

## Archaeologists Excavate Crow Agency Site



Archaeologists expose foundations of the Absaroka Agency near Roscoe Junction 419 South Project.

In preparation for MDT's Roscoe Junction 419 South project, archaeologists are uncovering a fantastically rich artifact record of the Absaroka Agency (Crow).

The archaeologically intact nature of this site, that once served as the government's administrative point of

contact for the Crow, makes it truly unique on the Northern Plains.

In 2006, MDT hired consulting archaeologist Steve Aaberg from Billings, to conduct test excavations at the site, marking the remnants of what had been the Absaroka Agency. The test

excavations proved extremely productive. Aaberg located dumps associated with the main agency compound and Doby Town, an area of Crow Indian housing made from adobe brick. Dumps are especially important to archaeologists because they often include artifacts rich in data about people's daily lives. They located the agent's house, a blacksmith shop, sawmill, and a hand-stacked stone well. At MDT's request, Aaberg began a full-scale excavation within the proposed highway right-of-way limits in 2011.

Thousands of butchered animal bone fragments have been recovered from the Doby Town and main agency dumps. These artifacts tell about the Crow diet and reflect the changes in their way of life. Chokecherry and wild plum pits tell the story of how they gathered traditional wild fruit. The artifacts also show how the Crow went from living on bison, antelope, deer, cutthroat trout and elk, to living primarily on government-provided beef.

The Treaty of 1868 recognized the Crow Reservation as existing south and east of the Yellowstone River and east to the divide between the Big Horn River and Rosebud Creek in southeastern Montana. The first Crow Indian Agency was located near the

... Continued on next page

### Congressional Actions Renew Hope for Long-term Transportation Funding



The last long-term transportation funding bill, SAFETEA-LU, expired in September of 2009. Since then, states have been delivering the program through numerous short-term program funding extensions, the latest of which expires March 31, 2012. However, recent committee actions and press releases indicate broad support for continued infrastructure investment as we move into 2012.

The most notable action was taken by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which drafted and unanimously passed out of committee, a bi-partisan two-year surface transportation funding bill called *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act* - or MAP-21.

This two-year bill proposes to continue highway and bridge funding at current levels under a consolidated program structure. Though there would be fewer program categories, the bill doesn't eliminate any eligibilities and allows states to continue to make funding decisions. Most importantly and thanks to Senator Max Baucus, Montana would retain its share of the federal program and funding level under MAP-21. Program aspects this bill doesn't address include transit, motor carriers, safety, and a \$12 billion revenue gap. These other programs will be taken up in their associated committees, and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Senator Max Baucus will pursue a revenue solution. This is a very good bill for Montana.

Speaker John Boehner for the House of Representatives and Representative John Mica, Transportation and Infrastructure committee chair, have also made strong statements promoting job creation through funding transportation infrastructure. The House program includes a five-year infrastructure bill focusing on funding high priority projects, removing project development obstacles, leveraging private funding, and consolidating or eliminating duplicative programs. Funding levels for the five-year House proposal were not released, but there is mention of using revenue generated from expanded American energy production to help keep the program solvent at levels higher than fuel taxes alone could support. Much of this proposal remains uncertain. Montana usually fares better in the Senate.

Overall, it's encouraging that transportation program discussions are not only taking place but being promoted in a time of economic uncertainty. Both the Senate and the House recognize that continued and increased investment in transportation infrastructure is vital to the economic competitiveness of the nation. MDT will continue to ensure that Montana's transportation needs are considered as these bills move forward.

*Archaeologists continued from previous page*

western edge of the reservation at Mission Creek near present-day Livingston.

In 1875, the U.S. government moved the Crow Indian Agency from Mission Creek to a location near present-day Absarokee, Montana. The purpose, according to the official record, was to locate the Crow to a more agricultural area. However, it is clear that the agency was moved east with the intent of pressuring the Crow into giving up the western portion of their reservation. The Crow Agency stayed near the Absarokee area until 1884, when it was pushed farther east to its present location on the Little Big Horn.

