

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
October 10, 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:

Susan Conell	Director, Cascade County Planning Department
Dave Dobbs	City of Great Falls Engineer
Jim Ekberg	Cascade County Planning Department
Andrew Finch	Sr. Transportation Planner, City of Great Falls
Candace Ellsworth (for John Hale)	Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom Air Force Base
Courtney Lyerly	Civil Engineer, Special Projects, City of Great Falls
Christie McOmber	District Project Engineer, GF District MDT
Craig Raymond	Director, Planning & Com. Dev., City of Great Falls
Jim Rearden	Director, Great Falls Public Works Department
Carol Strizich (by phone)	Statewide & Urban Planning Section, Helena MDT
Alex Dachs (for Bruce Treis)	Environmental Health Specialist, City-County Health Department
Jerilee Weibel	Right-of-Way Supervisor, Great Falls District – MDT

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented:

Brian Clifton	Public Works Director, Cascade County
John Faulkner	Director Great Falls International Airport Authority
Jim Helgeson	Manager, Great Falls Transit District
Jerry McKinley	Traffic Supervisor, City of Great Falls
Rick Schutz	Cascade County Public Works
Jim Turnbow	Street Supervisor, Great Falls Street Division

Recognition of Others Present:

Jeff Key	Robert Peccia & Associates, Inc.
Don Sims	Cascade County Planner
Galen Amy	Planner II, City of Great Falls
Tom Kahle (by phone)	Statewide & Urban Planning, Helena MDT
Mike Tierney (by phone)	Statewide & Urban Planning, Helena MDT
Shyla Patera	North Central Independent Living Services

MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided a copy of the September 12, 2013 TAC meeting minutes.

MOTION: That the minutes of September 12, 2013 be approved.

Made by: Mr. Dobbs

Second: Mr. Finch

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 shared information on the Long Range Transportation Plan update process. He said they have a good traffic model, but they need to deliver some model alternatives to Tom Kahle with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). He said models should be in response to an identified need or in response to the public outreach process. They have finished the modeling for traffic volumes for the year 2035, and the draft Existing and Projected Conditions Memo and the draft Non-motorized Existing Conditions Memo have been delivered to Mr. Finch.

Mr. Key said they have created a matrix which identifies potential resources that may be impacted when a transportation project is developed, such as wetlands, historic resources, and cultural resources. They have developed a menu for identifying these resources, some boiler plate mitigation strategies, and where to find more information, as well as links to maps available through the City and County, MDT, and Federal highways. The matrix has been sent out to 38 resource partners, and those agencies have until October 31 to provide input.

A draft System Security Memo is expected to be received from the sub-consultant by end of day tomorrow (Oct. 11), and the draft Freight and Goods Movement Memo is expected to be received by Tuesday, Oct. 15. These will be forwarded to Mr. Finch. Mr. Finch asked if the sub-consultant wanted any information from Malmstrom Air Force Base for the System Security Memo. Mr. Key said he didn't know if the consultant had contacted anyone yet, but he will follow up on it today. Mr. Key said there is a public meeting on the Alternative Network modeling in just over two weeks, on October 28.

Mr. Key talked about model volumes and how they are used as a "first glance" to help determine future projections. He said they are only one piece of the puzzle. He said the volumes do not take into account new collector roadways but are a snapshot of the future if nothing changes. Another part of the picture is the capacity of a roadway. Volumes are divided by theoretical capacities to come up with B/C ratios, and anything over 0.85 is a cause for concern. If a B/C ratio equals one, the roadway volume is at capacity, and a ratio greater than one means there is more volume than capacity. River Drive North, 9th Street, and east of Fox Farm are areas of concern for current use, and additional roadways become concerning in the future, such as Vaughn Road and areas by the Gore Hill interchange, as well as areas along 10th Avenue South going eastward and the Central Avenue bridge.

Mr. Key said they look for alternative models such as new roadway links, new or reconfigured interchanges, removing links (like closing a roadway), capacity enhancements, or change in direction of travel (as in one-way streets). He reviewed information on specific models. Discussion followed on Model Run #1 to extend the 25th/26th Street South couplet system south of 10th Avenue South to 15th Avenue South. Mr. Finch pointed out that there is development in the way of extending this roadway to 24th Avenue South. There was discussion concurring with that assessment and other possible alternatives. It was agreed there was value in extending the roadway to 15th Avenue South.

Mr. Key talked about Model Run #2, which involves closing 11th Avenue South between 26th and 28th Streets South, and said he wasn't sure it was a reasonable project, but they can model it to see how that would look. He had questions about the validity of Model Run #3, which closes 13th Ave. S. between 25th and 26th Streets South. Mr. Dobbs said that the idea keeps coming up, and it may be useful to run the model. There was discussion about pedestrian issues in the area. There was discussion about connection to 32nd Street South or 33rd Street South in Model Run #4, and a general consensus that the connection should be to 32nd Street South. There was no discussion on Model Run #5.

There was some discussion on Model Run #6. Mr. Key talked about adding 20th Avenue South to the model, since there is a gap. Discussion followed about how to run a model to include the gap. The conclusion was to punch through 20th Avenue South as Model Run #7. Model Run #8 would then be a combined overview.

Next, Mr. Key discussed potential model runs for interchanges. He said the Emerson Junction interchange model should include increased capacity on Vaughn Road. In discussing the potential Model Run #8 interchange as presented, Mr. Key said he did not think an interchange south of Gore Hill would do anything for traffic flow but could be tested. He explained there is not a model run planned for an interchange connecting to the BNSF rail yards. He said it was modeled in the last plan and has not been brought up in any public outreach. Mr. Finch said that Cynthia Shultz had wanted better access from the airport to the interstate, such as for FedEx trucks. Mr. Key said the board and director at the airport did not see that as a need, but were concerned about the Gore Hill interchange. He wasn't sure a model run would provide much helpful information for that, as the issues are more turning radius, ramp stackage and width of the overpass.

Mr. Key explained that for Model Run #9 for the northern Great Falls area, extending the roadway should better distribute traffic. Due to connectivity issues in that area, he suggests Model Run #10 and 11. It was noted that Watson Lane is a private road and Mr. Dobbs pointed out it has a substantial hill. Mr. Key wasn't sure if it was possible to extend from Bootlegger Trail through to Highway 87, but he thought it was worth looking at. Model Run #11 includes a few new north-south collectors. Mr. Key said his overall vision for northern Great Falls is a solid grid of collector roadways in that area.

For the southern Great Falls area, Mr. Key presented potential Model Runs #12 and 13. He said he stayed away from the south and north arterials, which had been modeled in the last two efforts, as well as one-way couplets. Model Run #12 adds a two-lane collector roadway between Fox Farm Road and Upper River Road along 40th Avenue South and includes a new bridge. Model Run #13 adds a two-lane collector roadway between Gore Hill interchange east to 13th Street South along 40th Avenue South and also includes a new bridge. Mr. Finch said these could not be modeled because they are along the alignment of the south arterial, which was killed because of the alignment. He said a different connection could be modeled if the neighborhood wanted one. After some discussion, it was agreed that Model Run #12 and 13 should be eliminated.

Mr. Key talked about River Drive North and the issues involved in modeling that area. He asked for input on the possibility of a model run for the area. Mr. Finch said his personal opinion is that in the current fiscal environment, model runs should be kept to relatively feasible models and he wasn't overly confident that there were enough traffic problems to warrant a new bridge. Mr. Key agreed with that assessment. Mr. Finch suggested modeling four lanes in that stretch of River Drive North. Ms. Weibel said MDT is looking into the possibility of three lanes. She said the feasibility of four lanes would be a big task, and that businesses along the route are using space and there would be relocation issues. After further discussion, it was agreed that a three-lane model be run from 15th to 25th, and a four-lane model be run from 15th to 38th.

Another model was also proposed for the Fox Farm interchange. Mr. Key said that the 2012 traffic volumes are close to what was projected in past modeling for 2015. After some discussion on other possible models, it was decided to model an extension of 24th Avenue South between 13th Street South and Upper River Road, and to run another model extending 24th Avenue South between 13th Street South and Park Garden Road.

Mr. Key said he has presented 20 outreach events and Alta has presented 6. There are two more informational meetings, one on October 28 and the other possibly in December. He said they anticipate an administrative draft being ready around the Thanksgiving holiday time, a public draft ready a month later, and the final draft ready a month following that. The public adoption process will follow after that schedule. He said it is in their scope to engage both the City and County Commissions. Typically that occurs after the second public information meeting. They expect to engage TAC three or four more times, as well as conducting a TAC workshop. Mr. Key encouraged TAC members to request any additional models they might like to see, and concluded his presentation.

5B. Urban Funding Update Memorandum

Mr. Finch said that every 10 years, the U.S. census establishes new areas of urban density, and MDT is responsible to include all the urban clusters in transportation funding formulae. He said that some representatives of TAC met with MDT and talked about the urban clusters and boundary cleanup. MDT approved a recent map for the Great Falls Urban Area and Urban Highway System that incorporated some changes. Mr. Finch said State law dictates that urban transportation funds are distributed on a per capita basis. Since Great Falls is not growing as fast as other urban areas, we will receive a smaller portion of the available funds. Due to a legislative change at the State level in how funds are allocated for urban areas, Great Falls portion was further decreased. If the Montana Transportation Commission approves use of MACI funds to supplement the urban system, Great Falls will lose approximately a quarter of a million dollars in funding per year. If they don't approve the use of MACI funds, Great Falls will lose over \$326,000 per year.

Mr. Finch said the local and state government needs to find additional sources of transportation funding to prevent eventual breakdown in the transportation system.

OTHER BUSINESS & PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no other business and no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

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