

This message is submitted as public comment to AMATS in response to Amendment 1 of AMATS' 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program.

The Port of Alaska recently received \$68 million in U.S. DOT grants to improve a small portion of the port's land-side operations area. It is just one feature of the port's multifaceted modernization program. In 2022 the Alaska Legislature funded the Port of Alaska with \$200 million. It is estimated that more than \$1 billion is necessary to fully refurbish the Port of Alaska and help ensure it may continue reliably receiving and distributing 90% of the goods received by the Alaskans. These investments represent significant transportation funding utilization. Alaskans should expect to reap long-term benefits stemming from this investment through the efficient and reliable distribution of goods across Alaska through the Port of Alaska.

The Alaska DOT/PF Midtown Congestion Relief project is actively evaluating how to move Alaska's goods and services through Anchorage. A successful midtown congestion relief project will ensure investments in the Port of Alaska are neither hampered by existing congestion factors, nor restricted by forced aesthetic design features intended to discourage use of the corridor by restricting traffic. This critical highway corridor – the Seward to Glenn highway connection running through Midtown, Fairview, and Downtown – represents the single corridor through which substantial volumes of goods will travel from the Port of Alaska moving either south out of Anchorage, or north to Anchorage and beyond – and, to and from other ports.

AMATS' current Four-Year Program Summary, Amendment 1 of the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program, dated November 3, 2022, indicates AMATS intends to spend more than 25% of its 4-year budget on non-motorized pathway and trail improvements, while spending only 54.2% of its 4-year budget on roadway and pavement improvements. In 2024, spending on pathways and trails are shown to exceed spending on roadway and pavement improvements by more than \$2 million. AMATS' total 4-year budget is nearly \$172 million. Investments aimed at non-motorized trails and pathways come as Anchorage residents depend on the confines of their personal vehicles as safe spaces secure from the rampant crime and lawlessness occurring within urban areas of Anchorage. Maintaining a funding focus on trails and pathways would make it more challenging for downtown workers to maintain shelter in their vehicles during a commute while also needing to count on the future reliability of their commutes. To complicate AMATS' imbalanced funding allocation giving undue preference to non-motorized active transportation modes, the Biden Administration may likely award the Fairview neighborhood a Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program planning grant, which will very likely make necessary improvements to the Seward to Glenn highway connection even more difficult to achieve.

AMATS' focus on diverting scarce transportation funds away from critical roadway needs towards non-motorized trails, pedestrian pathways, and traffic calming features could render Alaska's investment in the Port of Alaska detrimentally ineffective.

Please re-program AMATS funds away from non-motorized active transportation means and modes towards roadway and pavement improvements, which will keep goods and services moving throughout Alaska, through the Port of Alaska, and through Anchorage.

Sincerely,
Lucas Smith
Anchorage Resident