

...two roads diverged in a wood, and i  
i took the road less traveled by  
and that has made all the difference.

– Robert Frost

The US-93, Evaro to Polson project is a study in taking the road less traveled. Mired in decades of discussion and disagreement, efforts to improve the safety of this highway segment collided with efforts to protect tribal heritage. Traditional approaches to highway design concepts simply were not working. What was in order was a whole different approach, a road less traveled.

### innovation

Innovation isn't just about inventing something new. It can also be about using old, reliable tools in new ways for new purposes. Skillings-Connolly employed a partnering process normally used in forestalling disputes with construction contractors as a means of building trust and agreement among the three governments. Their use of traffic-modeling technology kept idea exploration results-oriented by providing immediate feedback on the relative effectiveness of various scenarios proposed. And sub-consultants were given a much broader role than is typically seen, which gave the three governments plenty of room to explore options.

### results

With the tools and approach set in place, the three governments were able to authorize Right-of-Way acquisition a month earlier than expected. Even more importantly, where disagreements in design concept still occur, there is a strong sense of trust among the three governments that, whatever the solution, it will be arrived at fairly, using good and complete information, and respecting the needs not only of those who drive along this highway, but those who live along it as well.



# US - 93 – the road less traveled

### spirit of place

Introducing the "Spirit of Place" concept offered a context for all three governments to discuss and address not only what was good and right for the highway, but also what was good and right for the region through which it travels. Spirit of Place is the whole continuum of what is seen, touched, felt and traveled through. The concept provided inspiration and guidance and led to design solutions uniquely suited to the special qualities of the area.



### relationship building

The relationship forged between the three governments is perhaps the most extraordinary construct of this entire effort. Entrenched in the merits of their own position to the detriment of the others, it seemed as though each of these three governments would never be able to see the merits of others' concerns. Skillings-Connolly saw full consensus as the keystone that would lock in the trust necessary to get things going. Every idea suggested remained on the table until all three governments agreed that it should come off. Getting out into the field to see first hand the issue of discussion also helped, and balancing the interests of all produced benefits for all.



US-93 – The Road Less Traveled  
Missoula and Lake Counties, Montana

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client

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