

Montana Transportation Commission

**April 24, 2025 Meeting
Commission Room
2701 Prospect Avenue
Helena, Montana**

IN ATTENDANCE

Loren Frazier, Transportation Commission Chair (District 3)
Kody Swartz, Transportation Commissioner (District 1)
Shane Sanders, Transportation Commissioner (District 2)
Noel Sansaver, Transportation Commissioner (District 4)
Scott Aspenlieder, Transportation Commissioner (District 5)
Chris Dorrington, Director, MDT
Larry Flynn, Deputy Director, MDT
Jess Bousliman, Commission Secretary
Dustin Rouse, Chief Engineer MDT
Valerie Balukas, Chief Legal MDT
Rob Stapley, Planning Administrator MDT
Bob Vosen, District 1 MDT
Geno Liva, District 2 MDT
Jim Wingerter, District 3 MDT
Shane Mintz, District 4, MDT
Mike Taylor, District 5 MDT
Dave Gates, Construction Engineer MDT
Brenden Borges, MDT

On Line

Paul Johnson, MDT
Thaddeus Lesnik, MDT
Lucia Olivera, FHWA
Andrew Finch, City of Great Falls
Jim Hammons, Lincoln County Commissioner
Ray Stout
Tami Berreman
Brian Berreman

Please note: Minutes are available for review on the commission's website at https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans_comm/meetings.aspx. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For additional information, please contact transportation secretary Jess Bousliman at (406) 444-6201, jbousliman@mt.gov or visit the commission's website at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans_comm/meetings.aspx. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592 or call the Montana Relay at 711. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request.

OPENING – Commissioner Loran Frazier

Commissioner Frazier called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Sansaver offered the Invocation. Commissioner Frazier asked for introductions.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the Commission Meetings of January 13, 2025, January 21, 2025, February 11, 2025, February 20, 2025 and March 4, 2025 were presented for approval.

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the minutes for the Commission Meetings of January 13, 2025, January 21, 2025, February 11, 2025, February 20, 2025 and March 4, 2025. Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 1: Transportation Alternative (TA) Program Project Additions to TA Program (1 New Project)

Rob Stapley presented the Transportation Alternative (TA) Program Project, Additions to TA Program (1 New Project) to the Commission. The Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program provides assistance to local governments, tribal entities, transit providers, resource agencies and/or school districts for community improvements deemed eligible to receive TA funding. Program priorities are determined via a competitive process – with the highest scoring proposals moving forward as project nominations.

At this time, MDT is advancing one new project from the most recent round of Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program project evaluations. This project is shown on Attachment A. If approved, it would be MDT's intention to utilize the Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) process for project delivery.

MDT is requesting Commission approval to add a new Transportation Alternatives (TA) project to the program. The estimated total cost for the project is \$3,557,863 (\$3,080,399 federal + \$477,464 local) – with the entirety of the federal funding originating from the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program. The project is consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the Performance Programming (Px3) Process as well as the policy direction established in TranPlanMT. Specifically, traveler safety and bicycle/pedestrian features will be enhanced with the addition of this project to the program.

Staff recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission add this TA project to the program and requests that the Commission delegate its authority to let, award, and administer the contract for this project to the City of Great Falls in accordance with MDT's Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) process for project delivery.

Commissioner Aspenlieder asked where we are in finalizing the planning process. I know we've been back and forth on changes to that process and getting everybody bought in but that hasn't necessarily been as smooth as either side wanted. Dustin Rouse said the latest was LAG was helping MDT and the cities to navigate through the LAG process. They are in the process of transitioning from a pretty burdensome process for locals to administer projects and making that more consumable. We've developed a website with some checklist items to help the locals navigate through that process. We stood that up and it is out there and available. Cities are using that and we've got some examples of what they've done and I can provide that information. That was step one. The larger lift is still ongoing and that is putting together a revised manual to simplify the process and make it consumable.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said I appreciate that but do you have more than "we're working on that?" Dustin Rouse said based on our last discussion we are looking at December 2025 for having a revised document for the cities to look at. There is a lot of back and forth going on. That was the last target. Commissioner Aspenlieder asked if they were on track. Dustin Rouse said all things considered I believe we are.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program Project – Additions to TA Program (1 New Project). Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. Commissioners Frazier, Sanders, Sansaver and Swartz voted aye, and Commissioner Aspenlieder voted nay.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item 2: Speed Limit Recommendation Montana 56 (P-56) – Tory

Dustin Rouse presented the Speed Limit Recommendation, Montana 56, (P-56) – Troy to the Commission. I would like to start with a discussion on speed zones. First, 90% of drivers speed. About 9 out of 10 of us speed. When asked, about 75% of people speed regularly. We go out and put counters down and monitor speeds and that is the rate we're speeding people speeding or exceeding the posted limit. Commissioner Sansaver said you can attribute that speed to a change in the tire pressure. Dustin Rouse said yes there can be some adjustments of about one or two miles per hour on a tire change. Commissioner Frazier said speedometers are only accurate +/- three miles per hour. Dustin Rouse said that is correct. With that said, why do people do that? Why would an individual exceed a posted speed limit? There

are criteria – there are visual cues a driver uses to set their speed. Things that influence that are: how wide are the lanes, how wide are the shoulders, are there horizontal or vertical curves, how up and down is the terrain, side obstructions, your sight distance? The other is development around the roadway, how many approaches there are to highway through a section. All those can influence where a driver sets his speed and how fast they drive through a section of roadway.

The metrics we use to set speed limits in order to get the best outcomes and to make our roads safer. Research has shown vehicles that travel within the 80-85th percentiles of the lowest speed related crashes. The 85th percentile is the speed at which 85% of drivers drive at or below. When we measure it, that 85th percentile speed is measured on the ground and measuring all vehicles traveling in a segment of roadway, and 85% of all drivers are at that speed or less. Of course, what we're targeting is a uniformity of speed. Drivers are safer when the flow of traffic is very close together and the flow of traffic is consistent. Uniform speeds increase safety and reduce vehicle collisions. When vehicles deviate from that, then we begin to see an increase in crashes. So setting speed limits wither too high or too low can result in speed differentials in that flow of traffic. If you set it too low potentially you have a set of drivers that will abide by whatever is posted but you have other drivers who are driving based on those cues they receive. That results in a differential in speed and what can happen is cars cue up behind those slower moving vehicles and making dangerous decisions and trying to pass multiple vehicles that results in increase of crashes.

The other thing we look at is pace. Pace is a 10-mile per hour range of speeds at which the majority of drivers are driving. If we set a speed at 55 mph ideally we'll a pace tracking around that. We'll see most drivers within that zone. If it is not set appropriately, then we need to take a look at either raising or lower the speed limit. If we do see some significant issues, like only 30% of the people are traveling within that 10-mph pace of speed, that means you have some drivers going significantly over that and some below that. Now I'll talk about Agenda I tem 2 and how we applied that information.

