

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Mayor's Conference Room, 8th Floor
632 W. 6th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska**

**March 21, 2024
1:00 PM**

*This meeting is available for viewing at
[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](http://Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings (muni.org))*

Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Sean Holland	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Kent Kohlhasse	Municipal Manager, Mayor's Office
Emma Pokon	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Kevin Cross	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Chelsea Ward-Waller	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
Aves Thompson	
Brandon Telford	MOA/Project Management & Engineering Dept. (PM&E)
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Laurie Cummings	HDR
Morgan Miller	HDR
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Zakary Hartman	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Jeanne Bowie	Kinney Engineering
Joe Taylor	Lounsbury & Associates
Brad Coy*	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Alex Read	DOT&PF
Rachel Steer	DOWL
Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Adeyemi Alimi*	ADEC
Amy Burnett	HDR
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Mark Littlefield	
John McPherson	HDR
Stephen Stone	
Steven Rzepka	DOT&PF
Gaylen Jones	DOT&PF
Noah King	DOT&PF

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR HOLLAND called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Kent Kohlhase, Municipal Manager, represented Mayor Bronson. A quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AARON JONGENELEN encouraged public involvement in this meeting of the AMATS Policy 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. KOHLHASE moved to approve the agenda. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 15, 2024

MS. POKON moved to approve the minutes. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS**a. AMATS Safety Plan**

MR. JONGENELEN noted that work on the AMATS Safety Plan began in March 2023 with the contracting of consultants Burgess and Niple, Fehr and Peers, and R&M Consultants, Inc. Public involvement in this project includes three stakeholder meetings, a half-day public open house, presentations to AMATS committees, and a public survey with 444 people responding. This plan was developed using the Safety System Approach (SSA) and allows AMATS, along with partner agencies and the community, to be eligible for Safe Streets 4 All (SS4A) grants. A work session with the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Committee (PC) was held on February 21, 2024, to provide an overview of the plan to committee members. The TAC recommended approval with the following edits:

- Page 18: Update the bullet point about “The Municipality Traffic Safety Committee” to be the “Safe Student Transportation Committee”.
- Page 18: Under Safety Programs, add “Neighborhood” to the bullet about traffic calming.
- Page 18: Under Safety Programs, add a new bullet point for Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND referred to Page 42 regarding one of the low-cost potential engineering countermeasures: prohibiting right turns on red. He noted that this is a great plan, but his experience is that the Traffic Engineering Department and PM&E are often unsupportive of these interventions. Currently, he has an ordinance proposing to prohibit right turns on red in the downtown area where there are no protected bike lanes. Yes, we are doing a pilot. It is also illegal to ride a bike on the sidewalk. It is frustrating for him to have another plan, wait for another study, and hold off doing any of these things that could prevent pedestrian and bicycle collisions. During the Safe Routes to School working group, we talked about raised crosswalks. As an intervention here, interestingly, it was put under some of the medium-cost countermeasures. We heard from PM&E about how expensive and prohibitive raised crosswalks would be, and we ended up disbanding that working group because the Assembly members had asked how to support making some of these intersections safer, or what they could fund, but were frustrated with hearing at every meeting why everything is already safe enough as is. He is happy to support the plan, but it will be interesting to see what happens when some of these interventions are supported by policymakers and whether or not the departments will support them as well.

CHAIR HOLLAND commented that those decisions need to be data-driven. Currently, there are some streets downtown that restrict right hand turns on red. He believed the MOA Traffic Engineer has the ability to post those, so he would respect that professionalism and have that decision come from that department because he would hate to be legislating traffic laws. During the joint work session, the following errors were discussed:

1. The diagram on page 41 of the plan speaks to crashes in areas with no sidewalks. The diagram shows three roads as examples, and all three of those roads have continuous sidewalks from start to finish.
2. Similarly, page 45 speaks to accidents that occur at uncontrolled intersections, but some of the data shows crashes at intersections that are clearly controlled.
3. It is important to get the plan approved in order to move forward with funding. He did not know that any of those areas were significant, and the data does come from the Anchorage Police Department (APD) filling out a form, and maybe APD needs to improve their form.
4. He suggested adding the sentence that some of this data may not be 100 percent correct. He believed there was probably a crash at the location or near the location shown on the plan, but the exact circumstances might not be 100 percent correct.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that one of the challenges is that the data gathered was from the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). The MOA assigns or documents the location of the crashes or incidents to the nearest intersection. When the report was filled out, the crash might not have taken place at that exact intersection. It could have been because there was no sidewalk or because there was no controlled type at that exact location that it actually took place, but when the information is entered into the system, it is assigned to the nearest intersection. These are good comments, and adding them to the data gathered from APD does speak to further discussions that need to happen about how the data is collected, how it is managed and maintained, and how it is entered into the system. He was a little leery about adding something in the description that says it is not 100 percent correct because that speaks to concerns about the document itself. His recommendation would be to

change the titles of the profiles to be more open-ended or get some information in the profile paragraph sections that speak to the data being entered into the system and are assigned to an intersection. We need to look at the actual data if we are going to determine the exact location where it happened and the circumstances surrounding it.

CHAIR HOLLAND expressed that Mr. Jongenelen's explanation helped him understand why this may be correct, and he did not know how significant that is, but adding a sentence with that explanation would have value.

CHAIR HOLLAND opened the floor to public comments.

AVES THOMPSON

In response to Mr. Thompson's question if the Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) had provided any input on this project, MR. CECIL replied that during either the fourth quarter of last year or the first quarter of this year, a presentation was given to the FAC seeking their input. The consultant team had also met with the Alaska Transportation Association (ATA).

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions Safety Plan. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

MS. POKON moved to amend to add a sentence that reads, "Crashes are assigned to intersections and additional review is needed." MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

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

b. Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Planning Environmental Linkage (PEL) Comments

MR. JONGENELEN noted that AMATS' staff attended the public open house for the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway PEL on February 7, 2024, to review the alternatives being presented to the public. Afterwards, staff met to discuss the alternatives and any comments provided. These comments were drafted into a letter to be reviewed and approved by the TAC and PC. The TAC met on March 7, 2024, and held a robust discussion on the letter and recommended approval with the addition of Comment #10 that reads, "Please provide clarification on what is part of the no-build alternative versus the build alternative."

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

- (DV) As one of the Assembly members representing the Fairview community, he strongly supported this letter, noting that it captures a lot of both his and the community's concerns. One thing he would like to see more clearly presented

by the project team is a satellite overlay because the community does not fully understand some of the impacts. He appreciated the comment about the housing crisis Anchorage has. Some of these alternatives would cause the removal of a lot of housing for right-of-way. Alternative C would cut through south Fairview. Having a clear presentation of what those trade-offs are is paramount. His question would be about the interim alternative versus no-build alternatives because, with everything he has seen, he is most inclined to support an interim alternative that incorporates our local planning documents, such as the 2050 MTP, a complete street model on Gambell and Ingra to include lane reduction, undergrounding the utilities, etcetera. It is important for the community to see something creative on Hyder. When he thinks of a no-build alternative, he hopes it does not preclude the opportunity to create a greenway or something that connects active transportation to that corridor. It would be helpful to have more of an explanation of what no-build alternatives could look like versus that internal alternative because he wants to see a serious presentation of that interim alternative.

- (KK) He agreed with many of Assembly Member Volland's comments, particularly the housing issue, and liked the idea of a graphical overlay through GIS that shows the true impacts because everyone knows that housing has been a focus of both the Administration and the Assembly. Some of those alternatives would have significant impacts. One thing not addressed in the letter that he is personally aware of are the potential impacts on Merrill Field with some of the alternatives. There are pros and cons within the community regarding Merrill Field, but it is an economic engine in that area right now. He also appreciated the staff's work on this.
- (DV) We did receive the Reconnecting Communities Novel Grant to help support the community. The Assembly funded the local match for the reconnecting Fairview project. He was curious about the impacts on local institutions. Recently, as part of Alaska Design Week, he had the opportunity to do a walking tour of that corridor with the parishioners at Greater Friendship Baptist Church, which is on the National Register of Historic Places and is the first black church in Alaska. Are there alternatives that impact this church that would potentially cause it to be relocated for right-of-way?
- (SH) Asked staff for clarification on the committee's process for this action. We are looking at one set of comments; it is out for public review, and we are hopefully going to get a lot of feedback. He did not feel like putting the project staff on the spot today, but once the other comments come in, we could ask the project staff to present during a joint work session and discuss the other concerns that are not on this list. The correct action for this is to pass these comments onto the project team and then present them to the TAC? He did not feel this was the place to debate these comments before they had been reviewed by the project team and the TAC, but he did want to learn more about the project and any comments from other committees.

- (DV) He did not know if that made sense because he needs to understand the process of forwarding this letter. He liked what was in the letter. Is this coming on behalf of staff as approved by the Policy Committee?
- (AJ) *Technically speaking, this committee can choose to not send the comments, send the comments as staff, or send the comments on behalf of the Policy Committee. Staff wanted to bring them before you, ensuring that you were involved in the process and were aware of what was being proposed by staff.*
- (DV) Potentially, there is an opportunity to amend this letter, particularly if it is going to be sent on behalf of the Policy Committee, to say something to the effect that we would support alternatives that cause minimal impacts on community institutions.
- (SH) He is not comfortable or ready to endorse any of these comments. The comments might all be valid, but he wanted the project staff to review them, have the TAC look at those responses, and give us an idea of what the best path forward is from a technical perspective.
- (AJ) *The TAC has seen the comments, but as Chair Holland pointed out, the comments need to go to the project team for their review and response. Those responses will go back to the TAC, who will then make a recommendation to the PC based on the project team's responses. The project team has not responded to this because we have not officially sent it out.*
- (SH) He clarified that neither he nor the TAC have seen the responses. This should be forwarded onto the project team because there is value here, but he does not think the Policy Committee is ready to approve or endorse the comments until we receive feedback.
- (DV) He is ready to send these comments to the project team.
- (KC) It is important to recognize that Powder Reserve West was just approved for over 1,000 homes located in mid-Eagle River and we currently do not have any public transportation. There might be one bus route into Eagle River. When talking about adding that many more homes, most of that traffic will have to go through downtown because most of the job base is in midtown. He wanted to know that in light of that more recent development and project being approved, Eklutna, Inc. is working on developing what is probably one of the largest residential developments in 30 years in Anchorage's history. If that is being taken into consideration with the amount of traffic volume that will now be funneled through our Downtown/Fairview area and how we are looking to mitigate that, particularly taking housing concerns into account. That project is aggressively moving forward, and he just wanted to make sure that was being taken into consideration when planning.

- (KK) He asked Mr. Jongenelen if the Policy Committee were to not approve forwarding these comments, would AMATS staff still forward them?
- (AJ) *Staff would not forward them if the Policy Committee did not approve them.*
- (SH) He thought he might be overthinking this and felt that the comments should be forwarded to the project team. He did not want to review and approve the comments being incorporated into the project but is in favor of forwarding the comments.
- (AJ) *The intent was just to bring it forward for the Policy Committee's recommendation to send the comments to the project team because it is a significant project and staff wanted to make sure this committee was aware of what was being said.*
- (KK) He was not sure that Chair Holland was overthinking the process. He supported many of the comments and thought the project team did need to see them, but he also did try to balance the Policy Committee's role in approving the comments to go forward, as opposed to approving the comments and supporting them from this Body. There is a distinction. He did want to make sure that there is an avenue for these comments, officially, to go to the project team because he thinks that is important.
- (EP) Would it make sense to have the motion recognize that the comments were approved to forward to the project team for consideration, rather than suggesting there is a specific endorsement?
- (DV) He thinks this committee will go to public comment, then come back to the motion. He would support either or both. Maybe we vote on both; maybe we have a motion to say that we are okay with AMATS' staff sending in their comments to the project team, and then take a secondary vote saying that the PC endorses these comments because he does endorse them. It would be interesting to see where various entities do or do not line up on that.
- (SH) He clarified that the committee would get another shot at reviewing the projects and comments. It is definitely a topic for a work session.

