

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS  
**TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
Meeting Minutes  
September 12, 2013

**CALL TO ORDER**

Jim Rearden, Chairman, called the Great Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. in the Rainbow Room of the Great Falls Civic Center.

**ROLL CALL OF TAC MEMBERS & ATTENDANCE**

TAC Members Present/Represented:

Brian Clifton	Public Works Director, Cascade County
Susan Conell	Director, Cascade County Planning Department
Tell Keaster (for Dave Dobbs)	City Engineering, City of Great Falls
Andrew Finch	Sr. Transportation Planner, City of Great Falls
Stephanie Groux (for John Hale)	Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom Air Force Base
Jim Helgeson	Manager, Great Falls Transit District
Courtney Lyerly	Civil Engineer, Special Projects, City of Great Falls
Jerry McKinley	Traffic Supervisor, City of Great Falls
Galen Amy (for Craig Raymond)	Director, Planning & Com. Dev., City of Great Falls
Jim Rearden	Director, Great Falls Public Works Department
Jim Ekberg	Cascade County Planning Department
Rick Schutz	Cascade County Public Works
Tom Kahle (for Carol Strizich)	Statewide & Urban Planning Section, Helena MDT
Bruce Treis	Environmental Health Specialist, City-County Health Department

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented:

John Faulkner	Director Great Falls International Airport Authority
Christie McOmber	District Project Engineer, GF District MDT
Lloyd Rue	Federal Highway Administration
Jim Turnbow	Street Supervisor, Great Falls Street Division
Jerilee Weibel	Right-of-Way Supervisor, Great Falls District – MDT

Recognition of Others Present:

Jeff Key	Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.
Scott Randall	Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.
Joe Gilpin	ALTA
Shyla Patera	North Central Independent Living Services

## MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided a copy of the August 8, 2013 TAC meeting minutes.

MOTION: That the minutes of August 8, 2013 be approved.

Made by: Mr. Helgeson

Second: Mr. Clifton

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. Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Consultant Update

Mr. Key provided an update on the Long Range Transportation Plan process. He said September and October are busy with finishing the existing conditions analysis and Tom Kahle is helping with a modeling effort. Since the last TAC meeting, they have been working on finishing the socio-economic and growth memorandum. They visited with local groups, such as the Great Falls Development Authority, Airport Authority, and the Chamber of Commerce, and he said a few of the groups felt that growth, especially job growth, is underestimated. Mr. Kahle has already run the 2035 year model, and another scenario can be developed projecting higher growth. In discussing housing, he said the model needs census blocks in census tracts. He said that all memos are being posted on the website.

He said a list of committed projects is provided to Mr. Kahle as well. The committed projects are projects that affect capacity, such as roadway expansion. He explained that committed projects have to be done within five years and funding has to be available in order to be on that list. He said that Mr. Randall is working on intersection, corridor and crash analysis, and he himself has visited with Mr. Helgeson and the Great Falls Transit Board to work on the transit summary. He said these memos will be delivered next week.

Mr. Randall, as part of some technical analysis for existing conditions, reviewed information on intersection level service. He said they counted 42 intersections, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) data had an additional 19 intersections. They looked at peak hours for any current issues, such as traffic delay. They will take Mr. Kahle's model, apply projected increases for the future, and run a future analysis for 2035. He said did not include the downtown area since it was recently heavily studied. Mr. Key added that there are lots of D, E, and F traffic ratings on the side streets, but as a whole, the intersection could be a B. He said 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South seems more efficient that it used to be. Mr. Randall explained that a leg of an intersection, such as the left turn lane, could be failing, but the intersection as a whole might be functioning properly. He said this presentation is just an overall snapshot, but they can look at individual legs for issues, and they will show it in more detail in their report.

Mr. Randall gave a brief review of corridor volumes. He said they take existing volume with the available counts and divide by the theoretical capacity to get a volume to capacity ratio. He said a ratio of one means that volume is equal to capacity, which is essentially failing. The rule of thumb is that at .85, there is congestion. He said volume does not give the whole picture. It was noted however, that

this could point to future expansion. Mr. Randall said that some areas at peak capacity are River Drive and 9<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as some spots on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.

Mr. Randall reviewed crash analysis. Analysis can show numbers and severity of crashes, conditions, types of crashes, and if there are clusters. Comparisons are also made state-wide.

Mr. Key said there is a portion of the memorandum which focuses on the Medical District. He said there are seven different count locations around the district, and some volumes have been steadily increasing, while others are holding steady or decreasing. They counted nine major intersections in June and attempted to capture shift changes. He said traffic on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South may be fine, but at some intersections such as 26<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup>, the north and southbound movement does not operate fine. He said in the Medical District, they'd like to model closing 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> to see what it does to traffic flow. They'd also like to model extending the 25-26<sup>th</sup> Street couplet south of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, extending the 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue South route, closing 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South for one block, extend 23<sup>rd</sup> Street South to 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, and model changes to 21st Street South.

