# II. Introduction

This report summarizes the final results of the US Highway 89 (US 89) Corridor planning process and presents goals, objectives and recommendations regarding the future development of the corridor.

## Study Area

As shown in Figure 1, the study area comprised the 27-mile segment of US 89 between the Idaho-Utah state line and east city limit of Montpelier. The largest activity centers along the corridor are the city of Montpelier and, in the summer months, the Fish Haven area. Other activity centers are the rural communities of St. Charles, Bloomington, and Paris. US 89 provides connections to Utah to the south and Wyoming to the north, as well as the major intersecting roads of State Highway 36 in Ovid and US 30 in Montpelier. Due to the rural character of the study area, there is no transit service. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are limited, with the only pathway extending from just south of the Idaho-Utah state line into Utah and sidewalks adjacent to US 89 in Paris and Montpelier. Other modes of transportation within or nearby the study area include a Union Pacific rail line, a public and a private airport, two high-power transmission lines, and the navigable waterway of Bear Lake.

## Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the US 89 transportation corridor is to provide a transportation facility for a broad range of current and future travel demands. Examples of these demands include serving the needs of travelers who use the corridor for both regional and long-distance through-travel; serving the needs of residents and communities along and near the corridor that rely on the corridor for commuting, conducting community service activities, and carrying out the other routine activities of daily life and work; and serving the increasing number of people who come to this area to recreate. It is intended that this corridor should accommodate many modes of travel; both motorized and non-motorized, and that these transportation facilities and services should be provided in as efficient, economical, safe, equitable, and environmentally-conserving a manner as can reasonably be achieved through adherence to accepted standards, requirements of the law, interagency collaboration, coordination, and cooperation, and consultation with elected officials and the public.

The purpose of the corridor plan is to define the best course of action for management practices and project improvements along the corridor over the next 20 years, including all transportation modes. This will be done through the identification of existing and

