

# Application for a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Transportation Project Site Plan Review

Municipality of Anchorage  
Planning Department  
PO Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650




PETITIONER (Municipal or State Project Manager)	PETITIONER REPRESENTATIVE (IF ANY - Consultant)
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PROJECT INFORMATION
Project Name: AMATS: Spenard Road Rehabilitation Minnesota Dr. to Benson Blvd. MOA/ADOT Project #: CFHWY00604
Community Council(s): Spenard Community Council
Project description (location): This is the third phase of a larger effort to improve the northern segment of Spenard Road between the Minnesota Drive on-ramp to the north and the intersection with Minnesota Drive to the south. The design of the project will be led by DOT&PF with support from the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA).  DOT&PF is proposing to rehabilitate Spenard Road to improve safety for all users and bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards. Spenard Road supports one of the highest pedestrian and transit uses within the MOA, yet current pedestrian and transit facilities are minimal or non-existent. In addition, intersections along the corridor have historically high collision rates.

TRANSPORTATION PROJECT SITE PLAN APPROVAL REQUESTED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Context Sensitive Solutions Concept Report (Planning and Zoning Commission) <input type="checkbox"/> Draft Design Study Report (Planning and Zoning Commission) <input type="checkbox"/> Plans in Hand (Urban Design Commission)

I hereby certify that (I am)(I have been authorized to act for) owner of the property described above and that I petition for a site plan review in conformance with Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal, Code of Ordinances. I understand that payment of the application fee is nonrefundable and is to cover the costs associated with processing this application, and that it does not assure approval of the site plan. I also understand that assigned hearing dates are tentative and may have to be postponed by Planning Department staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission or Urban Design Commission for administrative reasons.

12/21/2020	
Date	Signature (Agents must provide written proof of authorization)

Accepted by:	Poster & Affidavit:	Fee	Case Number 2021-0020
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**CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS CONCEPT REPORT DOCUMENTATION**

- ☒ Transportation Project Site Plan Review Application Form with original signatures
- ☐ Environmental Analysis or Environmental Impact Study, if applicable
- ☐ 15 complete sets of above items

**DRAFT DESIGN STUDY REPORT (35% LEVEL OF DESIGN) DOCUMENTATION**

- ☐ Transportation Project Site Plan Review Application Form with original signatures
- ☐ Narrative addressing AMC 21.03.190B.4.b.i. – xiii.
- ☐ Design Study Report Summary, including:
  1. Introduction
    - A. Location Map and Project Boundaries
    - B. Purpose
    - C. Need
  2. History (Project Origin) and Input from other Planning Documents
    - A. Anchorage Comprehensive Plan
    - B. Local Planning Studies/CIP/TIP/LRTP
    - C. Anchorage Pedestrian Plan or Areawide Trails Plan
  3. Existing Conditions
    - A. Right-of-Way Availability
    - B. Traffic Conditions
    - C. Pedestrian Conditions
    - D. Context (Land Use, Street Character)
    - E. Existing Landscape
    - F. Existing Utilities
    - G. Existing Drainage
  4. Design Standards
 

What Standard is the project being designed to? (Collector, Arterial, OSHP Classification, LRTP typology, etc.)

How do existing conditions impact the ability to meet those standards?
  5. Design Alternatives
    - A. Design narrative and graphic for each alternative considered. Note that the discussion of each alternative should address traffic (and traffic calming), parking, pedestrian facilities, drainage, and utilities (to include lighting), and right of way considerations (does right of way need to be purchased?)
    - B. Recommended Alternative with narrative (why is it recommended?) To include a discussion of the landscape approach and other enhancements (gateway features, fencing, etc.)
  6. Public Involvement Summary
  7. Rough Estimated Project Cost
  8. Maintenance Considerations
  9. Response to comments from Concept Report Review
  10. Preliminary Project Plans
- ☐ 35 Complete sets of above items, including 1 copy on CD or USB drive

**PLANS IN HAND (55-65% LEVEL OF DESIGN) DOCUMENTATION**

- ☐ Road Project Site Plan Review Application Form with original signatures
- ☐ Narrative addressing AMC 21.03.190B.5.c.i. – vii.
- ☐ Memo addressing Review Comments from DSR Review
- ☐ 55% to 65% Project Plans
- ☐ 35 Complete sets of above items, including 1 copy on CD or USB drive

December 17, 2020

Ms. Michelle McNulty, Director  
Planning Department  
Municipality of Anchorage  
P O Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

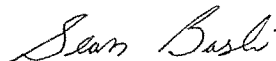
Regarding: AMATS Spenard Road Rehabilitation: Minnesota Drive to Benson  
Boulevard Project  
IRIS Project No: CFHWY00604/Federal Project No. 0001659

Dear Ms. McNulty:

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is the project manager for the AMATS Spenard Road Rehabilitation: Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard Project. We authorize Lounsbury & Associates and DOWL to act on our behalf to complete and submit all the Context Sensitive Solutions Transportation Project actions for the abovementioned project.

I can be reached via telephone at [sean.baski@alaska.gov](mailto:sean.baski@alaska.gov) or via telephone 907-269-0547.

Sincerely,



Sean Baski, P.E.,  
Project Manager

cc: Joe Taylor, P.E., Lounsbury & Associates, Project Manager  
Katie Conway, DOWL Public Involvement

# **AMATS: SPENARD ROAD REHABILITATION MINNESOTA DRIVE TO BENSON BOULEVARD**

## **Draft Concept Report**

State Project No: CFHWY00604/Federal Project No: 0001659

### **Prepared for:**

State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
4111 Aviation Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99519

### **Prepared by:**

DOWL  
4041 B Street  
Anchorage, AK 99503

December 2020



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## ACRONYMS

ACS	Alaska Communication Systems
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AMATS	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
ASD	Anchorage School District
AST	Alaska State Troopers
AWWU	Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility
CEA	Chugach Electric Association
DEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
DOT&PF	State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GCI	General Communications Inc.
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
mph	miles per hour
OS&HP	Official Streets and Highways Plan
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
ROW	Right-of-Way
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers

## **PROJECT TEAM**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS): Spenard Road Rehabilitation project is the third phase of a larger effort to improve the northern segment of Spenard Road between the Minnesota Drive on-ramp to the north and the intersection with Minnesota Drive to the south (Figure 1). The first two phases were led and funded by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). This third phase focuses on the section between Benson Boulevard and Minnesota Drive<sup>1</sup>. Design of this project is federally funded and will be led by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in collaboration with the MOA.

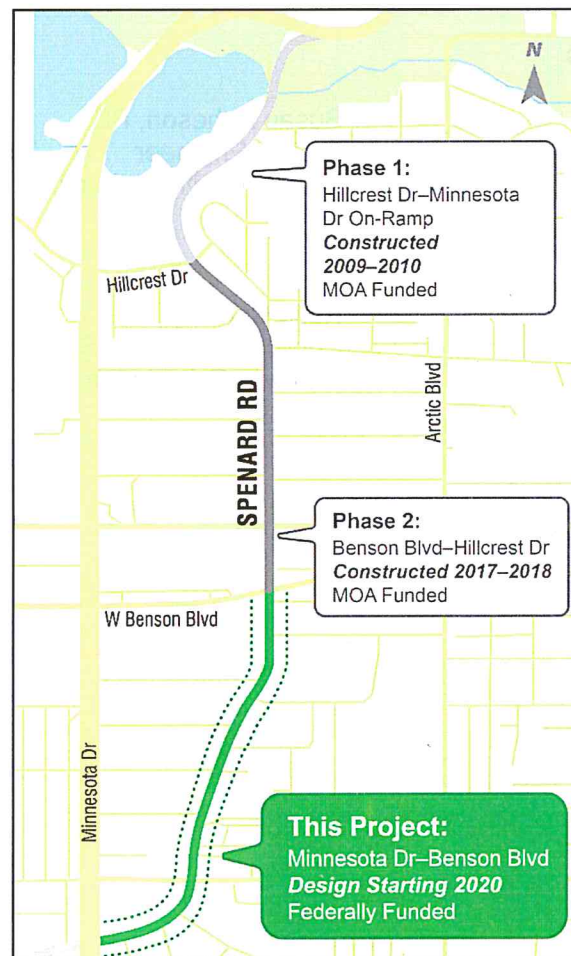


Figure 1: Project Location

<sup>1</sup> The design of this project will not include improvements to the Minnesota Drive intersection except for Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements on the east side of the intersection.



Spenard Road supports some of the highest pedestrian and transit uses within the MOA, yet current pedestrian and transit facilities along this segment are minimal or non-existent. In addition, intersections in the project corridor have historically high collision rates. DOT&PF is proposing to rehabilitate Spenard Road to improve safety for all users and bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards (see Project Nomination Form, attached as Appendix A).

The project will evaluate existing corridor conditions, define problems that are obstacles to non-motorized and motorized travel and transit use, and determine feasible solutions to improve the transportation network in this part of the city.

This Concept Report outlines the proposed project, documents the identified issues, and presents preliminary concepts to be considered during the alternative development phase.

## 1.2 Background

Spenard is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Anchorage and was formed around a winding road connecting Anchorage's "tent city" to a lumber camp and resort owned by Joe Spenard.

The MOA's Spenard Corridor Plan notes:

*"Some of the original neighborhoods along the corridor were platted in a traditional grid pattern of narrow streets, alleys and rectangular lots. In the 1960s and 1970s, some of these subdivisions were given a commercial zoning designation which, over time, has allowed for a unique mix of uses and activities. These subdivisions had no sidewalks, parks or pedestrian amenities and many fell into disrepair. Spenard Road quickly evolved into a mix of auto-oriented businesses that regularly changed ownership or uses, causing the corridor to lose a sense of cohesiveness. By the 1980s, redevelopment potential and reuse of existing, aging structures were hampered by inflexible land use regulations and outdated infrastructure."*<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, several older businesses have closed, and some structures have been demolished between 32nd Avenue and Benson Boulevard. At the same time, Cook Inlet Housing Authority and other developers have begun to revitalize properties along, and adjacent to, the corridor.

