



# NEWSLINE

Montana Department of Transportation  
mdt.mt.gov



December 2021

## MDT Project Nationally Recognized for Safety

The North of Kiowa North project (featured as the Great Falls District project in the December 2020 issue of the Newsline) has received national recognition for its approach to improving safety on US Highway 89 (US-89) on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, west of Browning. The main goals of this 5.8-mile reconstruction project were to improve roadway safety and traffic flow while minimizing impacts to numerous Blackfeet cultural sites, adjacent wetlands, and area wildlife.

The project received Honorable Mention in the 2021 National Roadway Safety Awards program, and was included in the Noteworthy Practices Guide. The honor was presented virtually by US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Pete Buttigieg on October 6, 2021, in a ceremony co-sponsored by the Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

To learn more about this competition or the North of Kiowa North project and other projects around the country recognized for their contributions to safety, visit <https://www.roadwaysafety.org/awards>. An electronic copy of the 2021 Noteworthy Practices Guide is available as a PDF at the bottom of the web page.



Before (top) and after (bottom) photos of the project corridor demonstrate the widening of US-89 and other safety features of the completed project that received national recognition.

## Protect Those at Work to Keep Montana's Roadways Safe

Winter driving in Montana requires extra preparation and vigilance. Planning ahead and making the right choices behind the wheel not only help you arrive safely as a driver, but also help keep those who work on our roads out of harm's way.

First responders, tow truck operators, maintenance workers (including snowplow drivers), law enforcement, and Motor Carrier Services (MCS) officers travel our roadways to provide aid, emergency care, regulation, and safer routes for the rest of us. On October 1, 2021, the statutory revisions to Montana's "Move Over" law (passed by the State Legislature) went into effect, and include changes in fines and penalties for "reckless endangerment of emergency or highway workers." You can find the updated statutes in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) here:

<https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/index.html> (Refer to MCA 61-8-346; 61-8-715; 61-8-803)

Whether you're driving for your daily commute or traveling to winter fun, these tips will help ensure you and others along your journey arrive alive:

- Stay alert and focus on the road ahead.
- Use your vehicle lights during low-light times of day and during inclement weather to ensure you can see what's ahead, and that other road users can see you.
- Slow down and adjust your speed for current weather and road conditions. The speed limit is not always a safe driving speed in winter.
- Plan ahead. Check the weather and travel conditions before leaving, and allow extra time to get to your destination.



While assisting with a disabled Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) on I-94 recently, a second CMV struck a Motor Carrier Services (MCS) vehicle from behind and pushed it into the disabled vehicle. This is an important reminder for drivers to #SlowDown and #MoveOver when emergency vehicles are ahead.



## Federal Surface Transportation Program Status

On November 15, 2021, the long-discussed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill – was signed into law. IIJA represents a multi-year, \$1.2 trillion national investment in infrastructure - including funding for roads, bridges, airports, transit, rail, ports, and broadband expansion. For Montana, IIJA brings an estimated 20% increase in apportioned funds for surface transportation projects and much needed additional funding directed to bridges. Nearly as important as the funding increase, IIJA provides a multi-year reauthorization of the surface transportation program, replacing the expired FAST Act. This multi-year bill provides program stability that allows MDT to make the most effective decisions when planning and constructing projects. Provisions in IIJA recognize the importance of a national investment for transportation infrastructure in rural, low population states like Montana, which in turn support our economy and improve the safety and quality of life of our citizens. At over 5,000 pages long, IIJA is an extensive bill, and MDT's staff are currently working through the provisions to ensure the department is prepared for all opportunities.

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***We thank you in advance for your help in reducing waste and your assistance in providing updates to your subscription information as they occur.***

## New MDT Plans and Reports

### **2021 ADA Transition Plan Update**

The ADA Transition Plan Update was completed in the fall of 2021, and the final plan is now available online: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/ada/>

### **2021 TranPlanMT Biennial Surveys**

During odd years, MDT solicits public and stakeholder feedback through surveys as part of MDT's long-range transportation plan, TranPlanMT. In partnership with the University of Montana—Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), survey responses are gathered anonymously from a statistical sample of public respondents statewide, as well as from MDT's valued transportation stakeholders. This important process helps MDT continue to plan, build and maintain a transportation system that serves Montanans and the general traveling public of our state.

After survey responses are collected, the results are compiled into two survey reports—Public Involvement and Stakeholder—and published on the TranPlanMT website. The 2021 survey reports will be available by the end of the calendar year at <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan/>.

