

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

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

**November 18, 2021
1:30 PM**

Policy Committee Members Present:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Wolfgang Junge	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Adam Trombley	Director, MOA Community Development
Emma Pokon	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
John Weddleton	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Meg Zaletel	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Aaron Jongenelen	MOA/Planning Department
Christine Schuette	MOA/Planning Department
Joni Wilm	MOA/Planning Department
Jon Cecil	MOA/Planning Department
Cindy Heil*	ADEC
Chris Constant**	MOA/Municipal Assembly
David Gamez	Lounsbury & Associates
Jason Kewin	Lounsbury & Associates
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Travis Holmes	DOT&PF
Kelly Summer	DOT&PF
Josie Wilson	HDR
Taylor Horne	HDR
Brad Coy*	MOA/Traffic Engineering Department
Todd VanHove*	DOT&PF
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Tom Davis	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division
Elizabeth Appleby	MOA/Planning Department
Robert Bravo	
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Max Kohn	
Morgan McCammon	
Laurie Cummings	HDR
Bart Rudolph	MOA/Public Transportation Department (PTD)
Ben Coleman	R&M Consultants
LaQuita Chmielowski	DOWL

John McPherson
Tristan Walsh
Adam Moser DOT&PF
Luke Bowland* DOT&PF
Douglas Campbell DOT&PF
John Linnell DOT&PF
Nancy Pease
Jim Amundsen DOT&PF

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR JUNGE called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Adam Trombley, Community Development Director, represented Mayor Bronson. Cindy Heil represented Emma Pokon until her arrival at 1:46 p.m. Assembly Member Constant acted as Designated Assembly Alternate until Assembly Member Zaletel's arrival at 1:46 p.m. A quorum was established prior to Assembly Member Weddleton's arrival at 1:37 p.m.

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

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT moved to approve the agenda. MR. TROMBLEY seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CONSTANT requested to reorder the agenda to hear Item 7.d. prior to Item 7.a.

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

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – None

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2050 Draft Technical Report 1: Goals and Objectives

BACKGROUND:

The AMATS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Goals and Objectives were based on the 2040 MTP and have been refined to reflect comments heard during the 2040 MTP that were not addressed during that update, the 2040 Land Use Plan, the AMATS Non-Motorized Plan, the AMATS Spenard Corridor Plan, the MOA Climate Action Plan, and to ensure conformance with the FAST Act.

MR. JONGENELEN introduced the project team and the consultants and provided a Power Point Presentation.

Project Team:

AMATS Planners - Mr. Lyon, Ms. Schuette, Mr. Cecil, Ms. Wilm, and Mr. Jongenelen
James Starzec, DOT&PF and Bart Rudolph, Public Transportation Department

Consultants:

Van Le and Ben Coleman with R&M Consultants, McKinley Research Group, and RSG, Inc.

- Goal 2 and objectives were refined to be more achievable and measurable. One objective was removed as it was redundant.
- Goal 3 and objectives were refined to emphasize connectivity, mobility, equitability, and to strengthen the connection between land use and transportation. Five objectives were removed as they were redundant and/or difficult for AMATS to affect.
- Goal 4 and objectives were refined to be more achievable and measurable.
- Goal 5 was split into two goals (5&6) and the objectives were refined to focus on health, environment, and climate change. Two objectives were moved to Goal 4, one was removed due to redundancy, and two were moved to the new Goal 6.
- Goal 6 is a new goal with three objectives that focus on providing equity throughout the transportation planning process.
- Removal of Goal 7 and objectives as they were redundant with other goals and objectives and did not help to support the new goal of Equitability.

Assembly Member Weddleton arrived at 1:37 p.m.

The following are questions and comments by the Committee with responses noted in *Italic*.

- (AT) Referred to Goal 3 that shows in the left column “improving travel conditions” and the right column shows “improve mobility options” and asked for clarification that there were not two separate Goal 3s.

(AJ) *Replied, no, the left column was for the 2040. We did change the name from “travel options” to “mobility” because we felt it was more encompassing and more inclusive of all travel options and would do a much better job connecting us with the land use.*

Assembly Member Zaletel and Ms. Pokon arrived at 1:46 p.m.

(WJ) With regard to Goal 5, he asked if this one contains resiliency?

(AJ) *Yes, this is one part of resiliency, but it is spread throughout.*

(WJ) He had forwarded the Washington State DOT study on equity assessment to staff and asked if they had reviewed it to see if there might be anything major we could be missing in our equity comparisons?

(AJ) *At the TAC meeting, we received several comments asking for changes. One of the things the TAC did recommend was that the comments heard be incorporated as part of our Comment/Response Summary. He had not yet had a chance to review the Washington DOT equity analysis, but it is included in our process to respond to in the Comment/Response Summary*

(WJ) Some of what Washington discusses are equitable compensation and property acquisition, but he was not sure that is an area AMATS would focus on. AMATS is most likely more focused on equity or highway construction program investments, and where we are putting the resources.

(AJ) *Investments is one aspect of equity that we would connect with. That does also include our policy in place of percentages towards different modes, like roadway gets the highest and non-motorized gets less. We should be looking to see if those percentages require changes.*

(MZ) She appreciated the comment that equity be overlaid throughout this, but the slide that called out equity said it was for vulnerable populations. Where does that language come from and exactly what does it mean because she can see it raising some concerns in the public? That slide is the one time it is explicitly talking about equity and seems to limit it to vulnerable populations.

(AJ) *This is a standard term throughout our industry on what it is. We do have a definition of it in the technical memorandum, which reads, “Generally, vulnerable populations are EJ (Environmental Justice) populations, minority populations, age (children or elderly), and anyone with a disability. Low income is encompassed in EJ.*

(MZ) If that definition were available somehow as this goes out for public comment, it will be helpful in getting more responsive comments.

(AJ) *We can add it in as a footnote to the table itself or when we determine how we will display the Goals and Objectives in an easy manner for people to follow, we can include it in that.*

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON moved to release for a 30-day public comment period in December. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

6. PROJECT/PLAN UPDATES - None

7. GENERAL INFORMATION

The agenda was reordered to hear Item 7.d. before Item 7.a.

d. Seward/Glenn Mobility Project

KELLY SUMMERS with DOT&PF, TAYLOR HORNE and JOSIE WILSON with HDR provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

The following are questions and comments by the Committee with responses noted in *Italic*.

(JW) Have the tribal committees been met with and who are the members because it can be tricky to get them involved?

(J. Wilson) *All the people on these committees are listed on the website. Focus was only on the tribes that have jurisdiction in the project area, not everyone. One-on-one phone conversations were held to see if they were interested and available, and to engage them at their convenience.*

(JW) How does this fit with the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL?

(TH) *He referred to the project area slide noting that the Midtown Congestion Relief ended, essentially, one year ago. The recommended alternative identified during that plan would be assumed to be part of the future condition and we would look at that as incoming data.*

(JW) Is there any implication of timing? Have you done that first and this one second? Could this project end up being done before Midtown?

(TH) *By projects, you mean ultimately. There is nothing dictating the timing of programming of any results that come out of the PEL study. This goes through a planning process and is put into the MTP or the STIP, so, again, there is nothing dictating which one comes before or after. Part of any PEL study*

process is identifying implementation and could be staged implementation also, so you could look at what is existing in the plans and say that it fits in the component and take that into consideration. Part of our scope of work is to look at implementation of the recommended alternative.

(JW) When does this study go stale?

(TH) *There is a provision in the statutes that set up a PEL study that talks about a five-year limit. In practice, that just means you have five years to directly incorporate the products made during a PEL process into that subsequent NEPA and design process for construction projects. Guidance that the Federal Highway Administration has given, kind of broadly, is that it does not mean you have to throw away the whole study and the product after five years, but it does mean you have to look at it for changed conditions; and you might have to provide a memorandum and update. There is no definite stale date as it is based on the change of conditions.*

(AT) Asked for clarification that this has been studied for approximately 60 years? Is there any reason to believe that now it is going to happen? The PEL is being funded, but he is assuming this is not the first go around for something like this. Is there confidence that now this is going to happen, or can we assume it is going to get derailed? We will not be here in 2063, but someone will be here discussing the history of this project.

(WJ) *This lays out a vision for a corridor.*

(AT) He is just trying to understand the history and asked if there had ever been a vision prior to now.

(TH) *This is the first Planning Environmental Linkage process, and the list shows not only the plans that have focused on making that highway connection, but also the long-range plans, and MTPs that had included that idea in it. What is novel about this effort is that this is a tool that is being applied to a corridor, particularly, the connection bit. The Highway-to-Highway looked at options that went far east of town covering a wide area. This is the first effort that is using a tool that is geared by regulations and statutes to move that from planning into implementation, and is why it was created.*

(AT) What you are doing now has never been done?

(TH) *The Planning Environmental Linkage Study has not been done on this section. Midtown, the one that happened recently, was part of this eighth corridor, but we were looking at making the turn to connect. The plan is to design, implement, and get this funded. This is a component of the plan.*

(MZ) With regard to the Midtown PEL, how are those work groups going to interact with the affected community council areas?

- (J. Wilson) *All the community councils in the area are serving in one of the committees one way or another. We have scope, as well, to engage with the community councils individually and have two to three different ways ensuring the community councils are engaged in this process. If you have specific suggestions or ideas of what you would like to see, please contact her. She wants to engage them in an appropriate way that they feel like they are being heard and their input is involved. At the same time, she did not want to attend every community council to talk about this, if it is not helpful to them. Those councils that are serving on the Community Advisory Committees are available on the website. We have met with Airport Heights, Fairview, Downtown, and three or four others that are part of the committees, and we are also going to be engaging with the councils directly.*
- (MZ) A lot of community councils with projects this large happening in their areas create their own committees. You may want to query them to see if they do plan to make their own committees. She saw Midtown in particular and noted that they will only need occasional updates, not regular. Midtown Community Councils are still getting updates on PEL projects as they move from that contractor. Any significant dates since the two projects, while independent, are part of an entire corridor.
- (JW) This is so significant to Midtown with where people drive and why. This will draw people off Muldoon Road and Tudor Road, but he did not think it was quite in their area. It is interesting because we have troubles on Tudor with pedestrians killed while crossing the street and a variety of other things. But to justify this project, you could say that what it does is solve other problems elsewhere, and it is hard to look at the whole city, but that is an important piece. Maybe that will jump out when you do your destination study and see all the people that will use Muldoon Road. If we do this project, it will pull an “x” number away. He did not know if they have quantitative information on that.
- (WJ) There were traffic studies on Midtown and, similarly, those traffic studies will feed into this?
- (TH) *Absolutely. Those origin and destination studies and traffic studies that are ongoing right now are not just focusing on that outlined area. The study area, shown on the screen, was just to give people an idea of where we are looking in the problem area. The traffic and destination study and travel demand model are an outbirth of the AMATS model, of which we are updating and looking at travel on those routes. We have a team working on it that will look at the different zones where people are traveling from, and part of the products that will come out of that will be brought before this Committee to review.*
- (AT) Can you tell me the main reason why this has never happened? Why has there never been a Highway-to-Highway? What has been the resistance? Has it been funding or just no desire for it? It has been consistently studied but has never gone beyond the study phase.

- (J. Wilson) *We, as the project team, asked the same question. The answer is more complex than just simply going in and doing something. Just in the community advisory meetings, we have people that say, “do this” and others that say, “do not do this”. We have a lot of good data that we are going to be able to use to move the project forward. This process will come up with recommendations that can be actionable and supported by the community.*
- (AT) It would be important to identify what those consistent impediments are to possibly avoid them and deal with them early on so that we are not sitting here in 2063 talking about a Highway-to-Highway.
- (JW) *Since he has been tracking this for many years, he explained that part of it is money because the AMATS allocation is approximately \$30 million, but not close to the billion this will take. It also includes a huge amount of the State’s federal funds. We really need to justify what it solves in other areas, instead of just moving more cars faster through this corridor. If it was only that, he would not be that interested in it because what is the benefit for Anchorage and for the people in Wasilla to get to Kenai quicker? He is not going to use his road money for that. If it is pulling off too much traffic from other parts of town and we can focus on this area and quiet down traffic in other places; and get people where they want to go more efficiently and safely, that is what he wants to see us do. He did not see that in previous iterations, but he knows more than he did eight or nine years ago with the Highway-to-Highway. It is opportunity costs and lack of money.*

There were no public comments.

a. Northern Lights Boulevard – Minnesota Drive to Seward Highway Sidewalks Project – DOT&PF

SEAN BASKI with DOT&PF provided a PowerPoint Presentation. TRAVIS HOLMES with DOT&PF and DAVE GAMEZ with Lounsbury and Associates were also present.

The following are questions and comments by the Committee with responses noted in *Italic*.

- (WJ) When speaking to repairs, that means bringing them up to ADA standards? The project total is \$4.1 million, and you have \$800,000? Are there any right-of-way acquisition pieces to that or is that all within the existing right-of-way?
- (SB) *Yes, it would bring them up to ADA standards. The project total is in that neighborhood, and that is a rough order of magnitude depending on cost escalations happening all over in two to three years from now. Regarding right-of-way acquisitions, the features shown in the presentation are within the existing right-of-way. The problem becomes that as soon as we start driveway repairs and such, we might need interests from the adjacent property owners, so we would need to talk to the property owner of each driveway and*

get something signed allowing us access to their property and, potentially, redo parking and other things because the regrading would have to go well back onto each of the properties.

- (AT) How was this project identified? Who came up with the \$800,000 and how did it get allocated? Why are we here with this when common sense would say the project requires way more than \$800,000?
- (AJ) *When we built the TIP, this project was not specifically called out of the TIP. We put a preservation project into the TIP and similar to what is in Pavement Preservation is what we did for non-motorized. We recognized there were a lot of places around town that need this type of help, so we put in kind of a catch-all and assigned money based on the information available to us at the time. This particular one was not something we had thought about at the time, so we did not say this one was only going to cost \$800,000.*
- (AT) From a process standpoint, if we say we have \$800,000, can we change and find a project that is more reasonable for that amount of money, or are we stuck with this because we have made it to this point?
- (SB) *From the project standpoint, we are still working on the environmental document. If a no-build selection was made, then we would likely be reimbursed for all our costs.*
- (CL) *As Aaron mentioned, this project was listed as Pavement Preservation for a non-motorized facility, so it was not saying we were doing this project. We have a couple of possibilities to add additional funding to it either through some of the COVID-19 relief funds or some of the projects in the current TIP that did not take quite as much money as expected, and some projects that might slip. There is an opportunity to add funds to this project and \$800,000 is not all we have.*
- (WJ) *It is important to know that Oregon was penalized quite heavily for lack of corrective actions to ADA compliant facilities to the point where the Federal Highway Administration came in and forced quite a large additional percentage of their program that had to be allocated only to ADA related things. In other words, you would not want to ignore it.*
- (CL) *Right now in AMATS programming, we say we are going to allocate between 10 and 15 percent of our total allocation to non-motorized type projects. We do not have one that says ADA compliance.*
- (AT) Now that it has been identified that so much of Northern Lights is not ADA compliant, is there some sort of obligation that kicks in to fix it, since it has been identified as grossly out of compliance?
- (CL) *There is not from AMATS, but there may be from the owner of the facility.*

- (SB) *We have ADA transition plans at high level and are trying to address non-compliance and are program-wide that looks at those things, so this would just be included. The DOT&PF has sent out interns to document every single curb ramp intersection in the entire city of Anchorage and we know where all our non-compliances are at specific curb ramps, and that is what we are driven to have to replace when doing normal pavement preservation projects on roadways.*
- (WJ) *Formula funds will most likely increase as a result of the formula fund increases, so that will be an additional opportunity to apply for new funding.*
- (JW) He recollected walking this sort of thing with Anne Brooks. Kevin Jackson was also there at that time and, for a guy in a wheelchair he was amazingly mobile, but the objects right in the middle of the sidewalk were the deal killer. Mr. Jackson could deal with the slants, the bumps, and the cracks, but when there is a hole in the middle of the sidewalk, then where do you go? Are there some alternatives to go around power poles or do you have to go onto private property?
- (SB) *It has happened but would be dependent on the specific situation. For example, we have overhead utility poles carrying overhead wires that have an alignment associated with them. As soon as you start addressing one, then you are out of alignment with the pole line creating a cascade affect down the line. We are just talking about a luminaire, which is an easier fix by just moving it to the back of the sidewalk or pathway, but we might have to buy additional right-of-way for that space. To provide the minimum four-foot-wide ADA facility, we would have to buy right-of-way onto private property and reroute the power poles, if we were to go with that type of application.*
- (JW) Have we done that in Anchorage?
- (SB) *Engineers use a lot of tools and you might not notice that we divert around the utilities, but we do to try to reduce costs for projects.*
- (WJ) Utility companies have undergrounding funds and plans. Has there been any attempt to coordinate with utilities and utilize their funds in conjunction with undergrounding some of these?
- (SB) *We have not engaged in that yet as we are at a very preliminary level.*
- (MZ) Can this project be looked at in the context of other projects in the area coming up because it feels like it is an expensive and very important standalone project? The disability lawyer in her feels the ADA compliance should be done quickly. What she does not get with this project is how it fits into the overall vision for the area and the corridor as a general matter. It is her understanding that there are some other planned projects in this area, and she would hate to see work done at this cost if there are others forthcoming. She did not know if that investigation had been done at all.

(SB) *There is at least one project in the LRTP (Long-Range Transportation Plan) for reworking Northern Lights, given that DOT&PF just resurfaced Northern Lights in 2015. We expect a few more years out it, but, typically for us, a reconstruction project or rehabilitation of this entire corridor is astronomically expensive. Certainly, it does need it at some point in time because we cannot continue resurfacing the roadway.*

(MZ) It would make sense to think about synchronizing these projects in other areas. This is just a suggestion and, maybe not with this project, just as a general matter.

CHAIR JUNGE asked for public comments.

ROBERT BRAVO also commented on synchronizing projects and having a calendar. He wondered what that would be if there was a limited pot of money from a work perspective and how you would do that job, because if you do the sidewalk at the same time as the adjacent asphalt reclamation, it will require a lot less money to the job. Money could be spread further.

BART RUDOLPH, Public Transportation Department, noted that our bus stops are on the north side of Northern Lights, so if this is going to be done, he would strongly recommend focusing on the north side. Some of them are most used by stops averaging 100 people per day using one bus stop, on and off. There is significant pedestrian traffic on the north side. These facilities are mostly inadequate as you can imagine, and if you try to walk them multiple days or every day, it is incredibly difficult. It gives a strong, unsafe feeling. VisionZero identifies this corridor as a high crash corridor for all pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle user groups. We strongly recommend funding this at the highest level to get some of this work done. In speaking to Assembly Member Zaletel's point regarding the vision in the MTP, it is to three-lane this section and add the appropriate, adequate sidewalks needed, which is a much larger project, but he thinks that should be expedited. If you do not fund this completely, then maybe you can start on the data and engineering for the project knowing there are significant questions from DOT&PF and others as to whether or not that is feasible. That is the real solution here and he hoped this project does not get spotfunded. If you want to talk about equity in transportation planning and putting it into action, this is it. If this were a road project that was underscoped and underfunded, it would have come back to AMATS to get more money. A prime example of that is O'Malley Road.

CHAIR JUNGE pointed out that this must be a really old aerial photograph because there is a lot that no longer exists, such as what was torn down on Northern Lights 10 years ago. Was your assessment based on an aerial review? He suggested providing updated aerial photography.

MR. BASKI replied, no, the assessment was not based on aerial reviews as we had people in the field walking every inch of it.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON asked for clarification that tying this in with the pavement replacement project was already done.

MR. BASKI explained that DOT&PF has its own program for replacing the pavement on these facilities. We are well behind on nearly all our pavement preservation projects. There is not one on the books at this moment, which means it is at least three to four years out, but we did complete one in 2015.

Assembly Member Zaletel left the meeting at 2:57 p.m.

b. Chugach Way Study – DOWL

LAQUITA CHMIELOWSKI with DOWL provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON disclosed that he owns a four-plex in the area.

There were no further comments.

c. Title 21 Parking Amendment – Public Release Draft – MOA

TOM DAVIS and ELIZABETH APPLEBY with the MOA Planning Department provided a PowerPoint Presentation.

There were no comments.

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

CHAIR JUNGE announced the Infrastructure Investment and JOBS Act was signed by President Biden this last week. Our Planning section is quickly dissecting and assessing at a broad level as we are looking at anywhere between a 20 and 40 percent increase in formula funds across the board. That will also be reflected in the AMATS allocation as well. Also, significant amounts of funds in discretionary grants have become available. DOT&PF is predominantly a formula driven organization and have not been in the grant business much, so we, along with the city and other Boroughs and Townships within the state will need to learn the process. A lot of money is available. Our Congressional Delegation did a great job putting Alaska specific language in some of those grants, so we have some real good opportunities to garner in taking care of our checklists whether it is ADA related, Port related, or other related projects. Ryan Anderson, Northern Region Director, was recently appointed as our new Commissioner, but still must complete the confirmation hearings during the Legislative cycle. CHAIR JUNGE thanked AMATS for their assistance in helping the Mat-Su Borough view what an MPO looks like and how they will start up. His understanding is that it will go live April 2023 with the Governor signing the Operational Agreement and they will draw from the same pot of money as Fairbanks (FMATS). He also expressed condolences for Eugene Carl Haberman having passed away last month. Mr. Haberman had a real passion for public involvement and was an advocate for transparency. His heart was in the right place.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.