Montana Local Technical Assistance Program

Quarterly Progress Report

MDT Project No. 02443

SFY 2023 Q4

April 1, 2023 - June 31, 2023

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MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

in cooperation with the

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FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This State Fiscal Year (SFY 2023) 4th Quarter Report is submitted to the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to provide details on the activities and project work of Montana LTAP in support of MDT Project No. 02443, Montana Local Technical Assistance Program, during the period April 1, 2023, through June 31, 2023 (Q4).

At the heart of what LTAP does is provide instructor hours to our local customers. During Q4 LTAP's activities hosted a total of 517 in-class participants, 163 instruction hours, and 2,910 contact hours.
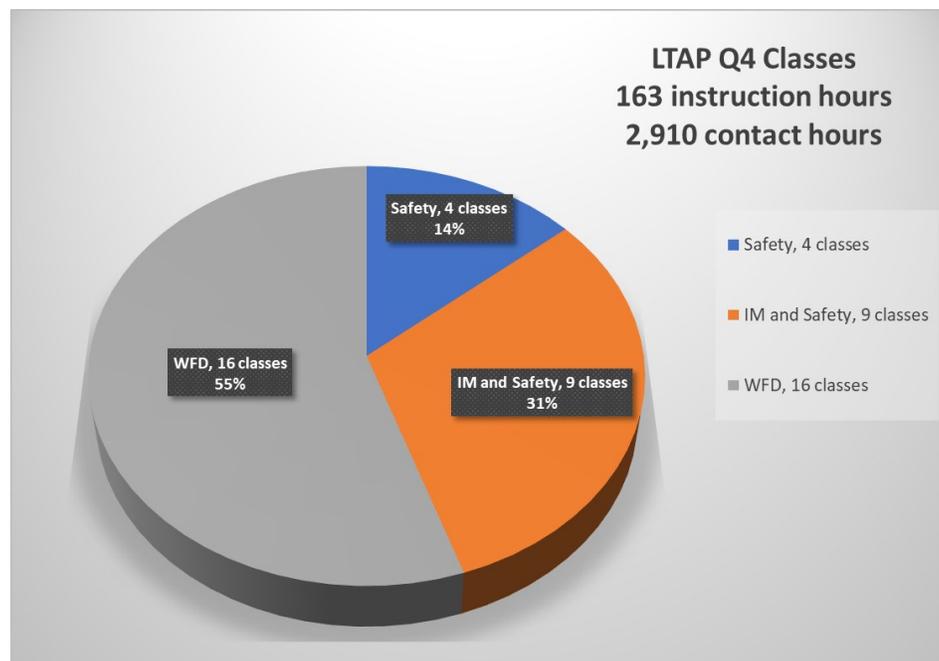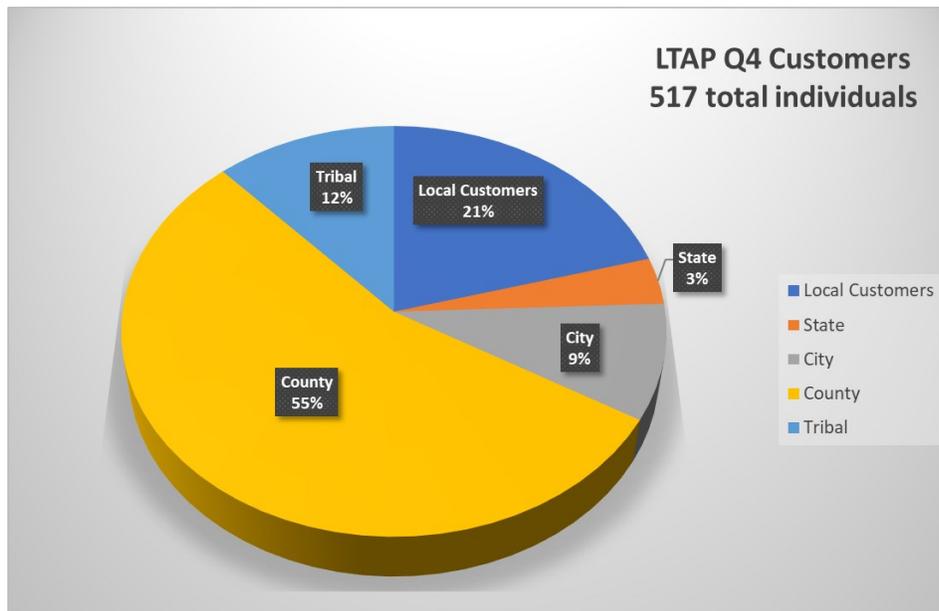
Other highlights of Montana LTAP's accomplishments during Q4 include:

- LTAP-MACRS Spring District trainings were conducted in Lewistown, Billings, Bozeman, Miles City, Sidney, Glasgow, Cutbank, Kalispell, and Boulder. These were well received, and attendance was excellent. Attendee feedback was very positive, with fully excellent scores on our course feedback surveys.
- LTAP hosted three monthly webinars.
- Instructor-led classes included:
- 11 Flagger Certification classes
- 4 Forklift/Skid Steer Certification classes
- 9 MACRS District Meetings in-person trainings
- 2 MSHA Refresher classes
- 1 Traffic Control Technician class
- 2 Work Zone Safety classes

This progress report further details these activities and is organized following the four LTAP focus areas:

1. Safety
2. Infrastructure Management
3. Workforce Development
4. Organizational Excellence

SAFETY

Safety is incorporated into all of our activities, technical assistance, and trainings. This includes personal safety classes, as well as roadway and operations/maintenance safety. Working with the National Center for Rural Road Safety at the Western Transportation Institute, FHWA Peer Exchanges, and other partnerships allows Montana LTAP to bring more attention to safety, and through delivering relevant training and technical assistance.

Activities: Q4 State Fiscal Year 2023

Proactive safety training initiatives for local governments are key objectives in this focus area. Our regular delivery of in-person safety trainings are intentionally geographically spread out to reach our customers across the state. Focused delivery to the five Montana Association of County Road Supervisors (MACRS) Districts at least twice a year accommodates a broad reach while allowing regular interaction among multiple agencies at our trainings. Technology transfer is accomplished through direct outreach, relaying FHWA EDC initiatives, safety-related articles in LTAP's newsletter, staff responses to phone and email inquiries, and on-site technical assistance.

Our center-directed Safety trainings and workshops included:

- LTAP Conducted three webinars this quarter focused on Safety: Work Zone Safety, Fall Protection, and Summer Safety Tips. The webinar recordings can be accessed via the LTAP website link: **http://www.coe.montana.edu/ltapv2/resources/webinars/index.html**
- Webinar attendance is not easily tracked at this time, other than live attendance. We count those in real-time attendance and are working to track online views of the video recordings.
- 11 in-person Flagger Certification classes, certifying 236 flaggers this quarter.
- 8 MACRS District Training Meetings in Lewistown, Billings, Bozeman, Miles City, Sidney, Cutbank, Kalispell, and Boulder reaching a total of 169 attendees. The Glasgow class was canceled at the last minute due to County staffing issues. The training course topics focused on both Safety and Infrastructure Management topics.
- 2 MSHA Refresher classes; one in Gallatin County and one in Conrad
- 1 Traffic Control Technician class for the City of Missoula
- 2 Work Zone Safety classes – One of these classes was to train the Department of Labor work zone inspection staff – a unique opportunity to interface with DLI and build a relationship for future efforts.

Challenges

- Turnover within local agencies: This means that we need to offer more basic safety trainings in addition to what we have been delivering to our customers. This change in needs is not reflected in our annual needs assessment results, and we are adjusting to the call for basic PPE, equipment safety, seasonal safety, and excavation safety classes. While this is a little bit of a challenge, we will adjust to the needs of our local customers (locals) and will accommodate as many requests as we can.
- High demand for Flagger Certification workshops exceeds current trainer capacity to deliver them. These classes are requested regularly across the State, and we are scheduling them as frequently as we can. We are glad to have the high level of interest, but with trainer

Shawna Page at ¾ time (0.75 FTE) and a busy schedule of travel for our Spring MACRS trainings extending through the spring, scheduling these to fit our customers' needs can be challenging. We train new flagger trainers every year and are seeing increased interest in the Train-the-Trainer, with the certification rolling over a 3-year cycle. We hope they can relieve some of the pressure on our schedules.

Planned Activities (July-August-September 2023)

- We will participate in the FHWA TTAP Tribal Peer Exchange in August, hosted in Great Falls by Northern TTAP and MT LTAP. Much of this peer exchange will focus on Safety and funding opportunities.
- In September we will host two snow rodeos in Missoula and Richland Counties.
- The Fall MACRS-hosted trainings will start again in September, with topics to be determined.
- LTAP webinars focused primarily on safety will continue in SFY 2024 on a monthly schedule.
- We continue to promote the circulation of online training options outside of our own center, drawing attention to AASHTO TC3, ITE, and NHI courses available to our customers through strategic partnerships with the NLTAPA organization. These are regularly available online, but the topics offered are not typically relevant to all of our customers. Information on these items is included in our listserv emails and newsletters as appropriate and available.

INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

The Infrastructure Management area of focus is an included component of many of our classes, including the Gravel Roads/ Basics of Good Gravel class offered in the regular MACRS trainings. It is also included in many other classes and meetings in whole or in part. Montana LTAP is promoting more attention on Infrastructure Management through partnerships with the Asphalt Institute, and through delivering relevant training and technical assistance.

Activities: Q4 State Fiscal Year 2023

Infrastructure Management activities this quarter reached a total of 107 in-class participants.

- 8 MACRS District Training Meetings in Lewistown, Billings, Bozeman, Miles City, Sidney, Cutbank, Kalispell, and Boulder reaching a total of 169 attendees. The Glasgow class location was canceled at the last minute at the request of the host due to County Road Department turnover/staffing issues. The training course topics were slightly different in all locations but focused on both Safety and Infrastructure Management topics.
- Matt Ulberg conducted an on-site field review and provided technical assistance for:
- Missoula County - Large culvert replacement in Missoula County.
- Ravalli County - Sign management.
- Blaine County - Waste materials from industrial processes (ongoing).
- Outreach and technical assistance continue in Infrastructure Management.

Challenges

- Inventory Management Systems: We encourage implementation of strong Inventory Management systems, but these efforts get limited traction. The challenge is to continually offer best practices with options even when customers are sometimes not very receptive. The pushback is generally from a perspective of limited funding, limited resources/personnel, and the reluctance to change while in a perceived crisis mode. Most of our locals have unfilled positions for months or even longer and applicants are generally not well trained when they start at the agency. The burden for basic training needs is high and inventory management is perceived by many as something that is beyond their current reach.

Planned Activities (July-August-September 2023)

- We are currently evaluating our needs assessment survey to inform content for MACRS trainings this fall, and our calendars are reflecting trainings commitments into October.
- We continue to promote the circulation of online training options outside of our own center, drawing attention to AASHTO TC3, ITE, and NHI courses available to our customers. These are available online at irregular intervals. Information on these items will be included in our listserv emails and newsletters as appropriate and available.
- LTAP will also continue to offer more opportunities for classes on keeping good culvert, cattleguard, sign inventories, and pavement management and assessment methods.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Our program delivery in Workforce Development continues to improve due largely to the communicated needs of our customers. The program is supported through our funding partners, as Workforce Development is an area of focus in the current Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and we expect to enhance this part of our program moving forward. Workforce trainings are a foundational training for our locals and when combined with personal safety, we can successfully reach most of our locals at all levels of the agency. We continue to receive positive feedback from our City, County and Tribal customers regarding our ability to help prepare the workforce to meet the regular challenges of owning, operating, and maintaining their roadways. The large amount of worker turnover and worker shortages in the public sector throughout the State will continue to make this an important part of our program delivery.

Activities: Q4 State Fiscal Year 2023

Workforce Development activities this quarter reached a total of 141 in-class participants. This was accomplished partially through four Workforce Development related workshops and classes conducted through the MACRS District meetings, in Billings, Conrad, Kalispell and Boulder this quarter.

Our instructor-led Workforce Development efforts also included the following:

- 4 Flagger Certification classes in Butte, Kalispell, Lewistown, and Shelby
- 1 Confined Space training in Livingston
- 1 Traffic Control Technician class for the City of Missoula
- 1 Forklift training for the City of Bozeman
- 1 Winter Maintenance class for Missoula County

Challenges

- Reduced Workforce: Loss of experienced workforce to industry (better pay), retirement and other factors continue to cause our customers significant workforce deficits. LTAP helps by offering demand-responsive workforce development classes and assisting with distribution of vacancy announcements when asked.
- We continue to have high demand in the area of workforce development. Strategic direction from FHWA is emphasizing the need to focus on this area. We continue to look for opportunities to deliver training in the workforce development focus area and offer relevant trainings to our customers. Part of the challenge is in knowing what is needed and understanding the changing needs of the workforce.
- Lack of Equipment Trainers: We would like to expand our offerings for equipment trainings in both frequency and geography (across the State of MT). Finding qualified instructors to help us increase our ability to reach our customers is a priority for us. We are currently reaching out to some new instructors that work within Montana Counties to provide part-time support for equipment classes.

