



Transportation Interim Committee

66th Montana Legislature

PO BOX 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706
(406) 444-3064
FAX (406) 444-3036

SENATE MEMBERS

GORDON VANCE - Chair
DIANE SANDS - Vice Chair
CYDNE (CARLIE) BOLAND
JEFF WELBORN

HOUSE MEMBERS

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DENLEY LOGE
ANDREA OLSEN
MARK SWEENEY

COMMITTEE STAFF

SONJA NOWAKOWSKI, Research Director
JOE CARROLL, Staff Attorney
BRI NORDHAGEN, Secretary

June 30, 2020

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2604

Dear Senator Daines,

The Transportation Interim Committee is a bipartisan committee of the Montana Legislature. At its meeting June 22 in Helena, the committee voted unanimously to urge enactment of federal legislation that substantially invests in rail grade separation and improved crossings. A national grade separation program can reduce the interaction between trains, vehicles, and pedestrians at at-grade crossings, eliminating potential for accidents and enabling an uninterrupted flow of traffic around and across rail corridors.

At-grade crossings can slow or stop car traffic and increase congestion and motorist travel time, as well as decrease overall efficiency of the roadway network. Grade-separated intersections increase roadway capacity by eliminating delays at railroad crossings. Most importantly, grade separations eliminate the potential for accidents between trains and surface traffic that can occur when motorists do not obey installed warning devices.

A national program should invest \$5 billion per year over 5 years for 300 to 400 grade separations nationwide. A successful program should include a dedicated grant program to fund priority projects, with scoring based on set criteria, recognizing that most projects are already vetted in state and regional transportation improvement plans. Grant eligibility should include a combination of local, state, and private funding for a match and ensure project selection is done in collaboration with local, state, and freight and passenger rail stakeholders. A successful program also would include an assessment of performance and effectiveness, allowing Congress to effectively evaluate its efficacy and determine the best path for reauthorization. The program should also provide mechanisms for these projects to be developed with federal aid to address planning and preliminary engineering needs for these projects.

Montana's 2016 Rail Grade Separation Study identified a list of at-grade and grade-separated railroad crossings where potential improvements could be considered. Billings, Bozeman, and Helena had multiple crossings considered for feasibility of grade separation. Numerous rural crossings also were identified. No funding sources, however, were identified to support recommended improvement projects identified. This demonstrates a need for federal support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Presiding Officer Senator Gordon Vance

Vice-Presiding Officer Senator Diane Sands



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June 30, 2020

Senator Jon Tester
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2604

Dear Senator Tester,

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June 30, 2020

Representative Greg Gianforte
1222 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gianforte,

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