



RESPONSES TO COVID-19:

AGENCY OVERVIEWS, UPDATES, AND CHANGES IN SERVICE

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MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

A MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR TOOLEY

Montana's Department of Transportation (MDT) is taking a cautious approach to the Phase II reopening of the state. MDT approached June 1 as a start line, not a deadline. Public facing services, like permitting, are opening on a limited basis, but most workers that can telework continue to telework, as MDT determines the safest way to bring more employees back into the facilities. Construction and maintenance activities continue, with no major impacts due to COVID-19.

MDT remains open for business, even if it is not business entirely as usual.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

The ongoing and expected significant decline in travel will negatively impact Highway State Special Revenue Account balances, although it is unclear to what degree. The impact on distributor tax returns will become more apparent as additional details are collected. The retail fuel community has indicated to MDT that gasoline sales are down nearly 30% and are expected to drop to about half of normal at the peak. Diesel is only down 1% to 2%.

If the predictions come to fruition, and levels return to normal within a year, a conservative estimate of the impact to the fund is about \$35 million. While significant, MDT expects its current balances can absorb the decline in the short term but will impact the long-term scenario. MDT also expects to reconsider additional investments during the upcoming Executive Planning Process.

For May 2020, collections were up about \$3 million for the month. While good news, MDT remains cautious. MDT suspects a fair amount of "stockpiling" of fuel early in the month due to favorable prices, followed by a sharp drop in the second half due to travel restrictions and lack of fuel storage capacity. Although traffic has picked up and the retail community is seeing a smaller decline than anticipated, the overstocking of fuel may have some ripple effects over the next couple of months. MDT reports a dynamic situation.

As the pandemic unfolds, providing accurate predictions on revenue impact is challenging, but MDT is maintaining close (virtual) contact with the retail community and carefully monitoring distributor tax. Regular updates will be provided to the Legislature.

Staffing:

- 34 working full time from home
- 1 working full time in office (no ability for internet connection at home)
- 1 mailroom employee working in office each morning
- 5 mailroom staff alternating one day in the office each week
- 3 bureau chiefs alternating one day in the office each week
- 1 administrator alternating with bureau chiefs 2-3 days in the office each week

Total: 45 employees, 2-4 in the office at any given time

AERONAUTICS DIVISION

Aeronautics has closed its office to the public except by appointment. Response times are also slightly lengthened due to inefficiencies and added COVID-19 workload. Public education outreach programs are planned but with modifications to the traditional delivery or approach.

Capital improvement plan outreach to airport sponsors has been suspended until after June 15. Impacts to commercial service at the Yellowstone Airport are likely but unknown at this time.

Six staffers are working entirely remotely, three are working in the office, and one is working a split shift arrangement.

ENGINEERING DIVISION

The transportation industry currently is considered an essential service, and construction activities including advertising, letting, construction, etc. continue. MDT is ensuring construction activities progress as much as safely possible. Most of MDT's engineers are teleworking. Preconstruction design activities continue in order to maintain upcoming letting schedules and award of projects as planned. MDT's Materials Bureau continues to operate and prepare for the upcoming construction season. Staff are taking as many precautions as possible while still performing all lab functions. This includes District labs.

MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Currently there is little impact to the traveling public due to impacts from COVID-19. Field maintenance personnel continue to plow roads, fix guardrail, patch bridge and potholes, repair traffic signal and signs, and remove debris from the highways across the state. The Equipment Bureau and Communications Bureau continue to support maintenance and construction with repairs to the light and heavy-duty equipment and communication devices. Headquarters maintenance and field staff continue to provide accurate and timely traveler information. The facilities bureau is working on various building construction projects across the state and currently, all year-round rest areas and truck parking areas remain open. MDT is struggling a bit with obtaining cleaning and disinfectant supplies, but

the agency is working with local suppliers and State Disaster and Emergency Services to acquire items. Helena staff are gathering data and information on the department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maintenance headquarters has 11 employees working from home exclusively, five are doing a split shift—partial telework and partially at work, and 46 are working at headquarters (these include the carpenters, mechanics, custodial staff and sign shop staff).

INFORMATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

Fifty-four employees are working remote full-time. Three employees are working in the office, and two employees are doing a combination.

MOTOR CARRIERS SERVICES DIVISION

Remote working requirements have a minimal impact to motor carrier services throughout the state. Beginning June 4, Motor Carrier Services began allowing permit customers back into the building with appropriate social distancing guidelines.

PLANNING DIVISION

Staffing includes about 69 employees working remotely, five splitting time between remote and office work, and four in the office full time.

Some external customer meetings or training are postponed, for example, a child passenger safety seat technician update and training scheduled for May 6-7. This would have included about 40 to 50 attendees, 10 trainers, and four MDT staff. MDT staff are working with trainers to schedule 7-9 regional child passenger seat technician update training across the state. Anticipate training to start in July, dates and location TBD.

In terms of public transportation, Federal transit funds flow thru MDT to about 40 providers in the state. As of June 1st all transit providers are operating with full service except for one Tribe (Blackfeet Transit) who is currently providing reduced service. Overall, this is an improvement from the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when 38 transit systems across the state were providing only essential services and 10 of those systems eventually suspended service altogether. There was a significant drop in ridership during the early stages, however, we are seeing those levels gradually increase as services are restored.

HUMAN RESOURCES AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY DIVISION

Twenty-four employees are working entirely remotely. Three employees are working in the Helena office, and four employees are working in the District Office. A split shift arrangement is in place, and employees may work from home to complete paperwork.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

Audit Services has 13 employees working remotely, and one employee working at the office. Restrictions on travel to locations to perform audits is slowing progress, and some audits are postponed. However, MDT is receiving tax records via mail or drop off and supporting documents from businesses electronically.

The Office of Civil Rights is primarily working remotely with minimal disruptions. MDT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program postponed the annual small business and summit event. Americans with Disability Act staff are working from home, accessing construction and design programs necessary for review and program support. MDT's 5-year affirmative action plan is due this federal fiscal year, and staff is focusing on this work. The Contractor Compliance Program is supporting construction contractors through phone or skype. Equal employment office submissions are done electronically. The Nondiscrimination Program continues to address complaints. Scheduled trainings are postponed or done virtually. Staff are updating training, both for presenting and for continued growth. Nine staffers are working from home, and one employee has made shift arrangements.

Essential legal services functions are covered, and the unit is responding to public information requests within normal time frames. Four staffers are working from home, and five staff have shift arrangements.

DISTRICT OFFICE SERVICES

The district offices are operating with minimal staff in the central offices. Two-to 5-employees are in the office with the district administrators working 3-to-4 days a week in the office and 1-to-2 days telecommuting. All other district office staff are telecommuting.

District construction and maintenance personnel are mostly reporting to work, as they are unable to telecommute. Construction personnel are working in the field surveying and administering active construction projects. Construction personnel working in field offices are telecommuting when possible. District construction engineers and construction operations engineers are alternating between reporting to the office and working from home. Additional impacts to construction field staff include:

- Limit travel to one person per vehicle
- Maintain 6 feet of distance between individuals in the field
- Limit one person per work trailer at a time
- Work part time or stagger shifts to limit the number of crew members at a given time
- When crews are in the office, try to work as separated as possible from others. Some staff may work out of their vehicle. If you don't need to be in the office, don't be
- Avoid overnight travel and staying in hotels. Permission from a supervisor and details of the need for the overnight travel are required.

Maintenance personnel are working on routine road and equipment maintenance, as well as building maintenance. Maintenance chiefs are alternating from reporting to the office and working from home. Additional impacts include:

- Concentrating on core activities such as guardrail repair, sign installation, and roadway safety type activities
- Less productivity due to smaller crew sizes from alternating shifts to enhance social distancing
- Short staff due to childcare and compromised immune systems, focus is on essential services
- Some open operator and tech positions should be filled soon, but may be delayed
- Increased facility cleaning costs
- More time spent disinfecting vehicles and facilities means less time maintaining systems

Missoula District

- 34 working remotely
- 206 working at regular reporting locations (mainly maintenance and construction)
- 18 working some amount remotely

Butte District

- Butte Office: 21 teleworking, two working at office, and seven working split telework/office
- Bozeman Office: Zero teleworking, three working at office, and three working offset shifts
- Butte and Bozeman construction, materials laboratory, and survey field crews: 56 using shift scheduling and other means to reduce the number of staff exposed to one another at any given time
- Construction and maintenance services are being provided to the full extent.
- Butte and Bozeman equipment shops are short personnel due to illness and vacancies. However, the workload is being managed using internal and external resources.
- District and division offices are beginning to issue carrier permits. Signs posted on the doors (and messaging on social media) still encourage permittees to use MDT's electronic permitting system.

Glendive District

- Preconstruction: 14 telework, three splitting time between remote and office
- Construction: Six partially at home and 59 in the field
- Office staff: Two telework, six splitting time
- WP Maintenance: Five partially at home, 50 in the field or shops
- MC Maintenance: Seven partially at home, 63 in the field or shops

Billings District

- 20 working remotely
- 217 working at MDT (Mostly maintenance and construction in the field)
- 2 working combination shifts Combination of the two above:

