

# **POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**

## **Virtual Video Conference**

MINUTES –NOVEMBER 17, 2020

APPROVED BY A MOTION FEBRUARY 16, 2021

### **NOTICE**

Due to COVID-19, the meeting will held through a virtual platform. Public comment will be taken only during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda. Comments may be sent to Board via email before 10:00 AM on Tuesday, November 17, 2020. All e-mails received prior to this time will be read into the record for the public hearing.

**Member Participants:** Chairman Bill Cole, Mayor, City of Billings; Denis Pitman, Vice Chairman, Board of County Commissioners; Rod Nelson, MDT District Office; Planning Board President Woody Woods, Yellowstone County Planning Board

**Staff Participants:** Wyeth Friday, Director, Planning and Community Services; Manager; Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, Planning & Community Services Department; Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk, Erica Wiley, Admin, BOCC

**Other Participants:** John Ostlund, Yellowstone County Commissioner; Stefan Streeter, HDR; Lisa L Gray, HDR; Tim Erickson, HDR. Michael Taylor, MDT District Engineering Services Supervisor

**1. Call to Order:** Chairman Bill Cole called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. Chairman Cole asked Commissioner Pitman to chair this meeting as Mayor Cole is participating remotely.

### **2. Public Comment/Communication from the Audience:**

The Public may call in during specific Public Comment periods at (406) 237-8694. All callers will be in a queued system and are asked to remain on hold and be patient. Calls will be taken in the order in which they are received. Callers will be restricted to 3 minutes of testimony as is customary. Live coverage can be viewed:

<https://www.facebook.com/Billings-Planning-Community-Services-Department-1738982159659260/?ref=bookmarks>

**A. Comments on items not on the agenda and requests to add items to future agendas.**

**B. Comments on items on the Non-public and Public Agenda Items**

Planning Clerk Tamara Deines received no calls from the public. There was no communication from the audience regarding agenda items or future agenda items.

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**3. Minutes of August 18, 2020.** (The September 15, 2020 and the October 20, 2020 meetings were canceled due to a lack of agenda items).

### **Motion**

**Planning Board President Woods made a motion and it was seconded by Mayor Bill Cole to approve the minutes of July 21, 2020 with corrections on pages 1 and 6. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

**4. Old Business:** There is no Old Business.

### **5. New Business**

**5a. Presentation/Discussion. 27<sup>th</sup> Street Railroad Study. Tim Erickson, HDR, presenting.**

Tim Erickson, HDR Engineering, welcomed the participants. He stated HDR has worked with MDT to determine practical options for the 27<sup>th</sup> Street Crossing in Billings. Numerous studies have been conducted over the past 50+ years. This is one of the busiest railroad crossings in the state of Montana. The 2017 Montana Rail Grade Separation Study identified the 27<sup>th</sup> Street crossing as one of the top crossings in the state for benefits from possible grade separation improvement options. Previously identified solutions have been considered un-practicable.

He stressed that stakeholder input is important to this process.

### **Study Objectives**

- Ground level study of the 27<sup>th</sup> Street at-grade rail crossing
- Identify short-term and long –term improvement solutions.
- Vet each solution through a transparent decision process
- Incorporate feedback from local stakeholders and the public
- Determine what should, and can be implemented in the future

### **Short Term Alternatives**

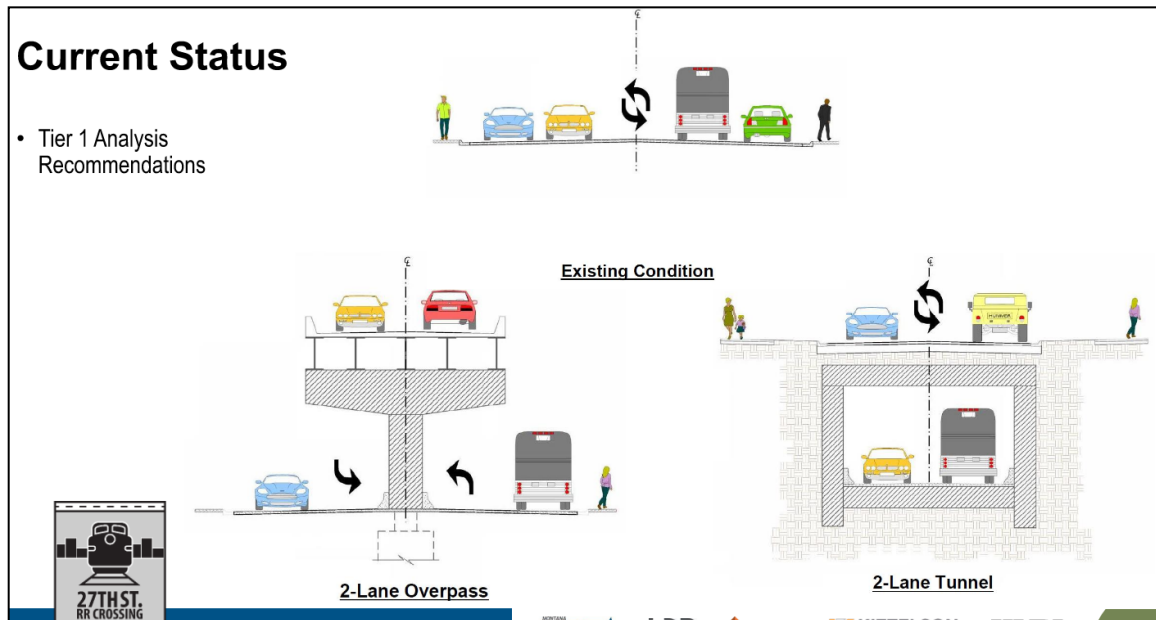
- No Build
- Signal Modifications,
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

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## Long Term Alternatives

- Closing 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> Street Crossings-The minimal benefits do not offset the need for accessibility.
- Two lane option at grade
- Two lane option with one lane going over or under the tracts, i.e. a Two-lane overpass or Two-lane tunnel.



**Overpass Option Rendering-**An Aesthetics Committee will be developed to find ways to create place making. There is a proposed touch down point on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North and 27<sup>th</sup> Street moving southward.



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### Tunnel Option Rendering



### Next Steps and Study Schedule

- Virtual Pubic Meeting: December 1, 2020
- Business and Stakeholder Outreach
- Aesthetics Committee
- Determine Preferred Alternative for the Community-Early 2021
- 30% Design Plans-Summer 2021

### Discussion

Mayor Code said he finds the tunnel option aesthetically superior. He asked if there is a cost difference. Tim Erickson said the in today's dollars the overpass project is projected for \$35-40 million while the tunnel project is projected at \$85-90 million due to the overall construction of the tunnel and impacts to buildings and utilities, (water, sewer, gas, fiber). MRL has been a stakeholder since the beginning of the study and has provided input for mitigation during construction for impacts on the tracks.

Planning Board President Woods asked regarding the overpass option, if the sky bridges will be removed going to Jakes Restaurant and how it would affect the motel. Tim Erickson said the sky bridges would need to be removed. They have not had discussion with the motels. As part of the study, they have performed a notice study by placing noise receptors on the Northern Hotel and the Double Tree. The tunnel option makes sense but the overpass structure deflects noise from the cars below.

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Mayor Cole asked if the adjacent property owners have voiced concerns. Stefan Streeter said HDR has conducted outreach with the business owners who are primarily concerned with connectivity. He said several of the business were supportive.

Commissioner Pitman asked about potential funding sources and project timelines. Tim Erickson said funding has not been identified but once the preferred option is identified, the district will look at opportunities for funding availability. At the earliest, it will be eight to ten years before anything would be constructed.

Mayor Cole commented that the difference in cost for an overpass could pay for many aesthetic improvements and still be less expensive than the underpass option. Suggested improvements could be an art walk, pedestrian opportunities for interaction, and a farmers' market.

Planning Board President Woods asked about the Bypass project and the new bridge construction. Rod Nelson said there is a dedicated camera for this project and he can email the link to the website.

**Public Comment:** There were no incoming calls for public comment on this agenda item.

### **6. Other Business**

#### **6a. MPO Project Updates. Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, presenting.**

**Billings Area Bike & Scooter Share Feasibility Study** This study is in the final stages. Considered service options: a docked bike share, a hybrid bike share, and dock less electric scooters. The study considers scooter share parking management and an operational plat.

#### **Discussion**

Mayor Cole commented that regulatory changes would be needed as to where designated parking areas and charging stations will be located. Scott said there have been a few companies that expressed interest prior to this study. Since then the markets for scooters in communities, the size of Billings has come up. The study will provide recommendations of how the community should move forward.

**Downtown Billings Traffic Study** This study is in the final stages. It considers feasibility of moving several one-way streets back to two-way streets. The final draft should be available in December 2020, with the final version ready during the spring 2021.

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**5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Corridor Study** This study is about one-third completed. I considers feasibility. The railroad is guardedly optimistic with collaborating with this effort. There are some obstacles. Land ownership has been identified and the consultants have been in contact with the property owners. A public meeting will be held in December 2020. The final version is projected to be available during the Spring of 2021.

**North Bypass Corridor Study** the Request for Proposals have been distributed for a consultant for this project. This study looks at the area that is the northwest portion of the new connection. Safety, land use, and connectivity will be considered. They are working with MDT.

### **Discussion**

In response to question by Commissioner Pitman, Scott Walker commented the 5-Mile connection and roundabout projects are working well. MDT has not received any negative comments from the public. Comment was made that this lends to the community the reality that this project is happening. Rod Nelson concurred and thanked staff for their work. Woody Woods said he drove this segment las week, and the project is nice and should be well received. Rod Nelson said MDT is happy with their dealings with Dover Park and they have a planned approach to the park.

### **2021 Community Transportation Safety Plan Update**

### **2021 Safe Routes to School Plan Update Update**

**Public Comment:** No public calls were received on this agenda item.

### **7. Future Agenda Items:**

- 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment 2
- 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program, (TIP), Amendment 1-to reflect the BUILD grant award, which is moving forward and waiting on an agreement from FWHA to be signed locally.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 1:20 PM

**DRAFT-To be approved be approved by a motion on February 16, 2021.**

*Tamara L. Deines, Planning Clerk*