

Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System  
**POLICY COMMITTEE**  
Fairbanks City Hall, 800 Cushman Street, Council Chambers  
800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Meeting Minutes – June 16, 2010

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Steve Titus called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

**2. Introduction of Members and Attendees**

The following were present:

- \* FMATS Policy Committee members
- \*\* FMATS Staff members
- \*\*\* FMATS Technical Committee members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>
* Steve Titus, P.E.	DOT&PF
* Mike Schmetzer for	Mayor Terry Strle ( <b>absent</b> ), City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Luke Hopkins	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Mayor Isaacson	City of North Pole
* Guy Sattley	Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly
* Chad Roberts	Fairbanks City Council
* Alice Edwards	ADEC, Air Quality Division
*** Donna Gardino	FMATS, Coordinator
** Margaret Carpenter	DOT&PF, Transportation Planner
** Todd Boyce	FNSB Planning
** Tara Callear	FMATS, Planner
David van den Berg	Downtown Association of Fairbanks
*** Joan Hardesty	ADEC
*** Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks, Engineering
Natalie Howard	FNSB Assembly
Marilyn Romano	Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
John Jackovich	Big I
Anna Plager	Resident
Chris Miller	Resident
Tim Cerny	Resident
Jerry Colp	City of Fairbanks
Sheri Olesen	Downtown Business Owner
David Hayden	Downtown Business Owner
Michelle Roberts	Festival Fairbanks
Dwight Morris	Resident
Jerry Cleworth	Councilman, City of Fairbanks
Jerry Rafson	DOT&PF
Ron Ricketts	Downtown resident
Amy Geiger	Downtown Association of Fairbanks
Jane Parish	Resident
Ken Murray	Downtown business owner
Karen Farel	Vision Fairbanks
Lissa Hughes	Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Janet Brown	DOT&PF
Sue Sprinkle	Downtown Business Owner
Janet North	Resident
Molly Rettig	Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
Al Beck	DOT&PF
Jo Heckman	Denali State Bank
Marilyn Romano	Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
Tim Staton	Alaska Gold and Gems

	Matt Stone	PDC Engineers, Inc.
	Romona Oxendine	Santa's Vagabond Travel
	Don Callahan	Resident
	Don Lowell	Real Estate and Development Group
	Angelika Krinner	Downtown Business Owner
***	Ethan Birkholz	DOT&PF
	Julie Smith	Resident
	Ed Niemeyer (sp?)	Resident
	Scott Essalon (sp?)	Downtown business owner

### 3. Public Comments

Dwight Morris said that when he came to Fairbanks in 1963, Cushman Street was a two-way street. When the pipeline construction began there was increased traffic on Cushman, including trucks and there was congestion that caused delays. It was changed to a one-way street and it improved immensely. He said that there are no fewer cars in town than there were at the time of the pipeline construction. He suggested that the people doing the studies and making recommendations have not been here long enough to see this. He believes Barnette would work fine as a two-way street.

David van den Berg, Downtown Association, noted the editorial in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, which says that the decision to make the bridges one-way traffic was decided last year. He said that this is only partly true, because it was actually decided 30 years ago. He said that the Illinois Street project has not been updated adequately to reflect the needs of the downtown economy. In the last year, the hope has remained alive that the Policy Committee would reevaluate that decision to improve the Illinois Street Reconstruction Plan so that it works with the Vision Fairbanks Downtown Revitalization Plan. This being a delay to the Illinois Street Project is a formidable claim that has stopped any exploration of the alternatives. He said that the delays are an overstatement. In response to the earlier comment, he said that there are now other streets that run north/south and Cushman no longer needs to function as a mobility street. Another argument has been CO levels, which he said are on the mend and is not an issue. Congestion is not an issue, as stated in the 1984 study that talks about the "Cushman Bottleneck". He recommends the continued dismantling of the fragmented one-way streets in the downtown core area. He said if none of the reasons remain for having one-way in the downtown, then why do we. Cogent cases can be made for having two-way.

Chris Miller, former FNSB Planning Commissioner and FMATS Committee member, bought property downtown because he could see the community's effort to improve downtown. One of the big things that came out of this Vision planning process is that the roads are not conducive to what the community wants to see happen downtown. He said that there is less traffic downtown than in years past and suggested that this could be due to one-way traffic strangling the downtown. Many people say that they never go downtown because there is nothing there for them. The reason there is nothing downtown for people is because it does not attract economic investment. Millions are being spent on Illinois Street and that needs to be done, but what about downtown? It is not just about moving cars. It is about where the cars need to go. The roads need to be planned for what is wanted in the community. His experience on the FNSB Planning Commission proved to him that Fairbanks is reactionary. There is not a lot of long range, visionary planning, for example, the reaction to all the traffic at the Bentley Trust area. There is a long range plan for downtown and it says we need two way streets. Everything says that two-way streets work better. Many times it is not possible to see the problems in a project until you get closer. He said he often has to recreate projects during construction because there were unforeseeable factors. He encouraged the Committee to think about something other than the cars, like the businesses, the exposure, the pedestrians by going two-way. Noble and Lacey are great now. There were complaints at the time of that work and there have been none since.

