



Northeast Entrance Road Improvement Project
October 2024

The road is renowned for its spectacular landscape and wildlife viewing.

Project Overview

The National Park Service (NPS), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for improvements to the Northeast Entrance Road (road) in Yellowstone National Park (park). The project begins about 1 mile east of the intersection of Northeast Entrance Road and Tower Junction and extends about 27 miles to the northeast boundary of the park. The project will improve safety and traffic flow through various upgrades. Project alternatives will analyze ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to sensitive resources. The NPS encourages your participation throughout the planning process.

Why is this Project Needed?

Aging Infrastructure: The road has not had any substantial improvements since the 1980’s. The existing pavement has exceeded its 20-year design life and was not designed for current traffic loads. The age of the road combined with increased visitation has also taken a toll on associated infrastructure such as bridges, culverts, and retaining walls. In areas where the road intersects seasonally wet areas or crosses over areas with historical subsurface water flows, the road subgrade is poorly drained and susceptible to frost heaves.

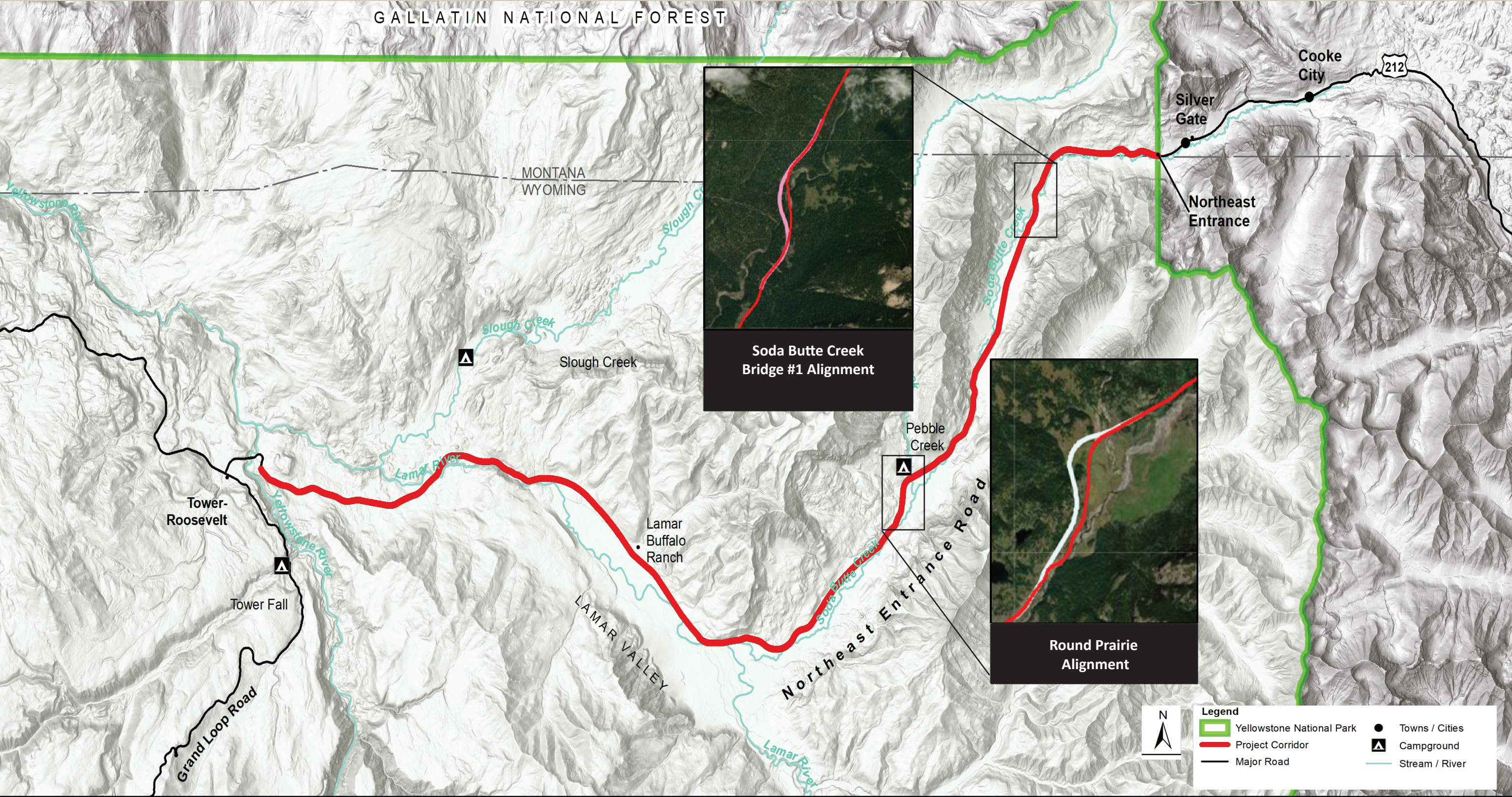
Outdated Standards that Impact Safety: The existing corridor has a substandard width of 20-22 feet while the modern park standard is 30 feet. The corridor lacks adequate shoulders for vehicles to pull off in case of an emergency. The increased road width, the addition of shoulders, and improvements to parking and turnouts will help increase safety by minimizing vehicle conflicts and facilitating traffic flows.

