

Northern Access Working Group Meeting – June 26th
Hosted by Representative Tarr

The following people were in attendance:

Representative Geran Tarr
Representative Max Gruenberg
Rudy Ascott – Staff for Rep. Tarr
Meghan Cavanaugh – Staff for Rep. Josephson
TJ Presley – Staff for Sen. Gardner
Nathan Zencey – Staff for Sen. Ellis
Jacob Gondek –University Area Community Council
Robin Bronen –Rogers Park Community Council
Joanie Nardini – University Area Community Council
Barbara Garner – Rogers Park Community Council

Summary: Representative Tarr began the meeting with an overview of the project and an update on the current status of the U-Med District Plan update, the Northern Access Project and the capital budget. Two issues were discussed- opportunities for stopping a road project and minimum road standards should a road project happen.

U-Med District Plan Status Update: There are two projects that are happening simultaneously- the U-Med District Plan update and the proposed Northern Access Road Project. The U-Med Planning Team held their second public meeting in May to report the findings from their first meeting and “Visioning Session.” They reported that residents placed a high value on the green space in the area. They also reported that residents want for things like more shopping and eating options in the U-Med area. Attendees at the meeting expressed strong concerns about the Northern Access Road Project.

The day after the public meeting, a meeting of the U-Med District Steering Committee was held involving the U-Med Planning Team, Stakeholder representatives from UAA, APU, Providence, Southcentral Foundation, ANMC, ANTHC, and the MOA. Representatives Tarr and Josephson attended. The U-Med Planning Team reported on the community events. A representative from the Northern Access Road Project team gave a presentation. The U-Med Planning Team announced their schedule- come back to Alaska in August with draft development plans. They also stated that, in their opinion, a road project doesn’t have to change the natural character of an area and that the amount in the capital budget would only be enough for a basic road with no features.

Northern Access Project Update: Work has begun on this project, with information from previous studies about road routes and community concerns. The public process will kick off in August.

Capital Budget Update: Representative Tarr shared information about the capital budget. \$20 million dollars, language stipulating public must be involved. An amendment that did not pass removed funding for the project, but having the language in the budget is significant. It’s difficult because although This is a project that is seen as having area wide importance for north-south traffic flow.

Northern Access Working Group Meeting – June 26th
Hosted by Representative Tarr

The discussion was around two themes:

1. Opportunities for stopping the road project. There was general opposition among attendees.
2. Minimum standards should a road project happen.

Regarding #1, after a thorough discussion there were five specific points of inquiry identified to see if development of the road project could be halted.

- 1) Check to see if the U-Med District Plan from 2003 is a legally binding document, since the road is not recommended in this plan, and if this Plan is still valid because a new plan has not been adopted.
- 2) A clause was added to the capital budget stating that the public must be involved in planning project, although the language is not exactly clear what that mean. Find out legally “engaged in the public process” means?
- 3) What exactly is the criteria being used to determine if a road is necessary and are there identified flaws with data?
- 4) If Lake Otis is going to be expanded, won’t this alleviate traffic into the U-Med area enough to make the Bragaw road unnecessary? Was this taken into account when the Bragaw road plan was originally conceived?
- 5) Are there environmental concerns and important habitat?

Regarding #2, there was a discussion as to how to proceed if the road proved to be moving ahead regardless of objections from community members. There was a brief presentation with photos of different road features: country road, bike paths, pedestrian overpasses, natural features and vegetation. Attendees completed a survey

Possible ideas for consideration:

- 1) Speed Limit: a low speed limit of 25mph.
- 2) Number of Lanes: Limiting the road to two lanes.
- 3) Vegetation: Minimizing the footprint of the road (i.e., keeping greenery right up to the roads edge).
- 4) Pedestrian Overpass: Having adequate public access and limiting the impact on existing trails.
- 5) Wildlife: Maintaining wildlife corridors.