Background

- Transportation access is one of many factors influencing the pattern and/or rate of development activity. Transportation access is a “necessary, but not sufficient” condition for growth to occur.

Project Objectives

- Process improvements - enhance existing functional process to make indirect effects assessment easier and faster.
- Indirect land use effects assessment guidance - including the development of screening criteria and recommended methodologies for detailed analysis. These materials may be included in the Montana Department of Transportation’s (MDT) Environmental Manual. Guidance tailored to unique Montana conditions—large state with very low population density.
- Adaptive management plan – to ensure the guidance remains up-to-date with the latest data, legal and regulatory information.
- Even though we cannot predict the future with certainty and future land development is inherently uncertain, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a “hard look” into “reasonably foreseeable” indirect land use and environmental effects of proposed projects. Indirect effects (secondary impacts) are also addressed by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).
- Due to the uncertainty involved in forecasting the indirect effects of transportation projects on land use, transportation agencies nationally have, struggled in identifying the appropriate level of analysis for this issue, in some cited studies being in litigation and project delays.

Research Methodology

The following research activities informed the Indirect Effects Desk Reference development:
- Review of existing MDT practice: review of MDT environmental documents (6 CEAs, 7 EAs, 6 EIs), interviews of MDT staff and a survey of resource agency staff.
- Case law review: precedent setting indirect effects cases under NEPA and MEPA.
- Literature review: review of national research and other state-level guidance documents for approaches applicable to Montana context.
- Review of Montana State Statutes Regarding Land Use.

Overview of the Indirect Effects Desk Reference

The Desk Reference for Indirect Effects Assessment provides step-by-step guidance for addressing indirect land use effects in the environmental review documentation of transportation projects in Montana.

Indirect Effects Screening Methodology

- Standardized process to determine if further analysis needed.
- User friendly and minimal data requirements.
- The vast majority of MDT transportation projects will not require detailed analysis based on this methodology.

MDT Indirect Land Use Effects Screening Process

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Implementation recommendations

- Incorporate the indirect effects guidance developed through this research in the MDT Environmental Manual.
- Implementation monitoring, including mechanisms for soliciting and tracking feedback from practitioners.
- Update data sources/references as new data and tools become available.

Assessing Indirect Land Use Effects of Transportation Projects in Montana

2000-2010 Montana Population Change by County

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Internal Reviewers: Jonathan F. Groat, Served as the Project Manager for the work developed through this research.

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