



POLICY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

February 25, 2026 • 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: 891-5727-3851

1. Call to Order

Ms. Little, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

2. Introduction of Members and Attendees

Attendee	Representative Organization
*Scott Crass	FNSB Assembly
*Nick Czarnecki	DEC Air Quality
*Grier Hopkins, Chair	Mayor, Fairbanks North Star Borough
*Lauren Little, Vice Chair	DOT&PF
*Mindy O'Neall	Mayor, City of Fairbanks
*Larry Terch	Mayor, City of North Pole
*Crystal Tidwell	Fairbanks City Council
**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
+Brett Nelson	DOT&PF Planning
+Kate Dueber	Alaska Railroad
Al Beck	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Ethan Graetz	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Ivet Hall	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Jennifer Wright	DOT&PF Preconstruction
Tom Hewitt	FNSB Mayor's Office
*FAST Planning Policy Board Members, ** FAST Planning Staff Members, +FAST Planning Technical Committee Members	

3. Approval of the February 25, 2026 Agenda

Motion: To approve the February 25, 2026 Agenda. (Terch/Crass).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

4. Approval of the January 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the January 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes. (Terch/Crass).

Discussion: No discussion.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

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

- Mr. Fox met with the FNSB Parks & Recreation Department to create a list of transportation-related projects for inclusion in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update.
- Mr. Fox met with the City Council, Chena Riverfront Commission, DOT&PF, and City of Fairbanks regarding the status of the design and maintenance funding for the Chena Riverwalk Stage III project.
- The FFY25 CPA audit is being wrapped up by Alliance CPAs and the financial statements will be presented to the Policy Board at the March meeting.
- FAST Planning has received all of the annual dues payments.
- FAST Planning is potentially planning to hire an Alaska fellow.
- The Policy Board will be considering approval of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #2 today.
- Mr. Fox attended the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Quarterly meeting, which was held in Anchorage on February 12, 2026.
- The initial draft of the FAST Planning Community Grant Program application has been created. This Community Grant is for non-profits that want to do transportation-related projects. The grants can be for up to \$5,000 and will be scored and prioritized by the Project Enhancement Committee, reviewed by the Technical Committee, and approved by the Policy Board.
- At the **February 4, 2026** meeting, the **Technical Committee:**
 - Recommended approval of TIP Amendment #2. Additional changes were received from DOT after the Policy Board meeting that will be incorporated.
 - Recommended funding only the applications for electric vehicle charging stations located on public property.

6. Public Comment Period (Non-Action Items)

No public comment.

7. Old Business

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

Review of Comments Response Summary and Corresponding Revisions to TIP Amendment, and Consideration of Approval

Mr. Fox explained that TIP Amendment #2 went out for public comment from December 21, 2025 to January 30, 2026. Following the closure of the public comment period, the comments were incorporated into the document. The Technical Committee reviewed TIP Amendment #2 and recommended that it be approved by the Policy Board.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion: To approve Amendment #2 for the Transportation Improvement Program [TIP]. (O'Neill/Crass).

Discussion:

Mr. Crass: I could use some clarification on Item #13 that came in after the public comment period. There's a 300% increase of \$1M to \$4M for the Steese/Johansen Phase 7.

Ms. Little: That's the utilities phase.

Mr. Crass: Utilities phase. Right. It's a huge increase. Why?

Ms. Little: It's not in the context of the total project cost. The total construction alone is over \$80M. That threshold is based on total project costs for all phases. So, \$3M on a \$100M+ project is not considered a significant change.

Mr. Crass: What is entailed in that change for the utilities phase? In the recommendations and amendments that we've adopted, we got to \$2.7M. Is that an adequate amount of funding?

Mr. Fox: The \$2.7M shown on Page 19 in the bottom right is the Federal portion only. The State also has to pay \$300K match on that, so that brings that total up to \$3M.

Mr. Crass: The comment was that they requested \$4M.

Mr. Fox: They were already funded at \$1M. They increased it from \$1M up to \$4M so it's an increase of \$3M. The way I show the summary of changes is I list the Federal portion only because that is what's shown in our funding plan.

Mr. Crass: Okay. What is this phase? The utilities phase? Phase 7?

