

Lewistown West Overpass

Public Hearing:

Thursday - November 20, 2003

We Invite Your Comments:

1 The Big Spinnings watershed partnership would like to see an ~~one~~ (1 or 2) underpasses on the area of the the current railroad underpass. This would be part of the master plan for a walking trail system for the city & county.

1 The preliminary design currently has enough grade difference between the existing railroad grade and the proposed roadway grade along US 87 to allow for the inclusion of an underpass for pedestrian use. An additional underpass will also be required at the new roadway connecting US 87 westbound traffic to the truck bypass. These underpasses will be included and can be reasonably accommodated without affecting the current roadway design or the impacts identified in the Environmental Assessment.

To receive further project information, please provide your name and address:

Name: John Turner

Address: P.O. Box 777
Lewistown, MT
59457

Please leave your comments with either MDT or HKM staff at the meeting, or mail to :

Jean Riley, P.E.
MDT – Environmental
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Please submit comments by or before December 19, 2003



Lewistown West Overpass

Public Hearing:

Thursday - November 20, 2003

We Invite Your Comments:

- 2 I believe the environmental Assessment should address whether mitigation funds can be used to mitigate Railroad street crossings, should the railroad right-of-way be converted to public ownership. The EA should also address whether the mitigation funds can be used for a rails-to-Trails proposal.
- 3

2

Over the course of the development of this project, MDT had considered utilizing project funds to pay for the reclamation of the numerous at-grade crossings throughout Lewistown. MDT later discovered that by participating in this effort, the state would interfere with federal railroad abandonment regulations and procedures which require the railroad to perform this reclamation function. Thus, rail crossing reclamation activities were eliminated from further consideration as part of this project. At the time of the distribution of the EA in September 2003, the City of Lewistown, Fergus County, BNSF, CMR, and the Lewistown Port Authority were involved in discussions concerning the ultimate disposition of the existing rail line and materials, and reclamation of the crossings. MDT has not played an active role in these discussions, but remains committed to participating in the reclamation efforts at the five crossings on the state-maintained route(s). This would be subject to a formal agreement between MDT and the City and/or County.

3

It is unlikely that a "rails-to-trails" project could be constructed as part of this project. The property would have to be in public ownership, and as noted above, the future ownership of the existing rail line is still under negotiation. All activities under this project will be funded and constructed at the same time, and no funding will be held over for work outside the scope as defined by the EA.

General Note:

This commenter and several following refer to "mitigation funds" available for use relative to this project. It should be noted that there is no special or separate funding source identified for mitigation for this project. A portion of the money saved from not having to construct a new rail overpass structure has been identified (up to \$2 million) to provide "compensatory mitigation for the loss of rail service to Lewistown." MDT stipulated in the EA that the funding level was contingent upon the overall project cost, and "that the expenditure must be related to the proposed action and support the modal relationships between the highway, rail service, and local transportation needs." See discussion in the Rail System Relationship section of Chapter 1 of the EA.

To receive further project information, please provide your name and address:

Name: Richard Oppler

Address: 1015 W. Watson
Lewistown, MT 59457

Please leave your comments with either MDT or HKM staff at the meeting, or mail to:

Jean Riley, P.E.
MDT - Environmental
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Please submit comments by or before December 19, 2003



DEC 03 2003

Lewistown West Overpass

ENVIRONMENTAL

Public Hearing:

Thursday - November 20, 2003

We Invite Your Comments:

4 We own property on the Highway that joins the Tike Repair Company. Lewistown TIM Factory Hwy 87 West. On your new Road Lewistown Overpass. We would like to see a Joint or Shared approach with the tire CO.

K + T Properties
RT 2 Box 2349
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-538-2000

ALSO CAN I GET A DETAILED MAP OF THE COMPLETE ROAD PROPOSAL.
Tony Stein

Tony Stein

To receive further project information, please provide your name and address:

Name: Tony Stein

Address: RT 2 Box 2349
Lewistown MT 59457.

Please leave your comments with either MDT or HKM staff at the meeting, or mail to:

Jean Riley, P.E.
MDT - Environmental
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

4 This shared approach is certainly feasible, and even desirable from an access management perspective. MDT will work with each individual land owner as the design progresses to ensure that your needs are considered. Once the design is complete, a detailed map of the area can be provided for your review.

Please submit comments by or before December 19, 2003





December 5, 2003

Montana Department of Transportation
Dave Galt, Director
2701 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Dear Mr. Galt;

Snowy Mountain Development Corporation is a regional economic development corporation serving the communities of Lewistown and Fergus County, in addition to the communities of five other counties within the Central Montana area.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of SMDC, I thank you for the work on the Environmental Assessment of the Lewistown West Overpass and the opportunity to comment on it. We concur that the Preferred Alternative relative to this project is a relatively safe and cost-effective alternative to existing conditions. We regret that Lewistown will be losing rail service to the immediate community, as this will have a profound negative impact on the economy of the community and the development of business.

5 Use of the mitigation funds, which have resulted from the elimination of the need to replace the existing overpass structure, is prominent in our minds. We appreciate the DOT's desire to commit these funds towards the mitigation of impacts to our community for the loss of the railroad service. In public meetings over the past five years, it has been stated approximately two (2) million dollars are available for mitigation. It is imperative that these funds be used to have the greatest impact on the economy as possible.

6 The community has supported and continues to support the development of a proposed industrial park west of Lewistown adjacent to transportation systems. If an industrial park is to be successful, it is critical for not only land to be available for development but that infrastructure and utilities also be developed at the industrial park site. Businesses interested in locating within an industrial site will most certainly need municipal water and sewer to operate. The need for this infrastructure places an undue burden on the local governments. Mitigation funds should also help the local governments develop the necessary utilities needed for the industrial park site.

With the railroad leaving Lewistown, the community is faced with a potential blight caused by the abandoned railroad tracks and crossings within the City of Lewistown and abandoned rail

613 N.E. Main *Lewistown, MT 59457 * (406) 350-0198 * smdcdist6@hotmail.com

5 The ability to potentially redistribute construction funds intended for structure replacement to other transportation improvements related to the loss of rail service is still contingent upon an agreement being reached between the City, County, and BNSF.

6 The concept of purchasing property for the establishment of an industrial park was in response to concerns expressed by the City and County for the loss of rail frontage along commercial/industrial properties in town. MDT was approached with this concept and FWHA agreed that this loss of rail frontage for commercial/industrial properties could feasibly be compensated through the purchase of other properties with similar rail access. This purchase and provision of a well are elements of the Preferred Alternative.

According to a preliminary estimate prepared by URS Corporation, the cost of extending municipal water and sewer to this site would total approximately \$1.7 million. When added to the cost of the property itself, this would greatly exceed the maximum amount available of \$2 million; thus, the Preferred Alternative includes only the purchase of the property and installation of a well.

7

area. These abandoned tracks and crossings present a weed infestation problem, hazardous areas, and an aesthetically unattractive area. It is important that the community receive mitigation funds to provide restoration of these areas. Reclaiming existing railroad crossings is a huge burden on local transportation funds and mitigation funds should be available to help the local governments deal with this impact.

We sincerely appreciate the Department's commitment to assisting the community in mitigating the devastating effects this has on the community. We encourage the Department to allocate the entire \$2 million for mitigation efforts as discussed above.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Lewistown West Overpass EA. We look forward to working with the Department on this project.

Sincerely,



Kathie A. Bailey,
Executive Director

C: Bruce Barrett
City of Lewistown
Fergus County

7

As noted above in Comment/Response 2, MDT had considered reclamation of the rail crossings as a potential mitigation concept, but became aware of the potential conflict with the federal process to perform this function and eliminated this concept from further consideration.

Further, MDT cannot commit to conducting any reclamation activities on the rail lines themselves because they are not yet, and it is not clear when or if, they will be in public ownership.

Lewistown West Overpass

RECEIVED

DEC 16 2003

ENVIRONMENTAL
Public Hearing

Thursday - November 20, 2003

We Invite Your Comments:

- 8 The center turn lane should connect between where it now joins @ 10th Ave. so to the new project.
- 9 Right turn lanes need to be considered on the west bound lane full length of project.
- 10 Definitely stay with plan to make approach into Airport as your preferred alternative shows. Drastically reduce the super on East end. That is transition area between 25 mph & 35 mph. So needs very little super.
- 11 Although the wide shoulder is adequate for foot and bike traffic now in its rural state this area could become urban even before the job is built or soon thereafter. The addition of sidewalk(s) should be considered.

MASTER FILE
COPY

To receive further project information, please provide your name and address:

Name: Vera Peterson

Address: 712 W Main
Lewistown mt 59457

Please leave your comments with either MDT or HKM staff at the meeting, or mail to:

Jean Riley, P.E.
MDT - Environmental
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Please submit comments by or before **December 19, 2003**

URS

MDT
Montana Dept. of Transportation

HKM
ENGINEERS

8 The Lewistown West Overpass project ends at 15th Avenue. The Main Street North project extends from 15th Avenue east into town. That project included reconstruction of the highway (Main Street) from 15th to 10th to include sidewalks and parking on both sides, and center turn lanes from approximately 10th Avenue east into town. The pavement markings could be changed to accommodate a center turn lane, but such a change is beyond the physical limits of this project. The MDT Lewistown Maintenance office will review the street width and if a third lane can be accommodated, the lanes will be re-stripped with the next resurfacing/re-stripping project.

9 Right-turn lanes were considered but are undesirable for several reasons. In this case, they could potentially "shadow" vehicles traveling too closely behind a turning vehicle and increase the likelihood of an accident, and they would present a very inconsistent travel way for bikes on the shoulder. It would be preferable to include a wider shoulder to provide additional refuge for right-turning vehicles to utilize when necessary. The Preferred Alternative has been modified to include 10 foot shoulders from Airport Road to the truck bypass.

10 The Proposed Action at Airport Road consists of shifting Airport Road to the east to align with Entrance Avenue to the north. The superelevation on Highway 87 at this location can also be reduced from 8 percent to 6 percent and provide a much flatter bank.

11 The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* is generally followed by MDT on highway improvement projects involving pedestrian and bicycle use. The AASHTO guidance recommends paved shoulders of at least four feet. The 10 foot shoulder now proposed in the EA will accommodate a rumble strip and more than six feet of clear path for bicycles and pedestrians along the shoulder. When considering a sidewalk, or shared-use path adjacent to the roadway, AASHTO warns that some operational problems are likely to occur, including:

(continued on next page)

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BRAD PARRISH
KARL GIES
First Ward Commissioners

DEC 16 2003 CITY OF LEWISTOWN

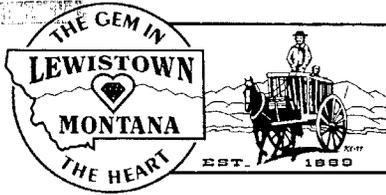
DARRYL MCKENZIE
DENISE JENNINGS
Second Ward Commissioners

RICK POSS
WENDELL VANNATTER
Third Ward Commissioners

DAVE SATHIER, JR.
At-Large Commissioner

KEVIN MYHRE
City Manager

MONTE BOETTGER
City Attorney



305 W. Watson, Lewistown, MT 59457
Phone (406) 538-2303 / Fax (406) 5383323

NIKKI BRUMMOP
Financial Officer

JIM DANIEL
Park and Recreac
Director

KEV
MYHRE
Chief of Poli

STEVE CUNNINGHA
Fire Ch

LEO KAI
Director of Public Wor

BRIDGETT JOHNSC
Library Direct

DUANE FERDINAN

11

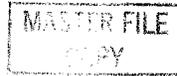
(Continued)

Bicyclists continue to use the roadway instead of the shared use path because they have found the roadway to be more convenient, better maintained, and safer. Bicyclists using the roadway may be harassed by some motorists who feel that in all cases bicyclists should be on the adjacent path.

