

## Late Summer Anti-DUI Mobilization Begins



MDT Director Jim Lynch speaks at the Anti-DUI Mobilization news conference on August 15.

MDT, the Montana Highway Patrol, and local law enforcement joined forces again Labor Day weekend in an effort to detect and deter Montana's deadliest offenders—drunk drivers. August and September are typically the months with the highest number of alcohol-related fatalities in Montana.

Extra patrols, overtime shifts, and highway spot safety checks are

part of a national impaired-driving crackdown. In the past, law enforcement mobilizations have been effective in getting drunk drivers off the road.

“Last year, the number of DUI citations by the Montana Highway Patrol was up 31 percent over the average of the previous four years,” said Jim Lynch, MDT director. “More hours on the road, better equipment, and better training are all adding up to more arrests.”

Under the slogan “Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest,” the focus of the national campaign was on a blood alcohol limit of .08. All 50 states have now enacted the lower limit.

“Many people don’t know what their limit is, so driving after consuming alcohol simply isn’t worth the risk,” Lynch stated. “Not only do you risk killing yourself or someone else, but the trauma and financial costs of a crash or an arrest for impaired driving can be significant,” he said. “Violators often face jail time, the loss of a driver’s license, higher insurance rates, attorney fees, time away from work, and dozens of other expenses.”

MDT supports the crackdown on impaired drivers by funding overtime hours to keep more officers on the road and by the purchase of equipment such as portable breath-testing devices, video cameras, and radars.



## Safe Routes to School Program Encourages Children to Walk & Bicycle to School Safely

MDT will kick off its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program this fall with events in Missoula and Billings. SRTS seeks to make walking and bicycling to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative for children in kindergarten through middle school (K–8), including children with disabilities.

Here is a list of upcoming events:

- September 16, SRTS coordinator Virginia Summey will give a presentation and provide information at the Montana PTA Conference at the Hilton Garden Inn in Missoula. She will also be at the School Administrators Conference at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center on October 19.
- Also on October 19, MDT’s bicycle/pedestrian coordinator Pam Langve-Davis will be available to answer questions at the SRTS display at the Montana Education Association/Montana Federation of Teachers conference in Billings.
- On October 3 in Missoula and October 4 in Billings, nationally known walkability expert Mark Fenton will facilitate SRTS informational workshops to identify ways to help communities create safer routes for kids to walk and

bicycle to school. Participants will leave the workshops with the tools and resources necessary to start an SRTS program in their communities. Mark Fenton has a master’s degree in engineering from MIT and is a certified instructor and developer of the SRTS National Course. Former host of PBS’s *America’s Walking*, Mark is the author of *The Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness* (Lyons Press, 2001).

- October 4 is also International Walk-to-School Day. Montana schools are encouraged to register their events at [www.walktoschool.org](http://www.walktoschool.org). For more information, contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-9273 or [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov).

SRTS is a reimbursable grant program, meaning that recipients pay for their projects up front and are reimbursed during the course of the project. All costs submitted for reimbursement are subject to eligibility requirements. Costs incurred prior to a project’s authorization are not eligible for reimbursement.

SRTS projects include both infrastructure and noninfrastructure projects. Infrastructure-related projects include activities that improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to

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# MDT Dedicates Renovated Lincoln Airport

Recently, people flocked by plane and by automobile to the Lincoln Airport to participate in a dedication of the refurbished facility. MDT hosted the public open house on August 9. More than 90 people attended, touring the newly remodeled grounds and enjoying festivities that included speakers and a free barbeque.

Stelling Engineers of Great Falls designed the project that refurbished the airport with a 4,240-foot runway, a partial parallel taxiway, an aircraft and helicopter apron, and several hangars for private aircraft. The project also included installing pilot-controlled runway lighting, a lighted nighttime precision approach-path indicator, and airport property animal-control fencing. Helena Sand and Gravel was the primary contractor.

The MDT Aeronautics Division in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration funded the \$2.7 million project to meet federal airport design standards.

Because of the renovation, the Lincoln Airport is guaranteed and federally protected for the next 20 years. Additional apron and taxiway expansions are pre-planned as part of the current airport layout plan. In the coming years, MDT hopes to install several other features at the airport in cooperation with the Recreational Airstrip Foundation, Montana Pilots' Association, the



*Out with the old and in with the new: Stelling Engineers' Jason Giard (l) and Mitch Stelling (r) remove the old black and white Lincoln Airport sign and replace it with a colorful new sign featuring the saying "A River Runs Next to It."*

Montana Aeronautics Board, local tenants, and other organizations. These features may include, but are not limited to, a first-rate pilot "fly-in campground," restroom facilities, a pilots' lounge, courtesy bicycles for pilots, and fuel storage and sales.

MDT owns and operates 15 airports around Montana. The Aeronautics Division is dedicated to promoting safe air travel and is also a lead agency for Montana search and rescue efforts for missing planes.

# Mosby Rest Area to Honor James E. McKenna



*MDT Director Jim Lynch addresses attendees at the dedication of the James E. McKenna Memorial Rest Area near Mosby.*

On August 1, MDT held a "First Flush" ceremony to dedicate the James E. McKenna Memorial Rest Area on Highway 200 near the community of Mosby. MDT Director Jim Lynch, other MDT officials, and members of the McKenna family participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The rest area was named in honor of James E. McKenna and built on land donated by the McKenna family.

McKenna (1883-1974) was an active member of the Lewistown community. He served as the deputy attorney for Lewistown before becoming Fergus County Attorney, a post he held for 18 years. In 1934, McKenna also served as the judge for Judicial District 10. He represented Fergus County in the state legislature, serving in both the House and Senate.

"The new, open-year-round facility is the latest of MDT's efforts to improve Montana's rest areas in response to public input and the recommendations of the 1999 Montana Rest Area Plan," said Director Lynch.

The Mosby rest area, which is similar to the Dena Mora rest area near Lookout Pass, was designed with safety in mind. It features private restrooms and a large, well-lit lobby with maps and informational displays. The exterior offers visitors picnic areas, a pet exercise area, and walking paths that include both a historical marker about Kerchival City and a geological marker explaining the origin of the area's Bearpaw Shale. Exterior lighting contributes to the safety and security of the traveler.

"This project has been a tremendous success, and we're proud to be here. It is a magnificent facility," said James McKenna III.

With several additional MDT rest area projects in the pipeline, visitors and residents can look forward to more new and improved facilities as they travel around Montana.

## Kerchival City

The historical marker at the Mosby rest area relates the story of Kerchival City, once located about 35 miles north of the area at the confluence of the Musselshell and Missouri Rivers. Kerchival City was founded as a business venture in 1866. The Rocky Mountain Wagon Company hoped to undercut Fort Benton's dominance of the upper Missouri river trade by building a steamboat landing downstream. The scheme was unsuccessful, and by 1868, the settlement was all but abandoned. In a colorful side-light, it was at Kerchival City that mountain man John Johnston first earned the sobriquet "Liver-eating" after a bloody skirmish with the Lakota Indians in 1869.

# Ground Broken for South Helena Interchange

On August 17, with the scoop of a backhoe, Senator Max Baucus officially broke ground for the South Helena Interchange. Senator Baucus was joined by MDT Director Jim Lynch, Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger, Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Anita Varone and Mike Murray, Jefferson County Commissioner Tom Lythgoe, and Federal Highway Division Administrator Jan Brown.

The interchange project is the first step toward the improvements recommended in the Interstate 15 Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision that was approved by the Federal Highway Administration in January of 2004. It is also an excellent example of how cooperative efforts between state, local, and private entities can result in accelerated project design and delivery, which on this project was about two and a half years.

MDT in cooperation with Lewis and Clark County, the City of Helena, Jefferson County, FHWA, and Robert Peccia and

Associates expedited the project design and worked cooperatively to reach a funding solution for the project. The balance of funding for the interchange will come from a \$10 million earmark secured by Senator Baucus for the I-15 corridor interchange to the Lincoln Road Interchange. The remainder of the \$10 million earmark will be put toward an interchange at Custer Avenue and improvements at the Capitol Interchange.



Senator Max Baucus operates a backhoe at the groundbreaking for the South Helena Interchange.

Helena Sand and Gravel was awarded the construction contract, and the project is expected to be completed in 2007. It will include the first roundabout ever built on an MDT project.

# Cooperation + Reconstruction = a Safer Highway

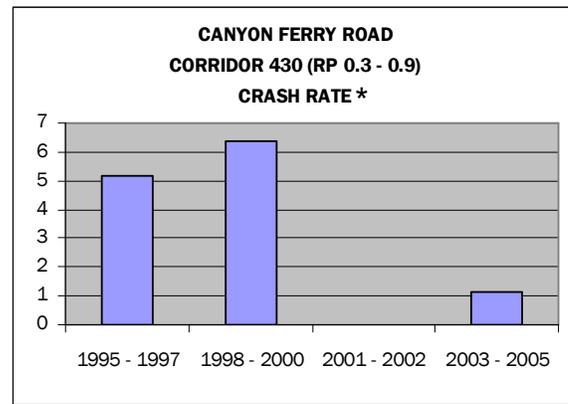
In the early 1990s, MDT's Safety Engineering Improvement Program identified two accident cluster sites along Secondary Highway 430 on the outskirts of Helena. The first site was at a sharp curve adjacent to the bridge over Prickly Pear Creek. The second site, just north of the airport, included several curves combined with changes in elevation. Despite warning signs, chevrons, and flashers, crashes continued to occur.

Secondary Highway 430, also known as Canyon Ferry Road, was a typical two-lane, two-way road without shoulders. The Safety Management staff wanted to straighten it, add rumble strips and shoulders, flatten the slopes, and build a new bridge that would meet current standards.

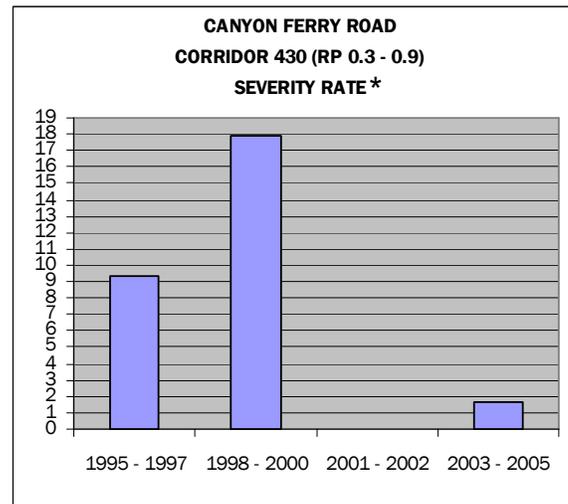
Normally, MDT would pay for a project of this type with funds from the federal Hazard Elimination Program; however, based on the benefit/cost analysis, this source of funds could not completely fund this project. MDT contacted officials from Lewis and Clark County and the City of Helena, explained the long-range benefits of realigning the roadway, and requested financial assistance. All three agencies combined their funds, and construction began in March 2001. The road was completed two years later in March 2003 at a final cost of about \$2,270,000. SK Construction was the primary contractor.

The annual average daily traffic count for this section increased from 4,400 in 1995-1997 to 6,600 in 2003-2005. The tables at right illustrate the decrease in crash and severity rates following the project. Both the crash rate and the severity rate are now below the statewide average for Secondary Highways.

- Here are some high points of the project:
- Multi-agency collaboration between Lewis and Clark County, the City of Helena, and MDT.
  - Determination and belief in the benefits of this project by the Safety Management staff.
  - Good public response.
  - Challenging design considerations.
  - Encouraging safety results.



\*Crash rate is the number of crashes per million vehicle miles traveled.



\*Severity rate is eight times the number of fatal and incapacitating injury crashes plus three times the number of minor injury crashes plus the number of property-damage-only crashes per million vehicle miles of travel.

# MDT Reviews Ride Specification

Smooth roads are important to travelers for many reasons. In addition to a comfortable ride, smooth roads mean improved fuel economy, lower maintenance costs, and shorter travel times. There's another reason too—one that is important to both MDT and Montana's taxpayers: Smooth roads last longer.

MDT includes a ride specification in its paving contracts that holds contractors responsible for providing the public with the smoothest road surface possible. The ride is measured using specially equipped pickup trucks, called road profilers, and the International Roughness Index (IRI). The specification works by rewarding quality paving with additional pay and by assessing price reductions for substandard work. Contractors are paid a substantial incentive if they exceed the specified smoothness on a project. This incentive is for the additional road life that can be expected from a smooth paving job. On the other hand, if contractors leave the road in a rougher condition than specified, they lose money. These price deductions are compensation for anticipated loss of service life.

In an effort to ensure the road users of Montana are receiving the smoothest ride possible, MDT hired Sierra Transportation Engineers, Inc. (STE) to review MDT's ride specification, compare it with current literature and state of the practice, and make recommendations for changes.

STE determined MDT's ride specification was operating well and that it was more developed than the specifications of many other states; however, there were opportunities for fine-tuning and improving processes and procedures. Their recommendations are currently being implemented and include the following:

- Simplified project classification system.
- Revised tolerances.
- A maximum allowable roughness level beyond which corrective action is required.
- Revised test procedure.
- Enhanced quality assurance/quality control procedures.
- Graduated pay-factor system.

In addition to the final report, STE prepared a number of implementation documents including a revised ride specification, revised methods for testing surface smoothness and profile, a quality control/quality assurance plan, and a profiler operations manual. These documents can soon be found at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/const/ride\\_review.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/const/ride_review.shtml). MDT feels the quality of roads in Montana will be improved as a result of this research. For more information, contact Sue Sillick at 444-7693 ([ssillick@mt.gov](mailto:ssillick@mt.gov)) or Matt Strizich at 444-6297 ([mstrizich@mt.gov](mailto:mstrizich@mt.gov)).

## The International Roughness Index

In the early 1970s, the World Bank was trying to determine if developing countries were better off borrowing money to build expensive, good roads or if they should save money with cheap, poor roads. They found that poor roads were costly to due to user costs such as damage to vehicles. Roughness was a primary factor in the tradeoff between road quality and user cost. The result of this research was the development of the International Roughness Index, a worldwide standard for measuring road roughness.

(University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute)



*These are MDT's road profilers. The front bumpers hold lasers, accelerometers, and distance-measuring instruments that measure irregularities in the road surface and produce data on its condition. Each MDT district has one road profiler.*

## CTEP Spotlight

**CTEP Workshops Coming in the Fall:** CTEP is planning two workshops to help local participating agencies and consultants learn more about CTEP and how it can benefit local communities. Mid October is the tentative target for free one-day workshops in Missoula and Lewistown. CTEP staff will distribute e-mail surveys to help determine the best dates, times, and locations and to find out what topics local entities want to learn about.

**New Staff Member:** CTEP added a new staff member, Ross "Oak" Metcalfe, on August 21. Oak joins CTEP as a project engineer after spending approximately six years with the Butte Construction Office. Oak received his environmental engineering degree from Montana Tech. He still serves as faculty advisor to the student-run radio station as well as hosting a blues segment on Sunday nights. Oak is also a Harley owner and enthusiast. Welcome aboard, Oak!



*Ross "Oak" Metcalfe*

**Manual Update:** Roy Jorgensen Associates Inc. is making good progress updating the CTEP Manual. The consultants have surveyed the staff and will review older versions of the manual. A new and improved manual should be available this time next year.

**Database Upgrade:** CTEP staff met with Andy Metroka of Cybernaut last month to look at its current database processes with the intent of upgrading the system to current Department standards. This move will lead to more efficient project management, reduce redundant data entry, and produce reports quickly and accurately. The new database system should be ready and in use next year.

CTEP is the Community Transportation Enhancement Program. For more information, contact Mike Wherley at 444-4221 or [mwherley@mt.gov](mailto:mwherley@mt.gov).

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## Safe Routes to School

school such as sidewalk improvements, bicyclist and pedestrian facilities, speed reduction efforts, and improvements to pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

Montana's SRTS Program encourages communities to use SRTS funding to supplement funding from the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP) for infrastructure improvements near schools. For information on CTEP funding of infrastructure programs, contact Mike Wherley at 444-4221 or [mwherley@mt.gov](mailto:mwherley@mt.gov).

Noninfrastructure-related projects are activities that encourage children to safely walk or bicycle to school. These include

public awareness campaigns, traffic education and enforcement near schools, and educating students on safety and health issues.

The SRTS Program will be requesting applications this September. Local school systems, governments, communities, and nonprofit organizations are encouraged to get involved. MDT administers Montana's SRTS Program, with Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies providing coordination support. For information on any of the above events, contact Virginia Summey at 877-935-7233 or [vsummey@mt.gov](mailto:vsummey@mt.gov). Information on SRTS is also available from the national Safe Routes to School Clearinghouse at [www.saferoutesinfo.org](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org).

## Transit Tales

### New Bus Service Streamlines Travel Options for Gallatin Valley Residents

The many Gallatin Valley residents who have been shaking their heads at rising gas prices while taking long looks at skateboards, scooters, and Segways finally have an alternative that makes sense and saves money, particularly because this new service won't charge customers for riding.

The Gallatin Valley Bus Company began service August 21. Streamline is the valley's new public transportation system. This new service will compliment the current service offered by Galavan.

Streamline hit the streets with routes that stretch from the Montana State University campus in Bozeman to Belgrade. Those routes will expand along with customer needs. In addition to fixed-route transportation, the company will also offer transportation options including car and van pooling services and demand-responsive transportation.

According to David Kack, chairman of the Galavan Advisory Board, Streamline will gradually extend its service area, eventually carrying commuters from Livingston to Belgrade and throughout the Gallatin Valley.

"The valley is growing," Kack said, "and as we grow, it gets tougher for people to get around. Couple that with the rising price of gasoline and the fact that we won't charge fares for at least our first year of operation, and Streamline is going to make a real positive contribution to the quality of life for people all over our area."

Streamline, like Galavan, is a service of the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC). According to Kack, the new service has been made possible through collaboration between HRDC and the Associated Students of MSU, which provided nearly \$90,000 in funding to support this new venture.

Other major funding contributors include Gallatin County, City of Bozeman, City of Belgrade, MDT, the Federal Transit

Administration, and United Way of Gallatin County. Thanks to that funding, Streamline will offer increased transportation options with no increase in taxes.

According to Kack, planning for Streamline has been going on since 2001. "From the beginning," he explained, "the needs of the people in our community have driven the planning process. Understanding those evolving needs will also be important as we expand our routes and services. Funding levels, ridership trends, locations of new neighborhoods, roads, facilities as well as public input will shape our future routes and services."

In the past, bus lines in the area have existed to serve Montana State University students and faculty as well as special-needs groups. Streamline will serve these market segments as well as the growing business commuter and general travel community.

Streamline schedules and route maps are available on the buses and online at [www.streamlinebus.com](http://www.streamlinebus.com), or call 587-2434 for more information.



### Fall Transit Workshops



MDT's Transit Section will offer two workshops for transit providers this November. The workshops will be held in Missoula, November 1-3 and Glendive, November 15-17. Workshop topics will include Financial Management, Drug Testing, Policy and Procedure, Maintenance, and more. New transit providers as well as long-term service providers are encouraged to attend. Registration forms will go out by September 15, or you can register online at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ftw\\_reg.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/ftw_reg.shtml). For more information, contact David Jacobs at 444-9192 or [dajacobs@mt.gov](mailto:dajacobs@mt.gov).

# Montana Celebrates a Half-Century of Interstate Highways

by Jon Axline, MDT Historian

The summer of 2006 marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1956, which created the Interstate Highway System. Signed into law by President Dwight Eisenhower, the program had a profound effect on the United States and is arguably the biggest public works project in history. Designed to facilitate military traffic during the height of the Cold War, the twin ribbons of concrete and asphalt that crisscross the country changed the American landscape, its economy, and society. It is difficult to underestimate the significance of the Interstate Highways—especially on a largely rural state like Montana. The Interstate Highway had its genesis in the early 20th century when federal, state, and county governments began a monumental effort to improve the country's roads and thereby help modernize America.

Since the first Federal-Aid Road Act in 1916, the federal government pressed for the creation of an interstate highway system in the United States. The movement gained momentum in the 1920s with the 1922 Federal-Aid Road Act and in 1926 with the numbering of the nation's highways. In January 1927, U.S. Senator Coleman DuPont introduced a bill in Congress "providing for the survey of a superhighway, five hundred feet wide, as direct as possible from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast." Two months later, he hired famed sculptor Gutzon Borglum to help design the "inter-ocean" highway. DuPont's dream faded during the Great Depression as the economic calamity redirected the country's resources to more pressing issues. By the early 1940s, however, the threat of war overseas resurrected the idea of a coast-to-coast superhighway over which military materiel and troops could be moved quickly to counter any threats to national security. In 1941, the War Department directed the State Highway Commission to designate highways in Montana critical to the military in case war should occur. The commission designated U.S. Highways 10, 87, and 91 for inclusion on the National Military Strategic Network. That system of National Defense Highways became the basis for the Interstate System of the post-war years. Today, those highways are paralleled by Interstates 90, 94, and 15 in Montana.

The United States' new international role as the Arsenal of Freedom and the cooling of relations with the Soviet Union after

World War II revived the federal government's interest in developing an interstate system similar to what Nazi Germany had constructed during the 1930s. In August 1947, the federal Public Roads Administration proposed a route for the new interstate highway system based on the pre-war strategic highway network. The map that accompanied the proposal became the basis of federal and state planning for the system. The Soviets' development of atomic and thermonuclear weapons and the Korean War caused the Cold War to heat up in the early 1950s and provided the basis for President Eisenhower's crusade to establish a modern interstate highway system during his administration. In his 1954 State of the Union Address, Ike stated that he considered it "important to protect the vital interest of every citizen in a safe and adequate highway system."

Over the next two years, he lobbied hard in Congress for the money to fund the construction of an interstate system. By early 1956, he was able to broker an agreement between all the disparate political interests in Washington D.C. and pushed through the legislation creating the Interstate System. On June 29, 1956, Eisenhower signed the Federal Highway Act into law from his bed at Walter Reed Hospital, where he was recovering from an intestinal ailment. The legislation authorized the expenditure of \$25 billion for the construction of the Interstate System from 1957 to 1969. The Interstate program, however, did not manifest itself in Montana until 1958.

The 1956 Federal Highway Act called for the development of uniform Interstate design standards to accommodate traffic forecasts for 1975. The Bureau of Public Roads (renamed the Federal Highway Administration in 1967) and the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO) developed minimum standards that ensured "uniformity of design, full control of access, and elimination of highway

and railroad-highway grade crossings." While most would be four-lane road segments, two-lane segments were initially permitted as well as at-grade intersections on lightly traveled segments in rural areas. In Montana, much of the first Interstate highway mileage was constructed as two-lane segments, specifically on Interstate 15 north of Butte and on Sieben Flat north of Helena, that were converted to four-lane highways after 1966.



Interstate 94 east of Forsyth



Interstate 90 near Butte

Access to the Interstates was limited to interchanges, and service stations and other commercial establishments were banned from Interstate right-of-way. Because of the great cost of acquiring right-of-way, federal funds were used to purchase land instead of state funds as had been used previously. Just over a year after Eisenhower signed the legislation creating the Interstate Highway System, AASHO announced the numbering system for the Interstates and “unveiled the red, white, blue Interstate shield.” The federal legislation intended to fund the Interstates as a “pay as you go” project with much of the money garnered from a federal gasoline tax.

Even before Eisenhower created the Interstate System, Montana engineers had begun planning for the roads. In 1954 and 1955, Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) engineers traveled the state to work up estimates of the route of the Interstates based on the 1947 strategic highway map. Because of the size of the program, the Montana Highway Department was not equipped to tackle the task the President had set before it. Fortunately, the federal government funded 90 percent of the construction of the Interstates (compared to 60 percent on the old two-lane Primary System). Much of

the money was initially channeled into the expansion of the Montana Highway Department to handle the projected workload. This included the creation of an Interstate Division to oversee the planning, design, and construction of the new highways. According to retired MDT engineer Steve Kologi, division managers hired the best engineers to design and build the Interstates, which had to adhere to stricter standards than was necessary for the Primary and Secondary highways. The engineers were also forced to contend with increasingly more stringent environmental laws—many of which were enacted by the federal government in the 1960s in response to growing public concerns about the damage caused to natural and cultural resources by the construction of the superhighways. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Section 4(f), of the 1966 Department of Transportation Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act owe at least a part of their existence to the Interstate Highway Program.

Although the general route of the Interstates had largely been determined by 1956, there was still considerable work to do in establishing the exact routings. Although the BPR and Montana Highway Department engineers worked well together in determining alignments, occasionally politics played a part in the decision. For example, many engineers at both agencies favored a route for I-15 between Boulder and Butte that bypassed the Boulder River Canyon and Elk Park altogether. The proposed route cut directly south from Boulder, crossed Bull Mountain, and intersected with I-90 at Whitehall rather than at Butte. However, political pressure eventually resulted in the existing I-15 route between Boulder and Butte. Other alignments were also investigated for I-15 north of Helena and for I-90 south of Hardin. Perhaps the most significant alignment changes were the most subtle. Beginning in the 1960s, Chief Engineer Lewis Chittim listened to the complaints of many

farmers and ranchers who lived along the routes of the Interstates in the Yellowstone Valley about the loss of valuable agricultural land. Consequently, Chittim directed the engineers to design the Interstates to skirt the agricultural land and keep to the bluffs bordering the valleys. The best examples of this shift in philosophy are along I-90 near Livingston and I-94 near Hysham. Despite the attempt to accommodate Montana residents, right-of-way condemnations for the Interstates averaged about 10 percent of the total number of land acquisitions.

The Montana State Highway Commission let the first Interstate contracts in March 1958 for five miles of I-15 (including overpasses) south of Dillon. It was followed shortly by a segment between Ulm and Cascade and another in Big Horn County near Garryowen. By 1962, 300 miles of Interstate had been constructed in Montana, or about 26 percent of the projected network in the state. The Department built the first Interstate rest area in Montana on I-15 in the Wolf Creek Canyon in 1963.

In 1966, it cost \$318,186 per mile to construct the system; by 1977, that cost had jumped to \$1.2 million per mile. The largest single contract for the system was let in

1982—\$16.3 million to construct 7.8 miles of I-15 near Basin.

The Interstate system had largely been finished by 1987 with the completion of I-90 at St. Regis and another segment between Lodge Grass and the Wyoming border.

The almost 1,200 miles of Interstates in Montana have had a profound effect on the state. The planning, preconstruction, and construction phases caused the greatest expansion of MDT in its history, and Montana contractors and workers benefited mightily from the federal funds used to build the highways. MDT’s snow removal and maintenance practices also expanded to take care of the system. In addition, the Interstates supported a national increase in commercial trucking. The Interstate Highways have shaped how we travel and have become an integral part of the Montana landscape.



*Interstate 15 at Wolf Creek Canyon*

## Send Us Your Stories

In the early 1930s, my future father-in-law and two of his brothers set out from McAllister, Montana, to their home in Butte driving a converted Model-A, affectionately called “the Bug.” Just outside McAllister they had their first flat tire. Twenty-seven flat tires, several tire-repair kits, and two days later, the boys and the Bug finally limped into Butte.

Do you have a story about Montana’s roadways? If so, we’d like to hear from you. Send your Montana travel tales to [dmccallum@mt.gov](mailto:dmccallum@mt.gov), or mail them to *Newslines*, MDT Rail, Transit & Planning Division, P.O. Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620.

## MDT Wants Your Comments

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans\\_comm/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf), or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to [mdtnewprojects@mt.gov](mailto:mdtnewprojects@mt.gov).

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## Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment.

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