U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (Transit in the Parks Program)
Project Proposal for Fiscal Year 2009 Funds – Planning Project

BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION	
Project Name (Please provide a 1-2 sentence description of the project): The Highway 86 Alternative Transportation Study will assess the feasibility of alternative transportation to reduce negative impacts of traffic on public lands along the MT Highway 86 corridor connecting Bozeman, MT to USFS and USFWS lands north of town.	
Proposed Funding Recipient: Gallatin National Forest	
Public land unit(s) involved: Gallatin National Forest US Fish & Wildlife Service	Location of Project City: Bozeman County: Gallatin State: Montana Congressional District: MT-at large
Federal Land Management Agency managing the above unit(s): ☐ Bureau of Land Management ☐ Bureau of Reclamation ☐ Fish and Wildlife Service ☒ Forest Service ☐ National Park Service ☐ Other (e.g. Federal Trust) Describe:	Type of Planning Project: (Implementation projects, please use the alternate form) ☒ Planning
☐ Proposal is to plan for a possible new alternative transportation system where none currently exists. ☒ Proposal is to plan for a possible expansion or enhancement of an existing alternative transportation system. (expand existing transit and trails systems)	
Transit in Parks Program Funding Requested during FY 2009 $279,925	**Total** Cost of Planning Project at Completion (All sources) $279,925
Were you awarded Transit in Parks Program funds for this project in the past? ☐ Yes ☒ No If answer "Yes," please provide amount awarded: $	
Do you plan to request additional Transit in Parks Program funds in future years? ☒ Yes ☐ No **(Note: If you wish to compete for future Transit in Parks Program fiscal year funds you must reapply).** If answer "Yes," please specify Transit in Parks Program proposed funding levels for out years below:	

FY 2010 $depends on planning study	FY 2011 $depends on planning study	FY 2012 $0

FY 2009 Funding Amounts from sources other than Transit in Parks Program funds? ☐ Yes ☒ No If answer "Yes," please specify funding levels per source below: Strong potential for in-kind and cash donations.			
State $	Local $	Federal (other than Transit in Parks Program)	Private sources $

		$	

CONTACT PERSON	
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OTHER PROJECT SPONSORS (in addition to funding recipient)
Bridger Bowl Ski Area, Bohart Ranch Cross Country Ski Center, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Streamline Transit System, Human Resource and Development Council (HRDC), Gallatin County, City of Bozeman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Western Transportation Institute, Montana Outdoor Science School

REQUIREMENTS
☐ If a State, Tribal, or local government entity is proposing the project, the applicant has contacted the manager of the Federal land unit(s) and has the consent of the Federal land management agency or agencies affected. ☒ The project is consistent with the metropolitan and statewide planning process. ☒ The project is consistent with agency plans. ☒ The planning project will analyze all reasonable alternatives, including a non-construction option.

BASIC PROJECT DATA	
Number of Visitors (Annual): 205,100 (five year weighted average skier visits to Bridger est. for 2010) 65,000 (best estimate for USFWS trailheads and MOSS/Fish Technology Center Campus) Other trailheads in GNF- 45,000 (best estimate)	Daily Number of Visitors (Peak season): 3,506 average peak day at Bridger Bowl from 1991 to 2001. 300 (best estimate for Summertime at USFWS trailheads and MOSS/Fish Technology Center Campus)
Average Number of Vehicles per Day at Peak Visitation: 6364 (winter weekend along Hwy 86 west of Kelly Canyon Rd.) 300 (best estimate for summertime at USFWS trailheads and MOSS/Fish Technology Center Campus)	
Current Road Level of Service at Peak Visitation: LOS D (Bridger Bowl Final EIS, Jan 2005) (Please consult guidance where available on determining this variable. You may use observational accounts or pictures to provide an assessment of this datum for FY 2009 proposals).	
What time of the year does your land unit experience Peak Visitation? ☒ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ Fall ☒ Winter	
Current Carrying Capacity of Existing Roads: 1700 (vehicles/hour)	
What percent of that capacity is the site operating at during peak periods? 41 %	

Current parking shortages during peak visitation: Trailheads – Overflow parking averages 10 cars throughout the day Bridger Bowl & Bohart ski areas – Overflow parking occurs during big powder days and special events
Current Number of Persons who use the alternative transportation system (if one already exists) at peak visitation: Trailheads – No system exists Bridger Bowl & Bohart - 170 (average number of visitors/daily at peak)
Estimated Annual Number of Persons who will use the alternative transportation system at project completion: Trailheads – 20,000 Bridger Bowl & Bohart – 55,000 (anticipated number of riders or users/annually)
Average number of auto collisions with wildlife in the area? 9 collisions per/year based on MDT carcass reports. Based on observations from regular canyon drivers including skiers and homeowners, there are significantly more than 9 wildlife/vehicle collisions per year suggesting they are under-reported.

Executive Summary

Please provide an executive summary of your proposal that is no more than one page in length.

