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DOT SC Regional Director and CLT Meeting Notes

DATE: 08/16/24

WHERE: In-person, Cooper Landing Brewery

TIME BEGUN: 4:00 p.m.

PURPOSE: Bring ideas to the Director for CLT projects. Remind or inform the Director further about the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Town Road Pathway Planning Project.

PRESENT: S. Holland, DOT Southcentral Regional Director, D. Story, Chair CLT, J. Cadieux, Secretary CLT

DISCUSSION:

- A new planner will be taking over to assist CLT. S. Holland will share his contact information.
- DOT will have a new office in Soldotna. It will start out just construction. SH would like to add a Kenai Peninsula resident as a Planner in that office. Timeline not yet established.
- CLT has submitted for TAP monies in the past and will do so in the future. Feedback on the submissions made would be helpful to future grant applications.
- CLT has a basic plan that was accepted by KPB as a part of their Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan. Funding is being sought to work on a more detailed, engineering plan for this complex area.
- The town road will not be safe for either vehicles or alternative transportation users even once the Sterling Hwy realignment opens.
- The existing Walkable Cooper Landing plan was always intended to be accomplished piece by piece as detailed planning can be accomplished and monies obtained.
- We need to lean upon R. Miranda, DPOR Engineer, for KRSMA engineering design but we could really use a DOT Planner who would work with us on all the aspects of the project that involve DOT, the ROW, and the roadway.
- The community supports the project and we only need to ask and they will draw together but we need to make it mean something and not continuously ask for the support without showing a result for the effort.
- We are prepared to do pieces of the project as we are able.
- We would like to serve as a case study for projects throughout the state. If we can solve the problems here, it could be done elsewhere.

- Cooper Creek bridge is an example pinch point. Alternative transport users must hop the guardrail, dash across the bridge, hop the guardrail again to move through that section of the roadway. The sloughing bluff immediately east of that bridge (~MP50) is a problem for all travelers, maintenance, and river health.
- Latent demand exists and once the new alignment opens with a separated pathway it will only expand from what exists today. 4.73% of all sport fishing in the state occurs in the Upper Kenai River and Russian River area.
- The two biggest recreation facilities, Quart Creek campground and the Russian River complex, would be joined by a town road pathway. Access to state, borough, and federal assets will be achieved by the Cooper Landing Town Road project.
- SH: DOT is evolving to place more focus on all modes of transportation including alternative transportation in projects.
- The State has a transportation pot of money that is underfunded but they're trying to highlight the existing Sterling Hwy through CL as needing maintenance before the realignment opens. If funding is found, the existing roadway project would likely only gain enough monies to do a resurfacing project and not solve any of the existing long-term needs of the highway.
- Offering paired maintenance with CLT via grant monies could possibly get an expansion of the resurfacing project.
- If CLT got a grant that would buy maintenance equipment for the Town Road Pathway, once built, could the local DOT Crew use that equipment to maintain the pathway? SH: Likely.
- To clarify, CLT does not expect the pathway along the new alignment to be maintained in winter.
- We need a definitive ROW mapping that at least tells what our project boundaries are. We could then begin to work with private property owners where ROW is limited.
- If we know where our pathway might go, SH thinks we might be able to partially map the ROW in strategic areas when they do the resurfacing project to identify constraints and potential acquisitions required..
- Wider/longer culverts if replaced during the resurfacing project, in anticipation of a future pathway, would advance the project.
- The pathway was eliminated in some locations by ditch creation during the last repaving project in 2012. (Despite the Safety Path being built by the local DOT crew and partially funded by the State Legislature, the pathway was not acknowledged to exist because it was "substandard." It was later improved in two locations during the repave project and the bridge pathway project funded by a capital grant obtained by CLT/CLCC.) Informal agreement with private property owners that allows users to cross their property at the interface with the DOT ROW now occupied by the ditch will need formal easement documents before any project could occur in that space.
- SH: We have a dedicated group that tracks discretionary grants and funding opportunities. DOT has applied to all of the grants they are able to with some success. The group tracking these grants may be able to help identify grants that CLT could apply for. They may be able to read past grant apps and provide feedback. SH will find out what this group can and cannot do with us.

- SH: Will send us contact information or introduce us to Romo, the new planner at DOT. Romo will contact Rhys Miranda, engineer at DPOR, about our planning project. He may also be able to attend a meeting with partners.
- SH: Will bring up the Cooper Creek and Schooner Bend bridges with Kenaitze Tribe. It is highly likely that there would be early dwellers near Cooper Creek bridge since the creek formerly hosted multiple salmon species and now still hosts some. There is multi-agency interest in solving the problem of the sloughing bluff and its impact on Cooper Creek, Kenai River, travel, and ancient sights that may exist there. The bridges need to be in the Kenaitze inventory for the special federal funding that is available through the tribe. DOT and Kenaitze Tribe are looking for projects to work together.
- SH will get a cost estimate for a ROW study for the MP 47-56.
- If CLT were to get grant money for equipment to maintain a pathway, could the local DOT maintenance crew use that equipment to maintain the pathway? SH: Possibly.
- CAPSIS: Grant project. Work through legislators. (Similar to how we obtained the capital funds to replace the pathway on the Kenai River bridge at ~MP 48.) The following is obtained from akleg.gov website

What is typically included in a capital appropriations bill?

Typical capital projects may include the following:

- New infrastructure construction
- Capital improvements to existing infrastructure
- Infrastructure maintenance/deferred maintenance
- Information technology upgrades
- Major equipment purchases
- Materials stockpiling
- State equipment fleet replacement
- Trail/parks construction and maintenance
- Land purchases
- Grants to municipalities, communities and organizations

TASKS for FOLLOW THROUGH:

DS:

- Shared Drop Box links to documents for the most recent TAP and FLAP grants written by CLT. Provide SH with other docs as needed including pdf docs of the grant applications.

SH:

- Will share contact information for the new planner and, if possible, have him contact CLT officers as well as Rhys Miranda of DPOR. Also if possible, the new planner may be able to participate in a team meeting for the Town Road Pathway Planning Project.
- Find out if and what the grant tracking group within DOT can do to identify grant opportunities for CLT and to review past grant applications to inform CLT where they are deficient.
- Will obtain a cost estimate of a ROW study for the existing Sterling Hwy MP 47-56.
- Will bring up the Cooper Creek and Schooner Bend bridges with Kenaitze Tribe.

TIME ENDED: 7:00 P.M.