

To: Missoula City Council, Mary McCrea (City Development Services) cc. Burley McWilliams
From: Teresa Jacobs, Wapikiya neighborhood resident

Friday May 17, 2019

Pedestrian routes, bus stops, and traffic flow/safety are still on my mind in regards to the proposed Hillview Crossing development. I hope that you will require Hillview Crossing to align with the city's commitments (green and clean) to help residents access buses and otherwise move safely around the city on bikes and on foot, while also not creating hazards for buses and other vehicles. I hope you will consider inviting MCPS's Operations Director Burley McWilliams and others (Beach Transportation that serves MCPS and Mountain Line) to help sort out some possible ramifications of current plans and what might be other better alternatives.

Please reject the developers' most recently proposed route for a year-around pedestrian access through Hillview Crossing that does not directly connect the top and bottom tiers of townhomes, as that could discourage efficient walking to and from bus stops. Please also reject the developer's assertion to you that any kids living in Hillview Crossing will just be driven to school (as a self-fulfilling prophecy).

1) Concerns about current bus stops to get students to Russell Elementary, etc.:

Bus Stop A - Too far and too difficult to walk uphill, and could be safer

Students carrying backpacks would walk up or down Hillview Crossing neighborhood (undecided - 1/4 to 1/2 mile?) with 150 foot elevation change for some), then walk over nearly 1/2 mile through the Wapikiya neighborhood (narrow roads and no sidewalks) to the current bus stop at 39th and Russell where there is a Mountain Line bus road pull-off. FYI: The MCPS website states that students are not allowed to cross 39th Street.

Bus Stop B - Too far and too difficult to walk uphill, and not safe

Students carrying backpacks would walk up or down Hillview Crossing neighborhood (unclear - 1/4 to 1/2 mile?) with 150 foot elevation change for some), cross Hillview Way (crosswalk on a hill), walk up or down for nearly .4 miles on Hillview Way on sidewalks before crossing Hillview Way (existing sidewalk on relatively flat elevation) to get to the current bus stop at Clearview Way (entrance to Oak Hills). MCPS Operations Director Burley McWilliams (in his January email to city staffer Anita McNamara) stated that having students cross Hillview would be a safety concern. Would requiring them to cross twice even be acceptable?

2) Concern that proposed cross walk near the entrance to Hillview Crossing poses a potential public traffic hazard, and a risk for pedestrians too:

In the course of speaking with MCPS's Burley McWilliams about school bus routes, he was surprised and concerned to learn about a proposed crosswalk. He mentioned the danger of impeding the momentum of traffic heading uphill on slippery winter days (the same concern he mentioned in his email to city staff about buses on steep roads within Hillview Crossing. He mentioned that he's seen many vehicles get stuck on Hillview, sometimes behind cars that slow down or stop approaching the crest of the steep hill.

Members of the public have also expressed concerned about the safety of pedestrians crossing Hillview Way **on the hill**, considering the speed of vehicles coming downhill,

especially on slippery days (35 mph speed limit going downhill but it is easy to get going faster due to decline) and the angle of the sun in winter impeding sight there at certain times of the day.

- 3) **Brainstorming “win-win” options – practical, safe routes to school and city bus stops (and the safest links between public trail systems across major roads)**
- a) A better bus stop for getting to school: I’ve asked Burley McWilliams if MCPS would consider adding a bus stop at Wapikiya Park, at the base of the hillside to shorten the walking distance for students living in Hillview Crossing development as well as students in the Wapikiya neighborhood, and to increase safety since Wapikiya is without sidewalks. Students living on the hill would walk downhill to their bus stop.
 - b) A better bus stop for getting home from school: I’ve also asked if MCPS would consider dropping Hillview Crossing students (after school) at a new bus stop on Hillview Way (beyond Hillview Crossing’s proposed entrance where it starts to level out a bit). This way, students would only walk downhill a short distance home and avoid the risks of students crossing Hillview Way.
 - c) And if Mountain Line were to add Hillview Way route, then adult bike commuters heading downhill to work or the UM in the morning could hook bikes onto a bus to avoid the big hill and utilize this new bus stop too.
 - d) A possible resource – The Montana Cadastral system map shows that Hillview Crossing Missoula, LLC that owns the nearly 25 acres being proposed for townhouse development, also apparently owns a long strip of land along that undeveloped side of Hillview Way (no sidewalks) uphill from their proposed entrance road. Would these land owners be willing to create a road turn-off spot exclusively for use by buses (MCPS buses and also Mountain Line buses in the future?)
 - e) Technical questions - Is there a spot uphill from the proposed entrance flat enough to create a bus pull-off area? Could the pull off be engineered to allow traction by buses even in the winter? Is there better place for a crosswalk for use by Tonkin Trail hikers that is easily seen by vehicles approaching from both directions (and as far away as practical from the crest of the hill so as not to impede uphill traffic)?

Photo:
See right turn lane off Hillview Way at the entrance to Elk Hills development (at Hillview and Clearview) that keeps uphill traffic from being impeded. Also note the sidewalk there on a relatively flat stretch of road.



Thanks for reading! T.J.