

# Municipality of Anchorage



*P.O. Box 390  
Girdwood, Alaska 99587  
<http://www.muni.org/gbos>*

*Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor*

*GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS*

*Jerry Fox & Robert Snitzer, Co-Chairs  
Eryn Boone, Mike Edgington, Sam Daniel*

February 20, 2018

Commissioner Marc Luiken  
Alaska Department of Transportation  
PO Box 112500  
Juneau, AK 99811-2500

Via Email: [dot.commissioner@alaska.gov](mailto:dot.commissioner@alaska.gov)

RE: Alyeska Highway Pedestrian Safety Corridor

Dear Commissioner Luiken,

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors is the elected body which represents the community of Girdwood, Alaska. We are writing to express our community's dissatisfaction with the design of the recently reconstructed Alyeska Highway Multiuse Pathway, and to ask you to consider remedial actions to alleviate the problems caused by this design.

Plans for redesign of the Multiuse Pathway were presented to the Girdwood community in 2015, with promises that the path would be widened, drainage improved and pathway users' safety would be enhanced. While the older multiuse path maintained physical separation from Alyeska Highway, the new design introduced "sweeps" which brought the path down to the main highway at several side road junctions, ostensibly to improve safety. However, cyclists, walkers and other pathway users are now brought immediately next to the Alyeska Highway with no intervening barrier or even shoulder between them and vehicle traffic on the 45mph speed limit highway.

Girdwood is a small, compact community where walkability and non-motorized use are strongly encouraged. The design of the Multiuse Pathway goes against these goals, providing an unpleasant user experience at best, and discouraging families with young children from using the pathway at all.

At community presentations, the DOT project engineering team explained that the motivation for the sweep design was to provide better sight-lines, both for side road vehicle drivers and pathway users, at

the cost of limiting the physical separation between highway traffic and pathway users. In urban areas with significant side road traffic, the benefits of this design likely outweigh the drawbacks. However due to a combination of reasons it is not a suitable solution for the Girdwood community.

The final design included seven sweeps, listed here from south to north:

- one sweep at the Chugach National Forest Glacier Ranger Station
- three at junctions with Monarch Mine, Gunnysack & Hottentot Roads which together access a medium-sized residential area (around 70 residences)
- three sweeps at Danish Circle, Brenner Circle & Glacier Creek Drive which access limited housing of 8, 5 & 3 residences respectively.

We do not believe that the level of traffic on many of these side roads justifies the increased risks to pathway users at those junctions.

After construction and in response to our request, the project engineering team attended several community meetings and listened to the community concerns. They subsequently provided additional striping at the side road junctions, although this has only reinforced concerns that there is no shoulder separation at all between the road and pathway. The project team has also informed us that design standards for sweeps will be changed in future construction.

The Girdwood community has discussed a range of possible remediation options, from adding physical barriers to reestablishing a shoulder or removing the sweeps completely at many of the side roads. There are likely other options that the DOT engineering team could propose. We request your help in directing DOT to address the community concerns and to propose a solution.

Respectfully,



Mike Edgington and Sam Daniel  
Girdwood Board of Supervisors

CC: Governor Bill Walker  
Mayor Ethan Berkowitz  
Alaska State Legislators  
Anchorage Assembly