

COUNTY OF RAVALLI



August 7, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support: PROTECTing Montana's Bridges (14 Bridges Impacted by Flooding) Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Ravalli County, I am writing to express our support of the Montana Department of Transportation's (MDT) Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant application for the PROTECTing Montana's Bridges project.

Ravalli County owns and maintains over 100 bridges. The bridge over Bear Creek on Meridian Road provides an alternate route in the event that highway traffic needs to be rerouted around US Highway 93. The bridge was constructed in 1935 and is narrow and has less than desirable alignment at its approaches. There have been several crashes at the bridge over the last couple of years. The bridge has also been added on to over the years in addition to fixing scouring issues under the footings.

The PROTECTing Montana's Bridges project will replace 14 bridges across the state that have been impacted by flooding or scour issues. Due to the location of these bridges, failure would be catastrophic and immediate, cutting off efficient and safe access to communities, for commerce and the traveling public. In recent summers, Montana has experienced a number of failures due to flooding with dramatic impacts not limited to the location but that were felt throughout the region and state. MDT and our communities understand that actively protecting infrastructure to ensure continuity of public services will increase our competitive advantage across the socioeconomic, built, and natural environments as climate change makes a progressively greater impact on the state and region.

Without this award, these bridge replacements will be delayed well into the future, as current funding is limited and is already obligated to other critical bridge projects/needs. Although MDT will serve as the applicant for this PROTECT application, Ravalli County is a co-applicant and will be actively engaged with MDT in the project development and implementation.

On behalf of the community and traveling public of Montana, I thank you for your consideration of this important project and look forward to its swift completion.

Respectfully,

Dan Huls, Chairman