



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519
Tel 907-343-4355

URL www.muni.org/departments/parks



MEMORANDUM

Date: February 3, 2017

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Josh Durand, Parks Superintendent

From: Tom Korosei, Park Planner

PRC 2017-10 Request for Approval of Proposed Improvements to a Viewpoint

Project: on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (Mile 0.4)

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The Great Land Trust, with support of the Anchorage Audubon Society, has proposed upgrades to a portion of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Specifically, the improvements would enhance a turnout/viewpoint located on a portion of the trail at approximately mile 0.4, west of the Alaska Railroad on Railroad property. The turnout now includes a park bench, and was part of the trail constructed in the mid-1980s. A page from the original plans is attached for reference. The current project is sometimes referred to as the "Audubon Wayside."

The proposal would enlarge the turnout to give more space for trail users to stop to enjoy the vista, and would include an additional bench.

The Turnagain Community Council reviewed the project at its meetings in December 2016 and January 2017, and recommended including a bicycle rack and waste receptacle.

Additional background and project information, provided by the project designer, is attached. As noted, the project requires approval from the Alaska Railroad.

The Parks and Recreation Dept. believes that the improvements would improve safety and convenience for trail users and visitors and generally enhance the quality of this section of the trail.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Parks and Recreation Department requests that the Parks and Recreation Commission adopt the attached resolution to approve the trailside improvements, generally as proposed, including recommendations of the Turnagain Community Council.

Attachments

Cc: Pat Pourchot, Great Land Trust
Dwayne Adams, Earthscape



**Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Commission**

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519



Resolution No. 2017-04

Approval of Proposed Improvements to Tony Knowles Coastal Trail Turnout/Viewpoint at Milepost 0.4

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the Great Land Trust with support of the Audubon Society proposes improvements to a feature of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail; and

WHEREAS, the affected portion of the Coastal Trail is located on Alaska Railroad (ARRC) property and the project is subject to ARRC approval; and

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements would enhance a well-used scenic overlook, originally built about 1986, by providing an expanded area with a suitable platform for sightseeing and birdwatching by visitors and residents and would enhance views to the shoreline and its biological resources currently obscured by vegetation; and

WHEREAS, the project would help address current safety issues between Tony Knowles Coastal Trail through-traffic and wayside users and would allow expansion of the width of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in the future; and

WHEREAS, on January 12, 2017, the Turnagain Community Council considered the project and with recommendations gave its unanimous support; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: The Parks and Recreation Commission approves the improvements, generally as proposed, to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail turnout/viewpoint at Milepost 0.4, with recommendations of the Turnagain Community Council, subject to obtaining required permits.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 8th day of December 2016.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

John H. Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation Department

THE “AUDUBON WAYSIDE” AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Background

Birding is becoming an increasingly popular activity within Anchorage, valued by both residents and our city's visitors. It is not unusual to see more than a dozen foreign or out-of-state visitors gathered at key birding locations such as Westchester Lagoon or Fish Creek, glassing the lake, inlet, or estuary for our northern birds. As well, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is frequented by dozens of Anchorage residents at a time, walking along the trail with a pair of binoculars, gazing across Westchester Lagoon or Knik Arm in search of sightings of Eagles, Cranes, Sandpipers, Plovers, Goldeneyes or any number of other birds.

One of the prime opportunities for viewing shorebirds has been a well-known wayside on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, midway between the southern railroad tunnel at Westchester Lagoon and the newly-replaced Fish Creek Bridge. However, this wayside is often congested, with through traffic needing to navigate sightseers at that location. Those who do use the wayside have views that are limited by an overgrowth of vegetation to each side that restricts the panorama of the inlet, its wildlife, the Knik Arm shoreline, the Port of Anchorage, and the distant mountains.

Many members of the community have recognized that the wayside is a prime viewing opportunity that needs to be improved to better serve birders and trail users, enhancing the user experience.

Importantly as well, many recognize that the large number of wayside users and trail users sometimes leads to conflicts between user groups as space is limited to accommodate both activities at peak use times. However, the need for improvement of this wayside is overshadowed by the need for other fixes on the Coastal Trail and other Anchorage Trails. Thus, funding has not been available to address this need.

