



FAST POLICY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2025 • 12:00 – 2:00 P.M.

FAST Planning Office, KeyBank Building, 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: 810-8731-8466

1. Call to Order

Mayor Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee	Representative Organization
*Scott Crass	FNSB Assembly
*Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair	Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
*Lauren Little	DOT&PF
*Nick Czarnecki	DEC Air Quality
*Mindy O'Neill	Mayor, City of Fairbanks
*Larry Terch	Mayor, City of North Pole
*Crystal Tidwell	City of Fairbanks
**Corey DiRutigliano	FAST Planning
**Jackson Fox	FAST Planning
**Olivia Lunsford	FAST Planning
**Deborah Todd	FAST Planning
**Randi Bailey	DOT&PF Planning
**Don Galligan	FNSB Community Planning
+Kellen Spillman	FNSB Community Planning
+Brett Nelson	DOT&PF Planning
+Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad Corporation
Adam Moser	DOT&PF Program Development
Al Beck	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Ivet Hall	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Tom Hewitt	FNSB Mayor's Office
Emily Haynes	FHWA
Laura Achee	Senator Bjorkman's Office
Blake Phillips	AK Permanent Capital Management
Jack Barnwell	Fairbanks Daily News Miner

Steve

Anonymous

***FAST Planning Policy Board Members, ** FAST Planning Staff Members, +FAST Planning Technical Committee Members**

3. Approval of the November 19, 2025 Agenda

Motion: To approve the November 19, 2025 Agenda as amended. (Terch/O'Neall).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

4. Approval of the October 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the October 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes. (O'Neall/Terch).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

5. Staff/Working Group/Chair Reports (including mid-year Operating Budget review)

- The second Steering Committee meeting for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update was held at the FAST Planning office to debrief the Committee on the MTP Public Workshop that was held at the Noel Wien Library Auditorium on October 21, 2025. The Goals and Objectives for the MTP were revised and resent to the group. The Existing Conditions Report was also reviewed by the Committee. All the documents are on the FAST Planning website for public viewing.
- Two vacant seats on the Technical Committee have been filled by Corey Richardson with Tanana Chiefs Conference, as the new Tribal representative, and Anna Clausen with Weaver Brothers will replace Justin Burgess with AES Transportation as the new Freight representative.
- Mr. Fox drafted Resolutions two different options for moving some funding to interest-bearing bank accounts.
- Change of Officials forms were filed with the State replacing Mayor Pruhs with Mayor Mindy O'Neall and Jerry Cleworth with Crystal Tidwell for the City of Fairbanks seats on the Policy Board. The Borough Assembly member seat will be chosen next month by the Borough Assembly.
- The 2025 Winter Maintenance Forum event was held October 28, 2025 from 5:30-7:30 pm at the Noel Wien Library Auditorium. Eighty-one (81) people attended the event.
- Mr. Fox prepared a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Administrative Modification and Amendment for review and approval.
- At the **November 5, 2025** meeting, the Technical Committee recommended:
 - Approval of TIP Administrative Modification #7 and release of TIP Amendment #2 for a 30-day public comment period following completion of an Interagency Consultation meeting for air quality conformity.

- Support for the State's 2026 Performance Safety Targets.
- Approval of the 2026 FAST Planning Meeting calendar.

6. Public Comment Period (Non-Action Items)

No public comment.

7. Old Business

a. Intergovernmental Operating Agreement & Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Update (Action Item)

Action Postponed from October 22nd Policy Board Meeting

A recommendation was made by the Technical Committee to approve the formation of a working group to review the FAST Planning Operating Agreement but only after approval of the FAST Planning Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Update was received from the Governor. A motion was made by the Policy Board at their October 22, 2025 meeting, but postponed action to the November meeting.

Motion (from October 22, 2025): To approve the Technical Committee recommendation to form a working group to evaluate and recommend changes to the Operating Agreement. (Little/Czarnecki).

Discussion:

Ms. Little: I think since all of the things shook out, this entire Policy Board has turned over from when the initial boundary was submitted and approved. The actual initial boundary, not the letters and all that stuff that followed. In the time that's gone on, we've identified some areas where there are gaps. Just for some general education, the Operating Agreement is how the State of Alaska DOT and the MPO Policy Board work together on administering this federal funding. There's been a lot of misconceptions that somehow the Federal Highway Administration has some role within that Operating Agreement. The Federal Highway Administration has an agreement with the State of Alaska called the Stewardship and Oversight Agreement. That's how the Federal Highway Administration and DOT work together. The Operating Agreement is how DOT and the MPOs work together. So, Federal Highways is not a party to that agreement. I just want to clarify that because I know folks are kind of new and have probably been learning about this through the newspapers. That was a big misconception in AMATS in particular. So, as we worked through all this, we identified some areas that are not clear such as how we resolve conflicts over projects. Two years ago, the State brought a bridge project forward and the FAST Planning Policy Board opted not to allow that to move forward in the MTP (Metropolitan Transportation Plan) and the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) document. That was the first time that had ever happened. Historically, DOT brings their projects forward, the MPO has their projects, we work together,

