

ARCTIC TRANSPORTATION FUTURES

Workshop Statement and Recommendations

Arctic transportation futures are at a crossroads. Increasing global connectivity, climate change, geopolitical tensions, tourism and resource extraction are reshaping mobility and access across the region. At the same time, Northern communities depend on transportation systems that are essential to sustain local livelihoods and cultural practices, yet these systems have historically reflected external interests more than local priorities. Reconciling these global drivers with local perspectives is both a strategic necessity and a governance challenge – one that the 4th International Conference on Arctic Research Planning (ICARP IV) must address to inform future Arctic research planning.

Recognizing the need to address this challenge, the European Research Council (ERC) project InfraNorth convened the workshop “Arctic Transportation Futures: Reconciling Local Needs and Global Drivers” on September 25, 2025, at the University of Vienna (Austria) with financial support from the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC). Invited online and in-person participants represented government organizations, regional planning authorities, private businesses and research institutions from Arctic and non-Arctic countries, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices. Acknowledging the relevance of ATS for the quality of life in the North, at the conclusion of the one-day workshop, participants identified a set of recommendations to guide more inclusive and sustainable ATS research planning:

- » The overarching principle and priority should be that ATS **benefit local communities**. We understand that the development of ATS is increasingly driven by national and international interests, be they military or economic, including moves toward a “green transition.” Still, **meaningful engagement and co-creation with Indigenous and local rights- and stakeholders should be the norm**. This includes **greater transparency and accountability** of all the actors. While we need to acknowledge **conflicts of interest** where they exist, the goal should be **informed consent through dialogue**.
- » The **cumulative impacts of ATS on environments and societies** need to be considered. This should include the monitoring of **post-construction** impacts and effects, as well as mechanisms in place to address **unintended consequences**. Notwithstanding the importance of ATS for people, the **non-human aspects** of the environments impacted by ATS must not be neglected.
- » There should be increased **international collaboration**, such as **regional cross border planning** for ATS or their use in **search and rescue (SAR) operations**. While regional and international transport planning should result in mutual benefits for regions and countries, it should not be used to the detriment of local communities.
- » ATS are closely tied to **economic development**, including the development of **tourism**. The example of tourism shows the **interconnectedness of different forms of Arctic infrastructures**, as it is not enough to have expanded ATS, if there are no capacities to house tourists (or workers) arriving with them. From a local perspective, ATS need to provide **supply security**, which points to the fact that ATS need to contribute to the **preparedness of the logistic system** of a given community or region.
- » ATS are an exemplary field where more **transdisciplinary knowledge co-creation**, through a **dialogue between science and society**, is needed. We need to strengthen co-operation between planners, society and science, based on **open communication and the free dissemination of research results**. A precondition for such relationships is **mutual trust**, which can only be achieved through ongoing engagement.

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