

Brief History of TVMT - Television Montana

Prepared for the Montana Legislative Council

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- In 1999, the League of Women Voters approached Rep. Tom Facey to carry a resolution regarding broadcasting of the legislature. House Joint Resolution No. 18 passed directing a study of the possibility of broadcasting the deliberations of the Montana Legislature. The study involved members of the committee visiting several states that were televising at the time.
- TVMT was established by the 2001 Legislature to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage and is administered by the Legislative Services Division (LSD). (Chapter 557, L. 2001) Codified in Title 5, chapter 11, part 11. It was first broadcast in Helena through Helena Civic Television (HCTV) and within the Capitol building.
- Since the beginning, TVMT has been funded by a combination of various sources in the past, including state special revenue from lobbyists fees, general fund from the LSD portion of past feed bills, carryforward, and one-time only funding. Budget was consolidated and formalized in 2009.
- 2007-08 Interim: 4 sites and 17 communities - first expansion outside of Helena.
- 2007 Session: 26 communities through video programming with local providers or public television and audio programming streamed through the legislative website.
- The Legislative Council had a TVMT Subcommittee in the 2007-2008 Interim that recommended an expansion in transmission across Montana through Bresnan Communications and also approved the consolidation of the budget.
- In Summer 2008, doubled the number of media access to audio and video feeds in all Capitol committee rooms, the House, and the Senate.
- In 2008, an Alternative Procurement Method Request for a terrestrial network with transmission and television providers throughout the state was denied by the Department of Administration. The LSD had planned to contract separately with VisionNet, Bresnan Communications, and Mid-Rivers Communications for transmission circuits and, in the case of VisionNet, for centralized maintenance and monitoring.
- A Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) was entered with the State Information Technology Services Division as part of Statewide Transport Services Contract with Bresnan: \$34,170/month for up to 100 sites, original MOU from 1/1/2009 through 6/30/2009, extended through October 2009.
- Transmission and distribution was expanded for the 2009 Session (FY 2009) to communities not reached during the 2007 legislative session. Existing funding was augmented with funding in the feed bill (LSD) for the 2009 Legislature.
- For the 2009 Session: the first satellite transmission through cable added 5 communities:

Red Lodge, Hardin, Forsyth, Big Timber, and Laurel for a total of 55 sites and 77 communities.

- In the 2009 Session, TVMT funding was consolidated under a New Proposal to make funding more predictable and to enable planning.
- For the 2011 biennium (including the 2009-2010 legislative interim), transmission and services were expanded. A 2011 biennium funding request, based on approval by the Legislative Council, was included in the agency's final 2011 budget request for consideration by the 2009 Legislature, and was passed.
- The Legislative Services Division issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) for transmission services for 10/1/09 thru 6/30/2011 at \$22,500/month. The result was a contract with Bresnan (now Charter): \$22,500/month + one-time startup costs for new sites.
- In 2010, Montana PBS added TVMT to their over-the-air broadcast lineup of channels, expanding coverage to over 200 communities statewide.
- In 2010, Legislative Services entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding with the Montana Historical Society for digital video and audio preservation planning. This included conversion of analog audio tapes (1997-2003), DV and Mini-DV recordings, digital audio to gold DVD's, transfer of audio files for archiving to OCLC (Online Computer Library Center, Inc.).
- In November of 2012, following the state procurement process, LSD contracted with Granicus, Inc., to provide streaming services (encoding and distribution) through the legislative website and also provide public access of copies for download, and archiving capabilities.
- By 2013, TVMT was included in the channel lineups, not only for Charter cable but also for Mid-Rivers Communications, 3 Rivers Communications, Tobacco Valley Communications, Skyview TV (Broadus), Nemont Communications, Lincoln Cable TV, and Valley County Television (Glasgow).
- For the 2013 and 2015 biennia, with Legislative Council approval and dedicated funds, continued upgrade and replacement to TVMT equipment in the Capitol - House and Senate, committee hearing rooms. The Legislative Council chose to use one-time only funds from the IT Reserve Account for both biennia.
- In September 2014, Charter consolidated cable TV channels and moved TVMT to Channel 191 statewide from over 20 separate channel locations across the state previously.
- In May 2015, Charter announced an upgrade of TVMT signal and picture quality to digital and upgraded the infrastructure to improve picture quality.