

Memorandum

To: Elected Officials and Stakeholders for MDT's Billings Bypass Project

From: MDT Rail, Transit & Planning Division

Date: April 26, 2022

Subject: Talking Points for MPDG Grant Letter of Support: Billings Bypass Project

Talking Points for LOS

Your Letter of Support (LOS) is intended to strengthen the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) application for federal Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) funding for the Billings Bypass Project. MDT is applying for funds under the National Infrastructure Project Assistance grants program (MEGA) and the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highways Projects grants program (INFRA), two new funding programs created under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA/BIL).

Billings Bypass Project

- The Billings Bypass is a multi-phase project that will result in a new arterial roadway. Upon completion, the new road will begin at the Johnson Lane Interchange in Lockwood, span the Yellowstone River, and connect to the intersection of Highway 312/Highway 87 in the Billings Heights neighborhood.
- The project addresses infrastructure barriers posed by the Interstate Highway 90 (I-90), Montana Rail Link (MRL) tracks, and the natural barriers of the Yellowstone River and Rimrocks. The project will greatly reduce these barriers, improving accessibility and providing equitable, multimodal transportation choices between the city and the communities of Billings Heights and Lockwood.
- The Five Mile Road segment has been completed, and the Yellowstone River Bridge segment is currently under construction. The MDT grant application will seek funding for the remaining four project segments (Railroad Overpass, Johnson Lane Interchange, Johnson Lane Interchange-Railroad Overpass, and Five Mile Road to US 87).
- The project will feature the installation of Montana's first diverging diamond interchange at Johnson Lane and will improve safety and congestion levels within the existing Billings transportation network.
- The project is anticipated to improve environmental quality by decreasing congestion of traffic through the area. Congestion results in more fuel used by vehicles over a longer period of time, so a reduction will positively impact carbon emissions.

Grant Criteria:

- The MEGA and INFRA grants include several focused evaluation criteria we hope you'll consider as you draft your LOS for the Billings Bypass Project:
 - **Congestion Reduction** – The project would help alleviate the regional north-south traffic that is currently funneled through the US 87/Main Street corridor in the urban area of Billings, thus reducing congestion in downtown Billings and reducing the amount of commercial truck traffic through the city.



- **Safety** –The project will improve safety for a variety of system users by reducing crashes on other roadways within the study area. Additionally, the new arterial will improve emergency service response times for the Billings Heights and Lockwood neighborhoods.
 - **Freight Movement and Economic Vitality** – The project is needed to improve truck/commercial vehicle access to existing state highways and major facilities in the Billings area. Additionally, the new Bypass arterial will provide at-grade access to serve the Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD) in Lockwood. The development is planned to include a light industrial park and a facility for distributing and transferring goods between rail and truck, helping facilitate continued economic growth in the Billings area.
 - **Multimodal Options and Quality of Life** – The project will provide a new shared use path crossing the Yellowstone River and connecting to adjacent trail systems to serve pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, the project will improve quality of life for residents by providing increased connectivity and access within the community.
- Grant applications are also reviewed under additional criteria relating to cost effectiveness, infrastructure condition/state of good repair, system reliability, environmental sustainability and resiliency, equity, and innovation.