

Commuter Rail Task Force Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: March 30th, 1-3 pm

Location: Wasilla City Hall, Council Chambers (290 E Herning Avenue, Wasilla) / 907-373-3543

Attendees:

Bert Cottle*	Mayor of Wasilla (Co-Chair)	Jamie Acton for Craig Lyon*	AMATS Transportation Planning Mgr
Virgie Thompson*	Mayor of Houston	Cynthia Wentworth*	Public Member
Edna DeVries*	Mayor of Palmer	Dave Kemp	DOT&PF CR Director
Vern Halter*	Mat-Su Borough Mayor	Brian Lindamood	ARRC Director of Capital Projects
LaMarr Anderson*	Public Member	Ernest Piper	Chief Mechanical Officer, Keolis
Murph O'Brien	HDR	Megan Byrd	DOT&PF
Kenda Huling	Monday Market	Governor Bill Sheffield	Vice Chair, ARRC Board of Directors
Bob Hackinson	Member of Public	Eugene Haberman	Member of Public
Jon Scudder	JBER Planning Section		

*Indicates Appointed Task Force Member

Attending by phone:

Ona Brause For Ethan Berkowitz*	Mayor of Anchorage (Co-Chair)	Heather Parker	Policy & Program Analyst, Office of the Governor
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Agenda

- Welcome (Bert Cottle)
- Review of recommendations (Members, 2-3min)
- Development of model
- Working Groups Identified
- Action Items
- Next meeting date
- Public Comment

Discussion

Welcome & Introductions: Mayor Cottle welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Lessons learned – March 22nd Glenn Hwy closure at South Eagle River overpass: Mayor Halter said he was impressed with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) response to the Glenn Hwy Bridge closure incident. Director Kemp said that he thought the DOT&PF response went well, but in the future DOT&PF would make it a point to improve communications with APD.

Brian Lindamood, said Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) had prepared commuter rail services in the event that the bridge and highway remained closed during the next week. ARRC did not have staff or rail

cars prepared for dispatch on March 23rd, but felt that 48-72 hours would be a reasonable response time without impacting existing scheduled service. Had the commuter rail service been in the pilot phase, providing for an influx of passengers would have been nearly seamless.

Review of recommendations: the task force briefly discussed the recommendations that were collected and distributed March 12th to members. The following concerns were discussed: the cost of the pilot program and infrastructure needed to stand the program up; funding sources and stigma of subsidizing the costs recognizing that the highway system is heavily subsidized as well; the short turn around for the report due to the Governor’s office in August; commute times compared to drive times; amenities (WiFi, food service) and comfort of the rail cars; consistency and reliability during all seasons of operations; building a system that will fit the long term needs of the anticipated population in a rapidly growing community; definition of a successful program, clear goals and measurable outcomes need to be agreed upon before the start of the pilot; making decisions acknowledging the full true costs of roads and highways when considering our regions additional regional corollary transit needs and options, and recognizing how commuter rail will build our regional economic attractiveness to outside international and US companies.

Ernie Piper agreed to draft sample goals for the groups’ discussion and reiterated that transit is about the people who live in the community, and what they want their community to look and feel like. It is important that the community guide the program. He gave the following as a guideline on creating subcommittees to discuss the two sides of the report that the task force should be focusing on.

Both groups should have members representing:	Pilot Program subcommittee should be focusing on:	Sustainable Service subcommittee should be focusing on:
ARRC	Engineering	Modes of Transportation connecting to Rail services.
ADOT&PF	Operations	Passenger comfort (food and beverages, WiFi, “Mobile office”, etc.)
JBER	Funding for set up	Equipment and Schedule
Communities Tribes Cities Individuals		Funding Sources: State, Local, Federal, Tribal, and the consequences and requirements of accepting different types of funding (Air Quality, ADA compliance, etc.)
		Governance Model
		Community Education

Additional concerns were that the existing infrastructure will not meet passenger comfort, ADA or Air Quality requirements; and upgrading the existing track system to make a faster commute time would have significant costs involved; with the expectation of the train taking 72 minutes (and up to 78 minutes with stops in Eagle River and JBER) to complete its route, the amenities on the train need to allow for the maximum use of that time for work related activities.

The city of Wasilla has already purchased a parking lot that will be used for the commuter rail depot, and plans to move the existing depot building to that lot. In the event that it is determined the commuter rail program is not sustainable the lot would be repurposed for park and ride parking.

Public comments: members of the public were given an opportunity to comment on the record.

Governor Bill Sheffield thanked the group and was glad to see the program moving along.

Eugene Haberman was concerned that there was not enough public notice given, and that the time of the meetings did not allow for members of the working public to attend.

Kenda Huling was excited for the possibilities of commuter services being extended outside of the normal work week/hours. For those valley residents that would like to work in Anchorage, but do not have regular transportation and would likely be working on the weekends and evenings outside of the Valley Mover hours of operations. Extended hours would also allow for use for students attending sporting and other events, dining, and airport transit options.

Murph O'Brien was happy to see the progress being made and suggested that community education be added to the above chart.

Action Items:

	Item	Responsible	Status
1	Distribution of subcommittee selection chart	Megan Byrd	
2	Task Force members select which subcommittee(s) they will be members of	Task Force Members	
3	Determine what a successful program would look like, come up with measurable goals for success.	Subcommittees	Mr. Piper is preparing sample goals to distribute to the subcommittee members.
4	Subcommittees meet with Ernie Piper to better understand each group's role.	Subcommittees	Mr. Piper will be in Alaska 4/14-20/18. once subcommittees are determined dates will be set for these meetings.

Next Meeting: Tentatively scheduled for 4/20/18 in Anchorage. Location TBD.