

Correspondence



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



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

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions

February 4, 2022

Re: Nominations for the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program

Dear Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee members:

Thank you for serving as advocates to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) for bike and pedestrian improvements in Anchorage!

We understand from Joni Wilm that your committee, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), will choose at least five High Priority Bicycle Projects from the Non-Motorized Plan, and nominate these projects for funding in the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) requests that your nominations include Project 233, along Old Seward Highway on the east side of Potter Marsh. This a 2-mile stretch from Rabbit Creek Road to Potter Valley Road. This project is shown as High Priority on the Prioritized Bicycle Corridors map, and is listed on pages 100-101 of the Non-Motorized Plan. The RCCC has requested funding for non-motorized improvements to this corridor for 25 years. In all that time, we have only managed to achieve a slight speed reduction, instituted due to safety concerns about innumerable cracks, dips, and breaks in the pavement. Moreover, this reduction is likely only temporary until scheduled re-paving.

There are many reasons this route merits your endorsement for inclusion in this TIP:

- Safety: The proposed route along the Old Seward Highway (OSH) is the only route for cyclists to avoid the Seward Highway along Potter Marsh, where there have been multiple fatalities.
- Existing infrastructure deficiencies: OSH is a much lower speed corridor than the main highway, but has many hazards, including:
 - No shoulders
 - Chronically cracked and heaved pavement
 - Poor sight lines
 - Puddling and flooding many times per year
- All-season use by a variety of non-motorized users:
 - Multiple users share the traffic lanes, including bicyclists, walkers, runners, wildlife watchers, roller-skiers and strollers

- Bicyclists stage several races on this route in summer
- City-wide recreation and commuter value for bicyclists:
 - Recreationists and long-distance riders from all parts of Anchorage are attracted here because it has relatively low traffic, is scenic, and connects to several Hillside riding routes.
 - It will implement part of the vision of an Anchorage to Girdwood bike route.
- Growing visitor attraction
 - The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, in partnership with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, will upgrade and expand a popular bicycle staging area at the base of Potter Valley Road in summer 2022 to include parking for 45+ vehicles, a vaulted toilet and picnic tables. Later plans include interpretive features and a boardwalk into Potter Marsh, part of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, a State Critical Habitat Area that already receives at least 100,000 visits annually. Bicycle use, and other non-motorized uses, will increase significantly. So will vehicular traffic along with increased risk of collisions.

Given the anticipated surge in traffic on this route, we request that you nominate the Old Seward Highway route for corridor study and non-motorized design and construction, not just a study as listed on pages 100-101.

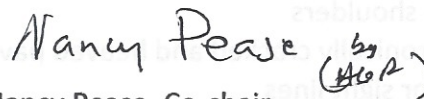
In addition to the trail nomination, RCCC requests that the BPAC pro-actively advise AMATS on its next non-motorized planning effort, currently referred as a Recreational Trails Plan. We understand that AMATS wants to fund a recreational trails plan in the upcoming TIP. We ask BPAC to ensure that the title and scope of the trails plan be expanded to include utilitarian trails as well as recreational trails. There are many utilitarian trails depicted in the 1996 Areawide Trails Plan, the Hillside District Plan, and neighborhood plans that are NOT represented in the recent Non-Motorized Plan. These 'commuter connections' between neighborhoods and community destinations should be included in the next Trails Plan, along with trails.

Thank you for your careful consideration of Project 233, the Old Seward Highway, High Priority Bicycle segment for nomination to the 2023-2026 TIP, as a study and non-motorized design and construction project. If you have any questions regarding community support for this project, we can provide past correspondence and recommendations, including for the annual Capital Improvement Program. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,



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Nancy Pease, Co-chair
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cc: Joni Wilm, AMATS Non-Motorized Planner and Committee Liaison