



POLICY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2023 • 12:00 – 3:00 P.M.

FAST Planning Office, 100 Cushman Street, Suite 215, Fairbanks, AK

Web Conference at: <https://fastplanning.us/keepup/zoom/>

Zoom Meeting Telephone Number: 1 (253) 215-8782 Meeting ID: 891-4176-2436

1. Call to Order

Mayor Bryce Ward, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee	Representative Organization
*Bryce Ward, Chair	Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
*Jerry Cleworth	Fairbanks City Council
*Joe Kemp	Acting Director, DOT&PF Northern Region
*Jason Olds	Director, DEC Air Quality
*David Pruhls	Mayor, City of Fairbanks
*Brett Rotermund	FNSB Assembly
*Michael Welch	Mayor, City of North Pole
**Jackson Fox	FAST Planning
**Olivia Lunsford	FAST Planning
**Corey DiRutigliano	FAST Planning
**Deborah Todd	FAST Planning
**Randi Bailey	DOT&PF Planning
**Don Galligan	FNSB Community Planning
Kim Sollien	MatSu Borough Planning
Donna Gardino	Consultant for MatSu Borough MPO
Adam Moser	DOT&PF Program Development
Trish Levasseur	FNSB Parks & Recreation
Brett Nelson	DOT&PF Planning
Danny Wallace	City of North Pole
Alex Colón	Boys & Girls Club Fairbanks
Luke Hopkins	Participant

***FAST Planning Policy Board Members, ** FAST Planning Staff Members, + FAST Planning Technical Committee Members, • Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Members**

3. Approval of the September 13, 2023 Agenda

Motion: To approve the September 13, 2023 agenda. (Cleworth/Rotermund).

Discussion: Mayor Ward noted that the Public Comment Period in Item #6 for Non Action Items will also include Action Items.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

4. Approval of the July 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the July 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes. (Rotermund/Kemp).

Discussion: Mayor Ward noted for the record that there were no August 2023 meeting minutes since the Policy Board did not meet in August.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

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

a. Staff Report and Technical Committee Action Items

- The Tetlin to Fort Knox Transportation Advisory Committee meetings were held in July and August 2023. The bus stops in the corridor and stopping distance were looked at. A presentation from the State Bridge Engineer was provided regarding the bridge conditions and load rating of specific bridges along the route. The next Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting will be held September 14, 2023. There might be an ore-haul truck in the parking lot of the Pipeline Training Center to show the Transportation Advisory Committee what they look like.
- Ms. Lunsford is leading the Steering Committee for the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Update. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 19, 2023.
- FAST Planning staff met twice with R&M Consultants, the consultant working on the Transportation Plan Updates for MACS Transit. They have developed the Visions, Goals, and Objectives and will be scheduling the first official Steering Committee meeting to present them.
- Mr. Fox drafted a comment letter regarding the FFY24-27 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that was released for public comment on July 20, 2023. The public comment period closed on September 3, 2023. The draft STIP Comment Letter has been shared with the DOT&PF Commissioners office, DOT&PF Staff, and FHWA. Mr. Fox flew to Anchorage and met with the DOT&PF Commissioner's Office staff involved with drafting the STIP to go over the comment letter. DOT&PF is in communication with the FHWA on corrective actions to modify the funding plan so that it can be approved. At this time, the FHWA considers the document not approvable and has asked the DOT&PF to request an extension. The extension cannot be granted by FHWA unless the two MPOs in the State concur with the extension request. The two MPO approval letters have been sent to the FHWA which should allow more time for the DOT&PF to revise the funding plan.

- Mr. Fox made a budget transfer in late July. Funds were moved out of the Advertising account into the Office Supplies and Membership Dues accounts.
- Mr. Fox prepared the FFY2024 FAST Planning Office Budget for Policy Board approval.
- Mr. Fox provided a walking tour during the Alaska Community Forestry Program Annual Conference to show them the trees that were planted along Cushman Street that are now eight to nine years old and doing well.
- Ms. Lunsford distributed 15 bike repair tool kits to the 15 local businesses that sponsored the “Bike Friendly Business Program.”
- Ms. Lunsford distributed 3,500 copies of the 2023 Bikeways Maps to various businesses and other places around town.
- Mr. Fox received approval for the funding plan projects that focus on improving air quality under the CMAQ and Carbon Reduction Program. Funding for the projects in the funding plan is currently being obligated.
- Olivia Lunsford and Corey DiRutigliano attended the two-day Complete Streets Training hosted by DOT&PF in Fairbanks.
- At the August 2, 2023 meeting, the Technical Committee:
 - Reviewed and revised the FFY24-27 STIP comment letter. The comment letter was also revised following a meeting with the DOT Commissioner’s Office.
 - Recommended that the Policy Board approve the new Metropolitan Planning Fund Distribution Formula.
 - Recommended a list of funding requests to DOT&PF for the \$3.8 million in Unobligated Planning Funds.
- At the September 6, 2023 meeting, the Technical Committee:
 - Added a comment that DOT develop a plan for the pedestrian overcrossing bridge on Geist Road to the STIP Comment Letter and modified the comment to add “either an overpass or at-grade crossing.”
 - Recommended the remaining FFY23 offset funds be used to pay back Advance Construction funds used for FFY24 projects.

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

Donna Gardino, representing the MATSU Borough commented that she has been working with the MatSu Borough for the past three years to help them form their MPO. Ms. Gardino explained that she has been helping them write their Operating Agreement, Bylaws, and create the Boundary Map which will soon be sent to the Governor for approval. Ms. Gardino explained that they have been working as a pre-MPO and they went through a long exercise of who should host them during that process. Ms. Gardino explained that no one stepped up to host the MPO so now they need someone to manage their MPO as it moves forward in the process of

forming a non-profit. Ms. Gardino explained that the MatSu Borough can no longer do the work on behalf of the MPO because their lawyers have said they cannot. Ms. Gardino explained that they need a registered agent for the organization to accomplish all the tasks required to become an MPO in good standing. Ms. Gardino explained that the new MPO needs to prepare a Metropolitan Transportation Plan which requires a Household Travel Survey, a Travel Model, and other pertinent documents. Ms. Gardino explained that those tasks take approximately six months to hash out at the Policy Board level and during that time, they need to temporarily piggyback onto the organizational structure that FAST Planning has created.

Ms. Gardino explained that when FMATS was up and running it was first run by the State and the State is not stepping up to do that this time. Ms. Gardino stated that when FMATS decided to become a non-profit, they were temporarily hosted by the State. Ms. Gardino stated that Mr. Fox came up with the proposal to hire someone that can serve as the face of the MPO in the MatSu Borough who would be assisted by Mr. Fox and housed in MatSu. Ms. Gardino commented that she hoped that FAST Planning would consider Mr. Fox's proposal to help MatSu form their new organization and get it operational.

Kim Sollien, MatSu Borough Planning commented that they are currently in a situation where it makes sense to hire another person to become the face of their MPO. Ms. Sollien commented that they have never formed an MPO in the MatSu Borough. Ms. Sollien commented that the MatSu Borough, Cities of Palmer and Wasilla, DOT&PF, Chickaloon and Knik Tribes have never worked together in the way they are working together right now. Ms. Sollien commented that having an interim Coordinator that would potentially flow into the Executive Director position would really help this organization form and create its own identity. Ms. Sollien commented that having her, as a Borough employee, as the face of the organization does have its challenges. Ms. Sollien commented that she will still be here for support, project management, and to help manage the potential new employee, but hiring an interim Coordinator that would eventually flow into the Executive Director as the new face for the MPO sooner rather than later would be beneficial in helping get this work going and help the MPO create its own identity. Ms. Sollien commented that Mr. Fox has been an incredible resource for them and is always willing to help. Ms. Sollien commented that they are very lucky to have such a competent, skilled, helpful, kind, and smart Executive Director for FAST Planning. Ms. Sollien commented that Mr. Fox has been a great support for them and really appreciated his help and mentorship on transportation-related issues.

Ms. Gardino commented that the new FAST Planning Bike Map is awesome, and Ms. Lunsford did an incredible job on it.

