

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Thomas Micuda called the Great Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to order at approximately 9:31 A.M. in the Planning and Community Development Conference Room at the Civic Center, #2 Park Drive South and via Zoom.

ROLL CALL OF TAC MEMBERS & ATTENDANCE

TAC Members Present/Represented:

Russell Brewer	Civil Engineer, Special Projects, City of Great Falls
Andrew Finch	Sr. Transportation Planner, City of Great Falls
Nadine Hanning	Manager, Great Falls Transit District – VIA ZOOM
Mike Judge	Supervisor, City of Great Falls Utility Division
Jay Manuel	Operations Engineer, Great Falls District – MDT
Tom Micuda	Deputy Director, Planning & Community Development, City of GF
Amanda Brownlee for Jesse Patton	Engineer, City of GF Engineering Division
Rick Schutz	Superintendent, Cascade County Road & Bridge Division
Geoff Streeeter for Katie Potts	MDT Statewide & Urban Planning – VIA ZOOM
Chris Ward	District Projects Engineer, Great Falls District - MDT
Charity Yonker	Director, Cascade County Planning Department

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented

John Faulkner	Director, Great Falls International Airport Authority
John Hale	Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom Air Force Base
Sandy Johnson	Superfund Coordinator, City County Health Department
Ken Jorgensen	Supervisor, City of Great Falls Street Division
Les Payne	Director, Cascade County Public Works Department

Recognition of Others Present

Raina Leavens	Cascade County Planning Department
Jamie Nygard	Sr. Administrative Assistant, Planning and Community Development
Kienna Owen-Quinata	Cascade County Planning Department
Kenn Winegar	MDT Statewide & Urban Planning

MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided with the May 12, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Brewer moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Finch. All in favor, the minutes were approved as submitted.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Watson Coulee Road/Vaughn Road Roundabout

Mr. Finch presented to the committee, an overview of a possible project of adding a roundabout at the intersection of Watson Coulee Road/Vaughn Road. He presented via Google Earth. He stated that the consultant, Sanderson Stewart, recommended that the centerline of the road be shifted over slightly, not to encroach on the neighboring property. That is not what staff was looking for, so they asked Sanderson Stewart to go back to the drawing board and they came up with the possibility of a roundabout. Sanderson Stewart did a study on the intersection turning movements that Mr. Finch presented. He stated the information shows nearly even distribution of movements

Mr. Finch stated that in looking at the big picture, a roundabout was the best option for the project. The northern arterial is being discussed, which would be a connection from US 87 around Stuckey Rd. to the interchange of either the Northwest Bypass or Central Avenue West. The pinch point would be at the intersection presented. Mr. Finch stated that the question for the committee was if it was appropriate to make an investment, at this time, on a better traffic control figuration, realizing that there is no demonstrated congestion or safety concerns at the intersection.

Mr. Finch presented some renderings of what the roundabout might look like. It would be a single lane roundabout. The impacts on the adjoining properties may require some right-of-way purchase in order to accommodate drainage and some encroachment on the corner property that would need to be worked out through project development. No property would lose their access.

Mr. Finch stated that there was somewhere between \$8-10 million in uncommitted CMAQ funds that could be directed to the project. He stated that the estimate for the project is roughly \$2.5 million. TAC's responsibility is to think about how the funds are used and if they are going to the best use.

Mr. Finch stated that there are other needs within the community that would be eligible for CMAQ funds.

COMMITTEE QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Ms. Yonker asked if there is a lot of heavy truck traffic at the intersection. Mr. Brewer responded that it was between 2-3% truck traffic.

Mr. Micuda asked if Mr. Finch had a sense of what the CMAQ funds might look like going out at least a year or two. Mr. Finch responded that future allocations are based on recent allocations. It is about \$1.3 million a year.

Mr. Judge asked when the Watson Coulee/9th St NW project is slated for construction. Mr. Finch replied at least two years out. Mr. Finch stated that if a roundabout was to be included, it would delay the project on Watson Coulee Road, but the 9th St NW reconstruction portion of the project could be separated out for an earlier construction timeframe.

Mr. Judge stated that if TAC agrees that the roundabout is the way to go, then delaying the Watson Coulee Road project is the right thing to do.

Ms. Yonkers asked what the other areas in the City were that are being contemplated for a roundabout and wanted to know if they would be a higher priority than the subject project. Mr. Finch responded that the need at the subject intersection was not an immediate need. If it were on a list with the others needed in the city, it would be at the bottom of the list. Mr. Finch showed on Google Earth the intersections that have been slated for intersection modification. The first one is on 6th Street/8th Avenue North/ Park Drive. Another location is River Drive and 25th Street North. Lastly Bootlegger and US 87/Old Havre Highway.

Mr. Judge asked if there was a priority level on the projects mentioned. Mr. Finch stated that Bootlegger would be the highest priority but it is not ready. The one that would be the most ready would be 25th Street North and River Drive.

Mr. Judge asked if the incline on River Drive would work for a roundabout on 25th Street North. Mr. Finch responded that there was a study done and the consultant determined that it was high enough on the crest. With a roundabout, it would not stop traffic in most instances, so there should be little problem.

Mr. Judge stated that utility services would need to be replaced under the roundabout on Watson Coulee Road/Vaughn Road and on River Drive and 25th St. N.

Mr. Micuda stated that the current intersection on Watson Coulee Road/Vaughn Road is very hazardous for pedestrians, and a roundabout would help.

Mr. Finch stated that roadway improvements tend to attract private investors. If you have a major public investment that improves the functionality of a roadway, private investors often build around it.

BOARD ACTION

MOTION: That TAC concur in pursuing a roundabout at Vaughn Road and Watson Coulee Road and recommend PCC approve an estimated \$2.5 million in CMAQ funds for the project.

Made by: Russell Brewer

Second by: Mike Judge

VOTE: All in Favor the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Finch stated that there was a request to talk about new funding opportunities and grants. He does have a web link that he will send to committee members. If anyone has any questions or would like a more formal presentation, Mr. Finch can set it up for a future TAC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion to adjourn by Ms. Yonker seconded by Mr. Finch. All in favor the meeting adjourned at 10:09 am.