MDT’s Van Buren Street Interchange Project Wins Regional Transportation Award

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), AAA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced the 2020 America’s Transportation Awards (ATA) competition regional winners during the week of August 17, 2020. Montana’s Van Buren Street Interchange (Missoula) project is among the winning projects in the western regional competition (WASHTO) and tied for first in the Quality of Life/Community Development – Small Projects category.

Since original construction of the Van Buren Street Interchange in 1966, the city of Missoula has seen tremendous growth – both in residential population and visitation. MDT’s improvements to this interchange align with Missoula’s long-range transportation plan to decrease traffic congestion, improve air quality, and increase multimodal options. Overall, the project increased traffic flow efficiency and safety for all modes of transportation while enhancing quality of life for residents and quality of experience for Missoula’s visitors for years to come. To learn more about the project, visit mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/vanburen/.

The three highest-scoring projects from each regional competition earned a place on the “Top 12” list of projects and will compete for the national Grand Prize – selected by an independent panel of industry judges – and the People’s Choice Award, chosen by the general public through online voting. While the Van Buren Street Interchange Project will not be one of the projects advancing to this phase of the 2020 competition, we (MDT) extend our best wishes to the state DOTs selected. To learn more about ATA or to view past projects submitted by MDT, visit americastransportationawards.org.

Federal Surface Transportation Program Status

MDT has received full funding for FY 2020 and is on track to deliver all planned projects and programs. However, the added uncertainty surrounding the global pandemic in addition to the timeline on long-term transportation re-authorization and FY 2021 appropriations are issues that need to be addressed. Though there is movement on reauthorization in both chambers of Congress with initial committee action on the Senate’s bill last summer and the recent passage of the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act by the House, reauthorization this year may be difficult given the few remaining days that Congress is in session. These bills are a first step in a lengthy process for transportation funding and continued long-term program stability. Regarding the annual appropriation process, the House has passed its full year appropriations bill for FY 2021, while work in the Senate is ongoing. MDT continues to support Montana’s congressional delegation in its efforts to protect and represent rural state transportation needs and continued funding for transportation.
The National Center for Rural Road Safety is proud to announce a new initiative developed over the past year — the inaugural Rural Road Safety Awareness Week (RRSAW)! Rural road owners and users face unique challenges, including longer emergency response times, substantially more lane miles than their urban counterparts, and fewer resources. Rural roads are essential and so are the lives of everyone who uses them. With this in mind, we are dedicating an entire week to promoting rural road safety.

Taking place the week of September 28 - October 2, 2020, RRSAW will shine a light on rural needs, challenges, and solutions, especially those that help us make progress on the Rural Road to Zero fatalities and serious injuries. This will be a social media driven campaign, so high levels of social media interaction will be the key to success for RRSAW. We encourage you to use your own social media platforms to extend the reach of RRSAW’s stories and messages by friending us on Facebook (@ruralroadsafety) and LinkedIn (@national-center-for-rural-road-safety), sharing our posts, and using the hashtags #RuralRoadSafety and #RRSAW2020. Daily themes include:

- Monday: Defining Rural
- Tuesday: Rural Safety Champions
- Wednesday: Rural Road Modes
- Thursday: Proven Rural Safety Countermeasures
- Friday: Rural Safety Culture

We are looking forward to your participation and to proclaiming the final week in September Rural Road Safety Awareness Week in all 50 states. Learn more at ruralsafetycenter.org/news-events/rural-road-safety-awareness-week/.

November 1 Deadline Approaching for BaRSAA Funds

Cities, Towns and Counties don’t miss out on your allocated BaRSAA funds. Submit your request for your funds using Webgrants at funding.mt.gov/index.do.

The request must include:
- The amount of BaRSAA funding sought
- An adopted resolution to request and accept the funding including the source of the local matching funds
- A description of the road or bridge construction, reconstruction, maintenance, or repair project

More information is available on the MDT website: mdt.mt.gov/roadbridge/

Need help submitting your request? Call MDT at 444-9131

Questions on the BaRSAA program can be directed to the Montana League of Cities and Towns or the Montana Association of Counties. Additional information is also available on the MLCT and MACO websites:

mtleague.org/resources/
mcounties.org/resources-data/barsaa/

Mark Your Calendars: MDT’s Annual Transportation Safety Planning Meeting is Going Virtual!*
October 5-6, 2020

This event brings together state, tribal, local, and federal safety partners to share the 2020 Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan, implementation progress on emphasis area safety strategies, and assess Montana’s progress in reducing roadway fatalities and suspected serious injuries.

