MEMORANDUM

To: RRC Members  
Debbie Alke, Administrator/Aeronautics Division  
D. John Blacker, Administrator/Maintenance Division  
Mike Bousliman, Administrator/Information Services Division  
Monte N. Brown, Administrator/Administration Division  
Robert E. Burkhardt/Federal Highway Administration  
Jim Currie, Deputy Director/Department of Transportation  
Jeffery M. Ebert, P.E./District Administrator-Butte  
Loran Frazier, P.E., Administrator/Highway and Engineering Division  
Jim Lynch, Director/Department of Transportation  
Dennis Sheehy, Administrator/Motor Carrier Services Division  
Sandra S. Straehl, Administrator/Rail, Transit, and Planning Division

From: Susan C. Sillick, Manager  
Research Programs

Date: March 16, 2007

Subject: Summary of Minutes from the March 1, 2007 RRC Meeting

The following RRC members were present: John Blacker, Mike Bousliman, Monte Brown, Bob Burkhardt, Jim Currie, Jeff Ebert, Dennis Sheehy, Sandy Straehl, and Sue Sillick.

Subject: 03/01/2007 RRC Meeting Agenda (9:30 a.m. MDTCNF Commission Room)

1. **2007 Solicitation** – Champions presented their research topics.

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The District Administrators and Research Review Committee (RRC) will rate each of these problem statements with respect to their worth, timeliness, and attainability after presentations by Champions; these rating forms are due March 8th. The RRC will then determine which problem statements will move forward at the March 30th RRC meeting.

**ADA Transition Plan as Required by Federal Regulations – 07.005**

Sheila Cozzie/Human Resources Division is the champion for this research topic.

The purpose of this research is to develop ADA Transition Plan. This transition plan should contain:

1) A list of physical barriers in a public entities’ facilities that limit the accessibility of its programs, activities, or services to individuals with disabilities (to include all MDT owned buildings and facilities).

2) A detailed outline of the methods to be utilized to remove these barriers and make the facilities available.

3) The schedule for taking the necessary steps to achieving compliance with title II. If the time period for achieving compliance is longer than 1 year, the plan identified in the interim steps will be taken during each year of the transition plan and;

4) The name of the official responsible for the plan’s implementation.

This includes ensuring ADA compliance with all construction projects funded with Federal and State funding (i.e., sidewalks, ramps, etc). The plan should identify needs and integrate them into the State’s planning process. This should be incorporated into the program on an ongoing basis in a variety of ways to include:

1) Any construction project that is programmed must meet accessibility requirements when built.

2) Accessibility improvements identified in the transition plan that are not part of an alternation project should be incorporated into the overall transportation planning process. This can be accomplished with the development of stand-alone projects.

3) As a means to identify ADA compliance needs, during scheduling maintenance activities, the agencies should identify ADA accessibility needs and incorporate them into the overall planning process.

It was decided to remove this research topic from the list and turn it over to Planning as it is a better fit in Planning.

**Soil Stabilizations Utilizing Byproducts – 07.007**

Phil Johnson/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research topic.

The purpose of this research is for MDT to evaluate camelina meal, a byproduct of oil extraction, as a means to reduce erosion along disturbed road construction sites.
**Varmint Impact on Shoulders and Paved Surfaces – 07.010**

Kevin Brewer/Butte District is the champion for this research project, which was presented jointly by Martin Martin/Butte District and Kevin Brewer.

Varmint impact on shoulders and paved surfaces include, but are not limited to gophers, moles, badgers and muskrats, which are burrowing into the shoulders and under the paved surfaces. In turn these burrows allow the infiltration of water into the subsurface causing premature pavement failure.

The purpose of this research topic is to communicate with other states to see if they have the same issues, and what, if anything they have found to be successful in eliminating the problems.

**Wetland Water Loss and Salinity Impacts from Saltcedar Infestations - 07.012**

Phil Johnson/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research project.

Saltcedar transpiration reduces surface and ground-water flow, increases soil and water salinity and other chemical concentrations, and facilitates erosion and siltation. Damages to the wetland environments and stream use in eastern and south central Montana could be particularly severe given the relatively limited water resources. Saltcedar can deplete stream flows and localized groundwater and make the remaining water unusable to wildlife and agriculture due to salinity impacts associated with the plants.

The goal of this project is to collect the data necessary to assess the flow and quality damages inflicted by Saltcedar infestation on impact sites. Detailed data on plant transpirations, weather, water budgets, and soil and ground-water quality impacts will be collected from field test sites. The interpretations of this data will be necessary for wetland and watershed planning and best management practices throughout eastern Montana.

The RRC would like this submitted to the Noxious Weed Trust Fund for funding. This is a much broader issue, impacting others, and the RRC feels that MDT should not fund this research in its entirety.

**Preventing Adverse Effects from Highway Noise: A Toolkit for Local Decision Makers – 07.013**

Cora Helm/Environmental Services Bureau is the champion for this research project.

Noise assessment is a fairly specialized field. Many local authorities lack the capacity to assess noise in the development review process or craft effective approaches to addressing it. MDT proposes to develop tools for noise assessment and mitigation useful to local development agencies in Montana.

The goal is to empower local governments to manage for noise. MDT needs to provide tools for local governments, while staying within our authority.
If this project is moved forward to the Technical Panel stage, ISD will be represented on the panel.

**Growing Smart in Transportation and Development: Tools for the State and Local Decision Makers – 07.014**

Hal Fossum/ Rail, Transit, and Planning Division is the champion for this research topic.

There is a mounting need to develop effective tools for transit system development, street network planning, and transportation infrastructure financing tools useful for land planners and policy leaders.

Development of these tools will foster more productive relationships between transportation and local development efforts. In isolation, state transportation agencies cannot create “smarter” communities. There must be an informed partnership between state and local efforts.

The proposed research will develop a toolkit for local planners and policy makers targeted at improving their technical capacity to plan communities around “smart growth” transportation principles including: developing networks verses cul-de-sac residential patterns, residential developments that are sufficiently dense to support transit and car-pooling, provision for non-motorized transportation, mixed commercial development to encourage shorter trips, etc. It will also entail identifying program approaches and options for MDT to consider based on the experience of other states with comparable governance structures to Montana in supporting smart growth. We expect this research to advance practical approaches in four main sub-topics: 1) tools for transit planning, 2) tools for the assessment of development impacts on local roads, 3) tools for local transportation financing, and 4) tools for developing local transportation networks.

If this project moves forward to the Technical Panel stage, it was suggested that Tim Davis/ Sonoran Institute, and John Horwich/UM Law School be placed on this Technical Panel.

2. **Budget Report** – Distributed at meeting

3. **Research Project – current listing** – Attached

   3a. **Highway Project Cost Estimating and Management** (04.018) – Results of e-mail ballot.

   Sue announced that 7 members returned e-mail ballots all voting in favor of this project. As the project was voted to move forward, a contract is already being prepared.

4. **Reports:** Available Upon Request

   4a. **Fish Passage in Montana Culverts Phase II – Passage Goals** – Progress Report December 2006
4b. Warm Water Species Fish Passage in Eastern Montana Culverts – Progress Report – December 2006


4d. Experimental Assessment of Aggregate Surfacing Materials – Progress Report December 2006


4h. One-Stop Shop for Public/Specialized Transportation Information in Montana (05.013) – Progress Report December 2006

4i. LTAP – Progress Report – December 2006

4j. 2006 Annual Report for the Montana Department of Transportation Research Programs – Final Report – FHWA/MT-06-017/8010


5. Contract Extensions: None

6. Proposals:

6a. A Proposal to Conduct a Disparity/Availability Study for the State of Montana Department of Transportation

Sheila Cozzie and Alice Flesch/Human Resources Division attended the meeting to discuss this proposal.
The purpose of this project is to determine the extent to which barriers exist that impact small, disadvantaged businesses’ ability to participate in federally assisted contracting opportunities in the construction industry in Montana.

Jim Currie made a motion to fund this project in the amount of $648,733.46. Monte Brown seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

6b. **Effect of Fuel Price on Fuel Tax Collections**

Bob Turner/Administration Division attended the meeting to discuss this proposal.

Fuel prices have continued to fluctuate during the recent past. Considering the unrest in the Middle East, increased global fuel demand, and continued environmental pressure; fuel costs may continue to rise. If fuel costs continue to rise, will fuel usage decrease? If fuel usage decreases, how soon will the decrease start and over what time period?

If fuel usage does decrease significantly, this has a major impact on fuel tax revenues. If there is a significant dip, or at least flattening, of future fuel tax revenues, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) needs to have an estimate of the magnitude in order to plan accordingly.

The primary benefit of this research is to allow MDT better insight into forecasting fuel tax revenues, and will allow MDT to be proactive in planning expenditures in the coming years.

Sandy Straehl expressed the concern that this proposal is extremely vague. She felt that the data set complexity is not realized in the proposal and doesn’t feel that we will get product that we need.

Jim Currie made a motion to fund this project in the amount of $68,833.32. Sandy Straehl seconded the motion. The motion passed. John Blacker voted against the motion.

A discussion followed the motion, at which time Monte Brown suggested that some changes needed to be made in the proposal and that the Technical Panel needed to look at other options.

John Blacker said overall that he approved of the proposal; however, there were things written into it that he did not agree with and felt changes needed to be made.

Jim Currie then made an alternate motion to have the Technical Panel issue an RFP to address the RRC concerns as this is a very important issue with MDT. John Blacker seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

Sue will work with the Technical Panel to draft a scope of work, which will be sent to the RRC for an approval-in-concept via e-mail ballot.

7. **Implementation/Technology Transfer** - None
8. **Department/Division Hot Topics – RRC Members Roundtable Discussion**

**Mike Bousliman** – Noted the experimental trial of automated anti-icing device for use on Billing’s area bridge “Boschung Fixed Automatically Spray Technology” is already working with positive results.

**Sandy Straehl** – Recently attended a Climate Change Committee meeting. She indicated there maybe a need to conduct research to evaluate our new trucks.

**Jim Currie** – informed the RRC that the Legislature tabled the state budget.

cc: Craig L. Abernathy/Research Programs  
Lisa Autio/Research Program  
Kent M. Barnes, P.E./Bridge Bureau  
Bruce H. Barrett/District Administrator-Billings  
Keven Christensen/Highways and Engineering Division  
Lisa Durbin/Construction Administration-Bureau  
Mike Dyrdahl/Highways and Engineering Division  
Paul R. Ferry, P.E./Highways Bureau  
John Horton/Right-of-Way Bureau  
Paul Jagoda, P.E./Construction Engineering Bureau  
Jennifer Jensen/Human Resources Division  
Michael P. Johnson/District Administrator-Great Falls  
Dwane Kailey, P.E./District Administrator-Missoula  
Tom Martin, P.E./Consultant Design Bureau  
Ray Mengel/District Administrator-Glendive  
Jeanne Nydegger/Research Programs  
Suzy Price/Contract Plans Bureau  
Timothy W. Reardon/Legal Services  
Jean A. Riley, P.E./Environmental Services Bureau  
Matt Strizich, P.E./Materials Bureau  
James A. Walther, P.E./Highways and Engineering Division  
Duane E. Williams, P.E./Traffic & Safety Bureau  
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