



# GREAT FALLS AREA

Long Range Transportation Plan - 2018 Update

## APPENDIX B: Goals and Objectives



# Goals and Objectives

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Long Range Transportation Plan - 2018 Update



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**TABLE OF CONTENTS** ..... 1  
 List of Tables ..... i

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**..... 1

**2.0 LOCAL PLANNING PROCESSES** ..... 2

2.1. River Drive Corridor Study (2016)..... 2  
 2.2. I-15 Gore Hill To Emerson Junction Corridor Study (2015) ..... 2  
 2.3. Imagine 2025 Growth Policy Update (2013) ..... 3  
 2.4. Cascade County Growth Policy Update (May 2014) ..... 4  
 2.5. Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Plan (April 2013) ..... 5  
 2.6. Malmstrom AFB Joint Land Use Study (March 2012) ..... 6  
 2.7. Downtown Master Plan (October 2011)..... 6  
 2.8. Great Falls Transit Development Plan (October 2010)..... 7  
 2.9. Great Falls Area LRTP Update (2009)..... 7  
 2.10. Medical District Master Plan (January 2007) ..... 8  
 2.11. Missouri River Urban Corridor Plan (2004)..... 9

**3.0 STATE PLANNING PROCESSES** ..... 10

3.1. TranPlanMT (2017) ..... 10  
 3.2. Comprehensive State Highway Safety Plan (2015)..... 10  
 3.3. Livability for Montana Transportation (2012) ..... 11

**4.0 FEDERAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**..... 12

4.1. Fast Act ..... 12  
 4.2. Livability Principles From HUD/EPA/USDOT..... 13

**5.0 RECOMMENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR LRTP UPDATE**..... 14

5.1. Proposed Goals and Objectives for LRTP ..... 14  
 5.2. Alignment of Goals with FAST Act and Livability Principles ..... 17

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Alignment of Goals with FAST Act and Livability Principles ..... 18

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Development of goals and objectives for the *Great Falls Area Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) is a critical first step in the transportation planning process. In addition to capturing all related information from previous community planning efforts, the goals and objectives lay out the general course of action for the LRTP development and represent the community's vision for the future transportation system. Accordingly, developing goals and objectives cannot be accomplished within a vacuum. It is an iterative process that continually evolves through guidance provided by the planning team, specific stakeholders, the general public, and the elected officials.

The goals and objectives described later in this memo are put forth in hopes of accurately reflecting the condition of planning within the general community, and more specifically reflecting the needs and desires relative to transportation.

The goals and objectives developed for the LRTP are connected concepts – that is they represent the desired end result of the community's transportation system once projects identified are implemented. Goals and objectives also provide direction on how to get to that end result. Factoring in specific requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) transportation planning relative to the ten planning factors contained in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) legislation, it is clear the importance that the establishment of goals and objectives carries. Collectively, the goals and objectives will inform the planning process and set the course of action for the transportation system for years to come.

**Goals** represent the overarching statements of the LRTP intent and the direct elements of the community's vision.

**Objectives** are more focused statements of specific actions, measures or procedures that reflect how a particular goal can be attained.

## 2.0 LOCAL PLANNING PROCESSES

The following are various plans, policies, and studies developed at the local level which impact transportation in the Great Falls area. It is important to align the goals and objectives for the City of Great Falls with those defined previously to assure that local needs are met.

### 2.1. RIVER DRIVE CORRIDOR STUDY (2016)

River Drive North serves as a key route in the Great Falls transportation system and supports both local access and regional travel demand. The primary purpose of the corridor study was to develop a comprehensive, long-range plan for managing the corridor, addressing the transportation needs of the corridor, and determining appropriate improvements for the corridor. The following needs and objectives were established based on the analysis of existing and projected conditions, local plans, and input from resource agencies, stakeholders, and the public.

#### **Need 1: Improve the Safety of the Corridor**

##### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes.
- Improve roadway elements to current design criteria.
- Reduce vehicle conflicts.

#### **Need 2: Accommodate Existing and Future Demands**

##### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Reduce corridor congestion.
- Improve operations to achieve LOS standards.
- Accommodate large vehicles and freight movements.
- Accommodate non-motorized use.

#### **Need 3: Minimize Adverse Impacts to the Environmental Characteristics of the Study Area**

##### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Minimize adverse impacts to the Missouri River and surrounding wetlands.
- Avoid or minimize adverse impacts to historic, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources.
- Preserve the scenic character of the corridor.

#### **Other Considerations**

- Local and regional planning efforts
- Funding availability
- Construction feasibility and physical constraints
- Impacts to existing residents and businesses in the area

### 2.2. I-15 GORE HILL TO EMERSON JUNCTION CORRIDOR STUDY (2015)

The 2014 *Great Falls Area LRTP* identified the need to evaluate the Interstate System through Great Falls. As a result, this corridor study was prepared with the primary purpose of determining potential improvement options to address safety and operational concerns throughout the study corridor. A review and analysis of existing and projected conditions, local plans, and input from the public, study partners, and resources agencies, identified the following needs and objectives for the corridor.

