

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2035 Public Review Draft

Get your motor running The group of 5 that plans transportation projects in Anchorage, called Anchorage Metropolitan Transportation Solutions (AMATS), released the Public Review Draft of the 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) on October 1, 2011. There's a 30 day public comment period. The core of the MTP is a long list of projects you can expect for the Anchorage Bowl and Chugiak-Eagle River. The Plan contains short-range (2011 - 2023) and long-range recommendations (2024 - 2035) for roadway, transit, bike, pedestrian and trails. There is also a list called "Illustrative Projects" that might be nice, but there isn't going to be enough money for them.

This is serious stuff. The price tag is around \$3 billion (not including the bridge). The money we're talking about is from Federal funds (mostly subsidized by gas taxes in other states and dropping fast), state funds and Anchorage property taxes through bonds.

This is your first crack at this. The current document is the Public Review Draft. It warrants your comments before the October 31 deadline. All the comments will be considered and turned into a Public Hearing Draft. That's the one the Planning and Zoning Commission will consider after a January public hearing. More information is available at

<http://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/AMATS/Pages/2035MTPDocuments.aspx>

Points to consider:

- The MTP doesn't adhere to several elements of the road and trail system adopted in the Hillside District Plan (HDP). Examples:
 - Map 5-17, titled Missing Grid Links, does not reflect the road plan adopted in the HDP. It is misleading to have a map that implies a perfect grid as the ideal, when Hillside terrain and land use patterns are not suited to a grid. Remember the tenacity of the "conceptual urban/rural boundary" in the 2020 plan? Get rid of the Missing Grid Links map or replace the Hillside area with the recommendations from the HDP.
 - Several of the HDP Special Study Areas (such as Study Area A, connectivity between DeArmoun and Rabbit Creek) have been ignored and the project has been scoped in-house, without the requisite community involvement. Study Area C and D are also ignored, despite funded projects across those areas.
 - Project 311, Seward Highway from Potter Weigh Station to Rabbit Creek, isn't scheduled for upgrade until after 2035. It is confusingly presented, but the 7.3 mile length appears to be both the Old and New Seward Highways (both east and west of Potter Marsh). It would have only bikeable road shoulders, but not the primary pathways and recreational character called for in the HDP.
 - Bike shoulders are budgeted for on Rabbit Creek from Evergreen to Clarks Road, which sounds like a good idea BUT there are already shoulders, and what middle school kids and the general public need is a separated pathway, such as the primary pathway up the Little Rabbit Creek alignment as shown in the HDP.
- The commitment to transit is lukewarm at best. There is debilitating language in Goal 7, which could prevent bus lanes or even bus stops in some areas, by requiring that transit may be improved only "without adversely affecting motor vehicle travel".
- Transit for the Hillside shows an express route that looks like a milk run, snaking around the Huffman/Birch/Abbott Elmore area and then into town. The missing concept is: competitive transportation choices, with transit time close to vehicle travel time. The previous bus routes took the Seward Highway: direct routes are important if we are going to encourage commuters.

- The financial accounting in the MTP is not clear. If KABATA takes state funding for the Knik Arm Crossing, how much less will other Anchorage transportation projects receive? The MTP lists the Knik Arm Crossing in the project list, but doesn't add the \$1.1 billion price tag for this bridge into the MTP budget. The bridge project is no longer labeled as self-paying. KABATA (the Bridge Authority) is asking for state funding guarantees. The MOA originally approved the Knik Arm Crossing only with a promise that no state money would be required. The MTP assumes that KABATA and other MTP projects won't compete for state funds. However, it all comes from the same state coffers.
- Big projects that affect HALO commuters include six lanes north of O'Malley (but no new lanes south of that). Also, a freeway style interchange to connect from O'Malley directly to Minnesota, apparently eliminating stoplights at the Old & New Seward.
- There is already a "waiting list" of projects not funded until after 2035 (20 percent of road projects and 33 percent of non-motorized projects). However, many Hillside projects from the HDP aren't even on the waiting list.
- There is a maximum percentage set for non-motorized transportation projects. In the history of AMATS, these projects are underfunded. A minimum percentage might make spending more balanced among roads, transit, and non-motorized projects.

WHAT HILLSIDE PROJECTS MADE THE LIST?

All projects were scored based on project readiness, timing of need, safety needs, logical sequencing, functional classification, number of modes supported and the cost, length and amount of traffic. If you take a look at the full list and disagree with any rankings, you should address your concerns in terms of the rankings.

Short Term (2011-2023)

113 O'Malley Road \$29million (3 lane east of Lake Otis, 5 lanes west of LO to NSH)
 120 DeArmoun Rd Phase II 140th to Hillside \$15 million ("reconstruct on the existing alignment")
 124 Abbott Rd Lake Otis to Birch Rd \$39 million (5 lanes W of Elmore, 3 lanes to the east.)
 131 Mountain Air Dr Rabbit Ck Rd to E 164th Ave \$7.9 million (new road)
 509 Possible bike lanes DeArmoun to Debarr
 519 Elmore Rd bike lanes
 540 Goldenview Dr paved shoulder bike way
 543 O'Malley Rd Separated pathway under railroad
 554 Elmore Rd Separated bike lanes DeArmoun Rd to O'Malley
 555 Hillside Dr Clarks Rd to Abbott paved shoulder Bikeway
 563 Rabbit Ck Rd Evergreen to Clark's Rd paved shoulder bikeway

Long Term (2024-2035)

202 Huffman Rd Rehab Pintail to Birch \$8million
 211 Seward Hwy/O'Malley Rd Interchange \$75 million (Freeway style interchange ...)
 605 Abbott Rd Paved shoulder bike way Birch to Hillside Dr.
 606 DeArmoun Rd Seward Hwy to 140th Bike lanes
 609 Old Seward Hwy Rabbit Ck to Huffman paved shoulder bike way
 633 Elmore path extension Rabbit Creek to DeArmoun separated pathway

Illustrative Projects (i.e. don't expect any money for these.)

307 Elmore Rd Extension O'Malley to Abbott \$35.2 million
 311 Seward HY Potter weigh station to Rabbit Ck Rd. \$47 million
 314 Birch Rd Huffman to O'Malley \$9million (Reconstruct Rd ...)
 318 Golden View Dr extension Romania to Potter Valley Rd \$18.1 million
 319 Elmore Rd extension Rabbit Ck to DeArmoun Rd. \$19 million
 320 Huffman Rd Extension Birch to Hillside Dr \$13.5 million

324 Seward Hwy./O'Malley Rd Interchanges \$75 million (complete project 211)