

CORVALLIS CIVIC CLUB

P.O. Box 321
Corvallis, MT 59828

May 19, 2020

Paul Johnson
MDT Project Analysis Manager
Rail, Transit & Planning Division
Montana Department of Transportation
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Dear Mr. Johnson:

We would like to offer the following comments on a project included in MDOT's draft 2020-2024 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Specifically, our comments relate to Project #8687 listed for District 1-Missoula-FY 2020.

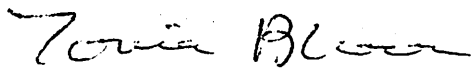
In 2013, the Corvallis Civic Club worked with the Ravalli County Commission to prepare a successful application to the Transportation Alternatives (TA) competitive grant program for the construction of a pedestrian bridge across the Bitterroot River at Woodside on S-373. This pedestrian span would link two legs of an existing pedestrian/bikepath along S-373 and eliminate the remaining gap in non-motorized infrastructure linking Corvallis to Hamilton and Victor, as well as to all communities northward to Missoula. Ravalli County received notification in January 2014, of its successful TA application, which was the top-ranked project in that round of grant approvals.

The Corvallis Civic Club is pleased to see this project listed in the 2020-2024 STIP, but remains concerned that the serious safety and accessibility issues for pedestrians and bicyclist on the narrow 1954 vehicle bridge still have not been addressed in the seven years that have passed since the TA grant was submitted. Traffic on S-373 has increased significantly over the past several decades as the population of the area has grown. The speed limit along S-373 was recently lowered to 45 mph in recognition of that fact that it no longer is a lightly used rural road.

We understand that preliminary engineering has been performed for this project and that some concerns may have arisen regarding the advisability of constructing a separate span across the river, as opposed to constructing a new vehicular bridge with a separate lane for non-motorized users. The Corvallis Civic Club is supportive of any solution that creates a safe river crossing. What we find discouraging and unacceptable is inaction and the indefinite continuation of the current situation. We know we speak for residents of Corvallis, as well as those in the larger Bitterroot community who travel S-373 in vehicles, on a bicycle, or on foot, in urging you to make providing a safe non-motorized river crossing the highest priority.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Tonia Bloom
Secretary

Cc: Ravalli County Commission
Corvallis School District
Representative David Bedey
Representative Nancy Ballance