Planned Activities (July-August-September 2023)

- WFD: LTAP will continue to work toward offering more in-house Motor Grader Operation trainings. This includes offered instruction on unpaved roadway management. Blaine County has requested a grader class, and we are planning to deliver this in July or August.
- We are working with Miles City Community College to organize more Workforce Development and CDL-related and equipment trainings hosted at MCCC. This has been on hold as their main instructor's availability is limited while he is managing a cattle ranch due to family illness.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To provide the best service possible to constituents, LTAP personnel seek and attend training and other professional development opportunities to improve their outreach capabilities. Activity in NLTAPA, APWA, NACE, and other organizations are supported and encouraged by FHWA CLAS and our partners. Organizational excellence addresses professional development and leadership training for LTAP personnel, as well as our partnering efforts with sponsoring agencies, professional support of our staff through activity in Nationally significant organizations and efforts, and support of our customers and partners.

Activities: Q4 State Fiscal Year 2023

Activities in this area of focus this quarter included:

- Participation with the MDT CHSP Roadway Departure & Intersection Crashes Emphasis Area meetings
- MDT Safety Research Technical Panel participation
- NLTAPA North Central Region meeting attendance
- TRB Standing Committee on Low Volume Roads (TRB Committee AKD30); virtual meeting and paper reviews for upcoming TRB meeting presentations
- TRB Standing Committee on Workforce Development and Organizational Excellence (TRB Committee AJE15) - Review of materials for upcoming meetings
- Regular NLTAPA Executive Committee (MS Teams) meetings

Course Evaluations: Evaluations are generally collected at the end of LTAP courses to determine whether participants are using workshop information in their jobs and their satisfaction with the material presented and with the instructors. A sample evaluation is included on pages 10 and 11 of this report. Numerical response to questions 5-9 from evaluations collected during Q4 are summarized in Table 1. These evaluations are confidential, and it is common for students to stay after a class to discuss the training, their needs, and/or their appreciation for the class.

Participants use the following ranking system for content and delivery: Poor = 1, Fair = 2 Average = 3, Good = 4, Excellent = 5. As an aggregate, Table 1 shows that we are presenting the right materials in the right ways. A few comments in our evaluations have been very informative and help us to be in the mode of constant improvement.

Table 1: Q4 SFY 2023 Workshop Evaluation Summary

Workshop Evaluations	
Topics	Rating
ALL	4.92/5

Challenges

LTAP lost files during the cyber-attack that occurred at Montana State University (MSU) on April 20, 2023. MSU worked diligently to repair damages and protect against further losses and some files have been restored from backups. Other files, most critically the LTAP 3rd quarter report, were lost and will need to be recreated.

Planned Activities (July-August-September 2023)

- Work to complete database integration and the remainder of the scope for the STIC Grant.
- We will participate in the FHWA TTAP Tribal Peer Exchange in August, hosted in Great Falls by Northern TTAP and MT LTAP. Much of this peer exchange will focus on Safety and funding opportunities.
- The once-every-4-years Summer Meeting of TRB AKD30, Low Volume Roads Committee will be in Cedar Falls, IA in July. Matt Ulberg will attend as a committee member.
- The annual NLTTAPA meeting will be held in July in Columbus, MO, and both Shawna and Matt will attend.
- Director Matt Ulberg continues activities to review TRB papers and participate with the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Standing Committee on Low-Volume Roads — AKD30. This TRB committee provides strategic planning for research and serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources pertaining to all aspects of low-volume roads including planning, design, construction, safety, maintenance operations, environmental, and social issues.
- We plan to participate in TRB committee meetings (Member of AKD 30 Low Volume Roads) and Matt plans to complete a few technical paper reviews for the upcoming annual TRB meeting in January 2024.
- LTAP will continue participation with MDT research committees and technical panels. Director Matt Ulberg is currently on the Technical Panel (TP) for the *Safety Evaluation of Sinusoidal Centerline Rumble Strips* research project.
- LTAP attends MDT Research Review Committee meetings when invited, and when our schedule allows. This enables us to stay informed of ongoing and upcoming MDT research.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Table 2: Year to Date Budget Summary, Q4 SFY 2023

SUMMARY:				
Cost Categories	**Quarterly Budget**	**Costs-this-Quarter**	**Annual Budget**	**Costs-to-Date**
Salaries/Benefits	71,010.75	93,607.55	284,043.00	285,887.41
Prof. Services	625.00	-	2,500.00	-
Travel	1,250.00	2,009.62	5,000.00	7,862.11
Supplies/Comm.	995.00	(12.28)	3,980.00	944.85
Equipment	-	(16.22)	-	978.78
Total	**73,880.75**	**95,588.67**	**295,523.00**	**295,673.15**
IDC's	21,119.25	27,847.75	84,477.00	84,585.26
	95,000.000	**123,436.42**	**380,000.00**	**380,258.41**

