



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
ALASKA DIVISION
709 W. 9TH STREET, ROOM 851
P.O. BOX 21648
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99802-1648

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
915 SECOND AVENUE, SUITE 3190
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98174

August 31, 2023

Mr. John R. Binder III, A.A.E.
AMATS Policy Committee Chairman
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Central Region
P.O. Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519

Subject: 2023 AMATS TMA Transportation Planning Certification Review

Dear Mr. Binder:

This letter notifies you that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly certify, subject to the resolution of corrective actions, that the planning process for the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) Transportation Management Area (TMA) substantially meets the requirements of 23 CFR 450, Section 336(b). This certification is based on the findings from the Federal Certification Review conducted on May 24-25, 2023.

The overall conclusion of the Federal Certification Review is that the planning process for AMATS complies with the spirit and intent of Federal metropolitan transportation planning laws and regulations under 23 U.S.C. § 134 and 49 U.S.C. § 5303. The planning process at AMATS reflects a significant professional commitment to deliver quality transportation planning.

We would like to thank Aaron Jongenelen and his staff for their time and assistance in planning and coordination for the review process. Enclosed is a report that documents the results of this review which includes six corrective actions, fourteen recommendations, and two commendations. This report has been transmitted concurrently to Alaska DOT&PF.

If you have any questions regarding the Certification Review process, the Certification action, and/or the enclosed report, please direct them to Julie Jenkins, Program Development Team Leader, FHWA Alaska Division at (907) 586-7476 or Ned Conroy, Senior Community Planner, FTA Region 10 at (206) 220-4318.

Sincerely,

Sandra A. Garcia-Aline
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Susan Fletcher
Acting Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

cc:

Aaron Jongenelen, AMATS Coordinator
Adam Moser, DOT&PF, Program Development Chief
Ben White, DOT&PF Central Region Planning Chief
James Starzec, DOT&PF AMATS Coordinator
Ned Conroy, Senior Community Planner, FTA, Region 10
Julie Jenkins, FHWA Program Development Team Leader



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Highway
Administration**

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Certification Review

FHWA Alaska
Division

*Julie Jenkins,
Financial
Manager/Team
Leader*

*Ryan Wilson, Civil
Rights/Realty
Program Specialist*

FHWA
Headquarters
Planning
*Theresa Hutchins,
Community Planner*

FTA Region 10
*Ned Conroy,
Community Planner*

*Danielle Casey,
Community Planner*

Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) Certification Review

August 2023



Final Report

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF MPO	8
DISPOSITION OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS	9
RESULTS OF THE 2023 CERTIFICATION REVIEW	11
PERFORMANCE-BASED PLANNING	11
INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATING AGREEMENTS	12
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....	14
FEDERAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AGENCY COORDINATION AND TRIBAL CONSULTATION	16
CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS	18
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN.....	20
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM	22
CIVIL RIGHTS	24
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.....	25
DISPOSITION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS	26
CONCLUSION	26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Requirements and Objectives

Since the enactment of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are required to jointly review, evaluate, and certify the transportation planning process in all Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), which are defined as urbanized areas over 200,000 in population, to determine if the process meets the Federal planning requirements set forth in 23 U.S.C. § 134, 49 U.S.C. § 5303, and 23 CFR Part 450 no less than once every four years. Certification of the planning process is a pre-requisite to the approval of Federal funding for transportation projects in such areas. The TMA certification review is also an opportunity to assist on new programs and to enhance the ability of the metropolitan transportation planning process to provide decision-makers with the knowledge they need to make well-informed capital and operating investment decisions.

Process

The TMA certification review was conducted by a team of representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), hereafter referred to as the Review Team. It consisted of a desk review of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) documented practices, procedures, guidelines and activities, followed by a field review that includes meetings with the MPO management, partners and staff, and finally the issuance of a report that includes findings and recommendations of the Review Team. The review results are presented in a joint statement of certification by the FHWA and FTA included in this report.

On May 24 and 25, 2023, the Review Team conducted an on-site visit with the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS), the MPO for the Anchorage Urbanized Area in Alaska, and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) staff. A risk-based review approach identified the following priority subject areas:

1. Follow-up on recommendations from the October 2019 review which resulted in two corrective actions.
2. Performance-Based Planning – Coordination with DOT&PF on Transportation Performance Management (TPM) and the use of TPM in transportation planning decisionmaking processes.
3. Intergovernmental Operating Agreements – Focusing on data sharing, coordination and processes used to review and approve required MPO documents and procedures.
4. Public Participation Plan (PPP) – Implementation of the PPP throughout the planning processes.
5. Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) Coordination and Tribal Consultation – The role coordination with FLMA's play in the transportation planning processes and the impact of the MPO's tribal consultation process.
6. Congestion Management Process (CMP) – Implementation of the CMP through the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

7. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – Emphasis on the transit element, financial constraint, and data.
8. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) changes – Review of fiscal constraint and processes and procedures for implementing administrative modifications and amendments.
9. Civil Rights – Implementation of AMATS’ Title VI Plan and procedures.
10. Environmental Justice – Focus on data collection and processes to understand and address needs in impacted communities.

Conclusion

The Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration jointly certify, subject to the resolution of the six corrective actions outlined in this report, that the planning process for the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions substantially meets the requirement of 23 CFR 450, Section 336(b).

In addition, the Federal review team offer fourteen recommendations to support improvements to the MPO’s planning processes. Finally, in recognition of the MPO’s efforts, FHWA and FTA also provided two commendations.

Corrective Actions:

1. 23 CFR 450.326(c) and (d) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP)

The TIP must include a description of the effect of the projects toward achieving the Federal performance targets. This includes analysis and clarification of how the TPM was administered through project selection and/or prioritization and how projects in the TIP will support the TPM targets. The TIP must include a description that demonstrates how projects contribute toward achieving the selected performance targets identified in the metropolitan transportation plan and link investment priorities to those performance targets.

2. 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vi) Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

The PPP must include information about the disposition of public comments and how/where the public can gain access to the disposition of public comments as part of the final MTP and TIP documents.

3. 23 CFR 450.324 (f)(6) Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan.

The MTP must document the consideration of the results of the CMP, including identifying any project including SOV projects, that result from the CMP.

4. 23 CFR 450.322 (d)(6) Congestion management process in transportation management areas.

The CMP must implement a process that assesses the effectiveness of implemented strategies, in terms of the area’s established performance measures. This assessment should consider changes in policy, performance measures, and data collection to ensure the CMP is current and supports the planning processes of the MPO.

5. 23 CFR 450.326(j) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP).

The TIP financial plan must demonstrate how the approved TIP can be implemented, including clearly identifying all federal funding sources as well as the required non-federal matching funds. These non-federal funds must be treated similarly to the Federal funds in terms of documenting whether the funds are reasonably expected to be available.

6. 23 CFR 450.326(j) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP).

The TIP cannot include projects for which funds are not currently available, including those projects with zero funds. The TIP may only contain projects for which funding is reasonably expected to be available. Any projects that are not funded, are considered illustrative and must be clearly identified and are not considered part of the approved TIP. As funding becomes available, the illustrative project must be added to the TIP through approved amendment procedures.

Recommendations:

1. The 2050 MTP should include a system performance report consistent with the process mutually agreed upon with DOT&PF. The system performance report should outline baseline conditions for each performance measure, the targets set for each measure, and the progress made to achieve each target.
2. The 2002 Intergovernmental Operating Agreement should be reviewed, updated, and streamlined. The Agreement should focus on the role and responsibility of the MPO, DOT&PF and the transit operator for carrying out the requirements for transportation planning and programming within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The Operating Agreement should be updated to reflect current federal requirements including data sharing, financial planning, and transportation performance management. Processes detailed that are more appropriately documented in required documents such as the Public Participation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program or Unified Planning Work Program, should be removed from the Operating Agreement to support greater flexibility and to minimize confusion.
3. The Intergovernmental Operating Agreement should recognize the opportunity to streamline review processes including air quality conformity for the TIP, allowing for concurrent reviews among member agencies and the public where appropriate and to allow for more timely approvals for amendments to key documents including the TIP.
4. The MPO should consider streamlining the PPP. Currently, the MPO develops a strategic public input process for different planning efforts. To simplify the PPP, the MPO should explain that each planning document will have an updated and concise public participation process that will be developed for and tailored to the specific planning product (e.g., MTP, TIP). This will provide the MPO with greater flexibility to engage the public during their planning processes and will streamline the PPP to those activities that do not change or that employ the same processes.
5. The PPP should be updated to reflect the public participation processes employed by the MPO. The public participation practices used by the MPO support effective public engagement, including the use of social media, and the MPO's website.

6. The tribal consultation agreement between AMATS and the Native Village of Eklutna should be updated to ensure agreement and commitment to the consultation processes between the MPO and the Village of Eklutna. It should also document the processes for engagement to support improved coordination and communication between the entities.
7. The MPO should update the PPP to document the coordination processes with JBER and BLM. This includes JBER's position on the Transportation Community Advisory Committee and the MPO's involvement with the TWiG. Finally, the PPP should document the tribal consultation processes to clarify the agreement between AMATS and the Village of Eklutna and the processes outlined in the agreement for consultation during the development of the MTP and TIP.
8. The MPO should consider an assessment of the CMP, separate from the planned TSMO and TDM studies. While these studies will certainly provide valuable data as an input into the CMP, the update and implementation of the CMP as noted in the corrective action above is an urgent need to support the 2050 MTP and therefore, should not be held based on the outcomes of the TSMO and TDM studies.
9. The MPO should prioritize the development of a data collection and reporting system to support the MTP. An investment in a data system could support local agencies in their efforts to update land use data and travel data necessary for travel demand forecasting and reporting requirements for Federal transportation performance management.
10. The MPO should include O&M costs in the full funding and expenditure of the preferred alternative. This provides a full need within the region for transportation revenue. In addition, revenues applied to the preferred alternative should reflect the funds necessary to support O&M in order to clarify any additional revenue need or shortfall.
11. The 2050 MTP update should expand the preferred alternative to identify the full scale of transit project needs in support of the goals and policies of the MTP. Transit needs should not be limited to only those funds available through the Federal Transit Administration nor should need be based on the amount of transit funds spent in past years.
12. The 2050 MTP should provide a clear analysis of unfunded needs, including, the impact not funding the list of transportation projects will have on the overall movement of people and goods. Additionally, the MTP should provide a summary of the impact on the transportation system if financial assumptions such as state grants or bonds do not come to fruition.
13. The MPO should streamline the TIP amendment process and make changes that provide for efficiencies while still meeting Federal requirements. This may include offering reviews to various committees concurrently rather than separately; air quality conformity review as part of the amendment rather than separate; and providing a single opportunity for public comment on TIP amendments. The MPO should review their administrative modification and staff modification processes for efficiency and opportunities to streamline the process. In addition, the MPO should ensure that these processes adequately meet the Policy Committee needs and requirements.
14. The DOT&PF CRO and the AMATS Title VI implementation team should have an exclusive annual meeting, specifically to discuss activities of the AMATS Title VI implementation team and any necessary updates to the AMATS Title VI Plan as is required by the DOT&PF's Title VI Plan (pg. 14-15). This meeting is also an opportunity to produce and discuss the annual AMATS' Title VI Compliance Report. Readily available

documentation of the meeting and its discussion items should be kept and made available for the public and FHWA/FTA to review.

Commendations:

1. The improvements to coordination between AMATS and DOT&PF are commendable. The dedication by DOT&PF to ensure coordination through a dedicated new staff position has made a significant difference in how the MPO is able to accomplish their responsibilities and fulfil their role.
2. The training provided by MPO staff for new Policy Committee members in support of the Operating Agreement is an excellent practice worthy of commendation. Policy Committee members expressed appreciation for this practice and noted that because of their training, they were more prepared to engage effectively on the Policy Committee.

DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW OF MPO

AMATS was first designated as a metropolitan planning organization in 1976. The governor of the state of Alaska, per the Intergovernmental Agreement signed in December 2002 by the DOT&PF and the Municipality of Anchorage, and in accordance with the federal regulation coded in 23 CFR 450, designated AMATS. The Operating Agreement was last amended administratively by the AMATS staff in 2023.

The Municipality of Anchorage fulfills its dual roles as the recognized MPO and air quality planning agency for the Anchorage limited-maintenance area through AMATS. The participant groups in the AMATS planning and decision-making process are: AMATS Policy Committee; AMATS Technical Advisory Committee; Citizens Advisory Committee; AMATS Freight Advisory Committee; Municipal Assembly; and AMATS staff.

The Anchorage Urbanized Area is made up of the densely populated areas of the Municipality of Anchorage. The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) encompasses the Anchorage Urbanized Area and the rapidly developing areas of Eagle River/Chugiak/Birchwood/Eklutna and the residential area south of Rabbit Creek Road.

The following provides a summary of key MPO facts:

- Policy Committee Chair: John Binder, Commissioner of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, or designee.
- Member Jurisdictions and Number Represented: The MPO Policy Committee includes three members from the Municipality of Anchorage (Mayor and two Assembly members) and two members from the state (Department of Environmental Conservation Air Quality Manager and Commissioner of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities or Designee).
- Population Served: Approximately 249,252 (2020 Census)
- Major Transit Operators: The public transit system includes People Mover (fixed route), AnchorRIDES (paratransit), and Share-A-Ride (vanpool). Alaska Railroad Corporation also provides rail transportation services in the Anchorage metropolitan area.

DISPOSITION OF PREVIOUS FINDINGS

The Federal Review Team made two corrective actions and two recommendations during the 2019 TMA Certification Review. The resolutions to the corrective actions and recommendations are summarized below:

Corrective Actions:

1. AMATS' 2040 MTP must be completed by November 2020 and fully meet the requirements of 23 CFR 450.324. This includes using the latest available estimates and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity and incorporating the requirements for transportation performance management. AMATS, in coordination with planning partners, should develop an MTP update schedule and process that ensures the next MTP, and subsequent updates meets federal requirements within the federally required MTP update cycle.

Resolution: The current 2040 MTP was adopted in June 2020, meeting the compliance date of November 2020. The latest planning data and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity were included in the considered in the development of the MTP. The 2040 MTP outlines performance-based planning and the Federal transportation performance measures, targets. Based on these findings, the corrective action is resolved.

2. The TIP must provide documentation that describes the planning and programming processes used to develop and adopt the TIP as described in 23 CFR 450.326, including how performance-based planning targets are addressed, a description of public, local agency, involvement and the disposition of any public comments received, tribal consultation, and a financial plan that meets 23 CFR 450.326(j) including the MPO's ability to operate and maintain the existing and proposed transportation system.

Resolution: The 2023-2026 TIP was adopted August 8, 2022. It describes the planning programming processes used to develop and adopt the TIP. The TIP also includes discussion about the performance-based planning and programming process and Federal transportation performance measures and targets. Operations and maintenance of the existing transportation system is clearly explained, and the funding details are outlined in terms of both costs and associated revenues. Additionally, the disposition of public comments, were made available to the public and were documented in the TIP. Since the 2019 review, the MPO provided a tribal consultation agreement signed between the MPO and the Native Village of Eklutna in 2007. This document remains the current tribal consultation process for the MPO. Based on these findings, the corrective action is resolved.

Recommendations:

1. AMATS and DOT&PF should work together to better support a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive, performance-based multimodal transportation planning and decision-making process described under 23 CFR 450.306. This includes developing a regional approach to planning and programming for the entire Metropolitan Planning Area and the multi-modal transportation system and includes developing a consensus process on how federal-aid transportation projects are determined and funded within the AMATS planning area.

