

## COMMON INTERESTS, FACT-BASED, ACTION ORIENTED

**INTRODUCTION:** The Madison Valley Coalition is a newly-formed, non-partisan, non profit, group of landowners, residents- full & part-time, businesses, working ranches and legal resources assembled to efficiently create solutions, communicate and act upon important issues affecting the broader Madison Valley. With its presence in the Madison Valley in Montana and representation in Washington D.C., the goal of the Coalition 's solutions will, ideally, span the interests of everyone and will be proposed and acted upon at the local, county, state and federal levels.

**ISSUE #1:** The commercial trucking situation in the Madison Valley is one of the Coalition's first focus issues. A concise, **5-Point Solution**, inter-dependent proposal is also presented that we think is an equitable and sensible plan for commercial trucking and the citizens and businesses in southwestern Montana.

**ACTION:** Work with local, state & federal agencies on this plan

1. Open United States Highway 191 to commercial through trucking. Re-establish more routes available to the large number of trucks traveling north & east.
2. Place into operation, and regularly staff, a permanent weigh station in the southern Madison Corridor. Valley View in Island Park is a location being discussed & costs would be shared with Idaho.
3. Create vehicle restrictions in critical wildlife corridors in the Madison Valley. Lower speed limits.
4. Close Montana Route 84 to through commercial trucking. Petition being developed for circulation.
5. Create and begin the execution of a plan to move all through HAZMAT traffic to Interstate 15.

**ISSUE #2:** Replacement of the Blaine Spring Creek Bridge & the Varney Bridge

**FACTS:** The road from HWY 287 at Cameron across the 2 bridges is a seasonal road & has been used in that manner for decades. No houses are located on the road from the bridges to Hwy 287. No one disputes the advanced age of the bridges or their need for attention. A west side bypass of Ennis has been seriously considered with freeway type, high speed concrete bridge replacements to handle the weight loads of long-haul trucking.

Additionally, MT State Secondary Route 294, (Varney Road to Cameron) is described as an essential emergency road during extreme weather for first responders from Ennis. The facts are that no first responders from Ennis could possibly decrease their time to an emergency on Hwy 287 by traveling across the Madison via the Blaine Spring Creek & Varney bridges, especially in inclement weather.

It is common knowledge to all who live in the Madison Valley that the Madison River is subject to Winter River gorging on a fairly regular basis which totally freezes the river & causes the water to overflow & freeze across the adjacent



meadows & run into the Blaine Spring Creek. The entire area is a large floodplain, from McAtee Bridge (south) to the Ennis Lake (north). When this spectacular winter condition occurs, the road in between the bridges is **inaccessible** to any vehicles. In addition to the gorge, the road is highly susceptible to snow drifts which also make it **impassible** on an even more frequent basis. It is debatable that Madison County road crews will have this route on top of their priority list for plowing when there are so many more essential miles of roads that need their attention every winter.

**ACTION:**

- 1 To make the bridges **SAFE** for seasonal use by ranchers, hay trucks & cattle drives, sportsmen, vacationers, RV, residents & any emergency vehicles needed.
- 2 Replace the bridges with **REPLICA**, steel truss design & maintain the bridges without undo damage to the conservation corridor or excessive road work.
- 3 Stop the waste of Ten Million dollars on superstructure bridges & the related road work that will be subject to creating a bypass for traffic around Ennis. Only 4 million is needed to replace both bridges.
- 4 Support the effort to implement **the 5- Point Solution** for long-haul trucking to mitigate the heavy truck traffic & disperse it over many roads.

**ACTION YOU CAN TAKE:** **Speak Up: Write, email &/or call or fax** the following people & make your concerns known. Request that public hearings be held. Keep alert for public meetings held on this discussion & attend them & participate in the conversation. Keep copies of your correspondence & notes on any conversations you have & to whom you talked to. Contact us at: [madisoncoalition@yahoo.com](mailto:madisoncoalition@yahoo.com) & visit our website: [www.madisonvalleycoalition.com](http://www.madisonvalleycoalition.com) for information & updates. We welcome your support & contribution of time, energy & opinion.

We have provided a sample letter as a guideline. Please feel free to copy or use any parts that may agree with your thinking on these issues.

Join the Madison Valley Coalition. Go to our website & join our email list to be kept up to date. Everyone is welcome.

**These are issues that profoundly affect each & every one of us!** Together we can make sure the Madison Valley is preserved in a manner that attracted all of us here in the first place. It does not matter whether you are a resident, seasonal, visiting, vacationing, in or out of state, however you landed in the Madison Valley, your opinion counts! **It is all about you!**

Thank you!



(Sample Letter)

We are writing as twenty-two year, voting, and taxpaying residents of the Madison Valley. In those years, we have witnessed many changes, both positive & negative to the entire Madison corridor. Fortunately, many of the good changes have enhanced the character, rural purity, natural beauty and lifestyle that attracted us and a majority of people, ranchers, residents, businesses & sportsmen to the Madison Valley in the first place.

Right at the top of detrimental changes is the 1990 legislation by Congress that re-routes HAZMAT trucks to HWY 287 due to restrictions of traveling through Yellowstone National Park on US-191. The subsequent closure to long-haul trucking on US-191 for the past year due to road construction has additionally re-routed 600 plus, trucks per day down the Madison Corridor in addition to the HAZMAT trucks traveling on HWY-287. This issue has reached critical mass.

We are writing to you to emphasize our overwhelming support of the Madison Valley Coalition & the common-interest, fact-based & action-oriented "5 Point Solution" as proposed by David Cope to the Madison Valley Commissioner's meeting on Feb. 16, 2010, in Virginia City.

This "5 Point Solution" is the first emotion free, logical, common sense, fair and easily implemented proposal that has been put forth for consideration on this hot-bed issue.

Furthermore, the "5 Point Solution" offers City, State, and Federal Officials a chance to make some positive changes and restore some confidence of the voting public in elected officials who work for them and that they actually listen and care about what the public wants to have happen.

- 1. Re-open United States Highway 191 to commercial through trucking – by July 1, 2010**
- 2. Place into operation, and regularly staff, a permanent weigh station in the southern Madison Corridor.(Valley View,Idaho)**
- 3. Create vehicle and commercial truck restrictions (e.g. speed) in critical wildlife corridors in the Madison Valley**
- 4. Close Montana Route 84 (Norris to Four Corners) to through commercial trucking – permanently**
- 5. Create, and begin the execution of a plan to move all HAZMAT traffic to Interstate 15**

In regard to the Varney and Blaine Spring Creek Bridges, not many would argue that they have been neglected for many years and are in need of repair/replacement. As you well know, this particular area is widely used by ranchers, residents, sportsmen, fishermen, guides, businesses, vacationers, and tourists among many others. The entire area, east and west side of the river, above and below the bridges are surrounded by critical riparian areas (recently restored) as well as important historical (carbon- dated, 4,000 year old Sandhill Crane nesting sites)(Varney history – 1865-1897), cultural & rural characteristics that are unequaled anywhere else along the Madison Corridor.



The HPP Funding request currently sitting on Rep. Denny Rehberg’s desk for 10 million dollars should be considered blatant pork and a waste of taxpayer dollars.(NOTE: THIS FUNDING REQUEST HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY WITHDRAWN) It is ludicrous to fund another “Bridge to Nowhere” as in Alaska & has become the poster-child for wasteful spending. I cannot believe any elected official would want to have a “Bridge to Nowhere” in their resume. In addition, we are adamantly opposed to high-speed, maximum load bridges and a west-side bypass of Ennis.

4 million is the reasonable, cost effective, replica bridge, estimated replacement cost for both bridges. The design needs to be steel truss, not concrete superstructure, high speed, culvert or any other designs that do not minimize collateral damage to riparian areas, the Madison River, Blaine Spring Creek, along with minimum adjacent road work to make them accessible. This entire section of the Madison River is subject to winter gorging on a regular basis, making it impassable for extended lengths of time.

In closing, we urge you to put the bridges on a high priority list for county/state funding in concert with the work of the Madison Valley Coalition for the best possible outcome for the entire Madison Valley and to support the “5 Point Solution” which is fair to residents and truckers alike.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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**CONTACT LIST: Note: The same letter can be sent to multiple contacts. Also, phone calls are excellent as well.**

Governor Brian Schweitzer : PO Box 200801, Helena, MT. 59620-0801 406-444-3111 Fax: 406-444-5529

Jim Lynch – Director, MDOT: PO Box 201001, Helena, MT. 59620-1001 406-444-6201 [jilynch@mt.gov](mailto:jilynch@mt.gov)

Kent Barnes – Bridge Bureau Chief, MDOT: 406-444-6260 [kbarnes@mt.gov](mailto:kbarnes@mt.gov)

Jeff Ebert – Butte District Administrator MDOT: PO Box 3068, Butte, MT. 59702-3068 406-494-9625 [jebert@mt.gov](mailto:jebert@mt.gov)

Debby Barrett – MT Senate: 18580 MT Hwy 324, Dillon, MT 59725 406-681-3177 [gtr3177@smtel.com](mailto:gtr3177@smtel.com)

Bob Wagner – MT Representative: PO Box 191, Harrison, MT. 59735-0191 406-287-5343

**Madison County Commissioners:** PO Box 287, Virginia City, MT. 59755-0287 406-843-4277 Fax: 406-843-5517

Jim Hart – District 3 cell: 406-444-6201 [madco@madison.gov](mailto:madco@madison.gov)

**Town of Ennis** – Mayor-John Clark & Commissioner Pat Clancy – Chairman 406-682-4287 Fax:406-682-5011

PO Box 147, Ennis, MT. 59729-0147