

To: Meridian City Council

Re: MDC *Destination: Downtown-Street Connections*

Dear Councilmembers,

A critical component of a thriving downtown is a well-connected street network. That network should accommodate the people who live and work downtown as well as those who seek to visit to shop, eat, or celebrate. The streets should also accommodate all forms of travel, including walking, bicycling, driving, and transit.

As part of *Destination: Downtown*, an assessment of the transportation environment was made. Public input also provided additional perspective on the kinds of improvements supported. This work session focuses on many of those key recommended connections. There are a particular few suggestions that are worthy of additional consideration, as existing policies may need to be changed or revisited.

The connections suggested throughout the document consist of four different types:

Development Streets: Many of the new street and pathway connections suggested can be implemented through the development process. Whether infill development, reuse, redevelopment, or greenfield parcels yet to be developed, many of the new routes would be achieved without City or ACHD funding.

Gap Fills: There are a few recommendation that address missing connections, street or pathways, that will not be filled by the development community. In these instances, those gaps will need to be filled using public funding. The funds can come from ACHD's Community Programs, Urban Renewal funding, City funding through the Parks Department, or general funding.

Street Crossings and Enhancements: For people to safely cross a street, tools like Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons, refuge islands, curb extensions, or Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons are needed. The busier the road is, the more robust the treatment should be. In these instances, the funding can come from similar sources as gap fills, though it is likely ACHD would request a financial partnership for crossings outside its Five-Year Work Program.

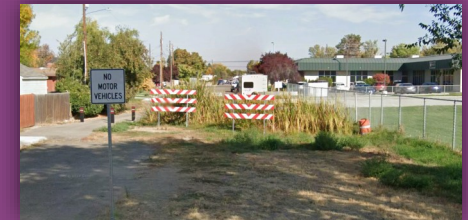
Non-Development Roads: In some instances, new streets won't be built by the development community but will require public funding. These streets are types that serve the public well, increase circulation, and may ease traffic on existing roads. While these streets require public investment, they would stand to serve Meridian residents in significant ways for years to come.

Development Streets



Images from Meridian and beyond illustrating the types of connections discussed.

Gap Fills



Street Crossings



Non-Development Roads



Development Streets

Streets that should be required as a condition of development approval and improvements to existing streets that connect with new developments are highlighted in *Destination: Downtown*. These include the following recommendations:

Northern Gateway - The major property yet to be developed in the northern portion of the planning area is west of Meridian Road and north of Cherry Lane. The property is large enough to include new street segments, and an emphasis on new east-to-west segments should be made. If possible, a north-to-south route would be ideal if it is located at the westernmost edge of the property. All recommended streets would reduce the need to take immediate access solely from Meridian Road or Cherry Lane.

Traditional Core - The heart of downtown is a highly connected section of Meridian. One opportunity would help reduce intersection activity at one of Meridian's busiest intersections, Franklin Road and Meridian Road. By completing West Taylor and formally connecting with Franklin, the vicinity would create a complete street connection that serves the parcels west of Meridian Road and with lower traffic stress for walkers and bicyclists.

Southern Gateway - The Southern Gateway entrance has an undeveloped parcel subject of much discussion in recent years. The street improvements should include a series of network connections that improve circulation, reduce safety hazards on Meridian Road, and shorten travel distance. Two recommended streets already exist, but are not fully improved with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks, or with features like landscape buffers, curb extensions, or other treatments. Another needed connection is between Waltman Lane and Ruddy Drive. Ruddy Drive was built with the anticipation of an eventual connection. That connection would encourage local trips to the Waltman property without requiring a long, circuitous route that further adds to congestion. This connection should be considered with speed management techniques used to avoid cut-through traffic. These tools may include a gateway roundabout, choker islands, speed tables, raised intersections, and more.