Observation: The coordination between AMATS and DOT&PF is significantly improved with strong support from DOT&PF to ensure coordination between the two agencies is effective. This includes a new staff position dedicated to coordination with AMATS and facilitating AQ Conformity processes. The DOT&PF is in the process of expanding this effort with additional staff to provide a similar level of support across the state.

2. AMATS should closely monitor the air quality in Eagle River. To avoid exceeding the allowable 5-year concentration of PM10 particulate matter, maintenance forces or contractors should perform mitigation measures such as street sweeping and application of dust palliative in the spring when the dust problem is the worst.

Observation: AMATS continues to monitor the air quality in Eagle River to avoid exceeding the allowable 5-year concentration of PM 10 particulate matter.

RESULTS OF THE 2023 CERTIFICATION REVIEW

PERFORMANCE-BASED PLANNING

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.306(d) Scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process

Findings

In 2018, AMATS elected to support the Federal Transportation Performance Measures (TPM) targets established by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The [2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(MTP\)](#), provides a summary of the Federal performance measures and the targets established by DOT&PF for which the MPO supports through their planning processes. The MTP was adopted prior to the effective date of TPM system reporting requirements, therefore, the 2040 MTP is not required to document a system performance report. The MTP provides a summary of how the MTP considers the performance measures in selecting the scenarios and projects included in the plan. It also provides a summary of the number of projects that support TPM targets, and a table of actions associated with each MTP Goal is also documented. Each MTP Goal indicates an action associated with utilizing the Federal performance measures. However, it's unclear how the MPO implements those actions and the MTP caveats the actions listed as dependent on available funding. The MTP does not include a system performance report.

The [2023-2024 Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) provides a section specific to performance management. This section outlines the Federal performance measures and targets adopted by the MPO in support of DOT&PF targets, and it provides examples of projects selected for funding in the TIP that specifically support each target. Criteria used to score projects submitted for funding through the TIP process indicates that the Performance criteria was updated to reflect performance measures, however, there is no analysis or clarification how Federal performance measures were administered through the project selection or prioritization processes or how the projects in the TIP will support the TPM targets.

Corrective Actions

1. 23 CFR 450.326(c) and (d) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP)

The TIP must include a description of the effect of the projects toward achieving the Federal performance targets. This includes analysis and clarification of how the TPM was administered through project selection and/or prioritization and how projects in the TIP will support the TPM targets. The TIP must include a description that demonstrates how projects contribute toward achieving the selected performance targets identified in the metropolitan transportation plan and link investment priorities to those performance targets.

Recommendations

1. The 2050 MTP should include a system performance report consistent with the process mutually agreed upon with DOT&PF. The system performance report should outline baseline conditions for each performance measure, the targets set for each measure, and the progress made to achieve each target.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATING AGREEMENTS

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.314 Metropolitan planning agreements

Findings

AMATS signed an Intergovernmental Operating Agreement in 2002. In an email to the Federal team, MPO staff indicated that an updated agreement was signed in March 2023, however, there is no new or updated signature page for the 2023 agreement; the 2002 signature page was attached to the revised March 2023 document. Staff indicated that revisions made in 2023 were administrative and did not require formal signatures by the MPO Policy Committee Chair.

The 2002 Operating Agreement specifies the creation of the MPO's five member Policy Committee; members include two Anchorage Municipal Assembly members, Mayor of Anchorage, the Commissioner of the DOT&PF and the Commissioner of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC). The agreement identifies various committees and their role and responsibilities to the MPO planning processes. These committees including the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), Air Quality Committee, Freight Advisory Committee, Community Advisory Committee to name a few. Delivery of the MPO's products is outlined in the 2002 Operating agreement, including the development and delivery of the MTP, TIP, Public Participation Plan (PPP) and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as required under 23 U.S.C 134.

The 2002 Operating Agreement outlines the relationship between the Municipality of Anchorage and the MPO for staffing and facilities. The MPO's role and responsibility as a sub-recipient under DOT&PF is also outlined as are the reporting requirements necessary to ensure compliance for grant administration, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program. In accordance with Anchorage Ordinance 97-139(S), the agreement specifies that Anchorage Municipal Assembly must be provided timely review and recommendations to the MPO prior to MPO final approval of the MTP, TIP, UPWP and PPP.

The 2002 Operating Agreement provides explicit details related to public participation practices, including the number of days required for certain public involvement comment periods and how the MPO interacts with the Anchorage Assembly. Some processes prescribed within the Operating Agreement are duplicative to the MPO's other required documents and in some cases the level of detail is inconsistent with the MPO's roles and responsibilities. For example, the MPO's Public Participation Plan describes the MPO's processes for engaging the public and details the processes used. These processes are in some ways different or duplicative to the activities outlined in the Operating Agreement. This creates conflict between these two documents and confusion in terms of which document is followed.

In support of the Operating Agreement MPO staff provide new Policy Committee members with training to support their role and responsibilities and to increase their participation and engagement as Policy Committee members.

Corrective Actions

None

Recommendations

2. The 2002 Intergovernmental Operating Agreement should be reviewed, updated, and streamlined. The Agreement should focus on the role and responsibility of the MPO, DOT&PF and the transit operator for carrying out the requirements for transportation planning and programming within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The Operating Agreement should be updated to reflect current federal requirements including data sharing, financial planning, and transportation performance management. Processes detailed that are more appropriately documented in required documents such as the Public Participation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program or Unified Planning Work Program, should be removed from the Operating Agreement to support greater flexibility and to minimize confusion.
3. The Intergovernmental Operating Agreement should recognize the opportunity to streamline review processes including air quality conformity for the TIP, allowing for concurrent reviews among member agencies and the public where appropriate and to allow for more timely approvals for amendments to key documents including the TIP.