Emphasis Areas:
- Roadway Departure & Intersection Crashes
- Impaired Driving Crashes
- Occupant Protection Use
- Emergency Response—After-Crash Care

For more information, contact Pam Langve-Davis at plangvedavis@mt.gov, or go to Montana’s Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan at mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp.shtml.

*Meeting details and agenda to come*
USDOT Announces New Resources for Rural Communities

On July 27, 2020, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao announced the Applicant Toolkit for the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) Initiative at the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

The new ROUTES Toolkit addresses funding challenges by assisting rural stakeholders to better understand how to access USDOT grants and financing products.

Find out more about the ROUTES Initiative and Toolkit at transportation.gov/rural.

CARES Act funding was put to good use in Montana’s rural communities, making additional transportation services available for those who are transit dependent.

Non-Metropolitan Local Official Participation Process

Local officials are encouraged to review MDT’s non-metropolitan transportation planning and programming participation process guidelines and submit comments or proposed modifications to the MDT Planning Division. The process for coordinating and cooperating with non-metropolitan local officials on transportation planning and programming issues is not only good business, but also a product of multiple federal and state statutes and intergovernmental agreements. This participation process occurs at both the statewide and small urban area levels and includes:

- The ongoing implementation of TranPlanMT, MDT’s overall policy goals and direction for the State’s transportation programs
- Biennial public and stakeholder surveys on the state-of-transportation in Montana and MDT’s public involvement activities. Stakeholder groups include bicycle/pedestrian, economic development, environmental, Tribal planners, cities and towns (Mayors), counties (County Commissioners), intermodal freight, passenger transportation, and state/federal government groups
- MDT support of Small Urban Area plans and coordinating committees
- Cooperation with local officials on the annual Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) development process
- Coordination between MDT and local governments for review of major developments to protect the safety and capacity of state and local roadway systems
- Direct involvement in the selection or nomination of federally funded projects using Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for the Secondary and Urban Highway Systems
- Many other issue-specific public involvement processes that provide opportunities for consultation with non-metropolitan local officials

MDT will continue to provide early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the planning and programming process as described in the Non-Metropolitan Local Official Participation Process guidelines. Local officials are encouraged to review the process guidelines located on MDT’s website and submit comments or any proposed modifications by November 13, 2020.

Review the guidelines at mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/consultation_process.pdf or use your mobile device to scan the QR code to the right.

MDT Puts CARES Act Funds to Good Use in Montana’s Rural Communities

Transit systems across the state have been receiving CARES Act funds since early spring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nationwide, the pandemic has put a large strain on people, businesses and transportation systems. This has been no exception in Montana as transit providers in the state have seen a dramatic decline in ridership the past few months. MDT has been assisting the transit systems by providing operating and capital funding at 100% federal to all the general public transit systems that currently receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 funding. CARES Act funds have allowed the transit dependent to obtain rides for essential services throughout the pandemic. These funds have also assisted transit systems by updating their vehicles and/or facilities and providing personal protective equipment to allow riders a safe traveling experience.

Annually, transit managers across the state attend the Fall Transit Manager’s Workshop. In September, MDT will be holding the workshop in a virtual environment to provide the managers updates in state and federal regulations. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact David Jacobs at dajacobs@mt.gov or 444-9192.

Overhead view of past construction in Belgrade, Mont.
Montana’s Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) update process is continuing with the guidance of a multiagency Advisory Committee (AC). To date the AC has confirmed Vision Zero, the CHSP mission, and the interim goal; as well as identified the emphasis areas based on the current 10 years of crash data. The leading factors of deaths and serious injuries on Montana’s roads continue to be Impaired Driving, Unrestrained Vehicle Occupants, and Roadway Departures & Intersection-related Crashes. The CHSP is required to include the 4Es of transportation safety and the AC determined that Emergency Response—After-Crash Care be the fourth emphasis area (EA) to focus on the essential role of emergency medical services and the safety of emergency responders. The EA teams will begin developing annual work plans which are anticipated to be completed and align with federal fiscal year program implementation.

**CHSP Mission Statement:** We will focus our resources strategically, where opportunities for saving lives are greatest, through a collaborative process to reduce deaths and life-changing motor vehicle injuries in Montana by using education, enforcement, emergency response and engineering strategies to improve the health and lives of Montanans.

