



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 27, 2020 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am

Virtual Conference Format

Live Coverage was available here: <https://www.facebook.com/Billings-Planning-Community-Services-Department-1738982159659260/> Recording is also available on same Facebook page link.

DRAFT

Call to order: Ed Gulick, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:30 am

Members present: Anna O'Donnell, City; Liana Susott, County; Scott Barber, City, Kristi Drake; Rose Cook, County.

Others present: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; Karen Groulak-McCord, Montana Department of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator; Bill Dutcher, Metra Park General Manager; Tim Goodrich, Metra Park Assistant General Manager; Debi Meling, City Engineer and acting co-Public Works Director.

Public Comment Period:

- a. **Comments on items not on the agenda and request to add items to future agendas –**
None.
- b. **Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –**
None.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of September 22, 2020: Liana Susott, BPAC member, motioned to approve the minutes, Rose Cook, BPAC Member, seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business:

Metra Park Plans: Bill Dutcher, Metra Park General Manager and Tim Goodrich, Metra Park Assistant General Manager, gave a presentation about Metra Park and the changes happening there. The grandstands are being torn down. The carnival lot was improved this summer and will be repaved when the weather allows. 1st Ave. N and Main Street is being reconstructed. Master planning has begun and the consultants are interviewing stakeholders to get input. One idea is to expand the Expo center.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has about half a billion dollars of projects going in around the general area, with the largest one being the bypass. There will be a slip lane at 1st Ave. N and Expo Drive, and there may be a signal installed at the south entrance of Metra Park which will help improve traffic. Within the Metra Park campus, they are hoping to move people around the area more efficiently and are looking at a pedestrian walkway as part of the master plan. There may be a

bike/ped bridge over Main Street which could connect the Heights to downtown as well as to the East Billings Urban Renewal District.

Liana asked about adding a track and field area for Billings Public Schools. Tim said they were looking at the economic benefits of that and that it was still an option.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator from Montana Department of Transportation (MDT):

Karen Groulak-McCord, the new Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator from MDT, introduced herself. Ed suggested having her join a BPAC meeting once a year to help maintain contact.

Public Works Capital Improvement Plan (CIP): Debi Meling, City Engineer and acting co-Public Works Director, gave presentation about the CIP.

During FY20: Radford square got sidewalks, King Ave. E got a trail on one side and sidewalks on the other, and the PAVER program was used to put bike lanes on Lake Elmo and 17th St. W. In addition, S. 24th and Overland got a new signal and Grand and Virginia has better detection at its signal and better timing.

There is \$100,000 in the CIP for enhanced crossings. This construction season, these projects included crossings at Shiloh, Barrett Rd. at the Kiwanis Trail, Rimrock and Arvin, and Lake Elmo and Milton. The sidewalk project was delayed until next construction season.

During FY21, Songbird and Wicks from Bench to Hawthorne will be done, as will 32nd St. W from King to Gable. For new signals, 2 of the three projects will be completed: Rimrock and Virginia, Grand and 32nd, or King Ave. W and 36th St. W. They will do enhanced crossings again. The bike boulevard will be constructed. Sidewalk will be installed on Aronson from Hilltop to Nutter, 11th Ave N from 27th to 22nd, and 24th St. W from Lewis to Broadwater.

The proposed projects for FY22 – FY26 include paving streets and adding sidewalk, curb, and gutter in the SBURA area (bounded by Underpass/State to King Ave. East). Primarily, this will be around the optimist park area. Other projects include 36th St. W from Central to Broadwater, Broadwater from Vermillion to Shiloh, the Inner Belt Loop, Mullowney Ln., Wicks Ln. from Bitterroot to Hawthorne, and the 32nd St. W corridor-multi-year project.

Sidewalk/trail/bike boulevard projects for FY22-FY26 will include:

- 6th Ave. Multi-use trail (currently in FY24, but will be dependent on adjacent MDT project)
- Bike Boulevard in FY24: 24th St. W/Arvin
- FY 26: 2nd and 3rd Aves. N bike lanes downtown. May be pushed up with chip sealing.
- Pedestrian crossing of Expo (depends when development occurs)
- Annual intersections will include King and 36th, Rimrock and Virginia, and Grand and 32nd
- Annual missing sidewalks (Aronson, 11th, N. 24th)
- Annual ADA (did 4th Ave. N, also open to ideas)
- Gravel Streets-building streets and add sidewalks. They are assessed to neighboring property owners, so they have to wait for groups to say agree to participate
- Annual pedestrian crossings-trying to get all of crossings at schools taken care of
- Annual paver project for crack sealing, overlay, and chip seals– Hilltop, Lampman, 2nd and 3rd Aves. N

Ed Gulick, BPAC Chair, asked if street conversions on 2nd and 3rd would happen with the chip sealing. Debi said chip sealing is happening due to maintenance, but they may not have funding for the street conversion right away. Either way, bike lanes will fit in. Ed asked about using gas tax for the two-way conversion. Debi said there is always great demand for gas tax money for sidewalks and crossing. The difficult part about using gas tax money for two-way conversion is that the conversion

does not necessarily improve traffic flow, which is what the money has been used for, so there would have to be a discussion of this.

Anna O'Donnell, BPAC member, brought up the missing sidewalk around 5th and Rimrock. Debi said Poly is also missing some sidewalk and they have received a lot of questions about it.

Anna also brought up a needed crosswalk to Cameron Park at Beth and Rimrock. Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, can share the list from the last meeting with crosswalk suggestions with Debi.

Kristi Drake, BPAC member, asked if BPAC could help pick out enhanced crossings for CIP projects. Debi said BPAC could send a list of suggestions every year by November 15 for crosswalks, enhanced crossings, and accessible ramps. The Engineering Division also talks to the Parks Department, schools, and looks for paths where people are walking but don't have a sidewalk or ramp. Debi will have Erin reach out when he is putting the list together for sidewalks, crossings, ramps, etc.

Kristi asked Debi what they could do with additional funding for active transportation. There is currently \$100,000 available for crossings. Enhanced crossings are about \$15,000 so they add about 5 per year. Sidewalks are assessed to adjacent property owners, and there are not that many Billings contractors who can do sidewalks. As a result, we have probably maximized what can do on sidewalks each year. She said there is capacity to put in additional trails each year. In regards to Safe Routes to School, Billings is chipping away at projects.

Anna asked about stoplights at Rimrock and Virginia and rimrock and Rehberg. Rimrock and Virginia will get done this year or next year. MDT is requiring Public Works to do more justification to put signals on urban routes (in this case, the road is owned by MDT but maintained by the City), so they have to get approval from MDT first.

Debi will bring the bicycle boulevard design to BPAC. Public Works wants it to be something everyone is happy with since it is the first one. One of the positive impacts of the bicycle boulevard is that it will help local streets to stay local.

The N 29th and N 30th Streets 1-way to 2-way street conversions were funded through the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. Right now, Public Works is waiting on equipment to do the conversion, but it has been approved by City Council.

A BPAC member asked if the Skyline trail could go in before the Inner Belt Loop, as both projects were funded by the BUILD grant. The Skyline trail could be built as early as next year as long as we get the parking lots designed and the agreement with the federal DOT is ready to go.

Utility Bill Funding

Billings TrailNet has been discussing the need for trails and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and how to fund these projects. They are encouraging the City to consider adding an optional fee to the utility bill/solid waste bill to fund SRTS and trails. Jennifer Duray, co-acting Public Works Director, is putting together the presentation. They are talking about using funds for construction and reconstruction of SRTS, approved yearly. It will be presented as an opt-out fee. Debi can send a priority list of projects that Engineering still wants to work on.

BPAC suggested having students or PTA members speak at City Council in favor of the funding. Presenting a list of projects the funding could go towards would be beneficial. There would have to be a division of how much funding was going to SRTS vs. trails. Ed, Scott, and Anna volunteered to help develop a list of capital projects that the funding could go towards.

Motion: Rose Cook, BPAC member, moved to have BPAC draft a letter for review in support of utility bill funding that will be held until a time when it is needed. Scott Barber, BPAC member, seconded and the motion passed with support from all members, except for Kristi who recused herself from the vote as she is also the Executive Director of Billings TrailNet.

Schedule combined November/December meeting: Will meet at 11:30 at 1st of Dec.

Future agenda items:

Update on utility bill funding

Items that were postponed from this agenda including 5th Ave. N Corridor Feasibility Study and Bike and Scooter Share Feasibility Study.

Complete Streets Progress Report Update

BPAC Project Prioritization

Other business: Kristi mentioned that the business owners on Montana Ave. have signed a petition saying they want angled parking instead of bike lanes in response to the Downtown Traffic Study. She wondered when a street conversion would move forward. Elyse will check on timing of a possible conversion, but said there is no funding currently identified for the project and Montana is a MDT route which will add additional time to any future projects. Ed asked for more information on the petition.

Anna went over to the KIM bike event at McKinley and enjoyed seeing how the event works.

Meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.