

# **POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE MINUTES JULY 18, 2023**

DRAFT TO APPROVED BY A MOTION

## **NOTICE**

Public comment will be taken only during the Public Comment periods as indicated on the agenda. Comments may be sent to Planning Staff 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:** Chairman John Ostlund, Board of County Commissioners; Mayor Bill Cole, City of Billings; Planning Board President Dennis Cook, Yellowstone County Planning Board, Kurtis Schneiber, MDT

**Staff Participants:** Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator, Planning & Community Services Department; Tammy Deines, Planning Clerk; (Virtual); Lora Mattox, Transportation Planner

**Other Participants:** Woody Woods, Board of County Commissioners, Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager, Andy Daleiden, Kittelson & Assoc., Mike Black, Yellowstone County Public Works.

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

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

**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**

There were no comments from the audience regarding agenda or future agenda items.

### **4. Minutes of April 18, 2023**

#### **Motion**

**A motion was made by Mayor Cole, seconded by Planning Board President Dennis Cook to approve the minutes of April 18, 2023. The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

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

### **5. New Business**

**5a. Motion. 2023 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Program (LRTP). Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator presenting.**

Scott Walker opened this agenda item and gave a brief introduction. Andy Daleiden, Kittelson & Associates, Project Manager gave an overview of the LRTP.

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## **Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Policy Coordinating Committee approve the 2023 LRTP.

## **Background**

The Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a fiscally constrained plan and framework to guide the continued development and implementation of multimodal transportation system projects for the Billings urban area. The LRTP is updated every five years, and the previous iteration was completed in 2018. This LRTP assesses today's (2023) land use and transportation conditions to forecast the future (year 2045) conditions, which aids in identifying and strategizing transportation improvements for the region. This Draft 2023 LRTP includes updates to current transportation conditions, forecasts future population impact on the transportation system, models future traffic volumes to 2045, and includes transportation project priorities. The Plan also complies with the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) requirements to ensure the community qualifies for Federal Transportation funds. The Billings MPO is required to update this plan every five years.

In addition to being compliant with federal regulations it must also meet state and local requirements. For this LRTP, a Project Oversight Committee (POC) was formed to assist staff and the consultant with transportation project review and consultations with stakeholder organizations. The POC included local representation from the Board of County Commissioners, City Council, City Engineering Division, Planning Division, MET Transit, and County Public Works. In addition, extensive coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation, Billings Department of Aviation and Transit, Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, The Federal Highway Administration and City and County Public Works was conducted to ensure the most up-to-date information was included in the plan. Attached to this report are the plan itself and an executive summary which provides an overview of the purpose and intent of the document and generalizes outcomes. This can be used as a quick reference for the plan.

## **Fiscal Effects**

There will be no direct financial impact with review and adoption of the 2023 LRTP. This plan acts as a guide to the development and implementation of multi-modal transportation system projects for the Billings Urban Area. The projects within the plan are prioritized through community engagement, policy documents like the City's Capital Improvement Plan, and City/County review.

Chairman Ostlund asked for any questions. There were no questions.

## **Motion**

**Motion by Planning Board President Dennis Cook, seconded by Mayor Cole to approve the 2023 Billings Urban Area Long Range Transportation Program (LRTP) as presented by staff.**

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## Discussion

There was no discussion on the motion. **The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

**5b. Motion. Transportation Alternatives Program, (TAP). Scott Walker, Transportation Coordinator presenting.**

## Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) approve the two submitted Transportation Alternative (TA) projects based on the recommendations of the City-County Planning Board (PB), Billings City Council (CC), and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). This recommendation will be forwarded to the Montana Department of Transportation for review and action by the State Transportation Commission at its August 24 meeting.

## Background

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TA) is a set-aside program from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program. Eligible uses of the funds include projects and activities that were previously eligible under the Transportation Alternatives Program under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). This includes a variety of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects and other community improvement projects.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) allows for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to administer their own competitive application process with approval and oversight from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Billings, Missoula, and Great Falls will be overseeing a local process for the TA funding that is specific to areas with a population of over 50,000. Entities within the MPO may also apply with MDT's Call for Applications as well, as there is funding that is not tied to population. The timeline for both processes runs concurrently.

This year, the MPO received an allocation of approximately \$6.38 million of TA funds. This includes several years of previously unspent TA funds managed by the Montana Department of Transportation. Future year funding will be approximately \$700,000 annually. Two projects were submitted requesting funding. The first is from Yellowstone County on behalf of the Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District. A proposed sidewalk gap connection along Old Hardin Road between two end points that are being constructed by Yellowstone County on one end and the Montana Department of Transportation (part of the Billings Bypass project) on the other. This project will complete the 2,200' gap. The second project, Stagecoach Trail, was submitted by the City of Billings Parks Department and will construct a 10' wide shared use path from the Skyline Trail on the east side of Zimmerman Trail to Rimrock Road below the Rims.

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The TAC based the scoring of the applications on a process developed by the MPO with guidance from MDT. Based on a total of 100 points, 10 points for Project Description, 45 points for Project Benefits and 45 points for Project Risk Analysis. Based on TAC scoring and the available TA funding, TAC recommended fully funding both projects to the local governing bodies, including the PB, CC, and BOCC. Each body is recommending approval.

## Stakeholders

Both projects are located within the Billings MPO and have been identified in local planning efforts that included robust public participation. The Lockwood project is identified in the 2017 Lockwood Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and the Stagecoach Trail was identified in the 2015 Rimrocks to Valley Bike & Pedestrian Study.

## Summary

The Transportation Alternatives Program is an opportunity for the Billings Urban Area to complete those larger, complex non-motorized projects. The two projects submitted for this round of funding addresses both a city and county connection that are both critical to the community's goals.

## Motion

**Motion by Mayor Cole, seconded by Planning Board President, Dennis Cook to approve the Transportation Alternatives Program, (TAP) as recommended by Staff. Public Comment:** There was no public comment on this agenda item.

## Discussion

Chairman Ostlund called for questions and discussion. Mayor Cole stressed the importance about what is happening west of the airport with the development of the inner belt loop and commercial property coming online. It's critically important we have a way to get people from the Bench down into the valley. Construction is going well, as is the Skyline Trail. Timing there is quite good. **The motion carried with a unanimous voice vote.**

**6. Other Business** There is no Other Business.

## **7. Future Agenda Items**

- a. Transportation Alternative Program -- Stagecoach Trail; Skyline Trail Projects.
- b. Transportation Plan Update.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 12:30 PM

**DRAFT. To be approved by a motion during the next scheduled meeting**

*Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk*

**City-County Planning Division**  
**Tuesday, July 18, 2023**  
**Policy Coordinating Committee**



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