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve AMATS staff sending in these comments via this letter as their comments on the Seward to Glenn PEL. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

MR. JONGENELEN reminded the committee that only one main motion can be made on an action item plus any added amendments.

CHAIR HOLLAND restated that the motion is to forward the comments to the project team.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend to add Comment #10 to clarify what is the no-build versus build alternatives, as recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

1st Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend to add a final paragraph to the letter saying, "These comments are endorsed by the AMATS Policy Committee." ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

Hearing objections, CHAIR HOLLAND called for a roll call vote.

Second Amendment

YAY

Assembly Member Volland

Assembly Member Cross

NAY

Ms. Pokon

Mr. Kohlhase

Chair Holland

The amendment failed with 2 votes in favor and 3 votes against.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend to add a sentence to Comment #1 that reads, "The impacts to community institutions should also be analyzed and presented." ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND explained that he is thinking of the Greater Friendship Baptist Church, historic places in Fairview, and representing honestly to the community what those trade-offs look like when it comes to rights-of-way and which historic community institutions would have to be relocated with some of these alternatives. Presenting in an honest dialogue what those impacts are is really important to the community.

CHAIR HOLLAND pointed out that presenting this information is a part of the process anyway, so he did not object to the amendment.

MR. KOHLHASE offered a friendly amendment that would add "public and private institutions" to the amendment. There is a need to analyze things such as the impacts on Merrill Field.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND accepted the friendly amendment. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded the friendly amendment.

MR. JONGENELEN restated that the amendment reads, “The impacts to community, public, and private institutions should be analyzed and presented,” or should it read, “The impacts to public and private institutions should also be analyzed and presented”?

MR. KOHLHASE suggested that it should read, “The impacts to public and private community institutions...”

MR. JONGENELEN clarified that the amendment language would read, “The impacts to public and private community institutions should also be analyzed and presented.”

Third Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Main Motion, As Amended

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

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. 2024 Cycling Urbanism Master Class Presentation

MS. WARD-WALLER briefed the Committee on the presentation. ZAKARY HARTMAN with the Traffic Engineering Department provided a PowerPoint presentation. ALEX READ with DOT&PF and BRANDON TELFORD with PM&E were also present.

There were no public comments.

b. Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation Update

ALEX READ with DOT&PF and JOE TAYLOR with Lounsbury & Associates presented the update.

In response to Chair Holland’s questions about whether the \$50 million shown in TIP Amendment #2 was funded from AMATS’ allocation and what the total mileage was, MR. JONGENELEN noted that it is funded 100 percent from AMATS and the distance is 1.25 miles.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if phasing was being considered or would it be built all in one project.

MR. READ replied that, as of now, and depending on what the funding is for construction and when it is available, phasing might actually make sense. We are not to the point where we would look at splitting it up. There are driveway issues, drainage issues, and utility issues throughout the whole corridor that would be addressed during the design process.

There were no public comments.

7. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

CHAIR HOLLAND announced that Anna Bosin was hired as the DOT&PF Regional Traffic Engineer. She is not a stranger to the AMATS MTP and has been a long-term DOT&PF employee and registered engineer with a traffic background.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

AVES THOMPSON noted that as AMATS works through the safety programs and the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway project, he could not overemphasize the fact that AMATS must take into consideration commercial vehicles. Commercial vehicles are an integral part of our economy and our way of life and deliver goods from the Port to stores in South Anchorage, Fairview, and Muldoon. Please keep in mind that there must be a safe and efficient way for them to deliver those goods.

10. ADJOURNMENT

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to adjourn. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.