and it's not been a conflict. So, that kind of raised some issues and it wasn't just this MPO. A similar situation also happened with AMATS. It was actually a little different. A project was included, and they opted to remove it from both their TIP and MTP and the project had significant federal-aid dollars. So, these actions kind of brought forward that there's no conflict resolution procedures in our Operating Agreement. We've operated on, we've never not gotten along, so, it never needed to be addressed. That's no longer the case. Now certainly, you know, the circumstances around that, obviously there was some lack of coordination from me in a prior role in terms of giving FAST Planning the time and saying, here's the project, here's the timeline, understanding the timelines associated with MTP and TIP inclusion. There are steps, there's process, there's people in new roles, and things got missed. But it doesn't change the overarching if you're not going to agree on a project, how do we work through that? Because at the end of the day, the TIP and the ability to spend federal dollars is not just the MPOs authority. It is also the Governor's authority. The Governor ultimately approves the TIP, and we'll be failing Alaskans if we ever get to that point of a conflict between the State and an MPO leading to a full-out disapproval of a TIP. So, if we can build some things into these Operating Agreements and there's been other stuff, the 3C Process and stuff that was worked through on the STIP comments, and the efforts that were done there. We want to get that stuff consistent in all the MPO Operating Agreements. We're having the same conversation with AMATS. MVP (MatSu) doesn't have a TIP or MTP yet, so it's been a lower priority to get theirs in alignment, but we want all three Operating Agreements handled to seek resolution for how we coordinate to bring information, share information forward on the MPO projects, and the money you are allocated, as well as the projects at DOT and their allocations. How that stuff is coordinated. Things like the split letters come up. Let's get that stuff coordinated so we're all working on the same sheet of music. That's the goal of this. The goal of this is not, how maybe it came across in the initial efforts, that DOT is the sole authority over all the things. That wasn't what we were asserting, but I can fully understand how it may have come across that way. This is, the Technical Committee are the experts and they agreed that this was a worthwhile effort as demonstrated by their motions, and it would be good for all of us to have these things identified and get some language, so that we don't end up in these gridlocked conflicts. Regarding the boundary, I have been working through that with Law, FAST Planning, and AMATS. They have different issues, but the same issues. So, we're just trying to get on the same sheet of music to give the letters to the Governor for what decision should be made there. If you all want to tie it to the boundary approval, you're welcome to. It's just that much longer that we're not identifying these areas of conflict. We, as the State, are fully motivated to ensure that a final boundary is approved before December 31, 2026.

That is the deadline that we're given. If it's not approved, then no one knows. No one is like "oh yeah, that's what happens." Theoretically, it would be that you cannot spend any money in the FAST (Planning) area boundary until it's resolved. So, we don't want to get there. We're not going to get there but I think what I remember when we discussed it last month was this was a conscious effort to decouple boundary from the Operating Agreement and recommend them as two discreet issues and handle them as two discreet issues. So, a slightly different speech than in the past two or three times I think I've done it but the same highlights. Thank you for letting me speak.

Mayor Terch: Is there a way to separate our discussions from Anchorage when it comes to presenting our boundaries to the Governor? Anchorage is in its own unique situation as we, the Fairbanks area, are in our unique situations and to have those co-mingled and tied together seems very problematic for our area. Is there a way to uncouple those so that the Governor has the option to decide on those independently rather than as a whole process?

Ms. Little: Yes. Let me clarify. They will be separate letters to the Governor for approval or disapproval. The one point of issue that is common between the two is the expansion on NHS (National Highway System). Some of it is where that Census line was drawn and some Federal Highways rules. It's that overarching conflict that we talked about over the months and months of Policy Board that the State of Alaska is ultimately responsible for it. We're the ones who get the NHS funding. We're responsible for performance metrics to Federal Highways on the performance of our NHS system. The choice by both FAST and AMATS to not include DOT priority projects on the NHS, and in the case of Anchorage, try to force investment that maybe the State wasn't interested in making us pay a lot tighter attention to where that money is drawn. In this MPO, it's the Richardson Highway and in Anchorage it's the Seward and Glenn Highways.

Mayor Terch: Is there a way to separate the timeline as well? So, instead of waiting for all of those agreements to get made with Anchorage and bringing both options to the table related to the boundary to the Governor at the same time, is there a way to split that timeline since I believe Fairbanks is in a better place than Anchorage, as far as negotiations and agreements, to be able to have that presented to the Governor before Anchorage's discussions have taken place?

