

**BEAVERHEAD TRAILS COALITION IN-TOWN
TRAILS STRATEGIC PLAN**

Approved – 02/07/2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Leadership and Program Development Goals	2
Project Selection and Management Goals.....	2
Outreach and Marketing Goals.....	3
Project Implementation Goals.....	3
In-town Trails Program Role and Scope.....	3
Pedestrian-Bicycle Infrastructure and Related Projects	4
Land Acquisition Projects.....	4
Five Year Goals.....	4
Planning & Leadership	4
Dillon Community Plan & Dillon Downtown Masterplan	5
Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan.....	5
Other Organizations	6
Beaverhead Trails Coalition In-Town Trails Program Planning	7
Pedestrian-Bicycle Trails and Routes Status	7
Sidewalk System	7
Existing Trails	8
On-Street Bicycle-Pedestrian Lanes.....	11
Bicycling.....	13
Parks	13
Five Year Plan for In-Town Trail Projects	13
Leadership & Program’s Role within BTC	13
Current Priority Projects	14
Projects in the Pipeline	16
Implementing & Completing Projects.....	18
Project Selection and Management	20
Outreach and Marketing	25
Project Implementation.....	30
APPENDICES.....	1
Appendix A – Leadership and Organization Actions	2
Year 1.....	2
Year 3.....	2
Year 5.....	2
Appendix B – Outreach and Marketing Actions.....	2
Ongoing	2

In-Town Trails – Approved on February 7th, 2018

Year 1.....	3
Year 3.....	3
Year 5.....	3
Appendix C: Current Priority Project Implementation Actions.....	4
Annual/Periodic.....	4
Year 1.....	4
Year 3.....	4
Year 5.....	4
Appendix D – Project Selection and Management.....	5
Actions.....	5
Ranking Projects.....	6
Approving Projects.....	7
Project Updates and Changes.....	9
Project Data Base Design.....	10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Beaverhead Trails Coalition’s (BTC’s) In-town Trails Program (ITTP) envisions a community where residents and visitors to Dillon can enjoy an interconnected system of safe and accessible walking and biking trails and routes. Our mission is to improve and connect existing routes and trails and expand the walk/bike network as shown in Figure 1, thereby encouraging healthy lifestyles and reducing traffic. The scope of the program includes all types of pedestrian-bicycle infrastructure and improvements as well as documenting and publicizing opportunities within the city limits and the Dillon Growth Area.

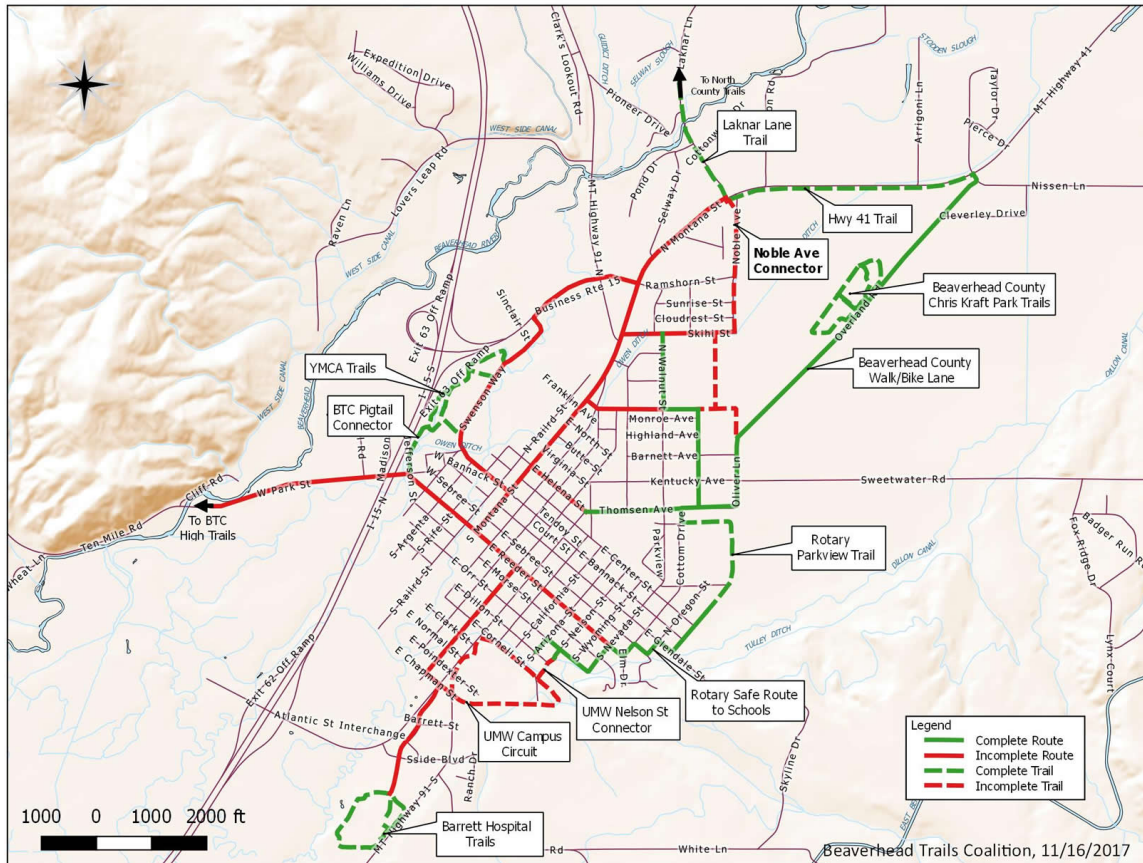


Figure 1 – Dillon Walk-bike Route and Trail Network

Increasing and improving in-town walk/bike opportunities has always been an important part of BTC’s mission. However, out of necessity BTC’s program work, publicity, and marketing have focused primarily on its High Trails Program in recent years. Even the image of Dillon on the BTC’s home page is from a High Trails perspective. This has led to a perception that in-town projects are not central to BTC’s mission and that the BTC is primarily an organization for “hard core” hikers.

BTC is now in a position to renew an emphasis on the In-Town Trails Program which was identified as a primary focus area in the strategic planning exercise. In doing so, BTC confirmed the importance of the program in building support for BTC within the community, ensuring that the community’s perception of BTC matches the organization’s mission and vision, thus enabling completion of many projects.

As part of the BTC strategic planning process, we have identified goals and actions in four areas:

1. Leadership and Program Development
2. Project Selection and Management
3. Outreach and Marketing
4. Project Implementation

This section presents a brief summary of the plan.

The remainder of the document begins with a discussion of the role of the ITT program and a brief history of trails development efforts in Dillon and the surrounding area. A more detailed discussion of the five-year plan for the four areas listed above follows a summary of the status of current pedestrian-bicycle routes and trails. Additional details for each of the areas, including actions can be found in the appendices.

Leadership and Program Development Goals

In five years, BTC will successfully reinvigorate the In-Town Trails Program, achieve important new pedestrian-bicycle connections, and engage more BTC and community members in participating in and achieving BTC's goals for in-town connectivity and safety. Specifically, the In-Town Trails Program will need to increase the size of the In-town Trails Committee and identify volunteers. In the near term, the Program will attempt to raise the visibility of the program by completing at least one project and in the longer term have an experienced team capable of managing multiple projects. In five years the In-Town Trails Program will:

- Achieve a level of capacity, momentum and community engagement that will make it possible to tackle projects on the scale that the High Trails Program is currently tackling.
- Increase the number of BTC members actively involved in the In-Town Trails Program as volunteers and committee members in order to significantly increase BTC's capacity to achieve the program's vision.

Project Selection and Management Goals

As the In-town Trails Program capacity increases, it will be increasingly important to develop processes for selecting and managing the projects. Specific goals include:

- Develop a systematic process for approving, prioritizing, and tracking projects to guide BTC in making wise strategic decisions.
- Ensure that time and resources are invested in projects with high value to the community, high potential to strengthen BTC as an organization, and a strong likelihood of success.
- Manage the program's workload and help avoid overcommitting time and resources.
- Develop a broad vision for expanded connectivity to lands adjacent to the City, and embrace related opportunities should they arise, within the constraints of available resources.

Outreach and Marketing Goals

As community support and involvement are necessary for the success of the In-Town Trails Program, a significant effort must be made to cultivate all stakeholders. The Program will therefore focus on publicizing the In-town goals and projects, maintaining contact with stakeholders, and recruiting new BTC members and volunteers who can help publicize that BTC is not “just for hardcore hikers.” Outreach and marketing goals for the next five years include:

- The public perceives in-town connectivity as a significant part of BTC’s work, and views BTC as a leader and as an organization that is achieving valuable improvements in pedestrian-bicycle connectivity and safety.
- A significant portion of the community understands and supports BTC’s vision for pedestrian-bicycle connectivity.
- There is stronger, more broad-based support for making pedestrian-bicycle improvements a high priority in the community.

Project Implementation Goals

Implementing projects includes making improvements to existing routes or trails or building new trails. In the next five years In-Town Trails Program will focus on the following project implementation goals:

- Complete two significant connectivity improvement projects such as Noble Street.
- Complete two smaller scale projects such as signage and crosswalks in one or more areas of town.
- Have two significant projects in process; one active smaller scale project and one moving toward completion.
- Three projects will be at or nearing “shovel ready” status.

Projects currently identified as high priority, and therefore candidates for implementation in the near term, include the Noble Avenue Connector Trail construction, Reeder Street route improvements, and the Nelson Street UMW Connector.

IN-TOWN TRAILS PROGRAM ROLE AND SCOPE

There has been some discussion about whether the In-Town Trails Program should incorporate all of BTC’s in-town programs including the Bicycle Recycling Program and the Walking School Bus. To effectively manage the In-town Trails projects, it would probably not be a good approach to combine all three efforts within the In-Town Trails Program.

The In-Town Trails master project list includes a number of complicated and interrelated projects. In-town trails meetings will need all their available time to be fully focused on prioritizing and managing these projects. Volunteers with limited time shouldn’t attend meetings where two-thirds or more of the agenda would be covering work with which they were not directly involved. These recommended steps will develop a clear vision for BTC’s in-town connectivity work.

Pedestrian-Bicycle Infrastructure and Related Projects

Over the next five years the program’s scope may include:

- Separated paved and gravel trails including bridges over streams and ditches
- Sidewalks including curb ramps
- Wide shoulders with striped bicycle-pedestrian lanes on County roads without sidewalks
- Bike lanes on City streets with sidewalks
- Route signage
- Crosswalks and other safe street crossing infrastructure possibly including traffic signals, mid-street pedestrian refuges, or even roundabouts and/or traffic calming design elements
- Community pedestrian-bicycle routes that could combine some or all of these elements
- Maps
- Bicycle racks

Land Acquisition Projects

There are currently no parkland acquisition projects on BTC’s in-town projects list. BTC leadership should decide whether in-town parkland or public land acquisition projects should be included in the In-Town Trails Committee’s scope.

With the success of the High Trails land acquisitions, BTC is clearly well positioned, and has the skills and experience to lead the community in identifying and pursuing parkland acquisition opportunities. As long as such projects are carefully prioritized, there are many potential benefits to including land acquisitions.

