

Submitted by: Assembly Member Volland
Prepared by: Assembly Legislative Services
For reading: August 8, 2023

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AR No. 2023-XX**

A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RECOMMENDING CHANGES TO THE DRAFT ALASKA STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP) FOR 2024-2027 TO BE FORWARDED TO THE ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS POLICY COMMITTEE (AMATS) AND SUBMITTED TO THE STATE OF ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES (DOT&PF) BEFORE THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD CONCLUDES ON SEPT. 3, 2023.

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak-Eagle River Areas; and

WHEREAS, decisions for the MPO are made through the AMATS Policy Committee; and

WHEREAS, two Assembly Members serve on the AMATS Policy Committee and represent the views of the Assembly on the committee, the Mayor also has a representative as well as Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (AK DOT&PF) Central Region and Department of Environmental Conservation's Deputy Commissioner representing the Air Quality Division; and

WHEREAS, the MPO adopts a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) which details the spending of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and other surface transportation federal funds on roads, trails, transit, rail, studies and projects involving transportation; and

WHEREAS, the AMATS TIP is only a portion of the State's Federally funded surface transportation program; and

WHEREAS, DOT&PF is the State funding agency to plan, develop, deliver and maintain the State's surface transportation system as a partner with FHWA to receive 90.5% federal funds with 9.5% state general funds used as required match; and

WHEREAS, the City of Anchorage is nearly 40% of Alaska's population, 75% of all Alaskans live on the Anchorage-connected road system, and Anchorage is the nexus to important state business and economic vitality via the Port of Alaska, Ted Stevens International Airport, and Alaska Railroad; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is the state's four-year program for surface transportation system preservation and development, which includes interstate, state and some local highways, bridges, ferries, rail and public transportation and covers all system improvements for which partial or full federal funding is approved and that are expected to take place during the four-year duration of the STIP; and

WHEREAS, the STIP is a fiscally constrained program that has a finite source of resources for programming, exclusive of one-time funds; and

WHEREAS, it is paramount that the State of Alaska follow the guidance of locally adopted policy and plans that seek to strengthen Anchorage's surface transportation system while also protecting quality of life in for residents, such as AMATS Complete Streets Policy, Anchorage Vision Zero Action Plan, Anchorage Climate Action Plan, 2040 Land Use Plan, and other publicly adopted plans that prioritize human health and quality of life over vehicle movement;

WHEREAS, the inclusion of this project in the STIP precludes other beneficial transportation projects from having funding and moving forward; and

WHEREAS, roadway maintenance funding is sparse, inconsistent, and creates challenges in plowing the existing roadway network; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular underpass would necessitate collector roads east of the Highway (Academy Drive and Vanguard Drive) and the Anchorage Assembly in past years voted against funding these collector roads with MOA funds; and

WHEREAS, the proposed vehicular underpass will divert business from the Abbott Town Center, working contrary to the pattern of the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*, which ranks the future 92nd Avenue corridor low on its list of infill and redevelopment transit supported corridors; and

WHEREAS, it is NEPA policy that "[a]lternative courses of action be evaluated and decisions be made in the best overall public interest based upon a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed transportation improvement," 23 C.F.R. § 711.105(c) (Federal Highway Administration regulations); and

WHEREAS, the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*, Goal 5, recognizes that that trails are utilitarian investments and are essential to support growth:

Maximizing all modes of travel, including street, sidewalk, transit, and trail connections, is critical to supporting successful growth. More frequent, predictable public transit service and extensions of the trails system should coincide with mixed- use centers targeted for growth. Transit and trails are critical to growth, while improving quality of life and mitigating road congestion (*Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan*, p 22); and

WHEREAS, the *Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2040* has a policy action (3-1) to investigate congestion management alternatives to roadway expansion projects and it needs to be applied here; and

WHEREAS, on August 23, 2022, the Anchorage Assembly passed and approved AR 2022-254(S), a resolution recommending changes to the TIP for 2023-2026, including the recommendation to delete the project (NHS0004) that contains the

construction of a vehicular underpass at 92nd Avenue/Scooter Avenue (part of NHS0004) and delete the Academy Drive/Vanguard Drive circulation improvements (RDY00013) in order to add a new project that mirrors Project NHS0004, but instead provides for a non-vehicular freeway crossing at 92nd Avenue and Scooter Drive, by a vote of 11-1; and

