

Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System  
**POLICY COMMITTEE**  
 State of Alaska, DOT&PF, Main Conference Room  
 2301 Peger Road Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Meeting Minutes – October 21, 2009

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Steve Titus called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

**2. Introduction of Members and Attendees**

The following were present:

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

Name	Representing
* Steve Titus, P.E.	DOT&PF
* Mike Schmetzer	<b>sub for</b> Mayor Terry Strle ( <b>absent</b> ) City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Jim Whitaker	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Mayor Doug Isaacson	City of North Pole
* Luke Hopkins	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Chad Roberts	Fairbanks City Council Rep.
* Alice Edwards	ADEC Acting Director, Air Quality Division
*** Donna Gardino	FMATS Coordinator
*** Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks
*** Ethan Birkholz	DOT&PF, Planning Manager
** Margaret Carpenter	DOT&PF, Transportation Planner
** Tara Callear	FMATS, Planner
** Todd Boyce	FNSB
David van den Berg	Downtown Association
Dave Bloom	DOT&PF
Jerry Rafson	DOT&PF
Guy Sattley	Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly
Jerry Colp	City of Fairbanks
David Leone	FNSB
*** Jerry Woods	Tanana Cheifs Conference
Jon Gustafson	Resident
Jim Lee	Deputy Director Planning
Tami Sams	Resident, Plack Road
Phyllis Kraft	Resident, Plack Road
Jeff Stepp	Office of Sen. Paskavan
Meredith Cameron	Office of Rep. Guttenberg
Jake Hamburg	Office of Sen. Paskavan
Clint Adler	DOT, Research
Edith Tomany	Resident, Volunteer
Bruce Carr	AKRR
Dick Tomany	Chamber of Commerce, Transportation Subcommittee

**3. Public Comments**

Ms. Phyllis Kraft commented on the Plack Road bike path. In 2007 she collected 1200 signatures on a petition to have the Plack Road bike path constructed. She distributed packets of other supporting documents along with photos. She read a letter from a child expressing the safety concerns about the narrow shoulders and deep ditches.

Ms. Edith Tominey commented on the opening of Dawson Road. The traffic is really heavy in the morning and she said the road needs to be open. It needs to be open for fire safety reasons as well.

Mr. David van den Berg commented on the discussion about the funding priorities being submitted to the Governor's office. His understanding was that all projects in the TIP for 2011 were to be included on this list, including the Cushman Street downtown traffic revision. He asked that this be addressed in the action item on the agenda.

Congressman Don Young addressed the Policy Committee on the status of the Surface Transportation Authorization Act of 2009. He reported that a three-month extension of SAFETEA-LU was approved by the House and the current continuing resolution is set to expire October 31, 2009. He stated the CRs aren't all bad for Alaska because it allows us to continue to receive funding under the current formula. He believes that Alaska can continue to receive funding under this formula in the new bill. The Congressman said that Congress is examining options for funding the Highway Trust Fund. He said the fairest option is a user fee on gasoline. Other options are a registration fee, tire tax or toll roads, which he does not support for Alaska. He emphasized the need for maintenance of existing roads. He then answered questions from the Committee and attendees.

**4. Approval of the October 21, 2009 Agenda**

- **MOTION:** To approve the October 21, 2009 Agenda, as amended. (Hopkins/Edwards).  
No opposition. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Hopkins asked if Bus shelters, ROW and Funding be added as an item under Other Issues.

**5. Approval of September 16, 2009 minutes**

- **MOTION:** To approve the September 16, 2009 minutes as amended. (Edwards/Hopkins).  
No opposition. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Ms. Callear noted having received an amendment to the attendee list and asked that Michael Wenstrup, the newest member of the Technical Committee, be added.

**6. Committee Reports**

**a) FMATS Coordinator / Technical Committee Action Items**

Ms. Donna Gardino pointed out the highlights from the Coordinator's report and Technical Committee Action Items as presented in the meeting materials.

**b) Seasonal Mobility Task Force**

Ms. Gardino reported that the Task Force is in the final stages of developing a Recommendation and Analysis report that will be presented at the next meeting. She also reported that a representative of the DOT&PF Maintenance and Operations will be attending the next Technical Committee meeting to discuss the improvements that they are making to their performance standards.

**c) Preventive Maintenance Subcommittee**

Ms. Gardino reported that there is \$1.3 million in funding in the TIP and there are approximately \$1.1 million in projects. Each entity has come up with possible projects and estimates and the Subcommittee will meet and come up with final recommendations for the Technical Committee. It will include crack sealing for all entities within the FMATS area, surface upgrades for the Fairbanks North Star Borough, sidewalk/bike path repairs and signal upgrades.

## 7. Old Business

Mayor Jim Whitaker excused himself from the meeting at 10:47 AM.

## 8. New Business

### a) CMAQ Funding/Criteria/Agreement

Ms. Gardino explained that a Technical Subcommittee has been formed to come up with an agreement on the transportation air quality conformity responsibilities as it relates to the non-attainment area for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. CMAQ funding will be withheld until this agreement is in place. The need for this agreement arises from the situation of having the area of non-attainment being larger than the MPO. It was unanimously agreed that the DOT&PF will remain responsible for ensuring overall that transportation conformity regulations are being met, as it is now. The pros and cons of the additional details of the agreement will be addressed at the next meeting. The Subcommittee is scheduled to reconvene at a date and time to be determined.

Ms. Gardino added that the CMAQ criteria used to prioritize CMAQ projects for funding has been revised in response to the PM<sub>2.5</sub> designation. A Subcommittee of the DEC, DOT&PF and the FNSB have drafted recommendations for the Technical Committee to review.

Mr. Hopkins asked about the CMAQ funding, he asked if the Subcommittee is discussing the CMAQ funding allocation. Ms. Gardino said yes, that the Subcommittee is examining the potential funding distribution structures that could result. One solution is that the projects could be ranked and funded based on need (CMAQ criteria scoring), rather than by formula.

Ms. Edwards said that this would prioritize projects based on the reduction in PM<sub>2.5</sub>, regardless of whether or not they are in or out of the MPO boundary. This would be the most beneficial way of allocating the funds, but it does not lend itself to being the DOT&PF preferred, more structured method of distribution. She said expanding the boundary would eliminate the need for an agreement and this would simplify matters. The Subcommittee has agreed to look at this as an option. The pros and cons will be considered.

### b) 2010 Policy/Technical Committee Meeting Dates

Mr. Titus referenced the calendar in the packet.

- **MOTION:** To approve the 2010 FMATS Policy and Technical Committee meeting dates as presented. (Isaacson/Hopkins). None opposed. Approved.

### COMMENTS:

NONE

### c) Chena Pump/Chena Small Tracts Scope Change

Ms. Gardino said that the DOT&PF requested that the Technical Committee review the potential for closing down the Chena Pump/Chena Small Tracts project with participation. Money has already been spent on the project. The need for the project no longer exists.

Mr. Hopkins asked about the turn into the transfer site, asking if there would be a deceleration lane added as part of this project.

Mr. Dave Bloom said the scope of the project would have addressed this turn lane, but the capacity analysis does not warrant the project. It could be closed or it could be revised if FHWA does not agree to closing the project with participation.

Mr. Ethan Birkholz said that the dedicated turn lane would be beneficial, but it is only a perceived problem that the data does not support. Mr. Titus said that if FHWA will not participate, the project would remain open and be re-scoped and this lane could be considered at that time.

- **MOTION:** To pursue closing down the Chena Pump/Chena Small Tracts Safety Project, with participation. (Isaacson/Roberts). None opposed. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

None

**d) South Cushman: Mitchell to Van Horn Scope Change**

Ms. Gardino explained that the South Cushman: Mitchell to Van Horn project is partially funded in the current TIP \$180,000 for PH2. The revised estimate on the existing project brings the total up \$600K and extending the termini to Sanduri, as recommended, would bring the total up and additional \$1.1 million. This would take the project to the furthest extent of DOT&PF maintenance responsibility.

Mayor Isaacson asked about the need for additional project funding. Ms. Gardino said that the project needs another \$100K to complete PH2, while PH4 funding has yet to be added in the TIP. The funding scenario is a moving target based on the input from Design. As it advances it will be compete with other projects for funding as available, depending on how readily it moves forward.

Mr. Titus said that this would be the opportune time to add additional funds to the PH2 so as to enable the completion of the project design. It needs roughly another \$100K.

- **MOTION:** To change the termini of the South Cushman: Mitchell to Van Horn Project to the end of the pavement at Sanduri. (Roberts/Hopkins). None opposed. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Roberts said that the area being addressed in the next action is densely retail and is the gateway to the Van Horn industrial area. He is concerned that this proposed scope would potentially detract funding from what he considers a higher priority north of this area. He requested that this be discussed.

Ms. Gardino commented that the Technical Committee has requested that the City of Fairbanks re-examine the cost estimates to give a more accurate picture of what is needed to fund the project. She said there is a \$10 million estimate for the 15<sup>th</sup> to Mitchell portion of the project that Mr. Roberts is referencing.

Mr. Roberts said he would like to be sure that in approving this extension that they are not disallowing funding for the 15<sup>th</sup> to Mitchell project. Ms. Gardino suggested that money could become available for the design of this project through de-obligation of funds due to

projects being bid lower than the engineers estimates, for example from Phillips Field Road.

Mr. Hopkins asked to postpone a vote on the motion until the next item of business is addressed. This would give a better understanding of what is being considered.

Mr. Birkholz said that one of the reasons for funding this now is because there is additional surveying work that still could be done this year. In addition, because it is a relatively low dollar project, once it is designed and ready it can be easily be slipped into funding gaps. Mr. Titus said that the ideal is to do both projects. He agreed to postpone the motion if it was what the Committee wanted. Mr. Hopkins called for the question.

**e) South Cushman: 15<sup>th</sup> to Mitchell**

Mr. Roberts said that he feels this project has been neglected because of the size of the scope due to ROW and utilities costs. He said he is asking the Committee to discuss advancing it in the TIP so that the project can begin a project on South Cushman.

Mr. Titus said that PH2 needs \$1.8 million, and PH4 needs roughly \$6.5 million. Mr. Bloom recommended estimating funding needed to complete the environmental document. This initial amount is all of the PH2 money that would be available at the start. The remainder follows the approval of the environmental document.

Mr. Pristash explained briefly how he arrived at the estimates. He said he cannot say with certainty how much it would cost for the environmental document process. He estimated roughly \$300K.

Mr. Schmetzer said that this area is the number one reported problem area in the City of Fairbanks. It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> highest VMT in the City, pedestrian facilities are poor or non-existent, it has the lowest pavement rating in the MPO, it is the densest commercial area outside the Bentley area, and drainage is non-existent on portions of the road.

Mr. Hopkins questioned whether this level of detail was necessary at this point, with further discussion following a cleaner estimate. Ms. Gardino said that the timing aligns with the TIP amendment making it an appropriate time to rescope if the project.

Mr. Bloom added that he would recommend estimating the environmental document for this project at 50-60% up front. He also noted that in the process of re-scoping, the first thing that needs to happen is to identify where the NHS project ends and where this FMATS project begins.

- **MOTION:** To recommend re-scoping the South Cushman: 15<sup>th</sup> to Mitchell project by sending it back to the Technical Committee for their consideration. (Hopkins/Isaacson). None opposed. Approved.

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**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Roberts asked if this motion includes moving it up in the TIP. Ms. Gardino said more information will soon be known that will enable this. Mr. Titus said it is a work in progress.

**f) FMATS 2011 Priorities**

Mr. Titus referenced the letter and project list included in the packet.

