

March 3, 2021

Joni Wilm
AMATS Senior Planner
Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department
4700 Elmore Road, Anchorage AK 99507
By Electronic Mail: joni.wilm@anchorageak.gov



Re: AMATS Non-Motorized Plan comments – Spenard Community Council

Dear Joni Wilm,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the “AMATS Non-Motorized Plan Draft” (NMP), dated January 2021. These comments are submitted on behalf of the Spenard Community Council (SCC).

Since 2017, SCC residents have participated in the planning process. Our comments within this document are written with the intention of aligning the NMP with the Spenard Corridor Plan (SCP), finalized in 2020. The SCP is unique for Anchorage in having transit-oriented development, active transportation, and neighborhood identities as central and necessary components of the document. We feel these components are essential in guiding our community for years to come around pedestrian, bicyclist, and trail access and infrastructure identified within the NMP.

There are a number of projects the Spenard Community Council is pleased to see within or near our council area, including bicycle network improvements on:

- A separated bikeway on Frontage Road
- An enhanced shared roadway along 40th Ave. and 27th Ave.
- A separated bikeway on Fireweed Lane, an enhanced shared roadway along Cope St, Harrison St. and Cambridge Way
- an enhanced bikeway along Hillcrest
- Enhanced shared roadway on Chugach Way
- Separated bikeway along Minnesota Drive

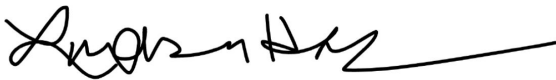
The proposed pedestrian network within the Spenard Community Council include:

- Spenard Road
- Minnesota Drive
- Benson Boulevard and Northern Lights Boulevard couplet
- Arctic Avenue
- Tudor Road

We offer the following comments in an effort to continue to align the document with our resident's vision for our own neighborhoods. In considering our comments, we convened a work group to discuss a number of our community assets and how we can safely access them on foot, bike, or bus. An example of a roadway we considered when thinking about pedestrian safety is Minnesota Drive. It acts as a "wall" splitting our community with high speed traffic and few signalized crossings. Recently, a pedestrian was killed by a vehicle while crossing 35th Avenue along Minnesota Drive, and we kept that person, and so many others, in mind while identifying the opportunities here to put people first in this plan, rather than vehicles.

We are thankful for the opportunity to help make this planning document even better. Please contact us for clarifications or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lindsey Hajduk", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lindsey Hajduk
President
Spenard Community Council
907-360-3320

AMATS Non-Motorized Plan Draft - Community Comments

| | Draft document: | https://www.muni.org/departments/ocpd/planning/amats/documents/nonmotorized/update_2020/20210104_non_motorized_plan_public_review_draft.pdf | |
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| Page | Section | Recommendation | Comment |
| Overall | | There are a significant number of substantive recommendations included within these comments. We respectfully ask that these issues are addressed and incorporated into the document before the Assembly and AMATS Policy Committee adopt this plan. | |
| Overall | Network Maps | Include combined maps of existing infrastructure and proposed infrastructure. | The included maps do not have a high level of detail on what facilities are existing since all lines are gray and could signify bike lanes, multi-use paths, sidewalks, etc., but it is impossible to distinguish them on the maps. Without seeing the connections of the infrastructure it is difficult to identify what is proposed and how it relates to the existing network. |
| Overall | Network Maps | Develop low-speed infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists that is separate and distinct from high-speed vehicle traffic. | Pedestrian speeds are about 3 mph, and bicyclists are at 10-12 mph. Rather than including core components of the pedestrian and bicyclist networks on high-speed roadways, we would like to see the core networks, which is especially true in the proposed pedestrian network. Right now many of the primary network improvements are along state-managed roads, which often are more difficult to address. |
| Overall | Network Maps | Create a winter map of the pedestrian and bicyclist core network. | There is mention of Anchorage as a winter city, but it is not clearly reflected in the document. We should be able to look at a map of our winter vs. summer networks and see if the infrastructure maintenance plan will work. The winter network could be the "core" network prioritized for winter maintenance, and the summer network would be all infrastructure. There are differences in staffing and funding for state and city winter |

