



# CHUAC Meeting Notes

## 07/30/08

Subject: CHUAC Meeting	
Client: Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	
Project: Highway to Highway	Project No: 80510
Meeting Date: July 30, 2008, 6:00pm-8:00pm	In Attendance: See Sign In Sheet
Notes by: Erin Begier	

### Welcome – Jim Childers, ADOT&PF

Introduced Mike Vanderhoof (Federal Highway Administration), John Tolley (Municipality of Anchorage) and Louise Smart (CDR Associates)

Introductions of the Citizen & Highway Users Advisory Committee members and the rest of the project team were led by Louise Smart

### What exactly is Highway to Highway (H2H)?

John McPherson, of HDR, gave an overview of the project through a PowerPoint presentation. The goal of the project is to improve the connection between the Glenn and Seward Highways. The existing National Highway System (NHS) in this area has problems. The concept of an improved connection has been around for approximately 40 years.

#### Project schedule:

- Project initiation - March – June 2008
- Scoping - July - October 2008
- Alternatives - Fall 2008 – 2009
- Draft EIS - Spring 2009-2010
- Final EIS - July-December 2010

#### Who is Involved

- FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) – Lead Federal Agency
- DOT&PF (Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities) – Joint Lead Agency, Project Manager and Owner
- MOA (Municipality of Anchorage) – Cooperating Agency
- HDR (HDR Alaska, Inc.) – Consultants
- EOC (Executive Oversight Committee)
  - Established by MOA and DOT&PF
  - Mayor, DOT&PF Central Region Director, and FHWA Division Administrator
  - Provide policy guidance and coordination
- CHUAC (Citizen & Highway Users Advisory Committee)
  - Advisory body
  - Established by MOA and DOT&PF
  - Provide diverse perspectives
  - Supplement other outreach efforts
  - Information flows to the project team
  - Role of the Chair and Facilitator
    - Facilitator (want to make sure everyone is heard)

- Chair (assists the project team to coordinate meeting agendas)
- Act as liaison with the Executive Oversight Committee
- Not a decision-making body
- Does not need to reach consensus or agreement

### Mission Statement

#### **“Balancing transportation needs with community values.”**

The project team will approach the project development process as a collaborative effort involving residents, businesses, and agencies in a meaningful dialog. We will develop Context Sensitive Design and mitigation approaches to avoid and minimize community and natural resource impacts and balance community values. The team will develop a project that best meets the Purpose and Need for the improvement, incorporates measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse effect on important community resources, and preserves or enhances community values.

The mission statement will guide the project team’s approach to the project. It includes our public outreach philosophy and is grounded in Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS).

#### **Community Values – Louise Smart**

Louise Smart posed the following question to the group: *You are interested in your community. You reflect the community thoughts and values. Take a few moments to write down important community values held by you and those around you.*

Louise then facilitated the group through an exercise to capture the sentiments expressed by the members. The following values were captured on flip charts:

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Safety</li> <li>○ Education opportunities</li> <li>○ Inclusion of opportunities to be a part of the greater whole</li> <li>○ Minimal noise</li> <li>○ Economic viability</li> <li>○ Maintain neighborhood integrity</li> <li>○ Walkability</li> <li>○ Balance between user groups</li> <li>○ Visual excitement that is calming</li> <li>○ Lack of pollution</li> <li>○ Travel time for commuting (shorter)</li> <li>○ Anticipating large scale growth (gas pipeline, thinking ahead)</li> <li>○ Congestion free</li> <li>○ Recreational access</li> <li>○ Safe access</li> <li>○ Sense of place</li> <li>○ Ease of access</li> <li>○ Natural</li> <li>○ Closeness, recreational and business</li> <li>○ Health</li> <li>○ Sense of individual responsibility to the community</li> <li>○ Access</li> <li>○ Land use and transportation promotes a sense of community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(areas with social connection), parks and green belts</li> <li>○ Safety around the Sullivan arena (lots of traffic), safe arrival, parking and then exit from events</li> <li>○ Leading edge (don’t need to rely on historic precedence) ingenuity</li> <li>○ Access to public transportation</li> <li>○ Venues that draw the community together</li> <li>○ Innovative lighting solutions</li> <li>○ Architectural consistency: appropriate design, respectful design, historic preservation</li> <li>○ Forward looking (think 50 to 100 years in the future as a higher value for subsequent generations)</li> <li>○ Accommodate growth of freight</li> </ul> |
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## **NEPA 101 – Mike Vanderhoof, Federal Highway Administration**

Mike Vanderhoof gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled “What is the NEPA process?”

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

- National policy – encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment
- Prevent or eliminate damage to the environment
- Fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

### The Federal government became responsible for:

- Acting as trustees of the environment
- Attaining the widest range of benefit without degradation or undesirable and unintended consequences
- Preserving important historic, cultural, and natural aspects
- Achieving a balance between historic, cultural, and natural aspects

### Federal responsibility includes

- Compliance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and FHWA Regulations
- Encouraging and facilitating public involvement in decisions
- Providing reasonable alternatives to avoid and minimize adverse effects
- Reducing paperwork and delay

### The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) NEPA Implementation Policy

- Alternatives are evaluated and decisions made in the best overall public interest considering safety and environment
- Incorporate measures to mitigate adverse effects
- Comply with all requirements reflected in the environmental document

Mr. Vanderhoof showed a slide of the various environmental and regulatory actions that govern FHWA decision-making in addition to NEPA.

### Project Development

- Planning – system wide coordination, conformity, project goals, objectives and solutions
- NEPA – project purpose/need, alternative, impacts, public/agency coordination, documentation
- NEPA Approval – Location, design concept acceptance and environmental decision
- Post NEPA
  - Final Design
  - Right of Way
  - Construction

### NEPA Decision Making

- Include a detailed statement on
  - Unavoidable adverse impacts
  - Alternatives to proposed action
- NEPA is a systematic and interdisciplinary approach
- The environment is given consideration with economic and technical considerations
- The Federal agency must consult with other government agencies
- The public must be involved

### Elements of the NEPA Process

- NOI (Notice of Intent)
- Scoping
- Purpose and Need Development
- Alternatives analysis
- Resources Impacts and Mitigation
- Public Involvement
- Interagency coordination
- Documentation and Decision
- Draft EIS – Alternatives and impacts
- Final EIS – preferred alternative and mitigation
- Record of Decision (ROD)
  - Selected alternative
  - Discuss values considered and basis of decision
  - Identify “environmentally preferred” alternative
  - Describe mitigation – commitment

### Purpose and Need should address the following aspects of the project:

- Transportation problems to be addressed
- Basis for development/screening of alternatives
- Assists with identification of preferred alternative

Mike Vanderhoof indicated that with SAFTEA-LU, lead agencies must provide opportunities for public involvement during development of purpose and need.

### **Purpose and Need – Louise Smart**

Louise Smart posed the following question to the committee members: *What do you see as the primary transportation needs for this project? From your experience what is the transportation problems that need to be addressed?* The following elements were captured:

- Crossing Gambell as a pedestrian takes too long
- Safety for pedestrian and bikes (Gambell 5<sup>th</sup> Ave)
- Tudor traffic
- Difficult public transportation from Downtown to Hillside
- Midtown gridlock (morning, noon, evening)
- Congestion, asking too much of Gambell and Ingra
- Develop the transportation corridor that doesn't divide the community (Ingra, Gambell)
- Concerned about air quality
- Economic impacts (avoidance due to traffic)
- Congestion – moves to side streets (Cordova and Carlyle)
- Parking (insufficient, improperly located, not best use of land in high rent areas, no provision for pedestrians once you leave your car)
- Inefficient use of land for transportation
- Conflicts between pedestrians/bike and traffic (safety and quality of life for both)
- Future looking (set up infrastructure for future needs including Port issues and growth)
- Monorail or subway with parking lots
- Leaves out opportunity for non-car options for Mat-Su valley, Downtown and Southside
- Large trucks in Downtown on narrow roads
- MatSu to Kenai movement of goods (pipeline) needs a multimodal form of transportation

Ms. Smart then posed the following question: *If you can imagine improvement to transportation problem, what would be the benefits?* The following elements were captured:

- Save time
- Remove large volume of traffic from Gambell and Ingra; could be two-way, more viable commercial use, opportunity to improve traffic flow
- Reduced emissions (reduce idle times, fuel conservation)
- Improve productivity commercial/non-commercial (getting there faster)
- Quality of life
- Reduce noise
- Non-car related modes
- Safer environment (reduce road rage)
- Advancement of public transit system
- Increase retail traffic due to less congestion
- Opportunities for enhanced public spaces (parks and green spaces)
- Higher density closer to Downtown
- Revitalization in a deteriorating area

Ms. Smart then asked the group “*What are your worst fears about the project?*” The following elements were captured:

- You won’t do it – project won’t move forward
- It will be underfunded, under built
- New lanes (addition only), over simplified, not changing enough
- Could make things worse
- Increase noise
- Increase in certain types of particulates (pollution)
- Degrade the neighborhood that it goes through (noise, undesirable affects)
- Increase lighting pollution
- Cost climb over 10 years, connectivity of pedestrian/bike and greenbelts may go away and leave only brick and mortar
- Not a good design, could further divide neighborhoods (trench, elevated)
- Effort may go into it and nothing coming out of it
- Small businesses may get bypassed (Mom and Pop stores)
- Design wouldn’t be climate appropriate (snow storage and ice issues)
- Climate change
- Mileage increase

### **Future Meetings:**

The committee requested a meeting to go over some of the data supporting the purpose and need. They agreed to meet on September 15<sup>th</sup> from 4pm to 7pm at HDR.

The next round of public meetings covering alternatives will happen in late October. The project team will present information on the range of alternatives and screening on Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup> from 4pm to 7pm at HDR.

### **Next Steps – Louise Smart**

- Other issues/questions proposed for consideration, in addition to those suggested on the returned CHUAC questionnaires, included
  - Air pollution/prevention
  - Address bikes as part of public transit
  - Relationship between H2H and the proposed Knik Arm Crossing

The group was invited to attend the public meeting at Fairview Elementary school on July 31 and was encouraged to submit scoping comments to the project team.

**Adjourned at 8:19 pm**