



**Missoula Urban Transportation District  
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes  
December 13, 2023**

**APPROVED**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Don MacArthur  
Amy Cilimburg  
Jason Wiener  
Jesse Dodson  
Sebastian Strauss

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

**STAFF**

Corey Aldridge, Gen. Mgr.  
Colin Woodrow, Dir. P3  
Jen Sweten, Dir. Operations  
Olga Kreimer, Comms. Specialist  
Darlene Craven, Exec. Asst.  
Spencer Starke, Assoc. Planner  
Vince Caristo, Contracts Specialist  
Dan Stone, Transit Planner

**Guests**

Chris Proud, Project Manager, HDR  
Ylena Padgett, Transportation Planner, HDR  
Annettee Marchesseault, Project Lead, Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA)

**Call to Order and Roll Call**

11:04 a.m. – MacArthur called the meeting to order and asked for roll call.

**Changes or Additions to the Agenda**

None

**Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda**

None

**Action Items**

**4.1 Minutes of November 11, 2023** – Cilimburg moved to approve the minutes, Dodson seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

**5.1 RAISE Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown** – Woodrow introduced the guests, Proud, Padgett and Marchesseault, who wrote the one-million-dollar planning grant for the RAISE Transform Brooks project. MUTD has joined the project to get to fifteen percent planning with a focus on strategic planning and capital improvement planning.

11:11 – Strauss joined the meeting.

Proud stated that the focus will be on drafting a detailed planning study and outlined the upcoming tasks: clarify the need and purpose, finalize the central running bus concept, develop the fifteen percent design, estimate the cost and provide funding option suggestions. He reviewed the planning history and described the study area, capital route and end points. Woodrow pointed out that the buses will run down the center of Brooks in the main stretch. Steps in the process include:

1. Kickoff, scoping and coordination
2. Concept finalization and environmental impacts
3. Funding study and concept design
4. Design completion and phasing

Partnering with the Montana Department of Transportation and maintaining public engagement are vital to the project's success.

Proud pointed out that making the concept real, even with constraints, is important to establish what the fifteen percent design benchmark will cost. MacArthur asked how the MUTD board would be involved. Woodrow replied that the board would need to weigh in on the kind of buses to be used, cost estimation, how MUTD would plan for this and how the plan would work with current services. Marchesseault added that there would be a lot of questions to answer and approvals to obtain in working collectively to put all the pieces together.

Brooks Street presents many challenges to moving all methods of traffic through efficiently and effectively while providing dependable and frequent transit services. Developing the purpose and need early in the process will help with future planning. Specific needs are underserved communities, safety, alignment of mobility needs and improving travel times.

Study activities include development of purpose and need memorandum, transit propensity memorandum, design criteria guidance, and traffic data collection. Next steps will be developing concrete concepts (safety, center-running buses, maintaining travel lanes, and reducing greenhouse gases) and developing the design.

Previous planning concepts focus on a center-running BRT?? [PLEASE DEFINE] with two general purpose lanes running both directions bordered by sidewalks and bike lanes. Establishing priorities with the available space on Brooks that varies in width will require keeping what's working now while adding the center-running lanes. MacArthur noted sidewalks are essential so purchasing rights-of-way should be a part of the discussion. Proud emphasized that this needs to be a true multi-modal corridor. Woodrow noted that enough greenspace to ensure adequate snow removal, lighting and drainage is an essential component of the project. Marchesseault said the midtown master plan's top findings is that there is strong support for doing something about Brooks that connects the communities. Proud said that the team will need to establish what the tradeoffs are. MacArthur said that residents in underserved neighborhoods should be a discussion focus as is development in the city and on the outskirts. Proud said obtaining funding for the commercial parts of Brooks that would spark investment in that section is another focal point and concluded by asking the committee for an initial reaction.

Dodson strongly supported the Brooks center-running option. Strauss suggested that running the buses off Brooks over to Stephens would be feasible. Aldridge said Stephens has a median in the center so the right-of-way is already there but the Higgins route had better ridership. Kreimer pointed out that using the Mount alternative allowed riders to get closer to the university. Starke stated Stephens wouldn't be easy to rezone to support more commercial businesses. Strauss suggested modifying the bus routes to tie into UM student ridership.

MacArthur asked what the MRA board is doing. Marchesseault replied the MRA board cannot set policy for the city. The study will be presented to the MRA board and then to the MUTD board with a recommendation to the city council to adopt as a policy. MacArthur asked how the project connected to other strategic planning efforts. Woodrow replied that the current strategic planning will contain a current and future conditions report detailing a matrix of options that will require a decision in spring 2024. Aldridge pointed out that it boils down to where the board wants to spend MUTD's funds. MacArthur asked if there is a budget. Proud replied that the study will show magnitude and operational costs. Marchesseault said the funding source would dictate how much would come from local funding. Dodson pointed out that the property owners along the corridor would benefit if the streetscape was improved. Marchesseault said the study will include recommendations for finding funding, but the primary focus is establishing a magnitude cost. MacArthur asked if the costs of right-of-way will be established as well. Marchesseault said those costs should be included in the study and included in the federal funding. MacArthur said that MUTD's previous rights-of-way purchases had cost a lot more than the original estimate and it could be the biggest barrier to the project and its scope. Proud said that the numbers have changed significantly but conservative numbers could be lower than expected. MacArthur said then it becomes a matter of how much friction the project can take with respect to the community.

12:33 – Proud, Padgett and Marchesseault left the meeting.

5.2 Bus Stop Improvement Project Update – Stone reviewed the project from inception in 2015 to the current status, noting that the project wrapped up in late November 2023. The maintenance team is now installing the remaining amenities as staffing allows. There is a new stop at 34<sup>th</sup> Street near the Albertson's and the stop at the Veteran's Administration clinic is now ADA accessible.

Phase 2 of the project is complicated by the sheer number of bus stops (over 350) requiring signs. As of November 2023, all signs and curb striping are complete and the maintenance teams is removing the old signs and other equipment as staffing allows.

Ninety percent of the bus stops on Routes 1 and 2 are now ADA-accessible and reducing the number of near-side stops resulted in an eighteen-percent safety improvement. All 350 stops now have signage for the first time in MUTD history and feature an octagonal shaped pole for the sight impaired. Reducing the stops from 438 to 346 and relocating some of them has maximized service efficiency and easy walkability.

Strauss asked who serviced the trash cans at the bus stops. Aldridge replied that the maintenance team does that work.

Stone related that the next steps are installing the remaining amenities, some curb striping and ground-truthing with data updates for efficient asset management. The bus stop master plan will be updated in 2024.

MacArthur said the project looked great and is transformative in highlighting the stops in a modern, consistent way. Strauss concurred that the stops are noticeable and hopes it pushes ridership. He asked if any remaining funds will be used to put schedule information in the bus stops. Stone said he has discussed low-cost alternatives for providing a QR code at the stops for riders with smartphones. The goal is to put maps in all the shelters though it is difficult to present the entire information easily. Aldridge said that Stone has done a remarkable job.

Woodrow said that item 5.3, the Missoula development report will be presented at the January planning committee meeting.

Starke told the committee about a public meeting on growth policy scheduled at the library for the evening of December 13.

**Adjournment**

1:01 p.m. – MacArthur adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by Darlene Craven