

Air Quality Advisory Council
Minutes
June 1, 2004

Members/Alternates present: Ronald Mueller, Alexandra Gorman, Dick Shimer, Mickey Reese, Leif Griffin, and Ann O'Hagan.

Members/Alternates absent: Lita Furby (excused), John Garberson (excused), Sue Spanke (excused), Jan Scher (excused), Jan Hoem (excused), Garon Smith (excused), and Dan McCaffery,

Staff present: Sandy Mack, Ben Schmidt

Others present: Tony Tweedale.

1. Ronald Mueller called the meeting to Order.
2. Voting membership included all members and alternates present.
3. The agenda was approved.
4. Minutes. The minutes from May 4, 2004 were approved.
5. New Business. Carl Thompson, Traffic Services Superintendent for the Missoula Department of Public Works and Tim Seeley, Signal Technician, spoke to the Council about Traffic Light Synchronization in Missoula and answered Council member questions.

Carl explained that the Montana Department of Transportation (DOT) has the ultimate control of signalization in Missoula. He said the Public Works Department works with them very well and very closely. He said DOT's top priority is to move the main stream of traffic through. They are not as concerned with the side streets. Public Works believes the optimum speed for air quality and flow is ~35 mi./hr

Carl noted 3 main problems to synchronizing lights in Missoula. He said the biggest problem is that there is simply way more traffic than the infrastructure can accommodate. He used a river analogy saying as the main channel fills the water spills out over the sides and finds new paths to take. The second problem he noted was that the signals are not evenly spaced, which complicates balancing and timing. The third problem he noted was that in Missoula rush hour traffic does not all flow in one direction, it goes in both (all) directions.

Carl explained that modeling is used to optimize the timing of lights and then tweaking is constantly done at individual intersections. A system wide study was completed 6 years ago in 1998. Since then Reserve Street has had 12 different timing plans. Tim said that some intersections have the capability of 48 different "personalities" or timing sequences. Carl said that he believes the light synchronization project has made great improvement to the Missoula area, though he said as a driver you might not recognize it. He said the \$5.2 million Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds were invested to coordinate the system through new hardware, new signalization standards and state of the art

computerized controllers. At certain intersections they can now monitor from off site. The CMAQ funds ran out before better pavement markings were completed.

A member asked if the system would look different if it was designed just for minimizing CO. Carl said no. He said that by helping the flow, lowering the average speed and reducing stopped time you are also minimizing CO emissions.

Pedestrian phases are longer to allow time to cross the street. This is needed and it causes a loss in efficiency in moving vehicles through. Studies have shown that marked crossings are much less safe than unmarked intersections. The reason is believed to be that the markings produce a false sense of security for the pedestrian.

A member asked what the process was for putting in a light. Carl explained that a stringent 12 criteria warrant system has to be met before a light would be approved. He said the City is conservative with putting in lights because they are expensive (\$150,000 - \$200,000)

A member asked about putting in physical barriers to slow down traffic to the ideal 35 mi/hr. Carl said this is called "traffic calming" and he said it can work very well but it is not as effective on major corridors like Reserve Street. He said roundabouts take up more real estate but are very effective at managing traffic and speed and therefore CO emissions.

Carl felt it would be helpful for a consultant to do a study to prioritize intersections needing improvements. He said the 3-yr. Transportation plan does some prioritization but it doesn't look at the whole system and ID which intersections to prioritize.

6. Committee Reports.

Unpaved Roads Committee. The committee met with Greg Robertson on 5/25/04. Greg answered the Council's questions and discussed unpaved roads issues. The meeting minutes were provided to the Council. The Council asked Sandy to put Greg's information into a report format for the Air Board. The Council decided a different format, may be better for the public.

The Council decided to work with Garon when he returns to see if a student could help fill in the information gaps that have been identified.

7. Staff Report. Staff asked what the Council would like in their "members' notebooks" and they responded: Procedures, policies, Robert's rules of order notes, all air pollution regulations, roster of members, and basic resources (web sites, contact list).

The group said they would be interested in the following future Council Meeting Topics:

- Tour of Stimson Lumber Co. – perhaps in Sept.
- Presentation from Lief on implementation of Smurfit-Stone Container MACT 2 Project and two other projects planned.
- Presentation by Cyra Cain, DEQ, on Conformity Modeling – perhaps in August.

8. Public Comment. Tony Tweedale asked if the Department had made a determination on proposing to close the loophole for diesel vehicles in the smoking vehicle regulations. Sandy said that the issue was discussed at a staff meeting and it was determined that current rules (Rule 11.102) require engines to be in good operating conditions. If a diesel is smoking excessively it is not in good operating condition and the Department can take appropriate actions in enforcing that rule.

Tony asked if the Department planned to comment on the State's Episode Avoidance and Emergency Action Plans. Sandy said she would check. He said he had some questions about the CO conformity modeling. He said he had already spoken to Cyra about his questions but would put the questions in writing to discuss when she addresses the Council.

9. Next meeting. The next regularly scheduled meeting would be July 6, 2004; many members will be out of town. The Council asked Sandy to poll members and our tentative speaker and find a date that works.

Action Items:

- Sandy – Put Unpaved Road information into a “report briefing” for Air Board
- Sandy - Contact Steve Stolle, potential speaker for July, and Council Members to set a meeting date in July