



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 27, 2023 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am

1st Floor Conference Room of 2825 3rd Ave. N

Live Coverage was available here: <https://www.facebook.com/Billings-Planning-Community-Services-Department-1738982159659260/> Recording is also available on same Facebook page link.

DRAFT

Call to order: Nikki Zimmer, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at about 11:30 am.

Members present: Dave Coppock, Planning Board; Jason Wood, County; Anna O'Donnell, City; Kristi Drake; City.

Others present: Scott Walker, Transportation Planning Coordinator; Sarah Plath, PE, Staff Engineer; Debi Meling, PE, Director of Public Works; Billings City Councilmember Ed Gulick

Public Comment Period:

- a. **Comments on items not on the agenda and request to add items to future agendas –** Anna O'Donnell, BPAC member, wanted to find out when 56th under the bridge is going to be done.
- b. **Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –** Someone emailed Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, about loose gravel on Senators. The Street and Traffic Division said that it is on their schedule coming up to sweep the street.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of March 28, 2022: Dave Coppock, BPAC member, moved to accept the minutes. Jason Wood, BPAC member, seconded. All voted in favor.

New Business:

Downtown 2-way Street Restoration Project

Sarah Plath, a staff engineer with Public Works (PW), presented information to BPAC about the downtown 2-way street restoration project. She is the project manager on the city end. Many of the streets downtown need pavement preservation treatments which gives the opportunity to restripe the streets in a different way. PW has been working closely with the Downtown Billings Alliance on the project. There is a team of consultants completing project design. Right now, they are working on 30% design and construction is tentatively planned for next summer.

The consultant is also under contract to look at a road diet on Montana Ave.

The extents of the 2-way restoration project are N. 25th, N 26th, N 31st, and N 32nd Streets from Montana Ave. to 6th Ave N., the full lengths of N. 33rd, 34th, and 35th Streets, 2nd and 3rd Aves. from Division to N. 22 St. Broadway Ave. will also undergo pavement preservation but is already two way.

The goals of the project are to improve livability and stimulate economic growth. This will be accomplished by promoting safety through traffic calming, improving access to downtown, increasing walkability, and increasing multimodal connectivity. The ultimate goal is to support the vitality of downtown.

Working downtown requires a balancing act between sometimes competing interests like parking, bike improvements, traffic calming, traffic congestion, maintenance, and cost.

The scope of work will be from curb to curb, i.e., there will not be a lot of sidewalk reconstruction. Some intersection modifications will need to be made and new turn lanes may be added on N 27th St., N 32nd St., & 4th Ave. N.

Kristi Drake, BPAC member, asked if there could be a cycle track on N. 32nd St. Sarah said Public Works has been trying to prioritize where bike routes are and right now, they are looking at N 31st St. as a location for a 2-way cycle track. The intersection at N 32nd and Grand will likely change when 32nd becomes 2-way.

Public Works is looking at adding bike connectivity on 2nd and 3rd Aves. and on N 25th and N 31st Streets.

On 3rd Ave. N, PW is planning a two-way cycle track between Division and N. 22nd. The width will be between 8 and 10 feet and there will be a 3 ft. buffer. The cycle track will be parking protected with parallel parking on both sides of the road. The motorized traffic lanes will be 10.5 feet which will calm traffic. They are looking at some other potential treatments like the potential for a bike box at 3rd and Division and maybe green paint through the intersections.

Councilmember Gulick asked if there were plans to add contraflow lanes on Clark Ave. Sarah said that the contraflow lanes were not part of this project, but they are aware of the possibility and planning for it.

In front of Alberta Bair, the cycle track will get down to about 7.5 feet which is pretty narrow, but there will be treatments in place to make people biking aware that the conditions are changing.

2nd Ave. N will have buffered bike lanes from Division to N. 31st St and from N 25th St. to N 22nd St. There will be sharrows from N. 31st St to N. 25th in order to preserve parking. They thought about swapping the parking to allow for a protected bike lane, but then the gutter would be part of the width of the bike lane, and they felt that the bike lane would be too narrow.

