

missoula

connect

2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan
Update

Final Plan

July 2025



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CHAPTER 1

Our Charge

The Missoula MPO planning area is home to more than 100,000 residents spread over 263 square miles. With a thriving downtown, unique residential neighborhoods, a large public research university, and proximity to world-class outdoor recreation, it's no surprise that Missoula continues to grow quickly.

While growth brings benefits to the region, it also brings change and creates challenges to affordability, connectivity, and accessibility. Growth also puts pressure on our current transportation system, especially as our community's demographics and land use change. For example, the number of Missoulians working from home has doubled post pandemic, large master planned areas like Sx^wtpqyen (S-wh-tip-KAYN) have progressed, and a new land use plan has been adopted. People are asking for a wider range of mobility options, and they want safe connections that help them get to where they need to go.

As we conducted a targeted update to the previous Missoula Connect 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, we learned about your vision for the future of the Missoula area and your ideas for solutions to help respond to current challenges. We heard that Missoula area residents want safe, comfortable, and reliable ways to get around the region. For some, that means better biking connections or safer places to walk; for others, that means a reliable way to drive or an efficient trip to work and services on transit.

We know that when transportation is integrated with land use, we can support future growth and catalyze the local economy without straining the transportation system or creating negative environmental impacts for future generations. As we grow, we need a transportation system that keeps pace—one that reflects our community's character and supports a region that is more livable, equitable, and sustainable.

What is the Missoula MPO?

Who:

The MPO, or Metropolitan Planning Organization, works to plan a safe transportation network for the Missoula area to ensure we have a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation system. Missoula's MPO was designated in 1982 through an Interlocal Agreement between the City of Missoula, Missoula County, Missoula Urban Transportation District (MUTD) and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT).



What:

The primary responsibility of the MPO is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process throughout the Missoula area to ensure that transportation investments are based on a regional needs assessment and public input.

When:

The Missoula MPO was formed 45 years ago, following the 1980 Census. Today, the MPO is responsible for long-range planning and programming of federal transportation funds within the Missoula area.

Where:

The MPO serves the Missoula Urbanized Area as well as surrounding areas expected to become urbanized within the next 20 years. This planning area is larger than the Missoula city limits but smaller than the boundaries of Missoula County.

Why:

The MPO carries out the metropolitan transportation planning process and facilitates collaboration between federal, state, and local government agencies, interested parties, and community members.

How:

The Missoula MPO directs federal funds towards transportation projects that increase access to opportunity and prosperity, while promoting the health, wellness, and distinct character of the Missoula area through regional policymaking.

Connecting our Planning Efforts

The Missoula region has a rich tradition of planning, which both contributes to and helps to implement our long-range transportation plan. This update to the LRTP occurred in step with Mountain Line’s Transit Service Plan (Appendix J). This unique approach will continue to strengthen the relationship between the MPO and MUTD and reinforce the recommendations made in each plan. The area’s growth plans and policies and our climate action plans are a few examples of the many documents that have guided and shaped the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update. And to help our region implement the many recommended transportation projects and programs, we have developed plans like the Downtown Safety Access and Mobility (SAM) Project, the Brooks Street Bus Rapid Transit & Transit-oriented development (BRT/TOD) Planning Study, and other corridor-specific plans.

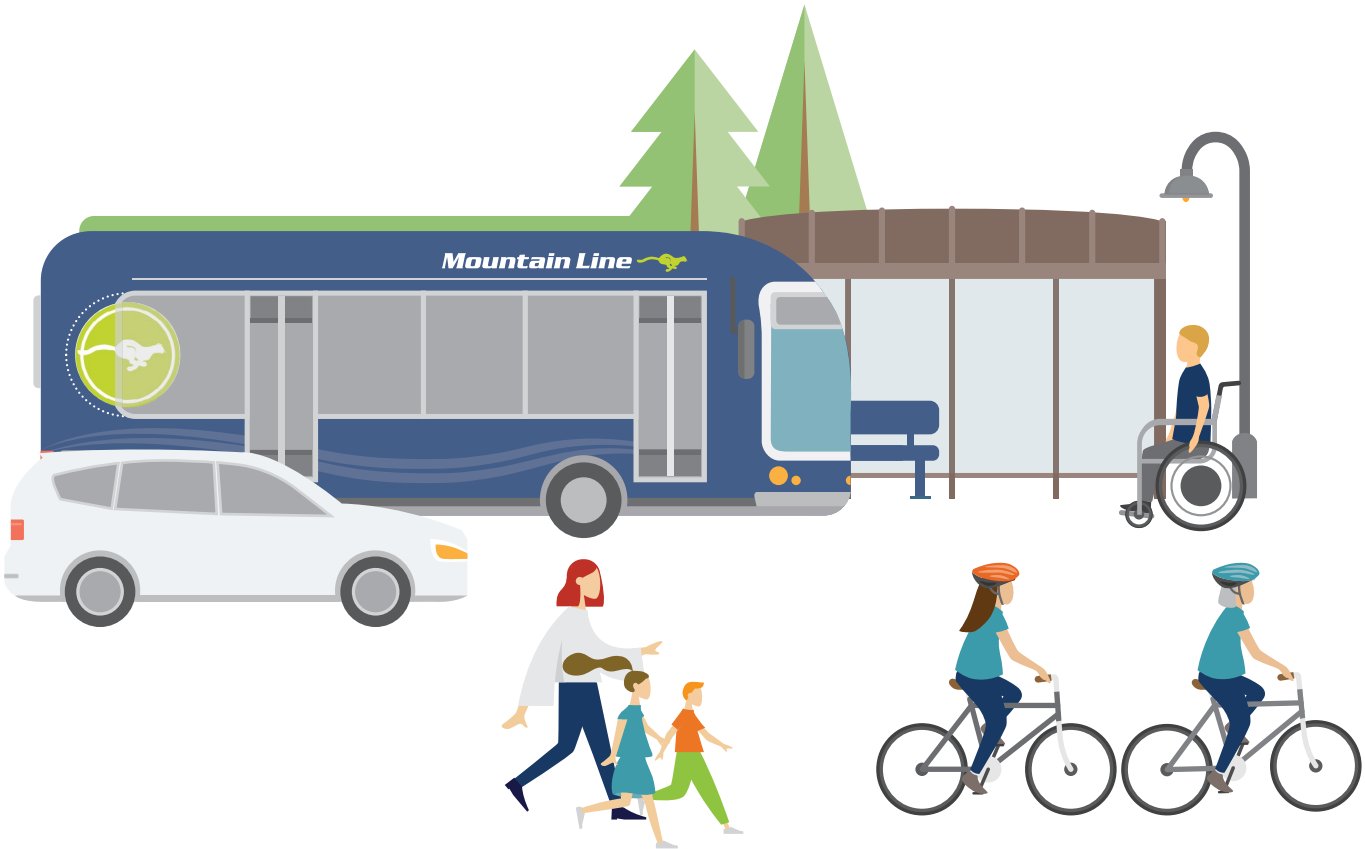
By serving as a connector between the region’s contributing and implementing plans, the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update helps to carry our values forward and advance our highest priorities. A comprehensive review of previous and ongoing plans reviewed for this effort is provided in Appendix C - Existing and Projected Conditions.



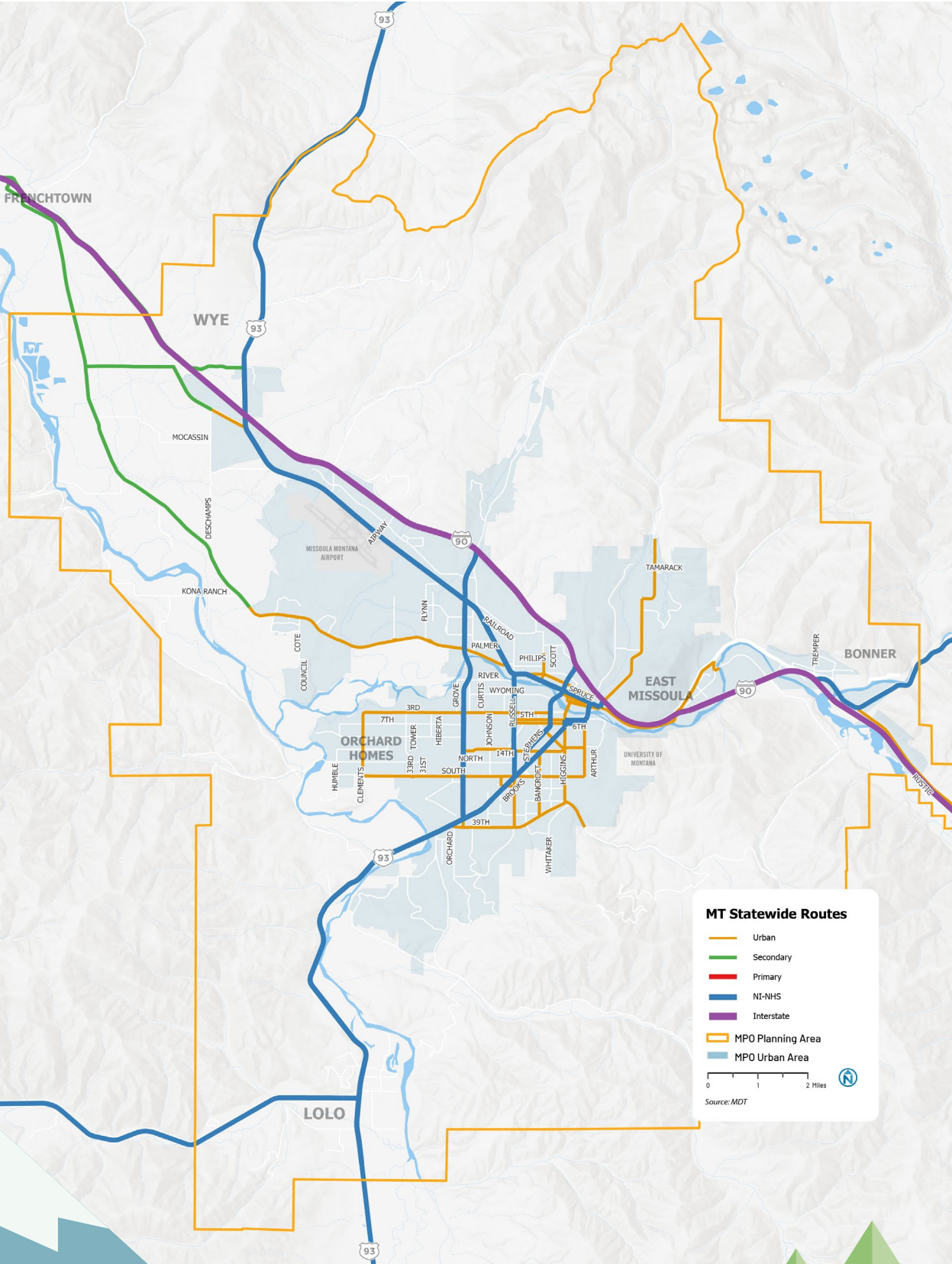
The Plan

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update is an update to our Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The 25-year plan looks at all modes of transportation and identifies priorities for projects and programs, as well as how funding should be allocated. Relying on previous planning work and extensive community outreach, the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update integrates existing plans and projects to create a sustainable transportation future that improves mobility and access across all modes for all Missoula area residents, workers, and visitors.

A strong transportation plan is critical to the success of the City of Missoula’s Land Use Plan and the Missoula County Growth Policy, and the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update will knit together our land use and transportation goals. Missoula is on the move and we need to ensure we’re not only keeping pace but staying ahead. The following plan details improvements and policies for our urban transportation system within the MPO Planning Area. See Appendix C for more detail on Missoula’s transportation system.



The Missoula MPO Planning and Urban Area



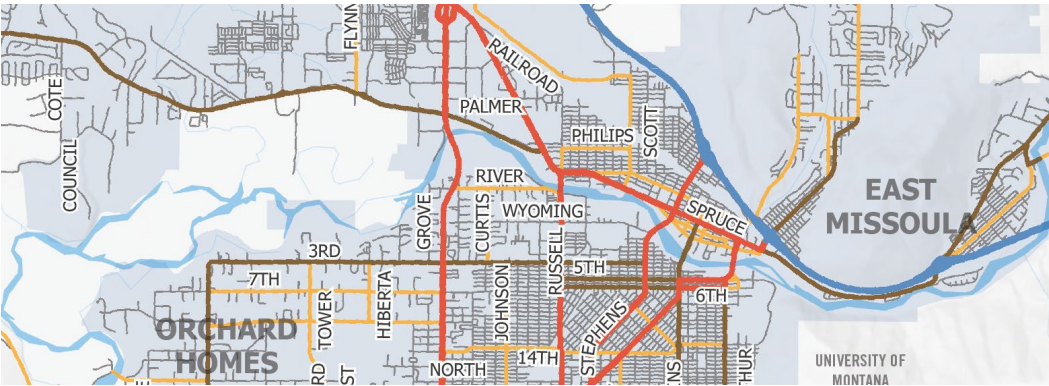
Source: MDT - See Full Map in Appendix C

The Planning and Urban Areas

The Missoula MPO’s Planning and Urban Areas, originally established in 1982, have undergone subtle boundary changes over time. Despite these adjustments, the boundaries continue to encompass the City of Missoula and several surrounding unincorporated communities in Missoula County, including East Missoula, Bonner, Milltown, Turah, the Wye, and Lolo. The Planning Area represents the full extent of the region considered in our analysis of transportation function and identifies where growth and urbanization will most likely occur over this plan’s 25 year timeframe. The Urban Area, which is smaller and more densely populated, defines the area where the Missoula MPO has jurisdiction over the expenditure of urban transportation funds. Within the MPO, several statewide routes are present, including Interstate 90 (I-90), key corridors on the National Highway System such as Brooks Street and Reserve Street, as well as multiple urban routes within the City of Missoula and secondary routes in the county.

Functional Classification

While Missoula residents typically refer to roads by name, transportation planners use a system called Functional Classification to describe a roadway’s purpose and design intent. As shown below, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) applies this system to categorize roads based on their role within the broader transportation network. MDT uses the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) functional classification system because it is required by federal regulations. These classifications include Interstate and Non-Interstate Principal Arterials, such as I-90, US 93, and Highway 200, along with several key corridors within the City of Missoula. Other common functional classes include Minor Arterials—such as 3rd Street, Higgins Avenue, and South Avenue—as well as Major Collectors and Local Streets. The Planning Area has 19 miles of Interstate, 72 miles of Principal and Minor Arterials, 122 miles of collectors, and 722 miles of local streets. See the full map in Appendix C.



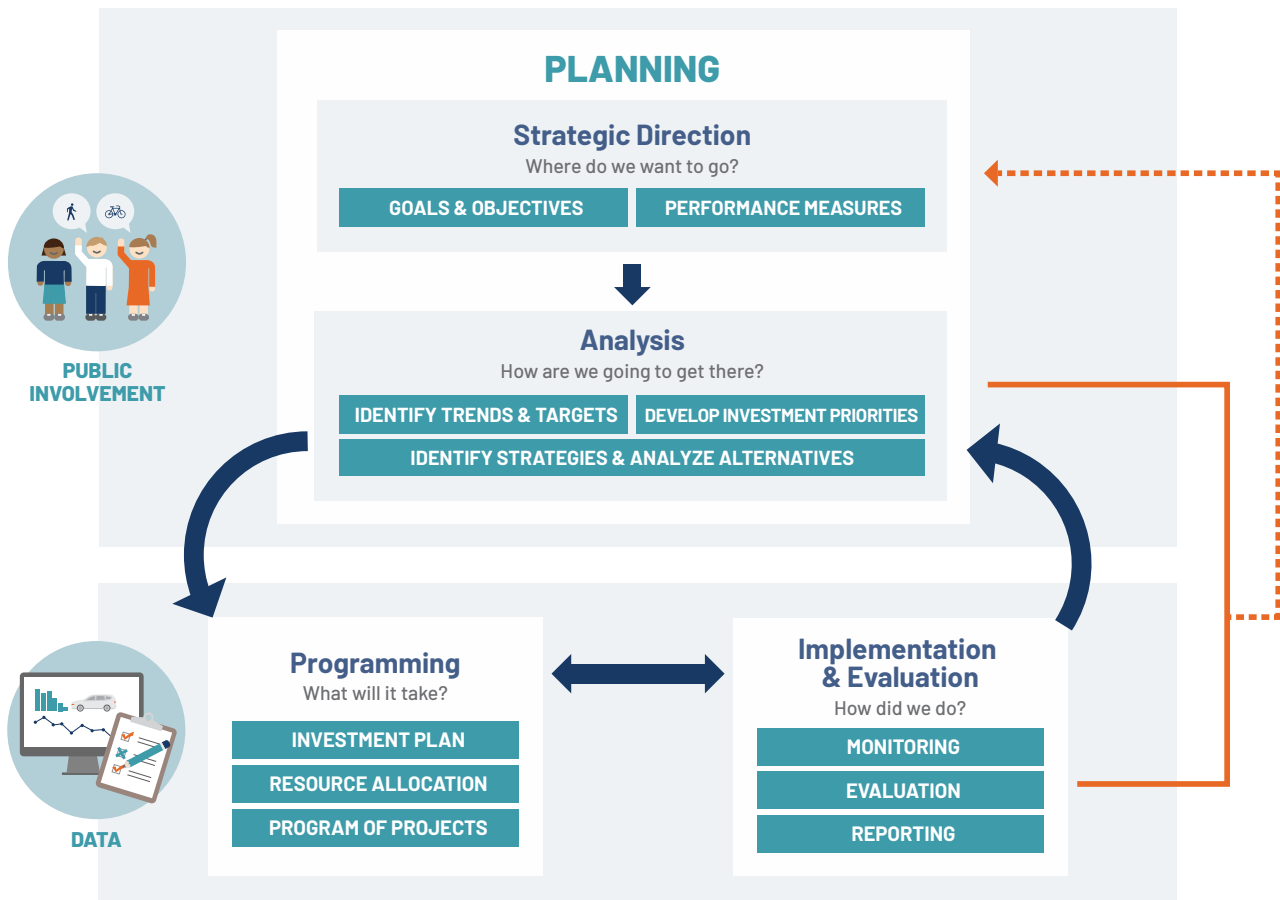
Montana Highway Functional Classification

Source: MDT - See Full Map in Appendix C

The Process

The Missoula Connect 2050 LRTP Update is a vision for transportation needs and opportunities through 2050. The project team—made up of MPO staff and consultants—engaged with the community at key milestones, capturing the Missoula area’s values and priorities and using them to shape this plan.

The Planning Process



JAN 2024 - APR

Community Values & Existing Conditions

We explored data to understand the demographics and existing transportation and land use conditions of the Missoula area. We also meet with our committees, held a pop-up event, and launched an online survey to understand your priorities when it comes to getting around the region.

APR - SEP

Public Engagement

We hosted a series of workshops, open houses, and attended numerous community events to let our community know this project’s timeline and how the public could participate.

SEP - DEC

Public Engagement

We gathered project ideas from City and County staff and previous project lists from past and ongoing planning efforts and scored the projects using our evaluation framework. Based on the goals established in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP and the current fiscal landscape, we prioritized projects into a committed and recommended project list with short-term, medium-term, long-term, and illustrative identified.

SEP - JAN 2025

Recommended Scenario & Implementation Plan

We developed a final preferred scenario that best supports the values identified by the community. The implementation plan identifies current and future funding sources, recognizing that new revenues will be needed to develop our future transportation system.

JAN - JULY

Draft & Final Long-Range Transportation Plan

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update includes a final list of projects, programs, and policies along with metrics to monitor performance and a financial plan for getting it all done. The plan will be adopted by the MPO to guide funding decisions moving forward.

You Guided Our Work

We gathered input from you, Missoula area residents, to create the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update. Through focus groups, in-person and virtual community meetings, social media posts, and online surveys, we heard your ideas to improve getting around our region today and in the future. We also worked with standing committees, described below, throughout the planning process. More information about our engagement activities and what we learned can be found in Chapter 3.

Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee

The Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC) is the governing body of the Missoula MPO and includes elected officials and representatives from the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board, the Missoula Urban Transportation District (MUTD) Board, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) participates as a non-voting member. TPCC members guide transportation planning in the Missoula area and approve the final LRTP. TPCC provided direction to the project team, responded to input from the LRTP committees and the public, and shaped the plan’s recommendations.

Transportation Technical Advisory Committee

The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) is a standing committee of the Missoula MPO and provides technical advice to the TPCC and technical direction to the MPO and the project team. TTAC includes staff from the City, the City-County Health Department, County Parks and Trails, the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, Public Works & Mobility, MUTD, MDT, and FHWA and FTA non-voting members. TTAC members provided input on the project scoring framework update, submittal of project ideas, and guidance for prioritizing project and policy recommendations.

Community Partner Advisory Group

The Community Partner Advisory Group included representatives from a diverse group of community organizations, such as Summit Independent Living, Missoula Economic Partnership, Missoula Housing Authority, and Partnership Health Center. These partners provided input on transportation projects, transit scenarios, and evaluation metrics at a meeting in the summer of 2024.

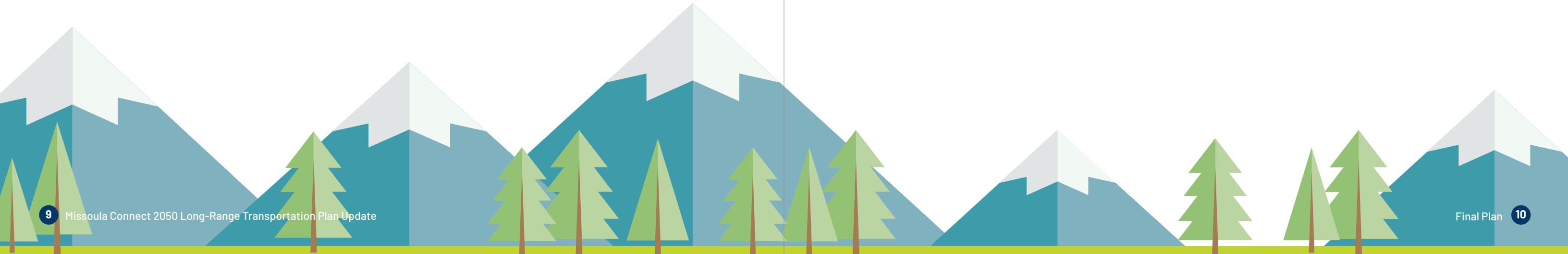
Community Partner Presentations

Community partner presentations and conversations were held throughout the duration of the planning process to inform community leaders and members of the LRTP and Transit Service Plan plan, process, and opportunities for engagement, answer questions and seek input, and provide multiple opportunities for dialogue between MPO and MUTD staff and community leaders and members.

There were additional organizations and community groups who were unable to host a meeting or event but requested and shared additional information about the project and engagement opportunities with their membership, such as the Tenants Union.

Collaboration with Concurrent Planning Efforts

This LRTP update builds on the strong foundation established by the previous LRTP, the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP, refining our approach based on new data, community feedback, and evolving priorities. Since the last plan, we have evaluated changes in Missoula’s transportation network, reviewed progress on programs, and aligned our planning with complementary efforts like the Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan. This targeted update ensures that our transportation investments continue to support a safe, connected, and sustainable transportation future for Missoula.



CHAPTER 2

A Strong Foundation

Relying on previous planning work and extensive community outreach, the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update integrates existing plans and projects to create a sustainable transportation future that improves mobility and access across all travel modes for all Missoula area residents, workers, and visitors.

Guiding Plans

There’s been a lot of good planning work done in the region since the 2021 Long-Range Transportation Plan. We’ve completed the Reserve Street Community Input Project, the Missoula Transportation Options Action Plan, the Higgins Corridor Plan, and the countywide Pathways and Trails Plan.

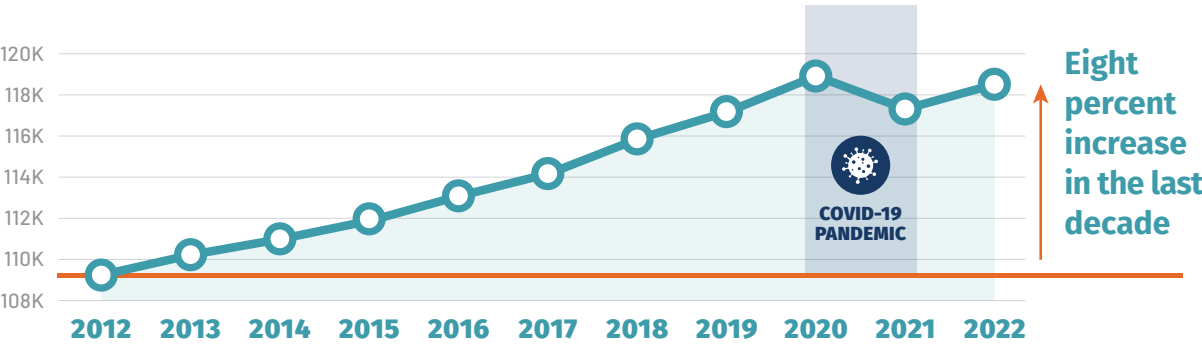
Together, these efforts have identified important transportation projects and programs and reaffirm that the goals put forth by the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP remain paramount to moving forward our region. The recommendations from these plans have been integrated into the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update so that we have a single list of projects that can advance with our region’s limited transportation funding. These recent plans—and many more—share common values that informed our work on the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update.



Missoula Today: A Growing Region

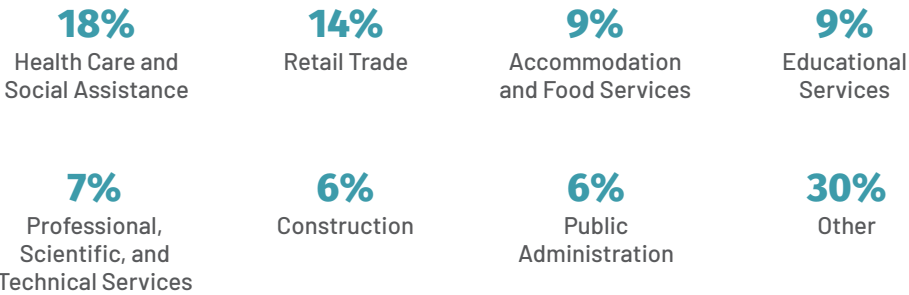
As more people move to the Missoula area, we face both new opportunities and new challenges. Between 2012 and 2022, the region’s population grew by 8%. As our community grows, demand is rising across all modes of transportation. The projected growth in the City and County suggests that an additional 56,418 people will move into the planning area by 2050, yielding a 55% increase in population from 2022 (103,012) to 2050 (159,430)(see Appendix C). To keep pace, we must find creative ways to make better use of our existing infrastructure to move both people and goods.

Population Growth in Missoula County



The Missoula Planning Area’s population as of 2022 is estimated to be 103,012 and is projected to be 159,430 in 2050. Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 2022

In recent years, the Missoula area economy has grown increasingly diversified. Healthcare and retail trade account for nearly one-third of all jobs, with an additional 32,738 jobs anticipated by 2050 (see Appendix C). Missoula also serves as the regional economic hub, with many people traveling into the urban area to access jobs, services and other major destinations. As the region continues to grow, transportation options need to be considered to connect people from where they live to jobs and opportunities in the community, and regional infrastructure will need to accommodate additional trips from outside the planning area.



Source: LEHD, 2022

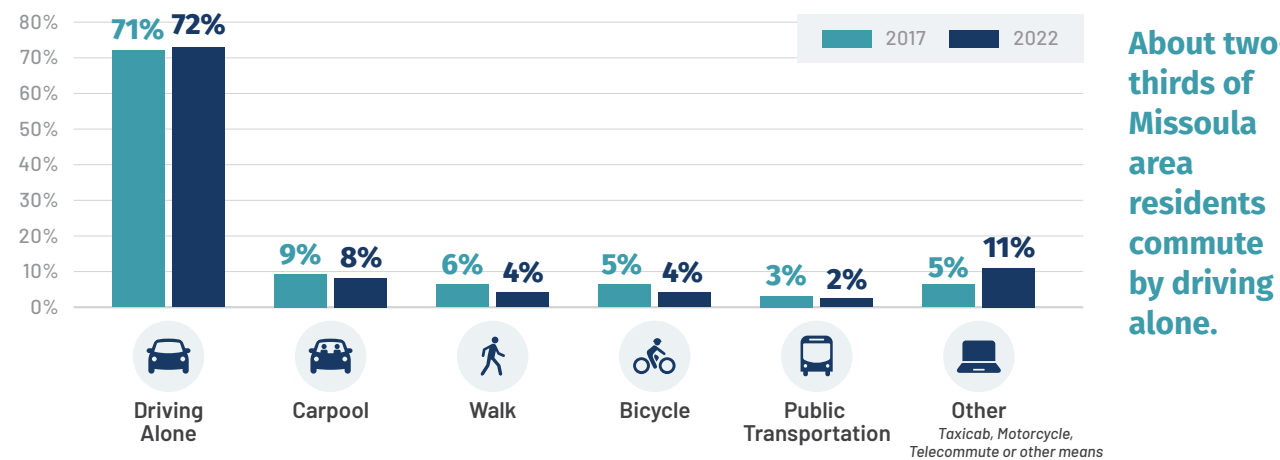
How We Travel

How are Missoulians getting around the region today? Well, most often by driving. Given our relatively low density and large area—and our role as a regional economic, educational, and tourism hub—driving is often the fastest and most convenient way to travel. This is especially true for longer trips. However, drive-alone rates among Missoula area residents are less than the state average, while active transportation modes such as biking and walking are well above what we see in the rest of the state.

