



**US 93 Whitefish Urban & West
Citizen Working Group
April 23, 2009 5:30 – 8:30 PM
(Light supper at 5:30)
Whitefish City Library**

Facilitator Notes

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

1. Provide the Working Group with a final update on the process to this point and discuss what happens next.
2. Present final design elements to the Working Group.
3. Celebrate the completion of this phase and the Working Group's contribution.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Duane Bauch Bruce Boody John Chaney
George Gardner Mary Jo Look Terry Nelson
Gary Stevens
Sheila Bowen (Substitute for Monte for Whitefish Chamber)
Virginia Tribe – Facilitator

TECHNICAL ADVISORS AND OBSERVERS

Maggie Conry – Private citizen Michael Conry – Private citizen
Karen Hilding – City of Whitefish Jeremy Keene – WGM Group
Nick Parmer - Whitefish City Council Chuck Stearns – City of Whitefish
Ed Toars – Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Final acknowledgment of the Working Group Charter and Guiding Principles

Charter

The purpose of the Whitefish Highway 93 Citizen Working Group is to offer comment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), its Consultants, and local decision makers on critical issues and design details regarding the reconstruction of Highway 93 in the Whitefish vicinity as framed by the completed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the decisions contained in the Record of Decision (ROD).

The Group consists of a diverse body of citizens representing the interests of local people who will benefit from, and feel the impacts of, the Highway 93 project individually and as a community. It is chartered to develop creative, collaborative responses, suggestions, and recommendations to the Decision Team regarding the principles and design details that will guide implementation of the project. The Group's products should address specific questions asked by the FHWA, MDT, its Consultants, and the Decision Team, as well as implementation interests brought to the table by the Group's members.

Guiding Principles

- We believe that economic vitality is linked to community character.
- We believe that safe design for all traffic (pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.) is important to enhancing the "Whitefish" experience for visitors as well as community members.
- We believe in preserving the character and quality of life of Whitefish including a strong sense of "small community"; architectural and landscape aesthetics; and existing natural environs.
- We believe that the Highway 93 design must be adaptable and flexible to accommodate future growth in the area.
- We believe that project must be completed in a timely, organized and well-planned manner to mitigate overall impacts on the community.
- We believe that blending useful and important parts of the Highway 93 Plan with the "Heart of Whitefish" Downtown Plan will result in positive short and long term outcomes for the community.

Final Update

Where are we in the process?

- This is the final formal Citizen Working Group meeting for this phase:
- The following process steps will occur fall to winter 2009:
 - "Plan-In-Hand" Review with MDT, etc.
 - The project will be split into 2-3 phases.
 - The project will be assessed for funding prioritization by MDT.
 - Public Open House – Members of the Working Group will be asked to attend the Open House to help explain the process and the design elements that were influenced by their work.
- The rights-of-way acquisition process could begin in 2010 for the first phase, depending on funding.
- With the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars, MDT will be able to fund many projects in the pipeline. There is some possibility that projects like this one could move up in the priority line with regular funds. To help with funding the project, it is recommended that it occur in phases.
- Representatives from the City of Whitefish reported that the other Plans related to Whitefish Transportation are moving forward.

Presentation on Final Design Elements

WGM personnel presented design elements and described how Working Group comments from the February 2009 meeting resulted in the following final design:

- A two-lane bridge with wide pedestrian walkways that:
 - Reflects the character of the community
 - Is modeled after the Orange Street Bridge in Missoula in terms of hand rails and lighting
 - Uses tinted the decorative, formed concrete “rock” similar to that along Highway 93 leaving Polson to the south
- An improved storm drain system away from the River resulting from the construction/design of the new bridge
- Lighting placement and decorative light pole design that is compliant with the City Lighting Ordinance and consistent with the design and placement of other lights in the City
- Two Golf Course underpasses with the bike paths along the Golf Course
- The intent to lose as few trees as possible
- Attention to placement of concrete retaining walls where visual impact is low and it can be screened with vegetation
- Bus pull out sites added to the street design in what is anticipated to be the most useful places

Working Group members had the following comments as part of the discussion:

- It's important that WGM and the Golf Course work closely to assure that safety issues (e.g., riders being hit with golf balls) regarding the bike path along the Golf Course are mitigated.
- Light poles need to accommodate the weight and sag of the City's traditional Christmas lights. The light pole can be extended up (like the others in the City) beyond the lamp.
- Recognizing that there may be additional costs for lighting, the Group encouraged seeking a memo with the City for agreement on final lighting design.
- It might be useful to explore coloring the base of the formed concrete for the bridge, etc., to lessen the visual impact of chipping from snow clearing blades, etc.
- There are great opportunities to continue to connect bike paths.
- The intent needs to be to not lose any trees unless absolutely necessary.

Affirming Working Group Concurrence

The Working Group unanimously concurred with the final design elements.

Closing... Thank You's

- The Working Group celebrated their last meeting with pizza.
- Members were awarded certificates of appreciations from the consultants with sincere expressions of gratitude for their work over the past 3 years.