Funding

In the 1980s, a small group of dedicated citizens, foremost including birders and wetland preservationists, launched an effort to protect open spaces and provide modest improvements to Business Park Wetlands, a small wetland complex west of C Street, between Tudor Road and International Airport Road. The group, led by Anchorage Audubon, was successful in its efforts, combining financial donations and contributions of professional talents to both preserve land in a rapidly developing portion of Anchorage’s Midtown while constructing a small deck and installing interpretive material. At the completion of that effort, a pool of money remained that to this date is largely unspent.

Anchorage Audubon was interested in putting the funds into a project that would respect the interests of those who had so generously donated to the Business Park Wetlands cause. After consideration of many projects, the consensus of Anchorage Audubon members was that improvement of the wayside on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail was its preferred project for use of the funds.

Anchorage Audubon did not have the management team available to administer an improvement project and chose to partner with Great Land Trust to see the project through to completion. Great Land Trust has taken the reins of the project and has coordinated on an on-going basis with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) to move the project forward.

Great Land Trust has also entered a contract with the Anchorage Park Foundation to help in the contracting associated with the project, helping to assure that the project meets MOA park standards and reflects the goals of the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department. Working with the Park Foundation, Great Land Trust hired Anchorage landscape architecture firm Earthscape, LLC, to design the project and help manage the construction effort. Also, Great Land Trust has been conferring with Alaska Treeline for construction. Alaska Treeline constructed the trail and deck improvements at Campbell Creek Estuary Natural Area and has demonstrated their appreciation for working in sensitive wetland settings. The project construction budget is approximately \$50,000.

Land Ownership/Management Requirements

Though not apparent, the land on which the wayside and its appurtenant trail reside is owned by the ARRC. While not within the right-of-way, the trail and wayside are located on a peninsula of land ownership that is retained by ARRC. The parcel is subject to the same recognition and reviews that would be required of any project proposed within ARRC right-of-way.

ARRC requires permits for both the soil borings and for the actual construction of the proposed project. They will review the project for its possibility of jeopardizing ARRC operations and safety. They also will review plans for competency and will determine whether the proposed borings/construction might require ARRC inspection and flagmen. These permits require approximately four weeks each to review and approve, not to mention imposition of fees to support the review process. That review time expands from the four weeks proportionate to the time for design review, after completion of final design drawings.

Lastly, ARRC may require that the existing agreement between ARRC and MOA for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail be amended to reflect the proposed improvements. The determination of this requirement is still pending. Amendment of the agreement would require additional fees to cover ARRC costs to amend the permit.

Design Status

With guidance from the Department of Parks and Recreation, Earthscape has designed a wayside improvement project that recognizes the “architecture” of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and existing wayside facilities such as those at the western end of Westchester Lagoon. The design was presented to the Turnagain Community Council at their December meeting and the council provided unanimous approval at their January 12 meeting. In summary, the design provides the following:

- Renovates an existing wayside
- Provides a 20'x30' viewing deck
- Will accommodate groups of bird/landscape viewers up to a capacity of approximately 24 viewers
- Extends over coastal wetland
- Allows views now precluded by vegetation
- Removes viewers from congested area of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail
- Will include interpretive material and donor recognitions
- Accommodates future Coastal Trail widening

- Includes a bike rack, seating, and a trash receptacle. In the future, it will also provide a viewing scope, dependent on funding.
- The project will also update interpretive panels located at Fish Creek, also pending funding.

As part of the project, Earthscape has hired DOWL to provide soil borings to determine structural requirements for the deck, recognizing the dynamics of the shoreline location and its challenging soils. Information from the borings will be provided to BBFM Engineering which will provide the structural engineering for the deck. Once completed, the drawings will be submitted to the ARRC for review.

Schedule

Soil borings awaited completion of the Fish Creek Bridge replacement so that a drill rig could be mobilized to the site. Soil borings are now intended to take place in January, after ARRC approval of an entry permit. Following that, structural engineering will be complete in January/February. Construction could take place in mid-March, after the Tour of Anchorage is held. However, that depends on ARRC review times. If review delays the project into late April, construction may be delayed till after the bird migration in April/May. Work is intended to require approximately two to three weeks for completion.

Public Access

The site of the actual construction will be fenced to prevent casual access during the 2-3 weeks of construction. This will not reduce the existing width of the trail. Materials will be driven to the site, down the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, from Lyn Ary Park. The contractor intends to use small trucks, sometimes with trailers, to deliver materials to the site. Most of the movement of materials can be handled without closing the trail. Delivery of larger beams or prefabricated steel components may require closings for as much as 30 minutes. If such periodic closings are necessary, Great Land Trust will coordinate with the Department to ensure such closings take place at times that trail use is at low volume times of day. Great Land Trust will provide public notifications as directed by the Department including signage at Westchester Lagoon, Lyn Ary Park, and caution signs at the site itself.

