

# 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, Christina Hendrickson*

January 14, 2019

James Amundsen  
Chief of Highway Design  
Alaska Department of Transportation  
P.O. Box 196900  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6900

Dear Mr. Amundsen,

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS) is the elected body which represents the Community of Girdwood, Alaska. We are writing to express our community's desire to identify solutions to recurring issues along Alyeska Highway.

**ISSUES:** The seven sweeps implemented along Alyeska Highway are unjustified with current population numbers and actual use of the shared path and do not meet design specifications for a Shared-Use Path. A Shared-Use Path is defined as paved, off-street travel ways designed to serve nonmotorized travelers<sup>1</sup>. The sweeps are located in a 45 mile per hour (mph) zone. Their design and location are dangerous:

- Visitors to Girdwood mistake them for frontage roads and drive on them.
- The lack of buffer or barrier between the road's unmarked shoulder and the path does not keep users safe.
- They do not match any other Shared-Use Path design in Alaska, including other small communities in South Central Alaska.

In his letter dated 24 April 2018, Mr. David Kemp stated that the sweeps are "standard in Alaska" and "have a proven safety benefit." GBOS and the community do not agree with this statement.

**BACKGROUND:** During design and construction, the Department of Transportation (DOT)'s Project Engineering team members attended community meetings, biked the path, and heard multiple documented public comments. Within the allocated budget, the team responded to public comments with design features that, in effect, exacerbated the very issues described above. GBOS engaged Scott Thomas, Dave Kemp, and Commissioner Luiken. In his reply dated August 2017, Mr. Thomas recommended GBOS contact you "to see what new discussion items are possible."

**REQUESTS:** Formally, GBOS requests that by February 2019, DOT complete the following new items to demonstrate how the current Shared-Use Path along Alyeska Highway meets needs of the community; and if not, join one of our monthly GBOS public meetings for further discussion on remedies.

1. Comprehensive report on the methodology used for data collection including but not limited to the computation to determine design implemented along Alyeska Highway<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. 2006. *Evaluation of Safety, Design, and Operation of Shared-Use Paths* Final Report.

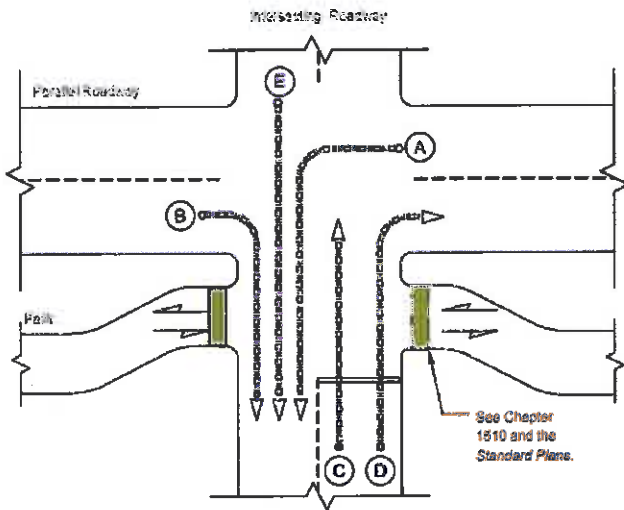
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

2. Comprehensive, diagramed comparison to other standard Shared-Use Paths in Alaska where this design has proven safe for the user community<sup>3</sup>.

Girdwood seeks a design that keeps our community and visitors safe. The current design places path users in potential conflicts, specifically pedestrians and motor vehicle traffic on Alyeska Highway and the path itself, as shown in Diagram 1-1<sup>4</sup>.

In Diagram 1-1, the path user faces potential conflicts with motor vehicles turning left (A) and right (B) from the parallel roadway and on the crossed roadway (C, D, and E). So that motorists and path users recognize one another, the crossing path should be moved. An important design element to consider for traffic right of way is the separation distance between path and roadway. Figure 1-1 measures the safe distances among the roadway shoulder and the paved Shared-Use Path in areas with greater to or equal 35 mph<sup>5</sup>.

**DIAGRAM 1-1**



**FIGURE 1-1**



**Notes:**

- A separation greater than 5 feet is required for path user comfort. If separation greater than 5 feet cannot be obtained, provide barrier separation in accordance with Exhibit 1515-4c.
- See Chapter 1600 for roadway clear zone design guidance for fixed objects.

**Two-Way Shared-Use Path: Adjacent to Roadway (> 35mph)**

Respectfully,

*Eryn A Boone*

Eryn Boone  
Roads and Utilities Supervisor  
Girdwood Board of Supervisors

CC: Mayor Ethan Berkowitz  
Representative Jennifer Johnston  
Senator Cathy Giessel  
Assemblyman John Weddleton  
Assemblywoman Suzanne LaFrance  
Scott Thomas  
David Kemp

<sup>3</sup> Washington Department of Transportation. July 2012. Design Manual, Section 1515.04, *Shared-Use Path Design – the Basics*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.