State News for NSPE Members

Montana Passenger Rail Gets \$15 Million for Malta Infrastructure, Southern Rail Planning

KPVI reports that efforts to expand and upgrade passenger rail service both along the Hi-Line and in southern Montana recently got boosts to the tune of more than \$15 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

That includes nearly \$15 million to upgrade rail infrastructure on Amtrak's Empire Builder line and \$500,000 so the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority can put together a plan to restore the North Coast Hiawatha route through southern Montana.

About \$14.9 million will run through the Federal-State Partnership program to upgrade Empire Builder infrastructure in and around Malta, including track, bridge, and signal construction to try to cut down on delays and issues between freight and passenger trains.

"For years folks have been telling me that we need an upgrade to our rail infrastructure around Malta to improve passenger and freight services, and with the help of my bipartisan infrastructure law, we'll finally be able to deliver," Senator Jon Tester said in a statement.

The Empire Builder runs between Chicago and Seattle and Portland, connecting through Minneapolis, across the Hi-Line from Wolf Point to Libby, with stops along the way. It is currently the only Amtrak passenger rail line through Montana. Read more.

MSU Awarded \$3 million to Study Use of Microorganisms in Building Materials

Montana State University has announced that a multi-disciplinary team of the school's experts searching for a way to use living materials to reduce the building industry's reliance on cement and concrete has been awarded a \$3 million Future Research Manufacturing

Research grant from the National Science Foundation. Chelsea Heveran, assistant professor in the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, is the principal investigator for the four-year project. Its specific goal is to advance the ability to make complex, load-bearing structures by using mineral-producing microorganisms. It includes funding for three graduate student researchers and the establishment of an eco-manufacturing undergraduate student research and training program called Eco-start, whose students will have the opportunity to work in campus labs and in related industries during the summers, Heveran said.

The construction industry current relies heavily on the manufacture of cement and concrete to make building materials. According to the NSF abstract, both require the use of scarce materials, and the manufacturing process leaves a high carbon footprint.

"This research advances the eco-manufacturing of sustainable building materials using microbes by addressing several key challenges that limit how current biomineralized structures are built, repaired, and recycled," the abstract states.

Read more.

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Share Your Expertise: NSPECon24 Presentations



NSPE seeks speakers willing to elevate the profession by providing interesting, relevant, and timely education to colleagues attending the 2024 Professional Engineers Conference (NSPECon24) August 7-9 in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Proposals may address a number of topics in three key conference tracks that include leadership, issues and trends, and career assistance. Please consider sharing your expertise and insights by **submitting a presentation proposal by midnight, January 10**.

To learn more about potential topic areas, how to prepare a submission, and the benefits of being selected to present, click on the button below.

Submit Your Presentation

NSPE Member Benefit: On-Demand Webinars

The WORKability Wednesdays fall series wrapped up in November. Recordings of the presentations are available in the PE Institute. Past webinars are also available for viewing in the On-Demand Webinars section of the website.

NSPE is always seeking great content and speakers. Those interested in presenting can submit ideas using the online Call for Webinars form.

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"NSPE Enterprise Membership has proven to be a valuable program for our

engineering team at Huitt-Zollars. It streamlines our membership process; the ability to make a single payment for multiple employees simplifies our administrative tasks and reduces time. Our engineers appreciate the continuous learning/professional development and networking opportunities provided by NSPE throughout the year."— John Ho, P.E., F.NSPE, Vice President, Huitt-Zollars

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