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Transportation Solutions (AMATS)

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Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the
ANCHORAGE BOWL AND CHUGIAK-EAGLE

Guiding Principles



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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the principles that will guide development of Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions' (AMATS) 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the Anchorage Bowl, Chugiak, and Eagle River.

AMATS is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) that oversees planning and programming of the Federal Highway Trust Funds dollars designated for the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). The MTP is the primary tool AMATS uses to plan for MOA's long-range transportation needs and recommend solutions based on anticipated funding availability over a minimum 20-year horizon.

Since federal funding is involved, the MTP must comply with current requirements of 23 CFR 450, Planning Assistance Standards, Subpart C – Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming. Additionally, the MTP needs to reflect adopted local plans with compatible recommendations.

The following guiding principles incorporate these federal and local parameters.

PRINCIPLES BASED ON FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

FHWA Planning Regulations

The 2050 MTP must comply with the applicable metropolitan planning and programming requirements described in 23 CFR 450, Subpart C regarding 2050 MTP development and content.

MTP Update Requirement – AMATS must review and update the MTP at least every four years in air quality maintenance areas to avoid a lapse in the MTP Air Quality Conformity Determination. This requires effective and timely coordination with stakeholders and the public to meaningfully incorporate feedback while meeting federal deadlines.

Planning Horizon – the 2050 MTP must encompass a minimum 20-year planning horizon.

Planning Factors – the 2050 MTP will address the following ten planning factors:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;

- Promote efficient system management and operation;
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance travel and tourism.

National Goals – Congress has established seven national Federal-aid Highway Program performance goals in 23 USC 150(b) that the 2050 MTP will incorporate:

- **Safety** – To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.
- **Infrastructure Condition** – To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
- **Congestion Reduction** – To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.
- **System Reliability** – To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
- **Freight Movement and Economic Vitality** – To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
- **Environmental Sustainability** – To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Reduced Project Delivery Delays** – To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

Transportation Modeling – the 2050 MTP must project transportation demand for persons and goods on existing and proposed transportation facilities for the planning horizon. The AMATS Travel Demand Model will be updated as a separate but concurrent effort with MTP development. The updated model will confirm the level of need for projects identified in the 2040 MTP and inform any additional projects required to meet projected transportation needs by 2050. This will be one of many tools used to develop the 2050 MTP.

Performance-Based Approach – 2050 MTP recommendations and project decisions will be determined based on the goals, objectives, and performance measures and targets established by the MPO to address federal performance standards.

Environmental Justice – The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) environmental justice screening and mapping tool, EJSCREEN, will be used to ensure a comprehensive approach when determining whether MTP recommendations would have disproportionate adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

EPA Regulations

The 2050 MTP will follow Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations stated in 40 CFR 93, Subpart A Conformity to State or Federal Implementation Plans of Transportation Plans, Programs, and Projects.

Air Quality Conformity – The EPA designated the Anchorage Bowl as a limited maintenance area for carbon monoxide (CO) and Eagle River as a limited maintenance area for particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM₁₀). While air quality modeling is no longer required to estimate emissions, AMATS will prepare design concept and scope descriptions of all existing and proposed facilities for air quality conformity determinations. The 2050 Plan will include discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities.

Fiscal Constraint – All recommended projects and programs in the 2050 MTP must be matched with reasonably anticipated funding. Unconstructed projects listed in the 2040 MTP may be nominated and re-evaluated for consistency with 2050 MTP goals and objectives, local and state planning documents, funding availability and restrictions, etc.

23 CFR 450.324(f)(11) specifies the required elements and processes for an MTP’s financial plan. Financial plan elements include estimated costs and reasonably expected revenue sources, additional funding strategies, and transportation control measures for air-quality non-attainment and maintenance areas. Anticipated funding is determined using historical trends and specific appropriations. Funding amounts, source eligibility, and timing must be considered when matching costs with revenues over the planning horizon.

Aside from the federal requirement, fiscal constraint has the primary benefit of making the MTP more implementable. A key change to better maintain fiscal constraint in the 2050 MTP is to account for the full range of project costs over their useful life (e.g. higher snow maintenance costs following new road construction require increasing the maintenance budget to cover those costs).

