MONTANA
Department of Transportation

Director Christopher Dorrington

August 31, 2026

Chairman Russ Tempel
PO Box 131
Chester, MT 59522

Dear Chairman Tempel,

We have an issue of great concern to me – the availability and amount of state funding to both match the federal program and perform the necessary transportation system operations and maintenance. We are turning away available federal transportation funds.

This is the first time in my 43 years of involvement with MDT that we have turned away August redistribution funds from federal highways. Redistribution is a bonus for Montana, creating an ability to use federal money other states could not. For decades we have taken pride in the ability to deliver projects that take advantage of that opportunity.

Even though it may be a logical and safe move by the department to preserve state revenue for critical operations; the elimination of $40 million of projects is impactful to our state. It is a shame to lose the opportunity of additional funding that has an 87% federal - 13% state match, when our highway and bridge repair needs are so large.

I am concerned about the future of our state transportation system. We have an ageing infrastructure in which the need for repairs is outpacing our revenue. We need every penny we can spare for our transportation system. There are many bridges approaching 100 years in age that need replacing. A predicted funding shortfall in mid-2028 paints a bleak picture and needs to be addressed.

The 2017 state fuel tax increase was forecasted to be sufficient for ten years. It has shown to be challenging for the last couple of years and appears to be falling short at the end. This is frustrating when we have accomplished so much since 2017 by finding innovative ways of stretching our funding with project strategies that included pavement rehabilitations, recycling materials, bridge preservation, and reconstructions, coupled with state-of-the-art maintenance practices. This history of investment with state-of-practice, well-planned, well-timed, well-funded solutions to maximize the investment must continue. Prosperity for Montana's citizens, visitors, and commerce relies on a well-built, well-maintained transportation system.

State revenues and the emotional politics of taxes are a complex beast and pose a challenge to tame. We have a serious issue regarding funding for our bridges and roads. Turning back available funds for an underfunded transportation program has serious

Loran Frazier, Chair, Great Falls
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Transportation Commission

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consequences. I appreciate your attention to this issue and hope for all of you to develop a solution that properly funds our state's transportation system.

Respectfully,

Loran Frazier
Chairman, Montana Transportation Commission

Copies:
Governor Greg Gianforte
Chairman Jerry Schillinger

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