

Video transcript for the Ronan-North virtual Open House held Mon, Nov. 15, 2021

[Laura Langdon] Welcome, to the Ronan-North Virtual Open House. We will just wait a few minutes while people filter in and this meeting is being recorded. The agenda today, we are going to go through the meeting instructions, the team introductions, the project purpose, the Vision Zero, the project area, the anticipated schedule, what to expect during construction, questions and answers, and how to stay connected.

Meeting instructions today, you'll notice all of your mics are muted. They will stay muted. Please type your question in the chat at any time during the meeting and we will read it for you aloud at the end. And at the end that is also when we will be answering these questions by the team. And the team with you tonight, Bob Vosen, Missoula District Administrator, Montana Department of Transportation. Miki Lloyd, Project Design Engineer, also with MDT. John Schmitt, Construction Engineer, John could not make it tonight. Dan Richardson, Project Manager He's with KLJ Engineering and myself. Laura Langdon, Public Information Officer, KLJ Engineering.

So, what is this project's purpose? How did this project come about? Well, it was part of a greater set of US 93 Corridor projects. It was originally connected with sections that we refer to as Ronan Urban and Ronan South. It was separated from these other sections due to some financing and some actual complexities with these other sections. But the goal here is to develop a continuous four-lane route. And one of the goals to of Ronan North is to develop that couplet that will end up connecting with the Ronan Urban portion.

[Bob Vosen] I'd like to take a moment really quick and briefly talk about Vision Zero So many of you are probably familiar with our logo off to the side here. The Vision Zero logo and what this is that Vision Zero is a multi-pronged initiative. The ultimate goal is to eliminate deaths and serious injuries on Montana highways. MDT recognizes that without good roads, bridges and intersections, traveling safely and efficiently through Montana would be very difficult. And having these good roads, bridges and other transportation systems, as well as educating drivers on how to use them, is critical to building strong communities and a strong state. So, MDT asks all drivers to do their part slow down, wear your seatbelt, don't drink and drive, and pay attention. We need to end distracted driving, so please put down your cell phone and pay attention to the road. Our goal is always for travelers to get to their destination safely. As part of the highly traveled roadway in the Mission Valley, the Ronan North Project, must align with our Vision Zero goal, and we strongly believe this project is another piece to helping achieve the goal of Vision Zero. I'm going to turn the presentation over to Dan now to discuss the project area and a little more depth.

[Dan Richardson] Thank you, Bob. Like Bob was saying, the project area is essentially to reconstruct US 93 into four lanes, and that's going from just north of where the wildlife crossing is currently there to the Pablo Project and ending on the south part Round Butte Road, starting out Round Butte Road, there will be (2) two lane segments we can kind of see in this image here for about 600 feet. They'll be referred to as northbound couplet and southbound couplet, and they'll continue and then merge into a continuous four lane segment through the north end of the project. Gets a couple of the features that are going to be on this product area. There's there will be a new traffic light signal at US 93 and 3rd Avenue. Spring Creek Road will be closed off with the cul de sac through there, where people can access that down through the old US 93. And there also be a new shared his path that will connect Round Butte Road to the

north, to the shared use path for the existing one right now that shared use path is going to cross at the new signal light to high traffic light as well. So, you can kind of see an image there. Another I guess key element to this as well is there will be some wildlife fencing that will be located from about the Old US 93 up to the North, the connection there with jump outs as well, for shall any wildlife get within that fence in there.

So as Bob was saying, this is the Ronan North Project. And so, if we build this, the Ronan Urban Project isn't necessarily here. It's not already constructed, so having a couplet there it's going to act a little bit different than the full build one. The whole project's done, so. Laura if you want to go the next slide, they're. You got just kind of a closer look at the traffic patterns, really. It's going to act very similar to how it is currently right now. There'll be the single lane on US 93 heading north, which is the orange there. And it'll eventually after the couplets it will merge into a double lane there. Heading south within the blue there. There are the two lanes coming south with dedicated right turn there, which is the southbound couplet for turning on Round Butte road. When I go straight, it's going to be exactly how the patterns are right now. The full build of this will be a northbound and southbound couplet, so we'll be two lanes each, each side there for a four-lane road. But in the interim here, this is how the traffic patterns are going to work through here. So, I want to kind of make sure that was shown clearly here because I know that I want to make sure the traffic flows just as well as a can through this with the new couplet here. Now that I think I'm done with my slides are so Miki.

