



Montana Department of Transportation  
PO Box 201001  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

## **Memorandum**

To: RRC Members  
Steve Albert/WTI  
Debbie Alke, Administrator/ Aeronautics Division  
Mike Bousliman, Administrator/Information Services Division  
Jeffery M. Ebert, P.E./District Administrator-Butte  
Larry Flynn, Administrator/ Administration Division  
Dwane Kailey, Administrator/Highways and Engineering Division  
Bob Seliskar/FHWA  
Jon Swartz, Administrator/Maintenance Division  
Mike Tooley/Director  
Duane Williams, Administrator/Motor Carrier Services Division  
Pat Wise/Deputy Director  
Lynn Zanto, Administrator/Rail, Transit, and Planning Division

From: Susan C. Sillick, Manager  
Research Programs

Date: February 11, 2015

Subject: January 28, 2014 RRC Meeting Notes

**RRC Members Present:** Steve Albert, Debbie Alke, Mike Bousliman, Dwane Kailey, Bob Seliskar, Sue Sillick, and Duane Williams.

**Others Present:** Kris Christensen, Mike Dyrdaahl, Mike Grover, Diane Myers, Brad Nelson, Lesly Tribelhorn, and Kam Wrigg.

### **1. Budget Report**

Dwane noted that the unexpended balance used to hover around \$2M, but is down to about \$1M. These carry forward funds are being spent.

Sue indicated the RRC may want to consider prioritizing research topics in the future. Sue also indicated that in addition to the focusing on projects that address current needs, the RRC may want to use a part of the program to look ahead to try to anticipate needs 5 to 10 years down the road.

Debbie suggested that Research could be used to help the Divisions meet their annual plans.

**Post-Meeting Notes: The amount available is overstated by about \$180,000 (Funding A spreadsheet, 4<sup>th</sup> in budget packet) as these funds will be released (available) when FFY 2014**

is closed. Also, the multiyear federal expenditures (3<sup>rd</sup> spreadsheet in the budget packet) for 8882-309/TPF-5(309) are funds from other states for which budget and authority will be transferred as well; these numbers will have a net zero impact on the budget instead of a negative impact as it is now stated.

2. **Research Projects – current listing**

No discussion.

3. **Reports:** Available on Research [website](#)

- a. **Speed Limits Set Lower than Engineering Recommendations (13-008)- Task 2 report**

No discussion.

4. **Proposals:**

- a. **Advanced Methodology to Determine Highway Construction Cost Index**

Mike Grover and Lesly Tribelhorn were present on behalf of the technical panel to request funding for this project. The purpose of this project is to improve our current estimation practices by developing a Montana-specific highway construction cost index (HCCI), which will improve the accuracy and precision of project estimates.

Dwane indicated the results will help MDT respond to the increased accountability requirements of the new “super circular”.

Lynn was not able to attend the RRC meeting, but gave her support for this project via e-mail.

Dwane made a motion to fund this project for \$152,463 as requested. Mike seconded the motion. All RRC members present and Lynn via e-mail voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed

- b. **Feasibility of Non-Proprietary Ultra-High Performance Concrete (UHPC) for Use in Highway Bridges in Montana**

Due to unforeseen circumstances, no one was present to discuss this proposal. It will be addressed at the next RRC meeting.

- c. **State Responses to Energy Sector Developments Pooled Fund Study**

Diane Myers was present to request funding for this pooled fund study. The purpose of this pooled fund study is to provide a mechanism for partner states to share information and experiences with each other and with experts in the field related to responding to energy sector development. The project will also identify areas for needed research that may be funded in futures years of the pooled fund project, through NCHRP, or other venues.

Funding was requested for FFY 2015 and 2016 (\$20,000 per year for a total of \$40,000). However, there was some confusion as to whether it is a one or two year project. On the pooled fund site, it indicated two commitment years, but also stated it is a 12 month project, with an end date of 11/30/15. Most participating states (80%, 4/5) have committed funds for one year. Given this, Sue recommended funding for one year. Also, Lynn indicated via e-mail she was fine with funding for one year, either the first year and monitoring progress, or the second year, if after monitoring progress, MDT is satisfied with the direction. Dwane stated he supports one year of funding as he's not sure what the status of the Bakken will be a year down the road.

Mike questioned the fact that there is no identified deliverable.

Debbie made a motion to fund this project for one year. Dwane seconded the motion. All RRC members present and Lynn via e-mail voted for the motion. The motion passed.

d. **Tel8 Telecommunications System (Transportation learning Network - TLN) Pooled Fund Study** (attached and to be distributed)

Brad Nelson and Mike Dyrdaahl were present to support continued MDT participation in this pooled fund study. Mike stated that we are currently completing our second year of funding for the TLN; he added that MDT had supported the TLN for a number of years quite a while ago. Mike also stated this topic was discussed at a meeting of the Division Administrators and they supported an additional two-year funding request at \$117,000 per year for a total of \$234,000.

