
APPENDIX P

COMMENT #1

From: Bob.Burkhardt@dot.gov
Sent: Saturday, August 29, 2009 3:16 PM
To: Ludlow, Sheila
Subject: FW: I-94 Rest Area Corridor Study

Hi Sheila, Hope this isn't too late for comments from Lloyd.

From: Rue, Lloyd (FHWA)
Sent: Thu 8/27/2009 4:48 PM
To: Burkhardt, Bob (FHWA)
Cc: Woodmansey, Alan (FHWA)
Subject: I-94 Rest Area Corridor Study

Bob:

I offer a couple of comments on the subject study.

First and foremost, this is a good product that lays out the site information and the assessment in a digestible manner.

I have an opinion that differs from the conclusion of the assessment regarding closing the Hysham rest area.

I do acknowledge the site constraints described in the assessment for the Hysham site. I also note that the Hysham, Custer and Hathaway sites all receive about the same usage rates. The assessment describes that the Hysham/Custer spacing is excessively close. I would expect that if the sites were functionally too close, either the Hysham or Custer would be experiencing something noticeably less than the Hathaway site. I don't necessarily see that pattern.

The other aspect is managing the Custer/Hysham sites more like paired sites in considering overall parking space availability and perhaps even septic/well capability. Instead of modeling each site as independent, would it be reasonable to model each site as somewhat dependent and view the combined capacity of the two sites to accommodate 1.75 times the need at an independent site?

The technology is available to provide advance information to travelers regarding the usage at a site. For example, a detector at the entrance to the rest area could detect and report estimated occupancy of a site for a given time interval, this information then could be translated on some form of variable message sign upstream of the site.

In some respect, the outcome could be that each site is rehabbed to a slightly 'lower' target with respect to well and septic capacity and parking availability because of the paired arrangement. If the Custer site is rehabbed with year-round use in mind, then the Hysham site could be rehabbed with only peak or summer-season use in mind.

Those are my thoughts on the assessment. Perhaps there has been consideration given to this and I didn't find it in the text or it was already discarded for other reasons.

Lloyd H. Rue, P.E., P.T.O.E.
Program Development Engineer
FHWA - Montana Division
585 Shepard Way
Helena, MT 59601
406-441-3906

RESPONSE #1

Thank you for your comment. It is not clear whether usage rates or stopping percentages at one site influence those at another. MDT is currently conducting a research study to better determine actual usage trends.

Regarding the suggestion to manage the Custer/Hysham sites as paired sites in order to better meet future demand, this would not result in cost savings to MDT. Conversion of the Hysham rest area to a truck parking location is a promising option, in part, because it would provide substantial savings in terms of maintenance and operation time and costs, including costs associated with heating, lighting, landscaping and irrigation. Further, by converting the Hysham rest area, MDT would not need to pursue costly rehabilitation and/or expansion of existing building, parking, water, and wastewater facilities in this location.

It is highly speculative to suggest that the sum of vehicles currently stopping at three rest areas would be equal to the number of vehicles stopping at two should one rest area be converted to a truck parking location. In the absence of actual usage data, AASHTO's methodology for independently assessing rest area usage is the standard accepted to date.

RESPONSE #1, CONTINUED

In the event that conversion of the Hysham rest area were to result in higher usage rates at the Custer or Hathaway rest areas, these actual usage numbers could be taken into account when rehabilitating the sites at the time of project development. Even accounting for higher usage numbers, however, it would still likely be more cost effective from an asset management perspective to expand the Custer and Hathaway rest areas as needed than to rehabilitate and maintain all three rest areas.

Under the recommended conversion option at Hysham it should be noted that the MDT-owned land would still be available for use as a truck parking location; existing on- and off-ramps would remain intact. Although a remote possibility, MDT could consider re-opening the facility as a rest area in the future should this be warranted due to higher demand than anticipated.

COMMENT #2



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

1420 East Sixth Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
September 8, 2009

RECEIVED

SEP 11 2009

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Sheila Ludlow
Montana Department of Transportation
2701 Prospect Avenue
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

RE: Greycliff Rest Area
I-94 Rest Area Corridor Study

Dear Ms. Ludlow:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has received the August 2009 'Public Review Draft' of the study related to Rest Area sites in central-to-eastern Montana.

As you are likely aware, some preliminary discussions have taken place between our two agencies concerning the 98-acre Greycliff Prairie Dog Town State Park located at Exit 377, just west of the existing MDT Greycliff Rest Area site. The site is immediately adjacent to the Interstate and the possibility exists for further detailed discussions related to MDT utilizing a portion of the site for a future rest area. Montana State Parks is open to exploring these possibilities more. Please be aware, however, that any land transactions proposed will involve a public comment process, FWP Commission approval, and related steps.

Thanks for providing the draft study for our review. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact me at 444-3752.

Sincerely,

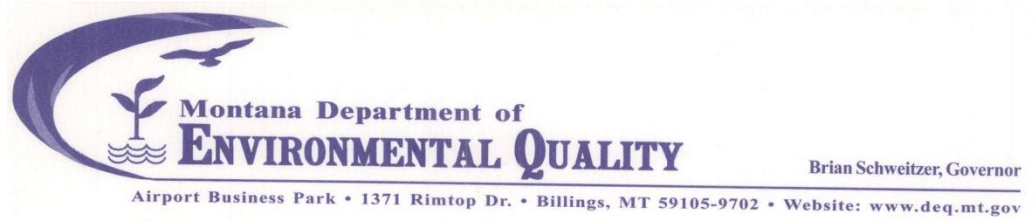
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom R." followed by a date "9/8/09".

