

# Project Summary

## Montana Transportation Choices

TRANSPORTATION CHOICES TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY CHARACTER, PUBLIC SAFETY, ECONOMIC VITALITY, AND NATURAL LANDSCAPES IN MONTANA

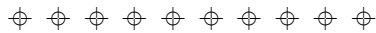


*Montana Smart Growth Coalition*  
and  
*Western Montana Alliance for Sustainable Transportation*

2004

# Project Summary Montana Transportation Choices

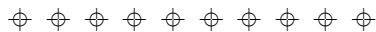
Transportation Choices to Enhance Community Character, Public Safety,  
Economic Vitality, and Natural Landscapes in Montana



A Policy Review  
Prepared for The Montana Smart Growth Coalition  
and the  
Western Montana Alliance for Sustainable Transportation

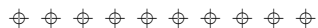
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2004

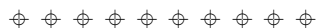


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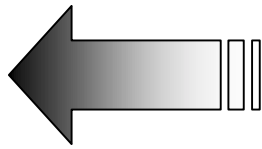
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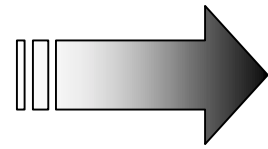
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# Montana Transportation Choices



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### *Steering Committee*

This project was organized and funded through WestMAST, in conjunction with the Montana Smart Growth Coalition.

This project was guided by a steering committee that devoted significant time and support for this effort. The Steering Committee was chaired by Mayre Flowers with Citizens For A Better Flathead (Kalispell), who also serves as head of the Montana Smart Growth Coalition Transportation Committee.

Committee members included Tim Davis with the Montana Smart Growth Coalition (Helena), Jim Olsen with the Highway 93 Citizens Coalition for Responsible Growth (Hamilton), Thompson Smith and Harold Young with Flathead Resource Organization (St. Ignatius), Deb Kmon Davidson with American Wildlands (Bozeman), Mark Haggerty with the Greater Yellowstone Coalition (Bozeman), Anne Hedges with Montana Environmental Information Center (Helena), and Marga Lincoln with AREO (Helena).

(See the appendix for a resource list of organizations affiliated with the Montana Smart Growth Coalition.)

The Committee is grateful to the many people who provided information, insight, and technical advice in the preparation and refinement of this report.

We are particularly thankful to community leaders and agencies who participated in the focus groups conducted by Charlier Associates and/or in our mail-in survey (see Appendix).

Finally, the Steering committee wishes to thank the Turner Foundation, which provided the bulk of the funding for this project, along with the Bullitt Foundation and the Wilburforce Foundation.

### *About the Montana Smart Growth Coalition*

The Montana Smart Growth Coalition (MSGC) is a network of organizations and individuals from across the state who share a commitment to just, affordable, and sustainable communities. The Coalition advocates for sensible policy, both locally and statewide, regarding land use, transportation, housing, sustainable agriculture, conservation of habitat, cultural diversity, economic equity, and the environment.

The MSGC includes forty member groups, representing a broad-based membership, including farming, ranching, affordable housing, local planning, and conservation organizations. WestMAST (see following page) members are now a part of the MSGC and provide key leadership on its transportation committee.

## *About WestMAST*

The Western Montana Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (WestMAST) is comprised of a coalition of organizations along US Hwy. 93 and is committed to achieving progressive transportation reform in Montana.

WestMAST's long efforts in this area contributed toward the ultimate precedent-setting agreement between Tribal, Federal, and State officials on the reconstruction of U.S. Highway 93 through the Flathead Indian Reservation, which resulted in a limited highway size, a thorough integration of landscape architect concepts into the road's design, and perhaps the most extensive investment in wildlife crossings of any comparable highway in the nation.

WestMAST also saw recent successes in the development and implementation of an advisory group model used in the Bitterroot for greater citizen participation in transportation planning.

Steering committee members include Citizens For A Better Flathead, Flathead Resource Organization, and Highway 93 Citizens' Coalition for Responsible Planning.

## *Technical Work*

Technical work on this project was conducted by Charlier Associates, Inc. of Boulder, Colorado. Jim Charlier managed the project and prepared this report. Charlier Associates is nationally recognized for their work and for special awareness of, and sensitivity to, the unique transportation issues facing western mountain communities.



Rainstorm over Montana farmland. *Dennis Glick.*

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Livingston, Montana. Dennis Glick.





Road widening. U.S. Highway 93. Kalispell, Montana. CFBF Archives.

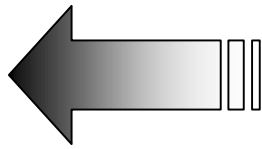
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## PRIMARY THEMES

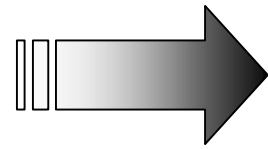
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As a result of the research and analysis conducted for this Study, three overriding themes have emerged and are reflected throughout this Summary. They are:

1. There is a need for more local control in transportation decision making in Montana.
2. It is clear that wise transportation choices will have a major influence on development patterns in Montana—perhaps more than any other single force.
3. Sound transportation policies at the state level are essential to sustaining strong local and regional economies in Montana.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THIS SUMMARY

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This Summary presents an overview of the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the Montana Transportation Choices Study. Details of the Study findings have been published in a set of issue papers addressing issues and topics identified by stakeholders from across Montana during 2002. These issue papers are available from the sponsoring organizations (see inside cover page).

The purpose of this Study was to evaluate Montana's state transportation program in light of current guidelines, goals, and requirements contained in federal transportation laws, and to compare Montana's transportation program to best practices among the states in key policy areas of importance to Montana's citizens.

(See the box on page 9 for an explanation of common terms used in this Summary.)

Transportation infrastructure has always been one of the primary forces shaping development patterns in Montana. The state's oldest native villages and centers of population—and later, cities and towns—were located along rivers, cross-country trade routes, and railroads. Since World War II, the location and growth of the state's communities has been driven primarily by the state's evolving network of roads, streets, and highways.

With a gross density of 6.2 people per square mile (compared to 80.5 nationally), Montana is a state with compact cities and towns (where most of its people live), and vast areas of open lands. Transportation choices made by Montanans over the next decade could have a profound effect on the future of the state's cities and towns, and on its landscape.

The passage of the 1997 update to the federal surface transportation authorization act (Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) brought a major increase in annual highway funds flowing to Montana from the federal government (an increase of \$150 million annually). Virtually all of this money has gone into construction of new state highway capacity. The state continues to place little or no emphasis on development of a multimodal transportation program.

This trend raises the stakes considerably, presenting the specter of rampant sprawl development associated with over-expansion of rural state highways as has occurred elsewhere in the West. The resulting impacts to community character, environmental values, economic viability, and energy sustainability threaten Montana's status as the "last best place" and should be cause for concern at the highest policy levels in Montana.

This Summary is organized around five subjects, reflecting the most important of the issues identified by stakeholders:

1. Highway Capacity Investments, Access Management, Land Development Patterns, and Induced Travel
2. Transportation Program Funding and Prioritization
3. Highways, Wildlife Corridors, and Wildlife Habitat
4. Context Sensitive Highway Design
5. Community Planning, Citizen Empowerment



Rural trophy homes in Montana. *Dennis Glick.*



## Common Terms and Acronyms Used In This Summary

**Transportation**—Personal mobility, access, circulation, and freight movement.

**Multimodal Transportation**—The full range of travel modes, including motor vehicles, public transit, walking and bicycling, and variations of these.

**Sprawl**—Low-density, dispersed development extending away from existing population centers, usually encompassing issues relating to growth, development patterns, environmental impacts, land use, cost of public services, and the vitality of existing communities.

**ISTEA**—Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. The 1990 federal legislation that completely revamped the federal surface transportation program, ushering in the modern era in transportation planning and investment.

**TEA-21**—Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century. The 1997 update to ISTEA that made significant changes, including funding changes affecting Montana.

**MDT or Montana Department of Transportation**—The state transportation agency in Montana responsible for building, maintaining, and operating the state's highways, and also responsible for planning and investing in multimodal transportation systems.

**MPO or Metropolitan Planning Organization**—An agency required by federal law that is made up of both state and local officials, and has significant responsibility and authority to make transportation planning and investment decisions.

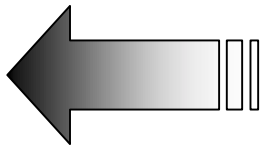
**VMT or Vehicle Miles of Travel**—A measure of the amount of vehicular travel (per capita, per household, or within some geographical area). One vehicle traveling one mile = 1 VMT.

**CTEP or Community Transportation Enhancement Program**—CTEP projects are transportation-related activities designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of Montana's transportation system. Mandated by federal legislation, CTEP is an important source of funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

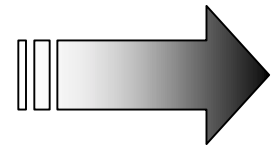
**Transit**—A general term applied in Montana to passenger bus and van services available for use by the public. Includes both demand response services and services operating on fixed routes with fixed schedules.

**LOS or Level of Service**—An engineering term originally used to describe the relationship between the capacity of a roadway and the volume of traffic on that roadway. The most common rating system employs letter grades (A-B-C-D-E-F) to describe conditions ranging from low traffic and free-flow driving (A) to stop-and-go congestion (F).

**Access Management**—The control of driveways and street connections to public roadways in order to manage traffic flow and safety, preserve the carrying capacity of the road, and implement coordinated land use and transportation plans.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## MONTANA HIGHWAY CAPACITY INVESTMENTS, ACCESS MANAGEMENT, LAND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS, AND INDUCED TRAVEL

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Montana has added about 200,000 people since 1970. The state grew rapidly in the 1970s and again for a while in the early 1990s. Overall, Montana's growth rate since 1970 has averaged about three-fourths of the national growth rate.

At the same time, there has been disparity within Montana in the rate and extent of growth. While many eastern counties lost population in the 1990s, many areas of western Montana experienced some of the highest population growth rates in the nation. Further, much of the growth in western Montana over the past couple of decades has occurred outside of towns and cities.

Of course, transportation policy does not and cannot cause the state's population to grow, or not grow. However, transportation investments—especially roads—do shape where growth occurs within regions, and within the influence areas of cities and towns.

In fact, research has shown that investment in road capacity is often the most influential factor determining where growth will occur within regional markets.

Most of Montana's population still lives within cities and towns, and sprawl has not advanced nearly as far (yet) as it has in some other western states. However, the highway building boom initiated in Montana in the 1990s threatens to change this, leading to widespread low-density development in rural areas.

Highway investments have a significant impact on the location of growth because they reduce travel time in affected corridors by reducing delay and increasing travel speed. New alignment roadways create more direct routes, and "add lanes" projects increase average speeds. These changes, in turn, affect where land development pressures will be felt.



Rural development near Bozeman. *Tim Crawford.*

For a given family or individual travel time budget, reduced travel time means a larger range of the landscape becomes feasible for occupation. Coupled with low land prices farther out from existing city centers, this encourages what we know as “sprawl development.” (Europeans use a more prosaic term—“splash development”—to describe the actual patterns that result.)

*Road capacity may be the most influential factor determining where growth will occur within regional markets.*

An important concern for Montanans should be: When do additions to state highway capacity, either through new centerline miles of roadway or through expanded capacity along existing roadways, represent good planning and sound economic investments? When do they represent poor investments?

Of particular concern are the unintended consequences of an overly aggressive rural state highway expansion program, including sprawl and induced travel.

Over-investment in Montana’s rural state highways:

- Leads to an inefficient concentration of traffic on arterial roadways;
- Stimulates land development patterns that increase daily household travel, increasing the amount of family income devoted to transportation;

- Increases the cost of providing local government services (e.g., fire protection) to the resulting sprawled settlement pattern; and,
- Hurts the state’s economy by increasing energy dependence and capital outflow.

One of the costly side effects of an overly aggressive rural state highway building program is “induced travel.” This effect consumes a significant percentage of the new roadway capacity achieved through construction of new roads or through addition of lanes and interchanges, thereby erasing most of the intended benefits of capacity investments.

Induced travel is the additional travel that results directly and indirectly from a transportation capacity or travel time improvement—travel that would not otherwise have occurred at that location.

This occurs in all modes, and is well documented in the motor vehicle, transit, and bicycle modes. For state highways, induced travel means the increased motor vehicle traffic associated with roadway capacity investments.



Foothills of Bridger Mountains, Montana. Tim Crawford.



Heavy traffic on Reserve Street, Highway 93. Missoula, Montana. *John Williams.*

Induced travel has long been a subject of study and analysis in transportation planning and engineering. Current research focuses on the timing of induced traffic effects and techniques for forecasting the effects. However, there is no question about whether new roadway capacity induces additional traffic—that is well accepted by traffic engineers throughout the U.S.

However, Montana DOT does not routinely acknowledge or estimate the induced traffic resulting from expansion of state highways. State traffic forecasts ignore the effects of induced traffic. Road projects are advocated either as “congestion relief” measures in rapidly growing areas of the state, or as “economic development” measures in areas with no growth pressure.

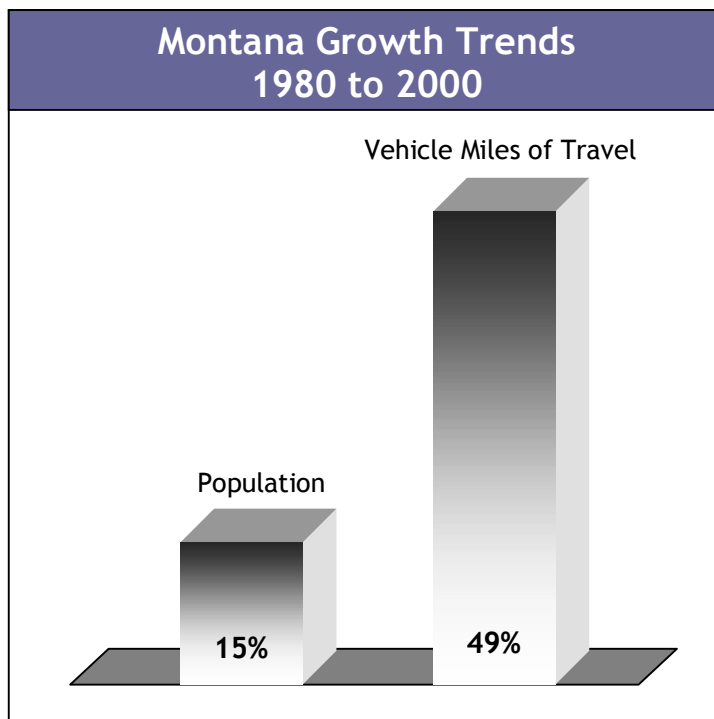
Neither of these benefits will actually accrue from rural highway expansion.

Specific policy issues of particular importance to Montanans include:

1. Unresolved conflicts between MDT highway expansion projects and local land use plans and community development objectives
2. Higher cost of public services associated with low-density suburban development patterns
3. Missed opportunity from not focusing roadway program expenditures in existing cities and towns to support redevelopment and infill
4. Problems with access management along state highways, with associated impacts on land development patterns

## Study Conclusions

- Induced traffic consumes 60% to 100% of the capacity provided by highway expansion where there is existing traffic congestion and demand for land development. Capacity projects designed to “relieve congestion” have more effect on land development than on traffic congestion.
- Little or no induced traffic results from projects in economically depressed areas where traffic congestion is not endemic. Where the purpose of a highway capacity project is to induce economic growth, the actual benefits will not measure up to project costs.
- In areas where there are growth pressures, traffic generated by expansion of rural state highways increases daily vehicle miles of travel per capita and per household.



- Montana Department of Transportation, in its Memorandum of Agreement on Highway 93 through the Flathead Reservation, acknowledged effects of induced traffic. That document states, “Improvement and expansion of U.S. 93 will induce population growth, parcel subdivision, and development and construction in the U.S. 93 corridor. These activities will cause habitat fragmentation, environmental impacts, and significant changes to the Reservation landscape.” However, MDT has not, as an institution, formally recognized the problem of induced traffic.
- Increases in personal vehicular travel are detrimental to the state’s economy. Higher per capita VMT increases energy dependence, drains cash from the state, and makes Montana vulnerable to increased energy costs. Higher VMT also increases the percentage of family budgets that goes into travel, reducing other expenditures more beneficial to the Montana economy.
- Roadway “level of service” (LOS) is a concept that is used to guide decision making about state and local highways in Montana. While its use as one concept within a suite of analytical tools is appropriate and sometimes necessary, the current over-reliance on this one measure, and the technical misuse and misapplication of the LOS concept in general, represent serious public policy issues for Montanans.



- Aside from methodological issues and a complex relationship with traffic safety, the most serious problems with the roadway LOS concept are the fact that it focuses narrowly on increasing the *supply* of roadway capacity as the primary (or only) objective, and the fact that it disregards a need for *modal balance*.

- Over-reliance on state highways for travel in Montana leads to under-development of local and collector roadways, concentration of traffic in a few congested corridors, and unnecessary increases in VMT.

- Inadequate access management results in a system of continuous access roadways that facilitate corridor-oriented development patterns everywhere, even in locations where this is not consistent with local land use planning.

- Such continuous access roadways are self-defeating in terms of congestion relief and are disastrous for local land development patterns.

- MDT's "Systems Impact Action Process" provides a process for review of access permits, but does not fully address issues described in this section.

- As roadway capacity in state highway corridors is

increased, residential development will migrate out from cities to take advantage of intrinsic land values and lower land prices.

- The resulting "splash development" changes the region, including its core city, in ways that are undesirable for community character, quality of life, and affordability.



Madison River Valley, near Ennis, Montana. Dennis Glick.

## Best Practices - Highway Capacity, Access Management, Land Development Patterns, and Induced Travel

### **Florida Growth Management Act**

Legislation enacted in 1986 (and updated several times since) requires local governments (cities, towns, and counties) to develop comprehensive plans, including transportation elements. These plans set the future for local and state roadways. While the state DOT has an influential role in determining what highway projects will be shown in state and local plans, the DOT must ultimately conform to adopted plans in its programs. Extensive public involvement requirements are a major feature of the Act as are "standing" provisions enabling citizens and neighboring jurisdictions to challenge plans. Concurrency provisions of the original Act are of questionable value in transportation planning, but do provide a framework for revealing to the public the likely interaction between local growth trends and the state highway construction program. More information at: [www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/complanning/comprehensiveplanning.htm](http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/complanning/comprehensiveplanning.htm).

### **State of Washington Growth Management Act**

Washington's 1990 GMA was modeled in part on Florida's Act, and on Florida's experience with that legislation, including a 1989 assessment by a Florida Governor's Task Force examining how well the Florida Act was working. A key difference in Washington's GMA was the decision to limit the application of the statute to urban areas (primarily along the coast and in the Puget Sound Region), leaving rural governments free of the expense associated with developing growth management plans. Transportation plans of state and regional entities must be consistent with local plans. Considerable negotiation goes into determining what transportation projects will be built and where. While the concurrency idea is carried over from the Florida law, more freedom is given to local governments to design level of service standards that meet local land planning objectives. The GMA includes provisions for local Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) that are based on population forecasts given by the State and on extensive regional coordination among local entities. Finally, the Washington GMA gives a lead role to urban counties to set countywide policies and coordinate the UGAs of cities and towns within the county. More information at: [www.ocd.wa.gov/info/lgd/growth/](http://www.ocd.wa.gov/info/lgd/growth/).

### **Florida Access Management Program**

Florida DOT has the nation's most complete, progressive program for controlling and managing access to the state highway system. The Florida program is effective in part because it provides for a high level of coordination with affected local jurisdictions. FDOT will not issue access permits in most cases without evidence of prior site plan approval by the relevant city or county. FDOT provides training to local planning staff in access management principles and in the state program. An important feature of the program has been the adoption of statewide standards for driveway spacing, local street connections, and other access characteristics that are tied to the functional classification of the affected roadway and to local growth management plans. More information at: [www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/systems/sm/accman/](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/systems/sm/accman/).

### **Colorado Access Management Program**

Colorado was the first state to adopt a statewide access management program including standards for access points and a uniform permitting process. The Colorado State Highway Access Code is a regulatory document that outlines permit standards for access onto state highways. In general, local governments in Colorado require developers to obtain access permits prior to city or county approval of subdivisions and site plans. CDOT works to maintain a high level of coordination with local staff and provides ongoing training in the access management system. Details available at: [www.dot.state.co.us/AccessPermits/601\\_1\\_AccessCode\\_May2002.pdf](http://www.dot.state.co.us/AccessPermits/601_1_AccessCode_May2002.pdf).

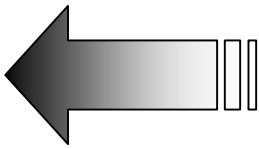
### **Trust for Public Land - "Taking the High Road"**

This 2002 TPL report describes how road builders and conservationists can work together "toward an improved national highway policy—one that minimizes the impacts of highway development and brings about smarter land use practices. Taking the High Road examines problems such as the environmental impacts of road construction and the spiraling of land prices along new roads, and it promotes best practices for linking land use and road construction and includes state and local success stories." Best practices cited include Fairfax County's "parkway" development; State of Delaware's use of open space strategies to preserve highway capacity; and other examples from Minnesota, California, and Washington. Copy available at: [www.tpl.org/tier3\\_cd.cfm?content\\_item\\_id=10863&folder\\_id=175](http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cd.cfm?content_item_id=10863&folder_id=175), or search publications at: [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org).

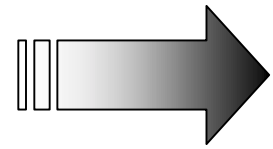
## *Study Recommendations*

The State of Montana should implement the following policies and approaches in planning, designing, and funding state highway capacity projects. These should be implemented either as agency policies or through legislation, as indicated.

1. The legislature should mandate a comprehensive program of access management for all state highways (modeled after programs in Colorado and Florida and drawing on the lessons learned from the Highway 93 project on the Flathead Indian Reservation), including:
  - a. a statewide access classification system;
  - b. comprehensive and uniform access standards based on functional classification;
  - c. a process for intergovernmental coordination and cooperation in issuance of access permits to state highways, based on state standards and local land use plans.
  - d. provisions allowing special access management agreements between MDT and individual local governments setting up special review and approval processes to be used in that jurisdiction.
  - e. new or widened continuous access state highways should be allowed only in those instances where that is the design most consistent with local land use plans. Where insufficient funding is available to achieve managed access, proposed projects should be modified, postponed, or deferred.
2. The state legislature should mandate that transportation programs and projects of the state and of local governments must be planned, designed, and implemented in a manner that responds to, and is supportive of, local and tribal growth policies and transportation plans. Legislation should require that MDT:
  - a. provide technical expertise and financial support to local and tribal governments as they develop growth policies and local transportation plans;
  - b. work proactively with local and tribal governments to help them develop growth policies, plans, and regulations that will support development of an integrated state, regional, and local multimodal transportation system that is efficient and safe and accommodates future growth;
  - c. de-emphasize highway capacity increases and use of LOS measurement as criteria for roadway investment.
3. MDT should develop a methodology for predicting induced traffic resulting from proposed highway capacity projects. Forecasts of induced traffic and the net economic benefits of projects should be required for all state highway projects prior to programming and again prior to construction (at final design). Predicting induced traffic should be done without complex travel models. Forecasts of induced traffic should be presented and discussed in the public process for highway projects, at the programming stage and again early in final design.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FUNDING AND PRIORITIZATION

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Montana's state transportation program represents a major force shaping the state's cities, towns, and countryside, as well as a major influence on the state's economy and quality of life.

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) spends \$500 million annually, over half of which is federal funding. This money is spent primarily on construction, reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of state highways and bridges. This funding should be used in a manner that results in improved quality of life and economic well-being for Montanans.

In the 1970s, states began converting their "road departments" into "departments of transportation" to broaden their transportation efforts into multimodal approaches.



Shopping, downtown Kalispell. *Mayre Flowers.*

This transition occurred more rapidly in urban states due to the multimodal nature of urban transportation needs. It has taken longer in rural states where roads continue to be the only real priority. Often, the conversion to a "DOT" has represented more of a change in labeling than a real change in policy. The road building lobby is well established and effective in every state.

Federal laws governing use of federal funds have evolved significantly since 1990. The last two federal surface transportation program authorizations (ISTEA and TEA-21) introduced sweeping changes in the structure of federal highway programs and in the use of "surface transportation program" funds for multimodal purposes.

The structure of the federal program has been substantially revised, and new features have been created to enable the states to pursue more balanced multimodal state transportation programs. These features have included establishing an *enhancements* program to fund bicycle and pedestrian needs (among other uses) and giving the states authority to "flex" federal highway funds—invest them in transit, or in projects benefiting other modes of travel.

Provisions in these laws also increased public empowerment in transportation decision making and strengthened consideration of environmental and land use factors in transportation planning.

*One of the primary implications of TEA-21 was a major increase in highway program funding to Montana.*

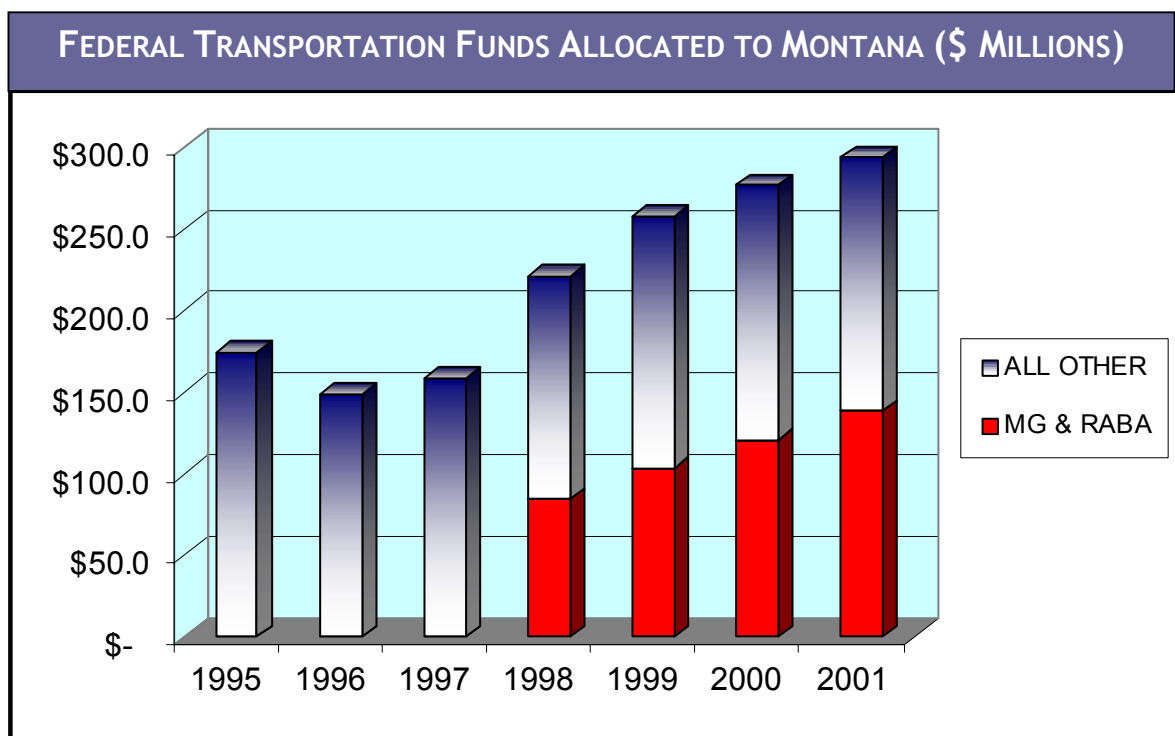
The greatest changes have occurred in urban areas where Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have been given greatly expanded authority over investment priorities and allocation of funds between projects and programs.

Correspondingly, the greatest changes at the state level have occurred in urban states (New Jersey, California, Florida, etc.) where the presence of large MPOs

has required a statewide adjustment in program structure and management. Other significant changes in federal legislation in the 1998 rewrite of the federal statutes (TEA-21) have been especially significant for Montana. One of the primary implications of TEA-21 was a major increase in highway program funding to Montana.

This increase was attributable to two provisions of TEA-21: one creating a "minimum guarantee" (MG) of funding, and the other providing for distribution of spending authority in excess of the amounts anticipated at the time the legislation was written (Revenue Adjusted Budget Authority—RABA).

Montana's annual federal highway funding levels increased by about \$150 million annually as a direct result of these provisions.







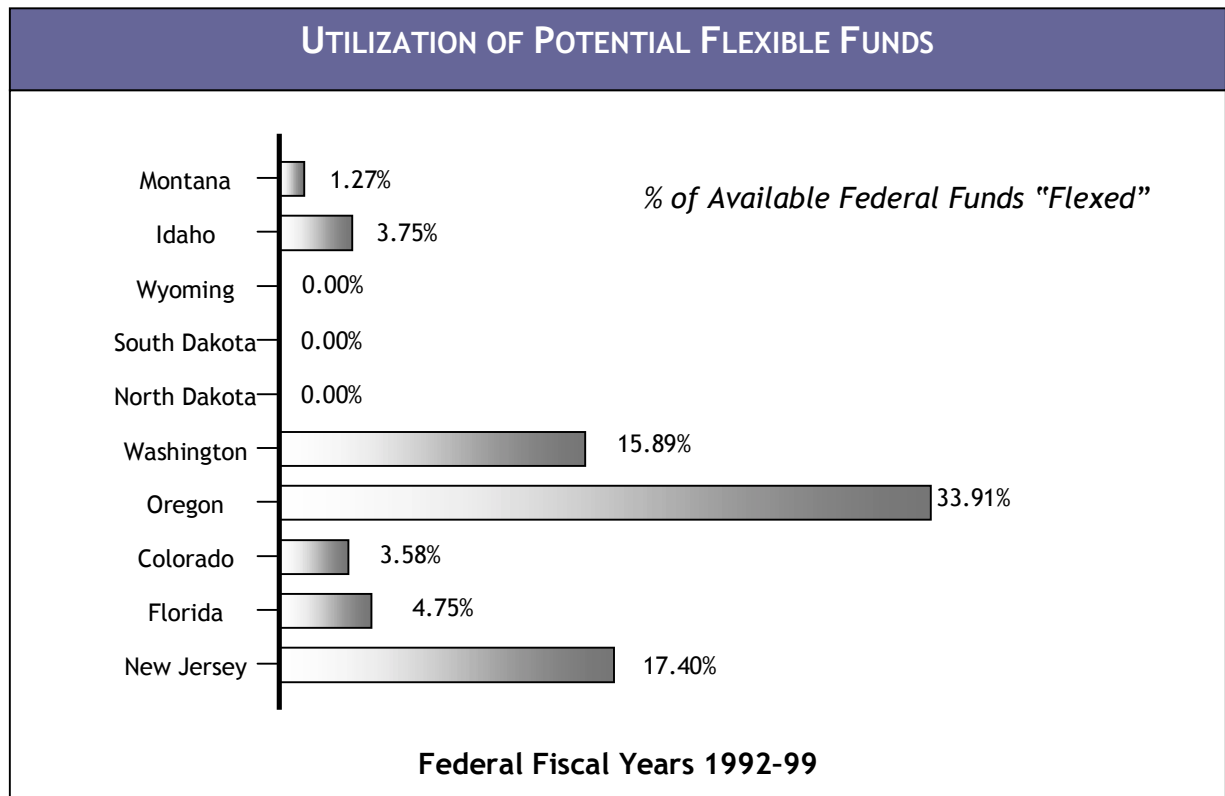
Modern transit center. Missoula, Montana. John Williams.

Specific policy issues of particular importance to Montanans include:

1. Has the State placed enough emphasis on urban public transit as a necessary component of public mobility?
2. Has the State made an adequate commitment to developing complete and safe nonmotorized elements of the transportation system?
3. Is the State making the right allocation of **state** funds among highway, transit, transportation demand management, and non-motorized programs?
4. Is the State making the right allocation of **federal** funds among highway, transit, and non-motorized programs, including use of "flexible funding" authority?
5. Is MDT planning for, and funding, bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized vehicles as integral elements of state highway corridors?
6. Should Montana consider a "Fix it first" provision--the prioritization of highway program funds among routine maintenance, rehabilitation and repair, and new construction?
7. Is the State making the right distribution of federal and state transportation funding between the state, counties, and urban areas?

## Study Conclusions

- Most of Montana's state funding for transportation is dedicated by law (State Constitution) to highways and bridges. The limitation of state funding to roads has far-reaching consequences. Most importantly, the result is that MDT is cannot spend state funds on public transit (with one or two very limited exceptions). This takes Montana out of the transit planning and development business.
- Urban public transit will be vital to the development of viable, livable, and sustainable cities in Montana. Cities over 25,000 population and cities and towns with significant summer tourism should be planning for scheduled, fixed-route bus service augmented by demand response and special needs services. (Montana cities will not be large enough to justify rail transit systems for at least several decades.) Public transit is a key structural element necessary to multimodal mobility, with special value for families, including the young and elderly, and for employers.
- Urban transit systems currently operate in Great Falls, Billings, Missoula, Butte, and Kalispell. These are supported primarily by local funding. They do qualify for federal transit assistance. However, the lack of state funding for urban transit services slows the rate at which those systems can grow and handicaps them in their efforts to compete for federal transit funding since they don't have access to state funds for matching federal grants.



- Federal legislation has given states flexibility to utilize a portion of their federal highway funds on transit (and other mode) projects. This offers a way to help with transit capital needs, especially for states like Montana that receive limited direct federal transit capital assistance.
- However, the lack of significant state transportation funding for anything other than highways serves as a barrier to use of flexible funding authority. For this and other reasons, Montana has not made much use of the flex fund provisions.
- Over the past decade, federal legislation and rules have emphasized walking and bicycling. The Federal Highway Administration has specifically directed states to place greater emphasis on these modes. This direction, however, has been widely ignored in rural states.
- Montana has chosen not to allocate funds to its enhancement program beyond minimums required in federal law. Further, MDT's policy is that bicycle and pedestrian needs may not be met as part of the funding of highway projects. This means as highways are built, sidewalks, bike lanes, and paths may not be funded out of the funds supporting the highway elements of these projects. Instead, local governments may be required to use CTEP monies to ensure needed facilities are built.
- While Montana has historically emphasized highway maintenance, this has changed with windfall monies from TEA-21. The new federal funds (about \$150 million annually to Montana) have been spent expanding highways. And, Montana continues to shift budget (obligation authority) to its highway construction program.

Comparative Use of Federal Funding Authority By Peer States				
	% of Federal Funds to Alternative Modes in '98 & '99	Federal Funds Obligation Rate ('92-'99)		
		Enhancements	CMAQ (1)	NHS (2)
Rural Western States				
Montana	2.98%	78.03%	71.43%	110.05%
Idaho	4.25%	55.69%	61.04%	104.20%
Wyoming	3.26%	99.50%	66.96%	88.58%
South Dakota	3.59%	63.94%	100.12%	87.22%
North Dakota	3.98%	75.63%	90.43%	87.97%
Urban/Rural Western States				
Washington	20.34%	60.30%	79.31%	100.58%
Oregon	24.82%	62.34%	76.33%	108.77%
Colorado	20.66%	77.33%	58.77%	93.85%
Urban Eastern States				
Florida	18.11%	99.94%	77.06%	99.03%
New Jersey	36.62%	82.88%	88.68%	88.44%
(1) Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (2) National Highway System				



Rails-to-trails conversion to multi-use pathway. Somers, Montana. *Mayre Flowers.*

- Montana's 14 largest cities generate more in fuel taxes than they receive to build and maintain local roads. Yet, the wisest investment of highway funding would be in existing cities and towns, where it would sustain local economic vitality, support redevelopment and infill, and reduce the subsidization of low-density rural and suburban development.
- Modally-balanced transportation programs are most likely to emerge where there are MPOs (metropolitan planning organizations) able to set local priorities and less susceptible to pressures from state road building lobbies. The most progressive flexing of federal funds has occurred in states where MPOs play a major role in fund allocation and project prioritization. However, Congress has not extended this type of local control over transportation funding to rural areas. The result is that in states without large cities (including Montana), state DOTs continue to place financial emphasis on road building and are less likely to reflect local priorities and needs in project programming.
- Accurate, timely information and data about the relationships discussed in this section are difficult to obtain. Most ordinary citizens would never be able to pull this kind of information together, and as a result, Montanans do not have ready access to information about how the State is utilizing its federal funds and flex funds authority. This issue is so complex, and data so unavailable, that citizens are essentially disenfranchised from active involvement in decision making about Montana's use of federal funds.



- The design and layout of our infrastructure and places directly and significantly affects our ability to walk and bike, as well as our willingness to travel by means other than personal vehicle. This, in turn, directly and significantly affects the personal physical health and well-being of Montana's residents. Research by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shows that the health of children is particularly at risk, as inactivity due to auto-oriented development patterns is leading directly to an epidemic of obesity and Type II diabetes (previously rare in children), as well as other physical and learning disabilities.
- At the same time, people indicate in surveys that being able to walk in their communities for short trips is an important feature that they associate with high "quality of life." They desire this feature and will pay higher prices for homes in neighborhoods and communities that provide it (according to the Urban Land Institute). The bottom line is that active living is a fundamental and important value that may outweigh other design considerations in urban development and transportation infrastructure.



A trip to the post office. Whitefish, Montana. *Mayre Flowers*.



## Best Practices - Transportation Funding and Prioritization

### **Colorado State Transit Set Aside**

The Legislature in 2002 set aside 10% of a special statewide sales tax for use exclusively on public transit capital projects throughout the State. The statewide tax was originally enacted to fund transportation projects. However, because the State DOT was devoting the entire program to roadway projects, the Legislature amended the Act to provide a minimum 10% to public transit. As sales tax collections grow, this set aside will eventually provide over \$25 million annually to transit projects in Colorado. An attempt during the 2003 legislative session to delete the transit set aside was narrowly defeated.

### **Florida Public Transit Block Grant Program**

The "Public Transit Block Grant Program" is allocated by state law from the proceeds of state sales taxes, a program that has been in place since 1990. Only capital projects are eligible, and most of the money (\$60 to \$70 million annually) is utilized to provide matching funds for federal transit capital grants. See Chapters 14-73 Florida Revised Statutes.

### **Central Florida Off-The-Top Allocation to Public Transit**

The Orlando area MPO has allocated 20% to 30% of the region's federal surface transportation (STP) funds directly to LYNX, the regional transit provider. These funds have supplemented LYNX's regular allocation of federal capital funds so that it could pursue transit capital projects, such as a downtown transit center.

### **New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund and "Fix It First"**

Legislation in 1999 eliminated the dedication of State transportation trust funds (including gas taxes) to road projects. The State now allocates about 44% of the Trust Fund directly to New Jersey Transit, the state's public transit corporation. Much of the State's total transportation program funding is allocated directly to the three MPOs. The State's "Fix It First" law, passed in 2000, requires NJDOT to place emphasis on repair of existing roads and bridges, to obtain line item approval for new highway construction projects, and to submit annual report cards on progress toward repair of structurally deficient roadways and bridges.

### **Portland (Oregon) Regional Flex Funds**

Over the past decade, the Portland area MPO has flexed nearly half of its STP funds and significant portions of its congestion mitigation air quality (CMAQ) funds into transit, a process carried out through the programming of the Regional Transportation Improvement Program. The principal beneficiary of this program has been Tri-Met, the regional transit provider, which has received over \$20 million annually.

### **California Transit Funding**

California has flexed about a third of the total funds technically eligible for flexing—the leader nationally. From 1992 through 1999, the State flexed over \$1.2 billion, primarily into public transit programs and projects. Two factors influence this use of flex authority. First, most of the State's federal funds are distributed directly to the MPOs, which are actively involved in major rail corridor programs. The second factor is the availability of significant local, regional, and state funding for multimodal transportation programs, including transit. This equips local governments and transit agencies with the necessary matching funds to take advantage of federal fund flexing authority. Information available at: [www.dot.ca.gov/hq/transprog/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/transprog/).

### **Oregon Bike Bill**

The Oregon "Bike Bill" was originally passed in 1973. Oregon has perhaps the most comprehensive approach to bicycling and pedestrian needs of any state. The Bike Bill requires ODOT, cities, and counties to provide walkways and bikeways on roadway construction, reconstruction, or relocation projects and requires that they be funded from the highway project funding source. Other provisions of the Bill require a minimum set aside of state and local transportation funding for use on bicycle and pedestrian projects. The Bike Bill is available on line at [www.ncppa.org/Oregon%20Bike%20Bill.pdf](http://www.ncppa.org/Oregon%20Bike%20Bill.pdf).



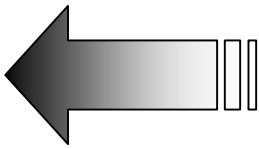
Lack of sidewalks puts pedestrians at risk. Near Kalispell. *Mayre Flowers.*

### *Study Recommendations*

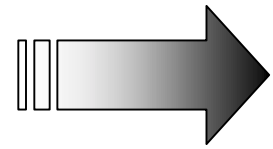
The State of Montana should implement the following policies and approaches, either as agency policies or through legislation, as appropriate.

1. Montana's urban areas need balanced multimodal transportation systems with integrated motor vehicle, public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks. State funds to leverage local and federal funds could, even at modest levels, make a significant difference in mobility and quality of life in Montana's cities and towns. A broad coalition of transportation interests (including highway advocates) should be established to pursue *additional* state funding for transportation. A portion of this should be set aside for multimodal programs, and a "safe routes to school" program should be included.
2. Montana should establish performance objectives for its highway program. The objectives should apply to state and federal fund sources and should:
  - a. de-emphasize add-lanes and new roadway capacity projects;
  - b. focus investment in existing cities and towns rather than rural areas;
  - c. prioritize recapitalization and maintenance of existing roadways above funding for new capacity;
  - d. emphasize congestion management strategies, including intersection improvements and travel demand management.

- e. Emphasize access management as a congestion management and system preservation strategy.
  - f. Provide for travel demand management programs as required elements in every major state highway corridor project.
3. Montana should revise its policy on enhancements funding. The updated policy (perhaps modeled on Oregon's policy) should state that the appropriate accommodation of walking and bicycling will be included in the design of every state highway project and will be funded through the funding source supporting the highway improvement. Enhancements (the CTEP program) should then become an additional source of funding for bike and pedestrian needs where highway expansion projects are otherwise not planned. This change should be coordinated with the State's cities and counties.
  4. The State should establish a task force of local government representatives, MDT staff, and legislators to study the allocation of transportation trust funds between MDT and local governments, especially the major cities. The study should recommend a reallocation of state transportation funds to increase emphasis on urban transportation needs and end the over-expansion of rural state highways.
  5. The State should implement an annual Transportation Funding Report. This report should detail Montana's response (both in its annually updated transportation program and in the projects initiated that year) to the flex funds authority, transportation enhancements set aside, and other key provisions of federal surface transportation funding. This Report should be written in a manner that enables ordinary citizens to read and understand it, and should explicitly:
    - a. compare the potential flex funding available to Montana with the amount actually flexed;
    - b. compare the maximum potential transportation enhancements program allocation with the amount actually allocated;
    - c. show how monies coming to Montana pursuant to "Revenue Adjusted Budget Authority" and "Minimum Guarantee" funding are being allocated and spent in MDT's work program;
    - d. show how the state's obligation authority is being allocated among programs and among modes;
    - e. describe the allocation of highway program funds among new construction (add-lanes, intersection reconstruction, new centerline miles, etc.), resurfacing and rehabilitation, and routine maintenance; and,
    - f. describe how funds originally allocated to reprogrammed projects were reallocated to other projects.
  6. The State should work with its congressional delegation to include in the Surface Transportation Program reauthorization provisions creating rural planning organizations (RPOs) with a power over transportation programs similar to those currently extended to MPOs.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## HIGHWAYS, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS, AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

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Rural highways—especially wide, heavily-traveled highways—represent major barriers for wildlife. They affect daily circulation patterns and herd movement and affect seasonal migration patterns.

Roads result in five distinct impacts:

- Direct habitat loss from roads;
- Introduction of humans, houses, and development into previously less-developed areas;
- Fragmentation of habitat;
- Alteration of behavior as animals seek to avoid roads; and,
- Direct destruction of wildlife in roadway collisions with vehicles.

The Humane Society estimates more than a million vertebrates are killed daily on roadways in the U.S.—the number one way that humans kill wildlife. Of course, humans are killed in these accidents, too. More than 200 people die nationally each year in animal-vehicle collisions.

According to MDT, there were 1,796 collisions between motor vehicles and wild animals on Montana's roadways in 2002, resulting in 3 human fatalities. Roads reduce the amount of contiguous habitat by dividing areas into smaller components. Often, these smaller pieces of a formerly large habitat area are too small to sustain indigenous species, especially large carnivores and ungulates.

Roads have a particularly significant impact on large carnivores with low reproductive rates, low population densities, and large home ranges.



Grizzly on shoulder. C. Barlebaugh.

Examples include grizzly bears, wolves, and mountain lions. Roads in Montana cut through home ranges of these species, fragmenting habitat and creating hazards and obstacles for migration.

*More than a million vertebrates are killed daily on roadways in the U.S.—the number one way that humans kill wildlife.*

These impacts are of special concern in Montana, where wildlife and habitat represents a unique and significant resource—both in terms of quality of life and in terms of the state’s economy.

The policy issue of particular importance to Montanans is: *What changes in state policies and processes are needed to reduce wildlife impacts associated with the rural highway expansion program?*

### *Study Conclusions*

1. MDT has encountered stiff opposition to construction of highways with inadequate attention to wildlife impacts. One example is the planned reconstruction of 56 miles of Highway 93, some of which travels through tribal lands. MDT is now working with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and with the federal highway administration to develop a plan that will take wildlife impacts more fully into account. The parties are now putting the finishing touches on that plan.

2. MDT is also beginning to incorporate such project elements as fencing, cattle guards, and landscaping modifications into projects around the state in an attempt to reduce wildlife impacts. There will be a need for a systematic, statewide approach to wildlife impacts, taking into account available comprehensive information about critical habitat and migration corridors, supported by increased funding and attention with work plans.
3. State DOTs around the U.S. are beginning to address wildlife corridors and wildlife habitat loss more systematically than in the past. Specifically, they are working on the significant underlying issues of lack of comprehensive information about wildlife migration routes, habitat needs, and sensitivity to habitat disaggregation and habitat loss. These efforts have highlighted the need for inter-jurisdictional cooperation and innovative land use tools, including land banking and dedicated funding to address wildlife preservation needs.



Deer becomes road kill. Bozeman Pass. Jolene Adams.



## Best Practices - Highways, Wildlife Corridors, and Habitat

### **Washington DOT**

Washington DOT has undertaken the task of identifying high priority wildlife habitats and potentially critical wildlife crossings at a statewide scale. WSDOT has engaged the Forest Service to model and identify large carnivore habitat and linkages. The goal is for WSDOT to be aware of critical habitat areas prior to the planning process for highway reconstruction or widening. The intent is that early knowledge would prevent WSDOT from learning about key concerns at a point in the process where work must be redone. In addition, this research will provide WSDOT, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service with the same working map of habitat areas and linkages, dramatically streamlining the highway project design process.

### **Banff National Park**

Banff National Park contains the highest concentration of wildlife crossing structures in the world. It includes 21 underpasses and 2 overpasses across the Trans-Canada Highway. After crossings were constructed, mortality rates of elk decreased by 96%.

### **Florida DOT**

The Florida DOT has a budget ranging from \$1.0 to \$1.5 million dollars annually to fund wildlife conservation projects. FDOT has funded research by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) to identify high priority black bear and Florida panther habitat areas and corridors. The goals of this partnership are to promote an understanding of sensitive areas and mitigation needs on a regional level, and before projects are started. This partnership has encouraged public acceptance of FDOT policies on certain wildlife issues. For example, FFWCC has supported FDOT efforts to build wildlife crossings in areas of public ownership, rather than those under private ownership. This policy is upheld even in areas of critical wildlife habitat and crossings because FFWCC has documented that safe crossings are only effective in those areas where fencing can be put in place to direct wildlife to the crossings.

### **Second Nature**

This recent report, a joint project of Defenders of Wildlife and the Surface Transportation Policy Project, documents a number of leading edge efforts to establish systematic collaboration and cooperation among transportation and resource agencies to protect wildlife, wildlife habitat, and wildlife corridors at all stages of transportation corridor development. Included are a number of examples relevant to this discussion (More information can be found in the full report available at [www.transact.org/report](http://www.transact.org/report).):

- **Colorado's Shortgrass Prairie Initiative.** This collaboration between Colorado DOT and a number of state and federal resource agencies is designed to protect and preserve large tracts of rangeland, grassland, and prairie along with the species that inhabit these places.
- **Oregon's Collaborative Environmental and Transportation Agreement for Streamlining (CETAS).** This program is designed to provide a coordinated review process for highway construction projects.
- **U.S. Highway 93 in Montana.** This project is the result of the combined efforts of citizens, and local, state, federal, and tribal governments. A 56-mile section of the highway will be rebuilt according to an innovative plan to respect "a spirit of place" by considering wildlife and land ethics while reconstructing the highway.

### **Riverside County, CA, Anticipating Growth and Preserving Biodiversity**

As part of the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP), the Community and Environmental Transportation Acceptability Process identifies needs and priorities for highways and transit systems, taking into account impacts on sensitive habitats and valuable open space. For more information, see [www.rcip.org](http://www.rcip.org).

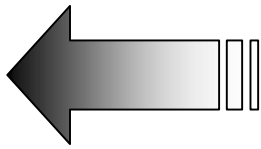
## *Study Recommendations*

The State of Montana should implement the following policies and approaches, either as agency policies or through legislation, as appropriate.

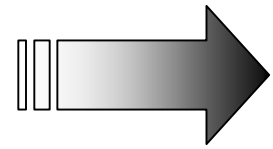
1. MDT should make use of existing cataloguing of high priority wildlife habitat and critical wildlife crossings completed by American Wildlands, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The goal should be for MDT, other agencies, and the public to be aware of critical habitat areas prior to the planning of highway construction projects.
2. MDT should extend the example of U.S. 93 at Flathead to all projects, where needed and appropriate: provision of wildlife crossings with fencing regimes, commitments to habitat protection in the corridor, and working closely with local people and governments in developing and carrying out these provisions. The U.S. 93 experience at Flathead should become a model, not an exception.
3. The State Legislature should provide leadership, direction, and funding to support this program.
4. The State should work with its congressional delegation to pursue greater funding for wildlife habitat identification and preservation efforts in transportation corridor development as part of this year's update of the Surface Transportation Program.



Bear and cubs. *Reno Sommerhalder.*



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## CONTEXT SENSITIVE HIGHWAY DESIGN

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In the eyes of many citizens, transportation planning practices in general, and highway design practices in particular, are inflexible, uncreative, and destructive to surrounding resources and lands.

Context Sensitive Design (CSD) is a set of ideas and principles developed and promoted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as an answer to this problem. According to FHWA: "Context Sensitive Design is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility.



Commercial strip along North Seventh Avenue, Bozeman, Montana. *GYC Archives.*

CSD considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist. An important concept in highway design is that every project is unique. The setting and character of the area, the values of the community, the needs of the highway users, and the challenges and opportunities are unique factors that designers must consider with each highway project.

Whether the design to be developed is for a modest safety improvement or 10 miles of new location rural freeway, there are no patented solutions. For each potential project, designers are faced with the task of balancing the need for the highway improvement with the need to safely integrate the design into the surrounding natural and human environments."



Gridded street network. Bozeman, Montana. *Dennis Glick.*



Real context sensitive design processes:

- Balance safety, mobility, community, and environmental goals in all projects;
- Involve the public and affected agencies early and continuously;
- Use an interdisciplinary team tailored to project needs;
- Address all modes of travel;
- Apply flexibility inherent in design standards;
- Incorporate aesthetics as an integral part of good design.

*An important concept in highway design is that every project is unique.*

*The specific issue for Montanans is: how can we ensure that Context Sensitive Design (CSD) principles are applied in our state highway projects?*



Thompson River Road near Thompson Falls, Montana. Flathead Resource Organization Archives.

## *Study Conclusions*

- Highway expansion projects in Montana will inevitably be controversial because a significant part of the citizenry is knowledgeable and concerned about the negative impacts of highway projects.
- MDT has been slow to embrace context sensitive design either as a policy or as standard practice in highway development. MDT is one of the state DOTs yet to implement an aggressive CSD training program for its engineers and contractors.
- However, MDT has also shown an ability to take a more progressive approach. For example, MDT's efforts to rebuild Highway 93 on the Flathead Indian Reservation were stalemated by opposition. MDT worked creatively with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the FHWA to develop a plan that has garnered national awards.
- The details of highway design—centerline alignment, cross-section, access—represent powerful forces shaping land development patterns. Local towns, cities, counties, and the public they represent, are the experts about “context” and must be involved throughout the highway design process to ensure that the development forces unleashed by the state's highway investments are consistent with community plans and with environmental values.
- Context Sensitive Design represents a sweeping change in the way public works and transportation departments—and especially state DOTs—approach planning and design of projects. It is specifically intended to fundamentally improve the process for designing highway projects and to improve the resulting transportation facilities.
- DOTs that have adopted CSD principles and procedures (e.g., Minnesota and Kentucky) believe the result has been better projects—projects that provide greater value, are well-received by the public, and enhance the agency's credibility with the affected communities.
- If Montana were to incorporate these ideas and principles into its own state highway planning and design processes, it would be able to draw from a growing body of experience and practice developed and adopted by several of its sister state DOTs.
- Successful and effective context sensitive design processes:
  - Balance safety, mobility, community, and environmental goals in all projects;
  - Involve public and agencies early and continuously;
  - Use an interdisciplinary team tailored to project needs;
  - Address all modes of travel;
  - Apply flexibility inherent in design standards; and,
  - Incorporate aesthetics as an integral part of good design.



## Best Practices - Context Sensitive Design

### **Maryland DOT**

In the mid-1990s, Governor Glendening directed Maryland DOT staff to develop a process that would result in projects that were more sensitive to local communities and the environment. Prior to the Governor's directive, the state had seen many highway projects sent back to the drawing board after falling under public attack right before initiation of construction. In response to the directive, MDOT determined that incorporating CSD principles into their highway design process was necessary and began an initiative they styled "Thinking Beyond the Pavement" (TBTP). In developing their approach, MDOT relied primarily on internal staff rather than outside consultants, which added hands-on insight to the discussions and helped to streamline the transitions recommended by the process. MDOT teams worked to redesign a project development process, including project management training and a community handbook on CSD principles. Staff is now developing a citizen-training program. Some highway design policies were updated to include CSD principles. For example, the utility policy now identifies potential funding sources for burying utilities and potential alternatives. MDOT feels it has improved communication during all project phases (planning, design, and construction). In addition, there has been increased consistency in the quality of projects.

### **Kentucky DOT**

Kentucky's CSD program began at the top level of the Kentucky DOT and was implemented through a reconfiguration of the agency's highway design process, coupled with an exhaustive training program. The KYDOT secretary, concerned about the agency's inability to complete highway projects, noted that environmental issues were holding up many projects. In an effort to remedy this, the agency's staff environmentalist was promoted to a top-level executive position. Two staff members, a public relations officer and environmental coordinator, were added to each DOT district. The public relations officer was responsible for increasing public participation in projects. Next, the project development process was overhauled. Prior to the focus on CSD, each section (engineering, planning, environmental) looked at a project in a "silo" (in isolation) and then passed its finished product on to the next section. This was changed to involve "project teams" composed of a member from each section. The team followed each project from inception through construction. KYDOT worked with the University of Kentucky and Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to develop a 2-day workshop on CSD principles as part of a FHWA pilot project. All KYDOT staff and consultants (prior to bidding on a project) involved in highway projects are required to take the training. Recently, KYDOT has noticed that while these changes have resulted in a successful context sensitive design and planning process with high levels of public acceptance, CSD principles are often lost during construction. To remedy this, KYDOT construction staff is now required to participate in a half-day workshop to learn about CSD principles. The private construction industry has also been receptive to learning about CSD, and while not a requirement, many contractors also take the workshop.

### **Minnesota DOT**

Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) has developed and implemented a CSD training program with the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies. Mn/DOT's 3-day workshop focuses training on interdisciplinary project managers, planners, and program delivery support professionals. The success of Mn/DOT's CSD training has inspired KYDOT to ask the University of Kentucky to develop a similar course. Mn/DOT has also begun offering a shorter workshop targeting local government and consultants.

### **Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan**

This local government initiative established the SDCP to "ensure the long-term survival of plants, animals and biological communities that are indigenous" to Pima County. The plan utilizes the concept of "bio-planning," or natural resource assessment and planning, as a necessary first step in determining urban form. For information, see Second Nature, Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2003.

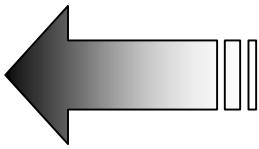
## *Study Recommendations*

The State of Montana should implement the following policies and approaches, either as agency policies or through legislation, as indicated.

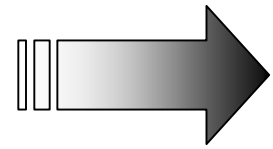
1. Legislation should be adopted by the Montana Legislature establishing the policy that all highway planning and design by MDT shall adhere to principles of context sensitive design. These principles should be spelled out in the legislation to include:
  - a. balancing of safety, mobility, community, and environmental goals in all projects;
  - b. involving the public and affected agencies early and continuously;
  - c. utilizing an interdisciplinary team tailored to project needs;
  - d. addressing all modes of travel;
  - e. applying flexibility inherent in design standards;
  - f. incorporating aesthetics as an integral part of good design.
2. MDT should undertake comprehensive context sensitive design training modeled after Kentucky, California, and Minnesota programs. Specific training elements should be phased and should be addressed to:
  - a. MDT staff (first two years);
  - b. consulting engineers and contractors (second two years).



Proposed bypass route and site of proposed commercial development. Highway 93, Kalispell. Karen Nichols.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## COMMUNITY PLANNING, CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT

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Transportation agencies—state DOTs and local public works departments—have not been skilled at working with the public. There are exceptions, but in general the public feels alienated from transportation programs (especially roads and streets) and from transportation agencies.

To some extent, state DOTs have earned the criticisms they endure. They have failed to engage the public in a fair and impartial assessment of the program and project tradeoffs. They have couched the rationale for their decisions in technical jargon. They have been reluctant to empower people by helping them understand data and tradeoffs. As a result, the agencies assume full responsibility for difficult decisions, and the outcome appears to have been imposed upon an unwilling public.

The fact is that citizens, given complete and accurate information, and given an opportunity to be part of the process, often arrive at decisions similar to those the DOT might have recommended. It is also true that citizens are often capable of arriving at decisions that are significantly better than the DOT might have recommended.

The Montana public does not wish to return to the days when road projects were “explained” at “public information meetings” held just prior to construction. Today’s public expects and demands a high degree of sincere public inclusion and participation in the planning and design of public facilities. They also increasingly expect projects to be sensitive to the environment and to community values, including quality of life for Montanans.

Around the U.S., public agencies of all sorts—and more than a few private corporations—are honing their skills at fostering sincere, inclusive public consultation processes. Increasingly, the most successful agencies and entities will be those that have developed deep, ongoing relationships with their affected publics.

The policy issue for Montanans is: *How can the State of Montana increase community involvement in the planning and design of state highway projects and increase citizen empowerment in transportation system planning, development, and management?*

## Study Conclusions

- One of the most important mandates of ISTEA was the elevation of citizen participation in transportation planning into systematic citizen empowerment.

*Today's public expects and demands a high degree of sincere public inclusion and participation in the planning and design of public facilities.*

- A truly effective system of citizen involvement requires a comprehensive approach mirroring all of the phases of transportation system planning, program development, project planning and design, implementation, and monitoring.



Community planning workshop, Kalispell, Montana.

- Public involvement cannot succeed as a minor part of a project, or as a project task. It must be the backbone of the project. Public participation is the backbone of a project when:

- The schedule is organized around well-timed public events.
  - Public consultation starts early in the project, before objectives are set or alternatives are identified.
  - Public events are planned in detail and are an integral part of project decision making.
  - Products are timed in anticipation of public events so that the right information is available.
  - Public events represent a significant percentage of the planning and design budget.
- The best ideas in well-managed transportation planning and design projects come from the community itself. It takes time to reach this point. The public involvement program must be routine, well-established, credible and sincere.
- Characteristics and symptoms of a sincere public process include:
    - The process has the right objectives.
      - Short term—empowering people to shape the outcome of this plan or project;
      - Long term—sustained community learning.
    - The outcome is uncertain.
    - The conversation is not controlled (although the conversation environment is carefully controlled).
    - The consensus plan may be something entirely new and unanticipated.

## Best Practices - Community Planning, Citizen Empowerment

### Vermont Transportation Planning Initiative

The Vermont Transportation Planning Initiative involves the public in the planning process for various improvements to the state's transportation system. The objective of this initiative is to encourage the expansion of local decision making and planning for a variety of transportation priorities, projects, and long range plans. The Vermont Agency of Transportation, in association with Vermont's Regional Planning Councils and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, formed the TPI program as a way to organize a transportation planning process in which local municipalities, citizens, and stakeholders could participate directly. The goal of the TPI is to gain insight from local communities in order to influence the planning process of transportation policy and projects. Regional and local plans should be in accordance with the statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. The TPI is meant to serve as the foundation to bring all interests of local, regional, and statewide representation to fruition. Local governments are actively involved in all projects from the point of inception to completion. Final work products are endorsed by the affected jurisdictions. What is especially unique about the Vermont approach is the careful nurturing of public involvement in a formal manner that begins early in system planning, carries through program development and project development, and continues into follow-up monitoring and evaluation.

### Minnesota DOT - Hear Every Voice

One of the nation's most progressive and comprehensive public involvement programs was implemented by Minnesota DOT (Mn/DOT) in 1997. The program is designed to encompass the department's business—from system planning, through program development, and through project planning, design, and construction. The following public involvement guidelines were developed to assist Mn/DOT personnel in implementing public involvement plans and activities. They reflect the mandates of ISTEA, reinforced by TEA-21, as well as public agency best practices.

1. For all Mn/DOT plans and projects, public involvement plans should be developed and tailored to the complexities of the project.
2. Solicit public involvement as early as possible.
3. When possible and appropriate, Mn/DOT employees will plan for smaller, more informal group meetings and discussion.
4. Mailing lists, including known neighborhood associations, civic and cultural groups, environmental organizations, citizens advisory committees, and organizations and associations with low income, minority, elderly, and disabled constituents will be kept up-to-date, as appropriate.
5. Mn/DOT employees will make an effort to go where the people are.
6. Communication must be two-way, continuing, and consistent.
7. Mn/DOT is committed to being clear about the process of public involvement and how it ties into decision making.
8. Innovative tools and media will be used to communicate to the public.
9. Varying types of incentives may be necessary given the type of project, or plan, and the people who are invited to the meeting.

### Maine - Kids and Transportation Program

Maine's Kids and Transportation Program was organized by Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG). The KAT program teaches children and their parents about alternatives to car travel. Through school-based seminars and community field trips, the program teaches young people that bicycling, walking and riding the bus can be lifelong travel habits that improve personal fitness, make communities more livable, reduce road congestion, and help maintain the quality of clean air. The KAT program uses a "train the trainer" approach that helps teachers to facilitate the concise message of alternative transportation. Each teacher must complete a safety course which emphasizes the importance of non-motorized transportation as a viable form of travel. Teachers are encouraged to integrate transportation education into their classroom teaching. This program has also produced a Kids Map Guide, which identifies various transportation systems, routes, and connections for kids to use to find their way through Greater Portland. Observers feel parents and students are more aware of transportation safety as a result of the program.



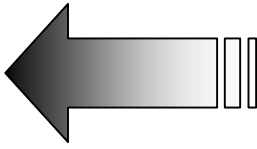
### *Study Recommendations*

The State of Montana should implement the following policies and approaches, either as agency policies or through legislation, as indicated.

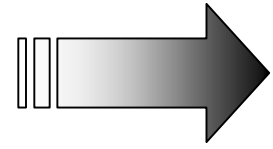
1. The Montana Legislature should provide for the establishment of a "Public Involvement Task Force" (similar to that undertaken by Minnesota DOT) that would:
  - a. Begin with statewide meetings;
  - b. Develop a vision statement;
  - c. Publish a statewide guidance document for public involvement in MDT's planning and project development.
2. The Montana Legislature should create statutory requirements and standards for community involvement in transportation projects, at both the state and local levels in Montana.
3. The Montana Legislature should create statutory requirements for a local approval process for review and acceptance of certain types of proposed MDT projects by local jurisdictions. This could be limited to those local governments with adopted local land use or growth management plans, including transportation plans, or could be limited to cities, towns, and counties above a certain size.



The author with 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. Wilson, Wyoming. Charlier Associates, Inc.



# Montana Transportation Choices



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## APPENDIX - PART I

### RESOURCE LIST - ORGANIZATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE MONTANA SMART GROWTH COALITION

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AERO (Alternative Energy  
Resources Organization)  
432 N. Last Chance Gulch  
Helena MT 59601  
406-443-7272 ph  
406-442-9120 fx  
aero@aeromt.org  
Dedicated to sustainable resource use and rural  
community vitality, including smart growth  
planning and transportation alternatives,  
renewable energy and conservation, and  
community self-reliance.

American Conservation Real Estate  
2 N. Last Chance Gulch  
Helena MT 59601  
406-443-7085  
conservation@qwest.net  
www.conservationrealestate.com  
A regional company consulting for private land  
conservation strategies and real estate deals in  
Montana and Wyoming.

American Farmland Trust  
Rocky Mountain Field Office,  
401 Edwards St.  
Fort Collins CO 80524  
970-484-8988 ph  
970-484-8098 fx  
www.farmland.org  
Protecting the nation's agricultural resources,  
including stopping the loss of productive farmland  
and promoting farming practices leading to a  
healthy environment.

American Wildlands  
40 E. Main, Suite 2  
Bozeman MT 59715  
406-586-8175 ph  
www.wildlands.org  
Science-based conservation for the northern  
Rockies.

Artisan LLP  
PO Box 472  
Helena MT 59624  
406-443-2160 ph  
406-443-2161 fx  
www.gntowncenter.com  
A private development firm specializing in smart  
growth.

Bitterrooters for Planning  
PO Box 505  
Corvallis MT 59828  
406-821-3134  
www.montana.com/bfp/  
Working for a growth policy in Ravalli County and  
encouraging understanding of, clarification of, and  
support for such a policy.

City of Bozeman  
Department of Planning &  
Community Development  
PO Box 1230  
Bozeman MT 59771-1230  
406-582-2366 ph  
406-582-2363 fx  
www.bozeman.net

Brown Bear Resources  
222 N. Higgins  
Missoula MT 59802  
406-549-4896 ph  
406-549-4884 fx  
ursus@marsweb.com  
www.brownbear.org  
Working proactively to protect the grizzly bear by reducing human-wildlife conflict and by protecting critical wildlife habitat.

Citizens for a Better Flathead  
PO Box 771  
Kalispell MT 59903  
406-756-8993 ph  
406-756-8991 fx  
citizens@flatheadcitizens.org  
www.montanaweb.com/citizens/  
Working together since 1992 for smart growth solutions to enhance communities and to secure the economic vitality and natural resources of the Flathead Basin.

Clark Fork Coalition  
114 W. Pine / PO Box 7593  
Missoula MT 59807  
406-542-0539  
info@clarkfork.org  
www.clarkfork.org  
Protecting and restoring water quality in the Clark Fork River basin, which drains 22,000 square miles.

Downtown Billings Partnership  
207 N. Broadway  
PO Box 2117  
Billings MT 59103  
406-247-5060 ph  
406-247-5061 fx  
partnership@downtownbillings.com  
www.downtownbillings.com  
Dedicated to revitalizing downtown Billings.

Flathead Lakers  
PO Box 70  
Polson MT 59860  
406-883-1346  
lakers@cyberport.net  
www.flatheadlakers.org  
Dedicated to protecting and improving water quality in Flathead Lake and its watershed in Northwest Montana.

Flathead Resource Organization  
PO Box 541  
St. Ignatius MT 59865  
406-644-2511 ph  
406-644-2516 fx  
fro@blackfoot.net  
Dedicated to the protection and restoration of the lower Flathead River drainage system and surrounding area, and to the promotion of a sustainable human relationship with that environment.

Friends of the Bitterroot  
PO Box 442  
Hamilton MT 59840  
406-363-5410

Greater Yellowstone Coalition  
13 S. Willson, Ste. 2  
PO Box 1874  
Bozeman MT 59771  
406-586-1593 ph  
406-586-0851 fx  
gyc@greateryellowstone.org  
www.greateryellowstone.org  
Working to conserve and protect the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the full range of its life, now and for future generations.

High Plains Architects  
PO Box 2203  
Billings MT 59103  
406-896-0250  
rhafer@highplainsarchitects.com  
highplainsarchitects.uswestdex.com  
Providing superior quality professional design services in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and innovation.

Highway 93 Citizens' Coalition  
for Responsible Planning  
PO Box 521  
Stevensville MT 59870  
406-777-3210  
hwy93cc@bitterroot.net  
Striving for highway design that is safe and rural-friendly, does not induce sprawl, and benefits the Bitterroot Valley economically.

homeWORD  
127 N. Higgins  
Missoula MT 59802  
406-543-3550 ph  
406-721-4584 fx  
www.homeWORD.org  
Develops affordable housing and asset-building strategies for those most in need of sustainable and replicable methods.

Montana Association of  
Conservation Districts  
501 N. Sanders, Ste. 2  
Helena MT 59601  
406-443-5711  
mail@macdnet.org  
www.macdnet.org  
Providing leadership, representation, and support enabling conservation district supervisors to fulfill their responsibilities as elected officials implementing locally led natural resource programs.

Montana Audubon  
PO Box 595  
Helena MT 59624  
406-443-3949 ph  
406-443-7144 fx  
mtaudubon@mcn.net  
www.mtaudubon.org  
Enabling Audubon's members to work together so that Montana's ecosystems will continue to nourish birds, other wildlife, and the human spirit for future generations.

Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)  
PO Box 1184  
Helena MT 59624  
406-443-2520 ph  
406-443-2507 fx  
meic@meic.org  
www.meic.org  
Montana's environmental watchdog, lobbying the legislature, monitoring state government, educating the public about environmental issues, and providing citizens and communities with organizing and technical assistance.

Montana Farmers Union  
PO Box 2447  
Great Falls MT 59403

Montana Human Rights Network  
PO Box 1222  
Helena MT 59624  
406-442-5506  
network@mhrn.org  
www.mhrn.org  
Dedicated to promoting democratic values like pluralism, equality, and justice; challenging bigotry and intolerance; and organizing communities to speak out for democratic principles and institutions.

Montana Public Interest Research Group  
360 Corbin Hall  
Missoula MT 59812  
montpirg@pirg.org  
www.pirg.org/montpirg

Montana Smart Growth Coalition  
PO Box 543  
Helena MT 59624  
406-449-6086  
smartgrowth@mcn.net  
www.mtsmartgrowth.org  
Montana's only statewide group dedicated solely to working for smart growth.

Montana Wildlife Federation  
PO Box 1175  
Helena MT 59624  
406-458-0227 ph  
406-458-0373 fx  
mwf@mtwf.org  
www.montanawildlife.com  
Believing the wildlife of Montana are valuable social, recreational, and aesthetic assets which should be restored, perpetuated, and conserved for this and future generations.

National Center for Appropriate Technology  
PO Box 3838  
Butte MT 59702  
406-327-0705  
energyassistance@ncat.org  
www.ncat.org  
Championing sustainable technologies and community-based approaches that protect natural resources and assist people, especially the economically disadvantaged, become more self-reliant.

Northern Plains Resource Council  
2401 Montana Ave. #200  
Billings MT 59101  
406-248-1154 ph  
406-248-2110 fx  
info@nprcmt.org  
www.nprcmt.org  
Grassroots citizens' group dedicated to responsible stewardship of Montana's air, land, and water, and preserving a sustainable system of family agriculture.

Park Co. Environmental Council  
PO Box 164  
Livingston MT 59047  
406-222-0723  
envirocouncil@imt.net  
www.parkcountyenvironmentalcouncil.org  
Supporting sound land use planning and wild land protection; protecting air, water, and wildlife; and promoting public awareness of environmental issues.

Plan Helena  
PO Box 984  
Helena MT 59624  
Preserving those characteristics—natural, urban, rural, historic—that define the desirable quality of life in the Helena area.

Smart Growth Missoula  
PO Box 7342  
Missoula MT 59807  
406-543-6997  
Supporting safe and healthy communities, sustainable economies, conservation of farm, forest, and ranch lands, and protection of natural resources and wildlife habitat in greater Missoula.

Soil and Water Conservation Society - Montana Chapter  
38 Hidden Valley Drive  
Clancy MT 59634  
406-444-4490  
Promoting the wise use of soil, water, and related natural resources through advocacy, professional development, and educational activities.

Sonoran Institute, Northwest Office  
201 S. Wallace  
Bozeman MT 59715  
406-587-7331  
sonoran@sonoran.org; www.sonoran.org  
Working with communities in western North America to conserve and restore their unique natural landscapes, wildlife, and cultural values.

Tracy-Williams Consulting  
PO Box 8311  
Missoula MT 59807  
406-543-8113 ph 406-543-8146 fx  
ltracy@montana.com  
www.bikeplan.com/tracy2.htm  
Designing, planning, and projects for non-motorized transportation.

Burton K. Wheeler Center for Public Policy  
PO Box 170590  
Montana State University  
Bozeman MT 59717  
406-994-0336 ph  
406-994-0341 fx  
wheeler@montana.edu  
www.montana.edu/wheeler/  
Providing a forum for the discussion of critical statewide issues in the form of conferences and roundtables that are free and open to the public.

Women's Opportunity and Resource Development (WORD)  
127 N. Higgins Ave.  
Missoula MT 59802  
406-543-3350 ph  
406-721-4584 fx  
Seeking to inform, educate, and empower women and their families to make choices that lead toward economic self-sufficiency.

Women's Voices for the Earth  
114 W. Pine St.  
PO Box 8743  
Missoula MT 59807  
406-543-3747  
wve@wildrockies.org  
www.wildrockies.org/WVE/  
Empowering women, and others who historically have had little power in affecting environmental policy, to create a society that is ecologically sustainable and socially just.



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## APPENDIX - PART II

### MONTANA TRANSPORTATION CHOICES STUDY STAKEHOLDERS' ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

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Rob Bukvich	Montana Department of Transportation
Paul Cartright	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
John Couch	SU Missoula
Deb Kmon Davidson	American Wildlands, Bozeman Office
Tim Davis	Montana Smart Growth Coalition, Helena
Steve King	City of Missoula
David Kack	Western Transportation Institute
Tony Kolnik	4-Corners Citizens' Transportation Task Force, Bozeman
Mike Kress	Missoula Office of Planning and Grants, Missoula
Loran Frazier	Montana Department of Transportation
Mayre Flowers	Citizens For A Better Flathead, Kalispell
Jason Giard	Montana Department of Transportation
Bob Giordano	Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation, Missoula
Dennis Glick	Sonoran Institute, Bozeman Office
Mark Haggerty	Greater Yellowstone Coalition, Bozeman
Kathy Harris	Lewis and Clark County
Marga Lincoln	Alternative Energy Resources Organization, Helena
Jimmie Lohmeier	Citizen participant, Bozeman
Nancy McKiddy	Associated Students Univ. of MT Office of Transportation, Missoula
Ethel MacDonald	CALM, Smart Growth Missoula, Missoula
Jim Olsen	Highway 93 Citizens Coalition, Hamilton
Dale Paulson	U.S. Federal Highway Administration
Paul Reichert	Downtown Business Improvement District, Helena
Chris Saunders	City of Bozeman
Susan Scallia	Clark Fork Coalition, Missoula
Phil Smith	City of Missoula Bike/Pedestrian Coordinator, Missoula
Carol Strizich	Montana Department of Transportation
Dick Turner	Montana Department of Transportation
Kaylie Utter	4-Corners Citizens' Transportation Task Force, Bozeman
John Williams	National Center for Bicycling & Walking, Missoula
Gary Vodehnal	Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Bozeman
Harold Young	Flathead Resource Organization, Arlee
Marcia Youngman	Bozeman City Commission

Note: Additional input was provided through an e-mail survey and from direct requests for information from agencies and local governments.