

Montana Department of Commerce
Treasure State Endowment Program
Environmental Assessment

EKEGREN ROAD BRIDGE

BLAINE COUNTY, MONTANA

Proposed Action: The Ekegren Road Bridge is a structurally deficient bridge that has historically provided primary access to agricultural and residential users. Currently, the bridge has been closed for safety reasons. Blaine County proposes to replace the structure with a new, single-span prestressed concrete bulb tee bridge. The new Ekegren Road Bridge will: provide a two-lane crossing, increase safety, ensure long-term access, handle legal loading requirements, and maintain waterway adequacy.

A. Environmental Checklist:

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As the engineer that prepared the preliminary engineering report, I Cole Peebles, PE have reviewed the information presented in this checklist and believe that it accurately identifies the environmental resources in the area and the potential impacts that the project could have on those resources. In addition, the required state and federal agencies were provided with the required information about the project and requested to provide comments on the proposed public facility project. Their comments have been incorporated into and attached to the Preliminary Engineering Report.

Engineer's Signature: _____

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

NAME OF PROJECT:	Ekegren Road Bridge Replacement
PROPOSED ACTION:	Bridge Replacement
LOCATION:	<u>Blaine County</u> , Montana

Key Letter:

N: No Impact; **B:** Potentially Beneficial; **A:** Potentially Adverse; **P:** Approval/Permits Required; **M:** Mitigation Required

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

KEY	1	Soil Suitability, Topographic and/or Geologic Constraints (e.g., soil slump, steep slopes, subsidence, seismic activity)
N		<i>Response and source of information:</i> USDA, NRCS Soil Maps indicate the soil at the bridge site is classified as Havre Silty Clay Loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes. This soil is composed of fine sandy loams and silty clay loams. There are no identified topographical or geological constraints. Prior to construction, a Geotechnical analysis will be undertaken in order to verify the most efficient foundation design based on the in-situ soils in the project vicinity. - Cole Peebles, P.E. - USDA National Cooperative Soil Survey
KEY	2	Hazardous Facilities (e.g., power lines, EPA hazardous waste sites, acceptable distance from explosive and flammable hazards including chemical/petrochemical storage tanks, underground fuel storage tanks, and related facilities such as natural gas storage facilities & propane storage tanks)
N		<i>Response and source of information:</i> A file search of the State Hazard Mapping (DEQ) and State Digital Atlas (NRIS) revealed <u>no</u> underground storage tanks, petroleum leak sites, or related facilities in the project vicinity. An overhead power line is located approximately 20 feet upstream of the upstream edge of the existing bridge. According to Triangle Communications, there is a Fiber Optic line buried roughly 70 feet east of the existing bridge. This communications cable is located well outside the anticipated construction envelope. There is a possibility of other underground utilities in the area. Prior to construction, a detailed inspection will be undertaken by contacting a utility location service. If utilities are located within the affected area, they will be relocated or supported/protected during construction. Typically, such work can be completed by the utility company at no cost to the County. - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Digital Mapping Index, Montana DEQ - Bruce Kudrna, Triangle Communications - Construction Engineering Division

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KEY	3	Effects of Project on Surrounding Air Quality or Any Kind of Effects of Existing Air Quality on Project (e.g., dust, odors, emissions)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The only impacts on air quality may be temporary dust during construction. Reasonable efforts will be taken during construction to minimize these temporary impacts.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	4	Groundwater Resources & Aquifers (e.g., quantity, quality, distribution, depth to groundwater, sole source aquifers)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Given the nature of the construction activities, the proposed project should not have any impact on groundwater resources and aquifers. Based on a preliminary review of site information, the local groundwater table is anticipated to lie sufficiently below the excavation envelope for the project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	5	Surface Water/Water Quality, Quantity & Distribution (e.g., streams, lakes, storm runoff, irrigation systems, canals)
P		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Some temporary adverse effects to water quality are typical during bridge construction. According to Cody Nagel, local FWP field biologist, the proposed project is not anticipated to present any immediate threats to the local aquatic communities. The preferred alternative for this structure is a single-span prestressed concrete bulb tee beam bridge with driven pile foundations. Blaine County intends to work with a Contractor to coordinate the proposed project so that as much of the work as possible can be implemented in the dry. As such, the project is not anticipated to have significant impacts on water quality or the creek bed. The new structure will be installed in the approximate location of the existing bridge. Best Management Practices (BMP's) will be utilized during construction to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.</p> <p>A temporary work structure may be constructed adjacent to the existing bridge during the project in order to facilitate construction activities (such as beam setting). The existing crossing will be closed in the vicinity of the structure during construction. In order to convey local traffic, the Old Savoy, Eroaux, and Everett Roads (located north, east, and south of the existing structure, respectively) will be utilized as a detour. The detour route is approximately 4.2 miles long.</p> <p>All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the contractor will be required to abide by the conditions set forth by these permits.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Cody Nagel, FWP</p>

