

Transportation and Smart Growth



We envision a community with a safe, comprehensive, low-carbon transportation system that complements smart land use planning, focusing growth and vitality inward toward existing infrastructure, neighborhoods, and public services.

Our community will develop infrastructure and new growth that is sustainable, adaptable, and in the direction of existing services, while promoting a bold “multi-modal” transportation network that empowers people to walk, bike, and bus and is an efficient, affordable, and sustainable way to meet our transportation needs.

Snapshot: Transportation is the second largest source of total US greenhouse gas emissions. Planning for a multi-modal, active, efficient, and accessible transportation system ensures that we hedge against the harmful effects of climate change, remain fiscally responsible, and maintain public health. In addition, Missoula is growing, and there is great opportunity to both mitigate climate change and build resilience in the face of climate change by the manner in which Missoula develops. Smart growth strategies, such as redeveloping or developing new areas near existing infrastructure, schools, business, parks and services, are efficient, reduce capital and household costs, encourage sustainable, healthy transportation options, build community, and conserve open space and agricultural land. While nearly a century of auto-centric development has influenced travel habits that are counter to sustainability, community leaders are excited by the possibilities of using education to shift cultural understanding of what it means to transport people and goods. Combined with a robust multi-modal transportation system, a smart growth strategy emphasizes the triple bottom line of environmental health, economic prosperity and social equity, and increases the quality of life in Missoula. Note: in 2016 we blended what originally were two separate focal areas—Transportation and Smart Growth are inextricably linked, at least here in Missoula at this time!

KEY STRATEGIES:

1. Reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

Goal: Work with key community entities to establish a benchmark for vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Missoula, set reduction goals for VMT, and launch a community wide education program to work towards those goals.

Action Steps:

- A. Work with the City of Missoula, Missoula in Motion (MiM), Bike Walk Alliance Missoula (BWAM), Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation (MIST), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), University of Montana, Missoula Urban Transportation District/Mountain Line, and others to determine the current benchmark of total VMT in Missoula.
- B. Measure the greenhouse gas emissions associated with community VMT.
- C. Establish a target goal and year, as well as interim goals, for VMT reduction.
- D. Assist transportation planning entities with policies and strategies that will work towards the VMT reduction goal.
- E. Working with partners, develop and implement a public education campaign that explains the importance of reducing VMT, its relationship to climate change, and ways to utilize sustainable transportation. Ensure it is creative, fun and engaging.

- F. Partner with MiM, BWAM, Free Cycles, Adventure Cycling, myriad bike shops, University of Montana, etc. to increase ease of owning and renting bikes.
- G. Celebrate and encourage active transportation. Help showcase key events that feature biking and walking options: Sunday streets, Bike Walk Bus Week, River City Roots and other downtown festivals.

Metrics and Timetable:

- a. Success measured by an established benchmark for vehicle miles traveled in Missoula, both end and interim reduction goals set (in 2016), and a Climate Smart outreach program is initiated (2016-17).
- b. Greenhouse Gas savings measured (fall 2016).
- c. Goal established (2016).
- d. Engaged in policy discussions, education, outreach and celebration. Successful plans, products, and events tracked (2016 and ongoing).

2. Enhance expansive, accessible, and affordable public transit

Goal: Work to expand services and accessibility of fare free Mountain Line and University of Montana bus services, and align these with new land use planning developments.

Activities:

- A. Encourage Mountain Line to continue upgrades and increased capacity, including additional late night, Sunday and holiday bus service.
- B. Improve transit infrastructure to industry best practices, like pullouts, shelters at bus stops, and pedestrian crossings.
- C. Continue to build support with community Fare-Free partners to extend Mountain Line pilot beyond three years, making fare-free permanent.
- D. Develop outreach specific to poor air quality time periods (wildfire smoke in summer, inversions in winter) to encourage bus use during these times.
- E. Continue to coordinate with Associated Students of University of Montana (ASUM) transportation to ensure optimal transit service city-wide.
- F. Advocate for public transportation support in state and federal legislation and policy.
- G. Encourage a transition to electric buses, with identifiable renewable energy available or purchased (to fuel the electricity for the buses).
- H. Advocate for bus transit systems that are aligned with new smart growth and redevelopment (see #4).

