



Proposal to Replace the Lamar River Bridge

Project Scoping

July 28, 2008

Dear Interested Party:

The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, is planning to repair, rehabilitate, or replace the Lamar River Bridge located on the Northeast Entrance Road within Yellowstone National Park. The bridge is located approximately five miles east of Tower Junction. The existing bridge was constructed in 1939, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a contributing element of the Northeast Entrance Road Historic District which is also eligible for listing.

The existing three-span structure (bridge) is currently in fair to poor structural condition and deterioration has been marked as progressive and steady according to a 2006 Federal Highway Administration bridge inspection report.

The condition of the bridge does not pose any safety concern for travelers. No significant changes in the structural condition have been documented during inspections. Deterioration of the concrete deck and curb as well as paint on steel girders is the most noticeable. Over-size vehicles are strictly prohibited and the National Park Service has denied hauling for construction and logging vehicles related to activity in and around Cooke City and Silver Gate as well as the Beartooth Highway.

If replacement of the bridge occurs, a temporary bridge would be needed to allow for continued traffic during construction if the current location of the bridge is used. If a new location for a permanent bridge is chosen, the existing bridge could continue to allow traffic until a new bridge is completed. All action alternatives would require a temporary road be constructed down the banks of the river to allow equipment access for pier and abutment work to be completed. Some traffic delays would be expected during construction, though traffic on this road segment would continue throughout construction.

An Environmental Assessment will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The National Park Service encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project; once during initial project scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and I invite you to voice your ideas, comments, or concerns in this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the Environmental Assessment. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

*Suzanne Lewis
Superintendent
Yellowstone National Park*

Alternatives

Following is the preliminary range of alternatives to be evaluated in the Environmental Assessment:

- **No-Action Alternative:** A new bridge would not be constructed, and the existing bridge would continue to deteriorate. This alternative serves as a baseline from which to compare the impacts of other action alternatives.
- **Repair the Existing Bridge:** Re-deck the existing bridge to a wider 30' width and rehabilitate the existing superstructure and substructure.
- **Rehabilitation of the Existing Bridge:** Replace the superstructure (deck and girders) and retrofit the existing abutments and piers
- **Replace the Existing Bridge on Existing Alignment:** Remove the existing bridge and construct an entirely new structure located on the same horizontal alignment as the existing bridge.
- **Replace Existing Bridge Along New Alignment:** Construct a new bridge adjacent to the existing bridge rather than on the existing alignment.

Overview of the Process

Project milestones include ("*" indicates opportunities for public comment):

- Public scoping (closes August 28, 2008)*
- Preparation of the Environmental Assessment
- Public review of the Environmental Assessment*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision

Resources and Concerns

The Environmental Assessment will analyze potential impacts to a number of resources including:

- Geology, soils, and vegetation
- Wildlife and species of special concern
- Health and Safety
- Water resources, floodplains, and wetlands
- Cultural resources
- Visitor use and experience
- Park operations

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have any ideas to share about issues/concerns, or are there any issues/concerns about the project that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the environmental assessment?

How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/yell>

Please provide all comments by August 28, 2008. If you wish to be added to the Park's mailing list for future correspondence, please indicate that in your response.

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this website, then you may also submit written comments to the address on the postmark, Attention: Lamar River Bridge Project. You may also hand-deliver written comments to the Superintendent's Office at Yellowstone National Park.

Yellowstone National Park
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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

