

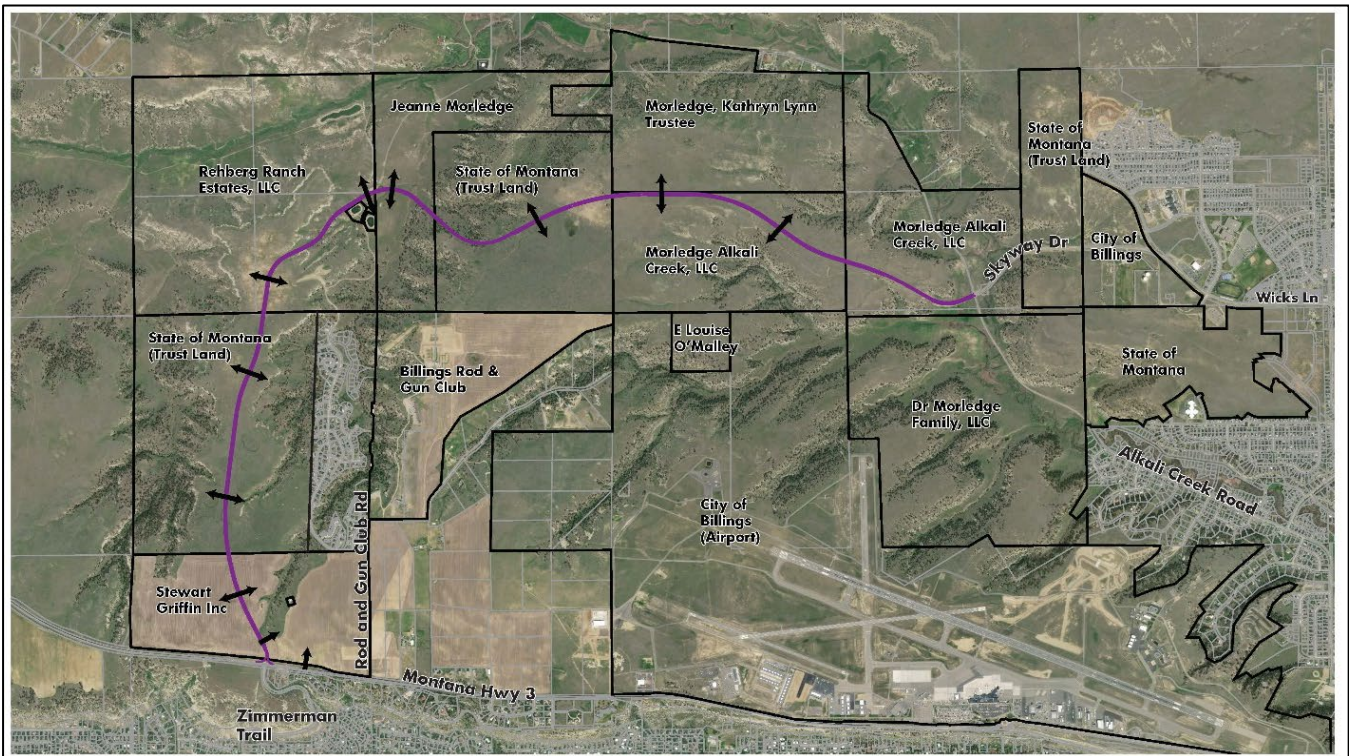
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Inner Belt Loop Corridor Study* provides a vision for the corridor that balances the need to plan for new development areas while ensuring a safe and well-connected city. The recommendations in this study are a result of extensive data collection and analysis, coupled with public and stakeholder engagement. The analysis and recommendations contained within this study will inform the final design and construction of the roadway and set the stage for land development to occur along the corridor in a way that is consistent with the principles outlined in the *2016 City of Billings Growth Policy*.

The Inner Belt Loop is a 7-mile roadway corridor that will connect the West End and Heights regions of Billings. The concept of an Inner Belt Loop roadway connection was first discussed approximately 30 years ago during the development of the 1990 update to Billings-Area Transportation Plan. In 2006,

the City completed the *Inner Belt Loop Connection Planning Study*, which evaluated route alternatives and recommended the current alignment. Additional consideration of other possible routes was again reviewed in 2009, with the original alignment selected for design. Phase 1 of the project (Skyway Drive) was completed in 2014, providing a link from Wicks Lane to Alkali Creek Road.

