

DRAFT CONCEPT REPORT

Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange

CSHWY00298

November 2021

Prepared for:

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AADT	Average Annual Daily Traffic
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AMATS	Anchorage Metropolitan Transportation Solutions
ASATP	Alaska Statewide Active Transportation Master Plan
DOT&PF	State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
H2H	Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Connection Project
LRTP	Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan “Let’s Keep Moving 2036”
MADT	Mean Average Daily Traffic
MCR	Midtown Congestion Relief
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
mph	miles per hour
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NHS	National Highway System
OS&HP	Official Streets and Highways Plan
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PTR	the Permanent Traffic Recorder
ROW	Right-of-Way
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is proposing to construct a new interchange at the intersection of 36th Avenue and the Seward Highway to improve safety and connectivity and reduce delay (Figure 1).

This intersection is one of the busiest and most crash-prone in Alaska. Bicyclists and pedestrians report that it is difficult to cross the highway and users report a general lack of east-west connectivity in the area. Planned improvements include grade separations, highway ramps, non-motorized facilities, and new frontage roads connecting Tudor Road to 36th Avenue. This project will:

- Improve flow for all travel modes
- Support the separation of local trips from through trips
- Improve facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Increase safety
- Reduce delays

This is currently a state-funded project. DOT&PF plans to seek federal funding for future stages by adding this project to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

This Concept Report outlines the proposed project, documents the identified issues, and presents preliminary concepts to be considered during the alternative development phase.

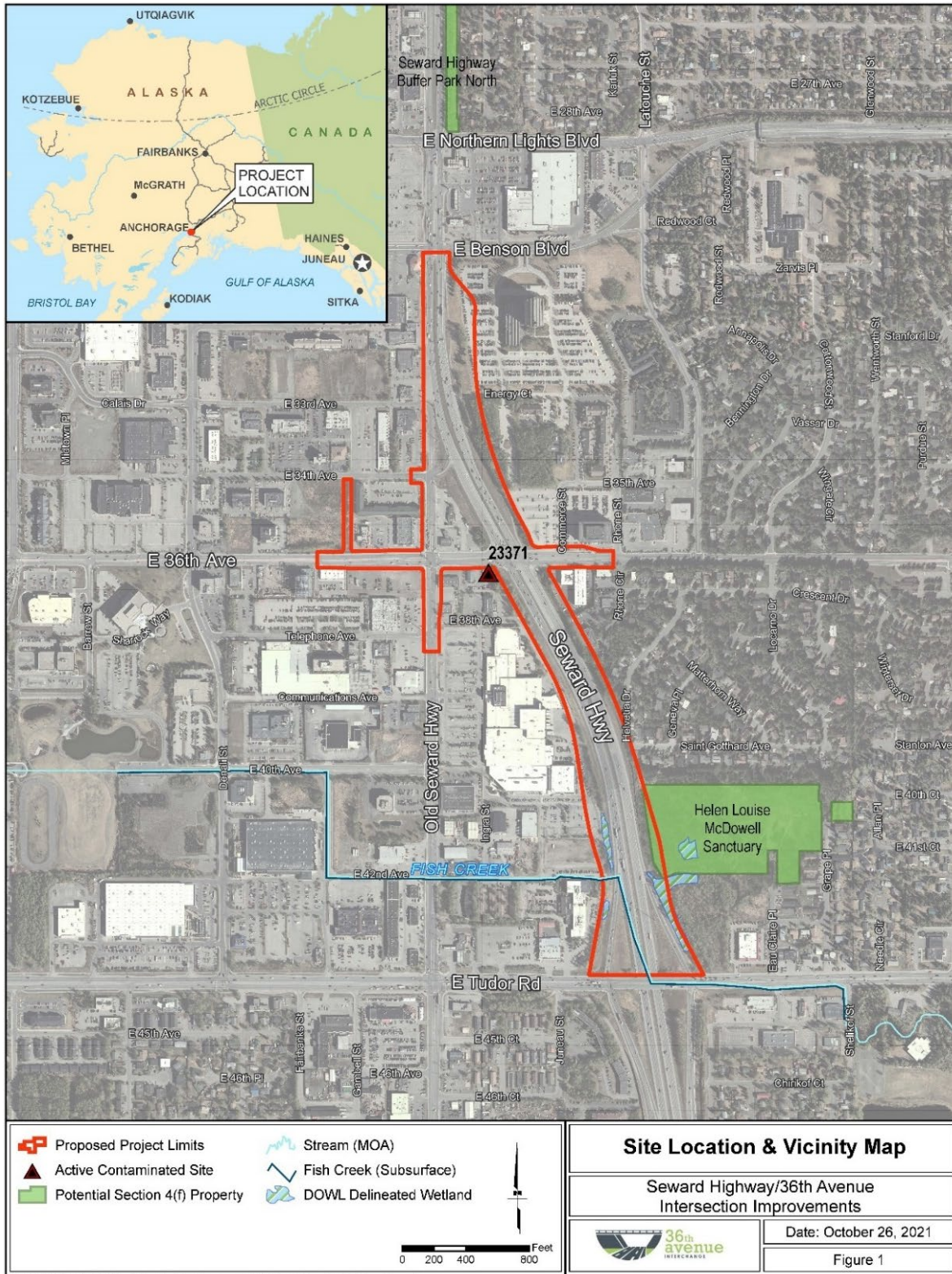


Figure 1: Project Location

1.2 Background

The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project has a long history dating back at least to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) Major Corridors Study (March 1982), which evaluated alternatives to connect the Seward Highway from its intersection with Tudor Road through downtown Anchorage to the Glenn Highway. This project grew into the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Connection Project (H2H), which was paused in 2011 due to concerns about the scale of the project and public push-back.

In 2012, DOT&PF chose to focus only on the Midtown section of the previous H2H project, as alternatives for improvements between the Tudor Road interchange and Chester Creek shared the same configuration and would not jeopardize flexibility to ultimately create a connection between the Seward Highway and Glenn Highway. In late 2012, DOT&PF further revised the project scope to focus on a standalone project at the intersection of Seward Highway and 36th Avenue. This project was named Seward and 36th Improvements. The project proceeded to approximately 35 percent design, but there were significant public concerns raised about the preferred alternative interchange layout, particularly northbound access to Seward Highway from 36th Avenue. As a result of the public response, the project was paused in early 2015.

In 2017, DOT&PF moved forward with a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study focused on the Seward Highway from the Tudor Road Interchange to approximately 20th Avenue (known as Midtown Congestion Relief, or “MCR”). The PEL Study recommend five separate projects with independent purpose and need and logical termini that could be constructed to alleviate congestion and enhance safety. The first project moving forward from the MCR PEL Study is the 36th Avenue Interchange, which is a combination of two projects recommended in the PEL Study.

2.0 AREA CONTEXT

The study area for this project is 36th Avenue between approximately LaTouche Street to the east and Denali Street to the west, and approximately one mile along the Seward Highway between the Tudor Interchange to the south and Benson Boulevard to the north (Figure 2). The project area is located within three Community Council areas:

- Midtown
- Rogers Park
- Tudor Area

The Seward Highway corridor is an important interface between the predominantly residential areas to the east and the commercial areas to the west. The Midtown regional employment center and commercial area to the west includes extensive medium to large office buildings and a variety of small to large retailers.

Residential land uses, primarily to the east of the Seward Highway, include large areas of single and two-family housing, and some of the oldest neighborhoods in Anchorage are within the study area. These neighborhoods include Geneva Woods, College Village, and Rogers Park. Other residential areas are more dispersed throughout Midtown, and include a mix of single and two-family housing, as well as

higher density housing types. The American Community Survey estimates for 2014-2018 within a one-mile radius of the intersection of 36th Avenue and the Seward Highway contains approximately 3,674 households with 9,597 residents. Children under 18 make up 18 percent of household residents within the area, 15 percent are senior citizens, and 48 percent of residents are people of color. This population area reports as diverse, with approximately 24 percent primarily speaking a language other than English at home.¹



Figure 2: Project Area

2.1 Existing Conditions

The project area is centered on one of the busiest intersections in Anchorage, one of the few freeways in the state, and several smaller but heavily used roadways within Midtown. Existing conditions are variable within the area. The Seward Highway and 36th Avenue intersection is signalized and at grade. It is a high-traffic corridor with inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities, an elevated collision rate, high severity crash rate, history of fatal injury crashes, no north/south pedestrian corridors, and non-ADA compliant pedestrian facilities.

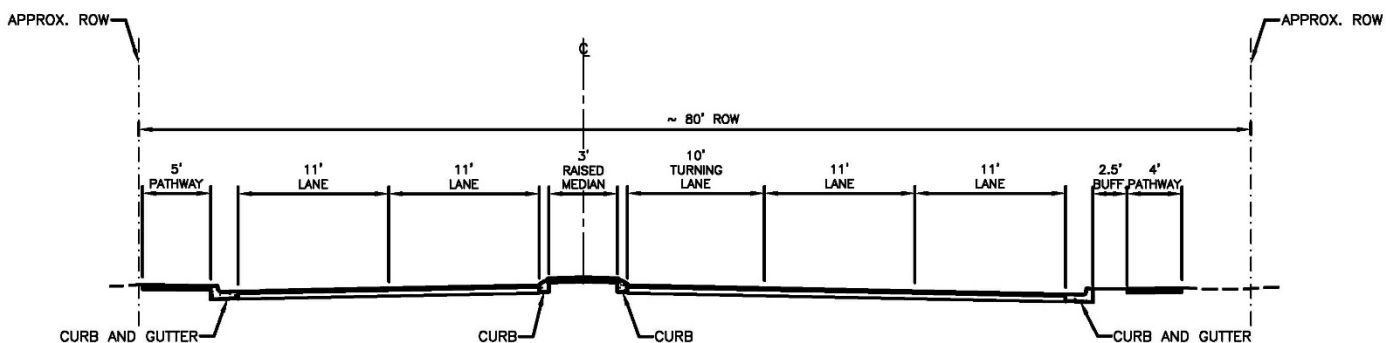
¹ EPA. 2021. One-mile radius around the intersection of 36th Avenue and New Seward Highway ACS Estimates for 2014-2018. Accessed November 9, 2021. <https://eiscscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>

2.1.1 36th Avenue

36th Avenue, a Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) owned roadway, is a minor arterial as classified in the MOA's Official Streets and Highways Plan (OS&HP). Within the project area, 36th Avenue has two travel lanes in each direction until it approaches the Seward Highway, where it expands to include two left-turn lanes, two through lanes, and a right-turn lane in both directions. Right-of-way (ROW) width ranges from 70 feet to 80 feet. Figures 3 and 4 show the existing typical sections of 36th Avenue near the LaTouche intersection and near the Seward Highway Intersection. Figure 5 shows the existing condition of the roadway at the 36th Avenue and LaTouche Street intersection.

The roadway has a posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour (mph) west of the Seward Highway, and reduces to a posted speed limit of 35 mph, east of the highway. The most recently available Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) information provided by DOT&PF shows 36th Avenue's 2019 AADT ranging from 11,426 (near LaTouche Street) to 16,972 (near Old Seward Highway) vehicles per day². It is worth noting that volume estimates for 2020 are approximately 15 to 20 percent lower owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruptions to normal routines.

The existing pedestrian facilities (sidewalks) along both sides of 36th Avenue are narrow, with an average width of 4 feet, and a maximum width of 8 feet. These sidewalks abut the adjacent roadway, which does not include space for roadway shoulders and prevents refuge from potentially errant vehicles. Additionally, the narrow width makes multimodal or cross directional passing along the sidewalks difficult. This issue is compounded by the lack of separate bicycle facilities along the corridor. Current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standard requirements are not fully met throughout the project area. Sidewalks contain steep curb ramps that do not provide a smooth transition from/to the finished grade of the roadway. In addition, no detectable warning strips are provided along directional curb ramps while uplifted joints and worn concrete pose additional tripping hazards and safety



concerns.

Figure 3: 36th Avenue just west of the intersection at LaTouche Street, looking east

² <https://alaskatraficdata.drakewell.com/publicmultinodemap.asp> accessed 11/14/21.

