



**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA
CITY OF BILLINGS AND
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY**



**May 8, 2025
MEETING TIME: 10:30 AM**

316 N. 26th Street, 5th Floor Beartooth Conference Room

Committee Members			
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	Jay D. Anderson Deputy PW Director, YC Public Works	V
Kurtis Schnieber, MDT	1	Emma Belmont, Region 8, FTA	A
Zach Kirkemo, MDT	A	Kyle Shuck, Project Engineer, MDT	1
Mitch Buthod, Urban Planning and Statewide Supervisor, MDT	A		

Call to Order: Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator, called the meeting to order at 10:33 am

Introduction of Committee Members and staff.

Staff in Attendance: Wyeth Friday, Planning & Community Services Director; Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator; Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner; Brenda Berns, Planning Clerk

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Approval of the minutes: April 10, 2025

Motion: Debi Meling moved to approve April 10, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted by staff, seconded by Rusty Logan. The motion carries unanimously.

Old Business: There is no Old Business.

New Business

a. **Presentation and Recommendation: Transportation Alternatives Program Applications. Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner**

Elyse reviewed the 2025 applications, with Federal funding available this round at \$1,784,111 with \$1,584,307.74 requested. To be eligible, applicants must be city, county, or tribal entities. Nonprofits may not apply as primary and must have a local government sponsor.

The grant applications are reviewed locally with project recommendations forwarded to MDT for programming. The default is for the local entity to administer the project under the MDT LAG (Local Agency Guidelines) program. All projects must include a local match of 13.42%; instructions on developing the budget were included in the TA instructions. There were five categories for scoring, with two categories being a simple yes/no. Scoring categories with points available include project description, project benefits, and risk analysis.

2025 Projects Submitted:

- City of Billings; Safe Routes to School 2025 TA. Seven project focus areas are recommended from the SRTS plans, phases I and II. Total project cost: \$1,492,297.
- Yellowstone County (Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District) Johnson Lane Sidewalk Connector Project. Two sidewalk gaps of approximately 500 feet of sidewalk on Johnson Lane from Silverton Street to Old Hardin Road. Total project cost: \$296,000.

Questions

The committee discussed project similarities to previously funded initiatives and clarified that property owners are only assessed for sidewalk costs in specific cases, such as RSIDs, usually tied to subdivision maintenance. There was a question about why proof of local match isn't required with applications; staff explained that applicants state the source of the local match in their submission, and it is assumed that the match is secured. A TAC member suggested that, moving forward, it would be beneficial for projects using public funds to have formal council approval and confirmed budget allocations. However, another TAC member raised concerns about the feasibility of obtaining a formal commitment letter from the City Council before application submittal.

The CIP already has funding listed for Safe Routes to School projects which would be used for the match. Lora mentioned that staff would work on a solution for the next application cycle that would strike a balance between the two objectives-making it clear that the match is secured but not being overly burdensome.

Review Schedule

Meeting	Date and time	Location
TAC	May 8 @ 10:30 am	City Hall, 5 th Floor Beartooth Conference Room 316 N. 26 th St.
Planning Board Public Hearing and Vote	May 13 @ 6 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Council Work Session	June 16 @ 5:30 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Council Vote	June 23 @ 5:30 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Commissioners' Discussion	June 18 @ 9 am	Commissioners' Board Room, 3 rd Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Commissioners Vote	June 24 @ 9 am	Commissioners' Board Room, 3 rd Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
PCC	July 15 @ noon	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.

Scoring

Each TAC member scored the applications. Their scores and the average score is listed below.

Evaluator	City of Billings	Yellowstone County
Mattox	97	97
Logan	50	60
Friday	90	90
Meling	92	88
Fogelsong	96	93
Graham	66	73
Plecker	90	90
Anderson	92	92
Shuck	90	85
Wood	96	96
Snyder	95	95
Total	954	959
Average Score (total/# of evaluators)	86.72727273	87.18181818

Discussion

City Application -

The committee reviewed several aspects of the proposed application, focusing on specific locations and the clarity of application materials. TAC members clarified that the improvements at Wicks Lane and Governors Boulevard would benefit Castle Rock Middle School and Skyview High School. A TAC member asked about the specific design for the Riverside project, and City staff clarified that specifics would be decided as part of the design. A TAC member also asked if thermoplastic was being used for the crosswalk at 17th and Parkhill and City staff clarified that it was.

TAC members discussed the importance of highlighting how the proposed projects will also benefit those using MET Transit, especially for students. The member suggested adding this information to the PowerPoint presentation for the grant application. Key locations identified for MET student pick-up and drop-off included Wicks & Governors, Jackson, Central, and Kratz. It was recommended that these benefits be more clearly shown in presentations, maps, and staff memos to better support project justification.

A TAC member expressed concerns about the application process, but noted it was harder to get into detail about the 7 projects listed in the City application than the one in the County. Concerns were expressed about the application process, particularly the difficulty of evaluating proposals that cover multiple locations. A MPO staff member mentioned that the City's successful Safe Streets for All application had a similar suite of projects submitted with a similar amount of information, and the US DOT did award that application.

One TAC member discussed that there was a lot of benefit in the City's project being implemented where infrastructure is already in place. Highlighting school locations directly on maps was suggested to strengthen applications and potentially enhance their scoring.

County Application -

The committee discussed the status and evaluation of the TA grant project in Lockwood, focusing on project readiness, cost justification, and long-term maintenance planning.

It was noted that the Lockwood project is expected to go out to bid within two weeks. The County was hoping to start the project before water started running in the canal, but was not able to make the deadline which will result in a delay in the project. County staff clarified that MDT will be installing a sidewalk along Johnson Lane near the substation at the corner of Old Hardin Road and Johnson Lane. Design standards such as sidewalk width—ranging from 5 to 6 feet—were discussed, with attention to consistency and MDT standards. Some sidewalks in the area are designed at 6 feet to encourage use, although 5 feet is generally standard.

The conversation shifted to maintenance responsibilities, with clarification that the Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District—not adjacent property owners—would be responsible for both short- and long-term maintenance. A member also suggested that pedestrian counts should be referenced in the application.

A TAC member suggested that more justification should be required and asking applicants to cite sources would help justify these projects to governing bodies.

A TAC member brought up the high-cost estimate of the project considering the relatively short length and the fact that the project does not include utilities, curb, or stormwater improvements. A MPO staff member said that they had recently clarified with MDT that the contingency could be dropped below 30% for straightforward projects. It was suggested that a review of the cost per square foot—currently estimated at \$37 per square versus \$12 per square that the City typically pays—could provide insight. The group discussed whether it might be more appropriate to partially fund the project if cost concerns persist.

It was agreed that additional scrutiny is needed for the cost estimate, and that asking applicants to justify their figures could help ensure responsible use of TA funds. TAC members also raised questions about the project's likelihood of construction by 2026, with some members noting MDT review delays as a frequent challenge. The current project has three years of inflation built into the estimate.

To ensure that funds are allocated appropriately, the committee decided to delay the final decision making by at least two weeks to gather further information. There was an agreement that applications under the \$250,000 would not be accepted.

The group emphasized the importance of being good stewards of public funds and adjusting applications based on the best available information. A motion to delay was recommended.

Motion

Rusty motioned and Debi seconded to postpone the Technical Advisory Committee's recommendation until additional information is received. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Business:

a. MET Transit Update –

It was noted that the City Budget shortfall for the upcoming year is already widely known, though no service impacts are expected at this time. MET Transit has returned to its office and is completing final contractor repairs; the facility is now open to the public.

The RFP for Transit Financial Sustainability Study is set to close on Friday. There may be follow-up requests for assistance with scoring the proposals and reviewing the evaluation standards used in the assessment process.

b. Other Business – There was no other business.

Future Agenda Items: There were no future agenda items.

Adjournment 11:44AM

Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk