



# News Release

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## Public Hearing to Receive Comments on Targhee Pass Environmental Assessment Set for January 17 in Island Park

ISLAND PARK ? The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have released the Targhee Pass Environmental Assessment (EA) and invite the public to participate in a public hearing on January 17 to ask questions and provide comments. The hearing will take place from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Island Park EMS Building, 4124 County Circle Road, in Island Park. The Targhee Pass EA evaluates the risks, benefits, opportunities and costs associated with reconstruction of Targhee Pass (U.S. 20 between the junction with S.H. 87 and the Montana state line).

The hearing will be an open-house format, and citizens are encouraged to attend any time during the three-hour period. Information outlining the findings of the EA will be on display, and the public will have the opportunity to give written or verbal comment. Hearing materials will also be made available on the study website ([www.islandparkus20.com](http://www.islandparkus20.com)) the day of the hearing for those unavailable to attend in-person. Attending the public hearing is not a requirement for submitting a comment. Comments can also be submitted via:

- ? **Phone:** (208) 220-5937
- ? **Email:** [targheepass@langdongroupinc.com](mailto:targheepass@langdongroupinc.com)
- ? **Regular Mail:** Idaho Transportation Department District 6 (Attn: Public Information Specialist) P.O. Box 97, Rigby, ID 83442-0097

Comments pertaining to the Targhee Pass EA through any of the above methods will become part of the record for this project and may be submitted through February 1, 2019.

A print copy of the EA is available for review at the Island Park City Offices, Fremont County Planning & Zoning Office, the Fremont District Library (Island Park Branch), the ITD District 6 office in Rigby, ITD headquarters in Boise, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Offices in Boise. The EA as well as other project-related information are also available on [www.islandparkus20.com](http://www.islandparkus20.com) and the ITD website at: <https://itd.idaho.gov/d6/>.

?ITD looked at a number of possible alternatives to improve roadway structural integrity, traffic flow and safety of the Targhee Pass segment of U.S. 20, and identified Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative,? said ITD project manager Derek Noyes. ?ITD encourages the public to review the findings in the EA and welcomes stakeholder feedback on the document at the public hearing or any time between now and February 1,, 2019."

Roadway improvements included with Alternative 3 (and all of the build alternatives) are:

- ? An additional travel lane in the uphill direction from S.H. 87 to the Montana State line
- ? Shoulder widening from 5-feet to 8-feet
- ? Hill cut to improve stopping sight distance
- ? Left-and-right-turn lanes into Big Horn Hills Estates entrances
- ? Tree clearing to reduce shade
- ? Road subsurface reconstruction and drainage improvements

In addition to the roadway improvements, Alternative 3 would include installation of an animal detection system throughout the 4-mile segment of U.S. 20. The system would alert drivers to the presence of animals. This alternative does not include crossing structures with wildlife fencing.



ITD's considerations for preferring Alternative 3 include:

- ? No easements would be required on private or Federal lands.
- ? Alternative 3 would not require installation of cattle guards/electric mats and pedestrian access gates, such as entrances to Big Horn Hills Estates.
- ? Local elected officials have communicated that they do not support wildlife crossings and fencing as improvements for the U.S. 20 corridor.
- ? Implementing Alternative 3 would provide an opportunity to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions on Targhee Pass. This would partially support objectives of the State Wildlife Action Plan and recommendations of the Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy by reducing mortality. Fremont County Commissioners have indicated through a land use plan resolution (April 2018) that they would support animal-detection systems for reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- ? Targhee Pass has high seasonal variability in traffic volume. Major wildlife movements take place when traffic volumes are lower in off-tourism and recreation seasons. The permeability for wildlife movement has not been shown to be impacting large mammal populations.
- ? On a statewide and districtwide priority, the Targhee Pass location does not have the highest frequency of wildlife vehicle collisions. With limited funding, priority locations that have a greater safety benefit should be implemented prior to wildlife crossing through the Targhee Pass area.

Targhee Pass is a four-mile portion of the U.S. 20 corridor that was evaluated as a part of a safety corridor planning effort for U.S. 20 from Chester to the Montana State Line. In addition to serving Yellowstone National Park, Targhee Pass serves many popular recreational and tourist destinations. The highway functions as the region's Main Street, providing primary access to year-round residences, vacation homes, hunting and fishing lodges, state park and national forest areas, and a variety of community commercial establishments.

FHWA is the lead agency for the EA. The EA is being completed in accordance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). For more information, please contact Andrea Gumm at 208-220-5937 or [targheepass@landgongroupinc.com](mailto:targheepass@landgongroupinc.com).

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