

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Planning & Development Center
Main Conference Room, 1st Floor
4700 Elmore Road**

**August 10, 2023
2:30 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
Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Ben White	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Anchorage Field Office
Luke Bowland	DOT&PF
Bart Rudolph	MOA/Public Transportation Department (PTD)
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Melinda Kohlhaas	MOA/Project Management & Engineering (PM&E)
Matt Stichick	MOA/Anchorage Health Department (AHD)
Steve Rafuse	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Rhiannon Brown	AMATS
Chelsea Ward-Waller	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Joni Wilm	AMATS
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
James Marks	DOT&PF
Kyle Mielke	
Adam Bradway	DOT&PF
Sean Holland	DOWL
Brandon Telford	MOA/PM&E
Randy Brown	MOA/PTD
Emily Haynes	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Julie Jenkins	FHWA
Cole Carnahan	FHWA
Kevin Cross*	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Melissa Babb	
Zakary Hartman	MOA/Traffic Engineering Department
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Kassie Andrews	

**Policy Committee Member*

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

CHAIR COY called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m. Adeyemi Alimi with the Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation was excused. Steve Ribuffo with the MOA Port of Alaska was absent. Mr. Rudolph represented the MOA Public Transportation Department on behalf of Jamie Acton. Ms. Dueber represented the Alaska Railroad Corporation on behalf of Brian Lindamood. 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.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – July 13, 2023

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

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Administrative Modification #1

MR. JONGENELEN noted that an administrative modification to the AMATS 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is needed to update Table 2: Roadway, Table 3: Non-motorized, and Table 9: Transit. These changes meet the requirements outlined in the AMATS Operating Agreement Section 6.6.2 and Policies and Procedures #5.

The committee discussed opportunities to make changes as long they meet the thresholds in the Operating Agreement and additional funding in the Areawide Pathway Trails Pavement Replacement Program.

There were no public comments.

MR. RUDOLPH moved to recommend approval to the Policy Committee. MR. LYON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

b. AMATS Planning Funds Distribution Formula Update

MR. JONGENELEN noted that as part of the federal transportation planning process Planning (PL) funding is provided to States to fund these efforts. MPOs are given a portion of these funds to cover planning activities outlined in the Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWP). The State coordinates with MPOs on developing a formula for how the PL funds are distributed.

The committee discussed Planning funding being used for staff funding, but that it can also be used for studies within the UPWP period. They also discussed the process of obligating federal funds.

There were no public comments.

MS. KOHLHAAS moved to forward to the Policy Committee for approval. MR. LYON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

c. 2024-2027 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Comments

MR. JONGENELEN informed the committee that DOT&PF recently released their STIP for comments, which is a larger version of the TIP. The TIP covers AMATS and has to be incorporated into the STIP, and the STIP covers ALASKA. While reviewing the STIP, AMATS' staff noticed areas of concern and drafted a letter to bring these forward to both the TAC and PC for review requesting approval to submit the comments to the State regarding the STIP.

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

- (CL) Having done AMATS for a long time, the main focus of the feds was the public process because these are taxpayer funds. This is not federal, state, or AMATS money. We are using taxpayer funds to make improvements that we think, through our efforts, are the right improvements, and AMATS goes out to the public all the time to ensure we are getting those sound reports. We do not do it absolutely perfectly, and there is always room for improvement. There is no criteria here that shows how DOT&PF scored one project over another; there are no scoring sheets showing who scored what or what the scores were, so we have no way of knowing how DOT&PF picked projects out of thin air. When Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding was added under SAFETELU, the feds said, "You have to have a competitive process to do this." They did not dictate what criteria you had to use or how many criteria you had to use. A black box is not a competitive process. When AMATS ranked and scored projects in the previous TIP, we had the Northern Access to UMED (the road to the University), which was the second highest scored project and was met with universal acclaim, and everyone thought that was wonderful. The reality is that when that project was scored using the criteria that AMATS approved, and the

process AMATS went through to approve it was a very public process, saying, "Here are the criteria that we are going to use. What do you think of that?" Then the comments came in. AMATS then does the ranking and scoring, showing how the project was laid out. So many people came forward, asking why the project was scoring so high. Our response was, for example, that it improves non-motorized and gets you a certain number of points. If you put that road in and have a sidewalk on one side and a separated pathway on the other, that improves non-motorized facilities. One may not like the project, but it gets points for doing that. In other words, a very public process was very transparent and showed everyone what it was. The technical merits of that project were scored at a certain amount. The Policy Committee decided not to fund that project and removed it. Again, the process was extremely transparent; this process is the opposite of it. He appreciated Mr. Jongenelen's very thorough comments.

