

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

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

**January 16, 2024
1:00 PM**

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[Transportation Planning / AMATS Meetings \(muni.org\)](https://www.muni.org/transportation-planning/amats-meetings)*

Due to Chair Holland participating virtually, Kent Kohlhasse acted as Chair

Policy Committee Members Present:

Name	Representing
Sean Holland	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Kent Kohlhasse	MOA/Public Works
Jason Olds	Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation (ADEC), Air Quality
Mark Littlefield**	MOA/Municipal Assembly
Daniel Volland	MOA/Municipal Assembly

Also in attendance:

Name	Representing
Aaron Jongenelen	AMATS
Christine Schuette	AMATS
Mook Puttong	AMATS
Brian Lindamood*	Alaska Railroad Corporation
Kate Dueber	ARRC
Mélisa Babb*	MOA/Planning Department
Alexa Dobson	Bike Anchorage
James Starzec	DOT&PF
Julie Jenkins	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Adeyemi Alimi*	ADEC
Jason Norris	
Taylor Keegan*	MOA/Parks & Recreation Department
Jim Winchester	Planning & Zoning Commission Representative
Anna Bosin	DOT&PF
Emily Weiser	Bike Anchorage President
Marie Heidemann	FHWA
Kim Sollien	
Van Le	R&M Consultants
Ben White*	DOT&PF
Luke Bowland*	DOT&PF
Lindsey Hajduk	NeighborWorks Alaska
Joselyn Biloon	DOT&PF
Zachary Schwartz	
Mark Eisenmann	DOT&PF

**AMATS Technical Advisory Committee Member*

***Designated Assembly Alternate*

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

MR. KOHLHASE called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Kent Kohlhasse represented the Mayor's Office on behalf of Graham Downey. Designated Assembly Member Alternate Mark Littlefield represented Assembly Member Zaletel. Sean Holland participated virtually. 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. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the agenda was approved.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – November 21, 2024 and December 19, 2024

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve the minutes. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the minutes were approved.

5. ACTION ITEMS**a. 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – Amendment #1**

MR. JONGENELEN noted that at the November Policy Committee (PC) meeting, staff was directed to remove the Safer Seward Highway project from the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan as part of Amendment #1. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on January 2, 2025, and voted to table this item to February 6, 2025. The TAC asked that DOT&PF provide the letter discussed back in November 2024, giving a full understanding of where the funding is coming from for this project. Additionally, the TAC asked staff to provide information that should this project be removed from the MTP, what projects will be added to use the available funding.

There were no comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to release the MTP Amendment #1 for a 45-day public comment period. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

MR. HOLLAND expressed that he did not intend to support the motion because he felt that the project should stay in the MTP. The strategy that has been discussed with FHWA is that we are going to keep moving on the project and cut it back to outside of AMATS' limits and keep the environmental document for that whole stretch, which cuts out some high accident areas. Those could be addressed with HSIP funds in the future and revisit the MTP when we get to building that part.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND clarified that the motion is to just to release the amendment for public comment. It does not move the project from the MTP, since this committee already voted to do that.

ACTING CHAIR KOHLHASE called for a roll call vote.

YEA

Assembly Member Volland
Assembly Member Littlefield
Acting Chair Kohlhase

NAY

Mr. Holland
Mr. Olds

The motion passed with 3 in favor and 2 against.

b. 2023-2026 Funding Program – Amendment #3

MR. JONGENELEN noted that an amendment to the AMATS 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is required to update Table 1: Summary, Table 2: Roadway, Table 3: Non-Motorized, Table 7: HSIP (Highway Safety Improvement Program), Table 8: NHS (National Highway System), Table 9: Transit, and Table 10: Other, Federal, State, and Local Funded Projects. These updates comply with the requirements outlined in Section 6.6.1 of the AMATS Operating Agreement and Policy #5 of the Policies and Procedures. The overall changes are as follows:

- Remove the STIP Need ID columns from all tables.
- Added in a “Project Cost Pre-2023” column to all tables. This update affects the total project cost displayed for most projects, even if no additional funds are included as part of TIP Amendment #3.
- Separated the match amounts for all projects to identify the different providers and included the corresponding funding source in the match name.
- Adjusted all funding amounts to display precise values down to the dollar, instead of rounding to the nearest thousand.

The following are comments and questions from the committee with responses noted in *Italic*.

