

**Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project
and Kenai Mountains Turnagain Arm Heritage Area
Phone Conference Dec 10, 2019**

Present via phone: D Story/J Cadieux in Cooper Landing, L Slemons/K Lewis in ANC

Agenda:

- Update on Dec 4 CLAPC and Dec 5 CLWCP meetings
- Moving forward together
 - Trail Towns
 - Jessica Szalag meeting with Marcus Mueller, KPB Land Manager to make KPB aware of the support KMTA for CLWCP and receive updates on position of KPB with regards to the project.
 - Grant applications?

Dec 4, CLAPC Meeting:

- DOT present, S Holland, Project Manager, and R&M design engineer, Lance DeBernardi, for pathway construction.
- KMTA- Please follow-up with R&M staff members to help ensure that information is tracking with the designers.
- KPB issuing a permit to clear and survey. The point was made that future concerns will come up that will need to be addressed and even have permits. E.g. There's a Grouse Ridge subdivision that will be eliminated by the MP 45-60 Highway Project.
- Discussion included what will occur in compensation to KPB in future when the Bypass itself is permitted on KPB lands. At that point, KPB may be able to leverage more demands for design changes such as trail heads or access features.
- Discussion included the bike/ped pathway.
 - One attendee asked if motorized/off-highway use of the pathway will be accommodated in the new corridor. This has led to more discussion within the community.
 - Local town transit change is occurring for folks who live on east side of the community and the pathway will be the remaining link. Because of the physical separation of the town that has not existed prior, it needs to be emphasized how this impacts the community and the pathway's importance in sustaining link.
 - The separated pathway will run at least where possible on the existing highway footprint.
 - Current western endpoint is just shy of Kenai Lake Lodge where there's a rock face that pinches the pathway. This pinch point was identified in the CLAPC meeting and DOT was asked to help get past that point.
- DOT provided update and plan for next meeting in CL when 65% design will be brought.
- DOT does not yet know where the new alignment (phases 3,4,5) will meet the phase 1B segment on the east end of the project.

- We'd like to mark and identify concerns on the maps available so far to communicate clearly with DOT.
- CLAPC (and CLWCP) will attempt to track community concerns e.g. hydrology of the project, and impacts to the community members.

Dec 5, CLWCP meeting

- Had a good turnout, ~20 people, good cross-section of folks and concerns
- Presented a Walkable Community history and update power point
 - Our last official CLWCP meeting was one year prior.
 - Updated folks on projects (see notes)
- One portion of the meeting was spent on Bypass mitigation projects
 - There is no North/South crossing on the east side of the project and that's a primary concern in the community
 - DOT wants to know what the community is accessing if they reach the north side of the highway. They've been told we have trails and a neighborhood on the north side.
 - At present when you go through the rock cuts and then there's a DNR viewpoint on the south side of the roadway which will, in future, be accessible only by the pathway. What should happen with this? An interpretive sign? Spotting scope? These things were vandalized in the past.
 - DOT probably wants to just build a bike/ped path and not address motorized traffic but they did offer something in the ROW on the north side of the highway.
 - Any efforts cannot add significant cost to the project
 - The EIS cannot be changed
 - Any long term maintenance costs cannot be added
 - He had not said, "no." What can be pursued without major changes
- Organizational structure of our group:
- Trails Committee and Walkable Committee are separate and both under CL Community Club as committees.
 - Should the two become one? (There was some consensus that they should join.)
 - Should the combined group become its own 501C3?
- The Walkable group has the project in the KPB Transportation Plan and so must be sustained in some way by name.
- Trails as a group is more inclusive of all user types and represents a broader scope including transition to major land management trails such as USFS and NWR

Going Forward:

- There is a window of opportunity that is not open much longer for something as significant as an underpass on the east end of the MP 45-60 Highway project
- We can look as far east as the Tract C KPB land or going westward toward Quartz Crk Rd.

- KPB will also have an interest in having north/south access across the Sterling Hwy. We might also look at the eastern end of the “Old Sterling Hwy where Our Point of View lodge used to be.
- The proposed spot (from DOT) at ~MP46 is a mile beyond where folks need to get across.
- Advocacy by KMTA with both KPB and DOT?
 - Can KMTA help advocate for getting the proposed pathway past the pinch point near MP 47?
 - Can KMTA help advocate for the DNR pull-out refurbishing?
 - Can KMTA help advocate for safe north/south crossing at the east end of the highway project? The community would be happiest with an underpass.
- David will send KMTA what the bullet points were that many organizations and community members submitted as public comment to DOT.

Trail Towns

- Communities that are in proximity to trails in the area work to bring attention to those trails.
- This has brought dollars to those communities.
- Raise awareness of the value of visitor recreation to the local communities.
- Ensure that the history of the town and community values are represented by trails promotion.
- Marketing becomes possible
- Maintenance resources are dwindling and bringing more people to a trail system will result in a need for greater maintenance. All traffic on trails causes wear. People can be directed to the more durable trails. Helps the argument for getting more funds for trails. Non-targeted trails will be impacted. The impacts must be addressed at the beginning.
- Community trails plans could be promoted.
- Cooper Landing could become a trails town.
- USFS has spoken in the past about CL becoming a “Forest Town” to increase the visibility of the Chugach National Forest in town.
- There’s been a higher emphasis of local communities taking on responsibilities of trails maintenance and projects.
- Our community would have to identify which trails to focus on. The Walkable Community Project seems that it would be integral to connecting trails.
- Federal Highways funds might be accessed to help fund since we’re talking about accessing federal lands and assets.

STIP?

- Walkables have been encouraged to pursue a STIP grant to coincide with the Bypass highway project.
- KMTA support and advocacy could be helpful in the STIP application process.
- KMTA could help us in knowing timelines and meeting them

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- One more segment of the CLWCP project could be identified to submit
- KMTA could help once again with ushering the project through for us