

JOIN US!

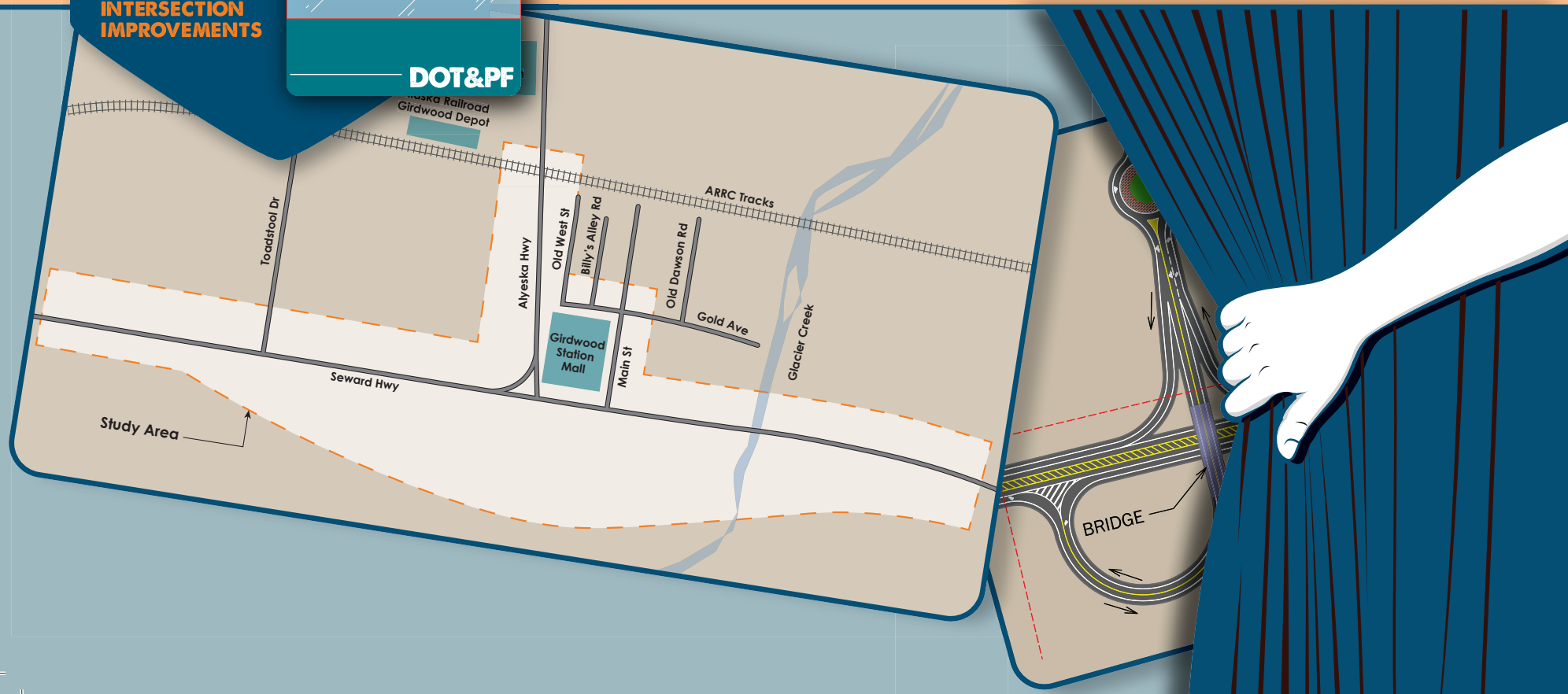
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ALYESKA & SEWARD HWY

INTERSECTION
IMPROVEMENTS

DOT&PF

The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is working to improve the capacity, operation, and safety of the Alyeska Hwy & Seward Hwy Intersection. Conceptual intersection alternatives have been developed from information gathered to-date. DOT&PF is seeking your input on these conceptual alternatives.



Please join us at the virtual open house any time between 6:00 and 8:00 PM to share your input. Presentations will be given at 6:10 PM and 7:00 PM. If you cannot attend the meeting, you may still provide comment via the project website or by emailing Van Le at vle@rmconsult.com.

WHEN

Thursday
April 22nd, 2021
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

ZOOM INFO *(Three ways to log in)*

1. Direct link to meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/91961636095>

2. Go to www.zoom.us

meeting ID: 919 61631 6095

3. Phone In: +1 253.215.8782

meeting ID: 919 61631 6095

CONTACT

PROJECT MANAGER, DOT&PF

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT LEAD, R&M CONSULTANTS, INC.

Van Le, AICP | 907.646.9659 | vle@rmconsult.com

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DEPARTMENT of
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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 |

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.

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.

Meeting Materials

The following materials were presented during the Public Meeting and were also posted to the project website (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

Meeting Summary

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.
-
- **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.

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DOT&PF is seeking your input on an updated Conceptual Alternative.



Please **join us in person** at the Gerrish Library to review an updated intersection alternative, ask questions of the project team and provide your feedback to improve the concept design.