- (LB) Thanked staff and those who had commented online. DOT&PF held a public meeting in Anchorage the night before that was not well-attended. Hopefully, people are taking advantage of the virtual options available. A recording of the virtual meeting that was held last week is on the website. As Mr. Lyon mentioned, these are public dollars, and he is hoping people are providing input on where they think those public dollars should be going. He referred to page 3, noting that a minor edit to Technical Comment #4 that talks about the Glenn Highway Milepost 0-33 Rehabilitation and is listed as an Anchorage/Mat-Su project should read just the Mat-Su area. That project extends from Airport Heights all the way to the Parks Highway, so it does fit underneath both Anchorage and the Mat-Su, but there are a number of projects within the STIP that do call out Anchorage and Mat-Su that are in one or the other. He did not know if the best way would be to swap a project for this technical comment or to revise the comment to say the multiple projects should be reviewed and adjusted as needed.
- (AJ) *Yes, that is an error, and another project can be added. The Seward Highway from Dimond to O'Malley project is also listed as Anchorage/Mat-Su for the Borough. It might be better to just say, "Please check the Borough locations and correctly identify them for Anchorage projects," because there is no Municipality of Anchorage Borough. Anchorage/Mat-Su Borough does not make sense. If the committee would like, he can change it to be more generic.*
- (BC) On some of these that go across multiple boroughs and jurisdictions, it seemed like separating out what was in Anchorage, in the Mat-Su, or other places was helpful to do. How do you do that with a project like this that does span the two?
- (LB) *Thinks it is appropriate with the Glenn Highway Milepost 0-33, but others need to be cleaned up. It would just be a minor correction.*
- (AJ) *It would be easy to do, so when wanting to search for all the projects in the MOA, it is a little difficult now, especially since one of them is listed in Kenai. Leaving it as Anchorage/Mat-Su is fine, but it should be noted that it is in both locations, so when searching for projects, you can enter the Borough as the MOA, and the Borough as Anchorage/Mat-Su.*

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- (BC) If Comment #4 was not both, what does it say in the location field? If filtering by location, can you choose Anchorage, Mat-Su, or combined?
- (AJ) *It says both, Anchorage/Mat-Su. What is nice about the air tables is that it gives you the ability to filter by how you want to search with a lot more nuance than it has been in the past.*
- (LB) Recommended amending the first sentence to read, “Several projects within the STIP are listed as Anchorage/Mat-Su but are only located in the Mat-Su or Anchorage areas.”
- (SR) With regard to the timeline, this committee would make a recommendation to the PC when they meet on August 24, and from that point the letter would be sent, but we are looking at a tight turnaround with the closing date being the 3rd. Should we be asking to extend the period, allowing DOT&PF to address some of the things we are pointing out that they might not have realized?
- (AJ) *Did not know because typically what happens is the public comment period is opened, then gather all the comments, then make the changes from those comments. The comment period does not necessarily need to be extended, unless you feel the current comment period was not long enough.*
- (SR) In reviewing Mr. Jongenelen’s comments, he thought a lot of good things were being identified, but he did not know if it would be beneficial to point them out and give DOT&PF a chance to make some of the corrections, clarify information, and allow for a longer review period rather than us spending a couple of weeks making recommendations for the PC to give the okay to send it. These will simply be comments filed into the record perhaps without any time for meaningful redress.
- (BC) It seems like having their comment period close sooner gives them more time to actively address them. He would assume from what he has seen with the way the process works that we would not want to extend the comment period because it delays when they can start making changes.
- (AJ) *The STIP is required to be approved by October 1, 2023 when the new fiscal year starts. If the STIP is not approved, then AMATS is penalized. We are not able to move forward on any new projects, any new phases of projects, and cannot make changes to the TIP, like the amendment he has scheduled for September, which may not happen now. The Congestion Management Process Plan (CMP) needs to be added to update that per FHWA’s request. Or any of the changes that projects need in 2024 to keep them moving forward if their cost increases. In calling out these errors, he did not see how the STIP can be approved on time. It is a huge problem and extending the comment period will not matter too much.*
- (SR) Could there be criteria that DOT&PF was following but not out there for us to see or for those folks that might be commenting to see? Would bringing this to the attention of DOT&PF allow for more transparency before the comment period closes? The point of the STIP being done in October and the timeline we are working with make total sense not to extend that comment period.
- (AJ) *Typically, no one responds to comments in the middle of a comment period, but they wait until the comment period is closed to respond to them because the comments have all been compiled instead of in increments. He did anticipate some kind of response from DOT&PF if this letter goes forward.*