WHEREAS, the TIP for 2023-2026 was approved and adopted by the AMATS Policy Committee on August 25, 2022 by a vote of 3-2 with the two Assembly representatives being the dissenting votes; and

WHEREAS, the Seward Highway O'Malley to Dimond Reconstruction (STIP ID 30691) is expensive at a cost estimation of \$171,900,000 for 2023-2030, will increase maintenance costs of the highway, and is longer justified by population growth or travel demand. The future of Anchorage's transportation network should not fall victim to sunken-cost fallacies, particularly when the outcome of the project would be to remove well-loved soccer fields and direct more vehicular traffic through a low income neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, on February 21, 2023, the Anchorage Assembly unanimously approved AR 2023-54, a resolution calling for the AK DOT&PF and Alaska Division of the FHWA conduct a full, written, NEPA re-evaluation focusing on the accuracy, applicability, and necessity of the purpose and need section of the Environmental Assessment for the Seward Highway: Rabbit Creek Road to 36th Avenue project as well as to ensure compliance with the many new environmental, climate, and transportation planning and policy documents that are currently adopted; and

WHEREAS, AK DOT&PF Project Manager Huber submitted a memorandum to the Anchorage Assembly on February 21, 2023 stating that the department would conduct a NEPA EA re-evaluation of the project in Q2 of 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly, Anchorage Health Department, and MOA Department of Parks and Recreation jointly affirmed, via AR 2023-35, a commitment to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Active People, Healthy Nation Initiative" which supports Activity-Friendly Routes to Everyday Destinations, a strategy to help make it safe and easy to walk, bicycle, or wheelchair roll for people of all ages and abilities by improving the design of routes such as sidewalks, trails, bicycle lanes, and public transit to destinations such as grocery stores, schools, worksites, libraries, parks, or health care facilities

NOW THEREFORE THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES to adopt the following as official comments on the 2024-2027 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program:

1. The following changes should be included in the 2024-2027 STIP:

1. Delete the current project (STIP ID 30691) to reconstruct the Seward Highway between O'Malley Road and Dimond Blvd beyond the 2028 federal fiscal year

2. Add Complete Streets corridor studies of A and C Streets from 3rd Avenue to Tudor Road; and
 3. Add 5th Avenue Signalization as a funded project in the TIP if there are available funds or as a project listed in the “fourth” year of the TIP.
 4. The Safe Routes to Schools program should be allocated dedicated funding for the Anchorage School District, MOA Traffic Engineer, and MOA Planning Department to collaborate on planning efforts that seek to increase safety for vulnerable road users within school walking boundaries.
2. All CMAQ funds used within the Municipality to be directed towards true GHG reduction, to include mode-shift projects such as public transit, road-diets, complete streets, trail connection, landscaping, and commuter rail alternatives.
3. All DOT&PF projects within the Anchorage boundary, in addition to AMATS TIP projects, should follow community plans during planning and environmental projects, specifically the following projects listed in the 4-year STIP: PEL, x, y, z (i will scan the STIP for all those that are “DOT” projects that they argue are not beholden to AMATS guidance for scoping.)
4. ALL DOT&PF projects with the Anchorage boundary should include, as part of the fiscal constraint requirement for the STIP, the anticipated Maintenance and Operations Budget for proposed projects in the STIP and fully transparency regarding the financial viability of the system, that is mainly funded through State General funds, but is part of the agreement to receive capital funds from the federal government.
5. Any USDOT grants received, including active grants such as the 2022 Reconnecting Communities Grant, should follow Municipally adopted plans and include community-led scope development of the design through construction.
6. All DOT&PF projects within the Anchorage boundary with funding allocations over X should include 1% for art, prioritizing local artists and indigenous cultural interpretation as part of the place-making for Anchorage.
7. All DOT&PF projects within the Anchorage boundary above and beyond a pavement preservation project should include speed studies to prioritize safety and achieve Vision Zero goals.
8. All DOT&PF pavement preservation projects within the Anchorage boundary should include traffic studies to evaluate ROW reallocation to multi-modal corridors.

PASSED and APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this ___ day of August, 2022.

ATTEST:

Chair

Municipal Clerk

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