



## LRTPP Working Group Meeting #1 Notes

August 23, 2023

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

**Meeting Purpose:** Introduce the Long-Range Transportation Plan Policy Document purpose and begin the conversation on Muni-wide shared values and vision for transportation.

### Attendees:

Radhika Krishna – Anchorage Downtown Partnership

Sarah Preskitt – Transit Advisory Board

Matt Cruickshank – Chugiak/Eagle River Resident

Jed Drolet – Anchorage Health Department

Donovan Camp – Engineer

Kristine Bunnell – At Large

Aaron Jongenelen – AMATS

Zack Hartman – MOA Traffic Engineering

Brian Lindamood – Alaska Railroad (online)

Mike Edgington – Girdwood Resident (online)

Daniel George – Realtor

Ryan Yelle – MOA Long-Range Planning Manager

Craig Lyon – MOA Planning Director

Miles Colescott – MOA Long-Range Planning Intern

Daniel McKenna-Foster – MOA Senior Planner

Rory McAllister – HDR

Julie Jessen - HDR

Approximately 20 percent of Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) land is dedicated to transportation. The MOA initiated development of a Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan's (LRTPP) to provide guidance for future decision-makers about the community of Anchorage's desired transportation future. The purpose of the working group (WG) is to identify a shared transportation vision, goals, and objectives for the Municipality as a whole - from Girdwood to Eklutna - that can be used by future planners to identify strategies, action items, and projects for implementation.

Daniel McKenna-Foster (MOA) shared the LRTPP's background and purpose.

The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) is the metropolitan planning organization for the Anchorage Bowl and Eagle River/Chugiak and has been the de-facto transportation organization for Anchorage. AMATS develops a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for Anchorage and Eagle River/Chugiak<sup>1</sup>. The MTP feeds project ideas and priorities into the Alaska Department of Transportation's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Projects are often identified years in advance and don't always reflect current conditions or community needs.

The purpose of the LRTPP is to develop a policy that can be used by funding agencies, planners, and others to inform future planning efforts, prioritize spending, and better reflect the community's desires for transportation

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<sup>1</sup> Girdwood, with a population of less than 50,000, is not within the AMATS boundary.

improvements. While AMATS and DOT&PF are not bound by the LRTPP, it provides a framework for prioritizing improvements within the MOA. The final LRTPP will be approved and adopted into code by the Anchorage Assembly.

Where are we now? The WG described transportation in Anchorage today as difficult, congested, inflexible, and undermaintained, but also as improving and not bad (as compared to other cities). This view of today helps shape our desired Vision for tomorrow.

Julie Jessen (HDR) led the group in a brainstorm about community values as they relate to transportation. Transportation should be:

- Cost Effective – If funds are limited, they should benefit as many people as possible.
- Equitable –When marginalized groups are not taken care of, there ends up being a cost to everyone. Sometimes people need more resources than others to be equitable. The discussion of who the user of the transportation space, including non-transportation users, is sometimes left out of the discussion. For example, plowing a sidewalk should work for everyone, whether you walk or are in a wheelchair. If it works for a vulnerable user, it works for everyone, including people who are not primary users.
- Contribute – The transportation system can and should contribute to economic development.
- Sustainable – Is it something that we can afford into the future? There's a need for future functionality as well as environmental sustainability, and there are benefits to maintaining what we have.
- Mindful/Intention – There needs to be a reason to do what you're doing. Projects must have a purpose.
- Accessible – Transportation right-of-way needs to consider more than private vehicles. It should consider other transportation-related elements like transit stops and trailheads.
- Convenient/Continuity – Being able to go from point A to point B and not run into tons of stops along the way.
- Contextual – Design should consider the area a road is going through, not just try to get traffic from point A to B as quickly as possible. Example, provide more functional access to street parking in business districts or not having multi-lane roads through residential areas.
- Communicative – Design should reflect purpose. For instance, how does the design communicate speed? What do bottlenecks communicate as you come into downtown?
- Transparent – Be clear and open about how and why you're doing what you're doing.

Some values posed contradictions:

- Safety - this may depend on the mode of travel, the user group, motorized vs non-motorized... something that's safe for a vehicle user might be unsafe for someone who doesn't use a car. There has to be a holistic approach to safety. No improvements should be made for one group at the expense of another group.
- Cost-effectiveness vs Equitability - front-end planning needs to hash out and find a balance, but not everything may be reconcilable.

Julie explained how these shared values shape how we work with others, how we view our community, and how we consider public transportation infrastructure. They also help shape our vision of the future: what we hope to see as our future destination.

Ideally, a vision statement should be concise, inspiring, and based on the essentials.

Julie shared a draft vision statement the planning team had developed previously and asked the group if it reflected the value statements mentioned earlier. What is missing, what should be emphasized, and does it capture anticipated future transportation trends (such as driverless cars, electric vehicles, e-bikes, etc.)?

*[Draft]: Anchorage supports transportation infrastructure that is safe for all modes of travel and provides access to all users who live, work, and play within the Municipality's boundaries. Anchorage's transportation decisions encourage innovation and healthy communities, while building a resilient and resourceful economy based on transportation connected land use and recognizing community character.*

- The word “safe” led the response. The definition of safety is different for each mode. While it captures it in a simple way, safety for all modes of travel does imply some tradeoffs. It’s a complicated statement in the long term. It should address benefit-seeking and maximizing harm-reduction across all users.
- The vision should also acknowledge the system IS complex.
- It should avoid tech-speak. It should be more human. The current version is about mechanisms of travel for users.
- It should acknowledge that Anchorage supports the rest of the state through our transportation infrastructure.

The group also discussed the Municipality as a whole. Where is the future of transportation GOING? If population in the downtown core is shrinking and population is growing in Eagle River, we need think about right-sizing transportation infrastructure based on population, age, and mode preference.

The group agreed “healthy communities” was important.

Julie then asked the group if they thought the average person would see their preferred mode reflected in the statement?

While not exclusive, the group thought the language wouldn’t connect to the average person. It didn’t explicitly address walkability, sidewalks, transit, or land use. Transportation is about motion and connectivity, more than roads and highways.

It should also reference the future of transportation, maintenance, and long-term sustainability. It should also consider the potential to adjust use rather than big changes to the existing system. It should be a way of connecting communities.

Some comments on the vision - such as a need for redundancy for all transportation modes - could be developed into transportation goals, the broad statements of what we want to achieve. The group was encouraged to suggest other goal statements for the next WG meeting.

The WG will meet monthly through December to develop the vision, goals, objectives, and performance measures (if appropriate). A draft policy plan will be shared with the Federation of Community Councils, AMATS, MOA Planning and Zoning Commission and other groups, and a public open house will be held in February 2024.

*WG Meeting 1 Action Items:*

- Project Team: revise the draft vision statement based on WG input and share at the next WG meeting.
- Project Team: Create a diagram showing what the Muni/AMATS/etc. control and where they do and do not intersect.
- WG members will send Daniel up to 3 suggested goal statements by September 13.
- Next WG Meeting: September 27, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.