



**POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
AGENDA  
CITY OF BILLINGS AND  
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY, MONTANA**



**AUGUST 17, 2021 MEETING TIME: 12:00 p.m.**  
**316 N 26 ST, ROOM 3101**  
**(3RD FLOOR, STILLWATER BUILDING)**  
**Billings, Montana 59101**

**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC**

The Policy Coordinating Committee will hold its regular meeting on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 12:00 PM, at the Board of County Commissioners meeting room located on the 3rd Floor of the Stillwater Building, 316 North 26, Billings, Montana. The meeting is open to any interested members of the public. Meeting agendas are prepared for the meetings and are available online at: [www.billingsmt.gov](http://www.billingsmt.gov) and at 2825 3rd Avenue North, 4th Floor, Billings, MT. Citizens are invited to Review the Agenda Packet on the City's website at: <https://ci.billings.mt.us/117/Agendas-Minutes> Public comment will be taken only during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda and during the Public Hearings, if any are scheduled, under the Regular agenda. Comments may be sent to Board via email before 10:00 AM on the meeting date. All emails received prior to this time will be read into the record for the public hearing. Comments may be submitted by Mail: City/County Planning Division, 2825 3rd Ave N 4th Floor, Billings, MT 59101  
Email: [deinest@billingsmt.gov](mailto:deinest@billingsmt.gov)

Call in during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda:

Citizens may call in during specific Public Comment periods at 406.237.6165. All callers will be placed 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 limited to 3 minutes of testimony as is customary. Future delivery methods may be explored as best practice is learned.

\*\*In the event a quorum of the Council is present, no City-related decisions will be made during this meeting or event.

Please direct questions to Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk at [deinest@billingsmt.gov](mailto:deinest@billingsmt.gov) or 406-247-8610. Thank you!

1. **Call to Order/Pledge to the American Flag: PCC Chairman**
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD --** (A 3-minute maximum per person.) *Any member of the public may be heard at this time on any subject(s), including items that are not on the agenda. The Policy Coordinating Committee will not take any action on non-agenda items today but could choose to add an item to the next meeting's agenda for discussion. Public comment may also allowed later on some items (see below), but an individual may only comment once on the same item.*
3. **Approval of the minutes of: July 20, 2021**
4. **Old Business**
  - a. **Public Comment**
5. **New Business**
  - a. Motion: 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study, Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner
  - b. Motion: FY2022 UPWP, Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator
  - c. Public Comment
6. **Other Business**
  - a. Public Comment
7. **Future Agenda Items: September 21, 2021**
8. **Adjournment**

PCC Agenda

**Meeting Date:** 08/17/2021

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**Information**

**Subject**

Approval of the minutes of: July 20, 2021

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**Attachments**

PCC\_2021\_07\_20\_DRAFT

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# **POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES -JULY 20, 2021**

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION AUGUST 17, 2021

## **NOTICE**

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 the meeting date. All e-mails received prior to this time will be read into the record for the public hearing.

**Member Participants:** Commissioner John Ostlund, Board of County Commissioners Bill Cole, Mayor, City of Billings; Rod Nelson, MDT District Office; Planning Board President Woody Woods, Yellowstone County Planning Board

**Staff Participants:** Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, Planning & Community Services Department; Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk, (Virtually)

**Other Participants:** Virtual: Michael Taylor, MDT; Wade Salyards, MDT, Andy Daleiden, Kittelson and Associates, Katie Potts, MDT Planning; Kenn Winegar, MDT Planning, Parker Osterloh, MDT Planning

**1. Call to Order:** Commissioner Ostlund called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

The Public may call in during specific Public Comment periods at (406) 237-6165. 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 three minutes of testimony as is customary.

**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 Tammy Deines received no calls from the public. There was no communication from the audience regarding agenda items or future agenda items.

## **3. Minutes of June 15, 2021**

### **Motion**

**A motion was made by Woody Woods and seconded by Mayor Bill Cole to approve the meeting minutes of June 15, 2021. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

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

# **POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES -JULY 20, 2021**

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION AUGUST 17, 2021

## **5. New Business**

### **5a. Motion. Administrative Update. 2021 Billings Urban Area Unified Planning Work Program, (UPWP), Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager, presenting.**

Scott Walker opened this agenda item and introduced Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager. He explained that the Work Program identifies funds that can be expended from a budgetary standpoint. This amendment is due to Federal funds coming into the system for transit. Staff presentations were given to TAC, Planning Board, City Council and the Board of County Commissioners who forwarded recommendations of approval.

## **INTRODUCTION**

- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must be established in communities over 50,000 in population to do transportation planning and be eligible for federal transportation planning funds. Both the MPO and the local designated transit provider must submit a work program outlining intended activities annually.
- The Work Program and subsequent amendments are reviewed and recommended for approval by the:
  - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
  - Planning Board
  - Yellowstone County Commission
  - City Council
  - Policy Coordinating Committee
  - Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

## **AMENDMENT #1**

- MET Transit planning funding is typically received in accordance with 49 USC section 5303, a funding source that is intended for urbanized area transit planning
- MDT has opted to transfer a balance of unused section 5304 funds (typically used for rural area transit planning) to the City of Billings
- Transferred funds will be programmed into the 5303 program via the proposed amendment; as with previously programmed funds, these are subject to a 20% local / 80% federal match.
- Using these funds, MET Transit will expand on previously programmed activities surrounding development of a Transit Development Plan and a Marketing Strategy Plan. These changes effect plan elements of “Future Service Enhancements” and “Current Service Enhancements.” MET had originally intended development of these plans in house but will solicit proposals from planning and development firms for assistance after the amendment is finalized.
- The total amount of additional federal funding is \$60,000, requiring \$15,000 in local match for a total program change of \$75,000.

# POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES -JULY 20, 2021

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION AUGUST 17, 2021

## Discussion

There was no discussion or questions forwarded from the Committee.

## Public Comment

There was no public comment.

## Motion

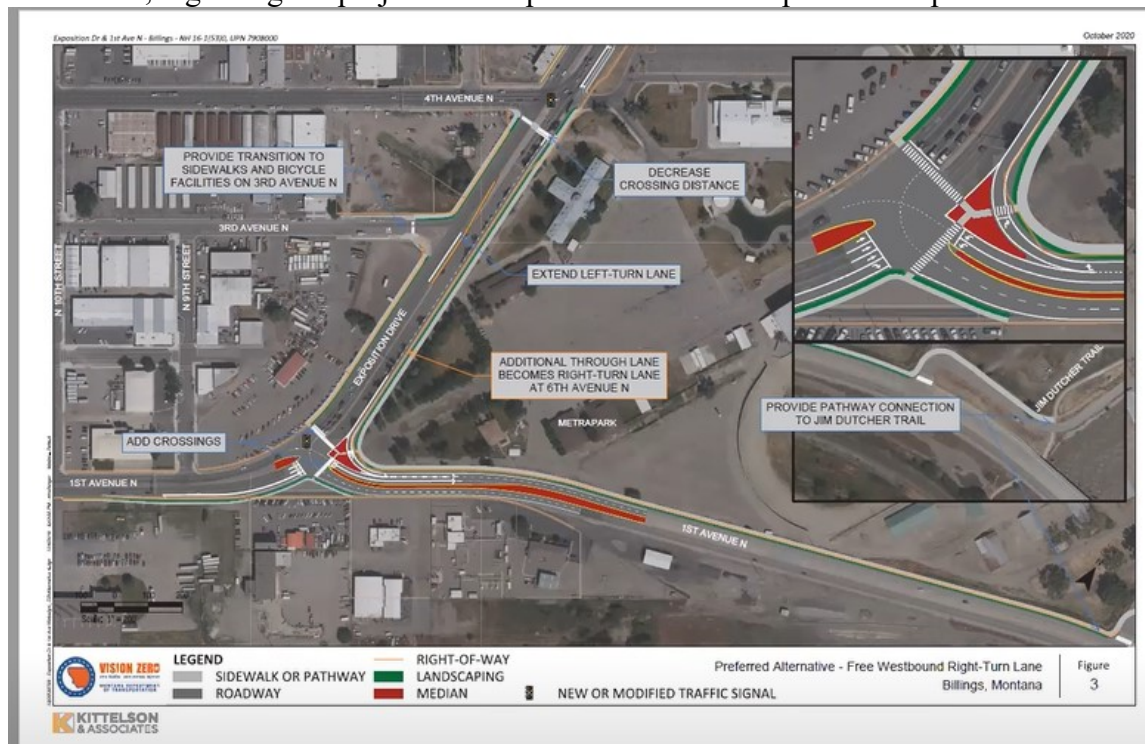
Mayor Cole made a motion and Woody Woods seconded the motion to recommend approval of the Administrative Update to the 2021 Billings Urban Area Unified Planning Program, (UPWP), as presented by staff.

The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

## 6. Other Business:

### 6a. Update. Discussion. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Exposition project. Wade Salyards, Project Manager, MDT

Wade Salyards, MDT opened this agenda item and introduced Andy Daleiden, Kittelson and Associates, regarding the project area depicted below and explained the preferred alternative.

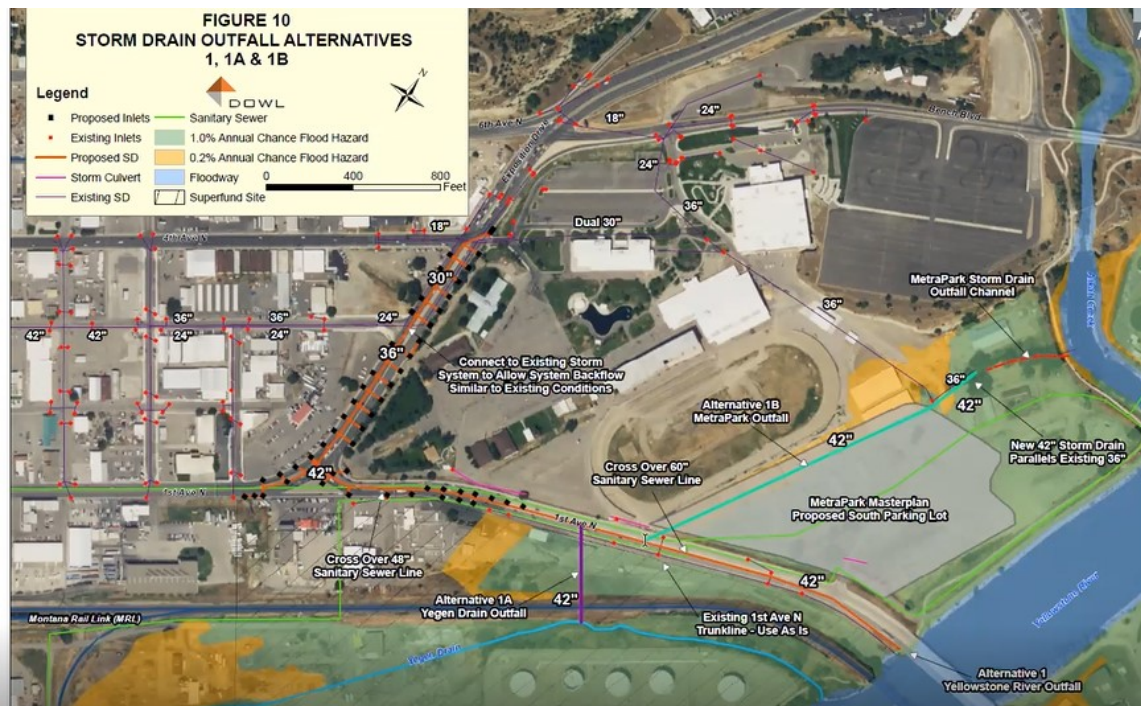


PHASE 1 is the transportation study to identify the proposed project for design and construction.  
 PHASE 2 will include the design and construction of the project.

# POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES -JULY 20, 2021

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION AUGUST 17, 2021

They are moving forward with DOWL as project consultant, who is working on a preliminary hydraulic report. They have identified a couple of alternatives to address storm water in the area. They have initiated conversations with Tim Goodridge, METRA Park to work towards coordination with the Master Plan effort.



MDT is working with consultant WCEC to conduct a subsurface soil and groundwater investigation. The field work has been completed, and monitoring wells are installed. This study will help to understand the level of contaminants and identify the level of risk for the project and treatments that need to occur during the construction phase. Access options are under consideration for the southern parcels along with the potential for a future signal to connect with METRA Park at Gate 2. This information will lead to the roadway design effort for the overall roadway improvements. They are coordinating with sub consultants on a revised schedule for delivery of the roadway design. They will circle back with PCC to give the updated schedule for this project.

Commissioner Ostlund asked about a tentative date for the signal evaluation to be completed. Andy said discussions will be held next week and he projects a final document to be ready within the next three to four weeks. In response to question by Woody Woods, Andy stated the sidewalk pathway on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North will be on the north side with a segment at the intersection on the south side to facilitate the crossing at Exposition Drive. Mayor Cole asked about the reasoning for not having sidewalks on both sides. Andy explained that the connection was on the north side and the property owners did not desire to provide a connection on the southern side.

# **POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES -JULY 20, 2021**

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION AUGUST 17, 2021

## **Public Comment**

Commissioner Ostlund called for public comment on this agenda item. There was no public comment.

### **6b. Update. Discussion. Federal funds for road and bridge projects. Michael Taylor, MDT.**

This agenda item was opened by Michael Taylor, MDT. He said it is too early in the process to know if there will be a reauthorization for Federal funding. The distribution within the state will be performance based which aligns with existing plans and policies. They hope to know more information in the future.

### **6c. Other Business**

6c1. Mayor Cole commented that the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Corridor Study presentation was very well received by City Council and there is a lot of excitement about the potential for developing certain phases if funding is available.

6c2. Mayor Cole reported that he attended a tour on the rims to walk the easterly half of the Skyline Trail to consider locations for future shade structures, benches, and historical signage. They met with representatives from the Yellowstone County museum for input. He was reminded that the BUILD grant funding covers construction of the transportation element but not the other amenities. His desire is to have the amenities done at the same time that the road is built. The goal is for the Skyline Trail in conjunction with the Inner Belt Loop to go to bid for construction some time this winter. This would be bid as one project with two different elements. Projected construction is early 2022.

6c3. Planning Board President Woody Woods asked Michael Taylor, MDT asked if an advisory committee had been created for the Lockwood Interchange Dick Johnson Bridge Project/Interface with METRA Park. Michael Taylor said this is on MDT's task list for this project, and it should be done in the near future.

### **7. Future Agenda Items: Tuesday, August 17, 2021**

- a. Motion. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave Corridor Feasibility Study. Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner.
- b. Motion. FFY 2022 Billings Urban Area Unified Work Program, Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator

**ADJOURNMENT: 1:00 PM**

**DRAFT. To be approved by a motion on August 17, 2021**

*Tamara L. Deines, Planning Clerk*

PCC Agenda

**Meeting Date:** 08/17/2021

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**Information**

**Subject**

Motion: 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study, Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner

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**Attachments**

Memo

5th Ave North Feasibility Study

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**Date:** 08/10/2021  
**Title:** 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study  
**Presented by:** Lora Mattox  
**Department:** Planning & Community Services  
**Presentation:** Yes

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## Information

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) approve the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study based on the recommendations of the City-County Planning Board, Billings City Council, and the Board of County Commissioners.

### BACKGROUND (Consistency with Adopted Plans and Policies, if applicable)

The goal of the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study is to analyze opportunities to develop transportation connections to, from, and within the corridor for non-traditional and non-motorized facilities and identify connectivity opportunities to the existing transportation system in the area. The study was developed with assistance of a Project Oversight Committee (POC). The committee included representatives from Planning, City Engineering, County Public Works, MET Transit, local and state Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) staff, Billings Industrial Revitalization District (BIRD), Schnitzer Steel, East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD), Downtown Billings Alliance (DBA), Billings TrailNet, YMCA, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In addition to regular meetings of the POC, two public meetings and outreach to property owners were held as well as emailed updates to the City Council and Board of County Commissioners. More on stakeholder and public involvement meetings and opportunities are outlined further in this memo.

The goal of the study was to analyze and develop the following information:

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities to develop transportation connections to, from and within the corridor for multi-modal uses;
- Identify connective opportunities to the existing transportation system;
- Incorporate, as appropriate, elements from adopted plans and studies;
- Provide broad opportunities for community involvement to help inform the study;
- Develop a vision for the corridor that incorporates transportation elements and considers adjacent land uses; and
- Develop implementation priorities, including phasing and funding opportunities.

Feasibility Criteria – The following discussion provides the feasibility criteria used to develop the study. The criteria included:

- Railroad agreement and support -- it was essential that the study include how a transportation corridor may amicably co-exist with existing rail operations;
- Property owner agreement and support -- success of the corridor will only be achieved if property owners understand and support potential changes in land uses and ensure that respect will be given with current land uses;
- Right-of-way availability -- the east and west ends of the 5th Corridor are very different and have to be treated separately while keeping a cohesive corridor. The portion west of North 27th Street has been reclaimed by private owners and wayfinding and creative routes will have to be explored, the section east of North 27th Street is primarily right-of-way for Montana Rail Link, any proposed improvements will need cooperation from the rail company;
- Public support -- development of this corridor will require securing public support, public and private funding will be the best way to promote a successful corridor;
- Safety -- safety of a continuous corridor for all users is a desire of the numerous stakeholder groups who participated in the study;
- Costs -- because of the magnitude of the corridor and its differences, it will likely be developed in phases with a variety of funding sources. It was important to identify and understand potential costs of improvements, this not only allows for future planning, but provides the information needed to apply for grant funds;
- Phasing -- to accommodate rail operations, the improvements will need to be phased as opportunity arises.

The study determined that the 5th Avenue North corridor can be completed over time to create a multitude of high-amenity non-motorized connections. The study includes implementation recommendations and strategies for the identified visionary concepts. It also provides pilot project suggestions, phasing priorities and potential funding sources.

### STAKEHOLDERS

Sanderson Stewart and City staff met with a variety of key stakeholders. The intent of these one to one meetings was to understand the opportunities for development, potential obstacles, and issue in the redevelopment of the corridor. Five meetings were held with landowners, developers, social service providers, adjoining neighborhoods, and transportation advocacy groups. A full list of the agencies and property owners are listed on page 18 of the study. In conformance with the Yellowstone County Board of Planning Public Participation Plan, a robust public participation process was developed. Because this study took place during the height of the pandemic, public events and meetings were held virtually. A website was developed to provide information and a platform for the public to provide feedback. Two virtual open houses were held, the first in the fall of 2020 to introduce the study to the public and solicit public opinion. Comments solicited during this meeting were used to develop a corridor vision, goals, and improvements. Virtual open house number two was held in February 2021 to present the draft corridor study and solicit comments.

This study has been reviewed and acted upon by the City-County Planning Board, the Billings City Council, and the Board of County Commissioners. The Planning Board conducted a public hearing prior to its recommendation of approval. Each governing body is forwarding a recommendation of approval to the PCC. Approval of this feasibility study does not require the governing body to implement any part of the study.

### ALTERNATIVES

The Policy Coordinating Committee may:

- Approve the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study; or,
- Not Approve the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study

Not approving the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study would be contrary to the recommendations of approval forwarded by the Planning Board, City Council, and the Board of County Commissioners.

### FISCAL EFFECTS

The contract for the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study was budgeted at \$97,000. The majority of the funding is through the MPO's Federal PL (planning) funds. PL funds for this project required 13.42% local match, which was provided through the Planning Division's FY21 Budget utilizing its County-Wide Planning Mill Levy revenues. Implementing projects identified in the study are not included in this budget.

Adoption of this study does not program funds to be expended. Prioritizing project identified in this plan would be part of the City's CIP process.

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**Attachments**

Study Area  
5th Ave North Feasibility Study



5<sup>th</sup>  
AVENUE NORTH



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## Acknowledgements

This feasibility study was made possible through funding by the Billings Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Many thanks to all the community members, steering committee, key stakeholders, and staff who contributed to the development of this study.

### Project Oversight Committee

Scott Walker, City/County Planning  
 Lora Mattox, City/County Planning  
 Wyeth Friday, City/County Planning  
 Elyse Monat, City/County Planning  
 Rusty Logan, MET Transit  
 Erin Claunch, City Public Works  
 Kurtis Schnieber, Montana Department of Transportation  
 Zack Terakedis, Billings Industrial Revitalization District (BIRD)  
 James Chandler, Downtown Billings Association  
 Patrick Klugman, Big Sky Economic Development  
 Katie Potts, Montana Department of Transportation  
 Parker Osterloh, Montana Department of Transportation  
 Mike Black, Yellowstone County Public Works

### Consultant Team

#### Sanderson Stewart

Michael Sanderson  
 Lauren Waterton  
 Eären Hummel  
 Chris Naumann

#### Collaborative Design

Jeff Kanning

### Stakeholder Group Participants

Anna O'Donnell, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
 Tom Rupsis, Billings Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Board  
 Craig VanNice, Billings Public Schools  
 Kristi Drake, Billings TrailNet  
 Kim Kaiser, Billings YMCA  
 Matt McDonnell, BIRD Board Chair  
 Kathy Aragon, Community Advocate  
 Marcee Farrar-Neary, Community Crisis Center  
 Brad Sperry, Cushing Terrell/YMCA Board Chair  
 Alan Woodmansey, FHWA  
 Jed Barton, LIFTT  
 Barbara Mettler, Mental Health Center  
 Tim Goodridge, MetraPark  
 Nick Bailey, Montana Rail Link  
 Joe Gentri, Montana Rail Link  
 Ross Lane, Montana Rail Link  
 Claire Oakley, Riverstone Health  
 Pat Ryan, Ryan Restaurant Corp  
 David Trost, St. John's United  
 Craig Barthel, St. Vincent de Paul  
 Rob, St. Vincent de Paul Guest  
 Shane, St. Vincent de Paul Guest  
 David Ellis, Schnitzer Steel  
 Erika Willis, Tumbleweed  
 Joel Long, United Properties, Inc.  
 Danna Newell, United Properties, Inc.  
 John Greenberger, Yellowstone Art Museum

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# PREFACE

## Project Vision

Envision the 5th Avenue North corridor as a non-traditional motorized and non-motorized corridor connecting to the existing transportation system in the area and enhancing the surrounding community.

## Project Goals

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities to develop transportation connections to, from and within the corridor for multi-modal uses
- Identify connective opportunities to the existing transportation system
- Incorporate, as appropriate, elements from adopted plans and studies
- Provide broad opportunities for community involvement to help inform the study
- Develop a vision for the corridor that incorporates transportation elements and considers adjacent land uses
- Develop implementation priorities, including phasing and funding opportunities



Concept of 5th Avenue North at North 20th Street.

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# INTRODUCTION

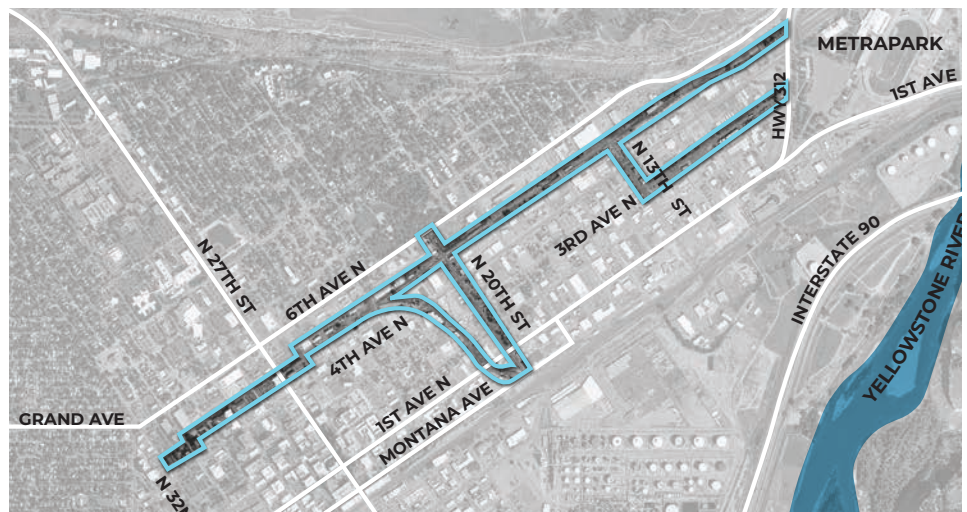
## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study (the Study) is to investigate the feasibility of creating a non-traditional motorized and non-motorized transportation corridor within the 5th Avenue North alignment through Downtown Billings and the East Billings Urban Renewal District. This document outlines the analyses and conclusions of the planning effort which was initiated in June 2020 by the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization. The Study reflects a comprehensive effort in which the consultants, Sanderson Stewart and Collaborative Design Architects, worked closely with the City of Billings, and additional stakeholders to evaluate opportunities within the corridor. The Study provides a broad framework for furthering the community building potential within the corridor and includes recommendations for designing and implementing corridor improvements.

## Study Area Description

The study area (shown below outlined in blue) is the 5th Avenue North railroad corridor, bounded by Main Street/Highway 312 on the east, North 32nd Street on the west, 4th Avenue North to the south, and 6th Avenue North to the north. The Study also includes the north-south spur connecting this corridor to the main rail line adjacent to Montana Avenue. The Study includes the corridor alignment and properties adjacent to the corridor.

A rail spur running north from the Montana Rail Link (MRL) Main Line to the 5th Avenue North corridor services properties along the eastern portion of 5th Avenue North. The active spur occupies approximately 75 percent of the overall corridor within the study area. The actively used railroad is located within the existing right-of-way owned by BNSF Railway Co. and leased by MRL. Portions of the corridor no longer have active railroad right-of-way. Over the years, the right-of-way has been deeded back to the adjacent properties.



5th Avenue study area.

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# BACKGROUND

## Relevant Planning Documents

The completed analysis and proposed recommendations of this Study align with the community's shared vision and established priorities articulated in numerous existing plans.

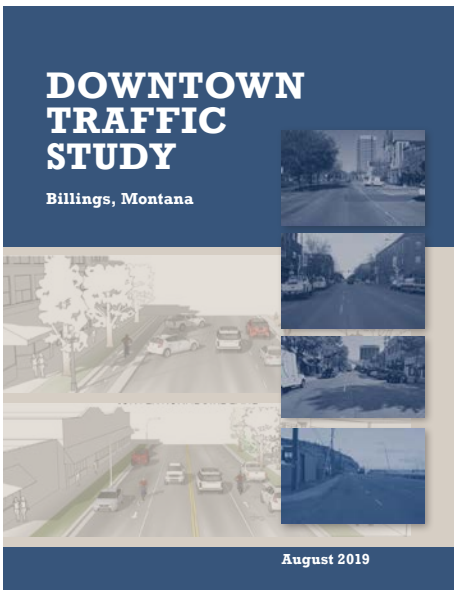


### 2020 Billings Area Wayfinding Signage Plan

The 2020 Wayfinding Signage Plan identifies several general benefits of wayfinding that directly correlate to the goals of the 5th Avenue North Corridor Study. Most notably, the Wayfinding Plan states, “Moving forward, wayfinding elements should be considered part of the complete implementation of any future bikeways”.

### 2019 Downtown Traffic Study

The 2019 Downtown Traffic Study (supplemented by the 2021 Alternative Prioritization & Public Preference Plan) investigated issues related to the transportation network and identified alternatives to enhance that network. According to the traffic study, the Project Advisory Committee identified several actions that could improve downtown transportation. One of those actions includes using the 5th Avenue North corridor as a green space for pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This action would help improve the connectivity to and from downtown.



### 2015-2019 Billings City Council Strategic Plan

It is critical that all sub-area plans and secondary studies support the City's Strategic Plan. Several of the City Council strategies and objectives would be bolstered by the 5th Avenue North Corridor Study.

- Strategy 3: Transportation - Objective 1: Improve transportation in Billings - Action 2: Continue adding to the City's network of trails and sidewalks to improve pedestrian access.
- Strategy 4: Sustainable Economic Development - Objective 5: Enhance economic growth by ensuring infrastructure availability - Action 4: Continue to develop the transportation system to accommodate both commercial and commuter needs.
- Strategy 7: Quality of Life - Objective 2: Plan for adequate parks, open space and trails infrastructure city wide - Objective 6: Promote, encourage and develop city wide landscaping and tree planting to make the community more attractive.

## 2018 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan

The Transportation Plan does not include any specific recommendations for 5th Avenue North but does identify the need to add bike and pedestrian facilities.

- Pedestrians and Bicyclists – Create a transportation system that supports the practical and efficient use of active transportation such as walking and bicycling. Objectives: Increase number of shared-use trail miles by 10% between 2018 and 2023; Incorporate bicycle or pedestrian facilities on 75% of projects between 2018 and 2023.

## 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan

The 5th Avenue North Corridor Study aligns with the Bikeway and Trails Plan which recommends developing more off-street multi-use trails and shows 5th Avenue as a visionary long range bikeway. Multi-modal improvements to 5th Avenue North would support several general recommendations of the Bikeway and Trails Plan:

- Provide a bicycle, pedestrian, and trail network that is safe and attractive and meets the needs of all ages and abilities.
- Providing adequate, and a variety of bikeway connections to downtown can positively impact daily bicycle use in the City. Bikeway facilities that provide direct or secondary connectivity to downtown will qualify for this criterion.

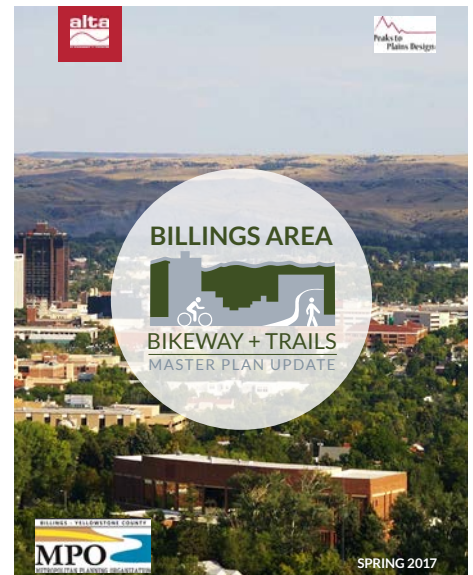
## 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy

The Growth Policy provides the high-level framework that all other plans and studies must support. The 5th Avenue North Study aligns with several of the defined growth guidelines established in 2016.

Essential Investments: relating public and private expenditures to public values

- The safety of all users and the connectivity of the transportation system are important criteria to consider in roadway designs and transportation plans.
- Planning and construction of safe and affordable interconnected sidewalks and trails are important to the economy and livability of Billings.

## 2018 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation



Place Making: enhance, maintain, preserve, and improve existing public places

- The history and heritage of Billings are cornerstones of our community.
- Encouraging the installation of art in public spaces enhances the places and showcases the talents and diversity of the community.

Community Fabric: attractive, aesthetically pleasing, uniquely Billings

- Developed landscape areas in commercial areas encourage more pedestrian activity and vibrant commercial activity.

Mobility and Access: choices in places where goods and services are accessible to all

- Connecting people to places with transportation choices is vital to the well-being of Billings' residents, businesses and visitors.
- Safe and accessible transportation systems benefit everyone's quality of life.



## 2009 East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan

The East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan (EBURD) articulates a vision for the urban renewal area, which includes a portion of the 5th Avenue North corridor.

The following guiding principles from the Master Plan are relevant to the 5th Avenue North Study:

- **Industrial Uses:** Ensure existing industrial uses can continue to operate as desired.
- **Edges:** Integrate the edges of the District with the North Park Neighborhood, the Downtown Core, the Medical Corridor, and the University.
- **Transportation:** Provide a variety of transportation connections and choices throughout the District and surrounding areas.
- **Trees & Open Space:** Improve the natural beauty of the District by reintroducing trees and environmental features.
- **River Connections:** Extend non-motorized connections from the Billings Core to MetraPark, the Yellowstone River, and the Heights.

Additionally, the goals and objectives outlined in the 5th Avenue North Study would address the bicycle and pedestrian deficiencies identified in the EBURD Master Plan.

- “The EBURD has numerous limitations with respect to its bicycle and pedestrian environment. Currently, the district has a poor environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are no established bikeways through the district. There is no established pedestrian link between the CBD (Central Business District) and MetraPark.”

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## 2013 Exposition Gateway Plan and Hospitality Corridor Study

The eastern portion of the 5th Avenue North corridor includes the Exposition Gateway District and the Hospitality Corridor. The Exposition Gateway and Hospitality Corridor documents identify several opportunities that align with the Study including:

- The confluence of transportation corridors and eventual reuse of rail corridor offers visibility and access to the greater metropolitan area.
- Provide safe and comfortable travel for a variety of modes, vehicle and non-vehicle, supporting the City's overall vision of revitalizing the Exposition Gateway District and better connecting with MetraPark.



## Why this Corridor

**“Having access to strong mobility options equates to having access to opportunities like employment and education, which is critical for individual, economic, social and community success.”**

**– Active Transportation Transforms America, Rails to Trails**

The 5th Avenue North corridor presents a rare opportunity for the community to create a shared-use mobility route through the heart of Billings. Because of its historic use as a railroad spur, this corridor has been set aside from the traditional street grid of downtown and East Billings. This creates a chance to enhance the transportation network by adding a unique multi-modal element that does not exist.

The railroad is still in use within this corridor and this use will continue as long as there are customers and adjacent properties in need of rail access. In coordination with Montana Rail Link and other adjoining properties, the 5th Avenue North corridor provides an opportunity to incorporate multi-modal transportation facilities that are compatible alongside the existing rail line and transform the corridor into a safe, vibrant public space.

With portions of the corridor underutilized, there is an opportunity for revitalization of the corridor and adjacent properties. The case studies located in Appendix A demonstrate the opportunity other communities have leveraged underutilized property into community assets. These types of projects are often catalyst projects that cause a corresponding and complementary development reaction on surrounding properties.

## Feasibility Criteria

**“Multimodal Streets and Connectivity: downtown Billings will be viewed as a safe, attractive, and connected environment, which encourages downtown visitors and residents to walk and cycle between destinations to support increased multi-modal activity and communication within this unique economic and cultural asset.”**

**– One of Four Transformational Initiatives from the Downtown Billings Strategic Plan**

This section describes the criteria used to evaluate the feasibility of transforming the 5th Avenue North corridor. Railroad use, adjacent land uses and available right-of-way were evaluated within the corridor as the primary feasibility criteria. Below is a summary of each item identified as key component in determining feasibility.

### Railroad agreement and support

Because a portion of the corridor is currently used as part of the Montana Rail Link service to local businesses, it is essential that the feasibility study include how a transportation corridor may amicably co-exist with the existing rail operations.

### Property owner agreement and support

The ultimate success of the corridor will be achieved if improvements support and enhance the existing land uses along the right-of-way. Understanding the potential changes in land uses and respecting current activities of adjacent properties are critical to determining the feasibility of the corridor transformation.

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## Right-of-way availability

What remains of the 5th Avenue North corridor is primarily right-of-way owned or leased by Montana Rail Link. In the section that is no longer used by the railroad, the right-of-way has been returned to the adjoining property owners. To construct transportation improvements within the entire corridor, easements or right-of-way will need to be acquired, as well as agreements made to use any portion of the railroad right-of-way.

## Public support

The development of this corridor will require securing considerable public support. Public funding and community support for improving the corridor will be vital to leverage additional funding, win the necessary approvals, and act as a catalyst for private investment.

## Safety

The feasibility of transforming the 5th Avenue North corridor will require the creation of a safe, continuous corridor for a variety of users. Input from numerous stakeholder groups identified improving safety as a top priority for the project.

## Costs

While the corridor will likely be developed in phases and with a variety of funding sources, it is important to identify and understand potential total costs of the proposed improvements. Even at this conceptual level, the feasibility study provides an analysis of estimated implementation costs to provide a sense of the required funding.

## Phasing

Due to the continued railroad operations, the corridor vision will need be completed in phases to accommodate the multiple, differing uses over time. Phased improvements along the active rail line will need to physically begin and end at points that such as intersections to discourage trespassing along unimproved portions of the corridor. The corridor should be evaluated with an understanding of how it can be strategically improved to best function for existing and future uses.

# PROJECT PROCESS

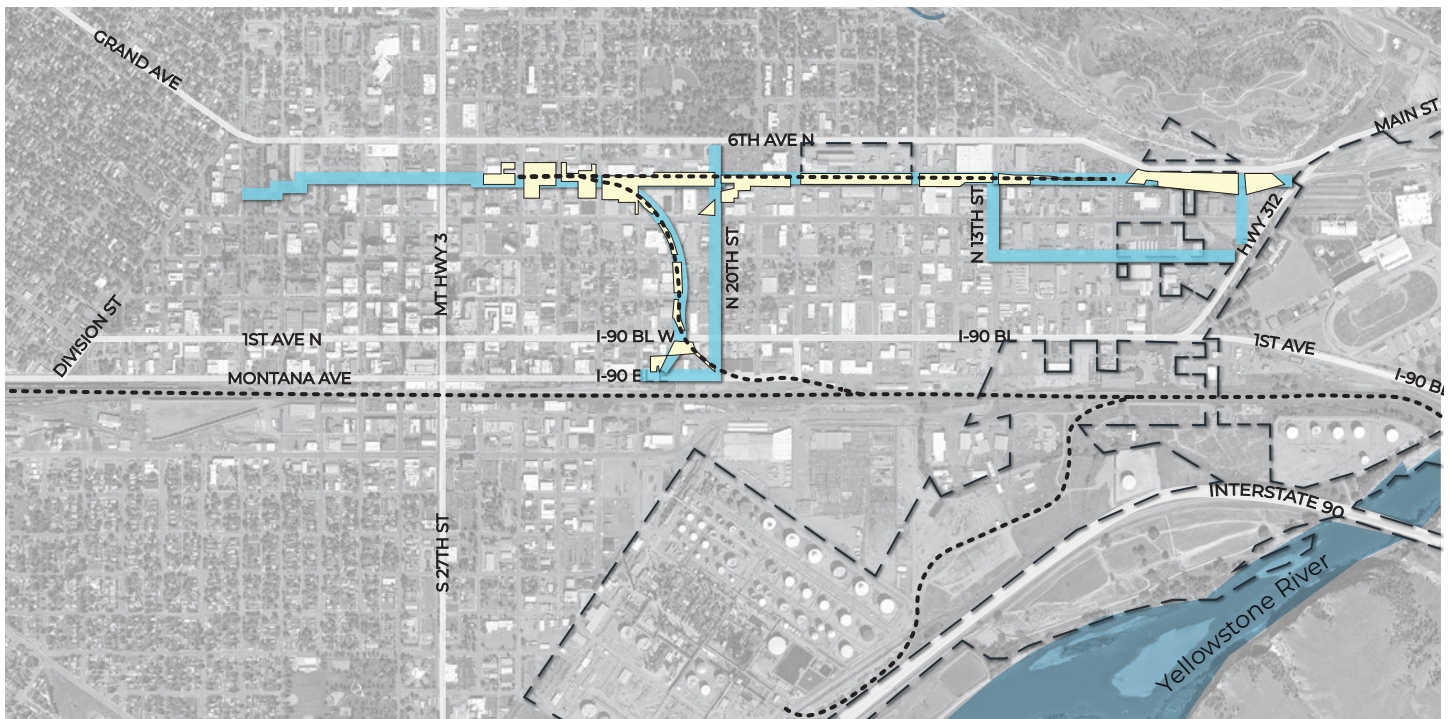
Evaluation of the feasibility for the 5th Avenue North corridor included technical analysis, stakeholder engagement, steering committee meetings, and public participation and input. A summary of the project process is described below.

## Analysis

### Right-of-Way Analysis

The first step was to determine the location and use of existing right-of-way. Using available cadastral and property record information, as well as information from Montana Rail Link, the right-of-way locations are noted throughout the study. The width of the right-of-way varies from approximately 20 feet to over 60 feet. Facilities within the right-of-way include railroad tracks and storage buildings. Some of the buildings are leased to adjoining landowners, which contributes to the irregularity of the right-of-way width.

Within the western portion of the corridor from North 26th Street to North 32nd Street, the right-of-way no longer exists. Over time, as railroad use diminished, it was deeded to the adjacent properties. A walking tour of the corridor indicated that physical space exists to use the former alignment as a potential transportation corridor. Property owner cooperation and involvement would be required to complete this portion of the corridor.



#### LEGEND

- Study Area
- City Limits
- Active Montana Rail Link
- Railroad Right-of-Way



## Railroad Use

With an understanding of the right-of-way, the next step of the process explored the frequency of train access on the corridor, and locations of businesses requiring rail service. There are currently four businesses within the corridor that have a service agreement with Montana Rail Link, although only two of those businesses currently request service for rail cars. When a rail car is delivered to a business, trains use the tracks from Montana Avenue and then turn north to the corridor at North 23rd Street. Train cars are then moved along the corridor to the business requesting service. Train cars are requested approximately 10 times per week. Because this is an active rail line, frequency of use and locations along the corridor may change as new businesses request service or existing customers discontinue rail service.

## Coordination with Other Planning Projects

Based on the economic development projections and scenarios, the consultant team, City staff, and stakeholders suggested elements for the physical improvement of the corridor including land use, stormwater, and transportation. This vision lays out options for achieving the land use goals, addressing the rail traffic requirements, and enhancing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

## Stakeholder Meetings

Early in the process, the consultant team and City staff met with the key stakeholders. The intent of these meetings was to understand the opportunities for development of the corridor, potential obstacles, and issues for additional exploration. Five meetings were held with landowners, developers, service providers, adjoining neighborhoods, and transportation advocacy groups to provide information and offer ideas for the corridor. Social Services representatives and several homeless residents, which are traditionally underrepresented groups in public processes, participated in the stakeholder meetings. Four key themes emerged from stakeholder meetings: Active Transportation, Economic Development, Public Safety, and Placemaking. These themes were used to develop the vision and opportunities for the corridor.



### **Agencies Represented:**

Billings Industrial Revitalization District  
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
Billings Police Department  
Billings TrailNet  
City of Billings Public Works and Planning & Community Development Departments  
Community Crisis Center  
Downtown Billings Association  
LIFFT  
Mental Health Center  
MET Transit  
Parks, Recreation & Cemetery Board  
Riverstone Health  
St. Vincent de Paul  
Tumbleweed

### **Property Owners:**

Billings Public Schools  
Montana Rail Link  
Ryan Restaurant Corporation  
St. John's United,  
United Properties  
Yellowstone Art Museum  
YMCA

## Active Transportation

Active transportation, the non-motorized movement of people most commonly walking and bicycling, emerged as a common theme with all groups.

Key points:

- Portions of the corridor are already used as an active pedestrian transportation corridor. This includes the west end between the YMCA, First Interstate Bank Building, and the Lincoln Center. It also includes east of North 27th Street where many people use it informally to connect to social services in the area.
- Formalizing those routes and connections would be beneficial to facilitating connectivity, improving safety, and increasing biking and walking options. More opportunities to safely bike and walk could reduce vehicle traffic.
- It would be a community benefit to safely walk or bike from the MetraPark to downtown after an event to extend the evening.
- Use of the corridor for public transit was viewed as not viable due to the limited availability of usable right-of-way and lack of activity generated by transit. However, transit is an important function within the area and can serve the corridor via parallel routes and key intersections with 5th Avenue North.
- A dedicated corridor to biking and walking would increase accessibility and use by a broad spectrum of residents.

## Economic Development

The transformation of the corridor to a safe, attractive, and active transportation corridor has a symbiotic relationship with economic development.

Key points:

- The improvement of the 5th Avenue North corridor would provide the community a reason to come downtown and stay downtown.
- Connections to the medical corridor and Montana State University – Billings would enhance downtown and reduce car trips.
- This is an opportunity to create an identifiable district by connecting these areas of the city. This corridor can be a significant destination, like the San Antonio River Walk.
- Start small. Identify some target project pieces and start connecting nodes of activity. A phased approach would make it more feasible rather than trying to develop the corridor as one action.

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## Public Safety

Concerns about existing and potential public safety were identified during all stakeholder meetings.

Key points:

- MRL expressed concern about incorporating a trail along an active rail line without sufficient buffers and barriers.
- One stakeholder discussion included representatives from local social service agencies and two clients of St. Vincent de Paul who are currently homeless. They shared their experiences related to safety, homelessness, and ways in which the 5th Avenue North Corridor could be developed to serve the needs of homeless people.
- Because homeless people often need to carry all their belongings with them, the threat of crime increases. In other communities, providing storage for homeless people has resulted in a reduction of crime.
- There is already concern about crime and safety in the area so people may be reluctant to use the corridor unless properly designed and built.
- Lighting was identified as an important public safety improvement and necessary for the enhancement of the corridor.
- The corridor should be visible at all intersections to increase safety while crossing streets. North 27th Street was identified as a particular challenge for pedestrians and bicyclists.

## Placemaking

Stakeholders expressed optimism that the 5th Avenue Corridor could be a transformational project for Billings.

Key points:

- Several groups identified the San Antonio River Walk as an inspirational project that this corridor could replicate.
- There is a desire to build a community asset that is beautiful and that draws people to and from downtown.
- Improvements that would make it inviting to all include adding public restrooms, green space, and areas to gather.
- Designing for all, including the homeless, will create a welcoming and inclusive public amenity.
- Using the rail corridor would allow Billings to tell its history as a railroad town.

“Let’s create our own green-belt style cultural “Rail-Walk” - telling our history of culture, trade, commerce, agriculture and industry. These could be built as small parklets along the tracks that support different displays- sculptural, interactive, and educational art. These then become nodes for additional development: food truck hubs, housing neighborhoods, adventure playgrounds, venues for small productions.”

– Public Comment

## Project Oversight Committee

The Project Oversight Committee (POC) was tasked with providing in-depth review and feedback on the study as it progressed. The Committee consisted of staff members from the City of Billings and Yellowstone County, elected and appointed officials, and community members. POC meetings were held monthly to discuss the direction of the planning study from June 2020 and until February 2021. The first meeting included a walking tour of the corridor, while the remaining meetings were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The POC provided input on the project vision and goals, corridor character, and improvement opportunities.

## Public Participation

In conformance with the Yellowstone County Board of Planning Participation Plan, a thorough public participation process was conducted. Because of concerns with public events during the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings and activities were held virtually. For the duration of the project, a website provided information to and a feedback platform for the public.

The following public engagement meetings were conducted and planned as part of the feasibility study process:

### Virtual Open Houses

Virtual open house No. 1 was held in the fall of 2020 to introduce the corridor planning study to the public. A virtual open house also solicited public opinion regarding the opportunities for multi-modal transportation and public improvements. The comments provided during the open house were reviewed by the POC and used to develop the corridor vision, goals, and improvements.

Virtual Open House No. 2 will be held in February 2021 to present the draft corridor study and solicit public feedback.



### Opportunity Focus

There are many possibilities and opportunities for this corridor and we want to hear from you about **what you think would be important**. Considering the inspiration projects and any other successful corridor/transportation/community gathering projects you have seen – let us know what you think might work for 5th Avenue.

Click anywhere on the map to leave a comment or idea – remember to hit submit to send us your ideas!



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## Approval Process

The approval process will include the following dates for review and approval of the 5th Avenue North Feasibility Study and will be completed prior to issuing final study document.

Reviewer	Presentation	Action
Technical Advisory Committee	TBD	TBD
Yellowstone County Planning Board	TBD	TBD
Billings City Council	TBD	TBD
Yellowstone County Commission	TBD	TBD
Policy Coordinating Committee	TBD	TBD

## Recommendations

Based upon the vision and goals of the project, corridor analysis, and public engagement, a set of recommendations was developed to improve the corridor and anticipate future issues and opportunities. These recommendations provide a thoughtful framework including the necessary information to make future decisions about specific improvements, project phasing, and potential costs.

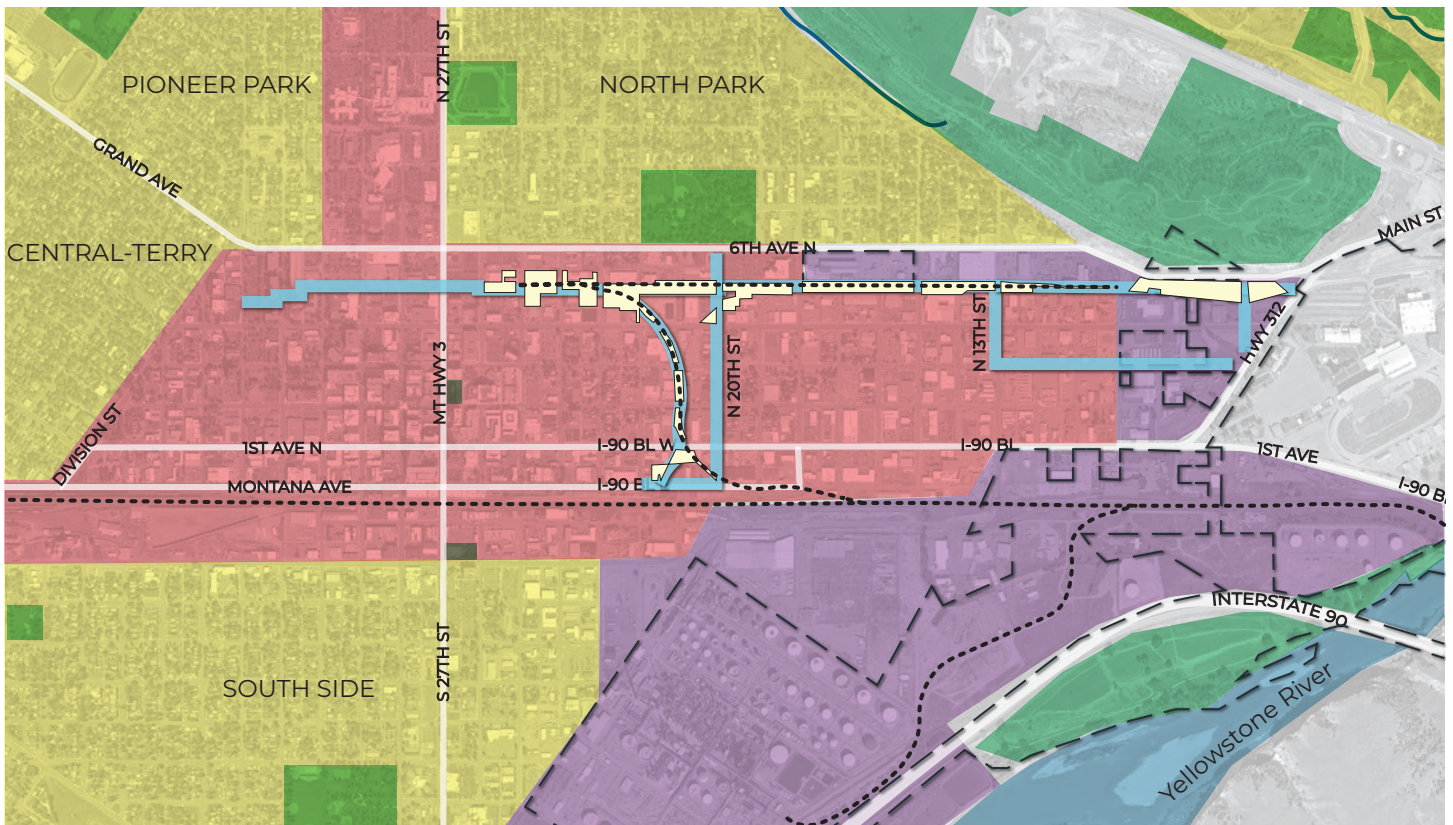
# EXISTING CONDITIONS

## Corridor Alignment

5th Avenue North is a non-motorized corridor integrated into the existing street grid for the downtown and East Billings business districts. For nearly two miles, it lies parallel between 4th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North running from North 32nd Street to Main Street/Highway 312. The eastern portion of the corridor is within Montana Rail Link right-of-way. The western portion, between North 32nd Street and North 26th Street, no longer has designated right-of-way. Over the years, this right-of-way has been deeded back to the adjacent landowners.

## Rail Use

The corridor is used to service several businesses via rail cars. The portion of the corridor that is actively used by trains includes the 14 blocks between North 24th Street and North 10th Street. It also includes the five-block north-south spur from 5th Avenue North to the Montana Rail Link main line adjacent to Montana Avenue. Presently, there are two industrial businesses that order cars from Montana Rail Link with service several times a week.



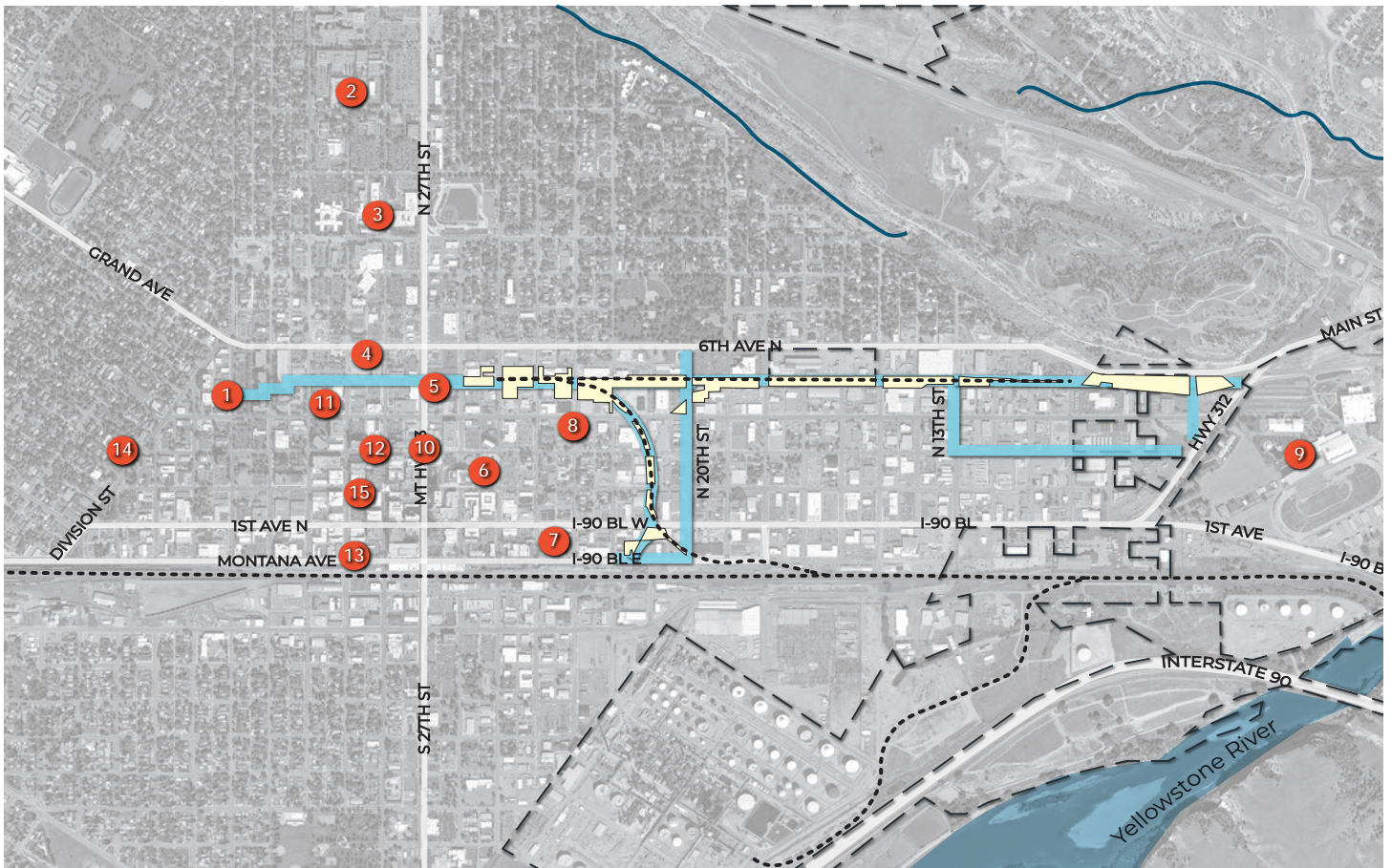
### LEGEND

- Project Area
- Residential
- City Limits
- Commercial
- Active Montana Rail Link
- Industrial
- Railroad Right-of-Way
- Parks & Open Space



# Adjacent Land Use

There are a wide variety of land uses adjacent to the 5th Avenue North Corridor. The western end of the corridor is anchored by the YMCA. Continuing east, the corridor is bound by multi-story office buildings, landscaped plazas, and surface and structured parking lots. Moving to the east, the corridor continues through a series of surface parking lots until it reaches North 25th Street. Buildings that accompany those parking lots include public facilities, institutions, and a variety of commercial uses (the Lincoln Center, Billings Public Library, and the Billings Gazette). Between North 25th Street and Main Street/Highway 312, the uses are predominately industrial and warehousing, except for a cluster of office buildings at the corridor's intersection with North 20th Street, such as First Interstate Bank and Federal Building.



## LEGEND

- Project Area
- City Limits
- Active Montana Rail Link
- Railroad Right-of-Way

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">1</span> YMCA</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">2</span> St Vincent Healthcare</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">3</span> Billings Clinic Hospital</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">4</span> Billings Public Library</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">5</span> Yellowstone Art Museum</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">6</span> MET Transit Transfer Station</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">7</span> Historic Train Depot</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">8</span> Billings Community Center</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">9</span> Metrapark</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">10</span> City Hall, County Courthouse</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">11</span> Lincoln Center</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">12</span> Alberta Bair Theatre</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">13</span> Western Heritage Center</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">14</span> Moss Mansion Historic House</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; background-color: #D9534F; color: white; text-align: center; line-height: 15px; margin-right: 5px;">15</span> Babcock Theatre</li> </ul> |
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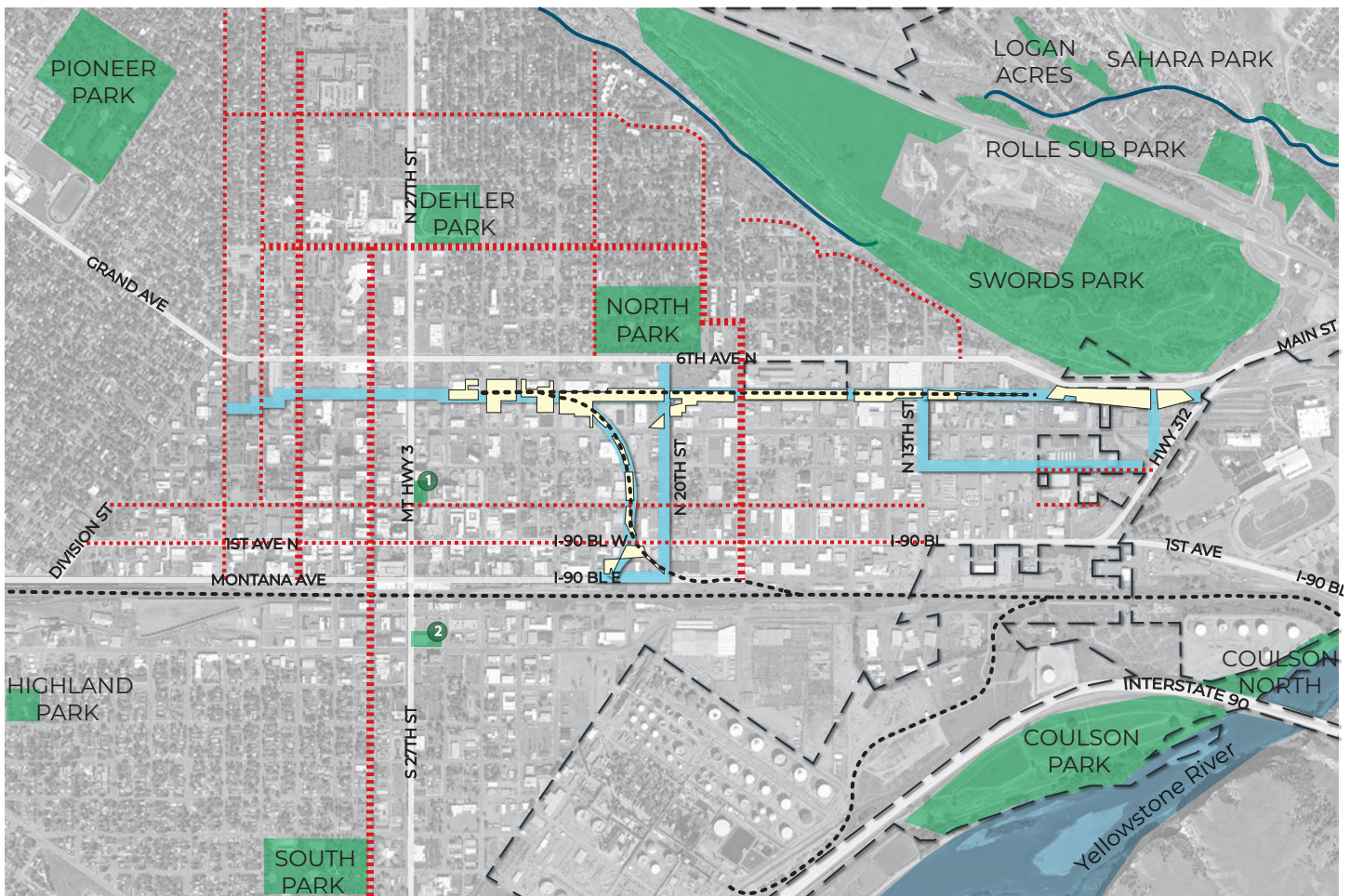


# Social Conditions

In addition to the commercial uses of 5th Avenue, some community members use the corridor as a direct east-west route of travel connecting various destinations. Some of the area's homeless population have used the area for temporary camps. Stakeholders indicated that the homeless are a diverse group with differing needs and encouraged the proposed improvements of the corridor to take these members of the community into consideration.

# Green Space

Green space refers to parks or naturally enhanced areas within an urban environment. There are limited areas of green space within and immediately adjacent to the corridor. North Park and Swords Park are the only two parks near the 5th Avenue project area.



## LEGEND

- Project Area
- City Limits
- Active Montana Rail Link
- Railroad Right-of-Way
- Primary Bikeway
- Secondary Bikeway
- 1 County Courthouse Park
- 2 Downtown Skatepark



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# Multi-Modal Transportation

The existing transportation network serves the adjoining neighborhoods and districts, but also provides connectivity between eastern Billings and rest of the city. In doing so, streets adjacent to the corridor carry significant vehicle traffic volumes that are not conducive to safe, efficient pedestrian and bicycle travel. Creating a dedicated multi-modal shared-use transportation route along 5th Avenue North would result in more equitable options for a wide variety of residents.

## Transit Routes

The area is well served by the Metropolitan Transit system (MET) with the Downtown Transit Station located on North 25th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues North. Of the 13 routes using this station, six cross 5th Avenue North allowing for multiple connection points between the corridor and the bus system. These bus routes travel in all four directions, enhancing the opportunity to connect more geographical areas to the corridor via public transit.

## Bicycle Infrastructure

Existing and proposed bike routes cross the 5th Avenue North corridor in multiple locations. These designated bike facilities include buffered bike lanes, shared use paths, and bikeways. With six proposed routes crossing 5th Avenue North, there is the opportunity to extend and expand the bicycle network east and west by improving the corridor as a protected, high-amenity bike facility.

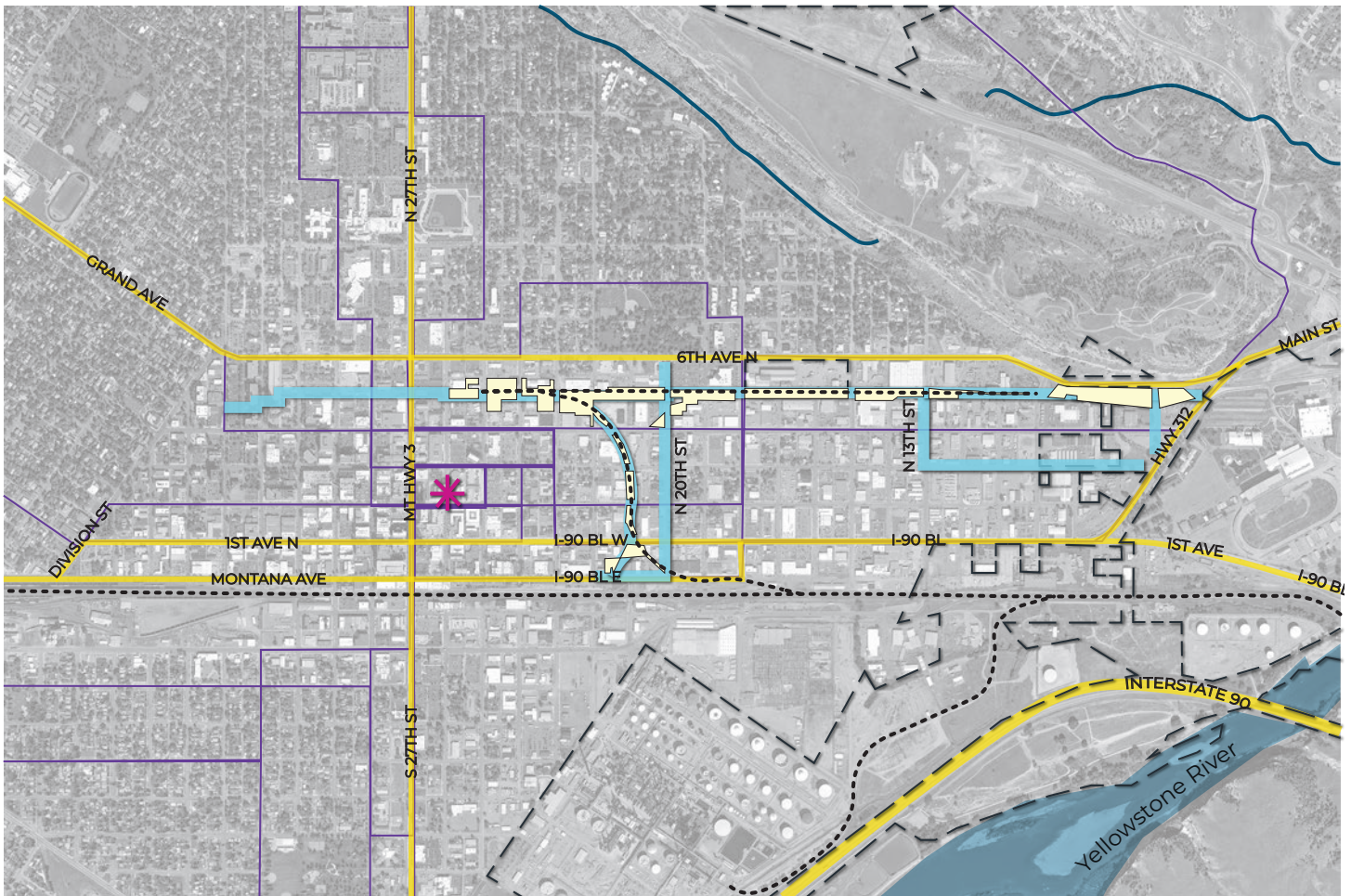
## Pedestrian Infrastructure

All the adjacent parallel and cross streets in the project area have at least partial sidewalks. They are in varying condition in terms of size and maintenance. Very few of the sidewalks include desirable amenities such as trees, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, or pedestrian-scale lighting. There is a pedestrian crosswalk signal at 6th Avenue North between North 20th and North 21st Streets. This provides a critical safe crossing between the East Billings area and the North Park neighborhood. A pedestrian activated crosswalk signal also provides a safe crossing at the intersection of 4th Avenue North and North 20th Street.

# Street Network

The street network in the project area consists of arterials, collectors, and local streets ranging from two lanes to six lanes wide. They are a mix of one-way and two-way streets. The recently completed Downtown Traffic Study presented recommendations to convert some one-way streets to two-way. A few currently include bike lanes while others are identified in the Billings Bikeway and Trails Plan as future bike facilities. On the eastern end, several north-south streets terminate at the corridor impeding connectivity. Some of this is due to the rail spur from Montana Avenue.

It is important to note that Montana Avenue, 1st Avenue North, and North 27th Street are classified as National Highway System routes. North 30th Street, North 13th Street, 4th Avenue North, and 6th Avenue North are designated as Montana Department of Transportation Urban Routes.



## LEGEND

- Project Area
- City Limits
- Active Montana Rail Link
- Railroad Right-of-Way
- Major Roadways
- Bus Routes
- ✱ MET Transit Transfer Station



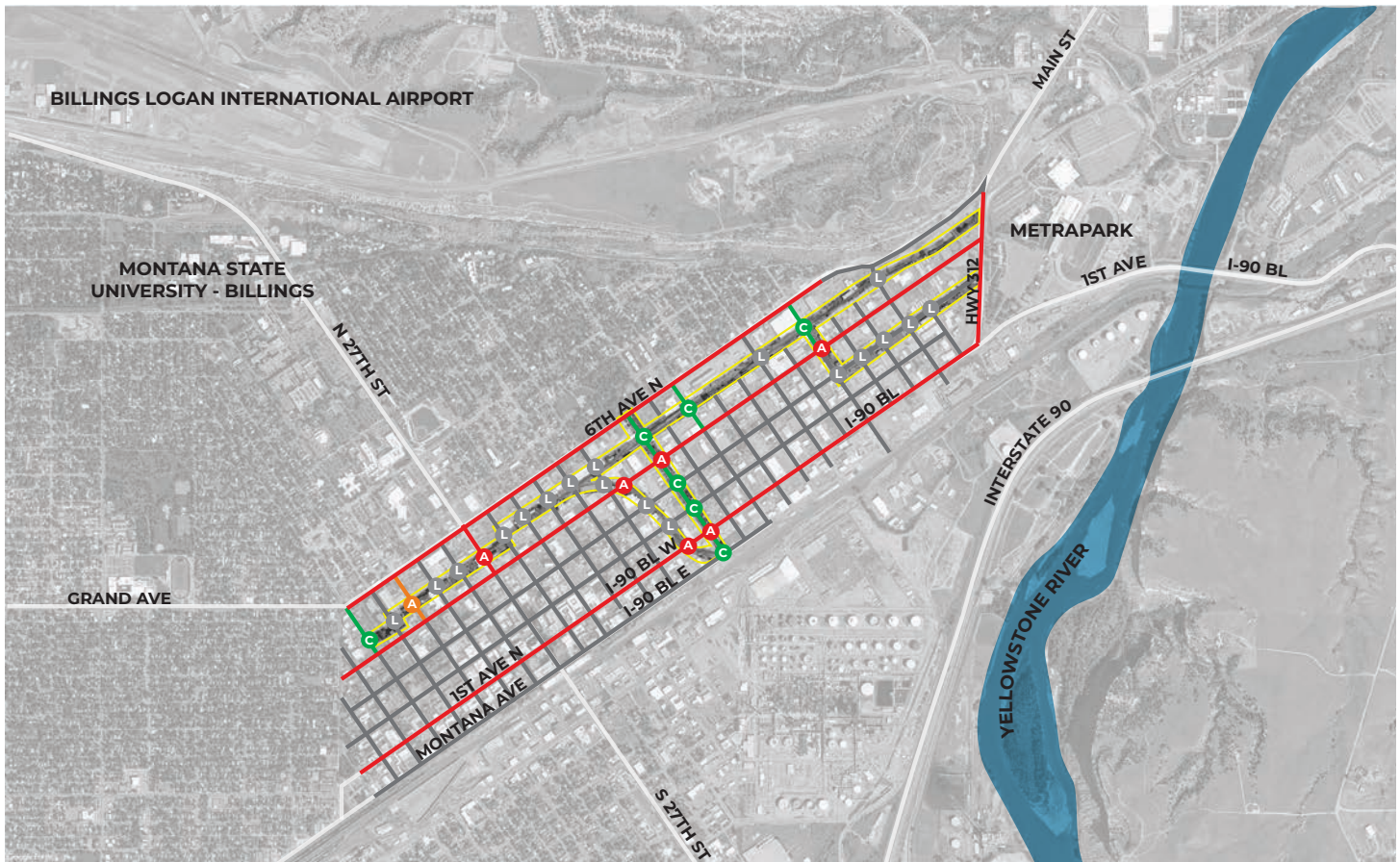
# Inventory of Intersections

Cross street intersections interrupt the continuity of the corridor. Understanding the current conditions of those intersections helps to determine the feasibility of creating a continuous transportation facility for the 5th Avenue North corridor. Some of the intersections present challenges to pedestrian and bicyclist safety, while others create important connectivity with other transportation modes. The intersections are grouped into two categories. 1) Arterials and Collectors and 2) Local Streets. These designations influence the design and traffic volumes and therefore will influence the appropriate intersection and crossing type with any multi-modal improvements proposed for the corridor.

Appendix B provides an inventory of the existing conditions for each intersection and how each relates to the 5th Avenue North corridor.

“North 27th Street between Montana Ave and 6th Ave North had the highest crash rate in the City of Billings from 2013-2017. The intersection of North 27th Street and 6th Avenue North was the 7th worst intersection for crashes during that same period.”

*Source: 2020 Billings Urban Area Transportation Plan*



## ROAD CLASSIFICATION LEGEND

- A Major Arterial
- A Minor Arterial
- C Collector
- L Local



## Corridor Character



The diversity of character and uses distinguishes the corridor from any other piece of the street grid in Billings. Due to the variety of adjacent uses (office space, cultural institutions, light industrial, warehousing, and a regional recycling center), it is difficult to summarize the character of the entire corridor as anything other than unique.



The western edge of the corridor, where the railroad right-of-way no longer exists, there are plazas and open space associated with adjacent office buildings providing some activated common-area outdoor places. Given the proximity to several social service agencies, parts of 5th Avenue North are actively used as direct pedestrian connections to those services. Further east, where there are fewer office buildings and lighter pedestrian use, neglected sections of the corridor are littered with debris and subject to higher rates of crime and vandalism.

The existing negative characteristics present challenges to the perceived feasibility, but those same challenges are the very reason to envision transforming 5th Avenue North into a safe park-like shared-use corridor to better serve the adjacent properties and the Billing community. To this end, the feasibility study proposes a cohesive community-envisioned concept to improve the overall character and function of 5th Avenue North that honors its heritage, current uses, and future evolution.



All photos on this page show existing conditions along 5th Avenue North in Billings



# ASSESSMENT OF FEASIBILITY CRITERIA

This section describes the evaluation of the established criteria to determine the feasibility of improving the 5th Avenue North corridor. Right-of-way availability, active railroad use, and safety were considered. Qualitative assessments including public support, community needs, and property owner interest were also evaluated. Results of these assessments formed the foundation to develop a vision for the corridor.

## Railroad Agreement and Support

Montana Rail Link has an obligation to serve customers with rail service for as long as that need exists. Therefore, because a portion of the corridor is actively used to service local businesses, it is essential that the feasibility study include how enhancing the transportation corridor can co-exist with the existing rail operations.

The consultant team met with Montana Rail Link representatives to discuss the project opportunities and constraints. While approval for any use of the MRL right-of-way will require design plans beyond the scope of this feasibility study, a phased approach to the development of a multi-use path adjacent to or within the right-of-way was not outright rejected. Beyond this study, the next step in assessing the development of the corridor will be to complete design plans to a level that can be reviewed by MRL and subsequently BNSF Railway Co. It is anticipated that a 30% complete design would be the minimum to initiate additional discussions, with final approval by BNSF not occurring until nearly 100% design completion.

## Property Owner Agreement and Support

In addition to MRL and BSNF support, implementing the proposed improvements along the 5th Avenue North corridor will require significant support from the adjacent business and property owners. Understanding the needs and securing the support of the adjacent properties is critical to determining the feasibility of the corridor improvements.

During the project process, the consultant team and representatives from the POC met with property owners along the corridor. Many view the opportunity to construct a non-traditional transportation corridor as a catalyst for redevelopment within the downtown and EBURD areas. As there is no designated right-of-way for 5th Avenue North west of North 26th Street, coordination with property owners in this section will be integral for the completion of the corridor.

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## Right-of-Way Availability

The right-of-way varies in width, which will influence the ultimate design of the corridor. In analyzing the availability and dimensions of the right-of-way, the design approach will need to respond to the varying opportunities and constraints. In some locations, easements may need to be secured. In locations with active rail use, safety buffers will need to be implemented which may require additional easements. In the overall analysis of the right-of-way, it has been determined that the corridor can be significantly improved with support from MRL and certain adjacent property owners.

## Public Support

Throughout the public outreach, including the virtual open house in the fall, the overall response has been very supportive of the project. The community views 5th Avenue North as an opportunity to create a unique amenity that can be a showcase improvement project and enduring public asset for Billings. The vision created within this document is the result of resounding public support and constructive input. 5th Avenue North is an opportunity to build a multi-faceted coalition of public and private partners to bring the community's vision to fruition.

## Safety

Throughout discussions with stakeholders, safety was a common theme. The downtown and EBURD areas currently have higher rates of crime than other locations within the City. According to the Billings Police Interactive Crime Stats Report ([link](#)), the downtown and East Billings neighborhoods reported nearly 17,000 calls for service between January and September 2020.

Balancing the needs to provide a welcoming and safe place for all with the development of adjacent land uses will be important for the design of the corridor. Improving the safety for the corridor and the adjacent neighborhoods will take a coordinated effort between public agencies, social service agencies, and property owners. To that end, implementing transportation and placemaking improvements will be important aspects to increasing overall safety.

Another safety consideration is the many intersection crossings within the 2-mile corridor. Two-thirds of these intersections are local streets with little traffic. However, the intersections of busy and multiple lane streets, such as North 27th Street, pose a significant safety challenge for bicyclists and pedestrians. Designing a safe multi-modal corridor must include consideration of improving this intersection.

**“Cities can foster the development of safer conditions for all road users through planning that prioritizes mass transport, pedestrians, and bicyclists.”**

**– *Cities Safer by Design*,  
World Resources Institute**

## Costs

While the corridor will likely be improved in phases over time using a variety of funding sources, it is important to identify and understand the potential project costs up front. While this feasibility study is conceptual only, it provides preliminary cost estimates for the major components of the proposed improvements.

The cost estimates do not include the purchase of any right-of-way and assumes that any improvement of the corridor on private property would be completed in coordination with the current owner or future redevelopment.

ESTIMATED IMPLEMENTATION COSTS			
Item	Total	Notes	
Demolition & Reconstruction	\$ 316,800.00	Average of 40' width of demolition; 2 mile of trail length	
Trail	\$ 407,000.00	12' wide asphalt	
Site Amenities	\$ 164,400.00	Trash/recycling receptacles; benches; bike racks; dog waste bag dispensers; planter pots	
Site Lighting	\$ 1,020,000.00	Pedestrian scale pole lights; light bollards; electrical connection	
Railroad Barrier Fence	\$ 528,000.00	Metal barrier fence; 4' height	
Pilot Project Activity Spur	\$ 750,000.00	Plaza, site furnishing, plantings, specialty lighting	
Intersection - Local	\$ 110,880.00	12 intersections; accessible ramp with truncated dome pavers, removable bollards, painted crosswalk	
Intersection - Collector & Minor Arterial	\$ 301,480.00	5 intersections; accessible ramp with truncated dome pavers; removable bollards; enhanced concrete paver crosswalk	
Intersection - N 27th St.	\$ 802,176.00	Traffic signal, pedestrian signals, electric service; removable and fixed bollards; median refuge; enhanced concrete paver crosswalk with concrete banding	
Signage and Wayfinding	\$ 63,000.00	5th Ave N Corridor (East-West) Gateway kiosks, street/trail intersection signs, secondary access & trail etiquette signs, destination/decision signs	
Signage and Wayfinding	\$ 20,000.00	3rd Ave N, N 13th St, and N 20th St (North-South) Gateway kiosks, street/trail intersection signs, secondary access & trail etiquette signs, destination/decision signs	
Landscaping	\$ 50,000.00	Trees, seeding, shrub beds	
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 4,533,736.00</b>		
Public Art	\$ 45,337.36		
<b>Design Contingency</b>	<b>\$ 906,747.20</b>		
<b>Construction Contingency</b>	<b>\$ 453,373.60</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,939,194.16</b>		

NOTE: Opinion of probable cost does not include environmental remediation

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## Phasing

Because the railroad will continue to operate for as long as there are customers needing rail service, the corridor will need to be completed in phases. Phased improvements along the active rail line will need to physically begin and end at points that such as intersections to discourage trespassing along unimproved portions of the corridor. The evaluation of feasibility includes opportunities to implement the improvements over time, while providing a consistent and cohesive design. Phasing also facilitates gaining additional public support in response to initial pilot improvements. The phasing will also need to be responsive to redevelopment opportunities as they arise, as opportunities will likely not be sequential or contiguous along the corridor. Putting forth a complete and comprehensive vision will help facilitate the strategic, phased implementation of the project.

## Summary

The feasibility study evaluated the reasonable ability to provide a continuous east-west multi-modal route along 5th Avenue North between the YMCA and MetraPark with connections south to Montana Avenue. It has been determined that the 5th Avenue North corridor can be completed over time to create a multitude of high-amenity non-motorized connections. Alternate routes from North 13th Street east to Main Street and MetraPark were also identified to connect the eastern portion of the corridor while the recycling hub is still operational with active rail use.

In response to the varying existing conditions and uses along 5th Avenue North, the proposed improvements identified in the vision below are a coordinated kit of parts. This allows for flexibility and adaptation as the implementation is phased and adjacent land uses change over time.

# CORRIDOR VISION

**A bold vision is required to realize the full potential of the 5th Avenue North Corridor to be a safe, amenity-rich community asset.**

Throughout the feasibility analysis, many ideas were presented and evaluated that would transform this corridor into a high-value community asset. These ideas represent opportunities to improve transportation access, interact with adjoining properties, and create a unique inclusive public space.

As demonstrated in the case studies presented in Appendix A, communities that embrace a bold vision for the transformation of public places benefit immensely from the improvements for decades. These types of projects become the catalyst for revitalization of private property while providing safe, attractive, and functional public space for the entire community.

The vision and concepts proposed in this study articulate ways that the 5th Avenue North Corridor can be a transformational catalytic project for Billings. Most importantly, the corridor vision and concepts are community driven by the project oversight committee, business and property stakeholders, community organizations, and the people of Billings.

## Corridor Vision

Guided by the established project vision and community input, the 5th Avenue North Corridor will be a safe, attractive, and accessible transportation corridor acting as a catalyst for revitalization and economic prosperity while invoking community pride and ownership.

It will provide an inviting, convenient, and safe way of travel for all ages and abilities, provide convenient access to transit, and create new connections to local destinations. A dedicated space to non-motorized travel will provide opportunities for pedestrians and bicycles through creative trail design, attractive public spaces, landscape, signage, art, and other site amenities.

**“We can create a gathering spot for things like festivals and outdoor markets that would be a centerpiece for Billings.”**

**- Public Comment**

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# Corridor Goals

The 5th Avenue North Corridor study provides a vision for the corridor by considering physical design elements, existing conditions, potential land use, and future traffic demand. The following goals are established to help achieve the project vision.

## Connect the Community through a Multi-Use Transportation Corridor

- Enhance the physical and visual connections of 5th Avenue North to streets, bike routes, the bus transfer station, neighborhoods, downtown, and MetraPark by creating an attractive, safe multi-use transportation corridor.

## Create a Transformational and Inviting Public Space

- Transform the railroad corridor into a vibrant travel route that welcomes users with an inviting and safe experience that is enlivened by well-designed placemaking.

## Increase Corridor Visibility

- Increase the visibility of the 5th Avenue North corridor at street crossings and access points through placemaking, wayfinding signage, and public artwork.

## Create an Atmosphere of Safety

- Prevent problems and encourage safe behavior by improving street connections, signage, and lighting to create a public space that is inclusive and inviting to a wide variety of users.

## Leverage Community Partnerships

- Leverage existing partnerships between the City, businesses, and property owners to enhance, maintain, and manage the corridor by developing engaging public and private spaces that encourage the use of the corridor.

**“Would love a green space here to bike/run to the Metra, hook up to the rest of our trail system, or attend events at Metra Park (and not have to drive!). More housing/density along here could also support food trucks, pop up craft fairs, and other inviting activities along this trail. Even farmers markets on different nights of the week! So much potential.”**

**– Public Comment**

# OPPORTUNITIES

**“Prioritize the connectivity of this project to surrounding neighborhoods and provide an alternative for pedestrians.”**

**– Public Comment**

Building off the vision and goals, the project consultants developed a schematic corridor alignment and evaluated the opportunities that could arise from corridor development. These opportunities relate to the corridor itself, the overall transportation system, placemaking, and associated redevelopment opportunities along the alignment.

All the corridor goals stated above represent a unique opportunity for Billings to create a community asset that is accessible, equitable, and inclusive for everyone. The goals could be summarized as “leverage partnerships to connect the community by creating an inviting public space that is visible and safe”. The 5th Avenue North corridor could, and should, become a place that people can travel, recreate, and find respite regardless of the race, age, ability, and socio-economic status.

## Corridor Character

The analysis of the existing conditions along 5th Avenue North identified widely diverse characteristics of the corridor. The opportunities to improve and enhance the corridor should reflect and celebrate that diversity. There are four sections that generally have different characteristics from one another. Each distinct section should have a unique but complementary approach to the specific improvements proposed. One way to ensure cohesion of the corridor is to create a common theme of design elements and allow flexibility as when and how those elements can be completed. This will enable phasing of the corridor to occur as conditions change and opportunities arise. Yet, creating that common theme ensures that each element is working towards completion of the corridor.

The idea of development of the corridor into an identifiable destination in Billings has been evolving through the community. Incorporating public comments, stakeholder meetings, and the Project Oversight Committee, a theme arose to identity this corridor as the 5th Avenue Rail Trail. Retaining 5th Avenue in the name securely holds the location in geographical context. Rail reminds the community of the use – past and present – of the corridor. Trail presents the opportunity for the future use.

Throughout the rest of this Study, there are images that reflect the Rail Trail theme. Through development of a visionary concept design, these ideas can be further established and incorporated throughout the length of the corridor.

As the vision for 5th Avenue North is refined, section boundaries may need to be adjusted. The character areas proposed below are a starting point for further exploration and design.



Charlotte Rail Trail, Charlotte, North Carolina

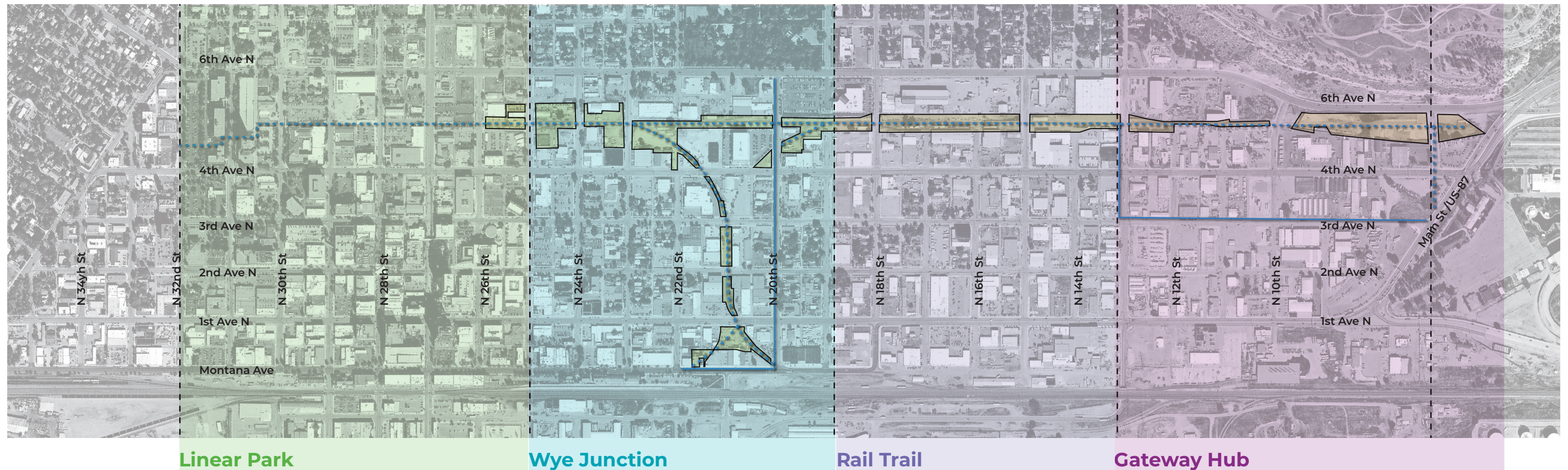


Charlotte Rail Trail, Charlotte, North Carolina



Indianapolis Cultural Trail  
credit: Lavengood Photography





## Corridor Transportation Improvements



Crosswalk

Marked crosswalk to designate pedestrian / bicycle right-of-way at street crossing



Entry Monument

Gateway monument to provide a clear and grand image on entry points to the corridor



Wayfinding Signage

Signage to encourage visitation, provide clear directions, and reflects the character of the corridor



Shared Street

Street shared between vehicles and bicycles with bicycle lane markings and sidewalk improvements

## Corridor Placemaking Elements



Pedestrian Lighting

Pedestrian scale lighting along the corridor and at entry points to increase user safety and visibility within the corridor



Site Furnishing

Benches, planters, trash receptacles, bicycle parking that reflects the character of the corridor and creates places for people



Trees and Landscape

Trees to provide shade and planting to provide interest and act as a buffer from the railroad tracks or street



Pocket Park

Small activity spaces at entry points where people can gather, where additional amenities can be provided, and provide a sense of place



Public Art

Murals and sculptures that reflect the character of the corridor

## Overall Vision Exhibit

# Linear Park

The section of the 5th Avenue North vision from the YMCA to North 25th Street offers an opportunity to use existing plazas and landscaping to extend the corridor into the central business district as an urban linear park. This area lacks cohesive park and open spaces, and the Linear Park would provide a connected multi-use route and green space to enhance the public realm.

As the right-of-way has been deeded back to adjacent properties, implementation of the Linear Park improvements through this section would require cooperation and participation by adjacent property owners. The Linear Park will require community collaboration to incorporate the recommended corridor improvements with future private redevelopment.

Highlights of the Linear Park section include providing a safe and accessible route for students who attend youth and after-school programs at the YMCA by reducing interaction with busy vehicular streets.

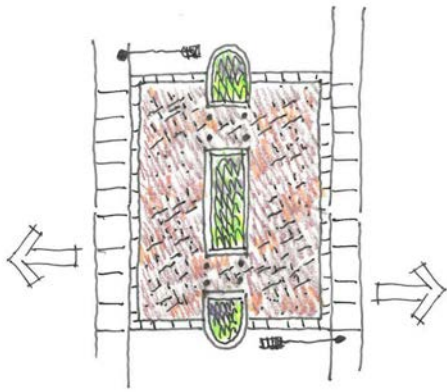
Additionally, the Linear Park would support and enhance amenities such as the Billings Public Library, the Lincoln Center, and the Yellowstone Art Museum. It could be used as a public space for outdoor gatherings, markets, and special events.



ADJACENT PROPERTY    BUFFER - VARIES    12' TRAIL    BUFFER - VARIES    EXISTING PARKING

### *Linear Park*

An area of civic and office buildings interlaced with parking lots. Without any of the 5th Avenue North right-of-way remaining, the corridor would meander through existing development, creating opportunities for plazas and pockets of amenities. Corridor should be designed to add green space and gathering spots as amenities for nearby residents and downtown workers.



Conceptual intersection crossing at  
North 27th Street and 5th Avenue North

There are seven cross streets within this section that would require creation of intersections with 5th Avenue North. All City streets are designated in the Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan as local, collector, and arterial streets based on the intended balance between prioritizing local access versus efficient mobility. Intersection design will vary due to traffic volumes, speed, and street width of those cross streets. Below are examples of intersections of pedestrian streets with different street conditions.

Given the high traffic volume and street width, the intersection with North 27th Street will require special consideration. Classified as a Major Arterial and a Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Urban Route, North 27th Street is a primary route through downtown Billings, providing direct connectivity between I-90 and both Highway 3 and Billings Logan Airport. According to nationally accepted resources such as the Guide for Improving Safety at Uncontrolled Crossing Locations (FHWA, 2018) and the Urban Street Design Guide (NACTO, 2013), best practices for pedestrian and bicycle crossings of multi-lane urban arterials include:

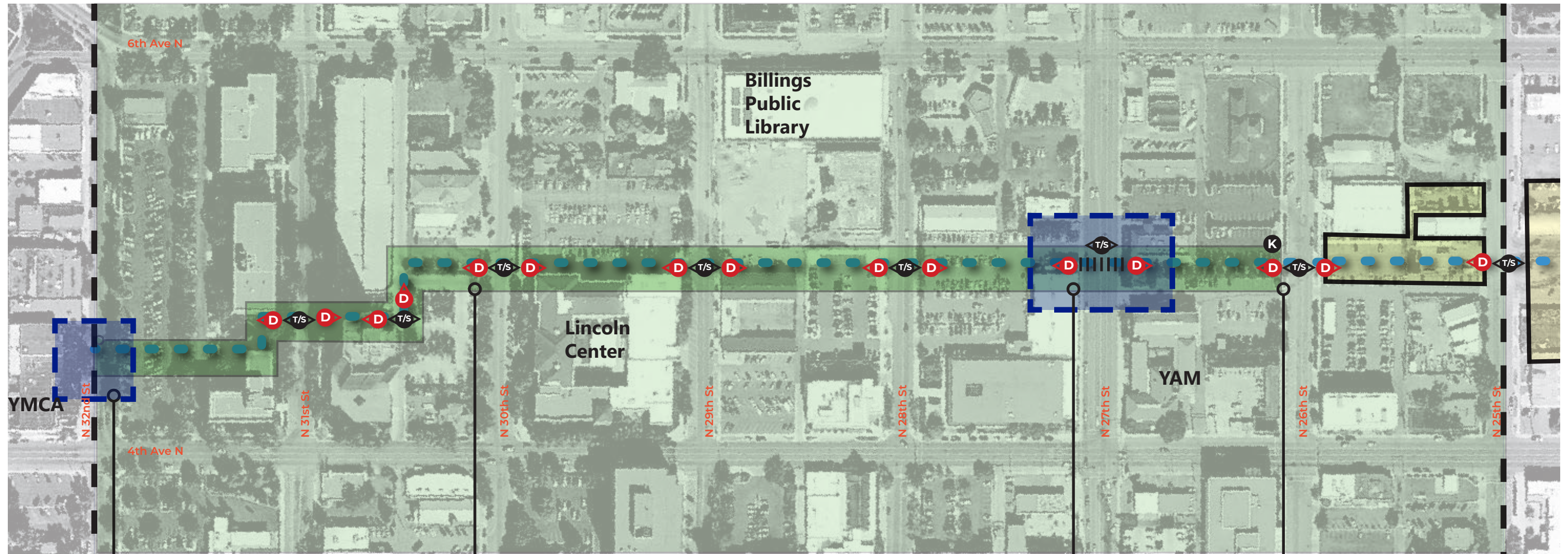
- Crosswalk visibility enhancements (high-visibility markings, lighting improvements, curb extensions, advanced signing)
- Raised crosswalk
- Pedestrian refuge island (with offset crosswalk alignments where applicable)
- Road diet (reduction in lanes)
- Actuated pedestrian signal systems (Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon)

Designing a safe intersection and meeting the goal to increase the corridor visibility creates a distinct opportunity at this focal point of the corridor.



Dequindre Cut, Detroit, Michigan  
credit: Smith Group JJR





Transformation Public Space - create public space where none currently exists.

Activity Hub: flexible event space, increased green spaces, public-private collaboration

Partnership - Collaboration to create trail connecting civic and cultural uses

Corridor Visibility -High visibility crossing N 27th St with at-grade crossing the full width of corridor, with traffic signal and median refuge

Safety - Enhance intersections to provide safe crossing

**WAYFINDING ELEMENTS LEGEND**

-  DECISION SIGN
-  TRAIL / STREET INTERSECTION SIGN
-  INFORMATION KIOSK
-  SHARED USE PATH (separated from active railroad line with approved barrier)

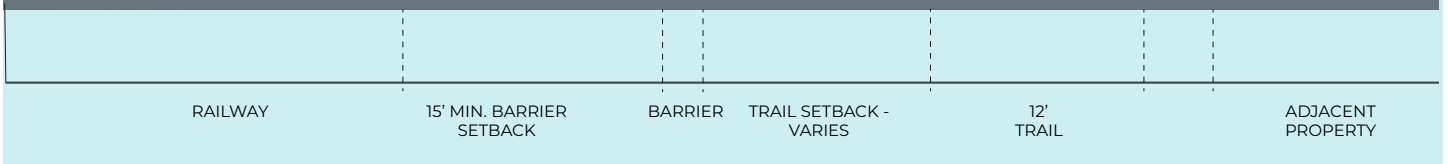
**Linear Park Exhibit**

# Wye Junction

The section between North 25th Street and North 20th Street is a transition between the urban central business district and the industrial section to the east. The railroad right-of-way begins here and provides increased opportunities for plazas and activity areas. The area includes a mix of adjacent land uses. This section includes a significant concentration of professional offices, including the Federal Building and the First Interstate Bank Operations Center.

As Billings looks to expand and improve transportation networks, the Wye Junction area provides critical connectivity between downtown, the North Park neighborhood, Montana Avenue, the EBURD, and MetraPark.

In railroad structures, and rail terminology, a wye (like the 'Y' glyph) is a triangular joining arrangement of three rail lines with a railroad switch (set of points) at each corner connecting to each incoming line.



## Wye Junction

The zone is a transition from downtown to the industrial area and serves as a connection to Montana Avenue and the North Park neighborhood. With several large office buildings, this zone serves as a potential pilot project area for corridor improvements. Improvements including trail development, activity nodes and wayfinding would be valuable amenities.

**A re-envisioned 5th Avenue North would create a dedicated multi-modal transportation corridor, connecting employment, social services, entertainment, and housing.**

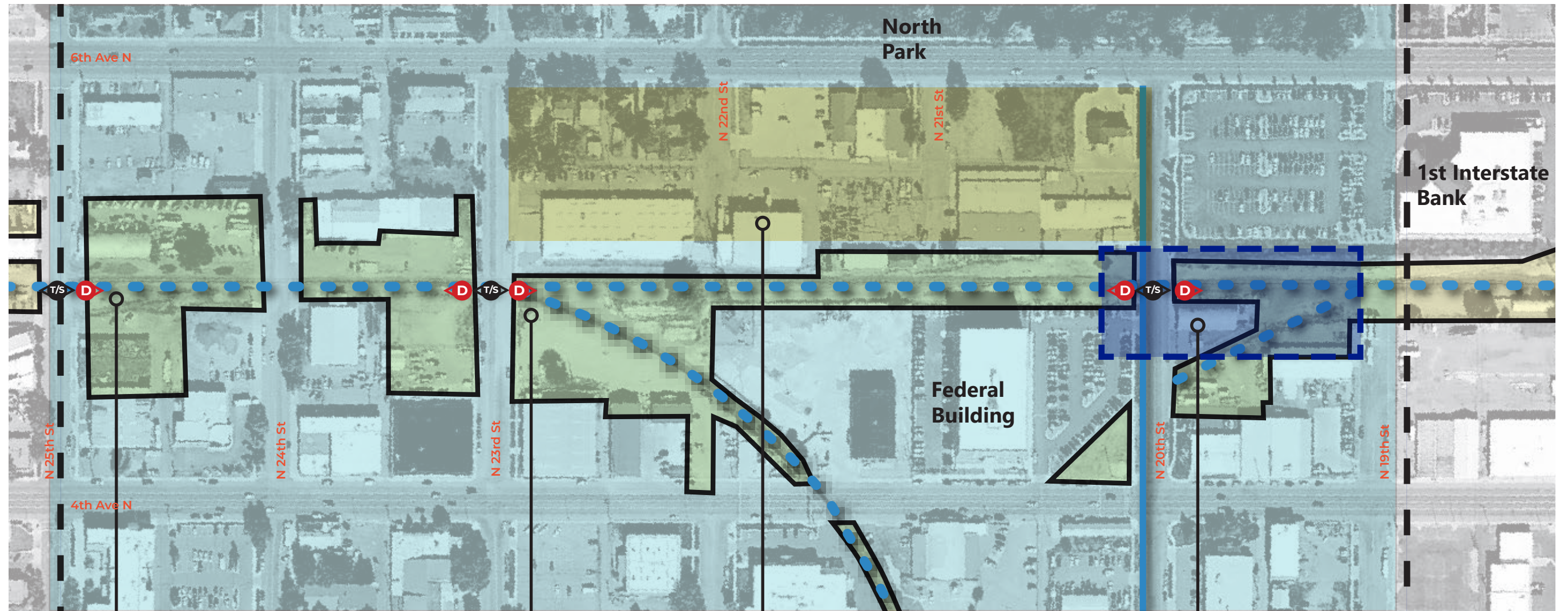
The focal point of Wye Junction would be an activity node near the North 20th Street intersection anchored by the Federal Building and the First Interstate Bank Operations Center. This node could incorporate green space, public art, and a food truck plaza. Additionally, just one block north, a pedestrian signal crossing 6th Avenue North to the North Park Neighborhood would allow residents to safely access and utilize the 5th Avenue North corridor. The proposed 6th Avenue North pedestrian signal crossing at North 20th Street would compliment the existing one at 4th Avenue North, providing safe access from both the north and south.

The Wye Junction section also connects south to Montana Avenue via the rail spur right-of-way and adjacent streets. From north to south, this route would create multi-modal connectivity between the North Park Neighborhood, North Park, the 5th Ave North Corridor, and Montana Avenue.

North 20th Street can serve as the north-south connection until such time that the current active rail spur can be converted to a shared-use path. As an interim solution, North 20th Street is the logical direct connection between the North Park Neighborhood and Montana Avenue that will allow safe travel across 6th Avenue North and 4th Avenue North utilizing the existing signalized pedestrian crosswalks

There is also opportunity to connect to transit routes that currently cross the 5th Avenue North Corridor. According to the US Department of Transportation, public transportation ridership can increase by 16 percent when walking and bicycling access is improved.





Multi-Modal – Increase connectivity with transit opportunities

Corridor Visibility – Wayfinding and other common elements can highlight the connection between 5th Avenue North and Montana Avenue

Safety – With active railroad use, look for opportunities to expand amenities with adjacent property owners

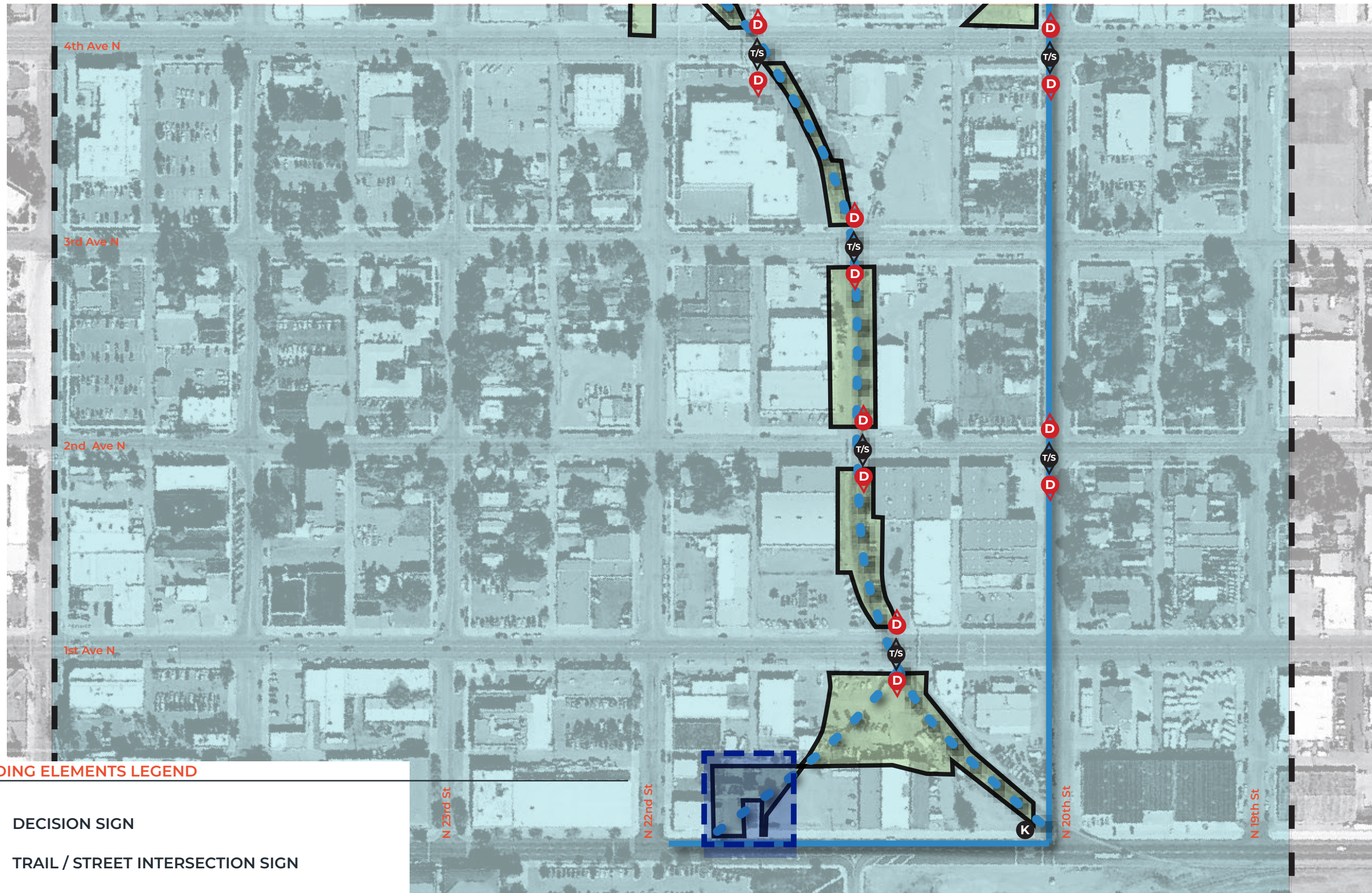
Transformational Public Space - Employment Activity Hub: build off the private investment occurring in this area by activating public space with increased green space, food truck plaza, and public art  
Partnerships – Seek spaces for food trucks and other amenities for nearby office workers

**WAYFINDING ELEMENTS LEGEND**

-  DECISION SIGN
-  TRAIL / STREET INTERSECTION SIGN
-  INFORMATION KIOSK
-  SHARED USE PATH (separated from active railroad line with approved barrier)

**Wye Junction North Exhibit**



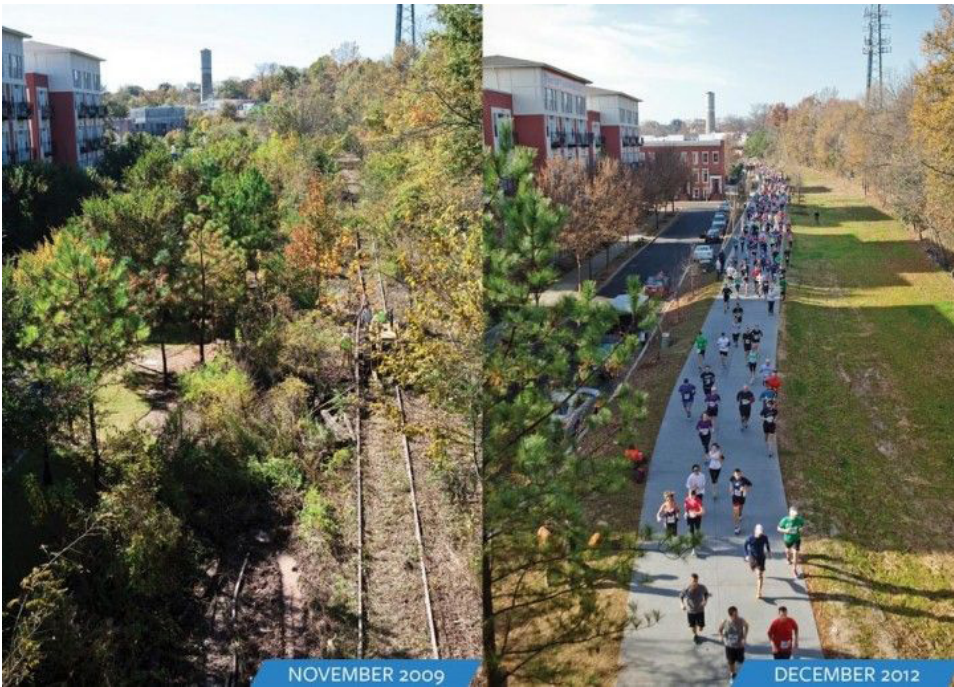


**WAYFINDING ELEMENTS LEGEND**

- DECISION SIGN
- TRAIL / STREET INTERSECTION SIGN
- INFORMATION KIOSK

SHARED USE PATH (separated from active railroad line with approved barrier)

**Wye Junction South Exhibit**



The BeltLine, Atlanta, Georgia

“The Atlanta BeltLine project is converting 22 miles of disused railway beds surrounding the city into a biking and pedestrian loop. A Georgia Tech graduate student submitted the idea for the BeltLine to city officials in 2001. This idea turned into a grassroots campaign of local citizens and civic leaders dedicated to the BeltLine’s integrated approach to transportation, land use, greenspace, and sustainable growth. Construction began in 2006, and the city expects to complete the \$4.8 billion project by 2030. It will connect 45 neighborhoods – cutting across socioeconomic and racial lines – while promoting urban revitalization and a healthier lifestyle for all residents.”

*Source: Case Study of the Atlanta BeltLine*



The BeltLine in Atlanta, Georgia  
credit: Christopher T. Martin

## Rail Trail

East of the Wye Junction section, the railroad use increases and the right-of-way narrows. Therefore, the Rail Trail section is envisioned as a straight multi-modal shared-use trail without the potential for activity hubs. This section has fewer intersections than those to the west, allowing for longer uninterrupted stretches of the trail for improved mobility efficiencies.

Assessment of the existing right-of-way established there is ample room for a 12-foot multi-use trail and a buffer zone to limit conflict with rail activity. In addition to the buffer zone, safety should be enhanced through the Rail Trail with additional lighting elements.

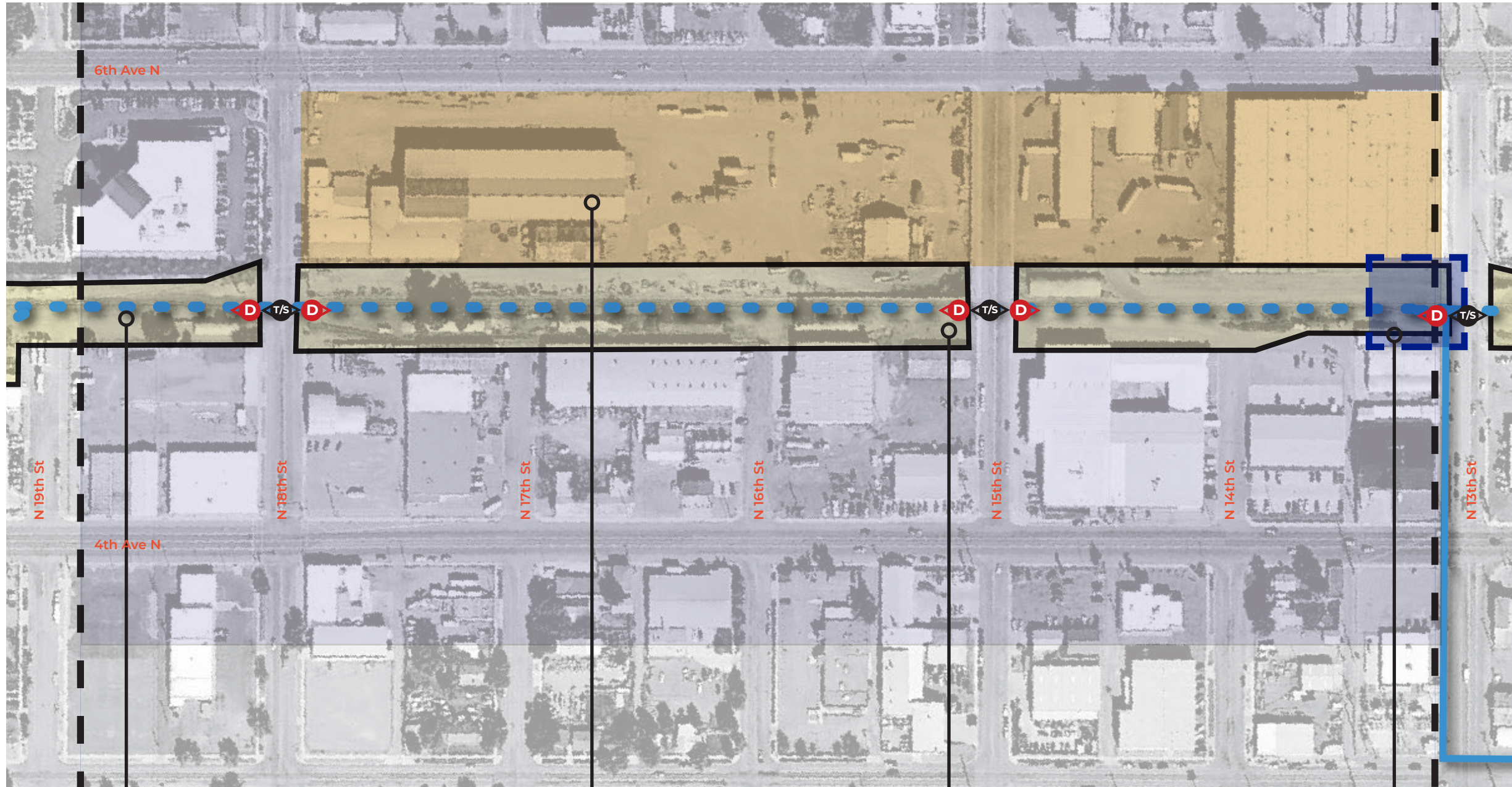
If land and business use along the Rail Trail change, opportunities to create amenity nodes on adjacent property could be explored. This section of the corridor has larger properties, particularly on the north side, which would enable greater opportunity for partnerships if and when property redevelops. This could include providing easements for trail use and public spaces.



### **Rail Trail**

The right-of-way narrows through this zone, creating fewer opportunities for activity hubs. This section provides opportunity for a multi-use trail with limited intersections. This zone has some larger properties that could partner to complete the corridor as part of redevelopment projects.





Multi-Modal – Increase connectivity with transit opportunities

Safety – With active railroad use, look for opportunities to expand amenities with adjacent property owners

Corridor Visibility – Wayfinding and other common elements can highlight the connection between 5th Avenue North and Montana Avenue

Transformational Public Space - Employment Activity Hub: build off the private investment occurring in this area by activating public space with increased green space, food truck plaza, and public art

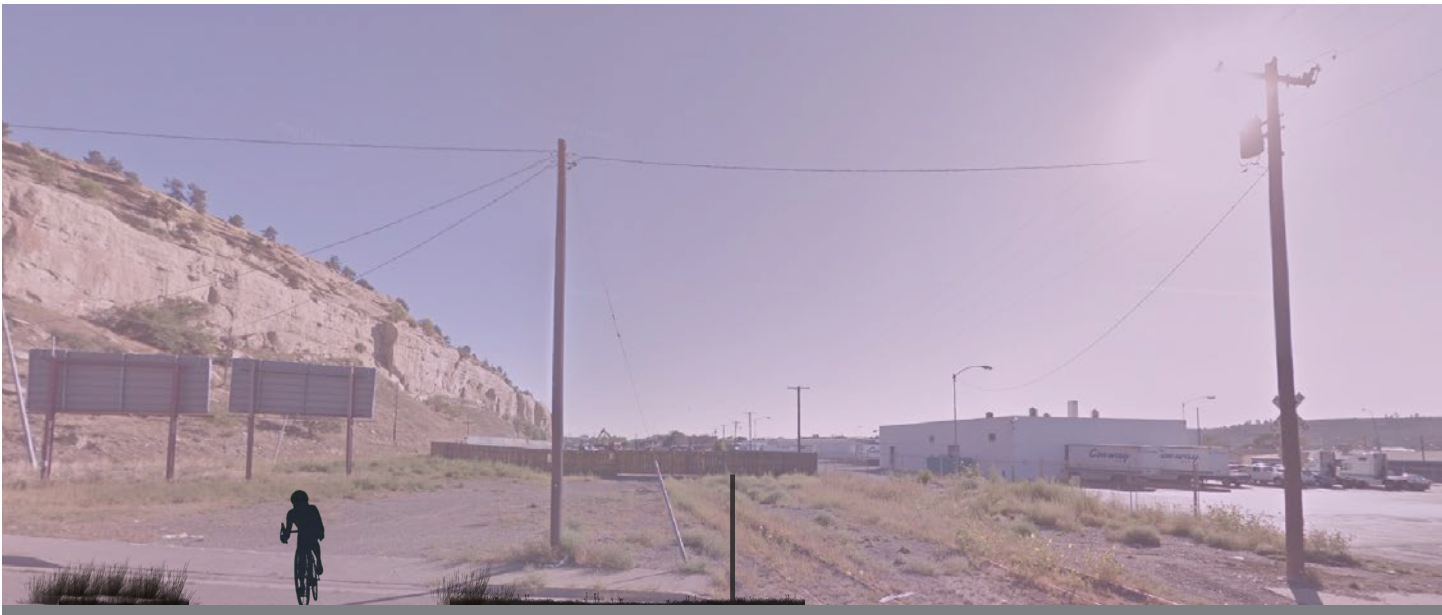
Partnerships – Seek spaces for food trucks and other amenities for nearby office workers

**WAYFINDING ELEMENTS LEGEND**

-  DECISION SIGN
-  TRAIL / STREET INTERSECTION SIGN
-  INFORMATION KIOSK

 SHARED USE PATH (separated from active railroad line with approved barrier)

**Rail Trail Exhibit**



12' TRAIL

TRAIL SETBACK - VARIES

BARRIER

15' MIN. BARRIER  
SETBACK

RAILWAY

**Gateway Hub**  
 This zone has active rail use and limited right-of-way. It provides opportunity to connect with the activities of MetraPark as well as connection to the Swords Park trails. While the railroad use remains active, an alternate route using 3rd Avenue North could provide these needed connections.

## Gateway Hub

The final section of the corridor is located between North 13th Street and MetraPark. Between North 13th Street and North 10th Street, the right-of-way becomes too narrow to continue the buffered shared-use trail. An alternative alignment would be to detour the shared-use trail south along North 13th Street to continue east on 3rd Avenue North. This alignment would ultimately connect to the proposed pedestrian overpass across Main Street to MetraPark.

There should be a committed effort to extend the corridor within the 5th Avenue North alignment east of North 13th Street in conjunction with future property redevelopment. If right-of-way or easements can be secured, opportunities such as those envisioned in the Wye Junction can also be created here. Green spaces, nodes and activity centers should be considered to enhance the area, providing amenities for the nearby users of MetraPark.

This zone should also be focused on connecting bike and pedestrian facilities to Swords Park and The Heights.

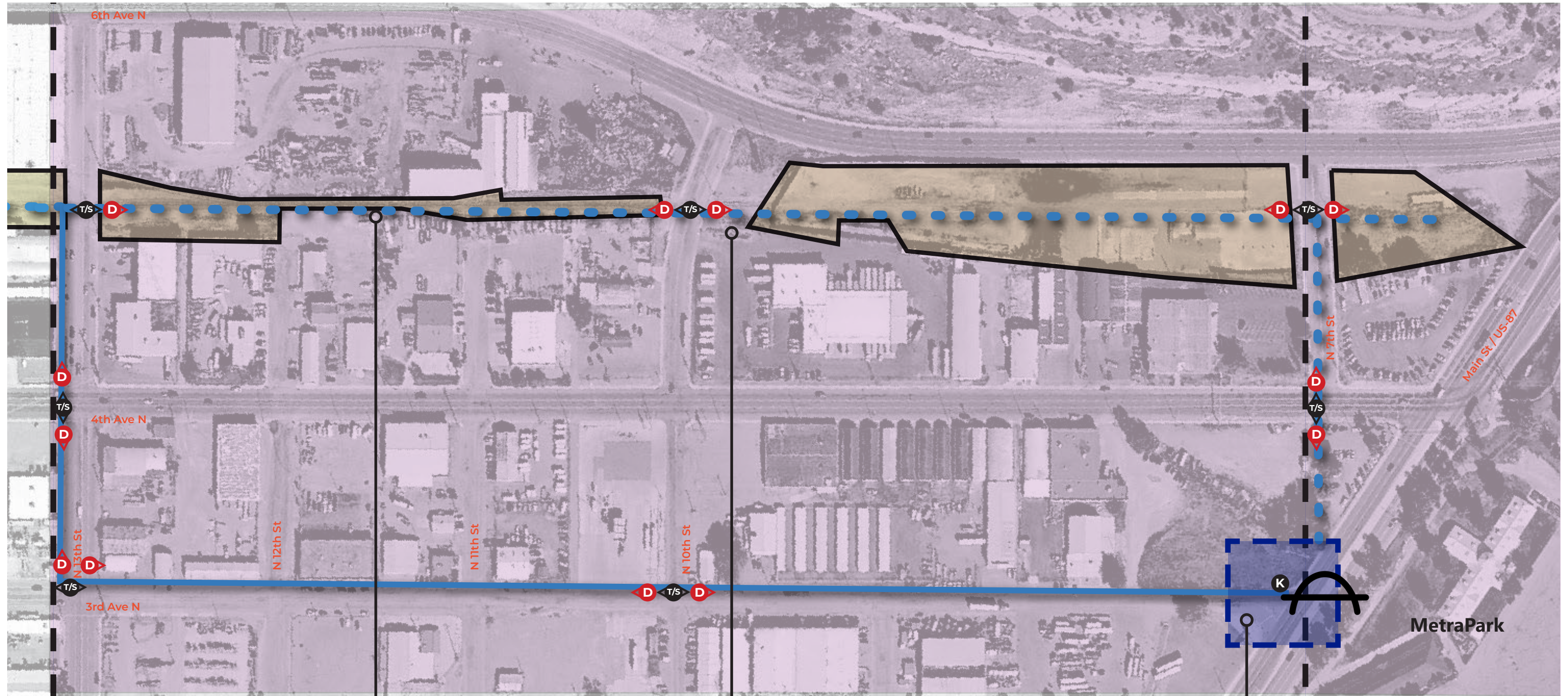
As an interim solution, the existing facilities along 3rd Avenue North, which includes an existing bike lanes, can provide a connection to MetraPark. In this case, coordinated signage and other amenities should be used to build and create a cohesive corridor.

This section is called Gateway Hub in recognition of the area's current identification as the Recycling Hub and the adjacent Exposition Gateway. As these areas continue to be developed and evolve, the Gateway Hub will serve as gateway to and from MetraPark and a hub of complimentary amenities to the Exposition Gateway and its proposed hospitality corridor.



The Rail Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania





**WAYFINDING ELEMENTS LEGEND**

- DECISION SIGN
- TRAIL / STREET INTERSECTION SIGN
- INFORMATION KIOSK
- SHARED USE PATH (separated from active railroad line with approved barrier)

**Gateway Hub Exhibit**

Multi-Modal – Increase connectivity with transit opportunities

Corridor Visibility – Wayfinding and other common elements can highlight the connection between 5th Avenue North and Montana Avenue

Transformational Public Space - Employment Activity Hub: build off the private investment occurring in this area by activating public space with increased green space, food truck plaza, and public art

Partnerships – Seek spaces for food trucks and other amenities for nearby office workers

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# Transportation

The primary purpose of the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study is to identify opportunities to create new multi-modal transportation facilities and connectivity with the existing network.

## Access

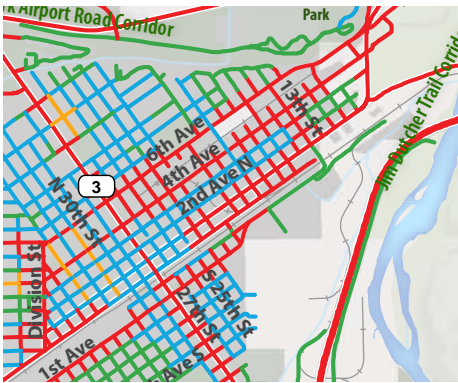
Implementing complementary transportation facilities along 5th Avenue North would create a 2-mile stretch of east-west multi-modal access that does not currently exist. Establishing access between the downtown central business district, the EBURD, and MetraPark is a community goal reiterated in numerous Billings plans, including the 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan, 2013 Exposition Gateway Plan and Hospitality Corridor Study, and the 2009 East Billings Urban Renew District Master Plan.

## Connectivity

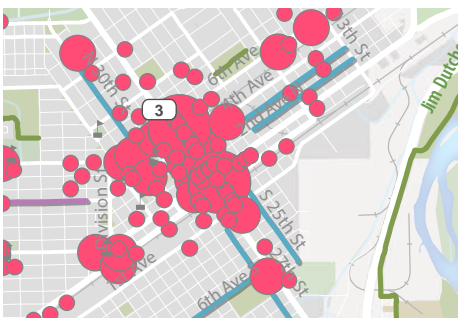
In addition to increasing access to downtown and MetraPark, upgrading 5th Avenue North as a multi-modal corridor would dramatically improve connectivity with numerous north-south transportation facilities. The proposed shared-use corridor would intersect with over 15 streets many of which are established bike routes and pedestrian ways. A highly connected transportation system, particularly for multi-modal uses such as biking and walking, dramatically increases efficiency, route options, and correspondingly, utilization.

## Safety

The 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan (the Plan) includes an analysis of the level of traffic stress for bicyclists. The Plan assigned the highest level of traffic stress to 4th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North. It also designates every cross street between North 13th Street and North 27th Street at the highest traffic stress level. The Plan establishes that high traffic stress streets are only appropriate for “strong and fearless” cyclists, thus excluding most people. The Plan states an equitable transportation network “should provide direct routes between origins and destinations that do not include links that exceed one’s tolerance for traffic stress.”



Level of Traffic Stress for Bicyclists, 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan



Bike/Ped-Vehicle Collisions, 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan

The 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan provides this explanation of the stress level designations:

“The methods used for the Level of Traffic Stress Analysis were adapted from the 2012 Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) Report 11-19: Low-Stress Bicycling and Network Connectivity. The approach outlined in the MTI report uses the following variables to classify roadways:

Posted speed limit

The number (and width) of travel lanes

The presence of bicycle lanes

LTS 4 [denoted in red on the corresponding map] is assigned to segments that are only acceptable to “strong and fearless” bicyclists, who will tolerate riding on roadways with higher motorized traffic volumes and speeds. Sometimes, even the presence of a dedicated bicycle lane is not sufficient to make a high-speed and volume roadway comfortable to a significant portion of the population.”

High amounts of traffic stress directly correlate to vehicle collisions with pedestrians and bicyclists. The 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan illustrates the high number of collisions occurring within the 5th Avenue North corridor project area. These collisions are a direct result of inadequate safe pedestrian and bike facilities.

Converting 5th Avenue North to a low-stress multi-modal corridor connecting nearby destinations would benefit bicyclists and pedestrians. The east-west pedestrian experience along 4th Avenue North and 6th Avenue North - high-speed one-way four-lane thoroughfares with marginal sidewalks and little to no traffic calming amenities - leave much to be desired. A quiet, attractive, and safe 5th Avenue North multi-modal corridor would be a significant improvement for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

## Demand

All the relevant planning documents referenced in the Background section of this study prioritize access, connectivity, improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, multi-modal transportation, and mobility safety. The emphasis placed on these community benefits indicate a high level of demand for the type of improvements proposed for the 5th Avenue North corridor.

The 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan received 650 individual interactions using an online public input map. The mapping input indicated that only 8 miles of “comfortable” bike routes currently exist in the entire city. Resident input indicated the demand for 120.3 miles of new desired off-street bike facilities and 217 miles of new desired on-street bike facilities.

### MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES

BASED ON RESIDENTS' TOP FOUR CHOICES

From the Community Interest/Opinion Survey

WALKING & BIKING TRAILS 54%

SMALL PARKS 50%

LARGE PARKS 23%

### HIGHEST PRIORITY FOR INVESTMENT

BASED ON RESIDENTS' CHOICES AND UNMET NEEDS

### WALKING AND BIKING TRAILS

Source: 2016 City of Billings Community Interest and Opinion Survey

Trails Master Plan Survey Responses, 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan

The 2018 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan established a goal of “increasing the number of shared-use trail miles by 10% between 2018 and 2023”. These metrics begin to quantify a high demand for additional multi-modal facilities.

## Placemaking

The 5th Avenue North corridor provides a unique opportunity to incorporate a variety of placemaking strategies to enhance the multi-modal transportation function of the corridor while celebrating its history and current industrial character.

Placemaking incorporates landscaping, hardscaping, lighting, public art, and amenities such as wayfinding, seating, trash receptacles, etc. Where more right-of-way is available, and by collaborating with adjacent property owners, pocket parks could be built to provide small spaces with high concentrations of public amenities. All these placemaking elements not only make the public realm more attractive and user-friendly, but they also increase safety and positively impact property values.

### *What is Placemaking?*

**A hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, by inspiring people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.**

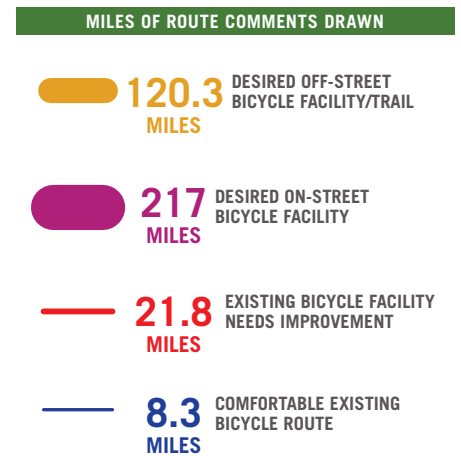
**A collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared values and to strengthen the connection between people and the places they share.**

**A tool to facilitate creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.**

*Source: Project for Public Spaces*

Wayfinding is a key component of placemaking and particularly important for the 5th Avenue North Corridor to provide guidance along, to, and from this long transportation corridor. Using the standards and typologies identified in the 2020 Billings Wayfinding Plan, a signage plan should be developed for 5th Avenue North and installed as the other improvements are implemented. The wayfinding system would also need to be extended along North 20th Street as the north-south connection in Wye Junction and down North 13th Street and along 3rd Avenue North in the Gateway Hub.

The 5th Avenue North Corridor has a rich history and diverse mix of uses today that provide an authentic framework to inspire placemaking design and implementation. The primary themes for the placemaking vision are the railroad and the recycling industry.



Trails Master Plan public input



The Rail Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



An on-street parklet, Oslo, Norway

***Why is Wayfinding Important?***

**The 2020 Billings Area Wayfinding Signage Plan outlines the numerous benefits of comprehensive wayfinding system:**

**Orients and guides locals and visitors from place to place with minimal stress**

**Identifies best routes to destinations**

**Creates a recognizable brand and identity for the jurisdiction and/or active transportation network**

**Overcomes barriers to entry, such as negative perceptions of connectivity, safety, the time it takes to travel by bicycle, and overall convenience**

**Improves safety by increasing the visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists and heightening the awareness of motor vehicle drivers**

**Normalizes walking and bicycling as legitimate modes of transportation**

By incorporating railroad and recycling themes into the placemaking elements, the improvements will be uniquely Billings—familiar and comfortable to residents and interesting to visitors. It is recommended that, when feasible, placemaking amenities such as seating, signage, and public art should be designed and created locally. This would allow Billings artisans and fabricators to capture a unique community ‘look and feel’ and supports the local economy.

Public art is also a placemaking strategy that can transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant community assets. Collaborating with local art institutions (Yellowstone Art Museum), schools, and artists, to develop a public art plan for 5th Avenue North would engage a diverse group of residents to design and create a shared vision for beautifying and activating the corridor.

## **Adjacent Land Redevelopment**

**See Appendix A for several inspiring case studies of redevelopment adjacent to railroad corridors.**

Implementation of the vision of the 5th Avenue North corridor will be directly tied to redevelopment and improvements of adjacent properties. The creation of new and safe public open space, such as the 5th Avenue North corridor, can generate positive momentum that leads to private investment in a neighborhood. Also, private redevelopment can lead to opportunities to complete and enhance the corridor. These activities will need to go hand-in-hand.

Much of the land adjacent to the corridor, particularly between 26th Street and Main Street/Hwy 312, is underused. Over half of properties have an assessed land value greater than the assessed building improvements value. This indicates an under-investment in the area and suggests many opportunities for higher and better uses in the future.

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# FROM FEASIBILITY TO FRUITION

Taking the 5th Avenue North corridor from current conditions to the envisioned multi-modal transportation facility will take preparation and partnerships. The intent of this Study is to evaluate the feasibility of creating a multimodal corridor. That realization will require private investment and strategic public infrastructure investments. This is especially important as the city does not own any corridor property and therefore is reliant on cooperation and collaboration with property owners to realize the vision for this area. The following information details the necessary actions and steps to work towards project completion.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation requires proactive planning to ensure success. Visionary concepts do not become reality by accident or luck. Every project needs a group of leaders and champions to carry the vision forward to completion. Just as the steering committee shepherded this study forward, implementation is dependent on a group of community leaders dedicated to improving the 5th Avenue North corridor.

Planning for implementation also needs to consider how the improved corridor is going to be managed and maintained. Use of right-of-way will require an agreement between Montana Rail Link, BNSF and the City of Billings. Such agreements would need to include provisions for managing and maintaining the public improvements. Forming a community non-profit, Friends of 5th Avenue North, could be a third-party partner.

To fully implement the corridor vision, the community must be committed and prepared to take advantage of two critical types of implementation opportunities. The first is the acquisition of the railroad right-of-way at such time that its use for rail service is discontinued. What makes the 5th Avenue North corridor so unique is the fact that it is neither a traditional street nor is it typically developed with buildings and parking lots. Therefore, if given the chance, the City of Billings should acquire the right-of-way rather than it being deeded back to the adjacent private properties. The second type of critical opportunity will arise when private properties adjacent to the corridor are redeveloped. The City and champions of the 5th Avenue North vision will need to work with developers to ensure the corridor's public access and amenities are incorporated into the design, construction, and operation of new developments. This can be done in mutually beneficial ways discussed more in the public private partnership section of Appendix C, which also outlines potential funding sources for ROW acquisition.

Beyond taking advantage of those two critical opportunities, each of the defined character areas would require different implementation strategies to successfully improve the corridor.

### *What Are Public Private Partnerships?*

**Public Private Partnerships, commonly referred to as P3 or PPP, are a powerful tool that has been used across the country to bring high-impact community projects to fruition by combining the respective strengths of the public and private sectors.**

**Community improvements can be made beyond the scope of one private development project using P3.**

**Cities do not have enough funding to finance all the needed public improvements and P3 provide a means to invest public funds and leverage private resources.**

## Linear Park

The railroad right-of-way terminates just past North 25th Street. The extension of the corridor further to the west will require vision, patience, and collaboration. For example, by partnering with The Yellowstone Art Museum, the corridor could be extended to North 27th Street by making use of the existing open spaces adjacent to the Vault and YAM buildings and parking lots. One idea would be to create a slightly elevated walkway over the stormwater detention swale. This would create a safe, tree lined path for pedestrian and bicyclists while preserving the stormwater function.

Continuing further west would require creating a safe crossing where the corridor would cross North 27th Street. Further implementation will require working with the existing property owners, many of which are community-minded, such as the Billings Gazette, Stockman Bank, the Billings Public Library, and the Lincoln Center. There may be creative ways using ‘tactical urbanism’ strategies to safely extend the corridor along the edges of those buildings and the associated parking lots. In addition to exploring ways to traverse this stretch today, a bold concept design should be formulated that would incorporate the complete 5th Avenue North shared-use corridor between North 27th Street and North 32nd Street at such time that one or more of those properties are redeveloped. This area would be ideal to utilize public private partnerships when the opportunities arise.

## Wye Junction

The entire 5th Avenue North corridor through Wye Junction has ample railroad right-of-way and implementing the full complement of improvements will be dependent on collaborating with Montana Rail Link. Wye Junction is the most complicated and perhaps most important area of the four corridor sections because it includes the potential for a critical north-south connection from the North Park neighborhood to Montana Avenue. Therefore, implementation of this north-south connection will need to be phased over time. The exiting rail spurs arcing between Montana Avenue and the 5th Avenue North corridor do not have enough right-of-way to co-locate a shared use path with the rail lines. Therefore, the recommended first phase implementation would be to use North 20th Street as the north-south connection. This initial connection could be made by sampling using the 5th Ave North corridor wayfinding elements to guide users north and south along North 20th Street. This part of the wayfinding system would be anchored with a gateway monument at the intersection of Montana Avenue and North 20th Street.

In preparation for full north-south implementation along rail spur, a visionary concept design should be created. In the future, if the rail use along either spur is discontinued, the City of Billings should be prepared to acquire the railroad right-of-way to extend the shared-use path and placemaking improvements between 5th Avenue North and Montana Avenue.

### *What is Tactical Urbanism?*

**Tactical Urbanism is all about action. Also known as DIY Urbanism, Planning-by-Doing, Urban Acupuncture, or Urban Prototyping, this approach refers to a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change.**

*Source: Tactical Urbanism Guide*



**Tactical urbanism crosswalk project across Main Street in Price, Utah**



Tactical urbanism wayfinding signs in Ottawa, Canada

## Rail Trail

The implementation through the Rail Trail section is the most straight forward of the four character areas. In this section, 5th Ave North is a clearly defined and consistent corridor between North 19th and North 13th Streets. The entire length runs through a wide railroad right-of-way that would accommodate the proposed landscaped shared-use path. Complete implementation will require collaborating with Montana Rail Link to agree on the access and recommended improvements.

## Gateway Hub

Implementation of the shared-use trail and placemaking improvements along the 5th Avenue North corridor through the Gateway Hub will require temporarily utilizing the existing street and sidewalk network. Initially, the shared-use path will need to transition from the 5th Avenue North corridor and turn south down North 13th Street. The route could then continue east along 3rd Avenue North until it reaches Main Street. Wayfinding signage would identify this meandering route.

Like the implementation strategies recommended for the Wye Junction north-south connection, a visionary concept design should be developed illustrating the extension of the 5th Avenue North corridor improvements. The complete implementation would be possible at such time that the adjacent land use along the corridor between North 13th Street and Main Street changes. The City of Billings should be prepared to acquire the right-of-way through this section and collaborate with future redevelopment projects to extend the full slate of shared-use path and placemaking improvements.



Pop-up protected bike lane on Telegraph Avenue in Oakland, California

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# PILOT PROJECTS AND PHASING PRIORITIES

The 5th Avenue North Corridor feasibility study proposes an ambitious vision for enhancing the corridor that will need to be implemented in phases over time. Thoughtful consideration will need to be given to the prioritization of the potential implementation phases. Phasing may be influenced as adjacent properties are redevelopment. As private property may redevelop, an opportunity to implement corridor improvements is created. The vision created in the Study acknowledges the need to be flexible and provide a theme for common elements so that parts may be built over time.

Below is a phasing plan utilizing the proposed Corridor Character Areas. The phase order is based on a variety of factors including current use, available right-of-way, and potential private partners.

