

Billings City Administrator Weekly Report

September 16, 2023

- 1. Planning Division Staff at State Conference - *Important Notice*** The week of September 18-22 several Planning Division staff will be attending the Montana Association of Planners Conference reducing available staff and some services. The office is open to the public, but please be aware that with limited staff resources response times and application processing may be slower than usual. Staff will resume to normal levels beginning September 25th. We appreciate your understanding and patience during this time, and we look forward to resuming full services upon our return. For immediate assistance, please contact Robbin Bartley at 406-247-8676, Brenda Berns at 406-247-8610 or the Planning Hot Desk at 406-657-8247. Online submittal services are still available through citizen access: <https://services.billingsmt.gov/citizenaccess/>
- 2. Board and Commission Annual Report** – Please find attached the annual report for the Energy and Conservation Commission.
- 3. Downtown 2-Way Restoration Project Update and Council Work Session Question Follow-up –**

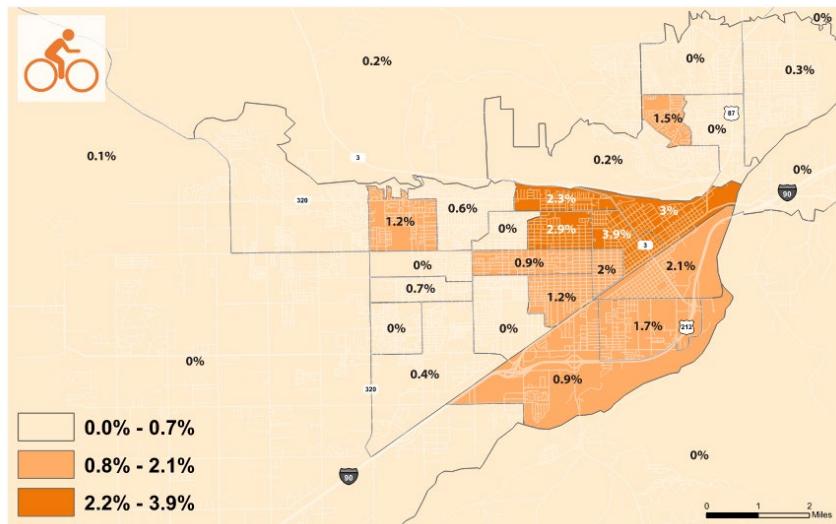
Parking Board Presentation - Staff gave a presentation on the Downtown 2-Way restoration project to the Parking Board on September 13th, 2023. An overview of the project and details on impacts to metered parking stalls and 10-hour permit stalls were presented. Other topics discussed included handicap parking stalls, impacts to on-street parking on 3rd Avenue North between 27th St and 25th St, and impacts to parking garages. The Parking Board reiterated that metered parking is important to revenue, however the board understood the metered stalls being impacted are generally underutilized. No feedback was received that resulted in major changes to the design.

Downtown 2-Way Restoration – Follow Up Answers to Questions from City Council Work Session

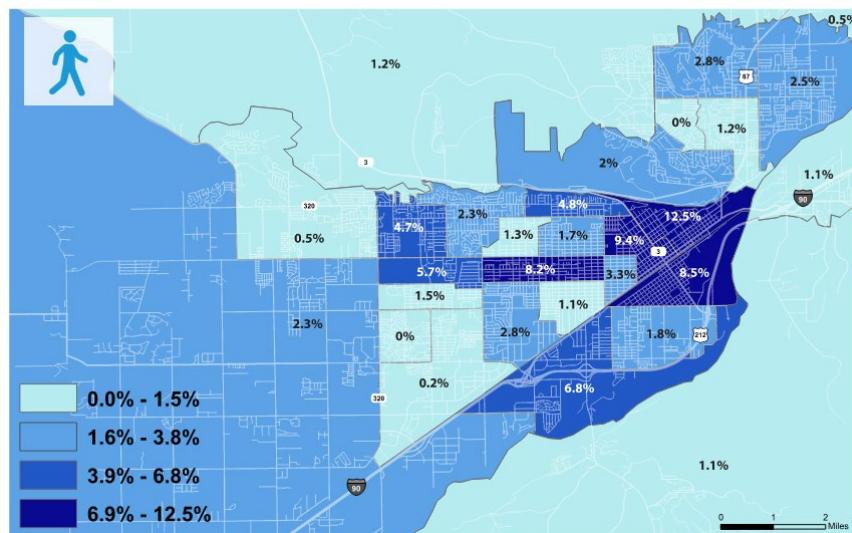
A. Do motorized scooters use the bike lanes & cycle track? From the 2021 Bike & Scooter Plan: “Micromobility users will generally operate like a bicyclist.” Micromobility is defined in the study as docked and hybrid bike share and dockless scooter share. This would indicate that scooters would use the bike lanes, sharrows, cycle track, or other bike facilities present in the right-of-way.

