

Meeting Details

Purpose: Seward Glenn PEL Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3
Date: Wednesday, June 1, 2022
Time: 4:00 – 5:19pm AKT
Location: Conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Kelly Summers – DOT&PF	Rebecca Parker – Anchorage Senior Center
James Starzec – DOT&PF	Paula Pawlowski – Anchorage Senior Center
Doug Campbell – DOT&PF	John McPherson – HDR
Aaron Jongenelen – AMATS	Taylor Horne – HDR
Allen Kemplen – Fairview CC President	Laurie Cummings – HDR
Mikhail Siskoff – Airport Heights CC President	Josie Wilson – HDR
Silvia Villamedes – Downtown CC President	Jenny Merrill – HDR
Tiffany Santos – Fairview Community Center	

Summary

Josie welcomed everyone and thanked all attendees for joining the meeting.

Josie provided a safety moment on tips to stay safe in warm weather including, stay hydrated, use sunscreen, and check sunscreen expiration dates. Josie also reminded the group to be careful of vehicles while walking and biking outside.

Josie reminded everyone to hold questions and comments until the end. Josie went over the agenda and noted that the purpose of the meeting is to get feedback on technical document drafts Purpose & Need and Alternative Selection Criteria, and to get feedback about Public Meeting #2, held on May 25, 2022.

Josie mentioned that this meeting is being recorded for notetaking purposes and the minutes will be posted on the website. These actions are taken to ensure that the PEL Study processes remain transparent.

Allen asked about the summary report on the initial issues in study area. Josie responded the responses and summary are located on the website. Josie will show the CAC where this and other project documents are located on the website later in the meeting.

PEL Process Step 3

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Laurie and Taylor provided an abbreviated version of the PEL Process presentation from Public Meeting #2. See presentation on website.

Slide 3. Laurie discussed outcomes from the previous public comment period that lasted from January 24-February 28, 2022. The public submitted a total of 419 comments focused on the following themes:

- Non-Motorized
- Alternatives
- Other
- Environmental
- Environmental Justice
- Transportation
- Traffic Forecasting

Slide 4. Laurie mentioned the comments were added to a heat map. The darker the green indicates the higher concentration of comments received. The Fairview area in dark green is where the project team received many non-motorized comments.

Slide 5. Laurie discussed the origin destination study, which quantifies the amount and nature of observed travel in and through the study area in the representative time period of Fall 2019. The origin destination study looked at information from smartphone apps which is used to inform the development of planning alternatives in order to align the proposed alternatives to where people are coming from and going to. The map on the left shows the origin study analysis for the 5th Ave. corridor. The red dot shows the link the project team analyzed. Most of the traffic on 5th Ave. comes from Northeast Anchorage, Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Chugiak Eagle River, or the Mat-Su borough. The map on the right shows analysis on the Seward Corridor. Traffic here doesn't have the same concentrated pattern as it does on the Glenn Highway corridor. Traffic comes from a much broader area including East Anchorage, South Anchorage, Hillside, and Midtown.

Slide 7. Laurie discussed the traffic forecasting process, which compared what traffic is like in 2019 versus the traffic estimations for 2050. The map shows the anticipated growth over that 30-year period. Glenn Highway had the biggest growth, predicted to increase by about 10,000 vehicles per day over that 30-year period. The rest of the study area traffic is not predicted to increase as much.

Slides 8 and 9 explored why this forecast was different than previous studies.

Slide 8. Laurie discussed population forecast changes. In the forecasts prepared in 2006, population in the region was expected to grow to nearly 650,000 by 2040. That growth was predicted to be dramatically influenced by growth in the Mat-Su Borough. By 2013, the regional population was expected to be around 500,000. A Department of Labor 2020 forecast now predicts only 450,000 in the region in 2040, which is approximately 200,000 less than the 2006 forecast. This is due to several factors including the national recession of 2008-09 and recession in Alaska. Also, local transportation improvements and land use changes have

influenced trip patterns and have lowered predicted traffic levels in the study area. Some of the changes include:

- Improvements to the Lake Otis Parkway-Tudor Road intersection that removed a bottleneck at that intersection that previously caused more traffic to travel onto the Seward Highway.
- Completion of the Martin Luther King Boulevard and Dowling Road projects created an alternative to using the Glenn Highway to travel to and from south Anchorage.
- Tikhatnu Commons created a regional shopping destination, meaning shoppers from Chugiak-Eagle River and the MSB do not need to go downtown to the 5th Avenue Mall or locations on Dimond Boulevard.
- The MSB developed services like a new hospital and commercial retail opportunities that reduced the need to travel into Anchorage to obtain such services.

The result of all these factors is that considerably fewer trips are predicted to use the Seward and Glenn Highways as compared to past forecasts.

Slide 9. Laurie discussed that based on the lower population forecast, the lower traffic volumes are predicted to result in less congestion than previously anticipated. The map shows the 3:00-6:00PM peak period. Most of the roads in the study area are not predicted to have unacceptable levels of congestion, (Level of Service E and F displayed in pink and red on the map). We are starting to see some congestion on 5th Ave/Glenn Highway Corridor during 5:00-6:00PM by 2050.

Slide 10. Laurie discussed how the project team looked at conditions during the peak (worst) hour. The map shows more areas of congestion, especially along the 5th Ave. Glenn Highway corridor in red, as well as other roads including 6th Ave., 15th Ave. Ingra, Airport Heights and Bragaw start to see some congestion.

Slide 11. Laurie discussed the system performance report which summarizes the existing and desired transportation conditions of the study area. The project team analyzed a variety of travel modes, including automobile, public transportation, walking, and bicycling. Information presented in this memo will be used to support the study's purpose and need statement and alternative selection criteria. The memo examines the transportation system performance in terms of the nine elements recommended by FHWA. The report is available on the project website and the comment period is open until June 24. Laurie encouraged everyone to review the system performance report and submit comments.

Slide 12. Taylor provided an overview of the draft purpose and need statement. The project team combined the comments and feedback during the first phase with the data from background reports and models to craft a statement that encompasses the needs in the corridor. Taylor reminded everyone that this statement is still a draft that the project team is collecting feedback on and will then revise it if needed to make sure the project team is hitting the mark.

Slide 12. Taylor reviewed the draft purpose statement. "The purpose of the PEL study is to improve mobility, accessibility, and safety for people and goods traveling by all modes on or

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across the roadway system connecting the Seward Highway, the Glenn Highway, and the Port of Alaska. The intent is to:

1. Maintain the functionality of the National Highway System
2. Meet the local travel needs of residents who must safely travel across or along those roadways
3. Improve neighborhood connections.”

Slide 13. Taylor explained the needs statement categorizes the problems that need to be solved in the corridor. Taylor mentioned these needs are not listed in any order or hierarchy. The needs in the corridor fall into three categories:

1. Conflicting travel functions- serving competing regional and local travel functions on the highway network in the study area leads to conflicts that reduce mobility, safety, and accessibility for all users.
2. Safety- crashes for vehicles and people walking and bicycling are elevated at several study area intersections
3. Social Demands and Economic Development- current Street design on the Seward/Glenn corridor in the study area is inconsistent with the vision expressed in recently adopted development plans and is adversely affecting neighborhood redevelopment efforts, community cohesion, and quality of life.

Slide 14. Taylor reviewed an outline graphic of the PEL process. The project team has taken the identified issues and funneled them into a Purpose and Need Statement. That statement serves as the foundation for the Alternative Selection Criteria. The Alternative Selection Criteria are the ways used to measure the alternatives against each other to determine which of the proposed solutions do the best job of addressing the issues. The next phase is Design Criteria, which are the engineering aspects of how you build the solutions, i.e., sidewalks, roadways, widths etc. The next phase looks at creating about five different alternatives to meet the needs. Those Preliminary Alternatives will be evaluated against the criteria in a two-level screening process. After the Level 1 Screening, the project team will refine the alternatives that perform well by modifying the engineering and design. Then the Level 2 screening occurs with more quantitative measures. The Recommended Alternatives are the end result of this process. Taylor pointed out that the Red Dots with people on the graphic signify opportunities for public comment periods and CAC and other advisory committees to meet. We are currently in between Alternative Selection Criteria and Design Criteria.

Slide 15. Taylor discussed the Level 1 Evaluation Criteria which identify ways to measure how well an alternative meets the needs that were identified. Taylor reminded everyone that these are still draft and that the project team is collecting feedback from the CAC and others. The measures, outlined below are meant to evaluate the alternatives.

Safety

- Measure the number of crashes with the Build Condition compared to the No Action condition. Build means if you build the alternative, No-Action means if nothing is done between now and 2050.
- Measure the number of conflict points between vehicles and non-motorized users.

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- Measure the number of vehicle conflict points with the Build Condition compared to the No Action condition.

