

Roads and Highways Advisory Board Conference Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2019

Meeting called to order by Chair, Dan Hall at 1:02 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members:

Present: Donna Gardino, Daniel Hall, Harry McDonald, Howard Thies, Tony Johansen, John Baker

Absent: Scott Eickholt

DOT&PF: Commissioner John MacKinnon, Judy Chapman, Marie Heidemann

Public: Jackson Fox, Alicia Stevens

Telephone Participants: Ben Coleman, Meadow Bailey, Craig Lyon, Matt, Courtney Wendel

Approval of Agenda: Motion: Donna Gardino moved to accept agenda, Howard second.

Approval of Minutes: Motion: Donna Gardino moved to accept agenda, Howard second.

Public Comments: Ben Coleman is looking to explore and engage with the board concerning the MPO.

Chair Remarks:

This is the first board meeting under the new Administration. Mr. Hall looks forward to being involved with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and looks forward to help grow our transportation system. Mr. Hall stated that this board has a good group of people, with vast knowledge of the highway industry. Being on this board is an opportunity that Mr. Hall believes that he and the rest of the board members should take advantage of to serve the people of our state. He stated that they should be held accountable and be available for the meetings, interject if they can, and take advantage of this opportunity.

Board Discussion:

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Update

Commissioner MacKinnon notified the board of the upcoming budget release, which will happen on February 13, 2019. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has already taken hits from the budget cuts already, and the main operations cuts are impacting the communities in Alaska. With the budget impacts on Alaska, the Commissioner's main focus is to take care of the problem areas in Alaska. He plans to focus on safer roads, and clearing road congestion.

The Commissioner has asked the board to consider combining three of DOT&PF's advisory boards. (Aviation, Marine, and Roads). Benefits to be gained – spending money wisely, and being efficient in what we do. The reasoning of doing this, is to promote communication, and to make decisions that will be efficient.

New Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Judy Chapman and Marie Heidemann gave the board a presentation on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPO is a federally mandated, and federally funded transportation policy-making organization. It is made up of local transportation authorities, and communities in the MPO Area. In order to qualify to become an MPO, there must be a population over 50,000 people in an urban area. Alaska currently has two MPOs. Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS), and Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS). The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is expected to become an MPO from the upcoming 2020 census.

Ms. Heidemann covered the funding for MPOs, and the distribution plans. The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is currently operating under the federal highway authorization bill, the Fast Act. Which provides funding through federally fiscal year 2020. The department is required to develop a distribution formula and consultation with the state, MPOs, and approved by the Federal Highways. The distribution formula then provides the funding that goes to the MPOs. MPOs detail the work, with what they want to do with those funds. This formula must take into account the populations of the two MPAs according to the latest decennial census, the attainment of air quality standards, transportation planning needs, transportation planning status and other factors. Once the Matanuska-Susitna Borough becomes an MPO, the distribution formula will need to be changed so they can include the new MPO.

For more information on the MPOs, the presentation can be found on the Roads and Highways Advisory Board's website. <http://dot.alaska.gov/comm/rh-advisoryboard/>

Bi-annual Budget Proposal

The board supports the state in having a bi-annual budget. After the budget is released on February 13, the board plans to discuss this topic, and are willing to help advise the department.

Board Comments

The board discussed the upcoming challenges that lay ahead. They are ready to do more to help the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.