

## I2 Walk Audit at Benton Ave

June 28<sup>th</sup> 3:00pm-4:30pm

**Attendees:** Joel Peden (Montana Association of Centers for Independent Living), Carin and Nina McClain (Neighbor and Lewis and Clark Public Health, mother/daughter(4y.o) combo), James Szerwo (NMTAC member), Greg Wirth (NMTAC member), Sarah Sandau (Lewis and Clark Public Health and walk audit facilitator), Lucas Wallace (NMTAC member and Neighbor), Brandi Thomas (Childcare Connections), Chandler Lowell (NMTAC member and Neighbor), Byron Dike (Helena Civic Center Manager)

The Non-Motorized Travel Advisory Council to the Helena City Commission (NMTAC) requested that Lewis and Clark Public Health assist in coordinating an Inclusive Interdisciplinary Walk Audit (I2 Walk Audit) at and around Benton Ave crossing to the Great Northern Town Center. Concern regarding accessibility, safety, and connectivity was voiced at a NMTAC meeting in May.

In that area of town, there are numerous houses that range from larger one family homes, to fourplexes, to Carroll College housing. There are businesses, Helena Civic Center, connection to the Great Northern Town Center, connection to Downtown, Helena Farmers Market, and numerous elementary schools. Farmers Market use parking by Civic Center. This route is owned by the City of Helena.

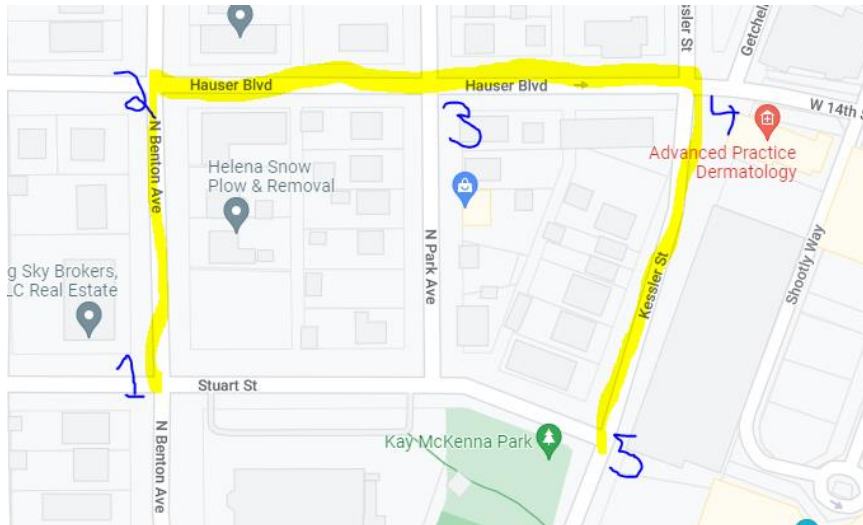
### Additional points:

- 1) Neighborhood crosses Benton to access Centennial park through tunnel via Great Northern
- 2) Farmers Market use parking by Civic Center
- 3) Difficult crossing in front of civic center at Neill Avenue
- 4) Vehicle spray prohibits pedestrian staging
- 5) Lack of sidewalk for connectivity on Stuart Street north of civic
- 6) Frequent non-compliance with one way on 14th Street
- 7) School crossing occurs at 14th/Hauser Street
- 8) Vehicle volumes and complexity prohibits use of signal at highway 12
- 9) Hauser Street is designated bike route
- 10) Tour train uses Hauser Street

### Route:

The Walk Audit started at the intersection of Benton Ave and Stuart Street. The group walked along Benton to the intersection of Benton and Hauser Blvd. They crossed Benton to walk down Hauser Blvd. They stopped at the intersection of Hauser and N Park Ave, then the intersection of Hauser/Kessler St, then lastly Kessler St/Stuart St.

The map of the route:



Observations, questions, and ideas from the I2 Walk Audit are as follows:

**Stop #1:** Intersection of Stuart St and Benton Ave. At the first stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 5. Comments on the first leg of the walk are as follows:

*Positive aspects:* Trees in the boulevard and on the street, sidewalk present (although narrow), curb cuts, boulevard, network of facilities

*Needs Improvement:* Busy and quick moving street. Hard visibility with on Benton Ave between the curve and the trees. Scary to cross Benton, and there are reasons to cross on both sides. No bike lane.

*Ideas:* Flashing beacons and crosswalk. Long term Benton should be made into one lane each side and protected bike lanes.

**Stop #2:** Intersection of N Benton Ave and Hauser Blvd. At the second stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 4. Comments on the second leg of the walk are as follows:

*Positive aspects:* Trees in the boulevard and on the street, sidewalk present (although narrow), curb cuts, boulevard, network of facilities

*Needs Improvement:* Busy and quick moving street. Hard visibility with on Benton Ave with the trees. Scary to cross Benton, and there are reasons to cross on both sides. No bike lane.

*Ideas:* Flashing beacons and crosswalk. Long term Benton should be made into one lane each side and protected bike lanes.

**Stop #3:** Intersection of Hauser Blvd and N Park Ave. At the third stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 6. Comments on the third leg of the walk are as follows:

*Positive aspects:* Quieter street, network of facilities, yellow paint on the curbs

*Needs Improvement:* One-way street that no one knows is a one-way, so many people unsafely drive the wrong way. No sidewalks.

*Ideas:* Take away one of the streets and make it a protected bike lane and pedestrian lane.

**Stop #4:** Intersection of Hauser Blvd and Kessler St. At the fourth stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 5. Comments on the fourth leg of the walk are as follows:

*Positive aspects:* Connection for housing to the Great Northern Town Center.

*Needs Improvement:* It is a complicated mix of streets convening here with little coordination. No sidewalks or bike lanes.

*Ideas:* Roundabout and sidewalks

**Stop #5:** Intersection of Kessler St and Stuart St. At the fifth stop the team assessed the area as an average score of 6.5. Comments on the fifth leg of the walk are as follows:

*Positive aspects:* Sidewalks on each side, curb cuts, parking, network of facilities

*Needs Improvement:* Parking garage exit is a blind area.

### **Summary suggestions:**

*Short term:*

1. Need safer crossing of Benton. This could look like flashing beacons, signage, and a painted crosswalk.
2. Public Education campaign around stopping for pedestrians (city, parks and rec, public health, etc.)
3. Take away a lane from Hauser Blvd and make it a protected bike and walk area
4. Mini-roundabout on Hauser/Kessler. Maybe a pop-up temporary option first to try it out?

*Long term:*

~Less lanes on Benton for traffic calming

### **Next Steps:**

This summary account will be provided to all participants in addition to NMTAC. This will be discussed at the next NMTAC meeting on Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup>.

Community members can always make requests to the City on their own through the My Helena App. They can also post signs, park vehicles, or make their own requests to the city in addition.

Additional comments:

- 1) Flashing speeds signs were constantly flashing for car traveling over the speed limit
- 2) Pedestrian was observed walking in street with traffic awaiting an opening to cross opposing traffic

Pictures from the walk audit:

