

Rattlesnake Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, Dec 3rd, 2024, 6:15pm-7:30pm,
Missoula Public Library, Cooper Space B, Public Library

1. Introductions
 - a. Attendees: Bob Giordano- chair, Bradley Layton, Marta Meengs, Tim Skufka, Gracie Sandford, Judy Stack, Jeani Adams, Fred Rice, Dan Doyle, Eric Melson- City Council ward 1
2. Public Comment
 - a. General public comments focused on making streets safer for all.
3. Approval of Minutes- [October 8, 2024](#)
 - a. Approved
4. Presentations:
 - a. None.
5. Items to be Discussed:
 - a. Discussion and action on 'place types and street types' for the Missoula 2045 draft land use plan going to City Council. Discussion and action on 'place types and street types' for the Missoula 2045 draft land use plan going to City Council. After a discussion, Bob agreed to send the following letter, which includes a language change for the Rattlesnake:
Dear City Council, Land Use Planners for Missoula,
At our Dec. 3rd Rattlesnake Transportation Committee meeting, our group of 10 unanimously supported a language change for the place type, 'Limited Urban Residential' (LUR). LUR comprises of our neighborhood, the Rattlesnake Valley.

The language change is focused on softening the notion that the Rattlesnake Valley is- and will always be- very car-dependent. As the plan is aspirational, we believe that over time the Rattlesnake can be much more 'multi-modal', with walking, biking and transit playing a stronger role in meeting our collective mobility needs. Contributing factors include: safer and more accessible walk and bike ways, trail extensions, more frequent transit and mixed use development.

As a subcommittee of both the Upper and Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood councils, and with support of those councils, we hope that you will adopt our suggested word changes for LUR. The changes are shown below. Thank you for your work on setting the stage for future growth in Missoula.

Sincerely,
Bob Giordano, Chair, Rattlesnake Transportation Committee, and member of the Our Missoula Citizen Advisory Group

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Melissa Glueckert, Neighborhood Specialist
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Upper Rattlesnake Leadership Team

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Limited Urban Residential (LUR)

original:

These quieter neighborhoods are located on the outskirts of the city core that have more limited transit options and rely heavily on cars for transportation. Sometimes these places are closer to the city core but include or are near environmental or topological constraints or hazards that influence how these areas can develop and grow.

These areas primarily offer homeownership opportunities, mainly through single-family homes and duplexes, with some medium to large-scale multi-dwelling developments along collector streets. Housing variety is moderate, spanning single family homes to limited “missing middle” housing options, with buildings that often feature medium to large setbacks that allow for driveways and on-site parking. It is less common for streets to be accompanied by alleys, which often means that on-site parking and garages are accessed directly from the street.

While amenities like parks and schools may be within walking distance, these areas are primarily car-dependent to access services, with biking as a secondary mode of travel. There may be dedicated trails and routes that support biking and walking, but walkability is less emphasized than in more urban neighborhoods. Longer commuter trails connect these neighborhoods to more urbanized areas with commercial services and employment opportunities.

Edits:

These quieter neighborhoods are located on the outskirts of the city core and have more limited transit options (strike: and rely heavily on cars for transportation). Sometimes these places are closer to the city core but include or are near environmental or topological constraints or hazards that influence how these areas can develop and grow.

2nd paragraph OK

While amenities like parks and schools may be within walking distance, these areas (change, 'are primarily car-dependent to access services, with biking as a secondary mode of travel' to 'also rely on driving and cycling to access services'). (strike: 'There may be dedicated trails and routes support biking and walking, but walkability is less emphasized than in more urban neighborhoods'). Longer commuter trails connect these neighborhoods to more urbanized areas with commercial services and employment opportunities.

Proposed version:

These quieter neighborhoods are located on the outskirts of the city core and have more limited transit options. Sometimes these places are closer to the city core but include or are near environmental or topological constraints or hazards that influence how these areas can develop and grow.

2nd paragraph same as original

While amenities like parks and schools may be within walking distance, these areas also rely on driving and cycling to access services. Longer commuter trails connect these neighborhoods to more urbanized areas with commercial services and employment opportunities.

- b. Discussion on proposed Cherry Gulch development and possible endorsement of the Leadership team (both Lower and Upper councils) comments and letter. Letter was approved unanimously (copied below).

Cherry Gulch Rattlesnake Hills
Lower Rattlesnake Leadership Team Agency Comments
November 25, 2024

Alex and the development committee,

During the Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood Leadership Team meeting on November 25, 2024, the leadership team and a few additional neighborhood citizens met to review the current proposal of the Rattlesnake Hills development in Cherry Gulch.

I have listed the recurring themes that we discussed in our meeting, which include general comments, concerns, and suggestions for consideration ahead of City Council review.

Traffic Management and Emergency Evacuation Concerns:
with additional residents, there are concerns for how the development team and the city plan to manage increased traffic, especially considering emergency vehicles and emergency evacuations. There are two roads that lead out of the Rattlesnake corridor and both are narrow two lane roads. The leadership team would like to better understand the plan for emergency travel.

Intersections Safety:
The new Minckler Road was designed to be narrow and at a sharp angle, presumably to slow traffic considering the high foot traffic to access the Waterworks trails. The leadership team would like to see a study or further data and consideration around the choice of access road to the new development. Peggio could be a safer access road considering its location along Greenough Drive and the hill. The type of intersection is also in question: is it possible to include a roundabout or something that reduces chances of accidents.

Greenough Drive Expansion:
Additionally, Greenough drive, one of the two routes out of the corridor, is a narrow road without safe options for pedestrians or bikes in its current state. With 40+ additional dwelling units added to this road, the leadership team would like the

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development team and the city to provide a plan that ensures Greenough Drive is safe for cars, bikes, and pedestrians alike.

Public transportation - this is already a public transportation desert.

Greenough Drive and the residents who live on the west side of the Rattlesnake corridor do not have access to Missoula's public transportation due to the train schedules. The leadership team and many neighbors have concerns around developing 40+ new dwelling units in a known public transit desert.

Cherry Gulch is a Wildlife Corridor:

Cherry Gulch is a major wildlife corridor: deer, bears, foxes, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, snakes and other animals extensively use this corridor from Greenough Park up to Waterworks Hill. It would appear that the development will necessitate filling in and bridging part of the Gulch. The plans, as presented, do not provide any information on the status of Cherry Gulch or how its hydrology will be maintained. And the increased traffic out of the subdivision Rattlesnake will interrupt wildlife movements and will result in decimation of wildlife populations that we are supposed to protect. With two major developments planned along Cherry Gulch (Rattlesnake Estates and Greenough Heights) it is likely that erosion and disturbance in the gulch area will be severe, and that is not even considering the likelihood of "social trails" from both developments for people to gain access to Greenough Park. All of this disturbance will result in spread of invasive weeds and also changes in water quality due to erosion and runoff into Rattlesnake Creek, where people are trying to restore bull trout habitat.

Water Use and Runoff Concerns:

The leadership team would like to see additional material around plans for water use and water runoff not only during construction, but for the lifetime impact of these dwelling units on the environment in and adjacent to Cherry Gulch.

Affordable Housing:

Will any of these units be marked as affordable housing and be in line with City Council's housing initiatives?

Commercial/Mixed Use:

If we have increased residential units, the leadership team would like to see options for mixed/commercial zoning.

Sidewalks and Trails - pedestrian safety concerns:

The plan sketches are not clear on where the trails will exist or be diverted – either during construction or after completion of the project. The boundaries of the existing conservation easement are also not clear. But one of the most important issues is the status of Cherry Gulch, which is a major wildlife corridor. Will the development include ADA sidewalks and other provisions in the neighborhood?

Heat Island and Sustainability Impact:

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The leadership team would like to see development plans for general environmental impact considering City Council's recent initiatives on sustainability in residential developments, including how heat will be increased by increased asphalt, etc.

General Access and Safety:

The lower section of Greenough Drive does not have any bike or pedestrian ways. So construction traffic, and new resident traffic will cause roadway, biking and pedestrian hazards. Also, if the road through the new 42-unit buildings is shunted down Minkler Road, then there will be additional hazards associated with people and cars going up to the Waterworks Hill parking lot (which is full most times). Also, the access to Greenough Drive from Minkler Road is one lane, steep and ends up on the steepest section of Greenough Drive. This section (going down the hill) now has traffic backups past Minkler Road when there is a train going through the Madison Street Crossing. Also, the egress as planned will overlay with the additional traffic coming down the Greenough Hill from the Greenough Heights development (which was approved two years ago, but not started yet). The new development does not seem to have an alternate "escape route" – as it should to allow new residents to get out in the event of road closures, especially due to ice and snow on the steep roadway out of the development. And there is no plan for Mountain Lion bus line to run up Greenough Drive to service all the new residents. I was told that is due to the issue of the railroad trains at the Madison Street crossing that cause delays. Another safety consideration is how the people on the west side of the Rattlesnake Valley are going to be evacuated in the event of a train mishap or wildfire. This was extensively discussed during an Office of Emergency Management meeting at the Rattlesnake School this year.

General Timeline:

There is very little time to comment on the proposal. The Ward 1 reps said (as of November 19) that they did not even have the "staff report" on the project yet. And the original, conditional approval was 30 years ago. A lot has changed since then, and many more developments have been approved in the lower Rattlesnake. Also, earlier plans call for 80 storage units and a senior center. Are they still in the plans? The plans are hard to read and the revised maps don't track well with the original plans from 1994. Given the deadlines, the leadership team and several neighbors gathered together in short notice to ensure we could submit our agency comments ahead of the agency comment deadline, December 4, 2024.

We look forward to your consideration of these comments and are open to collaborate further to ensure we are aligned on sustainably supporting our neighborhood, including our human neighbors, animal neighbors, and plant neighbors.

Sincerely,

Gracie Sanford & the Lower Rattlesnake Leadership Team on behalf of the Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood

6. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

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7. Announcements

8. Adjournment – 7:30pm

Rattlesnake Transportation Committee – Mission and Purpose:

The Rattlesnake Transportation Committee is a subcommittee of the Upper and Lower Rattlesnake Neighborhood Councils. Members of the committee are residents of the neighborhood who volunteer their time to gather monthly (September – June) in public meetings to promote safe, efficient, equitable and accessible transportation options for residents and visitors of the Rattlesnake Valley. Everyone is welcome to attend the meetings and participate to discuss issues and identify potential solutions to be considered by the neighborhood, the City of Missoula, Missoula County and others as appropriate. The committee can be contacted at: rattlesnaketransportationplan@gmail.com

Rattlesnake Transportation Plan:

In 2019 the committee began work to update the 2011 Rattlesnake Valley Transportation Summit Study. Working alongside the Missoula City Office of Neighborhoods, a process was put in place to gather input and feedback from residents of the adjoining upper and lower Rattlesnake neighborhoods and to identify priority issues and potential solutions. In November of 2021 the Rattlesnake Transportation Plan Update was completed and it can be found here: <https://rattlesnaketransportation.org/>