

MVP for Transportation Technical Committee Meeting

MEMBERS

Adeyemi Alimi, ADEC
Alex Strawn, MSB (**Chair**)
Ben White, Alaska DOT&PF
Bob Charles Jr., Knik Tribe
Brian Lindamood, ARRC
Brian Winnestaffer, Chickaloon Native Village
Clint Adler, Alaska DOT&PF
Crystal Smith, MSBSD
Dan Tucker, RSA Representative
Erich Schaal, City of Wasilla (**Vice Chair**)
Jennifer Busch, Public Transit
Jude Bilafer, City of Palmer
Lawrence Smith, Trucking Industry Advocate
Randy Durham, MSB TAB
Stuart Leidner, Mobility Advocate
Tom Adams, MSB



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Minutes

Tuesday, February 11th, 2025
2:00 – 4:00pm

Meeting Location

Musk Ox Farm
12850 E Archie Road, Palmer Alaska 99645
Hayloft / Classroom

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm.

Members Present

Alex Strawn, MSB
Bob Charles Jr., Knik Tribe
Clint Adler, Alaska DOT&PF
Alimi Adeyemi, ADEC
Crystal Smith, MSBSD
Lawrence Smith, Trucking Industry Advocate
Stuart Leidner, Mobility Advocate
Randy Durham, MSB TAB
Ben White, Alaska DOT&PF
Dan Tucker, RSA Representative
Brian Winnestaffer, Chickaloon Native Village
Kate Dueber, ARRC
Erich Schaal, City of Wasilla

Members Absent

Brian Lindamood, ARRC
Jude Bilafer, City of Palmer
Tom Adams, MSB
Jennifer Busch, Public Transit

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Visitors Present

Kim Sollien, MVP MPO
Donna Gardino, Gardino Consulting Services
Adam Bradway, Alaska DOT&PF
Manny Eichholz, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Bianca Zibrat, MSB Long Range Planner
Julie Spackman, Long Range Planner MSB
Rebecca Skjothaug, MSB Planning Support Specialist
Megan Flory, RESPEC
Natalie Lyon, RESPEC
Laurie Cummings, HDR
James Marks, HDR
Luke Bowland, DOT&PF

2. Consent Agenda (Action Item)

Motion to approve the Consent agenda (Winnestaffer), seconded. Passed unanimously.

- a. Approval of the February 11th, 2025 Agenda
- b. Approval of the January 14th, 2025, Minutes

3. Staff/Committee/Working Group Reports

• Staff Report

a. Schedule of topics

Kim Sollien provided a staff report. The MSB Transportation Fair was a great event on 1/30/25 with great attendance, over 500 people. At the event, Kim met Manny Eichholz with Fish and Game who wanted to get involved in MVP activities. His expertise is bringing a wildlife management perspective to development projects. He is based in the Palmer office. Kim and the Policy Board decided not to sublet from RESPEC due to inability to sufficiently separate the two entities. Kim is looking at office space in Palmer. Once the Office Manager is hired, a part of their tasks will be to help identify and lease office space. Kim is working on transferring MVP's technology away from FAST Planning. The Policy Board asked for a portal on the MVP website. A portal can also be set up for the Technical Committee if desired. Indirect Cost Rate determination is in progress with DOT&PF, so we should receive a determination letter soon. MVP lawyer is reviewing the MSB pass-through grant agreement.

4. Voices of the Visitors (Non-Action Items)

None

5. Action Items

None

6. Old Business

- a. MSB Pass Through Grant Agreement Update
- b. Metropolitan Transportation Plan Contract Update

Very close to finalizing the MTP contract with RESPEC. Adam Bradway is working on the final letter documenting the negotiation process. The budget is within the right range. It took a little bit longer than expected but is coming to fruition. Kim noted having an MTP kickoff at the March meetings.

7. New Business

a. STIP Amendment #2 Update

Ben White: STIP amendment #2 should be coming out the next couple weeks. DOT&PF is currently doing coordination with non-metropolitan areas.

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Brian Winnestaffer: How does DOT&PF get the word out beyond the MPOs, and how do they decide who to talk to?

Ben White: It's local governments, Tribes, incorporated communities, anyone on the list.

Kim Sollien: Will the MPOs also get that information about the STIP amendment before it is released?

Ben White: There shouldn't be any surprises in this STIP amendment. The TIP is now driving the STIP. So right now, there is a "black hole" for Anchorage and Fairbanks. We are still trying to figure out exactly what that looks like, because it is not something that we specifically are working on.

Kim Sollien: We found some errors in Amendment #1, when will we be able to review to see if those have been corrected?

Ben White: We have been trying to get our Project Delivery Plan updated. There are some items in the approval process that haven't been approved just yet. So, we should look at that as soon as possible.

Adam Bradway: Most of the Amendment #1 issues you identified should have been fixed. I have not seen the narrative portions yet or the fiscal constraint table.

Ben White: There shouldn't be major changes for this amendment. That is what we have been told. It was just project sheets and fiscal constraint table, nothing in the narrative.

Brian Winnestaffer: Since folks expect the MPO to be the source of information for local projects, can we add something like an interactive map to the website to show this information? Such as DOT&PF and other projects within the boundary?

Kim Sollien: Yes, we can do something like that. Especially if we can hire a Transportation Planner with GIS experience. If not, we have some GIS support from MSB. Alternatively, there is a small amount of funds set aside for obtaining interactive map assistance from a consultant.

Adam Bradway: We can also do a draft "practice-run" TIP to establish the format and process.

b. MVP tagline review and voting

Kim Sollien: At the MSB Transportation Fair, attendees were asked to vote on potential taglines for MVP that were developed using ChatGPT. We have a MentiMeter today for the Technical Committee and guests to vote on the taglines as well. It is hard to explain what the MPO does, so we wanted to develop an easy one-sentence explanation.

<TC members and guests voted via MentiMeter>

Kim Sollien: "We Make Getting Around Easy – Whether you Walk, Roll, or Ride" is currently in the lead. Through the MTP process, developing an official mission statement for MVP will likely be another task.

8. Other Issues

a. MSB Transit Update Presentation

Rebecca S. (MSB) provided the Transit Update Presentation.

- Valley Transit has funding until June of this year.
- Option A: Existing Transit \$3M/Year (\$1.5M FTA funding/\$1.5M Borough funding), 0.107 Mill Rate

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- Option B: 17% Reduction \$2.5M/Year (\$1.25M FTA funding/\$1.25M Borough), 0.090 mill rate, loss of 10,000 rides and 3 buses.
- Option c: 33% Reduction \$2M/Year (\$1M FTA/\$1M Borough), 0.072 mill rate, 21,000 riders lost, 5 total buses lost.
- Option D: 50% Reduction \$1.5M/Year (\$750,000 FTA/\$750,000 Borough), 0.054 mill rate, 31,000 riders lost, 8 vehicles removed from fleet.

Adam Bradway: Did you create an option for the total 5307 budget?

Rebecca Skjothaug: No, we did not. We were using the numbers we were given. The Assembly had been given the \$3M estimate previously. We did not think it would be a productive conversation to discuss expansion.

Dan Tucker: I am concerned that this analysis took numbers from the first quarter of 2024 and extrapolated from that. It should go back several years and look at numbers for full years.

Brian Winnestaffer: Does Valley Transit keep track of missed demand opportunities?

Bianca Zibrat: No, we were not given that information. We are still waiting on full 2024 data from Valley Transit.

Brian Winnestaffer: I hope the transit providers start tracking this information.

Donna Gardino (in chat): Do you know what impact a reduction in service would have on travel times and congestion?

Rebecca Skjothaug: Camden did the analysis. Her estimation of traffic and congestion was pretty low, on how much the buses actually help reduce traffic. We can share that document from Camden.

Donna Gardino: What if scheduled service locally increased? What impact would that have on traffic and congestion? For example, rides to Walmart?

Rebecca Skjothaug: Since that service has never been offered, we do not have that data, and it would be a guess. For example, rides from Palmer to Wasilla.

Adam Bradway: There was a widely read news article about DOT&PF projects in the Mat-Su, which talked about transit demand being increased during those projects.

Rebecca Skjothaug: There are a lot of gaps in the information currently related to transit in the Mat-Su. The RFP will be a good opportunity to collect more data to fill those gaps.

Rebecca Skjothaug: Provided overview of the timeline.

- January – Request for Interest (RFI)
- February/March – RFP (likely released Monday or Wednesday of next week)
 - Meeting with FTA this week will determine if it is 1 or 2 RFPs.
- March – Manager's Budget
- April – Proposed Assembly Budget and public comment period
- June 1st – Award Contracts
- July 1st – Begin Service

Brian Winnestaffer: There is a need to coordinate with rural areas and Anchorage since Mat-Su transit will be bringing people into their areas for jobs. Is there anything AMATs can do to support transit in the valley?

Rebecca Skjothaug: There is a small ride share service that exists.

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Kim Sollien: Has the MSB Manager disclosed which option he is leaning towards supporting?

Rebecca Skjothaug: Maybe Option C? Some Assembly members are for it, and some are against it. They have been asking lots of good questions.

Kim Sollien: I like how you showed the taxpayer mill rate for each transit option. Has that analysis also been done for road infrastructure upgrades to show all improvements as an entire system?

Rebecca Skjothaug: Jason Ortiz suggested doing so. We have that information for 5307 funds, but we haven't done the analysis yet.

Kim Sollien: What about for MSB-bonded projects?

James Marks (in chat): There was a national study, and a corresponding study done at Alaska DOT&PF, "the Economic Impacts of Transit" that quantifies not just cost but benefits to economy and individuals from transit.

9. Informational Items

- a. MSB Corridor Access Management Plan for Bogard [Matanuska-Susitna Borough - Proposed Bogard Seldon CAMP Revised 01 30 2025](#)

Julie Spackman, Long Range Planner MSB provided an overview of the public involvement process for the plan.

Brian Winnestaffer: Coordination question. DOT&PF has a project in that same area. Whose jurisdiction is that?

Julie Spackman: The MSB plan is a bigger picture, long range vision for the entire area.

Alex Strawn: MSB has been working closely with DOT&PF for the entire project. This is a long-term vision for this ROW, not a design project.

- b. **Transit Roundtable February 12th at noon via [Teams](#)**

Kim Sollien: Send me an email if you would like to attend.

- c. **FHWA/DOT/MPO Peer Exchange overview of concerns, needs, actions, and next steps**

Kim Sollien: MVP had good representation at the peer exchange. On day 1, the 3 MPOs gave presentations about their history and concerns. Kim talked about consistent communication regarding the STIP. Jackson (FAST Planning) and Aaron (AMATs) went into more detail about challenges with their TIPs and coordination with DOT&PF. The Lower 48 partner MPOs gave presentations about their organization and structure and how they work with their DOTs on TIP amendments, STIP amendments, etc. The other MPOs are not having the same challenges Alaska has because they work closely with their DOTs. They also each have long range plans that allow them to plan 10 years out. In Alaska, we have great relationships with our local DOT&PF staff, that is not our issue.

<Kim Sollien shared the AK Peer Exchange Action Items spreadsheet>

Donna Gardino: The MPOs we heard from had a set schedule that they stick to every year, for when the STIP is coming out. The MPOs work backwards from that schedule to determine when they need to develop the TIP. It was clear that there is a total lack of a schedule here in Alaska, which is hampering our efforts. They also had great communication

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from the DOT&PF about project updates. They'd receive those updates from the Project Managers, and there were deadlines for when no more changes to project estimates, etc., are allowed. This ensured limited changes between the draft and final versions of the STIP. Communication is a huge discussion topic that we need to work on, not with local DOT&PF staff, but with those "driving the STIP train."

Crystal Smith: Education was a big component. It was clear that education was a big priority for the Lower 48 MPOs, and they took public comment periods very seriously.

Adeyemi Alimi: Active communication, schedule, and trust building are my three takeaways.

Adam Bradway: The Lower 48 MPOs and DOTs are doing a lot of longer-range planning. Additionally, they limited changes to projects in the first few years of the STIP.

Donna Gardino: It was very clear that the projects within the boundary will be shown in the TIPs and not the STIP. It was also clear there is still resistance at higher levels of DOT&PF about this. The MPOs should have a similar memo to the PL funds memo for capital funds. Having this ahead of time would allow it to be clarified before it is released to the public. There is a trust issue that is hindering this.

Kim Sollien: Provided some background on the current STIP and challenges. It is lucky that MVP doesn't have a TIP yet, because it has been more challenging for FAST Planning and AMATs, who already have TIPs. There will be a follow-up peer exchange meeting in 3 months to check in on action items. There will also be a regular quarterly MPO meeting coming up.

Kim Sollien: In the Lower 48, the local governments are allowed to manage the construction of projects, unlike here. That would allow for example, borough staff, to be paid from federal funds to manage those projects. Luke Bowland is going to work on a local public agency (LPA) agreement to try this.

Ben White: This has been tried in the past in Anchorage. One challenge is that if anything goes wrong, the State of Alaska must pay for the costs. Sometimes the local governments don't have the understanding to carry out these projects. DOT&PF must do a lot of "hand holding" since rules change, even daily. The end responsibility always remains with the State of Alaska.

Brian Winnestaffer: With an LPA, which parts would the local government be doing?

Ben White: Preliminary design work, environmental, and some ROW can be transferred to the local government. Construction and construction management will likely remain with DOT&PF.

Kim Sollien: There is currently no STIP schedule, which makes it very difficult for the MPOs to plan their TIPs. That is one issue that will be worked on. Additionally, the local DOT&PF staff don't currently have access to all components of the STIP so they can't share it with the MPOs. DOT&PF will be working on that internally. DOT&PF (Lauren) is going to provide guidance on TIP format.

James Marks (in chat): MPO and RTPO require enabling legislation, which we have the former but not the latter. Does LPA (a formal FHWA construct) require enabling legislation? Maybe a follow-up for Ben...

Ben White (in chat, in response to James Marks): This is one thing we are looking into...FHWA has indicated that our Stewardship and Oversight agreement would be the mechanism that they would need plus agreements with the local public agency.

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Brian Winnestaffer: Who holds the DOT&PF's feet to the fire for the STIP? For TIPs, it doesn't seem as strict if there is sufficient communication.

Adam Bradway: Yes, it must be specific and aligned, especially for the year that you are in.

Kim Sollien: MnDOT has their own 20-year plan of projects. This allows them to know their priorities. Does DOT&PF have a long-range plan for projects? Is there a 10-year approved project list? Hopefully, we will hear more about what DOT&PF's long-range project list is and if that will happen in the future.

Kim Sollien: The MPOs are going to propose some other ways to communicate with DOT&PF and the local communities. We want to make sure that from the MPO side, the flow of information and schedules is clear. Going to work on this at the quarterly meeting this year.

10. Technical Committee Comments

Bob Charles: Reminder to Kim, Natalie, Donna, and Elise to have MVP registered in the system for award management at SAM.gov. Go to the site, and there is a manual to do that. There is paperwork required to register. Sent a copy of FAST's registration to see how they got theirs.

Brian Winnestaffer: They opened up Stringfield Road; it's great!

Dan Tucker: Sounds like the Peer Exchange was a valuable experience

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 pm.

Next Scheduled MPO Technical Committee Meeting – Tuesday, March 11th from 2:00-4:00pm to be held at the Musk Ox Farm and Microsoft TEAMS.