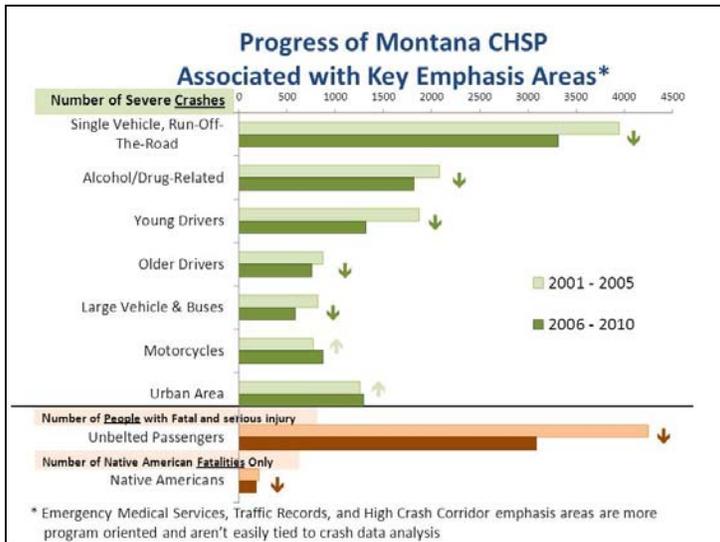


## Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan Shows Progress

Since 2006, safety advocates from across Montana have partnered to develop and implement the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP). Addressing 12 emphasis areas, the plan's vision is that "All highway users arrive safely at their destinations." This collaboration between federal, state, local, tribal and other safety advocates has resulted in the implementation of strategies and countermeasures that have decreased fatalities and incapacitating injuries on Montana's roads over the past five years.

Many of the original strategies proposed in the CHSP have been implemented or are underway. A recent amendment to the plan reflects the latest safety data, program updates, and a revised overall goal of halving Montana highway fatalities and serious injuries in two decades.

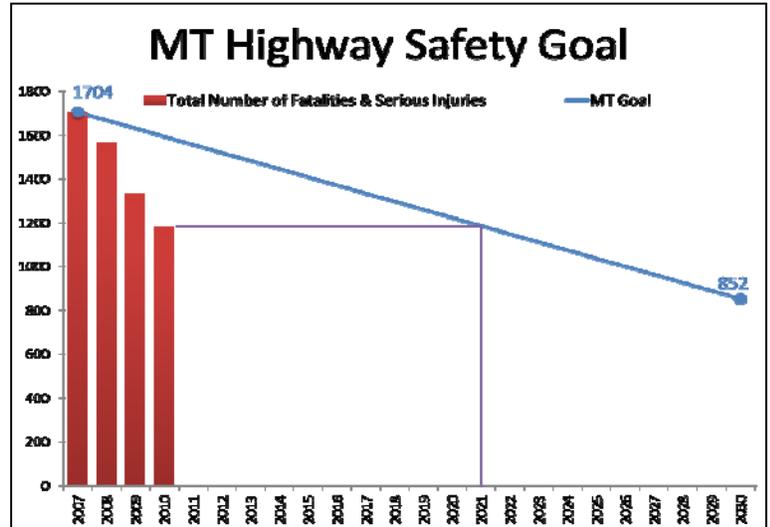


Progress of the Montana CHSP emphasis areas before the CHSP (prior to 2005) and after the CHSP was implemented.

During the 62<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, many more of the plan's strategies were supported through a series of DUI bills, a primary seatbelt law for children, and a continuation of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) grant program.

### DUI Bills

- Senate Bill (SB) 42 authorizes law enforcement to request a search warrant for blood samples if the offender has a prior refusal or DUI conviction. This bill gives law enforcement and prosecutors more tools to ensure that people who drive impaired are taken off the roadway.
- SB 15 establishes the offense of aggravated DUI and associated



The Montana Highway Safety Goal is to reduce fatalities and incapacitating injuries in Montana by half in 20 years, from 1,704 in 2007 to 852 by 2030.

- penalties for individuals convicted of multiple DUIs or a first DUI if blood alcohol content exceeds 0.16.
- SB 29 requires mandatory training for all who sell or serve alcohol. The training is targeted at compliance with laws that prohibit sale of alcohol to individuals under age 21 and those who are intoxicated.
- House Bill (HB) 12 extends the possible jail time for certain DUI offenses.
- HB 69, provides that if a person convicted of a second or third DUI voluntarily participates in a DUI court, that person's jail time beyond the mandatory minimum may be suspended.
- HB 106, creates a statewide 24/7 sobriety program. Participating county sheriffs designate locations and times to test twice a day for the presence of alcohol and/or drugs in persons charged and/or convicted of a second or third DUI. Probationary driver's licenses are available to participants if they comply with the sobriety program requirements, complete court-ordered chemical dependency treatment, provide proof of insurance, and complete the minimum driver's license suspension period.
- HB 102 incentivizes participation in DUI courts by revising the probationary driver's license provisions for DUI court participants. DUI courts use a comprehensive approach including treatment, drug/alcohol testing, monitoring, incentives and sanctions, and other services to help DUI offenders with underlying addiction associated with driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

# Montana's Scenic-Historic Byways Program

Montana's State Scenic-Historic Byway Program (SSHBP) was established to promote and enhance tourism and foster greater understanding and appreciation of the state's historic and cultural resources. Other than federal outdoor advertising restrictions, Montana State Byway designation does not provide federal, state or local governments with any additional authority to pass or enforce regulations. The statute specifically states the designation will not affect property owners, highway users or the activities of the agency responsible for the highway. To address concerns of private property owners, the program limits eligible highways to routes crossing public or tribal lands with no adjacent private property.

A SSHBP Advisory Council was established by the Montana Transportation Commission to review applications and make recommendations for roads to be designated as State Scenic-Historic Byways. On May 26, 2011, the Transportation Commission designated Montana's first two state scenic-historic byways: **Giant Springs Road** in Great Falls and **Lake Koocanusa**, a 42 mile segment on Montana Highway 37 in northwestern Montana.

## Giant Springs Road

At less than three miles long, no other short drive in Montana, has so many different natural and historic attractions. Attractions along the byway include the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, Giant Springs State Park, Giant Springs State Fish Hatchery, fishing on the Missouri River, River's Edge Trail as well as several picnic and overlook sites.

Giant Springs is the largest spring in Montana and one of the top 100 in the United States. The flow of the spring is 156 to 190 million gallons a day. The Giant Springs area contains a mosaic of four distinctive plant communities: prairie grasslands, steep river-side breaks, riparian areas and some wetlands. This section of the Missouri River, with prairie and riparian habitat centered around Giant Springs, is the richest year-round birding area in north-central Montana. The 54 degree (F) water keeps a good-size portion of the Missouri River open, even in -30 degree weather. The first documented accounts of Giant Springs were made by a member of Lewis & Clark's Corps of Discovery during their 27-day portage around the Great Falls of the Missouri.

## Lake Koocanusa



*Giant Springs in Great Falls, Montana.*

Lake Koocanusa formed behind Libby Dam, which was completed in 1974. The lake extends 90 miles north from the dam into British Columbia. The scenic byway highlights the southern half of the reservoir.

To the untrained ear, Koocanusa sounds much like a Kootenai Indian word. However, it is a modern creation. When the dam was under construction, the Corps of Engineers conducted a contest to name the lake. A woman from Eureka, Montana, won the contest by taking the first three letters from the words Kootenai and Canada and adding USA to create the name Koocanusa.

The Kootenai River and Lake Koocanusa dominate the landscape of this scenic byway corridor. The lake cuts a narrow fjord-like gorge between the Purcell Mountains and the Salish Mountains. Rock outcrops and ledges provide habitat for Bighorn sheep, seen frequently along the byway. The surrounding Kootenai National Forest provides habitat for wildlife of all kinds.

Recreational opportunities like camping, fishing, boating and sightseeing at the area's ghost towns, Libby Dam and lookouts, abound. Surrounded by unique culture and scenic wonders of the area, the Lake Koocanusa Scenic Byway is as original as its name.

If you are interested in having a road designated as a scenic by-



*Lake Koocanusa near Libby, Montana.*

way in your area, please review the guideline and application material to see if your road qualifies. Applications and application guidelines may be found on MDT's Web site.

Application Guidelines: [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/scenic/byway\\_app\\_guide.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/scenic/byway_app_guide.pdf)

Application: [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/scenic/byway\\_app.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/scenic/byway_app.pdf)

To receive Scenic-Historic Byways information by mail, call Sheila Ludlow at 444-9193.

