



## TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes – March 3, 2021

Zoom Meeting URL: <https://fastplanning.us/keepup/zoom/>

Telephone Number: 1 (253) 215-8782, Meeting ID: 873 8063 6710

#### 1. Call to Order

Jackson Fox, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

#### 2. Introduction of Members and Attendee

The following were present:

Name	Representing
*Jackson Fox, Chair	FAST Planning
*Olivia Lunsford, Vice Chair	FAST Planning
**Andrew Ackerman	City of Fairbanks Engineering
**Bob Pristash	City of Fairbanks Engineering
**Bill Butler	City of North Pole
**Steven Hoke	ADEC Air Quality
**Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation
**Judy Chapman	DOT&PF Planning
**Sarah Schacher	DOT&PF Preconstruction
**John Perreault (absent)	FNSB Planning Commission
**Kellen Spillman	FNSB Community Planning
**Michelle Denton	FNSB Transportation
**John Weinberger	Fort Wainwright Planning
**Justin Burgess	AES Transportation
**Jakob Theurich	UAF
*Deborah Todd	FAST Planning
*Randi Bailey	DOT&PF Planning
*Don Galligan (absent)	FNSB Community Planning
Peter Stern	BPAC
Nathan Belz	BPAC
John Netardus	DOT&PF
Ivet Hall	DOT&PF
Laura Minski	FNSB Parks & Recreation
Brian Charlton	FNSB Parks & Recreation
Alex Gagne-Hawes	Citizen
Brian Lindamood	Alaska Railroad

\* FAST PLANNING Staff members

\*\* FAST PLANNING Technical Committee members

#### 3. Approval of the March 3, 2021 Agenda

**Motion:** To approve the March 3, 2021 Technical Committee Agenda.  
(Ackerman/Denton).

**Discussion:** No further discussion.

**Vote on Motion:** None opposed. Approved.

**4. Approval of the February 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** To approve the February 3, 2021 Meeting Minutes. (Denton/Ackerman).

**Discussion:** No discussion.

**Vote on Motion:** None opposed. Approved.

**5. Committee/Working Group Reports (including the Chair's Report)**

Mr. Fox noted the following updates:

- The Policy Board authorized release of the Draft Non-Motorized Plan for a 30-day public review period.
- The Policy Board did not take the recommendation of the Technical Committee regarding the Chena River Walk Project and asked that we continue with the original plan to continue communications with the Alaska Railroad to move the project forward.
- The Policy Board tabled the Resolution of Support for AAC Revisions for further review by DOT regional offices and Headquarters. There were two minor revisions made by DOT. It will go back to the Policy Board for approval on March 17, 2021.
- The Policy Board approved the Scope of Work for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update and the scope they approved was sent to DOT Planning to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to do the work.
- At the 2/25/21 BPAC meeting the proposed boundary change for the Chena River Recreation Area generated much discussion.
- The Draft Non-Motorized Plan is located on the FAST Planning Website in the top right-hand corner of the main page. The file is very large to download so a Cloud Share was set up so that people could download the file by sections. There is a place on the website for general comments that are submitted to FAST Planning as well as Kittelson & Associates, the consultant for the project. An interactive project map containing all the projects listed in the Non-Motorized Plan Update are shown and people can comment on the individual projects on the map. Ms. Lunsford posted 75 flyers at various locations all over town and is working on a Public Service Announcement (PSA) for the radio.

**6. Public Comment Period (Non-Action Items)**

No public comment.

**7. Old Business**

**a. Chena River Walk – Stage III**

- ***Update on Policy Board action and discussion with Chena Riverfront Commission.***

Mr. Fox gave an update on the Policy Board action and the discussions with the Chena Riverfront Commission at their February 24, 2021 meeting and correspondence received from the Alaska Railroad. Mr. Fox explained that the meeting packet contained a conceptual design drawing of what the Master Plan was for the Chena River Walk Project, the five-year Land Use Permit that was issued to the City of Fairbanks in 2014 and expired in January of 2019, a letter from the Alaska Railroad from January 15, 2021 containing a notice of permit termination due to expiration of the permit, a response letter from the City of Fairbanks which rectified the fact that the project was fully funded with federal funding in the FAST Planning TIP as of February 15, 2017 and requested that the Alaska Railroad reactivate the permit, and the TIP showing that the project was

funded in the TIP as of February 2017 and remained funded through construction in the current TIP. Mr. Fox stated that the latest motion that was made by the Technical Committee recommended to the Policy Board to change the scope of the project to construct a path between the Chena Landings Loop and Phillip Fields Road along Peger Road and prepare a letter to the Railroad acknowledging they did not desire the use of their property for the project at this time, offer to the Railroad to resurface the path and include lighting between the Chena River and Chena Landings Loop, and continue discussion of the original Riverwalk path outside of this project with the Chena Riverfront Commission. Mr. Fox explained that the packet contained a figure associated with that motion showing the portion of the path that would be built along Peger Road as well as the proposed resurfacing, and the most recent Policy Board action to continue with the original plan to continue working on this project and communicating with the Alaska Railroad to get the original project built on the north bank of the Chena River. Mr. Fox explained that on February 24, 2021, the Chena Riverfront Commission held a meeting, and the main agenda item of that meeting was discussion of the Chena River Walk Project where Mr. Fox provided a presentation about what had transpired between last summer and now. Mr. Fox explained that at the conclusion of that meeting the Chena Riverfront Commission passed a motion to write a letter to the Borough Assembly, Borough Mayor, City Mayor, and City Council expressing the desire for continued support to bring the Chena River Walk Project Phase III to construction. Mr. Fox explained that at the time that he sent the packet out he did not have the official minutes from that meeting but noted that during the discussion at the meeting, the Commission members also supported further reducing the footprint of the project. Mr. Fox stated that the Commission was in support of resurfacing the existing path and adding pedestrian lighting if the Railroad would support a maintenance agreement for those improvements and supported an offer to pay for a long-term land lease with the Railroad that was considerate of the public interest. Mr. Fox stated that on February 25, 2021 a letter was received from the Railroad that reactivated the City permit based on the information the City provided them. Mr. Fox stated that the meeting packet contained the Letter of Support signed by the Chena Riverfront Commission and sent to the two Mayors, the City Council, and the Borough Assembly. Mr. Fox stated that a Draft Resolution from the Borough was also being circulated for internal review.

Ms. Schacher stressed that she knew she made the motion at Technical Committee last month regarding just moving on in a different direction with this project. Ms. Schacher explained that DOT's entire interest was moving forward with a project whatever that project looked like. Ms. Schacher stated that she thought the proposed project on the north side of the river was a great project and they would love to do it but also wanted to advance it with federal funds however they saw it feasible and the information they had as of last month was that it was not. Ms. Schacher explained that the City of Fairbanks permit held was only authorized to the City of Fairbanks. Ms. Schacher stated that she was pretty sure that the permit was not transferrable, which meant it was of no use to Alaska DOT who was the entity that needed the permission to construct improvements on Railroad property. Ms. Schacher stated that was why DOT was involved with this.

Ms. Schacher explained that the other problem was that even if it were transferrable, it was a permit, and a permit was not a secure interest because a permit could be revoked at any time. Ms. Schacher stated that DOT could not be in that situation when they had invested even one dollar of Federal Highway funding into that land and could not be just randomly kicked out. Ms. Schacher stated that it was no criticism to the Railroad because a permit was given for a specific purpose to a specific entity. Ms. Schacher explained that the City had the approval to move forward and work within the parameters of that permit today, if they wanted to, but that was not relative to the project they were currently pursuing. Ms. Schacher stated that they were meeting with the City to brainstorm. Ms. Schacher stated that what she saw happening was that they were going to have a new sort of agreement with the Railroad that DOT was a party to and, that would open up a lot of terms for renegotiation. Ms. Schacher stated that she really appreciated that the Chena Riverfront Commission had asked for consideration of a 50-year lease. Ms. Schacher explained that she wanted this body to understand that she did not see this as a simple or quick process. Ms. Schacher stated that that she wanted to be clear on that. Ms. Schacher stated there was still the issue of compensation and previous conversations they had with the Railroad was that compensation would be desirable if they were to pursue a sale or lease. Ms. Schacher stated that from DOT's perspective she just wanted them to know that they were committed to finding their way through this and were still trying to move forward with this project.

Mr. Spillman stated that he appreciated Ms. Schacher's comments and working with the Chena Riverfront Commission on this project. Mr. Spillman stated that the Borough was committed to working through this and looking forward to working with everyone in this group to get the north side Chena River Walk to fruition.

Mr. Ackerman stated that a lot had happened and there was still a lot of work that had to happen on this project. Mr. Ackerman explained that the DOT and City had put a lot of time and energy into it and it was consistent with the objective that the Chena Riverfront and Policy Board had. Mr. Ackerman stated that while some of the motions made seemed to be in conflict, he wanted to clarify that they needed a permanent easement across this land in order to construct a path there and in the meantime, there was no good access between the pedestrian bridge and Peger Road. Mr. Ackerman stated that he wanted to clarify that if they were okay with putting that off, that was what they would do.

Mr. Fox stated that we would keep this project on the April agenda to keep the Technical Committee updated on its progress.

