

## 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

### Summary of Comments Received 3/28/17 through 7/15/17

Public comments were collected via public meetings, online open house, project website, email, comment sheets, the first online survey, and listening posts at community events. This summary is intended to highlight themes and the diversity of comments received. The following comments have been roughly categorized for better readability, but there is overlap among categories. Other than grouping, comments are presented in no particular order. Complete copies of public comments are available at:

- A table of all public comments received from 3/28/17-7/14/17 ([http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/mtp\\_2040\\_running\\_comments\\_071417.pdf](http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/mtp_2040_running_comments_071417.pdf)).
- The first MetroQuest survey results and comments:
  - [http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/20171031\\_metroquest\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/20171031_metroquest_report_final.pdf)
  - [http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/20171031\\_metroquest\\_survey\\_report\\_apx\\_a.pdf](http://www.mtp2040.com/assets/20171031_metroquest_survey_report_apx_a.pdf)
  - Map of comment: <http://arcg.is/vyO8m>
- Responses to comments on:
  - Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures ([http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Technical\\_Advisory\\_Committee/2017/081017/5B\\_Responses\\_1A.pdf](http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Technical_Advisory_Committee/2017/081017/5B_Responses_1A.pdf))
  - Initial Screening Criteria ([http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Technical\\_Advisory\\_Committee/2017/081017/5C\\_Responses\\_1B.pdf](http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Technical_Advisory_Committee/2017/081017/5C_Responses_1B.pdf))

### Overall Community Planning

- Need consistency between planning documents and communication between planning teams for MTP and Anchorage Land Use Plan/Anchorage 2020/Title 21, including designated transit corridors. Transportation planning should be based on the overall values of residents. Give highest ranking to projects that align with adopted community plans. Negative points or disqualification for projects that don't align.
- Revitalize commercial zones at major intersections and improve pedestrian access to these zones. Ensure diverse housing stock in these areas.
- Anchorage is infilling and needs to look toward more density, better mass transit, and increased options for non-motorized transportation. Anchorage 2020 emphasizes infilling/greater density. The MTP should acknowledge and support this intended land use pattern.
- Reduce reliance on travel by car to improve quality of life. For example, Anchorage will be more livable with less noise.
- Focus on concept of village centers and neighborhood respect.
- Transportation projects should contribute to achieving comprehensive plan goals and help build Anchorage into a great Winter City.
- Need to address the issue of mandatory free parking of vehicles, which is a subsidy for an auto-centric lifestyle.
- Need to address contemporary changes in transportation in society: Car-sharing services, automated vehicles resulting in increased safety and more efficient use of road capacity, electric vehicles and reduced revenue from motor fuel taxes, people wanting a less auto-centric lifestyle.
- The proposed plan lacks innovation and future vision and focuses only on expanding current infrastructure and methodology.

- Designate four rail corridors in the Municipality for transit: Downtown to MatSu corridor (Anchorage Bowl section); Downtown to the Anchorage airport; Downtown and airport to Dimond Center; Dimond Center to Girdwood (Anchorage Bowl section). Designate areas near the primary rail stations for residences.
- Capitalize on rail investments already made in preparation for commuter rail, including Dimond Center intermodal station, airport rail station, track straightening, and Chugach DMU rail car, and designate Transit Supportive Development Corridors.
- Work with Planning and Zoning to establish mixed use zoning to decrease congestion and promote more localized traffic that is walkable and supports local businesses.
- Anchorage should not try to be Seattle. Larger lots make for improved living conditions.
- Land shortage in Anchorage is overrated. We have space but need to use it efficiently. Too much parking. Need to densify. Also consider land trade with feds.
- There is a basic disconnect between what people say is important to them (safety, sustainability, quality of life) and the focus of engineers (speed, and efficiency of automobile movement)

### **The Transportation Planning Process**

- Implement performance measures for local roads similar to those required for NHS roads to promote reality based ranking and allow better screening of projects.
- AMATS should follow protocols that major industries and AK Liquefied Natural Gas export project use, especially for mega transportation projects and phased transportation projects.
- Regarding “quality decision making”: Avoid tendency to push unwanted/unneeded projects. Use better screening criteria, honest evaluations, more attention to public comments, and independent review. Reduce politically motivated projects.
- Economic benefits and costs
  - Economic benefits should consider loss of land to right-of-way that could have other uses.
  - Economic benefits / Benefit-cost ratio can be manipulated. Need reality based calculations and evaluations and a process that is carefully constructed.
  - Benefit-cost analysis should be required for each project, and method should be clearly defined so it is possible to compare projects. Want a way to do objective ranking of projects and minimize subjective factors.
  - Examine tools for estimating benefit/cost ratio (for evaluating projects)
  - Transportation should focus on support of localized economies—less development of big box stores with large parking lots and more nodes and destinations to promote walkable community.
- It is important not only that “impacts can be mitigated” but that the proposed mitigation is actually acceptable to the community.
- *Not* building infrastructure could be a negative impact on the community. Building thoughtfully ideally creates positive impacts.
- Need to have consistent underlying socio-economic data (e.g., local economic conditions, inflation rates, revenue source, growth rates) between regions (e.g., Anchorage and Mat-Su) and agencies (AMATS and DOT&PF). Plan should acknowledge connection to MSB and KPB.
- Engage Alaska Natives and Native organizations regarding transportation needs of people from rural Alaska/outside Anchorage who visit for health care, conferences, shopping, etc.
- Don’t shortcut the public process in an effort to fast-track projects.
- Environmental

