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Way for trail, new rail customers in Montana

By Justin Franz | October 10, 2018

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KALISPELL, Mont. — Officials in Montana hope that a recently completed rail-served industrial park will lead to increased freight traffic and pave the way for building a new rail trail through the heart of Kalispell, a town of 22,000 people in the northwest corner of the state.

On Monday, federal, state, and local officials, along with representatives of Watco Cos.' Mission Mountain Railroad and BNSF Railway, celebrated the completion of the 44-acre, \$12.2-million Glacier Rail Park. The event featured the ceremonial driving of 10 golden spikes and the display of the original silver spike that was driven in January 1892 when the Great Northern Railway first arrived in Kalispell.

For more than a decade, city and business leaders have wanted to redevelop the land along the former Great Northern Railway Kalispell Branch through downtown, which today is operated by the Mission Mountain. The tracks are still owned by BNSF. In 2015, the city received a \$10 million grant from the federal government to begin construction of a new rail park that will eventually be home to two rail-served businesses currently located near downtown Kalispell: a grain elevator and a drywall



Kalispell, Mont., and railroad officials hammer in final "golden" spikes to celebrate the completion of a rail-served industrial park.

Justin Franz

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also features a team track, meaning more businesses will have access to rail service and there is at least 7 acres of land that is ready for industrial development.

“This project will transform Kalispell,” says U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, who was instrumental in helping secure the government grant.

While construction of the rail park was wrapped up, including the construction of a new rail yard, roads, water, and sewer services, work continues on building the new grain elevator and drywall warehouse.

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