



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 23, 2021 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: Scott Barber, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:30 am

Members present: Anna O'Donnell, City; Liana Susott, County; Kristi Drake, City; Dorothy Dupree, County; Rose Cook, County; Ed Gulick, Planning Board.

Others present: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; Robbin Bartley, Administrative Support.

Scott Barber, BPAC Chair, moved to add I-90 bridges to agenda. Rose Cook, BPAC member, seconded. Anna O'Donnell, BPAC Vice-Chair, asked if there would be time and who would give the update. Kristi Drake, BPAC member, said she could give an update. The motion passed unanimously.

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 –**
A resident emailed Mayor Cole to say that it is hard to walk around Billings during the winter. Snow shoveling is currently required within 24 hours of a snow event, but this code is not actively enforced. Enforcement is based on complaint. The City doesn't currently have the staff to enforce proactively. BPAC wanted to add this topic to the agenda next month. Kristi also wanted to talk about how people get in touch with the City to share concerns.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of January 26, 2021: Ed Gulick, BPAC member, motioned to approve the minutes. Kristi Drake, BPAC member, seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Bike and Scooter Share Feasibility Study

Last meeting, Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, gave the presentation on the Bike and Scooter Share Feasibility Study. BPAC discussed sending a letter in support of bike/scooter share to City Council which is why it was put on the agenda for this month. The study is currently going through the review process and was approved by the Technical Advisory Committee, Planning

Board, City Council, and the County Commissioners. The study was approved by City Council by one vote. Approving the study does not commit the City to implementing bike/scooter share right now.

Kristi asked why BPAC waited until after the study went to City Council to send a letter about the bike/scooter share study. Elyse said that was not what BPAC had done in the past, but it was something they could look at doing in the future.

Ed asked if bike/scooter share implementation would have to be brought forward by Council Initiative. Elyse said she was not sure and would have to learn more to answer the question.

Dorothy Dupree, BPAC member, suggested putting forth suggestions as advisory committee more proactively.

Ed thought that downtown might need to be more bike friendly before bike/scooter share goes into place, but bike/scooter share could be rolled out hand-in-hand with new infrastructure.

The discussion at the last meeting was that BPAC would send a letter to Council saying they support the plan, but that more bicycle infrastructure needs to be implemented first. The letter should also state where the funding for the study came from.

Moving forward, BPAC wants to send a letter to the governing bodies before plans go for adoption. The group also suggested attending meetings via Zoom or in person to speak in favor of plans.

Dorothy moved to send a letter to City Council before March 18 about bike share. Ed seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

During public comment, Councilmember Penny Ronning called in and thanked BPAC members for their service. She suggested a public information officer would help with spreading information. She cautioned mentioning scooter share in the letter as it was not heavily recommended in the study and said emphasizing bike share would be better. She encouraged calling Council, not just emailing. Councilmembers get so many emails that calls are good. Council counts on the help of advisory members as council deals with so much.

New Business:

Complete Streets Progress Report

Elyse shared information from the 2020 Complete Streets Progress Report. There is no one design for a complete street, but they can include a variety of elements including sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, transit stops, median islands, safe crossings, curb extensions, etc. The idea is to build streets that make it safe for everyone to get to their everyday destinations.

The City of Billings policy was adopted in 2011 and updated in 2016.

Performance measures from the report included bicycle and pedestrian counts and crashes, sidewalk inventory, and a graph of the number of miles of trails and bike lanes added each year in Billings. Of note, fatal crashes involving pedestrians across the county reached record numbers across the country in 2018, as they did in Billings. Crashes involving bicyclists have decreased slightly even with more people bicycling. There are just under 50 miles of shared use paths in Billings. Funding has decreased due to changes in a federal program. Data shows that transit continues to be an essential service for students, people with disabilities, and seniors.

The Community Health Needs Assessment provides data from Yellowstone County every three years and shows that more people are overweight and fewer people are meeting physical activity

recommendations than 3 years ago. Active transportation can be a way to help improve these numbers.

Anna asked if there was data available to track the connection between obesity and mental health in Yellowstone County. Elyse directed her to the Yellowstone County Community Health Needs Assessment.

I90 Yellowstone River Project Billings

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is going to be rebuilding the I-90 bridge. Billings TrailNet began discussing this issue with MDT in 2013 and requested bike/ped be added onto the bridge. No bike/ped facilities are currently included. The bridge is designed and MDT is planning to build it starting this fall.

Kristi would like to have BPAC address this. Anna agrees that infrastructure needs to include everyone and agrees on sending a letter.

There was interest in having a rendering of what bike/ped facilities on the bridge would look like, but that might be hard to get as the City is not the client for the project.

MDT also said that they were planning to close the Jim Dutcher trail for two years during the bridge construction.

Pam Ellis called in during public comment and said that the Bypass was on the drawing board for twenty years. Pam donated a bench to Dover Park and asked them what they were going to do about the bridge coming through their park. That got the river group going and the reason there is bike/ped access at all on the bridge is because Yellowstone River Parks Association got it going. She said this is a 20-year plan that was funded by the federal government and that BPAC was late to the party. Councilmembers Ewalt and Neese were on the Heights task force all along. There were multiple public meetings. She said BPAC could go ahead with a letter, but with 20 years of planning they were too late.

BPAC members discussed that the bridge Ms. Ellis called in about was a different bridge than the one they were talking about.

Ed moved to create a letter to the City and County advising them to contact MDT and say that closing down the Jim Dutcher trail for two years is unacceptable and to investigate the opportunity to have a multiuse path option on the side of the interstate bridge. Dorothy seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Future agenda items:

Presentation on 27th St. crossing

Sending a letter of recommendation to City Council to find bike/ped infrastructure.

Other business:

- HB420- Requires MDT to adopt rules defining and specifying standards for designated bicycle lanes and bicycle routes. Billings Public Works Director suggests referencing national standards such as AASHTO and NACTO instead.

Adjournment

Ed moved to adjourn, Kristi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.