

To:
City of Billings
Yellowstone County Commissioners
Montana Department of Transportation

Re: September 12, 2025 Letter Regarding the Memorial for Savannah Rose Robinson

Dear Officials,

I am writing in response to a letter dated September 12, 2025, signed by Mr. Paul Khera of Billings Logan International Airport and Mr. Michael D. Taylor of the Montana Department of Transportation. This letter was directed to my daughter's grieving mother concerning the memorial I placed at the site where my daughter, **Savannah Rose Robinson**, was tragically killed by an impaired motorcycle driver on May 26, 2025.

First, I must express my deep concern with the manner in which this matter was handled. Directing such correspondence to my daughter's grieving mother inflicted unnecessary pain during an already devastating period.

Beyond the communication, I respectfully raise the following issues:

- **Highway Safety:** The absence of a guardrail at the site is a critical concern. A guardrail may have prevented my daughter's death and could still protect other motorists.
- **Motorcycle Safety Laws:** The legal BAC limit is identical for motorcycles and cars (.08), despite the heightened risk associated with operating motorcycles under impairment.
- **Liability Insurance:** Motorcycles are not required to carry liability insurance, leaving families unprotected in cases of tragedy.
- **Impaired Driving Accountability:** When drivers are under the influence of both drugs and alcohol, they are not charged separately for each. This loophole diminishes accountability.
- **Highway Maintenance Neglect:** Large rocks were left behind from highway construction. The rock my daughter's head struck should never have remained in place. I removed it myself after the accident—too late to save her life.

The letter also claimed that my daughter's memorial violates Montana Code Title 60, Chapter 6, and poses a distraction to motorists. Respectfully, if a modest memorial is deemed a distraction, then why are large city-installed steel statues along the rims not held to the same standard? Furthermore, the letter advised me to apply for a white cross marker, overlooking the fact that such a marker has already stood at the site for more than two months.

This memorial is not an obstruction, nor is it a careless placement. It is the last physical connection I have to my daughter at the place where her life was taken. Removing it would compound my family's grief without serving any meaningful public benefit.

I am not seeking conflict. I am asking for compassion, accountability, and consistency. I urge your offices to:

1. Reconsider policies that treat grieving families with insensitivity when establishing roadside memorials.
2. Allow my daughter's memorial to remain in place as it stands today.
3. Address the safety hazards at this location and reevaluate Montana laws concerning motorcycle safety, liability insurance, and impaired driving accountability.

My family and I live every day with the pain of this loss. The memorial is a small but deeply meaningful way to honor Savannah's life. I respectfully request that you allow it to remain.

Respectfully,

Lemuel Robinson





Billings Logan International Airport
Aviation and Transit Department
1901 Terminal Circle, Room 216
Billings, MT 59105
P 406-657-8495

Travel With Us

September 12, 2025

Darlene Vanek
2818 8th Avenue South
Billings, Montana 59101



Dear Ms. Vanek:

Please accept our deepest condolences for the loss of your daughter. We understand that this is an incredibly difficult time, and we recognize the importance of honoring her memory.

It has come to our attention that a memorial is being constructed on property owned by the City of Billings and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). We also understand that additional work has recently been done at the site. While we truly respect your desire to create a meaningful tribute, we must inform you that such installations are not permitted under Montana Code Annotated Title 60, Chapter 6, unless a formal encroachment permit has been issued.

In addition, we have received concerns that the memorial may pose a distraction or safety hazard to passing motorists. For these reasons, we must respectfully ask that all unpermitted structures be removed within 30 days, no later than October 17, 2025.

