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Tourism Projects in Billings, Deer Lodge, Fort Benton, Havre, Missoula and Wolf Point Awarded \$289,767 in Facility Improvement Grants

(HELENA) –Governor Brian Schweitzer today announced the Montana Department of Commerce award of \$289,767 from the Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP) to projects in six Montana communities. Each project sponsor will use its grant funds to complete tourism-related facility improvements.

“These grant funds are an important investment in some key community tourism facilities that help bring in new customers and new dollars to Montana businesses and communities,” said Governor Schweitzer. “We look forward to the completion of these projects that are going to strengthen Montana’s appeal as a place people want to come to visit and spend their travel dollars.”

Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite approved the TIIP grant funding for the six tourism-related projects following recommendations from Department of Commerce staff and the state’s Tourism Advisory Council. The six TIIP grant recipients were selected from 40 applications requesting over \$2 million from the Commerce Department program.

“With this investment of tourism facility use tax dollars, we are able to leverage almost \$1 million from other state and national funding sources to create and support local construction, supply and service industry jobs as well as strengthen Montana’s visitor appeal,” said Preite.

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The 2009 TIIP Grant Awards include:

- \$66,667 – Hill County’s Buffalo Jump Preservation Project at the Wahkpa Chu’gn Buffalo Jump Site in Havre.
- \$60,000 – River & Plains Society Inc. of Fort Benton reconstruction of the Bourgeois House at Old Fort Benton.
- \$50,000 – Wolf Point Area Historical Society’s Museum Relocation Project.
- \$50,000 – Historical Museum at Fort Missoula replacement of a boiler at the historic Post Headquarters building in Missoula.
- \$34,100 – Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation’s Milwaukee Railroad Exhibit & Museum in Deer Lodge.
- \$29,000 – Western Heritage Center’s replacement of an old boiler and installation of humidity control equipment in Billings.

Since 1995, TIIP grants have provided \$3.3 million in tourism facility use tax funds to 75 projects in 42 Montana communities. These TIIP-assisted projects represent a total investment of \$40 million in public and private funds into Montana’s tourism-related infrastructure.

TIIP grants funds are provided by a 4% state tourism facility use tax which is assessed on the lodging price of all accommodations across Montana, including campgrounds. The grants are awarded through a competitive process and require a \$1 match for every \$2 provided by grant funds.

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