Five Year Goals

- 1) Reinvigorate the In-Town Trails Program, achieve important new pedestrian-bicycle connections, and engage more BTC and community members in supporting BTC’s goals for in-town connectivity and safety.
- 2) Achieve a level of momentum and community engagement making it possible to tackle projects on the scale that the High Trails Program is currently tackling.
- 3) Achieve connectivity between existing trails and routes within the City, as well as to existing trails located in the County on the perimeter of the City.
- 4) Achieve “Complete Streets” for designated routes – addressing needs such as missing sections of sidewalk, signage, crosswalk striping, and curb ramps to make street crossings accessible for people with disabilities.

PLANNING & LEADERSHIP

Over the last 25 years, many proposals have been made for improving safety and opportunities for walking and biking in the community. Many organizations, including the BTC have played important leadership roles in developing plans and implementing some of those plans.

Dillon Community Plan & Dillon Downtown Masterplan

The Dillon Community Plan (2016) strongly emphasizes trails, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, and parks and recreation. The plan frequently references BTC as an important community leader for improving trails.

For BTC's in-town projects, important City personnel include Todd Hazelbaker, Dillon's Director of Operations; and the Mayor and City Council members on the Streets and Alleys, and Parks Committees.

The plan included a community survey in which trails and recreation needs were frequently noted. Recreational opportunities within and near Dillon were identified as one of the community's greatest assets, and participants noted the need to find ways to connect local trails with parks and other recreational areas.

The plan's goals and recommended actions are closely aligned with BTC's vision for improving pedestrian and bicycle opportunities in the community. The economic vitality and sense of place relies on a functional infrastructure system, including pedestrian facilities. Existing and future infrastructure must be well planned and maintained in a reliable, cost effective manner.

- Develop adequate and reliable funding sources for infrastructure improvement and expansion.
- Provide recreational opportunities through the development of park areas, connect to public lands in surrounding areas, and create opportunities for walking and biking to be part of daily life for residents. Access to greenspace promotes an active and healthy lifestyle, strengthens community, fosters social interaction, and is a public benefit.
- Participate in public/private partnerships to support parks and recreation.
- Provide parks that are accessible to all residents. Review access for ADA compliance and safe bicycle and walking routes to parks from adjacent neighborhoods.
- Connect the community using trails. Develop maps and signage for trails and trail facilities.
- Develop a city-wide approach to transportation needs. Prepare a city transportation plan that addresses vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian transportation needs, including a review of street grid network. Continue the work of the Capital Improvement Plan to identify future needs for right-of-way acquisition. Work with the Beaverhead Trails Coalition to develop trails that can support non-vehicular transportation needs.
- Coordinate with County and non-profit organizations in the development of public amenities that both city and county residents enjoy. Such coordination can provide cost efficiencies, reduce duplication of services and improve quality of life.

The Downtown Dillon Master Plan includes a guiding principle that all streets should be designed equally for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan

Completed in 2011, this plan includes a good overview of walking and biking conditions and needs, along with detailed proposals for potential projects to improve walking and biking opportunities.

The plan includes a detailed discussion of trail types, construction standards, signage and maintenance. Appendix B includes maps of all proposed trails; Appendix G includes a draft of a Trail Etiquette

Brochure. The plan emphasizes that safety is one of the most crucial aspects of design and implementation.

The plan focuses on the Dillon Growth Area, encompassing a two-mile radius around the City of Dillon. Improvements to bicycle and pedestrian routes within the City of Dillon are not discussed in this plan.

The plan's goals are closely aligned with BTC's vision for improving pedestrian and bicycle opportunities in the community:

- Provide the community with a plan to develop an improved multi-use trail system. The plan recommends focusing on multi-use trails while reducing the costs associated with building single-purpose trails. Its proposed trail system recommends creating both safe on-road and off-road routes.
- Provide trails outside the City that will connect to existing trails and routes within the City, creating opportunities for rural residential areas to access City recreational opportunities without the need to drive into town.
- Give residents alternative transportation options, improve quality of life and exercise regimens, increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and provide more recreation-based tourism that supports local businesses.

Beaverhead County Planner Rick Hartz has worked closely with BTC and played a key leadership role in developing this plan, as well as implementing several trail projects. County Commissioner Mike McGinley has also been a trails supporter. Hartz is retired, so it will be important for BTC to develop a strong relationship with the new County Planner, and maintain relationships with McGinley and other trail supporters in County government.

Other Organizations

Rotary – Beginning in 1990, Dillon's Rotary club was instrumental in articulating a vision that has guided much of the work to date. Several route sections have been implemented with support and funding from a number of government and citizen organizations in addition to the Rotary.

YMCA – Following completion of their facility on Swenson Way (2006), the YMCA along with other community partners has been actively involved in developing the popular network of paved and gravel trails on adjacent land linking wetland areas and the Blacktail Meadows fishing access and kid's fishing pond.

Barrett Hospital – With the opening of the new Barrett Hospital south of town (2012), the hospital worked with the community to develop a trail loop on their property.

University of Montana Western – UWM recently published a strategic plan that includes a proposal for a trail circumnavigating the campus.

City Tree Board – The City Tree Board has created a four-page brochure including a map for a Trail of Trees. This is a sidewalk route through City neighborhoods highlighting 15 different types of urban landscaping trees.

Beaverhead Trails Coalition In-Town Trails Program Planning

Since forming in 2009, BTC has been planning and advocating for trails and bicycle-pedestrian improvements in the community. BTC has developed maps and concepts for a large number of connectivity projects within and around Dillon. The maps include existing and proposed trails, on-street routes and sidewalk improvements. BTC has also developed written descriptions for each segment shown on the maps.

BTC played a lead role in creating the recently completed Pigtail Trail, which connects to the trail system at the YMCA and Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access.

BTC's In-Town Trails Program experienced a period of inactivity but in late 2016, a small group of BTC members resumed planning and prioritizing new in-town trails and pedestrian-bicycle connectivity projects. They have recently been assessing the viability and timing of different projects, including holding discussions with City and County staff.

PEDESTRIAN-BICYCLE TRAILS AND ROUTES STATUS

As documented in the previous sections, there has been a good deal of planning for and development of safe and enjoyable walking and biking opportunities in Dillon for at least a generation. Responses to BTC's recent online survey as well as input from the City and County officials and other sources also point to continued strong interest in improved connectivity between existing trails, on-street routes and sidewalks, and parks. Comments also often refer to the need for better marking or signing of trails and routes, as well as the need for maps showing trails and routes.

This section summarizes those comments and proposals and provides an overview of the community's current walking and biking conditions and needs. Connectivity needs are identified for sidewalks, existing trails, on-street lanes, bicycling, and parks.

Sidewalk System

The Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan states that within the City of Dillon, pedestrian traffic is typically safe due to an extensive sidewalk system. Additionally, the Dillon Downtown Master Plan highlights that the community's small scale makes it very walkable. A large area of the City is located within ½ mile of the City center (intersection of Bannack and Idaho Streets), which is considered a 15 minute walk for most people. The University of Montana Western campus is located just beyond the ½ mile radius.

Sidewalks provide critical links to Dillon's trails. For example, from the University and residential areas at the south end of town, sidewalks provide a safe connection to popular trails at the Hospital.

In contrast, in the county adjacent to Dillon sidewalks are absent. The Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan notes that this absence makes it tough for pedestrians using roads for recreation or commuting, and that this often deters many people from walking.

Sidewalk Connectivity Needs

Some gaps in Dillon’s sidewalk system exist, and the sidewalks often lack curb ramps and crosswalk markings at intersections. (e.g. some small gaps near the elementary and middle schools, and large gaps on the unpaved streets connecting to Oliver/Overland).

Existing Trails

Both asphalt paved trails and gravel trails fully separated from roads are located in several areas of the community. All these trails are potential opportunities for improved connectivity. Many public and stakeholder comments as well as the City and County planning processes identified a strong interest and need for better connections between trails, as well as longer sections of trail independent of roads. One respondent stated, “It would be really great if a person could walk, run, bike from Laknar Lane to Barrett Hospital via a trail system.”

1. Pigtail, YMCA, Blacktail Meadows Trail Network

Trail Type – Both paved and gravel

Use – Recreation

Land Ownership – Private non-profit organization (YMCA), State (Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks), City (Pigtail)

Maintenance – The trails are maintained by the City, including wintertime snowplowing.

On the west side of town, adjacent to I-15, a popular network of paved and gravel trails links wetland areas and the Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access and kid’s fishing pond. These trails run approximately half-a-mile from the dead end of W. Jefferson Street north of W. Park Street near the I-15 underpass, to the kids’ fishing pond and the fishing access parking lot.

The trails are heavily used year round by many Dillon residents of all ages. Most users access these trails from the YMCA and Blacktail Meadows Fishing Access parking lots on Swenson Way. The trails are an outstanding recreational resource. Due to their location, they do not provide significant connectivity for non-recreational uses.

Connectivity Needs

- **Improved Connection to Town** – Most users drive to use these trails because there is not good pedestrian and bicycle connectivity from the rest of town. There are no bike lanes and there are gaps in the sidewalk system accessing both Swenson Way and West Jefferson Street.
- **Improved Connection to High Trails** – At the south end of this trail network, improvements to W. Park St. and W. Jefferson St. could provide safe connectivity between the Pigtail Trail and the High Trails parking area on Ten Mile Road. The City plans to resurfaced and widened W. Park St. to improve this connection. These improvements would also connect with Cornell Park/Kiwanis Family Project on the Beaverhead River. Recommended improvements to West Park are included in the County Trail Plan (5.1.10 Trail J).
- **Possible Future Connection to Veterans Memorial Park and Highway 41** – Within the next several years there may be an opportunity to expand this trail system and connect it to Highway

41. A local developer who is a trail supporter is exploring the possibility of a new development east of Blacktail Deer Creek and adjacent to Veterans Memorial Park. If this project moves forward, it would create the opportunity for trails linking the fishing access parking area to Veterans Memorial Park and the sidewalks on Highway 41. YMCA's Executive Director is very interested in pursuing this opportunity and has had preliminary discussions with the developer.

II. Hospital Trails

Trail Type – Paved

Use – Recreation

Land Ownership – Private non-profit organization (Barrett Hospital & HealthCare)

Maintenance – The Hospital maintains the trails, including providing wintertime snowplowing.

On the south side of town, a popular 0.9 mile paved trail loop runs around the perimeter of the hospital property. Many community members use the trails year-round for exercise. Due to location, they do not provide significant connectivity for non-recreational uses. The sidewalk system and an additional section of paved trail at the Dillon Community Health Center provide good connectivity to the Hospital trails from residential neighborhoods at the south end of town and the UMW campus.

