



## **MRA Project Summary**

February 13, 2023

**Urban Renewal District:** Hellgate, Front Street & Riverfront Triangle URD

**City Council Ward:** 1

**Neighborhood:** Heart of Missoula

**Name of Project:** RAISE Grant Matching Funds - Downtown Safety & Multimodal Connectivity Grant

**Project Location:** Front, Main, Higgins, Beartracks Bridge, Caras Park, Kiwanis Park and Ron's River Trail

**TIF Investment:** \$ 1,000,000

**Project Description:** The City is applying for a RAISE grant to convert Front and Main Streets to two-way streets, convert Higgins Ave. from Broadway to Brooks to an improved three-lane street, provide ADA access from the Beartracks Bridge to Caras Park, provide ADA access from Front St. to Caras Park via Ryman St., provide improved access to Ron's River Trail from Front St. through Kiwanis Park and continue widening Ron's River Trail from Orange to Levasseur Streets.

### **Cost Breakdown of TIF/CCP/CRLP Funds:**

TIF Funds - \$1,000,000 distributed between three URDs

**Unique Public Purpose or Benefit:** This use of TIF funds allows the City to be more competitive in applying for a RAISE Grant that can fund important transportation safety, connectivity and mobility projects that have been identified in the Downtown Master Plans as priorities. These are projects that would take decades to accomplish, if at all, if funding is confined to local dollars. There is an unprecedented amount of Federal infrastructure funding available for which these project components are a strong match.

**Tax Increment Investment:** MRA will partner with City Public Works & Mobility, City Parks, the Downtown Missoula Partnership, and other agencies and organizations to provide matching funds in order to increase the competitiveness of a RAISE Grant application to fund the important transportation and multimodal projects described above with a commitment of \$1,000,000 to be available in the event that the grant is awarded.

**District Sunset Date:** Hellgate – currently 2029, Front Street – 2046, Riverfront Triangle – currently 2043



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** MRA Board of Commissioners

**FROM:** Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*

**DATE:** February 12, 2023

**SUBJECT:** RAISE Grant Matching Funds – Downtown Safety & Multimodal Connectivity Grant

The City is in the process of writing an application for a US Department of Transportation Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grant (RAISE). The grant focuses on downtown streets and trails with an emphasis on safety, connectivity and mobility. The components of the grant application are funding for the conversion of Front and Main from a one-way couplet to two-way streets with protected bike lanes; the conversion of Higgins Avenue from Broadway to Brooks Streets to an improved three-lane street with dedicated left turn pockets, wider vehicle travel lanes and protected bike lanes; an ADA accessible connection from the Beartracks Bridge to Caras Park; modifications to Ryman Street to provide ADA access from Front Street into Caras Park; improved access to Ron's River Trail from Front Street through Kiwanis Park; and extension of the widening of Ron's River Trail from Orange Street to Levasseur Street. The grant amount will be between \$20M and \$25M and, if awarded, will accomplish some of the most impactful transportation and multimodal recommendations in the Downtown Master Plans. These are projects that would take decades to accomplish, if at all, if funding is confined to local dollars. There is currently an unprecedented amount of Federal infrastructure funding available for which these project components are a strong match.

When it became obvious that there was likely to be a large Federal infrastructure bill funded, MRA committed resources to engineer Front and Main to the point of being shovel ready in order to assure that it could be competitive for grant funding. We are at 90% design and once we get all of the necessary approvals, the project will be ready to bid. City staff debated whether to simply apply for the Front/Main conversion or expand the project to include other elements that make the project a more holistic approach to addressing an efficient, sustainable and equitable transportation network for the downtown and settled on the scope described above as being the most competitive. I have attached a graphic which demonstrates the interconnectivity of multiple transportation projects in Missoula with an emphasis on the components of the Downtown Safety & Multimodal Connectivity Grant.

Montana is in the category of rural projects which do not require matching funds. If this was an urban grant it would require a minimum of a 20% match. We believe that if we can

provide some level of matching funds, the grant will be more competitive. We are working on providing matching funds from MRA, Parks, the Business Improvement District (BID), the Missoula Downtown Foundation (MDF) and Mountain Line. If we are not successful in getting the grant funded, the matching funds can be reprogrammed. The grant application is due at the end of this month and we anticipate award announcements in the fall after the end of the current Federal Fiscal Year, so the funds would be encumbered for 6 – 8 months unless we are successful.