Commendations

1. The improvements to coordination between AMATS and DOT&PF are commendable. The dedication by DOT&PF to ensure coordination through a dedicated new staff position has made a significant difference in how the MPO is able to accomplish their responsibilities and fulfil their role.
2. The training provided by MPO staff for new Policy Committee members in support of the Operating Agreement is an excellent practice worthy of commendation. Policy Committee members expressed appreciation for this practice and noted that because of their training, they were more prepared to engage effectively on the Policy Committee.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.316 Interested parties, participation and consultation;
- 23 CFR 450.316(c) and (d) Interested parties, participation and consultation;
- 23 CFR 450.324(j) and (k) Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan;
- 23 CFR 326(b) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP)

Findings

The AMATS [Public Participation Plan](#) (PPP) was adopted in January 2017. The PPP provides a summary of the MPO's functions, boundary map, purpose, and key products. The document also explains the governing structure for the MPO including the Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and other various committees as well as the role and responsibilities for MPO staff. AMATS meetings are also described, including meeting times, locations and accessibility, as well as meeting notifications, agendas and public comment processes. The PPP provides a summary of the governing legislation that AMATS is responsible for meeting as the MPO for the Anchorage area, as well as the various MPO requirements outlined in Federal law and regulations. However, the PPP does not appear to reflect the current processes used by the MPO for development and approvals of the MPO's planning documents.

The PPP identifies a specific listing of stakeholders associated with the MPO's PPP, including community groups, stakeholder groups, and regional groups. Included in these stakeholders are Federal Land Management Agencies and the Native Village of Eklutna. A menu of public participation techniques is described including techniques specific for low-income, minority and limited-English proficient populations and communities. However, current public engagement practices are not necessarily reflected in the PPP, creating a gap between the PPP and how the MPO engages with the public.

The PPP does not document how the public comments received will be considered in the final products or how the disposition of these comments will be made available to the public.

Beyond the PPP, the MPO's website site is well organized and provides opportunities for the public to comment directly within the website itself. Comments offered through the public website are logged and placed in a portal where MPO staff provides input into how the comment may be addressed. The comments are then made available to the Policy Committee prior to any action. Additionally, the MPO engages on social media including, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. However, these techniques are not included in the adopted PPP. Finally, several of the weblinks provided on the MPO's website and some of the buttons linking to key documents or resources are not functioning.

Corrective Actions

2. 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vi) Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

The PPP must include information about the disposition of public comments and how/where the public can gain access to the disposition of public comments as part of the final MTP and TIP documents.

Recommendations

4. The MPO should consider streamlining the PPP. Currently, the MPO develops a strategic public input process for different planning efforts. To simplify the PPP, the MPO should explain that each planning document will have an updated and concise public participation process that will be developed for and tailored to the specific planning product (e.g., MTP, TIP). This will provide the MPO with greater flexibility to engage the public during their planning processes and will streamline the PPP to those activities that do not change or that employ the same processes.
5. The PPP should be updated to reflect the public participation processes employed by the MPO. The public participation practices used by the MPO support effective public engagement, including the use of social media, and the MPO's website.

FEDERAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AGENCY COORDINATION AND TRIBAL CONSULTATION

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.316(c) Interested parties, participation and consultation;
- 23 CFR 450.316 (d) Interested parties, participation and consultation;
- 23 CFR 450.326(e) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP)

Findings

AMATS Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) includes land for the Federal Land Management Agencies of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) and Bureau of Land Management land (BLM). In addition, the MPA also includes lands for the Alaska Native Village of the Eklutna.

A tribal consultation agreement was signed between the MPO and the Native Village of Eklutna in 2007. The agreement does not specify the means of communication that the MPO will use to engage with the tribe during the MTP and TIP processes. However, the MPO has traditionally invited the tribe by formal letter to sit down with MPO staff to discuss the MTP development process. In the past, the tribe has designated an individual to represent the tribe for outreach and emails between the MPO and the designated tribe contact have resulted in successful comments and coordination between the MPO and the Tribe. However, recently, the designated representative for the Native Village of Eklutna left the organization, therefore, for the 2040 MTP, the tribe did not respond to staff's request for consultation on the MTP or most recently for the 2023-2026 TIP.

Both JBER and BLM are included as stakeholders within the MPO's PPP. This designation entitles both agencies to outreach during the MTP and TIP development processes. JBER is also a member of the Community Advisory Committee, meaning the agency has formal representation in the development of both the MTP and TIP. However, the PPP does not specify how the MPO provides coordination opportunities to these Federal Lands Management Agencies, nor does it specify the tribal consultation processes outlined in the consultation agreement with the Native Village of Eklutna.

Within the last couple of years, the FHWA's Western Federal Lands Division initiated the bi-monthly Transportation Working Inspiration Group (TWiG), designed to support information and coordination among States, MPOs and Federal Land Management Agencies with regard to the Federal Lands Access Program. AMATS staff is actively engaged in the TWiG and has been able to share information informally with BLM about their MTP and TIP update activities.

Corrective Actions

None

Recommendations

6. The tribal consultation agreement between AMATS and the Native Village of Eklutna should be updated to ensure agreement and commitment to the consultation processes between the MPO and the Village of Eklutna. It should also document the processes for

engagement to support improved coordination and communication between the entities.

7. The MPO should update the PPP to document the coordination processes with JBER and BLM. This includes JBER's position on the Community Advisory Committee and the MPO's involvement with the TWiG. Finally, the PPP should document the tribal consultation processes to clarify the agreement between AMATS and the Village of Eklutna and the processes outlined in the agreement for consultation during the development of the MTP and TIP.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.322 Congestion management process in transportation management areas

Findings

The [Congestion Management Process](#) (CMP) was adopted in February 2016. The most recent [Status of the System Report](#) was also published in 2016, however, the 2010 [Status of the System Report](#) was used in the development of the 2040 MTP. The CMP is documented and outlines the steps recommended in FHWA's *Congestion Management Process Guidebook*. The process specifies efforts to address congestion in the development of the 2035 MTP and the performance measures aligned with the 2010 *Status of the System Report*. The report indicates that the CMP network was developed for the AMATS Travel Demand Model; however, the network and map were not included in the CMP document.

The CMP performance measures are organized into two tiers; Tier 1 focuses on congestion-oriented measures; and Tier 2 outlines potential future performance measures available for use by AMATS if required through Federal legislation. The data management plan specifies the data requirements for each Tier of performance measures as well as the current and potential sources of the data required. The CMP focuses analysis on travel time and level of service as the primary measures of congestion on the network. Based on the levels of congestion, a list of road projects is identified to address congested corridors as well as public transportation projects and ITS projects.

A series of congestion management strategies are also discussed and aligned with strategic goals and CMP goals and objectives and performance measures. A CMP Toolbox provides a hierarchical order of options suggest preference to demand management strategies to eliminate or reduce travel over increasing capacity projects. The implementation plan describes how CMP projects are programmed and implemented through the MTP and TIP. A system performance and data management plan identified a process by which a framework for following up on the implementation of CMP strategies may be evaluated and documented.

Neither the 2040 MTP nor the 2023-2026 TIP reference the *CMP* or *Status of the System Report* in the narrative portion of the documents or in appendices. The 2040 MTP does reference the use of selection criteria and a need to address congestion, but the analysis does not appear to align with the processes outlined in the CMP. For the TIP, criteria are referenced, but it's unclear whether the criteria referenced has a relation to the CMP.

An assessment of the 2016 CMP is pending the completion of a Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) studies. Staff intends to use the analysis from these studies to move the CMP toward managing congestion rather than eliminating congestion as is emphasized in the 2016 CMP. The TSMO and TDM studies are not anticipated to be completed before the completion of the 2050 MTP. Therefore, the MPO is not planning to update the CMP prior to the completion of the 2050 MTP.

Corrective Actions

3. 23 CFR 450.324 (f)(6) Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan.

The MTP must document the consideration of the results of the CMP, including identifying any project including SOV projects, that result from the CMP.

4. 23 CFR 450.322 (d)(6) Congestion management process in transportation management areas.

The CMP must implement a process that assesses the effectiveness of implemented strategies, in terms of the area's established performance measures. This assessment should consider changes in policy, performance measures, and data collection to ensure the CMP is current and supports the planning processes of the MPO.

Recommendations

8. The MPO should consider an assessment of the CMP, separate from the planned TSMO and TDM studies. While these studies will certainly provide valuable data as an input into the CMP, the update and implementation of the CMP as noted in the corrective action above is an urgent need to support the 2050 MTP and therefore, should not be held based on the outcomes of the TSMO and TDM studies.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.324 Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan

Findings

The [Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(MTP\)](#) in effect at the time of the May 2023 review is the [2040 MTP](#), adopted by the MPO Policy Committee in June 2020. The Air Quality Conformity determination for the 2040 MTP was approved by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration on August 25, 2020.

The plan includes goals and policies specific to the Anchorage planning area and discusses the Federal performance measures. The MTP discusses freight movement, bike and pedestrian facilities and transit and reflects the most current data available. However, most of the data used for the 2040 plan was the same data used for the 2035 MTP, with employment data as old as 2001 and some land use data as old as 2006.

The MPO held charrettes to identify needs and integrate potential solutions and to meet community interests. Stakeholders were also engaged throughout the plan development processes including FLMA's and the Native Village of Eklutna. The draft alternatives were also posted online via a MetroQuest survey. The MTP provides a clear summary of operations and maintenance (O&M) costs for the existing transportation system and the roles and responsibilities of regional partners to fund O&M. The preferred alternative is a derivative of the three alternatives offered to the public for comment. The preferred alternative supports both regional goals and objectives as well as Federal performance measures and targets.

A financial plan identifies year of expenditure estimates for both costs and revenues. The inflation factor used for expenditures is 2.0 percent through 2030 and 2.5 percent from 2031 to 2040. Revenues use an inflation factor of 2.1 percent. Operations and maintenance for the region is documented with an inflation rate of 2.1 percent. However, each financial table indicates that cost and revenue estimates shown are in 2018 dollars.

