



LRTSD Working Group Meeting #2

September 27, 2023

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Attendees

Donovan Camp	Daniel McKenna-Foster
Jed Drolet	Ryan Yelle
Mike Edgington	Kristine Bunnell
Katie Severin	Matt Cruickshank
Teri Lindseth	Jasmine Smith
Sarah Preskitt	Aaron Jongenelen
Julie Jessen, HDR	Rory McAllister, HDR

During introductions, the group was asked how they would have gotten to this meeting if not by car? Responses ranged from biking, taking a bus, or carpooling. Some wouldn't have made it at all and for those who would have biked, it may have taken more than an hour to reach PM&E's building. This question encouraged people to think about transportation accessibility and equity. Transportation choices go hand in hand with economic development.

Planning Context

Historically, the AMATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan served as the MOA's de-facto long-range transportation plan. But the AMATS boundary doesn't include the entirety of the MOA's area. Projects are identified years in advance and don't always reflect current community needs or conditions.

LRTSD Strategy Document is about our shared community vision for transportation, from Eklutna to Girdwood and should reflect the diversity of our communities. Ultimately, the document will provide high-level guidance for the Assembly and planners as they consider investments in the nearly 20% of

MOA land area dedicated to transportation. It will also be used to influence decision-making in other agencies – like AMATS and DOT&PF – as they consider capital improvements and funding priorities.

At the last meeting, the group had asked for clarification on the planning documents and roles of the MOA, AMATS, and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Transportation Plans Memo #1). This group is helping develop the strategy document that will be used by MOA decision-makers to identify and prioritize surface transportation improvements for the entire municipal area based on community values.

The group also discussed transportation and strategic planning terms to confirm participants had a shared understanding.

Matt pointed out that the term equitable should be included and defined in the vision statement to include not just geophysical areas but population centers as well, citing Eagle River making up 13% of the Municipal area.

Kristine requested that if funding is going to be spent to improve neighborhoods, it should be used to improve all neighborhoods, not just the ones in high-transit areas. This is the only way to keep the project properly equitable and fair.

Sarah noted that most equity conversations are focused on how cars travel through different areas, and barely address people who walk and bike beyond simply checking a box. Using Northern Lights as an example, while it does have a sidewalk for pedestrians, it is unusable for the vast majority of the year due to snow buildup and needed maintenance.

Donovan suggested that Equity vs Equality is a key element to address in the plan, wanting to recognize that there has been a historic under-investment in certain areas and those need to be equalized before upgrading areas that are already well maintained. Additionally, a focus must be on who is most impacted from a safety standpoint. Pedestrians account for 3% of crashes but 40% of fatalities. There is an inequitable distribution there.

Mike wanted more definition on the term adaptability. As things are changing very fast right now, and we really can't see where anything might be going in 10-15 years, we need something that is highly adaptable to be flexible around the changes of the future.

Transportation, ultimately, is about moving people. The group requested the definitions be updated to be more people focused.

Draft Visions

Last meeting, the group talked about our transportation values and a far-ranging vision for the MOA's transportation infrastructure. Our transportation values – like equity, safety, sustainability, accessibility, context, and cost effectiveness – shape our desired future for our transportation system. Sometimes, our values pose contradictions.

At the last meeting, the group asked the team to come back with something more people-centric and that acknowledged the complexity of our system.

Three draft vision statements were presented – two based on comments from the August meeting, and the AMATS MTP draft vision. Because a vision statement should be concise, a preamble was added to highlight some of the challenges and contradictions the group had raised.

The group was asked to give a “helping hand” to show their gut reaction to each of the statements. A high five indicated full support for the statement, a thumbs down (1) showed no support. For each statement, the group was asked what resonated or, if it was given a thumbs down, what should be changed to achieve a higher level of support.

Draft Vision 1

The Municipality of Anchorage provides safe and accessible transportation choices for its residents and visitors. Our transportation system is a catalyst for innovation, healthy neighborhoods, and a resilient economy, and our planning decisions consider economic and environmental sustainability; embrace innovation; and provide long-term social benefits.

When rated on a scale of 1-5, the group responded with mostly 4s and 5s, with one 3 and a 1.

Matt liked the phrase “supporting economic sustainability” but preferred the flow of the second vision statement. He pointed out the term catalyst is overused in all statements and should be defined more clearly.

The group discussed who would ultimately use this document. Kristine didn’t like the phrasing of “the Municipality of Anchorage provides” as it leaves out the Department of Transportation and other government entities that can help. It is important to mention that the projects should be justified as well. Donovan disagreed, noting that the state has their own statement for transportation projects, AMATS has its own, the Municipality needs its own as well. He also asked for clarification on the word “innovation” and noted its overuse in all statements without clarification.

Jed pointed out that all plans should include both residents and visitors in the statement and make a distinction between the two.

Ryan suggested adding “Efficiency,” as it is missing from statements 1 and 2. Efficiency is crucial to the success of any transit system, whether it’s motorized or non-motorized.

“Providing long-term social benefits” is a lot to ask a transportation system to do.

Draft Vision 2

Municipality of Anchorage residents have transportation infrastructure that accommodates and maintains equitable travel choices. Anchorage’s transportation decisions encourage innovation, are responsive to changing needs, support economic stability, and encourage healthy communities.

When rated on a scale of 1-5, the group responded with mostly 4's and 3's, with one 5 and a 2.

Jed felt that this statement has more a passive voice and is missing a lot of the positive vibe of the first statement, however it is more concise.

Katie felt that this statement is just a "wordsmith" version of the first statement, and it's missing the emphasis on safety and sustainability from vision 1, as well as most of the good concepts.

AMATS MTP Vision

Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River are vibrant winter communities with an adaptable and efficient multimodal transportation network that is equitable, safe, accessible, and reliable, which supports a sustainable economy, enhances and protects the natural and built environment, and fosters healthy, connected neighborhoods.

When rated on a scale of 1-5, the group responded with mostly 4's and 3's, with one or two 5's.

Jed felt that this requires some tweaking to be specific to the Municipality and also must be modified to include Girdwood.

Sarah noted that this statement is the only one that refers to a "winter community", as dealing with winter is a serious hurdle for any plan or vision statement. This term should be added to other statements if possible. Matt disagreed, feeling that a more concise statement is better.

Aaron pointed out that an overly broad vision statement satisfies everyone but doesn't provide focus for project decisions. Rather, the group should consider "Who is this plan for? The public or planners?". AMATS's MTP has to be complex due to federal requirements, but the Municipality's plan can have more flexibility and customization.

Jed pointed out that a vision statement doesn't have to stand alone. Definitions of certain terms can be included in the full document that the vision statement is attached to, and using this information it can help the statement stay concise.

Matt offered the sentence "Transportation should support economic vitality of regions, encourage smart regional land use strategies and land development patterns" for use in a vision statement.

Goal Statements

Goals are broad statement on what we want to achieve and use "infinite" verbs. They shouldn't be things that can be checked off a to-do list; rather they should be far reaching: promote, provide, maximize... The group considered goal statements from the draft AMATS MTP and asked if they reflect our vision. Should other areas be added?

The group recognized that having too many goal statements (and later, objectives) becomes unwieldy.

Jed felt that the goals around Safety/Equity are not a given, but must be included, and the AMATS goal areas approach what we're looking for.

The group also noted that technology is changing and maintenance and material costs are skyrocketing. “Lifecycle accounting” and affordability should be a part of any statement or plan.

The final strategy document should also include language that it is regularly revisited and updated to stay relevant with population changes and other upgrades. The final document should include recommendations on how often the MOA plan is updated.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Group homework assignment: send comments on vision statement and proposed goal statements to Julie (Julie.Jessen@hdrinc.com) by October 4.

Action Item

- Share vision statements/documents from other similar communities to the next meeting.
- Update terms to be more accessible – less engineering/planning speak.
- Combine Vision statements based on group feedback.