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Shelby port authority awarded intermodal hub grant

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Published: Wednesday, September 28, 2011 8:49 AM MDT

The Northern Express Transportation Authority of Shelby has been awarded an intermodal hub grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the Port of Northern Montana Energy Park.

The \$320,000 grant requires an equal match from the port authority, bringing the budget of a project to continue the work currently being done at the intermodal facility east of town to \$640,000.

The grant will pay for the construction of 1,860 feet of primary rail spur, according to the award letter from the EDA dated Sept. 12.

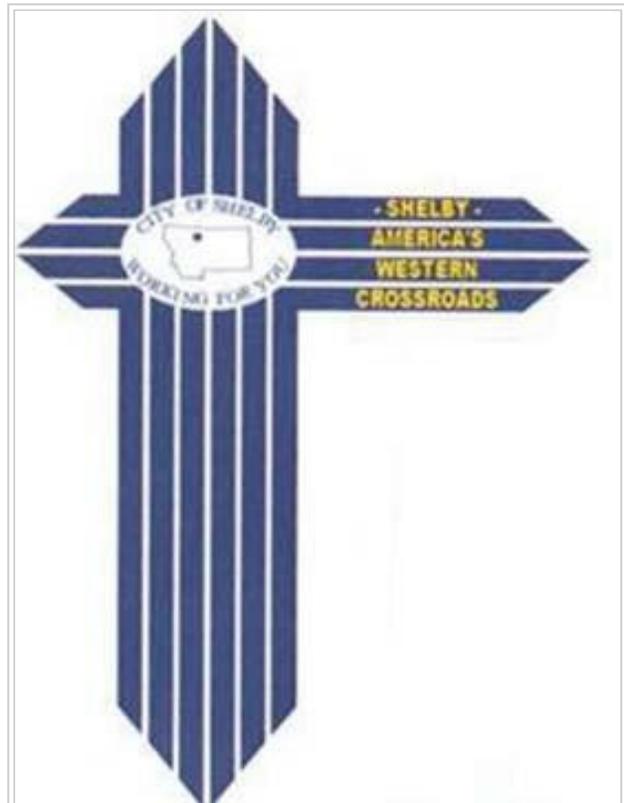
Larry Bonderud, executive director of the port authority and Shelby's mayor, explained the project would build rail lines at the industrial park that would allow more rail traffic into Shelby to load and unload products that could go into Canada or be transported south on Interstate 15.

Bonderud said the port authority plans to account for the \$320,000 in matching funds with "cash reserves and/or a loan from the Montana State Board of Investments."

The project will create approximately 15 temporary construction jobs, said Bonderud. "When the facility is complete, we're looking at permanent jobs," he said. "This project affects the entire area. Agricultural and oilfield projects will come on and off the hub. The end result, when the project is completed, is hundreds of jobs."

It will take several years for the facility to reach its employment potential, Bonderud added. "As the facility evolves and expands over the upcoming four or five years, it's expected that the facility and its associated companies located in it will account for several hundred new jobs in the area," he continued.

Initial work at the hub began about two years ago with construction of a switch off the main line along with a base and platforms, said Bonderud. With the grant, he said the new phase of the project will go out for bid within the next 60 days, he said. Beginning the work is "totally weather dependent," he added.



City of Shelby

"We look forward to quickly moving forward and putting boots on the ground with this project," Bonderud continued. He acknowledged the help of Montana senators Baucus and Tester in their "understanding of this project."

In a statement, Tester said, "The construction of this new hub will put folks to work and help Montana connect with regional, national, international and overseas trading partners to find more markets for Montana's goods."

Under conditions of the grant, the project must begin by Sept. 9, 2013 and be completed by Sept. 9, 2016, a deadline Bonderud is confident the port authority will meet.

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