

Theme 3: Transportation

Transportation opportunities on and along the Upper Missouri River and its tributaries initiated the use of resources of the region, the exploration, and settlement of Montana and the Northwest.

Subthemes:

1. For thousands of years, Native Americans, including the Blackfeet, Assiniboine, and Gros Ventre, developed and utilized trails along the Upper Missouri and its tributaries to follow game, winter in protected sites, and trade with other tribes.
2. The river provided the means to navigate, explore, and seek a north-west passage by Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery expedition.
3. The Mullan Military Wagon Road completed the Northwest Passage through the Rocky Mountains, the Northwest's first interstate highway.
4. Steamboats transported passengers and tons of cargo from St. Louis through the Upper Missouri to Fort Benton.
5. Settlers, miners, and soldiers embarked on roads and trails from Fort Benton, head of navigation on the Upper Missouri and the birthplace of Montana. Roads and trails radiated from Fort Benton, like spokes on a wagon wheel, in every direction. The Mullan Road evolved into the Benton to Helena Road, while the Whoop-Up Trail led to the settlement of western Canada.
6. The arrival of Jim Hill's Great Northern Railroad completed the vision of a transcontinental railroad through the Upper Missouri River region.
7. During Prohibition in the United States, whiskey "flowed" south from Canada along the Bootlegger Trail to Great Falls and other distribution points.
8. Modern transportation routes including the interstate highway follow, connect, and cross the Upper Missouri River providing viable transportation routes for residents, goods and services, and visitors to the region.