

# Montana Transportation Commission

OPEN HOUSE  
Glendive, Montana  
May 28, 2013

## IN ATTENDANCE

Kevin Howlett, Transportation Commissioner, Chairman  
Barb Skelton, Transportation Commissioner  
Rick Griffith, Transportation Commissioner  
Carol Lambert, Transportation Commissioner  
Lori Ryan – Transportation Secretary  
Ed Beaudette, MDT Staff Attorney  
Shane Mintz, MDT  
Senator Matt Rosendale  
Jim Skillstad  
Deb Ranum – Fallon County Commissioner  
Bill Randish – Fallon County Commissioner  
Jim Swanson – Dawson County Commissioner  
Jim Swanson – Glendive

*Please note:* the complete recorded minutes are available for review on the commission's website at [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans\\_comm/meetings.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/trans_comm/meetings.shtml). You may request a compact disc (containing the audio files, agenda, and minutes) from the transportation secretary Lori Ryan at (406) 444-7200 or [lravn@mt.gov](mailto:lravn@mt.gov). Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For additional information, please call (406) 444-7200. The TTY number is (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592.

## **OPENING – Commissioner Kevin Howlett**

Commissioner Howlett said we have heard the concerns about the impacts of the activity in this area. I thank Carol Lambert for inviting us to her District. I thank Shane Mintz for arranging for us to go out and look tomorrow at the some of the projects and needs.

Before we get started let me introduce myself and tell you who I am and where I come from and then I'll let each of the Commissioners do that same. My name is Kevin Howlett. I live in the little community of Arlee north of Missoula. This is my 10<sup>th</sup> year on the Montana Transportation Commission. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Governor I will have served. At every meeting I learn something new. The Commission doesn't get into the day-to-day business of managing the Department of Transportation; we look at the broad spectrum of planning and approve projects that are brought forth from people such as yourselves through your respective Commissioners.

I was forewarned before the meeting started that we were going to get an ear-full. That's nothing new. I'm used to it and so is this Commission. We never have enough money to do everything that needs to be done. We try to serve the entire State of Montana which is very diverse with lots of needs. Everybody has a priority and we understand that. It's through the work of your District, the District Administrator and the District Commissioner that projects get advanced based on traffic volume, accident history, and road conditions. So there isn't any process by which we give and take; it's based on the science of what's there. I particularly am concerned about a number of things and it's evident in our minutes. I live on the west side of the State and we have a lot of issues over there. Some of those issues are related to wildlife, overcrowding, speed studies, and I think the real needs vary from district-to-district. We're here to listen to your concerns; we can't take any action. But things you'd like to see advanced in terms of action will be recorded. This discussion will be recorded and become part of the minutes. If it is something that advances to an actual Commission Meeting, it will be scheduled on our Agenda and we will deal with it when it comes forward. I failed to mention that my real job is a

Health Systems Administrator for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. With that let's do some introductions of staff and the Commission.

## INTRODUCTIONS

Ed Beaudette, I've been an MDT Staff Attorney for 15 years.

Lori Ryan, Transportation Commission Secretary in Helena.

Rick Griffith, District Two Representative. I live in Butte and I've been on the Commission for eight years. My vocation is a retired Airport Manager for 22 years in Butte, prior to that I was a construction estimator in Butte. I've got a lot of familiarity with construction and highway work.

Carol Lambert, District Four Commissioner. Many of you know me because I was your Legislator for quite a while. I have to laugh at Kevin because we've got the same concerns on our end of the state – wildlife, sudden over population, roads that need work. We have a lot of roads in this District that need a lot of care. I think we do a great a job with what we've got but certainly any time I can be of assistance or any time you want to just talk to me or tell me something, I'm as close as the nearest telephone. I'm delighted to see all of you out here.

Barb Skelton, District Five Commissioner, Billings, Montana. I've had the pleasure of working in Glendive a couple of years ago on the Keystone Pipeline Hearing and it's great to see so many of you here. I've also spent some time in the Bakken because when I wear a different hat I do some work for Energy Forums. I was a County Commissioner in Judith Basin County in another lifetime. I'm pleased to be here and I've seen some of your roads and some of your concerns and I certainly understand where you come from especially from a Commissioner's standpoint and from law enforcement. I'm certainly glad to be here and thank you for inviting us.

Commissioner Howlett said he would like to keep this informal. We want to have an open microphone, you can identify yourself and if you have any questions specific to any of the Commissioners, I don't know a lot of about this area so we will defer to the District Commissioner and the District Administrator. We ask that you please sign in when you step up to the podium.