With the nearby towns of Bozeman and Belgrade posting growth rates of 38% and 40% since the 2000 census there is increased use of Montana Highway 86 to access popular recreation areas in the Gallatin National Forest and USFWS lands. In addition, Hwy 86 bisects a critical section of one of the most threatened wildlife corridors in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and experiences frequent vehicle-wildlife collisions. The MT Highway 86 Alternative Transportation Study will take a holistic view of the Hwy 86 corridor, assessing the feasibility of alternative transportation systems to connect people in Bozeman to Federal lands and reduce traffic impacts. This study will focus on access to four popular recreation areas on Federal Lands located along MT Hwy 86:

1. The "M" trailhead accessing dozens of miles of trails on thousands of acres of federal land in the Bridger Mountains. (2 miles from Story Mill Rd. in Bozeman)
2. The "Drinking Horse Mountain" trailhead at the USFWS Fish Technology Center/Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS) campus. (2 miles from Story Mill Rd. in Bozeman)
3. Bridger Bowl Ski Area is a community based non-profit (14 miles from Story Mill Rd. in Bozeman)
4. Bohart Ranch Cross Country Ski Area (15 miles from Story Mill Rd. in Bozeman)

The "M" and "Drinking Horse Mountain" trailheads are located on USFWS lands, on opposite sides of Hwy 86. These trails and the MOSS campus see high visitor use year-round, with peak use in the summer resulting in overcrowded parking lots and spill-over parking onto Hwy 86. This curving road has a steady flow of high-speed traffic making pedestrian crossing dangerous between the two trailheads. With no sidewalks, a minimal shoulder and steep embankments, the road does not provide a safe bicycle-pedestrian route from town. This study will assess a combination of transit-bicycle-pedestrian connections between the trailheads and town to reduce motor-vehicle trips, alleviate congestion in parking lots, and provide a safe route for bicyclists and pedestrians. Wildlife/vehicle collisions and mitigation strategies will also be assessed and designed if appropriate.

Bridger Bowl ski area initiated the dialogue with stakeholders to bring public transportation to the canyon in efforts to preserve this unique natural resource. Bridger Bowl Ski Area and Bohart Ranch Cross Country Ski Areas lease some land from the U.S. Forest Service. The majority of users drive to these areas from Bozeman, and on high-use winter mornings and evenings there are long lines of cars on Hwy 86 from Bozeman to Bridger Bowl. Traffic volume is highest when roads are snow packed or icy putting motorist safety at risk due to hazardous road conditions and impatient drivers attempting to pass.

This study will include collection of traffic data, visitor surveys and stakeholder interviews to assess the feasibility of alternative transportation. Considerations will include environmental impacts, motorist safety, and wildlife/vehicle collisions. Alternative transportation options can provide mobility to people without access to vehicles and reduce traffic on Hwy 86. Reducing traffic will help to preserve the natural resources of Bridger Canyon by helping to maintain good air quality, reduce fuel use, improve roadway safety, reduce wildlife/vehicle collisions and reduce the need for expanded parking lots and roadways. This project will be administered by the Gallatin National Forest. This study is a cooperative effort, with participation by Bridger Bowl Ski Area, Bohart Ranch Cross Country Ski Center, Eagle Mount—helping recreationalists with disabilities, Bridger Canyon Property Owners Association, Montana DOT, Streamline Transit System, Gallatin County, City of Bozeman, U.S. FWS, Gallatin Valley Land Trust, the Western Transportation Institute and the Montana Outdoor Science School. This project enjoys widespread support from the community of Bozeman as is evident from the attached letters of support.

Project Description

What activities would be funded by the requested Transit in Parks Program financial assistance? Please provide a project description that is no more than one page in length. You may attach up to two pages of maps or other illustrations that do not count towards the page limit.

The MT Highway 86 Alternative Transportation Study will assess, plan and design alternative transportation options for accessing popular recreation sites on USFS and USFWS lands between Story Mill Road and the Battle Ridge and Fairy Lake Campgrounds northeast of Bozeman, MT. The study will focus primarily on four high-use recreation areas including: the "M" trailhead, the "Drinking Horse Mountain" trailhead and USFWS Fish Technology Center/Montana Outdoor Science School campus, Bridger Bowl Ski Area and Bohart Ranch Cross Country Ski Area. Additionally, the study will take a holistic view of the MT Hwy 86 corridor by assessing the potential for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and preventing wildlife collisions throughout its entire length. Gallatin Nation Forest and its partners hope to secure funding for the following activities:

Traffic data collection. Collect data such as volumes, average vehicle occupancy, average length of stay, and the percentage of vehicles which are dropping off and/or picking up people. Visitor surveys will help answer questions such as: How many days per week do you drive? Would be you be willing to ride a bus? How long do you normally stay? What is the typical occupancy rate per vehicle? Data and survey results will inform options to expand existing transit service and address safety issues.

Transit feasibility to trailheads, Bridger Bowl and Bohart Ranch. Streamline Transit and First Student offer limited rides to the ski areas. This study will identify and interview transit stakeholders, conduct rider surveys, identify issues and look for opportunities to improve efficiency and coordination between existing transit systems. It will develop alternatives for expanding transit schedules, routes, and connections to other modes and funding options to connect the community to Federal lands.