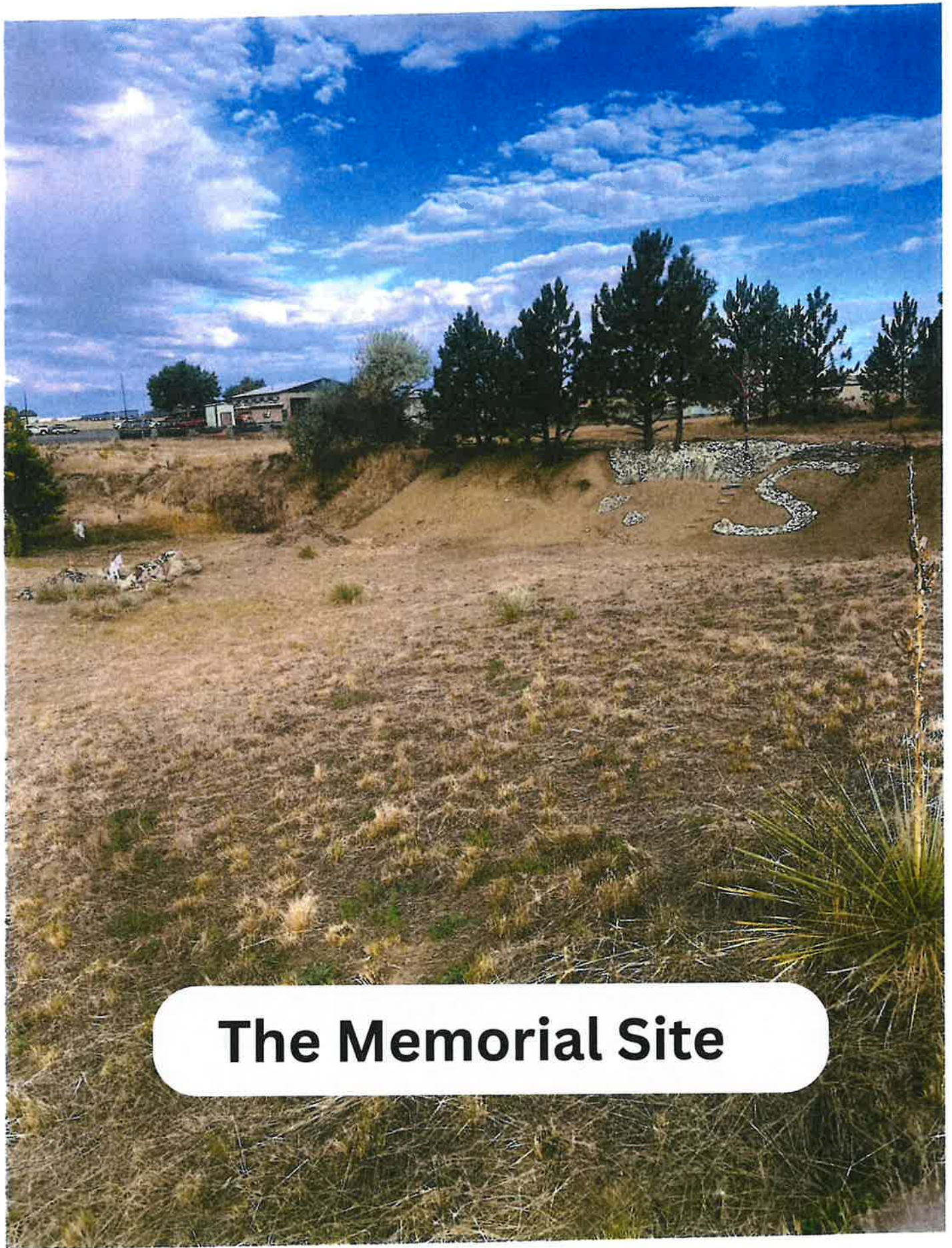
That said, we want to support your efforts to commemorate your daughter in a way that is both meaningful and compliant with state regulations. The Montana Department of Transportation has indicated a willingness to approve a Highway Fatality Marker at the site, provided it is coordinated through the American Legion of Montana. This program has long served as a respectful and recognized way to honor lives lost on Montana's roads. You can find more information and contact details for the program at:
<http://mtlegion.org/highwayfatalitymarkers.html>

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or need assistance with this process. Again, we extend our heartfelt sympathy to you and your family.

