

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

**4700 Elmore Road  
Anchorage, Alaska**

**March 25, 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:**

Name	Representing
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

**Also in attendance:**

Name	Representing
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Christine Schuette	MOA/Planning Department
Aaron Jongenelen	MOA/Planning Department
Jim Amundsen	DOT&PF
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Darrel Hess	MOA/Ombudsman
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Adam Moser	DOT&PF
Tom Davis	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division
Elizabeth Appleby	MOA/Current Planning

*\*AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

*\*\*Designated Assembly Alternate*

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

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m. Chris Schutte, Executive Director, MOA Economic and Community Development, represented Acting Mayor Austin Quinn-Davidson. 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 WEDDLETON seconded.

*Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.*

### **4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 25, 2021**

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

*Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.*

### **5. ACTION ITEMS**

#### **a. Citizens Advisory Committee Seat Nomination**

##### BACKGROUND:

*The AMATS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is the citizen's forum for transportation issues affecting the AMATS area. This group serves to review projects and plans, share information with the public and bring forth recommendations about transportation planning issues to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee. Members of this committee serve rotating three-year terms. Committee bylaws limit members to two consecutive terms. Diana Evans is being nominated to fill Public Seat for Assembly District 4.*

MR. LYON presented the recommended appointment of Diana Evans to the Citizens Advisory Committee.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL commented that the CAC would benefit having Ms. Evans as a member.

MS. HEIL moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL seconded.

*Hearing no objections, this motion passed.*

#### **b. Citizens Advisory Committee Name Change**

MR. LYON referred to Darrel Hess' letter recommending changing the name of the Citizens Advisory Committee to something more appropriate that would not discourage non-citizens from participating.

In response to Assembly Member Weddleton's question what the requirements are to serve on the CAC, MR. LYON noted that the Committee consists of representatives from each of the six Assembly Districts, a member from the Federation of Community Councils, the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, the Chugach-Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, Planning and Zoning Commission, and JBER.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON intends to support the name change because, for example, those that use the buses are lower-income and recent immigrants that might not be citizens, but would be good representatives on the CAC due to their familiarity with the transportation system.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL supports the name change partly because the makeup of the CAC is really the community more than citizens. When Chambers of Commerce are involved, it certainly suggests that it is the community giving input or being involved in this committee. On the flip side, if it is called a Community Advisory Committee, we might get more community groups to engage with the advisory committee. It seems to be more of a true reflection of what the advisory committee is doing, which is engaging with the community on various levels, and is not restricted to anyone under the term "citizen".

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL moved to change the name of the Citizens Advisory Committee to Community Advisory Committee. ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON noted that Mr. Hess' letter was just suggesting dropping "citizens" from the name and leaving it as just "advisory committee". That would be okay, but other advisory committees exist, such as the Freight Advisory Committee and the Port Advisory Committee.

MR. HESS pointed out that further down in his letter he noted that the Policy Committee could consider using "residents" or "public", but that Ms. McNulty suggested using Community Advisory Committee because the acronym would still be relevant for historic documents. The word "community" truly reflects, as Assembly Member Zaletel stated, the intent of this to be a community group.

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE called for a vote.

**Yay**

Assembly Member Zaletel  
Assembly Member Weddleton  
Mr. Schutte

**Nay**

Ms. Heil  
Acting Chair Vanhove

***The motion passed 3 to 2.***

**6. Project and Plan Updates - None****7. General Information****a. AMATS Project & Plan Updates**

MR. LYON briefed the Committee noting that the Non-motorized Plan comment period has ended, and Ms. Wilm is preparing responses to over 700 comments received. The TIP Amendment #2 is out for public comment through March 29. He did receive three requests for some changes to the TIP. The FTA 5307 split-letter appears to have been signed between the Alaska Railroad and the Municipality because of the changes to Table 10, which is outside AMATS' allocation. Any changes to AMATS' allocation, the Railroad, and Public Transportation Department funding would require an amendment. The RFP (Request for Proposal) for the 2050 MTP is now open to potential bidders.

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

(JW) With regard to the \$11 million from FHWA that came out in January with the rule that it had to be in our TIP, what is the process if there was some reason to use it on a project that is either not in the TIP, or is in the TIP, but could be modified?

(CL) *Those funds have to be in the TIP in order to be spent in our area. If it is a project already in the TIP, then all we need to do is reflect the funding. If it is more than 50 percent of the allocation or the total project cost, then there would need to be an amendment. For example, if we currently had a \$3 million phase of the project that we are planning on using to AMATS' allocation and are going to replace it with this, it will still be the same dollar figure, we are just using a different source of funds. If we were wanting to add a project that is not in the current TIP, we would need to do a full amendment to add the new project in.*

(JW) Who decides what that money is spent on?