Ms. Little: That would be the utilities relocation. The utilities that are currently out there that are impacted by the project construction. This is a number that is frequently a "WAG" early in the project's development. It isn't until you get pretty far along in the design that you'll get the utility companies to really sit down and give you the time of day and tell you what that cost is. I can't recall if this one was changed in the scope of the relocation or simply that the utilities now have to comply with the "Buy America Build America" requirement. So, a lot of things that didn't used to have domestic preference requirements on them now do. That has exponentially increased the cost of utility relocations, particularly for things like communications fiber optics because of that domestic preference requirement. We do have the Project Manager online if you would like details on that. One

thing I will add is that this is the State's money so none of this is FAST's allocation of funding. This is all Department of Transportation and National Highway Performance Program funding and State match.

Mr. Crass: But it's in the MPA [Metropolitan Planning Area].

Ms. Little: It's in the MPA. Correct. Yes.

Mr. Crass: The issue here I think is that this hasn't been in front of the Technical Committee, so this is our one look at it. It's a big chunk of money. \$3M is a lot of money, and I know it's a big project. I'm glad to hear that we'll work on this going forward, getting this stuff in front of the public and in front of the Technical Committee, but I would like to hear the details since this will be the only time that it comes through the planning organization.

Ms. Little: Sure. Ms. Wright, are you available to respond to the cost increase?

Ms. Wright: I believe the original \$1M was the estimate when the project was started back in 2017, pre-Covid and pre-Buy America Build America requirements. This \$4M is based on actual estimates that we received recently from the utility companies. So, we have Golden Heart Utilities, ACS, GCI, AT&T, and GVEA that gave us estimates for the relocations. But these are the actual estimates as opposed to the \$1M that was just our estimate at the project start.

Ms. Little: So, I'll speak more to that as the Project Manager who put that \$1M in there. There were two access-controlled expressways where the project limits were so we thought it was fairly low risk for utilities because by law they can only cross where those access points are, so we narrowed the scope. But we weren't staying within the confines of those access control limits with those improvements so there is more to it than what we originally envisioned with that planning level estimate that brought more utilities into the fold and the costs associated with that. Utility relocation costs are not optional. They are all actual-based agreements with the utility companies for their facilities so it's not something that the State really ever has a lot of control over if we want to build our project this is the cross we have to bear with it.

Ms. Wright: Just to add. The biggest surprise was from GHU (Golden Heart Utilities) because we didn't think there was an impact and there's a significant impact, to the tune of \$1.26M there. I think we'll be able to work with them as we get to the utility agreement to lower that but right now that is their estimate and that's the most accurate information we have right now. But I think there may be opportunities to work to lower that, but we have to go through that process, and it could take a while.

Mayor Terch: In the eight to nine years that this project has been going on, that wasn't ever looked at or re-estimated during those eight years?

Ms. Little: No. The first thing you have to do is get your NEPA. This project had a wide range of alternatives on it, so we really focused first on what the right

solution was for this intersection. Then once you complete that stage you get into detailing out those final slope limits and that's really the timeframe where you have a much better handle on what your actual impact and detail to the utility company is. So, we'll use placeholder numbers, particularly for the right-of-way and utilities phases, until we have a very, very tight design and that's when we can get the utility companies to come to the table and give us numbers. Many times, projects like this, especially when they're farther out in construction, utility companies have their own pressures. GHU is probably giving us relocation estimates for ten or fifteen different projects around town in any given year. So, you really don't get good numbers, particularly on the utilities side, until you're within a couple of years of construction. Even then, sometimes it's within a year of construction to get them to really sharpen their pencils and give you a good number.

Mayor Terch: Understood. When you say the slope was changed on the project was that because of amendments or changes to the project, or because of state or federal requirements to change that slope?

Ms. Little: That's just the detailed design process. You start with a 30% design where it's enough to define the environmental impacts, the general scope and direction of the project, but you iterate on those things. The final angle of that exit ramp. The final elevation of that bridge girder. That stuff all comes through the detailed design process. That's just the natural evolution of the project.

Mayor Terch: Understood. Thank you.

Mayor O'Neill: Does receiving the comments after the public comment period put us in jeopardy for not following the public process?

Mr. Fox: No. Again, as long as it qualifies underneath our thresholds for an administrative modification or a minor change to our funding plan, it just needs to be approved by the Policy Board. It doesn't even actually have to go through the Technical Committee even though by good process we would do that. It is within the Policy Board's authority to approve any changes that qualify for an administrative modification without a public comment period.

Mayor O'Neill: Do you have any concerns with any of these administrative changes?

Mr. Fox: No. I don't have any concerns with any of the changes that were received. I think that they're all reasonable. I think that all of these changes are going to keep these projects moving forward toward project delivery, so I support these changes.

Mayor Terch: Once we get into the projects further and there may be further amendments or adjustments to the projects, would those have to come back to the Policy Board for approval again?

Mr. Fox: Yes. Any changes beyond what is shown here would have to come before the Policy Board for approval. Even if it's just one project.

Mayor Terch: Thank you.

Ms. Little: I'll just add that what a TIP and STIP does is allow us to submit the paperwork to Federal Highways to secure that funding. It doesn't guarantee that, even though the project development authorization moves forward, it doesn't guarantee that the federal government approves it. It is a required step that we do that. Thank you, Mr. Fox, for accommodating these. I know that even though I was copied with all these emails, I had the same eyebrows raised as you did. We will certainly try to be more organized in the future.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations Project Nominations (Action Item)

Consideration of Approval of Technical Committee's Recommendations to Advance First Bundle of Projects

The Technical Committee decided not to use the ranking and prioritization criteria that Mr. Fox developed. Based on the estimate of a total cost of \$136K per site for Level 2 charging stations, the Technical Committee recommended funding only the public locations.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion: To postpone Item 7b Electric Vehicle Charging Station Nominations to the March agenda. (Terch/Hopkins).

Discussion:

Mayor Hopkins: What would those private landowners need to do in order to get these projects available for them?

Ms. Little: I'm in the thick of it with Federal Highways so it's probably me. Some of them are very simple. In the case of the News Miner. The News Miner owns the land. The News Miner wants to do this. Some of the ones in question would be like Three Bears. They have a partnership with Recharge and it's probably just a joint venture agreement that they need to do to satisfy that. I believe I have a meeting in the next couple of weeks to finalize our plan with Federal Highways which would put us in a position to give you guys a lot better advice on what would be needed to allow any of these to move forward.

Mr. Crass: I have some concerns about us choosing this method. I can see why the Technical Committee chose simply publicly owned property versus private. As soon as we start scoring these based on the amount of red tape, that's not something any of these entities can control and it becomes sort of an equity issue that we create where we say that we're going to give you something but first you have to do this. I guess I have some concerns about how that might work with these different private groups. Then we're scoring them on something that wasn't in the initial application. It then becomes whether or not it falls into a certain

category of federal or state funding. I can see why the Technical Committee chose the clean demarcation line so that there wasn't any appearance of creating favoritism with private entities. I tend to agree more with their vision there and that's something I think that we need to just be careful of. I am support of the motion. There's no timeline. I think if you want to continue to work with private groups and the Technical Committee to see if there are ways we can get them on the list, but I am concerned if we start cherry-picking them not based on any kind of scoring that was available during the application process.

Ms. Little: Just one point on that. The Technical Committee chose not to score the projects using the rubric that was originally included.

Mr. Fox: That's correct.

Ms. Little: I would agree that some sort of scoring would be warranted before it came back to Policy Board.

Ms. Tidwell: Mr. Fox, when you were going through stuff, did you say that if they had been scored that you had a list of the way that it would have come out? If we were to go back and reattach some of the private entities, does that change where anybody landed? Would any of these publicly owned ones drop out if we were to include some of the other ones?

Mr. Fox: Yes. Just as staff, I took the scoring criteria that I created and I scored these projects. Now, the normal process would be that the full Technical Committee would individually score all the projects and then we would average their scores. That's the normal process when we do this. But I wanted to see where things played out with the criteria that we had so that I could speak to that. When I scored this, the private property locations that got funded were Three Bears and Pikes Waterfront Lodge. The public properties that fell off included the North Pole Library, the Carlson Center, and the Borough Administrative Center. So, three public properties fell off, and two private properties were added on utilizing the scoring criteria.

Mr. Crass: In the initial application, we also identified that preference may be given to public entities.

Mr. Fox: Yes. So, we're safe there.

Mr. Crass: Yes. That combined with the scoring gives us something to hang our hat on. I'm leery of us having folks apply, creating a rubric, and then just disregarding them.

Vote on Motion: Five in favor. Two opposed. (O'Neill, Tidwell). Approved.

8. New Business

a. Chena Riverwalk Stage III Project Update (Action Item)

Update on Right-of-Way Acquisition, Design, Construction Estimate, and Scope and Funding Considerations; Open Action Item for Direction from Policy Board on Next Steps

For the right-of-way phase of the project the Alaska Railroad Board approved the sale of the land for the Chena Riverwalk Stage III project so it can now move forward. Three decision points need to be addressed. The first is the design and cost of the overall project. The original design of the project was an asphalt path on an embankment throughout the alignment at a cost of \$1.7M. With the recent design change of adding a boardwalk section crossing over a floodplain area of the project, the estimated project cost is \$7.1M. Construction of the floodway can be permitted and the length of the boardwalk could be shortened to reduce the design cost of the project. The City of Fairbanks does not have a licensed structural engineer to design this structure. The next logical step in this process would be to hire a structural engineer and supporting team to do geotechnical analysis, hydraulic analysis, and permit activities for constructing a project in the floodway. That would come at a cost as well. The next item for consideration is maintaining the project. When the project was initiated as a federally funded project, the City of Fairbanks had a lease with the Alaska Railroad. Now that we are going with the purchase of the land, that permit will likely be voided for this path so the City of Fairbanks, the Borough, or DOT will have to get a signed maintenance agreement and decide who will take over maintenance of the path after construction. The last item for consideration is the funding. The project was initiated with Federal funds using an old state appropriation for match. Since then, those funds have dwindled and there are not enough state legislative funds to cover the match on that project. There are a variety of federal funding sources that could be used for this project. The largest amount of available funding is in the CMAQ funding which could reduce the local contribution to the project. The Policy Board will need to determine the type of federal funding, maintenance agreement, and match funding source that will be used for the project.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion: To refer this [next steps for the Chena Riverwalk project] to the Walk, Ride, and Roll Advisory Committee [WRRAC]. (Crass/Terch).

Discussion:

Mayor O'Neill: At some point we are going to have to not kick the can down the road and make a decision. I think it's great that we are using our committees for more input, but I just want them to be aware of the timeline that we have before us, so we don't lose this opportunity whatever we decide to do. It's a tough question so I'm glad that we're looking for more input.

Ms. Little: It would be nice if this Policy Board made the final decision.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

b. Safety Improvements at Trainor Gate & F Street Intersection (Action Item)

Discussion of Mayor O'Neill's Request for Intersection Improvements, and Consideration of Project Addition to FFY2026 FAST Improvement Program

Mayor O'Neill sent a letter to FAST Planning requesting adding the installation of speed tables and a pedestrian-activated crosswalk lighting system like those installed in Kodiak at the Trainor Gate/F Street intersection. This project could be added to the FAST Improvement Program for construction this summer or next.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion: To include the safety improvements for the Trainor Gate/F Street Intersection in the FFY2026 FAST Improvement Program. (O'Neill/Crass).

Discussion:

Mayor O'Neill: So, I have picked up the ball again. I think this is a project that we can improve safety for a fairly low cost. My question is, in consideration of feedback that we got from the Railroad, will we need to renominate a project to put it on a bigger long-term plan later?

Mr. Fox: Yes. It would be advisable that we continue to have a larger, long-term fix included in our long-range transportation plan for consideration in a future funding plan.

Mayor O'Neill: And my understanding is that it's not in there now.

Mr. Fox: The rectangular rapid flashing beacon has always been in there for this intersection.

Mayor O'Neill: But, for the long term?

Mr. Fox: That may not be the appropriate treatment for this intersection.

Mayor O'Neill: I see.

Mr. Fox: We would have to modify what we have in our current, approved plan and come up with something different.

Mayor O'Neill: I think for a relatively low cost an opportunity to be a pilot community and test out some new technology is cool and makes a lot of sense, and I urge your support.

Ms. Little: Mr. Fox, so that was the Railroad's opinion that a traffic signal was needed? Correct?

Mr. Fox: It was the Railroad's opinion. Not necessarily DOT's opinion.

Ms. Little: I'll just add that there are benefits to the Railroad in terms of their liability and traffic control at a crossing that are probably weighing into that, separate from the crosswalk situation.

Mayor Terch: Do we have an estimated cost on that light and signal? I think it's the greatest technology ever, looking at it. There are multiple places in our city and in our entire borough that these truly should be used for the safety of our students, especially when you look at industrial traffic that travels up and down Trainor Gate. In my community, I think about the Old Rich and the difference

between North Pole Middle School, North Pole High School, and that crossing there that is equally as dangerous. Thankfully, we haven't had an incident there, but it scares the hell out of me. Having technology like this certainly would be helpful.

Ms. O'Neall: My understanding is that there is potentially some pilot program money that helps the DOT to be able to test those out.

Ms. Little: The one in Kodiak was installed by the manufacturer for free to kind of get us sucked into their technology. It does have an annual fee associated with it. I can certainly get those numbers for Technical Committee. It was thousands of dollars not millions of dollars. All in, I think this is probably a \$150K effort, tops.

Ms. O'Neall: Do you think that is for the subscription for the software as well as putting it online?

Ms. Little: Yes. There are some electrical feeds, and you would have to pay for power drop and stuff. I can't remember what it was, but it was nominal. It was very reasonable. The one thing to be aware of is these don't work well when there is a lot of ambient light. You really do need darkness for these installations. We started with these in Anchorage and there was just so much background light in downtown that the entity said they were not effective.

Mr. Crass: When is that Road Safety Audit? I know we were waiting on more information for a larger solution. What's the timeframe on that?

Mr. Fox: I don't have that at this time. Yes. This Board previously recommended that DOT do a safety audit along Trainor Gate Road, like the corridor, and look at all the different intersection interactions in addition to this particular intersection. I don't know if that's going to occur next summer or the summer after. I don't know where it is in the queue at this time. But it is something that's going to happen in the future.

Mr. Crass: Okay. It sounds like DOT is pretty well booked. Is there a possibility for the City of Fairbanks to manage this project? I don't know if they have the capability. I'm just worried about temporarily. It would be really great if we could get something in place this summer so it's available as we get into the school year next fall.

Ms. Little: Specifically with City of Fairbanks projects, we enter into an agreement with the city to do the design work. We cannot hand off the federal responsibility. The conformity piece. As the State we are the recipient. We are beholden to all the federal rules. We are the "buck stops here" on if we comply. Quite frankly, what we're talking about here other than figuring out the electrical connections is the standard details. This is not something that keeps me up at night as a big engineering lift to get it ready for construction this season.

Mr. Crass: But you sounded like you were concerned that it wouldn't be able to be constructed this summer.

Ms. Little: I'm not.

Mr. Crass: Okay. Great.

Ms. Little: The only other thing I'll add is I that I do think when we started looking at this, I think Trainor Gate as a whole; is something to consider in the TIP and the MTP is a corridor study for Trainor Gate. There's been a lot of growth residentially around there, traffic patterns, the base [Ft. Wainwright] traffic, and schools. There's a lot going on there. It's changed a lot. So, that was just something to consider including in our long-range plan. The Road Safety Audit piece is under HSIP, but also just a broader look at that corridor I think makes sense.

Mr. Crass: Thanks. I really appreciate Mayor O'Neill's work on this. I've been contacted over the years. Senator Scott Kawasaki sent me a letter a number of years ago identifying this as an issue. I've had a number of folks reach out. This has been a problem intersection. We had an accident in 2023. I think that taking whatever steps we can currently is entirely appropriate and as quickly as possible and then hopefully DOT will be able to accomplish that longer-term study and we can figure out some ways to change the flow of traffic to make it safer for the children.

Vote on Motion: None opposed. Approved.

9. Informational Items

a. Bridges & Safety Infrastructure for Community Success (BASICS) Act

Mr. Fox provided a briefing on the BASICS Act and said he was considering writing a Letter of Support for the Act to our Congressional Delegation.

b. 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

Ms. Little: I just want to thank Mayor O'Neill and City Engineer Bob Pristash for the solutions for Trainor Gate and F Street. I those are really good, they're common sense, and we can get them done. Thanks. Good job.

12. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: (O'Neill/Crass). The meeting was adjourned at **1:51 p.m.** The next Policy Board Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 18, 2026.**

Approved: _____


Mayor Grier Hopkins, Chair

FAST Planning Policy Board

Date: _____

