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Applicant for this TIGER Discretionary Grant

Montana Department of Transportation

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1. PROJECT NAME – I-15 CUSTER INTERCHANGE/AVE, MRL OVERPASS-HELENA

2. GRANT REQUEST AMOUNT - \$54,000,000

3. PROJECT DATA State: Montana

County: Lewis & Clark

City: Helena

Congressional District: MT-001

Rural or Urban: Urban

Type: Highway, Interchange and Bridge Reconstruction

DUNS Number: 878557917

Web link: http://www.mdt.mt.gov/recovery/grant_i15corr.shtml

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Custer Avenue Interchange & MRL Structures project includes construction of a new interchange at the Interstate 15 (I-15) intersection with Custer Avenue and replacement of two Interstate bridges over the Montana Rail Link (MRL) rail line between the Cedar Street and Capitol Interchanges in Helena, Montana. See Figure 1: Location Map below for the project area.

The Custer Avenue Interchange portion of the project, along with the supporting elements as described in the I-15 Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for the I-15 Corridor through Helena, includes:

The construction elements within this project include:

- Reconstruction of Custer Avenue (U-5802) from Montana Avenue to Washington Street to provide five lanes and median improvements.
- Construction of a new interchange and bridge structure on I-15 at its intersection with Custer Avenue including a two-lane southbound off-ramp.
- Construction of multiple auxiliary lanes on I-15 between Custer Avenue and Cedar Street.
- Relocation of utilities and reconstruction of all existing public and private approaches.
- New signalization and signal upgrades in the corridor.
- Developing a storm drain system including a detention pond within the southbound on-ramp loop and a new drainage crossing under I-15 to a storm drain detention facility.
- Widening Cedar Street to a 5 lane facility between I-15 and Montana Avenue;

- Realigning the I-15 frontage road to access Custer Avenue at the existing Washington Street signalized intersection;
- The MRL Structures portion of the project will reconstruct two functionally obsolete Interstate structures that cross over the MRL rail line between the Cedar Street and Capitol Interchanges.

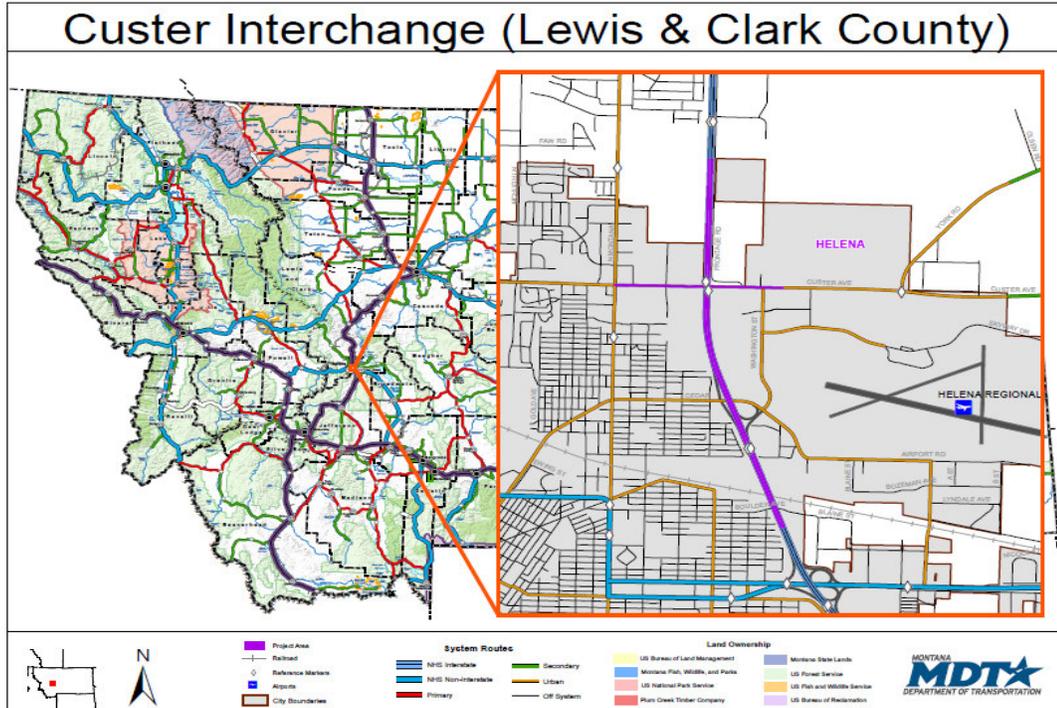


Figure 1: Location Map

The north Helena valley has experienced constant growth since the early 1980's. Along with this growth, traffic on Custer Avenue, as the only uninterrupted east/west corridor on the north City boundary, has grown beyond the capacity of the existing roadway. The two-lane facility constructed in the 1950's is a narrow rural design with two twelve foot driving lanes, gravel shoulders and parallel drainage ditches.

The segment of I-15 and Custer Avenue included in this project has also seen considerable commercial and retail development that has further stressed the City street network and collector routes that funnel Helena valley commuter traffic through this area.

Currently, the Cedar Street Interchange is the City's most northern interchange, with the next I-15 access approximately 9-miles to the north at the Lincoln Road Interchange.

Adding an Interchange at Custer Avenue, reconstructing the I-15 MRL structures, and constructing the supporting elements for these projects, will provide both local and through traffic more safe and efficient access to this growing area of the Helena community.

Project Limits and Major Design Features

The project is located within the City of Helena urban limits in sections 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21, T10N, R03W, in Lewis & Clark County and includes a number of routes, as described below.ⁱ

Custer Interchange & Supporting Elements

- Interstate 15 is functionally classified as a rural principal arterial (Interstate). The limits of construction extend from RP 193+0.316 (Cedar Street Interchange, junction with U-5807) RP 194+0.396. Auxiliary lanes will accommodate increased traffic flow between Custer Avenue and Cedar Street.
- Route U-5802, Custer Avenue, is functionally classified as a Minor Arterial. This segment begins at approximately RP 001+0.553 (200' west of the intersection of with Montana Avenue (U-5809)) and continues east to RP 002+0.421 (500' east of the intersection with Washington Street (U-5807)). Utility relocation work will extend to RP 003+0.055 (intersection of Custer Avenue and York Road (U-5823)).
- Route U-5807, Cedar Street is functionally classified as a Principal Arterial. This segment begins at approximately RP 001+0.217 (intersection with Montana Avenue (U-5809)) and continues east to approximately RP 001+0.823 (Cedar Street Interchange). Widening Cedar Street will accommodate detour traffic during the Custer Avenue Interchange construction and increased traffic volumes. This widening is a supporting element in the I-15 Corridor EIS.
- Realignment of the I-15 frontage road.
- There currently is no funding available for these project segments. Project cost estimate is \$36,000,000.

MRL Structures

- The twin structures crossing the Montana Rail Link tracks and facilities are located approximately at RP 192.6 on I-15 between the Capital and Cedar Street interchanges. The project will replace these narrow- functionally obsolete structures and add lanes necessary to accommodate increased traffic volumes.
- There is no funding for this project segment. Project cost estimate is \$18,000,000.

Project Roadway Traffic Volumes

Traffic growth estimates for I-15 and Custer Avenue are based on projections included in the Greater Helena Area Transportation Plan (2004 update), combined with a statistically based regression analysis (20 year projection) as provided by MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division are shown in Table 1 below.

Within the estimated traffic volumes, 20% or more of the truck traffic tend to travel these routes during the peak hours, adding to area congestion.

Traffic volumes along the future frontage road alignment may increase significantly as proposed commercial and residential subdivisions north of Custer Avenue develop.

	I-15 RP 193.316-197.124		Custer Ave RP 1.513-2.338		Frontage Rd
	N of Custer	S of Custer	West of I-15	East of I-15	
2005 ADT	8060	8060	14260	15210	2900
2012 ADT	12620	26470	20575	14890	3120
2032 ADT	25100	52670	40940	29630	4210
DHV	2736		4094		460
Trucks	8.7%		2.0%		1.1%
ESAL's	725		162		15
Growth Rate	3.5%		3.5%		1.5%

Table 1: Traffic Projection

Project Map

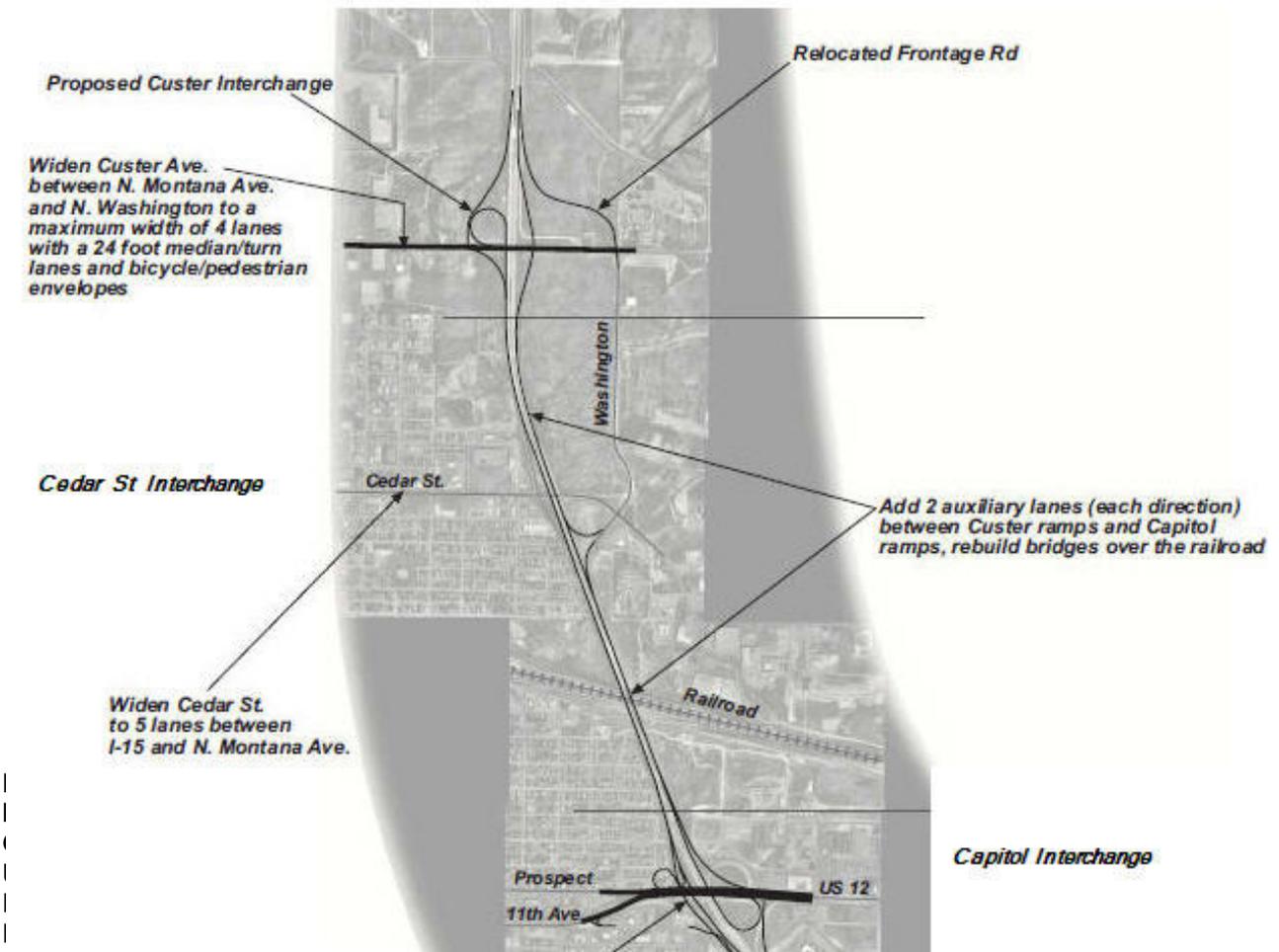


Figure 2: Project Map

5. PROJECT PARTIES

The Montana Department of Transportation – Grant Recipient – This project includes work on the Interstate, Urban, and off-system routes that are the responsibility of MDT. Montana Division of Federal Highways Administration

City of Helena

6. Grant Funds and Sources and Uses of Project Funds

This request for Funding from the TIGER grant totals \$54,000,000. The construction phase of this project will be 100% from TIGER Grant Funds. Grant funds in the amount of \$36,000,000 are requested for the Custer Avenue reconstruction and the I-15 interchange including the structure, ramps and auxiliary lanes on I-15. Grant funds in the amount of \$18,000,000 are requested for the I-15 MRL Structures segment of the project. Funding is available for a state match and for the remaining engineering and project development activities for the project. The project-funding scenario is in Table 2 below.

Project Phase	IM Funding	SAFETEA-LU Funding	TIGER Grant	R/W Contribution
Preliminary Engineering	\$3,300,000			
Right of Way	\$8,700,000	\$2,500,000		\$280,000
Utilities		\$2,400,000		
Construction/Construction Engineering			\$54,000,000	

Table 2: Project Funding

MDT has received, obligated and expended federal funds (IM and SAFETEA-LU Transportation Improvement Projects) for this project under the Custer Interchange – Helena project. As of September 2009, MDT has obligated approximately \$17,000,000 of Federal and State funds for preliminary engineering, right of way acquisition, and utility moves for this project. MDT also received R/W contribution to the project valued at \$280,000 from the City of Helena. In addition to these funds, federal funds were used to develop the I-15 Corridor EIS for this project.

