



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, July 23, 2024, MEETING TIME: 11:30 am
1st Floor Conference Room of 2825 3rd Ave. N

DRAFT

Call to order: Dave Coppock, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:32 am.

Members present: Kristi Drake, City; Anna O'Donnell, City; Stephanie Donovan, City; Jason Wood, County; Joan Schey, County.

Others present: Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Mike Pigg, Parks and Recreation Director; Emma Hardy, Transportation Planning Intern; 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

Councilmember Joy summarized a 2024 report titled "Dangerous by Design" from Transportation for America. The report indicates that since 2010, the number of pedestrian fatalities has increased by 30%. It also highlights that many Native people and individuals with lower incomes are disproportionately affected. CM Joy offered to either send the report to BPAC or mentioned that it can be found online.

Councilmember Joy suggested that BPAC include a discussion of the "Dangerous by Design" report in a future agenda, focusing on data specific to Montana. She also hopes that BPAC will advocate for the redesign of unsafe streets. Potential improvements include addressing the slip lane under the 6th St underpass, where drivers currently speed past the crosswalk. She said another street that could benefit from safety enhancements is Mullowney Lane.

Kristi Drake, BPAC member, asked Councilmember Joy about the most effective way to create change, curious about the impact of BPAC's letters to the Council. Councilmember Joy advised continuing to write to the Council but also emphasized the importance of engaging with city staff.

b. Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –

Elyse Monat, the Active Transportation Planner, received an email informing her that the trail on Rimrock Road near the country club near 50th Street had been removed and was now just dirt and mud. Elyse contacted the project manager, who said that the trail would be replaced and will be graveled by next week. Anna O'Donnell, BPAC member, asked Elyse for more details about the trail and signage and if there would be any additional signage that cars would be turning across the trail if an entrance to the

subdivision was built there. Elyse said she would check with the engineers to see if there were any standard signs for when a trail crosses a street.

Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of May 28, 2024: Anna moved to accept the minutes as corrected. Kristi, BPAC member, seconded. Kristi made corrections to the minutes including two misspellings and one missing word. Stephanie motioned to approve as amended. Anna seconded. All voted in favor.

New Business:

a. Presentation. Parks Budget and Maintenance. Mike Pigg, Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands Director presenting. (11:45 am -12:05 pm)

Mike Pigg gave a brief presentation about failing parks. The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is “to provide accessible, safe, and quality parks, facilities, open spaces, and recreational opportunities for all.”

Parks can help contribute to public safety by helping to deter crime. Design and maintenance are critical to keeping parks in good enough shape to help deter crime.

The 2017 Comprehensive Plan said that Parks was short 5.5 FTEs. This staff shortage equals a loss in revenue because they can’t fully staff parks maintenance districts, which means they can’t bill for these services. The Parks Supervisor has to oversee 15 full-time staff and 40 seasonal staff. The 2017 Plan suggested almost \$2.8 million additional per year for maintenance in the Parks budget. Additionally, Parks has taken on additional infrastructure to maintain without additional maintenance funds since the 2017 Plan was adopted.

Parks has applied for and been awarded many sources of outside funding.

Parks have to be maintained properly to help deter, rather than attract, crime. Anna asked if there is a public-private partnership to help maintain trails or additional dollars to help maintain. Mike said volunteers can help with maintenance, but he never gets additional dollars to help with maintenance for day-to-day operations. Due to this ongoing underfunding, Mike mentioned that he would be less receptive to future trail installations until they secure more funds for trail maintenance. Parks has had to back down maintenance standards in other areas to add new trails.

Kristi asked Mike Pigg if increasing the number of volunteers could help address the issue of underfunded parks. Mike responded that while they have many dedicated volunteers, the problem is more systemic, involving funding and the city's budget.

Kristi asked if other organizations that had contributed to help build facilities helped pay for maintenance. Mike said that Little League was technically self-maintaining, but that Parks does work for them. He understands that he will not be able to charge enough in fees to be able to pay for maintenance.

Stephanie Donovan, BPAC member, suggested that Mike update the figures in his presentation to account for inflation and ongoing degradation. Mike responded that it's challenging to calculate accurately because new issues keep arising. However, Stephanie emphasized that even a rough estimate would be helpful when facing questions from the council about the current costs.