Drive-alone commute trips place increasing strain on Missoula’s transportation system. As we prioritize regional investments, it is clear that simply building more road capacity is not a sustainable solution. Roadway expansions are expensive, take years to complete, and often offer only temporary congestion relief. The Russell Street project is one example of this challenge. First started in the early 1990s, it has taken more than three decades to move through planning, funding, and construction. Throughout that time, rising construction costs, driven largely by inflation, have consistently outpaced available funding, placing additional strain on already limited budgets. The long timelines and escalating expenses associated with projects like Russell Street make it clear that expanding road capacity to manage congestion is not a sustainable path forward for the Missoula region.

Based on growth projections, if Missoulians continue to travel at the same rates of vehicle trips as today, streets within the planning area will see expanded congestion, delays, and travel times. Modeling estimates—accounting for projected population and employment growth—show an increase in 591,103 daily vehicle miles traveled in the Planning Area by 2050 without additional infrastructure investments or shift in modes. The number of lane miles operating at a failing level of service (LOS E or F) is projected to nearly double from 43 to 83 miles (see Appendix C).

How People in the Missoula Area Commute 2017 vs. 2022



About two-thirds of Missoula area residents commute by driving alone.

Source: ACS, 2017 and 2022

We also expect Missoula to continue growing as a regional and national destination. According to the 2024 Destination Stewardship Plan, approximately 3.5 million visitors traveled to or through Missoula in 2022-2023.¹ This is a tremendous amount of travel that can impact our transportation system and needs to be planned for and supported in the future as one of Missoula’s core industries.

One of the key strategies for mitigating the impacts of growth on our transportation system in Missoula is achieving greater efficiency of our transportation system (see Appendix C). Recent investments in multimodal infrastructure resulted in a more connected, safe, and accessible network of sidewalks (420 miles), bike lanes (47 miles), and shared-use paths (60 miles). Increases in transit service is leading to growing ridership. The region already leads the state in non-SOV commuting, and by further integrating land use and transit, encouraging compact development, and investing in multimodal infrastructure, Missoula can move more people more efficiently—maximizing the impact of our existing network and resources.

Addressing our transportation system efficiency is about more than just biking and walking. Strategies initiated in the Missoula area include implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to enhance traffic operations through real-time communication systems that monitor and manage roadways, coordinate signals, and provide dynamic messaging to travelers. This includes efforts such as the Reserve Street Retiming project, which aims to improve traffic flow by increasing signal connectivity and synchronization. These system management and operational improvements can often be implemented more quickly—and at significantly lower cost—than large-scale capacity expansions.

Our Mode Split Goals

Progress since 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP

In our 2016 Long-Range Transportation Plan, we set some important mode-share goals which we carried through the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP and into the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update:

- Reduce drive-alone commute share to **34% by 2050**
- x3** Triple bike and walk shares and transit share by 2050
- Reduce drive-alone commute trips by **20,000 by 2050**
- Achieve a **small increase** in carpool and work from home

Since then, our drive-alone rate has increased ever so slightly from 71% to 72% between 2017 and 2022. Due to the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on commuting patterns, more people are working from home than ever before. As a result, carpooling, walking, biking, and transit use have all declined slightly as modes as those commuters transitioned to telework. The rate of Missoula residents telecommuting has more than doubled over the last five years.

Source: 2023 Missoula Area Transportation Survey, see Appendix C for more detail

¹ Source: [https://destinationmissoula.org/files/missoula-destination-stewardship-plan\(12.18.2024\).pdf](https://destinationmissoula.org/files/missoula-destination-stewardship-plan(12.18.2024).pdf)

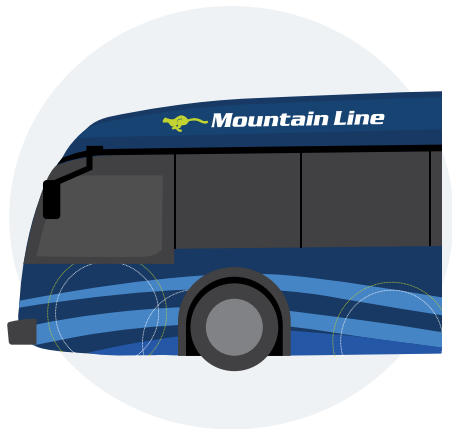
Transit as a Regional Backbone

Transit ridership in the Missoula area is on the rise since its sharp decline during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, MUTD ridership is about 70% of what it was in 2019. Ridership is projected to grow, although currently about two percent of Missoula area commuters use the bus to get to work.

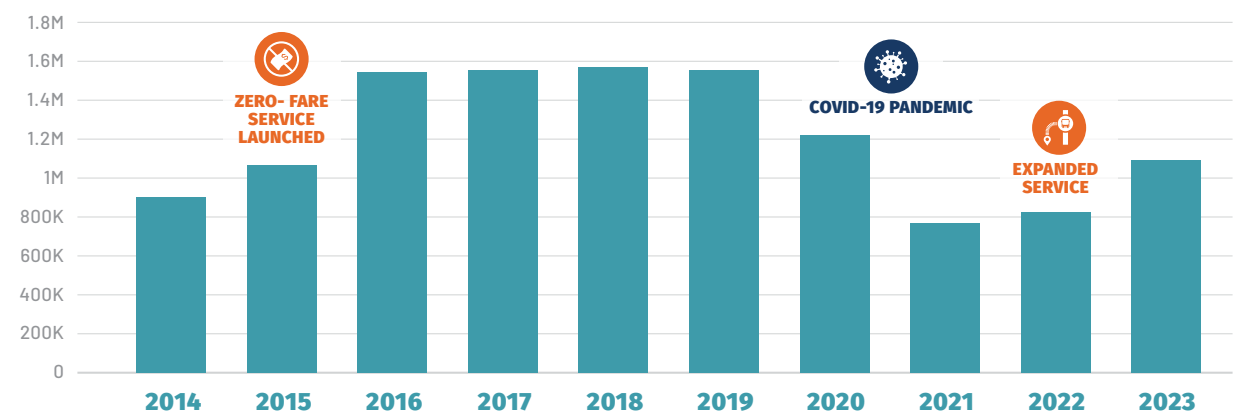
The cost of operating both fixed-route and paratransit services has risen significantly over the past three years due to pandemic-related parts shortages and price increases, wage increases tied to the rising cost of living, and growing demand for paratransit service.

Mountain Line has 12 fixed routes and offers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service. Paratransit service has increased its ridership by half since 2019, displaying an increased transportation need for our most transit-reliant community members.

All but two of Mountain Line’s routes operate seven days per week, with service generally between 6a.m. and 9p.m. Most routes have buses come every 30 to 60 minutes, with two routes operating at a 15-minute frequency during weekdays. MUTD’s most popular routes are those with 15-minute service along corridors like S Johnston Street, South Avenue, Russell Street, and Broadway Street. Increased service has consistently led to increased ridership, as demonstrated during key service changes in recent years. In 2015, the introduction of Zero-Fare service and Bolt (high-frequency) routes significantly boosted ridership, and in 2022, further gains were observed following the expansion of evening and weekend service.



Mountain Line Ridership



Source: MUTD, 2023

Leverage the Mountain Line Transit Service Plan

The MPO partnered with Mountain Line to jointly update the Transit Service Plan and the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP. This coordinated effort aligned agency strategies and identified shared priorities to improve regional mobility. One example is the LRTP’s proposed traffic signal at Cregg Lane and South Orange Street, which enhances transit access and enables routing changes to Route 8.

The updated Transit Service Plan provides a comprehensive strategy to strengthen Missoula’s transit system. It addresses service and operations, capital needs, funding, sustainability, equity, and policy—building on the 2018 plan while adapting to current conditions. Key objectives include assessing the existing route network, engaging the community, and developing an actionable roadmap for near- and long-term improvements. An assessment of current system performance and ridership trends, outlined in the Transit Conditions analysis in Appendix C, provided the foundation for identifying priority improvements.

Mountain Line Near-Term Service Changes

Improving and expanding transit service throughout the Missoula region is critical to achieving our goal of improved connectivity, as well as the mode shift targets included in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP. These targets include tripling the share of trips made by biking, walking, and transit by the year 2050.

As part of this coordinated planning effort, the Transit Service Plan identified a set of near-term service improvements for Mountain Line. These recommendations are designed to expand service coverage, improve frequency and reliability, and make transit an option for a greater share of Missoula residents and visitors. Learn more in Appendix J – Transit Service Plan.



Route Alignment Changes

Route alignment changes to **Routes 7, 8, and 11** to improve speed and reliability and accommodate new developments and travel patterns.

Increased Frequency

Increased frequency from 60 minutes to 30 minutes on **Routes 3 and 4**.

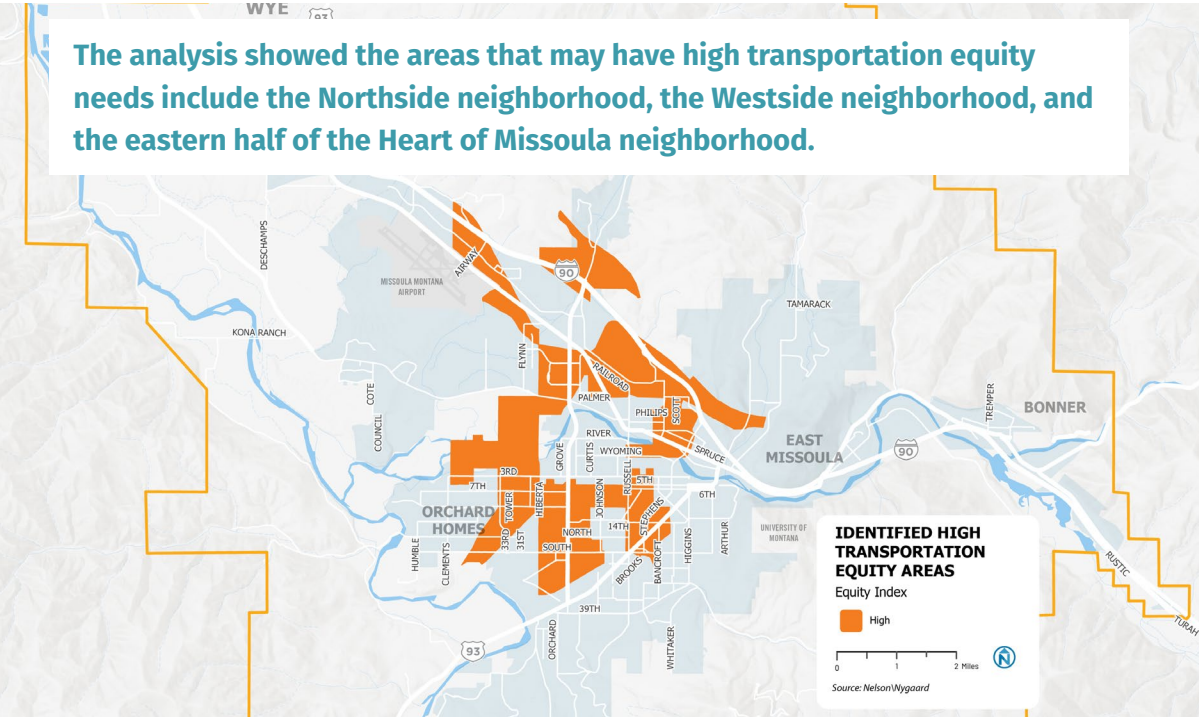
Focusing on Equity

Equity is an important tool for analyzing people’s access to transportation and planning future transportation investments. Planning within an equity framework charges decision-makers with the responsibility to invest in places where transportation projects and programs can support historically underrepresented communities that may have fewer transportation options.

Providing people with affordable, reliable, and safe transportation options can enhance their economic stability and create a safety net for the most vulnerable in our community. Some steps the region is taking to better serve historically underrepresented communities include providing fare-free public transportation and improving multimodal access to affordable housing, parks, schools, health care facilities, and social services.

An analysis was conducted to identify areas in the greater Missoula region that may have high transportation equity needs (see Appendix C). Using the latest Census block group data, three variables with strong indicators for high transportation equity needs were examined and used in project prioritization described in Chapter 5. These variables were:

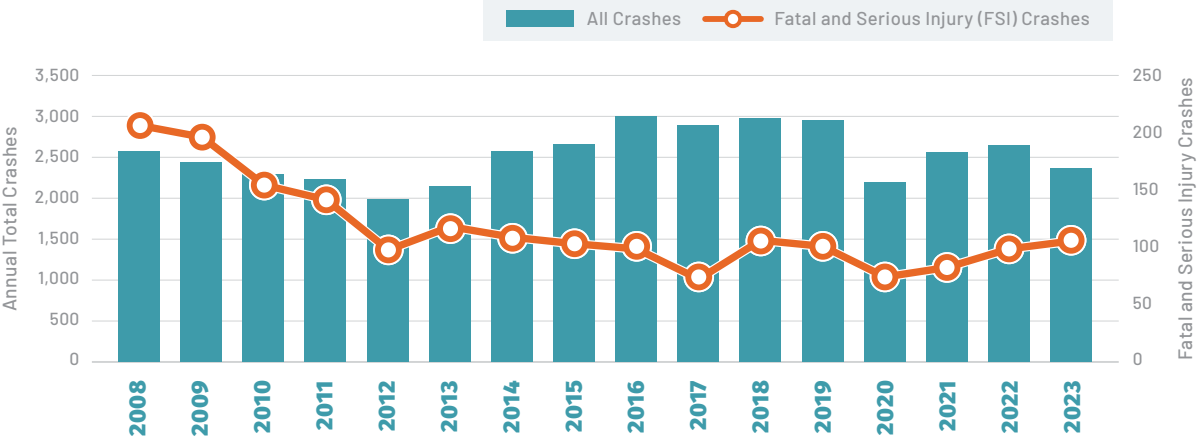
- Households with annual income of \$25,000 and below (Low-Income)
- Non-white population (Black, Indigenous, People of Color ‘BIPOC’ Population)
- Zero-vehicle households



Transportation Safety in Missoula

One of our biggest priorities as we plan for the future is keeping people safe on our streets. Between 2019 and 2023, there were over 12,500 transportation-related crashes in the Missoula area that impacted people using all modes of travel. While the total crash numbers are less than pre-pandemic, the fatal crash rate has steadily increased year-over-year since 2020. Corridors in Missoula with higher traffic volumes and higher speed limits, such as Reserve Street, generally have higher overall crash rates. See Appendix C for detailed analysis.

Historical Crash Trends



Source: MDT, 2008–2023

Vehicle Travel Speeds and Pedestrian Injury



25%
chance of pedestrian fatality or severe injury



50%
chance of pedestrian fatality or severe injury



90%
chance of pedestrian fatality or severe injury

Source: Tefft, Brian, 'Impact speed and a pedestrian's risk of severe injury or death' (Accident Prevention Analysis, 2013)

Nearly three quarters of crashes involving people walking or biking result in some level of serious injury or fatality, which highlights the importance of promoting safety improvements that reduce vehicular conflicts with vulnerable roadway users. While a relatively small percentage of the total number of collisions, people walking, biking, and rolling are our most vulnerable travelers. They face a high risk of injury or death, particularly when hit by a vehicle traveling at speeds greater than 25 miles per hour. Mullan Road and Broadway Street currently have the highest concentration of crashes involving either a pedestrian or cyclist.

Most crash reports include information on factors that contributed to the crash. A review of the crash data shows that most crashes are caused by human factors, rather than environmental conditions or vehicle issues. Looking at human factors specifically, the top three causes of crashes are:



There were 268 crashes involving people biking and walking between 2019 and 2023.



Driving distracted or in a careless/inattentive manner



Failing to yield right-of-way



Driving in an erratic, reckless, negligent, or aggressive manner

Opportunities for this 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update builds on the robust public process and project prioritization developed in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP. The opportunities for this update include connecting urban and rural areas, moving the dial on mode shift, and integrating land use and transportation.

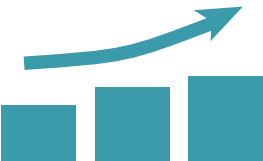
We developed processes to reaffirm the projects and programs identified in the previous 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP that best meet the shared values of the Missoula region. These processes were necessary to gain support and funding for the implementation of these investments and demonstrate a need based on the following opportunities.



Moving the Dial on Mode Share

Driving is the way that most people get around the Missoula area today. But the region is growing, and preferences are changing. Missoulians have asked for safe, sustainable, efficient, and cost effective transportation choices to support getting them to the places they need to go. This means creating a more robust transit system and reducing barriers to access to that system as it already operates fare-free. And it means doing more to manage transportation demand, including creating new policies and programs to make it easier for people to shift to non-drive-alone modes. The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update proposes clear actions to change behavior, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and meet our ambitious mode share and climate goals.

This LRTP update will help move the dial on mode share to create more affordable travel options, break the paradigm of Missoula as an auto-centric area, and champion the fact this is a great place to live without owning a car.



Multimodal Snapshot

The road network in the MPO planning area is approximately 946 miles, with bicycle facilities on 47 miles and sidewalks on 420 miles¹.

Source: 2018 Pedestrian Facilities Master Plan

Planning for Regional Transportation

The Missoula region covers 263 square miles. This presents challenges for delivering transportation choices for all residents across a large geography. Many of the people living in areas further out from the downtown core, like the Wye and Lower Miller Creek, need access to affordable and efficient transportation. The urban parts of our region are disconnected from the rural areas, especially when it comes to biking and walking connections. The urban core also serves as the regional jobs and services center, with as many as one third of all workers commuting in from another county.¹ While this is a slight reduction in external workers commuting into Missoula County compared to 2017 data, it is still a significant number of people needing to travel to access jobs.

If the current proportion of workers traveling from outside the MPO remains consistent—currently 17,438 per day—the region is projected to see an increase of approximately 6,894 daily work commute trips by 2050, bringing the total to 24,332 trips into the planning area each day. Travel from outside the region particularly impacts key regional corridors in Missoula such as Brooks/Highway 93, East and West Broadway, Reserve Street, and the I-90 corridor. It will be challenging and unlikely to expand capacity on these streets without significant changes to infrastructure funding, further reinforcing the need for other efficiency-based tools to accommodate future traffic.

Advancing Safe and Local Networks

Over the past five years, the Missoula area has experienced more than 250 collisions involving people walking or biking, with approximately one-quarter resulting in a fatality or serious injury. To keep people safe on our roads, the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update focuses on completing and maintaining our networks. The plan continues to build on the bicycle network proposed in the 2017 Bicycle Facilities Master Plan, which proposes adding 100 miles to the network. Nearly half of these proposed bicycle facilities will be protected, which will have an impact on network safety. The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update identifies opportunities to create local systems—like neighborhood greenways—that focus on low-speed and low-volume streets to enhance safety for people walking and biking. But safety is about more than infrastructure. To create streets that work for people of all ages and abilities, the 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update prioritizes saving lives over free-flowing traffic.

The Bicycle Facilities Master Plan proposes adding 100 miles of bike facilities throughout Missoula.



¹Source: US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), Main (JT00) Montana (2022)

Freight and Goods Movement

Freight movement is essential to Missoula’s economy and the success of local businesses. As a regional hub in western Montana, Missoula depends on a multimodal freight network—including trucking, rail, and air—to move goods efficiently within the region and to broader domestic and international markets. To better support freight, Missoula Connect looks to improve system efficiency and reduce single-occupancy vehicle use. Two LRTP programs that support this effort are:

- ✓ The Freight and Goods Management Program, which establishes a framework for evaluating and improving local freight infrastructure.
- ✓ The Intelligent Transportation Systems and Signal Coordination Program, which proposes adaptive signal technologies to reduce congestion and improve travel reliability.

Missoula’s freight strategies align with the 2022 Montana Freight Plan, which shares goals with Missoula Connect, including safety, system preservation, reliability, environmental stewardship, and network resiliency.



Trucking is the primary mode of freight in Missoula, with approximately 100,000 of the state’s 3.35 million commercial vehicle miles traveled each day occurring within the Missoula Planning Area. As truck freight volumes are expected to grow significantly by 2050, Missoula’s location on I-90 and US 93 makes it a critical freight corridor.



Rail plays a vital role in moving bulk commodities such as agriculture products and timber. Missoula is served by BNSF Railway, part of a statewide network spanning over 3,500 miles.



Air freight is growing rapidly due to population increases and rising e-commerce. Missoula Montana Airport offers essential service for high-value, time-sensitive goods, with statewide air cargo volumes rising 34% between 2017 and 2020.

Freight movement also presents challenges. Missoula County experiences higher rates of commercial vehicle crashes than rural areas in the state, in part due to urban congestion, weather, and wildlife conflicts. Key freight corridors, including Brooks Street and Reserve Street, are prioritized for improvements that enhance freight mobility and aim to improve multimodal connectivity and safety.

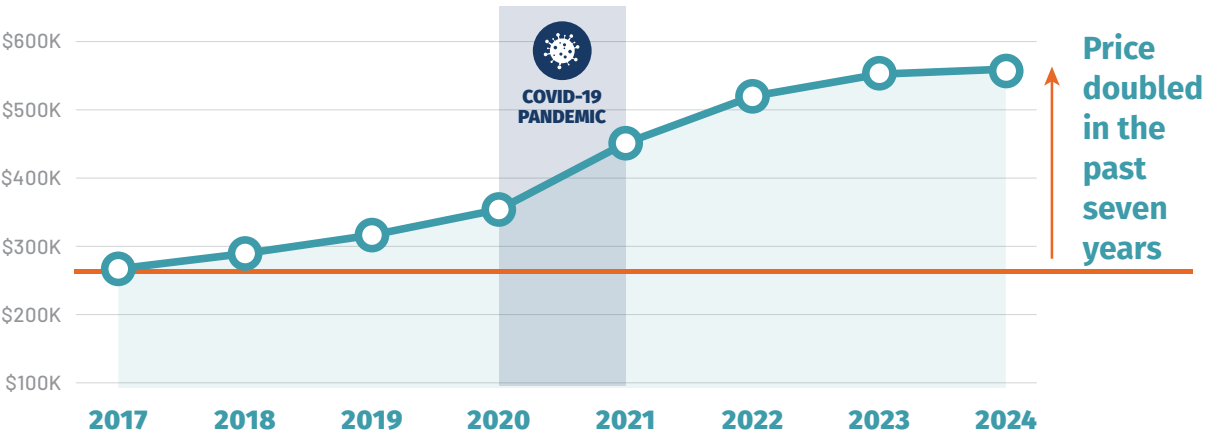
Changes in Affordability

Like many metropolitan areas across the United States, the Missoula region is experiencing a rise in housing costs that outpaces wage growth, making it increasingly difficult for many residents to find affordable housing. Because transportation is typically the second-largest household expense, reducing transportation costs can play a key role in lowering the overall cost of living. This highlights the importance of providing accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation options that connect Missoula-area residents to jobs, schools, essential services, and recreational opportunities.

As we grow, we must ensure that everyone in the Missoula area has access to high-quality transportation options that connect us to the places we go. About half of our region’s residents make less than \$40,000 per year. Providing affordable options—like Mountain Line, which is fare-free—can increase access to jobs, schools, and services for everyone.



Median Home Sale Price, 2017-2024



Source: Montana Regional MLS, 2024

Integrating Land Use and Transportation

Our transportation system is shaped by our land uses. This plan was developed in coordination with the recently adopted [Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan](#), which guides urban growth and development while setting clear expectations for how and where growth should occur in and around the City of Missoula. The plan also integrated the land use vision from the [Missoula County Growth Policy](#), particularly through the Missoula Area Land Use Element planning process completed in 2019. Land use decisions shape where people live, work, and travel while transportation investments—in turn—influence future development patterns. Missoula Connect intentionally integrates land use planning to create a unified vision for growth and transportation infrastructure, drawing on the work of these local growth plans for future population and employment growth projections, land use development patterns, and identifying areas of concentrated growth. The key themes of the City of Missoula Land Use Plan and the Missoula County Growth Policy are directly aligned with the LRTP’s project scoring and prioritization framework, as outlined in Chapter 5. In the City of Missoula, inward growth is achieved by concentrating development within the urban core, while Missoula County supports targeted growth by directing development toward existing communities and designated growth areas.

Focusing growth inward builds off the scenario planning and evaluation done during the 2021 Long Range Transportation Plan effort, which demonstrated that the more compact development occurs, the more sustainable and efficient our transportation system becomes by reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and shortening travel times to daily destinations.

Missoula needs to produce 22,000 homes by 2045 for a 5% vacancy rate. Where this growth occurs will impact our transportation system. [“Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan,”](#) page 15

City of Missoula Land Use Plan

The Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan establishes a vision for the city’s future growth and development, providing clear guidance for public and private land use decisions and development regulations. Building on previous transportation planning work, the plan recognizes key differences in the built environment—urban, limited urban, and rural—and the mobility options available in each. These distinctions are foundational to how the plan defines place types and street types, helping to tailor roadway design to the surrounding land use context and the needs of priority users.

Focusing growth inward and in centers with existing infrastructure builds off the scenario planning and evaluation done during the 2021 Long Range Transportation Plan effort, which demonstrated that the more compact development occurs, the more sustainable and efficient our transportation system becomes by reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and shortening travel times to daily destinations. Prioritizing transportation investments in areas identified for significant future growth like the Wye, North Reserve-Scott Street, Midtown, and the Sxwtpqyen Area will help avoid unnecessary congestion or impacts to our key regional facilities, and ensure Missoula meets transportation performance targets.

Focus Inward

Focus development and infill within the Plan area to minimize strain on infrastructure and prevent sprawl into sensitive and constrained lands.

Housing Choice & Access

Develop a diverse, equitable, and resilient housing system that meets current and future needs and limits displacement.

Community & Quality of Life

Enable community access to opportunity as well as social, cultural, recreational, and public amenities.

Environmental Quality & Climate Resilience

Balance urban development with environmental protection and resilience through sustainable practices and mitigation of impacts to sensitive lands.

Economic Health

Promote balanced growth by supporting commercial services with improved infrastructure and connectivity while also considering climate, mobility, and community compatibility.

Health & Safety

Ensure access to services and infrastructure that support health and safety.

Missoula County Growth Policy

The planning in the LRTP extends beyond the Missoula city limits to include the adjacent urbanized areas of Missoula County. The One Community approach, central to the Missoula County Growth Policy, recognizes that while the city and county are governed separately, they form a single, interconnected community. Residents in the County rely on a seamless and consistent network as they move between jurisdictions, whether walking, biking, driving, or taking transit. This perspective guided the LRTP to ensure that projects in both jurisdictions reflect a unified vision for how the Missoula area grows and moves. The integration of land use into the LRTP scoring framework supports multiple goals of the Missoula County Growth Policy, including:



Conservation

Conserving vital natural resources, including water quality, air, farmland, and wildlife habitat.



Growth Planning

Proactively planning for logical growth, guiding development to areas best suited for it while protecting rural character



Economic Development

Supporting economic development across income levels and geographies, including rural areas



Healthy Communities

Promoting healthy, active communities through safe, accessible infrastructure

CHAPTER 3

Your Input

Through traditional and social media, surveys, meetings, and workshops around the region, we heard from thousands of community members.

You helped the project team understand the Missoula area’s transportation opportunities and challenges—and input guided our final project and program recommendations. Highlights of the input you provided are described below, and much more information is available in Appendix A.

What We Heard

- 1

Key Theme:
Community engagement in Phase I revealed several themes, including the need for improved mobility options for underserved groups, a desire for sustainable transportation solutions, and concerns over the impact of future developments on local infrastructure.
- 2

Key Theme:
The feedback gathered in Phase II emphasized the importance of expanding transit and mobility options, particularly for young people and families, as well as the growing need to address transportation and housing insecurity. Increased collaboration with local schools, shelters, and health organizations was essential for crafting holistic transportation solutions.
- 3

Key Theme:
Phase III of engagement focused on sharing out final recommendations for both the LRTP and the MUTD service plan. The project team hosted a virtual open house in December to outline project and program recommendations and provide financial overview and timeline.

How We Engaged

In partnership with the Missoula Urban Transportation District (MUTD) and the Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), a multifaceted outreach approach was used to engage the Missoula community for the LRTP update and the Transit Service Plan (TSP). A variety of methods were employed to ensure broad public comments were collected, including press releases, pop-up events, open houses, and stakeholder meetings. The outreach was conducted in three phases, each designed to gather and apply public feedback in the development of recommendations and final project lists. This inclusive approach ensured that the project captured a wide range of perspectives, from stakeholders and residents.

Phase I: Listen and Learn

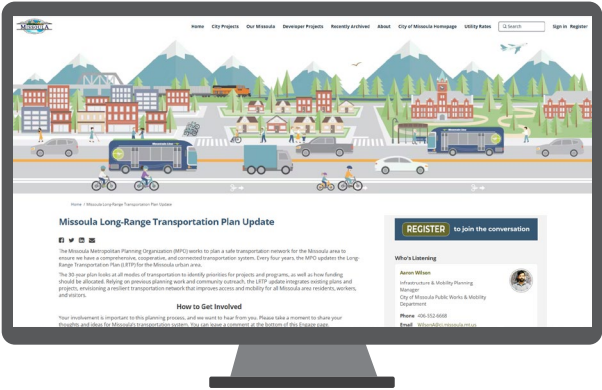
 April to June 2024

The first phase of engagement focused on listening to the community’s needs, concerns, and hopes for Missoula’s transportation future. This phase aimed to create awareness of the LRTP and strategic plan planning efforts, gather community thoughts/ideas, and set the foundation for subsequent engagement. A variety of activities were conducted, ranging from project website development to community meetings and tabling events.

Engagement Activities

Engage Pages

Two project websites were set up on the Engage Missoula platform for both the LRTP and strategic plan, serving as the central hub for information dissemination and public feedback.



Printed and Digital Materials

Postcards, flyers, and display boards were used to promote project awareness by directing people to project websites and survey links.

Community Meetings

Project teams conducted five advisory group meetings with Diversity Advisory Council, Midtown Implementation Committee, Missoula Neighborhood Councils, Missoula Infrastructure Coalition, and Missoula County Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion (JEDI) Advisory Board to talk about their organizations and their transportation needs/ challenges. Six community partnership meetings with various interests such as business/ economics, climate/health/active transportation, and community development were also conducted in Phase I outreach.



July to September 2024

Phase II: Create and Apply

Phase II built on the momentum from Phase I, focusing on deeper community dialogues and targeted outreach efforts. The goal of this phase was focused on soliciting feedback from the community on the proposed recommendations and potential projects list.

Engagement Activities

Neighborhood Meetings

Seven general and neighborhood meetings were held, including the Bonner Milltown Community Council and River Road General Meetings. The meetings allowed for a more intimate discussion about transportation improvements in specific neighborhoods.



Virtual Workshops

The Missoula MPO and MUTD hosted a virtual workshop in September with about 15 organizations to discuss potential recommendations.

Focused Dialogues

One-on-one conversations with 11 community organizations like Missoula County Public Schools, Partnership Health Center, and Missoula Aging Services provided the opportunity to discuss transportation challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

Engagement Activities

Project team members hosted 16 tabling events at local schools, Missoula Library, and various community events. Project staff also distributed postcards and flyers to promote the public open house and survey. Attendees completed surveys and shared ideas and comments for proposed transportation improvements at the tabling events.

Tier 1 Projects - Corridors 1/2			
Vote on your top two or three corridor projects			
Active Transportation			
ID	Project Name	Project Description	Place Voting Dot Below
C2	Northside Riverfront Trail Extension	Extend multi-use trail and construct bridge over Rattlesnake Creek	• • •
C3	Klaehn Park Trail Widening	Extend and widen multi-use trail	• • •
C13	3rd St Bike Lane Extension	Install on-street bicycle facilities	• • • • •
C22	Regent St Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• •
C36	Grant St Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• •
C37	Sherwood Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• •
C38	Gerald Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• • • • •
C42	4th St Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• • • • •
C43	Palace Creek Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• • • • •
C44	Burton Neighborhood Greenway	Improve intersection at Tule and Broadway	• • • • •
C45	Kerr/Central Neighborhood Greenway	Install neighborhood greenway	• •

Open House

A public open house held in September 2024 which included residents, local business owners, and community members. In-depth information on the LRTP and MUTD service plan was provided, and community members discussed and shared their input in an open forum. Attendees also visited multiple stations that covered specific topics such as project prioritization. At each station, participants provided input via comment cards, surveys, interactive dot-voting boards, and one-on-one conversations with project team members.



Public Survey

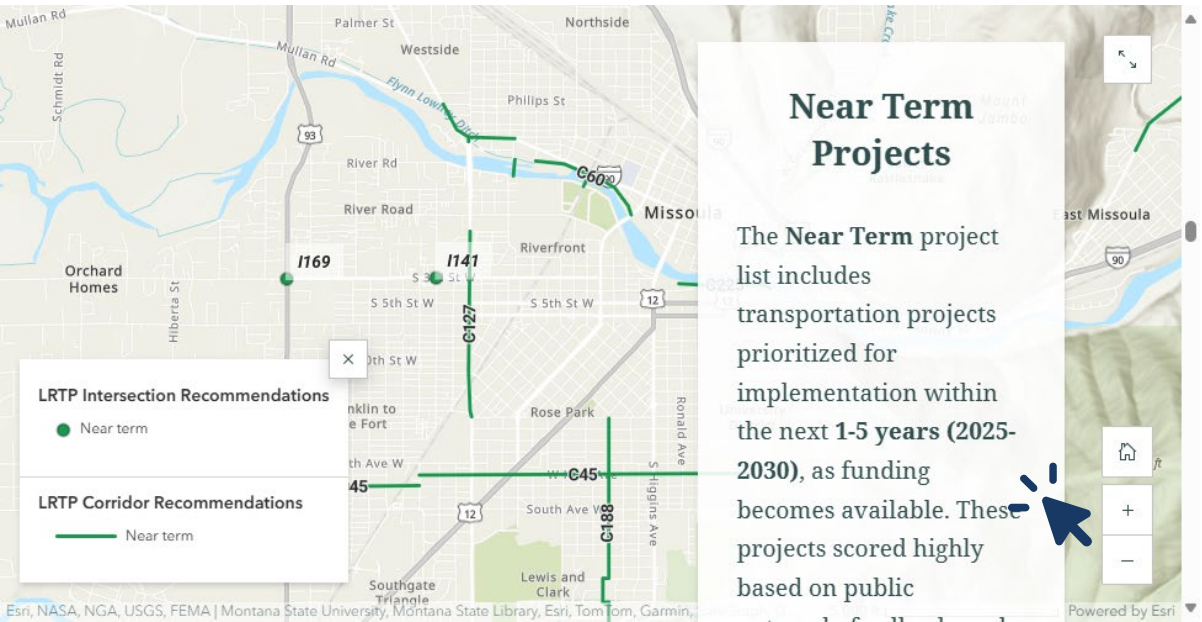
An online survey allowed the community to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations and potential projects. Altogether, 640 people participated. Survey results are included in Appendix A.



Mapping Activities

The project team created an interactive map for the community to engage with the proposed list of transportation projects in Missoula. Based on a project prioritization process described in detail in Chapter 5, the interactive map showed projects that scored the highest. This exercise helped us understand if our prioritization process reflected the needs of the community.

Community members could pan around and zoom in and out of the interactive map in order to fully understand how the landscape of our area could improve and change in the coming years. People left comments, voted on their favorite projects, and elevated important questions for us to consider during the later steps of the project prioritization process. Community feedback directly shaped the final recommendations for the LRTP project list.



Phase III: Integrate and Refine

Engagement Activities

The December Virtual Open House recapped Phase 2 outreach, outlined the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transit Service Plan Update recommendations, and provided an overview of next steps.

Our LRTP team presented the project prioritization process and findings, showing where community impact had the largest impact on final decision making. We walked through our financial big picture, and highlighted important projects and programs we plan to prioritize. The recommendations shown prioritize projects that enhance safety, improve active transportation, maintain and preserve existing infrastructure, and support multimodal connectivity while considering the region's limited funding.

Links to the interactive project map and comment boxes were still available to the community at the time of the December Open House.

Agency Coordination

Agency support and coordination were central to the development of the LRTP. Local agency partners and MDT were represented through the MPO's Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), with the FTA and FHWA participating as non-voting members. A dedicated agency coordination meeting was held with federal land management agencies, tribal representatives, and rail and air stakeholders. The LRTP process was also closely aligned with updates to the Missoula Land Use Plan, the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails (PROST) Plan, and Mountain Line's Transit Service Plan, ensuring collaboration and consistency across local planning. Through these coordination efforts, Missoula Connect will support efforts to protect the environment, enhance conservation, and preserve natural and historic resources.

Public Review Period

The MPO released the draft LRTP for public review on April 4, 2025. The 45-day public comment period provided an opportunity for community members, stakeholders, and partner agencies to review the plan and share their feedback. The comment period closed on May 19, 2025. Input received during this time helped shape the final version of the LRTP. The MPO carefully reviewed all comments and made revisions where appropriate to reflect community priorities, address concerns, and clarify the plan's content. A catalog of the public comments received, the MPO's responses, and a summary of edits and changes made to the draft plan are included in Appendix H.



CHAPTER 4

Missoula Connect Goals

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update is committed to carrying on the vision set forth by the community and local stakeholders in the previously adopted 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP.

Each recommendation in this long-range plan—whether a major project or a new program—has a hand in moving the region toward a safer, healthier, more sustainable, more equitable, and more connected future. Together, these individual projects and programs will help the Missoula region achieve its mobility vision, rooted in shared community values.

To guide this 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update, the project team reaffirmed the goals and desired outcomes that build on federal requirements, previous planning work, and Missoula’s mobility values. The goals have been used in every step of the planning process.



LRTP



Federal Goals and Planning Factors



Mobility Values



Other Missoula Plans

Reaffirming Project Goals

To ensure compliance with federal requirements, the project team used the seven National Performance Goals and 10 Planning Factors as a basis for reaffirming the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP goals.

National Performance Goals



National Planning Factors



Our Goals

The plan update carries forward the five goals previously adopted for the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP which still reflect today’s needs and priorities and the outcomes our region must achieve in the next three decades. The goals are consistent with federal requirements and form the basis for the project and scenario evaluation process that helped refine our priorities and shape our recommendations.

Improve safety and promote health to enhance quality of life

- Eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries
- Improve safety for people, walking, biking, and rolling
- Enhance active transportation and transit linkages to lower-income neighborhoods
- Increase physical activity and human connections by making walking and biking convenient modes of travel
- Improve access to recreational facilities and trails to support healthy lifestyles



Advance sustainability and community resilience to protect natural resources and address climate change

- Improve climate resilience and advance toward carbon neutrality
- Reduce transportation-related air emissions
- Minimize sediment, nutrients, and litter entering surface water
- Expand the urban canopy and green stormwater infrastructure
- Protect and enhance natural, cultural, and historic resources, including agricultural lands
- Create adaptable and resilient infrastructure to respond to changing needs



Expand mobility choices to improve efficiency and accessibility for people and goods

- Build complete streets and increase access to multimodal options
- Increase street, trail/greenway, and sidewalk network connectivity for all ages and abilities
- Optimize the efficiency and accessibility of the transportation system
- Reduce person hours of delay for people driving and improve freight movement
- Improve access to high-quality and high-frequency transit stops and routes



Connect and strengthen communities to create a more equitable region

- Increase affordability and reduce overall household transportation costs
- Develop an integrated mobility system that connects destinations with sustainable travel options
- Integrate land use and transportation planning to support infill development and create complete neighborhoods
- Improve access to schools, jobs, parks, essential services, affordable and senior housing, and basic life needs
- Engage with and invest in areas and in neighborhoods that have been adversely impacted by transportation decisions



Maintain assets and invest strategically to boost economic vitality

- Bring existing infrastructure and transit assets into a state of good repair to support the regional economy, local industry, and goods movement
- Balance cost-effective, implementable projects with high-impact projects
- Plan for a transportation system that makes the best use of public financial resources
- Provide a network that targets growth inward to support existing centers and mixed-use development
- Support access to businesses and commercial and industrial centers to enhance economic recovery and growth
- Explore more equitable and sustainable funding sources for transportation projects and programs

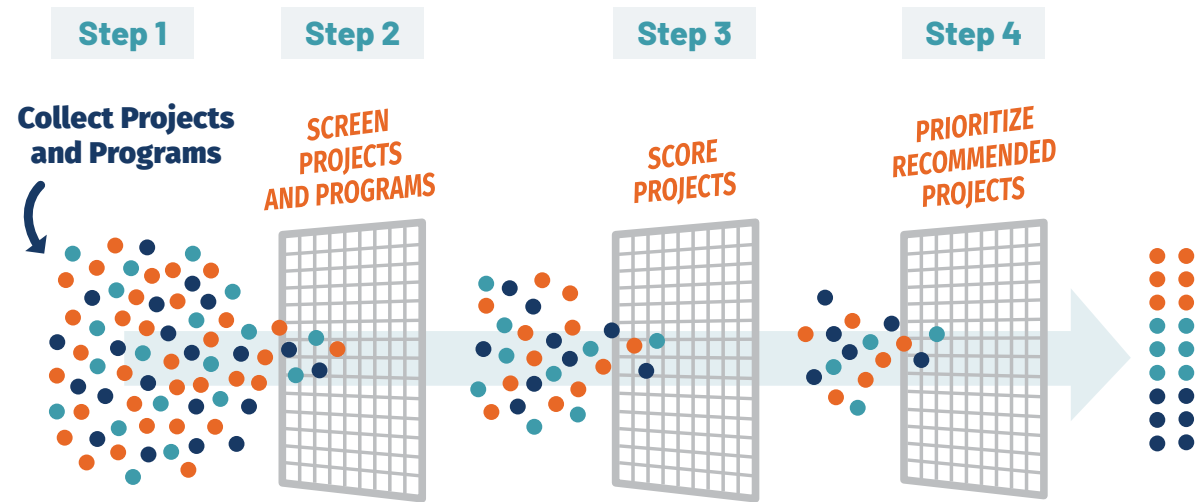


CHAPTER 5

Potential Futures: Project Evaluation and Prioritization

Connecting Transportation and Land Use

This chapter outlines the project evaluation and prioritization of the MPO's update of the LRTP through the horizon year 2050. The purpose and process associated with this revised plan is as follows:

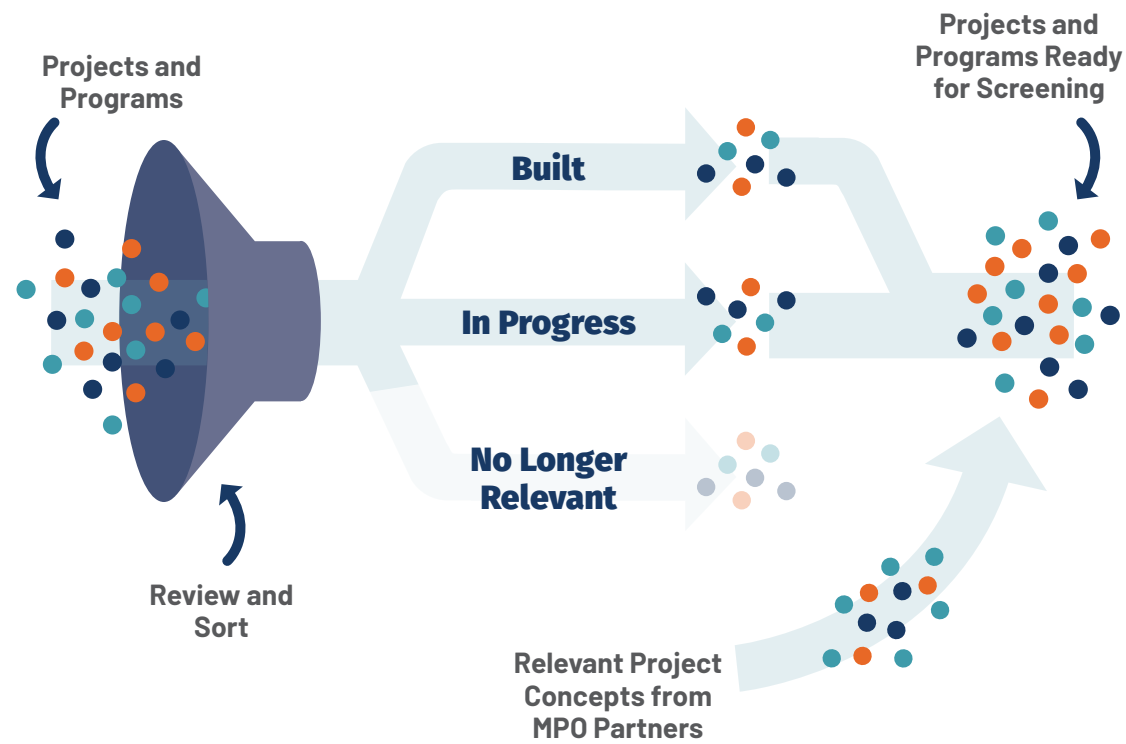


» Step 1

Collect Projects and Programs

The project team worked with MPO staff to review the existing LRTP project list to identify which projects have been built, are in progress, or identified as no longer relevant since the adoption of the last plan in 2021. This includes all projects contained within the fiscally constrained recommended projects as well as those on the illustrative list of projects that were identified, scored, and evaluated as part of the last plan but were not allocated funding based on the prioritization evaluation process.

In order to best reflect the priorities of the entire region, an agency call for projects was held for MPO partners to submit their relevant project concepts of regional planning significance that should be considered for inclusion in the LRTP update.



» Step 2

Screening

Altogether almost 200 potential projects were collected for evaluation, which were then screened and filtered to prepare for analysis. All projects expected to receive funding from programs in Title 23 or Title 49 of United States Code (USC) are required to be included in this plan. Although eligibility was not expressly considered in the screening stage of project evaluation, the requirements for funding programs within these federal aid programs was considered in the development of the final recommended project list. At this stage, proposals which are not specifically a transportation facility capital project but more closely classified as a program, policy, study, or initiative with the potential to expand or enhance the provision of mobility options in the Missoula area are set aside for consideration in the implementation plans once funding for recommended projects has been allocated. Eligible projects were then filtered into one of **four categories**:



Active Transportation

Projects aimed at providing dedicated space for people to walk, bike, or roll. This includes bicycle and shared facility extensions and construction, bicycle safety countermeasures, neighborhood greenways, and enhancements to the pedestrian and trail network.



Safety

Projects aimed at reducing conflicts and efficiently moving people through intersections and corridors. This includes intersection enhancements, roundabouts and traffic circles, and countermeasures at crossings.



Complete Streets

Projects designed to enable safe and comfortable mobility for travelers of all ages and abilities. This includes integration of transit priority measures, multimodal improvements, and on-street facility reconfiguration.



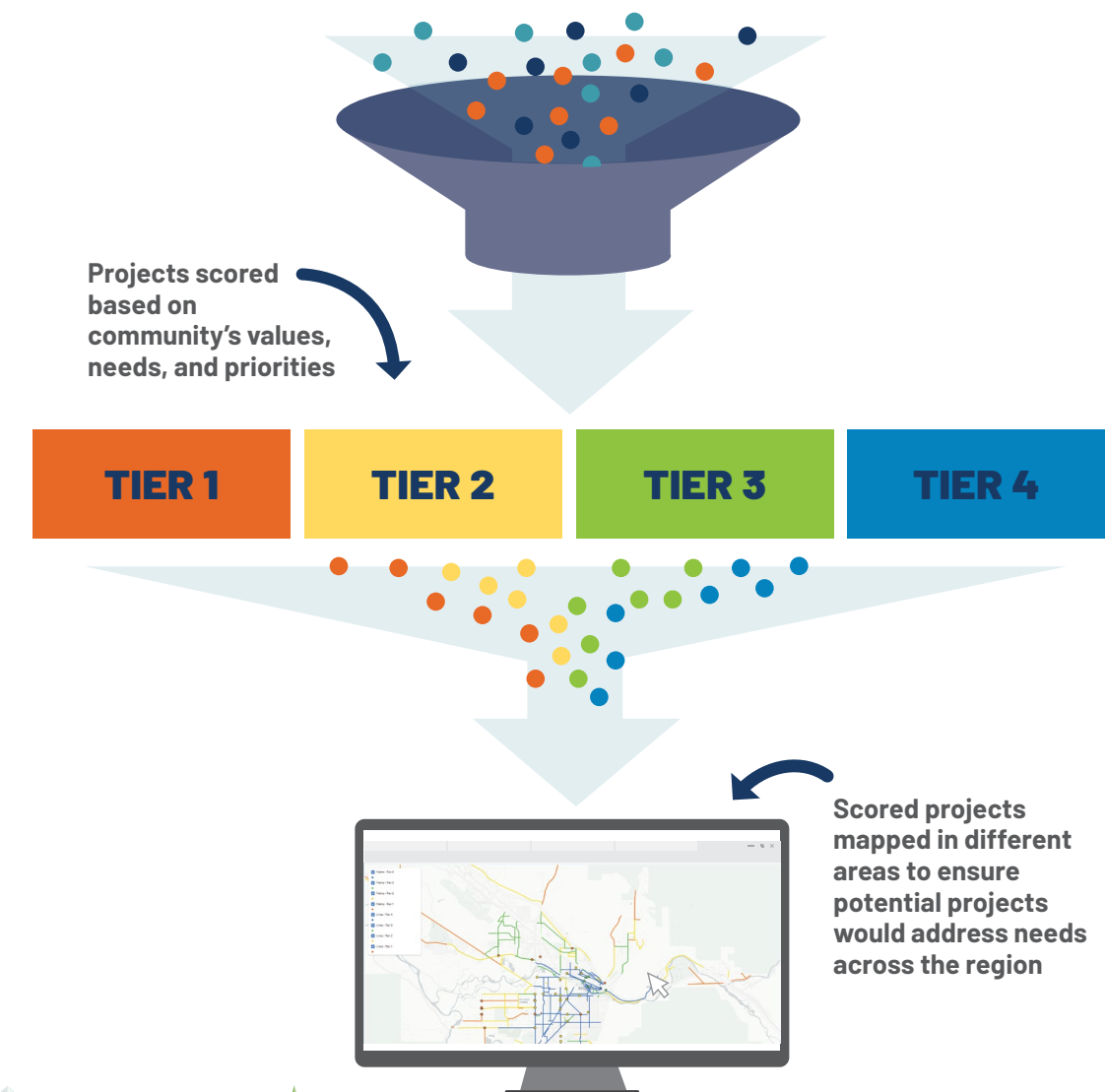
Roadways & Bridges

Projects aimed at gap closures and preservation of the roadway system which includes creation, reconfiguration, and resurfacing of streets and bridges for all modes.

» Step 3

Scoring

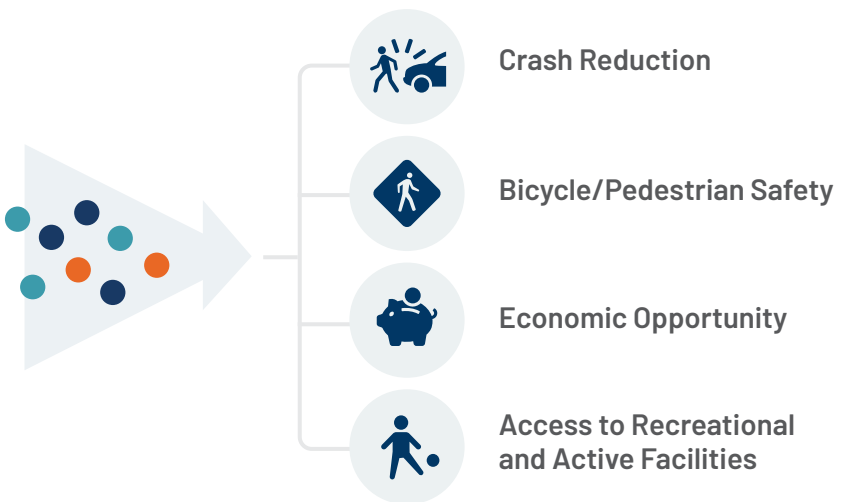
With a screened list of projects in hand, we used geographic criteria based on the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP goals to score the remaining projects and group them into four tiers. We adjusted the weighting of the scores to reflect the community's values, needs, and priorities. When the initial scoring was completed, the project team identified the highest scoring projects in different neighborhoods to ensure that potential projects would address needs across the region.



To identify top-ranking projects across the region, the project team updated the project scoring criteria developed previously with the community for the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP to include 20 quantitative metrics to assess potential towards helping to meet the LRTP performance targets documented in Chapter 9. The projects were then analyzed across 60 spatial variables for potential to improve network access and performance based on project location and design features. Projects were tiered based on an aggregate score out of 29 available points. A more detailed method of how we scored each project is available in Appendix D – Project Evaluation.

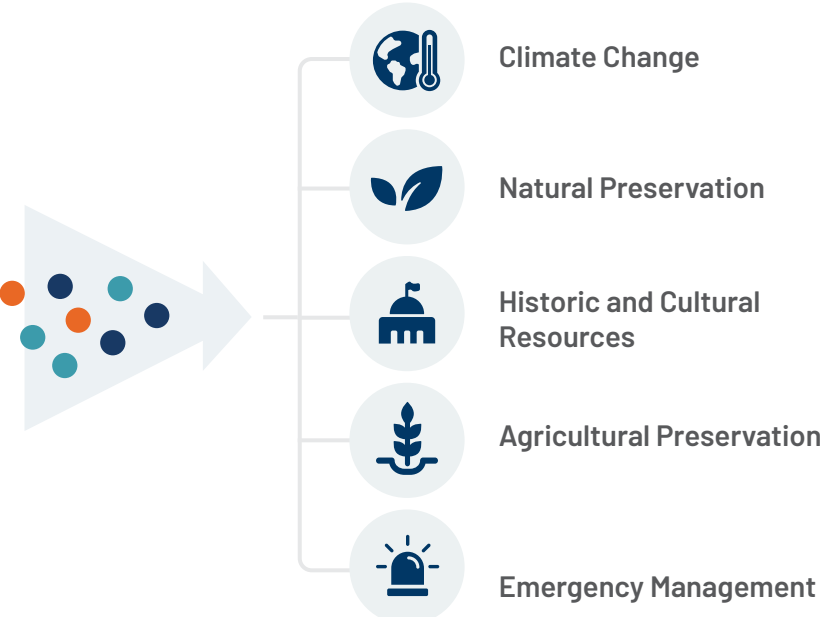
Goal 1

Improve safety and promote health to enhance quality of life



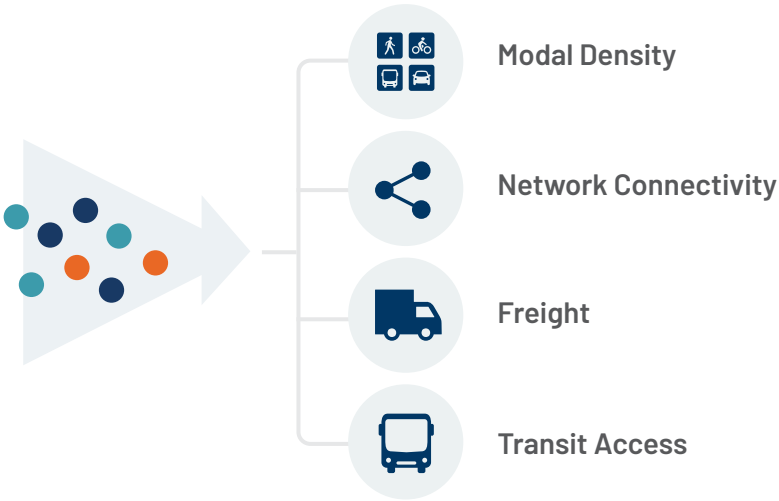
Goal 2

Advance sustainability and community resilience to protect natural resources and address climate change



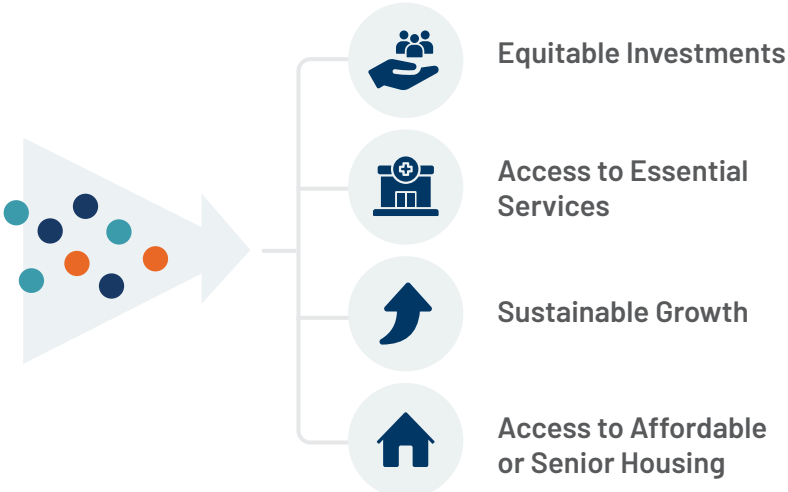
Goal 3

Expand mobility choices to improve efficiency and accessibility for people and goods



Goal 4

Connect and strengthen communities to create a more equitable region



Goal 5

Maintain assets and invest strategically to boost economic vitality



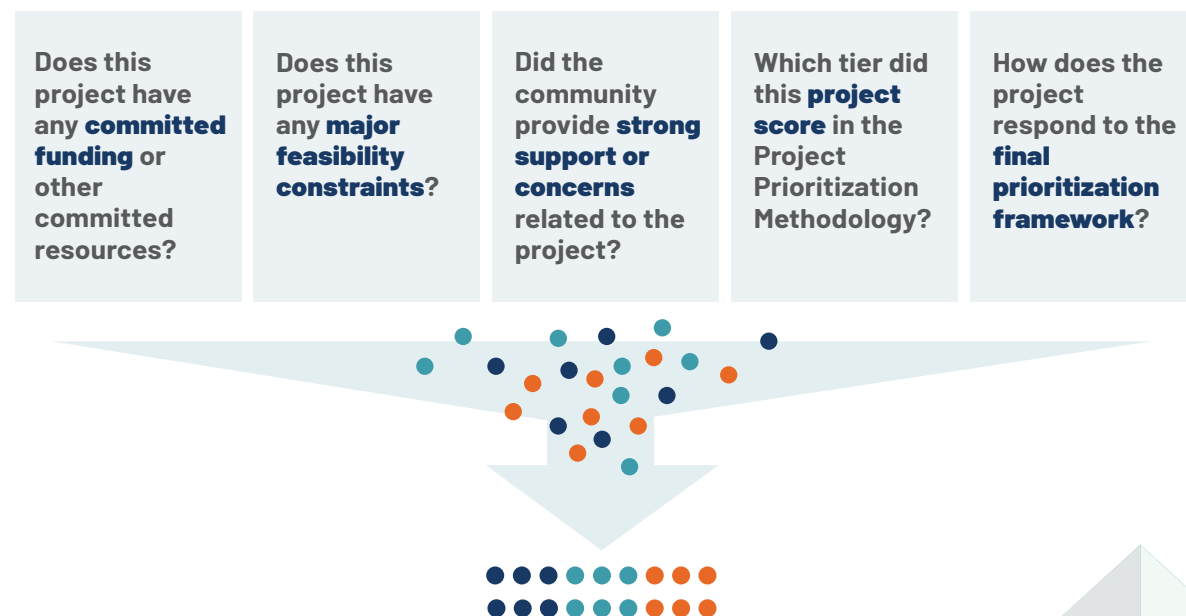
» Step 4

Prioritizing and Recommending

With a scored list of projects, the project team conducted engagement throughout the Fall of 2024 to confirm the trends identified in the scoring and learn from the community and key partners which projects outside Tier 1 (highest scoring) should be considered for factors that may not be elevated within the spatially focused scoring process. This engagement included questions about project preferences and tiers within the community survey, open house and tabling activities to gather input on specific projects, and group listening sessions.

Prioritization work sessions were also held with MPO staff and agency partners to determine tradeoffs and feasibility constraints with projects to develop a constrained list with the greatest potential return on investment based on LRTP goals.

How do we decide which projects make the cut?



Plan Scenarios

This update carries forward the extensive travel demand modeling and growth analysis conducted in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP by considering prioritization of projects that were included in one or both of the preferred development scenarios. A detailed review of the Missoula Connect scenarios and progress since 2020 is included in Appendix G:

Strategic Growth

Building off the strategic growth recommendations from the previous plans while considering future efforts. Prioritizing Strategic Growth maximizes inward-focused development. It targets growth in specific areas, including places that have services and are close to high-quality bus service, mixed-use development, and existing transportation networks. Strategic Growth assigns growth to areas where more households could have the largest effect on transportation infrastructure.



Preferred Network Scenario

The preferred network scenario was developed using public input on three proposed scenarios: New Connections, Enhanced Connections, and Regional Equity. Based on direction gathered in 2020, the final scenario combined elements of Enhanced Connections and Regional Equity. These scenarios aimed to eliminate mobility gaps, increase opportunity, and address critical needs. The resulting scenario prioritizes projects that scored highly on the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP's equity criteria and those located in Invest Health neighborhoods—areas of the community experiencing persistent poverty or poor health outcomes based on social determinants of health. Projects included in this scenario represent a more equitable use of transportation funding, such as the Howard Raser Drive connection between the Northside neighborhood and North Reserve, and the Highway 200 complete street project. These investments are expected to significantly improve affordability and expand travel options. This combined scenario is carried forward into the current LRTP update through the project screening and prioritization methodology.



CHAPTER 6

Recommended Projects

Our Transportation Future

Shaped through community input, technical analysis, and collaboration with agency partners, the updated LRTP project list reflects what is required to meet immediate needs and prepare for the future while balancing priorities throughout the region. The recommendations prioritize projects that enhance safety, improve active transportation, maintain and preserve existing infrastructure, and support multimodal connectivity while considering the cumulative impact of projects that when implemented together can more greatly enhance connectivity to opportunities and destinations. The final recommended list of projects that is fiscally constrained is based on the MPOs estimated revenues through the implementation horizon, while some projects are classified as grant-contingent or illustrative due to funding or feasibility constraints, ensuring flexibility to adapt to future opportunities.



Projects included in this update are categorized into one of **four types of investments**:



Active Transportation

Projects aimed at providing dedicated space for people to walk, bike, or roll

Examples:

Bicycle and shared facility extensions and construction, bicycle safety countermeasures, neighborhood greenways, trail and pedestrian network enhancements



Safety

Projects aimed at reducing conflicts and efficiently moving people through intersections and corridors

Examples:

Intersection enhancements, roundabouts, crossing safety countermeasures



Complete Streets

Projects designed to enable safe and comfortable mobility for travelers of all ages and abilities

Examples:

Transit integration, multimodal improvements, and on-street facility reconfiguration



Roadway/Bridges

Projects aimed at gap closures and preservation of the roadway and bridge system

Examples:

Create, reconfigure, or maintain multimodal road and bridge infrastructure

Connecting Missoula

The Fiscally Constrained Recommended Project List includes 93 investments that best meet the Missoula Connect 2050 LRTP Update goals. It includes:



The projects included in this list are all eligible for federal, state, or local funds and there may be other funding sources available in the future (see Chapter 8 for more information).

Committed Projects

Committed projects have funding allocated or are currently underway within the current 5-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP, federal funds) or the City’s or County’s Capital Improvement Programs (CIP local funds). Many of these projects are underway, with construction anticipated within the next 5 years. Committed projects are included in the Near Term projections, however in some cases the funding needs extend beyond the current timeframe of the TIP, or are only programmed for a partial phase of the full project. Those with partial funding are allocated the remaining amount needed prior to funding Recommended projects within the LRTP fiscal constraints. Committed projects also include grant funding such as multimodal improvements on Higgins Avenue and reconstruction of Russell Street.

Grant Contingent Projects

These projects represent transformative investments which can support catalytic development and regionally significant mobility priorities but are simply too expensive to fund without outside assistance and not compromise the MPO’s ability to implement a wide range of improvements across the region. Cost estimates of these projects tend to be in the tens of millions of dollars and involve the construction of new roads, on-ramps, bridges, or trails with land acquisition considerations. Grant funded projects in the Committed near term list are not included in the MPO’s fiscal constraint as these federal grant awards were not included in the plan revenue projections in Appendix E.

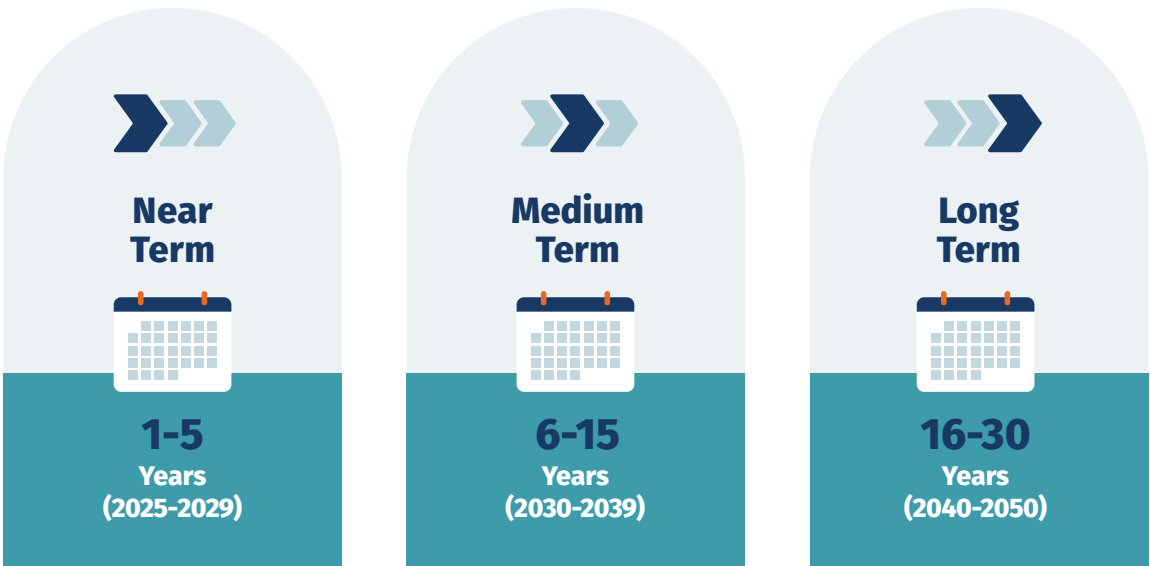
Illustrative Projects

All projects that are not included in the Recommended Project List are considered “illustrative.” The list of illustrative projects is used to supplement the recommended projects list and provides the region with the ability to keep concepts on the books as the funding environment, right-of-way ownership, or community need may change in the future. Illustrative projects can become recommended projects, and vice versa, through future evaluation and consideration.

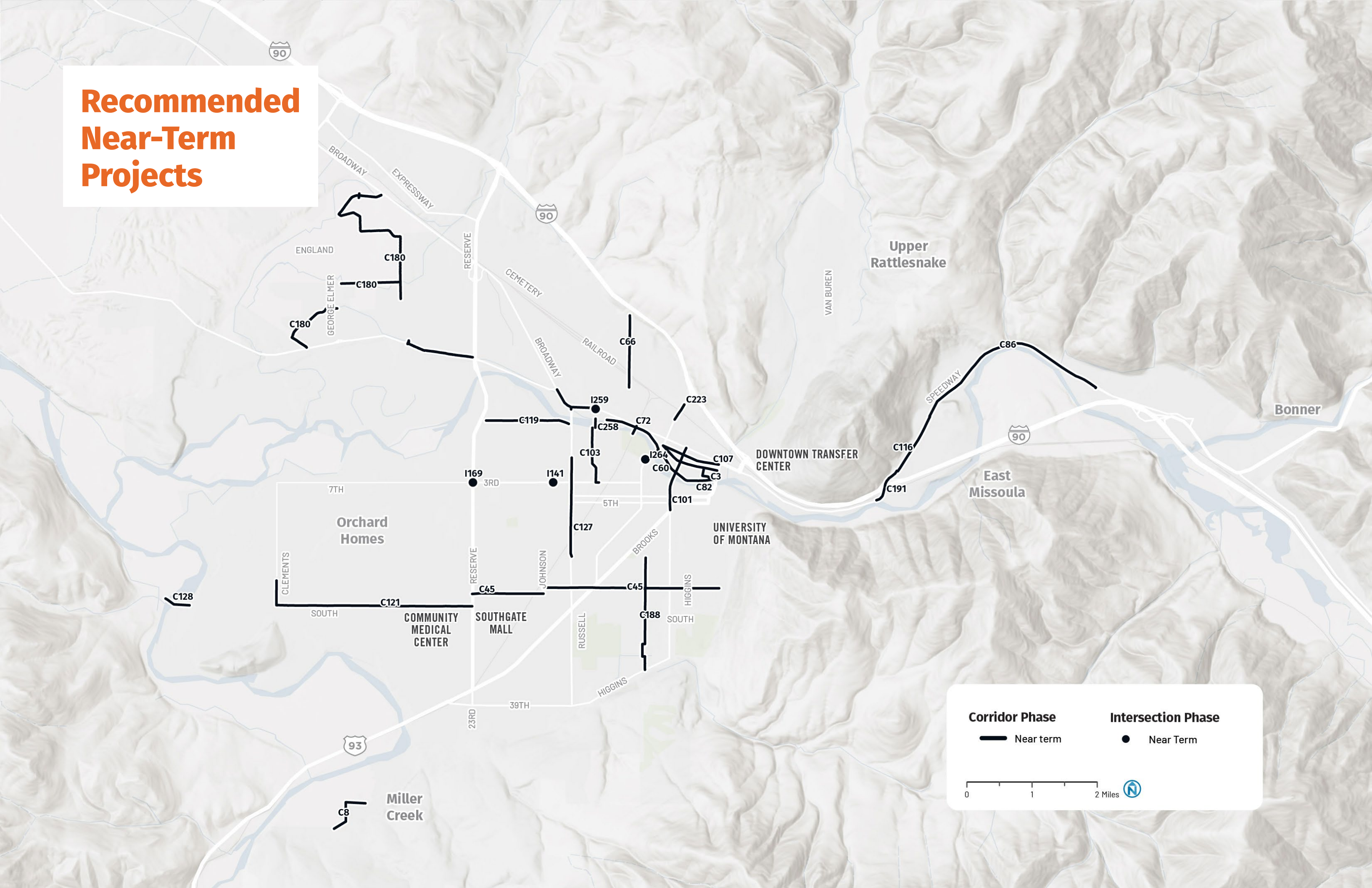
The following pages provide more information about projects recommended for the Missoula area. You’ll also find Project Spotlights, which give additional information about specific projects. More detailed information and a list of all projects is provided in Appendix B. An [interactive map](#) showing all projects across the entire planning area is available online.

Prioritized Projects

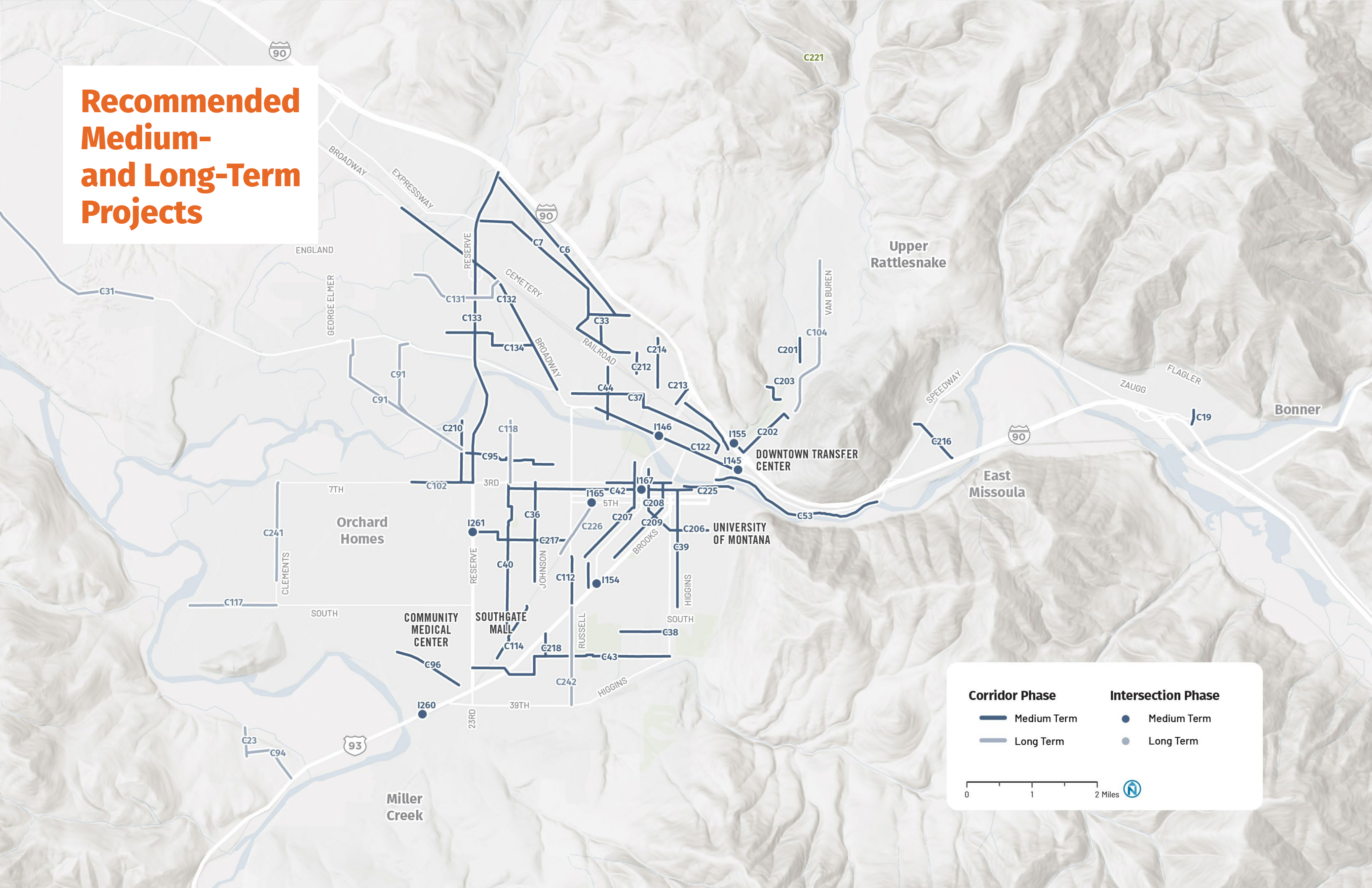
The recommended projects will be implemented in order of priority as funding allows. The following sections describe the recommended projects in more detail, including costing and potential phasing.



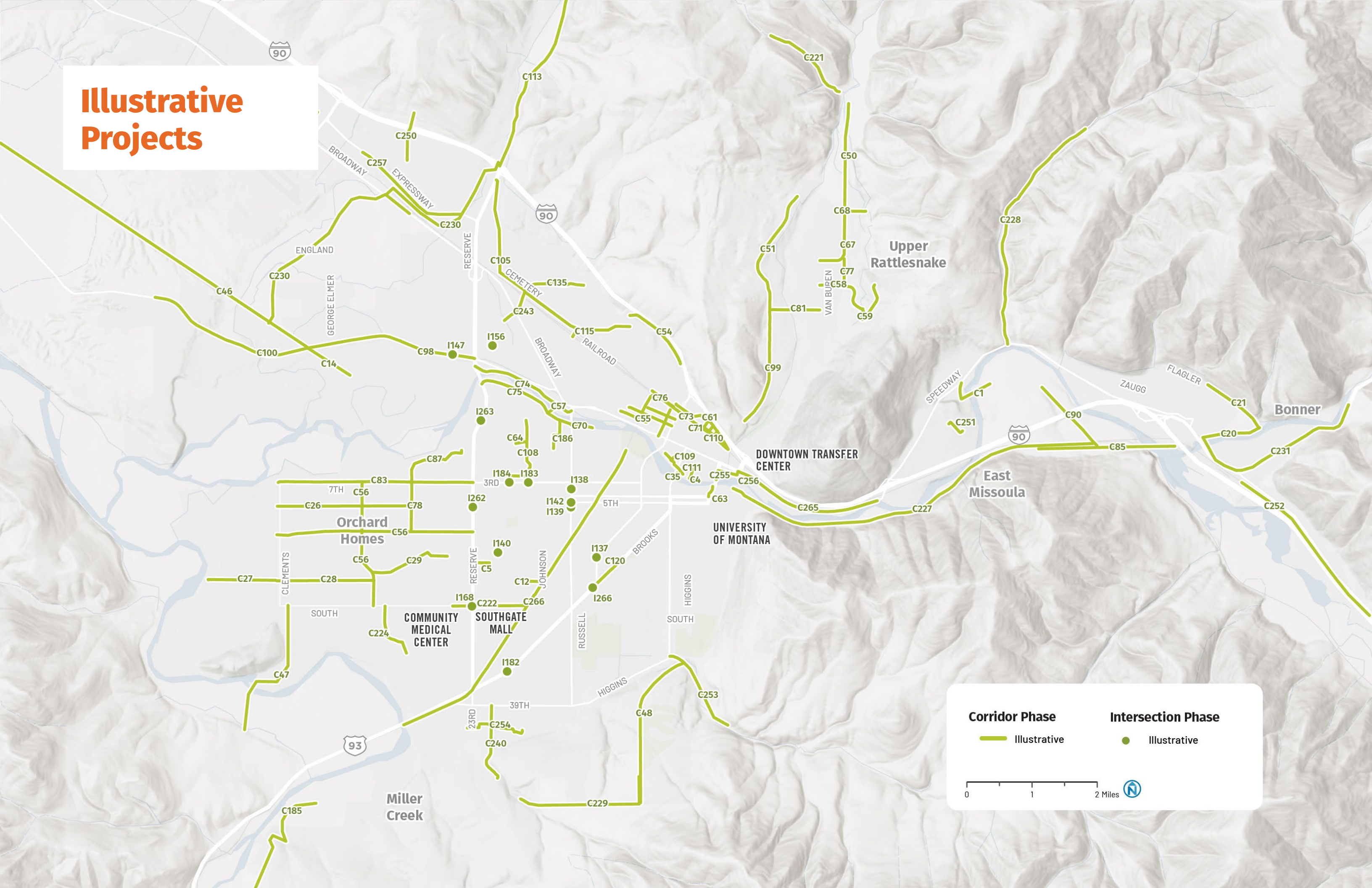
Recommended Near-Term Projects



Recommended Medium- and Long-Term Projects



Illustrative Projects



Recommended Project List

Committed Projects*

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
--	Roadway/ Bridge	Missoula Urban Pave Preservation	--	--	\$2,977,311
--	Active Transportation	S Russell St Sidewalk	--	--	\$985,486
--	Safety	SF 189 Russell Street Lighting	--	--	\$492,325
--	Roadway/ Bridge	SF 229 D1 I-90 Striping 6 Inch	--	--	\$190,997
--	Roadway/ Bridge	SF 229 Missoula Wrong Way Phase 2	--	--	\$80,276
--	Active Transportation	Trail maintenance	--	--	\$1,343,231
--	Roadway/ Bridge	West of Missoula-NW	--	--	\$18,407,600
--	Roadway/ Bridge	Lolo Street Bridge Replacement†	--	--	\$2,937,901
C101	Complete Streets	Higgins Ave Multimodal Improvements†	Broadway St	Brooks St	\$8,224,780
C103	Complete Streets	California Street Complete Street and reconstruction	--	--	\$3,121,000
C107	Complete Streets	Front/Main 2-Way Conversion and Multimodal Improvements†	--	--	\$11,275,255
C116	Complete Streets	Hwy 200 Complete Street†	--	--	\$12,000,000
C121	Complete Streets	South Ave Complete Street and Shared-Use Path†	--	--	\$11,639,100

† Partially or fully funded by federal grant

*Committed projects generally do not include project phases or funding obligated prior to FY2025, and do not include sources such as SIDs or developer contributions.

Projects without IDs are those programmed in the TIP but not included as L RTP projects.

Committed Projects Continued

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C128	Roadway/ Bridge	Bitterroot River Crossing (South Ave Bridge)	South Ave	River Pines Rd	\$20,287,836
C191	Roadway/ Bridge	Hwy 200 Railroad Bridge Replacement†	--	--	\$18,000,000
C223	Roadway/ Bridge	Orange Street Tunnel Rehabilitation	N Orange St	Railroad Tracks	\$11,330,715
C3	Active Transportation	Kiwanis Park Trail Widening†	Ron's River Trail	Front St	\$302,000
C66	Complete Streets	Scott St Area Complete Street	Otis St	Philips St	\$2,226,000
C8	Complete Streets	Lower Miller Creek Complete Street	Linda Vist Blvd	Bigfork Rd	\$354,000
C82	Active Transportation	Ron's River Trail Downtown†	Madison St	Orange St	\$6,138,861
I259	Safety	California St/Toole Ave/ Broadway St Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$3,232,200
I264	Safety	Orange Street and Cregg Lane Intersection Improvement	--	--	\$376,000
C127	Roadway/ Bridge	Russell Street Reconstruction†	Mount Ave	Sherwood St	\$42,062,483
C180	Active Transportation	BUILD Grant Trails - Wye/ Mullan Plan Collector Routes	Multiple	Multiple	\$1,533,115

† Partially or fully funded by federal grant

Recommended Near Term Projects*

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C188	Active Transportation	Ivy/Franklin/Park Neighborhood Greenway	Plymouth St	SW Higgins Ave	\$1,000,000
C258	Active Transportation	California Street Bridge Renovation	California Foot Bridge	Flynn Lowney Ditch	\$3,545,520
C45	Active Transportation	Kent/Central Neighborhood Greenway	Maurice Ave	31st St	\$1,406,000
C60	Active Transportation	Ron's River Trail Extension	Burton St	Orange St	\$1,071,000
C72	Roadway/ Bridge	Bitterroot Trail Bridge at Clark Fork River	McCormick Park/Ogren Field	Broadway St	\$4,058,000
C86	Active Transportation	Hwy 200 Shared-Use Path	Tamarack Rd	Staples St	\$3,809,000
	Safety	Signal Optimization Study	--	--	\$700,000
I141	Safety	Catlin St and 3rd St Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$232,000
C119	Complete Streets	River Rd Complete Street	Reserve St	Russell St	\$3,123,000

*Recommended Near Term projects include some projects that are already underway, have partial funding, or are in a CIP. At least a portion of these projects will be funded through the MPO's discretionary funding as described in Chapter 8.

Medium Term Projects

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C43	Active Transportation	Pattee Creek Neighborhood Greenway	S Higgins Ave	Reserve St	\$353,000
C44	Active Transportation	Burton Neighborhood Greenway	Stoddard St	Riverfront Trail	\$235,000
C102	Complete Streets	S 3rd St Complete Street	Hiberta St	Reserve St	\$2,304,000
C112	Complete Streets	Russell St Complete Streets	Brooks St	Mount Ave	\$2,553,000
C122	Complete Streets	Broadway Complete Street	Van Buren St	Toole Ave	\$6,678,000
C13	Active Transportation	3rd St Bike Lane Extension	Ash St	Higgins Ave	\$12,000
C133	Active Transportation	Reserve St Protected Bike Lanes	3rd St	I-90	\$146,000
C134	Active Transportation	Union Pacific - Palmer Protected Bike Lanes	Clark Fork Ln	Broadway St	\$1,714,000
C2	Active Transportation	Northside Riverfront Trail Extension	Madison St	Van Buren St	\$870,000
C201	Active Transportation	Wylie Neighborhood Greenway	Lolo St	Wylie	\$11,600
C202	Active Transportation	Jackson/Holly Neighborhood Greenway	Van Buren St	Monroe St	\$11,600
C203	Active Transportation	Alvina Path Neighborhood Greenway	Duncan Dr	City Dr	\$11,600
C206	Active Transportation	University Neighborhood Greenway	S Higgins Ave	Arthur Ave	\$121,800
C207	Active Transportation	Rollins/Cottonwood Neighborhood Greenway	W Florence St	Mount Ave	\$122,000
C208	Active Transportation	Tremont/Chestnut Neighborhood Greenway	River St	Plymouth St	\$354,000
C209	Active Transportation	Myrtle/Woodford Neighborhood Greenway	S 3rd St W	Mount Ave	\$122,000

Medium Term Projects Continued

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C210	Active Transportation	Grove Neighborhood Greenway	S 3rd St W	River Rd	\$11,600
C212	Active Transportation	Waverly Neighborhood Greenway	Turner St	Defoe St	\$11,600
C213	Active Transportation	Grand Neighborhood Greenway	N 1st St	N 5th St	\$11,600
C214	Active Transportation	Holmes Neighborhood Greenway	Charlo St	Phillips St	\$122,000
C216	Active Transportation	Sommers Neighborhood Greenway	Discovery Way	Sommers St	\$11,600
C217	Active Transportation	Spurgin Rd/12th Neighborhood Greenway	S Reserve St	Bitterroot Branch	\$122,000
C218	Active Transportation	Garfield/Agnes Neighborhood Greenway	Ernest Ave	Brooks St	\$11,600
C22	Active Transportation	Regent St Neighborhood Greenway	Mount Ave	Kent Ave	\$117,000
C33	Complete Streets	North Reserve Scott Street Area Grid Extension	Otis St	Philips St	\$2,226,000
C36	Active Transportation	Grant St Neighborhood Greenway	3rd St	North Ave W	\$122,000
C37	Active Transportation	Sherwood Neighborhood Greenway	Russell St	Pine St	\$127,000
C38	Active Transportation	Benton Neighborhood Greenway	Higgins Ave	Bancroft St	\$119,000
C39	Active Transportation	Gerald Neighborhood Greenway	4th St	South Ave W	\$123,000
C40	Active Transportation	Schilling Neighborhood Greenway	3rd St	Bitterroot Trail	\$473,000
C42	Active Transportation	4th St Neighborhood Greenway	Schilling St	Toole Park	\$475,000
C52	Complete Streets	N 2nd St Complete Street	Madison St	A St	\$2,412,000

Medium Term Projects Continued

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C53	Active Transportation	Northbank Riverfront Trail East	Easy St	Van Buren St	\$2,688,000
C6	Active Transportation	North Reserve/ Scott Street I-90 Trail Connection	Grant Creek Rd	Scott St	\$3,257,000
C62	Active Transportation	Strand Ave to Burlington Ave Shared-Use Path	Strand Ave	Burlington Ave	\$107,000
C7	Roadway/ Bridge	Howard Raser Ave Complete Street	Old Grant Creek Rd	Scott St	\$9,312,000
C74	Active Transportation	Northbank Riverfront Trail West	Reserve St	Russell St	\$2,688,000
C95	Active Transportation	Milwaukee Trail Lighting	Reserve St	Catlin St	\$406,000
C96	Active Transportation	Post Siding Road Shared-Use Path	Old Hwy 93	Fort Missoula Rd	\$1,315,000
I145	Safety	E Broadway St and N Van Buren St Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$522,000
I146	Safety	Owen St and Broadway St Enhanced Crossing	--	--	\$348,000
I154	Safety	Brooks St and Stephens Ave Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$145,000
I155	Safety	Greenough Dr and Vine St Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$232,000
I165	Safety	6th St and Ronan St Enhanced Trail Crossing	--	--	\$145,000
I167	Safety	4th and Orange Enhanced Crossing	--	--	\$232,000
I261	Active Transportation	Reserve St and Spurgin Rd Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$522,000
C132	Active Transportation	Broadway Protected Bike Lanes	Mullan Rd	Mary Jane Blvd	\$636,000

Medium Term Projects Continued

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C19	Active Transportation	West Riverside 1st St Shared-Use Path	US 200	W Riverside Dr	\$251,000
C225	Active Transportation	Milwaukee Trail Widening Reconstruction and Lighting	S Van Buren Ave	Higgins	\$232,000
C114	Roadway/ Bridge	Johnson Street Extension	South Ave	Brooks St	\$2,829,000
I260	Safety	Highway 93 and Miller Creek Road			\$522,000
I169	Active Transportation	Reserve St S 3rd St W Intersection Improvements	--	--	\$522,000

Long Term Projects

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C104	Complete Streets	Rattlesnake Dr Complete Street	Creek Crossing	Missoula Ave	\$6,049,000
C117	Complete Streets	South Ave Complete Street	Hanson Dr	Clements	\$5,541,000
C118	Complete Streets	Curtis St Complete Street	S 3rd St	River Rd	\$2,320,000
C131	Active Transportation	England Blvd Protected Bike Lanes	Mary Jane Blvd	Great Northern Ave	\$4,007,000
C226	Complete Streets	Ronan Street	S 6th St W	S 14th St W	\$2,216,000
C241	Complete Streets	Clements Road Complete Street	S 3rd St W	North Ave	\$4,743,000
C242	Complete Streets	S Russell Street Safety Improvements	Brooks St	SW 39th St	\$2,087,000
C31	Active Transportation	Mullan Rd Shared-Use Path	Deschamps Ln	Cote Ln	\$3,831,000

Long Term Projects Continued

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C91	Active Transportation	Milwaukee Trail Extension and Bridges	Mullan Rd (via Schmidt Rd)	Grove St	\$16,175,000
C94	Active Transportation	Blue Mountain Rd Shared-Use Path	Bitterroot Trail	Blue Mountain Recreation Area	\$1,005,000
C23	Active Transportation	Blue Mountain Rd Trail	Forest Hill Ln	Future Bridge	\$494,000

Grant Contingent Projects

ID	CATEGORY	PROJECT NAME	TO	FROM	TOTAL COST
C124	Complete Streets	Brooks St Complete Street and Transit Improvements	Reserve St	Stephens Ave	\$34,779,000
C130	Complete Streets	BUILD Grant Roads - Wye/ Mullan Plan Collector Routes	Multiple	Multiple	\$34,534,000
C15	Active Transportation	I-90 Trail Grant Creek to the Wye	Grant Creek Rd	US 93	\$13,653,000
C181	Roadway/ Bridge	Coal Mine Road/I-90 Interchange	Howard Raser Ave	I-90	\$17,390,000
C88	Roadway/ Bridge	Riverfront Triangle Non-Motorized Bridge	Riverfront Triangle	McCormick Park	\$9,275,000
C89	Roadway/ Bridge	Missoula College Non-Motorized Bridge	Missoula College	Kim Williams Trail	\$9,275,000
C97	Active Transportation	People's Way Trail Phase 1	Evaro	I-90	\$13,767,000



Project Spotlights

Downtown Safety Access Mobility Projects



Complete Streets & Active Transportation

The Downtown Safety and Mobility Project (DowntownSAM) is a collection of projects packaged together for federal grant funding (awarded in Summer 2023) to cohesively rebuild streets, modernize traffic signals, and update streetlighting in the Downtown Missoula and improve access to riverfront parks and trails. DowntownSAM projects that are included as committed recommendations in this plan and estimated for construction before the end of the decade include:

Front/Main 2-Way Conversion and Multimodal Improvements:

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:	
C107	\$11.3 Million	Committed	Near Term	➡➡

Restores Front and Main Streets to two-way traffic, and includes intersection improvements, signal upgrades, a new signal at Front/Madison, a protected bicycle loop running west on Front Street and east on Main Street, and bus stop improvements. On-street parking will be maintained in most locations, although parking will be removed in some locations to accommodate intersection curb extensions. The economic impact of this conversion is estimated to have an increase in sales of about 10% to 13% for local retail, restaurants, and other food establishments based on increased daily vehicle traffic and an improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists¹.

Ron’s River Trail (Downtown)

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:	
C82	\$5.6 Million	Committed	Near Term	➡➡

Widens Ron’s River Trail to create safer connections between the trail and Front Street at four locations: Ryman Street Gateway, Pattee Street, Kiwanis Park, and the east side of Beartracks Bridge. Ryman Street between Front Street and the trail will be reconstructed, creating access for pedestrians and protected bicycle lanes between the Central Business District and the Riverfront Trail system. A new ADA-accessible ramp from Beartracks Bridge to the Riverfront Trail will provide a long-needed direct route between the bridge and riverfront commuter trail system.

¹ Front Street/Main Street Two-Way Conversion Study, Pg. 43, 2015-5-15-FRONT_MAIN_FINAL

Kiwanis Park Trail Widening

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:	
C3	\$334,000	Committed	Near Term	➡➡

Construct Primary Commuter Trail through Kiwanis Park, creating a vital new connection between Downtown and the riverfront.

Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan: Brooks to Broadway

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:	
C101	\$8.2 Million	Committed	Near Term	➡➡

Reconfigures Higgins Ave from 4 lanes to 3, allowing for dedicated left turn lanes, protected bike lanes, standardized lane widths, curb extensions, improved transit stops, wide sidewalks, street trees, improved lighting and ADA upgrades. All improvements will take place within existing right-of-way, and largely within existing curb lines. Based on analysis conducted for the Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan, the reconfiguration has the potential to reduce crashes by up to 50%, and peer research of similar projects across the country indicates a strong potential for economic benefits through an enhancement in sense of place and increased spending from park-once and bicycle and pedestrian customer traffic.



Higgins Avenue Street Improvements

Sx^wtpqyen Area Projects

Complete Streets & Active Transportation

Projects recommended in the Sx^wtpqyen Area (previously referred to Mullan Area) advance work started under a 2019 Mullan BUILD grant award of \$13 million to build infrastructure supportive of newly built affordable housing, Missoula County's only Opportunity Zone, and infill development for thousands of new housing units and over 500,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space. The associated master plan, adopted by the County and City in 2020, outlines steps to create fully walkable new neighborhoods that emphasize streets designed to be safe, comfortable, and interesting, and a fully built out trail network which serves residences and businesses directly as opposed to just recreational uses.



Preliminary S^wtpqyen area complete streets construction

Recommended LRTP projects will finalize several trail connections in the greater Sx^wtpqyen Area between West Broadway, Mullan Road, and Reserve Street. If additional grant funding can be obtained, Project C130 will complete the remaining collector roadway network for development, which would support a new Mountain Line Route 15 to the area, included in the Transit Service Plan's near-term recommendations contingent on funding availability. In addition to new complete streets and trails, active transportation projects have been recommended for medium and long-term investment to add and provide greater connections to the wider multimodal network including protected bike lanes on West Broadway, Reserve Street, England Boulevard, and Union Pacific Street. Advancing projects in this area reaffirms the MPO's commitment to promoting the region's focus on inward growth by supporting more compact and mixed-use development along multimodal and transit corridors.



Proposed and completed projects for the Sx^wtpqyen area

Neighborhood Greenways

Active Transportation

Neighborhood Greenways are residential streets, close to main roads, with relatively low vehicle volumes and speeds that support the comfort and safety of people who bike, walk, and roll. To build upon existing opportunities for biking and walking and to close gaps in the commuter trail, sidewalk, and on-street bike systems, the City of Missoula mapped a citywide Neighborhood Greenway system as part of the 2016 Bicycle Facilities Master Plan.

This LRTP update recommends the funding and construction of the remaining greenways identified in Missoula Connect to improve east-west and north-south connections and support daily travel for many Missoula residents.

In the near-term this will include the Ivy/Franklin/Park (Project C188) and Kent/Central (Project C45) Neighborhood Greenways with 23 additional projects throughout the medium-term investment period. Once completed, the expanded network will directly connect seven neighborhoods with low-stress routes suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

The Neighborhood Greenways in Missoula Connect include sidewalks, traffic calming at minor intersections, safety enhancements and crossing prioritization at major crossings, and pavement markings and other wayfinding elements. As the City and MPO work to install permanent infrastructure along the Neighborhood Greenway network, the City has been using quick-build traffic calming and adding pavement markings to establish the routes. By the end of the 2025 construction season, the City will have installed quick build traffic calming at minor intersections along seven Greenway corridors and by the end of 2025 will have added safety enhancements and crossing prioritization features at seven arterial crossings.



Installed neighborhood greenway elements

Bitterroot Trail Bridge at Clark Fork River

Bridge

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:	
C72	\$4.1 Million	Recommended	Near Term	

The proposed shared-use path connection over the Clark Fork River on the Bitterroot rail trestle provides an important link from the Heart of Missoula to the existing commuter trail network south of the river. This area has significant potential for redevelopment but currently lacks a dedicated bicycle/pedestrian river crossing. As the project moves forward, design would be closely coordinated with BNSF, as use of railroad right-of-way can be challenging, and further analysis is necessary to assess feasibility of using the existing trestle structure. Connecting the River Front Triangle to the McCormick recreation area is an alternative crossing option that offers the same connection without use of the existing rail trestle.



Existing Montana Rail Link Trestle



Possible bridge location

Southgate Triangle

Roadway & Active Transportation

Project Number:
C114

Cost:
\$2.8 Million

Funding Status:
Recommended

Project Priority:
Long Term

The Southgate Mall is currently surrounded by vacant land awaiting redevelopment and is near the site of a proposed new Midtown Transit Center which would allow for better connectivity and transfers between Mountain Line routes and support future bus rapid transit along Brooks Street. The surrounding roadway network lacks an established grid, and connections are limited due to the railroad tracks. The Johnson Street Extension (Project C114) is recommended to create access to the anticipated transit center site and provide new multimodal connections which can support future infill development and economic vitality as commercial land uses at and surrounding the mall evolve over time. The project will also provide connections to the Bitterroot Trail, improve access to Montana Rail Link (MRL) Park, and relieve traffic on the Brooks corridor by providing alternative routes from the signal at Dore Lane and Brooks to the signal at South Avenue. Within the surrounding residential areas, medium-term recommendations include completing neighborhood greenways on Schilling Street, Garfield Street, Charlott Avenue, Grant Street, and Ernest Avenue.



At the eastern end of the area, multiple projects are recommended for Russell Street including intersection safety improvements at Fairgrounds Trail, Ernest Avenue, McDonald Avenue, and 34th Street south of Brooks Street (Project C242) and complete streets improvements north of Brook Streets to Mount Avenue (Project C112).



Reconnecting East Missoula

Complete Street/Active Transportation

Historically, East Missoula was its own community, with local services and economy based around the timber industry built around the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers. With the decline of logging and mills in the 1990s, the area saw a decline in economic opportunity and services. Older parts of East Missoula today are defined by denser workforce housing, centered on Hwy 200 which along with the railroad line present mobility barriers that diminish the existing quality of life and stymie efforts to revitalize locally serving land uses and the potential to accommodate recent growth in multifamily residential housing.

Safety improvements along the East Missoula/Highway 200 Corridor have been included in the Missoula region’s Long-Range Transportation Plan since 2012. Adopted in Spring 2021, the East Missoula/Highway 200 Corridor Plan built upon previous planning and community engagement to provide comprehensive guidance for corridor improvements. The plan identifies projects that improve safety for all travelers, including shared-use paths, bike lanes, cycle tracks, pedestrian crossings, and improved bus stops. The LRTP update solidifies this commitment by allocating the remaining funded needed to implement the near-term Hwy 200 Complete Street (Project C116) to create a true main street for the community from Van Buren Street to Staple Street, a shared use path from Staples Street to Tamarack Road towards Bonner (Project C86) and replacing the existing railroad underpass near the I-90 interchange. The existing underpass presents a significant barrier, which when replaced will provide a less constrained thoroughway allowing adequate space for safer multimodal facilities (Project C191). Longer-term recommendations in the area include a neighborhood greenway along Sommers Street (Project C216) and a new link to the Kim Williams Trail (Project C90).



Railroad underpass location and its existing condition

Source: Reconnecting East Missoula

North Reserve-Scott Street Area

Roadway/Bridge, Complete Streets, and Active Transportation

As identified in the North Reserve Scott Street Master Plan and reiterated in the recent Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan, this area remains one of the largest undeveloped areas in the Missoula urban area with an unprecedented opportunity to expand housing and new commercial and creative industrial uses near existing neighborhoods. This LRTP update advances long-term and illustrative projects identified in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP by recommending the extensions of Howard Raser Drive between North Reserve Street and Scott Street (Project C7) to support future growth and relieve pressure on existing corridors like Broadway. Today, access to the North Reserve/Scott Street neighborhood is limited to the Scott Street bridge, Orange Street underpass, I-90 at Orange Street, and the pedestrian bridge connecting Owen Street to the Northside.



Focused inward growth with transportation can reduce pressures on housing affordability

Additional recommendations include building out the street grid needed to support new multifamily housing development on the Scott Street side (Project C33) and a new trail south of I-90 which will connect the growing district to jobs and services on North Reserve Street and recreational opportunities like Grant Creek Trail. The former Roseburg Lumber site, located off Raser Drive, will redevelop at some juncture, presenting additional redevelopment opportunities which are undecided at this time. As the area grows, the LRTP update includes illustrative and grant contingent projects which may be needed to alleviate congestion, such as a new I-90 interchange at Coal Mine Road (Project C181), to reduce growing pains on existing neighborhoods, like the Northside, and divert heavy truck traffic away from residential streets.

Brooks Corridor

Complete Streets

Project Number:	Cost:	Funding Status:	Project Priority:
C124	\$34.8 Million	Grant Contingent	--

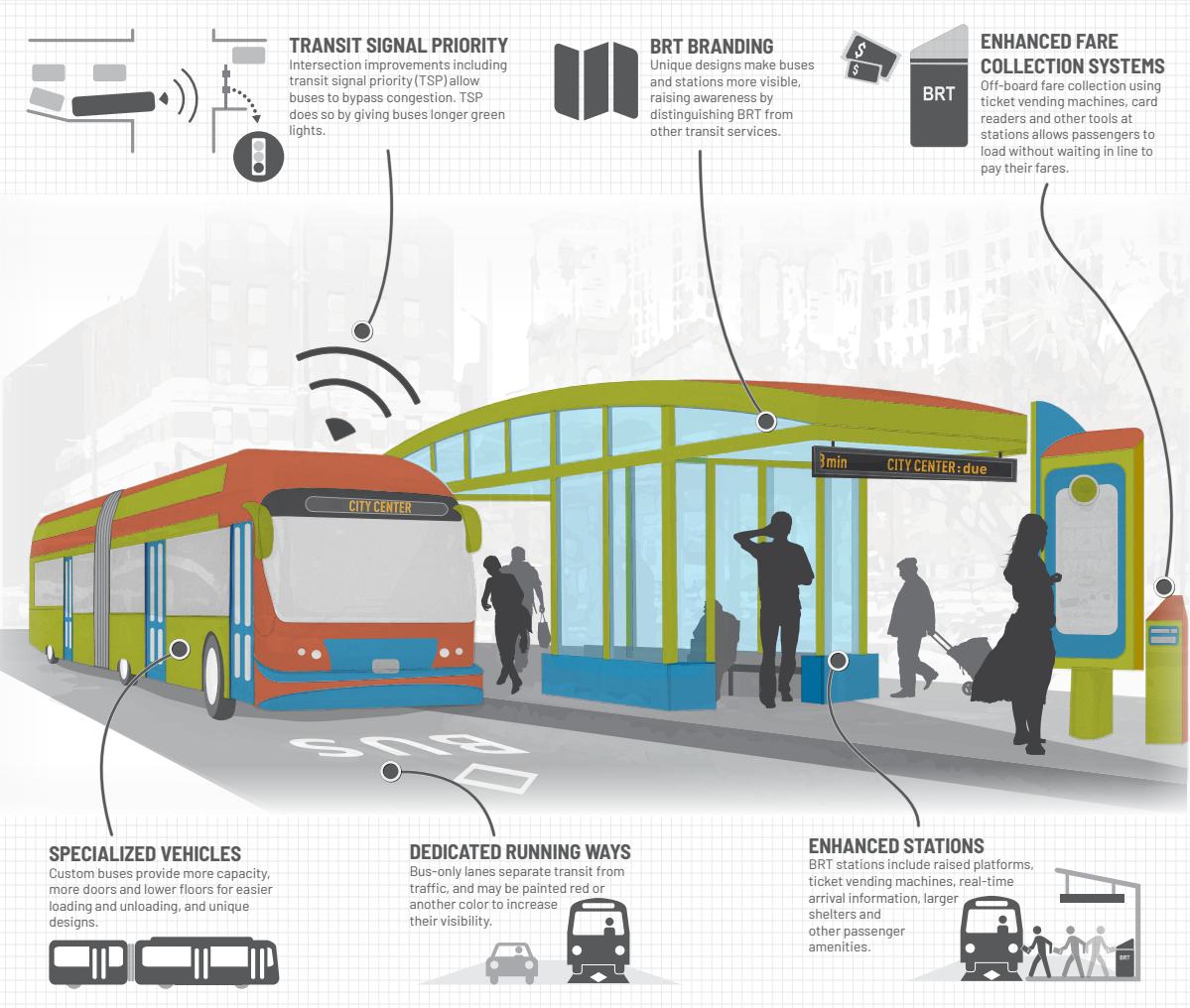
Brook Street is the spine of Midtown Missoula and an important regional arterial providing the most direct route between the Bitterroot Valley and the heart of Missoula. The community recognizes that it is essential to maintain Brooks Street as a strong, vibrant transportation and commercial corridor by transforming it into a multimodal, walkable street supporting Midtown's commercial activity and adjacent neighborhoods. Today, Brooks Street is difficult for pedestrians to cross or walk along comfortably, which makes it challenging to implement high frequency transit or infill development envisioned in previous studies, including the Midtown Missoula masterplan completed in 2023.

The Transform Brooks – Connect Midtown detailed planning study being sponsored by the Missoula Urban Transportation District (Mountain Line) and the Missoula Redevelopment Agency (MRA) is seeking design strategies to successfully implement fixed-route bus-rapid transit (BRT) and transit-oriented development (TOD) along Brooks Street. Transform Brooks, which is being funded largely by a Federal grant, is a follow-on to previous studies completed with community engagement in 2016 and 2020, which established the vision for BRT and TOD on Brooks Street. The project team is working to design dependable, frequent, and efficient transit service along the Brooks Street corridor and to build an urban environment that supports density, creates a safer and more accessible roadway environment, and reduces barriers for pedestrians to cross Brooks Street, connecting communities on both sides.



Existing corridor conditions near Southgate Mall

Designers are analyzing two BRT configurations (center-running or side-running), identifying locations for transit stops that will support commercial nodes, planning for sidewalk improvements that make it safer and more comfortable to walk along and to cross Brooks Street, and identifying strategic routes to connect a Midtown BRT to Downtown and other parts of the community. A location for a new bus transfer center in Midtown also is being considered. When the Transform Brooks study is completed in mid-2025, Mountain Line, MRA, and the City of Missoula expect to be fully prepared to seek federal capital funding for BRT construction on Brooks Street.



Typical design features of Bus Rapid Transit

MDT Maintenance & Safety Projects

In addition to the committed projects shown as near-term Missoula Connect priorities, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has funds dedicated to maintenance and safety priorities in the Missoula District. MDT develops a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in accordance with the requirements of Title 23 and Title 49 of USC (United States Code) and addresses Montana’s transportation needs for the next four fiscal years.

Maintenance

- ✓

Interstate 90 Durable Pavement Markings
- ✓

US 93 Durable Pavement Markings
- ✓

Russell Street Durable Pavement Markings
- ✓

SW Higgins Durable Pavement Markings
- ✓

West Broadway Durable Pavement Markings
- ✓

Missoula Urban Pavement Preservation
- ✓

I-90 Bridge Pier Removal

The projects in the STIP are developed via nominations from the MDT Districts and program managers. Nominations are prioritized and ranked by surface condition, rideability, traffic safety and geometrics consistent with specific work strategies identified in the MDT’s asset management program. The asset management program, also known as the Performance Programming Process, or Px3, ensures that projects will support overall system performance goals for pavement condition, bridge condition, congestion, system reliability, and safety.

Safety

- ✓

Russell Street Lighting
- ✓

Missoula Wrong Way Phase 2
- ✓

US 93 Missoula to Lolo Safety Study
- ✓

I-90 Striping
- ✓

Missoula South Signs

Transportation improvements in western Montana currently outpace available federal funding. As the MPO plans for the future, regional MPO priorities could be eligible for federal aid funds if improvements are consistent with MDT’s asset management program and if funding is available. Potential sources of MDT prioritized federal funding are described further in Chapter 8 and listed in Appendix E. MDT is a member of the MPO and will be part of any future project development and funding decisions.

MDT Programmed Funding by Phase

PROJECT NAME	FUNDING SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	NEAR TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM
Future nominated HSIP Projects	HSIP	Improvements to address serious and fatal crashes on the region's roadway network	\$394,397.00	\$4,027,156.00	\$4,716,308.00
Pavement Preservation and Highway Maintenance	UPP, IM, STPS	Perform chip seals, overlays, mill & fill, and other maintenance improvements	\$4,440,472.00	\$45,341,213.00	\$53,100,283.00
National Freight movement & efficiency	NHFP	Future projects to improve the efficient movement of freight and goods along the National Highway Freight Network	\$5,030,000.00	\$10,517,227.00	\$12,317,000.00
Urban and National Highway System Improvements	NH, MACI	Improvements to improve the function, efficiency, accessibility and reliability of the National Highway and Urban System routes within the Missoula MPO. Includes improvements to the region's bridges.	\$13,190,434.41	\$134,686,207.00	\$157,734,547.00



MDT constructed safety improvements at the Orange Street interchange of I-90

Source: MDT

CHAPTER 7

Recommended Programs and Policies

Beyond Capital Projects

Capital improvements—like new bicycle and sidewalk connections—are only part of what is needed to implement the vision of an LRTP. Non-capital programs and policies will help deliver on the commitment to a transportation system that prioritizes more options for getting around the region. These programs and policies can improve people’s awareness of transportation choices and support Missoula’s mode split goals. The Missoula MPO could initiate some of these programs and policy changes, but most would require partnerships with other agencies and community organizations.

The following pages explain each program or policy, why it matters, key steps the region has taken since the last LRTP (if applicable), recommended next steps, and the relative priority (near-, medium, or long-term) for implementation. The program and policy spotlights featured in this chapter are those that are particularly important to advance in the next five years. Programs and policies will be funded through various sources including unallocated federal funds (where eligible), dedicated City or County funding (ex. NTMP), and PL funds for planning activities.

Transit and Program Funding by Phase

PROJECT NAME	FUNDING SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	NEAR TERM	MID TERM	LONG TERM
Transit Operations	FTA, CMAQ, MUTD Local	General transit operating service costs. Includes fixed route, paratransit, microtransit, vanpool, and other applicable programs	\$90,918,518.00	\$195,047,655.24	\$246,716,254.00
Transit Capital	FTA, CMAQ	Purchases of buses and other vehicles, bus stop improvements, facility improvements, and other capital projects related to supporting transit service	\$6,900,985.00	\$13,520,303.76	\$19,524,427.00
Transportation Options	CMAQ	Marketing, education and outreach to increase support and utilization of multi-modal transportation options	\$1,744,940.00	\$3,648,495.00	\$4,263,491.00
Street Sweepers & Flush Trucks	CMAQ	Purchase of street sweepers and flush trucks for City and County street maintenance to reduce particulate pollution	\$1,952,379.00	\$5,609,994.00	\$7,415,231.00

Recommended Programs List

Safe Routes to School

PRIORITY
Ongoing
➡➡➡

PARTNERS
Missoula County
Public Schools

WHY IT MATTERS: Safe Routes to School programming prioritizes safety for some of the Missoula region's most vulnerable travelers and promotes improved health outcomes by encouraging walking and biking to school.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The City of Missoula Partnered with Missoula County Public Schools to create maps for each elementary and middle school in the district to guide parents/guardians with recommended walking and biking routes based on the location of safety measures, shared use paths, and low traffic volume streets.

NEXT STEPS: Prioritize safety improvements for funding based on route mapping efforts and City's CIP prioritization methodology which awards projects points for community investment based on location within the SRTS network.

Leverage communication materials and outreach materials provided from organizations like the National Center for Safe Routes to School to support events like National Walk & Roll to School Day.

Prioritized Snow Removal and Street Sweeping Routes

PRIORITY
Ongoing
➡➡➡

PARTNERS
Public Works
& Mobility and
County Public
Works

WHY IT MATTERS: Prioritization and scheduling are key to supporting year-round mobility for active travel modes. Keeping primary bikeways and routes leading to schools and business districts clear of snow provides the best access to the greatest number of people.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? City and County Public Works have developed a Snow Removal Priority Plan for bikeways, walkways, and local roads for street sweeping and snow clearing for all modes during the winter, with arterial streets, school bus routes, and transit bus routes cleared first.

Missoula's Street Division currently uses a pick-up mounted plow and deicer dedicated to the width of bike lanes and has recently installed a web camera on Beartracks Bridge to monitor ice and snow conditions.

NEXT STEPS: Continue to update inventory of priority bikeways, walkways, and local roads for clearing with a focus on maintaining critical access to bus stops.

Utilize technologies to monitor the winter conditions of multimodal infrastructure so that removal crews target sidewalks and bridges with the correct sized equipment when most needed.



Missoulians shared with us their priorities for the transportation system, which are reflected in both the project list (Chapter 6) and the programs and policies here, in Chapter 7.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Pavement Maintenance and Asset Management

PRIORITY
Ongoing
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility, County Public Works, and MDT

WHY IT MATTERS: Taking care of the region’s roads and trails with properly timed preservation activities is more effective and efficient than reactive repair and helps maintain system performance and the longevity of our regional investments.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? There are hundreds of miles of roads in need of maintenance and very limited funds available. To date, the MPO has worked with Public Works Departments to better align maintenance and capital improvement projects so that transportation improvements can be implemented in conjunction with needs like water and sewer upgrades that may require reconstruction of roadways.

NEXT STEPS: The MPO will coordinate with regional partners to implement a “Fix-It First” policy to guide the region’s asset management programs. This includes continuously gathering information about pavement conditions and making maintenance decisions to manage transportation facilities to a consistent standard. In addition to working with the City and County Public Works Departments, the MPO will seek greater coordination with MDT to implement restriping and minor upgrades when maintenance and preservation is conducted on State facilities in the region.

Neighborhood Greenways

PRIORITY
Ongoing
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility and County Public Works

WHY IT MATTERS Neighborhood greenways on low traffic streets in residential areas provide the community with additional space for all ages and abilities to enjoy outdoor physical activity like walking, biking, skateboarding, and running. Neighborhood greenways also supports the overall transportation system by closing gaps in the existing commuter trail, sidewalk, and on-street bicycle networks.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The City of Missoula first mapped out a proposed neighborhood greenway system in the 2016 Bicycle Facilities Plan Master Plan. Since then, the MPO has been collaborating with the City on the delivery of initial segments, primarily with the use of quick-build materials and pavement markings.

NEXT STEPS: Publish a Neighborhood Greenways toolkit for community members through the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program, including quick-build lessons learned, transitioning to permanent design elements, and approval processes.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Traffic Calming and Speed Management

PRIORITY
Ongoing
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility and County Public Works

WHY IT MATTERS: Traffic calming and speed management includes engineering, educational, enforcement, and neighborhood driven solutions to reduce the frequency and severity of crashes for all modes and helps, particularly on neighborhood streets that experience cut through traffic or of ongoing concern by residents.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Since the last LRTP the City’s Public Work’s Department developed a Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) including releasing an April 2021 report with comprehensive details on speeding and the contributing factors on Missoula’s streets, a workflow for data-driven analysis of concerns, high-level potential counter measures, and publicly sourced placemaking and engagement interventions for public space known as “neighborhood energizers.”

NEXT STEPS: Build off Neighborhood Greenways and the City’s Neighborhood Traffic Management Program efforts to create a toolbox of safety countermeasures and support the implementation of solutions to address traffic safety concerns submitted by the community that have been evaluated by the City’s Transportation Safety Team.

Pilot and Demonstrations

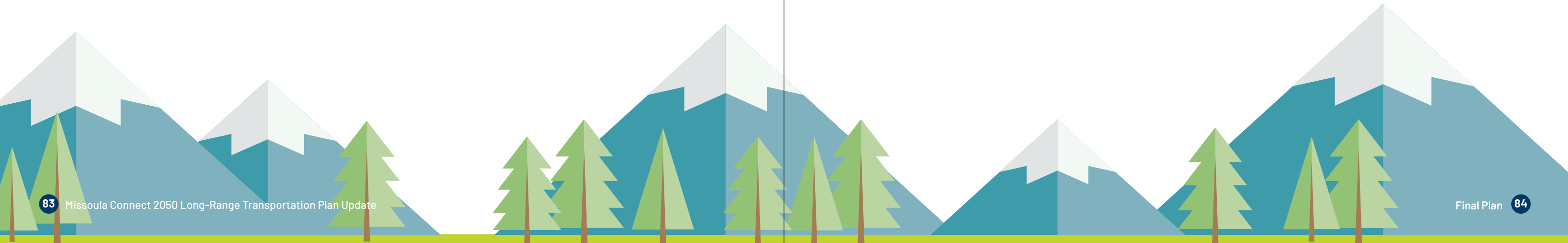
PRIORITY
Near
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility

WHY IT MATTERS: The Missoula region has a history of innovative transportation projects, but it can be difficult to advance them quickly due to funding and staff capacity. Pilot programs support rapid implementation and help people understand new approaches to street design before they are permanent.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The upcoming Neighborways project, developed in partnership with Common Good, will be introduced as a pilot, testing neighborhood-friendly street designs that prioritize walking and biking. Additionally, the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) routinely uses pilot approaches to address speeding and safety concerns before making permanent changes. Incremental improvements remain a core philosophy, allowing transportation projects to evolve based on data, public feedback, and real-world performance.

NEXT STEPS: Develop a demonstration program toolkit that identifies requirements, materials, and opportunities for pilot projects including parameters for public engagement and real-time feedback.



Recommended Programs List Continued

Transportation Options

PRIORITY
Near

PARTNERS
Missoula in Motion

WHY IT MATTERS: Missoula has a robust Transportation Options Program, Missoula in Motion, that focuses on encouraging people to use sustainable transportation options. Having transportation options is key to managing transportation demand, improving air quality, and ensuring access to opportunity for all residents and workers in Missoula. If there are easy and convenient alternatives to driving alone for most trips, people can choose the option that best suits their needs. TO strategies include transportation services and amenities; active transportation such as biking, walking, and rolling; parking management; multimodal subsidies; and education to help people bike, walk, take transit, and share rides for more trips.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The MPO's 2023 Transportation Options(TO) Action Plan identifies programs, policies, and recommended code changes to enhance transportation options in Missoula. The plan was developed based on the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP recommendations to:

- Identify strategies to better manage and utilize downtown parking.
- Develop a Transportation Options Policy that will require and/or incentivize transportation options programs and infrastructure for existing employers and through the development review process.

NEXT STEPS: Collaborate with the City to advance the codes identified in the Implementation Action Table of *Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan* as relates to new development and employers, parking requirements and management, and bicycle parking.

Transportation and Health Campaign

PRIORITY
Near

PARTNERS
Missoula County Health Department

WHY IT MATTERS: Promoting physical activity through walking and biking may help lower obesity rates in adults and children.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The MPO continues to partner with public health organizations to develop helps people understand the connection between transportation and health. Most recently MPO staff supported Missoula Public Health's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which includes goals to improve health outcomes through improved infrastructure that promotes physical activity.

NEXT STEPS: Leverage the existing Invest Health campaign and identify additional priority areas for health messaging.

Transit Amenities Program

PRIORITY
Near

PARTNERS
Missoula Urban Transportation District

WHY IT MATTERS: Stop amenities help to ensure that transit stops in the region provide a high-quality, comfortable, and safe experience for transit riders. Customer experience can be enhanced by adding amenities, such as bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles, and schedules(or real-time information).

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Mountain Line has a Bus Stop Master Plan, adopted in 2015 and revised in 2020 that provides guidelines for the spacing, placement, and design of bus stops in addition to an implementation plan for improving signage and amenities.

NEXT STEPS: Collaborate with MUTD to implement priorities identified by the Bus Stop Master Plan and continue to update guidelines and assess needs based on conditions of existing infrastructure and evolving land use context.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Corridor Study Prioritization

PRIORITY
Near

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility, Montana Department of Transportation

WHY IT MATTERS: Corridor studies allow the MPO to establish vision and build consensus for the planning and conceptual design of roadway projects that best respond to surrounding context and land uses.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Since the adoption of the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP, the MPO has worked with the community and its partners to develop corridor plans including the Reserve Street Community Input Project, East Missoula Highway 200 Corridor Plan, and Higgins Corridor Plan. The MPO is currently in the process of developing the Reserve Street Safety Action Plan which will provide informed safety interventions for implementation across the corridor based on rigorous data analysis and public input.

NEXT STEPS: Prioritize a list and seek funding to support multimodal studies of key regional corridors to improve design documentation for grant pursuits. The MPO will need to coordinate with MDT on the prioritization and selection process of recommended corridors. Potential corridors of regional significance to consider include Broadway Street, Orange Street, and Mullan Road.

Safe Routes for Older Adults

PRIORITY
Medium

PARTNERS
Missoula Aging Services

WHY IT MATTERS: Making communities age-friendly and transportation systems supportive of all road users is incredibly important as we consider demographic shifts underway as a larger set of the population reaches senior years and is living longer. Focusing on the mobility needs of older people is critical for ensuring access to key destinations for aging in place, thriving when driving is no longer an option, and reducing conflicts for travelers that have increased risk of severe injury when collisions occur.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Elevating projects with outstanding importance to older adults is considered within the LRTP project evaluation criteria through proximity and improvements to relevant destinations like healthcare, affordable housing, and group/assisted living centers. In addition, the MPO has collaborated with Missoula Aging Services to bring more older adults into helping frame the regional mobility discussion, including through the LRTP process with specific meetings and review of projects that connect to essential services and housing.

NEXT STEPS: Continue to engage with community-based organizations to understand mobility challenges for older Missoulians and prioritize solutions based on the LRTP and CIP evaluation processes. Future studies or plans such as the Vision Zero Annual Report could use crash data to further identify areas of risk to older adults and assess results where related improvements have been made.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Expanded Regional Vanpools

PRIORITY
Medium

WHY IT MATTERS: The Missoula region is large and includes rural and lower density areas that have few options for travel besides driving. Vanpools provide affordable, non-drive-alone options for parts of the region or job sites that may not be able to support regular fixed route transit service.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association (MRTMA) operates the iRide Vanpool service for groups of six to 13 people with similar travel patterns who ride to work or other places together. Outlying areas in Missoula County with existing vanpools include Lolo, Frenchtown, Huson, Evaro, and the Wye.

PARTNERS
Missoula Urban Transportation District; MRTMA

NEXT STEPS: Identify priority areas for expanded vanpool service, such as Clinton/Turah, and establish principles for a financially sustainable program.

Community Carshare

PRIORITY
Medium

WHY IT MATTERS: Car ownership is expensive. To increase affordability and provide greater access to opportunity, a car share program gives people access to a vehicle for short periods of time at affordable rates. Car share may also be beneficial in the region as it can provide additional options for accessing the many natural and outdoor recreational opportunities nearby that may not be reachable by transit.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? At present, car sharing in the Missoula area is limited to the peer-to-peer rental app Turo. In addition, Missoula in Motion has options for one-time events and rides to ski areas on their carpool dashboard but does not offer the ease and flexibility of use of car share which can help attract new users, including visitors which may forgo renting a car with other options available.

PARTNERS
Missoula in Motion, Missoula Parking Commission, University of Montana

NEXT STEPS: Identify potential private partners and funding sources for a pilot program. Partnerships with the University and developers, as well as the development community should be included in discussions.

Bike Share

PRIORITY
Medium

WHY IT MATTERS: By providing a fleet of bikes for public use, bike share could help Missoula residents and visitors access key destinations without a car.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The City of Missoula and University of Montana have previously had discussions with micromobility providers about the potential of bike share and e-scooter sharing services, however concerns remain without having a specific policy in place that provides regulations for parking of devices and avoiding clutter and riding on sidewalks.

PARTNERS
Missoula in Motion, University of Montana

NEXT STEPS: Assess bike share modes (e.g., dockless or station-based), market feasibility, community minded pricing structures, and regulations to inform discussions with micromobility providers. The MPO can also reach out to peers such as Bend, OR who launched an e-bike share program in 2022 for lessons learned.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Mobility Hubs

PRIORITY
Medium

WHY IT MATTERS: Mobility hubs integrate public and private mobility services to enhance customer experience and expand transportation choices. They include multimodal connections, high-quality amenities, and frequent transit service.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? To date mobility hubs have yet to be piloted in the Missoula area.

PARTNERS
Missoula Urban Transportation District, Missoula Parking Commission

NEXT STEPS Develop a typology of mobility hubs based on land use and travel characteristics. After identifying the types of hubs that are right for the region—such as county, neighborhood, and downtown context—the second step is to determine which elements and amenities are best for each type of hub. This “kit of parts” might include those listed above as well as community-designed features. Once complete, the MPO could then establish a set of regionally significant mobility hubs for a pilot program.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Signal Coordination

PRIORITY
Medium

WHY IT MATTERS: ITS supports efficient traffic operations through communication systems that provide real-time feedback to monitor and manage roadways, coordinate signals, and disseminate dynamic messaging to travelers. Implementing ITS can reduce traffic congestion, optimize infrastructure investments, provide roadway performance data, and improve system reliability.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? An example of recent work includes the Reserve Street Retiming project to study traffic signal timing along the Reserve Street corridor. The overall goal of the project is to promote traffic flow improvements via increased signal connectivity and synchronization. Traffic signal hardware may be updated as well.

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility, Montana Department of Transportation

This location was chosen as part of MDT’s systematic corridor retiming process and will incorporate data obtained from an Automated Traffic Signal Performance Measures (ATSPM) pilot project conducted on Reserve Street at 12 signals from Brooks Street to the I-90 Interchange. The ATSPM system will also provide valuable before and after metrics that can be used to measure retiming success project on Reserve Street.

NEXT STEPS: Conduct a signal optimization study and identify and evaluate need for specific ITS investments in the region, such as active traffic management, traffic cameras, traffic data collectors, variable message signs, or vehicle to everything (V2X) infrastructure.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Low-Impact Planting

PRIORITY
Medium



PARTNERS

Public Works
& Mobility;
City Parks &
Recreation,
Montana
Department of
Transportation

WHY IT MATTERS: Street trees and landscaping help buffer people on the sidewalk from traffic in the roadway. Vegetation also helps to manage stormwater, removes pollutants, and provides shade. Adding native vegetation, like trees, plantings, or shrubs, along roads, trails, and other public spaces.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? *Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan* calls for enhancing livability by providing shade and promoting sustainability through street trees and vegetation. Street Types with high emphasis on greening can feature larger and more numerous landscaped boulevards and medians, street trees, planter boxes, and green stormwater infrastructure.

NEXT STEPS: Identify priority improvement areas from other plans and develop guidelines for encouraging new development to expand landscaping plans using native vegetation, street shading, and stormwater management. The MPO can assist with implementing relevant code actions of the Land Use Plan such as developing standards for tree planting and health, and protection requirements during construction activities. Additional coordination could be required on MDT right-of-way to ensure these improvements meet state construction requirements.

Regional Development Coordination

PRIORITY
Medium



PARTNERS

City of Missoula;
Missoula County

WHY IT MATTERS: Missoula Connect's preferred scenario emphasizes inward growth, and the County supports this approach in the region by accommodating planned development in areas like the Wye through its Land Use Element and targeted land use planning. These growth areas, identified in past planning efforts, require improved transportation connectivity to support changing travel patterns, meet countywide housing needs, and reduce development pressure on rural and environmentally sensitive areas.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? The MPO regularly coordinates with Missoula County to ensure transportation planning accounts for future growth in outlying areas and aligns infrastructure investments with regional mobility priorities. One example is the Wye area near the intersection of I-90 and Hwy 93. Currently, there are approximately 3,500 homes and 1.5 million square feet of residential and industrial projects planned for the next 20 years. The theoretical build out is significantly more, up to 15,000 new homes in planned residential neighborhoods and more than 1,000 acres of land for economic development. To identify the infrastructure upgrades needed to support this growth, including traffic operations and non-motorized circulation, Missoula County produced the 2024 Wye Infrastructure Plan.

NEXT STEPS: Develop a program oriented towards completing transportation area plans surrounding development hot spots within the City and County and support implementation of recommendations. The Wye Infrastructure Plan identifies numerous multimodal needs to accommodate future growth, including key intersection improvements such as upgrades to the I-90 westbound ramps and a new traffic signal at Hwy-93 and Waldo Rd. Following adoption of the Wye Infrastructure Plan, these recommended projects will be more fully integrated into the LRTP.

Recommended Programs List Continued

Disaster Management and Preparation

PRIORITY
Long



PARTNERS

Missoula County
Disaster &
Emergency
Services

WHY IT MATTERS: The Missoula region exists with risk of natural disaster, whether it is wildfire, flooding, draught, windstorm, etc. Assessment of the existing emergency plans in relation to the transportation system is critical to determine shortcomings related to transportation system resilience and preparedness.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? In 2024 Missoula County and the City of Missoula updated their Multi-Jurisdictional Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Plan to comply with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, which requires proactive hazard planning. The update identifies significant community hazards and mitigation projects to protect residents, infrastructure, and the environment.

NEXT STEPS: Assess Missoula area's transportation system in accordance with adopted emergency and disaster preparedness plans to consider resiliency upgrades and alternative routes for single access communities.

Freight and Goods Delivery Management

PRIORITY
Long



PARTNERS

Montana
Department of
Transportation,
Motor Carriers of
Montana

WHY IT MATTERS: Maintaining and planning the transportation system with goods movement in mind helps support the regional economy and can reduce the burden from passthrough truck travel in the local community. Re-envisioning goods delivery and other freight services can improve efficiency, reduce environmental impacts, and improve safety for all modes.

WHERE ARE WE NOW? Montana's State Freight Plan was last updated in 2022 and recognizes Goals 1, 2, 3, and 5 of Missoula Connect, which are reaffirmed in this update, are directly aligned with MDT's five goals for the movement of freight on Montana's roads which are 1) Safety, 2) System Preservation and Maintenance, 3) System Reliability, 4) Environmental Stewardship, and 5) Network Resiliency.

NEXT STEPS: Create an inventory of existing freight routes and on- and off-street commercial loading zones to inform a future delivery network. Efforts should also be made to encourage goods delivery by alternate modes, such as e-cargo bikes, which can reduce demands on loading spaces and the transportation network.

Recommended Policies

Vision Zero

PRIORITY
Ongoing
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility, Montana Department of Transportation

WHAT IS IT? Builds on the Missoula Community Transportation Safety Plan (CTSP) and MDT’s Vision Zero initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in the Missoula area over 10 years. Addresses safety through coordinated engineering, enforcement, and education efforts.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Adopting a Vision Zero Policy means recognizing traffic-related deaths and serious injuries can be prevented and aligns with existing City and State commitments.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Adopt an explicit Vision Zero Policy and Implement Missoula Community Transportation Safety Plan and MDT initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Zero-Emission Fleet Conversion

PRIORITY
Ongoing
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PARTNERS
Missoula Urban Transportation District; City of Missoula; Missoula County

WHAT IS IT? Expands use of electric vehicles and alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels, especially in City and County fleets.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Shifting City and County fleets away from fossil fuels increases sustainability of local government operations. Improving air quality is good for our region, and battery-electric buses reduce annual CO2 emissions by 77% and annual NOx by 71% compared to diesel buses.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Continue to identify potential funding sources to support additional bus and fleet conversion. This builds on MUTD’s resolution to convert Mountain Line’s fleet to all-electric by 2035.

Encourage Compact Growth

PRIORITY
Ongoing
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
City of Missoula; Missoula County

WHAT IS IT? Since 2015, Missoula has embraced a “Focus Inward” growth strategy, prioritizing compact, sustainable growth within its urban areas. This strategy means leveraging opportunities for infill development to maximize use of infrastructure and prevent sprawl into sensitive and constrained lands.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Targeting compact growth in areas that have good transit service, mixed-use development, and transportation network connectivity provides more people with access to more resources and opportunities without having to travel far. This creates time savings, less congestion, and more options to walk, bike, and ride transit. This strategy not only addresses housing shortages but also aligns with the region’s renowned landscapes, preserving Missoula unique character while fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Collaborate with the City of Missoula to implement Street Types and mobility improvements to deliver the Place Types outlined in Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan which were specifically crafted to spur more compact and walkable mixed-use development.

Recommended Policies Continued

Street and Trail Types

PRIORITY
Near
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility

WHAT IS IT? With limited public right-of-way, competing demands for walking, biking, driving, public transit, freight and emergency services must be carefully prioritized. Missoula’s recently developed Street Types sets priorities and design objects for new streets and ROW projects based on functional classification and land use, providing a more nuanced approach to managing the transportation system.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Not every arterial street serves the same function in the transportation network or needs the same types of facilities. Street types and design standards articulate what matters and guide implementation for both public and private projects based on local context. By linking to Land Use Plan Place Types, street design objectives can also better respond the surrounding built environment, aligning transportation networks with adjacent land uses, zoning, and visions for future development.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Implement the Street Types framework from the *Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan* to provide greater consistency between land use planning and the development of a more functional transportation network, and support implementation of Trail Types following adoption of the PROST plan.

Emerging Mobility

PRIORITY
Medium
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility

WHAT IS IT? Emerging mobility refers to new transportation modes and services delivered primarily by the private sector, but occasionally in partnership with or as permitted by the public sector; elements that support their effectiveness and operations; and importantly, the management tools to align emerging mobility with a community’s broader goals.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Adopting guiding principles provides a consistent framework for evaluating and guiding decisions, policies, and actions related to emerging mobility services to ensure their implementation advances community goals and is oriented around addressing specific needs.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Adopt Emerging Mobility Policy based on previously developed playbook to articulate draft principles for regional discussion.

Expanded Development and Traffic Impact Analysis Requirements

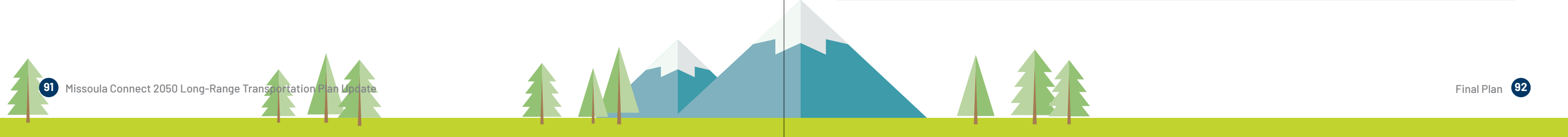
PRIORITY
Medium
▶▶▶

PARTNERS
Community Planning, Development & Innovation

WHAT IS IT? Builds off the existing impact fee program by expanding requirements for developers to conduct multimodal traffic impact analyses and implement sidewalks, bike lanes, and/or transit stops as part of the new development process, including addressing nearby intersections and critical connections to existing facilities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Mitigating traffic impacts and securing private funding for projects that address intersection and crossing improvements and make connections to nearby facilities can create a more complete multimodal network.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Identify desired outcomes of expanded requirements with input from the development community.



Recommended Policies Continued

Complete Streets

PRIORITY
Medium

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PARTNERS
Public Works & Mobility

WHAT IS IT? In 2016, the Missoula City Council adopted Resolution 8098, updating the 2009 Complete Streets policy to guide the design and maintenance of streets that accommodate all modes of transportation for people of all ages and abilities.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? This policy prioritizes safety, accessibility, and convenience for pedestrians, cyclists, public transit users, and motorists, with an emphasis on human-centered design. It promotes a connected multimodal transportation system, prioritizing pedestrian safety while balancing the needs of all users based on context. The policy also supports flexibility in street design to align with social, economic, and environmental goals.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Last updated in 2016, the current Complete Streets policy is due for an update to meet current standards and requirements and provide better guidance on street design. This work can be integrated into Street Types.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

PRIORITY
Medium

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PARTNERS
Missoula in Motion; Community Planning, Development & Innovation

WHAT IS IT? TDM focuses on helping people change their travel behavior—to meet their travel needs by using different modes, traveling at different times, making fewer trips or shorter trips, or taking different routes. Since 1997, Missoula in Motion (MIM), has led efforts to encourage alternative transportation options available to individuals and workplaces throughout the region.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? A TDM policy would amplify investments identified in the LRTP and add regulatory strength to current TDM programs. Expanding the regulatory arm of Missoula in Motion is another way to reduce vehicle trips and help to manage congestion. In March 2025, MIM received accreditation from the Association of Commuter Transportation for meeting best in practice industry criteria for administration of TDM.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Establish desired elements of a TDM policy and implement the TDM related recommendations of the Missoula Transportation Options Plan including establishing requirements for new development, updating Missoula’s parking management and requirements, and a fee-based commuter incentive program for major employers.

Recommended Policies Continued

Transit Oriented Community

PRIORITY
Long

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PARTNERS
Community Planning, Development & Innovation

WHAT IS IT? Transit-oriented communities encourage housing, shopping and economic development near public transportation and mobility options.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Traditionally referred to as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), the region has explored how to encourage mixed-use projects around transit, including along the Brooks Corridor. Establishing a TOC policy could further the Missoula area’s commitment to dense, compact development by focusing land uses around major transit stations to maximize access to frequent, high-quality bus service.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Develop and adopt a TOC policy that identifies priorities and goals for increasing housing supply and job creation near existing and future high-frequency and work with the development community to build projects that align with adopted Place and Street Types.

Downtown Parking and Curb Management Plan

PRIORITY
Long

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PARTNERS
Missoula Parking Commission

WHAT IS IT? Identifies strategies to better manage downtown parking. Creates a system that increases the efficiency and utilization of the existing parking supply and other transportation options.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? Managing and pricing parking can support the region’s mode share goals and ensure optimal use of existing facilities. As new travel options are available, including expanded ride-sharing and shared-mobility services, demands for curb space will increase, requiring a thoughtful approach to managing this important resource.

WHAT ACTIONS ARE NEEDED FIRST? Work with Missoula Parking Commission to develop a need statement for a parking and curb management plan.

Program and Policy Spotlights



Advance Transportation Accessibility for All

The Missoula MPO has taken a data driven approach to ensuring projects are evaluated on their potential to improve equitable access to opportunities and identify the need for investments in areas of the community that have previously been underserved or negatively impacted by the transportation system. The LRTP update project evaluation process included scoring metrics to understand which transportation investments can best provide full and equal access to opportunities and resources to all people in the region to achieve their full potential to thrive. This includes using Census data identify projects that can alleviate mobility gaps for people with lower incomes, Indigenous populations and people of color, older adults, children, people with limited English proficiency, and people with disabilities. Considering factors that advance transportation equity in planning future connections and mobility options can increase affordability, improve access to jobs, education, and services, and improve overall quality of life.

In implementing the LRTP update the MPO will continue to prioritize projects, programs, and policies that align with the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP preferred scenario and the values of the recently adopted Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan which identifies coordination of transportation with land use priorities as critical for meeting regional needs like a more affordable housing supply and strengthening existing neighborhoods with walkable inward growth. This includes continuing to plan for and investing in the following:

- ✓ **Reducing adverse human health and environmental impacts** associated with transportation projects, particularly capacity projects that generate additional air pollution
- ✓ **Improving** access to grocery stores, healthcare services, greenspace, Invest Health Neighborhoods, and other community amenities
- ✓ **Enhancing economic opportunities** by improving access to jobs and job training programs
- ✓ **Advancing accessibility** by applying universal design principles and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design requirements
- ✓ **Promoting affordable and sustainable mobility options** such as riding a bike or taking the bus
- ✓ **Ensuring inclusive engagement practices** throughout all phases of project planning, design, and delivery

Create a Mobility Hubs Program

Built on a backbone of transit routes, mobility hubs offer a safe, comfortable, convenient, and accessible space to seamlessly transfer between travel modes. Mobility hubs can help to reduce emissions, increase affordability, and enhance connections across the region, while seamlessly integrating public and private mobility services. Mobility hubs are tailored to the needs of the people and communities they serve. A Mobility hub in downtown Missoula, for example, would have different design features than a mobility hub at the Dornblaser Park and Ride. A traveler might find a mix of the following features at mobility hubs throughout the Missoula area:

- Bus shelters and waiting areas
- Shared bikes and scooters
- Charging stations for electric vehicles and bikes
- Real-time traveler information
- Dedicated car-share parking
- High-quality walking and biking connections
- Secure bike parking
- Loading zones for pick-up and drop-off
- Amenities such as lighting, street furniture, wayfinding, and kiosks



Source: Nelson\Nygaard MTC Regional Mobility Hub Report

Support a Great Transit System

Transit is the backbone of a strong multimodal transportation system, and a high-quality transit system plays a critical role in creating a more equitable, affordable, and connected region. By more than doubling ridership in the past 15 years, Mountain Line has played a major role in accommodating new growth, reducing traffic congestion, and connecting the Missoula area to opportunities and activities. Mountain Line has also helped households reduce transportation costs with the system-wide zero-fare service, representing a hedge against the increasing cost of living.

Growth is projected to continue, and it is critical the long-range planning of the transportation system meets Mountain Line’s needs to sustain and enhance operations while proving options for thousands of new residents. Through implementing this LRTP update this MPO will invest in projects and programs that directly support the near-term and long-term recommendations of the 2025 Mountain Line Transit Service Plan. The Service Plan can be found attached as Appendix J.



Public engagement events throughout this update were held in conjunction with the Transit Service Plan to align priorities and recommendations



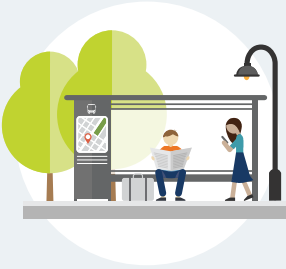
Update and Streamline the Route Network

Realign bus routes to better serve the needs of existing and potential transit riders by improving access to key destinations and reducing travel times. This includes greater frequency in high-ridership/high-density areas, direct service from Franklin to the Fort to downtown Missoula, and service to S*tpqyen.



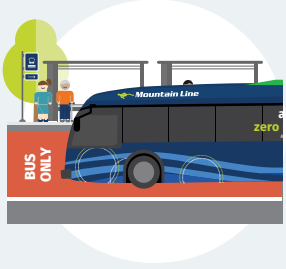
Strategically Expand Bus Service

Extend routes to serve emerging destinations, offer longer hours, and more frequent service on weekdays and weekends. Four new corridors would deliver frequent service, every 15 minutes or better.



Promote Transit-Supportive Land Uses

New fixed-route service to the Sawmill District and S*tpqyen, as well as improved service to the rapidly redeveloping Midtown. Will align with regional growth and the vision set forth in the latest Land Use Plan and code reform.



Invest in Capital Projects That Improve Speed and Reliability

Long-term improvements such as bus lanes, improved stops, transit centers, and transit signal priority, can make bus travel times more competitive with private vehicles.

The new **Brooks Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor** would deliver fast, frequent, and reliable service between downtown Missoula and Southgate Mall.

The new **Midtown transit center at Southgate Mall** would foster better connectivity and transfers between routes, including the new BRT service

Completing the **Maintenance, Operations, and Administration Base (MOAB)** by 2029 establishes a much-needed storage/maintenance space for operating a larger fleet that could deliver more peak service.

Enhance the Region’s Approach to Asset Management

Asset management—the maintenance, preservation, repair, rehabilitation, and replacement of transportation infrastructure—is vital to ensure the ongoing performance and long-term viability of the Missoula region’s existing and future transportation network. The City and County of Missoula, through the Departments of Public Works & Mobility and Parks and Recreation, have existing maintenance programs that are funded annually. These include a sidewalk gap replacement program that requires sidewalk infill with development projects and offers cost-sharing for adjacent property owners, ongoing maintenance (e.g., sweeping, snow removal) of biking and walking facilities, and a spot maintenance program to make smaller-scale roadway repairs on an ongoing basis.



Construction work in Missoula

The 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP established a need for the City and County to adopt a “Fix-It First” policy. In developing long-term transportation priorities, the life-cycle cost of new capital investments is sometimes overlooked. A Fix-It First approach prioritizes the maintenance of roadway facilities over adding new facilities or expanding existing roads. Critical maintenance activities to preserve and enhance existing infrastructure include chip seal/crack sealing, resurfacing, and reconstruction. In addition, the MPO will seek coordination with MDT during routine maintenance in the region to provide input on restriping and minor changes to ensure safety for all users.

The City has worked to align its maintenance and capital improvement projects, ensuring that all Public Works & Mobility projects can do double or triple duty. By incorporating complete street design elements and utility upgrades when constructing new or reconstructing existing streets, the region can get greater benefit out of each maintenance project and continue to expand the Missoula area’s multimodal networks. When the City or County undertakes standard roadway maintenance activities, they should continue to consider opportunities to repair existing sidewalks, restripe crosswalks and bike lanes, and address gaps in the sidewalk or On-street bicycle network, if funds are available.

Facilitate Safe Crossings of Freight Rail Network

In January 2024, BNSF Railway Company resumed direct operations of more than 900 miles of track from Billings to Spokane after the early termination of Montana Rail Link’s (MRL) lease. MRL, a Missoula-based Class II freight railroad, had operated on BNSF-owned tracks under a long-term lease agreement.. Now operating within the BNSF Montana Division, the rail yards between the Northside and Downtown Missoula remains one of the key points for switching and assembling freight trains in the State. This amount of rail activity can create delays on the surrounding roadway network and safety concerns at at-grade crossings, such as the Spruce Street/Madison Street intersection.

