



## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Billings & Yellowstone County  
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 22, 2024 MEETING TIME: 12:00 pm  
Stillwater Building, 3rd Floor Room 3108 316 N. 26th Street, Billings MT 59101

APPROVED BY A MOTION ON DECEMBER 10, 2024

- Call to order:** Nikki Zimmer, BPAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.
- Members present:** Kristi Drake, City (attended virtually); Dave Coppock, Planning Board; Anna O'Donnell, City; Stephanie Donovan, City; Jason Wood, County
- Others present:** Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner; Emma Hardy, Active 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 –** Stephanie Donovan, BPAC member, suggested adding pedestrian/bicycle roundabout crossing safety to future agendas.

Dave Coppock, BPAC member, suggested adding e-bike safety and etiquette to future agendas.

- b. Online comments and comments received by the Active Transportation Planner –** Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, received a comment from a resident stating that there is “lots of traffic with many cars parked on the street. No bike lanes” on Parkhill Dr. between Virginia Ln. and 13<sup>th</sup> St. W. The resident proposed that “sharrows” be added to the streets in this area due to the number of commuters and school kids riding bikes on this street.” Elyse wrote back to the resident and explained that the route is included in the draft Pedestrian Bicycle Master Plan and that bike facilities could be included in the future as a result.

**Motion. Approval of the meeting minutes of July 23, 2024 and September 24, 2024:** Dave Coppock, moved to accept the minutes. Kristi Drake, BPAC member, seconded. All voted in favor.

### New Business:

- a. Skyline Trail Safety. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee members discussing. (12:15-12:35 pm) Objective: Discuss safety concerns, response Engineering Division, and possible additional measures.**
- a. Joe Holden, of 3028 MT-3, expressed concerns about the safety of cyclists and pedestrians on the Skyline Trail, noting that they often fail to yield to cars entering and exiting Highway 3. He recently had an experience where a person on

a bike traveling very fast almost hit his bumper. He had just passed a warning, yield, and two yield signs. Joe said he is not worried for his own safety, he is worried for the safety of trail users. He said this was the fastest guy, but not the only guy. He said when drivers pull up and are looking to the west and not looking for pedestrians and bicyclists, people with a stroller will walk right in front of you when you are trying to get onto the highway and right past yield signs. He has some photos from Kristi Drake of an idea to add a gate at intersections to slow down cyclists. Joe said he spoke with a Parks and Recreation staff member who had a concern about snow plowing, and Joe thinks people like himself would volunteer to open the gates during snow events so they wouldn't have to stop at every one of those gates. Some of the yield signs have been removed and thrown to the ground. If you are traveling westbound, you have to turn across traffic going 50 mph, and getting off the highway, there could be someone who is going very fast or thinks that the cars should yield to the trail users. Joe also suggested petitioning the State to reduce the speed limit on Highway 3. He said at a meeting with the Air National Guard, they were concerned about access for their employees.

Norma Boyd, of 103 Sky Ranch Dr., thinks that all of the BPAC members got an email from Dave Kinnard late last night. Dave has been the president of the association, and the letter states what their concerns are. Like the speaker before her said, it is kind of the same thing. When they pull out of Sky Ranch, they have two rock barriers, so they have to pull up past the white line to be able to see down either way of the trail. She usually honks because she doesn't want to hit someone or have someone hit her. A lot of times, little kids will be way ahead of their parents, and you are trying to pull out of the driveway or turn in. Turning left into Sky Ranch, people pass you on the left. She says it is dangerous to be up there and then add the trail to that. She thinks Dave stated pretty well the concerns of Sky Ranch. They did have some people that would come ride around Sky Ranch, but they tried to stop that because it is private property. She also feels that the yield signs are placed too high and suggested lowering them for better visibility. She thought painting yield on the trail might help. When people are in groups on the trail, sometimes the first person will look but the one after them won't. Lastly, she mentioned that the traffic is very congested in the area and believes adding a turn lane would help improve the situation.

Jim Nickles of 239 Beverly Hill Blvd regularly bikes on this trail. He has had experiences in other parts of the world, including France and Germany and has been on a lot of other trails. He also feels that cyclists are not well-informed about what is dangerous and what isn't dangerous on these intersections on the Skyline Trail. He suggests adding posts/gates along with warning stripes, diamonds, and other warning signs to improve safety. He also agrees that people don't look at yield signs necessarily and that you need something on the trail that is going to bring their eyes to the caution. He thinks the warning needs to be on the trail.

Kristi said she was on the Skyline Trail with a new cyclist, riding uphill toward Sky Ranch from the east and heading west. Her friend sped through the intersection and was nearly hit by a car exiting Sky Ranch. Kristi was behind her, and just went through it also. Kristi explained that her friend didn't even notice the yield signs. She heard a squeal of tires, and she looked behind her, and there was a woman who was heading into Sky Ranch in her car, and she was visibly shaken. Kristi said the driver almost hit them and they didn't even know it. Kristi

pointed out the yield signs, and her friend said she didn't even see them. Kristi says she knows they meet the guidelines, but thinks they are not effective. She said if people on the trail are not seeing the signs and they pose that much danger, they need to really think about it. She proposed installing bollards that would go on either side of the driveway and swing open for trail plowing. She asked how much a life was worth and if the City would be liable if they had this many warnings before and the City does nothing.

Dave shared that he had similar experience from last spring and noted that there was a difference depending on which driveway it was on Highway 3 on where the stop sign is. Some places the line was right up to the highway, and other places it was behind the trail. He felt the line should be consistent. He said it was also the cyclists' responsibility and recommended adding bicycle rumble strips, noting that they are relatively inexpensive, and snowplows can easily work around them. He also suggested adding a sign to indicate the presence of the rumble strips. He mentioned bike speed bumps as another option.

Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, read an email from Dave Kinnard. Email is as follows:

“When Kristi Drake alerted me last Friday to your meeting of 10/22, I advised her that I was unfortunately going to be in an airplane at the time but really wanted to be able to participate if possible. I had hoped someone else from our subdivision could but it doesn't look likely with short notice and lack of publicity.

I am currently the president of the Sky Ranch Condominium Association (SRC) located immediately across from the Billings Flying Service (BFS) properties and am writing on behalf of SRC residents. Our entrance road of Sky Ranch Drive is behind a rock wall entry with a dirt berm, directly across Highway 3 from the BFS eastern gravel entrance road. My wife and I have lived here since March 2001 (and by way of disclosure) we contributed to both the Skyline Trail and to the future Zimmerman Trail project.

From the point that the construction of the Skyline Trail was being contemplated, planned and was later underway, we attempted to address in onsite meetings and in correspondence, numerous safety concerns with the project planners, consultants, contractors, city and state officials as they were focused along our subdivision, which has been in existence since 1973. Before that the property was the location of the Skyline Club, the Bella Vista Supper Club and prior to that a private residence.

Unlike the other subdivisions and streets that adjoin or cross the Skyline Trail, our Sky Ranch Drive has a narrow roadway entrance and both sides are view blocked by the long existing rock entry wall with a dirt berm covered with trees and other vegetation. It is also located very close to Highway 3 and has very little apron between it and the highway. The trail is located in that apron area starting immediately north of our entrance. Someone exiting our subdivision must pull slightly past the rock entry to see bike or pedestrian traffic from either direction, let alone highway traffic. That problem is compounded by other vehicles typically going faster than the 50 mile an hour speed limit and coming up behind vehicles turning from the west or east into our subdivision or BPS property.

Like the highway itself, the grade of the bikeway itself adjacent to our subdivision descends going east and ascends steeply going west toward the intersection of Stony Ridge and AJ Way with the highway. Much like motor vehicles, many bikers tend to accelerate going downhill and tend to look toward the ground if they are peddling hard uphill. As careful as we may be, our residents have had a number of close calls with bikers in those instances, which is exaggerated by families with small children riding ahead of their parents. Since the trail was completed, we are seeing many more families with children on bikes.

The close calls can be either while vehicles are pulling off the highway to our entry in heavy traffic or pulling out of our entry gate, where visibility is limited both directions. As we predicted, the yield signs do not appear to have much effect on the bikers. I have had reports from some of our residents of instances of confrontations between drivers and bicyclists with words and gestures resulting from some close calls. What will be done and who will be blamed and/or sued when one of those close calls turns into something that kills or seriously injures someone?

I am not certain what the solutions should be but I know that Kristi and BikeNet have some good ideas, as well as many others. Brightly colored warning signage at our intersection should be a must. SRC would like to see further consultation about these issues and more public input to you after appropriate solicitation by your group to the public. Please use such an opportunity now rather than before something awful happens. I am not certain what the solutions should be but I know that Kristi and TrailNet have some ideas they can show you, and many of you and the public do too. I believe you should solicit further public input and consultation about these issues after a directed effort to reach out.

With the input of government and so many groups and individuals, Billings has made tremendous strides in creating recreational and scenic opportunities for its visitors and citizens alike that the City can be proud of. Let's keep those safe and enjoyable for all of us!

Thanks for your time, efforts and consideration.

/s/ Dave Kinnard

Dave Kinnard  
106 Sky Ranch Drive  
Billings, MT 59106

P.S. As a side note, my wife would like to see a few signs urging bikers to be extra careful with all of the new traffic on the Trail - perhaps something along the lines of:

Bikers - Please be courteous: let walkers or bikers ahead of you know you are approaching and which side you are passing them on. Remember too that not everyone has perfect hearing and it may be that your voices or horns may be masked by highway noise.”