The decade in which the U.S. government's primary point of contact with the Crow at the Absaroka Agency was one of monumental change for the Crow. In 1875, they were a free people, moving about their homeland, hunting and gathering as they had for hundreds of years. By the mid-1880s, the bison were almost extinct, other game populations were in sharp decline, and the Crow were dependent on government foodstuffs and other goods for their livelihood.

Additional artifacts recovered in the excavations include thousands of glass beads, many rifle and revolver cartridges and parts, metal trade arrow points, and various Civil-War-era army items that were probably sent as surplus to the agency. The excavations yielded artifacts indicative of the great cultural changes the Crow were experiencing at this time. Several chipped-stone hide-scraping tools were fashioned from bottle glass instead of the traditional chert (siliceous rock). An "Iniskim" or "buffalo stone" was recovered from one of the cabins. It is a fragment of fossil baculite that looks like a small stone buffalo. Buffalo stones are often found in Plains Indian medicine bundles and personal medicine pouches.

The site is of intense interest to the Crow Tribe, archaeologists, and historians. This year, FHWA Executive Director Jeff Paniati toured the site with Montana FHWA officials and commented that the visit to the site was one of the high points of his trip.

While the existence of the site was not a surprise, the extent and the intact nature of artifacts have been. The foundations of the main agency compound were unexpectedly discovered, still intact beneath the plow-zone in the alfalfa field on the east side of Highway 419.

MDT designers are now working on an alternative road design that will minimize impacts and avoid as much of this unique archaeological site as possible.



Montana State University Professor Dr. Jack Fisher, analyzes bone fragments from the Doby Town dump in the field lab.

Crow Tribal Monitor Shawn Danforth assists Archaeologist Dylan Haymans as he excavates the Absaroka Agency well.

## Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Grant Program in Third Round



New ambulances purchased through the EMS grant program.

MDT is pleased to announce a third round of EMS grant funding has been awarded to 21 applicants. The purpose of this program is to provide competitive grants to emergency medical service providers for acquiring or leasing ambulances or emergency response vehicles, training, communication equipment, and medical care equipment.

The EMS grant pays 90 percent of the cost to acquire critical lifesaving equipment for Montana's volunteer ambulance services. Delivery of equipment for the first two rounds of grant funding (SFY 2010 and SFY 2011) are nearing completion. This included 16 emergency vehicles, 15 power cots, 13 manikins, and 29 radios plus additional pieces of medical equipment. The third round will include 7 emergency vehicles, 7 power cots, 14 manikins, and 6 radios. Over half of all applicants received funding for requested items through this grant program.

Following is an excerpt from a letter MDT received from a 2010 grant recipient:

*"Fire and EMS personnel were able to use the new extrication equipment to quickly and safely lift the vehicle off the patient to save his life. He was transported to the hospital where he was reported to be in stable condition. Without the new extrication equipment purchased through the EMS grant the Fire Company would not have had the right equipment to perform this rescue operation and the patient would have very likely lost his life. The new equipment made it possible to perform the rescue and can be credited with a save."*



Rescue 42 strut kit and lifting bags were used in this rescue operation.

For more information, contact MDT's Rail, Transit, and Planning Division at 444-3423, or visit our web site at [www.mdt.mt.gov](http://www.mdt.mt.gov).

# MDT Maintenance Crews Battle Winter Storms

Driving through a winter storm is not for the faint of heart. For the hundreds of professionals on MDT's winter maintenance crews though, dealing with ice, sleet and snow is just part of the job. A typical shift will start at 5 a.m. and a second shift might keep crews out until midnight. Since Montana weather is anything but typical, it's not uncommon for MDT to have crews on the road around-the-clock.

MDT maintains 25,000 lane miles of highway, or about the distance it would take to drive around the equator. A storm that covers the state often means that in less than 24-hours, maintenance crews can log enough miles to travel twice around the earth.

Crews clear roads on a level-of-service priority system based on a number of factors such as proximity to an urban area, type of road, and traffic volumes. MDT's maintenance chiefs and superintendents rely on the crews' experience to balance the need for safety with the expected or current conditions and available resources. Crews may adjust schedules, call in reinforcements from other areas in the state, or when warranted, close roads.

Maintenance personnel rely on their experience and training as they consider how to clear winter roadways. These factors include air temperature, pavement temperature, humidity levels, dew point temperatures, exposure to sun, type and rate of precipitation, weather forecast, weather radar data, and satellite data. Crews monitor road conditions using infrared sensors, thermal mapping, Road Weather Information Systems (RWIS), and MDT's webcams.

These factors play into what treatment or combination of treatments are chosen to best clear the road. Winter maintenance chemicals, magnesium chloride and sodium chloride with corrosion inhibitors, are sometimes applied just before a storm or in the early stages of a storm. This helps prevent a hard bond of ice, reduces snow buildup, and speeds snow and ice breakup after the storm. De-icer might be applied to a thin layer of snow-pack or ice already on the road to melt black ice and freezing rain.

Traction sand is crushed aggregate and is applied to provide temporary traction during a storm. Keeping sand on a road is nearly impossible in some circumstances, especially in very cold weather, under windy conditions, and where traffic moves at higher speeds. Wetting traditional sanding material with liquid chlorides helps sand to stick to snow-pack.

Workers monitor conditions before, during, and after a winter storm. Road treatments and applications are modified in response to the changing conditions throughout the storm.

MDT has many tools and equipment to use in its mission to keep the roads clear for winter travel. It's the skilled professionals using these tools and equipment that deliver the effective winter maintenance program.

For **road** and **weather** conditions  
call 511 or 1-800-226-7623  
or go to web address:  
<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>

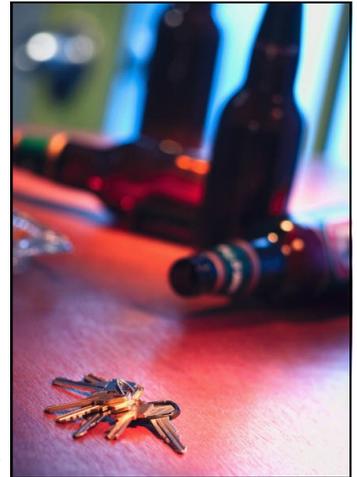
# Holiday Gatherings— Host Responsibly

The 2011 holiday season is underway. It is a time for people to gather and celebrate, and these celebrations often involve alcohol. Hosts would be wise to take some common-sense precautions to prevent excessive consumption of alcohol at their party, such as:

- Make it known as guests arrive, that you will not allow anyone impaired to drive.
- Serve a variety of non-alcoholic drinks, and have water readily available.
- Serve plenty of food, including protein-rich foods that slow the absorption of alcohol.
- Have activities, so drinking isn't the only thing to do at the party.
- Be prepared to get your guest home safely with designated drivers or public transportation.

Hosts can be held legally responsible for the damage an impaired driver might cause after leaving the party.

Hosts should also be careful if minors are present to ensure that they aren't served or consuming alcohol.



## Underage house parties

Many Montana cities have passed a Social Host Ordinance, a municipal civil law that holds hosts accountable if they allow minors, other than their own children, to consume alcohol on private property.

The host or homeowner who knowingly allows their property to be used for such an event could be held liable for injuries or other consequences that occur as a result of underage drinking.

This year, give your guests the best holiday gift of all: a healthy and safe environment.

*We wish everyone a fun and safe holiday season!*

## Montana Essential Freight Rail Loans Available

In January 2012, the Montana Essential Freight Rail Loan program will once again solicit interest in freight rail projects. Letters should demonstrate an eligible applicant and project, and should indicate project readiness.

Learn more about this program at  
[http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants\\_rail.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_rail.shtml)

# Montana's Rest Areas— Then and Now

In the early 1930s, the Montana Highway Department developed roadside picnic areas where motorists could stop, take a break, and spend some quality time communing with Montana's great outdoors. In 1934, the department took the concept one step further and built its first rest area. Located on North Main Street in Helena across from Memorial Park, (then a part of US 91), the picnic area included an information center, drinking fountain, picnic tables, and a circular stone parking structure.

Rest areas have come a long way since then. As you travel across Montana today, you will notice a new look and improved functionality at state-maintained rest areas. These facilities play an important role in relation to highway safety, primarily as it relates to driver fatigue. In addition to the safety role, these facilities also serve an important role as truck staging areas for the commercial trucking industry. With an increasing emphasis on "just-in-time" delivery practices, commercial truck drivers often use rest area facilities outside urbanized areas to await the opening of a warehouse or business.

Over the past ten years, MDT has built or reconstructed nine rest areas. This past year alone, two new rest areas were opened at Lima and Harlowton and another was reconstructed at Dearborn. The interiors of the facilities feature large, well-lit lobbies with informational displays and individual rest-



*New rest areas feature large, well-lit lobbies with information displays and individual restrooms with a child seat located on the back of the doors.*

rooms with a child seat located on the back of the doors. Common exterior features include picnic shelters, street lighting, and walking paths. In addition to the common features included in the three rest areas, each has its own unique appeal and attraction.

The original Lima rest area built in 1936 in Monida was moved to Lima in the late 1940s. It was closed in 1957. The new rest area built in 2010 is located off I-15 within the community of Lima, and offers three interpretive markers with information on geological and historical points of interest, the most notable being the old Port of Entry Station. Local businesses are seeing a boost in business due to the opening of the rest area. Lima Mayor David Olsen commented, "There are people coming into Lima that never knew we had a shopping area. The facility is a nice fit for Lima."

The existing northbound and southbound Dearborn rest area locations along I-15 near the Dearborn interchange were also reconstructed this year. These new facilities share the same design as Lima, but are the first in Montana to include dog runs. The dog runs feature a fenced enclosure that allows visitors to let their dog loose inside the gated area to exercise. These are also the first facilities in the Great Falls district to offer vending machines.



*New to rest areas are dog runs featuring a fenced enclosure that allows pets to exercise.*

MDT also constructed a new rest area on the eastern outskirts of

Harlowton by the junction of US 12 and US 191. The design of the Harlowton rest area is similar to the popular barn-style Anaconda and Dena Mora (Lookout Pass) rest areas. One of the main benefits of having the rest area located at this intersection is to



*New rest area by the junction of US 12 and US 191 near Harlowton.*

provide an area for travelers to stop during winter storms. Often, winter storms in the Harlowton area are accompanied by windy conditions and periods of low visibility. US 191 north from Harlowton through Judith Gap is occasionally closed during strong winter storms due to visibility problems. The Harlowton rest area provides a safe location for travelers to stop, get off the road, and wait out the storm.

Results from surveys recently conducted at these three rest areas indicate the traveling public is pleased with the new facilities and would like to see more of them in the state. Contact Sheila Ludlow at 444-9193 or [sludlow@mt.gov](mailto:sludlow@mt.gov) for information.

## CTEP Spotlight

### 2011—A Banner Year for CTEP Construction

Winter weather signals the end of another construction season in Montana. For CTEP, 2011 was an active and successful year with nearly 40 construction projects completed, totaling approximately \$4.5 million. Sample projects include:

- new pedestrian and bicycle paths in Troy and Libby, (matching funds provided by Lincoln County);
- new streetscaping in Fairfield, Lame Deer, and Wibaux,
- new welcome monuments, a refurbished visitor center, and a new downtown park in Cut Bank (matching funds provided by the city of Cut Bank and Glacier County).

The list of projects continues, ranging from sidewalk and park improvements in Missoula and Billings to a sidewalk at the Bridger library (matching funds provided by Carbon County). Forsyth, Red Lodge, Ronan, Helena, and Florence also sport new sidewalks and bicycle paths. Harlowton's historic Milwaukee Railroad depot received a facelift that included preservation measures to the vestige of the Milwaukee Railroad (the "electric train," for those old enough to remember!).

These projects represent a sampling of typical projects completed by participating local and tribal governments, and add to the ever-growing number of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure constructed around the state. 2011 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year of CTEP in Montana with more than \$70 million expended and more than 600 projects completed. With nearly \$5 million worth of projects in the works for 2012, the program looks forward to an even bigger and better 2012 construction season.

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

### MDT Transit Featured in the 2011 Tribal Relations Report

The 2011 Tribal Relations Report issued by the Schweitzer administration identifies some of the positive work and assistance provided by MDT's Transit Section. The report highlights MDT Transit's interaction with six of the seven Montana reservations and the role that interaction plays in sustaining reliable transit programs. This interaction is a key to improving the economy of the reservations. Three tribal, general-public operators on the Blackfeet, Fort Peck, and Flathead reservations provided 178,000 combined vehicle trips in fiscal year 2011.

The Blackfeet and Flathead tribes received Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Recovery funds to enhance their facilities. This included an addition to the vehicle storage and maintenance facility on the Blackfoot reservation and construction of ten passenger shelters and installation of a gas storage tank on the Flathead reservation.

Operating funds were provided to North-Central Montana Transit (NCMT) in Havre which accesses the Fort Belknap and Rocky Boy reservations, and the Crow tribes received three transit vehicles enabling them to start a new general public transit system.

This assistance enhances the travel experiences of passengers by increasing access to work sites and areas away from their own service areas, shelter from the weather, and vehicle operations via improved maintenance.

All of the providers extend service to passengers throughout their respective reservations from Monday through Friday. Additional service is provided by Fort Peck Transportation Service, which connects with Valley County Transit, while NCMT connects with Liberty County Transit, Northern Transit Interlocal (Shelby), Toole County Transit, Phillips County Transit Authority, and Glacier Transit.

Two reservations do not currently receive funding directly from MDT, Northern Cheyenne and Fort Belknap. Northern Cheyenne receives direct funding for transit services from the FTA. Fort Belknap currently coordinates transit service with NCMT, which links the general public on the reservation to Havre and other highline communities for employment and other services. Fort Belknap also received Federal Highway Administration funding in the past fiscal year to complete a transit maintenance facility. Fort Belknap received FTA funds via MDT in previous years.

For more information on the Governor's 2011 Tribal Relations Report see: [http://tribalnations.mt.gov/docs/2011\\_Tribal\\_Relations\\_Report.pdf](http://tribalnations.mt.gov/docs/2011_Tribal_Relations_Report.pdf)

### Safe Routes to School Application Deadline Drawing Near



Montana's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program is in its sixth year and is now in full swing. More and more Montana communities are

discovering and using the program each year. Qualifying projects include:

- K-5 classroom PE activities about developing and building safe roadway skills, also known as "Journeys from Home,"
- college students leading weekly "Walking School Buses", or
- building sidewalks that provide safe and secure access to school campuses.

Approximately \$700,000 was awarded for 7 infrastructure and 23 non-infrastructure projects across Montana.

Applications for state fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) are due by December 31, 2011. The Montana SRTS application is available online at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/saferoutes> or from Montana's SRTS Coordinator Taylor Lonsdale of the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University in Bozeman, at 994-7031 or by e-mail at [taylor.lonsdale@coe.montana.edu](mailto:taylor.lonsdale@coe.montana.edu).



*A Walking School Bus is a group of children walking safely to school with one or more adults.*

# Research Corner

## MDT Experimental Research Projects in the Mix

The MDT Research Section conducts experimental projects to evaluate the potential of new methods and materials for deployment along Montana roads. The Research staff is managing 40 active or planned experimental projects. Four projects are highlighted below, two projects constructed in 2011, followed by two projects to be constructed in 2012. For more information on these and other projects, visit the Experimental Projects Program website at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/eps1.shtml> or contact Craig Abernathy at [cabernathy@mt.gov](mailto:cabernathy@mt.gov) or 444-6269.

### Monida-Lima Southbound: Evaluation of warm mix asphalt (WMA) pavement on a highway construction project using three different WMA technologies

Rising energy costs and heightened environmental awareness have increased interest in the potential benefits of WMA in the United States. WMA



*Rollers applying the warm-mix asphalt.*

is produced by incorporating additives or water into asphalt mixtures to allow production and placement of the mixture at temperatures well below the 300°F+ temperatures required for conventional hot-mix asphalt (HMA). Benefits such as reduced plant emissions, improved compaction in the field, extension of the paving season into colder weather, and reduced energy consumption at the plant may be realized with different applications. Lower production temperatures may also increase mixture durability by reducing production aging of the mixture.

This project, constructed in September 2011, consists of three types of WMA technologies (Evotherm, Sasobit, and foaming) and an HMA control section. Research staff will monitor and evaluate the project for a minimum of five years.

### Helena-Centennial/Bausch Parks: Redi-Torque Model 280 Omni-directional Slip Base Square Sign Support

The objective of this experimental project is to determine the durability and reliability of the Redi-Torque Model 280 system for sign placement. This system was designed as a break-away device. In case of a vehicle impact (to minimize potential structural damage and increase safety for vehicle occupants) the unit base is designed to compress through the use of Teflon slip-washers, decreasing tension on the support bolts and allowing the sign base to release. The sign post is held in place by a simple



*Redi-Torque Model 280 Omni-directional Slip Base square sign support.*

locking wedge. This system allows MDT to install the unit with an existing compatible triangular slip base. The device components are not damaged on impact and may be reused.

Product evaluation focused on the stability of the base, specifically, the attachment hardware components; environmental effects (wind movement, vibrations, temperature variances, etc.); and overall product durability. At the end of the six-month trial, the unit was deemed effective and suitable for use.

### Big Hole Pass: Evaluation of Launched Soil Nails for Slope Stabilization

Launched soil nailing is a technique developed to reinforce unstable soil. Launched soil nails are steel or fiberglass rods installed to reinforce or strengthen the existing ground.

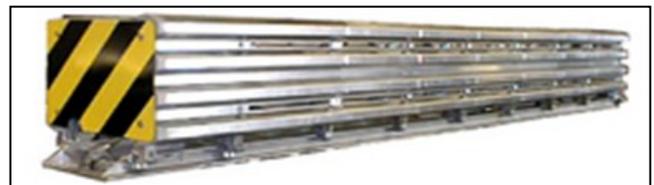


*Soil Nail Launcher*

Twenty-foot soil nails are inserted using high-pressure air, launching nails up to speeds of 250 mph. As the nail passes into the soil, the ground around the nail is displaced. As the nail comes to rest, the soil rebounds onto and bonds with the nail and reinforces the locally unstable soil. The nails maintain the resisting force because they are anchored beyond the slip plane.

### Taft-West: Smart Cushion Innovations (SCI) 100GM Crash Attenuator

The purpose of this project is to determine the effectiveness of the SCI100GM crash attenuator. A crash attenuator is a device that reduces the vehicle impact of a crash. It is designed to eliminate side panel stress during a collapse. In addition, it has a low angle of exit on side impacts to keep vehicles from rebounding back into traffic. The hydraulic collapsing of the attenuator ensures that the proper resistance is used to stop the vehicle before it reaches the end of the cushion's usable length. According to the manufacturer, this device, based on a frontal impact, may be reset and back in service in under an hour with minimum cost.



*Smart Cushion Innovations (SCI) 100GM Crash Attenuator is one type of crash reduction device.*

MDT research programs serve to discover, develop, and extend knowledge needed to operate, maintain, and improve the state-wide multimodal transportation system.

# MDT and the 1964 Centennial Train

by MDT Historian Jon Axline

MDT has been a major player in many different projects since its creation nearly a century ago in 1913 – not all involving highway construction. Some, like the official highway map, make sense, while others, like its acquisition of the Pictograph Cave site outside Billings in 1938, might seem like a stretch for a department dedicated to improving and maintaining the state’s roads and bridges. But, for nearly 50 years, the department was involved in advertising the state as a tourist destination. The roadside historical markers, museums, roadside parks, port of entry stations, and colorful tourism literature and road maps are all examples of MDT’s efforts to draw visitors to the Big Sky Country. MDT retained that responsibility until 1975, when the State Advertising Department became part of the Department of Commerce, where it resides today as Travel Montana.

In 1963, MDT became involved in the celebration of Montana’s centennial as a territory. The Montana Centennial Train was the brainchild of two men, Howard Kelsey and Jack Hume, who saw an opportunity to celebrate the centennial and promote the state to would-be visitors from all over the country. The men garnered the financial support of individuals, businessmen, and state agencies, including MDT.

Backers of the project purchased nine railcars in West Virginia with the Northern Pacific and Burlington railroads loaning an additional 16 cars and a locomotive. The interior of the railcars were filled with exhibit cases rich in historical artifacts loaned by the Montana Historical Society. Kelsey and Hume planned a month-long good-will tour that would begin on April 5, 1964, and include stops in nine cities before arriving at the New York World’s Fair in time for Montana Day, where it would remain on display for three days before returning to Montana on May 5. Three hundred passengers, characterized as “gregarious, happy, fun-loving Montanans,” paid for the privilege of riding on the train and included cowboys, Indians, musicians, Miss Montana Centennial, and Montana Governor Tim Babcock. Seventy-two horses would also accompany the group along with a chuck wagon, Conestoga wagon, “and other vehicles of ancient vintage.” The only thing remaining was to decorate the exterior of the train.

In June 1963, Kelsey and Hume appeared before the Montana State Highway Commission, explained their plans, and asked the commissioners for help. It was quick in coming. The commissioners appropriated \$30,000 for the production of 54 paintings that would decorate the exterior of the train on its cross-country tour of the United States. Artists Lyman Rice and Bud Wert painted the 8’ x 16’ murals on behalf of the highway commission,

which loaned them to the Centennial Train until the tour was completed. Thereafter, the commissioners planned to display the panels, which depicted Montana from prehistory through the nineteenth century, at each of the ports of entry on the state’s borders.

What the commissioners didn’t anticipate was the extent to which they’d be financially responsible for the train. In October 1963, Governor Babcock asked that the finances of the train be taken over by the highway commission, which would give it the legal authority to operate beyond the June 30, 1965 expiration of the Territorial Centennial Commission. One commissioner, George Gosman of Dillon, wasn’t happy with the arrangement, claiming that “we’re going to be parents of the train, but let the [centennial commission] run it as they damn please. It doesn’t look like a business transaction at all.” The commissioners directed State Advertising Director Orvin Fjare, an employee of the highway department, that he would be responsible for the

operation of the train and the department’s accountant, Robert O’Leary, would manage the Centennial Commission’s finances. Somewhere along the line, the highway department obtained ownership of the railcars. The Centennial Train became the adopted baby of the highway commission.

After touring several Montana cities in late March and early April 1964, the train left Billings for New York on April 5, stopping at Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Charleston, Washington DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia before arriving at the World’s Fair on April 22. The tour was a resounding success, returning to Billings on May 5, after stopping in six cities in the Midwest. Once the excitement of the trip cooled, however, the question for the highway commissioners became, “What do we do with the Centennial Train?”

MDT removed the murals from the exterior of the train and put them in storage at the department’s Billings District office. The nine core railroad cars were mothballed at the Laurel rail yard, where they stayed for the next seven years. Finally, in 1971, the highway commissioners leased some of the railcars to communities for use as tourist information centers. The cars ended up in Hungry Horse, Wibaux, West Yellowstone, Glasgow, and Gardiner. Eventually, many of the murals were sold to private collectors or donated to local museums throughout Montana. Four were kept for display in the new MDT building in Helena. Today, two Centennial Train cars can still be seen in Wibaux and West Yellowstone.



Montana Centennial Train in 1964 with murals intact (top photo), and a present-day train car located behind the Yellowstone Historic Center in West Yellowstone (bottom photo). Photos are courtesy of the Yellowstone Historic Center, West Yellowstone.

Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.

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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***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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