### **Need 1: Improve the Safety of The Corridor**

#### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Reduce the frequency and severity of crashes.
- Improve roadway elements to meet current design criteria to address identified safety concerns.
- Reduce conflicts between vehicles of varying types and speeds.
- Address identified crash trends and clusters.

### **Need 2: Accommodate Existing and Future Capacity Demands**

#### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Maintain level of service (LOS) standards for mainline segments and interchange ramps.
- Improve operations and maintain LOS standards for intersections.

### **Need 3: Provide for The Mobility of People and Freight**

#### Objectives (To the Extent Practicable)

- Provide for the movement and transfer of people and goods.
- Maintain the roadway for effective and prompt emergency response.

### **Other Considerations**

- Environmental resource impacts of improvement options
- Local and regional planning efforts
- Funding availability
- Construction feasibility and impacts
- Security of the transportation system

## **2.3. IMAGINE 2025 GROWTH POLICY UPDATE (2013)**

The 2013 *Great Falls Growth Policy Update* replaces the previous growth policy which was last amended in/updated in 2005. The goals and policies in the Growth Policy Update were developed through countless public interactions, and as such have been vetted through the public process. The goals and policies in this planning document must be considered in the development of goals and objectives for the LRTP Update.

The goals and policies are crafted around four (4) primary focus areas: Social, Environmental, Economic and Physical. In all four focus areas there are transportation related policies interwoven throughout. For example, goal *SOC 1.2 - employ innovative strategies to promote, enhance and utilize the City's parks*, speaks to improving key intersection improvements to improve pedestrian access to Gibson Park (policy SOC 1.2.8). This transportation related component is embedded within the goals for the City's park system. Examples abound throughout the policies to improve transportation system form and function.

Perhaps most specific to transportation in the community is information developed under the "transportation and mobility" goal found under the Physical focus area. This goal is listed below, along with accompanying policies.

### **Transportation and Mobility**

PHY 4.4 Increase mobility and the access of citizens to transportation alternatives throughout the City.

## Policies

- Phy 4.4.1 Improve the ability of residents to travel from home to work, schools, shopping, employment centers and activity centers.
- Phy 4.4.2 Support efforts and programs that seek to improve school crossings, pedestrian access and the safety of those enroute to and from schools.
- Phy 4.4.3 Enhance public access to community services and programs such as the library, Centene Stadium, Mansfield Center and other civic facilities and events.
- Phy 4.4.4 Create a built environment that promotes easy access to safe walking, biking and other opportunities for physical activity.
- Phy 4.4.5 Encourage, promote and support transit options for the community of Great Falls, including those required for the elderly and the disabled.
- Phy 4.4.6 Review, update and adopt new standards and regulations that encourage pedestrian and bicycle-friendly development.
- Phy 4.4.7 Provide sufficient resources to construct and maintain the trails and related facilities recommended in the City's *Comprehensive Park and Recreation Master Plan* and the *Bikeway Facilities Plan*.
- Phy 4.4.8 Review and adopt formal design standards for all roadways.
- Phy 4.4.9 Pursue grant funds to create a "Complete Streets" demonstration project or projects in the City.
- Phy 4.4.10 Develop a formal ADA Transition Plan for public rights-of-way.
- Phy 4.4.11 Implement elements of the *Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Plan*, as opportunities arise.
- Phy 4.4.12 Encourage development of network improvements that reduce emissions and idling times, reduce maintenance costs and increase efficiency of the road network. Examples include roundabouts, improved signal controls, construction of turn lanes and bike lanes, LED signal and street lighting, etc.

## 2.4. CASCADE COUNTY GROWTH POLICY UPDATE (MAY 2014)

Concurrent to the City's update of their Growth Policy, Cascade County also recently completed a comprehensive Growth Policy Update. Much of the update to the County's Growth Policy reaffirms previous policy language and direction, however, where appropriate new data on population, employment and zoning was included. Perhaps the most relevant goal from the County Growth Policy for this LRTP Update is the transportation goal, as follows:

### Transportation

GOAL 6: Promote and maintain a transportation system that provides safety, efficiency, and is cost effective.

### Objectives

- A. New additions to the transportation system should be compatible with the existing road system and coordinated with roads from other jurisdictions.
- B. Transportation planning for new developments should support the Cascade County Growth Policy.
- C. Ensure that all new roads, both public and private, are built to county design standards for new construction. These standards can be found within the Cascade County Subdivision Regulations.

