



Memorandum

To: Duane Williams, P.E.
Motor Carrier Services Administrator

From: Heidi Bruner, P.E.
Engineering Section Supervisor
Environmental Services Bureau

Date: May 21, 2013

Subject: Categorical Exclusion (c)
Missoula Interstate Sign Bridges



Environmental Services Bureau understands that MDT is proposing to remove two sign bridges located on Interstate 90 in the Missoula District and replace them with four new ground mounted guide signs. One sign bridge is located in the westbound direction just east of Van Buren Street and one sign bridge is located in the eastbound direction just west of Orange Street.

The reason to remove these sign bridges is that questions are being raised about their integrity with the displacement that has taken place during wide load moves. These sign bridges were originally installed in 1968. Over the past several years the bridges have been displaced a number of times as a result of wide load moves. Inspections have indicated the Orange Street structure has a "bend" or "bow" in part of the overhead structure. Given the age of these structures, the Department believes we will not be able to place responsibility for the integrity of the structures on any company's personnel involved with moving these bridges for wide load purposes.

Rather than replacing the aging sign structures, these two sign bridges would be replaced with four ground mounted signs. The 2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices list several conditions that may provide benefit for installing overhead signs. Of the 13 conditions, two conditions apply to this location.

- 1) High-speed traffic – condition applies. Of note is the statutory speed limit is lowered through Missoula to 65 rather than 75mph.
- 2) Closely-spaced interchanges – condition applies. The spacing between interchanges for urban areas is 1.0 mile. The distance between Orange and Van Buren Street is 500 feet short of 1.0 mile or 0.9 mile.

This change will have minimal impact to the operational characteristic or safety issues to the traveling public.

Environmental Services Bureau has reviewed the proposed project and concluded that it will not involve unusual circumstances as described under 23 CFR 771.117(b). As a result, the project qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under the provisions of 23 CFR 771.117(c), part (8), which describes installation of fencing, signs, pavement markings, small passenger shelters, traffic signals, and railroad warning devices where no substantial land acquisition or traffic disruption will occur. The proposed action also qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under the provisions of ARM 18.2.261 (Sections 75-1-103 and 75-1-201, MCA).

Since the proposed work is on an Interstate roadway, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is being copied on this memorandum so that they are aware that that the proposed action is being processed in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117(c).

e-copies: Ed Toavs, P.E., District Administrator
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