Development Streets



Northern Gateway

East/West focus

Maybe North/South route

Traditional Core

Finish West Taylor



Southern Gateway



Southern Gateway

Major emphasis on complete E/W (Corporate Drive, Waltman Lane)

New Connection to the west, with speed management tools



Roadway Connection

Gap Fills

In certain instances, a gap between two existing facilities needs to be filled. The gaps are often what prevent a system from being well-connected, inviting, safe, and utilized. *Destination: Downtown* includes several such gap-fill projects, ranging in length and complexity.

Recommendations include:

North Main District - This east-to-west connection would likely be made with a pathway rather than a road, though if redevelopment occurred, a full street segment would further enhance connectivity. The proposed alignment spans from 2 1/2 street on the east, connecting with Main Street, where an enhanced crosswalk should be installed, before continuing west with an eventual Meridian Road connection. As land use continues to entice more visitors and residents, such a connection will be vital to the efficient movement of people.

Traditional Core - The same arguments that were made for making the East 3rd Street connection to the east can be made for the 4th Street connection to the west. Currently, the street does not function as a street and prohibits local circulation to the neighborhood residents. By making the connection and completing the street, not only would vehicle circulation be improved, but pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, transit access, and nearby school routing would also be better. If a connection at 4th Street is made, consideration for speed management tools should accompany it, since the street has not historically been used as it could be.

Traditional Core - Another gap worth filling spans the railroad corridor. This connection is challenging and highly unlikely to make at-grade. However, it is possible to make it via an underpass or an overpass. The benefit of such a connection is to link two residential areas west of the Split Corridor and to avoid using the crossing at Meridian Road. The shorter, more efficient distance would encourage more walking or biking trips and help stimulate redevelopment of the current industrial sites in the future. Both methods are not without difficulties, such as floodplains and water tables for an underpass, and landing areas and high costs for an overpass.

Gap Fills



North Main District

A potential connection from Badley Avenue to Main Street and Meridian Road



Traditional Core

4th Street allows North/South travel on a proper collector and avoid trips on Meridian/Main.



Traditional Core

Possible pedestrian railroad under/overpass

Street Crossings and Enhancements

Downtown Core

Much of the downtown core has been subject to numerous projects that have helped connect and enhance the local street system. The next iteration of improvements is envisioned to include a few additional key projects and a robust neighborhood traffic circle system. The festival street segment has been adopted and endorsed for East 2nd Street. The two crossing enhancements suggested for the Main Street segment include refuge islands or turn pockets that can add another layer of pedestrian safety.

The neighborhood traffic circle concept is to achieve two main objectives. First, to distinguish a part of Meridian unlike anywhere in the county by employing a unique street treatment. Second, providing a demonstrated safety treatment instead of the conventional two or four-way STOP. The locations are suggestions and include intersections with two local streets or neighborhood collectors that would be the most suitable candidates, given intersection dimensions and traffic volumes.

Speedway - The suggestions in the Speedway area include three strategic crossings and enhancements to existing facilities. The crossings help usher people from one desirable land use to another, particularly as locations redevelop and offer more pedestrian-friendly outlets. Remaining enhancements should include sidepaths along Franklin Road and street trees, benches, and such features along Meridian Road.

Southern Gateway - The Southern Gateway will eventually be filled with new buildings and businesses, potentially new residential neighborhoods, and a host of other sites that appeal to Meridian residents. Recommended connections other than streets include two north-to-south pathways that connect Watertower to Waltman, and an enhanced east-to-west pathway that links both sides of Watertower. The Watertower connection currently exists but is not efficient, as the right-of-way lacks sidewalks, and a key portion is flanked by two businesses and used as a sitting area. Making the connection more official with dedicated infrastructure is recommended.



Downtown Core
Properly located traffic circles, specific crossing locations, and modest enhancements make up improvements in the downtown core area. (Below) Traffic circles can be simple and affective.





Speedway
Most projects in the Speedway vicinity include enhancements and key crossings to help people safely access vital land uses.



Southern Gateway
Pathway and gap fills linking the Waltman property and the Watertower route.

Non-Development Streets

One of the more consequential transportation projects to affect downtown Meridian is the planned 3rd Street extension. Since 2008, the local street has been intended to extend north and eventually connect with Fairview Avenue. The purpose of the street is to serve as a north-south collector east of the Split Corridor, providing local circulation into and out of downtown.

As part of the *Destination: Downtown* process, a more thorough examination of the corridor was conducted. The assumptions and findings were included in a technical white paper (Submitted at a future date). Given that many of the assumptions, factors for consideration, and costs have changed significantly since 2008, the Council is asked to weigh the following:

Signalization: The 3rd Street alignment was selected due to the potential for signalization with Fairview. In interviews with ACHD staff, this is no longer seen as viable due to signal spacing policies and a lack of a traffic signal warrant.

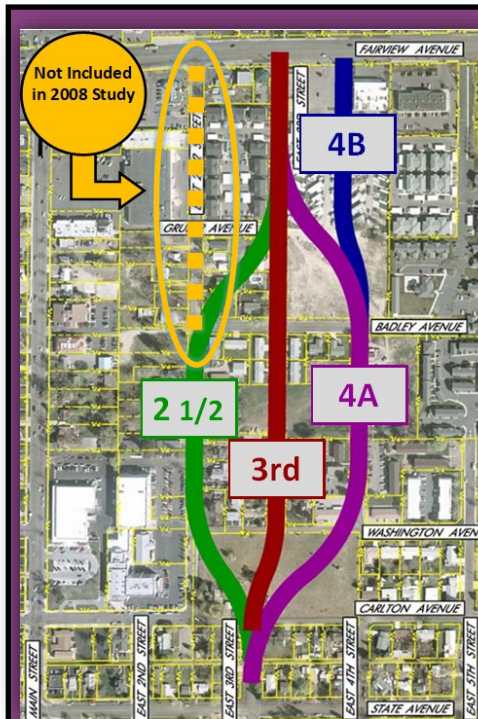
Right of Way Impacts: To install the 3rd Street segment, numerous properties and homes would be purchased and demolished to accommodate the new connection. A full 2 1/2 Street segment requires no residential demolition.

Costs: Right-of-way and construction costs have increased markedly, and costs to construct the street would fall to the City of Meridian as collectors are not impact fee eligible.

Cole Valley Christian: The 2008 study identified the Cole Valley Christian school as being a major reason why the 2 1/2 Street segment was not supported. However, the school is actively fundraising to relocate from downtown, and the property is likely to be sold allowing the first segment to be required with redevelopment.

Pathway Connection: The City of Meridian continues to work with irrigation providers to construct pathways along the canals and laterals in the community. The 3rd Street intersection does not align directly with the lateral to the north, unlike the 2 1/2 Street intersection. In discussions with ACHD staff, there is a willingness to consider a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon and pedestrian refuge islands at the Fairview and 2 1/2 Street intersection to guide users to retail outlets and the pathway to the north.

After a thorough examination of previous assumptions, current facts, and the desire for implementation, the 2 1/2 Street alignment using the 2 1/2 Street segment is suggested for consideration between the City and ACHD.



Downtown Core

The 2008 alignment study began with the 2 1/2 Street (green) and the 3rd Street (red) routes but grew to include two more after public input (4A/4B). What was not included was extending the 2 1/2 Street route north directly to Fairview along its current alignment. Costs for both right of way, and construction of the four examined routes were included and escalators used to estimate current amounts. Note, extending the 2 1/2 street section would have construction costs but amounts were not determined.

Alignment	2008 ROW Estimate	2025 ROW Estimate	2008 Constr. Estimate	2025 Constr. Estimate
2 1/2	\$1,341,000	\$3,084,000	\$1,636,000	\$2,945,00
Total Estimate				\$6,029,000
3rd	\$1,296,000	\$2,981,000	\$1,465,000	\$2,637,000
Total Estimate				\$5,618,000
4th A	\$1,467,000	\$3,374,000	\$1,682,000	\$3,028,000
Total Estimate				\$6,402,000
4th B	\$1,310,000	\$3,013,000	\$1,713,000	\$3,083,000
Total Estimate				\$6,096,000