

Meeting Details

Purpose: Seward Glenn PEL Agencies and Tribes (ATC) Committee Meeting #2
Date: Wednesday, June 15, 2022
Time: 2:00-3:00pm AKT
Location: Conducted Virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Kelly Summers – AK DOT&PF	Steve Ribuffo – Port of Alaska, Director
Douglas Campbell – AK DOT&PF	Emily Vullo – USACE
Bob Charles – Knik Tribal Council	John McPherson – HDR
Brian Lindamood – ARRC, Chief Engineer	Taylor Horne – HDR
Kristine Bunnell – MOA, Historic Preservation	Laurie Cummings – HDR
Liz Ortiz – AK DNR, SHPO	Josie Wilson – HDR
	Jenny Merrill – HDR

Summary

Kelly provided welcome remarks and thanked everyone for attending.

Kelly reminded attendees that the project is a joint endeavor between DOT&FP and AMATS.

Josie provided a safety moment on bear safety. Josie reminded attendees to wait to put garbage out until the morning of collection and be cautious of bird feeders.

Josie reviewed the agenda and reminded everyone that the meeting will be recorded, and minutes will be added to the website as part of the PEL communications process.

Josie reviewed that the purpose of today's meeting is to collect feedback from the committee subject matter experts on the draft documents prepared by the project team.

Josie conducted a roll call.

Taylor and Laurie shared a presentation on project updates. See presentation on website.

Slide 3. Taylor provided a project schedule update on progress to date and noted the project team is currently near the end of study step three.

Slide 4. Taylor provided a summary of the results from the first public comment period that lasted from January 24 – February 23, 2022. Non-motorized issues were the subject of the majority of comments received.

Slide 5. Taylor displayed a heat map of the non-motorized issues, highlighting the density of comments about non-motorized issues which were focused in the Gambell Ingra couplet near 15th Avenue.

Slide 6. Laurie summarized the origin and destination study that quantifies the number and reason of trips people make in the study area. The study used information from smartphone apps and will be used to help develop alternatives.

Slide 8. Laurie reviewed travel model results. Laurie reviewed maps that represent traffic growth from 2019 to 2050.

Slide 9. Laurie reviewed population forecast changes that have occurred over time and the impact that has on predicted traffic growth. The 2006 forecast predicted large population growth versus 2020 forecast, which predicts less population growth.

Slide 10 & 11. Laurie displayed maps that present 2050 projected peak period congestion during a three-hour and one-hour basis. During the one-hour basis the project area is predicted to experience more congestion.

Slide 12. Laurie summarized the draft system performance report. The Federal Highway Administration recommends reviewing nine topical areas when drafting a purpose and need statement. The project team conducted analysis on the conditions relative to the 9 areas and the findings were used to inform the draft purpose and need statement. The draft system performance report is available on the project website.

Slide 13. Taylor summarized where the project team is in the PEL process. Taylor highlighted opportunities for public comment, including advisory group meetings and public comment periods. The project is currently in the second public comment period.

Slide 14 & 15. Taylor reviewed the draft purpose and need statement.

Slide 16. Taylor reviewed the draft level one evaluation criteria. Based on initial comments during the comment period, the project team is aware that the current draft does not effectively measure non-motorized users and conflicting functions.

Slide 17. Taylor reviewed the next steps in the project schedule. Public comment period number two ends June 24, 2022. After the project team develops and screens the alternatives, the project team will host another public meeting and advisory meetings in the fall 2022 to review draft results.

Slide 18. Taylor reminded attendees that the project team is seeking input on the draft purpose and need statement, draft system performance memo, and draft recommended alternatives selection criteria memo. The project team is also seeking recommendations for solving transportation problems in the corridor.

Josie reviewed the different options to submit a comment, including the online public comment form available on the website.

Josie displayed website updates including the Project Library tab that contains all project related documents, the Public Outreach tab that contains all meeting recordings and materials, and the Committees page that contains all committee meeting information.

John commented that the PEL study documents prepared by the project team carry through future NEPA phases. The project team hopes the purpose and need statement will be finalized in the planning phase and would be able to be used in the NEPA phase. It is similar for alternatives, alternatives that are screened out in the planning phase are not planned to get resurrected in the NEPA phase. He reminded attendees that it is important for agencies to know that the PEL study can be considered a precursor to a NEPA document.

Josie facilitated a discussion on comments on the draft documents. See Questions and Comments section below.

Kelly provided closing comments and expressed gratitude to committee members for their participation. The meeting ended at 2:57pm AKT.

Questions and Comments

Emily commented, USACE can utilize the project's purpose and need statement, other documentation, and the NEPA document that result from the PEL study.

Emily commented on the alternative screening process, page 16 section 1.2, the least environmentally damaging alternative might cost more.

Liz indicated that the DNR office currently does not have any comments. DNR will provide comments later in the process when alternatives are identified.

Steve commented that the purpose and need statement is perfectly clear. Steve does not want the project to get bogged down in the minor grammar edits of these documents. Steve will also share thoughts in the future as a member of the freight advisory committee.

John responded to Steve that there is information about the port in the draft system performance memo and purpose and need memo. John encouraged Steve to review sections about the port for accuracy.

Brian commented that the ARRC will have comments later in the process when alternatives are identified. ARRC is more interested in port connectivity.

Bob commented that the Knik Tribal Council will review and provide comments by June 24. The Knik Tribal Council comments will focus on mitigation of storm water, regular runoff, and drainage surrounding the new construction.

John responded to Bob that environmental factors covering items like water quality will be discussed in the second phase of screening.

John commented that the project team presented to the freight advisory committee, but that the project team may need additional input on freight connection issues and ideas for railroad or port improvements. The PEL is a sub-area study, and the railroad and access to port are an

important part of the project area. The project team is seeking ideas or alternatives to improve transportation access to those areas.

Steve commented that inviting the Alaska Trucking Association will be important.

Josie responded that the Alaska Trucking Association is a member on another committee.

Brian commented that ARRC is working with AMATS on a study to de-clog the main gate going in and out of the port and the connection between C Street and Whitney Road; that connection has several issues. Whitney road is undersized for the current amount of truck traffic. It is very difficult for drivers to make a left turn onto 5th Avenue off of C Street. Drivers often re-route to Reeve Boulevard. That entire route is not ideal. ARRC is also working on intermodal facility improvements. There are several sub-projects that Brian and Steve could discuss with the project team.

John responded to Brian, there is an all-day workshop in the project scope to discuss alternatives and that might be a good time to discuss sub-projects and include inter-modal folks in the discussion.

Action Items/Next Steps

- Josie will follow up with the new Merrill Field representative for future engagement with the Agency & Tribal Committee. Steve Ribuffo informed that the team that the prior representative, Ralph Gibbs, is no longer with Merrill Field.
- The project team will follow up with Brian on ARRC sub-area ARRC plans.
- The project team will incorporate ARRC improvement ideas and inter-modal access in the workshop agenda.