The purpose of this pooled fund is to provide training to address needs for states in the region, complementing the training provided by each of its members. In addition, it provides access to information and expertise not readily available to transportation professionals in the region. Finally, the TLN identifies, schedules, distributes, and warehouses training for its members.

Brad stated there were 376 MDT employees registered in 41 courses, with the majority of courses being held via videoconferencing. This results in a total of about \$2,800/course and about \$311/participant/event. This is much lower than the state of Montana PDC and FHWA NHI courses (\$10K - \$15K/event, ranging from \$350 to \$750/participant/event). Brad added that we can offer these courses to 11 sites across the state; this option is not available for most classes through PDC or NHI. Brad acknowledged there were some technical difficulties experienced in the first year of our most recent participation (SFY 2014), but he felt these issues were resolved and, he added, that the instructor quality has improved. At least, he's been receiving good feedback. Brad indicated there were some concerns with the soft skill courses, but those courses have some of the highest attendance and Dwane indicated HR likes the concept of working with Brad and the TLN.

Brad discussed the process for determining the courses in each year. Each of the participating states identifies and prioritizes topics. With this information, TLN staff chooses 40-50 topics per year. Finally, Brad stated we are nearing the process of

identifying training needs within MDT; this schedule will fit in well with providing feedback to TLN as to the courses we would like added to the schedule.

Mike wondered if the TLN is a competitor to PDC. Brad responded that soft skill courses are vetted through HR. Dwane added that PDC courses are primarily in Helena.

Lynn indicated she checked with staff and received the following in feedback via e-mail. She also stated there were several verbal responses indicating the same sentiment. Given the responses, Lynn stated she would vote against continued funding for the TLN.

1. Over the course of the two years, I kept my eye open for relevant TLN courses for my Section, and in that time, we have only attended one training event. Unfortunately, at that one event, they had video difficulties....which I felt was very important since this is the avenue they are communicating. I am finding little to no value of TLN offerings in my area.
2. I only attended leadership classes and found them to be very basic and unorganized. I believe the PDC and MDT offers better classes on leadership and communication.
3. I took a class via video conferencing, which did not work well. The instructor was also not very effective. The whole class I think was disappointed.
4. I've only attended one TLN training course. The person conducting the training was fairly new and he struggled with the technology, and with some of the material. This did take away from the training. But, the subject matter was good and I did get a lot out of the training.

Brad stated that he needs to be notified of any issues with TLN courses. He added that if he doesn't receive feedback, he assumes everything is working well. Dwane reinforced this comment.

Steve reminded the group that WTI was successful in receiving the award for a safety (mostly rural) center of excellence (COE); this center will focus on providing training and technical assistance mostly to locals, but added there could be coordination between this new COE and the TLN to leverage funds.

Dwane made a motion to fund the TLN for an additional two years as requested. Mike seconded the motion. All RRC members present voted in favor of the motion. Lynn voted against the motion via e-mail. The motion passed.

## **5. Implementation/Performance Measures/Technology Transfer**

No discussion.

## **6. Department/Division Hot Topics – RRC Members Roundtable Discussion**

Bob Seliskar mentioned some of the new accountability requirements with the “super circular”.

Dwane added the discussion under the Budget Section above.

Debbie stated Aeronautics and MCS staff would like to meet with Sue to determine how they can tap more research funding.

Steve suggested MDT should develop a strategic plan in relation to the budget discussion above.

Copies: Craig Abernathy/Research Section  
Audrey Allums/Grants Bureau  
Kent M. Barnes, P.E./Bridge Bureau  
Katy Callon/Research Section  
Kevin Christensen/Highways and Engineering Division  
Kris Christensen/Research Section  
Ryan Dahlke, P.E./Consultant Design Bureau  
Chris Dorrington/Multimodal Programs Bureau  
Lisa Durbin/Construction Administration Bureau  
Mike Dyrdahl/Engineering Operations Bureau  
Ed Ereth/Data and Statistics Bureau  
Lesly Tribelhorn, P.E./Highways Bureau  
Dave Hand/District Administrator-Great Falls  
Paul Jagoda, P.E./Construction Engineering Services Bureau  
Tom Martin, P.E./Environmental Services Bureau  
Shane Mintz/District Administrator-Glendive  
Ed Toavs/District Administrator-Missoula  
Roy Peterson, P.E./Traffic & Safety Bureau  
Suzy Price/Contract Plans Bureau  
Jim Skinner/Planning and Policy Analysis Bureau  
Rob Stapley/Right of Way Bureau  
Jerry Stephens, P.E./WTI MSU  
Stefan Streeter, P.E./District Administrator-Billings  
Matt Strizich, P.E./Materials Bureau  
James A. Walther, P.E./Highways and Engineering Division  
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