
TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL
c/o Federation of Community Councils
1057 W. Fireweed Lane, Suite 100, Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Cathy L. Gleason, President

August 20, 2018

Sent via email

Mr. Craig Lyon
AMATS Coordinator
lyoncl@muni.org

RE: **AMATS Draft 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program**

Dear Mr. Lyon (Craig):

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the AMATS Draft 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (Draft 2019-2022 TIP) now out for review. Because the Turnagain Community Council (TCC) does not meet during the summer, these comments are being presented by the TCC Executive Board, and ratification consideration of this letter by attending members will be on our September 6, 2018, general meeting agenda.

Draft AMATS FFY 2019-2022 TIP Table 3. Non-Motorized Projects:

- **NCOO00002 — Fish Creek Trail Connection (Northern Lights Blvd. to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail)**

This project will construct a connection of the Fish Creek Trail to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

TCC supports the inclusion of a Fish Creek Trail Connection, Northern Lights Blvd. (WNL) to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail) in the Draft 2019-2022 TIP Non-Motorized project list.

After an informal public use trail located within the Alaska Railroad (AKRR) right-of-way in Turnagain was blocked off as part of an Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility project a few years ago, TCC members have been participating in a Fish Creek Trail to Ocean (FCTO) working group, with the goal of reestablishing a trail between WNL and the Coastal Trail.

TCC's conceptual support of this trail connection project, which we have expressed at FCTO meetings and to the Parks Department, is contingent upon the opportunity, as a stakeholder, to collaborate with the Parks Department and other relevant stakeholders (GreatLand Trust and AKRR) with regard to the actual trail route location as well as the physical nature of the trail (paved vs. unpaved and width). We feel important factors that need to be taken into consideration include potential impacts to area property owners, Fish Creek hydrology and

water quality, stream setback widths and vegetation, the wetlands of the Fish Creek estuary, and waterfowl and wildlife that use the area, and — of course — project cost.

After discussions with the Parks Department, the FOCT working group was presented four potential, conceptual trail routes some time last year. At that point, *informally*, the group's preference was for the Municipality to work with the Alaska Railroad (AKRR), so that some form of trail could be located back within the AKRR right-of-way — as this would be the least expensive and quickest way to reestablish a connecting trail in this area for public use.

Since that discussion, FOCT has not met for some time and TCC has not been provided information by the Parks Department on 1) the status of AKRR's position of allowing the trail to be placed within their right-of-way; 2) GreatLand Trust's input on various trail routes near or within protected estuary boundaries; 3) updates on the feasibility of other potential route locations; or 4) cost projections for the Fish Creek Connection project now included in the Draft 2019-2022 TIP.

As a result, it is difficult to comment on whether \$4M is an appropriate amount of funding to include in the TIP document (\$500,000 for 2020; \$500,000 for 2022; \$3,000,000 after 2024). However, as a result of TCC's engagement with the proposed changes to the Municipality Stream Setback Code, we do understand there are bank erosion impacts from locating paved trails near creeks as well as high costs associated with maintenance or repair of existing paved trails near municipal creeks. Thus, TCC recognizes a less expensive, unpaved, narrower trail *may* need to be considered for this location along Fish Creek within the Turnagain area. If that is the case, the trail could likely cost significantly less than \$4M — and could be developed in a much shorter timeframe than projected in the Draft 2019-2022 TIP.

TCC's desire for this important trail project is that it ultimately provides the community a trail that balances the need to provide connectivity from the existing Fish Creek Trail south of WNL to the Coastal Trail, with the need to address negative impacts and protect the existing natural, environmental and neighborhood attributes in this area of Turnagain. We look forward to our council's participation as a stakeholder as the Fish Creek Trail Connection project proposal moves forward as an AMATS 2019-2022 TIP project to accomplish this goal.

Draft AMATS FFY 2019-2022 TIP Table 5. Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Projects:

- **CMA00001 Anchorage Ridesharing/Transit Marketing**

This project funds the Municipal Share-A-Ride program, which promotes, subsidizes, and contract manages an areawide vanpool commuter service, and a comprehensive public transportation marketing effort.

TCC supports the continued funding of ridesharing and transit marketing in the Municipality of Anchorage, which is included in the Draft 2019-2022 TIP.

Unfortunately, the Turnagain neighborhood lost significant coverage of bus service with the discontinuation of Route 36 in 2017, leaving fewer transit options for people living north and west of Spenard Rd., including Wisconsin St. and West Northern Lights Blvd. We understand the reasons for the changes, and appreciate that our neighborhood is fairly close to other People Mover bus routes in adjacent areas.

Promoting transit use and increasing ridership may allow People Mover to expand bus service again in the future, and TCC hopes that our neighborhood could, once again, have bus service in Turnagain. In the meantime, we support the municipality's efforts to educate Turnagain residents and the general community about existing options for people to get to work and other destinations, including transit and the vanpool service for commuters. This helps reduce congestion on our roads, gives residents more options to get around town, and helps vulnerable neighbors like the elderly and people who cannot afford a car.

- **CMA00002 Air Quality Public & Business Awareness Education Campaign**

The goal of this program is to further inform the public about air quality issues and what steps people may take to reduce pollution.

We are fortunate to have access to many beautiful natural and green space areas in or near the Turnagain neighborhood, and live in a city that does not have the same level of pollution as many larger or older cities in the Lower 48. However, living near Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, residents of Turnagain are near a busy transportation and industrial area. As a result, we often are exposed to emissions and odors from nearby sources, such as jets, general aviation aircraft, buses, trucks, taxis and vans serving the airport and surrounding businesses.

TCC is also aware of the air quality issues associated with people starting up their cars and letting them idle for long periods of time on cold days in the winter.

Our council supports funding proposed for the Air Quality Public & Business Awareness Education Campaign in the Draft 2019-2022 TIP. To keep our community healthy, it is important for the Municipality to take steps to address sources of air pollution within our community, and to increase awareness of residents and businesses on how they can reduce emissions and impacts on our air quality.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity to provide input to the AMATS Draft 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program project list — and TCC would appreciate your consideration of our comments. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,
Cathy L. Gleason
Turnagain Community Council President

Cc: Municipality of Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz
Municipality of Anchorage Parks Division Superintendent Joshua Durand
Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Landscape Architect Taylor Keegan
Assembly Member Eric Croft
Assembly Member Ira Perman
Assembly Member-elect Austin Quinn Davis
Spenard Community Council Chair Jay Stange
Fish Creek Trail to Ocean Working Group Lead Meghan Holtan