- **MOTION:** To forward the FY11 funding request to the Administration as amended. (Isaacson/Hopkins). None opposed. Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Titus addressed Mr. van den Berg's earlier comment. Mr. van den Berg restated that his concern was that the Cushman Reconstruction project was not listed.

Mayor Isaacson asked about the railroad realignment and whether this would be an appropriate place to request for funding for this project. Ms. Gardino said if the Committee would like to decide to do so, it can be added. It is in the TIP and funded for \$2 million currently, but the re-authorization has to occur to tap those funds.

Mayor Isaacson asked that motion be amended to add the Fairbanks to North Pole Rail Realignment Phase I to the request.

Ms. Gardino asked the Committee to consider the order they are being listed ; whether it should be the actual order of priority, or by cost as it is. She said that it is listed by cost now because it was how the Technical Committee decided to list them. She noted that Congressman Young recommended assigning priorities. Mr. Titus echoed this need for knowing which project is of the highest priority for when funding becomes available.

Mayor Isaacson said that it may be better to prioritize them at another meeting. Ms. Gardino said that it would not be good to wait another month to submit the request.

Mr. Hopkins addressed the Cushman Reconstruction project public comment. He asked where the City of Fairbanks is at in the process of analyzing the traffic configuration that resulted from the decision to not do a roundabout and proceed with one way bridges and where the project stands currently in the TIP in terms of funding.

Ms. Gardino said that in 2010 the project is funded for \$165K and in 2011 there is nearly \$6 million (\$1.4 million from HB381 and \$4.5 million of the Gaffney/Cushman appropriation). This is all State funded. She reminded all that this funding can only be used on Gaffney and Cushman until there is a legislative change to spend it elsewhere, i.e. Barnette. Mr. Hopkins commented that this project appears to be adequately funded.

Mr. Schmetzer answered Mr. Hopkins first question, explaining that the City of Fairbanks has concerns that the Cushman/Barnette two-way traffic patterns will actually work under the decision to construct one way bridges. He said that they are drafting an RFP to reexamine the Kinney traffic report. If it is concluded that it will work, the decision could be to move forward with the traffic conversion. If it is determined that the project would not achieve the desired results, the project would then be re-scoped and the funding used on other downtown revitalization efforts.

Mr. Titus asked when the results of the analysis will be known. He said that the language for the appropriation would be dependent upon this conclusion and questioned how FMATS would get this language for re-appropriation to the legislature in time for consideration.

Mr. Titus said that the City of Fairbanks, once decided on the scope, would come to the Policy Committee to have the language revised and approved to go to the legislature. Ms. Gardino said that the Policy Committee will ultimately decide the scope of the project and then decide who will go to the legislature to request the change.

Mr. Hopkins said that the language does not need to be forwarded to the legislature for the start of the session in order for it the change to be made during that session.

Ms. Gardino said that she tried to ensure that there were projects listed from each district.

- **AMENDED MOTION:** To add the Fairbanks to North Pole Rail Realignment Phase I Project (\$1 million) to the FFY2011 request to the Administration. (Issacson/Hopkins). Five approved. One opposed (Titus). Approved.

**COMMENTS:**

Mr. Hopkins pointed out the importance of removing the railroad crossings in the area.

Ms. Gardino said that the Railroad is currently working to move some earmarked Anchorage Section 115 funds to this project, noting that this will not be accomplished until there is a new highway bill in place.

Mr. Titus asked what actions specifically are being made by the Railroad to secure this funding. Mayor Isaacson said that it will require an act of Congress. He said if this funding could be secured otherwise it could go a long way to advance this important project sooner. He said he too will be seeking this money in Juneau.

**g) Peger Road Railroad Property Access**

Mr. Titus referenced the material in the packet. He said that this was an item of discussion between DOT&PF and the Railroad. A few intersection options were discussed. The map shows that geometrically there is room for a right in, right out. He said there are safety concerns even with this configuration. He said that the DOT&PF does not have the money to address perceived access issues to private property. There is a driveway permit process that the Railroad can submit if the concern were going to be considered. Mr. Bruce Carr, Technical Committee member, agreed that this is not a problem and that it is a direction in which the Railroad will proceed. Mr. Titus said that he had earlier explained this to Mayor Whitaker, who initially raised the issue, and he was satisfied with this movement on the issue.

Mr. Hopkins asked about the illustration, questioning whether there was potential for moving the driveway south, to address some of the concerns about providing this access.

Mr. Bloom said that it is possible that could be moved a bit to the south, but at some point it would start to interfere with the geometry of the bridge. He added that, according to the pre-construction manual it would need to be moved further yet to the south so as not to interfere with the Philips Field Road intersection.

**h) Richardson Highway MP 345 Moose Creek Railroad Overpass**

Mayor Isaacson referenced the 1988 reconnaissance study and said that the traffic counts do not warrant the overpass. He said that it does not make sense to put an overpass to an area that people are not accessing. He said that a bypass lane would be a better alternative and that there are higher priority needs than this project in the STIP. He questioned keeping the project alive.

Mr. Titus said it is in the illustrative project in the STIP and that he questioned whether it would survive the STIP process. It is not currently funded. He said that the Railroad agrees that an overpass is not needed at this location. This Committee could pass a resolution as to the opinion of the Committee, but ultimately its removal would be an action of the DOT&PF.

Mayor Isaacson clarified his concern stating that it was not necessarily that he thought the funding could be better spent elsewhere, but rather he did not want it to be misunderstood that if it is in the Illustrative section that it is worth considering for funding, when it is not recognized as a priority.

Mayor Isaacson said that although it is not inside the MPO boundary, it is a concern of this Committee because if it were considered for funding, this low priority project could out-compete a higher priority MPO project for funding.

## 9. Public Comments

Mr. Guy Sattley said that he is concerned about the changing of the MPO boundary. He said he was around when the MPO boundary was formed. He said it was dictated by the density of various census districts with some linkage between North Pole and Fairbanks. He said that expanding it does not strike him as a good idea because it would assume more road miles and cost the MPO more money. He said he understands that it is possible that the expansion could bring in that money, but he cautioned the Committee to be certain of this before considering expanding the boundary to include this additional area.

Mr. David Leone mentioned that Congressman Young urged the utilization of allocated funding to avoid it being rescinded. Mr. Leone told the Committee that 5 years ago \$625K was appropriated for bus shelters. He encouraged the Policy Committee to help move this project along that is currently stuck in the ROW permitting process with DOT&PF to avoid the loss of this much needed funding.

Mr. van den Berg thanked the Committee for addressing his earlier stated concern. He also stated that he appreciated the recognition of the value of keeping the Cushman Street Reconstruction funding for downtown core area for revitalization efforts.

## 10. Other Issues

### a) New Highway Bill Status

This topic was covered earlier in the agenda.

### b) November Meeting Date

- **MOTION:** To reschedule the November Policy Committee meeting to Tuesday, November 24, 2009. (Edwards/Hopkins) None opposed. Approved.

### c) Bus Shelters, ROW and Funding

Mr. Hopkins requested that at the November meeting there be a presentation as to where this project stands due to the concerns raised by Mr. Leone earlier. Mr. Titus agreed to adding it on the next agenda

### COMMENTS:

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Ms. Gardino reminded the Committee that she will not be present on that date and that Mr. Todd Boyce would be sitting in her place.

Mr. Titus said that the elections will be held at that meeting.

## 11. Informational Items

### a) Alternatives Charette Rescheduled to November 17, 2009

Ms. Gardino said that the date will be reconfirmed in an email.




**12. Adjourn**

**Motion to Adjourn.** (Hopkins/Edwards). Adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

**Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, November 24, 2009 at  
DOT&PF Main Conference Room**

Approved:

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

Date:

11/24/09