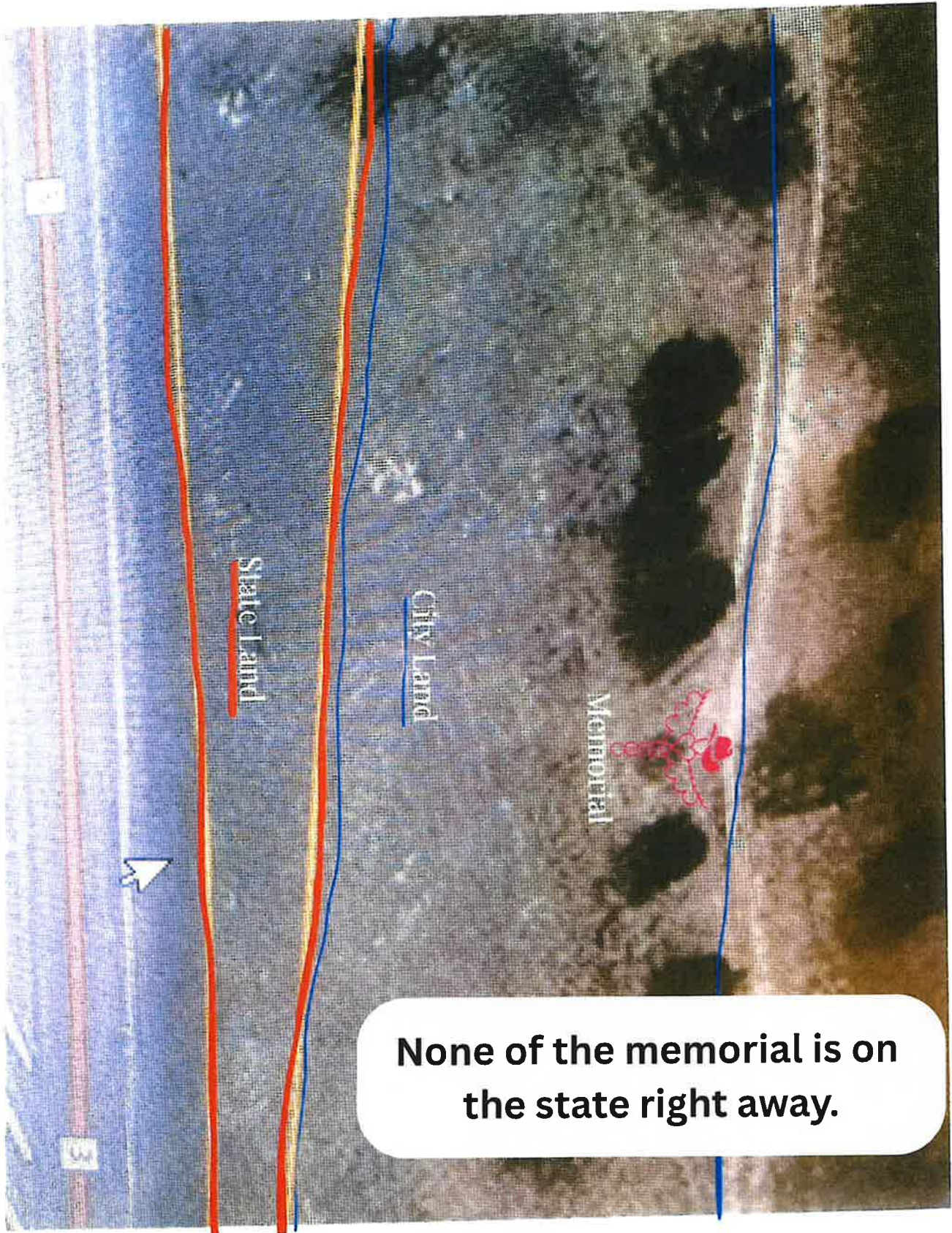
Sincerely,

Paul Khera, A.A.E., ACE
Assistant Aviation Director
Billings-Logan International Airport

Michael D. Taylor, P.E.
District Administrator
Montana Department of Transportation



The Memorial Site



**None of the memorial is on
the state right away.**



Article in the Billings Gazette

Lem Robinson built an elaborate memorial to his daughter Savannah along Highway 3 west of the Billings airport. The site includes river rock, a cross titled "Angel of the Rims" and a site for a bench. The work is being done for a gathering of Savannah's friends on Saturday, September 6, at 1 p.m. The 22-year-old died when the driver of a motorcycle she was riding on left the road and crashed on May 26.

LARRY MAYER Billings Gazette

The Angel of the Rims