## Montana Stands Out in State Highway Condition, Cost-Effectiveness, and State-Driven Performance

Montana recently received high ranks in national evaluations for state highway condition, cost-effectiveness, and state-driven performance measure tracking. With the current status of limited federal funding for transportation programs, Montana's system condition is a notable achievement and national policy makers should recognize that states are most suited to make the best decisions for the efficient use of available resources.

*... Continued on next page*

## Montana Stands Out *continued from previous page*

SAFETEA-LU, the last long-term transportation authorization bill, expired September 30, 2009. Since then, the states have been operating on short-term program extensions, the latest of which carries funding through September 30, 2011. The largest hurdle in getting a new long-term bill in place is revenue shortfalls for program funding. Most funds for the federal surface transportation program are generated by user fee (fuel tax) revenues which haven't kept pace with growing infrastructure needs and increasing construction costs.

Revenue shortfalls, and how to fund the future program, have been a major topic of discussion since 2005 when SAFETEA-LU was signed into law. Along with these revenue discussions, the scarcity of funds has heightened national awareness in Congress, states and federal agencies for making the most informed and responsible decisions in the use of these funds, which has led to widespread pressure to implement national performance measures. However, a one-size-fits-all approach to national performance measures could be very detrimental to Montana.

Nationally established performance measures will influence decision-making processes in the states. Rather than allowing the states to use funds for the highest and best uses to meet unique state needs, we will have to spend funds to achieve a national performance goal. This is a problem because national performance measures, by their nature, will have to be a compromise. There is no single measure that will capture the needs of the varying conditions across the nation. As a result, national performance measures will either need to be general to the point of providing no real measurement or specific and ill-suited for much of the country. Either way – national performance measures will require additional reporting and will not provide a better measure of a state's performance than can be provided by well-designed state processes, like MDT's. More of our scarce dollars will be directed to process rather than much-needed infrastructure improvements.

The *Reason Foundation 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Highway Report\** ranked Montana second in the nation in state highway performance and cost-effectiveness. In addition, *The PEW Center on the States: Measuring Transportation Investment Report: The Road to Results,\*\** described Montana as a state "... leading the way in having essential tools needed to help decision makers choose more cost-effective transportation funding and policy options." The report also said that Montana "exemplifies strong results in tracking where its transportation system is advancing the key policy goals of jobs and commerce and access."

MDT's nationally recognized management of our limited resources in providing superior results is a clear indication that states don't need new and burdensome national performance measures to direct our policy and funding decisions.

MDT staff will continue to support our Congressional Delegation and participate in national policy discussions to ensure that Montana's transportation decisions are made in Montana.

\*Reason Foundation 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Highway Report:  
<http://reason.org/studies/show/19th-annual-highway-report-montana>

\*\*The PEW Center on the States - Measuring Transportation Investment Report: The Road to Results  
[http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives\\_detail.aspx?initiativeID=85899358927](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives_detail.aspx?initiativeID=85899358927)

# Wetland Mitigation Program Is Leading the Way

In 1996, MDT created the Wetland Mitigation Unit to meet wetland mitigation needs across Montana. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Tea-21), the federal project funding mandate of "No Net Loss," and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regulations governing Section 404 of the Clean Water Act sparked the need for MDT to meet new requirements, especially to offset wetlands impacted by transportation projects.

As we approach the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary, MDT's Wetland Mitigation program is a model for other programs around the country. Approximately 1,300 acres of wetland mitigation credits, situated within 56 mitigation sites across the state, have been developed since 1996. The development of these mitigation sites is an essential part of the state's transportation program as Corps' regulations require that wetland mitigation be in place prior to projects being let to construction, (thereby preventing costly delays). The MDT Wetland Unit constantly works find suitable sites across Montana.

The program's success is highlighted by the strong partnerships and cooperation of the following:

- MDT staff and private landowners
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks; Department of Environmental Quality; and Department of Natural Resources
- Montana Wetlands Legacy
- Ducks and Trout Unlimited
- Montana Land Reliance
- Gallatin Valley and Five Valleys Land Trusts
- Montana Conservation Districts
- Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Blackfeet, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes, Northern Cheyenne, and Crow Nations

An interactive Web site showcases the wetland mitigation program and all of the wetland mitigation sites developed across Montana during the past 15 years. The site includes an interactive map, links to a brief history, photographs, lists of vegetation communities, and birds and wildlife observed within the sites. The Web site link is <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/wetlands.shtml>.

The goal is to provide a tool to submit testimonials, bird and wildlife observations, photographs, or comments about the wetlands for potential inclusion on the Web site.

On this anniversary of its humble beginnings, visit the MDT Mitigation Program Web site. If you have questions or concerns, contact the MDT Wetland Program staff:

Bonnie Gundrum, Resources Supervisor – 444-9205  
Lawrence Urban, Wetland Mitigation Specialist – 444-6224  
Wade Salyards, Wetland Engineer – 444-0451.

**Occupant Protection**

SB 319 reinstates primary enforcement of child passenger safety violations in Montana. This bill requires child safety restraints be appropriate for the height and weight of the child as indicated by manufacturer standards. It allows law enforcement to stop a vehicle if a child is under six years of age, weighs less than 60 pounds, and is not properly restrained.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

HB 262 extends the EMS Grant Program for the next biennium. This program provides important equipment, including ambulances and transport vehicles, to mostly volunteer EMS providers. The program addresses EMS delivery by providing reliable transport for people injured in a vehicle crash, decreasing transport time by providing trained EMS technicians, and enhancing communications between pre-hospital and hospital trauma treatment.

Although not part of the CHSP, two bills were passed that should never had to be written, honoring the Montana Highway Patrolmen who lost their lives in the line of duty. HB 270 provides for a memorial highway for Trooper Michael Haynes on U.S. 93 south of Kalispell. Trooper Haynes was killed by a drunk driver. His final sacrifice possibly saved other innocent victims. SB 179 creates the David Delaittre Memorial Highway along four miles of U.S. 287. Trooper Delaittre was killed in service also while keeping Montana citizens safe on our highways. Although these designations can never adequately comfort the families of these brave men, it is the MDT's honor to sign these highways in memory of these heroes.

**2011 National Child Passenger Safety Training**

- June 20-23—Glendive
- July 12-15—Helena
- September 7-10—Billings
- September 27-30—Butte



**September 2011—Technician & instructor update**

Become a certified child passenger safety technician. Use your new skills to teach parents and caregivers about proper car seat safety for their children. More information can be found at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/docs/2011\\_cps\\_training.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/docs/2011_cps_training.pdf).

**2011 Annual Transportation Safety Meeting was Held June 8—9, Gateway Center—Helena**

This event brings stakeholders together to assess Montana's progress in improving transportation safety. Areas of emphasis include:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| -Safety belt use                         | -High crash corridors/high crash locations |
| -Alcohol & impaired driving              | -Large vehicle & bus crashes               |
| -Native American crashes                 | -Emergency medical services                |
| -Traffic records management              | -Motorcycle crashes                        |
| -Young driver crashes                    | -Older drivers                             |
| -Single vehicle run-off-the-road crashes | -Urban area crashes                        |

The **Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan** is located on the Web at [www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml). For more information, contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or at [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov).

**Transit Tales**



**Safe Routes to School and Journeys from Home**

The Montana Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program and MDT have completed the application review process for SFY 2012 and awarded \$691,103 to 25 schools and communities for seven infrastructure and 24 non-infrastructure projects. The application pool consisted of 28 infrastructure projects and 28 non-infrastructure projects.

Planning and construction will begin July 1, 2011, on sidewalks, separated pathways and concrete/asphalt/non-dirt bike rack pads throughout Montana. July and August will see schools and communities planning and implementing programs promoting the safety benefits (i.e. healthier students and less automobile congestion in and around school property) of walking and biking to school for Montana's K-8 students. The 2011-2012 school year will see more Montana students taking walking school buses and bike trains to school.

A growing number of elementary physical education classes will be implementing the Montana Journeys From Home (JFH) road awareness and safety curriculum. This K-5 physical education curriculum is designed to burn up youthful energy while educating and creating aware, safety-minded and knowledgeable pedestrians and bicyclists for Montana's transportation network. Due to the success and popularity of the JFH program around the state, Montana's SRTS has contracted directly with JFH to provide regional curriculum trainings for teachers, administrators and law enforcement personnel in SFY 2012. Also, new for 2012, Montana SRTS will be outfitting applicant programs with bicycles and cargo trailers to support schools currently providing JFH training.

Montana's SRTS program can be investigated by linking to <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/saferoutes/>. Information on the JFH training can be found online at <http://journeysfromhomemontana.com/moodle/>.

