



## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County  
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 27, 2024 MEETING TIME: 11:30 am  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room of 2825 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N

APPROVED BY A MOTION ON MARCH 26, 2024

- Call to order:** Nikki Zimmer, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:32 am.
- Members present:** Kristi Drake, City; Dave Coppock, Planning Board; Anna O'Donnell, City; Jason Wood, County; Joan Schey, County; Stephanie Donovan, City
- Others present:** Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; members of the public as listed on the sign in sheet.

### Public Comment Period:

- a. Comments on items not on the agenda and request to add items to future agendas –** Tricia Ganson, member of the public, called in on the public call-in line. She lives on Highland right between Rimrock and Poly. She called to express her concern about the intersections of Highwood at Rimrock and Poly about crossing for young people and general pedestrians in the community. On September 16 at around 6:45, her daughter was involved in a crash at Glenwood and Rimrock in an attempt to cross from the south side to the north side of Rimrock. It was at the “witching hour” when the sun was “wicked.” In an attempt to get out of the way of the car, her daughter fell and hit her head on the curb and ended up in emergency surgery. Tricia said that just knowing the population of young people that live on the north side of Rimrock and in the poet street area, and also that crossing at Poly towards the country club... Just the amount of young people that use that area in the spring and summer to get to the country club for swimming and golfing. Those would be two places where crosswalks could be added for safety and pedestrians in our community. If you look at Rimrock, there is a crossing at Virginia and there isn't another one until 13<sup>th</sup>. That is over a mile of access where they say it is 25 in some places, but she thinks that is an unrealistic number that people travel as they come down Rimrock. Kathy Aragon, member of the public, asked if she would come on and share her input and involvement in regard to this topic. If there are any committees or activities she can join/attend to help express her concern, she would be more than willing to help advocate for this. The crosswalk that is at Poly and 11<sup>th</sup> with the flashing light is an amazing crosswalk. She wanted to express her concern related to this area. She knows not a lot of pedestrian crashes have happened at Poly in the past, but she thinks it is a matter of time before something happens at the Highwood and Poly intersection. Elyse will get her email from Kathy and follow up with her.

Kathy Aragon, member of the public, requested that we do more to slow speeds of vehicular traffic, including maybe an overlay of safe routes to school plan to stop cross traffic and maybe include traffic circles. She mentioned the boy that got hit on the west

of Poly School. She suggested multiple crossings along Rimrock or Poly. Or a crossing at Lewis where a boy was severely injured and she thinks was in the ICU. She said the school boundaries are huge now. As schools close and the boundary expands, kids are having to cross more and more high-density traffic streets. Kathy requests that BPAC look at the entire City and County and areas where people are coming and going and there is a high volume of vehicular traffic to put in some of the recommendations. Back in the early 2000s, Mark Fenton came to Billings and suggested there be multiple crossings on Rimrock, so people don't use that as a speeding throughfare. Kathy would like to suggest that many of the things that are in the NACTO guidelines be implemented to reduce the speeds of vehicular traffic so that the people who are walking, biking, or rolling are safer. She would like to have an overlay to look at these features like traffic circles, multiple crossings, and pedestrian activated signals. She said kudos to the City for implementing some of this, but thought more could be done.

**b. Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –** Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, received a letter from Steve and Tracy Neary that read:

“Dear Billings Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee,

The core reason for complete streets is to improve the safety for all road users. We have made some advances since the passage of the complete streets policy in the city of Billings and yet it will take some time to bring our community to the safety our citizens should experience. With our aging demographic, the growing cost of living and financial challenges for working families, more people do not drive and rely on public transportation to get to and from work, the grocery store, healthcare and other community locations. Making decisions through the eyes of motorists cannot be our default setting if we want a thriving and safe community.

The vital importance of pedestrian safety for children hit close to home for our family on March 11th of 2011 when our daughter was struck by a motor vehicle traveling 35 miles per hour while crossing a street near her middle school.

It happened at the end of volleyball practice when she and her teammates decided to walk to the grocery store for some snacks after their hard work. It is a straight line between their school and the grocery store. Unfortunately, the crosswalk was not designed with this intuitive path in mind and the pre-teens defaulted to the shortest path that has no traffic slowing design. Our 13-year-old daughter's body flew through the air as the immense force of the pickup truck struck her and as her teammates stood motionless shocked by what they were witnessing. A passerby performed CPR until the ambulance arrived and led her to what would be days in the pediatric intensive care unit, giving time for swelling to subside and her brain to begin its new work of learning to walk and reason again.

Our daughter made a full recovery. She was one of the lucky pedestrians to be struck on Billings streets.

We must do better. We must prioritize the development of infrastructure that slows motor vehicle traffic. Clear signage, raised medians at intersections, clear bike lanes, well-marked cross walks, narrow lanes to slow traffic, on street parking, flashing and/or illuminated crossing signs, all should be considered as we look to design for the safety of our community. Environmental design is the least costly approach to the long term

safety problem solving we need to do for our all our children and our children's children.

Sincerely,  
Steve & Tracy Neary”

Elyse also talked with a woman who lives near Central Heights Elementary School. She was concerned about the crossings near the school. Elyse connected her with one of the engineers in public works, and he shared that the Phase 1 Safe Routes to School Plan includes a crossing near the school. She was glad to hear that and wanted the crossing installed as soon as possible. She also had a question about sanding which is more of a Street and Traffic division issue. There is limited sanding that the City does. The engineer connected her with Street and Traffic The woman asked for a yield sign at Alamo and Pueblo because she thought that would increase the likelihood of getting it sanded.

**Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of January 23, 2024:** Dave Coppock, BPAC member, moved to accept the minutes. Joan Schey, BPAC member, seconded. All voted in favor.

**Old Business:**

**a. BPAC presentation to governing bodies**

BPAC members reviewed the annual presentation to governing bodies and made edits to it. Nikki Zimmer, BPAC Chair, offered to finish up the presentation. The result was the attached presentation. The presentation will be given to the Planning Board, the City Council, and the County Commissioners.

**b. Review and mapping of PD crashes**

This item was tabled due to lack of time.

**c. Tree grant**

This item was tabled due to lack of time.

**New Business:**

**Other Business:**

Joan noted that on or around January 26, there was an article in the Montana Free Press about sidewalks in Missoula and how they were being paid for.

**Future agenda items:** None

**Joan moved to adjourn; Jason seconded. All voted in favor.**