

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

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

**August 24, 2023
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
John Binder	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Kent Kohlhas	Municipal Manager, Mayor's Office
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Kevin Cross	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Adeyemi Alimi*	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Rhiannon Brown	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Joni Wilm	AMATS
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Sarah Riopelle	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Noah King	DOT&PF
Matt Stichick*	MOA/Anchorage Health Dept. (AHD)
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Steve Rafuse*	MOA/Parks & Recreation Dept.
Zakary Hartman	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Patrick Swalling	DOT&PF
Adam Bradway	DOT&PF
Bart Rudolph	MOA/Public Transportation Dept. (PTD)
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Sean Holland	DOWL
Anna Bosin	DOT&PF
Brad Coy*	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Allie Hartman	
Sean Baski	DOT&PF
Emily Weiser	Bike Anchorage and Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
James Marks	
Taylor Keegan	MOA, Parks & Recreation Dept.

*AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member

**Designated Assembly Alternate

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR BINDER called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Kent Kohlhase, Municipal Manager, represented Mayor Bronson. Adeyemi Alimi represented the Department of Environmental Conservation on behalf of Emma Pokon. 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. ALIM moved to approve the agenda. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND requested to add a time-sensitive letter as an action item. The letter was drafted by AMATS staff in consultation with the MOA Parks & Recreation Department regarding the Fish Creek Trail Connection project currently programmed in the STIP to use STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant) funds for design and right-of-way in 2023 and 2024. This is time-sensitive because a private citizen appears to be requesting a 95-year property lease from the Alaska Railroad (ARRC) that would effectively prevent the project from moving forward. ARRC meets in September to discuss that lease proposal.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS moved to amend the agenda to add the letter as Action Item 5.c. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

MR. JONGENELEN stated that he was notified yesterday by DOT&PF that they intend to request a 180-day extension of the 2020-2023 STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program) from FHWA (Federal Highway Administration). This is also time-sensitive reason being that in order for DOT&PF to receive that extension, they need concurrence from the State's MPOs. FAST (Fairbanks Area Surface Transportation) has already concurred and DOT&PF is awaiting AMATS' decision. He has drafted a letter and is requesting it be added to the agenda as an action item.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend the agenda to add the concurrence letter to the agenda as Action Item 5.d. MR. KOHLHASE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Main Motion, As Amended

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

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – July 27, 2023

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

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Administrative Modification #1

MR. JONGENELEN noted that an administrative modification to the AMATS 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is needed to update Table 2: Roadway, Table 3: Non-motorized, and Table 9: Transit. These changes meet the requirements outlined in the AMATS Operating Agreement Section 6.6.2 and Policies and Procedures #5.

There were no comments.

MR. KOHLHASE moved to approve the TIP Administrative Modification #1. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

b. AMATS Planning Funds Distribution Formula Update

MR. JONGENELEN noted that, as part of the federal transportation planning process, Planning (PL) funding is provided to the states to fund these efforts. MPOs are given a portion of these funds to cover planning activities outlined in the Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWP). The State coordinates with MPOs on developing a formula for how the PL funds are distributed.

The Committee discussed if any dollar amount was being returned to the state.

There were no public comments.

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

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

c. 2024-2027 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Comments

MR. JONGENELEN informed the Committee that DOT&PF recently released their STIP for comments, which is a larger version of the TIP. The TIP covers AMATS and must be incorporated into the STIP. The STIP covers ALASKA. While reviewing the STIP, AMATS' staff noticed areas of concern and drafted a letter to bring these concerns forward to both the TAC and PC for review requesting approval to submit these comments to the State.

The following were committee questions and comments with responses noted in *Italic*.

- (DV) The Assembly passed a resolution on the STIP and share some of the concerns detailed in this letter. How were projects in the STIP scored, were they scored, and by what criteria? Is there an opportunity to have the STIP projects scored using AMATS criteria?
- (JB) *He had no information to respond to the first question.*
- (AJ) *With regard to the second question, yes, the STIP projects can be scored with the TIP criteria and we, as AMATS, need to take a look at our process on how we develop the TIP. AMATS may have to start moving in the direction of scoring any project brought to us to be included in the TIP using our criteria. It is only limited to the TIP. If AMATS scores these projects with the TIP criteria, it is only for AMATS and not the State's criteria.*
- (DV) He needs more information and any consultation required. He referred to Item #6 under Major Concerns, noting that those projects not in the MTP cannot legally be in the STIP. What is the plan to address these concerns and to make sure that the priorities of the MPOs and of the communities are taken into account?
- (JB) *DOT&PF did meet with Mr. Jongenelen and FAST and have listed several things it impacted in the document. Part of the reason DOT&PF puts these out for public comment and input is to find concerns. There are some areas we could have done better and coordination was one of those, and DOT&PF is working hard to rectify that and make sure all the concerns and inputs are being considered going forward. Another piece of this is that the infrastructure bill obviously deposited a lot of money into the highway programs with a lot of new programs needing to stand up quickly where we do not have metrics and performance standards developed yet, so part of the intent of this process is soliciting input on what that might look like. We will certainly work with the MPOs to ensure we are aligned on some of those items. The last piece we were very focused on is being transparent in utilizing a new process, so that the public did have visibility into all the details mentioned initially, such as showing where in the state we are using it while the programs are being used, and what is the fiscal constraint element. In pulling data out of our old system, some projects were transferred that had not yet been coordinated, although we thought had been, but will be addressed as we review the comments at the end of the comment period.*
- (KC) That gives credence to the need to extend up to 180 days while we iron out some items. He asked for clarification, as time goes by, how the ranking system adjusts as new projects are added and how do older projects (that either have or have not moved forward) change? How does that ranking system affect the necessity of a project over time as the demographics of a community change? A project that might have been very important at some point, but 5 or 7 years later still maintains that high level? Or is there an adjustment period that requires it to be reranked?
- (KK) Could some of the major comments be resolved with specific coordination between DOT&PF and AMATS? Others may be difficult to resolve, such as Comment #1 that reads, "No coordination with AMATS prior to the draft

- document being released.” Does the extension address that? It seems that we are so far down the road that there is no resolution to some of those major comments.
- (AJ) *That is how it appears and that is why he suggested the importance of highlighting it now, so that it does not happen again. It is up to DOT&PF what to do with these comments. Most would be easy to resolve. With regard to Comments 1 and 2, he did not know how to resolve, but Comment 3 will take some work. Comments 4 and 5 would just require correcting the document. Comment 6 is the hardest because it puts the most on AMATS. If these projects are not in the MTP and the state wants to move forward with them, then AMATS has to add them to the MTP. That would require an MTP amendment and removing them from the TIP, adding them back into the TIP, then they can be added to the STIP. It is a long and complicated process.*
- (JB) *During the conversation with Mr. Jongenelen and FAST, we made that point because of the process involved with both MPOs. It definitely does lend itself to an extension making sure we are not bringing anything to a stop while resolving some of the issues in the draft.*
- (AJ) *Just a heads up that the MTP amendment process takes approximately 8 months, so we are well beyond the 180 days at that point. He did inform DOT&PF of this. FHWA has asked AMATS to start shortening our amendment time period for both the TIP and the MTP because they are too long. This might be an opportunity for discussion on how we can make those more streamlined to help move everything forward.*
- (DV) As far as an MTP amendment goes, he did not want to determine an outcome to make the STIP work because some of these projects he does have concerns with. For instance, the Tract J access road process will be interesting to go through and try to make things jive.
- (KK) He referred to Item 6 and asked if the application 23CFR450 would mean that if the MTP is not amended, then these projects could not be in the STIP?
- (AJ) *Yes, according to FHWA (in its current form), the STIP cannot be approved with these projects in it because they are not in the MTP. That also raises questions that a number of these projects are already in the TIP and the STIP, but how did they get in there without being in the MTP? He felt responsible for not doing a good enough job with gatekeeping and apologized to everyone at DOT&PF, the MOA, AMATS, and the public because it will be a long-complicated process to correct this error. It just goes to show that AMATS needs to update its process to be more streamlined and in line with federal requirements. FHWA looks at AMATS as the gatekeeper of projects in our area. We need to do our process diligently, so it does not delay everyone else.*
- (DV) What happens if we are not given more information about the State’s scoring process and their criteria? Are we going to score those projects for the TIP and what would the timeline for that look like?

