



**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA  
CITY OF BILLINGS AND  
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY  
January 30, 2025  
MEETING TIME: 10:30 AM**



**316 N. 26<sup>th</sup> Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Beartooth Conference Room**

<b>Committee Members</b>			
Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator, T.A.C.	1	Katie Potts, FHWA	V
Monica Plecker, Director YC Public Works Dept.	1	Wyeth Friday, Director Planning and Community Services	1
Debi Meling, Public Works Director, City of Billings Engineering	1	Mac Fogelsong, City Engineer, City PW Engineering,	1
Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manger	1	Sarah Graham, MET Transit Planner	1
Samantha Woods, Urban Planning Section, MDT	V	Clark Snyder, Environmental Health RiverStone Health	1
Kenn Winegar, Urban Planning Section, MDT	A		
Kurtis Schnieber, MDT	A		
Zach Kirkemo, MDT	V		

**Call to Order:** Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator

**Introduction of Committee Members and staff.**

**Staff in Attendance:** Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator; Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner; Brenda Berns, Planning Clerk

**Participants:** Mack Drzayich,

**Approval of the minutes:** July 18, 2024

**Motion:** Motion made by Rusty Logan, seconded by Sarah Graham to approve the July 18, 2024 meeting minutes as submitted by staff.

**Old Business:** There is no Old Business.

## **New Business:**

### **a. Presentation/Recommendation - Billings Area Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan.**

Plan Consultant; Mack Drzayich, Alta Planning & Design – Mr. Drzayich gave a presentation on the updates to the 2017 plan.

#### **Network Recommendations**

The Billings community envisions a safe, convenient, and connected active transportation network consisting of bikeways, trails, and sidewalks that serve people of all ages and abilities and trips of all purposes, improving the economic, physical, and mental health of the community and its citizens.

#### **Plan Vision & Goals**

The Billings area pedestrian and bicycle system should consist of the following elements:

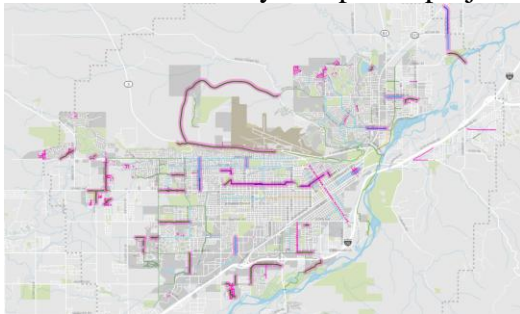
- Make useful connections.
- Serve a wide variety of people.
- Increase the safety and health of the community.
- Enable efficient and sustainable implementation.
- Expand transportation choices.

#### **Progress Report**

Mileage built since 2017:

- 8.6 new bikeway miles
- 33 new sidewalks
- 14.5 new shared use path miles

Locations of recently completed projects since 2017:



Some lessons learned:

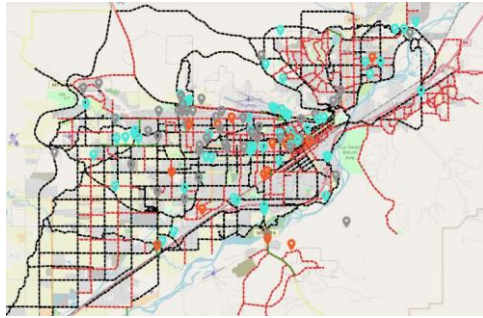
- Funding and staff capacity continue to be limiting factors.
- The MPO has shown it can be successful in obtaining external funding.
- The majority of completed projects came from synergies with other roadway construction and maintenance projects led by Public Works.

- Public Works is doing a good job of referencing the Bikeways & Trails Master Plan to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian improvements are included when roadways are constructed/repaved.

## Community Input

Outreach efforts:

- Phase 1 – November 2023 to January 2024; conducted online surveys and in-person open house.
- Phase 11 – July 2024; conducted Online Comment Map showing proposed routes, and pop-up & festival events.



## Network Recommendations

FHWA Approach:

- FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide; Target design user & the needs and preferences of varying design users, network design approach, case-by-case guidance for selecting the appropriate facility type.

Design User:

- The majority of existing and potential cyclists have limited tolerance for exposure to motor vehicle traffic; and if they perceive that their exposure is too high, they'll choose not to ride a bike.
- Designing for the “interested but concerned” in every scenario is likely not feasible.

