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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information: Hal Fossum, (406) 444-6116 Dick Turner, (406) 444-7289 Don Galligan, (406) 541-8132

www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/us2tred/

Public Invited to Discuss the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Development (TRED) Study

US 2/MT 16—North Dakota State Line to Culbertson/Culbertson to the Canadian Border at the Port of Raymond

The Montana Department of Transportation and a team of national experts in transportation economics are coming to Culbertson and Plentywood to examine whether four-lane highway improvements can be justified by economic and safety considerations.

On July 11, the study team will share information and receive public input during two casual coffee meetings and two more detailed open house meetings.

The effort is dubbed the TRED Study, for Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Development Study. The effort focuses on the Montana section of the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway (TRE), a newly named multi-state trade corridor.

The Montana segment runs along Montana Highway 16 from the Port of Raymond to US Highway 2 at Culbertson and then follows US Highway 2 to the North Dakota state line. The TRE then heads east to just east of Williston, North Dakota and turns south on US

The public is encouraged to attend TRED Study meetings scheduled for Tuesday, July 11, 2006.

- ✓ 7 to 9 a.m., Cousins Family Restaurant,
 Plentywood. Meet members of the study team
 for casual coffee and discussion.
- √ 7 to 9 a.m., Missouri Breaks Truck Stop,

 Culbertson. Meet members of the study team
 for casual coffee and discussion.
- ✓ 12 noon to 2 p.m., Jubilee Room, Sheridan County Courthouse, Plentywood. The study team will conduct an open house to present and discuss the purpose, approach, findings to date, and next steps.
- ✓ 5 to 7 p.m., Senior Citizens Conference Room, Culbertson. The study team will conduct an open house to present and discuss the purpose, approach, findings to date, and next steps.

Highway 85 to Rapid City, South Dakota. The TRE links onto other previously named corridors all the way to the Port of Laredo, Texas.



TRED

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The team seeks to identify a detailed study of what regional economic, regulatory, and operational changes could help justify widening Montana's segment of the TRE to four-lanes.

"TRED is a new approach for our agency," said Jim Lynch, MDT director. "We need to work with businesses and the communities to link transportation improvements with economic development. We are listening carefully and working to find the best possible outcomes."

MDT believes the timing is right for this study, given booming energy development in the area as well as growing agriculture and tourism. Additionally, trucking is expected to continue to become more important, especially along north-south trade corridors.

"This study goes beyond traditional economic impact assessment," continued Lynch. "Previous studies along more heavily traveled segments of the US 2 corridor have found economic effects of building a four-lane road were not enough to warrant four-lane improvements."

The study will also look at safety concerns and the potential for regulatory changes, but the focal point of the study is economic development.

The study team is gathering information, meeting with area stakeholders, and interviewing businesses. The study team will complete information gathering this summer and draft its findings for review in September. The study is slated to be complete by the end of October.

"We are leaving no stone unturned to understand what transportation improvements may be justified by the economic potential of the TRED region," Lynch finished.

If the TRED Study shows high probability that four-lanes can be justified, the next step is to use these results as a starting point for the federally-required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, which is required for all federally-funded highway projects.

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person's participation in any service, program or activity of our department. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate in this meeting, please call Hal Fossum at (406) 444-6116 at least two days before the meeting. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592 or Montana relay at 711.

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