

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Planning & Development Center
Main Conference Room, 1st Floor
4700 Elmore Road**

**March 7, 2024
1:00 PM**

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Technical Advisory Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Brad Coy (Chair)	MOA/Traffic Engineering Department
Brian Lindamood	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Ben White	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Anchorage Field Office
Luke Bowland	DOT&PF
Craig Lyon	MOA/Planning Department
Steve Ribuffo	MOA/Port of Alaska
Melinda Kohlhaas	MOA/Project Management & Engineering (PM&E)
Taylor Keegan	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department
Adeyemi Alimi	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
Matt Stichick	MOA Health Department

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Chelsea Ward-Waller	AMATS
Jon Cecil	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Alice Horazdovsky	HDR
Kate Dueber	ARRC
John McPherson	HDR
Sarah Riopelle	DOT&PF
Taylor Whitaker	Fehr & Peers
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Patrick Swalling	DOT&PF
Becca Rorabaugh	
Cynthia Ferguson	DOT&PF
Kristina Huling	DOT&PF
Zak Hartman	MOA/Traffic Engineering Dept.
Jeanne Bowie	Kinney Engineering
Lindsey Hajduk	NeighborWorks Alaska
Sarah Davenport	
Jenna Difolco	DOT&PF

Matthew Flickinger	DOT&PF
Gerard Billinger	DOT&PF
Mark Littlefield	
Alex Read	DOT&PF
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Brandon Telford	PM&E
Joe Taylor	Lounsbury & Associates
Gaylen Jones	DOT&PF

**Policy Committee Member*

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

CHAIR COY called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Jamie Acton with the MOA Public Transportation Department was excused. A quorum was established prior to the arrival of Mr. Stichick at 1:20 p.m.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AARON JONGENELEN encouraged public involvement in this meeting of the AMATS Technical Advisory 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. ALIMI moved to approve the agenda. MR. BOWLAND seconded.

MR. JONGENELEN requested to add the Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation as Project and Plan Update Item 6.b.

MR. BOWLAND moved to amend. MR. WHITE seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment was approved.

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

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 1, 2024

MR. LYON moved to approve the minutes. MS. KEEGAN seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS**a. AMATS Safety Plan**

MR. JONGENELEN noted that work on the AMATS Safety Plan began in March 2023 with the contracting of three consultants: Burgess and Niple, Fehr and Peers, and R&M Consultants, Inc. Public involvement in this project included three stakeholder meetings, a half-day public open house, presentations to AMATS committees, and a public survey with 444 people responding. This plan was developed using the Safety System Approach (SSA) and allows AMATS, along with partner agencies and the community, to be eligible for Safe Streets 4 All (SS4A) grants. A joint work session with the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy Committee (PC) was held on February 21, 2024, allowing staff to provide an overview of the plan and respond to questions.

CHAIR COY referred to the Safety Programs section shown on page 18, noting that he was not sure what the Municipality Traffic Safety Committee meeting regularly was referring to. He did know there was a School Transportation Committee that might have been confused with this, and he would prefer not to have something inaccurate that did not exist included.

TAYLOR WHITAKER with Fehr & Peers noted that it could be just a wording error, but she will follow up with Nichole.

CHAIR COY pointed out that the simplest adjustment would be to delete that line in order to move forward with the plan. In addition, the bullet that refers to having a traffic calming program in place should read, "A neighborhood traffic calming program is in place." There has been a lot of discussion regarding arterial traffic calming, and this only applies to neighborhood streets.

MR. JONGENELEN will make sure that is corrected. The HSIP (Highway Safety Improvement Program) is a critical program and also needs to be listed in this plan.

MS. WHITAKER mentioned that the HSIP is shown on page 17, but it can also be included in the safety programs. The Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program will also be added.

MS. KOHLHAAS asked if the three stakeholders' meetings were agency stakeholders.

MS. WHITAKER noted that the stakeholders are listed on page 10.

MR. JONGENELEN mentioned that staff is considering updating this plan every four years and asked the committee for their thoughts as to how often it should be updated.

CHAIR COY opened the floor to public comments.

SARAH DAVENPORT
MARK EISENMAN

Mr. Stichick joined the meeting virtually at 1:20 p.m.

MS. KOHLHAAS moved to recommend approval to the Policy Committee of the AMATS Safety Plan. MR. WHITE seconded.

CHAIR COY suggested making the changes to page 18 to strike, “The Municipality Traffic Safety Committee meets regularly” and change “A traffic calming program is in place” to “A neighborhood traffic calming program is in place.”

MR. LYON preferred to wait to hear from Ms. Whitaker and Nichole to see if there was a specific committee that she had in mind. It was probably meant to be the Safe Streets Committee, but maybe we could get an answer before it goes to the Policy Committee in two weeks, and Mr. Jongeneelen can have it accurately noted in the document. He believed there was a committee that meets regularly, and it would be nice to have that reflected.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that staff would not make any edits but would forward these recommendations and questions to the Policy Committee.

MS. KEEGAN moved to amend to provide a list to the Policy Committee of the research by the project team with an explanation regarding 1) Municipality Traffic Safety Committee meets regularly; 2) to adjust “A traffic calming program is in place” to “A neighborhood” before the word traffic; and 3) to add the HSIP program to the list. MS. KOHLHAAS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Hearing no objections, the main motion, as amended, passed.

b. AMATS Comments on Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Planning Environmental Linkage (PEL)

MR. JONGENELEN informed the committee that AMATS’ staff recently attended a public meeting for the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Connection Planning Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study. A portion of AMATS’ responsibility is to oversee the federal transportation planning process, and it is through that view that the comments and feedback noted in the memorandum are being provided to the project team, who have been working closely with AMATS’ staff on the PEL and had acknowledged that it links with the AMATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). As such, we appreciate that the 2050 MTP projects for this area have been included as projects that are anticipated. Additionally, including an interim solution as an option is very positive, but AMATS’ staff does have significant concerns that need to be addressed as part of this project.

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

- (BL) Who came up with the boundary for the consideration of alternatives because he was made aware that other solutions were available? He attended a meeting with DOT&PF specifically for ARRC comments and found that the other solutions were not considered because they lie outside the boundary.

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- (JM) *We proposed a boundary, shared it at public meetings, and received input. He did not think there was any limitation to where alternatives land relative to the boundary, but the study area was kind of set up by the original PEL study description as being between the Glenn Highway at Bragaw and 20th on the Seward Highway. And was to include potential to and from the Port and to and from the highway network.*
- (BL) What frustrates him is that DOT&PF already has a four-lane connection between the two. If you take Dowling, Elmore, Martin Luther King, and Boniface, you have four lanes the entire way. You are meeting AMATS' objectives without disrupting new things when what you are looking at is a series of intersection improvements and, if you really want limited access, cleaning up the street access. It is scalable, and it already exists. If you look closely at the connection at Tudor and Elmore and look closely at the connection at Tudor and Martin Luther King/Boniface (he was not sure where it changes), it also potentially becomes your solution for dealing with the Bragaw Street extension to the University because suddenly you are taking all that traffic with literally one-third of it coming from the Valley and pumping it directly to Tudor rather than through what, clearly, the public has a concern about. A recreational area. You are not going to do a billion-dollar project, which is probably that and more. You could just sort of eat it slowly, one or two miles at a time. Quite frankly, you could probably do a lot to improve it just by making intersection improvements on those five streets right now. When he brought this up before, he was told it was outside the boundary. It is the route everyone is using now. If you just watch traffic from that side of town to the other side of town, it is the main route. No one goes downtown. It is frequently fairly congested and is very heavily used. Again, it is already four lanes the whole way and is not going to take that much to make it that much better. You can start drawing what is coming down Muldoon and Bragaw to it. You will not have to completely displace a bunch of communities or wreck other recreational areas to do it. He reiterated that he is just frustrated that we only have \$5 million for \$2 billion solutions that do not need AMATS objectives, do not need planning documents, and are quite frankly fantasies if you ever think you are going to fund them when you look at the other transportation needs of the state.
- (LB) *The PEL is still in a preliminary stage and these are preliminary alternatives. We do not have cost estimates at this point in time, and we have not done any traffic modeling. A lot of that is going to play out, but we want to give the public, stakeholders, and everyone else an opportunity to provide input on the alternatives that have been thrown out there to see what kind of issues should be addressed. He did appreciate AMATS' staff taking the time to provide comments. One of the misconceptions when seeing this mention congestion is that is not something we are trying to solve with the PEL. One of the big problems we see is resolving those local and regional traffic conflicts, especially in the Ingra and Gambell areas.*
- (MK) She would be interested in finding out more about the level of service and the data-driven need for the project and to find out if there is a no-build solution. She

emphasized looking for the TSMO options, broadening the evaluation, and if there is an option like metered control onto the Glenn Highway. In the Lower 48, she has seen those options on the highway and being able to drive out with red lights noting oncoming traffic. Connectivity is very important and goes hand in hand with transit. PM&E has learned, when doing work for Providence and the UMED District, that the network of pedestrian facilities is entirely essential, and having good access to a functional transit system by providing safe access to where people need to go is important. She urged for this to be looked at promptly.

- (LB) *The team has looked at transit plans in this area, and that is something we see as an important aspect. As we are looking at preliminary alternatives, there is still a lot of time to refine where transit would go in any one of these scenarios. The way he sees this PEL playing out would not be one alternative through this area, it would be a series of projects coming out that would help address different problems in different areas and try and balance the needs of all users in this area.*
- (GJ) *DOT&PF is showing these seven build alternatives, but there are also two no-action alternatives that are part of the PEL process we are required to look at. One of the no-action alternatives takes all the MTP projects and assumes they are build. It looks at a 2050-year horizon, but it assumes no projects are being built on Ingra and Gambell, so no-build on Ingra and Gambell and everything else is built out for the MTP 2050. The second no-action alternative is a modification of that by simply adding the road diet projects from the MTP 2050 on Ingra and Gambell, so all the MTP 2050 projects within the study area. We get a good opportunity to see that if we do not do anything at all on Ingra and Gambell, then what will that look like in different horizon years all the way out to 2050? But if we do perform the road diets per the MTP 2050, which includes dropping a lane on each of those roads (Ingra and Gambell), and remain a couplet, and still have all the same traffic going through there, then what does that look like from a traffic performance perspective in the study area? Does it push traffic onto a road that we do not want extra traffic on? What does it do to the network?*
- (AJ) *He thinks there is a misunderstanding of what a no-build is and what a build is. What Mr. Jones just described is an alternative - an actual build alternative - that instead of doing the highway, you do these other options. You called it a no-build, but that is not what it is. A no-build means that you do not build anything. It cannot be called a no-build and then say that you are going to build all these projects out through 2050 to see what they do to the network. That is an alternative, and that is what is missing from here. The only alternatives are highway alternatives. Our community is repeatedly asked, and he is constantly beaten upon by people, that all we do as AMATS is look at highways. When he has to go before the Assembly and is yelled at by them for that, what is he supposed to do? When DOT&PF is looking at these, stop thinking that it is only highways we can build. Do not think you can look at these alternatives later; you need to look at them first. You should look at the 2050 MTP projects as an option for an alternative, not a no-build alternative. Call it an alternative, and if it does not work, great; we know that information. Then we will have other things to look at as well. There is a misunderstanding of what a PEL is supposed to be doing.*

(JP) Mr. Jones may have given it a slight misnomer. What we are looking at is one of the alternatives that is a build alternative, and it is what is in the MTP. Part of the letter suggests we should look at the project in the MTP, and that is one of the build alternatives that we are evaluating. He just wanted to make that clear. Secondly, there seems to be a little bit of confusion about the purpose and need, and the level of service. We do have some reports out there. As was mentioned, congestion is not really the problem here. What we have is a historical transportation system where we have the Glenn Highway and the Seward Highway that come into Anchorage. We are not just simply trying to connect the two highways together someplace, but we are trying to get people where they need to go. What we did in the past was dump all the highway traffic onto a surface set of couplets right through the middle of Fairview. Fairview has carried the burden of that traffic for 50 or 60 years, and there are a lot of conflicts. There are safety problems there, plans for a main street, reconstructing Ingra Street, and doing road diet projects. The Anchorage Land Use Plan Map has a vision for this area that is in conflict with the surface set of couplets. How do we balance the regional travel needs? People need to get downtown, to midtown, to the Port, to the airport and, right now, we have routed them all through Fairview. We have a system of alternatives to try to separate some of those functions, where we try to put regional traffic somewhere and make a place where we can have local traffic and local connections. We either do that by trenching, and that was the alternative that was in the previous MTP and supported by the Fairview Neighborhood Plan that was adopted, or we try to bypass that neighborhood and separate some of those uses by going south of Merrill Field. We have a range of alternatives. If we want to select the do-nothing alternative or the MTP alternative, we are going to be evaluating those impacts and evaluating the cost of all of them. If we end up choosing that, then what we are saying is that traffic will continue to be in Fairview. That is really the gist of what we are trying to do. It is not trying to solve a congestion problem because that is not what we are seeing, but there is a lot of conflict between uses, between regional travel and local travel there, and that is what the alternatives are trying to solve.

There were no public comments.

MS. KOHLHAAS asked if there was an opportunity for the project team with the assistance of HDR to provide their perspective in response to this? When could that happen?

MR. JONGENELEN replied that the response would probably be after the letter is sent. Technically, it is a draft. If the Policy Committee declined sending the letter, then the project team does not have to respond to it. If there is a desire from the committees to have the project team attend the meetings to discuss this, what was heard today will most likely be similar to what you would hear at any future briefings

MR. LYON clarified that there is a public comment period open now, and this would be our opportunity as the MPO to offer comments on this. His prior experience with the public comment process is that they receive the comments you submit and then prepare a comment response summary once all comments have been received. He did not think we would be looking at responses at this point in time, but thought DOT&PF would be happy to provide a

presentation or a work session on the project itself. Do we think we should have Mr. Jongenelen send this, or do we recommend to the Policy Committee that Mr. Jongenelen send this as written? He did not have any suggested edits and would be happy to move it forward.

MR. BOWLAND expressed that he did forward this to the project team, and members of that team are present. He would like to see these recorded as comments from AMATS as is because it is good and honest input from staff. There is a benefit to getting together with AMATS' staff and the project team to walk through this. If there are some innovative ideas, he would like to expand on them and see what we can do. The public comment period ends on April 7. In theory, the AMATS meeting is where we would issue official comments, so there is an opportunity for us to meet and take that input (within the comment period) and make sure they are addressed, whether this gets changed through this committee's actions today or the Policy Committee.

MR. LYON moved to forward the comments to the Policy Committee for their review. MS. Keegan seconded.

MS. KEEGAN moved to amend to add a request for clarification on the no-build as Concern #10 just to provide an opportunity to have that discussion and defer it to AMATS to word this in a way they would see fit. MS. KOHLHAAS seconded.

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Hearing no objections, the motion, as amended, passed.

c. AMATS Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Resolution 2024-001

MR. JONGENELEN presented the Community Advisory Committee's signed Resolution 2024-001 requesting that the People Mover Eagle River Route R (included in the Transit on the Move 2020 Transit Plan) be placed into regular service as soon as possible. Consideration should also be given to extending the route to include Eagle River High School, the Native Village of Eklutna, and northern communities in some capacity.

MR. LYON pointed out that he was not sure who this was directed to because the only people that can fund this is the Anchorage Assembly, and maybe it should be clarified in this that the Assembly should consider this possibility. The Policy Committee cannot use our federal funds.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that the resolution itself cannot be changed because it was approved by the CAC, but we can attach a memorandum to it stating that it would go to the Assembly and/or the Public Transportation Department from the Policy Committee. He could draft a letter to the PC providing this information.

MR. LYON also pointed out that the Assembly either just added or was considering adding funding for another route, which would be an increase and not a wash. This resolution says the CAC is requesting additional funding for this route.

CHAIR COY asked what other Transit on the Move routes are not currently in operation?

MR. JONGENELEN was not sure if that information was identified somewhere and agreed that this would be a question better directed to Ms. Acton.

MS. WARD-WALLER believed there were two additional routes included in the MTP, but Route R was not one of them.

CHAIR COY was interested in knowing if the Transit Department could choose one route to add on; what would be their choice? As much as he would like for Eagle River to have this additional route, he would be interested in seeing how all of the other priorities play in because that is something he is very mindful of. Just how easy is it for certain neighborhoods to raise a concern, but if it is not looked at in the full context, it does play into that question regarding the priorities.

MR. LYON expressed that Chair Coy raised a good point. He did not know enough about the document to know if they prioritized and determined that Route R is number two or number one, and he did not want to go against what they had already done because Transit on the Move did have extensive public involvement in creating that document. He would be more comfortable waiting until someone from the Transit Department was present to have this discussion. It was unfortunate that Ms. Acton and Mr. Rudolph are the most knowledgeable on this but are both on leave. If this is not time-sensitive, he would prefer to table it to the next meeting.

There were no public comments.

MR. LINDAMOOD moved to postpone this to the next meeting when the Transit Department will be present for discussion. MR. LYON seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. 2024 Cycling Urbanism Master Class Presentation

MS. WARD-WALLER briefed the Committee on the presentation. ZAKARY HARTMAN with the Traffic Engineering Department and BRANDON TELFORD with PM&E provided a PowerPoint presentation.

The Committee discussed snow removal strategies.

CHAIR COY opened the floor to public comments.

JAMES STARZEC

b. Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation

ALEX READ with DOT&PF and JOE TAYLOR with Lounsbury & Associates presented the update.

The Committee discussed pilot studies.

There were no public comments.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION - None**8. COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

MR. BOWLAND announced that the Anchorage Transportation Fair will be held on March 28 from 3:00-7:00 p.m. at the Alaska Airlines Center and will have a lot of project presentations.

CHAIR COY noted that the Traffic Engineering Department will have a VisionZero Coordinator position available in one week. The Anchorage Protected Bike Lane Pilot Project's website is now live on anchoragepbl.com, and provides information and ways to engage with comments on the design.

MR. WHITE noted that the STIP was submitted to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) last Friday for their approval, which typically takes approximately 30 days.

MS. KOHLHAAS noted that PM&E is working on the 2024 construction projects now and for the Parks & Recreation Department, internal MOA projects, and DOT&PF projects to submit their projects to Donna Brechan. Ms. Brechan had set a tentative cutoff date of mid-March.

MR. RIBUFFO noted that final oral arguments in the Municipality's lawsuit against the Maritime Administration for the old intermodal expansion project were heard today. All court-related back-and-forth is done and is in the hands of the three-judge appeals counsel, and we are standing by to hear their decision. His understanding is that it went well for the Municipality, but it depends on the court system. This brings to a close a 12-year effort to recover from what was left a mess for those of us at the Port.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *No meeting time remained, and an extension was not requested to hear public comments.***10. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Coy stated that it is now 3:00 p.m. and the meeting is adjourned.