

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Planning & Development Center
4700 Elmore Road, Room 170**

**January 4, 2024
1:00 PM**

*This meeting is available for viewing at
[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](http://Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings (muni.org))*

Technical Advisory Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Brad Coy (Chair)	MOA/Traffic Engineering Department
Andrew Gallagher	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Ben White	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Anchorage Field Office
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Jamie Acton	MOA/Public Transportation Department (PTD)
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Adeyemi Alimi	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
Melinda Kohlhaas	MOA/Project Management & Engineering (PM&E)
Matt Stichick	MOA/Anchorage Health Department (AHD)
Taylor Keegan	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
Randy Brown	MOA/PTD
Bart Rudolph	MOA/PTD
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Adam Bradway	DOT&PF
Romorenzo Marasigan	DOT&PF
Carma Reed	
John Linnell	DOT&PF

**Policy Committee Member*

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

CHAIR COY called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Sean Baski represented the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities on behalf of Luke Bowland. Andrew Gallagher represented the Alaska Railroad Corporation on behalf of Brian Lindamood. Steve Ribuffo with the Port of Alaska was excused. Matt Stichick with the MOA Anchorage Health Department was absent. A quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AARON JONGENELEN encouraged public involvement in this meeting of the AMATS Technical Advisory 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.

CHAIR COY welcomed the committee to 2024, noting that the Technical Advisory Committee meetings are now being held the first Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MR. WHITE moved to approve the agenda. MR. ALIMI seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – December 7, 2023

MR. LYON moved to approve the minutes. MR. WHITE seconded.

CHAIR COY referred to page 10, noting that the suggested meeting dates and times should read, "...TAC meetings be held on the first Thursday of every month from 12:30-2:30 p.m., instead of 2:30-4:30 p.m., ...The Policy Committee meetings would be held the third Thursday of every month from 12:30-2:30 p.m., instead of 1:30-3:30 p.m."

MR. LYON accepted the friendly amendment to have staff make the corrections to the minutes. MR. WHITE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes, as amended, were approved.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

**a. AMATS Draft 2020 Boundary Update
AMATS 2010 Boundary – for reference**

MS. SCHUETTE noted that the 2020 AMATS Area Boundary includes the 2020 Urban Boundary and all areas where AMATS (the MPO) funds can be expended. The U.S. Census Bureau released the updated Urbanized Areas (UZA) maps after the completion of the 2020 decennial census, and it is necessary to modify the boundary of the MPO based upon the newly released maps.

MR. JONGENELEN added that the reason for expanding our boundary is to include the transportation system and areas that we anticipate growth where development could take place over the next twenty years. Shrinking the boundary is more difficult than expanding the boundary and requires a good rationale why it will not be in our MPO boundary.

CHAIR COY asked if there was an advantage to shrinking the boundary and how JBER fits in the MPO.

MR. JONGENELEN explained that there is really no advantage to shrinking boundaries because, basically, these are less areas where we are able to spend federal funding and are not beneficial to the community. We also need to be cautious when expanding, making sure it is being done logically. AMATS cannot do Indian, Bird, or Girdwood because there is not enough density between our main boundary and those areas where hops and skips can be done, which is approximately one mile between each, allowing for only two or three at a time. We can eliminate any area where we do not anticipate development. With regard to JBER, AMATS does not do any funding for JBER, but they are an important partner on our Freight Advisory Committee that we are required to coordinate with, so we include them in the process. Similar to the Port, although we recently learned that we could spend AMATS dollars on the Port area. The 2010 boundary included all of that land that is not part of our urban area, and there is no reason for us not to include it and ensuring that it is part of our planning area. This accounts for all the use, growth, and development JBER has, and even if we cannot put our transportation funds on their land, they still impact our transportation system.

CHAIR COY also asked if we could legally put money towards building infrastructure on JBER?

MR. JONGENELEN did not believe so because it is considered a defense department. The Port is similar, but the requirements are not as strict as those at JBER. Even though it is a secured facility, it is a different secured facility than the military base. We do utilize base land in the transportation system because they lease it out, but we do not put our projects beyond the secured fence.

MR. LYON recalled that the reason the Port was not eligible previously was because the public did not have access and entry was controlled. The same restriction applies to JBER.

CHAIR COY opened the floor to public comments.