Resource and Resiliency Concerns: The lack of adequate shoulders and turnouts are causing resource issues when drivers pull off in undesignated areas which leads to vegetation degradation and the spread of invasive weeds. Some of these areas are steep and pose a safety issue. In addition, several sections of the road washed out during the 2022 flood event, and other sections may be vulnerable to similar future events. The alignment could be diverted in some locations within the corridor due to sensitive resources and/or natural hazards impacting infrastructure.

Improvement of the Visitor Experience: The Northeast Entrance Road along with the North Entrance Road are the only two park roads open year-round to the communities of Silver Gate and Cooke City, MT. This corridor includes the very popular Lamar Valley, known for its spectacular landscape and wildlife viewing. The parking configurations in some turnouts need to be expanded and/or redesigned to add capacity, improve vehicle circulation, and add new wildlife viewing turnouts.

Yellowstone National Park

Northeast Entrance Road Improvement Project



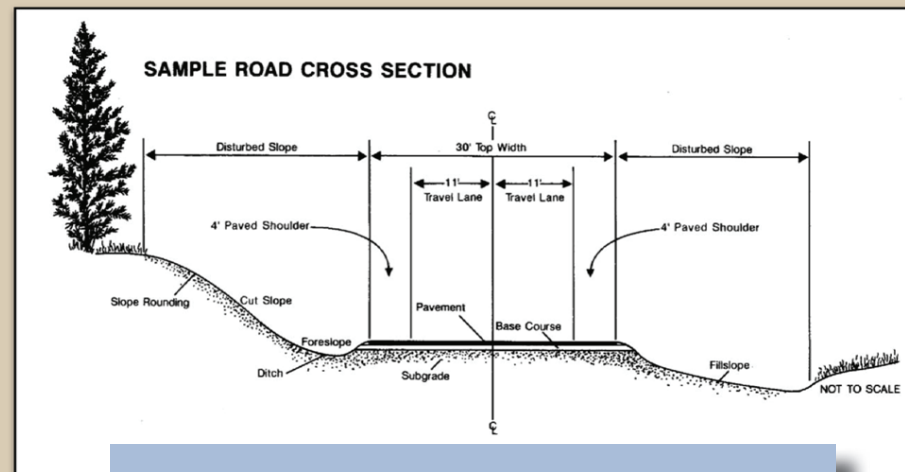
Yellowstone National Park

Northeast Entrance Road Improvement Project



Alternatives to be Evaluated in the EA

- 1. No Action Alternative:** No substantial infrastructure improvements would take place, but routine and periodic maintenance would continue as issues arise. Deterioration and maintenance needs of the corridor infrastructure would likely increase.
- 2. Action Alternative:** Upgrade Northeast Entrance Road. This alternative would upgrade the road as well as its associated infrastructure including widening from 20-22 feet to 30 feet; repairing or replacing bridges and culverts; improving parking areas and turnouts; and providing additional turnouts where appropriate.