Conflicting Function

- Peak period (3:00-6:00PM) freight travel time
- Peak period travel time other users, meaning how long does it take to get between two points measured through the study area
- Miles of roadway in the study area that have a peak period volume-to-capacity ratio about 0.8, meaning how congested is the road or how many cars can the road handle. 1.0 means the road cannot handle any more cars. 0.8 means the road is 80% full and this is when congestion slows everything down.
- Peak period delay, meaning the delay it takes to get from one place to another.
- Miles of road with average peak period travel speed within 20% of design speed, meaning are you traveling at a speed close to the designed road speed.

Social Demands & Economics Development

- Consistency with Anchorage 2020, 2040 Land Use Plan, Fairview Neighborhood Plan, and other land use plans.
- Regional VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled)
- Regional VMT per capita (per person)
- Impacts to Section 4(f) resources, meaning parks and other protected or historic resources.

Slide 16. Taylor provided an update on the schedule. Currently the team is in Phase 3, moving into Phase 4 during this summer/fall. The project team is asking for input now regarding the Purpose and Need and Level Screening Criteria.

Slide 17. Taylor reminded CAC members the project team needs feedback on three draft documents, the Purpose and Need Statement, the System Performance Memo, and the Recommended Alternatives Selection Criteria Memo. The project team is also soliciting ideas for how to solve the identified problems.

Josie shared the project website and displayed new updates to the website including:

- The What's New section on the homepage includes links to the draft purpose and need statement, draft alternative selection criteria, draft system performance report, comments and responses from the previous comment period, and the recording from Public Meeting #2.
- The Project Library page includes all project related documents
- The Public Outreach page includes outreach activities and committees. Currently, it contains the recording from the latest public meeting, and a place to leave a comment. It also contains an infographic that summarizes the key takeaways from the comment matrix.

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- The Committees page also includes committee members and notes from previous CAC meetings.

Josie facilitated an activity on Mentimeter to collect feedback on the draft purpose and need statement, draft Level 1 evaluation criteria. The results are documented below.

Do you have any suggestions for the draft Purpose Statement?

- Yes-2 responses
- No-4 responses
- If yes, what wording would you suggest?
 - Include safety of pedestrian infrastructure
 - Restore the quality of life that the current highway has negatively impacted for the past 50 years
 - One unified community
 - Tourism as economic development
 - Economic development
- Discussion:
 - Allen commented on pedestrian infrastructure. How a person feels as they walk along a street is important. There is no separation on Gambell and Ingra- 4 lanes with a 4-ft sidewalk, and on Ingra there are large utility poles in the sidewalk. To not address this is a significant gap in study so far. Ingra- before the couplet, used to be residential street. Cars traveling 40-55 mph coming up hill. There are only two visual cues presented for people to slow down, 2 little signs, other than that - nothing. Physical design of that corridor is anti-pedestrian, anti-people, and anti-neighborhood. This needs to be addressed.
 - John responded to Allen that project team has tried to capture this issue in the need statement. The current roadway design is lacking in accommodating all the different needs.
 - Allen responded it's relevant to issue of environmental injustice. The only part of neighborhood affected by this bad design is ethnically diverse and low income.
 - John responded this issue is captured in the purpose and need statement as well.
 - Laurie added there is an HSIP project in process to remove the poles.
 - Allen responded there has been no action on that for 8 years.
 - Aaron Jongenelen commented that the HSIP project is a recent one. Construction funding is shown for Fiscal Year 2023 in the AMATS TIP.
 - Silvia commented the project is awesome for our community, but the whole city of Anchorage needs to buy in. How can we get other people involved outside of this core. If we have all the players around the table, then we'll have less problems.
 - Allen commented about recently attending a meeting of American Institute of Architects about reimagine downtown. One of the main components of revitalize downtown is the need to deal with traffic. If you want a vibrant area, attractive to people and tourists, it has to be safe. This study encompasses the downtown area, but we're not seeing the voices from the downtown area joining in this dialog.

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- Josie took the action to follow up with Silva afterwards about what additional efforts are being taken to include feedback from downtown stakeholders.

Do you have any suggestions for the draft Need Statement?

- Yes- 1 response
- No- 3 responses
- What wording would you suggest?
 - Noise/aesthetic relief
- Discussion
 - None

Level 1 Evaluation Criteria

- Yes- 2
- No- 4
- What wording would you suggest?
- Discussion
 - Allen would like to see more criteria that address non-motorized, suggests wording including person trips and moving people.
 - John responded to Allen that, as an example - on the last criteria, "social demands and economic development," regional VMT criteria isn't clear but reducing VMT is the goal. Creating less traffic on the road network would be improving the quality of travel for everyone. In the inconsistency of plans discussion, the needs in the specific plans are presented. The project team learned at the public meeting that the wording is unclear and more balance is needed in these measures. Team plans to revise some of the evaluation criteria. John acknowledged that the project team needs to do better at balancing the measures.
 - Mikhail commented that it seems like peak congestion is the main concern, but that timeframe is so limited. Putting peak congestion as a priority is like building a parking lot to accommodate Black Friday shoppers. On Black Friday the lot will be full, but every other day of the week it will be nearly empty. Peak congestion should not be given such priority when weighing other priorities. Silvia agreed that is a really good idea.

