

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Planning & Development Center

Conference Room 170

4700 Elmore Road

Anchorage, Alaska

October 26, 2021

2:30 PM

This meeting was conducted in-person and virtually

Community Advisory Committee Members Present:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Matt Cruickshank	District 2
Steve Horn	District 3
Diana Evans	District 4
Bob French	Federation of Community Councils
Jon Scudder	JBER
Jim Winchester	Planning & Zoning Commission
Debbie Rinckey	Chugiak/Eagle River Chamber of Commerce

Also in attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Craig Lyon	AMATS Coordinator
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Christine Schuette	AMATS Planner
Aaron Jongenelen	MOA Planner
Nichole Rehm	PTS, INC
Nancy Pease	Member of the Public

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK called the meeting to order at 2:33 pm. A quorum was reached. Debbie Rinckey joined the meeting at 2:40pm.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MR. FRENCH moved to approve the agenda. MR. HORN seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

MR. WINCHESTER moved to approve the minutes. MS. EVANS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS

a. Appointing Committee Member Alternates

MS. EVANS asked for this item to be on the agenda regarding member absences.

MR. LYON briefed the committee noting that there is no official process for appointing alternates.

CHAIR. CRUICKSHANK asked if Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members were appointed by the administration.

MR. LYON stated that CAC members are appointed by the Policy Committee (PC).

CHAIR. CRUICKSHANK asked if the PC would object to CAC members appointing an alternate for their seat.

MR. FRENCH asked for clarification as to whether alternates would be appointed in the event of a single meeting being missed or for several meetings in a row.

The committee discussed whether the alternates should be officially appointed by the PC and if the by-laws needed to be changed.

MR. FRENCH moved to recommend to the Policy Committee that a formal process be set up for approving alternates so that there can be adequate coverage of representatives at the meetings.

MS. EVANS seconded.

MR. WINCHESTER asked if there has been issued with filling a quorum in the past.

CHAIR. CRUICKSHANK confirmed that there had been.

MR. HORN stated that we have a good motion on the alternates, but we do need to enforce the absences.

CHAIR. CRUICKSHANK asked staff for clarification on whether attendance was tracked.

MR. LYON briefed the committee on how absences have been handled in the past.

CHAIR. CRUICKSHANK asked for confirmation that if a committee member misses three meetings in a row, AMATS staff would reach out to them to confirm that they still intended to service on the committee and if they subsequently did not show up to the next meeting, the fourth in a row, their seat on the committee would be replaced with someone else.

MR. LYON confirmed that that was the current process.

Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.

b. Hiland Merge Lane Improvements

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK made a motion for the CAC to support merge lane improvements on Hiland Road

MR. WINCHESTER seconded.

MR. HORN asked the chair what he would like to see be done in the area.

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK said that he would like to see the merge lane be extended.

MR. HORN asked if there was any current project that these improvements could dovetail with.

MR. STARZEC clarified that DOT&PF did not have any current projects planned for the existing southbound merge lane from Hiland Road to the Glenn Hwy, but that there was design funding for the on-ramp from Hiland going southbound. That would create an on-ramp for people going westbound on Eagle River Rd to be able to make a right-turn like what is on Artillery Road. Once there are federal funds identified to implement the project, that could move into right-of-way acquisition.

The committee discussed the design potential for this project.

MR. STARZEC clarified that the intent of the current project is not to design a new interchange, but to add a hook on-ramp onto the Glenn Hwy.

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK is moving to support merge lane improvements southbound on Hiland Road onto the southbound Glenn Hwy and asked committee members for clarification on language tying in the project in design that Mr. Starzec discussed.

MR. FRENCH moved that the CAC support merge lane improvements southbound on Hiland Road onto the southbound Glenn Hwy such that the merge lanes would not be conflicting with possible future partial clover-leaf renovations to the Hiland Glenn interchange.

Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. Eagle River Traffic Mitigation Phase I - Business Blvd to Eagle River Rd

PROJECT BACKGROUND

A. State Grant Summary

In 2011 and 2012 a combined total of \$8.5 million in State Grants was provided to the Municipality to begin implementation of transportation improvements identified in the 2011 Eagle River Central Business District and Residential Core Circulation Study (CBD Study). The grants provided \$2.5 million in 2011 (expended), and \$6 million in 2012 (\$5.17 remaining).

