



TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AGENDA
CITY OF BILLINGS AND
YELLOWSTONE COUNTY
June 12, 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	A
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	V	Mac Fogelsong, City Engineer, City PW Engineering,	1
Rusty Logan, MET Transit Manger	1	Sarah Graham, MET Transit Planner	1
Samantha Wood, Urban Planning Section, MDT	V	Clark Snyder, Environmental Health Riverstone Health	A
Kenn Winegar, Urban Planning Section, MDT	A	Jay D. Anderson Deputy PW Director, YC Public Works	1
Kurtis Schnieber, MDT	A	Emma Belmont, Region 8, FTA	A
Zach Kirkemo, MDT	A	Kyle Shuck, Project Engineer, MDT	1
Mitch Buthod, Urban Planning and Statewide Supervisor, MDT	V	Callion Maddox, FTA	V

Call to Order: Lora Mattox, Transportation Planning Coordinator, called the meeting to order at 10:30 am

Introduction of Committee Members and staff.

Staff in Attendance: Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner; Brenda Berns, Planning Clerk; Rob Gress, Intern.

Approval Meeting Minutes: May 8, 2025

Motion: Rusty Logan moved to approve the May 8, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted by staff, seconded by Wyeth Friday. The motion carries unanimously.

Old Business:

- a. **Transportation Alternatives Applications – Review/Recommendation**
Elyse Monat, Transportation Planner.

Ms. Monat provided a brief overview of the application process. Available funding totals \$1.784 million, which is sufficient to cover all current TA requests totaling \$1.5 million, leaving approximately \$275,000 remaining. Discussion was then opened for committee input.

2025 Projects Submitted:

- City of Billings: City of Billings Safe Routes to School 2025 TA – Requested \$1,492,297.23
- Yellowstone County: Johnson Lane Sidewalk Connector Project – Requested \$250,660.00

Discussion

Elyse Monat stated that the item is being returned as TAC had requested additional clarification. She reached out to the consultant, Erin Claunch, who adjusted the construction costs:

- As directed (and counter to the TA Application instructions), I removed the IDC calculation from the construction costs and moved it to apply only to the preliminary engineering phase.
- Instead of using the recommended 35% and 25% for preliminary engineering and construction engineering costs (respectively) as shown in the TA Application instructions, I used \$50,000 and \$30,000 for these items, respectively.
- I also reviewed the raw construction estimate (now shown at \$165,000 without the IDC). I did not change any of the estimate's unit costs. (It should be noted that I modified a typo in the unit for 6" Sidewalk (6-feet) from SY to SF.) Prior to contingency and inflation, the raw construction cost is \$111,214.15. This comes to approximately \$256 / LF of sidewalk. The LPSD has recently constructed (last Summer) a similar sidewalk project that is approximately 125-feet of sidewalk. This project was built for approximately \$28,000, which equates to \$224 / LF of sidewalk. This project also had to be re-bid multiple times as the Board received multiple bids over \$50,000. Therefore, I feel that our construction estimate to be a best representation of the conceptual design project.

Review Schedule:

Meeting	Date and time	Location
TAC	June 12 @ 10:30 am	City Hall, 5 th Floor Beartooth Conference Room 316 N. 26 th St.
Planning Board Public Hearing and Vote	June 24 @ 6 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Council Work Session	July 7 @ 5:30 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Council Vote	July 14 @ 5:30 pm	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Commissioners' Discussion	July 9 @ 9 am	Commissioners' Board Room, 3 rd Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
Commissioners Vote	July 15 @ 9 am	Commissioners' Board Room, 3 rd Floor 316 N. 26 th St.
PCC	July 22 @ noon	City Hall Council Chambers, 5 th Floor 316 N. 26 th St.

Discussion

Lora Mattox reported that there was initial confusion regarding the application, but clarification has since been received from MDT. She noted that the upcoming changes will be aligned with MDT's guidance. The discussion was extensive. The current estimate includes a 30% contingency, which is required; however, it may be adjusted to better match MDT's practices.

Motion

Motion made by Mac Fogelson, seconded by Rusty Logan to approve the two Transportation Alternatives Applications. Motion passes unanimously.

Discussion

The discussion focused on the application meeting requirements, although it is primarily designed for single-location projects, which can limit flexibility and affect scoring. It was noted that the application will be refined and returned for review to ensure consistency among stakeholders. Questions were raised regarding the true cost of sidewalks, with recent project bids referenced as benchmarks, emphasizing the importance of demonstrating fiscal responsibility even if cost savings are realized.

Timing and scheduling of projects were also discussed, including the submission to MDT, anticipated construction start dates, TIP amendments, and highway commission approvals. Past experiences with cost overruns were highlighted, and the need to establish responsibility for managing any overruns in advance was emphasized, along with the potential to provide sample contract language for applicants.

The conversation addressed the potential for unused TA funds, considerations for additional funding sources, and how to prioritize projects if multiple cost overruns occur. The inclusion of contingency percentages in the application was confirmed, and it was recognized that delays and lengthy review processes can affect project timelines. Concerns were raised about placing undue burden on applicants due to delays from reviewing agencies. Coordination with MDT was discussed to address appropriate language and fund obligation processes, drawing on lessons learned from previous project cycles. Finally, typical project approval and expenditure timelines were reviewed, noting that multi-year windows are common for funding and project completion.

New Business

a. FY26 Draft Unified Planning Work Program – Discussion/Recommendation

Lora Mattox provided an overview of the Billings Urban Area 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):

- The UPWP programs federal transportation planning funds received from:
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – for transportation planning.
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – for MET transit planning.
 - Funds are passed through the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT).
- Funding Summary
 - Total FY26 PL allocation: \$1,395,824.
 - Local match (Planning Division): \$1,112,000.
 - Funded via Planning MIL levy and city/county planning application fees.
 - Un-programmed PL funds will carry over to FY28.

UPWP Work Elements and Funding Percentages:

WORK ELEMENT	RECIPIENT	PL	LOCAL	TOTAL
100 Administration	MPO	55	45	100
101 Service	MPO	50	50	100
102 Citizen Inv.	MPO	50	50	100
200 Community Planning	MPO	30	70	100
204 Zoning Administration	MPO	20	80	100
205 Subdivision Admin.	MPO	30	70	100
300 Transportation System Data	MPO	100		100
301 Transportation Plan	MPO	100		100
302 Planning Studies	MPO	60	40	100
500 T.I.P.	MPO	100		100
600 Environmental	MPO	100		100
700 Un-Programmed Funds	MPO	100		100

Additional outreach is needed with local governing bodies to highlight programs that align with their priorities. While participation in previous discussion meetings has occurred, there is an opportunity to increase transparency and engagement. A meeting outside of the regular work session was suggested to allow for a more focused discussion.

Review of the projects:

Element 300 – CIP funded

- Traffic and Trail counter upgrade and replacement as needed.
- Support the City of Billings Transportation Corridor Analysis with Travel Demand Modeling support as needed.
- Update the 2017 Household Travel Survey.

Element 302

- Feasibility and Planning Studies
 - Alkali Creek Trail Connection
 - Downtown Connector (Downtown to Billings Heights).

Council Legislative and Local Affairs Meeting – Project Suggestions

1. Staff recommended further study on SRTS projects
 - St. Francis Catholic Schools
 - Medicine Crow Middle School

2. Council Member Neese suggested a feasibility study of the trail connection between Aronson Avenue to Annadale Road.

Discussion

The discussion included updates on proposed trail projects and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) initiatives. One trail connection was noted as relating to a nearby school. A feasibility study was suggested for a trail connection between Aronson and Annadale Road, though due to the scope of work, limited staff, and lack of funding, this study may be pursued next year using PL funds. The Alkali Creek Connection was also discussed, with planning dollars proposed for a feasibility study; easements have not yet been secured, but additional design could be funded through local trail funds if needed. Support from certain property owners was noted despite some challenges with easements.

The Downtown to Billings Heights Connection, which crosses the 27th Street Bridge, was highlighted as the only non-motorized trail to the Heights. Coordination with property owners, local organizations, and the railroad was discussed. Potential refinements included street improvements, lighting, protected bike lanes, and ensuring emergency access. Rail traffic in the area is minimal, which may simplify development.

Several SRTS projects were reviewed, including street and lighting improvements near schools and potential sidewalk and crossing upgrades on existing gravel roads. Planning for a trail from Aronson to Annadale Road was noted as part of previous long-term plans, with positive support for its future implementation.

Funding priorities for FY26 were reviewed, focusing on a few projects aligned with City Council guidance. A memo will be prepared, and no new projects are recommended unless additional guidance is received. Comparisons between FY25 and FY26 indicate minimal differences in funding, with slightly higher allocations this year reflecting council goals.

Mr. Logan provided an update on Transit funding and service hours, noting adjustments based on available funding.

- Funding Summary
-FY26; 5303 allocation \$211,694
- Local match (Planning Division) \$52,924
-Funded primarily via Transit MIL levy, generated revenue and state resources.
- Total Program: \$264,618

Proposed Transit Planning Activities:

- Continue capital planning
- Develop a plan for a 15-minute transit line connecting Downtown-Stewart Park
- Assess improved practices for Paratransit
- Develop recommendations from Financial Sustainability/Governance Study
- Support Federal program requirements; PMT recertification, management, reporting.
- Participate in ongoing MPO studies and activities.

Motion

The Board unanimously approved a motion recommending TAC endorse all proposed projects, with priority given to the Transportation Corridor Analysis, 2017 Household Travel Survey Update, Alkali Creek Trail Connection, Downtown Connector, Aronson to Annadale Road Trail Connection, and Safe Routes to School studies.

Other Business

Rusty Logan provided an overview on the electric buses currently operating in the city, noting that they use approximately 400–425 kilowatt hours per day. Charging costs at the end of the day are around \$60, compared to diesel costs of approximately \$120. Updates were also shared regarding the upcoming Financial Sustainability Governance Study. Contracts are being finalized, and when meetings with the consultants begin, stakeholders will be invited to participate. The study is expected to take six to eight months.

Future Business

Lora Mattox stated that the 21st Underpass project survey update will be available on Facebook. Also upcoming, the LRTP committee meeting for the audit and MPO Boundary update.

Adjournment - 11:48 AM

Brenda J Berns, Planning Clerk