Community impacts

The new interchange at Custer Avenue will primarily address access, capacity, mobility, emergency services and local and regional planning needs in Helena and Lewis & Clark County. One of the most critical issues is emergency services access for the east side of I-15. Both the Helena fire and police departments have identified difficulties because of the dividing effect I-15 has on the Helena community. Additionally, I-15 provides one of the main conduits for the community and region to access St. Peter’s Hospital. The main entrance to St. Peter’s was recently revised and provides very direct access to the South Helena Interchange. However, there is an approximate nine-mile gap in Interstate access in the Helena Valley and these areas must use collectors or surface roads to access the Hospital. Emergency service providers have identified a need for additional access to I-15 and for additional east/west arterials to cross the interstate for emergency service access.

In addition to the barrier to emergency services, I-15 also serves as a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian access. The existing Custer Avenue overpass was constructed in the 1960’s as a narrow structure with guardrail along both approaches. There are no

bicycle/pedestrian facilities on the overpass, or on Custer Avenue in either direction within this project. Pedestrians often walk behind the guardrail until they reach the bridge, then step over to walk along the roadway between traffic and the bridge rail, stepping back over the guardrail once they have crossed the bridge. The area behind the guardrail is very narrow path adjacent to steep side slopes.

This project includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and accessible ramps for the entire project length along Custer Avenue. These facilities will tie into existing bicycle/pedestrian paths west of Montana Avenue and south along Washington Street.

Construction of a modern interchange at Custer Avenue and the associated widening of Custer Avenue and Cedar Street will address both emergency service and bicycle/pedestrian needs.

Social and Economic

I-15 is a critical regional and national transportation facility. I-15 is the most heavily traveled continuous north-south corridor in the State of Montana. I-15 supports interstate and international commerce, and is a vital link in the international CANAMEX Trade Corridor linking Mexico City, Mexico to the Canadian province of Alberta.

Accidents and Safety Concerns

Analysis of crash data indicates areas in the project corridor I-15 where crashes frequently occur, primarily at interchange ramps and merge/diverge locations. As traffic volumes continue to increase on the existing facilities, it is likely that the number of crashes will also increase. Constructing a new interchange at Custer Avenue will relieve congestion along the corridor and at the existing interchanges, which will likely alleviate some of the volume related crashes.

The crash history from January 2003 to December 2005 shows 170 traffic accidents on Custer Avenue in the project limits. 59% were intersection related, 11% driveway related, and 30% non-junction. The signalized intersections at Montana Avenue and at Washington Street accounted for approximately 50 percent of all crashes or 85 percent of all intersection related crashes. Rear-end (52%), angle (25%) and single vehicle (13%) crashes accounted for the largest trends by type.

On I-15 between the US Highway 12 overpass and Custer Avenue there were a total of 34 crashes in this three year time period accounting for a crash rate of 1.38 crashes per million vehicle-miles traveled. Twenty-four of those crashes occurred south of the Cedar Street over-pass, seven of which were multi-vehicle crashes. Of the 10 crashes that occurred north of Cedar Street, one involved multiple vehicles.

Increasing access demand will be taking place with the addition of the new urban link on I-15 and with expanding adjacent commercial development.

Expanding the roadway capacity by converting Custer Avenue to five lanes will help to address some of the crash trends at the signalized intersections. By reducing traffic lane density on the roadway at these intersections and along the corridor the exposure to rear-end and right angle type conflict will also be reduced.

Infrastructure Condition

The Custer Avenue bridge is a narrow two lane structure that is functionally obsolete. This segment of the Custer Avenue corridor experiences considerable congestion as a commuter route between residential development to the north and east to the Helena business district, which is compounded by growing commercial development in the immediate area. The Custer Avenue overpass was constructed in 1962 and currently has a sufficiency rating of 62.2. The overpass is 24-feet wide and carries over 15,000 vehicles per day.

The I-15 Montana Rail Link Overpass structures were constructed in 1961 and have a sufficiency rating of 76.0. These 800-foot long structures each provide a travel width of 28 feet, well below current Interstate standards. These bridges are considered Functionally Obsolete and Eligible for Rehabilitation.

The Custer Avenue corridor is a two -lane section providing the northernmost interstate crossing to link the residential and commercial areas north of Helena. Currently, there is no access to I-15 at this location. The lack of Interstate access at this location forces Helena valley traffic to use parallel collector routes and city streets to access Helena's business area and commercial development.

Geographic Equity

Montana is a rural state with a limited population base to support major infrastructure improvements. While larger urban areas have the ability to enact tolling or establish public-private-partnerships to upgrade and maintain their infrastructure, these types of financing mechanisms are not viable in low population rural states like Montana.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA - PRIMARY SELECTION CRITERIA

7.1. Long-Term Outcomes

7.1.1. State of Good Repair

This project will improve the existing Custer Avenue and I-15 corridor by addressing operational issues with the existing aging infrastructure as well as minimizing lifecycle costs.

Consistency with State Plans

This project is consistent with state and local transportation planning efforts.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) utilizes an asset management strategy termed the Performance Programming Process (P3) to establish highway construction priorities within the state. The P3 Process utilizes management system outputs to determine the optimal project mix in order to maximize performance relating to pavements, bridges, and congestion conditions. The construction projects advanced for consideration for TIGER grants represent preferred treatment strategies for roadways and bridges with regard to increased performance in the areas of pavement life, bridge condition and congestion relief.

Population increases and changes in land use patterns in the Helena Valley have resulted in increased traffic volumes on I-15, and the on- and off-ramps and interchanges serving I-15, and on east-west arterial roadways crossing over the interstate highway. The increased traffic has decreased the operating efficiency of the existing interchanges and arterials resulting in heavy congestion.

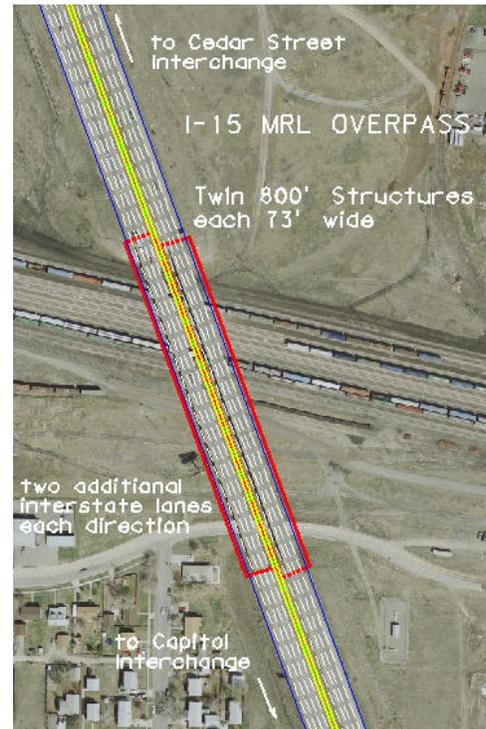
The project will shift traffic to the more efficient and safe interstate facilities and the new Custer Avenue Interchange while reducing volumes on local routes and other area interchanges to an acceptable level. Decreases in traffic volumes and the resulting congestion on these local routes of 20% to 50% are expected.