Elyse mentioned that the Engineering Division does not recommend adding gates to the Skyline Trail due to safety concerns, such as the risk of people running into them. While the Engineering Division believes the trail meets current safety standards, they are open to exploring additional safety measures and hear the concerns. A next step could be setting up traffic cameras at the intersection to better understand the situation and monitor what's happening at these intersections. Anna O'Donnell, BPAC member, felt asking the residents to open and close the gates created more liability. Kristi said these gates were all over Europe and felt they were visible enough that people wouldn't run into them.

Nikki shared a few suggestions, such as adding trail painting, and asked Elyse to pass these ideas along to Engineering. Elyse said she would do so and noted that Engineering is aware of the concerns and open to exploring options that could help improve safety. However, they want to avoid creating any negative consequences. Elyse also mentioned that most trails don't have yield signs, and in other parts of town, cars are generally expected to yield, so this will be taken into consideration as well.

Anna pointed out that trail painting would be covered by snow in the winter, so she recommended adding additional prevention measures, such as flashing yield signs and educating cyclists. Anna expressed that she felt the issue was urgent and hoped it would get taken care of soon to prevent any crashes. Anna also mentioned the education of cyclists. Elyse suggested using platforms like Facebook and Kristi's newsletter. Anna suggested adding something at local bike shops to help spread awareness and educate cyclists.

Joe Holden recommended installing ten signs along the Skyline Trail that state, "Trail Users Do Not Have the Right of Way." He offered to purchase and donate the signs. Jason Wood, BPAC member, supported this idea and added that there should also be a physical safety measure, such as the previously mentioned rumble strips and speed bumps. Joe said he liked Kristi's bollard idea.

Stephanie summarized the five key components discussed: adjusting highway speed limits, improving signage by adding new signs and lowering the existing ones.

Kristy Halderman, member of the public, said that the people aren't really paying attention to the signs. She said they have done a lot of stenciling, and that is probably something they could do immediately.

Stephanie continued her list including making physical changes to the trail such as installing rumble strips, providing trail education/etiquette, and the stone wall in front of Sky Ranch. She questioned whether the stone wall would still pose a safety issue even if all these measures were implemented. Additionally, Stephanie expressed her disagreement with Engineering's stance that lowering the yield signs would obstruct drivers' vision.

**b. Select date/time of combined November/December meeting.**

This agenda item was delayed until the end of the meeting to allow Yellowstone County staff to attend the discussion and confirm availability of the room. The group decided to hold the combined November/December meeting on December 10, 2024 at noon.

- c. Report out from Portland Comprehensive Bikeway Design Workshop. Elyse Monat, Active Transportation Planner, presenting. (12:40-1:00 pm)**  
**Objective: Learn about some of the bikeway design elements and supportive policies taught in the Comprehensive Bikeway Design Workshop.**

See the attached presentation below.

Nikki Zimmer, BPAC member, mentioned that she liked that there was a single very recognizable color that indicated the bikeways and said that might be an idea that could be beneficial to Billings.

Stephanie asked Elyse if there are any things that Elyse found that could be implemented immediately in the two-way restoration project. Elyse thought there were bike boxes in the two-way restoration project. Elyse said that she liked the elevated bike lanes at driveways that cause drivers to slow down as they are turning across bike lanes.

### **Old Business:**

- a. PD Crash Mapping. BPAC members discussing. (1:00 - 1:20 pm) Objective: Review crashes involving people walking and biking from July, August, and September.**  
Emma Hardy, Active Transportation Intern, presented new data points on the Crash Data Map for July, August, and September which she had mapped on the online crash map. Committee discussed.
- b. Active Transportation Planner Report**
- a. Planning office moving update: now in the Depot, 2224 Montana Ave.
  - b. KIM events wrapped up for this semester. There were four this semester due to the later school start date and there will be 6 in the spring. Emma did a great job managing those.
  - c. Consultant working on draft chapters for Pedestrian Bicycle Master Plan. Looking to start adoption process in December, finish in February
  - d. Planning is updating the Bike and Trail Tour Map. Hoping to have it done in about a month.
  - e. The Heights Neighborhood plan survey is open <https://billingsheightsplan.com/>
  - f. The West End Plan will be having another public meeting in the near future. No date set.
  - g. Still working on Rose Park Trail. The City got an amendment to the grant to update the route to make it more direct and have it go north of the ball field which will also keep it farther from the playground.
  - h. River's Edge trail short section is substantially complete. It will connect the bridge over the City/County drain at old Washington St. on the east side of Riverfront Park to the future trail along the frontage road.
  - i. The Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant agreement has been signed. Staff are getting started on looking for design and construction administration consultant.
  - j. The open County BPAC seat is being advertised. Haven't received any applications. Elyse can send it out to BPAC members to share.
  - k. Emma's last day is tomorrow! Will likely be looking for future interns.

**Other Business:**

None

**Future agenda items:**

None

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