

# Montana Transportation Commission

**October 30, 2025 Meeting  
Commission Room  
2701 Prospect Avenue  
Helena, Montana**

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

Loran Frazier, Transportation Commission Chair (District 3)  
Kody Swartz, Transportation Commissioner (District 1)  
Shane Sanders, Transportation Commissioner (District 2)  
Noel Sansaver, Transportation Commissioner (District 4)  
Scott Aspenlieder, Transportation Commissioner (District 5)  
Chris Dorrington, MDT Director  
Larry Flynn, MDT Deputy Director  
Jess Bousliman, MDT Commission Secretary  
Dustin Rouse, MDT Chief Engineer  
Dave Gates, MDT Construction Engineer  
Valerie Balukas, MDT Chief Legal  
Doug McBroom, MDT Statewide Planning & Modal Operations Administrator  
Geno Liva, MDT District 2  
Jim Wingerter, MDT District 3  
Shane Mintz, MDT District 4  
Jon Swartz, MDT Asset Strategy, Operations & Maintenance  
Ryan Dahlke, MDT Preconstruction Engineer  
Nicole Pallister, MDT  
Brenden Borges, MDT  
Peter Taitt, MDT  
Thomas Burnett, MDT

### Online:

Mike Taylor, MDT District 5  
Lucia Olivera, FHWA  
Lisa Fischer  
Lora Mattox

*Please note:* Minutes are available for review on the commission's website at [https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans\\_comm/meetings.aspx](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans_comm/meetings.aspx). Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For additional information, please contact transportation secretary Jess Bousliman at (406) 444-6201, [jbousliman@mt.gov](mailto:jbousliman@mt.gov) or visit the commission's website at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans\\_comm/meetings.aspx](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans_comm/meetings.aspx). For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592 or call the Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request.

## **OPENING – Commissioner Loran Frazier**

Commissioner Frazier called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Sansaver offered the Invocation. Commissioner Frazier asked for introductions.

## **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the Commission Meetings of August 19, 2025, August 28, 2025, and September 9, 2025, were presented for approval.

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the minutes for the Commission Meetings of August 19, 2025, August 28, 2025, and September 9, 2025. Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **Agenda Item 1: TCP Approval**

Director Dorrington thanked everyone for all their work yesterday and the staff who put it together. You asked good questions, hard questions. Ryan Dahlke thanked everyone for the great discussion and dialogue. Not only for yesterday, which was a long day but also for the questions and inquiries given throughout the year that helped guide the development of the TCP and gives vision for the agency and transportation in the State of Montana. I appreciate all the engagement, comments and questions.

This is a long process every year; it's a year-round process which all the DAs can attest to. This doesn't come together in one month, it's a 12-month process. We're always working on it and preparing for this time of year each fall. I've asked Thomas Burnett to share his screen with us. He is the new Federal Funds Section Supervisor responsible for maintaining and managing all of our federal funds at MDT. He comes to us from our Construction Administration Section and has some experience with Dave Gates on the financial part in construction. I'm excited to bring him on board.

We are here to adopt or approve the Tentative Construction Plan (TCP) as presented to the Commission and today we're asking for your approval exactly as presented yesterday in the handouts you have with two exceptions to the letting dates on the TA Program. Everything else is exactly as presented in the handouts and yesterday. The recommendation from staff is to approve the TCP.

Commissioner Frazier said you mentioned the long day yesterday and the hard work but actually it is the easy part of the whole thing because it is now up to the MDT staff to deliver the plan during the next year and keep those projects online and on schedule. Congratulations, we've got a good plan and now we have to deliver it.

Commissioner Frazier said I've been doing a lot of driving all over the state in the last month. In the 90's we had a program called, "Save Our Secondary's" program. It was a state-funded program where we did largely shovel ready pavement preservation projects. A lot of the roads we did in the 90's in that program are still there but they are starting to look like they need some attention again. I don't know if the Legislature in looking at the budget and having a more robust state program can take some of those funds and hit some of the Secondary's. I'm thinking of Cardwell, where we had an exception and did an overlay, but we also did a couple of choice dig-outs where they had some problems. The road is in good shape but it's showing 30 years of wear, and it needs some minor rehab. That is something to think about for future planning. That program was kind of a one-time shot for two or three years, but it really helped. It looks like we're going to be needing that again. That might help our plan with some of the match issues we were talking about.

Commissioner Sansaver said the staff did a great job and I appreciate their hard work. They don't get enough credit for that as well as all the supporting people. We get to see the faces of the department, so please extend to the staff our appreciation of their hard work. Commissioner Aspenlieder said I certainly appreciate the time and dedication, and effort MDT puts forward every time. The leadership in the districts is outstanding, and I certainly appreciate the willingness to lean into hard conversations. We all grow by having those hard conversations. I learn just as much as the next guy. I'm just a dirt guy and not a highway or bridge guy and I appreciate the opportunity to get educated by the way you think about things and the way you view things through the lens you have to operate. It helps educate me and makes me more well-rounded and better able to do this job for the people of my district and the people of the state. Thank you for that.

I have a couple of things that Mr. Dahlke and I talked about yesterday. It would be helpful on bridges in particular as we go into next year to know in that list of bridge

projects how we're tracking on timber bridge issues and how we are tracking on the load-posted and load-restricted bridges. When we're nominating those projects, what are we tackling with respect to those issues? Out in the district those are the most contentious with the local governments. Those are the ones that we get called about. In the way we present those bridges, I don't know how we're handling them or where they are stacking up and how fast we're tackling those issues. It would also be helpful, as we're going through the pre-TCP plans with our DA's and walking through what's going to come out of our district, the thing we don't see when we sit down with our district is what the other programs are nominating inside our district. We can talk about the three core programs and that's it. Our DAs don't have a clue what's coming from Safety, Bridge, etc. We have those pre-meetings and we get educated on what's coming into Core but we have no idea what's coming in our districts in the other programs. That would be helpful ahead of the TCP so we're aware of how those things are stacking up. It was helpful that you sent out the full TCP a week ahead of time to be able to review it early, but it would also be helpful if we have tentative sense of what's coming. It doesn't have to be the final version understanding things are going to change. That would be helpful just in my own education and ability to speak to County Commissioners and local government folks. Those are my two suggestions as we head into next year. The process is great. As we continue to turn the fine-tuning dials to make it better, those are some things for me that would help us be more educated.

Commissioner Frazier said I echo that for Bridges, Freight, etc. As we were going through things in my district, we could only talk about what might happen. We put a big one in because we didn't know what was happening with Freight and some of the other programs. The process went well, and I appreciate the time I spent with our district folks going through it.

Commissioner Sansaver moved to approve the Tentative Construction Plan (TCP) as recommended by staff with two changes. Commissioner Sanders seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **Agenda Item 2: Construction Project on State Highway System – Contract Labor – Benton Avenue, Helena**

Doug McBroom, Statewide Planning and Modal Ops presented the Construction Project on State Highway System, Contract Labor – Benton Avenue, Helena to the Commission.

The City of Helena is proposing modifications to Benton Avenue (U-5805) to improve traffic operations and safety at the entrance to their Transfer Station (near Carroll College). Proposed improvements include approach modifications (with dedicated turn lanes), curb and gutter upgrades, and ADA improvements.

MDT headquarters and District staff have reviewed and concur with the recommended improvements. The City of Helena will provide 100 percent of project funding and will be required to complete MDT's design review and approval process to ensure that all work complies with MDT design standards.

When complete, the City of Helena will assume all maintenance and operational responsibilities associated with the proposed improvements.

Staff recommends that the Commission approve these modifications to Benton Avenue and requests that the Commission delegate its authority to let, award, and administer the contract for this project to the City of Helena - pending completion of applicable state (and local) design review and approval processes.

Director Dorrington asked about the rail crossing. There are a lot of safety considerations with that. Doug McBroom said that will be taken into consideration.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Construction Project on State Highway System, Contract Labor – Benton Avenue, Helena. Commissioner Swartz seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 3: Highway Safety Improvement Program Additions to HSIP Program (3 New Projects)**

Doug McBroom presented the Highway Safety Improvement Program– Additions to HSIP Program (3 New Projects) to the Commission. The Highway Safety Improvement (HSIP) Program makes federal funding available to states to assist with the implementation of a data-driven and strategic approach to improving highway safety on all public roads. In Montana, the primary focus of the HSIP program involves identifying locations with crash trends (where feasible countermeasures exist) and prioritizing work according to benefit/cost ratios.

At this time, MDT is proposing to add three new projects to the HSIP program – one in District 1, one in District 3, and one in District 4. The projects on the attached list meet the criteria set forth for HSIP-funded projects. If approved, it would be MDT’s intention to let these projects individually.

The estimated total cost for all project phases is \$7,198,253 (\$6,478,428 federal + \$719,825 state match) – with the entirety of the federal funding originating from the Highway Safety Improvement Program.

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the addition of these HSIP projects to the highway program.

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the Highway Safety Improvement Program – Additions to HSIP Program (3 New Projects). Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 4: Speed Limit Recommendation US 89 (N-11) – Gardiner**

Dustin Rouse presented the Speed Limit Recommendation, US 89 (N-11) – Gardiner to the Commission. In September of 2023, Park County requested a speed study be performed on US 89 from Airport Road to Park Street in Gardiner. After reviewing the study area, the study was expanded to milepost 2. Park County highlighted in their request that they have received many complaints of speeding with pedestrians near the roadway. A review of the posted speed limit was also desired due to the new development in the region.

The last improvements occurred at the Yellowstone Bridge on US 89 with the scope being a bridge deck rehabilitation that was completed in 2020. This section of the road was last reconstructed in 1974. Gardiner was largely impacted by the 2022 Floods; however, the section currently being analyzed for this study was not affected. Within this speed study, US 89 is part of the national highway system (N-11) and is classified as a principal arterial. The typical sections are comprised of two 12-foot travel lanes with varying shoulder widths. The shoulder width near the start of the study is approximately 8-feet wide for the majority of the developed parts of

Gardiner and reduced to approximately 5-foot wide for the remainder of the study area. In areas where there is a non-traversable slope, there currently is guardrail to protect that side of the roadway. Sight distance can be obscured at times inside of Gardiner due to the prevalence of on-street parking throughout the developed parts of Gardiner. There are no centerline rumble strips, however, shoulder rumble strips are present in the rural sections of the study area. There are a few passing zones near the end of the study area but are relatively short in length.

Average annual daily traffic volume from 2024 range from 4,100 vehicles within the urban sections of Gardiner to about 3,500 vehicles near the northern side of Gardiner. Peak AADT was observed in 2021 at 4,781 vehicles in the urban section and 4,057 vehicles for the northern end section. On average there has been a 1.2-percent increase in traffic volumes each year over the past 5 years. It should be noted that traffic volumes on average were 91 percent higher during the summer months, which is considered a very high amount of seasonal traffic deviation. Traffic volumes in general are highly variable from year to year due to the community being an entrance to Yellowstone National Park. As a result, traffic volumes taken from this area can vary drastically depending on the day and amount of traffic that Yellowstone National Park received that year, which varies substantially from year to year.

The roadside environment starts out as urban and then rapidly transitions to a more rural setting. From the start of the study at the intersection with Park Street until approximately just north of Hellroaring Street, the roadside environment can be considered urban with high approach densities and high pedestrian activity. The development inside of the urbanized area can be considered a mix of residential and commercial. The residential development is largely comprised of single-family homes while the commercial development is a mix of recreational, eateries and hotels/lodges. Development after Hellroaring Street rapidly decreases in scope and density. The area after Hellroaring creek can be considered more rural in nature and is currently acting as a transitional zone between the largely rural area just north and the urban area just south of it. The majority of the new development occurring in the area is on the north side of Gardiner in this transitional zone. North of the Yellowstone RV Park the environment becomes largely rural with very limited development with the Gardiner Airport being located in this area. The Gardiner Airport is a small airport with minimal commercial use.

*Summary:* A review of the spot speed samples shows that the prevailing speeds along US 89 match with the set speed limits. The 85th percentile speeds and upper limits of the pace are for the most part within  $\pm 3$ -mph of the 25-mph,  $\pm 1$ -mph of the 45-mph and  $\pm 5$ -mph of the 70 mph posted speed limits. Within the 25-mph speed zone about 80 percent of drivers are all within 10-mph of each other. The same is not true in the 45-mph and 70-mph speed zones with only about 60 percent of drivers traveling within 10-mph of each other respectively. Although the prevailing speeds indicate appropriately set speed limits roadway context indicates these speeds are slightly elevated above what should be considered reasonable and prudent. Currently the 25-mph speed zone ends before the high approach density, on-street parking and pedestrian activity actually ends near the edge of town. The 25-mph speed zone should be extended to where the current 35/45-mph transition is at. The roadway environment better suits this area for a 25-mph speed zone and having vehicles transitioning this far into the community is not prudent. The speed data also supports the 25-mph speed zone extension, with the station located at the existing 25/35-mph transition showing 85th percentile speeds approximately 4-mph below the 35-mph limit for either direction.

The transitions entering Gardiner are not up to current MDT guidance and best practices. The current transition configuration is as follows: 25-35-45-55-70-mph. The 35-mph transition zone is only approximately 1,050-ft in length and as mentioned above, doesn't fit the context of the town and speed data. Eliminating the 35-mph transition and extending the 25-mph speed zone will also reduce the amount

of speed limit changes and better reflect the roadside environment. We then recommend a 40-mph transition zone where the existing 45-mph transition is. This 5-mph reduction will keep the transitions within 15 mph of each other and further help drivers transition into the urban environment.

Finally, the 55-mph transition currently is only 1,250-ft length and should be extended to 2,700-ft to meet current MDT best practices and guidance. The speed data shows that drivers are already transitioning before they meet the current transition area and extending the 55-mph zone would further reflect the actual speed data in the transitional zone. The overall proposed transition configuration is as follows: 25-40-55-70-mph. This transition configuration reduces the amount of speed zones, reflects the current roadside environment, aligns with the speed data and should better facilitate drivers transitioning from the rural to urban areas.

Park County concurs with MDT's recommendation, and their concurrence is attached.

**Staff recommendation:**

It is the desire of MDT with the approval of the Montana Transportation Commission to institute the following speed limit:

**A 25-mph speed limit beginning at the intersection with Park Street (straight-line station 00+00) and continuing north for an approximate distance of 0.83-miles, approximately 950-feet north of the intersection with Travertine Street (straight-line station 144+00)**

**A 40-mph speed limit beginning approximately 950-feet north of the intersection with Travertine Street (straight-line station 144+00) and continuing north for an approximate distance of 1,600-feet, approximately 800-feet north of milepost 1 (straight-line station 160+00)**

**A 55-mph speed limit beginning approximately 800-ft north of milepost 1 (straight line station 160+00) and continuing north for an approximate distance of 2,700-feet, approximately 1,600-feet south of Airport Road (straight-line station 187+00)**

Commissioner Sanders asked if they feel there isn't significant enough traffic going into the airport to extend the 55 mph zone out to there. Dustin Rouse said the Gardiner Airport is not heavily used at this time and we don't see a lot of traffic in and out of the airport.

Commissioner Sanders said he loved the map and Commissioner Frazier said the map was also helpful. Dustin Rouse said the thanks goes to Brenden and it makes it easier for me also.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Speed Limit Recommendation, US 89 (N-11) – Gardiner. Commissioner Swartz seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:**

No public comment was given.

## **Agenda Item 5: Speed Limit Recommendation US 87 (N-57) – Windham**

Dustin Rouse presented the Speed Limit Recommendation, US 87 (N-57) – Windham to the Commission. In September of 2023, Judith Basin County requested a speed study be performed on US 87 near the community of Windham citing site distance issues at Central Avenue intersection. After reviewing the study area, we determined to extend the study out to similar limits as the 2019 speed study. This study begins near milepost 41 and continues to milepost 46. Judith Basin County cited the Windham intersection approach to have sight distance issues making it difficult to see oncoming traffic. It should be noted that this request is the same request as the 2019 request. Judith Basin desires a 60-mph zone that begins approximately 1,500-ft west of the S-541 intersection and continues to approximately 1500-ft east of Central Avenue, an approximate distance of 3,900-ft or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile.

This segment of US 87 was reconstructed in 1993 under project NH 57-2(18)34 F and most recently improved in 2014 under project NH 57-2(28)34. There is a turn lane project in development as well under project NH 57-2(43)43. The genesis of this project is sight distance issues at the Windham approach (Central Avenue). The design speed of this section is 60-mph and passing restrictions are in place near the community of Windham. Within this speed study, US 87 is part of the national highway system (N-57) and classified as a principal arterial. The primary typical section of US 87 in this area consists of two 12-foot travel lanes with 8-foot paved shoulders. The posted speed limit is 70-mph for the entire study area. There are no turn lanes for the study area currently. Centerline and shoulder rumble strips are present. There is adequate sight distance both on and along the highway. There are limitations in sight distance due to the curvature and slight grade of US 87 along the Windham area. However, sight distance does exceed the design speed of 60-mph and for the prevailing speeds collected. The community of Windham recently became a census designated place (CDP) in 2020 and has an estimated population of 43. Additionally, the average wind speed for this area is 13.5-mph, this is considered to be windy.

Average annual daily traffic volume from 2023 was approximately 2,601-vehicles. Peak AADT was observed in 2023. On average there has been a 4% increase in traffic volumes each year over the past 5 years. When excluding the covid years of 2020 and 2021, traffic volumes have increased by 3% on average. It should be noted that traffic volumes on average were 41% higher during the summer months. The roadside environment is primarily rural with open agricultural land for the majority of the study area. US 87 curves around the south side of Windham with the main body of the community orientated north of the highway. A railroad is present and provides a buffer area between US 87 and most of the residential area on the north side of the roadway. There are some residences and a saloon that are set back on the south side of US 87 and utilizes Central Avenue and US 87 for their main approaches. Secondary 541 intersects US 87 just west of the community.

*Summary:* A review of the spot speed samples shows that the prevailing speeds along US 87 match with the set speed limits. The 85th percentile speeds and upper limits of the pace are for the most part within (+2 & +8)-mph of the 70-mph posted speed limits. The percentage of drivers within 10-mph of each other is on average 64-percent. The percentage within the pace does decrease at station 3 which is just north of the intersection with S-541 to 57 percent. There is an observed decrease in speeds near the Windham area, however, it's only by approximately 0.5-mph for the 85th percentile and 1-mph for the 50th percentile. Comparing speed data collected in the 2019 speed study report, shows that speeds have remained largely the same, however, speeds are slightly elevated compared to 2019 levels.

As a result, we recommend the speed limit be based on the 85th percentile, this would result in a statutory increase to 75-mph. However, considering the context of the area, potential for windy conditions and local desires, we recommend no change to the existing speed limit of 70-mph for the study area.

Judith Basin County was contacted multiple times for official comment, but we did not receive any comments within the 120-day deadline, we assume concurrence as a result.

Of note: There is a turn-lane project for Windham, and it will encompass S-541 Intersection and Central Avenue. That should also address some of the site distance concerns associated with Central as well.

**Staff recommendation:**

**It is the desire of MDT with the approval of the Montana Transportation Commission to institute “No-Change” to the existing speed limit configuration.**

Commissioner Aspenlieder said both this, and the next study were done in 2019 without significant changes to either of the areas. What is our policy on using our resources for areas that have not significantly changed since the last study? Dustin Rouse said we are looking at available software that will allow us to look at areas and give us an indication of the speeds without going through a full speed study. We hope through the use of that technology we can make a quick determination if there is a change in the area and if so, is it worth going through the effort and expense of a full speed study or not. To answer your question, it is difficult for us to just say “no there is no change” when we’re not out there doing a study. We hope with some of this additional data it will allow us to at least do a screening to determine if it is valid to go through that effort or not. Commissioner Aspenlieder said then we don’t ever say no. My concern is they can just throw a request out there and right now our policy is to do a speed study. Dustin Rouse said I wouldn’t say we don’t push back. Your point is very valid and we’re having these conversations at the district level. We have traffic counters out there and we have some information to our folks today. Those discussions are happening, and we will convey to the County Commissioners looking for a speed study the information we have on hand and tell them we’re not seeing anything to indicate the need for a speed study. With what we’re looking at, it bolsters the information we have available and makes a more informed decision. It provides us with additional information to push back as appropriate.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said ... (inaudible) ... so we’re not going through a traffic study to say “we’re leaving it the same” or can we just say we’re not changing anything because there wasn’t anything there. It feels like we waste a lot of time on things like this one when there is no change.

Valerie Balukas, MDT Legal said, as a function of state law we’re obligated to do these speed studies. I haven’t looked at whether or not developing a policy will work. Within that there is probably some room for us to develop a policy to evaluate but I don’t believe to date we’ve looked at that, but the volume of these studies and the back log is significant in looking at whether we have statutory authority to develop an internal policy.

Director Dorrington said he would address this in his comments to the Commission. We’re entering into pilot software where the data set is incredible and if the Commission would like to see a demo, we can arrange that at a future meeting. We can show you what it is capable of doing. We can look at intersections or sections of highway. In the case of a speed study request, the data is 24-hours old and goes back 12 months. You can show in almost live time what the traffic is doing. Visually you can immediately grasp what you’re seeing. That tool will predicate what we’re capable

of doing. The locals are in a tough spot when a group of constituents or a strong voice in the community says we must look at this. They are the eligible ones to request a speed study and often times we're placed in the position of being the bad guy. County and City Commissions would like to say, "let's send it on" and then we do the review and we're the bad guy. This gives us the tool to do a quick scan to see if there are anomalies quickly and be able to say whether it rises to the point of a study or the justification to say not now.

Commissioner Sansaver said I'm not so sure according to our policy that we don't have to show due diligence to that community with an honest speed study. I totally appreciate what Commissioner Aspenlieder is saying – you say no, we say no and send it back and we don't have to go through this but according to policy we must show due diligence for each study request.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said I appreciate that note but where my question goes is it can still be on the Agenda and we can still take formal action on it, which is our due diligence. If somebody has a question about it or wants clarification, we can pull it out otherwise it is passed with a consent agenda where we don't spend any time on it knowing that we voted to approve it. Theoretically we've read the document ahead of time to know how we're going to vote and why and then move on. That would be my nuance request for legal to determine. I think you're right; I don't think we cannot take formal action. Commissioner Frazier said I like the consent agenda idea for some of these that are fairly straight forward.

Commissioner Sansaver to approve the Speed Limit Recommendation, US 87 (N-57 – Windham. Commissioner Aspenlieder seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 6: Speed Limit Recommendation 57<sup>th</sup> Street (N-102) – Great Falls**

Dustin Rouse presented the Speed Limit Recommendation, 57<sup>th</sup> Street (N-102) – Great Falls to the Commission. In October of 2022, the City of Great Falls requested a speed study to be conducted on 57<sup>th</sup> Street. However, due to the tragic loss of our Great Falls District Traffic Engineer at the time, MDT did not coordinate with the City of Great Falls until March of 2023. Due to the volume of studies requiring data in 2023, data collection was postponed until May of 2024. The City of Great Falls stated the section between 2nd Avenue North and 10th Avenue South to be a point of emphasis for the speed study. After reviewing the study area, MDT determined that the limits of the study to start at the intersection of North Park Trail and continue south until the intersection with 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

Within this speed study, 57<sup>th</sup> Street is part of the national highway system (N-102) and is classified as a principal arterial. There are three types of typical sections for the study area, the section from North Star Boulevard to 10th Avenue North has two 12-foot travel lanes, a two-way-left-turn-lane (TWLTL) in the median and 8-foot shoulders with a bike lane located on the eastside shoulder. The section from 10th Avenue North to 2nd Avenue North has two 12-foot travel lanes, a raised median and 8-foot shoulders with a bike lane utilizing the east side shoulder. The typical section from 2nd Avenue North to 10th Avenue South is comprised of four 12-foot travel lanes, a raised median and 8-foot shoulders. There is adequate sight distance both on and along the roadway as the alignment is tangent and flat for most of the study. There are no passing zones located in the study or centerline/shoulder rumble strips. There is a 35-mph school zone located near Loy Elementary School that extends beyond the school property; this school zone was established by commission action in 2022.

This study area was last reviewed in 2019; the result of that study was for no-change to the existing speed limits. Reviewing the area from 2019 to 2024 shows little change in the roadside environment. Malmstrom Airforce base is located near the study area and 57th Street acts as a primary route for the base. There are three signalized intersections in the study area, 10th Avenue North, 2nd Avenue North and 10th Avenue South. Average annual daily traffic volumes from 2022 ranges from 9,800 vehicles between 10th Avenue South and 2nd Avenue North to approximately 6,700 vehicles between 10th Avenue North and North Star Boulevard. Peak AADT was observed in 2018 with traffic growth being stagnant for the last five years along the entire study area. It should be noted that traffic volumes on average were 22 percent higher during the summer months. The roadside environment beginning near North Star Boulevard is heavily commercial with mixed light and heavy industrial. The environment changes to a more rural setting from 10th Avenue North to 2nd Avenue North as the adjacent land use is primarily open fields besides Loy Elementary. From 2nd Avenue North to 3rd Avenue South is a mix of open fields and commercial development. From 3rd Avenue to the end of the study is primarily a suburban environment on the west side of the roadway and rural to the east side. Land use for the study area as a whole is mixed and variable.

*Summary:* A review of the spot speed samples shows that the prevailing speeds along 57th Street match the set speed limits, however, they are considered slightly elevated. The 85th percentile and upper limits of the pace are for the most part within (-1 to +7)-mph of the 45-mph posted speed limits and (+6 to +11) of the 35-mph school zone. Within the 45-mph speed zone approximately 76% are within the pace on average. The 35-mph had approximately 72% of drivers within 10-mph of each other. The percentage of drivers within the pace is consistent throughout the study area and the percentage within the pace overall is considered acceptable, showing consistent and uniform driver speeds. Although the prevailing speeds indicate elevated speeds, roadway context indicates these speeds are elevated above what should be considered reasonable and prudent. Roadway context indicates the use of two different speed statistics as the roadside environment changes through three distinct sections. The first and last third of the study indicates the use of the rounded down 85th percentile as the roadway has limited pedestrian facilities and a non-separated bike lane utilizing the east/north side of the roadways shoulder. The average 85th percentile speed spot data for the first third of the study is 46-mph and the average 50th percentile being 42-mph. The average 85th percentile speed spot data for the last third of the study is 51-mph and the average 50th percentile being 47-mph. The use of the rounded down 85th percentile yields a no-change of the existing 45-mph for these two sections. For the middle part of the study where Loy Elementary presides, roadway context shows a lack of pedestrian facilities, a non-separated bike lane and vulnerable road users near the roadway. The average 85th percentile speed spot data is 43-mph and an average 50th percentile of 38-mph. Utilizing the closest 50th percentile yields a speed limit recommendation of 35-mph. However, since speed spot data was taken when the school zone was operational, speeds based on this recommendation are for the school zone speed limit. This yields a no-change recommendation to the existing 45/35-mph special school speed limit.

The City of Great Falls was contacted multiple times for official comment, but we did not receive any comments within the 120-day deadline, we assume concurrence as a result.

**Staff recommendation:**

**It is the desire of MDT with the approval of the Montana Department of Transportation Commission to institute “No-Change” to the existing speed limit configuration.**

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the Speed Limit Recommendation, 57<sup>th</sup> Street (N-102) – Great Falls. Commissioner Sanders seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 7: Certificates of Completion July & August 2025**

Dave Gates presented the Certificates of Completion for July & August 2025, to the Commission. Certificates of Completion serve as documentation of final acceptance by the Department, confirming the contract was completed in full compliance with the plans, specifications, and special provisions, as authorized by the Transportation Commission.

After a Certificate of Completion is accepted by the Transportation Commission, the Department will notify the Contractor and its Escrow Agent that the bid documents may be released.

July 2025, there are two projects proposed for Certificates of Completion. The sum of the original bid amount for these projects was \$46,251,579.48. The sum of the final amount of these projects was \$46,390,277.86; amounting to a.3% growth above the original bid amount. This was one tied contract.

August 2025, there are eight projects proposed for Certificates of Completion. The sum of the original bid amount was \$28,526,060.13. The sum of the final amount was \$27,994,617.63; -1.86% below the original bid amounts.

#### **Staff recommendation:**

**Staff recommends the Commission approve Certificates of Completion for July & August 2025.**

Commissioner Frazier commented on Salmon Lake. This was a new contracting method if I recall correctly and I was skeptical if you would come in close to the budget. Good job, you were right. It's nice to see something work. Dave Gates said Salmon Lake was a pilot CMGC project, so there were a lot of lessons learned. I'm definitely proud of the completion and the product.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Certificates of Completion for July & August 2025. Commissioner Aspenlieder seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 8: Bid Tabulation Policy, MDT POL 9-01-017**

Dave Gates presented the Bid Tabulation Policy, MDT POL 9-01-017, to the Commission. This item was tabled at the August 25<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting. The Commissioner asked staff to revise the procedures outlined in the policy that account for a scenario where less than three bidders submit on a contract.

As part of an FHWA Stewardship and Oversight request in June 2025, MDT was tasked with verifying compliance with 23 CFR 635.113(b), 635.113(b)(1), and 635.113(b)(2). 23 CFR 635.113(b) requires that the State DOT prepare and forward tabulations of bids to the (FHWA) Division Administrator and the tabulations shall be certified by a responsible State DOT official.

It was determined that MDT does not have a policy in place that ensured certification of the bid tabulations by a responsible State DOT official.

As recommended by the Commission we revised the procedures as follows:

1. **PURPOSE:** To ensure compliance with 23 CFR 635.113.
2. **SCOPE:** This policy applies to all contracts to be awarded.
3. **POLICY:** It is the policy of MDT to comply with all federal requirements, including 23 CFR 635.113.
4. **PROCEDURE:**
  - 4.1.1. The Statewide Project Delivery Engineer or designee will prepare and email bid tabulations to the FHWA Division Administrator.
    - 4.1.1.1. If there are three or fewer bids, the bid tabulations shall show bid item details for all acceptable bids.
    - 4.1.1.2. If there are more than three bids, the bid tabulations shall show, at a minimum, bid item details for at least the low three acceptable bids, and the total amounts of all other acceptable bids.
    - 4.1.1.3. Bid comparison sheets may also be forwarded to the FHWA Division Administrator.
  - 4.1.2. The transmittal of bid tabulations shall state: "I certify that the attached bid tabulation is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge."
  - 4.1.3. The bid tabulations must contain the Statewide Project Delivery Engineer's or designee's signature and the date. Electronic or email signatures are acceptable.
  - 4.1.4. The requirements of this policy are not intended to alter or reduce the confidentiality of bid tabulation documents, and the Statewide Project Delivery Engineer should continue to protect such confidentiality.
5. **CLOSING:** Questions about this policy shall be directed to the Director.

**Staff recommendation:**

**Staff recommends the Commission approve MDT POL 9-01-017.**

Commissioner Sansaver said he visited with Valerie Balukas prior to the meeting about my question on the policy change. She made it clear that we do not need to do that, so I'm fine with the staff recommendation. Commissioner Frazier asked Valerie Balukas if we have to sign this after the meeting. Valerie said yes.

Commissioner Sansaver moved to approve the Bid Tabulation Policy, MDT POL 9-01-017. Commissioner Swartz seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Agenda Item 9: Directors Discussion**

**Director Chris Dorrington**

*Thank You to the Commission*

First, I'd like to say other Boards of Commissions aren't nearly as proficient or capable as this Commission. So, I want to say thank you. I mean that sincerely. There's a lot of boards and commissions that work with others that aren't quite as good as you are, and I appreciate working with you.

*Monthly Meeting with Governor*

I have a monthly meeting with the Governor, and we report out to the Legislature per two bills HB 190 and HB 367. We are tracking commitments on an annual basis looking on a two-year basis. That sounds odd but that is the way it is written. I want to highlight a few things.

*Pro-Active Mindset*

We are working in the agency on a proactive mindset. One of the things we're doing is tracking proactive outreaches. I track the time series to report to the Governor, and I wanted to note for you that we, as a department, are working monthly at a grade on between 40 and 47,000 pro-active outreaches per month. So, our staff are required ten proactive outreaches per person per month. Obviously, we're averaging well above that. It's a really important part of our mindset. It seems simple to do that proactively so that's what we're doing. We've been doing this for about one year and we have done over 350,000 pro-active outreaches. That's a really important mindset for our communities in Montana.

Some things I want to highlight were areas I track monthly. In addition to our citizen customer services ... (inaudible) ... Systems Impact is an area that we definitely need to work on; it is a difficult area for our communities, our developers and people who are impacted by systems impact, so we're working diligently on that.

*Bridge Development Delivery*

Yesterday we talked about the way the assets are telling us to invest. Bridges are being hammered and they are aged, so we're working really diligently on that. Our folks are doing a lot of hard work there.

*Legislative Planning*

It's never too early to plan for the next Legislative Session. You've already noted one for investment on Secondary's. There are three categories that we're working on legislative ideas:

*Agency Efficiency* – In the past since the Governor took office a jurist has been assigned the role of tracking and improving on red-tape initiatives. MDT has been a part of that since the on-set and we will continue. So, there are efforts that will probably advance – some simple and some complex in order for us to be as streamlined as we can be

*Safety* – That involves serious injuries and crashes on our highways. We talked about US 212 yesterday as an example. There are initiatives and not all are popular, likely not all will make it through but there are initiatives in the safety realm that I think we will still continue to need to address. One of which is the Motor Carrier Service Officers' scope of service what they are capable of doing.

*Video Enforcement in Construction Zones* – video enforcement is one of those things that will be challenging from a privacy perspective in Montana, but we had a fatality last week in a construction zone where a commercial vehicle operator was checking his email and operating well above speed through the construction zone and killed another motorist. He rear-ended her and there were three other vehicles involved in that crash. We continue to see construction zone safety completely violated, especially by certain classes of operators. It is wholly untenable for our people to be involved in that realm of work and not be safe.

*Funding* – looking at our revenue situation, it is incumbent upon us to highlight what the forward looking two-biennium looks like. There is a need there. We're not proscriptive on what the solution looks like but definitely want to make certain people understand the work with growth in the federal program, the ability for us to match redistribution funds, which are anywhere from \$60 to \$120 million worth of projects that require a state match. We get a heck of a lot out of the redistribution money. So, we're just highlighting those three categories – Agency Efficiency, Safety and Funding and maintaining those categories.

### *Project Delivery*

We are on the same page; we now need to deliver on what we're committing to. From last year to this year, we're 83% on time for the letting date, we're 96% on time within federal fiscal year for projects we committed a year ago. That is a hell of a performance, and I want to commend Ryan and Dave on the work they're doing to make that happen. Of course, their teams played a huge part in that. You can't just say you're going to do something; you have to do it. Pretty amazing.

One of the things I'll highlight that we're above and beyond the projects we've committed to, we added 20 additional projects with redistribution. So, we're 96% on time this fiscal year but then you also added 20 projects that were delivered within the same timeline. So, I want to commend our folks that are doing that hard work.

Commissioner Frazier said construction zone safety and the accidents, something I've noticed that seems to be going statewide is if we want people to respect our zones, let's not put up a 35-mph zone for eight miles from one end of the project to the other when half of it's got nothing going on. People don't follow that; they ignore them. I've seen that quite a bit, a 35-mph zone for eight-ten miles on some of these projects and I'm the one leading the parade because I set my cruise control at 35 mph and I'm backing up cars behind me and I'm getting flipped off but it's still a construction zone. So, we might look at where we have those reduced speeds where the work is going on because they tend to ignore them. It's like railroad crossings when we have railroad accidents. I bring up my poor cousin who was hit on a railroad crossing by Twin Bridges, they hit him and his tractor and bailer, and the train runs there twice a summer. He was used to never seeing a train there, so when a train was there with his equipment running, he couldn't hear the whistle, and he got hit by the train. So, it's the same thing, they see the reduced speed but see nothing going on so they speed up. That's my observation from my drive-bys.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said I agree with Chairman Frazier. One feedback I got from my district is we're setting up the construction zone stuff so far in advance and then we're so late in taking it down. There's got to be a better way to work with the contractors to honor traffic control and the timing to make sure it's appropriate and in time with our construction because it does impact drivers' attention to it when it seems completely out of place and there's no action there. It seems like we're getting worse at putting it up early and taking it down late. That is something from a construction standpoint we certainly need to get better at. That adds to your point about attention and drivers.

With respect to video compliance, I know there is a large push from the municipalities and law enforcement community for the same thing. It struggles in our Legislature to even get out of committee let alone get to the floor. From a local government standpoint, we can't hire enough cops to keep our communities safe let alone do traffic control and traffic policing in our communities. Billings is struggling with traffic violation issues. It's time for us to have a more robust conversation about that and I think you'll find more partners in that conversation if you reach out. I don't know that it changes the outcome but it's something that all of us at the state and local government lobbies can do, we need to have conversations with our local legislators. That is way cheaper than us trying to hire ten more cops to put on patrol

in Billings and way more effective at this stage of the game and we can't afford it anymore.

As it relates to system impacts, I've been talking about this with Mr. Stapley for five years and frankly I think we're getting to where it's untenable. You have two Commissioners who do that work for a living and work in that space regularly that can bring a different perspective. What I would encourage you not to do is to come up with a policy internally and roll it out and think that you've fixed it without actually having some engagement with the impacted consultant and development community because that's what happens most often. Please engage either Kody or myself or somebody else in the consultant community, but don't go to the ACEC and think you're getting relative comments because those folks don't do it. It's the small engineering firms and mid-size engineering firms that actually work in that space. It's not HDR, Dowl or those folks. So, when you go to ACEC and get their comments which are irrelevant to that work because they do not do it and they're not good at conveying our company's experience in that. I'm happy to lean into that conversation at any point in time and I'm sure Commissioner Swartz would do the same because it is as frustrating as hell in the development community and we've got to find a better way. I will tell you when we can work with our local district staff, it is remarkably fast, remarkable efficient and we get to good, amenable solutions. But when we kicked it up the system impacts, it's a disaster. We deal with people that don't know our communities, that don't understand the local situations and have no context or understanding of what actually goes on in those specific institutions. This is one area where if we can get out of centralizing decision making and put it back to the district where they actually know what is going on, it would be so much better for all including the communities that are impacted.

Director Dorrington said regarding systems impact, I don't think it's going to feel good until it's probably in place for a while and operating. I totally agree. There are a couple of things we're working on. One is district coordination. Internally we don't communicate on this issue but centrally from Helena we don't know what's going on in the districts and communities, especially where growth areas are and growth opportunities. Subdivisions are being built, and growth is being induced or planned for, and I just don't think Helena has the best understanding of that growth. So, what we're trying to do, both Doug and Jon are incentivized to work on this. Doug as an area planner will be working with the district and Jon as systems impact folks will be working with the districts. The coordination and communication is really important, the proactive mindset of where things are happening, but it's not just working with the districts, it's also working with the communities. Doug has already visited with a couple of communities, and the rest of the communities are worked into his schedule. Billings is in December. Doug said we've had a preliminary meeting with Helena and one scheduled in the future.

Director Dorrington said the one thing I'd note is the communities are going to feel a little bit more pressure from us as we comment on county platting. We're trying to say if you put that in, it's going to impact the transportation system in an anticipated way so it doesn't play out that at the end of the line MDT shows up and says no you can't do that or here's the pain you're going to go through to fix it, so we're trying to get ahead of it. That's only part of it. My philosophy is get better internally and it's going to feel better externally because we have a planner process way of communicating.

#### *Fish, Wildlife and Park Collaboration*

Commissioner Sanders said to Director Dorrington, we're trying to have a more collaborative effort with Fish, Wildlife and Parks and some Commissioners indicated they'd be happy to meet with them. I've not heard anything more about that. Can you give me an update on that? Director Dorrington said the collaboration now is as strong as it's ever been with Fish, Wildlife and Parks. I talk to Director Clark on a

routine basis. We're working on a handful of things that are really sticky –railroad fishing access and the transportation system is one area we're trying to demonstrate how we can work better together. That's one of the things we're working on, but it's still not ironed out because everybody still has a responsible charge, so we have to go back to protect transportation system or railway access, those are difficult issues. But what it is projecting into is a much better coordinated relationship on bridges in particular where we have issues and concerns. We're not where I'd like to be. I'd like for Fish, Wildlife and Parks to be a little bit more proactive in their anticipation of water shed approvals not just individual crossing approvals and review and design and the back-and-forth that takes time. We also have a couple of demonstrated successes. Digital delivery wiped out probably two years of back-and-forth, and we did it in two months. That's a far better model. To summarize – we're in the best place we've been. We have a ways to go but we're certainly coordinating better than I've ever seen. Doug said my monthly meeting with FWP is very productive. Our intent is if we can bring no issues to those meetings, that's the ideal but they are quick to resolve them, and I think it is eye-opening for them with some of the engagements that have been occurring. I think we've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go but it's been very positive.

### **Agenda Item 10: Change Orders July & August 2025**

Dave Gates presented the Change Orders for July & August 2025 to the Commission. Included in your packets is a summary of our change orders. This is informational only.

For July 2025, we had 23 contracts with 27 change orders for a total of \$63,160.57. For August 2025, we had 25 contracts with 30 change orders for a total of \$2,988,919.25. For a sum total of \$3,852,079.82

### **Agenda Item 11: Letting Lists**

Ryan Dahlke presented the Letting Lists to the Commission. It is informational only.

This is the TA Program all the way through December 2026 that reflects the TCP that you just approved. One item of note on the very last page that is different than what you've seen in letting lists in the past, these are projects that are proposed for letting but are non-traditional, so they don't follow our typical process of design, bid, build that go through the Commission Award Meetings. The alternative contracting ones go through the Commission as unique items and the lag projects identified there are local agency led, and they let those projects on their own. So, these on the letting dates are for the alternative contracting projects that are in our control, and we strive to hit those – those are obligation dates. The lag projects are letting dates the local agencies provided us that they anticipate hitting. A little different format on the last page are the ones that don't fall into our typical letting schedule.

Through discussion with the MCA and through our bridge summit discussions we heard from the contractors that it would be very beneficial to them if we provided more transparency. We only publish the lettings that are upcoming, so we committed to publically publish this entire thing. We've never put this out and published all the proposed letting dates for the entire year. Our intent is to have this information out and available for contractors so they can plan ahead. Knowing that things happen, internally we have reviews, and we make adjustments. So, as we work our way through the year we'll update any changes to these schedules. Our intent is to provide this information and hold ourselves accountable. Commissioner Aspenlieder asked that Jess email that to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Swartz said notably on the lag it looks like Missoula is leading the charge. Is there something that Missoula is doing different to encourage the lag process or is it just a coincidence? Ryan Dahlke said this is a byproduct of the number of projects that Missoula has versus Billings. As an example, we're not administering Billings projects, they are administering their projects. It is just the number of TA projects that were selected and awarded last cycle. That's why there's a difference.

### **Next Commission Meetings**

The next Commission Conference Calls were scheduled for November 5, 2025, and November 25, 2025.

The next Commission Meeting was scheduled for December 11, 2025.

Commissioner Sansaver asked if the December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting could be a zoom meeting. Director Dorrington said it is up to the Director if we skip it or zoom it. Director Dorrington said electronic is fine with me. Commissioner Frazier said we'll see what we have for an agenda. There's always the option of attending via zoom for any meeting.

Jess Bousliman said next week after the call I plan to send out the entire next year of meetings so prepare yourselves for a lot of emails.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Commissioner Loran Frazier, Chairman  
Montana Transportation Commission

Chris Dorrington, Director  
Montana Department of Transportation

Jess Bousliman, Secretary  
Montana Transportation Commission