



Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System
800 Cushman Street • Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 • 907.459.6786

Responsiveness Summary

Draft 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Associated Conformity Analysis Public Comment Period

July 21 – August 20, 2011

The Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System completed a draft 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and associated Conformity Analysis which was released on July 21, 2011 for public comment by the FMATS Policy Committee. The public comment period was open until August 20, 2011. Two open houses were held; on July 25, 2011 in Fairbanks and July 26, 2011 in North Pole, to inform and field questions from the public. The following is a summary of the comments from both the open house events as well as other comments that the FMATS Coordinator's Office received during the 30-day public comment period.

Comment: Comment indicated an urgent need for the Gold Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility due to dangerous conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians along Gold Hill Road.

Response: FMATS understands the need for bicyclists and pedestrian facilities along Gold Hill Road and progress continues to move forward on the project. In Federal Fiscal Year 2012 (FFY12), FMATS plans to obligate the funding to begin work on the final design of the project as well as obligate right-of-way funding and utility funding. The design process and right-of-way process can be lengthy and currently the project is not expected to be ready for construction until FFY15. There is a second open house planned for fall of 2011 to review some of additional designs proposed for this project.

Comment: Comment Indicated lack of snow clearing along Aurora Drive and the Johansen Expressway as well as traffic congestion at “the old Foodland.”

Response: The City of Fairbanks is responsible for snow removal on Aurora Drive. Last winter was especially problematic in that a November rainstorm created icy conditions that were very difficult to address throughout the entire winter season. In the winter of 2009 – 2010, FMATS organized and participated in a Seasonal Mobility Task Force focusing on snow removal on and around non-motorized transportation facilities. The final Seasonal Mobility Task Force report may be viewed on our website (www.fmats.alaska.gov.) The State of Alaska DOT & PF is responsible for maintenance along the Johansen Expressway and they have submitted a request for funding operators and equipment to take on snow clearing along the path from

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College to the Steese Highway, the area in question. A traffic analysis is underway in the downtown core area that will consider the area around the “old Foodland.” In this traffic analysis, a full retail build-out of this particular parcel will be considered.

Comment: The comment indicated that the North Pole Interchange Pedestrian Facilities and the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing are not being constructed soon enough. Concern was also expressed over potential loss of FMATS as an MPO in the next Transportation Bill.

Response: The North Pole Interchange Pedestrian Facilities project is proceeding forward with final design, utilities work, and right-of-way scheduled for FFY12. Construction funding on this project is set to obligate in FFY14.

In FFY10, FMATS allocated funding for the completion of the environmental assessment (EA) for the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction project. The Environmental Assessment is proceeding as scheduled with reviews of the draft EA set to begin in August of 2011. There is no schedule for construction or right-of-way for the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project.

The changing of the minimum population threshold for new MPOs to 200,000 may be an issue with FMATS if a grandfather clause is not included in the authorization for existing MPOs. The Mayors of the area signed a joint letter to Congressman Young expressing their concerns.

Comment: The comment expressed concern over the lack of pedestrian facilities along St. Nicholas Drive and the danger associated with this lack of facilities. The comment also encouraged FMATS not to wait until 2014 to construct the project.

Response: The North Pole Interchange Pedestrian Facilities project is a very high priority for FMATS and the project is proceeding forward. Currently this project is in the environmental phase with final design, utilities work, and right-of-way scheduled for FFY12. The construction funding for this project is set to obligate in FFY14 due to the time required to complete the other phases, including right-of-way acquisition, which could require over 20 sliver parcel takes along St. Nicholas Drive.

Comment: The comment expressed concern over transportation funding being withheld from FMATS if the Fairbanks area does not meet the PM_{2.5} emissions budgets.

Response: Federal funding could be at risk if emissions budgets are not met. However, usually that does not happen if good faith efforts are made. In the past, transportation funds have been threatened when there is a flat out refusal to do a requirement. When a refusal or a requirement is missed, then a sanction clock starts. If there is not resolution after a sanction clock starts, then once the clock runs out, FHWA could be required to withhold federal transportation funds. Sanction clocks are usually 18 months.

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Comment: The comment expressed support over a minimal approach to the bike and pedestrian facilities proposed on Gold Hill Road. There were concerns over widening the tree line and potential impacts to personal properties along the road.

Response: The Gold Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility project is still in the design phase and a preferred alternative has not been selected. There will be an open house this fall to discuss the alternatives that the project team has been working on in response to the comments received at the first open house. Both options that the project team has been working on include minimizing the impacts to the trees in the area.

Comment: The comment expressed the need for traffic improvements at the Tanana Loop and Alumni Drive intersection. The comment encourages FMATS to include funding for the UAF Roundabout: Tanana Loop to Alumni Drive in the Transportation Improvement Program.

Response: The UAF Roundabout: Tanana Loop to Alumni Drive is a project included in the FMATS TIP under the Illustrative section. While the UAF Roundabout project is an important project for FMATS, funding has become extremely tight over the length of the 2012 – 2015 TIP and currently there is no funding allocated for this project. In addition, UAF has hired a consultant to complete a traffic study of lower campus and the findings of the study will assist in determining any proposed action at this intersection.

Comment: The comment expressed the need the design phases of the UAF Roundabout: Tanana Loop and Alumni Drive project and the UAF Tanana Drive Extension project to be funded in the 2012 – 2015 TIP.

Response: See above comment/response

Comment: The comment expressed the need for the design phase of the Tanana Drive Extension project to be changed from Illustrative to funded in the 2012 – 2015 TIP (2 comments).

Response: The design phase of the Tanana Drive Extension project is currently listed in the Illustrative section of the 2012 – 2015 TIP, which illustrates that FMATS finds this to be an important project. FMATS currently has a fiscally constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and if more funding becomes available, funding the Tanana Drive Extension project will be considered.

Comment: The comment expressed the need for the design phase of the Tanana Drive Extension project to be changed from Illustrative to funded in the 2012 – 2015 TIP.

Response: See above comment/response