



**Statewide
Transportation
Planning &
Programming
Public Involvement
Process**

Rail, Transit & Planning Division

MDT Mission Statement

To serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.



OVERVIEW

This guide describes the methods MDT uses to involve the public in state-level planning processes. It also provides a summary of how MDT involves local officials in the statewide planning process for nonmetropolitan areas.

Federal law requires each state to develop a public involvement process that provides complete, continual, and timely information. The Rail, Transit and Planning Division interacts with its constituents through a variety of channels. Title 23, Section 135, USC, requires Montana to have a statewide intermodal transportation planning process that includes a statewide transportation plan (*TranPlan 21*) and a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

This guide describes the methods MDT uses to involve the public in its planning processes. It also provides a summary of how MDT involves local officials in the statewide planning process for nonmetropolitan areas.

The Transportation Planning public involvement process should not be confused with the project-specific public involvement process. MDT uses the project-specific process to increase public awareness of highway improvement projects and to provide opportunities for the public to become involved in shaping project design and development.



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RAIL, TRANSIT & PLANNING

The Rail, Transit and Planning Division offers a broad range of planning functions and services that include, but is not limited to the following:

- Performance measurement using its management systems and the Performance Programming Process (P³)
- Development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Traffic data collection and analysis
- Road inventory and mapping
- Transit and urban funding administration
- Coordination of planning issues statewide and in Montana's urban areas

Many of these activities help state, local, and federal officials select projects and provide information for short- and long-range construction and grant programs. All of these activities include some public involvement.

Routine staff contact with the public is an important and often overlooked element of an effective public involvement process. MDT staff members are encouraged to treat all contacts as customers. Listed on the next page are the most frequently requested numbers for the Rail, Transit and Planning Division.

For an area or person not listed, call toll-free 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423.



CUSTOMERS

MDT's customers for the statewide transportation planning process include:

- The public.
- Transportation officials – including city and county planners, city and county engineers, public works directors, transit providers, etc.
- Stakeholder groups – including groups with special interests such as bicycle/pedestrian, economic development, environment, intermodal freight, and passenger transportation.
- Community leaders – mayors, city and county commissioners, legislators, etc.
- Tribal governments – including tribal chairpersons, planners, and Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO) officers/directors.

It should be noted that MDT has a federally required separate consultation process with nonmetropolitan local officials for its statewide planning process. Consultation is defined as the process whereby one party confers with another identified party according to an established process prior to taking action, considers that party's views, and periodically informs that party about action taken. This process is briefly described at the end of this publication.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

Montana's Statewide Transportation Improvement (STIP) Program is a three-year program that contains all proposed multi-modal transportation projects that use federal and state funds. MDT and its customers work together to develop the STIP. The program outreach includes:

- Gathering public comments and project nominations through the district administrators and the Transportation Commission.
- News releases announcing the availability of the draft STIP and the final STIP.
- Providing copies of the draft and final STIP to public libraries, on the MDT Web site, and by request.
- Reviewing the draft STIP with local officials during annual regional meetings.
- Providing a toll-free telephone line for requests and comments.
- Internet.

Proposed Highway Projects

A list of highway projects MDT plans to present at upcoming Transportation Commission meetings is available on the MDT Web page at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf. Individuals can call 800-714-7296 to get a printed copy of the list.

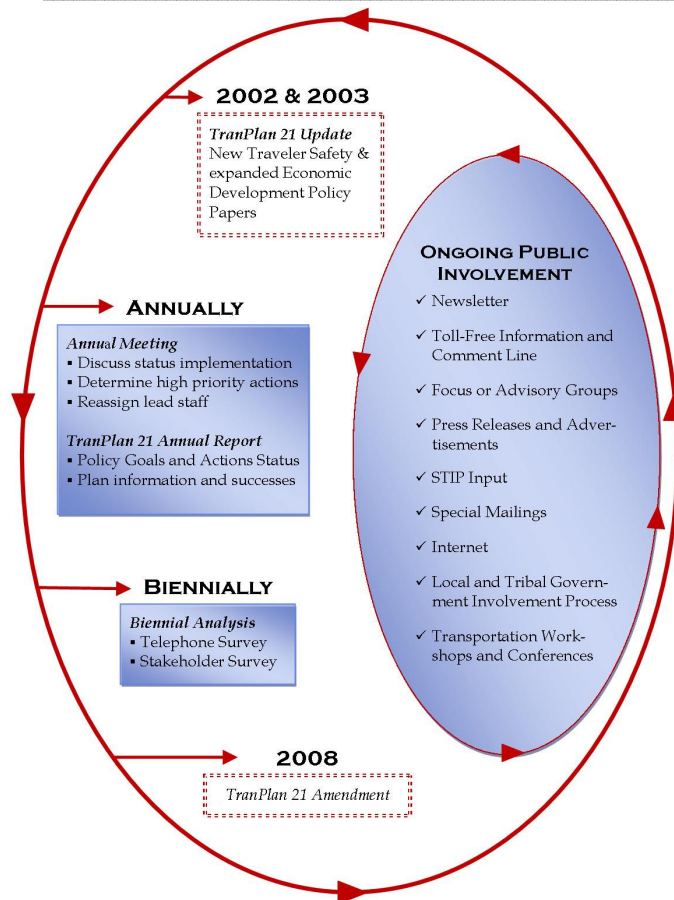
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TranPlan 21

TranPlan 21, Montana's long-range transportation policy plan, was developed with the assistance of the public and transportation stakeholders. It is essential that MDT involve these same groups in implementing *TranPlan 21* policy goals and actions. The figure on page 10 illustrates the periodic and ongoing processes that help ensure this involvement.

MDT will continue to publish and distribute the *TranPlan 21 Annual Report* and conduct biennial public involvement telephone and

TranPlan 21 Implementation & Evaluation Process





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stakeholder surveys to monitor changes in public and stakeholder issues and priorities. These are essential tools in keeping MDT customers informed and in gathering input on emerging issues. In addition, MDT will continue its consultation processes with local and tribal governments.

MDT provides early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process using a variety of strategies. Many of these strategies are combined to reach as many customers as possible.

Quarterly Newsletter

The Rail, Transit and Planning Division mails its quarterly newsletter, *Newsline*, to over 6,500 citizens, stakeholder organizations, and elected and appointed officials. Its design and content is appropriate for the general public, and the articles and graphics are presented in a nontechnical, user-friendly manner. The division uses *Newsline* to provide information and gather input on planning activities and topics. Staff continually update and expand the distribution and mailing list. *The Newsline* was used extensively throughout the *TranPlan 21 2002 Update* and is used each year during the development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. It is also available online at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/>.

**Toll-free Information & Comment Line
800-714-7296 (Montana only)**

The Rail, Transit and Planning Division's toll-free information and comment line provides a quick and inexpensive way to request information, provide comments, request the *Newsline* or any other publication the Department provides, and discuss transportation issues with division staff. The toll-free line is also used extensively during the development of the STIP.

Special Mailings to Groups & Individuals

Occasionally, MDT must develop "white papers" or other informational material on state and national transportation issues. The division mails these reports to groups or individuals interested in the issues addressed. These informational items are also noted in *The Newsline* and on MDT's Website. The division mailing list is continually updated with the addresses of groups and individuals for these special mailings.

In addition to the special informational mailings, the Rail, Transit and Planning Division will occasionally send postcards and e-mails to individuals and stakeholder groups to announce the availability of certain publications or meetings.

MDT Website

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/>

MDT has developed an extensive Website, and the Rail, Transit and Planning Division uses this communication tool to provide information and solicit comments.



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Information is available on a variety of topics including the following:

- Current and past *Newslines*
- Division publications
- Maps
- Recent press releases
- Traffic counts
- Program delivery status reports
- *TranPlan 21* documents and papers
- Copies of the draft and final STIP
- Transit grant information and applications
- A list of projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission

In addition to Rail, Transit and Planning subjects, the Website also includes information on other MDT projects and programs.

Media Releases & Advertisements

The Rail, Transit and Planning Division occasionally publishes special reports addressing specific transportation issues or conducts transportation studies that are of interest to various customers. When appropriate, the Division uses media releases and advertisements to notify the public of the availability and content of these reports. MDT also issues media releases to announce meetings and public input opportunities.

Project-Specific or Advisory Groups

MDT uses study or project-specific groups as a source of valuable input and expertise from those with knowledge about specific



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issues when it develops special studies or projects. For example, during the *TranPlan 21 2002 Update*, MDT established two such groups to develop the Economic Development Policy Paper.

Other Activities

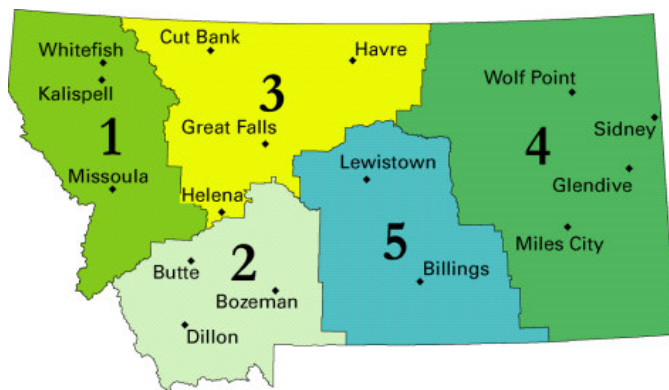
As the division responsible for statewide transportation planning and programming, the Rail, Transit and Planning Division strives to monitor local transportation issues and concerns and to take advantage of the many ways it can effectively serve its customers.

The division has tested new public involvement techniques such as dedicated e-mail addresses for certain projects, e-mail distribution and mailing lists to provide information in a timely fashion, and videoconferencing public meetings to include as many people as possible without requiring them to drive long distances. These and other approaches will be used as they become more available in Montana.

The division also sponsors meetings, conferences, and training workshops that bring together state, tribal, and local government officials, as well as other customers, to discuss planning issues and provide technical assistance.

PROJECT CONTACTS

MDT's District Administrators are familiar with the highway projects in their area. If they cannot help with your questions, they will direct you to the appropriate staff.



District 1 – Missoula

Currently vacant

P.O. Box 7039, Missoula, MT 59807-7039

406-523-5800 or toll-free 888-231-5819

District 2 – Butte

Jeff Ebert, jebert@mt.gov

P.O. Box 3068, Butte, MT 59702-3068

406-494-9600 or toll-free 800-261-6909

District 3 – Great Falls

Michael (Mick) Johnson

mijohnson@mt.gov

P.O. Box 1359, Great Falls, MT 59403-1359

406-454-5880 or toll-free 888-730-0898

District 4 – Glendive

Shane Mintz, smintz@mt.gov

P.O. Box 890, Glendive, MT 59330-0890

406-345-8200 or toll-free 888-689-5296

District 5 – Billings

Stefan Streeter, sstreeter@mt.gov

P.O. Box 20437, Billings, MT 59104-0437

406-252-4138 or toll-free 888-863-8465

MDT has a separate transportation planning and programming consultation process for non-metropolitan local officials. It is an inclusive and flexible process that involves local officials in a variety of ways.

Planning:

- MDT consults with local officials during formal updates of *TranPlan 21* through participation on expert panels, targeted mailings, meetings, and formal presentations.
- The Department consults with local officials informally and through the biennial *TranPlan 21 Stakeholder Survey*, which includes separate stakeholder groups for city and county officials.
- MDT consults with local officials when developing local transportation plans and with multi-agency coordinating committees on plan updates, urban project nominations, and other transportation issues.

Programming:

- MDT provides local officials and the public opportunities to review and comment on the draft STIP and holds regional meetings to discuss the draft .

Programs:

- In addition to consulting with non-metropolitan local officials during the statewide planning and programming process, Montana law and Transportation Commission policies give local officials a lead role in selecting projects funded through programs such as the Urban and Secondary Highway Programs.

MDT attempts to provide reasonable 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 document will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-6331 or TTY (406)444-7696.