Bikeway selection process:

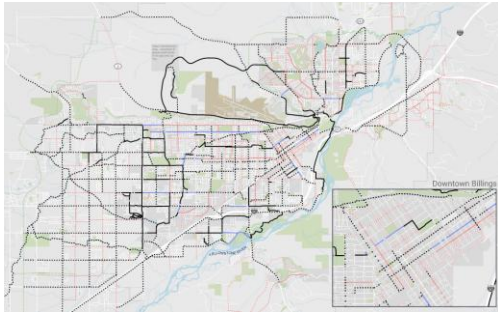
- Plan
- Identify Project Purpose
- Identify Corridor or Project
  - Identify Desired Bikeway
  - Assess and Refine
  - Evaluate Feasibility
    - Select Preferred Bikeway
    - Design

Creating a “spine” network:

- Create a high-comfort network that creates the most important connections.
- Augment with supplemental bikeways that make additional connections.

#### Draft Network:

- Recommended network



#### Discussion

There was discussion regarding sidewalks and the separation from traffic to provide a more comfortable experience to most people. Mr. Drzayich stated the Transportation Master plan is intending to look at that more in depth and provide more narrative.

Mr. Fogelson expressed the need for more information on pedestrian crossings included in the presentation. Ms. Monat affirmed that would be included in future presentations.

#### Motion

A motion was made by Wyeth Friday and seconded by Clark Snyder to recommend that the governing bodies approve the adoption of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. The motion carries unanimously.

#### b. Transportation Alternatives Program –

Lora Mattox provided an update on the current application period for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program, noting that the period is now open. She acknowledged that there have been some administrative challenges this week, with funding status fluctuating on the federal level— first available, then paused, and now available again. Despite the uncertainty, the plan is to proceed with the application process as normal until further guidance is received. Lora also shared that staff will present information on the TA Program at the City Council work session scheduled for Monday night. Some committee members have already reviewed a memo related to parks projects, which was provided in case questions arise during the presentation. Lora emphasized that the projects listed in the memo are not formal submissions, but rather reflect initial ideas and feedback gathered so far. At this time, no official project proposals have been received from the County. There was some preliminary discussion with Brandy in Lockwood about potential projects, but nothing formal has been submitted.

Monica Plecker, Public Works Director, added that the County has not been approached regarding specific projects. She also clarified that during a recent RTA meeting to review the final design of the Lockwood sidewalk project, it was confirmed that TA funding is not considered a traditional federal grant. Instead, TA funding falls under a separate program, meaning the current administrative funding issues do not directly apply to TA projects.

## **Discussion**

Staff discussed the importance of clear communication with City Council regarding the funding source and process for the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program. Staff noted they could provide specific references to the funding source to help clarify how these projects are funded and managed.

It was also noted that MDT (Montana Department of Transportation) is shifting more project management responsibilities to local communities, meaning the City or County may need to take a larger role in managing and maintaining these projects after they are built.

The board discussed maintenance challenges, especially if new infrastructure is added through TA projects, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, flashing beacons, and trail connections. Questions were raised about who will be responsible for maintaining these facilities long-term, and how to ensure federal funding can support not only construction but also ongoing maintenance.

There was general agreement that clarity on maintenance funding is critical, especially when applying for grants like Safe Routes to School or other programs that fund infrastructure improvements. If local governments are unwilling or unable to commit to long-term maintenance, it could jeopardize future funding opportunities.

Staff also briefly reviewed the TA funding timeline, noting that projects typically have two years to obligate funds and up to four or five years to complete construction. If not all funds are used in a given year, a second application round in the fall could be considered.

Finally, staff noted that other local jurisdictions, such as Shepherd, may be applying for TA funding through the statewide program, and they are seeking letters of support to strengthen their applications. The application deadline for the current TA funding cycle is April 9th. Staff encouraged board members to reach out with any additional questions or feedback as the process moves forward.

### **c. MPO Boundary Update/LRTP Project List Audit RFP –**

Lora Mattox provided an update on the MPO boundary review and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) project list, noting that submissions for consultant proposals are due tomorrow. One proposal has already been received.

Lora emphasized the importance of this process, especially for reviewing the MPO planning boundary, which may need to expand further into the County to account for growth areas. She highlighted the need for input from key staff, including Monica, to ensure the boundary reflects future growth and development. Lora clarified that this is not a review of the urbanized boundary, but rather the broader planning boundary that guides transportation planning.

