



COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP MEETING #1 SUMMARY | February 11, 2020

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) hosted a community working group meeting in February 2020 to gather input on future wildlife crossings along U.S. Highway 30 at Rocky Point (Mileposts 443-448). High rates of wildlife-vehicle collisions occur at Rocky Point, and both experts and the community have expressed a need for wildlife crossing features to preserve the local mule deer population and improve the safety of U.S. 30. In response to these concerns, ITD has begun exploring possible designs to greatly reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions.

ITD has committed to working closely with the community throughout the design process. Key stakeholders and members of the public have been invited to participate in a community working group. During working group meetings, participants will provide input that will assist ITD with developing a design that best meets the needs of all stakeholders.

The first community workshop was held at the Allred Community Education and Event Center (21620 US Highway 30, Montpelier ID) from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on February 11, 2020. Approximately 50 people attended.

Workshop #1 Purpose and Notification

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Introduce the Rocky Point Wildlife Crossing project and provide background information
- Learn the community's issues, concerns and suggestions for the project area to identify possible improvements
- Communicate the timeline for the project to the public

ITD notified the community about the workshop in several ways.

- **A letter from Tara Capson, Project Manager** was sent to key stakeholders in the project database. These key stakeholders included local government officials and wildlife groups, as well as property owners within the project area.
- **A postcard invitation** was sent to **1,900** residences and businesses within the project area, as well as to all stakeholders in the project database.
- **A display ad** ran in the Montpelier News-Examiner on February 5, 2020.

- **A news release** was sent to local news outlets on Feb. 6 and Feb. 10.
- **Reminder phone calls** were placed to city council members and county commissioners before the workshop.

Copies of all notification materials are included in the appendix to this document.

Workshop presentation

The community working group started with a short presentation by ITD Project Manager Tara Capson. She introduced the project and its purpose and need; introduced the process and schedule of the project; and explained traffic and safety data. The PowerPoint slides are included in the appendix to this document.

Participants were then encouraged to discuss questions from the presentations at their tables.

Questions included:

1. What are your thoughts about wildlife crossing Highway 30?
2. What are your concerns?
3. What suggestions do you have for ITD?
4. What additional questions or comments do you have about the project?

Participants were asked to fill out comment sheets and record their thoughts, concerns and suggestions on roll plot maps.

Approximately 50 people participated in discussion groups and ITD received 23 written comment sheets.

Key Themes

Several key themes were present in comments collected at Community Working Group Meeting #1:

- Every participant in the meeting expressed the need for preventing wildlife collisions in the project area.
- Community members were very supportive of the project and would like to see construction begin soon.
- Most participants expressed interest in what types of crossing structures would be designed and built by ITD. Questions about fencing, underpasses and overpasses were common.
- Many participants expressed a need for multiple crossing structures along the stretch of highway identified as the project area.
- Several comments suggested that ITD and IDFG seek data, information and support from Wyoming Department of Transportation and Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Many participants wanted ITD and IDFG to ensure adequate funding and quality of design.
- Some comments pointed to several other hazards in the area including steep slopes on the south side of Highway 30, regular flooding of the Bear River in spring and railroad tracks that are another source of wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- Participants thanked ITD and IDFG for hosting the meeting, collecting input, and moving forward with much-needed wildlife crossing structures.

A question-by question summary of input follows. Comments submitted on the map are pictured on page 6. A verbatim transcription of written comments is included in the appendix to this document.

Summary of written and verbal comments

1. What are your thoughts about wildlife crossing Highway 30?

Frequent responses:

- The majority of comments expressed a need for the crossing
 - No comments opposed the project
- Many comments expressed a need for multiple crossings at Rocky Point
- Some comments identified mileposts 443-444 and 445-447 as most problematic
- Some comments expressed concern about deer and elk crossing railroad tracks

Other notable comments included:

- Mention of natural funnels that force deer to cross between mileposts 445-446 and at milepost 447
- Suggesting contact with Wyoming experts
- A question about accidents caused by swerving to avoid deer

2. What are your concerns?

Repeated responses included:

- Concerns about fencing
 - South side of Highway 30 has terrain that will make construction difficult
 - Fences should not obstruct view of oncoming traffic for residents turning onto Highway 30
 - Fences blocking access to side roads (i.e. old hunting road at milepost 446)
- Railroad tracks south of Highway 30 also a risk to deer and elk
- Concerns about funding and timing
 - ITD and IDFG need to spend enough money to create adequate measures
 - Is there enough funding?
- The need for multiple crossing structures
- Questions about type of funneling system used
 - Underpasses may flood or deer may be unwilling to use them

Other notable comments included:

- Project quality is critical for the success of similar projects

- Poor quality of cell reception in area makes calling for help/reporting collisions difficult
- Flashing lights should be installed to alert motorists
- Involve more people in the process

3. What suggestions do you have for ITD?

Repeated suggestions included:

- Secure more funding and/or additional funding sources
- Focus on fencing
 - Double-high gate at Mileposts 443-444
 - Facilitate both north and south migration of deer (fencing on both sides of the road)
 - Fences should be along all highways/ "should be in every contract"
- Construct multiple crossings
- Ensure quality of the project
- Establishing contact with Wyoming Department of Transportation and Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Project should be moved forward as quickly as possible

Other notable comments included:

- No crossings on corners
- More announcements/notifications of meetings (radio)
- More signage along project area to keep motorists aware
- Visualization of proposed structure
- Compliments for ITD's work

4. Do you have any other questions or comments?

Responses to this question included:

- Several comments expressed a desire for the project to move forward
- Are there additional sources of funding? Who's paying?
- Can volunteers help the project move forward?

Maps from Discussion

One group of participants worked together to draw their suggestions on large maps of the intersection.

Map 1. Rocky Point area of US Highway 30 south of Montpelier, Idaho (mileposts 443-448).

