

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY BOARD OF PLANNING

CITY-COUNTY PLANNING DIVISION
2825 3RD AVENUE NORTH, 4TH FLOOR
BILLINGS, MONTANA 59101
PHONE: (406)247-8676 FAX: (406) 657-8327



June 25, 2019

Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for the 2019 BUILD Discretionary Grant: Northwest Billings
Connector/Marathon Loop, Billings Montana

Dear Ms. Chao:

I am writing this letter to express the Yellowstone County Board of Planning's support for the City of Billings Montana Northwest Billings Connector/Marathon Loop request for 2019 DOT BUILD Discretionary grant to construct the final components of the Northwest Billings Connector/Marathon Loop project. The Planning Board is an integral part of the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization, representing the City and County in reviewing and recommending transportation planning and project programming for Billings and the surrounding areas to our elected officials.

The Planning Board has reviewed and approved multiple studies that identify this program of projects, including the Rims to Valley Bike/Ped Feasibility Study for the Stage Coach Trail, and the Zoo Montana to Riverfront Park Trail Feasibility Study and the Yellowstone Riverfront Trail Feasibility Study for the trail segments completing the Marathon Loop in south and west Billings. The Planning Board also approved the 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trail Master Plan Update to improve mobility and recreation opportunities in the Billings community.

The Northwest Billings Connector/Marathon Loop is a multimodal system of roadway and separated non-motorized parkways intended to provide the following benefits:

- Provide vehicle and non-motorized alternatives to the congested artery of 6th Avenue/4th Avenue/3rd Avenue/1st Avenue that provides the primary connectivity between areas of Billings and Billings Heights.
- Provides separate facilities to reduce conflicts between motorized and non-motorized modes within the compressed artery that connects Billing and Billings Heights. Present conflicts are observed in vehicle-pedestrian and/or vehicle-bicycle crashes that result in injuries, including fatalities.

- Enhanced active transportation and recreation-based economic opportunities associated with the Marathon Loop, which when complete will provide a unique full marathon circuit showcasing the vistas of Billings.

Construction of the Northwest Billings Connector/Marathon Loop will move our community forward in developing a safe and accessible transportation system, construction of interconnected sidewalks and trails, and provide safe transportation choices for Billings' residents, businesses and visitors. The completion of the Northwest Billings Connector/Marathon Loop will greatly benefit our community and the Planning Board is in full support.

Sincerely,

Darell Tunnicliff, President
Yellowstone County Board of Planning