

Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System
POLICY COMMITTEE
State of Alaska, DOT&PF, Main Conference Room
2301 Peger Road Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Meeting Minutes – December 15, 2010

1. Call to Order

Chair Steve Titus called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

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, Regional Director
* Mayor Jerry Cleworth	City of Fairbanks
* Mayor Luke Hopkins	Fairbanks North Star Borough
* Mayor Doug Isaacson	City of North Pole
* Mike Musick	Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly
* Chad Roberts	Fairbanks City Council
* Alice Edwards	ADEC, Air Quality Division
*** Donna Gardino	FMATS Coordinator
*** Joan Hardesty	ADEC, Air Quality Division
*** Bernardo Hernandez	FNSB, Planning
*** Ethan Birkholtz	DOT&PF, Planning
** Margaret Carpenter	DOT&PF, Transportation Planner
** Todd Boyce	FNSB, Planning
** Kellen Spillman	FMATS Planner
Janet Brown	DOT&PF Regional Pre-Construction Engineer
Meadow Bailey	DOT&PF Information Officer
Adam Barth	FNSB Transportation
Jeff Roach	DOT&PF, Planner
Colleen Ackiss	DOT&PF, Transportation
Mike Schmetzer	City of Fairbanks, Engineering

3. Public Comments:

There were no public comments at this time.

4. Approval of the December 15, 2010 Agenda

- **Motion:** To approve the December 15, 2010 Policy Committee agenda. (Edwards/Cleworth)

Discussion: Mayor Hopkins would like item 13 section (a), FMATS Coordinator Evaluation (Action Item), to be a separate action item.

- **Motion:** To make item 13 section (a), item 14 and adjust the numbers so that adjournment is item 15. (Hopkins/Cleworth)
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.
- **Vote on the amended motion:** None opposed. Approved

5. Approval of November 10, 2010 Minutes

- **Motion:** To approve the November 10, 2010 minutes. (Edwards/Roberts).
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved

6. Committee Reports

a) FMATS' Coordinator's Report with Action Items

Ms. Gardino reported working on several projects listed in the December 2010 FMATS Staff Report provided in the meeting packet and discussed the highlights.

- Worked on the project level conformity process for PM_{2.5}, which was completed and sent out for interagency consultation.
- A PDA request was submitted by the Illinois Street project for funding. Before that request can be processed a form must be filled out and sent through interagency consultation to state why it does not have to go through a project level conformity analysis.
 - This is important because the December 14, 2010 deadline for PM_{2.5} conformity has passed and a process is in place which all of the agencies involved have reviewed and agreed to.
- Attended the Goldhill Road bike and pedestrian facility open house and there is another open house tomorrow for the North Pole pedestrian interchange facility from 4:00 – 7:00 at the City of North Pole.
- Attended the Monthly Chena Riverfront Commission meeting and received resolutions of support for the Wendell Avenue Bridge project and for the Graehl Park Access project.
- Kellen Spillman was hired as the new Transportation Planner/Assistant and started November 29, 2010.
- November newsletter for FMATS was completed.
- Completed FMATS portion of the planning report for the Unified Planning Work Program and submitted it to DOT.
- Proposals were scored and negotiations were initiated for the non-motorized transportation plan.
- Administrative Modification #3 was developed.
- A presentation was given to the interior delegation in regards to a request for funding.

Comments: Mayor Hopkins wanted to know which entity will be used to develop the non-motorized plan and Ms. Gardino informed the committee that Kittelson & Associates, partnered with PDC Engineering, will be used.

Mr. Titus, referring to the FMATS budget, asked if there was \$78,000.00 left over and Ms. Gardino stated there was and the surplus was all 381 money.

7. Old Business

a) FMATS' Funding Request to the Governor – Response

A letter was sent to the Governor's Office requesting funding for 2011. A letter was received in response and the budget will be released later in the day.

Mr. Titus noted that the DOT and FMATS, both, presented to the interior delegates recently and last year \$5,000,000.00 was received by FMATS last year and was hopeful for future funding.

8. New Business

a) 2010 – 2013 TIP Administrative Modification #3 (Action Item)

- **Motion:** To approve the 2010 – 2013 TIP Administrative Modification #3, as presented. (Hopkins/Musick)

Comments: Ms. Gardino informed the committee that the STIP Revision #15 was released on Friday and the allocation that FMATS will receive was increased by 36.1% which is \$3,061,800.00 above what was expected. Ms. Gardino feels that action on Administrative Modification #3 should be delayed because there are no issues that require immediate action and it will give the FMATS Technical Committee time to look at illustrative projects and project needs ultimately finding the best use for the funding. If this money is not spent in this fiscal year it will be lost.

Mayor Isaacson arrived at the meeting. (10:20am)

Mr. Titus stated that this additional funding is welcomed because FMATS went from an \$8,000,000.00 program to an \$11,500,000.00 program.

Ms. Gardino stated that there are three minor issues, related to SB230 funding, that should be addressed at this meeting, but the amendment in its entirety should be delayed.

Mr. Titus and Mayor Hopkins asked for further clarification on the three SB230 issues, which are not fiscally constrained. Ms. Gardino gave the example of Van Horn Road West and how it was desired to be put to construction, which was listed as a potential use of SB230 funding. Mr. Titus stated that his understanding was that the list of potential uses for SB230 funding was not binding and Ms. Gardino agreed with that statement. Ms. Gardino said that if this issue was delay it could possibly postpone projects going to bid. Ms. Brown stated that there was still right-of-way to acquire and Ms. Gardino said, if that was the case, action could be postponed to next meeting.

- **Motion:** To postpone action on the 2010 – 2013 TIP Administrative Modification #3 until the January meeting. (Hopkins/Cleworth)

Comments: Mr. Musick asked for clarification on why this issue is being postponed, and Mr. Titus stated it was because of the newly acquired \$3,000,000.00.

Mayor Cleworth asked if this postponement slows any projects and Ms. Gardino said that she believes it will not slow any projects.

Mr. Roberts said that this newly acquired \$3,000,000.00 is very good news for FMATS along with the apparent priority of the program to the interior delegates. Mr. Roberts stated that it is realistic to become a \$16,000,000.00 program and Ms. Gardino stated that FMATS obligated over \$29,000,000.00 last year.

Mr. Isaacson asked if moving the North Pole rail crossing from FFY11 to FFY12 was going to affect the project, due to ARR meetings in January. Ms. Gardino noted that this funding transfer was at the request of the railroad because the environmental document completion date is in December of 2011.

- **Vote on the motion to postpone:** None opposed. Approved

b) University/Peger – Possible National Highway System Designation

The FMATS Technical Committee asked a package be put together designating both Peger Road, and University Avenue as National Highway System routes. Ms. Gardino noted that in the research she has completed, it has been found that an amendment is not necessary to the long range plan until construction funding is requested. Ms. Gardino went on to say this is not a normal situation because currently the proposed routes are not requesting funding. Ms. Gardino noted that she has received a copy of the document, prepared by the DOT, used to get the Knik Arm Crossing designated as a NHS route. It was cautioned that this document may not be the best reference in receiving this designation. Ms Gardino stated that, hopefully, by next month she will have a proposal for the FMATS Policy Committee to review, but ultimately the final request must come from the DOT to the FHWA.

Comments: Mr. Hopkins asked for a timeline on receiving a possible designation and Ms. Gardino stated that when a project is nominated it does not require congressional action; noting the Knik Arm Crossing request was completed in August and it has already been approved, but she was unaware of the actual timeline.

Mr. Titus stated that this designation is important because it would allow highways to compete for STIP funding and FMATS would not have to fund them primarily through the TIP.

c) Cushman, Barnette and Gaffney Upgrades (Action Item)

The FMATS Technical Committee recommended to the FMATS Policy Committee to initiate upgrades on Cushman Street and Barnette Street, creating a signature street, but eliminate any further evaluation of two-way for this project.

- **Motion:** To initiate upgrades to Cushman, creating a signature street, eliminating any future evaluation of converting Cushman and Barnette to two-way streets. (Cleworth/Roberts)

Comments: Mayor Cleworth said that this motion was introduced by the Director of Public Works, Mike Schmetzer. Mayor Cleworth continued to say that there has been difficulty for some time about the two-way concept, stating that the engineering department has been baffled about some of the complexities between 1st Avenue and 5th Avenue on Cushman. The City is still considering conversion on 5th Avenue from one-way traffic to two-way traffic, which Mayor Cleworth believes to be an easy conversion.

