

Construction of US 93 Across the Flathead Reservation is Progressing Quickly Celebrating the Spirit of Place

Few are more excited than I am that we have finally begun the long awaited reconstruction of US 93 across the Flathead Reservation. Having lived in this area, I know all too well the safety issues that have plagued this particular stretch of road for decades.

As the Director of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) I am pleased to announce that road construction is underway and real progress can be seen by locals and visitors alike everyday. If you haven't been to the area lately, you'll be surprised at the transformation to date.

There are currently three projects under construction, the Jocko River Bridge between Arlee and Ravalli; Minesinger Trail to MT-35, just south of Polson; and Polson East, on MT-35 to the junction at Hwy 93.

US 93, though sometimes contentious, has been a priority for members of the Montana Department of Transportation, the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes and the Federal Highway Administration. Today we all take pride in knowing we have a plan and a road that will celebrate the "Spirit of Place" that defines its new name, "The Peoples Way."

In all things, it is the people who make a difference and so this segment is properly named for all "the people," who have shared in the vision for this highway.

There are eight segments on The Peoples Way from Evaro to Polson, not including Polson East. The segment in the Ninepipe area is currently undergoing a supplemental environment impact statement, and we expect a draft to be out for public comment by late summer.

Overall, we plan for the entire corridor to be finished quickly. The three projects currently underway are expected to be completed by the time we let two more projects in November. The corridor, with the exception of Ninepipe, is scheduled to be completed by 2009.

The overall cost of the project is estimated to be just over \$130 million dollars. Through using GARVEE bonds, we are able to fund the entire project to allow this rapid construction and doesn't divert resources from highway projects in other districts of the state.

As with all highway construction, traffic will be slowed when safety issues warrant, but we are committed to keeping vehicles moving and keeping delays to the absolute minimum. The Montana Department of Transportation understands

what a heavily traveled corridor this is and its importance on tourism to the area and to the state.

The way this road was designed, the safety improvements, wildlife crossings, the attention to the environment and the respect for the land this road will travel has set a new standard for MDT. We believe this corridor will be a model for context sensitive solutions around the United States.

If you want to know more about the reconstruction of "The Peoples Way" I hope you will go to the web site www.93info.com and learn about construction updates and the history of this magnificent project.

Serving you with pride,

Jim Lynch
Director,
Montana Department of Transportation