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KEY	6	Floodplains & Floodplain Management (Identify any floodplains within one mile of the boundary of the project.)
P		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The bridge is located in approximate Zone A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain. As the proposed bridge replacement is located within a designated floodplain, a County Floodplain Development Permit will be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Robert Neihart, P.E., CFM, Blaine County Floodplain Administrator - John Connors, P.E. CFM, DNRC - FEMA Community Panel 30005C I 175E
KEY	7	Wetlands Protection (Identify any wetlands within one mile of the boundary of the project.)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Based on information collected from site visits and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey National Wetlands Inventory, there do not appear to be any wetlands areas that will be affected by the proposed bridge replacement project. The nearest catalogued wetland zones consist of be riverine and freshwater emergent systems associated with Thirtymile Creek. These wetlands are located at least 1000 feet from the proposed construction envelope. The proposed project should not impact any wetland areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - USFWS National Wetlands Inventory
KEY	8	Agricultural Lands, Production, & Farmland Protection (e.g., grazing, forestry, cropland, prime or unique agricultural lands) (Identify any prime or important farm ground or forest lands within one mile of the boundary of the project.)
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The Ekegren Road Bridge over Thirtymile Creek is located in a rural area surrounded primarily undeveloped agricultural properties. Preliminary investigations indicate that the surrounding lands are designated as Farmlands of Statewide Importance when irrigated (NRCS Soils Map). Tilled farmlands and hay crop are located in proximity to the four corners of the existing bridge. The nearest occurs roughly 200 feet to the southwest of the bridge. The predominant crop in this area is wheat with interspersed pulse crops (peas, beans, and lentils). As the structure replacement will likely be located within the 60-foot County easement, which is not tillable land, no negative impacts are anticipated. No forest lands exist within one mile of the project. The bridge was closed for safety reasons in the fall of 2015. If the bridge is not improved and remains closed, agricultural operations will be forced to permanently detour to different roadways in order to access their farms, agricultural interests, and grazing pasture. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - USDA, NRCS Soil Survey

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KEY	9 Vegetation & Wildlife Species & Habitats, Including Fish and Sage Grouse (e.g., terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats)
P	<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project is not expected to have any permanent effects on vegetation and wildlife. Any construction effects on plant species will be re-seeded to promote re-vegetation and reduce erosion.</p> <p>A database search conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program website and by the USFWS found seventeen possible species of special concern in the area: Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Baird's Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Bobolink, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Northern Redbelly Dace, Iowa Darter, Pearl Dace, Sprague's Pipit, Black-Footed Ferret, Sauger, Pallid Sturgeon, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle (as well as other migratory birds). However, Jodi Bush of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service notes that "<i>Given the limited scope, location, and nature of the project...we do not anticipate adverse effects to threatened, endangered, or candidate species to result...</i>" Local FWP Fisheries Biologist in the area, Cody Nagel, has indicated that he has no immediate concerns regarding project impacts to fisheries.</p> <p>Based on a review of the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP) Mapper (https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/projects), the proposed project is mapped as being in an area of General Sage Grouse Habitat. Figure 5 and general guidance from the Montana Natural Heritage Program's Predictable Suitable Habitat Model for Sage Grouse, indicate that the proposed project location is in a location mapped as having low suitability for Sage Grouse Habitat.</p> <p>Following the award of TSEP grant funds, and within 12 months of the proposed construction date, the County will consult with the MSGHCP regarding the work. As necessary, a consultation will be submitted for MSGHCP review. Depending on the outcome of the application, some form of mitigation may be required in order to implement the project.</p> <p>According to the Montana Field Guide, the Greater Sage Grouse's Courtship season starts in early March and persists to into May. Typically, Sage hens prefer to nest on sagebrush covered benches from June to July. When forbs on bench habitats begin to dry, Sage Grouse tend to migrate to alfalfa fields or greasewood bottoms. Where feasible, construction activities will be coordinated such that disruptive and/or destructive impacts to Sage Grouse can be avoided. Where avoidance is not feasible, best management practices will be implemented in order to minimize impacts and reasonable efforts will be made to restore damages. As such, Sage Grouse are not anticipated to be adversely affected by this work. The need for compensatory mitigation is not anticipated as a result of the relatively small footprint (less than half an acre) of the proposed project.</p> <p>Thirtymile Creek supports aquatic wildlife populations; therefore, careful consideration to the stream habitat and effects that the proposed bridge will have on the stream will be considered. No specific fish window for in-stream construction has been identified by permitting agencies. All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the Contractor will be required to adhere to the permit documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Cody Nagel, FWP - Jodi Bush, USFWS - Montana Natural Heritage Program - Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

