

MEMORANDUM

To: RRC Members
Debbie Alke, Administrator/Aeronautics Division
D. John Blacker, Administrator/Maintenance Division
Mike Bousliman, Administrator/Information Services Division
Monte N. Brown, Administrator/Administration Division
Robert E. Burkhardt/Federal Highway Administration
Jim Currie, Deputy Director/Department of Transportation
Jeffery M. Ebert, P.E./District Administrator-Butte
Loran Frazier, P.E., Administrator/Highway and Engineering Division
Jim Lynch, Director/Department of Transportation
Dennis Sheehy, Administrator/Motor Carrier Services Division
Sandra S. Straehl, Administrator/Rail, Transit, and Planning Division

From: Susan C. Sillick, Manager
Research Programs

Date: March 16, 2007

Subject: Summary of Minutes from the March 1, 2007 RRC Meeting

The following RRC members were present: John Blacker, Mike Bousliman, Monte Brown, Bob Burkhardt, Jim Currie, Jeff Ebert, Dennis Sheehy, Sandy Straehl, and Sue Sillick.

Subject: 03/01/2007 RRC Meeting Agenda (9:30 a.m. MDTCNF Commission Room)

1. **2007 Solicitation** – Champions presented their research topics.

SUBJECT AREA	PROB NO.	PROBLEM TITLE
Human Resources	07.005	ADA Transition Plan as Required by Federal Regulation
Environmental	07.007	Soil Stabilization Utilizing Byproducts
Environmental/ Maintenance	07.010	Varmit Impact on Shoulders and Paved Surfaces
Environmental	07.012	Wetlands Water Loss and Salinity Impacts from Saltcedar Infestations
Planning	07.013	Preventing Adverse Effects from Highway Noise: A Toolkit for Local Decision Makers
Planning	07.014	Growing Smart in Transportation and Development: Tools for State and Local Decisions Makers

The District Administrators and Research Review Committee (RRC) will rate each of these problem statements with respect to their worth, timeliness, and attainability after presentations by Champions; these rating forms are due March 8th. The RRC will then determine which problem statements will move forward at the March 30th RRC meeting.

ADA Transition Plan as Required by Federal Regulations – 07.005

Sheila Cozzie/Human Resources Division is the champion for this research topic.

The purpose of this research is to develop ADA Transition Plan. This transition plan should contain:

- 1) A list of physical barriers in a public entities' facilities that limit the accessibility of its programs, activities, or services to individuals with disabilities (to include all MDT owned buildings and facilities).
- 2) A detailed outline of the methods to be utilized to remove these barriers and make the facilities available.
- 3) The schedule for taking the necessary steps to achieving compliance with title II. If the time period for achieving compliance is longer than 1 year, the plan identified in the interim steps will be taken during each year of the transition plan and;
- 4) The name of the official responsible for the plan's implementation.

This includes ensuring ADA compliance with all construction projects funded with Federal and State funding (i.e., sidewalks, ramps, etc). The plan should identify needs and integrate them into the State's planning process. This should be incorporated into the program on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways to include:

- 1) Any construction project that is programmed must meet accessibility requirements when built.
- 2) Accessibility improvements identified in the transition plan that are not part of an alternation project should be incorporated into the overall transportation planning process. This can be accomplished with the development of stand-alone projects.
- 3) As a means to identify ADA compliance needs, during scheduling maintenance activities, the agencies should identify ADA accessibility needs and incorporate them into the overall planning process.

It was decided to remove this research topic from the list and turn it over to Planning as it is a better fit in Planning.

Soil Stabilizations Utilizing Byproducts – 07.007

Phil Johnson/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research topic.

The purpose of this research is for MDT to evaluate camelina meal, a byproduct of oil extraction, as a means to reduce erosion along disturbed road construction sites.

Varmint Impact on Shoulders and Paved Surfaces – 07.010

Kevin Brewer/Butte District is the champion for this research project, which was presented jointly by Martin Martin/Butte District and Kevin Brewer.

Varmint impact on shoulders and paved surfaces include, but are not limited to gophers, moles, badgers and muskrats, which are burrowing into the shoulders and under the paved surfaces. In turn these burrows allow the infiltration of water into the subsurface causing premature pavement failure.

