RESOLUTION 2025 - 116

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF A MONTANA COAL ENDOWMENT PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING GRANT

WHEREAS, Lewis & Clark County is applying to the Montana Department of Commerce for financial assistance from the Montana Coal Endowment Program (MCEP) for a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for Birdtail Road/Flat Creek Bridge;

WHEREAS, Lewis & Clark County agrees to comply with all State laws and regulations and the requirements described in the *MCEP Administrative Guidelines & Application for Infrastructure Planning Grants,* specifically, and those that will be described in the *MCEP Project Administration Manual* generally;

WHEREAS, Lewis & Clark County commits to providing the amount of matching funds as proposed in the MCEP application;

WHEREAS, Lewis & Clark County commits to providing any funding from other grant sources listed in the application budget if not awarded by those grant sources; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Candace Payne, Commission Chair, is authorized to submit this application to the Montana Department of Commerce, on behalf of Lewis & Clark County, to act on its behalf and to provide such additional information as may be required.

DATED this 4 day of November 2025

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Candace Payne, Chair

ATTEST:

Amy Reeves, Clerk of the Board

3443020 B: M64 P: 7681 COUNTY
11/04/2025 12:26 PM Pages: 1 of 13 Fees: 0.00
Amy Reeves Clerk & Recorder, Lewis & Clark MT

THE SEAL OF LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY • STATE OF MONTANA

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
MCEP INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

AUTHORIZING STATEMENT

I hereby declare that the information included in, and all attachments to, this application is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I further declare that, on behalf of **Lewis and Clark County**, I am legally authorized to enter into an agreement with the Montana Department of Commerce if an MCEP grant is awarded.

1) I further declare that if an MCEP grant is awarded, and if that grant is to be used to prepare a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), then the PER will follow the format that meets the requirements of the *Uniform Preliminary Engineering Report for Montana Public Facility Projects* outline and will include a completed environmental checklist.
2) If the grant is to be used to prepare a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), it must be comprehensive and in accordance with criteria acceptable to Commerce.

I understand that Commerce will only review the final PER in an attempt to ensure that the information presented in the PER meets the basic requirements of the *Uniform Preliminary Engineering Report for Montana Public Facility Projects* outline and that Commerce will not certify the quality of the PER. I further understand that the review and approval of the content of the PER by Commerce does not guarantee that a subsequent application to MCEP for a construction project would result in the maximum number of points being assigned in the scoring of the engineering problem or design during the MCEP ranking process.

Name (printed): Candace Payne

Title (printed): Commissioner Chair

Signature: _____ **Date:** 11-4-25

APPLICANT INFORMATION SUMMARY

1. **Name of Applicant:** Lewis and Clark County
2. **Mailing Address:** 3402 Cooney Drive, Helena, MT 59602 (Public Works Department)
3. **Type of Governmental Entity:** County
4. **Federal Tax ID Number:** 81-6001383

CONTACT INFORMATION SUMMARY

CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL/AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE:

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Commissioner Chair
(Title)

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PROJECT ENGINEER/ARCHITECT (if applicable):

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(Title)

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(Email)

GRANT/LOAN ADMINISTRATOR (if applicable):

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LEGAL COUNSEL/ATTORNEY:

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CLERK/CONTRACT ATTESTER:

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Treasurer/Clerk and Recorder
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PROJECT PROPOSAL DETAILS

Type of Grant Applied For (check one):

X Bridge Preliminary Engineering Report (PER).

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) eligibility (check as many as apply):

X The proposed planning project is meant to address growth primarily.

Proposed Budget:

	SOURCE: *MCEP PL Grant*	SOURCE: *Lewis and Clark Co.*	**TOTAL**
Professional Services	**$30,000**	**$8,000**	**$38,000**

Detailed Budget Narrative:

The following estimates to develop the Bridge PER are based on anticipated staffing: one Engineer 5, one Engineer 4, one Engineer 1, an Ecologist (Environmental), and a GIS Specialist working on various tasks. The average Hourly rate for each activity varies based on the combination of staff involved, but for planning purposes, a rate of $180 per hour was used. This rate also includes travel and expenses.

