



## **Seward to Glenn Connection Planning and Environmental Linkages Study**

### **Community Advisory Committee Meeting Notes**

#### **Meeting Details**

Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Time: 11:00am – 12:00pm

Location: HDR Office

#### **Attendees**

Allen Kemplen, Fairview Community Council  
Aleza Dobson, Bike Anchorage  
Jennifer Osput, Alaska Regional Hospital  
SJ Klein, Fairview Business Association  
Lindsey Hajduk, NeighborWorks

Mikhail Siskoff, Airport Heights Community Council  
Galen Jones, DOT&PF  
Amy Burnett, HDR  
Laurie Cummings, HDR  
Alice Horazdovsky, HDR

#### **Summary**

Galen welcomed the meeting attendees, and each attendee introduced themselves, noting which organization they represent and one interesting fact about themselves.

- Allen Kemplen
  - President of the Fairview Community Council
  - He lives in Fairview.
- Aleza Dobson
  - Bike Anchorage
  - She's been with Bike Anchorage for about 6 months, lives in Fairview, and participates in winter bicycling in Edmonton.
- Jennifer Osput
  - Alaska Regional Hospital
  - Hank, who is the hospital's Vice President of Operations, will also be involved with the Committee moving forward.
- SJ Klein
  - Vice President of the Fairview Business Association
  - He owns AK Sprouts and helped make the PEL Study happen, as he pushed the topic at many AMATS Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings.
- Lindsey Hajduk
  - Alaska NeighborWorks
  - This is her first CAC Meeting, she is also involved with the grant effort, and her organization owns property in every impacted neighborhood.
- Mikhail Siskoff
  - Airport Heights Community Council

- He's lived in Fairview for 10 years and is an urbanist, which means that he wants more people living in cities, so he supports more urban housing of all types.

Amy added that there are many new people on the committee, and the information shared gives great content to reviving the committee. She added that the goal of the committee meeting is to get your feedback on each alternative. All comments will be looked at affect the designs. While we are taking notes today, we do encourage you to submit comments to us via email, phone, direct mail, or the Online Open House.

Galen gave an overview of the PEL Study and the overall design approach used for each alternative. He noted that the study area includes Anchorage's interstate highway network and port connections. He also informed attendees that the proposed purpose is to improve mobility, accessibility, safety, and livability for people and goods traveling on or across the roadway system connecting the Seward Highway, Glenn Highway, and Port of Alaska by all modes (including people on foot, bicycles, and buses) while improving community cohesion. The intent is to maintain the functionality of the National Highway System while meeting the local travel needs of residents who live, play, and work in the area and must safely travel across or along those roadways; and to improve neighborhood connections and quality of life and accommodate adopted plans as practicable.

Also, a balanced design approach was taken for each alternative. The team incorporated the following items in each design:

- Improve local travel, livability, and economic development
- Improve nonmotorized travel and livability
- Improve freight movement, reduce conflicts, and improve safety
- Reduce travel conflicts and improve safety
- Improve regional travel
- Be consistent with adopted plans like the MTP2050, the Anchorage Land Use Plan Map, and the Fairview Adopted Plans

Although we tried to accomplish each of these, we do know that some are included in the alternatives better than others. Edith added that we need your feedback to help prevent recreating what is happening in Fairview in another area. Galen added that the project performed a base conditions traffic analysis, and the goal of this project is not to solve congestion (i.e., adding lanes), since that is not an issue.

Galen reminded attendees that the PEL Study Report will provide a detailed recommendation of how the Purpose and Need can be accomplished. The team is excited about the work that's being done and the amount of public feedback we're getting. We will need to keep the feedback coming to ensure that the right project is advanced into the PEL Study Report.



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#### **Regional Roadway Examples**

Regional roadway examples were shared, and it was noted that they represent potential solutions that can be incorporated in the alternatives.

The at-grade example is for when we don't want to expand outward for a highway and not add more right-of-way (ROW). The lanes will be added inside of the noted example graphic.

A depressed roadway will have walks and go through a tighter urban area (i.e., Fairview). The expansion on a depressed roadway is to the middle.