**CHSP Interim Goal:** Reduce deaths and life changing injuries on Montana’s roads by half, from 952 in 2018 to 476 in 2030.

More information is available at mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/ or by contacting Pam Langve-Davis at plangvedavis@mt.gov.

### Make Sure Your Child is in the Right Seat

Car seats and boosters provide protection for infants and children in a crash, yet car crashes are a leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 13. According to various reports from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and technicians in the field, car seat, booster seat, and seat belt misuse rates vary from 74 to 90%. **Montana car seat technicians typically find that four out of five child seats are installed incorrectly when working with caregivers.** That is why it is so important to choose and use the right car seat correctly every time your child is in the car.

The Child Passenger Safety (CPS) program is fundamental in minimizing deaths and injuries to children on Montana’s roads. National statistics show that child safety seats reduce the risk of fatal injuries by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers in passenger cars. Booster seat use reduces the risk of serious injury by 45% for children aged 4-8 years when compared with seat belt use alone.

Montana has 325 certified CPS technicians and instructors available at checkup events, permanent inspection stations, and through appointments to ensure children are in the correct car seat, that the seats are properly installed and used, and the seats are registered with the manufacturer to ensure caregivers receive important safety updates. Currently, 40 Montana inspection stations are registered with NHTSA. These stations serve 36 of Montana’s 56 counties, providing services to approximately 91 percent of the population.

Caregivers can visit a certified CPS technician to double-check car seats are properly installed. CPS technicians are car seat experts who have taken a 40-hour class with curriculum written by NHTSA in collaboration with National CPS Board and Safe Kids Worldwide. They learn proper car seat installation options, vehicle differences, harnessing procedures, and more.

To find a CPS technician and inspection station, go to cert.safekids.org/ or nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#installation-help-inspection.
**Back to School: Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Tips**

Like much of the country, Montana is facing uncertainty and safety challenges with how to approach the upcoming school year. While schools and colleges across the state may change how they'll approach back-to-school routines with students, pedestrian and bicycle safety is still critically important — especially for younger students walking or bicycling without adult supervision. So as students continue to recreate outside and return to the classroom — virtually or in-person - across Montana, keep the following in mind when driving near schools, bus stops or residential neighborhoods:

- Watch for children walking or bicycling when backing out of driveways and garages and when exiting alleyways.

  ![Slow down and watch for increased pedestrian and bike traffic around schools.](image)

- Watch for children in neighborhood school zones. Be aware of your child’s school route.

- Slow down and watch for children at corners and bus stops.

- Be aware of school bus laws: Yellow flashing lights indicate children are preparing to load or unload and drivers should be prepared to stop. Red flashing lights indicate children are loading or unloading and drivers MUST stop and wait until red lights are no longer flashing. The motorist must not resume driving until the extended stop-sign arm is retracted and the bus is moving again.

- Children are not small adults. A child’s peripheral vision is not fully developed. Children also have difficulty determining direction of sound and judging the speed and distance of moving motor vehicles.

  Are you a parent or guardian of a child? There’s no better time to teach them about pedestrian and bicycle safety! MDT has a wealth of safety and educational resources available online at [mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped](http://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/bikeped) or by contacting MDT’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator at 444-9273 or MDTBikePed@mt.gov

**MDT Awards Traffic Safety Grants to Support Vision Zero**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Grants — MDT awarded $2.9 million in federal grant monies from NHTSA for FFY2021. The grants will address impaired driving, occupant protection and child passenger safety. The emphasis of this grant program is to improve traffic safety through enforcement and education. Law enforcement agencies are funded for extra patrols to concentrate on seat belt and impaired driving laws. Grants for DUI Courts, a Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, and the 24/7 Program address impaired driving. Traffic safety education programs continue with the Native American Safe On All Roads (SOAR) program and Buckle Up coalitions. The NHTSA grant opportunity will open January 1 and close March 1, 2021 for FFY22 funds. [mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/grants/](http://mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/grants/)

Emergency Medical Services Grant Program — nearly $1 million in grant funds has been awarded through the state funded EMS Grant program. The grants are provided to agencies that are staffed by mostly volunteers, Medicare-level billing providers for ambulances, emergency vehicles, training, equipment, communication, or patient care. The program is awarded through a competitive grant process that opens May 1, annually. For State Fiscal Year 2021, 12 EMS providers were awarded a range of equipment—including four ambulances, three cot power load systems, and a variety of training, communication and monitoring equipment. [mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_ems.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/business/grants_ems.shtml)

Contact Janet Kenny at 444-7417 or jkenny@mt.gov for more information.