- Bridge Inventory and Evaluations (44 hours)
  - Kickoff meeting with County
  - Compiling bridge inventory list and working with County to identify bridge inspection needs.
  - Review of previous inspection reports and update of bridge inventory
  - Bridge Inspections of selected bridge(s)
  - Development of a priority list for bridge replacements and repairs
  - **$8,000**

- Bridge PER (167 hours)
  - Prepare a preliminary engineering report (PER) for the Birdtail Road Bridge over Flat Creek
  - Background research and compiling County Data for PER document.
  - Conducting a geotechnical analysis of the soils in the Birdtail Road Bridge project area if budget allows.
  - Preparing PER meeting MCEP requirements
  - Review of draft PER and public hearings
  - Environmental Documentation
  - Finalize PER and hold a public hearing to accept PER.
  - **$30,000**

Total Estimated Cost of Project: $38,000

Proposed Implementation Schedule:

Estimated Start Date of Infrastructure Planning Activities: November 17, 2025

Estimated Completion Date of Infrastructure Planning Activities: May 1, 2026

A detailed project implementation schedule is Exhibit 1 of this application.

Proposed Planning Activity Description and History:

The proposed planning project is to prepare a Bridge Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for Lewis and Clark County. The County will prepare the PER following the Montana Department of Commerce's Preliminary Engineering Report Outline for Bridge Projects. A copy of the outline is available at https://comdev.mt.gov/_shared/CTAP/docs/Presentations-Publications-Models/Tech-Doc-Guides/PER-Outline-Bridges.pdf.

The proposed scope of work/work plan is summarized in the budget narrative on the following page. However, one of the first actions taken by the Lewis and Clark County Public Works Department will be to host a kick-off meeting. The meeting will aim to identify specific areas of concern, review past reports, and develop goals and objectives for the project.

The Bridge PER will act as a budgeting and financial tool for the County to plan and budget for a project to replace the Birdtail Road Bridge over Flat Creek, which is restricted to single light-passenger vehicles only. On November 1, 2024, the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners ordered that loads be limited to single light-passenger vehicles following an inspection by the Montana Department of Transportation, which showed evidence that loads exceeding the 5-ton weight limit had crossed the bridge, raising safety concerns.

By identifying priorities and funding mechanisms for replacing the bridge, the County can better protect public safety and restore a bridge that serves several ranches. Since the closure, ranchers, propane suppliers, and other vendors have had to use a 50-mile detour to deliver cattle, hay, propane, and other essential goods and services. The Bridge PER will include the following elements:

- Inventory and evaluation of existing bridge.
    - History of the bridge
    - Location of the bridge
    - Physical characteristics of the project area, including a geotechnical analysis of the site.
    - Floodway issues (if applicable)
    - Condition of the bridge
    - Identify current use and expected changes in the functional use of the bridge
    - Utility issues
    - Routing options
    - Growth and population trends
    - Identify needed improvements.
    - Impact on public and emergency services
- Determine and identify projected revenues for improvements/maintenance.
- Develop a project priority list.
- Develop an implementation plan for improvements; and
- Identify potential funding sources for implementation.

The Bridge PER will help the County identify options for restoring the vital Birdtail Road transportation corridor, evaluate needs, provide scope definition and public input, and include cost estimates with financial planning and funding strategies. Ultimately, this planning process will help ensure the County is positioned to:

- Protect public safety and preserve and improve the quality of its bridge inventory through careful planning, maintenance, rehabilitation, and construction.
- Maximize the useful life of its bridge inventory by scheduling major renovation, rehabilitation, or replacement at the appropriate time in each bridge's lifecycle.
- Identify and examine current and future infrastructure needs and establish priorities among projects so available resources are used to the County's best advantage; and
- Improve bridge capital improvement planning and budgeting by balancing needs and resources and identifying potential fiscal implications.

MCEP Infrastructure Planning Grant Award Criteria:

1. Public Health and Safety—Is the proposed planning activity intended to address an urgent threat to public health and safety or to enable local governments to meet state or federal health or safety standards?

   ☒ Yes—if "yes" provide documentation of the violation or warning from the appropriate agency (e.g., MDEQ, EPA, etc.) and relevant standard that is being or is at threat of being violated.

