



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda  
CBJ Assembly Chambers**

**January 30, 2020, 6:00 p.m.**

**Steering Committee Members Present:**

Christine Woll, Chair  
Karena Perry, Vice Chair  
Betsy Brenneman  
Kirby Day  
Daniel Glidmann  
Michael Heumann

Jill Ramiel  
Ricardo Worl  
Patty Ware  
Nathaniel Dye  
Iris Matthews  
Tahlia Gerger

**Steering Committee Members Absent:**

Laura Martinson

**Staff:**

Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager  
Beth McKibben, Senior Planner, Project Manager  
Tim Felstead, Planner, Assistant Project Manager

**Assembly Members:**

None

**I. Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**a. January 9, 2020 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting**

**MOTION:** By Mr. Glidmann to approve the January 9, 2020 minutes. Ms. Ware seconded.

**The motion passed with no objection.**

**III. Public Participation – None.**

**IV. AKDOT - Presentation**

The Steering Committee heard a presentation from three State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) employees: Verne Skagerberg, Planning Chief; Christopher Goins, Design Group Chief; and David Epstein, Traffic & Safety Engineer.

Mr. Skagerberg presented a list of topics of concern identified by the Steering Committee. He started with the Marine Way/South Franklin corridor, stating that the pavement is in tough shape and needs some work. There is already a preventative maintenance project, known colloquially as a peel-and-pave, scheduled to address the issues. The corridor presents some

challenges due to it being a narrow right-of-way. There are encroachments, or things that don't belong in the right-of-way, complicating the matter, and there has been talk of a bypass.

Mr. Skagerberg addressed the idea of a second crossing to Douglas Island, stating that CBJ has put aside some funding for a study on that topic. DOT is prepared to launch a planning environmental linkage study, on the lines of a pre-environmental study. This will enable them to look at a broad set of alternatives and purposes of the project and to engage in a robust public process. He said that a second crossing to Douglas would also be beneficial for a potential deep-water port on the west side of Douglas. It would alleviate freight traffic that currently runs through downtown Juneau and would allow freight to get to Lemon Creek faster.

Mr. Goins talked about the performance issues at the intersection of Egan Drive and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, saying that whatever solution they implement would be affected by the possible second crossing. He outlined one potential solution to bring up the intersection performance to appropriate standards: a two-lane roundabout. He went on to explain the reasoning behind having two lanes in the proposed roundabout instead of a single lane. The average annual daily traffic (AADT) at this intersection, he said, is about 20 thousand, while the maximum AADT for a single-lane roundabout is 5 thousand. Since a two-lane roundabout has an AADT of 45 thousand, there would be room for growth. The proposed roundabout would be a 230-foot diameter circle, with all traffic and pedestrian lanes included.

Mr. Goins identified the benefits of a roundabout as two-fold: it would allow faster processing of traffic, and it brings immense safety improvements. Roundabouts eliminate T-bone accidents due to the angle of approaching traffic, they inherently slow down the speed of traffic, and they position drivers in a way that makes it easy to see when they need to yield. Mr. Goins said that, since roundabouts can also be egg-shaped rather than only circular, the ways in which they can fit one in the intersection space are flexible.

Ms. Perry asked how bicycles would interact with a two-lane roundabout.

Mr. Goins said that bicyclists would be given the option to exit before coming to the roundabout and to merge with a wider pedestrian path. The more skilled riders would stay in lane and yield like a car. He explained that vehicle traffic would be traveling at about the same speed that a bicycle can travel. He also said that there would be two-stage crossings for pedestrians, where they can wait for cars to stop and cross to the median at the center.

Mr. Day questioned the efficiency of a two-lane roundabout, expressing doubt that anyone would want to use the center lane.

Mr. Goins explained the process of using a two-lane roundabout, showing how it would be beneficial for drivers making left turns and U-turns to use the center lane. He used left-hand turns out of Aurora Harbor, which have raised safety concerns, as an example of a maneuver that would benefit from using the center lane of the proposed roundabout. Firstly, it would be safer to make a right-hand turn into the roundabout in order to head northbound on Egan

Drive. Secondly, it would be faster to use the roundabout, due to a roundabout's ability to process traffic more efficiently and to eliminating the need to wait for both lanes of traffic to clear before making a left-hand turn.

Mr. Felstead asked about the cost of the proposed roundabout.

