



MEMORANDUM

TO: MRA Board of Commissioners

FROM: Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*

DATE: July 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Front/Main Conversion Design Contract – Amendment 1

The conversion of Front and Main Streets to two-way circulation has been a top priority in both of the Downtown Master Plans. The 2009 master plan recommended that the City consider protected bike lanes on both Higgins and Broadway along with a strong recommendation that Front and Main be converted to two-way streets. In 2015, HDR, under contract with the MRA, completed a feasibility study focusing on satisfying the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) that a conversion would not adversely impact the intersections with State routes on Madison Street, Higgins Avenue and Orange Street. The other goal of the study was to give the City guidance as to how intersections and parking would work with the conversion. This has allowed decisions to be made within the public right of way when new development occurred that would not impede the conversion when funding was available to move forward with the project. The 2015 Feasibility Study was successful in both respects.

Fast forward 10 years and it was evident that so many things in the original master plan had been accomplished and things had changed significantly enough that a fresh look at the downtown was warranted. In 2018, the Business Improvement District contracted with Dover Kohl & Partners to guide the community through an evaluation of the previous plan and a very robust planning process which resulted in Missoula's Downtown Master Plan which was adopted in 2019. The current plan continues to place a high priority on the conversion of Front and Main Streets. Both master plans acknowledged the importance of accommodating multiple modes of travel throughout downtown with an emphasis on bicycles, pedestrians and transit. The protected bike lanes on North Higgins were a direct result of the recommendations in the 2009 Plan, which recommended protected bike lanes and new curb extensions on both Higgins and Broadway. A significant difference between the two plans is that the current plan focused more on continuing a three-lane street with protected bike facilities on Higgins south of Broadway and looked at creating the east/west bike facility on Main Street.

Once it became apparent that new Federal funding for infrastructure was going to be forthcoming through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, MRA staff requested that the

Board direct staff to issue an RFP to engage an engineering firm to take the 2015 Feasibility Study to the next step and prepare it to be more competitive for Federal grant funds by being fully engineered and ready to construct. Upon approval of that request, MRA issued an RFP for full engineering design of the configuration of Front and Main identified in the 2015 Feasibility Study. The Board approved funding for a Professional Services Agreement and Scope of Services with HDR in the amount of \$428,215 at the April 15, 2021 Board meeting.

HDR advanced the 2015 design concept to the 30% stage and submitted it for review by the City and MDT. City staff felt strongly that we should look at the feasibility of including the protected bike lanes on Main Street per the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan. This recommendation was bolstered by the City's decision to conduct a public process around the redesign of Higgins from Broadway to Brooks with the hope of continuing the three-lane cross section and protected bike lanes. By moving the protected bike lanes off of Broadway, the City is acknowledging that this is MDT's major east/west connector north of the river and, while it needs to have bicycle facilities, protected bike lanes may be more appropriate on Main or Front. Based on the 30% design comments from City staff, HDR began investigating the impacts of the bike facility on Main Street and it quickly became apparent that it would displace more parking than was likely to be acceptable to downtown businesses and residents. HDR then proposed an innovative approach which included a one-directional protected bike lane on each street with the eastbound lane on the south side of Main Street and the westbound lane on the north side of Front. This has turned out to be the balance between bicycles, pedestrians and vehicles that we hoped to achieve.

The work done to date on this project is not lost as a result of this shift in concept; however, it has caused a significant increase in the scope of the project. The 2015 concept only involved redesign of twelve of the intersections between Madison and Orange. With the addition of the bike lanes, all of the intersections require varying degrees of redesign including curb extensions and drainage modifications in some cases necessitating additional survey work. One of the unwavering assumptions in 2015 and today is that we will work within the existing curb lines; consequently, the change in design has put stress on how much we can accommodate within the existing curbs and right of way, pitting travel lanes, bike facilities, pedestrian needs, on-street parking and street trees against each other as they compete for space. We have successfully worked through those issues with compromise on all sides and believe that we have a design concept that is not the gold standard for any component but is one that works for all of these interests. One new element that the compromises have brought about is the need for a landscaping plan. The final bid documents will now include a fairly sophisticated landscaping component in order to assure that we are offering existing healthy trees a good chance of remaining healthy as we add facilities next to them and we will be adding a suspended pavement system where there are no boulevards to support tree growth.

One other thing that we are proposing is to add the traffic analysis that is needed for the development of the Riverfront Triangle property to HDR's scope of work. It is difficult to consider what is happening on the west side of Orange St. without taking into consideration the impact of making Front and Main two-way streets and modifying the intersection at Main and Orange. We believe that there may be design changes in the Front/Main/Orange intersection that could benefit the additional traffic resulting from the Riverfront Triangle project and potentially eliminate the need to consider widening Orange Street. That street is already a major barrier street as we strive to expand downtown to the west and any widening

to accommodate the additional traffic will only exacerbate the challenges of creating a comfortable pedestrian or bicycle experience there. It will facilitate decisions by potential developers west of Orange if we are able to resolve impacts and mitigation as part of the current project. Uncertainty about what MDT might require on Orange and Broadway are a major concern and we believe that we can resolve that with this scope change.