MARK EISENMAN

MR. LYON moved to recommend to the Policy Committee approval of the boundary changes suggested by staff. MS. KOHLHAAS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

b. DOT&PF Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Coordination Policy

MR. JONGENELEN informed the committee that DOT&PF recently met with AMATS staff to review the draft 2024-2027 STIP. At that meeting, DOT&PF provided AMATS staff with a copy of a new draft policy to address MPO coordination moving forward. This policy is “to formalize the department’s procedures for Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) cooperating in the development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), an individual MPO’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and an individual

MPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). This guidance may also apply to the development of an MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)." He added the following comments:

1. The policy overall is a good attempt, but it does not do a good job explaining the 3C (Comprehensive, Continuous, and Cooperative) process and incorporating that into whatever they are talking about in the document. This, to him, reads more: "You, as the MPO, do as you are told by DOT&PF in the coordination process versus "Let us work together to get this coordination process done."
2. He referred to the Authority Section's first paragraph, which reads, "DOT is responsible for planning the statewide transportation system, including the National Highway System," pointing out that how it is written is a little disingenuous. As we have learned recently and as everyone has been corrected by FHWA, AMATS is the one who oversees the transportation planning process within our boundary and does have a say in decisions for projects that are moving forward or not moving forward by including it in our MTP and our TIP.
3. If this goes forward, there needs to be some adjustments, especially on the authority side, because it is misleading in terms of responsibilities and who is responsible for what.

MR. LYON added the following comments:

1. This document is a state document and controls how the state runs its policies and procedures, but it is not to dictate in any shape or form how AMATS staff do their work. Staff is more than busy as it is and does not need anything added in relation to this quarterly plan.
2. Under the Authority section, federal laws make it very clear that the AMATS MTP requires AMATS to review the planning for all facilities inside the MPO's boundaries, regardless of ownership. That is why we have to include the funding that the state can bring to bear, whether it is state funds or state NHS funds, or the railroad's 5307 funds, or other funds that ARRC controls. This also includes municipal bonds. All are in there because the federal government wants you to look at everything, not have the MPO only look at certain classifications of roadway. It is a system, so that language would definitely need to be clarified because, whereas an MPO is responsible in our case for funding improvements on many of the lower-class roads and highways and not necessarily the National Highway System (NHS), AMATS can certainly be used and has been used on the NHS in the past. That definitely needs to be clarified there.

MS. KOHLHAAS added the following comments:

1. The initiative of wanting to do more coordination in the interest of all players is a great thing, but it is how it gets done. One thing she was concerned about is where it would be reviewed at the minimum at a quarterly meeting at the following venues: statewide, MPO, quarterly meetings, TAC, and the PC. She is not comfortable with having it brought forward at this forum without knowing that staff has looked at it in

great detail. We rely on staff looking to see that we are in compliance; are the allocations being used properly versus us looking at something and being tasked with approving or recommending it for approval to the PC? Even at their level, we rely on the resources of staff doing their jobs. The coordination part is coming and just being that added piece, she did not know if this piece belongs here at the TAC meeting for us to be reviewing this report. What she would like to see and offer as a recommendation is to bump up the coordination piece with whatever staff can do to work together with the 3Cs, and if anything needs to be brought forward as a summary that is distilled, then bring it forward to the TAC, and then we can have a conversation or recommend further. She did not see it being effective as it was written.

2. Define the acronym STA shown in the authority section.
3. She agreed with Craig on the authority piece that is already defined elsewhere, but the overall goal is favorable.

CHAIR COY added the following comments:

1. This policy is a great step by DOT in trying to work with cooperation and coordination. It has actionable things that they can do. It has specificity in directing what seems to be their stuff when it talks about MPO Field Planning Units. It looks like they were laying out specifically what their staff could do to improve that coordination and trying to address some of the challenges that came up with the STIP. He felt it was a big plus that they were being mindful of the MPO wanting to do more to be on the same page.
2. He was glad they put the authority discussion in here because it raised some of the differences and perspectives that arise when it talks about the state being responsible for statewide and the MPO being responsible for transportation planning in a metropolitan area, normally on lower functionally classified roads and highways. He disagreed with that piece based on things that he has read that are not how they are supposed to be. This is illuminating because if this is how things have been done, it makes a lot more sense why things have been done the way they have been done. The first step to improving that coordination and that relationship is to first understand where things are coming from, and this has made it very clear to him. He felt that with the things he has read, the MPO is the policy organization for the urban area, and that is overarching for DOT, the municipality, and is a way to have the policies for this region set forth so that DOT can execute where it applies to some of their facilities and the municipality can execute it where it applies to our facilities. It is all this regional cooperative, coordinated effort with the MPO receiving that funding and that authority and being indicative from FHWA, which is how he understood it, so he saw differences here. If we are able to have a conversation around this question of authority, some of the other pieces he had questions about can play out a lot better and become clearer. For example, one of the things he read says, "TIPs developed by MPOs must be incorporated directly or by reference and without change into the STIP." It is kind of the reverse that we have been doing with regards to the STIP being incorporated into the TIP almost without change or into the MTP with that change.

