

**ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Mayor's Conference Room, 8th Floor
632 W. 6th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska**

**August 15, 2024
1:00 PM**

*This meeting is available for viewing at
[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](http://Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings (muni.org))*

Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Sean Holland	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Graham Downey	Mayor's Special Assistant for Housing & Transportation
Jason Olds	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Meg Zaletel	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
Mark Littlefield**	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)
Brian Lindamood*	ARRC
Ben White*	DOT&PF
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Mark Eisenman	DOT&PF
Brandon Telford	MOA/Project Management & Engineering Dept. (PM&E)
Chelsea Ward-Waller	PM&E
Marie Heidemann	FHWA
Morgan McCammon	DOWL
Mary McRae	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Sam Tyler	DOWL
Adam Bradway	DOT&PF
Lindsey Hajduk	NeighborWorks Alaska/AMATS Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee
John Linnell	DOT&PF
Kelly Kilpatrick	DOWL
Galen Jones	DOT&PF
Daniel Mckenna-Foster	MOA/Long-Range Planning Division

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

CHAIR HOLLAND called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Graham Downey, Special Administrative Assistant, represented Mayor LaFrance. A quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

AARON JONGENELEN encouraged public involvement in this meeting of the AMATS Policy 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

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve the agenda. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend the agenda to add the letter from the Alaska State Legislature regarding STIP Amendment #1 as Item 6.e. ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL seconded.

Hearing no objections, the first amendment passed.

CHAIR HOLLAND moved to amend the agenda to add an action item to revisit a boundary change that was approved by the PC several months ago but has not yet been implemented.

MR. JONGENELEN pointed out that without having received any information regarding this item, he did not have any information to provide the committee members, and it has not been posted on the agenda seven days in advance of the meeting. It could go before the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) next month and then come before this committee.

CHAIR HOLLAND proposed to send it back to the TAC.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that AMATS had already sent it to DOT&PF for approval by the governor. He could ask DOT&PF to resend it and include the reason why.

In response to Mr. Downey's request for motion clarification, CHAIR HOLLAND explained that it would be sent back to the TAC for additional review.

MR. DOWNEY seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL expressed that she is not clear on what the actual item is. Is it to refer back to the TAC and then back to the PC, or just refer it to the TAC for final action, which she did not think was possible?

CHAIR HOLLAND clarified that the action would be to rescind the approval of the PC, send it back to the TAC, then send it back to the PC for approval.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL asked if there was an item or what it was exactly to use as a reference, so if anyone would like to be involved, they could go back and look at what we did. If we agree to add this now, can we go back and add a hyperlink to the agenda as to what we actually referred to?

MR. JONGENELEN replied that, yes, it can be edited and make note of it, but we do not typically edit the agendas because records are kept of what was actually sent out to the public. A note can be added that the agenda was changed during the meeting to add this as an action item.

CHAIR HOLLAND did not believe there was any urgency in approving that boundary. He could have DOT&PF staff hold off on that concurrence and signature another month, if that would make it easier to add to next month's agenda.

MR. JONGENELEN noted that it would make it much easier because the agenda would not have to be edited and could be brought back in September. We are not really in a rush, but we do have a time limit because, at a certain point, FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) will want our boundary to be updated due to having changes for the census-designated urban boundaries, and we need to reflect that in our boundary. He believed the time limit was 2025, but he will check and have that information available.

CHAIR HOLLAND explained that DOT&PF was adding a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) project on the Seward Highway and had it on hold because they discovered that it is inside the new boundary. When they approved that previously, he asked what the benefit of expanding their boundary was and if they had to. He did not see any benefit, but what he did not think of was the detriment. Not critical, maybe more bad than good, but the process that they have for being able to program that project, if in fact the new boundary was in place, would have delayed that project at least one year. It needs a little bit more work, and he wanted to make sure everyone thought about the detriments of expanding that boundary.

CHAIR HOLLAND withdrew his motion to amend. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Hearing no objections the motion passed, as amended.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – July 18, 2024

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve the minutes. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS

a. Vulnerable Road User Data from Strategic Highway Safety Plan

MR. JONGENELEN noted that DOT&PF is working on a multi-year Road Safety Audit and is requesting information from AMATS to provide a selected roadway segment or intersection within the AMATS boundary. DOT&PF is looking for locations that are focused on Vulnerable Road Users (VRU). This project will rotate between the DOT&PF regions and the MPOs. Central Region DOT&PF has requested that DeBarr Road between Pine Street and Boniface Parkway be audited. AMATS' staff reviewed and recommended the following:

- Intersection: West 5th and 6th Avenues and A and C Streets. These intersections are part of the Justice 40 locations and fall within an active planning project, the Downtown Streets Engineering study, as well as the upcoming AMATS A/C Corridor Plan. Additionally, the AMATS Safety Plan lists these locations as having a higher need.
- Segment: Tudor Road - Lake Otis Parkway to Elmore Road. This segment falls within the Justice 40 location, will be part of an upcoming AMATS Tudor Road Corridor Plan, and falls within the AMATS safety plan area of higher need. Additionally, the Lake Otis and Tudor intersection was reconstructed to help with safety and congestion, so this audit can help review the area to determine how it worked.

