MONTANA WILDLIFE AND TRANSPORTATION

STEERING COMMITTEE
Meeting Notes
February 10, 2021

PURPOSE: To finalize the 2021 workplan and discuss ways to update the new administration on wildlife and transportation efforts in Montana

Objectives:

- Finalize the 2021 workplan
- Identify ways to share information about the steering committee's work with the new directors and administration
- Learn about the Data and Information Work Group's progress, updates to the communications white paper, and status of the funding white paper

ATTENDEES:

- Steering Committee (Committee): Kevin Christensen (MDT), Tom Martin (MDT), Ken McDonald (FWP), Charlie Sperry (FWP), Kylie Paul (MSWP), Brooke Shifrin (MSWP Proxy)
- Agency Staff: Bill Semmens (MDT)
- Planning and Implementation Team (PIT Crew): Deb Wambach (MDT), Renee Lemon (FWP), Hannah Jaicks (MSWP), Nick Clarke (MSWP), Laramie Maxwell (MSWP)

AGENDA:

1. **Introduction:**
    a. New members Kevin Christensen (MDT) and Tom Martin (MDT) introduced themselves.
    b. Bill Semmens was designated as a Tom's proxy. Kevin still needs to designate a proxy.

2. **2020 Reflection / 2021 Direction**
    a. **Accomplishments to date**
        - Summit Final Report
        - MOA between the MDT and FWP
        - Ongoing relationship building within the Steering Committee and the Data and Information Working Group
        - 2020 workplan was successful as the majority of items were accomplished
    b. **Upcoming highlights**
        - Data and Information Working Group product
    c. **Suggested improvements-thoughts:**
        - Longer meetings with the focus on one or two topics rather than three or more items. Current packed agendas have caused the group to leave some agenda items undecided/unfished due to time/complexity.
        - Desire to spend the time and focus required on each item and work to conclusion/decision.
        - Steering Committee committed to being more responsive to emails and other requests between meetings.
        - Strike the balance between on-the-groundwork getting done and progressing effectively by slowing down and making decisions deliberately to make work 'fast' in the future; function purposefully; exercise patience.

- May need to meet more frequently to accomplish specific tasks, more than 4 times a year.

3. **Workplan**
    a. **Status of the workplan**
        - This draft plan was presented at the November 2020 meeting and has not yet received approval.
        - Following the initial presentation of the work plan, Kylie and Brooke proposed changes in Track Changes and emailed to the group. That version is discussed here today.
    b. **Proposed MSWP edits and discussion of the Committee**
        - There was an overall desire to simplify the workplan and take a more stepwise approach to each of the Action items. Focus on realistic schedule and logical progression more so than priority number.
        - There was discussion about the timing of certain actions relative to other actions. Can some things happen concurrently, do some things need to be initiated or completed before other things can begin?
        - The agencies expressed concern about capacity and the ability to work on all these items at once.
        - There was some agreement in the desire to see a work product from the D&I group prior to moving forward. This would help to understand the criteria (needs, implementation), how much resources and capacity are required and where they can be allocated and inform the development of guidance for use of the tool and decision making on priority projects.
        - The steering committee needs to explore and inform the relationship between the statewide effort and local groups already underway in some locations.
    - Summit Recommendation 4A, Work Plan Action 7: **proposed text change was accepted.**
        - There was a discussion of the timeline of this element. It was noted the timing of this issue is highly dependent on when the Data and Information Working Group (D&I) gets a draft mapping tool product completed.
    - Summit Recommendation 4B, Work Plan Action 9:
        - Discussion revolved around consideration of how the D&I mapping tool will be used once completed.
        - While the mapping tool will have a lot of information about areas of greatest need in the state, there is other criteria that needs to be considered for project implementation (land protection, community support, etc.) Discussion of some of these elements may be in order to ultimately move projects forward more readily once the mapping tool is complete.
        - There were concerns about moving the timeline up for this action. Members were keen to see a draft product before having discussion about *how* to use the mapping tool and how projects will ultimately be chosen.

- It is hoped that the D&I group will have a draft product of some kind to share with the steering committee at the May meeting. **A definitive conclusion was not reached on this action.**

- Summit Recommendation 5A and 5B, Work Plan Action 8:
  - There is some need to communicate with the public and stakeholders in a meaningful way about this effort and how best engage.
  - There was some concern that talking points change, messaging may not be the same over time. It may be too early to have a collaborative communications plan on this subject.
  - There may be some elements that could be communicated to the public: status of the steering committee work to date; how to work in concert with the steering committee, logistics of project implementation, etc.
  - Use of a communications consultant would take pressure off of the PIT crew for these communications efforts. The steering committee needs to explore what they need to communicate, why communication is important, who is the audience, what are the goals and objectives of the communication?
- Summit Recommendation 6A and 6B, Work Plan Action 10:
  - Make this action specific to the funding white paper at this point. Need to keep in mind this is a living document and will need to be updated. MSWP is willing to lend support to this.
  - Suggested there could be two versions, one more complex and robust for internal use and a simplified version for public distribution.
  - MDT intends to provide comments to the whitepaper by the May meeting.
  - **The task will be revised to specify finalization of the whitepaper. Other funding items related to Action 10 will be moved to subsequent tasks.**
- Summit Recommendation C and 6D, Work Plan Action 11:
  - There is a need to develop mechanisms for agency acceptance of private funding for wildlife accommodation projects. MDT noted that funding is a complex issue, and they must be in a place where they can leverage funding from grants or donations, and this needs to be communicated to the public.
  - A suggestion to roll the Identification of the funding asks and needs into this action item was made.
  - **No conclusion was reached regarding this proposed action.**
- Summit Recommendations 2A, 4B, 5B, 6C, Action 12:
  - An example was provided regarding a local group in Missoula region and how that group might interface with this body.
  - It is, perhaps, not realistic for this body to take on a pilot project at this time considering meeting schedule, current capacity, and stage of development of statewide efforts/guidance.
  - The steering committee discussed the possibility of identifying some roles and relationships between the statewide effort and local, community-led effort.
  - **No conclusion was reached regarding this proposed action.**

4. **New Administration:** Each organization will provide an update on coordination with the new administration (e.g., new directors).
    a. Is there anything the steering committee can do to familiarize the new directors and administration with wildlife and transportation efforts in Montana?
    b. Next steps
        - PIT Crew should discuss this with their respective Steering Committee members after this meeting to determine next steps for this group to do outreach together.
        - Steering committee will coordinate on a collaborative approach to bring the new administration up to speed on their work.

5. **Updates: These did not take place due to lack of time**
    a. Data and Information Work Group
    b. Communications White Paper
    c. Funding White Paper

6. **Review and Close**

ACTION ITEMS

- The PIT Crew will provide a revised draft of the 2021 workplan based on the steering committee discussion and direction to simplify the tasks.
    - Steering Committee will finalize work plan via email

- The PIT crew will work with each respective entity to develop a collaborative approach for jointly updating the new directors and governor's office on the Steering Committee's efforts.

- The PIT Crew will ask the Data and Information Work Group about their timeline and when they will have meaningful progress to share with the Steering Committee.