- (KK) With regard to the Non-Motorized Safety Campaign, there has been a lot of emphasis and interest from both agencies, the Assembly, and the public about pedestrian safety and the vehicle versus pedestrian collisions that have occurred. Is there an opportunity within this funding stream to distribute items such as reflective vests?

- (AJ) *The reflective tape is just some of the items provided. A report was done approximately two months ago and it showed caps, vests, and some items are handknitted. In addition, AMATS is doing outreach efforts that include campaigns with bus displays. DOT&PF and the Municipality of Anchorage are also contributing to the VisionZero task.*
- (DV) Has TIP Amendment #3 already been approved with the changes that are listed? Is the action here to approve this TIP Amendment #3 and release it for public comment?
- (AJ) *Approval will not happen until this comes back in April for final approval after the public has been given an opportunity to comment, but it is seeking the committee's approval to release it for a 45-day public comment period.*
- (DV) He had emailed Mr. Jongenelen about trying to get some justification for the Fish Creek Trail Connection cost increase and thought Mr. Jongenelen was going to reach out to Noah King, DOT&PF Project Manager, to get more specifics about why we need more design money and how the scope is being expanded. In being transparent, he felt there was a little bit of a lack of trust on the part of the public surrounding this project right now. What is that money going to be used for? Other alternatives that the public has not supported? Before he would support this, he felt that he needed more specific information to justify that cost increase and what it is actually going towards, since they do not have an analysis.
- (TK) *She explained that the proposed cost increase is having to do with extra and additional coordination with utilities, such as Marathon. The current design is going to impact the Coastal Trail between the tunnel at Westchester Lagoon and the Fish Creek Estuary bridge more than initially anticipated. DOT&PF is looking to realign that area so that they can improve a lot of the safety concerns. That will require wetland mitigation and additional design. That is what that additional cost is attributed to, which is increased work with the utilities and work extending out to the connection of the Coastal Trail.*
- (DV) How critical is the shift in timing to Academy/Vanguard moving it from beyond 2026 to 2026?
- (AJ) *Table 2, Project RDY00013, shows that the right-of-way phase was moved from beyond 2026 to FY26. DOT&PF should be able to speak on its urgency.*
- (JS) *All of the adjustments to both the schedule and budget that DOT&PF submitted for this amendment come from the project managers. In this case, he did not know what the project manager's need was, but the fact that she was able to move a phase one year forward is a lot better than what often happens, which is phases moving out years. The project manager was able to expedite this project and get it to the right-of-way phase earlier than expected. Therein lies the correction.*

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- (DV) Hearing that answer and knowing that Mr. Starzec is just answering as best he can and may not be directly connected to that project, he is looking at other projects on this list. The Spenard Road Rehabilitation is being pushed further out and will now be beyond FY26, but that is one that has a lot of community support. As a person on the Policy Committee, he would want to see that expedited. Are these all within the same funding sources? Is it possible to say with TIP Amendment #3 that he would rather see the Spenard Road Rehabilitation project expedited and the Academy/Vanguard put on the back burner? How does that work?
- (AJ) *It is dependent on the project schedule and what is possible. Because of the delays with the STIP and getting the right-of-way started on Spenard, he did not think there was the possibility of moving it up any quicker than it currently is. One of the things staff warned everyone about is that a STIP delay has rippling effects on some of these bigger projects. This committee can choose to delay a project if you do not think it is a necessity, but that does not necessarily mean other projects will be able to move faster to fill in that gap. This was a gap that was identified that we were able to fill with this project to keep it going while recognizing that some of the other projects were delayed beyond staff's control.*
- (SH) *With regard to the 3rd Avenue project in Table 2, DOT&PF has such a challenge to deliver their AMATS program. The scope creep was one of the causes for their delays, but that seems like a completely different project that they are adding the 70 percent of the funding to. He will have time to learn more in the next 30 to 45 days. Those projects are scored in the MTP. Was that project rescored to see if it would still rise to the top with the scope changes?*
- (AJ) *No. Staff had talked about rescoring the project. It did score very high as the Signals and Lighting project already, and this increased the scope of the project. Staff felt this would make it score even higher. If the committee would like, staff can rescore it and bring that information back during the public comment period in order to prevent having to wait until the very end of the comment period.*
- (SH) It can wait, as it seems to be a good project. He did not know if any strategies had been looked at to create another project so they can deliver the signal project first, but maybe that is not a possibility.
- (AJ) *What we are finding is that with the roads downtown, because of how the Signals and Lightings are done, they put the conduits under the pavement. We have to completely tear up the entire road to redo just the signals and lighting. The Signals and Lighting project would be impactful on its own.*
- (SH) How many comments do we typically get on these TIP amendments? In looking through the Operating Agreement, we are required to hold a 30-day public review period, but we are proposing a 45-day public review period. There are some changes in there that a lot of those projects were already in a previous TIP.