Although the shared use path should be given the same priority through intersections as the parallel highway, motorists falsely expect bicyclists to stop or yield at each cross-street and driveway. Efforts to require or encourage bicyclists to yield or stop at each cross-street and driveway are inappropriate and frequently ignored by bicyclists.

December 15, 2003

Jean A. Riley, P.E.
Environmental Services
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001



Dear Mrs. Riley:

Thank you for the work that your office has done on the Lewistown West- Overpass project and the environmental assessment public meetings. They are always informative and helpful. In reviewing the project, I have found some things that I feel should be addressed in the project.

12

-First, the highway at that location is the boundary of Lewistown's incorporated city limits. The airport property has been annexed including the businesses leasing airport property along the highway. The number of businesses along that corridor is increasing every year. In consideration of the bank and businesses as well as the developed campground on the highway, I feel that an urban highway design with adequate pedestrian facilities is appropriate. An eight foot shoulder may suffice for rural highways but this project accesses over twenty-five business and a campground and should provide an actual sidewalk or an improved trail for safety of pedestrians. Trials have been used in the Kalispell and Missoula areas and are effective in creating a safe separation from the motoring public.

13

-Next, I would ask that the center turn lane be continued from the east end of the project at 15th Avenue to 10th Avenue where it currently begins. This probably only involves a change in pavement markings but I think it will reduce confusion especially when the markings are covered by snow and ice.

-In looking at the current traffic flow in the project area, there may be a need for right turn lanes in some areas to move traffic quickly off of the roadway in to the many businesses along the route.

14

-As you know the access to businesses is a very delicate issue and should be taken seriously. The project currently calls for eliminating the through traffic on Wunderlin Street and building a cul

12

Please refer to Comment/Response 11 above regarding the proposed shoulder width. While not desirable to locate a separated trail immediately adjacent to the highway, it appears possible to locate a trail behind the businesses on US 87, and connect a trail from the underpass at Airport Road to the underpass at the truck bypass. This will be included as part of the Preferred Alternative, so long as the following conditions are met:

- No negative impacts to homes or businesses,
- No condemnation of properties required, and
- The City and/or County accepts maintenance responsibility for the trail upon project completion.

13

Please refer to Comment/Response 8 and 9 above regarding the center turn lane and right turn lanes.

14

The proposed cul-de-sac will have to be paved, and include curb and gutter, which will be completed as part of this project. A portion of Entrance Avenue will also have to be paved to provide an adequate intersection design and pavement markings for delineation of travel lanes.

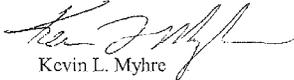
de sac on its east end. By the making the street a dead end street, the traffic on the street surface will increase greatly. I would like you to consider paving the street surface and installing curb and gutter at appropriate locations. Most of the street currently has curb and gutter with the exception of the cul de sac area.

15

-Finally, I am very concerned about the storm water management in the project area. The final highway design will be close to twice the as much pavement which will create much more runoff. Most of the runoff from the project area flows into and through the City of Lewistown. An example is the culvert that drains the valley by the Airport road intersection empties onto 15th Avenue S. and then into the frog ponds area. Possibly the use of storm water retention areas would be helpful. Lewistown's storm drain system only serves the lower area of the city. The city requires storm water retention facilities in new development outside of the current storm drainage system.

I know that many things will change prior to the completion of the project both in the geographical area and the details of the project design and I would ask for the Montana Department of Transportation's consideration in making the project a success and a assess for the Lewistown community well into the future. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the project and please contact me anytime if you have any questions or I can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Kevin L. Myhre
City Manager

cc. Lewistown City Commission
Leo Kapp, Public Works Director
Bruce Barrett, MDOT

15

Storm water retention facilities will be provided in accordance with local criteria in addition to MDT's criteria. This will be completed as part of the final design for this project.

