



## 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

DRAFT

- 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.**

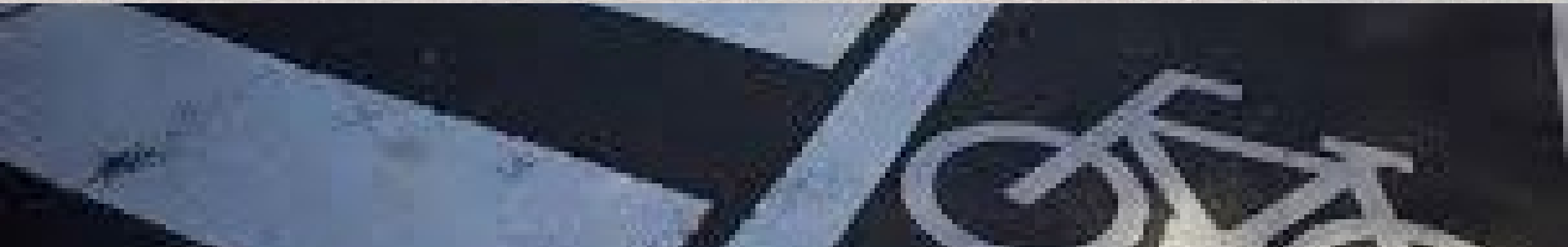
BPAC Meeting  
February 27, 2023

Printed Name	Email/Address
Tony Chase	Anthony.cha@riverstonehealth.org
Kathy Aragon	aragon5inmontana@gmail.com

# BPAC

BILLINGS AREA  
BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



# WHO WE ARE

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- Chair: Nikki Zimmer (County)
- Vice Chair: Dave Coppock (Planning Board)
- Joan Schey (County)
- Kristi Drake (City)
- Jason Wood (County)
- Anna O'Donnell (City)
- Stephanie Donovan (City)



# OUR FOCUS

Ensuring that our community's infrastructure enables people to walk, bike or use a wheelchair safely.



