

**Billings Technical Advisory Committee
 Virtual Video Conference Meeting 10:30 AM
 APPROVED Meeting Minutes—JANUARY 7, 2021**

1. Call the meeting to order:

Transportation Coordinator Scott Walker called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Due to the COVID-19 health concerns, the format of the Transportation Advisory Committee meeting will be held in a virtual videoconferencing environment. The normal hearing room on the 1st Floor at 2825 3rd Ave North, (Miller Building), will be closed during the meeting and no one will be attending this hearing in person.

Attendance

Committee Members			
Scott Walker, Transportation Coord., Chairman, T.A.C.	X	Wyeth Friday, Director, Planning and Community Services	X
Tim Miller, Director YC Public Works Dept.	X	Mike Black, Civil Engineer, YC Public Works Dept.	X
Debi Meling, City Engineer City of Billings Engineering	X	Erin Claunch, Traffic Engineer City of Billings Engineering	X
Rusty Logan, Manager, MET Transit	X	Clark Snyder, Environmental Health RiverStone Health	--
Katie Potts Urban Planning Section, MDT	X	Carol Strizich, Supervisor Urban Planning Section, MDT	--
Parker Osterloh Urban Planning Section, MDT	X	Alan Woodmansey, Federal Highways	X
Kurtis Schnieber, MDT	x	Ryan Hammon, FHWA	X

Others Participating

Monica Plecker, Planning Division Manager; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; Lora Mattox Transportation Planner; Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner. Lisa Olmstead, DOWL; Doug Enderson, DOWL

2. Public Comment:—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 1:00 PM on Thursday, January 7, 2021. All emails received prior to this time will be read into the record. 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 3 minutes of testimony as is customary.

Live coverage can be viewed:

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

Scott Walker opened the public comment portion of the meeting and asked if there was anyone wishing to make a comment at this time. There was no public comment.

3. Minutes of December 17, 2020

Motion

Tim Miller made a motion and it was seconded by Debi Meling to approve the minutes of December 17, 2020 with corrections requested by Erin Claunch to update the attendance and motion tables. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

4. Old Business:

4a. Approval of the Agenda

Motion

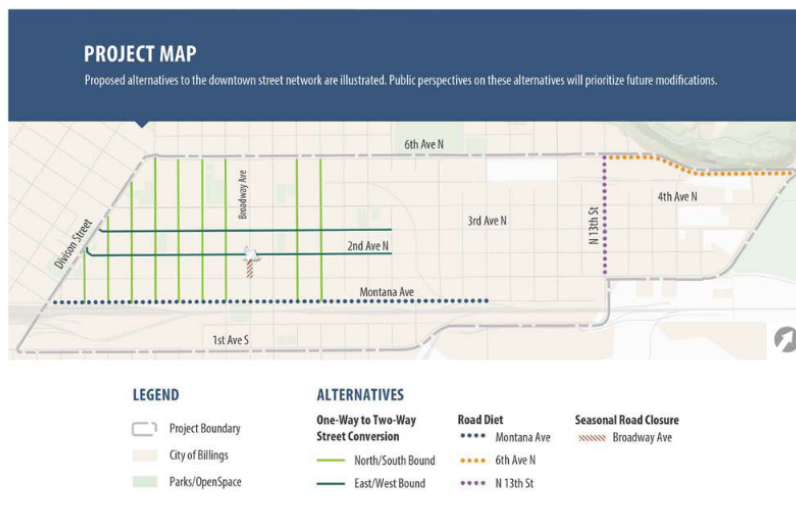
It was moved and seconded to approve the January 7, 2021 meeting agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

4b. Presentation/Discussion. Downtown Pedestrian and Traffic Circulation Study. Lisa Olmsted, DOWL, presenting.

Transportation Planner Lora opened this agenda item and gave some background on the project. She introduced Lisa Olmsted, DOWL Consulting, who will present this agenda item. Doug Enderson, DOWL consulting is also participating. Staff provided the link to the study area map and the DRAFT Downtown Preference Plan to the committee members prior to this meeting.

https://destinyhosted.com/agenda_publish.cfm?id=24568&mt=TAC&get_month=1&get_year=2021&dsp=ag&seq=1142

The DOWL Project Team consists of Lisa Olmsted, Doug Enderson, Transportation Engineer, and Ryan Guelff, Transportation Engineer. **Study Area Map**



Public Engagement Effort Schedule:

Lisa Olmstead state there was great community support and input for this project. The public engagement effort included a website and a survey; the ability to provide alternatives in relation to costs; and to submit additional thoughts and suggestions.