Sue Sprinkle, downtown business owner, told a story as an analogy to make a point about the merging of the Illinois Street Reconstruction project with the Vision Fairbanks Plan. She explained how a woman would cut off the legs of the turkey every year at Thanksgiving and had for years. She did it because her mom did. One year she asked grandma why they did it who responded because it was too big to fit in the oven. She said she feels that what is happening with these road projects is that instead of building a better oven, they are building a kitchen around the smaller oven that doesn't work. To be told that it has always been done that way is an old, tired argument and we need to be smarter about how the City is planned for because obviously something is not working. If running traffic at 45 mph through downtown is a good idea, it is not working. She said another bank is leaving downtown. More businesses are leaving. She reminded the Committee that the homepage of the FMATS website reads "The Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) plans for local multi-modal transportation system investments that work for the betterment of the community. Region-wide plans and development patterns help steer short and long-range plans, which aim to safely and efficiently move goods and people, while simultaneously supporting economic progress, environmental protection and an improved quality of life." It does not say that putting a highway through a downtown area is good. She said that FMATS is continuing an old way of thinking. She encouraged the Committee to look at the big picture and to make a decision that helps the City of Fairbanks. She said if people want a highway, they should be on the Steese. She lives and works downtown and walks whenever possible. She would like to see others do the same.

Anna Plager commented on two-way Cushman Street. She referenced the Kittelson report and the Technical Committee recommendations and how both concluded that one-way bridges and two-way traffic would create an unpleasant driving experience. She agrees that driving on Lacey and Noble since they were converted to two-way traffic has improved that experience. She likes the vision of two-way traffic on Cushman Street. She said she would feel safer as a driver because the three lanes of traffic are dangerous. She is less familiar with downtown and that makes it difficult to navigate because she does not know when and where she needs to turn making it more dangerous for her. She addressed the issue of delaying construction of the Illinois Street project, what she feels has been the Committee's biggest consideration. She has worked as a DNR manager on DOT projects for 25 years, and there are always delays. There is always something that delays a project and on Illinois Street, DOT is only part way through the ROW process and that takes forever. She told the Committee not to use that as a red herring to say that they can't wait for two-way design. She also said that politics should not be used as a reason to leave it one-way. Decisions are not made for short term gain at the expense of long term benefit. If you look at the long term benefit potential, it can be agreed that two-way traffic is the way to go.

Ramona Oxendine recently moved her business, Santa's Vagabond Travel, to the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Cushman. Perhaps it is coincidence, but since there has been a one-way traffic the downtown economy has been on the decline and there is little incentive to come downtown. She feels that the one-way traffic on Cushman has functioned as a funnel that gets traffic onto College Road. She sees no benefit to the downtown having one-way traffic, except that it is a short cut across town to the box stores. Two-way traffic would revitalize downtown and a lot of money has been spent to have professionals tell us that, and she doesn't understand why this advice would be ignored. She listens to visitors that come to town and they have comments about visiting the downtown area and they are not positive. With one-way traffic at high speeds there is no opportunity to discover opportunities or reasons to stop and visit downtown. Fairbanks has everything that it takes to make a charming, thriving downtown area. She feels that it is going to take making two-way streets for it to come together and happen.

Karen Farel, 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Design and Graphics, has looked forward to two-way traffic for a long time because it slows the pace of traffic and discourages traffic from speeding to make the next light before it turns red. It is an annoying situation for a pedestrian. She is in favor of slowing the traffic and making them pay attention to their surroundings.

Sheri Oleson, new downtown business owner of Chartreuse, spoke in favor of two-way traffic. Despite numerous recommendations to locate her business in the UAF area, she decided to put her business downtown. She grew up in Alaska, but has lived in communities with thriving downtowns. She is most passionate about the artwork and events and is organizing a group that will focus on this in order to draw people to the downtown. She believes that downtown Fairbanks has potential, otherwise she would not have invested in it. Many people question what there is to do downtown, but lately she has been hearing people say that downtown is starting to come to life. Making downtown a destination will require a better pedestrian environment and slower traffic.

Tim Staton, Alaska Gold and Gems, has been working downtown since the 1980's. He has seen a lot of changes downtown and is not in favor of two-way traffic on Barnette or Cushman Streets. He said Cushman and Barnette are arteries and the bridges connect the artery to the heart. The arteries feed the side streets which are veins. If you clog up the artery with signs and signals, it makes it difficult to get to the veins. Blood will be going in two-directions and slowing the flow. Cars are the blood and the City is the body and the downtown the heart. If you want to slow traffic, make them do the speed limit. He is concerned about the wait time for turning, increased accident potential and idling in the winter.

Amy Geiger, Community Development Director at the Downtown Association, has done extensive research on the benefits of two-way traffic and the answers she found were all in favor. Two way traffic allows for two opportunities for a business to be seen, slower traffic, safer pedestrian environment. She does not really understand the downside of two way streets. Maybe it is faster, but faster is not always better. She encouraged the Committee to step back and reconsider what two way streets can do for the downtown.

Julie Smith, Ester resident, has always wondered why Fairbanks did not have a more vital downtown environment. If it had charming shops and incentive to visit she would come. She is wondering currently if she will stay in Fairbanks after her retirement, and part of the question is what does Fairbanks offer. Although the downtown is improving, it does not offer much, particularly for future generations. She urged the Committee to go with two-way streets because it is a vision for a better future for downtown.

Ken Murray, downtown business owner, has been here since the early 1950's. He has seen both two-way streets and one-way streets downtown. He said he has also seen many stores close their doors to business. This happened whether there were one-way streets or two-way streets. He suggested leaving the streets one-way and not make an experiment of it. He said to wait until the bridges are built, that have been designed now for 30 years for one-way. Wait and see how it works and then consider two-way traffic. Just do it once. He is concerned about left hand turns on slowing traffic. He does not think slowing traffic is the answer to revitalizing. He is in favor of downtown revitalization because he misses how it was. But he is taking a practical standpoint on the issue. He is also concerned about two-way street snow removal.

Ed Niemeyer had law offices downtown for 15 years. He asked the Committee if they are interested in getting traffic through town as fast as possible or if they are interested in revitalizing the downtown area. The outside experts have said that two-way streets are essential for

downtown revitalization. And if people want to see the downtown be revitalized, they better let the downtown revitalization plan be implemented.

Jane Parish spoke in support of two-way streets. She has had business downtown and has lived downtown since 1975. She has seen a lot of change and a lot of plans. She said that the answers to the problems have still not been found in 2010. She invited the Committee to look at a community in British Columbia called Vernon. They have gone through a revitalization effort in the downtown. They have box stores that are on the outside of town. They have two-way streets in the downtown area and people move slowly through, but people continue to come downtown and it is charming. If the goal is to get tourists and residents interested in the downtown, then a creative answer is needed.

John Jackovich, Big I owner, said that the heart and the spirit of those that have commented are in the right place. But the reality is that they need a bike path on the north side of the river. People want to feel comfortable and safe, therefore there needs to be an effort to reduce the number of people hanging around in the streets. The tourists come into the shops and give this information. We have done a good job cleaning this up. He said that investment in downtown needs to be encouraged. It isn't going to matter if the streets are one-way or two-way. If people are not pulling off along Cushman to shop, give them a place to pull off and see if they stop. Doing two things at once to see if one thing works out is not good economics. It's about the shops, the charming atmosphere, and good customer service. People will go where ever they need to get their food and their clothes, etc. He goes to Big Rays.

Tim Cerney told a story about an encounter with lost tourists. They were trying to find downtown. They had started on the south end of Cushman Street and were now on the north side of the river. They had been in the middle of downtown and did not even know it. He said the Vision Plan may have come late, but not too late to amend an adjacent plan that started 25 years ago. 25 years ago it was projected that the traffic volumes would have gone up, but in fact they are down. The nature of retail has changed in the past 25 years, the transportation corridors have changed in the past 25 years and the town itself has changed dramatically. It is clear, looking at other communities, that those that do not make an active effort to revitalize lose their downtown. He believes that Fairbanks is losing its downtown. Businesses are lost every year. He owns a business in downtown and he believes that without a change, it will soon no longer be viable. The future success of the Bridgewater Hotel is connected to the success of Vision Fairbanks. He believes that the two-way streets are a very important piece of the Vision Fairbanks plan. Right now there are very few reasons for anyone to come downtown. Continuing on with one-way streets only continues to encourage traffic to speed through the community. It is an express corridor north to south. To encourage community, traffic must be slowed down. He urged the Committee to reconsider the two-way bridges. It is not too late to do something. If it does not happen now, it will not happen in our business careers. Fairbanks will still be talking about it 25 years from now, just like other communities that are working to correct development mistakes that have been made. You never get to go back and do it again. There are no guarantees that Vision Fairbanks will work, but it requires an active effort.

David Hayden, downtown business owner, home owner and architect, said he wants to see Cushman and Barnette designed for two way traffic. It is disappointing that this decision to make the bridges one way is not being reconsidered. One-way traffic works well to move cars but does nothing to encourage businesses to locate downtown. We need a charming and slower paced downtown and one-way streets will keep the downtown from flourishing.

Ron Ricketts is a downtown resident that lives between Cushman and Barnette Streets. He does not have a problem coming or going on either of the streets. He is comfortable shopping in the

area, with one-way streets. He agrees with leaving the streets as they are. It's not the streets that govern the invitation to shop. It's the goods that are offered. Cushman is a narrow street as it is, and this would make it narrower. This will create potential for accidents. He agrees with revitalization but the streets are not the way to go.

