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Providence Drive Closure FAQ

What happened?

In March, one of two steel creek culverts under Providence Drive at Chester Creek began to collapse, creating a sinkhole in the road. The MOA completed emergency repairs in March to keep the road open with one eastbound lane of traffic. If you live or work in the area, you have probably driven over the temporary steel bridge we put in place to prevent the road surface from settling more. The culverts, however, are still damaged and need to be replaced.

What construction is happening now?

In September, the MOA will completely replace the old steel culverts with a new, concrete box culvert. During construction, we will divert the creek and close down both the eastbound and westbound lanes to traffic between Spirit Drive and UAA Drive.

When will Providence Dr reopen?

We anticipate construction will take about six weeks, with Providence Dr reopening in mid-October.

Why didn't this work begin earlier in the summer?

A project of this size and complexity normally takes about two years to complete, from permitting and design through construction. We are operating on an accelerated schedule of approximately six months, so that we can reopen the road before winter. While we would have liked to begin construction earlier, it was not possible for us to design this project and fabricate the new culvert in less time.

Why do both lanes need to be closed?

Chester Creek flows through the culvert, and we need to divert the creek during construction. The creek is also an active salmon habitat. Under normal circumstances, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game would not allow construction while salmon are still running upstream. However, because of the emergency nature of this project, Fish & Game is allowing us to proceed as long as the creek is diverted.

Was this earthquake damage?

We can't say for sure if the November 2018 earthquake damaged this culvert, though it is safe to say that the earthquake certainly did not help. The culverts were originally built in 1981 and are beyond their useful lifespan. After the sinkhole formed in Providence Drive in March, MOA inspections showed significant corrosion and rust below the waterline of both culverts, which weakened them structurally. The new concrete culvert we are installing will not rust, will have a longer lifespan, and will be seismically more robust.