Wayside Ownership

As with other wayside infrastructure along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and other area trails, the constructed facilities will be owned by MOA, though the land ownership will remain with the ARRC. MOA will not accept ownership until such time that the project is complete and acceptable to MOA standards.

Legend

- GDBO.MILEMARKER
- GDBO.EASEMENT_LINES
 - <all other values>
 - CENTERLINE
 - EASEMENT
 - POLY_CLOSE
 - PUBLIC_USE
 - GDBO.TRAIL_SEGMENT



0 100 200 300 400 500 600 Feet

Coastal Trail – ARR MP 112.54 Area

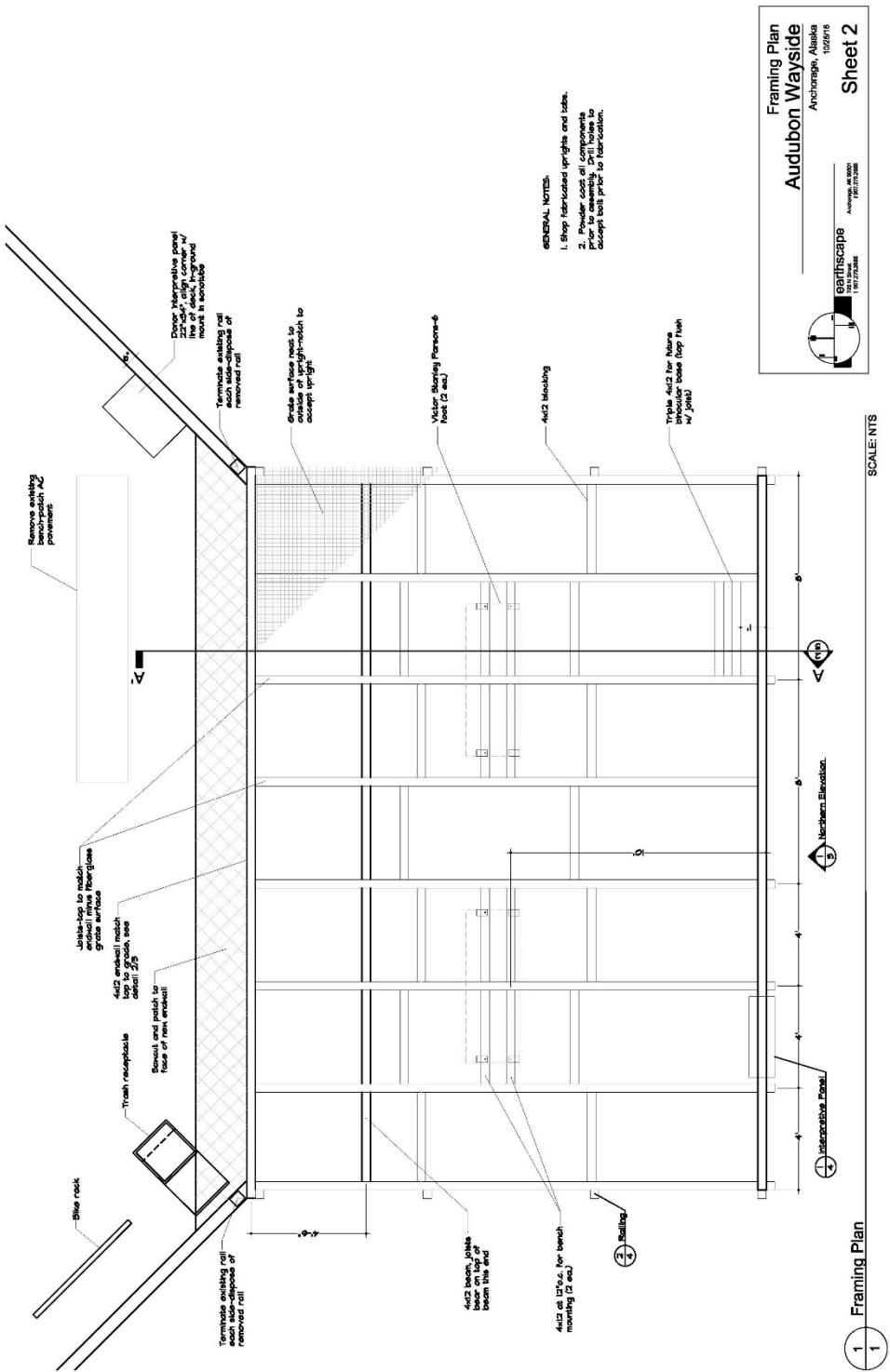
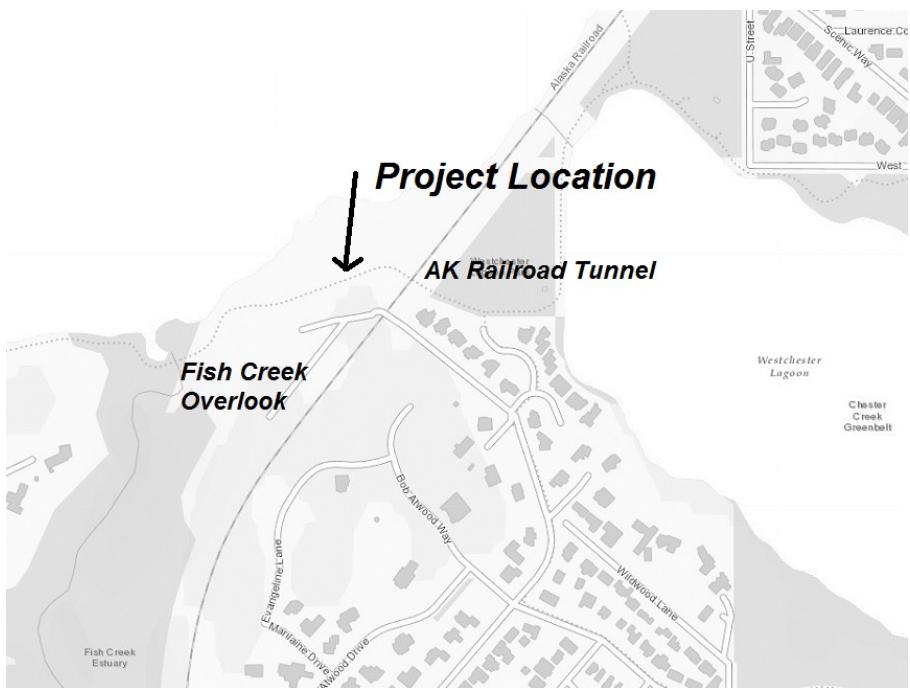