### ***Senator Matt Rosendale, Senate District 19***

I'm Senator Matt Rosendale, I represent Senate District 19. I'm pretty pleased with what MDT has been doing around here lately. They've listened to the needs of the communities and worked within their budgets to accommodate those needs as well as they could. Three things I want to highlight is the corridor studies that have been taking place between Glendive and Fairview to really do a good evaluation of what those needs were. Clearly before you can work on it, you have to know what the problem is. There was another one that was done around the Lambert area. Once again that is really critical in defining what issues need to be dealt with. Some of the things that have been done is they've constructed some passing lanes on Hwy 16 between Sidney and Glendive to help relieve some of the pressure that the increased traffic has been producing. I can tell you it goes through the center of my property. It has helped ease that pressure a lot. The other thing is the equalizing of the speed limit on Hwy 16 making all traffic 65 mph. Once again it was a really big help in easing that congestion. We don't have as much passing taking place now because everybody is supposed to be driving at the same speed.

Two things I would like you to keep in mind as you go around the state in your deliberations are to make sure that we certainly want to maintain the District offices here in Glendive. There are a lot of things taking place. Glendive is basically the

epicenter and from there we're going out to all these other areas. For this District as large as it is, it's nice to have that as the nucleus and the center that all these services can come out of. So I would certainly make the request that it is maintained here.

The other thing is when we do find some additional funds, and I understand these are two very expensive projects, but if I had my Christmas list it would be to put on the agenda a Bypass around Sidney and a Bypass around Culbertson. Both of those communities have just incredible amounts of truck traffic that are coming through there now. It goes right through the commercial districts down town; the streets weren't built for that type of traffic. I think the reports will tell you that the traffic on Hwy 16 has increased 125%. The biggest thing about the traffic increase is that 35% of it is truck traffic as opposed to the state average which is about 6%. Once again, if we're going to be looking at long-term projects, that we maybe could shorten up and get on the agenda a little bit faster, those two bypasses would be huge helps to those communities. At the end of the day it ends up generating additional commercial activity in the downtown district because you don't have all the semi's coming through and it's easier to maintain those streets as well.

Thank you for taking the time to come out here. We appreciate it.

***Jim Skillestad, Dawson County Commissioner.***

My name is Jim Skillestad, Dawson County Commissioner. I've been farming and ranching for 50 years. Looking around our area there are so many approaches. There is one spot where there is a tremendous amount of truck traffic coming in and out. The approach is right below a hill. Our supervisors have been looking at it trying to figure out another way to get an approach in there. Of course it is going to cost some dollars. Maybe tomorrow you can take a trip out there and look at it.

Also FAS 335 goes out to the oil field. The oil company that is out there now is using CO2 to increase the production of oil wells which have been increased by 400%. Half of 335 is paved and another part is still gravel. We have so much traffic out there anymore and trying to keep up with it is difficult and with production being increased by 400%, I can see a lot of needs there. I don't know what exactly you can do. You can really see what's happening to our county roads around the bloom field where there is some oil activity and there are some concerns when they turn onto the roads out there. They are pretty good now but they need some more signage – 540 and 523 also need looking at. I appreciate you coming out here and listening to us.

Commissioner Howlett asked what signage he was thinking about. Jim Skillestad said possibly "trucks entering" or something like that. It is a school bus route and the trucks are coming out and some of them don't even stop, they just pull right out onto the highway. Commissioner Howlett asked if it is a state route. Jim Skillestad said it is a state secondary. Commissioner Howlett said signing was an easy fix. He asked if the traffic was generated by the oil fields. Jim Skillestad said it is the oil tankers coming in and out of there. It is a well head but there are tanks that haul the oil out and go up to either Richey or another way. Commissioner Howlett asked if it was just a bad location for trucks because of the hill. Jim Skillestad said what scares me is that it is a bus route. There are trucks coming from both directions and I think there should be signage on both sides for trucks. Commissioner Howlett said they did something similar in Belgrade just last year where we had buses and trucks conflicting. We ended up doing signage that worked pretty well for them.

The road that goes up to 506 is a big tank farm and a lot of the oil companies are hauling oil into the pipelines up there and the approach is right below a hill. Whether you have signage or lights or whatever up there, it would help. If you have a chance to go out there and maybe get some ideas. When it's coming from Richey it comes right over a hill and boom there is the approach. Semis and tankers are turning to the left you can have the whole road blocked up there. Thank you.

