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5th/6th/ARTHUR PROJECT GOES LIVE FRIDAY **Partnership brings improvements at campus entrance**

Missoula's Arthur Avenue traffic improvement project opens for business Friday. Drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians will find the area around the Madison Street bridge and the north entrance to The University of Montana campus safer and easier to navigate.

Look for these changes traveling south over the bridge:

- There is now traffic coming north, too, in the lane added next to Jeannette Rankin Park.
- There's a traffic signal – red, yellow, green – at the foot of the bridge at 5th Street. Decide early if you're traveling straight through on Arthur or turning right on 5th.
- Traffic is two-way between 5th and 6th streets on Arthur. At 6th Street, drivers choose to continue straight ahead or turn left on 6th to approach campus.
- The 6th/Arthur intersection is the heart of the improvements. Eastbound Highway 12 traffic will now be able to turn north on Arthur and go over the Madison Street bridge, instead of having to travel the pedestrian- and bicycle-intense area on Maurice Avenue. Drivers traveling north on Arthur can choose to turn right on 6th Street to go to the campus or continue north over the bridge with the option of turning left on 5th Street at the foot of the bridge.
- Maurice Avenue will now have two-way traffic between 5th and 6th Streets and new protected, two-way bike lanes. Look for the new stop sign at 5th Street and Maurice. Only one lane will continue north over the bridge from there.

Please pay extra attention to new signs and signals and to lane markings.

Other features that have been incorporated into this project to increase safety for all modes of transportation are protected crosswalks and bike lanes and amenities. Many of the features for bicyclists will be more apparent next summer when green epoxy paint is put down after the streets are chip-sealed. New pushbutton-integrated devices at the intersections of 5th and 6th

streets with Arthur are some of the first Accessible Pedestrian Signals implemented in Montana; they are designed for pedestrians who are visually impaired. (See related news release.)

The biggest difference in the area is the new direct route for Highway 12 traffic.

“Now through traffic will truly be through traffic,” said City of Missoula Senior Project Coordinator Gregg Wood.

The project, called officially the 5th/6th/Arthur and Maurice Intersection Safety and Circulation Improvement Project, goes back to the fall of 2005, when a Montana Department of Transportation proposal was not supported by the public and lacked funding. That sent UM and City leaders back to the drawing board, where with design help from WGM Group they came up with a project to address safety and traffic circulation improvements but not increase capacity.

“It is important for people to understand that this is a project to improve safety and traffic circulation and not to increase traffic capacity,” Wood said.

The University of Montana funded most of the project with a \$1.25 million Special Improvement District in the neighborhood, for which UM will pay all of the assessments. The City and the Montana Department of Transportation each contributed about \$200,000 in labor and materials. City crews provided street restoration with milling and paving, and MDT furnished and funded the new traffic signal at the corner of Fifth and Arthur.

“This project is a fine example of the power of working collaboratively to solve problems locally,” said Mayor John Engen. “The basic design was conceived in a conference room at City Hall with all the partners at the table, and it does everything we need it to do: it handles a large volume of vehicles, puts traffic where it belongs, dramatically improves pedestrian safety, is aesthetically pleasing and costs a lot less than a version that was previously proposed and rejected. Good stuff all the way around.”

The project improvements will be especially welcome on football and basketball days as well as during the numerous cultural events held on campus year-round, said UM Executive Vice President Jim Foley.

“It really is a testament to the City, MDT and UM working together to make the community better and to make a safer area around The University of Montana,” Foley said. “The community, the university and the public should be proud of it.”

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To see a map of the project area, go to:

<http://mt-missoula.civicplus.com/Archive.aspx?ADID=4339>

To learn more about Accessible Pedestrian Signals, go to:
<http://mt-missoula.civicplus.com/Archive.aspx?ADID=4338>

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