- Phase One—Wye Junction
- Phase Two—Rail Trail
- Phase Three—Linear Park
- Phase Four—Gateway Hub

Phase One implementation in the Wye Junction area would serve as a pilot project showcasing all the improvement elements. This initial phase would extend between North 26th and North 18th Streets, respectively anchored by the Yellowstone Art Museum Visible Vault and the First Interstate Bank Operations Center. This section would also incorporate direct connectivity to North Park via North 20th Street with the installation of complimentary wayfinding signage.

The Linear Park area would provide another opportunity to pilot some improvements using temporary tactical urbanism installations discussed below.

These initial improvements and temporary installations would give the community a chance to guide the vision into reality and experience the benefits of improving the corridor. A successful initial phase and tactical installations would create excitement and momentum to pursue subsequent phases.

# NEXT STEPS

According to the findings in the study, there are two initial steps that the City could take to continue moving forward with the process of building a multi-modal transportation corridor.

The first step is for the City to request professional design services to finalize the corridor vision and develop design plans for the entire corridor.

The second step would be to continue discussions with Montana Rail Link to develop an agreement for use of the right-of-way.

Beyond these initial steps, subsequent activities include:

- Public Review and Design Concept
- Phasing Priorities and Funding Identification
- Design and Build Pilot Project
- Final Design Documents for Phase One
- Management and Maintenance Structure
- Construction
- Ribbon Cutting

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# Appendix A: Case Studies



## Railroad Adjacent Redevelopment Case Studies



SANDERSON STEWART 

Enduring Community Design

# 1. Sioux Falls, South Dakota Railyard



The City of Sioux Falls, SD purchased an existing railroad yard, approximately 10.25 acres in size, adjacent to their downtown for the purposes of redevelopment.

Plans for the area include:

- a new / reestablished / continued street grid organizing new mixed-use development
- a framework for multi-modal transportation
- Potential development yields

◇ Rail operations were relocated after City purchase

◇ Property was purchased using Federal funds

Similar to 5th Avenue North:

- » Plan area is adjacent to downtown
- » Redevelopment will be adjacent to active rail
- » Reuse of rail area to spur adjacent land use changes
- » Reestablishment of public ROW as a plan goal
- » Managing land use change and transition
- » Industrial uses remain in area
- » Vision will be accomplished through development on public and private property

Image Source: City of Sioux Falls Railyard Redevelopment Plan, RDG Planning & Design



## 2. Atlanta Belt Line



Image Source: Georgia State Signal, Google Images

The Atlanta Belt Line is an ambitious trails, open space, parks and redevelopment proposal that utilizes several segments of abandoned, underutilized, and very active railroad right of way that encircle the City of Atlanta.

- Right of way width varies considerable throughout the project, necessitating many different design approaches to providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, from grade separated trails to on-street paths.
- While emphasis is on trails, land use change is addressed through the designation of activity nodes that are near the system and primed for change. Many areas have been transitioning away from industrial uses for some time.
- Extensive effort has gone into integrating and aligning the beltline plan with other plans. Including transit and transportation and parks and open space.
- Funding sources include local government, foundation and philanthropic and the use of Tax Allocation Districts, which is similar to a TIF district.

Similar to 5th Avenue North:

- » Transportation and trails component
- » Managing land use change and transition component
- » Diversity of available right of way width, but often narrow
- » Adjacent to active rail operations

### 3. Kalispell Core Area Plan



Image Source: Kalispell Core Area and Glacier Rail Park Roadmap to Redevelopment, Council of Development Finance Agencies

The City of Kalispell Core Area Plan calls for the removal of a rail line and related industries located just north of their historic downtown and the redevelopment of the surrounding land, 44 acres of vacant, blighted, and brownfield property.

- At the time of the planning effort, the rail line was active. The plan created a process for moving rail served industries to a new location, allowing for the line's abandonment. The last rail car left in December 2019, seven years after the plan was done.
- Plan calls for a linear greenway and trail that supports existing and future development
- Key component is the establishment of new public crossing of the rail line area.
- Project is funded by a TIGER grant, federal rail loan, TIF funds and an EPA Brownfields grant. These funds will support the relocation of existing businesses, purchase and removal of railroad tracks, assessment and demolition of adjacent sites, and construction of the trail and amenities.

Similar to 5th Avenue North:

- » Study area is adjacent to downtown
- » Land use in study area is in transition from industrial to residential and commercial
- » Reuse of rail area to spur adjacent land use changes
- » Active rail line serving existing customers
- » Railroad ROW is linear in nature



Image Source: City of Kalispell, Montana Core Area Plan, CTA Architects Engineers

## 4. Montana Rail Link Park - Missoula

The City of Missoula purchased a 12 acre parcel from the Montana Rail Link RR in order to complete a missing segment of trail and construct a park.

- The purchase was funded through the 1995 Open Space Purchase Bond. The development of the park is funded using TIF funds.
- Park contains an open play field as well as children's playground and dog park. The Bitterroot Trail, which parallels an active rail line, runs along side the park.

Similar to 5th Avenue North:

- » Adjacent to active rail line
- » Reuse of previously occupied property



Image Source: Google Maps



# Appendix B: Inventory of Intersections

## Inventory of Intersections

Street	City Functional Classification	One-way or Two-way	Road Width (ft)	Number of Drive Lanes	Speed Limit	Traffic count	Sidewalk	Bike Facility	Transit Route
N 32 <sup>nd</sup> St	Major Collector	One-Way <sup>S</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	7776 <sup>1</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 31 <sup>st</sup> St	Local	One-Way <sup>N</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	-	Yes	No	No
N 30 <sup>th</sup> St	Minor Arterial	One-Way <sup>S</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	3380 <sup>1</sup>	Yes	No	No
N 29 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	One-Way <sup>N</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	3279 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	No
N Broadway	Local	Two-Way	47 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	3632 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 27 <sup>th</sup> St	Principal Arterial	Two-Way	66	6	25	18728 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 26 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	One-Way <sup>S</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	-	Yes	No	No
N 25 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	One-Way <sup>N</sup>	50 <sup>1</sup>	2	25	486 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 24 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	Two-Way	48 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	1152 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 23 <sup>rd</sup> St	Local	Two-Way	48 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	965 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes
N 20 <sup>th</sup> St	Collector	Two-Way	48 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	1071 <sup>2</sup>	Partial	No	No
N 18 <sup>th</sup> St	Collector	Two-Way	48 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	2006 <sup>2</sup>	Partial	No	Yes
N 15 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	Two-Way	46 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	590 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	No
N 13 <sup>th</sup> St	Collector	Two-Way	46 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	2121 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	No
N 10 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	Two-Way	46 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	747 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	No
N 7 <sup>th</sup> St	Local	Two-Way	46 <sup>2</sup>	2	25	-	Yes	No	No
Main St/Hwy 312	Principal Arterial	Two-Way	~110 <sup>3</sup>	8	35	40164 <sup>2</sup>	Yes	No	Yes

### One-Way or Two-Way:

- (N) - Northbound
- (S) – Southbound

### Road Width:

- (1) Data sourced from Billings Downtown Traffic Report
- (2) Data measured in field
- (3) Average width between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> measured from google earth aerial

### Traffic Count:

- (1) 2020 – MDT ms2 Data
- (2) 2019 – MDT ms2 Data/City of Billings ArcGIS
- (3) 2017 - Billings Downtown Traffic Study Report

### Sidewalk:

- Yes – Sidewalk is present on both sides of road
- Partial – Sidewalk is only on one side of road or not for entire road length
- No – No sidewalk present

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# Appendix C: Potential Funding Sources

Phasing the implementation also allows for securing funding overtime. Just like the implementation vision includes various components— a shared-use path, public art, placemaking amenities—the necessary funding will need to come from a variety of sources. Ultimately, the financing package will be a kit of parts potentially including transportation funds, public art grants, park and recreation funds, and private contributions. Sources may include local, state and federal government, urban renewal districts, non-profit organizations, private foundations and corporations, and charitable citizens.

## City of Billings Funds

The City uses funding mechanisms for a variety of government services. Some of these funding mechanisms could be used for actions identified within this Study. However, it should be noted that any mechanism included here does not imply the funding is available. This list is intended to identify potential sources of funding.

- General Funds
- General Obligation Bonds

## Targeted Assessments

Targeted assessments are collected and expended within a specific geographic area of the community.

- There are two Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts within the Study area: East Billings Urban Renewal District and the Downtown Urban Renewal District. Tax revenue collected within the district is commonly invested in public infrastructure projects that stimulate private development, such as street improvements and placemaking enhancements.
- Business Improvement Districts collect funds from a special assessment on commercial properties within the district area. The funds are used for special projects that benefit the property owners within the district. Examples of business improvement district expenditures include maintenance and beautification programs.
- Special Improvement Districts can be established to assess properties for funds that target a specific purpose. Examples include infrastructure improvements and maintenance of infrastructure.

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## Nonprofit Grant Funding

- Humanities Montana provides funding for public programs in the humanities, including events, lectures, conferences, oral histories, and workshops. These grants provide opportunities for community exploration of topics ranging from significance of historical events, cultural understanding, and interaction between scholars and the public.
- The National Endowment for the Arts awards cost/share matching grants to nonprofit organizations for a wide variety of arts projects across the country. The NEA “Challenge America” and “Grants for Arts Projects” are frequently awarded to community-driven public art projects.

## Public Grant Funding

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federally funded program that provides assistance to communities for projects such as public facilities, economic development, and planning grants.
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TA Program) is a federal program to assist local governments in developing transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects that improve access to public transportations, recreational trail improvements, and safe routes to school projects.
- The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD, Transportation Discretionary Grant program is a federal program that funds the building and repairing of critical pieces of road, rail, transit, and port facilities. It includes funding for multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional projects that are more difficult to support through traditional DOT programs.
- Montana Tourism Grants are available to assist communities in digital development, tourism infrastructure, event paid media advertising, and trade show assistance. The grant process is on a first come-first serve basis, starting July 1st. Preference is given to projects that are identified as key tourism projects in a community master planning process, undertaken with other programs within the Montana Department of Commerce (i.e. Main Street Program), which complement, enhance, and incorporate design elements of the Montana Brand. A matching fund is required.
- Environmental Protection Agency’s Brownfields Program provides grants and technical assistance to communities to assess, clean up, and reuse brownfields. The EPA specifically recognizes underutilized or abandoned railroad right-of-way as a type of brownfield. Grants for technical assistance are also available. Grants are typically awarded annually, with deadlines in December of each year.
- Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

administers a wide range of grants and loans. Urban and Community Forestry Grants are available to help support Urban Forestry projects. Grants range from \$2,000 to \$10,000.

- The Montana Arts Council provide grants through the Cultural and Aesthetic Project Grants program. The program is funded biannually, with a match required. Examples of government sponsors are county art or historical museums, public libraries, public educational institutions or school districts, state agencies, city arts commissions, parks and recreation departments, and tribal cultural or educational committees.
- Montana State Parks administers the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), a federally funded grants program that supports Montana's trails. The RTP funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. RTP applicants can include federal, tribal, state, county or city agencies, private associations, and clubs. Urban trail development projects are eligible to apply.

## Other Funding Sources

There is a wide variety of other funding sources that could be pursued to compliment municipal, assessment, and grant funding. Urban routes, such as North 27th Street, are eligible for funding from Montana Department of Transportation for access and safety improvements. Several of Montana's larger corporations make annual donations to community causes and projects. Utilizing popular crowdfunding platforms provide individual residents and small businesses a way to make donations to community enhancement projects. Developers often contribute to high-amenity public improvements near new projects to enhance the neighborhood where they are investing. Public-private partnerships (P3) are one way to cooperatively design, build, and maintain a community benefit project such as the 5th Avenue North corridor improvements.

PCC Agenda

**Meeting Date:** 08/17/2021

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**Information**

**Subject**

Motion: FY2022 UPWP, Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator

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**Attachments**

UPWP Memo  
FY2022 UPWP

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**Date:** 08/17/2021  
**Title:** 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)  
**Presented by:** Scott Walker  
**Department:** Planning & Community Services  
**Presentation:** Yes

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## Information

### RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Policy Coordinating Committee approve the 2022 UPWP and instruct Staff to forward that recommendation to the Montana Department of Transportation, Federal Highways and Federal Transit for concurrence. The City Council, Board of County Commissioners and Planning Board have all made favorable recommendations.

### BACKGROUND (Consistency with Adopted Plans and Policies, if applicable)

The City-County Planning Division is presenting the 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to the PCC for final local approval of this document. The City Council, County Commissioners and Planning Board have had an opportunity to review the document and received presentations from staff. In addition to the City Council and Board of County Commission review at public Work Sessions, Discussion Sessions and regular meetings, the Planning Board held a public hearing in which no testimony was received. All of these bodies have made a positive recommendation to the PCC.

The UPWP is primarily for the purpose of programming the federal dollars that Billings receives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for transportation planning and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for transit (MET) planning. These funds are passed through the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). All transportation planning activities are included in the UPWP so that it represents a comprehensive document for the urban transportation planning program and provides coordination between the Billings MPO, MDT, FHWA and FTA. This UPWP proposes planning activities for Federal Fiscal Year 2022, which runs from October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. This UPWP corresponds directly with the Planning Division's annual work plan. The significant changes in this year's program include an update to the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan, Phase II of the Safe Routes to School Plan, and completion of the North Bypass Corridor Study. The Transit section is Chapter II of the UPWP. The document is consistent with past programs in its content and format.

### STAKEHOLDERS

The City Council, County Commissioners and Planning Board have had an opportunity to review the document and received presentations from staff. In addition to the City Council and Board of County Commission review at public Work Sessions, Discussion Sessions and regular meetings, the Planning Board held a public hearing in which no testimony was received.

### ALTERNATIVES

### FISCAL EFFECTS

Approval of the 2022 UPWP allows the City to access Federal funds for transportation planning in the community. Federal and local funds are combined to provide most of the planning work done by the Planning Division for the City and the County, as well as support for MET Transit. If the UPWP is not approved, there would be a significant loss of resources for community planning and the community's ability to manage transportation planning projects and programs would be severely limited.

The breakdown of funding sources for the FY 2022 UPWP is estimated below:

- \$280,000 Planning Dept. Fee Revenue (City of Billings)
- \$155,000 Planning Dept. Fee Revenue (Yellowstone County)
- \$523,000 Yellowstone County Planning Levy
- \$1,679,581 Federal Planning (PL) Allocation

\$2,637,581 Total Local and Federal Program Funding (UPWP)

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## Attachments

Draft 2022 UPWP

# **Billings Urban Area**

## **Unified Planning Work Program**

**(UPWP)**

**Federal Fiscal Year**

**DRAFT**

# **2022**

Prepared By:

Billings/Yellowstone County Planning Division  
2825 3rd Avenue North, 4th Floor  
Billings, Montana 59101

In Cooperation With:

Montana Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
Federal Transit Administration



# UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

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## INTRODUCTION

The Billings Urban Area planning process is organized and conducted in a cooperative, coordinated, and comprehensive manner. The Yellowstone County Board of Planning, as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is charged with the responsibility of administering the planning process. Under federal regulations, an MPO must be established for urban areas with populations greater than 50,000 in order to receive federal funds for construction projects and transportation planning. This document, the Billings Urban Area Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and a companion document, the Prospectus, is the foundation upon which the planning process is based.

The UPWP is developed each year, and once adopted and approved by FHWA and FTA, is in effect from October 1 to September 30. The UPWP contains a task by task discussion of projects, which are to be undertaken during the program year. It also contains appropriate funding information, staffing information, and a schedule for each project. The UPWP undergoes a comprehensive review at the local, state, and federal levels each year.

This year, Federal Fiscal Year 2022, the format for work program activities conforms to Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 8100.1C, specifically Chapter IV. The Montana Department of Transportation and the Yellowstone County Board of Planning have mutually agreed upon use of this format.

The UPWP is a detailed description of projects, which occur on a routine basis. Once adopted, the document is only amended if there is a change in the planning process. The UPWP also contains information pertaining to the organization of the planning process, agencies involved, and agreements between agencies involved in the process.

Cost overrun guidelines have been established by the Montana Department of Transportation, and agreed to by the Yellowstone County Board of Planning. Those guidelines will determine the allowable overruns for any work program element. Overruns that surpass those outlined in the guidelines will require a UPWP amendment.

This document includes two chapters, Highway and Transit. Each chapter contains individual work elements. These work elements describe work the planning and transit staff will undertake in the program year as well as work accomplished in the past year. Also included is a breakdown of funding sources which include, Planning (PL) funds and Local (City & County) funds which are used to provide funding for non-PL eligible activities. Priorities this year include implementing the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan, the 2018 Public Participation Plan, an update of the School Sidewalk Program, continuing work on the Downtown Area Traffic Circulation and Safety Study, and other projects.

### **DATES OF LOCAL APPROVAL**

TAC -7/22/21  
PLANNING BOARD -8/10/21  
COUNTY COMMISSION -8/3/21  
CITY COUNCIL -8/9/21  
PCC -8/17/21  
FWHA-September 23, 2021

# CHAPTER I

## YELLOWSTONE COUNTY BOARD OF PLANNING

### SECTION I UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

#### 41.11.100 PROGRAM SUPPORT & ADMINISTRATION

#### **100 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION (4301)**

##### OBJECTIVE

- To administer the area-wide planning process.
- To support the Board of Planning and other Boards, Commissions, and the City Council and County Commissioners in decision-making activities in the planning process.
- To engage in administrative and financial actions related to identified planning activities and to prioritize those activities.
- To enhance staff skills and maintain staff exposure to the "state-of-the-art" in planning practice and computer software.
- To maintain contact with, provide input to, and receive feedback from various local, state and federal agencies, committees and groups during the planning process.

##### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Conformance with federal, state, and local administrative and regulatory requirements, as well as maintenance of planning operations was achieved for FY21.

Members of the planning staff attended various professional meetings, workshops, and conferences at which planning, transportation, transit, bicycle/pedestrian and related topics were presented and discussed.

Specifically, the City-County Planning Division (Planning Division) and members of other local, state and federal departments and agencies actively participated in a diverse set of local meetings, including the Billings Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC), Billings & Yellowstone County Zoning Commissions and Boards of Adjustment, Board of Planning, City Annexation Committee, City Development Process Review Committee, Community Development Board, Traffic Control Board, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Historic Preservation Board and others. Grant writing for the Division was completed under this work element. The coordination and administration of the TA Program applications and local approvals are administered through this work element.

Planning staff received updates in computer software programs for the geographic information system and its application to mapping data layers such as streets, land use, TAZ data information, address, ownerships and environmental data. Staff regularly utilizes an application tracking and project management software system that integrates the existing City building permit, finance and land management software, as well as coordinated subdivision and development project reviews across City and County departments. This software allows for electronic submittal of building, sign, fence and exempt plats for local review. Staff also reviewed/updated the City Annexation Policy and Limits of Annexation Map, and assisted in updates to the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Implementation of the City's Complete Streets Policy is ongoing with the continued collection of data to be incorporated into the Complete Streets Status Report that is updated and published every three years, including in calendar year 2020. Implementation

of the Billings Community Transportation Safety Plan will continue with reporting to MDT as required. The 2021 UPWP outlines an update to the Community Transportation Safety Plan, that project is discussed in more detail in the Transportation Planning Studies.

Due to COVID-19, the City-County Planning Division had altered the way business was conducted. The Division completely closed in March of 2020 only offering document drop off/pick up in the first-floor conference room. The Division was able to reopen with limited staff in the office in June of 2020. Online permitting has been a benefit to accommodate this situation with the virus. The city implemented a telework policy and with the availability of the vaccine, staff is now working 4 days in office and 1 day from home. Meetings are moving from only virtual to back in-person options.

Other COVID-19 activities will be identified and discussed in further sections as it may affect the conducting of business and travel/training.

## **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

All administrative functions of the Planning Division will be performed under this work element. Program management activities will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Correspondence
2. Public Relations
3. Employee Guidance, Supervision, and Training
4. Program Organization and Management
5. Consultant Liaison Activities
6. Staff Meetings
7. Negotiations
8. Preparation of Contracts
9. Staff Training
10. Performance Monitoring
11. Office Equipment Acquisition
12. Budget Management and Administration

Federal regulations require that performance measures and goals be established to monitor the performance of the region's transportation system.

The MPO will work with federal, state and local agencies to improve current performance tracking methods. Performance measures will be tracked on the MPO website and regular reporting will be provided to the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee, MPO committees and the general public depending on the availability of related data.

The MPO is excited to announce that after many years of being a vacant position, the Planner I position has been approved for funding by the City of Billings. This position has been vacant since the 2008 economic downturn experienced by the nation and Montana. But over the last year, there has been continuous pressure from the City on the MPO to expand sub area/neighborhood planning efforts to include transportation planning within the sub area/neighborhood plans. With development and implementation of the new Zoning Code, higher emphasis on the transportation system, including road classification, safety and connectivity is vital to how the adjacent land uses for residential and commercial development are built. The road system emphasis location and setting of any structures. The Planner I will be responsible to using the new code and existing transportation documents for review of land use applications, building permits and zoning clarification forms. This is a council priority adopted this spring. More information regarding this position's responsibilities are outlined in other UPWP Work Elements. This position is being filled immediately.

The MPO also has an opportunity to expand planning staff by introducing a new Planner I to the UPWP. This position is a reconfigured position from a Planning Assistant (not funded through the UPWP), who is retiring in October, to a more advanced Planner I. This position will also assist in transportation elements, such as non-motorized components, transportation safety, and other transportation planning elements under the 3 C's, Comprehensive, Continuing and Cooperative within sub area/neighborhood planning. More information regarding this position's responsibilities are outlined in other UPWP Work Elements. The MPO is excited about the changes in staffing that are about to be undertaken, the Division has been staffed at the same level, minus the change of the Active Transportation Planner to full-time, for over 10 years. The ability to fully staff the Division will allow for more transportation and land use planning that has been limited over the last few years.

### **PL Eligible Activities**

- As per the MPO's public participation plan and ongoing public outreach efforts, the planning staff will make available the documents and guidelines for transportation planning activities to the community, as well as keep abreast of federal and state requirements as they relate to the overall planning processes. These activities may include distribution of the Billings Area Bikeway and Trail Master Plan to community organizations or individuals, distribution of the current Billings Area Tour Map for bicycle and pedestrian users and visitors, distribution and explanation of the latest Billings Urbanized Area Traffic Count Map and Bicycle Count Map, explanation and distribution of the MPO's public participation plan to groups involved or interested in transportation planning processes in the community, and explanation and information dissemination of the TA or other grant programs to possible project applicants in the community.
- Staff will update the PL & Memorandum of Agreement as necessary to meet the requirements of the FAST Act or any new legislation they may be approved in the upcoming fiscal year.
- Quarterly progress and expenditure reports will be prepared and transmitted to the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) in order to maintain federal funding support.
- The FY 2022 UPWP will be continually appraised and monitored in terms of content and budget allocations and will be revised when deemed necessary.
- The Fiscal Year 2023 UPWP will be developed under this work element.
- The Board of Planning, Board of County Commissioners and City Council will be kept informed of the activities of the staff and its progress in completing the approved UPWP.
- Staff will be involved in update and implementation of the Community Safety Plan for the Billings Urban Area.
- All planning staff will participate in recognized and approved training programs in order to improve staff skills and capabilities. Planning expertise will be maintained through enrollment in appropriate planning and transportation-related courses at area colleges, workshops, seminars, webinars and conferences. Staff anticipates that conferences and workshops will start to meet in person as more vaccine is distributed.
- Staff will adapt software programs to effectively utilize traffic data and continue computer-training programs.
- The use of PL funds for out-of-state travel and/or registration fees for the above or other purposes will continue to be subject to prior approval of MDT.
- The TA Program administration will be funded through this work element.
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act or new replacement legislation will be reviewed so staff may become familiar with changes affecting the metropolitan planning process.
- Grant writing services will continue to be incorporated within the department.
- Planning activities pertaining to Bicycle-Pedestrian in this work element will include:
  - Work field inspections, handle complaints and investigate problem areas of the Bike/Pedestrian system.
  - Presentations as needed.

### **Locally Funded Activities**

- General administrative activities will include maintenance of files, library documents, daily correspondence and preparation of necessary periodic reports.
- Interagency committee participation is included in this work element.
- All staff members will continue to participate in and encourage increased cooperation between state and local agencies, departments and governing bodies.
- The Planning Division will serve both as a coordinator of and a participant in meetings and committees.
- Planning Division involvement will include participation with such agencies as the Housing Authority, Big Sky Economic Development (BSED), Air Pollution Control Board, RiverStone Health (City-County Health Department), Healthy by Design, legislative study committees, and other agencies.
- Staff will continue to implement long-term document storage through virtual servers and cloud storage platforms.

**STAFFING**

28 Staff Months – City/County Planning

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

The Planning Division will be responsible for administering the area-wide planning process for the City and County.

**PRODUCT**

- An ongoing administrative program focused primarily at effective and expeditious implementation of this UPWP.
- The continual enhancement of the Planning Division staff skills and knowledge.
- Maintenance of a coordinated, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process that is endorsed and supported by the local community.
- The development of the FY23 UPWP.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - ADMINISTRATION**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>			
<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$231,000	\$189,000	\$420,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$231,000</b>	<b>\$189,000</b>	<b>\$420,000</b>
<b>DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE</b>			
<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	55	45	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

<b>FUNDING SOURCE</b>			
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AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$247,500	\$202,500	\$450,000**
TOTAL	\$247,500	\$202,500	\$450,000**

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

\*\* Record Keeping via virtual servers and cloud storage - \$7,000, 3 Computer Upgrades - \$7,500.

## 101 SERVICE (4302)

### OBJECTIVE

- To coordinate the dissemination of information and exchange of ideas between planning agencies and the interested public, decision-makers, and other departments, agencies, and organizations as related to the Billings MPO.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Members of the planning staff were involved in a wide range of service tasks. Planning services included presentations related to roadways and alternative transportation, responding to citizen inquiry and complaints regarding streets, subdivision layout, site distance, zoning request, conformance with the 2018 Transportation Plan Update and the Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan, City of Billings 2016 Growth Policy, the Lockwood Growth Policy and various neighborhood and community plans.

Staff presented transportation planning information to its organization and agency partners as needed for educational and decision-making purposes. Planning staff also shared information with the community and stakeholders throughout the development of several planning efforts. Prior to COVID, the Billings MPO hosted monthly webinars covering a variety of topics including transportation and mobility related topics. Our webinar series will begin again starting in July of 2021.

### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### PL Eligible Activities

- Staff will reinstate the very successful series of webinars and “brown bag lunch” seminars on a wide range of planning topics, including multi-modal transportation planning and funding, collaborative community planning techniques and planning for sustainability as well as various Institute of Transportation Engineers, Project for Public Spaces, Sustainable Communities, and Federal Highway Administration webinars.
- Staff is also targeting webinars which educate staff and public on the transportation planning process and funding as related to the operation of the MPO.
- The Planner I position being filled immediately will also be working within this element. It is expected that these positions will provide transportation and related planning information to the general public and interested organizations.

#### Locally Funded Activities

- Staff will continue to develop and use website tools to enable citizens to access information on upcoming planning activities, board and commission meetings, and recent land use applications, as well as interact with various planning processes through email notification and online comment programs. Staff will look at implementing citizen access to the Questys System software for access to historical data related to transportation, zoning and other planning applications.

- Continue increasing community and agency awareness of the interrelationships between land use development and transportation needs through dissemination of information and drafting of planning documents that incorporate both elements together.

**STAFFING**

3.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

As Assigned.