In June of 2023, Commissioner Hammons of Lincoln County contacted MDT regarding a speed study on Highway 56 for the residents of Savage Lake. After reviewing the study area, MDT determined the study would begin at milepost 29 and continue north to the intersection with US 2. The public's main concern is the existing speed limit for "2 miles along Savage Lake where all these residences are" located. Local residents would like to see the speed limit reduced.

Within this speed study, Montana 56 is part of the Primary State Highway network (P-56) and classified as a minor arterial. Typical sections are primarily comprised of two 12-foot travel lanes with a 2-foot shoulder. There are areas where the shoulder appears to neck down at times to around 1-foot and areas where guardrail makes the shoulder appear narrower. Sight distance is for the most part adequate. Areas in and

around some of the curves and approaches with vegetation may have some sight restrictions but generally meet design standards.

In general, the alignment is both tangent and flat in this area with the exception of seven curves (mostly at the beginning of the study) and five noticeable grades. There are no centerline or shoulder rumble strips along the study area. Passing zones are present for about a quarter of the study area. Approximately 70-percent of the area for northbound traffic is passing restricted and 79-percent of the area is passing restricted for southbound traffic. Average annual daily traffic volume from 2022 was about 1,530 vehicles. Over the past 5-years there has been a 9 percent increase in traffic volumes. However, most of the traffic increase occurred between 2018 and 2021. There has been about a 14-percent decrease in traffic from 2021 to 2022. It should also be noted that traffic volumes on average were 44-percent higher during the summer months. The roadside environment is rural with minimal development outside of the Savage and Minor Lake area. Most of the land use along MT-56 is privately owned. There is some state and federal land but not a significant amount. The rural residential development primarily begins near the intersection with Taylor Loop Road and then ends prior to the curve that intersects with Shannon Road near milepost 32.7. Some other residential homes are present along the highway outside of this area but not as many. Towards the end of the study near the intersection with US 2 there is a rest area and weigh station.

Summary A review of the spot speed samples shows that the prevailing speeds along MT 56 primarily match with the set speed limits. The 85th percentile speeds and upper limits of the pace are within ± 5 -mph of the 70-mph and ± 11 -mph of the 55-mph speed zone. Within the 55-mph speed zone about 53 percent of drivers are all within 10-mph of each other. Within the 70 mph speed zones about 56 percent of drivers are all within 10-mph of each other. This study was broken into three different segments. The first 70-mph speed zone, which extends 2 miles from the intersection with US 2. The 55-mph speed zone, which extends from the first 70-mph speed zone and continues south for 6,300-feet. The second 70-mph speed zone, which extends from the 55-mph speed zone and continues south to the study limits approximately 2.5-miles. The first 70-mph speed zone has prevailing speeds that would indicate appropriately set speed limits. Roadway context and a closer look at those speeds show that they are elevated from what would be considered reasonable and prudent. This section of roadway does not meet minimum shoulder width guidance for its roadway classification and AADT levels. Additionally, the actual length that users reach the 70-mph speeds is approximately about a mile total, with the other mile being used as transitions from the stop-controlled intersection to the north of this speed zone and the 55-mph speed zone to the south of this speed zone. Considering the ramp up and ramp down, the actual speeds for this two-mile stretch are on average approximately 62-mph for the 85th percentile. NCHRP minimum speed zone length guidance for 70-mph is 5-miles, which this section does not currently meet. Considering it does not meet shoulder width guidance, the actual

average 85th percentile speeds and it does not meet speed zone length requirements, we recommend using the rounded down 85th percentile that is based on the average of the whole length of this two-mile segment. This would result in a recommendation of a 60-mph speed zone, a 10-mph reduction from the original 70-mph and would be approximately 2 miles in length. The 55-mph speed zone has prevailing speeds that would indicate set speed limits are lower than anticipated. The 85th percentile inside the 55-mph zone is 66-mph while the 50th percentile is 58-mph. This indicates that the speed limit is lower than what would be considered reasonable and prudent, with the set speed limit being lower than the 50th percentile. Considering the roadway context and utilizing the closest 50th percentile, our recommendation would be a 60-mph speed zone for this section.

However, considering local inputs for this specific section, we are recommending a no-change for this section and to maintain the 55-mph speed zone. We are also recommending additional confirmational signs be installed in the middle of this segment to reinforce the set speed limit. The second 70-mph speed zone has prevailing speeds that would indicate appropriately set speed limits, however, roadway context shows that these speeds are elevated from what be considered reasonable and prudent. This roadway segment does not meet minimum shoulder width guidance and the rounded down 85th percentile should be used to determine an appropriate speed limit. This would result in a recommendation of 65-mph from the current set speed limit of 70-mph and would be a 5-mph reduction. Additionally, a 65-mph speed limit should be a minimum length of 3-mile based on NCHRP guidance.

Lincoln County does not agree with MDT's recommendation and their response is attached. Lincoln County would like to see the existing 55-mph speed zone be reduced to 45-mph regardless of the outcome of the speed study. Lincoln County cites several significant safety concerns for residents and visitors, citing high approach density, several high-grade sections limiting sight distance and weather conditions. Additionally, they cite the popular boat launch as being a factor as well as children walking and biking to the nearby swimming area and frequent wildlife encounters.

MDT when creating its recommendation did take all these factors into account, which is why the context for the Savage Lake section includes the use of the closest 50th percentile for determining an appropriate speed limit. MDT would like to note that the recommendation would go below the 50th percentile by 13-mph and that the current speed limit is already below the 50th percentile. Artificially lowering the speed limit further would not make this roadway safer as research has shown that setting the speed limit by 15-mph or more below the engineering recommendation leads to an increase in all crash rates and severity crash rates. MDT does not recommend setting the speed limit to 45-mph for this speed zone.

Staff recommendation:

It is the desire of MDT with the approval of the Montana Transportation Commission to institute the following speed limits:

A 60-mph speed limit beginning at the intersection with US 2 (straight-line station 00+00) and continuing south for an approximate distance of 1.69 miles, approximately at Milepost 33 (straight-line station 89+20);

A 55-mph speed limit beginning approximately at Milepost 33 (straight-line station 89+20) and continuing south for an approximate distance of 1.3 miles, approximately 300-feet south of Taylor Loop (straight-line station 157+80);

A 65-mph speed limit beginning approximately 300-feet south of Taylor Loop (straight-line station 157+80) and continuing south for an approximate distance of 3.0 miles, approximately 2,440-feet south of Milepost 29 (straight-line station 316+40).

Commissioner Sansaver asked if there was a rise in accidents in the 55 mph speed zone. What has prompted them to ask for a 45 mph speed limit? Dustin Rouse said the local are on line as well. Based on the documentation we have there is concern with the increase in traffic through the area. There is also an increase in development in this area with approaches. They are seeing traffic they haven't seen before and they have concerns with close calls. We looked at the crash rates and we haven't seen an increase in this area. The locals are concerned with the speed of drivers through the area and locals being able to get in and out of their approaches and their access to the lake and the boat launch. Those conflicts are some of the reasons they brought this forward. Commissioner Sansaver said in your preamble you stated the amount of people who speed was 9 out of 10, so if they are in this 55 mph speed zone then they are doing 65 mph. Is that a reasonable conclusion? Dustin Rouse said I go back to the posted speed it is not a significant factor, it is a piece of sheet metal. Whether they follow it is indicated by what they are seeing, the sight distance and their level of comfort driving. We did see speeds at about 62 mph through this area which would indicate the 85th percentile. So 85% of people feel comfortable traveling at that speed.

Commissioner Frazier said in the report the crashes look pretty level, there hasn't been any spike in crashes in that area. Commissioner Aspenlieder asked about updated crash data. This is crash data from 2021. Where are we with the date from the last three years? Dustin Rouse said it takes some time for crash data to be officially approved and documented into our system so there's a lag of about two years and based on the timing of the study, citations can lag and crash histories can lag, we can see some lag in the reporting.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said I'm not 100% sure of the standard. From a public's perspective it creates an opportunity to have a legitimate complaint about the data used. When we can't use the most recent data, that's problematic for credibility on a whole bunch of levels. That being said, looking at citation data the thing that jumps out at me is in a span of three years there was only four citations for speeding. We can post a 25 mph speed limit but if the local sheriff's department or Highway Patrol are not actively patrolling and writing tickets, it really doesn't matter where we set the speed limit. If there's not the chance of getting a tickets because there's no active patrol, we might as well not even hang up a sign because people know and nobody's going to follow that. This is also an obligation in the local areas that if you have concerns about speed, you have to get your people out there to patrol and write tickets and that's not MDT's job. We set speed limits based on data and in accordance with keeping the traveling public safe. Also be mindful that we're here for the travelling public which is the residents but also the rest of the people of Montana and those coming through here and not just those of you who have a house on the road. I don't see anything here that even indicates from citations or crash data for the few years we're referencing that there's a problem or that there was enough emphasis by local law enforcement to patrol this. I appreciate what staff has done to get to what the local jurisdiction has asked. This is about as good as can be done with the data and it is incumbent upon the local jurisdiction to actually patrol and keep this road safe themselves.

Commissioner Sansaver said I'm still perplexed about the 85th percentile of people speeding. We have a 55 mph speed limit and they are consistently traveling at 62 mph. I agree with Commissioner Aspenlieder that it is up to the local police establishments to take care of this. It's up to that area's Commissioners to take this to the local police force and Montana Highway Patrol. You asked why people speed. It is because they can get there in three seconds on the computer and that's why they speed. Our lives as a young man was at a much slower pace but that has gone away. I usually tend to agree with communities because they see it but again the crash data we have and the citations written certainly don't support what they are asking for. I don't know where we go from here. It is just going to get worse and worse and they are coming back asking us to do something about this. You have cars with 480 horsepower now and they want to get out there and go. I support Commissioner Aspenlieder's suggestion to get back out there with your local police and Highway Patrol and get more presence out there.

Commissioner Sanders said you've educated me quite a bit on speed limits and we've spent a lot of time talking about this. I want to address your comment that a speed limit sign is just a piece of sheet metal with numbers on it. To that point, if we didn't have 85 mph signs and it was still "reasonable and prudent", do you think basic traffic would be the same? Do you think it has no connection to the sign? Dustin Rouse said that is a fantastic question. I would be interested in looking back to when we had the "reasonable and prudent" time period and people drove what they drove. I

don't know it off the top of my head but I believe the 85th percentile was close. Yes I believe drivers are likely going to drive at the rate they feel comfortable. On an Interstate that has really good sight distance with open areas and people feel safe with wide shoulders, you tend to see that.

Commissioner Sanders asked if after we've set a speed limit have we ever gone back and studied the pace and 85th percentile? It seems we just set these speed limits and then carry on and never go back and look to see if it had any impact. Dustin Rouse said it's not something we do at every location but we've certainly gone back and looked at that. There have been a few locations where we've set the speed limit below the recommendation and then went back and reviewed it and found some crashes had developed and ended up going back to the recommended speed. So yes we've gone back to locations where we set a speed lower than what was recommended from the speed study and then changed it. Commissioner Sanders said that is good to know and it appears the science behind it is more important than the posted speed limit sign. Dustin Rouse said yes that it correct. Commissioner Frazier said if you recall Quinn's Hot Springs where we set a speed limit far below the Engineer's Recommendation which created another set of problems so we went back and studied it and adjusted it.

Commissioner Sanders asked if we reach out to local law enforcement to get their input into speed studies and, if not, would that be something that would be reasonable to do? We can set out speed limits all day long but if nobody is enforcing it, it's immaterial. Is that is something we do? Dustin Rouse said through this whole process we're coordinating with the county and if there are specific requests for enforcement or if our study suggests more enforcement is needed, we will contact MHP and coordinate with the county to have them work with the local sheriff's office and sometimes we directly reach out to local law enforcement. Brenden Borges said it depends on what we're seeing in the speed study and there are times it would be helpful to include them. We do have a direct line to the District Administrators and in the past year Shane Mintz has received a lot of feedback from local law enforcement and they've worked through local media where they've observed crash clusters. So there's more than just the speed study channel, the DA's have a really good finger on what local law enforcement and MHP is feeling about a section we're asked to evaluate.

Commissioner Sansaver said if you look at the speed study and the data we have, why would you contact the local law enforcement and MHP, why would you? They will look at the last five years of crash data and see no crashes have occurred. So it's a double edged sword from that aspect. Again it puts it back on the local municipality to take care of the speeds. It is very hard for the Commission to set a standard to go against what the speed study data shows. In this particular instance the data doesn't support lowering the speed limit. They are still going to go faster than what the speed limit is. It is not up to us to patrol that area. That is the responsibility of the local

authorities. So I would suggest this community get together with their local sheriff's office, police office, and MHP.

Jim Hammons said one of the things the speed study doesn't show is if you look at all those approaches in this area, those aren't just level approaches coming into a highway, their all elevated. You've got to come up and then get on the highway. All through there on the left-hand side going south they are all like that. In the wintertime, you have people speeding while people are trying to get onto the highway from the approaches. That is where a lot of issues occur. I have a gentlemen with me today that lives there and had an accident right in his front yard strictly due to speed. That is something that should be taken into consideration, it is not just a level approach where you sit there and wait for traffic to come by to pull out. Commissioner Frazier asked if that was the area by the Milner Lake side. Jim Hammons said it is on the Savage Lake side. You also have a state maintenance shop on a sharp corner at the beginning of the 55 mph zone. It's almost a blind corner, there is not much time coming around that corner at 55 mph to slow down if a truck is pulling out. I know the data doesn't support what we're trying to do but there are other factors that make this more dangerous.