Threats to Future Economic Growth & Stability Due to Condition

Failure to complete these projects in a timely manner will threaten future economic growth and the stability of the region. The Custer Avenue bridge is a narrow two-lane crossing over Interstate 15 with no direct connection to the Interstate. The aging infrastructure results in congestion on Custer Avenue and adjacent arterials that are cause for both safety concerns and economic losses to the adjacent commercial development. The twin structures, shown in Figure 3, crossing the Montana Rail Link tracks are narrow and have substandard designs, leading to accidents and concerns with stability in the case of a natural disaster. The completed project will allow access across I-15, provide the necessary auxiliary acceleration lanes between interchanges, and provide a new access for growing commercial developments.

Increases in population and changes in land use patterns in the Helena Valley have resulted in increased traffic volumes and decreased operating efficiencies on the existing routes serving northern Helena. The Helena Regional Airport, the Army National Guard facilities, and the City Sewage and Water supply are located on the east side of I-15. The Custer Avenue overpass provides the link between this critical infrastructure and the city. In the event of a disaster, these facilities will be isolated from responders.

Figure 3: I-15 MRL Overpass –Twin Structures



Businesses adjacent to the proposed interchange include Costco, Home Depot, Shopko, Lowes, Town Pump, Albertsons, I-Hop, Applebee's, Ross, Hastings, Macy's, Target and many other businesses, banks, and restaurants. Lack of I-15 access and the narrow Custer Avenue overpass has become a barrier to east-west travel, limiting

the mobility of cars, trucks, busses, pedestrians, bicyclists and emergency response vehicles. All of these factors impact the viability of the commercial development.

The new I-15 MRL Structures will meet current safety and seismic standards. Helena falls within the Intermountain Seismic Belt and there are numerous known faults in the Helena area. The EQ rating for the Custer Avenue Overpass is 45 and the MRL structures rate at 62 (the second highest in the state) which is a concern as research shows that structures with ratings above 40 generally require extensive seismic retrofit to prevent collapse during a seismic event.

Appropriate Upfront Capitalization

The project is appropriately capitalized and uses asset management approaches that optimize its long-term cost structure. Consideration has been given to balancing user costs with the construction costs in phasing and designing the projects. An Accelerated Construction Technology Transfer (ACTT) conference and Value Analysis of the project were completed to refine the needs and insure the constructability. The corridor projects approved in the FEIS were split for construction. Priority was given to completing those that have funding packages or partners that will contribute, leaving the larger and more complex components for later years. Projects already completed or funded within the corridor include the South Helena Interchange, and partial completion of improvements to Capitol Interchange. .

Sustainable Resource of Revenue for Maintenance

The new infrastructure including pavement, signals and bridges will reduce maintenance costs over the long term. Energy efficient signals and lighting will also reduce costs. Federal and State revenue sources are available to continue the long-term maintenance. MDT will continue to be responsible for maintaining these facilities.

7.1.2 Economic Competitiveness

Long Term Efficiency

This project contributes to the economic competitiveness of the United States over the medium- to long-term by improving efficiency, reliability, and cost-competitiveness in the movement of workers and goods. The project improves infrastructure segments that are critical to the growth and efficiency of the Helena Valley. The project will improve safety and connectivity as well as creating jobs and promoting economic recovery in Montana. Connecting workers with employment and businesses with suppliers protects the regional economy. The investment into transportation infrastructure will provide long-term economic benefits through reduced maintenance costs, improved safety, and increased efficiency of goods and people movement.

This vital connection is located at the gateway to Montana's capitol city of Helena. The project will improve long-term efficiency for regional, national and international commerce. I-15 serves a critical role as a regional and national interstate facility. It is the major north-south corridor in the State of Montana for interstate and international commerce. I-15 is also a vital link in the international CANAMEX Trade Corridor linking Mexico City, Mexico to the Canadian province of Alberta.

The FEIS for this project shows a projected population and employment growth in the Helena Valley of approximately 43% between 2000 and 2025. Current daily traffic volumes on Custer are 14,200 with an expected increase to 25,200 by 2025. Efficient access for employees, suppliers and customers is essential for maintaining and expanding the economy. Preserving I-15's connection to regional and international freight ports and improving the safety and efficiency of freight movement will also have a lasting impact on the economy.

The project is the result of coordinated transportation and land-use planning decisions. Modeling completed for the City of Helena's 2004 Transportation Plan estimated the results of these changes to be highly desirable from an operational standpoint. Traffic volumes, congestion, and accidents will be reduced on narrow arterials parallel to the Interstate as the traffic shifts to the multilane interstate system. This project will provide lasting efficiencies directly on the Custer Avenue and I-15 corridor, and indirect efficiencies on the transportation facilities in the surrounding area. These efficiencies will carry over to improvements to system safety, operations, and economic competitiveness.

Traffic volumes crossing the Custer Avenue Overpass are forecast to nearly double in the next 20 years. The resulting volumes are well above the functional capacity of the existing two-lane roadway and the existing congestion will further constrain traffic flow. Without improvements, safety will be compromised by the growing traffic volumes and non-vehicular conflicts will increase on the narrow bridge structure.

The construction of the Custer interchange will reduce traffic volumes at the Cedar interchange by approximately 20% - improving traffic operations to an acceptable level of service. Parallel arterials will see similar or greater reductions. The auxiliary lanes and new structures along I-15, as shown in Figure 4, will provide additional capacity, allow more efficient merging, diverging and weaving of traffic and assist in shifting traffic patterns to the more efficient interstate.

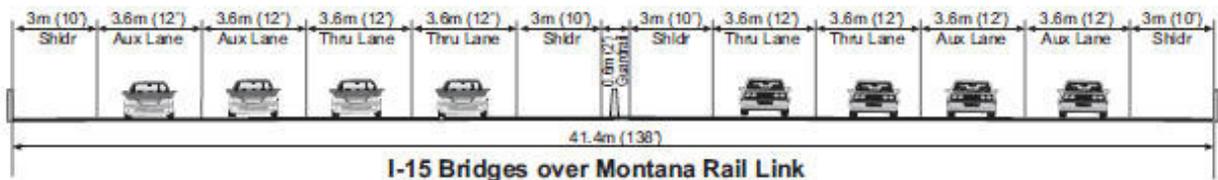


Figure 4: Illustration of I-15 Structures

Investments in Expansion, Hiring & Growth in Economically Distressed Areas

This project will allow for expansion, hiring, and growth of private sector production in the Helena Valley and Montana. Helena is the State Capitol and 6th largest city in Montana.ⁱⁱ Because it is centrally located, it serves as a trading and transportation hub. Traffic delays due to congestion could cause a loss of customers and place jobs in jeopardy. Montana's economy is distressed, and adequate infrastructure plays a key role in promoting stable growth and new industry.

Commercial development accounts for 50% of the employment in the Helena area. Many national chain stores have recently developed in the project vicinity. Safe and efficient transportation facilities to support both customer and merchandise deliveries are essential to this development's viability. Private sector growth resulting from improved access to goods and services will benefit the local and regional economy.

