

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Planning & Development Center
Training Conference Room, 1st Floor
4700 Elmore Road, Anchorage, Alaska 99507**

**July 16, 2026
1:00 PM**

*This meeting is available for viewing at
[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](https://www.muni.org/transportation-planning/amats-meetings)*

Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Katherine Keith	Acting Director Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities, Central Region
Kent Kohlhasse	Public Works Director
Erin Baldwin Day	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Morgan Frank	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality

Virtual

Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly
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Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Rhiannon Brown	AMATS
Emily Weiser	AMATS
Craig Lyon	
Lauren Little	DOT&PF
Alex Read	DOT&PF
Adeyemi Alimi*	ADEC
Taryn Oleson	R&M Consultants
Alexa Dobson	Bike Anchorage
Nicolette Dent	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department
Jessie Doherty	DOH
Connor Eshleman	DOT&PF
Shanna Gamble	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department
Taylor Keegan*	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department
Melinda Kohlhaas*	MOA/PM&E
Lindsey Hajduk	Community Engagement/External Affairs at NeighborWorks
Christopher Post	DOT&PF
Robert Wertman	RSG
Bart Rudolph*	MOA/Public Transportation Department
Hannah Flor	Alaska Public Media
Daniel Mckenna-Foster	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division

Galen Jones	DOT&PF
Robet Kinnaird	PM&E
Michael Nti Ababio	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division
Emily Haynes	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Anna Bosin	DOT&PF
Katherine Wood	HDR
Mélissa Babb*	MOA/Planning Department
Bob Doehl	MOA/Community & Economic Development
Randy Warden	FHWA
Nora Morse	MOA/Deputy Chief of Staff
Tanya Hong	PM&E
Judy Chapman	DOT&PF
Tom Davis	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division
David Hemstreet	DOT&PF
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF

*AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member

**Designated Assembly Member Alternate

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR KEITH called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Kent Kohlhasse represented Mayor LaFrance. A quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AARON JONGENELEN encouraged public involvement in this meeting of the AMATS Policy Committee. He explained staff would first make their presentation, followed by any comments from Committee members, and the floor would then be open to public comment.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MR. KOHLHASE moved to approve the agenda. MS. FRANK seconded.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to amend to hear Item 5.b. before 5.a. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

MR KOHLHASE offered a friendly amendment to hear the Safer Seward Highway and the fiscal assumptions before 5.c. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved, as amended.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – June 18-2026

ASSEMBLY MEMBER BALDWIN DAY moved to approve the minutes. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS**b. Recreational Trails Plan Approval**

EMILY WEISER briefed the committee on the trails plan, noting that the Technical Advisory Committee recommended postponing this item in order to schedule a work session.

NICOLETTE DENT with Parks and Recreation Department and TARYN OLESON-YELLE with R&M Consultants presented the trails plan.

The committee discussed the following:

- The term “recreational”.
- Bike lane connectivity.
- The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) not having the opportunity to review the plan in its entirety and recommending postponement.
- Potential right-of-way acquisition.
- If the recreational trails plan is approved today, there will still be an opportunity to amend it in the future.

CHAIR KEITH opened the floor to public comments.

CONNOR ESHLEMAN
ALEX READ

The committee further discussed the following:

- Scheduling a work session.
- Additional funding in Administrative Modification #8 of approximately \$20,000.
- Not anticipating significant edits, but if any edits, they need to be submitted by September.

CHAIR KEITH noted that she is inclined to approve this as a final and the team could still have a work session, respond to the Technical Advisory Committee’s concerns in writing, and reopen in the future if recommended.

MR. KOHLHASE added that the TACs concerns could be addressed in a future amendment or addendum. At the moment, he is leaning towards supporting the TACs recommendation.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to adopt the Technical Advisory Committee’s recommendation to postponed the Recreational Trails Plan to September and request of staff to schedule a TAC work session. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to amend his motion to hold a joint work session with the Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

CHAIR KEITH called for a roll call vote.