Most of the projects included in the preferred alternative are roadway projects (\$2.1 Billion) versus, transit projects (\$143.4 Million). This imbalance is contrary to the MTP goals and policies. In addition, most of the projects included in the MTP are identified in the short term (90 projects) versus, the outer years (46 projects). Twenty-one projects are unfunded. The MTP does not provide a summary of the impact those unfunded projects have on the future transportation system, nor does the plan offer potential or likely funding scenarios to meet the anticipated funding deficit.

The financial plan presents costs in two separate parts; one part provides operations and maintenance projects and costs; and the second part provides a list of capital projects and costs. The MTP references only the capital project list as the preferred alternative's list of projects and only references the costs associated with the capital project list.

Revenue assumptions for all types of funds (local, federal, and state) are not clearly explained or labeled in the tables provided in the MTP. However, State revenue assumptions appear to fully fund state projects. Assumptions supporting the full funding of state projects are not

clear. The MTP includes revenue assumptions including state grants and bonds. However, there is no clear analysis indicating how the MTP may be impacted if these sources are not realized.

Project costs and revenues associated with those costs are provided in a series of tables, separate from each other. The overall available revenue estimates demonstrate a surplus of revenue over the preferred alternative project costs. However, with the list of unfunded need identified, it's unclear how that surplus may or may not be used to support the unfunded list of projects.

Corrective Actions

None

Recommendations

9. The MPO should prioritize the development of a data collection and reporting system to support the MTP. An investment in a data system could support local agencies in their efforts to update land use data and travel data necessary for travel demand forecasting and reporting requirements for Federal transportation performance management.
10. The MPO should include O&M costs in the full funding and expenditure of the preferred alternative. This provides a full need within the region for transportation revenue. In addition, revenues applied to the preferred alternative should reflect the funds necessary to support O&M in order to clarify any additional revenue need or shortfall.
11. The 2050 MTP update should expand the preferred alternative to identify the full scale of transit project needs in support of the goals and policies of the MTP. Transit needs should not be limited to only those funds available through the Federal Transit Administration nor should need be based on the amount of transit funds spent in past years.
12. The 2050 MTP should provide a clear analysis of unfunded needs, including, the impact not funding the list of transportation projects will have on the overall movement of people and goods. Additionally, the MTP should provide a summary of the impact on the transportation system if financial assumptions such as state grants or bonds do not come to fruition.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.326 Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP);
- 23 CFR 450.328 TIP revisions and relationship to the STIP

Findings

The [2023-2026 AMATS TIP](#) was adopted on August 25, 2022 and approved into the STIP by FHWA and FTA. The TIP development process includes the use of performance-based criteria that supports the MTP's goals and policies and Federal performance targets. The TIP also provides a summary of performance-based planning and programming processes and the Federal performance measures and targets for which projects selected for funding support. Operations and maintenance of the existing transportation system is clearly explained and the funding details are outlined in terms of both costs and associated revenues.

The TIP was provided to stakeholders including federal land management agencies and the Native Village of Eklutna for review and comment based on the procedures outlined in the approved PPP.

The TIP includes a series of financial tables that provide relevant information for each project including project title, a project number, scope, termini, and total project cost. Also included are the amount of funds anticipated by year and by funding category. However, the amount of local match is not provided within the tables and is not clearly indicated within the document. Some projects are included in the TIP with zero funds assigned to them, which enables staff to move funds from one project to another administratively without having to go through a formal amendment process.

The TIP amendment/modification process allows for three levels of revisions based on the operating agreement with partner agencies and DOT&PF;

- Formal TIP Amendments (50% cost change or a scope change)
- Administrative modifications (25% cost change and no scope change)
- Staff modifications (<25% cost change and no scope change)

Formal TIP amendments generally take up to nine months to complete. This is due to the number of public comment periods; draft reviews by various committees, the Anchorage Assembly, and Policy Committee; then the final approvals through the Anchorage Assembly and Policy Committee. In addition, each TIP amendment is required to include an air quality conformity analysis and approval process. This approval process is done separately from the TIP amendment and follows a similar review, public comment period and approval process. As a result, the MPO processes one amendment per year.

Similarly, Administrative modifications must go through a formal review and approval process through the TAC and Policy Committee. Staff modifications require no review by any MPO committees, nor do they require approvals by the Policy Committee. MPO staff report any staff modifications to the Policy Committee after the fact. MPO staff host regular meetings with TIP project managers to monitor project cost increases or design changes. Through these meetings, staff is able to plan amendments, administrative modifications and staff

modifications effectively.

Appendix A of the TIP provides a series of funding tables, the first of which documents the kinds of projects funded over the four-year period of the TIP, the total cost of those types of projects and the amount of funds anticipated by year for each type of project. Appendix A, also provides a series of tables describing each project programming in the TIP, documenting the project title, description and Federal funding source used for each phase of the project. These tables provide the total project cost and the amount of funds anticipated by year. However, the matching funds required for most Federal funding sources is not included in the project costs, nor is there any sort of summary of the local funds available as revenue to support these projects. As a result, fiscal constraint cannot be determined through the data provided.

The required MPO self-certifications are included in the TIP but are not signed. The Division verified the self-certifications were completed and signed and are on file within the Division as needed.

DOT&PF is developing an e-STIP. This new approach is designed to better streamline the amendment and modification processes throughout the State.

Corrective Actions

5. 23 CFR 450.326(j) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP).