7.1.3. Livability

The project will improve the quality of life for Helena residents and I-15 through travelers.

This project will improve:

- User mobility through the creation of more convenient transportation options for travelers by providing a safe and modern structure for east/west crossing of I-15. This project will substantially improve emergency services access across I-15.
- Access to area schools, golf courses, the Helena Regional Airport, St. Peter's Hospital, and commercial development.
- Alternative modes of transportation from the construction of bike lanes, sidewalks and accessibility ramps.
- Business opportunities and regional economic development potential.

The combined project fulfills multiple goals. It minimizes the barrier effect of I-15 by creating more transportation connections and improving the transportation network for all forms of travel. It improves mobility and efficiency and provides a safe and modern transportation system while minimizing adverse impacts to neighborhoods, community and business owners. The project provides a transportation system that is responsive, complimentary, and coordinated that recognizes existing and planned infrastructure developments. Finally, the project protects and improves the operational efficiency of I-15 as a regional, interstate, and international highway.

7.1.4 Sustainability

The project promotes a more environmentally sustainable transportation system.

Environmental Sustainance & Energy Efficiency

The inefficiencies of the current system of connecting routes often leads to higher VMT as drivers travel out-of-direction to their destinations or avoid congested areas by driving longer distances. The FEIS notes that the project will reduce regional 2025 VMT by 0.2% overall, given a 13% increase in Interstate travel and 3.7% and 3.1% decreases in arterial and local road travel respectively. This is a savings of approximately 4000 vehicle miles. Regional Vehicle Hours of Travel is also reduced by 1.9% representing a minor enhancement in average travel speeds. This represents 1300 hours of travel time savings results in increased energy efficiency.

Environmental Protection

One of the key environmental benefits of this project is the development of the storm drainage design for the interchange area. The current drainage facilities are undersized with inadequate and undesirable outfalls which has resulted in past overtopping of the roadway and flooding. The storm drainage design will improve

drainage both through and within the interchange. Storm water detention will be incorporated into the storm drainage design to reduce peak flows and erosion. Vegetated ditches and detention ponds will improve the quality of the storm water leaving the project. The proposed storm water outfall for the project will return the drainage to its historic drainage path to the furthest extent practicable.

Reduced Dependence on Oil and Reduced Greenhouse Emissions

The projected 1.9% decrease in daily Vehicle Hours Traveled and overall 0.2% reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled will result in reduced greenhouse gas and carbon emissions and will improve the air quality.

7.1.5. Safety

Population increases and changes in land use patterns in the Helena Valley have resulted in increased traffic volumes on I-15, and the on- and off-ramps and interchanges serving I-15, and on east-west arterial roadways crossing over the interstate highway. A result of the increased traffic is a 31% higher than average crash rate along the I-15 corridor. I-15 has become a barrier to east-west travel, limiting the mobility of cars, trucks, busses, pedestrians, bicyclists and emergency response vehicles. The twin structures crossing the Montana Rail Link tracks are narrow and have substandard designs, leading to accidents and concerns with stability in the case of a natural disaster.

The crash history from January 2003 to December 2005 shows 170 traffic accidents on Custer Avenue between National Avenue and Kelleher Road. 59% were intersection related, 11% driveway related, and 30% non-junction. The signalized intersections at Montana Avenue and at Washington Street accounted for approximately 50 percent of all crashes or 85 percent of all intersection related crashes. Rear-end (52%), angle (25%) and single vehicle (13%) crashes accounted for the largest trends by type.

On I-15 between the Capitol Interchange and Custer Avenue there were a total of 34 crashes in this three year time period accounting for a crash rate of 1.38 crashes per million vehicle-miles traveled. Twenty-four of those crashes occurred south of the Cedar Street over-pass, seven of which were multi-vehicle crashes. Of the 10 crashes that occurred north of Cedar Street, one involved multiple vehicles.

Increasing access demand will be taking place with the addition of the new urban link on I-15 and with expanding adjacent commercial development. Expanding the roadway capacity by widening Custer Avenue to five lanes will help to address some of the crash trends at the signalized intersections. Reducing traffic lane density on the roadway and at the intersections also reduces exposure to rear-end and right angle conflicts. In addition, the project includes the construction of bike lanes, sidewalks, and accessible ramps, which will improve safety for non-motorized forms of travel.

I-15 is a major barrier for east-west travel. This barrier has proven problematic for emergency response vehicles needing to cross I-15. The project is estimated to reduce

total system wide emergency response time for fire by 3% and for hospital access by 6%.

7.2. Evaluation of Expected Project Costs and Benefits

Due to the complex nature of this project, comparing the build to the no-build option over a twenty-year lifecycle can only be based on qualitative measures of factors that do not readily lend themselves to monetization. A summary table (Table 3) of the project benefits is included below, followed by more detailed description of benefits for each long-term outcome.

Long-Term Outcome	Summary of Benefits
State of Good Repair	This project will improve the existing Custer Avenue and I-15 corridors by addressing operational issues with aging infrastructure by reducing congestion, reducing long-term maintenance costs, and providing much needed community access east of I-15 in Helena.
Economic Competitiveness	I-15 serves a critical role in regional, national and international trade as a vital link in the CANAMEX trade corridor. Custer Avenue is located in one of the fastest growing areas in the City of Helena. Improvements to these facilities protects economic viability of the region and allows for continued growth.
Livability	This project will substantially improve the quality of life for Helena Valley residents that must travel the Custer Avenue corridor for employment, access to commercial development for goods/services, and for access to medical services.
Sustainability	Through providing a more efficient transportation system, this project will reduce local and regional VMT, which will also result in reduced emissions, reduced hours of travel, and less demand on energy needs.
Safety	This project will address operation and safety issues that result from an aging facility and increased traffic volumes. These improvements will have direct safety and operation benefits to I-15/Custer Avenue travelers and indirect benefits on city streets and collector routes by providing additional Interstate access.

Table 3: Cost and Benefit Summary Table

Long-Term Efficiency and Cost Effectiveness

The importance of this structure for connectivity and access to essential services and for movement of freight is not difficult to quantify. Traffic volumes crossing the Custer Avenue Overpass are forecast to almost double in the next 20 years, as shown in Figure 5 below. The resulting volumes are well above the functional capacity of the existing two-lane roadway and the resulting congestion will further constrain traffic flow.

This project will shift traffic to the safer and more efficient Interstate facilities while reducing volumes on local routes and other area interchanges to an acceptable level. Shifting this traffic will result in lower traffic volumes and a decrease in congestion on these local routes. Construction of the Custer interchange will reduce traffic volumes at the Cedar interchange by approximately 20% - improving traffic operations to an acceptable level of service. Parallel arterials will also see similar or reductions in traffic

volumes. The addition of auxiliary lanes and new MRL structures on I-15 will provide additional capacity, allow for more efficient merging, diverging and weaving of traffic. The project will ensure increased and long-term efficiency in commodity movement, connections to existing businesses and residences, and the connectivity essential for growth and development.

