



Missoula Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board

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A Recommendation
on the Matter of

Public Works FY 20 Budget Request

Adopted
XXX

Dear Mayor Engen, City Council, and Mr. Keene:

We are writing this letter to recommend the administration and City Council provide increased funding for Traffic Services and to remind Public Works that maintenance funds and activities *must* serve people of all ages and abilities travelling by all modes of transportation, per Missoula's Complete Streets Policy.

Our board regularly hears from City staff that important priorities are limited by staff and budget resources, for example snow removal, bike lane sweeping, pothole repair, and striping of bike lanes and crosswalks. Fully funding our city's transportation system maintenance needs for all users is one of the easiest ways to impact safety for all people, no matter what mode they are using, as long as these maintenance project treat all users equitably.

Our city's snow removal crew works hard but barely keeps up. Many important corridors, especially our bike lanes adjacent to parked cars, are unsafe to travel by bicycle when snow removal is incomplete. Many roads are not plowed at all, including our neighborhood greenways, resulting in icy conditions that last much longer than necessary, and perpetuate drainage issues that cascade in their effects on everyone. Frequently snow must be stored in the bike lane, or vehicles move over into the bike lane to avoid snow. Berms make travel by foot or bike difficult and can exclude some people from access entirely. Important sidewalk routes, such as bridges, need to be plowed timely so people can get to work, school, and anywhere. When too much snow is on the sidewalk or blocking ADA curb ramps, it can force pedestrians into the roadway or keep people from even leaving their homes. Excessive use of gravel can place hazardous debris in bike lanes.

It was disheartening, to say the least, to hear the Deputy Public Works Director for Streets remark at the 7/17 Budget CoW Meeting that he wishes for more money to plow ADA ramps in faster and then to hear council members laugh at that. Joking at the expense of our youth, elderly, and disabled neighbors is not funny. Snow removal dollars and methods must serve all users, not just motorists.

Street sweeping is also critically important to making bike lanes passable throughout the year. Bike lanes need to be cleaned in a timely manner to remove winter debris. Because motor vehicle action can push additional gravel into the bike lane, these important parts of the roadway need to be cleaned more often. The current schedule leaves weeks or even months of good weather, when people want to be riding more often for

transportation, without safe and accessible bike facilities. On the many streets without sidewalks, delayed street sweeping exacerbates already unsafe pedestrian conditions.

Potholes may cause irritation to people driving, but have the potential to cause life-threatening injuries to people riding bicycles. Road damage that may seem minor from an automobile perspective can render a bike lane hazardous. Drivers who are busy dodging potholes may be distracted and put others at risk. We are told the City repairs the roadways as much and as fast as it can afford to. We strongly support fully funding the actual needs of Complete Streets, including facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, in order to make better repairs faster. Further, non-motorized facilities are not simply an additional line item in the budget. They are an essential function of our Complete Streets policy and as such must be funded as part of any activities in the public ROW.

A quick trip across town will reveal immediate needs for the restriping of bike lanes, symbols, crosswalks, shared lane markings, and the long lines and messages that keep cars in well-defined lanes. Crosswalks often spend more time faded than fresh, and curb paint often does not get replaced in a timely manner, resulting in illegally parked cars that can create unsafe visual conditions for street crossings. We are told the City paints as much and as fast as it can afford to. In order to actually create a safe, comfortable, and convenient environment for biking and walking, the least we can do is maintain our pavement markings. Increased funding for striping equipment and supplies could also help the City research brighter and/or more durable striping technologies. We are supportive of Public Works' request for increased budget for striping materials and staff. However, per the Complete Streets Policy, the cost of striping bicycle and pedestrian facilities must be considered as part of the cost of other roadway maintenance. It is time to end the division between budget line items for motor vehicles and budget line items for biking and walking.

All of these issues also affect users of Mountain Line's transit system as bus drivers have to avoid potholes, keep visual track of faded striping, and dodge snow hazards and the pedestrians and cyclists forced out into the roadway during snow conditions, and bus riders are often pedestrians and bicyclists before and after their bus ride.

Our whole city would benefit from an increase in funding to Traffic Services. Not only will this improve the convenience of peoples' trips on our system, it can prevent tragic accidents from occurring. Missoula is growing and we already have trouble maintaining the roadway for current needs. Missoula has set a policy target to increase non-motorized mode share. Adequately maintaining our Complete Streets is essential to this. To keep up with demand, we will need more safe and comfortable non-motorized facilities. If we continue to prioritize maintenance of our motor vehicle infrastructure, people will have no choice but to drive and vehicle traffic will worsen with growth. Increasing non-motorized mode share is the best way to address overcrowding and growth and is an explicitly stated goal of City plans and policies. The simplest and cheapest way to begin to address the inequity of the status quo is to fully fund Traffic Services for all users and ensure compliance with our Complete Streets policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene Schmitz
Missoula Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Chair