



MEMORANDUM

TO: MRA Board

FROM: Annette Marchesseault, RLA *ARM*
Project Manager/Redevelopment Specialist

DATE: January 22, 2024

SUBJECT: **Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown Planning Study (URD III; Wards 3, 4, 5)
– Funding Request for Tour of Peer Community BRT Systems**

The Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown planning study (previously referred to as the Brooks Street BRT/TOD RAISE Grant planning study) is approximately at its midpoint. Since the study kicked off in May 2023, the project team has been digging deep into identifying what is necessary to successfully design and implement center-running bus-rapid transit (BRT) on Brooks Street. The team also has been laying a broad foundation for seeking federal capital BRT funding in the future.

Tasks to date have included collecting and analyzing technical data, understanding transit propensity, identifying logical start and end locations and potential route to connect to Midtown, and gathering input from a wide range of stakeholders and technical experts. A public open house about the Transform Brooks study in November 2023 was very well attended. The design team will begin presenting proposed design strategies for internal team review shortly and expects to host another public meeting in late spring or early summer.

The project team believes that at this point it would be valuable for a small delegation from Missoula to tour some BRT systems similar to what is being considered in the Transform Brooks study. The purpose of the tour would be to establish relationships with peer communities and better understand topics such as maintenance, impacts on adjacent land uses, center-running BRT operations, and federal funding. The team has tentatively identified the first week in March to visit three BRT systems in Fort Collins, CO; Vancouver, WA; and Eugene, OR. The Missoula delegation would be approximately 10 people representing Mountain Line, City staff and boards; local elected officials; MDT; and Midtown business representatives.

Staff is exploring options for covering travel expenses for this information gathering tour including cost sharing and/or reimbursement from other sources. However, in order to make travel plans with certainty staff is requesting approval to use up to \$25,000 of TIF funds for travel expenses.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the MRA Board approve its request for up to \$25,000 in TIF funds to cover travel expenses for a small local delegation to tour BRT systems in peer communities to gather information and establish relationships that will be beneficial to the Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown planning study.