



Move Montana Forward Together Montana Department of Transportation Launches Long-Range Planning Update

The Montana Department of Transportation has launched an update to the statewide long-range transportation plan, TranPlanMT, with an online survey to gain public input.

The survey, tranplanmt.metroquest.com, will provide an initial opportunity for public input on transportation priorities and strategies for Montana's transportation network in the future. The survey and other efforts will continue the Department's partnerships with local, tribal, and federal governments, along with transportation stakeholders.

TranPlanMT, an update of TranPlan 21, defines the policy direction for operating, preserving, and improving Montana's transportation system over the next 20 years. It serves as the basis for MDT decisions, especially those related to investing Montana's limited transportation funds.

Transportation needs are outpacing funding 3 to 1. Now is a critical time for MDT to work with the traveling public and openly discuss the future of Montana's transportation network in the face of limited funding and mounting needs.

The TranPlanMT update process will extend through the year and identify travel, transportation, economic, and demographic trends both in Montana and on a national scale to plan for Montana's growing transportation needs. Public input will be considered along with other analysis and data in updating this multimodal long-range policy plan. The plan is not project specific, but sets a policy framework for ongoing department decisions to move Montana forward together.

The public is encouraged to comment through the online survey until August 4, 2016, and through the project website for the duration of the effort at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan>.

For questions regarding MDT's TranPlanMT effort, contact Charity Watt at (406) 444-3439 or cwatt@mt.gov.

Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request by contacting the Office of Civil Rights, P.O. Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620; 444-9229; fax 444-7243, or e-mail Alice Flesch at aflesch@mt.gov. For TTY, call (800) 335-7592 or the Montana Relay Service at 711.

**MDT wants your
input at
tranplanmt.metroquest.com**



FAST Act Reauthorization Bill Update

Since enacted in December 2015, MDT staff has been actively reviewing the 1,300-plus page Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act reauthorization bill. This five-year bill provides states much needed program stability, following the previous two-year MAP-21 authorization and numerous program extensions.

The FAST Act is a very good bill for Montana, providing a slight increase in both highway and transit program funding while retaining the state's share of the national program. Though there are some new program names, the Act also retained much of the existing program structure, limiting the burden on states for developing and implementing new programs. One exception is the addition of a new standalone Freight Program. The Freight Program joins the other formula-based core funding programs, receiving a guaranteed annual allocation of funding and establishes new criteria for the use of those funds. As a result of this new program, MDT will initiate the development of a state freight plan in the near future.

Another notable program change is the elimination of implementing behavioral measures as an eligible use of Highway Safety Improvement Program funding. This change in eligibility limits MDT's ability to continue to fund much needed behavioral-based safety initiatives to help reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries on Montana's highways.

Overall, the FAST Act brings much needed stability to Montana's surface transportation program and allows MDT to keep moving projects under development forward without disruption or re-direction. Additionally, MDT staff has begun and will continue to pursue avenues for restoring behavioral safety measures as an eligible use of Highway Safety Improvement Program Funds.

2015 TranPlan 21 Statewide Public Involvement and Stakeholder Survey Results Available

MDT administers the public involvement telephone and stakeholder surveys every two years as part of the TranPlan 21 (MDT's long-range transportation policy plan) public involvement process. The surveys are conducted by the University of Montana through a statistically valid, random telephone survey and identify changes in public and key transportation stakeholder groups' opinions on emerging issues resulting from MDT policies and programs.