**Summer Construction Safe Driving Tips**

During this summer road construction season, remember to drive safely, and follow these MDT safety tips:

- Plan ahead—dial 511 or visit [www.mdt511.com](http://www.mdt511.com) for current road construction information.
- Pay attention to signs and obey road crew flaggers.
- Be alert, expect the unexpected, and avoid distractions.
- Remain calm and patient—work zones aren't designed to be annoying, they are designed for everyone's safety.
- Follow posted speeds even when crews are not working.
- Give large trucks extra room and don't tailgate.
- Keep headlights on even when you are stopped.
- Also, keep in mind that **fines double in work zones**.

# Yellowstone Airport Opens for the Season

General aviation travel should resume by Memorial Day at the Yellowstone Airport, and Delta Connection will begin commercial air service for the 2011 summer tourist season beginning June 1. Daily flights connect in Salt Lake City to a variety of airlines. Reservations can be booked anytime at 800-221-1212 or [www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com).

Yellowstone Airport offers the closest access to Big Sky, Yellowstone Park, West Yellowstone, the Gallatin and Madison River corridors, Ennis, Virginia City, and Island Park. This service is ideal for Big Sky area/Yellowstone Park summer travelers and for local area residents.

The airport offers hassle-free TSA screening, free parking, rental cars and ground transportation, a full-service Fixed Base Operator with both general aviation and jet fuel available, and a full-service restaurant. For the general aviation community the airport offers a free campground with a hot shower, fire pits, running water, and bicycles for transportation on a first-come, first-serve basis. The facility is owned and operated by the MDT Aeronautics Division. The International Air Transport Association code for the airport is WYS.

For additional information call 646-7631 or visit [www.yellowstoneairport.org](http://www.yellowstoneairport.org).

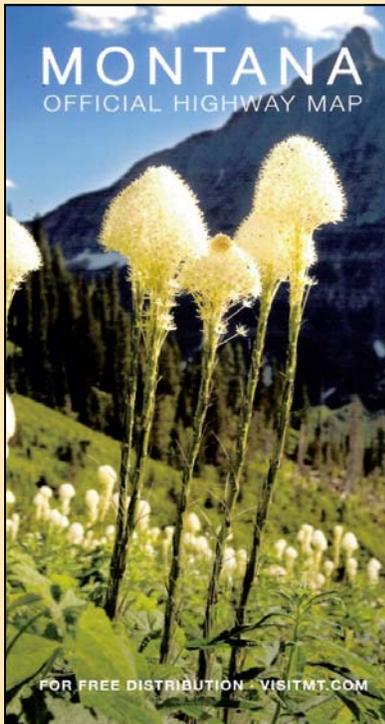
**Please note: the May opening for General Aviation is weather dependent. Call and check NOTAMS (Notice to Airmen) to confirm conditions.**

## Updated Highway Map is Available

The updated 2011-2012 Montana Highway map is available for distribution. To get a free copy, call (406) 444-3423 or order online at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment\\_form.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml).

Also online is a zoom enabled version at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/2011-2012-mt-highway-map.pdf> and a download version, [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps/Montana\\_map.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps/Montana_map.shtml).

A helpful new addition to the map, the Quick Response (QR) code, gives travelers access to the MDT Mobile Web page. Using a bar scanner application on a mobile device, the traveler can scan the QR code to access current road condition, incident and construction maps, as well as road cameras, rest area information, and MDT employment opportunities.



Quick Response (QR) code gives travelers access to MDT Mobile Webpage.

# Check Out MDT's Latest Safety Initiative

As more motorists hit the road for the summer season, MDT is continuing its commitment to spreading the word about the importance of buckling up and driving sober. The summer media campaign kicked off for Memorial weekend and will continue through Labor Day.

MDT is using traditional media like radio and television to spread the word and to direct our citizens to online social media sites to reinforce the message. MDT's site, [plan2live.mt.gov](http://plan2live.mt.gov), provides additional information, from myth buster videos to sending buckle up reminders. Also check out [plan2live](http://plan2live) on Facebook.



## Get Traffic Counts Online

A variety of traffic count information is available on MDT's Web site at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/traffic.shtml>. If you don't find the information you need on this site, please call the Traffic Data Collection Section at 444-6122.

## Submittal Date Extended for Community Transportation Safety Plan Letters of Interest

The March Newsline announced that MDT was seeking letters of interest from communities wanting to develop a Community Transportation Safety Plan. **The submittal date for letters of interest has been extended to June 24.**

MDT's award-winning approach to develop the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan, found at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml>, is the model to support similar safety planning in Montana communities.

MDT is seeking letters of interest from communities wanting to receive technical and financial assistance for developing a Community Transportation Safety Plan. Plans will identify safety issues and develop an action plan to address them. Letters should provide a detailed description of safety issues and concerns. Applicants should include letters of support from safety stakeholders representing the 4Es of transportation safety, (education, enforcement, emergency services, and engineering).

Additional information can be found at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/community-plans.shtml>, or contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or [plangveda-vis@mt.gov](mailto:plangveda-vis@mt.gov).

# MDT's Respect the Cage is—On the Road Again!



The race is on to see who can buckle up the fastest.

MDT's exhibit, Respect the Cage, designed to promote seat belt use and discourage impaired driving is on the road again for another season. The team has been traveling since the end of March and

will continue until the snow starts to fly in November.

Respect the Cage is geared toward 18-34 year olds. Statistics in Montana show that 18-34 year olds are least likely to buckle up and pickup truck drivers in this age demographic are even more unlikely to buckle. Respect the Cage will be attending events throughout Montana to help educate the public on how seat belts save lives.

This exhibit contains the vehicle from MDT's *Room to Live* video, a rollover simulator and an interactive buckle-up battle where participants race to see who can buckle their seat belts the fastest. As always, giveaways are on hand for the fastest buckler. With this ex-

hibit, individuals are able to see how a roll cage is designed to keep the cab of a vehicle intact during a rollover crash, and how a seat belt is the only device in the car that will keep occupants in the roll cage. The only way to Respect the Cage is to buckle up and not drink and drive!

Another busy summer lies ahead with events scheduled from Superior to Miles City and everywhere in between. If you are interested in having the Respect the Cage exhibit at your community event, you can submit your request by going to [www.respectthecage.com](http://www.respectthecage.com) and clicking on *Cage Request*. All event confirmations are dependent on availability and the appropriateness of event.

For an event calendar and pictures go to [www.facebook.com/respectthecage](http://www.facebook.com/respectthecage).

## Respect the Cage Summer Fair Schedule

- July 27-31: Last Chance Stampede and Fair – Helena, MT
- August 5-7: Mineral County Fair – Superior, MT
- August 11-14: Madison County Fair – Twin Bridges, MT
- August 17-21: Flathead County Fair – Kalispell, MT
- August 25-28: Eastern Montana Fair – Miles City, MT

## CTEP Spotlight

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

# New Bicycle/Pedestrian-Friendly Crossing Structures



The new Billings Main Street pedestrian tunnel.

Getting around Billings on foot or by bicycle has just become a "hole" lot easier. A November 9, 2010, ribbon cutting ceremony officially opened the city's new Alkali Creek bike/pedestrian tunnel under North Main Street, providing a much-needed facility for bicyclists and walkers to cross one of the busiest streets in Montana. The long-awaited project was delayed twice when construction bids exceeded available funding for the challenging tunnel construction. The MDT

walls at each end add a pleasing effect for trail users as they enter and exit the structure.

The Billings office of Dowl HKM Engineering assisted the city of Billings with design engineering and construction management services. The \$1.7 million construction contract was completed by Stillwater Excavating Inc. of Columbus, Montana.

The Billings tunnel joins several other bicycle/pedestrian-friendly crossing structures that MDT is currently designing and building across the state. A \$2.3 million elevated (bridge) crossing over US 93 on the Flathead Indian Reservation at Pablo is nearing completion and will be in use by mid-summer. Planning and design work for a tunnel crossing under US 93 near Kalispell has been completed and construction is about to start. In Helena, a bicycle/pedestrian crossing over Interstate 15 with connecting paths will be constructed this summer at the Capitol Interchange.

All of these projects will add to MDT's continuing effort to make our transportation system ever more friendly and useful for non-motorized users.

Community Transportation Enhancement Program and other funding sources finally put the project over the top. The project was let to bid in May 2010 and construction commenced in July.

Advancing the 200-foot long, 14-foot diameter tunnel through the Main Street road embankment at Alkali Creek was not done without some surprises. As the excavating and placing of the steel lining plates moved forward, the workers encountered a long-forgotten concrete bridge pier, which fortunately presented only a minor obstacle. The tunnel alignment, squeezed by the old abutment, required removal of only a few inches of the old concrete. A little farther along, an unknown pipeline was exposed, but it was an abandoned line filled only with stale water.

In early October, a small group of local officials and interested citizens gathered to watch as the workers pushed a shovel through the last bit of embankment, finding the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Success at last! A 10-foot-wide concrete travel surface and overhead lighting completed the tunnel interior. Decorative



An elevated bridge crossing over US 93 on the Flathead Indian Reservation at Pablo. Photo courtesy of the Flathead Indian Tribe.

# MDT on the Front Line of the Cold War by Jon Axline, MDT Historian

The fear of a Soviet sneak attack permeated the United States during the late 1940s and 1950s. That fear was heightened in 1949 when the USSR exploded an atomic bomb and intensified in 1953 when it tested a thermonuclear weapon. Americans reacted by building backyard bomb shelters, becoming active in civil defense endeavors, and participating in duck and cover drills. One of the reasons behind the construction of the Interstate highways was to facilitate the movement of military troops and supplies and enable the evacuation of cities in the event of a nuclear attack. Malmstrom Air Force Base, missile silos, radar installations, and the Interstates became the most highly visible manifestations of the cold war in Montana. What is less known, however, is the important role the Montana Highway Department (now MDT) played in it.

Just before World War II, MDT and the old Bureau of Public Roads (now FHWA) established the Strategic System of Military Defense Highways. The system prioritized Montana's primary highways based on their importance to national defense. The federal government allocated money first to MDT projects on high priority routes and then to second and third priority roads. That system was in effect during the war and codified by the Defense Highway Act of 1941. The strategic system remained in effect after World War II and became the basis of the Interstate highway system in 1956.

The expansion of the US military after the war meant a greater Air Force presence in Montana. Many believed that the Soviet Union might attempt a Pearl Harbor type sneak attack by using an air route over the Arctic into North America. Theoretically, Russian bombers bearing nuclear bombs would fly over the wide open and sparsely settled areas of Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas. The United States was woefully unprepared for such a contingency as radar technology was not yet advanced enough to provide adequate forewarning of such an attack. Despite that, the Air Force began establishing radar stations in the American West in 1952, including four in Montana. They were located at Cut Bank, north of Havre, Opheim, and near Yaak in the extreme north-western part of the state. MDT built and maintained 161 miles of roads to the radar stations. The Air Force supplied prefabricated buildings at each installation to house the MDT's maintenance equipment. Eventually there would be fifteen radar and gap filler stations in the state, with MDT maintaining the roads and plowing snow to each one. That system would eventually be applied to missile silos when the USAF installed them in Montana in the 1960s. In case the bombers did get through, the State Highway Commission designated the basement of the highway building at the corner of Sixth Avenue and North Roberts in Helena as a fall-out shelter.

MDT's maintenance men also kept a sharp eye out for Soviet bombers as part of the Ground Observer Corps (GOC). Formed in 1950, the GOC consisted of civilians who were trained by the Air Force to scan the skies and report on any aircraft they saw or heard. Their reports were radioed into filter centers at Helena and Billings, where plotters tracked the flight paths and tried to determine if they were friendly or hostile airplanes. If they could not be identified, filter center staff notified the Air Force, which then scrambled jet interceptors to investigate. The GOC was a provisional organization until the United States and Canada could be adequately covered by radar nets. The GOC expanded its responsibilities as part of Operation SKYWATCH in July 1952 and remained on

active duty until January 31, 1959. At its height in 1956, over 11,000 Montanans manned over 300 observation posts scattered all over Montana. In areas where there were no towns and even fewer residents, the Air Force relied heavily on the 190 "mobile units of the State Highway Maintenance Department to report aircraft." Unfortunately, the total number of sightings radioed in by Maintenance workers is not known, but they did plug a significant gap in the GOC's coverage of the state for several years.

MDT was an active participant in the cold war in Montana. In addition to the above, it also granted permits for the transportation of Minute Man missiles on the state's highways and granted Montana Civil Defense Agency permission to use Lewis and Clark Caverns as a fall-out shelter in 1964. Recently, MDT has commemorated the cold war in Montana by installing interpretive markers about the Miles City radar station and the Ace in the Hole missile silo near Monarch. An historical marker is planned to showcase Malmstrom Air Force Base in the near future.

## MDT Historic Preservation Efforts Recognized

On January 19, 2011, MDT was recognized for its historic preservation efforts for listing five historic bridges and a historic site on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger awarded certificates to MDT on behalf of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office at a ceremony held at the Myrna Loy Theater in Helena. MDT received certificates for the following sites:

- Missouri River Bridge near Wolf Creek
- Hardy Bridge in Cascade County
- Yellowstone River Bridge at Fallon
- Powder River Bridge west of Terry, and
- Big Horn River Bridge north of Custer.

The structures were listed on the National Register as required by the department's Historic Roads and Bridges Programmatic Agreement. Under the agreement terms, MDT developed guidelines for the identification, evaluation, and management of its historic bridges.

Also recognized was the Point of Rocks Historic Transportation Corridor in Mineral County. The site includes a two-mile segment of the Mullan Road and an abandoned segment of the Milwaukee Road Railroad. The 647-mile road connected Walla Walla, Washington and Fort Benton, Montana. Completed in 1860, it is the first engineered road in Montana. The transportation corridor is currently open to the public as an undeveloped hiking trail about two miles west of Alberton.



*Point of Rocks Historic Transportation Corridor in Mineral County.*

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.

**Rail, Transit & Planning Division  
Montana Department of Transportation**

2701 Prospect Avenue  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, Montana 59620-1001  
800-714-7296

Pre Sort Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Helena, MT  
Permit No. 141

MDT attempts to provide accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in any service, program, or activity of the Department. Alternative accessible formats of this information will be provided upon request. For further information call (406)444-3423, TTY (800)335-7592, or the Montana Relay at 711.

***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).

MDT Project Analysis Chief  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

***Inside This Issue***

Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan Shows Progress 1  
Montana's Scenic-Historic Byways Program ..... 2  
Montana Stands Out in Highway Condition, Cost-Effectiveness. 2  
Wetland Mitigation Program is Leading the Way ..... 3  
2011 National Child Passenger Safety Training..... 4  
2011 Annual Transportation Safety Meeting..... 4  
Safe Routes to School and Journeys from Home ..... 4  
Summer Construction Safety Driving Tips..... 4  
Yellowstone Airport Opens for the Season ..... 5  
Updated Highway Map is Available..... 5  
Check Out MDT's Latest Safety Initiative ..... 5  
Get Traffic Counts Online ..... 5  
Submittal Date Extended for CTSP Letters of Interest ..... 5  
MDT's Respect the Cage is—*On the Road Again* ..... 6  
New Bicycle/Pedestrian-Friendly Crossing Structures..... 6  
MDT on the Front Line of the Cold War ..... 7  
MDT Historic Preservation Efforts Recognized ..... 7

***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.

Administrator (Lynn Zanto)..... 444-3445  
..... [lzanto@mt.gov](mailto:lzanto@mt.gov)  
Bicyclist/Pedestrian (Mark Keeffe) ..... 444-9273  
..... [mkeeffe@mt.gov](mailto:mkeeffe@mt.gov)  
Environmental (Tom Martin) ..... 444-0879  
..... [tomartin@mt.gov](mailto:tomartin@mt.gov)  
Highway Traffic Safety (Priscilla Sinclair) ..... 444-7417  
..... [psinclair@mt.gov](mailto:psinclair@mt.gov)  
Map Orders ..... 444-6119  
..... <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/maps>  
Multimodal Programs (Doug McBroom)..... 444-7289  
..... [dmcbbroom@mt.gov](mailto:dmcbbroom@mt.gov)  
Projects (Paul Johnson) ..... 444-7259  
..... [paujohnson@mt.gov](mailto:paujohnson@mt.gov)  
Secondary Roads (Wayne Noem) ..... 444-6109  
..... [wnoem@mt.gov](mailto:wnoem@mt.gov)  
Road Data & Mapping (Ed Ereth)..... 444-6111  
..... [eereth@mt.gov](mailto:eereth@mt.gov)  
Traffic Data (Becky Duke)..... 444-6122  
..... [bduke@mt.gov](mailto:bduke@mt.gov)  
Transit (Audrey Allums) ..... 444-4210  
..... [aallums@mt.gov](mailto:aallums@mt.gov)  
Statewide & Urban Planning (Zia Kazimi) ..... 444-7252  
..... [zkazimi@mt.gov](mailto:zkazimi@mt.gov)  
Newsline Editor (Sandra Waddell) ..... 444-7614  
..... [swaddell@mt.gov](mailto:swaddell@mt.gov)

6200 copies were published at an estimated cost of \$0.45/copy, a total of \$2790 includes \$683 for printing and \$2,107 for distribution.