

**Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System
POLICY COMMITTEE
800 Cushman Street, City Council Chambers
City Hall, Fairbanks, Alaska
Meeting Minutes – September 19, 2012**

1. Call to Order

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

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee	Representative Organization
*Mayor Doug Isaacson	City of North Pole
*Mayor Jerry Cleworth	Mayor, City of Fairbanks
*Alice Edwards	Director, Division of Air Quality
*Mayor Luke Hopkins	Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
*Mike Musick	Member, FNSB Assembly
*Chad Roberts, Vice Chair	City of Fairbanks
*Steve Titus, Chair	DOT & PF
** ⁺ Donna Gardino	MPO Coordinator, FMATS
**Jessica Smith	Transportation Planner/Assistant, FMATS
⁺ Joan Hardesty	Division of Air Quality
Margaret Carpenter	DOT & PF
John Bennett	DOT & PF Right of Way
⁺ Mike Schmetzer	City of Fairbanks
Linda Mahlen	DOT & PF
Margaret Carpenter	DOT & PF
⁺ Bernardo Hernandez	FNSB
Barry Hooper	DOT & PF
Meadow Bailey	DOT & PF
Hannah Blankenship	DOT & PF
Sarah Schacher	DOT & PF
Dermot Cole	FDNM
Kellen Spillman	FNSB Planning
Dan Bross	KUAC Radio
<i>*FMATS Policy Committee Members</i>	
<i>**FMATS Staff Members</i>	
<i>⁺ FMATS Technical Committee Members</i>	

3. Public Comment

None.

4. Approval of September 19, 2012 Agenda.

- **Motion:** To approve the September 19, 2012 agenda. (Edwards/Roberts).
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.

5. Approval of August 15th, 2012 Minutes.

- **Motion:** To approve the August 15th, 2012 Minutes. (Roberts/Edwards).
- **Vote on the motion:** None opposed. Approved.

6. Committee Reports

a. Coordinator's Office Report and Technical Committee Action Items

Ms. Gardino provided an update on all FMATS activities, details of which are included in the Coordinator's Report in the meeting packet. Ms. Gardino thanked Jessica Smith for her work while Ms. Gardino was on vacation this year and at the AMPO Conference. Ms. Smith facilitated the Technical Committee meeting and two Art Selection Advisory Committee meetings in Ms. Gardino's absence. Ms. Gardino noted her experience giving a presentation on how to run a small MPO at the AMPO Conference, and said that an attendee's comment was that it was unusual for staff to be the chair of the technical committee. Mayor Isaacson asked if that was because most MPO Staff is non-technical and Ms. Gardino has a technical background. Mr. Titus noted the FMATS bylaws allows for this situation of the technical chair. Ms. Gardino agreed it was in the bylaws, but she would look at how other MPO's are structured. Ms. Smith is working on the new FMATS website, which can be found at www.fmats.us. The Title VI Plan will be produced this next year. Ms. Smith also served as an evaluator in the Wayfinding Project consultant selection; Bettisworth North was selected as the finalist for the project. The FMATS staff also attended a webinar on FHWA guidance of MAP-21.

b. FMATS Art Selection Advisory Committee Report

The downtown greenspace art project received 100 responses to the RFP/Q . The committee narrowed it down to fifty-five with the yes, no, maybe process, and following another process, narrowed the list to twenty-two selections, and finally down to eleven. The top eleven were scored numerically to select the final five. She noted that Mayor Cleworth and Mr. Roberts have seen the top five and Ms. Gardino is hopeful there is great art to be installed. Mr. Titus asked what the next steps would be. Ms. Gardino explained that the top five would be issued an RFP, a final selection made and a public hearing for maintenance and safety before a contract is negotiated with the finalist. Mr. Musick asked about timeline for artist selection, and Ms. Gardino said November 21st is the date the Policy Committee should be able to view the finalist.

c. Boundary Subcommittee Report

Ms. Gardino noted the recent Boundary Subcommittee Meeting, in which Mr. Spillman provided maps for the subcommittee to review. She summarized the definition of the urbanized area and how this affects the boundaries for the metro area. Mayor Isaacson asked if there were any projects that would be affected by the boundaries. Ms. Gardino said yes. Mayor Isaacson followed up by asking what steps would need to be taken. Ms. Gardino noted the TIP and the way the funds must be spent and that a project would not be removed from the TIP.

7. Old Business

a. Illinois Reconstruction Update

Ms. Gardino provided an update of the project, which included completion of the duct bank system. Piles are being driven for the Noyes Slough bridge. There have been some challenges with the pile driving, as they cannot drive down as far as originally intended. The experts are on site and consulting with the contractor to find a solution. The catch basins have been installed and the waterline on Minnie St. is being installed, which is the last of the waterline. The contractor is placing borrow all the way to the Noyes Slough bridge, and will also be installing curb and gutter and final paving. Lighting is being installed, and the signals should be on the way to Fairbanks. The change orders have not been fully processed at FHWA, but there is a discrepancy about whether the funding for the change orders will be taken from the banking request or from other sources. Mr. Titus is working to clear up this matter, as it was not the intent of the MPO to reduce the banking funding for any project this fiscal year. Mayor Hopkins asked if construction is waiting on the change order funding. Mr. Titus said the construction has moved forward, and as Ms. Gardino said, the obligation for the funds is being discussed internally and it is his belief that FMATS will be just fine. Mayor Hopkins asked when the signals would be in place. Mr. Titus said five intersections, traffic patterns, and final pavement should be in place and functioning by late October – early November.

b. Airport Way Median Alternatives

Sarah Schacher from DOT & PF provided the committee with a PowerPoint presentation of Airport Way median alternatives as a possible preventive maintenance project. The alternatives presented included asphalt medians or stamped concrete medians, as well as a “do nothing” alternative, leaving medians as-is on Airport Way, with no maintenance agreement currently in place, effectively being the least expensive alternative.

Mayor Hopkins asked if the lilac bushes would be preserved, and Ms. Schacher answered that the DOT would accommodate the lilac bushes. There would not be any additions to the number of bushes, as this is a preventative maintenance project and would not include additional beautification. Mayor Hopkins asked about the flower beds along the roadside; Ms. Schacher explained those areas would be addressed on a case-by-case basis, which may include paving those areas.

Mr. Musick asked if artificial turf had been considered, and what would the cost be. Ms. Schacher noted that it had not been considered, and did not know how well that would be received. She estimated it would be fairly low cost, but was not sure. Mr. Titus noted that this would be more of a renewal treatment, instead of a preventive maintenance project. Ms. Schacher also noted that snow is stacked in the medians in the winter and could potentially be a problem with something such as astroturf. Mayor Isaacson asked who maintains the large grassy medians in Anchorage; thinking it was an AMATS responsibility. Mayor Isaacson said he believes this would be the best and most attractive option, and gave examples in town. He does not think there is a way to avoid maintenance on paved medians, as there would still need to be weeding done along the medians. He asked if this cannot become an FMATS project, or maintained by the Borough or Cities, or could it be approached by the business

community. Mr. Titus said the federal funds require a maintenance agreement, and at this point there is no entity that has stepped forward; the Borough has not been able to continue their maintenance due to fiscal difficulties. Mr. Titus noted that the DOT is in the business of maintenance, and he wanted to make sure the committee did not think there would not be any maintenance done to the improvements. Ms. Schacher confirmed, noting the DOT was simply trying to learn where they should focus their efforts. She asked the committee to provide feedback during today's meeting in order to know whether or not the DOT should move forward. Mayor Isaacson asked if Ms. Schacher would be willing to give this same presentation to the Chamber of Commerce. She said if that was needed, she would, but today's focus is to gain the opinion of the committee as to whether or not to move forward with contacting FHWA for funding on these particular improvement alternatives. Mayor Hopkins asked what her timeline was on this project. Ms. Schacher said that depended on what the committee suggested as a direction for the project, but the DOT was hoping to obligate these funds for the next federal fiscal year. Construction would occur in the summer of 2014, due to design timelines.

Mayor Hopkins said he believes leaving the grassed medians for now, as the Borough has not formally withdrawn their maintenance; it is possible the Borough would be able to come back and continue with their maintenance with additional options such as community involvement. Mayor Cleworth asked if the DOT has a contract with Goldpanner to complete the maintenance. Mr. Titus said he did not know.

Mayor Cleworth asked Ms. Schacher if the DOT did not want to add more landscaping. Ms. Schacher said it was not that the DOT did not want to add the landscaping; it is a matter of additional design for additional landscaping, as well as additional maintenance involved. Mayor Cleworth said his preference is with the other two mayors for the grassed medians as the most attractive option; his second choice would be tree vaults with the scored concrete. Mr. Titus reiterated that the DOT will be providing the maintenance, but likely will not be at the high standard provided in the past by the Borough. Mayor Hopkins noted again that the Borough has not surrendered the maintenance agreement, but is in discussions with the attorneys. Mr. Titus noted with a properly executed maintenance agreement, the Borough would be able to maintain the medians, but in the interim the DOT would do the maintenance.

Ms. Gardino noted that the general consensus of the Technical Committee was to leave the medians as-is and focus the funds elsewhere, as a more robust beautification project is desired along the whole Airport Way corridor. Ms. Schacher noted that this is a NHS road. Mr. Titus summarized that the consensus of this committee was to keep the status quo of the Airport Way medians in hopes of a future project which would address the entire appearance of the facility.

8. New Business

a. UPWP – FNSB Report and Breakdown

Mayor Hopkins walked the committee through the FNSB budget and expenditures as included in the meeting packet. Mayor Hopkins noted the benefits DOT and FMATS receives from the GIS system housed and maintained by the Borough and is a huge financial burden. The UPWP funding expenditures are accounted for in the attached financial report. Additionally, Hopkins noted the aerial

photographs and LiDAR data that is being collected by the Borough. Mr. Titus noted that there are City projects, DOT projects, and FMATS projects and asked how these tasks broken down in the Borough budgets. Mr. Hernandez and Mr. Spillman noted that the cash matches are for any projects within the MPA boundaries. Mayor Hopkins asked if there are questions about the duties noted in the packet.

Mr. Roberts noted that his original concern was not that the funds were being used appropriately. The City is allocated less dollars, but there are two and a half employees as opposed to the Borough's one employee (FMATS). These are FMATS funds, and this argument can be made for any entity. Mr. Roberts suggested that this PL funding should be allocated more evenly between the entities. He believes the GIS system is a Borough issue and commitment, not an FMATS concern. Mr. Robert's asked if the current allocation was an equitable allocation of FMATS funds. Mr. Titus asked about the difference between budgeted and expended funds, and where the left over funds were allocated. Mayor Hopkins noted that the left over funds went to other projects (GIS, LiDAR), from which FMATS benefits. Mayor Hopkins answered Mr. Robert's question by saying the GIS system is mostly what Mr. Spillman's position consists of within the MPA boundaries, noting this is how Mr. Spillman's salary is utilized. Mr. Roberts followed up by saying he understands the allocations, but reiterated that the GIS system is a Borough function shared by the entities, while the PL funding is planning money that is distributed through FMATS. Mr. Roberts thinks it is an inequitable distribution of the funds, and stated that the question is should FMATS contribute \$130,000 to the GIS tasks of the Borough, as that is a function of the Borough that benefits all entities, not directly FMATS. Mr. Roberts followed up by asking why would the Borough received more than the other entities? Mayor Cleworth asked where the money was received for Todd Boyce's salary prior to the FMATS PL funding. Mr. Hernandez said it was from another source. He noted that the GIS database was started in 1994, and the Borough paid a consultant \$20,000 to get the GIS system started. Over time, Todd's salary got higher (20 years) and UPWP tasks 1 and 2 were merged. Mayor Cleworth brought up the discussion between Mayor Strle and Mayor Whitaker's lively talk. Predecessors always ask why the money is allocated the way it is, as it does not appear to be logical. The Borough employee does not even work for Ms. Gardino. Mayor Cleworth noted that he knows everyone has expenses, just like everyone else (State, Borough, FMATS, the Cities). Mayor Cleworth suggested the Technical Committee look at the allocations and tasks, and re-allocate the PL funding with some logical decision.

- **Motion:** To refer the issue back to Technical Committee and have them look at the allocation of the UPWP and make a recommendation for the next fiscal year. (Cleworth/Roberts).
- **Discussion:** Mayor Hopkins asked if the tasks/duties would be reviewed. Mr. Hernandez said he believes that is what the committee will do, as original allocation was based on the funding. Mayor Hopkins asked about a few years ago the two MPOs in Alaska had a conversation regarding the allocation, noting that someone (Ron King) from HQ said, FMATS gets what it gets. MAP-21 should be consulted on UPWP money. Mr. Titus noted that MAP-21 does not relate to the current motion, although that is a good question. Mr. Titus reminded Mayor Hopkins what the motion is to accomplish. Mr. Titus noted that he does not remember how the allocations were made, and there are in-kind services that are supplied by the DOT, the Cities, and by the Borough alike. No one seems to know the history, so the research of the Technical

Committee will be to find out how it got to be the way it is; this should be solved with an explanation. He asked if the Mayor had a clearer idea of how the allocations were made.

Mayor Cleworth asked Mike Schmetzer to speak. Mr. Schmetzer spoke to his responsibilities with his engineering department and all his staff. He noted that there is always a City input with FMATS projects. He listed all of the tasks the City is involved with. In the last five years, Mike noted all of the projects the engineers at the City has worked with the DOT and FMATS -- \$32.5 million dollars in projects. The City is not getting reimbursed at all, as far as the planning is concerned. The City is not getting reimbursed for those planning functions, only designing. Mayor Hopkins asked what was "planning." Mike responded by explaining planning level design.

Mayor Hopkins asked that the aspects of the GIS programming will be considered included in the research. Mr. Titus noted that this is a task that will be discussed, as it is a portion of the tasks to be discussed. There is no need to add an amendment. Mr. Roberts noted his support of the motion, as the question needs to be answered. Mayor Hopkins noted that the motion was made for the next fiscal year. Mayor Cleworth said it is for FFY13. Mr. Titus asked if it has been approved. Ms. Gardino said yes, but it can be amended as discussed when the UPWP was approved. Mayor Cleworth noted that if the Technical Committee cannot turn this around that quickly, then let them decide when the amendment may or may not be made. Mr. Musick said his observation is that the City and the State are not being adequately compensated for their time. Perhaps the Borough is not adequately compensated for their time. He suggested we try to get a bigger pot of money to solve this problem.

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

9. Public Comment

Meadow Bailey noted the misinformation that is out there regarding a non-FMATS project: the Steese/Farmer's Loop Connector Project, regarding the easing of congestion in that area. Mr. Musick said he heard about this project years ago and asked how long has this been in the works. Ms. Bailey noted that it has been talked about, but there has not been any planning. This is the first concept that has been put out. Ms. Bailey said the DOT was seeking info from the public and organizations. Mr. Titus noted the project's detailed background. Currently the project is moving forward as a GO Bond project, if funded. There are opportunities for this project to change, the scope to change, based on public hearings and feedback. The public seemed to think the road was going through Creamer's Field, and that is not the case. Ms. Bailey noted there is a website on the DOT page for public comment, including part of the environmental document. Mayor Hopkins asked if the project was found in the FMATS area. Ms. Gardino noted that most of the project is outside of the FMATS boundaries. He also asked if the project was in Creamer's Field property at all. Mr. Titus noted where it's located is within the refuge, but not going through the refuge. Ms. Bailey said it is a 250' section within the refuge.

Mr. Hernandez noted that the Planning Commission had a meeting and wanted to commend the DOT and Al Beck on the Gold Hill Road project. The work with the public is great and they were very happy. The project has been passed. (40 properties of ROW were acquired.)

Mike Schmetzer noted an update of the Bentley Trust Road, as it will soon be advertised. The Engineer's estimate is currently \$9.5 million.

10. Other Issues

a. FMATS MAP-21 Consultation

Mayor Hopkins asked for FMATS to be in consultation with DOT, as the law states. So far, there is no consultation – in the past it has only been FMATS told what is going to happen. Mr. Titus noted that Jeff Ottesen will come to speak to the Technical Committee and Chamber of Commerce.

11. Informational Items.

a. Surface Transportation Authorization Update

Ms. Gardino noted that Jeff Ottesen will be at the next Technical Committee meeting to present a summary on MAP-21 and its possible MPO effects. She noted the NHS roads and principle arterials that will be eligible for NHS funding. University Ave. will now be eligible and so will Gaffney Road (from Airport Way to Fort Wainwright). There is some misidentification of a particular route (Geist Road). Comments are due by September 20th. Ms. Gardino noted that there needs to be better communication from HQ, it is problematic as it stands.

Mayor Hopkins asked if remarks will be sent back electronically, because the issue with consultation has been brought up before. He said the consultation has not really happened, and that HQ needs to be involved and consult the MPO here, just like the law states. Mr. Titus suggested talking to Jeff Ottesen about these problems and issues with HQ communication. Mayor Isaacson said he doesn't know what they're looking for with comments, but in the Cities sometimes the federal money takes away the community visioning in interpreting these things. The communication could happen earlier to help include the community's vision. He noted that he hopes future FMATS bodies will consider the visions of the community instead of the constraints of the funding sources.

b. Obligations/Offset List

Ms. Gardino directed the committee to the new FFY2013 offset list and the monies available, found in the meeting packet. She noted the projects that will need to utilize these monies (the Curb Corner project and College Road project increase of about \$130K). These will be on the next Policy Committee agenda for approval and funding is available.

Mayor Hopkins asked about the DOT projects and core projects funding. Mayor Isaacson asked if the North Pole Bike Path bids came in at less than was obligated, which will let construction begin next year. Ms. Gardino confirmed.

12. Policy Committee Comments

Mr. Musick noted kudos to DOT and HC Contractors for expediting the project on Illinois Street.

Mayor Hopkins echoed Mr. Musick's comments and looks forward to the opening of the bridge and the Model T coming across the bridge. Mayor Hopkins voiced concerns regarding the CMAQ funding approval, including \$8 million worth of projects used in Air Quality Plan (plug ins and bus routes), which was a big stumbling block for FTA and Region 10 to post that as an approved grant. This may not be approved by Friday (end of the federal fiscal year). If it goes into next year, a 20% match has to be added in the next fiscal year. They were obligated in June by DOT, and it needs to be approved. Ms. Carpenter noted she has been talking to Glenn Miller at the Borough. The issue is FTA is holding the funds because there are twelve projects open where funding has not been spent. As there is a lot of turnover at the FTA, the newest FTA contact said they would not process 2012 funding until they work with the Borough to process these funds from FTA (which will result in a match). Some of the projects that are contingency measures in the STIP, the State will pay the match. Two projects (bus shelters, plug ins, and bus routes in Fort Wainwright and Fairbanks). The vanpool and headway are areas of concerns; a match waiver is being submitted for those projects. The vanpool may be 100% federal, as noted by Ms. Gardino. Mayor Hopkins noted that none of the twelve projects need to be moving forward, because they're multi-year. Margaret noted that the DOT cannot track it in the region because the Borough should be working directly with FTA. Mayor Hopkins noted they were doing this through the Congressional offices.

Mayor Cleworth said he received a letter from Don Callahan, asking for FMATS' consideration of the Eagen Street sidewalk, but to only put it on the South side to avoid right of way issues. Mayor Cleworth thought it could possibly be addressed in a CMAQ project.

Mr. Roberts said yesterday he saw the five finalists for the art project. He thinks it will be a good project, there has been a lot of work put into and he looks forward to how the RFPs come back. He's been watching that project develop over the summer and can't wait to see what's finally there. (He has a great view from his office of the project.)

Mr. Titus noted his thanks to the committee for their cooperation through design and construction, project increases, etc. of this summer. He thinks that kind of relationship help from the committee is really appreciated by the DOT.

Mayor Isaacson thanked the entities for the projects getting completed and happy to hear about new projects being opened and started.

13. Adjourn

- **Motion to adjourn.** (Hopkins/Edwards)
- **Vote on the motion.** None opposed. Approved.

Meeting adjourned at 11:53 am.

September 19, 2012
Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Next Scheduled Policy Committee Meeting, 10:00 am, Wednesday, October 17, 2012 at DOT&PF
Main Conference Room.

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

Date: 10/17/12