MEDA TRANSPORTATION WORKING GROUP
FEBRUARY 11, 2014
10:00AM – 11:30AM
MDT, Commission Room, 2nd Floor
Helena, MT

SUMMARY of the MEETING

MEDA Attendees: Barbie Durham, Headwaters RC&D; Kathy McLane, MidRivers Telephone Group; Kathie Bailey, Snowy Mountain Development Corp.; Anne Boothe, Triangle Communications; Sharon Franjevic, SBA; Cheryl Curry, Pondera Regional Port Authority; Craig Erickson, Great West Engineering; Webb Brown, Montana Chamber; Tracy McIntyre, MEDA President and Eureka Rural Development Partners.

MDT and Other Attendees: MDT - Director Mike Tooley, Lynn Zanto, and Chris Dorrington. Nola Freestone, Eco-Asset Management.

1. Introductions
   Kathie Bailey, Chair, asked for introductions and provided a brief history of the MEDA Transportation Working Group.

2. Review Purpose of MEDA Transportation Working Group
   Kathie Bailey reviewed the Working Group’s purpose: The purpose of the MEDA Transportation Working Group is to build relationships and foster communications with Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) regarding economic and community development and transportation-related issues, funding, and setting project priorities.

   Kathie explained the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) which is a five year planning strategy, and described the role of MDT in the transportation component of the report. The reports are submitted to EDA and Montana Dept. of Commerce (MDOC) for review and are available to the public.

   Anne Boothe noted most communities have a Growth Policy or a Community Development Block Grant which require holding public meetings. Anne said that public comment often involves transportation issues such as bridges and roads.
Eleven counties in North Central Montana are under a HUD program called Vibrant Futures and receive points from involvement with various state and federal partners such as MDT with the program.

**Question:** How could MDT be involved in the CEDS process?

**Answer:** Kathie suggest all Economic Development Districts provide a copy or online link of each CEDS report and request feedback from MDT on transportation issues. MDT does have regional representatives in the field that could be contacted. Once MDT has the contact list, the regional representatives can contact the economic development entity. In return, MDT representatives can contact local economic development entities when hold meetings with local governments.

3. **Director Michael Tooley and MDT Planning Dept.**

   Director Tooley encouraged future meetings with the MEDA Transportation Working Group so that communication and information exchanges can increase.

   a. **New Projects and/or Program Information**

      i. It has been a goal of Director Tooley and MDT to compile Unified Strategic Plans that complement each division’s plans. TranPlan21 contains a major element regarding economic development.

      ii. In October a four year construction plan was completed; this information is on the MDT website. A little more emphasis was on the Glendive and Missoula districts during the four year process due to unique construction needs. At this time, the Kalispell by-pass work continues; this July the trestle project should be completed near Lewistown. Work in Helena, Culbertson, and U.S. 2 between Bainville and North Dakota will take place in the near future.

      iii. As a result of a Strategic Planning Retreat MDT realized it must plan further than four years out and is beginning a 20 year plan.

      iv. TranPlan21 lists possible actions to improve Montana transportation and includes stakeholder surveys as well as public input. Economic stakeholders were moderately satisfied. MDT wants to hear more from economic developers as to how to improve.

      v. Federal Lands Access Grants is a current highway bill that provides a project access to federal lands. The total value from last year’s program was $20 million; the next solicitation is scheduled for next quarter. Director Tooley encouraged everyone to get ready to apply. Craig Erickson has expertise with this application process.

      vi. The Transportation Alternative Grant had 60 applications totaling $27 million for $7 million available. Funds pay for transportation enhancements.

      vii. Regarding Eastern MT, several studies are available regarding issues and transportation impacts as a result of the Bakken.

      viii. MDT is part of the Multi State Corridor Operations and Maintenance group. This group represents 27 million Americans and is critical to the success of the region. MDT helps administer the grant and is conducting a SWOT analysis.

      ix. Director Tooley is a key member of the National Freight Advisory Committee. It was noted the currently proposed Primary Freight Network developed by FHWA leaves large gaps in the western United States.

      x. MDT Project Cycle is in progress and seeks new nominations for projects. Economic developers have an opportunity to speak up.
b. Old Issues
   i. MAP-21, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act expires September 30, 2014. Several options are being explored to adjust funding streams. It is hoped funding can at least be maintained.

   ii. The National Highways System map expanded in 2013. All of MDT’s recommended changes were approved.

4. Open Discussion - Questions and Comments
   a. Engage Canada. Meetings have recently been held to improve interaction, workforce, and business opportunities with Canada. Tracy will nominate a Highway 93 project from Eureka to the border. A second study regarding the impacts of Alberta energy activities will be posted on the MDT website soon. A direct flight is needed to Calgary.

   b. For economic developers to get involved in a local project, for example, malfunction junction changes in Helena, the place to begin is with the local planning office. In the City of Helena you would contact the Transportation Coordinating Committee.

   c. Economic developers are concerned with the pending fiscal cliff facing transportation revenue. Without additional revenue beyond the current fuel tax, states will experience about a 40% decrease in Federal transportation funding beginning October 1, 2014.

   d. Essential Air Service Assistance (EAS). Several communities have been impacted by the loss of EAS, yet new routes are opening. MDT monitors the program to guard against budget cuts.

   e. Regarding rail service, Director Tooley is part of the Rail Service Competition Council which exists to address rail issues across Montana.

   f. Share this program information with MEDA members at the Havre conference and with the MEDA Board.

   g. Regarding matching EDA dollars with MDT programs, Lynn will share a brochure that summarizes funding options.

   h. Kathie noted the webcam for construction sites is fascinating; camera links are on the MDT website.

   i. MEDA works with other departments on legislative policy. If there are issues, MEDA would be open to learning about the issues.


   k. The Revenue Transportation Interim Committee meets next week; oversize loads will be discussed.

5. Next Meeting
   The MEDA Transportation Working Group agreed to meet twice per year with MDT with the Working Group members meeting more often if needed. Director Tooley encouraged MEDA representatives to feel free to contact MDT at any time. The next MEDA Transportation Working Group meeting with MDT will be held the end of summer.

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<tr>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compile CEDS copies or links for MDT; email to Lynn Zanto and Chris Dorrington</td>
<td>Kathie Bailey and Gloria</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide documents/links for non CEDS planning documents as well.</td>
<td>Kathie Bailey and Gloria</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Administrators in Eastern MT will begin as soon as possible to connect with economic developers once contact information is received.</td>
<td>Kathy McLane and Shane (Eastern MT District)</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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<td>MDT links to:</td>
<td>MDT Lynn Zanto, Chris</td>
<td>March 28th</td>
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- the impact study in the Bakken
- funding brochure
- RSCC website
- ICE2 – demographic info is outstanding
- Webcam links for project progress

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide resources on MEDA Working Group webpage.</td>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>March 28th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide Tony Preite’s Bakken Study link to MDT</td>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserve room on MEDA Spring Agenda for report back to membership</td>
<td>Gloria and MEDA Agenda Committee</td>
<td>March 28th</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEDA Board Report</td>
<td>Kathie and Anne</td>
<td>May 5th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Send meeting doodle with MDT and MEDA end of August/first of September</td>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>March 15th</td>
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