



**Missoula Urban Transportation District Board of Directors
Special Joint Meeting with Missoula Redevelopment
Agency Board of Directors**

Minutes

June 12, 2025

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

Don MacArthur
Sam Oliver
Lisa Sheppard
Amy Cilimborg
Sebastian Strauss
Jason Wiener

MEMBERS ABSENT

Eva Rocke

STAFF PRESENT

Jordan Hess
Colin Woodrow
Heather Halter
Stephane Gariepy
Darlene Craven
Spencer Starke

MRA BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Karl Englund
Natasha Prinzing Jones
Ruth Reineking
Melanie Brock
Jack Lawson
Mike Nugent

STAFF PRESENT

Annette Marchessault, Project Lead
Ellen Buchanan, Executive Director

GUESTS PRESENT

Aaron Wilson, Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization
Chris Proud, HDR Engineering

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

10:00 a.m. – Englund called the meeting to order and asked for a roll call.

2.0 Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

None.

3.0 Reports and Presentation

3.1 Transform Brooks-Connect Midtown RAISE Planning Grant Study Review –

Marchessault stated the purpose of the joint meeting was to review the results of the bus rapid transit study that represented a milestone in providing concrete concepts. She introduced Proud, the lead consultant of the study and Starke, who would present the Mountain Line strategic service plan showing how BRT fits into the transit system.

Proud thanked the MRA staff for their dedication and perseverance. He related that the final concepts and layouts would be presented at the scheduled public meeting. The study initially focused on creating BRT concepts on the Brooks corridor, including design and cost estimates. Dedicated space, economic development and complete streets were the main focus. Modeling revealed that routing along Stephens and Brooks and establishing a southern terminus in the Southgate Mall vicinity supported the best ridership for Mountain Line's system growth. High quality stops, reliability and frequency work in both side and center running configurations though the recommendation is to advance the side-running configuration. Key reasons include lower overall capital cost, potentially safer and fewer traffic impacts. Ten stops from downtown to the southern terminus are proposed that should not change the current traffic flow. Medians would help to control traffic and safety. The next steps include engagement and continued community outreach.

Missoula MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan Update – Wilson explained that the MPO was finalizing its LRTP update (occurring every four years) in collaboration with Mountain Line for adopting by the end of July. The process started in January 2024 and included public outreach, developing scenarios, and drafting a final list of projects, programs and policies for guiding future funding decisions. Among the challenging existing conditions are growth, housing affordability, transit ridership still under pre-COVID numbers, transportation safety and equity, and the roadway network. Key emerging themes included mobility options, underserved community locations, and cost of living and housing. Revenue sources for funding projects include federal and state grants as well as local capital through mill levies. Prioritized projects include crash reduction, bicycle and pedestrian safety, economic opportunity, and recreation access.

The LRTP recommends funding 193 projects covering 209 corridor miles. Grant funding will play an increasingly vital role for completing projects like BRT. Performance measures include bike lane striping, sidewalks, increased mobility and enhanced stormwater infrastructure. Implementing steps include maintaining a multimodal network year-round, optimizing signal timing in key corridors, positioning for infrastructure funding and advancing the greenway network. Missoula received a \$59 million federal grant to complete the Russell Street corridor that was not included in the LRTP finance section due to timing. The plan will be presented at the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee meeting in July for adoption.

Mountain Line 2025 Transit Service Plan – Starke explained the transit service plan was drafted in coordination with the MPO and focused on service implementation based on ridership changes and development patterns. Improving frequency, maintaining coverage, and exploring new services are near term priorities. Long term changes include the BRT operating out of a southern terminus and improving frequency while maintaining coverage while near term plans focus on route changes and extensions based on ridership shifts.

Brock asked if the southern terminus had been finalized. Proud responded that since ridership decreased considerably at the Walmart end point, it made sense to focus on the Southgate Mall area. Buchanan said a facility would be built at the Southgate Crossing location at some point, but nothing had been decided yet. Hess said a transfer center where buses could turn around could be located elsewhere as long as it was proximate to Brooks to serve BRT routing.

In response to Englund's question as to what is next, Proud said the public hearing would help steer the direction and potential funding opportunities are being explored. The current study establishes costs, design and impacts to proceed. There are funding opportunities within the current administration. Marchessault added that the study provides a substantial template for proceeding. Mountain Line is expanding its fleet and MRA is creating incentives for encouraging economic development in Midtown to support the BRT. Steps such as establishing strategic pedestrian crossings can be started now. Hess pointed out that it will take time to change 70 years of mixed land use. The best step MRA can take is to work on the land use portion while Mountain Line can complete its new facility.

MacArthur asked how much right of way is needed to rework the street for BRT. Marchessault said it wouldn't be possible to know that until the project can proceed. Buchanan added that the study used the existing curb lines to the extent feasible to avoid rebuilding Brooks. Marchessault said the highest priority would be to improve the inadequate pedestrian access.

Wiener asked how much lead time Mountain Line would need to implement changes dictated by the BRT. Proud said it could be five to seven years before buses actually start running. Starke added that additional vehicles and staffing would need to be purchased, and the new facility would need to be completed.

Marchessault said the plan would be presented to stakeholder groups such as the city council to get comment before adopting it as part of the Midtown plan that would establish credibility with the FTA for requesting funding. Proud said the FTA wants to see community alignment between the various stakeholders for providing matching funding.

Englund asked about the state's position. Marchessault said the Montana Department of Transportation supported the BRT study and has been supportive throughout the process.

Strauss asked if traffic signal prioritization could be implemented with the regular bus routes. Hess said the infrastructure is not in place to be able to use TSP as it is a many-layered process.

5.0 Adjournment – Englund adjourned the joint meeting at 11:30 a.m.