



POLICY BOARD

Meeting Minutes - February 15, 2017

Council Chambers, City Hall, 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, AK

1. Call to Order

Mayor Ward called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee

*Bryce Ward, Chair
 *Karl Kassel, Vice Chair
 *Jim Matherly
 *Ryan Anderson
 *Van Lawrence
 *Jerry Cleworth
 *Denise Koch (via telephone)
 **Donna Gardino
 **Alicia Stevens
 **Deborah Todd
 **Margaret Carpenter
 Carl Heim
 +Lee Borden
 +Mark Peterburs
 +Jackson Fox
 +Judy Chapman
 Janice Westlind
 Carl Westlind

Representative Organization

Mayor, City of North Pole
 Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
 Mayor, City of Fairbanks
 Director, DOT&PF, Northern Region
 FNSB Assembly
 City Council, City of Fairbanks
 DEC, Division of Air Quality
 FMATS MPO Coordinator
 FMATS Transportation Planner
 FMATS Administrative Assistant
 DOT&PF Planning
 DOT&PF
 DEC Air Quality
 Alaska Railroad
 City of Fairbanks
 DOT&PF Planning
 Citizen
 Citizen

**FMATS Policy Committee Members, **FMATS Staff Members, +FMATS Technical Committee Members*

3. Approval of the February 15, 2017 Agenda

Motion: To approve the February 15, 2017 Agenda. (Lawrence/Matherly).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

4. Approval of the January 18, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the January 18, 2017 meeting minutes. (Lawrence/Matherly).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

5. Committee/Working Group Reports (including the Chair's Report)

a. Executive Director's Staff Report and Technical Committee Action Items

Ms. Gardino provided information and highlights for all meetings, briefings, conferences, seminars, open houses, workshops, presentations, forums, and field trips she or FMATS staff had attended or participated in since the last meeting.

6. Public Comment Period (Items not on the Agenda)

No public comment.

7. Old Business

a. FMATS 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program and Conformity Approval (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino went through the TIP and provided information about the status of, and events scheduled for, the various projects.

Motion: To approve the 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program and Conformity Determination, as amended and presented. (Kassel/Lawrence).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. FMATS Title VI Implementation Plan for Public Comment (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino explained that FMATS would like to release the Plan for the 45-day public comment period and it would become part of the Public Participation Plan.

Motion: To release the Title VI Implementation Plan for public comment. (Kassel/Lawrence).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

8. New Business

a. FMATS Surface Upgrades FFY15 Phase 4 Increase (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino explained that the DOT Construction section was trying to close out FFY15 and the State of Alaska Accounting System (IRIS) had encountered \$10,000 in errors which resulted in this request for funding.

Motion: To approve a \$10,000 increase for the FFY15 FMATS Surface and Approach Upgrades Project, Phase 4. (Kassel/Lawrence).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. Notice of Proposed Rule Making on the Approval of the Moderate SIP

Ms. Gardino stated that EPA proposed to approve the Fairbanks North Star Borough PM_{2.5} Moderate Area Plan and she had asked DEC about whether FMATS should comment on it and they thought that no comment was comment enough. Ms. Gardino asked Ms. Koch if she had any additional information.

Ms. Koch stated that DEC had worked very hard to provide EPA with clarification and updated information they needed to come to this decision and was very pleased with this decision. Ms. Koch stated that there would be new effort to work on the Serious SIP and more stringent controls would need to be in that Serious SIP.

Discussion: Mayor Kassel commented that he wanted to thank EPA and they were very happy that they were approving this. Mayor Kassel stated that this was a case of EPA applying a little bit of common sense. Mayor Kassel stated that EPA was not overly enamored with it and it was not all that we needed to get us to where we wanted to go, but we were close with this plan.

Mayor Kassel stated that rejecting this would cause them to go into a mode where it would take a lot of work to fix it. Mayor Kassel stated that he thought it was logical for the Fairbanks North Star Borough to put more work into the Serious Plan because they had a lot of work to do for it.

**c. Response from the Commissioner regarding the Fairbanks Rail Plan
(Action Item)**

Ms. Gardino stated that they had received a response letter the Commissioner regarding the Fairbanks Rail Plan and while DOT thought it was a good idea and was meant to be State-lead, they did not think that it was supposed to be a DOT-lead plan. Ms. Gardino stated that the recommendation was to gather all the stakeholders together to obtain support from the Railroad to do this plan. Ms. Gardino explained that the Commissioner stated that a Memorandum of Understanding type document that incorporated a Railroad commitment to fund the plan was needed and then funding could be transferred to FTA or FRA.

Mayor Ward stated that it was his understanding that the Commissioner had commented that there was funding available for the State to do the Plan for the big donut area that was missing and asked Ms. Gardino if that was correct. Mayor Ward stated that it seemed like no one was willing to take the lead on this and wondered if it was appropriate for FMATS to take the lead on it.

Ms. Gardino stated that FMATS was willing to take the lead on it, but was not sure how much of that was within the FMATS boundaries. Ms. Gardino stated that FMATS funding could be used for portion of the plan that was within the MPO boundary and other funding could be used for areas outside of those boundaries.

Mr. Cleworth stated that there had been several groups that had weighed in on the railroad but lacked the funding to do anything. Mr. Cleworth asked Mayor Ward what he envisioned as a goal for the Plan.

Mayor Ward stated that what they were going to do in the next five years was their priority and thought that getting rid of the crossings was a good idea. Mayor Ward asked Ms. Gardino if it was appropriate for FMATS to take that role if they wanted to see that done.

Mayor Kassel stated that the Borough did planning and could probably do it, but currently did not have the money to do it. Mayor Kassel stated that the Plan was produced by DOT and said that the solution should be State-led and was confused as to why that solution was not DOT. Mayor Kassel stated that he thought we did need a 50-year plan for this community and FMATS was a transportation planning entity.

Motion: To draft a letter to the Commissioner offering FMATS to take the lead on the local Rail Plan if the State would provide sufficient funding.
(Lawrence.Cleworth).

Discussion: Mr. Lawrence stated that the current route of the railroad through the City of Fairbanks needed to change and they should be looking at the bigger plan of trying to reroute the railroad rather than spending money to improve it.

Mr. Cleworth stated that the only plan that would make sense would be to try to improve the current railroad and they needed to have a realistic expectation of what the plan would be.

Mayor Kassel stated that they needed to evaluate the rail system and what they were going to do in the short and long-term. Mayor Kassel stated that it might be best off leaving it where it was and fixing some of the issues, but no one had ever taken a look at how much that would cost, how much we were

losing, and what opportunities would be gained. Mayor Kassel stated that they could sell real estate or use it as collateral for bonding to figure out a plan.

Mr. Cleworth asked who Mayor Kassel envisioned would spearhead the plan.

Mayor Kassel stated that he thought the best course of action was to have the State do the Plan but they had already said that they would not be funding it. Mayor Kassel stated that he thought that FMATS taking the lead might be an alternate plan with a legitimate public process to make sure that everyone's interests were addressed. Mayor Kassel stated that they were currently wasting money and some opportunities as well.

Mr. Cleworth stated that when they discussed FMATS it was going to take a lot of time to ascertain all that and was wondering if Mayor Kassel envisioned FMATS staff doing that or how he would go about setting up infrastructure to do that study..

Mayor Kassel thought that they could have a consultant do that supervised by FMATS and monitored throughout the process.

Mayor Ward stated that was his understanding of how it would work as well. Mayor Ward asked if the State Rail Plan was federally funded. Ms. Chapman stated that it was not State funded.

Mayor Ward inquired if there was a mechanism that they could seek funding through.

Ms. Chapman stated that the only thing that they could do at DOT was to transfer Title 23 funds to FRA but was not entirely sure if FMATS could receive it.

Ms. Gardino stated that they had done some of the road/rail reduction plan work and if they relocated the railroad they were reducing conflicts with the highway and if they just decided to come up with a list of projects rather than relocating it, they were still reducing the number of at-grade crossings.

Ms. Chapman stated that Title 23 funds could be used for at-grade crossings but not for a plan to relocate the railroad or a rail reduction plan.

Ms. Gardino stated that she might be splitting hairs, but they might be able to find a way to do that since they were reducing at grade conflicts between the road and the rail.

Mr. Anderson stated that he was sure that it could get figured out and thought that the Commissioner was trying to outline that DOT resources were strained and they had less staff to help with that. Mr. Anderson stated that the \$3 million dollars had to come from somewhere and it was something to think about in terms of the value of spending that money instead of paving a road because that money had to come from somewhere. Mr. Anderson stated that if FMATS was to take the lead they might want to contribute as well.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

d. Birch Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Phase 2 Increase (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino stated that they received a request for \$20,000 in additional funding and introduced Carl Heim, DOT Project Manager, to provide them with further information about the project. Mr. Heim explained that the bike path design was almost complete except for the portion where they turned the corner at the bottom of the hill to the very top. Mr. Heim stated that they were having to do some redesign around four private property parcels. Mr. Heim

explained the preferred design option and the zero impact design option which they would use if they were not successful in negotiations with the four property owners.

Motion: To approve an increase of \$20,000 for Phase 2 of the Birch Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility. (Lawrence/Matherly).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

e. FMATS Transition Plan Scope of Services (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino explained that the scope of services would be to perform an organizational study of FMATS to look at the structure to identify deficiencies and develop an implementation plan to transition the organization to whatever the recommendations were for the new structure and assist in the recruitment of a new MPO Executive Director.

Motion: To approve the FMATS Transition Plan Scope of Services. (Lawrence/Matherly).

Discussion: Mr. Anderson asked about Ms. Gardino about Task 1 and whether it would review as an organization study the purpose of FMATS mission and outline strategic goals, or whether it was just transitional.

Ms. Gardino stated that it would do both.

Amendment to the Motion: Under Task 1, to add Strategic Goals and Mission Statement. (Lawrence/Matherly).

Discussion: Mr. Cleworth stated that this was very specific to a process and did not see where an organizational study fit into it.

Mr. Anderson stated that an organizational study reviewed the purpose, goals and objectives and a transition plan was a little different.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the introductory paragraph discussed an organizational study and housing of FMATS, as an MPO. Mr. Lawrence stated that he did not know whether they needed to go back and look at the organization, but rather where they were going to go from here.

Ms. Gardino stated that she thought it would be of value to look at the organizational structure since all MPOs did things a little differently and they might be focusing on things that they really did not need to, so that was the value of an organizational study.

Mr. Cleworth stated that when they started talking about organizational structure, he started thinking of the three entities that were involved and what they provided.

Ms. Gardino stated that they would need to work that out and that was all defined in the Office Agreement that they had and they would be amending Task 9 in order to achieve that. Ms. Gardino stated that DOT did not have the support that they had, and that was something they needed to be looking at to have someone else pick that up if necessary.

Vote on Amendment to the Motion: Six in favor. One opposed. (Cleworth). Approved.

Amended Motion: To approve the Transition Plan Scope of Services with Strategic Goals and Mission Statement added under Task 1.

Vote on Amended Motion: None opposed. Approved.

f. STIP Amendment #2 Comments (Action Item)

Ms. Gardino stated that STIP Amendment #2 was released on Friday, February 10th and wanted to point out comments that she had written.

Motion: To approve the letter regarding the STIP Amendment #2 comments. (Lawrence/Kassel).

Amendment to the Motion: To add a bullet about the need for the Fairbanks Area Rail Plan. (Cleworth/Kassel).

Discussion: No further discussion.

Vote on Amendment to the Motion: None opposed. Approved.

Amended Motion: To approve the letter regarding the STIP Amendment #2 comments with the addition of a bullet on the need for a Fairbanks Area Rail Plan.

Vote on Amended Motion: None opposed. Approved.

9. Other Issues

No other issues.

10. Informational Items

a. University Avenue Widening Project Update

Ms. Gardino shared a press release about the University Avenue Widening project. Ms. Gardino stated that DOT was going to moving forward with construction and asked Mr. Anderson to explain further.

Mr. Anderson stated that Great Northwest was the contractor for the project and construction would begin on the east and west ends of Geist Road to prepare for the 2018 intersection change. Mr. Anderson stated that they were also in the midst of right-of-way and hoped to have that completed in time for the 2018 construction season. Mr. Anderson stated that they could also provide an update on the project at a future meeting.

b. Safety Performance Measures and Target Setting

Ms. Gardino stated that she wrote up a summary of the workshop that she attended and also received a summary from the State and included it in the meeting packet as well. Ms. Gardino explained that for the five safety performance measures, they had two options: they could establish a numerical target for each performance measures specific to the MPO area, or they could choose to support the targets for DOT. Ms. Gardino stated that FMATS did not have to establish their targets until 180 days after the State established their targets. Ms. Gardino stated that the top three targets were the same targets that the Highway Safety Office and Highway Safety Improvement Program had to report on. Ms. Gardino stated that the NHTSA targets were due sooner than the Highway Safety Improvement Program targets were due.

c. State of Good Repair Performance Target Timeframes

Ms. Gardino stated that this was for the Federal Transit Administration and the final rule stated that they had to have their targets set by January 1st. Ms. Gardino stated that she had not received the targets from the Borough yet but FMATS would likely support those targets.

d. CAPSIS Request

Ms. Gardino stated that she drafted the request based on the letter FMATS sent to the Governor, then revised it when they decided to rehabilitate rather than replace the bridge and submitted that to the Legislature on Friday, February 10, 2017.

e. Old Richardson Highway Field Visit

Ms. Gardino stated that the comments compiled were included in the meeting packet and about 17 people attended and they had an opportunity to see the end of the school day traffic that went through that area and tried to come up with how to address the conflicts at this confusing intersection. Ms. Gardino stated that they might need to divert some of the traffic by looking at other routes for the busses to take to avoid conflict. Ms. Gardino stated that the trains have adjusted their schedules to avoid that area when school was dismissed.

f. Obligations and Offsets

Ms. Gardino explained the obligations and offsets included in the meeting packet.

11. Policy Board Comments

- Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Anderson if they were done with right-of-way issues on Third Street. Mr. Anderson stated that they had a new right-of-way map, were reinitiating the negotiations so it was all in the works and they were actually acquiring right now, so he would get back to him with an update.
- Ms. Koch stated that she wanted to let the group know that DEC was in the middle of a Saturation Study which was a monitoring study that was occurring near the North Pole Fire Station monitor. Ms. Koch stated that if people wanted more information about that study, they could go to the DEC Home Page under the section titled: Hot Topics. Mr. Lawrence stated that his recollection was that in order for the study to be effective, they had to have cold weather. Ms. Koch stated that they certainly wanted to capture some days where they had strong inversions and values above 35 µg/m³.

Mr. Lawrence asked Ms. Koch if she could remind them of the scheduling for the study. Ms. Koch stated that she did not have a definitive date, because there was some flexibility built into the planning based upon the weather encountered and they wanted to get some of the study in periods of real cold weather. Mr. Lawrence stated that unfortunately they were not expected to get any periods of real cold weather in the next couple weeks. Ms. Koch stated that there was always some risk associated with doing a monitoring study and they did the best they could in terms of coming up in the winter but some of those elements were beyond their control.

13. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn. (Matherly/Lawrence). The meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m. The next Policy Committee Meeting is scheduled Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 12 p.m. in the Fairbanks City Hall, Council Chambers

Approved: _____



Mayor Bryce Ward, Chair
FMATS Policy Committee

Date: 3-15-17