**PRODUCT**

- A responsive and flexible planning process utilizing staff capable of providing short-term findings and recommendations, as well as ongoing customer service to the public on all levels of planning projects and regulations.
- Provide transportation related webinars to staff, local officials and general public to educate on current transportation issues. These webinars are scheduled on a monthly basis (resuming in July of 2021) and anticipate 5-10-person viewings per showing. This number can fluctuate depending on the topic. Staff participation is anticipated to be 4-5 persons at these viewings.
- In addition to the transportation specific webinars, staff also provides general planning webinars that are advertised to all city staff, local officials and the general public. These webinars are scheduled routinely and can include up to 3 webinars a month. Participation anticipated at these webinars is 5-10 person per viewing. This number can fluctuate depending on the topic. Staff participation is approximately 3-5 per viewing contingent on scheduling. Webinars to the public will be monitored based on current health conditions with COVID-19.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - SERVICE**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$44,000
TOTAL	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$44,000

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	50	50	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
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MPO	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000
TOTAL	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$50,000

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## 102 CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT (4303)

### OBJECTIVE

- To solicit information concerning community values and goals and to receive community input into the development of plans and projects.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Numerous meetings with service clubs, civic groups, and professional organizations were attended by staff members to discuss all facets of local planning. The Planning Board used extensive public input to review and receive comments on a wide range of planning issues throughout the City and County. Meetings of neighborhood task force organizations and neighborhood advisory committees were also attended as requested to answer questions and review long-range planning issues, particularly related to transportation planning and projects, as well as code enforcement complaints. Projects specifically related to citizens and citizen boards included the Downtown Traffic Circulation and Safety Study Public Participation Plan, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study, the Bike and Scooter Share Feasibility Study, Complete Streets Progress Report and the carryover plans that include the North Billings Bypass Study, the Community Transportation Safety Plan, and the update to the Safe Routes to School Plan.

The City-County Planning Division developed alternative ways to ensure citizen participation in current planning projects, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects include zoning and subdivision applications, sign and fence permits, and long-range planning projects including Project Re-Code that was just starting its final review and adoption schedule when the virus hit its peak. Project Re-Code was delayed to ensure opportunities for citizen participation through multiple platforms. In addition, at this same time the Downtown Billings Traffic Study had just begun. The Consultant, Dowl, had to create alternative means to conduct this heavily public participation project. Virtual meetings, recorded information for Facebook and YouTube, and other platforms were used.

### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### PL Eligible Activities

- Outreach to the public and all affected jurisdictions for ongoing transportation projects, including but not limited to several MDT planning and construction projects such as the North Billings Bypass, short- and long-term planning for rail traffic mitigation in downtown Billings, 6<sup>th</sup> Street Underpass project and several MPO projects. The MPO has several projects that will be completed and initiated this upcoming year including the completion of the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Corridor Study, the Community Transportation Safety Plan Update, the Safe Routes to School Plan Update and the Billings Bypass Corridor Study. New studies and plans this year include an update to the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan and a Phase II of a Safe Routes to School Plan that will include Billings Middle, County Urban, and Private Schools.
- The staff will continue to support the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The Committee is responsible for forwarding recommendations to the Planning Board and governing bodies on bicycle safety, bike lanes, pedestrian safety and access, and other matters. The group will be involved in the nomination and review of TA Program eligible projects, bicycle and pedestrian signing and safety projects, grant applications for non-motorized transportation projects, and community education and outreach on bicycle and pedestrian safety within the MPO.

- TAC and PCC meetings will be held and meeting information disseminated as necessary.
- Staff will continue to update and maintain the MPO’s website to provide the most current up to date information to the community.
- Staff will utilize web-based GIS and web mapping software for assistance in transportation planning.
- Some of the specific projects that will involve community participation include the completion of the North Billings Bypass Corridor Study, the Community Transportation Safety Plan Update and the Safe Routes to School Plan update. New projects include updating the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan and a second phase of a Safe Routes to School Study that will review Middle Schools, urban County Elementary Schools and Private Schools. Both of these projects will include extensive public participation and solicitation.
- The Planner I will also act in this position through transportation and general planning efforts to engage the community in a broad range of MPO planning projects.

**Locally Funded Activities**

- Meetings with various citizen groups will be coordinated and attended for the purpose of soliciting information and ideas on a broad range of planning issues within the Billings Urban Area and throughout Yellowstone County.
- Community participation using new tools and techniques will also be included in all planning studies proposed within this document.
- Staff will utilize web-based GIS and Web mapping software for assistance in land-use planning.

**STAFFING**

4.0 Staff Months – City/County Planning

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning

**PRODUCT**

- A comprehensive and coordinated solicitation and collection of public opinions in order to accurately reflect the preferences and priorities of the citizens within the Billings Urban Area.
- An enhanced integrated web-based public participation software that includes MPO and general planning projects and procedures and other pertinent information.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$35,000	\$35,000	\$70,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$70,000</b>

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	50	50	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$80,000</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## 41.12.200 GENERAL DEVELOPMENT & COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

### 200 Community Planning (4304)

#### OBJECTIVE

- To maintain records and make projections of population and dwelling unit data, land use information, employment data, and to maintain adequate financial records, files and reports.
- To provide current, accurate information pertaining to the quantity of residential, commercial, industrial, and public land in the MPO and across the County.
- To summarize and analyze development trends and to provide visual information to the City Council, County Commission, Planning Board and the public during the public input process for transportation and land-use decision making.
- To recommend implementation of the goals, policies, and strategies of the adopted 2016 City of Billings and Lockwood Growth Policies.
- Implementation of Long-Range Transportation Plans and Planning Studies.
- The current ten planning factors have been reviewed and incorporated in this UPWP. The factors are:
  - 1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
  - 2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
  - 3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
  - 4) Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
  - 5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
  - 6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
  - 7) Promote efficient system management and operation;
  - 8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
  - 9) Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
  - 10) Enhance travel and tourism.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Staff is anxiously waiting for the release of the 2020 Census and most recent American Community Survey (ACS) data. Current ACS data is updated and placed in various databases as it has become available. Data gathered and updated included annual information related to population estimates for city and counties within the State of Montana. This annual information is used by the public and public agencies for planning purposes. The ACS is accessed for review and dissemination, and updated information released by the US Census Bureau in regards to commuting patterns. Other data gathered includes:

- Building Permits, Demolition Permits, Electrical Permits, Subdivision Applications, Zoning Applications, Special Reviews, Variances, temporary use permits, sign permits, zoning compliance permits and zoning clarification documents, annexation data, population trends, land use trends, school enrollment, employment data and general economic indicators.

The planning staff continues to review the most current ACS data and slowly released information from the 2020 Census data and estimates for population and demographic data. Census information is made available to various local agencies and organizations and to the general public. The data is used for developing reports, grant applications and planning documents such as Transportation and Land Use Plans and for projects like the Recreational Trails Program Grant and other grants as needed.

The City-County Planning Division, on behalf of the Billings MPO, is responsible for preparing a Complete Streets Progress Report every three years. This direction was outlined in the City of Billings Complete Streets Policy: “The City will periodically collect, review and report performance data and benchmark measurements to demonstrate the effectiveness of the policy.” This effort was completed with the first-ever Billings Complete Streets Benchmark Report prepared in 2013. The Report is updated on a 3-year cycle with the most current update occurring in 2020. This [Progress Report](#) includes comparison of various data sets related to motorized and non-motorized transportation.

Zoning data developed in element 204 for the entire City and County zoning jurisdictions was provided to neighborhood task force groups and others as requested.

Numerous other special purpose maps were prepared for meeting purposes including bicycle trail maps, annexation maps, estimated development density maps and tables for the Limits of Annexation Map area, and other project influence areas. Natural resource, 2010 Census, and jurisdictional boundary information was updated or developed. Traffic count station locations were geo-positioned and linked with the City-County traffic count matrix. The City also upgraded its internal mapping system with an ArcGIS product that makes access to the most current property data and aerial photography better and easier for staff when researching existing conditions of transportation corridors and adjacent property. The new system provides a robust City GIS base map for use in application reviews, transportation planning efforts, and general customer inquiries. Ongoing review and implementation of sub-area neighborhood and transportation plans, and other planning documents was carried out by staff.

2020 was a Decennial Census year; the City-County Planning Division was identified as lead for the County’s Complete Count Committee. Staff developed a committee of community leaders to help guide the completion of census forms for a good count of the county. The City of Billings took the lead by providing funds to carryout census activities. This included purchasing promotional materials, banner display during the Census kickoff (April 1) and advertisement. Again, due to COVID-19, many of the promotional materials were unable to be handed out due to public meeting cancellations.

## **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

### **PL Eligible Activities**

- The new web-based GIS software is compatible with available datasets and utilizes the existing data sets more effectively. The GIS will be utilized to develop a series of maps, including existing and proposed pedestrian trail routes and projects in the community, maps to implement the Long-Range Transportation Plan, updates to a preferred growth area map in conjunction with the City’s Limits of Annexation Map, mapping of focus areas for implementation of the City’s Infill Development Policy, and others. This ability of the new GIS allows for anticipating and planning for the transportation network in areas of annexation and infill. This will assist in the development of our LRTP and project planning for future plans and studies.
- The City has also rolled out a new web-based system that works with the City’s electronic project tracking and management system to provide a visual map view for staff and the public of the location of building permits that have been approved or are under review by the City. This web-based system will assist staff in identifying areas of impacts to the transportation system, specifically managing access.

- The planning staff, under the direction of the Board of Planning, will continue to work on long-range planning projects according to the priorities established by both the City of Billings and Yellowstone County. In particular, the continuing implementation of the South Billings Master Plan, the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan Update, and the 2016 Bikeway and Trails Master Plan.
- The addition of two new Planners will allow the senior staff to take a more active role in long range planning. It is anticipated that the Planner I's will undertake the review of:
  - Zoning applications. The development and adoption of Project Re:Code now ties land uses and land patterns to the road and street network.
  - Site development plans to address clear vision and controlled and shared access points.
  - Site development plans to address newly implemented build to zones which prevent traffic flow in front of buildings.
  - Site orientations that allow for internal traffic and other services, for example, drive through locations.

Work related to Bicycle-Pedestrian activities in this work element will include:

- Work with staff to insure a bike/pedestrian friendly community.
- Review of proposed subdivisions for non-motorized transportation connectivity.

### **Locally Funded Activities**

- Staff also will continue to work with the Big Sky Economic Development (BSED) to implement the Master Plan for the East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD), the Hospitality Corridor Planning Study, the Exposition Gateway Concept Plan and the South Billings Boulevard Urban Renewal District (SBBURD) Master Plan. The plans include detailed analysis of the transportation and land use connections in the area and promote sustainable development projects.
- Staff plans to work with the City, County, BSED, and neighborhood groups to identify planning needs in various parts of the urbanized area.
- Continued maintenance and update of socio-economic and land use data for both transportation and comprehensive planning activities will continue in 2021, with 2010 Census information, release of certain 2020 data and the newly released 2019 American Community Survey data.
- Various GIS databases and layers will continue to be developed and centrally maintained, including information on neighborhoods, community assets, route planning, trail systems and transportation plans.
- The new web-based system tracking and managing projects will include application information on zoning and subdivision applications.

### **STAFFING**

24 Staff Months – City/County Planning

### **FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning

### **PRODUCT**

- Various reports, files, and projections of socio-economic data necessary for current transportation and comprehensive planning activities, as well as support of City/County economic development activities.
- An ongoing GIS database/mapping system for the City of Billings and Yellowstone County.
- Ongoing updates to the preferred growth areas mapping and analysis for the City, implementation of the City Infill Development Policy, SBBURD Master Plan, the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan Update, 2018

Public Participation Plan, the Downtown Area Traffic Circulation and Safety Study, Wayfinding Sign Plan, and the Heritage Trail Tour Map and App.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - COMMUNITY PLANNING**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$77,100	\$179,900	\$257,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$77,100</b>	<b>\$179,900</b>	<b>\$257,000</b>

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	30	70	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$90,000	\$210,000	\$300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$90,000</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## **204 ZONING ADMINISTRATION (4308)**

### **OBJECTIVE**

- To oversee, interpret and enforce current City and County zoning regulations.
- To effectively administer the regulations and provide efficient service to the elected officials and the public.
- To maintain current zoning and land use information for all zoned property within the jurisdiction of the Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization to use in long-range transportation planning studies, traffic analysis, and transportation projects.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

During the past year, even during the height of COVID, all applications for zone changes, special reviews, variances, and planned developments were timely reviewed and processed by the planning staff. Reports and recommendations were prepared on each case to the various boards, commissions, and governing bodies. Digital photos are now incorporated into all zoning reports and Microsoft Power Point presentations are given to all boards and commissions. Staff is in the process of ongoing scanning of historic zoning files in preparation of future citizen access through a new archiving system software. All applications for building permits were also reviewed for compliance with City and County zoning regulations. Special zoning studies and ordinance updates were prepared as requested by the governing bodies. These included making a series of zoning code amendments to bring the regulations into compliance with changes in State Law and changes driven by community interests.

Staff coordinated with the County GIS Department to ensure that all zone changes within the Billings MPO area were reflected on GIS online and printed maps to ensure land use information was current.

A significant amount of time was also spent assisting the public with general zoning questions. The status of all active zoning applications is now posted on the City/County Planning websites.

The large undertaking of completely re-writing the Zoning Code started in early 2018 and was adopted in early 2021 and implemented in February of 2021. The community is now operating on an updated zoning code, the first since 1972.

### **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

#### **PL Eligible Activities**

- Zoning, Special Review, and Variance applications will be reviewed for land use compatibility, traffic, access, and overall site design. The Billings Travel Demand Model will be used to evaluate new roadway improvements including but not limited to links, lane changes, transit changes, and the addition of bike/pedestrian facilities.
- Staff will continue to maintain its zoning maps and land use information so that it is applicable to long-range transportation planning efforts in the Billings MPO. This information is regularly applied to a variety of MPO functions, including corridor analysis efforts like those involved in the Billings Bypass project, specific road projects, TA program applications and non-motorized grant applications.
- Staff will continue implementing the new Zoning Code. Staff will be reviewing and trouble-shooting any inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the new code with the intent to make any needed amendments within the next

2-years. As stated earlier, the Zoning Code places a higher emphasis on the transportation system, including road classification, safety and connectivity is vital to how the adjacent land uses for residential and commercial development are built. The road system emphasis location and setting of any structures.

- The addition of two new Planners will allow the senior staff to take a more active role in long range planning. It is anticipated that the Planner I's will undertake the review of:
  - Zoning applications. The development and adoption of Project Re:Code now ties land uses and land patterns to the road and street network.
  - Site development plans to address clear vision and controlled and shared access points.
  - Site development plans to address newly implemented build to zones which prevent traffic flow in front of buildings.
  - Site orientations that allow for internal traffic and other services, for example, drive through locations.

### **Locally Funded Activities**

- Carrying out the day to day activities required to effectively administer the zoning regulations as well as ensure that land use information is current and available for all long-range transportation planning efforts, including Transportation Plan updates, specific road projects, corridor studies and the North Bypass project.
- Activity in 2022 will include ordinance updates as required by State law or requested by the public or governing bodies.
- All zone change applications will be reviewed for compliance with local plans.
- Staff will continue the update to Zoning Code based on fulfilling policy goals set by the local governing body including Growth Policy, Neighborhood Plans, Complete Streets and Infill Policies.

### **STAFFING**

13 Staff Months – City/County Planning

### **FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning

### **PRODUCT**

- Effective zoning regulations and administration for the City of Billings and Yellowstone County. Effective enforcement of the zoning regulations for Yellowstone County.
- Online submittal capability for certain zoning permits, i.e. sign and fence will increase efficiency and convenience for applicants.

## FUNDING SCHEDULE - ZONING ADMINISTRATION

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$30,400	\$121,600	\$152,000
TOTAL	\$30,400	\$121,600	\$152,000

#### DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	20	80	100

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$37,000	\$148,000	\$185,000
TOTAL	\$37,000	\$148,000	\$185,000

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## 205 SUBDIVISION ADMINISTRATION (4309)

### OBJECTIVE

- To maintain the current City and County subdivision regulations and ensure that they are updated when changes in State law occur.
- To effectively administer the regulations and provide efficient service to developers, engineers and surveyors, elected officials, and the community.
- To ensure that development is occurring with minimal negative impacts to the community and that subdivisions are designed to be safe and long lasting in the community.
- To evaluate traffic accessibility studies, general circulation data, and ensure conformity with the Functional Classification Map and associated elements of the Long-Range Transportation Plan when a subdivision application is submitted.
- To collect, manage, and apply subdivision development information for long-range transportation planning activities for the MPO – including but not limited to updates to the transportation plan and maintenance of inputs for traffic modeling.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

The Board of Planning and the planning staff reviewed all preliminary major and minor plat applications. Numerous conceptual and pre-application meetings were coordinated and attended by staff. All final plats were reviewed and processed. Also, a significant amount of time was spent assisting the public with general subdivision questions. Updates to the City and County Subdivision Regulations due to legislative changes were drafted and approved.

Staff collected and compiled information on the details of each new subdivision in terms of numbers of lots and land area slated for development. This information is integral to any transportation plan updates or long-range transportation planning efforts undertaken by the MPO in the community to determine population growth and location of residents and commercial services that affect the transportation system. This involved monthly subdivision activity reporting and periodic reviews of new development locations. This is also considered in relation to the TA program and when the MPO pursues grants for non-motorized transportation projects in the community.

The MPO continues to implement and enforce the Suburban Subdivision Regulations that require property currently outside the city limits but within the County Zoning Jurisdiction that may be annexed in the future to develop at city standards for infrastructure such as curb, gutter, sidewalk, etc. This new procedure has been a positive to residential development on the city fringe areas.

## **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

### **PL Eligible Activities**

- Staff will review all subdivisions for compliance with the Billings Area Long Range Transportation Plan, and for conformity with the Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan, Lockwood Transportation Plan, Blue Creek Transportation Plan, and other neighborhood and community transportation plans as applicable. The new Billings Travel Demand Model will be used to evaluate new roadway improvements including but not limited to links, lane changes, transit changes, and addition of bike/pedestrian facilities.
- Staff also will continue to collect information on the details of each new subdivision as an integral data source for long-range transportation planning efforts undertaken by the MPO. The MPO expects to use this data in 2022 for a variety of projects, including the implementation of the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Bike/Ped Plan and continued analysis for the North Bypass.
- The newly added Planner I to the UPWP will take an active role in reviewing subdivision applications for compliance with the various transportation and planning documents overseeing land use within the MPO and Planning jurisdictional area.

### **Locally Funded Activities**

- All subdivision applications will be reviewed for compliance with local and state subdivision law.
- Staff will continue to carry out the day to day activities required to effectively administer the subdivision regulations, and to keep the regulations current.
- Continued implementation of the Suburban Subdivision Regulations within the County Zoning Jurisdiction area.

## **STAFFING**

14.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning

**PRODUCT**

- An effective subdivision review process with regard to local and state law, the Growth Policy, and the Billings Area Transportation Plan.
- Correctly identified street segments in alignment with the 2018 Transportation Plan Functional Classification Map.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - SUBDIVISION ADMINISTRATION**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$45,600	\$106,400	\$152,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$45,600</b>	<b>\$106,400</b>	<b>\$152,000</b>

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	30	70	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$55,500	\$129,500	\$185,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$55,500</b>	<b>\$129,500</b>	<b>\$185,000</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## 41.13.300 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

### 300 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM DATA (4310)

#### OBJECTIVE

- To develop and maintain current transportation system data files and records.
- To provide transportation planning and data information to City and County staff, elected officials, developers, engineering firms, and the general public.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

The traffic count program for FY 2021 was completed. Travel times/delay/speed studies were completed, calculations computed, and level-of-service values determined. This data was used for various planning and engineering projects throughout the year. In addition, the public commonly requests this data for land use planning.

Staff participated in the update of the City of Billings Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Crash information was compiled and analyzed. Crash data is also used in many of the planning studies undertaken by the MPO. The staff also continued to utilize the trail scanners that were purchased and found new and better ways to both use the scanners in more trail locations in the community and display the data for various applications. The MPO also took over collection and distribution of the data from the Lockwood sidewalk counters purchased through the Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District.

The transportation data is also being used for our current Planning Studies including the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Corridor Study, Billings Bypass Corridor Study, Safe Routes to School Plan Update and the Community Transportation Safety Plan (CTSP).

#### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022

##### PL Eligible Activities

- The traffic count program for the Billings Urban Area as well as the Yellowstone County influence area will be conducted and the appropriate data recorded during FY2022. All traffic count data will be submitted to the MDT by February 1, 2022.
- Crash data will be compiled and analyzed to determine high hazard locations, this includes work on the update to the CTSP .
- Staff will update, where appropriate, the City's Capital Improvement Program.
- The Contract Position with City Engineering has had a staff change, however, those duties of traffic and trail counts will continue.
- Staff will collect and maintain bike/pedestrian information through the trail census and use of the trail-bike/pedestrian scanners. The information from the bike/pedestrian counts links directly to the development of the LRTP and the MPO's non-motorized planning studies. These counts also contribute to other planning projects such as the Complete Streets Progress Report. This activity is in conjunction with MPO region wide planning.
- The traffic count data archive will be maintained and accessible for other agencies and the public.
- Data will also be used during proposed FY22 Planning Studies.
- The Bicycle-Pedestrian activities will continue. Duties will include but not limited to:
  - Maintain Bike/pedestrian data bases in conjunction with MPO region wide planning purposes.

- Maintain data base for easement acquisition.

**STAFFING**

13.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

11.0 Staff Months - City Engineering (Contract Position)

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning/MDT

**PRODUCT**

- Documentation as necessary, support of transportation grant programs, transportation system modeling, updated Traffic Count Program, and research and integration of traffic information into planning projects and development review activities.
- Current traffic count data. Traffic counts are vital for any long-range planning efforts and during development of commercial and residential projects. Traffic counts also directly relate to the development of projects in the LRTP and ultimately for programming in the TIP.
- Current bike/pedestrian counts. MPO uses these counts for the development of the non-motorized network. This information is used for the development of the Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan as well as for applications for various grants.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM DATA**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$231,000	\$0	\$231,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$231,000	\$0	\$231,000

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	100	0	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$266,000	\$0	\$266,000**
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$266,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$266,000**</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

\*\*This Includes - \$25,000 for Maintenance of the Billings MPO Travel Demand Model, Trail Counter purchase \$21,000.

**301 TRANSPORTATION PLAN (4311)**

**OBJECTIVE**

- Implement the Goals and Objectives in the Billings Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Develop (where necessary) and maintain data for the urban area in order to effectively monitor and evaluate the validity of the Transportation Plan.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

Staff continued to implement the 2018 Long Range Transportation Plan. Elements in the Plan include Goals and Objectives, a Transit section, an analysis of the railroad interface with the community, and a review of current projects listed in the 2018 Study. The MPO did complete a LRTP Amendment to identify and account for the addition of a successful BUILD grant. The City will be receiving approximately \$11.6 million in BUILD funds to construct the Northwest Connector (Inner Belt Loop) and Skyline Trail. The amendment was adjusted to accommodate this project and make sure the LRTP met all FHWA and MDT conformity requirements.

Staff will continue to implement the 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trail Master Plan. This will include working with MDT, City and County Public Works and other organizations with the continued development of the non-motorized transportation system.

**PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**PL Eligible Activities**

- The MPO will initiate an update to the 2018 Long Range Transportation Study in FY22. This project will span FY22 and FY23.
- Staff will work to implement the 2017 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan.
- Staff will also integrate the 2018 Transportation Plan with the City’s Capital Improvement Program to ensure consistency.
- Projects will continue to be reviewed for future implementation in the City’s CIP and the MPO’s TIP.

**STAFFING**

9.0 Staff Months – City/County Planning

## FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

City/County Planning

### PRODUCT

- Implementation of transportation projects identified in the Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan, the Transportation Improvements Program, Transportation Plan and the Capital Improvements Program.

## FUNDING SCHEDULE - TRANSPORTATION PLAN

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$231,000	\$0	\$231,000
TOTAL	\$231,000	\$0	\$231,000

#### DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	100	0	100

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$381,000	\$0	\$381,000
TOTAL	\$381,000	\$0	\$381,000

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

\*\*Approximately 50% or \$137,500 of the cost of the LRTP Update is included here.

## 302 PLANNING STUDIES (4312)

### OBJECTIVE

- To update and develop site-specific plans and transportation studies where appropriate.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

- The Downtown Billings Traffic Study was finalized and approved by PCC in February of 2021. This public participation focused study gathered citizen input on alternatives identified by the City of Billings Engineering Division downtown traffic circulation study, primarily the conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets. Dowl Engineering was the successful consultant selected for this project. Creative outreach had to be considered due to the virus and the inability to meet face to face with the public. The final study can be found [here](#).
- Sanderson Stewart was chosen to complete the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study; this study was started in July 2020. Initial outreach focused on individual stakeholder groups to gather input and comments regarding the project. With COVID-19, creative means to meet with stakeholders is being use and includes in-person (with social distancing protocols) and virtual opportunities. Currently, the study is in final local review with a PCC review in August 2021.
- Alta Planning + Design was chosen to complete the Bike/Scooter Share Feasibility Study. This project was completed in March of 2021. The study can be viewed at [https://www.ci.billings.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/44240/FINAL-Billings-Bike-Scooter-Share\\_Feb-2021](https://www.ci.billings.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/44240/FINAL-Billings-Bike-Scooter-Share_Feb-2021)
- The North Bypass Corridor Study began in January 2021, to date, the Consultant, Dowl has been preparing study development content and developing options for public outreach. A public website, [www.billingsbypasscorridor.com](http://www.billingsbypasscorridor.com) is live and soliciting survey responses. A public open house was held on June 17<sup>th</sup> with very good attendance, over 70 community members attended. From that meeting, the website has received over 85 survey responses.
- The Safe Route to School Plan Update has just gotten underway. Through the RFP process, Toole Design was the successful consultant. The kickoff for that project is scheduled for July 8, 2021.

## PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022

### PL Eligible Activities

- Complete the North Billings Bypass Corridor Study. This study will evaluate transportation needs along the proposed alignment of the North Bypass. The study could include future access options as development occurs along the roadway, potential intersections, storm water management, bicycle and pedestrian access, and transportation safety along the corridor. The study would focus on the northern portion of the Bypass alignment, at the City/County interface north of the Yellowstone River. ***This study will be in conformance with MDT's existing Environmental Documents.***
- The MPO will continually research grant opportunities. This could include additional Federal grants similar to RAISE, or State and Local opportunities.
- Continue to update and distribute the MPO Heritage Trail Bike/Pedestrian Tour Maps.
- Implement and promote the web-based interactive Bike and Pedestrian Mobile Application.
- Complete the Community Transportation Safety Plan that will include a review and comparison of crash data and re-visit Emphasis Areas for update.
- Complete the update to the 2011 Safe Routes to School Plan for all the public Elementary Schools in Billings. Since that plan was completed, the School District underwent a re-districting and boundary changes. The goals of the plan are to enhance the safety of students traveling to and from school and increase the number of students walking or bicycling to school.
- Implement a second phase of a Safe Routes to School Plan by addressing Billings Middle, County Urban Elementary, and Private Schools for interest in the development of a Safe Routes to School Plan.
- The Planner I will be active in this work element as part of transportation planning elements within sub-area/neighborhood plans, as well as assisting with the development and information gathering on Transportation Planning Studies.

## Locally Funded Activities

- Staff will be involved in the coordination through completion of all planning studies undertaken. This includes contract negotiations, coordination of citizen advisory groups, public meetings, overseeing contract deliverables and project wrap-up.

## STAFFING

6.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

## FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

City/County Planning

## PRODUCT

- Completed Urban Area-wide transportation studies for the North Billings Bypass Corridor Study, Community Transportation Safety Plan update, a Safe Routes to School Plan Update and a Middle, County Urban and Private School Safe Routes to School Plan.

## FUNDING SCHEDULE – PLANNING STUDIES

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$261,000	\$174,000	\$435,000
TOTAL	\$261,000	\$174,000	\$435,000

#### DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	60	40	100

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$140,400	\$93,600	\$234,000**
TOTAL	\$140,400	\$93,600	\$234,000**

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

\*\* Safe Routes to School Plan \$110,000; Grant Writing \$45,000.

