

# Attractions for MSIP to Consider

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## **Introduction:**

MSIP's mission is to produce quality live theatrical plays with an emphasis on underserved, rural communities. We were given the task of investigating the patterns of attendance and how they relate to various factors and constraints. We will provide recommendations for the upcoming season that can help MSIP achieve its mission of exposing underserved, rural audiences to their shows. Our goal was to cover as many rural towns as possible in the timespan given with at least two days off per month, while covering costs and expenses with money made by MSIP shows. Small towns tend to have fewer people in attendance that leads to smaller donations, thus making it essential to also involve larger towns with more people and money. We tried adding as many small towns across Montana and surrounding areas as possible, while still making enough money to pay the crew of actors and technical staff for MSIP.

We had varying data that covered audience counts, attendance per capita rates, average donation amounts, type of play performed at each town, and show and weather histories. Modeling with this information gave us information to show MSIP staff where they can increase attendance rates and donations while supporting their mission statement. We analyzed the given data and have identified some factors that we think will increase their success with this mission statement.

## **Methodology:**

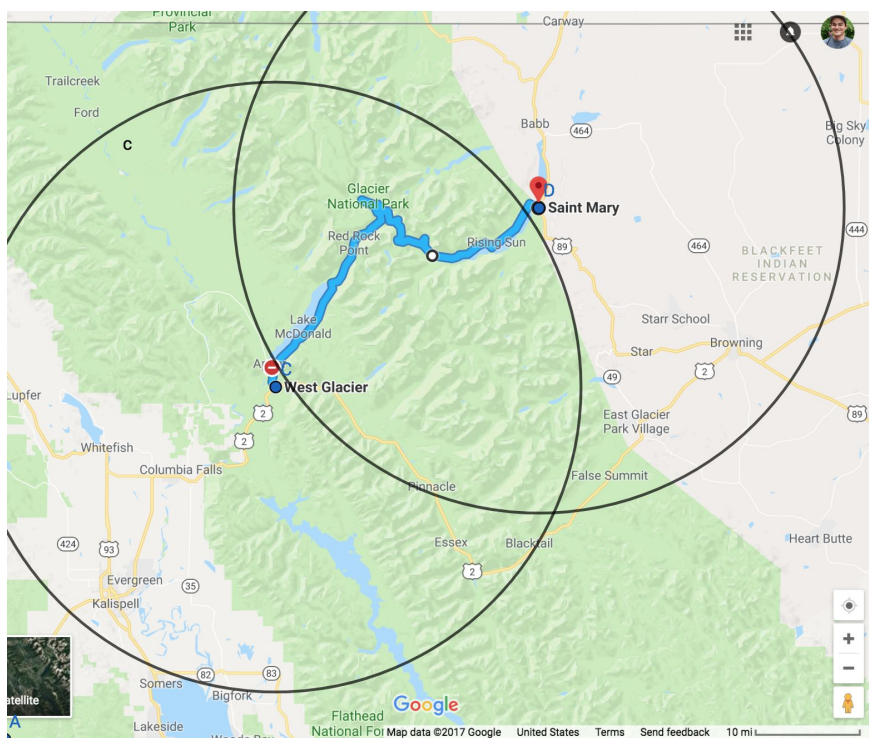
Our initial thought was to look at the attendance data and try to pinpoint what areas had higher attendance rates and why. When looking at the data we found that Cook City and Chico had elevated attendance rates compared to their city populations. We looked at the locations of each of those towns and found they are all relatively closed to Yellowstone National Park. We then thought about other rural towns and their proximity to national parks or other factors that would make these rural towns "destinations" during the summer months. So we looked at various festivals, lakes, parks, and other typical Montana destination factors.

Our first assumption is that we expect an increase in attendance in rural areas due to the factors listed above. This can be supported by the data we have in Dataset 1 under the "percent of town at show" tab. We decided to rank each town based on the attractions in or around the town. A rank of 1 was given to towns that have a high influx of people due to their attractions. A rank of 3 was given to towns that did not have much to offer in the way of attractions. Finally a 2 was given to the towns that were somewhere in the middle. You can see this ranking and the justifications for each in the Appendix A. If MSIP were to have a show in more rural towns ranked 1 or 2, you would not only be serving rural communities, as per the mission statement, but also be able to increase audience counts and donations to help with the costs associated with performing during the summer. We also choose to not include towns with a population of 8,000+ because we do recognize that these percentages will be lower but the attendance and donations are generally higher. We view these cities as necessary destinations for MSIP to help with costs associated with performances. A population of fewer than 8,000 also happens to be what we considered the cutoff for rural communities in Montana.

