

## **DCM Updates, Chapter 1 and 6, Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #2 Summary**

**Date:** March 24, 2026 2:00 pm – 4:30pm

**Attendees:** See attached list

**Subject:** DCM Updates, Safe Systems

### **Summary**

The second Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meeting focused on the process and priorities with the DCM Updates (Chapter 1 + 6). Discussion centered on how the DCM functions within Anchorage's broader planning framework, including prescriptive design criteria debate, how the DCM interacts with policy documents, safety aims, and design and community priorities.

### **Review of Meeting #1**

Brandon reviewed key themes from the first SAG meeting, including MOA roadway ownership, typical roadway and right-of-way dimensions and minimum widths for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and snow storage.

- Tyler R. (CIHA): Concerning snow storage, does MOA prefer this design with a separate buffer? Is there a difference in design between DOT and MOA?
  - Brandon Telford: MOA prefers that separation to use the space between sidewalk and road as snow storage, with sidewalk clearing. DOT and MOA use different equipment, which affects design and maintenance.
- Holly ST. (Huddle): Would DOT adopt Municipal design criteria?
  - DOT: The equipment we have is limited for that.
- Trying to fit a 130-foot cross-section into a 60-foot right-of-way led to alternate design options, including protected bike lanes that could serve as snow storage in winter and bicycle facilities in summer.
  - Brandon T: The MOA has discussed using bike infrastructure as the snow storage space. However, the policy decision for that hasn't been formalized.
- Tyler R. (CIHA): When DOT is doing the planning for a municipal road, are they using municipal standards or their own?
  - Alex R. (DOT): If federal funds are used, we use federal and state standards. DOT rarely supersedes municipal requirements unless more stringent regulations are required.

## DCM Changes and Success Discussion

Renée presented results from the pre-meeting poll, which identified key SAG member themes for DCM updates including Consistency with other plans, Clear plan hierarchy, Safety prioritization and Non-motorized design.

Brandon noted conflicting feedback like some participants want a simpler DCM, while others prefer more technical detail.

- Melinda K. (PM&E): What does less prescriptive design mean?
  - Brandon T: Many want the minimum and maximum design ranges for roadways. There is a desire to stay prescriptive because there are minimums that people want to see built within the right-of-way.
- Alex R. (DOT): It is important to have standards, but if we need to be consistent about the standards with less picking and choosing. A less prescriptive design allows for context-informed decisions.
  - Brandon: There could be a prescriptive standard with minimums but still allow for project context.
- Brandon T.: In terms of street typologies, there is an interest in street typologies and context-specific minimum requirements to avoid unnecessary right-of-way acquisition and provide facilities where they are most needed.
- Holly ST. (Huddle): Is the DCM too prescriptive now?
  - In some places yes. For example, there is a 14-foot requirement for a two-way-left-turn lane which could be adjusted based on context.
- Jason N. (CC): I've heard that AASHTO is more vehicle focused, are there other standards, like the Green Book, that better support multimodal design?
  - Brandon T.: The Green Book is comprehensive but intentionally non-prescriptive; NACTO referenced the Green Book for geometric design so even with NACTO you still need the AASHTO guide; NACTO provides useful multimodal concepts but is not fully adaptable to Anchorage conditions. There is value in developing locally tailored criteria informed by multiple sources.
- Donovan C. (Traffic): Currently, prescriptive standards struggle with right-of-way acquisition, emphasizing the need for clearer hierarchies that acknowledge not every street can accommodate all modes. The DCM could serve as a tool to promote consistency while limiting right-of-way demands.
  - Brandon: Different streets require different modal hierarchies, sometimes even within the same block. If we view roadways as part of a network, then hierarchies can be effective if they are clearly developed. Using the AMATS Complete Streets to first define the network, then layer typologies.

- Andre S. (Anchorage Home Builders): The DCM is too prescriptive when it comes to road prisms. It relies heavily on its standards and ignores geotechnical engineers site specific recommendations.
  - Brandon: There are philosophical differences between geotechnical practice for structural design in thaw weakened soils and municipal design standards which are based on frost-protection. For urban contexts with curbs, gutters, driveways, and frost considerations, more robust, frost-protected sections are often necessary even if they exceed geotechnical recommendations
- Stephanie M. (HDL): There's a conflict between design criteria for new subdivisions and roads and then redeveloping existing roads. The DCM is trying to balance being prescriptive, which is beneficial for engineers and their clients about requirements, and adhering to community and public involvement planning.

### **Policy, Function and Process Discussion**

Holly presented on MOA plan hierarchy and how plans fit into the comprehensive plan with an emphasis that the DCM does not drive policy, rather the comprehensive plan is policy that drives the DCM.

- Daniel MF. (Planning): The DCM does not drive policy, but policy is embedded in the DCM that doesn't align with other policy guides. Certain language prioritizes drivers over others, which is not reflected in our plans. The DCM should be explicit about what policy guidance is or isn't.
  - Holly ST. (Huddle): Let us know where you see current inconsistencies within the DCM and how it relates to policy, so we can make changes.
- Alex R. (DOT): The challenge is when adopted plans do not align with DCM requirements then design teams are uncertain how to proceed.

Brandon reviewed MOA Transportation Policy from pre-LRTS documents, including safety, multimodal access, connectivity, and resilience.

- Daniel MK (Planning): Safety and system efficiency mean different things to different users and on different road types. Plans do not clearly communicate who a roadway is being designed for or how tradeoffs should be resolved in practice.
- Brandon T.: Prioritizing safety and system efficiency includes congestion management strategies. How do congestion management and safety relate? For instance, avoiding cut through traffic.

- Colin S. (CRW): Safety looks like two different things in two different places. Compared to Italy's roads, their local roads are very slow, and their highways have frequent safety pullouts and limited horizontal curvature.
  - Brandon: It sounds like communities in Italy have a well-defined road network and roads aren't trying to do multiple things. Here there can be conflict between road and land use.
  - Colin S. (CRW): I think they have an easier time making concessions. We are more willing to accommodate, but not every road can do everything.
- Anna B. (DOT): Congestion management shouldn't be conflated with safety improvement.
- Chelsea WW (Public Works): Another challenge between safety and efficiency is residents often expect roads to accommodate emergency vehicle access in all conditions while also expecting sidewalks to remain fully cleared in winter. Individual residents frequently do not understand that these goals can conflict within constrained right-of-way and maintenance realities.
- Jade P. (CC): There is ongoing conflict between plans, policy and the hierarchy in practice as demonstrated with the current Midtown plan which has conflicting opinions and ideas. The DCM should empower engineers and project managers to make difficult decisions when plans conflict.
- Tyler R. (CIHA): I like the idea of looking at the network beyond a simple roadway. The challenge is we don't focus on implementation until we're designing specific roads. What if we funded area improvements rather than single road projects? Our current funding and process structures limit broader network-based solutions.
- Melinda K. (PM&E): Efficiency is often viewed negatively, but it is important for transit operations. Transit depends on predictable travel times to meet frequency goals, and that changes to roadway speed or design can affect routes, schedules, and re-entry delays for buses.
  - Brandon T.: I was unaware of the impact on speed limits for transit as any speed changes greatly impact their schedules and routes.
- Holly ST. (Huddle): Regarding the idea of policy versus implementation, if we want to improve these things- are we working on the right document?
  - Daniel MF. (Planning): We are also working on the Streets and Highway Plan and it's fine to work on these plans simultaneously
- Tyler R. (CIHA): What is a typology? And is the DCM the place for typologies and how it guides it?

- Brandon T: Yes, it should be in the DCM. The OSHP will tell you what your network is, the Complete Streets will tell you what your network and land use is, and the DCM will tell you criteria guidelines based on land use.
- Holly ST. (Huddle): What happens with the AMATS typologies?
  - Aaron J (AMATS): We started it first and the AMATS typologies are a guide and can be used to inform the DCM typologies.

### **Long-Range Transportation Strategy (LRTS) Discussion**

Brandon’s overview on the LRTS and its goals which include safety, maintenance, multimodal, reflect public priorities, and environmental sustainability, along with its mode share targets.

- Daniel MF. (Planning): The LRTS focused on commuter mode share because it relies on census data, which allows the MOA to track progress consistently, which is imperfect but practical.
- Brandon T.: Thinking about the feasibility of changing behavior through engineering and technical solutions, as changing behavior requires a change in belief. Can mode share goals be achieved solely through technical design or should educational efforts also play a role?
  - Jason N. (CC): Too often, we fall back on education, and it is less effect than design changes. People are responsive to their environment; most drivers would be less inclined to drive fast down a narrow street. Without technological changes, nothing will change.
  - Donovan C. (Traffic): Technical changes can intentionally reinforce behavior changes, as seen with our neighborhood greenways and sharrows.
  - Jade P. (CC): I had a near accident along a crosswalk with a driver who would be an ideal candidate for education safety. Education falls short relative to engineering and technical design. Small inconveniences to drivers can save lives. If engineers only consider design from a driver’s perspective, roadway designs will prioritize vehicle convenience over the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users

### **Activity: Rank the Long Range Transportation (LRTS) Goals, in order of importance for the DCM updates.**

1. Take a safe system approach to all projects
2. Maintain existing transportation infrastructure- improve, fix and use what we have
3. Reflect public priorities in transportation investment and decision making
4. Provide existing transportation choices in how people move around the municipality

5. Consider environmental sustainability

- Melinda K. (PM&E): As far as a shift, PM&E has also been looking at #2 for maintaining existing infrastructure.

**Activity: How can the DCM Update best support the LRTS goals?**

Responses:

Use LRTS policy guidance to justify/explain standards if they are not clear
Provide options in line with those goals with the flexibility to meet unique challenges in anchorage
provide clearer guidance for engineers to make decisions that are in line with LRTS goals
Provide flexible and cost efficient design options to be able to make more miles of improvements.
Provide hierarchy that helps clarify when there's tension between goals
Keep VRUs top of mind
Implement a dynamic modal hierarchy when implementing projects. Recognize the DCMs existing hierarchy.
By serving its purpose as just a design document to other policy documents .
Clearly establish a link between design and modal hierarchy.
Standards that support all modes of transportation
Design for safety
Snow storage and drainage
Design criteria that contribute to roads that contribute to networks that help achieve adopted MOA policies.
Seek balance of mode use and design for maintenance success
Reset the focus on SS4A by correcting assumptions about speed
Replace one size fits all standards with context driven design ranges

- Jason N. (CC): The DCM should have an established modal design hierarchy so we can actively work to change the culture of roadway design that prioritizes multimodal outcomes rather than defaulting to vehicle-centric design
  - Brandon T: Establishing a modal hierarchy would change the scope of the DCM. Currently the DCM does not direct project teams on how many vehicles to design for; those determinations are part of the project delivery process, including context-sensitive solutions and design study reports.
  - Zak H. (Traffic): Would this approach require additional traffic analysis, like determining pedestrian volumes, to inform design decisions?
  - Jason N. (CC): Right now, relying on vehicle volumes alone effectively prioritizes vehicles over other modes. The DCM should employ an 'outside-in'

design approach in which pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users are prioritized over vehicles. The LRTS explicitly identifies mode share and modal hierarchy and should be incorporated into the DCM.

- Zak H. (Traffic): So that is less about changing analytical requirements and more about establishing a design philosophy within the DCM.
- Brandon T: Current design practice involves collecting existing traffic volumes and projecting future volumes to inform design. The DCM does not explicitly require this process and if it did, that would be an expansion of the DCM's scope.
- Jason N. (CC): There are some traffic analyses with increased vehicle volumes that do not align with land use.
- Colin S. (CRW): Is the DCM role to simply provide design numbers or to explain why those numbers are used? Should the DCM prioritize simplicity or context?
  - Brandon T.: These numbers are part of the OSHP
- Emily W. (AMATS): The DCM should remain a technical document focused on roadway design criteria, while the OSHP establishes policy direction, such as roadway classifications, characteristics, and modal priorities.
  - Colin S. (CRW): As a designer, I support that.
- Stephanie M. (HDL): While design study reports and roadway analyses are not currently addressed in the DCM, there are inconsistencies in data collected across projects. Historically, only vehicular data were collected, but efforts are now improving to include pedestrian and bicycle volumes and behavior. Documenting design decisions and design hierarchies and explaining why decisions were made are important but possibly don't belong in the DCM.
  - Brandon T.: Formal thresholds tied to pedestrian or bicycle volumes could become a double-edged sword as requiring minimum usage thresholds to justify higher-level facilities could inadvertently limit multimodal design. We have an "if we build it, they will come" philosophy.
- Donovan C. (Traffic): Traffic analysis could instead be used to establish desired traffic volumes based on policy goals. The DCM could provide technical tools to help implement OSHP policy, like traffic calming, as policy requires practical implementation.
  - Brandon T.: We could incorporate mode shares into criteria and design for reduced traffic volumes, rather than projected growth, but that would expand the scope of the DCM.
- Melinda K (PM&E): I support using planning efforts to inform design but suggest that the DCM focus on typologies and network context, particularly with respect to

comfort and safety for different modes. The DCM can provide baseline expectations, like buffer guidance based on corridor context and traffic levels. While comfort is not a fixed number, it can be conveyed through typologies and ranges.

## **Safe System Approach**

Brandon presented on the Safe System Approach overview, its principles, objectives and focus on safer speeds and roads.

- Stephanie M. (HDL): Even though headlights have gotten brighter and more directive, drivers often outride their headlights particularly in dark conditions. With Alaska's low-light environment, roadway lighting is a critical safety component to ensure driver reaction time.
- Jade P. (CC): Are there any limitations with the Safe System Approach?
  - Daniel MF. (Planning): It's a nationwide program, with broad professional agreement and support.
- Jade P. (CC): How will the Safe System objectives function with roadway design decisions if incorporated into the DCM?
- Holly ST. (Huddle): Brandon, what do you think we change about the DCM?
  - Brandon T.: The DCM needs to address speed differently, as it currently relies on functional classification and land use. It should move beyond design speeds and instead change to target speeds, aligned with safety outcomes and context
- Donovan C. (Traffic): Are there other city DCMs or design manuals that you would recommend?
  - Zak H. (Traffic): Next time, I'll talk about some that use street typologies including Orange County, Halifax, Denver, Salt Lake City, and I like Minneapolis as well.

Brandon concluded by sharing a conversation with a planner from Helsinki about roadway fatalities, and they shared it had been five years since a roadway death and before that, eight years. This fundamentally reframed the understanding of Vision Zero from Brandon, shifting focus from annual loss to sustained periods of safety.

## **Next Steps**

The third stakeholder meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks for virtual site visits along with presentations on movement and place framework.

Stakeholders should submit any questions or comments on the DCM update on the comment form [here](#).

Attendees:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Jessie Doherty	AK DOH
Anna Bosin	AK DOT & PF
Connor Eshleman	AK DOT & PF
Alex Read	AK DOT & PF
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Emily Weiser	AMATS
Radhika Krishna	Anchorage Downtown Partnership
Andre Spinelli	Anchorage Home Builders Association
Katie Severin	AARP Alaska
Tyler Robinson	CIHA
Jason Norris	Community Council
Jade Powell	Community Council
Alma Abaza	CRW
Aaron Christie	DOWL
Stephanie Mormilo	HDL Engineering
Colin Singleton	CRW
Iain McPherson	Kinney Engineering
Steven Halcomb	Devise Engineering
Michael Nti Ababio	MOA Planning
Daniel Mckenna-Foster	MOA Planning
Mélisa Babb	MOA Planning
Tim Hunting	MOA PM&E
Melinda Kohlhaas	MOA PM&E

Kyle Pettibone	MOA PM&E
Shawn Wilson	MOA PM&E
Chelsea Ward-Waller	MOA Public Works
Brandon Telford	MOA Public Works
Donavan Camp	MOA Traffic
Zak Hartman	MOA Traffic
Brandon Marcott	Triad Engineering
Renée Eddy Harvey	Huddle
Holly Spoth-Torres	Huddle