***Deb Ranum, Chair of the Fallon County Commissioners.***

You have Secondary Road 336 scheduled to be reconstructed in 2015 and I'm here to ask you please not to bump that project. On May 18<sup>th</sup> it was hit with 6-8 inches of hail in 35 minutes and about 5-6 inches of rain. There is a lot of damage to the roadway right now to the point that we are questioning how much money Fallon County can continue to put into it to try and make it passable. I called Dwane Nome and asked him to come down and look at it. He said he would look at it next Thursday. So I'm asking you to please not to bump that project. Commissioner Howlett asked for a little history of that project.

Jim Skillestad said it is about eight miles long reconstruction to gravel with availability for future paving when traffic warrants it. It's Fallon County's number one priority. Commissioner Howlett asked if it was a secondary. Jim Skillestad said yes it is state secondary. Commissioner Howlett asked if they were alright with the schedule on their Secondary Program. Jim Skillestad said they were setting pretty well. We're going to be building West Ridge West this summer and that will be our next big one.

***Bill Randish – Fallon County Commissioner***

I think you guys from the western part of the state are going to think we're a bunch of crybabies down there. Commissioner Howlett said we're equally represented. Bill Randish said there was an article was in the Billings paper today about the millions being spent on highway work – \$438 million. On the last page of the paper it lists the major projects but it only lists \$130 million so some of the money is being spent somewhere else. Kalispell has one project on 212 and one project between Glendive and Sidney, but other than that everything else is west of Billings. Commissioner Howlett said the projects they mentioned are projects that are there right now, it doesn't break down the projects that are coming later. The article doesn't list all our projects. We, as a Commission, wouldn't be here today if we didn't want to try and make life better for the counties that are affected by the Bakken.

Bill Randish said he has a son and a son-in-law working up in the Bakken. I've been up there two or three times with him. You've been there and you know what it's like. About two weeks ago we went north of Mandary and we turned onto what was supposed to be a secondary road and there were seven tractor trailers ahead of us and a pickup. When we got on that road we didn't go one hundred yards, and I couldn't see those seven tractors and we weren't going 10-15 mph and I couldn't see them ahead of them. In fact you could just barely see the tailgate of the pickup ahead of us for all the dust. It was unbelievable dust and dirt. You know North Dakota has the same problem as we have – Fargo and Grand Forks on the eastern end of the state where the population is and then northwest North Dakota where the Bakken is. If North Dakota would have had time to plan for the Bakken, they could have saved themselves a hell of a lot of time and trouble with roads. They are killing a lot of people up there. There are accidents every day – trucks and pickups. People are being killed because the roads are no good. Now they are pouring money in there but if they'd done some planning and had the time to do the planning earlier, they would have avoided a lot of those problems. Right now in eastern Montana we've got some time to plan for some of this.

My pet project in Fallon County is in Baker. Commissioner Howlett said the Commission has been in Baker twice. Bill Randish said the railroad was built through many small towns in Eastern Montana. We ended up with about 80% of the town on the south side of the railroad tracks and 20% on the north side of the railroad tracks. The north side is where all the oil companies and all the oil business are. We've been fortunate in Fallon County because we've had an oil field for quite a few years so we have quite a few oil companies working there. All of these companies are located on the north side of the tracks. Then just a block south of where this railroad goes

through – Hwy 7 goes north and south and Hwy 12 runs east and west. When we get a train and a bunch of trucks, that intersection is unbelievable. We don't have the impact they are having in Sidney, Glendive, Plentywood, Bainville and Culbertson, but we're trying to get ready for it. I'd like to see a Bypass around the north side of town; something that would take the traffic off that intersection and off that railroad crossing. Mr. Mintz was good enough to come down and have a meeting with us. Of course it was the same old thing, it's a good idea but there isn't any funding. I would just like to see it and I would like to invite you all back to Baker to come down and take a look at our situation.

Commissioner Lambert said we actually have two projects going on in our District – there is one on 212 but there is also a big project on 59 which is from Biddle to the Wyoming line which definitely is due to the oil impact because a lot of this stuff is coming out of Wyoming. They come down 59 and hit 212. I just wanted you to know that we're getting a lot of that money up there too. Bill Randish said his Dad worked on Hwy 323 from Alzada to Ekalaka for about 60 years before they finally got that one done. Commissioner Lamberts said it was about a 74-year project but we got it done. Commissioner Howlett said some of the projects are made in DC literally. We're at the tail end of what was called earmarks. When the Senators would put in an earmark on a project then we found ourselves obligated to find resources to supplement that earmark. One of the projects you mentioned is in my District – the Kalispell Bypass. Those were earmarked projects. It's difficult because you have you're marching orders and you have to find ways to complete that. We're at the end of that now.