Mr. Goins said that he hadn't done a cost analysis, but he guessed in the \$4 thousand to \$7 thousand range. He admitted that there were concerns about how construction of the proposed roundabout would affect the surrounding business, but more importantly how it would affect the community living across the bridge. He said that construction would be difficult, and there would be up-front sacrifices to efficiency, but that the intersection would be much more efficient after construction is finished.

Mr. Felstead asked if this intersection warranted examination of other options.

Mr. Epstein stated that rating given to how well the intersection currently handles traffic is a D, which is the lowest acceptable rating.

Mr. Goins said that a second crossing to Douglas would help alleviate that issue.

Ms. Ware asked if the rating changes depending on what time of year it is.

Mr. Epstein said that there isn't much of a difference, due to an increase of tourist traffic in the summer and the impacts of weather and darkness in the winter.

Ms. Perry expressed concern about pedestrians having to wait in the median for the next light.

Mr. Epstein stated that there would be sufficient illumination, since roundabouts require 50% more illumination compared to similar intersections.

Mr. Goins said that there would be flashing beacons with push buttons.

Ms. Perry said that she has experienced issues with similar beacons in the winter months, saying that they only work about half of the time.

Ms. McKibben acknowledged that there are also issues with vehicles obeying the flashing beacons and stopping when they should.

Mr. Skagerberg said that roundabouts eliminate a lot of traffic conflict for both vehicles and pedestrians. Pedestrians only have to cross two lanes of traffic at a time and then they are in a refuge.

Mr. Goins stated that the decrease in conflict points is dramatic. Conflict maps show traditional intersections at 32 points, while roundabouts are at 8 points. Since the pedestrian crossing distances are shorter in roundabouts, the crossing times are shorter as well. This speeds up the process of getting pedestrians through the roundabout.

Mr. Felstead asked about the safety of pedestrians crossing from the harbor area and unsafe turns from the driveways in that area.

Mr. Epstein said that the problem is the need to decrease the speed at which people are traveling heading from the bridge to the valley. Putting up a sign with a lower speed limit would not solve the issue, and would be irresponsible.

Mr. Goins said that the entrance to the roundabout would have chicanes, or artificial turns or narrowing of the lanes, in order to slow drivers down. He explained that this is a unique intersection since it is an arterial roadway, meaning its function is to move traffic rather than provide access, and they generally try not to put pedestrians on arterials if possible. However, since the Seawalk ends near the intersection, there is a necessity for pedestrian crossings. He said they intended to put the speed limit at that section of Egan Drive at 35 mph rather than 40 mph.

Ms. Brenneman expressed that she is less interested in the roundabout and more interested in turning Aurora Harbor into an attractive area with amenities and restaurants. This would require being able to get there safely. She didn't think a roundabout was a good idea and advocated for making the area more aesthetically pleasing and more accessible.

Mr. Goins stated that he isn't advocating for or against a roundabout. He said that the roundabout designs did include an entrance into the harbor area.

Ms. McKibben asked what was involved in DOT's decision process in no longer treating the area as an arterial, since the designs add bike lanes and narrow the vehicle lanes.

Mr. Epstein replied that it is still treated as an arterial under this design plan.

Mr. Goins said that they looked at all users, including those who bike from Douglas and those who use the Seawalk, and that they need to accommodate all uses. The reasoning behind narrowing the lanes is that, by changing people's perception of how much maneuvering space they have, they subconsciously encourage drivers to slow down.

Ms. McKibben asked about DOT's planning and design process.

Mr. Skagerberg replied that they start with a public process and proceed from there. Since the intersection at Egan Drive and 10<sup>th</sup> Street is a designated highway and must meet the National Highway System's standards, the possible solutions are more limited.

Mr. Epstein said that this project would especially accommodate more non-motorized users.

Mr. Goins stated that they need to comply with federal standards and make sure there isn't a service issue with creating major delays.

Ms. Matthews asked what a possible future parking structure nearby would do to the flow of traffic. She explained that there was potential for a privately owned parking garage near the whale statue.

Mr. Goins replied that a center median island would mean that there probably wouldn't be a left-hand turn from that area.

Mr. Epstein said that there was potential for a ramp coming up from that area closer to the bridge.

Mr. Worl asked if there was any practicality to seasonally closing down part of Egan to create parking spaces.