## 2.0 AREA CONTEXT

The study area for this project is within the Spenard Community Council, which covers an area bordered by International Airport Road to the south, Arctic Boulevard to the east, west Fireweed Lane and west Northern Lights Boulevard to the north, and Fish Creek to the west (Figure 2). According to the 2010 U.S. Census<sup>3</sup>, Spenard Community Council is home to approximately four percent of Anchorage's population, with 11,286 residents. It also has one of the highest low income and minority populations in the Anchorage Bowl.

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<sup>2</sup> MOA. 2020. Spenard Corridor Plan.

<sup>3</sup> EPA. 2020. Spenard Community Council Boundaries. Accessed October 28, 2020. <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>



Figure 2: Project Area

Development along the corridor is primarily commercial, with a range of uses including restaurants and entertainment, shops, automotive sales, and other commercial businesses. There are a small number of residential properties, including a trailer park and a mixed use/apartment development, and other community uses. Residents in the area include families with young children and older people, but there is a predominance of adults aged between 18 and 65 years. The population of the area is diverse, with nearly 20 percent of the population speaking a language other than English at home.

## 2.1 Existing Conditions

Spenard Road is a minor arterial as classified in the MOA Official Streets and Highways Plan (OS&HP). From Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard, Spenard Road has four travel lanes (two in each direction) and an additional left-turn lane at the approach to Minnesota Drive. The most recently available Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) information provided by DOT&PF shows Spenard Road's 2018 AADT ranging from 8,000 (near Benson Boulevard) to 10,000 (near Minnesota Drive) vehicles per day. This section of Spenard Road consists of a 48-foot-wide roadway (face-of-curb to face-of-curb). Figure 3 shows the existing typical section along Spenard Road:



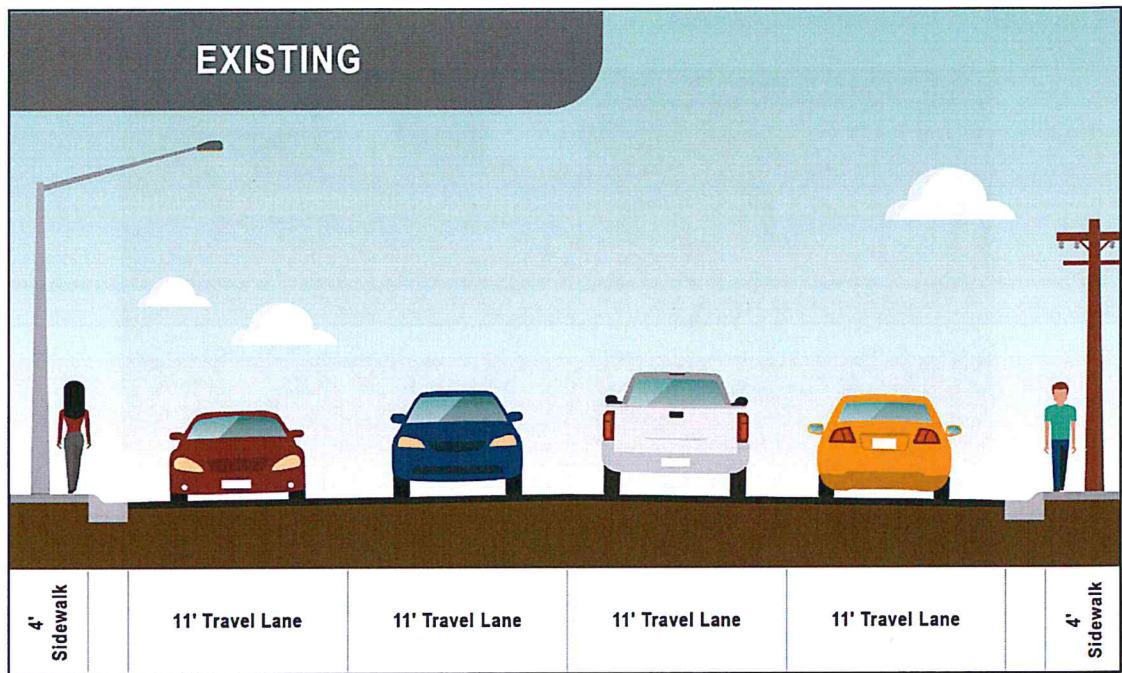
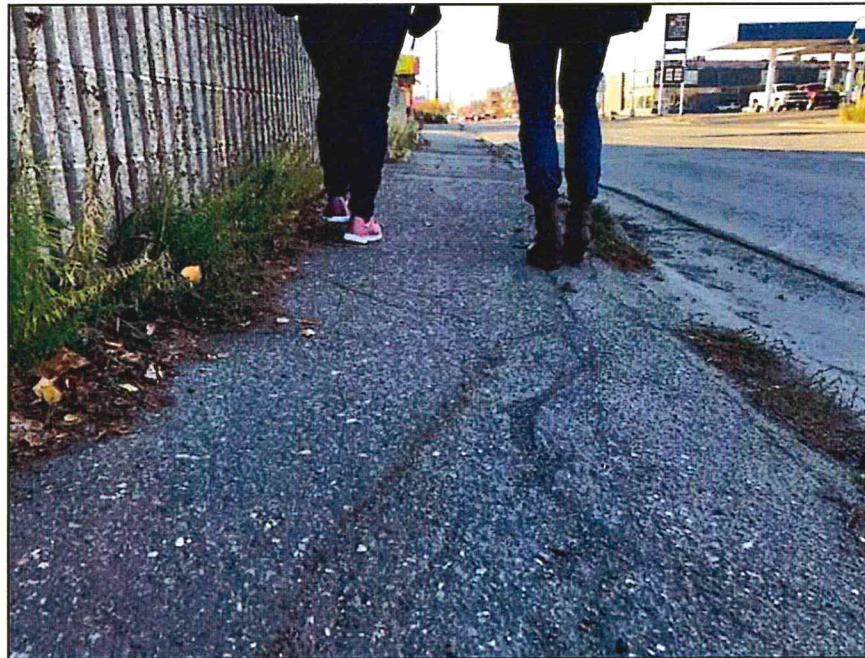


Figure 3: Existing Typical Section of Spenard Road

There are 18 intersections with cross streets along the project corridor. Three of these intersections are signalized: Benson Boulevard, 36th Avenue, and Minnesota Drive. Many of the minor side street intersections are skewed because of the winding geometry of the roadway. In addition to the cross streets, numerous driveways and parking areas of varying widths serve adjoining businesses that front Spenard Road.

From Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard there is a 4-foot wide "sidewalk" on both sides of Spenard Road, but this is primarily an extension of the asphalt parking lot from the front of the adjoining business to the back of the curb (Photo 1). Many sections of sidewalk have utility poles and light poles located in the middle of the walkway. There is no shoulder providing a buffer between the travel lane and the sidewalk and there are no bicycle facilities along this section of Spenard Road.



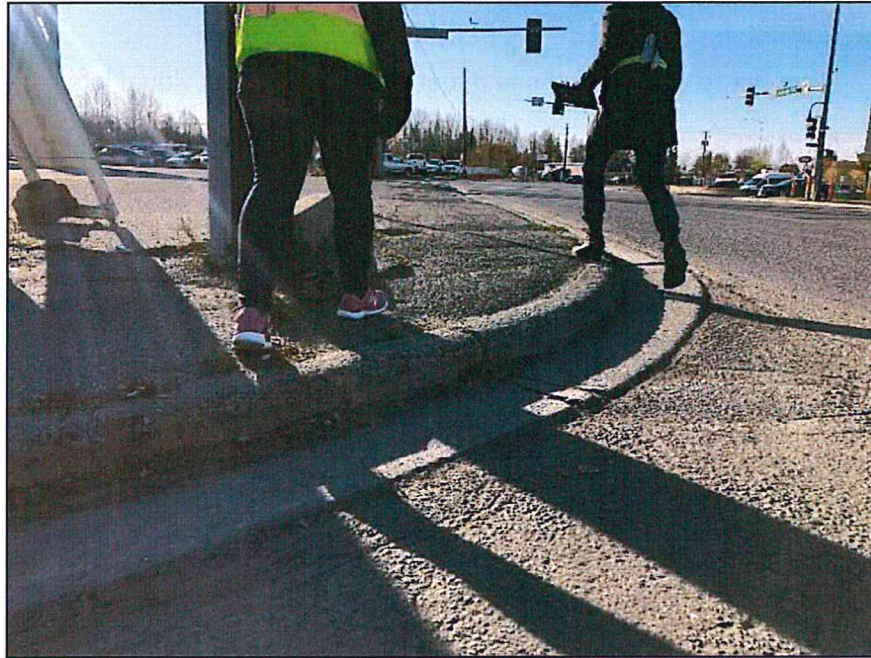
**Photo 1: The 4-foot wide sidewalk on the eastern side of Spenard Road is very narrow, making it challenging for two people to walk side by side. Pedestrians walk immediately next to the traffic lanes.**

The People Mover transit service provides public transportation along Spenard Road from Minnesota Drive to Hillcrest Drive. This section of Spenard Road has one of the highest public transportation usages in Anchorage. There are six bus stops along Spenard Road between Benson Boulevard and Minnesota Drive. Most stops consist only of a People Mover sign attached to a utility pole.

Right-of-way (ROW) width ranges from 60 feet to 70 feet. The roadway has a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph).

Spenard Road serves numerous abutting businesses and surrounding neighborhoods. Land use along this section of Spenard Road is primarily commercial, and zoned Main Street Corridor with a Residential Mixed-Use Development Growth-Supporting Feature overlay in the Municipality of Anchorage's 2040 Land Use Plan. Land on the eastern side of Spenard Road adjacent to 36th Avenue (north and south side) is zoned Urban Residential (High Density), indicating its potential for redevelopment as a residential area.