Tom Reilly
Assistant Administrator
Montana State Parks

RESPONSE #2

Thank you for your offer. Based on the study recommendations, at this time MDT is considering rehabilitating the existing Greycliff rest area. If based on future detailed study it appears that rehabilitation of the existing site is not feasible, MDT may wish to continue conversations with MFWP and further explore the possibility of utilizing a portion of the Prairie Dog Town State Park site.

COMMENT #3



September 11, 2009

RECEIVED
SEP 14 2009
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Sheila Ludlow
 Montana Department of Transportation
 2701 Prospect Avenue
 PO Box 201001
 Helena MT 59620-1001

Re: I-94 Rest Area Corridor Study

Dear Sheila:

Thank you for the opportunity to allow the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to review the study before it is finalized.

After reviewing the report I found that the report is generally consistent with DEQ regulations and regulatory documents concerning public water and wastewater systems. The report considered the DEQ Public Water Supply sanitary surveys and water quality sampling records on file with the department and noted how that information impacts the rest areas considered in the report.

Please be aware that if the recommendations from the study for upgrades to the public water or wastewater systems are implemented in the future, further review of improvements to those systems would have to be reviewed by the DEQ at that time.

If you or anyone reading this letter has any questions, please contact me at 406.247.4447.

Sincerely,

Chris "Shoots" Veis
 PWS and Subdivisions Bureau
 Billings Regional Office
 Phone (406) 247-4447

RESPONSE #3

Thank you for your comment. MDT will continue to keep DEQ informed of any proposed improvements or individual projects relating to the water or wastewater systems associated with rest areas in this corridor.

COMMENT #4

From: Bill Wallick [mailto:wtwjr@midrivers.com]
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2009 7:33 PM
To: Ludlow, Sheila
Subject: Rest Areas

Dear Shelah Ludlow;

I read the note regarding the public meeting and wanted to give you some of my own input.

We live in Miles City and usually stop at the areas that are near Hysham.

The sinks in use appear to be prison issue and are difficult to use and wash your hands with. Auto on with both hot and cold is needed.

A rest area would be nice for travelers near Miles City such as proposed. As of now there is not any public facilities for the traveling public other than service stations.

Rest areas can not be closed for winter, if they are built and present they need to be available 24/7 and 365 days.

The handles to open the door should be something other than is used now. These metal handles are very difficult for some to use. How about making the doors to push out, we wash our hands and then need to grab a filthy metal handle to exit.

Video cameras on the outside to time stamp and record who comes and goes would help safety and reduce vandalism.

I think it is unnecessary to build on both sides of the road, find a place like the bad route near Glendive and only build one.

Tour the facilities in North Dakota and Minnesota, they do a very nice job.

My two cents.

William T. Wallick
Miles City

RESPONSE #4

Thank you for your comment. As noted in the study, any future rehabilitation project at the existing rest areas would include improvements to the interior building facilities, including sinks, toilets, restroom stalls, and door handles.

The study does not recommend construction of a new rest area near Miles City based primarily on spacing and cost considerations. Please refer to Section 6.2 for a full discussion of this issue.

The study recommends converting the Custer rest area from seasonal operation to year-round use. All other existing rest areas in the corridor are currently open year round.

Installation of video cameras could be considered at the time of site rehabilitation.

Based on the findings of this study, it is feasible and cost-effective to rehabilitate existing EB and WB sites throughout the corridor. A design entailing a single rest area site serving both EB and WB traffic could be considered for construction of a new rest area, should one be needed beyond the 20-year planning horizon.

COMMENT #5

-----Original Message-----

From: www@mdt.mt.gov [mailto:www@mdt.mt.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2009 9:19 AM
To: MDT Comments - Project
Subject: Comment on a Project Submitted

A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.

Action Item: Comment on a Project
Submitted: 09/23/2009 09:19:19
Project Commenting On: I94_Rest_Area_Plan
Project State Highway No.: I-94
Nearest Town/City to Project:Hathaway

Comment or Question:

My comment on the proposal to move the Hathaway rest area to an area outside of Miles City. I am in opposition to this movement based on cost and benefit. In reading the facility evaluation form there seems to be no major maintenance issues regarding the rest areas now. The east bound apparently could use some sidewalk repair as well as removal of a frost heave on the acceleration ramp. These are relatively minor costs as compared to constructing new rest areas. Another concern of mine in tough economic times is the negative impact that moving these rest areas will have on the business community in Miles City. I have had the privilege of having travelled extensively throughout the United States over the past 30 years and can tell you that a rest area just outside of town will take dollars away from local businesses. When one stops at a local business to use the rest room, one will almost always purchase a drink or snack. If a rest area is built within 10 miles of that business, the traveller will not likely stop and spend money. I urge you to take these concerns of mine when you consider the movement of the Hathaway rest area to Miles City. The costs as I see them will far outweigh any benefit (of which I can see none) of the move.

Thanks for your time and consideration.
Ken Stabler
PO Box 1774
Miles City, MT 59301

RESPONSE #5

The study recommends rehabilitating the Greycliff, Custer, Hysham, and Hathaway rest areas in their current locations.

The study considered a separate proposal to build a new rest area near Miles City, but this proposal was eliminated from further consideration based primarily on corridor spacing and cost. Please refer to Section 6.2 for a full discussion of this issue.