

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

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

**November 16, 2023
1:30 PM**

*This meeting is available for viewing at
[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](https://www.muni.org/transportation-planning/amats-meetings)*

Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Sean Holland	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Kent Kohlhase	Municipal Manager, Mayor's Office
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Kevin Cross	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Emma Pokon	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Chelsea Ward-Waller	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Christina Huber	DOT&PF
Will Taygan	Chugach Mountain Bike Riders
Ben White*	DOT&PF
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Jamie Acton	MOA/Public Transportation Dept.
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Brandon Telford	MOA/Project Management & Engineering (PM&E)
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Zakary Hartman	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Adam Bradway	
Diana Rhoades	
Brad Coy*	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Taryn Oleson-Yelle	R&M Consultants
Allie Hartman	MOA/Assembly Special Assistant
James Potts	
Jeff Urbanus	MOA/Eagle River Parks & Recreation Dept.
Adam Moser	DOT&PF
Craig Lyon*	MOA/Planning Department

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR HOLLAND called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. Kent Kohlhase, Municipal Manager, represented Mayor Bronson. Assembly Member Cross participated telephonically. A quorum was established prior to the arrival of Ms. Pokon at 1:38 p.m.

CHAIR HOLLAND introduced himself as the official Director of Central Region, DOT&PF and provided a brief background.

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

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

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – September 28, 2023

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

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

Ms. Pokon arrived at 1:38 p.m.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. Draft 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Public Comments

MS. WARD-WALLER noted that AMATS held a 60-day public comment period for the draft 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) from August 10 to October 9, 2023. During the public comment period, staff held three open houses (virtual, Anchorage, and Eagle River) and provided eight additional public presentations. AMATS received 1,244 comments from 202 individuals/organizations (including anonymous commentors). The Policy Committee and Technical Advisory Committee held a joint work session on October 30, 2023. The Technical Advisory Committee supported the changes shown in bold below, changing CPS193 to a reconnaissance study (see number 3 under Additions), using the cost of removal #3 - Seward Highway: Rabbit Creek Road to Girdwood PEL to help fund additions #2 and #5, and reducing the cost of TIP NHS 1 – Seward Highway: O'Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard Reconstruction Phase II to fund additions #2 and #5.

Additions (with 2022 cost estimates)

1. Add project NMO198 – Glenn Highway Pathway – Settlers Drive to Knik River Bridge (\$21,900,000)
2. **Add and combine projects NMO202 – Glenn Highway Pathway Connection at Artillery Road (\$1,000,000) and CPS047 – Artillery Road Interchange Reconstruction (\$32,800,000)**
3. Add project CPS193 Turnagain Street – 35th/McRae Avenue to Northern Lights Boulevard (\$5,640,000)
4. Add reference to UMED Travel Demand Management Study and implementation
5. **Add Port of Alaska Tract-J Access Road (Project description from the draft 2024-2027 STIP: The Tract-J project supports the Port of Alaska and aims to construct a new, high-standard access road that can better accommodate heavy truck traffic. The new access road, designed as an alternative to Ocean Dock Road, will enhance access to port facilities. The project also includes necessary improvements to drainage and roadway lighting. \$5,622,733)**

Removals (with 2022 cost estimates)

As a starting point for maintaining fiscal constraint after adding projects, these projects received three or more comments requesting removal. Note: the fiscal constraint has several funding sources.

1. TIP NHS 1 - Seward Highway O'Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard Reconstruction Phase II (\$105,000,000)
2. STIP 1 - Seward Highway at 36th Avenue Interchange (\$102,000,000)
3. **STIP 2 - Seward Highway: Rabbit Creek Road to Girdwood Planning Environmental Linkage Study (\$3,000,000)**
4. TIP NHS 3 - Seward Highway Mile Post 98.5 to 118 Bird Flats to Rabbit Creek (\$90,224,000)
5. TIP NHS 4 - Seward Highway and Tudor Road Interchange Reconstruction (\$36,000,000)
6. TIP NHS 5 - Glenn Highway Incident Management Traffic Accommodations (\$19,900,000)

Changes

1. **Change project description for TIP CS 11 – Eagle River Road Rehabilitation (milepost 0.0 to 5.2, Old Glenn Highway to Oriedner Road) to explicitly include a separated multiuse pathway**
2. **Change project description for CPS151 – Old Glenn Highway (Eagle River Loop Road to North Eagle River Access Road) to take out lane removal and add improved traffic calming and improved active transportation facilities**
3. **Change project descriptions if public comment maintains/supports original project intent and doesn't modify the project such that it would need to be rescored.**
4. **Goals and objectives: minor language changes that maintain existing intent. For example: *Revise Objective 3G by changing "design and maintain" to "design, construct, and maintain."* Changing the intent nor adding new goals and objectives were recommended.**

The Committee discussed how small projects within larger projects that affect the greatest amount of change are separated. They also discussed with regard to being fiscally constrained that in order to add a project another project would have to be dropped within the same funding group.

CHAIR HOLLAND opened the floor to public comments.

WILL TAYGAN, Chugach Mountain Bike Riders Executive Director

DIANA RHOADES, Anchorage Park Foundation

JEFF URBANUS, MOA/Eagle River Parks and Recreation Dept.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved for main motion 1 to the 2050 MTP. MR. KOHLHASE second.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND noted the changes he would like to see incorporated in the 2050 MTP are as follows:

1. TIP NHS 1: Seward Highway – O’Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard to amend the project description to read, “Pedestrian over/undercrossing at Scooter and 92nd. Construction of a non-motorized overpass or underpass to connect 92nd Avenue (west of the Seward Highway) with Academy Drive (east of the Seward Highway)”. He would like to see the associated funding reduced from \$105 million to \$30 million based on a presentation heard on concept alternatives delivered by Christina Huber to the AMATS Policy Committee on November 17, 2023. Those concept alternatives can be seen in Exhibit A attached to the amendment document. He chose \$30 million because that would cover Concept #2, which was the most expensive.

He noted that he was a little disheartened to see the Technical Advisory Committee recommendations come forward and not be fully responsive to the public comments that were received in particular about this project. There were zero comments in support of the O’Malley to Dimond Boulevard Seward Reconstruction project, with 10 comments against. It scored very low at 35.35 using the MTP scoring process. The Assembly had passed four resolutions to either right-size, reevaluate, or cancel outright this project. The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) wrote a letter to Alaska Legislators on this project expressing their concern and has repeatedly voted that the full interchange at 92nd Avenue is no longer justified by traffic or use patterns in the area, and urge the deauthorization of this project as proposed, and requests a redesign with a non-motorized underpass to connect Academy Drive and 92nd Avenue to better and more safely serve the community. The RCCC also made recommendations on the STIP, commenting on this project as well. RCCC has been on record for several years in opposition to STIP project ID #30691 Seward Highway–O’Malley to Dimond Reconstruction as proposed. That freeway project is a poster child for misguided spending that goes against Anchorage’s goals for safety and reduced dependency on vehicular travel. The proposed freeway expansion is no longer justified by population growth or travel demand. The on/off ramp at 92nd Avenue would channel high-speed traffic through low-income neighborhoods and would not deliver safe and appealing non-motorized travel options. Again, the RCCC submitted comments on the TIP stating that this project, NHS 0004 92nd Avenue Interchange and Seward Highway–O’Malley to Dimond Boulevard Reconstruction with a full interchange of 92nd Avenue is no longer justified by traffic or use patterns in the area, etcetera. Abbott Loop Community Council, in May, passed a resolution 9 to 0 in support of an Assembly resolution regarding the Seward

Highway-Rabbit Creek to Dimond Boulevard Reconstruction project, asking that it be reevaluated and that they supported Anchorage Assembly Resolution 2023-54 and requested that the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities halt any additional work on the project until the request and the Assembly resolution have been met. To his understanding, they have not been. He hoped there was a compromise to keep the project programmed on the TIP rather than canceled outright, but with a reduced amount and an amended project description.

2. CPS047: To program the Artillery Road Interchange at its full amount of \$32.8 million.

He added that although it scored low, unlike the O'Malley to Dimond project, the MTP received 27 comments in support. Additionally, the MOA Traffic Director expressed that he felt there was a need to address traffic safety in that area.

3. NMO202: To program the Glenn Highway Pathway Connection at Artillery Road, that would be associated with that project, at \$1 million.
4. Add a reconnaissance study for Turnagain Street to evaluate options for potential complete street improvements and program that funding at \$800,000.
5. CPS092: Because we are fiscally constrained with the remainder of that money, he would like to increase the program funding for both Ingra Street and for (CPS118) Gambell Street rehabilitations by \$20.2 million to bring the total for each project up to \$42.5 million in the MTP.

He pointed out that Ingra, Gambell, the Corridor, and all the studying being done with the ongoing PEL process and the reconnecting Fairview project are priority. His colleagues have unanimously supported that in Assembly resolutions on the MTP and the STIP. Although those projects are currently programmed, he thought what really needed to be done was to come up with a realistic amount, and he thought the increases he is proposing would get us closer to that. We do not know what the preferred alternatives will be, which should be coming before us in the spring of 2024. In the past, this corridor has been studied with everything from losing a lane to doing a cut-and-cover, which would be very expensive. He would like to see a realistic programmed amount that could capture a range of preferred alternatives once the PEL and reconnecting Fairview projects are completed. He urged the Committee to adopt these recommendations.

SECRETARY BLAKE called a point of order, asking Assembly Member Volland for clarification that these recommendations are intended to be amendments to his main motion. The Committee could choose to amend his motion.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND clarified that his main motion is an omnibus motion to include all of his recommendations as part of that motion.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS supported the motion. Even though District 2 in Chugiak-Eagle River is far away from the Scooter and 92nd Avenue project, they have been scratching their heads for some time over the usefulness of the size and scope of that project and why it has not focused more on pedestrian access.

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

- (KK) With regard to the cost reduction and the savings that Assembly Member Volland is proposing to realize from eliminating the vehicle underpass and just going to a pedestrian underpass or overpass, his understanding was that the O'Malley to Dimond project was reconstructing the Seward Highway from O'Malley to Dimond. He was wondering if the remaining funding was sufficient for that scope of work, in which the project was around \$105 to \$110 million. Assembly Member is proposing to reduce it to \$30 million, and asked if that was enough to cover the scope of the O'Malley to Dimond project, that included some resurfacing and some lane additions without the vehicle underpass.
- (SH) He thought the intent was to descope that project for just the underpass for \$30 million.
- (KK) Yes, to descope the current O'Malley to Dimond project is reconstructing the Seward Highway from O'Malley to Dimond, building the 92nd Avenue underpass with the associated roundabouts. If the funding is reduced to \$30 million, is there sufficient funding to do the work on the Seward Highway that needs to be done without realizing that the underpass has now been removed. There was other work envisioned in the O'Malley to Dimond project than just the underpass. Is \$30 million enough to do a pedestrian underpass/overpass and the other work that was envisioned for that section of the Seward Highway?
- (DV) At the November 22 presentation referenced in Exhibit A, Concept #1 is the least expensive, at \$18 million estimated cost. However, before these three slides were shown in succession, Ms. Huber displayed a slide and noted that there was a baseline assumption that \$8 million would include the expansion (the two additional lanes). His understanding was that all three of these concepts include the funding of the additional lanes, but do not include the Diverging Diamond aspect. He thought this was consistent with the concept alternatives we were shown, and he chose the higher end of that, which DOT&PF had expressed an interest in doing some sort of phased approach undercrossing, so choosing the most expensive concept alternative here, for him, is a compromise. As Mr. Kohlhase is well aware, the municipality is doing snow maintenance on DOT&PF roads. He almost felt he was living in an alternate reality right now: that this project that is so unpopular and has such little support in the community, would add lanes that needed to be maintained. For him, this is a compromise and is based on the only presentation that had partial to good information on what it would look like to right-size this project. That is what he is working off of because he does not feel they have received good information from DOT&PF on what it truly would take. Even the concept alternatives that were presented to us at the November meeting were hastily thrown together in a matter of days. He is trying to, in good faith, allow this project to stay programmed in a way that would more closely align with the community's expressed needs.

Chair Holland relinquished the gavel to Vice Chair Kohlhase for the purpose of discussion.

(SH) He felt that if you descope the project so much that we are just talking about the pedestrian under cross, then we are talking about a completely different project, so it is almost like we would take the O'Malley to Dimond project out of the MTP and add a new project because the scope, the purpose and need, and all those things are completely different. He did not think it was really changing the project description, but was creating a new project. As far as the talking points that DOT&PF has for that Seward Highway: O'Malley to Dimond, the purpose and need are summarized to provide additional capacity, connectivity, and safety enhancements. He had discussed with staff about going back and reevaluating that purpose and need using the most current AMATS model to see if it still supports that projected traffic growth and reevaluating the scope of the projects and how those improvements might be phased. For instance, are those additional lanes warranted, as they may not be warranted by congestion with that reevaluation? There is a safety enhancement that allows a longer distance for cars to weave parallel, which is safer than the typical ramps there. The interchange improvements are a big part of the \$105 million, and we need to see if that is really warranted. Is it still the right interchange type? At the workshop, he brought up that, anecdotally, there appears to be a crash problem there. Our data lags by three years, which is just the way the system works. It turns out that it is not a big problem compared to a lot of other intersections or interchanges in the city. We do have a pedestrian crash problem on Dimond, which is also included in the scope of this project. Staff's idea was to look at what is the appropriate thing to do at Scooter, whether it is to make that connection or make a pedestrian undercrossing. Some of the elements he thought might appeal to some of the comments that he read were that the scope of the project includes a bike lane and pathway added to Brayton along the east side for the length of that. Right now we are showing some roundabouts in there that add traffic calming, which he understood was a problem on Brayton. There is also a separated pathway on the east side of the Seward Highway and pedestrian enhancements at the ramps on Dimond where there is a demonstrated crash history. Another important thing in the city is the creation of a new snow dump. To summarize, DOT&PF intends to go back to the drawing board with more recent data just to see what parts of that scope are still warranted and needed and maybe descope the project from there. As part of this exercise, we are willing to descope some and maybe move some of that funding towards the Glenn Highway to Artillery Interchange. That covers #1 and #2. With regard to #3, which is the Glenn Highway Pathway Connection to Artillery Road for \$1 million, he thought they could support that as long as they could find funding for it. With regard to #4, Turnagain Street Reconnaissance Study, he thought DOT&PF would probably defer it to the city as long as they can find funding for it. The increases in program funding for the Ingra and Gambell projects seem a little arbitrary. It is hard, in his mind, to just add \$20 million to that scope without knowing exactly what we are going to do. All these costs are at the concept level, so who knows what the accuracy is? We have seen 40-50% inflation compound over the last three or four years. It is probably going to drop off, but he was not sure how accurate any of these were. It is important to have it fiscally constrained, probably, but it is a plan, not a funding program. That is his input on DOT&PF's behalf.

- (DV) He asked Chair Holland what his recommendation was for Scooter and 92nd because that is the purpose of today, so that AMATS staff has their marching orders. It sounds like Chair Holland is acknowledging that the purpose and need do need to be reevaluated and the scope needs to be changed, but he did not hear an amount. If Chair Holland thought it was more appropriate to remove that project and add another, is that the recommendation being made?
- (SH) *No, that is not the recommendation.*
- (DV) Okay, so that is not the recommendation, so is the recommendation to keep it fully programmed at \$105 million in the MTP?
- (SH) *Right now, it is programmed for approximately \$42 million. We are already planning on phasing it in our project development plan, which kind of leads to the eventual STIP because we cannot afford that \$105 million hit in our spending plan. He felt that \$40 million is a good number to use, and, at this point, he did not want to make the decision on how we are going to descope that. But we do need to go through that analysis.*
- (DV) He is uncomfortable keeping that programmed in our Long-Range Transportation Plan without a clear sense of what that project hopes to accomplish. With Chair Holland's feedback, that makes him more inclined to just cancel the project and require DOT&PF to bring back a reevaluated project and a reevaluated scope. He is willing to keep his recommendation for \$30 million, but that gives him even more of a lack of clarity about where DOT&PF is headed. This is a planning document, not a funding document, but we need to have a plan, and the description needs to match up with what that plan is.
- (SH) *He explained that from the scope that is in the MTP, it is not all that detailed, and the things he mentioned here (bike lanes, pathways, and the traffic calming on Brayton), to him when he is reading through that project description, it is not very clear. If it were clear, he felt that it would have appeased some of the concerns the commentors had because it does have non-motorized facilities and it is going to make the frontage road safer. Travel on the ramps to Dimond where there is a demonstrated crash problem, would have channelization, and things like that would solve those problems. DOT&PF's opinion is that we should keep that in the MTP recognizing that there is potential and, at this point, he would not commit to anything; we may not need those extra lanes on the Seward Highway. There is potential to descope that some and come up with a less expensive alternative at the interchange and some things that could free up some money. We already have a plan to phase that project, but there is no real clear definition of those phases yet. It is programmed for 2027, so it is a little ways out.*
- (DV) Where has that phased approach documentation been publicly available?
- (SH) *It is in the 'to be' draft step and is a development that has come about in the last month or so. Keep in mind that this is his second week with DOT&PF.*
- (DV) So it is not publicly available?

(SH) He did not think so because the draft STIP had been published but not the final STIP.

MS. POKON asked for clarification on that point.

LUKE BOWLAND with DOT&PF could not speak to the specific numbers, but the draft STIP released for public comment did show a phased approach to this project. There were some inconsistencies in the numbers of where the phasing was going to be within the documents that were put out for public review. Part of the guidance within the STIP was to limit projects to \$50 million or less, and that was part of the front matter of the STIP.

Vice Chair Kohlhase returned the gavel to Chair Holland.

(KK) He did hear Chair Holland say that DOT&PF is interested in looking at reevaluating the project or what the scope of that project may look like. He knew that Assembly Member Volland articulated (and he had heard this himself since the 2018-2020 timeframe) that there is a lot of interest in the community in eliminating the vehicle underpass, and he thought that was clearly the intent behind Assembly Member Volland's motion. What is unclear to him is how the position being articulated now about reevaluating the project, if that level of reevaluation would occur, if we were to leave the funding at \$40 million. How is there assurance to the 'mover' that that reevaluation would occur? This is strange because Chair Holland is in the position of representing the project and on the Policy Committee at the same time and has noted that additional lanes are needed, but it sounded like that position would continue to be that the underpass would still be needed. One of the primary reasons behind Assembly Member Volland's motion is to eliminate the underpass in response to neighborhood and community council comments. He is a little unclear about how we reconcile that.

(SH) *He did not have a good answer for that, but DOT&PF had done a similar project to the north of Dimond at Lore Road, so maybe that will be part of that reevaluation. It is hard for him to provide any assurances that probably do have some value as far as connecting the communities across the highway. DOT&PF will take a look at it and consider public input, but we definitely know that is where the pushback is.*

(EP) She asked if Chair Holland had a rough sense of timing for when that reevaluation would occur? Presumably before 2027?

(SH) *CHAIR HOLLAND replied that DOT&PF is not programmed for construction until 2027, so we have time to figure that out, but it will be before 2027. Reevaluating the environmental document is required in the federal process at different milestones anyway, and we still have at least one more of those milestones to hit. If the document gets to a certain age, it is a requirement to reevaluate it as we move to construction, utility relocation, etcetera. But, yes, the project has been around long enough that he thinks we need to step back and see if some of the traffic projections that were made based on the old AMATS model are still accurate. If those change, then maybe that need for the undercrossing at 92nd*

Avenue goes away, but, at this point, we do not know those numbers. We have already started to work on the timeline.

- (KK) He asked Mr. Jongenelen if there was another opportunity in future years to amend the MTP? Are we facing a time window and do we need to act on this motion today?
- (AJ) *He replied, yes, the MTP can be amended. And, yes, AMATS does have a timeline because staff needs to know what additions, removals, and changes the committee wants made to the MTP. We can do that in December because it will involve modeling, making sure the fiscal analysis is done, and the air quality conformity determination is up-to-date before we can bring it back to the committee in January. The reason our timeline is so crunched is even though we have until August 2024, but we are pushing forward because the STIP cannot be approved until the MTP is approved. The projects shown in the STIP also need to be in the MTP and the TIP. There was an effort by AMATS to try and help the state get the STIP approved before their extension period ends at the end of March. However, AMATS is doing their best, but if the committees feel that more time is needed for discussions on these items, we can always push back MTP work until the committee is satisfied that they have all the answers they need. We also need to recognize that FHWA and FTA approvals of our MTP are needed by August 2024.*
- (CW) *In addition to being able to make amendments to the MTP in the future, once the MTP is approved, it also gets updated, wholly, every four years. That timeline also needs to be kept in mind.*
- (SH) We are working with several fiscally constrained plans, and, to DOT&PF, the STIP is probably the most important, and we are overprogrammed now, so we do have to prioritize those projects. He was not sure, with all the other elephants they are trying to eat, how high this raises it. The question about the MTP is that a lot of these numbers are conceptual. Does it not get changed every time there is a change to the estimate?
- (AJ) *He explained that it depends on how significant the change is. If it is significant enough that there could be an impact on other projects not being funded, then, yes, we do have to do a reevaluation of the funding. But because we are always updating the MTP, there is never a time when we are not updating the MTP and always relooking at these estimates. If we know, for example, that this project is not going to be \$105 million but instead \$30 million, that is a significant enough change for us to go back because it would free up funding for other projects that were not added in. We identified all these needs but could not fund them because of the cost. If it is only a \$2 million change, it washes out in the end.*
- (SH) He had asked that question, leading into Ingra with definitely some needs over at Ingra and Gambell, noting there are several projects in the MTP already if we go through that analysis and discover that that is a \$40 million project. DOT&PF has that flexibility too, as it is a living document.