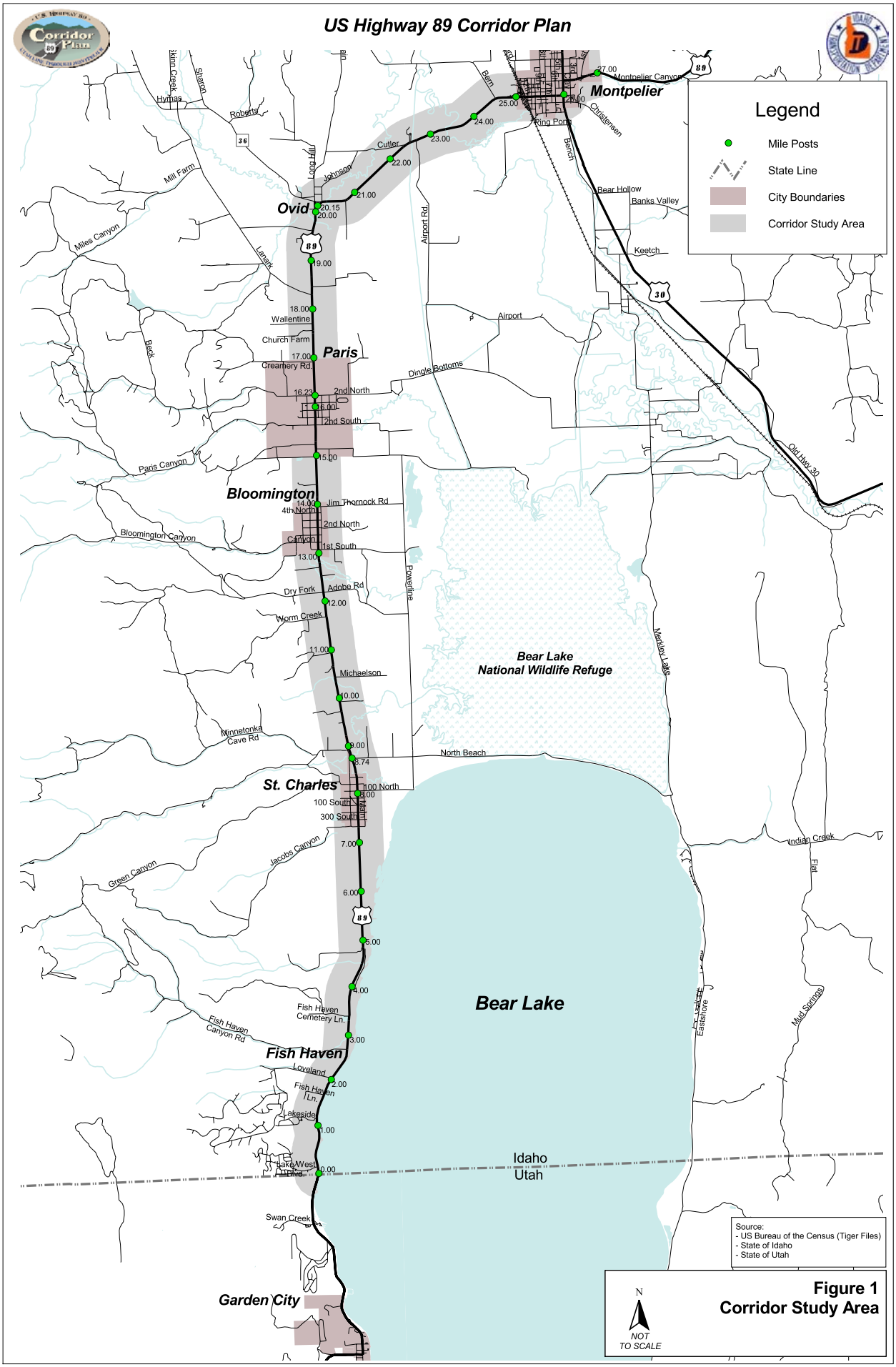


**Figure 1**
**Corridor Study Area**

future needs, establishment of corridor goals and objectives, and development of recommended management strategies and improvements to meet those needs that are consistent with the goals and objectives.

## Statement of Need

The need for the corridor plan is based on the expected growth, and the requirement to plan for its orderly accommodation in all modes of transportation. Annual average daily traffic (AADT) volumes along the corridor currently range from roughly 1,000 to 8,500 vehicles per day (vpd). The southern part of the corridor near Bear Lake, experiences a substantial seasonal variation in average daily traffic volumes due to a large influx of recreational traffic during the summer months. Near Paris, this influx produces traffic volumes three times higher in the summer than in the winter and six times higher in summer than winter just south of Fish Haven. The largest amount of future growth is expected to take place in this Bear Lake area where traffic volumes are forecasted to roughly double by year 2025. The balance of the corridor is expected to grow also, but more slowly, except between Washington and Clay streets where traffic volumes are forecasted to increase by about 55%.

## Public Involvement Program

An important part of the corridor planning process is the involvement of residents, businesses and local and state governments to help define the transportation needs of the corridor and identify appropriate solutions to meet those needs. To involve these groups, a public involvement program was established to:

- Listen to the community about transportation issues along the corridor; and
- Solicit input on potential solutions and priorities to address those issues.

The public involvement program was designed to provide a framework to create a collaborative environment that encouraged input and participation by local stakeholders. The goal was to ensure the corridor plan addresses all of the issues and has broad community understanding and support.

Some of the key issues identified through the public involvement program were:

- Traffic conflicts and general congestion in the Fish Haven area during the peak summer recreational months;
- Need for a bicycle facility between the Utah state line and St. Charles;
- Need for bypass around the Fish Haven area;
- Narrow shoulder widths within several segments of the corridor, including the Utah state line to St. Charles and Paris to Ovid Corner;

- Weather-related driving problems between Paris and Ovid Corner;
- Limited sight distance at a number of intersections along the corridor;
- Safety problems and driver confusion at Ovid Corner caused by poor configuration of the US 89/SH-36 junction; and
- Speed limits too high in several areas between Utah state line and Paris.

