

Winter 2022 Virtual Public Meeting - Questions & Answers

The following are answers and replies to questions and comments asked from the public (in bold) at the virtual public meeting held on January 25, 2022, all broken out into themes:

Safety

I would hope that safety would be a priority in decision making- in using and working on the pass since 1980- I believe that we are running on luck when it comes to traffic- recreation- wildlife and overall use

Safety definitely is a top priority for our study and there are a range of options that we will recommend to make the highway corridor safer for all users

How are you planning on making the pass safer?

As this study focuses on suggested safety improvements along with mitigating congestion along the highway, just some, not all, of the measures that the study will recommend to make the Pass and highway corridor safer include lessening congestion by increasing and enhancing the transit mode share and more pedestrian crossing friendly traffic control devices at popular recreation access areas

Current speed limits are not enforced. Can Speed limits be analyzed in this study because they are currently divorced from safety and wildlife preservation?

WYDOT recently lowered the speed limit from 55 to 45 from Coal Creek parking area east to Old Pass Road. This study is not prescriptive, but could suggest other areas for lower speed limits throughout the Study corridor which include limited site distance areas, and heavy wildlife and pedestrian crossing areas

Speed is not the only issue. can you address passing on double yellow lines and even at the Glory avalanche curve

Please direct highway related questions and concerns to:
https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home/news_info/contact-information.html

Can you stripe the approach to the truck arrestor approach so people do not park there....which happens frequently

Non-authorized vehicles are not allowed to park in this area west adjacent to the truck arrestor, and there are 'No Parking' signs and pavement markings approaching the arrestor that exist

How about speed cameras and enforcement of speed limit for starters! Nothing worse than watching for wildlife and pedestrians and enjoying world class scenery and having a rude person drive up on your rear end

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There was a fatal crash about where your map showed a fatality. A commuter died on the way back to Idaho when one vehicle crossed the center line, resulting in a head-on collision.

The WYDOT fatality did not occur during avalanche mitigation. It occurred during summer maintenance operations.

Recreational Access (w/ sub components)

I think and would hope that the study area includes the Old Pass Road particularly where it starts at the bottom of the road and at the top. One of your slides showed that parking at the top often blocks where the OPR intersects the highway. Parking at the bottom is often an issue in both winter and summer. Some of the recreational use is generating multiple trips to shuttle people up not just during the summer but also during the summer as people make multiple vehicular trips.

Part of our study will include parking issues affecting the Old Pass Road. This includes mitigating conflicts at the top of the Pass where the trail ends as well as considering Transportation Demand Management solutions to mitigate the parking issues at the bottom

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Will part of the report look at the feasibility of a non motor vehicle travel corridor (I.e a multi use trail along the road or through forest land)?

Yes, but the approximate 3 mile multi-use trail gap from the top of the Pass to Coal Creek to complete the paved multi-use trail will be very difficult from a landslide, wetland, and engineering standpoint

It seems like there's a lot of mention of alternative transportation options/shuttles for recreationists. Will the study be considering improved public transportation specifically for commuters from Teton County, ID?

No. This Study focuses on integrating recreation access and highway operational and safety needs. For further information on transit commuting, please refer to START and on-going complementary transportation studies in Teton County, Wyoming

Are you guys open minded to private shuttle up Teton pass?

Yes, the Study will consider a variety of public and private operational options

To follow up: it feels like bus access for both recreationalists and commuters should be a priority. All community members and visitors can benefit from shuttles / buses and safe pick up and drop off spots.

The focus of this Study is on integrating recreation access and highway operational and safety needs. We will look at improving bus/shuttle drop-off/pick off areas, especially at high use recreation access areas

Hi there. Thanks for being willing to consider all questions and concerns from locals. My biggest concerns about Teton Pass are related to issues bigger than this Study is probably designed to address... but cannot be ignored. Teton County, Wyoming, is pushing workforce to the Idaho side, and that means that while recreation is an important aspect (I am an avid winter backcountry skier and summer mountain biker and would hate to lose that access), I am concerned with what sort of infrastructure we might be able to provide for public transportation that can address the high likelihood that commuter traffic will only continue to increase.

For further information on planning for commuter transit, please refer to START and on-going complementary transportation studies in Teton County, Wyoming

Parking:

Don't assume existing pullouts will be repurposed for parking within highway r/w. need to search for ground on USFS.

At this point in the study, no assumptions are being made. All feasible options will be examined to best meet current and future highway operation/maintenance needs and recreation access needs within terrain and legal constraints

Throughout much of the literature I've read, skiing seems to be the only talked about recreation type in the winter. Phillips Canyon is the only access for snowmobilers on the pass, but snowmobiling is also a significant recreation type that should be considered. Has their been any talk about creating additional parking at Phillips to accommodate for new, additional skiing access so that snowmobilers continue to have access to our public lands?

We have documented the need for snowmobile access at Phillips in the assessment of existing conditions. There are several options to address both the summer and winter parking issues at Phillips, each of which has pros and cons. The option of separating skier and snowmobile parking has been brought up and will be considered. That said, with increasing use and terrain limitations, unlimited parking capacity is not realistic for any type of recreation

Has properly grading/paving the Phillips parking lot been explored? It seems with a bit of simple maintenance it's capacity could increase greatly?

Even though this area is used for recreation access, it is not technically considered a trailhead, but rather a WYDOT rock storage area. However, as noted in the response above, all options to better meet recreation access and highway needs in the Phillips area are being explored, including use of the this area

You mentioned that parking capacity does not meet current needs. Are you suggesting that parking access to trailheads should be increased in a significant way? I would suggest that the more you add, the more people will come, and it will not meet demand.

It is true that current parking capacity does not meet current and future demand for access. The study will examine a scenario with expanded parking where feasible. However, terrain and legal constraints plus the need to provide for highway operational and emergency needs, suggest that parking capacity cannot be realistically expanded significantly. A more realistic scenario for the future will likely involve some mix of re-configured recreation parking plus transit options.

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Commercial Traffic

Will the study consider whether commercial truck traffic is appropriate through the corridor?

This Study focuses on integrating recreation access and highway operational and safety needs. Studying whether commercial truck traffic is appropriate is outside the scope of the study. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

Trucks are prohibited during part of the year. Can trucks be prohibited all year?

As noted, above, restrictions on truck traffic is outside the scope of this study. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

Can we improve the enforcement of the seasonal closure to trailers/semis?

Enforcement of current trailer/semi-truck restrictions is outside the scope of this study. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

Are there any proposals to enforce the weight limit of trucks? most of truck runaways have involved over weight trucks i believe.

Enforcement of current trailer/semi-truck restrictions is outside the scope of this study. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

Every single day i see a tractor trailer truck or trailers going over. there is no enforcement at all. i saw three today.

Enforcement of current trailer/semi-truck restrictions is outside the scope of this study. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

On the topic of signage (the announcement of speed limit change happened long before winter BTW), is there a plan to increase signage/communication along with enforcement for trailer traffic in the winter and weight limits in the summer?

The Study will look into increased signage and communication along the corridor especially around high use recreation access areas to improve the safety of both pedestrian and motorist. This Study will not look into additional enforcement on vehicles. For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

Truck Arrestor

The 2nd vehicle arrestor makes no sense because traffic is often backed up past the planned arrestor - why does WYdot insist on moving forward?

Addressing truck arrestors is not part of our Study. For more information on arrestor issues including the WYDOT public involvement process, please visit: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/arrestor>

There has been overwhelming opposition from Wilson residents to the proposed location for WYDOT's second truck arrestor location. At multiple WYDOT meetings they have ignored our concerns. Traffic back up at the bottom of the pass creates a dangerous situation for the entrance position of the arrestor. Why has this not been highlighted in the planning process?

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The arrestor is a big issue! Tory's comments not sufficient!