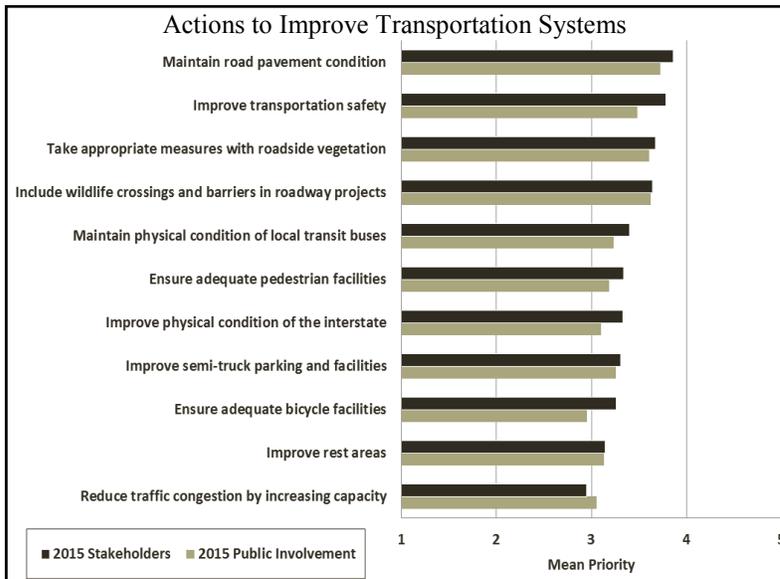
According to the most recent 2015 Biennial TranPlan 21 Public Involvement Survey, Montanans believe there is a need for:

- ◆ Pedestrian walkways.
- ◆ Major highways other than interstates.
- ◆ Rest areas.

Montanans viewed nearly all problems studied as small. Only one problem was viewed as moderately severe, which was road pavement condition.

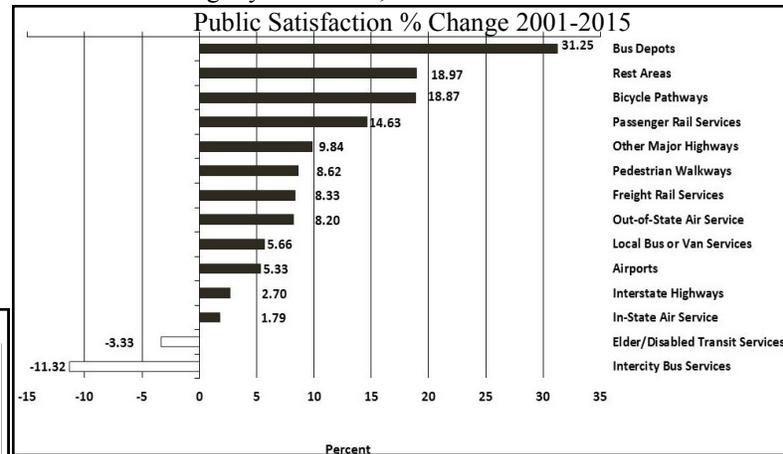
Montanans indicated that the highest priority possible actions to improve the system are:

- ◆ Maintain road pavement condition.
- ◆ Improve transportation safety.
- ◆ Include wildlife crossings and barriers



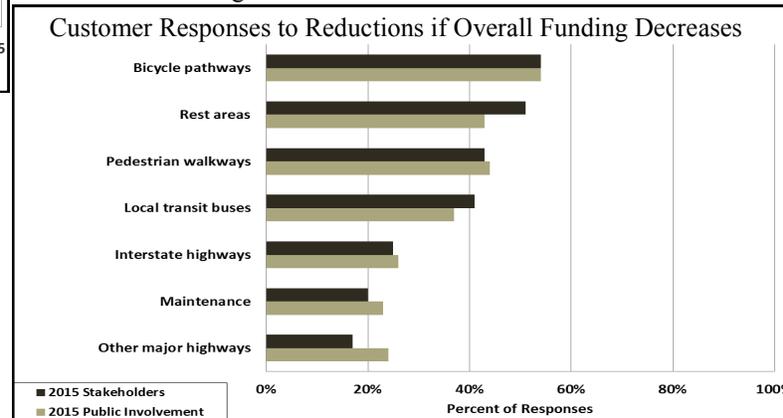
Because the 2015 survey includes many of the same questions as similar surveys since 1994, MDT is able to track historic trends in public satisfaction. Following are some examples:

- ◆ Overall system satisfaction remained consistent with 2013 and slightly improved over 2011.
- ◆ Physical condition of the interstate highways shows consistently high satisfaction.
- ◆ Most possible system improvements remain rated as medium priorities.
- ◆ MDT average performance and customer service grades declined slightly from 2013, but remain between B and C.



