Parking management solutions for the Missoula Midtown Area was explored via the Technical Assistance Tool Parking Audit conducted by Smart Growth America (SGA) and Charlier Associates in July 2014. Efforts following this audit have yielded several results during the past 12 months, including building partnerships, identifying trends, and highlighting the need to ensure parking studies continue during current planning efforts for the Fairgrounds.

Missoula Fairgrounds continues to partner with private and public entities to share parking. The annual Fair, which is the largest event held at the Fairgrounds, occurs during a time when some area parking lots are underutilized. This is fortunate as the Fairgrounds lacks adequate acreage to park the event. Providing public transportation to connect this parking with the Fairgrounds, along with incentives and marketing, allows for additional event parking without negative impacts. Parking studies during the Fair indicated that visitors may park along the street within a few blocks of the site, but use satellite parking areas and public transportation rather than continue to park street side beyond this point. Planning for the future is underway, and mindful parking is incorporated.

Missoula Fairgrounds is in the process of creating an implementation plan, which includes a market analysis. This planning process identifies stakeholder needs and evaluates the feasibility of related development at the Fairgrounds. Enhancing intermodal transportation, including bike and pedestrian, and expanding park and ride opportunities should be incorporated into plans for the future of the Missoula Midtown area.

Smart Growth America workshops created additional efforts, yielding improved understanding of existing parking issues, opportunities, and future needs. Parking is at the forefront of planning at the Fairgrounds, and parking awareness amongst stakeholders has increased. Continued improvements to the Missoula Fairgrounds and Midtown area enhance the quality of life in our community. As these improvements increase amenities, visitation will also increase. Smart parking will ensure safe, efficient access for visitors.