ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AR No. 2022-254(S)

A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDING CHANGES TO THE ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS (AMATS) TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2023-2026 BEFORE ITS ADOPTION BY THE AMATS POLICY COMMITTEE.

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak-Eagle River Areas; and

WHEREAS, decisions for the MPO are made through the AMATS Policy Committee; and

WHEREAS, the MPO adopts a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) which details the spending of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other federal funds on roads, trails, studies and projects involving transportation; and

WHEREAS, the proposed TIP for 2023-2026 is available and set to be adopted by the AMATS Policy Committee on August 25, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the TIP is a fiscally constrained program that has a finite source of resources for programming, exclusive of one-time funds; and

WHEREAS, two Assembly Members serve on the AMATS Policy Committee and represent the views of the Assembly on the committee, the Mayor also has a representative as well as Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Central Region and Department of Environmental Conservation’s Deputy Commissioner representing the Air Quality Division; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Climate Action Plan (2019) sets a target of 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the municipality by 2030. Anchorage will not meet that target without a data-based strategy for GHG reductions from the transportation system; and

WHEREAS, in July 2022, FHWA announced its proposed rule that would require states and municipalities to track and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (23 CFR Part 490) [Docket No. FHWA-2021-0004]; and

WHEREAS, Anchorage needs data and an action plan to take advantage of federal funding, including through the Inflation Reduction Act signed into law on August 16, 2022 which authorized $369 billion in federal funding on climate change reduction; and

WHEREAS, the label of “recreational trails” limits state and federal funding
WHEREAS, the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, Goal 5, recognizes that that trails are utilitarian investments and are essential to support growth:

Maximizing all modes of travel, including street, sidewalk, transit, and trail connections, is critical to supporting successful growth. More frequent, predictable public transit service and extensions of the trails system should coincide with mixed-use centers targeted for growth. Transit and trails are critical to growth, while improving quality of life and mitigating road congestion (Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, p 22); and

WHEREAS, Anchorage has numerous platted public trail easements, pathway tracts, and rights of way (ROW) that have never been developed; and

WHEREAS, undeveloped easements are depicted on Municipal plats but have never been compiled into a data base for purposes of transportation planning and offer direct connections between neighborhoods and destinations (for example, connecting between cul-de-sacs); and

WHEREAS, the proposed 92nd Avenue underpass would be located so close to the Dimond Boulevard interchange that an FHWA variance would be required; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular highway underpass to connect Scooter Road to Academy Drive is not warranted by current or projected traffic counts, but is rather a relic design from 20 years ago, when Dimond Center was the city’s only regional shopping center; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2040 has a policy action (3-1) to investigate congestion management alternatives to roadway expansion projects and it needs to be applied here; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular underpass would necessitate collector roads east of the Highway (Academy Drive and Vanguard Drive) and the Anchorage Assembly in past years voted against funding these collector roads with MOA funds; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular underpass will divert business from the Abbott Town Center, working contrary to the pattern of the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan, which ranks the future 92nd Avenue corridor low on its list of infill and redevelopment transit supported corridors; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular underpass as an element of the Seward Highway upgrade between O’Malley Road and Dimond Boulevard would necessitate a tenfold capacity increase and rerouting of Vanguard Drive, inflates the price of that upgrade to $200 million for one mile of reconstructed roadway and the proposed underpass alone costs $30 million, and would necessitate
WHEREAS, the proposed 2023-2026 TIP contains corridor studies for several roadways between Downtown and Midtown, including Northern Lights and Benson Boulevards, Tudor Road and Minnesota Drive; and

WHEREAS, if additional funding is made available in the TIP, adding corridor studies of A and C streets from 3rd Avenue to Tudor Road make sense to be in alignment with the other proposed corridor studies; and

WHEREAS, all corridor studies should examine making these identified corridors into Complete Streets consistent with FHWA recommended redesign and reconstruction of high-speed urban arterials into Complete Streets to make them safe for all users; and

WHEREAS, downtown lighting and signalization projects in the TIP are intended to replace traffic signals and lighting systems to meet current electrical safety standards and design criteria, sidewalks and pavement will be replaced as necessary to facilitate electrical work and meet ADA requirements; and

WHEREAS, the 5th and 6th Avenues Lighting project is necessary to replace the existing streetlights that are dated and not always working properly, and would install new lights and signals that meet new energy efficiency standards, ensure all are working and to respond to the recent Municipal public infrastructure along 4th Avenue and the updated Downtown District Plan (2022); and

WHEREAS, with the new lights and improvement to signalization the streets will be safer, more conducive to the increased pedestrian traffic along 5th and 6th and meet complete streets guidelines; and

WHEREAS, projects not funded in the TIP but still priorities can be listed in the “fourth” year of the TIP to be prioritized and included in the next TIP.

NOW THEREFORE THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES:

Section 1. The following additions and changes should be included in the 2023-2026 TIP:

1. A Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) Reduction Plan is needed for the Anchorage transportation system that is a data-based and directly targets current and future Anchorage GHG emissions and quantitatively evaluates strategies and actions to reduce GHG emissions from the Anchorage transportation system; and

2. Change the project title from Recreational Trails Plan (PLN00018) to “Recreational and Utilitarian Trails”, and add to the purpose description “plan for direct, safe, low-stress routes and crossings for utilitarian travel between neighborhoods and community destinations, as an attractive alternative to motorized transportation”; and

3. Change the project description of this trail inventory to include “non-
motorized easements, pedestrian ROW, and undeveloped ROW” (PLN00019); and

3. [4.] Delete the current project (NHS0004) that contains the construction of the vehicular underpass at 92nd Avenue/Scooter Avenue (part of NHS0004) and delete the Academy Drive/Vanguard Drive circulation improvements (RDY00013). Add a new project that mirrors Project NHS0004, but instead provides for a non-vehicular freeway crossing at 92nd Avenue and Scooter Drive; and

4. [5.] Add corridor studies of A and C Streets from 3rd Avenue to Tudor Road that coordinates with the Seward to Glenn Mobility Planning Environment Linkages Study; and

5. Change the description of the Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation project (RDY00001) to read, "This project would rehabilitate Fireweed Lane from Spenard Road to the Seward Highway and include a road diet, changing Fireweed from 4 lanes to a maximum of 3 lanes. This project would also include non-motorized improvements.” This removes the specificity of the current language; (2 with a center turn lane); and

6. Add 5th and 6th Avenue Signalization as a funded project in the TIP if there are available funds or as a project listed in the “fourth” year of the TIP.

Section 2. This resolution shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly.

PASSED and APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this 23rd day of August, 2022.

ATTEST: Chair

Municipal Clerk
FROM: Assembly Members Zaletel, Dunbar and Volland

SUBJECT: A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDING CHANGES TO THE ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS (AMATS) TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2023-2026 BEFORE ITS ADOPTION BY THE AMATS POLICY COMMITTEE.

The resolution submitted with this memorandum would provide several recommendations to the AMATS Policy Committee for changes to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for 2023-2026 prior to its planned adoption on August 25, 2022.

The TIP is intended to be the region’s short-range project plan for transportation improvements. It outlines the investment program of capital improvements to the metropolitan transportation system and is the means of implementing the goals and objectives of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. As a short-range plan, the TIP can serve to realign Municipal planning with the values and priorities of the community. Often, transportation projects lag in planning and funding stages to an extent that they become irrelevant or even counterproductive to the community’s current needs.

The recommendations in this resolution serve to bring parts of the TIP into concert with a clear directive from community members to prioritize non-motorized transportation and smaller roads or trails. The changes also answer the need for the TIP to communicate with other adopted goals, such as those contained in the Climate Action Plan or the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. In addition, planning with an eye to creating complete linkages and joining unconnected trail systems through existing easements or rights-of-way for a utilitarian commuter amenity.

Providing a safe, efficient and reasonable multimodal transportation system requires nimble, flexible action and the TIP is the appropriate place to make changes according to the current environment.

We request your support of this resolution.
Prepared by: Assembly Legislative Services

Respectfully submitted: Assembly Member Meg Zaletel
District 4, Midtown Anchorage

Assembly Member Forrest Dunbar
District 5, East Anchorage

Assembly Member Daniel Volland
District 1, North Anchorage