

From: [jim.nichols](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep Trails in the CIP
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 5:42:39 PM



Mayor Cole and Council Members,

I am in favor of keeping trails in the CIP for the following reasons:

1. We are competing with other cities for a qualified workforce. These workers choose cities based on livability and connected trails are consistently ranked among the top amenities.
2. Removing trails like the **Yellowjacket Trail** from the CIP undermine the community-driven planning process and signals unpredictability to businesses, nonprofits, and grant funders.
3. Removing Trails from the CIP would virtually eliminate being awarded any future grant funding.
4. Keeping Trails in the CIP reaffirms that the **Billings City Council** is committed to quality - of-life amenities that matter to today's workforce AND future families living in Billings.

Thank you for your support.

Jim Nichols
bobnmary421@gmail.com

From: [Aspenlieder, Scott](#)
To: [Kukulski, Chris](#); [Zoeller, Andy](#)
Cc: [Council](#); [Friday, Wyeth](#); [Meling, Debi](#); [Woltjer, Gavin](#)
Subject: CIP Modifications from Work Session
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 2:10:43 PM

Chris

It appears that none of the changes have been made to the CIP that were made in the first Work Session. That would include the following as just the ones I noticed:

- “Out Years” Column does not appear to be added with any of the projects we talked about shifting adjusted. My understanding was that this was the compromise position to allow projects to be identified in the CIP but put outside the 5-year plan without any funding source identified or obligated.
- Yellowjacket Trail is still shown in 2030 with CMAQ/TA/Urban funds. That was supposed to be moved to the “out years” with the funding sources stripped.
- 25th Street Bridge similarly is still shown and not located in the “out years.”
- It appears that the evidence lot expansion project got it’s proposed funding source shifted from SBURA which we agreed on that night but looks like it’s switched to “public safety mill levy” for funding which I didn’t remember or understand where that was coming from.
- It looks like the downtown underpass study and corresponding project were removed which is the only one that got pulled from our initial motions it appears.

With the document presented are we supposed to make all these motions to move/remove all over again or what happened?

Scott Aspenlieder, PE | City of Billings Councilman Ward 4 |

Email: aspenlieders@billingsmt.gov |

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From: [Dustin Ogdin](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please maintain trail funding opportunities
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 4:41:04 PM
Attachments: [Ogdin_Trail_Benefits_Letter.pdf](#)



Dear City Council members,

Please see my attached letter requesting that City Council maintain funding opportunities for Billings trails.

Thank you,

--

Dustin Ogdin

December 7, 2025

Dear City Council members,

I am writing to respectfully ask that you maintain all opportunities for future trail funding. This includes refraining from restricting Transportation Alternative funds to only include Safe Routes to School projects as well as refraining from removal of trail projects from the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Capital Improvements Plan. Trails are some of the most important infrastructure investments that a city can make. Trails improve public safety, community health, and economic prosperity. **Constituents use and want trail access in Billings.**

I realize that some City Council members are worried about future maintenance costs. I understand and appreciate your concern as fiscal stewards. However, I think a more responsible approach would involve seeking maintenance funds through grants and private fundraising rather than inhibiting future opportunities for trail development. This is especially true given the [extensive research](#) that shows the [positive economic impact](#) that trails have on communities. From a long term fiscal perspective, research indicates trails will more than pay for themselves over time.

Given the well documented benefits that trails provide, I can only assume those who oppose future trail development might be biased, at least in part, by their own lack of personal interest in trails for recreation, transportation, or personal health. People have different interests. Some folks may prefer recreation centers, sports fields, golf courses, or other activities altogether to trails. However, in my regular trail use, I witness consistent, enthusiastic community use of our trails year round. These assets are deeply important to your constituents. Please don't place unnecessary barriers to expansion of these prized city amenities.

Rather than limit future trail funding opportunities, we should follow the template of countless other towns and cities who have sought to create a cohesive trail system that interweaves paved and natural surface trails across neighborhoods for recreation and transportation.

The potential economic impact is profound and undeniable. In fact, I would strongly encourage City Council members to consider a future "sister city" visit to any number of towns that have made investments in trails a central economic driver (I would suggest Knoxville or Chattanooga, TN; Bend, OR; Fayetteville, AR; Duluth, MN; or Bellingham, WA for relatively comparable-sized cities). Here are just a few examples of recent economic studies about trails:

- A [study of Maryland's Northern Central Rail Trail](#) (page 4) found the state received \$303,000/year in trail-related tax income while the trail's management and maintenance costs were \$192,000/year.
- A [study from Duluth, MT](#) (population 88K) found that the city's \$7 million investment in expanding its trail system adds \$36 - \$48 million annually to the city's economy.
- A [study of Chattanooga, TN](#) (population 181K) found that trails add almost \$7 million to the local economy and \$500,000 in local and state tax revenue alone.

People want access to trails and outdoor recreation. If we hope to attract and maintain businesses and a professional workforce, trails and outdoor recreation are essential amenity investments.

I am excited, for instance, to see the amazing investment Intermountain Health is making in Billings. However, I think we have to ask ourselves if we, as a city, are stepping up as partners with Intermountain to attract the talent they need to thrive here. Medical professionals are in high demand. Is this city doing its part to make Billings attractive to those highly sought after professionals? While we have unlimited potential to meet and exceed that challenge, I think we are falling short of that measure in some respects. Self-sabotaging future trail development would move us in the wrong direction at the exact moment we need the vision, confidence, and can-do spirit to rise to the occasion.

Returning to the specific matters at hand, I am surprised that paved trails aren't part of any comprehensive effort to provide safe transportation options to school. While they may not fall within the specific purview of Safe Routes to School projects, our existing trails certainly function as some of the safest ways for youth to commute to school, uninhibited by traffic.

I would also like to speak to efforts that would remove the proposed Yellowjacket Trail on North 27th St. from future Capital Improvement Plan and/or Long Range Transportation Plan lists. I am dumbfounded by any effort to compromise this opportunity. This corridor would be an enormous public asset for MSU-B students, airport and county museum employees, tourists, and residents alike. I personally use the informal trail next to the 27th guardrail frequently and pass numerous other residents who use this "social trail" for both recreation and transportation. I am extremely careful on this route because, frankly, its safety is questionable at times. However, the need and demand for a path connecting these parts of the city are obvious. When Intermountain completes its new state-of-the-art hospital on 27th, that demand will only increase. Again, are we meeting the moment and showing ourselves to be trustworthy partners with large employers willing to invest in Billings, or are we being short-sighted?

I often defend Billings against detractors who criticize the community as a polluted industry town uninterested in the amazing resources we have here: the Yellowstone River, the rims, and, most importantly, our fantastic people. I believe we are a community on the rise poised to rival the most attractive cities in the region. I invite all City Council members to join me in proving our critics wrong. Please have faith in your neighbors and constituents. Please trust that Billings can support the amenities that our regional neighbors enjoy and our residents deserve.

Thank you for considering my thoughts, and thank you for your public service.

Sincerely,

*Dustin Ogdin
Pine St., Billings 59101*

From: [Cole, Bill](#)
To: [Woltjer, Gavin](#)
Cc: [Kukulski, Chris](#); [Council](#)
Subject: Item 3. Harvest Park
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 7:18:31 AM

Gavin:

P. 79 of the CIP says the Harvest Park sidewalk repairs will be paid for from the Olympic Park park maintenance district. I assume this is an error, correct?

Bill

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

From: [Woltjer, Gavin](#)
To: [Cole, Bill](#)
Cc: [Kukulski, Chris](#); [Council](#)
Subject: Re: Item 3. Harvest Park
Date: Sunday, December 7, 2025 1:42:38 PM
Attachments: [Outlook-4pzxcik.png](#)

Good afternoon, Mayor and Council--

Thank you for catching this mistake. Harvest Park sidewalks will be replaced with Harvest Park dollars.

Best,



Gavin J. Woltjer

Interim PRPL Director

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Billings, MT 59101

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From: Cole, Bill <coleb@billingsmt.gov>
Sent: Sunday, December 7, 2025 7:18 AM
To: Woltjer, Gavin <woltjerg@billingsmt.gov>
Cc: Kukulski, Chris <kukulskic@billingsmt.gov>; Council <council@billingsmt.gov>
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