Mr. Goins said that there was not, due to the width of the road. A parking space much have 18 inches of clearance in order to make room to open car doors without danger to drivers or their vehicles. Additionally, it would worsen the traffic situation and would not comply with National Highway System standards.

Mr. Felstead asked about the idea of preserving the median for a light rail. Since there are sections with no median, he asked how it would work if a light rail used some lane sections on Egan Drive. He said that a light rail had been brought up as a potential solution for ferrying tourists through that area as quickly as possible.

Mr. Skagerberg replied that a light rail would cut down lanes and that Juneau is nowhere near the critical mass needed to make it worth it.

Mr. Day asked how accidents keep occurring at the intersection of Yandukin Drive and Egan Drive, known colloquially as the Fred Meyer intersection.

Mr. Goins replied that, to give some perspective, 52% of traffic accidents at that intersection are left-hand turns, both towards Fred Meyer and towards the airport. Some past actions that have been taken to help alleviate the problem were to move the turn lanes closer to the turns and to light the corridor so that drivers can more easily see other vehicles approaching. Accidents at this intersection happen most frequently during the winter, when there is the least amount of traffic. This is partially due to winter weather and darkness, both of which contribute to a potential perception issue in judging the distance of oncoming traffic, as well as whether vehicles are turning or not. Mr. Goins also noted that many people turning right off of Egan towards Fred Meyer don't yield or give incoming vehicles a receiving lane. He stated that, in general, left hand turns are not very safe and with this particular intersection, there are high speeds involved.

Mr. Goins said that the next phase of problem solving this issue at the Fred Meyer intersection is bringing all possible options to their engineers to see which are feasible. They would also be holding public meetings to present their findings and to allow the public to weigh in on the matter.

## **V. Draft Chapter 8: Transportation, Streetscape & Parking**

### **a. Priorities, goals, actions & recommendations**

Mr. Felstead directed the Steering Committee towards the table listing policies, goals, and actions from relevant plan reviews and containing comments from the Steering Committee. He stated that there is a lot of duplication throughout the table, since past plans make overlapping recommendations. He asked each member to identify their top ten actions for recommendation in the Blueprint Downtown document.

Mr. Felstead explained that the exercise would help remove the repetition and allow them to cross-reference plans that suggest specific recommendations. It would also help identify which goals are short-, medium-, and long-term. By referencing entire plans, future planners will know exactly what documents to reference.

Mr. Matthews asked how they intend to ensure that the Blueprint Downtown Area Plan is implemented when new ideas continue to arise.

Mr. Felstead replied that supplemental ideas that are in the original spirit of the Plan aren't a negative thing. It's only a problem when the new ideas come into conflict with the Plan.

Ms. Matthews asked who identifies the conflict.

Mr. Felstead said that they facilitate a public discussion to gauge if people think it's a good enough idea to change track.

Ms. Pierce referenced the potential bike skills park at Cope Park as an idea that would interfere with other parts of the park plan.

Ms. Matthews asked if the bike skills park was being presented as a change to the original plan or as a new opportunity.

Ms. Pierce replied that it was being presented as a new opportunity.

Ms. Ware asked if it was the Steering Committee's responsibility to incorporate past plans, or should they consider their recommendations while structuring their own priorities.

Ms. McKibben replied that it was a difficult question to answer because the Blueprint Downtown planning effort is unique. There are many plans relevant to the downtown area, and they span many years. The challenge is to see what is still relevant and what is outdated, as well as where there are gaps.

Mr. Felstead said that this exercise could help to prioritize past plans' recommendations, consolidate them where possible, and create goals that summarize these recommendations. He recognized that some past goals might no longer be possible.

Ms. Pierce stated that part of the Steering Committee's charge is to knit together existing plans and to identify which past goals have been accomplished, which are no longer feasible, and which repeat throughout many plans. She recognized that they don't want to create a plan which isn't implemented and which doesn't take past plans into account. The exercise is intended to clarify the goals and actions that are relevant now and will be feasible and relevant over the next 20 years.

Ms. McKibben asked the Steering Committee to keep in mind the diverse audiences of the plan. Planner utilize them frequently, as well as policy makers. By having their priorities in the second chapter, policy makers can see what they should focus on and how to achieve those goals. She acknowledged that it is a challenging charge because the uniqueness of this project means there aren't past models to rely upon.