## **41.15.500 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

<b>500 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (4313)</b>
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### **OBJECTIVE**

- To maintain a viable five-year program of transportation improvements for the Billings Urban Area.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

In March of 2021, the MPO was notified of an approved 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #1. June of 2020, a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) covering the period of 2020-2024 was produced to reflect current project status. This included adding several new projects including the BUILD grant projects.

### **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

#### **PL Eligible Activities**

- A new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be completed in FY22 to reflect current project status. A certification statement will be included, as appropriate, to conform to the planning regulations. Based on the Transportation Plan, projects will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the Priority Ranking Procedures, and in accordance with consistency/conformity procedures. Necessary data will be gathered from primary and secondary sources by the planning staff based upon the Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Billings Public Works Department, establishing areas of data responsibility. Conformity determinations will be prepared as necessary to ensure conformity with the Clean Air Act.

### **STAFFING**

2.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

### **FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City/County Planning

### **PRODUCT**

- A current transportation improvement program which reflects conformity with FHWA, the Clean Air Act, and local priorities.

### **FUNDING SCHEDULE - TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	100	0	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022****FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$36,000	\$0	\$36,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$36,000</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## 41.16.600 SPECIAL PROJECTS

### 600 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS (4314)

#### OBJECTIVE

- Maintain current records of monitored air pollution levels and obtain other environmental data as necessary within the Metropolitan Planning Area.
- Review proposed development and transportation system improvements with respect to environmental considerations within the MPO influence area.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

The MPO was notified that in July of 2021 the Billings Urban Area was removed from the Air Quality's "Not Classified" list. The MPO is now designated as an Attainment Area and will move the update of the LRTP from 4-years to 5-years.

Air quality monitoring information was obtained from the County Air Pollution Control Board. Air quality mapping for the State Air Quality Bureau was revised. The Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program was implemented. Staff continues to monitor carbon monoxide (CO) information in the Urbanized Area.

The Socio-Economic and Environmental (SEE) effects guidelines were used to review proposed developments and transportation system improvements.

#### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022

##### PL Eligible Activities

- The planning staff will continue to utilize the SEE effects guidelines to evaluate all major development proposals in terms of transportation systems. This would include the CMAQ program.
- Work will continue to maintain the Billings air quality designation.
- Staff will continue to review the MOVES Program and others like it and their relationship to the MPO.

#### STAFFING

2.5 Staff Months – City/County Planning

#### FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

City/County Planning

## PRODUCT

Current environmental data as well as a comprehensive planning and transportation planning process that will substantially addresses the socio-economic and environmental consequences associated with growth and development.

## FUNDING SCHEDULE - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$34,000	\$0	\$34,000
TOTAL	\$34,000	\$0	\$34,000

#### DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE

AGENCY	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	100	0	100

### FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022

#### FUNDING SOURCE

AGENCY	PL*	LOCAL	TOTAL
MPO	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000
TOTAL	\$35,000	\$0	\$35,000

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

**41.17.700 OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**700 UN-PROGRAMMED FUNDS (4315)**

**OBJECTIVE**

- To provide for the accounting of available un-programmed funds in the current UPWP.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

N/A

**PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**PL Eligible Activities**

- This work element will be utilized for accounting purposes only. No specific work activity will be charged to this work element.

**STAFFING**

N/A

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

N/A

**PRODUCT**

N/A

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - CONTINGENCY**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$586,700	\$100	\$586,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$586,700	\$100	\$586,800

**DISBURSEMENT PERCENTAGE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	100	100	100

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PL*</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MPO	\$326,181	\$109,400	\$435,581
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$326,181	\$109,400	\$435,581

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

SECTION II -- FUNDING

**TABLE I  
FUNDING SUMMARY  
FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2022**

WORK ELEMENT	FUNDING SOURCES FY 2022		
	PL*	LOCAL	EST. COST
100 Administration	\$247,500	\$202,500	\$450,000
101 Service	25,000	25,000	50,000
102 Citizen Involvement	40,000	40,000	80,000
200 Community Planning	90,000	210,000	300,000
204 Zoning	37,000	148,000	185,000
205 Subdivision	55,500	129,500	185,000
300 Transportation System	266,000	0	266,000
301 Transportation Plan	381,000	0	381,000
302 Planning Studies	140,400	93,600	234,000
500 T.I.P.	36,000	0	36,000
600 Environmental	35,000	0	35,000
700 Un-Programmed Funds	326,181	109,400	435,581
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,679,581</b>	<b>\$958,000</b>	<b>\$2,637,581</b>

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

**TABLE II  
FUNDING COMPARISONS**

WORK ELEMENT	FY 2022 ESTIMATED COST	FY 2021 ESTIMATED COST
100 Administration	\$450,000	\$420,000
101 Service	50,000	44,000
102 Citizen Involvement	80,000	70,000
200 Community Planning	300,000	257,000
204 Zoning Administration	185,000	152,000
205 Subdivision Administration	185,000	152,000
300 Transportation System Data	266,000	240,000
301 Transportation Plan	381,000	231,000
302 Planning Studies	234,000	435,000
500 T.I.P.	36,000	35,000
600 Environmental Considerations	35,000	34,000
700 Un-Programmed Funds	435,581	586,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,637,581</b>	<b>\$2,656,800</b>

**TABLE III  
FUNDING PERCENTAGES FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2022**

<b>WORK ELEMENT</b>	<b>RECIPIENT</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
100 Administration	MPO	55	45	100
101 Service	MPO	50	50	100
102 Citizen Inv.	MPO	50	50	100
200 Community Planning	MPO	30	70	100
204 Zoning Administration	MPO	20	80	100
205 Subdivision Admin.	MPO	30	70	100
300 Trans. System Data	MPO	100		100
301 Transportation Plan	MPO	100		100
302 Planning Studies	MPO	60	40	100
500 T.I.P.	MPO	100		100
600 Environmental	MPO	100		100
700 Un-Programmed Funds	MPO	100		100

**TABLE IV  
STAFF MONTHS BY WORK ELEMENT FISCAL YEAR 2022**

<b>WORK ELEMENT</b>	<b>DIRECTOR</b>	<b>SENIOR PLANNER (TRANS)</b>	<b>PLANNER I</b>	<b>PLANNING MANAGER</b>	<b>PLANNER II</b>	<b>CLERK</b>	<b>PLANNER II</b>	<b>PLANNER I</b>	<b>PLANNER I (Vacant)</b>	<b>SENIOR PLANNER (ZONING)</b>	<b>Active Trans. Planner I</b>	<b>TOTAL M.M.</b>
100	7	1.5	2.5	5.5	.5	1.5	.5	.5	2	1	5.5	28
101	.5		1				.5	.5		1		3.5
102	.5		.5	.5	.5	.5	1	.5				4
200	1.5		5	2	1	2	1	5	3	1	2.5	24
204			.5	.5		.5	.5	2	3	6		13
205			.5	1		.5	7.5		3	2		14.5
300		2.5	.5	.5	5	2					3	13.5
301	.5	4		.5	2	2						9
302	.5	1		.5	1	1		2.5				6.5
500	.5	1			.5	.5						2.5
600		1	.5		.5	.5						2.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>121</b>

\*This table indicates approximately how many man months individual staff members work in each work element.

<b>WORK ELEMENT</b>	<b>CITY TRAF. TECHNICIAN</b>
300	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>

## SECTION III

### INDIRECT COST PLAN

#### INTRODUCTION

The Office of Management and Budget Circular 2 CFR Part 200 is used as governing criteria for establishing the allowed costs.

#### IDENTIFICATION OF COSTS

The costs are delineated below by type:

DIRECT	INDIRECT	BENEFITS
Salaries & Wages	Maintenance	FICA
Legal Notices	Reproduction	PERS
Travel	Supplies	Workmen's Compensation
Printing	Postage	Accident Insurance
Training	Subscriptions	Health Insurance
Consultants	Telephone	Sick Leave
Equipment	Utilities	Vacation
Mileage	Rent	Holidays
Moving/Interview	Audit	Maternity
	Messenger	Military
		Life Insurance
		Dental Insurance

#### ALLOCATION OF COSTS

Direct costs will be charged to the work program line item to which they apply.

An indirect cost rate of **9%** of the City and County's direct salaries and wages is proposed. The **9%** rate will be applied to the direct wages and salaries of each line item within the work program to cover all indirect expenses.

Benefits will be calculated at a rate of **53%** of the City and County's direct salaries and wages charged to each line item.

## **FUNDING SOURCES**

The degree of participation by each funding agency is based on the prorations which have been determined for each line item. Each agency will be billed their share of the total charges made against each line item according to the approved prorations.

Funding sources and amounts contained in the UPWP are as follows:

Planning Dept. Fees (City of Billings)	\$280,000
Planning Dept. Fees (Yellowstone Co.)	\$155,000
Yellowstone County (Mill)	\$523,000
PL*	\$1,679,581
TOTAL	\$2,637,581

\*The matching ratio is Federal PL--86.58% and State match-13.42%.

## **SUMMARY**

The indirect cost rate is a predetermined fixed rate which is not subject to adjustment. The base period used in determining the rate is the period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The calculated rate is applicable to the grant period, which is October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADA	American Disability Act
BSED	Big Sky Economic Development
BUILD	Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development
CAC	Citizen Advisory Committee
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation Air Quality
CTSP	Community Transportation Safety Plan
EBURD	East Billings Urban Renewal District
FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GIS	Geographic Information System
HPMS	Highway Performance Monitoring System
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MDT	Montana Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PCC	Policy Coordinating Committee
PEP	Private Enterprise Participation
PL	Planning Funds
RAISE	Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity
TA	Transportation Alternative Program
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TDP	Transit Development Plan
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
YCBP	Yellowstone County Board of Planning

## CHAPTER II

### CITY OF BILLINGS TRANSIT DIVISION

#### SECTION I UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM ELEMENTS

#### 44.21.00 PROGRAM SUPPORT & ADMINISTRATION

<b>44.21.01 ADMINISTRATION</b>
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#### OBJECTIVE

- To provide program support, general administration, and grant administration
- To provide training in support of transit planning activities.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2021

Conformance with federal, state, and local administrative and regulatory requirements for maintenance of transit planning and development as well as execution of developed plans.

Staff remained informed of Federal and State requirements concerning all federal funding sources including, but not limited to, sections 5303, 5307, 5310, and 5339. Staff also adjusted grants in response to the CARES Act, the American Rescue Plan, and Federal Transit Administration COVID response.

Staff continued to manage and execute programmed aspects of awarded 5339.

Staff attended training opportunities to enhance knowledge and skills, including the Montana Transit Association conference and multiple webinars focusing on the Transit Safety Plan requirements, Transit Asset Management, and COVID response.

Researched, developed and recommended significant budget structure modifications to facilitate increased efficiency in data gathering and compilation for NTD reports as well as other required reports.

Staff maintained and updated the Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan with upcoming and in-process capital projects, as well as fleet and facility metrics to ensure accurate capital and asset planning.

Developed and implemented the federally required Public Transit Agency Safety Plan for MET Transit, which received council approval in December of 2020; this included significant development of additional training programs for staff, risk assessment procedures, mitigation strategies, and safety promotion strategies.

Staff researched and recommended modifications to record keeping practices to enhance grant management, National Transit Database reporting, and the overall planning process.

Staff managed FTA Section 5303 grant activities and prepared the transit aspect of Unified Planning Work Program. Staff prepared an amendment to the 2021 UPWP to support MDT transfer of additional planning funds.

Transit members attended and participated in diverse range of transit-related and general community meetings including the Billings Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC), City of Billings Transportation Team meetings, Healthy By Design Coalition meetings, and various project specific coordinating committees for transportation related projects. As the lead agency on the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Committee, staff also provided guidance and updates to the plan.

## **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

All administrative functions necessary in support of transit planning and development will be performed under this work element. Activities will include:

- Continuing to assess data-keeping and gathering practices with focus on further technology utilization and process improvement.
- Quarterly progress and expenditure reports will be prepared and transmitted to the Montana Department of Transportation, Urban Planning Division to maintain funding requirements.
- The FY 2022 UPWP will be monitored and revised as necessary.
- The FY 2023 UPWP for transit activities will also be developed within this element.
- Staff will execute grant administrative functions; staff will continue research and development regarding the utilization of FTA funding, including furthering innovative funding practices and partnerships.
- Maintenance of coordination agreements with 5310 providers and, as the lead agency, updates to the Billings Area Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan.
- Research feasibility and make recommendations for capital grants as advised by the Transportation Coordination Plan Committee.
- Research feasibility and make recommendations for capital grants in the 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities programs and other funding opportunities utilizing the TAM plan as well as the City Equipment Replacement plan.
- Participation in recognized and approved training programs in order to improve skills and capabilities.
- Division policy assimilation of documents, regulations, codes, and practices to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local requirements as they relate to the transit planning process.
- Participate with the TAC, Transportation Coordination Plan Committee, citizen advisory boards and other committees throughout the community as needed.
- Staff will continue updating and maintaining the FTA mandated Transit Asset Management Plan

- Staff will continue to implement the required Public Transit Agency Safety Plan including annual updates as well as further research and development of best practices.

**STAFFING**

180.00 Transit Manager Staff Hours  
 54.00 Transit Supervisor Staff Hours (4 positions)  
 72.00 Administrative Support Staff Hours (1 positions)  
36.00 Aviation/Transit Director Staff Hours

**342.00 Total Staff Hours**

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City of Billings Transit Division – MET Transit

**PRODUCT**

- An ongoing administrative program to carry out the transit elements identified within this UPWP
- Administrative oversight and execution of transit planning and development functions including federally required plans.
- Enhancement of transit division skills and knowledge.
- Proper maintenance and administration of grant related activities.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE - ADMINISTRATION**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$5,743	\$22,973	\$28,716
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,743</b>	<b>\$22,973</b>	<b>\$28,716</b>

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$5,535	\$22,139	\$27,674
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,535</b>	<b>\$22,139</b>	<b>\$27,674</b>

## 44.24.00 SHORT RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

### 01 FUTURE SERVICE ANALYSIS AND ENHANCEMENTS

#### OBJECTIVE

To facilitate considerations of means to ensure citizens will have acceptable and improved public transportation alternatives in the future.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2021

Members of the transit division updated projections of future revenues and expenses and directed annual budget and financial resources analysis, including multi-year forecasts.

Staff arranged for and ensured execution of on-going data gathering and analysis efforts to monitor current system effectiveness and efficiency. This assisted in identification of operating and capital needs required to ensure a reliable and effective system into the future.

Transit Division members continued operational analysis of the transit system including analysis and developed identified goals to be addressed with the programmed Transit Development Plan; development of this plan will carry forward into FY 2022.

Staff continued development and recommendation of alternative service models for fixed-route systems in anticipation of changing ridership demands.

Staff researched and recommended routing areas to pilot and assess the transition from a flag stop fixed-route system to a designated stop system.

Assessed feasibility of additional capital projects utilizing CARES Act and ARP funds with a focus on increasing system safety.

Staff tracked and compiled on-going ridership metrics by route and mode to support planning practices.

Staff provided information and comments related to transit at meetings geared toward development, annexation, and traffic projects. Staff also received and responded to system inquiries, concerns, complaints, and suggestions.

#### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FISCAL YEAR 2022

Functions necessary in support of future transit planning and development will be performed under this work element, including continuation of activities undertaken in FY 2021. These activities necessitate the ongoing cloud-based software costs, including the addition of a run cutting

module, for route development and planning, which is split between this element and current service enhancements. Activities are as follows:

- Complete initial development and implementation of a Transit Development Plan including both short term and long term transit goals. This activity is being carried forward from the 2021 UPWP as the competitive request for consultation services is currently being developed.
- Continue the analysis of transitioning the system to designated stops and use lessons learned to develop and finalize a bus stop master plan and strategy for continued improvements.
- Finalize fixed-route system modifications in response to items identified via the creation and implementation of the Transit Development Plan.
- Continue investigating feasibility of expanding service beyond existing city limits and engage county stakeholders in discussion regarding potential for service to outlying areas.
- Performance of financial analysis and planning in support of modified frequency and service.
- Assessing ongoing and future capital and operating requirements based upon projected demand and growth. Assess financial and infrastructure requirements of transitioning eligible fleet vehicles to electric or alternative fuel sources. Assess feasibility of adding additional green technology to facility locations.
- Continue research on feasibility of additional technology conveniences for passengers including modifications to established electronic fare system and amenities at transfer centers.
- Continuation of planning efforts regarding public and stakeholder involvement and input opportunities, including recruiting involvement from key partners.
- Facilitation of public meetings to support planned system improvements as well as specialized services for seniors and disabled.

## **STAFFING**

405.00	Transit Manager Staff Hours
202.50	Transit Supervisor Staff Hours (4 positions)
162.00	Administrative Support Staff Hours (2 positions)
<u>81.00</u>	Aviation/Transit Director Staff Hours
<b>850.50</b>	<b>Total Staff Hours</b>

## **PRODUCT**

- Identification of and plans for efficient and effective transit service into the future.
- Financial and capital analyses for future transit enhancements.
- Identification and assistance in implementation of future system modifications.

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City of Billings Transit Division – MET Transit

**FUNDING SCHEDULE – FUTURE SERVICE EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$31,906	\$127,623	\$159,529
TOTAL	\$31,906	\$127,623	\$159,529

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$16,909	\$67,635	\$84,544
TOTAL	\$16,909	\$67,635	\$84,544

## **02 CURRENT SERVICE ENHANCEMENT**

### **OBJECTIVE**

To improve service, ridership, and effectiveness of the existing transit system.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2020**

Division members assessed upcoming and immediate operational needs and made recommendations on capital and operational projects.

Staff successfully completed the implementation of the Touchpass electronic fare system for fixed-route operations; staff developed modified practices and procedures to provide increased support to customers during and after transition to the new system.

Leveraged data gained from the electronic fare system to make recommendations to admin regarding metric tracking and budget structure.

Researched, recommended, and assisted in development of a staff position focused upon system education and outreach in order to ensure adequate and available information for the public as well as increased awareness and community support of the transit system.

Division members monitored operational data to analyze ongoing improvements to routes and schedules, identifying minor system changes and implementing improvements as possible to existing routes and services. This included development of modified internal scheduling practices to ensure continued service during the COVID-19 health crisis with minimal impact to the system ridership. Further, staff also created alternative schedules for the Fall of 2021 to accommodate for the nationwide difficulty in hiring qualified employees to fill operator positions.

Staff reviewed ridership data in analysis of system functioning and passenger miles travelled metrics; members also provided monthly ridership analysis (including ADA lift use and bike rack use), assessed ridership trends, and prepared other information on system functioning as requested.

Staff prepared National Transit Database reports for monthly submission of required metrics as well as annual reporting requirements.

Staff members regularly participated in group meetings and committee meetings (both in person and virtual) to solicit partner and public feedback on current system usage, demands, successes and shortfalls.

### **PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FISCAL YEAR 2021**

Functions necessary in support of planning and development of enhancements to the current systems will be performed under this work element, including continuation of activities undertaken in FY2020. These activities necessitate the ongoing cloud-based software costs,

including the addition of a run cutting module, for route development and planning, which is split between this element and future service enhancements. Activities are as follows:

- Complete initial development and implementation of a education and outreach strategy to guide market research, promote public awareness and increase ridership. This activity is being carried forward from the 2021 UPWP as the competitive request for consultation services is currently being developed.
- Develop and implement further outreach programs to increase community engagement through partnerships and other forms of participation.
- Identification and implementation of means to improve current service, including ongoing system analysis of efficiency and effectiveness with recommendations on immediate improvements for the current transit system.
- Development of a regular, bi-annual community surveys regarding transit use, support, and feedback.
- Assessment of current personnel usage for areas of improvement in utilization of resources and effectiveness.
- Procurement and implementation of further technology enhancements to the existing technology solutions system to gather data, improve efficiency, provide further customer conveniences, and enhance safety.
- Maintain monthly ridership figures and summary figures for effective decision-making. ; complete related National Transit Database reports.
- Solicit and record public reaction to any modified routes, schedules, education efforts, and technology enhancements.
- Assessment of current budgetary impact of potential improvements.

## **STAFFING**

370.00	Transit Manager Staff Hours
185.00	Transit Supervisor Staff Hours (4 positions)
148.00	Administrative Support Staff Hours (2 positions)
<u>74.00</u>	Aviation/Transit Director Staff Hours
<b>777.00</b>	<b>Total Staff Hours</b>

## **FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City of Billings Transit Division – MET Transit

## **PRODUCT**

- **Information relating to potential enhancements for existing service and system.**
- **Recommendations for immediate improvements.**
- **Information and recommendations on passenger education and outreach**
- **Analyses of current system functions.**
- **Budget alternatives.**

**FUNDING SCHEDULE – CURRENT SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$16,734	\$66,935	\$83,669
TOTAL	\$16,734	\$66,935	\$83,669

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$15,750	\$63,000	\$78,750
TOTAL	\$15,750	\$63,000	\$78,750

**44.25.00 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

<b>01 T.I.P</b>
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**OBJECTIVE**

To maintain a viable five year program of transit improvements for the Billings Urbanized Area.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2020**

Developed Transit specific updates for a TIP/STIP amendment, including programming for selected capital programs in relation to CARES Act funding. Updated projects were also added to the Division’s Transit Asset Management Plan (TAM), Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and Equipment Replacement Plan (ERP).

Monitored projects for inclusion in the TIP and STIP. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process was also addressed and monitored.

Attended and participated in MPO meetings.

**PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FISCAL YEAR 2021**

Functions necessary in support of transit related project inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program will be performed under this work element. Activities are as follows:

- Division members will develop and compile information on operating and capital projects which MET Transit plans to pursue grant assistance for inclusion in the TIP; this includes utilizing and updating the Division’s TAM, CIP, and ERP as required.
- All applicable projects will be provided to the MPO for inclusion in the program.
- Staff will monitor inclusion in the TIP and STIP to ensure ability to obtain federal Sections 5307, 5310 & 5339 and other applicable grants are not affected.

**STAFFING**

51.23	Transit Manager Staff Hours
15.37	Transit Supervisor Staff Hours (4 positions)
20.49	Administrative Support Staff Hours (1 position)
<u>10.25</u>	Aviation/Transit Director Staff Hours
<b>97.34</b>	<b>Total Staff Hours</b>

**FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY**

City of Billings Transit Division – MET Transit will provide transit-related information to the City/County Planning Department for the MPO's inclusion in the TIP document.

**PRODUCT**

- Monitoring of plans including Transit Asset Management, the Capital Improvement Program, and components of the Equipment Replacement Plan for related projects.
- Annual inclusion of projects in TIP as necessary per FTA regulations.
- Amendments to TIP as necessary to include new projects.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE – T.I.P.**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$2,034	\$8,138	\$10,172
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,034</b>	<b>\$8,138</b>	<b>\$10,172</b>

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$1,575	\$6,301	\$7,876
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,575</b>	<b>\$6,301</b>	<b>\$7,876</b>

**44.26.00 Implementation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

**01 IMPLEMENTATION OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

**OBJECTIVE**

To ensure optimal use of City of Billings funds in meeting the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities in both demand response and fixed route transportation in accordance with Federal Regulations, especially concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS FISCAL YEAR 2020**

Researched, developed and implemented additional training procedures for transit operators to improve paratransit customer service, procedures, and policies.

Staff investigated methods to improve paratransit efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including transitioning paratransit fare media to electronic client accounts and balances.

Executed, planned, implemented additional procedures to ensure dispatch and scheduler responsibilities could integrate with the increased demand placed on the system due to the change over in fare collection systems and practices. Continued evaluating practices for potential modification in regards to new dispatching software implementation as well as other technology implementations.

Members also assessed financial and operational functioning of paratransit services including contractual agreements with area agencies including the Adult Resource Alliance and the State of Montana Developmental Disabilities Bureau. These agreements were subsequently re-negotiated, updated, and modified to ensure more effective transportation service to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Staff monitored procedures and policies involving ADA accessible fixed-route service and other accessibility features/requirements and updated with relevant findings.

Assessed and recommended procurement of smaller ADA equipped vehicles to enhance paratransit service efficiencies.

Staff familiarized passengers with fixed route system use as appropriate via MET's travel training program.

Staff continued to coordinate transportation services among 5310 transit providers, social service agencies and the general public to provide an overall strategy to enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of services and facilitate the most appropriate cost-effective transportation possible within available resources. This also included outreach and engagement to improve and advance the coordination plan as well as to improve community relations.

## PROPOSED ACTIVITIES FISCAL YEAR 2021

Functions necessary in support of planning and development of transit related Americans with Disabilities projects, procedures, outreach, and other related activities will be performed under this work element. Activities are as follows:

- Research, develop, and implement improvements to current travel training options to the public using available technology and updated delivery methods.
- Staff will continue to provide outreach and education for professionals, organizations, and other identified entities in the community including participating on advisory groups in order to maintain positive relationships with individuals with disabilities and senior communities.
- Staff will continue to facilitate and encourage involvement in regular Billings Area Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan meetings with human service providers, social service agencies, transportation providers and the public to coordinate efforts associated with transit capital and service planning.
- Continue to facilitate effective service provision and usage of lift-equipped fixed-route vehicles; assess and recommend capital and operational projects with the intent of supporting existing service and adding potential enhancements.
- Continue identification of means to address transit and paratransit needs, assessing both short and long term paratransit needs, the organizational and financial capabilities of addressing those needs, and the inclusion of such needs in the Transit Development Plan.
- Continue paratransit system analysis for efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the current COVID crisis and workforce shortage, with emphasis on demand and best utilization of paratransit resources moving forward.
- Continue community outreach to the public and organizations in support of improving access to transportation for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income populations; continue participation on community committees meetings while exploring avenues for further outreach and engagement.
- Continue working with contracted providers in execution of agreements including existing agreements with the Adult Resource Alliance and the State of Montana, ensuring modifications are made as necessary to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service.

## STAFFING

345.30	Transit Manager Staff Hours
172.65	Transit Supervisors Staff Hours (4 positions)
138.12	Administrative Support Staff Hours (1 position)
<u>69.06</u>	Aviation/Transit Director Staff Hours
<b>725.13</b>	<b>Total Staff Hours</b>

## FUNCTIONAL AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

City of Billings Transit Division – MET Transit

**PRODUCT**

- Continued consensus with and support of City of Billings compliance with ADA regulations related to transit
- Continued community consensus and support of City of Billings methods for addressing of specialized needs, including lift-equipped vehicles and other options for individuals with disabilities and seniors.
- Recommendations and proposals for enhancements to existing system and programs in support of ADA compliance and regulations aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness.
- Public involvement and feedback regarding potential system enhancements in support of transportation for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

**FUNDING SCHEDULE – ADA SERVICE**

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2021**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$14,064	\$56,257	\$70,321
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,064</b>	<b>\$56,257</b>	<b>\$70,321</b>

**FUNDS PROGRAMMED - FISCAL YEAR 2022**

**FUNDING SOURCE**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MET	\$11,432	\$45,729	\$57,161
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,432</b>	<b>\$45,729</b>	<b>\$57,161</b>

**SECTION II FUNDING SUMMARY**

**FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2021**

<b>WORK ELEMENT</b>	<b>FUNDING SOURCES FY 2021</b>			<b>STAFF HOURS</b>
	<b>LOCAL</b>	<b>FTA</b>	<b>EST. COST</b>	
44.21.01 Administration	\$5,689	\$22,754	\$28,443	342.00
44.24.01 Future Service	\$16,905	\$67,622	\$84,527	850.50
44.24.02 Current Service	\$12,316	\$49,265	\$61,581	777.00
44.25.01 T.I.P.	\$1,700	\$6,799	\$8,499	97.34
44.26.15 ADA Service	\$11,591	\$46,364	\$57,955	725.13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$51,201</b>	<b>\$204,804</b>	<b>\$256,005</b>	<b>2791.97</b>

## **ALLOCATION OF COSTS**

Expenditures identified include direct costs, benefits at the rate of 48% of direct salary or wages, and indirect costs at the rate of 11% of direct salary or wages.

Federal Transit Administration Section 5303 funding is available at an 80% reimbursement rate, meaning the local to FTA funding ratio for all categories is 20% local, 80% federal.