

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO 2009-031

A RESOLUTION OF THE AMATS CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO DELETE THE KNIK ARM CROSSING FROM THE ANCHORAGE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

(Case 2009-075)

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan is intended to serve as a 20-year guide for transportation decisions;

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly has requested the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) to consider an amendment to the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to delete the Knik Arm Crossing;

WHEREAS, Phase I of the Knik Arm Crossing project includes construction of a 8,200 foot, pier supported bridge with causeways connecting the Mat-Su Borough near Point McKenzie with the Municipality of Anchorage north of Cairn Point and associated road connections from the bridge to the Anchorage road network which follows the Anchorage shoreline and western perimeter of Elmendorf Air Force Base at the bottom of the bluff to Cairn Point, and then continues south, closely following the natural curvature of the shoreline ending with a cut-and-cover tunnel under Government Hill, either along a Degan Street- or Erickson Street-area alignment;

WHEREAS, Phase II of the Knik Arm Crossing project includes expansion of the bridge from two to four lanes and construction of an new Ingra-Gambell connection across Ship Creek;

WHEREAS, the cost of Phase I is estimated to be between \$670 - \$740 million and the cost of Phase II is estimated to be between \$750 - \$920 million;

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission, acting as the AMATS Citizen Advisory Committee, held public hearings on May 18 and June 1, 2009, on the Knik Arm Crossing Amendment to the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission that:

A. The Commission makes the following findings of fact:

1. The cost and risks of the project to the economy, to the quality of life in Anchorage, and to the desired future development pattern as envisioned in adopted plans is greater than the perceived benefits.
2. There is substantial risk that the project will not be able to pay for itself and that diversion of existing sources of federal and state transportation funds from needed transportation projects in Anchorage would be needed to complete the project. KABATA has not met critical conditions that AMATS placed upon it when it the KAC was added to the LRTP over two years ago, including several financial conditions: Condition A(2) "The financial details of the bridge are [to be] solidified." There is still no solid financial plan for construction and operation. Condition B requires KABATA to fund the design and construction of an

Ingra/Gambell connection; and other conditions guarantee that no additional state funds, and no local funds, be spent on the project. These financial conditions are not being followed:

- KABATA currently has not sought private funding for an Ingra Gambell connection, and is seeking state financial backing for revenue bonds.
- KABATA has provided no evidence of recent progress to enter a funding contract with either of the two private financiers who expressed interest two years ago. One of the two private partners that bid on the project had substantial financial setbacks in 2008 (6-05-09 submittal Sec. 3, p. 4-5).
- The Planning and Zoning Commission expresses doubt about the toll revenue projections presented by KABATA. These doubts include:
 - KABATA studies differ from ISER studies by claiming that the bridge produces more job growth and population growth. The KABATA projections count “direct jobs” as not only the jobs associated with the bridge and infrastructure, but anyone on the payroll of construction or operation phases of any new development associated with the bridge; MOA planners call this “atypical” accounting.
 - surveys in which drivers’ support for the project is based on their misperception that the bridge would reduce congestion and allow shorter travel distances or shorter travel times (source: June 5, 2009 KABATA Section C).

3. The project is not consistent with Anchorage 2020 which specifically rejected a slow growth scenario which would have pushed more of the regional growth out into the Mat-Su Borough.
4. The Knik Arm Crossing project does not contribute to a net increase in regional economic growth.
5. The project would undermine redevelopment and infill efforts in Anchorage, which have only begun to gain momentum and is the cornerstone of the implementation strategy of the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the Anchorage Downtown Comprehensive Plan.
6. The project does little to reduce congestion in Anchorage and is not a priority compared to other more pressing transportation projects identified in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The project would increase total trips into Anchorage, thereby adding to congestion and parking demand; and would increase traffic through Downtown including 600 to 700 gravel truck trips per day on the A-C couplet until an Ingra / Gambell connection is built.
7. The project would have a negligible effect on reducing existing commuting times from the Mat-Su Borough to Anchorage. In fact, the travel time from the core of the Mat-Su Borough population center around Wasilla and Palmer would experience a longer (10-12 minute) commute travel time using the Knik Arm Bridge.

