

Memo from R. Mark Fenton

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TO: Mr. Steve Cleary, Alaska Trails; steve.cleary@alaska-trails.org
Mr. Craig Lyon, AMATS, LyonCH@ci.anchorage.ak.us

RE: Recommendations for Active Transportation initiatives in Anchorage, AK.

Hello Steve and Craig,

Thank you for the opportunity to visit Anchorage and for your extraordinary effort and financial support, which allowed me to interact with such a range of stakeholders and partners. I hope that you felt our collective efforts were worthwhile. With this memo I'm including three things:

- An overview of the core elements essential to encouraging more routine walking, bicycling, and transit use, and broad recommendations for action.
- Summarized recommendations for the neighborhood near the Spenard Recreation Center developed during the Active Transportation Summit there.
- An extensive current resource list, which you may choose to make available to attendees, or edit and place particularly relevant sources on the Alaska Trails website.

Summary Recommendations:

1. Hire an Active Transportation Coordinator
2. Pass and Implement Complete Streets Ordinances (city and AMATS).
3. Implement tactical urbanism to build healthy development momentum.
4. Institutionalize a full friends-of-the-trails program.
5. Implement planning *and zoning* for downtown & midtown redevelopment.

The broad evidence suggests four elements are essential to encourage more routine walking, bicycling, and transit use.

- A. **Mixed land use patterns:** Compact development with different land uses and activities intermingled and close together, allowing for varied types of destinations within walking, cycling, and transit distance, while preserving open land and agricultural space.
- B. **Active transportation facilities:** A comprehensive and connected network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and non-motorized pathways, as well as frequent, affordable, quality transit service appropriate to the community scale, from dial-a-bus service to commuter rail.
- C. **Functional site designs:** Destinations are designed to reward, not punish, those who arrive on foot, by bike and transit, such as buildings at the sidewalk, with

parking on-street or behind, and elements such as trees, landscaping, benches, shade structures or awnings, human scale lighting, and quality bicycle parking.

- D. **Safety and access** for people of all ages, incomes, physical abilities and disabilities, including quality street crossings (e.g. highly visible markings, countdown timers on pedestrian signals), full ADA-compliant design, and appropriately applied state of the art traffic calming such as curb extensions, median islands, roundabouts, and road diets.

Extensive resources on active living by design principles, original research, white papers and implementation ideas, are available at www.activelivingresearch.org. Following are five major focal areas in which Alaska Trails, AMATS, and other partners represented at the summit should collaborate to advance active transportation and the triple bottom line benefits of economic, environmental, and public health in the greater Anchorage region.

1. Hire an Active Transportation Coordinator

This is a position focused on assuring that every land use and transportation decision made in the region makes increasing the active mode shares (walking, cycling and transit) a priority as a long-term solution to economic, congestion, environmental, and health challenges. Responsibilities include:

- **Staff** to a standing Active Transportation Advisory Committee. Note that the BPAC must engage fully with transit and housing authorities to understand their challenges, opportunities, and to serve their clients. Development of meaningful transit for your lowest income residents is truly a health priority!
- **Oversight of routine accommodation.** Any activities that create or disturb the street network must be analyzed for any opportunity to create more complete street designs. Even routine paving and painting programs, for example, may allow for modest but advantageous changes in lane widths.
- **Oversee development of a comprehensive Active Transportation Plan.** This plan should bring together both the goals and resources of individual pedestrian, bicycle, and transit planning documents, as well as long range and comprehensive plans, and should be fully focused on implementation, with specific and detailed goal infrastructure projects and policies, target dates, and recommended resources for implementation (answering what should happen, by when, and how).