Jerry Cleworth noted that the next 5-10 years are going to be interesting at both the federal and state level as we watch the federal deficits grow and our states oil production decreasing. The money coming through FMATS is precious for this reason. He said that the \$6 million that would be used to convert these streets is a waste because it will not result in new pavement or improved drainage. This money is taken from other plans and visions that have predated this Vision. He does not think we have the luxury to do that. It should be used to improve the infrastructure that we have. His problem with the two-way traffic lies between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on Cushman. He said he had a chance to talk to Crandall & Arambula about the problem and there is no answer to that problem in the plan that has been put forward, which is essentially two-way traffic with one lane of parking. This would make left turns impossible. This will create gridlock. People parallel parking will back up traffic. There is no room for extending the sidewalks, this will only make the lanes smaller. There is no place to put snow as it is this will only create more of a problem. This will make emergency response problematic. He said that he talked to the City traffic engineer and there is no solution under this current scenario. There have been many plans for downtown and unfortunately this is trumping them.

Michelle Roberts has worked with Festival Fairbanks for 23 years. She supports many aspects of the Vision Fairbanks plan. When it comes to the two-way streets she has concerns, particularly snow removal and pedestrian environment. She pointed to the ROW constraints as a cause for concern. More parking would be possible if the streets were to remain one-way. She disagrees with the claim that the roads will bring people downtown. It's the shops that bring people downtown. She thinks that we are on the right track and that they need to give the plans that are currently in motion a chance to succeed and if it needs modification make changes then.

Don Callahan, former City Engineer and Public Works Director in the 1970's, said that there were all kinds of plans for the downtown area and none of them were followed. He understands that Barnette would function as a mobility street and allow for the traffic flow through the City and Cushman would slow the traffic to allow for the traffic to enjoy the downtown community. He is appalled by what has happened to the downtown since he was working with the City. He was amazed when Crandall & Arambula came to Fairbanks. Before now, he has seen all kinds of plans for Fairbanks and everything has been motivated by personal greed. He said this plan is different. He attended every meeting and he was very impressed with the development process and the plan. Barnette should be the through street and Cushman the access street.

Scott Essalon, downtown business owner, is not sure about two-way on Cushman, but he is certain that traffic on Cushman needs to be slowed down. He would like to see parking on Cushman. If were kept one-way, traffic could continue while people parked.

#### **4. Approval of the June 16, 2010 Agenda**

- **MOTION:** To approve the June 16, 2010 agenda, as amended (Isaacson/Sattley)  
No opposition. Approved.

**Comments:** Mr. Titus requested that the Steese Highway/Johansen Expressway Area Traffic Improvements be moved to the top of New Business.

**5. Approval of May 19, 2010 Minutes**

- **MOTION:** To approve the May 19, 2010 minutes (Sattley/Hopkins). No opposition. Approved.

**Comments:** NONE

**6. Committee Reports**

**a) FMATS Staff Report / Technical Committee Action Items**

Ms. Gardino referenced the staff report from the meeting materials and briefly discussed the highlights.

**7. Old Business**

**a) Status of the Fairbanks-North Pole Rail Realignment Funding**

Ms. Gardino explained that a meeting was held at ADOT Headquarters with AKRR, FRA, FMATS, DOT&PF to discuss what steps were to be taken. Ms. Gardino and Mr. Birkholz are to develop a Section 132 Agreement, which will allow the transfer of the funds from the ADOT to the FRA. They are also to draft a MOU between FMATS, ADOT and AKRR regarding who will pay the non-federal share of the project and who will be responsible for repaying the money if the project were to become a time trap; also that the AKRR will be responsible for the additional expense of the EA if it were to exceed \$1 million.

Ms. Gardino said that the Section 132 agreement has been drafted and is being reviewed by DOT Headquarters.

Mayor Hopkins said that the FNSB Assembly has passed a resolution directing design and environmental phase project money aimed at reducing the number of railroad crossings in the FNSB be directed to the FNSB for oversight and management. He asked if this has been discussed. Ms. Gardino said that neither FRA nor FTA have commented specifically about transferring the money to the FNSB. The DOT, Northern Region did say that they do not want to add another level of oversight to the process.

Mayor Hopkins asked if a match is going to be required. Ms. Gardino said that the match is 9.03% and is funded by the Alaska Railroad. This will be part of the MOU.

**b) Cushman/Barnette Two-Way Study Recommendations**

Ms. Gardino said that comments received at the FMATS office were included in the meeting materials.

Mr. Titus recognized those that testified during the public comment period. Before the committee there is a project, a City project, which has been funded to convert Cushman to two-way traffic. The DOT is also working on the Illinois Street project, which has currently been approved as one-way bridges and a signalized intersection. There is also the Vision Fairbanks plan in the downtown. The decision to be made is whether to do two-way traffic on Barnette and Cushman. This would change the scope of the project that is before the City.

Mr. Roberts asked for clarification on whose project the Cushman Street Reconstruction project is. Ms. Gardino said it is an FMATS funded project. Mr. Titus corrected saying that he meant that the City would be designing and administering the project. Mr. Schmetzer said the City is functioning like a consultant.

Mayor Hopkins, referencing the hand out presented by Mr. Titus at the start of the meeting, asked if there were three alternatives or two. He said that Kittelson looked at three, but the point Mr. Titus is making is that there are only two options.