Trail connections. Gallatin Valley Land Trust will negotiate option agreements with landowners for right-of-way and/or trail easement purchases and donations for a 2.1-mile trail connection from Story Mill Road in Bozeman to the heavily used "M" and "Drinking Horse Mountain" trailheads and the USFWS Fish Technology Center/Montana Outdoor Science School campus. Building on $6,600 of research, planning, CAD drawings and cost estimates recently donated by Bridger Engineers, engineering, surveying, and landscaping professionals will be contracted to complete trail planning and design. Work will include a trail maintenance and financial sustainability plan.

Pedestrian crossings/parking//trailhead access plan. Evaluate options already developed by Bridger Engineers and Montana State University engineering design class. Complete designs based on preferred alternative.

Designing for Wildlife. Hwy 89 bisects the northern end of the most threatened wildlife corridor in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Research existing wildlife collisions along MT Hwy 86. Conduct additional monitoring and research for the potential to incorporate strategies such as wildlife exclusionary fencing and wildlife sensors to reduce animal/vehicle collisions.

Bicycle-Pedestrian Safety Assessment. The entire section of Hwy 89 included in this planning project has high-speed traffic, many curves, narrow bridges and minimal shoulders. It is a popular road-biking route and also sees considerable mountain bike traffic accessing seven popular trailheads. Study use patterns and assess options for improving bicycle-pedestrian safety throughout the corridor.

