

Seward to Glenn Connection Planning and Environmental Linkages Study

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Details

Date: Friday, March 8, 2024

Time: 11:00am – 12:00pm

Location: HDR Office

Attendees

Brad Coy, MOA Traffic Engineer

Erik Hilsinger, DOT&PF Cultural Resources Specialist

Craig Lyon, MOA Transportation Planning Director

Leslie Daugherty, DOT&PF Chief Bridge Engineer

Ben White, DOT&PF Central Region Chief of Planning

Galen Jones, DOT&PF

Amy Burnett, HDR

John McPherson, HDR

Alice Horazdovsky, HDR

Summary

Galen welcomed the meeting attendees, and each attendee introduced themselves, noting which agency they represent.

PEL Study Overview, Design Approach, and Alternatives Discussion

John asked the attendees what their feedback is on trucks getting from point A to point B using Dowling Road, Elmore Road, Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue, and Boniface Parkway. With this, there is no need to deal with making Dowling Road and Martin Luther King, Jr., Avenue business roads. He explained that he's asking this because the idea was proposed at a recent meeting with the Alaska Railroad Corporation. He feels that this route doesn't solve the issue of people getting to Downtown, Midtown, or anywhere adjacent to the City Center area. He added that here are different zones within the study area. John explained that many people think that we want to connect highways. If the route noted above is used, it could be workable, but a large influx of people from the northeast and southern parts of Anchorage would still need to get to Downtown via Midtown. The current National Highway System would not help them get to these areas, so they would be using the same surface streets. We also would like to get your feedback on how the above route separates regional and industrial traffic.

Brad responded that there is a way for people to get from south Anchorage to north Anchorage by using Dowling Road, Elmore Road, and Boniface Parkway. It's a possibility that they aren't aware of the route. The project team does need to keep in mind that if the AMATS comments reflect that they don't like the freeway alternatives, the team needs to prove that they are thinking about other options to accommodate the traffic.

John responded that the trip Brad is describing would be less than 20% of the total trips taken. Brad acknowledges the percentage and notes that even though the area they are talking about is not within the study area, the team needs to find a way to communicate the problem and address the issue in the report. Galen agreed and noted that the team will do their best to look into finding better options for

people to use. Brad encouraged him to investigate extra data collection methods to back up their recommendations. This will help ensure that the answers do not seem like excuses. John added that Brad's question could be something that the MTP should accommodate. Galen commented that we need to look at the description of the Seward to Glenn Connection Planning and Environmental Linkages (SG PEL) Study in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Craig read the description of the study that's in the TIP, and it's not updated to address that the port is being analyzed within this study. He recommended that the study should develop messaging around this topic.

Balanced Design Approach

John gave an overview of the slide.

Brad commented that two of the bullets would not be addressed by the AMATS requirements.

Referenced bullets:

- *Improve local travel, livability, and economic development*
- *Reduce travel conflicts and improve safety*

The SG PEL Study team needs to keep this in mind if you are going to have an alternative that is not going to have a free-flow connection. John noted that an alternative does incorporate all the designs in the MTP2050. It will be described in the report as a base condition. There will also be a No Action Alternative that will be analyzed. John added that when looking at the slide, the bold titles note the general idea, and the bullets are examples of how the ideas can be incorporated into each alternative.

Brad added that the study should minimize impacts that regional traffic would have on neighborhoods. John responded that the team has tried to separate the traffic functions, although the MTP does not separate them. An MTP2050 Alternative will be evaluated so the data can be compared.

Brad asked how much regional traffic will be affected. Galen responded that while the study will serve regional traffic, it will be to the benefit of local traffic. John added that DOT&PF is executing this SG PEL Study because congestion is currently not an issue. Brad commented that he likes the thought of changing the language to reflect the messaging of reducing impacts of regional travel on the neighborhoods. Galen responded that is in our current messaging, but we can do a better job of communicating it. We want people to know that the study will be for the benefit of regional traffic.

Local Roadway Examples

A Main Street will improve pedestrian access. A Woonerf is in the MTP2050 and is oriented to non-motorized travel where cars travel at slower speeds and the road has various uses (e.g., bike lanes, restaurant seating). A Complete Street is designed to support all modes of travel (i.e., walking, biking, and motorized travel).



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Regional Roadway Examples

An at-grade road is completely on the surface, a depressed road is below the surface, and a viaduct is a long bridge.

Alternative A

Leslie commented that the current port access bridge recently had a seismic study done. The current bridge is vulnerable to seismic damage. For example, the part on the hillside is subject to liquefaction. The DOT&PF Bridge Group looks forward to an alignment that would allow them to work on the existing bridge.

Alternative B

John commented that the Alaska Trucking Association did not favor the at-grade crossing in this design.

Alternative AB1 & AB2

John and Galen gave an overview of the alternatives, and no comments or questions were submitted by Committee Members.

Alternative C1

John and Galen gave an overview of the alternative, and no comments or questions were submitted by Committee Members.

Alternative C2

Craig commented that when you go through a park, the dedicated Parkland zoning will need to be removed. That is done via a vote by the citizens of Anchorage. Amy responded that rezoning would need to be done for all impacts. For example, the piles and pillars of a viaduct will take away some of the park area.

Leslie commented that curved bridges are more costly. Galen responded that the SG PEL Study team will work with her to develop price estimates for bridges.

Alternative D

John and Galen gave an overview of the alternative, and Galen noted that this design will provide new trail connections.

Discussion and Feedback

Brad asked if the team had an idea of what the cost of each alternative will be. Galen responded that price estimating will be done in the refinement process. The team will analyze right-of-way and environmental impacts, score each alternative, and then collect feedback on each refined alternative via

a variety of public engagement opportunities (i.e., public meeting, workshop, small group meetings, and info kiosks). Galen added that during the refining process, the team will eliminate some alternatives.

Brad asked what the interim alternative is. Galen responded that it has line work similar to Alternative D, but with a three-lane road diet. Galen added that modeling will be done on all of the alternative designs.

Brad asked that if lane road diets are added, will there still be room for bikes. Galen responded that there will be bike lanes in summer that will convert to snow storage in the winter. Brad commented that unless the posted road speeds are dropped to 25mph, then the bike lanes won't be safe or usable.

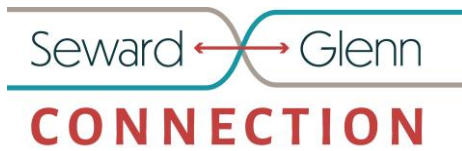
Brad asked what the SG PEL Study team's thoughts are on the MTP alternative. If you do recommend it, would you call it Alternative E so that is shown at on the same level as the other alternatives? He wanted to make sure that it will get the same treatment as the other alternatives. John responded that the Technical Memo stated that the SG PEL Study will look at the No Action Alternative, the MTP2050 Alternative, and Alternatives A–D. John added that if the MTP2050 has a map, it would be great if it was sent to us to be used during the refinement process. Brad asked if the rest of the alternatives will include the MTP2050 projects. John responded yes, the MTP2050 details will be in the background of all alternatives. The MTP2050 projects will be modeled. Brad commented that if the SG PEL Study team notices any bottlenecks in the MTP2050 recommendations, please think through the specifics that may not have been fully figured out in the MTP2050 options. John responded that the team would present the results and take the submitted feedback to improve the designs during the refinement process. Presumably, the MTP2050 will work fine since it's been reviewed by many committees.

Brad asked if the SG PEL Study team had any questions for the meeting attendees.

John asked for them to please let the SG PEL Study team know if they see any improvements or tweaks to reduce costs and/or decrease impacts. We would love to benefit from the knowledge that each of you has. Brad commented that he prefers the designs that do not have a depressed freeway through Fairview (e.g., Alternatives C and D). If Fairview has a freeway going through it, they will still need to create solutions with undetermined/unallocated funding. John responded that with the study, we can identify the corridor, see the results, and then move forward into an environmental analysis of to see which of the phased projects can be started. It is up to DOT&PF and the statewide environmental offices to determine what they can afford.

Brad added that the team should be aware that the Anchorage Assembly is drafting an ordinance to prohibit U-turns to be made on red lights in the central traffic district. This would include portions of Gambell Street from 9th Avenue to 3rd Avenue. This topic may be on the next Assembly meeting's agenda. Also, the Downtown streets are currently in an engineering study. The team should be aware that non-motorized travel has been prioritized in the Downtown area. John responded that feels a bit misguided since the AMATS letter implied that the team should be looking at highway connections.

Craig commented that the SG PEL Study team should not only be looking at highway connections but also including them in their analysis. Brad noted that when you look at the alternatives right now, it looks like all the designs are highways. Maybe the MTP2050 and No Action Alternatives should be messaged



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differently so they don't feel like second-class alternatives. Amy responded and agreed that this is a communication issue, and we will work on a solution for this.

Brad also commented that it would be great to have a bird's eye graphical view of the designs. This would give people an opportunity to see them conceptually and understand what they would look like. John agreed and noted that this idea is being considered. The team will model, look at the impacts, screen, and then develop the renderings.

Brad commented that the team should look at which alternatives make a long-term positive impact to Fairview.