC) should continue to serve as the point of contact with ITD, keeping up with the process and asking to review and comment on the project charter.

Suggested local requests for inclusion in the project charter are identified in Figure 3.2, with the recommended cross-section identified in Figure 3.3. All of the requests are designed to make Highway 95 easier and safer to navigate for all roadway users. It should be noted that the recommended cross-section would require the acquisition of additional right-of-way (approximately 10 feet) along US 95.

Suggested Local Requests

- 11' through lanes – not 12'
- 12' two-way left turn lane
- Bury storm water drainage, close ditches
- Planting strip between sidewalk & highway
- Good sidewalks (at least 6' wide) – both sides
- Crosswalks at key locations
- Reconfigure as many angled intersections as possible

Figure 3.2. Suggested local requests

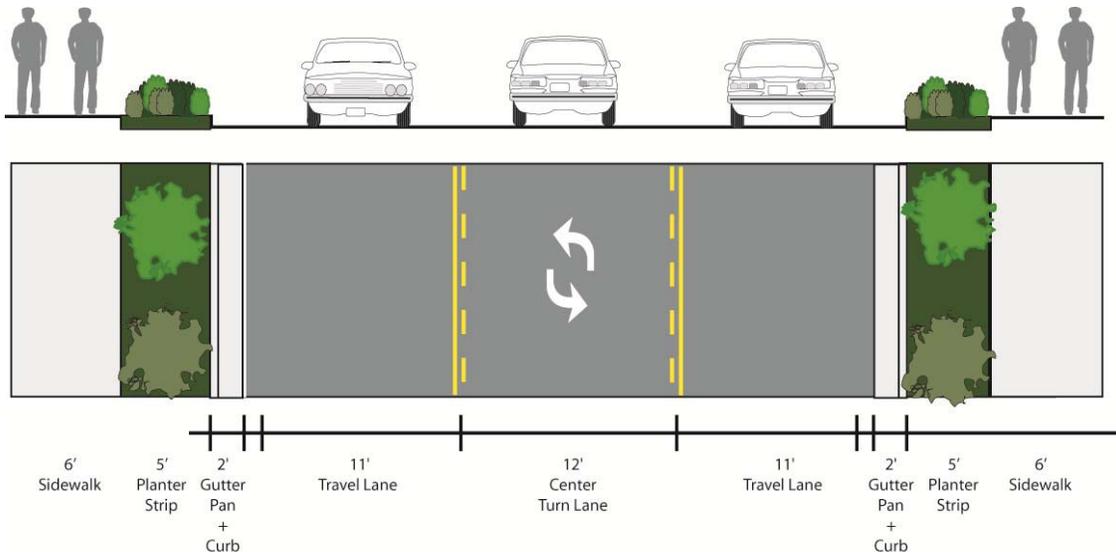


Figure 3.3. Recommended cross-section for US 95

Bypass Option

The latest US 95 Corridor studies all show that traffic levels and operations on US 95 do not support the need for a bypass. Looking out at 2031, vehicle movement along US 95 never reaches a critical congestion level, based on current traffic models. However, there are several strong arguments in favor of eventually building a bypass, as noted in Figure 3.4.

Route redundancy. Providing additional routes for local and regional circulation is desirable. One of the major issues (addressed further in Section 3.2) is the lack of local network connectivity. Residents have to use the highway to get everywhere. In addition, there is currently a single river crossing, which presents safety and homeland security issues. Providing an additional route for through traffic would decrease delays on the local streets and intersections with US 95.

Emergency Service Access. Currently, a crash or other emergency event anywhere along US 95 seriously hampers the ability of vehicles to move along the corridor and through town. In addition, with only one route through the area, emergency services can be impeded from reaching the site of accidents.

International corridor. The US 95 corridor serves as a vital connection to CAN 95 and CAN 93, important routes into British Columbia and Alberta.

Business Impacts. A bypass will provide relief to traffic flow on US 95, making it easier to access local businesses. However, a bypass may also draw some visitors away from the South Hill in Bonners Ferry if they choose to utilize a bypass.

Truck Route. A bypass would provide a dedicated truck route, improving safety and traffic flow through the South Hill on US 95.