Mr. Titus said that what was handed out was a document that was produced by DOT upon examination of both the Kinney report and the recent Kittelson study. These are recommendation reports and they are preliminary analysis findings as well. So combining the two reports, but the Committee can look at the other alternatives as well, because he was confused about what the recommendations of the two reports were. He wanted to make sure he understood all the information. He said that the handout shows that the Kinney report and the Kittelson report say the same thing.

Mr. Titus said that the LOS is high, given either alternative. There are people that favor one-way and people that favor two-way. He said a concern among some has been congestion with left hand turns, and the LOS projections of both consultants say that it will not be a problem.

Mr. Titus referenced the recommended motions put forth by the Technical Committee and said the Policy Committee can address them or not. He pointed out that if they do not address the recommended motions that they are staying with two-way streets and one-way bridges. He pointed out that an environmental document has not yet been produced for two-way Cushman/Barnette and suggested that this would validate the alternatives. What has been done are just recommendations by consultants. He said he is just giving the Committee this information because the public is expecting the Committee to make a decision.

Mayor Hopkins asked about the availability of the environmental document for the one-way bridges. He said his concern is that it is being looked at as a separate piece when it is part of a corridor. Mr. Titus said the environmental document is done and available. He said the FMATS Committee chose to remove the Barnette Street piece and that it would be a City of Fairbanks concern.

Mayor Hopkins asked if the Barnette Street traffic revision has also been handed over to the City of Fairbanks to design. Ms. Gardino said no and that the project has not yet been started. She said it is a project in the TIP that would eventually look at putting a roundabout on the north side of the river at the Terminal Street intersection. She said that there is also a project in the TIP that is to convert Cushman, Barnette and Gaffney to two-way traffic. That is a state funded project, including a \$6 million state appropriation and \$1.4 million in 381 funds. She noted that \$1.5 million of the state appropriation was used on Gaffney, so only \$4.5 million remain.

Mr. Titus said that he recalls the City of Fairbanks being concerned that with the decision to make the bridges one-way traffic might affect the two-way traffic on Cushman/Barnette Streets. Mr. Schmetzer agreed and said that they stopped design back in September 2009. He said that they hired Kittelson and they produced the report in late April 2010.



Mr. Sattley referenced the handout and the LOS. He asked what stretch is being referred to in the handout. Mr. Titus said that it in reference to the intersection. Mr. Sattley said that from what he remembered, the Kittelson report said that 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue would be problematic, possibly affecting 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue as well. He said that the handout is oversimplified.

Mr. Titus explained the motions recommended by the Technical Committee. He said that the motion recommending Alternative 1, namely two-way streets and two-way bridges is problematic for the Illinois Street project. He said both could be a future project but there is a current project and direction is needed on the current project.

Mr. Sattley asked Mr. Schmetzer for clarification on the Technical Committee motions. He said he recalls that there was a lot of discussion before the recommendation was made for Alternative 1. He said he recalls it being a long term recommendation, although it is not reflected in the action items in the meeting materials. Mr. Schmetzer said that he agrees that the motion could be better written. He said it was his intent that the streets be converted to two-way traffic as recommended in the long range transportation plan. His intent was for the long term but it may not have been the intent of everyone on the Technical Committee.

Mr. Schmetzer said that from his perspective the City does not want to delay the Illinois Street project.

Ms. Gardino added that the long range plan indicates that two-way traffic will be looked at in the mid range. This is also in the TIP. It is all consistent.

Mayor Hopkins asked again about the intent of the recommendation and asked Ms. Gardino, the Chair of the Technical Committee, how she interpreted the intent of the motion. Ms. Gardino said the intent was as Mr. Schmetzer indicated. She said that everyone at the table agrees that the Illinois Street project should not be slowed down. The intent was for it to be thoroughly evaluated in the future from every perspective.

Mayor Hopkins asked about the Policy Committee motion that determined that the bridges be one-way. He asked if that motion would need to be rescinded before another action is made, based on the recommended actions. Mr. Titus said he is not an expert in parliamentary procedure, but the project is moving forward as recommended by the Policy Committee. He said also the Committee, at that time, discussed a separate project that could take place in the future. It would be a second project that is in conformance with the long range plan that could happen once the Illinois Street project is underway. He does not see the connection to parliamentary procedure.

Mayor Isaacson said he believes that the Committee reserves the right to change their mind based on the various factors.

Mayor Hopkins said, as for Alternative 1, lots of testimony was heard about this Alternative. He said he is also hearing that it would impact the Illinois Street project to some degree because the bridges are one-way right now.

Mayor Hopkins asked if a delay would result from choosing Alternative 1. Mr. Schmetzer said that in order to remain in compliance with the long range plan, the two-way conversion of Cushman/Barnette must be evaluated. That should start after Illinois Street starts. Then the bridge conversion could be evaluated.

Ms. Gardino said that it is important to note the intent of the first motion by the Technical Committee because there was a lot of discussion from the Technical Committee. They really wanted to give the City of Fairbanks some direction. That is why they said not to do two-way streets with one-way bridges. The City wanted direction on how to proceed because currently it is two-way streets with one-way bridges.

