

Highway Construction Impacts on Victor, MT Meeting Minutes

Date: 7-13-11

Place: the Hamilton House Pub

Attendees (who signed the sheet or we were able to find): Pat & Merle Baker, Roger De Haan, Julie Foster (RCEDA), Mike Bower & Mary Hamilton, Rick O'Brien, Owen Robbins, Ben Schultes, Shane Stack (Montana Dept of Trans - MDOT), Cheryl Tenold, Trish Hatfield, Beryl Bailey, Mary Lee Bailey, Bridget Gardner, Gene Buroker, Sharon Hokeby, Allen McClintick, Sonny Lewis, Butch Aarrestad, Gary MacLaren, Ray Daguerra, Pete McCormick, Anita Drewien, Ken Gibson, Jim Schockley, Marilee Schockley, Ken Schultz, Suzy Foss, Bill Mart (MDOT), Dean Jones (MDOT), Mark Haldorson

The questions and concerns regarding the construction project were addressed by the Montana Department of Transportation - Shane Stack, Dean Jones, Ed Tate and Bill Marrt, Bill is the Project Manager.

There was a concern that Meridian Rd and the Highway would be closed off at the same time.

MDOT said that this situation will not occur again

Business owners and citizens were concerned because signage that indicated business access and detours is inconsistent and unreliable. Signs are located in places where traffic from Hwy 93 can't see them and they don't adequately describe the route necessary to access the business.

MDOT said that there were signs up for business access. The Victor citizens stated the signage had appeared in the last 30 days. Mark H. said that they could demonstrate the times when their business was inaccessible through their sales records. Shane (MDOT) said that a better job with signage could be done. Bill (MDOT) stated that it was contractor's responsibility and it was agreed that they that were not doing a good job with the signage. MDOT will remind the contractor of these responsibilities.

Business owners and citizens said that dust mitigation was not adequate and that there was no water truck at all on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

MDOT said that dust mitigation is supposed to be on going and should be occurring on Friday and the weekend. Bill is going to speak to the contractor. The paving in Victor is scheduled to be completed in the next 7 to 8 working days depending upon weather and repair of broken down equipment. This will resolve the situation in town.

The Hamilton House and Urban Montana Salon are concerned about possible structural damage to their buildings because of vibration from the construction.

Dean from MDOT said that they will talk with Geo Tech about taking a look at those buildings. Bill said that they could lower the vibration during the paving of Meridian Rd. There are compaction requirements and those would be adhered to but that it could be done by completing another pass or two with a lower vibrate setting. **Contact Shane Stack regarding building integrity concerns: sstack@mt.gov**

A frustration for the business owners and the citizens has been little or no communication from MDOT.

MDOT said that they have addressed all the issues that have been given to them. MDOT offered to communicate in a way that would be most beneficial to the town. Weekly meetings and email were discussed. Email and postings of information to the RCEDA.ORG web site were selected as the preferred methods at this time. Bill Marrt provided his cell phone number, 240-2274 and Dean Jones provided his telephone number, 523-5823, in case citizens can't get reach Bill. When someone does contact Bill with a question or concern Bill will provide the information to Julie at RCEDA - julie@rceda.org and RCEDA will post the Q&A on the web site so Bill doesn't get 10 calls with the same question.

Business owners and citizens were concerned and unhappy that there was no estimate on when construction will be finished and no scheduling information provided to them, even when it directly affected the access to their business.

MDOT has now provided a *project schedule.

- July 22nd - projected date for completion of paving in Town which includes Meridian. They are hoping to get the paving done to Sweathouse Creek also.
- Begin paving 2nd Week of August - Bear Creek Rd. South 2 miles
- Being paving mid-September - Bear Creek North 2 miles
- June or July of 2012 - chip sealing, will take approximately 3 days

*Weather, equipment break downs and other projects will influence this time table. Landscaping, striping and other portions of the project are not in the above timetable.

MDOT said that project schedules change daily. They will try to communicate those changes when significant and will work more closely with the businesses when affecting their access.

Bill, Victor Steakhouse and Victor Merc began working out a paving schedule that would have the least amount of negative impact on their businesses. The paving will be done in the morning in front of these two businesses. Although MDOT said the schedules change daily, Roger DeHaan asked them to try to adhere to the schedule they provide. It takes 30 minutes to an hour after paving before the surface can be driven on, depending on the weather.

The Tucker's , Shockley's and the business owners from the Physical Therapy were interested to learn their paving schedule and correct access issues that were preventing elderly patients (customers) from getting in to the PT business. The owner of the PT business said that her car was bottoming out because the parking lot was not flat enough and she was concerned about damage not only to her car but to customers vehicles. MDOT and these citizens and business owners met after the meeting at their places of business to get their issues addressed. Bill estimates that the paving on Railroad street would take two passes or about 5 to 6 hours.

There were concerns about areas that were not in the immediate construction area being ripped up.

That situation will not occur again.

The businesses and the citizens requested better access signage when construction is complete. Roger DeHaan suggested that signs saying that construction was complete not be placed prematurely before the September construction was complete.

MDOT said that they could place electronic signs just north of Hamilton and in the Florence area to advise motorists that they should return to Victor and use Hwy 93. The signs can contain 4 words and three flashes for a total of 12 words. Roger DeHaan confirmed with MDOT that there will be signs for the museum and the park. Roger said that the school's Performing Arts Center didn't qualify but he wished that it did. It was agreed that Roger, Mary, and RCEDA will have another meeting with everyone that wants to join in and decide what they would like to have on this sign and RCEDA will advise Shane at MDOT.

A question was asked about historical signage like they have in Stevensville. Shane said that signage would have required some planning and the Town had not planned for or asked for that type of signage. Julie suggested contacting Joan Prather at the Stevensville Main Street Association for some direction on that at 777-3773.

Other Items

The speed limit through Victor will be 45 mph. There may be an opportunity to amend that limit by contacting the County Commissioners.

A question was asked about who to contact if the Right of Way Agreement that was entered in to with WGM 15 years ago is now different. Dean Jones of MDOT should be contacted at 523-5823.

The County was asked for some assistance with grading the road. Commissioner Suzy Foss said that the road was down to base and need more materials to be applied in order to fix the problem. The road is being exposed to far greater traffic and use conditions than it normally would. Many of the County roads are in need of work, the County is working on it, there are no quick solutions but the road will be done.

It was suggested that the contractors employees could use some customer service skills.

A question was asked about a road abandonment schedule, Bill said he would try to get that information from Schellinger Construction.

The Ravalli Republic's advertising sales consultant, Cheryl Tenold attended the meeting and offered a special promotion and rate to the Victor Businesses through "Today's Deal." Cheryl's contact information is cheryl.tenold@ravallipublic.com, telephone numbers are 363-3300 and 529-1868. Ken Schultz, owner of Hidden Legends winery, said that the promotion had worked well for him. Cheryl will be attending the next meeting which will be a discussion of creating and sustaining a town leadership group.

Roger DeHaan said that when the highway group was meeting to discuss the planning for this project they didn't really consider business access.

Next Meeting: To be announced