(AJ) *We can do an amendment, or during the next update we will be looking at the fiscal analysis to determine where we are at, whether the projects are still moving forward as we said they were when last approved, and whether we make adjustments and changes. It is a never-ending process for AMATS. We also have to update the TIP if there are projects in the MTP that are also in the TIP in order for them to be in the STIP. If this project is also in the TIP, we have to update it with whatever was changed in the MTP. Because these projects are underway and we have actual numbers, we have to keep them consistent with the actual numbers known at the time.*

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND appreciated that the department is looking at how they can rescope the project, and he also appreciated hearing that there is an opportunity in the future to amend. But he thought the onus was on DOT&PF to rescope the project and then bring forward that amendment when it was ready. He did not feel comfortable with the approach of letting us just keep this nebulous amount of money so that we could figure out what we wanted to do because, again, this is our Long-Range Transportation Plan.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND called the question. ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

CHAIR HOLLAND clarified that approval of calling the question meant debate will end immediately and the main motion will then be on the floor for action. If the motion fails, discussion will continue.

Hearing objections, CHAIR HOLLAND called for a roll call vote on calling the question.

YAY

Assembly Member Cross
Assembly Member Volland

NAY

Ms. Pokon
Mr. Kohlhase
Chair Holland

The motion failed 2 to 3.

Discussion on the matter continued.

(KK) He referred to discussions in previous years about how Academy Drive, which attaches to the east end of Scooter, would be funded and the impacts on the neighborhood, noting that was where many of the comments from some of the community councils (Rabbit Creek Community Council and others) came from. Some of the discussions were also whether the traffic projections for Academy Drive remained accurate at tens of thousands of cars per day because of the improvements that had been made to the Dimond intersection. They had traffic projections for Academy Drive based on the Scooter project. The Dimond intersection was improved, and many in the community, including Assembly members, thought that the improvements to Dimond had alleviated the need for the Scooter/92nd Avenue vehicle underpass project. His question is whether those reevaluations had in fact been done based on the changes that have occurred to the Dimond intersection. If they have not been done, how would DOT&PF's reevaluation of the project incorporate that need?

If they have been done, how do the public and members of the committee know that the reevaluation may not already point to a change in the scope of this project? His overall discomfort is that if we leave it at \$105 million or rescope it to \$40 million with the understanding that DOT&PF will take the project and do a kind of reevaluation, does that happen with a public process? Where is the opportunity for consideration of the community council comments and other things that have led Assembly Member Volland to bring this motion to the table? He wanted to make sure that if we walk away voting yes on something today, everybody knows what the end product is going to be. If the starting point of the end product is that the vehicle underpass is a vital component, then he did not think it would achieve the goal Assembly Member Volland had in mind when bringing this motion and representing the interests of the community. He is struggling with the idea of voting to change the scope of a DOT&PF project on a wholesale basis, but he is also struggling with the concept of voting to allow the project to remain as it is because of the significant interest of the community, which is why he asked if there was an opportunity for a follow-up meeting.

(SH) Is the Academy project included in the MTP?

(AJ) *It is because it is currently programmed in the TIP to start next year.*

CHAIR HOLLAND deferred to Mr. Bowland to assist with responding to the question.

MR. BOWLAND explained that in terms of our path forward on this project and to some of the concerns raised by Assembly Member Volland, there was a letter issued that we are reevaluating the scope of this project and are looking at deferring the construction piece up to 2027. One of the benefits to that time frame is that it could align with the Academy/Vanguard and the scope of that project to address some concerns the community members had on how this may impact traffic near a neighborhood. We have also had discussions with community council members, legislators, folks in the community and have received a ton of input and we are in the process of compiling that information and looking at the scope. There are some other things that have changed in this area. We have relatively recently completed some projects on O'Malley and how that may impact some of the data as traffic equalizes after the completion of those projects. The approach moving forward is to compile that information and then put out public outreach that shows this is what we have heard. These are some of the things he thought would address the comments and concerns from the community and how the project may advance. When we are talking about rescoping this project, we are talking about a big public outreach effort to show what we can change and maybe some other things that if we cannot change it, why can we not change it. Where is that data driven backup on how we recommend proceeding for the benefit of the public.

(KK) The last number he heard for the Academy project was in the \$23-25 million range, so that begs another question in his mind is that if that project is planned to proceed, presumably depending on if the vehicle underpass project was rescoped and there was no vehicle underpass, then Assembly Member Volland presented the three different options that were presented by Ms. Huber last year. At least two of these options may not require the reconstruction of Academy Drive. Now we have the cart before the horse, and are talking about not \$105 million but \$130 million. If the underpass project were descoped, that

- might free up more than the \$70 million or so that Assembly Volland estimated and could free up the other \$25 million for Academy because Academy presumably would not be needed if some iteration of a pedestrian underpass was implemented instead of a vehicle underpass. He remained thoroughly confused as to the best path forward today. He had also heard the same concerns Assembly Member Volland has heard, and the strong pushback from the community, and some concerns from the previous administration about the project. He is not sure how to proceed right now.
- (DV) Concept #2 gives an estimated cost of \$27± million and it was pointed out during this presentation that the roundabout to the west may not be needed for pedestrian connectivity. So, even within Concept #2, he was not sure how much analysis went into this presentation or these concepts and was sort of self-admitted by the presenter. If the roundabout to the west is not needed, he still thought there would be a lot of wiggle room within this concept for the configuration of a non-motorized crossing. Even at \$30 million, which he is proposing, he thought that would cover all three of these alternatives. He argued that if DOT&PF disagrees and says there is still a need for the two lanes or there is still a need for an X, Y, and Z scope at \$40 million, they should do the reevaluation. We were told that DOT&PF was going to do a reevaluation. Why has that not been done yet? One of the four Assembly members called for a reanalysis of the purpose and need, and we were told by Ms. Huber that was going to be done. It was not, and we followed up on that. Now he thought it was like we are late at the game and are supposed to be approving the MTP, and we still do not know how we are going to rescope this. He is offering specific language and trying to make other projects that the community does support moving forward. It is on DOT&PF to come back at a later date when they have completed a reevaluation and have a proposed scope, and to amend the MTP. He hoped that we could be responsive to the community's concerns and to other elected officials that have supported this in the interim.
- (SH) *There is a design that is ready to bid. He felt there are many elements in here that the people that commented, and based on the nature of their comments, he would say that if they knew that was in the scope, that might have changed their comment to some extent. That is presumption, and he did not know if that was true or not, but it seems like there is a desire for non-motorized and safety improvements, and there are some elements that certainly do that. All those elements do that to some extent, but if we are going to phase that and do the work on Brayton and do the work on Dimond and hopefully do something at O'Malley, as Mr. Bowland had mentioned, maybe some of those changes that we made uphill will change some of those accident counts. Again, we have a design that is ready to go, that we could build part of that project that would have a lot of value to the people that are making those comments.*
- (DV) He did not think that it was just a desire for non-motorized elements that was driving the objection; but thought it was also the emptying of traffic into a lower-income neighborhood and the removal of soccer fields and recreational opportunities for kids as part of the right-of-way for that project. The community has been very clear about what they would like to see, and that is a non-motorized-only crossing. That is why he is bringing this forward.

- (SH) We are looking at 2050 and most of the projects in this plan are at concept level and that is exactly what this is and the costs are concept too.
- (KK) Asked Mr. Jongenelen what is the ability or the latitude of the Policy Committee to significantly modify the scope of a project that is not AMATS funded. He recalled hearing discussions that the Policy Committee can add or remove projects. In the opinion of the AMATS Coordinator, can a project be significantly rescoped?
- (AJ) *This gets into a tricky topic. It is clear that we can add or delete an AMATS-funded project, but rescoping is always in a gray area. FHWA and FTA say that AMATS is responsible for all transportation projects that are federally funded or non-federally regionally significant projects within our MPO boundary. They also hold AMATS accountable for all those projects, and anything in the TIP or the MTP is up to the Policy Committee's authority on what to do. His understanding is that the Policy Committee can do whatever it wants as long as it is legally allowable. However, when you send the MTP forward for approval by FHWA and FTA, they will ask if you made this change based on a cooperative discussion between the different parties. He thought what we are doing here today is part of that cooperative discussion. There are no federal guidelines here of what is the exact cooperative things you have to do regarding the MTP. So, yes, you can make changes to the description; however, it is a DOT&PF project with DOT&PF funding. If DOT&PF does not like the description that is changed or the change to the project, they do not have to implement the project as changed. He did not know what limitations there are on whether DOT&PF can just do whatever they want because there is so much emphasis placed on what is in the MTP, what is in the TIP, and then what is in the STIP. This would be new territory that we have not yet explored, so he did not have a lot of answers.*
- (SH) *With regard to the funding perspective, they are relevant, but he did not think they were that relevant. DOT&PF does not want to build a project that does not serve the purpose and need, regardless of whether we have to pay money back to the federal government. There is no guarantee that if we chop \$75 million out of this STIP project, that it will go to the other projects. He did not know if that was all that relevant because it now turns out that we are looking at priorities for the state. We are talking concept-level here again for the plan.*
- (EP) It sounds like there is a commitment from DOT&PF that there will be a reexamining of the purpose and need and that information will go through a public process and will be available to the public and to AMATS before anything goes forward related to a vehicular underpass, which sounds like the crux of the question. There is more information on the horizon that would inform.
- (SH) *As far as a commitment that was made to that work, he did not know when that commitment was made, but it is underway. He did not know the details of the project and could not put a timeline on how long that would take. The first step is using the updated AMATS model, which he thought was recently completed, and using that as a basis for making our projections later on. Yes, DOT&PF will commit to you that they will reevaluate that project, but today he could not provide a timeline.*

- (KK) He noted that Chair Holland had mentioned earlier using the \$40 million amount as opposed to \$105 million. Is there an amendment to the motion that could arrive at that amount for the scope of work for the reconfigured, reimagined O'Malley project?
- (SH) *He thinks there would be, mostly because it was concept-level. What can we build for \$42 million or whatever it is, but he did not think they knew the answer to that yet. There are some things, like the vehicle underpass, where the work could be pushed, if warranted, to a later scope. He was not sure when that would happen.*
- (DV) He thought what he was hearing was that DOT&PF would prefer to keep the existing project description language, but it is amenable to reducing the program funding to \$40 million. He still felt that it is DOT&PF's burden of proof. If there are other portions of the project that are still relevant or still have merit, he thought that would be a future amendment to the MTP. If the will of the Body is going to be that we do the former, he would support that., but he still thought it was important to prioritize these other projects. To Chair Holland's point about these being concept-level, he thought Gambell and Ingra are concept-level, and when we have seen previous concepts from highway-to-highway, we have seen a cut and cover. What is that going to cost? A whole lot more than \$80 million. That is why he wants to see realistic program funding for Gambell and Ingra. It is one of the most pressing needs and a stellar example of DOT&PF's willingness to work with the community, particularly with bringing on the new project manager, Galen Jones, who he thought was doing a fantastic job and has shown a willingness to work with the folks involved in the Reconnecting Fairview project. Mr. Jones did a novel study by putting cameras all along the corridor (Gambell, Ingra, and Hyder) to capture collisions at the intersections and near-misses and also capturing mid-block crossings and activity, not just at the conflict points or intersections. If the amendment is that we keep the same project language and reduce the funding, begrudgingly he could support that as long as these other projects are prioritized and programmed as well, and make the corresponding reductions to reach that \$10 million delta. We could make those reductions from Ingra and Gambell and would be a pretty big compromise.
- (SH) That is more in line with what the TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) recommended?
- (DV) *The TAC recommended no change, surprisingly, to the Dimond/O'Malley project.*
- (AJ) *Clarified that the TAC did recommend a change to reduce the cost of the Dimond/O'Malley Interchange to fund the Glenn Highway Pathway Connection on Artillery Road and the Tract J project.*
- (KK) How specific does a project need to be? If an amendment were made to reduce the funding for the O'Malley to Dimond project to an amount, is there an opportunity for the Policy Committee to recommend that DOT&PF go back and do the rescoping so that rescoping effort would be captured in the record?

(AJ) *Yes, they can, and it could be stated as part of the stipulation of the approval that DOT&PF is committing to redoing that evaluation and providing that information to the Policy Committee when it is done, allowing for further discussion. He referred to the recommended project description changes in the changes section of the memorandum and asked the Committee to look at those because a lot of those are responding to the public asking for more information to be added to project descriptions in the MTP to help address some of the concerns they have with noise, environmental impacts, or active transportation. That change was a recommendation for approval from the TAC so that it could be carried forward. Often, what happens is that the public will comment on a project description, and AMATS has generic descriptions in the MTP, and some of these items get lost. He suggested the committee look to see if any of those changes could be amended because they are not cost changes, just project description changes that are easy to do.*

First Amendment

MR. KOHLHASE moved to amend the project description under Item #1 to read, “Alaska Department of Transportation will evaluate the scope of the project based on community and local government comments that have been made about the viability of the project given the numerous public comments that have been received. Reduce program funding from \$105 million to \$40 million. Items 2 and 3 would remain the same. Strike Item #4, given that it is a local street owned by the municipality. Amend Item #5 to increase the funding by \$15.2 million. Amend Item #6 to increase the funding by \$15.2 million.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

CHAIR HOLLAND called for a roll call vote.

YAY

Assembly Member Cross

Ms. Pokon

Assembly Member Volland

Mr. Kohlhase

Chair Holland

NAY

The first amendment passed unanimously.

Second Amendment

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend to incorporate from the memorandum Items 1 through 4 under the suggested changes, not the additions or the deletions.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND understood from Mr. Jongenelen that these are responsive to public comments, but do not impact fiscal constraints.

Hearing no objections, the second amendment passed unanimously.

- (EP) She asked for clarification that the first amendment was to have that \$40 million include the current project description with that language added on about the evaluation of the project.
- (AJ) *Clarified that the first amendment would 'add' to the current project description the following addition.*
- (SH) He asked how does that deal with the memorandum that was before the committee to begin with?
- (EP) Are there still other recommended changes from the TAC that we have not addressed yet?
- (AJ) *Yes, but Assembly Member Cross has an amendment that might address the few changes recommended by the TAC about adding the Port of Alaska Tract J Access Road project and deleting the Rabbit Creek Road/Girdwood PEL study because of some overlapping issues with that PEL. Staff was unsure of what to do because there is a current approved STIP and a draft STIP. One of them has the PEL in it, the other does not, so we included it to be safe, and the TAC is recommending that the PEL be removed since there is a Seward Highway project currently underway for that portion.*
- (SH) *Clarified that the committee has addressed some of the changes that AMATS recommended; we have some that have not been addressed, so we will address the recommended changes that were not addressed by the initial motion and as amended.*
- (AJ) *The only things we are going to address at this point are what this committee has approved as amendments.*
- (DV) *Noted that we have had two motions that have passed. One as amended. Then we have the memorandum with recommendations, so it is up to any member of the Policy Committee if they want to make further motions on this agenda item or we could move on to the next agenda item.*
- (AJ) *Clarified that these have all been amendments at this point. You have the main motion, and two amendments have been made so far to that main motion.*
- (DV) Could you make a separate motion?
- (AJ) *No, a separate motion cannot be made. Only one main motion can be on the floor, and if that main motion is voted on, you are done with the action item. Only amendments can be made to the main motion. Those amendments are voted on, followed by the main motion itself with all the amended changes. The main motion here is Assembly Member Volland's initial motion.*
- (DV) Asked for clarification that each action item can only have one main motion associated.

- (AJ) *That is correct because you have taken action on that item and cannot take any additional action, which is why everything is done as amendments.*
- (EP) So we should have moved first to adopt and then amended.
- (AJ) *He thought how Assembly Member Volland presented his initial motion is fine because it is clear enough for staff to know that this was the original intent and these are the amendments. If there are any additional amendments, we can review them and make sure everything is accurate.*
- (DV) Called a point of order, noting that this is getting a little clunky because we did not realize you can only have one motion. In fact, what we did was actually vote to approve an amended motion.
- (AJ) *Clarified that the main motion had not been voted on yet, just the amendments.*

Third Amendment

ASSEMBLY MEMBER CROSS moved to amend to add the Glenn Highway Pathway Mile 198 project extending to the Knik River Bridge and reducing to just connect from Paradis Lane and connect that trail in Thunderbird Falls. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

- (KC) He noted that his intention is to fractionalize the Glenn Highway Pathway into smaller, manageable bites with things that are important. It would be adding the Glenn Highway Pathway back but reducing the scope where it is strictly connecting from Paradis Lane to Thunderbird Falls. This is a 1-1/2-mile section that connects from Mirror Lake to the Village of Eklutna and Thunderbird Falls, it is the last little leg. It is part of the overall Glenn Highway Pathway project for \$21 million connecting the whole neighborhood with the rest of Chugiak-Eagle River. As stated earlier, there has already been money associated and studies are already being done to resolve some of the connectivity issues.
- (DV) What is the proposed amount? With our fiscal constraint, where would you propose that come from? What would you remove or reduce elsewhere in the MTP?
- (KC) *Was there a reduction on some of the lane changes to the Old Glenn Highway? Some of those funds we should be using that were directed towards the Old Glenn Highway changes. It fits in with the pedestrian calming measures on the Old Glenn. He would estimate it at approximately \$1 million.*
- (CW) *The way AMATS' financial analysis is set up is that all non-motorized projects are under one revenue stream, so you would only be able to add non-motorized projects, not sort of cross-pollinate between the complete street list. She believed the change that he was suggesting was scored but was not positive; it was the appropriate distance because the cost estimate they have for it is \$10 million for Paradis Lane and Thunderbird Falls Exit, but it also says separated grade crossing. She was not sure if that included an overcrossing over the highway, which might be the reason it was \$10 million.*

- (KC) He did not think it was scored or had a grade crossing. This is on the east side, running right up next to the highway. He deferred this to Will Taygan for a further explanation.
- (WT) Noted that this was a good question about fiscal constraints. He would look to DOT&PF for recommendations on where that would come from. In his opinion, in looking at the scope and size of many of these projects, if we are looking at a \$2 million project, it seems to be a pretty small amount. There were some recommended removals in the memorandum, but he did not know which project to pull. However, this is such a small section and a trail that should be straightforward if there is a recommendation made by the committee or DOT&PF to do that work.
- (KC) We are just looking for suggestions where we can do the small connectivity in order to tie in the northern part of Anchorage into the rest of the city.
- (WT) You have moved some money around today, and the interesting thing about this is that it is a section of the Old Glenn that was paved over by the new Glenn, which is why it is a problem. With the rest of the connection all the way from Eagle River to Mirror Lake, you can follow the frontage roads, but the road is paved over for this half-mile. Theoretically, you could just connect the half-mile, but it makes more sense to go from exit to exit with those 1-1/2 miles.
- (SH) That funding has to come out of a certain pot. In his mind, they would take a look at the list, and maybe lower-scoring projects would be the ones they main target to descope?
- (AJ) *Clarified that currently in the TIP we have a portion of the Glenn Highway Pathway that we are extending, which is about a half-mile. It is \$6 million for that portion. If you are looking at 1-1/2 miles, it is going to be roughly three times the amount we have in there, so it could be approximately \$18 million to do the project. \$10 million might be something we could look at, but it definitely going to cost more than what people think with federal funding.*
- (DV) He appreciated the idea and is definitely interested in exploring that possibility in the future. At this point, he will oppose the motion because he did not see any options to deprogram in the non-motorized list specifically that would justify moving this forward.

CHAIR HOLLAND called for a roll call vote.

YAY

Assembly Member Cross

NAY

Assembly Member Volland

Ms. Pokon

Mr. Kohlhase

Chair Holland

The third amendment failed 1 to 4.

MR. KOHLHASE commented that he is time-constrained and there is a meeting scheduled in this room at 3:30 p.m.

(KC) He asked for clarification regarding the Eagle River Road improvements scheduled in the 2025 TIP and whether they include a non-motorized or multi-use pathway. If it does not, he wanted to make sure it was included or amended to include scope of work because that is a very dangerous road with 55mph and pedestrians walking down the side of an icy road with no shoulder or guardrail.

(KK) If we add or remove any of these as recommended by the TAC, do we need to adjust the fiscal constraint in the MTP overall?

(AJ) *It depends on what you are changing. If you are adding a new project, yes that will impact a fiscal constraint. If you are deleting a project, that will leave funding available that you can then do something with.*

(DV) There is a recommended removal from the TAC of the Seward Highway/Rabbit Creek Road to Girdwood PEL study for \$3 million. Is the planning money similar to the non-motorized money where you have to substitute plan-for-plan, or where could that be reprogrammed?

(CW) *That is DOT&PF funding and for the purposes of the financial analysis and to not incredibly overcomplicate things; the plans all fell within the complete street list.*

(DV) What he understood is that if we were to remove that, then it could potentially unlock something else just on the complete street list under DOT&PF funding.

(SH) But not guarantee its use there.

Fourth Amendment

MS. POKON moved to amend to make the additions and removals recommended by the Technical Advisory Committee that we have not already adopted.

Due to the lack of a second, the fourth amendment failed.

CHAIR HOLLAND called for a roll call vote.

MAIN MOTION, AS AMENDED

YAY

Assembly Member Volland

Ms. Pokon

Mr. Kohlhase

Assembly Member Cross

Chair Holland

NAY

The main motion, as amended, passed unanimously.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. Public Transportation Department Agency Safety Plan

JAMIE ACTON, MOA, Public Transportation Department Director, briefed the committee on the safety plan.

There were no comments.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION - None

8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

MR. KOHLHASE thanked the Body for their patience with his not wanting to call the question as he had more questions needing to be resolved.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND thanked the committee for a robust discussion. He was happy we landed where we did and thought that this will be a good, ongoing dialogue. A great job was done by Chair Holland in chairing his first meeting.

CHAIR HOLLAND reiterated that this was a good compromise, and Assembly Member Volland brought up some good points, and DOT&PF does need to do some heavier public involvement on that project.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 3:28 p.m.