

Public Involvement Plan

Technical Memorandum

MONTANA PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE PLAN

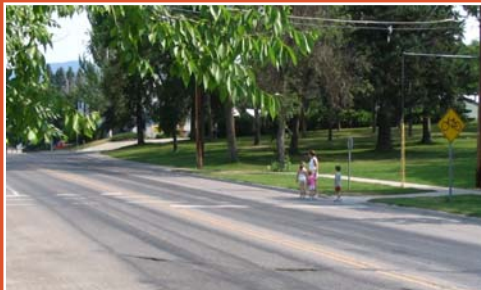
April 02, 2018



Prepared for:



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Public Involvement Plan

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) is developing the state's first Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. By engaging Montanans across the state, MDT will gain a better understanding of walking and biking as it is used to meet diverse transportation uses and needs. MDT's mission is to provide a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality and sensitivity to the environment. The *Montana Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (Plan)* will be used by MDT as it works to fulfill this mission for pedestrians, bicyclists, and all who use the state's transportation system.

Statewide planning efforts are often challenged in effectively engaging a broad population in the process, particularly in a state as large as Montana. An initial step in the transportation planning process is to develop a *Public Involvement Plan (PIP)* that will guide public input opportunities throughout the planning process. The PIP utilizes several traditional and non-traditional public participation strategies. The PIP aligns with MDT's established processes as outlined in its *Public Involvement Plan*¹.

1.1. Purpose of the PIP

The purpose of the PIP is to guide the implementation of strategies to provide opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points in the planning process. The methods described in this PIP are not intended to restrict consideration or use of other methods to include the public. Conditions vary, so good judgment must be exercised to identify possible limitations and opportunities to involve the public in order to deliver a quality *Plan*.

It is the intent of the PIP to identify the appropriate strategies to be used, define the sequencing within which the various strategies will be implemented, and chart out a course of action to be followed as the planning process commences. The goal of MDT and the planning team is to have ongoing involvement throughout the planning process. Education and outreach are an essential element in successfully informing individuals about the planning process. Early and ongoing public involvement is a key component to developing the *Plan*.

2.0. PARTICIPATING PROCEDURES

Active participation and input on walking and bicycling in Montana will be encouraged at every stage of the planning process. Key audiences that will be involved in this process include both internal and external stakeholders. Local officials, public, agencies, organizations and advocacy groups represent stakeholders that have initially been identified for outreach. This list is not all-inclusive and additional stakeholders may be identified as the process evolves and as needed for specific input are recognized. Internal stakeholders are involved in the planning process and are tasked with making decisions both through the development of the *Plan* and through implementation. External stakeholders include everyone with interest or expertise in walking and bicycling in Montana.

¹ Montana Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Plan*, available at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/manuals/pubinvhb.pdf>

2.1. Plan Contacts

Contract information for the MDT and Consultant project managers will be provided in all published information. The following will be the main points of contact for the *Plan*:

Sheila Ludlow

MDT Project Manager
2960 Prospect Avenue
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001
(406) 444-9193
MDTBikePed@mt.gov

Scott Randall

RPA Project Manager
3147 Saddle Drive
PO Box 5653
Helena, MT 59604
(406) 447-5000
srandall@rpa-hln.com

2.2. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will oversee the *Plan* development process and will consist of state and local governmental agencies. Steering Committee meetings will be held approximately every two months as project milestones are met (for a total of six meetings). The purpose of the meetings will be to review information and analyses and to provide input as the *Plan* progresses. The Committee will identify issues, possible solutions, review deliverables, and consider input received.

The Steering Committee will consider all public comments received for the duration of the planning effort. Public comments received on the draft *Plan* during the public comment period will be logged into a public comment matrix for consideration by the Steering Committee. The public comment matrix will be included in an appendix to the final report. Written responses to individuals who provided comments will not be offered.

2.3. Stakeholders

Everyone's opinions and experiences are important to the planning process. Stakeholders, the public, local officials, and other interested parties will be engaged throughout the planning process. These groups play a key role in implementing pedestrian and bicycle improvements in their jurisdictions by directing resources, providing education, etc., making their feedback invaluable. Each stakeholder group may represent different interests and perspectives of walking and bicycling, and communication and outreach may vary depending on individual needs and the planning process. Input from a diverse range of stakeholders is important to the planning process. The following stakeholders and interested parties have been identified:

- AARP
- Adventure Cycling Association
- Bike Walk Montana
- Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, Downtowns
- County Health
- County Officials
- Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Freight – i.e. Motor Carriers Association
- Journeys Safe from Home
- Law enforcement
- Local bike clubs
- Local Governments
- Montana Association of Planners

- Montana Independent Living Project
- Montana State University
 - Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)
 - Western Transportation Institute
- Motorists
- Pedestrian Advocacy group
- School Districts
- Trails Groups
- Tribes/BIA
- University of Montana
 - Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research
 - Montana Disability and Health Program
- Others yet to be identified

Stakeholders, including cities, counties, MPOs, and tribal representatives, among others, will be extended an invitation to the regional workshops. To ensure a broad range of stakeholder input, outreach through direct emails, phone calls, and other forms of communication may also be utilized. An online survey will also be sent to the stakeholder groups via email. It is hoped that these larger groups disseminate the information to smaller groups and other members of the community. Stakeholder groups will also be reached through the Bike Walk Summit. More information about outreach and engagement opportunities is provided in **Section 3**.

2.4. Public Comments and Input

Public comments and input will be collected and considered throughout the planning process. An official comment period will be provided after the release of the draft *Plan*. Additionally, all comments and concerns received at meetings and through individual discussions will be considered by the Steering Committee throughout the planning process and themes will help establish critical areas of concern and consideration. A series of questions and answers and/or fact sheets will be developed and posted to the website to address common questions and provide clarification.

3.0. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Information regarding all aspects of the *Plan* will be provided to the public and interested parties. Public and stakeholder input will be solicited and encouraged at every stage of the planning process. Several public engagement strategies are proposed to work together to reach the most people possible and elicit meaningful participation. This section provides an overview of each type of public outreach that will be used to gather input from the various stakeholders.

3.1. Electronic Media

The project team recognizes that people lead increasingly busy lives. Allowing the public to provide input on their own schedules has proven to increase the quantity, quality, and diversity of input. Electronic media allows for focused and expansive outreach while allowing the public to participate at their convenience to encourage meaningful feedback. Multiple electronic public engagement tools will be used to solicit input and provide information. These include developing and maintaining a project webpage, providing social media updates, developing an online survey, and publishing informational materials. The following sections discuss these tools in more detail.

Project Website

Informational materials will be made available on the project website. The website will be hosted by MDT and can be accessed at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/pedbike/>. The website will contain contact information, workshop announcements, frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the planning process, a description of the *PLAN*, finalized documents, and interim memorandums. The website will be the main tool for developing and maintaining an online presence and will be updated frequently.

Social Media

Periodic updates to MDT's Facebook page will be provided. Updates to MDT's Facebook page will also include paid posts and announcements. The updates will announce workshops and will give notice when materials are updated on the website. Online content will be shareable so MDT's partners can promote the *PLAN* on their websites, blogs, and social media outlets.

Online Survey

An online survey will be developed that leads the user through a series of questions and activities to collect their opinions, interests, and feedback about the state of walking and bicycling in Montana. The survey will be linked to the project website. Special attention will be made to achieve diverse outreach across the state to special interest groups, stakeholders, decision-makers, non-motorized users, and general motorists.

Published Information

Electronic information will be published to the website monthly and will be sent to interested parties. Newsletters, flyers, and/or technical memos will inform the public and solicit feedback during the planning process. The information will describe work in progress, results achieved, and other related information.

Email Contact List

A contact list of stakeholders and interested parties will be maintained throughout the planning process. The contact list will consist of email addresses for those wishing to receive periodic updates on the *Plan*. Email addresses for identified stakeholders, individuals who make public comments, and those wishing to stay informed about the *Plan* will be collected. A sign-up sheet list will also be made available at the Bike Walk Summit. Outreach to the contact list will include a monthly email blast, periodic updates as needed, distribution of newsletters/flyers, and other important news regarding the planning process.

3.2. Targeted Outreach and Engagement

Workshops, phone calls, and discussions with select stakeholders may occur throughout the project. The targeted stakeholder outreach is intended to obtain meaningful input and dialogue about walking and bicycling and to share information. The following describes the anticipated outreach events and strategies.

