

Highway Watch Program Underway in Flathead



New Highway Watch Program signs provide a means to report incidents and unsafe drivers along Montana 35 and US 93 in the Flathead Valley.

Montana Department of Transportation Director Jim Lynch and Barry “Spook” Stang, Executive Vice President of the Montana Motor Carriers Association, along with area law enforcement, motor carriers, and local residents recently launched the Highway Watch Program. The program is part of ongoing efforts to improve safety and address concerns about truck-trailer use of Highway 35 near Flathead Lake. The program will provide a means to report unsafe driving of commercial motor carriers and other motorists. Travelers now have a toll-free number and Web

site to report incidents and unsafe drivers.

The Highway Watch Program also will form a coalition between industry and community members to use radar guns once a week to monitor speeds along Montana 35 and US 93. The aim is to decrease speeding and aggressive driving and promote safer driving practices.

When calling the highway watch number, travelers are asked to describe the unsafe act they observed, whether the unsafe driver is traveling northbound or southbound, the time, and any other pertinent information such as license plate number. Callers can remain anonymous. This is not an emergency response number. Motorists should call 911 in the event of a serious driving offense, drunk driver, or emergency.

MDT will take calls through the toll-free number (1-877-684-9935) 7:30 am and 5 pm weekdays; otherwise, callers can leave messages with the information. Motorists also can report incidents at www.mdt.mt.gov.

MDT will evaluate information on a regular basis, and input received about unsafe truckers will be passed to the Montana Motor Carriers Association. Monthly, representatives of the Highway Watch Program will discuss the current findings and observations to determine if action can be taken to address concerns.

The total cost for seven signs is \$1,200. Three signs advise trucks of limited passing opportunities and narrow roads before they turn onto Montana 35 outside Polson, and four signs post the phone numbers to report incidents or unsafe driving.

For more information contact MDT Director Jim Lynch at 444-6200 or jilynych@mt.gov.

Emergency Medical Services Grant Program Deadline Approaches

MDT Director Jim Lynch is pleased to announce the application availability for MDT’s Emergency Medical Service provider grant program and submittal deadline of April 16th. Applications are available on MDT’s Web site at www.mdt.mt.gov. Applicants can submit their information electronically, or they can mail a paper copy to MDT Rail, Transit, and Planning Division.

The ability of emergency medical services to improve the medical outcome for people injured in vehicle crashes is well known. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study projects that reducing response time would reduce rural crash deaths by 12 percent and save an estimated 3,000 lives each year.

Many emergency medical service providers in Montana have difficulty making ends meet due to economic circumstances.

Therefore, the purpose of this program is to provide competitive grants to emergency medical service providers for acquiring or leasing ambulances or emergency response vehicles, training, communication equipment, and for equipment to provide medical care to patients. Emergency medical service providers are eligible for this program if they meet the following criteria:

- They have been in operation at least 12 months.
- They bill for services at a level that is at least equivalent to Medicare billing.
- The majority of active emergency medical technicians are volunteer emergency medical technicians.

For a hard copy of the application or more information, contact MDT’s Rail, Transit and Planning Division at 444-3423, or visit our Web site at www.mdt.mt.gov.