8. The project would not substantially reduce the rate of traffic growth on the Glenn Highway nor would it significantly change the need and timing of the recommended improvements along this corridor.
9. Anchorage population and job growth will be lower with the bridge than it would have been without the bridge.
10. The opening of the Knik Arm Bridge will lead to a reduction of Anchorage population and employment growth with the redistribution of jobs and population from Anchorage to the Mat-Su Borough accelerating over time.
11. The project will have an adverse effect on municipal property values which in turn will have an adverse effect on municipal property revenues.
12. The construction of the Knik Arm Bridge will promote sprawl throughout the western part of the Mat-Su Borough and will increase the regional commute distances, travel time, energy consumption and overall reliance on the automobile.
13. The cut-and-cover tunnel would demolish around 14 homes in the Government Hill neighborhood and would have a devastating impact on this historic Anchorage neighborhood. Some of the affected parties in the Government Hill area have not concurred with the proposed programmatic agreement for historical preservation and neighborhood Mitigation: Government Hill Community Council; Anchorage Historic Properties Inc.; Alaska Association for Historic Preservation. *Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan* policies 46 and 51 require the protection of the unique appeal of individual residential neighborhoods, and conservation strategies for historic buildings.
14. The increased traffic congestion through Downtown Anchorage created by the bridge will have a negative effect on its vitality and is contrary to the intent of the Downtown Comprehensive Plan.
15. There is substantial doubt about the timing and the funding availability for the Ingra-Gambell connection across Ship Creek (proposed to be funded with surplus bridge toll revenues), which is a critical component of the project needed to reduce the amount of bridge traffic through downtown. The Knik Arm Crossing project should not begin until funding is demonstrated for the Ingra/Gambell extension that does not come out of the LRTP.
16. The Knik Arm Crossing project fails to adequately meet the intent of the seven planning factors for Transportation Plans identified in 23 CFR Part 450 of the Federal Highway Administration Metropolitan Planning regulations, particularly with respect to the factors pertaining to supporting economic vitality, protecting and enhancing the environment, promoting energy conservation, and improving the quality of life.
17. The benefits that are envisioned with the project are contingent, speculative, and not significant, while the drawbacks seem significant and tangible.
18. Several of the conditions for including the KAC project in the LRTP have not been met, and will become unenforceable after a record of decision. The MOA staff note that "If the project stays in the LRTP, a Record of Decision [on the final

EIS] could be made by FHWA at any time in favor of the current preferred alternative, and the project could proceed without KABATA addressing the MOA's concerns, effectively rendering the conditions in the LRTP of no value, and by-passing local decision-makers. That is not the intent of the federal "3-C" (continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative) planning processes for Metropolitan planning organizations." In addition, if AMATS were to decide to cancel the KAC after the Record of Decision on the Final EIS, the state would have to repay the funds spent thus far (over \$44 million). The time to protect the public from unresolved risks and negative impacts is by removing the KAC from the LRTP before the record of decision.

19. The LRTP does not adequately address the Financial Constraint requirement of FHWA that states that there must be sufficient future revenues available to fund all of the LRTP projects. Factors that could significantly change the assumptions used to evaluate the Financial Constraint include: (1) the final design costs and cost of required mitigation measures, (2) uncertainties about the accuracy of the model used to estimate traffic volumes and toll revenues, and (3) questions about the ability to fund the Ingra/Gambell connection in a timely manner. Agencies and the public have noted that cost and revenue projections for the KAC may have significant inaccuracies and contradictions.
20. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend denial of the Knik Arm Crossing Amendment to the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2007: aye, none; nay, six.
21. There is no language that can be adopted in the LRTP that would have binding authority to safeguard the Municipality against funding risks, impacts, or deficiencies identified in these findings.
22. KABATA has recently proposed financing the bridge through State-backed revenue bonds, which would place a financial burden on the State and potentially but the bridge project in competition with other state-funded projects.
23. Since issuance of the final EIS, NOAA/NMFS has informed KABATA that: "the environmental consequences of the preferred alternative cause us to continue to support the No Action Alternative as the best option for promoting the recovery of Cook Inlet belugas and sustaining upper cook Inlet Salmon runs." If NOAA/NMFS were to require a 14,000-foot span in place of the current 8,200-foot bridge, that would raise the bridge cost to exceed \$1 billion.
24. Anchorage can absorb the projected economic and population growth without need for additional lands. MOA land use planners state that the supply of land in the MOA is adequate to accommodate forecasted growth through the planning horizon of 2030. Infill and redevelopment are the focus of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan land use pattern. The following assessment is provided by MOA land use planners (Tom Davis, memo):

