

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

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

**July 28, 2022
1:30 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
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
Meg Zaletel	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Forrest Dunbar	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	MOA/Planning Department
Christine Schuette	MOA/Planning Department
Jon Cecil	MOA/Planning Department
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Brian Lindamood*	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Cindy Heil	
Todd Vanhove*	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Steven Rzepka	DOT&PF
Kathryn Wenger	Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)
Shaina Kilcoyne*	MOA/Energy and Sustainability
Susie Serres	DKS Associates
Craig Lyon*	
Randy Brown	
Robert Wertman	RSG, Inc.
Adeyemi Alimi	ADEC
Cheryl Richardson	
Lindsey Hajduk	
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Ben Norman	
Matt Edge	CRW Engineering
Taylor Keegan	MOA/Parks and Recreation
Mark Butler	Federation of Community Councils/North Star Community Council

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR JUNGE called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Adam Trombley, Community Development Director 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

MS. POKON moved to approve the agenda. ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – June 23, 2022

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

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. Peak Hour Excessive Delay (PHED) Targets from the Department of Transportation

MR. JONGENELEN explained that Peak Hour Excessive Delay (PHED) is part of the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Federal Performance Measures program, which is a subpart of the Transportation Performance Management (TPM). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines TPM as a strategic approach that uses system information to make investment and policy decisions to achieve national performance goals.

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

(FD) Supported the moderately increasing targets and would support a higher target, if appropriate. For example, speed is less important than pedestrian deaths. This only applies to NHS (National Highway System) facilities, but which of our larger roads fall into that category? Does Tudor Road or Muldoon Road fall into that category?

(AJ) *The roads consist of the Seward Highway; Glenn Highway; 5th and 6th Avenues; Tudor Road; Lake Otis Parkway; most of Northern Lights Boulevard (east of Northern Lights past a certain point becomes municipal,*

non-NHS facility); Bragaw Street; Muldoon Road; Minnesota Drive; and International Airport Road; and A and C Streets are all NHS.

(FD) That does raise concerns in that the community he represents around Tudor Road has advocated for a long time to lower the speed limit on Tudor Road. It is 50 mph and serves very highly-densely populated areas that have a lot of pedestrian and other deaths, and they want to see it lowered to 40 or 45 mph. If we did that to reach community goals, would these numbers go up because, by this measure, we are no longer performing as well? Is that fair?

(AJ) *Yes. If the only thing you are doing is lowering the speed limit, then we would not meet these. Just slowing the speeds down may impact our ability to meet these targets, but what we need to recognize is that we are also attempting other things to help with congestion besides adding lanes or controlling speeds. For example, trying TSMO (Transportation Systems Management & Operations) and TDM (Transportation Demand Management), which is basically helping with congestion using means other than large-scale roadway expansions and technology, or other related systems. TDM is similar to TSMO and might be a way to help us offset. We would lower the speeds on Tudor Road, but would also start doing more, such as car or van pooling, share rides, increasing transit, which helps get people out of the single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) and reduces the congestion level. Again, yes, we reduce the speeds but we are also reducing SOV.*

(FD) Where does the 60% number come from? Can we alter it to 50%?

(AJ) *From FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) regulations that specify 20 mph or 60%.*

(FD) So, basically, we are saying the federal government gives an incentive to increase or to have higher speed limits on its roads. This particular measure does that?

(AJ) *He would not say that, but if that is how Assembly Member Dunbar wants to interpret it, that is up to him.*

(FD) You are penalized for people going less than 60%, but if you have a higher speed limit, it is easier to reach these numbers.

(AJ) *That would be a logical assumption.*

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR asked, historically, what has been the goal? Is this in line with what it was 10 years ago?

MR. JONGENELEN explained that this is the first time for AMATS setting these targets, so we do not have any historical data. He had not been able to draw information from other MPOs of our size because only the one million or greater populations have provided it and it is not

fair to look at places, such as what Los Angeles is doing versus AMATS in terms of peak hour. Where we are seems to be consistent, so far, with some of the other areas that are in the one million population range. When we get further along in our 2-year period and can look at similar-sized MPOs, it will be good to have that background data.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR moved to approve. MS. POKON seconded.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

b. 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Amendment 1

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the AMATS 2040 MTP was approved in June 2020 by the AMATS Policy Committee and received final approval by FHWA and FTA on August 26, 2020. An amendment to the 2040 MTP is needed to add a new project, the Alaska Cargo and Cold Storage warehouse facility. This project is partially funded with a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) federal grant from 2020. A project receiving BUILD grant funding must be consistent with State and local plans, including the long-range transportation plans of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, such as AMATS. This project must be added to the 2040 MTP as an amendment.

