

Hello, AMATS Technical Advisory Committee members,

On September 8, the Technical Advisory Committee will consider Anchorage Assembly's proposal to downsize the 92nd/Scooter Avenue underpass, constructing it as a non-motorized underpass rather than a full interchange with 10,000 vehicles per day cutting through neighborhoods.

We hope you will dive into a detailed and thoughtful analysis of this project. The proposed downsizing of the underpass--is really a right-sizing: it will provide a convenient, low-stress non-motorized corridor that solves the critical problem of safe pedestrian/bicycle passage east-west between neighborhoods and shopping destinations. This is an exciting model for providing safe, healthy, equitable transportation that does not induce more vehicle traffic and parking. And, a non-motorized underpass will save tens of millions of dollars, including \$18 million on collector roads that would not be needed for a non-motorized underpass.

What sort of presentations from experts and advocates would be helpful to the TAC? We would like to suggest that you ask for several presenters, including but not limited to John Weddleton, who has worked to « right-size » the 92nd underpass for many years; and ADOTPF's Active Transportation coordinator, Julius Adolfsson.

In addition, there are numerous questions that the TAC should seek answers to. We are trying to get information from DOTPF, with limited success so far. This is what we can share with the TAC, and what you might want to pursue further:

1. Comparative costs. The proposed vehicular underpass with two roundabouts will cost \$30 million (confirmed by DOTPF's Christina Huber). DOTPF has not confirmed a price for a non-motorized underpass, but a current non-motorized underpass project for Eagle River Loop Road cost \$2.3 million. The deletion or downsizing of neighborhood collectors and Academy/Vanguard could save \$18.7 million in total costs, and \$5 million in the current proposed TIP.
2. Comparative travel time. There is no substantial saving in driving time from Abbott neighborhoods to the Old Seward Highway/Dimond Boulevard intersection via the proposed new 92nd underpass, versus the existing route along East Dimond Boulevard. (per DOTPF email, 9-2).
3. Existing hazardous routes need attention. The existing routes along Dimond Boulevard are hazardous for pedestrians and cyclists and need safety upgrades and improved transit, which could be funded if money were not spent on an unneeded full-scale freeway interchange. Two high-school girls were killed on a sidewalk along East Dimond and a pedestrian was killed in a crosswalk at Old Seward/Dimond this winter.
4. Questionable safety for non-motorists in this current proposal. There is no northbound ramp from Brayton Dive. We think that means approximately high-speed vehicles per day on Brayton Drive, with only a 4 foot shoulder for bicycles along Brayton Drive, and only a 2 foot wide back-of-curb separation and a 5 to 8' sidewalk. The widths and separations are inadequate for safe, low stress non-motorized users, and especially for the children in the adjoining neighborhoods and recreation fields. We suggest that the TAC scrutinize the degree of physical separation for non-motorized users in the proposed design: if non-motorized safety is a main reason for this project, the design falls short.

5. No detailed designs of Academy/Vanguard are available from DOTPF at this time. We suggest that the underpass should be put on hold until the entire project can be scrutinized.

6. Current and future traffic projections. Is there a compelling need for the vehicle interchange and the added freeway lanes south of Dimond, based on current traffic data and trends? DOTPF conceived this interchange over 20 years ago, using traffic congestion data from an era Dimond Center was the beating heart of Anchorage retail. Land use patterns and traffic counts have changed. Traffic counts have fallen on other parts of the urban highway system, as shown in PEL studies for the Seward to Glenn. TAC should dig into the traffic data and make that data public.

7. Induced vehicle demand. This project is designed to "build vehicle capacity". The concept of induced vehicle travel demand has many negative impacts on congestion, land use, safety, and public health. What is the induced vehicle demand from this project?

8. Federal regulations for stopping or redesigning an unneeded or unsafe project. DOTPF has announced that it will proceed with Right-of-Way acquisition, utility agreements, and final design for the 92nd Underpass. The TAC should identify the regulations for stopping or redesigning a project that is in the late-design stage.

The TAC should gather information on the amount of money that will be spent to complete those stages. AMATS must engage in "continuous, cooperative, comprehensive" transportation planning: AMATS can DOTPF to suspend certain efforts until the right-sizing of the underpass is determined.

We trust that the TAC will recognize the breakthrough potential for right-sizing this underpass. A fiscally-responsible, safety-foremost decision will demonstrate how Anchorage can best meet the coming changes and challenges to our transportation system.

Thank you for taking an in-depth look at the 92nd/Scooter underpass, and the prudence of a non-motorized corridor there. We encourage you to call on non-motorized experts and numerous sources in addition to DOTPF.

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