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Beartracks Bridge Temporary Weight Restriction Implemented

Bridge safe for pedestrians, cyclists and standard vehicles

MISSOULA, Montana (July 16, 2021) – The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has established a ten-ton weight limit on Beartracks Bridge in downtown Missoula. The decision to implement the weight limit is a precautionary measure while additional analyses and repairs are conducted. The original weight restriction was instituted on Tuesday, July 13 and will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

“Proceeding with an abundance of caution is always the prudent decision,” Senior Vice President of Sletten Construction, Tony Ewalt said. “Sletten Construction will continue to work closely with MDT and its engineers to ensure the best results for this rehabilitation project and the continued safety of the traveling public.”

During the east half of the bridge’s demolition phase, degradation of some of the structural supports were noted. Additional inspections of the bridge’s west side found that some gusset plates -- steel plates that tie bracing, diaphragms, and/or beams to girders-- also need to be replaced. The newly imposed weight restriction has been established to prevent further degradation of these gusset plates.

“This is an old structure,” MDT’s Missoula District Administrator, Bob Vosen said. “When you rehabilitate an existing structure, there are bound to be some unique challenges. We have every confidence that this bridge is safe for the traveling public. This temporary weight restriction will help in preventing any further degradation or the need for additional repairs.”

Although the west side of the bridge appears complete, it remains an active construction site. While traffic is moving on the surface of the bridge, there is still work taking place below. The weight restriction, although temporary, will be adapted, modified or lifted as further analysis dictates it is prudent to do so.

“Sletten Construction appreciates the patience of residents dealing with the inconveniences that occur with this type of construction,” Ewalt said. “We are delivering a quality project and are confident the result will be a benefit to Missoula for many years to come.”

Drivers who are uncertain about the weight of their vehicle can most often find the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) posted on the vehicle (such as the door jamb) or listed in the owner manual. For trailers, the GVW might be shown on a plaque near the tongue. The posted GVW limit of 10 tons

includes the combined weight of the vehicle and any trailers it may be hauling. Many large RV's including Class A motorhomes could exceed the ten-ton limit, so in the interest of everyone's safety, please check your GVW before traveling across the bridge. Most standard passenger vehicles do not come close to the ten-ton weight limit.

The public is encouraged to sign up for updates and ask any questions via the project hotline at (406) 207-4484. The hotline is active Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. More information can be found on the project webpage: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/higginsbridge/>.

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-5416 or Montana Relay Service at 711.

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