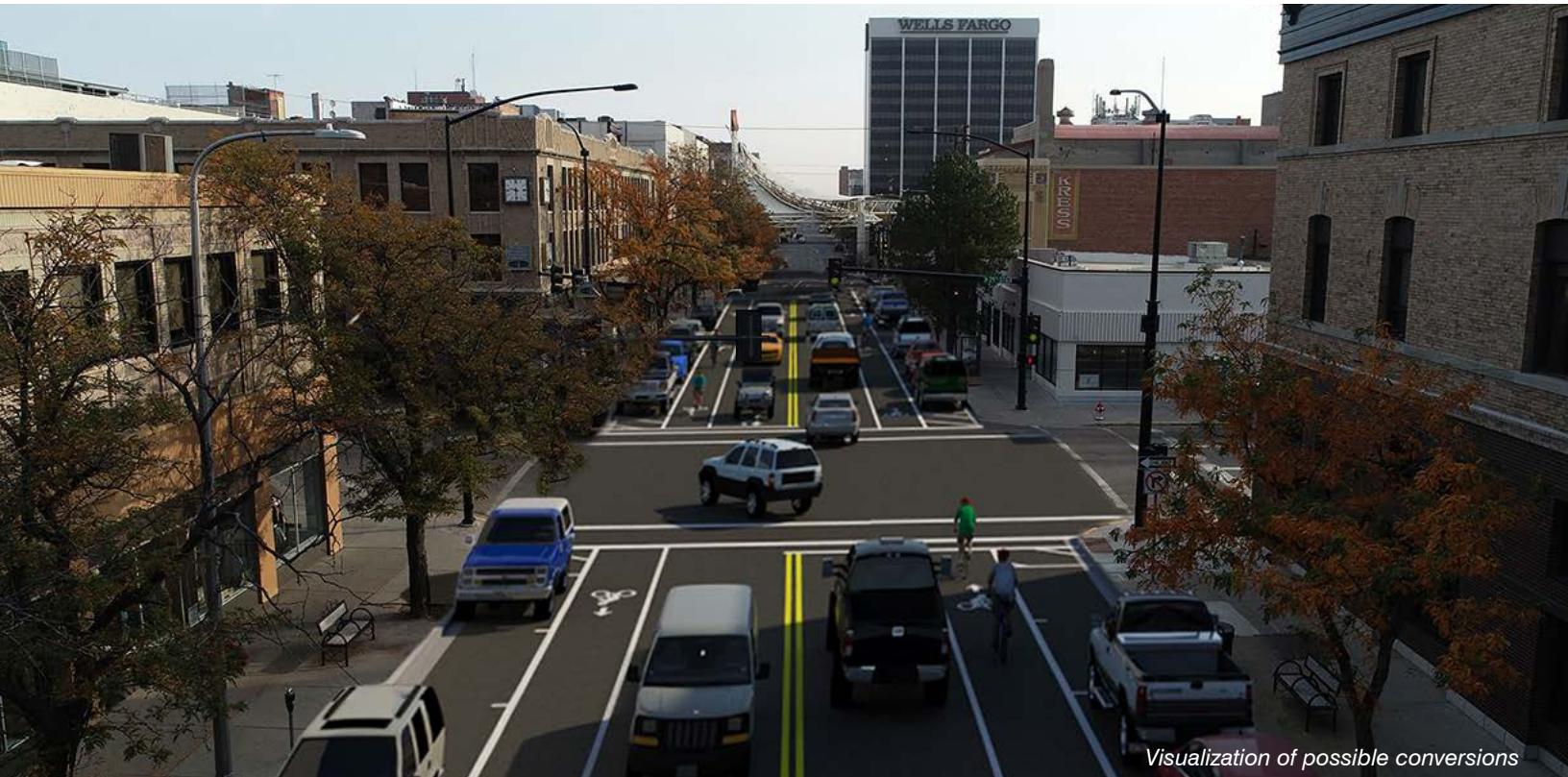


CITY OF BILLINGS
DOWNTOWN
TRAFFIC STUDY



DOWNTOWN BILLINGS TRAFFIC STUDY: ALTERNATIVE PRIORITIZATION AND PUBLIC PREFERENCE PLAN

Final Report - Executive Summary

February 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Purpose

The Downtown Billings Traffic Study Alternative Prioritization and Public Preference Plan project was prompted by the Downtown Billings Traffic Study (DBTS), completed for the City of Billings Engineering Division by Kittelson and Associates and DOWL and released in June 2019. This study solicited public feedback and prioritization preference of the feasible transportation network alternatives vetted in the DBTS. The vetted alternatives presented to the public are:

- **One-Way to Two-Way Conversions: North and South** – Converts north and south one-way streets between Division Street and 24th Street to two-way operation
- **One-Way to Two-Way Conversion: East and West (2nd Avenue N and 3rd Avenue N)** – Converts 2nd Avenue N and 3rd Avenue N west of 22nd Street to Division Street to two-way operation
- **Road Diet: Montana Avenue (Division Street to 18th Street)** – Provides options to accommodate all roadway users within existing curb limits
- **Road Diet: 6th Avenue N (Main Street to North 13th Street)** – Provides options to accommodate all roadway users within existing curb limits
- **Road Diet: 13th Street (Between 6th Avenue North and 1st Avenue North)** – Provides options to accommodate all roadway users within existing curb limits
- **Broadway Street Closure** – Creates a festival street by closing Broadway Street to vehicles between 1st Avenue N and 2nd Avenue. The DBTS noted a permanent closure, but this study explored public perspectives related to a seasonal closure at the direction of the City-County MPO.

This study collected public opinion related to the alternatives proposed in the DBTS. The results of the public input included in the following report will provide guidance to the City of Billings Engineering Division as future improvements are planned.

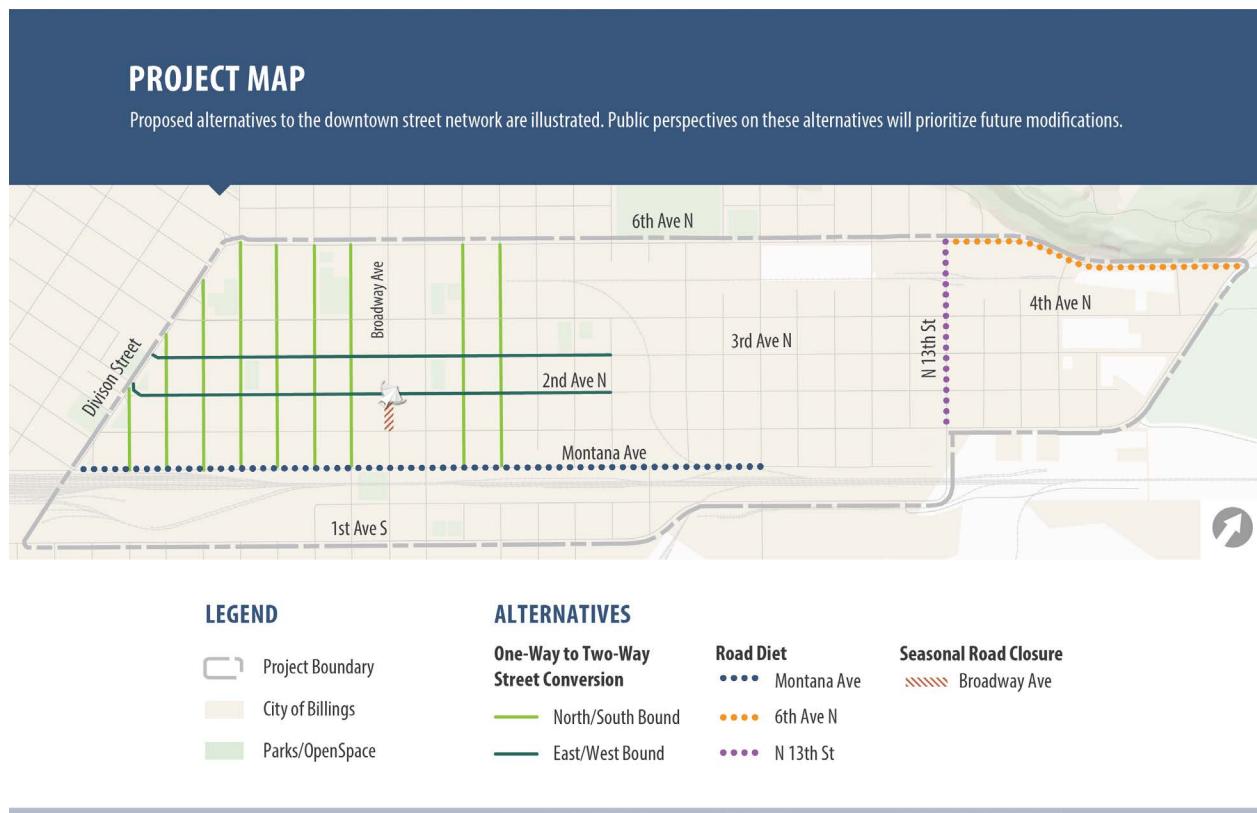


Figure 1. Study Area

Synopsis of Public Feedback



DOWL solicited public opinion on the proposed alternatives through in-person and virtual presentations to the public and stakeholder groups, direct outreach to property owners, and media coordination. An online website and survey was developed to collect feedback, with questions written to address corridor specifics, sometimes breaking corridors into multiple questions to accommodate differing dynamics along the corridor. Bicycle facilities were also integrated into the questions, in accordance with the 2016 Billings Bikeways and Trails Master Plan.

The online platform tracked a total of 6,176 visits from 2,393 users who completed 455 surveys and submitted 526 comments related to the project in general and specific alternatives. Overall, feedback collected was receptive to alterations to the current traffic system.

▪ One-Way to Two-Way Conversions: North and South

- This segment of the survey included six questions, five offering feasible options on 33rd, 34th, and 35th Streets; 26th, 29th, and 31st Streets; 30th and 32nd Streets; 25th Street; and 25th Street at the MET Transfer Center; and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 2,167 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **65% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 116 comments were made offering feedback related to traffic flow, the need for bike lanes, parking concerns/need, and safety.

▪ One-Way to Two-Way Conversion: East and West (2nd Avenue N and 3rd Avenue N)

- This segment of the survey included two questions, one asking about the conversion from one-way to two way and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 442 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **61% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 65 comments were made offering feedback; recurring themes included economic impact, concern over construction expense and possible congestion, and need for bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

▪ Road Diet: Montana Avenue (Division Street to 18th Street)

- This segment of the survey included four questions, three asking about possible road diet options between 30th-35th Street, 27th-30th Street, and 18th-27th Street, and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 1,326 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **60% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 94 comments were made offering feedback; recurring themes included varying opinions on the need for bike facilities and concerns over congestion, traffic speed and pedestrian safety on the east end of Montana Avenue, and loss of parking spaces.



Montana Avenue currently has three one-way lanes with parallel parking on either side.

- **Road Diet: 6th Avenue N (Main Street to North 13th Street)**

- This segment of the survey included three questions, two asking about possible road diet options between 10th Street and Main Street, and 13th Street and 10th Street, and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 2,167 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **66% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 61 comments were made offering feedback; recurring themes included concerns about congestion and commute time. Others emphasized the need for a connection for bicyclists between the Heights and Downtown and bike/pedestrian safety. References to the East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD) Master Plan, 5th Avenue N project, and Inner Belt Loop integration were also made. The consideration of Metra event-related traffic was also encouraged.

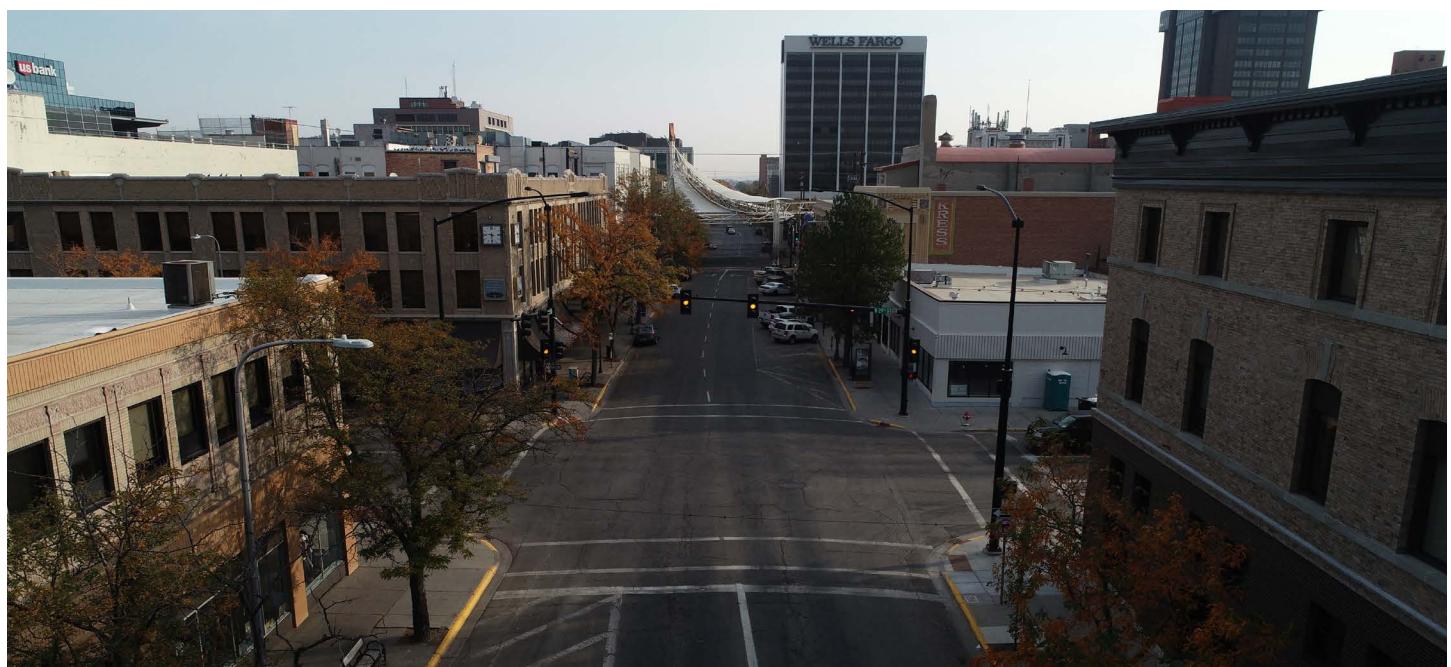
- **Road Diet: 13th Street (Between 6th Avenue North and 1st Avenue North)**

- This segment of the survey included three questions, two asking about possible road diet options between 4th Avenue N and 6th Avenue N, and 1st Avenue N and 4th Avenue N, and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 875 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **60% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 29 comments were made offering feedback; recurring themes included the need for bicycle and pedestrian safety, traffic flow and BIRD development. Others questioned the need for bike lanes in the industrial area of town and related expense. Again, integration with the East Billings Urban Renewal District (EBURD) Master Plan and 5th Avenue N project were recommended.

- **Seasonal Closure: Broadway Avenue**

- This segment of the survey included two questions, one asking about a seasonal closure and one offering an option for participants to comment.
- Of the 441 survey answers provided to this line of questioning, **64% were in favor of a conversion**.
- 108 comments were made offering feedback; recurring themes included business access, economic vitality, and activity in downtown. Some participants expressed a desire to see a full closure, while others were concerned about the impact to traffic flow and parking spaces.

Overall, members of the public and stakeholder groups who engaged with the project provided passionate, thoughtful opinions. Citizens are deeply engaged in the community and downtown; hopeful that improvements would increase economic vitality and spur development; and concerned about accessibility, walkability and bikability.



2nd Avenue North currently has three one-way lanes with parallel parking on either side.