There has been a lot of public funding invested in these project components over the last several years and we will highlight those in the application. Between engineering for Front/Main, development of Higgins design concepts, the City's investment in Beartracks Bridge and the recent public investment in Caras Park and Ron's River Trail, we have invested over \$2.6M in the components in this RAISE application. The grant will allow Missoula to greatly improve safety and mobility in the downtown as well as the mode shift necessary to deal with congestion. We cannot build our way out of traffic congestion by adding travel lanes and new bridges. We have to provide safe and convenient ways for people to access work, shopping, residences and recreation and these projects accomplish that on a number of fronts.

Staff is recommending that the MRA allocate \$1M in matching funds which will come from the three urban renewal districts touched by these projects – Hellgate, Front Street and Riverfront Triangle. This is how we have funded both phases of the Front/Main Conversion project development to date. Between these three districts, we have \$2.68M in unencumbered funds and \$14.5M in bonding capacity. If the Board approves the staff recommendation, the funds would simply be encumbered in the MRA budget as holding places until the grant is awarded or denied. Staff would like the flexibility to recommend to the Board how much each district contributes at the time that the grant is approved. By the end of this month, we will know how much the BID, MDF and Mountain Line have pledged, if any. Only the MDF Board meets prior to the MRA Board meeting. Mountain Line and BID meet the following week. We would like to get as close to a 5% match as possible to make us competitive against other rural projects.

### **City of Missoula Strategic Plan**

Award of this RAISE grant will help the City meet the goals of the City of Missoula Strategic Plan as follows:

- Safety and Wellness – Invest in transportation projects and create complete multi-modal networks that are comfortable, safe and accessible for people of all ages and all abilities.
- Community Design and Livability – Incentivize development patterns that build on existing infrastructure, such as high-frequency bus routes, and provide access to affordable, reliable and efficient transportation options.

**Recommendation: Staff recommends that the MRA Board approve a match for the Downtown Safety & Multimodal Connectivity RAISE Grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 in TIF funds from the Hellgate, Front Street and Riverfront Triangle Urban Renewal Districts with the stipulation that staff will bring a recommendation to the Board with respect to distribution of the matching funds between the Districts upon award of the grant.**



**Increase Transportation Choices:**  
These projects provide commuters more direct and safer options by building complete streets, connecting bike lanes and trails to local and regional systems, and support sustainable growth, livable density, and affordable housing.

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**missoula**  
connect

Priority Projects  
& Opportunities

A

**Downtown Safety & Mobility**

Multi-modal improvements on Higgins Ave. from Brooks St. to Broadway St. will connect existing facilities through the core of Downtown. Restoration of two-way traffic on Front and Main Streets in Downtown will reduce VMT and improve mobility while increasing safety. Improved trail connections will increase mobility from riverfront parks and regional commuter path system into Downtown.

B

**Brooks Street Transit Oriented Development**

The City has received funding to complete a Brooks Street Bus Rapid Transit study. This will provide reliable transit service from Downtown through the Brooks corridor supporting growth and affordable housing in the urban core. Also supports implementation of the *Midtown Master Plan*.

C

**East Missoula/ Hwy 200 Safety Improvements**

Improved multi-modal transportation and safety facilities along Hwy 200 will increase safety for commuters and residents of East Missoula. This project will include place-making improvements and provide investment in a historically underserved community.