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Question to Tory Thomas: Has WYDOT performed any studies as to the traffic congestion that occurs during the tourist high season at the proposed truck arrestor location? What happens when the entrance is blocked and a truck without brakes is directed to this arrestor location!

Addressing truck arrestors is not part of our Study. For more information on arrestor issues please visit: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/arrestor>

Gave comments to wydot and they said the decision on the arrestor has already been made!

Addressing truck arrestors is not part of our Study. For more information on arrestor issues please visit: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/arrestor>

How does the arrestor work in relation to the current bike path, that is a huge safety issue on recreationalist.?

Although we understand that the second truck arrestor potential location would likely disrupt the bike path on the south side of the Highway, our Study has no say on where the arrestor should be. If the arrestor is placed at this location, then our Study could look into alternate locations to place the bike path to continue the present seamless connected bike path experience

The idea of a second truck arrestor, however, based on what we as citizens have seen and know, appears to be a very bad idea for a multitude of reasons. I think WYDOT can expect some pushback on that.

Addressing truck arrestors is not part of our Study. For more information on arrestor issues please visit: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/arrestor>

Wildlife Crossings and Conflicts

Will this project consider wildlife crossings on the Idaho end of the Pass below the state line?

With the increase in wildlife collisions between the state line and Victor along Hwy 33, we agree that wildlife crossings should be considered, but our study will not include a thorough evaluation of highway needs in Idaho. Please contact Idaho Fish and Game for inquiries: idfg.idaho.gov

Are there examples of an avalanche snow sheds that also serve as wildlife crossings?

We are not aware of any snow sheds that also serve as a wildlife crossing.

Can Speed limits be analyzed in this study because they are currently divorced from safety and wildlife preservation?

Lowering speed limits could be considered in our suite of alternatives to make the corridor safer based on wildlife collision data we collect

Thank you so much for this good work on this much needed study! Have you collected WVC data from Idaho Fish and Game? Wildlife-vehicle collisions are pretty high right around the state line and their data will be critical in your evaluation of risk and wildlife movement, along with the JHWF WVC data.

Yes, we have collected WVC data from Idaho Fish and Game which could influence our analysis of alternatives to improve safety along the corridor

Attention to wildlife-corridor conflict, and consideration of wildlife crossings sounds excellent.

Snowsheds/Tunnels/Avalance

Europe has been doing sheds and tunnels for years, have we looked there for benchmarking?

As part of our case study research, we will look into what Europe has done for snow shed implementation

Any thoughts on adding a tunnel for at least the upper portion of the highway?

Although a tunnel through Mt. Glory at the top of the Pass is a hot topic, especially now with the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, studying the feasibility of a tunnel is outside the scope of our study

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If the BTFNF can close thousands of acres of forest to protect winter range for wildlife, why can't they close terrain on the north side of Teton Pass on days when the avalanche danger is Considerable or High to protect motorists on Highway 22?

The Forest Service has worked with WYDOT and the County Sheriff's office to explore options to implement "conditional" closures for the Glory/Twin Slides area. While USFS supports the idea, they have not yet found an enforcement solution. Forest Special Orders, like the one that protects wildlife winter range, have defined start and end dates; they are not meant to be used to implement "on and off" closures that need to be responsive to rapid changes in weather and snowpack stability. In other states, "conditional" closures are implemented through highway departments, since the primary purpose is to protect highway interests. Such an approach has been pursued in Wyoming but has not been adopted. In the interim, the USFS will closely coordinate with WYDOT, the Bridger-Teton Avalanche Center, patrol staff and partner organizations to provide timely information when backcountry recreationists should not ski/ride slopes that could affect the highway.

It may not seem financially feasible to do snow sheds over Twin and Glory slide paths- but if we think about the money and time that has been lost over the years in terms of unexpected closures- all that money could be saved with a reliable opening- not to mention the safety

Although our study will not examine the implementation details of snowsheds in the highway corridor, we will include case studies that could provide a foundation for further study.