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KEY	10	Unique, Endangered, Fragile, or Limited Environmental Resources, Including Endangered Species (e.g., plants, fish or wildlife)
P		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>A database search conducted using the Montana Natural Heritage Program website and by the USFWS found seventeen possible species of special concern in the area: Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Baird's Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Bobolink, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Curlew, Greater Sage-Grouse, Northern Redbelly Dace, Iowa Darter, Pearl Dace, Sprague's Pipit, Black-footed Ferret, Sauger, Pallid Sturgeon, Bald Eagle, and Golden Eagle (as well as other migratory birds).</p> <p>The USFWS believes that adverse impacts to any species of concern are unlikely due to the limited construction extents.</p> <p>Local FWP Fisheries Biologist in the area, Cody Nagel, has indicated that he has no immediate concerns about the replacement project regarding impact to fisheries.</p> <p>All necessary stream permits will be acquired prior to construction, and the Contractor will be required to adhere to all guidelines outlined in these documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Cody Nagel, FWP - Jodi Bush, USFWS - Montana Natural Heritage Program
KEY	11	Unique Natural Features (e.g., geologic features)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>There are no unique, natural features located in the vicinity of the proposed project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.
KEY	12	Access to, and Quality of, Recreational & Wilderness Activities, Public Lands and Waterways and Public Open Space
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge serves approximately 100 vehicles per day including access to private homes and agricultural properties. Permanent closure of the bridge would have significant impacts to agricultural, irrigation district, and residential access as well as access to (and quality of experience of) public lands. The bridge also lies in hunting district 611, which affords hunters opportunities to pursue multiple species of game including elk, deer and antelope. The new structure would ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.

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HUMAN POPULATION		
KEY	1	Visual Quality – Coherence, Diversity, Compatibility of Use and Scale, Aesthetics
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The project is not anticipated to adversely impact the visual quality of the area.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	2	Nuisances (e.g., glare, fumes)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project may cause temporary nuisances such as noise and exhaust fumes from construction equipment, and traffic detours will be necessary while the bridge is under construction. However, no long term impacts have been identified, and efforts will be made to minimize nuisances and address specific problems as they occur.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	3	Noise - suitable separation between noise sensitive activities (such as residential areas) and major noise sources (aircraft, highways & railroads).
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Nearby residences may be temporarily affected by noise from the construction of this bridge. However, as the bridge is not intended to increase use of the Ekegren Road, no additional permanent noise sources are anticipated.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	4	Historic Properties, Cultural, and Archaeological Resources
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>As a general rule, all bridges that are 50 years or older are considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ekegren Road Bridge is a wooden stringer bridge with a timber deck and wooden abutments on timber piling. It was constructed in 1938 and is approximately 78 years old. The County has been doing periodic deck replacements since the structure was built. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requested that Blaine County consult with MDT in order to make a determination of the bridge's eligibility for National Register Listing. According to MDT Historian, Jon Axline, the bridge does <u>not</u> meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places, therefore the need for mitigation is not anticipated to be necessary. No other culturally significant sites are located in the immediate project area.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jon Axline, MDT Historian - Damon Murdo, State Historical Preservation Office</p>

