

TRAFFIC CONTROL BOARD MINUTES

September 24, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Cormier, Gene Wade, Trina White, Capt. Harper, Jerry Dunning, Pierre Jomini

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sondra Baker

STAFF SUPPORT: Terry Smith, Erin Claunch, Zach Heid, Aaron Lebsack, Lora Mattox

GUESTS: None

BUSINESS MEETING:

Call to order: Todd Cormier called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm in the conference room of the Public Works Building, 2224 Montana Avenue.

Minutes: Motion for approval of the June minutes by Trina White, seconded by Gene Wade. Motion carried on a voice vote.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT: None

STAFF REPORTS:

Lewis Ave Bicycle Traffic: Erin reported that bike lanes are being striped on Lewis Avenue. There will be exclusive bike lanes from 24th St W to 12th St W except 17th St W to 18th St W. Due to width constraints the segments between 17th & 18th Streets West and from 12th St West to Division will be marked with sharrow indicating cyclists and cars share the full traffic lane. This is a cooperative project, with a portion of the funding coming from BikeNet, a local bike advocacy group. The project was designed by City staff. The lane striping is being done by City crews. The bike symbols, sharrow markings, and signage is funded through Bike Net.

Billings Bypass: The Billings Bypass that will extend from Johnson Lane to Mary Street is now officially a project following Federal approval of the Record of Decision (ROD) that establishes a roadway alignment. Preliminary engineering will begin soon. Project construction is anticipated in 2020 due to funding, but the first phase of the project could begin within the next 3 years. Todd Cormier stated MDT has requested consultant proposals for design of the project and will select a consultant by early November. MDT has left it open for splitting the project between two or more consultants. No decision has been made on whether the project will start at Johnson Lane or at the Mary Street end.

17th & 19th and Grand Avenue: The signal phasing on 17th St W & 19th St W on Grand Ave has been modified to reduce left turn crashes. Eastbound and westbound traffic will have separate phases due to the fact that there is no left turn lane. Terry stated the change is for safety reasons only. The new phasing is not intended to improve efficiency. The project is a cooperative effort between the City and MDT. The State purchased the new signal controllers and cabinets and the equipment was installed by City crews.

King Ave Signal Timing: The State has initiated a signal timing project on King Avenue from Mallowney Lane to 32nd St West. The signals from Mallowney Ln to 24th St W are State maintained and operated and the signals west of 24th St W to 32nd St W are City maintained and operated. Erin mentioned that as a daily commuter he has noted the new signal timings have improved traffic flow in the evening with little or no stopping for traffic westbound on King Ave. The MDT system and the City system will not be directly connected. The City and the State will be able to monitor their respective signals remotely and make adjustments. Because the City and the

State are using different brands of equipment and different software it will not be possible to look at all 10 signals at the same time.

BOARD REPORTS:

Highway 3 Corridor Study: This is a corridor study that starts at the Airport intersection and runs west to Indian Cliffs subdivision. The study is not only looking at the corridor for access management and future traffic needs but also at storm drainage, trail connections and parking. There will be a public meeting on October 15th from 4 pm to 6 pm at the Library.

Zoo Montana to Riverfront Park Trail Study: Lora gave an update on the Zoo Montana to Riverfront trail feasibility study. This is an important piece of the proposed 26 mile marathon loop that will provide a bike/pedestrian trail around the entire city. The purpose of the study is to determine a feasible alignment for this trail so that it can be secured as the area develops. The trail would start at Zoo Montana and pass under the interstate and railroad tracks, then go through some subdivisions and tie into the existing trail system near Norms Island. It may include both on-street and off-street segments.

CTEP Project Update: Lora gave an update on several current and proposed CTEP projects. The Aronson Bypass Trail should be completed in the next week or two. This is a new trail connection in Swords Park from the existing trail north of Alkali Creek and west of Aronson Avenue extending eastward under the Aronson Avenue bridge through parkland along Alkali Creek and then parallel to Swords Lane connecting to the existing sidewalk along the north side of Airport Road. Nine new projects were nominated so that funding originally budgeted for the 25th Street pedestrian bridge would not be lost. The City Council approved the project agreements for these nine projects at their last meeting. Next year will be a busy year with approved CTEP projects such as Ponderosa School Project, the Poly Drive Project, Arrowhead School Project and the 6th Avenue Bypass Project. There could be as many as 15 – 16 Bike-Pedestrian projects going on next summer.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES: Terry provided a handout about pedestrian scramble signal timing. The information was recently provided in a response to a council member's enquiry following another pedestrian crash downtown. Terry stated that due to the closely spaced intersections downtown and the time that would be devoted exclusively to pedestrians that it wouldn't be a good solution for downtown Billings. Trina asked about the HAWK signal located on 4th Ave N & N 20th Street near the new Federal office building. Erin reported that based on his observations the only problem with the signal is not all drivers understand how they are supposed to react to it. Drivers often remain stopped when the signal is in flashing mode and the crosswalk is clear, although they could proceed. This is an efficiency issue and not a safety concern.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Set December Meeting Date:** The Board agreed on Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014 for the December meeting date which will combine the November meeting and the December meeting.
- **Areas of Interest:** A general discussion was held about what areas of interest or policies the Board would like to learn more about at future meetings. Suggestions made included traffic safety, traffic maintenance- (signing, markings, and signals), street naming and addressing, traffic signals, street lighting, vehicle pedestrian accidents, projects and project planning, tour of sign and signal shop. Staff will compile the list and circulate it to Board members prior to the next meeting. Board members should get back to Terry or Todd with other topics of interest. Staff will compile an updated list and circulate it to Board members. The Board can then discuss how to prioritize them at the October meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.