

ON TRACK WITH MDT

On June 16th, I had the privilege of inviting delegates of the Western Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, or WASHTO, to join us in Montana for the WASHTO 2004 conference. The event is scheduled for July 18-21, 2004, in Kalispell. We are eager to share our accomplishments with our fellow WASHTO members and with the partners who make those successes possible.

For those of you who aren't familiar with WASHTO, it is a regional chapter of AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials. WASHTO's members include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Other members include the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Associate members include British Columbia, Canada; Manitoba, Canada; Saskatchewan, Canada; and the Navajo Nation.

Like AASHTO, WASHTO represents all modes of transportation: air, road, public transport, rail and water. Our primary goal is to support AASHTO and our partners in the development, operation and maintenance of an integrated transportation system. We do that, in part, by gathering each summer to discuss policies and facilitate change. Plus, when we host a conference, we are given the opportunity to showcase our state and our transportation systems – and to help folks have a little fun along the way. Doing so may take some time, but it really is worth the effort.

If you're wondering how much work goes in to planning a conference, I can assure you that it's a fair amount. Once we knew we were going to host the conference, for example, we booked the necessary hotels and asked our employees to come up with a conference theme, which we then utilized to design our logo. The result, shown here, depicts that we are bringing various entities together and *Partnering for Progress*, a theme that summarizes both our daily operations and our collaboration with our fellow WASHTO members. Now we are in the process of developing the program, the entertainment and the technical tours that will showcase our transportation challenges and successes while giving folks a unique sampling of life in the Pacific Northwest. Because Kalispell is such a delightful area, we are anticipating a large turnout, with many folks staying beyond the conference to take in the sights. That will help further showcase Montana while generating additional revenue for the state.



Planning any event that attracts several hundred individuals is a major undertaking, and we are keenly aware of that fact. We already have committees tasked with key duties, and we will be recruiting additional MDT "ambassadors" to help with the conference

itself. However, we will need the help of our partners as well. If you want to become a sponsor, an exhibitor or a conference attendee, please let us know by contacting Gail Brockbank at 406-442-4141 or gbrockbank@state.mt.us or Vickie Murphy, at 406-444-6104 or vmurphy@state.mt.us. As always, teamwork is key to success, and our relationships serve as testament to that fact.

I hope that, as the Kalispell conference draws near, we will be able to celebrate the involvement of our local partners in the event. By working together, we can showcase our successes and let folks know what a great state we live in. After all, that's the only way we can stay "on track," facilitate change and show others what it means to be *Partnering for Progress*.

Dave Galt
Director