



# The CityLink

Official News and Information  
from the City of Billings



Spring 2014

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## Parking Transformation on the Horizon

A transformation is on the horizon for the City's Parking Division. The newest garage, the Empire Parking Garage, is slated to be completed this spring. The six-level garage will have 330 public parking spaces, ground-level retail space which will bring new businesses to the downtown area, state-of-the art technology, and be a perfect fit on Montana Avenue, between N. 27th and 28th Streets.

City Administration and staff are working with the Parking Advisory Board, the City Council, and stakeholders of downtown to create a Strategic Parking Master Plan to address the future needs, goals and objectives of parking in downtown Billings. All parties involved are very excited to create and share this new and improved vision for Parking's future.

The Parking Division currently operates three parking garages containing 1,230 spaces, three surface parking

lots comprised of 160 parking spaces, and manages on-street parking through a combination of metered and time-limited spaces in the downtown area. Enforcement officers patrol the core area of downtown, and the hospital corridor and surrounding areas as time allows, to foster parking turnover for patrons and compliance with parking laws and ordinances.

The Parking Advisory Board and staff are considering technology updates in the garages and at parking meters, as well as a goodwill ambassador program for enforcement officers, in addition to their enforcement duties.

The Parking Division office is open Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and can be contacted for any parking questions at (406) 657-8412. Additional information regarding Parking may also be obtained by visiting <http://ci.billings.mt.us> — click on "Services" and then "Parking."



Courtesy of DFDG & Schutz Foss Architects

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Visit the City's website: <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us>



# Community Seven Television



**C7**television

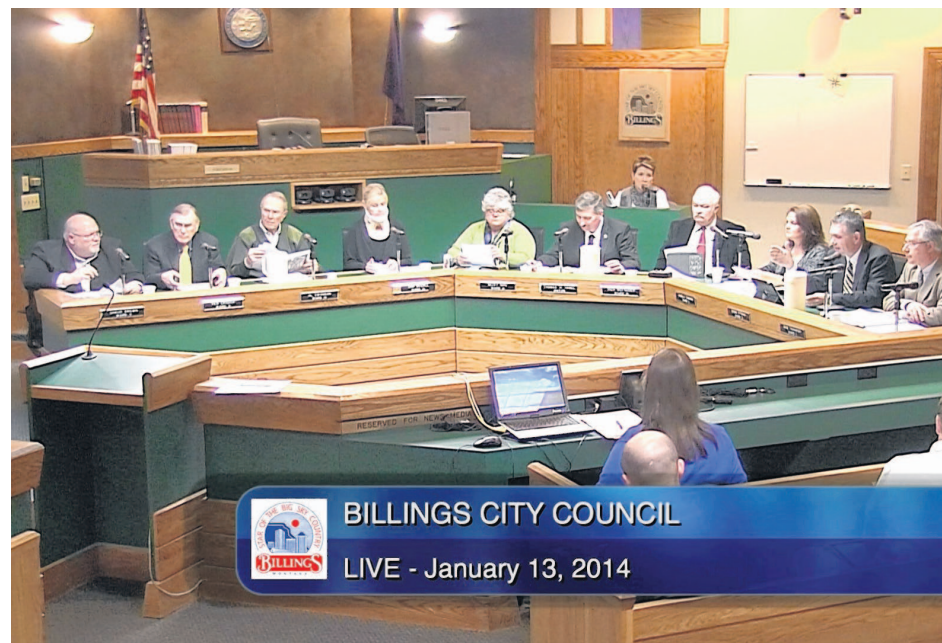
Community Seven Television is now broadcasting in High Definition on Charter cable channels 7.1 and 507! What does this mean to the viewers? The video is clearer, has better sound and sharper graphics. There are also more cameras to cover the action.

If you don't have a digital cable package, there is no special equipment need-

ed to view the programming; just auto program your TV set and it will pick up the HD signal on 7.1. Don't have cable TV at all? No problem. Watch Community Seven live at <http://www.comm7tv.com/> - click on "Watch Live" on the left side tab.

Did you miss a City Council meeting? In addition to watching the meetings live, you can now watch archived City Council meetings and other various programs on the Community Seven website from home anytime! Visit Community Seven's website at <http://www.comm7tv.com/> and then click on "Archived Meetings" on the left side tab. The meetings are now indexed for your convenience, making it possible to view a specific part of a meeting.

And, in case you're interested, you may view all Council meeting agendas, minutes and supporting documents on



the City's website at <http://ci.billings.mt.us> by clicking on the quick link "Agendas & Minutes" on the left hand side of the home page. Regular Council business meetings are held the second and fourth Mondays of each month, and

the work sessions are held the first and third Mondays of each month. If a holiday falls on a Monday, the meeting for that week is held on Tuesday.

We hope you enjoy the new format and thanks for watching!



## Billings Police Department (BPD) Volunteer Bike Patrol

What is the BPD Volunteer Bike Patrol (VBP)? "Just plain fun," according to Lon Woodbury.

"A fun way to multi-task biking with community service," said Trudy Collins.

VBP riders act as ambassadors and representatives of the BPD and are often greeted with smiles and sincere expression of thanks from the public.

VBP riders' skills are challenged in an introductory Police Bicycle Training course held in the early spring each year. Riders are expected to demonstrate safe police riding techniques and are taught observation and reporting skills. Once qualified for VBP, riders are equipped with first-aid kits.

Graffiti, vandalism and suspicious activity are some of the more serious reports filed by the VBP unit. However, riders also participate as escorts and sweepers while volunteering during events such as the "Heart & Sole" run, "Relay for Life" and the "Velo Bella" ride.

Riders choose their own routes, partners, hours and days to patrol. It is a no-pressure opportunity to combine a bike ride with community service. After training, all that is asked is to wear a police vest on a ride and log route and observations.

To learn more, contact Kallie Parsons at the Crime Prevention Center at (406) 247-8590 or at [parsonsk@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:parsonsk@ci.billings.mt.us).





# Police Department 2013 Medal and Annual Award Recipients



**The Billings Police Department has announced the recipients of its 2013 awards and community recognition programs.**

## **Officer of the Year:** **Brad Tucker**

Detective Brad Tucker, a detective since 2007, was the lead investigator on several major crimes in 2013. His ability to develop strong working relationships with several federal agencies has allowed him to actively assist in getting cases prosecuted. Detective Tucker's well-documented crime scenes and the quality of his cases continually draw praise by the County Attorney's Office. He is always seeking ways to improve his skills and was selected as President of the Montana Violent Crimes Investigators Association in 2013. Detective Tucker's attention to detail and professionalism make him not only an asset to the Billings Police Department, but also a detective who is well respected by everyone he works with.

## **Supervisor of the Year:** **Jason Gartner**

Sergeant Jason Gartner has been a sergeant for the last six years and currently supervises dayshift patrol. In addition to his patrol duties, Sgt. Gartner also supervises the department's bomb squad and traffic enforcement division. As bomb squad commander, Sgt. Gartner is responsible for making sure the department's Explosive Ordinance Disposal team is properly equipped and trained. This is a vital mission as the Billings Police Department Bomb Squad handles bomb threats to render safe procedures not only in Billings, but throughout Montana and surrounding states. As supervisor of the department's S.T.E.P. (Selective Traffic Enforcement Patrol) Officers, Sgt. Gartner is responsible for coordinating and planning traffic enforcement details and assisting with the planning and scheduling of community events such as the

Montana Women's Run and, most recently, the Toys For Tots Motorcycle Rally. The fact that these events take place safely and efficiently is a testament to Sgt. Gartner's work behind the scenes. Sgt. Gartner is admired by his troops and peers for his easy going and easy-to-get-along-with demeanor given the complexities of his position.

## **Employees of the Year:** **Suzi Henschel-Hansen** **Linda Mehlhaff** **Tressa Huet** **Lindy Newsome** **Amy Trimbo**

Suzi Henschel-Hansen and Linda Mehlhaff serve as police support specialists to the detective division. Their combined efforts this year resulted in over 460 felony statement transcriptions, which equated to over 7,800 pages of typed transcriptions, to aid in the prosecution of felony cases.

Tressa Huet, Lindy Newsome, and Amy Trimbo serve as police support specialists to the patrol division. With the police department suffering from several police support specialist vacancies in 2013, Tressa, Lindy, and Amy sacrificed days off and family time to work additional hours to ensure that all three shifts were adequately staffed during these vacancies. Once replacements were hired, they spent time training the new hires in addition to their regular duties. There were also several new online processes implemented in 2013, most notably involving payroll.

The dedication of these five individuals contributed greatly to the success of the detectives and officers of the police department in 2013.

## **Respect for Law:** **Officer Matt Lennick**

Officer Matt Lennick has been nominated to the Billings Optimist Club for their Respect for Law Community Award. Officer Lennick is a seven-year veteran of the Billings Police Department and is currently a Downtown Business Officer. Officer Lennick also serves as an Adopt-A-Cop at Central Heights Elementary School. In the two years he has been a volunteer at Central Heights, it is common to see Officer Lennick at the school before it starts and during lunch, building relationships and rapport with its students. Officer Lennick's influence on those he interacts with will have a lasting and positive impact on our community for many years to come.

## **American Legion National** **Law Enforcement Award:** **Officer Samantha Puckett**

Officer Samantha Puckett has been nominated to the American Legion for their National Law Enforcement Officer Award. Officer Puckett currently serves as an Adopt-A-Cop to Bitterroot Elementary School, has served as a counselor at Camp P.O.S.T.C.A.R.D. working with at-risk youth, worked extra detail during the Women's Run, and most notably took the time to teach other women defensive tactics while a suspected rapist was terrorizing the female citizens of Billings. Officer Puckett has more than demonstrated her care for others through her service to the community, both in and out of uniform.

## **Disabled American Veterans** **Ride the MET Free of Charge**



Last spring, MET Transit did a thorough review of their fixed-bus routes. Many of the changes involved additional service to the westend, including direct service to the VA Clinic on Spring Creek Lane. The VA Clinic is currently building and expanding their services and proposes to triple in size by next summer. Therefore, on January 6, 2014, after both the Aviation/Transit Commission and City Council endorsed the concept, MET Transit initiated a new program to allow Disabled American Veterans to ride the MET fixed-route system free of charge.

Disabled American Veterans only need to show their Department of Veterans Affairs Identification Card indicating "Service Connected" to the bus driver and they will ride for free. Many other, larger public transportation systems have initiated free ride programs to Disabled American Veterans, and MET Transit felt that a similar program would be a great complement to the new MET route that now serves the VA Clinic on the westend.

# New Billings Public Library Dedication



Billings Public Library celebrated the dedication of its new building in the heart of downtown on Feb. 1 with laughter, music, art and refreshments shared among 2,500 members of the community who crowded into the building for the occasion.

The formal dedication began with remarks from Billings Mayor Thomas Hanel, Yellowstone County Commissioner Jim Reno, Library Board Chair Shari Nault, Library Director Bill Cochran and design architect Will Bruder.

Music was a big part of the celebration. E2, a violin duo from the Library staff, provided the prelude. After the dedication, the Library rang out with music from the Heights Girls Honor Choir, the West End Girls Honor Choir, the Boys Honor Choir and Kathy Griffin's violin students. In the teen area, David Banuelos played guitar music.

One of the signature features in the new building is the collection of five Extraordinary Tables by Montana artists, commissioned by the Billings Public Library Foundation after a selection process by the Library's Art Committee. The five art tables are located around the building. Several of the artists were present to talk about their designs. The chosen artists hailed from across the state, and media includes wood, concrete, steel, glass, and stone. The Extraordinary Table artists are: Scot Herries, Missoula; Mark King, Whitefish; Colin Letts, Bozeman; James McGregor, Red Lodge; and Lee Proctor, Bigfork.

Board Chair Nault presided over the cake-cutting ceremony. Delicious cakes were provided courtesy of the association of Chefs and Cooks of Montana. Sweet Café, which leases the coffee shop in the Library building, provided the coffee.

Following the music, simultaneous programs focused on different aspects of the Library. Western Heritage Center's Kevin Kooistra presented on the history of library service in Billings. Architect Richard Jensen offered a walking tour about sustainability features of the building and the plans for LEED certification. Children enjoyed celebrity storytellers, including Billings First Lady Robin Hanel, a dual reading by Fire Chief Paul Dextras and Police Chief Rich St. John, ZooMontana's Jeff Ewelt, Gazette entertainment reporter Jaci Webb, and the inspiring former MSU football standout Caleb Shreibeis.



## Nonresident Traveler Arrivals in Billings for 2013

As a main entry point for visitors to Montana, Billings Logan International Airport participates in a program conducted by the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research (ITRR) to survey arriving passengers.