Potential safety improvements include:

- ✓ **Advanced Obstacle Detection:** Image processing technology monitors boom gate conditions, alerts engineers to the presence of trapped objects, monitors movements in real-time, and summons first-responders in the event of an emergency.
- ✓ **Real-Time Equipment Status:** Data acquisition systems alert operators if there are malfunctioning warning devices such as barriers, motors, lights, and alarms.
- ✓ **Grade Separation:** Separates the roadway from the railroad through above- or below-grade improvements to reduce conflicts. Requires special consideration of comfort and safety for people walking, rolling, and biking, especially if aerial walkways or tunnels are required.

Freight & Rail Quiet Zones

Since the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP, the City has conducted a “quiet zone” study to measure sound levels from wayside horns, which if installed would remove the requirement for trains to sound their horns as they approach the Spruce Street/Greenough Drive railroad crossing. The horn blasts can be disruptive to people who live and work near the crossing, especially when the horns are sounded throughout the night as well as during the day. The results from testing showed significantly lower noise levels in the nearby neighborhoods for the wayside horn when compared to the levels for the train horns. The next step is to continue to work with BNSF to create an agreement regarding equipment and signage installation and maintenance responsibilities in addition to assurance trains will not sound their horns at the Taylor Street railroad crossing if wayside horns are installed at the Spruce Street/Greenough Drive crossing.



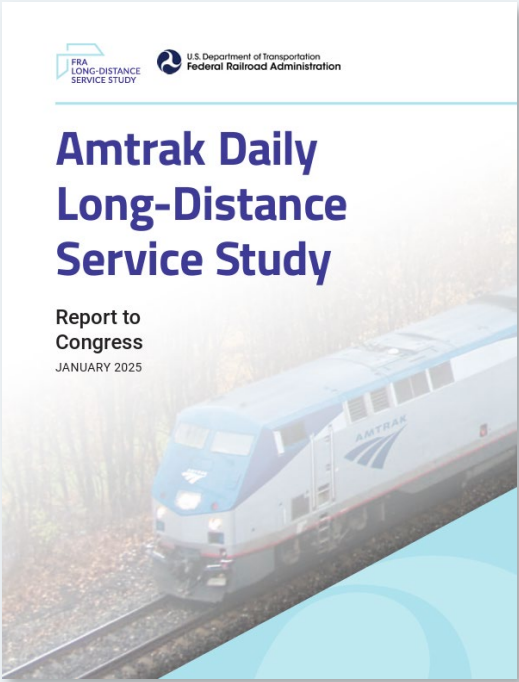
Missoula has been a regional hub for rail freight since its arrival in the 1880s

Support Future Passenger Rail

Until 1979, the Missoula region was served by the North Coast Hiawatha passenger rail route, which provided an important connection from points east and west. There has been ongoing advocacy to bring passenger rail back to southern Montana. The Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) was formally established in 2020 under existing state law, following a joint resolution by 12 counties. Authorizing the BSPRA increases the likelihood of critical federal support and funding for passenger rail, although competition for resources remains stiff. The goal of the Authority is to have a 21st Century passenger rail service designed over the coming years to enable service to operate as early as 2032 if the requisite funding is available.

In summer 2024, BSPRA was awarded funding through the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development (CID) Program to support planning and development efforts for future passenger rail service along the Big Sky North Coast Corridor, which includes Missoula. This will include a focus on developing concepts to deliver on-time performance, twice-daily trips in each direction, and coordinated transportation connecting to outlying communities and destinations within the route including Tribal communities. In January 2025, FRA released its final report on the Amtrak Daily Long-Distance Service Study, which identified the Big Sky North Coast Corridor as one of 15 discontinued long-distance routes with potential for restoration. The study is intended to inform Congress by providing data, analysis, and estimated costs, but does not propose new service or direct funding decisions. Any consideration of restoring service remains at the discretion of Congress.

The MPO supports the Authority’s efforts, as bringing passenger rail back to the region aligns with ongoing input from residents in the 2019 and 2023 Missoula Area Transportation Survey, feedback gathered through the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP, and the economic health objectives in the City of Missoula’s Growth Policy. In the 2023 survey, which provides a statistically valid analysis of the MPO area, a significant majority (80%) of respondents expressed support for using passenger rail service in the future. The MPO will continue to attend meetings and coordinate with BSPRA to articulate the connection between passenger rail and realizing the goals of the LRTP. The MPO can also play an important role in ensuring that the selection of a future depot site and its design best connects to the overall regional multimodal transportation network and supports the vision adopted in Mountain Line’s Transit Service Plan.



Support Airport Groundside Access

Missoula International Airport (MSO) is critical to Western Montana’s economy and quality of life, providing the primary means of access to national and international destinations for residents, business travelers, and visitors. While most airports in the nation have experienced high volatility over the past decade, MSO has experienced sustained growth, with 2019 a record setting year. By the middle of 2021, enplanements began to recover to pre-pandemic levels as leisure travel began rebounding and surpassed the pre-pandemic record by Fall 2022. Over the last ten years, growth has averaged 8.4 percent, with passenger counts increasing by more than 44 percent between 2013 and 2023.



Terminal areas at MSO are recently improved

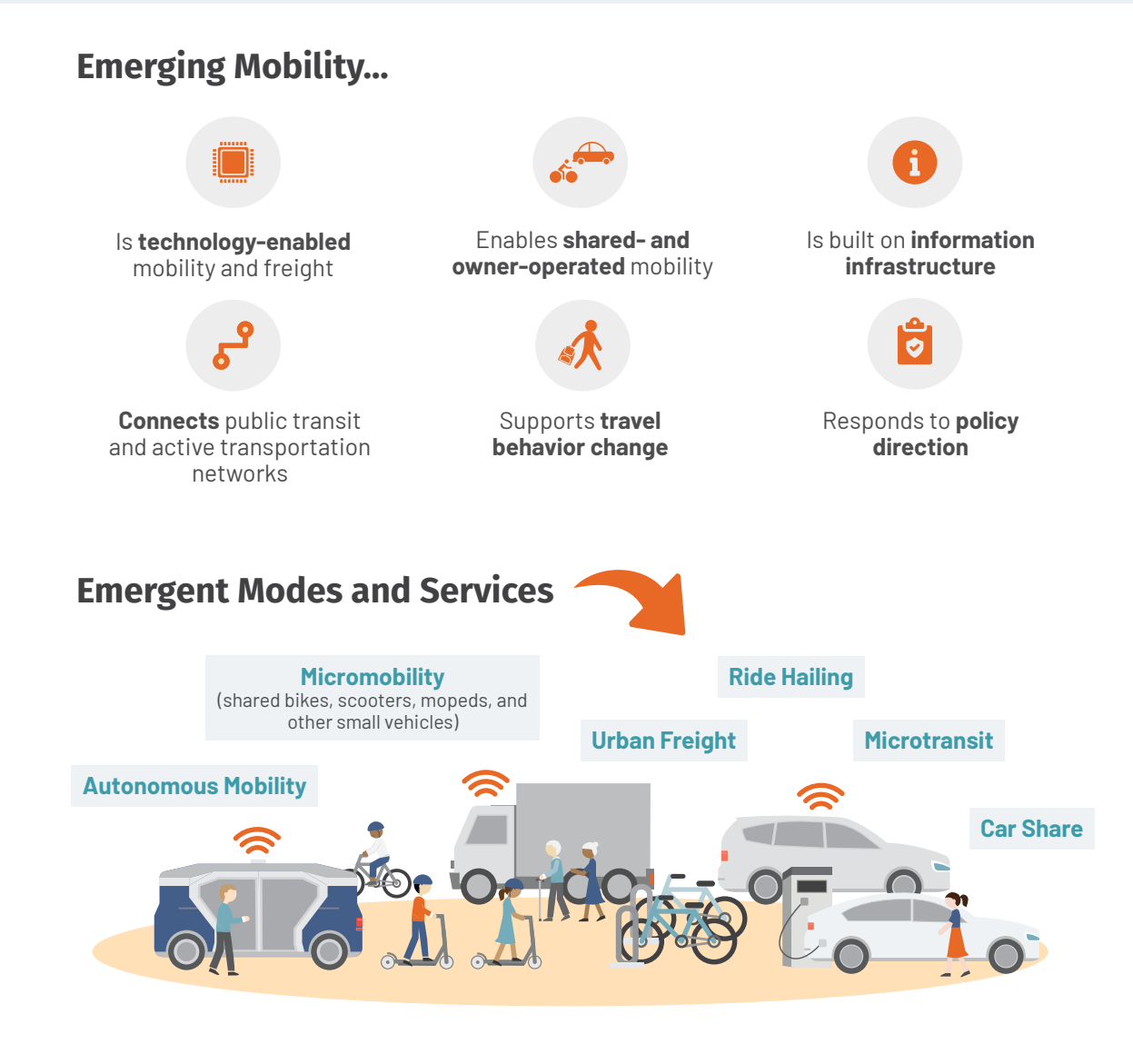
The airport is currently undergoing an expansion and improvement project of more than \$100 million which was funded in part by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. Phase 1 was completed in 2022 with renovated check-in and screening areas, concessions, and boarding areas. Phase 2 & 3 which are scheduled to be completed for Summer 2025 will include an expanded baggage claim, rental car center, and additional gates. The Missoula County Airport Authority is currently working to update MSO’s Airport Master Plan, last done in 2008, which will identify the needs to meet demand for the next 20 years. The MPO and its partners will continue to collaborate with the Airport to support multimodal groundside access through options such as long-term bicycle storage, trip-planning information screens, and enhanced transit facilities.



MSO Airport currently offers scheduled non-stop flights to 14 markets across the U.S.

Prepare for Emerging and Autonomous Technologies

Technology and new mobility services provide us with exciting tools and opportunities to enhance the role of transportation in achieving our region’s sustainability, connectivity, accessibility, and equity goals. Articulating guiding principles for emerging mobility can help to direct how new mobility services and technologies come online in the region. When investments are focused on our core transportation networks—like safe and connected walking, rolling, and biking systems, fast and reliable transit, well-managed parking, and “smart” signals—emerging mobility and public mobility services can complement one another.



The MPO, the City, and the County have somewhat limited authority over private mobility providers and emerging technologies. Many policies, practices, and requirements are established by the federal and state government. However, the Missoula region is already taking steps to prepare for the future of mobility, including autonomous vehicles, by developing a high quality and well-maintained transportation system. This LRTP update includes recommendations to build on the region’s efforts by:

- **Providing dedicated space for people walking, rolling, and biking** to free roadway space for vehicles and buses and increase safety in preparation for autonomous vehicles.
- **Implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems and coordinating signals**, including using technology that supports connected and autonomous vehicles, to prepare our transportation network for new technologies.
- **Conducting basic roadway maintenance**, including restriping lanes, shoulders, and crosswalks with high-visibility paint, to upgrade our existing systems to meet the needs of both traditional and emerging modes of transportation.
- **Advancing programs and policies** described in this chapter, such as Emerging Mobility Guiding Principles, Community Carshare, Bike Share, and Mobility Hubs.

The Emerging Mobility Playbook developed for the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP outlined key areas of action for advancing emerging mobility to help address regional challenges. Recommended strategic actions for the MPO to continue to pursue beyond the near-term time frame of this LRTP update include:

- **Target Problems:** Prioritize community engagement to define geographies, customer markets, localized pressure points, and specific mobility needs.
- **Continue Current Efforts:** Continue investing in protected infrastructure for the safe and comfortable use of bikes, scooters, and other small devices.
- **Coordinate with Partners:** Foster collaboration with key partners such as Mountain Line for coordinated mobility and mobility hubs strategies, the Missoula Parking Commission to identify specific project opportunities to expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure at new developments and key locations, and state-level organizations to identify and plan for job training opportunities that align with anticipated shifts in the transportation industry.
- **Connect with Peers:** Connect with case study peers (i.e. Ithaca Carshare) and other similarly sized northern cities working through similar topics to promote knowledge sharing. Identify liaison at the State level on emerging mobility topics, particularly autonomous vehicles, TNCs, and electric vehicle infrastructure.
- **Pilot and Test:** Establish a pilot evaluation framework rooted in predefined goals, objectives, and metrics to trial solutions, assess their performance and report results to the community.

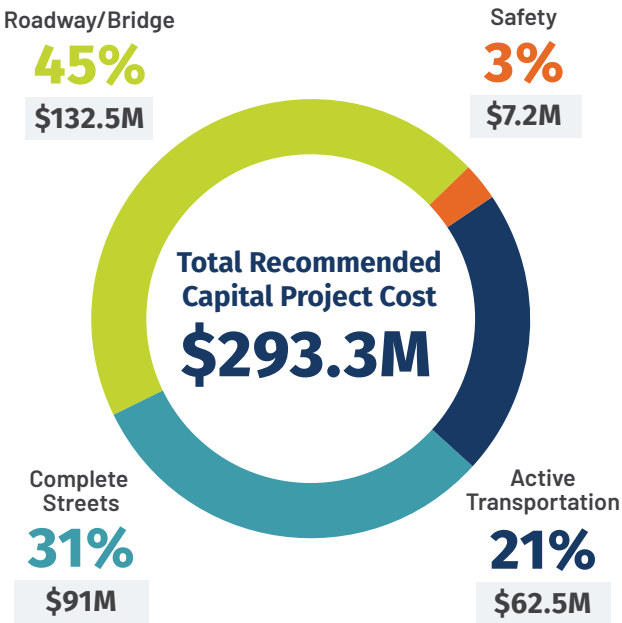
CHAPTER 8

Funding the Plan

Fully realizing our long-range transportation vision will require substantial investment over the next three decades. Implementing the recommended projects and programs will require funding from federal, state, and local sources. Our financial plan includes a combination of formula (predictable, direct allocations of federal and local funding) and non-traditional (or “potential”) funding sources. Traditionally, formula sources such as the Surface Transportation Block Grant (federal) and impact fees (local) have funded past transportation projects and to date have more predictable future funding levels. Competitive sources like grants are not as predictable and may not be available, but they can be critical in filling funding gaps.

The total cost for the 93 recommended capital projects in Missoula Connect, which includes committed projects from the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and local Capital Improvement Programs (CIP), is estimated at \$293.3 million in 2025 dollars. In comparison, the total estimated cost for all projects identified in the plan, including illustrative and grant-contingent projects, is \$788 million. 19 LRTP projects are already committed and included in the approved TIP for federal fiscal years 2024–2028 or in current CIPs. A breakdown of project costs by type is shown on the next page.

We developed project costs using existing estimates—from the MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program, the City of Missoula’s Capital Improvement Plan, and the Montana Department of Transportation’s (MDT) capital programs—and custom estimates based on recently completed transportation projects in the region and the 2024 unit costs for multimodal project elements used by the City of Missoula.



* Total includes transit funds from the TIP list

Costs represent the total amount of funding that will be needed to plan, design, and build a project. However, many of the Missoula Connect projects are not yet fully scoped or designed, so these are planning-level cost estimates rather than engineered estimates. To account for future year costs, an inflation factor of three percent per year to the midpoint of each timeframe was applied to all projects based on how they are programmed within the LRTP horizon.

Cost by Phase

Beyond the \$252.9 million in capital project funding sources programmed by the MPO or local partners like the City and County, MDT programs federal funds for highway capital projects in the region as well as maintenance projects on the National Highway system and urban routes within the MPO (e.g., bridge rehabilitation and pavement preservation). The near-term funds programmed by MDT in the current TIP are assigned to the “Committed” projects shown in Appendix B. Transit in the Missoula MPO is funded by a combination of federally directed funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), local Urban Transportation District (MUTD) revenues, and additional funding programmed by the MPO. For a more detailed breakdown of project costs and eligible funding sources, see Appendix B and E.

	 Near Term (2025-2029)	 Medium Term (2030-2039)	 Long Term (2040-2050)	TOTAL
State Programmed Federal	\$96.5M	\$194.6M	\$227.9M	\$519.0M
MPO Programmed Federal	\$40.9M	\$46.5M	\$56.8M	\$144.2M
Transit - Federal	\$27.0M	\$53.7M	\$86.7M	\$167.3M
Transit - Local	\$69.0M	\$149.6M	\$175.2M	\$393.8M
Local Capital	\$20.0M	\$40.6M	\$48.1M	\$108.6M
Local Maintenance	\$31.5M	\$67.2M	\$80.4M	\$179.1M
TOTAL	\$284.9M	\$522.1M	\$675.1M	\$1.5B

* The \$252.9 million in discretionary sources programmed by the MPO, City, and County will fund projects in the near, medium, and long term. This amount does not fund projects listed in the TIP. For a more detailed breakdown of funding and funding sources, please refer to Appendix E.

Projected Revenue

Fully funding our recommended projects and programs will require federal, state, county, city, and other funding sources. With federal, state, and local funds combined, the MPO has an estimated **\$252.9 million** in “discretionary” revenue available to fund LRTP projects by 2050. (“Discretionary” funds are those available for the MPO, City, or County to program and not otherwise committed to projects in a TIP or CIP.) However, federal and state funding sources are not guaranteed and are constantly in flux.

The \$252.9 million is what we can reasonably expect to have available, and it is the amount we used to set the “fiscally-constrained” recommended project list. Beyond the 95 recommended projects, there are another 100 projects included in the illustrative project list. While these are important projects, there are not enough funds currently available to include them within the fiscally constrained list of recommended projects. In addition, state and federal funds programmed by MDT are included in the plan but not specifically identified for individual projects due to the separate state-wide process for prioritizing those improvements described in Chapter 6.

	 Near Term	 Medium Term	 Long Term	TOTAL
State Programmed Federal IM, NH, MACI, STPS/SFPX/SFCN, HSIP, UPP, Bridge, NHFP	\$96.5M	\$194.6M	\$227.9M	\$519.0M
MPO Programmed Federal CMAQ, CRP, TA, STP	\$40.9M	\$46.5M	\$56.8M	\$144.2M
Transit - Federal FTA	\$27.0M	\$53.7M	\$86.7M	\$167.4M
Transit - Local Mill, other	\$69.0M	\$149.6M	\$175.2M	\$393.8M
Local Capital	\$20.0M	\$40.6M	\$48.1M	\$108.7M
Local Maintenance	\$31.5M	\$67.2M	\$80.4M	\$179.1M
Federal Grants RAISE, SS4A, PROTECT, NAE	\$66.9M	---	---	\$66.9
TOTAL	\$351.8M	\$552.2M	\$675.1M	\$1,579.1M

* For a more detailed breakdown of federal, state, and local funding sources, please refer to Appendix E

Federal and State Transportation Funding Sources

The Missoula MPO’s role is to help direct federal funds to projects and needs identified in Missoula Connect. Federal transportation appropriations come primarily through formula funds directed to states and administered by MDT, with amounts determined through Transportation Reauthorization legislation like the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Action (IIJA). Formula funds have two primary sources relating to this plan: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). FHWA funds are distributed through several statewide programs, which are provided in more detail in Appendix E. Transit funding is also apportioned to states, then distributed to transit providers for programming in the TIP or STIP.

For Missoula Connect, federal funding is considered in several primary categories when it comes to capital projects: MPO-programmed funding, MDT-programmed funding, and transit-specific funding allocated via FTA.

- **MPO programmed revenue:** within the formula funding apportioned to Montana, several sources provide for MPO authority to prioritize those funds in the urban area. These are the primary federal funds used in this plan for Recommended projects.
 - **Sources include:** Surface Transportation Block Grant-Urban (STPU), Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ), Surface Transportation Block Grant Set-aside (TA).
- **MDT programmed revenue:** Additional federal funds are used for projects within the MPO area but are programmed at the state or district level by MDT for critical transportation function, safety, reliability, and maintenance. Decision-making regarding project nominations is managed by MDT and approved by the Transportation Commission. This plan projects future revenue in these programs based on a historic average over the last 10 years.
 - **Sources include:** Interstate Maintenance (IM), National Highway Performance (NH), Surface Transportation Program Secondary & Off-system STPS/STPX), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Urban Pavement Preservation (UPP), Railroad Crossing (RRS), Bridge Program (Bridge), Montana Air and Congestion Initiative (MACI), and the National Highway Freight Program (NHFP).

- **Transit Funding:** through the FTA, federal transit dollars are apportioned to Montana and then further allocated to urban areas through MDT. These funds are federally directed to transit in the urban area, including fixed route service operations and capital expenses, paratransit, vanpool, and other transit-related services.
- **Sources of FTA funding include:** Urbanized Area Formula Grants (5307), Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and individuals with a Disability (5310), Formula Grants for Rural Areas (5311), and Bus & Bus Facilities (5339).

All federal funding regardless of the category noted above must be approved by the Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC) via the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). All projects nominated for inclusion in the TIP must be consistent with this plan.

Federal Grant Funding

Many of the committed projects identified in Chapter 6 are funded through successful direct federal discretionary grants, such as the South Ave Safe Streets project and the Lolo Street Bridge reconstruction. A total of \$66.9M in grant funds were awarded to in the MPO Planning Area as of January 2025, representing a considerable investment in transportation infrastructure. Direct grant funding allows the MPO to complete large projects that are otherwise challenging to finance, and frees up federal and local funds programmed through the MPO, City and County for other priority projects.

Local Funding Sources

While outside investments are critical, rising costs and needs mean local jurisdictions are also tasked with contributing future revenues. The MPO's revenue projections include local funding sources to provide a more complete picture of the region's available transportation resources.

The Missoula region typically uses a variety of local sources to fund transportation projects including tax increment financing (TIF) from Missoula's Urban Renewal Districts (URDs) is used to capture property taxes generated in these areas, as well as property value increases caused by a particular investment. These funds are dedicated to transportation projects within the URD boundaries. Local option taxes that contribute to the general fund also add funding.

Funding Resiliency

There is never enough money to design or build all the projects that are needed in our region. Nor is there enough funding available each year to take care of our transportation system's basic maintenance needs. The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update makes the dollars we have stretch further by focusing on lower cost and higher impact investments and seeking opportunities to expand the funding sources available for transportation projects. The Missoula MPO has successfully obtained a large amount of federal grant funding over the past few years, which is further explored in this chapter.

Failing to maintain our infrastructure is similar to making only the minimum payment on a credit card bill each month—deferring maintenance compounds the problem, just like monthly interest payments!



Additional Funding Sources Allowed by State Legislation

To fully implement the transportation projects and programs identified, the MPO—in coordination with the State and the City and County of Missoula—will need to seek additional funding sources. Some of these sources, such as grants and stimulus or recovery funds, are available but highly competitive. Others would require local action to begin or expand their use, such as additional impact fees or property taxes. The revenue sources described below are currently permitted for use by Montana State legislation.

Grants

On November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed as a bipartisan law authorizing \$550 billion for new Federal investment in the nation’s infrastructure including roads, bridges, and mass transit. The IIJA continues planning programs that provide funding and set procedural requirements for multimodal transportation planning in metropolitan areas and States that result in long-range plans and short-range programs of transportation investment priorities. The planning programs are jointly administered by FTA and the Federal Highway Administration. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and FHWA have a variety of competitive grant programs used to fund various types of transportation projects and activities for which planning agencies like the Missoula MPO are eligible to apply including:

- **Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program:** For surface transportation infrastructure projects that will have a significant local or regional impact (i.e. Local and Regional Project Assistance)
- **Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A):** For local initiatives to prevent transportation-related death and serious injury on roads and streets (commonly referred to as “Vision Zero”)



Since the adoption of the Missoula Connect 2050 LRTP, successful grants associated with the federal infrastructure bill have been critical to providing millions of dollars of additional funding needed to complete key regional investments including:



DowntownSAM



South Avenue Safe Streets



Highway 200 Improvements



Lolo Street Bridge



Reserve Street Safety Plan

Special Improvement Districts (SIDs)

SIDs are assessments secured by special property taxes in a defined area when there is a strong relationship between benefit and assessment (e.g., sidewalks in a specific neighborhood). SIDs can be initiated by the City or County of Missoula or petitioned by property owners. Costs from the creation or maintenance of infrastructure in the district are distributed across the properties that benefit.



Impact Fees

Impact fees are assessed on developers to fund improvements that will address project impacts on transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure within a designated area. The revenue provides the funding needed to accommodate new development without taxing other property owners in the area. In March 2021, the City and County of Missoula adopted special impact fees to address funding gaps for the Sx^wtpqyen Neighborhoods Master Plan project.



Property Taxes

These are taxes assessed on the value of a property. City and County portions of property taxes are used primarily to fund local services such as roads, bridges, courts, and public safety. Local property taxes made it possible for Mountain Line to offer 15-minute Bolt! service on several high-demand routes. Most recently, Missoula County’s 2021 budget increased property taxes for residents with a \$350,000 home who live outside the City limits and only pay County taxes. In August 2024, Missoula County commissioners decided to remove a five-mill levy from the general election ballot to give the Montana Legislature a chance to implement property tax reform during its 2025 session. The five-mill levy would have meant an increase of \$6.75 per \$100,000 of assessed property value, or about \$34 a year on a \$500,000 home, generating an estimated \$1.8m per year for County infrastructure repairs. By allowing time for more comprehensive reform at the statewide level, the Legislature will be able to review proposals that could reduce tax burden on residential property owners while shifting contributions from centrally assessed properties like telecoms and utilities to create more reliable funding streams for Public Works Departments.



Bonds

Bonds are issued by the State of Montana or other agencies to finance infrastructure that has “a long useful life,” such as transportation projects. Bonds issued by a municipality have a set return on investment, and investors purchase the bonds to help fund transportation projects. Bonds can help to smooth the financial impact of expensive projects by providing upfront capital, allowing the jurisdiction to repay the bond over a set amount of time. Our region has passed several bond measures in the past two decades to fund community priorities, including the construction of the Missoula City-County Library and local park operations.

Parking Fees

Municipalities can fund improvements, including transportation projects, through parking revenues. Parking Benefit Districts—sometimes called Mobility Benefit Districts—are a common type of benefit assessment district that uses parking meter revenue to invest in services and infrastructure, as determined by a downtown association or similar entity. Benefit Districts are often established in conjunction with a Business Improvement District. The revenue from parking meters contributes to the budget assessments from members of the district to fund specific projects or programs. The Missoula Parking Commission (MPC) works with government, businesses, and residents to provide and manage parking and parking alternatives. Any changes to parking fees or the use of parking revenues would require action by the MPC.



Hotel and Visitor Tax

A hotel tax is charged to travelers when they rent a room at a hotel, inn, or other lodging for a short time. Currently, Montana charges a combined lodging sales-and-use tax with 4% deposited into the State general fund and 4% deposited into several special revenue funds, the largest of which is used by the Department of Commerce for tourism promotion. The State could expand the use of these funds to transportation projects and programs, which could provide additional revenues for MDT and the Missoula MPO.

Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships involve a private entity, such as a local business owner, working with a public agency to fund a project (e.g., bus stop shelters, sidewalk maintenance, circulator shuttles that serve specific areas). For instance, business improvement districts can administer a grant or loan program to fund public infrastructure that serves the needs of businesses and promotes economic development. The City of Missoula, the Missoula Redevelopment Agency, and the Missoula Economic Partnership are working together to advance the Scott Street Project, which would create permanently affordable homes and address the infrastructure needs of the Northside neighborhood.



Additional Funding Sources in Other Municipalities & States

This section describes additional funding sources for transportation projects and programs that are used in other municipalities and states. Most of these options, which are not currently allowed by Montana State legislation, would require significant outreach to develop support, followed by State-level action. These sources are not provided as recommendations for funding Missoula Connect—they are simply other sources the Missoula Connect project team has encountered in other jurisdictions.



Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) or Road Usage Charge (RUC):

Instead of paying a per-gallon gasoline tax, drivers pay to use roads based on how many miles they drive. VMT and RUC programs have been piloted in Oregon and Hawaii and are under discussion in states across the U.S. as a replacement for declining gas tax revenues.



Fleet Pricing or Vehicle Weight Charging:

Charging fees for certain fleet or vehicle types, including heavy vehicles, is an approach that jurisdictions are exploring to help cover the costs of roadway maintenance. Additionally, many electric vehicles are heavier than gas-powered vehicles, and a weight charge could help to offset the loss of gas tax revenues attributed to more fuel-efficient vehicles.



Local Income Tax:

Local income taxes are generally applied to those who live or work in a jurisdiction and are used to complement or replace other local revenue sources, like property, sales, or lodging taxes. Income taxes are the least regressive taxing mechanism and can be used to fund many types of projects and programs.



Tourist Local Option Sales Tax:

In Montana, a local option sales tax (the “Resort Tax”) is allowed in 10 high-tourist areas. Expanding the use of this tax—and structuring it to ensure that out-of-state tourists are contributing to the roads and public services they access during their visits—could be an option for future exploration.



General Excise Tax:

Unlike sales taxes, a general excise tax is levied on businesses’ gross income from wholesale goods, services, and rents. The State of Montana has no general sales tax but levies tax on certain items like alcohol and tobacco.