   ☐ No

   Birdtail Road/Flat Creek Bridge is situated about 4 miles north of U.S. Highway 287. There is no all-weather detour around the bridge, which means that traffic from single-light passenger vehicles must find alternative routes—potentially adding up to 50 miles to a trip—and causing significant delays for emergency vehicles. Montana counties are legally required (7-14-2201 MCA Maintenance and Control of Bridges) to maintain public bridges, except those managed by the Montana Department of Transportation. The bridge inventory will serve as a planning and budgeting tool for the county to prioritize its bridge infrastructure needs and allocate funds accordingly, reducing the risk of compliance issues and safety hazards.

2. Financial Need—Are your water/wastewater user rates currently above or below the state's target rate? (Commerce assumes higher user rates reflect higher financial need; as the basis for calculating target rates, use the Target Rate calculation Resource on the Department of Commerce Community MT website, https://comdev.mt.gov/Resources/Target-Rate).

   ☐ Above target rate

   ☐ At the target rate

   ☐ Below target rate

   ☒ Not Applicable - **Lewis and Clark County does not own or operate a drinking water or wastewater system.**

Due to its rapidly growing and aging population, basic infrastructure repair and maintenance pose a major challenge for Lewis and Clark County. The bridge inventory will update the most recent inventory and CIP to include any work that has been completed, while also reprioritizing and planning for needed improvements. This inventory will give the County a clear outline of the most critical repair and replacement needs and help the County budget accordingly.

3. Community Change—How much has the population of the service area for the proposed planning activity changed (grown or decreased) annually between 2010 and 2023, according to the US Census (use the tool provided by Commerce here: https://ceic.mt.gov/People-and-Housing/Population)?

   ☒ Change of 10% or greater

   ☐ Change between 4-10%

   ☐ Change between 0 and 4%

   Optional—Additional information regarding community change (e.g., changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, new industries or economic developments, increased/high population of second homeowners):

The population of Lewis and Clark County grew by 17.7% from 2010 to 2023, increasing from 61,643 to 72,580.

4. Economic Impact—will the proposed planning activity result in the retention of existing full-time jobs, the creation of full-time employment, or stimulate some form of economic development that increases the tax base?

   ☐ Retention of existing full-time jobs—approximately how many?_____

   ☐ Creation of new full-time jobs—approximately how many? _____

   ☐ The estimated increase in the tax base resulting from the completion of the proposed infrastructure improvement:

A bridge PER does not typically create or retain long-term employment or existing full-time jobs. However, it enables a community to plan for and develop the infrastructure that the private sector needs to create and sustain jobs. The bridge PER will allow the County to optimize its resources by leveraging state and federal funding opportunities to replace the Birdtail Bridge and, in doing so, restore the crucial Birdtail Road transportation corridor for Lewis and Clark County's farm and ranch industry.

5. Best Long-Term Value—provide a brief explanation (less than 500 words) of why the proposed planning activity represents the best long-term value for the applicant, residents/users, and the people of Montana. Include a brief description of the following:

   ☒ How the proposed planning activity aligns with previous planning efforts.

   ☒ How it was prioritized among the applicant's planning priorities.

   ☒ Describe any citizen input and support for the proposed planning activity.

☒ And the activities will occur (including the process to procure an engineer) and products produced.

The project will prepare a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to replace the Birdtail Road/Flat Creek Bridge on Birdtail Road. It will also update the 2024 County-wide Bridge Evaluation and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The updated CIP will reflect any replacements or repairs conducted since 2024 and account for the accelerated deterioration of some structures in the County. The overall purpose of this inventory is to catalogue and evaluate the condition of the County's bridges to provide guidance for ongoing maintenance as well as future bridge repair/replacement projects.

An initial bridge inventory and bridge CIP were completed nearly two decades ago. Since then, the County has replaced or rebuilt over fifty bridges. The 95 bridges that Lewis and Clark County is responsible for are located throughout four County Road Districts: Helena, Wolf Creek, Augusta, and Lincoln. Lewis and Clark County has a progressive bridge maintenance program and has been proactive at maintaining, repairing, and replacing bridges as needed to be fiscally responsible and protect public safety.

A MCEP Planning Grant will enable Lewis and Clark County to continue their bridge maintenance program by updating the bridge inventory and reprioritizing the county's bridge needs. The grant will be used to prepare a bridge PER that will be the basis for funding applications to help finance the replacement of the Birdtail Road Bridge, which is its most critical concern.

In many ways, a bridge PER is a CIP. The Department of Commerce lists twenty-two (22) benefits in the **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLANNING MANUAL: A Strategic Tool for Planning and Financing Public Infrastructure (Manual),** prepared in February 2020. The list includes the following "benefits:"

- ***One of the most important reasons is that a CIP saves money by improving the cost-effectiveness of how local governments expend their limited resources and dollars:***
- ***It identifies where improvements will be needed over time, rather than waiting for each crisis to occur before acting. It is usually more expensive to make emergency repairs than to maintain a system in working order by anticipating problems and making corrections incrementally before there is a total breakdown in the system.***

For the complete list of benefits, open https://comdev.mt.gov/_shared/CTAP/docs/CIP-Manual-2020.pdf.

Following the submittal of this application, Lewis and Clark County will do the following:

1. Execute a task order with a consultant from our roster of qualified bridge consultants to prepare a bridge PER.
2. Complete the startup conditions of the MCEP planning grant and execute a grant agreement with the Montana Department of Commerce.
3. Hold a project kick-off meeting with selected consultant and local stakeholders.

In 2023, the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners selected Great West Engineering, DCI Engineering, and TD&H Engineering as its "on-call" bridge engineering, planning, and grant administration consultants for up to five years. A copy of the County's procurement file and

engineering services agreement with the selected consultant will be provided as an MCEP planning grant start-up condition.

6. Recent MCEP infrastructure planning grants or multiple applications in the 2027 Biennium—check the statement that applies:

   ☐ Applicant does not have an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant and has not been awarded an MCEP infrastructure planning grant in the past two biennia (past four years) AND is applying for only one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium (2025)

   ☐ Applicant does not have an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant and has not been awarded an MCEP infrastructure planning grant in the past two biennia (past four years) AND is applying for more than one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium.

   ☒ Applicant does not have an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant but was awarded an MCEP infrastructure planning grant in the past two biennia (past four years) AND is only applying for one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium.

   ☐ Applicant does not have an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant but has been awarded an MCEP infrastructure planning grant in the past two biennia (past four years) AND is applying for more than one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium.

   ☐ Applicant has an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant BUT is applying for only one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium in a different grant category (e.g., open MCEP infrastructure planning grant for a water or wastewater system PER, applying for an infrastructure MCEP infrastructure planning grant for a CIP)

   ☐ Applicant has an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant BUT is applying for more than one MCEP infrastructure planning grant in this biennium in different grant categories (e.g., open MCEP infrastructure planning grant for a water or wastewater system PER, applying for MCEP infrastructure planning grants for a CIP and a bridge PER)

   ☐ Applicant has an open MCEP infrastructure planning grant AND is applying for an MCEP infrastructure planning grant in the same grant category (e.g., open MCEP infrastructure planning grant for a water or wastewater PER, applying for another MCEP infrastructure planning grant for a water or wastewater PER)

Required Attachments:

☐ Documentation showing the legal creation of the district (if a county water and/or sewer district);

☒ Exhibit 1 - A resolution of Lewis and Clark County authorizing Commission Chairman Candace Payne to submit the County's application for MCEP planning grant funds and commit local funds to match the requested MCEP funding.

☒ Exhibit 2 - Proposed Project Implementation Schedule

☒ Exhibit 3 – Project Location Map

EXHIBIT I

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY RESOLUTION

EXHIBIT 2

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
BRIDGE PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING REPORT
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

