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FHWA  
MONTANA DIVISION

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Subject: 2nd Ave S - 7th to 15th (9th) - GTF  
STPU 5236 (1)  
UPN 4420

**MASTER FILE  
COPY**

This is a request for the FHWA's concurrence that the proposed project meets the criteria for classification as a Categorical Exclusion under the provisions of 23 CFR 771.117(d). The proposed action also qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion under the provisions of ARM 18.2.261 (Sections 75-1-103 and 75-1-201, M.C.A.).

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MDT), in cooperation with the City of Great Falls, plans to improve transportation on 2nd Avenue South (Route U-5236) by reconstructing the route between 7th and 9th Streets South. The proposed work would be done under a project designated as "2nd Ave S - 7th to 15th (9th) - GTF" [STPU 5236(1); UPN 4420]. 2nd Avenue South is on the Urban Highway System and the section between 7th and 9th Streets South is functionally classified as an urban minor arterial. East of the project area, between 9th Street South and 15th Street South, the route is classified as an urban collector.

The proposed project is located in Cascade County, within the limits of the City of Great Falls. The 2nd Avenue South project begins at RP 0.480, the intersection with 9th Street South (U-5242), and extends westerly 0.274 kilometers (km) (0.170 miles) to the intersection with 7th Street South at RP 0.650. These limits do not include the necessary connections to the existing street at the beginning and end of the project. A location map and representative photographs of the project area are attached.

The existing roadway has a back-of-curb to back-of-curb width of 10.67 meters (m) (35 feet) and accommodates two 2.74 m (9-foot) wide eastbound travel lanes and two 2.44 m (8-foot) wide parallel parking lanes. The roadway corridor also includes 2.44 m (8-foot) wide boulevards and 1.52 m (5-foot) wide sidewalks.

The proposed reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South would increase the street's width to 11.88 m (39 feet) from back-of-curb to back-of-curb and would accommodate two 3.3 m (11-foot) wide

driving lanes and two 2.4 m (8-foot) wide parking lanes. The proposed roadway construction would meet MDT's minimum geometric design standards for curbed minor arterials. Typical sections illustrating the features of the existing and proposed roadways on 2nd Avenue South are attached.

The project would shift the horizontal alignment of the street about 0.6 m (2 feet) to the north. This minor alignment shift, together with the increased width of the street, would reduce the width of the boulevard on the north side of 2nd Avenue South from 2.4 m (8 feet) to 1.2 m (4 feet). The proposed vertical alignment would closely follow that of the existing street. New curb and gutter would be installed over the length of the project. New driveway approach aprons would be constructed in the boulevard areas and the sidewalk through affected driveways would be replaced. However, existing sidewalks between driveways would remain in place. New sidewalks with curb ramps would be constructed at the street intersections.

The intersection of 2nd Avenue South and 9th Street South is signalized. MDT would replace the traffic signal, or at a minimum, provide the necessary traffic loops for a future signal installation.

Additionally, the existing storm drain line beneath 2nd Avenue South would be replaced over the entire length of the project. The storm drain improvements would be funded by the City of Great Falls. Other activities associated with the project include: grading, relocating conflicting utilities and/or poles for street lights, and installing new signs and pavement markings. The planned ready date for this project is currently October 2006.

## **PURPOSE AND NEED**

The fundamental purpose of this proposed project is to provide two widened travel lanes and full width parking lanes on a portion of 2nd Avenue South by reconstructing and widening the existing street to meet MDT's minimum geometric design standards for curbed minor arterials. Currently, when cars are parked along both sides of 2nd Avenue South, vehicles traveling in the two one-way eastbound lanes must often travel staggered instead of side by side because the travel lanes are only 2.74 m (9-feet) wide. MDT's Road Design Manual indicates that the typical width of travel lanes should range from 3.1 m (10 feet) to 3.6 m (12 feet). This project would provide travel lanes 3.3 m (11 feet) wide travel lanes.

Long-range transportation planning in Great Falls has identified the need to improve 2nd Avenue South. The proposed project was shown as a desirable transportation improvement in the *Great Falls 2000-2020 Transportation Plan* and is presently designated as "Project C-8" on the list of committed recommended major street network improvements listed in the *Great Falls Area Transportation Plan – 2003*. Committed recommended major street network improvement projects are defined in the *Transportation Plan* as "any transportation project with an identified funding source and that has been approved and committed to by the Great Falls Policy

Coordinating Committee.” The proposed 2nd Avenue South reconstruction project is included in the City’s five-year capital improvement program and transportation improvement program. MDT reviewed the accident history for this portion of 2nd Avenue South for the three-year period from July 1, 1997 to June 30, 2000. An engineering evaluation was not performed because accident analysis printouts and statewide average accident rates are not available for Urban Routes within city limits. Collision diagrams for the intersections with 7th and 9th Streets showed that the most common type of crash was a right angle collision. Also, there were four sideswipe same direction crashes, three of which involved vehicles parked on the street.

Since 2nd Avenue South is a three-lane roadway west of this project, a lane shift currently exists at the 7th Street intersection. The proposed minor shift in horizontal alignment would help correct this geometric issue and facilitate traffic flow through the intersection.

The existing street needs reconstruction due to its age and condition. Other than occasional overlays and normal maintenance activities, there have been no significant improvements to 2nd Avenue South since its original construction date, presumed to be around 1916 based on the dates stamped on sidewalks at intersections. Some sections of the project have integral curb and gutter, while others have the original square shaped curb. Additionally, the existing vitreous clay storm drain line under the street was installed in 1919 has reached the end of its service life and is undersized for the area it serves. Street reconstruction would allow the City to upgrade part of its storm drainage infrastructure in this area.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

The proposed project has been evaluated for, and would have **no effects** on the following environmental areas of concern:

- **Prime, Unique and Important Farmlands**
- **Threatened or Endangered Species**
- **Rare and Sensitive Species**
- **Other Wildlife Resources and Fisheries**
- **Section 6(f) Impacts**

The proposed project has been evaluated for, and would have **minor effects** on the following environmental areas of concern:

**Land Use.** The 2nd Avenue South project area is located within a predominantly residential neighborhood just south of the Central Business District of the City of Great Falls. The project area contains primarily single-family homes, although several apartment buildings and a few

small businesses exist along this portion of 2nd Avenue South. No public use buildings exist within the immediate project corridor.

The proposed realignment and reconstruction activities associated with this project would not cause notable changes to adjacent land uses, encourage new or undesirable growth or development, eliminate or substantially alter access to adjacent properties, or alter real property values. The proposed project would not relocate any residences or businesses.

The design for the proposed project would be consistent with several vision statements listed in the “Great Falls City-County Growth Policy” adopted in May 2003 including:

- implementing transportation and land use decisions intended to maintain cohesive, distinct, diverse, attractive, and safe neighborhoods; and
- implementing a transportation system that incorporates many modes of travel, facilitates safe movement of people and goods, protects air quality, minimizes congestion, and supports compact, efficient land use patterns.

**Right-of-Way and Utilities.** The width of the existing right-of-way within the project corridor is 24.4 m (80 feet). No new right-of-way is anticipated for this project. As indicated previously, the City intends to replace the existing storm drain line beneath 2nd Avenue South in the project area. The storm drain replacement would be included in the scope of this proposed project but funded by the City. MDT and the City would develop and implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to identify the City’s funding participation level for the storm drain work.

Few utility conflicts are anticipated; however, a power pole at the northeast corner of the intersection of 2nd Avenue South and 9th Street may be affected. Conflicting utilities would be relocated as part of this proposed project.

Existing street lighting is located in the boulevards along the street. No improvements to the existing street lighting are proposed; however, relocation of some light poles may be necessary within the boulevard on the north side of the street due to the proposed minor horizontal alignment shift.

**Social Impacts/Environmental Justice.** Since the proposed project involves no new right-of-way to be acquired, no adverse social impacts are foreseen. The proposed project would not affect the location, distribution, density or growth rate of the population in the vicinity. The proposed improvements would not adversely affect any social or ethnic groups nor would they isolate or divide any existing residential areas.

The proposed project would be in accordance with **Executive Order No. 12898**, and would not create disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority

and/or low-income populations. The proposed project would also comply with the provisions of *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act* of 1964 (**42 U.S.C. 2000d**, as amended) under the FHWA's regulations (23 CFR 200).

**Vegetation/Landscaping.** Introduced grasses, shrubs and trees dominate vegetated boulevards and landscaped yards within the project area. Numerous mature green ash and American linden trees with trunks ranging from 0.1 m to about 1.0 m (4 inches to about 3 feet) in diameter are notable features in this portion of the City and line both sides of 2nd Avenue South project area.

Some vegetation on boulevards adjoining 2nd Avenue South would be permanently lost or temporarily disturbed by the proposed construction activities. Since the project involves a minor shift in the horizontal alignment and a slight increase in the overall width of the street, the existing boulevard area along the north side of 2nd Avenue South would be reduced in width from 2.4 m (8 feet) to about 1.2 m (4 feet). Trees and other vegetation within the affected boulevard area along the north side of 2nd Avenue South would need to be removed. Preliminary design studies indicate that all trees within the boulevard along the north side of the street would be removed. Trees within the boulevards on the south side of the street would not be affected by this proposed project.

In accordance with **7-22-2152** and **60-2-208, M.C.A.**, MDT would replace impacted landscaping or re-establish permanent desirable vegetation along all areas disturbed by the proposed construction. The contractor selected for the project would be required to follow a set of revegetation guidelines developed by MDT.

As mitigation for the trees removed by the project, MDT would plant the same number of trees of identical or similar species in the boulevard on the north side of the street. The replacement trees would be at least 64 mm (2.5 inch) caliper in size. Plans would be prepared showing planting locations and specifying details for planting the replacement trees.

Additionally, special provisions would require that replacement trees be of the type and sizes called for in the plans; be inspected and approved for planting; and be planted within a specified time after delivery to the project site. MDT would specify acceptable planting times and initial care instructions (like watering during planting and staking). Contractors must typically guarantee that the trees remain healthy and in a vigorous growing conditions for a year after being planted and would be required to replace trees that do not meet such conditions.

**Water Quality/Storm Water Runoff.** The MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (MDEQ) has regulatory authority over activities that may cause discharges of sediment into "state waters" (which include, but are not limited to lakes/reservoirs, rivers, streams, unnamed tributaries to state waters, wetlands, and irrigation channels). There are no wetlands, water bodies, ditches or irrigation canals within the limits of this project.

The City of Great Falls operates an extensive storm water drain system consisting of underground storm drain lines, manholes or inlets, and seven detention basins. The Public Works Department has established a city-wide storm drain utility and operates and maintains the system in accordance with its Storm Drain Master Plan. The City is subject to U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) storm water management rules that are required by the *Clean Water Act* (33 U.S.C. 1251 – 1376). The rules are generally aimed at regulating the quality of urban storm water in order to minimize its impact on the water quality of receiving water bodies.

Most of the area affected by this proposed project is already impermeable (the existing paved roadway and parking lanes and concrete sidewalks) so the amount of storm water runoff would be approximately the same as under existing conditions. Storm water runoff from the project area is presently accommodated by the City's storm drain system.

The proposed project includes the replacement of an existing storm drain line under 2nd Avenue South. The planned storm drain work would have no effect on the existing system's downstream pipe capacities and the existing outfall is believed adequate for the drainage improvements implemented with this project.

The proposed project would cause temporary soil disturbances during reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South. If unmitigated, the proposed activities could result in sediment transport into the City's storm drain system during precipitation events.

Erosion Control Plans, incorporating Best Management Practices for temporary and long-term erosion control, would be prepared for the 2nd Avenue South project. The Erosion Control Plans would be developed using procedures and methods established in MDT's "Erosion and Sediment Control Best Management Practices: Reference Manual" whose main objective is to minimize erosion of disturbed areas during and after construction of this project.

Clearing, excavating, and grading for the proposed project may disturb less than 0.4 ha (1 acre). Therefore, this project may not be subject to the requirements of the MDEQ's Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity. MDT will calculate the anticipated disturbance area as plans are advanced for the project and determine the need for the MPDES permit. If necessary, MDT would submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) package to MDEQ's Permitting and Compliance Division for coverage under the MPDES General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction Activity.

**Noise.** Noise-sensitive receptors, including single-family residences and apartment buildings, exist within the project limits. Residences are listed under Activity Category B according to the Noise Abatement Criteria (NAC) listed in 23 CFR 772.

Preliminary plans for 2nd Avenue South show the centerline of the proposed travel lanes would shift about 0.6 m (2 feet) to the north. This minor shift does not represent a significant alteration to the existing roadway. Additionally, the project would not increase the number of travel lanes within the corridor. Therefore, the proposed reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South is not considered a Type I project according to 23 CFR 772 and MDT's "Traffic Noise Analysis and Abatement: Policy and Procedure Manual" and a noise analysis not required. This proposed project would be unlikely to create notable changes in the traffic noise levels at noise-sensitive receptors within the corridor.

**Traffic and Circulation Impacts.** The proposed project would disrupt the circulation of traffic during the period required to reconstruct the affected portion of 2nd Avenue South. The possibility of closing the street will be analyzed by MDT. If closing the road is not viable during the construction period, through traffic would be detoured onto other nearby streets to avoid work zones and local access would be maintained. Short-term delays or temporary street closures may occur on streets immediately adjoining the project during the construction period.

MDT would develop a traffic control plan to maintain traffic flows in a safe and efficient manner and to ensure work zone safety through the use of appropriate signing, flagging, lane closures, or other measures. The "Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices" (MUTCD) would be used to help design any traffic control plan implemented for the project. Reasonable access to adjacent businesses, residences, and public buildings would be provided to the maximum extent possible during the construction period.

**Air Quality.** The proposed project is located in an "unclassifiable/attainment" area of Montana for air quality under 40 CFR 81.327, as amended. As such, this proposed project is not covered under the EPA's **Final Rule** of September 15, 1997 on Air Quality conformity. Therefore, this proposed project complies with *Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7521 (a))*, as amended.

The City of Great Falls was designated as a nonattainment area for carbon monoxide (CO) in 1980 based on numerous violations of the 8-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for the pollutant recorded within the 10th Avenue South corridor. Consensus between the EPA and local officials resulted in the designation of the 10th Avenue South corridor as the nonattainment area boundary instead of the entire city.

Through the implementation of an air quality control plan and other continuing efforts to achieve attainment status, the EPA designated the 10th Avenue South corridor as a "limited maintenance plan" attainment area for CO in July 2002. However, with the new designation, the City must still comply with its existing ten-year maintenance plan and must submit a revised maintenance plan in 2010 that provides for maintenance of the CO standards for an additional ten years. Provided the 8-hour standard for CO is not exceeded (more than once per calendar year) over the

next 20 years, full attainment status can be requested from the EPA for the 10th Avenue South corridor.

Because the proposed project is located about eight blocks north of the 10th Avenue South CO Nonattainment Area, the reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South would not be expected to cause traffic delays that could contribute to new violations of CO standards within the Nonattainment Area.

The air quality effects of the 2nd Avenue South project and other committed and planned transportation projects, were considered in the *Great Falls Area Transportation Plan – 2003*. The *Transportation Plan* includes a determination that states committed and planned transportation projects are in conformance with the *Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990* and the Carbon Monoxide State Implementation Plan for the State of Montana.

**Hazardous Waste Sites.** A Phase I Hazardous Waste Investigation to identify existing or potential environmental hazards in the project area was done in August 2002 by Land & Water Consulting, Inc. According to the investigation, four sites on properties affected by this project were documented with potential environmental hazards associated with present or past land uses. These sites and potential impacts are identified below.

<b>Ulmer's Auto and Truck</b> (206 7th Street South)	Historic use as an auto repair facility (potential for underground fuel storage). Unknown impacts to soil/groundwater.
<b>Auto Shop and Residence</b> (726 2nd Avenue South)	Historic use as auto repair facilities and filling station (potential for underground fuel storage). Unknown impacts to soil/groundwater.
<b>Sun Cleaners</b> (113 9th Street South)	Historic use as a dry cleaner. Unknown impacts to soil/groundwater.
<b>Entech Computers</b> (900 2nd Avenue South) (211 9th Street South)	Historic use as a filling station. Unknown impacts to soil/groundwater.

The Phase I Hazardous Waste Investigation recommended that additional subsurface testing be performed within the right-of-way in the vicinity of these properties to determine if soil and/or groundwater contamination exists.

A follow-up Phase II subsurface investigation will be conducted prior to construction of this proposed project to determine the extent of contamination, if any, at the above locations. The investigation would also recommend actions to remediate areas of contamination that may be encountered during street reconstruction activities.

If needed, remediation may include actions such as removing contaminated soil and disposing of it at a licensed soil disposal facility or re-using low-risk contaminated material as backfill in areas where the material originated. Any necessary clean-up or re-use options would be determined by consultation with MDT Engineers, Solid/Hazardous Waste Specialists and MDEQ case managers. Safe handling procedures, sampling and analysis protocol, and worker safety procedures would also be outlined in the contract documents for the project.

Disposal of non-salvageable and leftover materials would be in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, including the *Montana Solid Waste Management Act (75-10-203, M.C.A.)*.

The Contractor would be required to take precautions to minimize the effects of construction operations and to prevent leakage or spilling of fluids from construction equipment.

**Historical/Cultural Resources.** A cultural resources survey of the 2nd Avenue South project corridor was performed by a cultural resources consultant in November 2002. The consultant reviewed previously recorded sites in the general project area and conducted a field survey to identify and record new cultural resource sites along 2nd Avenue South.

The results of the cultural resources survey showed that the project area does not lie within the boundaries of either the Downtown Historic District or the Railroad Historic District which exist to the north and west, respectively, of the 2nd Avenue South corridor. Only one site within the project area, the Thisted House (24CA695) located at 811 2nd Avenue South, was recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Montana STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO) concurred with the NRHP-eligibility determination for the Thisted House on December 3, 2003.

The proposed reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South would not require the acquisition of any new right-of-way from the property associated with the Thisted House. The proposed reconstruction and minor widening of the street would reduce the width of the existing boulevard by 1.2 m (4 feet) and require the removal of two trees from the boulevard in front of the Thisted House. The overall setting of the 2nd Avenue South streetscape in the vicinity of the Thisted House would be altered by the minor reduction in width of the north boulevard and the removal of all trees along the north side of the street within the project corridor. Trees within the boulevards on the south side of the street would not be affected by this proposed project.

While this proposed project would result in the loss of trees from the north boulevard along the street (including the boulevard in front of the Thisted House), planting a similar number and species of trees lost within the north boulevard would perpetuate the tree-lined boulevards, a distinctive feature of this portion of the City, along 2nd Avenue South. For this reason, it was concluded that the proposed 2nd Avenue South project would have **no effect** to the NRHP-

eligible Thisted House. A copy of SHPO's August 16, 2005 letter indicating their concurrence with this determination is attached.

**Section 4(f) Impacts.** *Section 4(f)* of the 1966 *Department of Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. 303)* provides for the protection of publicly owned parks, recreation lands, historical sites, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges. The proposed project would not impact any public parks, recreation lands, or wildlife and waterfowl refuges. The Thisted House (24CA695), a NRHP-eligible historic property, is located within the project area. However, since SHPO concurred that this project would have no effect to the Thisted House and right-of-way would not be acquired from the property, a *Section 4(f)* evaluation is not necessary.

**Visual Impacts.** The project area is situated within a predominately residential area of the City of Great Falls. One of the distinct features of Great Falls, including the project area on 2nd Avenue South, is its extensive tree-lined boulevard system. As described previously, the reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South would remove all trees from the boulevard along the north side of the existing street. MDT would replace the trees with a like number of trees of identical or similar species. Over time, the appearance of the 2nd Avenue South corridor would be similar to existing conditions.

Those who view the existing roadways and who would see the reconstructed transportation facilities in the project include permanent residents, business owners and patrons, and those passing through the area. Visual changes would be most apparent to the residents of the area and motorists who frequently travel through the corridor.

**Pedestrian and Bicyclist Provisions.** Sidewalks presently exist along both sides of the street and would be perpetuated with this project. New driveway approach aprons would be constructed in the boulevard areas and the sidewalk through affected driveways would be replaced as necessary. New sidewalks with curb ramps would be constructed at the street intersections. Handicapped access would be improved throughout the project area by the addition of curb ramps at intersections.

According to the *Great Falls Area Transportation Plan – 2003*, 2nd Avenue South is on the City's designated Bikeway Network. There are no separated bike paths or designated bicycle lanes within the 2nd Avenue South project corridor. This project would not change the way bicycle use is presently accommodated on this street.

**Construction Impacts.** Street reconstruction activities associated with the 2nd Avenue South project would cause temporary inconveniences to the traveling public and to local residents and businesses. These inconveniences may include slightly longer travel times, minor detours and delays in and around work zones, temporary disruption of access to adjacent land uses, and the noise and dust generated by construction equipment.

These impacts could occur at various times throughout period required to construct the proposed improvements but generally be localized to areas near the work zone. Construction impacts may include:

- Noise and Vibration. The operation of various types of machinery, such as heavy earth moving equipment, paving equipment, power tools, and trucks near residences and would create undesirable noise condition. Impacts from vibration are also likely during the construction period. Requiring adequate mufflers on construction equipment and generally conducting work during daylight hours would help mitigate anticipated noise and vibration impacts.
- Erosion and Sedimentation. Runoff from areas of exposed or disturbed soils could result in sediment transport into the City's storm drain system during precipitation events. The development of Erosion Control Plans incorporating temporary and long-term erosion control measures, would mitigate potential adverse effects.
- Air Quality. Short-term and localized air quality impacts could occur during construction of the proposed project due to the operation of heavy equipment on disturbed soils in the work zone. Measures to suppress dust will be employed with this project should it become a notable concern.
- Traffic. Traffic patterns would be disrupted for the users of 2nd Avenue South. Sections of the streets would be temporarily closed for periods of time during construction and local access to residences and businesses may be disrupted for short periods. MDT would work with the City of Great Falls to design and implement a traffic control plan to minimize the adverse effects of reconstruction on traffic circulation and local access and ensure work zone safety during construction of the project.
- Waste Disposal. Waste generated during construction will include minor amounts of soil, asphalt pavement, concrete, and other material associated with removing the old surfaces of 2nd Avenue South. Disposal of waste materials would be in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations. In addition, petroleum products and other materials could be spilled during the operation and maintenance of equipment needed to build the new highway facilities. MDT's contractor would be required to take precautions to minimize or prevent leakage or spilling of fluids from construction equipment.
- Visual. Stockpiled construction materials and parked equipment and vehicles would cause a temporary visual impact to adjoining residences and a few businesses.

Work related to the proposed 2nd Avenue South project would be subject to provisions in the current edition of *Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction* as adopted by MDT

and the Montana Transportation Commission.

MDT's public involvement plan for this project will include construction notifications to area residents and public information during construction.

**Indirect Effects.** The most apparent indirect effects associated with implementing the 2nd Avenue South project are discussed in the following paragraphs.

- **Traffic Operations and Safety.** The crashes on 2nd Avenue South can generally be attributed to conflicts between through traffic and parked vehicles since the existing street is not wide enough to adequately accommodate two travel lanes and parking along both sides of the street. The proposed project would provide a street capable of safely accommodating both through travel and parking. It is not known if the numbers and types of crashes within the project area would decrease after reconstruction. However, widening the driving surface and providing adequate parking lanes would indirectly benefit road users and enhance traffic safety on this minor arterial.
- **Air Quality.** The proposed project could result in minor localized benefits to air quality as traffic operations are enhanced within the project corridor.

**Cumulative Impacts.** MDT currently has one planned project in the City of Great Falls within about 1.6 km (1 mile) of the 2nd Avenue South project. This project is identified and briefly described below:

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N – 15<sup>th</sup> to Park; STPU 5299 (51); Control No. 4667** – This planned MDT project would reconstruct 14 blocks of 2nd Avenue North between Park Drive and 15th Street North and five blocks of 9<sup>th</sup> Street North between 3rd Avenues North and South. The current implementation date for this project is during 2006.

As indicated earlier, the City of Great Falls recently updated its urban transportation plan. The *Great Falls Area Transportation Plan – 2003* identifies nine proposed projects within 1.6 km (1 mile) of the 2nd Avenue South project. These proposed projects include improvements previously committed to in earlier plans and new projects that have not yet been approved by either the City or MDT. Projects near the 2nd Avenue South corridor are identified below:

- **Committed Short Range Improvement 4 (CSR-4)** - Replace traffic signals along Central Avenue at the intersections of 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Streets to increase safety and provide for better pedestrian and vehicle circulation.
- **Recommended Short Range Improvement 2 (SR-2)** – Review of traffic signal warrants at River Drive and 3rd Avenue South.

- **Recommended Short Range Improvement 11 (SR-11)** - Overlay 6th Street North (from River Drive to 8th Avenue North) and provide new curb and gutter and storm drainage improvements.
- **Recommended Short Range Improvement 19 (SR-19)** - Implement intersections undergo re-striping and intersection modifications on Central Avenue West (from 3rd Street Northwest) to 1st Avenue North (at River Drive), including the 1st Avenue North bridge and approaches.
- **Recommended Short Range Improvement 23 (SR-23)** – Implement geometric improvements at the intersection of 10th Avenue South and 2nd Street South.
- **Recommended Long Range Improvement 5 (River Drive North – 15th Street North to 38th Street North)** - Widen River Drive to a minimum three-lane principal arterial standard to accommodate future traffic volumes and reduce delays. This project may be completed in association with the installation of a future traffic signal recommended at the intersection of River Drive North and 25th Street North.
- **Recommended Long Range Improvement 8 (River Drive – 3rd Avenue South to 1st Avenue North)** - Reconstruct a portion of River Drive to minor arterial standards and install improvements at the railroad underpass.
- **Recommended Long Range Improvement 9 (Park Drive – 8th Avenue North to 2nd Avenue North)** - Reconstruct Park Drive to collector street standards with an emphasis on improving the intersection designs at 5th Street North and 6th Street North/8th Avenue North.
- **Recommended Long Range Improvement 14 (13th Avenue South – 4th Street to 9th Street)** - Reconstruct the street to existing pavement width and reconfigure intersection of 13th Avenue South and 7th Street South.

Based on the projects listed above, it is recognized that numerous transportation improvements may be undertaken within the City of Great Falls over the foreseeable future. These projects have the potential to alter traffic patterns, increase surface runoff quantities, change the visual appearance of street corridors, affect historic districts and individual buildings, create noise impacts, and cause minor effects to water and air quality. The potential effects of these planned transportation projects will generally be analyzed in detail prior to their implementation.

The development of two major industrial facilities has been discussed for years in the Great Falls area. These development proposals include a large malting plant and an ethanol plant and could substantially benefit the economy in Great Falls and Cascade County. There is currently no firm

schedule for the implementation of either development proposal. Neither plant location is near the 2nd Avenue South project area.

The City of Great Falls is seeking to redevelop about 18 ha (45 acres) of blighted, undeveloped and contaminated commercial and industrial land along the west bank of the Missouri River in the 3rd Street Northwest corridor. Efforts are underway to establish a \$7.3 million loan program to promote and fund development in the area known as the Brownfield Riverfront Redevelopment site. The site is not located near the 2nd Avenue South project area.

The incremental impacts of this project, when added to past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects in the area, would not be expected to result in a significant cumulative impact. This conclusion was reached due to the relatively limited scope of the project and because the other projects considered are not located immediately adjacent to the 2nd Avenue South project. The expected timing of construction activities for this project and other known or foreseeable projects would not typically coincide. The impacts directly associated with other known or foreseeable projects will typically be identified through the development of environmental documents and mitigated through the permitting processes established by the federal, state and local authorities.

## **COORDINATION**

A news release for this project was issued on June 20, 2002. The release listed the project as being on 2nd Avenue South between 7th and 15th Streets, and not 7th and 9th Streets. However, the scope of work described in the original news release included the two blocks of street reconstruction now proposed.

MDT conducted a public information meeting on the proposed project on August 1, 2002. The meeting was held in the Longfellow School Cafeteria and began at 7:00 p.m. MDT representatives were on hand to answer questions and discuss the issues important to the public. Similar to the 2002 news release, the scope of work discussed at the public meeting included project activities on 2nd Avenue South between 7th and 15th Streets, including the currently proposed reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South. Only one area resident attended the public meeting.

It was proposed at the August 1, 2002 meeting that copies of the presentation with graphics of the planned improvements and comment forms be mailed to all the landowners along the project area. Project information was subsequently mailed to area residents on August 15, 2002.

The Great Falls City-County Planning Office also held a public information meeting on December 11, 2002 relating to the proposed reconstruction of 2nd Avenue South. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain comments from residents of the 2nd Avenue South Neighborhood about the City's proposal to incorporate traffic calming measures with street reconstruction

between 7th Street South to 15th Street South. The meeting was held in the South Campus meeting room of Great Falls High and began at 7:00 p.m. Staff from the Planning Office were responsible for a technical presentation and for moderating the meeting. Mick Johnson and Jason Giard (retired) represented MDT at the meeting.

Prior to the December 2002 meeting, the City-County Planning Office mailed out meeting notices to some 375 people residing along 2nd Avenue South between 7th and 15th Streets South. Approximately 30 people (not counting City staff) attended the meeting. The meeting was also covered by a local television station.

The majority of the comments made by those who attended the City's public meeting concerned the parking impacts that would result with the implementation of bulb outs at corners and the creation of parking bays on each block. The following comments were heard:

- This neighborhood has historically had a severe shortage of parking.
- Preserving trees at the expense of parking for residents was not popular.
- Some residents were concerned about parking in the area during street reconstruction.

Other comments or suggestions relevant to this proposed project heard at the December 11, 2002 meeting included:

- Portions of the existing sidewalks that have "stamped" construction dates on them are important to the heritage of the neighborhood and should be preserved.
- Traffic signal at 2nd Avenue South and 9th Street needs to be retimed or coordinated with other signals. There are backups of traffic on 2nd Ave South occasionally (during inclement weather) because preference is given to movements on 9th.
- The city should implement a permit system to ensure residents have places to park.

This citizen input has been considered and incorporated into this project. Due to the substantial opposition voiced at the December 2002 public meeting, the City has chosen not to ask MDT to include traffic calming features with this proposed project since they would reduce the amount of parking along either side of 2nd Avenue South.

MDT recognizes that stamped construction dates on the sidewalk in the project area are locally important historic features that can be preserved. The proposed project would attempt to salvage and incorporate some old sections of concrete sidewalks with original date stamps into new sidewalk installations within the project area.

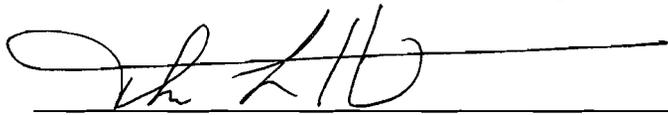
Janice W. Brown  
October 17, 2005  
Page 16

2nd Ave S - 7th to 15th (9th) – GTF  
STPU 5236 (1)  
UPN 4420

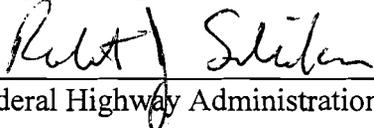
Public comments also requested that revisions be made to the traffic signal at the intersection of 2nd Avenue South and 9th Street North. This proposed project would include the replacement of the traffic signal, or at the minimum, provisions to facilitate the future replacement of the signal. MDT plans to issue an updated news release and will assess the need for another public meeting.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed project would not induce significant land use changes or promote unplanned growth and would not affect existing access to adjacent property or change present traffic patterns. The proposed project would not create disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations (**Executive Order No. 12898**) and complies with Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* (**42 U.S.C. 2000d**). In accordance with 23 CFR 771.117(a), the proposed action would neither individually nor cumulatively have any significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the FHWA's concurrence is requested that the proposed project is properly classified as a Categorical Exclusion.

  
Date 10/17/05

Thomas L. Hansen, P.E.  
Engineering Section Supervisor  
Environmental Services Bureau

Concur   
Date 10/20/05  
Federal Highway Administration

### Attachments

TLH:tgg: S:\PROJECTS\GREAT-FALLS\4420\FINALCED\4420CATEX\_FNL.DOC

cc: Michael P. Johnson, - Administrator - MDT Great Falls District  
Paul R. Ferry, P.E. - MDT Highway Engineer  
John Horton, Chief - MDT Right-of-Way Bureau  
Jean A. Riley, P.E., Chief – MDT Environmental Services Bureau  
Duane Williams, P.E., Chief – MDT Traffic and Safety Bureau  
David W. Jensen, Supervisor - MDT Fiscal Programming Section  
Suzy Althof, Supervisor - MDT Contract Plans Section  
project file

City of Great Falls, Attn: Jim Reardon  
P.O. Box 5021, 1005 25th Ave NE  
Great Falls, MT 59403-5021

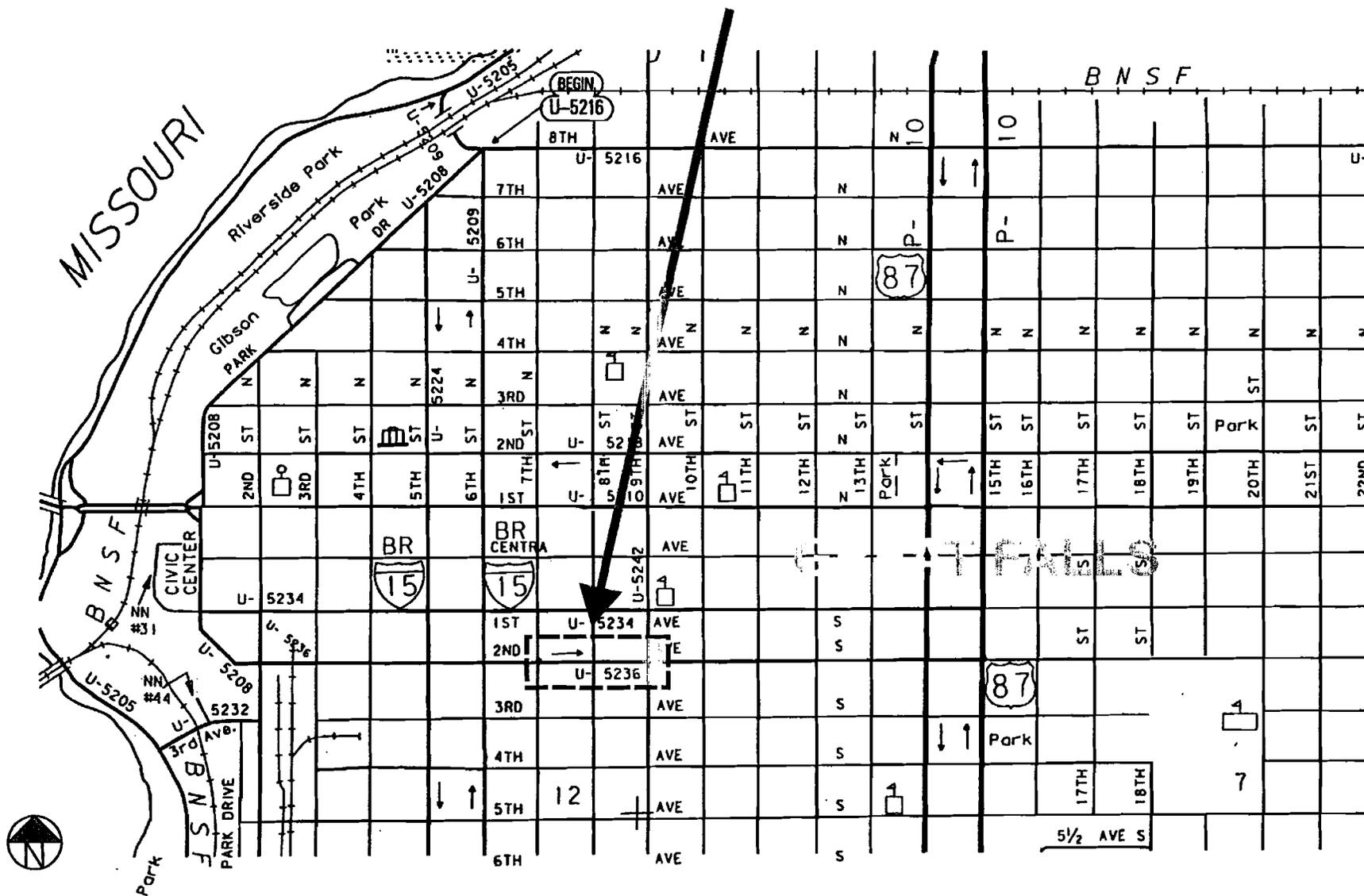
Janice W. Brown  
October 17, 2005  
Page 17

2nd Ave S - 7th to 15th (9th) – GTF  
STPU 5236 (1)  
UPN 4420

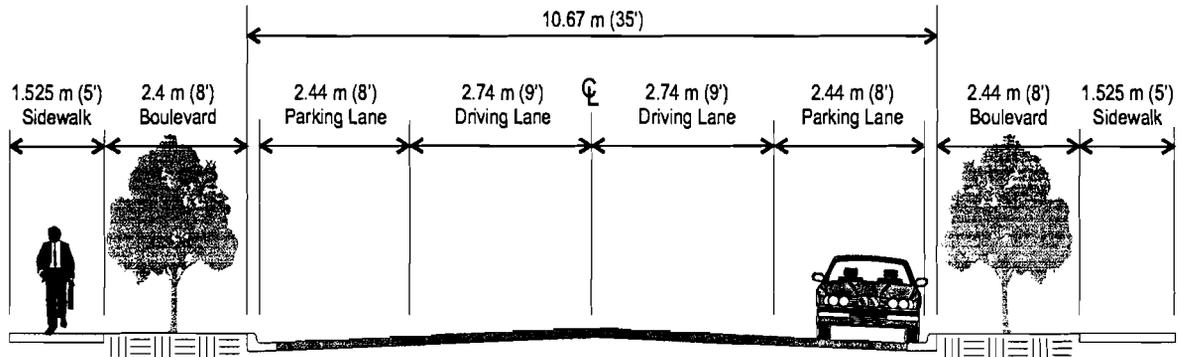
GF City-County Planning, Attn: Ben Rangel  
P.O. Box 5021, # 2 Park Drive South  
Great Falls, MT 59403-5021

**"ALTERNATIVE ACCESSIBLE FORMATS OF THIS DOCUMENT  
WILL BE PROVIDED ON REQUEST."**

# 2nd Avenue S - 7th to 15th(9th) - GTF STPU 5236(1); UPN 4420



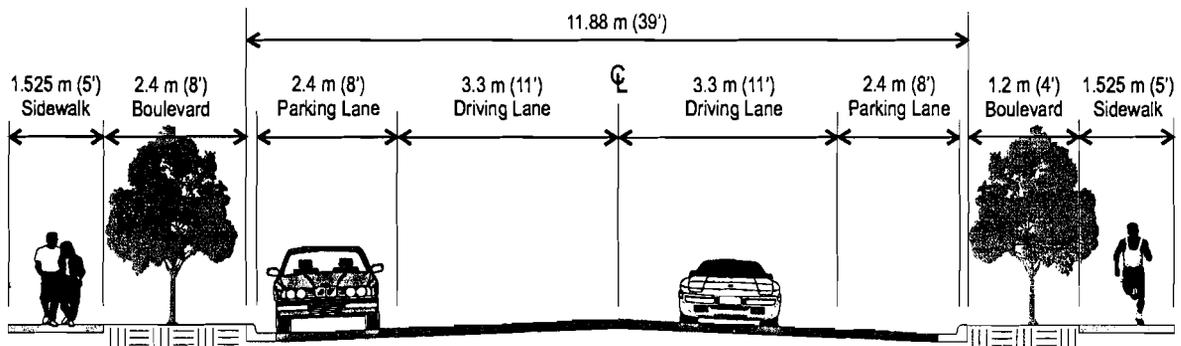
## 2nd Avenue South (7th to 9th Streets) (Existing)



ONE-WAY EASTBOUND

*Not To Scale*

## 2nd Avenue South (Proposed)



ONE-WAY EASTBOUND

*Not To Scale*

**Attachment 1**  
**Existing and Proposed Typical**  
**Sections for 2nd Avenue South**

STPU 5236(1); UPN 4420  
2nd Ave. S - 7th to 15th (9th) - GTF

2005080114



Montana Department of Transportation

2701 Prospect Avenue

Jim Lynch, Director  
Brian Schweitzer, Governor

RECEIVED  
Helena, MT 59620-1001

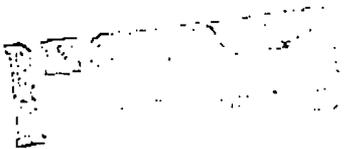
AUG 26 2005

ENVIRONMENTAL

Josef  
MDT  
2nd Ave S - 7th to 9th  
Great Falls

July 29, 2005

Mark Baurler, Ph.D.  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1410 8th Avenue  
P O Box 201202  
Helena, MT 59620-1202



BY: S. N. P. O.

CONCUR  
MONTANA SHPO

Subject: STPU 5236(1)  
2nd Avenue South - 7th to 9th - Great Falls  
Control No. 4420

DATE: 6 Aug 25 SIGNED: *Josef J. Wankral*

Dear Mark:

Enclosed is the Determination of Effect for the above project in Cascade County. We have determined that the proposed project would have No Effect to the NRHP-eligible Thisted House (24CA695) for the reasons specified in the document. We request your concurrence.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 444-6258.

*Jon Axline*  
Jon Axline, Historian  
Environmental Services

cc: Mick Johnson, Great Falls District Administrator  
Tom Martin, P.E., Consultant Design  
Bonnie Steg, Resources Section

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# Project Area Photos

## 2nd Avenue S – 7th to 15th (9th) – GTF

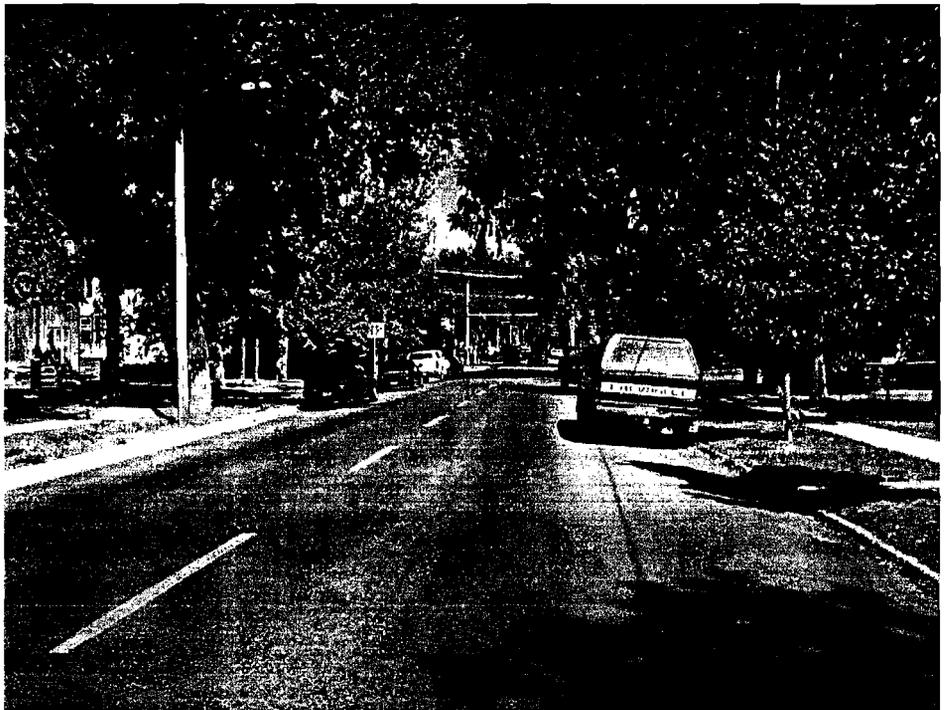
### STPU 5236(1); UPN 4420

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**Photograph 1:**  
Looking east along 2nd  
Avenue South near the  
project's beginning.



**Photograph 2:**  
Looking east along 2nd  
Avenue South from within  
the 800 block of the project  
area.



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# Project Area Photos

## 2nd Avenue S – 7th to 15th (9th) – GTF

### STPU 5236(1); UPN 4420

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**Photograph 3:**  
2nd Avenue South near its  
intersection with 9th Street  
North.