2. Pass Complete Streets Ordinances

In many communities this happens at multiples levels and over multiple stages. Ideally both the City of Anchorage and the regional planning authority AMATS will:

- **Pass Complete Streets resolutions**, stating the intent that all modes (pedestrian, bicycle, transit and motor vehicles) will be considered during all roadway projects, from new construction to routine maintenance.
- **Pass Complete Street ordinances**, *requiring* appropriate accommodation of all modes, based on adjoining land uses, corridor characteristics, and best case (not current) estimates of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit volumes.
- **Adopt NACTO guidelines by reference.** Empower engineers and planners to

use established designs recommended in the NACTO Urban Street, Urban Bikeway, and Transit Street Design Guides. www.nacto.org

- **Adopt Multi-Modal Transportation Analysis (MMTA).** Require Multi-modal Transportation Analysis for all new and re-development, rather than just a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). MMTA estimates not just automobile, but pedestrian, bicycle, and transit users as well. This allows for pedestrian (e.g. sidewalks, crosswalks), bicycle (e.g. bike lane, bike racks), and transit (e.g. bus pull-out, transit shelter, arrival information) facilities to be considered as part of required impact mitigation.

3. Implement tactical urbanism to build healthy development momentum.

A number of pending movements in Anchorage, such as implementation of road diets and traffic calming, or targeted downtown redevelopment, could be supported through temporary and low cost implementation approaches to establish viability.

These efforts will need champions to actually put these on the ground. Examples:

- Create a temporary protected bicycle line or neighborhood mini-circle, first as part of a festival or short term (weekend) event; then with low cost and removable materials (paint, flexible delineators, planters) to test for an extended period. Such a test must last through at least one winter season!
- Redesign an under-utilized downtown parcel (parking or empty lot) through a “better block” style redesign with food trucks, farmers market, temporary stage or game areas, etc. Do this in the 3 x 3 block area between I and L Streets and 6th and 9th Avenues, as it could initiate the “Few Great Blocks” recommendation of the Smart Growth America *Reinvesting In Our Downtown* report.
- Specifically implement mini-circles at the intersections of K and 7th, and K and 8th, as a step to creating a traffic-calmed super block downtown. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZORzsubQA_M
- Convert one or two on-street parking spaces into a bicycle parking corral; or install wooden decking and create a “parklet” as street-side seating for a restaurant or café.
- Relevant resources:
 - o <http://betterblock.org>
 - o <http://pavementtoparks.org>
 - o <http://www.citylab.com/design/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/>
- Implement pedestrian and bicycle way-finding in an inexpensive and reversible way, through the Walk Your City program. See it at <https://walkyourcity.org>

4. Institutionalize a full friends-of-the-trails program.

More than just a trail watch, which focuses only on recent tragedies on the trail, this should be a multi-faceted and long-term program to restore community comfort, appreciation, and use of the trails. Specific elements should include the following:

- **Trail ambassadors.** More than just a visual presence, eyes and ears on the trail, some may be willing to answer route and destination questions (how far to the park? where’s the nearest public restroom?).
- Create a **comprehensive way-finding system**; not just mileage markers, but

travel times (walk and bike) to key destinations.

- **Seasonal volunteer events** such as a section clean-ups and brush cutting.
- **Adopt-a-trail** or -park or -community garden program. Allow established groups (better than individuals) to adopt sections of trail (or other features) for routine maintenance, patrols, and special events.

5. Implement planning *and zoning* for downtown & midtown redevelopment.

It is not sufficient for planning documents to identify target areas for mixed-use development and redevelopment. Zoning and other policies must support such mixed-use development such as the following:

- Zoning to allow mixed uses (such as a form based code or overlay), with reduced parking requirements.
- Incentives for residential development, such as density bonuses.
- Requirements to assure a mix of housing types and affordability such as:
 - o Both rental and owned properties.
 - o A variety of housing sizes and types, including single family homes, row houses, and multi-story, multi-unit structures.
 - o Allow accessory dwellings (such as garden and over-garage apartments). Affordable units can be given preferential permitting.
 - o Inclusionary requirements for a specific percentage of affordable units in multi-unit structures.
- Incentives for specific retail development in target areas, such tax abatement, and low- or no-interest loans for specific redevelopment.