WHEN

Wednesday

July 27th, 2022

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

at the Gerrish Library Community Room

www.SEWARDALYESKAHWYINTERSECTION.com

CONTACT

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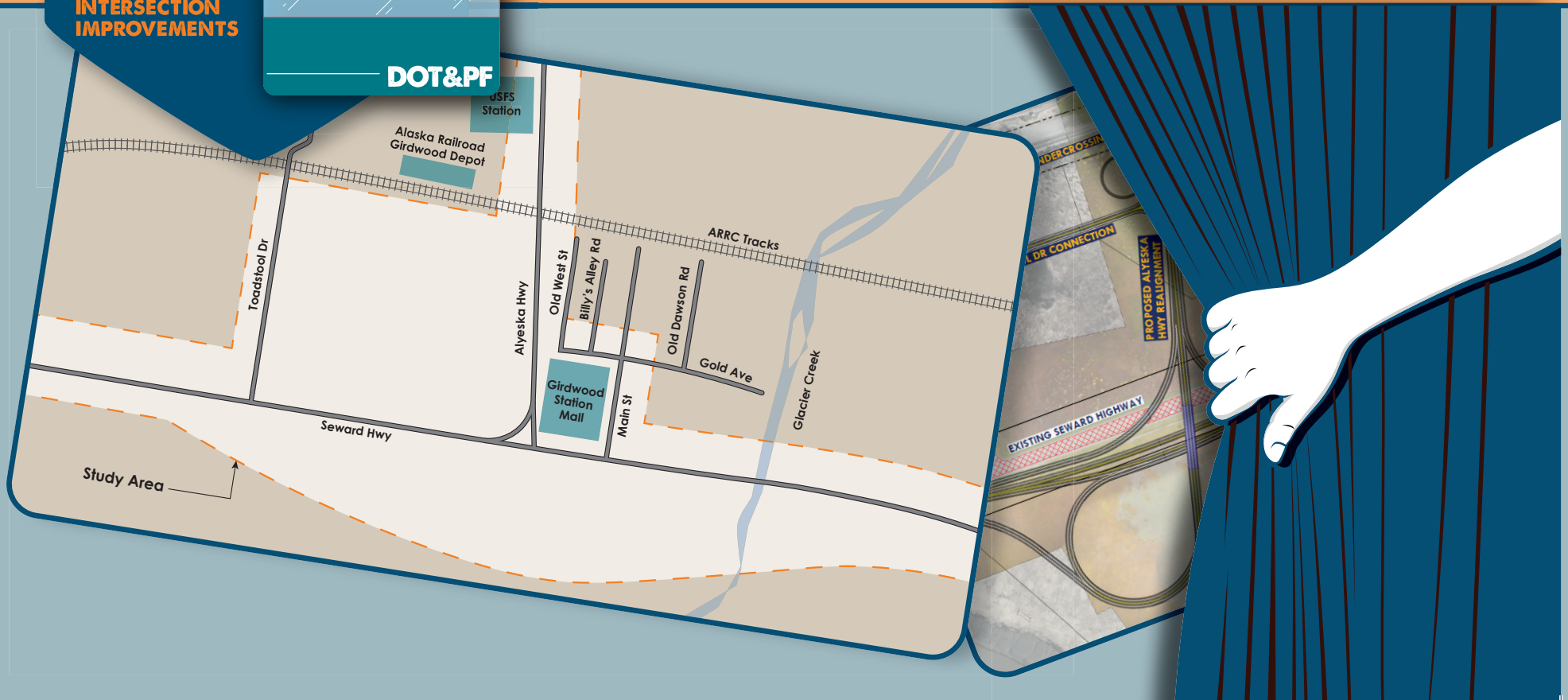
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WHEN

**Wednesday
July 27th, 2022
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Gerrish Library
Community Room**

CONTACT

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SUMMARY

Seward Hwy/Alyeska Hwy Intersection Improvements

Z546190000

Community Open House #3

Date | Time: July 27, 2022 (6:00pm - 8:00pm) |

Location: Girdwood Community Room (Gerrish Library) |

Project Team

- Christina Huber, PE, Project Manager, DOT&PF
- Travis Holmes, PE, Project Engineer, DOT&PF
- Mark Eisenman, Planner, DOT&PF
- David Post, Planner, DOT&PF
- Tim Grier, PE, Project Manager, R&M
- Taryn Oleson-Yelle, AICP, Public Engagement Coordinator/Planner, R&M
- Ryan Goentzel, PE, Lead Civil Engineer, R&M
- Joe Horazdovsky, PE, Project Engineer, R&M
- Van Le, AICP, Public Engagement Lead/Planning Manager, R&M

Attendees

Attendees signed in throughout the meeting, with 36 attendees signing in during the 2-hour meeting.

Girdwood residents, business owners, first responders, and area stakeholders were invited to attend the meeting.