- (BC) Let us say that DOT&PF gets this and says they will incorporate all of these. Path forward, if not approved by October, then that limits some funding. Is there an option to at least keep it as approved and work on an amendment?
- (AJ) *It is not up to AMATS about the STIP because it is DOT&PFs and FHWA approves it. It is up to FHWA to determine what happens with the STIP. AMATS has the opportunity to provide comments to them and rely on DOT&PF to respond. FHWA has already seen these comments and are aware of the concerns, and have been carbon copied in this letter.*
- (BC) For clarification, we are making the decision to forward the letter to the PC for them to decide whether to forward it to the state as comments. If the state takes them, they have the choice of how to incorporate and address them with this October date in mind. If DOT&PF did not, and as we come around to our TIP, would we go forward differently with how we slide STIP projects into AMATS' TIP?
- (AJ) *If DOT&PF did not approve it by October 1, then we are on hold with the TIP until the STIP is approved. Some other concerns are that there are projects in the STIP that are not in the AMATS MTP. Technically, that cannot happen because they are supposed to be in the MTP before they are included in the TIP or the STIP. If AMATS has to do an MTP amendment before the STIP can be approved with those projects in it, it is a 6–8-month process alone. That is why coordination happens with the MPOs before a STIP is put out, so you can identify those areas and get them addressed. This comment was not included in the letter, but we can add it as a Major Comment #6 that reads, "There are projects in the STIP that are not consistent with the AMATS MTP. An amendment would be needed to make that consistency happen prior to those projects being included in the TIP or the STIP." A good example is the Seward Highway: 98.5 to 110, as it is not in the fiscally constrained portion of the MTP.*
- (MK) Clarified that this is out for the public because they can access this draft letter, and this committee has members from DOT&PF. What DOT&PF does with the letter is not in our control, but it does give them an opportunity to know what types of comments are out there. A lot of cleanup could happen, especially having the math add up, some vetting, revisiting tables, and sorting. What they come up with in trying to meet the deadline for submitting the final before October 1 is an important milestone, so that everything falls into place. What is good about this is that it sends a clear message about how important transparency is, and safety projects, and public involvement. The message has been identified, and in moving forward, the program development group can be aware of this project and be concerned and mindful of all these things that have to be included in a fully justified document, so that AMATS can feel confident that this is the best represented item and has been looked at thoroughly. She is optimistic that it will get there by October 1, but hopefully they will see what is before them, and we will get a better project moving forward in the future and have more coordination.
- (MS) It sounds like the projects that are in the STIP and not in the MTP are highly consequential, since that would not allow the STIP to be approved. Can AMATS make a recommendation to DOT&PF that they pull those projects back out of the STIP and resubmit them as an amendment? Otherwise, it sounds like both the STIP and the TIP get delayed for at least 6 months.

- (AJ) *Technically speaking, the committee can recommend anything. A STIP project has to be in the MTP before it can be in the TIP. It has to be in the TIP before it can be in the STIP. This is logical because it is basically saying that the MPO agrees with this project in the Long-Range Plan and they agree with it in their plan, so in going forward with the STIP approval, the project is in there.*
- (MS) Is there a way the committee can head off an obvious 6-month delay by avoiding the issue in the STIP?
- (AJ) *He did not know if Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation (FAST) had any similar projects. This committee could make the recommendation that any project not in the 2040 MTP that is shown in the STIP be pulled and added in later via an amendment once it is in the MTP.*
- (BR) Appreciated the letter and the time AMATS' staff took to prepare and explain it to the committee. The STIP is very confusing at times. What AMATS sees is the public coming to meetings that are upset with a DOT&PF project because they see it in the TIP and want it removed or changed, and they do not understand that the STIP is the process they need to be involved in to amend a DOT&PF project. AMATS is constantly having that conversation at the TAC and PC levels. That reflects the lack of coordination between DOT&PF and AMATS. A lot of times a statement is made during committee comments from a DOT&PF representative that says, "The STIP is out for review and comment," and that is it. There is no presentation, no review of projects, and no discussion as to how those projects were included in the STIP. This is a great letter, and he hopes it sparks more conversation between DOT&PF and AMATS and gets DOT&PF to involve AMATS and the public in attending AMATS meetings more. Maybe DOT&PF will get a better turnout for their meetings or more comments from the public because it is terribly confusing for members of the public to understand the TIP, the STIP, and every funding source related to transportation. The easier we make this, the better, because he felt bad for the public attending meetings that are upset with DOT&PF projects because there is nothing AMATS can do. AMATS cannot change the projects or the funding. AMATS can vote to take it out of the TIP, but that would probably never happen as it would have huge ramifications. This is a good step to get the conversation moving. He agreed with Mr. Stichick's comment that the projects that are not in the MTP should be removed rather than amended because we do not have the time to follow the amendment process.
- (BC) Appreciated that it does feel like the state has been doing a lot of outreach (more than before) and is now more open to feedback. Expects it is tough to get this feedback on these potential issues that are being pointed out, but it is still very valuable, and he hopes the state doesn't shy away from these hard discussions, but instead can incorporate it and continue to move forward. He expressed his appreciation for that willingness and openness to be more vulnerable.
- (BW) For DOT&PF, officially, the planning program development team appreciates the relationship with AMATS. Mr. Starzec and his staff and AMATS' staff have been working really hard to get good coordination between planning program development and the MPOs. One of the things he and Mr. Jongenelen have talked about is making sure we maintain that strong relationship, the coordination, and

working through this. DOT&PF does value the comments and looks forward to trying to resolve these things.

There were no public comments.

MR. RUDOLPH moved to recommend to the Policy Committee to send Mr. Jongenelen's drafted letter. MR. LYON seconded.

MR. STICHICK moved to amend to modify the letter to add Major Comment #6 regarding the projects in the STIP that are not in the MTP being an issue that should be resolved by removing those projects and adding them in as an amendment to the STIP.

CHAIR COY clarified that the motion is to add Item #6 under the Major Comments section of the letter that addresses MTP consistency. To what degree does that motion need to be in specific language? Is it okay if there is a motion to add it and the committee leaves it up to Mr. Jongenelen?

MR. JONGENELEN replied that he will list the projects that he sees now, which will give an idea of what they are, and he can add the recommendation that these projects in the 2024–2027 STIP are not reflected in the 2040 MTP should be removed and can be added at a later date via an amendment if and when they are added to the 2040 MTP.

MR. LYON seconded the amendment.

1st Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

MR. BOWLAND moved to amend Technical Comment #4 to replace the first sentence to read, "Several projects in the STIP are listed as Anchorage/Mat-Su while they are only in Anchorage or Mat-Su area." MR. STICHICK seconded.

2nd Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Main Motion, As Amended

Hearing no objections, the main motion passed, as amended.

PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. 2023-2026 TIP Q3 Obligation Report

MR. JONGENELEN presented the report.

In response to Chair Coy, MR. JONGENELEN explained that the report will be shared with the PC after they approve Administrative Modification #1, but it does show the justification

for the modification. This information is also available on AMATS' TIP website for the public.

There were no public comments.

b. Project Status Report

MR. JONGENELEN presented the 3rd quarter update project status. He added that a ribbon cutting ceremony was held two weeks ago for the Chugach Foothill Phase 2 project. This project is located on the Tudor Road curve and connects with the Phase 1 project. It was well-attended and the community was grateful that AMATS supported that project.

CHAIR COY opened the floor to public comments.

JAMES STARZEC with DOT&PF

7. GENERAL INFORMATION

MR. JONGENELEN mentioned that an amazing amount of work had been done by Chelsea Ward-Waller on the 2050 MTP, which was just released for a 60-day public comment period ending October 9, 2023.

MS. WARD-WALLER added that once the public comment period is closed, staff will provide the document and public comments to the TAC and PC in a joint work session. A presentation was delivered to the Freight Advisory Committee yesterday and videos will also be available online.

There were no public comments.

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

MS. KOHLHAAS informed Mr. Rafuse that she just talked to the Purchasing Department and, in the future, Purchasing may be tweaking how we are calling out those AMs (memoranda) as a sole source to DOT&PF.

MR .RUDOLPH noted that People Mover is celebrating its 49th year in the 49th State this year. He encouraged everyone to follow them on Facebook, Instagram, or the MOA website to view photographs from previous decades. People Mover had a partnership with London in the 1980s where they sent us a double-decker bus and we drove it around downtown as a circulator.

CHAIR COY noted that the Assembly passed a Bike Equity Ordinance that makes some rule changes to Title 9, which is the traffic code for Anchorage. Cyclists will now be able to proceed through a stop sign as a yield sign, yielding to any traffic that may be present but otherwise not needing to stop. Also, if there is no traffic at a stoplight, cyclists are able to stop and then proceed through the stoplight before it turns green. They call it dead red, and the reason behind it is that we do not yet have comprehensive bike detection throughout Anchorage, so this change helps address that for the time being. There are a few other items in there, and if you have questions, you can look at that ordinance. It takes effect 60 days

after it was passed, which will be around October 8. With regard to that, there have been those in the public that have reached out, asking why bikes are even allowed in the road. So that everyone knows, the laws allow a bike to be in the road. It is just something to be aware of, and there is definitely a need for awareness of the rules related to cycling. The term ‘vulnerable road users’ is also highlighted in that ordinance, and there are some additional definitions for protected bike lanes, cycle tracks, and vulnerable road users. If anyone has questions, you are welcome to forward them to the Traffic Engineering Department, which is working to help increase awareness and education because, really, a key thing for safety is being aware, mindful, and courteous to everyone else on the road.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

KYLE MIELKE expressed that this has been the most educational meeting he has seen for AMATS, especially regarding the explanation of the TIP and the STIP, and all that goes into that. He really wanted to commend everyone on the committee for all their hard work and trying to deal with the STIP and let everyone know that your work is much appreciated.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that as part of AMATS’ safety campaign, staff has bright, high-visibility knitted hats to hand out.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.