(CL) *We believe everyone agrees that AMATS decides the allocation of that funding, but we are not 100 percent sure. The State is looking at it, but guidance from FHWA is not crystal clear and has not provided anything in writing yet.*

(JW) When would we start looking at what to do with that?

(CL) *He requested something in writing two weeks ago and as soon as he hears it can be spent here, it will go before the Policy Committee to decide.*

(JW) Asked if this could be added to the next agenda? If we have heard a response by then, at least it will be on the agenda and we can get started with discussions as quickly as possible.

(CL) *Absolutely. He added that the funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024.*

- (CS) Asked Mr. Lyon to further explain that if we use a portion of this previously unanticipated funding to contribute to a project in the TIP using the example that it is a \$3 million project for this construction year, but we want to do this year and next year all at once. Does that require a TIP modification or is it just that it is the funding source, and we would be doing two calendar years at once?
- (CL) *His understanding is that if we have a project with a \$3 million phase in 2022, and were planning on spending our Surface Transportation Block Grant or our AMATS allocation on it, but, instead, are going to use CRRSAA (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act) funds, that is not an amendment because the dollar figure is the same. It is just that you are changing what flavor it is, which would not be an amendment.*
- (CS) Where does the balance of our normal allocation go? Do we get to reassign that somewhere else?
- (CL) *We do get to reassign that somewhere else. A couple of the Non-motorized projects, for example, the Downtown Trail Connection and Fish Creek have been discussed possibly needing some additional funds. Those are opportunities where the additional funding could go. If it is over 50 percent, then it would be an amendment. CRRSAA funds do not have a match requirement. One of his suggestions was to look at the planned projects we have in the TIP, and if we use CRRSAA funds, we will not have to search for a match, since you cannot bond for a match for planning projects.*
- (MZ) With regard to the Surface Transportation Block Grants, it was her understanding that Anchorage would qualify independently. Are we anticipating a portion of Surface Block Grant money to come in through the AMATS process as well?
- (CL) *AMATS funds are the Surface Transportation Block Grants, which are our normal source of funds. These CRRSAA funds include the \$11.3 million that we are hoping AMATS will get as an additional allocation.*
- (MZ) Received a notice that the Municipality is getting the additional Surface Block Grant funds directly.
- (CL) *Yes, that is the additional \$11.3 million funds we are currently discussing. He reiterated that the federal guidance on this is not clear.*
- (MZ) Will forward her information to Mr. Lyon for clarification because she was reading it as two separate things.
- (JW) Asked Mr. Lyon if he could provide, prior to the next meeting, a tally through 2024 of what the matching amounts would be, if we do not change the TIP. Also, provide a list of projects that might be underfunded in the TIP, and their dollar figure.

There were no public comments.

**b. Project to Amend Title 21 Parking Regulations – Tom Davis, MOA Long-Range Planning Division**

TOM DAVIS with MOA Long-Range Planning Division and ELIZABETH APPLEBY with MOA Current Planning Division provided a PowerPoint Presentation about a prospective amendment to Title 21 zoning requirements for parking and site access.

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

- (JW) The neighborhood he lives in is Independence Park. Everyone parks independently of any rules because there are so many cars. Most every house has a garage and driveway parking for two, but cars are parked in yards and on sidewalks, not the streets. If people are not given a place to park, they are still going to park their car wherever. Are there any studies showing that if parking requirements were decreased that there is actually less driving?
- (TD) *Yes, we are starting to work with empirical data as to what the parking demand is under current conditions and census data. If the parking requirement exceeds demand for a majority of developments, most importantly multi-family land use types, this is where we see an opportunity to reduce the requirement. We can identify those studies, but when you have a lower parking requirement and a more urban oriented site development pattern, we are anticipating future percentage reductions and parking demand over time. What we are seeing and studying are differences in vehicle ownership rates between census tracts or parts of town. So, the areas we are really focusing on tend to be the urban neighborhood areas where we see lower parking demand, and more transportation alternatives available.*
- (JW) Are you just looking at the Anchorage Bowl, or does it include Chugiak-Eagle River, and Girdwood?
- (TD) *This particular Title 21 amendment would reduce minimum parking requirements only within the more urban neighborhoods and the transit support development corridors within the Anchorage Bowl. However, the proposed streamlining of the review and approval of administrative parking reductions that are proposed by developers on a project-by-project basis would be available throughout the Municipality. Also, by creating a space in the Title 21 parking code for area-specific lower parking requirements in targeted areas, it is naturally supportive of initiatives by other areas to propose their own area-specific parking adjustments. For example, if the Girdwood Land Use Committee moves forward with proposing some Girdwood-specific changes to its parking requirements, the Title 21 parking code will be able to reference code users to Chapter 9 (the Girdwood code).*

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE asked for public comments.