G

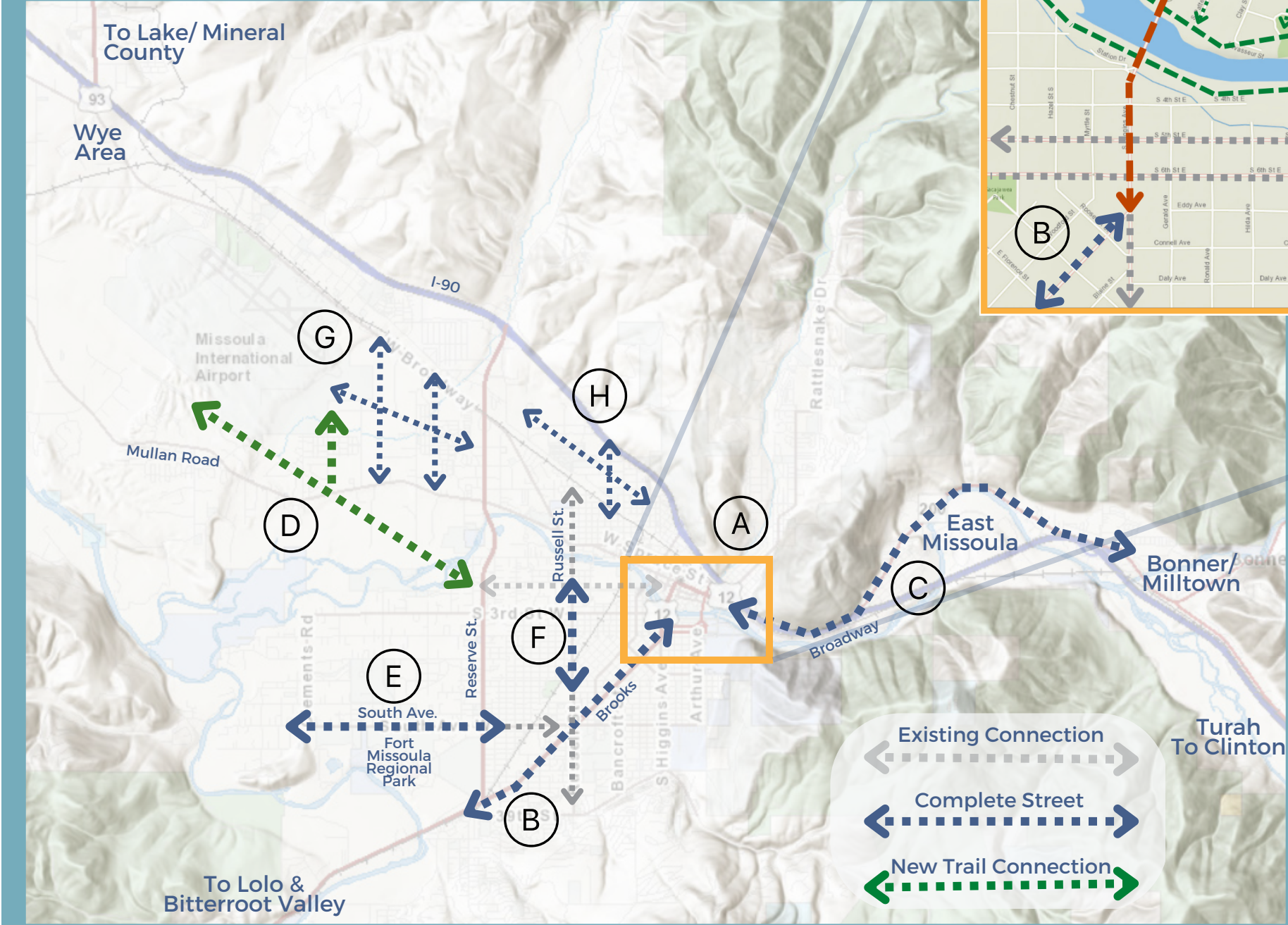


These priority projects will support growth in sustainable, mixed use housing and commercial centers and connect the newly developed Sxwtpqyen area with multi-modal facilities to the core of Missoula.

H



The North Reserve-Scott Street infrastructure will support large areas of affordable housing close to the urban core, as well as link housing to new opportunities for jobs and services.



D

**Milwaukee Trail River Crossing & Extension**

Extension of the Milwaukee Trail will provide direct non-motorized routes from areas of high growth in housing to the urban core, as well as continue development of the Great American Rail Trail, connecting Washington, D.C. to Seattle, WA.

E

**South Avenue Complete Streets**

Complete Streets from Clements Rd. to Reserve St. will provide safe multi-modal connections to the regional park, schools, and medical facilities.

