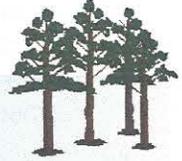


Correspondence



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



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

Joni Wilm, AMATS Senior Transportation Planner
Municipality of Anchorage
amatsinfo@anchorageak.gov

Re: Comments on the Municipality's Draft Non-Motorized Plan

March 4, 2021

Dear Ms. Wilm and AMATS:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) Non-Motorized Plan (NMP). The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) supports robust policies for development and maintenance of Anchorage's non-motorized transportation system. In December 2020, RCCC submitted comments on specific policies our Council believes the Non-Motorized Plan should address. Please include RCCC's December 20, 2020, in the comment record for the draft NMP (see attachment). Additionally, at our February 11, 2021, meeting, we reaffirmed those comments and approved additional comments as detailed in this letter, by a vote of 22 yays, 2 nays, and 5 abstained.

Our December 20th letter included recommendations on six policy areas. Those are re-capped below:

The NMP should include policies regarding:

1. Enabling development and use of off-street pathways within undeveloped right-of-way (ROW) and Section Line Easements.
2. Municipal and citizen partnership for off-street non-motorized corridor development.
3. Maintenance funding for pedestrian connections, both within and outside of roadways.
4. Continued authority of existing municipal and Chugach State Park Trails Plans, including adopted neighborhood and district plans such as the Hillside District Plan.
5. Coordination with the Schools on Trails program of the Anchorage Park Foundation.
6. Early neighborhood outreach during trail planning and development.

Additionally, we are disappointed that this plan does not incorporate any references or policies to implement the Anchorage Climate Action Plan of 2019. Now that a draft Non-Motorized Plan has been published for public review, we are providing these additional comments.

7. Acknowledge the continued authority of the Anchorage Trails Plan, district plans, and neighborhood plans, especially with regard to pedestrian pathways and trails.

Delete the sentence about superseding from the Executive Summary (pg. vii, para 1), which would abandon the detailed connections identified in prior adopted trails plans.

Instead, insert a statement such as this: *The Areawide Trails Plan and district and neighborhood plans will continue to determine non-motorized connections until AMATS amends the Non-Motorized Plan with detailed trails planning. The 2021 Non-Motorized Plan does not lay out detailed connections for trails and pathways at the neighborhood level, nor does it address many off-street connections or recreation trails.*

8. The follow-up trails plan should not be called a "Recreational" Trails plan; something like "Trails" or "Trails and Community Connections" would be better. The follow-up plan should include connections for utilitarian travel between neighborhoods, schools, and other community destinations. The label of "recreation trails" may create limits for funding sources as well as legal problems for use of easements. In addition, the word "recreation" may imply jurisdiction of the municipal parks department, which will often not be the case.
9. The NMP should be clear that off-street infrastructure is part of the basic infrastructure in new development and re-development. RCCC requests that the NMP include policies as follows:
 - 9A. Off-street pathways in new plats: as a condition of future plat approval, non-motorized off-street connections shall be cleared, surveyed, permanently signed, and developed with at least a durable soft-surface tread at the time of other infrastructure. In residential subdivisions, off-street pathways should be constructed prior to sale of lots
 - 9B. Off-street pathways along existing but undeveloped easements or ROW: MOA planning and ROW staff will create a template and a process for developing an off-street trail or pathway along existing easements and ROW.
10. Include annual training for staff and appointees about non-motorized connectivity.
The muni has forfeited numerous non-motorized connections in the Rabbit Creek area when staff or appointees did not apply Title 21 requirements or did not understand trail design possibilities. Examples include Upper Canyon Road and several connections in the Little Rabbit Creek vicinity.

Add to Section 6.2 Program recommendations, Internal Staff Trainings (pg. 129 of draft NMP):
Include annual training for the Platting Board and Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as Planning and Development Services staff, to inform them of requirements to ensure non-motorized connectivity during platting, subdivision design and road design. This should specifically include information that lay persons' judgment about the practicality of trail construction cannot be the basis for avoiding a non-motorized connection where indicated by adopted plans or Title 21.
11. We request a new definition for a type of off-street pathway suited to the rural and semi-rural Area B of the Anchorage Bowl: something smaller and simpler than a 10-14-foot-wide paved pathway, as defined in this NMP. On some terrain, it is not desirable to develop off-street pathways to the level of a Shared Use Pathway (paved, 10 to 14 feet). In fact, some existing public pedestrian easements are only 10 feet wide.

Specific projects

Table 5.2 Bicycle Projects: In addition to the Table, these should be numbered and printed on a locator map, or on several locator maps, one for each priority, High, Medium, and Low. Without a locator map, the reader must guess the projects' names. Likewise, there should be a locator map for Table 5.4 with over 300 pedestrian projects.

RCCC residents are disappointed that there are no priority shared pathways south of Dimond Blvd. Our council area has several priorities which we ask AMATS to add to the NMP. Over the years, we have recommended many of these connections in commenting on the Capital Improvement Program, area plans, subdivision plats, and zoning considerations, among others.

12. Re-align the DeArmoun Road to Rabbit Creek Road connection: the proposed bicycle network in the NMP doesn't achieve a practical connection.

142nd Avenue is part of the chosen route, but it is unsafe owing to very steep grades and a blind dip. Also, it requires north-south riders to ascend extra elevation if their intent is to continue south to Golden View. Buffalo Street is shown as worth improving as shown in the draft NMP, but the improvement should not leave any gap between DeArmoun and Rabbit Creek Road. The NMP should show improvements extending to Rabbit Creek Road on either the Buffalo alignment or on Evergreen Street.

13. Identify Old Seward Highway east of Potter Marsh as an Enhanced Shared Roadway/ Neighborhood Greenway. The draft NMP map (Figure 2.1) proposes that the bicycle network should extend only part way from Rabbit Creek Road to Potter Valley Road. It should not stop near Tideview. It should instead be extended the complete distance. Also, this should be a shared use project: it is identified on the Pedestrian Project list as Project 314. Old Seward, with blind hills from Rabbit Creek to Potter Valley, receives extensive use by pedestrians, bicyclists, and roller skiers throughout the year.

RCCC requests a high priority project to establish the Old Seward Highway near Potter Marsh as an Enhanced Shared Roadway as outlined on page 158. RCCC has been working for over a year with the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), trying to get Share-the-Route signage and a reduced speed limit. With the bordering state wildlife refuge, this is a model project for a "Neighborhood Greenway" as described in the NMP, with "low traffic volumes and speeds, designated and designed to give bicycles and pedestrians travel priority", while "discouraging through trips by non-local motorized traffic".

There is an existing and growing safety hazard along this connection. There are no shoulders, poor sight lines and steep embankments. Cyclists need an alternative to the current bike route on the Seward Highway, where there have been multiple fatal vehicle accidents. The Alaska Departments of Transportation (DOT&PF) and Fish and Game (ADFG) have designed and are implementing plans for a pullout with parking and toilets at the south end of this connection. This will surely increase vehicle traffic that poses a hazard to non-motorized users. In addition, this road provides important neighborhood connections and serves as a popular exercise/recreation corridor.

14. Add a Pedestrian Corridor from Goldenview Middle School along the 156th and 155th Avenue corridors or other existing easements to Jamie Avenue, with a T or spur trail to connect to Bear Valley Elementary School and Section 36 Park. We request that this be shown as a Near-Term priority because of the ongoing subdivision of surrounding tracts and scoping for road connections. A corridor delineation in this NMP will ensure that road designers and subdivision owners work cooperatively to connect schools, neighborhoods and parks.

- a. This corridor is shown as a future road and trail connection in the Hillside District Plan.
- b. Currently, Bear Valley School has zero areas that are designated for safe walking or biking. This school is one of only two in the entire Municipality where NO KIDS ARE ALLOWED TO WALK TO SCHOOL.
- c. There is also a road design underway for Mountain Air Drive which will include a segment of pathway but Mountain Air Drive will NOT provide a contiguous connection to existing neighborhoods or to Goldenview Middle School
- d. RCCC residents and school staff have expressed interest in a trail corridor along existing platted but undeveloped pedestrian easements and the Section Line Easement. This avoids the high speed traffic and steep grades of Rabbit Creek Road.

15. Connectivity from Golden View Drive to Potter Valley Road (Pedestrian Project 216): A short segment of Golden View Drive is shown on the NMP Bike Network Priority Map. The complete connection should be shown. In addition, Golden View Drive should be shown on the Pedestrian Priority map. RCCC has been rebuffed in its requests for a safe walk-to-school route in past re-design efforts for Golden View Drive.
16. Add a new corridor: Pedestrian or shared use path from DeArmoun at Canyon Road through several municipal parks to Our Own Lane and Old Rabbit Creek Road. This route would avoid steep grades and fast traffic on RC and DeArmoun Roads. This is shown as a primary corridor in the Hillside District Plan. Much of this route crosses municipal parkland. This partly off-street connection has a far lower construction cost than retro-fitting either Rabbit Creek or DeArmoun Road, both of which have high traffic stress levels and steep gradients. Moreover, off-street connections provide a higher quality and safer experience for non-motorized users.
17. The segments of bicycle network depicted at Jamie Avenue and at Potter Heights and Southpointe Ridge should have project numbers. They both provide important neighborhood connections. The Jamie Avenue connection would provide direct pedestrian access to our proposed School Corridor along the 156th alignment. The Potter Heights connection does not appear to be listed in Table 5.2. The roads in this area are due for upgrading, so the bicycle network connections should be clearly depicted on the Tables.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and we would be happy to discuss them further with you. Our lead contact for this issue is Nancy Pease; she can be reached at 907-441-6733, or by email: nancypease2@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-chair
[Rabbit Creek Community Council](#)

Carl Johnson, Co-chair
[Rabbit Creek Community Council](#)

cc: Joe Meehan, ADF&G
Julius Adolfsson, ADOT&PF