

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

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

**February 20, 2025
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)
Graham Downey	Mayor's Special Assistant for Housing & Transportation
Adeyemi Alimi	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Mark Littlefield**	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Leifiloa Felise	AMATS
Kate Dueber	ARRC
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Brian Lindamood*	Alaska Railroad Corporation
Craig Lyon	DOWL
Brandon Telford	MOA/Project Management & Engineering (PM&E)
Laurie Cummings	HDR
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Leslie Daugherty	DOT&PF
Emily Weiser	Bike Anchorage
Bart Rudolph*	MOA/Public Transportation Dept. (PTD)
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Joselyn Billon	DOT&PF
Julius Adolfsson	DOT&PF
Mélisa Babb*	MOA/Planning Dept.
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Emily Haynes	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Jackson Fox	
Jason Norris	
Kim Sollien	
Adam Moser	DOT&PF
Sarah Davenport	
Ben White*	DOT&PF

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR HOLLAND called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Graham Downey, Special Administrative Assistant, represented Mayor LaFrance. Adeyemi Alimi represented ADEC in Jason Olds absence. Designated Assembly Member Alternate Mark Littlefield represented Assembly Member Zaletel. 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. ALIMI moved to approve the agenda. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

MR. DOWNEY moved to amend the agenda to add discussion on the STIP amendment as Informational Item 6.e. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Amendment passed

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved, as amended.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – January 16, 2025

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve the minutes. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS**a. Letter of Support for MOA – FTA Designated Recipient**

MR. JONGENELEN noted that in October 2024, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notified the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) that a current designation letter for Section 5307 and/or Section 5339(a) was not on file. The existing letter, dated 1975, designates the Greater Anchorage Area Borough (GAAB). It appears that this designation was not updated when the GAAB transitioned to the MOA. To rectify this, the FTA requires an updated Governor's designation letter reflecting the MOA as a Designated Recipient of these funds. To simplify the process, the FTA recommends including all applicable funding types for the

MOA in this letter. Therefore, the proposed letter designates the MOA as a Designated Recipient for the following programs:

- Urbanized Area Formula Grants Program (49 U.S.C. Section 5307)
- Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (49 U.S.C. Section 5310)
- Formula Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program (49 U.S.C. Section 5339)

MR. DOWNEY noted that he is in support of this as it is relatively urgent with a couple of million dollars at stake for funding through the municipality.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked for clarification that this letter formalizes current practice.

MR. JONGENELEN replied that it is a requirement, but AMATS was always under the assumption that the MOA was a direct recipient of FTA funding, but the letter was not done. The MOA is working on the letter; they are just asking for a letter of support from AMATS to send to the governor stating that AMATS agrees with the MOA being a designated recipient for these FTA funds. Basically, this is making it a current practice that is continuing on.

There were no public comments.

MR. DOWNEY moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

b. Comments on the Seward to Glenn PEL

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) recently had a public comment period on the alternatives for the plan. After reviewing the information provided during the public comment period, staff has the following comments:

1. In the public material, the following statement was provided: “After Level 2 screening and additional public feedback, an alternative will be recommended in the draft PEL Study document.” In reviewing the PEL handbook from the Federal Highway Administration Environmental website: Planning and Environment Linkages | Environmental Initiatives | Environmental Review Toolkit | FHWA, it lists that PELs provide a range of options to be used for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The Seward to Glenn PEL should not be providing a single recommendation but providing options that can be selected from for the follow-on design efforts.
2. Moving forward, there should be more clarification provided to everyone on the 2050 MTP versus MTP+ alternatives. How they have been listed in the materials is confusing to follow along. For example, in the slide on the public meeting presentation titled “MTP 2050 and MTP+ Sensitivity Tests,” the graphs reference the 2050 MTP and then a Main Street option. It makes it seem like the MTP+ alternative disappeared. Additionally, it should be better communicated that the MTP+ was not done by AMATS.

3. All alternatives should be given the same equal consideration of viability. How the information was presented on the online material and in public meetings gave the appearance of favoritism towards the Parkway alternatives while dismissing the viability of the 2050 MTP or MTP+ alternatives. For example, in the slide presentation, it outlines the improvements for each alternative but only lists the possible challenges under the 2050 MTP. Each alternative presented has its own challenges that should have been listed, like the 2050 MTP.

There were no comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve sending this letter. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

c. Process for AMATS Political Environment Appearance Requests

MR. JONGENELEN noted that he, as the AMATS director, received a request to participate in an Alaska House Transportation Committee meeting on January 23, 2025, and provide information on concerns raised by AMATS on the 2024-2027 STIP. As director, he attended and provided a presentation pulling quotes directly from the letters approved by the Policy Committee on the STIP and a slide presentation on resolution moving forward. After the meeting, a Policy Committee member provided the following comment to the director and other PC members:

- *“I have not had the opportunity to listen to your testimony yet, but I have received some concerns. For future reference, the Policy Committee should make the decision on whether you should represent AMATS in a political environment, and we should be given an opportunity to review and comment on your presentation.” Another PC member requested this item be added to the February PC agenda for discussion.*

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that he did listen to Mr. Jongenelen’s testimony and found it to be factual and appropriate. It is important for AMATS to communicate with the legislature. He agreed that having approval for Mr. Jongenelen to present at these functions is not practical to have to go through the TAC and PC. The newer MPO was invited to either that meeting or a different meeting and did give the policy board a heads up; and what he learned was that may have been in violation of the Open Meetings Act. We may need to change our practices.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD asked if any other MPO has developed a Policy & Procedure that we could mimic.

MR. JONGENELEN replied that he had not yet reached out to FAST (Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation) but did not think they had a policy. He did reach out to a Peer MPO (Minnesota) from the Peer Exchange, but they did not have a policy. The Minnesota MPO said they do not often get requests from the legislature, but neither does AMATS.

MR. DOWNEY did not feel it was necessary to have a full-blown P&P for this. Giving Mr. Jongenelen clear guidelines authorizing these topics in particular policy statements the PC has approved, technical and factual information about the MPO of which Mr. Jongenelen is a technical expert.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD argued that not everyone will be here in 20 years. If there is a set policy in place, future generations of AMATS committees and staff will be able to fall back on it as a guideline. It does not have to be an elaborate P&P, but put in writing what was just discussed.

There were no public comments.

MR. DOWNEY moved that the Policy Committee authorize the executive director of AMATS to speak with the state legislature on matters of factual experience, technical information about the MPO and technical related documents, and to speak to policy statements that have been approved by the Policy Committee. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

MR. DOWNEY would like to determine a way to memorialize it.

MR. JONGENELEN recommended that this motion would stand for now and staff could research some policies and procedures and how other MPOs handle these. It may give us the opportunity to learn what works in Florida or New York. We can memorialize this now in the minutes, but have staff do the research and bring that information back to the committee.

MR. DOWNEY moved to amend his motion to direct staff to research and formulate a final P&P on the subject. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed, as amended.

d. Letter of Support for Alaska HB-26

CHAIR HOLLAND informed the committee that DOT&PF employees are not allowed to participate in letters of support for any type of legislative bill. He passed the gavel to Mr. Downey and abstained from participating in this matter.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that AMATS received a request for a letter of support from Representative Genevieve Mina on HB 26 (Statewide Public & Community Transit Plan). "It codifies federal requirements for Alaska's Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to coordinate with public, tribal, and community transit programs as they study alternative means of improving transportation. It also expands the scope of DOT&PF's studies to include analyzing alternate modes of transit in rural and remote areas. This legislation was originally brought to us by the Alaska Mobility Coalition and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education." The request came in after the TAC agenda was posted, but the TAC added an item to their agenda to discuss this request. They

approved sending forward language for the PC to consider in a letter of support. Staff drafted a letter of support using that language as provided.

ACTING CHAIR DOWNEY expressed that regardless of the merits of this bill, especially since our DOT&PF partners are unable to speak to these matters, it is a little odd for AMATS to speak to these. There may be cases where it is appropriate for AMATS to weigh in on state legislation, but it would probably be better if this committee stayed out of it and used other tools, such as Assembly resolutions, lobbying powers, the Mayor's office, and those sorts of things to support ordinances.

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND has a different perspective than Acting Chair Downey. The AMATS Policy Committee is a policy-making body limited in scope, but the policy-making is of AMATS. He thinks the committee does have the purview to weigh in on issues of transit and transportation infrastructure as it pertains to our boundary but also as it pertains to regional impacts as well. As pointed out in the letter, House Bill 26 is consistent with a lot of the work and effort that has been done in former long-range transportation planning. It could be something that would be helpful for coordination between ourselves and the state, but also the three MPOs in Alaska. He will be in support of the motion.

ACTING CHAIR DOWNEY noted that, as a general rule of thumb, he would prefer the Policy Committee did not weigh in on state legislation given that we have other tools that would be more effective.

ACTING CHAIR DOWNEY called for a roll call vote.

YEA

Assembly Member Volland
Assembly Member Littlefield

NAY

Acting Chair Downey

ABSTAINED

Mr. Holland

The motion passed with 2 in favor, 1 against, and 1 abstention.

Chair Holland assumed the gavel.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. Minnesota I/L corridor Plan Update

JAMES STARZEC with DOT&PF briefed the committee and VAN LE with R&M Consultants presented the update.

There were no comments.

b. Rabbit Creek Pedestrian Overcrossing Repairs

LESLIE DAUGHERTY with DOT&PF presented the overcrossing repairs.

There were no comments.

c. State of Alaska Complete Street Policy Update

JULIUS ADOLFSSON with DOT&PF presented the update.

The committee discussed if there was an opportunity for the I/L Corridor study and the Complete Streets to work together and when the actual Complete Streets Policy would be completed.

CHAIR HOLLAND opened the floor to public comments.

MARK EISENMAN

d. Peer Exchange Follow Up

MR. JONGENELEN presented the follow up.

The committee discussed that the exchange showed similar populations to what Anchorage has but a much different structure and setup and steps to help make the TIP procedures more efficient.

MR. JONGENELEN added that a report is forthcoming from the individuals that provided the training.

There were no public comments.

e. STIP Amendment Update

MR. DOWNEY presented the update.

MR. JONGENELEN commented that staff would love to participate, but there is some concern that distributing things to MPOs prior to the public comment period makes it available for the public to be able to review. One of the discussions held at the Peer Exchange Follow Up was how DOT&PF can coordinate with the MPOs prior to getting it out to the public.

The committee discussed version control being important, reviews at staff level, not showing projects because of the STIP-funded projects in Anchorage, and that the TIP is incorporated by reference.

CHAIR HOLLAND opened the floor to public comments.

EMILY WEISER

7. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

MR. DOWNEY mentioned that two more folks died on Anchorage roads this week. It is a concern of everyone, and we need to do something serious and urgent to prevent this. There are always going to be lots of causes in these accidents, not just road designs or things in AMATS wheelhouse. We need to figure out how to move faster and more decisively to address these. He was thankful for DOT&PF's partnership with the VisionZero working group to move towards that goal.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

MR. JONGENELEN announced that he might add an item to future agendas that will provide the committee an update on what to expect at the next Policy Committee meeting. The same will be provided for the TAC meetings. This could prevent the committees from being caught off guard when only seeing it when it is posted online. The following are what AMATS has for action:

1. AMATS Safety Targets – DOT&PF sets their 2025 Safety Targets, and the MPO can set their own or support the state's targets. Staff will be recommending that AMATS set their own safety targets for 2025.
2. Anticipating having an update to the Public Participation Plan for the committee to review and release for comment. Ms. Schuette has been doing a lot of work updating this to include a lot of plain language.
3. Received the Transit Asset Management Targets from the Alaska Railroad for 2025 and will bring those forward to the TAC and PC to review and support.

Additionally, a lot of changes are being made on a national level. Staff is regularly receiving emails from AMPO (Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations) about changes that are happening. One of the changes we were notified of is that the STIP and STIP amendments now have to go to the USDOT General Counsel for review prior to approval. We have talked about streamlining our process; we just had another layer added to the process on a national level that everyone has to deal with. There may be delays moving forward as things shift.

Lastly, he reminded everyone that AMATS still has two senior planner positions available. Also, the Juneau and Seattle offices, as well as nationwide, had some staffing reductions on the federal level. He believed Juneau lost five employees due to the recent changes but is doing their best to keep up with the process.

9. ADJOURN

MR. DOWNEY moved to adjourn. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.