Mayor Hopkins asked what the next step would be to keep the Cushman/Barnette Streets project moving forward. Mr. Schmetzer said that it would be to continue the design of the project and the initiation of the environmental process after Illinois Street has gone to construction.

Mr. Titus said that the design of the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> and Cushman can handle the traffic under either scenario, one-way or two-way streets. The project can continue and would not impact the current design.

Mr. Titus said that in order to proceed with Cushman/Barnette, it must be determined what type of environmental document is needed. This will propose a solution to whether it should be one-way or two-way streets based on one-way bridges. Mr. Schmetzer said no, that it would be based on two-way bridges after the Illinois Street project starts.

Mr. Titus said that then it is not known what is going to be done on the streets and that could be determined now and a future project for two-way streets and two-way bridges with an environmental document to determine if the bridges should be one-way or two-way. It is his understanding that it is a future project. This puts FMATS in compliance of reviewing that scenario under the long range transportation plan. What to do with Cushman/Barnette is still up in the air, as far as this Committee goes. The Illinois Street project will continue and will hit the streets this spring. But it keeps being said that the Cushman/Barnette Street project cannot be started until an environmental document on two-way streets and two-way bridges.

Mr. Schmetzer recommended handling the motions. As an engineer, he said he does not believe that the City will be proceeding in the future with two-way streets and one-way bridges. Mr. Titus clarified and said that they do not have the facts on that.

Mr. Sattley said that the Policy Committee is not constrained to making their motions match that of the technical advice from the Technical Committee.

- **Motion:** To re-affirm last year's Policy Committee decision that the bridges will be one-way on Cushman and Barnette. (Sattley/Isaacson) Five approved. Two opposed (Hopkins and Schmetzer). Approved.

**Comments:** Mayor Isaacson reviewed the way he remembered the roundabout proposed

at Terminal Street and the slip ramp solution. He recalled that these were the only ways to make the intersection work with two-way bridges. If the bridges are one-way and the intersection is ready for construction, how can it be any other way.

Mr. Titus said that if the bridges change to two-way, the intersection at Terminal Street will have to be redesigned, which will basically stop the project until it gets redesigned.

Mayor Hopkins questioned the need for such a motion. The project is under way.

Mr. Sattley said that he heard Mr. Schmetzer say that he stopped the design of the project pending the resolution of this discussion that involves the bridges and the streets. This motion gets the issue of the bridges off the table and lets them move on to the street discussion.

Mr. Roberts said that he agrees with Mr. Hopkins. The real motion is whether or not the City is going to continue and design two-way streets with one-way bridges.

- **Motion:** To not direct the City of Fairbanks or whatever designer to proceed with the implementation of two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette with one way bridges. (Roberts/Schmetzer) None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Mayor Isaacson said he does not want to disrupt a community that wants to revitalize. He respects the fact that a lot of public have testified. His concern is the cost. He suggested trying one-way with parking. He said that this motion does interrupt the Vision Plan.

- **Amendment to above Motion:** and to direct the City of Fairbanks to continue to evaluate the two-way street project in the June 2010 LRTP. (Hopkins/Isaacson). Six approved. One opposed (Sattley). Approved. (Amended motion)

**Comments:** Ms. Gardino said that the City of Fairbanks can proceed as stated once the Illinois Street project has gone to construction. Ms. Brown said that if it is State money, the project can proceed, if it is federal money, it cannot overlap. Ms. Gardino said that it is state funded.

Ms. Edwards asked if the City could continue and look at the end points along the corridor even while it is under constructed or if it has to be two different projects. Mr. Titus said there is nothing wrong with looking at the bridges and what is on the north side. Ms. Edwards said she is looking for a way to continue moving forward with considering two way conversions knowing that some time in the future the bridges are going to get looked at again.

Mr. Titus said it would be much clearer if Mayor Hopkins' amendment did not have the bridges in it. Then the City would be moving ahead with looking at one-way or two-way streets and in the future the bridges can be looked at for tw- way conversion in another project after Illinois Street.

Mr. Birkholz disagreed saying that the City is looking at the bigger picture and Mr. Titus is just looking at the individual projects. They want to know all the impacts, from the river to Terminal Street. Mr. Schmetzer said otherwise the process will happen twice.

Mr. Roberts said that he thinks it is right to look at the entire scope of the project. Vision Fairbanks is part of the long range transportation plan in the medium range. He thinks it is right to study this. He does not support rushing to spend money to convert to two-way when it is known that there will be one-way bridges. He would prefer to use the money on more constructive downtown projects, aesthetically and operationally. He is concerned about dumping money into an environmental process when it could be used on more effective projects for revitalization.

Mayor Hopkins said the City can use their money the way that they want. He said that signalization upgrades are already included.

Mr. Roberts is concerned that the amendment limits the use of the funds to an environmental assessment. Mayor Hopkins said no.

