



APPENDIX B: PAST PLAN SUMMARY

Appendix B – Past Plan Summary

Introduction

Appendix B includes summaries of plans the community has completed that are relevant to the Billings Bikeway and Trails Master Plan Update. Summaries of the following plans are included:

- East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan
- South Billings Master Plan
- Billings, Montana, Complete Streets Benchmark Report
- Billings Exposition Gateway Feasibility Study
- City of Billings Hospitality Corridor Planning Study
- 2014 Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan
- ZooMontana to Riverfront Park Trail Feasibility Study
- Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District Plan
- Highway 3 Corridor Study
- Rimrocks to Valley Bike|Ped Feasibility Study
- Community Transportation Safety Plan
- Growth Policy Update
- West End Multi-Modal Planning Study

East Billings Urban Renewal District Master Plan (2009)

Prepared For: Big Sky Economic Development Authority

Plan Overview

The plan area is east of downtown Billings, generally bounded by 22nd Street, 6th Avenue N, MetraPark, and Montana Avenue. The primarily industrial area has been identified as a natural progression of the revitalization of Billings' downtown. The plan sets forth a vision for development of a multi-faceted district, mixing clean industry, residential, commercial, and tourism.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The study findings identify that traffic is primarily pass-through for travelers coming to or from downtown and to the MetraPark area. Most east-west streets are one-way arterials, with two-way traffic on north-south streets.

The plan recommends redeveloping three streets with a “main street” feeling: 2nd Avenue is planned to become a two-way street serving east-west traffic, with 13th and 20th Streets planned as the primary north-south streets, and an extension of Montana Street to supplement east-west traffic. These streets would include bicycle lanes and parking, and be designed to maintain low traffic speeds. Other large one-way arterials are recommended to have a bicycle lane, and the plan also recommends trail extensions north of MetraPark and south to the Yellowstone River Trail. Arterials identified to have bike lanes include:

- 1st Avenue N
- Main Street/Exposition Drive N
- 4th Avenue N
- 6th Avenue N
- Montana Avenue

South Billings Master Plan (2012)

Prepared For: City of Billings

Plan Overview

The plan focuses on an area south of Laurel Road and State Avenue to the City of Billings’ southern boundary and includes four neighborhoods, Orchard, Optimist, Amend Village, and Four Corners. The area is south of the large King Avenue industrial district, but it is primarily residential, with some commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas along the main streets within the study area. The southern part of the plan area is bisected by I-90. The goal of the plan is to create a long-term strategy to improve the community through infrastructure, place-making, and social programs.

Key Findings and Recommendations

From an infrastructure standpoint, the plan identifies the study area’s low density and lack of robust utility and transportation infrastructure as barriers to development. The plan recommends a series of upgrades to improve transportation within the district, including: applying Complete Streets strategies in concert with future development; paving existing unpaved streets; connecting existing dead-end streets; and adding trail connections south to the Yellowstone River. In addition to physical improvements, the plan recommends implementing a Safe Routes to School program within the district.

Billings, Montana, Complete Streets Benchmark Report (2013)

Prepared For: Healthy by Design Built Environment Workgroup

In 2011, the City of Billings officially adopted a Complete Streets Policy to systematically integrate all modes of transportation into all transportation projects in Billings to improve the health, safety and well-being of Billings' residents and visitors. Three years after the policy's adoption, the Complete Streets Benchmarking report was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the complete streets policy over time.

The report highlights the growing body of evidence indicating the health, economic, and environmental benefits of active transportation and better transit access. The majority of the report focuses on infrastructure improvements that have been made specifically for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

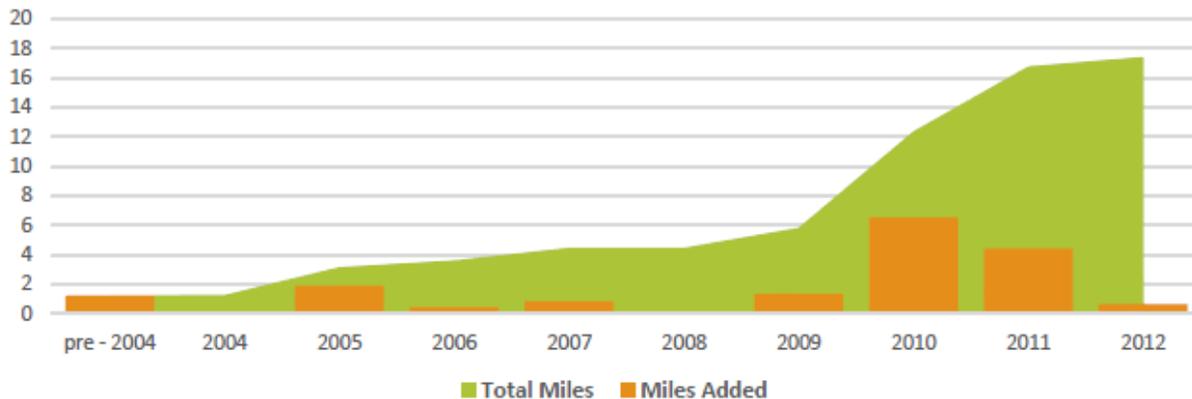
Key Findings and Recommendations

Pedestrians – At the time of publication, there was limited data available that provided insight into pedestrian travel patterns within the city. Riverstone Health commissioned the collection of pedestrian data at six key intersections, three of which were near recent pedestrian crossing improvements. The report recommended that these counts be continued subsequently so the city could determine what the impact of the improvements were over time. The report also notes that Billings had the highest number of reported pedestrian crashes in Montana, and the fourth highest rate of pedestrian crashes in the state (pedestrian crashes per 1,000 population). Reviewing pedestrian crash statistics from 2006 to 2011, crashes ranged from thirty-one to forty-three crashes per year, but there was no clear trend regarding crashes over time. The report also noted that the city was geocoding pedestrian facilities, such as sidewalks and crosswalk locations, and had planned to complete this data-set by 2015.

Bicyclists – The city recognized the importance of bicycling and trail use in Billings with the publication of the 2011 Billings Area Bikeway and Trails Master Plan Update. This plan made several recommendations to improve the bicyclist-user experience in Billings, including on-street bikeways, trails, crossing improvements, and programs that would support a growing culture of bicycling in the community. The Benchmarking Report included statistics that tracked the implementation of bike lanes since 2004. While the data indicated that the total miles of bike lanes had steadily increased, the miles implemented per year indicated no clear trend over time. The year with the most facility implementation was 2010, when approximately six miles were installed, while there were two years between 2004 and 2012 when no facilities were implemented, 2004 and 2008. As of 2013, there were approximately 40 miles of on-street bike lanes existing. Reviewing bicycle crash statistics from 2006 to 2011, crashes ranged from twenty-two to forty-seven crashes per year, but there was no clear trend regarding crashes over time. Bicycle counts were also collected at six key intersections, and the plan recommended that these counts be continued to track changes over time.

Figure 4.1 Yearly Bike Lane Mileage Added & Total (Pre-2004 to 2012)

Data Source: City of Billings



*note the report indicated that this data is tracked per year (maybe check the GIS file to verify).

The report included a chart of roadway projects completed during the 2012 construction season. Of the fourteen projects listed, ten included pedestrian and/or bicycle enhancements.

