



**Billings Technical Advisory Committee
Virtual Video Conference Meeting 10:30 AM
DRAFT Meeting Minutes—JULY 8, 2021**

1. Call the meeting to order:

Transportation Coordinator Scott Walker called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. in the Miller Building 1st Floor Conference Room, 2825 3rd Ave North

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

Others Participating

Monica Plecker, Planning Division; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; Lora Mattox Transportation Planner; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk Michael Sanderson, Sanderson Stewart

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, July 8, 2021. All emails received prior to this time will be read into the record 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 January 21, 2021

Motion

Rusty Logan made a motion and it was seconded by Mac Fogelsong to approve the minutes of January 21, 2021 as submitted. 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 July 8, 2021 meeting agenda. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.

4b. Motion/Recommendation. 5th Avenue North Corridor Study. Presentation by Sanderson Stewart. Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner.

Scott Walker noted the Background information from the staff report below. He introduced Project Consultant Michael Sanderson, Sanderson Stewart. PCC will hear this agenda item in August.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff is requesting TAC forward a recommendation of approval of the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study to the Yellowstone County Board of Planning, Billings City Council, and the Yellowstone County Board of County Commissioners with the intent to forward a positive recommendation to the PCC.

BACKGROUND

The Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is presenting the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with the intent to have the TAC make a recommendation to the three local governing bodies: Yellowstone County Board of Planning, City Council, and the Board of County Commissioners with the intent to forward a positive recommendation to the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC). The MPO hired Sanderson Stewart through a competitive process to develop the 5th Avenue North Corridor Feasibility Study. 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.

PRESENTATION

Project consultant Michael Sanderson presented an overview of the 5th Ave North Feasibility Study.



He stressed that this is a feasibility study. During public outreach meetings, they asked stakeholders and the public to consider opportunity visioning, “What if...” and presented concepts of rail corridor elements in other communities.

Identified Opportunities: Create connection to important areas; Diverse corridor with diverse users; Dedicated corridor for bicycles and pedestrians; Build off our railroad history; MRL is open to continuing conversations about reviewing design plans; Connection to private investment of adjacent properties; Create activity with a placemaking component.

Identified Concerns: Safety-traffic and social issues; the 27th Street Intersection; Long underused property sections; Activity during winter conditions

Process: Assess Feasibility with the Railroad Agreement & Support; Property Owner Agreement & Support; Right-of-Way Availability; Public Support-funding; Safety; Project Costs-(\$5-6 Million estimate with no design in place); Phasing-Coordination with MRL and property owners

Corridor Goals: Connect the Community through multi-transportation corridor; Create a transformational and inviting public space; Increase Corridor Visibility; Atmosphere of Safety; Leverage Community Partnerships



- **Corridor Vision:**
 - **Linear Park-west end of corridor:** Connection to key Billings Downtown institutions. Character Opportunities: Increased green space; Multi-Use Trails; Branded Spaces; Art Display; additional incorporation of and collaboration with private development that complements route
 - **Wye Junction:** rail spur connection to Montana Avenue. Crossroads opportunity in the middle of the corridor. Right-of-way opportunities to create nodes of amenities. Scott Walker commented he likes the offering of connectivity in this area and what it will accomplish for the corridor itself.
 - **Rail Trail:** significant opportunities for redevelopment of properties. A narrow railroad corridor. Potential for a multi-use path.
 - **Gateway Hub:** this area was called the recycling hub in the EBURD Master Plan. In addition, it interfaces with the Gateway. This is an active industrial area. This area is not conducive to pedestrian activity as long as it continues as an industrial hub. The on-street connection on 13th Street is consistent with other City plans to make the METRA Park connection.

Transportation Opportunities: multi-use trail as the backbone of the corridor

Placemaking Opportunities: Michael Sanderson stressed the importance of a consistent design and wayfinding theme to the corridor. A “Rail Walk”-amenity that draws people to this part of Billings.

Next Steps Beyond Feasibility: Corridor Design (30% Design for MRL Review); Cost Estimating; Funding Sources; Phasing-100% Design.

Discussion

Scott Walker called for discussion. He pointed out that MRL is a huge player and said staff has had several discussions with them. He feels the 30% Design criterion for MRL is moderately fair as MRL wants surety of community buy-in on the corridor. There are 17 intersections with

27th Street being the major intersection. This will involve MDT's and City Public Works' participation when moving forward with a design-oriented study. He likes the idea of using the Wey Track through to Montana Avenue as it is a part of the history of the Montana Avenue Connection. He spoke to opportunities of using public art and creating a place where people want to be. He stated he appreciates Zach Kirkemo's input on the EBURD section. Michael Sanderson said they directly reached out to the EBURD ground and held several meetings and did not receive any concerns. Scott Walker said they are building community confidence with this plan. Rusty Logan commented that he likes the idea of a node. From a transit point of view, it allows for transit stops, especially on the far west end of the corridor. Mac Fogelsong asked Michael Sanderson what the largest obstacle would be for this plan. Michael Sanderson said some success is needed in a visible pilot project to create amenities that people can use. There is a lot of interest from the Yellowstone Art Museum and the surrounding area. Alan Woodmansey, FWHA, said this is a good study. He said he has concerns with locating people in a railroad corridor but this could be addressed with separation in the design. Michael Sanderson referred to positive separations provided in other railroad corridors. Scott Walker said staff has expressed this to MRL in previous discussions. He said this study is a vision to create community opportunities. Michael Sanderson said these issues might be resolved with good design. Lora Mattox commented on her experience with a rail corridor in Salt Lake City, Utah. Scott Walker said this feasibility plan will help to move forward to a design-oriented plan with consideration of each of the areas and possible amenities. Lora Mattox commented on the potential for a cooperative effort with the Tax Increment Finance Districts and said having a plan in place will allow the community to move forward.

Motion

Rusty Logan made a motion and it was seconded by Mac Fogelsong to recommend the 5th Avenue Corridor Share Feasibility Study as presented by staff and include discussion and recommended additions that Alta staff will incorporate into the document.

Discussion

Scott Walker called for discussion. There was no further discussion.

6. Other Business

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

Rusty Logan said MET is on track for delivery for seventeen new buses. During an upcoming meeting, Rusty will update TAC on the Transit Annual Asset Plan and the Transit Safety Plan. MET is working on a development and marketing position for community outreach.

Future Agenda Items

DRAFT 2022 Unified Planning Work Program

Next meeting: Thursday, July 22, 2021

ADJOURNMENT: 11:31 AM

DRAFT-TO BE APPROVED BY A MOTION July 22, 2021.

--Tamara L. Deines, Planning Clerk