# WHAT WE DO

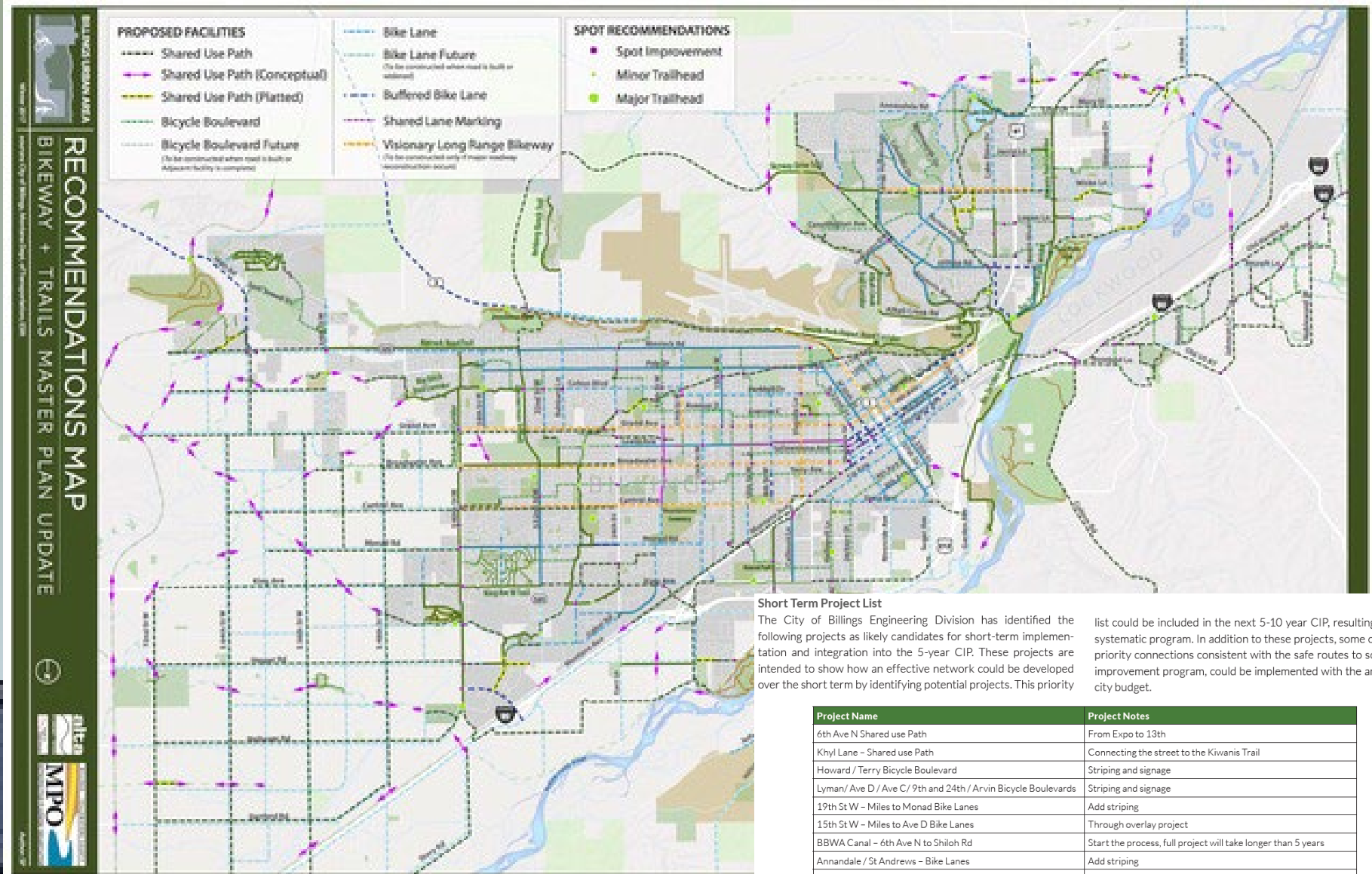
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- Advise city and county in regards to nonmotorized transportation issues
- Ensure advice is rooted in community need by soliciting and compiling public comment trends
- Maintain relationships with elected officials and planning board
- Use the Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan as guidance



# BILLINGS AREA BIKEWAY AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN- BEING UPDATED IN 2024!



## Short Term Project List

The City of Billings Engineering Division has identified the following projects as likely candidates for short-term implementation and integration into the 5-year CIP. These projects are intended to show how an effective network could be developed over the short term by identifying potential projects. This priority

list could be included in the next 5-10 year CIP, resulting in a systematic program. In addition to these projects, some of the priority connections consistent with the safe routes to school improvement program, could be implemented with the annual city budget.

Project Name	Project Notes
6th Ave N Shared use Path	From Expo to 13th
Khyl Lane - Shared use Path	Connecting the street to the Kiwanis Trail
Howard / Terry Bicycle Boulevard	Striping and signage
Lyman/ Ave D / Ave C/ 9th and 24th/ Arvin Bicycle Boulevards	Striping and signage
19th St W - Miles to Monad Bike Lanes	Add striping
15th St W - Miles to Ave D Bike Lanes	Through overlay project
BBWA Canal - 6th Ave N to Shiloh Rd	Start the process, full project will take longer than 5 years
Annandale / St Andrews - Bike Lanes	Add striping
Wicks Lane - Gleneagles to Kiwanis - Shared use Path	Add shared use path to south side of the street
Central Ave - 32nd to Shiloh - Shared use Path	With road project
Monad Rd - 32nd to 29th - Bike Lanes	Through overlay project

