

GREAT FALLS URBAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
June 11, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

Andrew Finch, Acting Chair, called the Great Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to order at approximately 9:32 a.m. in the Rainbow Room of the Civic Center, #2 Park Drive South.

ROLL CALL OF TAC MEMBERS & ATTENDANCE

TAC Members Present/Represented:

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| Jesse Patton (for Dave Dobbs) | City of Great Falls Engineer |
| John Faulkner | Director Great Falls International Airport Authority |
| Andrew Finch | MPO, Sr. Transportation Planner, City of Great Falls |
| Jim Helgeson | Manager, Great Falls Transit District |
| Floyd Wanke (for Bill McLaughlin) | Deputy Base Civil Engineer, Malmstrom Air Force Base |
| Craig Raymond | Director, City of Great Falls Planning & Community Development |
| Courtney Lyerly | Civil Engineer, Special Projects, City of Great Falls |
| Jerry McKinley | Traffic Supervisor, City of Great Falls |
| Christie McOmber | District Project Engineer, GF District MDT |
| Carol Strizich (via phone) | Statewide & Urban Planning Section, Helena MDT |
| Bruce Treis | Environmental Health Specialist, City-County Health Department |
| Jim Turnbow | Street Supervisor, City of Great Falls Street Division |
| Jerilee Weibel | Right-of-Way Supervisor, Great Falls District – MDT |

TAC Members Absent/Not Represented:

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| Brian Clifton | Public Works Director, Cascade County |
| Susan Conell | Director, Cascade County Planning Department |
| Jim Ekberg | Deputy Director, Cascade County Planning Department |
| Jim Rearden | Director, City of Great Falls Public Works Department |
| Rick Schutz | Cascade County Public Works |

Recognition of Others Present:

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| Galen Amy | Planner II, City of Great Falls |
| Chris Ward | |
| Shyla Patera | North Central Independent Living Services |

MINUTES

Prior to the meeting, Committee members were provided a copy of the March 12, 2015 TAC meeting minutes. Mr. Finch asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Seeing none, the minutes were accepted as submitted.

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. Airport Drive – Urban system Status

Mr. Finch presented information on the status of Airport Drive within the urban system. He said that MDT, the City, and the airport have been in discussion about Airport Drive. The airport would like responsibility and oversight of this roadway, which is owned by MDT and is on the urban system, with a portion of maintenance responsibility going to the City.

John Faulkner said gave a brief background on the history of this roadway and explained why the City has an easement and is responsible for a portion. In order for the Airport Authority to continue to use airport funding sources, they need to acquire ownership of the road through easement or acquisition. In addition, improvements need to be made to the MANG entrance and area signage and these are difficult to accomplish correctly under the urban roadway guidelines.

Mr. Finch said that TAC makes recommendations for additions or removals of roadways from the urban route. He said there are private and public properties accessing that roadway that will need continued access. The State would like to control the area around the interchange but they are in agreement with this proposed change in ownership. The Airport Authority needs to show they can legally accept ownership of a roadway from the MDT, and they are getting a legal opinion now.

There was a discussion about adding new routes and subtracting like mileage on urban routes. Ms. Strizich said this is under the jurisdiction of the Transportation Commission. Current policy does not require equal miles be removed if you are adding miles, but in the past Commission policy did require it. She said the Commission would support the City if they removed miles and added more than were removed. She also said that funding remains the same regardless of the miles eligible for use of existing funding. She said the secondary program does require that equal mileage be added or removed.

Mr. Finch said that taking the long view, he would hate to see any mileage lost within the Great Falls urban area. If the airport road is removed from the system, he would like to see the Giant Springs road segment that was just lost added back, or some other roadway that serves the purpose. It was clarified that no gas tax dollars would be lost if the airport road is removed from the urban system.

There was discussion about details of the process for the airport to pursue this issue. Mr. Finch summarized the process in saying the Airport Authority should pursue legal opinion on accepting ownership of the roadway. Then the matter will again come before TAC for action in the future, and opinions will be solicited on replacement roadways. Mr. Patton, City Engineer, noted that should there be an ownership transfer, an easement should remain for infrastructure purposes. Mr. Finch said the City should be a signatory to the agreement so the easement could be addressed at the same time.

5B. TA Grant Application

Mr. Finch explained the process and eligibility requirements of the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program. He said projects are submitted to MDT for consideration rather than applying for and receiving funds. If approved, MDT builds the projects. He said MDT likes projects that fill in connective gaps, provide ADA compliance and improve access to major destinations. In reviewing the Transportation Plan, he looked for projects that we have been hearing about from the public, that are in current planning documents, and also fulfill the intent of the TA.

He said they have been hearing a lot from the public about the intersection of 4th Avenue North and Park Drive for pedestrian access to Gibson Park. Regarding the list of Key Intersection Improvement projects provided, Mr. Finch said he would like MDT, the City and TAC to comment. The Downtown Development Partnership is in support of a TA application for this. He said there are three intersections to look at shortening crossing distances and possible on-street pedestrian markings: 4th Avenue North and Park Drive, 1st Avenue South and Park Drive, and 1st Avenue North and Park Drive. The City works to connect the downtown area with its parks, and Park Drive is a major barrier. Mr. Finch said there is a possibility of a flashing light warning if warranted at 4th Avenue North and Park Drive.