- D. Encourage provisions for multi-modal types of transportation including: bike lanes, trails, pedestrian facilities, etc.
- F. Develop and implement road and bridge improvement standards and maintenance schedules.
- G. Develop a policy and implementation program in cooperation with developers and school districts to provide walks, bridges and pathways for children to improve safety and reduce transportation costs between residential neighborhoods, schools and stores.
- H. Develop secondary means of access, where practical, to settlements and subdivisions in order to improve safety and overall traffic circulation.
- I. Consider the use of grants, Road Improvement Districts, and Rural Maintenance Districts to maximize funding strategies.
- J. Coordinate transportation issues with wildfire and fire protection issues, policies and goals.

## 2.5. DOWNTOWN ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND STREETScape PLAN (APRIL 2013)

Rather than speak in terms of goals and objectives, the *Downtown Access, Circulation and Streetscape Plan* developed a concise “Vision and Big Ideas” to articulate planning participants desire for the downtown area. Building upon work contained in the Downtown Master Plan, the following vision and three “big ideas” were formulated:

### Vision

Downtown is the heart and center of Great Falls. Like the Missouri River, it is dynamic, fluid, attractive, and welcoming, connecting the City’s heritage to its future. The River’s Edge Trail, historic neighborhoods, and parks and open space support and enhance a unique mix of local shops, restaurants, entertainment and special events that make Downtown the place to be – day and night (Great Falls Downtown Master Plan). Three big ideas for Downtown’s vision, as articulated in the Downtown Master Plan, which can be impacted by the recommendations that follow in this Plan include:

1. **Connected Downtown:** A transportation and circulation system that provides users with a variety of modes and a diversity in choices is fundamental to the future success of Downtown and will enhance Downtown’s value as a place to live, work, shop and recreate. Quality infrastructure for walking, biking, driving and transit provides choice in terms of the safest, healthiest, most efficient and less-expensive route to reach Downtown’s various amenities and destinations.
2. **Flourishing Downtown:** A flourishing Downtown is a key indicator of the overall economic health of Great Falls and plays a primary role in shaping the general perception of the City. By strengthening the existing business community and providing incentives for new investment, Downtown has the potential to evolve into a thriving place that enhances the image of the City and the region. Additionally, Downtown has great potential to capitalize on the presence of Malmstrom Air Force Base by providing services to airmen living on and off of the base and better serve students from the University of Great Falls, the Great Falls College, MSU Campuses. Downtown offers a different retail environment than the mall, big box, and neighborhood retail centers found elsewhere in the City and it should be targeted, celebrated, and built upon as a unique shopping and dining environment that can attract a larger segment of the local residents, employees, and students.
3. **Downtown Aesthetics:** Great Falls has a strong historic base and the clear center of this base is Downtown. Downtown’s buildings, streetscapes, parks and the Missouri River play a primary role



in articulating the rich culture and heritage of the City and are a source of pride for the community. The unique aesthetics of Downtown are an asset that should be preserved, enhanced and celebrated to propel Downtown toward a vibrant and sustainable future.

## 2.6. MALMSTROM AFB JOINT LAND USE STUDY (MARCH 2012)

The goal of the Malmstrom Air Force Base (MAFB) Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) is to protect the viability of current and future missions at MAFB and the Malmstrom Missile Complex, while at the same time guiding growth, sustaining the economic health of the region, and protecting the public health, safety, and welfare. To that end, several key objectives were developed that speak to the reasoning for preparation of the JLUS, and what the potential benefits of the planning exercise may provide. The objectives are noted as follows:

- **Understanding:** Convene community and military representatives to identify, confirm and understand the issues in an open forum, taking into consideration both community and U.S. Air Force viewpoints and needs. This includes public awareness, education and input organized in a cohesive outreach program.
- **Collaboration:** Encourage cooperative land use and resource planning among the Base, Missile Complex, and surrounding communities so that future community growth and development are compatible with the training and operational missions at the installation and missile sites, while at the same time seeking ways to reduce operational impacts on adjacent lands within the City of Great Falls and the seven counties.
- **Actions:** Provide a set of mutually supported tools, activities, and procedures from which local jurisdictions, agencies, and the U.S. Air Force can select, prepare, approve / adopt, and use to implement the recommendations developed during the JLUS process. The actions include both operational measures to mitigate installation impacts on surrounding communities and local government and agency approaches to reduce community impacts on military operations. These tools will help decision makers resolve compatibility issues and prioritize projects within the annual budgeting process of their respective entity / jurisdiction.

## 2.7. DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN (OCTOBER 2011)

The *Downtown Master Plan* provides a strategically focused vision with strategies to guide the growth and development of Downtown Great Falls. The plan seeks to build on the assets of Downtown and reinvigorate the area into a more active, vibrant, accessible and livable area that welcomes residents and visitors. Transportation objectives of primary importance to the LRTP effort include:

- Improve pedestrian connectivity and safety downtown.
- Develop a comprehensive downtown bicycle network to connect into a city-wide system and to connect to River's Edge Trail through signage and routes.
- Reduce or eliminate downtown one-ways.
- Improve connectivity for pedestrian and bicycles to the Missouri River, River's Edge Trail and Gibson Park.
- Develop a comprehensive downtown wayfinding system.
- Optimize parking for all stakeholders.
- Improve public realm to provide a safe, attractive and welcoming environment.