PW will be looking at what signage/education will be implemented as part of the project.

There will be a bike connection on N. 25th Steet. PW felt this was a good location because S. 25th Street has a bike lane, and it will tie into the future 25th St. bridge over the railroad tracks. There will be a buffered bike lane in most spots, but there is a pinch point near the MET Transfer station where there will be sharrows.

N 31st St has space for a 2-way cycle track. It will be a 10 ft. cycle track with a 3-foot buffer.

There was a question about how this cycle track will line up with the bike lane on N. 30th. Kristi suggested adding a bike lane on 6th Ave. N for a block to connect to N. 30th. Sarah said they were looking at that intersection and would take a look.

On the other north-south streets, they are looking at parallel parking on one side, 11 ft. travel lanes, and angled parking on the other side of the street.

PW is still working through some things including:

- Potential sharrows on Broadway
- Cycle track
 - Create clear expectations for the streets, driveways, and alleys
 - Figure out how to transition people biking on and off the cycle track
 - Pedestrian crossings
 - Loading Zones
 - Protection – if delineators will be used in addition to a buffer and the parking protection

Green paint might be used in higher traffic volume intersections to indicate potential conflict areas. Alleys and drive approaches would just have the dashed line.

Back in angled parking is suggested for this project, but City Council will likely provide direction.

Project outreach includes an open house, tentatively set for early August and more targeted downtown property owner outreach.

BPAC suggested writing a letter to Council in support of the proposal. Sarah said PW could also send over talking points when available for BPAC.

Debi Meling, City Public Works Director suggested BPAC could also help with education once the changes are implemented.

Councilmember Ed Guilck suggested that four-way stops might be included instead of stop lights in some locations if funding is tight. He said he also understands that the current funding source cannot be used outside of the downtown tax increment financing district, but he said the connections outside of the downtown were critical and suggested consideration of how N 30th, S. Broadway, and Clark Ave. will connect to the downtown.

Kristi asked if BPAC would suggest to Public Works that they keep the bike box on 3rd and Division, implement some sort of crossing strip across 30th to connect that bike lanes on that street to the future cycle track on N 31st, and to reconsider having a cycle track on N 32nd in front of the YMCA. Sarah mentioned that they are limited by space on N 32nd as there is a lot of traffic coming off Grand Ave. and adding bike facilities would likely require removing parking. Anna said she is an advocate for leaving the car parking as is. Debi mentioned that the 5th Ave. Corridor will likely have a crossing there which may help.

Sarah asked if adding a bike box at 6th Ave. and N 30th would help with the merging situation in that location. BPAC thought that would be helpful. Debi suggested striping a connection on 7th Ave. N instead of 6th Ave.

Old business

Etiquette Campaign

Kristi and Jason met, and they came up with simple language for the etiquette campaign.

They are trying to keep all messages to 5 words. The messages include:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Announce your presence when passing.
- Faster traffic, pass on left.
- Keep dogs on short leash.

Dave motioned to make the above messages the official messaging of the trail etiquette signage. Anna seconded. All voted in favor.

Draft letter to Billings Police Department

Nikki Zimmer, BPAC Chair, suggested adding to the letter the BPAC has been reviewing the monthly crash data related to biking and walking and a lot of the crashes are related to right on red. Anna suggested saying BPAC reviews the data as well as public comment.

Crash report from the PD

BPAC mapped out crash data from the PD on the printed map. BPAC discussed that if an intersection stands out as being a problem at some point, they may advocate for action on it.

BPAC discussed having a campaign about not fleeing the scene as there were several hits and runs.

Other Business:

None

Future agenda items:

Sidewalk funding – a couple of members could do some research before the next meeting and see how other Montana Cities are funding sidewalks. Nikki is going to email this out to the whole group to see who can help.

Look at fleeing the scene reports – Kristi will look into this.

Jason motioned to adjourn; Dave seconded. All voted in favor.