

Summer 2024

Built by Teamwork: The Stories Behind the MT 41 Bridge Reopening

As told by MDT's Structures and Innovations Engineer, Lenci Kappes, written by Newsline Editor, Lauren Eichenfels

In the world of transportation infrastructure, challenges – like a bridge closure – can seem daunting, overwhelming, and even a little discouraging. But sometimes, those challenges present opportunities, and when all is said and done, what started as a looming mountain emerges on the other side as a positive example of the power of teamwork and community.

For those who read the news coverage of the April closure and rapid reopening of the Montana Highway 41 (MT 41) bridge crossing the Beaverhead River near the small town of Twin Bridges, let's just say you're getting some of the facts but missing the true story behind what occurred in less than a week. That story holds many, many examples of the humans and connections that made the rapid repair and reopening of this structure possible.

Continued on page 6...



Pictured above: Team MDT working at the MT 41 bridge site near Twin Bridges, Mont. on Friday, April 12, 2024.

New MDT Employee Memorial Unveiled

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) recognizes its employees for their dedication to maintaining Montana's transportation system. We have now taken it one step further: to recognize those employees who tragically lost their lives while on the job.

The MDT Employee Memorial is an employee-driven initiative that focuses on remembering our coworkers-turned-family who are no longer with us. The memorial committee is comprised of staff from across the agency, who work towards the shared goal of honoring lost employees and their families. MDT Facilities Bureau combined designs from three consultants and constructed the memorial, along with help from MDT Maintenance and the Sign Shop. It represents elements of MDT's transportation infrastructure and Montana's geography, showcasing Helena's "Sleeping Giant" in the background.

On Tuesday, April 16, 2024, as part of National Work Zone Awareness Week (NWZAW), Governor Greg Gianforte and Melissa Dyekman, widow of late MDT employee Jeff Dyekman, joined Team MDT to dedicate this memorial. The MDT Employee Memorial holds personal significance to the families of those it recognizes, and is a reminder to drive safely, especially when passing through work zones.

The memorial is in the foyer of MDT Headquarters in Helena. For more information, please visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/memorial.aspx>.

Pictured at right: Melissa Dyekman speaks at the memorial dedication ceremony.



Federal Surface Transportation Program Status

The Federal Aid Highway Program (FAHP), administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), encompasses most of the federal programs providing federal highway funds to the states. This program is primarily funded from revenues collected by the United States Treasury from certain federal taxes on gasoline, tire sales, and other items, which are deposited into the federal Highway Trust Fund. Most of these federal funds are distributed to state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) based on formulas outlined in federal law. These formula funds allow states to know annual federal funding levels so project planning can take place. In addition to formula funds, federal funds are available through a wide range of competitive grant programs. These competitive grant programs have different requirements, timeframes, and target audiences. State DOTs, local governments, and tribes apply for these competitive grants in hopes of receiving a grant award. Unlike formula funds, funding from a competitive grant award is specific to the project that was listed in the grant application and may not be used for other projects or purposes. Additionally, the FAHP is a reimbursement program, meaning states must pay for construction costs then request reimbursement for the federal share from FHWA.



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SAVE THE DATES OCTOBER 16 & 17

2024 Annual Transportation Safety Meeting

Delta Colonial Hotel
2301 Colonial Drive, Helena, Montana

This event brings together federal, state, tribal, and local safety partners to share implementation of Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) emphasis areas, assess progress in reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries, and explore new opportunities to enhance traffic safety awareness.

Emphasis Areas:

- Roadway Departures & Intersection-Related Crashes
- Impaired Driving Crashes
- Unrestrained Vehicle Occupants
- Emergency Response Post-Crash Care

The agenda is under development and will be posted at www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp-meetings.shtml.

For additional information, please contact Pam Langve-Davis at 406-444-7646 or plangvedavis@mt.gov.

New Public Information Officer (PIO)

Charity Burns recently joined the Director's Office as the Public Information Officer (PIO) for MDT. She was first hired at the department in this role in December 2004, then moved to MDT's Rail, Transit and Planning Division in 2010 as a Transportation Planner and Division Information Officer. In 2020, she moved to the Highways and Engineering Division's Engineering Operation Bureau to be a project manager.

Prior to coming to MDT, Charity was the Public Relations Manager for AAA MountainWest, covering the territory of Montana, Alaska, and Wyoming.

Charity has a Bachelor's of Science degree in business with a marketing emphasis from Montana State University – Bozeman.

Contact Charity at 406-444-6281 or chburns@mt.gov.



Charity Burns, MDT PIO

New State Highway Traffic Safety Section Supervisor

Kevin Dusko has been with the Montana Department of Transportation for 11 years, and was recently hired as the State Highway Traffic Safety Section Supervisor. This section administers funding received from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and is intended to reduce highway fatalities and serious injuries in Montana. It also administers state funding for emergency medical service (EMS) providers to purchase ambulances, emergency response vehicles, or equipment for training to increase the ability for EMS programs to provide medical care to patients.

Prior to coming to MDT, Kevin was a grant manager with the Montana Board of Crime Control. Early in his career, Kevin spent over 10 years providing direct services within the Juvenile Correctional arena. He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and psychology.

Fun Fact: Outside of his work for MDT, Kevin loves to camp, hike and fish. His son Sam (pictured above with Kevin) typically outshines him in fishing skills.

Contact Kevin at 406-444-7411 or kedusko@mt.gov.



Kevin Dusko, MDT State Highway Traffic Safety Section Supervisor

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Montana Department of Transportation

MDT's Barb Sheridan Honored with Transit Excellence Award

Barb Sheridan, MDT Transit Planner, was recently awarded the prestigious Orval Meyer Award for Transit Excellence. This is the highest honor from the Montana Transit Association (MTA), and "...recognizes a person who gives of himself or herself for the improvement and development of transit in Montana in the same spirit as longtime MTA member Orval Meyer." Nominations for the award are provided by MTA membership and Montana's statewide transit community. MTA seeks to honor those who meet traits demonstrated by Orval Meyer, including honesty, integrity, exceptional work ethic, compassion, customer service, and humility.