**Montana Traffic Safety Dates to Remember**

- October 5-6, 2020
  Annual Transportation Safety Planning Meeting (CHSP)
- October 18-24, 2020
  Teen Driver Safety Week
- November 9-29, 2020
  Click It Or Ticket — Law Enforcement Mobilization
- November 26, 2020
  Thanksgiving & Holiday Travel – Buckle Up, Every Trip, Every Time
- December 16, 2020 – January 1, 2021
  Holiday Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over – Law Enforcement Mobilization

**Teen Driver Safety Week**

Parenting is no easy task, and parenting teenagers comes with its own unique set of challenges. During National Teen Driver Safety Week October 18-24, 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is teaming up with MDT to empower parents to discuss the importance of driving safety with their young drivers. The week is a perfect time to begin and continue this conversation, and to remind parents to not to hand over the car keys until their teen knows the rules of the road. NHTSA gives parents tips on how to talk about safe driving behaviors with their teens and address the most dangerous and deadly driving behaviors for teen drivers: alcohol, lack of seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers. [nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving#topic-parental-influence](http://nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving#topic-parental-influence)
Fall Tips to Help Prevent Stormwater Pollution

For many Montanans, outdoor resources and open spaces are some of our most precious assets. And the fall season is no exception, as we venture out to hike, camp, bike, fish, hunt or float one of the breathtaking waterways our vast state has to offer. There are several things you can do at home or on your adventures this fall to prevent stormwater pollution, keeping Montana’s waterways clean for the future.

At home:

- Check for leaks. As you winterize or do regular maintenance on vehicles, check for leaking oil, antifreeze, fuel or other chemicals and make repairs as needed.
- Keep it clear and clean! Make sure to clear debris away from drains, culverts and other stormwater facilities. Never dispose of common items like pet waste, leaves and other yard debris into stormwater systems, as this pollution will flow into our waterways.
- Watch where you wash and winterize. Washing and winterizing vehicles on pavement or asphalt can cause runoff into stormwater.
- Keep chemicals contained. Household cleaning products, pesticides and other liquids should be cleaned up and properly stored or disposed. Dumping these chemicals into stormwater has the same impact as dumping them directly into a waterway.

Outdoors:

- Leave no trace. Pack out what you bring in or create when outdoors. Dispose of common pollutants like pet waste, fuel and garbage properly and safely. Littering can block stormwater systems or be carried by the runoff into rivers, lakes and streams.
- Look before you go. Check vehicles, motorized boats, RVs and ATVs for leaks before venturing out.
- Watch where you wash. Rinsing off chemicals, oils, or other substances can lead to stormwater pollution. Only use designated wash bays to rinse off vehicles, trailers and watercraft.

Find out more about MDT’s MS4 program and how you can get involved in stormwater pollution prevention at mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stormwater/.

Thanks to MDT!

“I would like to send out a huge thank you to Butte Silver Bow and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for their work in making parts of Park and Excelsior Streets accessible to those living with a disability. I live in Centerville, and since this work has been completed, I can take my mobility scooter down Excelsior and across Park Street to the uptown Butte business district. This is a huge blessing for me and for others who rely on a wheelchair or other equipment to be mobile....This is a great way to serve our wonderful town in making it more livable for all abilities and ages in a joyful and powerful way.”

This above is an excerpt from an article in the Montana Standard newspaper on July 17, 2020. Read the full article “Butte project helps those with disabilities” at mtstandard.com.

Transportation Commission Approves Dedication of Toston Structures in Honor of Tim Reardon

During a summer meeting of the Montana Transportation Commission, approval was given to dedicate the Toston Structures on US-287 (currently under construction as part of the Toston Structures project) to Tim Reardon. Reardon dedicated many faithful years to MDT in service of the public, including time as director of the Department from 2011 to 2012, before retiring from his position as MDT Chief Legal Council in 2016.

Visit mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/tostonstructures/ for updates regarding the bridge dedication and more information about the Toston Structures project.

Pictured below from left to right: Commission Chair Barb Skelton, Tim Reardon and Director Mike Tooley at MDT Headquarters in Helena, Mont.
Montana is home to many one-of-a-kind historic sites. Many of these places are in the more remote places of the state and are not widely known to most people. One structure in northcentral Montana literally stands out as the only one of its kind in the United States and, perhaps, even the world. The Pugsley Bridge is a unique cabled-stay bridge spanning the Marias River in the remote badlands south of Chester in Liberty County. To say there are no others like it is an understatement.