*Follow the link under "Surveys" and navigate to the bottom of the web page to select the 2021 survey report (or the biennium survey reports you'd like to view).*

## New MDT Chief Operating Officer

**B**ringing decades of experience in engineering, transportation and public service, Dwane Kailey was recently named MDT's Chief Operating Officer (COO). Dwane took on his first position with the department while attending Montana State University (MSU) Bozeman. After working at the MDT/MSU Design Unit in 1993, he graduated from MSU Bozeman in Civil Engineering in 1994 and accepted a full-time role with MDT Construction the same year. Over the years that followed, Dwane held numerous positions within the department, including Missoula District Administrator. Prior to becoming MDT's COO, he served as Chief Engineer for 11 years.



*Dwane Kailey, MDT Chief Operating Officer*

Join us in congratulating Dwane and welcoming him to his new role!

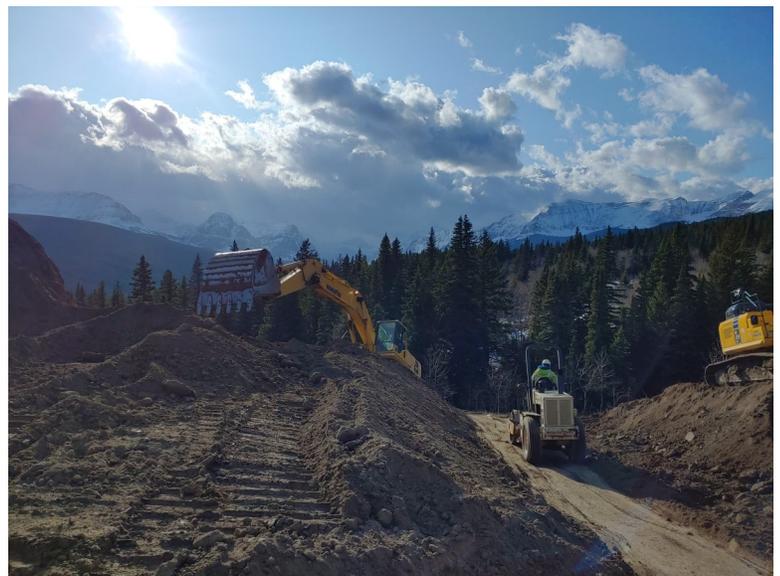
## Grant Applications for Recreational Trails Program Due February 28, 2022

**Recreational Trails Program:** The RTP is a federally funded grant program. This grant program awards about \$1.5 million annually. Eligible activities include construction or maintenance of motorized and non-motorized trails or trail-related facilities, purchase of trail equipment, and development of trail education or ethics programs.

Virtual training sessions are available for prospective RTP applicants. Find more information on attending a training session or applying for this grant online:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grant-programs/recreational-trails>.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) will accept applications for this grant from January 18, 2022—February 28, 2022, via the online system: <https://funding.mt.gov/index.do>



*Active construction on the North of Kiowa North project near Browning, Mont. (featured on Page 1)*

# 2021 Project Highlights & Progress

Each year, winter's arrival in Montana signals an end to construction and road work until spring and warmer temperatures arrive. While "construction season" can bring challenges to summer and fall travel, warm weather provides a limited opportunity for crews to advance or complete these much needed improvements to our roadways, improvements that will provide for safer, more efficient travel and Montana's economic vitality for years to come. MDT and our construction partners would like to extend sincere thanks to our customers—you, the traveling public of Montana. Thank you for your continued patience and support, and for helping make this another successful construction season. We look forward to 2022 and continuing to build better roadways for all of Montana. Learn more about the district projects featured in this issue, as well as other active and upcoming projects around the state, online: [https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/active\\_projects.shtml](https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/active_projects.shtml)

## Missoula District

**Project:** Kalispell Bypass (KBP) - Foy's Lake Road Interchange

**Background:** MDT, in partnership with the City of Kalispell, was awarded Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funds to upgrade a portion of the Kalispell Bypass in the vicinity of Foy's Lake Road. The intent of the project was to widen the controlled access US Highway 93 (US-93) alternate route to the "full-build" four-lane configuration, and upgrade the intersection with Foy's Lake Road to a full interchange. Given the timing constraints associated with BUILD grant funding, MDT opted to expedite delivery of this project by utilizing the Design-Build method. Construction began in early March 2021, and through creative phasing, the contractor was able to maintain two-way traffic onsite throughout construction. As this complex improvement project progressed, passersby had the opportunity to see a number of specialized construction operations, including ground improvement work, bridge beam setting, and concrete paving.

**Bid:** \$14.6 million

**Contractor:** LHC, Inc.

**Status:** Substantially complete as of November 2021



## Butte District

**Project:** Toston Structures

**Background:** Located south of Townsend on US Highway 287 (US-287), the Toston Structures project represents an important upgrade of aging infrastructure to meet design and environmental standards, while addressing primary safety concerns. In a recent five-year study, this stretch of highway has had higher crash frequency and more severe crashes than similar roadways across the state. Replacing roadway and bridges that were about 70 years old, the completed structures will address these safety concerns and accommodate future traffic demands due to residential growth and tourism. Additional work included innovative wildlife accommodations and a school bus turnaround.

**Bid:** \$29.6 million

**Contractor:** Riverside Construction Company

**Status:** Completed in 2021



## Great Falls District

**Project:** Great Falls—North

**Background:** This project begins immediately north of Great Falls. The scope proposes reconstructing seven miles of US Highway 87 (US-87) to include wider shoulders, turn bays at county road intersections, and the construction of a 2.5-mile, bi-directional passing lane to provide more capacity to accommodate future traffic volumes. The corridor attracts a sizable amount of large truck traffic, so these design features will provide conditions for safer interactions between truck traffic and passenger vehicles.

**Bid:** \$16.4 million

**Contractor:** Schellinger Construction

**Status:** Active construction in 2021; project anticipated to be completed in 2022



# Get Home Safe for the Holidays – Drive Sober and Buckle Up

The holidays are a time for many people to celebrate with family and friends. Whether just across town or the entire state, the months of November and December are a busy time for travel. The holiday season is also known for being a deadly season when it comes to impaired driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), across the nation, 837 people lost their lives in traffic crashes involving a drunk driver in the month of December 2019. During the Christmas and New Year's Day holiday periods in 2019 alone, there were more drunk-driving-related fatalities (210) than during any other holiday period that year. Alcohol impairment continues to be a factor in about a third of all crash fatalities nationwide.

As of November 16, 2021, preliminary crash data from the Montana Highway Patrol reports 210 people have died on Montana's roadways, compared to 185 deaths during the same time period in 2020. Over the last ten years in Montana (2011-2020), 28% of crash fatalities during the winter holiday period (December 15-January 3) involved a driver impaired by alcohol (blood alcohol content (BAC) > 0.079).

As part of the statewide, year-round effort to curb impaired driving, MDT supports law enforcement with grants to increase patrols as part of the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP). The Montana Highway Patrol and local law enforcement will be participating in mobilization patrols from Thanksgiving through Christmas and into the New Year to keep Montana's roads free of impaired drivers and to encourage all drivers to buckle up and drive sober or find a sober ride as they celebrate the season (**see Montana Traffic Safety Dates to Remember call-out to the right**).

You can do your part to ensure a safe and happy holiday for all. If you are hosting a celebration, serve alcohol responsibly and make sure your guests have safe, sober transportation home or a place to stay for the evening. As a party guest, it's also your responsibility to plan ahead if you'll be drinking. Whether it's a designated driver, calling a cab, using a ride share service, or staying with family or friends for the night, be safe and remind your loved ones to do the same. If you see or suspect drunk driving on the road, call 911.

Remember, the best defense in any motor vehicle crash is wearing a seat belt, so buckle up—every trip, every time, every person. There is no good excuse not to wear a seat belt!

MDT encourages drivers to drive sober, buckle up and avoid unsafe behaviors this holiday season and every day of the year, and to make Vision Zero their goal. For more information, please visit [www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/), or contact Janet Kenny at 444-7417 or [jakenny@mt.gov](mailto:jakenny@mt.gov).



## Montana Traffic Safety Dates to Remember

⇒ **December 11, 2021—January 3, 2022\***

Winter Holiday Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over—Law Enforcement Mobilization

**Note:** A total 595 hours were worked during the FFY2020 Winter Mobilization by 17 participating agencies. 1,325 citations and warnings were issued during this mobilization. For more information, contact Chad Newman at [chnewman@mt.gov](mailto:chnewman@mt.gov) or 444-0856.

⇒ **February 13, 2022**

Super Bowl LVI—Fans Don't Let Fans Drive Drunk

⇒ **March 16-19, 2022\***

St. Patrick's Day—Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving

⇒ **April 26-30, 2022**

National Work Zone Awareness Week

⇒ **May 1-31, 2022**

Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month

⇒ **May 15, 2022—June 5, 2022\***

Click It or Ticket Law Enforcement Seat Belt Mobilization (2022 STEP)

\*Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) Mobilization Periods

## Transit and Highway Traffic Safety Grant Applications Due March 1, 2022

Transit applications will only be accepted through the Black-Cat Transit Data Management System:

<https://secure.blackcattransit.com/Login.aspx?site=mtdot>

Register in the system and apply when the opportunity becomes available on January 3, 2022.

Highway Traffic Safety applications will only be accepted through the Montana Grant and Loans web-based system: <https://funding.mt.gov/index.do>

Register in the system and apply when the opportunity becomes available on January 3, 2022.

For information regarding:

**Transit grants**, contact Adam Kraft at 444-6120 or [akraft@mt.gov](mailto:akraft@mt.gov).

**Highway Traffic Safety grants**, contact Kevin Dusko at 444-7411 or [kedusko@mt.gov](mailto:kedusko@mt.gov).

# Safety Tips for Winter Walking in Montana

Montana's climate, large geographic area, and rugged terrain create unique challenges to getting around. Whether it be by motor vehicle, bicycle, walking, or mobility device, we can all take precautions to make our journey safe. Walking to your destination in the winter months is an economical, healthy, and sustainable transportation option. The following information will help you prepare for pedestrian travel in the winter and remain safe and active in cold conditions.

Check the weather first; severe conditions might mean changing plans. Local NOAA weather radio stations or [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) can alert to conditions and possible storms. Dress for the weather by layering a light, synthetic fabric underneath a second layer of insulative material such as fleece or wool to keep warm and wick away moisture. A third layer of waterproof or water-resistant material will protect from wind, rain, and snow. Ensuring footwear is waterproof and insulated can help keep feet warm and dry, and ice grippers stretched over the sole can provide extra traction when needed.



*Winter is a breathtaking season to enjoy on foot in Montana. Stay safe with a little preparation—such as proper footwear—before you venture out.*

Pedestrians traveling in low-light conditions should make themselves as visible to motorists as possible. Low visibility at dawn, dusk, or night can reduce a driver's ability to see pedestrians, and distance between the pedestrian and motor vehicle also decreases visibility. Be prepared by carrying a flashlight or wearing reflective material or high visibility colors such as fluorescents or bright white.

Extra focus on your surroundings and avoidance of distractions such as mobile devices will increase the outdoor experience as well as improve the ability to maintain balance on slick surfaces. Montana State University's Safety and Risk Management department recommends keeping hands out of pockets to restore balance, and taking small, careful steps to keep upright.

Pedestrian travel is a healthy and economical way to get around all year! Get some fresh air while you get to your destination – with the right preparation you can make your journey comfortable and safe while enjoying Montana's winter landscape.

Find more pedestrian safety information and resources at <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/>.



*Remember, we're ALL pedestrians at some point during the day. Drivers can do their part by using vehicle lights for safety during low-light conditions and inclement weather.*

# MDT Launches New Traveler Information Application

Winter has arrived in Montana, and MDT has tools to help plan for conditions so you can reach your destination safely – including the newly implemented traveler information system (MDT 511) and mobile application. While the legacy MDT 511 system ([mdt511.com](http://mdt511.com)) and apps served Montana travelers well for over 15 years, they ran on older code that became impossible to support with modern browsers and mobile devices. This created an urgent need to update the system before a catastrophic failure of the systems occurred. The new MDT 511 offers all information from the legacy MDT 511, and MDT continues to update road conditions statewide from the Transportation Management Center. Notable features include

- Clickable roadways to display conditions
- Ability to save favorite cameras or roadways
- Enhanced map layers
- Trip planning with a driving directions tool
- Weather forecasts
- Details on rest areas, sign messages, construction, and alerts
- “My 511” email sign-up for direct alerts and condition updates on selected routes or roadways

The new system website is [www.511mt.net](http://www.511mt.net) and comes with two new mobile apps for Android and iOS. By default, six information layers (Road Conditions, Construction, Restrictions, Incidents & Events, RWIS Cameras/Weather Information, and Other State Cameras) are enabled on the app for first-time users, but you can toggle them on or off using the setting toggles located at the upper right corner of the map. Most traveler information sites and apps are moving to a map-centric design with menus to the side. MDT's design is consistent with industry practice but ensures all information is still readily available to users. If you find you don't like the map-style navigation, you can use searchable lists at the top of the page.

Safety is a top priority for MDT, and these new features and custom updates will allow all travelers to be better prepared for delays or incidents so they can plan their trip accordingly. As with any change of this scale, we understand the new system and applications will take some time to get used to, but we believe it will serve the traveling public for years to come.

## Winter Travel Resources

To access the NEW MDT Traveler Information application—including the interactive map and information on downloading the mobile app—scan the QR Code on the right with your mobile device or visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>. Travelers can also call 511 from anywhere in state.



*#KnowBeforeYouGo this winter! Use MDT's travel resources to plan ahead for a safe journey.*

# 2021 Project Highlights & Progress (cont.)

## Glendive District

**Project:** MT 200—Fairview

**Background:** This project was a major rehabilitation of Montana Highway 200 (MT 200) through Fairview. The project constructed a new storm drain system, which required coordination with the Bureau of Rec – Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project, BNSF, the State of North Dakota (ND), East Fairview, ND and McKenzie County, ND, as it outfalls east of the MT/ND state border. The project included new cement within the curb and gutter limits, replacement of deteriorated sidewalk, ADA upgrades, new signs, and changed the lane configuration from four-lanes to three-lanes with bike lanes on each side of the roadway.

**Bid:** \$14.7 million

**Contractor:** Knife River Corporation—North Central

**Status:** Completed in 2021



## Billings District

**Project:** Billings Bypass—Yellowstone River Bridge

**Background:** The Billings Bypass project is a multi-phase, multi-year project that will result in a new arterial roadway that begins at the Johnson Lane Interchange in Lockwood, spans the Yellowstone River, and connects to the Old Highway 312/US Highway 87 (US-87) intersection in the Billings Heights neighborhood. This historical project — the largest in MDT's history — is progressing in cooperation with FHWA, Yellowstone County, and the City of Billings. The Yellowstone River Bridge project segment is Phase 2 of the Billings Bypass, and construction began in 2020. The new bridge will help fulfill the goals of better accessibility and connectivity between Interstate Highway 90 (I-90) and Old Highway 312/US-87.

**Bid:** \$30.1 million

**Contractor:** Wadsworth Brothers Construction

**Status:** Active construction in 2021, project segment anticipated to be complete in 2022



## MDT's Aeronautics Division: Grants & Funding

**M**DT's Aeronautics Division offers eligible Montana airports grants and low interest loans for various airport and aviation-related projects. Applications are due November 15 each year.

Any publicly owned, public-use airport is eligible to apply for loans and grants for any airport or aviation-related improvement project. Applications may also be submitted retroactively for projects already started or completed. Typical airport improvement projects include: pavement maintenance or rehabilitation or construction, lighting, communications and other infrastructure, terminal or certain equipment building construction, fuel systems, and many other items.

Grants can provide funding for up to 100% of an airport's share for its projects. Aeronautics Division grants are primarily funded by a small tax on general aviation fuel. Due to fluctuations in taxes collected, the amount in grants that the Aeronautics Division has available to disperse each year varies.

Loans can also be used to fund up to 100% of an airport's share of any airport project. Aeronautics Division loans are low interest, with the rates for loans at one half of federal prime lending rate of the first week of January of the preceding fiscal year for which the loan is provided. Division loans are repaid in equal annual installments over a ten-year period. Loans can be paid in full at any time without incurring additional interest or penalty charges.

The Aeronautics Board will hold its annual loan and grant public meeting in Helena in January and make all award decisions for eligible applications. Learn more about the Aeronautics Division online: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/>



Yellowstone Airport (WYS) in West Yellowstone, Mont.

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# An Oasis on the Frontier

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian

In the days before the automobile and the arrival of the railroads, one of the ways people got around Montana Territory was by stagecoach. There was no shortage of roads in the territory, but they were choked with dust in the summer and clogged with snow in the winter. Spring thaw and rain added another dimension to the already unpleasant experience of riding in a stagecoach. Stagecoach travel was an ordeal for the passengers forced to ride them. The trip from Virginia City to Helena took fourteen hours, depending on the weather, the condition of the roads, and the skill of the stage driver – and whether he was sober or not. The famed Concord stagecoach wasn't the most common conveyance on Montana's roads. Instead, coaches consisted primarily of "mud wagons" that were uncomfortable to ride in and often overloaded. The real bread and butter of the stage companies were federal mail contracts, not passengers. When the railroads arrived in the territory, the stagecoaches faded away and nobody seemed to miss them.

An established road system was important to the prosperity of Montana Territory. When the first territorial legislature convened from December 1864 to February 1865, it had no money to finance roads. Instead, it chartered companies to build and maintain roads, bridges, and ferries – and charge for their use. The rudimentary trail system in the territory dramatically expanded because of the toll system. An enterprising tollkeeper could make a good income by charging tolls. The territorial legislature licensed the Prickly Pear and Virginia City Wagon Road Company to operate a toll road from Virginia City to a point near today's Montana City. Stagecoaches were not exempt from paying their way on the road – the tollkeepers charged coaches five dollars to use the road between the two mining camps, which would be equivalent to about \$85 present day (2021).

The first stage line in Montana Territory was operated by A. J. Oliver and Company. Oliver carried mail and passengers between Salt Lake City and Virginia City beginning in 1863 and expanded his operations north to Helena in 1865. Oliver sold out to Wells Fargo in 1866 because he couldn't compete with the more established express company. The Gilmer & Salisbury Overland Stage Company, which operated in Montana from 1869 to the 1880s, was the most successful of the stage lines in the territory. Stage lines relied on a system of stage stations to keep things rolling along. There were two types of stations: change or swing stations and home stations. Located about every ten to twelve miles, hostlers changed horse teams at the stations. The stages stopped just long enough for the change to be made. Home stations, located every 50 miles, were where teams changed, meals were provided to passengers, and accommodations were offered in case of bad weather or some other unforeseen circumstance. Home stations usually included stables and a blacksmith shop, and many were managed by husband and wife teams.

One such home station still exists on the old road between Virginia City and Helena. The site is privately owned; the location and name of the station will not be revealed here. In 1864, Milo Cortright discovered promising gold, silver, and copper mineral prospects in the Elkhorn Mountains and built a cabin in the creek bottom just east of the mine. The cabin soon became an important stop and community center on the road. Traces of the old road can still be seen north and south of the site and in front of the station. The station, in this case, consisted of a horse barn and other ancillary structures. Fifteen to twenty cabins were once located across a shallow coulee to the south of the station. Indeed, it probably resembled a crude settlement to travelers on the road. The original stage station on the site, however, closely matches a description by Mark Twain in his 1872 book, *Roughing It*. The station consisted of a "hut for an eating-room for passengers. This latter had bunks in it for the station-keeper and a hostler or two. You could rest your elbow on its eaves, and you had to bend in order to get in at the door. In place of a window, there was a square hole about large



*The original stage station built in 1865 as it stands at the site.*

enough for a man to crawl through.... There was no flooring, but the ground was packed hard. There was no stove, but the fireplace served all needful purposes. There were no shelves, no cupboards, no closets."

A Helena reporter wrote in 1867 that the "town" was "passing rapidly back to its primitive condition." In 1873, former stage driver Sam Getts and his wife, Kate, owned and operated the station. They likely built the substantial house that still sits on the property for use as a hotel. Four years later, they sold it to Alex and Nellie Lux. He had operated stations before buying this place. The *Helena Independent* gushed that the couple "understood how a hotel should be kept, and travelers are assured of receiving the most courteous attention." The Lux's sold the property to Helena carpenter Mike O'Connell in 1879. He continued the tradition of fine dining and accommodations for his guests. In 1880, the population of the settlement was fourteen – most were members of O'Connell's family.

The arrival of the Helena, Boulder Valley and Butte Railroad Company in 1887 and the Montana Central Railroad in 1888 spelled doom for the stage line and the station. Both railroads were visible from the site and neither one chose to include it on the rail line. Thereafter, a former miner ran the property as a cattle ranch well into the twentieth century. Indeed, the site is somewhat of a microcosm of the evolution of transportation in Montana. In addition to the stage road, station, and railroad grades, old US Highway 91 and Interstate 15 (I-15) are visible from the site.



*The hotel, believed to be originally constructed as a house by the Getts family still stands at the site. It was built in approximately 1873.*

**MDT Wants Your Comments On New Projects**

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, please visit [www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/planning/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/planning/proposed_proj.pdf), [www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml), or call (800) 714-7296. You can mail comments on proposed projects to MDT Project Analysis Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 or email them to [mdtstip@mt.gov](mailto:mdtstip@mt.gov).

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**Contact Information**

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

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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment. Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit, and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.

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# Transportation Assistance for Montana Communities - 2021

Montana's local governments face numerous challenges in improving and maintaining their transportation infrastructure and services. Transportation needs outpace available funding at all levels. MDT administers many funding and planning programs that help local governments address their local transportation needs. Following are some MDT-administered programs that support local projects:

## ***Planning and Technical Assistance***

**Systems Impact Analysis Process (SIAP)** - MDT's SIAP ensures a coordinated review of major developments and local projects initiated outside of MDT that may significantly and permanently impact the state transportation system. MDT coordinates development reviews with Montana's local governments to ensure their concerns are addressed and provides technical assistance to local governments interested in developing local processes similar to SIAP. For more information, phone 444-9416.

**Multimodal Transportation Plans** - Outside of Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula, there are no federal or state requirements for transportation plans. MDT provides financial and technical support for transportation planning in other Montana communities, including some of our fastest growing cities. These cooperative planning efforts are usually managed by the local planning offices to ensure consistency with other planning efforts. The plans help identify deficiencies, needs, and funding to ensure an efficient, safe, and modern transportation system. For more information, phone 444-9238.

**Travel Demand Forecasting** - MDT develops and maintains state-of-the-art computer models in Montana's larger communities to forecast future travel demand and analyze alternative transportation improvements to accommodate existing and future demand. MDT works with cities, counties, and other government agencies in the development of these models, which help inform decisions about future transportation network needs. For more information, phone 444-9193.

**Corridor Planning Studies** - MDT provides financial and technical support toward the development of prioritized and selected corridor planning studies. The goal of these studies is to better scope projects before moving into the project development process, achieve the lowest level environmental document while minimizing project delivery costs and time, and provide early opportunities for public and resource agency participation. For more information, phone 444-9238.

**Safety Planning** - This MDT program provides technical and financial assistance to local governments for the development of Community Transportation Safety Plans. Through a coordinated process, safety stakeholders and agencies identify the specific transportation safety issues in a community, develop strategies to address those issues, and determine the responsible agency/individual to monitor implementation of each strategy. Participating communities must demonstrate a commitment to implement and monitor progress. For more information, phone 444-7646.

## ***Information & Education***

**Research Programs** - MDT conducts research to discover, develop, and extend knowledge needed to operate, maintain, and improve Montana's multimodal transportation system. Interested parties can propose research topics by March 31st of each year through MDT's annual solicitation process. More information can be found at [mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/solicit.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/solicit.shtml), or by phoning 444-7693.

**State Highway Traffic Safety Programs** - These programs provide funds to eligible applicants to promote the use of occupant restraints and prevent impaired driving. For more information, phone 444-7417 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/safetyprg.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/safetyprg.shtml)

**Bicyclist and Pedestrian** - MDT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator serves as MDT's liaison to internal and external bicycle and pedestrian interests. The coordinator provides input and technical support related to the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and plans. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Program is a clearinghouse for bicycle and pedestrian safety and educational resources. For more information, phone 444-9273.

## ***Data Collection and Management/GIS***

MDT collects and maintains information about Montana's transportation system. Available to government entities and the public, this information includes a comprehensive location inventory of roads in Montana, including basic physical attributes such as length, width, and surface type; traffic volume and classification data; and mapping and GIS services and products, including the official Montana State Highway map. For information, phone 444-6103.

## ***Additional Support***

Most federal-aid funding for projects and programs require non-federal matching funds. Although not required to do so, the state provides matching funds for most infrastructure projects on the state highway system. Additionally, in times of federal program growth, the state has passed the growth in federal program funding on to programs of importance to local governments through the State-level Urban and Secondary Highway Programs.

Programs that benefit local governments are the result of cooperative state and local efforts to distribute limited funding as fairly as possible. MDT continues its commitment to support local transportation planning and projects to ensure a safe and reliable transportation system for Montana communities. For more information, visit MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division website at [mdt.mt.gov/mdt/organization/railtran.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/mdt/organization/railtran.shtml).

## ***Infrastructure and Capital Assistance***

**Fuel Tax** - Counties and cities receive a portion of state fuel tax receipts based on statutory formulas for construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of rural roads and city or town streets and alleys. For more information, phone 444-6103 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/business/fueltax/allocations.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/business/fueltax/allocations.shtml).

**Bridge and Road Safety & Accountability Program** - The 65<sup>th</sup> Montana Legislature passed a fuel tax increase that went into effect on July 1, 2017. A portion of the revenue generated by the increase is allocated to local governments for road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of roads and bridges. Allocations are available March 1<sup>st</sup> each year. For more information, phone 444-9131.

**Surface Transportation Program-Urban** - Federal and state matching funds are allocated to Montana's urban areas (areas with a population greater than 5,000) for improvements to the Urban Highway System. Priorities are identified at the local level through established planning processes that include the public. Funds are primarily used for street reconstruction, rehabilitation, and traffic operation improvements. For more information, phone 444-9238.

**Surface Transportation Program-Secondary** - Federal funding with state and local matching funds is allocated based on a statutory formula for improvements on Montana's Secondary Highway System. Capital construction priorities are identified at the local level and coordinated with MDT. Eligible activities include reconstruction, rehabilitation, and pavement preservation improvements. For more information, phone 444-9194.

**Urban Highway Pavement Preservation** - Federal and state matching funds are provided for cost-effective treatments to Urban Highway System routes. These improvements preserve the system, delay roadway deterioration, and improve roadway condition without adding capacity. Priorities are identified through MDT district and local government consultation and are based on pavement management systems developed and maintained at the local level. For more information, phone 444-7259.

**Transportation Alternatives** - Federal funding with state and local matching funds are provided for transportation alternative projects. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas; lighting and safety-related infrastructure; projects to achieve ADA compliance; and environmental mitigation and wildlife connectivity. Projects are prioritized through a competitive process in accordance with federal eligibilities and requirements under MAP-21, 23 USC 213. For more information, phone 444-6118 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta\\_application.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ta_application.shtml).

**Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** - Federal funds are available with state matching funds for infrastructure projects that improve highway safety. These funds can be utilized for any public road projects such as signing, striping, guardrail installation, slope flattening, and

intersection improvements. Projects are prioritized through a competitive process utilizing a benefit-cost analysis. For more information, phone 444-9420 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/forms/hsip\\_application.pdf](http://mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/forms/hsip_application.pdf)

**Off-System Bridge Program** - Federal funding with State and Local matching funds are allocated for replacement and repair of locally maintained bridges. Construction priorities are identified at the local level and coordinated with MDT. Eligible activities include reconstruction and rehabilitation. For more information, phone 444-6260.

**Montana Air and Congestion Initiative (MACI)** - Federal funding with state and local matching funds through this unique MDT program supports strategies to proactively address air quality issues related to carbon monoxide and particulate matter. Projects in eligible air quality nonattainment or at-risk areas are prioritized and selected based on air quality benefits. Eligible projects include the purchase of street sweepers and flush trucks necessary to reduce particulate matter and the funding of intersection channelization and signal synchronization projects to reduce carbon monoxide emissions. For more information, phone 444-9238.

**EMS Grant Program** - State funds are available through a competitive process to volunteer emergency medical providers for acquiring or leasing ambulances or emergency response vehicles, training, communication equipment, and medical care equipment. For more information, phone 444-0856 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/business/grants\\_ems.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_ems.shtml).

**Montana Essential Freight Rail Loan Program** - MDT administers a state program that provides loans for railroad improvements including construction, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of rail lines and related facilities. Eligible parties include railroad owners and operators and certain port authorities. For more information, phone 444-9193.

**Transit** - Federal funding programs administered by MDT support community transit systems with operating, capital, and planning. A locally developed coordination plan is required and must include public services as well as services for the disabled and elderly. Federal Health and Human Services funds may be used to match federal Transit funds. For more information, phone 444-6120 or visit [mdt.mt.gov/business/grants\\_transit.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_transit.shtml).

**City Park Rest Areas** - State funds are provided to assist maintenance activities in communities with existing City Park Rest Area facilities. Proposals for assistance must directly benefit the traveling public. Expenditures must be reviewed and approved by MDT to be eligible for local government reimbursement. For more information, phone 444-7653.

**Ferry Boat Program** - Federal funds are available for Chouteau and Blaine Counties with some involvement with Fergus County for improvements to the ferries and facilities. For more information, phone 444-9194.