These projects don't happen overnight. We are looking at 7-8 years from the time a project is brought forward to do the planning, the right-of-way acquisition, the environmental and all the other things that have to be done. So the projects that are up now in all likelihood have been in the planning process for at least five years and in most cases probably 7-10 years. Bill Randish said he wouldn't expect our project to get done overnight; it's going to take some time. I'm thinking that the planning should be done now. We should be thinking about this now instead of waiting like North Dakota got caught and wait until everything is here and then try and remedy the situation that's been created with the roads. Commissioner Howlett said it's wise to do the planning. Corridor studies and things like that give you a good opportunity to get out in front of it. The need for highways is great and who knows how long the oil boom is going to last. Bill Randish said there are 180 rigs up in the Bakken drilling night and day. They are proven up their leases and they are going to branch out and go out on the outer edge and try and find oil. They talk about the Three Forks which is bigger than the Bakken. They are going to branch out and find the outer edge. That's where Montana will come into it.

### *Jim Swanson – Dawson County Commissioner*

I want to congratulate you. A number of years ago I went to the Committee in Helena on 323 which was not done. We wanted to get that done – 80 miles from Ekalaka to Alzada was not done and from Kerry to Brockway was not done and now it's done. We commend you for that. I would make a suggestion that the road from Wibaux to Baker is Hwy 7 but from Baker down to Alzada is another number. What would it take to make 16 come from Plentywood all the way to Alzada then tower up with Morecroft down by Devil's Tower instead of changing that number right in the middle of road? Why not make it one number all the way.

Commissioner Howlett asked Shane for the reason. Shane Mintz said 323 is a State Secondary even though it has some continuity with other roads. Jim Swanson said that Cecil Wheating said "let's make 12 all the way from Baker to Missoula" and they did it. It was 6 and 12 and something else and they finally got Hwy 12 all the way. It would sure make it a lot easier to travel if it as all the same number.

We have a little state park out here called Makoshika Park and we have a real bad situation down there. I'm the Chairman of Friends of Makoshika. Don't leave Glendive without going out to Makoshika Park. We've got a terrible situation and somebody is going to be killed on it. The road goes up a very steep hill and makes a switchback like Cook City Highway. When they built it they put the fill against the hill and water gets in behind it and it sloughs off. They've rebuilt it three or four times. We've talked to the Governor, we've talked to the Parks Commission and we'd like to start at the bottom and go straight up to Hyatt Lookout. Build it on the hill, don't try to build a slough like between here and Fallon; the old highway when you get all this rain it sloughs off. It's going to take some work.

We are trying to get the funding for that road. We have \$1.5 million qualified but the estimate is up to \$10 million to fix it. Maybe the construction outfit out of Malmstrom can come down. It's a big project. Thirty years ago we had 27,000 people in the Park and last year we had 87,000. So Makoshika could be the Glacier Park of Glendive but we have to have a good road.

Commissioner Lambert asked if it was state park. Jim Swanson said it was the largest state park in Montana. Commissioner Lambert asked if it was a state highway. Jim Swanson said "it's in a state park, it must belong to somebody." Commissioner Howlett said there must be a lot of mountains there because you mentioned Cook City and Glacier Park and they have some pretty good mountains. Jim Swanson said Makoshika Park could be Glendive's Glacier Park if we market that right. We had 27,000 visitors thirty years ago and 87,000 visitors last year in spite of the road. We've built a business center, the amphitheater and I charge each one of you to go out and drive through that. Take a hike through there; it's a fantastic park and it's being wasted.

There was a guy a while back that overheard me talking about Makoshika Park and he asked if I knew anything about it. He told us that his in-laws lived in Minneapolis and he lived in Billings and for about 30 years they met in Medora because they didn't know about Makoshika Park. Once I saw it I realized that you are missing something – it's the best kept secret in Montana. But you can't sell it if you don't have good roads. It's a terrible black eye for Montana.

Commissioner Howlett asked about where it was in the CTEP Program in terms of the county prioritizing it. Jim Swanson said it was off the chart. Commissioner Howlett said it's not a state highway, so doesn't it make sense that we look at what local decisions can be made before we look at other funding. I'm just being realistic here. Jim Swanson said we looked at CTEP money but then the last Legislature went away. We're hoping for the west end of the pipeline to get done and then we'd have the funds available to fix it. I just wanted to make you aware of the Park.