**Photo 2:** Many intersections within the corridor, including at 35th Avenue shown here, lack curb ramps.

The project is not expected to have any long-term negative impact on projected land use in the vicinity. The project will support the existing commercial land use and encourage residential mixed-use redevelopment consistent with the land use zoning and will improve access and safety for all transportation modes.

### **3.0 GUIDING DOCUMENTS**

#### **MOA Official Streets and Highways Plan – Maps, Policies and Standards (MOA Community Planning and Development, June 2014)**

- Spenard Road is classified as a Class II minor arterial street. Minor arterial streets are intended primarily to move through traffic, but they also provide an important land access function. Access should be at block intervals wherever possible.
- Class II minor arterial streets typically carry 10,000 to 20,000 vehicles per day. They should have two to four moving lanes and paved shoulders for emergency parking, and a minimum ROW width of 80 feet.
- Residential development should be discouraged from abutting directly onto minor arterial streets. Direct access to commercial property must be carefully controlled to limit the number of permitted driveways. Where possible, driveway access should be shared with adjacent property owners.
- Guidelines for minor arterials:

- Serve as the distribution link between major arterials and lower classification streets.
- Discourage direct access to minor arterials from individual lots.
- Connect smaller residential areas with community schools, neighborhood business areas, and recreation facilities.
- Provide landscaping to buffer areas and improve aesthetics.
- Connect neighborhoods by providing for safe pedestrian access facilities.

### **Spenard Corridor Plan (2020)**

- The Spenard Corridor Plan is Anchorage's first transit-supportive development plan, which reflects a community vision for the corridor. It outlines public and private investment objectives that will support and sustain a direct relationship between land use, transportation, pedestrian connectivity, and transit-supportive design. The plan sets out a policy framework, redevelopment guidance, land use, street typologies, and implementation actions.
  - Spenard Road is identified as an existing primary active transportation network.
  - The intersections of Spenard Road and Benson Boulevard, 36th Avenue, and Minnesota Drive are identified as key intersections and opportunities for enhanced street crossings.
  - The intersections of Spenard Road and 36th Avenue, and the Benson Boulevard/Northern Lights Boulevard couplet are identified as transit hubs.
  - The intersection of Spenard Road and 36th Avenue is identified as a gateway.
  - The areas surrounding Spenard Road, Minnesota Drive and 36th Avenue through to 34th Avenue are identified for potential intersection changes.
  - Chugach Way is identified as an existing primary active transportation network.
  - 32nd, 33rd, and 34th Avenues are identified as existing secondary active transportation networks.

### **2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MOA, 2020)**

- The Spenard Corridor is identified as a Transit Supportive Development Corridor and Reinvestment Focus Area. Table 1 lists the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) projects associated with the section of Spenard Road from Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard, including the current rehabilitation project and a future couplet study. A common theme of the projects is to address congestion and safety.

**Table 1: 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Projects in the Spenard Study Corridor**

Time Period	Project Name	MTP #	Project Description	Purpose
Short term (2018-2030)	Spenard Road Rehabilitation - Benson Boulevard to Minnesota Drive	134	Rehabilitate Spenard Road from Benson Boulevard to Minnesota Drive; project would include non-motorized improvements and consider adjacent land use	Congestion, Safety (Vision Zero High Injury Network Corridors), and Preservation of Existing Facility
	Short Term Metropolitan Transportation Plan Implementation Studies	133	Covers multiple potential plans, including the Transit Supportive Development Corridor Strategic Implementation Plan for Spenard Road	Not identified
Long term (2031-2040)	Minnesota Drive and 36th Avenue-Spenard Road Couplet Study	213	Study a one-way couplet at Minnesota Drive and 36th Avenue-Spenard Road; project would include non-motorized improvements and consider adjacent land use	Connectivity, Congestion, and Safety (Vision Zero High Injury Crash Location)
Illustrative (after 2040)	Minnesota Drive/ Spenard Road Intersection Improvements	311	Reconfigure Spenard Road approaches to eliminate split phasing, lengthen Minnesota Drive left turn lanes, and add Minnesota Drive southbound right turn lane	Congestion, Safety (Vision Zero High Injury Network), and Freight (Proposed Regional Truck Route)

#### **Anchorage Pedestrian Plan (AMATS, October 2007)**

- A pedestrian facility is proposed on the Spenard Road project to provide a missing sidewalk along Spenard Road between Chester Creek and Minnesota Drive. This project was ranked 7 out of 319 in the adopted plan.

#### **Anchorage Bicycle Plan (AMATS, March 2010)**

- The following projects are proposed in the adopted plan:
  - Shared facility – 32nd Avenue: Spenard Road to Cope Street
  - Bicycle Lane – Spenard Road: Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard.

#### **Areawide Trails Plan (Department of Community Planning and Development, AMATS, April 1997)**

- Because there is intensive use of pedestrian trails, it is vital to provide for pedestrian safety.

### **Additional Resources**

- Complete Streets Policy (AMATS, 2018)
- MOA Vision Zero Action Plan (AMATS, 2018)

## **4.0 PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED**

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The purpose of the proposed project is to meet current design standards and improve safety for all users by rehabilitating Spenard Road between Minnesota Drive and Benson Boulevard.

## **5.0 ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

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The project team has identified the following concerns. Additional issues and concerns will be documented throughout the design phase.

- Inadequate bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA-compliant infrastructure.
  - This corridor is on the Vision Zero Pedestrian High Injury Network
- Insufficient transit facilities.
  - This section of Spenard Road has one of the highest public transportation usages in Anchorage. Most of the transit stops in the project area do not meet current ADA or municipal standards.
- Right-of-way impacts.
  - Property owners have concerns that right-of-way acquisition related to the project will impact access, parking, and future development opportunities.
- Coordination with adjacent projects.
  - This is a relatively small corridor with several transportation and land-use projects currently underway.
- Historically high collision rates.
  - The project team will conduct a crash analysis using the most recently available crash data to identify safety issues and propose mitigations.
- Concerns about homelessness, vagrancy, and theft in the area.
  - Members of the Spenard Community Council have expressed support for improvements in the area that they hope will assist with mitigating these problems.
- Challenges managing stakeholder expectations regarding the degree to which the project will be able to support neighborhood revitalization efforts as envisioned in the Spenard Corridor Plan.



- Previous phases of work integrated art and/or historic features and constructed improvements that extended beyond the ROW. This phase of work is federally funded and improvements using those funds will be limited to project-specific work in the ROW. Any integrated art/historic features may be included in the project, but they will not be federally funded.
- Disruption to area businesses and residents that may result from construction.
  - Stakeholders have expressed concern about impacts due to construction.
- Overhead utility infrastructure.
  - Multiple Chugach Electric Association power poles are placed within the already-limited sidewalk space. This project may provide an opportunity to underground infrastructure.
- Contaminated soils.
  - Preliminary data shows there is one active contaminated site adjacent to the project area.

## 6.0 PROBLEM SOLVING CONCEPTS

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The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) notes that four-lane roadways with AADT volumes of 20,000 vehicles per day or less may be good candidates for conversion to three-lane roadways, a design concept sometimes referred to as a “road diet.” Expected benefits of road diets include an overall reduction in crash rates, reduced rear end and left turn crashes, and reduced right angle crashes at side streets. Road diets also provide the opportunity to install pedestrian refuge islands, bicycle lanes, on street parking or transit stops. Three-lane roadway alternative concepts that allocate more space to serve multi-modal travel have been recommended in prior studies of the corridor<sup>4</sup> and are expected to be compelling candidates for this project. Preliminary stakeholder feedback suggests support for the same three-lane alternative in the project corridor as developed in Phase 2 from Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive. The project team intends to conduct a brief reevaluation of a three-lane and a four-lane cross-section before moving forward with design (Figure 4).

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<sup>4</sup> Spenard Road Reconstruction Minnesota Drive to Minnesota Drive On-Ramp Preliminary Engineering Report. MOA, 2007 and Spenard Road: Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota Drive – Channelization and Pedestrian Facilities Improvement, Traffic and Safety Analysis. DOT&PF, June 2002.

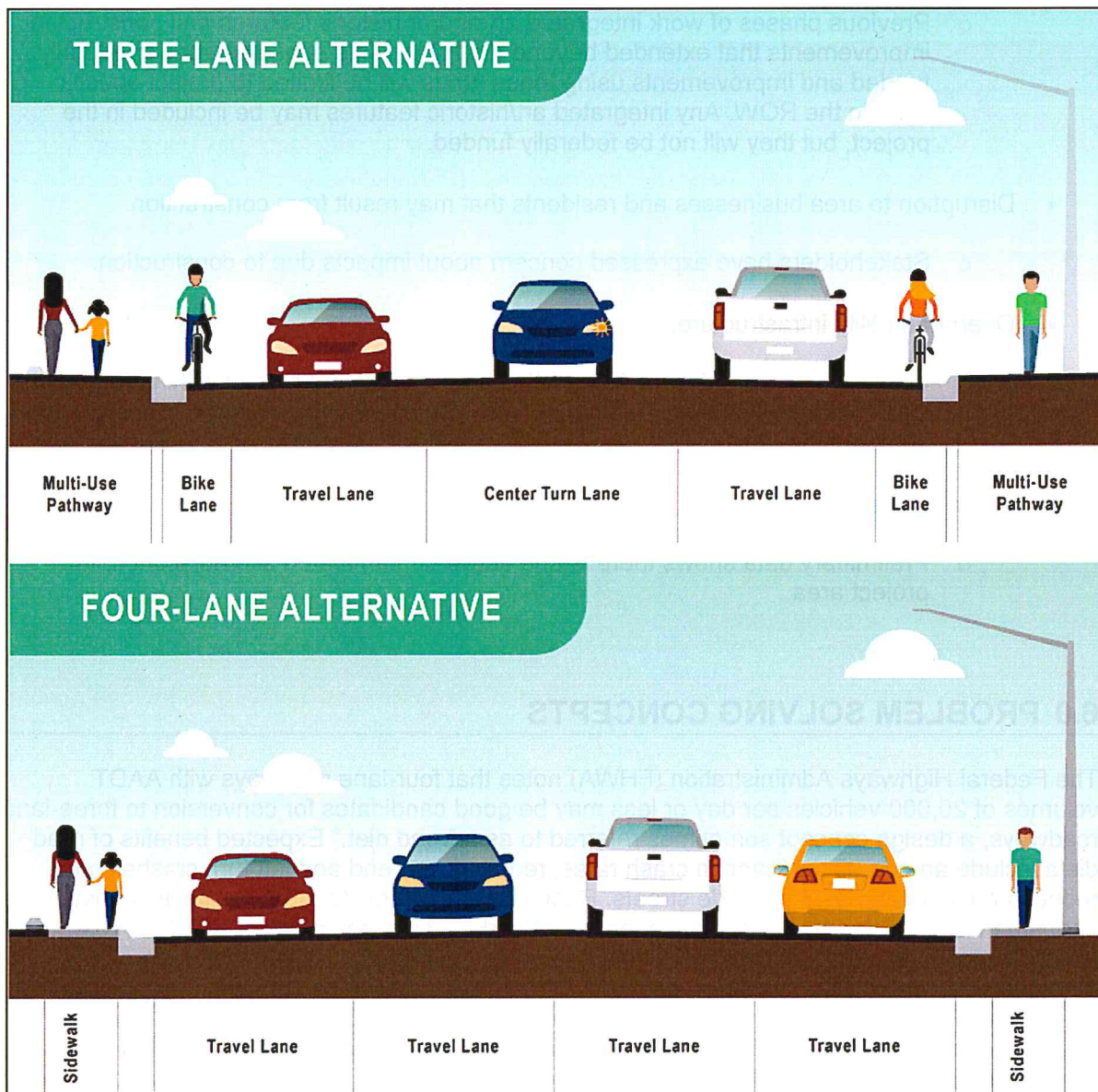


Figure 4: Roadway Alternatives

The following design elements will be discussed with project stakeholders. Their feedback will be considered in the development and selection of design alternatives.

- ROW requirements and impacts to adjacent properties
- Safety concerns, corridor speeds and crash rates
- Driveway and side-street spacing
- Accessibility improvements
- Non-motorized facilities

- Corridor capacity and traffic signal improvements
- Utility undergrounding/reconstruction
- Landscaping and lighting
- Signage

## 7.0 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Public involvement efforts for this project have extended over several years. The Spenard Road design process started in 2003 as a Highway Safety Improvement Project to address pedestrian, bicycle, and motorist safety issues. In 2007, a preliminary engineering report was published, documenting the Spenard Road Reconstruction engineering and public outreach effort. Due to public concerns and funding, design and construction on Spenard Road was delayed and eventually split into phases. Construction of Phase 1 (Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota on-ramp) was completed in 2010. Phase 2 construction (Hillcrest Drive to Benson Boulevard) was completed in 2018.

Stakeholders identified for this project are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Project Stakeholders**

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
<b>Public and Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods</li> <li>• Business owners and non-profit organizations in adjacent areas</li> <li>• Spenard Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Cook Inlet Housing Authority</li> <li>• Bike Anchorage</li> <li>• Federation of Community Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spenard</li> <li>○ North Star</li> <li>○ Midtown</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)</li> <li>• Alaska Legislature: Senators and Representatives</li> <li>• State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)</li> <li>• Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</li> <li>• State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)</li> <li>• United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)</li> <li>• Alaska State Troopers (AST)</li> <li>• Anchorage School District (ASD)</li> <li>• MOA</li> </ul>

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mayor's Office</li> <li>○ Anchorage Assembly</li> <li>○ Planning Department</li> <li>○ Parks and Recreation</li> <li>○ Public Transportation Department</li> <li>○ Anchorage Fire Department</li> <li>○ Anchorage Police Department</li> <li>○ Department of Economic and Community Development</li> <li>○ Planning and Zoning Commission</li> <li>○ Project Management and Engineering</li> <li>○ Traffic Engineering</li> <li>○ Maintenance and Operations</li> <li>○ Urban Design Commission</li> </ul>
AMATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical and Policy Committees</li> <li>• Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Freight Advisory Committee</li> </ul>
Utility Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alaska Communications Systems (ACS)</li> <li>• Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU)</li> <li>• Chugach Electric Association (CEA)</li> <li>• ENSTAR Natural Gas Company</li> <li>• General Communications Inc. (GCI)</li> </ul>

### 7.1 Walk/Bike Audit of Spenard Corridor – October 16, 2020

In early October representatives from the DOT&PF, MOA, and the consultant team participated in an informal walk/bike audit of the project corridor. Participants experienced the corridor as a user and provided feedback related to the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the environment. A copy of the audit prompt sheet is attached to this report in Appendix B.

### 7.2 Spenard Community Council Meeting – November 5, 2020

Members of the project team attended the November Spenard Community Council meeting to introduce the project and answer questions. Members of the Community Council were generally supportive of the project moving forward and for identifying opportunities to further revitalize this segment of Spenard Road. Notes from that meeting are attached to this report in Appendix C.

### 7.3 Anchorage Transportation Fair – November 18, 2020

Members of the project team presented a summary of the project during the 2020 Virtual Anchorage Transportation Fair. The project was also represented at the fair with a dedicated page on the online platform hosting the meeting where the public could make comments and ask questions about the project. During the three-hour event the project's page received 45 views and two people left comments/questions concerning the following:



- How the project design will integrate goals of the Spenard Corridor Plan and lessons learned in the previous phases of work.
- Support for the project's goals to improve safety for all users and bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards.
- A request for wider sidewalks, a buffered bicycle lane in both directions, bus pullouts, consolidation or reduction of driveways, and a road diet with a middle turn lane.
- The degree to which the project will include art and landscaping elements like those used in the northern portion of the road.
- Ways the project will extend the "complete street", accommodating all users for the full length of the corridor.

## 7.4 Planned Public Involvement

The project team has developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) that outlines how it will work with stakeholders to communicate the goals of the project and gather input. The PIP also defines how the project team will meet relevant Federal, DOT&PF, and MOA requirements (including the Context Sensitive Solutions Process) for public involvement. Key outreach strategies from the PIP are shown in Table 3. The full PIP is attached as Appendix D.

**Table 3: Key Outreach Strategies**

Strategy	Details
Project website and email	www.SpenardRoad.com SpenardRoad@dowl.com
Public meetings	January 2021: Present alternatives under consideration to stakeholders for input. Fall 2021: Present the environmental document.
Community Councils and Other Interest Group Meetings	The project team will maintain regular interaction with various stakeholder groups within the corridor, including attendance at Spenard Community Council meetings at key milestones during the project. The project team will be available to present and solicit comments from other interested groups upon request.
Government/Agency Presentations	Presentations will be made to the AMATS Technical and Policy Committees as well as the AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Freight Advisory Committee (if requested) at relevant project milestones. Assembly members representing this part of Anchorage and members of the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission and Urban Design Commission will be included in all project outreach. If requested, additional government/agency presentations will be scheduled.

## **APPENDIX A: PROJECT NOMINATION FORM**

**PROJECT NOMINATION FORM**

SECTION 1: Nomination (to be completed by nominating entity)			
1	<b>Nominated By:</b>	Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	
2	<b>Contact:</b>	Sean Baski, P.E.	
3	<b>Phone:</b>	(907)269-0547	<b>Email:</b> sean.baski@alaska.gov
4	<b>Street Name:</b>	Spenard Road	
5	<b>Between</b>	Benson Boulevard and Minnesota Drive	
6	<b>Statement Problems to solved.</b> <i>(What needs to be done? The problem definition should include: What are the underlying issues? What is the whole problem? What is the severity of the problem?) (as envisioned by nominating entity/ individual):</i>	This is the third phase of a larger effort to improve the northern segment of Spenard Road between the Minnesota Drive on-ramp to the north and the intersection with Minnesota Drive to the south. The design of the project will be led by DOT&PF with support from the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA).	
7	<b>Known Issues</b> <i>(What are the problems?) (List all known issues, reasons for project, problems to be solved)</i>	DOT&PF is proposing to rehabilitate Spenard Road to improve safety for all users and bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards. Spenard Road supports one of the highest pedestrian and transit uses within the MOA, yet current pedestrian and transit facilities are minimal or non-existent. In addition, intersections along the corridor have historically high collision rates.	

SECTION 2: Technical Data Collection				
8	<b>Classification</b>	Class II Urban Minor Arterial – 4 Lane, 60' ROW		
9	<b>Lanes/Speed</b> <i>(Note: 85th percentile speeds will be determined by project team)</i>	<b>Street</b>	<b>Number of Lanes</b>	<b>Speed</b>
				<b>Posted</b>
				<b>85th Percentile</b>
		Spenard Road	4	35
10	<b>Average Daily Traffic (ADT)</b> <i>(Note: To be determined by project team)</i>	<b>Street</b>	<b>Current Year: 2019</b>	<b>Design Year: TBD</b>
		Spenard Road: Minnesota Dr to 36th Ave	10,730	N/A - TBD
		Spenard Road: 36th Ave to Benson Blvd	7,924	N/A - TBD
11	<b>Traffic Crash Data</b>	Between years 2015-2019, there were a total of 594 crashes along Spenard Road between Minnesota Drive and Benson Boulevard. None of the crashes caused a fatality but 46 crashes caused possible injuries to those who were involved. Eleven of the total crashes involved a pedestrian and 14 crashes involved a bicyclist. Approximately 90 percent of the total crashes occurred at an intersection. Of those intersection crashes, 39 percent occurred at the Spenard Road/Minnesota Drive intersection, and 31 percent occurred at the Spenard Road/Benson Boulevard intersection. Those two intersections make up about 375 of the 594 total crashes. Rear-end and angle crashes attributed to 36 and 40 percent of the total crashes respectively.		
12	<b>Community Council</b>	Spenard		
13	<b>Transit Service</b> (List route numbers if transit service is available)	Route 40 on Spenard Road from Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard		
14	<b>Assembly Districts</b>	Assembly Section 3 – Kameron Perez-Verdia		
15	<b>Legislative Districts</b>	House District 18 – Harriet Drummond Senate District I – Elvi Gray-Jackson		
16	<b>Capital Improvement Program Information</b> (To be completed by MOA Staff)	<b>PM&amp;E Project Number: N/A</b>		
		<b>Phase</b>	<b>Approx. Date</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>
		Design		\$
		Right-of-way		\$
		Utilities		\$
		Bid Phase		
		Construction		\$
		<b>Total Project Estimate</b>		\$

