

Anchorage on the Move:

How the Public can Effectively Participate
in
Transportation Planning & Decisions
for Anchorage

Public Participation Program

Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Municipality of Anchorage

Anchorage, Alaska • 2001

Anchorage on the Move
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How to Use this Guide

Section-by-Section Descriptions

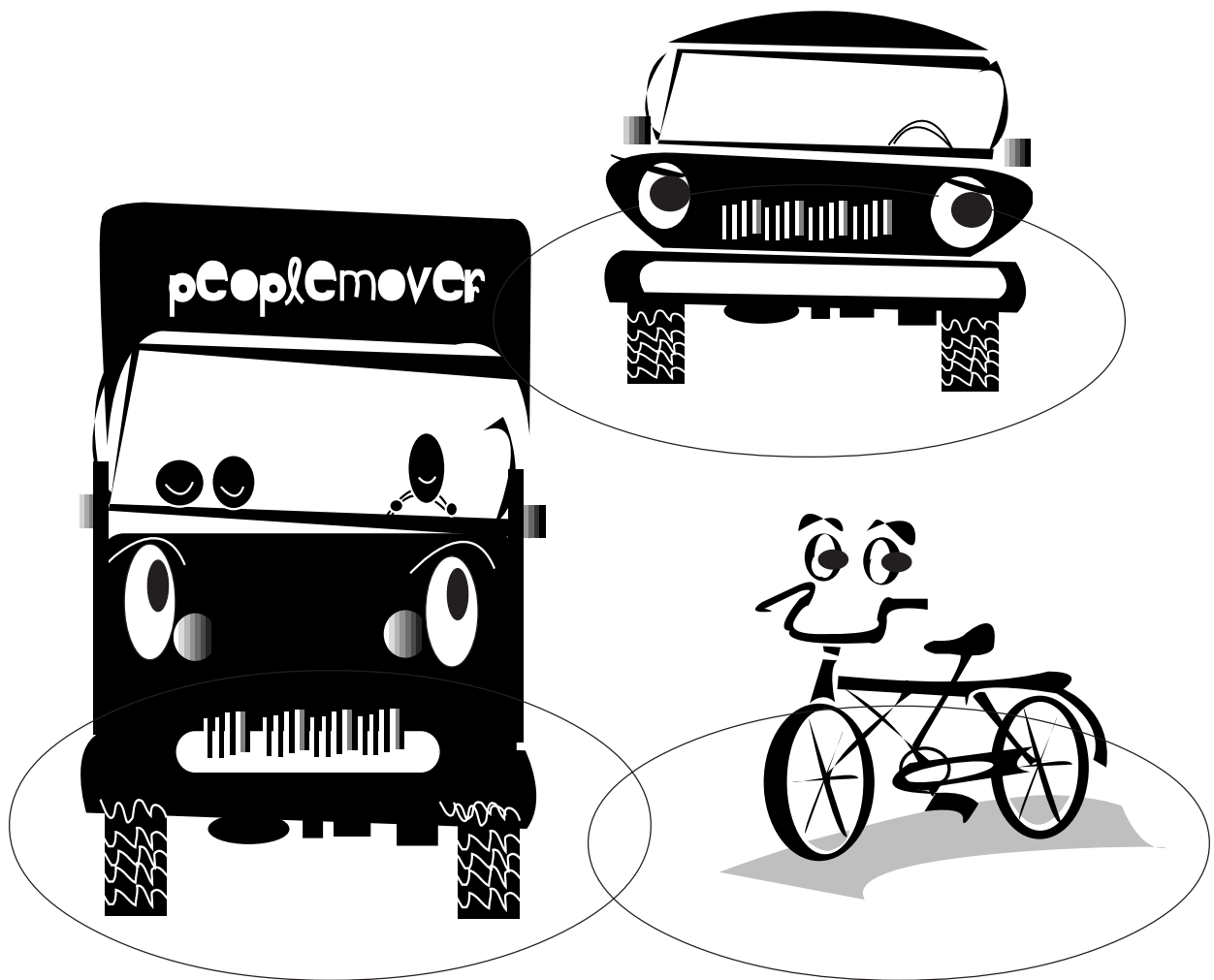
- A** Provides an introduction to AMATS and how this guide was developed.
- B** Overview of AMATS functions and decision-making structures, and how other transportation planning efforts link with AMATS activities.
- C** What public participation should accomplish for the public and AMATS, and the types of public participation techniques available—the *toolbox*.
- D** Decision-making and public participation steps for the LRTP.
- E** Decision-making and public participation steps for the TIP.
- F** Public involvement techniques used in Anchorage
- G** Strategic issues that citizens participating in developing this guide determined needed additional public discussion and rethinking of AMATS current policies.
- H** Additional references and resources for transportation planning information.
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Acronyms and Definitions

ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.
AMATS	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study. AMATS is a federally-mandated, multi-agency team that works together to plan and fund the transportation system in the Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River areas when <i>federal funds</i> are being used. AMATS comprises representatives from a variety of organizations.
ARRC	Alaska Railroad Corporation.
ASD	Anchorage School District.
CAC	Citizen Advisory Committee. Every organization like AMATS in the United States is federally mandated to have a CAC. The Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission fills this requirement for AMATS.
CIP	Capital Improvement Program. A municipal document that addresses funding for transportation and public facilities in the Municipality. Most projects funded in the CIP come from local taxes.
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality. This is a program that emphasizes the importance of the link between transportation and air quality. To that end, CMAQ program funding is applied to transportation projects that reduce vehicle emissions and help improve air quality. Transit and traffic flow improvement projects are included, as are projects such as ride-sharing, vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance programs, bicycle and pedestrian improvements and alternative fuels.
Comp Plan	Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan. A document updated every ten years, and most recently, in the Spring of 2001, the Anchorage 2020 Plan was adopted. It serves as a guide for community development, including transportation planning. This policy document identifies the issues, goals, and objectives for land use in Anchorage, thus providing a framework for making decisions about our transportation system.
DHHS	Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services.
DOT&PF	State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities.
FCC	Federation of Community Councils. A municipally funded body comprised of almost 40 community councils. The FCC is a formal participant in scoring Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects.
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration. A component of the U.S. Department of Transportation. FHWA authorizes expenditures from the Highway Trust Fund and sets deadlines for planning documents that AMATS is responsible for meeting.
FTA	Federal Transit Administration. A component of the U.S. Department of Transportation, established to provide leadership, technical assistance and financial resources for safe and technologically advanced public transportation.

LOS	Level of Service. A standard means of measuring traffic congestion by evaluating the capacity of a road with respect to the number of vehicles using the road in a given timeframe.
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan. A 20-year planning document, revised every three years, that identifies new transportation policies and facilities to meet the long-term (20-year) needs of an urban area for roads, public transportation, trail development, and general transportation. The LRTP must be consistent with the area's comprehensive long-range land use plan, urban development objectives, and overall social, economic, environmental, system performance, and energy conservation goals and objectives.
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage.
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization. A federal designation given to a local entity to take lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs using federal monies in an urbanized area with 50,000 or more people. The only MPO in Alaska is the Municipality of Anchorage.
OS&HP	Official Streets & Highways Plan. A document that depicts the hierarchy of road designations, which then creates the roadway system: freeway, highway, major arterial, minor arterial, collector, or street. These designations are determined based on projected traffic levels, which then determines the right-of-way (amount of land) needed.
Planning	A phase in transportation system development to determine the likely future transportation needs of an area.
Programming	A phase in transportation system development when the type and level of resources needed to design and build a project are determined and the scheduling of those resources occur.
PTDP or TDP	Public Transportation Development Plan. A short-term (5-year) program that outlines the intended development of the public transit system for each year during that period. It includes a detailed program of capital equipment needs, system management, and operations.
P&Z	Planning and Zoning Commission. An appointed Municipal body which, in one of its functions, serves as the official Citizens Advisory Committee to AMATS.
PC	AMATS Policy Committee. The formal decision-making body of AMATS, which approves final planning and programming documents.
POA	Port of Anchorage.
PSA	Public Service Announcement.
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program. A document produced by the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to allocate funds for transportation programming throughout the state.

- TAC AMATS Technical Advisory Committee. A formal body of representatives from various agencies and interests that reviews transportation planning documents and advises the AMATS Policy Committee.
- TEA-21 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Enacted on June 9, 1998, TEA-21 is the most recent comprehensive federal transportation enabling legislation.
- TIP Transportation Improvement Program. A document updated every two years and is required by FHWA-FTA joint regulations, in order for AMATS to receive federal funds. It is a prioritized program of transportation projects and air quality management strategies to be implemented in the near term (three years). The projects serve to implement the LRTP.
- TMA Transportation Management Area. A TMA is subject to special federal requirements regarding congestion management systems, project selection, and certification. These special requirements are for urbanized areas having a population over 200,000. AMATS is also a TMA.
- UDC Urban Design Commission. Reviews street and roadway landscape improvement projects and advises on urban design matters.



Anchorage on the Move: An Introduction



*This document is a toolbox
of strategies and techniques for involving
the public in transportation planning.*

Background

Anchorage on the Move was financed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as a 1999 Transportation and Community System Preservation (TCSP) grant in an effort to improve public participation in transportation planning efforts in the nation's larger populated areas. The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS), a joint state-municipal transportation planning effort, and Resource Solutions, a University of Alaska Anchorage program dedicated to improving citizen-government interaction, applied to FHWA and were awarded a grant to develop improved public participation guidance and practices for AMATS. AMATS is responsible for and has the authority to direct federal funds to *plan* for improving the Anchorage area transportation system, including Chugiak-Eagle River. Its responsibilities include planning improvements for the road, trail, public transportation, freight, pedestrian, and bicycle components of the transportation system as well as for air quality issues.

Anchorage on the Move (the name adopted for this FHWA-funded project) identified the most significant needs were better education about transportation planning and information on how to effectively be involved in the decision-making process. This document is one of several being developed to meet this need. It also serves as a guide about those transportation planning issues that Anchorage citizens identified as being the most important to understand, namely the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). It is also a toolbox of public participation strategies and techniques.

Anchorage on the Move was proactive in its approach to improve the interaction AMATS has with citizens in the Municipality of Anchorage. Initially, the scoping effort was conducted by interviewing individuals and groups; distributing and receiving completed questionnaires; and holding public meetings to solicit information about the public's concerns, interests, issues, and frustration with transportation planning in the Anchorage area.

The scoping effort revealed that education about transportation planning, AMATS itself, and, in particular, better understanding of the LRTP and TIP were key issues. *Anchorage on the Move's* next step was to then ask, "If this is what's most important to you, how do you want to learn or be informed about these issues?" Responses to this question were uncovered during a series of brainstorming sessions, where members of the public and agency staff shared and created ideas about what techniques work best in Anchorage. These recommendations are also found in this guide.

Anchorage on the Move undertook the following activities and tasks:

- Tested interactive public participation techniques in conjunction with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan update, *Anchorage 2020*.
- Conducted an assessment of the issues and frustrations associated with transportation planning in Anchorage.
- Developed a plan for improving public participation in transportation planning.
- Brainstormed and created ideas for improving public participation.
- Drafted a guide describing an improved AMATS Public Participation Program.
- Revised and finalized the draft guide; submitted it to AMATS decision-making committees.

Introduction to Transportation Planning in Anchorage

AMATS is a federally mandated, multi-agency team that works together to plan and fund the transportation system in the Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River areas when federal funds are being used. Federal funding accounts for 85% of public money spent to develop and build our transportation system and averages about \$50 million a year in Anchorage. These are capital funds and operation and maintenance needs then must be met by state and local funds. The 1998 Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) provides guidance and regulations on how to approach transportation planning and programming for areas with populations larger than 50,000. If Anchorage does not comply with these guidelines and regulations, it does not qualify for these funds, which are generated from gas taxes. In order to plan and fund our transportation system, AMATS has a number of responsibilities, but the two that garner the greatest level of public interest are the LRTP and the TIP. Both help to implement the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

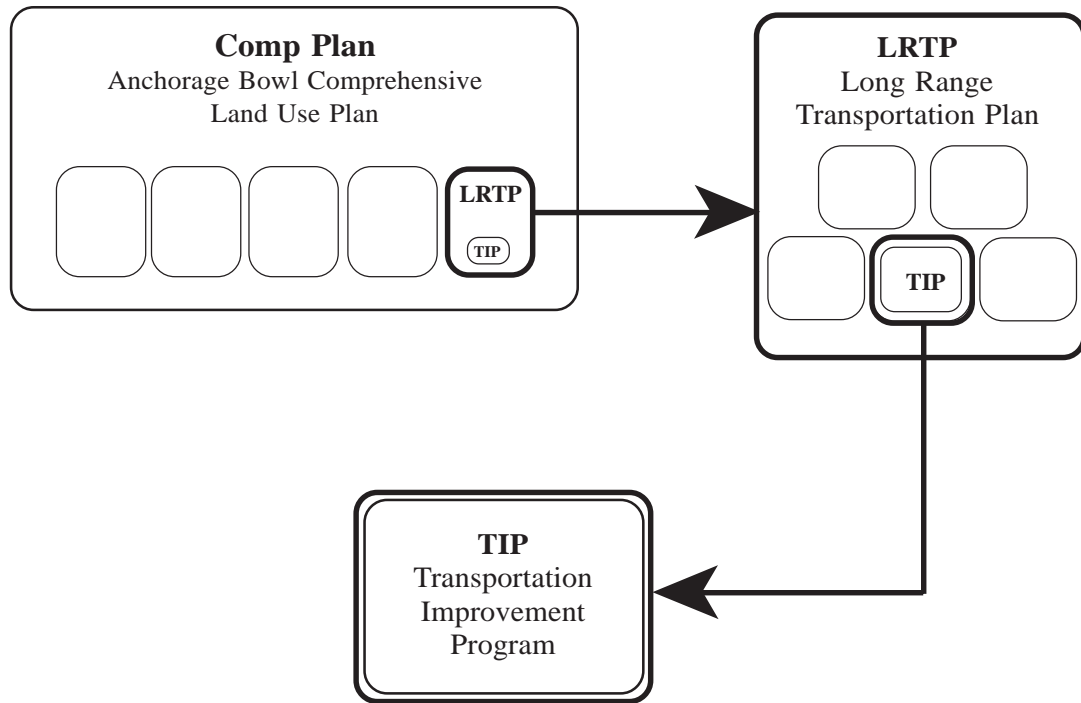
The Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan, or Comp Plan, serves as a guide for how the Anchorage community will grow and change over time. It is updated every ten years and includes designations for transportation system development; open space; and industrial, commercial, and residential area development. It is a policy document that identifies issues, goals, and objectives of how the land in the Anchorage Bowl will be used. It also provides a framework for the community to make more detailed decisions to implement the Comp Plan.

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) guides development of the Anchorage area transportation system for the next 20 years, hence its name “Long Range.” The LRTP is updated every three years. The transportation system is planned in such a way to address and meet the anticipated needs for mobility, accessibility and safety, including roads and sidewalks, public transportation, trail development, freight and commerce mobility, congestion management, and how to meet air quality standards in the Anchorage area, including Chugiak-Eagle River. The LRTP is based on demographic, population and cost projections as well as the land use decisions and goals and values of the community as outlined in the Comp Plan.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a three-year plan that serves to implement and fund the LRTP and the Comp Plan. The term *program* means determining the type and level of resources needed to advance the LRTP, and it is also where the scheduling or the timing of those resources is determined. The TIP is updated every two years. The TIP is the primary funding tool to implement the LRTP and since the LRTP is based on the Comp

Figure 1. Relationship of Major Planning Efforts

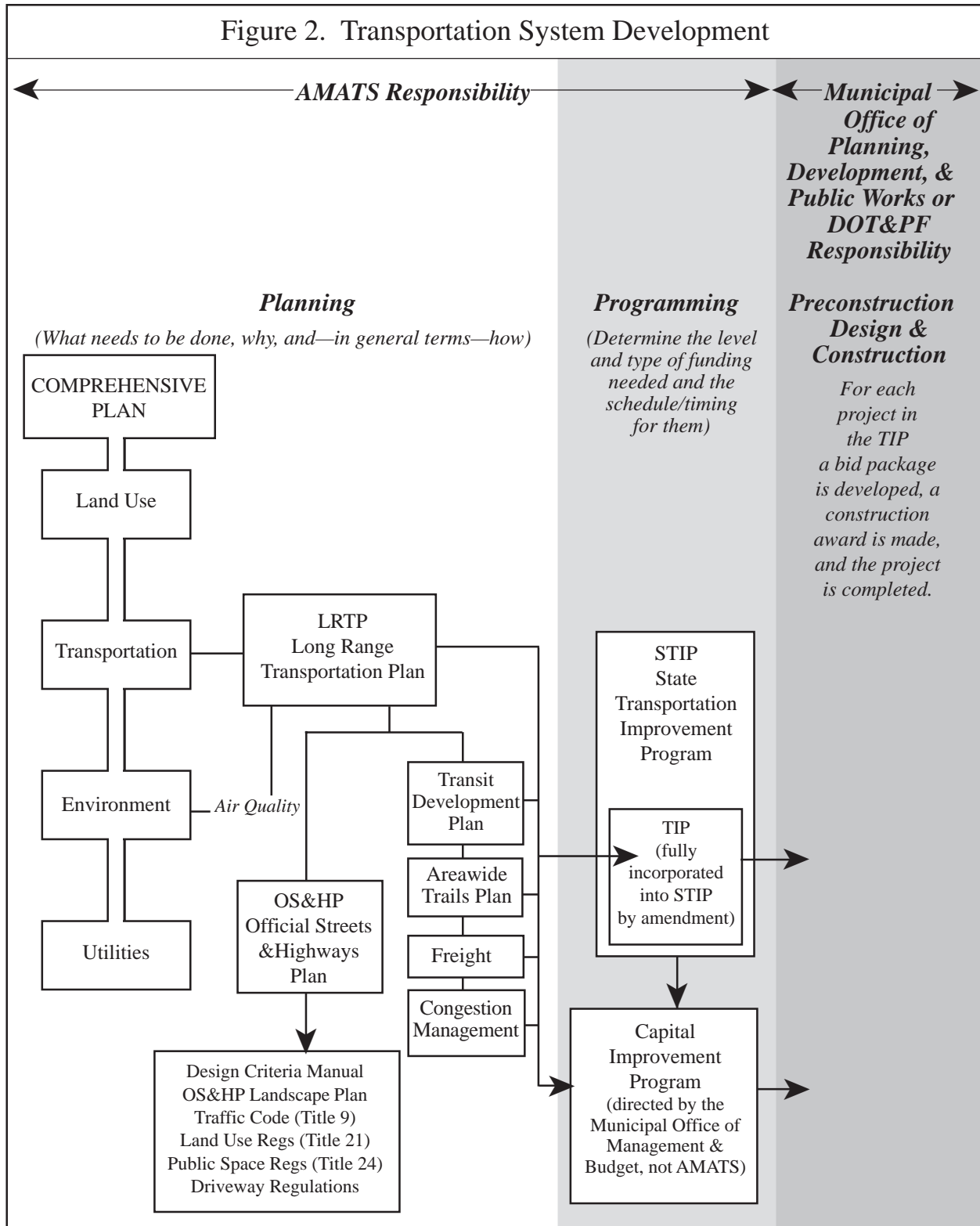
The Comp Plan provides a blueprint for land uses for a 20-year timeframe. The LRTP and TIP help implement the Comp Plan by aligning transportation system planning with the desired land use patterns.

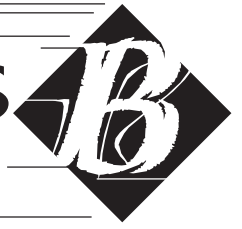


Plan, the TIP is also a primary mechanism to implement the Comp Plan. (See *Figure 1. Relationship of Major Planning Efforts*, above.)

Developing the transportation system is done in three phases. The first is long-term planning. The next is programming, or determining the level and type of resources needed, and the third is project design and construction. AMATS has responsibility for planning and programming, but does not have responsibility for project design and construction. Depending on if the project is a municipal or a state-owned road or facility, either the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) or the Municipal Office of Planning, Development, and Public Works has management responsibility during the preconstruction, design, and construction of the project, not AMATS. (See *Figure 2. Transportation System Development*, next page.)

Figure 2. Transportation System Development





General Functions

AMATS's mission is to develop and implement a multi-modal transportation system. AMATS does this through its primary functions:

- 1) Identify Anchorage's long-term (20-year) transportation system needs for all modes of transportation, which is known as the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).
- 2) Implement the planning phases for the long-term needs, which is known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP provides details about funding over a three-year timeframe; it designates where resources are *programmed* by determining what resources are needed and at what level, then the scheduling or timing to use those resources.
- 3) Coordinate with the various agencies that have a role and responsibility for transportation planning and development, including environmental concerns. (See *Figure 3. AMATS Organizational Chart and Decision-Making Structure*, next page.)

Organization and Decision-Making Structure

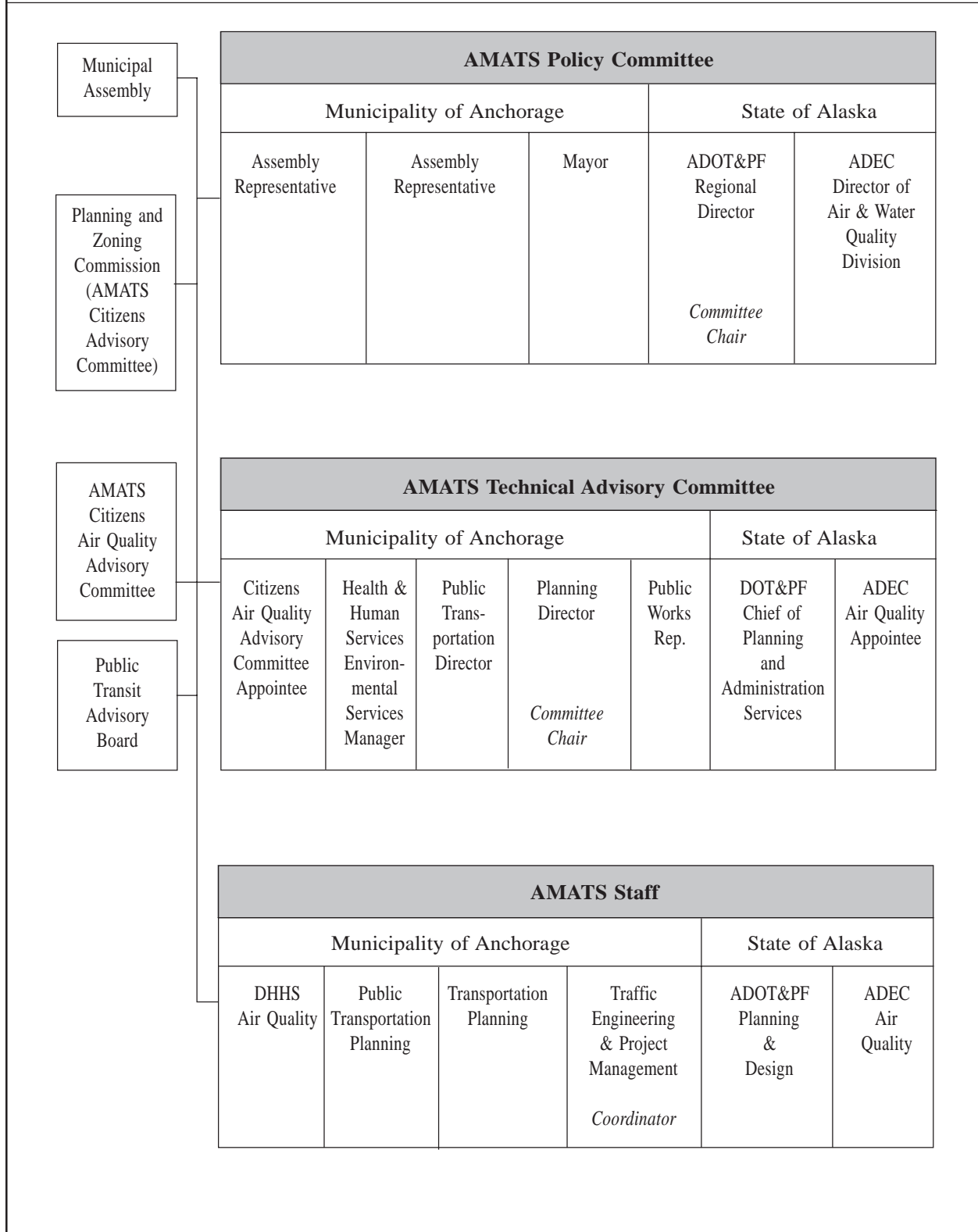
The AMATS structure represents a variety of organizations and, in many ways, acts as a *virtual* program. As indicated in the organizational chart, there are three tiers in the AMATS decision-making process and three advisory groups. The functions, responsibilities, and representatives of AMATS committees are established through a formal intergovernmental agreement between the Municipality and the State of Alaska, known as an Operating Agreement. Proposed revisions to this agreement call for representatives from the Port, the Alaska Railroad Corporation, and Cultural and Recreational Services to become members of the Technical Advisory Committee.

The AMATS Policy Committee consists of five equal voting members: the Commissioner of DOT&PF, who is the Central Region Director of DOT&PF, or designee; the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) or designee; the Municipal Mayor; and two Municipal Assembly representatives. The Municipal Assembly is a formal *advisory committee* to the Policy Committee.

The Policy Committee has the responsibility to act on all matters relating to the continuing comprehensive and cooperative transportation and air quality planning process for the area. The Policy Committee considers transportation system needs for all modes of transportation within the context of the Comp Plan:

- Provides overall direction to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and staff.
- Ensures public participation throughout the AMATS process.
- Directs the preparation of transportation plans, programs, and studies.

Figure 3. AMATS Organizational Chart



The AMATS TAC consists of seven equal voting members: 1) the DOT&PF Central Region Chief of Planning, 2) a representative from the ADEC, 3) the Municipal Planning Director, 4) the Municipal Public Works Director, 5) the Municipal Public Transportation Director, 6) a representative from the Municipal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and 7) a member of the Citizens Air Quality Advisory Committee.

The functions of the TAC include:

- Preparing and maintaining the AMATS transportation plans, technical studies, and programs for the area.
- Providing recommendations to the Policy Committee regarding the effects of transportation and air quality plans and programs on the plans of other agencies.
- Providing recommendations to the Policy Committee in its review of federal and state funded transportation projects and programs.
- Submitting recommendations on transportation/air quality planning matters to the Policy Committee.

At the staff level is where the day-to-day work occurs and where general public participation is conducted. Staff receives advice and formal consultation from the AMATS Citizens Air Quality Advisory Committee, the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z), the FHWA, and Public Transit Advisory Board.

Primary staff for AMATS is the AMATS Coordinator located at the Transportation Planning Division of the Traffic Department. Support is also furnished by the Municipal Office of Planning, Development, and Public Works, the Environmental Services Division of the Municipality, the Municipal Public Transportation Department, and the Municipal Department of Cultural & Recreational Services. The State of Alaska supports AMATS through the DOT&PF and ADEC. The AMATS contact phone is 343-7991.

The AMATS Citizens Air Quality Advisory Committee is the formal public participation body for air quality issues affecting the AMATS area. Specific functions of the Committee are to assist in promoting public participation in the air quality planning process and to comment on air quality planning issues. Members of this committee are appointed by the AMATS Policy Committee. DHHS is the coordinating agency for this Committee; call 343-6976.

The AMATS Citizens Advisory Committee is the P&Z Commission. In its capacity as the AMATS Citizens Advisory Committee, the P&Z reviews transportation plans and programs. In another capacity, the P&Z reviews site selections and site plans for roadway improvement projects.

The decision-making tiers displayed in the organizational chart on page 10 actually create a system where AMATS's goals, objectives, and plans are developed and met through ongoing interactions. The public can provide input at any time by contacting staff or Committee members or by participating and speaking at the TAC and Policy Committee meetings. (See *AMATS Committee Meetings*, page 55.)

AMATS Planning Documents

AMATS has primary responsibility for two planning documents, the Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Program.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The LRTP is based on land uses described in the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Chugiak-Eagle River Comp Plan. The LRTP is developed to address and meet the anticipated needs for:

- 1) Roads and adjacent sidewalks (major roads and highways, but not neighborhood streets)
- 2) Trails (primarily for recreation, bicycles, and commuters)
- 3) Public Transportation (People Mover, Anchor Rides, Share-A-Ride, Commuter Rail)
- 4) Freight Mobility (commercial trucks)
- 5) Air Quality (to meet federal air quality standards)
- 6) Congestion Management (to determine the level of acceptability)

The LRTP is actually composed of the above six components (subplans); it is a joint state and municipal document that is updated every three years and revised as necessary. The current plan identifies the long-range planning goals and addresses the general transportation needs of Anchorage through 2023. (See *Figure 6. LRTP Decision-Making and Public Participation Steps*, page 26.)

Because of the complexity of the LRTP's six components, when the LRTP goes through an update process, only two or three components are updated at the same time. We use the term "LRTP" even when only one or several of the components are the topic of discussion.

When developing the LRTP, four basic elements are evaluated:

- Where a trip starts (i.e., at home).
- Where a trip ends (i.e., at work, shopping, or school).
- Which mode of transportation you take (i.e., bus, car, walk, or bicycle).
- What route you take.

By assessing these four elements, it can be determined if problems exist and where a planning emphasis to meet long-term needs should be placed.

In Anchorage, most of the four million miles driven daily originate outside of the downtown area. Drivers from far-flung points of origin converge on workplaces throughout the city, primarily in downtown and midtown. This process is reversed as people travel from work to home. Other important considerations in transportation planning for the Anchorage Bowl are:

- Determining the current and preferred mode of transport.
- Determining the routing to and from points of origin and destination.
- Managing congestion, including how long it takes to get to and from points of origin and destination.
- Creating and analyzing alternatives that address concerns, including options that may not be a construction project.
- Maintaining safe and quiet residential areas in existing and planned neighborhoods by keeping traffic low.

- Supporting a trail system.
- Supporting a public transportation system.
- Supporting effective movement of freight.
- Providing public education and participation opportunities to ensure the best decisions are being made for the community.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The second major responsibility of AMATS is the TIP, a prioritized list of transportation plans for the Anchorage Bowl. This three-year plan is used to implement and fund the LRTP. The AMATS Policy Committee determined that 73 to 75 cents of every federal transportation dollar will go towards road improvements, 10 to 12 cents will be spent on improving congestion and air quality management, and 15 cents will be spent on transportation enhancements such as sidewalks, trails, and landscaping. Priorities in the TIP include efforts such as roadway rehabilitation, roadway expansion, roadway safety, air quality improvement, trails, and public transportation improvements. Priorities in the TIP must be consistent with the LRTP and include new and previously funded efforts advancing into a new phase.

Projects are nominated for the TIP by members of the public, agency representatives, and elected officials. The process for updating the TIP is displayed later in this document in *Figure 8. TIP Decision Making and Public Participation Steps*, page 38.

Coordinating Transportation Plans

To clearly understand the AMATS planning process, it is useful to understand how the development of the Comp Plan, the LRTP, and the TIP work together. Land use decisions set the stage for transportation decisions, so it is critical that the goals and objectives of these three plans support one another. Both the Comp Plan and the LRTP help develop a vision for 20 years into the future. Although 20 years seems like a long time, most federally funded transportation efforts in Anchorage take a minimum of seven years from idea to completion. In addition to the efforts discussed here, AMATS is striving to coordinate planning efforts with organizations such as the Alaska Railroad Corporation, the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, and the Port to enable Anchorage to address regional needs with integrated approaches.

Regional planning is also being initiated between the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. This is a proactive approach to the long-term commitment and success of the regional transportation system that links the two areas.

The LRTP provides greater detail on the transportation elements of the Comp Plan. The components that make up the LRTP are roads, trails, public transportation, congestion management, freight mobility, and meeting air quality standards. The LRTP is implemented in three-year phases through the TIP, which contains funding for priorities in the three-year time period. A new TIP is created every two years and amended annually, so that, in effect, it is continually implementing the LRTP.

Other Important and Related Transportation Documents

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is similar to the AMATS TIP, except it lists priorities for the entire state. The TIP is incorporated into the STIP using the amendment process. DOT&PF is responsible for the STIP; call 269-0520.

The Official Streets & Highways Plan (OS&HP) identifies and classifies roadways in the Municipality according to the functions they serve and the minimum right-of-way requirements for those functions. Classifications are collector, minor/major arterials, expressways, and freeways. The OS&HP is used primarily during land subdivision and development to ensure that an adequate amount of right-of-way is reserved for planned roads. The Municipal Office of Planning, Development, and Public Works is responsible for the OS&HP; call 343-7991.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a six-year program for municipal facilities that include roadways, transit, and trails as well as improvements to municipal structures, parks, and other public facilities. It is funded from a variety of sources such as local bonds, state grants, and others. The federally funded portion of the CIP is developed from the AMATS TIP. The Municipal Office of Management and Budget oversees the development of the CIP; call 343-4282.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a federally required document outlining the annual activities, or tasks, for AMATS to undertake in support of federally funded transportation projects. The Municipality of Anchorage and DOT&PF are the two agencies that agree on the UPWP, and it is approved by the AMATS Policy Committee; call 343-7991.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Paratransit Plan, 1995 Update, describes how Anchorage is meeting the transportation needs of persons with disabilities. The Municipal Public Transportation Department and AMATS are both responsible for meeting these needs; call 343-8409.

Citizens' Transportation Reference Guide (1996) is a document intended to provide general information to answer common questions from the public regarding transportation and air quality. It is available through AMATS; call 343-7991.

AMATS Citizens Handbook for Public Participation (2001) is a document intended to provide general information about AMATS and key public participation opportunities in the LRTP and TIP planning process; call 343-7991.

The Public Transportation Development Plan is a five-year operational and implementation document that carries out the decisions in the LRTP for the public transportation system. The Municipal Public Transportation Department is responsible for this plan; call 343-8409.

Project Preconstruction, Design, and Construction Plans are developed on a project-specific basis, with *project* meaning a certain road, intersection, trail, bus stop, etc. AMATS does *not* have oversight for this aspect of Anchorage's transportation system development. AMATS is responsible for planning functions, not for building or managing the actual construction of a project. See *Figure 2. Transportation System Development* on page 8. Management responsibility for project preconstruction, design and construction rests with either the DOT&PF or the Municipality's Office of Planning, Development, and Public Works. Chapter 5 of the *Highway Preconstruction Manual Part II*, DOT&PF, 1986, describes the public involvement and agency coordination for DOT&PF.

Public Participation in AMATS



In order to develop and implement an effective public participation plan, it is essential to determine who the public is. This is not always easy to do. The public is, of course, *everyone*. But how often is *everyone* interested in or impacted by a transportation planning effort? In public participation there is a need to convey information to and receive information from the general public. Generating opportunities for the public to participate, however, may involve a much smaller subset of the larger public. Often, the public who wants to participate is made up of those who are most *interested* (for example, people whose jobs will be affected, such as truck drivers); those who will be *impacted* to the greatest degree (such as people who live closest to trails or major roads); or those who *care* (such as those with environmental concerns or a disabled person facing a lack of transit service).

There are several keys to effective public participation in transportation planning. *Public awareness* is a key to communicating to the general public that a planning effort is underway and how they can either participate or gain more information. Another key is *public education*, which provides the general public with enough information to become more knowledgeable about the issues and what is happening in their community without having to spend an enormous amount of time to come up to speed. They can then have enough information to make an informed choice about whether to participate or not. Another key is to determine who is interested, impacted, or cares the most, and then seek them out and target them to participate. Developing public participation techniques that work for them, e.g. holding open houses at a time and place convenient to their schedules and locales, is paramount. Public participation provides members of the public with opportunities to engage in the discussion and help shape decisions, which ultimately will be made by elected and appointed officials to balance the community's diverse needs.

Guiding Principles for AMATS Public Participation

The following guiding principles were created by Anchorage-area residents who helped develop this public participation program. They were generated during a series of public meetings and discussions held over several months. These principles express how the public wants AMATS to work with them in developing transportation plans. The guiding principles for AMATS public participation ensure that there will be:

- An early and continuing public role and a commitment to be inclusive.
- A strong public presence in defining transportation goals and envisioning the future.
- Participation of the underserved.
- More efficient public participation techniques used.
- Enhanced customer service with explicit responses and feedback between agencies and the public.
- Fiscal constraints that make public participation time-efficient and cost-efficient.
- Meaningful dialogue among all stakeholders.

- Review of the effectiveness of the public participation process, including a critical look at how much is enough.
- Revision of the public participation process as necessary.
- A clear and well-understood public participation process.

During the first meetings of *Anchorage on the Move*, participating citizens began composing the initial set of guiding principles and discussed what the principles meant to them. Citizens particularly expressed a need for early, ongoing, and meaningful public participation; full public access to key decisions; and consideration of the underserved. In order for citizens to be effective in their public participation efforts, they made it clear that public education about AMATS and its decision-making structure is needed to improve citizens’ understanding of key issues, key decision points and conflict resolution procedures, as well as who is responsible for making the decisions.