PRINCIPLES BASED ON ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF AMATS COMMITTEES

Policy Committee (PC)

The PC has final authority to approve the MTP and supplemental materials. The PC provides overall direction and guidance and will address stakeholder and public input when making decisions. Key approvals during MTP development include:

- Public Involvement Plan
- Guiding Principles
- Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures and Targets
- Financial Plan
- Project Scoring Criteria

- Recommended Projects and Strategies
- Air Quality Conformity Determination
- Full MTP Draft

2050 MTP development will include review and incorporation of the AMATS Resolution 2020-001.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC provides technical direction and guidance to help the PC make more informed decisions.

AMATS has three additional advisory committees that bring suggestions to the Policy Committee through the Technical Advisory Committee.

Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

The CAC provides community comments and views on the metropolitan planning process.

FREIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FAC)

The FAC serves as an information resource on freight issues and concerns.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BPAC)

The BPAC serves as an information resource on bicycle and pedestrian issues and concerns.

Municipality of Anchorage Assembly

While the Assembly does not have authority to approve the MTP or its components, they are a valuable resource in determining public sentiment. The Assembly will have the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft MTP and hold a public hearing to solicit public comments.

PRINCIPLES BASED ON LOCAL PLANS

Plans developed for the Municipality of Anchorage or its sub-areas were used to guide 2040 MTP development. Several local plans have been adopted since the 2040 MTP, which the 2050 MTP needs to be compatible with. These include:

- AMATS Spenard Corridor Plan (2021)
- Transit on the Move Transit Plan (2020)
- AMATS Non-Motorized Plan (2021)

These plans will help refine 2050 MTP goals and objectives and influence what projects are included in the MTP. They serve as sources of strategies or project recommendations that will be scored and ranked during 2050 MTP development. They also provide a broader context to inform decision making, such as the land use and climate context.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations– The goals and objectives described in the 2040 MTP are based on community values expressed in local adopted plans.

Land Use – an effective MTP understands the link between transportation and land use decisions. The Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan provides the necessary context.

Climate and Transportation – the Anchorage Climate Action Plan (2019) is an important document that identifies the link between transportation and climate change. The plan discusses how Anchorage will improve resiliency to climate change and contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This plan will inform how the 2050 MTP should approach scoring criteria and project recommendations.

Public Participation

Public Participation is central to MTP development. In addition to fulfilling federal planning requirements, effective public involvement improves decision making and ensures the MTP more closely fits public needs and values. Development of the 2050 MTP will follow public involvement guidelines described in AMATS' most current Public Participation Plan at the time the various tasks occur. Additionally, online collaboration will be a key feature throughout MTP 2050 development, to help protect public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to federal time constraints, some comments were not addressed during 2040 MTP development; these public comments will be carried forward from the 2040 MTP Comment Response Summary for review and incorporation into the 2050 MTP, as appropriate. The current schedule reserves significantly more time to meaningfully incorporate public feedback into the 2050 MTP.

Equity

The 2050 MTP will incorporate equity throughout its development. Both the process and final products should equitably prioritize the needs of the MPO population, regardless of their preferred mode of transportation. This can be achieved through the development of the goals and objectives, project criteria, project selection, and by ensuring that public participation activities account for the barriers to participation that vulnerable populations regularly face. The American Planning Association provides resources regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion best practices.

PRINCIPLES BASED ON DATA SOURCES

Travel demand model runs and recommendations will incorporate socioeconomic, land-use, and TAZ data. Socioeconomic data sources will include the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADOLWD) and the U.S. Census, if the 2020 data are available at the time of data collection tasks.

2019 will be the base year for transportation projections. 2020 data are considered less reliable as an indicator of future travel demand due to COVID-19's short-term effects on travel.

2021 will be the base fiscal year for financial projections. This is anticipated to be the most current financial data available when the financial plan is developed.

VISION FOR 2050

Since the 2050 MTP is the primary tool AMATS uses to plan for the MPO's long-range transportation needs, the community's vision for the transportation network serves as a key guiding principle. The following vision statement describes what Anchorage, Chugiak, and Eagle River aspire to by 2050:

Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River are vibrant winter communities with an adaptable & efficient multi-modal transportation network that is equitable, safe, accessible, and reliable, which supports a sustainable economy, enhances and protects the natural and built environment, and fosters healthy, connected neighborhoods.