The City of Billings has allocated funding within the current capital improvements plan to complete design and construction of the remainder of the corridor in two phases, targeted for fiscal year (FY) 2022 (funds available on July 1, 2021) and FY 2024 (funds available on July 1, 2023). Phasing of the project has yet to be determined. Figure 1 (below) depicts the designed route for the Inner Belt Loop from Montana Highway 3 to Skyway Drive/Alkali Creek Road.



**Inner Belt Loop Alignment**

Guidance for the vision development process for the Inner Belt Loop was provided by a Project Oversight Committee consisting of individuals from stakeholder groups including the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, Montana Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Met Transit, and local neighborhood task force committees. Landowners with property fronting on the Inner Belt Loop provided input and guidance related to current and future land use and access needs. Additionally, two (2) public meetings were held to present preliminary and final findings of the study and to solicit feedback from the community on the project.

A key consideration for the Inner Belt Loop Study is to understand the land development feasibility for properties adjacent to the corridor. That in turn influences traffic demand and the corridor design. In order to understand the development feasibility, public service providers, including police, fire, public works and private utility companies were consulted regarding capacity to service the corridor. Their input, along with the evaluation of land topography, access standards, wetlands and floodplain impacts, airport influence, and City and County development standards, resulted in scenarios for future development. The scenarios represent approximately 2,300 acres of raw, developable land directly adjacent to the corridor, along with 975 single-family residential lots that are currently platted in the Rehberg Ranch and Skyview Ridge subdivisions.

With an understanding of development potential, existing and future traffic volumes and operations at key locations were evaluated. Combining the development scenarios with the future traffic operations, recommendations for the corridor were developed. The recommendations are intended to provide a framework for policy and decisions regarding future land use and corridor development.

## Recommendations

### Intergovernmental Coordination

**Approach to Land Development** - Because the majority of the land adjacent to the Inner Belt Loop is currently outside of the city limits and the construction of the road will be funded by the City of Billings, coordination between the City and the County relative to development approval is essential.

**Intergovernmental Agreement** - An intergovernmental agreement between the City of Billings and Yellowstone County would establish the roles and responsibilities of the County and City in the development review process.

### Development Tools

**Neighborhood Plan** - a neighborhood plan of the area would articulate the goals of the Inner Belt Loop area.

**Limits of Annexation Map** - As the City looks to construct the Inner Belt Loop, consideration should be given to update the Limits of Annexation Map.

**Development Standards** - Expectations for future development, established through the zoning regulation, should be created prior the construction of the Inner Belt Loop.

**Urban Density** - Development of urban density will be dependent on the presence of utilities. Developing a plan for the extension of water and sewer to enable development at urban densities will be critical to fulfilling the development pattern envisioned.

## Design Considerations

**Roadway Right-Of-Way** - The proposed right-of-way should be increased to at least 100 feet to provide flexibility for design.

**Intersection Design** - Major intersections may require future traffic signals or roundabouts and allocation of additional right-of-way at those intersection locations should be considered

**Access Management** - An access management strategy for the corridor should be developed, starting with an evaluation of the original planned access locations shown in the preliminary design with respect to spacing and configuration of access.

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities** - The multi-use trail along the Inner Belt Loop will be developed and the City should identify locations along the route where stopping points with amenities as well as crossing locations of the roadway.

## Phasing

**Roadway Construction Phasing** - Construction of the Inner Belt Loop will be funded through the City of Billings Capital Improvements Plan with half of the funding will be allocated in 2022 and the remaining funding to be allocated in 2024. Phasing the construction to align with the funding allocation should be considered.

Option 1 would focus on finalizing the road design, environmental assessments, permitting and initial site work within one phase. Completion of the road, including asphalt, signage, striping and trail work would occur with the final allocation of funding in 2024.

Option 2 would focus on completing one half of the roadway with the first allocation of funding and the second half with the remaining funding allocation. With this approach, the road design through the finish road section would be completed, with one

section of the Inner Belt Loop completed with the 2022 funding allocation and the second section completed with the 2024 funding allocation.

## Infrastructure Development

**Water and Sewer Infrastructure** - To facilitate the infrastructure that will support development along the Inner Belt Loop, water and sewer infrastructure will need to be evaluated. The funding of these improvements will be critical and evaluation of tools available to finance the construction should be included.

- Private property owner agreements - The City and County could work to facilitate the property owners in establishing their own agreement to address utility provision.
- Reimbursement Agreements - If the City of Billings constructs the utilities along the corridor, developers would be required to pay reimbursement fees in order to connect to this infrastructure
- Special Improvement District or Rural Improvement District – A district can be created that would distribute the costs of infrastructure and maintenance across the properties that would benefit