[Miki Lloyd] Hey, everyone, so I get to talk about the schedule here, as Bob mentioned earlier, we're pretty excited to finally be at this point with Ronan North. It's been a long time coming. So where are we at? We're in the final pieces of our design phase, and some of the things that we're still working on are right of way acquisition, utility agreements, maintenance agreements with local entities, and our environmental permits. All of those things rely on others to be able to complete those tasks. And so, some of the schedule, it looks like it's a little rough, but it's because we don't, we can't exactly tell when we're going to be completed with those tasks. So, what we're anticipating right now is to be able to advertise and award this to a contractor, in the spring or summer of 2022. That could mean that we could possibly start construction somewhere in the summer or fall of 2022. We always have a winter shutdown so that we're not doing construction during snowy, cold, and slick conditions. And then we'll start up again in the spring and probably go through that next construction season of 2023 to complete the project. And one final thing to note is we do have a website. Laura, I'll be sharing that website address with us later if you haven't already been to the site, but that will be where we will post updates on the schedule. So, thank you. And I'm going to turn it over to Bob for what to expect during construction. Thanks.

[Bob Vosen] Thanks, Miki, and I don't know if Miki broke up with our audio for everyone else, I know it did for me. So, if you have questions or didn't quite catch everything that Miki said, please, you can either use the Q&A bubble of the chat bubbles down in the bottom of your screen to ask for clarification if you need anything there. So just let us know, please, if we can share any further info with that, regarding the schedule. What to expect during construction. How will the traffic be maintained during construction? This is always one of our top questions in on this project. Generally, we won't be creating a detour. Traffic will stay on the alignment that it is right now. There will be obviously impacts as we go through. The construction will try to keep those impacts as short as possible and delays as short as possible. We do recognize that there is a lot of traffic that utilizes US 93, obviously through the Ronan area. So that will be

challenging. Also, the intent is to limit the time driving on gravel to shorten times as possible, we'll be developing a more firm schedule as we get closer to construction, but we'll do everything. We will be having a very robust public involvement program during construction as well. So, there will be regular updates. And this definitely isn't the last time you'll hear from MDT about what to expect. We'll have more information as we get closer to construction and then that'll be ongoing throughout construction. So, I'm going to turn this back over to Laura for Q&A. So again, if anybody has any questions, I encourage you to utilize the Q&A chat features at the bottom of your screen there. Thank you.

[Laura Langdon] Yeah, we have one question come in a few minutes ago. Is this being recorded, and will it be on the website? And yes, yes to both. This meeting has been recorded and we will get it up on the website. Yes, I see a question here. The question is I am still unclear how to access the new highway construction, turning both south and north from the Old Highway 93 across from the Boys and Girls Club.

[Bob Vosen] So, Laura, can you bring back I think it was slide eight that had the kind of the in-depth. There we go. That one, perfect. So. The question the Boys and Girls Club is basically just to the right of where the word round starts underneath the blue is where they are. The Boys and Girls Club is further out than that, I guess, but generally that's where the couplet system starts. So, the question is how to access the new highway construction turning both south and north from Old Highway 93 across from the Boys and Girls Club? I am. Not really tracking where old Highway 93 is.

[Miki Lloyd] So, Bob, it might help. Dan, do you have the... I guess, Laura, can we get maybe the traffic plans maybe put up there for that intersection? We're realigning that intersection. And put in a signal there, I think that's what I think, that's what they're asking about is.

[Bob Vosen] Up in Old Highway 93 and 3rd Avenue?

[Miki Lloyd] Yes, I was going to try to get to my traffic plans so that we could look at that a little bit. But they should be able to cross US 93 at the signal. If that's what we're asking, if it's the approach to the Boys and Girls Club, then there's obviously an approach to that area. And then they could. I guess exit out of that approach.

[Laura Langdon] I think that's what he was asking. He said, yes, thanks. OK, so let's see. Whitney has a nice comment, she says it will be so nice to have a light there and that's up that 3rd Avenue intersection. We have a message from Travis. A question for Dan. I own Ronan DQ and Java Junction. How will my current accesses be affected during construction? And will there be an East Side and a West Side access after the project is done?