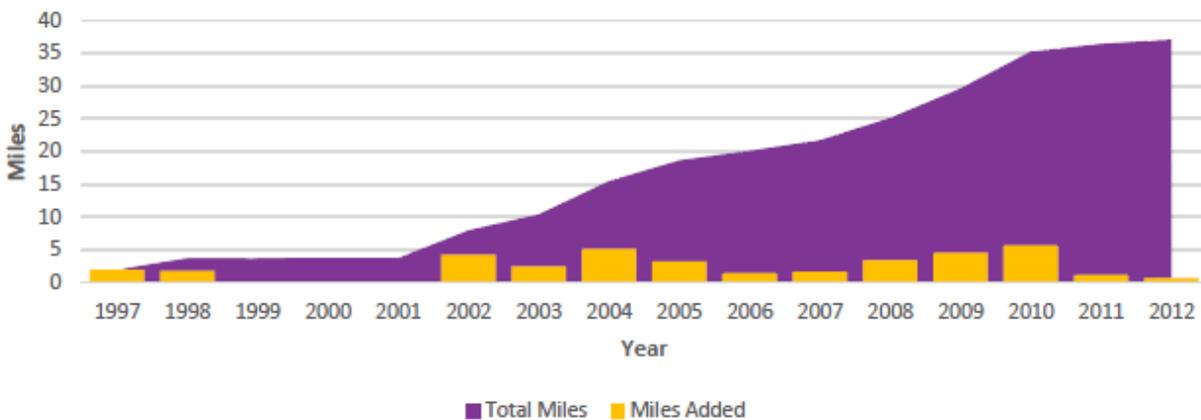
Transit – The report indicates that transit ridership within the MET region declined slightly from 2007 to 2012 by about 60,000 riders. The City of Billings MET Transit System provides public transportation through fixed-route and paratransit services throughout the city. MET transit operates a flag down bus system, enabling users to flag down a bus along a route. Busses stop at most intersections along a route, as well as at designated MET bus stop signs. There are eighteen routes total, and busses are ADA-accessible and equipped with bike-on-bus racks. Usage of the bike-on-bus racks had steadily increased, from about 12,000 to over 18,000 uses per year between 2007 and 2011. To use transit, pedestrians must have adequate facilities to reach the stops. At the time of publication, 86 percent (or 150 of the 173 miles) of the bus route network had sidewalks.

As of 2013, Billings has 40 miles of on-street bike lanes, eight miles of neighborhood paths, 38 miles of paved multi-use paths, 600 miles of sidewalks

The report concludes with a presentation of the health and economic benefits of increased rates of walking and bicycling. Overweight and obesity, like in most American cities, continue to be a growing issues for Billings. Transportation costs are also high, representing a significant portion of Billings’ residents’ income. By improving walking and bicycling infrastructure, more people can potentially use active modes of transportation and also reduce their transportation costs by shifting to less expensive modes.

Figure 6.1 Yearly Multi-use Path Mileage Added & Total

Data Source: City of Billings



Billings Exposition Gateway Concept Plan (2013)

Prepared For: Big Sky Economic Development

Plan Overview

The Exposition Gateway planning area encompasses properties both within and adjacent to the eastern-most edge of the East Billings Urban Renewal District. Only some of the properties are annexed into the City of Billings, while others remain in the County only. It generally covers an area from US Highway 87 (Exposition Drive) to 6th Avenue North to 10th Street North and south to the railroad tracks. The plan addresses recommendations for revitalization of the area through storm water management, connections to MetraPark, attraction of hospitality businesses and gateway enhancements.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Major streets in the development were classified as major arterials, retail streets, a gateway boulevard and a signature street. A major recommendation was the need for a pedestrian overcrossing to facilitate the safe crossing across Highway 87, a six-lane arterial highway. Additional recommendations include a multi-use trail on the east side of Highway 87, along with sidewalks on the avenue streets leading to MetraPark.

City of Billings Hospitality Corridor Planning Study (2013)

Prepared For: Yellowstone County Board of Commissioners

Plan Overview

The plan's focus area is the corridor along US Highway 87, Main Street, and Exposition Drive and is intended as a transportation study compliment to the Exposition Gateway Master Plan, which focused on land use. The study focuses on five key points along the corridor: Airport Road, 4th and 6th Avenues, 3rd Avenue, 1st Avenue/Exposition, and the Lockwood Interchange, and it seeks to enhance the streetscape and improve pedestrian access and safety in this area.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The plan identifies opportunities in the five key areas, generally focused on recommendations to improve pedestrian infrastructure. Near-term projects include intersection improvements and widening a sidewalk to create a multi-use path along US Highway 87 and MetraPark. Proposed bikeway improvements include an off-street path running along 6th Avenue North. Long-term projects include a pedestrian crossing at Exposition Drive and a roundabout at the intersection of US Highway 87, 1st Avenue North, and Exposition Drive. The plan identifies sidewalks with a planted buffer between the travel way and the sidewalk, and trails and bicycle parking in its corridor-wide design recommendations. The plan also provides general section diagrams for each segment of the corridor.

2014 Billings Urban Area Long-Range Transportation Plan (2014)

Prepared For: City of Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

The plan focuses on long-range multimodal transportation systems for the Billings Urban Area, which includes the City of Billings and a 4.5 mile radius beyond. The study includes all modes of transportation in the area: vehicular, transit, bicycle/pedestrian, freight, and rail—and has a twenty-year forecast. The goals of the plan include development of a safe, efficient, and effective multimodal transportation system that is environmentally and economically sustainable, and it identifies a prioritized list of project to reach these goals. For bicycling, the plan identifies a regional goal of having the most comprehensive bicycle and trail networks in the state and a Bicycle Friendly Community rating of Gold by 2020.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The planning team used existing demographic data and bicycle counts and reviewed existing bicycle infrastructure as part of the study. For the City of Billings, the plan reported that in 2011, the bicycle mode share for work commuting was .7 percent, and reported that bicycle mode share for school

commuting was 2.1 percent. Existing bicycle infrastructure consisted of 17.4 miles of on-street bicycle facilities, and 71 miles of trails (37 multi-use, 11 soft surface, 9 neighborhood, 14 unimproved). While there was a low percentage of crashes involving bicyclists overall (5 percent), half of those caused injuries. Public comments related to bicycles and trail included adding bike lanes and sharrows to roadways, providing safe routes to popular destinations—especially to downtown and near schools, improving the connectivity of the trail system to on-street facilities and transit, and increasing education on non-motorized travel. Forty-four percent of all comments collected were related to non-motorized modes of travel, indicating large public support for these types of infrastructure improvements.

The plan recommends on-street and trail systems, and provides planning-level costs and prioritization for these recommended projects, including 92 miles of bike lanes, 11 miles of new bicycle routes, 13 miles of bicycle boulevards, and 118 miles of trails. The largest projects are new rail with trail projects along the BNSF and MRL lines and the Inner Belt Loop trail. On-street facilities generally focus on major streets and extend facilities west to Shiloh Road and northeast to the Heights.

ZooMontana to Riverfront Park Trail Feasibility Study (2014)

Prepared For: Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

The study evaluates options for a trail connection from ZooMontana to Riverfront Park to take advantage of land development occurring in the area. The study area is broken down into four sub-areas, and potential trail segments are identified along existing rights of way, streets, or other land use elements within each sub-area.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The study identified opportunities along existing frontage roads, railroad alignments, and wide or parklike streets to create trail segments. Each potential segment was scored based on user comfort, existing structures, existing rights-of-way, access to nature and development, long-term land use, and environmental impacts. Because of the flux of development in the area, the study team created a list of actions for each sub-area to enable discrete segments of trail to be implemented as different developments advance.

Lockwood Area Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2015)

Prepared For: Yellowstone County Board of Commissioners

Plan Overview

The Yellowstone County Board of Commissioners created the Lockwood Pedestrian Safety District in 2014 in order to improve pedestrian safety in the Lockwood area. The general boundary of the plan is the Lockwood Elementary School District. The land use is increasingly commercial along major routes, suburban residential and agricultural land. The major roadways within the bounds of the district are I-90/94, Old Hardin Road, Old Highway 87, Coburn Road, and Johnson Lane. The plan seeks to eliminate pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries caused by vehicles within the study area. While focused on pedestrian infrastructure, the plan does identify bicycle and trail infrastructure improvements that should be implemented in tandem with pedestrian improvements.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The plan found that sidewalks exist on less than 2 percent of all roads in the study area, and those sidewalks that do exist are often not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The plan recommends a five-year work plan organized in the 6 Es, including increased education and encouragement around walking and bicycling; a series of sidewalk, crossing, and trail improvements; and evaluation programs such as pedestrian and bicycle counts. Specific infrastructure projects designated as high-priority included a sidewalk along US Highway 87 from Old Hardin Road to Peters Street, lights and waiting areas at bus stops, pedestrian infrastructure on Old Hardin Road, sidewalks on Becraft Lane (the site of a 2013 pedestrian fatality) and Piccolo Lane, and trail infrastructure along existing canals and Lockwood Irrigation District ditches.

Highway 3 Corridor Study (2015)

Prepared For: Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

This corridor planning effort is focused on North 27th Street to the Apache Trail along Montana State Highway 3. The goals of the study included identifying the highway's impact on adjacent land development, traffic patterns (both vehicular and non-motorized), stormwater management, and recommending roadway improvements along the corridor.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Highway 3 runs along the rimrocks formation, and the area north of the highway is estimated to exhibit high levels of development, especially in concert with the development of the Inner Belt Loop

Trail. In addition, the corridor is within 1 mile of 12 miles of trails and 300 acres of the parks, so it is a critical connection to Billings' recreational opportunities.

Recommendations include creating roadway profile consisting of two travel lanes, a center turn lane, and bike lanes in each direction. An off-street a shared-use trail would parallel the highway to the south, with trailheads and parking at Swords Park, Zimmerman Park, and a new trailhead at the existing parking lot.

Rimrocks to Valley Bike|Ped Feasibility Study (2016)

Prepared For: Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

This study outlines options for separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Highway 3, which extends from the rimrocks cliff formation to the valley below, and connects to the Marathon Loop Trail. The study area consists of Highway 3 on the north, Rimrock Road to the south, Zimmerman Trail on the west, and North 27th Street to the east. Because of the terrain, few feasible locations exist within the study area, especially that would conform with ADA.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The study identified four routes that could be considered to connect the top of the rims to the bottom of the rims: Stagecoach Trail, Myers Trail, Morledge Trail, and 27th Street Trail. The study outlines considerations such as slope, surfacing, geographic hazards, and opportunities for trailheads or other place-making. Each alternative's potential cost is also included in the study, though it does not offer any recommendations on which alternative to pursue.

Community Transportation Safety Plan (2016)

Prepared for Billings-Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

The purpose of the plan was to determine the transportation safety issues in Billings using a data-driven approach and to reduce fatal and serious injuries as a result of motor vehicle crashes.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Three areas were identified to focus on safety enhancements: unrestrained occupants, impaired driving and inattentive driving/speeding. The data from the plan indicates that over a 5-year period, 37 pedestrian-involved and 10 bicycle-involved serious injuries and fatalities were identified.

Pedestrian and bicycle involved crashes happened at intersections in 43.8 and 46.2 percent of the time, and included a young driver 38.4 and 30.8 percent of the time. This data only reflects crashes that resulted in a DOT-classified serious injury or fatality, not all crashes.

2016 Growth Policy Update (Ongoing)

Prepared For: City of Billings/Yellowstone County Metropolitan Planning Organization

Plan Overview

This planning process aims to update the 2008 Growth Policy for the City of Billings and Yellowstone County. A number of potential growth scenarios are being evaluated, with growth concentrated in the north or west or infill and under both high- and low-density options. The team is evaluating these growth scenarios with regards to infrastructure investment, housing options, mobility and access requirements, place-making, community characteristics, and neighborhood needs. Public comments on the growth policy so far have indicated a desire for transportation options, bike and trail infrastructure, and green space.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The policy for the City of Billings is still in progress, though recommendations have been developed for Lockwood. The growth policy for Lockwood recommends developing a Main Street-style town center with a variety of housing options. Specific recommendations included adjusting zoning requirements to increase density and to include multi-use zoning within the town center area; including pedestrian safety and addressing all users when designing the future roadway network; creating a Targeted Economic Development District (TEDD) to increase economic development; and protecting the floodway.

West End Multi-Modal Planning Study (Ongoing)

Prepared For: City of Billings/Yellowstone County

Plan Overview

This in-progress planning effort focuses on land development at the west end of Billings, generally bounded by Rimrock Road to the north, 64th Street West to the west, Neibauer Road to the south, and 48th Street West to the east. The project focuses on modeling the impact on transportation patterns due to current and future development projects. The intent of the plan is to prioritize recommendations that mitigate projected traffic impacts caused by development in the study area. Currently, no specifics related to bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure improvements have been identified, but the scope of the project does include all modes in the analysis.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The draft study found that, under 2015 traffic conditions, the study area's street corridors operated at an acceptable level of service for vehicles, though seven intersections had high crash rates. The study area has limited bicycle facilities, resulting in a stressful bicycling environment. Recommendations included adding bicycle facilities on 54th Street, 48th Street, Grand Avenue, and Central Avenue in the short term, and creating low-stress corridors along 58th Street, 66th Street, 60th Street, 52nd Street, Monad Road, Broadwater Avenue, and Colton Boulevard. Improvements recommended include shoulder widening, creation of protected bicycle lanes, and creation of sidepaths to accommodate safer riding on high-stress corridors.