## 2.8. GREAT FALLS TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2010)

The most recent comprehensive planning document prepared for the Great Falls Transit District was the Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update (October 2010). Completed by LSC Consultants, the TDP Update provided a comprehensive examination of transit service operations, performance and needs. Chapter 2 of the TDP reiterates the mission of the Great Falls Transit District, that is:

*“To provide a safe, reliable, affordable and fiscally sound transportation system for the people of Great Falls and Black Eagle, Montana.”*

Paramount to this mission, goals and objectives were formulated through an intensive public process. The overarching goals, as specified in chapter 2 of the TDP Update, are as follows:

- **Goal #1:** Maintain the existing ridership base while attracting new riders.
- **Goal #2:** Continue to enhance the environmental sustainability of the transit system.
- **Goal #3:** Provide high quality, customer-oriented service.
- **Goal #4:** Provide efficient, effective, and safe services.
- **Goal #5:** Promote the transit service.

## 2.9. GREAT FALLS AREA LRTP UPDATE (2009)

Vision(s), goals, and objectives were developed as part of the 2009 LRTP Update. The transportation planning vision described general, community-wide values of what the community desired in their transportation system. The goals of the Growth Policy and LRTP were developed, described and monitored to ensure compatibility with the vision. Specific objectives for the transportation system were also identified.

The developed transportation planning vision, goals, and objectives from the 2009 LRTP Update were as follows:

### Vision

- Great Falls should be a city of cohesive, distinct, diverse, attractive, and safe neighborhoods with a compact land-use pattern. The transportation and land use decisions made by the City and County should be mutually supportive.
- Our community should have a safe, accessible, and walkable Downtown supported by unique or specialized employment, civic, mixed-use, and commercial activities with adequate vehicular circulation and parking.
- Our community should feature a transportation system incorporating many modes of travel that will protect air quality, minimize traffic congestion, and support compact, efficient land use patterns. The system should fully integrate with public and private transportation facilities.
- Our community should grow in compact patterns that facilitate pedestrian, bicycle, and transit travel. Walking should be a practical, safe, and enjoyable means of travel throughout all neighborhoods and shopping areas. Bicycling should become a more viable transportation choice for all residents and visitors in Great Falls.
- Our community should have a comprehensive and fully accessible public transit system.
- Our community should have streets, trails and walkways that are planned, built, landscaped, and maintained as safe and attractive public spaces linking a balanced system of open lands, natural areas, recreational facilities, schools, and parks with trails and urban streetscapes.
- Our community should continually seek to protect and improve air quality as the area grows, through the creation and implementation of comprehensive programs and policies.

## Goals

The Transportation Element of the “then-current” Growth Policy included the following goals.

- Provide a safe, efficient, accessible, and cost-effective transportation system that offers viable choices for moving people and goods throughout the community.
- Make transit and non-motorized modes of transportation viable alternatives to the private automobile for travel in and around the community.
- Provide an open public involvement process in the development of the transportation system and in the implementation of transportation improvements to assure that community standards and values, such as aesthetics and neighborhood protection, are incorporated.

The following goal was also developed as a part of the LRTP Update to supplement the previously adopted goals.

- Provide a financially sustainable transportation plan that is actively used to guide the transportation decision-making process throughout the course of the next 20 years.

## Objectives

The following objectives were developed during the 2009 LRTP Update to provide measurable milestones to assist in achieving the goals stated above.

- Implement a comprehensive public involvement process.
- Review all existing and on-going planning reports and studies.
- Conduct a thorough data collection effort.
- Analyze multi-modal systems including transit, bicycle and pedestrian systems.
- Evaluate truck route system.
- Review accident history.
- Examine population and employment growth trends.
- Develop a 20-year traffic model.
- Identify current and foreseeable traffic problems.
- Develop a prioritized list of projects that address traffic problems and deficiencies.
- Update street standards.
- Identify Transportation Demand Management strategies to provide alternatives to private vehicle travel.
- Develop a traffic calming program.
- Conduct a financial analysis to ensure the plan is financially feasible and sustainable.
- Add elements required by SAFETEA-LU.
- Ensure fiscal constraint.

### 2.10. MEDICAL DISTRICT MASTER PLAN (JANUARY 2007)

The *Great Falls Medical District Master Plan* was completed in 2007. Key constituents in the community, most notably the City of Great Falls, Benefis Healthcare, Great Falls Clinic, and others, noted the need for a more explicitly defined vision for the medical district due to significant growth in medical and health care related businesses and services. The following vision was developed by the planning sub-group:

1. Collaboration between major medical providers, adjacent property owners, neighborhood councils, and the City of Great Falls to implement the Master Plan.