Barb was awarded the Orval Meyer Award in recognition of her important role in advancing Montana's transportation sector for decades. During her career, she has touched many areas of transit service and operations. She has developed countless relationships and partnerships across MDT and the statewide transit community. Her team members describe her as a "fearless advocate" when working with and assisting transit service providers, their riders and communities across the state.

Congratulations to Barb for this well-deserved honor!



Barb Sheridan, MDT Transit Planner, pictured holding her MTA Orval Meyer Award.

MDT's Patricia Burke Honored with Prismatic Award

Patricia Burke, MDT's Traffic Safety Engineering Supervisor, was recently awarded the prestigious Prismatic Legacy Award for her work on behalf of AASHTOWare, a division of the

national American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO). AASHTOWare offers a variety of transportation software products that are available to state departments of transportation (DOTs) across the country through a collaborative business model. The AASHTOWare Prismatic Legacy Award serves to "recognize and honor the valuable role state DOT volunteers play in its software development work."

Patricia received the award for her contributions and efforts "...as a leader in fostering a collaborative environment during the establishment of the AASHTOWare Safety User Experience Committee." She spent several years serving in committee leadership roles, and also helped "...develop innovative user permissions and roles features to support critical cyber security needs of state DOTs."

Congratulations to Patricia for this well-deserved honor! Read more about the award nomination in the AASHTO Journal: <https://aashtojournal.transportation.org/mdts-burke-wins-aashtoware-prismatic-award/>.



MDT's Col. Russ Christoferson Leading CVSA in 2024

In October 2023, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) announced new leadership, which included Colonel Russ Christoferson of MDT's Motor Carrier Services (MCS) Division. Col. Christoferson is currently leading CVSA as President, and his term will expire in 2027.

Col. Christoferson has been a part of Team MDT since January 7, 1996, serving and protecting the traveling public as part of MDT's MCS Enforcement.

The CVSA President's role has never been held by a Montana.n The responsibility demonstrates a tremendous dedication to leading the Alliance forward, uniting teamwork across international jurisdictions and fostering collaboration among the industry. Ultimately, the benefactor and bottom line is to improve highway safety in a consistent and proactive method.

Congratulations to Col. Christoferson on this prestigious leadership role! Learn more about CVSA and its current leadership here: <https://www.cvsa.org/about-cvsa/current-leadership/>.



Col. Russ Christoferson, CVSA President

Bicycling the Big Sky Map Updated for 2024



Planning a bicycle trip in Montana? MDT's *Bicycling the Big Sky* pocket map has been updated for 2024 and is now available for distribution. This helpful resource is a companion to the Official State Highway Map and includes highway information for bicyclists, state laws and regulations pertaining to bicyclists and safety tips for sharing the road.

Additional bicycle and pedestrian safety resource materials are available upon request and include pamphlets on Montana bicycle and pedestrian laws, Share the Road bumper stickers, Walk and Ride Safe brochures for parents and children, helmet fitting information, the A to Z by

Bike booklet, and traffic safety coloring books. You can request print copies of the map and other resources from MDT by email at mdtbikeped@mt.gov.

To view an electronic copy of the *Bicycling the Big Sky* Map and additional bicycle and pedestrian program information, scan the QR Code to the right with your mobile device or visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/>.

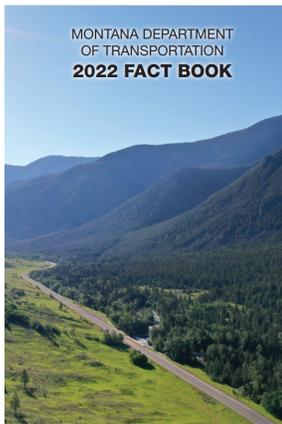


Celebrating Good Roads in Montana

There are over 73,000* miles of roads open to public travel in our state (including nearly 12,916 miles of MDT routes) that accommodate over 13 billion annual vehicle miles traveled (AVMT). Simply put, roads and roadways (including bridges) keep our great state connected and moving forward! The third Tuesday in June marks Good Roads Day, designated by the Montana Legislature in 1947, whereby the people of the state are asked to contribute toward the improvement and safety of public highways (MCA 60-1-104). For MDT, building "good roads" takes time and means a continuous planning process that is underway long before ground is ever broken on a project. It can take eight years to complete a road project, but long-range planning starts anywhere from 1 to 20 years prior to the project start date.

Join MDT in celebrating and share what #GoodRoads mean to you! **See the footer on page 2 of this issue for information on how to connect with MDT on our social media channels.**

*Find more facts about funding and Montana's roads in MDT's Fact Book: <https://mdt.mt.gov/fs/factbook/>.



MDT Aeronautics Division's Role in Aircraft Emergencies

In 2009, the satellites that monitored the 121.5 MHz frequency were decommissioned. There is currently no satellite-based system in place that will automatically trigger a search and rescue (SAR) if one of these older type beacons is activated. Newer distress beacons like a 406 MHz Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELTs) are monitored by a global network of satellites offering automatic detection by the Airforce Rescue Command Center.

The improvement in speed and accuracy in locating one of the newer 406 MHz ELTs as compared to the older 121.5 MHz is dramatic. Once detected, the older 121.5 beacons could only provide positional accuracy within a 12 to 15 Nautical Mile (NM) radius. That creates a search grid of 782 square miles. Compare that with a 406 MHz ELT which has a satellite-based accuracy of a one to three NM radius. This offers a significant advantage over the older ELT technology by giving search and rescue teams only 17 square miles to search. Since 406 MHz ELT's use Global Positioning System (GPS) to pinpoint location, search and rescue crews can proceed directly to the site of the rescue very quickly, cutting the average rescue time for the newer 406 MHz ELTs to less than 5 hours. The average time to locate a 121.5 beacon is over 40 hours.

As of February 2019, it is illegal to manufacture, install or repair a 121.5 ELT beacon. New or replacement ELTs must be 406 MHz beacons. It is important to properly register your 406 MHz beacon with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Registration number, name and contact information are required. This allows SAR teams to try to contact you in the event your beacon is accidentally activated, or if you've been involved in an incident and require assistance. You must renew your beacon registration every 2 years. It is also important to update your account if you sell, transfer, or purchase an aircraft that has a 406 MHz beacon installed.

