

Upper/Lower Rattlesnake Transportation Committee Minutes

March 8, 2022

The Break Espresso

5-6pm

Introductions: Bob Giordano (Co-chair), Emily Jensen (Co-chair), Tom Carlson (Secretary), Dan Doyle, Ike Moody, Bill Ruediger

Approve meeting minutes for February 8, 2022 - approved

Public Comment – Ike reported on a recent crash on the Lolo Street bridge involving a pickup truck traveling eastbound, which appeared to have hit the sidewalk and bridge wall. Police responded.

Discussion on the draft Rattlesnake Transportation Plan

The committee reviewed, discussed and approved the following goals listed in the Vision section of the plan:

- 1) 80% of residents in the valley should be within a 20-minute walk of public transportation.
- 2) All residents should be able to safely and easily walk and bike along and across all streets.
- 3) All residents should be within a 5-minute walk of a connected, valley-wide trail system.

The committee reviewed the additional suggested edits prepared by Bob and Tom (shown below) and approved them with minor changes and some clarifications.

Bob will send Tom a file copy of the latest draft in Word format.

Tom will incorporate the changes, except as noted below, and forward the final draft plan to the committee for review.

Emily will forward the final plan to the Upper and Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood Council Leadership Teams after review by the committee and final word-smithing.

Members of the committee will make presentations of the final plan at the next scheduled neighborhood council meetings.

Additional and replacement text and edits for the draft plan discussed and approved by the committee:

Introduction

The Rattlesnake Transportation Plan was created in order to address deficiencies in the shared mobility system of the residents and visitors of the Rattlesnake Valley in Missoula, Montana. The goal is to improve streets, trails and services, in a way that serves all needs. With agencies, organizations and interested citizens working together, the Rattlesnake Valley can become a more livable place.

In the Fall of 2016, the Rattlesnake Transportation Committee formed as a subcommittee of the adjoining neighborhood councils. The committee began monthly public meetings to discuss ways to effectively improve movement throughout the Rattlesnake Valley for all modes of transportation. In 2019, the committee decided to make a transportation plan. Working alongside the Office of Neighborhoods, a process was put in place to gather input and feedback from residents of the adjoining upper and lower rattlesnake neighborhoods. A questionnaire was distributed over the span of approximately five months. The questionnaire received over 600 responses. A draft plan was created and another two-month public comment period was held. The result was 80 more public comments, leading to this final draft.

The work of this plan follows previous efforts, and aims to grow momentum for positive change. Previous efforts and plans include the 'Rattlesnake Valley Comprehensive Plan Amendment: 1995 Update', and the '2011 Rattlesnake Valley Transportation Summit Study'. The Summit Study prioritized areas of the Rattlesnake most in need of improvement and was adopted by both the Lower and Upper Rattlesnake Neighborhood Councils, as well as the Missoula City Council. In order to update the 2011 Summit study, and in the spirit of collaboration, we offer the following:

Vision

Every resident of the Rattlesnake Valley can directly and safely walk and bike to meet their daily needs. The Rattlesnake Valley is accessible in all seasons and is an enjoyable place to live, work and play. While improvements can be made to facilitate safer and more efficient automobile transportation in the valley, the majority of infrastructure investments in the valley have already been made for the benefit of driving private motor vehicles. The infrastructure for other modes of transportation is inadequate and unsafe and public transit is not reasonably available for many residents. The next two decades of transportation planning and funding should prioritize other forms of transportation, including walking, biking and public transit. Accordingly, the goals of the next two decades are:

- 1) 80% of residents in the valley should be within a 20-minute walk of public

transportation.

2) All residents should be able to safely and easily walk and bike along and across all streets.

3) All residents should be within a 5-minute walk of a connected, valley-wide trail system.

Mission

The mission of the Rattlesnake Transportation Committee is to promote safe, efficient, equitable and accessible transportation options for residents and visitors of the Rattlesnake Valley.

This transportation plan is a way to meet the Vision and Mission.

Purpose of this plan

The purpose of this plan is to identify transportation issues and locations of concern in the Rattlesnake Valley, incorporate public input, and list possible solutions for consideration by decision-making organizations when planning, prioritizing, and implementing projects. The committee believes that this planning effort is important and that the issues and possible solutions documented in the plan will be taken as significant public input. The list of solutions, found in the Projects section of the plan, were generated by public input for each Issue and represent alternative actions that could be implemented to address the identified concern. This plan provides a framework for future discussion of the issues and identification of preferred solutions yet it does not take the place of additional public input by the committee or anyone on any future proposed transportation project.

Additional edits for the plan:

1-- Add a note on streets that had work done the last two summers, primarily: Missoula Avenue, Rattlesnake Drive, Van Buren/ Missoula Avenue. The note could simply say: "Note: work has been done on this street section since this plan process began. The Rattlesnake Transportation Committee will continue to monitor the project."

The text suggested above will be added but the draft plan will also be updated to reflect changes caused by projects in 2021 by revising the text as follows:

Intersection improvements:

Van Buren Street at Missoula Ave. – Map Index U4 No Changes

Complete Street

Rattlesnake Drive north of Missoula Ave. to Creek Crossing (LRTP # 156) – Map Index U7

Issues - Lack of ped/bike facilities along the entire segment, high volume mixed traffic, commuter route, school access route, bump-outs at Pineview and Mtn. View near Rattlesnake School, unsafe crosswalk on north side of Mountain View intersection due to vegetation, a fence, a power pole and an old river rock 'pier' blocking pedestrians' and drivers' view, housing density

Solutions - Make improvements for safer walking, biking, and school access such as:

- Construct sidewalks and designate bike lanes along entire segment
- ~~Address Rattlesnake School crosswalk safety issues for pedestrians and bicyclists at Pineview and Mtn. View. Options include:~~
 - ~~Modify bump-outs for safer biking - this has been accomplished~~
 - ~~Change bump-outs to a raised pedestrian crossing - the bumpouts have been removed~~
 - ~~Remove bump-outs and install a pedestrian refuge island instead - this has been accomplished~~
 - ~~Move crosswalk at Mountain View to south side of intersection for better visibility for both pedestrians and drivers. (Kids would also then be on the correct side of Mtn View so would not need to then cross again in front of buses, etc. to get to school) - this has been accomplished~~

Bike/pedestrian facilities

Missoula Ave. from Van Buren Street to Lolo Street – Map Index H5

The following text should be deleted because of project accomplishments during 2021:
~~Issues – Poor pavement condition and overhanging vegetation restricts use of ped/bike space~~

~~Solutions – Reestablish safe pathways for bicycle and pedestrian travel such as:~~

~~10~~

- ~~Repave existing bike/ped pathway and trim vegetation.~~
- ~~Investigate different lane configurations for scheduled 2021 repaving project~~

2- Add the term 'protected bike lane' for potential solutions on any street section that references Van Buren, Rattlesnake, Greenough, Duncan. (it's already listed in a couple spots)

3- Add 'edge lane road' as possible solution for Greenough and for Lolo, as referenced in the recent letters we sent on those two streets. 'edge lane road' is the same as 'advisory bike lane' I believe. Add definitions for both 'edge lane road' and 'advisory bike lane.'

4- Under potential solutions, add 'Consider an urban trail along the south side of the railroad tracks, leading to downtown and points westward' for the Spruce/Greenough railroad track crossing project.

5- Under 'other issues', add: Evacuation Routes- Valley wide Issue - Concern for not being able to exit the Rattlesnake Valley in case of large fire, train derailment or other catastrophe. Solutions - Begin a process to convene citizens and agencies to identify threats and solutions.

6- Move the first two sentences under 'history' to be the first paragraph under 'existing conditions'. It seems to be a better fit under 'existing conditions'.

History of Rattlesnake Valley

The Rattlesnake Valley ranges from one half to one mile wide, and is approximately four miles

long. The valley begins where Rattlesnake Creek meets the Clark Fork River near downtown

Missoula, and extends north to the Rattlesnake mountains. Through the ages, the Rattlesnake

Valley was a traditional dwelling and living place for Native Americans. The first known white

settler operated a trading post at the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek, from 1858 to 1864.

7- The following possible solution generated some confusion: 'Remove the auxiliary lane for the eastbound I-90 entrance ramp'. To better explain that solution, I propose we add this: "note: this refers to removing the 2nd lane dedicated to the north to east movement onto I-90. If this lane were to be removed, motor vehicles would still be able to make that northbound to eastbound movement; drivers would enter the roundabout instead of bypassing the roundabout. This type of reconfiguration would increase safety, save maintenance costs and make the intersection more human scale."

8- We suggest that the City look at some natural surfacing for Greenough Park. It will be a tough sell to do anything other than asphalt. There are options however, so I propose we add this language: "Consider decomposed granite (with or without a binder), or a pine resin-based trail (similar to use in Glacier National Park), or other sustainable surfacing treatment."

Other options:

-Dark skies ordinance, and addressing lighting? I like the darkness of the r'snake and not a fan of bright night lights. Note – The committee decided not to include this in the plan but, instead, monitor opportunities to maintain dark skies as projects are planned.

-roundabout education? I think this is better addressed city wide. part of my day job work at MIST and Free Cycles entails this education work. Note – The committee decided not to include this element in the plan.

-Ranking a couple trail projects? The draft plan does not categorize the trails. We could elevate a couple to 'urgent' as suggested by a couple comments? Note – The committee decided to emphasize the Clark Fork River to the National Recreation Area (NRA) route with connectors as the highest priority in the plan.

-Dogs off leash? better addressed by city ordinance and city enforcement I think. Note – The committee decided not to include this in the final plan.

-No e-bikes on our trails? again, a city-wide ordinance and enforcement thing. Note - The committee decided not to include this in the final plan.

-Neighborhood street and school issues? The draft plan addresses some of it. The City is growing a Neighborhood Greenway Program. Maybe we just get on board with that later. Note – The committee decided to add a new first item to the Other Issues and Concerns section:

Neighborhood Greenway Program

Various locations where neighborhood streets are used to access schools

Issue - Lack of safe and designated connecting routes to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel for students going to and from schools and parks.

Solution - Construct and/or designate routes and segments as needed

Looking ahead to possible improvements during the 2022 City of Missoula construction season

Greenough Drive re-paving – Bob stated that Ben Weiss plans to conduct a public meeting to gather input for the project planning process.

Lincoln Hill Drive - The committee discussed the project to re-pave Lincoln Hills Drive from Sunflower Drive to September scheduled for the summer of 2022. This stretch is potentially hazardous for pedestrians and bicyclists because there are no sidewalks or bike lanes. The committee will discuss the project further and determine whether or not to provide input to the city staff.

Greenough Heights subdivision - Bob made the committee aware of the new Greenough Heights subdivision of 20 lots to be developed near Cherry Gulch along the east side of Greenough Drive just north of the guardrail. The project will include a new loop street with two intersections of Greenough Drive and 6' wide sidewalk along Greenough Drive with an additional 7' boulevard and curb. The design of the sidewalk, boulevard, curb, etc. could set a precedent for future improvements along Greenough Drive north of this development. As currently proposed, there would still be an approximately 700 foot gap between the new sidewalk section and the existing sidewalk and bike lane that terminates at the top of the Greenough hill south of the development. The project is currently being reviewed by the planning board and will go to the city council for approval.

The committee identified an opportunity to close the gap between the new sidewalk and bike lane and the existing sidewalk and bike lane to enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Bob will draft a letter to the city staff for committee review.

Public comment

Borrow Ditch Trail – Bill stated that he is applying for a city grant to help design and construct a formal trail where the existing informal trail exist along upper Rattlesnake Drive. He has been in touch with Aaron Wilson to determine the process for establishing the trail in the road right-of-way.

Identify the next meeting date & time and prioritize discussion items

April 12, 5-6 pm at the Missoula Library.

Discussion items to include the upcoming 2022 road projects.

Adjourn