

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

**4700 Elmore Road  
Anchorage, Alaska**

**April 22, 2021  
1:30 PM**

*Due to COVID-19, this meeting was conducted virtually.*

*With the expected absence of Chair Junge, Todd Vanhove acted as Chair.*

**Policy Committee Members Present:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Todd Vanhove	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Chris Schutte	Executive Director, MOA Economic & Community Development
Cindy Heil	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Meg Zaletel	MOA/Municipal Assembly
John Weddleton	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Chris Constant**	MOA/ Municipal Assembly

**Also in attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Christine Schuette	MOA/Planning Department
Aaron Jongenelen	MOA/Planning Department
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Jim Amundsen	DOT&PF
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Adam Moser	DOT&PF
Susan Acheson	
Luke Bowland	DOT&PF

*\*AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

*\*\*Designated Assembly Alternate*

**1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Chris Schutte, Executive Director, MOA Economic and Community Development, represented Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson and arrived at 1:32 p.m. Assembly Member Constant acted as Designated Assembly Alternate until Assembly Member Weddleton's arrival at 1:33 p.m. A quorum was established.

**2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

CRAIG LYON 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. As a result of the virtual meetings, the public has been asked to submit an email request providing their name, phone number, and agenda item to AMATS by 6:30 p.m. the day prior to the meeting, but can also participate via Teams and provide testimony when the item is opened to the public for comments.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MR. SCHUTTE moved to approve the agenda. ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT requested to reorder the agenda to hear Agenda Item 6.a., Seward to Glenn Highway PEL, prior to the action items.

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

**4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 25, 2021**

MS. HEIL moved to approve the minutes. MR. SCHUTTE seconded.

*Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.*

*Project and Plan Update, Agenda Item 6.a., was ordered to be heard prior to the action items.*

**a. Seward to Glenn Highway PEL**

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE informed the Committee that negotiations have been finalized within DOT&PF and the contract has been forwarded to the consultant for final signatures, which will then be ready to kickoff in just a few days.

There were no comments.

**5. ACTION ITEMS**

**a. 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #2**

**BACKGROUND:**

*Amendment #2 to the AMATS 2019-22 Transportation Improvement Program was released for a 30-day public comment period on February 25, 2021. Nine comments were received during the public comment period and are summarized in the Comment/Response Summary table.*

MR. LYON noted that the majority of the comments received were changes to tables that were relatively minor, or were changes to tables that are not part of AMATS' allocation. Those changes were to Transit tables, which are mostly 5307 funds that the Alaska Railroad and the Public Transit Department control, and changes to the HSIP program, which the State of Alaska manages. We are being asked if we could roll these in with this amendment. In addition, we forwarded the three comments submitted by the Rabbit Creek Community Council to the project managers and DOT&PF that are managing those construction projects. A suggestion was received regarding Roadway Table Project 20, Mountain Air Drive, that currently includes the language 'recommend separated pathway' to be changed to "non-motorized access". We suggested changing that language to read, "Project will include non-motorized improvements" which is basically the same language in the other roadway projects in the TIP. The TAC agreed with staff's suggestions, but requested removing the language "project shall not include improvements to the Minnesota Intersection, except ADA requirements on the east side". Once this Committee has adjudicated these comments, we will make the changes and forward it to the Assembly for their recommendations. Any amendments made by the Assembly will come back before the TAC and the PC for final approval.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL referred to Comment #5 and asked if this project is a safe route to school as mentioned in the Rabbit Creek Community Council comment.

MR. LYON does not believe it is a safe route because it is new construction and the Hazardous Routes Committee is looking at existing roadways, not future projects.

In response to Ms. Heil's request for clarification that there was a project removed based on comments, MR. LYON explained that Roadway Table Project #2, C Street/Ocean Dock Road Ramp and Intersection Improvements, managed by DOT&PF, was suggested to be removed because anytime a project is added or removed, we need to look at the Air Quality Conformity Analysis. We did share this information with the Interagency Air Quality Conformity Team, and they replied that they were okay with our analysis going forward. MS. HEIL added that they asked for and were provided some slight edits to the Air Quality Conformity Determination, so that draft did not come before the Committee today, but the edited version will have to go before the TAC. She wanted to ensure everyone knew that the federal requirements are being met by having our major amendment and the Air Quality Conformity go hand-in-hand. MR. LYON pointed out that today's action just involves sharing the Comment/Response Summary and the TIP amendment would then follow. Should the amendment not conform to the air quality issues, we would not move it forward.

MR. SCHUTTE clarified that Bear Valley is a bus only school, there are no safe routes for Bear Valley Elementary School.

There were no public comments.

MS. HEIL moved to accept the Comment/Response Summary and forward it on to the Assembly. ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON seconded.

***Hearing no objections, this motion passed.***

**b. Operating Agreement Update****BACKGROUND:**

*The Federal Certification review asked AMATS to modify the percentages used to determine if changes to projects constitute an Amendment or an Administrative Modification. Staff drafted the attached modification to the AMATS Operating Agreement to reflect requested changes to that document. On March 25, 2021, the AMATS Policy Committee voted to change the name of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Community Advisory Committee.*

MR. LYON noted that the Committee had approved the name change of the Citizens Advisory Committee to the Community Advisory Committee. In addition to the name change modification, are changes to the percentages used to determine if something is an amendment versus an administrative modification. The TAC voted to table the Operating Agreement changes, but the PC had asked to have this on the agenda. During the TAC meeting, he was asked to check with FHWA for their comments on Operating Agreement changes and whether the changes were to be forwarded to the federal government first for their approval, and then present it to the PC for the formal change. He discussed this with Julie Jenkins (filling in for John Lohrey) and was advised that they do not have approval authority to have the MPO organize this themselves nor how the Operating Agreements work. Basically, FHWA is not going to comment on whether it is a good change or not.

Assembly Member Weddleton had the following questions with responses noted in *Italic*.

- (JW) Asked for clarification what the percentage was previously.
- (CL) *It was at 75 percent. When he put in the 75 percent, it was with the hope that we would not have to do many amendments because of the lengthy time period that amendments take. Previously, he had found an MPO in South Carolina that had a 75 percent level and during FHWA's review, John Lohrey stated that if we could show someone else using 75 percent, then they would be happy to accept it. Unfortunately, he was unable to track South Carolina's 75 percent, but did find that Boston was using 50 percent, so he was able to share that with Mr. Lohrey, which they were fine with.*
- (JW) This amendment means that more changes would require a longer public process and Policy Committee approval?
- (CL) *Yes. Administrative Modifications, previously referred to as minor amendments, can be approved by the TAC in some instances, but most require Policy Committee approval and a public comment period is not necessary. If more than 50 percent of the project is changing over the four years of the TIP, then it requires a public comment period and to go before the Assembly.*
- (JW) What is the practical difference here? If the threshold is lowered, does that mean twice as many come before the PC, or remain the same?
- (CL) *If it is changed from 75 to 50 percent, there will be more amendments, which would require a longer process. The longer process creates more of a challenge to ensure we can deliver the program in a federal fiscal year.*

(JW) Does that represent a lot or just a few?

(CL) *For example, this amendment has all the submitted comments with several of them for the AMATS allocation. While gathering those different amendments, should there be a project status meeting held at DOT&PF and the project manager said we needed \$200,000 more on this project, or \$75,000 more on a different project, and there was a significant number of changes in a relatively short period of time requiring an amendment, it would start the clock on a new amendment, that is if we did not have an amendment already in place at the time. In this case, because those changes are minor, we can process them as an administrative modification. This is only the second amendment and we are currently at seven or eight administrative modifications. At this time in the previous TIP, we were up to twenty-plus administrative modifications and just a few amendments. Since they take so much more time to process, we strive to get them done as administrative modifications and not risk losing our funds.*

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON moved to approve. MR. SCHUTTE seconded.

***Hearing no objections, this motion passed.***

## **6. Project and Plan Updates**

*Item 6.a. was heard prior to the action items.*

### **b. Spenard Road Project Update**

SEAN BASKI with ADOT&PF provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

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

(JW) When heading east on Spenard Road, is the traffic count so high that you need two lanes? If there were better facilities along 36th Avenue, between Spenard and Minnesota, and you could pull bikes and pedestrians away from that stretch, is there some way to include that to be simultaneous? Then, maybe, you would not need the bike/pedestrian facilities on this stretch to be quite as nice.

(SB) *We have done some modeling and worked with both traffic sections, but there is still some disagreement. It may be viable, but the problem is, especially when talking about the Minnesota Drive intersection, what do the backups look like on the west side. You have a certain traffic demand on the west side and, by our modeling, if we do not do this correctly, you push backups all the way past and through the railroad crossing. It is about how the public uses and drops that lane on the west side and how we engineer it, but then also*

*how they actually use it, which is the current disagreement. We can have drop lanes, but what is the likelihood that a lot of users are going to use that lane and merge over to the other lane.*

- (JW) Is there anything you can do on that little stretch of 36th Avenue to take bicycles/pedestrians onto there and then to Minnesota Drive?
- (SB) *As of right now, we do not have that in our project definition for scope. We could, but he did not know that it would measurably remove that eastern movement from the west side. The problem is eastbound Spenard.*
- (JW) Could keep the two lanes, but take 36th Avenue if bicycling or walking. The system works well, even though that particular stretch would not be optimal for bikers and walkers.
- (SB) *36th Avenue is rather narrow. If the Policy Committee would like the project to look at alternatives that would improve things down 36th Avenue and on Minnesota Drive because we still have a narrow corridor on Minnesota, the project could do that. The question is whether we would have some major impacts to the adjacent right-of-way.*
- (CS) Asked Assembly Member Weddleton for clarification that his suggestion is that non-motorized and bike traffic does not actually travel southwest on Spenard, but gets diverted on 36th Avenue. If that is what is being described, what happens when that gets to Minnesota Drive?
- (JW) He agreed that would be a mess at one point or the other. We could pull 36th Avenue and the intersection out of this project to get away from the controversy that is holding it up.
- (MZ) If this is short on right-of-way, are the alternatives being vetted against those recommendations in the Vision Zero plan? Agreeing that this is a dicey area to bicycle or walk on, currently, she commented that she would love to be able to. She also requested for this to be flagged and looked at closely while in the design phase.
- (JW) He noted that, while watching the northern end being built, there were huge structures built underground and all that can be seen is a manhole cover leading to open space. His understanding is that it was for ML&P to be able to run extra wires underground and not have to dig things up, if they wanted to add additional wires. But those were only available for ML&P, which is now Chugach Electric. What are the rules for these because it seems these should be available for all utilities? Is it possible to make that a requirement?
- (SB) *Those are known as utiliducts and we have used them sporadically throughout DOT's corridors. There are certainly some pros and cons associated and, generally, we do not go with them. We have extensive ones down DeBarr Road and it really hampers a lot of our potential rebuilds*

*throughout that space. We have not really dove into the utility relocation portions of this, but that will be one of the tools on the table. When we do engage in that, we will be required to follow all federal rules and regulations.*

- (JW) If DOT&PF decides to do a utiliduct, it would be nice to have it available for everyone.
- (SB) *Because it was not on the last phase, he is not sure whether it was paid for specifically by them or if the Municipality participated. If they were paying for their own facility, then forcing them to allow others into their utiliduct might not be something we could do. There are certain things eligible and not eligible, which forces certain utility companies to have to rebuild some of their own systems throughout the space.*
- (JW) With regard to cell towers, we require them to make it available for other companies to collocate, so there is a precedent there.
- (CS) Clarified that joint trenching agreements, when utility lines are coming down, is very common. The idea of shared utilidors or conduits is also something not widespread, but also practiced between the utility companies. It is something we would likely see happen with this project in the same way the collocation of utilities is proposed for other road projects where the overhead poles are coming down.
- (JW) Asked Mr. Schutte if it is typical to have collocation?
- (CS) *It is not 100 percent typical, but it does happen often.*
- (JW) Noted that it has been several years now with the north end having been done with the road diet. Do we have statistics on the amount of traffic going through there and traffic speeds from point-to-point that we could compare with prior to this project?
- (SB) *Requests were made and they did look at overall crash numbers and discussed speeds, but he does not have those numbers before him.*
- (JW) The center turn lane is at 14 feet, but the DCM (Design Criteria Manual) will not let it go below 12 feet?
- (SB) *The DCM has 14 feet as standard. We are looking to minimize the overall cross-sectional width, but we are not proposing anything narrower yet.*
- (JW) What is the rule because he has seen them, not in Anchorage, as narrow as 10 feet in some places?
- (SB) *There are a lot of "what it should be" across the board and what you would like for it to be at. For instance, the Department of Transportation will use anywhere from 14 to 16 feet for our two-way left turn lanes in anticipation*

*that, at some point and time in the future, you would need to channelize left turn pockets with a little bit of median in there. It sets yourself up for additional access management to some of the roads. Usually, that is on our arterials and other things. There are a lot of reasons why you might want a wider width, such as trucking and comfort and, certainly, there are reasons to reduce the overall width, as well.*

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE asked for public comments.

LINDSEY HAJDUK: The Spenard community has advocated for Minnesota Drive to be considered as an active transportation corridor, but that has not moved forward. Spenard Road is the designated primary active transportation corridor and should have bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Spenard Community Council also does not support the couplet of Minnesota/36th/Spenard.

**7. General Information**

**a. COVID-19 Funding Update**

MR. LYON presented the update.

There were no comments.

**b. AMATS Newsletter**

MS. SCHUETTE presented the newsletter.

MR. SCHUTTE expressed appreciation noting that it was very informative.

There were no public comments.

**8. Committee Comments - None**

**9. Public Comments - None**

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

MR. SCHUTTE moved to adjourn. ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON seconded.

*Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.*