SECTION 2: Technical Data Collection		
17	MOA GRID	1629, 1729
18	Schools	<b>Schools</b>
		<b>Notes</b>
		<b>Elementary:</b> Willow Crest
		<b>Middle:</b> Romig
		<b>High:</b> West
		<p><b>Safe Routes to Schools/School Walking Route Map</b> – is the street along a safe walking route? Should it be?</p> <p>Spenard Road is outside the MOA Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Walking Boundary. The portion of the project between Minnesota Drive and 36th Avenue is outside, but adjacent to the SRTS Walking Boundary.</p>

SECTION 3: Plan Conformance (to be completed by staff or consultants) (Review existing plans to see if the proposed project is included in these plans.)		
	Plan	Notes/Comments
19	Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	<p>Street typology – Commercial</p> <p>Short Term Projects:</p> <p>Project 406 – Spenard Rd. Surface Rehabilitation</p> <p>Reconstruct from 4 to 2 lanes with a center turn lane, plus pedestrian facilities, including Spenard Rd./36th Ave.</p>
20	Official Streets and Highways Plan (OSHPP)	Spenard Road is classified as an Urban Minor Arterial, Class II. Its function is to move through traffic and provide important business and property access.
21	Zoning/Comprehensive Plan	Main Street Corridor with a Residential Mixed-Use Development Growth-Supporting Feature overlay in the Municipality of Anchorage's 2040 Land Use Plan
22	Non-Motorized Transportation Plan	Refer to columns 25 and 26. Non-motorized plan incomplete.
23	Transit Development Plan	<p><b>Transit on the Move – Short Range Transit Plan</b></p> <p>Identified as the top Transit-Supportive Development Corridor</p> <p>Transit-Supportive Development Corridors encourage focused development on dense, walkable, mixed-use spaces with access to transit.</p>
24	Areawide Trails Plan	Planned multi-use paved trail on west-side.
25	Pedestrian Plan (proposed)	<p>Spenard Road from 36th Avenue to Fireweed Lane is identified as a Main Street. To further create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, main streets have wide sidewalks, 10 feet or greater, depending on the expected pedestrian traffic, street furniture, outdoor cafes, plazas, and other features.</p> <p>Under this typology, wide sidewalks with transit access and pedestrian plazas is considered a primary design element.</p>

<b>SECTION 3: Plan Conformance (to be completed by staff or consultants)</b> (Review existing plans to see if the proposed project is included in these plans.)		
26	<b>Bicycle Plan (proposed)</b>	Spenard Road – Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard is identified as a proposed bicycle lane corridor.
27	<b>Street and Highway Landscaping Plan</b>	Concept level project. Plans still to be developed.
28	<b>2006 Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan</b>	NW Park District. No parks in the project area.
29	<b>Wetlands Management Plan (March 2012)</b>	No designated wetlands in the project area.
30	<b>Watershed Requirements</b>	The project is within the Municipality of Anchorage so it will need to meet the drainage requirements set forth in the Municipality's current Design Criteria Manual. DOT&PF has also authored a Memorandum regarding Stormwater Facilities Design within the Municipality of Anchorage (dated August 28, 2018) that will be adhered to for this project.
31	<b>Traffic Calming</b> (Note whether a traffic calming plan exists for project area)	Arterial classified roadways (including Spenard Road) and most collector classified roadways are not considered for traffic calming measures (see MOA's 2016 Traffic Calming Policy Manual)
32	<b>Electric Utility Undergrounding 5-year Plan</b>	Nothing noted in Chugach Electric's 5-year plan.
33	<b>Street Lighting</b>	Street lighting will conform to the requirements outlined in the MOA's 2007 Design Criteria Manual Chapter 5. Spenard Road between Benson Boulevard and Minnesota Drive is classified as a minor arterial with medium pedestrian conflict. Roadway illumination will comply with Tables 5-1 5-2 of the DCM. Intersections will comply with Table 5-5 and pedestrian facilities with Table 5-4.
34	<b>Geotechnical Hazards Plan</b>	Moderately-Low Ground Failure Susceptibility (Hazard Zone 2)
35	<b>Drainage Plan</b>	The drainage design intent for this project is to maintain current runoff rates with the proposed stormwater system and install a new oil-grit separator for the portion of the system that is conveyed to Fish Creek along 36th Avenue. The existing system is over 40 years old and many of the catch basins are outdated structures. The existing system will be replaced due to its age and non-compliant features.



<b>SECTION 3: Plan Conformance (to be completed by staff or consultants)</b> (Review existing plans to see if the proposed project is included in these plans.)		
<b>36</b>	<b>Water and Wastewater Utility Corridor Plan 1990</b>	The recent Spenard Corridor Plan authored by the MOA notes that no major Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) improvements are planned for the area associated with the Spenard corridor. However, it is noted that several properties along the corridor are still on private wells and that AWWU would prefer providing services to those lots and decommissioning the wells. Further coordination with AWWU should occur to determine whether those improvements should be included on this project.
<b>37</b>	<b>Background Documents</b> <i>(list all on file)</i>	Public Involvement Plan

**APPENDIX B: OCTOBER 16, 2020 CORRIDOR WALK/BIKE AUDIT  
PROMPT SHEET**

# AMATS Spenard Road Rehabilitation Minnesota Dr. to Benson Blvd – Walking/Biking Audit

October 2020

## Introduction

A walking/biking audit is a hands-on exercise that provides an examination of the walking and biking environment. The general purpose of the audit is to experience the newly reconstructed north section of Spenard Road and the study section from Northern Lights Boulevard to Minnesota Drive as a person walking/biking/using transit daily would related to the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the environment.

## Overview

Participants can complete the audit as individuals or small teams. We are asking you to walk and/or bike the specific route, periodically taking on the role of a specific transportation system user and completing a common daily task, stopping at pre-determined locations along the way. The prompts below include questions to ponder and inspire a broad perspective of corridor users. One key aspect is crossing Spenard away from signals (because of bus stops, destinations locations, or signal spacing). Please consider the tradeoffs a daily user may assess in choosing where to cross, then identify a crossing route that you are comfortable with, either at a signal or at an unmarked crosswalk at an unsignalized intersection.

Please consider the prompts and take notes and/or pictures/video of your observations but need not provide a written answer to every question. When complete, please send a scan to [aooms@kittelsohn.com](mailto:aooms@kittelsohn.com).

## Big Picture Questions

While completing this audit, have a few big picture questions in the back of your mind:

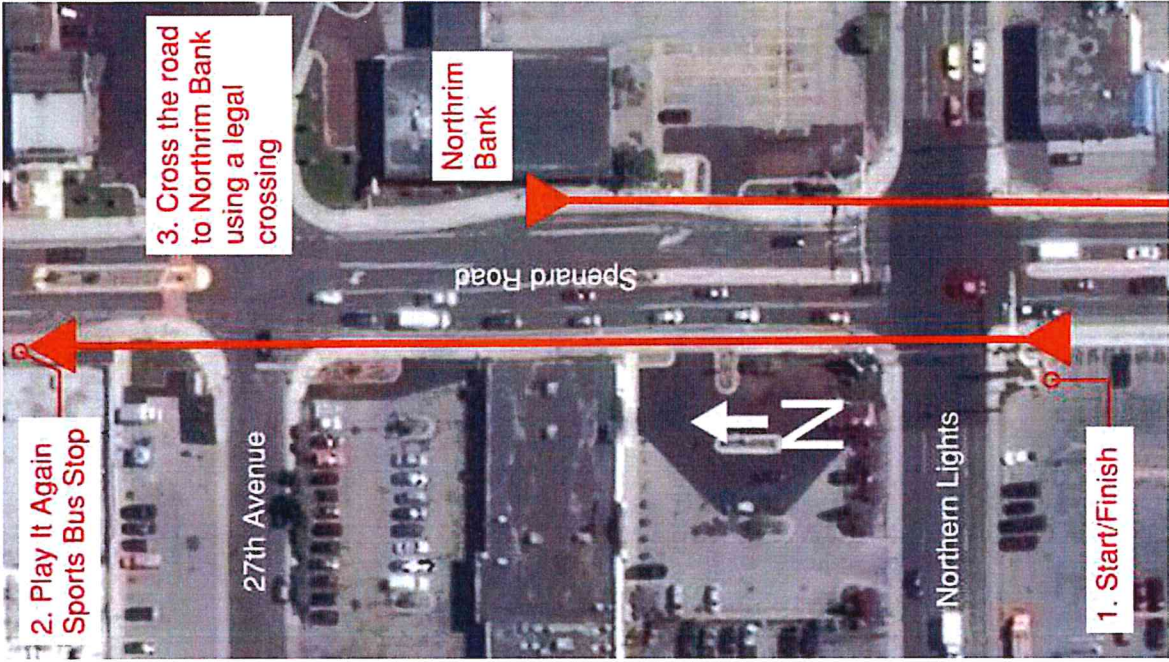
- 1) How does the street environment impact your feel for the corridor? Is it welcoming to those outside of a vehicle? Does it make you want to grab a coffee and window shop? Get through as quickly as possible?
- 2) Can you navigate comfortably and efficiently where you want to go? To connect with transit? To connect destinations? To residential areas?
- 3) How would those with limited mobility, visual impairments, and mobility devices navigate the corridor?

## Suggested Equipment to Bring

- Warm clothes, especially gloves
- Walking shoes
- A bike and helmet
- Your phone (or a stopwatch and camera)
- A clipboard and pen
- A small bag or backpack to carry materials while biking
- A mask
- Safety vest

# Walk Audit Prompts

Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather/Conditions \_\_\_\_\_



1. Start on the southwest corner of Northern Lights and Spenard (former REI).
2. Walk north along the west side of Spenard Road to the Play It Again Sports bus stop (north of 27<sup>th</sup>). Wait for the bus for 30 seconds.
  - a. What is it like? Was it a comfortable place to be? Where do you stand? What amenities would you use? What would you like?
  - b. How would you feel to wait 5 minutes? For 15 minutes? At night? In winter?

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3. Now pretend you took the bus here to get to Northrim Bank. Use a route you are comfortable with to get there. Use the stop watch to time how long it takes you. (Reminder: Every street intersection includes unmarked crosswalks were pedestrians have the right of way, including across Spenard. Use that information as you see fit.)
  - a. Where did you cross? Did drivers (through or turning) yield to you?
  - b. How long did it take you to walk to the crossing? How long did you wait to cross the street?
  - c. How comfortable was the crossing you chose? How convenient? What would you do if this was part of your daily commute? What would you do if you had children with you? If you had limited mobility?

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4. Walk south on the east side of Spenard Road to 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Note the change in environment as we transition from "new" to "old".
5. Walk south to the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street bus stop (in front of Sicily's Pizza). Wait for the bus for 30 seconds.
  - a. What is it like? Was it a comfortable place to be?
  - b. Where do you stand? What amenities would you use? What would you like?
  - c. How would you feel to wait 5 minutes? 15? At night? In winter?
  - d. How does it compare to the Play It Again Sports bus stop?

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6. Now pretend you took the bus here to get to Pancho's Villa. Use a route you are comfortable with to get there. Use the stop watch to time how long it takes you. (FYI: Signalized crossings are located 0.2 miles to the north and south.)
  - a. Where did you cross? Did drivers (through or turning) yield to you?
  - b. How long did it take you to walk to the crossing? How long did you wait to cross the street?
  - c. How comfortable was the crossing you chose? How safe? How convenient? What would you do if this was part of your daily commute? What would you do if you had children with you? If you had limited mobility?
  - d. How did this crossing compare to the North crossing?

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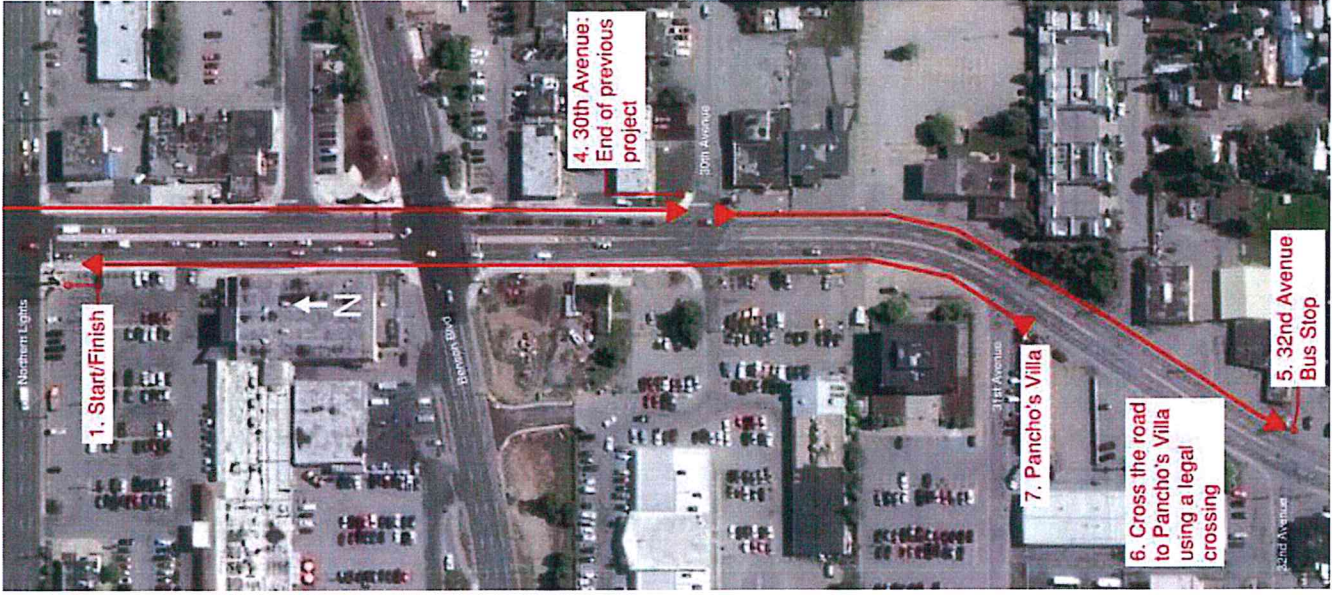


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7. Walk north along the west side of Spenard Road back to the start location. Note your experience on this section of sidewalk.
  - a. Could two people walk side by side comfortably? How would it feel for cyclist to pass?
  - b. How does the proximity and speed of vehicle traffic affect the feel of using the sidewalk?
  - c. Compare vehicle speeds for this section to the North Section.

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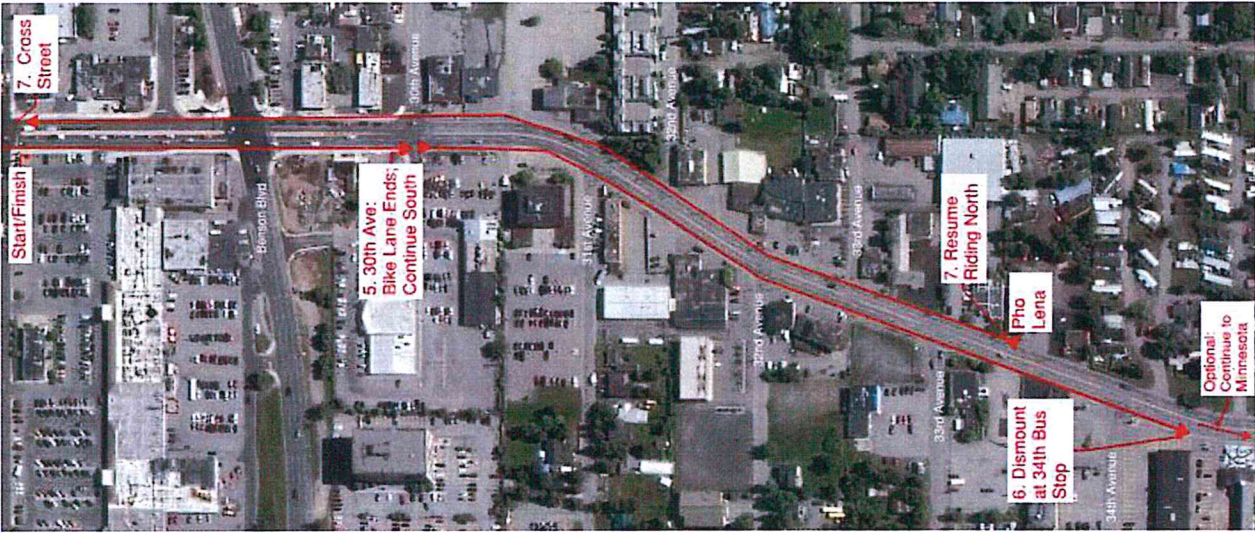
# Bike Audit Prompts

Observer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Weather/Conditions \_\_\_\_\_



1. Start on the southwest corner of Northern Lights and Spenard (former REI).
2. Safely cross to east side of Spenard and start biking north. Using the bike lane is encouraged, but use the sidewalk if more comfortable.
3. Dismount at the 25th Avenue Bus Stop (Chilkoot Charlie's). Wait for the bus for 30 seconds.
  - a. What is it like? Was it a comfortable place to be? Where do you stand? What amenities would you use? What would you like?
  - b. How would you feel to wait 5 minutes? 15 minutes? At night? In winter?
4. Use a route you are comfortable with to cross the street walking your bike on foot. Use a stop watch to time how long it takes you. (Reminder: Every street intersection includes unmarked crosswalks were pedestrians have the right of way, including across Spenard. Use that information as you see fit.)
  - a. Where did you cross? Did drivers (through or turning) yield to you?
  - b. How long did it take you to walk to the crossing? How long did you wait to cross the street?
  - c. How comfortable was the crossing you chose? How safe? How convenient? What would you do if this was part of your daily commute? What would you do if you had children with you? If you had limited mobility?





5. Remount and bike south to 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Stop at that intersection and note that the bike lane drops and the sidewalk narrows.

- Did you ride on the sidewalk or bike lanes or both in the north section? How comfortable are the bike lanes in terms of: vehicle speed and proximity, bike lane width, surface conditions.
- Would you bike with kids here? As a novice or person with low confidence on a bike?

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6. Continue biking south to the bus stop at 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue (near the Church of Love). *Option 1:* bike south to Minnesota, the extent of the study corridor, cross at Minnesota Drive and return. *Option 2:* Dismount.

Now pretend you took the bus here to get to Pho Lena, one block north. Use a route you are comfortable with to get there. Use the stop watch to time how long it takes you. (FYI: The 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue signalized crossing is located 350 feet to the south.)

- Where did you cross? Did drivers (through or turning) yield to you?
- How long did it take you to walk to the crossing? How long did you wait to cross the street?
- How comfortable was the crossing you chose? How safe? How convenient? What would you do if this was part of your daily commute? What would you do if you had children with you? If you had limited mobility? How did this crossing compare to the North crossing?

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7. Remount and bike north to Northern Lights. Cross Spenard to return to the start point. For the study corridor:

- How does it feel when the bike lanes drop out at 30<sup>th</sup>? Did you choose to bike in the roadway or sidewalk? Is the sidewalk conducive to biking? to sharing with pedestrians? What do driveways (curb cuts) and intersections feel like while biking? How was riding in the lane (or how would it have been)?
- Would you bike with kids here? As a novice or person with low confidence on a bike?

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**APPENDIX C: NOVEMBER 5, 2020 SPENARD COMMUNITY COUNCIL  
MEETING NOTES**



## Meeting Summary Spenard Community Council

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<b>Project Number:</b>	State CFHWY00604 / Federal 0001659
<b>Date/Location:</b>	November 4, 2020, 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Virtual – Zoom
<b>Staff Present:</b>	DOT&PF: Sean Baski; Travis Holmes Lounsbury: Susan Acheson DOWL: Katie Conway; Rachel Steer
<b>Elected Officials/</b>	Judy Jessen – Staff member for Kamerson Perez-Verdia
<b>Representatives:</b>	Starr Marsett – ASD Board Member

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### Summary

DOT&PF project manager Sean Baski introduced the project. He noted that the project was nominated by AMATS and will be federally funded. MOA is participating in the federal match and staff from the MOA PM&E department are taking part in the project.

A member of the CC said that she was thankful to see this project get started. She noted that it has been part of the Spenard CC capital improvements project list for a long time.

#### **What kind of integration will there be with Chugach Way?**

Access improvements addressing roadway approaches, safety, and road quality will be addressed, but improvements along side roads are likely be limited due to federal funding restrictions.

#### **A member of the CC said she really liked the work that was done on the north end of Spenard. The addition of bike and pedestrian amenities are nice and traffic has slowed. Is there any consideration for roundabouts such as at Spenard & 36<sup>th</sup> Ave?**

The project team has not started to dive into intersection alternatives, but DOT&PF does have a roundabouts-first policy when looking at an intersection. Roundabouts do tend to have negative impacts with regard to ROW impacts.

#### **There was a question about the amount of parking that would be lost along Spenard near 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave and 33rd Ave.**

It's too early to say anything definitively, the project is just starting. There is potential that roadway improvements will have impacts to private parcels and parking. This is a federally funded project that has a well-defined and lengthy process.

A member of the CC noted that homelessness, vagrancy, and theft are big problems in Spenard and it will be good to see improvements on the roadway that will help assist with mitigating these problems.

#### **Chat comments:**

- A nice row of neon palm trees?
- Continue bike lanes
- Seems like everything has been improved besides Minnesota to Forest Park; there is a very odd intersection at 29th and Lois and the unused pedestrian bridges at Lois and Benson

Sean thanked everyone for their time and said construction is anticipated to start in 2025 at the earliest.

## **APPENDIX D: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

# **AMATS: SPENARD ROAD REHABILITATION MINNESOTA DRIVE TO BENSON BOULEVARD**

## **Public Involvement Plan**

State Project No: CFHWY00604  
Federal Project No: 0001659

## **Prepared for:**



State of Alaska  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
Central Region  
4111 Aviation Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99519

## **Prepared by:**

DOWL  
4041 B Street  
Anchorage, AK 99503  
(907) 562-2000

December 2020

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## ACRONYMS

ACS .....	Alaska Communications Systems
ADA .....	Americans with Disabilities Act
AMATS .....	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
ASD .....	Anchorage School District
AWWU .....	Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility
CE .....	Categorical Exclusion
CEA .....	Chugach Electric Association
CSS .....	Context Sensitive Solutions
DEC .....	State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
DOT&PF .....	State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
EPA .....	Environmental Protection Agency
EPM .....	Alaska Environmental Procedures Manual
FHWA .....	Federal Highway Administration
GCI .....	General Communications Inc.
HPCM .....	Alaska Highway Preconstruction Manual
MOA .....	Municipality of Anchorage
NEPA .....	National Environmental Policy Act
PIP .....	Public Involvement Plan
SHPO .....	State Historic Preservation Office
USACE .....	United States Army Corps of Engineers

## **1.0 PROJECT TEAM**

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State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) – Central Region

*Sean Baski, P.E., Project Manager, (907) 269-0547, sean.baski@alaska.gov*

*Travis Holmes P.E., Project Engineer, (907) 269-0568, travis.holmes@alaska.gov*

Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)

*Melinda Tsu, P.E., Project Manager, (907) 343-8110, melinda.tsu@anchorageak.gov*

*Jennifer Noffke, P.E., Project Administrator, (907) 343-8130,  
jennifer.noffke@anchorageak.gov*

Lounsbury & Associates

*Joe Taylor, P.E., Project Manager, (907) 272-5451, j.taylor@lounsburyinc.com*

*Susan Acheson, P.E., Project Engineer, (907) 272-5451, s.acheson@lounsburyinc.com*

DOWL

*Rachel Steer, Public Involvement, (907) 562-2000, rsteer@dowl.com*

*Katie Conway, Public Involvement, (907) 562-2000, kconway@dowl.com*

Kittelson & Associates

*Andrew Ooms, P.E., Non-motorized Users & Safety, (907) 433-8102,  
aooms@kittelson.com*

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## **2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

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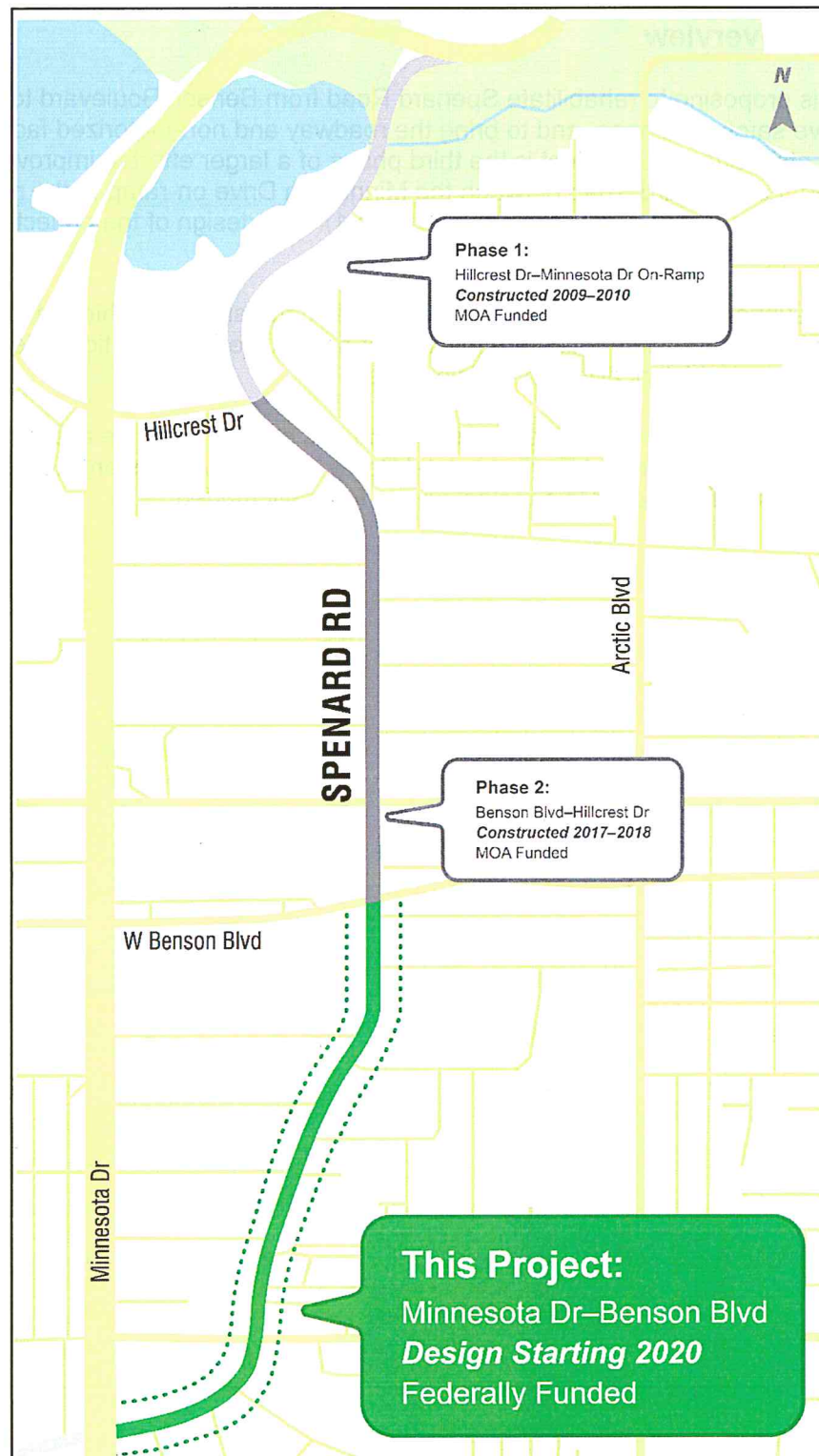
### **2.1 Project Overview**

The DOT&PF is proposing to rehabilitate Spenard Road from Benson Boulevard to Minnesota Drive to improve safety, drainage, and to bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards. This project is the third phase of a larger effort to improve the northern segment of Spenard Road between the Minnesota Drive on-ramp to the north and the intersection with Minnesota Drive to the south (Figure 1). The design of the project will be led by DOT&PF with support from the MOA.

Spenard Road supports one of the highest pedestrian and transit uses within the MOA, yet current pedestrian and transit facilities are minimal or non-existent. In addition, intersections along the corridor have historically high collision rates.

A 2019 Class of Action determination established that this project would be a Categorical Exclusion (CE) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is anticipated that more than 90 percent of the funding for this project will be federally funded.

Figure 1: Project Area





## 2.2 Project History

This effort started as a Highway Safety Improvement Project in the early 2000s. A Preliminary Engineering Report, completed in 2007, established design standards for the corridor and recommended a three-lane roadway alternative for Spenard Road from Hillcrest Drive south to the intersection with Minnesota Drive. Phase I, which constructed improvements from Hillcrest Drive to the Minnesota on-ramp, was completed 2010. Phase II, completed in 2018, resulted in improvements to Spenard Road from Hillcrest Drive south to Benson Boulevard.