TASK	MONTH / YEAR
ADVERTISEMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	
Publish RFP	Complete
Select a firm	November 2025
Execute a task order for the project with Great West Engineering firm	November 2025
MAJOR ACTIVITIES/MILESTONES	
Hold Project Kick-Off Meeting	November 2025
Review the condition of the County's bridges.	November 2025 – March 2026
Determine the community's needs through surveys, open houses, and public meetings. The exact methods of public outreach will be determined at the project kick-off meeting.	November 2025 – March 2026
Prepare draft PER.	November 2025 – February 2026
Hold public meetings/hearings as applicable.	January 2025 & April 2026
Final PER submittal to MDOC	May 2026
MCEP Request for Funds	
Submit a draft PER and request the first request for funds.	March 2026
Submit a final PER and request the last request for funds.	May 2026
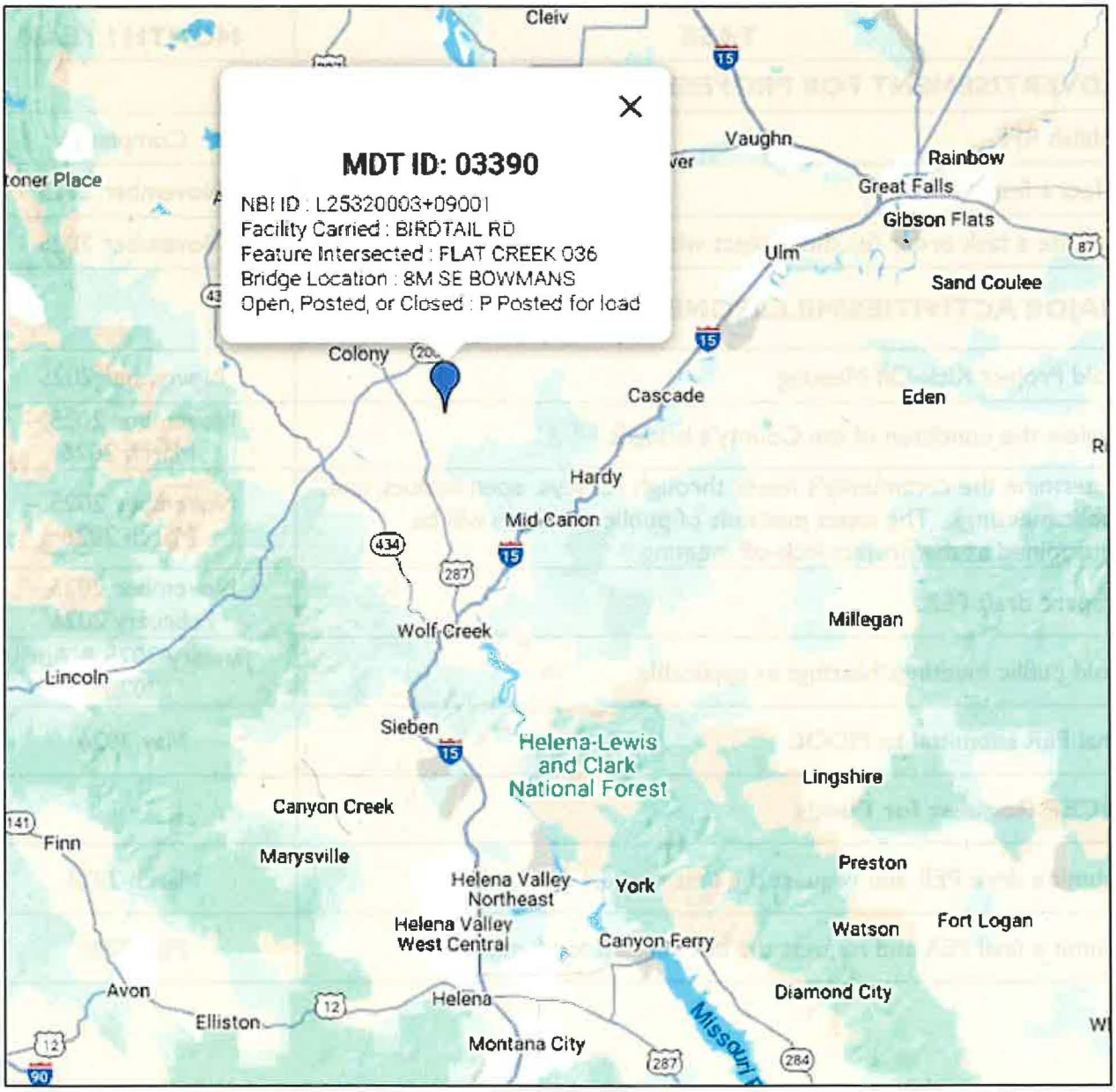
EXHIBIT 3
BIRDTAIL ROAD BRIDGE
PROJECT LOCATION MAP