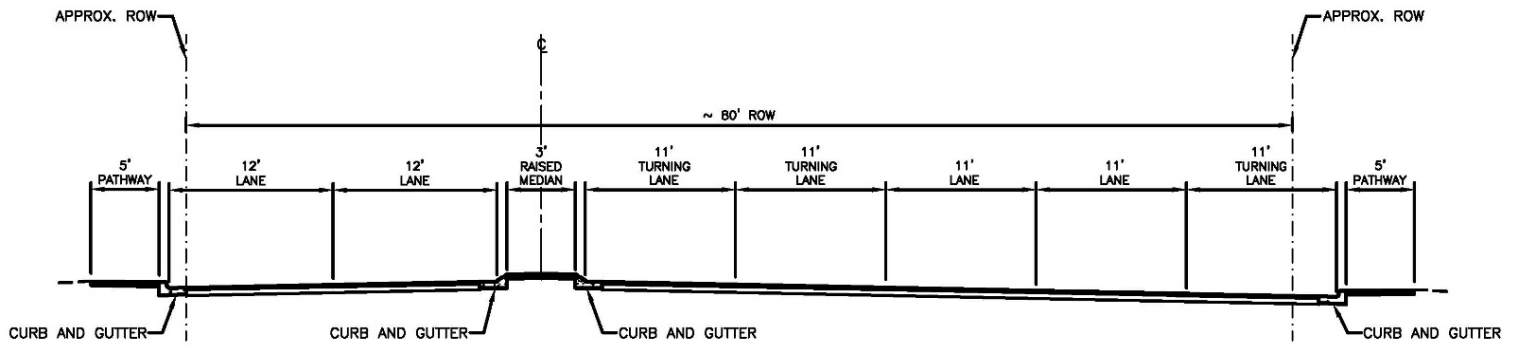


Figure 4: 36th Avenue looking east from the west side of the Seward Highway intersection



Figure 5: 36th Avenue looking west at the intersection with LaTouche Street

2.1.2 Seward Highway

The Seward Highway is classified by DOT&PF as an interstate highway and strategic freight route while the MOA has classified the Seward Highway as a freeway and identified it as a regional truck route. The Seward Highway between Tudor Road and 36th Avenue has three travel lanes in each direction, with two left-turn lanes and one right-turn lane in each direction at the 36th Avenue intersection. North of 36th Avenue, the Seward Highway narrows significantly and in both north-bound and south-bound directions has three travel lanes; north-bound, a right-turn lane into Energy Court becomes a right-turn lane onto Benson Boulevard. The 2019 AADT for combined north and south-bound travel within the project area are 43,262 vehicles per day. The AADT for 2020 was lower at 37,000, but actual traffic data at the Permanent Traffic Recorder (PTR) located at this site is recording an AADT above the 2019 volumes. Refer to Figure 6 for Mean Average Daily Traffic (MADT) by month, showing the year-on-year trends.

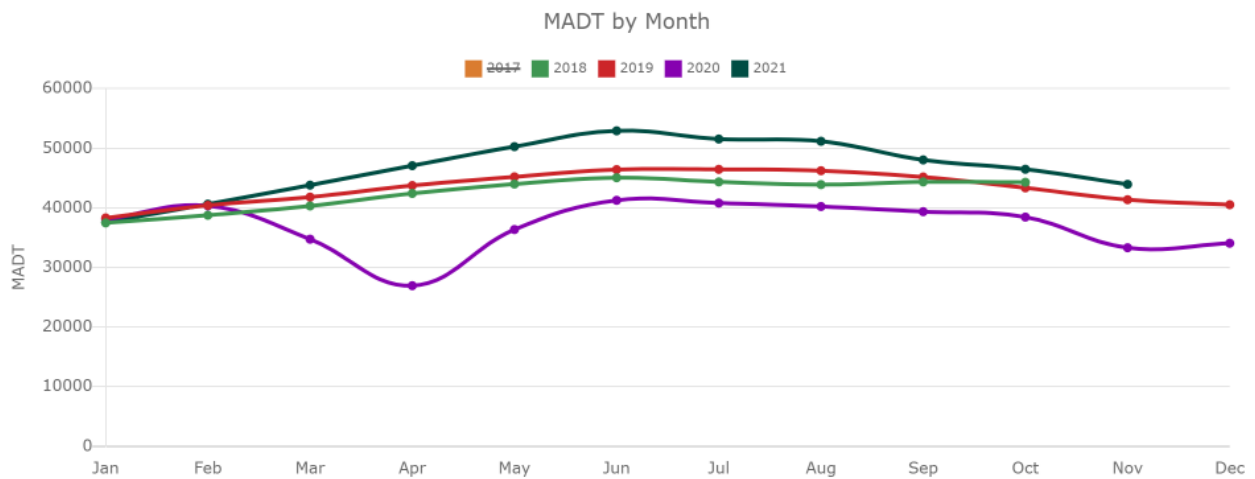


Figure 6: MADT by Month Recorded at the Seward Highway MP 125 Combo NB/SB Traffic Recorder at Mooses Tooth³

Figure 7 shows the existing typical section of the Seward Highway south of the 36th Avenue Intersection. Figure 8 shows the existing typical section of the Seward Highway north of the 36th Avenue intersection.

ROW width ranges from 300 to 400 feet. The roadway has a posted speed limit of 55 mph between Tudor and 36th Avenue, and reduces to a posted speed limit of 45 mph just south of 36th Avenue to 15th Avenue.

³

https://alaskatraficdata.drakewell.com/adtcharts.asp?node=AKDOT_CCS&cosit=000011393000&minyear=2011&maxyear=2021
Retrieved 11/14/21.

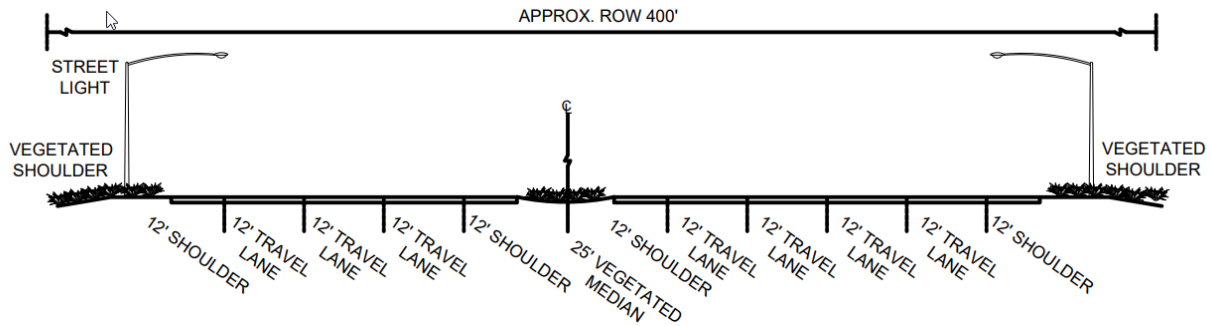


Figure 7: Seward Highway between Tudor Road and 36th Avenue

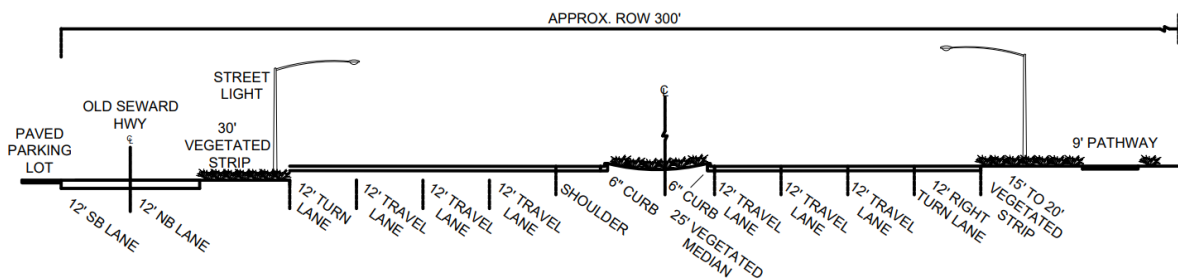


Figure 8: Seward Highway between 36th Avenue and Benson Boulevard

2.1.3 Non-Motorized and Transit Facilities

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are in relatively poor condition or absent and improvements are needed to either add these facilities or increase their safety and comfort.

There are currently no transit stops located within the project area and no People Mover routes traverse 36th Avenue or the Seward Highway in this part of Anchorage.

2.1.4 Land Use

Most of the area surrounding and to the west of the Seward Highway within the project corridor is designated as Midtown City Center in MOA's Land Use Plan 2040. A small area of Commercial Corridor is located near the corner of 36th Avenue and LaTouche Street. The project area includes a significant swathe of single-family and two-family neighborhood designations on the east side of Seward Highway. The Helen Louise McDowell Sanctuary, which is east of the Seward Highway between 36th Avenue and Tudor Road, is designated as a park or natural area. A greenway-supported development growth supporting feature is shown generally along the alignment of Fish Creek through the Sanctuary, extending west across the Seward Highway and approximately following the alignment of 40th Avenue.

The land use designations in the Land Use Plan largely align with existing land uses in the project area. The Midtown City Center is a regional employment center that has been growing over the past 20 years. The area includes extensive medium to large office buildings and a variety of large and small retailers.

The City Center designation encourages continued medium-to-high density development, walkable streets with wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, mixed use residential development, and strong connectivity to residential neighborhoods. The existing land uses, forecast growth, and City Center designation reinforce the need for improved connectivity across the Seward Highway corridor for non-motorized and motorized users and emphasizes the need for convenient, safe, and high-capacity access to the arterial and freeway network.

3.0 GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan “Let’s Keep Moving 2036” (2016)

The Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan “Let’s Keep Moving 2036” (LRTP) is a system-level transportation plan that addresses all modes and identifies policy priorities. It does not list projects and identify local transportation priorities. The 2036 vision for the transportation system is *“to provide a network that enables a robust and growing economy and meets the mobility needs of the state’s residents.”* The LRTP sets a policy framework, including prioritizing investments that increase productivity and reliability and reduces safety risks, focuses investment on the National Highway System (NHS), increased pedestrian and bicycle facilities in urban areas through corridor plans, ensures freight corridors are retained and improved, and addresses corridor preservation and access management in corridor plans.

MCR PEL Study (DOT&PF, April 2020)

The MCR PEL Study focused on the area surrounding the Seward Highway corridor from the Tudor Road interchange to approximately the 20th Avenue intersection through Midtown Anchorage. It sought to comprehensively develop and evaluate corridor concepts that would address safety and congestion issues where the Seward Highway transitions from a controlled access freeway south of Tudor Road to a slower speed major arterial road at 36th Avenue. The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange Project is the first project to move forward from the MCR PEL Study.

Alaska Statewide Active Transportation Master Plan (DOT&PF, July 2019)

The Alaska Statewide Active Transportation Master Plan (ASATP) is a modal plan focusing on walking and bicycling to improve safety, increase accessibility, promote healthy lifestyles, and develop a safer and more efficient active transportation network and infrastructure. The plan has a vision that *“people in Alaska will enjoy equitable, accessible, safer walking and bicycling opportunities as an integral part of daily life.”* The plan does not list specific projects, but sets out goal areas, objectives, and recommended actions to improve active transportation in Alaska.

MOA OS&HP – Maps, Policies and Standards (MOA Community Planning and Development, June 2014)

The OS&HP enables the community to prepare for future development and growth by establishing the location, classification, and minimum ROW requirements of streets and highways required to accommodate future transportation needs of the community. The plan designates the Seward Highway as a Freeway, street class V, which requires a minimum 150-foot ROW to accommodate the AADT of more than 40,000.

The OSHP notes that freeways are limited access, high-speed roadways with grade-separated interchanges whose only function is to carry traffic. They are highly efficient transporters of goods and people, but they are major barriers separating land uses and communities. The OSHP outlines the following general guidelines that should be followed in planning for and phasing freeway construction in Anchorage:

- Freeways should either connect or provide easy access to major traffic generators throughout the urban area. They should also be designed to handle through traffic, although this should be given secondary consideration due to the small percentage of local trips that are classified as through trips within the urban area.
- Freeway locations should not bisect communities, neighborhoods, or other areas whose function would be impaired by such construction, nor should they erect a barrier between populated areas and recreation areas. Where such an area is bisected, provision should be made for access across the freeway, particularly at those locations where non-motorized movement can be expected in the future.
- Construction of freeways should only be considered when the arterial system cannot meet the demand placed upon it. Traffic volumes must be well in excess of the design capacity of major arterials before freeway construction is considered. The total cost of freeway construction, including socio-economic costs must be determined to ensure the best route is selected. Provisions for landscaping, in order to provide a buffer, improve aesthetics, and to serve as a major entrance to and through the community, should also be considered.

36th Avenue is classified by the OSHP as a Class II minor arterial street. Minor arterial streets are intended primarily to move through traffic, but they also provide an important land access function. Access should be at block intervals wherever possible.

- Class II minor arterial streets typically carry 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day. They should have two to four moving lanes and paved shoulders for emergency parking, and a minimum ROW width of 80 feet.
- Residential development should be discouraged from abutting directly onto minor arterial streets. Direct access to commercial property must be carefully controlled to limit the number of permitted driveways. Where possible, driveway access should be shared with adjacent property owners.
- Guidelines for minor arterials:
 - Serve as the distribution link between major arterials and lower classification streets.
 - Discourage direct access to minor arterials from individual lots.

- Connect smaller residential areas with community schools, neighborhood business areas, and recreation facilities.
- Provide landscaping to buffer areas and improve aesthetics.
- Connect neighborhoods by providing for safe pedestrian access facilities.

2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MOA, 2020)

The 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the comprehensive, multimodal plan to create a safe and efficient transportation network that will provide transportation choices, support the local economy and enhance quality of life in Anchorage. It identifies transportation needs that reflect the region's changing population and demand for housing, land use, and transportation choices. It identifies transportation and mobility needs, opportunities policies, and strategies needed to support the multimodal transportation system. Relevant goals from the 2040 MTP include:

- **Goal 1 Preserve the Existing System:** Maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair.
- **Goal 2 Improve Safety:** Increase the safety and security of the transportation network.
- **Goal 3 Improve Travel Conditions:** Develop an efficient multimodal transportation system to reduce congestion, promote accessibility, and improve system reliability.
- **Goal 4 Support the Economy:** Develop a transportation system that supports a thriving, sustainable, broad-based economy.
- **Goal 5 Promote Environmental Sustainability:** In developing the transportation network, protect, preserve, and enhance the community's natural and built environment and quality of life, including the equity of all users and social justice, while considering our northern climate and supports planned land use patterns.
- **Goal 6 Quality Decision Making:** Make sound public investments.

Transportation projects must be programmed into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The AMATS TIP is included in the STIP. Each programming document identifies the most likely funding source and ranks the projects and programs by priority. Table 7-1 of the 2040 MTP lists recommended short-term projects (2018 to 2030), which includes the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project as part of the following broader project description, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange in the 2040 MTP

MTP#	Project Name	Project Description	MTP Goals	Address Federal Performance Area	2018 Estimate	Cost	Funded Prior to this MTP
117	Midtown Congestion Relief Project	Upon completion of the Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study and after the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process identifies a preferred alternative purchase Right of Way for future improvements from Tudor Road to 20th Avenue and extend the Seward Highway frontage roads. Project would include interim projects identified as part of the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL. Project would include non-motorized improvements and consider adjacent land use. Purpose: Connectivity, Access, Congestion, Capacity, and Freight (Regional Truck Route). Key Land Use Features: None.	3, 4, 6	Environmental sustainability, Freight movement/ Economic vitality, Performance of the NHS		\$193,288,000	

Anchorage Pedestrian Plan (AMATS, October 2007)

The purpose of the Anchorage Pedestrian Plan is to establish a 20-year framework for improvements that will enhance the pedestrian environment and increase opportunities to choose walking as a mode of transportation. The plan focuses on pedestrian facilities adjacent to streets and roadways as well as walkways to connect adjacent subdivisions and schools. It documents existing sidewalks in Anchorage and existing conditions for walking. Within the project area, an identified priority is an intersection/crossing improvement at the Seward Highway and 36th Avenue.

Anchorage Bicycle Plan (AMATS, March 2010)

The purpose of the Anchorage Bicycle Plan is to expand bicycle infrastructure and the use of bicycles for transportation. Other integral parts of the plan include programs to improve enforcement, safety, education, and support facilities, such as bicycle parking and signage. The plan considers existing conditions and issues and recommends a bicycle network for the Anchorage Bowl. Within the project

area, the Seward Highway is part of the core bicycle network, and Midtown is identified as a major employment center.

Areawide Trails Plan (Department of Community Planning and Development, AMATS, April 1997)

Because there is intensive use of pedestrian trails, it is vital to provide for pedestrian safety.

Additional Resources

Complete Streets Policy (AMATS, 2018)

Draft Non-Motorized Plan (AMATS, January 2021)

MOA Vision Zero Action Plan (AMATS, 2018)

4.0 PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- Improve facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Increase safety
- Support the separation of local trips from through trips
- Reduce delays

5.0 ISSUES IDENTIFIED

The project team has identified the following concerns. Additional issues and concerns will be documented throughout the design phase.

- Inadequate existing conditions.
 - Agencies and the public are concerned about safety, access, resiliency, and congestion.
- Inadequate access for all transportation modes.
 - There are existing challenges with access along and across the Seward Highway, because of congestion levels and traffic conflicts at intersections and driveways. Without improvements, delays from congestion and access conflicts are forecast to increase over time. Both motorized and non-motorized users experience issues associated with poor east-west connections across the Seward Highway corridor.

- Noise impacts.
 - Area residents are concerned about noise impacts related to future projects, particularly associated with grade separated improvements.
- Light/illumination impacts.
 - Area residents are concerned about light/illumination impacts from future projects.
- Visual impacts.
 - Area residents are concerned about the visual impacts of roadway improvements, particularly grade-separated interchanges that create visual barriers.
- Inadequate bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA-compliant infrastructure. The Seward Highway acts as a barrier for non-motorized travel in and out of Midtown; non-motorized travel improvements/accommodations are needed.
 - This section of 36th Avenue is on the Vision Zero Pedestrian and Bicycle High Injury Networks. Agencies and the public are concerned about safety, access, and congestion.
 - A strong focus on improvements and accommodations for non-motorized users is needed to ensure there is adequate accommodations for all modes of travel in the project area, and all travelers feel they can use the space comfortably and safely.
- Right-of-way impacts.
 - Property owners have concerns that ROW acquisition related to the project will impact access, parking, and future development opportunities.
- Disruption to area businesses and residents that may result from construction.
 - Unavoidable disruption and inconvenience could have a negative impact on stakeholders, including temporary loss of direct access to some properties.
- High intersection crash rates.
 - The PEL Study identified intersection crash rates in the study area are significantly above average.
 - The project team will conduct an updated crash analysis once 2018 and 2019 crash data are available to identify safety issues and propose mitigations.
- Disruption to area businesses and residents that may result from construction.
 - Unavoidable disruption and inconvenience could have an adverse impact on stakeholders, including temporary loss of direct access to some properties.

- Impacts to future projects.
 - Stakeholders have expressed concern that constructing a grade-separated improvement at the 36th Avenue interchange may limit options for improvements at other at-grade intersections (i.e., Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard, and Fireweed Lane). Stakeholders have also expressed concern that constructing improvements at the 36th Avenue intersection may exacerbate safety and congestion issues at other at-grade intersections.
- Contaminated soils.
 - Preliminary data shows there is one active contaminated site adjacent to the project area.
- Impact to the Helen Louise McDowell Sanctuary.
 - The project team is assessing potential impacts to the Sanctuary. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will be followed, and all reasonable efforts will be made to mitigate impacts.
- Water table impacts.
 - The high water table within the project area would require a depressed roadway at the intersection to be pumped continuously. Pumping volumes are significant and dewatering impacts could extend beyond the project area.

6.0 PROBLEM SOLVING CONCEPTS

This project has been considered through several different efforts since at least the 1980s. Most recently, the intersection was evaluated as part of the MCR PEL Study, which was completed in 2020. Five projects were recommended in the PEL study that would provide local street *and* highway improvements for all modes of transportation. This project builds on the work completed as part of the study but takes a fresh look at different alternatives that will improve safety and connectivity at 36th Avenue.

The current intersection layout, using signals with traffic interacting on the same surface (at grade), has reached its maximum capacity. A grade-separated interchange, where one lane of traffic crosses over another on a bridge will:

- Improve facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Increase safety
- Support the separation of local trips from through trips, and
- Reduce delay.

An interchange will increase roadway safety by reducing the potential for vehicle and pedestrian crashes. Roadways with interchanges generally allow traffic to move freely with fewer interruptions, which reduces the risk of collisions. An interchange at this location would mean that Seward Highway traffic will not have to stop at 36th Avenue. All the alternatives shown in this presentation allow the Seward Highway to flow freely while providing north, south, east, and west options for 36th Avenue

traffic. An interchange at 36th Avenue will also ensure traffic, including walkers and bicyclists travelling east-west, are separated from Seward Highway traffic. This will improve local traffic movements and enable the Seward Highway to operate more effectively as a strategic freight route and part of the NHS.

The project team is in the process of evaluating several versions of two alternatives for the interchange: a loop ramp and a median u-turn. Both alternatives maintain a grade-separated mainline that runs parallel to a northbound and southbound frontage road system while tying into the existing roadway just north of the Tudor Road overpass and at the Benson Boulevard intersection.

Stakeholder feedback to date indicates particular concern over vertical impacts of the proposed interchange. The project team is in the process of evaluating several versions of grade separation, seeking to minimize these impacts. The three alternatives under consideration are:

- Elevating the Seward Highway with 36th Avenue going under at grade (Figures 9 and 10)
- Depressing the Seward Highway with 36th Avenue going over at grade (Figures 11, 12, and 13)
- A hybrid approach in which the Seward Highway is slightly elevated while 36th Avenue is slightly depressed (Figures 14 and 15)

Stakeholder feedback gathered through public involvement activities to date indicates a preference for depressing the Seward Highway under 36th Avenue. This option is proving to be fatally flawed due to the high water table near the intersection and the need to continuously dewater a depressed basin through mechanical pumping, which would have a high operation and maintenance cost. The basin would also rapidly fill with water if the pumping system was not operational, creating concerns for network resiliency and a potential safety issue.

