



Stage 2 - Research Topic Statement

Print Form

RESEARCH PROGRAMS USE ONLY

RESEARCH IDEA NO:	23-021
DATE OF RECEIPT:	1-30-23
TOTAL MDT COST W/ICAP:	

RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Please submit completed forms via e-mail to MDTResearch@mt.gov. All fields are required, except the last field: XVIII, Sponsor(s). Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

TITLE (required): Bringing Montana's History into the Future

TOPIC STATEMENT: Montana's highway historical markers are stuck in the past. Established in 1935, there have been few changes to the system in nearly 90 years. This project would establish a working user friendly database for the marker system that makes it available to MDT Maintenance and Planning personnel and, hopefully, make the marker texts available to iPhone users in the field.

RELATED RESEARCH SUMMARY FROM STAGE 1:

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) currently administers 295 historic and geological interpretive markers along the state's primary and secondary roads and in rest areas on the Interstates. The markers have been an important part of the Montana transportation landscape since 1935. But, in the twenty-first century, new ways of providing that information to motorists is required. In addition to the printed medium, the marker texts can be displayed on interactive electronic maps on the MDT website. But there may be other methods available to get that information out and into the hands of people interested in the history and geology of Montana. One method may be a cell phone app for travelers to obtain the texts of the markers without stopping to read them. How that app would work is something to study. It would also be critical to the study to determine how other states are handling this issue and whether their methods are successful - or not. There may be other methods to consider based on a study of the other states as well. The roadside historical and geological markers are a popular way of providing information to the traveling public. But as times change, it is important the historical/geological marker system change with it.

RESEARCH PROPOSED:

Research involves investigating how other states treat their roadside interpretive marker programs and the methods used to make them more accessible to the traveling public.

RESEARCH PERIOD (Time to complete research project.):

Research period would encompass 18 months beginning upon approval of this topic.

IT COMPONENT: Identify if the project includes an IT component (purchasing of IT hardware, development of databases, acquisition of existing applications, etc.). If so, describe IT component in as much detail as possible.

There will be an IT component to purchase software to modernize the existing historical marker system. It would involve the development of a database available to the public as well as MDT Maintenance and planners. It would also include the purchase of software, should it be approved that would make the marker texts readily available on cell phones at the marker sites.

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FEASIBILITY, PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS, AND RISK:

The feasibility is good in that preliminary work on the database has already been completed. Other states are using methods that make the marker texts readily available to cell and iphone users. Risk: moderate, but the success, if accomplished, would have a profound effect on the historical marker system and the traveling public.

URGENCY, IMPORTANCE, AND EXPECTED BENEFITS/PAY-OFF: Address urgency, timeliness, and importance of the research. Identify if the research is required for any federal or state initiative or compliance. This section must include a description of how this research will help to meet MDT’s mission (i.e., serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and/or sensitivity to the environment).

The old Montana Highway Department established the highway marker system in 1935. There have been few changes to the system since then. The issues arising now are making them more accessible to the traveling public and easier for MDT to determine which markers are repeatedly vandalized, the information out of date, the relevancy of the existing markers or if MDT should be concentrating its efforts in a different direction in regards to the topics of the markers. Part of the issue involves making them more accessible. Many motorists now don't want to take the time to pull over to read the signs. Other states have either investigated or implemented ways to make the signs more accessible using modern technology. While not a tremendously urgent need, it would bring Montana into the twenty-first century with a program that has been around for nearly a century.

IMPLEMENTABILITY, IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, AND RESPONSIBILITY: Address the implementability of the expected results from the proposed project. Identify products that will enhance implementation. Identify any known implementation barriers and how these barriers might be eliminated or reduced. Identify MDT office or entity outside of MDT responsible for implementation. Describe initial implementation plan, include timeframe for implementation.

The expected results would be a user friend database available to MDT and to the public. The only implementation barrier would be in the type of software available for the project. The result would be a modernized roadside interpretive marker system that would be available to MDT and to users in the field.

MDT PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS: MDT may, as often as annually, identify priority research focus areas. These focus areas will be listed on <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/unique/solicit.shtml>.

[Empty text box]

TOTAL COST ESTIMATE (If the project proposal comes in at a higher cost, it may require further approval and may be delayed.):

[Empty text box]

MDT FUNDING SOURCE (If MDT Research, enter SPR): SPR

FUNDING MATCH SOURCE AND AMOUNT: [Empty text box]

FUNDING PARTNER(S): MDT would be the sole source of funding for this project.

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POTENTIAL TECHNICAL PANEL MEMBERS (At this time, individuals do not necessarily need to be identified; rather, MDT offices and outside entities can be named. However, if known, individuals may be named):

Jon Axline, Brian Anderson, Kira Axline, Jon Swartz, Montana Historical Society, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

SUBMITTED BY: (required)	
NAME:	Jon Axline
TITLE:	Historian
AFFILIATION:	Montana Dept. of Transportation/Environmental Services Bureau
ADDRESS:	2701 Prospect Ave., Helena, MT 59620-1001
PHONE NO.:	444-6258
E-MAIL:	jjaxline@mt.gov

CHAMPION: Must be internal to MDT, feel strongly that the research will benefit the Department, and is willing to chair the technical panel. Note: If a champion is not identified by you or Research staff, this topic statement will not move forward.

NAME:	Jon Axline
TITLE:	Historian
AFFILIATION:	Montana Dept. of Transportation/Environmental Services Bureau
ADDRESS:	2701 Prospect Avenue/Helena, MT 59620-1001
PHONE NO.:	444-6258
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SPONSOR(S) (optional): Must be internal to MDT (Division Administrator or higher) and willing to ensure implementation occurs, as appropriate. If a sponsor is not identified by you or Research staff, this topic statement will not move forward.

NAME:	
TITLE:	
AFFILIATION:	
ADDRESS:	
PHONE NO.:	
E-MAIL:	

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