Pre-Conference Networking
About 35 of the 115 MEDA Spring Conference attendees gathered before the conference for a fun Butte Trolley Ride and Pub Crawl Wednesday evening, April 20th. Along the way, the trolley visited three breweries and Montana’s oldest business, Whitehead’s Cutlery and Candy Store.

Thursday, April 21st
Conference Welcome and Introductions
Pam Haxby-Cote, Conference Chair, facilitated greetings and a warm welcome to Butte from BSB Chief Executive Matt Vincent, NorthWestern Energy’s Bob Rowe, and greetings from Senator Tester, and Senator Daines.

According to conference evaluation feedback, Pam Haxby-Cote, Executive Director, BLDC, should facilitate each and every MEDA Conference!

MEDA’s Opening Keynote was Nathan Ohle, Special Advisor for External Affairs, Economic Development Administration. Nathan called himself a “relentless networker” which has allowed him to become a leading voice in government and non-profit management, public relations, relationship management, economic development policy and fundraising. Nathan spoke of key EDA updates and shared a bit about Angie Martinez who was recently named Regional Director of EDA’s Denver Regional Office.
MEDA Annual Meeting
As Chair of the Nominating Committee, Tracy McIntyre opened the 2016 Annual MEDA Membership Meeting. MEDA’s membership voted in two new board members: Russ Fletcher and Stephanie Ray. New officers include: President Paul Tuss, Vice President Kellie Danielson, Treasurer Rick Edwards, Past President Jason Rittal, and Secretary Gloria O’Rourke. Full Board List. Ken Richardson and Linda Kindrick were thanked for their years of service to MEDA.

Jason Rittal provided an update on the newly formed Montana Infrastructure Coalition. Paul Tuss presented Jason with a thank-you gift from MEDA for his service as President. Committee updates from Professional Development and Scholarship Committee, Membership, and Marketing Committees were presented by Kellie Danielson and Tracy. Rick Edwards provided an update on MEDA’s Legislative Agenda to date. MEDA members were invited to join a committee and/or working group to benefit both themselves and the organization of MEDA. The Fall Conference was set for October 12 – 14, with Lake County Community Development serving as host, in Ronan.

Networking Break!

Tour of Whitehead’s Cutlery ~ Celebrating 126th year of business in Butte.
Had you ever seen a Ceremonial Beheading Ax?

Save the date! MEDA Fall Conference: October 12 – 14, Ronan, MT
Fostering a Talented Workforce ~ Best Practices

Left to right in the picture on the left below is Susan Gallagher, Education & Workforce Program Manager, Western Transportation Institute, MSU; Melanie Schwarz, Big Sky EDA representing BillingsWorks Workforce Council and Kristen Rosa, Butte-Silver Bow Economic Development Coordinator. These presenters shared best practices of creating and maintaining an excellent workforce. They were joined by Sean Becker, (center photo below) and Chris Wilhelm, (far right) MDLI, Incumbent Worker Training Program Director.

The Press is Calling ~ How to Best Respond

(Good News or Bad)

According to evaluation comments, MEDA conference attendees gained much from the comments shared by David McCumber, Editor, MT Standard and Claudia Rapkoch, Director, Corporate Communications for NWE. Perhaps the strongest advice given when dealing with the press: don't lie.

Thanks to Amy's Custom Cakes for our signature MEDA "Thank You" cookies.

MEDA is:

Leadership Dedicated to Building Montana’s Economy
**Lunch Table Talk**  
**Keynote: Betsy Markey**

Betsy Markey, newly appointed Regional Administrator SBA Region VIII, serves the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. As a business owner herself, Betsy “gets it” and is passionate about providing the right services at the right time for both business owners and those working in the field to support businesses.

Betsy provided an update on SBA’s core services of access to capital, counseling and contracting as well as tools for outreach to entrepreneurs and innovators.

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**Remember the 2010 Miles City conference in which MEDA surprised Herb Kulow with a real-life “Dog and Pony Show?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb and Pony in 2010</th>
<th>MEDA 2016</th>
<th>Herb introduces Doug Hill</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Herb and Pony in 2010" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="MEDA 2016" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Herb introduces Doug Hill" /></td>
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Jim Atchison thanked Herb for his years of dedication in building Montana. Jim presented Herb with his very own pony along with many thanks from MEDA.

Doug Hill will be filling Herb’s role for Montana Board of Investments.

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**Partners in Progress ~ Innovative Solutions to Job Creation and Retention**

Because program directors and managers are asked to work magic at times to make a project happen, MEDA asked program leaders to share their stories of challenging, complicated, and successful projects.

Left to Right:  
- **BE Forest Products** – Debi Davidson  
- **Diversified Plastics** – Aaron Pratt and Katie Willcockson  
- **Tribal Communications Project** – Heather Sobrepena-George  
- **Spring Prairie** – Ray Beck, Jessica Hoag  
- **Transco Rail Car** – Annmarie Robinson  
- **Blackfeet Community College Building Expansion** for Healthcare – Casey Lozar, Sarah Converse  
- Not pictured: **Consumer Direct** – Alyssa Townsend  
- **Resodyn Corporation** - Dave Desch, Larry Farrar
Main Street Montana Project ~ Successful Occurring Outcomes
Commissioner Pam Bucy, MDLI, presented an encouraging and enthusiastic report on the Main Street Montana Project. Commissioner Bucy focused on recommendations made as a result of Key Industry Networks which were formed to address critical Montana economic sectors.

Review the Main Street Montana Report

How to Get your Community “Tapped In” ~ Rural Craft Beverage Industry and Quality of Life. Two from Headwaters RC&D (standing) co-facilitated this panel: Joe Willauer and Julie Jaksha. Joe noted he did extensive research so that he felt knowledgeable about each business product represented. ;-) The panelists answered questions on their start-up process, best practices, workforce, and enjoying Montana’s quality of life. The businesses represented Headframe Spirits, Willie’s Distillery, Butte Brewing, Phillipsburg Brewing Co.

Following a fun night at Headframe Spirits and dinner in Uptown Butte, Friday morning began with one of the most popular presentations of the entire conference:

Building Capacity Where It Matters

Warren Vaughan, Gallatin County
Planning/BEAR Director, compared the typical BEAR model with his approach which is focused on building relationships, creating a team, and making resource connections.
Warren Vaughan Presentation

Jeff Batton, HomeStake Partners
Provided information on his latest business venture to help small business owners and startups learn specific skills and systems they need to succeed.
Jeff Batton Presentation
Thanks to our MEDA Agenda Committee: Pam Haxby-Cote, (Chair), Warren Vaughan, Sharon Franjevic, Rick Edwards, Warren Vaughan, Karyl Tobel, Jim Davison, Tracy McIntyre, Jason Rittal, Joe Willauer, Julie Jaksha, Barbie Durham, and Gloria O’Rourke.

**MEDA Board Meeting**
First MEDA Board Meeting with 2016 Officers and New Directors.

*Special thanks to NorthWestern Energy for donating our conference space and to Pam Haxby-Cote, for hosting MEDA in Butte!*

And more photos:

Thanks for your dedication to MEDA, Ken Richardson!

*Zombie Knife at Whitehead’s*  
*Ray Beck, DNRC*
Thanks to our MEDA Spring 2016 Conference Sponsors

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