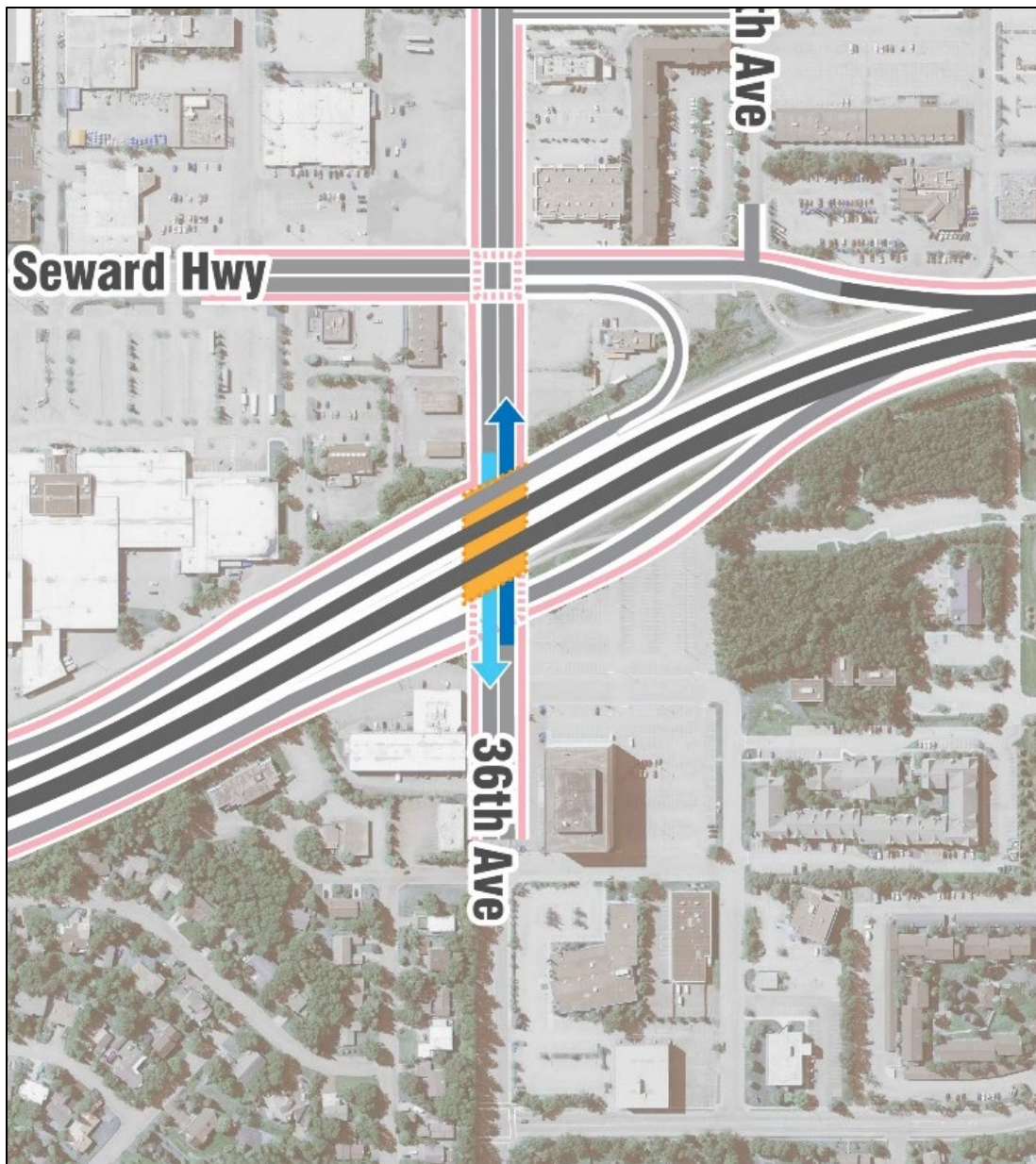


Figure 9: 36th Avenue at grade under an elevated Seward Highway

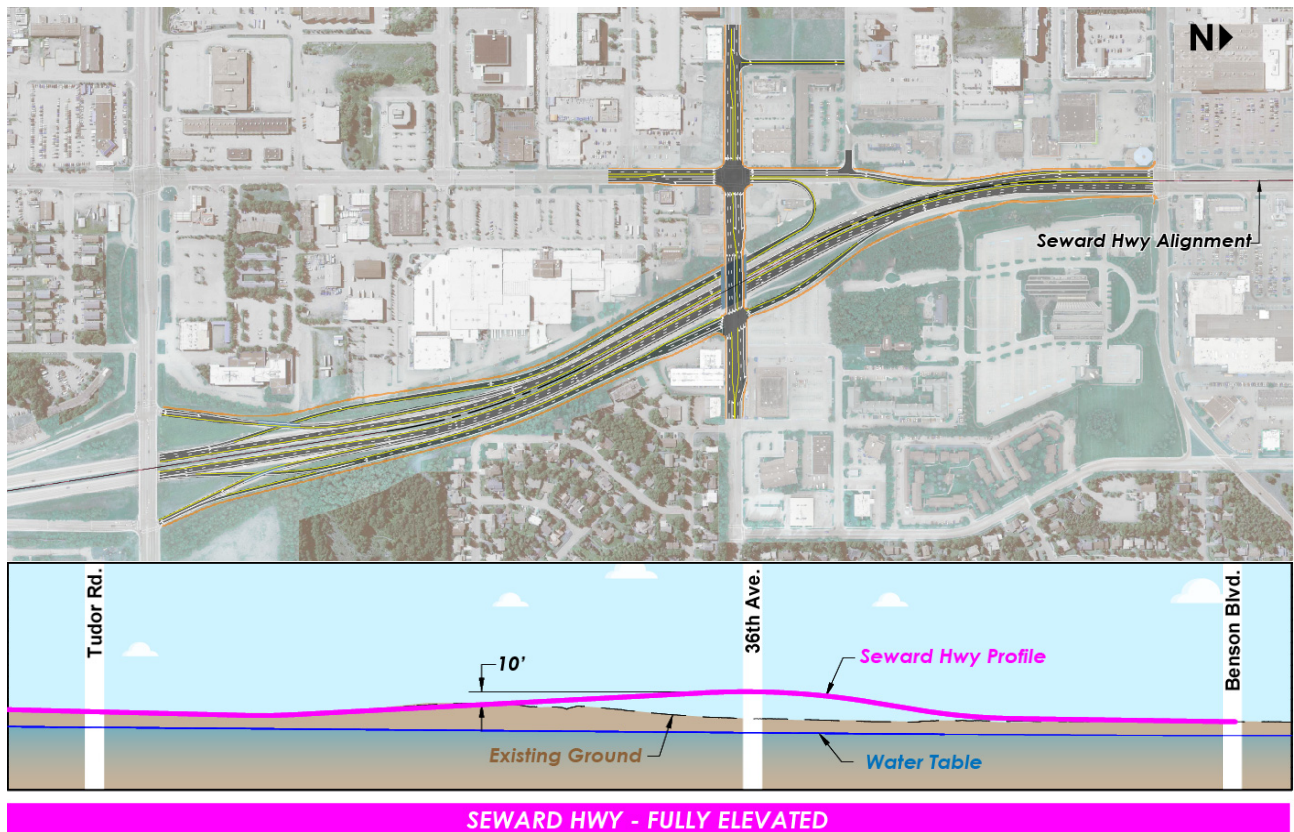


Figure 10: Profile of the Seward Highway elevated over 36th Avenue at grade

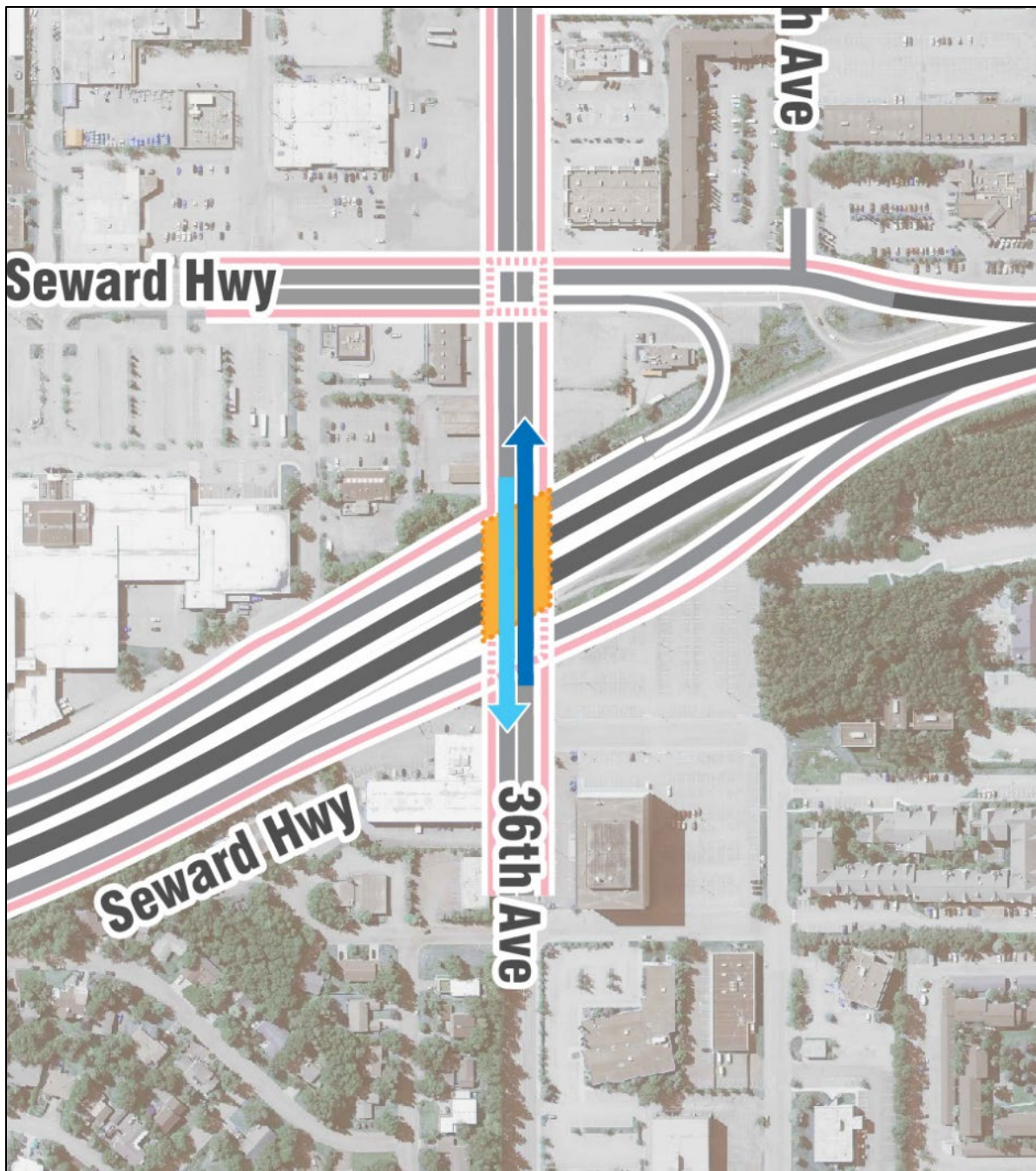


Figure 11: 36th Avenue at grade over a fully depressed Seward Highway

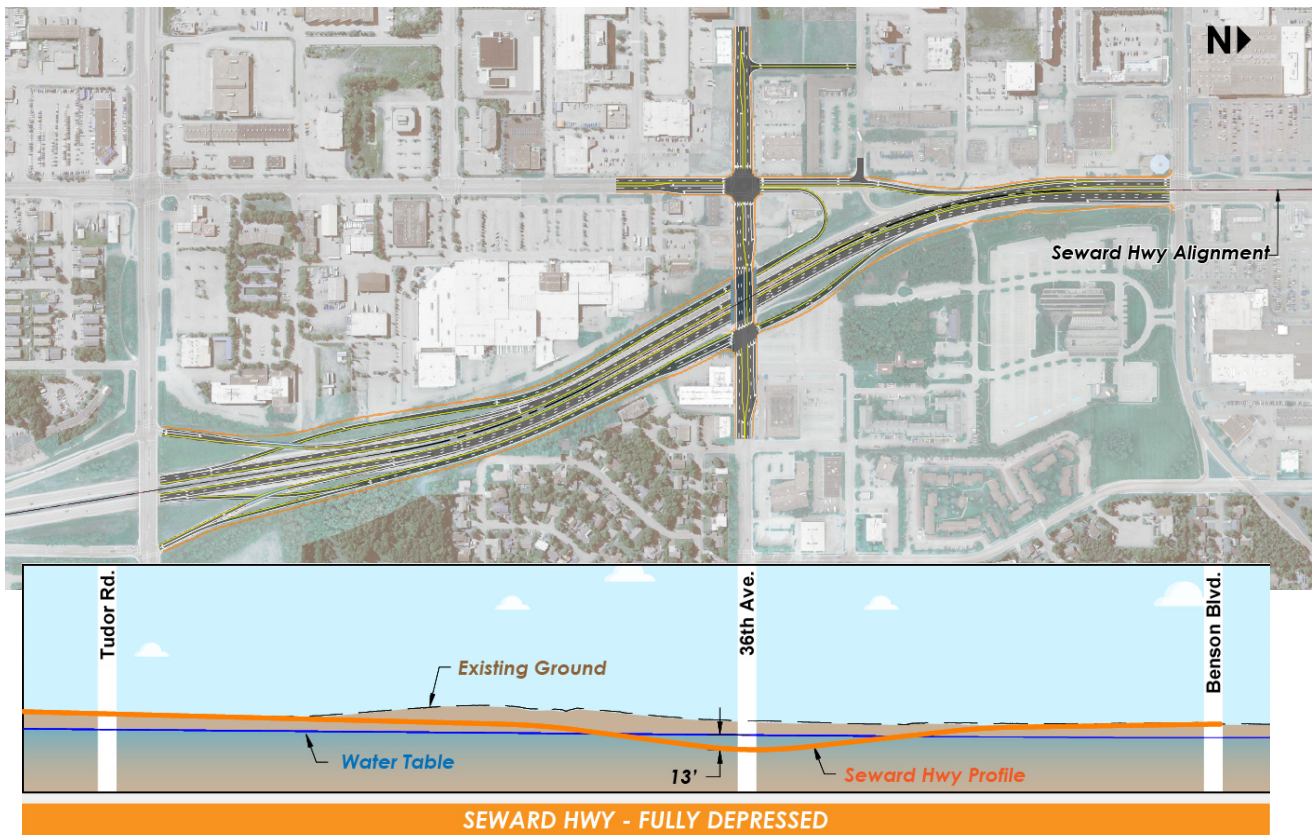


Figure 12: Profile of the Seward Highway fully depressed under 36th Avenue at grade