Mayor Cleworth said that the signature street conversion seems to be a concept that all parties agree on and it would be much less costly opposed to a traffic conversion. Mayor Cleworth stated that the funds that have been allocated by the city for a more costly project involving Cushman could be reallocated, possibly to South Cushman and Noble Street. A signature street would incorporate many of the concepts discussed in the Vision Fairbanks plan, but there is no set idea of what the street would look like at the current time.

Mr. Musick stated that he attended a great deal of Vision Fairbanks meetings and all of the meeting adopted the concept of two-way traffic. This concept was adopted, for the most part, to slow traffic down for businesses to grab the attention of travelers.

Mayor Cleworth stated that even though the traffic is one way there are still ample opportunities to slow traffic down for the purposes outlined in the Vision Fairbanks plan. Mayor Cleworth went on to say that the concept of on-street west side parking north of 5th Avenue is also being considered, which would slow traffic down. Mayor Cleworth stated that he does not believe that creating congestion will create a great business district. In some of the presentations that the City of Fairbanks reviewed in regards to

two-way traffic there are sections in which a bus could not make a right turn. Mayor Cleworth went on to say that it is very important to the downtown to have the busses visit the area and conversion may result in busses, possibly, not visiting the area. Mayor Cleworth stated that plans are being devised for emergency vehicles to use Barnette Street rather than Cushman because it is already too tight.

Mayor Cleworth referred to an article out of the Economist in which city residents were polled about what characteristics were highly desirable in cities and the most popular answer was the free flow of traffic. Mayor Cleworth stated that, in his opinion, free flow traffic runs contrary to the Visions Fairbanks plan.

Mayor Isaacson asked for an explanation of the signature street concept that is being considered, which he understands currently as enlarging sidewalks, and planting trees.

Mayor Cleworth stated that the trees are a large part of the signature street concept referring to the newly built, transportation center. Mayor Cleworth said that expanded sidewalks are part of the plan, but noted that they may be difficult due to the current lane size. Mayor Cleworth also noted that snow removal will be increasingly difficult if sidewalks are expanded and that, as of now, there is no set signature street design and it will be a combination of many ideas.

Mayor Hopkins asked to clarify the extent of the conversation that the FMATS Technical Committee had in regards to the signature street concept. Ms. Gardino stated that the Technical Committee did not go into great detail on what the signature street would involve. Mayor Cleworth noted that many cities have signature streets and the common principle is that they are all beautiful and pedestrian friendly

Mayor Hopkins asked if in the future there could be an overall presentation on the signature street concept being considered because, currently there are many different views. Mayor Hopkins went on to point out that the signature street would only focus as an entry to the community if approached from the south, due to Cushman being a one-way street.

Mayor Cleworth pointed out that Barnette would also remain one way and is not being considered under the current motion for signature street upgrades. Mayor Cleworth noted that the signature street idea is in the preliminary phases and the city needs to receive direction first and a scope will be defined at a later point in time. Mayor Cleworth noted that Barnette is being considered for upgrades such as signals, but not as a signature street.

Ms. Gardino noted that the project is called Cushman, Barnette, and Gaffney upgrades and the intent of the motion of the FMATS Technical Committee was the signature street on Cushman and did not address Barnette as a signature street. Ms. Gardino also stated that there will be signal concerns on Barnette Street at 1st Avenue and 2nd Avenue after Illinois Street is completed.

Mayor Isaacson wanted to know if the City of Fairbanks looked at the possibility of also making Barnette Street a signature street and Mayor Cleworth said that not a great deal of consideration was given to the idea.

Mayor Hopkins pointed out that the motion made by Mayor Cleworth is not the same as the motion that the FMATS Technical Committee recommended and asked if the City of Fairbanks would consider creating a signature street out of Barnette also, even if it were just the first two blocks. Mayor Hopkins asked if it would be possible to include an amendment in the motion to include the consideration of Barnette Street as a signature street in the future.