Winter 2020: Notice to Proceed; Survey Development; Outreach Coordination.

Spring 2020: Covid-19 Shelter-in-Place Order, Re-work of Outreach Plans

Summer/Fall 2020- Letters to Community Leaders and Property Owners, Press Release and Media Outreach, Presentations to Stakeholder Groups, Development of Public Service Announcement and Video Presentation.

Winter 2020: Compilation of Feedback Data, Development of Visualizations, Draft Report, Presentations of Draft Report.

Winter 2021: Final Report

Key Take Aways:

- Feedback was receptive to alterations to the current traffic system
- Received passionate, thoughtful opinions
- Citizens are:
 - Engaged in the community and downtown
 - Hopeful that improvements would increase economic vitality and spur development
 - Concerned about accessibility, walkability, and bikability

Survey Result/Participation

Lisa Olmstead reviewed the survey results for each question in the survey. Mike Black asked regarding the preference for two-way travel with back-in angled/parallel parking. He commented other communities that have used this and had potential safety concerns. Lisa Olmstead said EBURD is generally in favor of this option, while those in the McKinley neighborhood expressed concern with citizens understanding it needing education if it moves forward.

Final Survey Participation Data	
Total Visits	6,176
Unique Users	2,393
Sample Size Needed	383
Survey Responses	455
Comments	526
Budget Responses	34



Would you like to see (north and south-bound) 25th Street at the MET Transfer Center converted from one-way to two-way traffic?



- **Yes.** I prefer a sharrow in each lane. I understand that as a result, no on-street parking can be provided at this location.
- **Yes.** I prefer a conventional bike lane and sharrow. I understand that as a result, no on-street parking can be provided at this location.
- **No.** Leave them the way they are.

Lisa Olmstead continued with the presentation and the slide below. Mike Black asked for clarification on the numbers provided on the slide.

Wyeth Friday stated the 68, 177 is a total number that looks a lot different from what is depicted with the bar graph. Lisa Olmsted explained their thought in striving to delineate the two types of “yes” votes.

Kurtis Schnieber pointed out the need to communicate to the public and define a cycle track. Erin Claunch noted in the report points to Montana Avenue going to two-lanes and a right-turn lane. He asked if it is feasible to include a cycle track.

Visualization



Lisa Olmstead said concerns were voiced with pedestrian safety in this area so this is a relevant concern.

Mike Black commented the traffic counts on 6th Avenue

significantly increase following a METRA event. He asked about the benefit of a road diet in this piece and parking on 6th. Erin Claunch said the road diet is to eliminate the 5th lane at Main Street and the parking as you move further away from Main Street. Mike Black commented on a “weaving problem” as vehicles come into 6th Avenue. The graphic would allow for a mixed-use path. Wyeth Friday said there still would be four lanes westbound on 6th Avenue and there seemed to be some confusion with the public. He said it is his experience that there is a lot of room as he drives 6th Avenue. Kurtis Schnieber asked if the proposal would remove the southern sidewalk. Doug Enderson stated the intent is to relocate the pedestrians to one location to address safety issues. In response to question by Mike Black, Doug Enderson explained the intent of the boulevard is for separation and snow storage. Erin Claunch said the ultimate answers to questions on the improvements would come during the design phase of the project. They will consider the turning movements and traffic flows.

Doug Enderson said Kittelson and Associates have studied this intersection as well that discussed the turn movements. The purpose of the traffic study was to check feasibility while this study was done to gain community input. Kurtis Schnieber concurred and said there are many things “in the works” at this point.

Mike Black stressed the importance of considering the impacts from METRA during events when moving forward. Wyeth Friday noted that eventually there would be redevelopment on the side of 6th Avenue North. Lisa Olmstead stated this project was focused on citizen input but there is community knowledge on impacts and the desire to make all of the projects work together. She asked if there are any additional questions. Eric Claunch voiced concern as the North 30th Street conversion for this summer’s project does not include bike lanes and they are moving forward with angled parking desired by businesses. Doug Enderson said they received feedback from Downtown business groups and reached out to West end, Rimrock, and Heights Task forces as a broader effort, which may have contributed to the difference. Lora Mattox said there may need to include a

discussion in the study since this project is already moving forward. Lisa Olmsted said they could do this. Scott Walker said there are no bike facilities between Montana Avenue and 6th Avenue. Erin Claunch said as of now, there will be no bike lanes on North 30th in the plan. Lisa Olmstead said she could update the cover page photo to depict the site with no bike lanes.

Mike Black said the graphics in the plan are very good. He said the maintaining the cycle tracks will increase maintenance during the winter. Debi Meling asked Doug Enderson how the comments were weighted. Doug Enderson said they asked for residents' zip codes but they did not weight the comments. He said there are ways to review this data. He said they truly believe the feedback citizens provided were passionate responses as a part of a targeted audience. Lisa Olmsted she believes organically the data is weighted to those who have an investment in downtown.

Scott Walker said this is a planning study for public input. He cautioned not to get too far ahead as project design is needed but consideration should be made with pieces of this study. Rusty Logan commented on the need to stress this point when presenting to City Council. Scott Walker said it should be clear that there are some ideas and concepts put forward but the bottom line is what can actually be done.

He commented on the idea of the North 30th project truncating the bike lane on 30th with a transition for cyclists to move into downtown with the knowledge of a shared use facility. He asked that the study cover be updated to address this.

Mike Black said the METRA serves a regional area and a lot of education will be needed not only for local but also out of town visitors. Lisa Olmstead said they collected input to gain regional perspective.

Wyeth Friday said survey participation is impressive overall. The stakeholder contacts, 24+ entities is significant and shows community wide interest. The visualizations are helpful to gain responses even though there are items that will be addressed during design. Regarding parking, the survey says citizens are not using the parking garages. He voiced concern on the weight put on the loss of a few parking spaces and said there is a lot of surface parking in the downtown area. He agrees that more discussion is needed on the bike lane transition on North 30th. He thanked DOWL for their efforts especially with working through the hurdles with COVID-19.

Rusty Logan said this plan is supportive of transit in the Downtown area and will provide for a higher level of service. Doug Enderson said they had to clarify how deliveries take place in the downtown area and consider loading and unloading zones. Lisa Olmstead said the Fire Department provided input on bike lanes separated by a curb. Scott Walker said he met with DBA who mentioned a park-lit scenario, which would allow people to get out in the parking areas as an option for a seasonal approach on Broadway.

Kurtis Schnieber mentioned the one-way to two way conversion mentions 1st Ave North in the Executive Summary and this should be corrected. He said this is a Public Preference Plan and asked if this is the Committee's top preference. He said MDT is agreeable to most of the items discussed regarding 6th, 13th, and Montana Avenue for the most part. He pointed out that should it move to the design phase, discussions will have to be held with the state engineer, and the maintenance agreements will be addressed.

Mike Black spoke from the viewpoint as the County engineer and asked if the enhancements are worth the expense. Rusty Logan spoke to the need to maintain the larger thoroughfares. Scott Walker said the Public Works Department contracted with Kittleson for a Downtown Feasibility study for projects. The main bullet points in the study are locations considered. This study takes those locations and gleaned public input and reactions. The overall value of the study is to provide public transparency. He stressed that this will be phased and not all of the projects will be done at once. Mike Black asked regarding project funding. Scott Walker project priorities will be determined, as local funds are available. This study along with the Kittelson document will provide a good road map moving forward.

Scott Walker announced the public comment phone number. Staff received no public comments.

Motion

Mike Black made a motion and it was seconded by Wyeth Friday to recommend adoption of the Downtown Pedestrian and Traffic Circulation Study, (PPP), with the updated 30th street depiction.

Discussion

Scott Walker called for discussion. There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passes with a unanimous voice vote.

6. Other Business

6a. Updates. Discussion. MET Transit, Rusty Logan, Transit Manager

Rusty Logan said MET has gone live with the electronic fare system with approximately 1,100 active accounts. He said a TIP amendment might be needed in the future as the Stimulus Act included a funding package for transit.

Future Agenda Items

January 21, 2021 Motion/Recommendation. Bike and Scooter Feasibility Study. Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, presenting.

ADJOURNMENT: 11:56 AM

APPROVED BY A MOTION JANUARY 21, 2021

--Tamara L. Deines, Planning Clerk