

May 26, 2015

Doug Russell, City Manager  
City of Kalispell  
201 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue East  
Kalispell, MT 59901

RE: US 2 Information Request

Dear Mr. Russell,

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 7, 2015 which discusses the Rail Park Project the City of Kalispell is pursuing. This letter of response is intended to answer your questions and provide input in regards to the effects the changes this project would have on US 2.

In review of MDT's future projects and planning efforts, there is currently no plan to provide pedestrian or bike facilities on or across US 2 in the Evergreen area and Underpass Hill into downtown Kalispell. It is unlikely this pedestrian connection will ever be made given the relatively steep grade of Underpass Hill and the lack of space on each side of US 2 beyond the travel lanes. An attempt to install such facilities would require a significant engineering and construction investment which would not be competitive with other highway needs in Western Montana.

With regards to your questions on traffic volumes and crash data, our most recent records from 2013 list an average annual daily traffic count of 22,630 for US 2 west of Flathead Drive and 26,990 for US 2 east of Flathead Drive. For additional information on peak hour traffic and crash analysis, I would refer you to the Traffic Impact Study performed by KLJ Engineering as this study would be the most current and accurate information available for the subject area.

MDT's Missoula Bridge Engineer, Chris Hardan, was asked to comment on the proposed conversion of the rail bridge from rail traffic to pedestrian traffic. He did not perform an analysis on the conversion but has stated the conversion would provide mutual benefit for the vehicles traveling on US 2 and for pedestrians wishing to travel in this area.

The significant decrease in bridge loading will increase the life of the bridge structure and the possibility of a train derailling or spilling cargo onto US 2 would be eliminated. These observations result in direct benefit to vehicle traffic in terms of safety. For pedestrians, a grade-separated crossing provides both safety and connectivity which do not exist today and probably will not exist into the future unless this rail bridge conversion is implemented.

In closing, MDT sees multiple transportation benefits with the proposed project. If you need additional information or clarification, feel free to let me know.

Sincerely,



Ed Toavs, PE  
Missoula District Administrator

Cc: Chris Hardan, P.E. – Missoula Area Bridge Engineer