

**Date:** 10/18/2023  
**Title:** Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Boundary Map Amendment  
**Presented by:** Lora Mattox  
**Department:** Planning & Community Services  
**Presentation:** Yes

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is requesting the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) forward a recommendation of approval of the Billings MPO Boundary Map Amendment 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 (Consistency with Adopted Plans and Policies, if applicable)**

The Billings Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is tasked with coordinating transportation planning within the Billings metropolitan area. Its responsibilities encompass long-term transportation planning, allocation of funding, and ensuring that transportation projects align with regional goals and objectives. The MPO's planning boundary defines the specific geographic area over which it exercises planning authority.

In response to the recently released 2020 Census data, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) mandates that the MPO, in collaboration with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and local government agencies, adjust the planning boundary accordingly. These adjustments are based on the 2020 Census urban area boundaries, which are determined by housing density. The population within these adjusted urban areas determines their respective share of urban program funds. Final approval of the proposed boundaries is granted by the FHWA.

To define the MPO boundary, certain criteria were employed:

- **Reasonable Distance:** Areas within the urban boundary must be reachable within a 0.5-mile drive.
- **Large Traffic Generator:** This category includes industrial, commercial, or retail areas that do not encompass residential zones. Large traffic generators must primarily serve the urban area's population and have a significant impact, such as major hospitals, for example.
- **Minimizing Impacts to the Highway Systems:** The overarching goal is to avoid any adverse effects on the state highway system.

Additionally, when adjusting the urban boundaries, it is essential to consider the most recent city limit boundary, create a single contiguous area, adhere to political boundaries, census blocks, or physical features/intersections.

The first attached map illustrates the 2010 Urban Boundary, City Limits, 2020 Census Urban Area Boundary, and the proposed 2020 Urban Area Boundary. After discussions involving MDT Helena, MDT Billings District, City and County Public Works, and the Billings MPO, all proposed changes were accepted, with the exception of a section of King Avenue West. MDT Helena recommended converting a portion of this route from an Urban to a Secondary route. However, MDT Billings District and staff opposed this change due to the area's complex and rapidly changing land use. Ultimately, MDT Helena reviewed and concurred with the local recommendation.

The second map illustrates the ultimate proposed version, and MDT Helena is seeking a review and endorsement of this map from the municipal and county authorities. The TAC recommends that the Planning Board, City Council, and Board of County Commissioners give their approval for the boundary amendment, with the intention of having the Mayor and Chair sign the proposed map. MDT Helena will oversee this process using DocuSign.

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

This map amendment originated from MDT Helena and was subsequently introduced to the MPO, MDT Billings District, and the Public Works Departments of both the City and County. After undergoing a thorough examination and receiving a suggestion from the local review team, MDT Helena has made necessary adjustments and is presently seeking final approval and signatures from the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners. The public may view the map and attend the public meetings where consideration of the map update will be conducted at the Yellowstone County Board of Planning (11/14), City Council (11/6 Work Session and 11/13 Meeting), Board of County Commissioners (11/6 Discussion and 11/7 Meeting), and PCC (11/21).

## **ALTERNATIVES**

This boundary amendment is necessary to align the Billings MPO Planning Boundary with the US Census Urban Boundary per federal regulations so the only alternative is to approve the amendment per the FHWA process.

## **FISCAL EFFECTS**

The approval of the MPO Boundary will not result in any financial implications for either the City or County. Instead, it will guarantee the uninterrupted flow of Federal PL funding to support ongoing Transportation Planning Programs within the MPO urban area.

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## **Attachments**

Map 1

Map 2