Brian Berreman said I'm a resident of Savage Lake. With the citation record that is two and three years old, I think that's a little misleading. We have a lot more incidents lately in that area anything from deer strikes to roll-overs to slide-offs. Law enforcement in that area are more reactive than preventative because they're so busy doing everything else. You can't sit there and write people up for a speeding ticket when you have to respond to an accident in that area. That is the only data that gets labeled for that area. We have multiple bus stops on that road. It's a safety issue when people are coming way too fast around those corners or down those hills and there's a bus letting children off. As we get into summer there's going to be more pedestrians walking and people trying to launch boats onto the lake, it is just not safe at that speed. That is why there's been so much local comment as you see in the emails and letters that residents have sent in. We have a church in the area and quite a few recreational spots in that area that the public visits not just the residents. With the amount of traffic going up, I think it's safer to try and reduce the speed to make it safe for everybody not just the residents.

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the Speed Limit Recommendation, Montana 56 (P-56) – Troy. Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

No public comment was given.

Agenda Item 3: Speed Limit Recommendation Old US 91 (X-07603) – Cascade

Dustin Rouse presented the Speed Limit Recommendation, Old US 91 (X-07603) – Cascade, to the Commission. In June of 2023, Cascade County requested a speed study be performed on Old US Highway 91 from Ulm to Cascade with the intent on having the statutory 70-mph speed limit reduced. The public's main concern is the speed with the number of driveways, school bus stops, walking trails, and fishing access. After reviewing the area, MDT determined to begin the study at the intersection of 1st Street North (milepost 0) and continue north to the end of the road at the intersection with Millegan Road.

A review of the spot speed samples shows that the prevailing speeds along Old US 91 do not match set speed limits with the rural environment. The 85th percentile speeds and upper limits of the pace are for the most part within ± 6 -mph of the 70-mph posted speed limits. It should be noted that the upper limits of the pace generally trend approximately 5-mph lower than the 85th percentile. Additionally, the percentage of drivers traveling within the pace are low, with an average of 41%. Prevailing speeds indicated that the speed limits are not appropriately set for the 70-mph speed zone and are higher than what would be considered reasonable or prudent. Roadway context indicates that the 85th percentile should be used for determining a speed limit, however, since the AADT thresholds are near for meeting the 2 foot shoulder guidance, we recommend using the rounded down 85th percentile. The prevailing speeds being generally 5-mph lower than the 85th percentile and a very low percentage of drivers within the pace suggests that there are currently two different driver populations for this section. This shows that many drivers are driving lower than the posted speed limit while a small percentage of drivers were driving near the posted the posted speed limit. The 85th percentile for the 70-mph speed zone is approximately 68-mph while the 50th percentile for the 70-mph zone is approximately 59-mph. Using the rounded down 85th percentile would result in a 65-mph speed zone recommendation. A 65-mph speed zone would result in a 5-mph reduction from the current posted speed limit and help reduce the speed differential for this section. The speed data indicates two speed reductions are necessary entering Cascade and entering Ulm. Drivers are caught off guard by the existing 45/70-mph and the directional speed differential near Cascade of 35/45-mph. A historical review of the transitional zones shows that the southbound 35-mph zone entering Cascade was never approved. However, the 35-mph zone is currently offering a step-down into Cascade, and we recommend that this speed zone be instituted. To meet guidance this 35 mph speed zone should be 1,600-feet in length. Additionally, as part of the step-down process we recommend a 45-mph speed zone after the 35-mph speed zone for an equal length of 1,600-feet. A 55-mph speed zone should begin after the 45-mph speed zone and continue for a half mile in length. For

Ulm, a new 55-mph transitional speed zone should begin at the existing 70/45-mph transition zone and should be a half mile in length.

A local resident after reviewing our speed study, asked if we could lower the speed along the existing shared use path citing vehicular speeds were too fast for vulnerable road users. MDT recognizes the impact of speeds and having vulnerable road users near the roadway, as a result, MDT recommends a modification to the original recommendation with the addition of a 60-mph transition that extends a mile in length from the proposed 55-mph transition. This transition agrees with existing speeds and would cover the multi-use path in Cascade and Ulm. MDT presented this modification to Cascade County and the Town of Cascade with both agreeing with the modification and all other changes recommended by MDT. Their respective concurrence is attached.

Staff recommendation:

It is the desire of MDT with the approval of the Montana Transportation Commission to institute the following speed limits:

A 35-mph speed limit beginning at the intersection with 1st Street North and continuing north for an approximate distance of 1,600-feet, approximately 1,600-feet north of the intersection with 1st Street North.

A 45-mph speed limit beginning approximately 1,600-feet north of 1st Street North and continuing north for an approximate distance of 1,600-feet, approximately 3,200 feet north of the intersection with 1st Street North.

A 55-mph speed limit beginning approximately 3,200-feet north of 1st Street North and continuing north for an approximate distance of 2,640-feet, approximately 1,100 feet north of Milepost 1.

A 60-mph speed limit beginning approximately 1,100-feet north of Milepost 1 and continuing north for an approximate distance of 1-mile, approximately 1,100-feet north of Milepost 2.

A 65-mph speed limit beginning approximately 1,100-feet north of Milepost 2 and continuing north for an approximate distance of 9.6-miles, approximately 960-feet north of Milepost 12.

A 60-mph speed limit beginning approximately 960-feet north of Milepost 12 and continuing north for an approximate distance of 1-mile, approximately 960-feet north of Milepost 13.

A 55-mph speed limit beginning approximately 960-feet north of Milepost 13 and continuing north for an approximate distance of 2,640-feet, approximately 3,580-feet north of Milepost 13.

Commissioner Frazier asked if both local governments agreed. Dustin Rouse said yes. Commissioner Frazier asked if they checked it out with both the county and the communities. Dustin Rouse said correct, both the city of Cascade and Cascade County agree with the recommendations.

Commissioner Swartz asked if the transitions coming out of Cascade are standardized transitions. The reason I ask is it looks like Willow Bend Lane is right there and about 12-15 houses accessing at the same spot, would it make sense to bump that 55 mph zone past that. It's things like that to think about when you're going through the speed study instead of just applying a standard 1,600 feet to whatever you're doing, but look to see what the next roadway is that has quite a bit of traffic and adjust accordingly. I counted 12-15 house and it would make sense to extend the 55 mph zone the extra few feet rather than having them access at 70 mph.

One other comment in general to both speed studies. Both of these speed studies were requested in June 2023, 22 months ago and we're just now making a decision on it using data from 2021. That is four years old on a speed study that was requested two years ago. I would just challenge MDT to speed up that process and use pertinent data that is more recent. I understand there's a lot of work that comes outside of these pages and I understand there is data collection, but both reports are eight pages. Dustin Rouse said that is duly noted and I know that our Traffic Bureau has done an amazing job getting caught up. A couple of these for some reason or another have taken a while to get through. Most speed studies are within one year. The two presented today have taken some time. You're question on the adjustments, yes we can make some adjustments and move that location where the transition is based on your recommendations. Brenden Bores said it looks like it is within 500 feet. Dustin Rouse said in that case you wouldn't have to make a separate motion since it's within the range where we can make adjustments.

Commissioner Swartz asked if they are caught up on existing speed studies. How many are in the cue? Dustin Rouse said I can provide that information to you. Brenden Borges said pre-pandemic the amount of requests per year was about 25 for speed studies. In 2018 we had 26; 2019 we had 24; in 2020 we had 25; in 2021 we had 44 requests; in 2022 we had 35; in 2023 we had 31; and in 2024 we are back to 24. We had a three-year pandemic increase in speed study requests and that obviously leads to a backlog. Before the pandemic we had about 18-20 requests per year. When David was here those numbers increased to about 20-25 but still since the pandemic we're not doing enough speed studies to meet that pandemic high. We're doing our best. I took over about a year and a half ago and it took me awhile to get up to current level speed but even at that speed, I would have to do a speed study every 10

days to clear the backlog. That isn't enough time to give a location its due diligence. I hope that explains it. Again because of the pandemic we have a massive backlog that we are working through. For example on this one, we took data in July of 2023 and it took until now to get all the way up to that. We're getting closer. Commissioner Sanders asked how many were on his plate right now. Brenden Borges said 28. Commissioner Sanders asked if we could say no to speed studies.

Commissioner Frazier said there are consultants out there that you can hire to help with some of that backlog. Brenden Borges said yes but we can't do tons and we don't have infinite money to do a lot of consultant work. For example, this year the Commission requested a speed study for the Bozeman 65 mph corridor, we do have a consultant on board to do that speed study. We have another Interstate speed study that we are also hiring a consultant for. So we are still consulting out but there is only so much we can do.

Commissioner Sanders said the people in Ulm are frustrated so I need some reassurance since there is a disparity. Brenden Borges said having an adjacent path to the roadway is something we are considering adjusting our speeds for. The posting in this area is causing a speed differential and that is exactly what we want to avoid. In the instance by Troy, if we arbitrarily set that lower we get the issue we're seeing.

Commissioner Sansaver said I want to echo that. When you look at the crash history, it said it was reviewed for a three-year period from January 2019-December 2021 and there were no critical incidents in this area except a few wild animal run ins, people have run off the road, pavement conditions but again we're dropping the speed zones in that area. So I have the same question as Commissioner Sanders. How far do we go to explain this to those County Commissioners in Troy or wherever it might be, to explain the difference? We've got a highway system here that's critical to the off-road systems. How far do we go to explain to them that this is why these speed limits are what they are? To be frank, I've been on this Commission a long time and I don't understand it. There's a lot of language in there that this Commission can barely understand and it's really hard to make recommendations based off what the Engineers are saying should happen. In my communities and my district if they say there's been a number of accidents near the roundabout you put in and you say that's no big deal, we're leaving the speed limit the way it is. We have a whole lot of people calling in to say you'd better fix it and they tell them to call the Commissioner. So there's a whole lot of dialogue that needs to take place in each one of those communities to ensure they understand exactly how MDT looks at it from the Interstate, off-road systems, NHS and all the way down the line. It is pretty diabolical when you look at it from the viewpoint of one guy asking and boom it gets dropped and a second guy from Troy asks and we say no.

Dustin Rouse said the DAs are the ones who receive the phone call. Bob Vosen said it's something I've experienced. I take my Traffic Engineer with me because I'm not a

Traffic Engineer so when they get into the technical questions I have somebody who can speak the language. One of the points is how come they got it and we didn't. One of the things I focus on is the individual study since every situation is individual. We can't compare apples and oranges. The difference between Troy and Ulm and I've worked on both roads and they are literally miles apart because conditions are so different and the situation is so different. We have to let the engineering stand for itself for each individual case. That is what I come back to. If we have the same situation in two locations, we should handle it the same but in these two cases the engineering is drastically different. As you've said we're a data driven agency and we have to stand on the data we're evaluating. That is how I'd communicate it back to the people and do it with as much empathy and understanding as possible but we have to stand on the data we have. That is the message that I continually reinforce as I visit with communities.

Commissioner Sansaver said when you throw a couple of roundabouts in one of your districts, that changes the data. Now we're taking three-to-five years to come back to the Commission to change that. How do you respond to that as District Administrators? Bob Vosen said that is one I've dealt with numerous times. Again with the roundabout example, our standard is not to change the speed limit coming into it. We have advisory plates slowing them down and we have reduced speeds in those areas. The roundabout we recently installed west of Kalispell on Hwy 2 in a 65 mph area, we have posted advisory plates "roundabout ahead" but we utilize the engineering and what the standards are for putting a roundabout in. The roadway design is to slow the traffic down – we're putting side walls in, we introduced carbon gutters, and lights. We change the environment to make the drivers know they need to slow down along with putting in advisory signs to the recommended speed limit for the area. With the multiple roundabouts we've installed in the Missoula District, our data is sound and our crash numbers are greatly reduced. Again we have to stand on the engineering that got us to that point. Commissioner Sansaver asked if the engineering is up to date and not from 2019. Bob Vosen said with the roundabouts we installed the design was based on six-year prior data to when we installed it. I don't know that we'd be able to get more current data. We can't chase the data, we have to stand on the engineering. Data changes and we adjust as we can but I don't know how we would be able to continually modify the design based on the previous year's data when it takes the amount of time it takes. We're working on a roundabout where a business burned down and they are going to rebuild in a different location on their lot so obviously we have to change the approach to fit the location and how they changed the corner but for the most part we can't continually be chasing and gathering new data every year of the design. At some point we have to say this is the data we'll design for, we've got our projected growth models and we'll use those as we go forward.

Commissioner Sansaver said I appreciate the comments made about the speed studies and all but I'm not satisfied with data going back to 2019 since horsepower on

engines has gone up and with new electric vehicles. Again to Commissioner Swartz's comment earlier, we have to do much better. To the Chairman's comment that we have people out there that can help, let's get those people to come in and help out whether on a contract basis or whatever it might be. It's too darn difficult to make educated decisions on these speed studies. We go through it all the time. We want to be able to support the staff but on the other side we want to support the community that is requesting the preventative safety for their community. I asked the question earlier as to why people were speeding. It is because they can go to that same place in three seconds on the internet – they want to be able to do that on the road. Life has changed and we're not changing quickly enough with it. We need to be able to support our district administrators in the decisions they have to make when communities call. We have to be able to support the State of Montana. We need to learn from one another and not just stand by a standard. We need to learn from one another where we are right now and I don't think we're up to speed on that. I think the engineers are doing a good job but they are way behind the eight-ball and I don't think you're even on the table.

