



Agency Meeting Notes

08/19/09

Subject: Participating Agency Meeting	
Client: Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	
Project: Highway to Highway (H2H)	Project No: 80510
Meeting Date: August 19, 2009, 9:00am-11:00am	In Attendance: See Below
Notes by: Terry McConnell	

Attendees:

Cindy	Heil	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Will	Frost	Alaska Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pamela	Stantorf	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Bruce	Carr	Alaska Railroad Corporation
Jim	Childers	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Jerry	Ruehle	Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Jennifer	Curtis	Environmental Protection Agency
Gabriel	Mahns	Federal Aviation Administration
Mike	Vanderhoof	Federal Highway Administration
Carma	Reed	Housing and Urban Development
Andrew	Niemiec	Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority
Dale	Paulson	Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority
John	Tolley	Municipality of Anchorage
Brad	Dunker	Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation
Glen	Yankus	National Park Service
Genevieve	Holubik	US Air Force/ Elmendorf Air Force Base
Vince	Izzo	HDR
Julianne	Hanson	HDR
Terry	McConnell	HDR
John	McPherson	HDR
Leslie	Robbins	HDR

Welcome and Introductions

Jerry R. welcomed everyone and asked for introductions around the room. He then gave a brief introduction to the project for those who had not attended previous meetings. We are in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the lead agency, and Federal Transit Authority (FTA) as a co-lead agency. The Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are cooperating agencies.

Jim C. then gave a project update. November 10, 2008 was the last agency meeting, so a lot has been accomplished since then.

- The H2H project office has been remodeled and we have positioned staff here full time.
- Purpose and Need has been identified. It provides a framework for alternatives development, which is the current phase.
- Public meetings were held in May 2009 showing a long list of alternatives, including single modes and multi-modal alternatives. We are still in the process of defining those, and will end up with a range of reasonable alternatives.
- Purpose and Need drives the screening process. The Purpose and Need Statement drives the criteria. The first screening criterion for this project is traffic congestion.
- We anticipate initial screening (Purpose and Need factors) by the end of the year, and then we will look at critical impacts. We hope to have reasonable alternatives identified by March/April 2010.
- Field work for Cultural Resources is going on now. Field work for noise and wetlands begins next week.

A copy of the FHWA approved draft Purpose and Need and screening process memo was provided to the agencies. Formal comments on the P&N and screening criteria were requested by September 21, 2009. Jim described the screening process. The first screening will look at congestion. We will use the travel model to generate demand on connecting arterials. Each alternative will be screened as to how they relate to the congestion issue. The alternatives will start out broad and be refined in more detail as additional screening criteria (neighborhood connectivity, safety, intermodal connections, etc.) are applied. Jim said we will be developing growth forecasts for population and jobs out to 2035. This model will likely drive the next update of the Anchorage Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Bruce Carr (ARRC) said they could have a demonstration project by January. He expressed concern that transit alternatives never solve the problem of freight movement congestion. John M. said we want to include railroad forecasts in our model.

Jim C. said there is a lot of interest in an alternative that is a combination of land use policies and transit. A Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) workshop is scheduled for September 3, and will include Planning and Zoning, and AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

The estimated schedule for the EIS has been extended due mainly to QA/QC review.

- Draft EIS – start April 2010
- Draft EIS out for public comment – summer 2011
- Potential ROD – June 2012

Mike V. asked Jim to explain the screening process in more depth. Elements of stand-alone alternatives can be carried forward that would otherwise be screened out. We will have a full range of corridor alternatives, with an A and B transit option for each one. For instance, on a transit alternative, A would continue existing transit trends, and B would include an enhanced transit strategy (express bus, bus rapid transit, light rail).

Genevieve Holubik (EAFB) commented that none of the graphics in the screening process memo or Purpose and Need statement (that was distributed at the meeting) include the military bases. She also said she didn't see federal/state employee transit subsidy on the

list of incentives to encourage transit use. Genevieve said approximately \$126 a month is available to every federal employee under the government incentive program. She said 7100 people travel to and from the base daily, many of them civilian employees. There is little choice to exit the base anywhere but the Glenn Highway. This project will have an impact on the base(s). She said she has made this comment before but still does not see it illustrated on the project material. EAFB is the state's largest single employer and yet there is no transit system that allows employees that choice. John M. commented that the travel model does include trips to and from the bases. Carma Reed (HUD) agreed the bases are key destinations. She said HUD is in a memorandum of agreement with DOT and EPA that includes sustainable initiatives, which emphasizes integrated solutions for neighborhood connectivity. She said the partnership is looking at how transportation and housing projects can work together. Carma said stand alone options are not realistic. John M. said to make transit effective, supplemental strategies are needed. Employer subsidies could be part of that strategy. There are currently 18 vans driving in from the valley carrying 216 people a day, with a waiting list of people wanting to participate. By 2010 the bases will be combined into one base, Elmendorf/Richardson. Buses are needed from the two transit centers to the base. John T. will talk with Jody K. about that need.

Mike V. said the team is aware that demand outstrips supply. Some of the problem areas may end up being separate projects if they don't intersect this project. If we do roadway improvements to major access roads, we will accommodate the traffic on those roads. This is one project, to solve this problem, not an overall transit plan for the Anchorage bowl. Jerry R. suggested a one-on-one meeting be held with Genevieve H. to discuss her concerns further.

Someone asked for further clarification of the preliminary corridor map handout. The corridors depicted on the map are based on 8 lanes of freeway in 2027. The numbers shown on the map depict how much existing traffic would be drawn to that particular corridor. Jim said the routes are those that were proposed during the scoping process.

Julianne H. then gave an overview of the public involvement activities since the last agency meeting:

- EOC and CHUAC have convened since the last agency meeting. We are now planning meetings for both in September
- We are using a variety of outreach tools to reach the public
 - Fairview Community Council (8 meetings)
 - Airport Heights Community Council
 - Community events
 - Presentations to the Wasilla Chamber of Commerce and Palmer Chamber of Commerce
 - Media interest
 - 2 rounds of Public Meetings
 - All day workshop held in April
 - Project Office open – starting to get public interest
 - Kiosk at Loussac Library
 - Comments from the public
 - Want the project to move faster
 - Concern over community impacts

- Environmental Justice (EJ)
 - Parks and trails
 - Alternative land use/transit public participation
- Upcoming outreach opportunities
 - During alternatives development
 - During writing of EIS to develop community impact assessment
 - Develop a clear picture of EJ impacts
 - 2008-2009 school information shows new language groups growing
 - Sudanese now exceeds 5%
 - Hmong continues to grow

Vince I. is the Environmental Task Lead. He gave an update of current activity.

- Section 106 Cultural and Historic Resources activities are in progress. We are documenting buildings and structures. We meet with SHPO every two weeks and are in contact with the tribes. More than 2000 structures have been inventoried so far. We are developing a context paper which will assist in determining which may be eligible for the National Register or Section 4(f).
- Socioeconomic methodology is being developed. Community impact assessment will be part of that methodology. We have a sign-up sheet at the meeting today for agency representatives interested in receiving copies of the methodology papers. We will meet with a variety of groups to determine the socio-economic effects of the project.
 - How will it affect the tax base of Anchorage?
 - What kind of benefits could it have?
 - How will the project impact EJ issues for low income and minority populations
- Wetlands and Fish and Wildlife Habitat methodology papers have been developed. We met with the resource agencies last week to present information on the field work this summer/fall which will establish baseline information to determine potential impacts and mitigation.
- Hazardous Materials - an extensive list of existing information has been collected. A windshield survey is planned in the near term.
- Noise – we will do a full noise analysis. Baseline noise monitoring starts next week. Data collected will be used to calibrate the model to determine impacts. Jennifer C. asked if data will be collected in both summer and winter. Vince responded that noise and traffic levels are highest in the summer so that data will be used as the baseline. John M. added there are baseline standards that will be followed including summer collection on dry pavement, etc.
- Air Quality – starting the methodology development and looking at existing information. Bruce C. asked if we will look at the carbon footprint and greenhouse gases. Vince responded we will look at greenhouse gases and mobile source air toxics or MSATS. Cindy H. (ADEC) said they are in the process of coordinating a new EPA emissions model called “Moves.” It is a very complex model that will be required by 2011, and could affect conformity of the LRTP, programs and projects in the Anchorage Maintenance Area. Cindy said ADEC is trying to work with EPA to make local adjustments to the model. She said the model does not take into account cold starts and plug-ins. She said it’s a big issue in Fairbanks as Fairbanks uses Mobile 6. The problem is getting community specific input into the model.

- ADEC has a consultant evaluating the model (Sierra Research). It has provided detailed comments on the model to EPA. Jerry R. and Mike V. are aware of “Moves” and understand its potential to complicate the conformity process. Cindy wanted to make sure we were aware of this issue as it really has the potential to delay the project’s schedule. She suggested that we get all parties together soon to discuss the issue. Cindy also said ADEC is working on a regional haze map. She also indicated that the new State conformity regulations were out for public review.
- Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) properties. The goal will be to avoid such properties. A list of potential publicly-owned recreation areas, parks, and significant historic properties will be developed and researched in the next few months. Recommendations with respect to applicability will be provided to FHWA for a formal determination. Glen Y. (NPS) said he would like to go along on any field trips related to this work.
 - Stormwater – Jerry R. said he will be meeting with William Ashton (ADEC) as well as EPA and the MOA to look at related issues early on. Brad D. (MOA Parks) expressed concern about flood hazards. Vince responded that 100-year flood floodplain analysis will be done. Brad also said a watershed task force will be interested at fish passage, replacing culverts, and storm water. Jerry R. indicated that we should try and schedule a presentation for one of the watershed task forces regularly scheduled meets in the near future. He also indicated that someone on the project team should also try and attend these meetings on a regular basis. They meet the first Thursday of each month at City Hall Mayor’s Conference Room from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

John T. said there are neighborhood concerns about vibration. Mike V. said that comes up during discussion about transit alternatives, often related to rail. Vince said he has done measurements for vibration on other projects that he can give to Mike. The analysis generally shows the vibration from rubber tires is generally limited to the road. We can develop a methodology to address the concern. Visual impact will also be assessed. Mike said there was some 1984 guidance from FHWA. Viewshed will be evaluated in the Community Impact Assessment.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.