

COPPER RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Monthly Committee Meeting

August 6, 2025 at Copper Valley Air Conference Room at Gulkana Airport

- I. Call to Order 5:33 PM
Roll call: Terry Valentine (chair), Dennis McGlothin, Martin Boniek, Jason Hoke, Jerry Lesemann, Brett Nelson (remote), Ryan Anderson (remote), Michael Deegan (remote), John Becker (remote). Quorum established.
Guests: Sharon Daniel, Colleen Merrick (CRWP/CRNA), Tell Hand and Lakota McRoberts (CRWP/CRNA), Victoria Rego (remote)
- II. Approval of Agenda: Motion - Lesemann; second M. Boniek. Motion passes.
- III. Motion to approve minutes from June 11, 2025: Motion – McGlothin; 2nd by M. Boniek. Motion carries.
- IV. DOT&PF Report
 - a. Simpson Hill update: Nelson reported that the Simpson Hill section replacement project is still a couple years out, per the STIP Amendment #2, and per DOT monitoring status. The design process is in the works, and in the meantime, DOT will be installing guardrails from the project just south on the Richardson. Granite will complete this work, estimated by September 30, 2025. Valentine asked if this section is going to be replaced or moved further away from the bluff. Nelson said the plan is to relocate this section several hundred feet to the west of its current location. Boniek asked how long it will be until the current section of road is no longer in use. Nelson indicated that the area is being closely monitored, and should it be determined failure is imminent, the project may be accelerated, but as of now, it is estimated for 2027-2028, as there are numerous projects statewide and limited resources. Valentine asked if DOT has a contingency plan if the bluff does fail. Nelson said they have excellent crews who can handle it with an alternative route. Boniek shared his experiences with big riverbank slides up and down the Copper River and said he has seen huge areas collapse overnight. Several participants agreed. Hoke said the general consensus is that Simpson Hill looks pretty bad. **[Addendum via email 8/8/2025: Nelson talked with DOT's Geotech Engineer and he is planning to join the meeting in October with an update and will be available for questions.]**
 - b. Glenn-Richardson Junction Wayside: Nelson said that crews are nearly finished with the major construction work, and it is estimated to be operational very soon. Hoke asked if the large piles of soil covered by white tarps are contaminated. Nelson said he didn't know, but assured the committee there are capable personnel on site to handle it

appropriately if it is. He pointed out that the Hub's old fuel tanks used to sit in that general vicinity.

- c. Regional Road Construction: Hoke shared the general community frustration with the lengthy stretches of road and bridge work from the Tazlina River south to miles 96-108 on the Richardson Highway. Nelson shared that he also experienced about 90-minutes' delay during his recent trip south from Delta. Hoke suggested Chad Heller (DOT Tazlina District Superintendent) might be helpful a helpful participant in RPO meetings. Nelson offered to pass along information and suggestions as Heller's quite busy.

V. Old Business

- a. Website Refresh: Rego discussed the CVDA website updates, and new transportation planning sections, highlighting the improved utility of the site as an information clearinghouse for stakeholders, policy makers, and other members of the community.
- b. SS4A Grant: Hoke discussed CVDA's application for this grant in conjunction with the Denali Borough and the City of Delta Junction and said that CVDA was determined an eligible entity to apply for these funds which will help prepare traffic safety improvement plans in these areas. For the Copper River region, he mentioned pedestrian bridge extensions for several of the highway river crossings where there is often foot traffic in the road (e.g. seasonal fishing and recreational users). Hoke asked Commissioner Anderson about the status of the Thriving Communities grant. The commissioner said that there is a backlog of applications that are being reviewed and verified for eligibility. He was optimistic that this application would be approved.
- c. ROW: Hoke said there are surveyors working in Glennallen. Sharon Daniel? asked how much was going to be surveyed, if all the corners of the ROW property would be. Nelson said he would investigate and follow up with Hoke. **[Addendum, via email 8/8/2025: Nelson talked with Troy Hicks about the survey work and he said the corners are done.]**

Valentine asked if anyone had any questions about the old business before moving on to the new; none raised.

VI. New Business

- a. Tok Cutoff – Richardson Hwy junction missing signage: Hoke shared several Gakona residents' concerns about missing/inadequate signage on the Richardson Highway for the Tok Cutoff/AK-1 as there have been several northbound vehicles missing the turn and pulling into Saylor's Pit to turn around. Discussion ensued about what signage was present. Nelson said he would investigate with Heller and follow up. **[Addendum, via email 8/8/2025: Nelson contacted Heller, who is out for a few days, but should hear back soon with more information.]**

- b. MBI- Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP): Hoke discussed the LRTP process that this RPO is the first in the state to conduct. One of the goals is to help create some boilerplate tools to help other communities throughout the state with their own long range transportation plans, which can be used as fulcrum for other funding opportunities. This planning process aims to identify community needs and prioritize transportation infrastructure maintenance or improvement and involves a multi-source approach. It will generate data from community visits, presentations, surveys, and advisory groups comprised of knowledgeable local representatives from across the region.

The first community roadshow visit will be in McCarthy, Friday, August 15, 2025, 5:00 – 7:00 PM at the McCarthy Lodge. Hoke anticipates some of the senior legislative staff visiting the region being able to attend the meeting. Rego shared details about the community survey, which asks about user's modes of transportation, travel times for various daily and seasonal activities, and what their ranking of projects for funding focus is. The survey is now available for the public to complete via online or paper format. Preliminary results indicate 37 surveys have been completed; the goal is 150. The first advisory group meeting has been moved to later in September, due to the advisory group members' unavailability with summer's crush of activity.

Commissioner Anderson shared that the statewide LRTP update kicks off August 15, 2025, and they will be asking for transportation users' stories, for Alaskans to share how they use the state's various transportation systems.

VII. Public Comment

Hand asked about contact information for Simpson Hill monitoring. Nelson said that guardrails will be installed by the end of September and they will be a good visual to help keep an eye on the bluff erosion.

Merrick inquired about the LRTP advisory group meetings and composition. Rego outlined the plans to hold three virtual meetings, approximately 60-90 minutes each, over the next 18 months to gather regional transportation project needs and funding priorities. Merrick suggested someone from CRWP as a group participant; Hoke invited Merrick to provide the candidate's contact information to him for follow up.

Lakota McRoberts inquired about invasive weed seeds in gravel used by DOT&PF.

Discussion ensued about how DOT sources its gravel. Commissioner Anderson and Nelson discussed the specifications and guidelines DOT follows regarding weeds in gravel, as well as the partnerships with organizations to help mitigate the spread of invasive weeds.

Colleen Merrick mentioned that Delta burns their gravel, and the CRWP representative offered to help with burning gravel here.

Valentine asked for additional comments or questions; none followed. He thanked everyone for their time and participation.

VIII. Adjourn: McGlothin moved to adjourn; Martin B. seconded; motion carried, meeting adjourned 6:29 PM.

IX. Next Meeting: October 1, 2025, at 5:30 PM, same location

The RPO follows Title VI code for meetings.