The ITRR collects visitor data such as where they reside, length of stay, whether they have visited Billings before, and the reason for visiting Billings. The ITRR released the following survey results for January – October 2013:

- The average length of stay was 6.20 nights, compared to 6.58 nights in 2012.
- 66 percent of the visitors were repeat visitors, compared to 58 percent in 2012.
- 19 percent were first-time visitors.
- 42 percent of the visitors came primarily for business reasons, while 36 percent came to visit friends, relatives or for a family event.
- 21 percent came primarily for vacation, compared to 26 percent in 2012.
- 43 percent came to visit Yellowstone National Park.
- 26 percent of the visitors reported using Internet search engines for their trip planning.

RESIDENCE	PERCENTAGE
California	12%
Colorado	12%
Washington	9%
Texas	7%
Washington	5%
Arizona & Utah	5% each
<b>Canadian Provinces:</b> British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba	
<b>Countries:</b> Czech Republic, Thailand, Mexico	

\*The chart shows where the largest percentage of surveyed visitors resided.



# City Receives Trail Counters to Participate in National Trail Assessment Program

Billings' ability to count users on multi-purpose trails doubled in January when the City Council accepted two high-tech trail counters from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) as part of the City's participation in a national trail assessment program.

The two Eco-MULTI automatic trail use counters are valued at \$5,250 each. The City currently has two mobile trail counters that it uses at various locations on the trail system around the City.

Billings was one of 12 cities selected nationwide for the trail counters because of its notable efforts to support and monitor trail use, and the importance of Billings as a regional center for trails in the western United States.

The other locations selected for trail counters are Albuquerque, NM; Austin, TX; Denver, CO; Indianapolis, IN; Miami, FL; Minneapolis, MN; New Orleans, LA; Portland, ME; San Diego, CA; Seattle, WA; and Washington, DC.

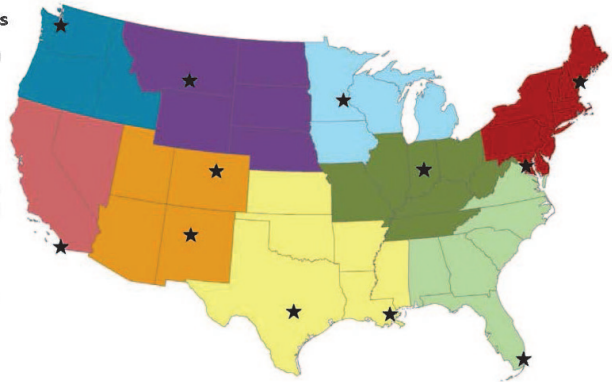
LA; Portland, ME; San Diego, CA; Seattle, WA; and Washington, DC.

The counters will be used as part of a three-year national program in coordination with RTC, but the City will keep the counters when the program is over. The counters will be permanently installed with "loop" systems embedded in the trails that are tripped by passing trail users. The counters will be set up this spring and will be located on the Billings Heights Kiwanis Trail south of Wicks Lane and on the Descro Park Trail between Central Avenue and Broadwater Avenue.

Because the Planning Division already manages a trail counter management and maintenance program through its Transportation Planning Program, there will be little or no additional costs to manage these new counters through the existing program.

## Proposed Study Areas

- ★ Albuquerque, NM
- ★ Austin, TX
- ★ Billings, MT
- ★ Denver, CO
- ★ Indianapolis, IN
- ★ Miami, FL
- ★ Minneapolis, MN
- ★ New Orleans, LA
- ★ Portland, ME
- ★ San Diego, CA
- ★ Seattle, WA
- ★ Washington, DC



**Billings was the only community in a five-state western region selected for the national trail assessment program due to its efforts to support and monitor trail use, and the importance of Billings as a regional center for trails in the Western United States.**

# 2014 Replacement Projects

Public Works Department staff is currently preparing for another season of utility replacement projects, so commuters should be aware of areas around Billings where construction of new water and sanitary sewer mains will take place from approximately April to November.

One project will replace the water main in Grand Avenue between 17th and 24th Streets West. The water main will also be replaced in North 27th Street between Montana Avenue and 6th Avenue North. Another project will replace sanitary sewer mains in the alleys between North 27th and North 32nd Streets from 6th to 9th Avenues North. While access to all affected businesses will be maintained, commuters should expect reduced driving speeds, travel lane restrictions, detours and road closures in these project areas.

The City of Billings replaces and upgrades its water and sanitary sewer utilities as part of an annual maintenance program. As underground pipes approach the end of their useful lives, the City's cost to maintain the failing pipes increases. Old metal water mains corrode and weaken, and leaking joints lead to water loss and reduced pipe carrying capacity. Eventually, water mains break and can cause property damage. Similar deterioration in old sanitary sewer mains, including tree root intrusion, causes problems such as misalignment, leakage, loss in carrying capacity and sewer backups.

