

Correspondence



RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC) A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations



1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

October 14, 2021

Dear Planning and Zoning Commission:

SUBJECT: Comments on 2020-0134, the Municipality's Long-Range Transportation Plan:

Please ensure these comments become part of the case record for the Municipality's Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2020-0134. The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) reviewed and submitted detailed comments (March 9, 2020) on the proposed 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Our summary concerns were that the document: (1) failed to acknowledge or coordinate with goals and commitments in the 2019 Anchorage Climate Action Plan; (2) failed to include Performance Measures; and (3) focused on expensive, land intensive projects favoring long transits across and out of the Municipality (Muni) over much less expensive, less land intensive, shorter connections, transit, and pedestrian options compatible with the 70-80% of trips within the Municipality of Anchorage (Muni). Additionally, we provided specific recommendations on numerous projects within and adjoining our council area, and comments on area-wide projects used by our residents. We also attached the priorities we had provided for the Muni's 2020 Capital Improvement Program as those projects are in the MTP. Consequently, we are very disappointed in the final MTP and subsequent Muni Long Range Transportation Plan as follows.

The MTP2040 final draft is almost a carbon copy of the public review draft. The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) apparently disregarded hundreds of public comments and Anchorage Assembly comments on the public review draft, and made no substantive changes to goals, policies or projects. AMATS staff have suggested that public comments will become the basis for the next MTP, for 2045. This is not an honest treatment of the public and Assembly, who commented on THIS plan, not the next one.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) can, and should, deviate from the MTP2040. The LRTP is part of the Anchorage comprehensive plan and should strongly embody the community's goals and visions, rather than the Federal Highway Administration's narrow goals which are a driving force for AMATS. RCCC urges the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) to adopt goals and revise the list of projects in order to represent the community's vision.

The most consequential revisions that the LRTP should incorporate regard climate change and future decision-making. Most critically, the LRTP should revise the MTP goal for environmental sustainability (goal 5) to incorporate the Anchorage Climate Action Plan goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2080. The LRTP should include objectives and funding for measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle travel, and for using greenhouse gas emissions as a criterion for project scoring and system modeling. Other cities have done this. Regarding future transportation decision-making, the MTP's Goal 6, titled "quality decision making" currently focuses on capital costs. Quality decision-making needs to incorporate further objectives: respond to public comments with substantive changes; and include costs to the environment, property values, and land uses adjoining major projects.

Regarding specific projects, RCCC would like the PZC to:

- a) scale back the Scooter Avenue underpass of the Seward Highway to a pedestrian/bicycle connection, saving the municipality \$20 million of induced spending on connecting roads, and also saving several low- to middle income neighborhoods (destruction of existing low-income housing in this area is irresponsible);
- b) modify the reconstruction of Rabbit Creek Road (project 127) to specify turn pockets but not a center turn lane, because of the safety hazards;
- c) eliminate the Americans with Disability Act ramps proposed for the Seward Highway pedestrian overpass at Rabbit Creek Elementary School, because there are pedestrian sidewalks and tunnels within 150 yards of this overpass;
- d) reduce the massive expansion of midtown roads for higher-speed vehicle through-traffic, allowing instead for more infill and re-development and non-motorized movement; and
- e) incorporate the comments submitted by the Anchorage Assembly, which represent greater accountability to local residents than the project list promoted by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and AMATS.

One closing note, the final LRTP should acknowledge how the ongoing pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus has upended our economy, and ways we work, attend school, recreate, socialize, etc. Many Anchorage office buildings, restaurants, and stores are currently being utilized at significantly reduced levels with a concomitant reduction in parking and vehicles on the road throughout the day and evening. While we all hope life will return to 'normal' once a vaccine is developed and widely dispersed (unlikely for at least another 8-12 months), it is likely that our ways of working and socializing may remain drastically different in the future. Teleworking has become a norm meaning that traffic congestion and pressures for new or expanded roads may not materialize, or will occur at a much slower pace than currently projected.

We are herein re-submitting our requested revisions that were brushed off during the MTP process. Our related recommendations on the Muni's Capital Improvement Program as updated for the 2021 survey (June 16, 2020) can be found here:

<https://www.muni.org/communitycouncilsurveys/homepage/>. These previous submittals include a number of additional requested revisions on goals and objectives, as well as on specific projects. We respectfully request that PZC take the time to specifically review and respond to them.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council



Ky Holland, Co-chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council

Attachment

cc: John Weddleton, Anchorage Assembly
SuZanne LaFrance, Anchorage Assembly
Mayor
Shaina Kilcoyne, SWS Energy & Sustainability Manager