Ms. Little: To be clear, the MPOs are not part of the discussion. What's going to go to the Governor's office is a recommendation to approve or disapprove based on the specific elements that Law has identified as well as some of the conversations that Law and DOT are having about these authorities and how to fit all these pieces together. I do believe FAST's boundary and letter will be ready sooner. But we're not going to come to the MPOs and say, "Hey you need to change this or that before we take it to the Governor." It's going to be the

Governor who recommends approval or denial for these reasons, and then that will come back to the MPOs. If there are corrections at that time, that would be when that conversation would occur. We've had back and forth now with the MPOs and have the information we need to generate that letter and get that to the Governor. But I do think that the FAST boundary decision will be ready sooner on a quicker timeline.

Mayor Terch: Do we have a timeline? I know at our last meeting you said that it was going to go in front of the Governor soon. I like soon. That timeframe works for me. But in my mind 'soon' would have already happened. We're a month down the road here and we're no steps closer other than it being in a legal cornucopia of discussion. Is there a way to make 'soon' a before the end of the year hard date? So that it is presented to our Governor in relation to FAST Planning before the end of the year. Is that a reasonable expectation? Or do you have a timeline that is a reasonable expectation of that being presented to the Governor?

Ms. Little: Yes. I am very motivated to ensure that this occurs before the end of the Legislative Session and attention gets diverted to the 12,000 hurricane bills. So, yes, by the end of the year is the timeline to get that presented to the Governor. At least have it in front of the Governor. I have no control over what he does from there.

Mayor Terch: Understood. Thank you for that.

Mayor Hopkins: Thank you. Thanks for some of those. I take a little bit of review on the principle that Mayor Terch said. I have a little bit of concerns. 'Soon' is usually good. This has been something that has been going on for years that we've been waiting for. My understanding is that there are no legal things that are still being discussed in terms of the boundary and where it's at and what it needs to look like. DOT and the State had as much time as anybody to comment on that boundary expansion back when it was being discussed and addressed before I was Mayor before we were. So, they've had a lot of opportunity there to weigh in on it. Additionally, as was stated clearly in the Technical Committee, there is no coupling, no connection between the Operating Agreement and the boundary. Those are entirely separate issues. The only reason that we do not have a boundary signed, as has been stated by the Department of Transportation in the past, was that the Governor will not sign it. DOT will not move the boundary to the Governor until the Operating Agreement is signed and changed. That was what was said in the last twelve months. There is no other reason besides that is what was said on it. And just a question on that. How long has the boundary change been in the State's hands to move to the Governor? Do you know?

Ms. Little: I do not know. I do want to make one clarifying point though. The statement on tying the Operating Agreement and the boundary. That was based

on Law's interpretation of a change in decision-making when FAST and AMATS chose to not include DOT priorities. That was somewhat unprecedented. There is CFR language about a change in decision-making that triggers some additional evaluation. For the most part, we've been able to move past that conversation, and we do have some willingness to decouple those things. But that was directly a result of our legal counsel's opinion and in that letter both Chair Cleworth received as well as Aaron Jongenelen with AMATS received a letter mirroring that language.

Mayor Hopkins: When we asked Federal Highways, if I remember correctly, they did not say there was a change in the decision-making process. We haven't changed how those decisions are made since during FAST time, this is five years or so it's been in existence, and before that. There was no change in process. It was a disagreement. Even just last month it was stated that there were no connections besides political decisions up the ladder in coupling that Operating Agreement and the boundaries. Do you remember how long the State has had the Boundary map on the Governor's or DOT's desk or when that was submitted?

Mr. Fox: It was submitted in December of 2023.

Mayor Hopkins: So, two years now that we've been waiting for that signature that had all the comments on it. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Crass: I appreciate you highlighting the timeline here where DOT has taken an extended hold of this. Something that should have just been moved to the Governor's desk for signature. That boundary expansion is something that's having FAST Planning do work that we are not being compensated for. So now we're doing work in the adopted boundary and we're not being compensated for by our federal funding partners. It seems that tying the two issues together, I mean it has been made clear that it's an effort to force other conversations and concessions, which is a terrible way to begin that conversation. I would encourage DOT to get that part of the conversation over with. I think the best way to put it in the rearview mirror is going to be for that boundary to be adopted by the Governor and then, at that point in time, I think we can have further discussions about the Operating Agreement. But it's not tenable to begin looking at that under what has been an overstatement of, "I am refusing to give you something that should be adopted, should not be contentious, and is harming the mission of FAST Planning." So, I am not in favor of forming this working group until we can put that part in the rearview mirror.