A couple years ago we had a state legion tournament here and I volunteered to take tickets. Someone asked about seeing Makoshika Park and how long it would take to see it. He said about one hour and I told him to not bother because you need at least four hours. He finally went out there and came back and said my kids had so much fun at the Park we couldn't get them back in the car after they'd found a dinosaur bone. You have to get people out there and you can't take them on a bad road. I charge each one of you to go out there and spend some time and hike a couple of the trails. Thank you.

### *Commissioner's Comments*

Commissioner Skelton said she really understands their concerns. I've been to the Bakken several times. I've sat at the Baker crossing waiting for the trains to go by. I agree with Jim that I'd sure like to see the Keystone Pipeline built as well to take some of the pressure off the trucks and the railways. As Commissioner Howlett and my fellow Commissioners said, we don't get to make a lot of decisions but we sure

are glad to listen to what you have to say and will take everything under advisement and try to fix some of your problems. I love the Park but I never found a dinosaur bone.

Commissioner Lambert said I'm so delighted that you all came. I love Makoshika Park; I've been there several times. We do have many roads. I think this District alone has over 3,400 miles of roads compared to District One and District Two which have about 1,800 or 1,900 miles of state roads. Actually I've been in other states that we think of as being very progressive and I'll take the Montana roads over them any time. I think the state has done a marvelous job with their funds. I know that they have many projects planned and again we try to do what we can when we can. Please come to us if there is something you think we could do sooner.

Commissioner Griffith said that's part of the reason why we take this meeting around the state. When we were dividing up the money we received from the Federal Government in ARRA funds, each District had about \$45 million over and above the normal budget. We were trying to get to the number that each District should have, so we went to Missoula and they said they had all the population base so we think all the money ought to go to Missoula. So we as a Commission made the point to them that Missoula, while it has a lot of needs, you need the connectivity to go from Glendive to the Idaho border on the Interstate. In my District we have fewer miles than you do, but 33% of the Interstate is in my District. The good news is that the Interstate is in pretty good shape. My District percentage out of our state pool is going down. I keep fighting to get it back because we still have unmet needs but so does everybody else. There is some weighting that has to happen. Between the District and the Department, they do a pretty good job of weighting those. Once the funds are distributed, in the end it ends up being Carol and Shane's decision to work through what that District needs as a priority. We talked about a road earlier that was seven miles long and the cost was \$6 to \$8 million for it. That's one million dollars per mile. When we get out west we have one bridge that costs \$7 million and we don't get any miles out of the deal. Yet it is important for the connectivity through the state.

That being said, we're here to hear what you guys have as priorities. Part of the success that Kevin and I have found is that we've been here long enough to see some successes – 323 being one of them. As a rule most Commissioners don't stay long enough to see a project they put in completed. I've been able to see a lot of successes and I'm thankful for that. When we had the Stimulus money, we met a lot of needs in a hurry which was good for the State. But since that time, the needs keep getting greater and the money is flat. So it's harder for us to meet the needs. In the end there probably needs to be something done on the federal level as far as increasing the amount of funds that Montana gets because we have a great expanse. We're probably going to have to participate in some way to get some of the important projects done. The Department is doing a very good job maintaining the system but when we get new projects in the system, that's where we get stymied. I'd like to think we could get to the Baker crossing sometime but it's going to be awhile. I've known about Sydney for a long time and I learned about Culbertson today and now I know about Baker. We just finally got a project in Belgrade that has a similar situation except they don't have the truck traffic; they've got 80,000 people in the area who are trying to get across the railroad. It divides the area in half. The problem they have is the fire and police service can't get from one end of the town to the other.

Someone asked the Commission to break down where the funding comes for highways. Where does the State get the money for the highways – you said federally but where else does funding come from? Shane Mintz said all the funding comes from the gas tax – 87% is federal money and 13% is state money. Occasionally you'll have earmarks that come through different designations. In the federal government a bill will come through with a tag on it that \$2 million has to go to X project in X city. That's a separate type of funding that comes from someplace else.

Someone asked about the growth in the Bakken and eastern Montana. Has the funding for eastern Montana increased? Shane Mintz said it had substantially increased. The problem is it all gets put into a gigantic pool and there is less fuel tax money being generated because of higher efficiency cars and less driving. The dedicated money is being reduced whereas the desire and costs are going up.

