

Yellowstone County

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April 23, 2024

Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: FY2025-2026 MPDG Grant: Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of **Yellowstone County**, please consider this letter as written confirmation of our full support of the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) application for Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) discretionary grant program that seeks funding for the Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project (Project). Construction work will replace the existing Interstate 90 (I-90) interchange with an innovative diverging diamond interchange (DDI), increase two miles of I-90 from two lanes to three between interchanges, construct a 10-foot multi-use (MU) path and 5-foot sidewalk to provide complete pedestrian connectivity from Lockwood to the City of Billings, and improve associated roads to accommodate the new interchange and MU path.

Montana is currently experiencing tremendous population growth, and MDT has determined the Project is needed to better accommodate current and future traffic patterns, provide a more efficient interchange, and improve safety for both motorists and non-motorists. MDT considers this Project to be a priority as it connects two adjacent I-90 projects located to the east and west that also propose to modernize the Interstate. As current MDT funding needs outweigh available funding by 3-to-1, MDT must seek additional funding sources. If awarded, MPDG funds would ensure Project construction begins in 2027.

The Project addresses MPDG program requirements in the following ways:

- Protects non-motorized travelers from safety risks with construction of an MU path buffered by concrete barricades.
- Reduces fatalities and serious injuries for motorists and pedestrians with DDI and MU path/sidewalk construction.
- Decreases transportation-related air pollution as DDI efficiency reduces extended vehicle idling.
- Avoids adverse environmental impacts by re-using existing asphalt pavement to reduce CO₂ emissions and complies with water quality and stormwater quantity standards.
- Reduces vehicle travel miles and improves quality of life/public health with promotion of active transportation via the MU path and sidewalk system.
- Addresses gaps in Lockwood's non-motorized transportation network.
- Facilitates access to nearby tourism opportunities by improving Project roads and interchange structure, and creates local, good-paying jobs with initiation of Project construction.
- Contributes to I-90's state of good repair by modernizing infrastructure, reducing construction and maintenance burdens, and addressing transportation system vulnerabilities.
- Engages residents and community-based organizations through public outreach.

On behalf of the community and the traveling public of Montana, I thank you for your consideration of this important project and look forward to its timely completion.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA

John Ostlund, Chair

Mark Morse, Member

Donald W. Jones, Member

Memorandum

To: Elected Officials and Stakeholders for MDT's Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project

From: MDT Rail, Transit & Planning Division

Date: April 15, 2024

Subject: Talking Points for MPDG Grant Letter of Support: Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project

Talking Points for LOS

This Letter of Support is intended to support the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) application for the federal Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) grant program for the Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project (Project). This Project was submitted for a RAISE grant application and MDT is now submitting for an MPDG grant funding in response to this year's notice of funding opportunity (NOFO).

Lockwood Interchange Reconstruction Project Overview

- The Project occurs just east of City of Billings in Yellowstone County, Montana, and will improve Interstate 90 (I-90) and associated roads around the city. This important project connects two adjacent I-90 projects located to the east and west that also propose to modernize the Interstate.
- Project will construct a new Lockwood Interchange that features an innovative Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI). Full bridge reconstruction will provide a longer service life for the structure and accommodate future interstate widening under the bridge.
- Widen approximately two miles of I-90 from the Lockwood Interchange to the Johnson Lane Interchange to three-lanes in each direction.
- Improve pedestrian/bicycle facilities and connectivity between Lockwood and Billings with the creation of a 10-foot multi-use (MU) path that extends along the middle of the new Lockwood Interchange and continues along the north segment of Hwy-87 East and Main Street to MetraPark. The MU path will also extend south of the interchange along the west side of Hwy-87 East to terminate at Coburn Road. A 5-foot sidewalk will begin at Coburn Road and extend about 0.4 miles before it terminates at Hardin Road.
- Reconstruct segments of Hwy-87 East (north and south of I-90) by adding additional travel lanes, widening shoulders, and realigning horizontal and vertical geometries to accommodate the DDI and MU path.

2025-2026 Grant Criteria:

- The MPDG grant application has several notably focused primary criteria for the 2025-2026 selection process to consider as you draft your LOS:
 - **Safety** – Project improves safety by protecting non-motorized travelers from safety risks with construction of an MU path and sidewalk system. This system is also projected to reduce pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries to bring them below Montana's state-wide average. Additionally, the Project will reduce vehicle



- crash fatalities and serious injuries with construction of a DDI structure. The Project also aligns with the *National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS) Plan* for post-crash care by improving ambulance accessibility to major Billings hospitals.
- **State of Good Repair** – Project contributes to I-90's state of good repair by modernizing existing infrastructure, reducing construction and maintenance burdens, and addressing transportation system vulnerabilities.
 - **Economic Impacts, Freight Movement, and Job Creation** – Project improves the economies of Lockwood and Billings by facilitating tourism opportunities and creating good-paying jobs.
 - **Climate Change, Resiliency, and Environment** – Project addresses environmental impacts with DDI construction which advances interchange efficiency and reduces extended vehicle idling to decrease transportation-related air pollution. The MU path and sidewalk system will also reduce vehicle travel miles by promoting the shift to active transportation along a connected non-motorized path between Lockwood and Billings. Additionally, the Project will re-use existing asphalt pavement on I-90 to reduce CO₂ emissions, the use and transport of virgin materials, and the amount of waste materials generated for landfill disposal.
 - **Equity, Multimodal Options, and Quality of Life** – Addresses gaps in Lockwood's active transportation network through the addition of the MU path and sidewalk system. The Project generally improves the quality of life and general health of residents by improving and expanding active transportation usage with MU path and sidewalk construction. The Project engages residents and community-based organizations to ensure equity considerations are meaningfully integrated throughout the Project's lifecycle.
 - **Innovation** – Project and the associated Johnson Lane Interchange Project will construct DDI structures, which represent the first use of this innovative interchange in Montana.