



DOWNTOWN WHITEFISH
HIGHWAY STUDY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MDT Finalizes Downtown Whitefish Highway Study

MDT identifies Concept C as the study's preferred concept and agrees with the City to take no further action at this time

WHITEFISH, Montana (February 28, 2022) – The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and consultant Robert Peccia and Associates (RPA) have finalized the Downtown Whitefish Highway Study, which identifies **Concept C as its preferred concept based on identified screening criteria.** However, after public feedback was gathered at an open house in late September 2021, **MDT will not move forward with a reconstruction project at this time.**

The Whitefish community, especially downtown, has experienced significant population growth in recent decades, which has increased traffic to levels that US Highway 93 and the downtown corridor were not originally built to accommodate. Highway 93 runs through the center of the Whitefish community and serves as the primary travel route through the city for residents, visitors, and other traffic. It also serves as an international trade corridor for commercial vehicles and tourists. When backups occur on the highway, the effects translate into delays and congestion on local cross streets, ultimately making it more difficult to travel through town. This congestion is what led the City of Whitefish to approach MDT to initiate a study of this highway through the Downtown Whitefish Highway Study, which began in July 2018.

“MDT entered this study with the goal of reducing congestion in downtown Whitefish and our preferred concept reaches this goal in the most efficient way,” Bob Vosen, Missoula District Administrator at the Montana Department of Transportation, said. “However, we don’t want to push anything forward that the community does not want. This has been agreed upon with the City, and we’re proud to have worked together to come to this decision.”

Concept C features two northbound lanes and one southbound lane on Spokane Avenue between 13th Street and Second Street. It also includes two southbound lanes and one northbound lane on Baker Avenue between the same cross streets. In this concept, Second Street continues to have one eastbound and one westbound driving lane, and 13th Street would have two eastbound lanes and one westbound travel lane.

MDT and the City of Whitefish met in early November 2021 to discuss the future of this study after public feedback was received in conjunction with the late September open house at the O’Shaughnessy Cultural Arts Center. There, 112 attendees viewed display boards (<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/downtownwhitefish/docs/092221->

[Display-Boards.pdf](#)) about the project, visited with team members, and submitted 68 formal comments to MDT. Although some members of the public expressed support for Concept C's ability to reduce congestion, many commenters expressed concern over the preferred concept. At the follow-up meeting between the City of Whitefish and MDT in November, it was decided that the finalized study, which identifies Concept C as the preferred concept to meet the goal of the study, would not be further acted upon by MDT or the City of Whitefish.

"I'm confident in our decision to identify Concept C as our preferred concept," Vosen explained. "We are going to finalize this study and put it on a shelf. We will revisit this study with the City of Whitefish in the future. In the meantime, the City will see no further action taken in relation to the Downtown Whitefish Highway Study."

To view the final Downtown Whitefish Highway Study, please visit:
<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/downtownwhitefish/documents.aspx>.

Although MDT will not move forward with the preferred study concept at this time, MDT will continue to work collaboratively with the City of Whitefish to maintain the Highway 93 corridor. This upcoming summer, MDT will be constructing a pavement preservation project to extend the life of the highway in its current configuration and improve sidewalks.

Media inquiries can be sent to Amy Aiello at amy@bigskypublicrelations.com. Public questions or comments can be directed to the project hotline at 406-207-4484, operating Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about the study, visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/downtownwhitefish/>.

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