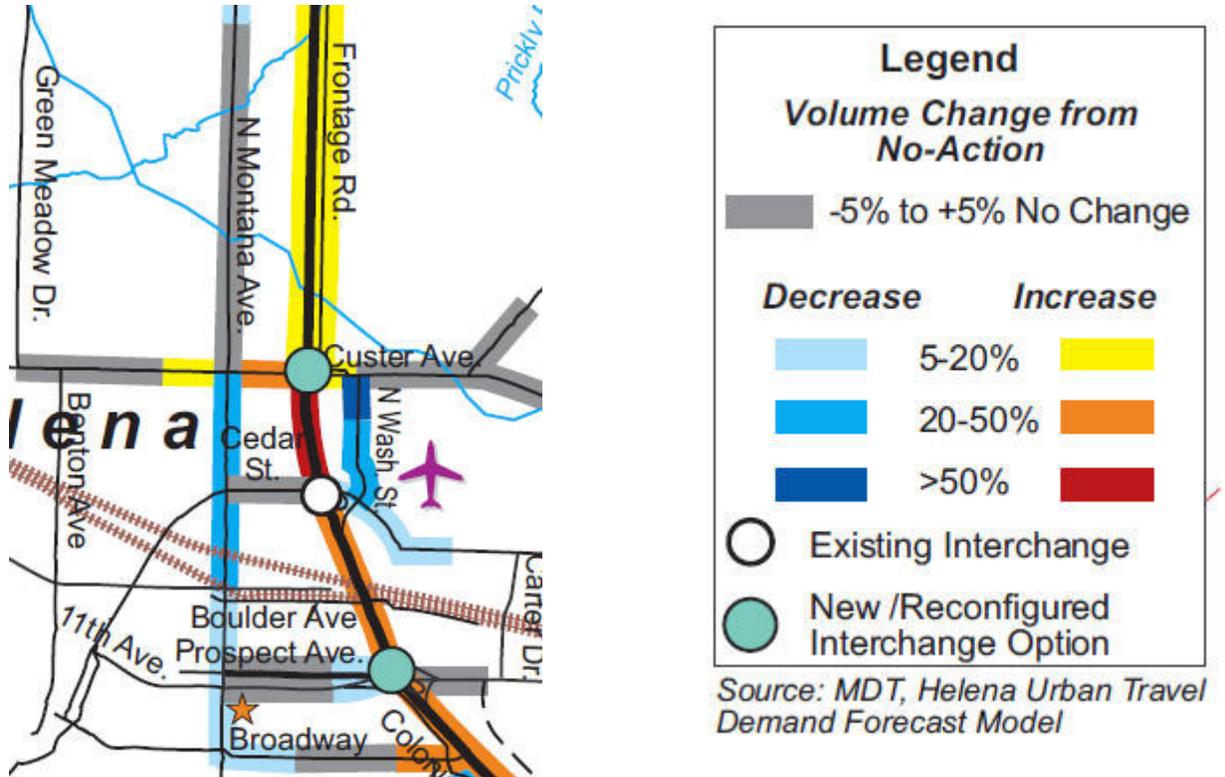


Figure 5: Traffic Volume Change – No Action

Investments in Expansion, Hiring and Growth in Economically Distressed Areas

The total expected benefits include jobs created or sustained, sales of gravel and material sources, shipping and local fuel purchases, induced jobs and new business growth. As the majority of the Helena area economy is based on retail and commercial services, business access is essential for growth. National chain stores have recently built adjacent to the interchange, a trend that is expected to continue, as illustrated in Figure 6 below, in the undeveloped areas. This project will increase the efficiency of access for employees, suppliers and customers.

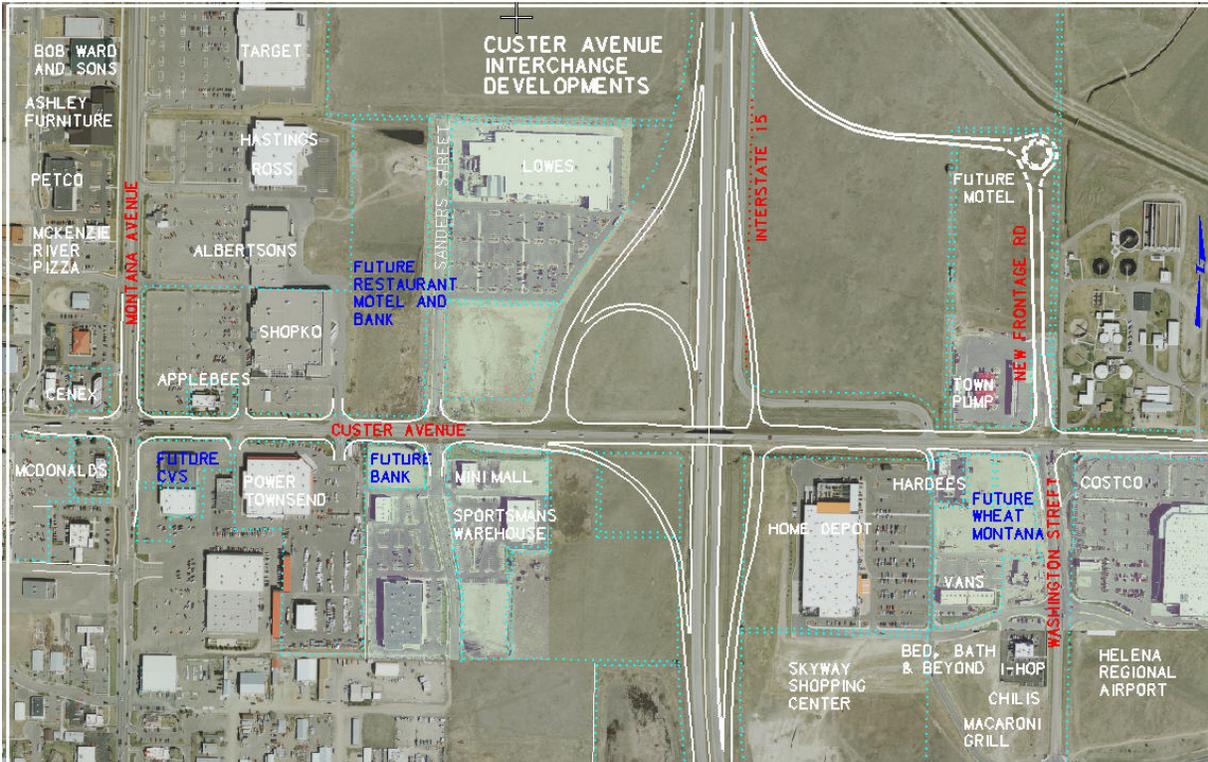


Figure 6: Future Commercial Business Development in Area

Livability

Mobility is an essential component of higher living standards. With the exception of the recently constructed Cedar Street Interchange, the Helena community I-15 Interchanges and overpasses do not have bicycle or pedestrian facilities. The existing Custer Avenue overpass does not accommodate bicycle or pedestrian travelers, while the new structure will provide the connectivity and safety essential for non-motorized travel. Bike lanes and new sidewalks planned throughout the Custer Avenue corridor will provide greatly improved options for non-motorized travel.