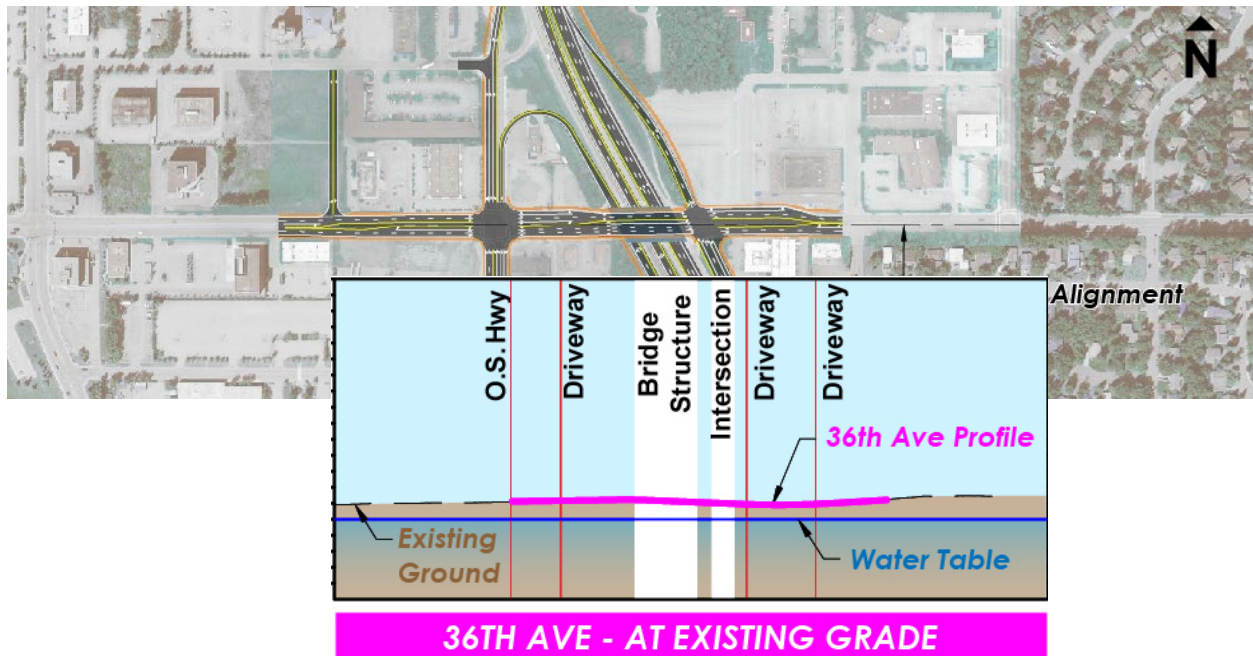


Figure 13: Profile of 36th Avenue at grade over a fully depressed Seward Highway

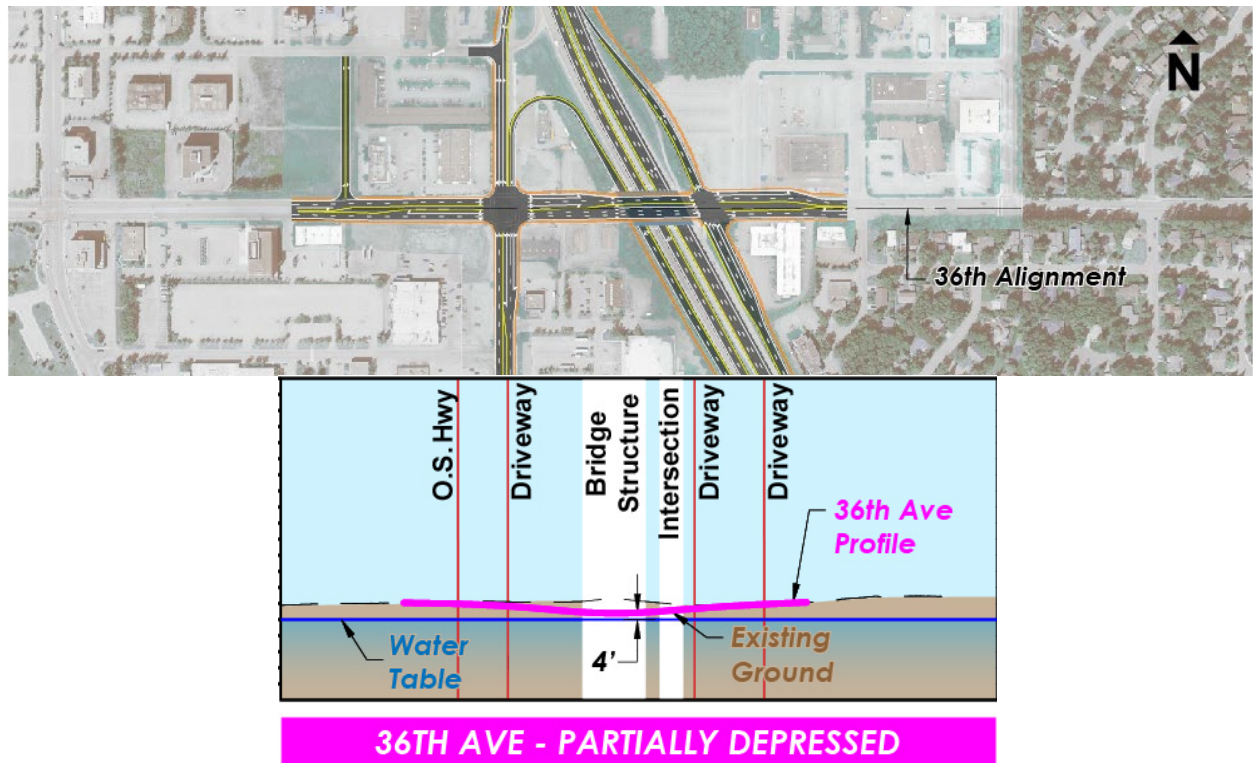


Figure 14: Profile of 36th Avenue partially depressed over a partially elevated Seward Highway

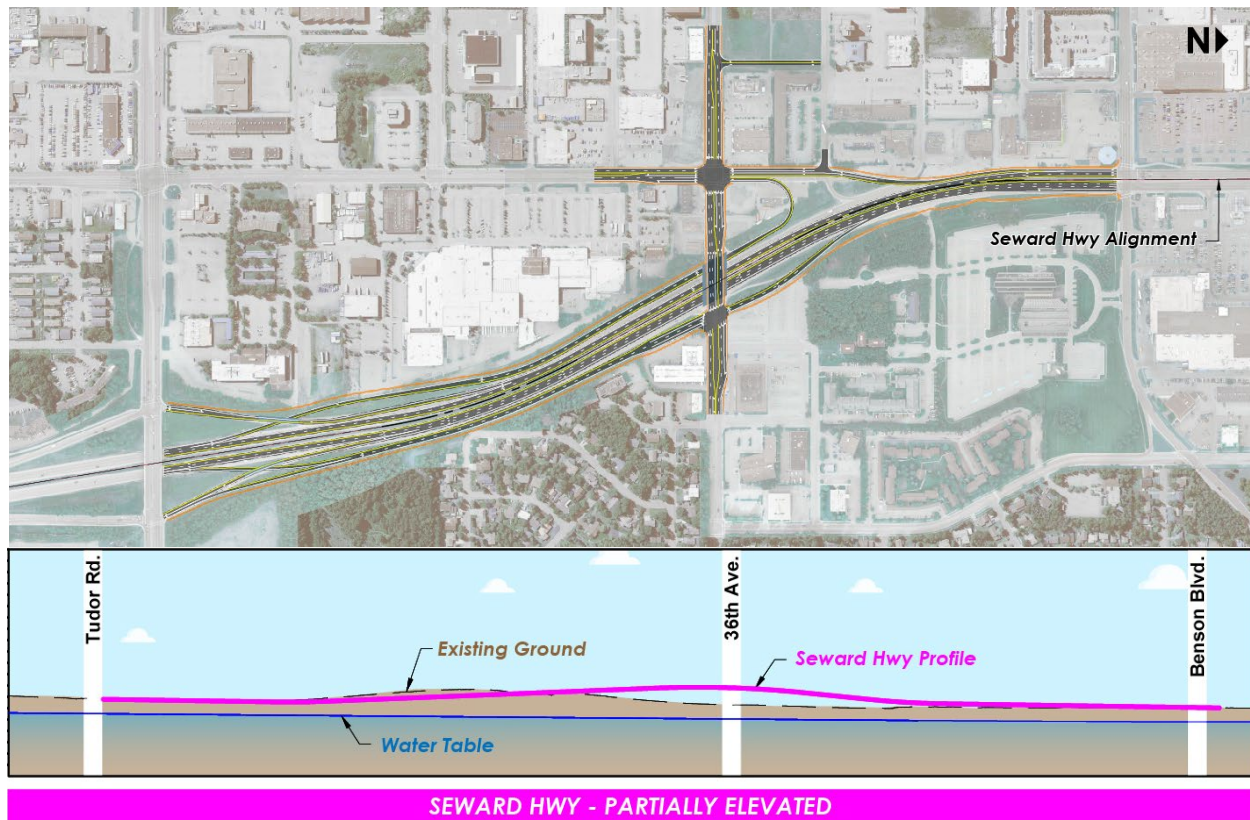


Figure 15: Profile of Seward Highway partially elevated over a partially depressed 36th Avenue

7.0 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Public involvement efforts for the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project were initiated during the previous project, the MCR PEL Study, which began in 2017 and was completed in 2020. A mainstay of public involvement for the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project has been regular updates to area Community Councils. In addition, the project team held one public open house in March 2021 and has another planned for spring 2022.

The 36th Avenue/Seward Highway intersection is used by a broad range of stakeholders. Stakeholders identified for this project, summarized in Table 2, consist of proximal residents, business and property owners, and agencies, as well as the public traveling in and through Midtown Anchorage.

Table 2: Project Stakeholders

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
Public and Other	• Access Alaska • Alaska Trucking Association • Anchorage Chamber of Commerce • Bike Anchorage • Business owners and non-profit organizations in adjacent areas • Federation of Community Councils ○ Airport Heights ○ Midtown ○ Rogers Park ○ Tudor Area • Geneva Woods Homeowners Association • Property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods
Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies	• Alaska Legislature: Senators and Representatives • Alaska State Troopers • Anchorage School District • Environmental Protection Agency • Federal Highway Administration • MOA ○ Anchorage Assembly ○ Anchorage Fire Department ○ Anchorage Police Department ○ Department of Economic and Community Development ○ Maintenance and Operations ○ Mayor's Office ○ Parks and Recreation ○ Planning and Zoning Commission ○ Planning Department ○ Project Management and Engineering ○ Public Transportation Department ○ Traffic Engineering ○ Urban Design Commission • State Historic Preservation Office • State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation • State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game • State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources • United States Army Corps of Engineers • United States Fish and Wildlife Service • University of Alaska Anchorage

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
AMATS	• Technical and Policy Committees • Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee • Freight Advisory Committee
Utility Companies	• Alaska Communications Systems • Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility • Chugach Electric Association • ENSTAR Natural Gas Company • General Communications Inc.

7.1 Community Council Meetings

Members of the project team have attended numerous area community council meetings since completion of the MCR PEL in late spring 2020 and continuing through fall 2021 to provide regular project updates and answer questions (see Table 3). Resolutions regarding the project that were deliberated and passed by the community councils are noted in the table with astericks and attached to this report in Appendix A.

Table 3: Community Council Participation

Community Council	July 2020	February 2021	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	Sept 2021
Airport Heights		X		X*			X
Campbell Park		X					X
Fairview		X					X
Midtown		X			X	X	X
North Star		X					X
Rogers Park	X	X	X	*	X		X
Tudor Area			X*		X		X

7.2 Open House #1 – March 16, 2021

The project team hosted a virtual open house on March 16 as two separate events: one from 12:00 to 1:30 PM and another from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. Both meetings started with a welcome, showed a 15-minute pre-recorded presentation, asked participants two informal poll questions, and then moved into two smaller breakout room groups for a moderated discussion. More than 80 people participated in the lunchtime meeting and approximately 70 people attended the evening meeting. The presentation included a detailed discussion of the alternatives under consideration with a particular emphasis on non-motorized facility improvements.