- **Amendment to Motion:** To amend the motion to include consideration of Barnette as a signature street. (Hopkins/Cleworth)

member, pointed out that the goal of the Vision Fairbanks plan is economic development and eliminating two-way traffic considerations is diametrically opposed to this plan. Mr. Hernandez stated that his recommendation is to forward this motion back to the FMATS Technical Committee for review. Mr. Hernandez said that he felt the FMATS Technical Committee did not give the motion enough technical review, because it is a major break from the plan. Mr. Hernandez reminds all FMATS members that a plan has been adopted and to vary from that plan would be detrimental to the long range plan.

- **Vote to amend:** None opposed. Amendment passed

Comments: Mayor Hopkins wanted clarification on when the two-way traffic was first discussed, stating that he believed decisions were tabled to analyze the capacity of the bridges to accommodate two-way traffic. Mr. Titus clarified that two environmental documents could not be open on two related projects concurrently, and after the Illinois Street project was bid and awarded two-way traffic could be looked into on Barnette Street.

Mr. Roberts asked for clarification on the signature street proposal and if an EIS was needed for projects such as widening sidewalks. Mr. Titus clarified it will go through the environmental process, but not the same process as a federally funded project.

Mayor Isaacson stated that he was under the impression that past FMATS Policy Committee discussions regarding two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette were halted because information coming to the Committee at a later date dictated so. Mayor Isaacson said that both the two-way concept and the signature street concept were proposed with economic development in mind. Mayor Isaacson stated that he felt it was more important for the motion to be passed so the city could begin work on it rather than the motion go back to the FMATS Technical Committee.

Mr. Roberts stated that in his personal profession he is a commercial real-estate agent and last month there was a commercial property in the downtown area under contract for a multi-million dollar renovation. Mr. Roberts went on to say that the driver of this renovation is not two-way traffic, but that there are offices, people, and money to be spend downtown on a daily basis. Mr. Roberts stated that the more we can beautify downtown with signature streets, the better it is going to be for economic development.

Mr. Musick pointed out that the FMATS Technical Committee made the recommendation for there to be no more consideration of two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette, and assumed that this recommendation was based on technical information. Mr. Musick asked for clarification on, technically why two-way traffic does not work on Cushman and Barnette, because it did work in the 1950's and 1960's. Mr. Titus pointed out, while the FMATS Technical Committee does advise the FMATS Policy Committee on technical information, it also advises on issues such as scope changes. Mr. Titus noted that, technically, it would still be possible to put two-way traffic on Cushman Street, but it is not desired by the FMATS Technical Committee for other reasons.

Ms. Gardino noted that in June of 2009 the FMATS Technical Committee requested further evaluation of two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette, because of the addition of a new bridge. Ms. Gardino pointed out, in the last Kittelson report, it was unclear if the new bridge would support two-way traffic.

Mr. Titus noted that there are two separate, differing, opinions on whether the Barnette Street Bridge could handle two-way traffic or not.

Mayor Hopkins asked for the position of the Downtown Association on the issue, from the previous Technical Committee meeting. Ms. Gardino noted that they were in favor of the signature street concept, and wanted further consideration of two-way traffic on cross streets.

- **Amended Motion:** To initiate upgrades to Cushman, creating a signature street, eliminating any future evaluation of converting Cushman and Barnette to two-way streets and include

consideration of Barnette as a signature street. (Cleworth/Roberts)

- **Vote on the amended motion:** None opposed. Approved

9. Public Comments

No public comments

10. Other Issues

a) November 2011 Meeting Date (change back to November 16)

Ms. Gardino stated that in an attempt to plan ahead the November 16, 2011 FMATS Policy Committee meeting was moved to November 11, 2011 to avoid a conflict generated by AML. AML has now moved their meeting back by one week.

- **Motion:** To approve moving the November 2011 meeting date back to November 16. (Musick/Edwards).
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.

11. Informational Items

a) Leasure Street PH4 Increase

Ms. Gardino noted that the bids came in for the Leasure Street project and the engineers estimate was roughly \$30,000.00 lower than the low bid and, accounting for engineering and ICAP, an additional \$72,982.00 was needed. Ms. Gardino stated that this action is in her authority to approve and she did approve it. Attached to the provided meeting material is the e-mail showing that this was approved using some of the de-obligated funding. This project should be ready for construction this spring, according to Ms. Gardino.

b) Signal Detection Presentation

Colleen Ackiss, Traffic and Safety Chief, was asked by the FMATS Policy Committee to give a presentation on signal detection.