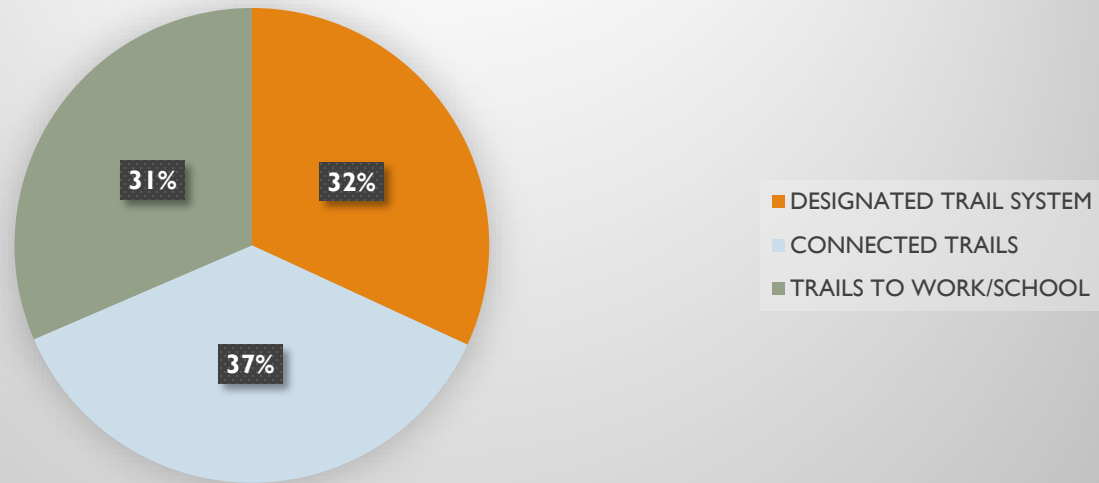
# WE REVIEW AND ACCEPT PUBLIC COMMENT ON NONMOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

1. Public comment at monthly meetings
2. Online comments report from City County Planning
3. 2023 survey to get input from the public on issues facing Billings and Yellowstone County residents regarding biking and walking
  - Collection method: City of Billings Facebook page
  - We received 120 responses
  - Use the survey data to prioritize the top issues to inform our elected officials



# SURVEY FINDINGS

**What matters most to you about access to safe bicycling, walking, and/or wheelchair facilities?  
Check all that apply**



48% of respondents selected all three



# CONNECTIONS OFTEN MENTIONED IN OUR SURVEY

## 1. Valley to rims (Stagecoach Trail)

- “Build the Zimmerman Trail Connector so we can get to the heights from the west end on Bike”
- “Need connection from west side up to the rims. Also need better connectivity to the river and to downtown”

## 2. Connection to downtown

- “We need much better (especially safer) connectivity between downtown and the Heights, downtown and the Yellowstone River, and between the Valley and the Rims. We also need to design the downtown streets so that they are more friendly to bicyclists. Walkers can use the sidewalks, but there are currently very few protected bike lanes downtown.”
- “Safely navigating downtown for bicyclists of all ages and abilities (not just those able to ride at the speed of traffic). Connecting downtown to surround neighborhoods. Division St. is a barrier. Getting between the Heights and downtown.”



# CONNECTIONS OFTEN MENTIONED IN OUR SURVEY

- “Medical corridor and downtown. I work at a hospital and live in tree streets. I don't feel safe commuting to work with regard to traffic and crime activity.”
- “Trying to get to downtown on a bike is a terrifying ordeal.”

## 3. More trails

- “The trails that we have for biking are few and often short or they don't connect. Makes it hard to go for long walks, bike rides or other outdoor activities. It does not help to attract companies to Billings.”
- “Would be good to have more bike paths that do not parallel major roads; the one along the big ditch is a nice example, and up at the rims”

## 4. Signage

- “The current trail system could use much better directional and informational signage.”