Mr. Glidmann stated that there is a sense of frustration when there is a lack of progress on a goal mentioned frequently in past plans. He asked if the role of the Steering Committee is to consider feasibility and to focus on easier and more immediate goals, or if it is to keep an overarching 20-year vision.

Ms. Ramiel asked if it was possible to work on both of those levels. She used the Seawalk as an example of a long-term goal that has now come to fruition. She mentioned better lighting on the stairs downtown as a possible goal that is easier to implement in the short-term.

Mr. Felstead replied that feasible goals are usually obvious, such as lights on the stairs. Bigger projects require a robust cost analysis with data to explore options that give a good financial answer about how to tackle a project.

Mr. Day stated that the exercise will help staff see what overlaps. They also need to keep in mind public perception, as well as what options are feasible.

Ms. Pierce said that she sees some major themes emerging within the transportation discussion. The next step is to group the ideas into those themes and prioritize them into short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

Ms. Woll expressed interest in reacting to what the planners come up with and think are good ideas. She said that it is easier to respond than to come up with recommendations themselves without having all of the relevant information.

Ms. Pierce stated that the strongest public processes have parameters. It's an iterative process, she said, and going back and forth between the planners and the Steering Committee members helps to refine their focus.

Mr. Glidmann said that he would like the document to recommend looking within the process of arterializing roadways to create a more vibrant and active harbor waterfront area. Since the Seawalk is nearly done, they should acknowledge that but needn't go too far into depth about it. If they have a goal of making downtown Juneau more walkable, they could suggest a parking

structure outside of the downtown core as a way to yield that result. He recommended that they prioritize projects that have already been suggested but not acted upon, and to create a list of projects on which it would be easy to make progress. This would allow the people actually implementing those recommendations to complete them more quickly.

Ms. McKibben said that CBJ won't be responsible for all of the recommendations, and sometimes the scope of recommendation will be for more study of an action item. Additionally, it could sometimes be as simple as to increase accessibility to something that is already available, such as the policy for stringing lights across streets. For the concept of street closures, she said that they could create a permitting process that wouldn't take too much time, effort, or money.

Mr. Glidmann said that it would, however, have a positive impact on the downtown area.

Ms. Pierce used the renovations to the Switzer Marriot Trail as an example of a successfully implemented recommendation from the Lemon Creek Area Plan. It was a partnership between CBJ and the Rotary Club, and used donations from the community as well.

Ms. McKibben said that, by putting the action chapter in the front, the goal is to make it more accessible.

Mr. Glidmann asked what staff would like the Steering Committee to prepare for the next meeting.

Ms. McKibben replied that staff intended to have the Economics chapter ready for the Steering Committee to react to, as well as a report on the exercise identifying each member's top ten priorities.

Mr. Glidmann asked about the motive behind installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations downtown.

Mr. Felstead said that a segment of residents don't have access to off-street parking and therefore can't install their own EV charger. Also, encouraging EVs helps the community make progress on its sustainability goals by using local renewable energy rather than fossil fuels, which don't economically benefit the local community.

Mr. Glidmann asked if the less dense areas of Lemon Creek or the valley might make better EV charging areas.

Ms. Matthews critiqued the inconvenience of those areas as potential charging areas for downtown residents with EVs.

Mr. Glidmann said that, since it is an individual choice to buy an EV, he didn't think that they should be using public parking spaces for charging.



Ms. McKibben acknowledged his concerns about possible EV charging spots taking away parking for conventional vehicles.

Mr. Felstead posited that EV charging spots could be an attraction for the downtown area.

Ms. Ramiel asked why no progress had been made on the Safe Route to Schools grant and associated program.

Ms. McKibben clarified that they had, in fact, made progress on implementing the plan. Staff had held several meetings with the school district to discuss the program. When the school district's point person for the program retired, no one took up the project on the school district's end. She identified a few projects from the SRTS plan, such as the new sidewalk on Douglas Highway on the same side as Gastineau Elementary. She also stated the intent had been to work with the school site councils on implementing the plan, but in practice it had not happened to the extent she would have liked. Staff stated that staffing issues have interfered with making more progress on the program. Staff also encouraged more public activism and involvement to fill in the gaps created by declining CBJ and State funding.

**VI. Steering Committee Updates – None.**

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, February 20, 2020, 6 p.m., Assembly Chambers