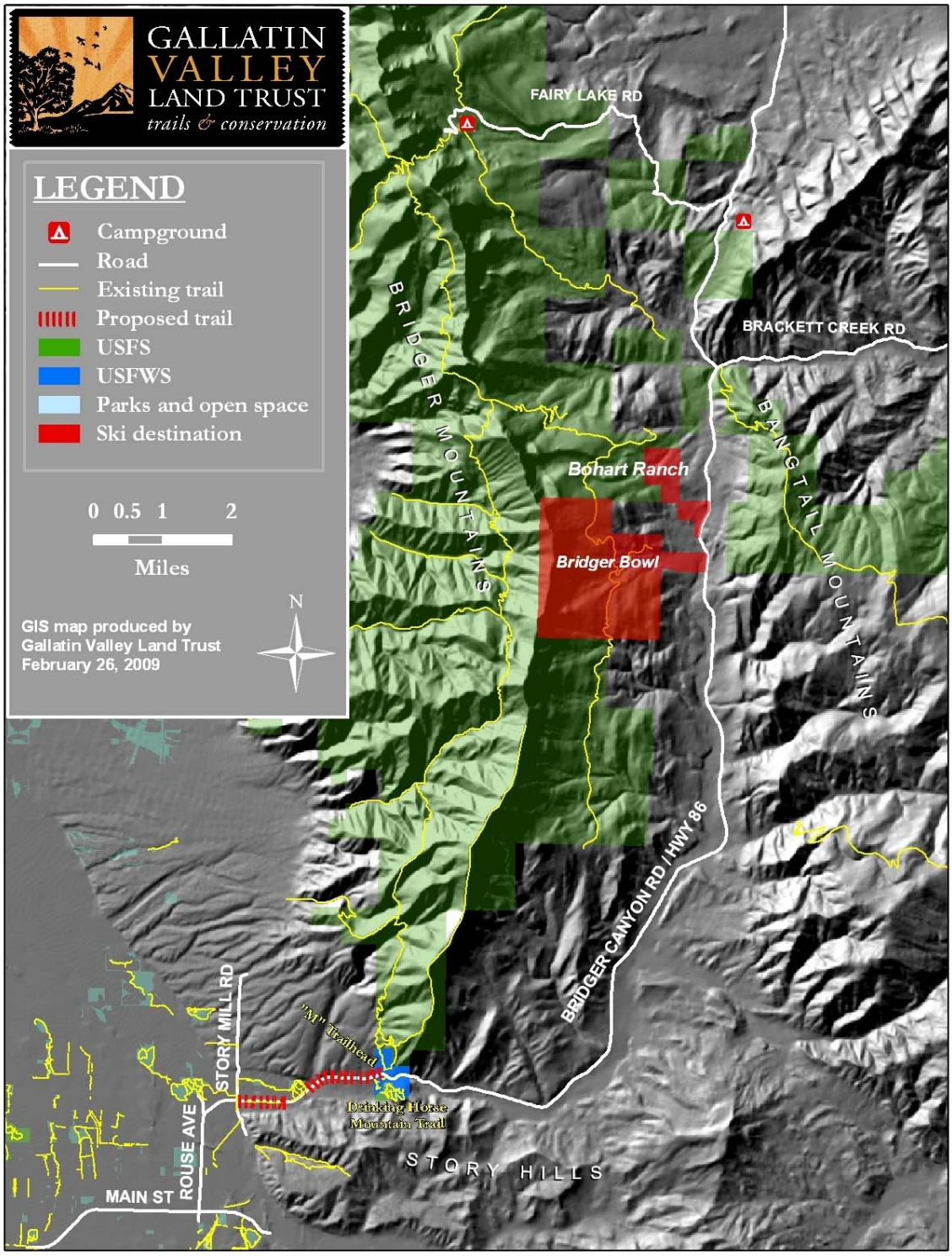

Figure 1: Montana Highway 86 Location Map

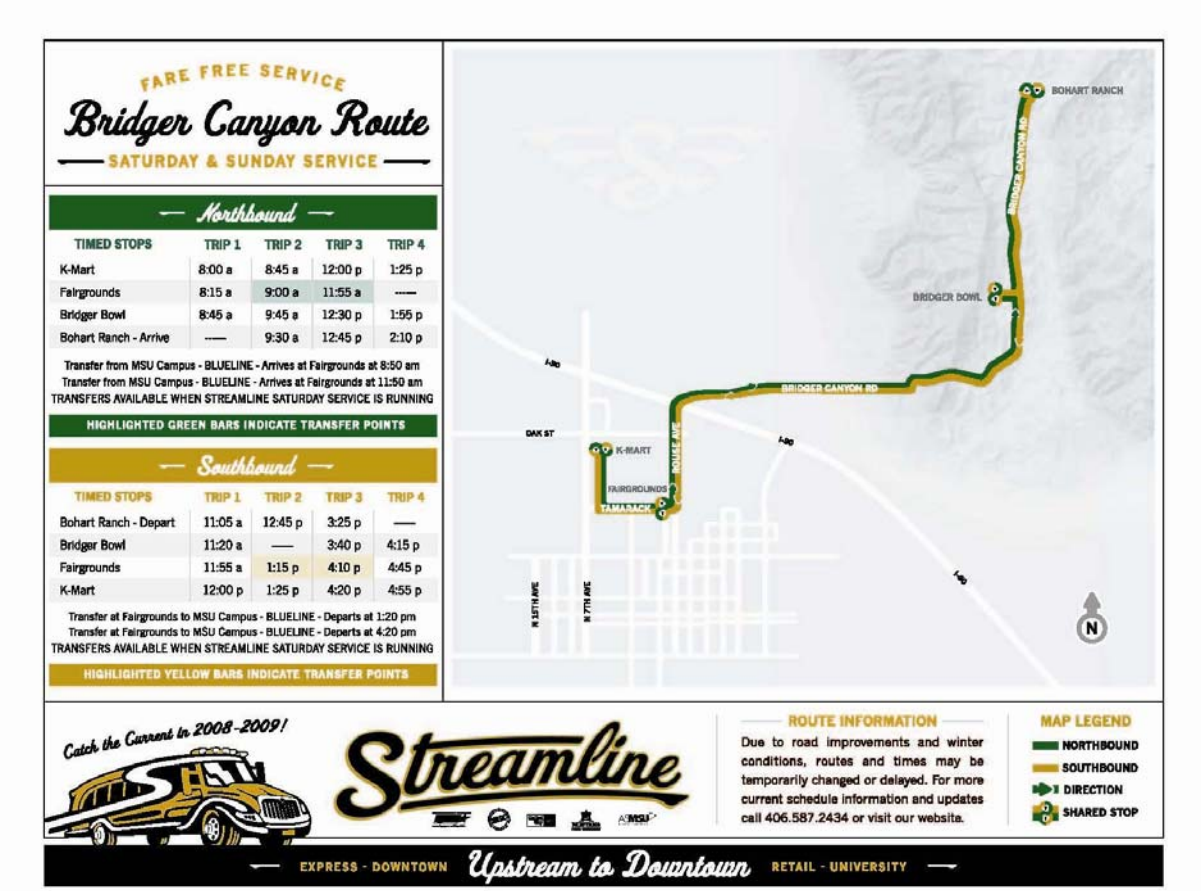

Figure 2: Existing weekend transit route in Bridger Canyon

Figure 3: View of Hwy 86 and new Drinking Horse Trail parking lot

Alternative Transportation in the Parks and Public Lands
Planning Evaluation Criteria

(There are separate evaluation factors for implementation projects. Use the implementation project proposal template for implementation projects.)

Criteria	Points	Weight
1. Demonstration of Need		50%
a. Visitor mobility & experience	(1-5)	
b. Environmental condition as result of existing transportation system	(1-5)	
2. Methodology for Assessing: Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project		15%
a. Reduced traffic congestion	(1-5)	
b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety	(1-5)	
c. Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits	(1-5)	
3. Methodology for Assessing: Environmental Benefits of Project		15%
a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources	(1-5)	
b. Reduced pollution	(1-5)	
4. Methodology for Assessing: Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability of Alternatives		20%
a. Effectiveness in meeting management goals	(1-5)	
b. Financial plan and cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
c. Cost effectiveness	(1-5)	
d. Partnerships and funding from other sources	(1-5)	

Planning Justification
Your responses to these questions must total no more than eight pages.

1. Demonstration of Need

a. Visitor mobility and experience: Describe the site's current and/or anticipated transportation problem or opportunity for improvement. You should include information on issues such as traffic congestion, traffic delays, parking shortages, difficulty in accessing destinations, safety issues, lack of access for persons with disabilities, lack of access for individuals with lower incomes or without cars, and visitor frustration. Please cite reports, plans, studies, and other documentation to support your description.

The Highway 86 Alternative Transportation Study will assess, plan and design alternative transportation options that are needed by the Bozeman area's growing population and by the large number of visitors drawn to the many outstanding recreation opportunities on the federal lands accessed from Bridger Canyon (see Figure 1).