# MOST COMMON AREAS OF CONCERN WITH ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

1. Crosswalks

2. Speed



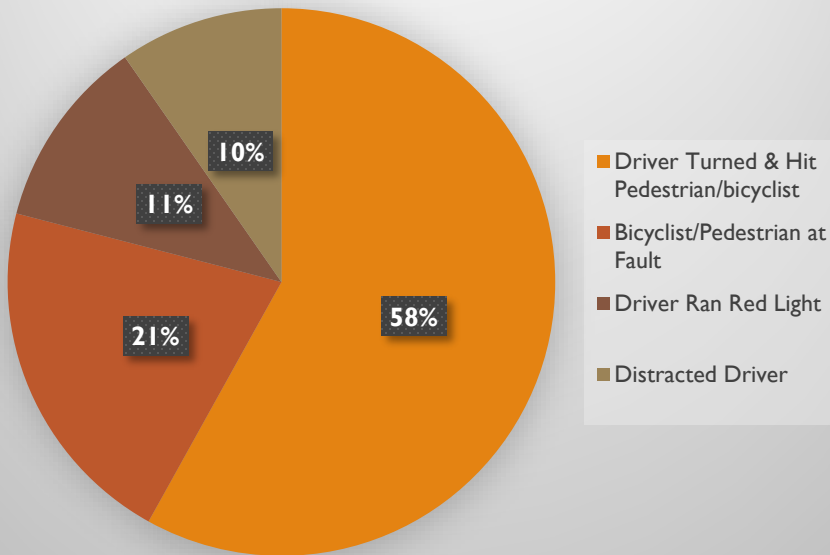
# WHAT RESIDENTS ARE SAYING

- **Law Enforcement** (Enforce violations: Speeding, crosswalks, traffic signals, inattentive drivers, code enforcement)
- **Infrastructure** (trail connectivity, maintenance, access, ADA compliance, bike/car separation)
- **Public Safety** (Crime, transients, trail safety, trash, graffiti)



# OTHER DATA TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

## Causes of the 79 Reported Vehicle-Vulnerable Road User Crashes in 14 months



Oct 2022- Dec 2023

We review bike/ped crash police reports

We document areas crashes occur to show areas of need for possible signage or other infrastructure:

- 2 fatalities occurred during this period
- 58% of crashes were due to a driver turning and hitting a bicyclist or pedestrian- often in a crosswalk
- 21% of all crashes involved hit and run



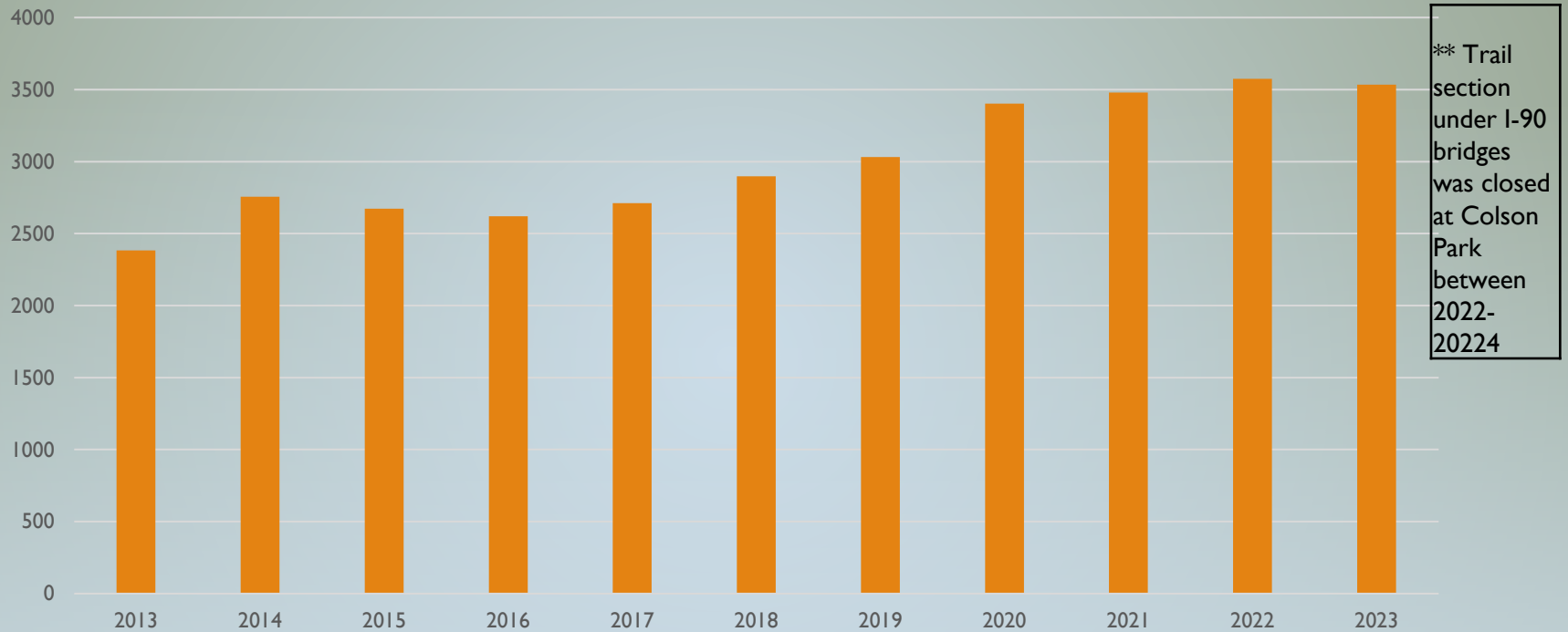
# BPAC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS CRASH DATA

