

MVP for Transportation MPO Policy Board Meeting

Representatives:

Bob Charles – Knik Tribe (**Secretary**)
Edna DeVries, Mayor - MSB
Glenda Ledford, Mayor – City of Wasilla (**Chair**)
Brian Winnestaffer - Chickaloon Native Village
Mike Brown - MSB
Sean Holland - DOT&PF (**Treasurer**)
Steve Carrington, Mayor – City of Palmer (**Vice Chair**)



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Minutes

Wednesday, February 26th, 2025

1:30-3:00pm

Meeting Location

Musk Ox Farm

12850 E Archie Road, Palmer Alaska 99645

Hayloft / Classroom

1. Meeting called to order at 1:30pm

Members Present

Clint Adler, Alaska DOT&PF (in for Sean Holland)
Edna DeVries, MSB
Alex Strawn, MSB (in for Mike Brown)
Glenda Ledford, City of Wasilla
Bob Charles, Knik Tribe
Steve Carrington, City of Palmer

Members Absent

Sean Holland, Alaska DOT&PF
Brian Winnestaffer, Chickaloon Native Village
Mike Brown, MSB

Visitors Present

Kim Sollien, MVP Executive Director
Elise Blocker, RESPEC
Donna Gardino, Gardino Consulting Services
Megan Flory, RESPEC
Rebecca Skjothaug, MSB
Adam Bradway, Alaska DOT&PF
Bianca Zibrat, MSB
Ben White, Alaska DOT&PF

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2. Consent Agenda (Action Item)

- a. **Approval of the February 26th, 2025, Agenda**
- b. **Approval of the January 22nd, 2025, Minutes**

*Motion to approve the February 26, 2025, agenda (**Strawn**), seconded. No objections. Passed.
Motion to approve the January 22, 2025, minutes (**Adler**), seconded. No objections. Passed.*

3. Committee/Working Group Reports (Including the Chair's Report)

i. Staff Report

- **Schedule of Topics**

Kim Sollien provided a staff report. STIP Amendment #2 was released for public comment on the 14th and MVP staff have been reviewing it. Sollien hopes to provide a full overview next month with questions and concerns. If the Policy Board would like, MVP could write a memo to send to Alaska DOT&PF during the public comment period.

Sollien attended the first roundtable for Mat-Su area transit providers. Only one provider attended, but there were representatives from the Mat-Su Borough, Alaska DOT&PF, and MVP and the attendees had a good conversation.

MVP is working with the IT contractor to shift from the FAST Planning system to MVP's own system. Sollien plans to start using her new email next week.

Sollien opened a bank account and will purchase QuickBooks next week and begin implementing the fiscal policy.

Sollien will begin interviews next week for the Office/Communications Manager position. Sollien has not received any applications for the Transportation Planner position. There is a deficit of long-range planners, especially transportation planners, in Alaska. After the Office/Communications Manager is hired, MVP may pay to advertise the Transportation Planner position across Alaska and nationally or may reach out to consultants that MVP is not currently working with to see if MVP could contract with one of them to assist during the initiation of the MTP.

4. Voices of the Visitors (Non-Action Items)

None.

5. Action Items

None.

6. Old Business

- a. **Metropolitan Transportation Plan Contract Update**

Adam Bradway provided an update. Negotiations were completed and Alaska DOT&PF Contracting is working on finalizing the agreement. Bradway anticipates kicking off the MTP by next month's Policy Board meeting.

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7. New Business

a. STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan) Amendment #2 Update

<https://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/>

Kim Sollien provided an update. STIP Amendment #2 was released on February 14 for public comment through March 20. MVP was not directly notified at the time of release. Staff are reviewing the funding allocations and will provide a list of questions for the Policy Board to consider at the next meeting. Sollien has requested that someone from the Alaska DOT&PF STIP Team provide a presentation at the next MVP Policy Board meeting to answer MVP's questions before MVP submits a formal comment. A summary of changes between STIP Amendment #1 and STIP Amendment #2 was not provided by Alaska DOT&PF, so MVP is comparing the versions to identify changes.

Donna Gardino noted that at the MVP Peer Exchange, the other MPOs did not significantly change their STIPs between the public review draft and the submitted draft. She asked if this would be the case for Alaska's STIP Amendment #2, since STIP Amendment #1 changed significantly between the public review draft and the submitted draft. Adam Bradway said the intention is to not have significant changes during the public comment period and Alaska DOT&PF was working with FHWA immediately prior to the release to address most of the major issues that FHWA may have with the draft. It is possible that public comments will result in changes, but Alaska DOT&PF is trying to minimize the changes.

8. Executive Session

a. MSB Grant Agreement Draft Review and Discussion

*Motion to enter into Executive Session to review and discuss the draft Mat-Su Borough Grant Agreement (**Strawn**), seconded. None opposed. Passed.*

9. Other Issues

a. Transit Update from MSB Planning

Rebecca Skjothaug and Bianca Zibrat from the MSB presented a transit update. The presentation was first given to the MSB Assembly on January 3rd and showed cost projections based on current transit ridership and service as well as reductions of 17%, 33%, and 50%. MSB plans to release an RFP in March for a transit service provider, with services beginning in July.

Kim Sollien asked how MSB was designing the RFP, since the amount of funding available is still unknown. Skjothaug explained that the respondents will provide a high rate and a low rate so MSB will have options for when the funding is determined. Sollien asked when the final Assembly budget hearing will be held. Skjothaug said it is planned for May 20 at the earliest.

Bob Charles asked if MSB has established criteria for selection of successful bidders. Skjothaug said that the MSB Planning team is working with Dustin Silva, Assistant Purchasing Officer at the MSB, but she is unsure of who will be on the panel for selecting criteria. There are regulations for what the criteria need to be, such as ADA compliance.

Sollien noted that transit is an important part of the transportation network, and many people rely on it. The on-demand provider has indicated that the demand is higher than what can be provided with the current funding available.

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b. **March Meeting Reschedule**

Motion to reschedule the next Policy Board meeting to March 19, 2025, from 1:30pm to 3:00pm (Charles), seconded. None opposed. Passed.

Kim Sollien explained that the public comment period for STIP Amendment #2 closes on March 20th. In the interest of MVP providing comments to Alaska DOT&PF within that timeframe, Sollien suggested moving the next Policy Board meeting from March 26 to March 19.

Glenda Ledford noted that she would be out of the state on that day.

10. Informational Items

a. **Peer Exchange Overview and Action Items Review**

Kim Sollien provided a summary of the January 2025 MPO Peer Exchange. The other MPOs that attended did not have the same struggles that the Alaska MPOs had. Other state DOTs have their own long-range plans that help mitigate surprises. The meeting resulted in a list of action items, included on page 18 of the packet. MVP will be meeting with Alaska DOT&PF and the other Alaska MPOs at the quarterly MPO meeting next week to review progress on the action items. Sollien noted her appreciation for FHWA's attendance at the Peer Exchange and for their reaffirmation that MPOs have planning authority within their planning boundaries.

b. **MPO Quarterly Meeting and Peer Exchange Follow-up March 3rd and 4th in Fairbanks, Alaska**

Kim Sollien will be attending the next MPO Quarterly Meeting.

c. **Anchorage Daily News Article – Alaska contractors warn of 'alarming' outlook for 2025 road construction season**

Kim Sollien included this article in the packet as an informational item for Policy Board members to be aware of the concerns that other entities in Alaska have regarding the impact of the STIP amendment process.

d. **Commissioner's Office Letter to FAST Planning – Index of Authorities Governing National Highway System Facilities in the Metropolitan Planning Area**

Kim Sollien included this letter in the packet as an informational item for the Policy Board to be aware of the disagreement between DOT&PF and FAST Planning regarding the role and authority of MPOs within their planning boundaries. Donna Gardino assisted in summarizing the contents of the letter. Alaska DOT&PF maintains that the state has the authority to add projects to the MPO TIP if the project is on NHS routes within MPO boundaries while FAST Planning and AMATS Policy Boards are maintaining that the state does not have this authority and any projects within an MPO boundary must go through the processes of that MPO. Alaska DOT&PF has stated that they will not recommend that the governor approve the updated FAST Planning MPA boundary map until FAST Planning agrees with Alaska DOT&PF about each entity's authority.

Steve Carrington asked whether each MPO has its own operating agreement with the state or if it is combined. Gardino explained that the operating agreements are separate, but they

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are fashioned after each other. MVP's operating agreement with Alaska DOT&PF is based on FAST Planning's operating agreement. Gardino also noted that some of the citations in the letter to FAST Planning apply only to Transportation Management Areas and are therefore not applicable to MVP or FAST Planning.

e. **Indirect Cost Rate DRAFT approval**

Kim Sollien provided an update. Sollien explained that MVP will submit staff hours for reimbursement (direct cost) as well as an additional percentage to pay for overhead expenses (indirect cost). MVP requires Alaska DOT&PF approval to use the federal Safe Harbor Rate. Final approval was received after the Policy Board packet was released last week.

f. **Senate Transportation Committee Meeting Presentation February 27th @1:30pm.**

Kim Sollien and the other Alaska MPO Executive Directors will be presenting to the Senate Transportation Committee. Sollien will be presenting an overview of the history of MPOs, their purpose, MVP's development, and MVP's involvement in the STIP process. FAST Planning and AMATS will also be presenting on their involvement in the STIP process. Sollien shared her presentation with the MVP Policy Board.

11. Policy Board Comments

No comments.

12. Adjournment

*Motion to adjourn (**Strawn**), seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:39pm.*

Next Scheduled MPO Policy Board Meeting – **March 19th**, from 1:30pm-3:00 p.m. to be held at the Musk Ox Farm and via Microsoft TEAMS.