



TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 3 MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 17, 2023, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m., via Teams

Attendees

- Clint Adler – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Project Manager
- Ben White – Department of Natural Resources
- Sue Goodlick – Department of Fish and Game
- Scott Thomas – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Erich Schaal – City of Wasilla
- Renee Whitesell – DOWL
- Rachel Steer – DOWL
- Jovie Garcia – DOWL
- Kristen Hansen – DOWL
- Kendal Ramage – DOWL
- Morgan McCammon – DOWL
- Joe Taylor – Lounsbury
- Kevin Jackson – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Doug Campbell – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Adam Bradway – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Brad Sworts – Matanuska-Susitna Borough
- Bob Charles – Knik Tribe
- Kristina Huling – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- James Sowerwine – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Isaac Kelsey – Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- Manny Eichholz – Department of Fish and Game

Meeting Objective

Review the alternative corridor routes recommended to progress to detailed alternative development. Discuss why these alternatives have been selected.

Outline the next steps for alternative development and evaluation to identify the recommended alternative(s) and wrapping up the PEL Study process.





Summary

Clint Adler, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Project Manager and Chief of Planning, opened the meeting, welcomed committee members, introduced the team, and shared an overview of the meeting agenda. Renee Whitesell, DOWL Project Manager, opened the presentation with the PEL Process update, reviewed the Purpose and Need Statement, and reminded Committee members about the Screening and Evaluation Process.

Renee and Joe Taylor, Lounsbury, then presented the recommended Preliminary Alternatives moving forward for detailed alternative development, provided route descriptions, and why these alternatives have been selected. Renee also shared the preliminary alternative routes screened out from further detailed analysis and welcomed discussion and feedback from the committee.

Kristen Hansen, DOWL, provided an update on the environmental process and an overview of the resources to complete the next screening and evaluation process.

Discussion and Feedback:

Scott Thomas, DOT&PF, asked if there is a process that allows the project team to combine routes under evaluation in the next screening phase? Instead of evaluating one color route, there may be some crossover between these where each provides greater benefit at different points.

Renee responded that the team is considering combining the dark blue, purple, and black dash routes and welcomed suggestions for other routes that may work in combination.

Scott referenced information he previously shared with Clint and DOWL about investment in the Parks Highway, particularly west of and leading into Wasilla. He suggested continuing the divided highway and frontage roads east of where it now merges. There may be variations on the alternatives that could be evaluated against the screening criteria.

Joe shared information where the project team has addressed the concept of a minimum bypass and how it could be constructed in phases. The project team is considering combinations of the orange and yellow routes, for example, that might be phased at Knik-Goose Bay Road. It could make sense to use one route on the eastern stage and another route on the western end as a different phase.

Sue Goodglick, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), asked what happens to the current Parks Highway (like the Old Seward Road/New Seward Road in Anchorage)? Are there plans to for an alternative corridor to prevent replicating the congestion on the Parks Highway as development increases?

Renee responded that the study team shared the Alternative Design Criteria document early in the process. It guides the alternatives development and refinement process through engineering. One





core criterion for the alternative corridor is identifying a controlled access corridor - a corridor where no direct access is provided to adjacent land uses and access is created at interchanges along the corridors. This is one of the ways to offset creating a copy of the existing conditions on the Parks Highway through Wasilla. Instead, creating a higher speed, controlled access facility focused on moving traffic through the study area to draw through traffic away from the existing Parks Highway. This would allow the Parks Highway to function as a local access facility and arterial road through the Wasilla urban core. Clint added that it would creating a new controlled access, high-speed facility to serve a different purpose.

Sue thanked the project team for the clarification of terms.

Bob Charles, Knik Tribe, suggested combining a greenfield route going one direction and another going the other way. He suggested using the Origin-Destination Study to determine which should go each way.

Renee clarified Bob's suggestion to turn the existing Parks Highway through Wasilla into one direction of travel and the alternative corridor into another direction of travel. Bob confirmed and suggested the other route to consider was the combined Purple, Dark Blue and Black-dash routes.

Renee shared that the project team had contemplated a two-way alternative corridor and have not considered an alternative as couplet alignment.

Joe shared the typical section slide that showed the proposed two lanes, like the Glenn Highway south of Wasilla, designed to be compatible with expansion. Now, the project team is considering a four-lane divided facility with two lanes in either direction strategically created to provide space in the median to add additional lanes in the future without having to widen the footprint.

Adam Bradway, DOT&PF, asked if it would potentially add cost to incorporate interchanges on two separate facilities rather than one.

Joe clarified that it would not necessarily add cost if the facilities could be brought together strategically at interchange locations to avoid replicating them. Depending on how far apart those alignments were, that may not be practical.

Brad Sworts, Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), asked would the State have to buy access control for the nearly the entire Parks Highway route if that were redesigned as a one-way road?

Renee responded that the concept could be considered further to determine if a one-way couplet option could be part of the detailed alternative development.

Clint added the project team needed to consider the difficulty of providing controlled access on both routes.

Bob requested the date when comments from the committee were due.



Renee said that comments were requested by Friday, June 16, 2023, and this date would be sent by email.

Renee concluded the meeting with final remarks, invited the committee members to attend Open House No. 2 on December 8, 2022, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. at the Wasilla Public Library, 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.
- Discuss the couplet concept further to determine whether it could be incorporated either as a full alignment or for sections of an alignment to minimize sitting impacts.

Committee members:

- Provide any additional feedback using online survey.
- Participate in the Open House No. 3 on May 25, 2023, and upcoming committee meetings.
- Monitor email for future project updates.