Mr. Finch reviewed other eligible projects. There was discussion about the area along Park Drive and possible solutions, such as ways to slow traffic in that area. Mr. Finch said if improvements are made on 4th Avenue North, it would include reconfiguration of the entrance to the parking lot to better focus pedestrian access. Mr. McKinley said that two of these intersections have no pedestrian facilities. Park Drive and 1st

Avenue North is signalized. Mr. Lyerly said the 4th Avenue North intersection is important because it includes connection from River Drive through the railway underpass, is used by bicyclists and could use a bike facility. Mr. Finch said that is a good point as two bike routes will converge at this point in the future and a bike crossing would be good at that location. It was noted there is no legal pedestrian crossing at that location, and Mr. Finch said that would make a good project. Mr. Finch said he will submit these three as one project with separate costs estimates. If the State chooses to fund a portion, we would prioritize as follows:

1. 4th Avenue North
2. 1st Avenue South
3. 1st Avenue North

Mr. Finch said there is no pedestrian crossing at 1st Avenue South because there is a yield right, and there would still need to be adequate turning movement. There was discussion about that intersection and different ideas on how to improve it.

MOTION: That the TAC recommend the City move forward with the TA application as proposed.

Made by: Mr. Lyerly
Second: Mr. Helgeson

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

5C. CMAQ Sidewalk project – priority areas

Mr. Finch said that CMAQ funding supports projects that are moved forward by the local transportation planning process; the State does not nominate projects for use of this funding source. The State needs a letter from the MPO to move these projects forward.

The City has identified sidewalk infill locations in the past, but the source of match was unsure and those projects have not moved forward. The Transportation Plan identifies areas with sidewalk gaps. Mr. Finch requested TAC members to review the list he provided, compare that list to the sidewalk gap map identified in the Transportation Plan, and provide feedback on suggested projects. Mr. Finch said the current budget can be increased if the TAC agrees there are more project locations.

Mr. Patton said that Dave Dobbs, City Engineer, requested some other possible project locations. Some may be duplicates of Mr. Finch's list. Suggestions include southeast Great Falls along the south side of 10th Avenue South; 14th and 15th Streets North from 8th Avenue North to River Drive North; the Riverview and Valley View areas of town; northwest and southwest areas of Great Falls, specifically between the Missouri River and the Interstate; and areas along Central Avenue West. He said that maybe the Committee could look at finding local match funds for the sidewalks.

Mr. Finch said there is another segment gap on 14th Street Southwest (13th Avenue Southwest), an on-system roadway north of I-15 that he forgot to add to this list. This is not designed to be an urban roadway, so curb and gutter would not be simple. It was noted that #4 on the Priority Sidewalk Gaps list should be Smelter Avenue NW instead of NE.

Mr. Finch said he selected these areas because the City has no matching funds, and these on-system roadways don't have the access people need and are the most dangerous for walking. He added that some off-system roadways needing improvements lead to schools, and we don't want children walking in the street. Ms. Patera said that is also a concern for ADA, since there are non-contiguous sidewalks on school system routes. Mr. Finch said we have made progress with MAKI and CDBG funds on the sidewalks around our schools, but there is more to do. Mr. Helgeson said they will look at the off-system gaps and see if they have any match for funding. Mr. Finch said Great Falls has made great progress on the sidewalk system

and ADA compliance, and has spent more per capita than any other city in Montana, but there is still more progress to be made.

Mr. Finch asked for input on the Priority Sidewalk Gaps list and requested responses within two weeks. Mr. Patton asked about prioritizing projects based on future development versus historical deficiencies. There was discussion about how the new sidewalks in developing areas connect within the system and the importance of prioritizing existing problem areas, as well as funding and assessment issues. Ms. McOmber asked whether replacing sidewalks in bad shape could be funded. Ms. Strizich said she could check into it, but if this is a maintenance issue, it may not be eligible. Mr. Finch said he thinks CMAQ funds have been used in a few instances for overlay projects, where the sidewalks were brought into full ADA compliance.

5D. CMAQ Funded projects

Mr. Finch asked if TAC members would like to proceed with the Park Drive/6th Street North/8th Avenue North intersection improvement. There was discussion about a roundabout and other solutions to this intersection and members were in agreement that the project should move forward.

MOTION: That the Park Drive intersection project be moved forward.

Made by: Mr. Patton

Second: Mr. Lyerly

VOTE: All being in favor, the motion passed.

Mr. Finch said he will write the appropriate letters to request that this project move forward.

Mr. Finch said Item 5D is a list of ideas of eligible and new projects with CMAQ funds. It is estimated the balance of this fund will be more than \$6 million at the end of 2018. New projects can be moved forward, and if there is an eligible component of another project, the funds can be used as a supplement. He requested TAC members to review the Transportation Plan in light of this list to see if there are priority projects, and he asked MDT to see if there is any likely use of these funds with existing projects. Mr. Finch said his preference is to use these funds for projects that otherwise would not move forward. He proposed a nomination process from TAC that can be reviewed in about a month.

Mr. Finch asked for comments. There were none.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mr. Finch adjourned the meeting at 10:38 a.m.