Anna pointed out that trippers could cause more liabilities and that might give additional reason to provide more maintenance money. Mike said Parks does everything they can to draw attention to the trippers so that visitors are safe. As a last resort, they will close something down if it is not safe.

b. Public Comment

Councilmember Joy highlighted that older parts of the city have many small parks, while newer developments often lack these amenities. She mentioned that people have said that residents rejected the bond because they prefer the city to focus on maintaining existing parks rather than building new ones which could drive up the maintenance cost. Councilmember Joy urged the Committee to engage in deeper conversations with the community, challenging members to consider whether parks should only be prioritized in older parts of town. She posed the question of whether, as a community, we want to forgo new parks in developing areas, despite a growing population of young families.

Old Business:

a. Crash Mapping

Emma Hardy, the Transportation Planning Intern, presented an updated crash data map to BPAC members. Kristi suggested adding a category for fatalities and asked if the map could be shared. Elyse will check with GIS to confirm if it is possible. Anna asked if the data could be compared from year to year, and Emma said you could do that visually or might be able to use one of the analysis tools provided in the tool.

Councilwoman Joy congratulated BPAC on creating the map, noting that it is valuable data collection. She mentioned that the "Dangerous By Design" report has a section on how to better collect pedestrian data to report on the problem. She pointed out that since 2010, pedestrian deaths have increased by 75%, reaching a 40-year high. Councilmember Joy also recommended adding categories for age range or speed.

Tony Chase, a member of the public, expressed interest in adding a category for users under 18, discussing the importance of identifying where to prioritize design improvements over behavioral changes. He also proposed adding a "barely hit" category.

b. Crossings of Rimrock Road

BPAC discussed crossings that they would like to recommend to the Engineering Division for Rimrock Road. Elyse noted that these projects would likely be competing with projects in the Safe Routes to School plans.

The committee agreed that the three places where BPAC recommend putting in cross walks are Beth Dr, Wisconsin St, and Glacier Dr. Elyse will pass these along to the Engineering Division.

c. Active Transportation Planner Report

Elyse covered these details in the Active transportation report:

- Ped/Bike Master Plan
 - Outreach extended until August 4.
 - So far have 95 comments on the map and have had 492 users (unique ID/IP addresses), 659 sessions (single visits to the website), and an average duration of 3 minutes and 35 seconds per session.
 - Please share as much as you can. There are several posts on the Planning FB page to share.
 - Pop-up protected bike lanes went well and had mostly positive feedback.

- Had good participation at Strawberry fest for pinto bean poll. Estimate we had 264 people participate. The table below shows votes in the pinto bean poll.

- What is most important to you for a comfortable walking experience?

	Total votes	Percent
Street Trees and Shade	194	24.49
Well-Maintained sidewalk	124	15.66
Safe Street Crossings	118	14.90
Adequate lighting	100	12.63
Buffered space btw sidewalks and roads	66	8.33
Wide sidewalks	60	7.58
Slow and low traffic	54	6.82
Accessibility/ADA compliant features	51	6.44
Frequent street crossings	25	3.16
	792	

- Reminder that Planning will be moving soon. August 9 is the last day in the office.
- The August meeting is cancelled. Next meeting is scheduled for September 24th in the Commissioners Board Room at noon as they are concerned their meeting will run over. Elyse asked if moving the meeting back a half an hour was a concern, and BPAC members indicated it was not.
- The West End plan is still progressing, no date for next public outreach yet. The Heights plan is just kicking off. Planning will let BPAC know when there is a chance for public input.
- CIP discussion is beginning soon-we are in the very early stages. Not sure yet when there will be an opportunity for public input.
- June's Commuter Challenge ended with 120 people logging at least one trip, 1212 commuter days recorded, 2361 total trips recorded, and 8235.3 total miles logged.
- Contract for small section of trail parallel to Washington Street is being awarded. The trail will be graveled by October, completed by June.
- Expecting to hear back on the Safe Streets for All grant contract this week. Includes SRTS projects and outreach campaign.

Other Business:

a. **Striping**

Kristi informed the committee that she has was applying for \$500 in funding from First Interstate Bank paint stencils on the Big Ditch Trail. She was able to find a contractor to stripe the trail for free.

Future Agenda Items

Kristi suggested adding the blind spots on Skyline Trail to future agendas to address and resolve the issues present. In particular, she has heard complaints about the section from Stoney Ridge onto Highway 3. Additionally, she noted that the yield signs are placed too high for bikers, which is another concern that needs to be addressed.

Additionally, Dave asked Elyse about the placement of stop signs on Highway 3 and requested that this issue be added to future agendas. Many BPAC members wanted to go look at the location and requested that Public Works be invited to the next meeting to discuss possible solutions.

Kristi moved to adjourn; Anna seconded. All voted in favor.