Metrics and Timetable:

- a. Mountain Line has long term plan (30 year Master Plan) in place; assist as needed
- b. Confirmed long-term support for fare free bus service.
- c. Air quality education developed (2017)

3. Develop safe, comprehensive transportation infrastructure

Goal: Improve infrastructure that supports multi-modal transportation and makes active transportation safer and more accessible, including bike lanes, trails and pedestrian areas.

Activities:

- A. Support pedestrian-scale design that encourages non-motorized transportation and social interaction, especially in areas of the City that are now predominantly vehicle-oriented.
- B. Work with the City of Missoula and our Metropolitan Planning Organization to implement the transportation objectives of the Our Missoula growth plan.
- C. Work with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to revise traffic models to include recent and projected demographic shifts, current traffic trends and climate threats and impacts.
- D. Work to obtain designation of Trails as Transportation corridors, to provide access to funding and improved decision making.
- E. Develop design standards (such as a prescription street width) that promote the safety of bikers and pedestrians and decrease conflicts with motor vehicles.
- F. Fund maintenance and improvement of infrastructure in preparation for impacts from climate change (e.g. trucking hubs, roundabouts, street design, lane width considerations, Front-Main St. conversion).
- G. Create a non-motorized street in Missoula's downtown area.

Metrics and Timetable:

- A. Will work with multiple partners to determine next steps and timeline in fall 2016 and beyond.

4. Integrate Transportation and Smart Growth Strategies

Goal: Foster transit-oriented development (TOD), prioritizing development near existing infrastructure and services and focusing on accessible, sustainable transportation options, and develop a comprehensive parking management strategy.

Activities:

- A. Engage transit-oriented development (TOD) strategies, including researching land use and zoning that supports TOD, concentrating public funding on TOD corridors, and developing private sector and major employer attraction/investment.
- B. Support "focus inward" growth plan approach by encouraging land-use strategies such as urban in-fill/redevelopment, mixed-use rezoning, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and protection of open space and agricultural land along the rural-urban interface.
- C. Work with elected officials, parking commission and others to create an updated parking management strategy that balances financial, environmental, and social benefits, including improved access/synergy to biking, walking, bus, etc.
- D. Help develop analysis of parking fee structure and revise according to management strategy; further reinvest parking revenues into sustainable transportation infrastructure and incentives.
- E. Support parking policy changes including creation of districts, address parking meters, disincentives for large box stores with tons of parking, and increased impact fees for parking.

Metrics and Timetable:

- A. Will work with multiple partners to determine next steps and timeline in fall 2016.

Additional Activities:

- Implement a 2% gas tax in Missoula County and use revenue for energy reduction and climate action projects.
- Develop alternative fuel stations in the area, especially electric, and ensure some of these are in public spaces and in or near downtown.
- Expand options to outlying areas (Bitterroot Rail, transit in four directions, aim to connect major towns)
- Expand bike-share and car-share programs.
- Implement no idling policy.

A CLIMATE SMART WAY FORWARD:

Transportation and Smart Growth are poised to be even more strongly linked in the future. Climate Smart Missoula leadership were key voices in the City of Missoula “Our Missoula” growth policy update process completed November 2015, participating in listening sessions, multiple focus groups, and sitting on the steering committee team. Climate Smart will continue to be a long-term resource and important partner as the City implements “Our Missoula”. In addition, sustainable transportation in the Missoula area has technically skilled proponents and a strong agenda.



Developing Transportation strategies during Summit #2

As we reconvene with public officials tasked with implementing “Our Missoula”, we will take the opportunity to link Transportation and Smart Growth even more closely, and will bring climate mitigation and adaptation perspectives to the table to ensure that future Missoula development patterns are sustainable and resilient to climate impacts. We will work to build a strong coalition to enable stronger state and federal laws, rules, options and funding for sustainable transportation and smart growth.

Potential Partners: City of Missoula Development Services, City of Missoula Parks and Recreation, Missoula County Community and Planning Services (CAPS), Missoula Metropolitan Planning Organization, Missoula in Motion, University of Montana, Missoula Urban Transportation District/Mountain Line, Bike Walk Alliance Missoula, Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation, Adventure Cycling, Free Cycles, Montana Department of Transportation, Missoula area architects, developers, and engineers, Missoula Housing Authority, Homeward, Missoula Downtown Partnership, Missoula Parking Commission, Missoula Chamber of Commerce, Sustainable Business Council, Missoula Architects and Engineers, local and state elected officials, various bike shops and bike tourism businesses, and more.



Developing Smart Growth strategies during Summit #2