

Minutes of Fergus Co. Commissioners Special Meeting

January 18, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

Council On Aging Meeting Room

307 W Watson St

Lewistown, MT 59457

Fergus County Commissioner and Presiding Officer Carl Seilstad welcomed everyone present and led the discussion. Commissioners Ross Butcher and Sandra Youngbauer were also present.

Director Mike Tooley with the MT Department of Transportation (MDT) also welcomed everyone and thanked them for their interest. He introduced Kirk Spalding with the engineering firm of Sanderson Stewart out of Bozeman. Mr. Spalding went through a PowerPoint presentation titled “SF119 – Int Imp – N Grass Range HS1P – STPHS14(36)” regarding the proposed round-a-bout by Grass Range.

Spalding stated there have been four deaths since 2003. His firm was hired to do an independent analysis of the intersection being discussed, which included a traffic study. The PowerPoint he used gave background information, and the conclusion that was reached was that a round-a-bout was the best alternative. Looking at the project at hand started in 2013, and the round-a-bout design was completed in 2016. The project is currently out for bid. They considered public and stakeholder involvement, and had news releases and public information meetings. They also met with trucking companies to get their input. A traffic evaluation was done to determine why accidents are occurring. The findings included there are no significant sight issues, there is not much traffic, and it wasn't felt that turn lanes were needed. The majority of the accidents are high speed right angle crashes.

The alternatives that Sanderson Stewart looked at are as follows:

- Do nothing - this doesn't address the problems being considered.
- Traffic signal – this doesn't mitigate the problems so was not pursued.
- All-way stop signs – This tends to lead to bad behavior and could actually increase noncompliance. It was felt this would not fix the behavior or mitigate the problems.
- Round-a-bout –  
Pros – reduction in crash severity, eliminates right angle crashes, speed is reduced for all vehicles, and it is a long term solution.  
Cons – cost, requires additional right-of-way.  
It was concluded that this was the preferred alternative.

Spalding then went on to explain the construction design, the signage and striping, and the center island design. The center island will be landscaped as they want it to be very visible.

At this point Commissioner Seilstad invited those in attendance to identify themselves and ask questions they may have for the MDT after being recognized.

**Mike Vlastelic** - asked how trucks coming from Winnett with a pup headed to Lewistown would get through. Spalding explained the pup has to go up on the truck apron, that all of this has been taken into consideration. Vlastelic asked if they have every looked into lighting as there is a light on the Winnett side.

**Carl Seilstad** – MDT was looking at putting in a round-a-bout and hired Sanderson Stewart to look at the project, knowing their expertise was in round-a-bouts. Knowing there were other options to be considered, why was round-a-bout expert firm hired. Roy Peterson with the Montana Highway Safety Program stated they looked at it and felt a round-a-bout was the answer. They constantly hear people say they don't want a round-a-bout, but after they are in people like them. He went on to say that insurance companies have reported a 62% reduction in all crashes, and an 85% reduction in injury.

**Michael Byrne** – Bowman Corner has a similar situation and what they did there has been very successful. He asked Roy Peterson if they have looked at that as an option. Peterson stated they did not look at Bowman Corner but have considered many others.

**Lonnie Bergstrom** – Bergstrom asked Peterson about other types of controlled intersections were considered. Peterson stated that when you have a pattern where 80% of the accidents are right angle collisions something must happen. It is hard to not put something in that you know will mitigate the problem. Bergstrom spoke of a study where it states that rural round-a-bouts have no purpose.

**Gordon Wentworth** – round-a-bouts are designed with color schemes for various trucks. Many people in here are color challenged. Wentworth's experience with round-a-bouts is not knowing what to do when he approaches one. A big percentage of the people going through this intersection have never been through there before. Other things to take into account are the sun and poor visibility. Also snow plows are not as available in rural areas as in urban areas. Ron Peterson, the maintenance chief for the Lewistown area snow plows, stated the main facility in that area is only one-half mile from the intersection so keeping it plowed won't be a problem.

**Jennifer Saunders** – Saunders asked Kirk Spalding where the speed limit signs would be placed, and what do they base the deceleration rates on. Spalding stated it won't be gradual and Saunders asked why. Spalding stated it is based on the running speed of vehicles. Roy Peterson stated the way it is normally done is using a formula using deceleration rates.