Our second assumption is that people in rural Montana are more willing to travel for entertainment than in areas more heavily populated. We ultimately decided that a 30 mile radius would sufficiently represent this notion. You will see below our recommendations for rural areas like southeastern Montana.

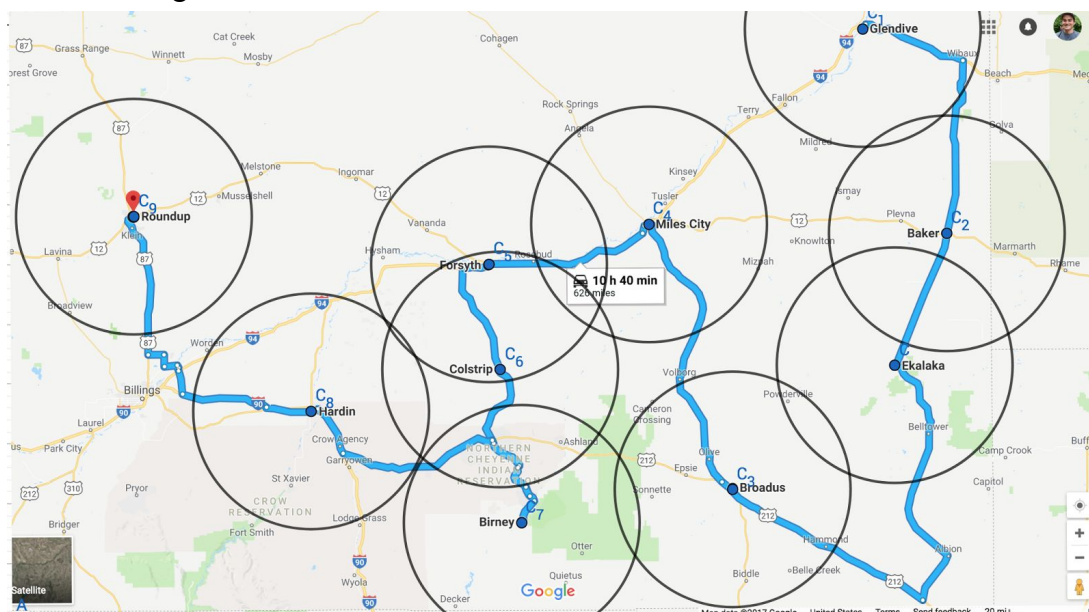
### Recommendations:

After specifying our considerations to tourist attractions, we are proposing to add West Glacier and St. Mary as part of the show route. Evidence gathered from Cooke City, Chico, and West Yellowstone gave us reason to believe Yellowstone National Park, along with other tourist attractions, draws in more people for the MSIP shows. We think having shows in West Glacier and St. Mary will complement this data and draw in both nearby rural Montanans and tourists. The type of show at each location should be different so people can have the opportunity to see both if desired (we discuss this idea more in detail later on). As seen below, we believe people inside these two circles have the opportunity to view at least one MSIP play. This includes at least 14 towns and potentially thousands of tourists. If the weather is rainy, we have identified two accommodation possibilities: Stone Fly Lounge in Coram (150 capacity) and the Moccasin room in Columbia Falls (250 capacity). MSIP could also work out a deal moving to Whitefish or Kalispell if needed.