Park-Standard Typical Road Section

This alternative is primarily on the existing alignment, but there are localized off-alignment options in several areas along the road to minimize impacts to sensitive resources or improve resiliency of the route against natural hazards. Two of the more prominent off-alignment options are located in Round Prairie and Soda Butte.

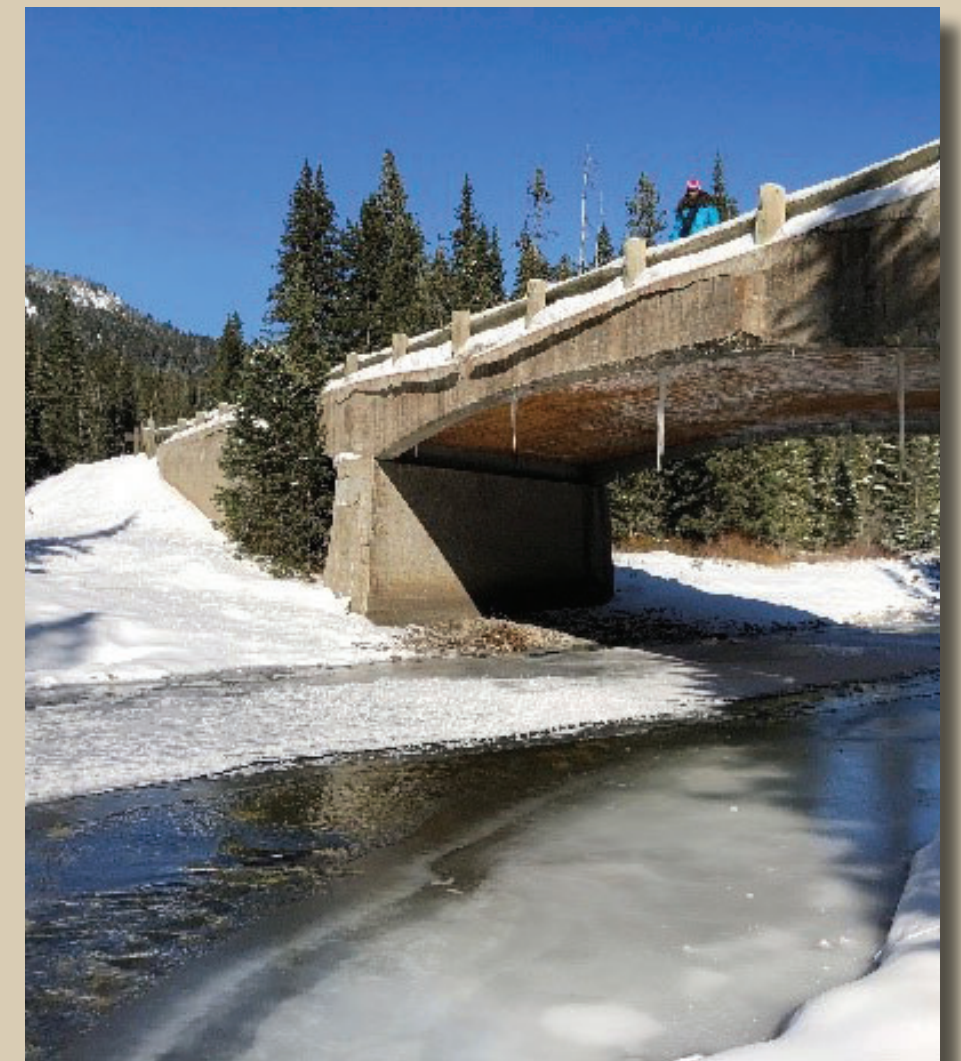
Round Prairie Alignment Option

This option would realign approximately 2.1 miles of road up to 805 feet to the north-northwest to reduce road infrastructure within the channel migration zone of Soda Butte Creek.



