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MEETING NOTES DOT Planning and CLT

DATE: 02/21/25

WHERE: Videoconference

TIME BEGUN: 10:00 a.m.

PURPOSE: Updates and question/answer

PRESENT: R. Marasignan, Transportation Planner, ADOT&PF, B. White, Regional Planning Chief DOT, D. Story, CLT Chair, J. Cadieux, CLT Secretary

DISCUSSION:

Q: Communications with Kenaitze Tribe?

- Planning department not much. DOT expanding their conversation.

Q: Sterling Hwy Long Term Planning: Can short term efforts help make the LT planning be more effective?

- Coordinating with Western Fed Lands, similar to Turnagain Arm area plan, working with WFL because of their efforts so far.
- 2026: Begin LT plan for Sterling Hwy. Will take approximately two years to complete. Funding hasn't been cut so far. Hoping early in 2026 to prepare for summer season. Using rest of 2026 and early 2027 to get it out to public input and finalize.
- Rehab of the existing Sterling Hwy.: Long term project was intended but poor road status moved it.
- Now because of the poor status of road they're going to have to do a quick rehab.
- Any time the State uses federal funds a 5-year period is begun before more funding may be requested for an area. A pavement rehab will engender that 5-year period if we use Federal monies. If it were State-funded alone we could come back before that 5-yr period.
- 1R could be a \$10 million dollar project.

Q: What can be done to elevate above 1R? Worry that the substrate problems will show back up almost immediately.

Q: If the rehab is done in 2027 and then the functional classification is reduced subsequently, how is it at all likely that anything will be done for the long-term status? KPB will want as good a project as possible, troubles fixed, before they take on a roadway.

Q: How can we advocate for more?

- BW: The result of the drainage issues is what we're seeing. Agreed that is a big part of the problem. (See below regarding advocacy for not using federal dollars unless more than surface rehab is done.)

Q: A ped bridge onto an existing structure seems typically in line with a basic rehab project. How can we figure out how to add these kinds of issues?

- BW: Preventative maintenance, 1R, is done because of the monies that the region can control. A 2R will have to go through the STIP and further review. The commissioner's office currently controls the STIP and so it must be reviewed by his office. Some in CL are wanting that pavement fixed today. State doesn't want to spend its own monies nor use Federal dollars in general these days.

Q: What's the likelihood of any parts of our project being accomplished? Some folks are going to see the re-alignment project and wonder why CL would need any more money. What's the way to ensure that this long-term fix project actually occurs?

- State does not have a KPB area-wide plan.
- The only obstacle within State DOT is capacity to work on it.
- DOT has tried to start this in the past but KPB forces would shift and the effort would start/stop.
- DS: We are starting to try to link State and Borough efforts. We cannot be the only community in the same position as CL. Most people seem ready to move forward on these kinds of efforts, e.g. pathways, safety for all users.
- BW: State won't start until late 2025 or early 2026. There's a two-year plan with feds. They're working on the next one. October-ish deadline. Including "old Sterling Hwy" (CL town road) corridor and Kenai Transportation Plan. They'd be ready to start sooner. Heading to Homer next to learn community needs/desires there and then can address more on CL.

Q SS4A: BW aware of outcomes so far. CL #6:20. CL has still not been made aware of how far this will take our project. State is in conversation with KPB. Joselyn Biloon is on that panel. She will retire in July and then Romo will take her place.

AK HB26: A minor language change but addresses a fair number of our project's needs regarding communication.

Q Matsu and pathways: They have a few locals involved. E.g. using tractors to maintain paths. Matsu allows and encourages them. The borough is seeking community councils to take things off the borough's plate.

Q: Why should we not assume the 2027 Project is the only thing that will happen for the next 20-25 years?

- BW: We're going through functional classification assessment of roadways. 10-year process. E.g. Old Glen is being maintained after the New Glen was built. We haven't abandoned but there's also no work been done on it. They are going to start looking at what is needed. What's the plan for the Old Glen? Trying to get a shift going to develop plans when they replace old highways but continue to use them.
- Agreed, if we do a 1R project then it will still be at least 6 years or more of planning, etc. before another project could be developed (and placed on the STIP)

- BW has advocated to please fix it right. Our Regional Director has fielded calls. Pressure exists that the pavement gets done sooner than later.
- The voice of our community is behind the Walkable efforts and the “get it done right” argument. The voices that are less patient and want it done now, are individuals with a voice in the matter. We need to marry the two efforts: If pavement is addressed then don’t use federal dollars so that the real solution may be developed and executed without waiting until the existing Sterling Hwy is no longer a part of the Interstate Hwy system.

Q: Is it likely we could get the State to fund the 2027 project so that we wouldn’t be tied to the longer time frame? How can we avoid the problem of never providing our project that the community has been convinced is needed?

- BW: Low likelihood that the State will fund the 2027 Project without federal dollars.
- Rep. Begich is interested in reducing state dependence on federal dollars.

Q: When’s the deadline for decisions on the 2027 Project?

- BW: Respond to the STIP amendment 2 as a whole community. They are moving toward a new way of keeping a rolling STIP rather than a 4-year block on any other construction and federal funding for all projects. Other states do this.
- The preventative maintenance project of 2027 may not be in the STIP. BW and RM will look this up and will give project names to CLT (our community) so that our efforts may be targeted. The more comments that come in, the better. They will inform us by Friday next week or early the week after. Comments are due March 20th. We (CLT) need to help community coordinate our effort.
- DS will try to write bullets this weekend and start informing the community without the project names but then add those in as soon as RM can get them to us.
- BW: Public comment should key in on importance of safety in the community. If the State is going to use federal funds then more than pavement rehab needs be done. Function and safety need to be addressed.
- A charette or workshop is a good idea. Anna Bosin, came from research in DOT, now with Planning, and is a supporter of active transportation. She should be included in a conversation with the community.
- Julius Adolofssen, DOT Active Transportation Planner, is aware of our project.
- DS:
 - This summer would be a good time to have a charette even though it’s a busy time.
 - AWA raft guides have been gathering images while using the roadway. We have about 100 images so far. We’re going to collect even more this summer to demonstrate how many folks are using the corridor despite the safety risks.
- Shoulders are needed!! Emergency vehicles are blocked because others have no place to pull-over.

Q: Is tribal funding going to be used for the bridge re-decking project?

- Kenaitze must have a structure in its inventory i.e. our bridges must be in their inventory first. This is done through BIA.
- BW will learn if our bridges are included in Kenaitze inventory.

TASKS ASSIGNED:**BW and RM:**

- What projects in the STIP to look at.
- Will talk to others including A. Hunting, in DOT about raising above a 1R.
- BW will check with feds regarding 5-year limit if federal dollars are used.
- BW talk internally about the expense of maintaining the road and the insufficiency.
- Will reach out to Kenaitze to learn if our bridges (Schooner Bend, Cooper Creek, and Kenai River at the lake outlet) are included in their inventory and are they interested in working with DOT/CL on these bridges.

DS and JC:

- Disseminate information provided by BW and RM to community once information is obtained and help coordinate community input to STIP Amendment 2.
- Plan a Charette for early Spring. Coordinate with BW and RM.

TIME ENDED: 11:07 a.m.