7. Old Business

No old business.

8. New Business

a. FFY2024-27 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Comment Letter (Action Item)

Mr. Fox noted that if the draft comments for the FFY24-27 STIP letter are approved today, they will be submitted 10 days late because the comment period closed September 3, 2023. Mr. Fox explained that even though the comments will be late, they have already been shared with DOT&PF staff so that they have those on record.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To adopt the FFY2024-27 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Comment Letter. (Welch/Rotermund).

Discussion: Mr. Kemp clarified that 98% of all the DOT&PF-owned streetlights in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, as well as the signal heads, are already LED.

Mr. Kemp stated that Comment #19 was a bit skewed on the number of projects because the only two projects that were not already on some sort of a long-range plan for the Department or already in the STIP are the two bridge projects: the northbound Chena River Bridge Replacement and Steese Milepost 5. Mr. Kemp commented that all the others were in the STIP or some sort of long-range plan before the Kinross Project. Mr. Kemp added that he did not think we should change the comment but wanted the Policy Board to be aware of that. Mr. Kemp explained that the majority of this work was already programmed except for the two bridge projects. Mr. Kemp commented that for the Corridor Study, he tried, but it did not get funded, and he would see if he could get it into the PEL Study or into an amendment. Mr. Kemp explained that he would continue to try on that. Mr. Kemp explained that for the Geist Road Pedestrian Bridge Replacement, they did not have a plan, but are looking at multiple avenues to get folks across the road. Mr. Kemp commented that he had met with both the high school principals in that area (West Valley and Hutchison High Schools). Mr. Kemp commented that something will be done there, but he did not know what, and they should have a plan by this Fall.

Mayor Ward commented that in Comment #19 he recognized that they always had some sort of corridor study or planning effort going on or were trying to get something in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and asked Mr. Kemp how the State had addressed this issue in the past. Mayor Ward asked Mr. Kemp how they got something in the queue without waiting for another cycle or an amendment to the TIP.

Mr. Kemp explained that there might be program funds or something they could use. Mr. Kemp commented that what his hope was that they would get some sort of list of items they could do and a rough estimate of how much it would cost.

Mr. Kemp explained that a lot of it would have to do with the cost of doing it. Mr. Kemp explained that they would have to pick out the highest priority project to get Federal funding for. Mr. Kemp explained that State funding can come in at any time, and he could get the money to fix those items.

Mayor Ward asked if there would be any merit to establishing a Richardson Highway Corridor Program that is more open to recommendations that are specific to projects under a certain dollar amount, maybe smaller dollar-value projects such as signing or lighting that could still move forward.

Mr. Kemp explained that DOT probably could but the thing with the STIP is that they are all Federal funds. Mr. Kemp commented that the other thing they could do is go to the Legislature with small-dollar amount projects, and lobby to get funding for them. Mr. Kemp commented that amendments can get laborious because the whole amendment would get scrutinized and that takes a long time or might get controversial.

Mr. Fox explained that he thought this question was already raised about adding programs into the STIP that would fund projects that come out of the Corridor Action Plan, and the answer at that time was "no." Mr. Fox added that he thought it was appropriate to have a program like that, but at this point, we do not.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. FFY2023 Offset Balance (Action Item)

 ***Consideration of using remaining FFY2023 Offset Funding toward FFY2024 Advance Construction payback***

Mr. Fox explained that there is a small FFY23 Offset balance of approximately \$42,000 and his proposal is to use that Offset balance toward FFY24 Advance Construction payback.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To approve the use of FFY2023 Offset Balance toward FFY2024 Advance Construction payback. (Cleworth/Pruhs).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

c. New Metropolitan Planning (PL) Fund Distribution Formula (Action Item)

