



A Regular Board Meeting of the Missoula Parking Commission was virtually held on **Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at 12:00 p.m.** Those in attendance were Board members Joe Easton, Glenda Bradshaw, Peter Walker-Keleher, and JR Casillas. From the Missoula Parking Commission (MPC) were Ian Ortlieb, Parking Services Director, and Danette Christiansen, Administrative Assistant II. Also in attendance Aaron Wilson, Infrastructure and Mobility Planning Manager for the City of Missoula.

- 1. Call to order**
- 2. Introductions**
- 3. Public Comments & Announcements - None**
- 4. Adjustment(s) to the Agenda - None**
- 5. Approval of Minutes**
 - a. JR Casillas moved to approve the minutes from the board meeting held July 13, 2021. Glenda Bradshaw seconded the motion. There was no discussion or questions. Through a roll call vote, the agenda was unanimously approved.
- 6. Communications and Presentations - Higgins Avenue Corridor Plan: Brooks to Broadway- Aaron Wilson, Infrastructure and Mobility Planning Manager, City of Missoula.**

Aaron shared a Power Point presentation. The Higgins Corridor Plan addresses the section of Higgins between Brooks and Broadway, not including the Bridge because that project is already under way. Background – The existing configuration of Higgins in this section has constrained travel lanes and poor bike facilities. There have been high profile crashes involving bicycles and vehicles and they hear regularly from pedestrians that the section feels unsafe. They want more efficient ways to use that space to accommodate all the different modes of transportation. Currently the Higgins Bridge rehabilitation is under way and supposed to wrap up this year. Half of the bridge is open with the expanded shared-use path. Once that project is done there will be great bike and pedestrian facilities. On the hip strip side, there is a pedestrian plaza being built. These improved facilities through the corridor will highlight some of the deficiencies we see in other areas of the corridor. Pedestrian traffic has increases and is predicted to continue. Additionally, there was the Downtown Master Plan which looked at the Hip Strip in particular. It tries to address increasing transit access through this corridor. The DMP proposed some different alternatives for the area. They have all of that to work with as a foundation and a starting point for creating a complete corridor with consistent and safe multimodal facilities from the railroad tracks down through the Higgins bridge and to Brooks Street.

A project team was established to help facilitate this project. An RFP was put out and Kittleson & Associates, a national consulting firm, was selected to lead a team and work through this corridor design. Included in the project team is DJ&A who has experience working with DOT, building and fostering that a relationship. Peter Walker-Keleher has been helping with stakeholder outreach and engagement. Big Sky PR helping with outreach & communications, and Wheeling Consulting Group to help with land use and economic analysis to think about different changes to the street will affect adjacent properties or businesses as we move forward. This is a good well-rounded team with a lot of expertise to help us be creative and develop solutions that try to weave all the different uses we see on Higgins Street. The process the team is going to undergo during this corridor study has been split into four main tasks.

The first task is Public & Stakeholder Engagement & Project Management. This task has already begun with outreach events and stakeholder interviews. This will continue throughout the life of the project as we move through different stages so we can get feedback from various interested parties.

The second task is the Project Foundation, doing some initial analysis and looking at what is going on with Higgins Street today. Looking at projected traffic volume, parking data from the DMP, utilization and where parking is and how that relates to the Higgins corridor. This task is also already underway. A technical analysis memo should be available in the next couple weeks.

The third task is Alternative Development & Evaluation. They will design some alternatives and thinking about how to evaluate those, looking at different options for designing Higgins, and how we use that space. This will help refine the last task in looking at what people are considering as the highest priority and balance all of the different modes and different uses for Higgins Street.

The final task is Final Concept which is to develop the final concept and get it approved and adopted, build support behind the project and move it forward to construction. The goal is complete this in 6-8 months. Looking to have it complete in February or March. The timing of this is critical with the amount of federal funding we will potentially see with the new infrastructure bill being passed by the Senate today. We anticipate seeing a lot of federal funding over the next 4-5 years. This sets us up well to try to access some of that federal funding.

The big picture objectives are to engage businesses and residents along the corridor so we understand the needs and what the stakeholders want to get out of the project like what some of the issues are, improvements we can do and how to best serve those using the corridor on a day-to-day basis. We also want to develop a concept that meets the needs of all users to the extent possible, including driving, walking riding the bus, looking really close at the transit, and how the design will fit in with the Brooks Street corridor as well as the Front and Main changes. We really want to focus on safety. We also want to provide a suitable space for people of all ages and abilities and increase opportunities for all modes of travel to access the corridor and downtown as well as accommodate future growth.

With the above objectives in mind, the envisioned outcomes we have in mind is that we have a street that is safer for all modes of transportation; an inviting streetscape that showcases Higgins as the spine of downtown; increase the economic activity along the corridor and support that growth. There has already been a number of high-profile projects like the hip strip the Reed Condos and the Missoulian property moving forward with some redevelopment plan; and to create a postcard street as envisioned by the Downtown Master Plan. Not just the parking side of it but creating a place where people want to be.

We started some initial public outreach over the past couple weeks in a number of different ways. We've got an online presence through a webpage with Engagemissoula.com. It's going to be the project website and hub of information and activity. An interactive map is set up where people can make comments on specific locations and post ideas. A survey was opened for both businesses, property owners, and residents or commuters. Also Idea & Question boards for people as we go through this project to put their ideas and upload pictures for their ideas to be used as we go along in the project. People can post questions about the project in general or specific aspects of the project and we can go onto the boards and we can answer the questions which is visible for everyone to see.

We have done direct outreach by holding a number of stakeholder meetings with small groups or individually with businesses and property owners. We participated in a number of events, such as Out

to Lunch, Clark Fork Market, and Downtown Tonight. We reached over 200 people at these events. Had some really good engagement from people were really interested and had really good ideas.

We also did some canvassing of properties and businesses along the corridor going door-to-door making sure they were aware of the project and if they had thoughts they could reach out. We have done a good job of building awareness and getting initial input about the project. We will continue this throughout the project.

Based on the public outreach, some of the things that we have heard people talking a lot about is parking. That's a major concern that people have. We've heard some differing thoughts. Some focus on the type of parking and that tension between long-term parkers who might be from the high school or downtown businesses parking along the hip strip parking and taking up those spaces and don't turn over and others are concerned about maintaining that free parking for the hip strip for their employees or customers. Others are just concerned about trying to find a spot near where they need to go.

We had some really interesting conversations about traffic flow, particularly with the left turn prohibitions. Some people really like it because it facilitates people just driving through to get to downtown but others say it is hard for Higgins to be a destination, particularly in the hip strip and the North side of Higgins Street for accessing parking garages and things off Higgins. It's really set up to move traffic through rather than circulating traffic to and around those destinations. We will be looking at how to better circulate traffic. One of the priorities for improvements is dealing with some of the parking struggles we have. MPC's role will be really important in thinking through how we might do that. We will continue to come to MPC as we continue to develop concepts or work through issues.

Bike facilities is something else we heard over and over. We received input not just from bicyclists but also from people driving concerned with the unpredictability of where bicyclists are riding and the transition zones where bike lanes end are issues. Also thinking about traffic flow as far as future growth look like and how do we continue to be able to move vehicles. We have to make sure the flow works well with all the other competing interests.

This what they have heard so far. These are some of the questions or starting points for conversation to think through these different issues and what people are saying and getting MPC's perspective on how we might balance what role Higgins plays for parking in particular. Also opportunities to help offset potential parking loss on Higgins or thinking creatively about that.

Peter Walker-Keleher added comment regarding to the framing that Aaron provided regarding the role of MPC. As Aaron described, there was mixed comments and sometimes contradicting comments related to parking. There is certainly an opportunity for managed parking on the south side of the river which is an area that the MPC currently does not have jurisdiction over. That would be a ripe conversation for the board to discuss what the role of managed parking over there. He would like to see people's thoughts on the role of MPC extending their jurisdiction south of the river.

Joe Easton agrees that MPC should seriously consider expanding their jurisdiction south of the river. There continues to be development and growth and parking demand south of the river that requires some level of management. This should be discussed with all the information that was provided today. Joe asked if the question about expanding south of the river is asked, how will it be asked as they are canvassing and how will it be quantified in its response. It's one thing for MPC to say they want to expand and then discuss it City Counsel and the Mayor's office. Joe asked for thoughts on using the public outreach and canvassing to add further information for the Board to consider.

Aaron responded by stating the project isn't going to determine whether the district expands south of the river, but it can make recommendations on how that could support a particular design. The study may just point out areas of opportunity for expansion.

Joe thinks that is interesting. He is sensitive to the idea of expanding the jurisdiction without an idea of use. If we decide to expand, we are saying to the community that we plan to manage parking in some form. His other comment is that any elimination of parking should have an acknowledgement that those are very fine and detailed assets for the community. Addressing how to replace that parking is necessary.

Glenda noted that it is clear that there are opportunities to have managed parking solution for employee parking Downtown. There seems to be a lot of willingness of employees Downtown to park in the Hip Strip and walk across the bridge. She is hopeful that a parking solution could be a part of the design. What is the process or timeline if we did want to expand the Parking Commission boundaries?

Joe answered that it starts with a Commission statement or resolution. We would want to involve City Council and that Ward and make sure that the expansion of the district matches various plans. He asked that it stay on Ian's immediate to-do list to find out the process for expansion.

Glenda would appreciate it if Ian could take a look at that now. She asked if anyone had seen the plans for the Missoulian building and does anyone know if access will remain the same.

Aaron noted that until they get zoning approved, plans will not move along. Access is likely to stay the same because they likely would not want access from that property. He would be surprised if there were another access to Higgins from that property. There may be changes to access on 4th.

Glenda followed up by asking on the walking path between the river and the Missoulian, is there any land beyond that Hellgate track that is City property?

Aaron answered that the green space that is right beyond is privately owned. There is a parking lot next to the Missoulian that is City owned, then there is open space and the rain gardens and native prairie. Then you are on Toole Park.

Glenda proffered that along with changing the boundaries for MPC, we may want to proactively partner and work with the developers on that Missoulian properties. It could be a really good place for a parking structure that could serve Downtown and the Hip Strip.

Glenda took a look at the infrastructure bill and there was some transit money. She asked Aaron how flexible any of that money might be and if any of that could go toward parking structures.

Aaron doesn't know for sure but has not seen a lot of transit funds go to parking structures. It is worth exploring. The worst they could say is no. If you could creatively put those packages together, not a hard no.

Peter Walker-Keleher mentioned that the Midtown master plan is coming up. That RFP hasn't come up. He recommends that we do some research. Joe asked Ian to reach out to the Midtown board and find out about what their doing regarding parking there. Aaron stated that Melanie Brock is the right person to reach out to for information about that project.

There were no further questions or comments from the Board.

7. Financial Statement

There were no representatives from JCCS.

Joe asked Ian to address any highlights. Ian had some questions from looking at the dashboard that he was going to look at with Brenda when she returns.

Joe asked the Board if anything jumped out for them. There was nothing.

8. Director's Report – Ian Ortlieb

In Ian's first three weeks, he participated in lots of meetings. He attended the Policy Advisory Team meeting, the TDM Consortium meeting, Linda McCarthy and the Downtown Missoula Partnership including a walking tour, Ellen Buchanan with the MRA, Jim Gallipeau and Brenda Peyton from JCCS regarding financials, and Jenn and Grace with Anderson and Zurmuehlen.

Tiffany Brander had presented the FY22 budget to the budget committee. The budget did not have many changes going forward. There were some contractual increases and some purchases, like the modem purchases and equipment purchases.

We have taken delivery of the new modems and are waiting for install instructions.

Ian met with Ried Prison and Tim Tollman from McKinstry on the energy performance plan. They updated MPC on their processes for lighting and water remediation for structures. We are working on compiling expenses for water intrusion so they can provide a better cost analysis for us.

Ian mentioned that he also had the opportunity to spend time with the various teams at the Parking Commission. He walked the area and looked at signage and enforcement with the enforcement team. He also spent some time with the maintenance staff to get a feel for their day to day. Lastly, he spent time with the admin staff in the front office to see how they use the back-end systems. He also spent some time with Jodi Pilgrim learning about some of the operations.

River City Roots is coming up on August 27th. The parking portion will remain the same as previous years. Meter parking will be free and there will be a section of Central Park blocked off for the information table and artist parking.

Glenda mentioned that the presentation from McKinstry that the Board had participated in previously, there had been some unanswered questions about the specific energy returns. She would like to look at the overall lighting solution for the structures but would like to look at multiple options before we make any major investments in lighting.

9. Action Items - None

10. Non-action Items

a. New Business

b. Old Business - None

11. Setting of next meeting (September 14, 2021, Jack Reidy Conference Room or via virtual meeting) and adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Pilgrim
Parking Services Manager