

POLICY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

AUGUST 26, 2015

Recommended Action

Approve changes to Urban System and forward recommendations to Montana Department of Transportation

Recommended Motion

“I move PCC approve the addition of 9th St S/17th Ave S to the Urban System and removal of Airport Dr. from the Urban System.”

Presented by

Andrew Finch, Senior Planner

REMOVAL AND ADDITION OF ROADWAYS TO THE URBAN HIGHWAY SYSTEM

SUMMARY

Overview

The Great Falls International Airport has proposed removing Airport Drive (+/- 1,931') from the Urban System and transferring ownership of the roadway to the Airport. While this is a roadway owned by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), it is on the Federal-Aid Urban System with local (City) maintenance responsibility. The City, in turn, has paid the Airport to maintain the stretch of roadway.

In order to exert decision-making authority over the roadway, the Airport would like to assume ownership of the roadway. Additionally, the Airport has also asked that it be removed from the Urban System to allow for more design flexibility.

Although the Montana Transportation Commission has ultimate decision-making authority for changes to this roadway, it relies heavily upon the local transportation planning process for changes to the Urban System. Therefore, PCC is being asked to consider the request and forward a recommendation to the Transportation Commission.

Background

Montana's Urban System is a state-designated system of important roadways in all urban areas. The state has further designated a specific portion of its Federal Surface Transportation Funds for use on these roadways. Distribution of these funds are based upon population, not miles of roadways. Although an obvious flaw, as road mileage and roadway needs have no direct

correlation to population, State law dictates the funding process that can only be fixed through State legislative action.

TAC Recommendation

TAC considered the removal of Airport Drive and, after consultation with MDT and the City of Great Falls, has determined there will be no adverse affect to the Urban Area's system of roadways if Airport Drive is taken off the Urban System, as long as the Airport commits to long-term maintenance. Therefore, TAC has recommended removal of the roadway.

However, it is important to ensure that the major roadways in the Great Falls area remain eligible for Federal Transportation funding. In the past, the Montana Transportation Commission has required that Great Falls maintain a consistent amount of Urban System mileage. That is, if a roadway was added, a like amount of mileage was removed.

Therefore, in order to balance Great Falls' Urban System mileage, TAC has recommended a roughly equal amount of mileage be added if Airport Drive is removed. After considering a number of different road segments, TAC recommended the addition of 9th Street South between 13th Avenue South and 17th Avenue South, and the addition of 17th Avenue South from 9th Street South to 13th Street South.

TAC based its decision upon guidance from MDT that the roadway “be a collector or

above, provide system continuity and have logical termini (defined as connecting to an equal or higher system roadway, a major traffic generator, or an urban boundary).”

The portion of 9th Street South from 10th Avenue South to 13th Avenue South is currently on the Urban System, but dead-ends at 13th Avenue South. To provide system continuity, adding the 9th Street S/17th Avenue S segment will provide a complete connection between the end of the 9th Street Urban Route and the 13th Street South Urban Route. Additionally, the two roadways in the recommended segment are classified as Collector roadways.

Concurrences

The Great Falls Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), as PCC’s advisory body, recommended that PCC remove Airport Drive from the Urban System and select 9th Street South/17th Avenue South for addition to the Urban System.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the following motion be made: **“I move PCC recommend to the Montana Transportation Commission the removal of Airport Drive from the Urban System and, simultaneously, the addition of the segment of 9th Street South/17th Avenue South between 13th Avenue South and 13th Street South to the Urban System.”**

Alternatives

The PCC could take action to not recommend removal of Airport Drive from the Urban System, recommend addition of a different roadway to the Urban System, recommend no additional roadway to the Urban System, or recommend some combination of the above.