(AJ) *That would be up to the Policy Committee. The general process for the MTP is that it can be adjusted as need be and the amendment has to happen first. AMATS will need a letter or email from DOT&PF asking for these projects to be added into the MTP. There needs to be backup, and once that is done, AMATS can start the MTP process. The MTP is fiscally constrained, so some projects will have to come out, which is part of the process with the modeling, air quality, and extensive public processes that we will have to do. He will also have to relook at the fiscal constraints and make sure everything matches up. That is why it is really important to have this coordination and make sure our process is outlined for it. The Policy Committee could vote to not include these projects in the MTP, and what we are told by FHWA means it cannot be in the TIP and it cannot be in the STIP.*

(DV) Why are these projects not currently in the MTP?

(AJ) *All four projects are relatively new. The history of the first one is that when AMATS did the 2040 MTP, there was a portion of this project put in the Illustrative as well as a PEL to look at the corridor and decide what to do because it is the Seward Highway Corridor from Rabbit Creek Interchange roughly to Girdwood and what to do on that corridor. At the time, DOT&PF's focus was on the Midtown Congestion Relief or the Seward to Glenn PEL connections. You can see that the projects that were selected were the big-ticket items. As with a lot of things, priorities change, and he believed this reflected a change in priorities as well as new projects coming online. Part of what he did not think was communicated well enough to everyone is that if you want a new project in the STIP, within the AMATS boundary, it is to be in MTP first, then the TIP. It has been a little lax over the years, but is being corrected right now, and that is why it seems so harsh of a punishment that we are all going through, but once we get our process in order and streamline the AMATS process, it will make it more efficient. Projects going into the MTP will be scored using the criteria we had at the time for 2040, so you will be able to see those in comparison to other projects. Then it is up to this committee if you would like AMATS to score these projects when and if we include them in the TIP.*

CHAIR BINDER opened the floor to public comments.

MATT STICHICK
EMILY WEISER

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to adopt the letter and send it to the recipients that are listed. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

d. Fish Creek Trail Connection

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND explained that the Fish Creek Trail Connection is a project the community is very excited about and would serve the community for decades or longer. It would be unfortunate for something that would be a public good and asset to the

community to be prevented from moving forward, essentially to serve the purposes of one private citizen or their family. What this letter does is ask the Alaska Railroad Corporation to take this project into careful consideration when they meet to decide whether or not to accept the lease proposal for that property.

MR. JONGENELEN briefed the Committee on the preferred alternative location of the trail connection.

CHAIR BINDER opened the floor to public comments.

TAYLOR KEEGAN
EMILY WEISER
ANNA BOSIN

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to submit this letter to the Alaska Railroad Corporation from AMATS. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

e. AKDOT&PF Request for 180-day extension

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the 2024-2027 STIP is out for public comment, and the period ends on September 3, 2023. DOT&PF is requesting, of AMATS, FHWA, FTA, and the required concurrence from MPOs, an extension of the STIP for up to 180 days. Fairbanks (FAST) has already submitted their concurrence. AMATS' letter is before the Committee for concurrence and approval of the request. He explained that once the STIP is done, the TIP is also done, which prohibits AMATS from obligating any funding starting in FT24. This extension gives DOT&PF the time it needs to correct anything in the STIP and get it approved, and it also allows AMATS to continue obligating our federal funding.

There were no comments.

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

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. 2023-2026 TIP Q3 Obligation Report

MR. JONGENELEN updated the Committee on the obligation report.

There were no comments.

b. Project Status Report

MR. JONGENELEN briefed the Committee on the status report.

CHAIR BINDER opened the floor to public comments.

JAMES STARZEC

7. GENERAL INFORMATION - None

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS - None

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

ZAKARY HARMON, MOA Traffic Engineering Department, noted that the Pilot Protected Bike Lane project along Pine Street and McCarrey Street has been progressing smoothly. The plastic flexible posts and rubber curb installation will begin (weather permitting) on Monday.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.