

Kalispell Bypass Receives Federal Funds to Expand Foys Section to Four Lanes

Project will also replace Foys roundabout with overpass interchange

BY MYERS REECE // DEC 7, 2018

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Thanks to a \$12.75 million federal grant announced yesterday, a roughly two-mile section of the southern Kalispell bypass will be expanded to a four-lane highway while removing the Foys roundabout.

The city of Kalispell was the lead agency in an application submitted earlier this year to receive federal BUILD — previously called TIGER — funds to complete the section's full build-out, bringing it up to speed with the four-lane northern section.

U.S. Sens. Steve Daines and Jon Tester, who advocated for the funding along with Rep. Greg Gianforte, released statements on Thursday announcing that the project has been awarded \$12.75 in BUILD money.



The project is estimated to cost \$20 million total. The remainder of the money will come from the Montana Department

of Transportation's (MDT) annual National Highway System allocation, according to MDT district administrator Ed Toavs.

"We're very excited about this," Toavs said of the grant announcement. "It's a great thing. It's a good Christmas present."

Toavs hopes to have the design-build contract locked down by next summer and begin construction after that. The project would be completed by the end of 2020, with the possibility of cleanup work extending into 2021.

The project will convert a stretch of the bypass from the Ashley Creek bridge to just north of the Airport Road roundabout into four lanes. It will also remove the Foys roundabout and replace it with an overpass interchange, meaning motorists on Foys Lake Road will travel over the bypass.

The city of Kalispell and MDT have a long list of local partners and supporters buoying the project, including Flathead County, the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce and an array of other chambers of commerce and organizations representing tourism and economic development.

Kalispell Mayor Mark Johnson, Kalispell Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Joe Unterreiner, Flathead County Commissioner Pam Holmquist and Republican state Sen. Mark Blasdel all released statements in response to the BUILD grant announcement, praising the project's impact on the Flathead Valley.

“This is an incredible step for the Flathead Valley in its growth and a tremendous example of collaborative effort and leadership,” Blasdel said, citing Daines, Tester and Gianforte, as well as “state agencies, local legislators, county and city government, and local business groups such as the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce.”

Daines and Tester also trumpeted the benefits of the project.

“From driving to work every day to welcoming visitors at Glacier National Park, this infrastructure is critical to Montana's economy and jobs,” Daines said in his statement, which also announced that the Missouri River Crossing Project near Toston will receive \$10 million in BUILD funds.

“The Kalispell bypass is building new opportunities for local businesses to create jobs and strengthen the economy,” Tester said. “For every dollar we invest in our transportation infrastructure we see major returns and Kalispell's leaders deserve big praise for their relentless push to secure this major grant.”

Although the bypass, also known as the U.S. Highway 93 Alternate Route, opened to traffic in October 2016, only the northern portion is complete with four lanes and overpass interchanges. The BUILD funding brings the bypass one step closer to full build-out, leaving only the remaining southern tip with two lanes and roundabouts.

Toavs said the MDT is under contract with a consultant to conduct design work for the southern section, which includes the Airport Road and Siderius roundabouts, and purchase remaining right-of-ways, with that process expected to get underway in January.

Johnson, Kalispell's mayor, said the bypass project will add to an already busy period of revitalization in Kalispell.

“Couple this with the TIGER grant we received to redevelop the core area of Kalispell,” Johnson said, “and we are well positioned to grow into the future and improve the lives of those who live in our community.”

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Anthony Hirsch

The City and all involved like MDOT, private sector, etc. all deserve a large Hats Off on this effort. A benefit to everyone who drives this booming Kalispell area.

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