

MDT Updates Strategic Plan

MDT recently released a new Strategic Business Plan that focuses on customer service, accountability, and simplicity. The updated plan provides overall strategic goals that

will guide MDT employees in meeting MDT's mission. For more information about the plan, visit www.mdt.state.mt.us, or call 444-7289 or 444-3445.

FINANCIAL

- Maximize revenue streams and explore innovative financing options
- Deliver cost-effective transportation programs and services to the citizens of Montana
- Ensure investment decisions consider policy directions, customer input, available resources, system performance, and funding levels

CUSTOMER

- Enhance traveler mobility by providing a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system that supports Montana's economy and is sensitive to the environment
- Reduce fatal and injury crash rates
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with MDT customers through communication and responsiveness
- Implement the policy goals and actions of *TranPlan 21* and other policy initiatives to support commitments to MDT's customers

INTERNAL BUSINESS

- Continuously strive to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations and processes
- Support MDT's Strategic Business Plan through annual performance plans and performance appraisals for all employees
- Provide a safe and healthy workplace for employees through education and compliance

LEARNING & GROWTH

- Maintain an effective work force by attracting, hiring, and retaining qualified employees
- Use information technology cost effectively to improve efficiency of programs and processes and support changing business needs
- Consistently communicate standards, guidelines, policies, and expectations throughout MDT



Data Management at MDT

Montana's transportation infrastructure represents a multi-billion-dollar taxpayer investment. This investment deserves the best decision making tools possible to build and maintain that infrastructure. Good decisions require information, and lots of it. With advancements in technology over the past decade, data and program managers can collect more and better data than ever before at virtually the same staffing levels. More and better data is good, but managing it efficiently across the entire enterprise is a daunting task.

Like all departments of transportation, MDT is "data hungry." Given the magnitude of the decisions being made, it is critical that data have the highest possible level of accuracy and integrity. It must be collected, managed, reported, and used in the most efficient manner possible. Moreover, data managers must understand that data belongs to the entire enterprise, not just to individual program areas.

Information must be collected and managed in such a way that it can be used by the greatest number of program areas.

While this is a common-sense approach, it is easier said than done. In an attempt to evaluate its data issues and needs across the entire agency, MDT commissioned the "Infrastructure Data Inventory and Needs Study" which was completed in August of 2003. The study encompassed such issues as identifying what data is collected, who collects it, how it's used, where it's stored and in what format, and what data needs are still unmet. Other key components of the study were recommendations about how the department could better and more efficiently manage its data. Undoubtedly, the key recommendation in this study was to form a departmentwide common data administration function. Im-



plemented properly, this recommendation will significantly improve MDT's data management practices.

MDT's Information Technology Governance Board (ITGB) consists of the department's highest level administrative staff. ITGB is charged with guiding the department's multifaceted IT program, of which data management is an integral part. Recognizing the importance of a data administration function, the ITGB created a Standing Committee on Data Administration (SCODA). Each ITGB member appointed one staff person from their respective divisions to serve on this committee. As its first order of business, SCODA developed the following mission statement for consideration and approval by the ITGB:

"It shall be the mission of the Standing Committee on Data Administration to develop, implement, and maintain policies and procedures needed to provide the Department with quality data; to assure the accuracy, integrity, and accessibility of the Department's data; to promote and assure data sharing and integration throughout the Department; and establish accountability for all data throughout the Department."

The ITGB approved the SCODA mission statement in February 2004. As SCODA proceeds with its activities, MDT will begin to reap the benefits of a well-coordinated approach to enterprisewide data management, and the entire state will benefit from better decisions on how to preserve and improve Montana's irreplaceable transportation infrastructure.

For more information about data management at MDT, contact Bill Cloud at 444-6114 or bcloud@state.mt.us.

Reconfiguration Study Tests Improvement Scenarios

Progress continues on the Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study, which is scheduled for completion later this spring. A team of consultants is testing several highway reconfiguration scenarios using the Highway Economic Analysis Tool, or HEAT, a new analysis tool that will provide MDT with the ability to analyze the impact of highway investments on Montana's economy.

Governor Martz requested the Highway Reconfiguration Study following discussions with local officials and residents about the importance of expanded highways in supporting and improving state and local economies. The consultant team is conducting the study which will also provide MDT with the tools necessary to meet a 2001 legislative mandate to include economic criteria in its programming and funding processes. The team includes Cambridge Systematics and Economic Development Research Group, two firms

with national and international experience in transportation and economic development issues.