Additionally, as part of this process, staff will also review the 2023 Long Range Transportation Plan project list. During a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) audit last year, several inconsistencies

were identified, including projects being listed under incorrect or conflicting funding sources. The project list is long and difficult to navigate, so the goal is to work with a consultant to find a clearer, more accurate way to present the project list — one that ensures funding sources are correctly assigned and that the federal requirements are fully met.

Lora noted that she will be reaching out to partner agencies for input and collaboration as this process moves forward.

**d. 21<sup>st</sup> Street Underpass Project -**

Lora Mattox provided an update on the 21st Street Underpass Project. The selection committee chose Kittelson & Associates for the project. Two proposals were received, one from Downtown Billings and the other from Kittelson.

The committee ultimately selected Kittelson because of their partnership with HDR as a subconsultant. HDR's extensive experience working with the railroad was seen as a significant advantage, given the complex coordination that will be required for this project.

The project is expected to go before City Council in February, with the goal of formally kicking off work in March.

**Discussion**

The board briefly discussed the next steps for the 21st Street Underpass Project, noting that work is expected to begin in March.

The project will focus on planning-level designs, including conceptual ideas and recommendations. While full design work won't happen at this stage, the planning process will help lay the groundwork for future design and construction, which could take place in 2028 or later.

**e. Complete Streets Progress Report –**

Elyse Monat provided an update on the Complete Streets Progress Report, noting that an advisory committee will be formed to help update the report. Elyse mentioned that a small amount of funding (approximately \$20,000) is available to hire a consultant to assist with the update.

Typically, this type of update is handled in-house, but Elyse asked the group if there were any performance measures or specific data points related to Complete Streets that they would like to see included in the update.

In past reports, the team has tracked things like:

- Facility usage counts
- Crash data
- New facility types
- Transit ridership and passenger miles traveled
- Bus amenity usage
- Mode share and trail connections

- Community health indicators (such as weight status and physical activity)

Elyse also noted that one idea suggested was to conduct a cost-benefit analysis comparing different facility types. She invited the group to share additional suggestions and encouraged input from both the advisory committee and others who may have ideas.

**Discussion**

The board briefly discussed why the Complete Streets Progress Report is required. Lora Mattox explained that the update is part of the Complete Streets Policy, which directs staff to regularly review and report on how the policy is working and its overall benefits and effectiveness.

**Other Business:**

Ms. Mattox stated staff is finalizing a job description to replace the Active Transportation Planner position. The role has been adjusted from an Active Transportation Planner to a Multimodal Planner, allowing it to support a broader range of transportation needs across the city and county. This position will work with active transportation, transit, and engineering, helping with public outreach, project coordination, data management, and mapping.

The goal is to create a well-rounded position that can support various transportation planning efforts, including addressing challenges and improving access to useful transportation information.

Lora noted that staff may reach out to partner agencies, including the county, to see if there are specific data or project needs this position could assist with.

**a. MET Transit Update -**

Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manager stated in 2024, MET recorded three (3) safety events on the fixed route service mode and zero (0) on Paratransit. The three safety events resulted in two (2) injuries and one (1) fatality. MET had fourteen (14) verbal employee assaults and two (2) physical assaults. This was a large increase from 2023, when MET had one verbal assault on an operator. Updated safety performance targets for 2025 are below:

	<b>Fixed Route Service</b>	<b>Paratransit Service</b>
Fatalities (Total)	0	0
Fatalities (per 100k VRM)	0	0
Injuries (Total)	0	0
Injuries (per 100k VRM)	0	0
Safety Events (Total)	1	0
Safety Events (per 100k VRM)	< 1	< 1
System Reliability (VRM/Failures)	30,000	100,000
Assaults on Operations Staff	0	0

**Discussion**

Katie Potts (FHWA) provided clarification regarding Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds, following up on earlier comments from Monica. Katie explained that TA funding falls under the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, not a traditional competitive grant program. She noted that while there is no formal written guidance yet, these formula funds are still moving forward as planned. FHWA continues to approve obligations and expenditures for these funds, and at this time, no disruptions are expected for TA funding.

**Future Agenda Items:** There was none.

**Adjournment 11:48AM**

*Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk – Planning & Community Services Division*