Thank you for your active participation in the development of this project and your comments on the EA.

RECEIVED

DEC 18 2003

December 17, 2003

Jean A. Riley, P.E.
Environmental Services

Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

MONTANA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
BILLINGS DISTRICT
BILLINGS, MONTANA

Dear Mrs. Riley:

On behalf of the greater Lewistown community, we thank you for your work on the Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Lewistown West Overpass and the chance to comment on it.

We begin with a comment on the use of mitigation funds resulting from the elimination of the need to replace the existing overpass structure. We appreciate the DOT's commitment to use those funds for mitigating the impacts to our community for the loss of railroad service.

The City of Lewistown and the Fergus County Commissioners have gone on record as supporting the use of a portion of the mitigation funds to purchase land for a proposed industrial park west of town. We still support that proposal. The Fergus County Port Authority invested \$40,000 to identify suitable sites for an industrial park that will help retain and utilize rail service to the area (Attachment A). We continue to support your plans to purchase land for an industrial park west of town. However, we believe the site will be effective at drawing businesses only if it can provide adequate infrastructure. We believe it will be a more effective approach to extend city water and sewer services to the site rather than merely drilling a well, and we urge you to adopt this option in your final plan.

You heard very clearly from the community at the November 20, 2003 hearing in Lewistown that there are many effective ways of mitigating impacts to our community that fall under your criteria of being transportation-related. Another suggestion is that mitigation funds be used to reclaim the existing railroad crossings in the city and county. A major impact of railroad abandonment is the cost of replacing the crossings with smooth roadway and pedestrian trails. Funding from the Montana Department of Transportation could help mitigate this impact to the community. Although Burlington Northern seems to be agreeable to abandoning the overpass structure, they have not been willing to assume any costs in the repair of the crossings.

Our next suggestions have to do with Lewistown's existing and proposed trail system. The Big Spring Creek Watershed Partnership has raised over \$200,000 to build walking trails and to develop a master trail plan for the community (Attachment B). As you can see in the attached trail plan, trails have been planned in the area of the Overpass project. The current overpass allows for safe passage of pedestrians under the highway without conflict of highway traffic. Without a pedestrian underpass in its place, the future

16

Please see Comment/Response 6 regarding the prohibitive cost of construction of the municipal water and sewer as part of this project. For the sake of clarification, it may be worth noting that MDT is not, and cannot attempt to compensate the Lewistown area for "impacts to the community for the loss of railroad service." The decision regarding termination of railroad service is in the authority of BNSF and Surface Transportation Board, and is unrelated to this proposed highway improvement project. MDT has committed to mitigate transportation-related impacts resulting directly from the loss of railroad service. Feasible options were outlined in the EA – some of which are no longer deemed valid due to a conflict with federal procedures, and others no longer necessary due to decisions made by local authorities.

17

Please see Comment/Response 2 regarding the conflict with federal procedures regarding rail crossing reclamation.

18

A representative from the Big Spring Creek Watershed Partnership informed MDT of plans for a trail system in the Lewistown area during a public meeting during project development. At that time, plans for the trail were neither complete nor approved, and accommodations for that system could not be reasonably considered under this project. At the Public Hearing for this project, MDT was presented with a copy of the Conceptual Design Report for the Brewery Flats Trail Addition and Lewistown Trail System (dated August 2003). Given that the trail plans have progressed, MDT has considered, and can reasonably accommodate an underpass at the current railroad overpass location as well as the proposed connection to the bypass, and incorporate an underpass in the new Airport Road alignment design. Those changes are reflected in the current preliminary design. The project now also includes a separated trail to connect the proposed underpasses. (Note: The "Attachment B" referred to in this comment letter is available from MDT, but has not been included in this document due to its lengthy volume.

highway will force pedestrian and bike traffic to cross the traffic lanes and create a dangerous situation. Another pedestrian underpass should be located at the trail crossing at the intersection of Airport Road. The City of Lewistown has been committed to the creation and improvement of trails in and adjacent to the city. The Incorporated city limit is the center line along most of the project. We feel that it would be appropriate to include concrete sidewalks or a walking path off of the roadway to allow safe and efficient movement of pedestrians along the entire length of the project. Examples of similar trails can be seen in the Hungry Horse, Kalispell, and Harlem communities. The current design which designates an eight foot shoulder for non-motorized traffic is inadequate for urban pedestrian and bicycling traffic.

19

The current project will directly affect the current trail system as well as future additions. Final project design should ensure that the trails are restored and pedestrian access to the trail is unrestricted after the project is completed.

20

The National Association of Realtors recently found that home buyers ranked access to walking, jogging, and biking trails second in a list of 16 amenities (sidewalks, access to highways, shopping, etc.) when purchasing a home. Thus the trail system is an important part of this community's efforts to attract new businesses and residents. As you can see from the attached plan, the abandoned rail line is an important component of the master trails plan the community has already initiated. We believe that mitigation funds should help cover the costs of converting abandoned railroad line into trails and utility right-of-way. This investment of highway mitigation funds is consistent with the inter-modal transportation approach advocated by the Federal DOT. It qualifies as a transportation enhancement measure and it would certainly help mitigate the loss of rail service.

21

The Montana Department of Transportation has repeatedly said that it could spend up to \$2.1 million for transportation-related mitigation measures for our community if the overpass is removed. There is no doubt that the removal of the overpass structure will end any future possibilities of rail service into Lewistown. Our community is losing an asset that we have enjoyed for almost a century and our future is uncertain. We compete in a economic realm where other areas have passenger and freight rail service, interstate highways, and developed air service. Our assets will be the amenities that we can offer. Healthy and growing communities have identified infrastructure and quality of life issues as major factors in the recruitment of business and economic development. Our group has come together to try to maintain Lewistown's safety, health, and economic stability. We feel that our recommendations are in line with our communities needs now and in the future.

22

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Lewistown West Overpass EA. We appreciate your commitment to our community, and we look forward to continued cooperation with your department on this project.

19

Please see Comment/Responses 11 and 12 regarding the proposed separated path.

20

Any impacts to existing trails will be restored, and trail continuity will be perpetuated following project completion.

21

To clarify Comment/Response 3 regarding the "rails-to-trails" proposal, the project does now include the underpasses and a section of trail located in the immediate vicinity of the project, and will be considered as an enhancement aspect of this project. Further construction of a "rails-to-trails" project under this project is not feasible due to the fact that the existing railroad right-of-way is not in public ownership, and it is uncertain when or if it will be. Other funding sources are available for trails, multi-modal projects, and transportation enhancement projects and should be pursued for future expansion of the trail system in Lewistown.

22

While we appreciate the desire of the community to invest in your future, MDT and FHWA are unable to provide the funding for the types of improvements you are requesting as part of this project. All construction funded under this project must be directly related to the "purpose and need" for transportation improvements identified in the EA, and/or be in direct response to impacts imposed by the MDT/FWHA action.

Thank you for your interest in the project, and your comments on behalf of the community. MDT and FWHA remain committed to providing the necessary and desirable transportation improvements for the Lewistown area.

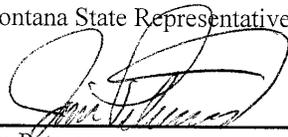
Sincerely,



Ed Butcher
Montana State Senator



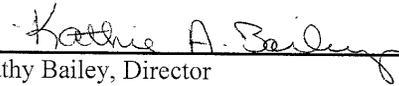
Bill Thomas
Montana State Representative



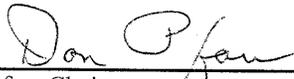
Jim Peterson
Montana State Representative



John Hertel, President
Fergus County Port Authority



Kathy Bailey, Director
Snowy Mountain Development Corporation



Don Pfau, Chairman
Big Spring Creek Watershed Partnership



Will Donahue RN, MSN, FNP-BC
Chief Nursing Officer, Central Montana Medical Center

Signature page attachment – no response necessary.

Specific Recommendations in the letter to the Montana Department of Transportation:

Background:

- The Montana State Department of Transportation (DOT) will save slightly more than \$2 million by not having to rebuild the overpass west of town if the rail line is abandoned.
- On several occasions, the Montana DOT has committed to spending up to that amount of money to pay for transportation-related mitigation for the loss of rail service to our community.
- The Montana DOT has already agreed to purchase land west of Lewistown for an industrial park.

The attached letter expresses support for the purchase of land for an industrial park *and* the following additional mitigation measures:

Recommendations:

The available mitigation dollars should also be used to:

- Reclaim the abandoned railroad crossings in the city and county.
- Convert abandoned railroad line into trails, as proposed in the community's Master Trails Plan.
- Install two pedestrian underpasses west of town when construction begins on the bypass.
- Widen and mark the shoulder for a designated bike and pedestrian lane along the roadway west of town to enhance safety of non-vehicular traffic.

23

Most of these comments were raised and addressed in the preceding letter. The final “recommendation” (fourth bullet at left) does, however, introduce a new concept. While the shoulder width has been increased to 10 feet, and is more than adequate to safely accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic according to federal guidelines, the project does not include specifications for special markings for this facility. The wider shoulders and provision of a separated path should eliminate the need to mark the shoulder for exclusive bike/pedestrian use. This marking would also discourage the intended joint use for motorists wishing to use the wider shoulder as a refuge for their right-turn movements in heavy traffic.

23



Public Hearing:

Thursday - November 20, 2003

Invite Your Comments:

24 Please consider incorporating into the design of the project an interpretive turnout to recognize the Nez Perce Trail crossing immediately west of the current city limits. This should be coordinated with Jon Axline, MDT historian in Helena. We assume there will also be an interpretive sign installed to recognize the Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District.

25 Also, please consider incorporating a bike path into the design of the project along its entire length. The bike path should be within the right of way but separate from the roadway surface as has been done on other highway projects.

26 We desire to have nodal development rather than strip development along the highway frontage. To encourage this, the number of highway approaches should be limited.

27 A pedestrian underpass(s) is desired at the location of the current highway overpass and where the new highway crosses the existing railroad. This will help as a tie to the pedestrian and, perhaps, an equestrian trail system on both sides of the highway.

24 The project does currently include a historic turnout and marker to identify the Lewistown Satellite Airfield Historic District. Rather than including an additional turnout, it may be more desirable from a roadside safety standpoint to expand the proposed turnout to also include an interpretive sign for the Nez Perce Trail. This change has been incorporated into the preliminary design.

25 Please refer to Comment/Response 12 regarding the parallel trail now included as part of this project.

26 As noted in the EA, the length of the project includes a plan for limited access control. Please refer to Section 2.4 (Three Lane Section and Access Management Concept) of the EA.

27 Please see Comment/Response 1 regarding the accommodation of trail crossings; however, it is unlikely that an equestrian passage (which would require more height clearance) is possible without substantial grade changes which would create undesirable hills or rolls in the otherwise improved roadway.

To receive further project information, please provide your name and address:

Name: Duane Ferdinand

Address: city of Lewistown
305 W. Watson Street
Lewistown, MT 59457

Please leave your comments with either MDT or HKM staff at the meeting, or mail to :

Jean Riley, P.E.
MDT – Environmental
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Please submit comments by or before **December 19, 2003**



RECEIVED

DEC 23 2003

MONTANA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
BILLINGS DISTRICT
BILLINGS, MONTANA

December 19, 2003

To: Edward Butcher, State Senator
Bill Thomas, State Representative
Jim Peterson, State Representative
John Hertel, Fergus County Port Authority
Kathie A. Bailey, Snowy Mountain Develop Corporation
Don Pfau, chairman Big Spring Watershed Partnership
Will Donahue, RN Central Montana Medical Center

From: David Wichman *Dave*

28

I encourage you to explore the merits of investing in a business incubator with those "Highway 87 railroad overpass removal mitigation funds" not spent on remediation work and the industrial park. Specifically, invest in a structure to house equipment resources for incubating businesses being established by local innovators and entrepreneurs. This structure could be constructed on the industrial park site or it might be a school or other building that is not in use. To best learn what I mean by a business incubator, I encourage you to get acquainted with the successful Mission Mountain Market business incubator in Ronan, Montana. This incubator is a project of the Lake County Development Corporation. Contact: Jan Tusick, Mission Mountain Market Project Agriculture & Cooperative Development Specialist (406)676-5901 email: jt@ronan.net.

In the following commentary, I will go beyond using excess remediation funds.

A business incubator provides various resources depending on its equipment, space and staffing. These may include: reduced up front capital cost, access to processing knowledge and experience, better market access, and an association with others in a similar business development mode. How many good business ideas fail because the upfront overhead was too burdensome? This structure could/should be equipped with a variety of equipment (most of it small scale by today's standards). Ideally the equipment would be arranged in a manner that would allow for multiple entrepreneurs to be using the various equipment at the same time or for one business to set up an assembly line should they have multi-stage processing needs. The important thing is that the structure fits the purpose rather than just finding any structure that is available. I am not prepared to offer any details on structure size or shape is needed. It would be pertinent to involve Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC) www.montana.edu/wwwpb/univ/mmec, Montana Manufacturing Center <http://www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com> and others such as Mission Mountain Marketing staff in designing such a structure. The businesses are expected to pay an hourly use /rental fee.

The equipment might be directed toward either Ag related product processing and/or wood, metal or others. Some of the equipment might be flour mills, dough mixers, rollers, dough cutters, cooling racks, juicers, heated vats for syrups, a bottler, super quick freezer for meats and fruit, vacuum sealers, and cafeteria size ovens. Some equipment, like a sacker/bagger, could be used on food, feed and household items such as ground flour, grain, pet food, cat nip, and potpourri. I have listed equipment items primarily associated with processing Ag products because that is what I am acquainted with, but the incubator could be equipped to serve non-Ag

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Please see Comment/Response 6, 7, and 16 regarding the appropriate expenditure of federal highway dollars.

products, also. These are just a few pieces of equipment that might be pertinent to getting new central Montana business up, processing, selling products, and employing people.

Another option would be to have two or three incubator structures within the Snowy Mountain Development Corporation's (SMDC) service area. Harlowton might house equipment dealing with cereal grain products. Roundup might have a wood and energy products incubator. Lewistown might serve as the meat, fruit, and metal works incubator. These issues can be dealt with once a decision is made on whether or not central Montana wants to support such an initiative.

A major resource that an incubator can provide for entrepreneurs dealing in food and beverage products is the necessary federal and state licensing and operator certification. The cost of training to secure the appropriate certification and licenses can be quite burdensome in time and money. With an incubator facility, one individual can serve as the certified individual for multiple entrepreneurs by reviewing the operation procedures and over-seeing the on-site processing at the incubator. The incubator operations manager can also be an invaluable resource to processors by helping them avoid various pitfalls that are learned through experience.

Our sparsely populated towns and communities in the Snowy Mountain Development's service area need each other to survive and thrive for central Montana to be vibrant and economically successful. I do not wish to diminish the importance of a trail system around Lewistown, but I think a business incubator facility could go along way toward insuring that we have people with children living in the SMDC area to walk and ride their bicycles on those trails.

Cc: Bruce Barrett, Montana DOT Administrator
Fergus County Commissioners
Judith Basin County Commissioners
Petroleum County Commissioners
Wheatland County Commissioners
Fergus County Extension Service
Judith Basin County Extension Service
Lewistown Ag Chamber
Lewistown Chamber of Commerce
Judith Basin County Chamber of Commerce