

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2012

CALL TO ORDER

Jim Rearden, Chairman, called the Great Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. in the Rainbow Room of the Great Falls Civic Center.

ROLL CALL OF TAC MEMBERS & ATTENDANCE

TAC Members Present/Represented:

Anita McNamara (for Susan Conell)	Cascade County Planning Department
Dave Dobbs	City Engineer, City of Great Falls
Andrew Finch	Sr. Trans. Planner, City of Great Falls
Jason Handl	Transportation/SID Engineer, City of Great Falls
Mike Haynes	Director, Planning & Community Development, City of Great Falls
Jim Helgeson	Manager, Great Falls Transit District
Tom Kahle (for Zia Kazimi)	Statewide & Urban Planning – MDT (via phone)
Jerry McKinley	Traffic Supervisor, City of Great Falls
Jim Rearden	Director, Great Falls Public Works Department
Bruce Treis	Environmental Health Specialist, City-County Health Dept
Jim Turnbow	Street Supervisor, Great Falls Street Division
Jerilee Weibel	Right-of-Way Supervisor, GF District – MDT

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented:

Brian Clifton	Public Works Director, Cascade County
John Faulkner	Director Great Falls International Airport Authority
John Hale	Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom AFB
Christie McOmber	District Project Engineer, GF District MDT
Rina Fontana-Moore	County Surveyor, Cascade County
Dave Sutton	Superintendent, Cascade County Road Department

Recognition of Others Present:

Brant Birkeland	Comprehensive Planner, City of Great Falls
Jeff Key	Robert Peccia & Associates
Chris Ward	Thomas Dean & Hoskins
Phyllis Tryon	Administrative Assistant, City of Great Falls
Shyla Paterra	NCIIS

MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided a copy of the December 14, 2011 TAC meeting minutes.

MOTION: That the minutes of December 14, 2011 be approved.

Made by: Mr. Haynes
Second: Mr. Dobbs

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Prior to the meeting, TAC members were provided with copies of the TAC meeting agenda. Copies of the agenda and handout materials are attached and incorporated by reference.

5A. FFY2012 UPWP Amendment 1 – Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Study

Mr. Finch explained that the Unifies Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a guiding document for the staff to the MPO of activities to be accomplished in the next Federal fiscal year, along with identification of funding sources and work products. As well, the UPWP identifies who will perform the work, whether staff or hired consultants.

Mr. Finch stated that late last year, he had brought an agenda item before the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and also the Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) requesting concurrence in the need for a Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Study. TAC did concur and recommended that PCC do the same. PCC subsequently also concurred in the need for such a study. TAC is now being requested to formally add the work activity to the UPWP and identify the funding sources (PL funds) for the preparation of the study. There may also be some Downtown parking funds available to help fund a usage study for Downtown parking. To add this item to the UPWP, work element #302 (Transportation reviews, analysis, assessments and consistency determinations) is being amended for the Federal Fiscal Year 2012. The study is projected to cost approximately \$100,000 and the State will match those funds. On Tuesday, April 10, the Planning Advisory Board unanimously approved the Amendment, and the item will be presented to the PCC if TAC approves it. Mr. Finch concluded his review of Item 5A.

~~Mr. Young inquired~~ There was an inquiry about whether the study would be confined to the Business Improvement District (BID) boundary. Mr. Finch said the study will extend beyond the BID boundaries. Mr. Haynes noted there is a TIF District being established to help with financing streetscape improvements.

MOTION: That the Transportation Advisory Committee approve Amendment 1 to the FYY 2012 Unified Planning Work Program, and recommend approval by PCC.

Made by: Mr. McKinley
Second: Mr. Haynes

Vote: There being no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

5B. ADA Ramps MACI Project and Sidewalk Upgrades

Mr. Finch stated he was updating TAC on this project, which is the top MACI project in the TIP and is titled ADA Curb Ramps Program 1. It is currently listed as 1/3 State and 2/3 local road responsibilities. First and 2nd Avenues North and 9th Street will be funded from this project. Jim Turnbow, City Street Supervisor, has identified roadways in need of ADA upgrade, which include 8th Avenue North from about 25th Street eastward to 38th Street; 25th and 26th Streets from 3rd Avenue North to 8th Avenue North; 38th Street; and 6th Street from 2nd Avenue South to 10th Avenue South.

Mr. Turnbow stated that once the ADA improvements are made, these streets can be nominated to the State for pavement improvement projects. He explained that the south avenues off 25th and 26th Streets had ramps put in about 20 years ago, and although they are not to current standards, the pavement conditions are pretty good.

Mr. Finch stated that given the cost estimates for the ramps, funds are deficient. The projected costs are \$1.9 million and in order to fund this, a TIP amendment would be needed. Mr. Finch said that he identified sidewalks south of Central Avenue which are not up to ADA standards. He suggested TAC might want to consider these for a project. He said that when a Federally funded pavement overlay or mill and fill project is undertaken, the sidewalks must first be up to ADA standards.