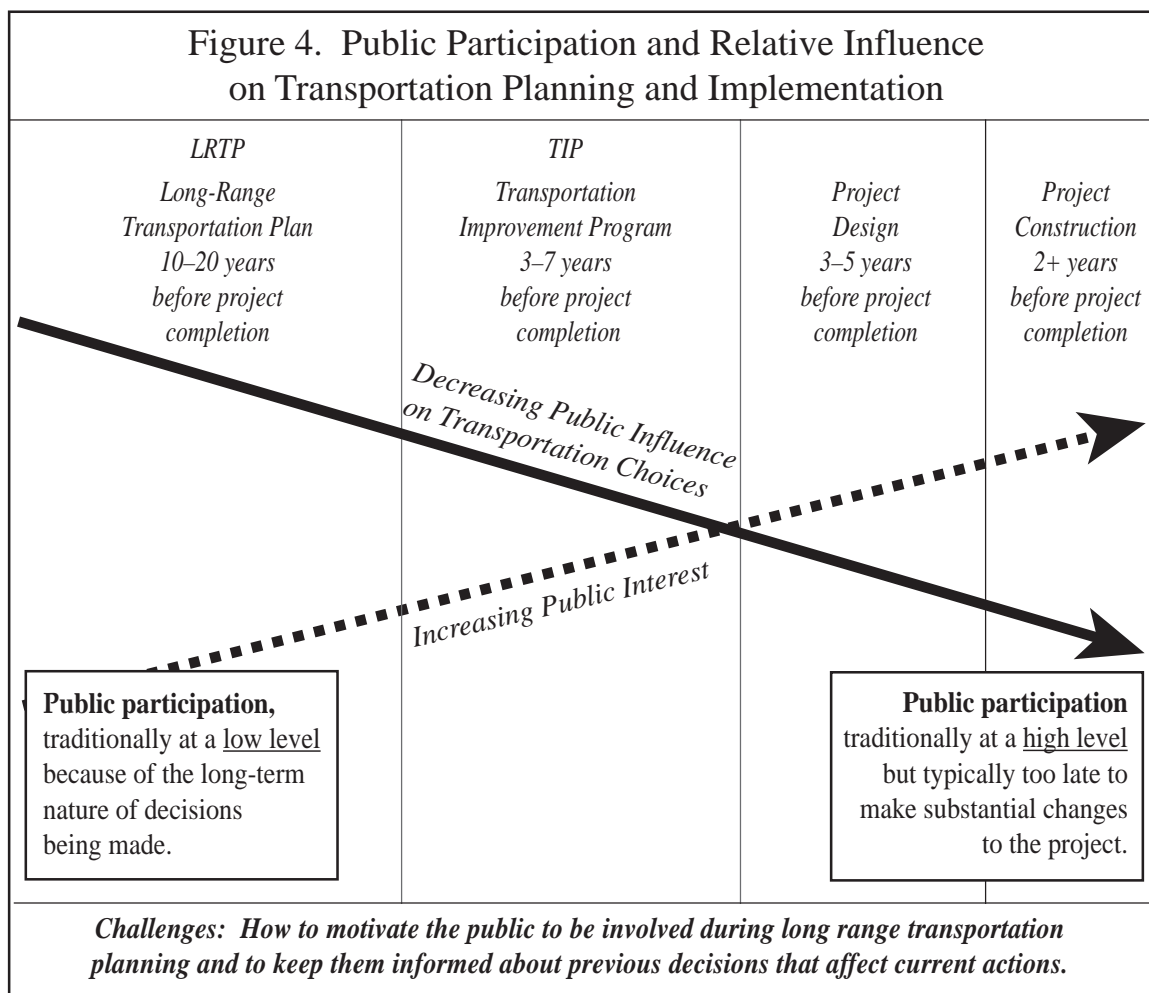
Participants defined *meaningful public participation* as dialogue among all stakeholders and that AMATS should consider public comments based on study, analysis, and the community’s values. The term *underserved* can apply to any group put at a disadvantage by a particular system or plan.

In Anchorage, there was general awareness that all users, including motorists, are not fully served by the current transportation system. Frequently, the *underserved* refers to non-motorists such as pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation users. One participant related transportation planning to the needs of the underserved by saying, “Transportation planning should seek to serve, not just consider, the needs of the underserved and deliver tangible results that improve their mobility.”

The Public’s Influential Role—Early Participation is Key

The primary reason that early public participation is necessary for transportation planning to be effective is the lengthy time it takes to develop transportation projects that are funded with federal dollars. Often these projects take 7 to 15 years, and some take even 20 years. (See *Figure 4. Public Involvement and Relative Influence on Transportation Planning and Implementation*, page 17.) This timeframe includes the planning, engineering, and, finally, construction.

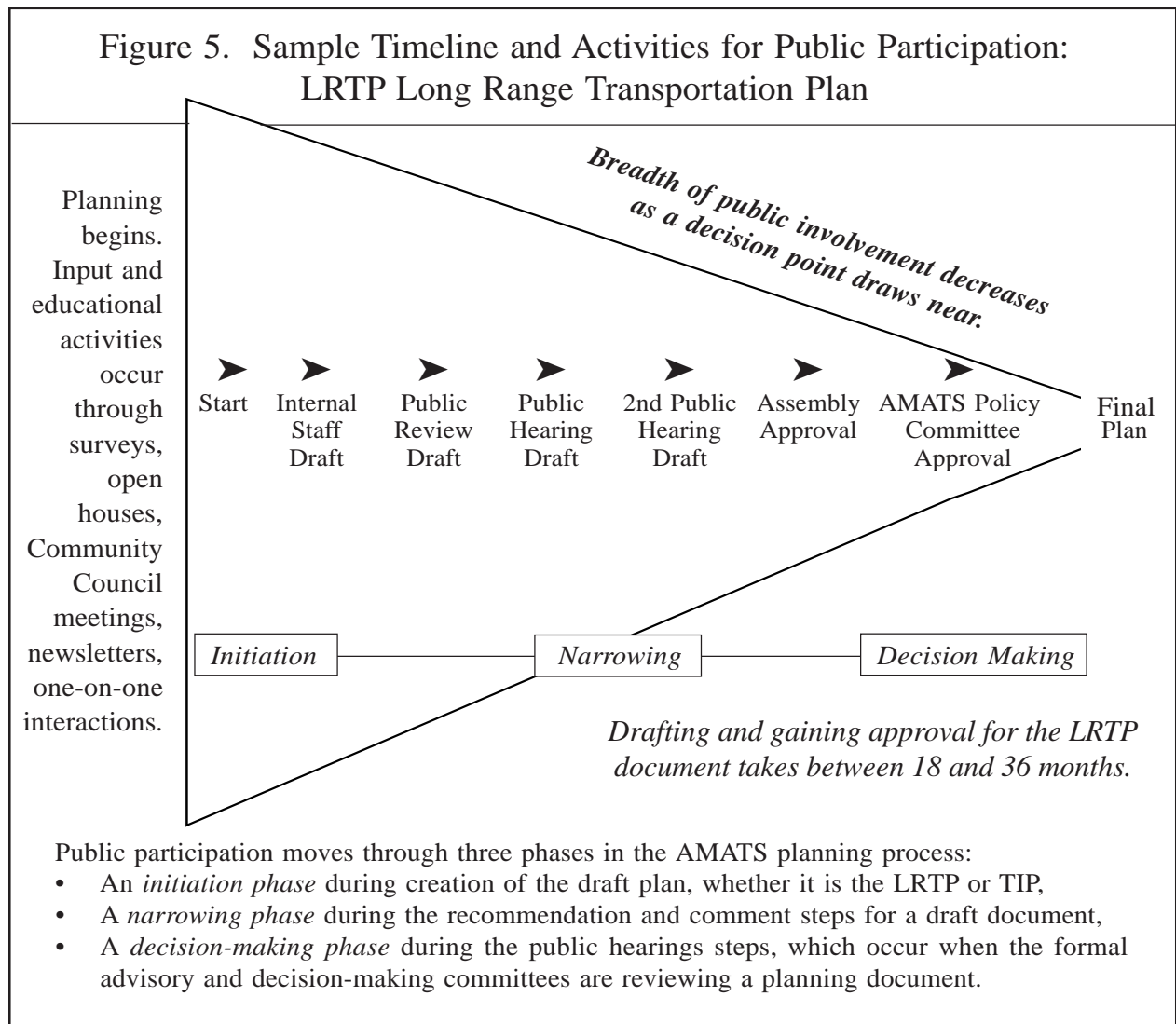
The public has its greatest influence about transportation improvements years before implementation occurs, whether it is construction or purchasing a street sweeper. The initial questions that need to be addressed are: “What problems are we trying to solve: mobility, access, safety, pedestrian, rush-hour congestion, livability, connectivity, pollution, or something else?” “How should we address this problem, with a road, sidewalk, trail, bridge, or some other means?” If the public waits to get involved until after the problem has been defined and a strategy determined to address it, it is usually too late to say, “No, we don’t want this.” By then, years of effort and resources may have been put forth to review alternatives and other options to address issues and service needs to provide mobility, livability, sustainability and accessibility for children, seniors, workers, the handicapped and virtually everyone living in the Anchorage area needing all modes of travel—walking, driving for both personal and commercial vehicles, bicycling, etc.



Often on public issues, there is heightened attention from the media and others as a decision point draws near. A lack of understanding by those who recently became aware or interested in the decision and its potential impacts becomes apparent. Whatever the reason, making the decision and, therefore, implementing it are delayed. The AMATS organizational structure, however, is intended to support timely decision making and implementation to meet federal mandates. This is another important reason for the public to be involved early, as the AMATS decision-making process is structured to meet these federal mandates.

During the entire planning process, alternatives are considered, choices are made, and plans are readied for final approval. When the planning options are narrowed through technical and public reviews and a timely decision is reached, the transportation planning process is considered *efficient*. The definition of *timely* is based on set federal deadlines for planning documents. When the planning process to develop the transportation system also helps to meet the goals and objectives of the community’s Comp Plan, then it is also considered *effective*.

In order to ensure the decisions are made in a timely manner, there must be effective public participation early in the process during the initiation and narrowing phases rather than just



before the plan (LRTP or TIP) goes to the Policy Committee for approval—the decision-making phase. Figure 5 uses a sample timeline to depict the decision-making process and how public participation narrows as the decision point is reached. These deadlines must be timely; if they are not, the Municipality will be out of compliance with federal law mandates.

Public Participation Programs and Techniques

Designing and Evaluating Public Participation Programs

Designing a public participation program provides the ability to align the public’s participation with the decision-making process. It requires internal coordination and, with transportation planning and projects, also requires interagency coordination. By designing the program before beginning a public process, mechanisms can be integrated to systematically

evaluate the public participation program and the various techniques employed. It can provide management, policymakers, and staff with a clear understanding of how the public participation program aligns with the decision-making process. In addition, it provides a document or roadmap that can be reviewed by the public, which could help gain credibility when a potentially divisive issue needs to be addressed.

A public participation program also needs to provide different approaches to encourage participation from various interests, such as the disabled and underinvolved. Elements of a public participation program include who needs to be involved from various public agencies, community interests and their possible representatives; techniques to be used to build awareness and inform the public about the issues and process; and techniques that encourage participation and help promote effective exchanges between government and the public, which includes interaction among all the public interest groups and participants. A budget needs to be developed, staff resources identified, and a timeline created. Further, the issues need to be described as well as the likely level of public interest.

Evaluation or review points should be incorporated because transportation planning efforts are lengthy. For each step in a planning process and even for each *technique* used, evaluations can be conducted. In order to evaluate the effectiveness, it is necessary to clearly identify the expected results or outcomes. Using the elements of the public participation program described above, expectations can be developed and then actual results compared.

An example from *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*, describes a meeting where an agency presented a proposed action. The response from the public was, “We don’t like it!” If the agency’s expectation was to have the public embrace its proposal, then the meeting would not receive a good evaluation for the effectiveness of its public involvement effort. However, if it was the intent to gauge how the public feels about the proposal, then it was probably quite successful—depending to what degree the various stakeholders, or publics, participated in the meeting.

Referring again to *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*, the evaluation strategies it describes are:

- Being Clear on Your Criteria for Success
- Simple Techniques for Evaluation:
 - Phone calls
 - One-on-one conversations
 - Hand-in response forms
 - Mail-in response forms for newsletters
 - Polls to assess public attitudes
 - Advisory Committee Reviews and Check-Point Meetings

Evaluating strategies are typically used by a core planning group, which can be composed of agency members or agency and public members, to assess, reassess, and consider how lessons learned should be used in the future; and to manage, or plan, for issues that the core group knows will be controversial. The purpose is to create the most constructive means possible to address issues and concerns in the community.

“How much is enough public participation?” There is no clear answer; it depends on the level of interest for any particular issue. It is difficult to gauge upfront what it will take to gain

sufficient support. Often, additional effort will be needed if the issue has substantial interest from key officials, but community members are not satisfied with the proposal. The continuing effort will usually result in one of two outcomes: 1) either changes are made to the proposal to address the community's concerns and support is then gained, or 2) support continues to wane and the key officials, after determining that the time is not right to continue pursuing the issue, drop it—at least for a time.

When designing a public participation program, it is important to be aware of the best ways to use various techniques. There are situations when the same technique can be used to meet different objectives, which is one of the reasons public participation does not lend itself to hard and fast rules. Effectiveness of public participation techniques is based on using the techniques appropriately in relation to the decision-making process or step, and creating the ability to objectively review and evaluate their effectiveness. Seven categories of public participation techniques are described here. They were identified by those who participated in *Anchorage on the Move* as necessary for AMATS to conduct effective public participation programs. Although public meetings are used as a technique in a number of the categories listed, it is such a primary activity used in public participation, that we have allowed it its own category. The FHWA also has created *Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*, a downloadable publication available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/cover.htm>.

Categories of Techniques

Agency Infrastructure techniques—e.g. staff, tracking systems—support all public participation goals, objectives, and activities for an agency. Specifically for AMATS, these techniques should integrate the Guiding Principles for Public Participation.

Awareness-Building techniques are used to get information to the broadest cross-section of the public possible about activities, events, and planning processes.

Education techniques are used to provide the public with factual information. A good public education effort should create a better and deeper understanding of the issues, objectives of an initiative, and the decision-making and public participation process, including timelines. It is a one-way form of communication typically directed towards the public from an agency.

Education: Written and Visual Products have a long-term usefulness and are typically resource intensive to develop. Their benefit is in the time they save both the public and agency by having easy-to-use and easy-to-access information.

Information Exchange techniques serve to inform and educate both agency representatives and members of the public. Often, conventional public meetings are more of an educational opportunity than an in-depth discussion. Workshops and open houses seem to be good information exchange techniques to use in Anchorage. These techniques are a two-way form of communication.

Input techniques are used by an agency to get information from the public. Typically the information shows perceptions, information gaps, attitudes and values, as well as priority preferences. These, too, are one-way communication techniques.

Public Meetings are a frequently used technique to achieve public awareness, education, and participation objectives.

Agency Infrastructure

These are techniques that constructively support all public participation activities for AMATS.

Public Participation Staff Position at AMATS: Dedicate the energies of a staff member to public participation efforts.

Public Participation Tracking System: Develop a system that provides a simple mechanism for tracking public participation efforts in a quantifiable way. This needs to be a joint effort of the Municipality of Anchorage and the DOT&PF staff along with their consultants to compile information such as the number of residents participating, the issues and concerns heard and if and how they were addressed, the techniques used and frequency to inform the public, as well as other information useful to determine the effectiveness of the public participation system.

Awareness-Building Techniques

When selecting awareness-building techniques, it is important to clearly define the specific public that is directly impacted, while ensuring that the broader, general public is made aware. For example, commuters, seniors, the disabled community, and students are highly interested publics on transportation issues. An effective awareness-building “campaign” would target organizations with members having those characteristics, while also cultivating a broader public awareness using of a variety of media.

In addition to using a combination of media such as emails, public service announcements (PSAs), ads, radio, and television, etc., the message needs to be compelling and convey relevant logistical information.

Citizens who participated in *Anchorage on the Move* suggested a variety of techniques to alert the public about a meeting, a planning process, or an issue under consideration (Table 1). In order to be effective, it is recommended that a combination of at least six techniques be used.

Education Techniques

Education may be the most important part of the public participation process. It should be a continuous, ongoing effort. Without sufficient and credible information, the public is unable to participate in any meaningful way. On the other hand, what makes many public decisions controversial is the fact that they are complicated due to the numerous issues woven into a single decision. While public agencies such as AMATS have the responsibility for providing understandable informational materials and presentations, members of the public then also have a responsibility to study and try to comprehend the complexity of the issues.

Table 2 is a list of suggested techniques to provide the public and interested groups with more in-depth information about a project, planning process, issue, decision-making process, and

Table 1. Suggested Awareness-Building Techniques

<p>Personal Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Educate the media on the public’s role in transportation planning decisionsOperate booths at community events (such as the Bear Paw Festival)Conduct presentations at service organizations and community councilsContact citizens by telephoneContact citizens door-to-doorEstablish a telephone call-in line announcing various efforts <p>Printed and Posted Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use orange cones in project areas during planning to draw attentionPublish ads and news stories in newspapersPublish stories in AMATS transportation & other newslettersPost advertisements in movie theatresPost road signsEmploy the “backpack mail” system in schoolsPost signs on buses (both inside and out)Post information in church newsletters and announcementsPost notices on bulletin boards and listserves of large employersPost flyersUse postal distribution listsPost signs on gas pumpsAdvertise on sales receipts from grocery stores <p>Electronic Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Broadcast radio PSAs and paid adsBroadcast TV commercialsBroadcast videos on MOA Channel 43Advertise AMATS meeting times on televised assembly meetingsPost information on the InternetUse fax and email to distribute informationGIS maps
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the tradeoffs surrounding a decision. Here, too, it is recommended that a combination of no less than six techniques be used in order to be effective.

If at all possible, the educational pieces should be disseminated at a point prior to asking the public to do something, such as participate in a meeting, activity, or event, or provide comments during a designated timeframe.

Determining which education techniques to use is also based on what public is directly impacted, while ensuring that the general public also has ample opportunity to learn more about community transportation issues. One of the primary factors that determines which combination of techniques will be used is the level of resources available, including the timeframe in which to conduct the educational part of the public participation process.

Table 2. Suggested Education Techniques

Community councils as educators
 Community school classes
 Conferences/Forums
 Discussion groups
 Education through project engineers and public officials who engage with many members of the public
 GIS Maps
 Providing educational materials through mailing and distribution lists, including fax and email
 Presentations by AMATS staff
 Printed news stories (unpaid)
 Radio news stories (unpaid)
 TV news stories (unpaid)
 Storyboards to describe planning processes
 Televised AMATS Policy Committee Meetings
 Transportation Information Clearinghouse, which would “house” information developed by all the transportation organizations in the Anchorage area
 Videos

Because of the high degree of emphasis that *Anchorage on the Move* participants placed on education, developing written and visual products became central to implementing a good public participation program for AMATS. Written and visual products can and should support awareness building, education, input, and information exchange techniques.

Brochures: Develop brochures about AMATS’s primary activities where public participation is critical and reoccurring, such as for TIP nominations.

Handbooks: Develop guidance documents for activities when public participation is critical, reoccurring, and the planning process requires detailed information from the public, such as project nominations for transportation improvements.

Informational Advertising Program: Provide information about the transportation system through the use of ads in a wide variety of media.

Non-interactive Website: Post downloadable information on the AMATS Website, including links to GIS maps that can show planned changes for neighborhoods. Due to the anticipated staff time needed to manage an interactive website, AMATS is currently unable to provide this.

Quarterly Newsletter: Transportation is a major issue in Anchorage and there are many activities, events, and decisions surrounding it. A quarterly newsletter would provide information about various items of interest.

Transportation Information Clearinghouse: A “one-stop shop” for information about transportation activities, events, decisions, planning efforts, and points of contact. It would also serve as a resource library for transportation planning efforts.

Videos: Convey general information about AMATS—what it is, its role, and the decision-making process.

Information Exchange Techniques

Information exchange techniques, such as those listed in Table 3, are a two-way form of communication. They serve to inform and educate both AMATS representatives and members of the public. They are usually structured to be conversational in nature. For many of the same reasons discussed in the input techniques section, information exchange techniques are important. They can develop clarity to better understand what is trying to be communicated, can help reduce and diffuse misunderstandings, and by doing so, are also mechanisms that help to build agreement.

Building agreement actually requires a higher level of resources to be expended in order to be successful. The objective of using information exchange techniques is to minimize misunderstandings and develop the ability to build agreement. Some efforts might use these techniques to seek and build agreement on long-term decisions, such as a ten-year master plan, while others might use information exchange techniques to understand where miscommunications exist and to remedy it. A decision about how much effort should be expended can be made after the desired level of agreement for an initiative is determined.

Table 3. Suggested Information Exchange Techniques
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call-in teleconferences• Citizens Advisory Committee meetings• Community councils meetings• Federation of Community Councils and individual community council meetings• Public meetings<ul style="list-style-type: none">Workshops: Problem specific, visioning, brainstorming,Charettes: Problem/project specificOpen houses with scheduled presentations• AMATS Policy Committee and TAC members actively involved in information exchange• Special events, such as booth management or special road show• Workshops or open houses that showcase multiple transportation efforts• Citywide or regional transportation fairs.

Input Techniques

Input techniques, such as those listed in Table 4, are how the public gets information to AMATS. It is important for AMATS and other government agencies to understand what the public is thinking, its ideas for improvements, and how it perceives and defines transportation needs and priorities.

What often happens in the “input” phase of public participation is that so much information is collected that the data itself becomes overwhelming. The challenge is to use the information in a way that informs and influences decisions in a cost-effective manner while at the same time letting citizens know they have been heard.

Table 4. Suggested Input Techniques

Groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Policy Committee meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Advisory Committee meetings • Public hearings
Individuals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faxes/Emails • Written surveys/Questionnaires • Public transportation system (for public transportation issues and decisions only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-addressed stamped comment cards • Visual preference surveys • Phone surveys

Input techniques often do not provide mechanisms for discussions that will clarify what is meant or build understanding of constraints and procedures that need to be addressed in order for AMATS to act on particular information or preferences from the public. This can be frustrating to individuals who took the time to provide input. Why does this happen? AMATS, like other public agencies, may receive competing and opposing input from members of the public. Sometimes AMATS may look to advisory committees, boards, or task forces to assist with integrating and sorting through the competing viewpoints. Most often, however, AMATS strives to address competing viewpoints.

Public Meetings

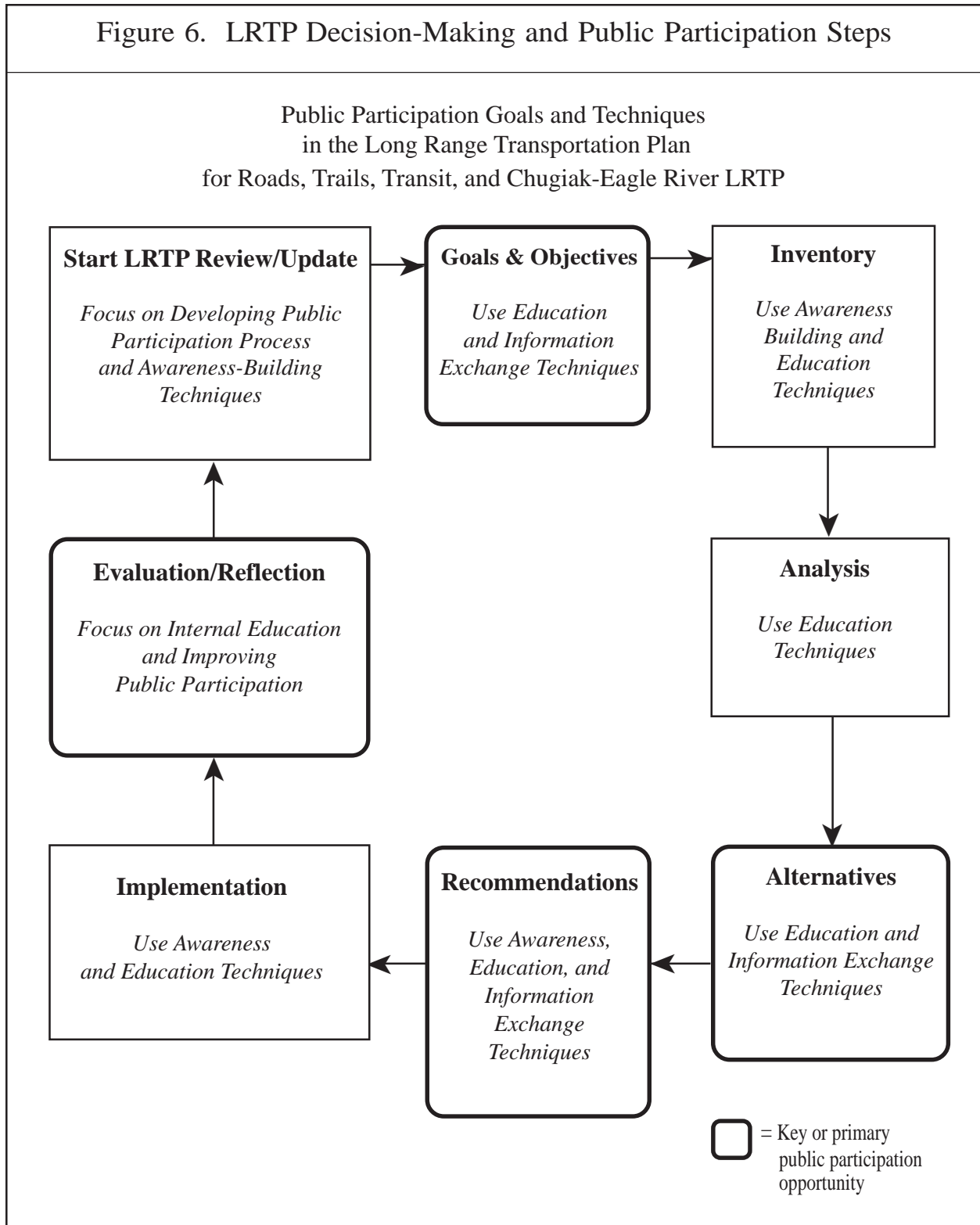
Public meetings and an educational program are often two primary components of a public participation plan—typically with a decision as the outcome. There are a number of different kinds of public meetings; public meetings can be categorized by the purpose of the meeting.

A public meeting in and of itself is not a public participation plan.

Informational meetings provide information to the public. Presentations, conferences, and open houses are considered traditional informational public meetings. Focus groups, public hearings where testimonies are taken, some traditional public meetings, and open houses are examples of *input-gathering* meetings. *Brainstorming and problem-solving* meetings are used to generate new ideas and then evaluate the ideas to determine how best to proceed. *Charettes* are often used to focus on technical design issues, and *workshops* are types of meetings used for both brainstorming and problem solving, usually with smaller groups.

Decision-making meetings, in the case of AMATS, rest with the TAC and the Policy Committee. There are also decisions made by the official advisory groups to AMATS, which are the Transit Advisory Board, the Citizens Air Quality Advisory Committee, and the P&Z. These formal advisory groups are types of *citizen advisory committees*. Although they are advisory in that they make recommendations to AMATS, they have formal roles comprised of differing perspectives, and their recommendations are seriously considered.

Figure 6. LRTP Decision-Making and Public Participation Steps



LRTP: Decision-Making and Public Participation Steps



There are several purposes that the LRTP fills. The LRTP provides a blueprint for developing our transportation system needs within the context of the Comp Plan, including the community's values of mobility, accessibility, livability, and sustainability. The FHWA requires Anchorage to have a LRTP, updated every three years. The FHWA considers a transportation system to be roads (including freeways, highways, and streets and sidewalks), the public transportation system, trails, and freight mobility, as well as managing congestion and attaining air quality standards.

Figure 6 describes the general decision-making process and public participation steps used to develop the LRTP for roads and sidewalks, trails, public transportation and the Eagle River-Chugiak area LRTP; Figure 7 is a more detailed explanation. Following Figure 7, the public participation activities for each of the LRTP components—attaining air quality standards, managing congestion problems, and ensuring freight mobility in the Anchorage area—are described.

Checklist of Primary Resources for Public Participation

Primary resources to assist you in *developing, implementing, and evaluating* a public participation program are:

- *Anchorage on the Move*, Section C “Guiding Principles for AMATS Public Participation” (page 15), which should be used as objectives for your public participation program.
- Section C “Public Participation Programs and Techniques, Designing and Evaluating Public Participation Programs” (page 18).
- *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook* (see page 59 for details).

Available Techniques and Their Evaluation

- Section C “Public Participation Program and Techniques” is an overview of categories of techniques and a listing of techniques for each category.
- Section F, *Figure 10. Preferred Public Involvement Techniques for Anchorage* (page 48).

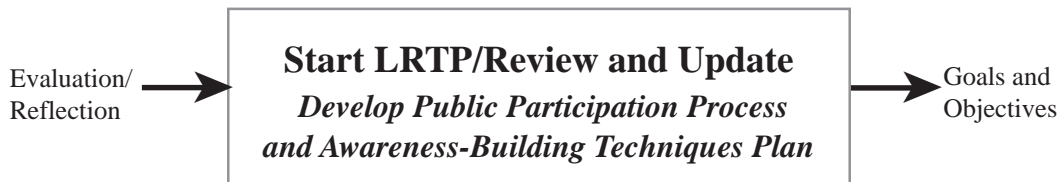
Detailed Information and Examples of Using Different Techniques

- *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making* (downloadable publication developed by FHWA (see page 59 for details).
- Section C “Guiding Principles for AMATS Public Participation” (page 15) and “Designing and Evaluating Public Participation Programs” for evaluating a technique's effectiveness (page 18).
- *Involving Citizens in Community Decision-Making: A Guidebook* (see page 59 for details).

Implementing Your Public Participation Program

- Section C's introduction and “Guiding Principles for AMATS Public Participation” (page 15) should be used to determine objectives, which *techniques* to use, and considerations on how to measure their effectiveness.

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail



The initial step is to review previous goals and objectives, refine and revise them, and develop performance measures or standards to evaluate how well proposed alternatives address the systemwide problems and issues that the LRTP will be created to solve. In addition to developing these measures, evaluation criteria for the public participation plan should be created.

In most cases, the overall goal of a public participation effort for transportation planning is a decision, whether it is about trails, air quality, road improvements, or other items. But at each step of the planning process, there are other more immediate goals. At the beginning of an effort, the objective may be to develop a process that provides a roadmap that is understandable and accepted by decision makers, staff, and the public. Further, for each technique employed, especially if it is fairly expensive, crafting a means to evaluate its effectiveness is preferred.

Another step, which is occurring simultaneously, is to develop the public participation plan and decision-making timeline to include awareness-building, education, and participation techniques. If the budget allows, conducting statistically sound input surveys on transportation concerns will provide accurate baseline information about the general public's concerns, knowledge, and preferences.

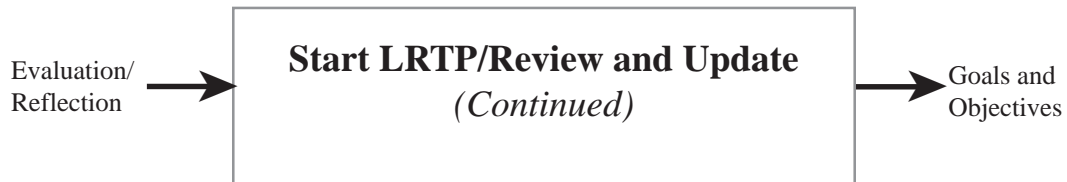
Checklist of Primary Resources for Public Participation on page 27 provides a fast reference to available information in this publication and other sources.

AMATS should decide what awareness-building techniques it will use and then how it will develop and implement them. It is best to use a mix of six different awareness-building techniques to ensure the message is heard by the broadest number of residents in the Anchorage area.

The intent is to provide enough information so that members of the public can decide for themselves if they want to participate, and if so, to make participating convenient enough for them so they can actually follow through. Messages for official public notices should include how to participate and where to find additional information and documents.

These messages need to be written and conveyed so they are easily understood; "transportation speak" and acronyms should be used minimally, if at all. Some of the key

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



messages in the building awareness step should be:

- What the LRTP is and how it fits with the Comp Plan and TIP,
- What the LRTP development and decision-making process and timeline is, and
- How the public can most effectively participate in the decision making and influence outcomes.

The educational phase also begins during this step by developing and distributing a more in-depth publication, which should be posted on the AMATS website. This educational document should provide the public with the same information listed above, plus information about transportation issues and concerns that discuss the system's deficiencies and identify problems that need to be addressed. Communicating what decisions AMATS will be considering in order to address the deficiencies is also useful.

This publication should provide an understanding of transportation trends and performance measures that are being used or need to be identified, the purpose of the LRTP effort, and the areas of emphasis or the deficiencies to be addressed. The publication needs to be written in nontechnical language and could include flow charts and timelines, clarification of constraints and parameters of the LRTP effort, and highlights of key points for public involvement—including where, when, and how to get additional information and provide input to the planning process.

Evaluation Tips:

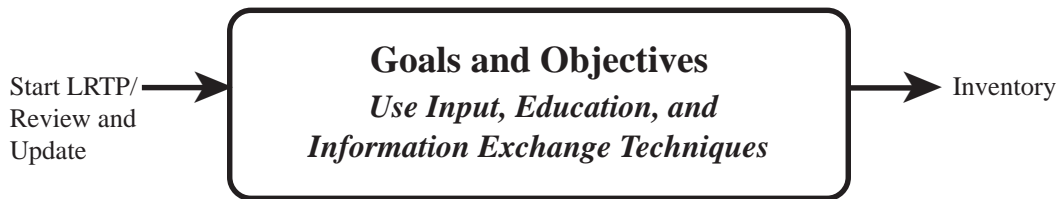
Determine what the public participation evaluation criteria for this step should be by first determining your objectives. The following helps to determine objectives:

Who do you want to build awareness with or provide information to? Various interest groups or organizations? Residents and workers in certain geographic areas? Others? Identify who you want to reach and the media you will use.

What do you want them to do with the information? To just be aware? To attend a meeting? To respond to an inquiry—email, survey, etc.? Other?

How will you measure your efforts? Readership or viewing audience? Number of responses received from a survey? Quantity of households a notice is sent to? Number of people attending or not attending a public meeting? Other?

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



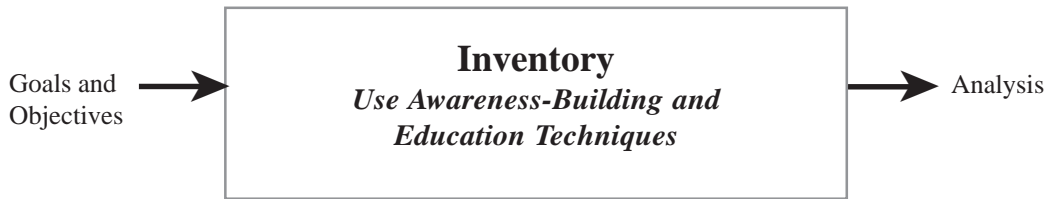
When developing the LRTP goals and objectives, care should be taken that they align with the goals set forth in the approved Comp Plan. Reconfirming and revising these goals can be a significant part of the public participation effort. During this step, criteria should be developed to evaluate the alternatives (that are yet to be determined), as well as defining and refining what the system deficiencies are and to identify the problems the LRTP planning process should address.

Goals might include issues such as land use and open space preferences; funding levels; air quality attainment measures; freight mobility; traffic congestion concerns; transit ridership targets; noise; neighborhood connectivity; and vehicular, bike, and pedestrian safety.

Several tried and true input techniques to consider using are interviews and questionnaires, including email, and perhaps focus group-style meetings. To deepen the public's understanding of issues use the educational publication at open houses and other forums, and in conjunction with other community-minded organizations.

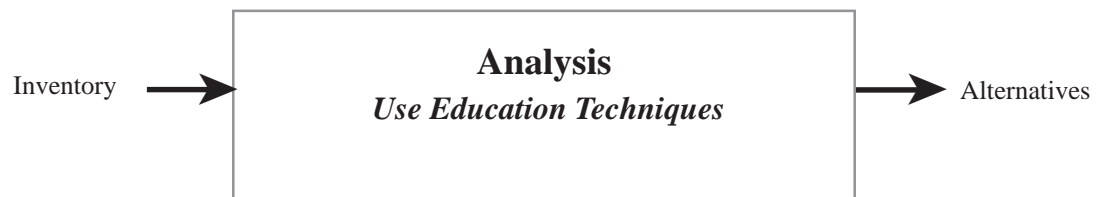
Develop a storyboard to describe the planning process based on a completed project. For example, the 15th Avenue project, although complicated, has also been highly visible in Anchorage. Using this as a case study to relate the planning, programming, and construction timeline to funding and other decisions would provide members of the public with a much better understanding of the transportation system development process, and how one project in the Anchorage area can impact the entire transportation system.

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



The Inventory step is a data collection exercise to determine what physical infrastructures currently exist, such as highways, roads and sidewalks, arterials, streets, trails, transit routes, and so forth.

This step requires very limited public input, but it does require that the public understand how the inventory process is being conducted and what the inventory is. At the end of this step, when the inventory is complete, a public education effort needs to occur to explain the trends or benchmarks—such as air quality, vehicle occupancy, land use parameters, and others—along with the findings, assumptions, limitations and constraints of the inventory. A public education effort includes newspaper articles, radio and TV, articles in organizational newsletters, an AMATS newsletter, and presentations with key organizations.



The Analysis step is a fairly technical one and requires interaction among agencies. It is necessary to create the ability for the public to stay informed about the purpose of the Analysis, how it is being conducted, and what decisions are made and by whom. In particular, it is important to carefully explain the tradeoffs among alternatives and the underlying analysis and assumptions in making analytical decisions.

Limited input is needed from the public. It has been suggested that public input from individuals who know the area in question could be highly useful. Small workshops may be work for this purpose. The same education techniques used in the inventory step are recommended here (newspaper articles, radio and TV, articles in organizational newsletters, an AMATS newsletter, and presentations with key organizations).

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



During the Alternatives step, several scenarios are developed that achieve the desired transportation and land use objectives. Although some of these will be developed by technical agency staff, the public will also have ideas and suggestions about alternatives. Both the public and technical staff members will be able to add to the body of knowledge about the impacts, benefits, and tradeoffs of alternatives.

Evaluating the alternatives based on the criteria developed during the Goals and Objectives step should occur here. The intent is to assess the impacts and benefits collectively, which may be key to making defensible decisions and absolutely necessary if solid agreements are to be reached. Workgroups and discussions should be conducted to encourage dialogue about how each alternative meets the community's criteria for an improved transportation system.

The same education techniques used in the inventory step are recommended here (newspaper articles, radio and TV, articles in organizational newsletters, an AMATS newsletter, and presentations with key organizations).

Determining which alternative is best for the community is one of the most important decision points in this planning process. A great deal of effort should be expended to educate and engage community members in discussions about what is best for the entire community and what tradeoffs residents are willing to live with.