[Dan Richardson] Sure. Yes, there will be an east side in a west side access there, and can you? Yeah. Maybe you can zoom in. Yeah, I guess you can kind of see there is a. There's an approach on... There you go, thank you Laura. There's an approach on the right-hand side of your property there for DQ from the east side there, and it's kind of like black a little darker black drawn at an angle, their right to the right of the first arrow. Or it might be a highlight that a little bit. Not sure. And then just to the West that there's also an approach which is in the darker black as well, just directly across the street or across the lot from there. So, there will be an access on both sides there. The one here is the one and also the one right here? I'm sorry, to your left Laura so, the Dairy Queen is the one between the couplets here. Okay. So, I go a little further in right there, so that's one access and then right across to the west. So right

there's the other access to DQ so. As far as access during construction, I'm not sure. Bob, if you wanted to help address that one as well or how.

[Bob Vosen] Yeah. So, we will maintain access to all businesses during construction. Some additional signing may be necessary for business access. It's always challenging but I can state without a doubt that we will work with the contractor to make sure there is still access to the businesses. It's always a little bit of a challenge, but we recognize the impact construction can have on businesses and we will do as much as possible to keep access and also to keep it consistent so that consumers can and customers recognize this is where I pull it and it's we try not to make those changes frequently, just so that a routine can be developed as well.

[Laura Langdon] Travis, I think has a follow up question. Traffic will continue to be to weigh on present corridor until Ronan in Urban is complete?

[Dan Richardson] That is correct. Yes.

[Laura Langdon] Okay. Thank you, Travis. Whitney has a question. How quickly do you think the bike path will connect that quarter mile north to the existing path? That's up here?

[Dan Richardson] And maybe if you pulled the schedule that Miki was talking about, I think that might...

[Miki Lloyd] Right. And we can't we don't exactly know what the contract will get started working on first. I think at this point, I don't know whether we could say anything sooner than our completion, which would be in 2023. They may start on it earlier, but I'm not sure if they're going to work on it in pieces or what sections they will work on first. can guarantee you it'll be done when the project is complete.

[Laura Langdon] Okay, Whitney says thank you. We have a comment from Bonnie. My niece and two nephews walk across the highway twice a day Arlee has already had a child hit in a crosswalk. Is there anything different or safer about this construction than Arlee?

[Miki Lloyd] I'm not sure I can answer this question real great, but Bob, you can tune in if you'd like. I think what we are trying to do is keep the pedestrians and bikes, putting the children on the paths that are designated for them. And then I think crossing at the signal is a pretty safe option. Just because it will stop the traffic where they are actually crossing the highway there, the other location that I think a lot of kids cross down at the other signal, which is on Round Butte Road and Terrace Lake Road, which is also signalized. So, I would say that that you know what we're putting in here today. This project is safer than what's out there today, comparison to the Arlee. I think they're a little bit different and Arlee is a full couplet in town, we are going to have several signals in town for people to cross, also just because of the nature of the traffic in town, that helps answer that.

[Laura Langdon] Yeah, Miki, thank you, I think so. Bonnie, do you have any follow up questions or comments? All right, well, Travis has a question about Ronan Urban. So, any ideas on the timeline for the Ronan Urban Project just south of here? And will the new infrastructure bill help to speed up the process?

[Miki Lloyd] So, I'll speak to this one again, if you would like me to Bob, but currently Ronan Urban is only about 30 percent design. Ronan Urban also has an extensive amount of right-of-way, acquisition that has that as needed, plus quite a bit of utility relocation. We are going to

plan to focus on that after this project is awarded to construction, but that project going to take quite some time to complete. And currently it's outside our five-year plan for completion of that segment, just due to all those things that that I just discussed. But we are looking at advancing that project as soon as this one this one is awarded. Thank you.

[Bob Vosen] The only thing that I would say to add to that is great job on kind of discussing where we are with the projects as far as the infrastructure bill. It's a little early for us to tell. The bill was just signed by the president today, so I haven't seen it myself yet in its entirety. It's gone back and forth, as many people know through House to Senate before it was sent to the President. Now it is signed. But as to what those, what the numbers are in there, what how that's going to affect project delivery program delivery for us just a little early for me to really be able to comment anything for sure. It does sound promising that there's going to be additional funds in the bill. As far as how the funds might be obligated or directed to be spent, we kind of have to dove in to see what that looks like to do more to come. Definitely a very promising note to have a long-term bill in front of us. Again, that's always exciting, but we'll have to kind of wait and see what how it impacts and what we have to where the emphasis and focus will be in that bill. Everything changes every time we get a new one of these. So.

[Laura Langdon] Thank you, Bob and Miki. All right, we've got another question from Brendan. When completed, will you be able to turn left off Baptiste onto 93?

