

KALISPELL COUNCIL BEGINS TO TACKLE TRAIL DESIGN

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The Kalispell City Council will hold a public work session at 7 p.m. today to discuss Phase II of the Core Area trail design.

Phase 1 of construction on the Glacier Rail Park has been completed through a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant Kalispell received. Phase II of the project is the design and construction of a 1.6-mile portion of the trail, from the railroad's intersection with U.S. 2 to North Meridian Road.

The council will hear public comments on the proposed 30 percent design plans. For capital projects such as this, the council will review the designs at the phases of 30, 60 and 90 percent completion. The work session will review the trail renderings and thirty percent design plans that Alta Design and KLJ Engineering have developed based on previous public comments.

According to the work session agenda, "the 30 percent design shows the proposed trail alignment within the right of way, existing street crossings, landscape plans and gateways or entrances to the trail along with some vision for integration with surrounding properties."

The agenda also reported that "the design is deliverable under the TIGER project funded with federal grant funds and city of Kalispell match."

The proposed plans the council will review are not necessarily a definitive street placement for this portion of the project. The council will finalize the rail-banking agreement with BNSF Railway Co. once they have concluded rail service in the old rail park. Before that happens, the current rail users — CHS Inc. and Northwest Drywall — will complete new rail facilities and move their operations there. They expect those moves to happen this fall.

The grant also requires a Supplemental Environmental Assessment to assess three additional potential complete street options. The document will be available for a 30-day public comment period after it goes through the Federal Rail Administration's review process. It is anticipated this process will begin in August.

Public comments on the 30 percent design plans must be gathered and addressed pursuant to a Finding of No Significant Impact report before it goes to the City Council. The council plans on gathering additional public input on the design this summer, followed by the completion of construction documents this winter.

They tentatively expect the trail project to be ready for construction in fall 2020 or spring 2021, but these timelines will be affected by the timing of ownership transfers, environmental assessments and possible remediation.

The council will meet at 7 p.m. in the City Hall council chambers, 201 First Ave. E.

The entire 30 percent design plan can be found at: <https://www.kalispell.com/AgendaCenter/City-Council-Agenda-8/>

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