Federal Land Destinations: Running east from Bozeman to the southern end of the Bridger Mountains, then north through Bridger Canyon, the 19.5 miles of Montana Highway 86 included in this proposal provide access to the highest concentration of federal land destinations in the Bozeman area, including nationally-known ski areas Bridger Bowl and Bohart Ranch, many of the area's most popular trailheads, two heavily-used USFS campgrounds and the Montana Outdoor Science School campus at the USFWS Fish Technology Center. Thanks to these high quality federal lands and the many stakeholders including Bridger Bowl, who have worked diligently over the years to preserve the rural character, natural beauty and resources of Bridger Canyon, it is a favorite outdoor escape for skiers, hikers, road and mountain bikers, hunters and fisherman.

Growth and Tourism – Bozeman has a population of nearly 40,000 and has grown 38% since the 2000 census, while neighboring Belgrade has another 8000 residents and has grown by 40% in the last eight years. At the same time, the area enjoys significant tourism. According to the Bozeman Chamber of Commerce Convention and Visitor Bureau, over 1.5 million visitors travel though Bozeman every year. Of non-resident visitors who spend at least one night in Bozeman, 40% participate in wildlife viewing and 30% enjoy day hiking. Of the vacationers spending at least one night in Bozeman 71% of them are attracted to Montana for the mountains and forests. Bozeman's dramatic growth and popularity are both reflected and spurred on by frequent recognition in the national media as an outdoor recreation mecca, including ratings in Outside Magazine as the fifth-best college town and one of the "top U.S. Adventure Hot Spots".

Development and Recreational Demand Immediately Adjacent to Hwy 86 – At the northeast corner of Bozeman, immediately adjacent to Hwy 86 and the planned trail included in this application, three residential subdivisions with an extensive trail system already constructed along Bridger Creek and a total of 268 units are currently under construction. Immediately southeast of these subdivisions and adjacent to Hwy 86, another 1200-unit residential & commercial mixed-use development also with extensive trails planned has been permitted but is currently stalled. Additionally, adjacent to the base of Bridger Bowl a resort development and an extensive trail system has been proposed but is currently stalled. All of these developments will greatly increase both traffic and demand for alternative transportation options in the coming years. The studies, planning and facility designs proposed in this application are ideally timed to prepare for this increased demand and its potential impacts.

Traffic Congestion and Level of Service – The Bozeman area's dramatic growth, combined with the tremendous popularity of the federal land destinations along Hwy 86 is producing increasing traffic congestion. One of the most significant traffic issues is associated with wintertime traffic to and from the ski areas. A recent Level of Service (LOS) analysis indicated that Bridger Bowl Ski Area increased traffic on MT Hwy 86. The resulting LOS B or C on a typical weekday is considered acceptable for a two-lane highway. Weekend service levels with ski area traffic during peak hours fall to a LOS D. Conducted in anticipation of the proposed resort development adjacent to the base of Bridger Bowl, this traffic impact study concluded that based on available data, average daily skier traffic increased at an annual rate of four percent over the last six years (from 2005). Increases in traffic are expected to continue due to new residential developments, increases in ski terrain and growth in Bozeman. In 2008, Bridger Bowl's first terrain expansion in 30 years opened an additional 311 acres of skiing. *(Source: Bridger Bowl Special Use Permit and Master Development Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Jan. 2005 pg. 84.)*

Crash Statistics – 282 crashes have been reported on Hwy 86 in the 15 miles south of mile marker over a ten year period ending in 2006. This equates to a rate of 2.10 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled, compared to the statewide average of 1.68 for secondary highways. Crash rates are highest in January and lowest in April. 47% of the 282 crashes occurred on wet, snow or icy roads, 57% occurred in daylight and 21% involved animals. Of the 282 reported crashes, 79 resulted in injuries and three resulted in fatalities. *(Source: Bridger Canyon Partners Base Area Development Traffic Impact Study, Abelin Traffic Services Sept. 2006).*

Wintertime Traffic Safety Concerns - Peak use at the ski areas is typically during or after winter storms. Consequently, skier traffic is highest when road conditions are snow packed or icy which can be very stressful for drivers. On snow days there is a long line of cars from town to the ski areas. Motorist safety can be compromised when impatient drivers attempt to pass, often on hazardous winter road conditions. An expanded transit system to the ski areas can decrease traffic during peak hours, resulting in improved roadway safety and less anxiety for winter drivers.

Warm Season Traffic Safety Concerns – Much of Hwy 86 has a steady stream of year-round high-speed traffic (posted 70 mph), many curves, narrow bridges, minimal shoulders and in many places steep embankments. Except for two short, fragmentary sections of trail in the first mile leaving Bozeman, bicycle-pedestrian facilities do not exist on Hwy 86. In spite of these safety issues, Hwy 86

is popular road-biking route and also sees considerable mountain bike traffic accessing seven popular trailheads.

