

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

June 30, 2010, 8:30 am

City Council Chambers

Members Present: Jason Wiener (chair), Ed Childers, Dick Haines, Lyn Hellegaard, Roy Houseman, Bob Jaffe, Marilyn Marler, Renee Mitchell, Dave Strohmaier, Pam Walzer

Members Absent: Jon Wilkins

Others Present: Steve King, Kevin Slovarp, Wayne Gravatt, Bob Giordano, John Hendrickson

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

- A. Approval of the minutes of [June 23, 2010](#) – Approved as submitted.
- B. Announcements – None.
- C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda items – None

II. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. Interlocal Agreement between the City of Missoula and the County of Missoula related to the Reserve Street / Mullan Road Intersection Improvements Project ([memo](#)) ([MDT Presentation](#)).—Regular Agenda (Gregg Wood) (Referred to committee: 01/11/10) **HELD IN COMMITTEE**

Steve King, City Public Works Director, stated that he was waiting for a phone call from Danielle Bolan, of the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), in order to answer questions on the design elements of the project. He explained that Greg Robertson, County Public Works Director, was working with the County Commissioners to fill in the blanks of the attached draft interlocal agreement. Mr. King was interested in moving the item forward as an action item in order to begin planning construction work for this summer season. The Recitals of the Interlocal agreement explained that the City would administer the project and the County would provide the funding. The Commissioners were currently considering the funding source for the interlocal agreement, along with the amount of available County funding for the project. He hoped to have the agreement completed shortly, but the elements of the agreement were in place.

The project would be completed in substantial conformance with the exhibit, or sketch, of the proposed layout of the intersection. The County would hold the funds until completion, which was estimated to be within two years. One issue remaining was actual project implementation. Mr. King recommended that the Council consider the attached resolution in order to go from the current action to a contract empowering the Mayor to sign a construction contract. By approving the interlocal agreement the Council would authorize the expenditure of the funding by having the Mayor administer the expenditure of the money. This was staff's recommendation and could only be done by resolution.

Danielle Bolan of MDT called into the meeting.

Mr. King explained he was available for questions on the agreement and Danielle Bolan, of MDT, was available in case the committee had any questions about operation of the intersection. He indicated that there had been a question on the technical operation of the intersection and Ms. Bolan's staff had prepared a memo in 2007 addressing accident history, types of accidents (rear end accidents and left turning accidents were the predominant types at the intersection), and a discussion of operational capacity. The operational capacity was based on delay time or level of service for the existing conditions and the expected changed conditions with the modified phasing of the turning movements as proposed. Mr. King reiterated that the staff recommendation was for approval of the interlocal agreement.

Jason Wiener asked Danielle Bolan about the visibility of the pedestrian countdown timers across the 130 ft intersection. Ms. Bolan stated that there were two types of countdown timers available and MDT was proposing that the 9 inch timers be used, which were the largest. Mr. Wiener asked if the manufacturer's specifications said anything about the visibility of a 9 inch sign at that distance. Ms. Bolan indicated that it did not.

Mr. Wiener then asked about the accident history chart on the technical memo and what the estimated change under the new design would be. He asked if all crashes would be eliminated. Ms. Bolan indicated that she could

not say all crashes would be eliminated, but a majority would be. Mr. Wiener then asked since there was not a manual that discussed how to predict crash rates at intersections, what did the operations manual say for protected versus permissive left turns. Mr. King explained he did not have the formula for a reduction, but his understanding was that if there was a problem with a permissive left turn that the manual recommended a protected left turn. He then pointed out that State Farm Insurance Company recommended, from their observations, that a protected movement be used. So this was not only an MDT recommendation, it was an insurance company recommendation as well.

Mr. Wiener asked about figures 7 and 9. They compared the existing geometry, including the island, with the modified phase operation versus the proposed design where the island was removed. Mr. Wiener asked if Ms. Bolan could explain how to read the figures. Ms. Bolan stated that the middle figure was the intersection delay and the others were for each approach. Mr. Wiener then indicated that he could see that the delay was lower on the southbound leg in the proposed design than the existing geometry with the modified phase, but it did not look like it lowered the overall delay at the intersection much. It made sense that the southbound lane could be delayed with a protected left turn to block, but in overall performance it did not seem like it affected the overall delay of the intersection. He then asked why the proposed design was better. Ms. Bolan explained that she wanted to caution everyone that the 2007 calculations were not as accurate as they were now with the improved software. She thought the new design helped the southbound movement and it would also help with congestion. Mr. Wiener then wondered about the current estimate of expected improvements with the proposed design. Ms. Bolan asked for a minute to look through paperwork.

Pam Walzer asked about the right hand turning motion and wondered if the increased time delay for pedestrians would be a problem with the integration of all timing on Reserve Street. Would the other pedestrian crossing times also be extended on Reserve Street? Ms. Bolan stated that when retiming the Reserve Street corridor MDT would look at using 3.5 feet per second, so the other intersections would also be updated. Mr. King added that the entire Reserve Street corridor was being studied for signal timing optimization and that a current city project was looking at signal optimization throughout the entire city.

Ed Childers had two good reasons for approving the interlocal agreement; one was automobile safety and the other was traffic flow. He realized there might be opposition from bike/pedestrian advocates so he asked how the new design would affect bike/pedestrian facilities. Ms. Bolan stated that it would not worsen the situation because the modified design would improve safety for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Bob Jaffe asked how the new design would help cyclists. Ms. Bolan stated that the reduced lane widths would help to maintain the bike lanes. One concern was also on the west approach. The west bound lane would be modified from one lane to two lanes and a bicycle jump-out would be installed in the northwest quadrant so those not liking narrow lane widths could ride up on the sidewalk until there was one bike lane in each lane.

Mr. Jaffe expressed that in Missoula people did not like to merge so drivers may refuse to use the second lane. Was the merging issue discussed? Mr. King stated that figure 2 of the technical memorandum looked at turning movements at Clark Fork Lane for Wal-Mart and the turning movements for Wal-Mart throughout the day. AM and PM peak was at 30% and midway through the day it was used the majority of the time. Destinations should balance the lane utilization for the double left turns. Mr. Jaffe then asked which lane was the thru lane. Mr. King said the outside lane, or outside left turn, was the thru lane and the inside lane went to Wal-Mart. Ms. Bolan added that with the new configuration there would be a pretty good balance. MDT was also looking at overhead signage on Reserve Street for the new lane configuration.

Pam Walzer commented that the bike facilities on Mullan Road were inadequate. She asked how the problems could be mitigated, especially on the East Mullan to West Mullan crossing with next to no bike lane on West Mullan. Ms. Bolan stated that the shoulder width would increase. Mr. King stated that signs would also be added and in certain areas bikes would be able to go around the intersection on the sidewalk. Ms. Walzer then added that in crossing Reserve Street from the east side to the west side of Mullan Road the bike lane seemed okay, but was there a problem with the bike lane. Did bicyclists have to cross from the left lane to the right lane with the new design? Mr. King stated that in the graphic attached, traveling westbound on Mullan there was currently one westbound lane. The westbound lane would end up with two receiving lanes. The second receiving lane could be used for bikes which was a new advantage.

Marilyn Marler asked if the current pedestrian island in place could be made smaller. Ms. Bolan stated that the island would then become too small to work sufficiently and it would fall below ASHTO standards. The crosswalk

would also have to be moved and MDT wanted to work within the existing roadway. The area could be redesigned with the island, but it would affect the whole intersection and would add right-of-way issues as well.

Bob Jaffe wondered if there was only a certain class of trucks that needed a large turn radius and could those trucks be re-routed. Mr. King explained that Mullan Road was the truck route to Wal-Mart and the west Mullan area. There was no alternative. Moving the truck route could cause problems in other areas. The current standard was the standard used for the largest truck on the highway, although trucks were a small percentage of the total traffic.

Jason Wiener asked what the latest operational improvement estimates were. Ms. Bolan said that the overall intersection delay was reduced by 20 seconds at pm peaks. She did not have the other information with her, but currently there was a delay of 91 seconds. That would take the delay down to 70 seconds. The southbound movement was currently at 1700 feet and the future proposed design would take the movement down to 1350 ft to the next intersection. Mr. Wiener said it appeared that the new design would get the delay down to where the city was in 2008. Ms. Bolan reminded him that MDT was now using improved software and that today's estimates were more realistic, especially with congestion.

Mr. Wiener then asked what the benefit would be with the new configuration on the northbound traffic on Reserve Street. Ms. Bolan said that currently the delay was 130 seconds at 800 feet. The new configuration would bring a 113 second delay with queue lanes at 425 feet. Mr. King added that with the new configuration there would be double the storage with the two lanes.

Ed Childers made the motion to approve the interlocal agreement only and not the resolution.

Bob Giordano of MIST brought a [PowerPoint presentation](#). His main concern was safety. During the previous week there were two crashes within twenty minutes of each other at the intersection. He felt that there were other ways to solve the problem of timing and congestion than adding new lanes. One way to mitigate the problems would be to develop a trail under the Reserve Street Bridge for an alternative route for bikes and pedestrians. He asked that the committee not approve the resolution; he thought more work needed to be done to improve the intersection.

Renee Mitchell asked Mr. Giordano if he felt a new trail and the currently proposed design of the intersection would help the intersection. Mr. Giordano stated that he was not just speaking to the intersection; he was looking toward the future. He wanted to improve the intersection now instead of later when there would be no more money available. He did not agree with MDT's calculations. Spending extra money and extra time now would be better than people being injured or dying in the future. Ms. Mitchell indicated that funding was the issue and the city was constricted by what it could accomplish, although she felt Mr. Giordano had good ideas. It could be carried out possibly in the future by the city instead of MDT.

Marilyn Marler stated that she was torn about the motion, but she may support it. She agreed with Mr. Giordano to extend the trail crossing. Dave Shaw of the City Parks Department told her that there may be a long term plan to do so. She thought the trail might be good for commuters, but not people trying to access businesses in the Mullan/Reserve area. She also did not want the pedestrian island removed, however it could be reduced or moved. She wondered if people could be encouraged to cross a half block up by Albertsons into Mullan station.

Jason Wiener stated that he was going to support the motion, but he wanted to place it under Committee Reports.

Pam Walzer indicated that she was also torn about the motion since it was just one piece of the puzzle. She also offered that the City was contributing financially by contributing staff time. City staff would do a great job of administering the project. The proposed configuration might relieve some accidents, but she was concerned about accidents on Mullan road when people merge into the right lane. She then stated she would support the motion.

Bob Jaffe stated that he would not be supporting the motion. He did not want the pedestrian island removed. He felt that there were other solutions, but they would take more time. The performance increases seemed negligible, and from the drivers perspective it would seem to be the same as before.

Dick Haines asked if the item could be discussed in committee longer, Mr. Giordano had brought up many good points.

Dave Strohmaier asked if another week of discussion would affect the project timeline. Steve King stated that it could be discussed again the following week since Council would not be meeting until the second week of July.

Jason Wiener added that time was available prior to 9:15 or after 4:25 on July 7, 2010. His preference was to wrap it up now though.

Dave Strohmaier added that more analysis could occur so there was no harm waiting another week.

Ed Childers offered to withdraw his motion. Jason Wiener stated that the committee would hear the item again on July 7th at 8:15 am. He then asked what intersection design would allow the city to retain the island.

Bob Jaffe indicated that he would be gone for the next meeting so he would meet with staff on his concerns.

Ed Childers withdrew his motion.

III. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion on the sizes of grease interceptors for the restaurant industry ([Grease Interceptor PowerPoint](#)) ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Stacy Rye and Bob Jaffe) (Referred to committee: 04/21/08)
2. Consider restructuring the city's Sewer Loan Program along the lines of the recently approved change to the Sidewalk & Curb Loan Fund.—Regular Agenda ([Chapter 3.16 – Sidewalk & Curb Loan](#)) ([Chapter 3.18 Sewer Loan](#)) ([Ordinance 3344](#)) (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 06/26/06)
3. Review infrastructure conditions at the locations of serious and fatal traffic accidents: 2007-2009 ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 01/25/10)
4. Resolution to restore vacated Inez Street at South 2nd Street to the public trust and public use, and vacate a public access easement that was a condition of the vacation ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Carla Krause) (Referred to committee: 04/26/2010)
5. Authorize a crosswalk at Central and Stephens ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Jon Wilkins) (Referred to committee: 06/21/10)

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heidi J. Bakula
Program Specialist
City Public Works Department