

Meeting Minutes

Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee Meeting

Date: February 24, 2026

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00PM

Location: Via Zoom

Meeting called to order by: Shannon McCarthy/Rebecca Garrett/Hazel Cristobal

In Attendance

- ARTAC Members Present: Lisa Agnew (12:05 PM), Lee Hart (12:02 PM), Allie Sargent, Terry Valentine, and Jennifer Yuhas
- ARTAC Member Absent: Jeffrey Collins, and Craig Compeau
- Agency Staff Present: Andy Mills, Shannon McCarthy, Hazel Cristobal, Rebecca Garrett (Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)); Natalya Fomina (Department of Natural Resources).

Summary

The Alaska Recreational Trails Advisory Committee (ARTAC) held a meeting on February 24, 2026. The meeting began with confusion regarding the meeting platform (Teams vs. Zoom) and a subsequent delay in achieving a quorum. Key agenda items included the approval of the agenda, public comments, approval of prior meeting minutes, review of redline versions of committee bylaws, and discussion of project scoring criteria.

During public comments, Andy Morrison raised concerns about the combination of snowmobile and other recreational trails, particularly regarding ADA accessibility, funding mechanisms, and potential audits. He suggested a solution involving increased snowmobile registration fees and separate funding buckets. Samuel Schilling from the Alaska Outdoor Access Alliance (AOAA) highlighted concerns about "double-dipping" or "piggybacking" on trail maintenance by various entities.

The committee approved the agenda and previous meeting minutes. The discussion on bylaws focused on clarifying public participation, streamlining sections on time-sensitive matters, and

refining the election of officers and committee member removal clauses. Proposed changes included making "repeated absences" into "unexcused absences" for committee member removal.

The scoring criteria discussion involved a draft document created by Rebecca and one by Jeff Collins. Jennifer Yuhas proposed including a mechanism in the application process to acknowledge existing trail grooming efforts by other groups to prevent duplication and ensure transparency.

Natalia (DNR) emphasized that a 10% match is a mandatory pass/fail requirement for federal funding applications, suggesting reallocating points from this section in the scoring rubric. Lee Hart advocated for upfront mandatory checks for match and public notice, and for scoring based on how well applicants demonstrate public benefit rather than just categories. The use of an Excel-specific budget format was discussed, with Natalia clarifying it's an FHWA requirement for uniformity and detailed breakdown, not just for state convenience.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about scheduling the next meeting, which will involve reviewing 18 RTP applications (2 safety/education, 10 non-motorized, 4 motorized, 2 diversified). There was an emphasis on moving quickly, especially for the two safety and education projects due to a September 30, 2026 completion deadline, and a motion was passed to excuse absent members. The committee affirmed that current applications would be scored using the old metrics, as changes would only apply to future application rounds. The meeting concluded at 1:04 PM.

Key topics

Meeting Logistics & Quorum: Initial confusion over meeting platform (Teams vs. Zoom) and delay in achieving quorum.

Public Comments:

Andy Morrison: Concerns about snowmobile/recreational trail combination, ADA accessibility, funding (federalization of funds, 30/30/40 mandate), and proposed solutions (increased snowmobile fees, separate funding buckets).

Samuel Schilling (AOA): Issues with "double-dipping" on trail maintenance by different organizations/businesses.

Michelle Stevens (Alaska Snow Machine Alliance): Defended current RTP practices, highlighting success of snow machine clubs, and advised adherence to program rules.

Agenda & Minutes Approval:

Both the meeting agenda and previous meeting minutes were approved.

Bylaws Review (Redline Version):

Public Participation: Clarification of public testimony and time limits.

Time-Sensitive Matters (Section 4.1): Streamlined and consolidated; clarifying action between meetings is advisory, documented, and ratified.

Election of Officers (Section 7.1) & Committee Member Removal (Section 9): Discussion on commissioner's role, term limits, and changing "repeated absences" to "unexcused absences" for removal.

Chair's Authority & Ethics Guidance (Sections 8.1, 11.4, 11.5): Redundancy reduction and combining sections.

Project Scoring Criteria Discussion:

Existing Grooming Efforts: Proposal to include acknowledgment of other ongoing trail grooming efforts in applications.

Mandatory Requirements: Natalia (DNR) clarified that a 10% match is a mandatory pass/fail requirement for federal funding; suggested reallocating points. Lee Hart supported upfront pass/fail for match and public notice.

Public Benefit: Discussion on scoring based on demonstrated achievement of benefits, not just categories.

Contractors vs. Nonprofits: Clarification that nonprofits can receive grants and then hire contractors, provided federal requirements are met.

Budget Format (Excel): Discussion on the requirement for Excel format for budgets (FHWA requirement for uniformity and detailed calculations).

Next Steps:

Application Review: 18 RTP applications (2 safety/education, 10 non-motorized, 4 motorized, 2 diversified) to be reviewed.

Urgency: Safety and Education projects have a September 30, 2026, completion deadline, requiring prompt review and funding.

Scoring Metrics: Current applications will be scored using old metrics; new criteria will apply to future rounds.

Meeting Scheduling: Doodle poll for next meeting within a month to allow time for application review; potential for shorter, concurrent meetings for urgent items.

Motion to adjourn was made at 1:04 p.m. and was passed.