[Dan Richardson] Yes, you will be able to, and it would help, I could probably I could put up a plan sheet for that as well. Sure, Yeah, I need just a second to pull up the appropriate one for that.

[Laura Langdon] Of course. These are great questions, thank you for chiming in everyone. Bob, someone doesn't like your Bobcat logo.

[Bob Vosen] They'll probably like it even less after we win on Saturday, I guess.

[Dan Richardson] Sorry trying to get the right page up here, Laura so. Sure. OK, I think I can. Am I able to share my screen here, let's see.

[Laura Langdon] Should be a green button.

[Dan Richardson] OK, I think it should be a PDF shown, is that correct, Laura? Right now?

[Laura Langdon] It's loading for me. That's showing.

[Dan Richardson] OK, so Baptiste Road, as I know these are the design plans here, so they might be a little bit not quite as clear, just picture as shown here. But Baptiste Road is on the west side here, and it has been realigned to come in more perpendicular with US 93. There will be a turn. There'll be an opening between the median there for a left turn to come off of Baptiste Road onto US 93. And so that was analyzed both with sight distances as well when it was designed for or on this curve here.

[Miki Lloyd] Dan, did you want me to bring the signing and striping plans up those that does show the left turn lane onto Baptiste?

[Dan Richardson] And I have that as well. Let's see. Just need to get the right sheet up here. So here is the signing and striping plans I'm guessing that's what you're talking about Miki this one?

[Miki Lloyd] Yes. And then you can see the left turn that you can turn off of US 93 onto Baptiste, but then you see the stop bar on Baptiste that then obviously you can turn.

[Dan Richardson] So there's the dedicated left turn here and then the stop bar here multiuse path crossing there. Then either left or right through there.

[Laura Langdon] That's great. We got to thank you for showing these, That's helpful. Bonnie had a comment. I'm just going back to the crossing; Bonnie is just concerned about all the kids trying to get to school and home to different direction. Traffic to cross is just more chances for danger.

[Bob Vosen] And definitely, we recognize that there will be, you know, we'll be putting up additional signing of the good news is for those crossings if they're crossing down at Round Butte Road, those will be signalized intersections, which do provide a safer level of crossing than obviously unsignalized intersection does. And when we get done with the final project where it's a couplet-only situation, there will be two lanes, but they'll only have to look in one direction, not have to be paying attention in both directions as they're crossing the street.

[Laura Langdon] I have a question here from Robbie, what are the proposed speed limit changes?

[Bob Vosen] So, interestingly enough, speed limit changes are how they're set is a complex matter set in state law. So the speed limits generally are going to stay the same as what they are now. You can see actually in this in that images and the dash line shows where it's currently located, and the solid line shows where its final location so MDT is not allowed to change speed limit. There's a legislative mandate or a legislative process actually spelled out in Montana code on how speed limits are changed. So long story short is that this time the speed limits will remain the same in the areas they are. It'll just be additional lanes of traffic north of town.

[Laura Langdon] Thank you, Bob. Travis has a follow up, he's curious about the Round Butte access into the DQ lot. Will that remain active until Ronan Urban, or will it be closed at the time of this construction? This could affect future construction plans for a possible remodel or rebuild of the current store.

[Dan Richardson] So, when this project is complete the accesses shown that we spoke to earlier, which is right here and right here, will be the ones that are active now. And along with the ones on Round Butte Road. And so, the current one right now, I believe, is a little bit further south that will be closed off to the sidewalk and the curb. So, these will be in place after this project is done. And then the Round Butte will remain as it is right now.

[Laura Langdon] Thanks, Dan. Don't have any more questions in the queue, but we can hold on for a few minutes of any more pop up or if we have any follow up comments. You can always email your question and you can find more info on our on our website, too. There's a couple maps up there, a couple of phone numbers and what not. So, if anything comes up later, you can reach out. So, I'm going to throw up the website on the screen to so you know, where it's at. Going to the end of the presentation. So, this is where we're going to host any schedule updates, any future maps. And then when construction gets going, we'll have updates as well there and then Miki Lloyd, who joined us tonight as well. You can also reach

out to her. Well, there's no more questions. Thank you all for coming. A lot of great questions, thank you. And we will be on tomorrow at noon as well. All right.

[Bob Vosen] I just want to again thank everyone for joining us tonight and if you have other ideas or thoughts to come in your mind, you're welcome to join us tomorrow and share with your friend's family that have comments or questions. Let them know to join tomorrow as well.

[Laura Langdon] Thank you, Bob. Thank you, everyone.