

COPPER RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Monthly Committee Meeting

June 11, 2025, at Copper Valley Air Conference Room at Gulkana Airport

- I. Call to Order 5:45 PM
Roll call: Terry Valentine (Chair), Dennis McGlothin, Martin Boniek, Jason Hoke, Brett Nelson (remote), John Becker (remote). Quorum established.
Guests: Victoria Rego (CVDA staff), Laura Boniek, Michael Rego, Jordanny Sutherland.
- II. Approval of Agenda: Motion - McGlothin.; second Boniek. Motion carries.
- III. Motion to approve Annual Meeting minutes from April 2, 2025: Motion – McGlothin; second Boniek. Motion carries.
- IV. DOT&PF Report
 - a. Simpson Hill update: Hoke has heard from a lot of folks about more trees falling/bluff collapsing. He has spoken with Commissioner Anderson; Jersey barriers were considered as temporary solution. Nelson said the DOT team, including Jason Sakalaskas, has been working on it. Russ Johnson with alignment project has been looking into it as well. Said Jersey barriers aren't a good fit for spec reasons; a couple hundred feet of guardrail would be quickest, best option. Near MP105-115, they are pulling guardrail that could be used here for quick fix. Nelson updated on STIP amendment #2 – awaiting approval for realignment of that section before significant work can get going. M. Rego asked about the data used in prioritizing this project and mentioned the major bluff loss in the subdivision below Simpson Hill the past two years. Nelson said they have good satellite imagery and are keeping a close eye on it. He explained some of the variables that go into project planning and prioritization and stressed that it does take some time. Nelson said the Federal Highways FHWA and FHA offices have had a reduction in staff, as well as at the Alaska office, which has also slowed work.
- V. Old Business
 - a. IATP: Hoke gave an update on the April IATP meeting, good turnout, and said they're going to drill down with it soon.
 - b. ROW meeting: good turnout of landowners ~26 people, plus ~25 more general commenters. Hoke gave overview of meeting. No firm dates for survey start but will know more next month. Would like to have another meeting to get a more accurate list of landowners in the area and get the facts out that no land is being seized.

Valentine inquired about wayside timeline: no updates given at this time. Carl Heim is DOT&PF point of contact.

- c. GKN Update: Hoke has been in touch with Scott Lethgard from Senator Sullivan's office about the economic development piece to GKN. Funding is there but not approved/awaiting public comment period. Hoke said putting in for USEDPA funds of approximately \$150,000 to help with study of freight traffic, cost analysis of fuel, etc. The DOD is considering diversification of various fleet hangars and fueling stations. Several Blackhawk helicopters have been sighted fueling at GKN. There may be opportunities for GKN to fit in with DOD objectives. Food security location at GKN could be helpful with air support. Valentine mentioned example of road closures (avalanche near Valdez) that have cut off communities from supply hubs in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

VI. New Business

- a. CVDA has signed on with Michael Baker International (MBI) for Long Range Transportation Planning (LRTP) process funded by Denali Commission. V. Rego and Hoke discussed road show planning process and website update to connect stakeholders with area resources and project updates, and to keep users apprised of transportation projects in the area. Boniek mentioned the need for a comprehensive map of the transportation corridors, roads, etc. with an interactive option to add comments on particular sections to gather as well as disseminate information. Nelson mentioned that Michelle Duncan with ADOT GIS planning section may have information useful for MBI as we develop the map on the site to make it user friendly, dynamic, and interactive. Rego said the state already has RS2477 and 17B easement maps, as well as ADOT 511 maps, and Boniek said that the 511 concept works very well for what he's thinking about. Valentine said the CVDA website would be a great place to let local businesses advertise, and to help connect visitors and others in the area with helpful resources. Hoke said late fall-early winter is the target to have the site revamp done. Valentine asked if there are any trails mapped for the area, NPS, etc. Discussion ensued. LRTP discussion continued on the public engagement process to find out what the various communities in the area need.
- b. SS4A: Safe Streets for America Grant (SS4A): CVDA is co-applicant with Denali Borough and city of Delta Junction to improve safety in the various communities. CVDA is considering walking bridges over the heavier-used fishing rivers to improve safety (esp. the old road bridge over Klutina). Connectivity with area trails could be considered down the road to connect the project to improved tourist experience. Grant is shared among the 3 applicants (\$350k total) with required funding or in-kind match. Thriving Communities grant in partnership with AML to help rural communities improve transportation needs and economic opportunities.

- c. CRV-RPO Report for the CVDA Board Meeting: Hoke solicited comments from the board for the reporting to CVDA and DOT.
- d. Other New Business

The trails question keeps popping up: Andy Burnham, owner Tolsona Ranch House, has inquired about the trail to Tolsona mud volcanoes. Discussion ensued about the opportunity for collaboration with road construction projects whereby sections of non-motorized “bike path” could be added on to help improve user experience and safety for non-motorized users in the area, as well as safety in keeping the recreational bicyclists out of the highway roadway. Meg Jensen and some others have been working on some trails ideas but may need help. A trails committee may need to be revived to identify existing trails and help connect users and maintenance volunteers with them. Rego mentioned a DNR grant for trails. Valentine mentioned reviving the snowmachine club to help get mechanical trail clearing done, as well as grant funding, in the winter to help re-open some trails that are getting overgrown. Discussion of the Aspen Trail and land ownership ensued; the trail is in dire need of maintenance/clearing downed trees.

Valentine thanked the Bonieks for the gracious use of their space and inquired about the possibility of the ARDOR getting its own office space for work to be done and users to connect with resources. Hoke said CVDA is in process of doing so. Discussion followed on the need for better facilities at/near the airport as an economic driver and provision of services for pilots as well as locals, to help bring people back to the area, etc. GKN is the largest airport between Anchorage and Tok, and it used to be a much busier place. The committee discussed possible ways to revive traffic here.

VII. Public Comment

M. Rego introduced the need for rural medevac facilities and said that several airstrips have seen discontinued state maintenance. Discussion ensued on the economic advantages of rehabilitating some of the outlying strips, as well as having a dedicated medevac aircraft at GKN to improve safety and response time. He also inquired about administrative code amendments and helping improve signage along this area’s roads for services to help travelers (e.g., next fuel or rest area signage like on the Parks Hwy). He pointed out that not all regions of the state match the administrative code, especially this large, widely-dispersed area. Discussion ensued on difficulties this area has had securing basic signage like mileposts. Boniek gave background information on the variables that go into medevac services/facilities, including the VA, Medicare, and IHS pre-authorization rules that can hinder providers and make it cost-prohibitive to even get going. The expenses and liabilities involved in medevac services are daunting for small businesses, and discussions with larger

providers like Guardian found this area to be inadequate for them to establish a base. Hoke mentioned the IRT program as a possible route to address this issue.

VIII. Adjourn: Boniek moved to adjourn; Becker seconded; motion carried, meeting adjourned 7:15 PM.

IX. Next Meeting: August 6, 2025, at 5:30 PM, same location

The RPO follows Title VI code for meetings.