Mr. Gilpin presented information on non-motorized conditions. He talked about the trend toward walking/biking communities. They estimate 30% of the population of Great Falls does not drive. Data shows that 0.8% of Great Falls residents bike to work and 2.7% walk to work. This compares to the national average at 0.5% biking to work and 3.5% walking. He noted that in Great Falls, there is no requirement by the City for developers to provide bicycle parking. For this study, they are looking at pedestrian facilities, curb ramps, sidewalks, roadway crossings and maintenance. Mr. Gilpin had a sidewalk map, which Mr. Finch noted was incomplete and will need to be fixed. Mr. Gilpin also reviewed data on curb ramps, pedestrian accidents, and biking. He said that for biking, when there is good volume and speed on a street, nothing really needs to be done. He talked about solving intersection issues for bikes, as well as various types of bike lanes on streets.

Mr. Gilpin said that the River's Edge Trail has 20 miles paved of the 47-mile trail. One of the issues with off-street paths is that it is easier to get money to build them than to maintain them. Thomas, Dean & Hoskins is working on a plan to help provide better maintenance for the existing trail. He said that the City handles trash removal, cleaning restrooms and clearing snow. Recreational Trails, Inc. gets a \$5,000 annual stipend, which equals about 100-feet of paving. Mr. Gilpin said that other cities typically provide an annual budget of \$1,500-\$2,500 per mile for maintenance.

The bus system in Great Falls is also being reviewed. There were two surveys, one for bicycling and one for walking, made available online with about 300 responses for biking and 200 for walking. Demographics for both were mostly middle-aged, fairly educated and fairly high income bracket people. Most were likely to be responsive to improved infrastructure. Mr. Gilpin reviewed general results of the surveys, and said there will be a technical memo summarizing the details of the surveys.

Mr. Key reviewed transit items for the update. He said transit needs to be more of an integral component of the update. He said that first and foremost, Great Falls Transit has a fairly robust level of planning. He explained that there are seven routes in the city, and buses operate on a flag system, which allows someone to flag down a bus where the driver determines it is safe to do so. He reviewed short-term recommendations for changes to routes from the 2010 TDP, which have not been implemented yet. He also reviewed long-term recommendations, which included evening service, extending curb service by 30 minutes in the evening, instituting fixed stops for predictability, and placement of shelters. He said they should wrap in relevant findings from the TDP as well as incorporating some guidance on design standards and placement for bus shelters.

Mr. Key said there were two more Neighborhood Council meetings to attend next week, and he would follow up with a matrix on results of those meetings. They will also be meeting with the Great Falls Association of Realtors, the Airport Authority Board, the Great Falls Development Authority, and the Downtown Development Partnership. He said the Black Eagle Civic Club will meet the first week in November. He said they will have attended 26-30 stakeholder outreach sessions, aside from public meetings. Lastly, he said they are finalizing three memorandums, which they hope to have to Ander next week for review. Then they will be working on freight security environmental litigation, delivering model alternatives to MDT, and scheduling and preparing a public meeting in late October.

Mr. Finch said if anyone had suggestions for a model alternative to let him know, as he will be coordinating that input to Mr. Key. Mr. Key said the South Arterial is not part of the modeling for this plan, but they could model it to see how it would do. Mr. Finch said we might model an extension of 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue South to the west. He said regarding the South Arterial that nothing is entirely off the table if the community wanted to bring it up again, but the direction given is that it is not an option.

#### 5B. FFY 2014 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Finch said that the FFY 2014 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a guide for what the Planning & Community Development Department anticipates accomplishing during the next fiscal year, and also incorporates the Great Falls Transit District work. The Planning & Community Development Department provides transportation planning for the MPO, and receives Federal funding to do so. Federal requirements ask that the UPWP incorporates all planning activities for the next year, as well as transportation related activity. Activities for this year include the continuation of the Long Range Transportation Plan, and purchasing new software and equipment for traffic counts. Mr. Finch said there are some staffing changes and shifting of work hours.

MOTION: That the Technical Advisory Committee approve the FY 2014 Unified Planning Work Program, and recommend that the Policy Coordinating Committee also approve the FFY 2014 UPWP.

Made by: Mr. Clifton  
Second: Mr. Helgeson

Vote: All being in favor, the motion passed.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There was no other business and no public comment.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Clifton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Finch seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.