



City of Missoula, Montana
Item to be Referred to City Council Committee

Committee: Public Works

Item: Proposal to Rename the Higgins Ave. Bridge to Bear Tracks Bridge

Date: February 18, 2021

Sponsor(s): Mirtha Becerra; Dave Strohmaier

Prepared by: Katie Emery

Ward(s) Affected:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Ward 4
<input type="checkbox"/> Ward 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ward 5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ward 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Ward 6
<input type="checkbox"/> All Wards	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Action Required:

No Action Required – Informational Only

Recommended Motion(s):

I move the City Council: No Recommended Motion – Informational Only

Timeline:

Referral to committee:	February 22, 2021
Committee discussion:	February 24, 2021
Council action (or sets hearing):	N/A
Public Hearing:	N/A
Deadline:	N/A

Background and Alternatives Explored:

Missoula County is proposing that as part of the Higgins Ave. bridge reconstruction project the bridge be rededicated with a name that reflects the past and current Native heritage of this place.

In 1891, the Bitterroot Salish were forcibly removed from the Bitterroot Valley and relocated to the Flathead Indian Reservation. An earlier version of the Higgins Ave. bridge may have been traversed by some of the Salish during this sad chapter of Salish history and federal Indian policy ([click here for a Missoulian story on this](#)).

One hundred and thirty years later, in the year 2021, and with the reconstruction of the bridge, the time is ripe-indeed, long overdue-to formally name a major piece of Missoula infrastructure to reflect the deep history and tribal heritage of the Missoula Valley rather than the standard cast of names of tree species, presidents, or white settlers and city fathers. Both the CSKT tribal council and the Selis Qlispe Culture Committee enthusiastically support this effort, and the culture committee has already discussed possible names for the bridge.

Missoula County proposed allowing the tribes to choose the name and subsequently bringing that forward to the Montana Transportation Commission for official action. The name Bear Tracks Bridge has been chosen by the tribes (please see attached documents for a history on the chosen name). The next step in this process, is for Missoula County, the City of Missoula, and CSKT to come together jointly in support of this before the Transportation Commission.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Links to external websites:

N/A