Wildlife Collisions - Hwy 89 bisects the northern end of the most threatened wildlife corridor in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and wildlife-vehicle collisions are common. This wildlife corridor allows wildlife populations to move between Yellowstone National Park and the Gallatin Mountains to the south and the Bridger Mountains to the north, providing part of an important link between the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the "Crown of the Continent" ecosystem surrounding Glacier and Waterton National Parks. Exploring strategies to minimize these collisions has the potential to significantly benefit both motorists and wildlife.

Transit Currently Limited – Most people drive to these public lands destinations because the contracted transit system provides only limited wintertime service to Bridger Bowl and Bohart Ranch. People who cannot afford a vehicle, do not have access to a vehicle or are unable to drive have very limited options for access to these federal lands. Bozeman is a college town and many students do not have access to a vehicle. Hitchhiking to and from Bridger Bowl is common. A transit system has the potential to remove drivers from the roadways during wet, icy or snowy conditions, thus reducing the risk for crashes. Transit can also decrease parking needs.

Trailhead Parking Issues – Even though the "M" and "Drinking Horse Mountain" trailheads are only two miles from Bozeman's existing trail system and only 4.1 miles from Main Street, nearly all users drive to these hugely popular destinations. The result is frequently overflowing parking lots – even on some winter days. The tremendous demand for these recreational destinations is demonstrated by the fact that the Drinking Horse Mountain parking lot began filling to capacity within days of the trail's completion and opening to the public in September 2008. Overflow vehicles parked along Hwy 86 cause safety issues for motorists, bicyclist, pedestrians and wildlife, and the sometimes chaotic situation can significantly impact visitor enjoyment. Of particular concern is the fact that the trailhead driveways are offset on opposite sides of the highway, located adjacent to a curve and have no safe crossing between them for the many pedestrians who cross in spite of the high speed traffic. Exploring transit options for these trailheads, and moving forward with design for a paved bicycle-pedestrian trail and a safe crossing between the trailheads has great potential for addressing these issues. As the County Planning Department explains in the attached letter of support, when the Gallatin County Trails Plan was developed through public outreach meetings, open houses, a survey, and meetings with local officials and area non-profits, ***"Many people expressed the wish for a safe bicycle, pedestrian route to the ("M") trailhead, saying they would no longer drive if this alternative were available."***

Montana Outdoor Science School - The Montana Outdoor Science School (MOSS) is located at the USFWS Fish Technology Center. MOSS serves a five-county region of southwest Montana and its year-round programs serve 8,000 children to adults annually. Hundreds of these students attend programs at the MOSS campus. Transit and a trail could greatly benefit both MOSS students and staff as well as USFWS staff and visitors.

Connection to Existing Urban Trails - Bozeman's "Main Street to the Mountains" trail system includes over 50 miles of greenway trails linking parks and neighborhoods throughout the community. This existing trail system crosses Hwy 86 at Story Mill Road intersection, which is the starting point of the planned trail included in this application.

Direct Connection to Main Street - The Montana Department of Transportation has nearly completed plans for a major road improvement project including significant bicycle-pedestrian infrastructure for two miles of Rouse Avenue/Hwy 86 from Bozeman's Main Street directly to the start of the trail proposed in this application. Planned for construction in 2012, this project will provide a safe, bicycle-pedestrian route directly to Main Street. The trail planning and design proposed in this application is ideally timed to lead to construction within the same general timeframe planned for the Rouse/Hwy 86 improvements.

Strong City and County Support – As demonstrated by the attached letters of support, this planning project is strongly supported by both the City of Bozeman and Gallatin County. The planned trail connection has been identified as a high priority in planning documents adopted by both the City and County. Thanks to City trail system master planning, 0.3 miles of the planned Hwy 86 paved trail has already been constructed as part of one of the new subdivisions on the north side of the highway.

b. Environmental condition as a result of the existing transportation system: Describe the site's current or anticipated problem or opportunity for improvement of the environment in this area. You should include information on current or anticipated problems such as air pollution, noise pollution, run-off, water quality, harm to vegetation and wildlife, and other impacts or stressors on natural, scenic, cultural and/or historic resources caused by the existing transportation system. Please cite documentation in agency plans, studies, reports and other documentation that will help to support your description.

Designing for Wildlife – The Bridger Mountains are inhabited by deer, elk, moose, bear, cougars, mountain goats, wolverines and many other native species. The 19.5 mile section of Hwy 86 proposed for study in this application bisects the northern end of the most threatened wildlife corridor in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem – the north-south connection between the Bridger Mountains (north) and the Gallatin Mountains and Yellowstone National Park (south).

The Western Transportation Institute (WTI) has been involved in a multi-year, broad-based partnership implementing a wildlife-vehicle collision reduction project along Interstate Highway 90 on the Bozeman Pass, a few miles south and parallel to our proposed project. Similarly, new roads and housing development along State Highway 86 through Bridger Canyon are dividing wildlife corridors, while at the same time increasing traffic volumes. This combination is posing greater risks for wildlife and motorists, alike.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs) are commonplace along Highway 86 and cause significant impacts to personal property, motorist health and welfare, as well as wildlife each year. Observations of deer carcasses along the road and conversations with homeowners in the canyon suggest that WVCs are common and may be under-reported by traditional Department of Transportation carcass removal and Highway Patrol accident reporting. Nation wide WVCs have increased 50 percent in the past 15 years. Given high growth rates in Bozeman, development in the Bridger Canyon area and increased traffic, Highway 86 is likely following these trends, though data is limited. Based on our experience on I-90, we are confident that wildlife monitoring and research can improve motorist safety along the Bridger Canyon highway by assessing the potential to incorporate counter measures such as wildlife exclusionary fencing with crossings, roadside animal detection-driver warning systems, or other effective methods in key problem areas.