The project team asked participants to take a two-minute survey after the meeting and a link was provided through the meeting chat. Twenty-four people took the survey. Survey results showed:

- Open house participants overwhelmingly indicated not feeling safe walking or bicycling through the existing intersection.
- Improved traffic flow along 36th Avenue and improved pedestrian facilities are the two things that most excite people about the project.
- Cost, ROW, construction impacts, property access, and non-motorized facilities are concerns expressed by participants.

The open house meeting summary, which includes a summary of the stakeholder survey results, is attached as Appendix B.

7.3 Anchorage Transportation Fair – November 18, 2020

Members of the project team presented a summary of the project during the 2020 Virtual Anchorage Transportation Fair. The project was also represented at the fair with a dedicated page on the online platform hosting the meeting where the public could make comments and ask questions about the project. During the three-hour event the project's page received 129 views and six people left comments/questions concerning the following:

- Concern about the dangerous existing conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians traveling through the intersection and request for reduced vehicular traffic speed, improved non-motorized crossings, and improved lighting.
- Support for the project's proposed bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Concern about directional movement restrictions with an interchange.
- Questions about the project's impact on the Best Western Golden Lion Hotel and the office buildings between the Seward Highway and LaTouche Street.
- Questions about the environmental process and whether that will be an abbreviated process because of the work completed for the PEL.
- Questions about the degree to which public input heard through the PEL process will be considered in selection of a preferred alternative for the interchange.

Transportation fair participant comments are attached as Appendix C.

7.4 Planned Public Involvement

The project team has developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) that outlines how it will work with stakeholders to communicate the goals of the project and gather input. The PIP also defines how the project team will meet relevant Federal, DOT&PF, and MOA requirements (including the Context Sensitive Solutions Process) for public involvement. Key outreach strategies from the PIP are shown in Table 4. Dates from the original PIP have been updated in the table below as the project schedule has evolved. The full PIP is attached as Appendix D.

Table 4: Key Outreach Strategies

Strategy	Details
Project website and email	www.36thInterchange.com 36thInterchange@dowl.com
Public meetings	March 2021: Present alternatives under consideration to stakeholders for input. Spring 2022: Provide update on design alternatives and analysis methodology. Fall 2023: Present environmental document and preferred alternative
Community Councils and Other Interest Group Meetings	The project team will maintain regular interaction with various stakeholder groups within the corridor, including attendance at Midtown, Rogers Park, Campbell Park, and Airport Heights Community Council meetings at key milestones during the project. The project team will be available to present and solicit comments from other interested groups upon request.
Government/Agency Presentations	Presentations will be made to the AMATS Technical and Policy Committees as well as the AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Freight Advisory Committee (if requested) at relevant project milestones. Assembly members representing this part of Anchorage and members of the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission and Urban Design Commission will be included in all project outreach. If requested, additional government/agency presentations will be scheduled.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

**AIRPORT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 2021-2**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE AIRPORT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL REGARDING
THE SEWARD HIGHWAY: 36th INTERCHANGE PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Airport Heights Community Council (AHCC) was closely involved with the recent Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study;

WHEREAS, DOT&PF and its consultant DOWL are proceeding with preliminary design and environmental permitting of the first PEL project to move forward, the Seward Highway 36th Interchange (hereafter “project”);

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, the project team held its first public meeting; presented four highway alternatives for the interchange; stated that they are evaluating whether the Seward Highway should be elevated above 36th or depressed below 36th, with 36th remaining approximately at grade for all alternatives, and requested feedback on all project issues;

WHEREAS, the project was based on overly optimistic population growth of Anchorage, however the Anchorage population continues has continued to decrease since its high in 2013;

WHEREAS, transportation as a whole is being reimagined due to the COVID-19 pandemic; many offices have closed, relinquished their office space and switched to a permanent work from home model including some State of Alaska offices;

WHEREAS, the AHCC’s January 16, 2020 Resolution 2020-1 regarding the PEL supported a future depressed freeway through Midtown, AHCC opposed an elevated freeway, advocated for the thoughtful design of non-vehicular components of future PEL projects, and advocated for a 35 mph speed limit on frontage roads;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that all highway alternatives for the 36th interchange, whether the highway passes over or under 36th, would be designed to allow future extension of the highway under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that the DOT&PF had not decided whether an Environmental Assessment was needed;

WHEREAS, the no-build and at-grade alternatives will not be evaluated unless an Environmental Assessment is performed;

WHEREAS, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the complete MCR project must be completed; a section by section approach does not address the project impacts or ensure environmental justice for the entire project as a whole;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Airport Heights Community Council continues to support:

1. a future depressed freeway through the council area, passing under 36th, as well as under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed in the future;
2. non-motorized facilities along and across the highway corridor that are accessible, safe, buffered, well-lit, usable year-round, and designed to minimize the winter maintenance effort;
3. a maximum speed limit of 35 mph on frontage roads and 45 mph on the highway through the entire midtown area;
4. an Environmental Assessment for the 36th Interchange Project;
5. an Environmental Impact Statement for the entire MCR project.

NOTE: this resolution is intended to reinforce and confirm the relevance of Resolution 2020-01 as it pertains to the project at hand. Resolution 2020-01 requests several accommodations that will be pertinent to other future PEL projects.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Airport Heights Community Council on April 15, 2021 by a vote of: FOR ____ AGAINST __, ABSTAIN ____.

Carolyn Ramsey, President

ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 2021-02

A RESOLUTION OF THE ROGERS PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL REGARDING THE
SEWARD HIGHWAY: 36th INTERCHANGE PROJECT

WHEREAS, Rogers Park Community Council (RPCC) was closely involved with the recent Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study;

WHEREAS, DOT&PF and its consultant DOWL are proceeding with preliminary design and environmental permitting of the first PEL project to move forward, the Seward Highway 36th Interchange (hereafter “project”);

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, the project team held its first public meeting; presented four highway alternatives for the interchange; stated that they are evaluating whether the Seward Highway should be elevated above 36th or depressed below 36th, with 36th remaining approximately at grade for all alternatives; and requested feedback on all project issues;

WHEREAS, the RPCC’s January 13, 2020 Resolution 2020-01 regarding the PEL supported a future depressed freeway through the council area (RPCC extends from 36th to Chester Creek), opposed an elevated freeway, advocated for the thoughtful design of non-vehicular components of future PEL projects, and advocated for a 35 mph speed limit on frontage roads;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that all highway alternatives for the 36th interchange, whether the highway passes over or under 36th, would be designed to allow future extension of the highway under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed;

WHEREAS, in the March 16 open house, the project team stated that the DOT&PF had not decided whether an Environmental Assessment was needed; and

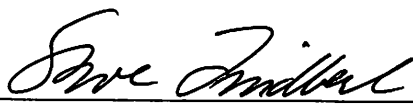
WHEREAS, the no-build and at-grade alternatives will not be evaluated unless an Environmental Assessment is performed;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the RPCC continues to support:

1. a future depressed freeway through the council area, passing under 36th, as well as under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed in the future;
2. non-motorized facilities along and across the highway corridor that are accessible, safe, buffered, well-lit, usable year-round, and designed to minimize the winter maintenance effort;
3. a maximum speed limit of 35 mph on frontage roads and 45 mph on the highway through the entire midtown area; and
4. an Environmental Assessment for the 36th Interchange Project.

NOTE: this resolution is intended to reinforce and confirm the relevance of Resolution 2020-01 as it pertains to the project at hand. Resolution 2020-01 requests several accommodations that will be pertinent to other future PEL projects.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Rogers Park Community Council on April 12, 2021 by a vote of: FOR 23, AGAINST 0, ABSTAIN 5.



Steve Lindbeck, President
Rogers Park Community Council

**TACC RESOLUTION 2021-03 DRAFT
A RESOLUTION OF THE TUDOR AREA COMMUNITY COUNCIL
REGARDING THE SEWARD HIGHWAY 36th INTERCHANGE
PROJECT**

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2021, the Highway project team held its first public meeting; presented four highway alternatives for the interchange; stated that they are evaluating whether the Seward Highway should be elevated above 36th Avenue or depressed below 36th, with 36th remaining approximately at grade for all alternatives; and requested feedback on all project issues;

WHEREAS, in the March 16th open house, the project team stated that all highway alternatives for the 36th Avenue interchange, whether the highway passes over or under 36th, would be designed to allow future extension of the highway under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed;

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has not decided whether an Environmental Assessment or Categorical Exclusion will be used to satisfy environmental compliance requirements;

Now therefore, be it resolved that the TACC continues to support:

1. A future depressed freeway through the council area, passing under 36th, as well as under Benson, Northern Lights, and Fireweed;
2. Non-motorized facilities along and across the Seward Highway corridor that are accessible, safe, buffered, well-lit, usable year-round, and designed to minimize the winter maintenance;

3. A maximum speed limit of 35 mph on frontage road and 45 mph on the highway through the entire Midtown area; and
4. Thorough evaluation of the environmental and community effects of the alternatives, including noise, visual and air quality impacts, wetlands and water table issues, and vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian safety.

APPENDIX B: MARCH 2021 OPEN HOUSE MEETING SUMMARY

Project Number:	State CSHWY00298 / Federal 0001659
Date/Time/Location:	March 16, 2021 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm and 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm Virtual – Zoom
Staff Present:	DOT&PF: Sean Baski, John Farr, Heidi Zimmer Kittelson: Andrew Ooms DOWL: Steve Noble, Renee Whitesell, Rachel Steer, Kelly Kilpatrick, Katie Conway, Sam Tyler, Brad Coy, Alexa Greene
Elected Officials:	State Senator Roger Holland; Anchorage Assembly – John Weddleton and Crystal Kennedy; various AMATS committee members
Total Participants:	150

Meeting Summary

The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project team hosted two virtual project open houses yesterday: one from 12:00 to 1:30 PM and another from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. Both meetings started with a welcome, showed the 15-minute pre-recorded presentation, asked two informal poll questions, and then moved into two smaller groups in breakout rooms for a moderated discussion.

More than 80 people participated in the lunchtime meeting, including members from the project team. Of note, State Senator Roger Holland and his staff, and Anchorage Assembly member John Weddleton attended.

Approximately 70 people participated in the evening meeting, including members from the project team. Of note, Anchorage Assembly member Crystal Kennedy attended, as well as several members from various AMATS committees.

The informal poll questions indicated that many of the participants were residents or regularly traveled through the project area. There was particular interest from residents of the Geneva Woods, College Village, and Rogers Park neighborhoods.

Attendees were then randomly broken out in to two-breakout rooms. Breakout Room 1 was led by Sean Baski and moderated by Rachel Steer and Breakout Room 2 was led by Steve Noble and moderated by Katie Conway, during both meetings each of the breakout rooms had between 25-30 attendees

Questions and Comments Summary

- Impacts to Geneva Woods residents associated with raising the Seward Highway, particularly access, noise, and visual impacts
- Emergency access to the UMED district
- Project cost
- Drainage, pertaining to potential drainage into Chester Creek
- Impacts to snow removal needs

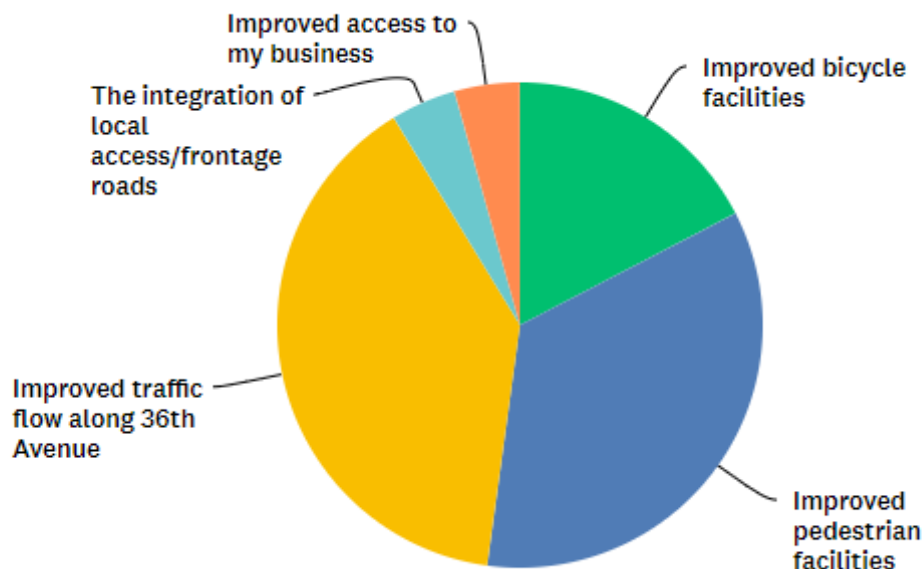
- Design elements (Under/Over, frontage roads, jug handles, tunnels for non-motorized crossings)
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities (improve overall safety for all non-motorized users)
- Potential ramifications to the MOA plan for the Golden Lion hotel
- Project schedule
- Noise study (noise study is required as part of this project)
- Whether the project is considering the traffic impacts of changing travel modes (ride-share, non-motorized), and population changes associated with a declining population trend in Anchorage.