KYLE FITZPATRICK knows that often parking requirements can be pseudoscience and are not based on empirical data. Has there been any consideration of semi-dynamic pricing for parking? Also, has there been a consideration of reduction in parking requirements for big box stores? Even though it is a little bit dated, he would highly recommend, “The High Cost of Free Parking” written by Donald Shoup to all committee members, if they have not already read it.

MS. APPLEBY responded that Richard Willson is Donald Shoup’s protégé and we have been using Dr. Willson’s book *Parking Reform Made Easy* as it lays out specific recommendations for changing parking requirements in cities.

MR. DAVIS added that the proposed parking reductions include the option to “unbundle” the cost of parking from the rest of the apartment rent. Some cities now require this for multi-family developments. Where the cost of parking is included in the rent, households renting that do not have a car, or have only one car, they are still paying for the cost of the parking and the development—basically subsidizing their neighbors who do have more cars. Unbundling the cost of parking from the rest of apartment rental fees allows households that have no car or only one car to opt out of paying for the parking stall they don’t use and lower their rent. “Unbundling” is on the residential side and we also have a commercial version of that pricing strategy. Secondly, the slides showed the possible expansion of the Downtown parking exempt area where, basically, we deregulate the minimum parking requirements; or we take a very aggressive approach to making the minimum parking requirement less than the majority of developments’ parking demand. In those cases, you are looking at a broader strategy like we do downtown that depends on public (on-street) parking and that have on-street parking permits or use-based pricing of on-street parking. Those are currently limited to downtown. In deregulating parking or an expanded area from Downtown into Fairview, we think there would need to be a variety of Travel Demand Management (TDM) measures; and a rethinking of how we manage on-street parking and street and sidewalk maintenance in such an area.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL noted that she would be interested in learning the effects of snow storage. She knows that on-lot snow storage for commercial properties is something they would like to do, but she would like to know how that intersects with parking minimums now and what that might do if parking minimums were not required, or were reduced.

MR. DAVIS explained that, in Title 21, property owners currently have a choice to either store the snow on-site or have it removed. If the snow is stored on-site, the required snow storage area cannot overlap with the required parking. If they provide more parking than the minimum requirement, then they can designate their extra, non-required parking stalls for snow storage. We have lower minimum parking requirements than we used to, in part because we now require snow storage areas. If we reduce minimum parking requirements, theoretically, the snow storage requirement in Title 21 would not change. In fact, they would, in reality, have less snow to plow and store if the parking requirement becomes lower. But as a percentage of their parking lot size, the snow storage requirement as set in code would remain the same.

MR. FITZPATRICK thinks it would be in the spirit of the COVID funds if they were used for bikes, sidewalk and trail infrastructure that have been a healthy alternative to buses for community and gyms for exercise during COVID.

**8. Committee Comments**

ASSEMBLY MEMBER WEDDLETON noted the following:

1. He and Assembly Member Zaletel have tasked themselves with turning the MTP 2040 into a Long-Range Transportation Plan for Anchorage.
2. Chair Junge gave compelling discussion, previously, that if the Glenn Highway and Seward Highway connection were done, it would pull traffic off of Muldoon and Tudor in appreciable amounts, so that Tudor could be narrowed. This brought about discussion regarding the dangerous crossings along Tudor. He wondered if there were travel studies that can support that.
3. The Knik Arm Crossing (KAC) is not gone, but he understood a study was finished approximately one year ago by Kevin Hemmingway, but was not made public. Can we get access to this study? Is the Knik Arm Crossing not even being considered or is it still viable?

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE explained the following:

1. The KAC project was recently discussed within DOT&PF and the most recent direction received from the executive branch was to complete the phase we are currently working on and close it out. We have gotten permission from FHWA to close out the pre-construction work that was done and the PD&E (Project Development and Environmental) Study that was done early on with participation, meaning the early phases have already been closed. Once the right-of-way actions we are finalizing are wrapped up, we will close out the KAC project.
2. The Hemmingway project study is located in Juneau's Headquarters, but is difficult to gain access to. Even though he has continually requested a copy, he has not yet received one.
3. With regard to the Seward to Glenn Connection, the best information he can provide when looking at the traffic modeling in the Municipality, is it basically shows that all other major arterials and collectors in the Municipality, or all the major roads, operate at a Level of Service of D or greater. That connection does improve the Level of Service on all other major arterials in the Anchorage Bowl.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL requested an update on the Fairview PEL or the Seward to Glenn PEL.

ACTING CHAIR VANHOVE replied that the contract has been awarded. Final negotiations are currently being worked on, if not already completed. A project manager from DOT&PF has been assigned and they are moving forward.

**9. Public Comments - None****10. ADJOURNMENT**

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

*Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.*