Connectivity needs

- **Connections to the West** – Acquiring land and/or easements from private landowners west of the hospital would create a number of opportunities. The most ambitious option would be a trail crossing I-15 and the Beaverhead River, connecting to Ten Mile Road and the High Trails trailhead. Regardless of the viability of this option, the land west of the hospital includes extensive riparian areas potentially offering opportunities for high quality nature trails. The Blacktail Deer Creek riparian area immediately west of the hospital and Van's IGA would be the closest and easiest location to expand the trails in this area.
- **Poindexter Slough** – Several individuals who were interviewed or responded to BTC's online survey expressed interest in a connection to Poindexter Slough. This is a popular natural area and fishing access approximately two miles southwest of the hospital on Highway 91 S. Similar comments were received during the Beaverhead County Trails Masterplan process, and that plan includes a proposed trail along Highway 91. Creating a separated trail would be a very ambitious and expensive goal, requiring acquisition of easements or right-of-way from numerous private landowners. Widening the road shoulder and striping a bike lane might be more achievable. A recommendation for a connection to Poindexter Slough is included in the County Trails Plan (5.1.13 Trail N).
- **Highway 91 North of the Hospital** – Adding pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure to Highway 91 north of the hospital could provide a more direct connection to the UMW campus, especially if it connected to and included public access on the private dirt road that runs south of the LDS Church and Straugh Gymnasium. Pedestrian/bicycle improvements could be some combination of separated trails, sidewalks and/or a widened shoulder with a striped bike lane. BTC has identified this as a potential project. However, it is currently a relatively low priority because a good pedestrian/bicycle connection already exists north of the hospital.

III. Parkview School Trail

Trail Type – Paved

Use – Recreation

Land Ownership – School District 10

Maintenance – City

A paved trail runs along the north and east perimeter of the Parkview school grounds. The trail connects to the sidewalk system in the surrounding residential neighborhood. Students and community members use the trail for exercise and recreation. Due to its location at the edge of town, it has limited value as a commuter route.

Connectivity Needs

- **Gaps in Sidewalk System** – Completing gaps in the sidewalk system would improve connectivity to this trail.
- **Connection to Oliver Lane** – At the northeast corner of the school grounds, the Storage Place storage unit business blocks a connection north to Oliver Lane. This short connection would add valuable connectivity for this area of the community, providing an important link in a pedestrian/bicycle route along Dillon’s east edge from the on-street route on Overland Road to the UMW campus. BTC members have had conversations with the Storage Place owner about possibly allowing the public to cut through his property between two of the storage unit buildings. The only other option would be to work with the agricultural landowner to the east to secure an easement for a trail running along the east side of the Storage Place.

IV. Highway 41 Trail

Trail Type – Paved

Use – Recreation

Land Ownership – County

Maintenance – City of Dillon

Constructed by the Montana Department of Transportation in 2006, a separated paved trail runs along the south side of Highway 41 from Overland Road until it merges with the city sidewalk system on North Montana Street just west of the intersection with Noble and Laknar.

With its location at the north edge of the community it is used primarily for exercise and recreation, although it has some potential to provide commuter access to several businesses. This trail provides an important link between the Overland Road on-street route, the city sidewalk system, and the Laknar Lane on-street route.

Connectivity Needs

- **Noble Avenue** – Currently, Noble Ave. from Highway 41 to Skihi Street is BTC’s highest priority for in-town pedestrian/bicycle improvements. Noble Ave. will likely be paved this year and at that time a wide shoulder with a striped bicycle-pedestrian lane could be installed. Alternately, a

more aesthetic separated trail could be installed along the west edge of the golf course. A separated trail would likely take longer to design and negotiate with the golf course, and would require securing funding. Some combination of on-street bicycle/pedestrian lane and separated trail could also be a possibility. These improvements would connect the Overland, Laknar and Highway 41 pedestrian/bicycle facilities to a residential neighborhood at the north end of town. Additionally, a development with a north-south trail is planned for the field between Skihi St. and Franklin Ave. Completing this trail would extend the Noble Ave. connection to the residential sidewalk system for the rest of the community including the schools.

V. Laknar Lane Trail

Trail Type – Paved

Use – Recreation and Transportation

Land Ownership – County

Maintenance – Beaverhead County

North of the city, a separated asphalt trail runs along the west side of Laknar Lane from Dilmont Lane to Schular Lane. At its south end, this trail connects to an on-street bicycle-pedestrian lane on the west side of Laknar that runs to Highway 41. Constructed by Beaverhead County in 2010, this trail is used primarily for exercise and recreation. The trail likely sees a low level of transportation use by people traveling into town. It is likely that transportation use would increase significantly if it had better connections to residential developments to the north and west, and if there was a safe crossing at Highway 41.

Connectivity Needs

- **Residential Areas North & West** –Pedestrian-bicycle improvements north of this point would have the potential to significantly increase use of this trail and could connect local residential areas and businesses to the City.

On-Street Bicycle-Pedestrian Lanes

There are three significant on-street bicycle-pedestrian lanes in the Dillon Growth Area. These routes were constructed by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) and the County during highway construction projects.

I. Overland Road

In summer 2015, the County widened and paved the west shoulder of Overland Road. This bicycle-pedestrian lane connects to the Highway 41 trail, providing a relatively long continuous route on the north end of the community. This route is used primarily for exercise and recreation, although it has some potential to provide commuter access to several businesses. Some partners commented that community members in general have a low level of awareness of this route.

Connectivity Needs

- **Oliver Lane & Sidewalk System** – At the south end of Overland where it merges with Oliver Lane, there is no connection to the city sidewalk system or any other pedestrian-bicycle infrastructure. One individual commented that this is a pinch point that creates safety issues: “I

have almost been hit a couple times in the stretch from Kentucky to Overland before the widened road takes place.” To address this issue and connect the Overland route to the city’s sidewalk system would require pedestrian-bicycle improvements on Oliver as well as one or more of the three streets and two alleys that intersect Oliver from the west.

- **Connection to North Dillon Neighborhood** – The Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan recommends creating a trail (5.1.15 Trail P) to provide an east-west connection between the residential area at the north end of town and Overland. Combined with improvements to Noble Ave., this trail would create a loop route with Overland and the Highway 41 trail. Starting at the intersection of Noble Avenue and Skihi Street, this trail would go east across private property along the south boundary of the Beaverhead Golf Course, following an irrigation ditch for 0.40 mile to Overland Road. The trail would cross private property where easements or right-of-way do not currently exist. The plan recommends that easements should be a minimum of 20-ft in width to construct an 8- to 10-ft wide paved trail.

II. Laknar Lane

In 2010, Montana Department of Transportation widened and paved the shoulder and striped an on-street bicycle-pedestrian lane on the west side of Laknar Lane from Highway 41 north across the Beaverhead River to Dilmont Lane. From this point, a separated paved trail continues this route north to Schular Lane. This route is used primarily for exercise and recreation. However, it would have significant commuter potential with a safe crossing at Highway 41 and better connections to residential areas to the west and north.

Connectivity Needs

- **Hwy 41 Crossing** – At the intersection of Laknar, Noble and Highway 41, curb ramps have been installed at all four corners, but there is no infrastructure in place to help pedestrians or bicyclists safely cross Highway 41. The highway has steady traffic flow, including significant truck traffic to and from I-15. This is an unsafe crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists, creating a significant connectivity barrier to the City. The need for a safe crossing at this location will be greatly increased if Noble is paved and has pedestrian-bicycle improvements installed. All possible options for crossing improvements should be considered, including crosswalks, mid-street pedestrian refuges, a traffic signal, or even a roundabout.
- **Pioneer Drive** – Pedestrian-bicycle improvements on Pioneer Drive would improve connectivity to two residential areas as well as Highway 91. The connection to Highway 91 would open the potential for connectivity to Clarks Lookout State Park as well as Lovers Leap Road, which accesses residential areas and potentially the High Trails area west of I-15.

III. 10 Mile Road

In 2016, as part of a major water line rebuild project, the County paved a wide shoulder and striped a bicycle-pedestrian lane on the south side of Ten Mile Road from the High Trails trailhead parking area to the bridge over the Beaverhead River. This is a significant safety improvement that has already resulted in an increase in bicyclists and pedestrians travelling to the trailhead.

Connectivity Needs

- **Connections to Downtown & Pigtail Trail** – Pedestrian-bicycle improvements to Park, Reeder and West Jefferson would link this route to Downtown and the YMCA/Blacktail trail network, as well as the Cornell Park/Kiwanis Family Project on the Beaverhead River. Additionally, these improvements would enhance safe pedestrian-bicycle access to the High Trails from Cliff Road – a significant improvement because of the minimal parking available on Cliff Road.

Bicycling

The Beaverhead County Trails Master Plan provides a good overview of biking conditions, which remain largely unchanged since the plan was completed.

Bicycle traffic is routed through Dillon via on-street bicycle routes as part of the local street network. For example, a City ordinance has designated a bike route from the Dillon Middle School to UMW. The on-street bicycle routes currently coexist with vehicle parking and travel lanes and are not designed with signage or striping. Bicyclists travelling through the City must share the road with motorized and parked vehicles. This condition presents a hazardous situation for bicyclists.

In the Dillon Growth Area outside the City, the plan notes that an unsafe environment often exists for bicyclists, and that this deters many users from biking. But safety has been improved on Overland and Ten Mile Road by widening road shoulders and striping bicycle-pedestrian lanes.

Connectivity Needs

- **In-Town** – Many have commented on the need for bike lanes. One urged BTC to work with local businesses and the City to install more bike racks so that bicyclists would have more options for locking their bikes. Another suggested conducting educational outreach in the community about cars sharing the road with bicycles.
- **Dillon Growth Area** – There are many areas where widened shoulders with bike lanes or separated paths could significantly improve safety and help to make bicycling a more appealing and viable option for transportation, recreation and exercise: 1) Roads accessing residential areas north of the City. 2) Sweetwater Road accessing residential developments east of the City. 3) Highway 91 accessing Poindexter Slough to the south, and Clarks Lookout State Park north of the City.

Parks

The Dillon Community Plan states that there are a total of five public parks within the City, as well as additional parks that are privately maintained. The plan recommends developing trails and safe pedestrian and bicycle access linked to parks.

FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR IN-TOWN TRAIL PROJECTS

Leadership & Program's Role within BTC

BTC leadership and the leadership of the In-Town Trails Program should agree on program goals and scope for the next five years. We should set a goal of gradually expanding the program's efforts and capacity to so that in five years it has the ability to tackle multiple projects and/or to take on major projects on the scale of the High Trails project.

To reach this level of capacity, BTC will need to invest more in the In-Town Trails Program. With only a small number of leaders, the program is currently vulnerable to becoming inactive if one or two key people has to cut back or discontinue their involvement for any reason. This would be particularly problematic if BTC was in the middle of an important in-town project.

An important goal for In-town-trails program will be to Increase the number of BTC members who are actively involved in the In-Town Trails Program as volunteers and committee members in order to significantly increase BTC's capacity to achieve the program's vision. Specific actions related to this goal can be found in Appendix A.

In-Town Trails Committee

The In-Town Trails Committee should add people with a goal of building it up to between five and seven members. It will be important to have an official chairperson and possibly other official roles such as secretary.

The comprehensive projects list could be a great recruiting tool. The committee could identify a short list of projects that could use a designated volunteer leader to help move them forward. Someone who may be hesitant to sit on a committee may be much more motivated if they are offered an opportunity to work directly on a project that interests them. The list should include a variety of different types of projects, including some small ones like bike racks, and members can start figuring out what it would take to make them successful – general viability, costs, partners, decision-makers, barriers, possible timeline etc. Of course there is no promise that BTC will be able to commit significant time and resources unless the project makes the cut the next time the committee updates its priorities.

Rick Hartz suggests trying to recruit people who are already involved on relevant City boards and committees. Several of BTC's partners have big networks of people who are likely to be interested in improving pedestrian-bicycle opportunities. These partners, such as the YMCA and the hospital and UMW wellness programs, may be willing to help BTC identify and recruit people who would be a good fit on the committee.

Current Priority Projects

The In-Town Trails Committee has identified three priority projects which possess significant community benefit and high likelihood of success within a relatively short time period. These three projects provide great examples of the challenges of projecting workload and allocating resources.

1. Noble Ave. from Hwy 41 to Skihi St.

This connection could be a separated trail, or a wide shoulder with a striped bicycle-pedestrian lane, or some combination of the two. This is the second trail proposed in the County Trail Plan after Overland Rd. which has now been completed. This project is the program's top priority because of the important connections it provides to existing trails.

The City plans to pave Noble this summer and could potentially add a wide shoulder on the east side of the road. Additionally, according to Todd Hazelbaker, significant improvements are being planned for Ray Lynch Park southeast of the Noble-Highway 41 intersection. These improvements could be integrated with a route on Noble, will increase the Park's value as a destination, and will increase public awareness and interest in a Noble Ave. project.

Because of timing and the multiple options with this route, strategic decisions need to be made fairly quickly. These decisions will impact the time and resources BTC will need to invest in the project and when those investments will need to be made.

- **Wide Shoulder Only** – Rick Hartz describes the wide shoulder option as “low hanging fruit” where BTC could achieve success with a relatively small investment of time, and no cost. The In-Town Trails Program would advocate for the wide shoulder, striping, and possibly a rumble strip to increase safety. However, depending on the amount and speed of traffic, some users such as families with children may not be comfortable using a wide shoulder.
- **Separated Trail** – Creating a separated trail for some or all of the route would provide a safer, more aesthetic and enjoyable experience for users – especially families with children. However, a trail would require BTC to play a lead role, investing considerable time and securing funding for construction of the trail as well as a fence (to protect users from golf balls from the adjacent golf course). Costs, including long term maintenance costs, would vary greatly depending on whether a gravel or paved trail was constructed. Additionally, if BTC negotiates for a trail on the west side of the golf course, it would make sense to also explore the possibility of a trail along the south side connecting to Overland, as proposed in the County Trail Plan.

The greatest risk with this project would be if BTC decided to advocate only for a separated trail, the wide shoulder was not constructed, and BTC was then unable to build the separated trail. In this worst-case scenario, the opportunity for an important community connection could be lost for a long time. The best approach is probably to plan this as a two-, three-, or even four-stage project:

- 1) **Wide Shoulder** – Ensure that the wide shoulder gets constructed along as much of the route as possible. Many people, especially bicyclists, will likely continue to use it even if a separated trail is also built. Long term, it could be valuable for separating high speed bike traffic from pedestrians and slower bicyclists using the trail.
- 2) **Trail on West Side of Golf Course**, a two- or three-year goal.
- 3) **Trail on South Side of Golf Course**, a four- or five-year goal.
- 4) **Trail Surface** – The trails could initially be constructed with gravel, and one or both of them could be paved at a later date as funding became available. With a paved wide shoulder on Noble, it might make sense to leave the trail on the west side of the golf course unpaved. An advantage of starting with gravel trails is that after observing use and collecting user feedback for several years, BTC may conclude that paving is unnecessary or that it is a much lower priority than other projects.

Since only the first stage is time sensitive, the commitment to the remaining stages could be budgeted to allow concurrent work on other projects.

BTC would need to play a lead role in stages 2-4 and the time and funding commitment could be substantial. The best approach may be to treat the wide shoulder and separated trail(s) as two or three separate projects. Once BTC has gathered enough information to do a realistic viability assessment of one or both separated trails, those could be compared to other potential projects.

II. Reeder Street from Montana to Jefferson

This project, the program’s second-highest priority, includes a bike lane and ADA improvements. It is time-sensitive and BTC would be playing a supporting role because the improvements are being planned

by the City. It is a high priority project because it would improve an important link between Downtown, the YMCA/Blacktail trails and the High Trails.

This project will not require a significant time or funding investment from BTC. In order to be conservative in budgeting time for lower priority projects, it would probably be a good idea for the program to assess in as much detail as possible all the tasks that would be required, and the likely time commitment and the likely timeline.

III. Nelson Street-UMW Connector

BTC would need to take a lead role in permitting, funding and constructing a trail in the City right-of-way, acquiring an easement across the Dillon Canal and funding and installing a bridge. This would require a considerable time and money. A realistic completion target might be three to four years.

This could be a good project to experiment with the project approval process outlined elsewhere. Doing so would help BTC decide how to modify the process to best fit the organization. Equally important, the steps in the approval process are a useful exercise for identifying all the “moving parts” in a project to create a task list and get a clearer picture of the required time and funding investments, and the likely timeline.

Projects in the Pipeline

Any project that the In-Town Trails Program is moving toward shovel ready status should be ranked as a high priority at least. A project “in the pipeline” could also be ranked as a top priority if there are no other or few other higher priority projects.

Shovel Ready Definition

A shovel ready project is one for which BTC wants to move forward with securing funding. BTC can promise a funder that the project is ready to break ground as soon as funding is in place.

BTC could create shovel-ready checklists. The checklist would be somewhat different for each unique project and could include: 1) Completed permitting. 2) Easements in place or secured with a contract or option agreement. 3) Resolved legal issues with no legal challenges expected. 4) Due diligence, e.g. Phase I assessment completed. And 5) Enough engineering completed to ensure project viability.

For a project such as a trail map, “shovel ready” might simply mean that a small project team of volunteers (probably two or three people with a clearly designated leader), the In-Town Trails Committee and the BTC Executive Director have committed the time to complete the project and developed a realistic budget based on quotes from several graphic designers and printers.

Candidate Projects

Currently, BTC has many projects that are almost shovel ready. BTC should be fairly conservative about how many projects to work on concurrently. However, as discussed elsewhere, some of these projects could engage new volunteers who could take the lead in the initial stages, and who could potentially be recruited to the committee.

The following projects stand out as good candidates. Realistically, only three or four of these projects should be prioritized as shovel ready:

- 1) **Trail Map** – This is a project where success is guaranteed and BTC can control all aspects of implementation.
- 2) **Online Trail Guide** – This project has all the benefits of the trail map and would be considerably easier and less expensive to implement.
- 3) **PowerPoint Presentation** – As described elsewhere, a presentation would require a modest time investment, and a presentation schedule would be extremely flexible depending on the time and volunteers available.
- 4) **County Trails Plan Update** – As discussed elsewhere, the County may receive funding in March, 2017 to update the Beaverhead County Trails Masterplan. {NOTE: UPDATE: DID COUNTY RECEIVE?} This process is likely to be important for BTC's future work, and participating in it could take as much time as some smaller projects on this list.
- 5) **Skihi to Monroe** – This is a very important connection, and because it is tied to a proposed development, an opportunity will likely arise to get this project built in the next few years. This opportunity may be time sensitive and may arise with little warning. The In-Town Trails Program should take advantage of any opening that appears
- 6) **UMW Loop Trail** – There appears to be a strong potential that this project could be completed within the next five years. It would provide significant benefit to BTC's target audiences, and would be a great opportunity to work with an important partner. Because BTC may primarily be playing a catalyst role, it might not be a substantial time commitment.
- 7) **Crossing on Atlantic St.** – This crossing would provide significant public benefit in the heart of the community. BTC would play a catalyst and/or supporting role so it might not be a significant time commitment.
- 8) **Highway 41 Crossing at Laknar and Noble** – A complex project, and the BTC would only play a supporting role. An obvious and logical extension of the Noble Ave. project, it wouldn't take long to determine whether this would require a massive organizing and lobbying effort, or just a moderate amount of advocacy.
- 9) **Oliver Lane to Parkview Trail** – This is a very short but important connection. It would probably only take a small time investment to determine project viability. Implementation would potentially be fast and relatively low cost.
- 10) **Oliver Lane** – Would address safety issues at the south end of Overland and would add an important link to the east side route.
- 11) **Sidewalks, Crosswalks and Bike Lanes** – A wide range of projects fall under these categories, but they have several things in common: a) The City would need to take the lead with BTC playing a catalyst and supporting role. b) There are many potential approaches that BTC could take, and these strategic choices are similar for all three categories of projects.

Variables in approaching these projects include:

- . **BTC's Role** – How closely involved would BTC need or want to be? Limit involvement to advocating for projects? Organize neighborhoods, partners, etc. to join in advocacy effort? Active involvement in planning efforts? Help secure funding?
- . **Walk-Bike Montana** – Would it make more sense for the new Walk-Bike Montana chapter to take the lead on some of these projects?

- . **One-at-a-Time** – BTC (and partners) could start very small, tackling just one or two sections/locations at a time.
- . **One-Area-at-a-Time** – BTC could prioritize and focus on certain areas, such as neighborhoods around Parkview School.
- . **One-Route-at-a-Time** – BTC could prioritize and focus on routes, such as a route from the west side of Atlantic St. to Parkview School.
- **Wayfinding Signage and Marking** – This project would be relatively low cost and could be tackled incrementally. One option to consider for wayfinding signage is to use stencils in lieu of or in combination with signs. Spray-painting wayfinding arrows on sidewalks would be far less expensive, less logistically complicated and easier to maintain than posting signs. Stencils could also incorporate a branding element. Very simple text such as “Dillon Trails Route” could be included with the wayfinding arrows using a font and paint color that matches BTC’s logo and other branding. BTC and the City could afford to use spray-painted wayfinding stencils in much greater numbers than signs. This could accomplish two goals, (1) making it easier for users to navigate between trails, and (2) creating greater awareness of community trails.

Implementing & Completing Projects

BTC has an impressive track record of completing projects, and should continue to use and build on strategies that have succeeded in the past. Following are recommendations for building on BTC’s success to date:

- **Project Working Groups** – For some projects where BTC is playing a lead role, it may be valuable to create a project working group in addition to the internal project team. A project working group ensures good coordination and engagement with external partners. Working group members should include representatives of any significant partners including government officials, other community organizations and businesses partnering with BTC, neighborhood representatives, landowners, etc.
- **Campaign Plan** – Especially for big, complex projects where BTC is playing a lead role, it may be valuable to create a comprehensive “campaign plan” that encompasses all project elements including funding, outreach and marketing, partners, permitting, easements, engineering, construction, and internal BTC approval process and periodic updates. This master plan includes the fundraising plan, outreach and marketing plan, and strategies for organizing supporters and lobbying decision-makers, etc. Tasks would be identified, timelined, and assigned to individuals, teams, or committees.
- **Timelines** – Especially for complex projects, an Excel Spreadsheet can be a good tool for tracking a timeline. Most projects timelines have parallel and overlapping timelines tracks for permitting, landowner negotiations, marketing, engineering, etc. A spreadsheet with each of these component timelines as a column and rows for months, weeks and/or days provides a good at-a-glance summary of how the different pieces fit together.
- **Online Project Management Platforms** – For large projects with multiple partners, web-based project management platforms such as Basecamp <https://basecamp.com/> can be useful, but only if you are confident that all partners will really use the platform.
- **In-Kind Donations/Business Partners** – Never overlook opportunities for in-kind donations. Business partners are often more able and willing to provide in-kind assistance than cash donations. (e.g.

engineering, materials, machinery/labor, food for events, community outreach, etc.). When asking for donations from businesses, think of ways and places where you can credit them such as the project website, trail signs (permanent or temporary), newsletters and eNews, a press release, mentioning them at events etc.

- **Long Term Needs** – Failing to plan for the long term can undermine a great success.
 - **Maintenance** – If trails, signage, and web pages fail to serve their purposes, create negative impressions, and even become dangerous (in the case of trails) if not maintained, it is sometimes better not to proceed with a project if there is not a realistic plan for maintaining it.
 - **Trail Construction Standards** – Many communities have developed good standards through years of trial and error. Asphalt trails will deteriorate badly and rapidly if they are not built to an appropriate standard. Friends of Pathways in Jackson, WY has one of the highest standards for building and maintaining asphalt trails. Gravel trails can be unpleasant to use and even dangerous – especially for bikes – if they are covered with lots of large loose pieces of gravel. Bozeman has developed standards for the ratio of “fines” to gravel that should be used to achieve smooth, weather resistant trail surface. These standards are included in Bozeman’s Parks Recreation Open Space and Trails (PROST) Plan <https://www.bozeman.net/Smarty/files/78/78215f19-19b9-44c0-8fd9-7df9068aeb0.pdf>. It is also worth noting that Bozeman has used crushed concrete has been used to resurface some Bozeman trails and produces a very smooth, durable tread.
 - **Two-Way Traffic on Wide Shoulders** – Over time, as use increases, BTC should monitor whether safety concerns develop with two-way traffic – especially bike traffic – using the wide shoulder bicycle-pedestrian lanes on County roads. Signage requiring bikes to ride with the flow of traffic and/or other strategies may eventually be needed.

Workplan

An annual program workplan is a valuable tool, and creating it is a “reality-check” for the cumulative workload the program is planning to tackle. It is particularly useful to compare timelines for different projects to identify times when a large amount of work and deadlines may converge.

The workplan is also a valuable tool for generating an annual budget. As the workplan is compiled, all potential expenses should be flagged and should include projected dates so that they can be easily copied and pasted into the budget.

The workplan should combine timelines for priority projects and include other time commitments:

- **Committee, Board and Membership Meetings**
- **Planning Processes** – Government planning processes such as the update to the County Trails Plan should be factored into the workplan.
- **Development Review** – Like planning processes, opportunities for review of new residential and commercial developments should be factored into the workplan if they have not already been. While these opportunities may be rare in Dillon, they can present very valuable opportunities (such as the potential Skihi to Monroe trail), that could easily justify putting another project on hold.

Ideally, to use the committee’s time effectively and efficiently, project prioritization, and the annual program workplan and budget would be done consecutively during a one or two-month period.

Project Selection and Management

BTC's In-Town Trails Program has a large list of potential projects located in all areas of the community. Many are interrelated and vary greatly in scale or type.

Deciding when and how to invest time and resources in different projects is a balancing act between being opportunistic and following a carefully designed workplan. For example, BTC may have spent a couple years making steady progress toward breaking ground on an important project, but having that project "shovel ready" is probably still a year or more away. Unexpectedly, a great opportunity arises for a similarly important project. Should BTC decide to postpone the first project for an additional year or more in order to take advantage of the new opportunity? Having a good project prioritization and approval process in place is extremely helpful for making this kind of important strategic decision.

BTC's current project map and project list is a good starting point. However, it is somewhat hard to follow, especially for someone not intimately familiar with it. Additionally, it is missing important projects such as a community pedestrian-bicycle map, a high priority over the next five years and could take a significant amount of time. This section provides an overview of the selection and approval process. Additional thoughts and recommendations are available in Appendix D.

The In-Town Trails Committee must

- 1) Develop a systematic process for tracking, prioritizing and approving projects to guide BTC in making wise strategic decisions.
- 2) Ensure that time and resources are invested in projects with high value to the community, high potential to strengthen BTC as an organization, and a strong likelihood of success.
- 3) Manage the program's workload and help avoid overcommitting time and resources.

Creating and Updating a Comprehensive Project List

In order to prioritize and plan, it is important to have a realistic, comprehensive picture of all types of projects. Currently, BTC's list only includes certain types projects that can be mapped. At least one important project – clean up of the dump on Blacktail Deer Creek – is missing; and other types of projects that aren't route segments are also missing (e.g. safe crossings on Highway 41 and Atlantic St.)

The master projects list should be reviewed periodically at intervals (e.g. from 6 – 24 months).

Some projects currently not on the list but important to the In-Town Trails Committee's work include:

- **Development Review** –The projects list should always include at least a placeholder for review of new pedestrian-bicycle connections with relatively small investment of time and resources. Appropriate City and County staff should be contacted to identify any new development review opportunities. Currently, at least two projects fall into this category – the Blacktail Deer Creek dump project and the trail between Skihi St. and Franklin Ave.
- **Planning Efforts** – Participating in City and County planning efforts can be fairly time consuming, but is likely to be very fruitful over the long term (e.g. updated County Trails Plan).
- **Street Crossings** – Some street crossings, such as the Laknar/Noble crossing on Hwy 41, can be complex and unique, with very different timelines from associated route projects. Additionally, efforts involving curb ramps and crosswalks may not fit neatly into existing projects on the list.

- **Sidewalks** – Efforts involving missing links in the sidewalk system may not fit neatly into existing projects on the list.
- **Bike Lanes** – Efforts to get bike lanes may not fit neatly into existing projects on the list.
- **Route Wayfinding Signage** – Working with the City on route marking and signage could require a significant time investment.
- **Maps & Trail Guides** – Making a community trails and routes guide available on the BTC website, and designing, publishing and distributing a hard copy pedestrian-bicycle map, will be high priorities in the next few years.
- **In-Town Land Acquisition** – While such projects may not happen within the next five years, there should at least be a place holder on the list for this project type.

Project List Organization & Tracking

Most land trusts have a long list of active and potential land conservation projects and use a database to track these projects. A similar approach, using Microsoft Access or other software would have a number of important benefits for BTC's In-Town Trails Program:

- A well-designed database would allow BTC to quickly and easily produce reports listing projects based on a wide variety of criteria – active vs. potential, projects in specific areas, projects related to specific routes, trails vs. on-street bicycle/pedestrian lanes, projects requiring easements from private landowners etc.
- A database can easily generate lists of accomplishments and relevant statistics, such as how many miles of different types of trails have been created in the community.
- Identifying the fields/project attributes needed would help in analyzing the many aspects of the different projects on the list.
- If there are multiple active projects, such a database is valuable for generating and tracking to-do list and timelines.
- A database allows detailed notes to be more easily organized and accessed. For example, it can be important to track all contacts with key landowners or partners – who contacted them when and what was discussed.
- While designing the database would require someone with more advanced database software skills, using the database would require only a modest level of software expertise.

Intermediate Steps

If creating a project tracking database becomes a long-term objective, several intermediate steps can help achieve this goal.

- **Excel Spreadsheet** – Putting the projects list into a spreadsheet would be easier than creating a database; would have many of the same benefits, especially the ability to easily sort the list by different criteria; and would be easy to import into a database. But a spreadsheet doesn't work well for recording notes.
- **Identify Fields/Attributes** – Identifying the fields/project attributes can be incorporated into a more detailed and useful project list. Every project should have a sentence or two describing its most significant benefits. This exercise would also help prioritize projects, move them forward, and secure funding.

Examples of Fields/Attributes for Project List

One set of attributes would apply to all projects, while an additional set would be needed for active projects (see Appendix D). A few fields such as “Maintenance Needs” and “Signage Needs” would be relevant only to completed projects.

Prioritization Criteria

The first step in creating an effective prioritization process is to identify the right questions to ask and the most important criteria to use in comparing projects to each other. The following prioritization criteria would be important to include in BTC’s process. However, these are examples and some overlap exists. BTC might use different titles with different combinations of elements.

1) Community Value – How great is the need? How many people will use it? Would it complete a critical pedestrian-bicycle connectivity link? Would it connect to an important destination? Would it be used primarily for recreation, alternative transportation or both?

2) Strengthening BTC – Would it be (or could it be made into) a high-visibility, high-profile project that will get lots of public attention? Will the project help BTC expand its membership? Recruit new leaders and volunteers? Increase awareness and community support for BTC’s work? Motivate more people to donate to BTC?

BTC Time Investment – Would BTC lead and coordinate all aspects of the project? Would BTC play a smaller, behind-the-scenes role? E.g., is an unpaved road being paved and BTC’ would help plan and lobby local government to include a wide shoulder in the project? Is a partner like YMCA or the Hospital taking the lead but BTC could play an important supporting role such as helping with grant writing? Would BTC be playing a catalyst role – for example, keeping a project like the UMW campus trail alive and moving forward but not being responsible for implementation?

Opportunity/Crisis – Is it a time-sensitive opportunity that will be lost if BTC does not act? Is this a case where the “stars are aligning” around a great project, or is it more of a crisis where you feel pressure to take on a big and potentially highly stressful challenge where the odds of success may be low? “Crisis” projects can pay off big if you succeed against the odds, and sometimes even if you don’t, since a sense of crisis can be great for rallying the community and recruiting new members, donors, partners etc. But there is a big risk of burning people out and ending up with nothing to show for it. Is it worth taking on the challenge because BTC will lose credibility if it doesn’t least try?

Likelihood of Success – What factors that could stall or derail the project or make it successful? (e.g. easements, permitting, funding, partnerships, BTC staff and volunteer capacity, public and decision-maker support).

Maintenance – Who will be responsible for maintenance? Will BTC and its partners have the long-term capacity to maintain the project after it is completed? Is the project worth the investment if this is questionable?

Controversy – Would the project be controversial? Who would the opponents be?

Would there be long term benefits from the controversy? Does it present an opportunity for BTC to demonstrate political strength so that the organization will have more influence and respect?

Or would the controversy have long-term negative impacts? Would polarization result, with some influential community members becoming reflexively opposed to anything BTC proposes in the future? Would a proposal for an easement or acquisition on agricultural land adjacent to town create a negative perception of BTC among the agricultural community that could undermine efforts toward an important easement or acquisition goal for the High Trails?

Priority Levels:

It is important not only to prioritize projects, but also to understand what the ranking means in terms of how the organization will allocate available time and resources. Following is an example of how those categories could be defined.

1. **Top Priority** – Significant staff/volunteer time and funding during current fiscal year. There may be only one project in this category and probably no more than three. If there is more than one project, they should be ranked individually to make it clear which one(s) come first when resources are limited.
2. **High Priority** – Invest as much staff time and funding as possible without compromising top priorities. It would probably not be realistic to have more than four projects in this category.
3. **Maintenance** – Invest enough staff time to keep project alive and/or monitor opportunities.