The purpose of this research topic is to communicate with other states to see if they have the same issues, and what, if anything they have found to be successful in eliminating the problems.

Wetland Water Loss and Salinity Impacts from Saltcedar Infestations - 07.012

Phil Johnson/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research project.

Saltcedar transpiration reduces surface and ground-water flow, increases soil and water salinity and other chemical concentrations, and facilitates erosion and siltation. Damages to the wetland environments and stream use in eastern and south central Montana could be particularly severe given the relatively limited water resources. Saltcedar can deplete stream flows and localized groundwater and make the remaining water unusable to wildlife and agriculture due to salinity impacts associated with the plants.

The goal of this project is to collect the data necessary to assess the flow and quality damages inflicted by Saltcedar infestation on impact sites. Detailed data on plant transpirations, weather, water budgets, and soil and ground-water quality impacts will be collected from field test sites. The interpretations of this data will be necessary for wetland and watershed planning and best management practices throughout eastern Montana.

The RRC would like this submitted to the Noxious Weed Trust Fund for funding. This is a much broader issue, impacting others, and the RRC feels that MDT should not fund this research in its entirety.

Preventing Adverse Effects from Highway Noise: A Toolkit for Local Decision Makers – 07.013

Cora Helm/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research project.

Noise assessment is a fairly specialized field. Many local authorities lack the capacity to assess noise in the development review process or craft effective approaches to addressing it. MDT proposes to develop tools for noise assessment and mitigation useful to local development agencies in Montana.

The goal is to empower local governments to manage for noise. MDT needs to provide tools for local governments, while staying within our authority.

If this project is moved forward to the Technical Panel stage, ISD will be represented on the panel.

Growing Smart in Transportation and Development: Tools for the State and Local Decision Makers – 07.014

Hal Fossum/ Rail, Transit, and Planning Division is the champion for this research topic.

There is a mounting need to develop effective tools for transit system development, street network planning, and transportation infrastructure financing tools useful for land planners and policy leaders.

Development of these tools will foster more productive relationships between transportation and local development efforts. In isolation, state transportation agencies cannot create “smarter” communities. There must be an informed partnership between state and local efforts.

The proposed research will develop a toolkit for local planners and policy makers targeted at improving their technical capacity to plan communities around “smart growth” transportation principles including: developing networks versus cul-de-sac residential patterns, residential developments that are sufficiently dense to support transit and car-pooling, provision for non-motorized transportation, mixed commercial development to encourage shorter trips, etc. It will also entail identifying program approaches and options for MDT to consider based on the experience of other states with comparable governance structures to Montana in supporting smart growth. We expect this research to advance practical approaches in four main sub-topics: 1) tools for transit planning, 2) tools for the assessment of development impacts on local roads, 3) tools for local transportation financing, and 4) tools for developing local transportation networks.

If this project moves forward to the Technical Panel stage, it was suggested that Tim Davis/Sonoran Institute, and John Horwich/UM Law School be placed on this Technical Panel.

2. **Budget Report** – Distributed at meeting
3. **Research Project – current listing** – Attached

3a. **Highway Project Cost Estimating and Management** (04.018) – Results of e-mail ballot.

Sue announced that 7 members returned e-mail ballots all voting in favor of this project. As the project was voted to move forward, a contract is already being prepared.

4. **Reports:** Available Upon Request

4a. **Fish Passage in Montana Culverts Phase II – Passage Goals** – Progress Report
December 2006

4b. **Warm Water Species Fish Passage in Eastern Montana Culverts** – Progress Report – December 2006

4c. **Axial Capacity of Piles in Intermediate Geomaterials** – Progress Report – December 2006

4d. **Experimental Assessment of Aggregate Surfacing Materials** – Progress Report December 2006

4e. **Automated Cost Recovery: A Feasibility Study** – Progress Report – December 2006

4f. **Evaluation of Methods for Estimation of Bridge-Pier Scour for Coarse Bed Streams Based on Measured Pier Scour in Montana** (99.019) Progress Report – December 2006

4g. **Business Market Analysis** (05.009) – Progress Report – January 31, 2007

4h. **One-Stop Shop for Public/Specialized Transportation Information in Montana** (05.013) – Progress Report December 2006

4i. **LTAP** – Progress Report – December 2006

4j. **2006 Annual Report for the Montana Department of Transportation Research Programs** – Final Report – FHWA/MT-06-017/8010

4k. **Montana Air Service: Opportunities and Challenges** – Final Report – FHWA/MT-06-013/8185

4l. **Comparative Analysis of Coarse Surfacing Aggregate Using the Micro-Deval, L. A. Abrasion and Sodium Sulfate Soundness Tests** – Summary Report – 8117-27

4m. **Comparative Analysis of Coarse Surfacing Aggregate Using the Micro-Deval, L.A. Abrasion and Sulfate Soundness Tests** – Final Report – FHWA/MT-06-017/8117-27

4n. **Habitat Connectivity and Rural Context Sensitive Design: A Synthesis of Practice** – Final Report - FHWA/MT06-012/8117-31

5. **Contract Extensions:** None

6. **Proposals:**

6a. A Proposal to Conduct a Disparity/Availability Study for the State of Montana Department of Transportation

Sheila Cozzie and Alice Flesch/Human Resources Division attended the meeting to discuss this proposal.

The purpose of this project is to determine the extent to which barriers exist that impact small, disadvantaged businesses' ability to participate in federally assisted contracting opportunities in the construction industry in Montana.

Jim Currie made a motion to fund this project in the amount of \$648,733.46. Monte Brown seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

6b. Effect of Fuel Price on Fuel Tax Collections

Bob Turner/Administration Division attended the meeting to discuss this proposal.

Fuel prices have continued to fluctuate during the recent past. Considering the unrest in the Middle East, increased global fuel demand, and continued environmental pressure; fuel costs may continue to rise. If fuel costs continue to rise, will fuel usage decrease? If fuel usage decreases, how soon will the decrease start and over what time period?

If fuel usage does decrease significantly, this has a major impact on fuel tax revenues. If there is a significant dip, or at least flattening, of future fuel tax revenues, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) needs to have an estimate of the magnitude in order to plan accordingly.

The primary benefit of this research is to allow MDT better insight into forecasting fuel tax revenues, and will allow MDT to be proactive in planning expenditures in the coming years.

Sandy Straehl expressed the concern that this proposal is extremely vague. She felt that the data set complexity is not realized in the proposal and doesn't feel that we will get product that we need.

Jim Currie made a motion to fund this project in the amount of \$68,833.20. Sandy Straehl seconded the motion. The motion passed. John Blacker voted against the motion.

A discussion followed the motion, at which time Monte Brown suggested that some changes needed to be made in the proposal and that the Technical Panel needed to look at other options.

John Blacker said overall that he approved of the proposal; however, there were things written into it that he did not agree with and felt changes needed to be made.

Jim Currie then made an alternate motion to have the Technical Panel issue an RFP to address the RRC concerns as this is a very important issue with MDT. John Blacker seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

Sue will work with the Technical Panel to draft a scope of work, which will be sent to the RRC for an approval-in-concept via e-mail ballot.

7. Implementation/Technology Transfer - None

8. Department/Division Hot Topics – RRC Members Roundtable Discussion

Mike Bousliman – Noted the experimental trial of automated anti-icing device for use on Billing’s area bridge “Boschung Fixed Automatically Spray Technology” is already working with positive results.

Sandy Straehl – Recently attended a Climate Change Committee meeting. She indicated there maybe a need to conduct research to evaluate our new trucks.

Jim Currie – informed the RRC that the Legislature tabled the state budget.

cc: Craig L. Abernathy/Research Programs
Lisa Autio/Research Program
Kent M. Barnes, P.E./Bridge Bureau
Bruce H. Barrett/District Administrator-Billings
Keven Christensen/Highways and Engineering Division
Lisa Durbin/Construction Administration-Bureau
Mike Dyrdaahl/Highways and Engineering Division
Paul R. Ferry, P.E./Highways Bureau
John Horton/Right-of-Way Bureau
Paul Jagoda, P.E./Construction Engineering Bureau
Jennifer Jensen/Human Resources Division
Michael P. Johnson/District Administrator-Great Falls
Dwane Kailey, P.E./District Administrator-Missoula
Tom Martin, P.E./Consultant Design Bureau
Ray Mengel/District Administrator-Glendive
Jeanne Nydegger/Research Programs
Suzy Price/Contract Plans Bureau
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