

5.6 PUBLIC FACILITIES/INFRASTRUCTURE

County Capital Improvements Plan

The county has a capital improvements plan for roads, library, public safety (e.g., sheriff), and general. The plans were adopted in 2000 and contain little detailed information. No budget information was attached. There is also a capital improvements plan for the county airport, which is located in the city-county planning area jurisdiction.

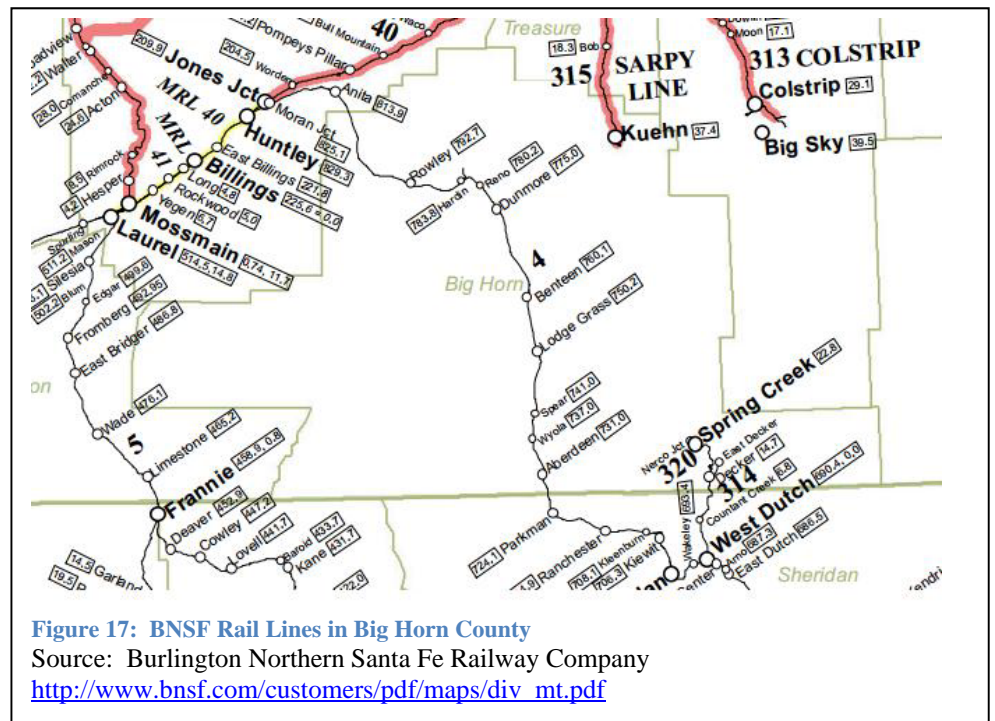
Transportation: Air

Commercial and air charter services are available in Billings (approximately 45 miles west of Hardin) or Sheridan, Wyoming (80 miles to the south of Hardin). There are two public airstrips in the county—at Hardin and at Fort Smith. The National Park Service owns and operates the airstrip at Fort Smith. Big Horn County is currently in the process of building a new airport west of Hardin to replace the aging existing airport it owns next to the county fairgrounds. The proximity of grain elevators, power lines, and narrow 60' width of the runway rendered the existing Hardin airport non-FAA compliant.

Transportation: Rail

No passenger rail service is available in Big Horn County.

Commercial/industrial service is limited to three areas of the county. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) operates a line between Billings (via Ballantine), Hardin and Sheridan, Wyoming. The coal mines at Decker are served by a spur line of the BNSF which terminates in a large loop at Decker and returns to the Sheridan area. There is a similar spur line serving the Absalooka Mine in the northwest corner of the county (shown as “Kuehn” on the map). The cars on these lines primarily carry coal and some mixed freight. Hazardous materials moved by rail through the county must comply with federal guidelines administered by the Federal Railroad Administration. There is railroad right-of-way between Hardin and Kingley to the north but no active rail line. The line was used to move sugar beets to Hardin,



when the sugar beet factory was operating. Rail traffic on the operating lines has increased over the past decade.

Transportation: Roads

Big Horn County is served by a system including interstate, state primary, state secondary, county, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and National Park Service roads.

