

September 2023

## 2023 A Year of Exciting Updates to MDT's Traffic Safety Campaign

**M**ontanans have probably seen a few examples of MDT's new traffic safety campaign efforts this summer, thanks to the hard work and creativity of the department's staff and valued media contractor, Duft Watterson (D-W). MDT and D-W created a robust campaign filled with fresh approaches based on the latest research related to reducing the number and severity of roadway crashes by positively influencing behavior. Updates included expanded efforts to address impaired driving, seat belt and child safety restraints, and distracted and aggressive driving with teens and young adults, as well as with the general traveling public across Montana. While the following campaign examples are new, they continue to build on past work to reach the overarching goal of Vision Zero – zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana roadways – by continuing to promote and educate system users on the importance of safe behaviors.

### Mascot: Meet Andy the Australian Shepherd!

Have you seen the four-legged star of MDT's recent traffic safety ads? Andy the Australian Shepherd was introduced to Montana this summer and will be helping keep our roads safe throughout the year by using his loveable and loyal personality to convey important reminders about seat belt use, only driving sober, putting aside distractions, and not speeding.

*Interview with Andy: I'm Andy, a working dog from a ranch out east, but I have friends and relatives all over Montana. My friends say I'm high energy — electric even! — and I'm stoked to be helping my community stay safe. Sure, I'll nip at heels to keep everyone safe, but I mean well. I'm dynamic. Some would say I'm even "cool," whatever that means. I'm a little stylish, too. I'm less of an enforcer, and more of a follow-my-lead guy. You'll find me herding people who have been drinking away from their cars and reminding teens life isn't a race and their neighborhood isn't a racetrack. I remind my humans to buckle up every trip, and to slow the roll and stay cool behind the wheel.*

Andy was born from creative brainstorming efforts by MDT and D-W as a way to personify a recognizable brand, stimulate engaged conversations on safety, and share human characteristics that relate to Montana's traffic safety audience. MDT and D-W recognized the limited opportunities to capture attention in the current-day crowded media world, and so far, Andy has proven to be just the canine for the job.



*Love Andy? Check out more reminders from MDT's furry safety mascot on YouTube! Remember, we all play a role in keeping our roadways safe. Share Andy with your loved ones as a gentle reminder (or paw) to commit to safety every time they travel!*

### **KUDOS to MDT!**

*"LOVE LOVE LOVE the "Thanks Andy" campaign!! This approach gives important public safety information in a relatable and engaging format. Hopefully, you are entering these spots in competitions - you should win. GR8 use of tax \$\$\$!" - Yvonne L.*

(Comment sent to MDT via online form submission on July 31, 2023)

### **More Coming Soon!**

MDT and D-W are preparing to unveil more new campaign efforts surrounding traffic safety this year – including a traffic safety brand to "Engage" Montana's roadway users, and exciting influencer partnerships with a few faces any Montana sports fan is sure to recognize! Stay tuned for more information in the December Newsline or on MDT's website, and follow along with Andy and other traffic safety campaign efforts on MDT's social media channels.

For more information on MDT's Traffic Safety programs and this campaign, contact Janet Kenny at 406-444-7417 or [jakenny@mt.gov](mailto:jakenny@mt.gov).

### **Find Andy on YouTube!**

Visit <https://www.youtube.com/@MontanaDOT/playlists> for the "Andy" playlist, or scan the QR code to the right with your mobile device.



## Federal Surface Transportation Program Status

**M**DT's annual program has grown over the years, with the department having success in securing additional funding through redistribution of federal funds. Redistribution happens at the end of each federal fiscal year when FHWA takes any remaining unobligated funds and distributes it to state departments of transportation (DOTs) that have projects ready. Those state DOTs are given about a month to obligate those funds, so all projects selected must be "shovel ready." The last three years have yielded significant funding to Montana for state infrastructure projects, in addition to the annual formula distribution, thanks to MDT's excellent preparation. FHWA has notified MDT that the estimated redistribution for Montana for 2023 is \$41.9 million. The department has projects "shovel ready" to ensure these funds can be fully obligated. Funding from House Bill (HB) 267 is now available to match these federal funds.

### Redistribution and HB 267

Also known as the "SAFER Act," HB 267 was passed during the legislative session in 2023 and will support MDT's efforts in securing federal redistribution funds by allowing the state to match these funds as required by FHWA.



## NEWSLINE SUBSCRIPTION UPDATES

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## SAVE THE DATES OCTOBER 4 & 5

### 2023 Annual Transportation Safety Meeting

Delta Colonial Hotel  
2301 Colonial Drive, Helena, MT

This event brings together federal, state, tribal, and local safety partners to discuss Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP), assess progress in reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries, and explore new opportunities to enhance traffic safety awareness.

#### **Emphasis Areas:**

- Roadway Departures & Intersection-related Crashes
- Impaired Driving Crashes
- Unrestrained Vehicle Occupants
- Emergency Response -After-Crash Care

The agenda is under development and will be posted at [www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp-meetings.shtm!](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp-meetings.shtm!)

For additional information, please contact Pam Langve-Davis at 406-444-7646 or [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov).



## NEVI Program: Montana Project Partnering Information Available Online

The Partnering List allows interested electric vehicle (EV) site hosts and other potential National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) partners to submit their contact and other relevant information for inclusion on the NEVI Project Partnering List. This list will provide a resource for the establishment of new partnerships to develop and deliver EV infrastructure projects in the state. By submitting information to this form, you agree to have your contact information and facility information posted publicly on MDT and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)'s NEVI website and to allow other interested entities to contact you directly.

Find more information on the NEVI Program and related partnering opportunities online: [www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/plans/ev/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/plans/ev/)

## MDT Awards Traffic Safety Grants to Support Vision Zero

### **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Grants**

MDT awarded almost \$3.8 million in federal grant monies from NHTSA for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024. The grants will address impaired driving, occupant protection and child passenger safety. The emphasis of this grant program is to improve traffic safety through education, enforcement and emergency medical services training. Law enforcement agencies are funded for increased patrols to concentrate on seat belt, speeding and impaired driving laws. Grants for DUI Courts, a Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, a Traffic Safety Resource Training Officer, and the 24/7 Program address impaired driving. Traffic safety education programs continue with the Native American Safe On All Roads (SOAR), Buckle Up Montana coalitions, and the Teen Peer to Peer Traffic Safety programs. The NHTSA grant opportunity will open January 1, 2024, and close March 1, 2024, for FFY25 funds. Contact Janet Kenny at 406-444-7417 or [jakenny@mt.gov](mailto:jakenny@mt.gov) for more information.

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/grants/>

### **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Grant Program**

Nearly \$1 million in grant funds is awarded annually through the state funded EMS Grant program. The grants are provided to agencies staffed by mostly volunteers, Medicare-level billing providers for ambulances, emergency vehicles, training, equipment, communication, or patient care. The program is awarded through a competitive grant process that opens on May 1 and closes June 30, annually. For State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024, about \$1 million in funding will be awarded to EMS providers. Contact Spencer Harris at 406-444-0856 or [sharris@mt.gov](mailto:sharris@mt.gov) for more information.

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants-ems.aspx>

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# Transportation Infrastructure Funding to Keep Montana Moving Forward: A Message from Director Long

**T**he last few years have presented quite a few challenges, but with these challenges have come new or improved opportunities to keep Montana moving forward for Team MDT and our valued project partners and stakeholders! With the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in 2021, many new discretionary grant programs to improve transportation infrastructure and safety were made available for state, tribal and local governments. At the state level, the 2023 legislative session resulted in several new transportation funding resources that I believe will further support our statewide communities in improving and maintaining local roads and bridges.

## Senate Bill (SB) 536

SB 536 was passed by the legislature to provide \$100 million in state funds to MDT for the reconstruction and repair of state highways, off-system bridges and/or matching local grant applications. Specific to our local governments, SB 536 set aside \$20 million for distribution directly to cities and towns with a population of less than 10,000. MDT was given flexibility for spending the remaining \$80 million to improve or construct roads and bridges. Team MDT is excited about the many opportunities SB 536 creates to support local road and bridge projects, and looks forward to partnering with our local governments in keeping residents and visitors traveling safely and efficiently.

Team MDT is pleased to inform our local government partners that MDT will utilize these funds for off-system load posted bridges, other bridge projects, and has dedicated **\$10 million** of the SB 536 funding to be used as a matching source for federal or state grants awarded to local governments for repair or construction of roads or bridges. Funding will be awarded through a request process to eligible projects on a first-come, first-serve basis until all funds have been committed and/or expended. Grant requests must be submitted through MDT's online form. To access the online form, or for more information on this funding, eligibility criteria or the request process, please visit our State Funding for Local Infrastructure web page: <https://mdt.mt.gov/business/localsupport/state-funding.aspx>

## House Bill (HB) 267

HB 267, also known as the "SAFER Act", was passed to support MDT with non-federal matching funds for the federal transportation program. The bill dedicates \$100 million for MDT to match federal funding that typically requires a 13% or greater funding match. This will ultimately benefit all of Montana by allowing MDT to put more money into road and bridge projects across the state. The SAFER Act provides matching funds to support MDT's annual efforts to pursue funds through discretionary grants and federal redistribution. **(Read more about redistribution on the cover of this issue...)**

## House Bill (HB) 76

Supporting the Governor's continued efforts to reduce government "red tape" for the customers we serve, HB 76 was passed to repeal the administrative burden related to the Bridge and Road Safety Accountability Act (BaRSAA). Specifically, HB 76 eliminates project reporting, resolutions and local match requirements, and local governments are no longer required to submit a request to MDT for their allocation of gas tax revenue. Local governments now receive a monthly share of gas tax revenue.

MDT has developed web resources and a streamlined process to request support or funds. We also have staff ready to answer questions and assist Montana's local governments. On behalf of the Governor's Office and Team MDT, thank you for your continued partnership in keeping our great state moving forward safely!

Sincerely,

**Malcolm D. Long**



# New Public Transit Facility Unveiled at Open House

**W**indrider Transit of Park County hosted an open house on June 28th to celebrate and unveil their new 3,360 square foot Public Transit Facility. The new building includes 2,240 square feet of garage bay space and an additional 1,120 square feet which includes two office spaces, an entry area, a driver training/kitchenette area, janitor rooms, and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant bathroom.

For over five years, since Windrider Transit first started fare-free fixed route services in November 2017, they have provided over 21,500 rides to Park County residents. These riders include elderly, disabled and youth in the community, as well as the general public. Some have no alternative means of transportation, some cannot operate vehicles, some choose not to drive, etc. This important program provides critical social service connections in the community that some citizens might not be able to be part of due to lack of transportation. Public transportation also contributes to both the economical and physical health of individuals, brings financial benefits to communities, and provides not only jobs in the industry itself but is also a key component of a healthy business ecosystem by increasing mobility options for both job commuters and customers alike.



MDT Director Long (pictured far right) presents ceremonial key to Park County for the new Windrider Transit facility at the open house on June 28th.

Grant funding for the project was provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and administered by MDT for Park County to build a dedicated facility for its ever-expanding program. The new facility allows Windrider Transit to move all transit related functions, vehicles, equipment and supplies to one dedicated building. The efficiencies will be tremendous; including the ability to keep well-used passenger vehicles in covered bays, year-round, which will add longevity to their expected life cycle. Windrider Transit is happy to continue to provide their community with fare-free fixed route and dial-a-ride services in a more efficient and cost-effective manner, and are grateful to MDT for helping them get to where they are today!

# National Teen Driver Safety Week 2023

**N**ational Teen Driver Safety Week takes place October 15-21, 2023. Now in its 16th year, this event is dedicated to raising awareness surrounding teen driving safety issues by connecting teens, parents and guardians, schools, and other traffic safety stakeholders to continue to work to address an important safety issue that tragically results in thousands of deaths each year.

On average, teens annually account for over 4,300 crashes nationwide. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States, with 2,608 fatalities reported in 2021. Here in Montana, there have been 130 teen fatalities over the last five years. Of those, 63% were unrestrained.

Parents and guardians play an important role in helping ensure their teen drivers take smart steps to stay safe on the road. NHTSA gives parents tips on how to talk about safe driving behaviors with their teens, particularly how to address the most dangerous and deadly driving behaviors for teen drivers: alcohol, lack of seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers. Visit NHTSA's teen driving webpage to learn more and access these resources: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving>

MDT partners with the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) to improve teen driving safety in Montana. FCCLA is a student organization for young men and women in Family and Consumer Sciences education through grade 12. There are 65 chapters across Montana, and through this partnership, they are given an opportunity to apply for funding to develop peer-to-peer traffic safety campaigns in their schools and communities. The peer-to-peer and community projects facilitated by these chapters target seat belt use, speeding, distracted driving, drowsy driving, impaired driving or any risky driving behavior impacting teens in the local community. Montana FCCLA has provided more traffic safety outreach to rural schools than any other project in the state.

For more information on teen driving safety efforts in Montana, contact Sheila Cozzie at 406-444-7301 or [scozzie@mt.gov](mailto:scozzie@mt.gov).



Photo collage featuring traffic safety campaign elements from Montana's Moore FCCLA Chapter, funded by their Vision Zero grant from MDT.

# Montana Child Passenger Safety Program

**T**he Montana Child Passenger Safety (CPS) team is going to be busy promoting awareness around safety for child passengers this fall; especially during CPS Week. This year, CPS Week will take place September 17-23, 2023, with check-up events held across the state on Saturday, September 23rd (National Seat Check Saturday).

Montana will also be holding one final CPS Technician Training in Kalispell during CPS Week. This training will take place September 19-22, 2023, with the check-up event being conducted on Friday, September 22nd. Montana currently has 16 active CPS instructors, 290 CPS technicians and 33 permanent CPS inspection stations to provide education and assistance on appropriate restraints for children in vehicles.

For more information, contact Jennifer Wilson at 406-444-0809 or [jwilson@mt.gov](mailto:jwilson@mt.gov). You can also visit MDT's Buckle Up webpage: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/seatbelts.aspx>

# Montana DUI Court Receives National Recognition

**O**n May 10, 2023, the National Center for DWI (Driving While under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs) Courts awarded the Sobriety, Treatment, Education, Excellence and Rehabilitation (STEER) Court of Yellowstone County's 13th Judicial District with a special certification during a ceremony, allowing it to train other treatment courts across the country to adhere to the guiding principles of substance abuse intervention and treatment programs for offenders. STEER is a driving under the influence (DUI) Court for repeat DUI offenders that represent a high risk or high need. 13th Judicial District Judge Knisely implemented the Court in Montana, and continues to preside over it.



The National Center for DWI Courts presents Montana's STEER with certification during ceremony on May 10th.

Montana's STEER reduces recidivism rates for repeat DUI offenders, and proudly serves as a model program for the rest of the country. MDT has been providing National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) funding to STEER for over a decade as part of statewide efforts to reach the goal of Vision Zero. Vision Zero is an ongoing statewide collaboration, which strives for zero deaths and zero serious injuries on Montana's roadways.

The Honorable Governor Greg Gianforte attended the ceremony on May 10th, and was the keynote speaker for the program. As part of his presentation, he declared May as Montana Drug Court Month in 2023.

For more information, contact Kevin Dusko at 406-444-7411 or [kedusko@mt.gov](mailto:kedusko@mt.gov). You can also visit MDT's Treatment/DUI Courts webpage: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/dui-courts.aspx>

## Montana Traffic Safety Dates

### ⇒ August 16, 2023-September 4, 2023\*

Labor Day Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Law Enforcement Impaired Driving Mobilization (2023 STEP)

**Note:** A total 969.5 hours were worked during the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 Labor Day Mobilization by 13 participating Agencies. A total of 2,801 citations and warnings were issued during this mobilization. For more information, contact Spencer Harris, Law Enforcement Liaison at 406-444-0856 or [sharris@mt.gov](mailto:sharris@mt.gov).

### ⇒ September 17-23, 2023

Child Passenger Safety Week (National Seat Check Saturday is September 23, 2023)

### ⇒ September 18-24, 2023

Rail Safety Week (Operation Lifesaver)

### ⇒ October 1-31, 2023

National Pedestrian Safety Month (National Walk & Roll to School Day is October 4, 2023: <https://walkbiketoschool.org>)

### ⇒ October 4-5, 2023 (See p. 2 for more info)

Annual Transportation Safety Meeting (CHSP)

### ⇒ October 15-21, 2023

National Teen Driver Safety Week

### ⇒ October 16-20, 2023

National School Bus Safety Week

### ⇒ October 31, 2023

Halloween Holiday—Drive Sober, Watch for Pedestrians!

### ⇒ November 13-17, 2023

Crash Responder Safety Week (CRSW)

### ⇒ November 23-26, 2023

Thanksgiving & Holiday Travel—Buckle Up & Drive Sober

### ⇒ December 16, 2023—January 1, 2024\*

Winter-Holiday Drive Sober Enforcement

**\*Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) Mobilization Periods**

# Safety is Always in Session: Back to School Travel Reminders and Tips

It's that time of year! Schools are back in session for 2023-2024, and many of Montana's children walk or bike to school every day. Motorists, as always, are reminded to share the road, use caution and look for bicyclists and pedestrians—especially near schools and in school zones. Safety is always in session, so let's ring in the school year by refreshing our knowledge about traffic safety and teaching our kids the same.

## Motorists should:

- Always avoid distractions while driving – including your phone.
- Watch for children walking or bicycling when backing out of driveways and garages, and when exiting alleyways (particularly in the morning and afternoon and as daylight hours decrease).
- Watch for children in school zones and be aware of nearby school routes.
- Slow down and watch for children at corners and bus stops.

It is also important for both bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages to:

- Pay attention and listen to their surroundings.
- Avoid cell phone use while walking and biking.
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing.
- Cross only at crosswalks and intersections.

Remember, children are not small adults. A child's peripheral vision is not fully developed. Children also have difficulty determining direction of sound and judging the speed and distance of moving motor vehicles. By being aware, slowing down, and observing traffic laws, you can do your part as a motorist to ensure Montana's children arrive to their destination safely.

Are you a parent or guardian of a child? There's no better time to teach them about pedestrian and bicycle safety! MDT has a wealth of safety and educational resources available online at [www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/), or by contacting MDT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at 406-444-9273 or [MDTBikePed@mt.gov](mailto:MDTBikePed@mt.gov).



## Safe Driving Around School Buses



➔ You should allow a *minimum* of 30 feet between your vehicle and a school bus making a passenger stop. But what might 30 feet look like?

### 2 Car Lengths



### 2.5 Snow Plows



### 3 Bison Lengths



### 22.5 Road Cones



## October is National Pedestrian Safety Month

In 2020, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) designated October as National Pedestrian Safety Month, making pedestrian safety the focus of the month as part of its continuing efforts to improve safety for vulnerable road users. October 2023 is the fourth year for this important safety period and is a great opportunity for Montanans to remember that at some point in our day, "we are all pedestrians." Watch for more messaging promoting National Pedestrian Safety Month this October on MDT's website ([www.mdt.mt.gov](http://www.mdt.mt.gov)) and social channels. You can also find safety tips and resources for non-motorized travel and transportation year-round online: [www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped/)



# MDT is Updating Its Storm Water Management Program

**M**ontana's streams and lakes are valuable resources that contribute to our economy, public health, and ecosystems. To protect these resources, MDT implements a statewide Storm Water Management Program (SWMP). This program is intended to reduce the discharge of pollutants from our transportation infrastructure into local surface waters. Components of this program include:

- Public education to raise awareness of behaviors and activities that impact storm water and to motivate action to reduce pollution;
- Strategies to involve key target audiences in the development and implementation of the SWMP;
- Detection and elimination of illicit (i.e. unauthorized) discharges;
- Reduction of pollutant runoff from construction activities;
- Control of storm water runoff from new development and redevelopment projects; and
- Implementation of an operation and maintenance program, including training, that prevents or reduces pollutant runoff from MDT operations.

In accordance with regulatory requirements, MDT's SWMP is specifically targeted to control storm water pollutant discharges in the following urban areas: Billings, Missoula, Great Falls, Butte, Helena, Kalispell, and Bozeman. The SWMP is the formal document that contains the strategies MDT is taking to reduce storm water runoff pollution into Montana's waterbodies.

As part of the requirements of the program, a 30-day public comment period was advertised and held August 7 through September 6 to solicit comments on MDT's annual SWMP update. Public and stakeholder involvement in annual plan updates is intended to improve the function of MDT's program and further protect water quality. MDT's June 2023 Revised Draft SWMP is still available online here:

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stormwater/>

MDT is addressing comments received and plans to issue a Final SWMP in the near future.

Changes in the June 2023 Revised Draft SWMP include clarification on the status of interlocal agreements and program legal authorities, inclusion of a standard operating procedure (SOP) update process, as well as identification of current SOP revisions, updates to MDT's Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation schedule, identification of significant non-stormwater discharges that may contribute pollutants to MDT's infrastructure, an inventory of MDT facilities and activities, updates to staff training frequencies, and revisions to MDT's impaired waterbody discharge status. Additionally, MDT added a measurable goal for post-construction site storm water management.

Although the official public comment period for this update has ended, MDT encourages and accepts comments on a continuous basis. If you have areas of concern regarding storm water discharges from MDT's transportation infrastructure and/or suggestions to improve other areas of the program listed above, please complete the MDT Storm Water Management Feedback Form located on MDT's website at <https://mt.accessgov.com/mdt/Forms/Page/mdt-tp/storm-water-management-feedback/0> or email comments to [mdtms4datamanager@mt.gov](mailto:mdtms4datamanager@mt.gov). Alternatively, comments can be mailed to the following physical address:

Montana Department of Transportation  
Environmental Services Bureau  
Attention: Tom Gocksch, P.E., Environmental  
Engineering Section Supervisor  
2701 Prospect  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

MDT's intent is to improve program implementation and public comments that are received will be considered in this SWMP version or during the next annual update in 2024.

# Rail Safety: Together, We Can #STOPTrackTragedies

**D**id you know that every three hours in the US, a person or vehicle is hit by a train? As part of the goal of Vision Zero for Montana, MDT works with Operation Lifesaver to educate people on how to be safe around highway-rail crossings and railroad tracks. One such annual effort is Rail Safety Week (September 18-24, 2023). This national safety week is a collaborative effort between Operation Lifesaver, Inc. and various rail safety partners across the US, Canada and Mexico.



MDT's Traffic Safety Engineering team promoting #RedOutForRailSafety during Rail Safety Week 2022.

Whether during Rail Safety Week or the rest of the year, MDT would like to encourage all Montanans to join in the conversation and do their part to always practice safe, legal behavior around railroad tracks and crossings. Together, we can #STOPTrackTragedies!

Learn more about railroad crossings in Montana and MDT's work with Operation Lifesaver here: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/roads/railroad-crossing.aspx>

## Summer Intern Program

**M**DT recently celebrated the success of another summer internship program. Interns that participated in 2023 were able to learn firsthand about their chosen career area of the department, ranging from research to engineering. This program starts in May and runs through mid-August, and typically expects a 40-hour work week, Monday-Friday. Internships are paid and available in a number of areas/divisions at MDT. Specific locations and roles vary annually, depending on department needs and upcoming projects. To be eligible to participate, students must:



MDT's internship program offers exciting opportunities in and out of the office!

- be enrolled in a college, university, or technical school; or be within 6 months of graduation date;
- have completed at least 60 academic credits (or 30 credits if enrolled in technical school); and
- be in good academic standing.

Interested in being an intern at MDT? Check out MDT's Current Openings ([www.mdt.mt.gov/jobs/current-openings.aspx](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/jobs/current-openings.aspx)) for future postings and more information, or contact MDT's Recruiter, Angela Murolo at [amurolo@mt.gov](mailto:amurolo@mt.gov). At MDT, you'll find more than just a job. You'll find a career!

Visit MDT's YouTube channel to meet the talented interns from this year's summer program, and hear about their experiences working for the department: <https://youtu.be/6yptsCZx0es?si=P9JiNQ8-qD9KqcbE>

# Paving the Way to the Future

*By Jon Axline, MDT Historian*

One of the questions I get most from people is “When was such-and-such highway paved?” Usually, it’s an easy question to answer as most of the state’s main highways were paved in the 1930s. The secondary roads came a little later, after World War II. Some secondary roads have never been paved and still have a gravel surface. But what was Montana’s first paved highway? Now that’s a good question.

Although the Highway Commission conducted a few experiments with paved roads in the late 1910s, serious discussions about paving roads with cement did not begin in commission meetings until 1920. On one level, the commissioners were not particularly supportive about paving roads. The commissioners viewed paved roads as an extravagance the state could ill-afford. Gravel and scoria surfaced roads, they believed, more than adequately served the needs of the state. Gravel was the preferred year-round surfacing. It was durable, drained water, and was easy to repair. The Highway Commission’s third biennial report stated that “Of all the 67,000 miles of public highway in the state probably not more than 100 miles carry a traffic which justifies immediate improvement with the so-called paved surface.” The Commission could only rationalize concrete paving on high traffic roads or where local officials specifically requested its use.

But despite what the Highway Commission told the state legislature in its 1920 biennial report, it made plans for an ambitious paving program. In February 1920, Commission Chairman Frank Conley authorized chief engineer John Edy to purchase cement from the Three Forks Portland Cement Company “for use in connection with proposed Federal Aid paving projects.” The cement company, based at Trident, agreed to sell cement directly to the state at a reduction of thirty cents per barrel. By October 1920, the Highway Commission had awarded 71 projects to contractors in 32 counties for a total of 560 miles of road improvements and 26 bridges. Of those roads, 502 miles would receive either an earth or gravel surface. The remaining 58 miles would be paved with either blacktop or concrete. Of the first ten paving projects, half involved paving city streets with cement. For concrete paved roads in Montana, the Highway Commission provided the cement.

The most ambitious projects involved the concrete paving of 23 miles of the Yellowstone Trail between Butte and Anaconda in Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties. On March 12, 1920, the Highway Commission awarded a project to Butte contractors Marco Medin, Dan Reardon, and P. J. O’Brien to build nine miles of concrete-paved highway in Silver Bow County. The project began at the foot of Emmett Avenue and proceeded west to the county line. The contractors won the project with their low bid of \$208,518. Medin began work on his section of the road on May 3. Five days later, the 75 men employed on the project went on strike. They declared an open shop and continued working on the project. The contractor began pouring concrete in July and had completed 4.5 miles of paved road by October. Winter weather shut down the project for the season in mid-October.

In early April 1920, the Highway Commissioner let a contract to Clifton, Applegate and Toole of Missoula to concrete-pave the 26 miles of the Butte-Anaconda Road in Deer Lodge County. The project began at the Anaconda city limits and would “proceed east as long as the money permitted.” The contractor avoided the labor problems experienced by Medin. By October, Clifton, Applegate and Toole completed eight miles of the highway. In celebration of the completion of that section, 252 cars passed over the route after a 54-gun salute (one for each Montana county), and a few words spoken by Governor Sam Stewart.

Completion of the first mile of concrete road in Montana was newsworthy. The Anaconda Standard stated that Deer Lodge County was the first in Montana to open a section of paved highway and then went on to predict the road “to be the liveliest 26 miles of roadway in

the Pacific Northwest!” Meanwhile, Highway Commission engineers made plans to eliminate a dangerous at-grade crossing of the Milwaukee Road Railroad on the Deer Lodge/Silver Bow County line. Deemed too expensive for a concrete or timber overpass, the engineers, instead, realigned five miles of the highway to the south to avoid the railroad crossing. Unfortunately, the section was not immediately paved. That would not occur for another seven years.

The road contractors completed the first concrete paved highway in Montana in September 1921. Christened the “Medin Highway” by the county commissioners in honor of Marco Medin, the highway was 26 miles in length and cost \$40,000 per mile to build (that’s a little over \$662,000 in 2022 dollars). The county and state split the cost of the project. Highway Commission resident engineer, U. S. Marshall, supervised the project for the state. When completed, the concrete road was 18 feet wide with the concrete eight inches thick at the crown, tapering to six inches at the edges. The highway was flanked by three-foot dirt shoulders. All culverts on the segment were reinforced concrete and the Anaconda Copper Mining Company provided the aggregate, which was crushed and “thoroughly washed” at the smelter. The Anaconda Standard wrote, “It is believed the success of the Butte-Anaconda concrete highway, the first in Montana, will result in considerable activity looking toward the construction of such roads throughout Montana during the years by counties assisted by the federal government.”

Unfortunately, that would not be the case. Between 1920 and 1928, the Highway Commission awarded 254 projects to contractors, improving 913.5 miles of roads and building 75 bridges. Of those projects, only 15 consisted of concrete paving for a total of 38.48 miles. Most were urban paving projects. In 1928, though, the Highway Commission began an ambitious program to pave Montana’s highways with road oil. A full road mix project involved mixing an asphaltic oil with crushed rock or gravel and blading it onto the gravel surface of the roadway, creating a hard blacktop surface. The federal make work programs of the Great Depression accelerated the road oiling program in Montana. Thus, by World War II, the state’s primary highway system was mostly paved. Improvements in bituminous paving materials after the war would transform the highway landscape in Montana.

The old Butte-Anaconda segment of US Highway 10 (US 10) still exists south of the I 15/I 90 alignment. You can still access it at several points. Until about 15 years ago, the original concrete surfacing was still exposed. But it had become badly cracked with large potholes. Driving it was difficult and hard on a vehicle’s tires and suspension. Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties have since resurfaced the road with asphalt, preserving the first concrete-paved Montana highway beneath it.

*Photo of  
“Montana’s  
First Paved  
Highway”  
(US 10),  
taken of a  
segment of  
the original  
route in Butte  
about 10  
years ago.*



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**MDT Wants Your Comments on New Projects**

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, please visit [www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/planning/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/planning/proposed_proj.pdf), [www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml), or call (800) 714-7296. You can mail comments on proposed projects to MDT Project Analysis Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 or email them to [mdtstip@mt.gov](mailto:mdtstip@mt.gov).

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