Someone asked with all the increased truck traffic due to the Bakken, isn't more funding coming from eastern Montana. Shane Mintz said it doesn't quite work that way. The fuel is counted on a larger scale than where it's coming from. The whole number is figured and then by state statute, it's divided up amongst the different Districts. Someone asked if you have 10,000 more trucks servicing eastern Montana, aren't they burning more fuel? Shane Mintz said they certainly are but that doesn't account for the way the calculation is done.

Commissioner Howlett said one of the ironies in highway funding is the Districts are pretty evenly apportioned in terms of the money. The last time I was in Baker the Chief Engineer and I were standing out in front of the Motel and there was a Department painting rig painting stripes on the road. The engineer asked if I could imagine them doing that on Hwy 93 in the western part of the state. I said you'd have to have traffic control and other things to do that because there are 30,000 vehicles per day driving on it. There is a real difference between eastern Montana and western Montana. In eastern Montana the senior citizens cooked us a dinner and we had a great visit with the people in Baker. The difference is that when you talk about building a road in eastern Montana, they'll help you take the fence down. In western Montana they want to charge you for the fence post. That's the difference; and it's a big difference. Real estate and right of way and other things cause you not to get as many miles built in the west as you can in the east. You simply can't. Some of the roads are far in excess of \$1 million per mile.

Before we leave I want to acknowledge the great work of Nancy Espy, your former Commissioner. What a great job and a privilege I had of serving with Nancy for eight years. I give my best to her and her family. In closing I'd like to thank you all for your participation. This will be recorded and will be in our minutes. We will be looking for Shane to come forward through his Commissioner with the projects that rise in their opinion to the priority status that can be considered and the projects that are in the pipeline now – the road that you mentioned and unless there is something drastic that happens, we intend to honor that commitment. But again that will come through your Commissioner and your District Administrator, so keep the pressure on them. This Commissioner is happy to come and listen to the people of the State of Montana; it's really an honor to get out and see these things first hand. It's not easy because we never have enough resources.

The County Commissioner said since Shane has been here the communication has been so good. We have a phone call a day and things are happening and I'd like to commend Shane for the job he is doing since he moved here. I really appreciate you guys coming down here.

Commissioner Howlett said I wish you guys could see our process - \$420 million per year. The point is this Commission gets to see the detail that gets put together. A prime example with Nancy Espy – when we got to the end of putting together all the projects using all the money we had available and Nancy had spent all her money on 323 but there was a bridge that needed to be done in her District. Kevin said to take it out of his District's money to build the bridge. That's the way the Commission works. This Commission works well together. So if there is any way possible to get to your projects, I can tell you this meeting has surely brought them to the forefront – Culberson, Baker, and Sidney. Those projects have been elevated to our attention and I do appreciate you taking the time to be here with us.

Bill Randish asked if the Commission had any pull with the railroad. In Baker the railroad cuts the town in half. A 100-unit train is a little over a mile long. We've got a double track because of the elevators that are right there on either side of Hwy 7. The switch for the double train double track is 1.7 miles from Hwy 7. Sometimes the railroad will pull down and cut Hwy 7 off and the engineer will jump out and run across the road and get a sandwich from the corner bar and let the cars sit there. I know Deb has been caught in that because she comes to work down that road. As a matter of fact, I've seen them pull down and cut Hwy 7 off and they fuel up the diesel engine with the highway blocked. That shouldn't happen. If they'd stop 100 yards from where they stop, Hwy 7 would be open. They block every crossing that we have. You'd have to go 13 miles one way just to get around the train – if there was an emergency where emergency services were needed, on a conservative estimate it would be 30 miles before you could get back over to Hwy 7.

Commissioner Howlett said there is obviously an absence of communication. If you had an emergency and you have someone in the sandwich shop blocking the highway, then that's bad news. Bill Randish said even if you could get ahold of him a lot of times they'll break the train at those crossings. Commissioner Howlett suggested that the County Commissioners write to Denny Washington. Bill Randish said Shane went with me to look at it and we had Baucus' representative there and Tester's field rep there. They said they were going to do something about it but nothing ever happened. The bad part of it is that our ambulance service, our fire department, our sheriff, and our city police are on the south side of the tracks, so if any kind of an emergency arises on the north side of the tracks, they can't get to it. Commissioner Howlett said to keep the pressure on; ask them for follow-up. That's all you can do.

Thank you for coming today and we look forward to having more discussions on the projects you've raised. We're looking forward to our tour tomorrow in your District.

## **Adjourned**

Meeting Adjourned