The MDT Aeronautics Division is responsible for the search for missing or overdue aircraft, and for ELT transmissions in the state. The MDT Aeronautics Division has search aircraft equipped with technology to locate emergency locator transmitters. They also train to locate missing aircraft with forensics, grid searches, and other techniques for aircraft that do not have an active distress signal broadcasting from an accident site. County Sheriff Departments are responsible for missing persons and ground search operations in Montana.

The MDT Aeronautics Division SAR program accomplishes the requirements of the air search operations by utilizing the department's pilots and aircraft, as well as volunteer pilots and their aircraft. The MDT Aeronautics Division is always available 24 hours a day to respond to aircraft related emergencies and does so on average 30 times per year.

TranPlanMT 2023 Biennial Surveys: Reports Available Online

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 2023 survey reports are available online (along with historical reports from past surveys) at <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan/>.

Follow the link under "Surveys" and navigate to the bottom of the web page to select the 2023 survey report (or the biennium survey reports you'd like to view).



Planning a visit to the Beartooth Highway this summer? Check MDT's 511 Travel Info resources and Know Before You Go! <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>

(Photo taken during last year's Beartooth Highway clearing.)

Commit to Safety in the “Cone Zone”

Warmer weather, clear roads, orange cones, and barrels – it’s construction season in Montana. Reduced speeds, detours, and delays can all wear on a driver’s patience. As you travel through these “cone zones,” please remember to manage your speed, space, and stress – there are loved ones working here! MDT work zone staff and construction crews work hard to keep Montana’s roads safe. Their families and friends want them to come home.

Work zone safety isn’t just to protect workers, though. In 2023, there were 222 work zone crashes reported, and 90 occurred with a worker present (based on preliminary data). Each year, the majority of national work zone crash fatalities are motorists and their passengers. So plan ahead, slow down, and stay alert! Your loved ones also want you home.

Safer Driving in Work Zones

Remember the Three S’s of work zone safety: speed, space and stress.

1. MANAGE YOUR SPEED

Slow down when approaching all work zones. Follow posted speed limits, especially within construction zones, and adjust your speed for weather conditions. Don’t resume normal speed until you see roadway signs indicating it’s safe to do so.

2. MANAGE YOUR SPACE

Leave adequate braking room between your vehicle and the one ahead of you, don’t pass on the shoulder, and don’t drive across the median. Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment, and workers, and give yourself an out. When stopped in traffic, leave a safety zone between you and the vehicle in front of you, and don’t try to force tailgaters to back off by slamming on your brakes.

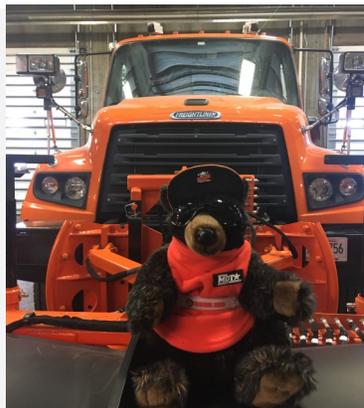
3. MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Keep your cool, don’t rush, and pay attention. Avoid cell phone or radio distractions, as well as distractions from other stopped vehicles or construction activity. Expect delays and use the Traveler Information Map to learn about construction, leave a bit earlier, or try an alternate route.

Visit www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/workzones.shtml to learn more about work zone safety in Montana.

JD the Beartooth Highway Bear says “Slow Down in the Cone Zone!”

You may recognize this furry member of MDT’s Beartooth Highway clearing crew from his appearances during snow clearing that takes place on this scenic route each spring. But you may not know that JD was named in honor of one of MDT’s own—Jeff Dyekman—who was tragically lost in a work zone crash in Billings in 2018.



MDT remains committed to the goal of Vision Zero—zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana’s roadways. As a department, we believe no death on our roads is acceptable, and everyone deserves to return home safely to their loved ones.

So as you travel through one of the many work zones around Montana this summer, remember JD and slow down, stay alert, and stay safe. The people you see at work wearing orange are bringing you better roads ahead, and they deserve to return home safely to their family and friends.

Montana Awarded Funds for Teen Driver Training in Tribal Communities

Montana’s Safe On All Roads (SOAR) Program is a tribal traffic safety program MDT implemented in 2006. Through this program, each Tribal Community employs their own coordinator with funding through MDT’s highway traffic safety program to educate community members on traffic safety issues.



Young drivers are the most dangerous age group on the road due to inexperience and immaturity, which puts everyone at risk. Over the last five years, Montana drivers under 21 have represented 11% of all traffic fatalities (per Fatality Analysis Reporting System data), while representing only 6% of the licensed drivers in the state (according to MVD data).

In an effort to reduce these statistics, MDT applied for and received additional funds through the Governor’s Highway Safety Administration (GHSA) and Ford Motor Company to support tribal teen traffic safety efforts. This funding was awarded specifically to improve drivers’ education programs in Tribal communities. MDT, in collaboration with Montana’s Office of Public Instruction (OPI), is launching a program to enhance driver education for Tribal youth. The program includes hands-on driver training workshops through OPI’s Montana Drive and focuses on Native American teens, many of whom are unable to access formal instruction.

MDT will also use the grant funds to provide five scholarships of \$5,000 each to help teachers in Native American communities become driver education instructors. This will help address a shortage of driving instructors in Tribal areas and ensure the long-term viability of the program.

If you have questions about the SOAR program or would like to assist with this project, contact Sheila Cozzie at 406-444-7301 or scozzie@mt.gov.



Melissa Dyekman, widow of the late MDT employee Jeff Dyekman, and her children in front of the employee memorial at MDT Headquarters on April 16, 2024.

Built by Teamwork (cont.)

