

Memorandum

Technical Advisory Committee
P. O. Box 5021
Great Falls, Montana 59403
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Date: October 4, 2013
To: Great Falls Technical Coordinating Committee Members
From: Andrew Finch, Senior Transportation Planner
Re: Notice of New Urban Transportation Funding Amounts

Every 10 years, after each US Census, the Montana Department of Transportation recalculates the distribution formulae for allocation of Urban System transportation funds to the various Urban Areas in Montana. The Funds are used to maintain and improve roadways on the “Urban” system within each Urban Area.

To understand the routes that are eligible for this category of Federal transportation funds, the map on “Attachment A” shows the Urban Routes. Montana Code defines the Urban Highway System as:

“the highways and streets that are in and near incorporated cities with populations of over 5,000 and within urban boundaries established by the department, that have been functionally classified as either urban arterials or collectors, and that have been selected by the commission, in cooperation with local government authorities, to be placed on the urban highway system.”

Locally, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) identify projects for use of Urban funds on Urban Routes.

Great Falls has grown since the 2000 Census, but not as much as some other Urban Areas in Montana. Also, one additional Urban Area was added in 2010 (Sidney). The Urban program is a State program, mandated through State law. Until the most recent Legislative session, the State made funds available to all Urban Areas with cities with a population of 5,000 or more. In 2013, some small cities were unwilling to expand to meet that threshold but still wanted to receive Urban Funding - therefore, the law was changed to redefine “Urban Area” as areas with an urban population concentration, but not require a central city of any size. This added three more Urban Areas - Columbia Falls, Hamilton and Glendive. The new apportionment states:

60-3-211. Apportionment of state funds to urban highway system. (1) Each fiscal year, the department shall apportion the federal-aid highway funds allocated for the urban highway system to the urban areas in the state as delineated and reported in the latest federal census with populations of 5,000 or more in the ratio of urban population in each urban area to the total urban population in all urban areas in the state.

(2) For the purpose of this section, "urban population" is defined as population within the urban area, as reported in the latest federal census, with a population of 5,000 or more and that population within the adjusted and federal highway administration-approved fringe areas based on the latest federal census.

To offset the impacts of the 2013 Legislative action, which would have further diluted the funding distributions, the Montana Department of Transportation staff will propose to the Montana Transportation Commission that funds from a State air quality improvement program that is used to improve air quality in areas with particulate matter deficiencies. This reduction will not affect the Great Falls area, as we are not in violation of particulate matter standards, and do not qualify for this funding source.

To understand how the changes affect each Urban Area, a table is attached. The far right group of columns shows the funding due to the 2010 Census and the 2013 Legislative action. The center group of columns show the changes due only to 2010 Census changes. This center group is the funding level the MDT staff is recommending be approved by the Transportation Commission at its October 31 meeting.

SUMMARY

Because of the addition of Sidney to the total Urban Population figure, and because the Great Falls Urban Area has not grown as much as other areas, our share of the State's Urban Population changed from 15.68% to 13.22% (or 12.66%, with the addition of the three new areas).

If the Transportation Commission approves the additional funds, the Great Falls Urban Area will annually receive **\$265,400 less** than it currently receives - or, \$1,428,200 instead of \$1,693,600. This is the largest decrease of any urban area.

IMPACT

The next project to be funded with Urban Funds is a reconstruction of Fox Farm Road, beginning at the current City Limits south to Dick Road. This project is just entering the initial design phase, so a date of construction has not yet been set. However, a five-year timeframe for project development and construction is a reasonable estimate at this point in time. The reduced Urban allocation is expected to delay the project by a year or more, unless a "borrow" of future funds can be arranged with the State.

If you have any questions on this topic, please feel free to call at 455-8434, or by e-mail at afinch@greatfallsmt.net.

Attach: Urban Area Allocations table
 Federal-Aid System - Great Falls