

**SOUTHERN MONTANA ELECTRIC GENERATION &
TRANSMISSION COOPERATIVE
HIGHWOOD GENERATING STATION
RAILROAD ROUTE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS – SUMMARY**

In order to supply coal to the Highwood Generating Station (HGS) it will be necessary to install a rail spur. The spur will extend from existing rail lines in the area to the plant site. Three possible rail spur alignments were evaluated for cost, environmental impacts, impacts to land owners and impacts to residents of the City of Great Falls. The three routes are summarized below:

1. Route rail south from the plant to the abandoned railroad grade, route along railroad grade toward the city of Great Falls and tie into existing track north of Malmstrom Air Force Base.
2. Route rail south from the plant and tie into existing main line track that is located three miles south of the city of Great Falls.
3. Route rail north from the plant and route it towards the city of Great Falls along property lines. This route also ties into the existing track north of Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Alignment 1 – Route along the abandoned railroad line to Great Falls.

Advantages:

- Utilizing the existing rail bed alignment and some of the existing grade structure will reduce cost.
- Environmental impacts will be minimized by reusing existing coulee crossings.
- Second lowest estimated cost.

Disadvantages:

- Utilizing the existing rail bed alignment and some of the existing grade structure will reduce cost; however, grade will need to be reworked to modern standards and the grade will need to be restored in other areas.
- Location of route divides some agricultural fields and is not preferred by local property owners.
- Longest alignment at 8.6 miles.
- Train traffic will be routed through the city of Great Falls. Residents have expressed concerns relative to length and number of trains and the amount of wait time at the existing grade crossing.

Alignment 2 – Route rail to the south of the plant and tie into existing main line.

Advantages:

- Shortest alignment at approximately 6.3 miles.
- No water course crossings required which minimizes environmental impacts.
- Coal originates in southern Montana so there would be no increase of train traffic in the city of Great Falls.
- Lowest estimated cost.

Disadvantages:

- The tracks cross Montana State Highway S-228, Highwood Road, which will require an expensive, raised highway crossing.
- Route is on agricultural land and will need to be reviewed with local property owners.

Alignment 3 – Route rail north of plant and tie into existing track north of Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Advantages:

- Avoids dissecting existing agricultural lands.

Disadvantages:

- Difficult and expensive installation due to rough terrain will be required. Large structures (either bridges or trestles) will need to be installed at creek and coulee intersections.
- Increased environmental impacts due to crossing of coulees and water courses.
- Second longest alignment (8.5 miles).
- Highest estimated cost.

Conclusion:

Based on cost and minimizing environmental concerns, Alignment 2 has been selected as the preferred railroad route for HGS.