

STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #1

SUMMARY

March 10, 2022, 3:00p.m. – 4:30p.m., via Teams

Meeting Objective

To reintroduce the project and technical stakeholders, discuss the project vision, review map studies and other data, and discuss draft purpose and need statement.

Attendees

Kelly Summers (DOT&PF)
Renee Whitesell (DOWL)
Kristen Hansen (DOWL)
Donna Robinson (DOWL)
Sam Klump (DOWL)
Rachel Steer (DOWL)
Morgan McCammon (DOWL)
Jovie Garcia (DOWL)
David Post (DOT&PF)
Allen Kemplen (DOT&PF)

Nina Horne (DOT&PF)
Douglas Campbell (DOT&PF)
Clint Adler (DOT&PF)
Andrea Jacuk (Cook Inlet Region Incorporated)
James Drayton (Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc.)
Joe Taylor (Lounsbury)
Camden Yehle (Meadow Lakes Community Council)
Bill Gamble (Big Lake Community Council)
Jeff Samuels (Alaska Travel Industry Association)
Jennifer Busch (Valley Transit)

Summary

DOT&PF Project Manager Kelly Summers welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

DOWL Project Manager Renee Whitesell provided project team introductions and acknowledged the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (StAC) members in attendance and reviewed the agenda outline. Jovie Garcia (Public Involvement) reviewed the StAC Charter.

Renee introduced the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) process, purpose of the PEL, significance of the Purpose and Need (P&N) Statement, review of preliminary schedule (including OH #1) and overview map of project area in consideration.

Environmental Lead Kristen Hansen provided an overview of baseline data/existing conditions (environmental baseline research).



Transportation Planner Sam Klump outlined land use changes in this area over time, provided an overview of the origin/destination study and system performance analysis – safety, mobility, volume and speeds, travel time reliability, and pavement condition.

Renee provided a brief overview of baseline population and traffic forecast. She referenced the Department of Labor (DOL) Historical Population and Growth Projections forecasts MSB growth at 1.7 percent annually to 2045. The DOL forecast will be used for the P&N informed by Mat-Su LRTP high growth areas.

All the baseline information helps inform the Study’s P&N. Renee explained What a P&N statement is, and its importance to the project. She provided an overview of emerging themes which form the P&N for this PEL study.

EMERGING THEMES: PURPOSE & NEED



Parks Highway Function:

Local, regional, and through trips all using Parks Highway through Wasilla.



Travel Time Reliability:

Delay experienced by all trips; significant delays for truck trips vs. comparable facilities.



Safety:

Fatal and serious injury crash rate well above targets and levels on comparable facilities.



Land Use:

Pace of land uptake for development increasing.



Multi-Modal Transportation:

Facilities for walking and bicycling deter use of these modes; access to transit can be challenging.



Economic Impact:

Travel time delay reduces supply chain reliability, impacts function of Wasilla urban core.



Delay:

Speeds reduce during peak travel times and add hours of delay to trips. As population and volumes grow, more hours of delay are likely.



Population increase in the Mat-Su:

Population has grown by 20% between 2010 and 2022.

Emerging Themes Discussion

The members were moved into two moderated breakout rooms facilitated by Donna Robinson (NEPA Specialist) and Kristen. The assigned team captain will report back to the group on the Emerging Themes:

- Do you agree or disagree with the emerging themes?
- Why/Why not?
- Are we missing anything, in terms on potential P&N for this project?



Breakout Room 1, Discussion:

- The map of showing 4(f) and 6(f) properties potentially discloses sites. She reminded the team that some of the historic sites are very culturally sensitive areas. Donna let her know that the team is following all regulations and that this is a very cursory review with mostly publicly available information. A National Historic Places Act evaluation will occur later when alternatives have been selected for evaluation.
- Improved bicycle and pedestrian connections are needed, as well as better maintenance for the facilities.
- Improve connectivity. The surrounding network of neighborhood and local streets needs improving so people are not using Parks Highway as a local street.
- Participants questioned the need for an alternative to the Parks Highway, and whether this entire study is based on an hour and a half of rush hour. One participant expressed a preference to upgrade the existing highway to function more as a highway and improve transit options. This could occur by improving back street connections and reducing the intersections with the Parks Highway.
- Consider not just building a bigger highway, but improving function so that Parks Highway is truly a highway
- Improve high speed transit options, particularly between Wasilla and Big Lake.
- Consider safety and connectivity for multimodal travel, particularly facilities for biking
- Safety is an issue with distracted drivers and interactions between vehicles and snowmachines/four-wheelers.
- Improve transit, including using rapid transit and providing more park and ride facilities.

Breakout Room 2, Discussion:

- Bypass Project: Cooper Landing is another bypass project; interest in corollaries/lessons learned that can be gleaned from this project (projects have differences, but good to look at themes).
- Traffic Over Time: Volumes have increased, traffic improvements are hugely helpful to ease traffic issues.
- Impacts to Businesses: Bypasses can impact businesses; but the existing conditions also impact businesses as travelers do not want to stop because traffic is so bad, it can take time to enter/exit corridor.
- Crashes: major issues over time.
- Maintenance: contributes to highway safety.
- Commercial development: space is limited along the main corridor commercial is likely to expand beyond the Parks Highway Corridor.
- Railroad corridor: constraint to widening existing highway.
- Infrastructure Act: potentially assist with funding highway (but may not be a significant infusion of funds).
- Additional Impacts: environmental costs/impacts of congestion need to be considered.



- Alternate financing methods: consider whether stakeholders might have an interest in alternative ways of financing development (i.e., land value recapture financing to constrain urban sprawl, and incentivize investments in areas that are near infrastructure investments already Transportation Research Board).

Renee captured the discussion, live in the presentation, and reviewed the StAC schedule of upcoming meetings. She concluded the meeting with closing comments and thanked the members for their participation. She reiterated the project contacts, project website and project email.

Action Items/Next Steps

Project team:

- Post meeting materials to project website.
- Post baseline conditions maps and memoranda to project website.
- Distribute online survey to committee members for additional comments on the emerging themes discussion.

Committee members:

- Provide any additional feedback using online survey.
- Participate in the Virtual Public Meeting #1 on March 29, 2022, and upcoming committee meetings.
- Monitor email for future project updates.

