



# Russell Street / South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

## Environmental Impact Statement

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### What is the Russell / South 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft Environmental Impact Statement Project?

This project was initiated in 2000 to address specified transportation issues in the Russell Street corridor from Mount to Broadway, and in the South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West corridor from Reserve to Russell. The City of Missoula, in coordination with the Montana Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, has initiated an environmental review process to develop and evaluate alternatives for transportation improvements to address the specified needs in these corridors. The environmental review will follow an evaluation and public involvement process to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Montana Environmental Policy Act. This process will ensure that there is a full and fair discussion of all significant social, economic, and environmental impacts before specific project-related decisions are made. The decision-making process will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement that will be available for public review and comment.

#### Why is this project being proposed?

The proposed improvements are in response to long-range planning goals identified in the 1996 and 1999 Missoula Transportation Plan Updates. These planning efforts and more detailed traffic analysis indicate that transportation facilities in the Russell and South 3<sup>rd</sup> corridors are not adequate to accommodate existing and future travel demand.

#### What is being proposed to address the identified problems?

Proposed improvements include widening the roadways, bus pullouts, new sidewalks, new curb and gutter, landscaping, roundabouts or traffic signals at appropriate locations, lighting, utility upgrades, and trail crossings that take bicyclists and pedestrians underneath Russell Street. These improvements are intended to:

- Improve roadway safety and capacity to meet current and predicted travel needs.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle linkages through and across the corridor.
- Address bottleneck at the Russell Street bridge over the Clark Fork River.

Specific design elements would also enhance the sense of neighborhood by providing lighting, sidewalks, landscaped medians, and safe pedestrian crossings.

#### Why is it taking so long?

A typical roadway improvement project can take anywhere from seven to ten years to go from planning, through environmental compliance, to final design and construction. This project started in 2000 and is currently anticipated to be under construction by 2010, which is still a reasonable schedule for a large project in a constrained urban corridor.

## **What are the alternatives that have been studied?**

All build alternatives include widened roadways, bike lanes, sidewalks, curb, and gutter.

Russell Street also included analysis of:

- “No Build” (would be limited to routine maintenance of the existing facility)
- Two through lanes
- Three through lanes with a center turn lane/raised median
- Four through lanes with a center turn lane/raised median

South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West included analysis of:

- Two through lanes
- Two through lanes with a center turn lane/raised median

## **Is there a preferred alternative?**

Yes. For Russell Street, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative includes four through lanes plus a center turn lane; multi-lane roundabouts at South 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets; and traffic signals at Mount, Wyoming, and Broadway.

For South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative includes two through lanes plus a center turn lane and single-lane roundabouts at Curtis/Schilling, Johnson, and Catlin.

## **How much would it cost, and is federal money involved?**

The estimated cost to rebuild Russell Street is approximately \$30 million. South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street West is estimated at \$14 million. Missoula receives about \$1.5 million a year in urban funds that could be used for the project, but without federal money, Missoula would not be able to afford it.

## **When would the project be built?**

If the City gets approval from the Federal Highway Administration to proceed, the project would be built in phases over a number of years. The first phase would likely start at the Broadway/Russell intersection and extend south to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This phase would include a new bridge over the Clark Fork River. Future phases would be contingent upon receipt of federal money. South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street would be constructed with local gas tax and local property owner assessments. The project(s) would be built over the next 15 to 20 years.

## **Why should I participate?**

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative is a preliminary recommendation only. The final decision will be made by the Federal Highway Administration, with weight given to the detailed analysis contained in the Environmental Impact Statement, and public comment.

This is one of the major transportation corridors in Missoula. Whether you commute in a car, bicycle, walk, ride the bus, or make trips to your favorite business, this project has the potential to impact you.