The project will provide a critical link for access to hospitals and emergency services for medical and fire, as well as access to schools, recreation and the Helena Regional Airport. The project is expected to improve the standards of living as the time spent commuting and accident potentials will be significantly reduced.

Sustainability

One of the key environmental benefits is completion of components of the storm drainage design for the interchange area. The current drainage facilities are undersized with inadequate and undesirable outfalls which has resulting in past flooding. The storm drainage design will improve drainage both through and within the interchange. Storm water detention will be incorporated into the storm drainage design to reduce peak flows and erosion. Vegetated ditches and detention ponds are proposed to improve the quality of the storm water leaving the project. The proposed storm water outfall for the project will return the drainage to its historic drainage path to the furthest extent practicable

Lower vehicle-miles-travelled and reductions in hours of vehicle travel will result in increases energy efficiencies and improved air quality. The bike lanes will serve to encourage non-motorized travel in the corridor.

Safety

The dynamics of an added interchange and the resulting changes in vehicular traffic patterns precludes any more than just a preliminary analysis of crash benefits. The benefits along Custer Avenue are expected to be marginally positive given the expected increase in traffic volumes. The right angle crash trends at signalized intersections and the exposure to rear-end crashes should be reduced along the corridor due to the added lanes and new signals. Reduced congestion and lower traffic volumes on other area routes will likely result in a large reduction in crashes. Added bike lanes and sidewalks will improve safety for non-motorized modes of travel.

I-15 is a major barrier for east-west travel. This project will reduce the barrier effect for emergency response vehicles needing to cross I-15 and decrease total system wide emergency response time for fire by 3% and for hospital access by 6%. The trend of rear-end accidents and turning vehicle accidents will also be significantly improved due to the added lanes. Widened and modern structures over the Montana Rail Link yard will reduce crash potential and provide increased stability during seismic events.

7.3. Evaluation of Project Performance

The Montana Department of Transportation has developed a data gathering and reporting process for all American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 funded projects. The process complies with Office of Management and Budget and Management (OMB), Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Montana State Governor's Office reporting requirements. If the TIGER Discretionary Grant funds are received for this project, full data collection and reporting will be implemented on this project. The reporting will evaluate the success of the project and measure the short- and long-term performance, specifically with respect to the economic recovery measures and long-term outcomes specified in this notice.

7.4. Job Creation & Economic Stimulus

This project is expected to create both short and long-term jobs in the region. The rapid economic impact is likely to spur long-term employment through the creation of improved access to new commercial development. Material supplies for concrete and gravel will likely come from nearby sources, benefiting the local economy.

The immediate impact will be jobs and spending created by accelerating the construction schedule which results in getting funds into the local economy sooner than planned, thereby reducing the inflationary impacts. Based on current project estimates of \$54 million (Custer Interchange/ MRL structures), 540 job-years will be created by the formula suggested by the Council of Economic Advisors in May of 2009.ⁱⁱⁱ Of these, 335 will be direct and indirect jobs, created by the project and for the material suppliers.

Materials essential for construction include plant mix, asphalt, cement and ready-mix concrete, bridge and signal components and gravel. Fabricating, transporting and mining these materials will spur the economy across the nation and many smaller firms are likely to serve as sub-contractors, creating even more jobs.

Food and lodging services for workers will also add to the economic impact. 190 induced job-years are expected as workers and firms increase their spending.

Job Opportunities for Low-Income Workers

The project will promote the creation of job opportunities for low-income workers by utilizing best practice hiring and apprenticeship (including pre-apprenticeship) programs. These rules ensure the local economy will benefit, provide for increased benefits from employment, and promote a stable labor force to insure the steady growth of commerce in Montana.

Maximum Practicable Opportunities for Small Businesses and DBSs

The MDT Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program encourages and supports the participation of companies owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in transportation contracts. MDT's supportive Services Program also provides business assistance to contribute to the self-sufficiency of DBE companies through skill development, training, and assistance with bonding and financing. There are currently seventy-seven (77) Disadvantaged Business Entities certified throughout the state of Montana. While they are not likely to serve as the prime on such a large contract, they are likely to be hired as sub-contractors. Given available opportunities, additional firms may develop. Small business entities are common in Montana and any construction activity will have a beneficial financial impact.

Community-Based Organizations

The project will make effective use of community-based organizations in connecting disadvantaged workers with economic opportunities. There are a variety of community and economic development corporations throughout the state. These groups partner with MDT to promote development in the area by assisting in training, job skills and connecting workers with employment.

Labor Practices and Compliance

The project will support entities that have a sound track record on labor practices and compliance with federal laws ensuring that American workers are safe and treated fairly. The Director of the Montana Department of Transportation signed the STATE ASSURANCE WITH REGARD TO EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AS REQUIRED BY THE FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY ACT OF 1968 on April 15, 2009, this agreement assures that employment in connection with all proposed projects will be provided without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin. It also includes the requirements for a system to ascertain whether contractors and sub-contractors are complying with their equal employment opportunity contract obligations and the degree to which such compliance is producing substantial progress on the various project sites in terms of minority group employment.^{iv}

Best Practices

The project implements best practices, consistent with our nation's civil rights and equal opportunity laws, for ensuring that all individuals— regardless of race, gender, age, disability, and national origin—benefit from the Recovery Act. Montana has a high minority population. There are firms throughout Montana capable of taking on this level of work and many low-income individuals are actively seeking work. The populations most likely to benefit from the creation or preservation of jobs or new or expanded business opportunities are from economically distressed areas throughout Montana. The project's procurement plan is likely to create follow-up jobs and economic stimulus for manufacturers and suppliers that support the construction industry and it will provide stimulus throughout the duration of the project. The speed of job creation is a definite benefit as crushing, stockpiling and fabricating could begin soon after contract award, and the project work would proceed rapidly.

7.5. Project Schedule

Final submittal of plans for the Custer Avenue Interchange and widening is scheduled for November of 2010. In order to complete the project by 2012, it is proposed to split the work into three separate projects. The first is construction of the interstate bridge structure and improvements along Custer Avenue. There will be an incentive to complete this work in 6 months while traffic is detoured to the newly widened Cedar Street. The auxiliary lanes on the interstate and interchange ramps will be the second split and construction can be concurrent with the first phase. The final segment is replacement of the twin MRL overpass structures and the additional laneage necessary to accommodate future traffic. Due to the limited level of design on these structures, they are proposed to be let as a Design-Build contract in 2010. The overall project schedule shows that the funds will be spent expeditiously and steadily throughout the project. MDT is continuing to investigate ways to accelerate the schedule and the contractor will be allowed to submit options to reduce the construction schedule based on their experience and equipment. A significant number of on-project jobs are expected to be created or sustained each calendar quarter after the project is underway.