Table 3: Budget Summary by Focus Area, Q4 SFY 2023

Focus Areas	Salary/Benefits	Prof. Services	Travel	Supplies/Comm	Minor Equip	Subtotal	IDC's	Total
Safety - 48%	44,931.62	-	964.62	(5.89)	(7.79)	45,882.56	13,366.92	59,249.48
Infrastructure Management - 18%	16,849.36	-	361.73	(2.21)	-2.92	17,205.96	5,012.60	22,218.56
Workforce Development 22%	20,593.66	-	442.12	(2.70)	-3.57	21,029.51	6,126.51	27,156.01
Organizational Excellence - 12%	11,232.91	0.00	241.15	(1.47)	(1.95)	11,470.64	3,341.73	14,812.37
TOTAL COSTS	**93,607.55**	**0.00**	**2,009.62**	**-12.28**	**-16.22**	**95,588.67**	**27,847.75**	**123,436.42**

Montana LTAP TRAINING EVALUATION

Course Subject or Title: _____

Date _____   Location: _____
1. Were the course objectives stated? Yes _____ No _____ Were they met? Yes _____ No _____
2. Did the course organization help you learn the material? Yes_____ No_____
      Please Explain:

| | 0% | 50% | 75% | 100% |
3. How much of the program did you understand? |_____|_____|____|_____|

4. What topics do you think should be:

        Added or expanded upon? _____

        Removed or eliminated? _____

5. How relevant was the course to your learning needs?

     1. Irrelevant   2. Slightly relevant   3. Somewhat relevant   4. Very relevant 5. Extremely relevant

6. Did you learn something that will help you in your job?

        1. None   2. A little bit   3. Some   4. Quite a bit   5. Lots!

7. The learning from the course that I am most likely to apply to my work is: (explain briefly)
     _____

8. How useful and appropriate are the following training methods to this course?
      (Please circle response)

Quantity

Not enough = 1	Lecture	1	3	5	0
Too much = 1	Video Presentation	1	3	5	0
Needs improvement = 3	Exercises	1	3	5	0
Just the right amount = 5	Role Play/Interaction	1	3	5	0
Not applicable = 0	Group Discussions	1	3	5	0

Quality

Poor = 1	Lecture	1	2	3	4	5	0
Below average = 2	Video Presentation	1	2	3	4	5	0
Average = 3	Role Play/Interaction	1	2	3	4	5	0
Above average = 4	Group Discussion	1	2	3	4	5	0
Excellent = 5	Exercises	1	2	3	4	5	0
Not applicable							

Other (specify):_____

(OVER)

9. What was your overall reaction to this program? Circle ONE
    Quite negative   2. Somewhat negative   3. Neutral   4. Somewhat positive   5.Quite positive

    Please comment: _____

Name of Trainer (s) _____
    Please Rate the trainer on the following areas.

	Poor = 1	Fair = 2	Average = 3	Good = 4	Excellent =5
• Knowledge of subject	1	2	3	4	5
• Organization and preparation	1	2	3	4	5
• Style and delivery	1	2	3	4	5
• Responsiveness to participants	1	2	3	4	5
• Creating appropriate learning climate	1	2	3	4	5
• Encouraging participation by all members of the class	1	2	3	4	5
• Provision of good feedback	1	2	3	4	5
• Clear presentation of learning points	1	2	3	4	5
• Enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
• Pace and amount of learning	1	2	3	4	5
• Handling questions and interruptions	1	2	3	4	5
• Maintaining interest	1	2	3	4	5

Name of Trainer (s) _____
    Please Rate the trainer on the following areas.
    Poor = 1   Fair = 2   Average = 3   Good = 4   Excellent =5

• Knowledge of subject	1	2	3	4	5
• Organization and preparation	1	2	3	4	5
• Style and delivery	1	2	3	4	5
• Responsiveness to participants	1	2	3	4	5
• Creating appropriate learning climate	1	2	3	4	5
• Encouraging participation by all members of the class	1	2	3	4	5
• Provision of good feedback	1	2	3	4	5
• Clear presentation of learning points	1	2	3	4	5
• Enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5
• Pace and amount of learning	1	2	3	4	5
• Handling questions and interruptions	1	2	3	4	5
• Maintaining interest	1	2	3	4	5

10.   How could the instructor's technique(s) be improved?_____
      _____

11. What other courses/training would you like to see offered? _____
    _____

Thank you for completing this form!