Stakeholder Survey Summary

We asked participants to take a two-minute survey after the meeting and a link was provided through the meeting chat. Twenty-four people took the survey over the two-week period it was live. Results show:

- Open house participants overwhelmingly indicate not feeling safe walking or bicycling through the existing intersection
- Improved traffic flow along 36th Avenue and improved pedestrian facilities are the two things that most excite people about the project
- Cost, right-of-way, construction impacts, property access, and non-motorized facilities are concerns expressed by participants

The following graph summarizes preliminary feedback on the elements people would most like to see from the project:



Detailed Survey Responses

1. Which road do you more frequently drive at the existing intersection?
 - a. 50% Seward Highway (north/south)
 - b. 42% 36th Avenue (east/west)
 - c. 8% Neither (I do not drive)
2. What is your level of comfort when walking or bicycling through this intersection?
 - a. 54% I don't feel safe at all and avoid crossing the intersection on foot or bicycle
 - b. 21% Not applicable
 - c. 13% I don't feel very safe, but I still cross on foot or bicycle
 - d. 8% I feel very safe
 - e. 4% I feel moderately safe
3. What are your primary concerns about the project?
 - a. High financial cost to construct and maintain
 - b. Geneva Woods access
 - c. Aesthetics
 - d. ROW impacts
 - e. Connectivity (36th traffic connecting to Seward Highway north)
 - f. Noise, during construction and after
 - g. Questionable need
 - h. Property impacts
 - i. Access for adjacent businesses
 - j. Panhandlers at intersection
 - k. Concern about non-motorized improvements being sacrificed
 - l. Traffic flow
4. Do you have any additional feedback or suggestions you'd like the project team to consider?
 - a. Earthquake damage mitigation that allows 36th to stay open for access to hospitals in the event of a large earthquake that causes the new overpass to fail
 - b. Design without prohibiting 36th to become a Primary Transit Corridor connecting the U-Med and Spenard areas in the future
 - c. Show winter conditions in future project graphics
 - d. Reduce highway speeds to make Benson Blvd safer
 - e. In future outreach, include information about construction impacts and impacts from the completed project to adjacent neighborhoods along 36th Ave, as well as mitigation plan for managing negative impacts
 - f. Incorporate non-motorized stakeholder concerns/requirements into the project design
 - g. Integrate technology that will provide real-time traffic information to the traveling public
 - h. When construction starts do it quickly
 - i. Keep 36th at grade
5. Would you like to be added to the project mailing list? (10 people responded with their contact information)

**APPENDIX C: NOVEMBER 2020
TRANSPORTATION FAIR COMMENTS**

Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange

Project Engagement

VIEWS	PARTICIPANTS	RESPONSES	COMMENTS
129	9	0	18

MOVE  What should the team consider? FILTER BY SEGMENT  OPTIONS    



lhajduk@gmail.com This is one of the most dangerous intersections in Anchorage for pedestrians and it has a recommended bike route along only the northern end. This intersection will not be safe unless pedestrians are safe. I'd like to see safer intersection with: reduced traffic speed, head start crossing for pedestrians and long enough to not strand pedestrians in the middle of the crossing, adequate lighting at corners, flashing ped light, etc.

21 days ago

 4 Agree



Craig Wood Strongly concur! I often walk across this intersection departing & returning from College View (Stanford Dr neighborhood) to access various Midtown establishments such as library, work & dining. I'm in good running shape but I find the pedestrian crossing almost as dangerous as some of my military assignments in Afghanistan! I really feel for the first older pedestrians & families who cross here. I'd love to take my grandchildren with me but it's not safe so I end up driving & contributing to the traffic congestion & pollution. This is a project that's long overdue! Please proceed!

21 days ago

 1 Agree



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) Thank you for your feedback. Improving non-motorized safety will be a key part of this project. We appreciate your suggestions for enhanced pedestrian facilities.

16 days ago



Tim Musgrove reducing the posted speed limit as most drivers go over the speed limit in Anchorage

21 days ago

 2 Agree



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) Thank you for your feedback. The posted speed limit will be an important consideration as we move forward with design of this project, including potentially reducing the speed limit or changing the intersection to improve safety for all transportation modes.

16 days ago



Craig Wood Strongly concur! I often walk across this intersection departing & returning from College View (Stanford Dr neighborhood) to access various Midtown establishments such as library, work & dining. I'm in good running shape but I find the pedestrian crossing almost as dangerous as some of my military assignments in Afghanistan! I really feel for the first older pedestrians & families who cross here. I'd love to take my grandchildren with me but it's not safe so I end up driving & contributing to the traffic congestion & pollution. This is a project that's long overdue! Please proceed!

21 days ago

 1 Agree



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) Thank you for your feedback. Improving non-motorized safety will be a key part of this project. We appreciate your suggestions for enhanced pedestrian facilities.

16 days ago



Karen Carson yes by all means..

21 days ago



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) Thank you for your feedback. Please refer to our response to question 4.

16 days ago



Pat Redmond Has a design option been selected? I know there were several presented in the past but I haven't been following it this year. We do need to be able to go North from East and West bound 36th. I seem to recall that at one time there would not be ability to travel north from 26th. Also how will this intersection design affect the Best Western property (which by now may be Muni property) and the office buildings between Seward Highway and LaTouche? Things to think about.

21 days ago



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) A design option has not yet been selected for the intersection. The Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages Study recommended two interchange concepts for this location: a loop ramp concept and a median u-turn concept. Early work is underway to explore a broad range of interchange alternatives and a preferred alternative has not yet been identified. We are planning further public involvement, including public open house meetings, in 2021 to present the range of interchange alternatives and receive feedback. We have added you to our mailing list so you will receive notice of the project's progress and upcoming meetings.

The impacts of the intersection design on the Best Western Golden Lion property and office buildings between Seward Highway and LaTouche Street are yet to be confirmed and will be a key element for consideration as we explore alternatives for the new interchange. Our early analysis suggests some small strip right-of-way acquisitions may be required around the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue intersection.

16 days ago

What questions or concerns do you have about the project?



Anne Brooks Has the interchange design been determined? What is the environmental process and will it truly be shortened by the PEL step?

21 days ago



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) The PEL supported an early review of environmental resources in the corridor, developed a draft purpose and need for the project, and identified two potential interchange concept alternatives at 36th Avenue. This work done as part of the PEL study will likely shorten and simplify the environmental process. DOT&PF is currently seeking a Class of Action determination for the 36th Avenue Interchange project. The project team is planning additional public involvement in 2021 to advance design and determine the preferred alternative.

15 days ago



lhajduk@gmail.com There were MANY challenges and opportunities for this intersection identified in the DOT's "Midtown Congestion Relief" public input process. I'd like to know that this input is incorporated for this project.

21 days ago



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) Public input gathered as part of the Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages Study will inform the design of the Seward Highway: 36th Avenue interchange. We plan to continue the dialogue started through the PEL Study process and captured through resolutions from the Anchorage Assembly and Community Councils, and will continue public involvement activities as the preliminary design and environmental process moves forward. We have added you to our mailing list so you will receive notice of the project's progress and upcoming meetings.

16 days ago



When is this project expected to be completed by?

22 days ago



AK DOT&PF (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) The project completion date is still to be determined. We are currently embarking on preliminary design and environmental analysis, and the project is yet to be incorporated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which will enable Federal funding to be allocated for further design and construction activities. We recommend you join the mailing list for the project, and we can keep in touch with you to provide updates as the project progresses.

16 days ago

Would you like to join the project mailing list? If yes, please let us know your name, mailing address and email address.



Craig Wood Yes I'd like to join the project mailing list.

21 days ago



lhajduk@gmail.com Yes, Lindsey Hajduk lhajduk@gmail.com

21 days ago



Mark Erickson Mark Erickson 1332 Matterhorn Way Anchorage, AK 99508 mark50eric@gmail.com

21 days ago

APPENDIX D: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange

State Project No: CSHWY00298



Prepared for:

State of Alaska
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Central Region
4111 Aviation Drive
Anchorage, AK 99519

Prepared by:

DOWL
4041 B Street
Anchorage, AK 99503

January 2021

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ACRONYMS

ACS	Alaska Communications Systems
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AMATS	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
AMC	Anchorage Municipal Code
AST	Alaska State Troopers
AWWU	Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility
CEA	Chugach Electric Association
CSS	Context Sensitive Solutions
DEC	State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
DOT&PF	State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DNR	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPM	Environmental Procedures Manual
FHWA	Federal Highways Administration
GCI	General Communications Inc.
HPCM	Highway Preconstruction Manual
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkages
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PZC	Planning and Zoning Commission
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 PROJECT TEAM

State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) – Central Region

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2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Project Overview

The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue Interchange project will improve safety and reduce delays by constructing a new interchange at the intersection of Seward Highway and 36th Avenue. This is one of the busiest and highest-crash-rate intersections in the Anchorage Bowl. Bicyclists and pedestrians report that it is difficult to cross the highway and users report a lack of east-west connectivity in the area. Planned improvements include grade separations, highway ramps, non-motorized facilities, and new frontage roads connecting Tudor Road to 36th Avenue.

This project will increase connectivity by:

- Improving flow for all travel modes
- Supporting separation of local trips from through trips
- Improving facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Increasing safety
- Reducing delays

Figure 1: Project Area



2.2 Project History

The Seward Highway: 36th Avenue project has a long history dating back at least to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study Major Corridors Study (March, 1982), which evaluated alternatives to connect the Seward Highway from its intersection with Tudor Road through downtown Anchorage to the Glenn Highway. This project grew into the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Connection Project (H2H), which was paused in 2011 due to concerns about the scale of the project and public push-back.

In 2012, DOT&PF chose to focus only on the Midtown section of the previous H2H project, as alternatives for improvements between the Tudor Road interchange and Chester Creek shared the same configuration and would not jeopardize flexibility to ultimately create a connection between the Seward Highway and Glenn Highway. In late 2012, DOT&PF further revised the project scope to focus on a standalone project at the intersection of Seward Highway and 36th Avenue. This project was named Seward and 36th Improvements. The project proceeded to approximately 35 percent design, but there were significant public concerns raised about the preferred alternative interchange layout, particularly northbound access to Seward Highway from 36th Avenue. As a result of the public response, the project was paused in early 2015.

In 2017, DOT&PF moved forward with efforts to relieve congestion in Midtown (Midtown Congestion Relief), which focused on the Seward Highway from the Tudor Road Interchange to approximately 20th Avenue. The first step was completion of a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study to determine purpose, need and scope for roadway improvements along this section of the Seward Highway, and recommend one or more projects with independent purpose and need and logical termini that could be constructed to alleviate congestion and enhance safety. The PEL Study concluded in April 2020, and five separate projects were recommended. Preliminary environmental work and alternatives development commenced on two of the projects recommended in the PEL Study, which sought to complete a frontage road network and at-grade intersection improvements.

In July of 2020, DOT&PF revised the project scope to focus on the 36th Avenue Interchange, which will focus on creating a grade-separated interchange between the Seward Highway and 36th Avenue, with associated ramps and other access improvements.

2.3 Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) details the proposed methods for communicating information with agencies, organizations, and the public for the project. The objective of this effort is to work directly with the interested public and other stakeholders to communicate the goals of the project and gather input. It will also ensure the project team is meeting the relevant Federal, DOT&PF, and Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) requirements for public involvement.

Public and agency involvement on transportation projects completed by the DOT&PF within the MOA is guided by a range of documents including:

- Alaska DOT&PF Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM)
- Alaska DOT&PF Highway Preconstruction Manual (HPCM)

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Assignment Program Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and DOT&PF
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (Chapter 21.03.190) (MOA)
- A Strategy for Developing Context Sensitive Transportation Projects (MOA, 2008)

The HPCM is the FHWA-approved guide for developing and designing federal-aid projects in Alaska, and is being used for this project on the expectation that federal funding will be allocated for design and construction in a future amendment to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). This PIP has been developed in accordance with the requirements and best practices as outlined in the HPCM and the EPM.

