



## 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 6, 2017

Subject: July 22, 2016 RRC Meeting Agenda (9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. MDT Commission Room)

**RRC Members Present:** Tim Conway for Debbie Alke, Gayleen Strachan for Mike Bousliman, Jennifer Nelson for Jeff Ebert, Dwane Kailey, Sue Sillick, Jon Swartz, and Duane Williams

**Others Present:** Kris Christensen, Megan Handl, Kraig McLeod, and Roy Peterson

1. **Budget Report:** Attached

No discussion.

2. **[Research Projects – current listing](#)**

No discussion

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

- a. **2016 Availability and Disparity Study – Final Report**
- b. **Development of Strategic Enterprise Architecture Design for MDT (14-016)- Task 3 report**
- c. **Development of a New Specification for ¾-inch Minus Crushed Base Course, Type A (14-007) – Task 2 report**
- d. **Investigation of Prefabricated Steel Truss Bridge Deck Systems (12-010)- Task 1 report**
- e. **Assessment of Montana Road Weather Information System (RWIS) System (14-019)-Task 6 report**

No discussion

4. **Proposals:** None
5. **Implementation/Performance Measures/Technology Transfer:**
  - a. **2016 Availability and Disparity Study** – Final Presentation
  - b. **Safety Impact of Differential Speed Limits on Rural Two-Lane highways in Montana** – Final - Presentation
  - c. **Speed Limits Set Lower than Engineering Recommendations** – Final Presentation
6. **Research Project Idea Prioritization, Selection, and Development** – Attached

Sue went through this document page by page. RRC members present decided to wait until the August RRC meeting (8/12) to finalize process changes.

The document begins with a statement that the RRC is the governance committee for all research, regardless of funding source.

The second paragraph (page 1) addresses the focus of FHWA-funded research within the Department.

The first main section includes definitions from 23 CFR 420.203. After the formal CFR definition, some clarifying text has been added. This section also includes a section on “what research is not”.

Beginning on page 2, the project types (i.e., Administration High Priority, Partnering (includes pooled fund projects and AASHTO Technical Services Programs), Quick Response/Small Projects, and Standard Research Projects) are described.

The next section is “Research Topic Solicitation”. There are four recommended process changes to this section. The first is that the RRC may want to identify priority research focus areas on an annual or some other basis. TranPlan MT could be one source of these priority focus areas. Research topic statements on these priority focus areas could be ranked/rated higher than those on other topics. The second recommended process change is to separate the solicitation process into two stages. In Stage 1, the champion would work with the MDT librarian to conduct a literature search on the topic; this stage is to be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. Based on the results of this first stage, a Research Topic Statement could be submitted in Stage 2, which is to be completed by April 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The third recommended process change includes adding a number of fields to the Research Topic Statement form. The last recommended process change in this section is to hold 15% funding to cover unexpected expenses. This recommendation will be moved to the next section, Research Topic Prioritization and Selection for Standard Research Projects.

The next section identifies the RRC and District Administrators as those who will prioritize and select research at the June RRC meeting each year. Champions will continue to present their topics to both groups in the May RRC meeting of each year. There are four recommended process changes in this section. These four recommended changes revolve around ranking/rating the topic statements after the May, but before the June, RRC meeting, compiling the rankings/ratings, and determining the research work plan for the following federal fiscal year.

The next section is “Research Topic Development and Proposal Solicitation for Standard Research Projects”. There are two recommended process changes in this section. The first responds to the disposition of funds when projects are cancelled. The second details when a SOW must be presented to the RRC. Currently, SOWs are presented to the RRC for approval when an RFP is to be issued or there was any contention with the Research Topic Statement when discussed in May. The thinking for SOWs when RFPs

are to be issued is that it takes a large effort all the way around to prepare, issue, and respond to an RFP. Also, it is much more difficult to change the SOW after proposals are received; in most cases, the RFP would have to be reissued. In the past, the RRC has changed SOWs. The recommended change keeps the SOW presentation when an RFP is to be issued. However, it adds the condition where the SOW changes such that the original intent has changed. Also, it is recommended that SOWs be presented to the RRC when the cost, not including ICAP, increases by 20% or more. There was some discussion on whether projects where an RFP will be issued should have the SOW approved by the RRC. Dwane suggests this be left up to each technical panel as he trusts staff to inform him if projects are taking too much time.

The next section is Research Project Funding and includes five recommended process changes. The first two deal with projects where proposals are 20% or less over, or more than 20% over the original estimate. The third recommended change deals with projects that don't rank high enough for funding in June of each year. The last recommended change deals with keeping ICAP estimates up-to-date.

The last section is "Non-Standard Research Projects" and includes the last six recommended process changes. The first recommended change includes diverting funding to administration high priority projects when they are identified. Three additional recommended changes recommend not funding any new partnering or quick response/small projects in FFY 2017, and developing annual limits for funding partnering projects. Two additional recommended changes pertains to partnering projects and include implementing project funding request, annual evaluation, and project close-out forms and presentations to the RRC; and limiting the funding requests for these partnering projects to three years at a time.

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

If you have any additions to the agenda, please contact me at 444-7693 or [ssillick@mt.gov](mailto:ssillick@mt.gov). You will be notified of any last minute additions to the agenda by E-mail.

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  
Lisa Durbin/Construction Administration Bureau  
Mike Dyrdahl/Engineering Operations Bureau  
Ed Ereth/Data and Statistics 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  
Roy Peterson, P.E./Traffic & Safety Bureau  
Suzy Price/Contract Plans Bureau  
Dustin Rouse, P.E./Highways and Engineering Division  
Ed Toavs/District Administrator-Missoula  
Lesly Tribelhorn, P.E./Highways 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  
File