

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

**Mayor's Conference Room, 8th Floor
632 W. 6th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska**

**February 23, 2023
1:30 PM**

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Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Wolfgang Junge	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Adam Trombley	Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Emma Pokon	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Chris Constant**	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Joni Wilm	AMATS
Craig Lyon*	MOA/Planning Department
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Todd Vanhove*	DOT&PF
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Anna Bosin	DOT&PF
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Bart Rudolph	MOA/Public Transportation Department (PTD)
Randy Brown	MOA/PTD
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Skylar King-Strang	
Alex Demarban	
Susan Acheson	Lounsbury & Associates
Scott Thomas	DOT&PF
Adeyemi Alimi*	ADEC
Adam Moser	DOT&PF
Daniel Robbins	
Cheryl Richardson	
Kristina Huling	DOT&PF
Adam Bradway	DOT&PF
Emily Weiser	Bike Anchorage and Bicycle & Pedestrians Advisory Committee
Lindsey Hajduk	Spenard Community Council

James Marks	DOT&PF
Robert Wertman	RSG
Joselyn Biloon	DOT&PF
Nancy Pease	
Devin Kelly	
Bill Herman	
Mark Butler	North Star Community Council
Sarah McCabe	
Kent Kohlhasse	MOA/Acting Municipal Manager
Melisa Babb	
Allie Hartman	
Alex Read	DOT&PF
Aaron Hunting	DOT&PF
Sean Holland	DOWL
Rachel Steer	DOWL
Travis Holmes	DOT&PF
Brad Coy*	MOA/Traffic Engineering Department

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR JUNGE called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Adam Trombley, Chief of Staff, represented Mayor Bronson. Assembly Member Constant acted as Designated Assembly Alternate for Assembly Member Zaletel. 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. TROMBLEY moved to approve the agenda. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

Following the discussion of staff having been asked (after the agenda had already been noticed) to invite FHWA to speak at the meeting and in response to Assembly Member Volland's request of the Committee, CHAIR JUNGE directed staff to provide a white paper on agenda procedures.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – December 15, 2022

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT moved to approve the minutes. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS

**a. 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1
Comment Response Summary**

MR. JONGENELEN presented TIP Amendment #1, noting that it was released for a 45-day public comment period with 102 comments having been received. Based on the comments received, changes were made to Table 1: Fiscal Constraint, Table 2: Roadway, Table 3: Non-Motorized, Table 4: Plans and Studies, Table 5: Congestion Mitigation Air Quality, Table 8: NHS, and Table 10: Other Federal, State and Local Funded projects within the AMATS area.

CHAIR JUNGE opened the floor to public comments.

BILL HERMAN

MARK BUTLER, North Star Community Council Vice President

SARAH MCCABE

LINDSEY HAJDUK, Spenard Community Council

NANCY PEASE

EMILY WEISER, Bike Anchorage and Bicycle & Pedestrians Advisory Committee

MR. TROMBLEY moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT seconded.

The following were Committee questions and comments with responses noted in *Italic*.

(DV) Referring to the Comment Response Summary, he noted that a lot of staff's responses to public comments had recommended no change - however, there are some comments supportive of the changes. It was interesting that staff recommended "no change" to the 92nd Avenue Freeway Project. During the Anchorage Assembly's recent meeting, they requested for that project to have the entire \$105M Seward Highway Expansion purpose and need reevaluated. Staff's "no change" response contradicts the expressed will of the Assembly in the resolution that was passed. He asked if all the carbon reduction plan funds had been allocated?

(AJ) *All have been allocated.*

(DV) A few public comments had expressed wanting the A&C Couplet Study done sooner than 2026. Staff's response was that DOT&PF Planning did not have

the capacity for that as there are already multiple corridor studies planned for FY2023-2025. What are those other studies and is it possible (in response to public comment) for the A&C Corridor Study to be moved forward in time and prioritized in that queue of corridor studies?

