

Anthony R. Foxx
Office of Infrastructure Finance and Innovation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington DC 20590

RE: Missoula Montana's TIGER Grant Application, *Russell Street, Broadway to Dakota Street*

Dear Secretary Foxx:

Thank you for your consideration of Missoula's TIGER Grant Application for the reconstruction project on Russell Street. We are writing to express our support of this project and the grant application. We are writing on behalf of the Northside/Westside Leadership Team and both these neighborhoods we represent will benefit in a variety of ways from this project. The reconstruction project planned for the section of Russell Street between Broadway and Dakota streets will improve the livability of our communities, provide public health and environmental benefits, and support our growing neighborhoods.

The Northside and Westside neighborhoods are centrally located neighborhoods within walking and biking distance of many commercial areas. With the burgeoning development taking place along the Russell Street Corridor, including multi-dwelling residential units, retail, and service-based commercial project, it will become increasingly important to provide the necessary transportation infrastructure in this area. The Russell Street reconstruction project will do this by providing both improved transportation for cars, bikes, and pedestrians.

The addition of bike lanes and sidewalks along this section of Russell Street is especially important. Currently the lack of biking and walking infrastructure is an impediment to alternative transportation along Russell. Improving the ability of residents to walk and bike along Russell could further reduce traffic congestion, which is currently a serious problem on Russell Street. Additionally, without bike lanes and sidewalks, and with an undersized bridge over the Clark Fork River, biking and walking along Russell Street can feel dangerous.

Creating a safer (and more enjoyable) experience for bikers and pedestrians is important. Many of Missoula's low and moderate income populations live west of Russell Street, such as the Westside and Northside neighborhoods, and likely rely on alternative transportation more than other, higher income neighborhoods. Young families are increasingly choosing to settle in the Northside and Westside neighborhoods, likely attracted by the central location and affordable housing. The Russell Street reconstruction will provide an innovative and complete urban street, enhancing all modes of transportation and increasing connectivity between residents west of Russell and the jobs downtown and in Missoula's other commercial corridors such as Brooks Street. This will improve the livability of our neighborhoods and has the potential to further encourage growth in our neighborhoods.

Lastly, the reconstruction project has the potential to result in improved health, both for the public and the environment. A recent report by the Active Living Research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation looked at a study done in Seattle and found that adults living within a half-mile of a bike path were 20 percent more likely to bicycle at least once a week. The Russell Street reconstruction will provide

better access to bike paths, and will also increase connectivity to the existing bike path network and build on other great work being done in our area—such as the recently funded Missoula to Lolo bike trail.

While the health benefits are apparent, so are the environmental benefits. More biking and walking results in fewer cars on the road and more efficient road systems result in lower idling times. Both of these factors will improve air quality in the Missoula Valley.

As representatives of the Northside and Westside Neighborhoods we appreciate the opportunity to voice our support for this grant application. The Russell Street reconstruction project will provide a host of benefits to our neighborhoods and the city of Missoula.

Sincerely,

The Northside/Westside Leadership Team City of Missoula, Montana

Please send letters to Dave Prescott, DPrescott@ci.missoula.mt.us
Cc: Aaron Wilson, AWilson@ci.missoula.mt.us

Deadline for Letters: Monday, April 21st (sooner if possible)

City of Missoula Development Services
435 Ryman Street
Missoula, MT 59802

NOTE: PDFs or hard copies of signed letters are fine. Let us know if you're mailing a hard copy so we can watch for it!

Project Background [just FYI – not part of your Letter of Support]:

The TIGER Grant is a funding program designed to improve motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation. This application seeks \$19.6 million in funding for the reconstruction of Russell Street from Broadway to Dakota, including replacement of the Russell Street Bridge over the Clark Fork River.

This project application is for the north segment of the full reconstruction of Russell Street extending from Broadway to Mount Avenue. Reconstruction of Russell Street is a project nearly twenty years in the making, marked by extensive community discussion and collaboration has taken place among local, regional, state and federal agencies. The project has been the top priority in the last five updates of the Missoula Long Range Transportation Plan.

Letters of support will be used to document the wide spread support that exists for this project and to provide key stakeholder input that will be needed to demonstrate that this project would be an excellent economic and safety investment for the region. For more information visit the [Montana Department of Transportation Russell Street project website](#).