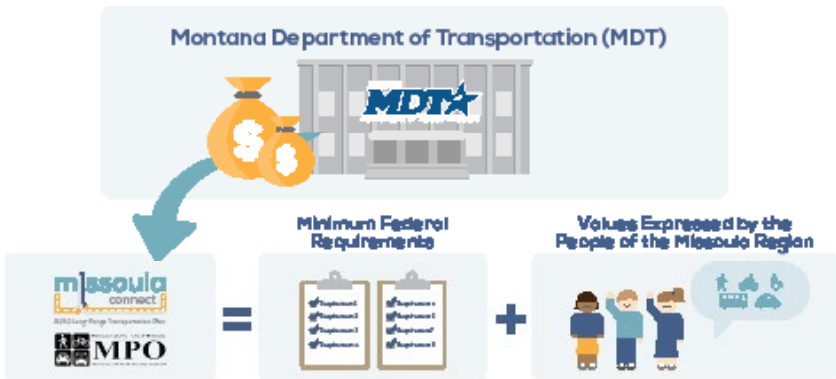
Western Montana has seen tremendous growth in tourism which presents challenges and new opportunities

CHAPTER 9

Achieving Success

How can we ensure that progress is being made toward that vision? How will we know if we’re achieving our regional mode share goals, as well as our objectives for improved outcomes for community health, safety, affordability, resiliency, and economic vitality? This chapter describes the performance measures identified by Missoula Connect, success to date, and steps for tracking and ensuring progress into the future. This section is oriented to goals internal to Missoula Connect and aligns with federal performance measures to demonstrate how transportation investments in the Missoula region will help meet statewide performance targets.

To receive transportation funding from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) Statewide Transportation Improvement Program or any federal formula programs, the Missoula MPO must evaluate the performance of the region’s transportation system using federally established metrics as detailed in Appendix G – Performance Measures. The Missoula Connect performance measures outlined below are consistent with the FHWA’s requirements for long-range transportation plans but oriented towards the publicly informed goals and meaning for visual and language-based description. To fully capture the region’s priorities, the 2025 Missoula Connect Update continues to evaluate and monitor additional transportation system evaluation criteria set in Missoula Connect 2050 for each of the plan goals. These indicators will help us assess both the overall transportation system and specific project performance.



Mode Share Targets

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update maintains consistency with 2021 Missoula Connect by carrying forward the adopted mode share and trip reduction goals. As noted in the 2021 plan, the mode share goal solidifies the region’s policy direction and encourages investment in a multi-modal transportation system. This regional policy not only aligns with locally adopted Complete Streets and Vision Zero Policies but also aligns with the reality of Missoula’s fiscal constraint. Investing in a variety of transportation options that support mode-shift and increased system efficiency is a financially feasible strategy to reduce roadway congestion given the substantial cost of capacity expansion projects. The Missoula region’s “Ambitious” mode share goals focus on providing people with better travel options and shifting some trips



away from driving:

Since 2021, the planning area’s drive-alone rate increased by one percent along with slight reductions in biking and walking trips. The regional mode shift was most dramatically changed through a six percent increase in telecommuting. The MPO continues to track changes in the mode split as the region transitions to a new commuting pattern after the COVID-19 pandemic

Regional Travel Demand Model

As part of the Long-Range Planning process a Regional Transportation Demand Model was used to understand the current and future conditions of our transportation system and travel trends. The model operates with a baseline year of 2022 representing latest available data on travel conditions. The future projections align with the long-range plan horizon year of 2050, and analysis included comparison of conditions with construction of recommended projects versus baseline conditions. The results of this analysis indicate that daily person trips throughout the region will increase sizably due to population growth both within and outside of the planning area. If vehicle trips continue to serve travel at the same rate as today, congestion is projected to increase beyond capacity across the arterial and collector system. Revenue forecasts show that there is insufficient funding to meaningfully address this growth in vehicle trips through traffic capacity expansion projects alone, supporting the goals and needs included in Missoula Connect to achieve a more balanced, efficient, and multimodal transportation system. If we are to make progress towards our mode share and performance targets, a balanced set of multimodal investments is needed.

The model was updated to better reflect the current and future bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and the transit service network as adopted in the Mountain Line Transit Service Plan to most accurately capture these travel modes both with current and future conditions. Results do show that recommended improvements, paired with a more inward focused growth strategy, trend towards reductions in vehicle trips and increases in other modes. However, it is important to note that 4-step transportation demand models are not well suited for capturing mode-shift from single occupancy vehicle trips to bicycling, walking, public transit. Intersection efficiency improvements such as signal timing coordination or telecommute options are also difficult to evaluate given the modeling constraints. A detailed summary of the Regional Transportation Demand Model analysis is provided in Appendix F.

- **2022 Base Year (Current conditions):** 2022 base year showed a total of 604,154 person trips per day.



- **2050 No Build (without Recommended Projects Completed):** In 2050 with the recommended project list completed the region will see an increase of 39% from the 2022 base-year for a total of 842,198 person trips per day.



- **2050 Build (with Recommended Projects Completed):** In 2050 with the recommended project list completed the region will see an increase of 39% from the base year for a total of 842,185 person trips per day.



When comparing the future outcomes for mode choice in 2050 the build scenario yields the same number of total person trips but a 4% increase in both bicycle and walking trips, a 7% increase in transit trips and a 1% decrease in automobile trips.

When comparing the 2050 build scenario to the baseline, the number of projects with bicycle and pedestrian benefits, transit network improvements combine the projected growth in population and jobs in their projected locations to yield the following increases to trips per day:



Air Quality

Since 2004, the MPO region achieved emission levels for the Air Stagnation Zone well below federal standards for both carbon monoxide and particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10). This resulted in carbon monoxide, PM2.5 and PM10 levels maintained at or below the required federal standards, redesignation as attainment areas and approval of limited maintenance plans. Due to meeting regional attainment goals and approval of limited maintenance plans across the key air quality metrics, air quality conformity analysis is an optional component of this LRTP update. The MPO, however, will continue to monitor vehicular emissions regardless of changes to the federal air quality designation. For more detail on air quality history and the monitoring approach moving forward visit Appendix G

Performance Management

Federal performance measures are tools for comparison and monitoring required by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) to help orient investments in our regional transportation system. These performance measures also help advance the goals of Missoula Connect as well as the state and MPO adopted targets in the areas of safety, system reliability, infrastructure condition and emissions reduction or environmental sustainability. Monitoring progress toward the region’s desired outcomes, such as improved access to jobs and services and enhanced transit and active transportation connections to lower-income neighborhoods are ways the plan expands beyond these high-level performance measure metrics to ensure greater local benefits.

The 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) continues the guidance provided in the FAST (Fixing America’s Surface Transportation) Act and MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century), by directing states to use a performance-based approach to manage the transportation system. A performance-based planning and programming approach can improve project and program delivery, inform decision-making, keep staff focused on priorities, and provide greater transparency to the public. It helps states, MPOs, counties, and cities understand whether the projects they are implementing are serving their goals and demonstrates how the transportation system is performing over time. Under current Federal guidance, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), are required to link investment priorities to the achievement of performance targets for seven national goal areas, including safety, infrastructure condition, congestion, system reliability, emissions, freight movement and reduced project delivery delays. These goals and associated performance measures are codified in Title 23 of the United States Code (USC), Section 150(b) as:

- **Safety:** To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.
- **Infrastructure Condition:** To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
- **Congestion Reduction:** To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.
- **System Reliability :** To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
- **Freight Movement and Economic Vitality:** To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development .

- **Environmental Sustainability:** To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Project Delivery:** To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process.”

The MPO’s ongoing progress and LRTP update alignment with these measures is detailed below, with a full report of performance measures included in Appendix G.

Safety

The Missoula MPO supports the federal performance measures and the state adopted safety targets as documented in Appendix G through implementation of safety projects through MPO funding and coordination with the City of Missoula and Missoula County. The MPO has also developed localized objectives through a Community Transportation Safety Plan (CTSP). Further, the MPO and City of Missoula adopted a “Vision Zero” resolution that reinstates the goal of eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes. The Vision Zero policy involves production of an annual report that provides analysis safety data to determine progress and clarify annual goals.

The LRTPs first goal, informed by public input, is to improve safety and promote health to enhance quality of life. The objectives associated with that goal are the following:

- ✓ Eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries
- ✓ Improve safety for people walking and biking
- ✓ Enhance active transportation and transit linkages to lower-income neighborhoods
- ✓ Increase physical activity and human connections by making walking and biking convenient modes of travel
- ✓ Improve access to recreational facilities and trails to support healthy lifestyles

Currently, Montana is meeting targets for 3 of the 5 safety performance metrics, and exceeding targets for 2. This plan update addresses safety performance using data-drive crash trend and location analysis to develop the recommended project list, project prioritization and scoring, programs and policies. A full analysis of safety performance is detailed in Appendix G. More information regarding the state’s safety performance targets established by MDT can be found within the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan.¹

¹Source: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/plans/chsp.aspx>

Infrastructure Condition

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has established performance measures to assist in the management of pavement and bridge conditions on the National Highway System (NHS) to guide infrastructure maintenance and ensure it remains functional and in good repair. The Missoula MPO aims to strategically address pavement conditions on local, state, and federal facilities using findings from the 2020 Pavement Management Report. This report provides the MPO with a current basis of our whole network's Pavement Condition Index. The updated LRTP project list considers the additional lifecycle costs of maintaining new roads and bridges and is informed by the plan's goal to maintain assets and invest strategically to boost economic vitality, which includes the following objectives:

- ✓ Bring existing infrastructure and transit assets into a state of good repair to support the regional economy, local industry, and goods movement
- ✓ Balance cost-effective, implementable projects with high-impact projects
- ✓ Plan for a transportation system that makes the best use of public financial resources
- ✓ Provide a network that targets growth inward to support existing centers and mixed-use development
- ✓ Support access to businesses and commercial and industrial centers to enhance economic recovery and growth
- ✓ Explore more equitable and sustainable funding sources for transportation projects and programs

This goal will not only be supported by capital projects but also our Pavement Maintenance and Asset Management Program. This program will provide a system to continuously gather pavement condition data and develop a mechanism to prioritize fixing our infrastructure before more costly decay occurs. More information regarding the federal infrastructure condition performance measures and targets established by MDT can be found in Appendix G with greater context available in the **Montana Transportation Asset Management Plan**.¹

¹Source: <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/plans/MDT-TAMP-2022.pdf>

System Reliability

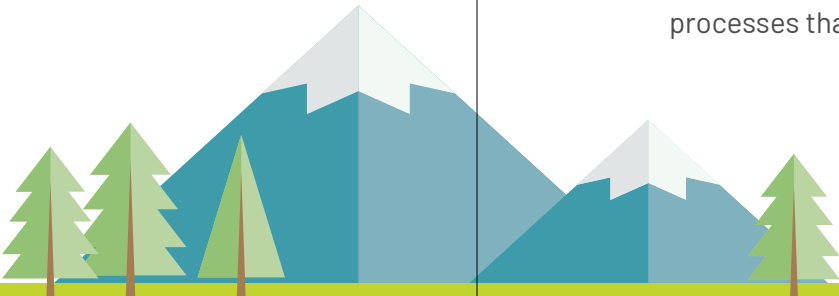
The LRTP update takes a holistic approach to system reliability, it's federal performance measures and state adopted targets as detailed in Appendix G. It is understood that improving system reliability through roadway and intersection capacity expansion projects is largely financially infeasible. System reliability is supported through the plan namely through the goal to expand mobility choices to improve efficiency and accessibility for people and goods. This goal includes the following objectives:

- ✓ Build complete streets and increase access to multimodal options
- ✓ Increase street, trail/greenway, and sidewalk network connectivity for all ages and abilities
- ✓ Optimize the efficiency and accessibility of the transportation system
- ✓ Reduce person hours of delay for people driving and improve freight movement
- ✓ Improve access to high-quality and high-frequency transit stops and routes

Montana is meeting or exceeding all system reliability targets, and even increased performance of the non-interstate NHS system. To continue supporting system reliability, this plan update includes a project list aimed at addressing travel reliability through implementation of new connections, investing in infrastructure that yields mode shift away from single-occupancy vehicle trips, introduces an intelligent transportation system (ITS) program to improve traffic signal timing, supporting [Our Missoula 2045 Land Use Plan's](#) inward growth strategy and aligning Strategic Growth Strategy from the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP.

Freight Movement and Economic Vitality

The established federal freight movement and economic vitality performance measures and state adopted targets of truck travel time reliability as detailed in Appendix G has several goals that align with Missoula Connect. This performance measure aims to improve the national freight network, while providing access to trade and enhancing the capacity of communities to participate in and support regional economic development. Missoula Connect has a diverse, multimodal transportation project list that is projected to increase efficiency across our transportation system by shifting our mode-share to reduce single- occupancy vehicle trips. Key corridors included in our region's freight routes are Brooks Street (Brooks Street Corridor Study) and Reserve Street (Reserve Street Safety Action Plan) which are both undergoing planning processes that will aim to improve multimodal connectivity and safety. Although these projects



don't directly involve capacity expansion, they will aid in achieving mode-shift goals, thus easing congestion and improving Truck Travel Time Reliability on these key corridors. Further, Reserve Street is the focus of an Integrated Traffic Management Systems Project being led by MDT to help support efficiency of the corridor.

In addition to these projects, Missoula Connect includes two programs to improve efficiency of the freight network. The Freight and Goods Management Program will offer a framework to analyze existing freight routes and re-envision the infrastructure that service local freight delivery and through-travel. The Intelligent Transportation Systems and Signal Coordination Program would offer the opportunity to integrate adaptive signal timing technology to improve congestion along key corridors. More information regarding freight-related performance measures and metrics can be found in the Montana Freight Plan.

Congestion Reduction

Congestion reduction is directly related to system reliability performance measures. Congestion reduction is achieved through Missoula Connect with the approaches with the objectives and approaches taken for achieving system reliability and freight movement as the LRTP establishes the following objectives relating to reducing congestion:

- ✓ Develop an integrated mobility system that connects destinations with sustainable travel options
- ✓ Integrate land use and transportation planning to support infill development and create complete neighborhoods

The MPO along with local jurisdictions have made progress on this approach towards congestion reduction through implementation of many projects and award of several large federal grants to complete construction and planning that will expedite projects with significant connectivity benefit for areas of residential and commercial development in Missoula. Although modeling projections for vehicle hour delay increases between 2022 and 2050, the travel demand model estimates that the vehicle hour delay will be lower in 2050 with the recommended projects completed:

- **2022 Base Year (Current conditions):** 11,324 Vehicle Hours of Congestion Delay (VHCD)
- **2050 Build (with Recommended Projects Completed):** 20,196 (VHCD)
- **2050 No Build (without Recommended Projects Completed):** 21,577 (VHCD)

It is important to recognize that due to the financial infeasibility of building several projects that involve expansion of corridor and intersection traffic capacity the MPO must prioritize a variety of affordable projects with ability to support mode split goals.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is a federal performance measure supported by state Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality targets related to reduction of transportation system emissions as detailed in Appendix G. The LRTP update directly addresses the federal performance measures of environmental sustainability with the goal of enhancing the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment. This goal has the following objectives:

- ✓ Improve resiliency and advance toward carbon neutrality
- ✓ Reduce transportation-related air emissions
- ✓ Minimize sediment nutrients, and litter entering surface water
- ✓ Expand the urban canopy and stormwater infrastructure
- ✓ Protect and enhance natural, cultural, and historic resources including agricultural lands
- ✓ Create adaptable and resilient infrastructure to respond to changing needs.

Reducing or lowering VMT is a key metric for achieving positive environmental outcomes. The travel demand model estimates that vehicle miles traveled will be lower in 2050 with the recommended projects completed as compared to not being completed. Although vehicle miles traveled increases 2022 and 2050 there will be an increase in bike, pedestrian and transit trips.

Within the Missoula MPO Planning Area:

- **2022 Base Year (Current conditions):** 2,113,440 Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
- **2050 Build (with Recommended Projects Completed):** 2,704,543 VMT
- **2050 No Build (without Recommended Projects Completed):** 2,733,507 VMT

Aside from the recommended set of projects that will help to increase non-motorized mode share, the LRTP includes programs and policies to advance environmental sustainability and resiliency including Low Impact Planting, Disaster Management and Preparation, Encouraging Compact Growth, and Zero-Emission Fleet Conversion.

Project Completion Since Last LRTP to Reduce Project Delivery Delay

Since adoption of Missoula Connect in 2020, the MPO has been building priority projects across all modes while actively planning, designing, and applying for grants for projects classified as committed in this LRTP update. The MPO has leveraged federal grant opportunities, local funding opportunities, quick-build techniques to expedite the process of getting projects in the ground and allowing for greater availability of funds for construction of remaining recommended projects. The LRTP also includes several programs and policies that help improve project development and thus delivery including Corridor Study Prioritization, Expanded Development and Traffic Impact Analysis Requirements, and Pilot and Demonstrations.



Curb extensions built as part of the Ivy Street/ Franklin Neighborhood Greenway

Projects completed since the last LRTP:

- BUILD Grant Roads - Wye/Mullan Road Plan Collector Routes (roadways)
- Eaton Street Sidewalk/Complete Streets Improvements
- Ivy Street/Franklin Neighborhood Greenway
- Kent/Central Neighborhood Greenway
- Gerald Neighborhood Greenway
- Mount Avenue/South 14th Avenue Bike Lane
- Russell Street Bike Lanes
- Russell Street Reconstruction Phase 1
- Turner St/Worden Ave/N 5th Complete Street
- HWY 200 Sha’ron Trail
- US 93: North of Desmet Interchange

Progress Made on the 2020 Missoula Connect LRTP Recommended Scenario

The Recommended scenario prioritized inward focused development and combining projects that enhanced connections and supported regional equity. First, growth was targeted in areas that have services and are close to high-quality bus service, mixed use development, and existing transportation networks or were planned for substantial development. Then, recommended projects were evaluated based on the ability to support the targeted growth through improving multi-modal connections, and ensuring investments were directed equitably throughout the region, including support for connecting urban to rural communities. The scenario assigned growth to areas where more households benefited from transportation infrastructure investments and creating greater impact on mode split goals.



7.4 miles

of **bike lanes striped** from 2020 to 2023 with an average of 2.5 miles a year



13 blocks

of **sidewalk** built from 2020 to 2023 with an average of 4 blocks a year

(excludes sidewalks built through private development or MRA).



10 projects

completed within **1/2 miles of a park, trail, or recreation facility**



3 projects

completed in **Invest Health Neighborhoods**



7 projects

completed with **enhanced stormwater infrastructure**



9 projects

completed in an **Area of Persistent Poverty** or a **Historically Disadvantaged Community**



9 projects

within **1/2 mile of transit**



10 projects

completed within a **15-minute walk** or bike ride to schools, job centers, parks, major institutions, or essential services



3 projects

completed to **increase mobility** in areas with historic sites

Ongoing Monitoring

The MPO will continue to use the performance measures prescribed in the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP, and below in this chapter to monitor progress toward goals and federal targets (the latter are indicated with a 🔄). Federal targets focus on safety, infrastructure condition, reliability, and emissions reductions. The targets related to the LRTP goals are more holistic, as the regional goals capture sustainability, connectivity, and economic development in ways that go beyond federal requirements. In many cases, the local targets are measures of actions we are or will be taking to help achieve federal targets and our regional goals.

The simple framework included in Missoula Connect will help us better align transportation investment decisions with tangible and measurable benefits. The progress on these metrics should trend in the direction indicated by the arrows in the tables on the following pages. If resources become available, the MPO may look in the future to develop an online dashboard to make more information easily available to the public and visualize progress outside Federally required LRTP updates.



GOAL 1: Improve safety and promote health to enhance quality of life

MEASURE	METRIC	TARGET TRAJECTORY
Eliminate traffic-related fatalities and reduce serious injuries from traffic collisions	Number and rate of serious and severe injuries and fatalities from collisions 🔄	⬇️
	Number of projects completed within 500ft of a corridor or intersection with 2 or more crashes on average per year resulting in serious or fatal injury of any mode	⬆️
Increase physical activity by making walking and biking convenient modes of travel	Total and annual lane miles of bicycle facilities constructed	⬆️
	Total and annual blocks of sidewalk constructed	⬆️
	Number of projects completed within ½ mile of a public recreation facility, park, playground, or trail	⬆️
Enhance active transportation linkages to lower-income neighborhoods	Number of projects completed in an Invest Health neighborhood or a low-to-moderate income census tract	⬆️



GOAL 2: Advance sustainability and community resilience to protect natural resources and address climate change

MEASURE	METRIC	TARGET TRAJECTORY
Reduce transportation-related air emissions	Total greenhouse gas emissions from ground transportation 🔄	⬇️
	Total vehicle miles traveled	⬇️
Protect or enhance natural or cultural resources	Number of projects completed that improve or enhance multimodal access to sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places	⬆️
	Acreage of land designated for agricultural preservation on which projects are built	⬇️
	Number of projects completed without impact to natural sensitive areas or land designated for agricultural preservation	⬇️
Minimize sediment, nutrients, and litter entering surface water	Number of projects completed that incorporate green stormwater infrastructure features or best practice approaches to managing runoff	⬆️



GOAL 3: Expand mobility choices to improve efficiency and accessibility for people and goods

MEASURE	METRIC	TARGET TRAJECTORY
Increase the number of available mobility options	Percent of people who take transit, walk or roll, bike, and share rides for all types of trips	⬆️
Optimize the reliability and connections in our transportation system	Person hours of delay 🔄	⬇️
	Link-node ratio 🔄	⬆️
Improve freight and transit movement	Rate of transit on-time performance	⬆️
	Number of projects completed that close a gap, remove a barrier, or improve transit operations within ½ mile of a Mountain Line or UDASH stop	⬆️
	Freight corridor travel time 🔄	⬇️



GOAL 4: Connect and strengthen communities to create a more equitable region

MEASURE	METRIC	TARGET TRAJECTORY
Improve access to schools, jobs, parks, essential services, affordable and senior housing, and basic life needs	Number of projects within a 15-minute walk or bike ride to schools, job centers, parks, major institutions, or essential services	⬆️
	Percent of households with direct transit connections to job centers	⬆️
Engage with and invest in historically disadvantaged areas and in neighborhoods that have been adversely impacted by transportation decisions	Number of projects completed in low-income or historically under-invested areas	⬆️
	Average household housing and transportation costs	⬇️
Integrate land use and transportation planning to support infill development and responsible growth	Number of projects completed in Tier 3 or Tier 4 Composite Suitability hexagons (from Our Missoula Development Guide)	⬆️



GOAL 5: Maintain assets and invest strategically to boost economic vitality

MEASURE	METRIC	TARGET TRAJECTORY
Bring existing infrastructure and transit assets into a state of good repair	Percent of lane miles of pavement in good condition 🔄	⬆️
	Percent of lane miles of pavement in poor condition 🔄	⬇️
	Percent of bridges in good condition 🔄	⬆️
	Percent of transit assets in a state of good repair 🔄	⬆️
Balance cost-effective, implementable projects with high-impact projects	Number of Missoula Connect 2050 LRTP Update near-term projects completed	⬆️
Support access to businesses and commercial and industrial centers to enhance economic recovery and growth	Number of projects completed within an Urban Renewal District	⬆️

Environmental Mitigation

The long-range planning process identifies ways to reduce or avoid harm to the environment, including the protection of natural areas, water, wildlife, and cultural resources. The MPO worked closely with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies to compare proposed LRTP projects with conservation plans and maps of sensitive lands. This collaboration helps ensure that projects are prioritized in a way that avoids or minimizes environmental impacts whenever possible. Depending on a project's location, it may require more detailed environmental studies and additional steps to reduce potential harm. By considering environmental factors early in the planning process, the LRTP supports smarter, more efficient project development and better long-term outcomes for both the community and the natural landscape. Read more about environmental mitigation in Appendix G.



Construction of the Ivy Street/Franklin Neighborhood Greenway

CHAPTER 10

Taking the First Steps

The 2025 Missoula Connect LRTP Update continues the region’s long-term commitment to improve the sustainability and resiliency of our transportation system. It identifies the projects and programs that are needed over the next three decades to make it safer, easier, and more convenient to travel in the Missoula area. But not everything in the plan needs to wait decades. There are many projects that will be built in the next 10 years, and there are programs and policies that can roll out in the next five years.

To help get things started, here are key actions that can move forward immediately to begin making the changes you’re hoping to see. Some of them have completed first steps, and others are less developed. However, these actions are critical to our success. While many of these will require support beyond the MPO, we present near-term actions the MPO can help the City, County, State, and community partners to implement.

Upcoming MDT Priorities

Beyond the projects included in the MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has other priorities within the Missoula District. MDT will advance the following projects and studies in the coming years:

- **Pavement Preservation:** Missoula Urban Area
- **Safety Study:** US 93 Missoula to Lolo
- **Durable Pavement Markings:** Interstate 90, US Highway 93, Russell Street, West Broadway, SW Higgins



Optimize Signal Timing on Key Corridors

Signal timing optimization synchronizes traffic signals on a corridor so that private autos, freight vehicles, and buses can travel through multiple signals without stopping, reducing congestion. While signal timing is traditionally used as a strategy to support the efficient movement of vehicles, it can also be designed to support people walking, biking, and riding transit. The MPO should work with the Montana Department of Transportation and other partners to optimize signal timing on priority corridors in the region, such as the Reserve Street and Brooks Street corridors.



Continue to Position Missoula for Major Infrastructure Funding

Projects that are “shovel ready” are good candidates for federal, state, and regional grants. The MPO and its partners should identify one or two priority projects and advance design as quickly as possible to prepare for upcoming funding opportunities. Smaller projects should also be aligned with ongoing City and County roadway maintenance and preservation schedules to implement improvements in conjunction with planned resurfacing, utilities, and reconstruction work.



Advance the Neighborhood Greenway Network

Building out the neighborhood greenway network is one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to make Missoula’s low-traffic streets safe and comfortable places to walk, run, bike, scoot, and roll. While seeking funding for permanent greenway improvements like speed humps and vertical traffic circles, the MPO and its partners have advanced implementation of the network by using quick-build treatments like painted traffic circles, pavement markings, and signs and wayfinding.



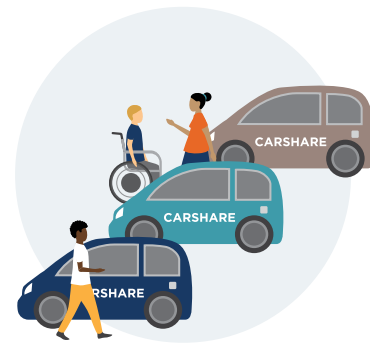


Develop Regional Freight and Rail Plan

Major national trucking and freight rail routes that traverse the region provide economic benefits but also generate negative impacts such as noise and pollution. The MPO and its partners should develop a plan, based on the 2022 Montana Freight Plan, that identifies regional freight priorities and solutions. This could be done in conjunction with the anticipated update to the Montana State Rail Plan, which also presents an opportunity to advocate for bringing passenger rail back to the state.

Pilot a Community Carshare Program

A carshare program provides access to a vehicle for short periods of time at affordable rates, reducing the need for a personal vehicle. Some service providers offer carshare using electric vehicles to enhance sustainability. The MPO should explore options for a community-supported carshare program through a partnership with a private or nonprofit organization. The program should be designed to provide options for all residents of the region, including people with lower incomes.



Adopt Principles from Emerging Mobility Playbook

Many new mobility services and technologies come online in Missoula in the past few years, providing great options for Missoulians to travel around the region. The MPO should continue to shape the conversation with mobility providers to achieve the goals of the 2021 Missoula Connect LRTP and adopt the values-driven principles from the Emerging Mobility Playbook, a useful and consistent framework to steer the region's response to the deployment of emerging mobility services.

Continue to Expand Transportation Options

The MPO developed the Transportation Options Action Plan, a set of policies and programs that provide travelers with choices and set development standards that reduce motorized vehicle trips, demand for parking, and carbon emissions. The MPO should continue to expand transportation options that support Missoulia travel needs.



Maintain Multimodal Network Year Round

While many residents of the Missoula area are enthusiastic year-round pedestrians and cyclists, walking and biking through the winter requires that sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-use paths, and trails are maintained in all types of weather, especially after snow events. The City and County should continue to maintain facilities to ensure they are usable year-round and adopt supportive maintenance procedures.

Bring Passenger Rail Back to the Region

There has been ongoing advocacy to bring passenger rail back to southern Montana, and the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) was established in 2020, following a joint resolution by 12 counties. The MPO will continue to support the Authority's efforts and coordinate with BSPRA to articulate the connection between passenger rail and the goals of the LRTP.



Upcoming Mountain Line Priorities



Improving and expanding transit service in the Missoula region is critical to achieve our goals of connectivity, affordability, and sustainability. The Transit Service Plan (Appendix J) was developed in conjunction with the Missoula Connect 2050 LRTP Update, and the following near-term service changes were recommended:

- **Route alignment changes** to Routes 7, 8, and 11 to improve speed and reliability and accommodate new developments and travel patterns.
- **Increased frequency** from 60 minutes to 30 minutes on Routes 3 and 4

CONCLUSION

Moving Forward

There is much work to be done to achieve the Missoula region's transportation vision, but there is a strong foundation on which to build. By working together, addressing current challenges, and thinking creatively about the future, we can make Missoula Connect's vision a reality.

We will create a safer, healthier, more sustainable transportation system, one that supports people of all incomes, ages, and abilities and provides multimodal options for those who need them most. We will build out our transit and active transportation networks to create a more vibrant region, connecting our residents to the people and places they need to go. And we will work collaboratively to make progress toward our mode share goals, combining investments in critical complete streets infrastructure projects with programs and policies that help to change behavior and create a more vibrant Missoula.

But the MPO can't do this alone. This LRTP update was created by and for the people of the Missoula region. We will implement this plan in partnership with the City of Missoula, Missoula County, Mountain Line, the State of Montana, and the residents of our region. Together, we will connect Missoula and move toward our transportation vision.



