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## **ARTHUR AVENUE PROJECT CONSTRUCTION STARTS Informational Meeting Set for Tuesday Evening**

Construction will start Monday on the much-anticipated Arthur Avenue project. It will bring improvements for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians to the intersections of Arthur and Maurice Avenues and Fifth and Sixth Streets near The University of Montana campus. The area will be safer and easier to navigate by allowing travelers who are not bound for campus to travel north on the west branch of the Madison Street bridge. That will include Highway 12 travelers, who will now travel straight through.

“Through traffic will truly be through traffic now,” said City of Missoula Project Coordinator Gregg Wood.

The University of Montana and the City of Missoula have worked hard with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to solve safety and traffic problems in this campus gateway area. An MDT proposal in fall 2005 was not supported by the public and lacked funding. That sent UM and City leaders back to the drawing board, where they came up with a lower-impact project with design help from WGM Group. UM is funding most of the project with a \$1.25 million Special Improvement District in the neighborhood, for which UM will pay all of the assessments. The City and MDT will each contribute about \$200,000 in labor and materials. City crews will provide street restoration with milling and paving, and MDT will furnish and fund the installation of a new traffic signal at the corner of Fifth Street and Arthur Avenue.

“This project is a fine example of the power of working collaboratively to solve problems locally,” said Mayor John Engen. “The basic design was conceived in a conference room at City Hall with all the partners at the table, and it does everything we needed it to do: it handles a large volume of vehicles, puts traffic where it belongs, dramatically improves pedestrian safety, is aesthetically pleasing and costs a lot less than a version that was previously proposed and rejected. Good stuff all the way around.”

Work will start Monday, May 16, on the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>/Arthur and Maurice Intersection Safety and Circulation Improvement Project. Mountain Water has been working in the area replacing water mains and will continue its work on Arthur Avenue between Sixth Street and Eddy Avenue. Work on the new project will begin on Madison Street.

During construction, intersections will be open to one through lane in both directions at most times with no detours, with minor exceptions during storm drain work. Both lanes will be open nights and weekends.

“We’re going to be working hard to get it done before school starts in the fall,” Wood said.

The public is invited to an informational meeting on Tuesday, May 17, at 6 p.m. in Room 332 of the University Center on the east side of the UM campus. Plans will be on display, and staff members from the City of Missoula, The University of Montana, project engineers WGM Group and contractor L.S. Jensen will be on hand to answer questions.

For additional interviews:

Jim Foley, Executive Vice President, The University of Montana, 243-2311

Jerry Ballas, Project Manager, The University of Montana, 243-5923

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