



**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 25, 2016

Subject: February 24, 2016 RRC Meeting Notes

**RRC Members Present:** Steve Albert, Harold Dramstad for Debbie Alke, Mike Bousliman, Dwane Kailey, Sue Sillick, Jon Swartz, Duane Williams, and Mike Tooley

**Others Present:** Kris Christensen, Scott Helm, and Tom Martin

1. **Budget Report:** Attached

Sue distributed a revised budget, showing only federal dollars on the summary sheet. Currently, there is about \$17,000 over committed. Dwane explained that currently, Sue programs only the estimated expenditures for each FFY in that FFY; this relies on accurate estimates from the researchers. The multi-year budget sheet, along with the projected expenditures for any new, proposed projects, currently track these unprogrammed obligations. Many other state DOTs and other MDT programs do the same. However, due to a FHWA accounting review, new projects will be programmed for the entire contract amount plus ICAP at the beginning of each project. This will decrease the amount of research projects that can be funded each year.

Given the over commitment, no new projects will be approved in FFY 2016. Also, pooled fund transfers will be held for now. Since the research project obligated amounts are based on estimates from the researchers, the over/under commitment amount will likely change. If the expenditures are close to or over what was estimated, Sue recommends holding the TLN pooled fund payment until October 2016. The reason for this recommendation is two-fold: 1) TLN is run on a SFY and would only be three months late, whereas the other pooled funds run on FFY and 2) the amount is large enough to potentially cover any over commitment.

It was noted much of the budget is committed for FFY 2017 as well.

It was suggested the RRC might want to discuss a strategic direction or some prioritization process for approving research projects and pooled funds in the future. This will be discussed at a future RRC.

Sue stated SPR funding is a 2% takedown of the federal funding MDT receives. Federal legislation states a minimum 25% of the SPR be applied to research. The MDT SPR funds have always been split with 75% applied to Planning and 25% applied to Research. NCHRP is 5.5% of this 2% or total SPR funds MDT receives each year. However, NCHRP has been paid from research funds for at least 22 years; currently, NCHRP is 22% of the total research funds. Since there are many planning-related projects and set asides for three AASHTO planning committees, Sue asked Lynn to help support NCHRP funding for this year and in the future. Lynn agreed to help this year, but couldn't commit for future years. Sue will make this request again for FFY 2017 as the year approaches.

For the Wildlife Accommodations project, the RFP was issued, proposals were evaluated, and we were nearing the time through which the chosen consultant was required to keep the cost maintained at the original proposed funding level. If we passed this date without an agreement that the consultant was willing to extend this date, the project would have to go through the RFP process again. Given the amount of work that had already gone into the process and the importance of the project, Sue asked Lynn if she would fund this project (\$174,000). Lynn agreed to do so. Tom Martin updated the RRC on the wildlife accommodations proposal; however it was stated since Research was not funding this project, it doesn't need to go through the research processes. A number of RRC members had some issues with this last statement and feel that all research should go through the RRC regardless of funding source. The role of the RRC will be discussed at a future RRC meeting when Lynn is able to be present. Also, Sue will send this proposal to the RRC for their information.

## 2. 2016 Research Topic Solicitation

Given the federal funding level, the 2016 solicitation will be cancelled. Sue will add a note to the solicitation web page that there will be no solicitation in 2016.

## 3. [Research Projects - current listing](#)

- a. **Assessing Noise Levels and Impacts from Pile Driving on Bull Trout During Construction (14-032)**  
- Panel recommends this project be cancelled.

Tom Martin was present to discuss this topic for the technical panel.

MDT is required to enter into consultation with the USFWS for potential impacts to threatened and endangered species. Bull Trout are currently listed as threatened species under the ESA. Bull trout are primarily threatened by habitat degradation and fragmentation, blockage of migratory corridors, poor water quality, the effects of climate change and past fisheries management practices, including the introduction of non-native species such as brown, lake and brook trout. The USFWS has indicated that analysis of noise impacts to bull trout will be required as part of the Biological Assessment preparation for USFWS consultation on bull trout occupied streams in Montana. Given this, a USFWS representative was added to the technical panel for this project.

Most of the research conducted on this topic was conducted in large, non-moving bodies of water, unlike our streams and rivers in Montana. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the impacts of pile driving on bull trout in Montana's moving waters. However, as the panel proceeded and some

research in similar situations was brought forward, USFS indicated no matter what research has been or will be conducted, it will not impact the restrictions placed on projects by USFWS. Given this, the panel recommends this project be cancelled.

Mike B. made a motion to cancel the project; Steve A. seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of cancelling this project.

- b. **Development of Best Practices for Micropile Foundation Design and Construction in Montana (15-004)** – Panel recommends this project be cancelled.

Scott Helm was present to discuss this topic for the technical panel.

This project was a placeholder for any additional research that might be suggested at the conclusion of the micropile synthesis project, which is now complete.

Micropiles are small diameter piles constructed by drilling and grouting techniques. They can be a cost effective foundation alternative. The synthesis project surveyed eight neighboring/close states. Related documents, such as specifications, were also collected. The panel felt they received enough information and concluded there are no research gaps in terms of use in Montana. Given this, the panel decided to proceed with an experimental project once a construction project is identified in lieu of another research project. Therefore, the panel recommends cancelling this follow-on project.

Dwane K. made a motion to cancel this project; Mike B. seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of cancelling this project.

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

No discussion

- a. **Development of a New Specification for 3/4-inch Minus Crushed Base Course, Type A (14-007)** – Task 1 report
- b. **Development of Strategic Enterprise Architecture Design for MDT (14-016)**- Task 2 report
- c. **Disparity Study** – Monthly Progress Reports, and Task 2 and Task 6 reports
- d. **Evaluation of Effectiveness and Cost-Benefits of Woolen Roadside Reclamation Products (13-008)** – Task 2 report
- e. **Assessment of Montana Road Weather Information System (RWIS) System (14-019)**-Task 3 and 4 reports
- f. **LTAP**- progress report
- g. **Safety Impact of Differential Speed Limits on Rural 2-Lane Highways in Montana (13-002)**- Task 1 and 2 reports
- h. **Special Event Traffic (13-010)**- Task 2 report
- i. **Statewide Rockfall Hazard Rating Process Update** - Task 1 report
- j. **Survey of Micropile Use in Neighboring States** – Final Report
- k. **Traffic Safety Culture Pooled Fund**
  - i. Driving After Cannabis Use – Task 1 report
  - ii. Traffic safety Citizenship – Task 1 report

#### 5. **Proposals:** None

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

a. **Survey of Micropile Use in Neighboring States – Results Presentation**

See 3.b. discussion

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

Steve mentioned the survey conducted for the millennials project and the importance of the results for workforce development. Sue indicated MDT has obligated \$10,000 to fund a portion of this multi-funder project. Also, Keni Grose is on the project panel and, therefore, MDT should be kept in the loop with activities, progress, and products.

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