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KEY	5	Changes in Demographic (population) Characteristics (e.g., quantity, distribution, density)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project is not anticipated to affect any changes in demographics to the area. The proposed replacement will be capable of safely supporting legal loads including agricultural loads, and delivery truck traffic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner
KEY	6	General Housing Conditions - Quality, Quantity, Affordability
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Previously, the Ekegren Road Bridge provided primary access to several residences and agricultural operations in adjacent properties. The proposed project will allow residents and ranch/farm owners to continue to have the most direct access to their properties. If the bridge is not improved and becomes permanently closed, residents would be forced to detour to different roadways in order to access their homes and properties. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.
KEY	7	Displacement or Relocation of Businesses or Residents
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project will restore the most direct access route to residents and agricultural property owners. If the bridge is not improved and closes permanently, residents and agricultural operations would be unable to use the most convenient access to their homes and properties. This would cause hardship for the local farming community, especially during the harvest season. Depending on the direction of a travel, the detour route would add up to 4.2 additional miles for those accessing areas beyond the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Dirk Drugge, Blaine County Road Supervisor

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KEY	8	Public Health and Safety
B		<i>Response and source of information:</i>
		<p>Based on recent bridge inspection(s), the bridge is in poor condition, is structurally deficient, and should be viewed as a potential threat to public safety. The superstructure consists of wooden stringers and a rotten nail-laminated timber deck. In the fall of 2015, Ekegren Bridge was closed by the County Road Department for safety reasons. There are currently large holes in the decking surface and several damaged stringers. The bridge substructure is also in poor condition, with cracks, rot, and poor contact with the timber caps. Many of the existing abutment piles contain dry rot and decay.</p> <p>The narrowness of the existing bridge is another safety concern. The existing bridge provides a useable width of 19-feet, which is too narrow to safely handle two-way travel. The new structure should be designed with a minimum useable width of 24-feet (wider if technically feasible to support passage of large farm equipment).</p> <p>The current bridge rail configuration is not crash tested. It consists of timber railing with timber posts which are in poor condition. Several instances of damage have been noted by the County Road Department staff as a result of the passage of large agricultural equipment. Many of the timber posts exhibit decay, which has led to flimsy and loose rails. In its current condition, the bridge rail likely provides minimal protection to stray vehicles that impact the rail. Crash-rated bridge rail and guardrail terminal end sections should be incorporated with the upgraded structure as required by the County Bridge Standards.</p> <p>The existing bridge should be replaced with a new structure that can adequately handle legal loads, remedy the existing structural concerns, allow for adequate hydraulic conductivity, and provide width for two-way travel. A new crossing would eliminate all structural deficiencies and provide a useful life of 75 to 100 years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - MDT Bridge Inspection Report - GWE Bridge Inspection Report - Dirk Drugge, Blaine County Road Supervisor
KEY	9	Lead Based Paint and/or Asbestos
M		<i>Response and source of information:</i>
		<p>There is no known lead based paint or asbestos at this site. However, recent requirements from Montana DEQ require an inspection for asbestos (performed by an accredited inspector) prior to any demolition taking place. This inspection may be waived depending on the type of the bridge structure and its components.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.

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KEY	10	Local Employment & Income Patterns – Quantity and Distribution of Employment, Economic Impact
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed structure replacement should not create any significant effects on local employment and income patterns. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	11	Local & State Tax Base & Revenues
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project should have no impact on local and state tax base and revenues.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	12	Educational Facilities - Schools, Colleges, Universities
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The bridge is not currently located on a designated school bus route. However, when the bridge is in service, parents utilize the road to transfer children to and from the Harlem School District. Therefore, the schools would benefit from the proposed bridge replacement project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	13	Commercial and Industrial Facilities - Production & Activity, Growth or Decline
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>A new bridge will allow oversized vehicles and wide, heavy equipment to cross the structure providing access for local ranchers and farmers.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	14	Health Care – Medical Services
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences and agricultural operations. If the bridge is not improved and becomes closed, medical, fire, and law enforcement personnel would be forced to travel longer distances to reach residents on the other side of the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>