Bypass Considerations

- Route redundancy
- Emergency service access & circulation
- International corridor (NAFTA, etc.)
- Business impacts
- Truck route

Figure 3.4. Bypass Considerations

3.2 Community Network Connectivity

Key Elements

As noted in the previous section, the third element in the strategic approach is to address local connectivity in the South Hill area. There are three significant ways in which Bonnors Ferry can address local connectivity:

Increased local circulation

Additional local street and/or trail connections would provide additional routes for residents to use through the South Hill, relieving traffic impacts on US 95 while making it safer and easier to navigate through the neighborhood.



Enhanced highway crossings

Adding crossing improvements to existing and proposed highway crossings would make it easier and safer for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross US 95. In addition, enhanced crossings would make pedestrians more visible to motorists on US 95.



Wayfinding route signage

Adding wayfinding route signage would benefit visitors and residents alike by identifying bicycle and pedestrian routes through South Hill that do not require the use of US 95.



Increased local circulation

Increased local circulation provides more route options for all roadway users, whether they are traveling by vehicle, on bike, or on foot. Figure 3.5 identifies recommended local connections that will improve local network connectivity. Completing the connections in local network gaps on both the east and west side of the highway, allowing residents to complete many more trips without using US 95 as a part of that trip if desired.

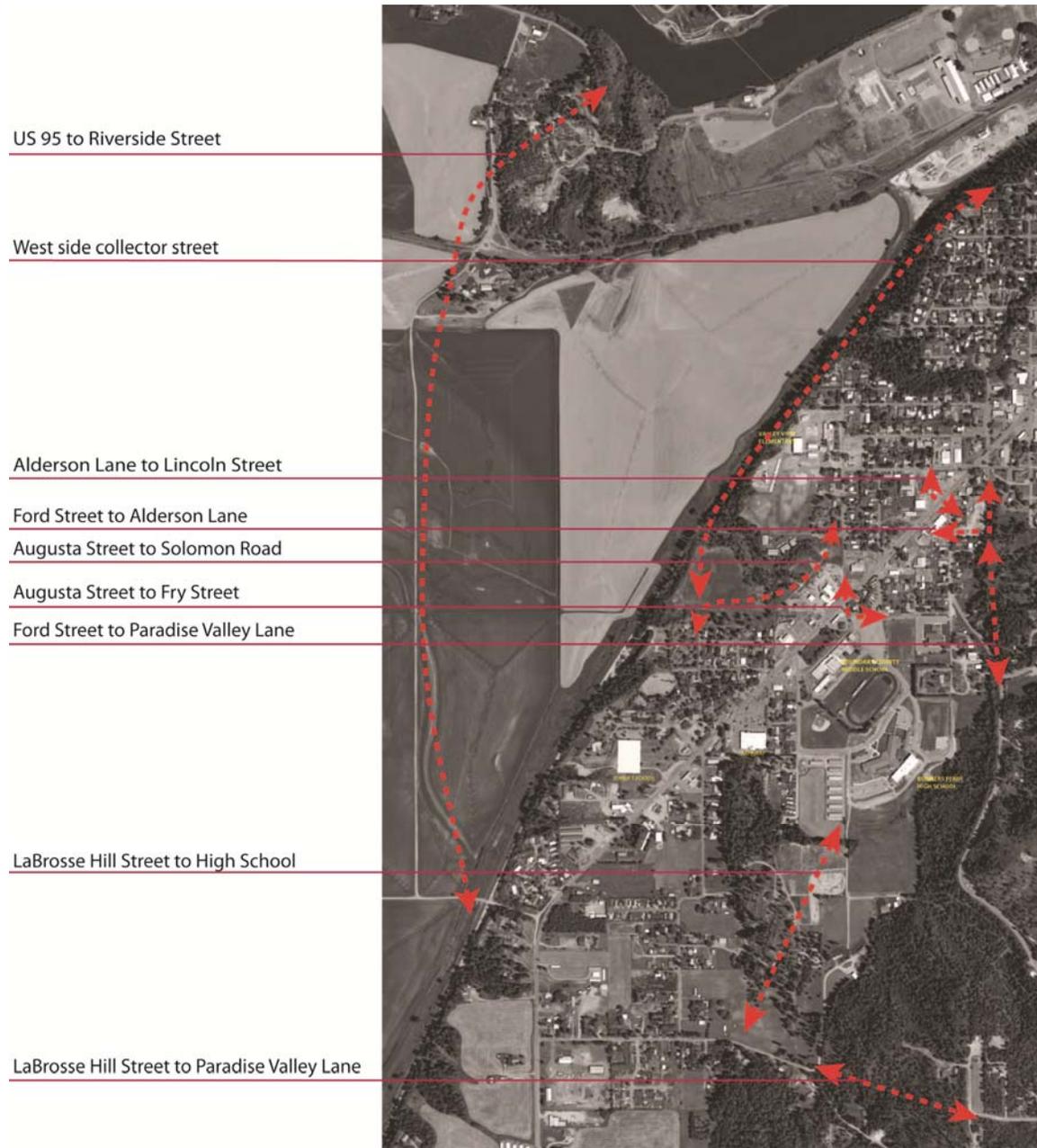


Figure 3.5. Recommended local network connections

Enhanced highway crossings

In addition to the lack of local street connectivity, crossing the highway can be difficult at times. It is recommended that additional enhanced crossings of the highway be installed (blue circles), or upgraded (red circles) along with the new US 95 project. Recommended locations are shown in Figure 3.6, with further detail provided in Table 3.1 on the following page.