Commissioner Aspenlieder asked between now and the next Commission meeting, can we get a sense of what is going on with the DOJ and the data situation. There's a lot of friction with that situation. Bob Vosen said right now we're sharing information quite well. Monthly we get updates on crash data. One of the real significant challenges is we don't get real crash data until almost a year after the crash year finishes. In the most severe crashes you can have someone who goes to the hospital in a severe trauma case but is not deceased and then six months later they pass from their injuries. That then is categorized as a fatal crash and there is science around it and why they wait until certain criteria are met for an individual involved in a very serious crash to then accurately portray that crash as a fatality. That is why they certify all of the crash data long after. Then we use that certified crash data to build upon for a recommendation. I know that is frustrating. You can use uncertified data but then you guys would face a real significant challenge with people saying this isn't certified. There aren't that many fatals and that inserts uncertainty into the outcome or recommendations. To your point, I think we're markedly improved in sharing data with MHP right now. I'll get you an update.

Director Dorrington said can I add one thing, I want to point out that this conversation speaks volumes to the challenges associated with transportation planning. Speed studies are one element of requests we handle at the agency that leverage industry standards, yours and generations and decades of tried and true methods that states across the country use to establish speed limits. I hear where Commissioner Sansaver is coming from regarding how fast things are moving and we had the discussion about "reasonable and prudent" on the Interstate. It is fundamentally different now because all vehicles go faster but we live in a time where we want things fast yet I caution that we have to lean on our standards, engineering practices, and that predominantly the data we collect doesn't change significantly year

to year unless there's a significant demographic shift like a big subdivision on one of the routes. We do have the ability to evaluate that. I hear you loud and clear that we need to find ways to improve our processes to speed up and communicate this information. I just wanted to add that Transportation Planning is challenging.

Commissioner Sansaver said again we're talking about data from six years ago and we're putting in a lot of roundabouts in between 2019 and 2025 and I don't know that we're up to speed on the data we have. The roundabouts are changing the direction of how you guys do your speed studies. Visiting with Shane during the break, in Sidney we have one going south out of Sidney that goes from 35 mph to 45 mph and before you get to the roundabout it changes to 55 mph when it should be going back to 35 mph. Our speed study showed in that area prior to the roundabout that it would be accurate to go 55 mph. Now you have a roundabout there and it should be going down to 35 mph. So we need to take a closer look at how we're impacting our highways and byways by putting in the roundabout which I feel are a safety feature but they're not when you're increasing the speed going into them. That's all I have.

Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Speed Limit Recommendation, Old US 91 (X-07603) – Cascade with the addition of the adjustment in the field within 500 feet of Willow Bend. Commissioner Swartz seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: *Certificates of Completion* *January & February 2025*

Dave Gates presented the Certificates of Completion for January & February 2025 to the Commission.

For January 2025 we have a total of fourteen projects proposed for completion that total bid amount of \$56,048,944.39. The final amount of the fourteen projects was \$55,976,842.37 which amounts to -0.13% below the contract awarded amounts.

For February 2025 we have eleven projects proposed for Certificate of Completion. The sum of the total bid amounts was \$25,833,108.81. The final amount on the eleven projects was \$25,232,056.20. This resulted in a net -2.33% below the total awarded contract amounts.

Staff Recommendation:

**Staff recommends approval of the Certificates of Completion for
January & February 2025 as proposed.**

Commissioner Swartz moved to approve the Certificates of Completion for January & February 2025. Commissioner Sanders seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5: PDSP Project Delivery and Selection Process
UPN 10661 – Greycliff Area Bridge
UPN 10663 – Terry - Miles City Bridges

Dave Gates presented the PDSP Project Delivery and Selection Process – UPN 10661 – Greycliff Area Bridge and UPN 10663 – Terry - Miles City Bridges to the Commission. The Greycliff Area Bridges and Terry – Miles City Bridges projects are Off System Bridge reconstruction projects. The Greycliff Area Bridges project is located in the Billings District and will replace 5 existing structures, while the Terry-Miles City Bridges project, located in the Glendive District, will replace 3 existing structures. Both projects require obligation of construction funds in the 2026 Federal Fiscal Year.

The timber bridges being replaced with both projects are reaching the end of their useful serviceable life and are susceptible to failure. Construction improvements include bridge demolition and replacement. Existing structures will be replaced with culverts or bridges depending on site-specific features. Necessary roadway approach work is anticipated but will be minimized as much as possible. These projects as proposed are low in design and construction complexity and both projects require obligation in the 2026 federal fiscal year.

The Project Delivery Selection Process (PDSP) provides a method to assist the Department in their selection of an appropriate project delivery method. A PDSP committee, consisting of district managers, bureau representatives, key stakeholders, and the funding manager, convened to review the project and complete this project delivery method selection process. The committee assessed seven main criteria to determine the advantages and disadvantages of delivering the subject project using the Design-Bid-Build (DBB), Design-Build (DB), Progressive Design-Build (PDB), and Construction Manager / General Contractor (CM/GC) delivery methods. The seven main criteria for determining the appropriateness of applying a delivery methods are as follows:

1. Cost Impacts
2. Schedule Impacts
3. Opportunity to Manage Risk
4. Complexity of Design and Construction Phasing

5. Opportunity for Innovation
6. Complexity of Coordination
7. Resource Availability

MDT conducted a Project Delivery Selection Process (PDSP) on February 26, 2025 to assess the most appropriate delivery method for the Greycliff Area Bridges and Terry-Miles City Bridges projects. Design-Build was selected for both projects as the most appropriate delivery method by the PDSP Team. The PDSP was conducted to comply with the requirements provided in MCA Title 60.

Selection Criteria: In accordance with MCA Title 60 Transportation Commission has the authority to determine the selection criteria for the solicitation prior to advertisement of the Request for Qualifications. MDT's Design-Build Guidelines outline the Department's policy for awarding Design-Build contracts under an adjusted score best value selection method. The Department's procedures include an emphasis on the technical qualifications and proposed design of the Design-Builders as the foundation of the selection process. This approach helps to ensure the quality of the project and provides the greatest benefit to the taxpayer.

The Design-Build Institute of America position statement on the topic of Best-Value Selection notes that "prioritizing technical, design, management, past performance and other non-cost/price qualitative factors maximizes the likelihood of project success." The subject projects are low in design and construction complexity. While being consistent with best practices and past MDT Design-Build selection efforts, the Department is suggesting a 60 percent technical proposal / 40 percent bid price proposal scoring split, wherein the technical merits of the proposal submittals are emphasized over project costs.

Stipend Justification: The Montana Code Annotated (MCA), the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and MDT's Design-Build Guidelines allow for payment of a stipend to promote competition in the procurement process, help offset the cost to prepare and submit proposals for prospective design-builders, and to ensure that smaller companies are not put at a competitive disadvantage. Implementation of a stipend is also considered best practice by the Design-Build 3 DocuSign Envelope ID: AB1E7A7F-028F-4B5C-B416-55EA7C8EC85C Institute of America (DBIA). Stipends are awarded to the unsuccessful, responsive proposers after project award.