Mayor Terch: I would like to defend the State just a little bit on this. I know that it's difficult as we change out offices. People pick up and run with different things. Things get dropped in the change-out in the State. It has been very difficult. Just in my short time here, I believe you are the third representative from the State to be here and that also becomes problematic. I appreciate you picking

up the ball and running with it. In the same sentence, I challenge you to run with it and continue to run with it and get that completed as you are the champion of this now, not your predecessors. The things that they have done, you can undo and move forward in a positive manner. I would like to speak to having the ability to have an open discussion which is super important to have some sort of mediation when the State disagrees with what FAST has put forward. I'd also like to challenge you to take that on and bring suggestions that make sense for not just our Policy Board, our state, but also for our area as you are a resident here. To move things forward in a way that makes sense for our entire community while, respectfully, doing your job. It's a tough position that you're in. No different than the mayors in this room or anybody else in this room that's a Policy Board member. To have to do your job and do what's best for your community at the same time. It's a tough position that you're in. So, thank you for the effort in making that happen and pushing this forward. Allowing our area to have a voice at a state level is very important. Anything that we can do, as a Policy Board, to help move that forward on the state's behalf is certainly something I'm willing to do and I hope that the rest of the Policy Board is. I think it would be great for all of us to put this in the rearview mirror so we can move forward in a positive fashion and get over the hill that we have been climbing for what feels like forever. So, thank you for that.

Mayor O'Neall: Mayor Terch are you in support of this or are you not in support of this? I'm a little confused by your statements.

Mayor Terch: The way that it is set up now, I am certainly not in support of. We're talking about two totally separate issues that have come together in some fashion to be one issue. Mediation is an issue by itself. The contractual language to not have mediation is an issue that certainly needs to be dealt with. The boundary is a totally separate issue. To try and combine the Anchorage area boundary and the Fairbanks area boundary together is super problematic because we're two separate parts of the state. That would be like saying that the North Slope is the same as the Fairbanks area versus Southeast. They're all different areas of the state and they have uniqueness that needs to be dealt with on a state level. I'm just challenging the State to look at those, separate those, get those in front of the Governor, and push this forward so that we can all move past this in a rational, reasonable way where we sit down, put our differences aside, and make the best decision for our entire area and the state when it comes to these issues. Thank you for that.

Mayor Hopkins: Thank you for commenting on and championing this. It's great having you here. Having someone regularly here with your knowledge and experience locally does give this a different approach and I do think that's good. It got contentious last time. But I think there was good reason for it to be

contentious. There were a lot of concerns about the changes to the Operating Agreement. None of those changes that were proposed that I remember off the top of my head, there was no conflict resolution for that situation. So, that wasn't in there. So, the main reason we're discussing it here, which is a valid reason, was not proposed. The change that was proposed by the State was that the State Department of Transportation shall, I don't remember the exact language, give the projects to FAST Planning to put into the TIP and the STIP. That would remove the local voice from that process. That was a big concern for us. There were a number of wrongly cited Federal codes. The way our staff here would work, who they would have worked for, and who they would have answered to changed. It was tabled indefinitely at the time. Just for clarification here, we do have a motion on the table that we're working on. So, let's have more dialog on the motion on the table right now. I guess I generally agree with Mayor Terch about the difference between the Operating Agreement and the boundary changes, but we have worked for many years without that conflict resolution language. While there might have been this one situation that arose, the larger changes that were proposed in the Operating Agreement were very concerning. There has not been a reason given for not signing the new boundary change which would expand the opportunity for FAST Planning to support our community's transportation needs in a much broader area. It's based on the Census. Where people live. What's going to be a metropolitan area in the next 20 years for growth. So, it's an important map for us to be able to work with. I guess you would be interested in a motion that requires the map to be signed before we move forward with a working group. Regardless of what happens with AMATS, this is a FAST Planning and Borough conversation. We have a motion on the table. We had public comments at the last meeting. We postponed this one month. We tabled it from the late winter last year. If people want more time to research what the letters look like that were written by the Anchorage Municipal Attorney, the ones that were submitted by the Department of Law on the Operating Agreement changes that were put forward, we can certainly allow for that time.

Ms. Tidwell: Just for my own clarification, being extremely new. Am I understanding that if we don't move this motion forward, we stay with the current Operating Agreement, and then we are just basically waiting for that boundary to be signed?

Mayor Hopkins: That's not in here currently but that is generally correct. If the Governor does not sign the boundary change, Federal Highways has also said on the record at this meeting that they do not know what would happen. It just goes into effect. On that note, the previous agreement was never signed either by Governor Walker in 2014. It was refused, then adopted just by use.

Mr. Fox: For clarification, that was for Anchorage not Fairbanks.

Ms. Little: To just circle back to what you said about the prior conversations around the Operating Agreement. I just wanted to point out that this is fundamentally different than that entire conversation. This request is from Technical Committee to Policy Board. This is not DOT saying, "Here's your changes to the Operating Agreement." This is fundamentally a different effort and approach intentionally and based on conversations (inaudible). I also wanted to clarify the boundary approval. That is very clear in the CFR that the Governor must approve it. It is not approved until the Governor approves it. So, if you don't have an approved boundary, then you don't have the ability to spend federal dollars in that area is the conversation we've had with Federal Highway Administration.

Mayor Hopkins: Do you know why AMATS was able to spend those federal dollars because I assume they were able to?