 ***Consideration of Support for new PL Fund Distribution Formula***

Mr. Fox explained that one of the objections to the current Distribution Formula for Planning (PL) funds to the two MPOs in the state is that 80% of the funds are distributed between Anchorage and Fairbanks based on population, and DOT reserves 20% of the funds for their own use in smaller, urban areas throughout the state. Mr. Fox explained that this type of formula is unusual and used in only two states: Alaska and Wyoming. Mr. Fox explained that prior to the last Statewide quarterly MPO Meeting, he sent an email explaining the reasons why

this 20% DOT set-aside should be removed. Mr. Fox explained that one of the main reasons was that the new MatSu MPO needed this funding to set up their new office. Mr. Fox explained that he presented his proposed funding distribution formula with 100% of the funds being split out between the three MPOs. Mr. Fox explained that with this distribution formula, AMATS is kept whole, FAST Planning is kept whole, and the new MatSu MPO has sufficient funding to set up a two-person office. Mr. Fox explained that at the Statewide MPO Quarterly Meeting, all three MPOs as well as the State agreed on the new PL Fund Distribution Formula for FFY2024.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To support the new PL [Metropolitan Planning] Fund Distribution formula. (Welch/Rotermund).

Discussion: Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Fox if the amount that FAST Planning received in the new Planning Fund Distribution Formula was the number he used when preparing the new FAST Planning Office Budget.

Mr. Fox explained that was the number they were using for Metropolitan Planning funds but in addition to those funds we supplement the Office budget with Surface Transportation Program dollars each year.

Mr. Kemp asked Mr. Fox how many people were in the AMATS office.

Mr. Fox explained that there were six or seven people in the AMATS office and the thing with AMATS is that they do not use all of their allocated funds each year. Mr. Fox explained that AMATS typically saves that funding to fund their planning projects and FAST Planning does not have that luxury because we do not have enough unobligated planning funds to do that.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

d. Request to Alaska DOT&PF for Use of Unobligated PL Funds (Action Item)

Request by FAST Planning to Utilize a Portion of the \$3.8 Million Unobligated PL Fund Balance for New Planning Efforts/Studies

Mr. Fox explained that he asked DOT for an explanation of how the 20% Unobligated PL Fund set-aside was spent. Mr. Fox explained DOT in Juneau provided a spreadsheet showing how that set-aside was spent. Mr. Fox explained that they found that there was \$3.8 million in Unobligated Planning Funds available for use by the MPOs. Mr. Fox explained that the three MPOs created proposals for how they would use those unobligated funds. Mr. Fox explained that the MatSu MPO created a proposed list of projects to use some of that \$3.8 million. Mr. Fox explained that AMATS indicated that they did not need the funds and agreed to leave the funds to FAST Planning and MatSu. Mr. Fox explained that FAST Planning created a list of ideas to: 1) Develop the first Regional Transportation Plan for rural communities outside the MPO boundary,

2) Prepare a comprehensive update to the Travel Demand Model using cell phone data; 3) Reserve funding for the next Long Range Transportation Plan Update for the MPO area; 4) Conduct a Community Transportation Safety Survey to ask residents about their safety concerns along the transportation network that may not show up in the Crash Database; 5) Develop and produce an educational booklet on use of all-purpose vehicles and snowmachines on public roadways throughout the state; and 6) A Downtown Streets Traffic Study of the one-way streets in the downtown core to look at what it would take to convert them to two-way streets.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To honor the request to utilize a portion of the \$3.8 million in Unobligated Planning Funds for new planning efforts and studies. (Welch/Rotermund).

Amendment to the Motion: To remove Item #6, The Downtown Streets Traffic Study, from the list of priorities. (Pruhs/Cleworth).

Discussion: Mayor Pruhs commented that the City of Fairbanks is not interested in changing our streets from one-way. Mayor Pruhs added that they have seven streets and that works out well for them. Mayor Pruhs commented that he asked the City Engineer to give him a list of items that could replace this. Mayor Pruhs commented the items were: 1) Increase the advance project definition funds to produce an updated Barnette Street estimate considering the latest concepts on bicycles, lane reductions, and parking; and 2) To add a study to prioritize sidewalk compliance projects coordinated with the cost and benefit to both users.

Mr. Cleworth commented that this subject goes way back. Mr. Cleworth commented that years ago they converted Lacey and Noble Streets to two-way. Mr. Cleworth commented that it worked, but there were lots of accidents.

Mr. Cleworth commented that we were trying to mitigate congestion and not create it. Mr. Cleworth commented that the streets are narrow, and parking is very important in the corridor. Mr. Cleworth commented that a lot of the complaints they receive are that there is not enough on-street parking.

Mr. Cleworth commented that he does not want to see us going back and thinks they can find a better use for this money which is more immediate. Mr. Cleworth commented that it is very important to get the sidewalks ADA-compliant.

Mr. Kemp asked if it was a good idea to postpone Item #6 until they get more information about the other two projects the City of Fairbanks requested to replace it with.

Mayor Welch asked if this was a specific list of projects to fund.

Mr. Fox explained that it is approved in our Work Plan, but there is no funding source yet.

Mayor Ward commented that there has been a long history of one-way to two-way streets in Fairbanks and asked if the idea would be to reconstruct them.

Mr. Fox explained that the geometry of 5th Avenue was designed and built to accommodate two-lane traffic with striping.

Mayor Ward asked Mr. Fox for clarification whether this was just a request and that there was no guarantee to fund any of this.

Mr. Fox explained that it would be at DOT&PF's discretion whether to release these funds for any of these projects on the list.

Mayor Ward commented that it sounds like the City is not supportive of this and we should probably think about that in the future.

Vote on Amendment to the Motion: None opposed. Approved.

Discussion: Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Fox if it would be possible to use some of the funds for the FAST Planning Office in lieu of using money from the TIP.

Mr. Fox explained that it could be used for that rather than using our Surface Transportation Program dollars.

Mr. Kemp clarified that this was a one-time thing and not a yearly thing.

Mr. Fox explained that this is an unobligated balance that will never grow and will never be spent. Mr. Fox explained that under this arrangement, FAST Planning would not lose any money.

Mayor Ward asked if DOT&PF was looking for planning projects. He thought that in the future it would make sense to ask for that allocation in future years.

Amended Motion: To honor the request to utilize a portion of the \$3.8 million in Unobligated Planning Funds for new planning efforts and studies, and remove Item #6, the Downtown Streets Traffic Study, from the list of priorities.

Vote on Amended Motion: None opposed. Approved.

e. MatSu Valley MPO Coordinator Position (Action Item)

Consideration of FAST Planning hiring an employee for the MatSu Valley MPO for a period of up to one year while their Non-Profit Corporation is being formed and organizational policies and procedures are developed and formalized

Mr. Fox explained that Page 86 of the meeting packet contained the most recent schedule of activities for the MatSu MPO. Mr. Fox explained that the Pre-MPO Policy Board will be signing their new MPO Operating Agreement, Bylaws, and Boundary Map, and forwarding them to the Governor's office for signature.

Mr. Fox explained that the MatSu Borough is going to file to become a 501(c)3 non-profit set up like FAST Planning. MatSu will file to become a non-profit, obtain a business license, set up an operating budget, and open up a bank account to collect membership fees. Mr. Fox explained that MatSu will need to

determine all their policies and procedures and they cannot spend any of the operating funds until all the policies and procedures are in place. They will also need to have their nonprofit designation before they can hire an employee to run the MPO. Mr. Fox explained that during this phase, there will be an awkward transition similar to the one experienced five years ago by FAST Planning.

Mr. Fox explained that during this time, they will need someone to host the MPO and they have encountered resistance from the MatSu Borough, the two cities, and the tribes. Mr. Fox explained that FAST Planning has procedures in place and if they took on an employee on MatSu's behalf, MatSu would manage the employee, and he would submit two invoices to DOT each month, one for MatSu and one for FAST Planning. Mr. Fox explained that the MatSu MPO funding would come out of the MatSu grant and not the FAST Planning grant. Mr. Fox explained that he presented two options for the employee hired for the MatSu MPO. Mr. Fox explained that he also created a Memorandum of Understanding for managing the duties related to hiring, personnel, payroll processing, insurance, travel, training, and timekeeping. Mr. Fox explained that under this arrangement, MatSu would agree to participate in interviewing and hiring the employing, provide the office and meeting spaces for all meetings. Mr. Fox explained that this agreement would take effect when both parties signed the Agreement and only remain in effect for one year.

Kim Sollien, MatSu Borough Planning, commented that one of the awkward things about this is that the MatSu Borough Attorney does not have the legal authority to form the MatSu MPO and if she is actively participating in creating the documents to create the new non-profit MPO, she could be in trouble.

Ms. Sollien commented that having FAST Planning consider hosting the employee provides the space between the MatSu Borough, the Consultant team, and this new organization so that they can, in good conscience, complete the other formation paperwork without having it be something that is in her court. Ms. Sollien commented that she just wanted to add that piece of the puzzle that also makes this an interesting time period. Ms. Sollien commented that she thinks it would be really beneficial for them if this works out. Ms. Sollien commented that she also recognizes that it is a big responsibility to take on a new employee, even in a remote situation with them taking on the management of that new employee. Ms. Sollien thanked Mr. Fox for his thoroughness in creating the MOU and Job Description for the new MatSu Pre-MPO employee.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To consider hiring an employee for the MatSu Valley MPO [Metropolitan Planning Organization] for up to one year. (Rotermund/Pruhs).

Discussion: Mayor Pruhs commented that he thought Mr. Fox gave a good presentation and thought it made economic sense for an agency that is in the nanny stage.

Mayor Ward commented that he appreciated all of the energy and support that we have been able to provide for the MPO development in MatSu and was excited about the idea of having another MPO in the state. Mayor Ward commented that he thinks it has been a tremendous benefit to our community to have the benefit of an MPO, and to have the coordination that we do locally is just truly amazing. Mayor Ward commented that he was excited to see that MatSu is joining the ranks. Mayor Ward commented that his concern has to do with FAST Planning being involved in that development. Mayor Ward commented that he understood that our own experience was one of trials and tribulations.

Mayor Ward commented that there was definitely some frustration and consternation going through that process. Mayor Ward commented that we have blazed the trail for the non-profit model. Mayor Ward added that we are the only one in the State and even looking at it from a national perspective, it is a minority that are the model that we are. Mayor Ward commented that through all of those challenges that we went through, it really helped identify who we are as an organization. Mayor Ward commented that he is not saying that he would want other people to go through that same struggle, but he thought the struggle was also important to build your identity as an organization. Mayor Ward commented that FAST Planning was created to do planning for the Fairbanks North Star Borough and for the regional area. Mayor Ward asked Mr. Fox if there was any conflict with our Bylaws and our creation documents as an organization that would be in conflict with providing these services to an area that was several hundred miles outside of our regional area.

Mr. Fox explained that, in his review, he has not seen anything that would prohibit us from doing this. Mr. Fox explained that our mission is to do MPO work. We are serving our own governments, educational institutions, etc., so this still fits in with our mission even though it is a different area. Mr. Fox explained that this employment relationship is non-permanent in nature, and we have personnel policies that have provisions for those types of employment relationships through special projects and programs. Mr. Fox explained that he did not see anything from the non-profit side that would cause concern for our organization. Mr. Fox explained that if we hired somebody that was doing work that was completely unrelated to the MPO then that would be cause for concern.

Mayor Ward commented that it just makes him a bit nervous to be in a completely different area when this organization was set up to serve the Fairbanks and the greater area. Mayor Ward commented that he wanted to be supportive of MPOs. Mayor Ward commented that he thought Mr. Fox and the

team had led the charge on a lot of different initiatives when it comes to advocating for MPOs and statewide planning. Mayor Ward commented that he did not want to speak against that, by any means, but to enter a contractual relationship with the MatSu to do work that they, and he meant this in a constructive way, needed to struggle to get through a little bit. Mayor Ward commented that he was disappointed to hear that neither the State nor any one of the local communities were able to stand up for it. Mayor Ward commented that he did not want to assuage anyone or make anyone feel like they should not support this. Mayor Ward commented that if that is the will of the Board, he will certainly support that as well. Mayor Ward commented that he has some hesitations, not against any of the work that the Board or staff here has done or any of the work that MatSu has done in support of this, but he is just a little nervous.

Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Fox if they had started a search for the new MPO Director.

Mr. Fox responded that a year ago, the MatSu Borough put out a job description to hire someone to do this work in a temporary Planner position and were unsuccessful in hiring anyone at that time. Mr. Fox explained that when you look at the salaries offered by the MatSu Borough, they are much lower than parallel positions here in Fairbanks. Mr. Fox explained that he did not think the salary was attractive enough to get a qualified candidate. Mr. Fox explained that there was a lot of discussion between Human Resources and the Legal Department at the time about a MatSu Borough employee doing the work of a separate organization or entity, so MatSu is now considering putting out a new job description.

Mr. Cleworth commented that we are using our wage parameters and personnel code for this position. Mr. Cleworth commented that he wondered if they were putting themselves in an awkward spot if after a year that this person moves back down and if they want to do something different, they are pretty well locked into what they are doing now. Mr. Cleworth commented that he would assume that they are aware of that.

Mr. Fox explained that when he started here, he had three different employers and there was no guarantee that his wage would be kept at that scale. Mr. Fox explained that if the job is advertised, his strategy would be to list that the salary depends on experience but there is still no guarantee that the Board is going to continue that wage. Mr. Fox explained that the MPO Board would be discussing the hiring at their next meeting.

Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Fox when the year started.

Mr. Fox explained that the MOU states that the year starts when both parties sign the Agreement whenever that might be. Mr. Fox commented that his assumption would be October 1st.

Mr. Cleworth commented that he had to share some of Mayor Ward's concerns about getting involved in all this. Mr. Cleworth commented that he understands you want to be the good Samaritan too, but this is pretty awkward. Especially when they themselves cannot come up with a solution down there. It is not a good start.

Mr. Rotermund commented that if these MPOs are required by Federal regulations, why are we offering to give support if it is required by the Feds.

Mr. Fox explained that it is Federally mandated that they have a local government, and the Feds will fund it, but that is as far as their involvement goes. Mr. Fox explained that he is very well aware of everything that you have to have in place before you hire someone to take that position. It would be easier to open the doors and hire someone if the MPO was hosted but that is not the decision they made in MatSu.

Mr. Rotermund asked what made Mr. Fox extend the olive branch and why the MatSu MPO cannot make it on their own as we did.

Mr. Fox explained that you would have to get someone in the wage that is in the collective bargaining agreement of the entity. Mr. Fox explained that from what he sees at the MatSu Borough, the wage they set is not sustainable. Mr. Fox explained that the FAST Planning Board has the ability to set the wages because we do not have a set wage schedule.

Mr. Rotermund commented that his only thought is that if nobody is willing to host, at what we believe is a competitive wage, isn't that their problem and not ours? Mr. Rotermund asked Mr. Fox if that is something they need to figure out on their own.

Mayor Ward commented that he thought that the issue was that they had limitations within the MPO policies that did not give them the flexibility that FAST Planning has to come in and take action. Mayor Ward commented that from that perspective he thinks this is the right way to go. Mayor Ward commented that he completely sympathizes with that since the State had to step in and host FAST Planning to get to the place where we are today. Mayor Ward commented that it was a struggle for us.

Mr. Olds commented that he was very indifferent on this, and it seems to him that we are showing them a non-profit model for a year and how it can potentially work. Mr. Olds commented that any potential applicant would go into it knowing that they could face a potential reduction in salary and benefits once this is established. Mr. Olds added that we are merely sharing that experience, not

withstanding the potential risk or liability to the mission. It is purely a neighborly demonstration of how to set this up and accomplish it for them to then take on and deal with the consequences of the people that come to the table, as they will.

Mr. Cleworth commented that if we do this, we need to be very clear about when the year starts and ends.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

f. FAST Planning FFY2024 Office Budget (Action Item)

Mr. Fox explained that Page 98 of the Meeting Packet contained the proposed FFY24 FAST Planning Office Budget. Mr. Fox explained that there is a six percent overall increase in the Budget.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To approve the FAST Planning FFY2024 Office Budget as presented. (Pruhs/Welch).

Discussion: Mr. Cleworth asked Mr. Fox for a better understanding of the revenues listed in the FAST Planning Budget.

Mr. Fox explained that what we have programmed in the TIP is more than sufficient to cover this office. Mr. Fox explained that FAST Planning is now receiving the Borough's Transit Planning Funds that the Borough has not used for the past five years. Mr. Fox explained that moving forward, FAST Planning will be receiving the annual allocation of Transit Planning Funds. Mr. Fox explained that the annual Transit Planning Fund allocation for our urbanized area is approximately \$140,000 per year which funds the Transit Planner position.

Mr. Cleworth asked if there are funds going to the Borough to supplement a salary.

Mayor Ward commented that there is still funding allocated for the Borough position.

Mr. Fox explained that each year we get a letter from DOT&PF that shows the funding allocated to the Borough, DOT&PF, and FAST Planning and the balance of that funding is allocated to the TIP.

Mr. Cleworth asked if the funding could be changed to go to the MPO for projects to offset the TIP rather than to the other entities.

Mr. Fox explained that the funding share is set out in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Mr. Fox explained that we will be meeting to update the UPWP, and the funding allocations can be revised by the Policy Board at that time.

Amendment to the Motion: To separate out the \$60,000 Undesignated Fund Appropriation and postpone that to the next meeting. (Cleworth/Pruhs).

Discussion: Mr. Kemp asked Mr. Fox if the Grant Writing Services was for assistance with grants that FAST Planning was applying for.

Mayor Ward asked Mr. Fox if it would affect the Budget if they removed the Undesignated Fund Allocation.

Mr. Fox explained that it was fine to separate this item out of the Budget since none of the items in the Undesignated Fund Allocation were time critical.

Vote on Amendment to the Motion: None opposed. Approved

Amended Motion: To approve the FAST Planning FFY2024 Office Budget as presented and separate out the \$60,000 Undesignated Fund Appropriation and postpone that to the next meeting.

Vote on Original Motion as Amended: None opposed. Approved.

A 5-minute break was taken at 2:55 pm. The meeting was reconvened at 3:00 p.m.

Motion: To Eliminate Items #9 and #10 of the agenda. (Cleworth/Welch).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

9. Other Issues

Eliminated from the Agenda by previous motion.

10. Informational Items

a. Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Development Update

Eliminated from the Agenda by previous motion.

b. Obligations and Offsets

Eliminated from the Agenda by previous motion.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Employee Reviews & Consideration of Merit

Increases (Action Item)

Mr. Fox explained that this Executive Session was required for annual employee reviews. Mr. Fox explained that he conducted the employee reviews with his staff and Mayor Ward and also drafted a memo regarding merit increases for his staff.

Public Comment: No public comment.

Motion: To go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing employee reviews and merit increases with the Executive Director (Jackson Fox). (Welch/Rotermund).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

Executive Session began at recording stopped at 3:15 p.m. The regular meeting was resumed on the record at 3:42 p.m.

Executive Session Outcome

The Policy Board met in Executive Session and agreed on a 1.5% merit increase for FAST Planning staff with an additional 1% increase for Olivia Lunsford to balance out the salaries.

12. Policy Board Member Comments

- 👉 Mr. Kemp commented that the DOT had homeless encampments in their right-of-way, so they contracted with the Fairbanks Police Department (FPD) and the City of Fairbanks, they go out and post it, and then the Contractor comes in and does the clean-up work. Mr. Kemp commented that he was recently told by Mr. Guttenberg that he was too cavalier about the homeless. Mr. Kemp explained that now the FPD is partnering with the United Way to hand out care packets and information about assistance they offer to those homeless displaced by a project.
- 👉 Mayor Pruhs that the Region 10 EPA Administrator was in Fairbanks with Senator Murkowski, and he hand-delivered a copy of the 8-page response letter to EPA that Mr. Fox wrote.
- 👉 Mayor Welch commented that he was looking forward to the Winter Maintenance Forum and asked when that was scheduled.
- 👉 Ms. Lunsford explained that FAST Planning is looking into different venues this year and hoping to have the Winter Maintenance Forum in the second week of November this year.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m. The next Policy Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 25, 2023.

Approved:



J. Bennett for Mayor Ward Date: 10-15-23

Mayor Bryce Ward, Chair
FAST Planning Policy Board