



TO: MRA Board of Commissioners
FROM: Ellen Buchanan, Director *EB*
DATE: January 21, 2024
SUBJECT: Director's Report

Downtown Safety, Accessibility, Mobility RAISE Grant – DowntownSAM

- Staff is waiting for approval of the grant agreement, which will take several months. In the interim, the Project Management Team is working on creating a Downtown SAM Working Group that will be able to represent as many of the downtown interests as possible. The application process has been open since early December and will close at the end of this month. This is a long-term commitment for which we hope to have 10 – 15 members who will see this project through completion.

Midtown Planning Efforts

- Brooks BRT/TOD Corridor – The project team for Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown, led by HDR, has completed most of the preliminary work required to begin looking at design elements such as intersection treatment, node and bus station locations, termini, right of way requirements and street cross sections, to name a few. The team continues to reach out to members of the Midtown community through tools like Hello Lamp Post and small group meetings. We are planning a field trip to a couple of cities that have implemented similar systems to increase mobility and economic investment and funded their systems with Federal Transit Authority grant funds.

URD II Exit Strategy Project Updates

- MRL Trestle Project – Staff has received and reviewed the Feasibility Study and it is apparent that we need to make some decisions concerning scour at the abutments. The West Broadway River Corridor Project has the potential to modify the river in ways that can benefit upstream conditions and impact decisions about how to address the issue. Due to staff capacity and the need to understand how the downstream project may impact the trestle, we have decided to put the project on a brief hold to let the river project get further along in design concept.
- Bitterroot Trail Lighting – The contract for design is well underway. Parks is working to evaluate the adequacy of the current trail easements as we experience increased use of that trail. Cushing Terrell is fine tuning the design with the understanding that the trail may be widened in the future. Our goal is to keep the project on schedule to begin construction this spring. We will likely start on the south end of the trail due to a request from the Midtown Association.

- West Broadway River Corridor Project – The design team, led by River Design Group, continues to work through arriving at a design that will address the many goals of this project. We recently had a very productive meeting with the group of river enthusiasts who have worked for many years to create another recreational structure in the river. There were a number of creative ideas about how to achieve their goals as well as those of other interest groups. This continues to be one of the most exciting projects the City and partners have undertaken for improvements to the river, riverbanks and areas adjacent to the river.

Old Library Block Redevelopment

- This project continues to move forward under the guidance of our partners, DeChase Miksis and Edlen & Co. They have selected local partners to work with as they develop concepts for reuse of the block. MRA has contracted with a local geotechnical firm to do some required soil testing and will be engaging a survey team to do an ALTA survey as part of the due diligence that the Board approved funding for at the October Board meeting. The team will be back in Missoula for a large public meeting on January 29 on the 4th floor of the new public library from 5 pm – 7 pm. Please try to attend if possible.

Workforce Housing Program

- Since the MRA Board's approval of the Workforce Housing Pilot Program Guidelines on September 21, staff is seeing increased interest by developers in providing workforce housing as part of already planned and future residential developments. We are seeing interest in both rental and ownership models. As you are aware, the Ravara project has requested gap funding for the income qualified units and we may be in a position to bring a request to the Board for a rental project in February.

Staffing

- As you are aware, Tod Gass has retired and is already really missed. I am taking this opportunity to reevaluate some of our programs and duplication of effort among City departments to see if we can create a more efficient process, particularly around City initiated infrastructure projects. I will brief the Board at the meeting if there is time.

As always, if you have questions or want information on any other projects not covered here, please contact me at buchanane@ci.missoula.mt.us or (406) 552-6156.