Cabled-stay bridges look a lot like suspension bridges. So much so, for years, the Pugsley Bridge was mistakenly believed to be a suspension bridge. Cabled-stay bridges are different from suspension bridges in that the cables run directly from the towers to the deck. The towers are the primary load-bearing structures. They transmit the dead weight (the deck structure) and the live loads (traffic) to the ground. For cabled-stay bridges, ground anchorages are not usually required, but the Pugsley Bridge has cables anchored by concrete block “deadmen” that provide additional support for the towers. Cabled-stay structures typically don’t have vertical cables descending from the main cables to the deck, but the Pugsley Bridge does have that feature. The cables were designed into the structure by the bridge’s designer, Tom Hurdle, which distinguishes this bridge from a standard cabled-stay structure. The innovative bridge design allowed Hurdle to keep within the limited county budget available to him. The Pugsley Bridge may very well be the first cabled-stay bridge built in the United States in the mid-twentieth century and the only one of this design.

During the early spring of 1947, an ice jam moved an old steel truss bridge located at the site of the current span off its foundation and onto the riverbank about a half-mile downstream. The Liberty County Commissioners hired the Billings-based R. T. Hurdle & Sons engineering firm to estimate the cost of placing the old bridge back onto its foundation. The company reckoned it would cost the county $53,520 to complete the work. The county held a bond election in July 1948 to raise funds to repair the old bridge. But before the work could begin, a second ice jam in 1949 moved the bridge another mile downstream and all but demolished it.

Because the destruction of the old bridge ended any chances for rehabilitation, the county and Hurdle made plans to construct a new bridge at the site. Hurdle decided on a cabled-stay bridge design, as it would provide a clear span across the Marias River and minimize the potential damage to the structure from future ice jams. Liberty County advertised for bids to construct the new bridge, but all came in much higher than the engineer’s estimate and the commissioners rejected them. Instead of relying on a contractor, the county commissioners decided to use county forces to build the new bridge under the supervision of Tom Hurdle’s younger brother, Willard. Liberty County forces began work on the new bridge in September 1949. The builders did not use falsework to construct the new bridge, and they incorporated portions of the original structure (i.e. the abutments and one of the approach piers) into the design of the structure. The county only employed eight men on the job with construction equipment consisting of a backhoe, a “concrete mixer, 2-drum hoist … winch truck, compressor and welding and burning equipment.”

The Great Falls Iron Works Company supplied the structural steel for the bridge. The cables were provided by the Pacific Wire Rope Company of Los Angeles and the timber by the Lorraine Valley Lumber Company of Cottage Creek, Oregon. The county completed work on the bridge in July 1950. The structure cost $51,546, nearly two-thousand dollars less than the engineer’s estimate and the cost of the bond. That R. T. Hurdle & Sons was proud of the bridge was demonstrated on the company’s stationery — for years it featured a profile of the Pugsley Bridge.

In 1963, problems surfaced regarding the camber (arch) of the bridge deck. It had settled significantly because the cables had overstretched. Tom Hurdle believed it was because of overflowing when the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation constructed nearby Tiber Dam in the 1950s. The bridge also suffered from a deteriorated deck, and the timber guardrails were in poor condition. By 1967, the problems had not been rectified and Hurdle contacted Montana representative Arnold Olsen to acquire federal funds for the repair of the bridge. Olsen’s bid for federal funds failed, and it was not until 1973 that any work was done on the bridge. That year, Liberty County removed the original timber deck and asphalt overlay and replaced it with a corrugated metal deck. In the mid-1980s, MDT removed the corrugated metal deck and replaced it with a timber deck. The agency also removed the original wood guardrails and replaced them with the existing steel I-beam and cable rails.

The Pugsley Bridge’s towers stand in stark contrast to the relative flatness of the northern Great Plains. It is a testimonial to the ingenuity of its designer and of Liberty County for supporting its construction. The bridge continues to serve local ranchers, farmers, and recreationalists. Some may wonder at it now, but at the time of its construction it was hailed as a marvel, a one-of-a-kind structure in the wilds of northern Montana.
MDT Wants Your Comments On New Projects

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/planning/proposed_proj.pdf, mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/stip.shtml or call 800-714-7296. You can mail comments on proposed projects to MDT Project Analysis Manager, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620 or e-mail them to: mdtnewprojects@mt.gov.

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Contact Information

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 800-335-7592.

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