Advertisements included:

- Postcards mailed to all PO Box holders and property owners in Girdwood
- Flyers posted at the Post Office, The Grind Coffee shop, Girdwood Library, Girdwood Station Mall
- Project Website
- Email
- Announcement at GBOS Meeting on 7/18/22, listed on agenda & flyer included in meeting packet

Meeting Materials

The following materials were provided during the site meeting:

- Recommended Concept Level Alternative – Project Overview
- Recommended Concept Level Alternative – Local Access
- Project Benefits (board and on Fact Sheet)
- Concept Development Process
- Intersection Turning Movements
- [3-D Model Fly-Through Video](#) (on repeat on TV screen)
- Conflict Points, Existing Intersection and Concept Alternative
- Fact Sheet and Conflict Points Handouts
- Comment Forms

Meeting Summary

Taryn or Van welcomed everyone as they arrived and signed in, thanking them for meeting with the project team to discuss the recommended concept level alternative. They explained the informal meeting format, identified other members of the project team, answered questions, and encouraged them to take a handout and comment form.

Christina, Travis, Mark, Tim, Ryan and Joe were dispersed around the room at copies of the Recommended Concept Level Alternative figures and engaged with one-on-one or small group conversations with attendees. Markers, pens, and comment forms were available at all tables in the room.



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

General Comments on Recommended Concept Level Alternative:

- Majority of sentiments were positive; the concept design was viewed as a significant safety improvement to the intersection and solves existing conditions issues.
- Roundabout was received positively.
 - Questions were asked about the size of the roundabout to ensure it would accommodate freight and other large vehicles and slow speeds on Alyeska Hwy.
- Pedestrian access was received positively.
- Providing direct access to Gold Avenue without having to go through mall property was received positively.
- Concern was expressed about the footprint of the interchange, specifically the on and off ramps to the south of the Seward Hwy; some said it felt like 'overkill' while others expressed concerns about wetland impacts and viewshed impacts.
 - The problems and issues that exist today do not warrant this type (size, scale, design) of intersection. There are not major accidents, why is this project needed?

- Is there a smaller and simpler solution to address the problems today? Then build this design when it is needed (traffic volumes and accident thresholds are met). Is there a way to phase this, to 'right-size' the solution to actual traffic volumes as they increase from now to 30+ years from now?
- This project seems like a waste of money with a complicated design.
- This design blocks or lessens viewsheds.
 - Counter points were expressed including "I can't enjoy the viewshed now because I'm so focused on the congested traffic while trying to get through the intersection without getting into an accident."
- Concern was expressed that people drive too quickly down Alyeska Highway. The roundabout was appreciated for its likelihood of calming traffic in the area.
- Proposed access to businesses in the Girdwood Station Mall was primarily viewed as a significant safety and circulation improvement by separating highway-through traffic from local traffic.
 - Some expressed concern for the longer amount of time it will take to get to the mall and that there may be less business traffic with this design (it is confusing & limits visibility)
- The need or reasoning to have the Toadstool Road extension was questioned as was the closure of the existing Toadstool Rd.
 - How will DOT&PF maintenance get in and out of their maintenance space?
 - Alternative/emergency access to Seward Hwy from Girdwood was an expressed need (Toadstool Dr and/or Main St)
 - Toadstool could possibly have gated access to the Seward Highway for emergency and maintenance use.
- Roadways lighting was requested to be kept to a minimum to protect night sky in evening and winter.
- The opportunity for a desirable viewpoint with the design was recognized. Requests to build a pullout attached to the off ramp like Beluga Point and others along the Seward Hwy were heard.
- Many asked when the project will be funded and built.

Comment Form comments:

- Great alternative! Please 'stay with it.' I've seen the grade separation work in Scotland
- Consider adding pedestrian stairways to north and south side of trail near pedestrian tunnel' in nice weather a pedestrian can take a shortcut
- Consider working with Girdwood to 'complete the loop' around the mall. Making easier for large RV's and 18-wheeler to get in and out via counter-clockwise path.
- I really like the plan as presented but have concerns about the cost and building out over the wetlands. Basically, I think it is a well thought out design
- U-turn southbound (what happens if someone misses the intersection?)
- Signing for amenities mall/tourist loss
- Oversize trucking signage
- Cost concern, as we can't even get a light

- Need to provide a good pullout/viewpoint given the extensive work – it is too big an opportunity to capture a viewpoint where there is none. Very high-quality potential view!
- Try to create bigger parking footprint to the important existing business/gas station
- Benefits/paths for the public helps sell what is needed but appears challenging
- Traffic incidents/accidents at nearly any point between the roundabout and the diverging road lanes have the potential to cut off vehicular access to Girdwood entirely.
- Put electricity up to the Girdwood sign so it can be light up during the dark seasons
- You all have put a lot of effort into this project, it's looking better! Primary concerns:
 - street/highway lighting on the southbound merge on-ramp that permanently ruins the dark/night sky/northern lights,
 - drainage on Gold Ave is horrible/needs to be addressed (the culvert in front of my home on Gold Ave are always flooded/backwatered)
 - more traffic on Gold Ave is dangerous for neighborhood kids

Next Steps:

The Recommended Concept Level Alternative will be refined based on feedback and will continue through the Context Sensitive Solutions Process and prepare for the second Planning & Zoning Commission appearance.