- **Change behaviors**
  - We recommend the City of Billings create a media campaign involving social media + PSAs on TV and radio, to educate both drivers and pedestrians
- **Change infrastructure**
  - Add marked crosswalks in select high traffic areas

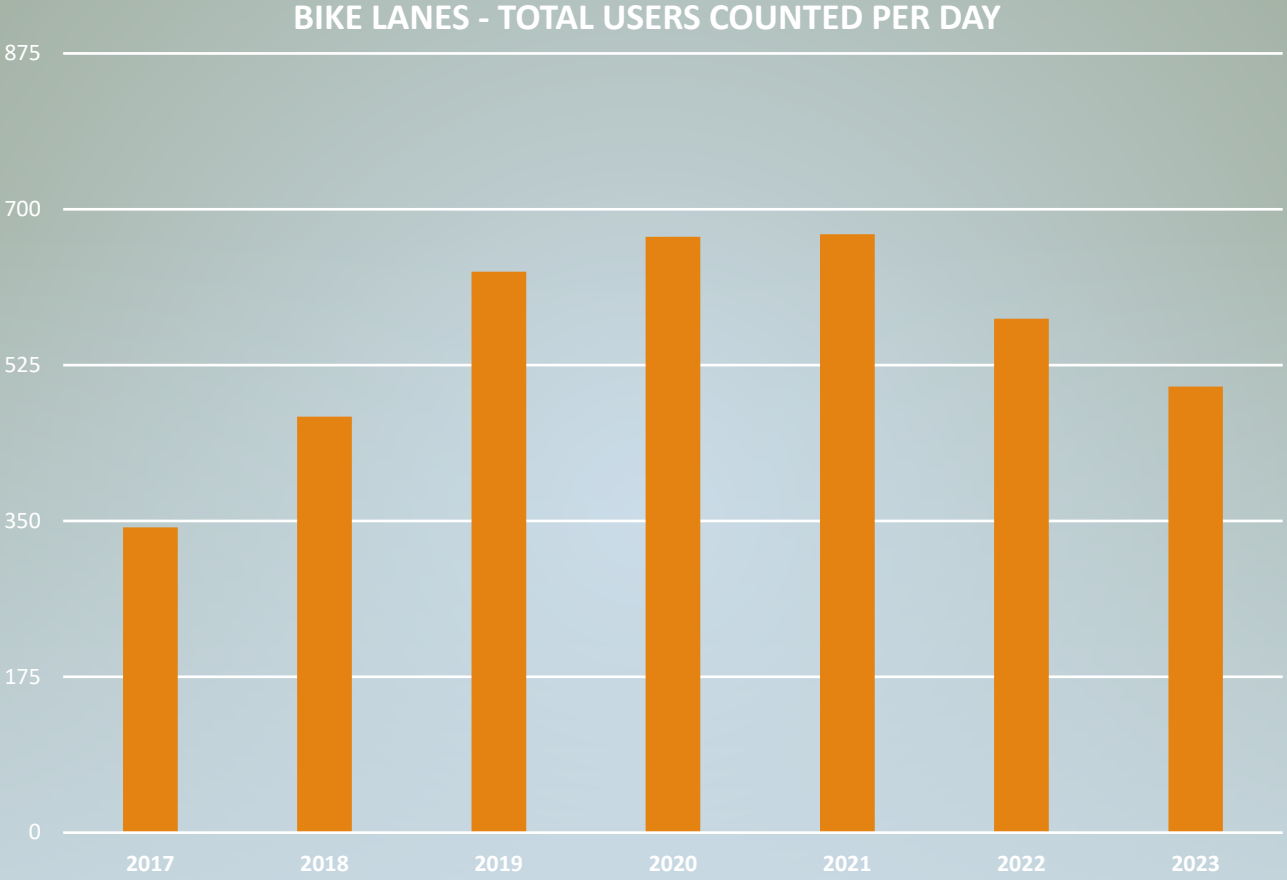


# 10-YEAR TRAIL USER COUNTS

Daily trail use



# BIKE LANE USAGE IN BILLINGS



# WE APPLAUD THE CITY, COUNTY AND STATE FOR THEIR EFFORTS IN THE PAST YEAR:

- Active transportation continues to rise
- Planning Department conducted their second Safe Routes to School study
- Key trail and bikeway connections built in 2023:
  - Billings Bypass bridge is being completed with a separated path
  - Skyline Trail was completed.
  - Bike lanes on both sides of Hilltop from Bench Boulevard to Bazaar Exchange. Bike lanes existed from Bazaar Exchange to around Shamrock, so now there is connectivity to Main from both directions.
  - Bike lanes on Rehberg from Rimrock to Grand Ave.
  - Multiuse trail along Mallowney Lane that completes the link to the trail along Elysian Road and the trail along Midland Road (part of Marathon Loop).



# *HELP US HELP YOU BE SUCCESSFUL*

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1. Recognize that there is broad support for trails and bikeways from:
  - general public
  - health community
  - business community
2. Recognize and support active transportation improvements happening in Billings and Yellowstone County including non-motorized improvements
3. Increase collaboration with other governmental entities, like MDT, creating a shared vision for a vibrant Billings and Yellowstone County



# *HELP US HELP YOU BE SUCCESSFUL*

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4. Review the data we provide to analyze and identify where improvements are necessary
5. Increase traffic enforcement for red light violators, distracted drivers and impaired drivers
6. Educate bicyclists and pedestrians to be consistent with signaling their intentions



# CITY COUNCIL ASKED US LAST YEAR TO LOOK INTO SIDEWALK FUNDING IN OTHER AREAS

City	Funding mechanism	Options for residents	Problems	Considerations
Helena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent property owner is responsible for the sidewalk, curb &amp; gutter</li> <li>• Streets budget to upgrade ADA corner ramps with any mill/fill projects since those upgrades are required by federal law</li> </ul>	10 year no interest sidewalk program loan but it is only funded to \$150K/yr	pay up front when project is complete	possibility of a Sidewalk Maintenance district(s), similar to our Street Maintenance District assessment
Great Falls				looking at the same issue and trying to find funding source other than property owners
Missoula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The portion assessed to the property owner only includes the sidewalk and associated work. \$0 - \$1,000 – City pays; \$1,000 - \$8,000 – 50/50 split with property owner; \$8,000 - \$22,000 – City pays</li> <li>• Gutter, asphalt patch back, boulevard and trees, etc are all covered by the city. This ensures that the most a property owner will pay is \$3,500 (that 50/50 split for costs between \$1,000 and \$8,000).</li> </ul>			
Bozeman	Funding falls on the adjacent property owner. City funds ADA ramps & corners + major boulevards			
Reno	Street repair program (small) small assessment for small area. Old area- new sidewalks: with street repair. One time- did sidewalk replacement 50% paid by homeowners.	Community Development Block Grant for spot improvements. Indexed gas tax. Set asides.		
Bend	100% responsibility of the property owner			maybe some low income



QUESTIONS?

