

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 2.11.05
HB HB530

House Bill 530 (Mathews)

Authorize Signage for Miles City Cultural Area

Miles City is one of the historic old Montana towns that was bypassed by the interstate highway system back in the 50's. Prior to that time, highways 10 and 12 passed through Miles City resulting in the development of significant tourist infrastructure including restaurants, motels, museums, a vibrant "old west" main street and many other both regional and tourist attractions. Much of this infrastructure is still in place including a historic downtown, 2 excellent museums, an art center, and accommodations for regional and tourism related traffic. Miles City has a reputation of being an old west trail town, a frontier town during the cavalry days, was a riverboat stop in its early history transporting large numbers of buffalo hides to the east and a railroad town with both the Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Road passing through our town. Many of our early settlers came by train.

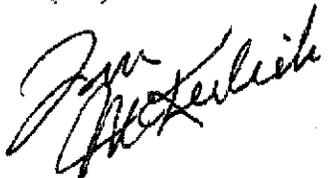
Miles City is somewhat unique in that there is only government land to our west along the interstate that does not allow any signage promoting Miles City or our businesses within at least 15 miles of town. (Fort Keogh) To the east, there are billboard signs in existence that were "grandfathered in" years ago. No new frames can be erected since there is a lack of proper zoning to allow this type of signage. If an existing billboard frame was to come available, there is a \$300 to \$500 monthly rental charge involved.

We believe our tourism traffic would significantly increase if we could promote our "old west" culture and town with a series of attractive wooden interstate signs similar to those used in and around Butte. To some extent these signs appear like those state and federal signs that promote state and federal parks and other attractions along our interstates. With the ever-increasing tourism to our state and with the advent of the Lewis and Clark Celebrations over the next few years, we believe these signs would bring more people into our town. There would be no cost to the state for this action.

Miles City residents, with assistance from the State of Montana Tourism Department and representatives from the U of M and MSU completed a Tourism Assessment Study for our area 3 years ago. One of the highest recommendations was to promote our town and area through the use of more effective signage. Increasing Tourism was identified as a high potential for increasing economic activity in our shrinking eastern Montana economy.

We would ask your support of this bill.

Miles City Area Economic Development Council
Tom McKerlick, Executive Director
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Post-it® Fax Note	7671	Date	2-9-05	# of pages	1
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