



## 5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Striping Project explainer

**What:** The 5<sup>th</sup> / 6<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Striping Project is a restriping of South Fifth Street West and South Sixth Street West between Higgins Avenue and Russell Street. The project aims to improve safety and reduce vehicle crashes by providing more room in driving lanes and parking lanes; adding turning lanes and buffered bike lanes; and eliminating the “double threat” situation when pedestrians must cross two lanes of traffic. The project should also reduce speeding.

The finished roadways will have wider parking lanes, one 11-foot driving lane, a buffered bike lane and turning lanes at the signalized intersections. The design incorporated comments from adjacent property and business owners and balances safety, mobility and accessibility for all users.

Work completed earlier this summer includes the installations of new curb ramps brought up to ADA standards, upgraded signal detection devices and pavement preparation for an extensive pavement preservation project. The pavement preservation project will be completed next year by the Montana Department of Transportation.

**Where:** This work is being done on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets between Higgins Avenue and Russell Street only.

**When:** Pavement work will wrap up this week, weather permitting. Striping will take place the week of Sept. 15, weather permitting.

**Who:** The City is completing this work ahead of a federally funded, MDT-programmed pavement preservation project scheduled for next year. The striping changes are taking place after more than six years of public process, initiated by the Riverfront Neighborhood Council and the City Council. The City hired a consultant to study traffic volumes, crash history, speeds, pedestrian safety and connectivity. The City has also held dozens of public meetings, including at least six City Council discussions. The striping changes were unanimously supported by the leadership

teams from the University, Riverfront, Rose Park and Franklin to the Fort Neighborhoods. The striping plan has been approved by City Council and the state Transportation Commission.

**Why:** This is first and foremost a safety project. Back in 2012, the neighborhood raised concerns about speeding, vehicle crashes, pets and parked cars getting hit, wrong-way driving, poor pedestrian crossing and lack of comfortable bicycle facilities. The study of these streets showed that there were 277 vehicle crashes on these sections of Fifth and Sixth Streets from 2007 to 2014 – just more than one every 10 days. The study found that these streets operate at between 24 percent and 39 percent of their capacities and that traffic volumes have not increased significantly in at least 40 years. Traffic speeds are significantly higher than the posted speed limit. Counts performed on Fifth Street between Orange and Russell showed that speeds are closer to 35 miles per hour than 25 miles per hour. This means that the streets are unnecessarily wide for the amount of cars that use them. The study looked at converting the streets back to two-way travel and at reducing the lanes to a single lane in each direction. The single-lane option was preferred by citizens and Council members because it is inexpensive, easy and should be effective at lowering speeds and improving safety. This option does not preclude a two-way conversion in the future, but that would require more study and significant changes to traffic signals, which will take more time and money. The new striping configuration will make the whole area safer for people walking, driving and biking. The ADA upgrades and pavement work were required to make these streets eligible for federal pavement preservation dollars next year. The signal detection upgrades were a one-time cost of about \$24,000. The time and materials of the new striping configuration will cost about \$11,000, which is \$4,000 more than the current striping layout. To put this in perspective, the State pavement preservation project scheduled for next year will cost close to \$1 million.

#### **Project Misconceptions:**

- “What about all the University of Montana traffic, especially when games get out?” This project is only between Higgins and Russell and DOES NOT include east of Higgins and the Highway 12 connection to the University. The traffic volumes in this project area are much lower than the routes to campus. South Sixth Street West currently only has one lane between Arthur and Maurice avenues, and it functions adequately.
- “Bikes are driving this project.” This is a safety project for drivers and pedestrians. The best use of the unnecessary travel lane happens to be a bike lane. So, people who currently ride bikes and those wanting to ride but who don’t feel safe today will benefit. But this project was approved on its likelihood to improve safety for people walking and driving.

- “The single lane will cause significant delays for drivers.” This project actually adds turning lanes at the signalized intersections, which will allow the streets to function as well or better than they do currently. One effective way to reduce congestion is to provide safe, comfortable and convenient transportation options other than the personal automobile. If it is easier for immediate and nearby neighbors to bike and walk, then there is more room in the travel lanes for drivers.

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City of Missoula Communications Office