The TAC also recommended supporting staff's recommendations. During that meeting, DOT&PF staff mentioned that all areas on the SHSP VRU list will be part of the audit project, and AMATS can recommend other locations as well.

MARY MCRAE with DOT&PF assisted with responding to questions.

The committee discussed the ability to choose both the segment and the intersection, funding audit areas, road safety audits being fact-based data-driven processes, and AMATS not needing to recommend DeBarr Road between Pine Street and Boniface Parkway since DOT&PF had already requested for this to be audited. They also discussed if there were prioritizations or timelines attached to these.

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL moved to approve. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend to change the termini to match Lake Otis to Elmore Road, instead of Bragaw Street. ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL seconded.

First Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

MR. DOWNEY moved to amend and correct the memorandum to clarify that both the intersection and the segment are being recommended and to clarify that we prioritized doing West 5th and 6th Avenues and A and C in the second year and Tudor Road in the fourth year. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND intends to support the first part of the amendment in terms of moving both project locations forward. He was curious if we have alignment with the rest of the committee to set them for prioritization in that manner.

MR. DOWNEY noted that he was making the choice based on part of the Downtown Street Engineering Study, as mentioned in the memorandum, and other community conversations happening in the short term about 5th and 6th Avenues, but it is not a strongly held position, so if the will of the committee is otherwise, then he is happy to be flexible on that piece.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL does not intend to support the amendment. She would rather see an amendment that keeps both projects prioritized in accordance with the timing of concurrent planning. Whether that is the Downtown Streets and the A and C corridor studies as well as the Tudor Road study, move them along in that fashion. It feels that they are complementary, but to simply put Tudor Road out an additional two years misaligns it when the corridor study is supposed to happen, and it undercuts a lot of the HSIP work that is already happening on Tudor Road when it could be informing it instead.

MR. GORDON understood from DOT&PF that they have to choose one for the second year and one for the fourth year. We cannot get both in the second year.

MS. MCRAE confirmed that, yes, DOT&PF has one slot in year two and one slot in year four.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL added that this is not an AMATS Policy Committee thing, but she did not want Midtown to take a back seat to downtown on this, so she cannot support the amendment when it would also misalign it when the corridor study is set to go.

MR. DOWNEY revised his amendment to prioritize Tudor Road for the second year and West 5th and 6th Avenues and A and C Streets for the fourth year.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND felt that the Assembly representatives on this committee, one representing North Anchorage and the other representing Midtown are being put in an uncomfortable position in terms of having to prioritize which should go in the second year and which in the fourth year. He was curious if it could be programmed according to whenever that planning process is finished. Do we know the Tudor Road will be finished before the Downtown Streets Engineering Study and/or the A and C Couplet study?

MR. JONGENELEN explained that for the planning projects, the Tudor Road project will come before the A and C project. If these were reversed having Tudor Road in the second year and A and C Streets were in the fourth year, he thought they would better align with the corridor plans and/or staff could make sure they do align with the corridor plans since we have some flexibility there. They will not align with the Downtown Streets since that is happening right now and is probably going to be done within the next year or so. That does not negate the importance of selecting those corridors because whatever comes from the Downtown Street can be complementary to whatever is chosen from here or what we look at for the A and C Streets. The TAC did not prioritize these because at the time we thought we had to select only one.

MR. DOWNEY would like clarification from DOT&PF if DeBarr Road between Pine Street and Boniface Parkway is their plan if there is flexibility in terms of maybe 5th and 6th Avenues and Tudor Road are coming in years one and two as opposed to two and four.

MS. MCRAE noted that, unfortunately, that is not an option given the project that has been approved by FHWA.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL suggested motion language that we would move these projects forward in accordance with the alignment with the corridor plans but if the timing on the corridor plans were to change the priority, the projects would change. What we know is that these things move, they are attached in the TIP, they are doing their own thing. She did not want to be tied into one order and what if the projects gets pushed or get reversed. If the intention is to align them with the corridor plans or with the Downtown Streets Engineering study and if we could just align them to the other studies so they can move as the timing works, that is where she is at. She is protective of Midtown but in the end it was more about alignment with the actual other pieces that are moving.

Second Amendment was withdrawn

MR. DOWNEY **withdrew** his amendment. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL moved to amend that the projects go forward in coordination and as close to alignment as possible with the corridor studies as programmed in the TIP and any other concurrent studies. ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND seconded.

Third Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to amend clarifying to have both the intersection and segment to go forward. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Fourth Amendment

Hearing no objections, the amendment passed.

Main Motion, As Amended

Hearing no objections, the main motion was approved, as amended.

b. Letter of Support for DOT&PF Wildlife Crossing Study

MR. JONGENELEN informed the committee that DOT&PF brought forward a letter of support for a Wildlife Vehicle Collision Mitigation Study to seek a discretionary grant. The TAC recommended approval. DOT&PF was originally going to do an actual project for wildlife crossing, but there was a desire to study the area more to determine the exact

locations and coordination between JBER, DOT&PF, MOA, and every other landowner and member of the public possible for that area before a decision is reached. Staff also recommends supporting the letter.

There were no comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve this letter. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. Hiland Road Interchange Project Update

GALEN JONES with DOT&PF and KELLY KILPATRICK with DOWL presented the project update.

The committee discussed what amount would need to be programmed to acquire an amendment to the TIP, what projects DOT&PF think should be deprogrammed or deprioritized from the TIP in order to make this a priority, and using STIP money to add to the TIP to fix the fiscal constraint. It was also reiterated that projects are required to be in the TIP prior to being added to the STIP,

There were no public comments.

b. Q3 Obligation Report FFY24

MR. JONGENELEN presented the obligation report.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL asked if there was any way for TIP projects to go through while awaiting the STIP amendment to happen. She felt they were being held hostage on our projects by a less than ideal STIP process, and she never feels comfortable when well-under-obligated on federal monies because federal monies always run the risk of disappearing if you do not use them. What kind of flexibility and what kind of problem solving can we do around this that lets us keep our projects on track because not only is it right-of-way and the Spenard project, but Costco up. It is not just that we will get out of alignment with the schedule; we are going to have cost escalators on here, and we are in a fiscally constrained program and will have to start making choices. It really throws the whole thing into quite substantial limbo; it throws the TIP and the implementation of the TIP into limbo. She is really concerned to see this.

MR. JONGENELEN commented that this is pretty concerning. He had never presented an obligation report that showed such a significant amount of funding not going to be obligated potentially in a fiscal year, but we have to wait for the STIP to be done before we can move

forward. It is part of the process where all the federal funding is provided to DOT&PF, which administers the federal process, and AMATS is a subrecipient of federal funding. For example, if AMATS were a direct recipient, we would not have to wait for the STIP. But because we are a subrecipient, as called out in federal regulations, we do have to wait for the STIP amendment to be done before we can move forward with the changes listed in TIP Amendment #2.

CHAIR HOLLAND added that the \$50 million includes projects that have slipped. Ideally, it would be zero, but when TIP Amendment #2 passes, that number would come down significantly. There have to be some construction projects in there.

MR. JONGENELEN pointed out that AMATS had already accounted for all the project slips that we knew at the time when doing TIP Amendment #2. For example, we already knew the Downtown Trail Connections were going to slip, so we accounted for that by having the PC approve moving that funding to Transit allowing them to purchase more buses or bus stop improvements. If TIP Amendment #2 through the STIP is not approved in time, then that money becomes available to be used in future years. We have to work with DOT&PF to recapture, get a new TIP amendment done, and get it into the STIP. It is a long and complicated process to get it changed if it does not go forward.

In response to Chair Holland's comment that the \$50 million includes some of AMATS' allocation but also includes the STIP projects, MR. JONGENELEN clarified that this is just the AMATS allocations.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked what is the annual value of that?

MR. JONGENELEN replied that it is about that because AMATS has carbon reduction program funding, transportation alternatives funding, congestion mitigation air quality funding, and our surface transportation block grant funding. We have also carried forward approximately \$14 million from previous years, which is not shown in this because it is in future years. We will still have to account for that with project slips as well, so we already have carried forward slippage from previous years.

There were no public comments.

c. Q3 AMATS Project Update

MR. JONGENELEN briefed the committee on the project update.

There were no comments.

d. AMATS TIP Amendments #2 and #3 Update/MTP Amendment #1

MR. JONGENELEN presented the amendment updates.

The committee discussed how serious DOT&PF is about these megadollar projects and the likelihood of these projects actually getting built; there is no schedule listed on the website other than starting construction in 2025; and having the DOT&PF project team attend a future meeting to provide details and more specificity about projects; and the committee's role in prioritizing and how the money is spent.

There were no public comments.

e. Legislative Letter STIP Amendment #1

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND informed the committee that the Anchorage Assembly received a letter from some of the legislators to Commissioner Anderson regarding STIP Amendment #1. The first paragraph in the letter states they are urging removal of proposed STIP Amendment #1, followed by their rationale.

CHAIR HOLLAND read the first paragraph in that it says it is sub-based on the risk it poses a threat to next year's construction season. He thinks it is important to pass Amendment #1 so that we can have that funding in place for next year's construction season.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER ZALETEL asked if someone could lay out a timeline regarding the STIP as to where we have been, what we have left, and where we are headed. When she receives a letter such as this, she has to go back into all the STIP documents because it has been an unusual STIP.

CHAIR HOLLAND noted that the public comment period for Amendment #1 has closed. The next step is for DOT&PF to prepare responses to those public comments, submit them to FHWA for approval, which has not happened yet. Once that is submitted, FHWA has up to 30 days to approve that amendment.

JAMES STARZEC clarified that FHWA has 30 days to respond to the STIP amendment, which could be a full approval, a partial approval, or a denial.

There were no public comments.

7. COMMITTEE COMMENTS - None

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

9. ADJOURN

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to adjourn. MR. DOWNEY seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.