AYE

Assembly Member Volland

Ms. Frank

Chair Keith

Mr. Kohlhasse

Assembly Member Baldwin Day

NAY

The motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 0 against.

a. AMATS Funding Program (TIP) Administrative Modification #8

MR. JONGENELEN presented the modification.

CHAIR KEITH opened the floor to public comments.

MARK EISENMAN

ASSEMBLY MEMBER BALDWIN DAY moved to approve the TIP Administrative Modification #8 with the addition of \$20,000 allocated to PLN00018 completing the Recreational Trails Plan. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

d. SAFER SEWARD HIGHWAY MILEPOST 98.5 TO 118 INCLUSION IN THE 2052 MTP

LAUREN LITTLE with DOT&PF presented the Safer Seward Highway project.

The following are comments and questions from the committee with responses noted in Italic.

- (DV) In the 2024 MTP, the project was programmed to cost around \$694 million but has more recently been estimated to cost \$1.4 billion in the draft Environmental Analysis. With 24 to 25 years of construction and an annual budget of \$65–75 million, or 10-12 with an annual budget of \$150 million. That would significantly reduce any other funding for the Anchorage area for the next two decades. The committee contended that they had not received enough information about the cost of this project to justify reversing the previous decision to remove this project from the MTP. At a prior meeting, DOT&PF staff acknowledged that the design so far had already cost \$16.5 million dollars and are expecting an additional \$50 million to be needed for final design. Is all this funding federally eligible? If not, where does DOT&PF plan to secure it from?

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- (LL) *At this time, the intent is to fully fund it with federal funds. Their financial plan was balancing that STIP impact, so that they could build a full program of projects, not just funds for Safer Seward.*
- (DV) The Planning and Zoning Commission, during their September 8, 2025, meeting, voted to request DOT&PF return the application to the project management team for additional work in accordance with department recommendations, which included comments such as the project does not meet muster, and the project team needs to respond with math and data. The concept of a 3-lane road did not provide them comfort that it was fully evaluated, and they adequately rejected it given the significant impact and cost associated with a divided 4-lane concept. The project team needs to directly engage and respond to the public testimony heard, especially the points from the Rabbit Creek Community Council. What is the plan to return this project for additional work?
- (LL) *Currently, they are working through and responding to the many public comments from the draft Environmental Assessment. The proposed open house will provide DOT&PF with the opportunity to focus specifically on some of the design elements.*
- (DV) Why did the project team plan for a highway expansion before the process started and maintain that design after the public process indicated that it was not appropriate?
- (LL) *With regard to the letter, DOT&PF followed the same process for all of their projects. They were put on notice that they did miss a consultation opportunity, so the project team had a follow-up with that group. In terms of the NEPA process, they followed the same process they would for any large project.*
- (DV) Why is a project of this scope and cost a priority when there are, within the Bowl on the high-injury network, roads that have had more pedestrian fatalities?
- (LL) *This project is one of a number of priorities in the state in which they have initiated to specifically address some of the non-motorized vulnerable road user challenges, both through the Highway Safety Improvement Program, and modifications to existing projects on the books. This was initially started as a Windy Corner project and progressed for that specific safety element, but one of the main challenges to that project from the public and stakeholders was that it didn't go far enough. The problems at Windy Corner were not isolated to Windy Corner and the full stretch from the Rabbit Creek interchange area to where this project currently terminates; that whole corridor needed to be looked at as a system and addressed systematically. That is what led to the modifications that brought the current project, 98.5 to 118, forward from Windy Corner and why we have worked to really manage the specific investment on this project, so that it leaves room for us to balance our investments across the numerous priorities, both from a safety and maintenance reliability of the transportation system needs.*

(EBD) Is the project team willing to reconsider its preferred alternative in light of the preponderance of public feedback?

