



Highway 93S Corridor Steering Committee

Meeting #1 Minutes

May 17, 2018

3-5pm

City Council Chambers Conference Room, Whitefish City Hall

In Attendance:

Staff – Dave Taylor, Hilary Lindh, Adam Hammatt, Karin Hilding

Committee Members – Marilyn Nelson, June Hanson, John Middleton, Mark Pascoli, Roger Sherman, Lisa Post, Ryan Hennen (Absent were Justin Lawrence and John Muhlfeld)

Other – James Freyholtz, MDT; Vicki Crnich, MDT (by phone); Richard Turbiak, Citizens for Better Flathead; Mayre Flowers, CommUnity Consulting; Rhonda Fitzgerald and Chris Schustrom, Heart of Whitefish

A. Introductions

Dave Taylor called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm; committee members introduced themselves and described their interest in participating in the process, what experience they bring to the table, and their expectations.

B. Overview of Plan

Dave provided an overview of the plan and the planning process. He explained the direction given in the Growth Policy to develop the plan, and what the corridor plan must address to be successful. This includes commercial growth; scale of development; architectural standards, landscaping/screening; utilities; trip generation; traffic safety, circulation, and access; and bike/pedestrian facilities. Components of the plan include a public process; visioning; goals, objectives, and policies; and implementation actions. The limitations and constraints of the corridor include areas that are outside the City's jurisdiction: Montanan Department of Transportation (MDT) has authority over its highway and right-of-way (ROW); many parcels of land within the proposed corridor study area are not within the City limits but are instead under the County's jurisdiction. Dave provided an estimated timeline for the planning process and discussed the importance of public outreach and achieving consensus among the Steering Committee. He also outlined the role of the steering committee. Members will act in an advisory role, assist with outreach, be a sounding board for the public, research issues if necessary; provide input to staff, including review of the plan; and reaching consensus.

C. Review Existing Conditions and Map

Dave reviewed the zoning, existing, and future land use designations in the corridor. Hilary Lindh reviewed some of the land use and transportation plans adopted in the past that are relevant to the Highway 93 South corridor. A summary of the relevant plans and excerpts from some of the more pertinent plans is included in a resource binder that was handed out to the committee members. Previous transportation and neighborhood plans in the area have considered a raised median for the highway corridor, better bike and pedestrian facilities, and an expanded network of roads and streets parallel and perpendicular to the highway corridor to help alleviate traffic congestion. Some, like the MDT's Environmental Impact Statement from 1994 and their 2010 update to that study considered

adding travel lanes to the highway north of the Whitefish River (where it is known as Spokane Avenue) paired with added lanes on Baker Avenue. Whitefish's 2009 Transportation Plan focuses on alleviating congestion on the highway by developing additional east/west and parallel connections. The Strategic Housing Plan recommends deed restricted housing by right along the highway corridor and free market housing with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Conditional Use Permit (CUP); currently residential development in the corridor is limited to the PUD process.

D. Public Outreach/Open House

Dave introduced public outreach strategy, which will include reaching out to stakeholders and holding public open houses and workshops. Project information will be available on a web page, and we'll generate an interested party mailing list. We may want to develop a web-based feedback tool, consider how best to notice public meetings, issue press releases, publish fact sheets and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the project

E. Discuss Stakeholders

Staff presented a list of potential stakeholders was presented which includes the City of Whitefish; MDT; Flathead County; citizens of Whitefish; corridor residents and business owners; North Valley Hospital; downtown business owners. The committee was asked for ideas of other stakeholders. Representatives of recreationists (users of the Smith sport fields, bikers) and tourists were suggested. Dave also asked whether we should include private property owners who hold large or multiple parcels with development potential, such as Tee Bauer and the land around the Highway 40 intersection, Mike Gaugin and the old hospital property, or the owner (Rasmussen) of the parcels north of Greenwood.

F. Issues/Opportunities exercise

The Steering Committee and other attendees broke into groups of 3-4 to discuss 1) issues and concerns, 2) strengths and opportunities throughout the corridor. Thoughts were written on post-it notes and stuck on a corridor map, and a representative of each group presented their top ideas which were recorded on an easel pad. The issues and opportunities identified by the committee can be divided into two basic categories: those related to the aesthetics, the look or feel of the corridor (the Form), and those related to how the corridor functions for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and property owners (the Function). For the most part, both issues and opportunities were identified for each topic discussed. These ideas are summarized in the table on the next page and will be discussed further at the next committee meeting.



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Issues and Opportunities Identified by the Steering Committee for the Highway 93 S Corridor

FORM	
Issue	Opportunity
Strip development/sprawl	Improve aesthetics to match downtown; continuity with downtown; PUD overlay to improve quality of development; landscaped medians and wide buffer or berm
Lack of transitions: strip to low-density residential; south to downtown; county to city	Welcome to Whitefish theme; buffer/smooth transitions; viewsheds; gateway at Highway 40 intersection
FUNCTION	
Issue	Opportunity
Traffic/congestion	Roundabouts at 13 th and JP Rd; Landscaped median and wide buffer or berm; Park & Rides
Need grid system in place before development	East/West connections: 7 th St. from Karrow to Kalispell (includes new bridge); Greenwood east to Monegan; JP Rd west to Karrow
Discontinuous bike paths; Unsafe bike/ped facilities; Safe Routes to School/recreation	Make bike/ped path connections along river; protected bikeway along highway
Minimal river access	Improved River access/river parks
Too much area zoned commercial	Allow deed restricted residential by right
OTHER	
Issue	Opportunity
Many stakeholders and diverse perspectives- all need to be heard	
Wildlife along river	

G. Next meeting

The committee discussed timing of the next meeting and decided that Hilary would send out a Doodle Poll to determine the best day and time to hold the meeting the week of May 29. Future committee meetings may be scheduled at an interval of once a month, but it was felt that initially more frequent meetings would be helpful to get everyone up to speed on the task at hand.

H. Appoint chair and vice-chair

The Steering Committee selected John Middleton to chair the committee and June Hanson as Vice Chair.

I. Public comment

John asked for comment from the attendees from the public who are not on the committee. Mayre Flowers stated that this is a critical plan that needs a significant budget, and that the City should set aside money for consultants who are experts in holding community charettes. She thought attempting to hold a public open house in June will be too soon because the Committee needs more time to learn about the corridor and gel as a group. Rhonda Fitzgerald stated that the plan is very important because it will affect everyone - everyone's livelihood and life.

J. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:05