3. This is a positive first step, and he appreciated the openness to have this discussion and see how we can have better coordination and cooperation at the MPO, where the state is a key player.

MR. LYON added the following comment:

1. He can speak from his last 20 years of experience that does not seem to have changed since Mr. Jongenelelen started, which is that the relationship between all of Central Region staff and the MPO has been very collaborative, comprehensive, continuous, and cooperative. It has been and continues to be a very good relationship, and they have worked very well together to continue to keep people in the loop. That has not changed, and he did not expect that to change. The challenging part has been elsewhere.

MR. JONGENELEN added the following comments:

1. His problem with this P&P is that it is empty in its approach. It does not commit to anything, like whether they will bring the STIP to us for review or whether they will bring their long-range plan to us for review. It is that they will document how they have been doing outreach and coordination with us and then provide that to us at our meetings. What if they do not do any coordination, like with the current STIP, and then they have nothing to report to us? His problem is that this policy is not actually committing DOT&PF to doing anything meaningful. It is a lot of lip service to coordination, and he is disappointed with that. He is trying not to be derisive, but he thought it might be expanded a bit more when the STIP is developed, and here is how they are going to be reaching out to MPOs for coordination, not just reporting on what they did during it. He wished they would expand this not just within MPOs but everywhere and commit to 'x' number of public meetings, or will actually send the information out to let the public know that the meetings are happening so that people can attend on a regular basis and then report on how the meetings went. That is a really good approach they could take for something like this.

MS. KOHLHAAS added the following comment:

1. The status report has been very helpful, and she has been using it as a resource. Those actionable steps that we are actually using create dialogue; she picks up the phone, calls Julia, and interacts.

MR. JONGENELEN pointed out that James Starzec with DOT&PF took the initiative to create that status report, and it does show there is an opportunity to increase that coordination in a meaningful way and make it better for everyone in the long run.

MR. WHITE added the following comments:

1. With three MPOs in our state, we realized a while back that we needed to start coordinating and getting some consistency within our MPO world, so we have started

setting up quarterly meetings where we sit down with our MPOs, and now we have RTPOs and RPOs in the state. This is getting bigger and broader as we go, so one of the things we are trying to capture is some consistency with how we are interacting with everyone. A lot of what Mr. Starzec has created with Mr. Jongenelen and our relationship between the Central Region and AMATS is starting to filter into other areas. We are looking to replicate what we have developed here with the MVP in the MatSu Borough. The intent behind this was to try and capture some of that. He did know this would be on the agenda at their next quarterly meeting in a couple of weeks.

MR. JONGENELEN suggested the motion language would be to formalize what we have talked about, like reworking the authority section, the venues, and defining STA.

In response to Mr. Lyon's request for clarification that DOT&PF were going to put this out for public review, MR. WHITE did not recall ever having put a policy and procedure document out for public review. Although it may go out for a departmental review.

MR. LYON noted that he saw the wisdom in having a document from the AMATS coordinator in terms of a response because it would seem inappropriate to have it come from the Policy Committee since the chair is a DOT&PF employee.

MR. LYON moved to direct Mr. Jongenelen to prepare a memorandum or letter capturing our comments and route it to the TAC for review prior to forwarding it to the Policy Committee. MS. KEEGAN seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

MR. JONGENELEN informed the committee that the 2050 MTP is close to being finalized, and staff is anticipating having it come before the committees for approval in February. He added that Mr. Cecil and Ms. Ward-Waller will be covering the February meeting as he will be out of town.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION

MR. JONGENELEN clarified that the Policy Committee agreed to scheduling the TAC meetings on the first Thursday and the PC meetings on the third Thursday of every month from 1:00-3:00 p.m. The July 4, 2024, meeting falls on a holiday, so the TAC meeting will be moved to July 11. The TAC meetings will continue to be held in the training room, unless the Mayor's Conference Room becomes available, then the meetings will be held there. Also, the AMATS Senior Transportation Planner position that focuses primarily on the MTP is still available.

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

MR. BASKI noted that the Anchorage Transportation Fair is scheduled for March 28, 2024 at the Alaska Airlines Center and January 25, 2024 is targeted for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Transportation Fair at the Alaska State Fairgrounds.

CHAIR COY noted that the Traffic Engineering Department is currently coordinating with Kent Kohlhase and Sean Baski on the Protected Bike Lane Pilot project and on a memorandum of agreement confirming that we can move forward with the project next summer on A Street and 6th Avenue. If that is approved, then we will move into the public outreach phase for feedback on those concepts. Also, we are in the process of organizing and posting the funded VisionZero coordinator position.

MR. BASKI also noted that the DOT&PF Regional Traffic Engineer position has been posted.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

MR. LYON moved to adjourn. MS. KOHLHAAS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.