## 2.3 Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) details the proposed methods for communicating information with agencies, organizations, and the public for the project. The objective of this effort is to work directly with the interested public and other stakeholders to communicate the goals of the project and gather input. It will also ensure the project team is meeting the relevant Federal, DOT&PF, and MOA requirements for public involvement.

Public and agency involvement on transportation projects completed by the DOT&PF within the MOA is guided by a range of documents including:

- Alaska Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM)
- Alaska Highway Preconstruction Manual (HPCM)
- NEPA Assignment Program Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and DOT&PF
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (Chapter 21.03.190) (MOA)
- A Strategy for Developing Context Sensitive Transportation Projects (MOA, 2008)

The HPCM is the FHWA-approved guide for developing and designing federal-aid projects in Alaska. This PIP has been developed in accordance with the requirements and best practices as outlined in the HPCM and the EPM.

DOT&PF is required by federal agreement to include a disclosure regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) compliance as part of agency outreach and public involvement. DOWL will work with the DOT&PF Civil Rights Office to confirm the most current language prior to publication. At time of writing this PIP, the current language is:

*The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated November 3, 2017, and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.*

DOT&PF Civil Rights Office notices will be published with all public announcements and Title VI documents will be displayed at public meetings and documented in the meeting record.

This project will follow the MOA's CSS process. This will include submittals to the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission at the Concept Report and Alternatives Analysis (commonly

referred to as the Draft Design Study Report) stage. The third submittal to the Urban Design Commission will occur at no more than 65 percent design.

### **3.0 IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS**

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Below is an initial list of stakeholders. When possible, these entities will be included in the project outreach/mailing list. This list will expand throughout the project.

#### **3.1 Public and Other**

- Property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods
- Business owners and non-profit organizations in adjacent areas
- Spenard Chamber of Commerce
- Cook Inlet Housing Authority
- Bike Anchorage
- Federation of Community Councils
  - Spenard
  - North Star
  - Midtown

#### **3.2 Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies**

- FHWA
- Alaska Legislature: Senators and Representatives
- State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Alaska State Troopers (AST)
- Anchorage School District (ASD)
- MOA
  - Mayor's Office
  - Anchorage Assembly
  - Planning Department
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Public Transportation Department
  - Anchorage Fire Department
  - Anchorage Police Department

- Department of Economic and Community Development
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Project Management and Engineering
- Traffic Engineering
- Maintenance and Operations
- Urban Design Commission
- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)
  - Technical and Policy Committees
  - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

### 3.3 Utility Companies

- Alaska Communications Systems (ACS)
- Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU)
- Chugach Electric Association (CEA)
- ENSTAR Natural Gas Company
- General Communications Incorporated (GCI)

## 4.0 STAKEHOLDER ISSUES & CONCERNS

The project team has identified the following potential concerns. Additional issues and concerns will be documented throughout the design phase.

Issue	Detail
Challenges managing stakeholder expectations regarding the degree to which the project will be able to support neighborhood revitalization efforts.	Previous phases of work were locally funded, which allowed for improvements beyond the right-of-way in support of neighborhood revitalization efforts. This new phase of work is federally funded, and limitations on that funding are prohibitive.
A desire for the project to incorporate the goals and objectives of the Spenard Corridor Plan.	The roadway amenities and features recommended by the Spenard Corridor Plan could set an expectation that these items will be incorporated into the project, which may not necessarily be the case.
A desire for the project to incorporate artistic or historic features into the project design.	There is some stakeholder expectation that art and/or historic features (such as those built in Phase II) will be integrated into this project. Art may be incorporated into this project, but MOA would fund the effort since it is not an eligible cost using Federal funds.
Area is used by a broad range of stakeholders (residents, businesses, commuting public).	There will be some who support the project and some who do not because of higher perceived impacts than benefits.

Issue	Detail
Right-of-way impacts.	Loss of parking and direct access for property owners could be perceived negatively.
Coordination with adjacent projects.	This is a relatively small corridor with several transportation and land-use projects currently underway.
Disruption to area businesses and residents that may result from construction.	Unavoidable disruption and inconvenience could have a negative impact on stakeholders, including temporary loss of direct access to some properties.

## 5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS

The following subsections identify the methods proposed to reach agencies and stakeholders with project information. The project team will discuss outreach efforts and select other tools for involving the public and agencies if feedback is considered insufficient.

### 5.1 Mailing Lists

Mailing lists for electronic and postal distribution will be purchased or created and maintained for all property owners, businesses, and residents within 500 feet of the project corridor. Constant Contact will be used to deliver electronic newsletters and other project updates. The project website will include a mechanism for interested persons to request to be added to the email distribution list.

### 5.2 Public Meetings (Virtual and In-Person)

Two public open houses are planned to inform the public about the project and to solicit comments or concerns. The first open house is scheduled for January 2021 to present alternatives under consideration to stakeholders for input. The second open house is scheduled for fall 2021 as the environmental document is being finalized. Given current public health uncertainties around the global COVID-19 pandemic, these open houses may be virtual, in-person, or a combination of both, depending on the circumstances and guidance from local, state, and federal governments at the time the meetings are being planned.

For both open house meetings, project stakeholders will be notified via a postcard mailed 21 days prior to the meeting, by public notice on the State of Alaska website, and by advertisement in the Anchorage Daily News. Meeting notes will be prepared as documentation and will include meeting materials, presentation, and a summary of public comments.

Additionally, the project will be featured at the virtual Anchorage Transportation Fair in November 2020, as well as the Anchorage Transportation Fair in Fall 2021.

### 5.3 Project Site Visits and Virtual Walk Throughs

In October 2020, members of the project team participated in a corridor walk/bike audit conducted by the project team. The general purpose of the audit was to experience the newly reconstructed north section of Spenard Road and the project corridor from Northern Lights Boulevard to Minnesota Drive as a person walking, biking, and/or using transit. The evaluation



considered the safety, access, comfort, and convenience of the environment. Findings from this walk/bike audit will be used to inform project design as well as stakeholder outreach.

An additional project walk-through will be conducted with stakeholders in winter 2020-2021. This will occur either as a group activity, or individually using instructions created by the project team. Data collected from members of the public will be shared with the design team.

#### **5.4 Website, Email, and Social Media**

A project website has been established at [www.SpenardRoad.com](http://www.SpenardRoad.com), using the State of Alaska Look and Feel Standards (<http://alaska.gov/LookAndFeel>), which is ADA compliant. The website will be maintained with project background information, a current schedule, meeting information, and contact information for the project team.

The email address [spenardroad@dowl.com](mailto:spenardroad@dowl.com) will be included on all communication materials. This email address will be linked to a distribution list that includes members from the DOT&PF, Lounsbury, and DOWL's project team.

DOWL will work with the DOT&PF public information team to craft and schedule project-specific content for the DOT&PF Facebook page, Twitter feed, and Instagram account. Social media advertising campaigns will be initiated in advance of the public open house meetings.

#### **5.5 Community Councils and Other Interest Group Meetings**

The project team will maintain regular interaction with various stakeholder groups within the corridor, including attendance at Spenard Community Council meetings at key milestones during the project.

Following Section 450.17, subsection "Communities with a Community Council" in the HPCM, a formal letter will be sent at every major project milestone to Community Councils within a half mile of the project corridor. These Community Councils are Spenard, North Star, and Midtown.

#### **5.6 Project Postcards and Newsletters**

A postcard will be distributed to announce both public open house meetings at least 21 days in advance. The postcard will be mailed, and an electronic version will be emailed to the contact list. Both will contain graphics and text explaining the purpose of the meeting and ask for public input. Additionally, up to eight e-newsletters will be distributed at relevant project milestones.

#### **5.7 Advertising**

Public meetings will be advertised in the Anchorage Daily News, on the statewide DOT&PF Facebook page, through email notices to the project contact list, on the State of Alaska Online Public Notice system. Meeting advertisements will be prepared in advance to allow for DOT&PF approval.

#### **5.8 Government/Agency Presentations**

Presentations will be made to the AMATS Technical and Policy Committees as well as the AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Freight Advisory Committee (if desired) at relevant project milestones. Assembly members representing this part of Anchorage

will be included in all project outreach; these Assembly members will be included in the project mailing list and will receive specific invitations to all Open Houses. If requested, additional government/agency presentations will be scheduled.

## **5.9 Media Communications**

The project team will coordinate with the DOT&PF project manager and public information officers prior to any media communications. Media communications may include press releases, media briefings, telephone interviews, and communication with elected officials.

## **5.10 Additional Public Involvement**

The project team will conduct additional public involvement throughout the project. Additional public involvement may include (as directed and agreed to by the DOT&PF project manager):

- Community council presentations
- Targeted literature drops to key stakeholders
- Pop-up open houses (road shows)
- Responses to informal requests for information from individuals and/or agencies

## **6.0 COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC AND DOCUMENTATION**

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Comments received via email, mail, phone, or in written form will be distributed to the project team and archived in the project comment database managed by DOWL. All comments and questions will be replied to within two (2) business days.

## **7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

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Guidelines for a successful public involvement process using context sensitive solutions requires a strong commitment from all members of the project team to reach out to potentially affected interests. Below are goals for obtaining public input throughout the project.

- The roles of the project team and the public will be defined.
- A working relationship between the community and the project team will be formed.
- Goals and expectations will be clearly defined.
- The project team will keep an open mind on all points of view.
- The project team will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input has influenced project decisions.
- Information will be shared openly and directly to help the public become familiar with the issues and the public process.
- Milestones in the process will be clearly defined, acknowledged, and communicated.
- Visualizations and illustrations will be used to convey design alternatives.
- The project team will encourage the public to provide feedback on elements of design that could be affected by input.



- Feedback opportunities will be designed in a way that each stakeholder can communicate in their desired form.
- The project team will follow-up on all inquiries and comments during project development.

## 8.0 APPROVAL

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Sean Baski, P.E.

Project Manager, DOT&PF

Date

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Jim Amundsen, P.E.

Chief, Central Region Highway Design Group, DOT&PF

Date

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Brian Elliott

Manager, Regional Environmental Program, DOT&PF

Date