



Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting #9

Location: Training Room (NE corner entry), Planning and Development Center,
4700 Bragaw Street

Date: July 16, 2007 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

MEETING NOTES

1. Introduction – agenda review, introductions of CAC, consultants, guests, public attendees

Committee

- David Lappi
- Carol Fries - absent
- John Reese
- Lori Davey
- Niel Thomas
- John Weddleton - absent
- Chris Hamre
- Connie Yoshimura - absent
- Dee High
- Victor Mollozzi - absent
- Fred Jenkins
- David Beveridge - absent
- Wayne Westberg

Staff

- Tanya Iden – Agnew::Beck
- Heather Stewart – Agnew::Beck
- Dwayne Adams – Land Design North
- John McPherson – HDR Alaska
- Holly Spoth-Torres – MOA Parks & Recreation
- Lance Wilber – MOA Traffic

2. Introduction – agenda review, introductions of CAC, consultants, guests, public attendees (10 minutes)
3. Update on schedule, work completed & in progress (Tanya Iden - 5 min)
4. John McPherson (from HDR, Alaska), Dwayne Adams (from Land Design North), Holly Spoth-Torres (from MOA Parks and Recreation) and Lance Wilber (from MOA Transportation) presented the transportation whitepapers.

Road Connectivity

- John McPherson gave background info about road networks and connectivity:
 - Lack of connectivity on Hillside
 - Arterials on mile grids, spacing works best; overloaded streets when not enough connections
 - Collector streets on a half-mile grid

- Very few half-mile streets on Hillside, putting more pressure on mile grid streets
- On much of Hillside, density is high enough to need mile grid, but can use smaller collector/arterial roads
- It is a legitimate concern that if you start connecting disconnected streets on the Hillside, they will flood with traffic (*de facto* arterial serving local traffic), so need to be careful if MOA starts connecting them
- Will roads be able to carry traffic for proposed senior center? (Very end of Goldenview Dr.)
 - MOA is requiring developers to put in the infrastructure to serve that. Some of those things are getting addressed as this plan is developed. Trying to inform platting approvals now, since many developments will have been approved before the HDP is passed.
- Where are you headed with this? Making recommendations?
 - Fire/emergency – should be at least 2 ways into/out of a place. Depends on land use projections of how much growth will occur in certain areas – density warrants some of these connections, but if it stays rural some might not be needed. Figure out which connections are needed.
- South end (South of Goldenview) needs close look. That’s where the development is yet to happen, least built out.
 - Topography may limit ability to make some of those connections, but should be a factor in determining how much density/development you allow in some of those places.
- Hierarchy of how decisions get made about which improvements happen where and when? (*gave some specific examples*)
 - Stop sign might be safety issue. Can also be a congestion-related improvement – a means of creating a gap in traffic for people to turn onto/off of streets.
 - Also take into account the amount of traffic coming in from cross-streets. On Goldenview, with traffic from schools and development, topography is a challenge. Signal there requires rebuilding the road because you need enough visual cue (distance) in the approach.
- Solution for Rabbit creek and Goldenview?
 - The MOA will have to address that somehow. We’ve looked at that intersection a lot and we’re not 100% convinced that putting in a signal will make a difference because weather is the issue there.
- At what point is connectivity going to become a priority for the MOA? Does it take people getting killed?
 - Even if it is our priority, given some of our financial restrictions, we can’t necessarily move forward with them. City lobbied hard for some of these issues on the Hillside but we didn’t get them (state grants funds). Even some of our highest priority projects didn’t get funding.
- What does it take to get the Muni to expand their boundary and take over Local Road Service Areas (LRSAs)? Huge problem?

- Implementation makes it difficult. 51% of Anchorage residents inside and outside of area have to agree to do it at the same time. At that time, Muni can assume responsibility.
- There are some folks who don't think connectivity is a good idea. What does this group think? Same for trails. What information do you need?
 - We need specific things to look at – need to see big red circles around areas you think are possible connections (I personally stick to my route; don't travel entire Hillside).
 - Road design can do a lot to discourage use of a road as a thoroughfare, so connectivity is fine if designed as a little neighborhood road (speed bumps, narrow with no shoulders, etc.).
 - (Section 27) McDonald Road/Lane – subdivision, need to upgrade road to city standards – subdivision wants to come across 136th, but nobody's going to use it. Concern that high school kids will start using it as a racetrack. Need to think about traffic around schools. Is there a long-term plan for this area (Elmore)? – Yes, plan is to connect Elmore to Rabbit Creek.
 - Don't hear wholesale agreement on solution. Lot of people don't want to be in LRSAs or ARDSA; they want to be independent. The big solution is going to be tough on a lot of people. They want to hear how can we identify and anticipate bottlenecks and solve the problems that will emerge rather than go for the global solution.
 - We have roads up there that are inadequate; there's no money to fix them – how to fund these things to get them done? If moving them from LRSA to city roads is not supported, then we have to figure out something else. But we're still going to struggle with funding. State funding is becoming more difficult over time. Developers are going to have to pay for more. Other options?
- Where does funding for roads come from?
 - To be addressed in other whitepaper(s).

Road Maintenance

- John McPherson gave a review of issues associated with LRSAs.
- How would you envision a transfer of maintenance from state to municipal control?
 - Taxpayers would need to be convinced they're not taking over a dilapidated structure (drainage issues, base issues) that previous administrations have resisted. Lance Wilber has been pushing for a long-term transfer program.
- How can we on the Hillside begin to start paying? Might be some buy-in from residents to pay for arterials, starting process of paying for things, bring people in incrementally.
 - Could happen, but would be surprised if residents of greater Anchorage would take Hillside roads without knowing they're built to municipal

standards. Will pay to maintain, but don't want to pay to rebuild substandard roads, bring them up to city standards.

- State uses capital funding for state-owned roads. They let them deteriorate, then use capital money to rebuild entire road because that's where their funding is (that's what we do with schools, too).
- But it's cheaper in the long run to maintain than to rebuild.
- Still don't see the city taking over state-owned roads.
- How hard is it to derive the number of households on the Hillside who are not part of LRSA, not paying for everything?
 - We can do it.
- Should we float the idea of a special taxing district?
 - Need some benefit for the dollar – what do they get out of it?
 - Maybe with a super-LRSA, which independents would be subsumed into?
 - People *are* paying – maybe not formally through taxes, but by owning and operating plows or passing the hat.
- Should the HDP acknowledge the independent road service providers in policy (i.e., take out of the equation the idea that someone would push a taxing authority)?
 - The Hillside's needs are different than the flatlands, so we need to do something to fix these roads that might be different.
 - There's a bill in the House and/or the Senate that would allow LRSAs to force people into LRSA if non-members predominantly use their roads. It's one way that would allow LRSAs to collect from freeriders, but LRSAs don't want to maintain the additional roads associated with those properties.
 - What would a rural road standard throughout the Hillside (basic drainage, chipseal) cost? Can HDR come up with a number? How would you prove an economy of scale?
 - Until there's a comprehensive drainage plan, we can't invest in capital improvements.
 - Going to get a wide range. \$225/foot to build to rural road standards. \$500/foot if using private contractor.
- Are the LRSAs the best political solution right now?
 - Depends on your area and what your needs are. Since all this development (the clearing of land and ensuing drainage impacts), LRSA's can't handle the problems we're seeing. Other areas don't have to deal with these impacts, so they're fine.
- Still need to talk about how to fund collector roads and arterials (traditionally state and federal funding):
 - ADOT's goal is to reduce the lane-mileage they have to maintain. They have been pushed to upgrade roads to standard then hand them off (maintenance is such a struggle for them, so local collectors and arterials get low priority and run down the most). The last two administrations (but not this one) have had programs of doing reconstruction projects if the Municipality is willing to take them over.

- Is there any program for state/federal funds to build local, non-state-owned roads?
 - Yes, gets passed through the State to the Municipality. Earmarks, mostly.

Road Classification

- John McPherson gave an overview of road hierarchy and explained how traffic engineers look at road classification chart.
- One of the issues on the Hillside: roads that are functioning as arterials (high design speeds) have lots of driveways on them (creates “side friction”), which results in more accidents.
 - Need to cue drivers to slow down on these streets.
 - Cut-throughs become *de facto* collectors or arterials because of the lack of connectivity; creates these problems.
 - These are the reasons why you don’t want development to occur in the *ad hoc* way it’s occurred on the Hillside
- State responsibility for roads means they’re probably getting paid for mostly with oil revenues. Once the municipality takes over, we’re pulling out our wallets because now we have to pay for them.
- Have to look at city’s road standards for city roads, and state standards for state roads
- Who owns South Goldenview?
 - Municipality owns it.
- There are many roads on the Hillside that don’t belong to either State or Municipality
- Is it necessary to bring roads up to city standards? Are there rural road standards?
 - The State has rural road standards and the Municipality has a couple, but they might be wider than what you want on the Hillside.
- Have Improvement Districts ever been done on Hillside?
 - Don’t remember any. Very long list for Road Improvement Districts (RIDs). Explanation of how RIDs get approved. (*Later, CAC asked if this could be included in whitepapers*)
 - Road Improvement Districts can only be used on Municipally-owned roads.
 - The hard part is getting the neighborhood on board with it. Not sure if it’s something we should include in our transportation “tool box.”
- How likely is it that the city will go bond on these roads?
 - If your LRSA can do capital improvements, the city could have the ability to front the money (not using bonds), then get reimbursed through some agreement with LRSA (basically a low-interest construction bond). Not sure how exactly it would work. (*The CAC wants more information on this topic.*)
- What would it take to change terms on LRSAs so they can do capital improvements?

- Become a Rural Road Service Area (RRSA) - South Goldenview just did it. RRSA's have the ability to bond.
- In a LRSA, increasing the mil rate takes a vote of all members.
- Need more information on financing options under existing law – what leverage do subunits (LRSA's, RRSA's, etc.) have for municipal, state, and federal money?
- What is the percentage of the Hillside that is unorganized (i.e. does not belong to LRSA, RRSA, ARDSA, etc.)?

Hillside Trails Policy and Access Options

- Dwayne gave an overview of process of getting trail dedications on the Hillside.
- HDP process has generated a lot of input for small connections. The whitepaper focuses on an issue that keeps arising: access to Chugach State Park, specifically private ownership vs. public access.
- Do well-used trails qualify as RS 2477?
 - No, they do not qualify.
- Responding to the liability issue for developers wanting to include trails:
 - State law specifically protects landowners from liability for use on public trails. With public use easements, homeowner liability is protected. If the developer is developing to a standard – if owned by public, developer liability diminishes.
 - If ownership/maintenance is transferred to the city, city is liable.
 - There are very few access points on public land. In trying to gain public access via existing trails, have to deal with parking and road access to trail heads.
- Getting trail dedications/easements happens fundamentally through the platting process: MOA can require a dedication of easement when it is in an approved plan (such as the Areawide Trails Plan, part of Anchorage 2020). New Title 21 has slightly different language: it allows the Chugach Access Inventory to be included in addition to adopted plans as evidence of public desire/support for trail dedications.
- MOA can't require setting aside land for parking lots; parking lots require a public reserve, rather than public access easements. When reserves are set aside, the MOA must buy them within two years.
- The platting board can allow cluster development/PUDs, by which the MOA doesn't have to buy land. But cluster development can also result in undesirable, high-density developments
- How far from Chugach can public access easements be extended (probably from border to roadway)? Say you're 3 miles from trail to park – can you connect all the pieces?
 - That will probably depend upon the interpretation of the Platting Board, which is unlikely to interpret in favor of those connections so far from the border of the Park.

- Chugach Access Inventory already identifies access points. The next step is to identify routes (within neighborhoods) to get *to* those access points, and the improvements necessary to connect them.
 - Chugach State Park is only interested in Chugach State Park – not necessarily interested in connections outside borders. (*Correction:* in the Chugach State Park Access Inventory, the Park recognizes the fact that connectivity has to extend beyond the park boundary and that there are existing pedestrian corridors that provide access to the park as well as many "Parcels of Concern" the disposition of which will affect access to Chugach State Park. Parks is concerned about what happens in terms of connectivity.)
 - As pointed out in the whitepaper, anything like this must be done in concert with State Park, MOA, etc.
- Policy 55 (talks about trails within new plats) not mentioned in whitepaper –
 - Relationships and platting law same as discussed in whitepaper
 - Talked about some specifically identified routes
- Sub-Area Plan says trails should be placed away from the roadways. This philosophy works well in un-subdivided areas (so that if it *is* subdivided, people buy the trail with the lot), but trying to plow trails through existing neighborhoods is not politically viable.
- The whitepaper also doesn't talk about who improves these trails – who would that be? How does that happen?
 - Though easements can be required, unless it's a connection to a school, the platting authority rarely requires construction of the trails.
 - LRSAs don't have authority to improve trails, so it falls to Parks & Recreation (or you could receive dedicated grant funding or support from Chugach State Park).
 - Trails along roads can be improved as part of road design standards, but if they're not along roadsides, it becomes much more difficult without a dedication.
- The intent of having a trails element in this plan is to show public support for specific trails in order to get dedications for them, but dedication and construction are two different things.
- Private efforts can build a trail, but it's not possible to *require* a developer to build a trail.
- At Eaglewood in Eagle River, the homeowners association has responsibility for the trail. Have you looked into that possibility?
 - It was a conscious decision by that group to improve the value of their land by building the trail.
 - They also had a topography that lent itself to building the trail (i.e., areas where you can't really build houses).
- What else do you want?
 - Does the Anchorage Park Foundation figure into this at all? Can this be a part of the whitepaper? (Yes. Organizations and homeowners associations can apply to the Anchorage Park Foundation for money for trail

improvements, and connectivity is a main issue for them, so they would be an appropriate resource to include.)

- Could we have more about the actual mechanism for getting trails dedicated? (The short answer is to go through MOA or the Greatland Trust.)
- Could we have an explanation of the process for getting trail dedications on lands that wouldn't be subdivided through platting process? It's a different process. (Holly - where would these areas be? Anything specific that you were thinking of on the Hillside?)
- Who takes the initiative to discuss whether there is a trail system in new development projects? For instance, Connie thinks homeowners don't care and just want to know how big their individual lots are. If developers are the only ones who suggest including trails in their projects, where does the planning come in? (There is some give and take during platting process, but this creates the pattern of discontinuous easements that we see all over Anchorage.) So it would be the public's role to advocate for public access easements? (Yes, as long as the trails are in plans like the HDP, the Platting Board is good about protecting the public interest in these cases.)
- Would like more visuals and factual things that are in place (e.g. access points).
- Next step appears to be identifying on the map areas where trail dedications are desired.
- Addendum: Correction on terminology in whitepaper concerning AS 34.17.055, tort immunity on land subject to a conservation easement. "Public use easement" should be replaced with "conservation easement." The law states that the landowner is not liable with respect to conservation easements that are 50 ft in width or less. In addition, the conservation easement must be granted to and accepted by the state or a municipality. Legally, there is a difference; see statutes:
<http://touchngo.com/lglcntr/akstats/STATUTES/Title34/Chapter17/Section055.htm>

5. Wrap-up (5 min)

Road Connectivity, Maintenance and Classification Assignments

- Clarify what the HDP will and will not do regarding road connectivity.
- Link road impacts with analysis of current capacity for new development and anticipated new development. Identify topographical limits to development.
- Visual examples of how road design can be used to discourage using small local roads as collectors/arterials (in making the case for increased connectivity)
- Maps showing examples of areas best suited for new connections, improvements (note caution from Lance Wilber about doing this prematurely)

For the following, with an eye toward helping Hillsiders better understand whether they should work toward an area-wide rural road service/improvement district or find a way for MOA to take over:

- Clarify ownership of Hillside roads.
- Estimate how much of the Hillside is unorganized (i.e. does not belong to LRSA, RRSA, ARDSA, etc.): miles of roadway not in road service areas, number/percentage of households not in road service areas, tax assessed value of land not in road service areas?
- Description of process for transferring roads to MOA (from State, LRSAs)
- Summary of existing funding sources and financing options under existing law for capital improvements to roads, especially collectors and arterials (broken down by ownership).
 - What leverage do subunits (LRSAs, RRSAs, etc.) have for municipal, state, and federal money?
 - How can subunits and MOA partner to leverage funding for capital improvements
 - Include possible alternatives such as special taxing districts and program(s) for state/federal funds to build local, non-state-owned roads
- Summary of existing rural road standards (state, municipal).
- Estimate cost of a rural road standard throughout the Hillside (basic drainage, chipseal) and identify where an economy of scale is reached.
- Explanation of how Road Improvement Districts get approved.

Hillside Trails Policy and Access Options Assignments

- Include mention of Policy 55 (talks about trails within new plats)
- Include description of options and process for deciding who builds/improves trails, how to get funding, etc.
- Anything to gain from example of Eaglewood in Eagle River
- Mention Anchorage Park Foundation and how organizations and homeowners associations can apply to the Anchorage Park Foundation for money for trail improvements
- More about the actual mechanism for getting trails dedicated
- Explanation of the process for getting trail dedications on lands that wouldn't be subdivided through platting process
- More visuals and factual things that are in place (e.g. access points).
- Identify areas where trail dedications are desired.

Next meetings

- July 18, Planning Conference Room 170 (NW entry/stairs) Planning & Development Center, 4700 Bragaw Street
Drainage – all topics
- Aug 20, location TBA
Review draft “goals & options” document