

AGENDA



Exposition Dr & 1st Ave N – Billings

NH 16-1(53)0, UPN 7908000

June 28th, 2019

Billings, Montana

Meeting Objectives:

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| 1. | Understand the study purpose and background information |
| 2. | Learn about how you use the intersection, challenges with the intersection, and what type of improvements you would like to see done at the intersection |
| 3. | Understand the initial intersection alternatives being considered and confirm the alternatives for further evaluation |

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| 10:00AM | Welcome, Introductions, and Committee Charge | Andy Daleiden / Wende Wilber / Wade Salyards (MDT) |
| 10:20 | Introduction to the Study | Andy Daleiden / Mark Heisinger |
| 10:45 | Let's hear from you <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How you use the intersection?• What challenges exist at the intersection? | PAC |
| 11:00 | Tier 1 Alternatives | Andy Daleiden / Mark Heisinger |
| 11:40 | Let's hear from you <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any comments or concerns on the initial alternatives?• What would be a successful outcome of this project? | PAC |
| 11:55 | Next steps and meeting close | Andy Daleiden / Wende Wilber |

Attachments provided to PAC included:

- A. Public Involvement Plan
- B. Technical Memorandum #1: Existing and Future Year 2040 Transportation Conditions and Analysis
- C. Initial Alternatives and Evaluation



MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting included ten PAC members, project team representatives, and MDT representatives.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM MEETING

- Post meeting materials on website mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/expofirst – Project Team
- Provide additional information on displaced left safety/enforcement based on other State's experiences – Project Team
- Investigate a maximized pedestrian/bicycle alternative – Project Team
- Perform further traffic operations analysis on MetraPark connection (#3C) to assess feasibility – Project Team
- Follow up with City, County and MDT to see if connecting 2nd Avenue is a viable alternative to consider as part of this project – Project Team
- Schedule next PAC Meeting in September. Verified 10 AM to Noon at the Library is a good time. - Project Team

INTRODUCTIONS

As part of the introductions, PAC representatives were asked what they would like to learn from the meeting.

What would you like to learn today?

- Thoughts and concerns from PAC representatives.
- Ways to organize traffic to unlock properties on the west side of Exposition Drive and 1st Avenue.
- How will bicycles and pedestrians be accommodated at intersection?
- Ideas for improvement that result in an efficient and safer flow through the intersection and how proposed improvements will connect with city roads.
- How will this project result in safer and more efficient transportation? How will it tie into other plans and serve as a catalyst for the hospitality district?
- What will the impacts be on transportation to and from the Heights community?
- About existing and future traffic flow through intersection.
- How much land will be needed for the improvements?
- What will the flow of vehicles be and how will that affect transit routes?

An overview of the existing and future conditions was given (The full presentation is posted on the project website). After the project introduction, PAC representatives were asked to complete a comment sheet and then share one or two key observations.

Key Observations – Project Challenges

- How can this project be designed to “welcome human traffic” given traffic volumes and the size of the intersection?
- The number of conflicting movements.
- Addressing transit operations:
 - 100 cars can be queued behind bus when it stops.

- Passenger safety – all passengers are pedestrians.
- Heavy traffic and incidents negatively impact bus schedules.
- Right turn onto Exposition Drive.
- Volume of traffic and its impact on bicyclists, pedestrians and transit.
- In off-peak times the intersection/corridor functions ok but it is a headache during peak hours.
- Human traffic. Sidewalks get plowed in because of different city/state maintenance schedules.
- Planning for absolute worst condition – event traffic when everyone arrives and leaves at the same time.
- Balance traffic with economic development – the Hospitality Corridor Committee is trying to improve the corridor aesthetics and access. Can't access MetraPark from the EBURD side. It's like a river that can't be crossed between 1st and 3rd Avenues. No one can turn into properties resulting in out of direction travel. If 2nd Avenue becomes a fourth leg to the intersection, would it improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities?



TIER 1 ALTERNATIVES

Initial conceptual alternatives were presented to get feedback on which concepts merited further evaluation. Alternatives that were discussed are posted on the project website, mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/expofirst, as part of the meeting presentation. *The italics text represents initial responses provided by the project team at the meeting, as well as some additional clarification from the project team after reflecting on the question/comment in the office.*

Feedback on Alternatives (*Italics indicate a response to the comments*)

General Comments

- Did you look at new bridge at Yellowstone? *Yes.*
- Is there a potential to connect 2nd Avenue? Is it a viable alternative to analyze? It would unlock the southeast corner of EBURD – great for economic development. *This requires coordination between the City, County and MDT. The Project Team will follow up to see if it is a possible alternative to consider as part of this project.*
- Like the idea of a pedestrian overpass as part of whole traffic solution; however, it will require funding from multiple jurisdictions. The goal is to pool TIF, County, MDT funding.
- Find some engineering miracle to get people across the street.
- People walk to catch the bus – it is essential to have pedestrian access across the corridor.

Displaced Left Alternative

- Are there increased crashes or enforcement challenges? *Crashes typically are reduced, but enforcement challenges exist with the configuration change. There is a traffic safety benefit, but it is challenging for bikes and pedestrians. The team will come back next time with the information if the alternative carries forward.*
- How do you handle bicycle/pedestrian mobility with displaced left? *A pedestrian crossing can be done at the displaced left cross over – midblock crossing type. At the Main Street intersection, a pedestrian would cross southbound to a median, then northbound to a median, then southbound left and then negotiate across the free right turn movement. Crossing distances are long. The pedestrian environment is challenging at this type of intersection form.*
- Are there issues from northbound right? *Would have to signalize and tighten up geometry.*
- There may be issues with queues impacting the 4th Avenue intersection. *If this alternative moves forward, queue lengths will have to be evaluated in further detail.*
- Can't imagine anyone would want to cross that intersection as pedestrian or bicyclist.
- Pedestrians and bicyclists are better served further north based on land uses and existing facilities. There is not much demand at Exposition Drive and 1st Avenue. It would be better to direct bicyclists and pedestrians to 3rd and 4th Avenues to get them to MetraPark and to connect to bike lanes on 3rd and 4th Avenues.

- If a pedestrian overpass/bridge is constructed, will it be bike-friendly? *The intent is to include a ramp to accommodate bicyclists.*
- Would like to see buildings at 3rd/4th Avenues removed. What happens with these properties will be critical to this project.
- How would the thinking be different if you started with bicycle and pedestrian facilities and connectivity first and then looked at traffic operations? How could traffic fit around other modes? *The project team will investigate a maximized pedestrian/bicycle scenario on its' own or within the context of each alternative.*
- Gives great connectivity to the Heights.



Restricted Crossing U Turn

- That's crazy.

Which Alternatives need to go? (*Italics indicate a response to the comments*)

- Trumpet interchange
- The displaced left turn alternative is more of a long-range, grand scheme. There should be one more long-range alternative like another grade separated southbound left, rather than just low-cost short-term fixes. *For reference, the project team did evaluate the grade-separated southbound left-turn flyover, but this option did not provide a significant operational benefit due to the heavy westbound right-turn lane conflicting with the northbound through volume. The grade-separated southbound left-turn flyover also comes with a high construction cost and other impacts, such as noise, aesthetics, right-of-way. Based on this assessment, the grade-separated southbound left-turn flyover was not carried further with the initial alternatives.*
Based on our initial operational analysis, there are several at-grade alternatives being considered for Tier 1 that provide acceptable operations (e.g. LOS C/D and volume-to-capacity ratio of less than 0.90) through the year 2040.
- Like Alternatives 3B and 3C but what issues are they creating upstream at Bench Boulevard and Airport Road and Main Street.
 - From a Transit perspective, it gives us more routes.
 - Gives Metra Park options for parking lots that we don't have.
 - Will have to overcome grade challenge.
- Roundabouts – they are bad for bicyclists and pedestrians – determining gaps is too challenging. *If carried forward, the roundabout would likely require a pedestrian signal – rapid flashing beacon.*
- I like roundabouts as a bicyclist – slows down traffic but need a signal.
- Do studies differentiate between vehicular and truck traffic? Based on visual observations, there are a lot of semis and pickups pulling trailers (stockyards, etc.). Roundabouts may not function based on the volume of truck traffic at this intersection. *Yes. Our traffic analysis includes truck and vehicle traffic volumes.*

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME

In closing, PAC representatives were asked to share what would be a successful outcome of this project.

- Coming up with a long-term solution versus a stop gap solution would be the ideal outcome.
- Multi-modal access to MetraPark. Accessibility for all users.
- The project actually includes bike and pedestrian improvements – a beautiful multimodal project.
- Right solution for all users.
- I usually criticize government for not planning ahead but in this case, there are so many projects in play at this end of this town, it could be very easy to overbuild and overspend. Need an outer belt loop and money should be shifted to that project. Just address the problems at hand for now at Exposition Drive and 1st Avenue and see how other projects change traffic at this intersection.
- Project team is going down the right road. Address simple things – for example, we can address snow storage with boulevards and keep sidewalks clear. It is a tough intersection and has been studied before.

Make sure it is safer and efficient. Put thoughts together to come up with a viable solution that works for the next 30 or 40 years.

- Improve traffic flow.
- Like the alternative through the MetraPark – its looking good (cost aside). Like the jog to the interstate so you don't have to go out of direction to get there. Also, like 4A.
- Idea of MDT not purely focused on moving cars. That's a good thing.



COMMENT SHEETS

Comments sheets were collected after the meeting and are summarized below.

What are the top three challenges at the intersection?

- Getting people into and out of MetraPark during a big event.
- Sidewalk is always plowed in during winter.
- From development perspective, access off Exposition Drive between 3rd and 1st Avenues.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Northbound turns off Highway 87.
- Traffic volumes.
- Commuter mindset.
- Lane capacity.
- Right turn onto Exposition Drive during evening commute.
- Enforcement of traffic signals.
- Truck traffic.
- Safety.
- Traffic flow.
- Access.
- There are no crossings for bikes and pedestrians from the bike lanes along 2nd and 3rd Avenues. Safe crossings are a must.
- This is a highly trafficked thoroughfare. Connecting it to accommodate and even welcome human foot traffic is the biggest challenge.

General Comments

- Would like to see added lane to speed up the flow and move the sidewalk back away from road.
- In terms of economic development in the EBURD, the properties between 3rd and 1st Avenues are land locked. It is hard to attract investment with no access.
- Incorporate a pedestrian bridge to connect trails.
- Interested in possible connection to I-90 from this intersection.
- Bike and pedestrian safety is a huge concern.

Alternatives to Move Forward to Tier 1 (Parentheses represent the number of PAC comments in support of moving the alternative to Tier 1, several alternatives received zero support)

- Conventional Signal
 - 1A - No Build (3)
 - 1B – Westbound Shared Left/Right-Turn Lane or Single Westbound Left-Turn Lane and Dual Westbound Right-Turn Lanes (4)
 - 1C – Free Westbound Right-Turn Lane Plus 4th Northbound Through Lane (5)
 - 1D – Dual Westbound Right-Turn Lanes (5)
- Multilane Roundabout
 - 2A – Multilane Roundabout, Three Circulatory Lanes

- 2B - Multilane Roundabout, Three Circulatory Lanes with Westbound Right-Turn Bypass Lane
- System and Alternatives Routes
 - 3B - Extend Exposition Drive to I-90 with New Interchange
 - 3C - New Connection Through MetraPark (2)
 - 3B and 3C together
- Alternative Intersections and Grade Separation
 - 4A - Displaced Left-Turn Intersection (3)
 - 4C - Grade Separated Overpass for Northbound-Through Lanes



Successful Outcome

- Improved traffic flow and better access into and out of MetraPark.
- Move traffic, bike and pedestrian safely through the intersection.
- All road users comfortably accommodated. It would be disappointing to forget bikes and pedestrians and go with an easy solution for vehicles only.