The TIP financial plan must demonstrate how the approved TIP can be implemented, including clearly identifying all federal funding sources as well as the required non-federal matching funds. These non-federal funds must be treated similarly to the Federal funds in terms of documenting whether the funds are reasonably expected to be available.

6. 23 CFR 450.326(j) Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP).

The TIP cannot include projects for which funds are not currently available, including those projects with zero funds. The TIP may only contain projects for which funding is reasonably expected to be available. Any projects that are not funded, are considered illustrative and must be clearly identified and are not considered part of the approved TIP. As funding becomes available, the illustrative project must be added to the TIP through approved amendment procedures.

Recommendations

13. The MPO should streamline the TIP amendment process and make changes that provide for efficiencies while still meeting Federal requirements. This may include offering reviews to various committees concurrently rather than separately; air quality conformity review as part of the amendment rather than separate; and providing a single opportunity for public comment on TIP amendments. The MPO should review their administrative modification and staff modification processes for efficiency and opportunities to streamline the process. In addition, the MPO should ensure that these processes adequately meet the Policy Committee needs and requirements.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Regulatory Basis:

- 23 CFR 450.336 Self-certifications and Federal certifications

Findings

The [AMATS Title VI Plan](#) is dated August 2012 and signed by the AMATS Policy Committee Chair on August 23, 2012. The AMATS Title IV Plan has a strong Limited English Proficiency (LEP) component, strong public outreach, and participation plan, and it sufficiently covers the complaint process. However, the Title VI assurances signed in 2012 are outdated and the annual required Title VI assurances have not been made since the adoption of the 2012 Title VI plan. In addition, there are a number of contacts listed in the plan that are no longer current, including a Title VI plan coordinator, and a nine-person Title VI implementation team.

AMATS has bi-annual meetings with the DOT&PF's Civil Rights Office (CRO). These meetings are being held congruently with other DOT&PF program areas however, these meetings do not provide an opportunity for the AMATS Title VI Implementation team and the DOT&PF CRO to discuss and consider updates to the AMATS' Title VI Non-Discrimination Implementation Plan.

The AMATS's Title VI Plan calls for the submission of an annual Title VI Compliance Report to the DOT&PF CRO. During the AMATS onsite review, there was some discussion of the Title VI Compliance Report being submitted as part of the DOT&PF internal review process. This document is provided as a response to a questionnaire, which is included in the annual Goals and Accomplishments Report of the DOT&PF. However, the AMATS Title VI Plan list elements of the Title VI Compliance Report that are not included in the questionnaire responses (ie., accomplishments for the previous Federal fiscal year including meetings with the ADOT&PF Civil Rights Office Title VI staff; Title VI reviews completed; and any program updates, including progress on developing key elements). The AMATS Title VI Plan also speaks to the development of the Compliance Report as part of the listed Title VI Coordinator Responsibilities (AMATS Title VI Plan pg. 21). The questionnaire and ultimately the Title VI Goals and Accomplishments Report is a product of the DOT&PF CRO and is not developed by the AMATS staff. Given the reasons noted in this paragraph, the review team considers the questionnaire responses a distinct and separate document from the Title VI Compliance Report as described by the AMATS Title VI Plan. There is currently no documentation that this Title VI Compliance Report, as described by the AMATS Title VI Plan, is being produced. .

Corrective Actions

None

Recommendations

14. The DOT&PF CRO and the AMATS Title VI implementation team should have an exclusive annual meeting, specifically to discuss activities of the AMATS Title VI implementation team and any necessary updates to the AMATS Title VI Plan as is required by the DOT&PF's Title VI Plan (pg. 14-15). This meeting is also an opportunity to produce and discuss the annual AMATS' Title VI Compliance Report. Readily available

documentation of the meeting and its discussion items should be kept and made available for the public and FHWA/FTA to review.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order:

- 12898 Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

Findings

The AMATS Title VI Plan has a number of environmental justice commitments. For example, under the Metropolitan Transportation Plan section there is a commitment to provide an environmental justice evaluation as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The AMATS Title VI Plan also speaks to a review of the 2035 MTP goals and objectives and an emphasis on the incorporation of Environmental Justice goals.

For the 2040 MTP, the MPO used EPA's Environmental Justice screening and mapping tool, as well as Equity and Analysis maps, to identify minority and low-income populations in the Anchorage metropolitan area. In addition, criteria used in the MTP and TIP for project selection supports EJ policies and principles.

The MPO struggles with how best to demonstrate benefits and burdens. However, A climate action plan is scheduled and is designed to consider equity and EJ. This effort will also help the MPO demonstrate benefits and burdens for EJ communities.

Corrective Actions

None

Recommendations

None

DISPOSITION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

A public meeting was held in conjunction with the May 25, 2023, AMATS Policy Committee meeting. A summary of the MPO TMA Certification review process was given by FHWA staff and a request was made for any comments from either the public or Policy Committee members on the role and responsibilities of the MPO to meet the Federal planning requirements under Title 23 and Title 49.

No comments were received.

CONCLUSION

The Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration jointly certify, subject to the resolution of the six corrective actions outlined in this report, that the planning process for the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions substantially meets the requirement of 23 CFR 450, Section 336(b).

In addition, the Federal review team offer fourteen recommendations to support improvements to the MPO's planning processes. Finally, in recognition of the MPO's efforts, FHWA and FTA also provided two commendations.