B. How many commuter bicyclists are in downtown Billings? From the 2016 Billings Bikeway and Trails Master Plan: Bicyclists make up ~1% of Billings commuters. 3.3% of commuters walk as their main mode of transportation. Downtown Billings has one of the higher shares of biking and walking commuters: bicyclists range from 3.0%-3.9% of commuters and walkers range from 8.5-12.5% of commuters.

MAP 2.3: BICYCLE MODE SHARE



MAP 2.4: WALKING MODE SHARE



C. Do 10-ft lanes lead to more traffic incidents? Design guidance for lane widths is commonly stated as 10-12-ft for rural and urban arterials, with wider lanes recommended for higher speed, free flowing arterials. A study from 2007 (Relationship of Lane Width to Safety for Urban and Suburban Arterials, 2007) found no general indication that the use of lanes narrower than 12-ft on urban or suburban arterials increases crash frequencies. The study does suggest using caution when implementing narrower lanes in the following situations:

- Lane widths 10-ft or less on four-lane undivided arterials
- Lane widths 9-ft or less on four-lane divided arterials
- Lane widths of 10-ft or less on approaches to four-leg STOP-controlled arterial intersections.

The lane widths proposed on the project vary from 10.5-ft wide to 12-ft wide, with a half-block of 10-ft wide lanes on 3rd Ave N. Further, the only roadways classified as an arterial within the project are Division Street and N 32nd Street between Grand Avenue and 4th Ave N.

D. What are the parking impacts to downtown? Parking impacts to downtown streets are still being evaluated, as we continue to evaluate sight distances with new changes in traffic patterns and the proposed bike infrastructure. Based on the 30-percent plans, the following impacts are anticipated:

Street	Net Change (% reduction or increase)	Location of Largest Share of Parking Loss	Parking Utilization in Largest Loss Section
2nd Avenue North	-5 (-2%)	N 27th St	55%*
3rd Avenue North	-36 (-19%)	East of N 26th St	45%*
N 32nd Street	-11 (-12%)	6th Ave – 4th Ave	47%**
N 31st Street	-29 (-22%)	6th Ave – 4th Ave	45%**
N 26th Street	+14 (+23%)	4th Ave – 3rd Ave	47%**
N 25th Street	-6 (-7%)	3rd Ave – 2nd Ave	41%**
Overall	-73 spaces (-9%)		

*Based on data collected from 2019 to 2023 – data is for the specific block noted

**Data from Downtown Billings Parking Strategic Plan (2015) – data is for entire roadway, not specific blocks

Parking impacts have been a major consideration for this project. Note that the majority of the parking impacts are located in areas where parking is historically underutilized. The street cross sections identified for 2nd Ave N and 3rd Ave N result in the best compromise for providing a protected bike facility downtown while also maintaining parking within the downtown core.

E. What is the maintenance cost of the cycle track? The maintenance cost associated with the cycle track will include signing and striping maintenance, and maintenance costs associated with regular street sweeping and plowing. Generally, the cycle track has the same amount of striping as two separated bike lanes. There is additional striping cost with the intersection treatments, however. The cycle track is estimated to have an additional \$1,150 to \$1,500 of striping cost per block when compared to buffered bike lanes or sharrows. The project has a proposed 18 blocks of cycle track, resulting in additional striping expense of \$20,000 to \$27,000 in additional striping costs for the downtown area. The cycle track will accommodate street sweeping and plowing with conventional equipment, given the width of the cycle track & buffer (13 feet).

F. Additional information on a mid-block crossing near the YMCA: There is a known jaywalking location at the entry to the YMCA, located between 4th Ave N and 6th Ave N on N 32nd Street, which is currently a one-way street. Concerns have been raised by citizens and business owners about the safety of pedestrians crossing mid-block outside of the crosswalk to access the YMCA. Crosswalks are located on 4th Ave N and 6th Ave N, which offer the safest location to cross the roadway. A separate project, the 5th Avenue Corridor, is proposing to formalize the old railroad spur as a multi-use pathway. When this project is developed, the trail will have multiple mid-block crossings through downtown and east Billings, including near the north end of the YMCA building. Given that both projects are ongoing and that a crossing will be planned for N 32nd Street eventually, we are including an analysis for a pedestrian crossing with the two-way restoration. Our Consultant will make a recommendation based on the data gathered, and a crossing may be implemented with the two-way restoration project. The crossing could be further formalized with the development of the 5th Avenue Corridor.