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| | | | maintenance, so much of the city's core network should be on municipally managed roadways, which often are lower speed. |
| 1-6 Chapter 1: Introduction | | | |
| 1 | Shared Use Pathway Network | More clearly label the "Shared Use Pathway Network" as the "Trails" portion of this plan. | Without clearly making the distinction that the 1997 Trails Plan is incorporated into this document as the "Shared Use Pathway Network," the trails portion gets lost in this document. The Existing and Proposed Bicycle Network maps and descriptions should also have the words "Trails" titles to more clearly communicate the incorporation of our multi-use pathways. As it appears now, there are only about 7 projects for trails. |
| 5 | Goal 5.1. | It's important to create ways for inter-transit activities, like people walking or biking to bus stops, and the bicyclists and pedestrian infrastructure should consider access to transit stops within primary transit corridors. | This document needs to include the Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2040 for transit-oriented planning as our city's true long-term transportation planning document. As it is now, People Mover transit routes are created through a short-range transit planning effort (about 5 years). |
| 15 | | This plan focuses on paved shared use trails and pathways. There is a forthcoming plan on recreational trails. | What is the time frame for the plan? Will the plan show the intersection of recreational trails and hard surface trails or sidewalks? |
| 7-38 Chapter 2: Existing Conditions | | | |
| 8-10 | 2.1 Existing Plan Review | Incorporate and include finalized plans after 2018. | Incorporate and include the Anchorage Climate Action Plan (2019), Spenard Corridor Plan (2020), Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2040 (2020). |
| 16 | Existing Bicycle Network | Include a map with more clearly defined existing and proposed bicycle infrastructure. | It is difficult to identify the existing infrastructure on the "proposed bicycle network map" so one needs to flip between the only map that shows existing infrastructure. A combined map will explain and communicate the proposed connectivity. |

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| <p>As described, the "level of traffic stress" was part of the prioritization process for the bicycle network. However, the mapping of the "Level of Traffic Stress" shows that most of the primary pedestrian corridors are on high-stress roadways. The Non-Motorized Plan should put pedestrians first, but as it is many of the recommended roadways for pedestrians are along fast roads with many lanes and inadequate sidewalks. Recognizing this won't change overnight, there should be roadways within the pedestrian network that are lower stress and put people before vehicles.</p> | <p>The level of traffic stress on the roadways should be considered for the pedestrian primary network.</p> | <p>Level of Traffic Stress</p> |
| <p>Asthma prevalence- Multiple studies have been done regarding living in proximity to highways which in many ways Minnesota functions as. There are higher rates of asthma in children within one-quarter of a mile of a highway. These studies should be considered when balancing neighborhood needs and moving traffic.</p> | <p>Particular attention should be made to health outcomes and stressors of surrounding communities when accommodating high speed/heavy use roadways.</p> | <p>34</p> |
| <p>39-50 Chapter 3 - Public Involvement</p> | | |
| <p>The draft NMP was expected in spring of 2018. The last public engagement on this project appears to have been early 2019, and in that time the community has not participated for nearly 2 years. The lack of momentum and transparency of the process in those 2 years is troubling.</p> | <p>Include an explanation of the gap in time from 2018 to the draft release in 2021.</p> | <p>39 Overall</p> |
| <p>Public input in the community processes or on the online interactive map are explained in the plan, including if or how this input was incorporated into prioritization. A map illustrating how the proposed networks overlays onto the public input map will show this relationship.</p> | <p>Include a map with the overlaid Proposed Networks onto the public input GIS map (this can also be shared on the website).</p> | <p>41 3.1 Field Data Collection and Community Input Map</p> |
| <p>51-61 Chapter 4 - Network Development</p> | | |
| <p>The description of "yield roadways" seems similar to many Anchorage roads by default, but this does not necessarily make them safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Does this terminology and roadway fit the culture of Anchorage and</p> | <p>Explain how "Yield Roadways" would function in the car-centric culture of Anchorage.</p> | <p>52 4.1 Bicycle Network. Approach</p> |