When Team MDT gathered for a meeting on Tuesday, April 9, following the closure of the MT 41 bridge the night before, the gravity of the situation was palpable. Everyone participating understood the impact of the closure on the rural communities relying on that bridge for safe passage over the Beaverhead River,

as well as the impact on commercial traffic utilizing the state route. Despite the pressure, everyone – from leadership to staff – quickly began working together on potential solutions for the repair and reopening of the structure. While replacement options were estimated to be at least 2 years out, the group continued brainstorming and turned to a past situation with a bridge near Chinook as inspiration for alternative options for the closed MT 41 bridge.

From this meeting on, it truly became an example of “many hands make light work.” From leadership to the Bridge Bureau’s engineers, everyone in the room wanted to do whatever they could to find a solution for the closure quickly. MDT’s Maintenance Division Administrator (Jon Swartz) gave full support to the effort by providing priority access to the Maintenance Shop for fabrication and related needs.

MDT’s Bridge Bureau (Lenci Kappes, Dave Crumley) designed a repair plan for the bridge, and staff spanning MDT’s Engineering Division, Maintenance Division, and Butte District went to work to gather the needed materials before traveling to the site. MDT construction and contracting staff (Dave Gates the Construction Engineer; Brandon Graff and Clancy Williams in Alternative Contracting) assisted the Bridge Bureau in locating a contractor with the equipment needed for the repairs. One came through with a lead on a barge for the repair, saying it was unused sitting in a field currently, and that they could guarantee it would “float until it sinks.”

On Wednesday, April 10, the Maintenance Shop (Doug Robbins, Walt Kerttula and the fabrication/stock crew) prioritized the fabrication of the steel plates as promised, ordering materials and completing the fabrication just two days after the initial meeting. By Thursday, April 11, the plates were ready to pick up from the shop in Helena. “They said they’d be ready early Thursday morning, so I was going to be there on time with donuts as a thank-you,” remembers Kappes with a chuckle. “I ran into Jon Swartz while I was there, and I remember there was this powerful, ‘we can do this’ attitude. It was truly inspiring.”

Meanwhile, MDT’s Butte Maintenance (Josh Ritchie, Maintenance Superintendent, and his crew) picked up the “loaner” barge from where it was parked in the contractor’s yard and fabricated a ladder for the watercraft to meet safety needs. As the local “hands on the project”, the Butte



Pictured above: The pre-repair condition of the bridge’s concrete cap shows the loss of support under the girder bearings.

Maintenance crew also handled much of the prep work – including gathering essential equipment such as generators, air compressors, tools, etc.

MDT’s Bridge engineers (Amanda Jackson) worked on a plan for the placement of the crane on the MT 41 bridge site for the barge launch, and (Jarrod Plummer) sourced the epoxy needed for the repairs. Due to the quantity of epoxy needed and the short turnaround time, Plummer traveled to

Missoula to make an additional purchase of epoxy and then transported the materials to the bridge site. “It turns out, we bought all of the specialized epoxy in Montana,” said Kappes with a laugh. He added, “It was important we didn’t run out mid-repair.”

“I wish I could speak to all the stories of everyone involved in this undertaking,” said Kappes. “It’s amazing the ownership and involvement that so many staff across our department likely felt with this repair. To think that people went home to their families after work that week, feeling pride in their hands-on impact (fabricating and drilling the steel plates, drilling anchor holes in the pier, running the John boat, mixing concrete, etc.) in completing this project... that’s powerful. Every person involved made it possible for us to restore that bridge to safe service!”

By Thursday afternoon, MDT was on-site with staff and equipment hard at work on the designed repair plan. As is the tendency with things like this, an additional opportunity came to light when MDT received word of

pressure on the bridge site from the dam upstream. The dam needed to be released, which would elevate the water quickly and may have stopped the repair work on the bridge. The release was originally planned for Thursday evening, but thanks to MDT’s Chief Engineer (Dustin Rouse) and Preconstruction Engineer (Ryan Dahlke) quickly communicating with the appropriate local contacts, they were able to buy an additional day for the MDT site crew to complete the bridge repairs. The crew kept working on the bridge repairs well into the dark hours Friday evening, continuing to take shifts for needed breaks and rest. District staff continued to shuttle supplies as needed until the repairs were completed late Friday evening.



Pictured above: Setting the barge in the Beaverhead River.



Pictured above: Dave Crumley setting up a bridge jack.



Pictured above: Steel plates and hardware ready for pickup at the Maintenance Shop.

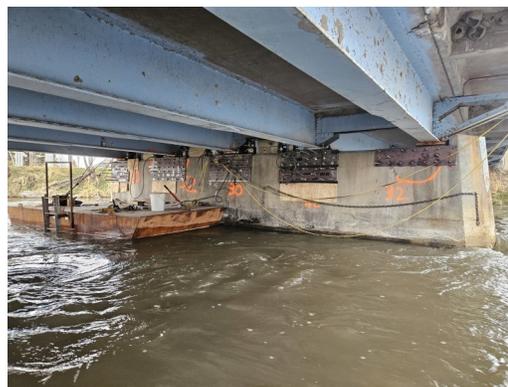
Fun Fact

The MT 41 bridge was barricaded at 4:30 p.m. MST on Monday, April 8, and the repair project was totally complete at 8:30 p.m. MST on Friday, April 12. That equates to **100 hours** from bridge closure to finished repairs. The reopening was delayed until Saturday morning for safety reasons (i.e., fatigued crews and avoiding working in the dark Friday night).

Moments of comradery were plentiful among those working at the bridge site. From those transporting needed supplies and equipment to the bridge team, there was an atmosphere of positivity and hard work. The members of Team MDT present at the site, led by Dave Crumley, shared the courage and support needed to make this effort a success – or, as Kappes calls it, the “secret ingredient” in similar bridge repair projects. He fondly remembers the arrival of Meghan Coon, a fellow Bridge Designer for MDT, and her warm welcome from the Butte Maintenance Area crews. “There’s my girl!” one called as she arrived at the site. “Apparently, the day before while on-site, she [Meghan] had promised MDT stickers for their hard hats which she did end up mailing a few weeks later,” Kappes chuckled. “It was a small moment that demonstrated how connected we [Team MDT] are when it comes to our shared passion for serving the state we love.” Coon and Plummer would then go on to mix and deliver the HD50 concrete to finalize the beam seat repairs after the steel plates were installed.



Pictured above: Example of repair progress at the end of the first night (Thursday) - some steel plates have been anchored and epoxied on the pier.

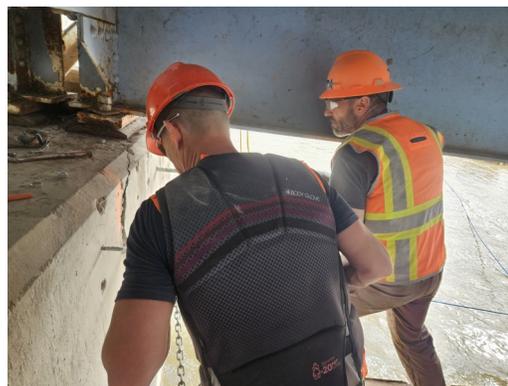


Pictured above: Bridge repairs near completion on Friday, with some beam sets finished and some waiting for epoxy to dry before finishing.

When the sun rose on Saturday, April 13, the Butte Maintenance Area crews arrived at the site to complete needed clean-up activities before reopening the repaired bridge to the public later that morning.

“People came from all over,” remembers Kappes. “I’m from Kalispell, we had people from Helena, from the Butte area... Staff were involved from all over the state, coming together to make this effort possible.”

In less than a week, Team MDT closed and then reopened the MT 41 bridge to the traveling public. To many, it may have seemed a simple repair project. But, to the many hands that impacted or directly touched this project, it was so much more. With the bridge reopened, the repair project stands as an example of what



Pictured above: Lenci Kappes (right) running a hammer drill next to Ryan Dahlke (left) on Friday.

MDT can do as a unified, courageous team – particularly when it comes to the next project of this type. As Kappes put it, “It seems odd to find something so positive in a situation that isn’t positive. Because of this closure and the way we handled the repairs, this will set the example for the next bridge... because there will be a next one, unfortunately.”



Pictured above: The completed bridge repairs on Saturday after cleanup of the site was complete.

He added “It tears our hearts out to see our Montana communities impacted by bridge closures like this. Being **B.U.I.L.D.E.R.S.** is more than just our motto at MDT. It’s something we carry in our hearts every day we’re on the job. We are always ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work when it comes to the safety and accessibility of our statewide communities.”

Without the trust and empowerment provided by MDT’s leadership and the incredible teamwork across multiple areas and districts, the MT 41 bridge repair project would not have been as successful, nor would it have been completed as quickly. “If we hadn’t tried, the bridge would have remained closed until the originally anticipated August date, or even indefinitely,” said Kappes. “We have to be willing to explore options, trying things when and where possible.” He notes that while this repair approach worked for MT 41 and a Chinook bridge in the past, there are (and will continue to be) some bridges where this unfortunately won’t be the solution. “We’ll keep trying though – that’s the important thing!”

Not all bridge repairs make the news or land on the public radar – and that’s a good thing! While Twin Bridges and Chinook are notable examples of larger-scale repairs, many bridges with less significant repair needs are completed regularly as part of MDT’s statewide bridge inspections and maintenance. There are about 2,400* state-owned bridges across Montana that communities like Twin Bridges rely on for safe passage and access. Thanks to the efforts of Dave Crumley, Jarrod Plummer, and other MDT Maintenance staff, these repairs happen on bridges in communities across the state every day, safeguarding our statewide transportation infrastructure and helping to ensure Montana keeps moving safely, efficiently and effectively.

Kudos to the members of Team MDT that made this incredible project a success, including:

- ◆ **Leadership:** Dustin Rouse, Jon Swartz, Ryan Dahlke, Andy Cullison
- ◆ **Construction/Barge Inspectors:** Dave Gates, Brandon Graff, Clancy Williams
- ◆ **Bridge:** Dave Crumley, Lenci Kappes, Amanda Jackson, Jarrod Plummer, Meghan Coon, Tyler Steffan, Trevin Burkhardtmeier
- ◆ **Maintenance Shop in Helena:** Walt Kerttula, Doug Robbins, Jeremy Ackerman, Brandon Dearing, Curtis Madsen, Cole Martin, Karl Thalmann
- ◆ **Butte Maintenance Area Crews:** Josh Ritchie, Jim Pesanti, Brandon Smith, Eric Antikainen, Colton Morris, Ricardo Johnson, Wade Pittman, Harry Poppe, Dale Peterson, Jed Bleaker, Doug Kiewat

...and to the **many** others who touched this bridge repair and continue to work on other projects across Montana, helping ensure the safety of our statewide communities and the traveling public. ■

*Figure taken from MDT Fact Book: <https://mdt.mt.gov/fs/factbook/>.

100 Deadliest Days of Summer: Stay Safe in Your Travels!



Montanans are ready to get out and travel our great state! As residents and visitors head out on the roadways to explore Montana, MDT is urging travelers to remember the serious nature of driving and join the commitment to Vision Zero – zero deaths and zero serious injuries on our roadways.

Memorial Day to Labor Day is known as the “100 Deadliest Days of Summer” due to an increase in roadway fatalities and serious injuries nationwide. At other times of the year, the nation often travels less – either by choice or limiting factors such as season or weather conditions. Travelers tend to stay closer to home and use increased caution while driving. However, summer months bring clear roadways and better weather, lowering drivers’ guards.

Montana has one of the highest highway fatality rates per capita in the nation, and unfortunately, 2024 has not been optimal with a preliminary trend of increasing fatalities. As of June 3, 2024, 65 fatalities have occurred on Montana roads compared to 59 at this same time in 2023. Contributing factors of speed, not wearing a seat belt and impaired driving continue to contribute to lives lost on our roadways. Whether traveling across town or across the state, Montanans need to do their part and commit to safety.

While higher speeds and traffic volumes can contribute to the severity of highway crashes, drivers need to remember that crashes – including severe and fatal crashes – don’t just happen on the highway. When traveling in town, on unpaved roads, as well as on the highway, all drivers, riders, bicyclists and pedestrians must take care to be safe. Drivers should always:

- Follow posted speed limits and keep in mind changing road conditions.
- Be rested and give full attention to driving.
- Keep their vehicle in safe running condition.
- Scan their travel area for safety hazards such as wildlife and debris. Expect the unexpected.
- Buckle up and drive sober.
- Share the road. Watch for motorcyclists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Each of us has at least one reason to reach our destination safely! The impact of losing just one person to a preventable motor vehicle crash is devastating for family, friends, and communities. If we can each remember that we have a reason to buckle up, watch our speed, arrange a sober ride, and drive distraction-free, arriving safely can be achieved for all travelers. Check out the Engage website to learn more about MDT’s traffic safety campaign efforts: <https://www.engage-mt.org/>.

MDT is committed to safety on Montana’s roadways. To learn more about Vision Zero, contact Kevin Dusko at 406-444-7411 or kedusko@mt.gov.



MDT and FCCLA Traffic Safety Partnership

For the past 8 years, MDT has partnered with the Montana Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) to promote teen traffic safety. This is a peer-to-peer project that gives teens the opportunity to educate their peers on traffic safety issues facing their communities. FCCLA is an organization for students in Family and Consumer Sciences education through grade 12. There are 65 Chapters across Montana.

Teen drivers represent approximately 10% of all fatalities and 22% of Montana’s total serious injuries. Yet, teens only account for approximately 6.7% of the state’s population. MDT has made this issue a priority.

During the 2023/2024 school year, MDT awarded approximately \$12,500 to seven FCCLA chapters across the state to create their own local teen traffic safety campaign. These campaigns ranged from school assemblies on traffic safety issues, to billboard development, newspaper and radio ads, and YouTube videos. As in past year, prizes were given to the top three projects and were awarded as follows:

- 1st Place: \$2,500 grant to Three Forks FCCLA
- 2nd Place: \$1,500 grant to Beaverhead FCCLA
- 3rd Place: \$1,000 grant to Arlee FCCLA

Winners were announced during the Montana FCCLA Statewide Leadership Conference held in Bozeman on March 14, 2024.

MDT is excited to continue this partnership for the 2024/2025 year, and applauds these teens and their efforts to educate their peers on local traffic safety issues. For more information, contact Sheila Cozzie at 406-444-7301 or scozzie@mt.gov.

Beaverhead FCCLA students pictured with their 2nd place traffic safety campaign.



Share the Road with Motorcycles this Summer

Montana’s scenic views invite motorcyclists to hit the open road when warmer weather arrives. Safe driving and motorcycle riding behaviors include observing the speed limit, staying alert for other drivers and driving sober. Safe driving can mean the difference between a memorable summer and the tragedy of life lost on our roads. To kick off the summer travel season, MDT successfully carried out a behavioral safety campaign in May in recognition of Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month.

Motorcyclists remain an at-risk group for crashes and fatalities in Montana. “Motorcycles are some of the most vulnerable vehicles on the road,” said Casey Redder, Director of Montana Motorcycle Rider Safety (MMRS). “It is very important for drivers to remember that a motorcycle has all the rights of the road as any other motorist.”

Preliminary numbers for 2022 indicate there were 37 motorcycle fatalities in Montana, representing over 17% of the total fatalities. 28 of the 37 total fatalities, or 75%, were not wearing helmets. In the last 10 years, there has been an 11% increase in motorcycle fatalities.

In addition to making Montana’s drivers more aware of motorcycles, this year’s campaign also targeted motorcycle riders; including the riskiest rider, those over the age of 45. Almost 63% of all motorcycle fatalities are aged 45 or over, making this a priority traffic safety issue in Montana.

For more information on MDT’s Motorcycle Traffic Safety Program, contact Sheila Cozzie at 406-444-7301 or scozzie@mt.gov.

Montana Traffic Safety Dates

⇒ **May 1, 2024 - September 30, 2024**

National Heatstroke Prevention Awareness

⇒ **May 13, 2024 - June 2, 2024***

Click It or Ticket Law Enforcement Seat Belt Mobilization (2024 STEP)

⇒ **July 1, 2024 - July 7, 2024***

4th of July Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Law Enforcement Impaired Driving Mobilization (2024 STEP)

⇒ **August 14, 2024 - September 2, 2024***

Labor Day Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Law Enforcement Impaired Driving Mobilization (2024 STEP)

Note: There are approximately 30 STEP participating Law Enforcement agencies across the state that conduct intensive enforcement of specific traffic safety laws with extensive communication, education, and outreach informing the public about the enforcement activity. For more information, contact Spencer Harris, MDT Law Enforcement Liaison, at 406-444-0856 or sharris@mt.gov.

⇒ **September 15-21, 2024**

Child Passenger Safety Week (National Seat Check Saturday is September 21, 2024)

⇒ **September 23-29, 2024**

Rail Safety Week (Operation Lifesaver)

⇒ **October 1-31, 2024**

National Pedestrian Safety Month

***Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) Mobilization Periods**

Stay Safe and Fit While Walking and Bicycling This Summer

There's nothing like stepping outside after a long winter and taking in the fresh Montana air! Walking or biking to run errands or commute is a fantastic way to enjoy the warmer weather and get some exercise. As you do, remember MDT's Vision Zero goal: Let's all commit to safety and courtesy on Montana's roads, whether we're driving, biking, or walking.

Here are some key safety tips from MDT to keep in mind:

Be Visible: If you're walking or biking, wear bright or reflective clothing so drivers can see you. Pedestrians and cyclists are smaller than vehicles and can be overlooked.

Be Alert: Pay attention to your surroundings, especially at intersections. Avoid using distractions like cell phones or headphones when you're on the move. They reduce your awareness and increase risk.

Be Considerate: Drivers, please leave a minimum of 3 feet of space when passing bicyclists (more is encouraged and appreciated for safety). Pedestrians have the right-of-way at crosswalks (marked or unmarked) at intersections. When turning, watch for cyclists and pedestrians who might be crossing. Respect each other's space and rights to keep everyone safe.