Regional Workshops

With a state as geographically large and diverse as Montana, it is important to understand the issues and concerns faced across the state. It is also important to allow for one-on-one engagement opportunities with the project team rather than rely only on online communications. With this in mind, the project team will conduct workshops in each MDT District early in the planning process. The intent of the workshops will be to reach a broad audience to discuss the development of the *Plan* and to hear from the stakeholders and the public about their concerns and needs. The workshops will serve the dual purpose of informing the participants and providing a listening opportunity for the project team.

The regional workshops are primarily designed to gather input and identify regional issues and needs. The purpose of the workshops is to explain the planning process, discuss the development of the *Plan*, and to listen to input and ideas. Workshops are an in-person opportunity for anyone interested. It is anticipated that the workshops will be held in the spring of 2018. Actual meeting dates and locations are unknown at this time. Meeting details will be discussed with the Steering Committee and will be advertised using the procedures discussed in this PIP.

Targeted Outreach

Targeted outreach will occur with key stakeholders and officials that cannot attend the workshops discussed previously. The targeted outreach will help ensure one-on-one dialogue is held with important representatives and decision-makers. Input from a variety of groups is critical to help identify what is working well, and what could be improved regarding non-motorized travel, safety, infrastructure, and maintenance. Targeted outreach may include phone conversations, emails, or select meetings as determined on a case-by-case basis.

Newsletters/Flyers

Two public announcement documents will be prepared in either the form of a newsletter or a flyer. The first will announce the project and will point the public to the online survey. The second will announce the completion of the draft *Plan* and will ask for public comment. The public announcements will be available on the website, MDT's social media pages, and distributed via email to the contact list.

Bike Walk Summit

The project team will leverage the state Bike Walk Summit, which will be held on March 21-23, 2018 in Bozeman. The Summit represents a captive audience of key stakeholders from across the state. MDT and the project team will also host a session where the *Plan* will be announced to attendees. Each person with whom we connect will be encouraged to promote engagement in their local communities.

3.3. Easy Access and Visibility

All information published regarding the *Plan* will have contact information for the project managers. Comments can be submitted throughout the planning process via the website or by contacting the contacts listed previously. The following describes considerations to be made throughout the planning process.

Information

Technical and planning level information related to the data or content used in the development of the *Plan* will be available in memorandums, project updates, graphics, and other miscellaneous materials. The materials will be made available on the project website.

Consideration of Public Input

Input and comments from stakeholders and the public will be considered by the Steering Committee throughout the planning process. Public comments received on the draft *Plan* will be documented and included as an appendix to the final *Plan*.

Considerations for Traditionally Underserved Populations

Additional efforts are necessary to involve traditionally underserved segments of the population, including disabled, minority, and low-income residents. The following steps will help with these efforts:

- Plan meeting locations carefully: We will hold workshops in locations that are accessible and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a targeted population is located

in a certain geographic part of a city or county, then the meeting location should be close to the area for convenience.

- Seek help from community leaders and organizations: To facilitate involvement of traditionally underserved populations, we will consult with community leaders and organizations representing these groups about the most effective ways to reach their constituents.
- Be sensitive to diverse audiences: At workshops, the project team will attempt to communicate as effectively as possible. Presenters will avoid using technical jargon, and staff will wear appropriate dress and adhere to professional conduct.

Accessibility

MDT will, on request, provide accessible information and services to individuals. The following measures will be employed:

- Workshops will be hosted in locations that are accessible and ADA compliant.
- Leaders of the communities and representative organizations will be conferred with about how best to involve traditionally underserved populations.

The following required ADA statement will be included on all published materials:

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided on request. Persons who need an alternative format should contact the Human Resources and Occupational Safety Division, Department of Transportation, 2701 Prospect Avenue., PO Box 201001, Helena, MT 59620. Telephone 406-444-9229. Those using a TTY may call 1(800)335-7592 or through the Montana Relay Service at 711.

4.0. OVERALL PLAN COMMUNICATION

This PIP establishes guidelines and procedures for encouraging public participation. The following communication strategies and techniques will be used to share information and to seek public and stakeholder input.