The program was integrated into the corridor planning process and designed to solicit input at key steps.

| Corridor Planning Process | Public Involvement Program |
|---|---|
| | |
| Issue Identification | Stakeholder Interviews<br>Public Open House #1<br>Task Force and TAC meeting |
| Existing and Future Conditions | Newsletter #1<br>Public Open House #2<br>Task Force and TAC meeting |
| Corridor Purpose and Goals<br>Preliminary Strategy and Improvement Options | Task Force and TAC meeting |
| Recommended Strategy and Options | Newsletter #2<br>Public Open House #3<br>Task Force and TAC meeting |
| Draft Corridor Plan | Task Force and TAC review |

**Advisory Groups**

There were two advisory groups established to review and comment on the work products at key decision points. Each group met individually or in a combined setting at the major milestones of the corridor planning process.

***Technical Advisory Committee***

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisted of county and city planning and public works staff, federal and state resource agency staff, FHWA representatives, and ITD staff. The TAC provided guidance on technical aspects of the planning process. This group met before or after each public meeting to review the results, as well as at specific points in the process (such as in the development of improvement options) to review work-in-progress and to provide guidance on technical work products. Agencies or organizations represented on the TAC included:

Montpelier Ranger District, US Forest Service
Region Five, Idaho Fish & Game Dept.
Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality
US Fish & Wildlife Service

Snake River Basin Field Office, US Fish & Wildlife Service
Region Ten, US EPA
Four County Alliance of SE Idaho, Idaho Dept. of Commerce
Bear Lake School District #33
Federal Highway Administration
Bear Lake County Airport
Bear Lake Regional Commission
Boise Regulatory Office, US Army Corps of Engineers
Bear Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce
Bear Lake County
City of Montpelier
City of Paris
City of St. Charles
Bear Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Cultural-Natural Resources, Northwest Band of the Shoshone Nation
Transportation Department, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
Southeast Idaho Council of Governments
District 5, Idaho Transportation Department
Region One, Utah Department of Transportation

***Community Task Force***

A Task Force was formed of locally elected and appointed officials and other community organizations. In general, this group met before or after each public meeting to review the work in progress, respond to public comments, and provide direction on the next steps in the planning process. Task Force members included:

City of Montpelier
City of Paris
City of St. Charles
City of Bloomington
Board of Bear Lake County Commissioners
Bear Lake County Planning & Zoning Board
Montpelier Planning & Zoning Commission
Idaho State Senate, District 31
Idaho House of Representatives, District 31
Senate Transportation Committee, Idaho State Senate
Transportation and Defense Committee, Idaho House of Representatives
Bear Lake County School Board, School District #33
Fort Hall Business Council
Business Council, Northwest Band of the Shoshone Nation
Wind River Tribal Council
Bear Lake County Planning & Zoning Board
Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

**Stakeholder Interviews**
As part of the issue identification phase of the US 89 corridor plan, a series of fourteen (14) stakeholder interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone in May and June, 2002. The purpose of the interviews was to gain local insight and experience with the current conditions and problems along the corridor.

**Public Meetings**
The core opportunity for public participation in the corridor planning process was three public meetings. The meetings were held in an open house format to present and discuss issues and the major findings of the corridor planning effort. The open house format included individual topic displays with ITD and the consultant team staff on hand to answer questions. The displays were supported by informational handouts and feedback questionnaires.

Given the relatively short length of the corridor and small size of the communities involved, one public meeting was held for each milestone in the planning process. Public meetings were held at either the Paris Elementary School or the Oregon Trail Center in Montpelier.

Advance public notice was provided using available and appropriate formats and methods such as media press releases, newspaper ads, newsletters, direct mail notices, community postings, and postings on the project website. Opportunities to provide public comment at the public meetings included both verbal and written comment formats.

The following public meetings were held:

**Open house #1** (June 25, 2002)

- Announce the start of the study;
- Explain the study process and schedule;
- Provide information about opportunities and format for public input; and
- Identify corridor issues.

**Open house #2** (July 1, 2003)

- Review existing and future conditions;
- Review land use and socio-economic profile; and
- Review environmental scan.

**Open house #3** (May 18, 2004)

- Review Statement of Purpose, Corridor Goals, and Screening Criteria;
- Review recommended improvement options;

**Project Newsletters**
A project logo was developed to create a unique and consistent identity for the project.

Newsletters were the primary vehicle for summarizing the technical information and announcing upcoming public meetings. The newsletters were distributed through a combination of direct mail and drop-off points (such as government offices, community centers, libraries, and schools). The distribution was timed to allow at least a two-week notice for an upcoming public meeting.

**Media Releases**
Media releases were used to announce upcoming public meetings. Each media release was distributed by the ITD Public Affairs Office. Also, public meeting announcements were included on community calendars.

In addition to the media releases, newspaper display ads were placed in the Montpelier newspaper to run for the two weeks prior to the public meeting.

**Project Website**
A website was used to post project updates, meeting announcements and summaries, technical reports, maps, and newsletters for downloading. Electronic files of all work products and reports were produced for posting on the website.

**Mailing List**
A mailing list was maintained for the duration of the project. The list consisted of 145 local stakeholders, organizations, and individuals that participated in the public meetings. After each meeting, the list was updated and used for the next meeting notice and newsletter distribution.

## Study Organization

The study was organized according to the following major tasks:

I. Identification of Existing Transportation, Land Use, and Environmental Conditions
II. Identification of Future Transportation and Land Use Conditions
III. Establishment of Corridor Goals and Objectives
IV. Development of Management Strategies and Improvement Options

V. Identification of Recommended Management Strategies and Improvements
VI. Preparation of Corridor Plan Document

Task I. involved the preparation of inventories of existing transportation, land use, and environmental characteristics within the study area. The transportation inventory data was used to analyze existing transportation deficiencies for the various modes. Existing (reported) transportation deficiencies were also identified through a series of stakeholder interviews, an ITD Management Team meeting, a joint Technical Advisory Committee and Task Force meeting, and a public open house. Also as a part of Task I., a review of local transportation and land use plans that may affect the corridor was conducted.

In Task II., future transportation and land use conditions were identified for the year 2025. A land use forecast for the study area was performed which served as the basis for the development of long-range travel forecasts. The travel forecasts were used to estimate future transportation deficiencies, using the same analysis procedures followed in Task I. for existing conditions.

The information on existing and future conditions developed in Tasks I. and II. was used in Task III. to establish corridor goals and objectives. A set of screening criteria related to the goals and objectives was also developed in Task III. for evaluating management strategy and improvement options.

In Task IV., management strategy and improvement options were developed to address the transportation deficiencies identified in Tasks I. and II. These included improvements to existing roadways as well as alternative mode improvements.

The improvement options were evaluated in Task V. using the screening criteria developed in Task III. This resulted in a set of draft recommended improvements that were reviewed by the ITD Management Team, Task Force, Technical Advisory Committee, and public. The draft recommended improvements were revised based on the review comments to produce the final recommended improvements.

Part I. of this report is divided into an existing transportation conditions section and a future transportation conditions section. Both of these sections are organized by mode (roadways, bicycle and pedestrian, and other modes). For each mode, a description of modal facilities and demand is provided first, followed by a discussion of identified deficiencies. Roadway deficiencies are broken down by the categories of capacity and level of service (LOS), traffic operations, safety, and geometrics.

Part II. of the report is divided into a land use section and environmental section. Within the land use section, information is first presented on existing land use conditions by corridor segment. This is followed by a discussion of estimated future land use conditions based on forecasts of housing units and employment. The environmental

section contains a socioeconomic profile of the local population and an environmental scan characterizing existing environmental resources within the corridor.

Part III. of the report describes the recommended corridor improvements and the process used to define them. The improvements are presented by corridor segment from the Utah state line to Minnetonka Cave Rd., Minnetonka Cave Rd. to the Paris south city limits, Paris south city limits to Ovid Corner, and Ovid Corner through Montpelier. In addition, the results of a special refinement analysis conducted for the Ovid Corner area are presented.

Finally, it should be noted that the transportation facility deficiencies identified in this report do not necessarily pose safety hazards, nor does the identification of these deficiencies imply that the improvements required to address them will necessarily be constructed. Implementation of the improvements identified in this study is dependent on the availability of funding. Preparation of this study by the Idaho Transportation Department does not guarantee adequate financial resources to implement these improvements.