G. Does a bicycle or vehicle yield through the intersection? A bicycle is a legal vehicle with the same rights and responsibilities as a motor vehicle. For example, a turning bicycle would yield to a motor vehicle with a through movement, and a turning motor vehicle would yield to a bicycle with a through movement. Both bicycles and motor vehicles are required to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. For additional information, see MCA 61-8-605.

4. **Parks and Recreation News** – The City of Billings was awarded a \$1,000,000 grant by the USFS from their Urban and Community Forestry Grants program. Billings was one of only three (3) cities from Montana to receive a grant. Our title for the grant is “Billings Urban Forestry Grant for Disadvantaged Areas”. The project will improve tree canopy equity and associated benefits while supporting urban tree care in disadvantaged portions of our community. Using this grant, the Forestry staff and contractors will work with neighborhoods to plant trees in boulevard strips in areas deficient in tree canopy and will provide maintenance for the first few years until the trees are well established, at which time the property owner will take over the care of the trees. Through this program the tree canopy throughout the city will be greatly enhanced for decades to come. For more information visit: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf/2023-grant-funding>

Splash Pads - Sunday September 17th will be the last day for splash pad season. The weather forecast is predicting highs in the 70's and an increased chance of rain, not the best splash pad weather. Parks staff also need time to winterize the systems ahead of freezing temperatures. Splash Pad season opens back up Memorial Day weekend, see you in 2024.

Flag Football - This weekend is the beginning of flag football games. All games are held at Centennial Park. Come out and cheer on your favorite team!

Skypoint - The reconstruction of Skypoint phase one is complete. The sails have been removed and the structure has been inspected, now the painters will move in for a fresh coat of paint. Once the new sails have been constructed installation will take place. The Parks Department will keep everyone informed as to when more road closures will take place.



5. **New City Hall Update** - This week at the city hall project the wall framing on the 2nd floor continued. Sheetrock and taping are ongoing on the 5th floor. Framing layout QC got started. Rough in for the walls and overhead plumbing on the 4th floor got started. Hydronic plumbing work continues on the 5th floor. Electrical wall rough in on the 4th floor was completed and inspected. Overhead conduit on the 4th and 5th floor is being worked on. The penetration for the new RTU was cut in and the curb set and covered. Installing of the new duct above the soffit in the council chambers got started. New iron for the partition wall in the EOC is underway. Fire sprinkler rough

in continued on the 1st floor and some of the dry system on the 5th floor was relocated. The remainder of the hollow metal door frames for the 5th floor were received and installed.



6. Next Week's Meetings/Task Forces

- a. Family Justice Strategic Planning, Tuesday, September 19th 8:30 AM, YWCA.
- b. West End Task Force, Tuesday, September 19th 7:00 PM, Connections Church.
- c. Family Justice Strategic Planning, Wednesday, September 20th 8:30 AM, YWCA.
- d. Southside Task Force, Thursday, September 21st 6:30 PM, Hope Center.

7. From the PIO Desk:

MET Transit unveils new schedule and bus routes, offering more convenience to riders

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2528>

FAA installs weather cameras at Billings Logan International Airport

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2527>

From BPL: Billings Public Library hosts amateur film festival, film submissions open now

<https://www.billingsmt.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2525>

City of Billings in the news...

Council

Kennedy and Loveridge lead Billings City Council Ward 3 race in Tuesday's primary

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/billings-city-council-primary-election-results/article_37ea79c8-5119-11ee-8b39-5fbeb9bfe7b4.html

2 challengers advance to general election in Billings City Council race

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/2-challengers-advance-to-general-election-in-billings-city-council-race>

PD

Teens end night of drinking with head-on crash in downtown Billings

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/crime-courts/teens-end-night-of-drinking-with-head-on-crash-in-downtown-billings/article_5984a6d2-4f5f-11ee-a253-a7268d2e82c9.html

Chief St. John addresses March Against Drugs and Violence march

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/chief-st-john-addreses-march-against-drugs-and-violence-march/video_10d8ae5b-44c8-5982-87c8-6ef49ee85ef8.html

Billings police share safety message, dashcam video of mysterious combustibles on streets

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-police-share-safety-message-dashcam-video-of-mysterious-combustibles-on-streets>

'Loud and startling': Billings woman recounts driving over combustible device

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/crime-watch/loud-and-startling-billings-woman-recounts-driving-over-combustible-device>

Billings Police Department celebrates National Policewoman Day

https://www.kulr8.com/news/billings-police-department-celebrates-national-policewoman-day/article_db1fec2e-51bc-11ee-acf7-cfc244771f60.html

Fire

A day of remembrance; Billings Fire Department reflects on 22nd anniversary of 9/11

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/a-day-of-remembrance-billings-fire-department-reflects-on-22nd-anniversary-of-9-11>

Confined space rescue equipment on display at Food for Kids event

https://billingsgazette.com/news/food-for-kids-billings/article_135d2812-4f52-11ee-92ba-fb35c6696186.html

PRPL

Bill and Anne Cole commit \$500K to Billings Parks, Trails, and Rec Center effort

https://billingsgazette.com/billings-parks-recreation-bond-500000-bill-cole-anne/article_b08df48e-530f-11ee-a299-93ef7b19eee1.html

Billings mayor donates \$500K to parks bond private fund

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-mayor-donates-to-parks-bond-private-fund>

After fan hit by foul ball, City vows to install extended nets at Dehler Park

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/after-fan-hit-by-foul-ball-city-vows-to-install-extended-nets-at-dehler-park>

Honoring vets lives and final resting place is impassioned goal of 'Saluting Branches'

<https://www.yourbigsky.com/local-news-2/honoring-vets-lives-and-final-resting-place-is-impassioned-goal-of-saluting-branches/>

Skypoint set for major renovations after 20+ years of weathering in Billings

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/skypoint-set-for-major-renovations-after-20-years-of-weathering-in-billings>

Billings Skypoint is getting some love

<https://www.yourbigsky.com/billings-beat/billings-beloved-skypoint-is-getting-some-love/>

PW

New garbage routes off to a good start in Billings

<https://www.ktvq.com/neighborhood-news/billings-yellowstone-county/new-garbage-routes-off-to-good-start-in-billings>

New and improved garbage and yard waste collection day and map in place in Billings

https://www.kulr8.com/news/new-and-improved-garbage-and-yard-waste-collection-days-and-map-in-place-in-billings/article_5dfd31e0-50c5-11ee-a4c3-57d22574bf2e.html

In other news...

Billings prepping for more than 100 refugees, including some from Afghanistan

<https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/billings-prepping-for-more-than-100-refugees-mostly-from-afghanistan>

Letter to the editor: Lowe's employees prevented a scam

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/billings-speaks-up-letters-to-the-editor-for-the-week-of-sep-8-2023/collection_57c2a944-cc84-5e14-b0b3-cba5bc4c16a2.html

Riverstone offering flu and COVID vaccines around community

https://billingsgazette.com/news/local/vaccines-flu-covid-19-riverstone-health-community-health/article_46ad55ea-525c-11ee-a287-6faa11a56b73.html

Ales for Trails returns to benefit the Magic City

https://www.kulr8.com/news/ales-for-trails-returns-to-benefit-the-magic-city/article_dfd90f94-4dce-11ee-9b0f-fff017f9bfee.html

Board & Commission Annual Report to City Council

Purpose: The annual report is to make a written report of a board or commission activity to the mayor and city council as authorized by majority vote of the entire membership of the board or commission.

Name of Board or Commission: Energy and Conservation Commission

Name of Presiding Officer: Glenn Foy, Chair

Name of Person or Persons filling out report: Glenn Foy

Meeting schedule: Second Monday of Each Month

Major Board or Commission accomplishments of the preceding year: Provided resources to the effort of the City of Billings to secure LEEDs for City Gold Certification, providing framework for the City to pursue a cost-effective sustainable future. LEED certification can also be an important tool for Big Sky Economic Development and Chamber of Commerce to attract businesses to the community since many employers have sustainability mandates.

Major Board or Commission challenges of the preceding year: The largest challenge of the ECC is securing time in the busy lives of the Commissioners.

Major Board or Commission goals for the upcoming year: In 2022, the Commission established a sub-team structure, led by subject matter expert Commissioners, to formalize a series of specific recommendations to further drive conservation in the City. This supported the efforts for LEED certification, and will be the focus for the upcoming year to identify specific goals and strategies to reduce energy consumption, water, pollution, and waste.

Requests for staff or city council: The process specified within the ECC for detailed recommendations prior to formal proposal to the City and City Council is to engage the respective Department Heads and responsible parties within the City to provide input, consequently an allocation of time will be required from certain City employees.

Changes to city ordinance or state law affecting the board or commission that should be considered:

At this time, no changes to city ordinance or state law are ready to be advanced to the City and City Council.

Anything else that board, commission or presiding officer want to comment on: The City of Billings should be commended on moving forward with conservation and sustainability (i.e. cardboard recycling) in a fiscally prudent manner.