As has been discussed previously, one of the major concerns with the conversion to two-way streets is the impact on circulation in the Kiwanis Park neighborhood. That is part of the current scope of work; however, we have encountered some obstacles that were not anticipated. There are only a couple of possible ways to provide reasonable access in and out of that area when Front Street becomes two-way. One had a significant impact on Kiwanis Park and is not feasible due to restrictions on that land. Parsons Drive is currently one-way into the neighborhood from Front Street. If it was changed to one-way north, or out of the neighborhood, egress would be improved significantly. Unfortunately, Parsons Drive is in private ownership and the owner is not receptive to changing the direction of traffic from inbound to outbound. Our inability to redirect traffic on Parsons Drive has resulted in a redesign of the Front/Madison intersection to a five-leg intersection so that traffic can exit the neighborhood on Hartman at a signalized intersection. In order to be able to visually demonstrate how circulation will work to residents and property owners, we believe that a traffic simulation model that demonstrates traffic flow in real time is an inexpensive tool to share with people as we move forward. In addition to the simulation showing the current design, we have asked HDR to create an additional model with the direction of traffic on Parsons reversed to demonstrate how that circulation pattern would function in the event that the owner might reconsider that decision. The traffic simulation is included in the amendment under consideration.

The Higgins Avenue redesign project is well underway with a lot of public input. The preferred alternative, by a significant margin, is to continue the three-lane cross-section found north of Broadway and add protected bike lanes while maintaining on-street parking. City staff is hopeful that enough of MDT's concerns can be addressed to get this transformative project to a "yes". The Higgins project is well behind the Front and Main redesign and how the intersections and traffic signals will be integrated is challenging. In an ideal world, we might be able to combine the two projects and seek Federal infrastructure funding for one large project. HDR is working with Kittleson & Associates, the engineers for the Higgins project, to understand how best to design the intersections and which project builds what portions in the event that the projects cannot be combined. One thought is that we may choose to finalize all other aspects of the Front/Main conversion except those two intersections and pause final design until we know that we have a path forward with MDT and what the requirements of that path might be.

The final component to this scope change is that Mountain Line has made the decision to focus transit on Front Street. That has necessitated the addition of several bus stops on Front and opened up the ability to put two bus stops on Ryman between Main and Front, creating a mini transit hub at the gateway to Caras Park. As part of the additional survey work that is needed, we have added the gateway into Caras to the scope, giving Annette necessary information as she works on the interface between Front Street and the new elevations proposed as part of the North Riverside Parks and Trails Master Plan.

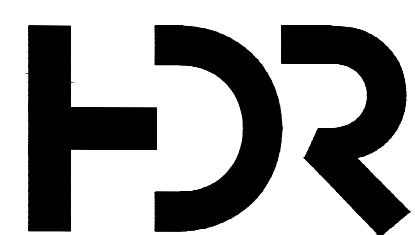
It is exciting to realize that the Front and Main project has really become the spine that knits several important downtown projects together in a cohesive way. The increase in scope needed to get this done correctly is not inexpensive but staff is confident that it is necessary if we want to maximize our investments in downtown. The revised project now provides excellent east/west bicycle facilities (currently nonexistent), significant investment in the eastern part of downtown which saw limited investment when it was part of URD I, facilitation of development of the Riverfront Triangle and enhancements which will benefit our riverfront parks and trails.

The additional scope of work will require a contract amendment of \$233,563. This includes a contingency of \$31,915, which may or may not be needed. Those of you who have been on the Board for some time might recall that we created a contingency fund for the design of Silver Park because it had a similar number of moving parts and authorized the Director to approve use of that contingency with reports back to the Board. We would request a similar approach for this contingency in order to keep the project moving forward. Not surprisingly, the most significant increases are in additional engineering and design, the additional surveying and the additional traffic data and analysis which includes the traffic simulation and the addition of the Riverfront Triangle redevelopment traffic analysis. The original contract amount was \$428,215. With this addition, if approved, the total cost for 100% design of the Front and Main conversion will be \$661,778 if the contingency is needed. Project cost estimates generated during the 2015 Feasibility Study were just over \$4.5M. We believe that the current project is likely closer to \$8M – \$9M, making engineering fees well below 10% of the project cost. Funds will come from the three impacted districts, Front Street, Riverfront Triangle and Hellgate, which have a combined FY23 contingency of just over \$2.2M.

In summary, the key elements which have contributed to the proposed scope change and amendment are as follows:

- Relocation of the protected bike lanes from Broadway to Front & Main Streets
- Reconciliation of all of the desired elements (bikes, pedestrians, street trees, parking, vehicle travel lanes) in a constrained amount of space
- Addition of the traffic analysis for development of the Riverfront Triangle
- Virtual traffic simulation was added to the scope
- Coordination with the potential redesign of Higgins south of Broadway
- Relocation of east/west bus service to Front Street

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the MRA Board approve Amendment 1 to the Professional Services Agreement for the Front Street/Main Street Two-Way Conversion and Kiwanis Neighborhood Access and Circulation Design in an amount not to exceed \$233,563, authorize the Director to approve use of any contingency funds as necessary and authorize the Chair to sign the Amendment.



FRONT ST/MAIN ST TWO-WAY CONVERSION



LINE IS 1 INCH
AT FULL SIZE
(IF NOT 1" - SCALE ACCORDINGLY)

SHEET NAME
EXHIBIT

SHEET NUMBER
1 OF 1