CHAIR JUNGE asked for public comments.

MARK BUTLER, North Star Community Council Vice President and Federation of Community Councils Manager, asked for clarification that this is not to take transportation dollars and put it into the project. It is just to allow this because of the federal requirement. The airport has had projects for 30 to 40 years coming forth, if only they could get enough money to build it. One after another, after another, they failed because they could not stand alone on their own.

CHAIR JUNGE confirmed that this does not come out of AMATS' allocation. It is a separate BUILD grant that has to be approved and because it routes through DOT&PF, it has to be approved in the TIP.

MS. POKON moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR seconded.

Hearing no objections, this motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. Transportation Systems Management & Operations (TSMO) Plan

SUSIE SERRES with DKS Associates provided a PowerPoint presentation.

There were no comments.

b. Fish Creek Trail Project

MATT EDGE with CRW Engineering Group provided a PowerPoint presentation. TAYLOR KEEGAN with MOA Parks and Recreation Department assisted with responding to questions.

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

(FD) Do you think you have enough money to do all of these routes at this point, or will any of these routes exceed the current budget that you will have to go back and ask for more bond funds?

(ME) *The bond funding is only 9% of the total project cost. He did not know exactly what was available for construction as they had not gotten into the cost portion yet.*

(FD) To put it in a very broad sense, with the pool of money that has come from AMATS and the municipality, so far, do you think it is enough to complete any of these routes?

(TK) *We have only bonded for the design match in this, so whatever the preferred alternative is, that will be associated with the cost estimate and then we will proportionately bond for that. It will go through the TIP process.*

(FD) How much did we bond for?

(TK) *Would have to look up that information.*

(FD) This topic will come out during the open houses, but in East Anchorage we received a lot of feedback about how some folks do not feel very safe in tunnels anymore, so there is a strong preference to not have tunnels that may encounter a road. To what degree does that factor into here? For example, the tunnel under the railroad.

(ME) *We refer to it as a tunnel on this but it will be fairly open when constructed based on conversations with ARRC (Alaska Railroad Corporation). It will be 30 to 50 feet wide with a creek, so it will be pretty open. The other tunnel proposed would be something tighter and that is part of the reason we built the second alternative and extend the limits down to the northern Westchester Lagoon tunnel connection. so that we can avoid putting people in a tight confine that is uncomfortable. The reality is that we have quite a bit of grade difference between where the railroad is and the Coastal Trail, and we do not want to put people on a winding, steep connection as we feel there are some safety issues with that.*

CHAIR JUNGE opened the floor to public comments.

MARK BUTLER noted that this is an iconic trail with well-to-do, politically powerful people that own property there, including Wally Hickel, Sr. The only reason the Coastal Trail made it through was because Mr. Hickel, personally, granted the right-of-way project and The Anchorage Times said, “This is horrible and is the worst project ever.” A month later they relented in big letters across the headlines that read, “This is the greatest that happened in many years.” Mr. Hickel said that he had always liked going down to the coast and thought his family should share that with the rest of the community. ARRC is adamant about what they will allow on their right-of-way. You have a very active community group made up of three councils hoping you come through the Community Councils Center at info@communitycouncils.org to send announcements for the public meeting in order to go broader than just one community council, since this is used by so many people. One item he wanted to discuss is access to the ocean and the cutoff of a long-used access through the Turnagain Community by some property owners. That provided a whole bunch of pressure to allow access this way for the Turnagain people, but also for all the Spenard people that are behind this and wish to go, but ARRC does not want them to walk on their right-of-way. When trains arrive, they make a certain noise to get people off that railroad right-of-way. This is a safety project and an aesthetic project and, lastly, it is part of a long-term project by community organizers in Anchorage to get Fish Creek daylighted and turned back into the creek it once was. Most of the estuaries in Anchorage have recreational properties, trails through them, and Campbell Creek has the bird viewing blinds. They have been very well-received and corporations helped fund that project. It is a very popular one and there are a lot of people watching this so we appreciate all your efforts and are looking forward to an October event that will allow, hopefully, some institutional pressure at the key spots.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR noted that there is currently in the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) package about a half million dollars for studying and moving forward with the daylighting of Fish Creek. Is Fish Creek already open along this whole route and would that impact any of these routes?

