



# SUMMARY

## Seward Hwy/Alyeska Hwy Intersection Improvements

Z546190000

Public Open House #2

Date | Time: April 22, 2021 (6:00pm - 8:00pm) |

Location: Virtual Meeting Via Zoom |

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### Project Team

- Christina Huber, PE, Project Manager, DOT&PF
- Van Le, AICP, Stakeholder Coordination/CSS Process Lead, R&M
- Marc Frutiger, PE, PTOE, Lead Civil Engineer, R&M
- Derek Christianson, PE, Intersection Design Lead, Michael Baker
- Jeanne Bowie, PE, PhD, PTOE, Traffic Engineering Analyst, Kinney Engineering

For a full list of project team members, see slide two of the attached presentation.

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### Attendees

The meeting was attended virtually via Zoom or conference call. Attendees signed in and out throughout the meeting, with 21 attendees at 6:10 PM during the first presentation, and 19 attendees after the second presentation at 7:00 PM, including project team members. Emails were collected from attendees who provided them to the project team via chat or email.

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### Meeting Materials

The following materials were presented during the Public Meeting and were also posted to the project website ([www.sewardalyeskahwyintersection.com](http://www.sewardalyeskahwyintersection.com)) prior to Open House (see attachments):

- PDF Presentation which included
  - Study Area Aerial Graphic
  - Traffic Data and Graphic
  - Identified Issues Graphic
  - Concept Alternative Graphics (11 alternatives)
  - Video by North Carolina DOT on Continuous Flow Intersections
  - Project Schedule
  - Contact information

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## Meeting Summary

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The Zoom meeting opened 10 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of 6:00 PM. The meeting was recorded for an accurate summary and to make available to those who couldn't attend. The recording is available on the project website. Participants mainly joined the meeting via the app but were also able to join by phone.

The meeting began at the scheduled time of 6:00 PM and the presentation began with introductions prior to 6:10 PM.

Van opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and announced that the meeting was being recorded. Marc introduced the Seward Hwy & Alyeska Hwy Intersection Improvements project and the project team. Marc then gave an overview of the project's scope and objectives and described the study area. He also reminded participants that the project is funded for engineering, environmental and public involvement activities through the selection of a preferred alternative and development of the design to the 30% level, including compliance with the Municipality of Anchorage's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Policy and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Marc then presented the concept alternatives and the criteria the project team is planning to use to evaluate the alternatives and recommend a preferred alternative.

Since the project's start in August 2020, the following outreach has occurred:

- Two presentations to the Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS)
- Girdwood Alliance Board
- Anchorage Transportation Fair in November 2020
- Public Open House 1 in December 2020
- Stakeholder meetings including two meetings with the Girdwood Tesoro Station
- Alaska Trucking Association (ATA)
- Kenai Peninsula Transportation Fair in February 2021

At 7:00 PM, Marc gave the presentation again to inform community members who had joined the meeting after the first presentation and round of discussion. The meeting concluded at 8:00 PM, consistent with the schedule end time. Stakeholder's input gathered during and after the meeting will help reduce the number of alternatives from 11 to 4-5 that will move forward for detailed engineering analysis.

The project is scheduled to go to the Planning and Zoning Commission in October 2021 with the draft environmental document which includes the preferred alternative. Prior to that, the project team will return to GBOS for an updated on the alternatives analysis. The Project team will notify the community through the website, emails and GBOS of the upcoming meetings.

The following is a summary of the comments (grouped roughly by topic), questions and answers that were provided during and after the meeting:

### *Alternative Design:*

- There is appreciation that all alternatives (except no build) extend Gold Ave up to Alyeska Hwy.
- Is there an option to provide the secondary roundabout in all modified options for the Gold/Alyeska Hwy intersection? This would decrease the traffic light requirements.
- There is resistance to alternatives that use any stoplights or alternatives that significantly reduce traffic speeds on the Seward Hwy.
  
- **Alternative 5** features unimpeded southbound Seward Hwy flow, but at the end of many weekend the traffic volumes reverse (people traveling back to Anchorage from the Kenai Peninsula or Turnagain Pass) which can make a left turn from Alyeska Hwy to southbound Seward Hwy hazardous.
  
- **Alternative 7 (Trumpet)** was a top preference by the public because it allows both northbound and southbound traffic on the Seward Hwy to flow unrestricted, has no stop lights, accommodates future expansion of the highway and appears to be more straight forward for snow removal operations.
- **Alternative 7 (Trumpet)** and other elevated overpass alternatives are a concern for maintaining viewshed due to the elevation needed for the crossing.
  - Countering opinions were also expressed, supporting grade-separated solutions to address the Seward Hwy/Alyeska Hwy intersection conflicts, as getting through the intersection safely is more important and the focus of drivers as they navigate the area.
- Elevated overpasses are concerning due to maneuverability (of emergency response vehicles) and emergency access onto the highway (not concerned about sightline).
- Concerned about **Alternative 7 (Trumpet)** and potential roll hazard of large apparatus. A comparison between the size, loop/curve angle, and mph expected of this alternative and the Eagle River to Anchorage on ramp would be helpful. If the loop/curve angle is mitigated or described as a much larger radius than the Eagle River example, this would be my (Girdwood Fire Deputy Chief) number 1 priority because it would increase the ability for turning mobility more than the 'high speed approach' roundabout.
  
- **Alternative 8 (Roundabout)** received significant positive feedback during meeting, as 'the most effective, safest, and lowest maintenance option provided.'
- **Alternative 8 (Roundabout)**; concerned about the delay and back up on the Seward Hwy this could create, suggest running a flow analysis to show the number of vehicles per min/hour through the primary intersection and compare that to the number of vehicles at peak travel on the Hwy.
  
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- **Alternative 9 (Tight Diamond)** has similar benefits to Alt. 7, perhaps with less impact on wetlands?
- **Alternative 9 (Tight Diamond)**; concerned about the retaining walls and snow removal, access to southbound Hwy during an emergency. Would the retaining walls provide enough view clearance for those traveling under the overpass to see an apparatus with lights taking the on ramp making access to the Hwy with plenty of time and distance to slow (even in winter conditions)?
  
- **Alternatives 10 and 11** seem to solve the problem but appear more expensive and environmentally-impacting than Alts. 7 and 9.

## Evaluation Criteria:

- Improved safety should be the determining factor for any change to the highway
- Emergency Use Access should be an evaluation criterion (suggested by Girdwood Deputy Fire Chief): Taking in to the consideration we will have to retro fit all the apparatus with “Opticom” Traffic light control systems along with the concern of our larger apparatus navigating the intersections. I understand that the Trucking industry will hopefully also provide some feedback on this along with DOT standards and evaluation. Other concerns include the ability for vehicles to move aside when approaching under emergency conditions (Lights & Sirens) and providing enough room for winter conditions i.e. snow along the road with the space accounted for the emergency vehicles to pass.
- Impact to the residential neighborhood of Old Girdwood should be added to the evaluation criteria.
- Consistency with other Girdwood Plans should be added to the evaluation criteria.
  - There are multiple plans under current development, including the Girdwood Trails Plan which envisions a “valley entrance” trailhead in this general area (right now thought to be immediately north of the railroad).
- If not already assumed under “maintenance”, snow removal and icing hazards should be added.

## Traffic:

- What safe speeds can be expected and maintained through the control in both the location options of the “Highspeed Approach Roundabout”?
  - Modern roundabout design prescribes a maximum circulating speed of 30 mph.
- Concern from some residents of Old Girdwood about the potential impact of directing all of the Tesoro Mall traffic along the western part of Gold Ave; could turn a low volume local access road into a much higher volume connector and isolate Old West Road from the rest of the neighborhood.
- Speeds should be reduced in front of the gas station and intersection from 55 mph to 45 mph.

## Access & Parking:

- Straightening the intersection and providing improved control options for the Tesoro mall is a must for safety in the community.
- Toadstool is the primary access for DOT and has the Hwy control barrier arms for shutting down the road while providing avalanche control on the Anchorage side. There are control barrier arms just south of the Main St./Seward Hwy intersection as well. If Alternatives 10/11 are considered further with a frontage road, this should be taken into consideration.
- How will large tractor trailers and double trailers access/approaches into the Tesoro parking area be accounted for and how will these large rigs be prevented from parking along the Seward Hwy across from the Tesoro Mall?
- Access to Glacier Creek needs to be maintained via the Seward Hwy Bridge pull off, as it is a drafting sight for large water operations during a major fire at/near Tesoro Mall, and is a fishing hole. (Unless you can also place a 10-20K gallon water cistern into the plan allowing for access ideally on a corner that can be used to refill or supply emergency operations as this is in a non-hydrated area – which would be amazing.)
  - Girdwood Fire Department’s primary Tender is 42’ long, 11’ 11” tall and GVWR of 68,000lbs and carrier 2500gal of water that would serve as that primary pumper in a water relay operation; the ability to have a primary water source at the intersection would be amazing.