The language of both grants specifically included upgrades needed to improve congestion and traffic circulation through the Artillery Interchange and the adjacent intersection of Eagle River Road and the Old Glenn Highway. The 2012 grant added that secondary access to Business Boulevard from Eagle River was needed to reduce pressure on the Old Glenn Highway. The grant recognized the Business Boulevard to Eagle River Road extension as the first alternative from the CBD Study to receive funding.

B. Project Design Background

In July 2012, DOWL Engineers were awarded a design contract to extend Eagle River Road north to Business Boulevard. After four years of evaluation and study under Municipal and ADOT&PF direction and oversight, and with considerable input from agency stakeholders and the public, DOWL prepared a Design Study Report that provided three alternatives for the Business Boulevard Extension. The total project costs were between \$23 and \$28 million. Due to the significant costs a preferred alignment was not selected, and the Extension project was shelved.

The scope of the project was then reduced to focus on the improvements needed at the intersection of Eagle River Road and the Old Glenn Highway to prepare for the Extension.

In December 2017, the 65% design of a traditional three-way, signal-controlled intersection was routed for agency review.

Also included in the review package, as a separate drawing set, was a design to restrict access to right-in only at Cross Drive and the Old Glenn Highway and provide a new road connection from Brook's Loop north to Centerfield Drive. While this project was not necessary to implement the intersection improvements, both MOA and DOT&PF agreed that access to and from Cross Drive at Old Glenn Highway should be limited or eliminated due to safety concerns.

During review, DOT&PF were not convinced that a traditional three-way intersection was the right answer at Eagle River Road. After careful consideration and a few whitepapers prepared by DOWL, DOT&PF decided it best not to proceed with design of the intersection without improvements to the interchange first. In early September 2019, the Project Team provided a project update to Municipal Manager Bill Falsey and assembly member Crystal Kennedy and offered potential alternatives for moving forward. Alternatives included: design and construction of the Centerfield Drive connection with restricted access at Cross Drive and Old Glenn Highway, and Phase II of the CBD Study. They supported these alternatives, however, requested the project include additional stakeholder involvement to inform and re-engage the public.

C. DOT&PF Request to Use Grant Funding for Design of Artillery Interchange

In 2020, Eric Myashiro, Preliminary Design and Environmental Chief for Central Region, requested that the Municipality amend DOWL's existing design contract to include the design of the Artillery Interchange with the intersection improvements.

MOA Purchasing Department reviewed this request and determined that the additional work is outside the original scope of the contract with DOWL. Purchasing advised that design of the Artillery Interchange would need to go out as a Request for Proposals.

Based on this, DOT&PF has requested that grant funding be transferred to them so they can contract for the design of the Interchange.

D. PM&E Consults with the Administration

On January 14, 2021, PM&E presents options to Municipal Manager Anna Henderson for use of the remaining \$5.17 million.

- PM&E's recommendation is:*
- Provide \$500,000 of the remaining grant funds to MOA Planning to conduct Phase II of the CMD study;*
- Retain \$2.6m of the remaining grant funds to finalize the design of Centerfield Drive/Brooks Loop connection and restricted access at Cross Drive/Old Glenn Highway, and advertise for construction of this work;*
- Provide remaining funds to ADOT&PF for interchange design.*

The following were Committee questions with responses noted in *Italic*

(MC) What is the key component for things to move forward?

(NR) The key component is for the interchange to be done. The CBD Study will focus on the internal workings of what is happening in Eagle River, not the interchange.

(MC) It has been hard to get information on this project since the Artillery Road Interchange PEL was canceled.

(NR) It is my understanding that the DOT has no problem finding Construction funding, but that Design funding is harder to come by. We are working with the DOT to help coordinate interchange design, but we are working on circulation and safety issues at Cross Drive and until we know how much that is going to cost, we cannot allocate any of the funding to the interchange design. Cross Drive, as it enters the Old Glenn Hwy, is a safety issue. We are only going to permit right-in turns and not permit any vehicles to enter or exit from the left. That could create more traffic on Cross Drive so improvements on Cross Drive will be necessary.

(MC) So where are you at on design?

(NR) We are now looking to focus on Cross Drive and not do anything at Brooks Loop. A parcel of land has been purchased by the MOA between Brooks Loop and Centerfield for a new fully developed street to absorb the congestion that would result from closing left entrance and exit on Cross Drive.

(MC) So there will be no movement on the Interchange because there is no design funding and design funding will not be available until Cross Drive is completed?

(NR) Just vetted, once we know what it will cost then we can coordinate with the DOT with what funding is available to contribute to the Interchange design.

(DR) Can you come and give an update to the Eagle River Chamber of Commerce?

(NR) Yes, once we have our concept ready to go, we will be presenting to community councils again and opening up the public process again.

(DR) Weren't they planning to grade Cross Drive last summer?

(NR) Yes, that was delayed due to the DOT putting a holding pattern on the intersection design. The improvements at Cross Drive were in conjunction with the intersection improvements that were planned. Cross Drive intersection improvements need to be redone now because they do not align with the intersection of Eagle River Road and Old Glenn Highway.

(BF) Am I correct in thinking that there will be a new connection between Centerfield Drive and Brooks Loop?

(NR) Yes, that is correct.

b. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2050 Update

MR. JONGENELEN provided an update on the MTP 2050 and that the Public Involvement Plan, the Vision Statement and the Guiding Principles were cycling through the Technical Advisory Committee and the Policy Committee this month.

MR. JONGENELEN mentioned that the Goals and Objectives should be before the committees in November, and he strongly recommended that this committee start looking at the Goals and Objectives as they are in draft form posted for TAC and PC approval.

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

(SH) How long is the comment period going to be?

(AJ) We have not decided yet. We have strict timelines to get these plans adopted. We are hoping to streamline the front end and have more time at the end for public comment on the whole document so that we have enough time to make the recommended changes.

(JS) I think that there needs to be increased time on the comment period.

(BF) I would second that not only should the CAC have adequate time to review the Goals and Objectives, but that the public should as well.

(MC) Would we need to schedule a workshop and another official meeting to take action?

(CS) You would not have to have two meetings. If you schedule a meeting and have a quorum, you could come with your suggestions and take action at that meeting.

The committee decided to schedule another meeting to bring their comments on the Goals and Objectives for the MTP 2050.

7. General Information

AMATS 3rd Quarter Newsletter

MS. SCHUETTE reminded the committee and anyone attending the meeting virtually that the 3rd Quarter Newsletter was released.

8. Committee Comments – NONE

9. Public Comments

NANCY PEASE commented that she would like the committee to weigh in on the use of data. It is her understanding that the MTP 2050 will look at 2019 data and disregard 2020 and 2021 data due to the potential variability that the COVID-19 pandemic brought. I am hopeful that we will use all available data.

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK said that the committee could talk about it at their next meeting.

MR. HORN said that it is tough because 2020 was an anomaly, and we aren't sure what will happen moving forward.

MR. FRENCH said that he would like to see what the differences in the data before he comments one way or the other.

MR. JONGENELEN said that it is too late to discuss changing datasets because the RFP for the model as already gone out and they decided to use 2019 data. 2021 data is not available yet and 2020 is significantly different and many organizations have gone back to in-person operations, including the Municipality of Anchorage.

MR. HORN said that he understands and agrees with Aaron that it is hard to trust datasets that include anomalies.

MR. FRENCH asked if the differences between the 2019 and 2020 data can be released?

MR. JONGENELEN I am not sure, but I can talk to the project manager and see what it would take to get that comparison.

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK said that if it is possible, it would be nice to see that data comparison at the next meeting.

CHARI CRUICKSHANK asked if there were any other public comments?

NANCY PEASE asked how new tools are being incorporated into the model and how the CAC is being kept abreast of those tools? She is interested in new models for modeling induced demand.

MR. LYON said that one thing to keep in mind is that the traffic demand model is one tool of many tools that are used to make project decisions.

MR. JONGENELEN said that the model that we use does account for induced demand.

CHAIR CRUICKSHANK asked how committee members educate themselves on modeling?

MR. JONGENELEN said that he could look for some information from the MTP 2040 model that could be used for these purposes, but that the MTP 2050 model is still out as an RFP, so it is too soon for that information to be available.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.