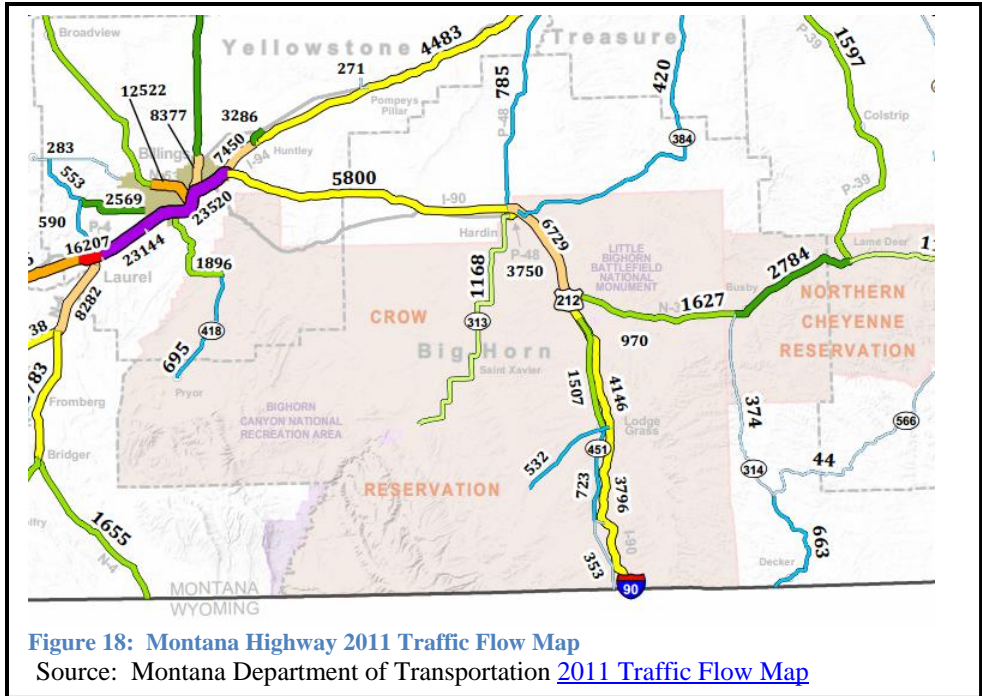
Based on statistics presented in the following table, there are some places that have very little change in traffic and others with major increases. The map inset shows the highway sections, but numbers in the table and map may be different because of slightly different segments. Traffic on Highway 384 nearly doubled between 2001 and 2011, when coal trucks began transporting coal to the power plant north of Hardin.

Table 19: Change in Highway Traffic 2001-2011

Highway	Location	2001 AADT	2011 AADT	% Change
I-90	Jct W Hardin Interchange to Jct US 212 (RP 495+1.019-510+0.890)	6,696	6,729	0.5%
	Jct US 212 to MT/WY Border (RP 510+0.890-554+0.438)	3,449	3,955	14.7%
US 212	Jct I-90 to Jct S-314 (RP 000+0.000-023+0.596)	1,582	1,627	2.8%
	Jct S-314 to Lame Deer (RP 023+0.596-041+0.965)	2,290	2,773	21.1%
MT 47	Jct I-90 to Jct I-94 (RP 001+0.039-029+0.767)	852	785	-7.9%
S-313	Jct 3rd St W in Hardin to entering Bighorn Canyon National Rec Area (RP 000+0.790-038+0.730)	1,063	1,116	5.0%
S-314	MT/WY border to Jct S-566 (RP 000+0.000-017+0.522)	549	663	20.8%
	Jct S-566 to Jct US 212 (RP 017+0.522-044+0.078)	270	374	38.5%
S-384	Jct Mountain Crow Frontage Rd to Sarpy Ck Rd (RP 001+0.170-025+0.772)	402	761	89.3%
	Jct Sarpy Ck Rd to Jct I-94 (RP 025+0.772-057+0.242)	92	106	15.2%

Source: Marie Stump, MDT | Planning Division, Traffic Data Collection Section

The Big Horn County road department is responsible for 1500 miles of roads and bridges. The Bureau of Indian Affairs maintains the road between Pryor and St. Xavier, the road between Lodge Grass and St. Xavier, much of the network of roads on the Crow Reservation south and west of Lodge Grass, and the Muddy Creek Road on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.



The road network in the county provides access routes to each community, but is not accurately described as a system. Roads are of varying standards, signing, and levels of maintenance. Routes are frequently circuitous owing to the rivers and mountain ranges and complicating the provision of all types of services to residents. Many county residents make difficult, daily commutes because they reside in one area of the county and work in another. Traffic fatalities are common in Big Horn County despite the relatively small population. Over the 10-year period 2002-2011 there was an average of 10.6 traffic fatalities per year. ([Montana Department of Transportation](#))

The Big Horn County Subdivision Regulations contain a section on roads. This direction provides standards for road design with which developers must comply. The road standards in the county regulations were adapted from model regulations developed by the state.