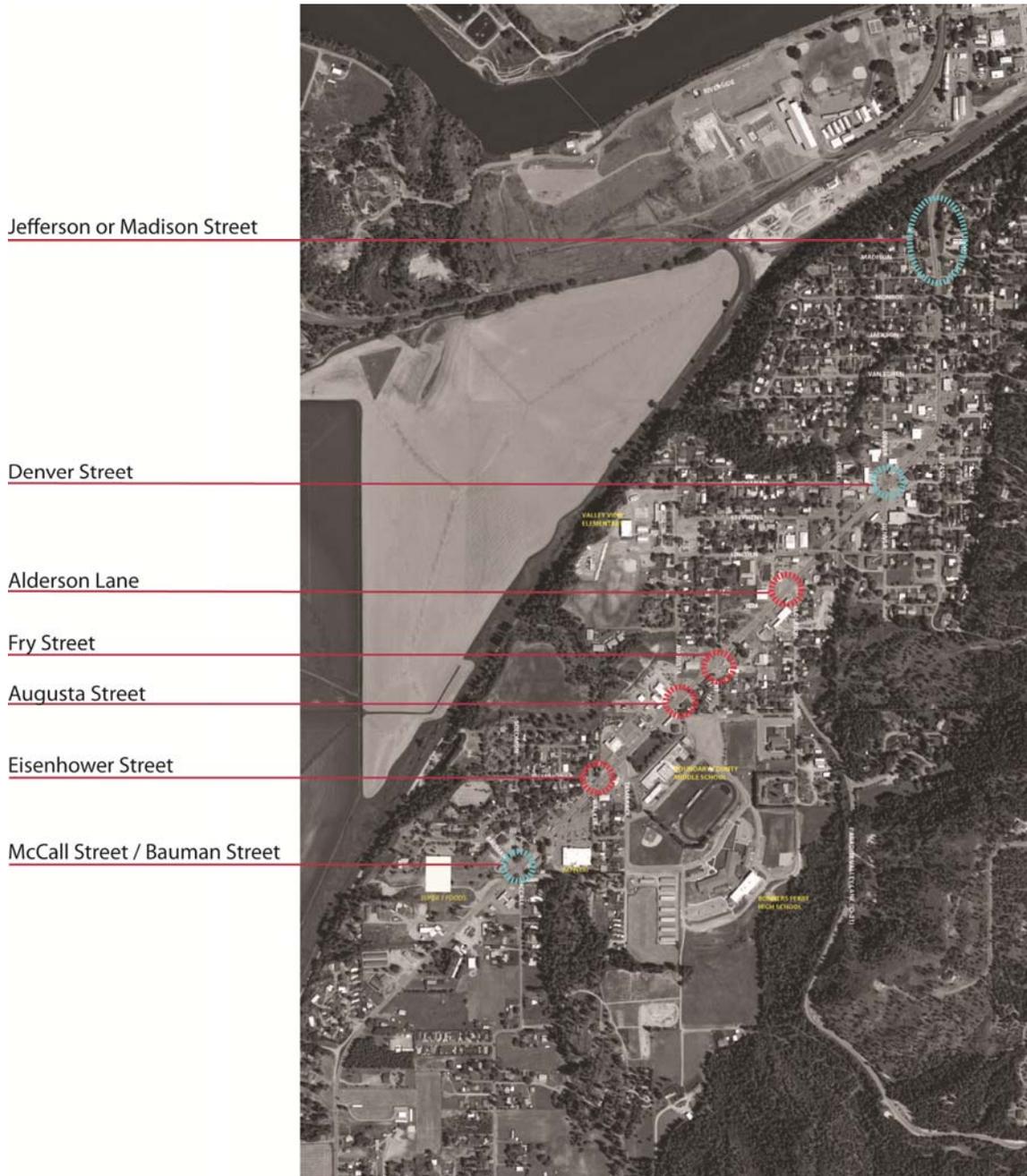


Figure 3.6. Recommended enhanced highway crossings

Table 3.1 Enhanced highway crossings

Intersection	Recommendation
Jefferson / Madison Street	Install a pedestrian overpass of US 95 connecting the east and west side of US 95 in an area where at-grade crossings are difficult. Will provide a critical connection between the residents west of the highway with the city pool and other destinations east of the highway.
Denver Street	In the long-term, options should be explored if Denver is extended south to the potential housing development. Options range from full signalization to a marked and striped crosswalk.
Alderson Lane	In the short-term, the existing crosswalk should be re-painted as a high-visibility crosswalk. In the long-term, full signalization should be explored if the roadway is extended to connect with Lincoln Street. Any roadway extension will require the acquisition of private property to complete.
Fry Street	Re-paint the crosswalk as high-visibility crosswalk with advanced stop bar.
Augusta Street	In the short-term, replace the existing flashing pedestrian crossing with a pedestrian activated rapid rectangular flashing beacon (RRFB). In the long-term, explore full signalization of this intersection if Augusta Avenue is ever extended south.
Eisenhower Street	Re-paint the crosswalk as a high-visibility crosswalk with advanced stop bar.
McCall Street / Bauman Street	Install a rapid rectangular flashing beacon (RRFB).



RRFB with marked crosswalk



A high-visibility crosswalk with advanced stop bar

Wayfinding route signage

In developing a more robust local network, installing thoughtful wayfinding signage along local streets serves multiple purposes. Wayfinding signage can:

- Direct local and regional bicyclists and pedestrians along low-traffic streets, reducing stress and improving safety
- Indicate to all roadway users that bicyclists are welcome and may be on the road
- Serve as a directional/advertising tool, indicating to roadway users what is nearby

Figure 3.7 identifies potential routes for wayfinding signs, as well as sample wayfinding signs.

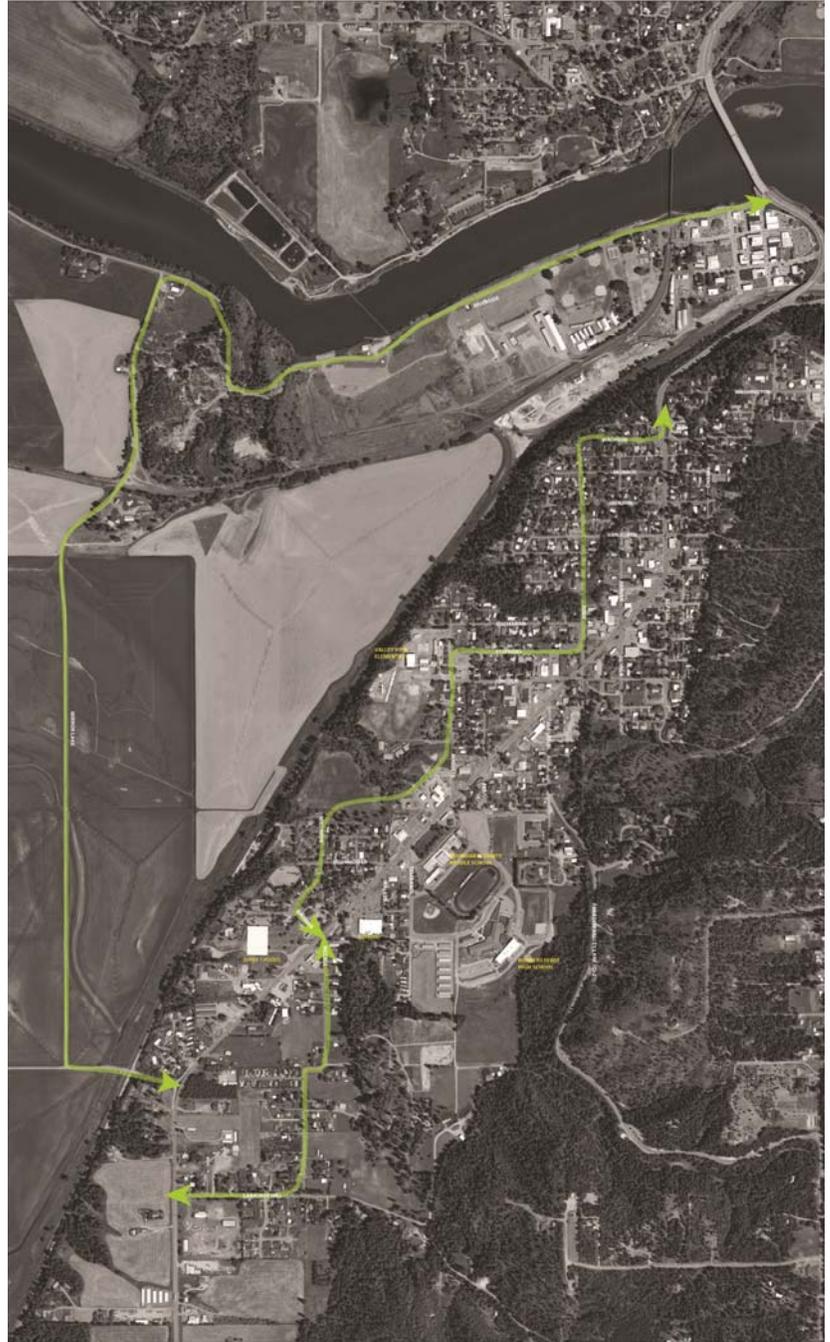


Figure 3.7. Proposed wayfinding routes

A group of people are seated in a meeting room, facing towards the right. The room features large windows in the background, through which bright light is streaming. An American flag is visible on the left side of the room. The participants are seated in blue chairs with metal frames. In the foreground, a man in a dark vest and light-colored shirt is seen from the back, gesturing with his hand. To his right, a desk holds a printer, a box, and some papers. The overall atmosphere is that of a formal meeting or presentation.

Next Steps

4.1 Next Steps

4.1 Next Steps

Table 4.1 outlines the short-(1-3 months), medium- (3-6 months), and long-term (6-12 months) steps that the Bonners Ferry community needs to consider to continue moving the ITD US 95 project forward.

Table 4.1. Next Steps

Step / Decision	Time-frame	Action Step
Acquisition of right-of-way (ROW)	Short	Determine the comfort level with acquiring right-of-way along US 95. Acquiring right-of-way allows for a broader cross-section and greater separation for pedestrians from vehicle traffic. Will have private property impacts. Discussions should include impacted property owners along the corridor.
Preferred cross-section	Short	The community should provide a formal statement of support for their preferred cross-section. This report recommends a 3-lane cross-section with planting strips and sidewalks on both sides that relies on a wider ROW. ITD has a cross-section that will fit within the existing ROW.
Comment on Project Charter	Short	Provide community-supported comments to ITD on the project charter regarding the proposed US 95 corridor project.
Intersection improvements	Medium	Working with ITD and community members, identify the key intersections for improvement, and prioritize those intersections. Determine which intersections (if any) could be closed along the corridor.
Side street delay	Medium	Determine how much vehicle delay on the side streets is acceptable to the community
Maintaining traffic through construction	Medium / Long	Working with ITD and community members, identify key methods/routes for maintaining two-way traffic, pedestrian traffic and crossings and business and school accesses during construction
Access Management	Medium / Long	Determine which driveways can be narrowed, eliminated or combined through collaborative discussion with ITD and private property owners.
Pedestrian-crossing improvements	Medium / Long	Determine (a) the key locations for pedestrian-crossing improvements and (b) the appropriate crossing treatments for the high-activity crossings. See Section 3 for crossing recommendations.
Bypass Feasibility	Long	Working with ITD and the community, determine the feasibility of a US 95 bypass.