



Maintaining Momentum

What's important now, community leaders stress, is that Kalispell maintains its momentum and focus on downtown. And they're right

BY KELLYN BROWN // SEP 26, 2014 // [LIKE I WAS SAYING](#), OPINION

In a blow to Kalispell's plans to build a rail yard and spur development downtown by replacing railroad tracks with a linear park, the city, once again, missed out on the TIGER grant it was seeking.

City officials broke the news last week and struck a positive tone, saying they would continue to pursue the core area redevelopment plan; they would likely reapply for the grant again next year; and this will slow down the process, but not stop it.

But to be sure, this was bad news.

Just about everyone I talked to involved with the planned project, and even our reporter who has covered it, expressed cautious optimism that the \$10 million federal transportation grant would be awarded to Kalispell. It would have provided funding and expedited the construction of a long-sought rail yard. That project, in turn, would have allowed the city to replace the tracks cutting through downtown — the first phase of a plan that is estimated to cost roughly \$22 million.

Instead, when U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced the combined \$600 million in grants, just one Montana project made the list. A former airport site on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation was awarded \$692,829.

MASTHEAD

NEWSROOM

EMAIL news@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.257.9220

TWITTER [@flatheadbeacon](https://twitter.com/flatheadbeacon)



KELLYN BROWN EDITOR IN CHIEF

EMAIL editor@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9539

TWITTER [@kellynjbrown](https://twitter.com/kellynjbrown)



MYERS REECE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

EMAIL mreece@flatheadbeacon.com

GREG LINDSTROM MEDIA DIRECTOR

EMAIL greg@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9541

TWITTER [@gl_photo](https://twitter.com/gl_photo)



TRISTAN SCOTT SENIOR WRITER

EMAIL tscott@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9540

TWITTER [@tristanscott](https://twitter.com/tristanscott)



MOLLY PRIDDY STAFF WRITER

EMAIL mpriddy@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9542

TWITTER [@FB_mollypriddy](https://twitter.com/FB_mollypriddy)



DILLON TABISH STAFF WRITER

EMAIL dtabish@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9543

TWITTER [@djtabish](https://twitter.com/djtabish)



JUSTIN FRANZ STAFF WRITER

EMAIL jfranz@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9544

Foxx's agency should have included Kalispell, but I am, of course, biased in this case.

This is the second year in a row the city has missed out on the grant. In 2013, a proposed bike path in Missoula County was awarded \$4.58 million.

Nothing against Missoula, but parts of downtown Kalispell don't even have sidewalks, much less bike paths.

What's important now, community leaders stress, is that Kalispell maintains its momentum and focus on downtown. And they're right. Despite the setback, it shouldn't deter attention from the area of the city that needs it most. And the core area redevelopment plan, which was several years in the making, should remain at the forefront of any plans to improve the city's walkability.

If completed, the tracks would be replaced by a pathway connecting the east and west sides of town and reconnect streets that currently dead-end at those tracks. But that is contingent on moving the current rail-served operations to a new rail yard, and that is contingent on money.

"This was just one option for funding the rail park and redevelopment plan and we will continue to work on solving that puzzle piece," Katharine Thompson, community development manager for Kalispell. "We lost the battle but we didn't lose the war."

There is a lot to like about the direction Kalispell is going. And there are still plenty of whispers about retailers potentially opening up or relocating in the downtown area. Those business owners are more likely to invest in the city when its elected officials and community leaders remain focused on improvements. And it's encouraging that they appear to be.

The next step is to at once look for alternative ways to fund the project while preparing to reapply for the TIGER grant again next year. With the completion of the U.S. 93 bypass in sight, and the discussion beginning in earnest

TWITTER @jfranz88



CLARE MENZEL STAFF WRITER

EMAIL clare@flatheadbeacon.com

PHONE 406.407.9545

TWITTER @claremenzel



about redeveloping the area around the courthouse, city officials still have plenty to keep them busy in steering the direction of growth downtown.

Despite the setback, this is an opportunity to regroup and continue to pursue the thoughtful vision set forth by the city administration. Like they have already stressed, this is no time to lose momentum.

0 Comments

Sort by Oldest



Add a comment...

[Facebook Comments Plugin](#)

MORE FROM THE BEACON



GPI Proposes West Glacier RV Park and Cabin Rental



Tribes Announce Emergency Watercraft Closure and Restrictions



Flathead County Attorney Declines to Reopen Lenio Case

[NEWS & FEATURES](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [OUTDOORS](#) | [ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT](#) | [OPINION](#) | [PHOTOS](#) | [EVENTS](#) | [ABOUT US](#) | [MARKETPLACE](#)

[Advertise](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertiser Tear Sheets](#) | [Email & RSS Feeds](#) | [Contact Us](#)

© 2017 Flathead Beacon, All Rights Reserved. Use of this site is subject to the Flathead Beacon's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

Flathead Beacon • 17 Main Street • Kalispell • Montana • 59901 • USA • (406) 257-9220