(LL) *Again, we're still working through the preponderance of public feedback. There was an extensive amount of comments received, and we have to look through that and make sure we understand the issues that have been raised and have responses. Until we have gone through that process, she cannot speak to what the overwhelming sentiment is on any specific element of the project or what might need to happen between the draft EA and a final environmental decision.*

(EBD) She was not making an assumption about what the preponderance might be, but was simply asking whether there is a threshold of public comment at which DOT&PF would be willing to reconsider its preferred alternative as outlined in the draft EA?

(LL) *It is less about a threshold of feedback and more about if our purpose and need is valid? Is this truly the only way to meet the purpose and need? Or do these comments bring into question some valid elements around that that may require us to adjust those two components? That is how the NEPA process works. It is not necessarily a public voting process, but it does need to be solidly defensible, and that is what we are going to have to work through. As we review these comments and consult with the law, who has to buy in on any final NEPA decision, those are the pieces that have to be evaluated. And until we've done that, it is hard to know exactly what the next steps will be.*

(EBD) She is concerned about what she has been hearing that the design choice has already been made. If we are looking at delivering a final design by 2027, the 4-lane divided highway option is a foregone conclusion.

(LL) *This is not what is being said. The final design by 2027 is not the final design of the entire project, but is working toward their first construction work package. They were planning to address the southernmost portion of the corridor, where they are in that transition from a full-build formally divided facility in the current proposal into an existing cross-section. There is no final decision until the finding of no significant impact has been signed and approved. The significant element is the proposed design and the cross-section, what that median is, how wide it is, where it is located, access points, pathway connections, and trail heads. Not just how many acres of wetland impacts or where the cultural resources are but what the project did to avoid, minimize, and mitigate. At this time, the design that they have available is a four-lane divided facility. They have multiple concept iterations that were addressed in the EA appendices that explain some of how they got to this point. She did not want to commit to reopening or closing anything. They want to have this engagement, understand the feedback, understand where they may need to optimize, and where they may need to rethink.*

(KK) This is really a kind of unprecedented situation where we are here, in large part because of the public frustration due to either the response to comments or the perception of response to comments, and the perception that those

comments have not been given the serious considerations they should have during the design development of a preferred alternative. The policy committee, municipality, state, stakeholders, and the public at large recognize that section of the Seward Highway has some dangers, so we all recognize the need to do something there. It serves all of Anchorage, much of the state, and the municipality through this seat on the committee. The governing entity for the citizens of Anchorage has a responsibility to ensure we represent the public. One reason we are at this point is because we have heard from some of the public that they do not feel their comments have been heard and represented, so the seat on the Policy Committee is one avenue for doing so. He is encouraged by the commissioner's letter and DOT&PF's commitment. He also asked that, if this is approved, the state holds true to that commitment.

(EBD) She did not share Mr. Kohlhasse's optimism about DOT&PF's willingness to listen and adapt, precisely because, if the responses that have been provided to the project team and by the project team to AMATS' staff, the TAC and PC, are any indication, then there is more of a dismissal of concern and an articulation of how we will just explain our rationale rather than reckoning with the substance of the comments. That is fundamentally troubling to her. In the 30 pages of response to the TAC, PC, and staff's comments, she could only find one that felt like it was actually taken into consideration, as opposed to being explained away. That is also troubling and there are pre-stages of what is to come. She was not confident that an additional public meeting and additional layers of public feedback are actually going to be useful in this process because she is less concerned about a thoughtful response and more concerned about feedback being taken seriously to the point where the project team is willing to make some fundamental reconsiderations about this project. We can continue to talk about purpose and need, but she did not think there was anybody in Anchorage suggesting that the Seward Highway is fine the way it is. She thinks the concern continues to be the scope and the scale of the project relative to the price tag, relative to the impact on things like state parks and view shed, which are fundamentally part of the NEPA process. The draft EA was almost dismissed by the letter from the commissioner and the stated commitment from you just now, Madam Chair, to have an open mind and listen to those comments. She heard that, while there is a preferred alternative in the EA, the design team and the state is open to listening wholeheartedly to public feedback, incorporating those comments, and adjusting the design, if warranted within the framework of the process. She hopes and expects the comments will be received and considered with the goal of really hearing what the public is saying and responding to those comments in a meaningful, encompassing manner.

(Chair) *In this case, if there is not that interchange or input, then we can create it and that is what we are trying to do here. Because of the lack of trust that there are going to be any changes made, the changes will be data-driven, and it is the inputs they receive that are put into the design. But what we are hearing here is that the inputs have not made it to the right places, which is what we are trying to correct. If we need to, if somehow we are not getting that feedback appropriately, or we are not interpreting the feedback correctly, then we need a different way to do that because right now, it is just a question and answer.*

(EBD) It feels like layering something on top of a core that is fundamentally flawed along with what the TAC and staff did in their comments as well, which is really the give and take frame of reference that we have at this point. The underlying message there was that the data and the assumptions around this project are fundamentally flawed, and therefore anything that comes out of that is going to be problematic for the community. That is a crux issue here that when you look at the data that was in the draft EA, the assumptions that flow from that are questionable at best. There is this connection between the data and the assumptions, so what we are prioritizing as a body, and where we put our money is a reflection of what we prioritize. But this area, being a highway traffic safety corridor, which was an arbitrary distinction that we made up in 2006, is being used as justification to do work on a stretch of highway that does not even crack the top 30 most dangerous sections of road on the NHS; and we are willing to spend \$1.5 billion or more, by the time we factor in inflation in 10 to 15 years of construction, to do it. That is, again, a publicly questionable value statement. In every Anchorage district, there is a roadway that is more deadly, has more crashes, and, in some cases, has comparable or more volume than the Seward Highway along this stretch. Is this where DOT&PF is interested in putting its money for a safety project? That question has yet to be answered adequately, given what the data tells us. If we are going to make data-driven decisions, then we should be true to that value. Or just say that we are going to make arbitrary and capricious decisions about where we think we want to build a new thing, and just own that.

(LL) *In response to Assembly Member Volland's question regarding the timeline, she explained that the draft responses still need to be thoroughly reviewed, so look at fall or winter with having them published and available.*

(DV) For him to want to add this project, given all the concerns stated, he would want to see those comments and responses that are still outstanding before were to add this project back into our planning document.

(AJ) *If you want to wait until after the August meeting that was mentioned in the letter, we could have this come back at the August Policy Committee meeting, which is on the 20th. It would be the week after that meeting, or it could be in September and still fit within the cycle. Just remember, that pushes out our approval of the MTP. After the MTP is approved, it could come back as an amendment to the MTP at a later date. If the committee wants to do an amendment or something at a September meeting, he recommended waiting until the September meeting to final approve the Complete Streets.*

CHAIR KEITH opened the floor to public comments.

BOB DOEHL
ALEXA DOBSON

Chair Keith passed the gavel to Mr. Kohlhasse.

CHAIR KEITH moved to include the Safer Seward Highway Mile Post 98.5 to 118 in the MTP 2052. MS. FRANK seconded.

Chair Keith assumed the gavel.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to postpone to the September Policy Committee meeting. ASSEMBLY MEMBER BALDWIN DAY seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND would like to see more work done and more information about what changes are actually going to be made in response to public feedback before we add this back to the document.

MR. JONGENELEN explained that the process, if the Safer Seward were added today, would be for staff to go back and do all the work to get the document ready, including all the approved projects. The MTP would then come back to the committee for review, and before it is posted for public comment, so there is the opportunity to remove it then. After public comment, it will come before the committee to respond to the public comments and final approval. If you remove it after public comments, it is a significant change, meaning it would have to go back out for an additional public comment period because of the size and impact of the project.

CHAIR KEITH called for a roll call vote.

AYE

Assembly Member Baldwin Day
Assembly Member Volland

NAY

Ms. Frank
Chair Keith
Mr. Kohlhasse

The motion failed with 2 votes in favor and 3 against.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER BALDWIN DAY expressed that her lingering question is still what needs to happen in terms of fiscal constraints and when we would see some sort of documentation from DOT&PF with respect to the funding that would be brought to bear.

