

FMATS Freight Mobility Plan  
Meeting Summary  
Freight Advisory Committee - Meeting #1  
February 16, 2016  
3 – 5 pm

Attendees:

HDR	Laurie Cummings	FAC	Uriah Nalikak- Petrostar
FAC	Bob Pristash – City of Fairbanks	FAC	Luke Hopkins – AGDC
FAC	Allan Hoza – Colville Transport	FAC	Bill Butler - City of North Pole
FAC	Rich Felsing– FNSB Transportation Planner	FAC	Mark Peterburs – Alaska Railroad
FAC	Mark Richardson - Ft. Wainwright	Huntington Consulting	Joy Huntington
FAC	Zach Dameron – FNG	FMATS	Donna Gardino
FAC	Jeremy Langton – Fairbanks International Airport	FMATS	Alicia Giamichael
FAC	Pam Golden – DOT&PF	DOT&PF	Linda Mahlen – DOT&PF
	Christine Nelson – FNSB Planning Director (T)	FAC	Aves Thompson – ATA (T)
HDR	Steve Decker (T)	FAC	Nicole Thompson – Eielson AFB (T)

T – Participated via teleconference

**1. Introductions, and Agenda Review – Donna Gardino, Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS)**

Donna introduced herself and the FMATS Freight Advisory Committee (FAC). She represents the federally recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO). She explained the purpose, goals, and scope (indicating boundaries of the metropolitan area on a map) of FMATS. Fairbanks is a non-attainment area for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, so FMATS has to show they are not going to make air quality worse through the implementation of transportation projects.

All decisions are made by the Policy Committee, and they have decided to fund this Freight Mobility Plan (FMP). They select projects to be built with funding received (approximately \$9 million) through the State of Alaska from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

They have never done a freight mobility plan, and need to do an update to their Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). They would like to incorporate the freight mobility plan into the LRTP. The goal is to move freight efficiently throughout the region. The LRTP has to address projects within the MPO area as well as projects sponsored by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) outside the MPO area but within the non-attainment area.

She gave a briefing on the plan, explained who FMATS is, and gave a briefing on the freight mobility plan. They want to get people who move freight in and out of the system together to identify issues, develop goals and objectives, identify deficiencies, and give recommendations on how to improve the transportation system and support efficiency and safety.

She indicated that this will be an interactive process and thanked attendees for being at the meeting. The attending FAC members, FMATS and DOT&PF staff, and HDR team members also introduced themselves.

Steve reiterated that this will be an interactive process, and attendees should feel free to ask questions throughout the meeting. He discussed the agenda for the meeting:

- Project overview and schedule – work plan and schedule to complete the project over the next 18 months
- Role of the FAC –the project team will also be looking for attendees' thoughts on expectations for the group
- Identification of issues in the region regarding freight
- Goals and objectives – tied to issues and expectations
- Next steps/next meeting

## **2. Public Comment Period (3 minute limit)**

No members of the public were present.

## **3. Project Overview – Steve Decker, HDR**

Steve Decker presented an overview of the FMATS FMP purpose and work plan. He identified the purpose of the FMP included FMATS working with regional and local stakeholders to develop the first FMP for the region. The FMP addresses existing and future freight transportation conditions and needs and identifies the potential long-term solutions and strategies that can be implemented to meet those needs over the next 20 years. The intent is to pull the FMP into the update to the LRTP.

Steve also briefly presented the entire FMP work plan by tasks, including how some tasks would be conducted concurrently with one another, feed into one another, and be used to implement the FMP over the project schedule. He described the following tasks:

1. Project Management Plan – how the project will be managed;
2. Establish FMATS Freight Advisory Committee and Stakeholder/Public Involvement Plan – the stakeholder/public involvement plan will establish how input will be gathered and distributed (e.g., website, public opinion surveys, stakeholder interviews, neighborhood briefings, and public meetings at key points in the process);
3. Data Collection, Inventory, and Assessment – relates to existing freight conditions and includes an inventory based on available information;
4. Develop Freight Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures and Targets – this will be started during a later exercise in this meeting;
5. Existing Conditions Report – this will be informed by Task 3;
6. Projected Freight Levels for 2035 and 2040;
  - There was a question regarding whether there are data sets (socioeconomic and traffic model) for 2025 and 2030; Donna said she will have to check with DOT&PF; the updates for the latest Metropolitan Transportation Plan go to 2040; there are data sources for interim years (DOT&PF, FHWA) but they are perhaps not as detailed
7. Evaluate Future Conditions and the Region’s Capacity to Meet Future Demands;
8. Identify and Characterize Freight Corridors and Potential Freight Development Zones;
9. Evaluate Maintenance and Interagency Issues;
10. Identify Potential Projects – based on goals and objectives and future conditions evaluation; and
11. Prepare Final Report, Executive Summary, and Implementation Plan – drafts will be available for public and agency reviews.

Steve then presented an overview of the 18-month project schedule from late 2015 to early 2017, and discussed some early target delivery/completion dates for key project milestones, including:

- Existing Conditions Report – May 2016;
- Future Conditions Report – July 2016; and
- Draft Plan – November 2016.

Donna reiterated that this is an interactive process, and the end goal is to develop a list of projects for implementation and funding to improve the transportation system for freight mobility, efficiency, and safety. This is why the meeting is important. The attendees know best what projects are out there and what deficiencies need to be addressed.

Steve suggested that there may be short-term, quick-fix solutions to some issues that can be implemented. Then we can look at long-term strategies as well. Everything is fair game in terms of solutions in the region.

#### **4. Role of the FAC – Steve Decker, HDR**

Steve presented the role of the FAC to support the FMP. The FAC is intended to:

- Advise FMATS about regional freight-related priorities and issues, problem areas and bottlenecks, key and emerging issues and potential projects, policy and strategy solutions, and funding needs and issues;
- Provide input on FMATS decisions affecting freight transportation in the region; and
- Promote information sharing between the private and public sectors on freight issues.

There will be four official meetings, but there will be outreach throughout the process.

Donna stated that she was looking forward to hearing from attendees how they could be benefited by the process.

Steve stated that the project team wants to hear about attendees' expectations from the FMP, how it will help attendees do business, and how it will help the region in general in terms of freight mobility. That discussion is included in the following section.

#### **5. Round Table Discussion**

Steve and Donna initiated a round table discussion with the FAC about why each member agreed to participate and what outcomes they envision as a result of the FMP. A summary of the FAC comments are presented below:

- Safety, Mobility, and Accessibility Needs:
  - Need for the safe and efficient movement of freight as well as for safe and inter-connected multimodal transportation systems;
  - Need for truck mobility and accessibility system improvements;
  - Need for a coordinated, integrated freight transportation system to improve mobility and accessibility for goods movement; and
  - Need to consider how future expected growth in traffic volumes will impact the system as part of the FMP solutions.
- Rail Enhancements:
  - Projected rail improvements from the State Rail Plan need to be translated to needs for the Fairbanks region, including the basic sharing of information with FMATS of the Rail Plan outcomes and the need for at-grade crossing improvements in the region; and
  - ARRC rail movements are increasing and need to be accommodated.
- Infrastructure Strategies:
  - Major construction projects, including projects that support Fairbanks and movement through the Fairbanks, are desired;

- Freight infrastructure issues, needs, and potential solutions need to be identified and addressed;
- Design of infrastructure to meet freight system needs should be assessed;
- Low hanging fruit improvements such as signage, striping, and signals should identified and part of the program; and
- Maintenance of facilities should be a consideration in the FMP in the context of efficiently using/allocating funds.
- Land Use Issues/Needs:
  - Military build-up and associated impacts to the freight transportation system will need to be addressed;
  - Future industrial land use growth and how this growth can be accommodated in the FMP process should be assessed; and
  - Freight-oriented land uses, including international uses, should be addressed in the FMP.
- Shippers, Carriers, and Freight Business Issues:
  - Enplanement and deplanement of air cargo needs to be addressed in the FMP;
  - Understanding how shippers can accommodate their customers/clients in the region should be defined and considered in the FMP;
  - The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) reports regarding gas line and other infrastructure need to be addressed;
  - Operations and the expected growth in hauling Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) should be built into the FMP; and
  - Strategic improvements to support large freight users, both rail and truck operations, in the region need to be addressed in the FMP.

## **6. Identification and Discussion of Issues – Steve Decker/Laurie Cummings, HDR**

Steve and Laurie led a FAC discussion of known freight issues in the Fairbanks region that the project team should be aware of and considered for integration in the FMP. Laurie reminded attendees that this should include current and potential future issues. Donna reiterated that this will not be the last time the team comes to the FAC for input. Laurie stated that there will be public meetings that gather public input. FMATS has developed a list of projects (short-, medium, and long-term) in the long range plan that could inform this list of issues, and DOT&PF has a Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) list that could also inform potential projects/issues. The team is looking for specific issues as well as broader policy issues. Attendees requested that the team provide a map. The team will be launching an interactive mapping system for commenters to use to identify areas with issues. Attendees were provided maps that they can write notes on.

Are there funding restrictions that the FAC should be aware of? FMATS has a scoring process they go through. FMATS funding is for surface transportation, and it is different from other funding sources. They have a scoring process that they use. Not all project identified will be best implemented by FMATS.

Potential issues suggested by the FAC included:

- Coordinate the development of the FMP with the latest FMATS Fairbanks Metro 2040 and with the strategies, projects, and policies being outlined in the State Rail Plan;
- Address Northern Rail Realignment issues in the FMP related to the North Pole Realignment;
- The general use zoning district has no freight loading area requirements (97% of the Borough) even though there are several big box stores in this zone with the potential need for loading requirements;
- The Steese Expressway is considered a transportation system bottleneck at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue/College Road intersections; while a re-design of these intersections is currently underway, the Steese Expressway has capacity expansion constraints, significant levels of traffic volumes, and several access points causing congestion and delay in the corridor;
- There is also a grade issue with the Steese Expressway/Farmers Loop intersection;
- Goldstream Road provides an alternate truck route that should be considered;
- Trucks often use Mitchell Expressway/Peger Road/Johansen Expressway to avoid the Johansen Expressway/Geist Road intersection; while this alternative route currently works well, future strategies in the FMP should be considered to address the use of this alternative route for trucks;
- Danby Street/Johansen Expressway (Aurora area) is a bottleneck in the transportation system and should be evaluated in the FMP;
- The Geist Road/University Avenue intersection is problematic;
- Southbound on the Steese Expressway at the South Cushman Street/Van Horn Road intersection is a bottleneck, with inappropriate use of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street for trucks;
- Project funding issues, needs, and possible restrictions exist and should be understood and addressed in the FMP;
- Air cargo levels are increasing at the airport, with the expectation that this growth in air cargo will continue to grow into the future and need to be addressed in the FMP;
- The Phillips Field Road at-grade location is unsafe and congested with crossing accidents common on both sides of the crossing and traffic congestion occurring along the road at this location;
- The Public-Private partnership for at-grade crossing location with Fort Wainwright currently includes shared facility issues and multiple operation issues and needs, including the need to address traffic volume increases (now and expected in the future) at the Badger Gate;
- A record of past decisions impacting the freight transportation system needs to be maintained, including maintaining consistent communication and involvement with the right set of public and private stakeholders; and
- There are several current at-grade rail/road conflict locations, causing safety, congestion, and emission issues throughout the region that should be quantified, addressed, potentially reduced in number, and identified for infrastructure improvements as part of the FMP; an example rail/road conflict location causing

negative transportation system impacts includes the Steese Expressway/Old Steese Expressway/Trainor Gate Road/Richardson Highway/University Avenue.

## 7. Goal and Objectives Brainstorming Exercise – Laurie Cummings, HDR

Laurie led an exercise designed to solicit feedback from FAC members for the development of FMP vision, goals, and objectives. The team is trying to determine what is best for Fairbanks; not develop a generic plan. What projects need to be done in Fairbanks to improve freight mobility? What is the vision for the future freight infrastructure be? What do attendees want to achieve over the next 20 years (goals)? Goals are broad, and objectives are quantifiable.

First, terms were defined to represent the vision, goals, and objectives of the FMP. Participants were then asked to think about the questions posed for vision, goals, and objectives and write responses (on 3x5 cards) designed to help identify the critical elements of each. Attendees were asked to write short (5-word) phrases that identify what they want freight infrastructure in Fairbanks to look like in 2035 and 2040. This exercise is meant to get the conversation started, not create a final list. These visions, goals, and objectives will be revisited at later meetings.

The FAC members were then asked to share their ideas in a large-group conversation. Each new idea offered to the group was then recorded on flip charts, as summarized below. The project team will document the FAC responses to develop draft vision, goal, and objective statements to support development of the FMP (note that the objectives will be documented with the FAC at a later time).

### Vision

#### What you would like the freight system to be like in 20 years?

- More efficient
- Robust
- Right-sized
- Sustainable
- Safe
- Proactive
- Informed
- Seamless integration
- Fewer intermodal conflicts
- Enhanced growth
- Adequate turning radii (intersections, access points)
- Free-flowing/unobstructed system
- Compactness between various key destinations and origins
- Coherence/compatibility with land uses
- Ease of mode switching
- Unobstructed
- Segregated passenger and freight systems
- Well signed wayfinding
- Segregated land uses (e.g., designated truck routes)

- Quick interface (i.e., reduce conflicts between uses)
- Enhancements of moving freight in and through the Fairbanks hub
- One-stop shop for all freight options
- Ongoing communication regarding freight movements and systems
- Keeping up with technology (“Leading Edge”; “State of the Practice”)
- More permanent vehicle classification counters
- Planning realistically
- Coordination for future needs
- Cost effective

Are there any conflicting statements? Do these sound like things that are desirable? It is important to reduce conflicts, be forward thinking, and coordinate planning efforts. Funding is an important factor.

### Goals

Setting goals help establish priorities for the community. Attendees were asked to provide five goals. Laurie reminded attendees that this is just the beginning and additional opportunities will be given for the FAC to develop goals.

### **What do you want to achieve for freight mobility over the next 20 years?**

- Reduced intermodal conflicts
- Maximize local entrepreneurial opportunities to participate in freight movement
- Use freight infrastructure to promote/support economic growth
- Provide safe, efficient, and economic freight delivery in/through Interior Alaska
- Reduce traffic impacts through different modes of traffic
- Find balance on short-/long-term goals and needs
- Reduce freight transit time to help reduce shipping costs
- Limiting freight system capacity will be expensive
- Modular freight movement is desired (e.g., Arctic Anvil operation; need to meet daily needs as well as special events)
- Build for future efficiencies
- Reduce emergency incidents and delays by creating redundant routes
- Maximize investments
- Maintain open dialogue (proactive instead of reactive)
- Improve signal timing to improve freight mobility and air quality

### Objectives

Objectives were not discussed in this meeting due to time constraints. They will be presented and discussed at a future FAC meeting.

### **8. Next Steps/ Next Meeting – Steve Decker, HDR**

Steve shared next steps. The project team will develop maps, data, and other materials for use in developing the FMP. Tasks to be undertaken by the project team between now and the next FAC meeting will include:

- Task 3 – Start the Data Collection and System Assessment and Literature Review



- Task 2 – Conduct the Stakeholder Interviews, prepare the website, and conduct the Public Opinion Survey
- Task 4 – Develop the FMP's Draft Visions, Goals, and Objectives

The next FAC meeting date is anticipated for April/May 2016. Attendees indicated they are pretty flexible on the timing of this second meeting. The project team will send out a proposed meeting date closer to the meeting date. Attendees asked that a map and other graphics be provided/available for the next meeting.

Laurie and Donna thanked the participants for attending and sharing their ideas.

#### **9. Public Comment Period**

No members of the public present.

#### **10. Adjournment**