The process of calculating the stipend amount involves MDT staff performing an independent estimate of the projected effort to prepare the Statement of Qualifications, Technical Proposal, and Bid Price Proposal. As noted in the CFR, the assigned stipend amount is generally a third to a half of the teams' estimated pursuit costs.

For the subject projects, staff has estimated that the design-builders' proposal effort will be approximately 1,300 hours, which equates to a total cost of about \$210,000 for the Greycliff Area Bridges project and proposal effort of approximately 1,000 hours, which equates to a total cost of about \$170,000 for the Terry-Miles City Bridges project. The stipend amount of \$85,000 for the Greycliff Area Bridges project and stipend amount of \$70,000 for the Terry-Miles City Bridges project is recommended to be offered to unsuccessful proposers in the DB procurement process.

Staff Recommendation:

The Greycliff Area Bridges (UPN 10661) project be delivered via Design-Build delivery method.

The Terry-Miles City Bridges (UPN 10663) project be delivered via Design Build delivery method.

The selection criteria weight of 60 percent technical proposal and 40 percent bid price proposal be utilized for determining the best value selection in the procurement of the Greycliff Area Bridges (UPN 10661) project.

The selection criteria weight of 60 percent technical proposal and 40 percent bid price proposal be utilized for determining the best value selection in the procurement of the Terry – Miles City Bridges (UPN 10663) project.

A stipend of \$85,000 be provided to the unsuccessful proposing firms for the Greycliff Area Bridges (UPN 10661) project.

A stipend of \$70,000 be provided to the unsuccessful proposing firms for the Terry – Miles City Bridges (UPN 10663) project.

Commissioner Sanders said they got 60% right from the start. Do you get feedback that others are not as interested in bidding on projects like this because of the development part of it? Dave Gates said the contractor/engineer community that usually pursues these type of projects understand the risk associated with the procurement process. The opportunity with this project is we intentionally packaged the size of it to stretch our legs with these smaller sized projects – our goal is to incentivize the smaller contractors to add more competition to have opportunity with these projects. That said, there is a challenge because in general there is a lot of work that goes into putting together Statements of Qualifications, Technical Proposals and the commensurate 30% package for these. It is always tough to be second place. We have a very strong project selection Technical Review Committee that evaluates our proposals and debriefs with folks so they know what they missed to move forward

and do better on. That said, there is both contractor and engineering firms that are motivated to complete this type of work for the department and it kind of cycles through. At times we have folks that don't appreciate it. That said, these numbers are estimates and that's the value in using these types of procurement methods in such that it provides an opportunity for those contractors/engineers to innovate to reduce the magnitude of effort and energy it takes to submit.

Commissioner Sanders said then you don't feel it's a disincentive by using this delivery method, you don't think there are contractors who aren't interested in bidding. Dave Gates said there are folks who have that perception and we're never going to be able to convince them one way or another. That's my opinion and me talking and not the department. We work on them all the time. Regarding our Stipend, Montana provides a Stipend which we're not required to do where some other states do not provide a Stipend. It is something we do to incentivize those contractor/engineer teams to continue competing for this type of work.

Commissioner Frazier said in my former career as a consulting engineer we put in for a lot of these. That 40% almost covers the bare labor; you don't get the overhead. We felt it was good to be number one all the time but when you lose a few it makes you look pretty hard at the project and what you missed. It didn't stop us from going after other ones.

Commissioner Sansaver asked how you come up with the hours of 1,300 on Greycliff and 1,000 for Terry. Is that based off what you have put into it? Dave Gates said included in your packet is a breakdown of our estimate and at this point in our history of administering alternative contracting projects specifically design-build, we've been able to collect data from projects that help inform our estimate for these and that has been a useful tool for us to establish that estimate. I will say that design-build as a mechanism has a risk associated with the procurement process and contractor/engineering teams that are pursuing that type of work take on that risk knowingly. When I was on consulting for MDT I pursued several design-build projects for the department and I was successful on some and not on others. I learned that we weren't going to go after rest areas because of that. What our motivation is in general is to find ways in talking with our contractor/engineer community about what we can do to be efficient on our end and on their end to reduce the risk and cost associated with these pursuits.

Commissioner Aspenlieder said from a contractor perspective it's very simple to stay out, you're in or you're out. On the consultant side of things, I've had this conversation with Mr. Dahlke and Mr. Gates a number of times. MDT is completely inbred in it's consultant pool and there is no opportunity for small to mid-size engineering firms to ever get into doing work for the first time with MDT. Absolutely zero. And your Consultant Bureau will tell you that. They've told me that directly. The reality is if you haven't done work for MDT, you're not going to. So that leads to

a situation where your pool is completely closed. There is no way to get new ideas or new approaches or firms that are more aggressive to do work for the State of Montana. So what that does is for those firms who are in, they're great to keep me out because the cost just keeps going up and up and up and there is no new competition to drive that down. At some point in time, we've got to figure that out. There has been zero motivation in my time as an engineer and my time on this Commission to even try and address that or even talk about it frankly. It is just acknowledged that if you haven't done work for a DOT especially MDT, you're never going to do work for them unless you come in as a sub for somebody big and different and take a little piece of the pie and you have to do that for five or six years. So there's no opportunity or ability to ever bring new blood from the consulting community in to do work for MDT. That I think is something we miss wildly because we just refuse to acknowledge it and address it.

Director Dorrington said I take that as a challenge. I don't want, especially on the public record that there's no way for a new firm to come in. I'm not denying your experience but that's not going to be the way we operate. So I take that as a challenge and we will definitely work on introducing new firms into our agency. Last week we had the bridge summit and, as an example, one of the consultants there said there is upwards of 80 engineering firms in the Bozeman area and almost none of them do work for MDT. I'm guessing it's for the reason your outlining that it is hard to get in and it is certainly incentivized for those that are in to keep the others out. But we're not going to continue to operate that way. The firms that do work for us do good work. I believe that firmly, however, that doesn't mean you rest on your laurels and just continue handing out checks to the ones in line for doing work for us. So we're incentivized to operate in a more efficient fashion and we're going to.

Commissioner Frazier said I'd like to visit off-line and share my experience from working with MDT and 11 years as a consultant doing work. Commissioner Sansaver said I'll offer the same thing. From the looks of it and everything Mr. Gates said, it would be very, very, difficult to get new blood to come into MDT with the standards we have. I was going to ask why we don't make it easier but Director Dorrington has stated he is going to make it easier. When the new up-and-comer looks at this and says the standards are set way too high and I don't have any previous experience. It's like going after a job with a business degree and they tell you you're over-educated for this job and then you go to another job and they say you're under-educated for this job. It's the same diabolic set up. Now we've been guaranteed by Director Dorrington we're going to change that.

