

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

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

AMATS

Attn: Craig Lyon, AMATS Coordinator
632 W. 6th Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99501

December 22, 2021

Dear AMATS:

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) appreciates your attention to our October 22, 2021, request for a longer review period for the Goals and Objectives of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) 2050 Goals and Objectives. We have now had time to review this document and are herein providing our comments, as approved by a unanimous vote at our December 9, 2021 meeting.

The MTP 2050 will guide at least \$2 billion in local transportation spending, and maybe much more as a result of the federal infrastructure bill that our Alaska congressional delegation supported. With that influx of funding, it is critical that the Goals and Objectives provide a strong, rational framework for the MTP 2050. Where and how we expend these funds to build roads and trails, and route buses, will shape the efficiency of our city, and the livability of our neighborhoods, for decades to come.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The Goals should be strong guiding principles as stated in Goals 4 and 5. Our recommendations on other goals focus on strengthening and clarifying them.

The Objectives should be worded as outcomes, not practices: The Objectives should preferably set targets, but at the least, they should identify outcomes that can be defined quantitatively and measured by publicly-noticed performance standards.

A number of the Objectives in this draft are not worded as outcomes, so our specific comments attempt to express desirable outcomes.

We understand the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) will use these Goals and Objectives to draft Performance Standards. Performance must be measured. We request that AMATS identify protocols for measuring the transportation system to see if each Objective is being met. The AMATS measuring protocols need to include a reporting process, with clear information and analysis, for presentation to the public and decision-makers.

We are encouraged to see that reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) have been added to the objectives. These objectives are key indicators of an efficient and sustainable transportation and land use system, and should be strongly worded.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The following are our specific comments on the six draft Goals in this document. Our recommended revisions to the draft Goals are provided by underlining additional recommended wording and striking through words to delete. We also recommend improvements to several objectives, and additional objectives to better frame development and effective implementation of the full plan. Our justification for these recommendations is provided in italics.

Draft Goal 1: Prioritize Maintenance for ~~Preserve~~ Existing Infrastructure.
Budget for repairs and rehabilitation before funding new projects.

The goal should be to "Fix It First" not construct new infrastructure while current infrastructure crumbles. The capacity to fund maintenance should be taken into account before funding new infrastructure.

Add new objectives:

Objective 1B: Prioritize maintenance for existing facilities before adding more facilities.

Objective 1C: Plan a fiscally-constrained budget for maintaining both new roads and the entire system.

Draft Goal 2: Improve Safety and Security.

Provide Design safer and more secure places to live, walk, bike, ride the bus, and drive.

The Objectives are too vague. We have suggested defined outcomes, not just the vague assurance of "reduced" harm. We want to emphasize physical designing for safety, because speed and inattention will always pose danger to travelers.

"What pedestrians and cyclists really need: infrastructure that consistently makes room for them, prioritizes their safety and comfort above vehicle speed, and that provides greater visibility for all road users when they do mix with traffic, so that when drivers need to share the road, it doesn't come as a surprise" (<https://t4america.org/2021/11/30/behind-ped-cyclist-fatalities/>)². Unfortunately, pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and injuries have been on the rise in Anchorage.

Revise Objective 2A. Reduce the number and severity of vehicle, pedestrian, bicycle and motorcycle and commercial vehicle crashes with a target of zero pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in keeping with Vision Zero (<https://visionzeronet.org/>).¹

Add new objectives:

Objective 2D: Design for safety over speed on local and arterial roads, with a maximum 35 mph speed (per studies and recommendations by T4America)

Objective 2E: Limit points of conflict on highways, freeways and arterials.

Draft Goal 3: Improve Mobility Options. *This is an exceedingly broad goal, and would be clearer if stated as: Improve travel efficiency and reliability.*

Support an efficient, reliable and connected transportation system that ~~allows people to succeed~~

by equitably improves access and mobility to all activities to neighborhoods, jobs and community destinations.

We have deleted words that are overly vague. There is no way to measure “allows people to succeed” and “all activities” —delete those phrases. We have suggested more outcome-based wording for the Objectives particularly regarding non-motorized uses and compact land use. We also want to protect neighborhoods from cut-through traffic.

Replace draft Objective 3B: ~~Provide transportation facilities to encourage and accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel. Design low-stress bicycle and pedestrian facilities to community destinations and schools to encourage these travel modes.~~

“Low stress” is an emerging term in transportation planning for minimizing points of conflict between motorized and non-motorized users.

Reword draft Objectives 3C and 3E, both of which address land use, insert a new 3F, revise old 3F and renumber it as 3G, then renumber the following objectives as 3H and 3I:

Objective 3C. ~~Implement transportation facilities that area[sic] appropriate for the intended adjacent land use. Design infrastructure that supports intended land use patterns and avoids negative impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and land uses.~~

Objective 3E. ~~Manage congestion to support land use goals and facility[sic] efficiency while avoiding unwanted induced demand impacts. Manage congestion by optimizing overall travel times for all travelers, not just vehicular travel speeds.~~

New Objective 3F. Avoid induced vehicle travel demand that will create negative impacts, such as increased VMT and GHG or reduced safety. Calculate induced demand and resulting impacts for all proposed new facilities.

Revise Objective 3F. ~~Reduce the passenger vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and passenger vehicle hours traveled (VHT) per capita.~~

Vehicle Miles Traveled is a keystone measure for an efficient and environmentally-sustainable land use and transportation system. Other municipalities seek to reduce ALL vehicle miles traveled, including freight miles. Vehicle freight miles can be reduced by more efficient land use patterns and delivery systems, and maybe by rail or drone delivery. Thus this objective should not be limited to reduction of passenger miles. The “per capita” allowance should be deleted so as not to accept VMT growth as an inevitable part of population growth: a growing city has even more incentive to reduce their VMT overall in order to have more compact land use, more street-level human activity, and lower GHG emissions. It is good for the health of the community and for individuals if people spend less time driving and riding in vehicles.

Draft Goal 4. Support the Economy.

Develop a transportation system that supports a thriving, sustainable, broad-based economy.

The heart of any great city is great neighborhoods. Add an objective:

Objective 4F: Protect neighborhood character and cohesion by minimizing cut-through traffic and designing safe local cross-travel along high-traffic routes.

The MTP 2040 had objectives (5H and 5I) to promote aesthetics. These should be restored as a new 4G:

Objective 4G: Enhance aesthetics and a sense of place by designing transportation improvements to reflect community character.

Draft Goal 5: Promote a Healthy Environment.

Protect, preserve, and enhance the natural environment to promote sustainability and public health.

We concur with this goal, however the previous MTP 2040 objectives under a similar goal were more specific, and outcome based. The vague language in the draft MTP 2050 is less accountable. Objective 5D is especially egregious by aiming for “compatibility with the natural environment,” while Goal 5 specifies “protect, preserve, and enhance the natural environment.”

MTP Goal 5 Objectives should be revised to restore specific types of environmental outcomes from our future transportation spending. They should also incorporate better public health indicators, not “healthy lifestyles” which cannot be easily measured. Public health indicators include rates of obesity, asthma, and mental illness (AMATS Non-Motorized Plan, 2021).³

The MTP should commit to a specific target for Greenhouse Gas Emissions in order to meet the Anchorage Climate Action Plan’s target of 80 percent greenhouse gas reduction by 2050.

Revise Objective 5A: Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions commensurate with the Anchorage Climate Action Plan target of 80% reduction by 2050.

Revise Objective 5D to include the pertinent wording of objective 5G from MTP 2040: Support context sensitive design standards in order to ensure transportation compatibility with the natural environment, minimize and mitigate impact on the natural environment, such as water resources, fish and wildlife habitat, watersheds and wetlands, open space, and parklands.

Revise Objective 5E: Promote healthy lifestyles through increased active transportation. Improve public health indicators by minimizing air pollution impacts and increasing the percentage of active transportation, to increase scores

Draft Goal 6: Prioritize equity.

~~Promote equitable transportation options, improvements and maintenance activities.~~ Prioritize projects that improve the ease of travel for vulnerable populations.

Objectives 6A and 6B are vague and weak. 6A speaks to mobility, not equity. They don’t really address equity between privileged and underprivileged populations

Replace 6A: ~~Improve access to employment, education, recreation and essential services for underserved neighborhoods.~~ Improve the safety, affordability, and total travel time to jobs and essential services for vulnerable populations and underserved neighborhoods.

Because Draft Objective 6B has poor grammar and needs to be clarified, we are unsure about its meaning and how to improve it.

[pt 3 below is covered in obj 1, I incorporated 1 and 2 into a closing para -

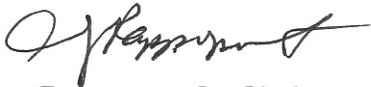
1. Design for safety over speed on local and arterial roads. Roads surrounded by development have lots of points of conflict, and should be designed to serve those areas with speeds of 35 mph or under, as speeds under 35 mph dramatically decrease the likelihood of fatalities in a crash.

2. Connect people to jobs, services, and community destinations. There are multiple measures for the ease of arriving at one's destination, including equity, affordability, and length of trip and total travel time, and not just speed of vehicular travel.
3. Prioritize maintenance for existing facilities before adding more facilities.
 - a. Plan and budget for maintaining both new roads and the entire system.]

In closing, we would like to emphasize a couple points that should be part of the MTP 2050 as it is further developed. These include the importance of designing for safety over speed on local and arterial roads. Roads surrounded by development have many points of conflict, and should be designed to serve those areas with speeds of no more than 35 mph, as speeds under 35mph dramatically decrease the likelihood of fatalities in a crash. Additionally, efficiently, economically, and sustainably connecting people to jobs, services, and community destinations should be a primary concern for the overall plan. There are multiple measures for the ease of arriving at one's destination, including equity, affordability, and length of trip and total travel time - not just speed of vehicular travel.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. If you have any questions or would like to discuss them further, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-Chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council



Carl Johnson, Co-Chair
Rabbit Creek Community Council

cc: Federation of Community Councils
John Weddleton, Anchorage Assembly
Suzanne LaFrance, Anchorage Assembly
Brooke Blessing, Anchorage Trails Planner

¹ The Vision Zero Network is a non-profit, collaborative campaign helping communities reach their goals of Vision Zero -- eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries -- while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. They are committed to defining, building momentum, and advancing Vision Zero in communities across the U.S.

² T4America Blog: Behind the scenes on the rise in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and injuries. 30 Nov 2021

³ https://www.anchoragenonmotorizedplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/20210205_non_motorized_plan_public_review_draft_with_appendices.pdf