

CHAPTER 2 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Transportation touches every aspect of the lives of Anchorage metropolitan area residents. To ensure the needs of residents are met, efforts have engaged the public to help shape the MTP. This chapter addresses the outreach that shaped this plan.

Public involvement is an ongoing, continuous process. Public involvement for this MTP is built on the earlier outreach conducted as part of the adopted Anchorage Bowl and the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTPs. Many of the recommended projects from these plans are carried forward into this MTP. The public was also actively involved in the development of the *Anchorage Pedestrian Plan*, *Anchorage Bicycle Plan*, and other planning efforts such as the *Hillside District Plan*. Many parts of these other efforts have been incorporated into this MTP.

For the Anchorage Bowl LRTP, the community responded to the challenge of shaping future transportation by joining in a community involvement process named TransVision. Anchorage residents contributed in a dedicated, vocal, and active manner to development of the 2025 Anchorage Bowl LRTP. Two years later that plan was revised to add the Knik Arm Crossing amendment, and the new edition was published as the 2027 Anchorage Bowl LRTP.

The key element in the preparation of the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP was a Citizen Advisory Committee that included representatives from each area community council; the Chugiak-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce; Chugiak-Birchwood-Eagle River Rural Road Service Area (CBERRRSA) Board of Supervisors; Eagle River-Chugiak Parks, Recreation and Community Development; MOA Planning and Zoning Commission; Native Village of Eklutna, and Eklutna, Inc. Each member of the committee was asked to serve as a liaison between the Citizen Advisory Committee and the group he or she represented. The Chugiak-Eagle River comprehensive plan, developed concurrently with the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP, tied land use to transportation planning.

Work sessions and hearings at meetings of the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission, Municipal Assembly, and AMATS Technical Advisory and Policy committees during adoption of these plans provided additional public involvement opportunities.

The public involvement for this MTP consisted of three phases: (1) awareness building, (2) plan development, and (3) plan review and approval.

Building Awareness of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Early in the MTP development, team members connected with established MOA boards and commissions and other community groups. Many of these groups represent constituencies that are traditionally underserved by transportation such as low-income, minority, and persons with disabilities.

The scope and schedule of the MTP update was shared with boards, commissions, and community groups, which in turn provided valuable feedback on travel preferences and transportation needs. The initial groups, which are identified in the following lists, also supplied additional contacts that helped the outreach effort extend deeper into the community.

- **Community**
 - Alaska Homeland Security & Emergency Management
 - Anchorage Faith and Action Congregations Together (AFACT)
 - Anchorage Literacy Program students and staff
 - ARC of Anchorage
 - Bridge Builders, Education Outreach
 - Catholic Social Services, HUGS Event attendees
 - Catholic Social Services, Program Managers
 - Federation of Community Councils
 - North Pole Chapter, National Defense Transportation Association
 - United Way Community Results Team
 - Municipality of Anchorage
 - American with Disabilities Act Advisory Commission

- Anchorage Community Diversity Advisory Commission
- Diversity Advisory Commission
- Equal Rights Commission
- Health and Human Services Commission
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Homeless Coordinator and Diversity Advisory Commissioner
- Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND) Commission
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
- Watershed and Natural Resources Commission
- Women's Commission
- Youth Advisory Commission
- **Tribal**
 - Native Village of Eklutna

Developing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan through Outreach

The public involvement activities for plan development reflected a multi-faceted approach. The creation of an expanded AMATS Technical Advisory Committee

(Technical Advisory Committee Plus, or TAC+) served as the primary mechanism for providing public input into plan development.

Additions to the standing AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) membership were determined based on the following criteria:

- Broad representation of stakeholder groups
- Contribution of a regional viewpoint
- Representation of a wider range of perspectives

With this in mind, the stakeholder groups, shown in Table 2-1, were invited to attend TAC+ meetings.

Table 2-1 MTP Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Nature of the Stakeholder Group
Access Alaska	Persons with disabilities
Alaska Center for the Environment	Environmental advocates
Freight Advisory Committee	Trucking companies and freight interests
Chugiak-Birchwood-Eagle River Rural Road Service Area	Chugiak-Eagle River and Birchwood residents of the road service area
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson	Military base personnel
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	Neighboring jurisdiction with or partner for regional connections
Native Village of Eklutna	Local Tribal entity
Public Transit Advisory Board	Public transportation users
State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management	Safety and security agency
State of Alaska, Department of Health	Non-motorized transportation users
Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority	State agency working to build the Knik Arm Crossing

The TAC+ worked with the MTP team throughout plan development, providing feedback and input. They were asked to share information with their constituent groups and bring the feedback of those groups to the plan development process.

Throughout the MTP development, the AMATS website (www.amatsinfo.org) provided information on the evolving plan. Information on all AMATS Technical Advisory Committee, Policy Committee, and TAC+ meetings was posted. Chapters of the plan were made available when team review was complete. The AMATS e-mail notifications through Constant Contact (a company that manages e-mail communications) provided advance notice of any and all AMATS meetings to a large e-mail list.

Throughout the outreach efforts described above, the MTP team encouraged stakeholders to join the AMATS e-mail list. Through the website and e-mail communications, members of the public

who were unable to attend meetings or presentations were able to keep abreast of the progress and submit comments. E-mail was used to alert members of organizations and public contacts about upcoming participation activities and to widely share information about the MTP.

To supplement the work of the TAC+ and expand the public involvement outreach, the MTP team developed an electronic survey and provided information about the link to the survey on fact sheets, in e-mail notices, and on the MTP website. The survey remained open throughout development of the MTP. In addition to the opportunity to complete the survey, the team provided a feedback form that could be filled out and returned by stakeholders. Issues raised in the survey are summarized in Table 2-2.

Facilitating Plan Review and Approval

The third phase of the planning process—plan review and approval—produced two draft iterations of the MTP: the Public Review Draft Plan and the Public Hearing Draft Plan. The first part of the review and approval phase was release of the Public Review Draft Plan in September 2011, which signaled the start of an intensive public comment period. During this time, the recommendations contained in the draft plan were extensively discussed at a number of public forums.

To kick off the release of the Public Review Draft Plan, a media campaign publicized upcoming opportunities for public participation. Public service announcements from major local media outlets informed the public about the MTP development process and upcoming events.

Table 2-2 Issues Identified During Public Involvement Outreach

Key Issues	Specific Concerns Cited during Outreach
Access to alternative modes	<p>Recognizing transportation as the No. 2 expense for needy individuals (behind rent and utility payments), which makes public transportation important</p> <p>Improving non-motorized and public transportation access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment, Schools for youth and adult education and services and Community facilities for all residents <p>Non-motorized and transit access for seniors, homeless, and low-income residents</p>
Accessibility	<p>Providing public transportation availability</p> <p>Expanding and improving areas along streets for walkers and bikers</p> <p>Developing public transit access to public facilities and specific locations such as the ARCA facility on Northern Lights Boulevard and the new neighborhood health center on C Street</p> <p>Improving public transit access to assisted living, group housing, and rehabilitation facilities</p> <p>Enhancing truck access for freight delivery</p>
Congestion	<p>Needing road improvements to alleviate congestion as population grows</p>
Coordination	<p>Enhancing coordination with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority Native Village of Eklutna on current and planned development Developers of workforce housing to enhance connections to public transportation Utilities for infrastructure development Regional transportation providers and governments
Economic and community development	<p>Developing road infrastructure that is an important component of community and business development</p> <p>Improving mobility that supports the safe movement of people and goods</p>
Education	<p>Providing information on rules of the road for motorists and bicyclists</p> <p>Explaining the community benefits of public transportation</p> <p>Providing travel training for public transportation</p> <p>Developing truck safety and education such as stopping distance for fully loaded trucks</p>
Healthy community	<p>Providing healthy transportation choices</p> <p>Taking advantage of health benefits of public and non-motorized transportation</p> <p>Enhancing mode options that support healthy lifestyles</p>
Maintenance	<p>Maintaining streets (such as removing potholes)</p> <p>Improving sidewalks and sidewalk access to public transportation stops and routes</p> <p>Providing lighting at bus stops</p> <p>Enhancing winter maintenance of sidewalks, public transportation stops, and bus shelters</p>
Network development	<p>Increasing the bicycle network</p> <p>Adding sidewalks in neighborhoods</p> <p>Developing the network to include improved access for commercial development and freight delivery, including to the Port of Anchorage, Alaska Railroad, and Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport</p> <p>Including the marine, rail, air, and pipeline modes</p>

Table 2-2 Issues Identified During Public Involvement Outreach (cont.)

Key Issues	Specific Concerns Cited during Outreach
Public outreach for MTP development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding efforts to provide information and seek input from low-income and minority voices Providing information in multiple languages (Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Samoan)
Public transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing safe service for all Maintaining and expanding service (including additional routes and more weekend service) Retaining AnchorRides as lifeline for seniors and people with disabilities Restoring public transportation service in Chugiak-Eagle River Advancing a Regional Transit Authority Advancing regional connections Considering use of discounted tokens for low-income residents Considering free public transportation for youth Increasing frequency of service Understanding how loss of service increases transit time and need for transfers Needing service for access to accessing health care facilities, particularly for traditionally underserved populations Providing information in multiple languages Coordinating with workforce housing developers Attempting to site assisted living, group housing, and rehabilitation facilities near current and planned public transportation routes Coordinating public transportation access to military bases for workers and residents
Regional transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considering regional transportation needs and transportation systems that may include rail, bus, and vanpools
Safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing for security of the transportation system Ensuring safety of those who use the transportation system Enhancing transportation for seniors, especially as the senior population grows Improving transportation safety for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women, children and persons with disabilities Pedestrians and bicyclists Freight movement Users of public transportation Providing lighting along roadways, along sidewalks, and at bus stops Planning an emergency network (for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles during an emergency) Integrating communications to provide the ability to communicate across all agencies in the event of network disruptions
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for technology use as the Baby Boomers become seniors and transition to alternative modes of transportation Enhancing Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies Developing a public transportation app (application) for online use

More than 50,000 copies of a newspaper publication that outlined the draft plan were distributed throughout the MOA as an insert in the *Anchorage Daily News*, *Eagle River Star*, *Anchorage Press*, *Alaska Journal of Commerce*, and Mat-Su Valley-based *Frontiersman*. The insert included the date, time, and location of the two open houses hosted in October 2011. In addition, 4,000 copies of this publication were translated into Spanish, Korean, and Tagalog and were distributed to community groups, public locations, and community meetings, as well as on People Mover buses.

Two public meetings were held during the 30-day comment period following release of the Public Review Draft Plan: one each in Anchorage and Eagle River. The team set up and staffed stations representing every plan chapter—introduction; plan goals and objectives; the AMATS transportation system today; the AMATS transportation system in 2035, reflecting changes in population and employment; the financial plan showing how the system will be built

and maintained; recommendations for all modes of travel; and an implementation plan, including policy and other general recommendations. Team members, AMATS, MOA staff, and DOT&PF staff were on hand to discuss the issues and to solicit and collect comments.

The team met once again with the boards, commissions, and groups listed above, as well as conducted specific focus group meetings with key stakeholders and other interested organizations. One focus group addressed a requirement of federal Metropolitan Planning Regulations that state and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation be consulted. The intent of this meeting was to solicit input on potential environmental mitigation measures and strategies to be implemented in conjunction with the transportation projects listed in the MTP (see Chapter 7).

Feedback from the public forums and focus groups served as the basis for revisions of the Public Review Draft Plan, which were then incorporated into the Public Hearing Draft Plan.

During the second part of the plan review and approval phase, the Municipal Assembly and AMATS Policy Committee reviewed and adopted the Public Hearing Draft Plan. Two formal public hearings were held, one for the Planning and Zoning Commission (which serves as the AMATS Citizen Advisory Committee) and the other for the Municipal Assembly.

Outreach for Inclusion of the Underserved

Youth, low-income, and minority population outreach was accomplished in several ways. The first initiative was an awareness-building campaign combined with direct contact with the boards and commissions in the MOA government and in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide a voice and services for these underserved groups. In visits to the NGOs, the MTP team was able to connect with transportation system users and hear their concerns directly.

The translation of the newspaper insert and distribution to the specific languages spoken by community groups also made connections with underserved segments of the public. Further analysis of the effects of MTP recommendations on the underserved is provided in Appendix C.

NEED TO EXPAND WITH UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

Policymaker Participation

Updates and work sessions involved Mayor Dan Sullivan, the Anchorage Assembly, the AMATS Policy Committee, and the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as other local, state, and federal transportation officials. The active involvement of these policymakers served to provide informed communications to their constituencies as well as to return vital feedback to the MTP team.

In October 2011 the team scheduled an information session for area state legislators to brief them on the document. In particular, the briefing covered the financial plan, which showed a shift from federal funding to state funding during the life of the MTP.

Regulatory and Resource Agency Participation (Revise after briefing)

NEED TO EXPAND WITH UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT

Summary

The issues identified in the public involvement outreach are summarized in Table 2-2. Recommendations for transportation improvements in Chapter 7 and for project management that adheres to policies and regulatory requirements in Chapter 8 address these issues.

The public outreach described in this chapter was undertaken with one goal in mind—to make better decisions about the future of transportation in the Anchorage metropolitan area. The input from the community has resulted not only in viable technical solutions, but also livable, credible, responsive solutions for all of its residents.