Ms. Ackiss continued to discuss the differences between fixed, no changes, and actuated changes due to traffic. The vast majority of the traffic signals in Fairbanks, 78, are actuated signals. These signals are either controlled by video detection or detection loops.

Ms Ackiss noted that Fairbanks has a unique circumstance because of the weather conditions, but both traffic loops and cameras have presented problems. About twenty years ago a reliable traffic loop was presented to Fairbanks and about five years ago a video detection system, that could handle the adverse conditions, was developed.

Ms. Ackiss explained the technical aspects of the cameras and the loops concluding that in the past few years, cameras have been the preferred option because of the costs, labor, effectiveness, and lower maintenance costs.

Adam Barth, FNSB Transportation, noted that there recently have been problems with busses in certain intersection and certain options are being considered. This item was introduced at the request of Mr. Miller, FNSB Transportation, to try to keep the busses on time and safe.

c) Call for Project Nominations for the 2012 – 2015 TIP

Ms. Gardino noted that the call for project nominations for the 2012 – 2015 TIP will close on December 26, 2010. Currently the projects that have been received for nomination are as follows: North Pole City-wide asphalt overlay project, Chena River Walk Phase III, Aurora Drive – Noyes Slough Bridge Replacement, Graehl Park Access, North Pole – Tamarac Woods Subdivision, and the Fairbanks Beautification Project.

d) Offset List FFY11

Ms. Gardino stated there is \$528,000.00 left to obligate. Mr. Titus noted that this funding could be used for scope changes and other minor changes to projects, but FMATS has until the end of the fiscal year to obligate said money.

12. Committee Comments

Ms. Gardino stated that the committee comments section is a new item suggested by Bruce Carr, ARRC.

Mr. Hopkins noted that it would be beneficial for the FMATS Policy Committee to receive a brief presentation on the progression of the Illinois Street project. It was determined that a presentation will be made on the Illinois Street project to the FMATS Policy Committee in early 2011. Mr. Hopkins asked what progress has been made on the submitted needs list and Mr. Brikholz said the list is being reviewed by Ms. Carpenter to see what projects would score the highest to receive funding and it will be completed in mid to late January.

Mayor Hopkins noted that there are actions under consideration regarding PM_{2.5} and an amending ordinance will probably be coming forward to the Borough Assembly to modify the air quality plan in regards to reducing vehicular emissions. Mr. Hopkins cautions that this could be an issue because it could greatly affect vehicular emissions while not actually doing much to the main PM_{2.5} issue. Ms. Edwards agrees with the Mayor, but stated that all the different contributions to PM_{2.5} in the Fairbanks area will be considered.

Mayor Isaacson asked Ms. Edwards about the position that DEC is taking on the Tanana Bridge issue and Ms. Edwards said she was unaware of any position.

13. Executive Session – Personnel Evaluation

The FMATS Policy Committee moved into executive session and no minutes were recorded. (11:57am).

- **Motion:** To enter an Executive Session for purposes of discussing an employee evaluation. (Hopkins/Isaacson).
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.

14. FMATS Coordinator Evaluation (Action Item)

The executive session ended and meeting minutes resumed. (12:35 pm)

- **Motion:** To approve a 4% merit increase to the Coordinator's 2010 salary effective January 1, 2011. (Hopkins/Isaacson).

Comments: Mr. Hopkins stated that Ms. Gardino has been the MPO Coordinator for many years and had advanced the progress of the Policy and Technical Committees. Mr. Roberts stated that a survey

monkey evaluation on the MPO Coordinator was completed and the results were extremely positive. Mayor Isaacson stated even though these are fiscally challenging times the merit increase was deserved, but cautioned not to use this as a precedent for every merit increase.

- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.

14. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn. (Titus/Isaacson). Adjourned at 12:39pm.

Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting, 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 19, 2011 at the DOT&PF Main Conference Room.

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

Date: 1/20/11