CHAIR KEITH noted that they provided the preliminary information on the construction of the sequencing, but there is funding identified that is needed to be included for the right-of-way phases and some further design phases as it is closer to final design in 2027. That information has been provided to Mr. Jongenelen, but we may have done that more informally, so an updated letter would be provided and the funding would be shown then in the funding source fiscal assumptions table.

MR. JONGENELEN explained that the fiscal assumptions need to be approved at some point, whether today or at a later date.

CHAIR KEITH noted that she could propose a motion, which would indicate the additional funding would be included or amended into that table because we have the dollar amounts, but it would just need to be put in this format and added to the dollars that are there. MS. MORGAN seconded.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to extend the meeting to 3:10 p.m. MS. FRANK seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

CHAIR KEITH called for a roll call vote on the main motion.

AYE

Ms. Frank

Chair Keith

Mr. Kohlhasse

NAY

Assembly Member Volland

Assembly Member Baldwin Day

The motion passed with 3 votes in favor and 2 against.

FISCAL ASSUMPTIONS

MS. BROWN briefed the committee on the assumptions. She explained that there is not enough funding in the current assumptions, so the committee would need to determine where the additional funding will come from for the portion within the MPO boundary.

There were no public comments.

CHAIR KEITH moved to approve the fiscal assumptions for the 2052 MTP, with the additional funds for the Safer Seward Highway, including additional reciprocating revenue by DOT&PF. MS. MORGAN seconded.

CHAIR KEITH called for a roll call vote.

AYE

Ms. Frank

Chair Keith

Mr. Kohlhasse

NAY

Assembly Member Volland

Assembly Member Baldwin Day

The motion passed with 3 votes in favor and 2 against.

COMPLETE STREETS PROJECT LIST

CHAIR KEITH noted that because changes had been made to the Complete Streets project list between yesterday's meeting and today, we do need to take action on this so we can give direction to staff for them to complete their modeling.

There were no public comments.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to approve the Complete Streets list and adopt it into the MTP.

CHAIR KEITH seconded.

AYE

Ms. Frank
Chair Keith
Mr. Kohlhasse

NAY

Assembly Member Volland
Assembly Member Baldwin Day

The motion passed with 3 votes in favor and 2 against.

c. AMATS BOUNDARY

MR. JONGENELEN noted that this was before the Technical Advisory Committee, who reviewed and recommended a joint work session with both the TAC and PC, and to have everything ready to come back in September 2024. For that work session, they do have some parameters, which include: 1) starting out with those everyone had agreed upon and 2) address the portions of the boundary where there is no agreement. TAC also asked for staff to provide items for the work session, so it is the 2014 Boundary, the 2024 Boundary for AMATS, the DOT&PF Boundary, the CASA Boundary, the Chugach State Park Access Service Area Boundary, and a satellite view.

The committee discussed the amount of work sessions being held.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER BALDWIN DAY moved to extend the meeting to 3:15 p.m. MS. FRANK seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

There were no public comments.

CHAIR KEITH moved to follow the Technical Advisory Committee's recommendation to hold a work session. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

The committee discussed holding a joint work session.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to extend the meeting to 3:20 p.m. CHAIR KEITH seconded.

MR. JONGENELEN pointed out that a work session is required to be noticed 7 days in advance.

CHAIR KEITH called for a roll call vote.

AYE

Assembly Member Volland
Assembly Member Baldwin Day
Ms. Frank
Chair Keith
Mr. Kohlhasse

NAY

The motion passed with 5 votes in favor and 0 against.

6. **Informational Items – postponed to the next meeting**
 - a. **Your Daily Journey – Household Travel Survey Presentation**
 - b. **Roadmap for AMATS**
 - c. **Next PC Meeting Overview**
7. **Committee Comments - None**
8. **Public Comments - None**
9. **Adjournment**

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.