The DOT&PF is required by federal agreement to include a disclosure regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), compliance as part of agency outreach and public involvement. DOWL will work with the DOT&PF Civil Rights Office to confirm the most current language prior to publication. At the time of writing this PIP the current language is:

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated November 3, 2017 and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

The DOT&PF Civil Rights Offices notices will be published with all public announcements and Title VI documents will be displayed at public meetings and documented in the meeting record.

The project will follow the MOA's CSS process. This will include submittals to the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission at the Concept Report and Alternatives Analysis (commonly referred to as the Draft Design Study Report) stage. The third submittal to the Urban Design Commission will occur at no more than 65 percent design. Further detail on the CSS process is included in Part 6 of this PIP.

3.0 IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

As noted in Section 2.2, this project follows a long history of project starts. The most recent effort, the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study, developed an extensive mailing list and as this project is immediately following that effort, the stakeholder list will be used as a starting point for communication on this project.

Below is an initial list of stakeholders. Where possible, these entities will be included in the project outreach/ mailing list. This list will expand throughout the project.

3.1 Public and Other

- Property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods
- Business owners and non-profit organizations in adjacent areas

- Commuters
- Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
- Anchorage School District
- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
- Federation of Community Councils
 - o Rogers Park
 - o Tudor Area
 - o Midtown
 - o North Star
 - o Fairview
 - o Campbell Park
 - o Airport Heights
- Alaska Trucking Association
- Bike Anchorage
- Access Alaska

3.2 Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies

- Federal Highway Administration
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Alaska State Senators and Representatives
- State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
- State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Alaska State Troopers (AST)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- MOA
 - o Mayor's Office
 - o Anchorage Assembly
 - o Planning Department
 - o Parks and Recreation
 - o Public Transportation Department
 - o Anchorage Fire Department
 - o Anchorage Police Department
 - o Department of Economic and Community Development
 - o Planning and Zoning Commission
 - o Project Management and Engineering
 - o Traffic Engineering
 - o Maintenance and Operations
 - o Urban Design Commission
- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)
 - o Technical and Policy Committees
 - o Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - o Freight Advisory Committee

3.3 Utility Companies

- Alaska Communications Systems (ACS)
- Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU)
- Chugach Electric Association, Inc. (CEA)
- ENSTAR Natural Gas Company
- General Communications Inc. (GCI)

4.0 STAKEHOLDER ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The project team has identified the following potential concerns. Several of these are drawn from the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study and are specific to this project. Additional issues and concerns will be documented throughout the design phase.

Issue	Level of Perceived Controversy
Area is used by a broad range of stakeholders that travel from throughout the Anchorage Bowl and beyond (residents, businesses, commuting public)	There will be some who support the project and some who do not because of higher perceived impacts than benefits. Public involvement will be closely evaluated throughout the project to ensure adequate public outreach and feedback, given the numerous potential stakeholders and interested public in this project.
Current corridor conditions	Agencies and the public are concerned about safety, access, and congestion.
Access for all transportation modes	There are existing challenges with access along and across the Seward Highway, because of congestion levels, and traffic conflicts at intersections and driveways. Without improvements, delays from congestion and access conflicts are forecast to increase over time. Both motorized and non-motorized users experience issues associated with poor east-west connections across the Seward Highway corridor.
Noise impacts	Area residents are concerned about noise impacts related to future projects, particularly associated with grade separated improvements.
Light/illumination impacts	Area residents are concerned about light/illumination impacts from future projects.
Visual impacts	Area residents are concerned about the visual impacts of roadway improvements, particularly grade-separated interchanges that create visual barriers.
Non-motorized travel improvements/accommodations	Strong focus on non-motorized accommodations is needed to ensure there is adequate accommodations for all modes of travel in the project area, and all travelers feel they can use the space comfortably and safely.
Right-of-way impacts	Loss of parking and direct access for property owners could be perceived negatively.
Disruption to area businesses and residents that may result from construction	Unavoidable disruption and inconvenience could have a negative impact on stakeholders, including temporary loss of direct access to some properties.
Impacts related to future projects	Concern that constructing a grade-separated improvement at the 36 th Avenue interchange may limit options for improvements at other at-grade intersections (i.e., Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard, and Fireweed Lane). Also concern that constructing improvements at the 36 th Avenue intersection may exacerbate safety and congestion issues at other at-grade intersections.

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS

The following subsections identify the methods proposed to reach agencies and stakeholders with project information. The project team will discuss outreach efforts and select other tools for involving the public and agencies if feedback is considered insufficient.

5.1 Mailing Lists

Mailing lists for electronic and postal distribution will be purchased or created and maintained for all property owners, businesses, and residents within 500 feet of the project corridor. Constant Contact will be used to deliver electronic newsletters and other project updates. The project website will include a mechanism for interested persons to request to be added to the email distribution list.

The most recent effort, the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study, developed an extensive mailing list and as this project is immediately following that effort, the mailing list will be used as a starting point for communication on this project.

5.2 Public Open House Meetings

Three public meetings are planned to inform the public about the project and to solicit comments or concerns. Given current public health uncertainties around the global COVID-19 pandemic, these open houses may be virtual, in-person, or a combination on both, depending on the circumstances and guidance from local, state, and federal governments at the time the meetings are being planned. Any pre-recorded presentations created for public open house meetings will be posted on the project website to enable people to review materials and comment if they are unable to attend an open house at a specified time.

For all open house meetings, project stakeholders will be notified via postcard mailed 21 days prior to the meeting, by public notice on the State of Alaska website, by advertisement in the Anchorage Daily News, and by notification to a Constant Contact email list. Meeting notes will be prepared as documentation for project records that will include meeting materials, presentation, and a summary of public comments.

Further detail about each of the public meetings is provided in the subsections below. This part of the PIP will be updated as the project progresses.

5.2.1 Public Open House Meeting 1

The first public open house meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2021, on completion of the Concept Report to present alternatives under consideration. The alternatives will include intersection configurations outlined in the “preferred concepts” in the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study, specifically the:

- Loop ramp grade-separated interchange
- Median u-turn grade-separated interchange

Other alternatives will be developed and presented, together with descriptions of the strengths, weaknesses, and compromises needed to accommodate each alternative. The purpose of the material presented will be to allow the public to understand the layout of each alternative and provide feedback on what elements they would like to see prioritized as each interchange alternative is evaluated (i.e., access, speed, multimodal facilities, visual impact, noise, etc.). This feedback will be used to help guide the design process and will contribute to the future identification of a preferred alternative.

The design decision about whether the Seward Highway will go over or under 36th Avenue will be introduced conceptually during the first open house meeting, but a recommendation on the profile will be reserved until second open house meeting.

5.2.2 Public Open House Meeting 2

The second public open house meeting is scheduled for late summer 2021. The project team will provide an update on development of the alternatives for the interchange, and will focus specifically on the design profile (i.e., whether the Seward Highway will go over or under 36th Avenue).

The project team will present information and create opportunities for the public to comment on their priorities relating to different aspects of the over vs. under profile (i.e., cost to construct, maintenance costs, visual impacts, noise impacts, connectivity between the east and west side of the highway, etc.). This feedback will be used to help guide the design process and will contribute to the future identification of a preferred alternative.

5.2.3 Public Open House Meeting 3

The third public open house meeting is scheduled for December 2021, prior to the submittal of the Alternatives Analysis to the MOA's Planning and Zoning Commission. At this open house the project team will provide an update on the alternatives for the interchange and progress toward identifying a preferred alternative.

5.3 Website, Email, and Social Media

A project website has been established at www.36thInterchange.com using the State of Alaska Look and Feel Standards (<http://alaska.gov/LookAndFeel/>), which is ADA compliant. The website will be maintained with project background information, a current schedule, meeting information, and contact information for the project team.

The email address 36thInterchange@dowl.com will be included on all communication materials. The email address will be linked to a distribution list that includes members from the DOT&PF and DOWL project team.

The project team will work with the DOT&PF public information team to craft and schedule project-specific content for the DOT&PF Facebook page, Twitter feed, and Instagram account. Social media advertising campaigns will be initiated in advance of the public open house meetings.

5.4 Community Councils and Other Interest Group Meetings

The project team will maintain regular interaction with various stakeholder groups within the project area, including attendance at and updates to the Rogers Park, Tudor Area, Campbell

Park, Midtown, North Star, Fairview and Airport Heights Community Councils at key milestones during the project.

Following Section 450.17, subsection “Communities with a Community Council” in the HPCM, a formal letter will be sent at every major project milestone to Community Councils within a half mile of the project area. These Community Councils are Rogers Park, Tudor, and Midtown.

5.5 Project Postcards and Newsletters

A postcard will be distributed to announce the three public open house meetings at least 21 days in advance. The postcard will be mailed, and an electronic version will be emailed to the contact list. Both will contain graphics and text explaining the alternatives under consideration and ask for public input. Additionally, e-newsletters will be distributed at relevant project milestones.

All reasonable accommodation will be made to ensure visually impaired individuals are able to access digital outreach materials, and best practices for ADA compliant email communication will be closely followed. For example, descriptive meta data will be embedded in PDFs used as digital outreach materials in emails or on websites, and text will not be flattened or outlined so that it remains readable by a machine. Alternate formats of print outreach materials can be produced upon request.

5.6 Advertising

Public meetings will be advertised in the Anchorage Daily News, on the statewide DOT&PF Facebook page, through email notices to the project contact list, and on the State of Alaska Online Public Notice system. Meeting advertisements will be prepared in advance to allow for DOT&PF approval.

5.7 Government/Agency Presentations

Presentations will be made to the AMATS Technical and Policy Committees as well as the AMATS Freight Committee and Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee at relevant project milestones. If requested, additional government/agency presentations will be scheduled.

5.8 Media Communications

The project team will coordinate with the DOT&PF project manager and public information officers prior to any media communications. Media communications may include press releases, media briefings, telephone interviews, and communication with elected officials.

5.9 Additional Public Involvement

The project team will conduct additional public involvement, as required, throughout the project. Additional public involvement may include (as directed and agreed by the DOT&PF Project Manager):

- Community Council presentations
- Targeted literature drops to key stakeholders

- Pop-up open houses (road shows)
- Responses to informal requests for information from individuals and/or agencies.

6.0 MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS (CSS) PROCESS

The MOA's CSS process is set out in Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC), and guided by A Strategy for Developing Context Sensitive Transportation Projects adopted by the MOA in October 2008.

Chapter 21.03.190 Street and Trail Review notes that new construction and reconstruction of street and intersection projects involving streets of collector classification or greater in the Official Streets and Highways Plan are required to follow a review process by the planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) and Urban Design Commission (UDC). The stages are:

- A concept report or equivalent, distributed to the PZC as an information item
- The draft design study report, reviewed by the PZC
- The plans in hand design drawings, review by the UDC

The project team will prepare and submit a concept report shortly after the first public open house meeting, in winter of 2021. An alternatives analysis (referred to as a design study report Title 21) will be prepared and submitted around the time of the third public open house, to enable the PZC to comment on alternatives being considered for the interchange. The third stage will be accomplished as part of future work but at no more than 65 percent design.

The project team will maintain communication with the MOA Planning Department to ensure the project progresses smoothly through the identified CSS project stages.

7.0 COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC AND DOCUMENTATION

Comments received via email, mail, phone, or in written form will be distributed to the project team and archived in the project comment database managed by DOWL. All comments and questions will be replied to within two (2) business days.

8.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Guidelines for a successful public involvement process using context sensitive solutions requires a strong commitment from all members of the project team to reach out to potentially affected interests. Below are goals developed for obtaining public outreach throughout the progression of the project.

- The roles of the project team and the public will be defined.
- A working relationship between the community and the project team will be formed.
- Goals and expectations will be clearly defined.

- The project team will keep an open mind to all points of view.
- The project team will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input has influenced project decisions.
- Information will be shared openly and directly to help the public become familiar with the issues and the public process.
- Milestones in the process will be clearly defined, acknowledged, and communicated to the public.
- Visualizations and illustrations will be used to convey design alternatives.
- The project team will encourage the public to provide feedback on elements of the design that are affected by input (landscaping, lighting, etc.).
- Feedback opportunities will be designed in a way that each stakeholder can communicate in their desired form.
- The project team will follow up on all inquiries and comments during project development.

APPROVAL

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Date

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