

Transportation Planning/AMATS
Municipality of Anchorage
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519
Via email: amatsinfo@muni.org

Subject: Carlson comments on MTP 2040 AMATS Public Review Draft

2020 March 8

Dear Craig Lyon and Whom it May Concern:

I write with my husband, Michael Carlson, today regarding the MTP 2040 public review draft. We have lived in the Sand Lake community since 1999. As I wrote in 2012, we write today, to call your attention to the need for a safe non-motorized facility in a specific and much used area of the Sand Lake community. The MTP 2040 AMATS public review draft, Fig. 4-16, 4//32, is misleading in suggesting that there is a safe nonmotorized facility “bike route” along the W Dimond Blvd/Jodhpur/Kincaid Road stretch described in #1 below. There is not. The described area has neither sidewalks, a bike lane, a shoulder, nor a separated multi-use trail. [Fig. 4-15 & 16, 4//30-32] Although many walkers, bikers, runners, dog walkers, and people pushing baby strollers use this route or parts of it, there is no safe non-motorized facility along this route. This makes it dangerous for non-motorized and motorized citizens alike as there is no place to safely stay out of each other’s way in many places if both are using the road concurrently. Although the round-about at the junctions of Sand Lake Road and W Dimond Blvd and West Park Drive and W Dimond Blvd have slowed traffic somewhat in those immediate vicinities, speeding still continues as soon as one passes the recent improvements, making it hazardous. We assert that an upgraded non-motorized route is an important need for not only the people who live in Sand Lake, but also for the athletes and recreational users of Kincaid Park, as it connects through to other destinations through parts of the area.

Decades ago there were few people who lived in this area of Anchorage, but recent housing growth has expanded the population and use of the area considerably. There will eventually be an elementary school in West Park and possibly a middle or junior high school nearby. Single family homes and duplexes continue to be built at a rapid pace north of W Dimond, filling in the former area of the old gravel pits, the recent resource extraction area (now Heather Glenn), and the Dimond Sands subdivision stands waiting for what we suspect may be the next area to be developed in the near vicinity. People who live so close to Kincaid Park should have a safe way to get there, other than putting their bikes in their motorized vehicles and driving to the parking lot or another trailhead. Please add this to the plan so that it can be included for the sake of safety and connectivity.

Careful trail planning is important to the quality of life in Anchorage. Thank you for the opportunity to give input. It is important in Anchorage that trail planning enhance citizens’ ability to get places they need to go without always using motorized transportation.

1. Pedestrian/bicycle facilities are very much needed in the following places:
 - a. Along W Dimond Blvd. from West Park Drive westward to where it connects with Jodhpur Road;
 - b. All along Jodhpur Road; and
 - c. Along Kincaid Road from where it connects with West Park Drive, westward to where it connects to Jodhpur Road;

There have been accidents along W Dimond and people need said trails for transportation, and secondarily, for exercise and recreation. Our family walks these roadsides frequently, but we are aghast seeing people with baby strollers, because it is just so unsafe—and in some places, there isn't even enough space in the gravel alongside the road to jump out of the way. People should be able to push strollers safely, and bike, walk & run, in our neighborhoods to walk or bike to stores, schools, and parks while getting some easy access exercise, without having to drive somewhere first. Many roller skiers and bikers train here because they like the variation in terrain. They safely need at least a bike lane if the City cannot come up with the funding or land to support sidewalks or a separated trail.

Let us persevere in making Anchorage a city in which citizens can safely travel to get places they need to go without always having to use motorized transportation.

2. It is critical to maintain and repair the trails we have as a priority.
3. Continue close some non-paved trails during breakup to protect them while they are wet and vulnerable to damage. Every year we see instances of ruts caused by people who disregard this rule, which is unfortunate.
4. It should also be a consideration to close some trails during moose calving and the first month after calf dropping. The single-track trails have put people and large mammals on collision courses with one another and we are concerned for the safety of citizens and the well-being of the wildlife. It is unfortunate that in the Kincaid woods, many single-track bikers race by just feet away from other trails; in places that break up the habitats into smaller areas making it harder for wildlife to get away from people. There are frequent and dangerous conflicts with moose, especially those with new calves and also confrontations with bears and their cubs. This also makes wildlife more likely to be agitated and possibly attack other humans nearby, who had nothing to do with said disturbance.
5. Parks and Rec might consider the possibility of alternating days when single tracks could be used by bikers, providing some days of the week when people who are watching wildlife to have a more pleasant and safe experience.
6. Keep trails out of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (ACWR) and important adjacent wetlands upon which its wildlife depend. It is a wildlife refuge and the only other purposes allowed are those which will not interfere with wildlife and the habitat. During spring, roughly early April through mid-May many species migrate through Anchorage and stopover in the ACWR to rest, preen and feed. The ACWR is part of the National Audubon recognized Anchorage Important Bird Area of Continental significance that stretches from Ship Creek to Potter Marsh.
 - a. Among the 220 species of birds who visit or live here are the sensitive sandhill crane, *Grus canadensis*. The breeding population has fewer than twenty pairs which use the narrow marsh and grasses with fresh water closest to the toe of the bluff. They are territorial and require a large amount of space around them to nest and

successfully raise their broods. Additionally, there is a small group of resident cranes who are non-breeders that grace the refuge each year, filling some quiet days and nights with primordial sounds.

- b. Another notable migratory bird that depends on the ACWR is the snow goose, *Chen caerulescens*. This distinctive white goose with black tipped wings stops over in the refuge in spring for an important refueling station en route to Wrangel Island north of Siberia. It is inspiring for citizens and visitors to be able to see these birds at overlooks and along extant trails. Although they are not endangered, for unknown reasons the last decade the snow geese coming through the ACWR has declined. Please be careful not to put trails in the habitat they use which would displace them.
 - c. Among the iconic wildlife the refuge supports are the endangered Cook Inlet beluga whale, *Delphinapterus leucas*.
7. With regards to MTP # 601, connecting Kincaid to Potter, that ship has sailed if one takes it to the extreme. The City has allowed the coastal land between the destinations to be developed, for which they collect handsome taxes. We believe the destinations should still be connected, but it will have to be done with connecting various trails and have some road crossings and stretches along roads. Overpasses and underpasses should be included wherever possible to make crossings safer. Wherever possible, trails should lead to scenic overlooks along the coast, where there are rest stations and educational signage created in collaboration with the appropriate agencies and groups, such as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Audubon, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and (Friends of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge) FAR. (Although Barbara is president and executive director of FAR, we write today as citizens.) We assert that to be in the MTP this section should properly be transportation related and not merely recreational. Although recreation is a good thing, these are primarily transportation funds. Regarding the stated goals 3, 5, & 6, as described.
- a. Goal 3: Providing at least a bike lane and possibly sidewalks and/or a multi-use trail along W Dimond Blvd/Jodhpur/Kincaid Road, the aforementioned and described route, would both decrease the hazards for motorized users to have conflicts with nonmotorized users by separating the surfaces upon which they travel. This is a more efficient and safer system than currently exists.
 - b. Goal 5: Providing at least the bike lane along this route would help promote environmental sustainability by making it possible to travel within the footprint of an established road, and not destroy or diminish valuable wildlife habitat.
 - i. Find ways to calm traffic through this area to make it safer to have a bike lane which would take less land, as opposed to a separated multi-use trail if possible.
 - ii. Consider dedicated street crossings if it will allow for this facility to be included. For example, if the public easement along a stretch is problematic because houses are too close to the road, a bike lane, sidewalk, or separated multi-use trail might be possible if there is a crossing and it switches from one side of W Dimond to the other.
 - c. Goal 6: It would seem to have the highest benefit-cost ratio to design with a simple bike lane. If there are locations along the stretch where a bike lane would be prohibitively costly, the route might travel for a distance as a multi-use trail, along, for example, an electric easement.

Anchorage is fast becoming a world-class city with an enviable quality of life. Thank you for your attention to the concerns of all citizens during this process of MTP 2040. Please do contact us if we may help in any way. Email is usually fastest, but if you need to call, our number is 248-2503.

Sincerely,

Michael and Barbara Carlson

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cc: Parker Haymans, Sand Lake Community Council President
David Battle, ADFG Area 2 Biologist
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