Why Safety Matters

Jim Lynch, Governor's Representative for Highway Traffic Safety

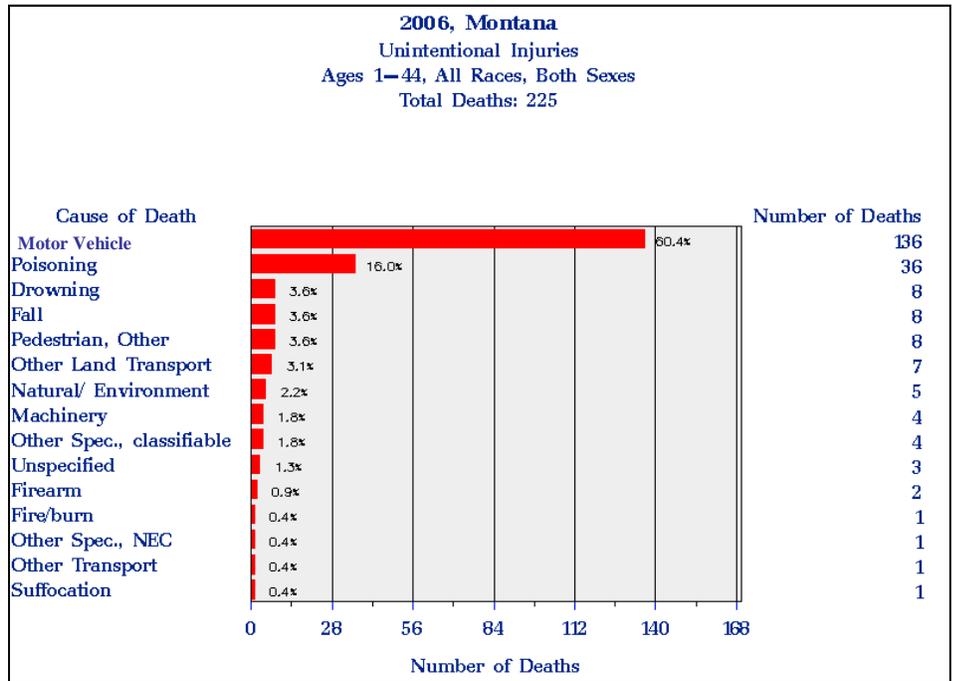
The leading cause of death for most Montanans between the ages of 1 and 44 is unintentional injury. In 2006, the number one cause of death in unintentional injury was motor vehicle crashes. More deaths occurred from motor vehicle crashes than from poisonings, falls, drowning, or firearms. Preventable crashes result in many deaths in Montana.

Let's take a closer look at the term "unintentional." No one gets up in the morning and intends to cause a crash or be a victim of a crash. The best strategy toward crash and injury avoidance is preparation, prevention, and commitment.

Preparation

Be prepared:

- Wear your safety belt every time you get in your vehicle, not just for long trips or on highways. According to the National Safety Council, more than half of the crashes that cause injury or death happen at speeds less than 40 mph and within 25 miles of home.
- Ensure that any children under the age of 13 are in the back seat. Children younger than age 9 should be in the child safety seat appropriate for their weight, height, and age, and booster seats for children between ages 4 and 9 should be used.
- Wearing a properly fitted safety belt (which includes both a lap and shoulder belt) doubles your chances of living through a crash. Safety belts keep you from being thrown against others and against the hard



Source: Centers for Disease Control

parts of your vehicle, such as the steering wheel, dashboard, and windshield. They keep you from being ejected and importantly, keep the driver behind the wheel, where he or she can control the vehicle.

Wear your safety belt, every trip, every time.

Prevention

According to the National Safety Council, over 99 percent of crashes are caused by human error. Many of these errors result from poor decisions, like driving under the influence, using a cell phone while driving, and speeding. Many of life's choices have consequences and

the consequences of hitting the asphalt at 70 miles per hour are usually final. Operating an object that weighs over 2000 pounds deserves your respect and 100 percent of your attention. So, take driving seriously: Drive sober and with focus. Drive at a reasonable speed for the terrain and conditions.

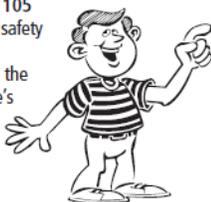
Commitment

MDT is committed to reducing traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Montana's highways through the **four E's: education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical services.**

As a result of our commitment, two new programs MDT is funding combine educa-

THE DEADLY EQUATION: **weight x speed = crash force**

A person weighing 105 pounds (not using a safety belt) in an impact at 40 M.P.H. will strike the interior of the vehicle's surfaces or objects outside the vehicle with the force of 4200 pounds.



105 POUNDS



times

40 M.P.H.

equals



4200 POUNDS CRASH FORCE

tion with enforcement: DUI court and *Cops in Shops*®.

DUI Court

DUI court is a relatively new intervention strategy to reduce impaired driving among habitual drunk drivers whose behavior is not typically affected by education, public safety efforts, or by traditional legal sanctions. MDT is funding DUI court implementation in the following jurisdictions:

- Billings Municipal Court – Judge Mary Jane Knisely
- Kalispell Municipal Court – Judge Heidi Ulbricht
- Fort Peck Tribal Court – Judge Danna Runsabove
- 7th Judicial District – Judge Katherine Irigoin

The DUI court is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of eight core members: the judge, DUI court coordinator, prosecutor, defense counsel, treatment provider, probation/compliance officer, law enforcement, and an expert in research and evaluation.

After conviction, the DUI offender may voluntarily enter into DUI court by signing a contract with the DUI court. This agreement allows the court to seek a long-term change in behavior by treating underlying substance abuse issues rather than focusing only on punishing the offender.

Chemical dependency treatment is emphasized and accompanied by intensive monitoring/testing. This typically includes the Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM®) bracelet, a device that monitors blood alcohol through the skin for

As established by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the National Drug Court Institute, the DUI court follows:

**Ten Key Components
of
Drug Courts
and
Ten Guiding Principles
of
DWI Courts**

30-90 days, frequent urinalysis testing, EtG blood testing, and requiring the DUI court client to blow into a portable breath tester at every possible opportunity, such as court appearances, home visits, and treatment sessions. Continued alcohol usage is discouraged through a progressive system of incentives and sanctions.

The model involves increased accountability (usually weekly DUI court sessions before the DUI court team and the judge) and access to a variety of other services to help the individual achieve sobriety, learn pro-social behaviors, and become a productive member of society.

With the repeat offender as its primary target population, DUI courts follow the *Ten Key Components of Drug Courts* and the *Ten Guiding Principles of DWI Courts*, as established by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and the National Drug Court Institute. These can be found at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/rugCourts/DefiningDC and www.dwicourts.org/learn/about-dwi-courts/-guiding-rinciples, respectively.

DUI court participants are up to 19 times less likely to get a new DUI offense than DUI offenders sentenced by a traditional court. DUI court is a major program that, over time, will help make a significant difference in reducing the number of fatalities on Montana's roads.

To learn more about DUI court, go to www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/dui_courts.shtml.

Cops in Shops®

Cops in Shops® is a unique partnership between retailers and law enforcement that helps stop illegal underage alcohol purchases and prevents adults from purchasing for those who are underage. Cops in Shops® places the focus on the perpetrators — minors who try to purchase alcohol illegally and adults who try to purchase alcohol for minors.

The program is preceded by a public information campaign advising of the forthcoming effort to reduce underage purchase by placing undercover officers in participating retail locations. Warning signs are placed in the windows and cold-case doors of the participating retailers.

Once the program begins, teams of officers are placed in strategic participating retail outlets. They usually consist of one undercover officer who works inside the store while a second officer is positioned outside the establishment to apprehend adults who procure alcohol for minors.

The *Cops in Shops*® concept was created by the Century Council. They also provide participants with free materials and technical support.

MDT funding for *Cops in Shops*® will be channeled through Montana's DUI Task Forces. Ten task forces will be conducting *Cops in Shops*® in 13 counties across the state:

- Broadwater County DUI Task Force
- Lake County DUI Task Force
- Mineral County DUI Task Force
- Missoula County DUI Task Force
- Park County DUI Task Force
- Phillips County DUI Task Force
- Powell County DUI Task Force
- Ravalli County DUI Task Force
- Richland & McCone County DUI Task Force
- Tri-County (Custer, Powder River, Rosebud) DUI Task Force

Safety should be everyone's concern. Please don't wait until tragedy strikes to make motor vehicle safety a top priority.



On average, each year in Montana, impaired driving is a factor in:

- 10% of all crashes
- 20% of all injuries
- 50% of all deaths

Pedestrian Safety Tips

Every year in Montana tragedy strikes when pedestrians are accidentally killed by motor vehicles. Alcohol is more often than not a contributing factor to the fatality. According to MDT Highway Traffic Safety Bureau, in 2008, there were 188 pedestrian/motor vehicle crashes with 11 fatalities and 130 injuries in Montana. Being alert to traffic and avoiding dangerous situations can save lives. If you drink, don't drive. If you are walking, find a safe way home with someone who has not been drinking. Montana law prohibits intoxicated pedestrians from being on a roadway or shoulder (MCA 61-8-508). If you are walking at night, stay in well-lit areas and make yourself visible to drivers. As a pedestrian always follow these safety tips:

- Wear bright, light-colored clothing and reflective materials.
- Carry a flashlight when walking at night.
- Cross roadways in a well-lit area at night and yield to all vehicles on the roadway.
- Stand clear of buses, hedges, parked cars, or other obstacles before crossing, so drivers can see you.
- Be smart and alert: avoid dangerous behaviors.
- Always walk on the sidewalk; if there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic.
- Stay sober; walking while impaired increases your chance of being struck. Intoxicated pedestrians must stay off the road and shoulder.
- Don't assume vehicles will stop; make eye contact with drivers, don't just look at the vehicle. If a driver is on a cell phone, they may not be paying enough attention to drive safely.
- Don't rely solely on pedestrian signals; look before you cross the road.
- Be alert to engine noise or backup lights on cars when in parking lots and near on-street parking spaces.
- Be careful at crossings: look before you step.
- Cross streets at marked crosswalks or intersections.
- Obey traffic signals such as WALK/DON'T WALK signs.
- Look left, right, and left again before crossing a street.
- Watch for turning vehicles; make sure the driver sees you and will stop for you.
- Look across ALL lanes you must cross and visually clear each lane before proceeding. Just because one motorist stops, do not presume drivers in other lanes can see you and will stop for you.
- Don't wear headphones or use a cell phone while crossing.

Safety tips for pedestrians and a link to Montana Pedestrian Laws can be found on http://www.walkinginfo.org/why/tips_walking-safely.cfm. Be safe, be seen, and if intoxicated, stay off the road!

CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program. For more information, contact Mike Wherley at 444-4221 or mwherley@mt.gov.

Operation Safe Driver Educates Drivers

A joint study conducted by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2006 found crashes involving large trucks accounted for 12 percent of all fatal crashes. The study of nearly 1000 truck crashes found that, in 88 percent, actions or inactions by the truck or automobile drivers were critical causal factors. Also, in 56 percent of multi-vehicle crashes involving large trucks and cars, car drivers were identified as the contributing factor for the crashes. *Driver behavior* is a predominant cause of crashes involving trucks and automobiles.

As a result of this study, the Montana Motor Carrier Services (MCS) Division developed "Operation Safe Driver," a special enforcement and education operation, as a strategy to address truck crashes under Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan. Operation Safe Driver is designed to address behavioral issues in high crash corridors. The goal is to reduce large truck-related crashes and consists of the following elements: 1) truck, vehicle and driver inspections with driver education; and, 2) truck and automobile/pickup traffic enforcement with driver education.

The inspection element consists of stopping trucks and conducting driver and vehicle inspections. When MCS officers find serious vehicle or driver violations, the vehicle or driver may be cited and/or placed out-of-service. The driver may also be issued a court citation. If the vehicle or driver are placed out-of-service, violations need to be corrected before the vehicle may leave the site. During the inspection process, the inspector



Out-of-service orders are issued when a truck fails to meet minimum safety requirements, for example, broken frame, inoperable brakes or flat or worn tires. Drivers can also be placed out-of-service for violations such as not having a valid or proper driver's license or driving longer than is allowed by law. The vehicle may not operate until the issues have been addressed.

This truck was placed out-of-service due to a broken frame.

provides the driver with a "Safe Driver" brochure that outlines how to avoid the hazards and risks of driving near large trucks.

The traffic enforcement element involves a Montana Highway Patrol (MHP) officer riding in the passenger seat of a large truck. The MHP officer observes other vehicles operating in the vicinity of the truck for traffic violations such as driving too close, speeding, or aggressive driving. When a violation is observed, the MHP officer radios the vehicle's description to MHP or local law enforcement officers operating patrol cars in advance of the truck. The patrol officer then identifies the vehicle and stops it at a safe location. Depending on the severity of the violation, the patrol officer may cite the driver

for traffic violations. During the stop, the patrol officer provides the driver with a “Safe Driver” brochure that outlines how drivers can avoid the hazards and risks of driving near large trucks.

Since the fall of 2007, MCS has conducted eight “Safe Driver” operations in the following high crash corridors:

- 3 on US 93 North, between Ravalli and Somers
- 1 on I-90 in the Missoula urban area
- 1 on I-90 in the Butte urban area
- 1 on I-90 in Bozeman and in the Gallatin Canyon
- 2 on I-90 in the Billings urban area

The last operation was conducted on I-90 in the Billings area. While in Billings, the team also operated on US 212 between Laurel and Red Lodge. For all the operations combined, officers and inspectors contacted 582 drivers, passed out approximately 500 brochures, conducted 303 truck safety inspections, issued 86 truck and/or truck driver out-of-service orders, and wrote truck drivers 39 traffic citations. Additionally, officers wrote automobile and pickup drivers 145 warnings and 105 citations for traffic violations.

“Operation Safe Driver” has provided some hopeful results. On US 93 North between Ravalli and Somers and I-90 in Billings, over a two-year period, the number of truck out-of-service and overall citations both dropped nearly 50 percent. Additionally, officers and inspectors reported they received positive comments from most drivers about educating them on the hazards of operating near large trucks. Through “Operation Safe Driver” MCS officers and MHP enforcement will continue to educate commercial vehicle and non-commercial vehicle drivers of the consequences of driving unsafely in the vicinity of a commercial vehicle.

For more information, contact Jeff Steeger at 444-4207 or jsteeger@mt.gov.

Transportation Safety Planning Assistance Available

MDT's award-winning approach to comprehensive statewide highway planning is the model for a new MDT effort to support similar safety planning efforts in Montana communities.

MDT is seeking requests from local governments interested in receiving technical and financial support to develop Community Transportation Safety Plans using a process similar to the one MDT used to develop the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/safety/current_chsp.pdf). The deadline to submit the requests is April 30, 2010.

Transportation safety plans are also being developed with Tribal governments cooperatively with the Federal Highway Administration.

Contact Pam Langve-Davis at plangvedavis@mt.gov or 444-7646 for more information about this funding opportunity to address transportation safety issues in Montana communities.

Transit Tales

Transit Provides Access to Jobs

Access to employment is an important part of services for each of the 38 general public transportation systems in Montana. To enhance regular Federal Transit Administration funding for public transportation, a federal program, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), is providing additional access to employment. JARC funding provides much-needed additional transportation for individuals with low incomes to access employment opportunities. JARC grants are competitive and are provided to both urban and rural transit providers.

Six transit providers will receive JARC funds in fiscal year 2010: Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Helena, and Butte. Each program is unique, but all are targeted to provide additional access to jobs that regular transit services could not provide for low income and disabled passengers. This year MET Special Transit in Billings combined transit funding with Public Health and Human Services funding to provide an estimated 37,000 rides to low income and disabled individuals who needed transportation to work sites and training programs.

Low income riders in Butte are transported to vocational training at Butte Montana-Tech, restaurants, motels, and retail centers. The JARC funds are also used to provide certain riders transportation to the Butte Shelter Workshop and the AWARE Recycling Center for their day-to-day employment. This program provides approximately 40,000 rides per year to these transit dependent individuals in Butte.

Without the JARC funding, many of these unique programs would not occur and these individuals would not be able to carry out their day-to-day activities. This service is literally a “lifeline” for many low income riders.

For more information contact Audrey Allums at 444-4210 or aallums@mt.gov.

Electronic Newsline Available – Signup Now!

The Newsline is available electronically for your convenience. If you wish to receive it electronically only, simply send your email address to Newsline Editor Sandra Waddell at swaddell@mt.gov, phone her at 444-7614, or drop a note to her attention at PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 to make the change from hard copy to electronic.

All other changes such as address updates and name changes are also welcome anytime.

Resources for Growing Communities

Recently, MDT launched the Web-based resource site entitled “Montana Transportation and Land Use *Resources for Growing Communities*.” This site is designed to support local planners, decision makers, and others that must effectively coordinate transportation and land use planning decisions. MDT recognizes that land use regulations and many transportation-related decisions are matters of local governance, but can have a dramatic effect on roadway mobility and safety. This resource is a result of research involving transportation professionals and local government representation. Input into the best and most promising practices was guided by land-use and transportation professionals. It can be accessed at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/toolkit>.

Resources include local and national case studies developed for this project, a wide variety of solution-oriented planning tools and techniques from around the nation, and an overview of national and Montana-specific resources. Included is a list of typical questions and situations Montana planners face as they coordinate land-use and transportation plans. Users can click on topics to find a list of relevant tools, strategies, and case studies. A “Search” function makes this site user-friendly. Ideas and feedback are encouraged and can be submitted using the MDT comments link.

Although the site is maintained by MDT, its content is not a statement of Montana policy, nor does it represent recommended or preferred practices.

For more information, contact Hal Fossum at 444-6116 or go to www.mdtinfo.mt.gov and search for Resources for Growing Communities.

Equipment Arrives for Spring Cleanup



Air quality equipment is being delivered to 13 communities funded through the Montana Air & Congestion Initiative (MACI) program. MDT purchased the equipment using \$1.65 million federal and \$256,367 local match

funding from this competitive grant program. The street sweepers, flush trucks, and deicer applicators will proactively address air quality issues related to particulate matter for communities in air quality non-attainment or at-risk areas.

Since the beginning of the MACI program, air quality purchases have proved to be the most cost-effective way to produce high-level air quality benefits. MDT solicited applications from eligible areas last spring, and the requests exceeded the amount available for award by over \$5.5 million. Applications were prioritized and selected based on input from the Department of Environmental Quality, demonstrated need and air quality benefit. Eight counties, Cascade, Butte-Silver Bow, Flathead, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Lincoln, Ravalli and Sanders, and five cities, Helena, Libby, Kalispell, Missoula and Whitefish will receive this equipment.

For more information about the program, contact Janet Kenny at 444-7294 or by e-mail at jakenny@mt.gov.

Research Corner

Research Projects: Idea to Product

In support of its mission to serve the public by providing a safe and cost-effective transportation system, MDT sponsors a variety of research efforts. The goal of this research is to evaluate and advance new transportation-related technologies, materials, and methods; develop design and analysis techniques; and study current transportation challenges.

The MDT Research Section requests new research topics by December 31 of each year. Ten of the 22 research ideas submitted during the 2010 research solicitation were moved forward to technical panels:

- An Advanced Life Extension Technology for MDT Reinforced Concrete Structures
- Assessing the Extent and Determinates of Induced Growth
- A Comparison of Predicted and Measured Prestress Losses
- Developing a Virtual Test Bed for Design and Evaluation of Advance Warning Signals
- Evaluating Intercity Transit Services
- Evaluation of a New Arch Bridge
- Flood Frequency Analyses for Montana Based on Data Through Water Year 2009
- Livability Benchmarks for MDT and Partner Agencies
- Relative Operational Performance of Geosynthetics Used as Subgrade Stabilization
- Warm Mix Asphalt Paving for Montana Highway Construction: Construction and Monitoring

Technical panels are formed to investigate the problem from inception through implementation; determine if a research need truly exists; evaluate proposals; and, if the research is funded, make sure the research stays on track and the results are implemented as appropriate.

MDT’s Research Review Committee makes the final project funding decision.

For information on past and current research projects, go to http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/sub_listing.shtml. For more information, contact Sue Sillick at 406-444-7693 or ssillick@mt.gov.

Environmental Services Bureau Relocates

MDT’s Environmental Services Bureau relocated recently to join the rest of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division at 2960 Prospect Avenue in Helena. The new location is across the highway from the headquarters building, just east of Wal-Mart.

The bureau’s role within the Department and their contact information will remain the same. However, in the spirit of linking planning and environmental processes as emphasized in the federal program, combining these functions in one division will ensure a more seamless transition of projects moving from planning to project development and delivery. Drop in and see their new “digs.”

A Highway Through History: US Highway 91 Between Sieben and Cascade

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian

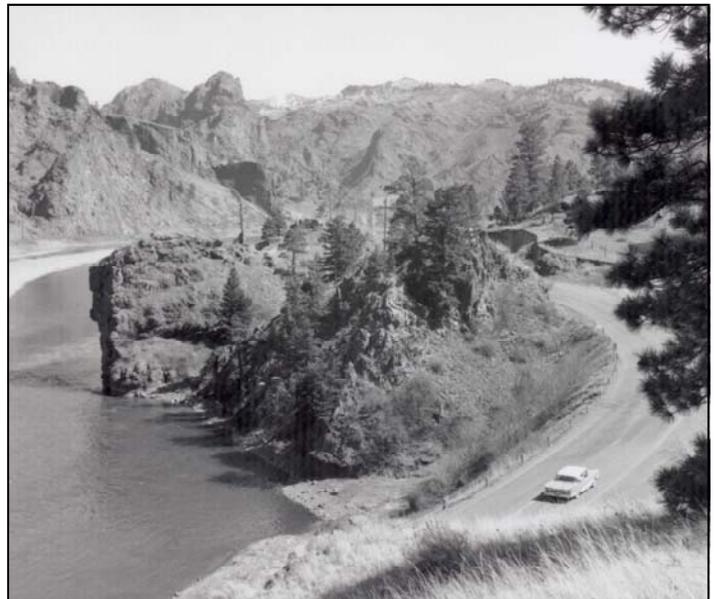
In Montana, most of the pre-Interstate two-lane highways still exist, giving motorists a unique opportunity to experience an important part of the state's rich transportation history. Although they may lack the significance of iconic Route 66, US Highways 2, 10, and 91 in Montana retain a colorful history all their own and also boast more than a few road fans. In a large state with thousands of miles of two-lane roads with many of those roads on my list of favorites, the 40-mile section of US Highway 91 between the Sieben and Hardy interchanges is my favorite of all Montana highways. It is a true Great Depression-era roadway that, even with the nearby presence of Interstate 15, has not changed significantly since it was built. It retains almost all of its original bridges and, with a few exceptions, its original alignment. As an added bonus, one can still see traces of the old wagon road between Fort Benton and Helena. Beginning in 1864, the route through Wolf Creek Canyon carried thousands of tons of freight, gold, and uncounted emigrants seeking their fortunes in the Montana goldfields. The road between Sieben and Hardy is a highway through history.

William Clark provided the first written description of the corridor in July 1805, when the Corps of Discovery passed through the area on its way up the Missouri River to the headwaters. He noted the vertical canyon walls and aboriginal trails along the river. For many decades afterward, the area was infrequently visited by fur trappers and traders until the 1860s when it was explored by Montana's first road-builder, John Mullan. In late 1864, the owners of the Little Prickly Pear Wagon Road Company built a road through Wolf Creek Canyon and operated it as a toll road until 1872 when it became a county road. A rudimentary road passed through the Missouri River Canyon to the north, but, for the most part, travelers between Helena and Great Falls rode the Montana Central Railroad between the two cities after the line's completion in 1887.

Beginning in 1928, delegations of Great Falls, Cascade, and Helena businessmen appeared before the Montana Highway Commission requesting that a more direct route between Helena and Great Falls be built through the Missouri River Canyon. Motorists had to take a circuitous route through the Wolf Creek Canyon to Wolf Creek and then over the old Benton Road to Great Falls. The commissioners from both Cascade and Lewis and Clark counties even contributed funds toward the construction of the new road. Their lobbying efforts proved successful and in January 1929, the highway commissioners designated a new route between Cascade and Wolf Creek as part of US Highway 91. The commissioners awarded the first contract to build the new road in November 1929. Over the course of the next six years, the commissioners awarded seven contracts for the construction of the road and nine projects for the construction of bridges, including two over the Missouri River. The new road was completed in 1935.

During discussions over the routing of the Wolf Creek – Sieben section of the road through the Prickly Pear Canyon in 1932, the highway commissioners and construction engineer George Poore determined that the new road could not pass through the community of Wolf Creek “at any reasonable cost.” Consequently, the new road was placed on the south side of the town on the opposite side of Little Prickly Pear Creek and the railroad. Businesses that had been located in the community, quickly moved to the outskirts of the town along the new road, including a gas station and two tourist cabin camps all of which are still there. The relocation changed the character of Wolf Creek. What was left of the town's business district was nearly obliterated by Interstate 15 in the 1960s.

When completed, the Sieben-Hardy segment of US 91 was among the most scenic in the state. The highway, which hugged the walls of two canyons, crossed the Missouri over two spectacular bridges at Hardy and near Wolf Creek, and included pull-outs added specifically to accommodate fishermen and picnickers. Surprisingly, none of the MDT's tourism promotional literature of the time mentions the scenic highway, nor were any roadside historical markers installed along its length, even though it passed through one of the most historically significant areas of the state. Little has changed to the original highway even though Interstate 15 now visually dominates it and carries most of the traffic. Both facilities, however, pass through an area that is steeped in the geology and history of the state. So, the next time you're in no hurry to reach your destination, get off the Interstate at Hardy or at the Spring Creek Interchange north of Sieben and take a trip through the past.



A portion of US 91 north of Wolf Creek still being used today.

MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.



**Rail, Transit & Planning Division
Montana Department of Transportation**

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MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-3423, TTY (800)335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf, or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

MDT Project Analysis Chief
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

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Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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