Prioritization Process

Project prioritization should be an ongoing process, conducted periodically – annually or bi-annually – or when circumstances change, such as a high priority project running into a long delay or a significant new opportunity arising. Whenever a new project or opportunity is identified, it should be added to the master list with as much detailed information as is easily available or seems appropriate for its likely priority level.

This should not be an entirely internal committee and board process; the In-Town Trails Committee should periodically seek input from the public, BTC membership, partners and other important stakeholders. For key partners, the most effective approach may be one-on-one interviews or small group meetings with partners who have common interests. For BTC’s membership and other larger target audiences, online surveys and/or public meetings every couple years could be effective.

Project Approval Process

A formal project approval process would help ensure that the BTC Board is making good strategic decisions and has evaluated all important aspects of a project before committing resources and effort to move the project forward. It should also include guidelines for project updates and Board review, and should identify triggers for additional board action.

Following are examples of steps that could be included in an approval process. For each step it is important to clearly decide who is responsible and whether that step requires a committee or board vote. These steps are designed to ensure that:

- 1) The In-Town Trails Committee has done its homework before bringing a project before the board; and
- 2) As soon as the project is approved, BTC has much of the groundwork already done and in writing to “hit the ground running” for marketing the project, communicating with partners and decision-makers, grant writing and fundraising, etc.
- 3) Unpleasant surprises will be minimized, reducing the risk that the project will stall or die after substantial time and resources have been invested.

Project Teams

There are potentially several important leadership benefits to creating project teams, especially if BTC takes on multiple in-town projects.

A project team:

- Spreads the workload so committee members don’t feel like they have to do everything.
- Ensures that important projects are managed by a small focused group of people.
- Ensures that the Development Committee is kept in the loop.
- Creates an opportunity to engage new volunteers who can become leaders through project teams. A project team can create a perfect opportunity to strategically recruit motivated, competent and collaborative people who are excited about a specific project. Such individuals could be recruited based on their general interest and motivation or for specific skills, knowledge or connections. For example, for the Noble St. project may attract someone who also has strong relationships with the golf course.

Volunteers

Engaging people as volunteers is one of the best ways to build a pool of potential future leaders. Moreover, getting to know someone who is helping as a volunteer is a great way to assess whether they would be a good fit for a leadership role.

- Any time the committee or a project team is creating lists of tasks that needs completion, it should review the list for opportunities to recruit and engage new or existing volunteers. Even small and occasional tasks can be good opportunities for engaging new people or maintaining the engagement of existing volunteers.
- The program should create and maintain a contact list of current, past and potential volunteers.
- Events typically offer good opportunities to engage volunteers. People can be recruited to help with different aspects of planning and running an event, and a volunteer signup sheet can be circulated at events to gather new names.
- BTC membership communications can list volunteer opportunities.
- Partner organizations may be willing to put out a call for volunteers for projects where they are working with BTC.

See Appendix B for related actions.

Outreach and Marketing

The In-Town Trails Program’s outreach and marketing efforts should be ongoing and should focus on the following broad objectives:

- Increasing community awareness and support for BTC’s goals and projects.
- Strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones.
- Recruiting new BTC members and volunteers.
- Developing concise and compelling messages describing program goals and projects, for use in grant applications and for communicating with a variety of audiences.
- Identifying groups and types of people in the community who are most likely to support BTC’s In-Town Trails vision, and finding effective strategies to communicate to these target audiences.
- Shift the perception of BTC, so that community members view BTC’s membership and mission as much broader and more inclusive than “just for hard core hikers.”

Five Year Goals

In five years,

- 1) the public perceives in-town connectivity as a significant part of BTC’s work, and views BTC as an organization that is achieving valuable improvements in pedestrian-bicycle connectivity and safety.
- 2) a significant portion of the community understands and supports BTC’s vision for pedestrian-bicycle connectivity. There is more broad-based support for making pedestrian-bicycle improvements a high priority.

Appendix B contains actions related to these goals.

Program Vision & Mission

The first steps in an effective outreach and marketing strategy are to develop a clear and compelling program mission and goals. All of BTC’s communications about the program and its projects should “stay on message,” using the mission and goal statements to explain why the program’s work is important to the community.

Website

BTC’s website is an important marketing platform, providing a gateway to all the In-Town Trails Program’s target audiences. The website should always have up-to-date and compelling information about the program’s goals and projects. This information should include good photos that help tell the story of what BTC is trying to accomplish.

Currently BTC’s website does not effectively explain or sell the In-Town Trails Program. Website content can be improved in a number of ways:

- **Present BTC’s In-Town Trails Work as a Program** – Currently in-town trails work is not presented as a BTC program. There should be a page with the program’s name at the top, followed by compelling language communicating the program’s vision, then information about the program’s projects and accomplishments (e.g. the Pigtail Trail Connector, Safe Routes to School and Trail Connectivity pages). Currently no pages present a succinct vision of what In-Town Trails Committee seeks.

- **Increase Prominence** – In-Town Trails work is central to BTC’s mission and should be prominent on the website. Currently the Trail Connectivity page is the only one that includes some language about BTC’s In-Town Trails program, and the Trail Connectivity link is at the very bottom of the Projects page. The main page for the In-Town Trails Program should be no more than one or two clicks from the top level navigation bar.
- **Add Photos** – Currently, there are almost no images on the website that convey BTC’s In-Town Trails vision. Even the banner image of Dillon on the Projects page is taken from the High Trails. The Pigtail Trail is an important accomplishment, but its only image is a map. Ideally, every in-town trails topic should be accompanied by at least one image, most with people in them.
- **Use compelling Language** – The Trail Connectivity page includes an example of language that greatly undersells BTC’s work. Always keep the program’s underlying values in mind – healthy lifestyles, safety, recreation, community, etc. – and use language that conveys those values.
- **Keep Content Up-to-Date** – The Pigtail Trail is an important accomplishment but the website content appears to be at least two years old and presents it as a future project.
- **Projects** – Once BTC has launched one or more significant In-Town Trails projects, these should have their own web pages with a link from the main (program) page. On that page each project link should probably be accompanied by a photo and a sentence or two describing the project. In the short term, this section could state that BTC has identified over 20 potential connectivity projects, and could provide one or two-sentence descriptions of the top priorities the committee has identified.
- **Accomplishments** – Accomplishments (e.g. the Pigtail Trail and some of the Safe Routes to School work) could have a small photo and a sentence or two on the main program page, with a link to more detailed information.
- **Guide to Trails and Routes** – BTC should provide web information about existing in-town trails and routes. In the short term, this would be particularly valuable to users since no hard copy community pedestrian-bicycle connectivity map exists. This would probably make the most sense as a stand alone page linked from the main program page (cf. Gallatin Valley Land Trust’s “Featured Trails” page <https://gvlt.org/trails/featured-trails/>).
- Following GVLТ’s approach, the “Accomplishments” section could be eliminated from the main program page and BTC could take credit for its accomplishments in the descriptions of relevant trails and routes. This makes a lot of sense because most users are probably much more interested in where they can go for a walk vs. things BTC did several years ago.
- If BTC actively markets this online guide in the community, it could significantly increase website traffic.
- **People Getting Involved** – On the main program page, include an invitation (just a sentence or two with a link to other pages) to get involved and sign up for BTC emails.

Presentations

BTC could create a PowerPoint presentation for the In-Town Trails Program. It could present the vision for In-Town Trails, provide an overview of the different types of potential projects, highlight the program’s high priority projects, and invite community support and involvement. The In-Town Trails Committee could set a goal of giving one presentation per month to different audiences. As a public relations tool, this could:

- **Increase Support for the Vision** – Many community members are probably unaware of the potential opportunities, and they may never have considered pedestrian-bicycle improvements to be a high priority for the community.
- **Recruit New Members and Volunteers** –Presenters should always bring a signup sheet for people who are interested in volunteering and/or receiving BTC emails. Additionally, while venues and hosts can be chosen to reach target audiences such as YMCA members, giving presentations can be a great opportunity to get in front of groups that otherwise might be hard to reach and who are less likely to be familiar with BTC’s work.
- **Increase Awareness of and Traffic to the BTC Website** – Presenters should always highlight the website as the place to go for the latest information, to volunteer, and to donate. If a community guide to trails and routes has been added to the website, presentations would be an ideal opportunity to publicize it.
- **Strengthen and Expand Partnerships** – Partners can be asked to host or help publicize presentations. Partners as well as audience members can be asked to suggest and help contact other organizations that might be willing to host a presentation.
- **Get feedback from the Community** – Q and A time after a presentation can solicit feedback about which opportunities get people excited, and possibly even to learn about new opportunities.

In the next couple years, giving presentations about the High Trails effort will likely be a higher priority for BTC. However, for some audiences, an in-town presentation could be a better fit. In all cases, presentations should at least briefly mention all of BTC’s programs.

Community Trails & Routes Map

BTC partners and members identified a community pedestrian-bicycle map as an important need because many people don’t know where to go for this information, and because there is low awareness of some routes such as Overland. Producing a hard copy map and making it widely available in the community would be a great marketing strategy.

Producing a map involves five factors:

- **Cost & Time** – While producing a map is relatively inexpensive, it requires time. Additionally, managing map distribution requires a modest, ongoing time commitment.
- **Partnership Opportunity** – Partnering with another organization to produce the map could reduce costs and workload.
- **Design and Content** – It is generally a good idea to work with a professional graphic designer. It’s also helpful to study (online) a variety of maps from other communities. Also, An important question is how much information to provide about BTC. At a minimum, BTC’s logo name and website should be prominently displayed with an invitation people to visit the website to learn about new trail projects, donate and get involved.
- **Map Price** – BTC could sell the maps or distribute them for free. Creating the map should be community outreach, not generating revenue. Charging a small amount also helps ensure that they won’t be wasted. The businesses and others who agree to distribute them are less likely to put them in a drawer and forget them if they have paid for them. It is generally easiest to ask distributors to pay up front for the maps and tell them they are welcome to charge any price they want or give them away if they prefer.

- **Distribution** – An Excel spreadsheet works well for tracking businesses and others who have agreed to be distributors, as well as those who have been asked and declined. It is important for a volunteer to keep the spreadsheet updated and periodically checks with distributors to see if they need more maps. Clear plastic map holders can be given to distributors to make it easier and more attractive to display the maps. The holders should have a sticker on the bottom with contact information for requesting more maps. The problem with providing map holders is the increase the cost of the project and that distributors tend to lose or break them.

Partners

Building a strong network of partners will help the In-Town Trails Program in fundraising, community outreach and building support for specific projects, and building and maintaining trails. Ideally, BTC's in-town trails leaders should be systematic about doing outreach to important partners, meeting periodically to update each other and network.

Large Organizations & Target Audiences

Large organizations such as United Way and Rotary with extensive community connections are particularly important. Several of BTC's partners can potentially provide the In-Town Trails Program access to large numbers of people who are in the program's target audiences. The hospital and UMW wellness programs are two large networks interested in new and improved opportunities to walk and ride bikes in town. Similarly, the YMCA is located in the midst of the community's best in-town trails network, and has a membership of over 1000 people.

Walk-Bike Montana

At the other end of the spectrum, the local Walk-Bike Montana group, a fairly new group, does not yet have a large constituency. However, this organization's mission is very closely aligned with BTC and could become a valuable partner for implementing projects and promoting a In-Town Trails vision. Because the two group's missions are so closely aligned, it will be important to develop a close working relationship in which strategies are coordinated.

Local Government

Maintaining its strong working relationships with local government officials obviously improves the In-Town Trails project. It will be important to schedule periodic meetings with elected officials and City and County staff to share priorities and future plans.

Business Partners

Working with local businesses offers a completely different type of partnership opportunity with significant marketing potential:

- If BTC works with businesses to install bike racks, the racks could have metal signs on the ends with BTC's name, logo and website.
- Businesses would be important distributors for a hard copy trail map.
- Business partners may be eager to let their customers know they support BTC. They may have email lists, a website or other communications through which they would be happy to help promote BTC events or projects. For example, "We just started selling Beaverhead Trails Coalition's new

community trails map, visit the BTC website (link) for more information about places to walk, run and bike in Dillon.”

- Businesses that make cash or in-kind donations to BTC or to specific projects could be given “We support Beaverhead Trails Coalition / Beaverhead Trails Coalition Business Partner” window stickers.

Adopt-a-Trail Program

An adopt-a-trail program could build partnerships and increase awareness of In-Town Trails efforts. The County Trail Plan recommends establishing an adopt-a-trail program, “to encourage community groups, families, businesses, school groups and other organizations to join in managing the parks and trails system. Adopt-a-Trail participants will be assigned to clean up their ‘adopted’ portion of the trail. Individuals involved in the cleanup process must obey all posted trail rules and act in a safe manner.

Adopt-a-Trail programs take some effort to manage. Partners tend not to remain engaged for more than a year or two without regular follow-up. Additionally, many trails have a limited need for cleanup and maintenance.

Projects that can be a good fit for adopt-a-trail groups can include:

- Cleaning up trash, if proper guidance is provided about wearing gloves and other safety precautions.
- Resurfacing trails with gravel.
- Installing and maintaining signage.
- Improving trails to address drainage or other issues.
- Fundraising for trail improvements such as signage, benches or repairs to a bridge.

Using power tools should generally be discouraged unless the group includes people who are clearly qualified.

Sometime during the next five years it may be worth assessing the value of launching such a program. However, in the short term it probably would not be a good investment of time. Additionally, organizing annual or semi-annual trail cleanup and maintenance events could be a more effective way to engage the community as a whole and/or specific partners.

Events

Events, while an effective marketing and outreach strategy, can divert significant time away from program work, often with little to show. It can be hard to create events that draw participants who are not already members and supporters. Additionally, fundraising should rarely be the primary goal for an event – especially in its first year.

An event can:

- Raise awareness of BTC and its work
- Recruit new members and volunteers
- Promote specific projects
- Fundraise
- Educate participants on relevant topics (e.g. bicycle safety)
- Accomplish ground work such as trash cleanup days or spreading gravel on trails.
- Celebrate new and old achievements. Try to incorporate an element of celebration into every event.

Currently, with limited resources and a very large projects list, it makes sense for the In-Town Trails Program to invest minimal time in events. It will make more sense to invest in events once one or more projects are moving forward and gaining momentum. If BTC has an active project(s) underway, interest in that project may draw more people and increasing enthusiasm about it would build momentum.

For In-Town Trails events, the Committee should:

- **Work with Partners** – It may make more sense to organize an event in partnership with a group such as YMCA. Benefits would include reduced workload for BTC as well as a higher likelihood of achieving strong participation including people not already BTC members and supporters.
- **Develop and Execute a Marketing Plan** – Don't invest time in planning an event unless you brainstorm a comprehensive list of target audiences and marketing strategies for the event, prioritize the list and then execute the strategies most likely to succeed.
- **Use Dates that are Already on People's Radar** – Holding events on dates such as Earth Day, National Trails Day, and Public Lands Day may help with marketing and turnout because people in BTC's target audiences may already be aware that these dates. But you may face competition from other events.
- **Grow an Annual Event** – The best return on investment may be to try to develop an annual event that has the potential to grow over time.

Project Implementation

Achieving on-the-ground pedestrian-bicycle improvements is the bottom line for success over the next five years. Achieving on-the-ground success can be broadly viewed as a two-stage process:

- 1) Moving projects to "shovel-ready" status where implementation can start as soon as adequate funding and time are available.
- 2) Managing active projects and taking them to completion.

To maximize accomplishments and momentum, as well as engagement by volunteers, supporters and the community, it is ideal to have a variety of projects simultaneously progressing through different stages. This will avoid significant downtime between active projects, helping BTC earn a reputation for getting things done and always having exciting new efforts that need support.

As discussed in the Leadership, Project and Outreach sections, in order to manage workload while maximizing opportunities for engagement and accomplishment, the Level 1 and Level 2 projects list should include a variety of projects:

- Significant projects like Noble Street.
- Smaller scale projects like signage, crosswalks or bike racks.
- Community-wide outreach projects like a trail map.

Whether BTC will be playing a lead role or a supporting role in different projects will be a major determining factor in the number and type of projects on the In-Town Trails Program's priority list at any given time. In cases where BTC is playing a supporting role, the majority of BTC's will likely be done once implementation begins. In cases where BTC is playing a lead role, the point where the greatest workload begins is likely to be when a project becomes "shovel ready".

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION ACTIONS

Year 1

- **Scope, Mission & Goals** – BTC and In-Town Trails Program leadership decide on the program’s scope, name, mission and big picture goals.
- **Volunteer List** – Start building and maintaining a contact list of volunteers.
- **Committee Membership** – Recruit one or two new members for the In-Town Trails Committee.

Year 3

- **Committee Membership** –The In-Town Trails Committee is consistently operating with to five active members.
- **Project Teams** – The program has experimented with creating one or more project teams.
- **Leadership Roles** – Committee members and a small number of committed volunteers are taking a variety of leadership roles ranging from coordinating events to helping to move projects forward. The volunteers are good prospects for expanding the committee or replacing existing committee members who step down.
- **Volunteers** – The program has a short list of engaged and reliable volunteers who are motivated and capable of helping in a variety of roles.

Year 5

- **Committee Membership** – The In-Town Trails Committee is operating with seven members.
- **Volunteers** – The program has expanded its list of engaged and reliable.
- **Leadership Roles** – Most committee members are confident and have the experience to take on a variety of leadership roles, and the committee has a deeper pool of volunteers who are able to handle leadership responsibilities and who could step up to join the committee as needed.
- **BTC Board** – One or more people who joined the committee in years 1-3 is now serving as a BTC Board member.

APPENDIX B – OUTREACH AND MARKETING ACTIONS

Ongoing

- **Marketing & Outreach Plans** – Create outreach and marketing plans for any active projects or planned events.
- **Message** – All of BTC’s communications about the program and its projects should “stay on message”, using the mission and goal statements and the values and themes embodied in them to explain why the program’s work is important to the community.
- **Website** – Keep website content up-to-date so that visitors get a clear impression that the program is dynamic and is actively achieving pedestrian-bicycle improvements.
- **Partnerships** – Meet with partners periodically to get input on priorities, network, share ideas and explore opportunities to collaborate.

Year 1

- **Program Name, Mission and Goals** – As discussed in the first section of this chapter, decide on the best name for the program and draft concise and compelling mission and big picture goal statements.
- **Website** – Improve website organization, text and photos to present BTC’s in-town trails work as one of the organization’s core programs with a compelling vision, projects and accomplishments. Start building an online trails and routes guide, possibly using Gallatin Valley Land Trust’s “Featured Trails” web pages as a template <https://gvlt.org/trails/featured-trails/>
- **Community Pedestrian-Bicycle Map** – Develop a plan for designing, publishing and distributing a hard copy map.

Year 3

- **Website** – Complete an online trails and routes guide.
- **Presentation** – Complete a PowerPoint presentation about the In-Town Trails Program and begin giving presentations to different audiences around the community.
- **Community Pedestrian-Bicycle Map** – By year 3 the map should be completed and a distribution system should be well established.
- **Events** – Start organizing one or two In-Town Trails themed events each year. Try different types of events with the goal of finding one that could evolve into a significant annual event.

Year 5

- **Community Pedestrian-Bicycle Map** – Update and republish the map if significant additions have been made to the community pedestrian-bicycle network.
- **Adopt-a-Trail Program** – Explore whether an adopt-a-trail program would make sense for any in-town trails or routes.
- **Events** – Focus on growing one major event a year. Organize additional events if they make sense for a specific project or outreach objective.

APPENDIX C: CURRENT PRIORITY PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Annual/Periodic

- **City and County Staff** – At least every six months, contact appropriate City and County staff to identify upcoming road and street projects, planning efforts, and residential and commercial developments that are in the planning stages that could offer opportunities for new or improved pedestrian-bicycle connections.
- **Workplan & Budget** – Complete an annual program workplan and budget.

Year 1

- **Noble Avenue** – Decide how to proceed with the Noble Ave. project – on-street lane and/or separated trail – and determine how much time and resources the program can invest in creating a separated trail over the next several years. Invest as much time and resources as possible to ensure no opportunities are lost.
- **Reeder Street** – Clearly identify BTC’s role(s) in this project and invest as much time and resources as possible to **maximize** pedestrian-bicycle safety and connectivity.
- **Nelson Street UMW Connector** – Determine how rapidly BTC should proceed with this project and how much time and resources the In-Town-Trails Program can invest in in this project over the next several years.
- **Project Pipeline** – Add three or four additional projects to the Level 2: High Priority list, and invest as much time and resources as possible to move them toward “shovel ready” status without compromising the top three priorities.

Year 3

- **Complete Projects** – Complete at least one significant project and one smaller scale project. Celebrate!
- **Active Projects** – At least one significant project and one smaller scale project should be in the implementation stage.
- **Pipeline** – Have two projects at or close to “shovel ready”, and two or three additional projects in the pipeline.

Year 5

- **Complete Projects** – Complete at least one significant project and one smaller scale project. Celebrate!
- **Active Projects** – At least one significant project and one smaller scale project should be in the implementation stage.
- **Pipeline** – Have three projects at or close to “shovel ready”, and three additional projects in the pipeline.

APPENDIX D – PROJECT SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Actions

Annual/Periodic

The following actions should be implemented periodically throughout the five-year planning timeframe.

- **Projects List** – Review and update the list.
- **Prioritization** – Review and update project prioritization. Evaluate whether weighting of prioritization criteria should be adjusted.
- **Stakeholder Input** – Seek input from BTC’s membership, partners and any other important stakeholders on which projects should be high priority and about the In-Town Trails Program generally.
- **Local Government Meetings** – Meet with local government officials to discuss upcoming street improvement projects, planning processes and development review opportunities.