Miscellaneous

Don't forget summer recreation use

Although Winter recreation has most users, we recognize that Summer recreation is steadily increasing and a big part of why people come to recreate along Teton Pass, so we will definitely not forget Summer recreation

Do you have a list of what implementations you would like to study?

This Study is not a decision document but rather one that will provide alternatives to make the corridor safer, especially at high use recreation access areas along the Highway

Is your study addressing both short-term and longer-term solutions? ie parking/shuttles/turn lanes short-term and for longer term things like a tunnel?

Our Study will evaluate alternatives for safer and more formalized parking, the feasibility of transit/shuttle operations for recreation, and improvements to the highway like added turn lanes to improve traffic flow and safety. The Study will not evaluate any tunnel solutions

Is ITD involved for the ID 33 and Mike Harris crossing mentioned?

Improvements along ID 33 at the Mike Harris intersection are not currently on the State Transportation Improvement Project list but with the increasing recreation access, improvements such as added turn lanes could be considered in the future in coordination with the USFS

In what year will the next road update happen for this highway?

For WYDOT updates please search the following site: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>
For ITD updates please search the following site: <https://itd.idaho.gov/>

Ok, but when is the next time that WYDOT will be upgrading this highway?

For additional info go to the following site and use the search function for answers: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>

How does the current and projected traffic use compare to the capacity of the 2-lane road?

The Teton Pass highway is currently a 2-lane road. For comparative roadway analysis, please use the search function in the following sites:

For WYDOT please search through: <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/home.html>
For ITD please search through: <https://itd.idaho.gov/>

Would you consider detailed driver education regarding steepness of grade. Similar to the pullouts with tunnel information in advance of entering Zion?

Consideration of improved signing and other means to provide education to people travelling the highway corridor will be considered

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Google Maps etc give no warnings about grade. Many tourists especially when towing have no idea of the nature of the pass. Often drivers, especially flatlanders and those towing RVs. do not comprehend what 10% grades mean for their engine and/or brakes

Better education and awareness that includes real time monitors placed before entering the Pass will be considered

Aren't you required in this enviro analysis to attempt to mitigate climate change and diminish vehicular use?

Our Study will include evaluating transit/shuttle use and other multimodal options for recreation purposes to get to sites along the Pass and therefore reducing single occupancy vehicle use and mitigating greenhouse gases

Any thoughts on managing the winter recreational access in a similar fashion to other high use areas with avalanche issues such as Rogers Pass, British Columbia?

Rogers Pass will definitely be considered as a case study as part of our Study.

Why not increase the fine for enforcement?

Enforcement of existing and potential future restrictions is outside the scope of this study.

Will you keep Dark Skies in mind if any lighting is installed anywhere? The new light at the sand storage building on the east side is very bright, (too bright), unshielded and on all the time even when no-one is working there. It could be motion activated to be on only when workers are using the site

The Study will not include any lighting improvements

Have you looked at how bright those green message lights are at the traffic arrestor? They almost blind drivers and with snow reflectivity in winter, to drive in there would be a leap of faith

If the green message lights have been linked to crashes along the Highway, then this could be included in the safety evaluation and further coordination with WYDOT

Would it be accurate to say that looking at all users if there is a functional priority of users with commercial users #1 (comprised of freight & commuters), tourism, recreational users on the pass, pedestrians, etc.

The highway first and foremost must function for highway travel (for commuters, visitors travelling through area, and commerce). But we also recognize the increasing importance of recreation access and are striving to integrate recreation needs in a way that doesn't fundamentally compromise highway safety.

The Disney-fixation of this place has been proceeding unabated in all of my 44 years here. The latest example is the ID bike path up the Pass. Don't pretend to care about environmental impacts and be a booster for that. Did everyone see the number of healthy trees cut for that project?

There are separate efforts occurring in the Jackson Hole region to address increasing concerns about regional growth. As alternatives to integrate recreation and highway needs are explored, environmental sustainability will be an important factor. In addition, following the Teton Pass Corridor Study, the local project team will need to evaluate the site-specific environmental effects of any construction project