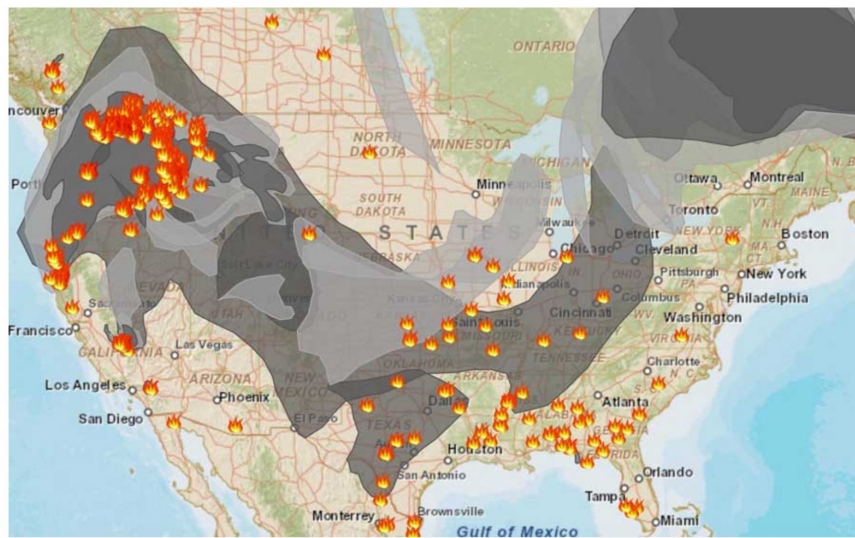
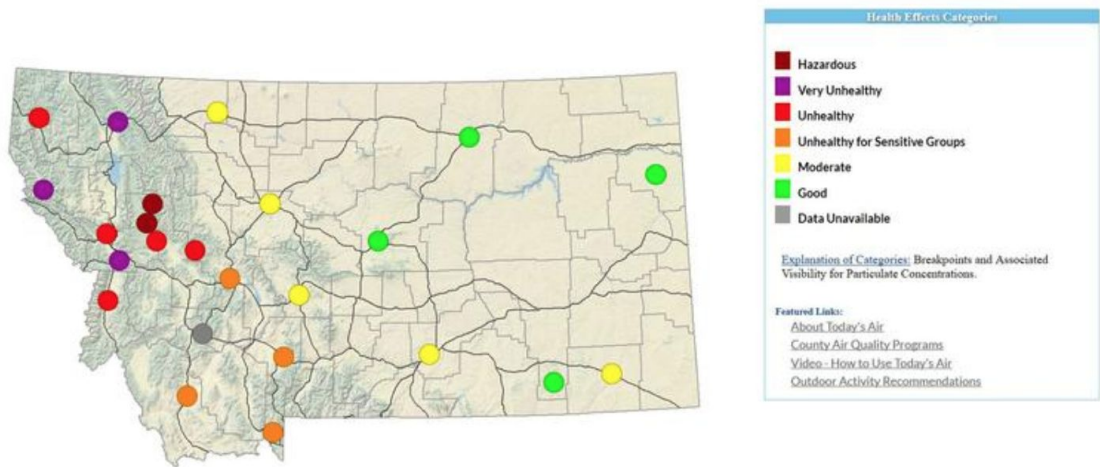


We saw a decline in numbers in Gardiner, which goes again our model. We aren't sure if this is because Gardiner always got one type of show, or just an overall decline in interest. We also wonder how MSIP markets their shows. Marketing near Gardiner and in and around Yellowstone National Park may attract a stronger audience of tourists. This would help bring in donations and raise the number of people exposed to MSIP.

In the southeast corner of Montana, we propose taking out Beach, ND, while adding Baker, MT and Broadus, MT. This will help MSIP cover a larger portion of rural Montana and could take out driving times if done in the order we have below.



These are 30 mile radius circles we assume people are willing to drive to view the MSIP plays in rural montana. We originally were trying to find towns within the 30 mile radii to put on one of each style of play, but after viewing this image, we decided the towns were too spread out. There are two towns (Colstrip and Forsyth) that are within thirty miles, so we suggest giving Forsyth a comedy and Colstrip a tragedy. We chose Forsyth to have a comedy because they've had a tragedy the last two years. Based on this picture, Beach, ND is just outside Glendive's circle, but isn't located in Montana. Based on MSIP's mission, we think adding in two rural communities in Montana is worth taking out one rural community outside Montana (Beach). Assuming people are willing to drive 30 miles to view an MSIP play in rural montana, adding Baker and Broadus covers a much larger area of Montana's rural communities than before, giving more opportunity for people living in or near 11 small communities to view an MSIP play. We are also proposing covering this portion of Montana later in the summer when the smoke tends to be worse around Montana. Below we have a picture of smoke data during the end of August last year. This shows the eastern region of Montana with cleaner air than the rest of Montana.



Map of smoke from wildfires, morning of August 24, 2015.





We know making this shift in the tour schedule may upset a lot of towns, but we believe a one-time change will affect the whole state tremendously in a positive manner. Going to eastern Montana first protects the plays from rain, but it also forces the plays into smokey regions at the end of the summer. We think MSIP should visit smaller towns in central and western Montana in late June and early July. Smaller towns have more proportional accommodations for inclement weather. We are assuming this because of Missoula's incapability to provide a large enough accommodation for their audience last year. Based on multiple data sources, there isn't usually a rain threat after July 4th, so we think MSIP could travel from Bozeman toward Glacier National park and hit enough small towns to potentially avoid rainy weather. Then they can start stopping at all (small and large) towns after those few days of potentially poor weather.

The next portion of our model has to do with the towns and their ranking according to their proximity to summer attractions. Our model shows that towns with a better attraction ranking have a higher percentage of the town attending the performances, with towns ranking a 1 averaging 14-15%, towns ranking a 2 averaging 9-10%, and towns with a ranking of 3 averaging 5-6% of their populations over the last two years. With this in mind, we propose adding West Glacier and St. Mary to the performance schedule. Both of these small towns have a huge influx of people during the summer since they are close to Glacier National Park. Both of these towns would rank a 1 in our model of towns and their "attraction ranking." It is easy to see that the small towns with an attraction ranking of 1 get a higher percentage of the town to attend the MSIP performances in general. We believe this is due to the tourists in the area of the town. Adding these towns will align with MSIP's mission statement of serving rural towns in Montana while tapping into the resources that are gained through tourism in these areas.