A viaduct will be an elevated highway and applies only to Alternative D. It will not go through neighborhoods.

#### **Local Roadway Examples**

These can be done once the regional and local traffic is separated.

A main street will have on-street parking and bike lanes and will be within the existing 60-foot ROW. A Woonerf is designed as a place for vehicles to travel at low speeds and have parking areas established. It protects nonmotorized users. An example of a Woonerf design in Anchorage is F Street. A Complete Street is designed to support all modes of travel including motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists.

#### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Study**

Galen noted that 37 intersections were studied in the Fairview neighborhood. The numbers in the blue dots represent pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle counts, and the numbers in the red dots represent pedestrian and bicycle counts. The counts were done using digital cameras, and the data was collected during 2 weekdays and 1 weekend day between 6:00am and 9:00pm while schools were in session and prior to the winter season. This data helps the team understand where pedestrians are and where mid-block crossings are taking place. This report is online and open for your feedback. Lindsey asked how this data informed the development of the alternatives and wanted to know what the busiest pedestrian area was. SJ then asked if a freeway is necessary. Galen responded that right now the team does not know where the non-motorized improvements need to be since modeling hasn't been done, public feedback hasn't been looked at, and the screening analysis hasn't happened.

#### **Alternative A**

Galen gave an overview of the alternative and noted that the alternatives all have a Gambell Main Street, which would be designed for two-way bidirectional travel. Ingra Street would have a road diet and a trail connection.

Allen inquired if the design has only bridges and no caps. Galen responded yes, there are no caps in the current design. Lindsey asked if caps were considered. Galen responded that none of the designs

preclude caps from being added to sections of the freeway but encouraged her to submit formal comments on this. He noted that while caps are expensive, they do provide greenspace. Edith added that caps are DOT&PF ROW, so certain structures can't be built there. Lindsey noted that the team needs to keep in mind that there are many cul-de-sacs in Fairview that limit connecting neighborhoods. She added that although a highway cap option seems expensive it's still worth exploring so we can gain knowledge of its limitations and financial constraints.

Alan added that the Federal Highway Administration does not preclude building on top of caps. The process is complicated, but it can be done. In the lower 48, vertical structures have been built on caps. Edith responded that while caps do have benefits, they also come with restrictions. Galen concluded that some of the freeway alternatives do limit non-motorized travel and agreed that a cap could provide a nice place for non-motorized traveling.

Lindsay asked how the current alternative designs will impact things like housing and what the long-range planning potential for the number of impacted properties will be. She encouraged the team to think about healing the corridor when creating the designs. Allen added that he hopes the state has moved on from the approach taken in the late 1950s and early 1960s for urban areas. Galen responded that back then, there was not a lot of public involvement, and Allen is correct that the impacts were tremendous. He asked for the attendees to submit their feedback on a successful way to reconcile relocating properties for the purpose of connecting the community.

#### **Alternative B**

The motorized aspects of this alternative connect Ingra and 5th Avenue. The non-motorized aspects contain trail connections. The ones noted in red on the map are part of MTP2050.

#### **Alternative AB1**

The motorized aspects avoid impacts on 5th Avenue, make Gambell Street a Main Street, and allow for a regional trail connection and a Woonerf on Hyder Street. The non-motorized aspects contain a connection of Chester Creek and Ship Creek Trail.

#### **Alternative AB2**

The motorized aspects utilize vacant land used by the Merrill Field runway safety area. This design reduces impacts to 5th Avenue.

#### **Alternative C1**

The motorized aspects include a bypass, get regional traffic out of Fairview, use public lands between communities, and make a Gambell Street a Main Street, which would be designed for two-way bidirectional travel; and Ingra Street would also be designed for two-way bidirectional travel with a center turn lane.

The non-motorized aspects include a Woonerf on Hyder to connect Chester and Ship Creek trails.

Allan noted that 15th Avenue and Bragaw Street are east-west arterial streets. He asked where DOT&PF has the ROW to develop a freeway. Also, if one is developed, where does the arterial traffic go? Galen responded that in Alternative C1, the traffic will be on the freeway for quarter mile and will then jump off, which is not ideal, although it does keep 15th Avenue intact since its east and west connection is important. Allen asked if the freeway is south of 15th Avenue. Galen responded that all homes south of 15th Avenue will be impacted, although this is not yet finalized since it would be depressed.

Mikhail commented that there is a high water table at Sitka Street. Edith responded that the details of the depressed areas are not finalized. Mikhail asked when will the next public feedback opportunity will be. Galen responded that these designs are the first stab the team took at accomplishing the Purpose and Need. There are many opportunities to get involved as the study continues. For example, we will host a public meeting to get your feedback after we have the screened/refined designs.

Michaela added that when looking at Merrill Field, there is a lot of parking for the airport, and a highway could traverse this area. Has this idea been explored as an option? Galen responded that this is a good comment and someone else has asked us this question. He asked him to submit this as a formal comment. Alan noted that some of Merrill Field is built over an old landfill. Galen noted that the area near Merrill Field where an interchange is shown is a newer part of the airport property and would have fewer issues, although it would require property acquisition.

Edith commented that when looking at building close to Merrill Field, the team needs to take it into account the air quality. Galen agreed and informed the attendees that when they met with Merrill Field's executive team, the executive team relayed that they need every inch of their property for airport activities. SJ commented that since Merrill Field has a 5-year plan, the team should look at it to see how alternatives could impact the airport's future plans and goals. Galen thanked SJ for his comment and agreed that if more studies are needed, they'll be incorporated within the PEL.

#### **Alternative C2**

Galen gave an overview of Alternative C2, and there were no comments from meeting attendees.

#### **Alternative D**

Galen gave an overview of Alternative D, and there were no comments from meeting attendees.

#### **General Discussion**

Allen asked if the width of the teal line on the map reflects the size of the existing ROW. Galen responded that the ROW is 60 feet, and the schematic is not to scale. He added that 150 feet would be needed to construct six lanes. After modeling, the team discovered that only four lanes are needed to accommodate the traffic. Please keep in mind that we will know more after traffic modeling is done.

Lindsay asked what the speed for the roads will be. Galen responded that the posted speed will be 55mpg and the roads will be designed for 60-mph speeds. Galen added that some of the curves can be looked at during the refinement process to see what the impacts would be for changing their angles.

Allan asked how many parcels would be affected by the alternatives. Galen responded that ROW data hasn't yet been determined. Allen responded that some of the design features could make areas in the corridor unpleasant places to live and decrease property values if they have high ROW acquisitions.

Lindsey added that wherever the highway is put, excluding Alternative D, it will create a barrier on the edge of the Fairview neighborhood. Modeling will be needed to calculate all of the unknown components. We are learning that there are lots of improvements that go into improving these highways, but keep in mind that some of them still cut off Fairview.

Galen added that the team is also looking and evaluating a No Action Alternative to determine what will it look like if nothing is changed on Ingra and Gamble Streets. The team is also designing the alternatives to accommodate the data forecasted for 2050. Lindsay responded that she is excited the team is looking into the future and adjusting designs to accommodate the forecasted growth.

Galen added that the study is utilizing the data within the MTP2050. SJ asked if that data will be available before the alternatives go through the screening process. Galen responded that a traffic analysis report will be a part of the screening process. SJ asked if the public will be able to see the traffic count data. Galen let him know that the plan is to publish it in the PEL Study Report since the demand will directly affect the design of the alternatives. A Base Conditions Analysis will also be published.

Allen asked if a passenger commuter rail from the valley will be implemented. Edith responded that we have a meeting with the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), and we will discuss this topic with them. Please keep in mind that if a commuter rail is implemented, ARRC would need to accommodate the increase of traffic on their rail lines. Lindsay noted that the MTP2050 did not include a commuter rail, so it's not something that the community is currently anticipating. Edith noted that the team will talk to the ARRC about this idea. Please keep in mind that if more people are brought here from the valley, additional transit infrastructure (e.g., buses, ride share) will need to be put in place to get people from the rail depot to their final destinations (e.g., work, school). Allen noted that this idea should be considered since the time spent on a train by passengers could be used as productive and efficient time.