It may be possible to use an educational publication and widely distribute it. Then also use it as a focal piece to engage local schools to 1) include these issues as current events in their curricula and, as part of the curricula, 2) encourage students to interview their parents and others about the alternatives. This homework could then be part of class discussions.

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



The work continues into the Recommendations step by comparing the various alternatives to the hoped-for goals and objectives in order to determine an alternative that best meets the community's needs, goals, and objectives. Using education and exchange techniques is recommended here. As the final decision point draws near, it will be important to keep the public informed about any changes to the draft plan, and education techniques that serve to inform the broader public should be used.

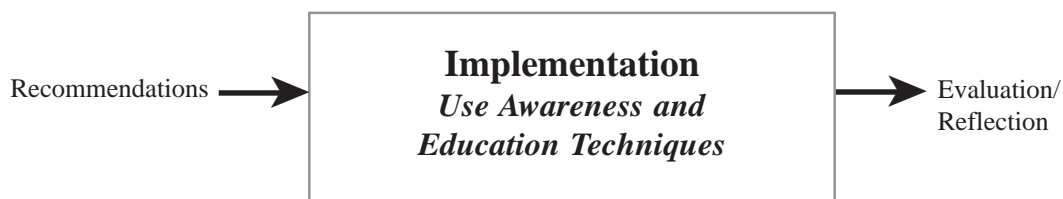
For those who want to participate in the recommendation process and progress, information exchange activities are key. It is necessary to use education techniques to ensure that the public has enough information to determine whether or not it wants to participate and, if so, to make certain that they are knowledgeable enough to participate in a meaningful way.

Planning staff discussions with constituent groups and a cross-mix of community members can serve to inform what the recommended alternative might be and to consider refinements based on community recommendations.

Staff will then make its recommendation to the TAC, which in turn makes its recommendation to the Policy Committee (PC). By using awareness-building techniques, the public can be informed about when and where the TAC and PC are meeting to address issues about and make decisions on the LRTP. Each committee must review the draft plan and hold public meetings before their respective approvals are final. If beneficial, the TAC or PC could hold more informal discussions with members of the public rather than the conventional public-hearing style meetings.

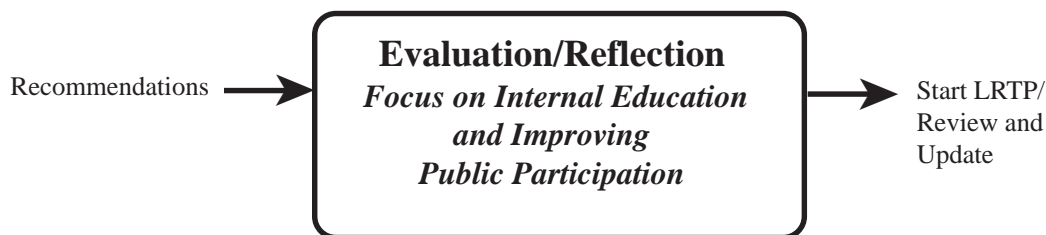
Again, as the final decision point draws ever closer, keeping the public informed about any changes to the draft plan by using education techniques to inform the broader public is recommended. The outcome of this step is adoption of the preferred, or recommended, alternative for the LRTP.

Figure 7. LRTP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



The most powerful tool for implementing the LRTP is the TIP. The TIP is the short-range implementation budget document used by AMATS to program federal funds for transportation improvements. The TIP steps out, in a three-year timeframe, the recommendations contained in the LRTP and the Comp Plan. Each of these documents—the Comp Plan, LRTP, and TIP—provides information about Anchorage’s transportation system, with the TIP giving the greatest amount of detail.

As the TIP is such an integral part of developing Anchorage’s transportation system, a more detailed description of that planning process is also part of this document, including recommended public participation techniques.



In an effort to improve the LRTP process in the future, both an internal review (with staff and AMATS members) as well as a public review should occur. Recommendations should be captured and integrated into the next LRTP update process, which will need to be completed three years from the time the LRTP is adopted.

Because of the focus on internal education, it is recommended that exchange techniques be used to capture the lessons learned, and then internal communication techniques such as emails and employee newsletters be used to convey what did and did not work well and why. For AMATS, “internal” will be defined by which organizations are actually participating, and at a minimum that will be the Municipality’s various departments and assembly members, the state agencies DOT&PF and ADEC, along with any support contractors and consultants.

Evaluation Tip

It is important to assess the success of the entire effort by answering the question: How does the approved LRTP support the goals and objectives of the Comp Plan and to what degree?

Public Participation for Roads, Areawide Trails, Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP, and Public Transportation

Figures 5 and 6 (see pages 18 and 26, respectively) described the general process for developing planning documents for the roads and sidewalks, trails, Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP, and public transit, but each of these components also has unique public participation activities and issues. Developing the LRTP for roads and sidewalks, trails, and public transit creates a good deal of public interest. The timeframe to develop these plans is at least twelve months, however the numbers of meetings, informational activities, and information exchanges are substantially higher than for the other components.

Roads

Because the vast majority of Anchorage residents drive cars and use the road system, a great deal of effort is expended to build awareness and generate diverse participation about how to meet Anchorage's needs in the future. During the planning cycle (Figures 6 and 8), many public participation awareness building, input and education activities are conducted.

Areawide Trails

In cooperation with other local and state agencies, the Municipal Planning Department coordinates the development of the Areawide Trails Plan. The last update of this plan was conducted over a three-year timeframe and required participation of the general public, the community councils, and other organizations. Committees made up of representatives from these various groups developed, reviewed, and revised the draft planning documents.

Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP

For the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP, all six components—roads and sidewalks, public transportation, trails, congestion management, air quality, and freight mobility are addressed together. This is unlike the LRTP components created to meet the needs for the immediate Anchorage area, where only a couple components at a time are addressed. The reason for this is that the population and transportation system in the Chugiak-Eagle River area is not as extensive, making it possible for all components to be addressed together.

Public Transportation

The public transportation system in Anchorage consists of the People Mover bus system, Anchor Rides for those who are physically unable to use the bus system, and the Share-a-Ride car pool and van pool program. In order to help meet the needs for which the public transportation system is designed, a Public Transit Advisory Board is a major component of the public participation efforts for the public transportation system. Board members are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Assembly for three-year terms.

In addition to the Advisory Board, the Public Transportation Department holds an annual public meeting as a *shakeup* or review to revise routes and schedules, and to determine where improvement funds should be spent, such as a new bus stop. Details about these funds and their uses can be found in the Public Transportation Development Plan (PTDP), which describes how the decisions in the LRTP for the public transportation system will be carried out.

The Public Transportation and People Mover website is www.peoplemover.org. There are also a number of brochures available describing the public transportation system's services. The annual Bus Rodeo, a public event where bus drivers compete with each other, is held in early spring. Often an open house is held later in the summer.

Another form of public participation, which enables staff to understand the type and level of service needed from the public transportation system, is continual communication with organizations representing various users. Some of these organizations are Foster Grandparents, Day Break, and Access Alaska.

Public Participation for Air Quality, Congestion Management, and Freight Mobility

The public participation efforts for air quality, congestion management, and freight mobility are different than the twelve-month public process used for roads and sidewalks, public transportation, trails, and the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP. The following describes the public participation activities for each of these three components. For more information on any of these, call AMATS at 343-7991.

Air Quality

The public participation strategy used to determine how to attain air quality standards is through the AMATS Citizens Air Quality Advisory Committee. This Committee is a result of federal requirements related to the expenditure of fuel tax money on projects meant to reduce air particulates including dust, as well as addressing other issues. Members are appointed by the AMATS Policy Committee and include individuals from public, private, and nonprofit organizations with an interest and responsibility in air quality improvements. The AMATS staff for the Air Quality Committee is located at the DHHS. The common thread that binds the board together is the desire to attain and maintain a level of air quality that is safe to breathe. There are a variety of ways to reach that end.

The Advisory Committee's first step has been to try and determine the scope and nature of existing air quality problems. This is a task that Municipal air quality personnel do as part of their jobs. The federal law that funds remedies for air quality problems provides a great deal of flexibility about how funds are spent to meet local needs.

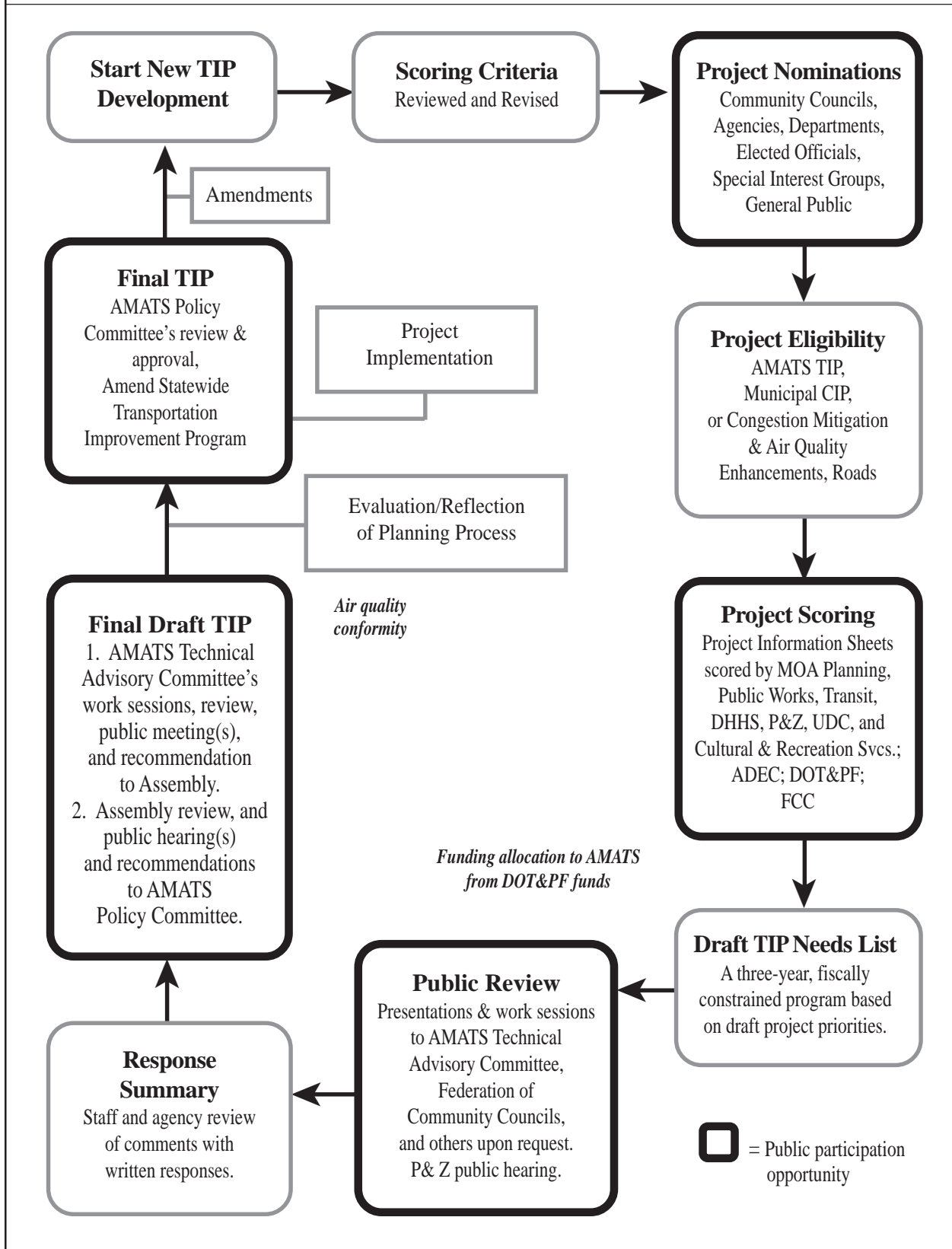
Congestion Management

The Congestion Management Program looks at short-term and long-term strategies for managing congestion. Strategies are selected through a public process including workshop meetings and a telephone survey of Anchorage residents to find out what strategies would be acceptable. There is no one silver bullet to address congestion. Congestion management requires different strategies for different parts of town because of heavy traffic times and causes of congestion. AMATS has a toolbox of techniques and strategies that it employs to address congestion issues. The Congestion Management Program is also a federal requirement. There are several sources of funding to address the congestion problems, including several federal sources, as well as local bonding. Here, too, the federal sources of funds are fairly flexible and AMATS is beginning to use new, or innovative, congestion management techniques.

Freight Mobility

During the inventory phase of the Freight Mobility Study, public participation is less formal and focuses on freight shippers and carriers. A survey of truck drivers is conducted for information, and interagency contact provides a broad overview of existing issues and problems. As this study moves into the next steps—analysis and alternatives—broader, more formal public participation process will be employed.

Figure 8. TIP Decision-Making and Public Participation Steps



TIP: Decision-Making and Public Participation Steps



There are several purposes that the TIP fills. The TIP provides both agencies and the community with a document that describes what efforts are being publicly funded and at what stage they are in development. In this way, the TIP acts as a tracking document. AMATS is required to develop, implement, and update the information in a TIP every two years.

The TIP provides the funds, which implements the LRTP. The TIP document details the level and types of resources that need to be expended to design and construct the transportation system. These resources include personnel, time, and funding needs for freeways, highways, streets and sidewalks, the public transportation system, trails, freight mobility, and attaining air quality standards and managing congestion.

Figure 8 describes the general decision-making and public participation steps used to develop the TIP. Figure 9 is a more extensive explanation of Figure 8.

See *Checklist of Primary Resources for Public Participation (page 27)* for fast reference to available information in this publication and other sources.

Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail

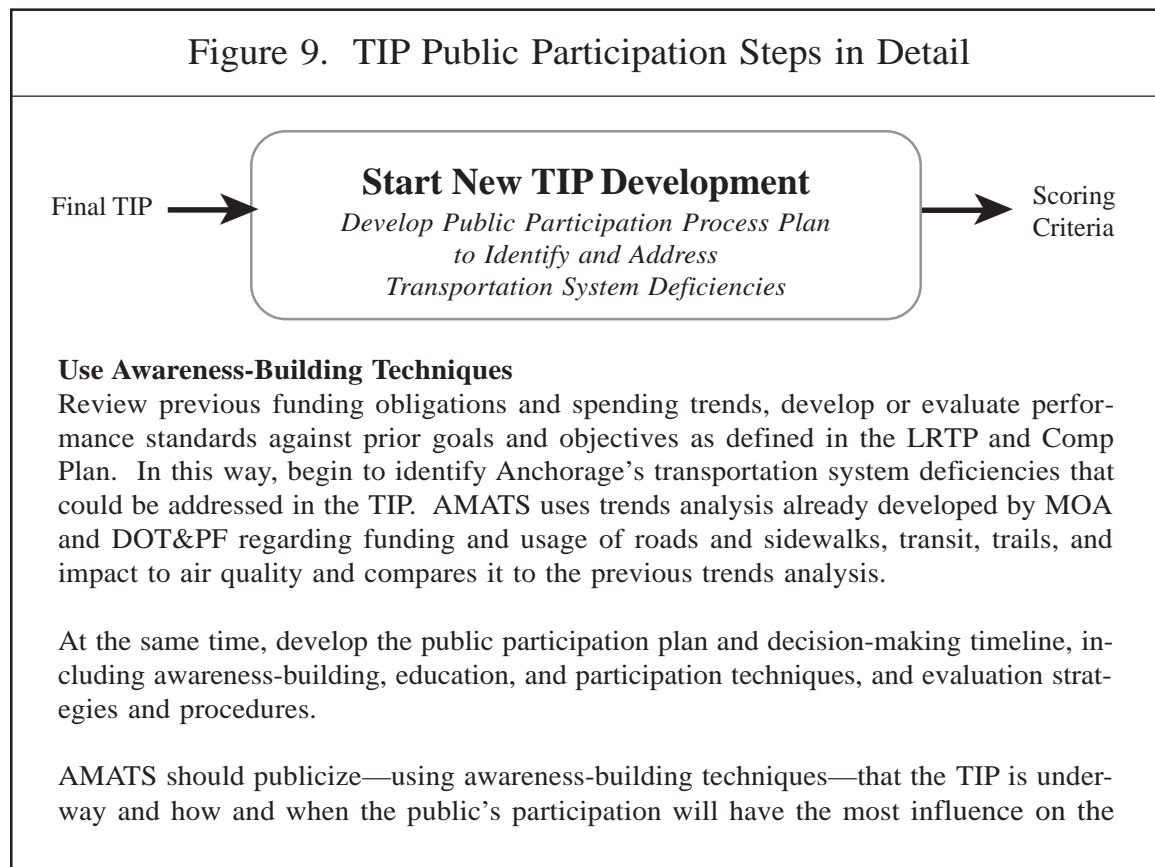


Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)

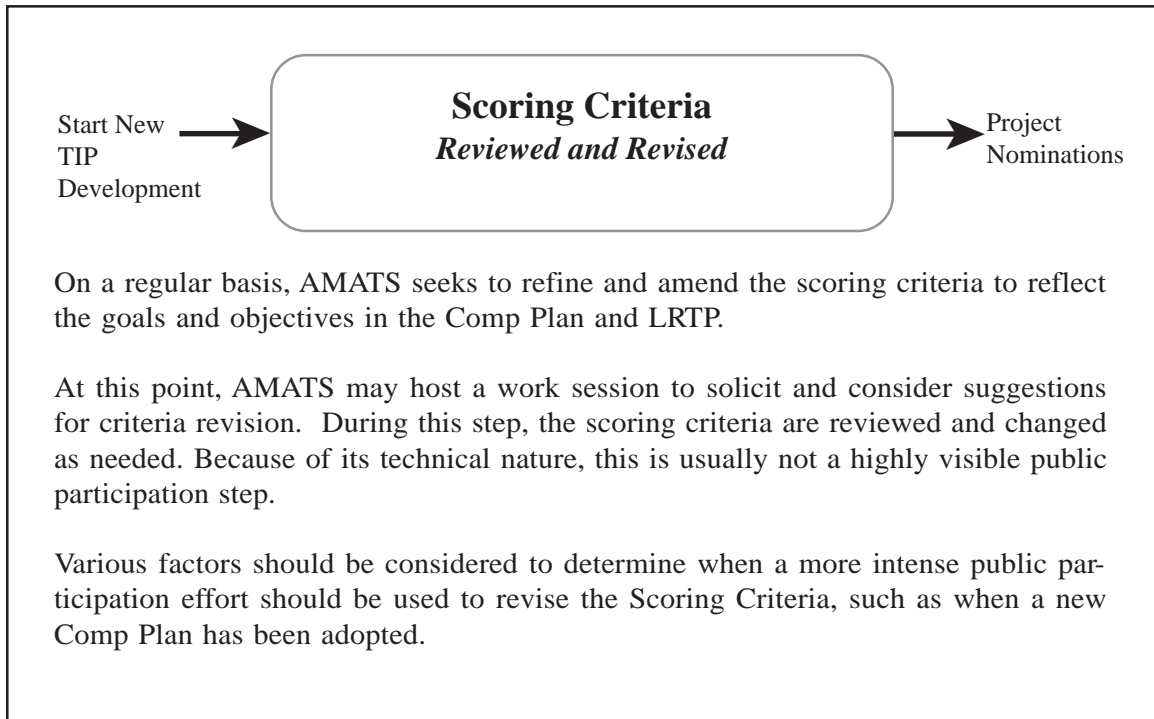
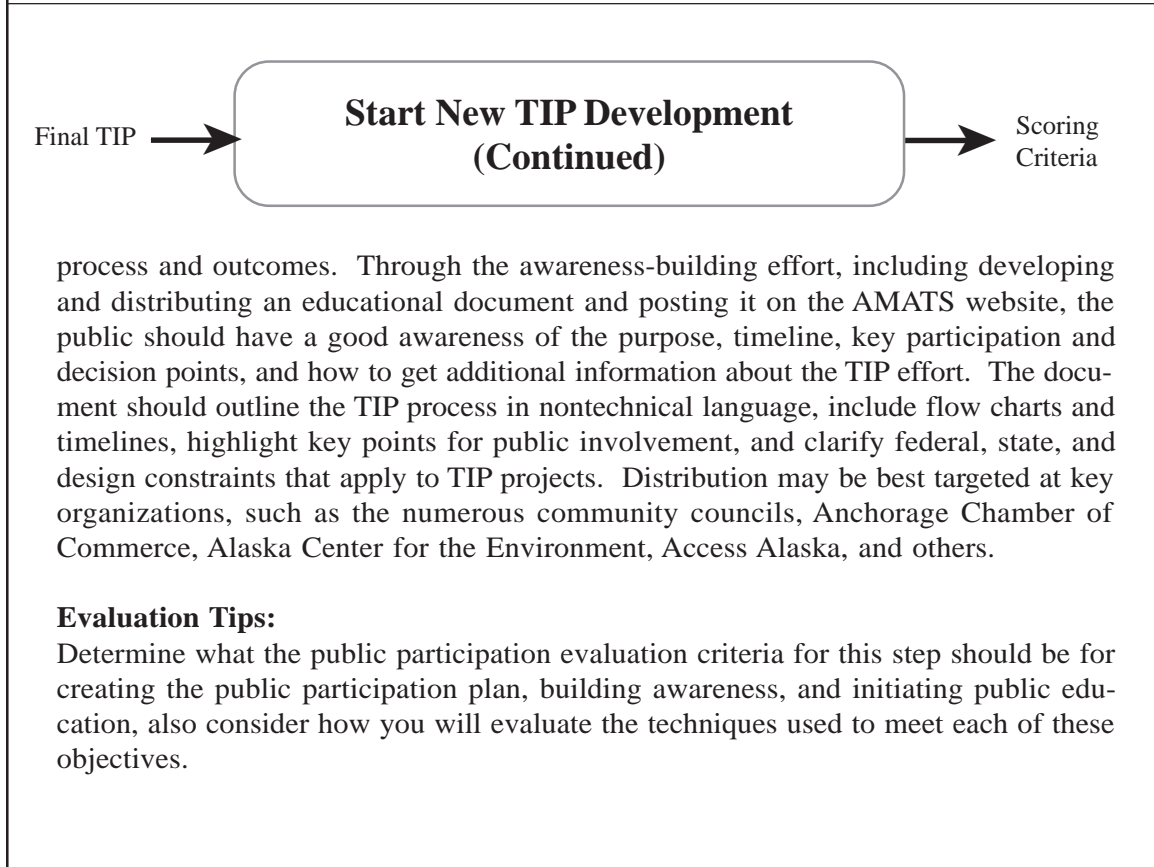
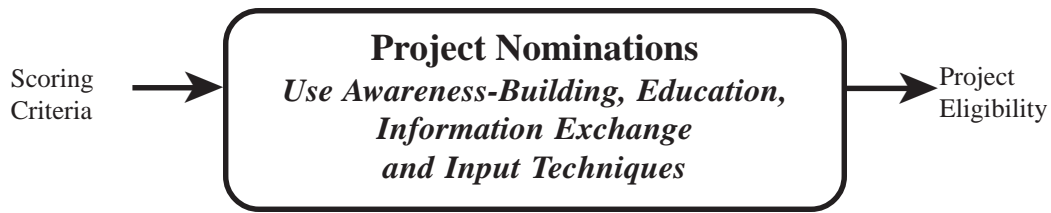


Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



This step has one of the greatest needs for effective public participation in the TIP process. It is where the public as well as local and state agencies submit ideas and proposals. It is a highly visible step and broad public input is sought.

Create an easy-to-use *Nominations Packet*, which will be completed by an individual nominating a particular transportation project for consideration. The nomination packet should include nomination forms, a how-to guide, and eligibility requirements.

The nomination form should request at a minimum the following information: What the project is; where it is; why it is needed—for safety, enhancement of pedestrian facilities, etc.; who is requesting it; who can be contacted for more information; if it has support by area businesses, residents, or community councils; if it is a street improvement to include information about needed enhancements such as sidewalks, trees, etc.

There should also be information included about compliance with local plans, although planning staff may need to provide this. The intent is to generate enough information about a given proposal that enables the AMATS staff reviewing and scoring nominations to understand the project and be able to provide a reasonable cost estimate.

The *Nominations Packet* could also provide information about what types of transportation system deficiencies have been identified and guidance on what types of projects will likely receive favorable scoring, such as those advancing certain goals and objectives identified in the Comp Plan and LRTP.

Develop an awareness campaign, including use of the website, to announce the nominations process. Conduct workshops to enable members of the public to complete nomination forms as thoroughly and efficiently as possible. Provide sufficient time to allow members of the public to respond.

Target workshop announcements to the general public through the news media, community councils, engineers, planners, public officials, and special interest groups. For those not present at an open house or workshop, mail nomination packets to all community councils, and others interested.

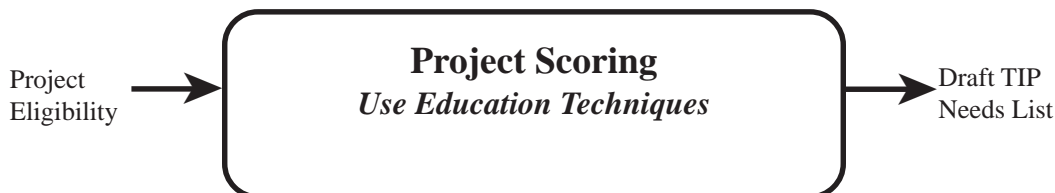
Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



This step entails a screening process to determine if a project meets the necessary funding requirements. Because of the “black-and-white” nature of this step, this is not a discussion point with members of the public. Eligibility requirements should be included in the nominations packet and posted on the website with an explanation of how eligibility decisions are made.

Convey to the general public and directly to those who nominated projects which projects were eligible, which were not, and why. This should include projects eligible under other transportation funding programs such as the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

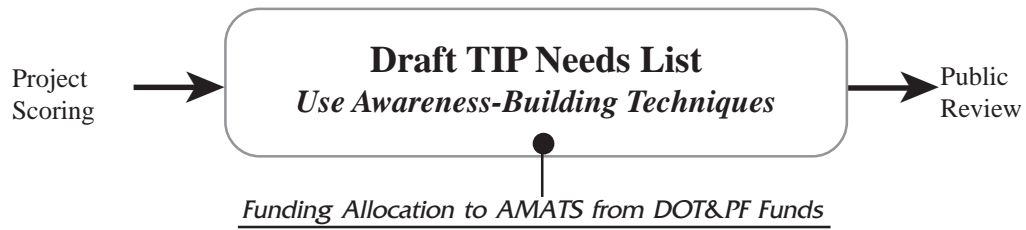
Also provide information about how to track nominations and TIP projects by providing website information and specific instructions about how to find a particular project using the web, as well as other means of getting the information.



Project scoring sessions are announced through an email network and are open to public attendance. Project information sheets are posted on the AMATS website.

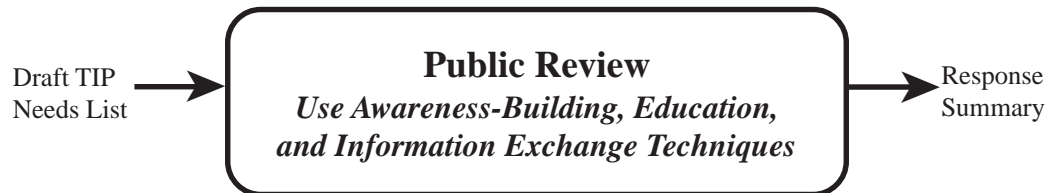
Educational information is posted on the website on why project scores from a previous TIP process may have changed with the new TIP.

Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



During this step, the staff writes and compiles the requisite project information in order to create a draft document that will then be scrutinized by the public.

By focusing on awareness, the public will be informed about when the Draft TIP will be available for review and comment.

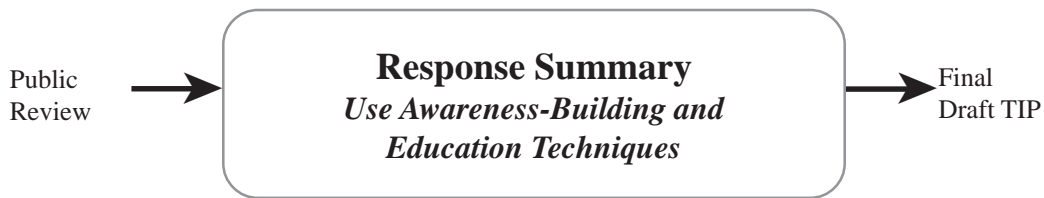


Broad awareness and information should be provided to the public about the Draft TIP. Those who chose to participate should be provided a variety of ways to make comments and recommendations, including electronically. The intent is to make participating or commenting on the document convenient.

Use the news media, ads, and postings on the AMATS website to advertise input and information exchange activities being held for comments and recommendations. Staff members record public comments on the Draft TIP for inclusion in the AMATS Response Summary.

A public work session should also be held to assess how well the Draft TIP meets the hoped-for goals and objectives in relation to the Comp Plan, the LRTP, and for the Scoring Criteria step of the TIP. These objectives might include construction and maintenance costs, and assessing trends for roads and sidewalks, transit, trails, and air quality. The results and discussions from the public work session are included in the AMATS Response Summary.

Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



During the Response Summary step, the staff compiles responses to each comment and suggestion received during the Public Review. The purpose of this step is significant especially for elected officials (the Assembly and Mayor) to understand what concerns were heard, what was done with those concerns, and if nothing was done, why that was appropriate.

A written Response Summary is developed and distributed to those who commented, the Assembly, the AMATS PC, and the TAC. It is also posted on the website.

Issue: This step is extremely time-consuming.

Members of the public often feel their comments on the written response were misunderstood or addressed inaccurately. Developing and using the *Nominations Packet* should help to address this issue.

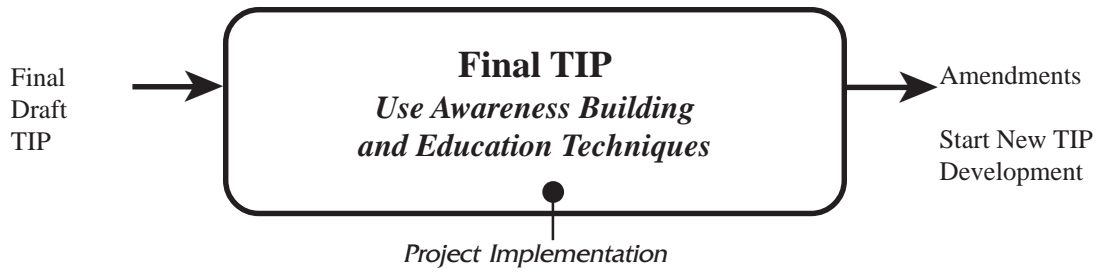


Based on the comments during the Public Review period, the Draft TIP is revised by the TAC and becomes the Final Draft TIP. The Final Draft TIP is then forwarded to the Anchorage Assembly for its review and to make recommendations to the PC prior to the PC's final approval/adoption.

The public may be involved at this step by calling an Assembly member, speaking at an Assembly meeting, or by sending emails or letters to the Assembly. The Assembly holds advertised public hearings on the Final Draft TIP. If beneficial, the Assembly may also hold workshops or more informal public meetings.

This is where the staff's interpretation of the public's comments (the Response Summary document) is also reviewed by the public. If there are misinterpretations, they are addressed at this point.

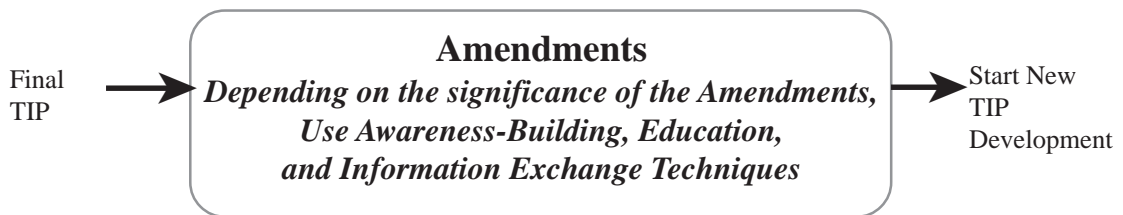
Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



After Assembly review, the Final Draft TIP is now forwarded to the PC along with any Assembly recommendations for change. The PC now considers the Assembly's recommendations, makes changes it deems useful, and gives the final approval. Upon approval, the Final *Draft* TIP becomes the Final TIP. Here too, the public may be involved at this step by calling a PC member, speaking at the PC meeting, or by sending emails or letters to the PC members.

The PC holds advertised public hearings on the Final Draft TIP. If beneficial, it may also hold workshops or more informal public meetings.

The news media is used to inform the community about the Final TIP and to describe the associated funding. Community councils and other interested groups are also apprised. The Final TIP is posted on the website, including information on how to follow a project through the TIP process.



After the Final TIP is adopted, there are changes—some minor, some major. Minor amendments can be approved by the TAC without additional public participation. These types of minor changes keep the integrity of the Final TIP in place while allowing changes to be approved in a timely manner.

Depending on what major changes are necessary, the level of public participation is then determined, and are consistent with required public participation procedures. The objective is to maintain the integrity of the Draft TIP Needs List.

Figure 9. TIP Public Participation Steps in Detail (continued)



In an effort to improve the TIP process in the future, both an internal review—with staff and AMATS members—should occur as well as a review with the public. Recommendations should be captured and integrated into the next TIP update process, which will begin approximately 12 to 18 months after completion of the current TIP process.

Because of the focus on internal education, it is recommended that exchange techniques be used to capture lessons learned, and then internal communication techniques be used, such as emails and employee newsletters to convey what did and did not work well and why. For AMATS, “internal” will be defined by which organizations are actually participating, which at a minimum will be the Municipality’s various departments and assembly members serving on the PC, the state agencies, DOT&PF and ADEC, along with any support contractors and consultants.

Relation to Other Plans *Use Education Techniques*

Use education techniques to develop understanding about the coordination with various planning efforts and programs at the Municipality and state agencies.

“Relation to Other Plans” is not a step, but rather an overarching objective that needs to be met through public involvement techniques and programs.

Section B’s “Coordinating Transportation Plans” describes other Anchorage area plans.

Evaluation Tips:

Determine what the public participation evaluation criteria for this step should be—for developing a public participation program, for building awareness, and for initiating public education. Also consider how you will evaluate the techniques used to meet each of these objectives.

Public Involvement Techniques for Anchorage

A Cost-Benefit Guide



On the following several pages is a chart depicting the outcome of an evaluation exercise that included the public, transportation consultants, public involvement specialists, and AMATS staff. The intent was to develop a general agreement on public involvement techniques that are or should be used in the Anchorage area for transportation planning efforts, and the relative costs given the following resources:

- Money
- Time
- Labor (personnel needed)

The relative benefits were based on:

- Awareness building and an informed community
- Long-term impacts

At some point, regardless of the cost-benefit, all of the techniques can add value to a public participation program to achieve the defined goals and objectives of a transportation planning effort.

Effective Keys

There are several keys to effective public participation in transportation planning.

Public awareness is a key to communicating to the general public that a planning effort is underway and how they can either participate or gain more information.

Public education provides the general public with enough information to become more knowledgeable about the issues and what is happening in their community without having to spend an enormous amount of time to come up to speed. They can then choose to participate or not.

Public participation provides members of the public with opportunities to engage in the discussion and help shape decisions, which ultimately will be made by elected and appointed officials to balance the community's diverse needs. Determining who is interested, impacted, or cares the most; seeking them out and inviting them to participate; and then using public participation techniques that work for them (e.g., holding open houses at a time and place convenient to their schedules and locales) helps make a public participation program effective.

The following evaluation of techniques needs to be used in context, by considering such factors as the specific planning effort or project, accompanying issues, and level of public interest. The chart was developed as a guide, based on the public participation experience in Anchorage.

Figure 10. Preferred Public Involvement Techniques for Anchorage

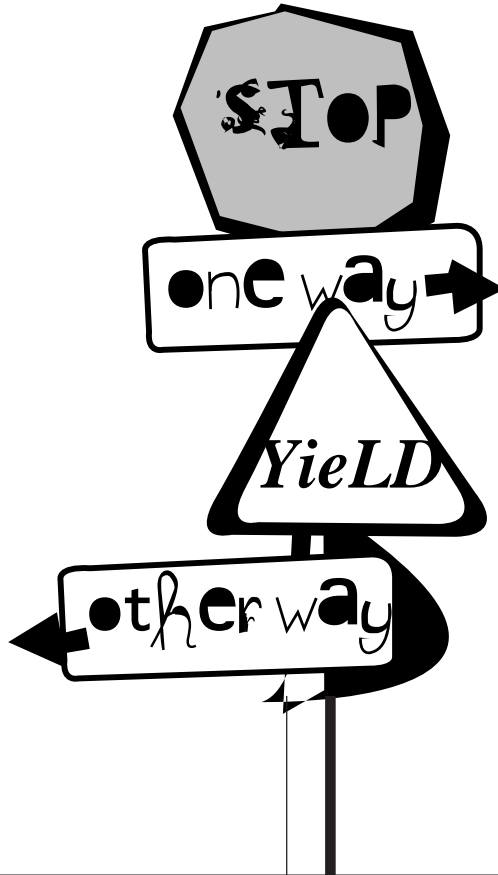
Scores of 9 or lower are considered to be more effective than those with 10 or higher.

Regardless of these cost-benefit scores and depending on the context, any technique can add value to a public participation program if it helps achieve the desired goals and objectives. Techniques with scores of 9 benefit or lower are shown in boldface type.