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**Spring 2014**

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# FedEx Express B-727 “Chad” Finds a New Home and Use

On June 13, 2013, David Sutton, Managing Director of Aircraft Acquisition and Sales for FedEx Express, presented Mayor Tom Hanel with a model-sized replica of the full-sized Boeing 727 aircraft named “Chad” that FedEx Express donated to the Billings Logan International Airport.

The donation of the full sized B-727 to the City’s Airport is part of a nationwide program in which FedEx Express donates aircraft that are being retired from their fleet of cargo aircraft to airport fire departments and/or aviation schools to enhance Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) training programs and for other educational purposes. The aircraft is

currently being retrofitted with seats to simulate a passenger aircraft. Additionally, a high volume smoke and heat generator will be added to simulate fire and smoke for ARFF training exercises. The cargo configuration will be retained to add a multi-dimensional function/use to the new training prop.

The B-727 prop will provide valuable hands-on training for firefighters who will be able to operate doors, windows, stairs and switches, as well as practice firefighting strategies and tactics.

The City of Billings and the Billings Logan International Airport staff greatly appreciate the donation by FedEx Express.



## Billings-Metro VISTA Project



**V is for VISTA!**  
The VISTA members  
celebrate AmeriCorps  
Week with Mayor Hanel

Since 2007, the Billings-Metro VISTA Project has been working to alleviate poverty in the Billings area.

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs) come from all over the nation to help people overcome poverty and leave a lasting impact on the community. Projects include food security initiatives, volunteer and mentor coordination projects, fund development positions and the list goes on!

One AmeriCorps VISTA member serving with the Billings-Metro VISTA Project created a portable, user-friendly Downtown Resource Map and Notepad to connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the community resources they need: shelter, food, clothing, health care, legal aid,

restrooms, shower and laundry facilities. Over 9,700 copies of the map and notepad have been distributed!

This highly successful project resulted in services to 1,500 clients, heightened capacity for 50 social service organizations, engaged 11 volunteers and generated \$27,374. The member also helped administer an annual survey of homeless individuals, completed data analysis and generated a results report. The Resource Map, Notepad, and survey results report are available for download on the City of Billings website to be shared with other communities across the nation.

For more information, contact Gina Simonetti at [simonettig@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:simonettig@ci.billings.mt.us) or (406) 247-8675.

### We Want to Hear From You

Please provide us with input for  
our next newsletter.

**What did you like most about the newsletter?**

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**What would you like to see in upcoming  
newsletters?**

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**Mail or e-mail your comments to us at:**

[citylink@ci.billings.mt.us](mailto:citylink@ci.billings.mt.us)

The City Link  
P.O. Box 1178  
Billings, MT 59103



# News from the Parks, Recreation & Public Lands Department



**Looking for something to stay active?  
Here is a small list of what Parks and Recreation  
has to offer!!**

- Girls' 5th and 6th grade Volleyball
- FAST Self Defense Seminars
- Parent's Night Out Childcare
- Kids in the Kitchen
- American Red Cross Babysitter's Training
- Fly Fishing
- Wilderness and Remote First Aid
- Backpacking 101
- Tree Pruning Basics 101
- American Red Cross First Aid, CPR and AED Training

All information and complete class listings may be found at [www.BillingsParks.org](http://www.BillingsParks.org). You may register for all classes online, mail in your registration form (this can be downloaded from the website), or come by the office located at 390 N. 23rd Street.

## More News...

- Pools open for the summer on June 11, with season passes going on sale April 21. Season passes purchased before May 23 will receive a 10 percent discount. The waterslides at Rose Park Pool were recently replaced and a new 31-foot speed slide was added. The Parks and Recreation staff is excited to have the slides up and running for the 2014 season.



- The mechanical equipment is being replaced at the StrikeZone Batting Cages, located at Stewart Park, for the upcoming 2014 season. This improvement is being funded as a part of the City-wide Park District deferred maintenance program. Addressing the mechanical needs at the batting cages increases safety and the overall batting cage experience. The installation of the new equipment is scheduled to begin the first week of April. Teams can reserve a specific cage by calling the StrikeZone at (406) 652-8403 during regular business hours. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday 4-9 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and Sunday 12-6 p.m.



- Looking for somewhere to hold that special event? Do you have a family gathering, birthday party or any special event planned for this summer? Check out one of the newly remodeled shelters in the City parks to hold your event. There are shelters in numerous locations around Billings offering many amenities. Visit [www.BillingsParks.org](http://www.BillingsParks.org) to reserve a shelter or locate the shelter nearest you.



- The successful Volunteer Park Ranger (VPR) program, started in the fall of 2013, is being expanded for the spring and summer of 2014. Rangers serve as an extra set of eyes and ears for the Parks Department, patrolling parks in pairs and reporting issues. Time commitments are flexible and are based on the ranger's availability. Applications for the spring program are being accepted through March 15. If you would like to get involved with making Billings' park system the best it can be, consider applying to be part of the VPR team. Applications are available online at [www.BillingsParks.org](http://www.BillingsParks.org), or at the Parks and Recreation office located at 390 N. 23rd Street.



- Two members of AmeriCorps VISTA, Liz Prather and Elizabeth Schlobohm, have recently joined the Billings Parks and Recreation team. Both VISTAs originated from the Midwest and recently graduated college. They are in Billings for one year, working on creating a sustainable community garden program that will be available to all members of the community.
- Are you interested in learning more about the trees around you? Arbor Day 2014 will take place in Pioneer Park Friday, April 25. If you would like to

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## Parks and Recreation Dept

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volunteer for the day, please sign up at <http://www.billingsparks.org/outreach/volunteer-individual-application> or contact Volunteer Coordinator Chris Waite at (406) 657-8308.



■ Beginning March 1, the Forestry Division will launch a new tree program called the “Tree Cost Share Program.” Do you have a strip of grass between your sidewalk and the street? This strip is the boulevard, and the Tree Cost Share Program is designed to provide trees in boulevards at a shared cost between homeowners and the City. For more information, visit <http://www.billingsparks.org/forestry/programs-2/>, and click on the “Tree Cost Share Program.”

■ You may have recently noticed orange protective fencing around some playgrounds in area parks. Recently the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have updated their rules to mandate universal access to, and better protection from accidental falls under and around play equipment. Under the play equipment at 22 parks, the existing sand and gravel will be removed and new fall protection material installed. This new material is called Engineered Wood Fibers (EWF) and looks like wood chips. It will allow wheelchairs, walkers, strollers and other mobility devices to roll over the top providing access to the play structures, in addition to providing a softer “cushion” in the event someone was to fall from the play equipment. This work is taking place over the winter to reduce interruption to playground access and to have the new EWF in place for spring activity.



## Inner Belt Loop



Construction started on the Inner Belt Loop this past November. It will connect Wicks Lane to Alkali Creek Road.

The contractor was able to get the majority of the roadway grading and storm drain facilities installed. Most of the roadwork at the Alkali Creek Road and Wicks Lane intersections was delayed until spring so that the roads would not be under construction through the winter.

The contractor has been working on the foundation preparations throughout the winter for the arch culverts that will span Alkali Creek. Work on the Alkali Creek structure should be completed by early spring.

It is anticipated that the contractor will have the project completed in May 2014.

## New Roadway Features and Technology

### Are you driving correctly?

The City has recently been improving traffic safety and efficiencies with new technology and roadway features. Over the past few years, the City has added roundabouts, Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), and High-intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) signals. In the coming months, the City will also install flashing yellow arrows for left turn signals.

The new technology requires the driving public to learn and adapt to the new laws regarding these features.

City staff has observed driver behavior at locations where these new technologies have been implemented, and while most drivers have adapted to these features and are navigating them correctly, staff is still witnessing a few errors.

For example, in roundabouts, an approaching driver is required to yield to ALL traffic that is already circulating within the roundabout. The most common error observed is that drivers enter the roundabout thinking they have a free lane, when in fact, a single vehicle in the roundabout has the right of way for both lanes.

At an activated RRFB, drivers should be alerted to pedestrians. Further, if any pedestrian is waiting to cross, drivers are required to yield to them.

At HAWK signals, once drivers have stopped and the crossing is clear of pedestrians, drivers are allowed to continue on their journey when the HAWK signal is flashing red. The most common error witnessed at HAWK signals is that drivers wait until the signal goes dark before proceeding instead of going after the red begins to flash and the crossing is clear of pedestrians.

More information on the locations and uses of the new road features in Billings can be found at the City's Traffic Engineering website located at <http://www.ci.billings.mt.us/index.aspx?NID=565>.