

Meeting Details

Purpose: Seward Glenn PEL Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Date: Wednesday, June 15, 2022
Time: 9:00-10:00am AKT
Location: Conducted Virtually via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Kelly Summers – AK DOT&PF	Drielle Welch – MOA, Office of Emergency Management (attended on behalf of Amanda Loach)
Doug Campbell – AK DOT&PF	John McPherson – HDR
Scott Thomas – AK DOT&PF	Taylor Horne – HDR
Todd Vanhove – AK DOT&PF	Laurie Cummings – HDR
Rich Pratt – AK DOT&PF	Josie Wilson – HDR
Kevin Jackson – AK DOT&PF	Jenny Merrill – HDR
Bradly Coy - MOA, Traffic Engineer	

Summary

Kelly provided welcome remarks and thanked everyone for attending.

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

Josie provided a safety moment reminding everyone to travel safely.

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

Josie stated 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 for 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 had on predicted traffic growth. The 2006 forecast predicted large population growth versus the 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 project 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 facilitated a discussion on comments on the draft documents. See Questions and Comments sections below.

Josie provided closing comments and expressed gratitude to committee members for their participation. The meeting ended at 10:05am AKT.

Questions and Comments

Bradly commented that based on the public feedback regarding non-motorized, if the project focuses on Fairview just being a through route for traffic, people will not want to live there. Traffic demand will grow along 5th Avenue because no one would want to live in Fairview. Fairview should be a place where people want to live, has connections, and has non-motorized functionality. How much would those features draw people to that area and reduce travel demands along the outskirts? Those are the questions the model isn't set up to answer well. Can the project do right by Fairview homeowners and business owners, but also balance the regional needs. What is the environment that we are creating, what will it be like, not just as through routes, but standing in the neighborhood, how would you feel in the area as a non-motorized user?

John responded that when the national highway system was originally built, it emphasized the through-movement, Laurie's presentation covered travel forecasts in early 2000's, which were up to 90-100K vehicles a day. The metropolitan transportation plan was needing to deal with those higher volumes; however, volumes are now not predicted to be nearly as high. It is important for leaders in Anchorage transportation to know these forecast numbers are changing, so the needs are changing too. Previously, addressing regional congestion was a top need, but now we are seeing changing conditions, which means there are different opportunities and needs that the study is evaluating.

Scott commented in the chat, "(set) Purpose looks good - covers a lot of needs. I think there are 2 sets of performance measures to jointly gauge alternatives which do all things well - Regional and Local transportation measures. We cannot get to alternatives with only one set of criteria. The purpose statement reveals that."

Scott commented that the draft purpose covers the dilemma that Bradley pointed out, through-road versus local impact. The Seward-Glenn Highway is about serving regional need, and if the highway does not serve regional need, then people will go to other roads and impact other parts of the community. The project must focus on the function, because by not serving the function we are causing this problem, change the problem from Fairview to Muldoon or somewhere else. The project team has captured the competing purposes that do not work well together with one solution or one performance criteria. There are no problems with the purpose statement, but the performance criteria are limited because the traditional regional measures are vehicular oriented. Designing the solution to meet local needs would require more signals and more crossings, which changes the performance for all users. The project team should provide more performance criteria for local uses than what is currently listed.

John responded that regarding the criteria, it is important for committee members to read the entire memo. On the third set of criteria regarding consistency with the plans, the plans point out the conflict between regional travel and through movement versus the neighborhood needs. The plans address how to make the corridor work better for both regional and local needs, which is a big challenge. What the project team means by regional VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) is that the PEL would measure reducing VMT in the study area. The project team missed the target on the conflicting functions, the criteria are currently too roadway focused, the project team needs to figure out other measures that address local functions or reduce conflicts.

Scott responded that regarding the conflicting functions criteria, the project team will need to have separate measures for local and regional use. The result will likely be that one road does not do everything well. The area will need a network with connections that are separated. The project area needs a network road with connections. The project can potentially achieve all performance measures, but it will require more than one design on one road. The project needs to design two roads, two projects for one corridor. This is most likely a regional highway grade separated from local roads – in order to meet 2 different goals and 2 sets of performance criteria.

Bradly commented that the project should include new metrics that address land use and transportation accessibility, meaning how easy it is to get from one land use to another. Mobility measures traffic and delays but mobility does not tell you where the person is driving from. Accessibility would include how long does it take to get from a house to a business and what are the conflicts and challenges. The project needs an iteration between land use and transportation. For example, when looking at peak period travel time, does that mean how long it takes to get from one end of the corridor to the other, or does it mean how long it takes people to get from their home to a business or work?

Laurie responded that the intention for those travel times were not just the corridor, they address key origins and destinations, for example, freight travel time would be measured from the port to the industrial reserves, or travel time from downtown to U-Med.

Bradly recommended having a discussion on motor vehicle needs and through traffic versus impact on neighborhood. Is there a way to differentiate the results and impact for Fairview residents? How would metrics and alternatives measure the impact of Fairview residents? A highway creates induced demand, meaning if we build a system to have a through-highway focus, then way more people in the valley are going to use it. Can we account for travel time and future modeling with different alternatives?

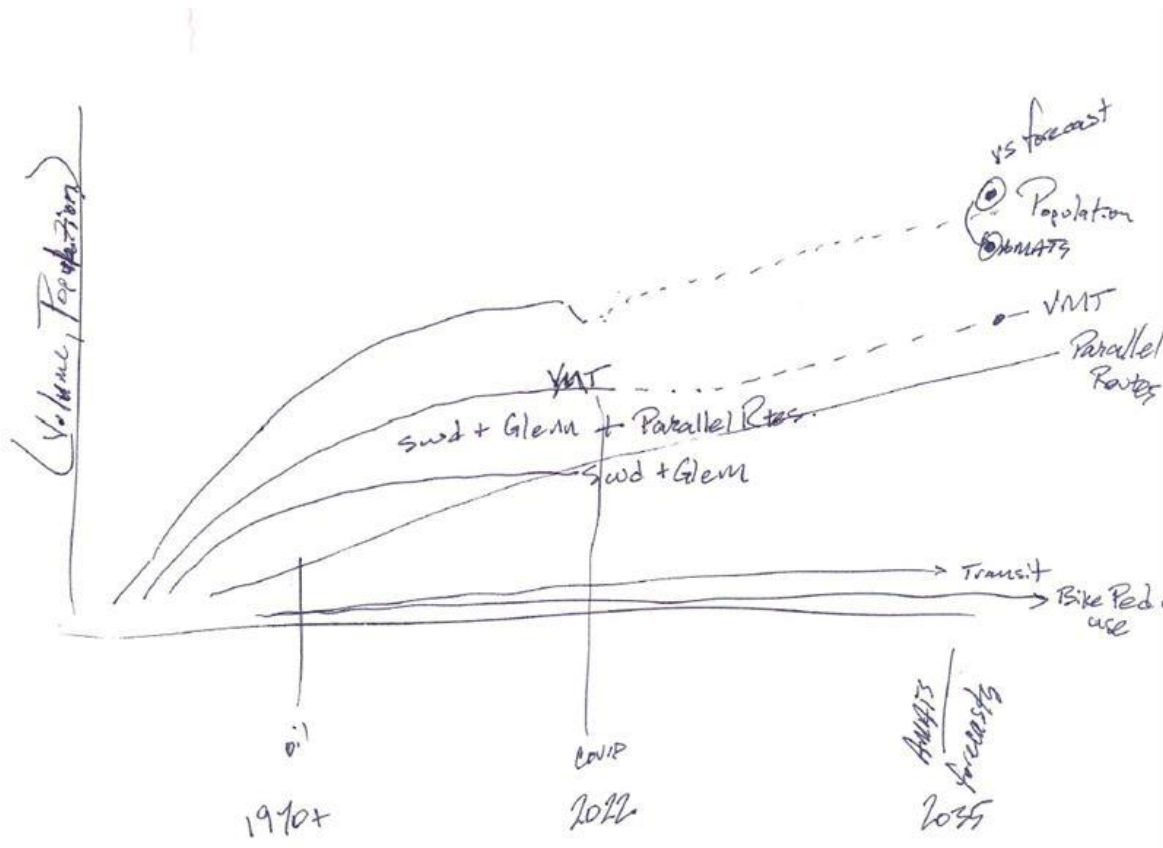
John responded that the study area is a sub-area plan, the project will address improvements between the two highways, but also to the port. The alternatives are likely to be system alternatives with improvements throughout the study area.

Laurie responded that multi-modal effects will be addressed in the level two criteria. The project team is currently in level one which addresses the purpose and need. Level two will address those finer details.

John added that the project team will address impacts to the neighborhood in the second screening.

Drielle commented that the biggest concern for MOA is ingress and egress access for emergency vehicles.

Scott commented in the chat, "Forecasting demand - needs, uses - causes us to look forward with a boom-and-bust bias. Want to confirm AMATS volumes and AMATS land use/population, and then make a historical lookback to temper that forecast based on our past economy. Scott included the graphic below:



Scott commented in the chat, "Ideas for grey "conflicting functions" are still percolating: concur w John M. Desire to be quantitative for local needs - may add Xing delay, Xing gaps, Conflicting speeds faced, Local People Miles of Travel (PMT) to/from O-D points within the Subarea vs VMT Regionally (PMT is lower with more direct arterial crossings) We measure alternatives that improve Xings, reduce speeds, and reduce PMT by being more direct travel vs lots of internal distance required."

Scott commented in the chat, "These measures for local subarea - if quantified - could show designs which reduce conflict and improve social and economic development."

Bradly commented in the chat, "My thoughts on priorities: #1 Great places, #2 Safe travel, #3 Efficient movement."

John reminded attendees that the committee members will receive draft documents of the origin destination study and travel model study via email soon. The project team welcomes feedback from the committee members on those documents.

Scott commented that there could be a lot of bridges in these alternatives. Scott is interested in advice the project team will need in the future from Rich on bridge costs, bridge heights, depth, and footprints.

Todd commented that these are DOT facilities and an AMATS funded project. Anything proposed that negatively impacts traffic will not be favored by DOT unless the municipality or AMATS are willing to fund the projects. It will be difficult for DOT to move forward with a project that will negatively impact the DOT's mission.

Action Items/Next Steps

- Committee members to review three draft documents and provide comments.
 - Draft Purpose and Need:
sewardglennmobility.com/documents/B13-5_Seward-Glenn_PEL_Purpose_and_Need_Draft_20220524.pdf
 - Draft Recommended Alternative Selection Criteria:
[Seward-Glenn PEL Draft Recommended Alternative Selection Criteria \(sewardglennmobility.com\)](https://sewardglennmobility.com/documents/B13-3_Seward-Glenn_PEL_System_Performance_Memo_Draft_20220524.pdf)
 - Draft System Performance Memo:
sewardglennmobility.com/documents/B13_3_Seward-Glenn_PEL_System_Performance_Memo_Draft_20220524.pdf
- Project team to follow up with committee members after comments are submitted.