F

**Russell Street Reconstruction**

Reconstruction of Russell Street from Dakota St. to Mount/14th Ave. will connect existing multi-modal facilities to the north and south. Russell Street also creates added freight and regional transportation capacity to one of Missoula's central corridors and river crossing. Supports economic growth and development.



# Need

Montana is one of the top ten fastest growing states in the country. Our mountains, rivers, and vast public lands that make it so desirable are attracting new residents and visitors. This growth is leading to a crisis of affordable housing and strains on our existing infrastructure. We have limited capacity to support more people and funding has not kept pace with increased costs to build new facilities. On top of these issues are the threats of climate change and rapidly changing technology.

Transportation investments give us the unique opportunity to tackle these challenges in a holistic way. We need to become more efficient via multi-modal transportation; we need to decrease the cost of transportation to improve affordability; we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and we need to invest in more compact, dense, sustainable and livable neighborhoods. Addressing these issues requires rethinking our entire transportation system, and making core investments spurs the types of growth required to ensure a prosperous future for Missoula.

# Vision & Goals

Missoula’s priorities address the growing needs of the region, as outlined in the Missoula Connect Long-Range Transportation Plan. This vision supports local public and private investments in sustainable growth and infrastructure.



## SAFE

Missoula supports a safe, comfortable and accessible transportation system for all users, with a goal of zero deaths. Each of the projects identified will lead to increased safety along critical transportation corridors. Emphasis for design will be on the most vulnerable users, but improvements will provide for a safer transportation system for all modes.



## SUSTAINABLE

These core investments will create a more sustainable and resilient transportation system. Increased multi-modal transportation will decrease greenhouse gases, improve economic sustainability of households through decreased costs, and create a more resilient system to the potential changes in technology and mobility in the future.



## MOBILITY

A connected network of safe, accessible and comfortable multi-modal systems will link our growing housing and economic centers and allow for broad choice in mode of travel for all trips. The identified projects also help link our urban and rural communities to increase regional equity in the transportation system.



## EQUITABLE

The projects also invest in a more equitable community, through a focus on supporting infrastructure to serve areas with existing and growing affordable housing, neighborhoods that are historically underserved and facing persistent poverty or negative health outcomes; and providing for increases in safety for our most vulnerable roadway users.



## ECONOMIC GROWTH

Our region cannot continue to grow with sustainable jobs, services and housing without smart investments in infrastructure. These projects focus on increasing connectivity and infrastructure in areas where we anticipate rapid growth of housing, jobs and industries.

As a package, these Priority Projects and Opportunities will set the stage for sustainable and equitable growth, local investments, and public-private partnerships. However, without an investment of federal funds, Missoula will continue to struggle to create a sustainable transportation system that is built for the future.

# How do we get there?

There is never enough money to design or build all the projects that are needed in our region. Nor is there enough funding available each year to take care of our transportation system’s basic maintenance needs. Missoula Connect makes the dollars we have stretch further by focusing on lower cost and higher impact investments and seeking opportunities to expand the funding sources available for transportation projects.

Funding is crucial for the community's continued effort to support sustainable transportation and a much-needed supply of housing for our community.

# Current Funding Scenarios

Fully realizing the Missoula Connect vision will take substantial investment over the next 30 years. Implementing the recommended projects and programs will require funding from federal, state, and local sources. The Missoula Connect financial plan includes a combination of traditional and non-traditional (or potential) funding sources. Traditional sources have funded past transportation projects and have more predictable future funding levels. Non-traditional sources are not as predictable and may not be available, but they can be critical in filling funding gaps and can expand the region’s available resources



Project costs were developed using existing estimates—from the MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program, the City of Missoula’s Capital Improvement Plan, and the Montana Department of Transportation’s (MDT) capital programs—and custom estimates based on recently completed transportation projects in the region. Costs represent the total amount of funding that will be needed to plan, design, and build a project. However, many of the Missoula Connect projects are not yet fully scoped or designed, so these are planning-level cost estimates rather than engineered estimates. To account for future year costs, an inflation factor of 0.75% per year to the midpoint of each timeframe was applied to all projects based on how they are programmed within the 30-year LRTP horizon.