

West Anchorage District Plan
Transportation Focus Group Minutes
Thursday, May 28, 2009, 11:30 am-1:30 pm
MOA Planning Department, Room 170

OBJECTIVES

- Access
 - Future expansion of the airport (the purchase of the FCC land)
 - UPS and FedEx expansion in Postmark Bog and Turnagain Bog areas
 - Lake Hood – avoid infringing on its operations because it is an important private and commercial asset
 - Big vehicles – we need functional access for big trucks. Make sure the big vehicles can turn easily and build roads so we don't pinch signage or curbs. Big trucks won't stop coming to Anchorage because that's how to distribute all goods in Anchorage.
- Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (TSAIA)
 - Keep airport lands open for more terminals to be built to store goods.
 - Use of Northern Lights Blvd. for freight would be ideal, but not likely.
 - Provided access to and from the airport to industrial reserve areas between Minnesota and C Street.
 - Design airport development so that the main employee entrance is closer to the road to accommodate public transit.
 - Continuous work shifts make it hard to get airport employees to work.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
 - Maintain Lake Hood area as public recreation area- extend bike path the entire length of lakes.
 - Anchorage Pedestrian Plan has hundreds of recommendations for sidewalks.
 - When sidewalk projects were prioritized by council, the priorities were based on housing density.
 - The most pressing sidewalks are needed in Spenard.
 - Bicycle Plan is in the review phase.
 - The Raspberry Road connection would follow the new West Dowling connection and include bike lanes on West Dowling.
 - Bicycle Plan recommends additional bike lanes along Postmark and Aviation Drives, which already have adequate shoulders.
 - There is a pinch point on Postmark Drive that is recommended for spot widening.
 - Bicycle Trail safety – if bike trails are not maintained, they become ice hills and bikers still use them; detached bike trails are safer (i.e. Elmore Rd.)
 - Erosion on the Coastal Trail is a huge concern as it is an immediate safety issue. Wave action and the north wind are both undermining the bluff.
 - Turnagain, Lois, 36th Ave. are all streets that are in need of an upgrade for pedestrians

- Public Transit
 - Address the north-south barriers to transit.
 - Property/residential densities are too low in southwest Anchorage area to support public transit right now.
 - Development, when it happens, needs to consider ability to provide public transit.
 - School Districts facilities are not near existing transit routes making cooperation a challenge.
- Traffic and Parking
 - Better use of the land around Lake Hood that was made into parking (south edge of Lake Hood) should be part of the Lake Hood development- either for aviation or recreation.
 - Look at the LRTP. The major improvements for this area are in the 2015 program.
 - There are a lot of grade separations planned in the LRTP (that may not get built).
 - New schools on Sand Lake and Raspberry Road will increase traffic.
 - Northwood Extension (From Victor Road to across the Campbell Creek) will need to be addressed with a connector when Klatt and West Anchorage build-out.
 - Connectivity: Neighborhoods suffer when connectivity is limited. Connectivity can be accomplished without straight lines.
 - Resolution to Connors Bog parking area and a frontage road access.
 - Include thinking about industrial lands- their distance may be outside the planning area, but the importance is the time to reach them. (Right now they are quick to access.)
 - Turnagain traffic calming project. Residents want to see more connections to reduce speeding within the neighborhoods.
 - Sand Lake traffic calming area. Study will be done soon. There is no connectivity at all. Northwood is a really key piece.
 - Student school traffic will continue to be huge problems.
 - Highschoolers prefer to drive
 - Afternoon pick-ups at Elementary Schools are the biggest congestion.
 - At Chinook Elementary, 70% of parents pickup. 15% parental pickup rate 15 years ago.
 - One possible idea is a loop around the airport to hit Raspberry Road to reduce some of the east-west International traffic. (This is not in the LRTP.)
 - Lois is a collector, but has right-of-way issues
 - Turnagain is not actually a collector
- Maintenance
 - W. Northern Lights Blvd. is in horrible condition. It has had a pavement overlay (which is not an upgrade).
 - Clay Station snow storage (next to Dimond Parking). Still no agreement on use with MOA. FAA won't permit a long-term lease. If this were to go

away, the cost of hauling snow for all of West Anchorage would be outrageous.

- Surface area (miles) of roads and the available funding/manpower are not proportionate. Bike trails do not accommodate these new areas. Example: Elmore Road did get an increase in maintenance dollars, but did not get an increase in manpower dollars.
- Focus on improvement AND its maintenance afterwards.
- Zoning
 - Tile 21 – There should be clear boundaries between industrial and residential.
 - There are a lot of undeveloped area in West Anchorage – allocate enough parks for the residents.

STRENGTHS & VALUES

- TSAIA
 - Airplane access straight from the runway into the terminal is efficient.
 - Allow the airport to expand while still maintaining recreational resources.
 - Good access to the airport. The International & Minnesota interchange is great for going south
 - Most airplane approaches are over the water.
- Neighborhoods
 - Jewel Lake
 - Jewel Lake and Dimond have more opportunity for success than Aurora Village because there's a lot of vacant land.
 - Jewel Lake has a lot of single families. The roads are cheaper to maintain per square mile because the area has less on-street parking and fewer alleys.
 - Jewel Lake has potential to become a Town Center, but has a far way to go.
 - Spenard
 - Spenard Road has been rebuilt and redesigned for a variety of purposes. Spenard Road needs to be preserved.
 - A Town Center could be located in Spenard; the neighborhood has the density and the variety of services. You could meet most of your daily needs within a ½ mile radius.
 - You can spend an entire day in Spenard area. It is separated from the industrial areas. Keep commercial areas like it in the future.
 - The West Turnagain and Sand Lake neighborhoods are very active, and want to participate in neighborhood planning projects.
 - Residents are proud to have varied commercial uses within their neighborhood.
- Recreation
 - Outside Kincaid, there are a lot of parks and recreational areas, and walking areas; good access to the bluff from the neighborhoods.

- Location and Transportation
 - Getting to the airport or downtown is very easy.
 - Traffic flow is good in West Anchorage, and is cheaper.
 - Centrally located for air, land, and water transport of goods.
 - International Exemption Lane during tourist season for the train was a good idea (because DOT regulations require commercial vehicles to stop at ARRC tracks)

ISSUES

- Transportation (motorized)
 - A better connection to Seward Highway would help improve truck traffic downtown via Minnestoa.
 - The idea of a road around west end is a good idea. Need a way to get from Palmer Highway to Seward Highway without going through downtown.
 - There is no major destination in the West Anchorage area, so public transit routes are not very productive. South of International is a difficult place to serve by public transit.
 - If areas have too many signals, then it slows down traffic.
 - Create a route to get from International to New Seward northbound.
 - Lack of alternatives to single occupancy vehicles. Lack of density does not support transit.
 - Do good traffic surveys to assist with better design.
 - Jewel Lake gets close to 18,000 trips/day.
 - Arctic Blvd. image problem, which reflects on other roads.
 - W Northern Lights Blvd. is so overbuilt that it doesn't function- putting too much into those right-of-ways (bike lanes, turn pockets, bus stops, landscaping). The one-lane sections make it difficult for snow removal. Drivers will do dangerous things to avoid the snow removal process.
 - A lot of retail stores use 53' trailers now. Make sure these vehicles can navigate into new mall centers and park easily. Roadways need to be able to accommodate them safely. We need to identify which routes ought to accommodate 53' trailers and which key routes currently do.
- Transportation (non-motorized)
 - Need better accommodation of bicyclists; there are more now than in previous years
 - The network of bicycle trails/bike lanes needs to be improved.
 - Pedestrians and bicyclists like to walk on the taxiways to see the planes. Some roads are shared-road/taxi-ways.
- Road Maintenance
 - There needs more attention paid to maintenance needs. ADOT&PF sometimes does not have the resources to keep roads swept and plowed.
 - Weather accommodation- Anchorage is a winter city. Medians and signs in the middle of the road are as much a problem for maintenance as they are for large trucks.

- Lack of understanding and appreciation about who is responsible for what. It was quite an education for the Hillside that they do not get service because they do not pay for it. The only big roads that the city owns are W Northern Lights, Northwood, and Spenard.
- Very little snow storage capacity. Nice landscaping leaves less room for snow storage; then it doesn't get maintained and dies.
- Land Use
 - If there is expansion to Point MacKenzie, for any growth, we need to be ready (ex. new Target).
 - Spenard developed the way it did when we didn't have zoning or ordinances.
 - Land Use could be better suited to encourage more walking trips. Sand Lake is pretty-much auto dependent.
 - Spenard is a good multi-modal environment with right-of-way constraints so you can't make the "complete street" concept.
- Image
 - Stigma over this part of town based on the amount of industrial use.

TRENDS

- Community and the airport are both continuing to grow
 - Solution: Zoning in and around the airport
- Studded tires are creating high road maintenance costs
 - Solution: Increase fees for studded tires and use this for the maintenance.
- Need another route to the airport.
- Use of Lake Hood is increasing and needs to be accommodated. New parking spaces for airplanes are already taken
 - Solution: Save land around Lake Hood for Lake Hood operations, not the airport.
- Anchorage's transportation users will include mostly younger and older people relying on the system as a whole. Having multiple choices of ways to get around are key.
 - Solution: Find ways through freight technology to meet increased demands without new infrastructure. We're so dependent on Federal dollars to achieve surface transportation capacity building, but these funds are drying up.
- Future travel demand will be more driven by TSAIA since most areas are already built-out.
 - Solution: Look at AMATS traffic model which over-predicts "special generator." Coordinate with H2H on their new model.
- There will be less money for future maintenance; should expect less "new" road features.
 - Solution: Take care of what we have first.
- Local roads do not have road improvement/replacement plans.

- Solution: Design for the money you have. Don't let private developers build or reconstruct to a poor design.
- Rutted roads are costly.
 - Solution: We need to more aggressive on weight restrictions because they contribute to ruts as do studs. (When the road warms, the moisture content makes the road softer and wears quickly.)
- Under-designed roads – either due to lack of experience or lack of funding.
- Federal dollars are drying up and less State general fund dollars for maintenance.
 - Solution: Sustain ourselves. We have been too quick to build on the federal dollar.
- Increase in mixed-use development, which is dangerous to pedestrians and drivers. Since there are industrial centers throughout town, people will be near many of them trying to recreate.
- Just-in-time inventory wears out our infrastructure. Besides the Gottstein and Napa DCs, everyone depends on trucks and warehouses to get their inventory which is stored within the supply chain (within the modes of transportation: boat/port, airport, truck). Stores have twice a week delivery. No one wants to build a big warehouse.

IDEAS

- Identify the 53' truck routes.
- One road repair phone call for both MOA and State roads so their switchboards don't have to transfer back and forth.
- Not every street can be complete streets (9th avenue). We can not afford to have the 100' ROW.