7.6. Environmental Approvals

All environmental approvals necessary for the project to proceed to construction on the timeline specified in the project schedule will be obtained, including satisfaction of all Federal, State, and local requirements and completion of the National Environmental Policy Act and Montana Environmental Policy Act processes. The Interstate 15 Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) were approved by FHWA in 2004. A re-evaluation of the FEIS and ROD has been submitted to the FHWA requesting concurrence that the proposed subject project is still covered under the FEIS and ROD.

7.7. Legislative Approvals

This project does not require additional legislative approval. The project is broadly supported by the local community and is being carried forward by MDT. See attached letters of support.

7.8. State and Local Planning

The project was authorized by the Federal Highway Administration and is under full federal oversight for both preliminary engineering and construction. The project has been included in the approved 2009-2013 Tentative Construction Plan (TCP), the 2009-2013 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Projects in the TCP Plan are consistent with the performance goals of MDT's management system, have been commissioned approved and have been through a public involvement period and significant progress has been made on environmental review, right-of-way acquisition, and project design. The project is consistent with the Helena Area Transportation Plan, the Greater Helena Area Transportation Development plan Update 2001, the Lewis & Clark County Development Plan and the Helena Regional Airport-Airport Capital Improvement Plan.

7.9. Technical Feasibility

Due to thorough examination of the options and constructability of the project in the planning stages, there are no concerns with the technical feasibility of the project.

7.10. Financial Feasibility

The commitment of TIGER Grant funds will complete the project's financing package. A reasonable amount of contingency reserves will be available through future federal appropriations or set-asides from the regular program to cover any shortfall or project overruns. Experienced MDT staff are available to manage the grant.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA – Secondary selection criteria

8.1. Innovation:

Given the complexity of designing and constructing in heavy traffic, innovation has been an essential element in the project design. An Accelerated Construction Technology Transfer (ACTT) workshop recommended accelerated bridge construction to expedite the interstate bridge and shorten the detour period. It also suggested addressing innovative contracting techniques to reduce construction delays and user costs including A+B contracting and incentives/disincentives provisions. Some bridge components will be pre-fabricated to allow for more rapid construction and the bridge construction schedule will likely allow for extended work hours and flexibility for contractor innovation. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has finalized the ACTT Report and the document is available online at the following locations:

- <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/actt/>
- <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/accelerated>

The project was split into segments to maximize completion and match funding. Traffic signal timing will be optimized along the surrounding streets to keep traffic moving as efficiently as possible during construction and an aggressive communications program is proposed. Traffic signal improvements and ITS technology will be implemented on all new signals. Additionally, dedicated staff plan to monitor and maintain traffic signal operations during construction using dynamic lane utilization and signalization and wireless cameras for incident monitoring response.

With the intent to expedite project design and right-of-way operations, MDT has been authorized by FHWA to conduct advanced acquisition of right-of-way for certain critical parcels and has instituted an aggressive approach to utility engineering and coordination with utility owners.

8.2. Partnerships - Jurisdictional & Stakeholder Collaboration

The Custer Avenue Interchange and I-15 Corridor projects demonstrate collaboration among neighboring and regional jurisdictions to achieve regional benefits. The broad range of participants and agencies involved in the project development include: the City of Helena, Lewis & Clark County, Helena Regional Airport Authority, FHWA, Helena Chamber of Commerce, Hometown Helena, and area business owners.

The project cannot be readily and efficiently completed without Federal assistance given Montana's limited resources and projected needs. Montana's bonding authority has been expended by other critical projects. A SAFETEA-LU Program set-aside was received under Sec. 1934 in 2005 for the Helena I-15 corridor for \$10,000,000. This small amount has already been expended on other projects in the corridor. Current donations of right-of-way necessary for the project construction include almost \$0.5 million in private landowner donations and almost \$1.0 million from the City of Helena. A TIGER grant is essential for completing the funding package for these critical segments of the corridor.

9. PROGRAM – SPECIFIC CRITERIA

This project meets the design standards outlined in 23 CFR 625 – Design Standards of Highways.

10. FEDERAL WAGE REQUIREMENT

The project implements best practices, consistent with our nation's civil rights and equal opportunity laws, for ensuring that all individuals – regardless of race, gender, age, disability, and national origin – benefit from the Recovery Act. Montana has a minority population. There are firms throughout Montana capable of taking on this level of work and many low-income individuals actively seeking work.

MDT certifies it complies with the requirements of subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40 U.S. code regarding federal wage rate requirements in relation to the Recovery act. MDT requires contractor training certification, payroll monitoring, and a formal complaint process to assure contractor compliance with Davis-Bacon wages rates and fringe benefits.^v

11. NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT REQUIREMENT

The project will not significantly influence the natural, social, or economic environment. A link to the completed and approved NEPA document for this project can be found at the following address:

http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/eis_ea_finalized.shtml

12. ENVIRONMENTALLY RELATED FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL ACTIONS

The Final Environmental Impact Statement was completed and the ROD was signed on January 22, 2004. A re-evaluation was signed in March of 2009. Environmental permits that will be secured for this project include a Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a Section 401 Water Quality certification from EPA, and a Stream Protection Act 124 Notification from the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and any other pertinent applications.

13. PROTECTION OF CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION

All information submitted is publicly available data and the methodologies presented herein are accepted by industry practice and standards. No data in this application contains confidential business information.

14. SUMMARY

The commitment, obligation and expenditure of TIGER Discretionary Grant funds on the project will (i) deliver programmatic results by greatly enhancing traveler mobility and safety; (ii) achieve economic stimulus by optimizing economic activity through creating or saving jobs and job-years; (iii) achieve long-term public benefits by preserving business access, increasing economic efficiency and improving the quality of life for travelers in the Helena area, and (iv) satisfy the Recovery Act's transparency and accountability objectives with both long and short-term performance reporting plans to include a dedicated Website.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Route U-5807, Cedar Street, is functionally classified as a Principal Arterial. The project begins at approximately RP 001+0.179 (200' east of the intersection of Cedar Street and Montana Avenue (U-5809)) and continues easterly approximately 3,400' to RP 001+0.823 (Cedar Street Interchange, junction with I-15). This project has been funded with City of Helena Urban funds.

Off-system route, I-15 Frontage Road, is functionally classified as a Major Collector. The project begins approximately 300' north of the intersection of Custer Avenue and Washington Street (U-5807) and continues northerly on a new alignment approximately 3,200' to reconnect with the existing frontage road. The project funding for this segment is expected to come from federal interstate funding.

ⁱⁱ Montana Dept of Commerce. Our Facts your Future, April 2009
http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org/admin/uploadedPublications/3481_CF09_Lewis.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See Estimates of Job Creation from the ARRA Act of 2009

^{iv} MDT. EEO/Affirmative Action Plan <http://mdtinfo.mdt.mt.gov/civilrights/docs/aap.pdf>

^v MDT Civil Rights Bureau. Labor Compliance Manual
http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/labor_manual.pdf