Dave Gates said I'm here for that reason. I came from a small firm that did work for MDT and I was able to break into the system that you speak of by pursuing design-build projects specifically and winning them on a best value calculation. What I want to emphasize with our 60% scoring criteria that is an objective metric such that we can evaluate a proposer's experience and expertise relating to the requested scope of

work. There is an element of past performance and what is your experience with this type of work but in my opinion this alternative contracting is a great way to bring in new consultants and contractors. That said, we hear you loud and clear and I want to emphasize that is one of the reasons I'm here at the department.

Commissioner Aspenlieder moved to approve the PDSP Project Delivery and Selection Process, UPN 10661 – Greycliff Area Bridge and UPN 106632 – Terry - Miles City Bridges. Commissioner Sansaver seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted aye.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 6: Directors Discussion

Director Chris Dorrington

Legislative Update

Legislatively we did very well. We're in the closing days of the Session. Our team at MDT, 20-25 people who are involved in the process, did very well this year. Our last bill made it through yesterday and I testified on one last night that affects us and we have one more that was resurrected yesterday which is unprecedented. The agency is in a good spot for the next biennium going forward. We have a lot of work to do.

Bridge Summit

We did a Bridge Summit with a group of contractor, suppliers, consultants and a whole host of our own team. It was a really good meeting. The objective of that meeting was to get bridges out. We absolutely need to get projects into the hands of contractors and get bridges improved in this state and we're still slow. Last week we had a great brain storming session. I'm happy to share some of the notes with you. We've made commitments to make our next steps and milestones to push projects out there. Our development process is still too slow especially for the age and deterioration of our bridges and infrastructure.

Fatality on US 212

Last week we had a real serious fatality on 212. Three deaths in one crash involving a school bus. You will be receiving a CC for a meeting with Gene Small and the Transportation Director there. MHP will be invited. There's a handful of things on the Agenda but we've been brainstorming some solutions that are fairly novel for Montana. We would really like to make a safety improvement on that road. I also note the geometrics of that road are not a problem. The physical condition of the

surface, site distances – there is so much money this agency has put into 212 that infrastructure is not a problem. It is behavior all day long especially truck-traffic mix is a real serious problem. The traffic crash trends are staggering when you look at 79% to 80% involve trucks, commercial vehicles, rear-ends, stoppages, out-of-state. There are definitely crashes on that corridor of high severity. We'll be headed down there on May 7th. We want to be part of bringing people together to improve that. Our role will be, as always, to maintain and improve our portion of it. While I don't think we can over-commit substantial infrastructure investment, I think we can lead parties. We have a big safety drive here so safety is very important. It is one of many corridors that have safety crash trends that we need to address. We're going to meet with the Tribes. Local officials, and state officials will be invited as well if they want to attend. Regarding the bill, the circumstances were really unfortunate; and that has now passed out of committee and was pretty substantially supported.

Commissioner Sansaver said there is a lot of criticism because we don't have the policing needed down there. That is District 4 and District 5, but we absolutely need to push the Tribes there to do a cross-deputization. I offered that over two years ago and helped create the cross-deputization at Fort Peck and there is no reason why we can't have that same thing because you're not getting the patrolling there. It has nothing to do with the safety of our highways, construction of them, speed zones, it has everything to do with patrolling those highways. We need to focus as a department on getting not just asking Montana Highway Patrol to come along but demanding that they come along. I don't know if we can do that. That absolutely needs to take place and they need to sit down with these Tribal leaders and push the Tribal leaders if they are really concerned about their elderly. Every election they say they are really concerned about the elderly and after they get elected, the elderly disappear off the spectrum. We need to focus on getting cross-deputization there so MHP feels like they can go and patrol that without any subsequent problems coming from the Tribes. To me, that is the crux of this whole thing. I think we need to push more in that direction than travel safety. Monitoring of the highways is way behind.

Director Dorrington said our safety goes way beyond our geometrics. So we talked about speed and that is one of them but in our safety profile we also have extensive partnerships with a broad range of folks from DUIs, occupant protection, speed-related vehicle categorization. I spoke with Col. Sager two days ago and he is sending someone to this meeting. He raised cross-deputization and I know it's an issue. Also Rosewood County Sheriff is also looking for a cross-deputization agreement that they can also provide enforcement so your point is well made and we're right on it.

Agency Re-organization

We are pushing forward on a pace that is safe enough for the people to know everyone has a job and we're not reducing our workforce but we are going to make substantial changes to operate a little more efficiently and more centrally purposed.

Information will be out for public consumption in June. We are working really hard to move the agency in a slightly different direction organizationally.

Commissioner Frazier said congratulations on navigating the Session. That doesn't happen without intention. Good work to your Team. This seems to be one of the smoother Legislative Sessions I've observed since I started watching them in 1999.

Agenda Item 7: Change Orders January & February 2025

Dave Gates presented the Change Orders for January & February 2025 to the Commission. The total for January 2025 was a negative (\$102,547.12) and for February 2025 the total was \$3,745,295.39 for a total sum of \$3,642,748.27. There is nothing of significance in the change orders to discuss. This item is for information only and no action is required.

Agenda Item 8: Letting Lists

Dustin Rouse said we just presented the upcoming Letting List for your information. That extends from April 3rd through June 13th. Commissioner Frazier said it is really nice to see for the April 24th letting that we have Mountainside to Milepost 133 that is finally being let to contract. As a DA in the year 2000 there were several tragic accidents. The history on this little piece of road, it was a stagecoach route that was paved. The alignment is terrible. I nominated that project in 2000 and in 2025 it's finally being done. I'm happy but sadly it took 25 years to get here.

Commissioner Aspenlieder asked about Badrock. Dave Gates said it is out – we awarded it. We had two bids. Commissioner Aspenlieder said my only frustration is I said to let me know and I'll make sure it gets in front of Billings contractors but nobody reached out to me and nobody got the contact. Commissioner Sansaver asked about the Missouri River bridge deck. You have District 4 and 5 and I'm wondering where that is. Shane Mintz said it is the Fred Robinson Bridge.

This is our last metric. Commissioner Frazier said there is a consulting firm that has dedicated a computer to hold the last Microstation version that supported metrics. It has been that way for 10 years. Microstation stopped supporting it and we had to keep it separate for the consulting firm that was finishing the job. Bob Vosen strategically has maintained a closet with metric equipment for 10 years to be able to deliver this project. Ten years in legal to get the right of way for this project. So thank you to Legal, I wish the courts moved faster.

Next Commission Meetings

The next Commission Conference Calls were scheduled for May 6, 2025, May 27, 2025, and June 17, 2025.

The next Commission Meeting was scheduled for June 26, 2025.

Meeting Adjourned

Commissioner Loren Frazier, Chairman
Montana Transportation Commission

Chris Dorrington, Director
Montana Department of Transportation

Jess Bousliman, Secretary
Montana Transportation Commission