



CHUAC Meeting Notes

Federal Project No: NH-000S(588)
AKSAS Project No. 58544

Subject:	Public Input and Project Status for CHUAC		
Client:	DOT&PF		
Project:	H2H Project	Project No:	80510
Meeting Date:	November 6, 2008 4-7 p.m.	In Attendance:	See Sign In Sheet
Notes by:	Erin Begier		

Following the welcome and introductions, Louise Smart reviewed the agenda for the evening, starting with an update on the project’s purpose and need statement.

Update – John McPherson

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has joined the project team. The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are in discussions with the FTA to determine how they will participate.

Public meetings were held October 27-29, 2008 and a series of listening posts have been held at locations across the project area.

The Purpose and Need Statement is changing based on public comment and CHUAC thoughts. While still in draft form—FHWA has not issued its final approval—it more specifically describes that the purpose is multimodal in nature. The statement has been refined based on the following general comments the project team has heard:

- Congestion and safety needs are resonating
- A broader focus to the purpose and need – not just highways
- Confusion about why a connection is necessary
- Consider plan context
- Be forward thinking
- Consider neighborhood needs

The project’s immediate schedule includes:

- Deadline moved to the end of November for public comments on the materials that were presented at the last round of meetings.

- Project Office open for limited hours for people who missed the meeting materials.
- Neighborhood Partnership meetings (information available on project Web site)
- CHUAC
- More public meetings
- E-newsletters
- Project Presentations
- www.highway2highway.com

Purpose and Need Statement discussion

John McPherson explained that the project team tried to remove jargon in the Purpose and Need Statement and include information relating to particular topics, such as neighborhood connectivity. Transit also has been emphasized as a need element.

The CHUAC asked if there will there be a section in the Purpose and Need Statement about historical effects of streets on business degradation in parts of the surrounding areas? John indicated that existing NHS streets may have contributed to a decline in businesses, but the project team doesn't have good data that would show cause and effect relationship.

The CHUAC commented that the statement does not mention freight. (The footnote mentions "automobiles" but not "trucks.") Also, congestion is limited to two hours in the morning and evening, but it's also an issue of getting freight through town better during all parts of the day. John indicated that the statement is intended to include freight but we expand the definition in the footnote to include all vehicles including trucks. He explained that more detailed descriptions explaining the needs will be included in the larger Purpose and Need chapter of the EIS.

H2H Logo

A comment about the emphasis of highway connection in the project name has been heard repeatedly. In response, the project team developed two alternative ideas for changing the tag line to better reflect the direction the purpose and need is heading. The team believes the H2H logo and colors should remain the same. The group was asked if they thought the tag line should be changed and a facilitated a discussion about potential options ensued.

Project Identity

We heard you say that the project branding was confusing, or that it implied that only highway solutions would be considered. Here's a few new ideas on project slogans:

H2H
Seward Highway to Glenn Highway
CONNECTION

H2H
Seward Highway to Glenn Highway
TRANSPORTATION
Solutions for Congestion

H2H
Seward Highway to Glenn Highway
MULTIMODAL
Congestion Relief

What do you think?
Do you have any other ideas about slogans that explain H2H?

Comments from the CHUAC about the H2H logo:

- Multimodal is very jargon-y, but transportation seems better for the public
- “Congestion” implies traffic only—“mobility” is better term.
- H2H is about congestion relief—not just trying to connect but relieve traffic.
- Brief is better—“multimodal: improving mobility” or “improving mobility.”
- Use active verb words— “moving people.”
- Project team could be underestimating people’s understanding of words.
- Mobility is too jargon-y.
- “Congestion” underlines the problem being addressed, below the graphic show a concise list of what is being addressed and congestion fits this.

Several specific options were put forth and discussed, and an advisor show of hands conducted (2 votes per person) Suggestions included:

1. Improving mobility (group crossed-off this option)
2. Solutions for congestion relief (3 votes)
3. Multimodal Solutions for Congestion Relief (12 votes)
4. Multimodal Solutions: Moving people and goods (17 votes)

The CHUAC’s recommendation (option 4) will be provided to the Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) for consideration.

Suggestions were made about changing the logo itself, but members pointed out that the logo is already branded and shouldn’t be changed now—the public is familiar with it and

Internet searches already recognize H2H. The final mock-up of the CHUAC's proposed logo looks like this:



EOC Report

Darrel Hess provided a brief report on the recent Executive Oversight Committee (EOC) meeting on October 21:

- The project is on schedule
- Scoping summary report will be out in the fall
- Alternatives development documents will be out in the winter
- More public meetings in January and February
- Upcoming workshops
- List of alternatives will be out by spring
- Project office will be up and running in March, and will have materials from all public meetings
- Regional Administrator for Federal Transportation (FTA) will likely be a co-lead and on the EOC

Alternatives Spectrum

John McPherson discussed the spectrum of possible alternatives for consideration:

- No build
- TSM/TDM
- Highway
- Transit

He described the different modal elements likely to be evaluated including:

- Roadway
- Transit
 - Carpool/Vanpool
 - Bus
 - BRT (express buses: push button green light, special lane)
 - Light Rail (tracks, overhead power, can't mix with heavy rail)

- Commuter Rail (carry some load of people at peak hours)
- Pedestrians
- Bikes
- Demand Management (looking at techniques examining peak hours, flexible work hours/schedules, telecommuting, etc.)
- System Management (timing traffic lights, high occupancy lane, etc.)

He explained that roadway and transit improvements often work together and that the project would also be examining how to integrate bike and pedestrian facilities in a multi-modal corridor.

Facilitated Conversation

Following the dinner break, Louise Smart led Jim Childers, DOT&PF project manager, and John McPherson, HDR project manager, in a facilitated conversation. She asked Jim “What is the current magnitude of the congestion?”

Jim explained that H2H is largely a congestion-relief project. Most of the congestion in Anchorage is in the north half, because of the employment areas there. He estimated that there is currently a capacity shortfall in both the east-west and north-south directions of approximately 30,000-40,000 vehicle trips per day. He explained that Anchorage is growing into Eagle River and the Mat-Su and they have counted 55,000 trips on the Glenn Highway by Muldoon. This is forecasted to increase to 100,000 in the timeframe of this project (by 2025). Past estimates have suggested that each arterial in northeast Anchorage could need two new lanes to accommodate future growth (E/W, S/N). This would have huge impacts—including bigger intersections that need more time to cross and turn through.

John suggested that H2H needs to look at this in a multimodal context. Can we conceive of a project that would carry the trips? The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) looked at the Highway to Highway project concept but H2H will also look at bus service and other transit modes. To put it in perspective, all buses in Anchorage carry 17,000 people a day on a peak day.

Louise asked how the project would examine the spectrum of modal choices to address the congestion?

John explained that the revised Purpose and Need statement includes multimodal considerations, and therefore a concept that does not satisfy the needs of multiple modes may not be reasonable. In other words, the solutions need to serve multiple modes to some degree—what lies ahead is figuring out at what levels and how affordable and realistic are they.

Jim indicated that the Seward/Glenn is the transportation backbone in Anchorage. He suggested that past studies found that less than 10 percent of trips are trying to bypass Anchorage completely. He explained that the existing highways have such high demand, because they provide a major part of the trips to get vehicles near to the destinations in

Downtown and Midtown. He suggested that fuel prices, however, will come into play. While buses and carpools are a relatively small percentage now, they will grow as fuel prices increase. The project team will need to screen alternatives to determine which are reasonable and make sure that the need elements included in the Purpose and Need report are satisfied.

The CHUAC asked what the benefits are of improving or expanding an existing route vs. building a new route.

John explained that the benefit of the LRTP concept is that it is proposed on a new alignment which means that it adds 100 percent to the capacity whereas when expanding an existing road planners have to account for the existing cars so that the added capacity is less. Jim explained that one concept that has been looked at in the past is to build out a grid adding additional smaller links. New alignments without substantial impacts are hard to find in Anchorage--most un-built areas have a wetland or park.

The CHUAC was wondering how many lanes might be needed. Would a three-lane highway in each direction between the Glenn and Seward solve this problem? Jim indicated that it this would improve and likely meet the needs of the existing congestion.

A CHUAC member indicated that the East Coast has dual directional lanes and wondered if it is possible to employ this concept in Anchorage? Jim indicated that it is possible in some areas, but sometimes there are exits that don't flow correctly with a reversible lane. This was an alternative considered on the recent expansion project on 5th Avenue, but was determined not appropriate due to the large number of left turns.

The CHUAC asked how the project will integrate demand management into the alternatives process? John explained that FHWA guidance requires the project to consider system management improvements. He indicated that demand management would likely play a role in combination with other improvements. Tolls, for example, affect demand, or an increase in the price of parking could be options that could work with other improvements. These changes can happen, but are often politically driven. It would take a push from elected officials to make these kinds of options a reality, but they are elements we will need to look at.

Bruce Carr indicated that light rail in Anchorage is a very real possibility at some point and that the team should think about future impacts from the roads we build now. Jim indicated the team is serious about trying to get other modes to work and has FTA helping with these considerations.

A CHUAC member suggested that the project should buy enough right-of-way now and save neighborhoods in the future from going through the pain of needing to expand the corridor. Jim said that approach is often used, for instance, the Seward Highway was originally planned for eight lanes south of 36th Avenue back in the 1960s. Now that right of way is available for developing transportation solutions in the corridor.

The CHUAC asked if the corridor demand grows to more than 100,000 vehicles in the future, would six lanes suffice? Jim said that the LRTP suggested that we would need an eight-lane section. He said if the project needs to expand beyond that, it creates additional traffic engineering problems. Jim, indicated, however, that this project is intended as an area-wide improvement that will provide benefits to other parallel routes in Anchorage.

The CHUAC asked how much traffic on the Glenn Highway is from Eagle River and the Valley and how much would be alleviated with KABATA? John explained that the Knik Arm Crossing does little for existing traffic. It would change growth patterns in the future where people may live and work, which would reduce travel growth on the Glenn Highway.

Next Steps

John ran through the project teams next steps.

- Federal agencies' approval of the purpose and need statement.
- Determine screening criteria to help evaluate alternatives.
- Develop alternatives that solve problems.
- Next round of public meetings would be in January or February, as well as the next CHUAC meeting.
- Continue neighborhood meetings
- Get lines on maps with multimodal alternatives.
- By June, the goal is to have applied screening criteria to show reasonable alternatives and to begin evaluating impacts.

Next Meeting

End of January, early February 2009.

Thursdays are good for everyone, 4p.m. to 7p.m.

Adjourned – 7:10pm