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From: Emily Weiser <emily.l.weiser@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 9, 2020 8:20 AM
To: AMATS Info
Subject: Comment on 2040 MTP Public Review Draft

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2040 MTP draft. The Plan clearly represents a large effort to provide a comprehensive and intentional path forward for transportation around Anchorage, and I appreciate all the work that has gone toward this essential aspect of living and working in the Municipality.

I use a bicycle for transportation year-round, and as such, I've focused on the non-motorized aspects of the Plan. It's really exciting to see that the Plan emphasizes the stated goals of improving the non-motorized transit network, reducing vehicle hours and miles per capita, and increasing safety for all users. These are all essential components of a viable transit plan for a major city like Anchorage, especially in the face of climate change, dwindling non-renewable energy sources, the inequalities created and exacerbated by a transit network that assumes cars are the default and necessary form of transportation, and the health benefits of active transportation.

However, the proposed projects in the 2040 MTP do not align with the stated overall goals for non-motorized transport. Many of the proposed projects focus on improving routes that are already safe for biking, such as widening the Coastal Trail or adding bicycle lanes on 88th Ave from Jewel Lake Road to Northwood Street. Adding bike-specific infrastructure is absolutely worthwhile to make streets safer, more appealing, and more inclusive for active transportation, and will encourage more people to start using non-motorized transportation on a daily basis, as has been shown in cities around the world. However, I would strongly encourage the Muni to focus on adding new bikeable routes before improving existing routes.

The main limiting factor for the Anchorage active transit network is the fact that there are significant challenges to accessing specific places or even large regions of the city. The existing active transportation network focuses strongly on a small number of off-road multi-use trails. These trails are wonderful for a relaxing weekend ride. However, they are extremely limiting in terms of providing routes to allow the use of bicycling as a viable form of daily transportation, especially as there are very few businesses and workplaces located directly on those routes. In most areas of the city, quiet roads (with sufficiently low speeds and low traffic volume) that are relatively safe for non-motorized use tend to dead-end quickly in residential areas, and are thus not an option for active transportation routes. The only remaining alternative is to bike on the sidewalks along busy roads, which is dangerous (due to numerous driveways and intersections with unaware motorists), unpleasant (noisy, stressful, and intimidating to be so close to high-speed traffic), and inconvenient (given the frequent need to stop at traffic signals that are timed for cars rather than any other mode of transportation). Travel on sidewalks is also greatly inhibited or impossible for half the year when snow is pushed onto the sidewalk from the road - sometimes with no maintenance for a week or more after a snowfall. The challenges due to lack of routes and insufficient and unpredictable maintenance present significant hurdles that prohibit many residents from using non-motorized transportation or PeopleMover even when they would prefer to do so.

If the transportation plan is to align with the Muni's stated goals of promoting non-motorized modes of transportation as a method of daily travel around Anchorage, it is essential to prioritize providing safe, contiguous, biking- and walking-friendly routes throughout the entire metropolitan area. In some areas of the city, existing gaps in the non-motorized transit network would be relatively simple to close, and those places could provide cost-effective ways to start improving the network. But in many areas, providing safe, contiguous routes will require major changes, including providing separated bike lanes (with appropriate protection at driveways, intersections, and roundabouts) along the existing arterial routes for motorized traffic. I understand that many of Anchorage's major arterial routes are owned and

operated by the State; but rather than using that as an excuse for the Muni to take no action, please instead make it a priority to coordinate with the State in improving the non-motorized transportation options along those routes.

Anchorage is lagging severely behind other similar-sized U.S. cities, and certainly far behind cities worldwide, in developing infrastructure for non-motorized transit. The Muni needs to start implementing major improvements now to become a livable city that will attract and retain residents and businesses long-term.

Thank you again for all the work that has gone into the 2040 MTP and the opportunity to comment. I look forward to hearing about the 2045 MTP as it begins to be developed, and hope to see a continued focus on developing infrastructure that will allow non-motorized modes of travel to become a viable option for daily transportation.

Sincerely,

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