

PRESS RELEASE, March 17, 2014

MACLAY BRIDGE OPINION SURVEY

In preparation for a Federal and State environmental study that may determine the future of Maclay Bridge, the Target Range Homeowners Association conducted a survey of households in the Target Range area of Missoula. The purpose of the survey was to learn the opinions of area residents regarding the possible replacement and removal, or upgrading, of the historic Maclay Bridge. A random sample of 800 households was drawn from a population of 1,682 Target Range households on both sides of the Maclay Bridge. A questionnaire was written and mailed to the households in the sample in late November 2013. A report based on the 248 questionnaires that were returned has just been completed. The full report, with an appendix that includes maps showing the geographic distribution of responses, is available on the Target Range Homeowners Association web site, www.targetrangehoa.org. The survey was conducted under the direction of a professional statistician.

SUMMARY RESULTS

- The key results of the survey show 56% of respondents favor upgrading the existing Maclay Bridge with 34% opposed and 9% undecided, while 33% favor building a new bridge at the end of South Ave. with 54% opposed and 13% undecided.
- The main reasons listed by those favoring upgrading Maclay Bridge were lower cost, negative community impacts with a new bridge and the fact that the existing bridge is adequately serving local needs.
- The main reasons listed by those opposing upgrading Maclay Bridge were the age of the bridge, and traffic and safety problems with the bridge.
- The primary reasons given in support of a new bridge on South Avenue were to improve traffic flow, access for fire, police and bus service, and the existing bridge is seen as worn out.
- The primary reasons given in opposition for a new bridge were safety concerns in the community from increased traffic generated by the new bridge and the expenses connected to a new bridge.
- A full 70% of respondents report using the bridge at least weekly, with 23% using the bridge daily.
- Major uses are for accessing work, school, or businesses on the east side of the river, as well as access to HWY-93 and the Big Flat/Blue Mountain areas on the west side.
- No problems with the use of Maclay Bridge were mentioned by 59% of respondents and 19% indicated other drivers are courteous when taking turns using the one lane bridge.
- Problems with congestion from swimmers in the summer and waiting for traffic on the one lane bridge were mentioned by 19% and 15% of respondents respectively.