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9026000 SF 159 Lola Shephard Improv

March 14, 2023 Virtual Project Information Meeting Summary

ZOOM Webinar Meeting

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In a parallel with the Montana of Transportation (MDT) review of the Plans-In-Hand (PIH) Design prepared for UPN 9026000 SF 159 Lola Shephard Improvements, a virtual, online project information meeting (PIM) was held through ZOOM on Tuesday, March 14, 2023, from Noon to 1 p.m. During this webinar format meeting, the project team provided an overview of the project goals, project background and current project design. The public attendees were then invited to ask questions or provide comments using the chat feature.

***Attendance Summary***

*Consultant Design Team*

- Darren Hippenstiel – Kittelson & Associates, Inc.
- Wende Wilber – Kittelson & Associates, Inc.
- Claire Dougherty – Kittelson & Associates, Inc.
- Shae Talley - DOWL

*MDT Presenters*

- Gabe Priebe
- Jim Combs
- Ben Schendel
- Patricia Burke

*Other Attendees*

- Michelle Wheat - MDT
- Natalee Stout - MDT
- Lori Ryan - MDT
- David Holien - MDT
- Kelly Williams - MDT
- Kevin St. George - MDT
- Doug Shultz - MDT
- Randy Boysen - MDT
- James Szerwo
- Doug Shultz
- Doug S.
- Ron Bolan
- Robert Padmos
- Greg Wirth
- Bill (no last name given)

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## **Public Comment Summary**

- One commentor asked how does splitting the access road improve access.
  - The project team responded that the intent of breaking the frontage road at Shephard Way is to reduce the traffic volume traveling west to 18th Street and instead provide access to US 12 at the new traffic signal which would operate with a protected left-turn phase. The existing grade difference between Shephard Way, the frontage road and US 12 precludes Shephard Way from also connecting to the planned traffic signal, and noted that if Shephard Way did connect, it may result in similar left turn queuing challenges that are experienced at 18th Street.
- There was a question about the timeline regarding right-of-way discussions with property owners.
  - The project team responded that property owner meetings would be scheduled for the following several weeks.
    - Following the PIM, these property owner meetings then occurred on March 22, 2023. Formal right-of-way discussions and negotiations with these property owners will proceed later in 2023.
- One commentor asked whether there will be an on-site meeting planned for the property owners that are impacted.
  - The project team responded that on-site property owner meetings would be scheduled for the following week.
    - Following the PIM, these property owner meetings then occurred on March 22, 2023.
- Regarding the schedule, an attendee asked how many months construction is estimated to take, and whether or not certain months are being targeted.
  - The project team responded that construction is planned for 2025 and is anticipated to be complete in one construction season. A more specific construction schedule will be developed as the Final Design is progressed and updates on the construction schedule will be posted on the project website when available.
- An attendee stated that the current design seems to be an expensive solution to solve the left-turn problem, the design does not appear to be a context sensitive solution to this gateway area. Eliminating access is a fire code compliance issue on Shephard Way. Large curb returns are very unsafe for bicyclists. A possible solution would be to route traffic through 18th Street intersection instead. Consider north-south connectivity with longer term connections to east Helena.
  - The project team responded that the ability of larger vehicles to turn around on Shephard Way would be further reviewed. Additionally, it was noted that the limitations on the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding doesn't allow for a shared use path to be paid for with the dedicated safety funds, though the project does provide new accommodations for non-motorized users including marked crosswalks and ADA compliant curb ramps and improves non-motorized connectivity from Shephard Way to the existing US 12 pathway.

- Concern was voiced about the traffic going towards 18th Street and there was a question about whether or not any projects were planned regarding 18th Street.
  - The project team noted that the proposed intersection changes should reduce the westbound vehicle traffic going to 18th Street, as the traffic coming from the east would now use the new traffic signal to access US 12 at North Street-Nicole Street. Additionally, MDT staff responded that at this time, no project is planned at 18th Street and that the scope of this project, to address the serious and fatal crash trend at Lola Street, is limited by the HSIP funding, though the public is encouraged to provide comments on any concerns at 18th Street for further MDT consideration.
- There was a request to make the meeting recording available on MDT's project website.
  - The project team confirmed that the meeting recording will be added to the MDT project website.