<i>Score</i>	<i>Resource (cost)</i>	<i>Impact (Benefit)</i>
1 =	low cost	high benefit
2 =	medium cost	medium benefit
3 =	high cost	low benefit

Resource (Cost)			Impact (Benefit)		SCORE	Public Involvement Technique
\$	Time	Labor	Potential to Build Awareness	Long-Term Benefit		
						<i>Awareness Building</i>
3	3	3	1	2	12	Advertising program
2	2	1	2	3	10	Bus signs
1	1	2	2	3	9	Cones
1	3	3	3	1	11	Door-to-door
1	1	2	2	3	9	Educate media
1	1	1	3	2	8	Fax/email lists
2	2	1	1	2	8	Flyers
2	1	1	2	2	8	Gas pumps
2	2	2	1	3	10	Grocery store receipts & bags
1	1	1	2	2	7	Movie theaters
3	2	1	2	3	11	Newspaper ads
1	3	3	3	1	11	Phone calls
2	1	1	1	3	8	PSAs
2	2	1	2	3	10	Signs
1	2	3	3	3	12	Special events
3	2	2	1	2	10	TV/radio commercials
						<i>Education</i>
1	2	3	2	2	10	AMATS staff presentations
1	2	3	2	3	11	CCs as educators
1	1	2	3	1	8	Community schools class
1	1	2	3	2	9	Discussions
1	1	1	2	3	8	Distribution & mailing lists
1	2	3	2	1	9	Educate project engineers & public officials
3	3	3	3	2	14	Forums
1	1	1	1	2	6	Print

Resource (Cost)			Impact (Benefit)		SCORE	Public Involvement Technique
\$	Time	Labor	Potential to Build Awareness	Long -Term Benefit		
						<i>Education continued</i>
1	1	1	1	2	6	Radio
2	1	1	2	1	7	Storyboard
2	1	1	2	3	9	Televise PC meetings
3	3	3	2	1	12	Transportation info clearinghouse
1	1	1	1	2	6	TV
3	2	1	2	1	9	Video
						<i>Input</i>
1	1	1	2	1	6	Fax/email
3	3	3	3	3	15	Focus groups
1	1	1	3	3	9	PC & TAC meetings
3	2	2	3	2	12	Phone surveys
1	2	3	3	3	12	Public hearings
2	3	3	3	2	13	Questionnaires
2	1	2	3	2	10	Self-mailing comment cards
1	1	1	3	3	9	Transit system
3	2	3	2	2	12	Visual preference survey
						<i>Information Exchange</i>
3	3	3	3	3	15	Call-in line / teleconference
2	3	3	3	3	14	Citizens advisory council
1	1	2	3	2	9	Community council
1	1	1	2	2	7	FCCs
1	2	3	2	2	10	Open houses
1	3	3	3	2	12	PC members involved in PI
1	2	3	2	2	10	Public meetings
3	3	3	2	2	13	Workshops
						<i>Written & Visual Products</i>
2	2	2	2	1	9	Brochures
2	3	3	2	1	11	Handbooks
3	3	2	2	2	12	Non-interactive website
2	3	3	3	1	12	Procedure guide
2	3	2	2	1	10	Public meeting tool kit
2	3	2	2	2	11	Quarterly newsletter
						<i>Agency Infrastructure</i>
3	2	2	1	1	9	PI staffperson
2	3	3	3	2	13	PI tracking system



AMATS Public Participation Program

is located on the web at:

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/Trans/amats.html

or call 343-7991.

Strategic Issues for Effective Public Participation



While creating *Anchorage on the Move*, several fundamental recommendations surfaced that participants believed would be important information for the AMATS Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and staff to consider addressing. The following is an unprioritized list of those suggestions (shown in italics).

Public Education Strategies

- *Change the name of AMATS and develop a new logo to better reflect its functions and create more community recognition.*
- *Develop and adopt a policy regarding the availability of AMATS documents, notices, and meeting announcements. Adhere to the policy by implementing it consistently.*
- *Commit to develop and implement a public education program that will better inform the general public about AMATS and its responsibilities, and encourage other transportation agencies to do the same.*

This may include education and training support for Community Council members, utilizing Community Councils as part of the public education process, developing and using an interactive website, and quarterly newsletter or newspaper inserts.

A possible outcome of an ongoing public education program would be to address the barrier between the public's understanding of AMATS's roles and responsibilities in the context of other transportation functions, particularly design and construction.

- *Develop an AMATS information kit and require it to be available at all public meetings when transportation projects are being addressed.*
- *Create statistically reliable information on public opinions about transportation efforts to help develop better system decisions and credibility for those decisions.*

Determine when this technique is most effective to use: at the beginning of the LRTP process, to gauge the effectiveness of an ongoing public education program, on particularly difficult issues, or on all projects.

Planning Process Changes

- *Revisit, through workshops and public review, funding allocation policy for the various modes of transportation and scoring criteria for the TIP.*
- *Consider a type of "grandfathering in" of projects rather than the current practice of "starting with a clean slate" each time the TIP is updated. Create a "requalification" process that is reasonable in terms of timing and resource requirements to ensure that changes can be made if the "grandfather" status no longer meets the transportation system development priorities.*

- *Create better integration of the Comp Plan and LRTP into the TIP by developing and using project evaluation criteria that support the community's long-term goals and objectives.*
- *Consider how to make the planning and development process more flexible to accommodate significant changes that can occur during the multi-year planning-programming-construction timeline. Create recommendations to submit to the appropriate state and federal officials.*
- *Create better coordination and relationships with the Airport, the Port, the Alaska Railroad, the Mat-Su Borough, and the School District.*

A possible starting point may be to conduct briefings with AMATS staff or TAC members and representatives of the other entities on how they are currently coordinating their efforts, the value of better coordination, and how interactions might be improved. In particular, suggestions from the public specified consideration about how the Public Transportation Department and the School District are working together to provide needed public transit. The AMATS Policy Committee and TAC should then specify, in the most concrete terms they can, what better coordination and relationships with each of these entities would accomplish for AMATS. Based on this, AMATS staff should work with staff from the other entities to develop proposed activities that achieve those outcomes.
- *Develop a TIP nomination kit that emphasizes identifying the problem and then clearly describing how a nominated project will solve that problem. Also, ensure that the scoring process for prioritizing TIP nominations aligns with solving problems.*

Accessibility Issues

- *Make the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee and the AMATS Policy Committee meetings more publicly accessible by changing the time of meetings to late afternoon or early evening, providing meeting materials online, and perhaps holding them in other locations besides the Municipal Building.*
- *Develop specialized public participation efforts for transportation issues that are anticipated to be highly controversial, e.g., a citizens advisory committee.*

Determine procedures for a) selecting which issues need a specialized public participation effort, b) determining how to select which public participation techniques to use, and c) determining how to select which members of the public will participate, if relevant.
- *Address participation by those less able (e.g., seniors and disabled) to be involved by creating systems or mechanisms allowing their concerns and voices to be heard early in the transportation planning process.*

AMATS staff should meet with constituent groups to begin developing an approach to create this system.
- *Use interactive website.*

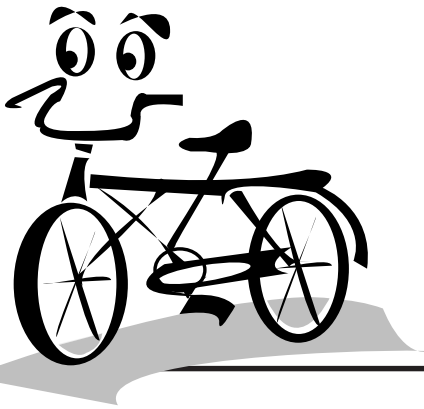
Coordination and Administrative Strategies

- *Improve legislative coordination with regard to major transportation projects by developing and using procedures to work more closely with legislators and staff.*
- *Include language in contracts for transportation planning and system development efforts that requires reporting or tracking public participation techniques used, associated costs, and success or effectiveness. Use a standard format for reporting. Involvement techniques could also be tracked by AMATS and DOT&PF staff.*
- *Develop model language for engineering and design contracts to provide effective public involvement by describing parameters and outcomes, rather than proscriptive activities.*
- *Consider having public involvement coordinators, who are often subcontractors, report directly to the agency conducting the study or design, rather than to the private contractor, who may have an interest in a particular outcome.*
- *Evaluate the handoff between AMATS and DOT&PF planning functions with MOA Project Management & Engineering, DOT&PF Preconstruction, Design and Construction, and any contractors to effectively transfer the knowledge gained from public planning efforts, and to ensure it is reflected in the actual construction of the project.*

Planners can help construction managers and staff understand the public's input, when and how to use the input, and if possible to provide feedback to those citizens who were involved in shaping the project. This may require realigning resources to bridge the gap between planning and construction and to ensure a seamless handoff.

- *Develop an AMATS Orientation Workshop, conduct it on a regular basis, requiring staff, project managers, and public involvement practitioners working on federally funded transportation efforts to participate.*
- *Develop easily accessible project summaries to explain how each was ranked high enough to warrant funding, describe the problem being solved, and the constraints in terms of dollars and design.*
- *Develop a tracking system to capture issues, concerns, and ideas at any time during the life of the project.*

This information should be passed on to others as a transportation effort progresses. For example, once AMATS no longer has oversight of a project, provide the information to MOA Project Management & Engineering, DOT&PF Preconstruction, or Design and Construction and their contractors.



AMATS Public Participation Program

is located on the web at:

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/Trans/amats.html
or call 343-7991.

Where to Find Additional Information



AMATS

Your first source of information is the AMATS staff.

AMATS Staff

Staff Contact

Municipality of Anchorage
Traffic Department
Transportation Planning Division
Permit Center, 4700 Bragaw, 2nd Floor

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

Contact by Phone

(907) 343-7991 • Fax (907) 343-7998

Visit the AMATS Website

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/Trans/amats.html

AMATS Committee Meetings

Formal decisions affecting AMATS policies and planning efforts are made in committee.

Meeting dates, times, and locations are subject to change; they should be confirmed by calling 343-7991, or checking the website:

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/Trans/amtsmsch.pdf

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Monthly meetings on the fourth Thursday, usually 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.

The Policy Committee (PC)

Monthly meetings on the second Thursday, most often 1:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M. Meetings are usually held in the Mayor's Conference Room at City Hall, which is located downtown at 6th Avenue and G Street.

Other meetings may be scheduled as requested by various entities.

On-street meter parking is available as well as some spaces in the Municipal lot on the 7th Street entrance. All bus routes travel to downtown Anchorage.

Community

The following groups have been active and involved in AMATS planning and program development.

Using Your Community Councils

To find your local community council contact for transportation issues, call the Federation of Community Councils (FCC) at 277-1977, or email councils@alaska.net. Girdwood, Turnagain Arm, and Portage Valley Community Councils are not part of the AMATS planning area, but citizens in those areas can get transportation contact information from the FCC.

Federation of Community Councils

(907) 277-1977 • Email: councils@alaska.net • www.alaska.net/~councils/

Community Councils, AMATS Planning Area

Abbott Loop	Airport Heights	Basher
Bayshore/Klatt	Bear Valley	Birchwood
Campbell Park	Chugiak	Downtown
Eagle River	Eagle River Valley	Fairview
Glen Alps	Government Hill	Hillside
East	Huffman/O'Malley	Mid-Hillside
Mountain View	Northeast	North Star
Old Seward/Oceanview	Rabbit Creek	Rogers Park
Russian Jack	Sand Lake	Scenic Foothills
South Addition	South Fork	Spenard
Taku/Campbell	Tudor Area	Turnagain
Turnagain Arm	University Area	

Other Organizations

The following organizations may be useful in providing additional information on transportation issues and planning in the Anchorage area.

Access Alaska

(907) 248-4777

Anchorage Citizens Coalition

(907) 274-2624

Anchorage Trails and Greenways Coalition

(907) 269-8704

Alaska Trucking Association

(907) 276-1149

Headquarters in Anchorage

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce

Transportation Committee

(907) 272-2401

Municipality of Anchorage
AMATS works with other Municipal offices.

Planning Department

(907) 343-4303 • Email: cpd@ci.anchorage.ak.us
www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/index.html

Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Com/2020/

Planning & Zoning Commission

(907) 343-4215 • Meets first Monday each month, 6:30 P.M.

Urban Design Commission

(907) 343-4224 • Meets second Thursday each month, 5:30 P.M.

Public Transportation Department

www.peoplemover.org

People Mover Bus Service • (907) 343-6543

Share-a-Ride Car and Vanpooling • (907) 562-7665

AnchorRIDES Transit for People with Disabilities • (907) 562-8444

Traffic Department

(907) 343-8406 • www.muni.org/Services/Department/Public/traffic.html

Project Management & Engineering Department

(907) 343-8109 • www.muni.org/projectmgmt/index.cfm

Department of Health & Human Services

(907) 343-4065 • www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/healthesd/index.cfm

Cultural & Recreational Services Department

(907) 343-4365 • www.muni.org/culture/index.cfm

Municipality of Anchorage *(continued)*

Anchorage Municipal Libraries

Z.J. Loussac Library

3600 Denali Street, Anchorage, AK 99503 • (907) 343-2975

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Culture/Library/index.html

The Alaska Collection holds state and municipal documents. It contains AMATS planning documents such as the latest LRTP and TIP and the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan. It also holds select federal documents.

Chugiak-Eagle River Library

12400 Old Glen Highway, Eagle River, AK 99577 • (907) 694-2500

www.ci.anchorage.ak.us/Services/Departments/Culture/Library/index.html

The Chugiak-Eagle River Library has the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan, the Chugiak-Eagle River Long Range Transportation Plan, and other transportation planning documents for the area.

Additional Library Services

Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (ARLIS)

3150 C Street, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99503 • (907) 272-7547

www.arlis.org/

ARLIS provides universal access to natural and cultural resources information. It has a large collection of state and federal documents and access to CD-Rom and online databases on Alaskan resource issues such as land use management. The Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Land Use Plan is available at ARLIS.

State of Alaska

AMATS and the State of Alaska also coordinate planning activities.

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)

Central Region Anchorage

www.dot.state.ak.us • Email: Planning_Comments@dot.state.ak.us

Planning (907) 269-0520

Preliminary Design & Environmental Section (907) 269-0542

Highway Construction Section (907) 269-0450

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)

Air & Water Quality Division, Air Nonpoint and Mobile Sources Section

(907) 269-7577

www.state.ak.us/local/akpages/ENV.CONSERV/dawq/dec_dawq/htm

Alaska Railroad Corporation

(907) 265-2300 (Headquartered in Anchorage) • www.akrr.com/

Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport

Planning (907) 266-2544 • Environmental (907) 266-2129

Community Relations (907) 266-2107 • www.anchorageairport.com

Federal

AMATS receives 90% of its funding from federal sources

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Alaska Division

(907) 586-7418 (Juneau, Alaska) • www.fhwa.dot.gov/akdiv/index.htm

Federal Transit Administration, Region 10 (includes Alaska)

Headquartered in Seattle, WA. (206) 220-7954 • www.fta.dot.gov/

Publications

FHWA. *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*. Downloadable publication: www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/cover.htm

Creighton, James L., Ph.D. 1992. *Involving Citizens in Community Decision Making: A Guidebook*. The Program for Community Problem Solving, Washington, D.C.

Transportation Issues

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers



Traffic Signals

“How does a signal operate? Is a specific signal operating correctly?”

There are many different types of traffic signals. Some are fixed-time and each movement gets a preset amount of time. Some use detectors buried in the pavement and time is allocated based on the amount of vehicles sensed by these detectors. At other intersections, some movements have detectors and other movements do not. At some intersections, where possible, the pedestrian movement is automatically recalled each cycle. At others pedestrians must push a button to bring up the walk signal. The proper operation of signals can be checked remotely by computer, or in the field by traffic signal personnel. Those with specific questions about signal operations should contact the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

“Why do I have to stop? Why are signals so poorly synchronized?”

When there is high traffic flow between intersections, signals are coordinated, or synchronized with each other, to reduce stops and delay for the major traffic movements. Coordinating signals require that all signals be programmed with a common cycle length, which is the amount of time it takes a signal to sequence through all traffic movements one time. The quality of progression through a set of traffic signals depends on the spacing between signals, the speed of traffic, the cycle length, and the amount of traffic. Signals along main arterials are generally coordinated with each other during the day, when there are heavy traffic flows. It is often not possible to progress traffic in both directions because of poor spacing between traffic signals. Sometimes it is necessary to choose one direction to progress. When two-way progression is not possible, the Municipality often uses computerized traffic modeling to find coordinated timing plans that decrease the total delay and stops for all users of the system. Traffic turning onto or off of a side street is generally not progressed, and turning vehicles can usually expect to stop at the next signal. Specific questions about signal progression should be referred to the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

“Why do I have to wait so long after I stop at a specific signal?”

At most traffic signals several different timing plans are used throughout the day to account for varying levels of traffic demand. The length of the wait depends on the signal cycle length and amount of traffic. In general, a longer cycle length increases the amount of vehicles that can be moved through an intersection (capacity). Increasing cycle lengths also increases driver delay. Cycle lengths range from 60 seconds to 160 seconds in the Municipality, depending on the size of the intersections and the amount of traffic. Cycle lengths must be

longer at larger intersections to serve the greater number of separate traffic movements during the timing sequence, to accommodate much longer pedestrian crossing times, and to accommodate higher volumes of traffic. Requests for timing changes at individual intersections should be referred to the Traffic Department. Information needed for a signal employee to investigate a requested timing change is what day of the week and at what time of day a problem occurs. Call the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

“Why isn’t there enough green time to get the traffic through the signal for a specific movement?”

The amount of green time programmed for each movement at a signal varies by time of day. Sometimes there is more traffic at a signal than the signal can handle, and the signal is over its capacity. In these situations, the Traffic Department attempts to time the signals to equalize delays for conflicting movements. At other times green time can be moved from one movement to a conflicting movement, realizing that improving one movement hurts another. Increasing green for one movement requires decreasing the amount of green for another movement.

Requests for timing changes at individual intersections should be referred to the Traffic Department. Here, too, information needed for a signal employee to investigate a requested change is what day of the week and at what time of day a problem occurs. Call the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

“How do I get a new signal installed?”

Installing a new traffic signal first requires determining if a signal is needed. If a signal is needed, then a method of funding and constructing the signal must be found. Evaluating the need for a traffic signal requires careful analysis of the accident history, the intersection geometry, and amount of traffic. The number of traffic accidents almost always increases when a signal is installed, as interruption of free flow results in an increased number of rear-end type accidents. Certain types of accidents that tend to be more severe can often be reduced by installing a signal. The analyst must weigh the different types of accidents and compare them to federal guidelines. There are certain federal requirements that must be met before a signal can be installed.

If a signal is needed, the next challenge is to find a method of constructing and funding the signal. On municipal roadways, signals can be included in road improvement projects, and constructed if bonds are approved by the voters. However, most of the major roads are owned by the State of Alaska, and Municipal funds can not be spent on these roadways. If a signal is needed on a state-owned roadway, other methods of funding must be sought, such as requesting inclusion in the state safety improvement program.

A new signal usually costs more than \$250,000 dollars to construct, and then additional dollars will be needed for annual maintenance. With limited funding, desired new signals must be compared with intersections with the worst accident problems, which receive priority. Requests for new traffic signals can be referred to the Traffic Department at 343-8306.

“How do I find how much traffic there is at a specific location, or how many accidents there have been?”

The Traffic Department counts traffic at all major intersections in the Municipality once every three years. Traffic at smaller intersections will be counted as needed, due to special projects or investigations. These counts are stored in a database that is maintained by the Traffic Department. All intersection related accidents for which police respond or accident reports are filled out, are also tracked and summarized in a computer database. This allows the Municipality to identify safety problems that arise at specific intersections. Requests for traffic volume or accident data should be submitted to the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

“How do I find how a signal was operating at a specific time and date, and if it was operating correctly?”

The Traffic Department cannot say exactly how a signal was operating on a specific date and time due to field variables such as traffic demand. However, we can determine how a signal was programmed to operate, and if there were any malfunctions such as a burned out light bulb or power outage on a specific date.

Records of all programming changes and all maintenance responses are maintained at the Traffic Department. Requests for historical records concerning traffic operations should be referred to the Traffic Department at 343-8406. Sifting through the records takes a significant amount of research, and it is not a good idea to make a request a week before the court date. A thorough records search can take up to three weeks.

“How does a pedestrian signal work?”

Where possible, pedestrian signals are programmed to automatically be served each signal cycle, so that pedestrians do not have to push the pedestrian button. This is often not possible due to site-specific constraints, and it is a good idea to push the button if there is one available.

Once a pedestrian indication starts, there can be some confusion as to the meaning of the signal indications. The first indication is a white walking man. This symbol means the pedestrian can start walking in the direction of the signal. This is followed by a flashing orange hand symbol. The flashing hand does not mean that the pedestrian should stop crossing the street. When this symbol is shown, any pedestrians who have started to cross should continue crossing, but pedestrians that have not yet started to cross should not begin crossing.

The length of the flashing indication can be quite long. It is calculated based on the length of the crosswalk and the nationally recognized average walking speed of pedestrians. A flashing hand terminates with a solid orange hand symbol. Pedestrians should not be in the crosswalk when this symbol is being shown. Questions about pedestrian signals should be referred to the Traffic Department at 343-8406.

Air Quality and Environmental Concerns

“How does Anchorage’s air quality compare with other communities in the Lower 48? Are we better or worse off?”

On the vast majority of days, Anchorage enjoys good air quality. Our levels of smog or ground level ozone pollution are well below federal standards and very low compared to many areas in the Lower 48. Our cool summer climate helps us avoid the hot summer weather smog alerts that many communities experience. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 92 million people in the United States live in areas where health standards for ground-level ozone pollution are exceeded.

While Anchorage enjoys some of the lowest smog levels in the country, winter carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations in Anchorage can approach and occasionally exceed federal standards. Although CO concentrations have dropped by 60% in the past twenty years, Anchorage is one of a handful of U.S. cities (including Fairbanks, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Phoenix) where continued long-term compliance with the standard remains an issue. Our subarctic winter climate makes achieving compliance more difficult. Strong temperature inversions trap pollution near the ground and “cold starts” increase CO emissions from motor vehicles.

“I can sometimes see a brown haze along the mountains. What is it?”

No specific studies have been performed to determine what is in Anchorage’s brown haze. Multimillion dollar studies in other communities like Denver have shown that much of their haze is comprised of very small particles called PM-2.5. Sources of these small particles could be exhaust emissions from gasoline or diesel-fueled cars and trucks, aircraft, and/or wood burning. This haze could also be caused in part by road dust particles. Road dust particles tend to be larger in size, however, and do not scatter light as efficiently as smaller particles. For this reason, most of the haze is presumed to be caused by the smaller PM-2.5 particles. CO is an invisible gas and does not contribute to the haze.

“Why don’t we require diesel vehicles to get an I/M test? They look like they emit more pollution than other vehicles.”

It is true that diesel vehicles generally emit more visible air pollution than gasoline vehicles. However, most of what is emitted from diesel vehicles is in the form of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, not CO. CO emissions from diesel vehicles are 5 to 10 times lower, on average, than a comparable gasoline vehicle. Also, the relatively large amounts of particulate pollution emitted by diesel vehicles would harm conventional I/M testing equipment.

“The TV news reports the air quality index. What do they mean when they say that air quality is good, moderate, or unhealthy?”

The Municipal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) monitors air pollution levels every weekday and reports them to the media using EPA’s air quality index. The EPA devised a uniform, reporting format to be used throughout the country to report pollution lev-

els. The air quality index is a reporting tool that converts air pollutant concentrations to a simple numerical scale from 0 to 500. An index of 100 corresponds to a level of pollution equal to the federal air quality standard. Under the index, air quality is described as follows:

Air Pollutant Concentrations	Air Quality
0-50	good
51-100	moderate
101-150	unhealthy for sensitive groups
151-200	unhealthy
201-300	very unhealthful
301-500	hazardous

When the air quality index rises above 100, the DHHS will issue an air quality health advisory containing recommendations for sensitive individuals that could be affected.

“Where, how, and who measures air pollution in Anchorage? What are the air pollution levels in my neighborhood?”

The DHHS is responsible for monitoring air pollution in Anchorage. They currently operate eight monitoring stations in the municipality. Over the years, monitoring has been conducted at over 50 locations. The DHHS prepares an annual report summarizing pollution levels and trends. This report is available at the Loussac Library; it is also available on the Internet at <http://www.indicators.ak.org/>.

Projects, Funding, and Schedules

“How did this project get funded anyway?”

Making decisions about and funding a transportation project is generally a very lengthy, public process. The initial needs for transportation services are identified in the Comp Plan, in a very general manner; then the LRTP provides a greater level of detail. Funding may actually come from one of two sources, or a combination of those sources. A project may be funded through the detailed plan—the TIP—which specifies how funds from the FHWA will be spent to develop the transportation system, or a project may be funded through bonds issued by the Municipality.

“Where is the money coming from?”

Gasoline tax receipts go into the Highway Trust Fund, which are appropriated by Congress, through the FHWA each year in the annual budget cycle. Alaska receives a very favorable return (\$6 for every \$1 it pays in gasoline tax). Ninety percent of the funding for road projects in Alaska comes from FHWA; the other 10% is state matching funds, which is appropriated by the Legislature from general funds. If the state did not appropriate matching

funds, the FHWA, by law, would not be able to provide the other 90%. Thus, the vast majority of road, trail, and transportation projects are not funded with property or sales taxes.

“How come this project isn’t done yet?”

Developing projects with FHWA funding can take a long time. For example, if there was money to start a reconstruction project tomorrow, dirt would not start being moved for five to seven years. Because we accept FHWA funds for transportation system development, we are then obligated to proceed with project development under FHWA rules and regulations, which require a rigorous environmental and project design process that takes considerable time, e.g. the five-to-seven-year timeframe.

“How come you always bid the projects at the end of the year?”

Bunching up projects for a specific bid cycle is not intentional. Bringing a project to the point where the FHWA will give us authorization to advertise the project is like weaving fabric. There are many strands to keep track of. Some of these strands, like utilities and right-of-way (ROW) acquisitions, become critical to track at the close of a project design and often these schedules are not driven by the DOT&PF.

Utility work agreements must be signed and all ROW certified before FHWA will give us authorization to advertise. Consequently, if utility agreements fall behind due to conflicting work needs at the utility or if ROW acquisition gets bogged down in a condemnation issue, the project slows down and may be delayed. Also, the FHWA will not allow DOT&PF to obligate all of the funding available in a federal fiscal year at once. FHWA sets quarterly goals for obligation of funding for all phases of project development. If a project is ready to bid in the first quarter of the year, but the obligation limit has already been reached, then the project must wait for the next quarter to receive authority to advertise.

“How can I get my pet project into the plan?”

Become involved early in the project nomination process, which is a primary step in the TIP planning process. Nominate your project emphasizing the appropriate ranking criteria. Get your community council and neighboring community councils to support your project. Elected officials support is also useful. Check to see if your project is already part of an existing plan.

“Why is the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) so difficult to understand?”

The name of this organization really confuses people, because it isn’t a “study.” It is a process. So right off, people have a problem with AMATS. Also, AMATS is a virtual organization overlaid on top of a single governmental unit, the Municipality of Anchorage. Metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are mandated by the federal government for communities with populations over 50,000, which accept federal funds for their transportation system. MPOs are most often made up of multiple governmental organizations and in a sense

are both more complex and more simple to understand. The federal government has many rules that directs how MPOs conduct business. People are also confused by AMATS because developing the plans and programs within the rules takes so much time. Most people do not have the patience or time to devote to trying to unravel the fabric that is AMATS. *Anchor-age on the Move* has been a start to help the general public to understand AMATS.

“How come it takes so long to get a project started and completed?”

If a nominated project is accepted into the AMATS TIP it does not mean that it is funded immediately. The TIP program is financially constrained, so not all nominated needs identified are allotted funding. The process is such that every two years the nominations are re-scored. A project that in one year is close to the funding line, could get booted lower on the list if a new nomination scores substantially higher in terms of need. So it can take awhile to get a project above the funding line. Once above the funding line, the project development process takes over as outlined above. Here too, since federal dollars are being used, project development must be conducted within the rules set out in the federal process.

Environmental assessments (EA) usually take 24 months and can take longer if there is substantial environmental or social concern. The initial design process takes 18 to 24 months. The design phase cannot be started until you have a signed EA, and the right-of-way (ROW) process cannot be started until there is sufficient design completed for the project and the utility process cannot begin until there is substantially more design. It is a “Mother May I” situation with FHWA at each phase of project development. Until FHWA is satisfied that the previous step has been conducted according to federal rules, it will not authorize funds for the next step.

*“LRTP - what’s that?” “I don’t have to buy in on that.”
“Why do priorities change in the TIP?”*

Most governmental units and all federal and state agencies have some kind of planning process, which are required by law. Usually there is a near/mid/and long range planning process. For an MPO the long range process is the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP is not based on someone’s wish list, but rather it is an analysis of what it will take to efficiently and safely move people and goods around town, 20 years from now. It is based on existing conditions of the road network, land use, population, employment centers, etc. Then a 20-year projection is made about what the community needs from its transportation system.

To call into question such a planning process that is guided by federal rules and regulations is to call into question “Why plan at all?” Transportation planning documents are meant to be dynamic and are reviewed and reevaluated to ensure that they are responsive to the changing needs of a community. The MPO must reevaluate its LRTP every three years. Subsequently, the plans for what a community needs from its transportation system get more scrutiny than most planning processes that sit on shelves for 5, 10, 15, and even 20 years, before they are updated.

“Why has Bragaw Road not been constructed south of Tudor Road?”

There is an insufficient level of agreement about the need for this proposed project. The reasons for the disagreement are unclear.

Public Transit

“Why don’t you have later bus service?”

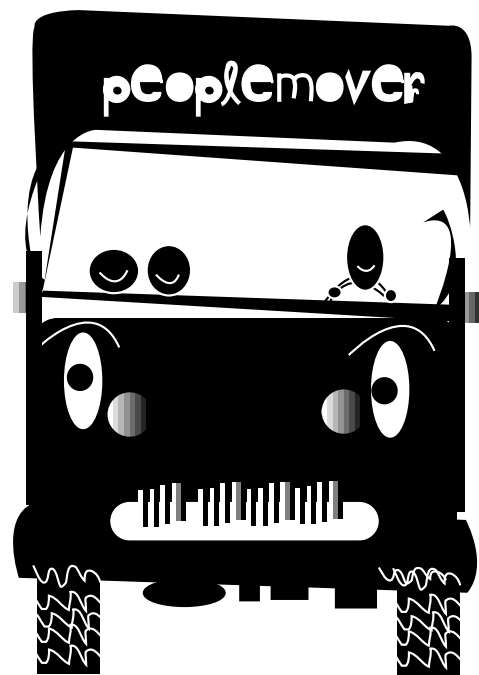
The need for more bus service (later, on weekends, and more frequent service) is recognized and priorities have been described in the 2000-2004 Public Transportation Development Plan. As operating funds are added to the Public Transportation Department, services can be added.

“Why are buses always running around empty?”

Anchorage’s Public Transportation system carries an average of 30 passengers per vehicle per hour. Generally, buses are most full at the mid-point of the route, with people getting on and off all along the route. The farthest from downtown and midtown you see a bus, chances are it is less full than if you saw that bus closer to downtown. Anchorage actually has one of the higher riderships in the country for its public transportation system.

“Why do you use the large buses when smaller buses would cost less?”

As much as 80% of the cost to operate a vehicle is labor costs, which is the same regardless of bus size. Daily, we have standing room only on some of our busiest routes—so there is a definite need for the 40-foot buses. By maintaining a standardized fleet, buses can be used areawide and inventory and maintenance costs are lower because we can take advantage of economies of scale when ordering parts. It also requires less continuous training for the maintenance staff, because they only have to be knowledgeable about a couple types of vehicles, rather than many types.



Inspection and Maintenance (I/M) and Oxygenated Fuels

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Contacts

Oxyfuels Contact: Gary Evans 269-7694 I/M Contact: Mary Parker 269-7695

“What type of oxygenated fuels do we use in Anchorage?”

Ethanol.

“What is the time frame that Anchorage uses oxyfuel?”

Beginning November 1st through March 1st—during the winter months.

“Why are we using oxyfuel in Anchorage but not in the Valley?”

Anchorage’s vehicle population compared to the Valley is a key, but mostly because Anchorage is in a bowl and we have temperature inversions that cause vehicle exhaust to stay trapped in the bowl.

“Why does my gas milage go down after the oxyfuel is added to the gas each winter?”

The BTU (burn rate) for oxyfuel is slightly less than regular unleaded fuel. While this *does* impact the miles per gallon you will get for any given vehicle, the primary reasons we get worse gas milage are cold starts, longer vehicle idle for warm-up, and improperly maintained vehicles, such as those not having regular oil changes and tune-ups.

“What are my options if my vehicle will not pass an I/M test?”

You can go to the Municipality I/M office (343-4200) and obtain a seasonal waiver. However, the vehicle may NOT be operated in the Municipality of Anchorage November 1st through March 31st. Otherwise, repairs will be needed to allow your vehicle to pass an I/M test.

“How old does a vehicle have to be before it does not require an I/M?”

The Municipality of Anchorage requires testing of vehicles that are 1968 or newer. Fairbanks requires testing of vehicles that are 1975 or newer.

“I live in the Valley and I just got an I/M non-commuter affidavit letter from your office. Why did I get this and what am I supposed to do?”

If a vehicle has had an I/M test in the past, the DEC database reflects this. Now that the vehicle’s current I/M is about to expire, we send the reminder letter to assist Valley residents. If you commute to Anchorage for work or school, your vehicle will need to pass an I/M test. If you do not, please fill out the non-commuter affidavit and send it to us.

“I don’t even own the vehicle listed on the non-commuter affidavit letter any more. What am I supposed to do?”

Enclosed with the affidavit is also a “notice of transfer” form. Please fill it out to the best of your ability and mail it to us. DEC routinely checks the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) database for current information. If DMV records show you to be the current owner, we recommend that you contact DMV to ensure that they know you no longer own the vehicle.

“I took my vehicle for an I/M test and the guy said I need an engine overhaul before it will pass the test. What should I do if I disagree with test results or the mechanic?”

An I/M referee facility is available; call 561-3111 for an appointment. The referee has the authority to verify and document inspection failures, to determine whether a waiver should be issued, and to confirm results of tests and repairs performed by an I/M certified mechanic if the vehicle owner disputes the work.

Public Notification Procedures



Notices for

AMATS Policy Committee (PC) (second Thursday each month)

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) (fourth Thursday each month)

Two weeks before meeting:

1. Submit ad to the ad coordinator by Tuesday noon.
2. Email ad to AMATS Notification List.
3. Add meeting to the Municipal Calendar after submitting ad to the ad coordinator.

One week before meeting:

4. Publish ad in *Alaska Journal of Commerce*.
5. Information packets—
To all on AMATS Notification List, email a copy of the information packet or email notice where the packets are available for pickup.

Monday before meeting:

6. Send email reminder.

Day before meeting:

7. Send email reminder.

Work Session Notifications (when possible)

Two weeks before work session:

1. Submit ad to the ad coordinator by Tuesday noon.
2. Email ad to AMATS Notification List.
3. Add meeting to the Municipal Calendar after submitting ad to the ad coordinator.

One week before meeting:

4. Publish ad in *Alaska Journal of Commerce*.

At least 48 hours before work session:

5. Email information packets and agenda to all on AMATS Notification List.
6. Send email reminder.

Day before meeting:

7. Send email reminder.

Public Meeting Notifications

Two weeks before meeting:

1. Submit ad to the ad coordinator by Tuesday noon.
2. Email ad to AMATS Notification List.
3. Add meeting to the Municipal Calendar after submitting ad to the ad coordinator.

One week before meeting:

4. Publish ad in *Alaska Journal of Commerce*.
5. Information packets—
Email notice to all on AMATS Notification List that the information packets are ready for pickup when available.

Monday before meeting:

6. Send email reminder.

Day before meeting:

7. Send email reminder.

AMATS Planning and Zoning Meetings (first Monday each month)

Two weeks before meeting:

1. Submit ad to the ad coordinator by Tuesday noon.

One week before meeting:

2. Email ad to all on AMATS Notification List.
3. Publish ad in *Alaska Journal of Commerce* and the *Anchorage Daily News*.
4. Information packets—
To all on AMATS Notification List, email a copy of the information packet or email notice where the packets are available for pickup.
5. Send information packets to the staff of Planning and Zoning Commission members

Three days before meeting:

6. Send email reminder.

Day before meeting:

7. Send email reminder.



Developing the Public Participation Program: *Anchorage on the Move* Activities

The first step to develop this Public Participation Program was to obtain funding to enhance and improve the existing public participation activities for transportation planning in Anchorage. The funding was provided by the Federal Highway Administration in late 1999. The funds were used in several ways:

- 1) To test and conduct several interactive public participation techniques in conjunction with the development of the Draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan update. In particular, the facilitated workgroups and open houses which were held in September and October 1999.
- 2) From December through February 2000 an assessment of the needs and frustrations of the public on transportation planning was conducted through interviews, questionnaires, and public meetings. A document compiling the issues and concerns titled, *Anchorage on the Move Compilation of Comments on the Issues*, was created and finalized in March 2000. This summary can be found at: http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/pdfs/Comm_bk.pdf or by calling AMATS at 343-7991. The most fundamental need identified in the *Compilation of Comments* was public education about AMATS' responsibilities, activities, decision-making processes, and how and when the public should expend its time to be involved.
- 3) From January to March 2000, besides creating the *Compilation of Comments*, Resource Solutions developed a project plan. During this time the name, *Anchorage on the Move*, was adopted. A key public participation technique used was a Core Group of individuals who had shown consistent interest in transportation planning, many of whom had frustrations and found transportation planning confusing. The participants in the Core Group were not selected by any one organization, but were self-selected and chose to actively participate in meetings, respond to requests for recommendations, and to help edit the Public Participation Program document. The Core Group was always open to anyone who wanted to participate, and meetings were announced in the major local newspaper.
- 4) During April 2000, a series of public meetings was held to develop a more in-depth understanding about AMATS planning functions and responsibilities, and to more directly contribute to the public involvement program by brainstorming ways to make public participation more effective. The summaries of these public meetings can be found at http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/amats.html or by calling AMATS at 343-7991.
- 5) In May 2000, guidance and direction was sought from the Core Group about the type and detail of information that would be part of the Public Participation Program document. See http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/pdfs/sum_5_19.pdf for the meeting summary.

- 6) The Public Participation Program was initially drafted by Resource Solutions. The Core Group then reconvened to review and make collective recommendations on the document. The recommendations were then incorporated into the draft document, which underwent several more rounds of reviews and edits by members of the public and agency representatives.
- 7) In June 2001, the final draft Public Participation Program was presented to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee.