

## **Two things: 1) Request for Immediate Action & 2) Brief Update**

### **Action REQUIRED NOW**

One of the Five Points in the Coalition's plan was to provide a weigh station in southern Montana. Of all of the southwestern Montana commercial truck routes, only the Madison Corridor has no permanent, regularly staffed truck enforcement. This is exacerbated by the fact that between the choices of US HWY 191 and the Madison Corridor, all of the hazardous material cargo travels through the Madison Valley and both the Snake River and Missouri (Madison, Gallatin) watersheds. After great input, this request for a weigh station has evolved with the support of the Montana Department of Transportation and recently with the support of the Idaho Department of Transportation to evolve into a Port of Entry rather than a simple weigh station.

The Port of Entry is targeted to be located near Valley View Idaho just to the south of the junction of HWY 20 and HWY 87. It would be shared resource of both Montana and Idaho and be designed to provide tourist education, inspection for non-native plants and animals (for example noxious weeds, zebra mussels, whirling disease etc.) along with providing commercial truck enforcement for safety, cargo and the like. This project would provide huge benefits to the Madison Valley, the Gallatin Valley, Island Park and the greater Yellowstone region.

**Another note...** because this project would largely eliminate the need for the roaming weigh station at Cameron, it would cut down on local commerce trucking such as outfitters, construction etc. from being inspected over and over again.

It is estimated that this project will cost about \$3M. The project will create construction, operations and maintenance **jobs**. The Madison Valley Coalition has been working with Senators Baucus and Tester to request an appropriation attached to the renewal of the highway bill.

Our latest feedback is that our request is looking good. The new bill is being worked on **NOW**. At the end of this email, you will see a letter sent to the Senators reiterating our request.

It's critical that they hear from you **NOW**.

Below is a list with contact information. If you support this Port of Entry, we need you to **CALL, WRITE, AND/OR EMAIL ASAP**.

Information can be obtained from the letters attached but it would be good to let them know:

- 1) Your support
- 2) Who you are – resident, landowner, concerned tourist, association etc.
- 3) Why you care.

This does take a little work. At a minimum, you could forward the attached letter. **PLEASE TRY TO SEND RIGHT LETTER TO RIGHT SENATOR**. It is, however, best if you could let them know how you feel and your support. You'll be amazed as to how important this is.

## Contact Information

Senator Max Baucus  
511 Hart Senate Bldg  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
202-224-2651  
[max@baucus.senate.gov](mailto:max@baucus.senate.gov)

Senator Jon Tester  
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Madison County Commissioners  
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406-444-6201  
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MT Dept of Transportation  
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406-444-6201

Idaho Department of Transportation

Allan Frew  
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Boise, ID. 83701  
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## Update

With your help and involvement, the Madison Valley Coalition, residents, landowners, the Madison County and other organizations have been able to work effectively at both the state and federal levels to begin to roll-out a multi-point plan to naturally reduce commercial truck traffic through the Madison Valley. The Coalition's plan, despite much discussion was and is about freedom for commercial trucks to use available routes with special consideration made for safety and wildlife interactions.

Two of the Coalition's goals in its Five-Point Plan (see below) were to ensure the re-opening of commercial truck traffic on HWY 191 and to restrict commercial trucks on MT Route 84 between Norris and Four Corners.

### Opening US HWY 191

Despite a great deal of debate otherwise, there was an active move to exercise a legal process that exists to not allow commercial, through trucks back on HWY 191. With your letters and input along with an open dialog with state Department of Transportation officials, US HWY 191 re-opened to commercial trucks and the diversion signs related to this closer were removed towards the end of July. Allowing trucks to use this route, enable them to use the shortest, most fuel-efficient route based on many origins/destinations and spreads the trucking load out across more roadways.

Today, by many accounts and based on the day, time etc. commercial trucks have been estimated to have been reduced by 50-70%. Actual sensor readings are being crunched. More later on this. Thanks again to many of you and associations/foundations for speaking up.

## **Regulating MT Route 84**

This short little segment of roadway has also become a favorite short-cut for commercial truck to connect from HWY 287 to I 90. Regulating through commercial trucking on this segment has broad support from the Bozeman areas as well as the Madison. The segment of MT Route 84 between Norris and Four Corners has been a scene of many vehicle accidents, many involving over-turned commercial trucks. This roadway is narrow, winding and follows crucial waterways such as the Madison, the Gallatin, Cherry Creek, Hot Creek, etc. and is an active recreational area with campers, fishermen and rafters. Also, because, the Madison corridor currently supports most of the HAZMAT traffic through this area of southwestern Montana, a spill in the area could be an environmental and economic disaster. Permanently restricting this roadway involves a legal/public process. It can be done while still allowing for farming/ranching operations, fuel deliveries etc. –Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

Through a working relationship with the state, the Coalition was able to get temporary restriction for “through commercial trucks”. While there are currently no electronic sensors, I think you'll agree that trucks on this route have been dramatically reduced. This is also encouraging because it was done on a voluntary basis and did not include local deliveries. More work is in process to finalize these restrictions. Staying on HWY 287 is a fine choice and the risks associated with commercial trucks taking the 84 short-cut FAR outweigh the few miles saved.

### **The Madison Valley Coalition's Five-Point Plan**

1. Provided Unfettered Access to Commercial Through **Trucking on US 191**
2. Place and Regularly Staff Permanent **Weigh Station (Now Port of Entry)** on the South End of Madison County (Now Valley View, Idaho)
3. Create Vehicle **Restrictions** e.g. Speed Through **Critical Wildlife Crossing Corridors**
4. Create Plan to **Move HAZMAT** Trucking to Interstate 15
5. **Restrict Use of Commercial Trucks on MT Route 84**

**Letter:**

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The Capitol Hill Office Building, Suite One  
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Larry Meyers- Executive Director D.C. - 202-484-2773

Montana Office  
The Madison Valley Coalition  
P.O. Box 991  
Ennis, Montana, 59729-0991  
David Cope - 406-600-3508

Honorable Max Baucus  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Port of Entry Transportation Appropriations Request

The purpose of this letter is to reinforce support for the \$3M Highway Appropriations request by the Madison Valley Coalition for a Port of Entry in southwestern Montana. With endorsements from the Madison Valley community, the Madison County Government, the Montana Department of Transportation, Trout Unlimited, the Madison River Foundation etc., the Port of Entry could be near the Montana/Idaho border or, ideally, located at or near Valley View Idaho (near HWY 87 & HWY 20 with existing property and a year-round fuel and convenience store facility –see picture), the Port of Entry would be an example of a strong cooperative relationship between the states of Montana and Idaho and would provide benefits important to areas that include Island Park/Snake River drainage, the Madison Valley, the Gallatin Valley and the greater Yellowstone region.

Increased trade across states and between countries, such as Canada and Mexico, coupled with growth in population and tourism has increased vehicle traffic significantly in and through southwestern Montana. Made up of both commercial and non-commercial vehicles, unmanaged, this increase in vehicle traffic can create a variety of challenges that include road safety incidents, HAZMAT spills, vehicle/wildlife interactions, the importation and infestation of non-native plant and animal species; all having an adverse impact on Montana's communities, physical roadways, natural resources and an economy which in turn is largely dependent on Montana's natural resources such as its rivers, lakes and wildlife.

— Important attributes of the Port of Entry would include:

- 1) Tourist information
- 2) Education and enforcement of restrictions related to the transmission of infectious species (e.g. Zebra Mussels, whirling disease) and noxious weeds etc.
- 3) Commercial transportation inspection and regulatory compliance regarding weight, cargo

(e.g. HAZMAT), equipment maintenance and driver safety and importation of the aforementioned infectious (non-native plant and animal) species and noxious weeds.  
The Madison Valley Coalition

— The benefits of constructing and operating such a Port of Entry would include:

1) Savings and prevention that will easily exceed construction, staffing and maintenance costs.

a. Reduce the financial impact and costs associated with the proliferation and required remediation of infectious species and noxious weeds in Montana, Idaho and the greater Yellowstone region.

i. Montana farmers and ranchers spend ~\$100M / year controlling weeds

ii. It is estimated that Knapweed alone costs Montana more than \$42M / year in lost tourism – equal to about 500 jobs

iii. Weed infestation can reduce land carrying capacity and related value by 50-60%

2) The creation of jobs to build, operate and maintain the Port of Entry

3) Support a responsible increase in tourist traffic and related revenues to Idaho and Montana

4) Maximize investments in local, state and federal roadway integrity by regulating commercial vehicle weights thus increasing repair intervals.

5) Enhance safety of people, property and natural resources

a. Preserve vital economies dependent of the balance between support for the commercial transportation of goods along with the preservation of critical waterways and watersheds utilized by communities, agriculture and recreation.

— The area proposed for the Port of Entry has a number of important attributes which include:

1) Strategic location

a. Provides a unique, single area that can provide benefits to a number of important regions that include Island Park, the Madison and Gallatin Valley and Yellowstone.

b. Spans and is adjacent to many critical watersheds and water ways needed to support wildlife, agriculture, communities and local economies e.g. Snake river, Missouri River watershed, the Madison River, the Gallatin River

c. If located at Valley View, ID. The area currently functions, year-round, as a commercial truck and traveler stop.

2) Located in area recently experiencing significant vehicle traffic growth

a. With an increase in fuel prices and desire for commercial trucking to save time and miles, southwestern Montana's routes affected by this Port of Entry (HWY 20, 87, 287, 191) have seen a significant increase in commercial trucking

3) Located in an area that can help address the exposure of HAZMAT material transportation through critical areas.

The Madison Valley Coalition

a. Due to legislative change, HAZMAT is no longer allowed on HWY 191 adjacent to Yellowstone Park. Because of this change, the majority of HAZMAT traffic crossing southwestern Montana now travels through Island Park Idaho, along the Henry's Fork of the Snake River, through the Madison Valley, along the Madison River and crossing the Gallatin River before joining Interstate 90. This latter route is unique in that it has no permanently constructed and regularly staffed commercial transportation enforcement/weigh station.

4) Eliminates the need for less efficient portable "weigh stations" and staffing

a. Reduces un-needed interaction with repetitive local trucking associated with ranching, construction, outfitting and the like.

5) Creates a natural regulatory point to encourage a comparable, balanced distribution of commercial transportation across available routes so as not to adversely disadvantage any particular corridor through the unique absence of regularly staffed enforcement.

The Madison Valley Coalition along with other supporting working ranches such as the Granger Ranch, the Alton Ranch, the Tailfeather Ranch, associations such as Trout Unlimited, government

bodies such as Madison County (passed a unanimous resolution supporting the Madison Valley Coalition's plan and related requests) and the Montana Department of Transportation, business owners and residents respectfully request that you include this Port of Entry funding in the upcoming transportation reauthorization bill which we understand is currently being drafted.

If you have any further questions or comments please contact the Madison Valley Coalition at 406-600-3508.

David Cope

The Madison Valley Coalition