- Anchorage 2020 intent is to “protect, preserve, and enhance” open spaces, water resources, and water quality. MTP needs to reflect this language.
- Concern about air pollution, diesel particulates, CO2 and climate change. Anchorage 2020 says Anchorage transportation programs “shall” minimize air quality impacts.
- Concern that noise and water quality are not adequately addressed. Don’t fill wetlands to create new roads.
- Incorporate trees and natural areas for greater sustainability. More important than added parking lots. Greater density to support transit is good, but use developed lots and preserve trees in undeveloped areas.
- Much of the demand for road expansion is for Valley residents who work in Anchorage but pay no Anchorage taxes. It is time for non-Anchorage residents to contribute. Create a means to exact fees from them (e.g., tolls).
- Funding big ideas is a problem and often such projects are costly to maintain. Spend some time on Strong Towns, and think small, local, and sustainable.
- Project Delivery
  - When projects take 20+ year to even start then things are wrong and not well thought out.
  - Long project timelines are a natural part of the process and provide opportunities for planning.

### **Transportation Goals/Patterns**

- MTP needs a strong purpose statement tied to overarching city planning goals.
- Reduce road infrastructure in Anchorage and spend money instead on maintaining smaller roads.
- Get rid of one-way streets and couplets downtown. Reduce speeds downtown at the same time. These changes would be appropriate for a downtown area/more pleasant for pedestrians.
- Pedestrian/trail/sidewalk connectivity is crucial. A goal of prioritizing those routes with highest use should not overshadow the need for route connectivity.
- Ensure roads don’t further create barriers for wildlife or people.
- Decisions to fund each transportation project should be based on measurable outcomes for achieving overarching community goals such as those found in Anchorage 2020.
- It costs too much to continue to accommodate all cars. We need to move to public transportation. “The age of the car is over.” Plan for a reduced level of service; we can’t continue to plan for no waiting/minimum delay for all drivers.
- Use existing transportation space well. One lane can have multiple uses (through-lane at busy times, parking at other times; shared bike and bus lanes).
- Added road infrastructure and regional connections are not inherently good. Focus should be first on preservation of the existing system or rehabilitation of the existing system, with new infrastructure rated lower. Giving highest rating to regional connection discounts value of local connections and keeping traffic/trips in a local area and is counter to Anchorage 2020 goals.
- Planning should incorporate intelligent and automated vehicles, which will dominate long before 2040.
- Driverless cars are dangerous/scary. To date, they perform poorly in snow. They won’t reduce congestion. Wait for lessons learned from the Lower 48.
- Encourage natural gas and electric vehicles.
- Need to shift away from highway level of service to focus on person trips, not vehicle trips and to integrate a multi-model level of service approach (walk, bike, bus, rail).

- Improve travel conditions by decreasing lanes on wider roads: should actually reduce congestion and would provide buffer space for pedestrians and snow storage.
- Anchorage is a hub for visitors. Improve way finding. Improve streets around rail depot. Transportation should be world class.
- Safety
  - Roads tend to be designed for peak hour traffic, but Anchorage roads have light traffic most of the rest of each day so there are no constraints on speed. Prioritize safety for cyclists, pedestrians, etc. as indicated in other Anchorage plans. Address the conflict between safety and desire for traffic movement at peak periods.
  - Consider safety of all users when designing roads. Adopt a Complete Streets model.
- Neighborhoods
  - Splitting neighborhoods with larger roads/traffic must not occur.
  - Avoid new transportation projects that increase problems (traffic/congestion) on lower standard parts of the existing road system.
  - Protect neighborhood quality of life and safety by reducing high-speed cut-through traffic. Reflect this in ratings by assigning negative points.
  - Use alternative means of clearing crashes, such as special pullouts for minor fender benders, better staging of tow trucks, and streamlined police investigations to alleviate congestion without adding lane miles.
- Winter City
  - Consider northern city design that allows for clearing of sidewalks by the same plow that does streets, by moving back signs, meters, etc.
  - MOA and land owners should remove snow from their sidewalks within 24 hours. Integrate an Anchorage road weather management system with DOT&PF so that weather is prepared for and responded to.
  - Winter is a reality here, and adequate maintenance should be built in. Designs should be more imaginative in accommodating snow/winter.
- Congestion
  - Evaluate the “induced driving” effect of congestion reduction.
  - The goal of decreased travel time during peak travel periods is a limited measure of efficiency. For example, need to include energy efficiency and land use efficiency, as called for in Anchorage 2020.
  - Measures for congestion reduction should include multi-occupant vehicle ridership and transit ridership, in addition to rideshare/van pool/bike/pedestrian trips.
  - “Build the road network” is not the best way to combat congestion. Anchorage has too many large roads. Use means other than expanding the road size and road system.
  - Uber and Lyft and car share may help. Provide dedicated lanes for these and mass transit.
  - Uber and Lyft are scary / dangerous, and people would not use them.
- Despite changing demographics, cars are necessary. They give flexibility for everyday tasks and emergencies and allow moving multiple or heavy items. We like to get out and play with our toys / fill our freezers, and that is not going away.

### **Screening Process/Criteria**

- See related comments under Bikes and Pedestrians, below.
- General comments
  - Ensure that the area analyzed for traffic effects is sufficient when running a screening process.

- The screening process needs a good procedure that is well explained. The screening process needs to be transparent, have independent QC checks on foundational data, and have public involvement. Transparency in general in the planning process and individual project evaluation is important and should be a guiding principle.
- Scoring of projects based on their impacts on roads needs to be changed to reflect multiple modes of transportation (e.g., railroads).
- Screening criteria should include increase/decrease of conflict between trucks and cars, trucks and pedestrians, and trucks and bikes and effects on freight movements.
- All transportation projects should be planned for multi-modal use, so all types should be combined and ranked together in one method.
- Safety is a big issue. Screening criteria should be weighted differently, with more important (e.g. safety) given more weight.
- Include a category/criterion of operations and maintenance costs.
- Parking is a major land use. Induced parking should be included in screening criteria. Reduce parking demand in order to achieve a more compact land use pattern that supports transit.
- Comments on Specific Criteria
  - ADA and environmental justice should be separate criteria.
  - ADA/environmental justice criteria should include age (ability to navigate) and language (reading signs)
  - High rating for new arterial expressway or freeway is unwise/encourages existing practices rather than seeking alternate means of travel (public transportation). Such highways are difficult to cross for non-motorized users.
  - High rating for connectivity is problematic. Don't want to break up residential and employment centers with roads just for sake of connectivity. Highest rating for closing a gap of ½ mile is not appropriate. There may be good reasons for gaps.
  - Emissions per mile travelled (not per vehicle-mile traveled) should be considered as a measure of effectiveness.
  - Environmental impact is rated highest for zero impact. There should be encouragement to actually have a positive effect. This applies to community impact as well; the plan should encourage enhancement rather than doing least harm.
  - "Sidewalk" criteria need to include safe crossings/crosswalks. Should include safe road crossings in criteria.
  - The criteria that consider the effects on neighborhood livability should include measurable factors such as noise, cut-through traffic, and traffic speeds in residential areas.
  - List impacts to air quality and water quality as specific environmental factors to consider in the environmental screening criteria.

### **Public Transportation**

- Existing bus issues
  - Problems with existing transit:
    - lack of good connections/having to wait long periods at transfer sites poor snow removal and street plows putting snow on recently cleared walkways. Problems with existing transit: Poor perception of the system ("loser cruiser")
  - Don't like the impending transit restructuring. Bus routes should stay as they are now and not be reduced (specific mentions of Eagle River and Dimond area).
  - Recent cutbacks in bus routes are not "preserving the existing system."

- Future bus/transit
  - Embrace multi-modal transportation such as bus rapid transit (BRT), ride-sharing, rail.
  - More bus routes to outer neighborhoods.
  - Public transit at shorter intervals.
  - Look into changing bus service to merge general public bus transportation and school bussing so that adults could ride school busses (into town of Eagle River, for example). Add later busses to accommodate after school activities and parents' return after work.
  - Ensure transit connects not only downtown areas of Anchorage and Eagle River but all commonly used commercial and service areas (U/Med, Dimond, Airport, Old Seward).
  - Need to figure out better criteria than benefit-cost for transit projects. Transit is a necessity for many and projects should not be scrapped solely because of benefit-cost.
  - Provide benches and shelters at all bus stops.
  - Improve transit only if also improving walkability among neighborhoods transit provides access to.
- Rail
  - Alternative measures require a huge change in attitudes. Many people dream of car ownership.
  - We should not create more highway between the Valley and Anchorage but should use alternative options. Commuter rail using the Alaska Railroad corridor from Wasilla to Anchorage and south to the airport and to Dimond or variations.
  - Portland built light rail/trolley system in the '80s with a population similar to Anchorage. It can be done with Anchorage's population, but ensure rail lines don't displace populations or encourage suburban sprawl.
  - Consider transit/rail in medians, perhaps elevated.
- Specific transit projects:
  - Light rail Anchorage-Eagle River-Wasilla / within Anchorage
  - Implement reloadable swipe-to-pay cards for bus fares.
  - Shuttle service to Anchorage airport is needed (Subway system between Mat-Su and Anchorage is needed).

### **Individual Road Projects**

- See also specific project under Bikes and Pedestrians and under Transit.
- Highways
  - Add/designated HOV lane on Seward Highway.
  - Seward Highway safety problems are related to speeding. Speed limits are too fast. Enforcement/large speeding tickets are necessary.
  - A connector of the Seward and Glenn Highways would further divide east and west Anchorage, and there is little traffic going from the Valley to the Peninsula.
  - On-going safety problem with WEAVING situation at NB off-ramp Glenn Highway and Artillery Road/Old Glenn Highway intersection
  - Rush hour traffic backs up for going north on Glenn on ER Loop Road
- Anchorage Smaller Road
  - Slow traffic on Boniface
  - Provide a left turn out of 38<sup>th</sup> to Tudor.
  - Divert railroad from crossing C Street.
  - East 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. needs fixing of frost heaves.
  - Neighborhood streets off the NE corner of Tudor and Lake Otis need to be widened and improved or parking needs to be limited.

- Eagle River:
  - Drivers from the Driftwood Bay area make U-turns at the frontage road/Parkview Terrace entrance, causing problems for drivers trying to exit and merge. Add a U-turn option at the N. Montague light and post a U-turn prohibition or yield sign.
  - At Old Glenn and ER Loop Road, paint a line for left turn lane to stop a little farther back, as people turning left from the other lanes cut into/over the yellow line. Angle of lanes is sharper.
  - Exit from Glenn Highway at Artillery Rd. is tough to navigate, with quick turnaround required.
  - Need a second 4-lane route from Anchorage to Eagle River.
  - Elevate Glenn Highway for through traffic.
  - West of Glenn Highway, Artillery Road is SUPER congested at 3:15-3:45pm, with the Church and school letting out.
  - Need 2 left turns onto ER Loop Rd from Old Glenn Hwy turning left onto ER Loop Road, especially with snow

### **Bikes and Pedestrians**

- Bike infrastructure enhances the cityscape and should augment or at least parallel development for the automobile. Such bike infrastructure includes trails such as those in the greenbelts and the coastal trail, signposts for bikers, special bike lanes inside car-parking spots, and boxes designated at intersections for bikes.
- North-south bike routes such as C Street trail are inadequate/not on par with the greenbelt trails. Need more commuter bike trails that are separated from motor traffic.
- Greenbelt trails are good but not sufficiently destination oriented. Make sure there are N/S and E/W bike lanes that run through downtown and midtown/Spenard and other places with common destinations.
- Put rumble strip and stripe between bike lanes and adjacent car lane.
- Community monitors could improve safety on trails.
- Keep sidewalks and trails clear in winter.
- Conflict on Trails
  - Fast cyclists needs signs to slow down.
  - Separate pedestrian routes/paths and bicycle routes/paths.
  - Separate bicycle infrastructure within the roadway is substantially different than recreational trails meant for all users, and these should be considered separately, not together.
- Screening trails/paths
  - Rate projects on how well they improve trail connectivity.
  - Rate projects based on how they add protected bike infrastructure on roads, painted bike lanes, etc.
  - Rate sidewalks based on separation from road, how well sidewalk accommodates road snow removal, ability to accommodate outside seating/retail/bike racks.
  - Connectivity for bikes: closing a gap of ½ mile or more is rated highly, but much shorter gaps also important.
  - Enhance neighborhoods by increasing connections for non-motorized travel between neighborhoods. Award points for good connections separated from high-speed traffic.
- Bike/Pedestrian Specific Projects:
  - Extend coastal trail south to Potter Marsh.
  - Put a bike path in the railroad right of way with a fence as north-south connector.

- Eagle River Rd. Mi 11 needs a path for bikes and runners.
- Short-term rentals of bikes may help but would need good bike infrastructure in place.

**Other**

- Increase use of light electric vehicles such as ebikes to reduce congestion and improve overall community health.
- Alternative measures like flexible work schedules, telecommuting, etc. is difficult to do on a large scale.
- Stud ruts are very dangerous.
- Distracted driving/texting while driving needs better enforcement and stiffer fines.
- Need taxi service in Eagle River.
- Roundabouts
  - Roundabouts are useless.
  - Roundabouts are good; more are needed to help with congestion (better than stoplights)
- Road designs need to accommodate large school buses (turning radius, etc).
- Need to keep fixing and paving roads.
- Short-term car rentals would be benefit to bike/bus commuters.