MR. EDGE explained that it is not open underneath the railroad. None of our improvements would constrict the creek as we would have bridges and other features that would have to be above the flood zone.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER DUNBAR noted that as much as we want to daylight Fish Creek, he did not think they were going to daylight the railroad portion.

MR. EDGE further explained that one alternative would be to go onto La Honda Drive and not go underneath the railroad, but would parallel with the creek. There are complications and expenses associated with this along with maintaining full-time railroad access through there.

LINDSEY HAJDUK informed Mr. Edge that the CRW “sign up now or submit comments” buttons on the website did not work for her.

c. AMATS Transportation Network – Model Presentation

MR. CECIL briefed the Committee on the model. ROBERT WERTMAN with RSG, Inc. provided a PowerPoint presentation.

There were no comments.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION - None

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

CHAIR JUNGE announced that STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program) Amendment #4 is out for a 30-day public review period. It involves a billion dollars' worth of new projects, including the 4-laning south of Anchorage to Indian that is a monster project; and the interchange at Alyeska Girdwood and the Sterling "Y" that have been a long-time coming. These all have to be FHWA approved by September 1. A transportation fair is scheduled in Anchorage for January 12, 2023, from 3:00p to 7:00p at the Alaska Airlines Center. He thanked everyone for their patience with the Dowling Road reset adding that the bridge will be open the first part of October and the roundabouts will be open by the end of October.

MR. JONGENELEN announced that Cindy Heil recently retired and presented her with a Letter of Recognition from the Policy Committee for her level of dedication and invaluable knowledge she provided while serving on AMATS.

MS. POKON noted that Ms. Heil and she had worked together for about one-tenth of Ms. Heil's career, but what stood out the most was Ms. Heil's patience and willingness to take time to mentor people and walk them through difficult, challenging topics, and always thinking five steps ahead of everyone else. Some folks are diligent about getting their tasks done and staying on top of things, but Ms. Heil has true talent for thinking strategically and finding pathways through really difficult topics and issues. Ms. Heil's counseling and mentorship was deeply valued and will be missed.

CHAIR JUNGE expressed that Ms. Heil had been a great mentor to all at AMATS for so, so long. She will be sorely missed as she moves into this emeritus status, meaning we can call on her at any time. The letter Mr. Jongenelen read only scratched the surface of how affective, and collaborative, and beneficial in recognizing all that she had done. She has really been amazing.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

CHERYL RICHARDSON asked if there were any detailed descriptions in ranking projects available to the public. Are there definitions of the ranking criteria? She praised staff for making the MTP and the TIP more consistent and the languages clearer, although, the whole maintenance process still remains very confusing to the public and elected officials. Requests for public review to clarify key elements, for example, the requests the Assembly made recently on the draft performance and project ranking criteria have been routinely denied this spring and summer. These problems are leading AMATS to potentially waste hundreds of millions of dollars. Instead of the current lists that we have, we should be focusing on projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gases citywide.

Secondly, we should also focus on projects that strengthen bike and pedestrian safety where most people actually live and work, in the urban core. AMATS rejected the pedestrian safety project for A and C Streets, while financing massive freeway construction, which is a key example. Finally, she heard Assembly Member Dunbar ask about available money to build Fish Creek and she had asked staff about this before, but had only gotten blank stares. The Federal Highway Administration allows Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) to shift its dollars among its programs, then use them accordingly to new program criteria. For instance, National highway dollars can be put into surface transportation block grants, so you can understand why it is exciting to have ADOT participating in the actual transportation planning that Anchorage does. Right now, we parallel practices with peers going in different directions. She thinks there are some things to be made by bringing ADOT into the planning process for Anchorage and getting some consensus on where they spend their money in the town. A billion dollars would go a long way towards resolving some of the long-term nasty issues that citizens have complained about for decades.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the definitions are in the criteria itself.

MR. BUTLER, Community Councils Center, noted that most of their delegates and community councils involved are very confused as to the different types of projects and so forth. We talked to Mr. Jongenelen and others about giving a TIP presentation to the Federation of Community Councils. We have been frustrated when talking to DOT&PF (he, himself, is a retired DOT&PF employee) with trying to understand the whole infrastructure thing. Many years ago, when he moved here as a young man, they were building freeway intersections all the way out and people were asking why we need it in Rabbit Creek and why do we need it in Birchwood because there was not much development out there. So, what we did is build the freeways out and they come in to town and destroy our city streets. Right now, there are only two ways to do that with about \$30 million for the road drainage fund every year that, for many years, had been voted positively by the citizens, and then the TIP. His understanding is there is no more money in the transportation infrastructure bill for the TIP project. Looking at the chart, there are about \$200 million of unsatisfied projects and we are wondering if Anchorage gets some of this money? We like the freeways and the connections between the different cities, and improving them. That, of course, is important for all of us who live here. Is the TIP going to be doubled in the amount of money, tripled, or quadrupled? This one time in our lifetime are we going to have this amount of money coming in? We are unclear as to what is happening and would like a presentation by DOT&PF at the September 21 Fall Equinox FCC meeting. We are trying to understand this so that we can get the roads fixed in Anchorage. In his North Star area, we have Fireweed Lane and Spenard Road being finished, and we like those projects, but they are two to seven years away. The transportation infrastructure bill is putting money into projects very soon. We are interested in having the 40%, or so, of Alaskans who live in Anchorage get money for our neighborhood streets that are greatly in need of improvement. We would love to have a presentation and connect with Mr. Starzec and other people about that. He also asked if there was going to be infrastructure money for local streets, not subdivision streets, but those similar to TIP projects that have already been approved and the needs have been established? Or is it just going to freeways and roads to other cities?

CHAIR JUNGE commented that Mr. Starzec can be contacted to schedule a community council presentation. He also offered for Mr. Butler to contact him directly with any questions.

MR. JONGENELEN explained that the TIP is not receiving an increase in funding. If there is, it will be a minor amount. We are receiving a small increase in funding for TAP (Transportation Alternative Program) from \$900,000 to \$1.9 million; and we are getting a new pot for carbon reduction funding of about \$3.6 million a year.

MR. BUTLER asked for clarification that the decision to not increase the TIP type projects was the input of the commissioners and their representatives, the mayor and two representatives of the Assembly. Is that decision made locally here by the governor and DOT&PF, or is the decision just that there is no way we can get those funds?

MR. JONGENELEN explained that the decisions regarding AMATS' allocations is made by DOT&PF Headquarters using a programmed formula based on population and other factors to help determine that.

MR. BUTLER reiterated that it is 42% of the population and instead of the old saying of fix America first, this is fix Anchorage first. We have a lot of projects needed to bring our streets up to a higher quality so that people are safe and secure.

CHAIR JUNGE encouraged everyone to engage with their legislators. He has been with DOT&PF for 28 years and has not seen much advocacy on the part of our Anchorage legislators at DOT&PF Headquarters during legislative sessions advocating for projects. Although Senator Stedman is seen there trying to convert funds for brand new ferries for what amounts to 7% of the population; and Senator Bishop from Fairbanks is advocating for a lot of money to go to Amber Alert and other projects. Point being is that this is political and we need to get our legislators and elected officials engaged in advocating for the STIP and those at DOT&PF Headquarters saying, "We are 40% of the population, so why are we only getting 20% of the money?" The legislators are the ones with the ability to make changes, not himself or the DOT&PF Commissioner. Some officials, such as Zach Fields, are able to get insight as to what is really going on; how does the money flow and where does it go; and who decides where the money goes, which is appreciated by DOT&PF.

MS. RICHARDSON noted that, for years, they have gone in and asked for a particular project, such as the Knik Arm Crossing. It is important for there to be a unified plan and less pork barreling of projects. She did not mean that this is what Chair Junge is advocating, but elected officials sometimes go straight to pork barrel. That is not always true, but, again, let us plan things together and set common priorities.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.