**Mark Weller** – from Winnett – stated he is a farmer that hauls many loads through that intersection. Why not just slow traffic down? Roy Peterson stated they do speed zone requests and investigations. People don't follow the signage.

**Angie Wright** – what is the annual maintenance and who is going to pay it? Kirk Spalding stated that MDT will maintain it and after it is established it will require little maintenance.

**Jenny Gessaman** – (Lewistown News Argus reported) – asked about the process used and if the public comments and questions tonight will have any impact. Director Tooley stated that they want people to understand what MDT plans to do. They want to hear the comments and questions in case they have an "aha" moment and find out something new. They feel they have it right.

Commissioner Seilstad invited those in attendance to identify themselves and to give comments after being recognized.

**Senator Mike Lang** – flashing lights that tell people how fast they are going typically slows them down. Roy Peterson commented they use those in areas such as schools and they help people know they are coming into a slower environment. Their use in an intersection like this isn't proven to do anything.

**Rick Vaughn** – (Fergus County Undersheriff) – was a study done after the rumble strips across the highways were installed? Kirk Spalding said something is needed to control the motorists and this does that.

**Motor Carriers Representative** – MDT needs to take into consideration the concerns of the motor carriers. This groups never heard anything about it until they read about this meeting. The process is flawed. They don't dislike all round-a-bouts, but don't feel this one is a good idea.

**Derree Kamp** – asked about the placement of the truck apron on the east side but not the west side. Kirk Spalding commented it is a big area and is just for megaloads.

**Gary Gershmel** - stated he is 80 years old and was raised in Winnett. He likes round-a-bouts, but this is a terrible place to waste this money. There have to be better places to spend money. The State has a tight budget and should be able to put this money to use in another place. This is rural Montana and we don't like round-a-bouts. We the people are paying the taxes so please listen.

**Representative Dan Bartel** – just looked at the sign in sheet and there are about 180 people here opposed to this round-a-bout.

**Delphine Finkbeiner**- stated she is from Grass Range and she doesn't like round-a-bouts. She said if you want to slow down traffic use a four-way stop. She doesn't feel there have been that many accidents.

**Ed Butcher** – he was the chief of the transportation committee in the Montana Senate. He said signage is the answer, not this. There are a lot of better places to spend this money. He is totally opposed to this and it is a total waste of money.

**Bill Harris** – he went to school in Grass Range and lives North of that intersection. He remembers when the intersection was built and the highway should ever have been built the way it was. The highways should have been brought together in separate areas. It would cost less to move one of these highways a little when joining the north/south road. He thinks this is a terrible waste of money and feels it is an experiment.

**Dean Martin** – he has hauled fuel to North Dakota and feels that a round-a-bout is ten times safer than what is there.

**Jenny Gessaman** – (Lewistown News Argus reporter) – did a story on this approximately last May and the projected cost was about \$2 million. She asked what it is now. Director Tooley said that was just the construction costs. The total cost is \$3.2 million. This is an expensive project but you have to consider the deaths. A lot of study went into this. Part of the money spent is going to paying wages. He said there are a lot of other areas that need work but this is the project that came to the top of the list.

**Senator Mike Lang** – (District 17) – doesn't think the MDT has listened enough. Megaloads were considered, but 80% of the constructions loads use it. He is here to represent the taxpayer. MDT made a bad decision. We as citizens need to watch better what is going on. Safety is a big concern, but human error comes into play. This state has a MDT Commission. "Free federal money" is the phrase being used. He disagrees with the cost and feasibility of this.

**Dolores Plumage** – (Blaine Co. Commissioner) – she wants Director Tooley and the MDT to hear Eastern Montana the way they hear Western Montana. We have things forced on us whereas Western Montana gets its way. We need other things first.

**Marilyn Olson** – lives east of the Divide – asked about the centerline rumble strips. Roy Peterson commented that Montana has a road departure problem. Long distances are traveled.

**Jeremy Farr** – is there a chance this won't happen? This is not the "fix-all" answer.

**Jim Pearson** – he has been a school bus driver for 22 years. There are a lot more crosses on the road from the Cheadle Hall to Shopko than there are in this area.

**Carl Seilstad** – There are five representatives present that will go back to Helena and discuss this.

**Jason Carlstrom** – safety is important. In six weeks there have been five crashes into the fence by Lewistown Rental on the truck route out of Lewistown. Commissioner Seilstad commented this is being addressed.

**Stefan Streeter** – the Divide Road is being studied.

**Tom St. John** – the center rumble strips are a hazard for motorcycles. They will cause accidents.

**Matt Burg** – have you studied other options or is the round-a-bout it? We need to save money and we want control of our government.

**Representative Dan Bartel** - (HD#29) – This round-a-bout is in his district. Due diligence was not done. Nobody in the Grass Range area wanted this. He even spoke to contractors and got their input. When the locals don't want something the State should listen. He has been inundated with statewide comments. Approximately 300 people have contacted him and they don't want this. Maintenance and snow removal is an issue. There was no legal announcement for this in the Lewistown News Argus. Many people didn't know.

**Larry Grinde** – In 2014 there was a meeting in Grass Range. Director Tooley commented that was the one meeting they had. Grinde stated "we didn't know about this." Is this going through no matter what? He asked for a "yes" or "no" answer but couldn't get one. Grinde asked why there were no meetings. Tooley stated they followed their process. Grinde told him they were wrong.

**Jennifer Saunders** – she stated she is in support of this. She was present at three of the four deaths. She told MDT that something has to be done. She saw a notice in the post office about the meeting is how she found out about it. She heard megaloads weren't accommodated but now knows they are.

**Becky Cushing** – she is on the Grass Range Ambulance crew. She was at all four deaths. All of these accidents were coming from the east and they were right angle crashes. Wrecks with a round-a-bout would be low impact, and while something needs to be done, a round-about may not be it.

**Larry Fulton** – (Malta) – travels this road a lot in passenger vehicles and trucks. Something needs to be done but this isn't it.

**Tom St. John** – we are told that we are already into this project \$700,000 and we can't stop now. This is wrong.

**Kevin Myhre** – we have heard a lot of feelings. Round-a-bouts do reduce the severity of accidents. Something must be done now.

**Mark Holman** – (Malta) – how many of these crashes involved semi's? He was told three (3).

**Jeremy Farr** – Why hasn't the speed limit been lowered before now?

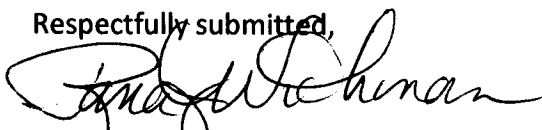
**Senator Ryan Osmundson** – appreciates everyone coming out for this meeting. There are five (5) people in this room that will vote on the budget. MDT doesn't do that.

**Representative Dan Bartel** – we are not saying something shouldn't be done. There are seven (7) different counties represented here that don't like this and want it looked into. Various people asked what the follow-up would be on this. Bartel commented he will try to make sure everyone is kept on top of this.

**Representative Dennis Lenz** – (Billings) – we have heard the term "free federal dollars" several times tonight. MDT needs to do a better job of communication and this may take some legislation.

Commissioner Seilstad thanked everyone for coming and stated that hopefully this will be reconsidered.

Respectfully submitted,



Rana J. Wichman

Fergus Co. Clerk & Recorder

# GRASS RANGE ROUND A BOUT

Grass Range, Mt

## Sign in Sheet

January 18, 2017, 7:00 pm 307 West Watson, Lewistown, Mt

Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
Shanna Blumbe	Shanna Blumbe	Lewistown	X	
Ralph T. Conner	Ralph T. Conner	Winnett		
Terry Gill	TERRY GILL	Lewistown	X	
Rod Nelson	Rod Nelson	Billings		X
Dorothy Kovacich	Dorothy Kovacich	Grass Range		
Dean Kovacich	Dean Kovacich	Grass Range		
Dolores Plumage	Dolores Plumage	Blaine Co. Chino	✓	
Richard Stahl	Richard Stahl	Grass Range	✓	
Jack Weller	Jack Weller	Winnett	X	
Deb Vlastelic	Deb Vlastelic	Lewistown/GR	X	
Sandra K. Youngbauer	Sandra K. Youngbauer	Lewistown	X	
Ross Butcher	Ross Butcher	Lewistown	X	
Ida Brinley	Ida Brinley	Lewistown	X	
Gordon Wentworth	Gordon Wentworth	Lewistown	X	
Jeremy Farr	Jeremy Farr	Lewistown	X	
Lloyd Rowton	Lloyd Rowton	Mosby	X	
Patti Bradley	Patti Bradley	Grass Range	X	
John Wehren	John Wehren	Grass Range	X	

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Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
<i>Kirk Spalding</i>	Kirk Spalding	Bozeman		
<i>Michael T Byrne</i>	Michael Byrne	Lewistown	X	
<i>Victor FARR</i>	Victor FARR	Lewistown	X	
<i>Nancy O'Reilly</i>	NANCY O'REILLY	WINNETT	X	
<i>Gary L Gershmel</i>	Gary L Gershmel	Winnett	X	
<i>Mark Welter</i>	Mark Welter	Winnett	X	
<i>Frank DePriest</i>	FRANK DePRIEST	Chenook	X	
<i>Mike Vlastelic</i>	Mike Vlastelic	Lewistown	X	
<i>Beverly Farr</i>	Beverly Farr	Lewistown	X	
<i>Harold Matovich</i>	Harold MATOVICH	Gross Range	X	
<i>Margie Matovich</i>	MARGIE MATOVICH	Gross Range	X	
<i>Paul McKenna</i>	Paul McKenna	Winnett	X	
<i>Ronald Pederson</i>	Ronald Pederson	Lewiston		X
<i>Evelyn Powell</i>	EVELYN POWELL	Gross Range	X	
<i>Trina Newton</i>	Trina Newton	Great Falls		
<i>Paul Gatzmeier</i>	PAUL GATZMEIER	Billings		
<i>Dennis Lenz</i>	Dennis Lenz	Billings	X	
<i>Russ Degner</i>	Russ Degner	Gross Range	X	

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Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
<i>Barb Skelton</i>	Barb Skelton	Billings -		
<i>Mike L Long</i>	Mike L Long	Mudde	X	
<i>Spark Selavy</i>	Spark Selavy	Helena	X	
<i>Robert D. Keller</i>	ROBERT D. KELLER	Lewistown	X	
<i>Kevin Myhas</i>	KEVIN MYHAS	Lewistown		X
<i>Devee Kamp</i>	Devee Kamp	Lewistown	X	
<i>Mike Tooley</i>	MDT	Helena		
<i>Roy Peterson</i>	MDT	Helena		
<i>Tommy L. Billing</i>	Tommy L. Billing	Jordan	X	
<i>Bill Harris</i>	Bill Harris	Mosby	X	
<i>Bruce Williams</i>	Bruce Williams	Lewistown	X	
<i>Mark Holman</i>	Mark Holman	Malta Mt.	X	
<i>Jennifer Saunders</i>	Jennifer Saunders	Grass Range MT		X
<i>Mike McKeyolds</i>	Mike McKeyolds	Hilger, MT	X	
<i>Gloria J Isom</i>	Gloria J Isom	Lewistown	X	
<i>Cody Isom</i>	Cody Isom	Winifred, mt	X	
<i>Lloyd Carter</i>	Lloyd Carter	Lewistown	X	
<i>Steve Walter</i>	Steve Walter	Lewistown	X	

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Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
<i>Phyllis D Smith</i>	Phyllis D. Smith	Lewistown		
<i>Ryan Osmundson</i>	Ryan Osmundson	Buffalo	✓	
<i>Blair Northey</i>	<i>Blair</i>	Montana City		
<i>Jerry Collier</i>	Jerry Collins	Cohagen Mt	✓	
<i>Stefan Stouker</i>	<i>Stefan</i>	Billings		✓
<i>Nadine Robertson</i>	Nadine Robertson	LEWISTOWN		✓
<i>Larry Boulton</i>	Larry Boulton	MALTA	✓	
<i>John Carahan</i>	John Carahan	Malta		
<i>Leda McReynolds</i>	Leda McReynolds	Hilger	✓	
<i>Richard Dunbar</i>	Richard Dunbar	MALTA	✓	
<i>Ralph Willmore</i>	Ralph Willmore	Ray	✓	
<i>Jenny Gessaman</i>	Jenny Gessaman	Lewistown (Newspaper)		
<i>Bill Stall</i>	BILL STALL	Grass Range	✓	
<i>Becky Cushing</i>	Becky Cushing	Grass Range	✓	
<i>Ed Butcher</i>	<i>Ed Butcher</i>	Winifred	X	
<i>Trevos Butcher</i>	<i>Trevos Butcher</i>	Winifred	X	
<i>Jim Pearson</i>	Jim Pearson	Lewistown	X	
<i>Lethia Olson</i>	Lethia Olson	Lewistown	X	