MDT wants to be a resource for you! If you are planning a bicycle or pedestrian focused event this summer (bike rodeos, health fairs, bicycling or running races, and other events), reach out to us at MDTBikePed@mt.gov. We would love to provide safety signage or materials for events!



Bicycling or walking are great active options for summer travel! Stay safe while out and about with tips and resources from MDT.

MDT Announces EMS Grant Opportunity, Applications Due June 30, 2024

The state fiscal year (SFY) 2025 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) grant opportunity opened on May 1, 2024, and the deadline for applications is June 30, 2024. The grant is used to enhance traffic safety in Montana by providing grant funds to mostly volunteer, Medicare-level billing providers for emergency response vehicles, ambulances, medical care equipment, communications equipment, and training. The grant provides approximately \$1 million annually, and to-date (since the beginning of the grant program in 2010), 206 individual awards have been made. Grant recipients are required to provide a 10% match for any grant funds received.

Online Application: Applications will only be accepted through the Montana Grants and Loan Web grants system at <https://funding.mt.gov/index.do>. Applicants will need to register and submit applications through the web-based system. For more information on eligibility and grant details, please visit MDT's website: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants-ems.aspx>.

For more information, contact Spencer Harris at 406-444-0856 or sharris@mt.gov.

Pictured below are examples of vehicles and equipment MDT EMS grant recipients were able to purchase with awarded funds to support their communities.



Research Projects Completed in 2023

MDT actively manages about 12 to 15 individual research projects at any given time, and the department adds and completes about three to five projects per year. Individual research projects are those that MDT has identified as questions or issues to solve needs specific to Montana. In 2023, we saw the following three research projects come to completion. An overview of each project is below, along with a link to the respective research webpage for more information.



Effectiveness of Highway Safety Public Education at Montana Motor Vehicle Registration Stations by Streaming a Variety of Safety Content: This project looked at the impacts of safety videos on viewers. The videos were shown to viewers at selected Division of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices. Learn more about this project:

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/safety/safetyvideos.aspx>



Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Tool to Estimate Contract Time: The objective of this project was to develop a quick and effective contract time determination tool. The idea used typical project characteristics such as work type, project location, major controlling work items and their quantities of work as input variables into a model. Using machine learning, the

model would estimate the most likely project duration or contract time by analyzing the data of the historical MDT highway projects. Learn more about this project: https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/const/ai_based_contracting_tool.aspx.



Evaluation of Thin Polymer Overlays for Bridge Decks: High friction surface treatments (HFSTs) are thin polymer concrete overlays that can extend the service life of bridges by restoring surface friction and preventing deicer fluid from seeping into the concrete. HFST can last for 15 years, however Montana was observing much lower

performance results. Developing a better understanding of the long-term performance of HFSTs in Montana and determining if they are the best solution for skid resistance and protection of Montana bridges will provide both safety and fiscal benefits. Learn more about this project: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/const/evaluation.aspx>.



MDT Library Spotlight

Did you know that MDT has a library? Located at MDT's Headquarters in Helena, the library's collection contains nearly 30,000 items in various formats, including all of MDT's final research reports, publications relating to transportation

research more generally, professional development and engineering exam study material, and works on the history of transportation. The library is managed by a professional Librarian, Anders Johnson, who began work at MDT in the summer of 2023. While the library primarily serves all of MDT's employees across its various areas and districts, members of the public are also welcome to apply for a library card.

To learn more about the MDT Library and its services, including how to apply for a library card, visit the Library Services page on MDT's website: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/services.aspx>.

MDT Permitting Process

Permitting at MDT can take on various forms, depending on the type and scope of the project proposed. Permit applications submitted to MDT are required when work is performed within the MDT right-of-way. Utility and Maintenance permits are subject to review by MDT staff. Utility permits include the installation of fiber optics, extension of water mains, gas, electric, and more. Maintenance permits include requests for approaches or encroachments within the MDT right-of-way. An approach permit is needed when the applicant requests to change the use of the existing approach, or to establish new access to their property. An encroachment permit is required when an applicant wishes to install a new facility such as a sidewalk, landscaping, or a storm drain, or if work will be performed within the MDT right-of-way. Two other Maintenance permits are forage (making hay within the right-of-way) and special use (parades and other events). For more information, please visit MDT's online permits and licenses page: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/permits.aspx>.

Most Utility and Maintenance permit applications are reviewed and approved directly by MDT District and Maintenance staff. Projects requiring review services across multiple areas of MDT (i.e., Traffic, Hydraulics, Construction, Surfacing, Right-of Way, Geotech, Environmental, or Legal) are nominated for a coordinated Systems Impact Action Process (SIAP) review. SIAP plays an integral role in ensuring all projects proposed within the MDT right-of-way preserve the safety of the traveling public while also providing a timely, customer service focused review of all applications. For more information on the SIAP process, please visit our webpage: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/siap.aspx>.

Detour Montana: History by the Roadside

Newest book by MDT's Historian, Jon Axline, out this summer!

Over his lengthy career as MDT's Historian, Jon Axline has contributed many short stories to the *Newsline*. These stories have given readers a glimpse into Montana's colorful, fascinating history as a state, with connections to statewide transportation.

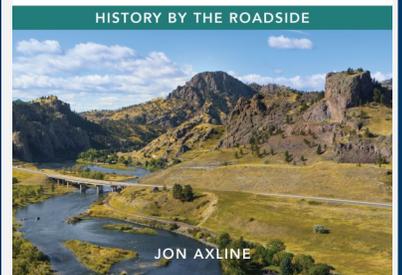
Jon's newest book, *Detour Montana*, is a compilation of his favorite *Newsline* stories, as well as others he's written over the years of his career. The book will be a great summer read for history buffs, road trip travelers, and anyone who has a passion for Big Sky Country. Once released, *Detour Montana* will be available for purchase through the Montana

Historical Society: <https://app.mt.gov/Shop/mhsstore>.



— DETOUR — MONTANA

HISTORY BY THE ROADSIDE



JON AXLINE

"I dedicate this book to my late colleague and dear friend Ellen Baumer. She read most of the chapters in this book while they were in draft form. Her excellent comments and suggestions made this a better book—with few, if any, passive voice sentences. She was an ace storyteller, and as we all know, history is a whopping good story. Godspeed my friend. I miss you." - Jon Axline, Detour Montana Introduction

Gone, But Not Completely Forgotten: Hiber Cemetery

By Jon Axline, MDT Historian

Montana is sprinkled with forgotten or nearly forgotten cemeteries. Some are small family plots associated with a specific homestead or ranch, while others served as cemeteries for towns that have long since disappeared. Sometimes their presence is a mystery. There are no communities connected to them or any other reasons that could explain why they exist. Many of those cemeteries are minimally maintained - if at all. Those buried there are long forgotten, have no family in the area or are unknown. MDT owns one of those cemeteries. The little cemetery is located in a field a few miles east of Laurel.

In October 1901, six-year-old Roy Hiber saddled his pony and trotted off on it across the family farm to visit his father. The saddle was homemade with rope stirrups. Something spooked the horse and it bucked Roy off its back. The little boy caught his boot in a stirrup, which scared the animal even more. The horse bolted across the field, trailing the boy across the ground behind it. By the time the pony stopped running, it had dragged the child for well over a mile. Roy's parents later found their little boy's mangled body.

Roy's parents had a contentious marriage, but they agreed on their feelings for their son. His is the only headstone in the cemetery. The stone's marble plinth reads "A Place is Vacant in Our Home Which Never Can Be Filled." Atop it is a manufactured marble headstone with a carved lily on top, representing innocence and purity. The east face of the headstone is carved with "Roy Edward Hiber Died Oct. 7, 1901 Aged 6 Yrs. 6 mos. 26 Days."

Hiber was buried next to an uncle, Will Consolver, who had died the year before. Will Consolver came to Laurel in 1899. He worked for and boarded with William Bode, a farmer, and his family in Laurel. Consolver was a member of an extended family that came to the Laurel area in the 1890s. In late 1900, doctors diagnosed him with a "brain abscess," an early term for a brain tumor, and gave him no hope for recovery. He died just before Christmas 1900. His family buried him at what was then known as the Allendale Cemetery. Allendale was essentially a paper community that never really existed. No houses, stores or post office were ever built there, just a flour mill that operated for only a couple years before it permanently closed. Consolver lies next to his nephew, Hiber, in an unmarked grave.

The cemetery also holds the remains of the infant son of John and Pearl Cusick, who died in January 1907. He was Hiber's cousin and also a nephew of Consolver. A little over a year later, in March 1908, William and Clara Jones laid their ten-year-old daughter, Edith Rose, to rest alongside her cousins and uncle. Born in Montana in 1897, Edith Rose died from diphtheria, an often fatal childhood disease at the time. There may be as many as two other people buried in the cemetery, but their names are not known. Only Roy Hiber's grave is marked by a headstone and is enclosed by a wood picket fence.

Roy Hiber's extended family established the cemetery in anticipation of the construction of a new church adjacent to it. At the turn of the twentieth century, residents in the area approached the unusually named Lake Huron Harriman about building a Presbyterian church on his property (Lake Huron had a brother named Lake Michigan). Harriman agreed to the proposal and was prepared to deed land to the congregation. The planned church is probably the reason why the cemetery was established at this site. For reasons unknown, however, the congregation decided to build their new church at a different site about a mile to the east. The Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church opened its doors in 1909, but closed in the 1920s for lack of parishioners. The cemetery remained unassociated with a church or any other organization and was nearly forgotten until the late twentieth century.

In November 1958, the Montana Highway Commission bought the property containing the cemetery in conjunction with its Interstate highway program. A year later, the commission awarded the Long Construction Company a project to construct a six-mile section of Interstate 90 between Mossmain and Billings. The contractor intended to utilize the property as a staging area, gravel source, and office site. But

before the project began, the contractor's foreman, Foster Oliver, had a task to perform: He made sure that the cemetery wouldn't be disturbed by the construction activity in the area. He had the cemetery fenced off with barbed wire. Oliver also imposed a 100-yard buffer around the burial ground. The fence, while badly deteriorated, still encloses the cemetery today.

The presence of the cemetery raised questions about who and how many people are buried there. Roy Hiber's grave is marked, but the others are not. In 1959, *Billings Gazette* correspondent, Charles Rightmire, reported that two graves flanking Hiber's plot were discernible at the time of his visit. He believed there were two others buried there as well. A descendent of Hiber's, Orville Jones, recalled that there were five burials there and possibly a sixth. A little over two weeks after Rightmire's article appeared in the *Gazette*, Roy Hiber and Will Consolver's niece wrote the *Gazette* that four people are buried in the cemetery: Roy Hiber, Will Consolver, Edith Rose Jones, and Frank Cusick.

The question remains though: how many people are buried in this lonely little cemetery? In November 2023, MDT conducted a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey of the cemetery. GPR is an electromagnetic investigation method that works by sending out a radio signal at a certain frequency and dielectric constant. When this signal encounters soil or an object with a different dielectric constant, this signal is reflected back and appears on the GPR scan. In the case of this survey, materials of significance with a differing dielectric constant than the background will look white or black on an otherwise brown background. This makes it easy to identify materials that contain water, air, or metal, as the dielectric constant of these materials is very different from that of a typical soil. In the case of identifying unmarked graves that are over a century old, the materials remaining from these sites are essentially bones, decayed wood, and remnants of clothing fibers that may remain with the skeletal remains. GPR has recently been used to identify potential graves at Helena's old poor farm cemetery, and at the Boot Hill Cemetery in Billings Heights.

The electronic survey of the cemetery revealed the presence of three graves in addition to Hiber's marked grave. The GPR scanned the metal hardware attached to the caskets. Two graves flank Hiber's plot. One is outlined in small stones and probably marks Consolver's burial. The other is likely Edith Rose Jones' grave. Frank Cusick lies near Edith Rose's grave. If there are other graves associated with the cemetery, the names of the dead are lost to history.



Overview of the Hiber Cemetery as it appears at present day.



Roy Hiber's grave site as it appears at present day.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-5416 or Montana Relay Service at 711.

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, 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.

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