

**Roads and Highways Advisory Board Teleconference  
April 1, 2020  
Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting called to order by Chair, Dan Hall**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Board Members:**

**Present:** Daniel Hall, Howard Thies, Tony Johansen, Scott Eickholt, Aves Thompson, Andrew Guy

**Excused Absence(s):** Donna Gardino

**DOT&PF:** Commissioner John MacKinnon, Meadow Bailey, Linda Bustamante, Wolfgang Junge, Rob Carpenter, Cynthia Ferguson, Tera Ollila

**Telephone Participants:**

**AGENDA and MINUTES** – Scott Eickholt moved to accept agenda, Tony Johansen seconded. Howard Thies moved to adopt minutes, Tony Johansen seconded. Motions passed unanimously. Approved minutes [posted](#) to website

**Public Comments:** No public comment provided

**Chair Remarks:**

Dan Hall thanked all for calling in. Welcomed new board member Andrew Guy, President, Calista Corporation. Dan noted that Andrew will offer a great rural perspective to board. Aves Thompson and Dan Hall were reappointed to board.

**Comments from Commissioner MacKinnon**

**COVID 19** – in response to the impacts and mandates of COVID 19, a management plan for travel and best practices has been put together with input from Alaska General Contractors, and construction companies. The plan was presented to Unified Command for approval and provides guidance to help mitigate the transmission of the coronavirus and provide safe and healthy working environments. The plan gives direction to essential critical infrastructure personnel working throughout the State of Alaska. The plan has been approved. Next steps will be to review plan with rural communities.

The Commissioner requested the board to let him know if they come across anything that might impact this year's construction program including operations that deal with any certifications. Please get those to DOT asap - he does not want any glitches to this summer's construction program.

All board members requested a copy of the COVID-19 Management Plan. The Laborers International Training Program just released an online COVID-19 awareness program available to laborers.

**Ad-Hoc Transportation Advisory Board** – there are three separate boards (Aviation, Highway, and Marine) that provide guidance to the Commissioner. His thought is to have a transportation advisory board with representation (the chair and 2 members) from each of the 3 current boards. Combining them into one ad-hoc transportation board to review policies and procedures more holistically. He would like to start this board late this year. He said having this type of board would provide him more continuity to make better decisions by looking at all three modes.

The Commissioner was asked if the current three boards would still function? Commissioner said yes, the three boards provide knowledge; a perspective that has a lot of value; and collectively help the department make better decisions.

## **Tustumena Replacement and Buy-America issue resolution**

Commissioner said the Tustumena replacement decision will depend upon recommendations from the Alaska Marine Highway System Working Group. The total project cost is about \$230M. If the decision is made to go ahead with replacement the department is looking for ways to spread the costs out over many years in the STIP. Also, looking at [GARVEE](#) Bonds as an option – these are considered revenue bonds and lend themselves to 1 or 2 big projects not a large number of small projects. It's not like to get a waiver through the Buy-America act.

## **Freight Program Funding Allocation Process (Sterling Highway)**

Board will move this topic to next meeting.

## **2020-2023 STIP Discussion**

The board asked for an understanding of the [Statewide Transportation Improvement Program](#) (STIP) Rob Carpenter advised that the STIP is the federal highway required planning document for laying out expenditures and obligations of all federal highway money. It has to be compiled and put out for public comment to be approved by fed-highways. The project load has to follow budgetary constraints in a 4-year window. Projects come from communities around the state to the regions and then those projects are scored, weighed and programed followed by public comment before going to fed-highways for approval.

Commissioner advised this is a detailed spending plan. He will look into extending the comment period past March 20<sup>th</sup> because of the COVID-19 crisis.

The Commissioner was asked about the STIP project selection committee? The board would like to know if they can be involved with the selection process. The Commissioner thinks this is a great idea and will check into it.

## **ROW Utility Issues and cost to the Highway Funds**

The board added this agenda item to better understand the process of fed-highway funding used to relocate private utilities in the right-of-way of a projects. Commissioner said the cost has averaged \$15M a year. Cynthia Ferguson with DOT provided historical perspective noting when Alaska was a developing state using federal funding for these purposes was considered a public benefit.

The board would like more discussion about the use of highway funds to pay for utility relocations and the [Alaska statute](#) governing it. This topic will be added to the next agenda.

## **Additional Board Comments**

Andrew Guy commented on the need for roads and railroads in his region. He asked about the state contributing to ice road maintenance currently paid for by local tribes. He believes state should help fund maintenance for Kuskokwim ice road that is also used by private companies and Alaska State Troopers. Commissioner believes there is \$50K in this year's budget to help pay for Kuskokwim ice road maintenance. He mentioned in Kotzebue there is some ice road construction that gets annual state support.

Board requests white paper on freight program funding allocation process.

**Next Meeting:** July 2020 – board will be polled for best date.

**Adjourn 2:38pm**