

Roads and Highways Advisory Board Conference Meeting Minutes
October 25, 2018

Meeting called to order by Chair, Dan Hall at 9:16 a.m.

PARTICIPANTS:

Board Members:

Present: Donna Gardino, Daniel Hall, Harry McDonald, Howard Thies

Absent: Tony Johansen, Scott Eickholt, John Baker

DOT&PF: Commissioner Marc Luiken, Judy Chapman, Eric Taylor

Guest Speaker: Cindi Heil

Public: Aves Thompson

Telephone Participants: Jackson Fox, Dave Thompson

Board Discussion:

Air quality:

Cindi Heil indicated there are various non-attainment and maintenance areas in Alaska.

- Fairbanks in non-attainment for PM 2.5, and maintenance for CO.
- Anchorage is in maintenance status for CO and Eagle River is maintenance for PM 10.
- Juneau is maintenance for PM 10, and is on the verge of becoming PM 2.5 non-attainment.
- Mat Su Borough is on the verge of becoming a PM 2.5 non-attainment area; the Butte area in particular, and also has PM 10 issues.

Board Member Gardino stated that the current FMATS TIP goes through 2020, and after that, if the chain of events that results in highway sanctions goes into effect, new projects will not be able to move forward.

Highway sanctions are intended to induce states to develop strategies to attain air quality standards. The highway sanction is a prohibition on federal funds for transportation projects within an area, other than certain safety, transit and air quality benefitting projects. They can also be 2:1 point source offsets, which applies to power plants and other emitters. The Fairbanks Serious SIP is due to EPA in December 2018, and it is not likely that we will be able to submit on time. The highway sanction clock could start as early as March 2019, with a 24 month period following until highway sanctions go into effect. Highway sanctions include the inability to advance new FHWA or FTA funded projects within the non-attainment area, other than exempt projects.

Once the highway sanction clock starts, it can be paused, but it won't be reset. A serious SIP submittal pauses the clock. Failure to attain and failure to submit a SIP = SIP failure, which means a conformity freeze ensues.

Since Proposition #4 passed in Fairbanks, the Fairbanks North Star Borough is not permitted to enforce air quality standards (wood stove burn bans). It is likely the EPA could “fail” our SIP submittal because we don’t have measures or authority to control air quality. This is something ADEC does not know.

ADEC has limited measures to address violations, with no administrative penalty authority. They can do “Notices of Violation” but that is it. EPA can only issue a “failure to implement.” Ms. Heil has proposed regulation changes that would allow ADEC to enforce air quality violations by issuing fines.

If we have a failed SIP, EPA may require DEC to submit a SIP as soon as possible, and get enforcement going. They will also require us to use the “best available control measure” by looking at other PM 2.5 non-attainment areas and the control measures that helped bring their air into conformity. Some of these measures can be quite onerous or expensive for the public to adhere to.

Gardino asks whether changes can be made to the TIP after the December 2018 SIP submittal deadline; Ms. Heil indicated that they can, through 2019.

Ms. Heil also indicated that the change in administration delay could result in a delay in approving the SIP for submittal to the EPA, which could result in EPA not giving the State of Alaska an extension on the SIP submittal. This is a real risk.

The cost of implementing measures at point source is very expensive, and won’t fix the problem (wood stove use). Doing 2:1 offsets, or even 5:1 offsets (very onerous) could make electric costs spike in Fairbanks. This would affect the economy and cost of living in the Fairbanks community.

DOT&PF Commissioner Luiken suggested that the Board might make some sort of statement about storage tanks for natural gas being installed in Fairbanks.

Long Range Transportation Policy Plan Presentation:

Mr. Taylor discussed the NPRDS dataset, which breaks the network up into segments and measures truck speed using cell signals. DOT&PF has been using this dataset since 2016. Kittleson also did a freight bottleneck analysis to be put on the SWLRTP website.

Alaska’s Critical Rural Freight Corridor designation is 244.45 miles, and DOT&PF has designated the Dalton Highway to receive this funding (15M per year).

Aves Thompson asked if the state could break down freight by vehicle classes, by drilling down into traffic data. How many trucks come up through the Alaska Highway into Tok, and what commodities are they carrying? Mr. Thompson suggested an informal survey that could be handed out at weigh stations might help gather this information. Mr. Thompson argued that more emphasis should go into freight as it is an area of emphasis in the FAST Act. He also suggests the state to employ a freight specialist position to focus on freight, and that this position drill down into how to better understand statewide freight movements, which are by highway, air, and sea.

Meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.