MONTANA WILDLIFE AND TRANSPORTATION

STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Notes

October 2, 2019

PURPOSE: To get to know each other, develop a basic organizational structure for the Steering Committee, and provide direction for the Planning and Implementation Team

OBJECTIVES:

- Create a purpose and need statement for the Steering Committee, and draft a basic charter
- Understand the Summit Commitments and progress to date
- Outline an approach to addressing the Summit Recommendations

ATTENDEES:

- Steering Committee (SC)- Stephanie Adams (MSWP); Lynn Zanto (MDT); Paul Sihler (FWP); Mike Tooley (MDT); Kylie Paul (MSWP); Ken McDonald (FWP)
- Agency Staff- Charlie Sperry (FWP); Bill Semmens (MDT); Tom Martin (MDT)
- Planning and Implementation Team (PIT Crew)- Deb Wambach (MDT); Hannah Jaicks (MSWP); Renee Lemon (FWP); Nick Clarke (MSWP); Laramie Maxwell (MSWP – via phone)

ACTION ITEMS:

- PIT Crew cleans up meeting notes, SC reviews notes, and MDT posts meeting notes on website.
- PIT Crew works with SC to schedule next SC meeting.
- PIT Crew drafts purpose and need statement and charter and sends to SC for review before November 28, 2019.
- PIT Crew drafts a workplan template focusing on Themes 4, 5, and 6, and sends to SC for review by November 28, 2019.

AGENDA:

1. **INTRODUCTION**
    a. Introductory Questions:
        i. When you think about wildlife and transportation what do you care about most?
            - Ken: Minimizing impacts on wildlife populations and human drivers from wildlife-vehicle collisions
            - Kylie: Doing the best that we can and taking the most effective steps possible to reduce wildlife mortality, improve habitat and human safety.
            - Mike: Protection of life – both people and wildlife.
            - Paul: Human safety and ecological connections/functions.
            - Lynn: Human and animal safety.
            - Stephanie: Identify how can we creatively and effectively use limited resources to make sure roads are not a barrier to wildlife nor a safety threat to people and wildlife.

ii. What do you bring to the Steering Committee that will contribute to the success of this effort?
    - Ken: Interest in the topic as well as oversight of the wildlife division, can help elevate the issues amongst wildlife staff spread across the state.
    - Kylie: Extensive background from previous and current jobs and master's thesis in wildlife highway mitigation issues. Understands the science as well as possesses a knowledge of the opportunities and challenges of implementing mitigation. Brings experience in advocacy, policy and a big picture understanding.
    - Mike: Decision-making ability. Broad perspective through his position and experience on the roadside (28+ years investigating crashes with MHP).
    - Paul: Ability to speak for the whole agency and represent the goals and mission of the agency.
    - Lynn: Recognizes responsibility from within the agency around human and wildlife safety, and policy opportunity under the goals and mission of her division (Planning, including Environmental) and the agency at large.
    - Stephanie: Ability to advocate and engage on political and ecological issues. The organizations that make up MSWP can engage millions of members and help with messaging locally, regionally, and nationally.

b. Background: Deb presented on how the Summit came to be, details of the Summit, and Summit objectives and outcomes, which is described in the Summit Final Report (www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/mwt/). One of the recommendations that came out of the Summit was the creation of the Steering Committee. The role of the Steering Committee is to consider recommendations resulting from the Summit (outlined in the Summit Final Report), make decisions regarding actions moving forward, and direct all work under the Summit themes.

2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE STEERING COMMITTEE

a. SC members responded to this question: Over the next year, what do you think the Steering Committee should accomplish? Individual responses are included below.
b. SC members were asked additional questions about their tasks to get to the deeper purpose or reasoning behind the tasks. For example, why is the SC the right entity to work on these tasks? Here is a list of ideas they generated:
    - Takes leaders to set goals
    - MDT and FWP involvement bring resources, ability to implement, and staff expertise
    - Need local government involvement
    - Showing organization presence and commitment to communication, relationships, and changing mindsets
    - Being on the same page, coordinate, avoid conflicting work, cross-purposes, and duplication
    - MDT can't identify ecological priorities, FWP can't identify safety priorities, and the NGOs can't act without that information
    - Collaboratively identify measures of success (accountability)

- Develop shared language and understanding at all levels of staff (higher-level and other levels of staff)
- The SC can identify barriers and the NGOs can help or facilitate addressing those barriers
- Identify resources, information, and knowledge from each organization
- Institutionalize relationships at all levels of staff (field staff too) – make it durable
- Principles that reflect diversity of values – finding areas of agreement within this diversity
- Strategic direction on communication and outreach so that MSWP, MDT, and FWP are saying the same thing

c. Individual Responses:
   - Stephanie: Set clear goals and provide direction and guidance to move forward. If we're going to build upon Summit momentum as a group, we need to set those goals, commitments, and deadlines. Agencies have the power to help move those things forward, and SC has that power to guide this work. Agencies and NGOs have the resources, staff, and decision-making power if this SC can provide direction.
   - Lynn: Land use decisions are a big factor that push wildlife into highways. Who in local government should be involved here, and how can we engage them? Improve communication. Communication = idea sharing = collaborative agreement. The SC can help by showing our presence and commitment to the effort.
   - Paul: Provide a place for key players in wildlife and transportation to understand the needs and issues and coordinate actions to address them. There is strength in these three groups being on the same page, especially if we want to achieve action. MDT on its own cannot identify where connection issues are for wildlife. FWP on its own cannot identify where safety issues are for people. There's shared interdependency there. NGOs can't act without that combined information. There's too much work to get done to be competing or working at cross purposes.
   - Mike: Define how we will measure success and define the barriers to success. It's not necessarily that the SC does the measuring, but that we decide what should be measured. We need to help the PIT Crew find a way to measure and implement these elements. This will help us gauge our impact more effectively, and we want to ensure that we're meeting our goals. The SC should pass on what's important to us (e.g., reducing human lives lost as a result of collisions, effectiveness of structures, cost-benefit analysis). Lynn and Paul agreed that it's important for the SC to identify what needs to be measured. If we work collaboratively across agencies and NGOs and come to a common place, that will have a greater impact and potential for effecting change.
   - Kylie: The SC has a higher-level perspective with its membership. This allows the SC to sort out the barriers to undertaking these efforts that we agree on (e.g., local government, statutory issues). This SC also puts to rest any misperceptions that agencies and NGOs are at odds at higher levels, and SC members can share

those collaborative understandings at staff levels. The SC should come up with a shared language and understanding of opportunities and challenges. Making sure that there is shared language and understanding of the issues at this level is key. Agency and NGO leaders can set the tone, agree on common language, and shared understanding that will then be brought back to respective organizations and be disseminated.

- Stephanie: Not only should we be identifying and understanding barriers, but also identifying things that we can do to creatively work around those barriers. For example, NGOs can think of creative fundraising alternatives to help overcome some of the limitations and challenges that agencies face in implementing wildlife projects.
- Paul: Another barrier is local support. We don't want to get all the way through a project only to realize there's not been local support. Mike agreed that the SC can help people understand what we're doing and why.
- Ken: Institutionalize working relationships between entities, so that when people leave (e.g., administration changes) the structures are still in place. Also, identify and assign more formal data collection protocols. Paul reflected that it's often said that policy should change, but really, it's the relationships and a broad base of support with agreement on key principles that can last through different administrations. These key principles should reflect society's diverse values and tie the benefits to these values.
- Stephanie: Since the Summit, has there been any agency or cultural shift in people starting to think about wildlife and transportation issues? Mike said yes. Paul noted that FWP staff have a better understanding of what MDT can do and how FWP staff can help. Ken explained he's seeing improved relationships at every level and that these relationships are helping FWP staff feel that their input is valuable. This has opened up opportunities for more collaboration. Kylie noted that finding ways for NGOs to meaningfully engage through these relationships is also important.

3. DRAFT A BASIC CHARTER FOR THE STEERING COMMITTEE

a. The SC reviewed the list of charter topics and added a topic related to how to review, revise, and amend the charter. This section should include a time frame for evaluation.
b. Input on each of the charter topics:
    - Define the scope and authority
        - Geographic scope
            - Transportation – highways under MDT's jurisdiction
            - Wildlife – all species, take an ecological approach
        - Authority
            - MDT – MCA Title 60, USC 23 CFR
            - FWP – MCA Title 87
    - Outline membership, roles, and responsibilities
        - Membership includes two representatives from each of MSWP, MDT, and FWP

- Members should be higher level staff
- Do not define terms, but discuss when members leave – review membership and charter every 3 years
- There is an expectation that members attend each meeting or assign a proxy. One to two proxies for each entity should be identified ahead of time to ensure consistency (i.e., not a new proxy every meeting)
- SC is small enough that individual roles do not need to be assigned (e.g., chair)
- The role of the PIT Crew is to continue to facilitate meetings and take notes, draft work items, etc.

- Describe communication preferences
  - Meeting minutes can be posted on the website
  - Meeting agendas will be provided on the website at least three days before the meeting. Public can attend the meetings.
  - Communication between meetings among the SC and PIT Crew can be through emails and phone calls.
  - Allow two weeks for the SC to review and provide input on drafts
  - Media relations
    - If there is a need to speak as the SC, all members must agree to what is being said. Any time an SC Member refers to something related to the Committee or a project we're jointly working on, it needs to be agreed upon by the entire Committee. Otherwise, continue to speak as respective groups, but consider how what is being said might affect your partnerships.
    - There is a need to develop consistent key points and connect the public information officers from each organization
- Estimate time frames, meeting schedules, and time commitments
  - The SC can meet four times for the first year (quarterly) and then re-evaluate. Four hour-meetings are fine in the beginning, or less as needed based on agenda.
- Determine method for decision making
  - Decisions will be based on consensus or if necessary, the majority vote of the members present at a meeting, with the assumption that proxy will be allowed to vote. For decisions that require agency/organizational review (to be determined as they arise), the group can agree to give sufficient time for SC Members to review those decisions with their respective agencies/organizations and return to the group with a final decision.
- Identify needed resources to support the SC
  - Needed resources do not need to be specified in the charter but can be identified and dedicated as the work plan evolves and as needed.
- Explain how the SC will monitor, evaluate, and communicate progress
  - The SC will monitor and evaluate progress using the work plan, which can be communicated through the website.
- Describe the process for reviewing, revising, and amending the charter

- The review period for the charter is every three years to allow for consistency through changing administrations
- Provide opportunity to review membership to ensure that members are participating according to the charter and to determine need for additional members

4. SUMMIT COMMITMENTS AND UPDATES

a. Agency Memorandum of Agreement - Renee and Deb described a plan to tackle to MOA, which includes researching MOAs from other states, putting together a list of potential topics, getting input from agency staff on the content, drafting a MOA, high level and director review, and review by the SC. They hope to have a draft before the SC by the next meeting in January.

b. Website (www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/mwt) - Provides the Summit Report and SC information. This will also be a space for data sharing on wildlife and transportation issues. To put something on the website, go through Deb Wambach and Bill Semmens.

c. MDT & FWP Biennial Meetings - Every other year is the best timeline because of the pace at which projects move through design and construction. There could be an opportunity to expand the topics and participants.

d. MDT's Wildlife Accommodation Process - It's an internal MDT business process specific to projects that are in the works. Trying to get at two things: 1) wildlife needs and 2) feasibility analysis (formalizes the evaluation of whether or not recommendations are feasible for inclusion in that project). Aims to get at more consistency in wildlife accommodation approach as well as increase transparency. It was suggested that MDT give a presentation on the WAP at another time.

e. Media and Communications - Articles about the Summit have appeared in various media outlets (E.g., Montana Outdoors, Explore Big Sky, The Missoulian, Helena Independent Record). The PIT Crew noted the need for a shared communication plan. Paul updated the group on a communication plan effort related to wildlife migration that is being led by Heart of the Rockies. They should be aware of the messaging that we're doing, and vice versa.

f. Citizen Science - Adventure Scientists has launched the Montana Wildlife Connectivity Project where cyclists capture wildlife roadkill as well as live animal observations on Montana highways. Andrew Jakes with the National Wildlife Federation is working on the Pronghorn Xing App, which is based upon Roadwatch BC. It is also designed to capture wildlife data. Deb shared that there was much discussion about citizen science at the recent International Conference On Ecology and Transportation. There is not a need to reinvent the wheel. There is a strong movement to establish national standards and protocol for what kind of data is essential to road ecology and what sort of data is useful. For now, Montana considers citizen science as "value-added" information to other data sources and stresses that it is a good way to engage the public in the topic, spread awareness and buy-in in wildlife and transportation considerations.

5. SUMMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

a. The SC brainstormed & discussed how they want to approach the recommendations:
   i. Use the SC's purpose statement to prioritize work on the recommendations.
   ii. Kylie asked if SC should focus on legislation (**Theme 3**) because there are current opportunities with the newly proposed federal transportation funding bill.
      - Mike and Lynn explained that their preference would be that federal funding provide more money with flexibility to let states decide how to spend it.
      - The group discussed that Montana's efforts to work on wildlife and transportation efforts are already occurring and do not require legislation.
   iii. Developing common terminology among the stakeholders should be a priority.
      - NGOs can help with this to build the public narrative once common messaging & direction is given.
   iv. Ken suggested a work group to focus on **Theme 4** (Priorities, Data Collection, and Information Sharing).
      - Key targets to identify: What is the purpose of the data? What do we have? What do we need? How much is enough to make good decisions?
      - This theme is less nebulous, and it is easier to identify tangible, concrete tasks. If we identify gaps, then we can form work group(s) to identify ways for people to fill them by establishing partnerships to do so, or other creative solutions to address opportunities.
      - This should be done prior to any prioritization process that we would take at the statewide level.
      - Each action item listed under this theme should have a report back. For example, with the Wildlife Accommodation Process, we could report on how may were done, how many did FWP comment on, and what were the results.
      - The first work group that could be formed could be a Data Synthesis Group. The SC could then use those data to inform how we define and measure success.
      - Stephanie asked about the purpose of data collection.
         - Lynn responded that it would show what data is available, identify redundancies and gaps, and help the group think about the data needed to make good decisions.
      - Key question to consider: What data is needed to make decisions about wildlife and transportation?
   v. There is a need for transparency and opportunities for the public to engage.
      - This speaks to Ken's point about **Theme 4** and the importance of identifying what information agencies and NGOs have and where the gaps/opportunities are.
      - People want to engage and see how progress is being made, and understanding priorities, data needs, and information sharing opportunities will enable SC to engage the public.
      - Having a common terminology and the NGOs helping to build the public narrative through a communications strategy will support this effort.

vi. Lynn recommended a developing a workplan that describes what the SC will work on in the next year.
    - Important to keep the work plan focused and not let it get too big.
    - **Theme 2A**: Planning is a way to start to focus this effort.
vii. Stephanie asked if there is a need for a working group focused on funding (**Theme 6**).
    - For example, the work group could research what other states have done and identify funding sources. The NGOs could help build a public narrative on needs, threats, etc.
    - She also suggested leaving space in the work plan for unanticipated work.
    - Stephanie suggested that completing the prioritization may help Montana be more competitive for federal funding, particularly as grant programs are being established.
    - Key point made by MDT: With long-term maintenance and long-term monitoring needs, we need funding beyond just capital investment. Part of the funding picture has to include long-term operations: monitoring and maintenance. Essential if you want to continue in the future.
viii. Mike listed recommendations **4A, 4C, 4E, 5B, and 6** as priorities.
    - Kylie asked about working on recommendations simultaneously. Mike noted that is important, but capacity is an issue.
ix. Ken described the work plan as needing to be achievable.
    - At the end of the year, the work plan should have enough specificity to show what we accomplished. There should be feasible, specific tasks. The MOA seems to be low hanging fruit (**1B**).
    - Someone suggested assigning work tasks per quarter.
    - Tom Martin noted that MDT could do their part to accomplish recommendations **1B and 4A.**
    - The role of the SC members is to allocate staff to work groups. Having a work plan and seeing the tasks will help them make decisions regarding capacity. At the next meeting, they can talk more about work groups.

<u>Summary:</u>

-Important to allow for flexibility in SC work-

- Identify what is important now, the types of staff time and resources that will be needed, and other key components to ensure its longevity and long-term effectiveness (beyond any single Administration).

-Don't be too big-

- The SC should stay focused and flexible in order to make stepwise progress. As we work through how to approach the above discussion, it will become obvious that some things need to be done in advance of others, while other efforts can happen congruently.

-Important to develop an annual workplan with measures of success-

- Perhaps quarterly assignments to do so.

-Primary recommendations discussed-**1B, 2A, 4A, 4C, 4E, 5B, and 6**.

- Consider possible work groups for Data, Funding, and Communication.

NEXT STEPS

- PIT Crew cleans up meeting notes, SC reviews notes, and MDT posts meeting notes on website.
- PIT Crew works with SC to schedule next SC meeting.
- PIT Crew drafts purpose and need statement and charter, and sends to SC for review before November 28, 2019.
- PIT Crew drafts a workplan template focusing on Themes 4, 5, and 6, and sends to SC for review by November 28, 2019.