Working with a Reconfiguration Study Steering Committee of representatives from local government, businesses, and organizations involved in highway and economic issues, the consultant team began its work by developing profiles of Montana's major industries. The profiles included valuable input from local economic development experts and industry leaders. HEAT uses these Montana-specific profiles as well as national, statewide, and county-level economic data from Regional Economic Models Incorporated to estimate the economic impacts of various investments.

For more information on the Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study, contact Sue Sillick at 444-7693 or Dick Turner at 444-7289. Additional information, including results of the HEAT test analysis, is also available at www.mdt.state.mt.us.

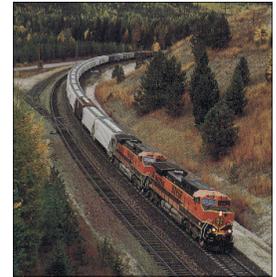
State Studies At-Risk Railroad Branch Lines

Although railroads have abandoned many of Montana's branch lines over the last fifty years, the remaining lines still provide an important transportation service to Montana shippers and communities. This is especially true in communities that rely on branch lines to ship agricultural commodities to national and international markets. That is why the Montana Departments of Transportation, Commerce, and Agriculture recently joined forces in a two-phase study to address branch line abandonment issues facing Montana.



The first phase of the study, which is being conducted by R.L. Banks and Associates, focuses on the proposed abandonment of two Eastern Montana branch lines by Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF). The two lines run from Plentywood to Scobey and from Glendive to Circle. Working with shippers, elected officials, and the three state agencies, R.L. Banks is analyzing the status of the two lines to develop recommendations for preserving them.

At the request of Governor Martz, BNSF has agreed to delay the formal abandonment process until July to provide time to complete the study and allow all involved parties to determine a course of action.



Although the situation with the Scobey and Circle lines is relatively urgent, Montana has many other branch lines that are potentially at risk of abandonment due to their low traffic volumes. The second phase of the Montana Branch Line Study will examine the status of these lines and suggest ways to avoid future abandonments of these important lines. In addition to low-volume lines, the study will also include out-of-service lines such as the line between Great Falls and Helena.

For more information about the Montana Branch Line Study, contact Dick Turner (444-7289 or dturner@state.mt.us) or Tom Steyaert (444-7646 or tsteyaert@state.mt.us).

SALE! – 50% Off Bridges

by Richard Knatterud, Montana Department of Commerce

Are your bridges in bad shape? Do you have sufficient funding to fix them? The Montana Department of Commerce Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) can help. TSEP is a state-funded program that provides grants to replace or rehabilitate old and unsafe bridges. During the last funding competition, over \$3 million was awarded to eleven different counties to assist in replacing up to 36 bridges.

Here's how it works:

TSEP funds can be used for bridge, water, wastewater, and solid waste projects. Funding is provided on a dollar-for-dollar match basis. Funding can be used for construction projects, Preliminary Engineering Reports (PERs), and emergency assistance.

Construction Grant applications are due in May of even-numbered years (due May 7th this year). The applications then go through a ranking process. Those ranked above the funding cutoff line are recommended to the Legislature. By about April of 2005, we should know which projects were approved by the Legislature. Counties awarded TSEP grants in 2003 for bridge construction projects included Blaine, Cascade, Gallatin, Hill, Lewis and Clark, Madison, Pondera, Richland, Sheridan, Stillwater, and Sweet Grass Counties.

Preliminary Engineering Grants help counties with the cost of preliminary engineering, which is required when ap-



plying for a TSEP construction grant. These funds are especially important for helping counties assess bridges they are responsible for—bridges that MDT does not inspect. PER grants are issued on a first-come-first-served basis. Although those issued by the 2003 Legislature are gone, we anticipate additional PER grant funds will be available after the 2005 Legislative Session. Counties awarded TSEP PER grants in 2003 included Big Horn, Carbon, Hill, Madison, Powell, Sheridan, Stillwater, and Sweet Grass Counties.

Emergency Grants for bridges are also available on a limited basis.

About one-third of our nation's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Help reduce this percentage by putting TSEP funds to work for you. Give us a call if you are interested in submitting an application this year. Also, it is never too early to start thinking about the next go-around, especially if you are interested in a PER grant. Phone us at 841-2785 or 841-2784. Or, visit our website at www.commerce.state.mt.us then click on Community Development and Treasure State Endowment Program.

Transit Tales

Fort Belknap Senior Citizens Hit the Road

Maintaining traditional lifestyles in the face of an aging population and limited transportation options is often a challenge in rural communities. However, residents in many of Montana's rural areas have safe and modern transportation thanks to MDT's Section 5310 Capital Assistance Program. These services are so welcome that the arrival of new buses is often a cause to celebrate.

Recently, Patrick Sanders, program manager of MDT's Section 5310 Capital Assistance Program, helped deliver three new buses to senior citizen centers on the Fort Belknap Reservation. Over 40 residents and dignitaries turned out to celebrate the event at a luncheon in Fort Belknap. Benjamin Speakthunder, president of the Fort Belknap Community Council, led the celebration which also included Peggy Healy, Fort Belknap Senior Citizens Center director, and C. John Healy Sr., transportation specialist and highway safety coordinator.

The buses will serve senior citizen centers in Hays, Lodge Pole, and Fort Belknap. Future plans include applying for operating assistance through MDT's Section 5311 and TransADE Programs.

For more information on the Section 5310 Capital Assistance Program, contact Patrick Sanders at 444-4265 or psanders@state.mt.us.



Pictured from left to right with the newly delivered buses are Joyce Castillo and Janet Daniels from the Fort Belknap Senior Citizens Center; Margaret Flying from the Hays Senior Center; Christine Main from the Lodge Pole Senior Center, and Peggy Healy, director of the Fort Belknap Senior Citizens Center.



Highway Program Reauthorization

Congress extended the current TEA-21 through the end of April. Efforts are being made to pass a six-year bill. Watch future editions of Newsline for more information.

What in the world is a . . .

- Plan ?
- Feasibility Study ?
- Corridor Study ?
- Program ?



Coming in next month's Newsline

CTEP Project Spotlight

Selecting Projects and Including the Public

The Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) provides funds to communities for projects that enhance the transportation system. An example of a CTEP-funded project is Great Falls' River's Edge Trail, which runs along the Missouri River and provides overlooks, tunnels, bridges, and rest facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians. CTEP has also contributed funds to rehabilitate historic buildings such as the Mission-style Yucca Theatre in Treasure County and the old Union Pacific Dining Hall in West Yellowstone. CTEP helped purchase land at the Ulm Pishkun Buffalo Jump, and the program paid for sidewalks and landscaping at Pompeys Pillar.

When selecting and developing CTEP projects, it is important that local and tribal governments include the public in the process. Federal and state law requires early and continuing public involvement. The goals are to ensure that projects are selected fairly, to encourage citizens to submit project proposals, and to inform the public about what projects are ultimately selected.

Local officials can fulfill this requirement by contacting interested individuals and groups to make them aware that projects are being considered and letting them know what they need to do to submit a proposal. Historically, local and tribal governments have used radio, web sites, newspaper ads, and meeting agendas to solicit CTEP project proposals. It is important to give enough advance notice so interested parties have sufficient time to learn about CTEP, submit a proposal, and participate in the decision prior to final project selection.

Local and tribal governments are allowed to choose the process they use to solicit or accept projects. For example, they may require citizens to submit project proposals in writing, or they may require that proposals be submitted at a public meeting. The public notice must clearly explain how to propose a project and who to contact for more information. Meetings need to be held at convenient times and locations and must be accessible to people with disabilities.

When filling out a CTEP project application, local and tribal governments must document that the public was involved in selecting the project. A copy of the newspaper ad, meeting agenda, or affidavit of performance must be included with the CTEP project application as proof that there was a good-faith effort to involve the public in the earliest stages of project selection and development.



CTEP funding helped pay for improvements to Hysham's historic Yucca Theatre. The structure was built in 1931 and was the first talking picture theater in the area.

For more information about the Community Transportation Enhancement Program, contact acting CTEP Engineer Kevin Malone at 444-9457 or kmalone@state.mt.us or CTEP Coordinator Ross Tervo at 444-9209 or rtervo@state.mt.us.

**Montana Department of Transportation
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For detailed information or to request accommodations, call
Bill Anderson at (406) 444-6331, TTY (800) 335-7592.

A Tabloid History of Montana

Part 1

This Tabloid History of Montana appears on the reverse side of a historical map published by the Montana Highway Commission in 1937.

We are reproducing the article as it was originally written, spelled, and punctuated. Although portions may jar 21st

by Bob Fletcher

Scientists tell a fascinating tale of prehistoric Montana in which these erudite gentlemen toss off millions of years in the nonchalant manner of a Congressman speaking of a billion dollar appropriation. Such figures are just too large for our average five-and-ten minds to grasp.



In the dim and distant past most of Montana's framework was built under water in horizontal layers of sedimentary rocks. Later a portion was lifted and formed the shore line and coastal plain of a shallow marshy arm of the great sea which covered America from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean. The climate was the sort that Florida real estate men brag about. Sashaying through the tropical vegetation were the mean looking reptiles we call dinosaurs. Now fossil hunters find their skeletons sealed in the rocks that formed the prehistoric mud and ooze.

Next Dame Nature developed a gigantic stomach ache in western Montana that caused her erstwhile placid countenance to crease with anguish. The largest wrinkles are the mountain ranges, the troughs between are structural valleys. The corrugations broadened and tapered off across eastern Montana into gently sloping anticlines.

Hell boiled over in the west. Restless molten masses beneath the sedimentaries bulged and fractured them; volcanic ash deluged the valleys, and lava sheets flowed down the mountain sides. Central Montana broke out in a rash. Skin eruptions popped out like measles, the lava cores solidified and left the isolated mountain ranges of that section. The climate changed with the mountain building period and the dinosaurs quit cold. But there followed other warm intervals when monkeys, camels, sabre toothed tigers and miniature three-toed horses romped over the landscape.

Then the continental ice sheet slid down from west of Hudson Bay and covered all of the northern part of the state east of the Rockies. It filled ancient stream beds with rock debris and started the ancient Missouri River cutting new channels. When it receded a mere 30,000 years or so ago it left its tracks in the shape of ridges or moraines. Since then the changes in Montana's surface have been through the less spectacular agencies of erosion.

No one knows when or whence the tribes came to Montana—probably Asia. There is a hazy tradition of an old

century sensibilities, the narrative remains as colorful and entertaining as it was 67 years ago.

So, with apologies to Florida real estate "women" and "Father" Nature, we present for your enjoyment the first installment of "the Pioneer History of the Land of Shining Mountains."

North Trail skirting the eastern toe of the front range of the Rockies from northern Canada to Mexico. There are pictographs painted in caves and on rock walls with pigments that have withstood the weathering of centuries. There are "medicine wheels," "buffalo falls" and other evidences of former tribes, concerning whom our present Indians have either no memory or scant tradition. We do know that the immediate ancestors of our plains and mountain tribes roamed and disputed the buffalo range that covered Montana's prairie country. Perhaps the first white man within Montana's present boundaries was Chevalier De La Verendrye, an adventurous Frenchman who came down from Canada. He had picked up stories from the Indians of a great river that ran westward to the sea, so in 1742 he left Fort La-Reine, now Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, to find the Columbia River. He probably entered the extreme southeastern corner of Montana and on New Year's Day, 1743, sighted snow capped mountains to the west. They glistened in the sunlight like burnished silver. Verendrye exclaimed, "This is truly the Land of the Shining Mountains." But the Chevalier turned back without reaching those mountains and no more white men came until the Lewis and Clark Expedition, sixty-two years later.

All of Montana east of the Rockies came into possession of the United States in 1804 as a part of the Louisiana Purchase. At the instigation of President Thomas Jefferson, Congress authorized an exploratory expedition with instructions to follow the Missouri River to its source, cross the mountains and reach the Pacific Coast. Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark were chosen as joint commanders of the party which became known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The outfit left St. Louis in the spring of 1804 and traveled by boat to the Mandan villages of North Dakota where they wintered. Here they picked up Charbonneau, a French Canadian trapper and trader, to serve as interpreter. Charbonneau didn't prove to be a particularly prize package, but his little Shoshone wife, Sacajawea, played a star role in the success of the journey.

They left the Mandans and entered Montana in the spring of 1805. Towing and poling pirogues upstream was a



pretty tedious process. Near the present town of Armstead they met the Shoshone Indians, traded for horses, and cached their canoes. From there they wandered into Idaho and then back into Montana so that it was early fall before they left the Bitterroot Valley, crossing the present western boundary

of the state through Lolo Pass. They returned in 1806, divided the party and extended their explorations to include the Maria's River country and the valley of the Yellowstone. It was an egregious history-making trek.

To be continued . . .

Montana's Roadside Historian: Bob Fletcher

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian



The Montana Department of Transportation was profoundly impacted by the Great Depression during the 1930s. Beginning in 1933, the federal government attempted to ease the effects of the economic calamity by funding public improvement projects in the states on an unprecedented scale. The subsequent road and bridge-building boom coincided with an expansion of tourism in

Montana during the depression. The old State Highway Commission actively sought ways to attract tourists to the Treasure State through a series of programs developed by the department's Plans Engineer, Robert H. Fletcher. Fletcher was the perfect man for the job. A gregarious natural-born story teller, he turned his love of Montana and its history into one of the most unique interpretive signing programs of its day, the highway historical markers.

Born in Clear Lake, Iowa in 1885, Bob Fletcher came to Montana in 1908 and worked as a surveyor for the United States Reclamation and U.S. Land Services, and as Helena's Public Works Director before his employment by the State Highway Commission. In 1928, the Commission hired him as a Resident Engineer. Three years later, in 1931, he was promoted to Plans Engineer and spent the next decade developing and writing the state's tourism promotional material. In May 1935, he implemented the highway markers program to "publicize points of interest along [the] highways and thereby make their use as pleasant, attractive, and instructive as possible." Over the next six years, the team of Fletcher, department graphic artist "Shorty" Shope, and sign-maker "Ace" Kindrick, wrote, designed, and built over 100 highway markers, many of which still stand next to the state's highways. Many markers were located in roadside parks and picnic areas (also a Fletcher innovation) that also enhanced the motorists' experience in Montana. The folksy, laid-back writing style of the highway makers proved immensely popular with both Montanans and visitors to the state, garnering praise from such notables as historian Bernard DeVoto and journalist Ernie Pyle.

Along with the historical markers, Fletcher wrote the department's promotional material, including *Headin' for the Hills* (1937) and *Picture Writing* (1938), published the first of the state's colorful highway maps in 1934, and established visitors' centers at Montana's ports of entry. Based on a successful program in South Dakota, the ports-of-entry

stations were rustic-looking log cabins designed and built by the highway department. They were located at each of the main highways on the Montana border and were manned by "well-mannered," college students duded up in blue jeans, western-style shirts, cowboy boots, and bandannas. The attendants distributed promotional literature, answered questions about Montana's history, recreational opportunities, accommodations, restaurants, and other attractions.

Fletcher also established a roadside museum program and was able to convince the Highway Commission to purchase the Pictograph Cave site near Billings in 1938. Only two roadside museums were built by the highway department during the 1930s. The first, built about 1935, was located at the junction of U.S. Highway 12 and 91 in Helena near a roadside beautification project adjacent to the city dump on North Main Street. That building now stands next to Louie's convenience store on Eleventh Avenue in Helena.

In 1938, the department constructed the second museum at Fireman's Park in Laurel. Fletcher worked tirelessly to scrounge artifacts for exhibit in the museum, built the display cases, and hired a Crow Indian family to run the museum. The family lived in a tepee on the museum grounds and provided demonstrations of Indian life to tourists passing through Laurel on U.S. Highway 10. Many of the artifacts displayed in the museum were excavated from Pictograph Cave.

From 1938 to 1942, Fletcher also edited the MDT's mimeographed newsletter, *The Centerline*. More a booklet than anything else, the newsletter included articles written by department employees, information about pending federal legislation, departmental gossip, and humorous interviews with a few select engineers. He also took the time to author a collection of cowboy poetry, which was illustrated by Shorty Shope, and put out the first compilation of highway marker texts in 1937. Because of his tourism programs, the newsletter and his publications, there is little doubt that Bob Fletcher was the highway department's most well-known employee in the 1930s.

In 1942, Fletcher resigned from the department to take a job as the Public Relations director at Montana Power Company. For several years, however, he continued to write historical marker texts for the Commission. He served for a time as a trustee of the Montana Historical Society and authored one of the seminal books on the Montana cattle industry, *Free Grass to Fences* in 1960. Fletcher died in California in 1972 at age 87. His legacy during the Great Depression continues. The highway historical marker program is still vibrant with new signs added every year. Although the wording has changed on some, they still tell the story of Montana's colorful history to anyone willing to stop and read them.

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Rail, Transit & Planning Telephone Numbers

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

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

Rail, Transit & Planning Division Montana Department of Transportation

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