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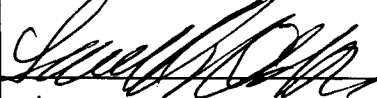
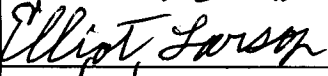

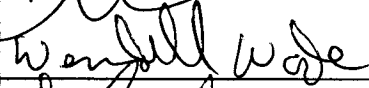


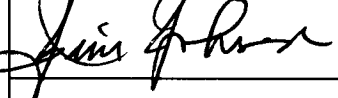
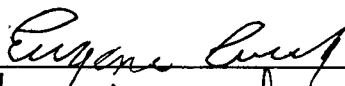
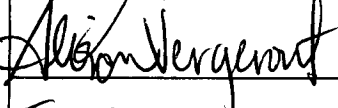
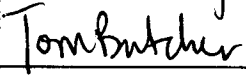

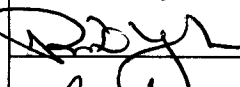
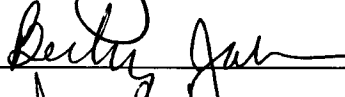
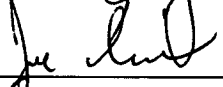
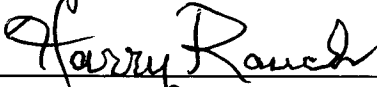

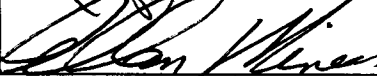
Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
<i>Andy</i>	Andy Mincks	Grass Range	-	
<del>Gary Matouch</del>	Gary Matouch	G. R.	-	
<i>Sam Holmes</i>	Sam Holmes	G-R	✓	
<del>Tom Berry</del>	TOM BERRY	ROUNDUP	X	
GRINOE		LEWISTOWN	X	
Cald Meg Frank	Cald Meg Frank	Buffalo	X	
<del>Delphina Finkbeiner</del>	Delphina Finkbeiner Grass Range	Grass Range	✓	
Connie Sue Larson	Connie Sue Larson	Lewistown	X	
Gary P. Batta	Gary P. Batta	Lewistown	X	
Paul Jensen	Paul Jensen	Lewistown	X	
Tom St. John	Tom St. John	Lewistown	X	
Jason Carlson	JASON CARLSON	LEWISTOWN	<del>X</del>	
Doug Autzel	DOUG AUTZEL	Lewistown	X	
Larry Bergstrom	Larry Bergstrom	lewistown	X	
Harland Rowas	Harland Rowas	Lewistown	✓	
Debra Hill	Debra Hill	lewistown	X	
Matt Burg	MATT BURG	Lewistown	X	
Angie Wright	Angie Wright	Lewistown	X	

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Signature	Printed name	City	Against	For
	David Bartel	Lewistown	X	
	Lowell Olson	Lewistown	X	
	ELLIOT LARSON	LEWISTOWN	X	
	Jennifer Jensen	Lewistown	X	
	Wendell Wade	Lewistown	X	
	Linda Gerleman	Lewistown	X	
	Micki Johnson	Lewistown	X	
	Jim Johnson	Lewistown	X	
	Eugene Coward	Lewistown	X	
	Alison Vergerant	Great Falls		
	Tom Butcher	Lewistown	X	
	JOE Zakler	Lewist. <sup>KKLO</sup> <sup>KLCK</sup>		
	Rick Vaughn	Freight County Undersheiff	X	
	Becky Jackson	Lewistown	X	
	Joe Irish	Lewistown	X	
	Harry Rauch	Lewistown	X	
	Marilyn Olson	Lewistown		
	ALLAN L. WINFAR	Lewistown	X	



