

IV. EXISTING ROADWAY CONDITIONS

This section summarizes the existing roadway conditions of both the State Highway 97 and the alternate routes to SH 97.

STATE HIGHWAY 97

SH 97 is a two lane rural *major collector* and is designated as the Lake Coeur d'Alene Scenic Byway that runs north to south along the eastern side of Coeur d'Alene Lake in Kootenai County. The highway extends about 35.8 miles from ITD milepost (MP) 60.63 to 96.43, providing a connection between Interstate 90 to the north and State Highway 3 to the south. The SH 97 route serves the City of Harrison, Idaho (population 1,480, as of 2007) and is widely used to access recreational areas and public lands.

The highway generally has a two lane cross section, with one lane provided in each direction of travel. The travel lanes on SH 97 generally range from eleven to twelve feet in width with up to two feet of unpaved shoulders. Many of the curves have tight radii. The foreslopes are typically either very steep or non-existent and the backslopes are either too steep and/or heavily vegetated.

In many places, the western lakeside edge (or edge closest to Coeur d'Alene Lake) slopes steeply, directly from the edge of asphalt to the lake or residences located well below the roadway. In other locations, the backslope consists of rock and rockfall from overly steep slopes, which is a constant traffic hazard and maintenance issue. Very limited guardrail installation was noted. In many places where guardrail is present, it is failing or has serious maintenance concerns. Drainage ditches and culverts are typically sub-standard in size and condition. There are very limited passing lanes or passing zones. Pullouts (slow vehicle or scenic) are limited in number and are typically substandard in length, taper, and width. Several very tight radii curves have serious erosion and culvert instability issues. Pedestrian crossings are typically poorly located, inadequately marked, and/or have multiple crossings within a short distance of each other, providing a confusion element, especially for the visiting motorist. The roadway right of way is generally 50 feet, but appears to vary from 40 feet to around 60 feet in general.

The geography along the SH 97 corridor is predominantly classified as "rolling terrain" with forested areas located to the east, and water and steep grades located to the west and on the northern end of the highway. These geographic conditions may limit the ability of agencies to provide cost effective capacity improvements on the highway. Even further, the terrain imposes abrupt horizontal changes that result in reduced travel speeds along the majority of the highway. The northern and mid segments of SH 97 contain the greatest number of curves and "switchbacks", which results in average travel speeds that are frequently less than 35 mph. The general lack of passing opportunities results in traffic delays, as a high percentage of vehicles spend time following other, slower moving vehicles.

Numerous driveways exist on the SH 97. In particular, accesses to single-family residential homes occur frequently on the route. Many of these driveways or private roads have limited sight distance due to roadway curvatures and steep slopes. While the SH 97 does fall under the Idaho Transportation Department Access Management Guidelines for Access Type 1 Major

Collector Rural roadways, it does not conform to the approach spacing requirements of 300 feet (see ITD Access Management Guidelines in the appendices of this report).

ITD has reviewed pavement conditions on SH 97 (June 2007). The analysis was performed in sections. According to the ITD *Pavement Management Report* for District 1, the average cracking index, upon which pavement conditions are graded, ranges from 4.20 to 5.00. This categorizes pavement conditions as “good” to “very good” on the highway.

The secondary roads intersecting SH 97 are either private roads maintained by private parties/entities, public roads providing access to public lands maintained by the agency (such as the Bureau of Land Management), or public roads maintained by the East Side Highway District (ESHD).

ALTERNATE ROUTES

Most roadways have other routes that can be used for area travel. The nature of SH 97 Corridor is such that much of the land to the east is public land that is impassable in winter months due to terrain and Coeur d’Alene Lake waters border the corridor to the west and north. The *Alternate Routes* that have been suggested (Burma Road, Gozzer Road, Gotham Bay Road, Carlin Bay Road, and South Asbury/East Thompson Lake Roads) all ultimately depart from and return to SH 97. These routes can best be described as “short cuts”. These routes provide a network of “alternate roadways” to travel on portions of SH 97, but ultimately the through traveler is returned to SH 97. Use of these routes could reduce some travel on SH 97; however, most are mainly unimproved or are partially improved. All of these routes are existing East Side Highway District (ESHD) roads and are mostly used by the local residents. These roads do not meet the new Associated Highway District (2008) standards for construction, alignments, drainage, pavement design, and materials.

The northern five miles of SH 97 from the interchange at Interstate 90 to the intersection with Burma Road to the south, provides no practical alternate route possibilities. SH 97 within this section is characterized by steep to severe mountainous terrain features, with numerous stream courses, and the adjacent surface of Lake Coeur d’Alene. Additionally, the same characteristics that provide for the SH 97 Scenic Byway designation, restrict and preclude viable alternate route development along the entire SH 97 Corridor.

The five identified alternate routes are all existing East Side Highway District roads and all begin and end at intersections with SH 97 or another alternate route. These routes include:

- **Burma Road** from the intersection with SH 97 on the north at MP 90.35, intersects with Gozzer Road, Gotham Bay Road, and Carlin Bay Road, to the southern intersection with SH 97 at MP 82.3.
- **Gozzer Road** from the intersection on the northeast with Burma Road to the intersection to the west with SH 97 at MP 86.62.
- **Gotham Bay Road** from the intersection on the east end with Burma Road to the intersection with SH 97 on the west end at MP 84.75.

- **Carlin Bay Road** from the intersection on the north with Burma Road to the intersection on the west with SH 97 at MP 79.46.
- **Asbury Road / East Thompson Lake Road** from the intersection on the north end with SH 97 at MP 78.64 to the end of Asbury Road at the intersection with the western portion of East Thompson Lake Road, then westerly along East Thompson Lake Road to the intersection with SH 97 at MP 70.05.

The roads consist of a mix of improved gravel and asphalt surfaces over a variety of base, ballast, and subgrade conditions. The existing road widths are typically less than 24 feet. These roads have historically been improved in a piecemeal fashion as maintenance, development, and funding has allowed. Several segments including portions of Gozzer Road from SH 97 to the Burma Road intersection have been recently improved to Associated Highway District standards. Other portions including Burma Road from the intersection with SH 97 at MP 90.35 to the intersection of Gozzer Road have been improved with an asphalt surface and some drainage upgrades, but still requires additional improvements to be classified as meeting AHD road standards. Other short segments have asphalt surfaces over varying subgrade conditions.

One of the most challenging and expensive existing characteristics is the noted “S” curve portions of Burma Road, Carlin Bay Road, Asbury Road and the lower portion of Gotham Bay Road. These segments are characterized as steep, narrow, tight, and constrained by geography, typically follow a drainage course with live streams, and likely are limited by narrow prescriptive rights of way. Improvements of these segments to bring the roadways up to the current AHD standards would be generally expensive and may require numerous permitting and right of way acquisitions.