

House CS for CS for Senate Bill 260 (TRA) am: Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Federal transportation planning regulations require the designation of metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) for urbanized areas with a population of at least 50,000. The current regulations provide the latitude for states and MPOs to establish the voting membership of the policy body, encouraging participation and cooperation by local elected officials, transportation officials and appropriate state officials. The membership of policy committees vary across the United States, some of which include state legislators.

Alaska currently has two federally designated metropolitan planning organizations: the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) and the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS). The House Committee Substitute for [Senate Bill 260](#) establishes under state statute, metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) and the makeup of the policy committee for the Anchorage Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The bill also improves Alaska's highway planning statutes by streamlining the design requirement for highway upgrades and new construction projects within an MPO.

The AMATS policy committee currently consists of five members: the Mayor of Anchorage, two members of the Anchorage Assembly, and representatives from both the State Departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation. To broaden the representation for Anchorage residents, the House CS for Senate Bill 260 increases the members of the policy committee from five to nine by adding two Anchorage-area legislators as non-voting members and two members of the public; one to be designated by the Municipality of Anchorage and one appointed by the Governor. The bill also provides the Governor the flexibility to appoint additional voting and non-voting members in the future, which is consistent with federal policy.

The Anchorage MPO policy committee has programmed over \$1.2 billion in federal funding for transportation projects, including state and municipal roads projects, since 1981. The current process of prioritizing and allocating this funding for transportation projects within Anchorage is difficult to understand and has long been the source of discontent among Anchorage residents. It's time to change the process to better address Anchorage's transportation needs and to be more responsive to the needs of the community.