The Bridger Mountains flyway hosts the largest known concentration of Golden Eagles in the lower 48 states during each fall migration. In 1991, Hawkwatch International established a monitoring station on the ridge at Bridger Bowl ski resort and has since documented thousands of raptors representing 18 species. The Bridger Raptor Festival at Bridger Bowl was established in 1997 to celebrate the migration and raise awareness of the significance of this key migration corridor. The Gallatin National Forest long ago restricted air transportation during peak migration months—there is a no fly zone over the Bridger range from September through the end of October to reduce potential conflicts with the migrating birds.

Bridger Canyon stakeholders have been proactive in their approach to preserving the natural resources of this area in part through strict zoning requirements. This unique area requires a proactive approach to transportation planning as well. Environmental concerns such as degraded water quality, noise and air pollution due to traffic may be mitigated in part by alternative transportation systems that reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Scope of Work and Methodology

The planning project's scope of work and methodology should include tasks that will assess the areas below in a thorough and professional manner. The planning project should have a scope of work and methodology at this proposal phase, although it may be refined later.

2. Methodology for Assessing - Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits of Project

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the visitor mobility & experience benefits of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

a. Reduced traffic congestion: This criterion includes: reduced average number of daily motorized vehicle trips during peak visitation, time lost to traffic delays, visitor frustration, and the area's current capacity of the existing transportation system.

The Highway 86 Alternative Transportation Study will include a visitor survey to determine the likelihood that visitors will use a transit system and/or trails to access trailheads and ski areas. This information, along with visitor and traffic counts can help estimate a possible reduction in traffic if a transit system and trail connections were to be implemented.

b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety: This criterion includes enhanced intermodal interconnectivity, improved public access to resources, improved access for those with disabilities and low incomes, traffic safety, pedestrian/cycling safety, and safety in the case of catastrophic events (i.e., forest fires or security threats).

Surveys and/or interviews from people with disabilities (such as Eagle Mount participants and Galavan riders) and low income populations can provide information on potential use of alternative transportation by these groups. Mobility would be improved for persons with disabilities, as any vehicles used for the potential transit system would be required to meet all current ADA standards. Ensuring moderate grades and a 10-foot wide paved surface have been central goals of the initial design work donated by a local engineering firm for the planned trail connection from Bozeman.

Road biking, mountain biking, hiking and skiing in the national forest are very popular in Bridger Canyon. This study will assess how a transit system and trail connection from town can provide options for people to leave their cars at home and access Federal lands. The key trail connection from Bozeman would create a safe link for bicyclists, people with disabilities pedestrians and potentially Nordic skiers to access trailheads from town. When connected with a transit system, this significantly improves public access to trailheads and recreation areas on USFS and USFWS lands.

Results of the study would be summarized in a report that addresses options to connect bicycle, skier, pedestrian and transit modes as well as traffic, bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

c. Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits: Describe how the project's scope and methodology will assess improved visitor education, recreation and health benefits?

The assessment, planning and design for alternative transportation options proposed within the scope of this project has the potential to achieve great health and recreation benefits by providing convenient, safe transit and bicycle-pedestrian options for accessing a high concentration of heavily-used recreational destinations on Federal lands.

Visitor surveys and surveys of user groups will help determine how visitors may improve their education, recreation and health through a potential transit and trail system.

The planned trail and potential transit connection to the two popular trailheads on USFWS land will not only achieve significant recreation and health benefits by making it possible and

enjoyable to safely walk and bike to these immensely popular destinations; it will also provide major educational benefits by connecting the public to the many educational opportunities available at the Montana Outdoor Science School / Fish Technology Center campus.

3. Methodology for Assessing - Environmental Benefits of Project

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the environmental benefits of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources: This criterion includes energy conservation, energy efficiency, ecosystem sustainability, preservation of archeological and/or historical resources, viewshed and watershed preservation, reduction in auto-wildlife collision rates, improved habitat connectivity, ensuring that visitation does not exceed an area's ability to handle increased levels of visitation or the "carrying capacity" of the land unit, and other protection benefits where applicable.

Collecting traffic data, visitor counts and surveys will provide information to estimate the number of motor-vehicle trips that can be replaced by alternative modes. This information can be used to estimate gas savings, emission reductions and related energy conservation data. Proposed wildlife monitoring and assessment and research from other similar projects will provide estimates of reductions in auto-wildlife collisions through wildlife/vehicle collision avoidance techniques.

b. Reduced pollution: This criterion includes air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, and visual pollution.

Many people visiting ski areas and trailheads in Bridger Canyon live in the Bozeman area or stay in lodging in Bozeman. A trail connection to town combined with a transit system would allow visitors to leave their cars in town, yet access Federal lands. This would result in reducing vehicles which is a key factor in reducing air, noise and visual pollution.