- (AJ) *From AMATS' staff perspective, the Policy Committee (PC) direction was what you see in the TIP. Staff did not have any direction from the PC on a vote saying, "Change the order of these items", so we did not recommend a change based on what DOT&PF had told us. The PC can reorder the plans that are in place, which are: First – in 2023 is the AMATS Minnesota Drive and I/L Street Corridor Plan that was updated to add the Complete Streets Policy information. Second – in 2024 is the AMATS Tudor Road Corridor Plan (Project PLN00013). Also in 2024 is the AMATS Northern Lights Boulevard & Benson Boulevard Corridor Plan (Project PLN00014). Third – the A/C Street Corridor Plan was added after all of the prior plans had already been added in the TIP. It was added in 2026 based on a recommendation from DOT&PF that that was as soon as they could begin, with all the other plans in the queue.*
- (AT) Assembly Member Volland pointed out that the Assembly passed a resolution on February 21 opposing the 92nd Avenue, which was just a couple days ago. When did staff make the no change recommendation?
- (AJ) *Two weeks after the close of the public comment period on January 13, 2023 is when we would have developed the comment response summary for any comments received from beginning to end of the open comment period.*
- (AT) The Assembly would have had to pass the resolution at their January 10, 2023 meeting in order for it to make it into the public comment section.
- (DV) Despite the fact that there are a few public comments and we had discussed this project having gone through the public process, Mr. Herman, Mr. Donart, Ms. Barnes-Martinez, Ms. McCabe, and Ms. Stockard have all expressed opposition to the 92nd Avenue project. With having received all of these public comments, why is AMATS staff recommending no change?
- (AJ) *The Policy Committee had already voted twice on whether to remove that project and voted it down twice. As staff, that is the direction of the PC until they say otherwise.*
- (DV) Staff's recommendation was purely based on how the PC voted and is not based on other data?
- (AJ) *This is not an AMATS project and is solely up to the PC to decide what is to be done with it. The current direction is to leave it in the TIP.*

- (DV) He read aloud Comment #67 from Ms. Pease that when a program allocation is being reduced to use a clearer word, such as reduced or defunded. The draft TIP amendment obscures the defunding of the pavement repair programs (for both Roadways and Non-motorized) by using vague word choices and lack of details. Balance the program with [RDY00012] Pavement Replacement Program is not clear to the lay public. He agreed with making it clearer in the future with what is being reduced or cut, instead of using ambiguous words like balance. With regard to staff's response to Comment #79 that reads, "The pavement funding was reduced to meet the cost estimates given by DOT&PF on what can feasibly be obligated in the fiscal years. This helped to balance the TIP to meet fiscal constraint. Small adjustments were made based on updated cost estimates, but at this time there is no additional funding to add.", he noted that Colorado DOT&PF recently switched to more of a "fix it first" philosophy. Whether or not we could be more ambitious on fixing and maintaining what we have, we are hearing a lot from constituents about snow removal from DOT&PF facilities and the need for various upgrades and repaving. Would \$105M help with any of that? If the Seward Highway Expansion project were to be canceled and free up the \$105M (not knowing what we would have to pay to FHWA), would that allow for any maintenance related activities, or does that have to be capital improvement?
- (WJ) *State maintenance activities are funded through UGF funds directly from the state government. We are not allowed to use federal funds in maintenance activities, such as snow removal actions. It is a different color of money, and he would not be able to reallocate that \$105M and redirect it to maintenance activities.*
- (CC) He observed that the only changes accepted are changes that come from the Port, DOT&PF, a staff member, or the Technical Advisory Committee. If you look through the comment tables, there is a pattern. It was mentioned to him, prior to the meeting, that maybe we could take some of this work offline instead of sabotaging this meeting. He argued that he did not sabotage but he does lean on the process and with six years into his term he has become much better at leaning into the process. He looked forward to seeing the nature of this relationship between the city and the state improve through the work we have discussed with creating a working group and a quarterly meeting as it can only provide dividends as opposed to future headaches. He has a specific project that is being proposed that he would like to have some information about and possibly propose an amendment. Line 100 (OSF00009) in the comment table referencing Table 10 is the Port of Alaska Solar Design & Engineering project notes that this project will not be paid for by AMATS allocation. Do we know what the source of funds is for the project proposed?
- (AJ) *It will be either state or other federal funding. How this came about is that the Port wanted to move forward on these projects and the DOT&PF Commissioner recommended that they get it into the TIP because that frees up*

their ability to use other federal funds and grants that came from IGA and other funding and is showing there is consistency. The recommendation is to include these projects to help support the Port.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT moved to amend the language under Project Description to read, "...east Buffer Zone of the Port of Anchorage, but not Tract J, which is intended as a neighborhood buffer and open space for community uses. Includes..." MR. TROMBLEY seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT noted that this is the defense fuel site and was transferred from the federal government to the Municipality by Ted Stevens (a project decades ago) and the buffer is very important. Tract J is directly abutting the neighborhoods on the top flat before it drops off into the valley below and is right next to the AT&T building. This is the site where the promise was made that the land would eventually come back to the neighborhood and the fence would then drop below the bluff and the neighborhood would not have to be subject to industrial uses again. The solar plant, as carbon free as it is, is still an industrial use abutting a residential neighborhood. This amendment would smooth a lot of potential hiccups in the future relating to this very invaluable project.

MR. TROMBLEY asked by doing that, what does it do to the economics of the project?

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT replied that it is 120 acres and this is the 5 acres that were identified to be transferred to the neighborhood's use and it is literally the smallest sliver directly connected to the neighborhood, so it does not affect it.

MR. TROMBLEY asked if there is a downtown plan or a written plan that states these 5 acres were to go somewhere?

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT explained that it is in the Neighborhood Plan. It is just figuring out the mechanics. Last year, JBER finally committed that they would resolve this because the restriction the military base put on the use that they had committed to resolving is just one of the issues we are trying to figure out with the path and method to getting it opened up to the public. That land was never intended to be used for industrial purposes.

MR. TROMBLEY asked if this had to be addressed today because he did not have enough information to make a decision and would like to know more about it.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT was afraid that if this project is added to the plan, then the project will proceed and we will never see it again. The neighborhood will continue to fight for this and were instrumental in getting the land transferred. He had discussed this with Mr. Ribuffo many times.

CHAIR JUNGE asked for clarification that if the Committee votes in favor of this today, will the process of installing solar plants begin tomorrow or years out? What is the timeline if this Body meets a month from now after being able to review additional information?

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT referred to Line 99 on the Comment Response Summary regarding the SMART Grid, noting that it would be years. One is the generation and the other is how that power gets moved around to the greatest elements to create the SMART Grid between JBER and the Port. It is in the design and analysis phase, so it is not near construction. This was a commitment made and the details are many and long.

MR. TROMBLEY asked that when projects are designed, generally, they have to conform to some sort of requirement in underlying zoning or district plans. If the land has already been identified in a district plan to be some sort of buffer, or non-developable, or non-industrial use, would that not already be factored into the project?

MR. JONGENELEN replied, yes, it would be.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT added that what happens over time is that when a project's need is demonstrated and its scope is changed because there is a 5-acre piece of land, that use will find a way to be done. Right now, he can provide the Committee with emails and asked for a 20-minute recess for the review of such emails.

MR. JONGENELEN addressed the timeline noting that, currently, staff is getting this ready to go to both the Interagency Consultation and Air Quality Conformity Determination processes and it will take approximately 2 months to complete. The final version of this will come back before the Committee in May. Any changes made to the TIP after the Interagency Consultation process is done will require staff to go back through the Interagency Consultation, even if it is just a small description change, because we have to show them the change in order for them to make the determination if it is exempt or non-exempt and if we are required to do any additional work. The Interagency Consultation Group consists of FHWA, FTA, EPA, and DEC. For example, last minute changes were made to the TIP itself when it was approved last year and caused a month delay, which resulted in delaying this amendment by one month forcing us into a conformity grace period. He was just informed of this change and was not yet able to reach out to Mr. Ribuffo -- who had forwarded him this information -- to see if Mr. Ribuffo is supportive of this change or not. The Committee can contact him but a delay of the TIP is problematic at this point because we are nearing the end of the federal fiscal year already and it takes 8 to 9 months to get TIP amendments completed.

CHAIR JUNGE suggested a 10-minute recess.

MR. TROMBLEY did not need a recess. If the underlying governmental plan identifies it, it will have to be built according to the plan.

Hearing objections, CHAIR JUNGE called for a vote.

AMENDMENT

YAY

Assembly Member Constant
Assembly Member Volland

NAY

Mr. Trombley
Ms. Pokon
Chair Junge

The amendment failed, 2 to 3.

In response to Mr. Trombley's question of the possibility of an administrative change, MR. JONGENELEN explained that, yes, after the amendment is approved an administrative modification can be done later and would only take a month to process.

MAIN MOTION

Hearing objections, CHAIR JUNGE called for a vote.

YAY

Mr. Trombley

Ms. Pokon

Chair Junge

NAY

Assembly Member Constant

Assembly Member Volland

The main motion passed, 3 to 2.

b. AMATS Policies & Procedures #3 – Funding Percentages

MR. JONGENELEN presented the funding percentage recently discussed by the TAC and the PC for non-motorized projects in the 2050 MTP. The committees included comments on the funding percentages that are or should be used for the AMATS TIP for non-motorized users with the suggestion of 15-30%. Outlined in the proposed changes that pertain only to TIP Tables 2 through 6 are: A - Roads/Major Infrastructure, B – Pavement Replacement, C – Transportation Enhancements, D – CMAQ, and E - to add a new category to reflect the new table in 2023-2026 for Plans and Studies and assign a 5-10% allocation percentage to reflect the need for continued funding of planning projects.

The Committee discussed AMATS' Complete Streets Policy and federally funded projects.

CHAIR JUNGE opened the floor to public comments.

EMILY WEISER, Bike Anchorage

CHERYL RICHARDSON

LINDSEY HAJDUK, Spenard Community Council

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

c. Letter to the Legislature on Winter Maintenance

MS. SCHUETTE briefed the Committee on the proposed letter drafted by the CAC to be sent to the Alaska Legislature expressing winter maintenance concerns within the AMATS boundary.

CHAIR JUNGE requested a Point of Order to disclose that he and Deputy Commissioner Pokon are both politically appointed members of the State of Alaska. Since this letter has to do with legislative and the governor's budgets, they will recuse themselves from participating in this action item.

VICE CHAIR TROMBLEY assumed the gavel and opened the floor to public comments.

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to have the Policy Committee send this letter to whom it is addressed. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT finds that this has been really surprising for a lot of us with the context of winter maintenance. The Assembly really tried to get in front of it earlier in the year. He did hear, when the crisis started for the Assembly, that DOT&PF located at the airport were able to recruit drivers that had pulled away from the Municipality. Because of the competitive ability of the airport they were forward thinking and got there first, so anything we can do to be more like the airport is probably better at this point, which argues strongly for sending this letter. Whoever was in charge of that process at the time should be commended because they were ahead of it, not behind it. That is the place you want to be when this kind of winter happens, so let us ask the legislature to help us get ahead.

VICE CHAIR TROMBLEY found that to be an interesting comment because he met with the airport director yesterday and the director was lamenting the fact that the airport was almost fined by the FAA due to not plowing the runways on time. The airport has not been able to fill operator positions and salary increases were requested last July, but the state did not allow them in time. The airport offered 30% increases and filled their ranks quickly, so he does not want to follow the airport too closely since they were also significantly behind. The other point in this letter, despite what you read in the media, is that the state is also having a hard time filling positions, so it is not just the Municipality. It is an issue all around.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND appreciated that the letter does speak to the importance of sidewalk clearing equipment and for removing snow from all facilities for those with mobility disabilities and the visually impaired.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT suggested using "Honorable Legislators" in place of "Dear Legislators".

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND mentioned that the correct spelling of Forest Dunbar is "Forrest".

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the corrections to the letter will be made along with updating the date.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

Chair Junge assumed the gavel.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

Due to technical difficulties, Agenda Item 6.b. was presented first.

b. Spenard Road Project Update

ALEX READ with DOT&PF and JOE TAYLOR with Lounsbury & Associates provided a PowerPoint presentation.

MR. TROMBLEY moved to extend the meeting 15 minutes. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting was extended to 3:45 p.m.

CHAIR JUNGE opened the floor to public comments.

MARK BUTLER, North Star Community Council
LINDSEY HAJDUK, Spenard Community Council
EMILY WEISER, Bike Anchorage
DEVIN KELLY
ANNA BOSIN, DOT&PF
CHERYL RICHARDSON

a. AMATS Model Information

The model presentation was postponed to March 23, 2023.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION - None

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT expressed that he was looking forward to the model update presentation. His first experience with the AKDOT&PF was a grant that Fairview received in 2013 for a traffic study on Gambell and Ingra to determine if a one-lane road was feasible. Kittelson & Associates was contracted and the study showed that it was. Staff and the Department came back with the response that our model must be flawed. It was the interim model for the 5–6-year period that all transportation was based on and planned for. It is interesting to see how models are used, what inputs and outputs come from them, and how flexible they are when it is in someone’s interest and how inflexible when in others.

CHAIR JUNGE noted that there has been significant consternation around the New Seward Highway/O'Malley to Dimond project, specifically the multimodal undercrossing at 92nd Avenue and Scooter. Assembly Member Volland had reached out to FHWA (Federal Highways Administration) to have a conversation with them. Their response was that they would be available any time after March 6, 2023. He felt it would be more beneficial to first hold a work session in order to inform other conversations. Mr. Jongenele could coordinate a meeting with FHWA and Sandra Garcia.

MR. JONGENELEN agreed to reach out to Ms. Garcia referencing Assembly Member Volland's email and request a meeting with her and the Committee either in-person or via Teams. It would have to be noticed if more than 2 members attend.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.