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Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Memorandum

To: Distribution

Joseph P. Kolman, P.E.
Bridge Engineer

June 19, 2003

Subject: Vertical Clearance
Railroad Separations

This is a follow-up to the letter that was distributed on May 1,2003. In that memo I stated that MDT would start providing 7.165 meters (23'-6") on all new projects that do not have an approved Alignment & Grade. I received a letter from FHWA dated June 16, 2003 that indicates that I was in error.

FHWA's Washington D.C. office has indicated that 23 CFR § 646.212(a)(3) "Appendix to Subpart B of Part 646 is very specific as to a vertical clearance of 7.1 meters (23'-3.5) without adequate justification for additional clearance.

With that in mind we will abide by the CFR and provide the clearances as specified unless adequate justification is received by the railroad.

Distribution:

Attachments

Carl Peil – Preconstruction
Ron Williams – Road Design
Tom Martin – Consultant Design
Walt Scott – Utility Section
Ted Burch – FHWA
Joel Marshik – Engineering
James Walther – Engineering
John Horton – R/W
Pat Saindon – Transportation Planning
file

US Department
Of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration

Montana Division
2880 Skyway Drive
Helena, Montana 59602

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June 16, 2003

Mr. Joe Kolman, Bridge Engineer
Montana Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Subject: Vertical Clearances at Railroad Seperations

Dear Mr. Kolman:

The issue of vertical clearance over railroad structures came up in relation to a bridge over the BNSF on the Dodson-East project, F 1-7(14)404. Specifically, BNSF was asking for 23'- 6" vertical clearance while 23 CFR §646.212(a)(3) "Appendix to Subpart B of Part 646" is very specific as to vertical clearance of 7.1 meters (23' - 3.5") without adequate justification. Based on our phone conversation, I concurred that providing 7.165 meters (23'-6") was reasonable. However, after consultation with our Washington, D.C., office, we have concluded that the lateral and vertical clearances in 23 CFR 646 are very specific and must be strictly adhered to.

Regarding the Dodson-East project, we will abide by our previous agreement to allow 7.165 meters (23' – 6"). All other projects shall be designed to provide 7.1 meters vertical clearance unless the railroad can provide adequate justification on a site-by-site basis for increasing the vertical clearance. If the increase cannot be justified, any incremental cost associated with providing more than 7.1 meters shall not be eligible for Federal-aid participation.

Please call me at 449-5302 ext. 231 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Theodore G Burch

Theodore G. Burch
Field Operations Engineer

cc: Walt Scott, Utility Section

File: #407.4 & F 1-7(14)404 tb/lr

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Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

Memorandum

To: Distribution

From: Joseph P. Kolman, P.E.
Bridge Engineer

Date: May 1, 2003

Subject: Vertical Clearance
Railroad Separations

This is in reference to the Vertical Clearance that MDT has historically provided over railroads. MDT will start providing 7.165 meters (23'-6") on all new projects that do not have an approved Alignment & Grade. Projects that have an approved Alignment & Grade will not be affected.

This is a change from the 7.01 meters (23'-0") that had been provided in the past. Two issues are driving this change. The first is that 23 CFR § 646.212(a)(3) "Appendix to Subpart B" has been revised to reflect metric units. The vertical clearance cited is now 7.1 meters (23'-3 1/2"). The second is that the BNSF Railroad has changed their standard drawing to request 23'-6". It makes sense to accommodate the Railroad's request.

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