Determining the feasibility of a transit system that could reduce pollution while enhancing access to popular Federal lands meets with local goals to preserve Bridger Canyon natural resources.

4. Methodology for Assessing - Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability

Please address how the planning project's scope and methodology will assess the operational efficiency and the financial sustainability of a potential alternative transportation system improvement in the following areas:

a. Operational efficiency: This criterion includes considerations of how a potential alternative system may/may not meet identified management goals and objectives for this site, including consideration of multiple alternatives.

The visitor survey, counts and stakeholder interviews will be used to determine a preferable frequency for the potential transit system and trails. Based on the potential system and ridership, an operational efficiency can be determined (rides per hour, rides per mile, etc.). This information can be compared to similar systems on other Federal lands to check if goals are realistic.

Further, the estimated ridership numbers can be used to estimate how much a potential intermodal transit and trail system could reduce traffic. This operational efficiency information will also be linked to cost figures to determine the financial feasibility and cost effectiveness of the potential system.

b. Financial feasibility: This criterion includes the development of a financial plan that will incorporate a potential alternative transportation system, including the evaluation of multiple alternatives.

This Study will investigate sources of revenue (including partnerships) that would allow for the long-term funding of the transit system and trail connections. Various options for financing alternative transportation systems will be explored including continuing support from existing partners and expanding partnerships for the Streamline transit system. The Study will include at least three alternatives for levels of service as well as a connector route/service. The Study will use the visitor surveys and stakeholder interviews to determine the appropriate levels of frequency for the proposed system. Given the widespread community support for transit and trails alternatives, other options may include establishing a local transit district, researching a variety of grants and donations from individuals and businesses.

In addition the Study will look at alternatives to procuring vehicles (such as purchase or lease), as well as alternatives for operating the system (hiring seasonal drivers, contracting for services, etc.).

c. Cost effectiveness: This criterion includes the development of an analysis of cost effectiveness considerations that includes multiple alternatives.

Cost effectiveness of the system will be based on estimates of the cost per ride, cost per mile, etc. and will be compared against the peer group information, as well as information from the National Transit Database (NTD). The NTD provides information on public transit systems in urban and rural areas. The NTD and peer group information will allow the Study to determine if a potential system would be within the current "cost effectiveness" range of similar systems.

Cost effectiveness will also be relevant when comparing the potential transit system against other possible transportation strategies, such as building additional lanes, entrance stations, parking spaces, etc.

d. Partnerships and funding from other sources: This criterion includes planning projects that would be carried out or funded in partnership with other entities in addition to the sponsor and will receive points depending on the level of partnership. Documentation (e.g., partnership agreements, letters of partnership support, letters of confirmation of financial contribution, letters of in-kind contributions, etc.) that supports and verifies involvement of partners and level of partnership *must* accompany this proposal.

The diverse, broad-based and strongly engaged partners supporting this planning project will contribute greatly to its success. Many stakeholders have made significant efforts over the years to preserve the natural resources along Highway 86, and these stakeholders will be strongly motivated to support this planning study to help evaluate transportation options that can contribute to this goal.

The establishment of the local Streamline Transit system in 2006 and Bridger Bowl and Bohart Ranch's contracted bus services demonstrates their commitment to alternative transportation and the environment. It should be noted that Bridger Bowl is a community based non-profit ski area and Bohart Ranch is a small locally owned area. Both Bridger Bowl and Bohart Ranch are vested in the long term preservation of the landscape and believe transit can be a valuable tool to help reduce traffic impacts in the canyon. The Montana Department of Transportation staff have participated in the development of this proposal through phone calls, emails and a meeting with USFWS and GVLT. They are supportive, but were not able to complete a letter of support by the deadline

For 18 years, Gallatin Valley Land Trust has worked to create and connect recreational and alternative transportation trails both within Bozeman and from the community to surrounding public lands. In addition, GVLT has worked with private landowners to permanently conserve over 50 square miles in Gallatin County and surrounding valleys, including a conservation easement on Bohart Ranch property abutting USFS land and a number of other conservation easements in the Bridger Canyon area. GVLT is strongly committed to this project and has the capacity to bring significant funding from other sources. GVLT coordinated the seven-year project to complete the new Drinking Horse Mountain trail at the USFWS Fish Technology Center. Principal partners on this project included USFWS, USFS, Montana Outdoor Science School and Friends of the Fish Technology Center. The project, which included a large pedestrian bridge over Bridger Creek, totaled over $200,000 including nearly $60,000 from five foundations, $64,000 of in-kind donations from a large number of business partners and many large and small private donations. GVLT is confident that many of these funders and in-kind donors will also enthusiastically support the planning and design work proposed in this application. Bridger Engineers, one of GVLTs business donors on the Drinking Horse Mountain Project, has already donated $6,600 in planning and design work toward the planned trail along Hwy 86.

Based on the partnerships forged to create the Streamline Transit System and Bozeman's “Main Street to the Mountains” trails, we are confident of strong support for an integrated transit and trail network linking Bozeman to Federal lands accessed by Highway 86. Please see the attached letters from organizations that support this planning study.