2. Reinvestment, redevelopment and growth within the Medical District to increase interest in the area for living, working and business investment.
3. A vibrant mixed-use Medical District that attracts new residents and businesses while respecting existing land uses.
4. Exciting and enjoyable public spaces, streetscapes, trails, and physical connections between a mix of major medical facilities, offices, commercial areas, and residences.

As a follow-up to the development of the vision, the following goals & objectives were formulated during the planning process:

- A. Develop a plan to facilitate the physical growth, development, redevelopment and renovation of the medical core area and its adjoining neighbors.
- B. Develop a plan to produce a functional, attractive, interrelated and growth friendly medical district.
- C. Enhance our community's economic competitiveness in attracting both individuals and businesses to locate in the Medical District.
- D. Identify alternative financing approaches, capital strategies, and organizational models to support implementation of the Medical District Master Plan.

## 2.1 1. MISSOURI RIVER URBAN CORRIDOR PLAN (2004)

The primary purpose of this Plan was to present a vision for what is possible in the Missouri River corridor. As a community, Great Falls and Cascade County has done a good job with open space and recreation along the river. The Plan sets forth a series of strategies and actions to make the vision a reality. The Plan recognized that some development patterns along the river corridor represented an opportunity for more desirable, sustainable development that would capitalize on the river as an amenity and a resource.

Much attention in the Plan was paid to transportation as an integrated component of the overall vision for the corridor. To that end, "guiding principles" were formed that were interrelated in form and function. The four (4) guiding principles are as follows (note number 4 speaks to transportation):

1. From the standpoint of river dynamics, no riverside development or stream bank treatment will prevent the Missouri River from safely passing flood stage flows, nor will permanent development be allowed that will be damaged by those flows. (Note: This statement is not intended to prevent the placement of Properly designed and lawfully constructed piers, decks, docks, trails, or other appurtenant improvements associated with a substantial public interest that may in fact be damaged by major flood events).
2. Land and water based recreational values and opportunities associated with the river will be created, preserved, and enhanced, including public access to the river.
3. This Corridor Plan will promote beneficial, sustainable economic development that utilizes the river as an amenity while preserving and enhancing its ecological integrity and asset values. Specifically, water quality, natural shoreline vegetation, and wetlands will be restored, enhanced, or protected, and the environmental health of the river will not be compromised by development.
4. Major through transportation facilities in the river corridor are discouraged. Alternative routing of such facilities already in the corridor through responsible urban area transportation planning is encouraged.

## 3.0 STATE PLANNING PROCESSES

The following sections summarize statewide plans developed by MDT which have an impact on the transportation in Great Falls.

### 3.1. TRANPLANMT (2017)

*TranPlanMT*<sup>1</sup> is Montana's statewide long-range transportation plan and is an update to *TranPlan21*. MDT developed the *TranPlan 21* in 1995 and amended it in 2008. The *TranPlanMT* update is part of an ongoing process to identify transportation needs, evaluate public and stakeholder needs and priorities, assess future transportation concerns, and establish policy goals and strategies to achieve Montana's transportation goals. The plan guides MDT's efforts to plan, manage, and preserve a safe and efficient transportation system.

*TranPlanMT* sets policy direction for MDT based on public and stakeholder goals. A broad outreach effort involving MDT personnel, transportation stakeholders, public users, state, tribal, county, and municipal leaders helped identify transportation goals and strategies contained in the *TranPlanMT* document. These goals include:

- **Goal (Safety):** Improve safety for all transportation users to achieve Vision Zero: zero fatalities and zero serious injuries.
- **Goal (System Preservation and Maintenance):** Preserve and maintain existing transportation infrastructure.
- **Goal (Mobility and Economic Vitality):** Facilitate the movement of people and goods recognizing the importance of economic vitality.
- **Goal (Accessibility and Connectivity):** Preserve access to the transportation network and connectivity between modes.
- **Goal (Environmental Stewardship):** Support MDT's transportation mission through regulatory compliance and responsible stewardship of the built and natural environment.
- **Goal (Business Operations and Management):** Provide efficient, cost-effective management and operation to accelerate transportation project delivery and ensure system reliability.

### 3.2. COMPREHENSIVE STATE HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN (2015)

The Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) is just one of many statewide planning level documents that provides guidance and sets policies regarding a multitude of transportation related issues. Perhaps most applicable to the LRTP is the focus of the CHSP on improving comprehensive safety within the community. The Montana CHSP sets forth goals and objectives that are both broad and distinct at the same time. The CHSP, dated May 2015, outlines the following safety vision and goal for the State of Montana:

#### Vision

The vision for safety on Montana's roadways is clear - *Vison Zero*: zero fatalities and zero serious injuries.

#### Goal

To reduce fatalities and incapacitating injuries in the State of Montana by half in two decades, from 1,705 in 2007 to 852 by 2030.

<sup>1</sup> *TranPlanMT Plan Summary (Draft)*, Montana Department of Transportation, June 2017, <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan/>

*Vision Zero* is a multipronged initiative with the goal of eliminating deaths and injuries on Montana highways. Using a combination of education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical response strategies, *Vision Zero* focuses on the following three emphasis areas:

- Roadway Departure and Intersection Crashes
- Impaired Driving Crashes
- Occupant Protection

### 3.3. LIVABILITY FOR MONTANA TRANSPORTATION (2012)

A research project was commissioned by MDT that resulted in report number FHWA/MT-12-001/8210, titled *Livability for Montana Transportation*<sup>2</sup>. Due to heightened national dialogue on livability, MDT sought to more formally define what livability means for Montana and its communities and understand how livability relates to Montana’s transportation needs. The study found that Montana has some unique characteristics that may have a bearing on measures of its livability. For example, sixty-two percent of Montanans live in areas where the population density is 800 people per square mile or higher, but those areas account for only 0.1 percent of the land area.

Along with Montana’s unique character, the surveys conducted for the study indicate the state is also a good place to live. Survey respondents endorsed the belief that MDT projects add value to their quality of life. There were some consistent themes identified through the various tasks of this study. One size does not fit all, and any definition of livability should have some flexibility and scalability based on local needs and a community vision. A well-maintained road system, safety, public transportation systems, bike and pedestrian facilities, and winter maintenance are all important features of livability for Montana communities.

Based on research and outreach, the team proposed the following definition for livability in Montana as it relates to transportation:

*“Provide a transportation system that emphasizes a safe, maintained road network; allows for multimodal transportation opportunities; and considers local community values.”*

Furthermore, the following summary offers an expanded definition of livability elements that are a priority for Montana and its residents:

*For Montanans, the most important elements of a livable community, although not necessarily transportation related, are friendly neighbors, rural character, availability of outdoor activities, access to high quality education and health care, abundance of natural scenic beauty, and availability of entertainment and cultural activities. However, transportation aspects that Montanan’s perceive bring value to a community include:*

Primarily

- A safe and well-maintained road network
- Infrastructure and services that match local community values and needs

Secondarily

- Multi-modal alternatives to automobile travel—access to transit, rail, and air services
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities

<sup>2</sup> *Livability for Montana Transportation*, Western Transportation Institute, March 2012, [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/research/docs/research\\_proj/benchmarks/final\\_report\\_apr12.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/research/docs/research_proj/benchmarks/final_report_apr12.pdf)

- *Access to nearby cities and towns for employment, health care services, and recreational activities through personal vehicles, transit, intercity bus, or other options*
- *Local enhancements that connect residents to the people and activities of their neighborhoods and communities*
- *Context-sensitive transportation planning that promotes the character of the community*
- *Preservation of the natural resources, scenic views, and rural sense of place that are valued by all Montanans*
- *Road surfaces that are well maintained in all weather conditions*
- *Transportation Infrastructure that improves local economies*

## 4.0 FEDERAL PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Various laws and regulations at the federal level assist to inform the development of the LRTP. The laws and regulations set forth requirements to be considered in the transportation planning process or to be contained in the LRTP. These include FAST Act planning requirements, livability principles, environmental justice considerations, and potentially others. Transportation planning activities must provide for consideration of all modes of travel, and are to be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive.

### 4.1. FAST ACT

The *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*<sup>3</sup> became law on December 4, 2015. The FAST Act authorizes five years of funding for the nation's transportation infrastructure including highways and rail; public transportation; safety for highways, motor vehicles, motor carriers, and hazardous materials; and research, technology, and statistics programs. The FAST Act generally retains highway program structure established in the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21) and continues the focus on safety and streamlined project delivery. The long-term authorization bill allows for better development and planning of federally-funded highway projects, which in turn results in more, and safer, transportation systems for the traveling public.

Title 23 of the United States Code, section 134(f) (revised in SAFETEA-LU section 6001(h)) describes eight Federal Planning Factors issued by Congress to emphasize planning from a national perspective. The FAST Act added two additional planning factors. The ten planning factors are listed below:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

<sup>3</sup> *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*, December 4, 2015, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/>

9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
10. Enhance travel and tourism.

While these factors typically apply to metropolitan and statewide planning efforts, considering them as potential goals for this LRTP is worthwhile.

## 4.2. LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES FROM HUD/EPA/USDOT

Many federal partners are leading a growing effort to provide communities with a high quality of life that is increasingly sustainable. Livability is a national movement with local implications that are supported within the Great Falls community. Providing transportation options to improve access to housing, jobs, businesses, services and social activities are fundamental desires of most transportation system user groups. Active transportation results in a physically fit population, minimizes auto emissions, extends the life of transportation infrastructure, and delays the needs for infrastructure improvements. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) have developed six guiding principles for communities to consider in their effort to achieve better access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs, while supporting the environment. These principles are listed below:

1. **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.
2. **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
3. **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.
4. **Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.
5. **Coordinate policies and leverage investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
6. **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.



## 5.0 RECOMMENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR LRTP UPDATE

Based on a review of relevant planning efforts within the community, five primary principles are suggested to carry forward for the LRTP. These principles are founded on the following:

1. The community desires a connected, smarter transportation system through land use and transportation planning. This type of system allows citizens to choose what mode of travel they desire, and makes travel more convenient while promoting an active lifestyle by choice for its citizens.
2. The community is a hub for local, regional and national industry. It is particularly growing as a freight hub serving various types of industries. The community embraces the opportunity to attract regional industry and support ongoing economic vitality.
3. Efficient travel and increased mobility is desirable to minimize transportation and associated costs.
4. Transportation influences quality of life. The community desires a transportation system that is compatible with the environment and context of the Great Falls area, with special consideration given to sustainability and conserving natural and cultural resources.
5. The community desires a safe and secure transportation system, and strives for a reduction in crashes, injuries and fatalities.

### 5.1. PROPOSED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR LRTP

#### **Goal 1: Maintain the existing transportation system.**

The Great Falls Area transportation system is aging, and available funding is not sufficient for the necessary maintenance. Upkeep of roadways is reactive rather than proactive. There is often competition between funding for new projects as compared to maintenance and operations of the existing system. New or wider roadways are generally not being built, rather the short- and mid-term focus should turn to optimizing the existing transportation system to the greatest extent possible.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1.1. Maintain existing roadway systems to optimize their usefulness and minimize life-cycle costs.
- 1.2. Monitor the performance of key facilities and work with local and regional partners to identify critical deficiencies in the roadway network.
- 1.3. Use transportation project selection criteria to identify and prioritize maintenance activities and project development.
- 1.4. Relieve pressures on the existing transportation system through minor infrastructure improvements, maintenance and system preservation activities rather than expanding the current system.
- 1.5. Encourage reuse and/or redevelopment around existing transportation facilities.

#### **Goal 2: Improve the efficiency, performance and connectivity of a balanced transportation system.**

A transportation system that performs well allows users to choose multiple transportation modes and to move through those modes in a safe and efficient manner. An efficient system allows people to move from place to place in as direct a route as possible, allowing them to reduce the amount of time spent in

travel, the distance that must be traveled, and the amount of time spent in congested traffic. Connectivity allows citizens to make route decisions and mode choices based on traffic and road conditions, or desired destinations.

**Objectives:**

- 2.1. Ensure the current street network of collectors, minor arterials, principal arterials and the interstate is adequate to safely and efficiently handle projected traffic.
- 2.2. Promote the development of an effective roadway network through improvements in intersection and roadway capacity.
- 2.3. Improve opportunities for active transportation (non-motorized) as part of daily travel mode choice within the community by increasing pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections.
- 2.4. Ensure that mobility-challenged populations, such as low income, persons with disabilities, or senior citizens, have travel options in the Great Falls area.
- 2.5. Minimize cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods.
- 2.6. Identify and reduce (or eliminate) freight movement impacts on area roadways and identify improvements to eliminate deficiencies with the objective of improving freight movement.

**Goal 3: Promote consistency between land use and transportation plans to enhance mobility and accessibility.**

Minimizing vehicle miles of travel and promoting alternative travel modes are fundamental objectives of a compact, livable urban environment. As the Great Falls Area population ages and the number of persons per household decreases, options in housing and transportation will be needed to meet the demands of the population. Transportation improvements should be integrated with local land use planning to ensure the proper mix of roads, trails, transit, paths and other bicycle and pedestrian features co-exist.

**Objectives:**

- 3.1. Integrate land use planning and transportation planning to manage and develop the transportation system.
- 3.2. Use transportation project programming to encourage desired development patterns within the community and ensure new development is adequately served.
- 3.3. Develop and implement consistent access management and corridor preservation standards, ordinances and plans appropriate to the roadway network and land use throughout the area.
- 3.4. Ensure an environmentally responsible and sound transportation system that minimizes adverse environmental impacts within the community.

**Goal 4: Provide a safe and secure transportation system.**

Most community planning efforts recognize the desire for a safe transportation system. Community safety and security can be improved by transportation efforts in a number of ways. Reducing crashes, improving the ability of emergency responders to quickly and reliably respond to emergencies, and providing evacuation routes in the event of a natural disaster will all assist to improving safety and security. Educational programs that help travelers understand the particular safety concerns associated with various travel modes can also help all users travel with increased confidence and security.

**Objectives:**

- 4.1. Reduce the rates of fatalities and crashes occurring on all transportation facilities.

- 4.2. Identify barriers to effective and prompt emergency response.
- 4.3. Implement safety initiatives and educational programs for all modes of transportation.
- 4.4. Coordinate with freight operators and agencies on projects that can enhance the security of the freight transportation system in the region.

#### **Goal 5: Support economic vitality of the community.**

All economic activity relies on a functioning, diverse transportation network. Vehicle, freight, air, transit, rail and non-motorized infrastructure all have a purpose to serve when linking economic vitality to the costs of doing business. Transportation in terms of economic vitality is only one component of a successful business environment. High quality schools, diversity in housing types, low debt, availability of infrastructure, and access to a highly educated workforce all contribute to the economic success of a community.

##### **Objectives:**

- 5.1. Optimize the transportation system to meet the needs of the Great Falls Area, including the Great Falls International Airport, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Downtown Great Falls, employment centers, and industrial and commercial areas.
- 5.2. Provide attractive and convenient transportation facilities that attract and retain business, young professionals, families and older adults.
- 5.3. Facilitate the movement of goods and freight to commercial and industrial centers.

#### **Goal 6: Protect and enhance environmental sustainability, provide opportunities for active lifestyles, and conserve natural and cultural resources.**

Both the FAST Act planning factors and the livability principles from HUD/EPA/USDOT point to quality of life concerns in the development of LRTP's. Not only are impacts to the environment taken more seriously, but increasingly Great Falls Area citizens are demanding a more holistic approach to transportation. The preservation of natural, historic and cultural resources, as well as promoting a healthy, active lifestyle, are priorities of this LRTP and current Federal transportation planning guidance.

##### **Objectives:**

- 6.1. Promote transportation projects, plans and/or programs that encourage reducing fuel consumption, reducing vehicle miles of travel, and thereby minimizing air pollution.
- 6.2. Coordinate transportation planning activities with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation.
- 6.3. Engage stakeholders and the public in the decision-making stage of the transportation planning process.
- 6.4. Coordinate transportation planning activities with local and regional land use planning activities, including the City and County Growth Policy Updates.

#### **Goal 7: Maximize the cost effectiveness of transportation.**

Transportation facilities that provide options to the public, reduce the time spent traveling, reduce fuel consumption, and make the best use of limited public funds for infrastructure improvements are desirable. Not only are costs related to the cost of building facilities, but there are also associated costs of time spent in vehicles.

**Objectives:**

- 7.1. Identify available funding mechanisms potentially including federal and state gas tax revenue, impact fees, transportation bond issues, local option gas taxes, and other revenue funding sources used in similar cities.
- 7.2. Encourage cooperation between public, private and non-profit organizations in the development, funding, and management of transportation projects.
- 7.3. Promote cost-effective recommendations that balance transportation system needs with available funding and expected expenditures.

## 5.2. ALIGNMENT OF GOALS WITH FAST ACT AND LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

As a MPO, it is necessary to ensure the alignment of local LRTP transportation goals with the FAST Act planning factors. Additionally, the Livability Principles from HUD/EPA/USDOT, while technically not Federal law, are worthy national transportation process objectives that should be reviewed and considered. **Table 1** depicts the relationship between the proposed Great Falls Area LRTP goals, the required FAST Act planning factors, and the objectives contained in the Livability Principles from HUD/EPA/USDOT.

**Table 1: Alignment of Goals with FAST Act and Livability Principles**

		Great Falls Area LRTP Goals							
		Goal 1: Maintain the existing transportation system.	Goal 2: Improve the efficiency, performance and connectivity of a balanced transportation system.	Goal 3: Promote consistency between land use and transportation plans to enhance mobility and accessibility.	Goal 4: Provide a safe and secure transportation system.	Goal 5: Support economic vitality of the community.	Goal 6: Protect and enhance environmental sustainability, provide opportunities for active lifestyles, and conserve natural and cultural resources.	Goal 7: Maximize the cost effectiveness of transportation.	
FAST ACT Planning Factors	1	Support the <b>economic vitality</b> of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.					✓		✓
	2	Increase the <b>safety</b> of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.				✓			
	3	Increase the <b>security</b> of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.				✓			
	4	Increase the <b>accessibility and mobility of people and for freight</b> .		✓	✓				
	5	<b>Protect and enhance the environment</b> , promote <b>energy conservation</b> , improve the <b>quality of life</b> , and promote <b>consistency between transportation improvements</b> and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.			✓			✓	✓
	6	Enhance the <b>integration and connectivity</b> of the transportation system, across and between modes, people and freight.		✓	✓				
	7	Promote <b>efficient system management and operation</b> .		✓					
	8	Emphasize the <b>preservation of the existing transportation system</b> .	✓						
	9	Improve the <b>resiliency and reliability</b> of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.		✓				✓	
	10	Enhance <b>travel and tourism</b> .					✓		
Livability Principles	1	Provide more <b>transportation choices</b> .		✓					
	2	Promote equitable, <b>affordable housing</b> .		✓	✓				✓
	3	Enhance <b>economic competitiveness</b> .					✓		
	4	<b>Support</b> existing <b>communities</b> .	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	5	Coordinate policies and <b>leverage investment</b> .							✓
	6	<b>Value communities and neighborhoods</b> .	✓	✓	✓	✓			