- A project website will be developed to include information about the planning process.
- Once reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee, technical memorandums will be posted to the website.
- Newsletters and/or flyers will be provided twice during the planning process.
- An online survey will be developed to gather input from the public.
- A monthly email blast will be sent out to the email contact list.
- Regional workshops will be conducted in each MDT District to hear from stakeholders and the public about their input and ideas.
- The Bike Walk Summit will be leveraged to announce the Plan and promote public and stakeholder engagement.
- Public comments and input will be collected and considered throughout the planning process.
- Social media posts will be shared through MDT's social media sites.

5.0. PLAN SCHEDULE

Adherence to the schedule is important to stay on track and to keep all participating parties engaged. The anticipated schedule follows a 12-month time frame. It is anticipated that the draft *Plan* would be completed by the end of 2018. A 30-day public review and comment process will commence following the release of the draft *Plan*. All work is expected to be complete by the end of February 2019. **Figure 1** contains the anticipated schedule.

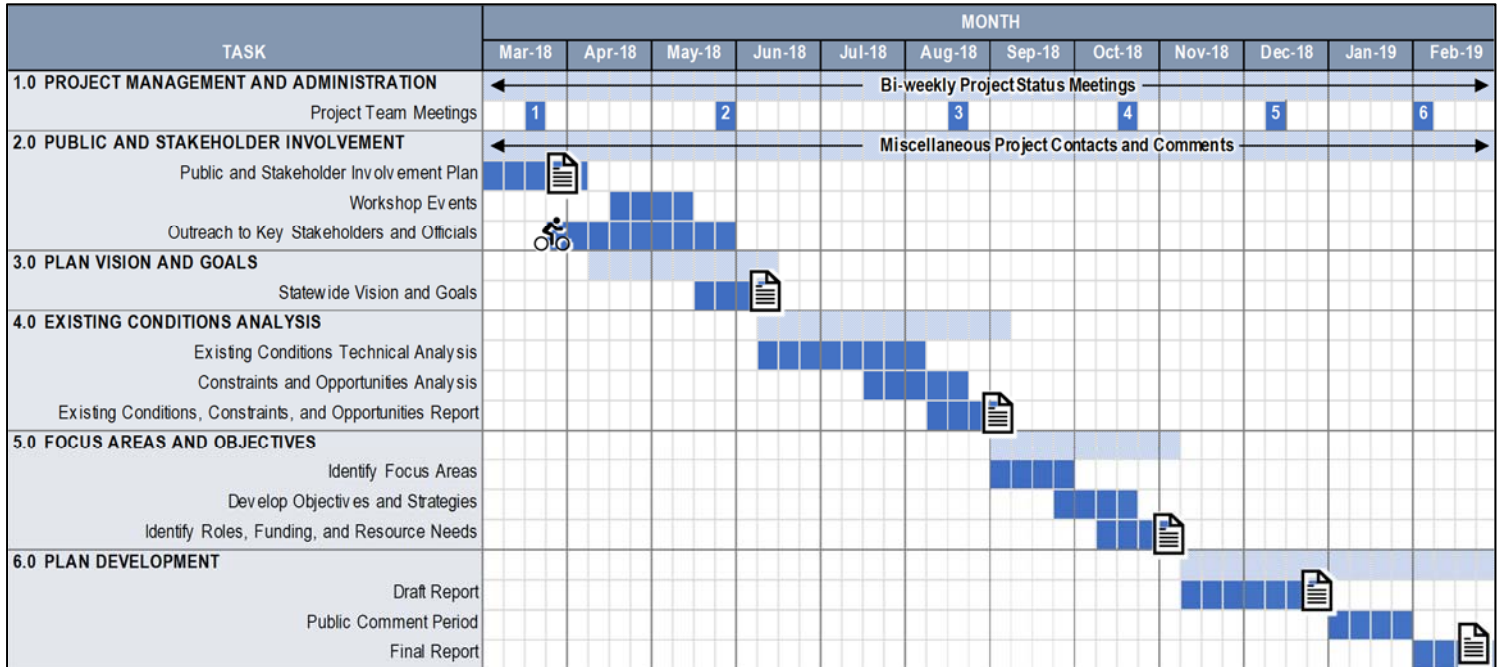


Figure 1: Plan Schedule

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