

# Appendix 1

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## *Public Comments*



## Comments Received During Public Comment Period

ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
01	08/03/2106 David Bibb	<p><i>Sent via email to Dave Hand</i></p> <p><i>From: David Bibb [mailto:david.bibb@gmail.com]</i>  <i>Sent: Wednesday, August 03, 2016 1:12 AM</i>  <i>To: Hand, Dave</i>  <i>Subject: River Drive in Great Falls, Montana</i></p> <p>Dear Sir:</p> <p>I noticed an article that suggested a roundabout might be installed at 25th Street North and River Drive. While I must admit the roundabout on the other side of town was well designed and works, I do not feel a roundabout would be a good idea for a road that includes traffic from the baseball stadium AND big rigs. I realize that roundabouts are very popular with designers, but I suspect most of them have never driven much in a country that utilizes them a lot. I have seen the result of a badly designed roundabout in Cape Girardeau, Mo. Someone thought it was a great idea to have a roundabout on the road to the emergency room; they also designed it to handle small cars, but not SUVs, ambulances, or supply trucks. After having to pay for repairs to various roundabout caused crashes, two updates were done to redesign the intersection. It never worked well, but it did become better. Now, in the UK and Wales, I have seen roundabouts where I had to take my life in my hands in order to get through the heavy traffic. As the flow requires yielding to those already on the circle, heavy traffic can cause long delays. Now, the Potwin Place Historic District (in what was once a separate city names Potwin) in Topeka, Ks has small circular parks / roundabouts on the corners and those work well, but it is a residential district.</p> <p>Regards,  David Bibb  Great Falls, MT</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>A final determination for additional traffic control at the intersection of River Drive North and 25<sup>th</sup> Street North has not been made at this time. Further evaluation would be needed during project development.</p>
02	08/03/2016 Jim Meade	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Web comment or suggestion  Submitted: 08/03/2016 07:41:25  Name: Jim Meade  Email Address: <a href="mailto:O2Canoe@bresnan.net">O2Canoe@bresnan.net</a></p> <p>Comment or suggestion:  River Drive North improvements in Gt. Falls. The (minor) improvements suggested in the Tribune are good, especially the need for a pedestrian, bicycling path on the North side between the Caboose and Giant Springs Road. In my opinion a major cause of the 113 crashes in a recent four year period is the 45 mph speed (which many use as a "suggested starting point" I have volunteered at the Lewis &amp; Clark Interpretive Center for a bit over 18 years and am very familiar with the intersection with Giant Spring Road. At least two former volunteers have had serious accidents at that intersection and were injured to the point that their volunteer service ended. Like the intersection with 25th Street either a traffic light or as a minimum, 3 stop signs are urgently needed, and a reduction in speed to 35 mph maximum (25 would be better). At 5 PM it often can take a LONG time to safely make a left turn from Giant Springs road onto River Drive (as it is at 25th St) Stop signs and a reduced speed along that very scenic section would cost relatively little, but save a lot in reduced accidents</p> <p>Reference Number = webcomment_95758056640625</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>The speed limit along River Drive North may be evaluated if/when an improvement is developed along the corridor.</p> <p>A final determination for additional traffic control at the intersection of River Drive North and 25<sup>th</sup> Street North has not been made at this time. Further evaluation would be needed during project development.</p>

# River Drive Corridor Study

Comments Received During Public Comment Period (July 29, 2016 – August 31, 2016)

ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
03	08/03/2016 <b>Tammy Nathe</b>	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 08/03/2016 10:27:52 Project/Study Commenting On: RiverDrive Name: Tammy Nathe Email Address: <a href="mailto:tnathe@mt-valley.com">tnathe@mt-valley.com</a></p> <p>Comment or Question: I work at MVI 2322 River Drive North Great Falls, MT. As one who uses this road daily I see a need for improvement here for safety. We have had an employee hit making a left turn into our business. If you stop to make a turn you have to constantly watch your rear view mirror to see if they notice you have stopped. Not good on a winter day and the roads are slick. We have many vehicles who stop along this route, pull over, turn around etc. Bikers and walkers have no where to be safe. The traffic is constant here.</p> <p>One day a family of ducks was trying to cross and a semi truck actually stopped to let them cross and so did the oncoming traffic. Pretty amazing and scary to watch at the same time!</p> <p>Sincerely, Tammy Nathe MVI Office Administrator Great Falls, MT 59401</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Improving safety is a key component of any improvement option developed in the future.</p>
04	08/04/2016 <b>Chris Ward</b>	<p><i>Sent via email to Scott Randall</i> <i>From: Scott Randall</i> <i>To: Chris Ward</i> <i>Cc: ccollins@mt.gov</i> <i>Subject: RE: River Drive question</i> <i>Date: Thursday, August 04, 2016 10:17:58 AM</i></p> <p>Scott, thanks for the presentation at the meeting yesterday. I started looking at the document and it reminded me of a question I had earlier. Maybe it is more a question about the LRTP. Here is the question...</p> <p>The 2014 transportation plan discussion of Alt-12 says that the traffic model showed a 35% increase in traffic on 38th Street North as a result of improving River Drive North. What causes this increase? I don't think a 35% increase in traffic on 38th would be easy to accommodate, particularly the further south you go into the neighborhoods and school areas. What sort of impacts would there be for 38th as a neighborhood street and route to school? If any proposal for River Drive is going to increase traffic on 38th to this extent then some actions should be identified to address the impact to neighborhood circulation. Are there measures that could be taken to make 25th/26th or 57th more attractive than 38th?</p> <p>Maybe the change is just sort of an anomaly in the model and doesn't really tell us anything about River Drive. On the other hand maybe these are through trips from 10th Ave S. that are getting rerouted due to better conditions on River Drive, in which case there really could be some noticeable changes along 38th. In any case I was wondering if it would be possible to get your thoughts on that. Thanks, Chris</p>	<p><i>Email reply sent by Scott Randall on Thursday, August 04, 2016 10:17:58 AM. A summary of the reply is included below:</i></p> <p>The recommendation for River Drive North in the study is not consistent with Alt 12. It is recommended that the corridor be reconstructed to a 2/3-lane facility which will help improve operations and safety, but would not increase capacity to the same level as a 4/5-lane road (as was modeled for Alt 12). Increases in traffic along 38<sup>th</sup> Street North are not anticipated to occur directly as a result of the reconstruction of River Drive North.</p>

# River Drive Corridor Study

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ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
05	08/03/2016 <b>Connie Caonetti</b>	<p><i>Transcribed from comment form from Informational Meeting #2</i></p> <p>I like the idea of a roundabout – if the trucks can make it – and if it doesn't plug up the westbound traffic.</p> <p>Would like to see turn lanes (where appropriate) from 15<sup>th</sup> Street to an entrance to Eagle Falls and Veterans Memorial.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and thank you for attending the informational meeting.</p> <p>A final determination for additional traffic control at the intersection of River Drive North and 25<sup>th</sup> Street North has not been made at this time. Further evaluation would be needed during project development.</p> <p>Improvement Option 8 recommends that turn lanes be constructed where appropriate along the River Drive North corridor.</p>
06	08/04/2016 <b>Randy Gray</b>	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 08/04/2016 13:39:05 Project/Study Commenting On: RiverDrive Name: Randy Gray Email Address: randygray@gmail.com</p> <p>Comment or Question: Dear MDT: I have owned the property @ 2322 River Drive No, GF along North River Drive and currently occupied by Montana Valley Irrigation for many years. I attended the info meeting last evening in GF. I pass on a couple of specific comments.</p> <p>-the south edge of the road needs a modest gutter to channel water down the edge of the road without its current tendency to badly erode the edge of the road. That erosion makes it difficult for cars to get to my tenants business.</p> <p>-at 19th street in front of the caboose trail access site, I recommend installing a pedestrian "sanctuary" island in the middle of the roadway, with appropriate signage. It is really dangerous for walkers, runners, and bike riders to cross those two very busy lanes of traffic, if they are trying to get up 19th street to 12th Ave No.</p> <p>Thanks. Randy Gray 781-4150 (c)</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_309234619140625</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Improvements to drainage along River Drive North are envisioned under Option 8.</p> <p>Further evaluation for non-motorized crossing treatment(s) would occur during project development to determine the appropriate improvements.</p>

# River Drive Corridor Study

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ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
07	08/05/2016 <b>Jeff Hedstrom</b>	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Ask MDT A Question Submitted: 08/05/2016 08:22:17 Name: Jeff Hedstrom Email Address: jhedstrom@greatfallsmt.net</p> <p>Comment or Question: Hi, I'm Jeff Hedstrom. I'm an active trail user in that area, but rarely use the Caboose Trailhead (right off of River Dr N within the study area) due to the safety factor. I feel the trailhead needs to be moved to the south side of the road and expanded and a tunnel built underneath River Dr N. The trailhead has overgrown its capacity and should be built to accommodate more trail users. I know that's a large sum for a solution, but both motorist and pedestrians have to be considered in this study. Widening the road is indeed a priority, but that does not address the pedestrian safety and motorized safety for that matter coming in and out of that trailhead.</p> <p>Another issue is residents that live south of the railroad tracks (off 25th St N) have no safe access to the River's Edge Trail. There are no sidewalks along River Dr N that connect pedestrians to the trail. I think that has to be considered too. The City of Great Falls recently built a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks, but the issue wasn't completely solved and I know COGF doesn't have jurisdiction to do any repairs to River Dr N. So I'm asking, please consider both motorist and pedestrian safety in this study.</p> <p>Reference Number = askmdt_46063232421875</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>Reference to evaluating a grade separated crossing at the Caboose Trailhead in conjunction with development of a larger roadway reconstruction project was made under Option 2.</p> <p>Non-motorized improvements are envisioned with reconstruction of River Drive North as included in Option 8.</p>
08	08/05/2016 <b>Dan Ginnaty</b>	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Ask MDT A Question Submitted: 08/05/2016 17:26:40 Name: Dan Ginnaty Email Address: gtflooring@yahoo.com</p> <p>Comment or Question: I attended the meeting on 8/3/16. During that meeting I asked the question about turn lights at the intersection of River Drive North and 15th St. N. I think my question was not understood as I meant it by the person answering questions. I would like to see turn only light on the East and West bound traffic seeking to turn left off River Drive onto 15th St. or onto the bridge. There are already left hand turn lanes. The project would require a signal unit change and a programming change. Should be moderately inexpensive compared to the wrecks or near wreck that occur on that corner. Turning left off River Drive North either to the south or north is a religious experience. A prayer and a heavy foot are required to make the turn successfully.</p> <p>Reference Number = askmdt_64544677734375</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments and for attending the informational meeting.</p> <p>A left-turn phase study was completed by MDT in 2011. The study explored implementation of an east/west protected-permissive left-turn phase. The results of the study indicated that an east/west left-turn phase was not needed at that time.</p> <p>An evaluation of signal timing was also conducted in the spring of 2016. Minor adjustments were made to the timing based on the evaluation.</p> <p>Additional review of signal timing could be conducted if/when traffic conditions change in the future.</p>

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09	08/06/2016 <b>Gene Cormier</b>	<p><i>Transcribed from letter sent to Corrina Collins</i></p> <p>Dear person: RE: the River Drive North Study in Great Falls.</p> <p>For traffic control at 25<sup>th</sup> ST. North intersection I'd rather have a roundabout than a traffic light – if you're gonna lose the N. 25<sup>th</sup> "stop" sign, with a roundabout, however, a semi-truck making LF turn would make like "more interesting" for drivers.</p> <p>Hang loose, Gene Cormier</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>A final determination for additional traffic control at the intersection of River Drive North and 25<sup>th</sup> Street North has not been made at this time. Further evaluation would be needed during project development.</p>
10	08/08/2016 <b>J. Casselli</b>	<p><i>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</i></p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 08/08/2016 22:28:36 Project/Study Commenting On: OldHWY312 Name: J.Casselli Email Address: camasprairie@3rivers.net Other Details: Attn: Corrina Collins</p> <p>Comment or Question: To: Corrina Collins, Montana Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue, PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001 RE: River Drive Corridor Study- Great Falls</p> <p>As I drive this road daily, I submit the following comments on the River Drive Corridor Study and Improvement Options.</p> <p>1. River Drive provides a free flowing segment between 15th and 38th and this should be maintained. The roundabout option for 25th St is the best option to maintain a free flow, reduce backup that signals can create and would slow traffic speeds for safety without stopping traffic. A roundabout would also better handle the high traffic volumes at various times coming from Centene Stadium events.</p> <p>(the report did not appear to address traffic flow from Centene Stadium only the golf course). A light is a poor option for this intersection, consider design of other successful roundabouts that handle high traffic volume in areas such as Billings and Missoula.</p> <p>2. This corridor has a high scenic integrity for the urban Great Falls setting and should be maintained with any proposed improvements including some level of appropriate landscaping, maintaining the current scenic turnouts, improving/adding historical interpretation and reducing excessive illumination from older street lights. This segment is a tourist travel stop as well as a local river viewing area that need to be maintained.</p> <p>3. Improvements to left turn lanes as well as appropriate center turn lanes will improve the traffic flow and safety at 15th and 38th St.</p> <p>4. Environmental factors noted are important including water quality from road runoff to the river as well as wildlife crossing. Canada lynx and Whitebark pine, species of concern noted in the report do not exist and this is well outside of the habitat for these species. Please focus on mitigation for the known species occurring along the corridor.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>A final determination for additional traffic control at the intersection of River Drive North and 25<sup>th</sup> Street North has not been made at this time. Further evaluation would be needed during project development.</p> <p>Improvement Option 6 is intended to provide relief to traffic congestion issues related to Centene Stadium, Eagle Falls Golf Club, and the Veteran's Memorial.</p> <p>Improvement Option 8 recommends that turn lanes be constructed where appropriate along the River Drive North corridor.</p> <p>Environmental concerns are a high priority and will be taken into consideration during development of any project.</p>

## River Drive Corridor Study

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		<p>5. Noxious weeds are a concern regardless of location. Mitigation of spread by vehicle, animals and wind should be addressed in a vegetation/weed plan for all construction that would occur with follow-up integrated weed management treatment as needed.</p> <p>6. Minimize lighting and where needed utilize only IDA compliant street lights but also consider LED or Solar fixtures.</p> <p>7. Provide for the non-motorized crossings and lanes for bike access as well as access to the river trail as noted.</p> <p>8. Consider more effective signage as opposed to the expense of a Railroad Crossing Review. This is a low volume slow crossing and is in good condition.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on potential improvements to this roadway.</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_330535888671875</p>	



ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
11	08/22/2016 Missouri River Citizen Inc. (MRC)	 <p>615 THIRD AVENUE NORTH GREAT FALLS, MONTANA, 59401 PHONE, FAX, V-MAIL: 406-727-8464 E-MAIL: stuartlewin@gmail.com</p> <p>August 22, 2016</p> <p><b>RECEIVED</b> AUG 24 2016 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING</p> <p>Corrina Collins Project Manager, MDT Statewide and Urban Planning, POBox 201001, Helena, MT 59620-1001</p> <p>Re: Missouri River Citizen Inc. (MRC)'s Comments on MDT River Drive Corridor Study (MDT RDGS) Deadline for comments: 8-31-2016</p> <p>Dear Ms Collins:</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above.</p> <p>We want to complement those who worked on this plan: it is most thorough and excellent.</p> <p><u>I. MRC'S RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <p><u>A. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS.</u> The Missouri River Corridor Plan (MRCP) recommends cutting back on truck traffic in order to reduce possible pollution to the river from spills and burned diesel and in order to enhance connectivity of the Missouri River to the City. (For reference to the language in the MRCP that makes this recommendation, <i>see II. below</i>).</p> <p>We believe protecting the Missouri River and its water quality is our community's responsibility!</p> <p>In order to move River Drive toward the recommendations in the MRCP, we would like to see roundabouts at 9th Street, 15th St., 25th St. (this option was included in the MDT RDGS) and 38th St. This would have a calming affect on River Road traffic. On 15<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> street, roundabouts would aid traffic on and off the bridges so that traffic is not backed up on the bridges and on its entrances. We would actually like to see a roundabout on Central Ave., West but recognize that there may not be enough room because of the railroad track underpass. All of these roundabouts should be made to accommodate truck traffic but it is our hope that with all of the the roundabouts on River Drive and the calming affect it brings that trucks and other vehicular traffic would consider other routes to be more desirable.</p>	<p>Thank you for taking the time to review the report and for submitting your comments.</p> <p>The Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan (MRCP) is referenced as a past local planning document in the report. The information and the guiding principles found in the MRCP will be considered as projects develop in the future.</p> <p>Further evaluation of improvements will occur during the development process. No final decisions have been made with regards to improvements along the study corridor. Environmental considerations are a high priority and will be evaluated in more detail with individual projects.</p>



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B. Under your Improvement Options, 2.1 (5.2.3) we make the following suggestions and comments:

- No lengthening and widening of the entrance from the east to the 15<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. We prefer to see a roundabout here as discussed in A above.
- 2. 19<sup>th</sup> Street North Intersection. We would like to see a tunnel here to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle connectivity with the trail that is one of your recommendations.
- 3. Big Stack Mobile Home Court Approach. We support relocating the access to the west and creating a new connection to the trailer park, eliminating the current access from River Drive for the reasons set forth in the MDT RDCS.
- 5. 25<sup>th</sup> Street North Intersection. We support using a single lane roundabout (which would accommodate truck traffic) rather than a traffic signal.
- We would like to see a trail heading east on the south side of river drive on the edge of the golf course from 24<sup>th</sup> street to 38<sup>th</sup> street for pedestrian and bicycle use.
- We propose a tunnel under river drive from this trail to connect the trail on south side with the River's Edge Trail system access on side of Giant Springs road. This would allow connectivity on both 25<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> street by tunnel rather than a surface crossing over River Drive and could be located on the slough area just east of the railroad track crossing by the Giant Springs road access to River Drive. This would also solve the slough problem on River Drive in this area.
- We agree with three lanes where necessary, but not a 5 lane improvement to River Drive through this Study area.
- We do not want to see any cantilevering of River Drive over the river! Not only is this expensive but it would impair views from the trail below.
- We oppose lengthening the access lane to the 15<sup>th</sup> Street bridge to accommodate 5 pm rush hour traffic because if this is done the tendency would be to increase traffic on River Drive, and because a roundabout here is a much better solution.

B. MISSOURI RIVER CORRIDOR STUDY (MRCP) Although the MRCP does not cover all of

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the corridor in the MDT RDCS, references and principals set out in the MRCP provide important guidance for for those developing the MDT RDCS.

- The MDT RDCS does not properly reference MRCP when the MDT RDCS states:

"The plan provided a heavy transportation focus for typical sections and gateway treatments, and included River Drive North between 15<sup>th</sup> Street North and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street North"

- The following excerpts are pertinent references and principles of the MRCP which have direct applicability to the MDT RDCS (the full MRCP can be found at <https://www.greatfallsmt.net/sites/default/files/fileattachments/mrucp1.pdf>):

#### A MAJOR ROLE FOR THE MISSOURI RIVER CORRIDOR

The River...[is] a major community asset for enhanced livability, growth, and economic development.

A Major Asset.....around which all interests in the community can rally — recreation, environmental enhancement, commercial development, expansion of Downtown Great Falls, mixed-use and housing development, civic and cultural facilities, and more.

A Valuable Resource...

...as a clean and plentiful source of water upon which demands are increasing.

...as habitat for fish and wildlife.

...as visual and psychological relief from the urban environment.

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#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This Corridor Plan has multiple objectives. It seeks to communicate a vision for economic vitality for development and redevelopment of lands within the Missouri River Corridor for the benefit of the entire community. At the same time it recognizes that the river is a vital part of a large ecosystem, and that the environmental integrity of the river must be protected. To better frame the issues to be addressed in this document, it is helpful to set forth the basic premises, or "guiding principles," on which the plan is based. These principles can then be used as a yardstick with which to measure all actions and recommendations contained in the plan.

1. From the standpoint of river dynamics, no riverside development or stream bank treatment will prevent the Missouri River from safely passing

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flood stage flows, nor will permanent development be allowed that will be damaged by those flows. (Note: This statement is not intended to prevent the placement of properly designed and lawfully constructed piers, decks, docks, trails, or other appurtenant improvements associated with a substantial public interest that may in fact be damaged by major flood events).

2. Land and water based recreational values and opportunities associated with the river will be created, preserved, and enhanced, including public access to the river.

3. This Corridor Plan will promote beneficial, sustainable economic development that utilizes the river as an amenity while preserving and enhancing its ecological integrity and asset values. Specifically, water quality, natural shoreline vegetation, and wetlands will be restored, enhanced, or protected, and the environmental health of the river will not be compromised by development.

4. Major through transportation facilities in the river corridor are discouraged. Alternative routing of such facilities already in the corridor through responsible urban area transportation planning is encouraged. (emphasis added)

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## STUDY AREA OVERVIEW

### CONSTRAINTS


#### Streets

Several arterial and collector streets are routed along and across the river corridor. Some of these routes are characterized by wide road ways with multiple traffic lanes, heavy traffic and a lack of landscape buffers to help separate pedestrians from vehicles. Although these routes generally provide good community traffic circulation, bicyclists and pedestrians are reluctant to travel these routes. This has resulted in a loss of connectivity between the river corridor and nearby residential neighborhoods.

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### TRANSPORTATION

[A]side from the River's Edge Trail, pedestrians and bicyclists often encounter difficulty moving about the corridor. Although a new citywide project to install sidewalks in some parts of the Secondary Impact Area will

ID	DATE	COMMENT	RESPONSE
		<p>MRC comments on MDT RDGS 8/22/16 page 5 of 5</p> <p>help some, new transportation projects must continue to include planning for safe and convenient pedestrian travel. In some cases, such as the Smelter Avenue-3<sup>rd</sup> St. NW corridor, there may be an opportunity to reconstruct existing roads to "reclaim" a greater portion of the right-of-way for pedestrian use and an enhanced streetscape.</p> <p><u>C. MRC's MISSION STATEMENT:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CONSERVATION FOR THE MISSOURI RIVER WATERSHED AND ITS ECOSYSTEM.</li> <li>• MRC is a citizen's action group incorporated under the laws of the State of Montana and having its principal office in Great Falls, Montana.</li> <li>• MRC works to maintain the Missouri River Watershed and its Ecosystem as not only a working river but also a living river, that is a river that continues to nurture a rich array of life sustaining habitats from mountains and forests to floodplains and wetlands.</li> <li>• MRC believes that it is imperative that we work to strike a balance between navigation, agriculture, commercial and residential development, recreation and the needs of the ecosystem to support wildlife and forest habitat before priceless biodiversity is lost to future generations.</li> </ul> <p>Thank you for allowing us to comment on this study plan.</p> <p>Sincerely yours,</p> <p>MISSOURI RIVER CITIZENS, INC.</p>  <p>Aart Dolman, President</p>	

ID	DATE	COMMENT
01	01/30/2016 <b>Chris Ward</b>	<p>Corrina, thank you for the holding the public meeting and the chance to hear what's going on with the study.</p> <p>This route serves some very important functions both as an arterial and for regional traffic. With the demise of the north bypass it should be kept in mind as a substitute north arterial and looking at ways to improve the connections all the way over to I-15 at Emerson Junction.</p> <p>The 2014 transportation plan discussion of Alt-12 says that the traffic model showed a 35% increase in traffic on 38th Street North as a result of improving River Drive North. What causes this increase? I don't think a 35% increase in traffic on 38th would be easy to accommodate, particularly the further south you go into the neighborhoods and school areas. What sort of impacts would there be for 38th as a neighborhood street and route to school? If any proposal for River Drive is going to increase traffic on 38th to this extent then some actions should be identified to address the impact to neighborhood circulation. Are there measures that could be taken to make 25th/26th or 57th more attractive than 38th?</p> <p>The 2014 plan states in the discussion on MSN-1 that any widening should be to the south and away from the river. I hope the study will keep in mind that vertical alignment changes and use of retaining walls and structures can facilitate widening. Let's focus on what the facility should do before identifying design solutions.</p> <p>I was glad to hear that the pedestrian crossing demand at 19th St. N was noted. There is almost constant use during the day, both cyclists and pedestrians, and some sort of crossing needs to be provided in the vicinity. The Columbia Grain elevator generates considerable semi traffic that uses the 19th Street intersection. The trucks use every bit of the pavement currently to make turns. The study should look at truck traffic patterns at the elevator and see if there are alternatives that would work better for the elevator, 12th Avenue North traffic, and the path crossing.</p> <p>The 2014 plan talks about bike lanes on River Drive North from 15th to 38th. I am glad the plan identifies this route as an important part of the nonmotorized network. River's Edge Trail is not a viable equivalent due to the extended steep grade at Giant Springs Road to get back up to River Drive and 38th, and the lack of other connections between the street network and the trail. However, on-street bike lanes are simply not a suitable treatment on a facility with higher speeds and heavy truck volumes, in combination with all the recreational features like the overlooks, the stadium, and golf course. The bike lanes recently painted on the shoulders of River Drive east of the project should not be the model as they are not subjectively safe for users of all ages and abilities. Separated cycle facilities (in addition to sidewalks) should be considered, particularly from 25th Street down to a potential crossing around the caboose trailhead. A bidirectional separated facility on the south side of River Drive could serve both local trips and make a connection from 25th Street to the trail.</p> <p>In general, I would like to encourage the study team to keep identifying possibilities and not prematurely start ruling things out as being unfeasible. We know funding and space are limited. Please give us a compelling vision for what the facility could be, that might help rally support for making the difficult decisions and getting the resources allocated to getting it done. I would rather see it broken up into a series of smaller projects that can be implemented over time than have the overall scope cut back to what is manageable in the short term and miss a one-time opportunity to shape the corridor for the future.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to comment.</p>
02	02/04/2016 <b>Ben Conard</b> (for Jodi Bush)	<p>Dear Ms. Collins,</p> <p>Thank you for your letter of January 14, 2016, requesting U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) comments on the River Drive Corridor Study (study). The Service also received supporting documents, including the draft environmental scan. The study area is in Cascade County, Montana along the Missouri River. It begins at the intersection of Highway 87 and River Drive North, extending 2 miles east along River Drive North to its intersection with 38th Street in Great Falls, Montana. The purpose of the study is to provide a planning-level overview of resources and identify potential improvement options within the corridor.</p>

Our comments are prepared under the authority of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d, 54 Stat. 250), and the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 et. seq.). Our comments do not address the overall environmental acceptability of the proposed action. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

#### **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibits the taking, killing, possession, and transportation (among other actions) of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically permitted. Because migratory birds build nests on a variety of substrates (e.g., ground, shrubs, trees, structures), the Service recommends the following measures should the proposed work occur during the breeding season: the cutting or removal of trees or shrubs take place between August 16th and April 30th so as to remove potential nesting surfaces prior to project commencement; the removal of swallow nests as they are built, but prior to egg laying, from any overhead structures that will be removed or impacts.

#### **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act**

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from taking bald or golden eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. The BGEPA provides criminal and civil penalties for persons who take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, at any time or any manner, any bald eagle ... [or any golden eagle], alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof. The BGEPA defines "take" as pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb. "Disturb" means to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle, 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior, or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior. In addition to immediate impacts, this definition also covers impacts that result from human-induced alterations initiated around a previously used nest site during a time when eagles are not present, if, upon the eagles return, such alterations agitate or bother an eagle to a degree that injures an eagle or substantially interferes with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering habits and causes, or is likely to cause, a loss of productivity or nest abandonment.

Two bald eagle nests are located within one mile of the study area (Montana Natural Heritage Program database 2016). Consequently, the Service recommends identification of potential bald eagle nests prior to project implementation. Should occupied eagle nests occur within 0.5 mile of the proposed site, we recommend that you comply with the recommended temporary seasonal and distance construction buffers stipulated in the 2010 Montana Bald Eagle Management Guidelines: An Addendum to Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (1994).

#### **Threatened and Endangered Species**

The current list of candidate, proposed, threatened or endangered species, and designated critical habitat occurring in Cascade County, Montana is as follows:

<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Status*</b>
<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Canada Lynx	LT
<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>	Red Knot	LT
<i>Anthus spragueii</i>	Sprague's Pipit	C
<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>	Whitebark Pine	C

\*LE=Listed as Endangered, LT=Listed Threatened, C=Candidate species for listing, P=Proposed, CH=Designated Critical Habitat

The species list provided above indicates those that may occur in Cascade County, but it is unlikely all of these will occur within your project area. Because of the scope and location of this study area, the Service believes it would be unlikely for project-related adverse effects to occur to these species as a result of any project that might result from this study.



		<p><b>Additional Guidance</b></p> <p>In addition to coordination with the Service, we recommend coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Montana Natural Heritage Program. These agencies may be able to provide updated, site-specific information regarding eagle and other raptor nests, as well as all other fish, wildlife, and sensitive plant resources occurring in the proposed project area. Contact information for these two agencies is below:</p> <p>Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks 1420 East Sixth Avenue P.O. Box 200701 Helena, Montana 59620-0701 Phone: (406) 444-2535</p> <p>Montana Natural Heritage Program 1515 East 6th Avenue, Box 201800 Helena, Montana 59620-1800 Phone: (406) 444-5354.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the River Drive Corridor Study. The Service appreciates your efforts to incorporate fish and wildlife resource concerns into your project planning. If you have further questions related to this issue, please do not hesitate to contact Mike McGrath at <a href="mailto:mike_mcgrath@fws.gov">mike_mcgrath@fws.gov</a> or (406) 449-5225 extension 201.</p>
03	02/10/2016 <b>John Juras</b>	<p>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 02/10/2016 14:31:46 Project/Study Commenting On: RiverDrive Name: John Juras Email Address: <a href="mailto:johnjuras@gmail.com">johnjuras@gmail.com</a></p> <p>Comment or Question: MDT, Please make every provision possible to enhance non-motorized transportation along this corridor. I believe that a shared use separated trail facility along the full length of this roadway on the river side is an appropriate solution for the increasing numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists who use this route for transportation or recreation.</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_89044189453125</p>
04	02/12/2016 <b>Charles Jennings</b>	<p>Dear David,</p> <p>I feel strongly that a path on the river side, clearly separated from the motorized traffic, of the river drive corridor is essential for the safety of our non-motorized users. My wife and I have ridden this many times, always with fear and trepidation, especially with the frequency of big trucks. Thanks for consideration of my opinion. Charles D. Jennings</p>
05	02/12/2016 <b>Gerry Jennings</b>	<p>I'm in full agreement with what Chuck has written. We bike together and a lot and this is one of the worst areas to bike. We would never take our grandchildren on this stretch. Gerry Jennings</p>
06	02/16/2016 <b>Anders Blewett</b>	<p>Dear Montana Department of Transportation,</p> <p>I would strongly encourage you to do everything in your power to promote non-motorized transportation along this corridor, including improving safe connections to the River's Edge Trail.</p> <p>I believe that creating a shared use separated trail facility along the full length of this roadway on the river side is an appropriate solution for the increasing numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists who use this route for transportation and/or recreation.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>
07	02/16/2016 <b>Ron Claver, Jr.</b>	<p>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study</p>



		<p>Submitted: 02/16/2016 21:41:10  Project/Study Commenting On: RiverDrive  Name: Ron Claver, Jr.  Email Address: reclaverjr@gmail.com</p> <p>Comment or Question:  I am interested in the River Drive Corridor Study in Great Falls, MT. As an avid runner, I, frequently, access the River's Edge Trail, from my neighborhood over River Drive @ 38th St. No doubt, River Drive is busy with traffic &amp; have often thought that a safer way to access River's Edge Trail would be preferable, perhaps a tunnel under River Drive. Please keep me informed of the study progress.</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_5096435546875</p>
08	02/17/2016 <b>Brion Torgerson</b>	<p>Thanks Corrina. My comments would be centered around wide loads from an agriculture perspective. As long as the planning study is putting considerable thought around this, I am good to go. Agriculture is the number one industry for Montana and certainly is the backbone of our great state as well as being the main economy driver of Great Falls.</p> <p>Any input I can give or assistance on the behalf of ag needs, please reach out.</p> <p>Brion</p> <p>Brion Torgerson  Chief Executive Officer  Torgerson's LLC  406 952 3266 Direct  406 899 3423 Mobile  brion.torgerson@torgerson.biz</p> <p>On Wed, Feb 17, 2016 at 3:38 PM, Collins, Corrina &lt;ccollins@mt.gov&gt; wrote:  Hi Brion,</p> <p>Dave forwarded your message to me. I am the PM for this corridor planning study and would love to hear any feedback you may have. Keep in mind that this is a planning study and not a design or construction project. Feel free to be in touch with any questions and, again, your input is encouraged.</p> <p>Thanks,</p> <p>Corrina Collins    Statewide &amp; Urban Planner    Montana Department of Transportation    406 444 9131</p> <p>From: Brion Torgerson [mailto:brion.torgerson@torgerson.biz]  Sent: Wednesday, February 17, 2016 3:26 PM  To: Hand, Dave  Subject: River Drive Corridor Study</p> <p>Dave</p> <p>Due to the wide loads our company consistently has, is it necessary that we give input on this project? Trying to stay proactive on this so thought I would reach out when I read the article.</p> <p>Thanks.</p> <p>Brion</p>

		<p>Brion Torgerson Chief Executive Officer Torgerson's LLC 406 952 3266 Direct 406 899 3423 Mobile brion.torgerson@torgerson.biz</p>
09	02/22/2016 Steffen	<p>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 02/22/2016 15:12:09 Project/Study Commenting On: Other Project or Activity Name: Steffen Email Address: sjanikula@greatfalsmt.net</p> <p>Comment or Question: Thank you for recognizing the need for a study of the River Drive Corridor, Please make any allowances for the River's Edge Trail System possible. It is a most popular destination for bikers and walkers using alternative transportation and recreation.</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_60418701171875</p>
10	03/14/2016 Travis Drevecky	<p>A question, comment or request has been submitted via the "Contact Us" web page.</p> <p>Reason for Submission: Comment on a Project or Study Submitted: 03/14/2016 14:44:25 Project/Study Commenting On: RiverDrive Name: Travis Drevecky Email Address: snow_freak_84@hotmail.com</p> <p>Comment or Question: Just some general thoughts for the Caboose Trailhead. The site sees the most people during the summer months. It looks like there might be enough right-of-way to the south of the road that might warrant additional parking. Park &amp; Rec and other departments are interested in looking for better and safer connections for bike trails. If a portion of the road was being redone, the opportunity for a pedestrian underpass might work. I doubt MDT would be interested in funding a rest area within City limits, but being as it is along a by-pass, there could be combined funding for a year round rest room with additional enclosed space for vendors or special events. Currently there is only a vault toilet. The closest city water is at 19th St or along the train ROW. Sewer would have to be pumped uphill.</p> <p>Reference Number = prjcomment_25299072265625</p>
11	10/15/2016 Chris Ward	<p>Thanks for the public meeting and providing a look at the draft study. I work in the corridor and commute to work by bike most of the time throughout the year so I am very interested in the proposals for the corridor. I realize the comment period is over (it has been a busy summer!) but I hope you can still take a minute to consider some thoughts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The study gives too much emphasis to local access. Section 3.2 states that "River Drive North serves as a key route in the Great Falls transportation system and supports both local access and regional travel demand." Local access does not need to be an important long term objective in this corridor. Far too often good access management has been neglected on arterial streets. The result is huge investment in compromised arterials that don't do a good job of either local access or moving through traffic. The access needs of a small number of partially abandoned commercial properties should not be a driving factor in planning for a route that is a principal arterial for the city, a US highway truck bypass, part of the national highway system, and an Air Force convoy route, as well as a scenic corridor. The study should be the basis for a strong commitment by the public for good access management in the corridor and as such should give high priority to the objective of corridor preservation and propose right-of-way acquisition to promote access control and eliminating direct accesses.</li> </ol>

2. Section 5.2.1.4 suggests it is possible to provide defined accesses, parking, circulation, and meet city requirements for redevelopment such as landscaping, but it isn't clear how this could work without major changes to the existing commercial sites. The heart of the document is the conclusion on page 36, that a wider roadway section that results in total acquisition of several businesses and residential units should not be advanced. How were the impacts to business and residents weighed against the benefit of operation of an arterial road, safety, scenic beautification, recreation, protection of resources, etc.? The report says additional travel lanes may be warranted for future travel demands, and that other configurations were looked at in detail. However the reasoning behind this crucial decision is not documented. Constructing the proposed three lane alternative would seem to lock the facility in without the ability to expand in the future. If the study set the required future capacity as the objective, acquired the necessary right of way corridor, and constructed an interim three lane access controlled facility, additional lanes could be added later if demand develops as anticipated.  
  
Section 3.3.3.2 states "Some properties are physically close to the River Drive North roadway, which may inhibit future project development. If improvements are forwarded from this study, land use at and adjacent to possible projects will need to be considered during design for determining overall project costs." This being the case, why was a three lane alternative advanced that apparently favors leaving the status quo on adjacent property? Costs and methods of acquiring right of way should be considered as part of this corridor planning process, prior to identifying specific projects. The need for a center left turn lane presented in 5.2.1.8 hinges on the effort to perpetuate existing private accesses rather than seek access control that would be more consistent with an arterial/regional road. With the physical constraints in the commercial area on Segment 1, further thought needs to be given to whether it is really feasible to provide safe access and parking while still meeting geometric design criteria for the roadway, as well as protecting natural resources. In general the study seems to present a proposal that falls short of the possible needs, without documenting why the alternatives are impractical. The study should describe the rejected reconstruction alternatives and explain why they were rejected. Since any NEPA document associated with a future project would need to identify alternatives, shouldn't the corridor study present alternatives at this stage? An alternative to a three lane section that facilitates direct access to existing development would be a riverside parkway with access control.
3. Segment 2 seems to be functioning reasonably well (although delays at the railroad crossing may be a concern). Without the local access issues it isn't clear that reconstruction to a three lane section would bring much capacity benefit, especially in light of the higher cost of Segment 2. Solving the problems in Segment 1, including the 25th street intersection, should be prioritized over reconstruction of Segment 2.
4. I agree with the statement in 5.2.1.2 that "Evaluation of a grade-separated crossing should occur in conjunction with project development of a larger roadway reconstruction project." A pedestrian crossing at grade should only be thought of as a temporary fix at 19th St. N.
5. Section 5.2.1.8 mentions a recommendation in the LRTP about a path connection to the River's Edge Trail at the intersection of 15th Street North and River Drive North. I disagree with this proposal. Bike and pedestrian travel would be better accommodated with a grade separated crossing in the vicinity of the Caboose Trailhead that can be accessed via 12th Ave N. from 15th St. The study rightly observes the 15th street intersection is crowded and congested, so more north-south pedestrian crossings at this intersection should not be encouraged when there are other better alternatives.
6. I strongly object to the recommendation in the LRTP for on-street bike lanes on River Drive. Separated cycle facilities are needed on this route due to higher traffic speeds and heavy truck traffic. Bike lanes will not provide the perception of safety that would be needed for most people to be willing to use River Drive as a cycle facility. A separated two way cycle path on the south side of River Drive makes sense for transportation cycling and is especially needed between 25th street and 19th Street in order to connect the recreational trail to residential areas. 12th Ave N. should be identified as a bike and pedestrian connection to 15th St. N. and enhanced over time and tied in to an improved crossing of River Drive.

7. The Columbia Grain elevator on 12th Ave N. is a significant heavy truck traffic generator on the corridor at 19th St. but is not mentioned. Providing for safe movements of grain trucks should be planned for. This might be best handled with different traffic patterns than exist right now so attention should be given to how trucks enter, stage, and leave the elevator. Separating the truck movements from pedestrians would be good. The discussion in 5.2.1.3 seems to indicate the trailer park access could be moved to west side, which is where grain trucks currently stage for the elevator. Acquiring right of way for an access on 19th Street N would be costly and more consideration should be given to how that would work with the grain elevator traffic. Making costly efforts to preserve this aging and partially vacant housing area is questionable and should be weighed against advantages of acquiring the site and eliminating the accesses altogether, which would also provide the opportunity for a better vertical alignment for River Drive that provides more buffer space between the road and the river.

Thanks for considering these comments. I would be happy to discuss further if there is an opportunity.

Chris Ward  
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