Mr. Schmetzer asked if the City proceeds with the environmental process now, does it lock them into forever using state money on the conversion. Ms. Brown said that if the federal process is followed, federal money can be used in the future. The environmental document is a decision document.

## **8. New Business**

### **a) Steese Highway/Johansen Expressway Area Traffic Improvements**

Al Beck gave a presentation summarizing this DOT project and a copy of the presentation slides is included in the meeting materials.

#### Questions:

Mayor Isaacson raised concerns about directly benefiting a particular developer in the project area. Mr. Beck said that the sole purpose of the project is to manage traffic in the area and reduce the congestion with a north-south connector. It is an access problem. Mayor Isaacson pointed out that that it still builds a road that a developer would otherwise need to build for access. Mr. Beck agreed that there is a large retail development area within the proposed project limits that would benefit as that area is built out, but the access route was not conceived with the intent of providing access to directly benefit a property owner.

Mayor Hopkins asked about the other improvements being considered, particularly the possibility of extending the Old Steese to five lanes all the way to the Johansen. Mr. Beck said that this is intended to be an access corridor, not a mobility corridor. Mayor Hopkins asked what the corridor project has looked at for solving the problem of extreme congestion and lack of pedestrian facilities at and around the Trainor Gate area. Mr. Beck said that these would be specific mitigation strategies for areas that are not being addressed in this presentation. He said that most of the improvements focus on intersection improvements. The City of Fairbanks resolution created problems because of the limited area of maintenance responsibility. He has not gotten a response on increasing the area of maintenance. He said that they plan to continue working through this issue. Mr. Titus said that there is a complete set of plans that outline the strategies being looked at. Mayor Hopkins said he is trying to find out what the stage 2 solution is, which he understood to be a possible fly over ramp. Mr. Titus said that there are lots of options being looked at for the balance of the money. Mayor Hopkins asked what role FMATS can play in influencing the process, possibly a resolution.

Mr. Sattley asked what role FMATS has in this. Mr. Titus said that as a Committee they have not been participating in the process. He does not know if FMATS has a role. Ms. Gardino said that if there is work on the NHS route, DOT administers the funds and the project. They could come

to FMATS and ask for funds to improve that road because it is in FMATS. That would make it an FMATS decision. FMATS can make recommendations at this point.

Mr. Schmetzer asked about the future projections looked at a build-out in the north Bentley Business Park. Mr. Beck said that it projected a full build out by 2020. Mayor Hopkins asked what size development was projected for example a Target versus a car wash. Mr. Beck said that it assumed business type stores, not box stores, per the plat. Mayor Hopkins said that the Planning Commission has since received a study analysis for the Target plan. There was a public meeting held for the ordinance. He said that there may be more current information available since the code change. Mr. Beck said that some information was developed under the scenario of the area being re-platted to allow a Target store to be located there. He said no modifications have been made to show that that Target is coming in there. Mayor Hopkins suggested that be considered. Mr. Titus disagreed because they cannot project if it would be one Target or ten Targets. To guess what types of development there will be on all of the undeveloped properties would not be an effective analysis. Mr. Beck said Target has pulled out their plans. He said that the traffic study can be updated to incorporate these changes, but he said that one box store on the north side will not be a significant enough of a traffic generator to drive and change the recommendations in this corridor study.

**a) FMATS Bike Path Rehabilitation Project PH4 Increase**

Ms. Gardino explained that the engineer's estimate was \$210K and the low bid was \$266K.

- **Motion:** To approve an increase of \$64,000 for PH4 of the FMATS Bike Path Rehabilitation Project to bring the funding level up to the low bid amount. (Hopkins/Roberts) None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Mayor Hopkins asked what paths are being rehabilitated. Ms Gardino explained that the work will be done along the Steese Highway from Airport Way to the Johansen and on Farmer's Loop Road on the west end.

Mayor Isaacson asked when other bike paths would be rehabilitated. Ms. Gardino explained that an existing conditions analysis will be conducted as part of the non-motorized transportation plan development.

**b) Conformity Determination for the MTP and the TIP**

Ms. Gardino referenced the Conformity Determination in the meeting materials.

- **Motion:** To release the Conformity Determination for the MTP and the TIP for public review. (Edwards/Roberts) None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Ms. Gardino said that this is for CO and it indicates surplus emissions in the budget. She said that it shows that the plans are in conformance with air quality regulation. Ms. Edwards asked and Ms. Gardino confirmed that the conformity determination went through the interagency consultation process.

**c) Fairbanks Metro 2035: A Plan to Keep You Moving**

Ms. Gardino referenced the draft plan included in the meeting materials.

- **Motion:** To release the Fairbanks Metro 2035 MTP for public review. (Edwards/Hopkins). None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Mr. Sattley said that it was just made available today and it is being approved for public review. He asked if they would then have time to review it. Ms. Gardino said yes and apologized for the short timing. She said that has been undergoing changes and Technical Committee review. She explained that the accelerated timeline is due to the fact that FMATS has already received an extension and if the deadline is not met the plan will lapse.

**d) Richardson Highway Bicycle Review Findings**

Ms. Gardino said that the Governor has recognized in a recent proclamation that bicyclists are legitimate users of the roadways. She made this point in reference to the debate as to whether or not to allow bicycle traffic on the Richardson Highway.

- **Motion:** To ask the DOT & PF to change the signage so the bicyclist may choose to use the frontage road or the Richardson Highway. (Isaacson/Sattley). None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Ms. Gardino said that it was indicated by the DOT that frontage roads had to be used when available and that bikes would not be permitted on the Richardson Highway in these areas. A map was included to show these detours. The Technical Committee does not recommend requiring these detours.

Mayor Isaacson was thankful for the investigation into this issue. He added that this is a problem when it comes to law enforcement, particularly due to the lack of clarity.

Mayor Hopkins asked if there was a liability issue to blame for having made this area prohibited to bicycles. Mr. Titus said DOT does not have a particular reason. Ms. Brown suggested talking to the Traffic Engineer.

Ms. Gardino said that the enforcement would be a fine for the violation of a traffic control device.

Ms. Edwards asked if there are any safety signs on the Richardson Highway alerting motorists of the presence of cyclists on the roadway.

**e) Illinois Street Reconstruction PH2/PH7**

Ms. Brown explained the request for increased funds. She said the increases are needed to complete the PS&E, and allow for the electrical, landscape and survey work stamped. She said that there were also costs associated with breaking ground on the bridge as well as unforeseen utility relocations.

- **Motion:** To approve a PH2 increase of \$500,000 and PH7 increase of \$1,652,000 for the Illinois Street Reconstruction Project. (Roberts/Hopkins). None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Mayor Isaacson asked where these funds would come from. Ms. Gardino said that there are DEOB funds as well as a portion of the increased federal allocation that can be used for this purpose.

Mr. Sattley asked about Mr. Schmetzer's concerns raised at the Technical Committee meeting about the request. Mr. Schmetzer said that the detailed information outlining the expenses related to this project will be provided at the next Technical Committee meeting.

**f) 2010-2013 TIP Amendment #2**

Ms. Gardino referenced the draft in the meeting materials.

- **Motion:** To release the 2010—2013 TIP Amendment #2 draft for public review. (Hopkins/Isaacson). None opposed. Approved.

**Comments:** Ms. Gardino confirmed that it will come back to the Policy Committee for approval in July 2010, and then go to Juneau in order to expedite the obligation of funds to ensure that no money is lost.

Mayor Hopkins asked Ms. Brown about the Illinois Street project and the ROW potential for bus stops and/or pull outs in the project area. Ms. Brown said it could be looked at and a pull out would be preferred over a stop in the road.

**g) Coordinator's PH4 Authority**

- **Motion:** To state that FMATS' staff does not have the authority to approve up to \$100,000 in PH4 during seasonal shutdown or after substantial completion of the project. (Hopkins/Roberts). Four approved. Three opposed. (Isaacson, Titus and Edwards). Approved.

**Comments:** Mr. Titus asked what the history is on the motion. Ms. Gardino explained that the authority that the Coordinator and the Technical Committee has to approve cost increases is to expedite the approval during construction so as not to delay or impact the project. The Technical Committee did not think that this authority was necessary when the approval is not urgent.

Mayor Isaacson asked if this further restriction is to reduce liability. Ms. Gardino said it would be when timing was not critical.

Mr. Titus said that he does not agree with this and he does not feel that it is necessary to wait for monthly meetings to facilitate project closeouts.

Mr. Roberts agrees with the motion and that the Coordinator does not need the pressure to make such decisions. It should be a Committee decision.

Mayor Isaacson asked how this would impact a contractor that may be waiting to get paid. Ms. Gardino said that the point is that these types of impacts would not be an issue during seasonal shut down.

Mayor Hopkins said that it is an opportunity to draw attention to a request for additional funding in times when a project would have otherwise been long closed out.

Mayor Isaacson asked Ms. Gardino's opinion. She said she is comfortable either way.

#### 9. Public Comments

Janet North thanked the Committee for their examination of the issue related to bike traffic on the Richardson Highway. She thinks the detour is silly. She said that she hosts many international bike tourists and this will go a long way to make their trip through the area more accommodating. She is also worried about the idea of keeping bikes off roads. She does not support this. She complimented the bike path rehab project scope. The bike paths must be usable for the public to benefit from them. She said she supports bike paths but wants to see a continued focus on accommodating bikes on roads.

#### 10. Other Issues

#### 11. Informational Items

##### a) State Capital Budget Update

Mr. Titus stated that the Governor has signed the bill and FMATS received \$5 million to be used on any project in the TIP, as well as \$4.5 million for College Road.

##### b) Obligation Plan

Ms. Gardino referenced the obligation status report in the meeting materials.

#### 12. Adjourn

**Motion to Adjourn** Adjourned at 1:48 p.m.

**Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, July 21, 2010 at DOT&PF Main Conference Room**

Approved:

  
Steve Titus, P.E., Chair  
FMATS Policy Committee

Date:

