

City Clerk Staff

From: Erin Wyckman <erinballas@montana.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 28, 2023 5:07 PM
To: Stacie Anderson; John P. Contos
Cc: Grp. City Council and City Web Site; mayorstaff@ci.missoula.mt.gov; rvosen; mstraub@mt.gov
Subject: Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan: Brooks to Broadway

Hello Stacie and John,

I am a resident of Ward 5, and I am contacting you today to voice my strong opposition to the Brooks to Broadway Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan being proposed by the City of Missoula's transportation planners. I live in the South Hills area of Missoula, so walking or cycling to downtown Missoula is simply neither practical nor reasonable.

I started a petition on change.org on December 17, 2022, after reading an article in the *Missoulian* regarding the City of Missoula's plans to decrease the number of motor vehicle lanes on the Beartracks Bridge from four to two. The petition currently has more than 140 signatures opposing the redesign of the Beartracks Bridge rehabilitation project.

The bridge rehabilitation project that was approved by the Missoula City Council in July of 2019 included four lanes of motor vehicle traffic, and wider pedestrian and bike lanes on both sides of the bridge separated by a rail from moving traffic. The rehabilitation project was said to be necessary to make the bridge safer and more spacious for **everyone**. The current pedestrian and bike lanes on both sides of the bridge are more than adequate to accommodate both pedestrian and cyclist traffic, so there should be no need to take away a lane intended for motor vehicle usage and dedicate it solely for bicycle usage.

It seems that the bicycle community and public transit advocates are the driving forces behind the City of Missoula's transportation planning decisions. I don't think anyone would disagree with the goal of making Missoula safe for everyone regardless of what mode of transportation they use. However, the fact remains that most Missoulians use private motor vehicles as their primary mode of transportation.

The city's transportation planners cite a 2:1 margin of approval in connection with a survey on the engagemissoula.com website for their preferred concept design for the Brooks to Broadway Higgins Corridor Plan. However, there is no mention of how many people participated in the survey. According to the engagement summary on the website, 75 participants responded to the online open house survey on the project website.

Reducing the number of motor vehicle lanes on Beartracks Bridge and Higgins Avenue between Brooks and Broadway will significantly constrict the flow of traffic into and out of downtown Missoula. Aside from the obvious issues that will arise during the work week at rush hour, what will happen on Saturday mornings when one lane of motor vehicle traffic will be backed up while drivers wait for the pedestrian traffic associated with the Saturday markets to clear the crosswalks before they can turn right?

Another issue of concern involves the availability of parking in downtown Missoula. The loss of parking spaces has been deemed minimal by the city's transportation planners, however each project that occurs in downtown Missoula seems to result in the loss of parking spaces. The completion of the Art Park on Pine Street resulted in the loss of about 16 on-street parking spaces. Additionally, the two new hotels that were recently constructed in downtown Missoula were not required to provide parking, putting an additional strain on the already limited parking options.

Finally, it is my understanding that the final cost of the bridge rehabilitation project is projected to be about \$17 million, not including the additional costs associated with the changes that are being proposed by the city's transportation planners. Apparently, there is no construction timeline or cost estimate available associated with the proposed changes.

Respectfully, I ask you to oppose the Brooks to Broadway Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan.

Sincerely,

Erin Wyckman, 5113 Elk Hills Court, Missoula, MT 59803, 406-251-5268