



BIKE/WALK ALLIANCE *for* MISSOULA

February 22, 2008

The Honorable Bill Carey
Chairman
Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC)
c/o Office of Planning and Grants
435 Ryman Street
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Commissioner Carey,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Bike/Walk Alliance for Missoula (BWAM), I am writing to express our organization's strong opposition to the proposed removal of the current bike lanes at the intersection of Reserve and Mullan streets.

First, the lane removal will seriously jeopardize the lives of cyclists. The configuration being proposed by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will thrust cyclists from a relatively safe bike lane on north-bound Reserve Street (which meets MUCTD standards) into what appears to be a narrow and treacherous two to three foot shoulder close to fast-moving vehicular traffic with no bicycle markings. The lanes on west-bound Mullan will also have to be removed, creating danger for cyclists trying to head west on that city-designated bike route. Altogether, the proposal will break up important existing sections of Missoula's bike network, threatening the death or injury of cyclists by fast-moving auto traffic.

Second, the decision explicitly defies city leaders' stated commitment to "complete streets." Mayor John Engen has stated repeatedly that he believes in the importance of streets that are built for all users: walkers, cyclists, motorists, disabled persons with special needs. While Reserve Street is not always the most pleasant biking experience, it is designed to allow cyclists to ride safely along this important north-south corridor, while still accommodating motor vehicle traffic. Additionally, based on the schematic we have seen and that was provided to TTAC, it appears that two pedestrian crossings may grow longer because of the new configuration. It is not right to take a major arterial *backwards*, in terms of serving all transportation users in Missoula.

Third, it is unjust that MDT is considering spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to remove critical bike facilities, after using substantial federal funding (through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program) to secure the right-of-way and build the space for bike lanes. Moreover, based on early communication with FHWA, it appears that MDT and/or Missoula may be responsible for reimbursing CMAQ funds if the lanes are removed.

Any of these reasons on their own should be enough to end further consideration of MDT's bike lane removal proposal. But taken together, they clinch the case against this potentially life-threatening proposal.

Sincerely,

Jim Sayer
President
Board of Directors

***BWAM Board of Directors:** Geraldine Carter, Kevin Dohr, Erin Kautz, Kevin Hyde, Ethel MacDonald, Marta Meengs, Ryan Newhouse, Jim Sayer, Bob Wachtel*

cc: Mayor John Engen, TPCC and TTAC Chairs and Vice Chairs, City and County of Missoula Public Works Directors, Montana Department of Transportation