Year 1

- **Expand Project List** – Make the projects list comprehensive by including projects of all types that could take time and resources.
- **Project Attributes** – Create a comprehensive list of project attributes and start adding this information to each project on the projects list. Make it a high priority to add a short “purpose” description for every project.
- **Database Planning** – Start planning how to design a project tracking database for storing and updating this information, and for quickly generating useful reports with subsets of this information.
- **Project Prioritization** – Establish a set of prioritization criteria and a formal process. Prioritize the projects on the project list.
- **Project Approval** – Establish a formal project approval process. Formally approve the prioritized projects list.

Year 3

- **Project Tracking Database or Spreadsheet** – Complete and start using a project tracking database or spreadsheet.
- **Land Acquisition** – Identify at least one potential parkland or public land acquisition opportunity and add it to the projects list.

Year 5

- **Project Tracking Database** – If a spreadsheet was completed by year three, by year five aim to transition to a database.
- **Land Acquisition** – Complete a viability assessment of at least one potential parkland or public land acquisition opportunity and run it through the project prioritization process.

Ranking Projects

Scoring & Assigning Priority Levels

The most effective approach to prioritizing BTC's large in-town projects list would be to use a scoring process in combination with the judgment and consensus of committee and board members.

- The scoring process would use the prioritization criteria to assign points to projects to try to arrive at a relatively objective score to use in comparing different projects.
- A 1-5 scale could be used, with zero assigned to any criteria that are not relevant to a project.
- BTC may decide to give some criteria greater weight than others.
- To keep the process efficient, only obvious candidates for the highest priority rankings would be carefully scored using all the prioritization criteria.
- The remaining projects on the master list would be quickly grouped by consensus into lower priority levels. If there is significant debate about the appropriate ranking for a specific project, then a more detailed evaluation could be done using the list of criteria.
- Project scores should not be rigidly used to make final priority determinations. Rather, they should be used as guidance. Often, the most valuable result of the scoring process is not the score itself, but rather the substantive discussion of project strengths and weaknesses that might not otherwise have been adequately evaluated.
- Smaller scale projects should not be excluded from top priority status simply because their community benefit is limited. Over the next several years, the program may only be able to manage one significant, ambitious project at a time. However, it may be realistic to simultaneously manage one or two smaller scale projects. There are many benefits to smaller projects including generating momentum by achieving success in a relatively short period of time; creating opportunities for leaders and volunteers to gain experience; and building broader community support through a variety of active projects that will benefit different areas of town and different constituencies.
- Final prioritization decisions should be made by consensus or vote of the In-Town Trails Committee and/or the BTC Board.
- When deciding whether to assign projects to "Level 1: Top Priority" or "Level 2: High Priority", it is important to consider how the project will fit into the program's current workload of active projects and projects that are in the process of reaching "shovel-ready" status (discussed in the Project Implementation section below).

Weighting Criteria

Finally, every time the prioritization process is conducted, it is important to be flexible about changing how criteria are weighted. Following are several examples illustrating factors that BCT may give higher weight to at this stage in the organization's development:

- **Build Momentum with a Quick Win** – Because BTC is currently re-starting its In-Town Trails Program, a strong argument can be made for giving more weight to a project that has a high likelihood of success in a relatively short timeframe – one or two years. This will build momentum and minimize the risk of volunteers getting burnt out or frustrated. Once the program has been active for a few years, and has built more depth of experience and a larger pool of leadership and

volunteers, it may make more sense to prioritize a big project. At that stage, a project that's going to take five years may make sense as a top priority as long as it has a good likelihood of success and people will feel a clear sense of progress and accomplishment along the way.

- **Carefully Evaluate Funding Goals and Strategies** – While the High Trails capital campaign is ongoing, it will be important not launch in-town projects that will compete for funding. Before committing to any in-town project, BTC should carefully evaluate whether the project's funding goals can be met with grants and donations from sources that would be unlikely to fund the High Trails.
- **Avoid Controversy** – While controversy is sometimes necessary or even beneficial, it would probably be best to try to avoid it in a first project that's also coinciding with the BTC's important and ambitious High Trails capital campaign. Controversy over an in-town project could be a big distraction both publicly and internally from the High Trails effort. Additionally, BTC is more likely to be successful in a controversial situation after the organization has built momentum and support with a few successful non-controversial projects.

Build Relationships with the Agricultural Community – When evaluating the Nelson Street UMW connector trail, it will be important to assess how a bridge across the canal will affect BTC's relationships and perception in the agricultural community. Depending on the personalities involved, working to negotiate an easement across the canal could be a great relationship building opportunity, it could be perceived negatively or it might have minimal impact one way or the other. It is likely that most members of the agricultural community have not yet developed strong opinions about BTC. Since BTC is currently working with agricultural landowners on access and trespass issues around the High Trails, and since many other future projects will depend on good relationships with the ag community this is a particularly important time to focus on building positive relationships and a reputation for understanding and being responsive to the ag community.

Approving Projects

Triggering the Approval Process

The approval process should be triggered when the committee wants to commit the BTC to a significant investments of money or time.

- **Cost** – The board should approve a project before it is included in grant applications. The committee and Board should agree on a cost threshold below which a project does not need to go through the approval process, or that would warrant only a quick presentation to the board for approval. An example might be installing trail signage.
- **Time** – Compared to cost, time commitments are more of a judgement call and a grey area. However, the process would generally be triggered when a project is ranked as a Level 1 priority. However, the committee may want to go through the process for a Level 2 project that is moving toward implementation very quickly.

Project Team

The first step in the process is to create a Project Team to evaluate the project in more depth and to help move the project forward more quickly. Ideally, the team should include:

- Three to five people total

- At least one committee member who will act as a liaison between the project team and the committee
- At least one board member who will act as a liaison with the Board
- Someone who is familiar with BTC’s budget and fundraising plan and who will act a liaison with the Development Committee
- The team could also include one or two BTC members who are interested and knowledgeable about the potential project – for example, someone who is highly motivated because the project would benefit their neighborhood. This is the kind of role that can be ideal for recruiting people for the committee or even the board by engaging them at a higher level of participation. Also, involving one or two new, motivated people is a great way to reduce the workload on committee and board members.

Preliminary Approval

Materials

The Project Team develops the following materials that the committee and Board will review and discuss before voting on the project:

Budget Estimate – including:

- Estimated costs plus contingency
- Estimated long term maintenance & management costs if project is successful
- Initial ideas for fundraising plan

Project Factsheet – The team drafts a project factsheet / briefing paper summarizing the project and all relevant issues. The factsheet should include:

- A summary and brief explanation of how the project scored on each of the prioritization criteria.
- A projected timeline including two key benchmarks: What is the goal for having the project “shovel-ready”? What is a realistic goal for completing the project?
- Photographs if they are helpful to understanding the project.
- A brief discussion of whether a project working group would be appropriate, and if so which partners and stakeholders should be invited to participate.

Project Map(s) – Create a map(s) of the project showing how the project fits into the community pedestrian-bicycle network.

Draft Motion – Having a motion drafted ahead of time for the committee and Board to vote on typically saves a lot of time at those meetings. It also helps focus the discussion, and the process of drafting the motion tends to help identify key issues that need to be addressed.

Committee Preliminary Approval – Committee reviews project evaluation, factsheet, budget, map, timeline and draft motion and votes on a recommendation to the Board.

Board Preliminary Approval – A Project Team / Committee member(s) presents the recommendation and draft motion to the Board for discussion and approval. The final motion should state which Board member(s) will participate on the Project as the Board-liason for the project.

Final Approval

Materials

The Project Team develops the following materials that the committee and Board will review and discuss before voting on final approval. In many instances, requiring both preliminary and final approval votes may be excessive and unnecessary. In these instances, the preliminary approval motion could be amended to require the following materials to simply be presented to the committee and Board as part of periodic project updates. However, including this step in the formal process encourages the organization to take an incremental approach before fully committing to a major investment of time and resources.

Due Diligence – Dig deeper and edit the project factsheet and timeline to provide more in-depth information and timeline benchmarks for easement issues, design and budget, surveying, preliminary engineering, etc.

Project Working Group – If a project working group is planned, all potential members should be contacted and notes from these conversations should be summarized in a brief document that presents the likely level of partner engagement and support, and specifically which partners have agreed to participate on the working group.

Comprehensive Budget – Project Team prepares a comprehensive budget including:

- Detailed costs plus contingency
- Detailed fundraising plan
- Summary of staff/volunteer capacity committed to the project

Marketing & Outreach Plan – A plan summarizing strategies for maximizing public awareness and support for the project.

Committee Final Approval – Team member(s) presents detailed project plan and budget to Committee for final approval.

Board Final Approval – Team / committee member(s) present detailed project plan and budget to Board for final approval.

Project Updates and Changes

Committee Updates – The Team periodically updates the In-Town Trails Committee and the Fundraising Committee on all Level 1 priority projects.

Board Updates – For all Level 1 projects, an update is provided in writing at every Board meeting and/or a brief presentation is given including:

- Milestones achieved
- Budget status

Project Changes – The team prepares summaries of any substantial change to the project. This may include a written summary, updated map, budget, factsheet etc. A substantial change could include:

- A budget change > 10%

- Significant changes in scope such as major design or trail routing changes
- Significant changes in the timeline

Additional Committee Approvals – Committee makes recommendations to the Board if there are substantial changes to the project resulting in a budget change greater than 10%.

Additional Board Approvals – A Board vote is required to approve any budget change greater than 10%, or other substantial change to the project plan that Board members believe warrants a vote.

Project Data Base Design

Fields/Attributes for All Projects:

- **Status** – existing, proposed, conceptual, planning, construction
- **Purpose** – A sentence or two describing the project’s public benefits. What connections would it make? What destinations would it make more accessible? What are the strongest arguments for why it is needed?
- **Trail/Route Mileage** – to generate totals based on different criteria
- **Type** – separated paved trail, separated gravel trail, sidewalk gap, crosswalk, curb ramp, bike lane, on-street wide shoulder bicycle-pedestrian lane.
- **Route or Area** – Trails could be geographically categorized by named route (east side, High Trails access, etc.), by area of town (north Dillon, Dillon Growth Area north, etc.) or both. An example of why it could make sense to use two fields is that an “east side route” from Overland to UMW could include two or more areas of town.
- **Connections** – What trails, bike lanes and sidewalks does this project connect to directly?
- **Easement** – Existing or needed
- **Easement Details** – Landowner & easement holder
- **Cost** – What the project cost or an estimate of what it would cost.
- **BTC’s Role** – Lead? Support? Planning? Catalyst?
- **Maintenance Responsibility** – Who is responsible for an existing trail or who would likely need to be responsible if a project is constructed.
- **Maintenance Needs** – For completed projects.
- **Signage Needs** – For completed projects.

Fields/Attributes for Active Projects:

Designing these fields will be considerably more complicated because of the many moving parts in a typical project; the fact that every project tends to have different combinations of elements; and the likely need for multiple text fields to record notes on different subjects. The goals would be to effectively track all the moving parts, and to be able to easily generate status reports and to-do lists.

- **BTC priority level**
- **Completion target date**
- **Landowner**
- **Landowner Communication Notes**
- **Most recent action**
- **Engineering Status**

In-Town Trails – Approved on February 7th, 2018

- **Permitting Status**
- **Fundraising Goal**
- **Fundraising Status**
- **In-Kind Donation Goals**
- **In-Kind Donation Status**