In addition to the public telephone survey, MDT's transportation stakeholder groups survey continues to be compared to past public and stakeholder surveys. Opinions of the stakeholder surveys closely match the public opinions.

New in this survey, both the public and stakeholders were asked to evaluate potential aspects of the transportation system to decrease funding in the event MDT's overall funding was decreased. Both groups agreed that the least preferred choices were other major highways, maintenance, and interstate highways. Bicycle pathways, rest areas, and pedestrian walkways ranked as the most preferable areas to decrease funding.



The complete results of the 2015 public telephone and stakeholder surveys are available on-line at:

- ◆ http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/surveys/2015_tranplan21_public_involvement.pdf
- ◆ http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/surveys/2015_tranplan21_stakeholder.pdf

For more information, contact Sandy Waddell at 444-7614 or swaddell@mt.gov.

Comment on MDT's ADA Transition Plan

The deadline for commenting on the draft update to the ADA Transition Plan is June 19, 2016. The update provides guidance for removal of accessibility barriers and identifies methods to assist MDT in complying with ADA regulations. Go to <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/contracting/civil/external-ada.shtml> for the plan and to comment, or contact Matt Maze at 406-444-9270 or mmaze@mt.gov.

Emergency Medical Services Grant Applications Due June 30th

MDT has opened the State Fiscal Year 2017 grant round for applications for the Emergency Medical Services Grants to enhance traffic safety in Montana. The purpose of the program is to provide grants to mostly volunteer, Medicare-level billing providers for emergency response vehicles, ambulances, medical care equipment, communications equipment, and training. Approximately \$1.1 million is granted annually through the program with a required 10 percent match.

New this year: Applications will only be accepted through the Montana Grants and Loan Web grants system at <https://fundingmt.org/index.do>. Applicants will need to register and submit an application through the web-based system.

For program eligibility and the application process, see MDT's website at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_ems.shtml.

For more information, contact Chad Newman at 444-0856 or chnewman@mt.gov.

New MDT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator and Safety Tips



Michelle Erb is MDT's new bicycle/pedestrian coordinator. She will serve as a contact for bicycle and pedestrian safety information, assist with design standards for bicycle/pedestrian facilities, supply signs for cycling events, provide bicycle touring information, and coordinate training of MDT and local staff in bicycle and pedestrian facility design.

A Montana native, Michelle grew up in Clancy. She started working for MDT as an intern in 2009 and began full time in the Director's Office. Most recently, she was a compliance specialist in the Right-of-Way Bureau.

Summer Safety Tips

The summer season is upon us, which means more bicyclists and pedestrians will be using the roadways. Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians are all responsible for safety on Montana's roadways. No matter the travel mode, everyone must take care because a collision with a motor vehicle and a bicycle or pedestrian is often deadly. MDT reminds all users to follow traffic laws, avoid distractions, and share the road. By showing common courtesy and respect on the road, we can ensure that our roadways are safe for all.

MDT provides bicycle and pedestrian safety materials upon request. Materials include Share the Road bumper stickers, safety quick tip handouts, pocket booklets on laws affecting pedestrians and bicyclists, and the *Kids Walking and Bicycling in Montana!* coloring and activities booklets.

For more information on all materials available, contact Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator Michelle Erb at 444-9273 or merb@mt.gov.

Yellowstone Airport Opens May 26

SkyWest Airlines and the Yellowstone Airport are pleased to announce that daily jet flights from Salt Lake City to West Yellowstone will resume on May 26, five days earlier than last season. The seasonal Delta Connection service ensures visitors to Yellowstone National Park will enjoy quick, convenient flights and unmatched access to the world's first national park.