We also believe a similar model can be used for towns that have festivals or fairs in the area. In particular, White Sulphur Springs has its annual Red Ants Pants Festival which seems to be a good fit for MSIP. Red Ants Pants is mostly a music festival, however we believe this could be an opportunity to introduce many people from rural Montana to Shakespeare. It could also be marketed as a break from the music and a change of pace. Another opportunity to increase attendance would be performing in the larger towns during their state and county fairs. Fairs tend to bring in a lot of people from rural areas surrounding the town the fair is in. This helps MSIP to serve a large population of people from rural areas. MSIP would benefit from performing in the following towns due to this notion:

Missoula - Western Montana Fair  
Great Falls - Montana State Fair  
Billings - Montana Fair  
Bozeman - Sweet Pea Fest (already done) and Big Sky Country State Fair

Our final recommendation is to add three towns, that is, West Glacier, St. Mary, and Broadus. We are also proposing to cut Liberty Lake, one tragedy in Bozeman in the beginning, and family and graduate housing at the end of the summer. Liberty Lake is a long drive from

anywhere else MSIP tours, it's not a rural community, it has a lot of access to Spokane and Coeur d'Alene, and it hasn't made much money lately. One tragedy in Bozeman the last two years has had less than 300 people at it. This would be cutting approximately \$700, but we believe that can be made up near Glacier National Park if the show is advertised well. We decided to cut family and graduate housing's show because Bozeman already has so many shows and this show doesn't go with MSIP's mission statement. We assume MSIP is targeting new graduate families, but these families don't donate very much, and there aren't very many that typically attend this show. We also assume these students/families will be around for more than one year, so they can attend the shows the next summer. By cutting these towns, MSIP will make room for three more rural communities with high potential according to our model.

## References:

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## Appendix A

COMMUNITY	Rank	Justification	2016 Percentages	2017 Percentages
BEACH ND	3		5.73%	5.16%
BIG TIMBER	3			
BIRNEY	3			
COLSTRIP	3			
COLUMBUS	3			
CONRAD	3			
DEER LODGE	3			
DILLON	3			
EKALAKA	3			
FORSYTH	3			
LENDIVE	3			
HARDIN	3			
HOBSON-UTICA	3			
LAUREL	3			
LEWISTOWN	3			
ALTA	3			
LES CITY	3			
POWELL WY	3			
OUNDUP	3			
SIDNEY	3			
OUT CREEK	3			
WHITEHALL	3			
WOLF POINT	3			
WORLAND WY	3			
ABSAROKEE	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>	9.10%	10.01%
ANACONDA	2	<i>Proximity to Georgetown Lake</i>		
BOULDER	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
CHARLO	2	<i>Proximity to Flathead Lake</i>		
CHOTEAU	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
CODY WY	2	<i>Proximity to YNP</i>		
CUT BANK	2	<i>Proximity to GNP and Outdoor Rec</i>		
DRIGGS ID	2	<i>Proximity to Grand Teton and Outdoor Rec</i>		
EUREKA	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
FORT BENTON	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
HAMILTON	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
LIBBY	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
LIVINGSTON	2	<i>Proximity to YNP and Outdoor Rec</i>		
ANHATTAN	2	<i>Outdoor Rec/Potato Fest</i>		
PLAINS	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
ED LODGE	2	<i>Proximity to YNP/Beartooth Highway</i>		
ST IGNATIUS	2	<i>Proximity to Flathead Lake</i>		
SUPERIOR	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
HAYNE WY	2	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
OWNSEND	2	<i>Proximity to Canyon Ferry</i>		
BIG SKY	1	<i>Proximity to YNP and Outdoor Rec</i>	14.23%	14.58%
CHICO	1	<i>Proximity to YNP, Hot Springs and Outdoor Rec</i>		
COOKE CITY-SILVER GATE	1	<i>Proximity to YNP</i>		
SALMON ID	1	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
SANDPOINT ID	1	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
SEELEY LAKE	1	<i>Outdoor Rec</i>		
WEST YELLOWSTONE	1	<i>Proximity to YNP</i>		

*\*outdoor rec includes fishing, boating, hiking, biking, fairs, and other possible attractions*

BELGRADE  
BILLINGS  
BILLINGS  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BOZEMAN  
BUTTE  
EAT FALLS  
EAT FALLS  
HELENA  
HELENA  
LIBERTY LAKE WA  
SSOULA  
SSOULA  
POCATELLO ID  
POCATELLO ID  
SHERIDAN WY  
SWEET PEA  
SWEET PEA