## **8. New Business**

### **a. MPO Boundary Adjustment for Chena Lakes Recreation Area (Action Item)**

Mr. Fox explained that the meeting packet included a request from Mayor Ward of the Borough for a proposed boundary adjustment to include the Chena Lakes Recreation Area within Metropolitan Planning Area. Mr. Fox stated that the Chena Lakes Recreation was on the edge of our boundary on the east side but not included in it. Mr. Fox stated that he thought the Mayor's intent was to annex the area in so that the area was eligible for funding from FAST Planning for projects in that area. Mr. Fox stated that there was currently a project listed on Plack Road to provide access to the Chena Lakes Recreation Area. Mr. Fox explained that

separately the Borough had nominated paving and plug-in projects to the Statewide CMAQ Program. Mr. Fox stated that he looked through the federal regulations and guidance on MPO boundary adjustments and it appeared that any adjustments had to be approved by the Policy Board and the Governor. Mr. Fox explained that he also found in FHWA guidance that MPO boundary adjustments could be made for fringe area public parks and any other areas that were large traffic generators that were within a reasonable distance of our boundary lines. Mr. Fox stated that the proposed boundary redraw included the entire Chena Lakes Recreation Area and followed the PM<sup>2.5</sup> non-attainment area boundary. Mr. Fox stated that the Borough had obtained letters of support from the US Army Corp of Engineers and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Mr. Fox stated that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) motion had recommended delaying the boundary adjustment until the 2020 Census data and resulting boundary adjustment were received and requested further information from the Borough as to the urgency for the boundary change. Mr. Fox stated that he recommended that Mayor Ward wait until the new boundary was drawn but Mayor Ward had requested that it be put on the March Technical Committee and Policy Board agendas. Mr. Fox stated that BPAC had questioned the proposed boundary and why it should follow the PM<sup>2.5</sup> area boundary and not the flood control levee. Mr. Fox stated our boundary did follow the flood control levee south of town so they thought that might be a good move. Mr. Fox explained that a subsequent discussion also suggested adjusting the boundaries for the Tanana Lakes Recreation Area which was on the south side of our boundary and the “donut area” within the PM<sup>2.5</sup> non-attainment area so that all the projects listed in those areas were included in our air quality analysis.

**Public Comment:** Alex Gagne Hawes, Fairbanks Resident, commented that looking at it he thought the BPAC made the right decision because spending a bunch of money on a perspective park that might future benefit unbuilt homes in North Pole and might help the North Pole Mayor, did not really help bicyclists and pedestrians. Mr. Gagne-Hawes commented that he agreed that budget-wise they did not need any more parks although institutionally and philosophically it made all kinds of sense to add both this lake and the other lakes. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that he did not see a lot of talk about how with all these other new air people, even though their program had failed according to reports, they did live here now and were centered around North Pole. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that Chena Lakes had been a popular draw for all sorts of people. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that it would be really nice to have access to it that was not the crude gravel roads indicated in the drawings. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated he did not oppose helping out North Pole. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that it was interesting example that the priorities of FMATS were not systemic, so a lot of institutional work that needed to be done. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that he started reading the 250-page plan and the fact that they needed 250 pages indicated that there really was not a plan. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that any help that they could give to get us into the parks would improve civilization.

**Motion:** To recommend to the Policy Board to approve the proposed FAST Planning MPO Boundary Adjustment as presented. (Spillman/Denton).

**Discussion:** Mr. Spillman stated that they did not get the Census data until April of 2012 and all indications were that the new Census data could be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Spillman explained that it made sense now and was not a big hurdle. Mr. Spillman stated that all they needed after Policy Board approval was to get the Governor's signature and funding was only part of it. Mr. Spillman stated that things got more complex when projects were half inside and half outside of the boundary and it was not the most efficient means of managing a project. Mr. Spillman explained that crossing boundaries with multiple different funding sources it got very confusing. Mr. Spillman stated that the reason this was important was because there were tens of thousands of people living in that area that had to drive all the way around to access Chena Lakes. Mr. Spillman stated that one of the high priority projects was making a bicycle/pedestrian access from Plack Road. Mr. Spillman stated that thousands of people could access Chena Lakes without having to drive around. Mr. Spillman commented that this was an interesting unique and well-visited park. Mr. Spillman explained that last year they had 270,000 visitors at Chena Lakes. Mr. Spillman stated that it made great sense to have a generator like that included in the MPO. Mr. Spillman stated that this could be included in a boundary adjustment that probably would not go into effect until 2024.

Mr. Ackerman commented that when the new Census came out, they were going to most likely be looking at an expanded MPO boundary on Chena Ridge and other residentially developed areas. Mr. Ackerman stated that he was concerned that at the same time we were expanding our boundaries, we were seeing a reduction in our funding allocation for the MPO so he thought they needed to weigh the benefits carefully and he would tend to lean towards residential areas being the priority over parkland like this where there were clearly no access limitations and having no or fewer access roads would be of benefit to a park.

**Vote on Motion:** Seven in favor. Five opposed. (Ackerman, Burgess, Chapman, Hoke, Pristash). Approved

**b. Letter of Support for FNSB Proposals to Alaska Federal Lands Access Program (Action Item)**

Mr. Fox explained that he had drafted a Letter of Support for two grant applications that the Borough would be submitting to the Western Federal Lands Access Program. Mr. Fox explained that the Borough was gathering letters of support for two projects. Mr. Fox explained that one of the projects was to convert all the gravel roads to paved roads in the Chena Lakes Recreation Area as well as the parking areas and the second project was to work on a planning effort for the new Plack Road access improvements to the Chena Lakes Recreation Area which would primarily be for non-motorized users to access the park.

**Public Comment:** Alex Gagne-Hawes commented that it looked like this was exactly the rebuttal to Mr. Ackerman's fear that if we put more roads in the park it can make it worse. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that as you looked at the topo maps, it was pretty clear that all that park was right now was basically just roads. Mr. Gagne-Hawes commented that right now they were gravel roads that were unsightly, dusty, and unpleasant. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that in the winter it was the focal point for all sorts of motorized ATVs and snowmachines churning up the snow and putting foul fumes in the air. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that it was not

a great park right now especially in the winter. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that he thought this was the kind of stuff that made it a year-round destination point. Mr. Gagne-Hawes stated that someone might want to be in the hotel 50 feet from it and looking at beautiful Chena Lakes all summer. Go team and thanks for putting this together.

**Motion:** To recommend to the Policy Board to approve the Letter of Support for FNSB proposals to Alaska Federal Lands Access Program (Schacher/Ackerman).

**Discussion:** Mr. Spillman stated that he was very much in support of the letter and thought it was well written. Mr. Spillman stated that he thought that you could already see some of the projects in development. Mr. Spillman stated that the proposed new Plack Road Project entrance into Chena Lakes was one of the main projects that came out of that very large Salcha-Badger Planning effort the Borough went through. Mr. Spillman stated they heard from the residents in the area that they had this fantastic recreation area but had to drive all the way around to utilize it. Mr. Spillman commented that he thought the project would support motorized and non-motorized access to this recreation area. Mr. Spillman noted that this was not FAST Planning funds and was additional funding that the Parks and Recreation Department had identified so it was a new pot of funding for this urbanized area.

Ms. Schacher stated that she wanted to add the same sentiment. Ms. Schacher stated that she thought the approach on Plack Road was a great one the way the Borough was figuring out how the residents felt about a second entrance before they launched into a design project. Ms. Schacher stated that she thought that was smart planning. Ms. Schacher stated that she liked the Chena Lakes proposal and looked forward to working with Parks and Recreation on this. Ms. Schacher stated that it was a good project, and she grew up rollerblading on the path in Chena Lakes. Ms. Schacher stated that it was a unique place in the Borough that you could ride your bike or rollerblade and not be bothered by cars from approach roads or atv's kicking up gravel. Ms. Schacher stated that she thought it was a great project, looked forward to seeing it, and hoped that they were successful.

**Vote on Motion:** None opposed. Approved.

- c. **Fairbanks PM<sup>2.5</sup> Non-Attainment Area CMAQ Program Project Status Update**  
Mr. Fox explained that in association with our Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the Project Evaluation Board for the Statewide CMAQ Program which devoted funds to the PM<sup>2.5</sup> non-attainment area for projects that made improvement to air quality in our area, each year we needed to revisit that project list to see if we needed to open up a new nomination process this year or next. Mr. Fox provided the status of the projects that were already nominated to this program for funding. Mr. Fox went over the projects that had been started, were pending, and had not started yet.

- d. **Safety Evaluation of Statewide Off-Highway Vehicle Use in Alaska**
  - **Guest Presentation on Findings of UAF Study (partially funded by DOT&PF)**  
Mr. Fox introduced Dr. Nathan Belz, Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and Chair of the BPAC, to present his findings on the Safety Evaluation of Statewide Off-Highway Vehicle Use in Alaska Study.

9. **Other Issues**  
No other issues.

10. **Informational Items**

- a. **Obligations and Offsets**  
Mr. Fox explained the obligations and offsets included in the meeting packet.

11. **Technical Committee Member Comments**

- Mr. Spillman commented that he wanted to give kudos to Olivia Lunsford with FAST Planning stating that she did a fantastic presentation at the Alaska Planning Association Conference about the Lacey Street Project. Mr. Spillman commented that it was a great presentation as well as great publicity for FAST Planning and some of the work we were doing.

12. **Adjournment**  
**Motion to Adjourn:** (Denton/Spillman). The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m. The next Technical Committee meeting is Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 4/7/2021  
Jackson Fox, Chair  
FAST Planning Technical Committee