

Commuter Rail Task Force Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: March 9th, 1-3 pm

Location: Anchorage City Hall, Mayor's conference room 830 (632 West 6th Avenue) / 907-266-2455

Attendees:

Bert Cottle*	Mayor of Wasilla (Co-Chair)	Shalome Cederberg	Governor's Office / Boards & Commissions
Ethan Berkowitz*	Mayor of Anchorage (Co-Chair)	Colleen Gould	DOT&PF Facilities Project Manager
Virgie Thompson*	Mayor of Houston	Amanda Moser	Governor's Office
Nathan Wallace*	Palmer City Manager	Brad Sworts	MatSu Borough Capital Projects
Vern Halter*	Mat-Su Borough Mayor	Ben Coleman	Matsu Transportation Planner
LaMarr Anderson*	Public Member	Lyn Carden	Administrator, City of Wasilla
Cynthia Wentworth*	Public Member	Steve Herring	Stantec Solutions
Jon Scudder*	JBER Base Planning	Merc O'Brian	HDR
Craig Lyon*	AMATS Transportation Planning	Tim Sullivan	ARRC Director of External Affairs
Brian Lindamood	ARRC Director of Capital Projects	Genie Bererd	Engineering, Anchorage
Marc Luiken	DOT&PF Commissioner	Ona Brause	Chief of Staff for Mayor Berkowitz
Dave Kemp	DOT&PF Central Region Director	Megan Byrd	DOT&PF

*Indicates Appointed Task Force Member or Designee

Via phone:

Mike Vigue	DOT Program Development Director	Sarah Heath	Director of the Governor's Matanuska Susitna Regional Office
Ernest Piper	Consultant		

Agenda

- Introductions (Marc Luiken)
- Overview of Task Force goals / Administrative Order 292 (Colleen Gould)
- Project History (Brian Lindamood)
- Business Model Discussion (Ernest Piper)
- Working Groups (Bert Cottle / Ethan Berkowitz)
- Draft Schedule (Colleen Gould)
- Action Items (Colleen Gould)
- Meeting Frequency and Format (Bert Cottle / Ethan Berkowitz)
- Questions / Discussion (Marc Luiken)

Discussion

Welcome & Introductions: Marc Luiken welcomed the Task Force and Co-chairs Ethan Berkowitz and Bert Cottle greeted the group and shared their enthusiasm for this initiative.

Task Force Goals: Reviewed Administrative Order 292, which outlines the purpose of the Task Force as a body to provide recommendations on a commuter rail pilot concept. The Order states that these recommendations are to be provided in the form of two reports, due 05/31/2018 and 09/30/2019. The

reports should include recommendations concerning: initial and ongoing capital costs; expected annual operating costs; estimated ridership; recommended governance structure; other challenges or opportunities associated with potential operation; possible federal funding sources.

Project History (ARRC): 2001 study provides thorough background, updated in 2008 for ridership. 2011 resolution signed by Anchorage and Valley Mayors discussing regional transportation authority. 2013/2014 – ARRC presents specifics of a pilot project based on information from past studies. 2015/2016 ARRC worked regularly with Commuter Rail Advocacy group to model a rail concept, including costs.

Recommendations (Ernie Piper): Commuting and public perception of mobility is different now, ask people *What do you want / how do you want this service to work*. After a consensus can be determined, then governance and funding should be explored. Overall options should be considered in the long term, beyond this specific rail pilot program.

Consistency: Multiple members addressed regular operation as a critical success factor. Intermittent service is seen as a major barrier to attracting riders who are tied to a routine. There was a concern that this seasonal service model could be designed to fail. It was noted that it is important to work with what we have and that as the public experiences this option, a dialogue is opened. It was asked if there was any knowledge of other seasonal services and the group didn't know of any. It was pointed out that this pilot model will give real information regarding feasibility and affordability to compare to studies and anecdotal information.

Barriers to Year-Round Service: Year-round service was suggested, and it was asked if this was a viable possibility with existing infrastructure and equipment. It was explained that there is a lack of capacity in the summer, a high cost for additional equipment, and additional infrastructure obligations based on ADA compliance and FTA certification requirements.

Risk and Liability: The group discussed delays to commuters as a long-term failure risk, pointing out that a delayed or inconsistent service could turn away commuters long-term. It was noted that current accidents and weather impacts delayed commuters on the Glenn Highway. It was pointed out that while delays do exist on the Glenn Highway, these are not perceived by the public as the responsibility of a single entity. Conversely, it was suggested that commuters would recognize the operator as the sole responsible party for delays to the rail service. It was also observed that the testing phase of a demonstration pilot program (dry run) would help identify potential impacts before kicking off service.

Process: Ernie Piper reinforced the importance of starting with an unconstrained vision, based on the needs of the customer base. It was suggested that the Task Force might first consider a cohesive vision of this possibility, then apply constraints as a group, and then finally address what might be possible in a pilot program.

Schedule and Funding: Some of the known constraints to achieving an operational pilot by Fall of 2019 were explained. In order to accomplish necessary capital improvements, the ARRC would need to have funding in place by late summer 2018 to begin procurement processes.

Work Groups: A dialogue on specific work groups was tabled for the next meeting. It was pointed out that additional expertise may be necessary to answer some questions. One example presented was the question of the "last mile" (transportation from the Anchorage stop to a commuter's final destination).

Potential Cost Savings: It was observed that prior studies did not include cost savings that a rail could generate. It was suggested that this would be important to present to the legislature. Potential savings areas could include lost labor, wear and tear on the road, even CO2 emissions.

Action Items

	Item	Responsible	Status
1	Confirmation of final report date - September of 2018 or 2019	Marc Luiken	Final Report due 9/31/2019. See clarification to TF Members in 3/12 email
2	Period for public comment should be added to future agendas	Co-chairs	
3	Distribute initial draft schedule for functioning pilot by Fall 2019	Colleen Gould	Distributed in 03/12/2019 email to Task Force Members
4	Estimated number of JBER commuters provided to Task Force	Allen Lucht	
5	White boards or sticky paper were requested for the 03/30 meeting	Megan Byrd	
6	Written recommendations provided for discussion at next meeting	All	03/12 email presented items to consider, response by 03/26 requested
7	Draft agenda based on Task Force recommendations	Colleen Gould	Will be distributed prior to 03/30 meeting

Next Meeting

The Task Force agreed to convene again on March 30th at 12:30pm in Wasilla.