Residential growth can be absorbed while maintaining currently-zoned residential densities in nearly all neighborhoods of the Bowl, with targeted density increases in Downtown and Midtown.

Industrial growth can be assured by strategies of the Anchorage Industrial Land Assessment report, including redevelopment of underutilized parcels through municipal involvement in infrastructure and collaborating with major public landowners such as the Port, Railroad and University.

Commercial growth was analyzed in the Title 21 Rewrite Economic Impact Analysis, which found that the majority of commercially developed lots are underutilized in terms of amount of floor area. The commercial growth is limited by current market for commercial goods and services, not land and the supply of commercially zoned land is believed to exceed that of most cities of comparable size.

25. The Bridge would produce a pattern of urban sprawl rather than infill within Anchorage. "The MOA is on record in the comments to the DEIS as noting that the bridge project would serve as the catalyst for more dispersed development, urban land absorption, increased automobile dependency, higher vehicle travel miles, more mobile emission and greenhouse gases, and significant new and larger public infrastructure needs." This works against numerous LRTP goals of reinvesting to preserve the existing system, enhancing transit service, reducing dependence on vehicular travel, developing other modes of transportation; against the Chugiak-Eagle River LRTP intent to support opportunities for commuter rail service; and against the 2020 comprehensive plan land use goals of infill and redevelopment, and of optimizing existing infrastructure before extending into new areas.
26. It is difficult to conclude that the KAC, although regionally significant because of its size and cost, serves regional transportation needs effectively or efficiently. "The MOA is on record in the comments for the DEIS stating that the DEIS did not give adequate consideration to public transportation, ridesharing, non-truck goods movement options, and non-motorize transportation among the alternatives examined, the travel model mode choices procedures, and the modal composition of the project. The MOA said it was difficult to conclude that the project fulfills its intended purpose of furthering the development of public transportation systems in the vicinity of Upper Cook Inlet."
27. The project will increase carbon emissions for the region compared to not building the bridge, and contribute to the negative public impacts from climate change. "LRTP Table 12.6 shows that the Bridge increases the region's total vehicle miles traveled, vehicle hours traveled, and total fuel use." The HDR studies commissioned by KABATA show that emission reductions from the Bridge traffic patterns cannot be considered additional reductions and cannot be verified, and this project is not eligible as a carbon offset investment. In addition, KABATA's models of the project's greenhouse gases so far have not accounted for the increase in greenhouse gases by inducing more vehicle trips, and from the construction of the project. (KABATA 6-05-09) Section 4.
28. The Planning and Zoning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval to the removal of the Knik Arm Crossing from the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan: aye 7, nay, none.


- B. The Planning and Zoning Commission recommends the deletion of the Knik Arm Crossing Amendment from the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan be forwarded to the Municipal Assembly and the AMATS Technical Advisory and Policy Committees.
- C. The Planning and Zoning Commission recommend approval of Chapter 13 to include the financial plan and new federal transportation planning requirements as illustrated on pages 7-18 of the Public Review Draft, approve the updated funding tables revised and presented at the June 1, 2009 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, and concur to remove pages 22-35, Table 8.1 of the Public Review Draft of Chapter 13 and recommend it be included in a revised Chapter 8 for purposes of updating project status and costs.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission on the 8th day of June 2009.

Adopted by the Anchorage Municipal Planning and Zoning Commission this 15th day of June 2009.



Tom Nelson
Secretary



Toni M. Jones
Chair