Mr. Turnbow stated that roadways on the south side of Central Avenue will not be nominated for any pavement preservation projects for some time and that concentration is on the north side. Mr. Finch noted that the nominated MACI project has no relation to a pavement preservation overlay project and suggested bringing ADA facilities up to standard in order to fix roadways. He said he was suggesting this to TAC to consider use of MACI funds for sidewalk improvements along major routes. He said he will need to bring a TIP amendment before TAC and PCC, because the dollar amount requested by Mr. Turnbow exceeds the amount of the TIP. However, there are funds TIP available and as yet unallocated, and this might be an opportunity to use funds and correct deficiencies.

Mr. Helgeson asked if it was the homeowner's responsibility to repair sidewalks in front of their home, and whether citizens that do fix their sidewalks would be offended to have other homeowners have theirs done through a project. Mr. Finch pointed out that the vast majority of homeowners do not repair sidewalks. Mr. Dobbs said that there is a block by Paris Gibson Alternative High School that needs repair. He said that last year, the State elected to repair sidewalks along 1st and 2nd Avenues North, which is an exception to the norm.

Mr. Finch stated there is another MACI project, which is a sidewalk infill project, but it has not been moved forward because priority locations have not been identified. In addition, many of the locations are off system, which requires local matches.

Mr. Dobbs said there is a list of sidewalks from a MACI project from about 10 years ago which are in need of repair but for which there was not enough funding to complete the work. Mr. Turnbow inquired if MACI funds could be used to replace sidewalk. Mr. Finch said he would have to research that, but thought if the sidewalks were a minor component of a project of broader scope, it might be allowed. He said that if a sidewalk is not able to be traveled via wheelchair, repair might also be allowed under MACI funding.

Mr. Haynes said that it made sense to make improvements if MACI funds are available and there are deficiencies in sidewalks. Mr. Rearden noted that matching funds are a challenge. Mr. Finch said he must inquire of the MACI coordinator at the State to see if the State has used the funds for the same purpose. Mr. Helgeson asked why the City wouldn't tell landowners to repair the sidewalks, and Mr. Finch explained that approach becomes a political nightmare. He suggested that at a minimum, the area around schools be included. Mr. Helgeson said there were many areas without any sidewalks which might be a better approach to using MACI funds.

Mr. Dobbs suggested bringing a list of sidewalks and cost estimates for repairs back to TAC for review before making any decisions. Mr. Helgeson said there might be match funds from New

Freedom funding. He said he would look into it. Mr. Rearden said he thought there was more need for infill rather than replacement. He said the University is putting sidewalks on 20th Street South, but that 23rd Street South is deficient. Mr. Finch stated that Engineering is looking at cost estimates for 23rd as well as 16th Avenue South by MSU-COT. A CTEP project for that is being contemplated, and could be built faster than if MACI funds are used. The University would need to agree to match funds. He agreed with Mr. Helgeson that there is a need for infill and no mechanism for having property owners install the sidewalks. It was agreed that TAC needs a list of sidewalks in need of repair to review. Mr. Haynes suggested clarification on the eligibility of MACI funds for sidewalk replacement. Mr. Finch said that in addition, he will bring forward a TIP amendment for additional monies for ADA curb ramps.

5C. Complete Streets Presentation

Mr. Brant Birkeland presented information on a Complete Streets Policy. He said the City is working with other organization such as Cascade County, Get Fit Great Falls, Benefis Health Systems, the Great Falls School District and Peak Wellness to develop this policy for the City. During the presentation, Mr. Birkeland noted that the need and desire for the policy developed out of the Downtown Master Plan, the City/County Health Services Community Health Improvement Plan, and the Community Health Assessment.

Mr. Birkeland explained that Complete Streets are streets that are planned, designed and operated to provide safe, comfortable and convenient travel for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles and transit, for all ages and all abilities. He noted a website named walkscore.com which scores amenities within walking distance from your home. He explained that a 1-point increase in walk score can increase home value by \$1,500 and explained health and safety benefits that come with building Complete Streets. He stated that the Great Falls Police Department reported a 40% increase in pedestrian traffic accidents related to 10th Avenue South in 2010-2011. Mr. Birkeland explained that 25 states have adopted Complete Streets policies. The policy will come before the City Commission for adoption. On May 23, Benefis Health Systems will host an open house presentation on this proposed policy. Following his presentation, Mr. Birkeland received questions from TAC members.

Mr. Turnbow asked Mr. Finch about the medical corridor study in relation to Complete Streets. Mr. Finch said that other projects have currently taken precedence over the medical study.

OTHER BUSINESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Patera, Independent Living Services, expressed hope that ADA compliance issues for local sidewalks will be addressed. She said there could be input from others in the community in need of handicap accessible streets and in support of the proposed Complete Streets Policy at the next ADA Committee meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Helgeson made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.