At 5:00PM Josie paused the discussion to allow for those with scheduling conflicts to jump off the call. John reminded the group that the same survey questions are on the website for the public to provide comments and encouraged them to provide their comments there.

Josie moved to the next agenda items a review of the Public Meeting #2. There were 65 people at Public Meeting #2, and she described the continuing outreach, including info kiosks. Josie asked for info kiosks location recommendations in addition to Carrs. Paula recommended hosting one at the Senior Center. Silvia recommended the Fifth Ave. Mall.

Final Comments

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Allen asked where to find the project team's consideration of the federally required planning factors. John responded they are in the purpose and need chapter and there is an evaluation of the criteria against those federal factors in the screening document.

Tiffany will send comments later after reading material again.

Paula commented that the senior center is surrounded by low-income senior housing and disability housing, there are 240 units. The neighborhood is not very walkable, particularly when the roads are plowed and the snow is moved onto the sidewalk, so there is nowhere to walk except in the middle of the road. There are many people with mobility issues and sometimes the senior center will help people with wheelchairs or walkers because the streets aren't plowed. There is a lot of foot activity and car activity and with Chester Creek Park at the end of the road, it's busier than people would think.

Allen asked if any type of noise assessment or monitoring was being done. John responded, yes, but on planning level, there is not monitoring proposed or noise modeling of alternatives at this time. The planning level is more screening level noise analysis, like looking at noise sensitive land uses within a screening distance of potential alternatives. The examination of those details are what is in the Level 2 screening, which would be done on a shorter list of alternatives, not initial list.

Allen asked will transit be addressed, including how productive the transit routes are? John responded, yes there is transit information in the system performance memo, including transition ridership generation in the study area.

Allen asked, will the system performance memo cover person trips? John responded, yes, the memo talks about bus riders, so yes.

Allen pointed out the difference between vehicle occupancy ratios versus transit. Transit is different because you have to walk or bike to a transit stop, and when you get off, you have to walk or bike to your destination. So, there is a linkage there between bus usage and the ability to get to bus stops. If you're just trying to factor in vehicle travel time reliability it's painting a false picture, because once a person gets off a bus, it could take them a significant amount of time depending on weather conditions. Pedestrian safety, mobility, and infrastructure are critical to mobility and accessibility in this geographical area.

Allen commented the Anchorage land use plan identifies the future land use along the corridor, along Gambell. It's going to be mixed use community development which means there will be more intra-zonal trips vs inter-zonal trips. That is relevant to the performance measures which are all about regional traffic, if land use in Anchorage is changing to create more mixed use, then there will be less trips moving from traffic analysis zone to traffic analysis zone, and more trips staying within a particular traffic analysis zone. This needs to be acknowledged as we refine the alternative screening criteria. John responded that could be a contributing factor to what Laurie is describing in traffic forecast. The traffic forecasts on the Glenn and Seward highways, compared to the early-mid 2000s are vastly different. There are a number of reasons for that, and this could be one of them, because the traffic modelers are attempting to model

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land use in the 2040 land use plan map. Josie and John took the action to follow up with Allen individually on additional ideas.

Josie concluded the meeting by thanking the CAC members for participating and providing great feedback. Josie reminded everyone that the comment period is open through June 24. All documents and the comment form can be found on the project website.

Final comments

Allen was surprised the project team scheduled the public meeting and got people to participate during this time of the year when the weather is nice.

Allen asked Josie to resend her email to the CAC members since it might have gone to spam.

Paula agreed with Allen, we all need to go outside.

Tiffany will send comments later on.

John thanked everyone for participating.

Action Items/Next Steps

Based on the committee's discussion, the following action items will be undertaken by the project team:

- Josie will take action to check if Mikhail's comments from Public Meeting #1 are in the comment log.
- Josie will take action to meet with Silvia offline regarding feedback from downtown community and hosting an info kiosk at the Fifth Ave. Mall.
- Josie will connect with Paula on hosting info kiosk at senior center.
- Josie and John will take action to follow up with Allen on additional comments.