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| <p>36th Avenue is a primary active transportation corridor that needs improvements. The current facilities, including multi-use paths are inconsistent along the corridor, with notable impediments like light poles within sidewalks, and dangerous crossings.</p> | <p>36th Avenue: Add as a MEDIUM priority pedestrian and bicyclist facilities.</p> | |
| <p>Tudor Road currently has a combination of multi-use paths, sidewalks, and shoulders, but this section is non-existent and extremely dangerous in the winter with snow banks and semi-trucks. Along the full stretch of the corridor, there are numerous crossings and driveways that are dangerous, especially for pedestrians crossing the high-speed roadway with few crosswalks and poor lighting. This roadway needs to be prioritized and improved.</p> | <p>Tudor Road: Add shared use pathway from Minnesota Dr. to Harding Dr.</p> | |
| <p>This project is in design and is moving into construction on 30th Avenue and Spenard. It is a "Complete Streets" project for the city. It may be that the enhanced shared roadway on "31st Ave" should be replaced with the 32nd/33rd separated bikeway recommendations on both maps and project tables.</p> | <p>Include the 32nd & 33rd Avenue projects as HIGH priorities</p> | |
| <p>Alaska Railroad multi-use trail: As identified in the 2010 Anchorage Bicycle Plan, this multi-use trail along the railroad corridor should be reinstated. This corridor was reaffirmed in the 2020 Spenard Corridor Plan as a "future active transportation corridor."</p> | <p>Include an active transportation corridor along the Alaska Railroad.</p> | |
| <p>Currently, Fish Creek Trail deadheads at Taft, which is very dangerous due to the deep curve that was installed for the purposes of the trucking industry. There is no sidewalk or pathway from Harding to Minnesota and nowhere to walk other than in the vegetation when crossing the railroad tracks if one wants to stay out of the road.</p> | <p>Include working with the Alaska Railroad to access ROW for a pedestrian/bike trail from Fish Creek Trail at Red Bridge Park to Minnesota Dr.</p> | |

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| <p>Fish Creek Trail: This multi-use trail along the Alaska Railroad, as identified in the 2010 Anchorage Bicycle Plan and reaffirmed in the 2020 Spenard Corridor Plan (primary active network as shown on the Open Space Network map on pg. 44 of the SCP), should be included. The council also supports a trail connection from Ure Park to the Fish Creek Trail.</p> <p>Fish Creek Trail to the Ocean is a project currently in the works for bond funding, but it is not included on the trail map. Our council strongly supports connectivity of our parks and trails, as well as the long-term vision of daylighting Fish Creek. This corridor is identified as a “future active transportation corridor” in the 2020 Spenard Corridor Plan.</p> | <p>Include an active transportation corridor along the Fish Creek Trail, including the Fish Creek Trail connector to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, as a recommended shared use pathway</p> <p>Include and highlight the "Ride the Moose Loop" route as well as priority connections, like through the Mountains View neighborhood.</p> | <p>Major connection barriers to the Moose Loop, such as the Lake Otis crossing and connection through Mountain View.</p> <p>The residents who live in the area to the north of International Airport Road cannot safely walk, catch a bus or ride a bike because the bike trail has never been finished between Spenard and Northwood. Many of the cars driving on that strip of road are going in excess of 45 mph.</p> |
| <p>Right now the core network appears along most state-managed roadways, which are often at high speeds and are not as frequently maintained in the wintertime. Secondary or tertiary streets as the main network would be a practical approach the muni could better implement. Pedestrians often face difficult conditions along sidewalks, which snow dumped on them, cars parked over the curb, and barriers within pathways, all issues that make sidewalks/pathways often impassable.</p> | <p>There should be a trail connection on the north side of International Airport Road from Spenard to Northwood as there is no shoulder path or trail to walk on safely.</p> <p>Include a core pedestrian network that puts pedestrians first. Right now this document does not prioritize active transportation users on any roadways throughout Anchorage.</p> | <p>Looking at the "Proposed Pedestrian Network" and "Priority Pedestrian Network" does not illustrate where all 300 projects land on the map and how they relate to the priority corridors.</p> |
| <p>Proposed Pedestrian Network</p> <p>57</p> | <p>Include a map of all the 300 pedestrian projects.</p> | |