"I was pleasantly surprised when I got the call this winter saying that SkyWest was interested in expanding their service into May for the first time since they have been flying here," Airport Manager Jeff Kadlec said. "It's an exciting thing for all of us here at the airport and for the community as well."

The Yellowstone Airport resumed jet service for the first time in many years in 2015, a change that helped bring in 2,168 more travelers than the airport saw in 2014, a 38 percent increase. This season, SkyWest will be adding an additional one flight per day from May 26-31 before resuming its usual summer schedule June 1. The airline will also be adding an additional flight on Wednesdays for eight weeks this summer, bringing the total number of new flights to West Yellowstone to 13 this season.

"I think this expansion shows that SkyWest is really wanting to invest here in West Yellowstone," Kadlec said. "This is the most convenient way to travel to Yellowstone as we are located only two miles from the West Gate of the park."

Each of the jet flights from Salt Lake City to West Yellowstone will be onboard the 50-seat Canadair Regional Jet (CRJ200). There will be two daily flights Thursday through Monday and one daily flight on Tuesday and Wednesday, with an additional flight on Wednesday during the peak of the summer season. Each flight is timed to ensure passengers are able to easily connect from Salt Lake City to hundreds of destinations around the world through Delta's global network.

SkyWest Airlines has proudly provided quality service to the West Yellowstone community since 1986. The airline is a leading Bombardier CRJ200 operator and has been named the manufacturer's most reliable operator in North America five times.

Customers may book the new jet flights immediately at delta.com.

Note: Article originally appeared in the April 8, 2016 issue of West Yellowstone News, reprinted with permission by Jeremy Weber.



MDT and Partners Ramp Up Seat Belt Education and Enforcement Efforts Heading into Summer



zero deaths | zero serious injuries

Director Tooley led a press tour in Billings May 24 highlighting the issues vital to saving lives and preventing injuries on Montana roads. Law enforcement agencies, motor vehicle crash responders, trauma care providers, and child protection safety advocates joined Director Tooley last month to highlight public education

and enforcement efforts to reach Vision Zero – Zero Deaths and Zero Serious Injuries on Montana roadways and to highlight the May National Seat Belt Enforcement Mobilization – “Click it or Ticket”.

At St. Vincent Healthcare Trauma Center a tour of the Level II trauma center and ICU was led by Barry McKenzie, M.D., general and trauma surgeon with Surgical Associates P.C., who treats patients at St. Vincent Healthcare Trauma Center in Billings. “Sadly, we see firsthand the devastation when people don’t use seat belts,” Dr. McKenzie said “Crash injuries, especially when someone is thrown from a vehicle because they weren’t buckled up, almost always end in death or severe life-changing injuries.” Dr. McKenzie stated that the best form of trauma care is trauma prevention and seat belts are the best prevention in a crash.

Emergency responders at American Medical Response and Koren Bloom, Safe Kids Yellowstone County Coalition coordinator demonstrated the correct installation of a child safety seat in a vehicle and discussed best-practice recommendations for parents and caregivers to protect children being transported in a vehicle. Staff also emphasized the importance of parents setting a good example for young children and teens by using their seatbelts at all times.

The final stop of the tour was at Hanser’s Family of Automotive Services. Hanser crews respond to tow vehicles after crashes and help with extrication of victims when needed. With over 30 years of experience recovering crash scenes, Hanser’s staff recounted how they see the evidence in fatal and serious injury crashes when vehicle occupants don’t properly restrain themselves and their children with seat belts and car seats. Staff showed the mangled remains of a car in which the driver who wasn’t wearing a



Never underestimate the value of life-saving proper restraints including child safety seats.

seat belt died and a young child was injured. Montana Highway Patrol Sgt. Scott Ayers was on hand and emphasized the importance of getting more people to wear seatbelts. “I can’t say enough about the proper use of seat belts and child seats, if someone wants to survive a crash, that’s the number one thing you can do.”

So far Montana’s traffic fatalities in 2016 have outpaced the previous year, concerning MDT and others as the state enters the summer months when traffic deaths and injuries traditionally spike. In 2015 in Montana, about 70 percent of the fatalities in automobiles equipped with seat belts involved victims either not wearing a seat belt or not wearing a seat belt properly.

Buckle up every trip, every time.



MDT Director Mike Tooley views a vehicle involved in a fatal crash.

Be Extra Aware in Work Zones

Warmer weather, clear roads, orange cones and barrels...it’s construction season in Montana! Reduced speeds, detours, and delays can all wear on a driver’s patience. But as you travel through these “orange” zones, please remember to manage your speed, space, and stress.

There are loved ones working here! MDT work zone staff, contractors, construction crews, and other road-work professionals work hard to keep Montana’s transportation system functioning. Their families and friends want them to come home after their time on the job.

Work zone safety isn’t just to protect workers. In 2015, there were 130 work zone crashes. Fifty people were injured, and three were killed. These injuries and deaths were not workers, but the traveling public. Each year, 85-90 percent of national work zone crash fatalities are motorists. So plan ahead, slow down, and stay alert. Your loved ones want you home.

Work zone safety is an important part of reaching Vision Zero! Find more information on how to plan ahead and be a safe work zone driver at

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/workzones.shtml>.



Leaders Tackle Montana's Traffic Fatality Crisis

In the first four and half months of 2016, 61 people died on Montana roads. This is on *the heels of a 17 percent increase in fatalities and serious injuries in 2015* over the prior year. For the first time, leaders representing state, local and tribal governments and associations in Montana have committed to joining forces to address this growing problem and work together to implement Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan.

"Addressing traffic safety issues and driver behavior has been ongoing, but we are at a point we must elevate participation to the top of organizations across Montana," said MDT Director Mike Tooley. "These crashes affect families and loved ones, our health system, our courts, our corrections system, and more."

The total cost of crash-related deaths in Montana is \$296 million annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Motor vehicle crashes rank at the top of the CDC's list of unintentional injury deaths in Montana.

"Roadway safety is a public health concern," said Richard Opper, director of the Department of Public Health and Human Services. "Collaboration and commitment of the state's leaders are keys to turning this around."

The first meeting of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) took place on March 15 in Helena. Leaders from various agencies were invited to participate including the Governor's Office, Office of Indian Affairs, Legislative representatives, Montana Department of Transportation, Attorney General, Montana Highway Patrol, 13th Judicial Court, Department of Corrections, Court Administrator's Office, Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association, Montana County Attorney's Association, Office of the State Public Defender, Montana League of Cities and Towns, Montana Association of Counties, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Public Instruction, Department of Revenue, Department of Health and Human Services and the Montana Tavern Association.

The meeting couldn't come too soon, according to Director Tooley. "We are seeing an early surge in fatalities with every indication that things could get worse. June, July, and August are historically when the highest number of fatalities occur. Low gas prices, longer days and good weather mean more people traveling and more opportunities for crashes."

Driver behavior plays a big role in these crashes. In the last decade, 73 percent of fatalities and serious injuries involved either driver impairment or not properly wearing a seatbelt. Roadway departure is a factor in the majority of fatalities and serious injuries in Montana.

The ELT discussed advancing safety strategies by incorporating the 4Es of traffic safety: education, enforcement, emergency medical services, and engineering. The team shared resources, responsibilities and broke down barriers for the state to meet Vision Zero, zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana's roadways.

On July 12, the ELT will again discuss advancing strategies of the 4E's, including a primary seatbelt law with possible language change. Other focus areas include researching commonalities of fatalities in Montana so intervention points can be established to reach the Vision Zero goal. The ELT meets twice a year at a minimum.

For additional information on the Executive Leadership Team or the Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan, please visit our site at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp.shtml> or contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or plangvedavis@mt.gov or Kevin Dusko at 444-7411 or kedusko@mt.gov.

It's Motorcycle Season – Let's Share the Road!



Threatened by traffic on Montana's roads, many are killed or injured because they're vulnerable and hard to see. We're not talking about wildlife, we're talking about motorcyclists.

Our Montana summer brings nice weather, longer days, and more travelers on Montana roadways including motorcyclists. In the last ten years, 283 motorcyclists have died and more than 1,500 have been seriously injured in motorcycle crashes, occurring mostly during the months of May through September. MDT reminds you to take a second look before pulling out into

traffic or turning left. Give these fellow travelers extra room to help them make their way safely along our roads.

Prevention of motorcycle crashes is critical to reaching Vision Zero, zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana roads. These tips can help avoid crashes with motorcycles:

Tips for drivers:

- Respect all other vehicles on the road.
- Keep your full attention on driving and avoid distractions.
- Allow motorcyclists the full lane width – never share a lane.
- Perform a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots at intersections and before entering or exiting a lane of traffic.
- Always signal your intention to change lanes or when merging with traffic.
- Allow more following distance behind a motorcycle so they have enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency.
- Never drive impaired.

Tips for motorcycle riders:

- Wear a DOT-compliant helmet.
- Be highly visible; wear brightly colored or reflective protective gear and turn on your headlights.
- Strategically use your lane position to see and be seen.
- Stay alert – and slow down when approaching left turns or intersections in anticipation of other drivers' actions.
- Use turn signals in advance when changing lanes or turning.
- Never ride impaired.
- Observe speed limits – over half of fatal motorcycle crashes are speed related.
- Take a motorcycle safety course.

MDT partners with the Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety program out of MSU Northern. Training courses are available and space is open in the Basic Rider Course for novice or beginning riders; the Basic Rider Course 2 designed for experienced riders to brush up skills and experience street riding traffic experiences; and the Advanced Rider Course advanced skill development based on sport bike riding techniques and safety awareness. For more information, and to register for a course call 800-922-BIKE or visit <http://motorcycle.musn.edu>.

Transportation Alternatives Projects Awarded

In the fall of 2015, MDT awarded several of the first Transportation Alternatives (TA) projects, and construction has begun on a number of these projects. Many other of these projects from the 2013-2014 funding cycle are slated for bidding this year and next.

MDT recently awarded 12 TA projects from the 42 applications received for the 2015-2016 funding to city, county, and tribal governments. These projects will be developed in the months to come and prepared for bidding by 2018.

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act provides for five years of funding including TA projects. MDT plans to issue a call for TA project applications for the next two-year cycle (2017-2018) later this summer or fall. A global notice will be sent when the call for applications is issued.

One change to the program provides funding for maintenance/preservation for TA projects. There will be a separate TA maintenance application and scoring criteria for the new maintenance/preservation category. One criterion is that the original project be constructed with federal funds. Details and a summary of the changes will be available when the call for project applications is issued. All other funding categories will remain the same.

Information about the TA program is available on the MDT Transportation Alternatives website www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml.

For more information, contact TA Program Manager Dave Holien at 444-6118 or dholien@mt.gov.

Download Montana's Road Construction Mobile App

MDT provides travelers access to construction information in a quick and easy manner so they can be prepared for summer travel plans. The mobile app "MDT Travel Info" provides a color-coded map with layer capability so users can customize the view based on their travel preferences. The "MDT Travel Info" app and corresponding website, www.mdt511.com, include access to RWIS and camera sites, reported incidents, construction information, and several other layers. The sites also include text reports, rest area locations, weather forecasts, and much more.

Travelers can download the free "MDT Travel Info" mobile app from the traveler information website or by going to the App Store.



Construction season is gearing up. Check for delays and progress before you leave. (Photo: Capitol Interchange—Cedar Street construction in Helena.)

Montana Rail Grade Separation Study Complete

The 2016 Montana Rail Grade Separation Study (RGSS) was recently completed. The study is an update to the 2003 RGSS commissioned to address changing conditions and assess highway-rail crossings at affected communities across the state.

Since publication of the 2003 study, some Montana communities have experienced growth in population, roadway traffic, and train traffic, contributing to vehicle delays at at-grade railroad crossings. Both safety and delay issues at railroad crossings continue to be an important statewide and individual community concern.

To assess current and future safety and delay issues at railroad crossings across the state, the 2016 RGSS utilized a data-driven methodology to objectively rank public railroad crossings, both separated and at-grade, using factors such as vehicular volumes, train volumes, and community mobility.

Ten at-grade crossings were selected for further analysis, which included site visits, recommended separation configurations, conceptual plans, benefit-cost analyses, and planning-level cost estimates. Project selection for construction, funding types and availability, and prioritization were outside the scope of the study. Project advancement is dependent on funding availability through MDT routine project nomination process.

For more information, contact Diane Myers at 444-7252 or dmyers@mt.gov. The report can be viewed at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/MDT-RGSS-Final-Report-2016-05-13.pdf>.

Third Tuesday of June is Good Roads Day

The third Tuesday in June, this year June 21, marks Good Roads Day, as designated by the Montana Legislature whereby the people of the state are asked to "...contribute toward the improvement and safety of public highways." Again this year, MDT is asking Montanans to take a minute to think about what good roads in the state contribute to their daily lives.

Getting to work, healthcare, shopping, recreation, and going about daily activities is easier and more enjoyable when the transportation system is functioning well. Good pavement and bridge decks, traffic signals, sidewalks, buses, and turn lanes are just some of the components of a well-functioning system.

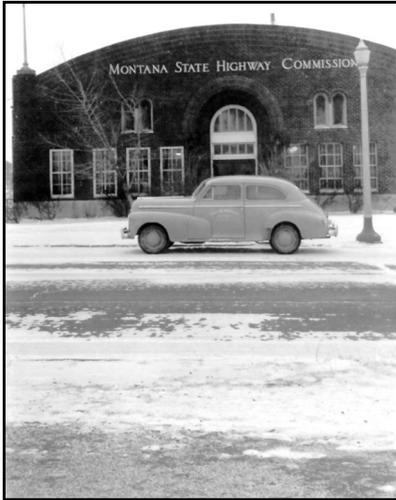
Funding for Montana's transportation system has been flat for years while construction costs, inflation, an aging infrastructure, and increased use make it tougher to preserve and maintain Montana's roads and bridges. Available highway money will cover less than a third of the projected \$15.8 billion in Montana transportation needs over the next decade. MDT diligently manages transportation assets with a focus on preserving the system first, because it costs a lot less than having to reconstruct a highway or a bridge.

In Montana, a driver averaging 12,500 miles a year, with a vehicle averaging 21 miles per gallon, contributes about \$3.50 a week or \$182.50 a year to fuel taxes for maintaining and constructing Montana highways. Federal funds pay for about 87 percent of MDT's highway construction, and Montana receives about \$2.58 for every dollar it contributes to the federal Highway Trust Fund.

This June 21, consider how that \$3.50 weekly investment is serving your day-to-day life.

A History of MDT's District and Area Offices

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian



Montana State Highway Commission building in Great Falls, circa 1938.

In 1919, the 12-member State Highway Commission, headed by Montana State Penitentiary Warden Frank Conley and Chief Engineer Paul Pratt, devised a plan to divide the state into districts so that “representatives of the department might be brought into closer touch with local officials and conditions.” Individual districts also made sense from a travel standpoint, significantly reducing the cost of traveling to all corners of the state from Helena. The highway

commission divided the state into four districts: Helena, Great Falls, Billings, and Glasgow. At first, the Glasgow office existed only on paper as there were no construction projects happening in that area. The highway department leased space in privately-owned buildings for its district operations. The district operations were small, involving only the chief engineer, a few field men, and a secretary.

Through the years, the number of districts expanded and contracted depending on federal funding and construction activities in certain parts of the state. The locations of the district offices also changed, with a few staying put in certain cities. In 1921, the commission maintained six district offices, but abandoned two of them at the end of the construction season. In 1928, there were 12 district offices, corresponding with each of the 12 construction districts. Chief Highway Engineer Dave McKinnon reorganized the highway department in 1935 and reduced the number of district offices to ten, including one at Poplar. Chief Highway Engineer Howard Holmes and the highway commissioners again reorganized the department in 1943, at least temporarily, establishing ten districts: Butte, Great Falls, Wolf Point, Missoula, Kalispell, Havre, Miles City, Lewistown, and Bozeman. The restructuring set the organization in each district pretty much as it is today. The district office locations established in 1943 are now the sites of the MDT's district and area offices. Operations then, as it is now, included administration, engineering, and maintenance activities all under the direction of a district engineer (called a district administrator since the early 1990s).

The Interstate Highway era firmly established today's district and area office organization. In 1957, Chief Engineer Fred Quinnell designated five district and five area offices. Glendive originated as a “sub-district” for Miles City in 1947 but became the administrative center of the Glendive District in the 1970s. The highway department owned some office buildings and leased others until well into the 1950s. The Wolf Point Area Office originated as a district office in 1932. The unique barrel arch design of the building was used for other district offices until the 1950s. The architectural design can also be seen in the MDT's Glendive

and Havre offices. The commissioners authorized the construction of district offices in Great Falls in 1936 and Havre in 1953. Now privately owned, the old Great Falls district office building still exists as a vacant building at the intersection of Central Avenue West and Bay Drive.

Quinnell's 1957 decision resulted in significant changes to the department's district infrastructure. In 1956, the highway commissioners had already hired Billings architects Harry Loner and Frank Stroebe to design a new district office building and maintenance shop in the Magic City to replace the old district office on North 24th Street on property leased from the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad since the 1930s. The Modern style building on Laurel Road (US Highway 10) is definitely a product of post-World War II architectural aesthetics. The flat roofed administrative building displays decorative brick walls and ribbons of large windows to provide natural interior lighting. The attached barrel-arch roofed maintenance shop provided plenty of space for the repair and maintenance of the district's equipment.

Loner and Stroebe's design proved highly adaptable as well. Buildings of almost identical design were built in Great Falls (1959), Lewistown (1963), and Missoula (1964). The standardized design of the district offices/shops were also mirrored in the steel buildings that typified the highway department's properties in those communities. Enough so, that the same style of utility buildings are located at each of the four district and area office sites. There are some variations though. The Missoula District Office complex includes a 1955 port of entry station that was originally located at Saltese and moved to Missoula in 1964. It now functions as the Missoula Maintenance section house. In Lewistown, there are several garages that were provided by the US Air Force in the 1960s to house equipment to maintain the roads to the missile silos. The Butte District Office is housed in a building constructed in 1969 and the Kalispell Area Office in a much newer building – too recent to be considered historic.

The buildings housing the four district and two area offices are products of their times and, despite the activities going on in and around them, are little changed from their original appearances. The Billings District Office sports an addition that is definitely 1960s in origin and once housed the Montana Highway Patrol. The Glendive District office has an addition that was added to allow for right-of-way activities during the Interstate era. This author particularly likes the steel buildings on each of the district complexes. They all tell a story about how the MDT's mission has changed and expanded to serve the needs of the traveling public.



Missoula District office building 2015.

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.

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MDT Wants Your Comments

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

MDT Project Analysis Manager
PO Box 201001
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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 800-335-7592.

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