Water Systems

Water is provided to residents from individual wells, privately and municipally-owned systems, and systems operated by the Tribes, BIA, National Park Service, and Bureau of Reclamation. There are 31 public water supply systems in Big Horn County, according to the Montana Department Environmental Quality. The list does not include systems operated by tribal government or BIA.

Table 20: Permitted Water Supply Systems in Big Horn County

Water Supply Systems Permitted by Montana DEQ in Big Horn County 2013		
Water System Name	Type	Primary Water Source
Fort Smith Water And Sewer District	C	GW
Hardin City Of	C	SW
Lodge Grass Town Of	C	GW
Quality Water	C	SWP
Wegner Water Service Hauler	C	SWP
Yellowtail Dam Gc Lower System	C	GW
Yellowtail Dam Mk Upper System	C	GW
7th Ranch RV Camp	NC	GW
Big Horn Co Historical Museum	NC	SWP
Chief Plenty Coups Museum	NC	GW
Cottonwood Camp Fort Smith	NC	GW
Fort Custer Golf Club Inc	NC	SWP
Hardin Eastbound Rest Area	NC	GW
Hardin Koa	NC	GW
Hardin Koa Cistern	NC	SWP
Hardin Westbound Rest Area	NC	GW
Historical Land Preservation Co. Inc.	NC	GW
Kirby Saloon	NC	GW
Ok A Beh Marina	NC	GW
Spring Creek Tavern Hardin	NC	GW
Tongue River Pee Wee Point	NC	GW
Tongue River - Campers Point	NC	GW
Yellowtail Dam Powerplant And Visitor Center	NC	SW
Absaloka Mine	NTNC	GW
East Decker Coal Mine	NTNC	GW
Little Bighorn Battlefield Nm	NTNC	GW
Spring Creek Coal Domestic	NTNC	GW
Spring Creek Mine	NTNC	SWP
St Charles School	NTNC	GW
Wegner Water Service Bottling Plant	NTNC	SWP
West Decker Coal Mine	NTNC	GW

Source: Montana DEQ website: <http://sdwisdww.mt.gov:8080/DWW/index.jsp>

C Community: Serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves 25 year-round residents

NTNC Non-Transient Non-Community: Serves at least the same 25 non-residential individuals during 6 months of the year

NC Transient Non-Community: Regularly serves at least 25 non-residential individuals (transient) during 60 or more days per year

GW Ground Water SW Surface Water SWP System purchases water that originates from a surface source

Big Horn County does not operate any water systems. The only public water system formed under the authority of Big Horn County is the Fort Smith Water and Sewer District, which operates under its own Board of Directors. Citizens of the Fort Smith area petitioned the County Commissioners for the formation of a water and sewer district in the late 1990s. The district was formed after a vote of the residents and began providing service in 2012. The system serves 450 persons with three active wells and an inactive back-up well.

Many county residents are not served by public water systems and some who may not have wells or have wells with inadequate potable water may obtain water from two commercial water providers in the county, Quality Water and Wegner Water Service, or haul their own water from the Hardin water station.

The incorporated municipalities of Hardin and Lodge Grass have municipal water systems. The city of Hardin was on the state DEQ's 2013 capital improvements funding list for \$2.1million in water treatment plant improvements and has used the funds to install automated controls. The water plant continues to have issues with sedimentation and will be in need of a major upgrade in 5-10 years. Lodge Grass's system has had one pump renovated and a new telemetry sensor control system installed since 2000, but the town still needs another well to address capacity and to replace the town's corroded tank. The town is now working to develop a capital improvements plan and growth policy to address long-term infrastructure needs.

On the Crow Indian Reservation, water supply systems operated by the tribe and/or BIA include Crow Agency, Wyola and Pryor. There are two water supply treatment plants serving Crow Agency, one operated by the tribe and the other by the BIA. At time of the last growth policy, in 2000, the tribal plant was not in operation. The systems are now both operating and working well for current needs. The Wyola water supply has had some renovation since 2000. A new automated telemetry sensor control is now in place and can pump and treat concurrently providing more consistent supply compared to the previous manual control system. Wyola has two wells now and one has a considerable amount of iron that can clog the system. Developing another well is needed for a back-up. Pryor operates with a main well and two back-up wells. Water system issues include the tank, which is corroding and not at sufficient elevation to provide good water pressure for all residents, particularly those in homes close to the tank.

The Northern Cheyenne Tribe operates the water systems for Busby and Muddy Cluster. Muddy Cluster operated previously on a separate well system, but recently was connected to the Lame Deer water supply system. Busby has a separate system with two wells, a telemetry sensor control system.

Other systems include the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's government camp at Fort Smith. Private systems that serve more than one family or household include the systems operated by the coal mines and other businesses (e.g., restaurants).