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| | | <p>The corridors do not capture important neighborhood connections or safe routes to schools. These should be represented in the plan in some way.</p> | <p>For example, Lois Drive is an important pedestrian corridor through Spenard and it is not identified in the plan. There are also numerous schools that only have a block of sidewalk (if that) surrounding the school properties, not representing realistic or safe pathways for children to access schools.</p> |
| | | <p>Include the Fairview Greenway as a priority</p> | <p>This is identified in the Fairview Community Plan (page 60) Goal "5.2 Improve and identify linkages to the Ship Creek and Chester Creek greenbelts and trail systems." It is also included in the Anchorage Land Use Plan 2040 and should be part of the priority pedestrian network, connecting the Chestercreek Trail through Fairview and to the Ship Creek Trail.</p> |
| | | <p>Incorporate "Open Streets" within the primary pedestrian network.</p> | <p>Anchorage has many opportunities, like in Downtown Anchorage, where roadways could be closed off to vehicle traffic and put active transportation users first. These could be anchors within the pedestrian network. This policy is described as a pilot program (page 132-133); however these potential locations can be identified and described within the primary network. A pedestrian plan should have some areas where pedestrians are "first," but right now the network still resides mainly on high-speed roadways designed for vehicles.</p> |
| | | <p>Tudor Road</p> | <p>As stated above, Tudor Road is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists alike. There are sections along this road that should be identified for safer crosswalks, including where pedestrians are unfortunately injured or killed by vehicles.</p> |
| 61-98 | Chapter 5 - Prioritization | | |
| | General | <p>There are a number of projects that should be included in 5.2 Bicycle Projects table, explained above.</p> | |

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| <p>64-65</p> | <p>Table 5.1 Prioritization Criteria Matrix</p> | <p>Include criteria (potentially under “Previous Support”) for projects that appear in community council’s Capital Improvement Plan prioritization for the municipality.</p> | <p>There are a number of projects that have high community support, and these can be found in recent annual CIP priorities for each community council.</p> |
| <p>70-96</p> | <p>Tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4</p> | <p>Explain the difference in prioritization between pedestrian and bicycle projects.</p> | <p>It is our understanding the plan explains the bicycle project prioritization in more detail because these projects listed are newly developed and prioritized (high, medium, or low projects). The Pedestrian projects are listed in priority 1-300, but were not reevaluated and were included as was developed in the 2007 Pedestrian Plan, but a similar prioritization listing would make more sense.</p> |
| <p>70-83</p> | <p>Tables 5.2 Bicycle Projects</p> | <p>Revisit this prioritization to ensure the active transportation corridors identified in the Spenard Corridor Plan are included in the process.</p> | <p>Though the SCP is listed in the prioritization table for “Previous Support” (p. 65), it does not appear for all the projects identified in the existing or proposed active transportation corridors (primary, secondary, or both) within this table. Examples include 27th Ave, 40th Ave, Chugach Way, and Wilson/Cambridge/Cope.</p> |
| <p>84</p> | <p>Tables 5.3 Priority Pedestrian Corridors</p> | <p>Explain the proposed infrastructure changes on the “Priority Pedestrian Corridors.”</p> | <p>The plan lists primary and secondary pedestrian corridors, but does not explain the kind of pedestrian infrastructure recommended to make those often high-speed roadways safer for pedestrians. The 300 projects listed also do not seem to align with the corridors and include many facilities and intersections. This makes it difficult to understand when pedestrian projects may get implemented along the proposed primary or secondary networks. This needs further explanation to help ensure pedestrian projects do get developed in a timely way.</p> |