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KEY	15	Social Services – Governmental Services (e.g., demand on)
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences and adjacent properties. If the bridge is not improved and remains closed, services such as the United States Postal Service would be forced to permanently detour to different roads in order to deliver mail to homeowners. The current detour has already created a minor hardship for mail delivery. A new structure will ensure access to the area and access to government services for 75 to 100 years. No additional demand on government services is anticipated as a result of the bridge replacement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jan Egeland, Harlem Post Master USPS
KEY	16	Social Structures & Mores (Standards of Social Conduct/Social Conventions)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project should not have any impact on social structures and mores.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.
KEY	17	Land Use Compatibility (e.g., growth, land use change, development activity, adjacent land uses and potential conflicts)
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge provides primary access to numerous residences and agricultural operations. The proposed project will allow residents and business owners (including ranchers and farmers) to continue to have the most direct access to their properties. If the bridge is not improved and becomes permanently closed, residents would be forced to detour to different roads for access. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years. Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner, has stated that the project area is not anticipated to experience changes in population growth and is not located within specifically identified growth areas.</p> <p>According to the County Planner, the proposed bridge replacement fits the goals of the Blaine County Growth Policy. Specifically, Goal #1 for Community Infrastructure developments states that Blaine County shall maintain existing roads and work to reduce maintenance and operations costs via strategic bridge replacements, which seek out potential funding partnerships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner
KEY	18	Energy Resources - Consumption and Conservation
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project will restore Ekegren Road as the most efficient route for local traffic. If the bridge were to be closed permanently, travelers would be forced to utilize alternate routes. As a result, more fuel will likely be consumed by taking longer alternate routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cole Peebles, P.E.

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KEY	19	Solid Waste Management
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project will restore Ekegren road to a serviceable condition for use by local residents and businesses. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	20	Wastewater Treatment - Sewage System
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Not applicable to this project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	21	Storm Water – Surface Drainage
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed bridge design, including the new roadway design, will take BMP's into account. Where practicable, the new crossing will incorporate features to direct storm water (which may contain sediment, salt, or other contaminants) away from State Waters.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Bonnie Lovelace, MDEQ Regulatory Affairs Manager</p>
KEY	22	Community Water Supply
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Not applicable to this project.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	23	Public Safety – Police
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences, agricultural operations and adjacent properties. County DES Manager, Haley Gustitis has expressed concerns with delayed emergency response times if the bridge is not improved and remains closed. Currently, medical, fire, and law enforcement personnel must travel longer distances to reach residents opposite the bridge. A new structure will restore access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Haley Gustitis, Blaine County Disaster and Emergency Services</p>

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KEY	24	Fire Protection – Hazards
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>Currently, the crossing is closed. If the bridge is not replaced, firefighting personnel and equipment will continue to travel longer distances to reach property opposite of the crossing. A new structure will restore access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	25	Emergency Medical Services
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>When in service, the Ekegren Road Bridge provides primary access to several residences in adjacent properties. County Ambulance Co-Chiefs, Laurie Huestis and Jim Doyle have expressed concerns with delayed medical response times as a result of the existing bridge closure. Currently, medical and fire personnel must travel longer distances in order to reach residents across the bridge. A new structure will ensure access to the area for 75 to 100 years.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Laurie Huestis and Jim Doyle, Blaine County Ambulance Co-Crew Chiefs</p>
KEY	26	Parks, Playgrounds, & Open Space
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>No adverse effects to parks, playgrounds, and open space are anticipated at this time.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	27	Cultural Facilities, Cultural Uniqueness & Diversity
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>As a general rule, all bridges that are 50 years or older are considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ekegren Road Bridge is a wooden stringer bridge with a timber deck and wooden abutments on timber piling. It was constructed in 1938 and is approximately 78 years old. The County has been doing periodic deck replacements since the structure was built. The current deck is in poor condition and has several large and dangerous holes. According to MDT Historian, Jon Axline, the bridge does <u>not</u> meet the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places, therefore the need for mitigation is not anticipated to be necessary. No other culturally significant sites are located in the immediate project area.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jon Axline, MDT Historian</p>

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KEY	28	Transportation Networks and Traffic Flow Conflicts (e.g., rail; auto including local traffic; airport runway clear zones - avoidance of incompatible land use in airport runway clear zones)
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect current transportation networks and traffic flow conflicts. A new structure will increase the efficiency of the local transportation network, by restoring the existing crossing to service. This project will offer more direct access.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>
KEY	29	Consistency with Local Ordinances, Resolutions, or Plans (e.g., conformance with local comprehensive plans, zoning, or capital improvement plans)
B		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>The project is in accordance with the recommendations and priorities set forth in the Blaine County Bridge Evaluation & Bridge Capital Improvements Plan. The existing bridge does not comply with the current standards. According to the County Planner, the proposed bridge replacement fits the goals of the Blaine County Growth Policy. Specifically, Goal #1 for Community Infrastructure developments states that Blaine County shall maintain existing roads and work to reduce maintenance and operations costs via strategic bridge replacements.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E. - Jeremy Fadness, Blaine County Planner - 2016 Blaine County Bridge Evaluation and Capital Improvement Plan</p>
KEY	30	Is there a Regulatory Action on Private Property Rights as a Result of this Project? (Consider options that reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.)
N		<p><i>Response and source of information:</i></p> <p>There proposed project should not have any impact on private property rights.</p> <p>- Cole Peebles, P.E.</p>

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FORM

Answer the following as they apply to your proposed project:

1. **Alternatives:** Describe reasonable alternatives to the project.

Several bridge alternatives were explored including; no action, repair/rehabilitation, and replacement options. As the original structure requires complete replacement of the existing wooden stringers and timber deck, and significant work to replace the deteriorated substructure, it is in the best interest of the County to replace the bridge rather than conduct repairs (or perform rehabilitation). A new structure would have a useful life of 75 to 100 years and require a substantially less amount of maintenance. Precast, prestressed concrete and steel modular bridge systems were found to be the most feasible superstructure options. Spread footing and driven pile foundations were explored for the substructure. The analysis determined that a precast concrete bulb tee beam superstructure with a driven pile foundation as the most economical and technically feasible option. The selected alternative will provide a number of benefits, specifically: ease of maintenance, increased hydraulic capacity, increased scour resistance, and enhanced public safety.

2. **Mitigation:** Identify any enforceable measures necessary to reduce any impacts to an insignificant level.

Contract documents will require contractors to follow the requirements of any stream permits issued to perform the work. Contract documents for construction will require contractors to follow the requirements of the permits, any specified construction window, necessary utility location and adhere to Best Management Practices (BMP's) during construction. The Montana DEQ requires an asbestos inspection be performed by an accredited inspector prior to bridge component demolition/removal. The DEQ may exercise its right to waive the asbestos inspection requirement depending on the type of bridge structure and its components.

3. **Is an EA or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required?** Describe whether or not an EA or EIS is required, and explain in detail why or why not.

Based on our analysis, the EA is an adequate level of environmental review. An EIS is not required.

4. **Public Involvement:** Describe the process followed to involve the public in the proposed project and its potential environmental impacts. Identify the public meetings -- where and when -- the project was considered and discussed, and when the applicant approved the final environmental assessment.

The public was provided opportunities for comment prior to the project being submitted for grant funding. Bridge alternatives were discussed during a regularly scheduled County Commissioners Meeting on March 7th, 2016. Also, a public hearing was held on Tuesday, March 22nd, 2016. Written comments were also accepted until 1 p.m. on March 21st, 2016. Notices advertising the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and Public Hearing were published in the Blaine County Journal on March 9th and 16th of 2016. There have been several letters of support, but to date, no written or verbal negative comments from the general public.

concerning the project. The Blaine County Commission determined whether (or not) to adopt the EA immediately following the Public Hearing on March 22nd.

5. **Person(s) Responsible for Preparing:** Identify the person(s) responsible for preparation of this checklist.

Cole Peebles, P.E. – Great West Engineering

6. **Other Agencies:** List any state, local, or federal agencies that have over-lapping or additional jurisdiction or environmental review responsibility for the proposed action and the permits, licenses, and other authorizations required; and list any agencies or groups that were contacted or contributed information to this Environmental Assessment (EA).

Other Agencies:

- Blaine County
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program

Contributors to EA:

- Blaine County
- MT Department of Transportation
- MT Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Natural Heritage Program
- Blaine County Ambulance Department
- Blaine County Disaster Emergency Services
- Triangle Communications
- United States Postal Service

Authorized Representative Signature

Date

Blaine County Commission

Frank DePriest – Commission Chair