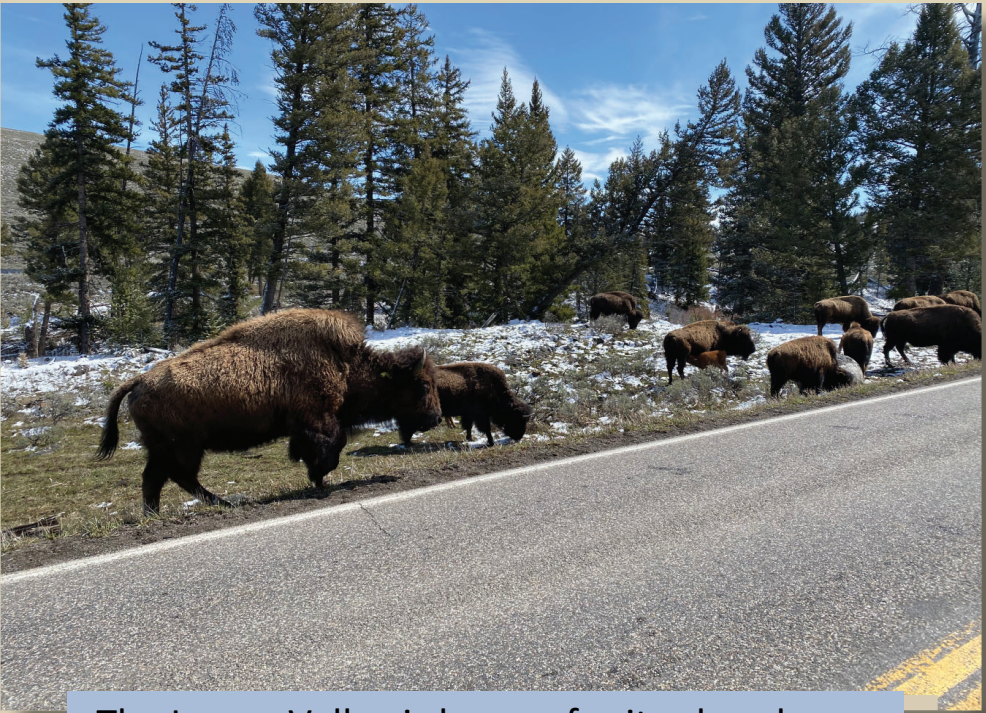
Soda Butte Creek Bridge #1 Alignment Option

This option would realign approximately 1 mile of road up to 315 feet to the west and construct a new 550-foot, multi-span bridge, spanning both the channel and floodplain, allowing Soda Butte Creek to flow unimpeded by the bridge.



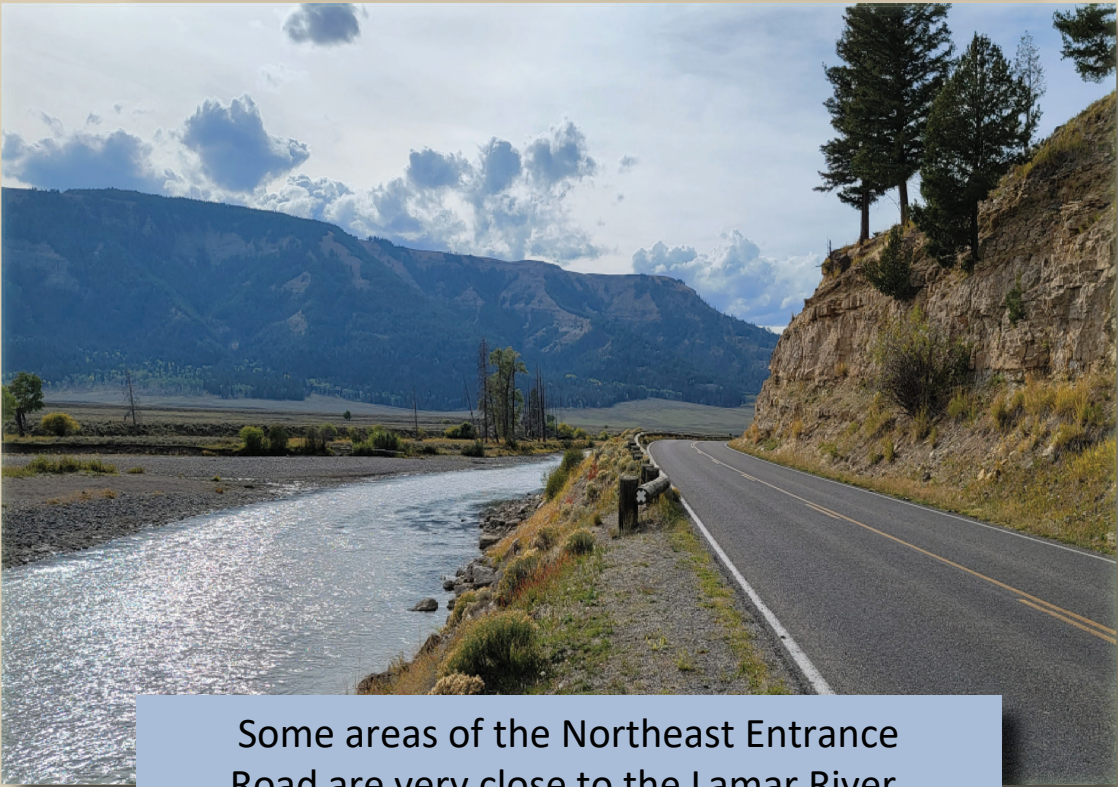
Yellowstone National Park

Northeast Entrance Road Improvement Project



The Lamar Valley is known for its abundance of bison, wolves, and other wildlife.

Road improvements will consider resiliency to future natural disasters while improving visitor use and experience.



Some areas of the Northeast Entrance Road are very close to the Lamar River.



The damage caused by the 2022 flood event to the Northeast Entrance Road was repaired within 3-16 months.

Considerations

The EA will evaluate potential resource impacts associated with the proposed project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NPS guidance. Resources evaluated include, but are not limited to natural and cultural resources, socioeconomics, and visitor experience. Some primary resource considerations include:

Resiliency to Future Natural Disasters or Climate-Related Events: One of the primary goals of the project is to enhance the road’s resilience to future flooding and other natural disasters. The new design will repair and replace bridges, improve drainage, and reinforce embankments to better withstand extreme weather events. These measures aim to ensure long-term access and safety for park visitors and staff, even in the face of severe weather conditions.

Wildlife and Vegetation: The project will consider the potential impacts on wildlife habitats and movement patterns for species such as bison, elk, bighorn sheep, moose; and habitat for whitebark pine which was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in December 2022.

Visitor Use and Experience: The park is renowned for its diverse wildlife and the road is a popular route for wildlife viewing. The project will improve the visitor experience by providing safer infrastructure that protects both visitors and wildlife. Other improvements may include additional picnic opportunities and vault toilets, and the rehabilitation of the Pebble Creek Campground, which was damaged during the 2022 flood.

Wetland and Stream Impacts: The road intersects several streams, including Soda Butte Creek, Pebble Creek, Lamar River, and Slough Creek. Numerous wetlands are also located adjacent to the roadway throughout the project area. Efforts will be made to minimize impacts to these streams and wetlands to the extent practicable.

Cultural and Historic: We are also using this process to identify and evaluate effects to historic properties to satisfy requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.



Project Milestones

Public Scoping:	October - November 2024
Development of EA:	October 2024 - April 2025
Public Comment Period on the EA:	June 2025
Publish Finding of No Significant Impact:	October 2025
Final Design:	October 2025 - Winter 2026
Commencement of Construction:	Spring 2027



How to Comment

During this scoping phase of the project, the park invites you to share your comments and suggestions by going to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: https://parkplanning.nps.gov/YELL_NER. Comments will be accepted from October 29th to December 3rd, 2024.

Written comments may also be mailed to the address below and must be received by December 3rd, 2024.

Yellowstone National Park
Attn: Northeast Entrance Road Project
PO Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190-0168



The Northeast Entrance Road currently has narrow shoulders and a substandard width with limited parking opportunities.