| 99-138 Chapter 6 - Implementation | |
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| Overall | <p>Include guidance on implementing solutions around education, encouragement, equity, and enforcement, in addition to the engineering and evaluation included in this plan..</p> <p>There are a number of ways to improve our non-motorized network beyond the physical system and data. These can include improving wayfinding and signage, adjusting timing of traffic signals for non-motorized users, improving law enforcement and education, and adding lighting where needed.</p> <p>By building this policy into the maintenance cycle, progress to upgrade facilities with minimal footprint changes can occur more timely. The plan should lay out how to recommend dedicated pedestrian facilities on all roads, and dedicated bicycle facilities on all roads where posted speeds exceed 25mph, with the potential for bike lanes on more urban roads that have 25mph limits, like downtown where bicycles are required to ride in the roadway without any on-road facilities. If there's not a dedicated bike facility recommended that should be the exception rather than the rule.</p> |
| 127 | <p>6.2 Policy + Programs</p> <p>Add a municipal policy that whenever roadways are repaved, on-road (buffered, sharrows, etc) bicycle facilities should be considered the re-stripping.</p> <p>The municipality has a Vision Zero Action Plan with numerous action items that should be integrated into the Non-Motorized Plan's policy recommendations and implementation. All of the city's planning documents should not be siloed, but should be better integrated. Examples include staffing, task forces, reducing speeds, and more. Since adopting this plan, there have not been sufficient programmatic changes in how we build and maintain infrastructure to reach the goals articulated in Vision Zero.</p> |
| 127 | <p>6.2 Policy + Programs</p> <p>Create a municipal policy that would integrate policy recommendations of Vision Zero going forward.</p> |
| 128 | <p>Data Consolidation</p> <p>Share non-motorized data online in an easily accessible format.</p> <p>The "general public" is listed as an audience and should be able to easily seek and find the data. Consider sharing data in user-friendly ways to find and visualize the data over time.</p> |

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| 131 | Safe Routes to School | Prioritize funding and integrating safe routes to school in municipal projects. | Funding this program has decreased over the years, and makes implementing lasting partnerships difficult. The municipality needs to prioritize safe routes to schools so students can walk and bike safely. Right now, most schools just have sidewalks along school grounds or are lucky to have bicycle racks. These infrastructure pieces are just as important as community partnerships. |
| 134 | Winter Maintenance Strategy | Create a map of the core pedestrian and bicyclist network. | As a winter maintenance policy and procedure is created, there needs to be more recognition that Anchorage is a winter city October- April each year. Our pedestrian and bicycle network and facilities should show this. |
| 139-204 Chapter 7 - Design Guide | | | |
| 147 | Design Needs of Users - Bicyclists | Include electric bicycles (e-bikes) in the bicyclists users. | E-bikes are becoming more popular to assist bike riders throughout the municipality, but are not mentioned within the plan. This impacts accessibility along the network, speeds, and more. |
| 155 | 7.3 Facility Types | Include Festival Streets as a design type | (See above and Spenard Corridor Plan) |
| 155 | 7.3 Facility Types | Design bicycle infrastructure for a winter city. | Winter maintenance is always a challenge for our roadways. We need to consider above-ground indicators for sidewalks, paths, and on-street facilities like signs with lane markings, street lights for bike lanes, and other creative solutions for when snow and ice may hide facilities. |
| 158 | Yield Roadway | Expand the design options for an "Enhanced Shared Roadway" to incorporate safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that would fit with Anchorage's culture and advance us toward more active transportation awareness. | The "Yield Roadway" as described would not allow for painting or signage. Instead, the Yield Roadway design should better mirror "Neighborhood Street Design Alternatives" included in the Spenard Corridor Plan (p. 96-98 for example). This would allow for sidewalks or paths, swales, sharrows and bike markings, and signs. |

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| 167 | Intersections and crossings | Include recommended maximum distances between signalized crosswalks. | <p>Right now Anchorage has many "super blocks" with signalized crosswalks over 0.5 miles apart, encouraging jay walking on high-speed roads. This plan should recommend a maximum distance for signalized crosswalks especially along the primary pedestrian network.</p> |
| 179 | Signalization | Include additional design features for safer signalized crossings at intersections, including automatic activation of pedestrian signals and bicyclists | <p>Intersections are one of the most dangerous places for pedestrians and bicyclists being hit by people in cars. Options like increasing lighting at key intersections, allowing the walk signal to start before vehicle traffic, automatic "walk signals," allowing for manual activation to happen even after the traffic light changes when time allows, etc.</p> |
| 189 | Signage and Wayfinding | Incorporate Indigenous Place Names in signage and wayfinding. | <p>The Indigenous Place Names Project is a successful initiative of the Anchorage Park Foundation and many partners, but this project should be more broadly adopted and integrated into the municipality's design process as a cornerstone for the city.</p> |