- (AJ) *He did not have that information at hand, but one of the reasons we are recommending a 45-day public comment period is, for example, if we do a 30-day period, it only gives us February for staff to compile and prepare the comments, which takes a week or so. 30 days is just not doable, and we have missed the deadline for the next TAC meeting to move this forward. In addition, AMATS is required to bring this before the Assembly for a public hearing, which is in the Operating Agreement. Staff felt that because they will already be waiting to get through the Assembly process, it made sense to allow everyone to have some additional time to review the document and submit comments.*
- (SH) He recognized that AMATS' is short-staffed, noting that DOT&PF is collaborative and may have some resources to assist staff.
- (AJ) *The last TIP amendment received 83 comments. TIP Amendment #1 received 102 comments.*
- (KK) At the end of the public review comment period, what is the next step? Does AMATS incorporate the comments? Do you present the comments and the amendment as it stands back to the TAC or the PC? How are those comments dealt with?
- (AJ) *We are required to do an adjudication of comments, so every comment received, regardless of who it is from, staff compiles them into an Excel document showing who the comment was received from and here is the comment. Staff will then review it and work with other staff from both DOT&PF and the Municipality of Anchorage to review and provide a response to the comments.*
- (KK) Is there a path forward where this committee recommends for this to go forward for public comment but also formally requests answers to those questions that will come back at some future meeting and could be taken under advisement by this committee in the next action?
- (AJ) *Yes. If this committee wants to approve it for release and also add in to please do research on X, Y, and Z projects and provide that information at the next PC meeting, or in email form that could be brought up at the next meeting for discussion. That could then be incorporated into the actual comment/response summary. The public, DOT&PF, FHWA, and FTA will all be able to see the whole process.*

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to release the proposed 2023-26 Amendment #3 for a 45-day public comment period. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

c. Safer Seward Highway – Letter of Support

MR. JONGENELEN noted that Alaska DOT&PF had reached out to AMATS requesting that staff provide a letter of support for the Safer Seward Highway Project (Seward Highway 98.5 to 118). Staff updated the template provided by DOT&PF with the support language to the current AMATS letterhead and posted it to the TAC agenda for review and recommendation. The TAC reviewed the letter and had a lengthy discussion about the project and providing a letter of support. A vote was taken to recommend the letter of support, which failed 6 votes against and 5 votes in favor. A comment was provided by the TAC to update who the letter should be addressed to prior to sending it out. AMATS staff recommends the Policy Committee not support the requested letter of support for the Safer Seward Highway Project.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND commented that it seems DOT&PF is really wanting to move forward with the Safer Seward Highway project. However, he is curious if the state applied for any other projects under the RAISE grant, since it is so broad.

MR. HOLLAND did not have a specific response to the question.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND further commented that we do not know if the RAISE grant is being pursued for any other projects by DOT&PF Central Region.

MR. HOLLAND noted that it is a statewide effort.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND expressed that he was not hearing an answer. What he is confused about is that this project is a safety corridor, but there are other safety corridors in need in the Anchorage Bowl. He is still struggling with the prioritization of this over other needs in the Bowl.

MR. HOLLAND did not understand why the TAC did not recommend that we provide a letter of support. We are voting against injecting \$25 million into our program, and it does not make a whole lot of sense to him. He just talked about the change in scope, and the project is still there, just outside of AMATS' boundaries. The safety corridor is based on a higher rate of fatalities and serious injury accidents, so there is a problem there. He is just a little baffled why we would not support that grant.

ACTING CHAIR KOHLHASE noted that he recognizes, respects, and supports the state's ability, interest, and authority in applying for grants. We all know that irrespective of what the final solution looks like, there are certainly significant issues on the Seward Highway, so that is a weight on the scale in favor of voting to approve the letter of support. On the other hand, the PC did direct that the project be removed from the MTP, which presents this conundrum of this committee voting in favor of sending a letter of support when the committee has voted to remove the project from the MTP or direct that it be removed. He does understand and respect the state's interest in safety on the Seward Highway.

There were no public comments.

MR. HOLLAND moved to issue a Letter of Support for the Safer Seward Highway Project.

MR. OLDS seconded.

ACTING CHAIR KOHLHASE called for a roll call vote.

YEA

Mr. Holland
Mr. Olds

NAY

Assembly Member Volland
Assembly Member Littlefield
Acting Chair Kohlhas

The motion failed with 2 in favor and 3 against.

d. Letter on the AMATS Boundary and Operating Agreement

MR. JONGENELEN noted that during the TAC January 2, 2025, meeting, an informational item was added to the agenda at the request of DOT&PF to discuss concerns regarding the AMATS boundary submitted in September 2024 and the current Operating Agreement. At the TAC meeting, DOT&PF requested the item be pulled as more time was needed to gather more information to bring back to the committees. Instead, the TAC voted to direct staff to write a letter to the Governor and the DOT&PF Commissioner requesting more information on the concerns raised on these two items. Staff did draft the letter based on direction from the TAC and the following that they voted on to include in the letter:

1. To have the information provided in time for the March 2025 TAC and PC meetings.
2. To provide an explanation as to why the boundary and Operating Agreement are connected in this process.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD asked if the information would be available for the March meetings or are we being hopeful.

MR. JONGENELEN replied that nothing has been received to date and this has been around since September 2024, so we are being hopeful.

MR. HOLLAND does not object to the letter, but he does support revisiting the Operating Agreement for a couple of reasons. This code that requires them to revisit that agreement at certain times, including when we change the boundary and practices change from FHWA and the FTA on how we include projects in our TIP. He did not think it would hurt to revisit some parts of that agreement. It is all about being able to deliver projects in Anchorage. It is harder to deliver projects in Anchorage than it is in any other part of the state and that is okay. We have diverse transportation needs in the city, but anything that DOT&PF can do to be able to deliver their program, they will. DOT&PF obligated \$18 million in 20204 and that is just not enough. We have the densest utilities in the state, our facilities are all constructed up to the edge of the right-of-way, and then we have a duplicate process with the STIP and the TIP. He has said multiple times that he would like to see the boundary go back to the urbanized section there. The delay is probably good. We have a peer review coming at the end of the month and that would be a good topic of conversation for that review.

There were no public comments.

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to approve and send the letter regarding the AMATS boundary and Operating Agreement. ASSEMBLY MEMBER LITTLEFIELD seconded.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

6. PROJECT AND PLAN UPDATES

a. AMATS Climate Action Plan Introduction: Project Website

MR. JONGENELEN presented the Climate Action Plan.

The committee discussed how this plan would interplay with project ranking and if it will become a criteria used to rank projects.

There were no public comments.

7. COMMITTEE COMMENTS

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND noted that there has been a request from folks interested in weighing in on the Seward/Glenn Connection PEL study. There was a meeting recently with Fairview, Rogers Park, and Airport Heights community council members trying to get into alignment on how the future of this project and any proposed alternatives could impact those various neighborhoods. The folks who are part of that discussion would like more time so they can go back to their community councils to complete their process. A lot of community councils have a process where they have to introduce a resolution one month and then cannot take action on it until the following month. The published deadline for comment right now is January 23, but they would like to see an extension of at least another month so that the community councils can formally weigh in as advisory committees. He just wanted to make everyone apprised of that situation, and for what it is worth, the DOT&PF folks who are listening, there is interest in that.

MR. HOLLAND did not think there was a problem with extending that comment period. It would be helpful if the community councils sent an email to the project group stating the reason for the extension. DOT&PF does want to give people enough time to be able to comment on it. He also thanked Acting Chair Kohlhase for filling in for him on such short notice.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

MR. JONGENELEN announced that Leifiloa Felise has joined AMATS as an associate planner. She has a lot of experience working with local governments and will be focusing on the TransCAD modeling software and getting AMATS up to speed with GIS capabilities.

9. ADJOURN

ASSEMBLY MEMBER VOLLAND moved to adjourn. Assembly Member Littlefield seconded.

Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Draft Minutes