Ms. Little: I don't know what happened there. That was a long time ago. Obviously, the level of interest in the relationship with the MPOs is very different after the last two years than it maybe was back then. They may have cleaned that up now. I can't recall if they did go ahead and they're wrapping all of that into the updated 2027 stuff. I'm not as up to speed on that.

Mayor O'Neill: If the Governor doesn't approve the proposed boundary line does that mean the one that was approved just stays in order until it is approved, or that there is no boundary that's approved?

Ms. Little: You have a current approved boundary. This is just an expansion of that boundary. So, if the Governor were to disapprove it, it would come back to FAST Planning with corrections. What needed to be changed for the Governor's Office to approve the boundary. So, it's not disapproved and then we're done talking. It would come with some resolution so that we could get to that approved boundary before that December 31st.

Mayor O'Neill: So that's what you mean that if there's not an approved one by the 26th, then the entire boundary goes away?

Ms. Little: You don't have a federally compliant boundary. You still have a boundary, but it doesn't meet the federal requirements to include the expanded Census information. That's where this weird gray area comes in that has happened before but we're not going to let it happen.

Ms. O'Neill: Has the Governor indicated why he hasn't returned that back if he's not going to approve it?

Ms. Little: It has not gone to the Governor. It is the Commissioner's Office that ultimately reviews and makes the recommendation. The Commissioner is designee for the Governor on many, many things.

Ms. O'Neill: Has the Commissioner said why he hasn't passed it on to the Governor?

Ms. Little: That was the conversation back in February when the letter was sent about a lot of concerns over a variety of things that initially linked the Operating Agreement changes to the boundary. And that's where I was saying that I think we've been able to move past that conversation and decouple those things to some degree so we can continue to work collaboratively on addressing some of these points of conflict.

Mayor O'Neall: So, is the Commissioner willing to send a letter back to that effect to FAST Planning so we have that in writing?

Ms. Little: You have the letter.

Ms. O'Neall: That has happened?

Ms. Little: That was in February.

Ms. O'Neall: Sorry. I'm discovering. So, my impression was that the Commissioner has the boundary.

Ms. Little: Correct. And as someone working for the Commissioner, I'm working with Law on the letter so that we can get that decision back.

Ms. O'Neall: So, we don't have a decision back?

Ms. Little: You don't have approval or disapproval of the boundary. That is what I'm working on with Law to get in front of the Governor for that final determination on the boundary separate from the Operating Agreement. That's my hope that we can decouple these things because FAST has indicated some willingness to recognize these areas that we want to shore up in our Operating Agreement with the MPO and DOT on how we're going to work together. Yes. It's a long, tangled web and we're trying to untangle it and move forward.

Ms. Tidwell: Are you feeling like, even if we don't have this motion saying that we're going to form a working group, do you feel that at this time it's going to move forward even without saying that we're going to form a working group? Or is it hanging on us making the decision to form a working group right now?

Ms. Little: I don't have a solid read on which direction it will go. I think it would be unfortunate if this Board makes the determination to not allow a working group to start evaluating and identifying areas for change. That is, not make changes to the Operating Agreement. That's not the motion. The motion is to form a working group to look at it and recommend changes. The actual changes are a long way down the line. This is a good show of faith up the chain of 'We're committed. We hear you. We understand some of the concerns. We're open to trying to find a path forward so that we don't end up in this conflict again.' That's the end goal. We don't want to be in this conflict again. But we very well may continue to move forward with that boundary discussion. I don't know what the final answer will be. It would be unfortunate though if this Board does choose not to at least kind of a show of good faith that we want to make this better for all of us.

Mayor Terch: With respect to shows of good faith and steps forward, it has been on the table for a long time, and I know you're hopeful. Hope in one hand and shit in the other and see which one fills up first. And really, the timeline that the Governor has had an opportunity to deal with this is filling up faster than the hope. With respect to moving things forward in a manner that makes sense and putting a good faith effort forward, having a discussion without an updated boundary certainly would be step one from my viewpoint. I can't speak for everybody on the Board but that would be step one in truly the good faith that's been out there for almost three years.

Ms. Little: Two years.

Mayor Terch: Two years and very little action. It's unfortunate. To sort of throw your own words right back at you respectfully, that good faith works both ways and having that in front of the Governor certainly would make positive steps forward very quickly in showing action and hope as far as coming together and making something happen.

Ms. Little: That's completely fair and I hear you. I think it's really tough to have this conversation with this Policy Board because you all were not any of the decision-makers that led to the initial conflict. So, it's easy to forget where this all started was a choice by a former Policy Board, I don't think a single member on here was on that Policy Board at the time, to deny inclusion of a DOT project. That had never happened before. It was a project that we wanted to fast-track. It was the Chena Hot Springs overcrossing on the Steese. We were looking at the ore trucks being down in the roundabout where we could fast-track the bridge replacement project and eliminate that conflict. This Board chose not to include that. There were a lot of very unfortunate quotes. A lot of newspaper articles over the ensuing two years. Testimony from the Executive Director to the Legislature that was very derogatory towards the Department and towards our STIP processes. There is a lot buried in this. I think I've been given a lot of latitude even in the way we're approaching it right now from where we were even months ago because of all of the conflict that got us to this point. But again, it's not any one of you on this current Board. But it did outline that these things can happen and that's where, the State, we have to look out for all of Alaska and make sure that we can maintain that integrity of our National Highway System and interstate routes. So, there was a lot of conflict that led to where we're at and that none of you were a part of. So, that's where I think the State has continued to show a lot of good faith. You have an approved TIP. Right? That's also something that is within the Governor's purview to deny when there's a conflict. If you don't include a project that's important to the State that's an option but we haven't gotten there. We don't want to get there. Right? We have to work through this. We hope that by taking this down to the Technical Committee level that opens the door for us to work through these

conflicts. I am committed to working through that boundary and ensuring that it's in front of the Governor before the end of the year. That's a personal commitment. I can't commit the State to that. I think the shows of good faith have maybe been not recognized entirely. I think my participation on this Policy Board was a show of good faith from the Commissioner's Office. A recognition that a local person with a long history of work with FAST and Federal Highways was going to do a better job of helping us work through this and better serve Fairbanks. I think the shows of good faith have been there. I think there's just been a lot of hurt feelings, quite frankly, up to this point that has maybe made it hard to see those things.

Mayor Terch: I appreciate that perspective but penalizing the current FAST Policy Board for actions that were made prior to any of us even being here would be like penalizing me, as a mayor, for something my predecessor has done and even speaking to that, so I understand hurt feelings. I understand frustrations in the way that things have moved forward, but we are not that Policy Board and trying to move forward in a positive way makes a lot of sense for our community and for the state. So, if we can all set those hurt feelings aside, move forward like adults, and make things happen I think that would benefit all of us in making actions and steps forward. So, whatever we can do to champion that, I'm all for. Thank you for your hard work and what you're doing. I know you're in a very tough spot and I recognize the difficulty in that between the State and this Policy Board. Glad you're here. Would encourage you to stay. I know it's difficult, but we are happy that you're here, and you are local, and you're representing truly the best of what Fairbanks needs moving forward.

Mr. Crass: I do appreciate having a local here from DOT. I hope they can get that Acting part of your title off sooner than later. I think you're doing a great job as the Northern Region Director. With that said, I think that the Policy Board made a wise choice in hearing local input and ensuring there is some local control in our transportation planning processes. There was a tremendous amount of community concern and folks were heated. You're absolutely right. It can be very difficult, as a public servant, to hear those criticisms of the processes that we have but this is the public lever for local control over how these funds are spent. The DOT's position is that they should not have as much control as they have. That's sort of the genesis. Right? This rub of broke local control in affecting what projects are able to happen in our boundary. You know, this is as much of a policy choice as you can imagine toward this Policy Board. I don't know that this is appropriate to have sent to the Technical Committee. I appreciate the work they do but this is absolutely a local political and policy decision. I think my standpoint on this Board has always been in favor of local control, and I will continue to defend that. I am not in favor of revising our Operating Agreements which clearly state that we have

control over local projects and I am steadfast and adamant in maintaining that control. That is the crux of the disagreement at play here is who has control over how this highway money is spent in our area. Anchorage is going through it as well. You look at the memo that their legal counsel drew up, and they have some very solid arguments that the existing law supports local control, that this planning process is to defer to local control and enshrines that in law so, these end arounds is what they feel like. I'm not in support of working on this. I think we can come back and maybe look at this when we've worked on our established working relationship. I think something that will help us engender that working relationship is moving the boundary, the MPO boundary. I think, as Mayor Terch said, that would be an excellent show of good faith. I think we can do really good work together. I think that is a good first step in this dance though. Thank you.

Ms. Little: I just want to make one point on the local control. The CFRs do give the MPOs, through the Policy Boards, the authority to approve the MTPs, to recommend the TIPs, but the Governor is the final determination on the approval of the TIP. So, while there is in CFR significant local input, it is ultimately the Governor's approval or disapproval of the TIP that allows for the flow of that federal money. I just want to make sure that nobody forgets that.

Ms. O'Neall: Okay. We're probably going to beat a dead horse here. I just wanted to make sure that I'm getting this straight. So, the TIP did not include something that DOT considered a priority. So, because of that DOT held on to the boundary decision and has not forwarded that to the Governor. Is that correct?

Ms. Little: Close. Because of that we engaged our legal counsel to understand the authorities of the MPOs to make that decision because this MPO had never done that. We had always been able to get our projects included. Our legal counsel viewed that as a change in decision-making which is something that does require additional steps for MPO approvals.

Mayor O'Neall: Who? Sorry. Let me interrupt here.

Ms. Little: The Attorney General's (AG) Office. We have an AG assigned to the Department of Transportation. We have legal counsel that said we can't move forward with these things until we clarify these authorities in the Operating Agreement. That's what linked all these things together. That's what I'm saying here is that we have some agreement to decouple these things and move them forward separately but that was at the advice of legal counsel to say hold up.

Mayor O'Neall: So, just to be very clear. This boundary approval is not on the Governor's desk. It's stuck with the Commissioner?

Ms. Little: It's stuck with me and Law at the moment. We need to provide a document to the Commissioner for him to forward that on.

Mayor O'Neall: So, when you say that it's been there for two years, it's been stuck in your office?

Ms. Little: It's been stuck with Law in this interpretation that we cannot advance the boundary until we have made changes to the Operating Agreements that clarify authority because of what our legal counsel interpreted as a change in decision-making authority by the MPOs for choosing to not include National Highway System projects. I've learned a lot of CFRs since the start of this job.

Mayor Hopkins: I could not quote what was discussed about the federal highways being included or not included in the National Highway System in the MPOs. If we wanted information on that, I would turn to staff and maybe ask for a letter to us to clarify what was discussed about that because I remember it was complicated. Federal Highways certainly did have some opinions on it when they were on the call back in the late winter.

Mayor O'Neill: Mayor Hopkins, I would like to ask Mr. Fox since I think you're probably the only person that's been around here since this started. Is there anything else that you would want to briefly add for our awareness?

Mr. Fox: To correct some things that were stated here, there has been no change to the decision-making authority of our Metropolitan Planning Organization. We have always reserved the right to accept or reject any projects brought to us by the State. That is the power of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Now, when you exercise that authority to say potentially that the State wants a project and this Board does not, it's going to create conflict. So, yes, we did do that two years ago. I've got the Action Items here. It was done in the same meeting as our Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary was approved unanimously by this Board. That was all in the same meeting. This decision-making authority has been exercised by AMATS in the past. It was a pretty famous case and also produced a lot of controversy with the State DOT. That's when they (AMATS) nixed the Knik Arm Crossing Bridge out of their long and short-range transportation improvement program documents and, more recently, they have also removed some projects out of their TIP that the State wanted included. We always maintain that decision-making authority and it is very clear in the Code of Federal Regulations that we have that. The problem with the bridge projects that this Board looked at is that they were never planned out. We have to update our long-range transportation plan every four years and it has a list of transportation improvements that are needed for the network over a 20-year time period, and it's a very specific list of projects. Neither of the bridges that were brought forward at that time were included in that long-range transportation plan. There was no public input. There were no freight providers telling us that these bridges needed to be replaced. DOT was not telling us that these bridges needed to be replaced. But DOT started working on those, designing them, and getting them to contract without coordinating with our Technical Committee and Policy Board to get them in the necessary documents. So, yes, it was up to the Policy Board and it was their

decision whether to include them or not at that time. But the other thing I wanted to mention with our metropolitan planning area boundary is that we had an extremely robust process to put that together. That boundary is as small as we could make it. That was the request of this Board and in particular our Board Chair, Jerry Cleworth, that we don't want to make this boundary any larger than what we have to. So, I understand that there are some areas of our boundary that DOT would like us to exclude, but we simply cannot. The Census Bureau gave us a base layer we must include this as our minimum area and we could expand that to what we perceived would be our urbanized 20 years from now and we did the smallest expansion that we could. If there are changes from the Governor's office to this boundary, I just want to warn the Policy Board it will only make the boundary bigger. We can't make it any smaller than what we have on the books right now. That was our marching orders. That was the process we went through with our Steering Committee and that was what we presented to the Technical Committee and the Policy Board.

Mayor O'Neill: We've never received any feedback from anybody about that decision?

Mr. Fox: I have been in a few different meetings with DOT staff members about their concerns about different parts of the boundary, and we have worked through those conversations. I was never officially requested to make any changes, but these meetings happened a year and months after these boundaries were turned in. So, it's like DOT is looking for something, or there might be a particular reason, but there's nothing that we can exclude from our current boundary. The other thing is that this boundary needs to be approved by the Governor and what we've been hearing is that we submitted the boundary to the State, as a courtesy, to advance up to the Governor for signature. Right? So, the discussion more recently with AMATS and with us was that maybe we should have just transmitted it to the Governor's Office. If the Governor's not seeing it, he has not had the opportunity to approve or disapprove. The Governor may refer it back to the DOT Commissioner's office, but the Governor hasn't seen it and hasn't had the opportunity to approve or disapprove of the boundary. If you disapprove of the boundary, I don't know where we go next. Again, we can only make the boundary bigger than what we turned in. It is in the CFRs so if the Board wants, we can expand the boundary to the full metropolitan typical area. We can go to the full Borough boundary if that's what we want to do. We made it small because no matter how big your boundary is, if you make it bigger, it doesn't come with any more money. There's not really an advantage. We kept it small to spread our few dollars in this area here. If we make it any bigger, it doesn't mean we can spend any more money.

Vote on Motion: Two in favor. (Czarnecki, Little). Five opposed (Crass, Hopkins, O'Neill, Terch, Tidwell). Motion Failed.

Motion: To extend the meeting to 2:15 p.m. (Terch).

Discussion:

Mr. Fox: If I could present Item 8a, we could postpone all other agenda items to the next meeting.

Vote on Motion: None opposed.

b. FAST Planning Banking & Investment Options (Action Item)

Consideration of Options for Opening Interest-Bearing Accounts

Mr. Fox prepared two competing resolutions with different banking and investment options to be reviewed and approved by the Policy Board. Blake Phillips of Alaska Permanent Capital Management (APCM) provided a presentation about the Alaska Municipal League Investment Pool account features and investment options through KeyBank.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion: To advance the Resolution to participate in the Alaska Municipal League Investment Pool with the amount of \$800,000 as the initial investment intent. (O'Neill/Little).

Discussion:

Mayor Terch: When we write up any sort of Bylaws, if we could have that threshold be \$100K that you could move in and out which would allow you to raise that initial amount from \$800 to \$900K. If we have a million or a million two in there, that would allow you to move up to a \$100K in and out of that account as you need for payroll monthly expenses but it would also allow you the opportunity to maximize that investment as you see fit.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

c. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Call for Project Nominations

Application Period Open Through November 21, 2025; Discussion of Next Steps

Postponed to the December 17, 2025 Meeting.

8. New Business

a. FFY2023-27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Administrative Modification #7 and TIP Amendment #2 (Action Item)

Consideration of Approval of Administrative Modification #7 and Release of Amendment #2 for 30-Day Public Comment Period

Mr. Fox provided a detailed explanation of the revisions for each project.

Public Comment Period:

No public comment.

Motion: To approve the FY23-27 Transportation Improvement Program Administrative Modification #7 and [release of] Amendment #2 [for a 30-day public comment period following completion of an Interagency Consultation for air quality conformity with our Federal partners]. (Terch/Little).

Discussion:

Mayor Hopkins: Mr. Fox would we still be able to amend it in the future if DOT comes forward with support and funding for the Old Steese Reconstruction?

Mr. Fox: Yes. There's two steps before I release it for public comment. First, I need the Conformity Freeze lifted. That's important. Second, I need to have an Interagency Consultation to share with our federal partners what's being added as part of this amendment and see if there's any concerns on the air quality side, which there shouldn't be for this project if the Conformity Freeze is lifted because it's in our planning process and travel demand model, etc. This could take a few weeks before I'm able to release it for public comment. If something comes in for Old Steese to include in there, even a placeholder amount for construction. In theory, if the money comes together and it can move forward, I will add it. Absolutely. But it is important that it is in that document as part of that consultation prior to releasing it for public comment. It cannot be added while it's open for public comment or after the fact. We would have to restart the public comment period in order to do that. We need to be transparent with the public on anything new that we're adding as part of the amendment process.

Mayor Hopkins: Are you able to do that with an estimate from DOT, or do you need the actual funding mechanism that they have in place?

Mr. Fox: I just need an estimate. I know that DOT has a pretty solid construction estimate for this, but they have to let me know what that number is.

Mayor Hopkins: Would the next meeting be too far away? The December meeting? For us to be able to amend this and put that in there or should we make space in this motion now?

Mr. Fox: If everyone understands what I'm doing and they're comfortable with it, I don't think we need to make any amendments to the motion.

Mayor Hopkins: A yes vote would allow us to still move forward with the Old Steese if we get that?

Mr. Fox: Yes.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. Alaska DOT&PF Safety Performance Measure Targets (Action Item)

➤ **Consideration of Supporting the State's Adopted Targets or Developing our own Targets for the Metropolitan Planning Area**

This item was postponed to the December 17, 2025 meeting.

c. FAST Planning 2026 Meeting Calendar (Action Item)

This item was postponed to the December 17, 2025 meeting.

9. Informational Items

a. FFY2026 Obligations and Offsets

Mr. Fox explained the obligations and offsets included in the meeting packet.

10. Other Issues

No other issues.

11. Policy Board Member Comments

Mayor Hopkins: It has been wonderful having you on here, Ms. Little. I do appreciate it. The tenor has changed. The trust is certainly there. I will echo what Mayor Terch said, the shows of good faith would be much appreciated by signing that boundary. It would be wonderful to have that done and it has been good having you on here.

12. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: (Terch/Little). The meeting was adjourned at **2:15 p.m.** The next Policy Board Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 17, 2025.**

Approved:  Date: 12/17/25
Grier Hopkins, Vice Chair
FAST Planning Policy Board