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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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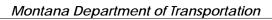
## Public invited to discuss the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Development (TRED) Study

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

(Culbertson) - The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) would like to notify the public that it will unveil a draft of a study that examines whether four-lane highway improvements can be justified by economic and safety considerations. The research team will hold a public meeting at the Senior Center, 208 Broadway, in Culbertson on Wednesday, November 8, 2006. The meeting will run from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The highway improvement study is dubbed the US2 / MT 16 TRED Study, for Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Development. The effort concentrates 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 U.S. 2 at Culbertson. The TRE then heads east into North Dakota and turns south to Rapid City, S.D. The TRE links with other previously named corridors all the way to the Port of Laredo, Texas.

- The study's purpose is to identify what conditions may justify the expansion of the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway to four lanes.
- Gathering input from citizens and business people in the area has been central to the study's methods. Representatives of the project team have been to the area nearly every month since the project was launched in January 2006.
- In July, an expert panel was established, including local voices as well as some national experts. Denver Tolliver, the associate director of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute at North



Dakota State University and Martin Weiss, a trade corridor expert with the Federal Highway Administration both sit on this panel.

- By assessing the economic and environmental impacts of possible widening of U.S. 2, this study provides MDT and the state with the information needed to determine the viability of moving the project forward.
- HDR Engineering, Inc., a national consulting firm with Billings and Missoula offices, has led the research effort. HDR is one of the world's leading architectural, engineering and economic consulting firms.
- In its efforts to identify and assess what economic opportunities will generate traffic on the corridor, the project team has interviewed citizen stakeholders, public officials, representatives from area businesses, and Canadian transportation officials and shippers.
- For more information on the TRED Study, or to provide comments, call 1-800-714-7296 or visit <u>www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/us2tred/</u>.
- The deadline to submit comments is Friday, December 8, 2006.

The public meeting will kick off a 30-day review process that will culminate in the release of a final report. If the study shows that a fourlane highway improvement is warranted, MDT will then initiate a more formal environmental impact process to seek formal approval of state and federal agencies for the improvements.

Jim Lynch, MDT director, calls the TRED Study "a new approach for our agency. 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."

Director Lynch explained that the study project team was "leaving no stone unturned to understand what transportation improvements may be justified by the economic potential of the TRED region."

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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