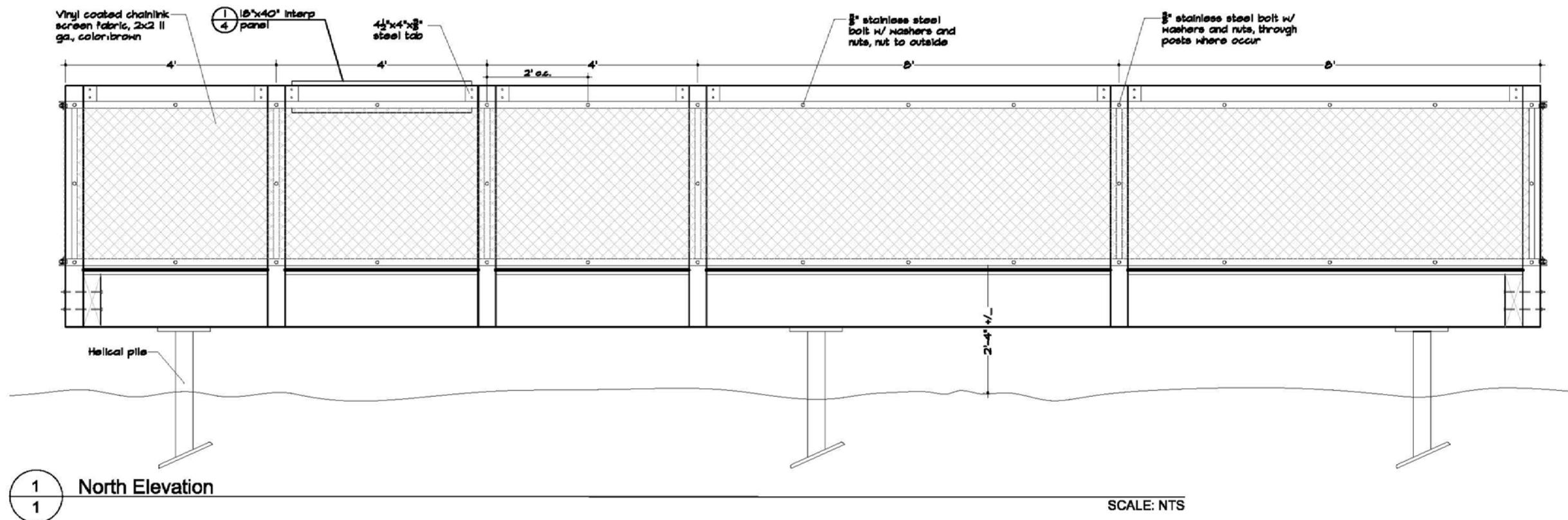
Audubon Wayside

Plan Layout

Project provides for the following:

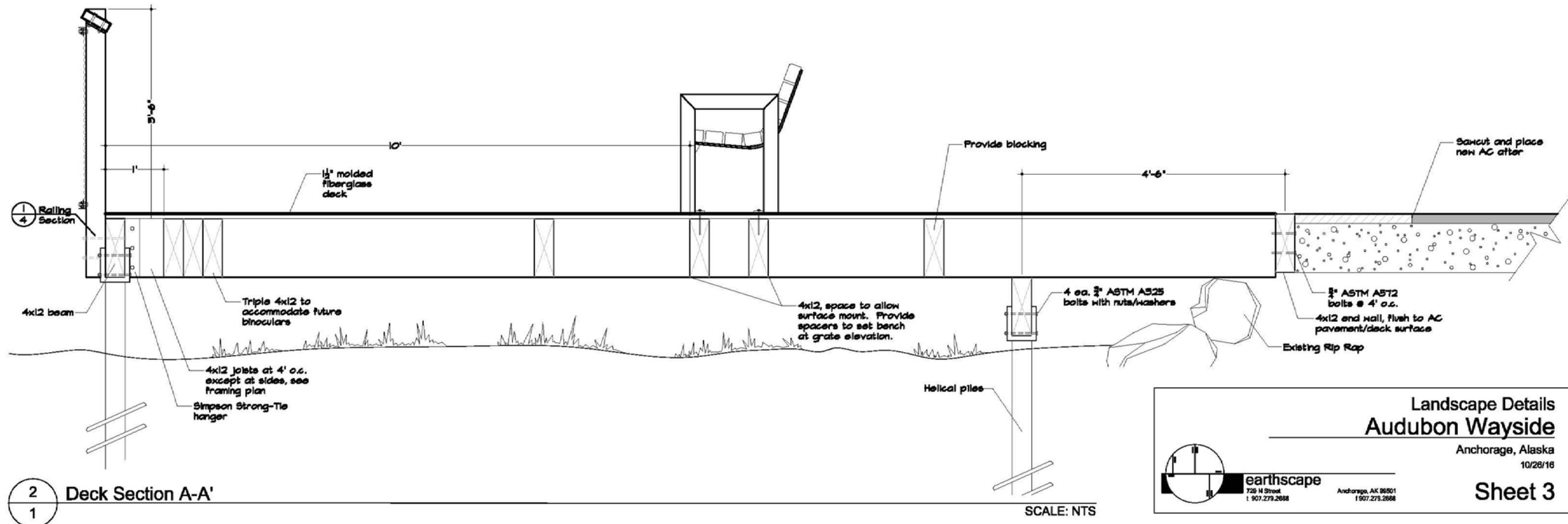
- Renovate an existing wayside
 - Provide 20'x30' viewing deck
 - Will accommodate groups of bird/landscape viewers
 - Extends over coastal wetland
 - Allows views now precluded by alder growth
 - Removes viewers from congested area of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail
 - Will include interpretive material and donor recognitions
 - Accommodates future Coastal Trail widening
 - Updates interpretive material at the Fish Creek overlook
 - ARRC land-funded by Anchorage Audubon with assistance from Great Land Trust





North Elevation

SCALE: NT



2 Deck Section A-A

SCALE: NT

Landscape Details
Audubon Wayside

Anchorage, Alaska
10/26/16

Terza

Sheet 3

Street 3

Street 3

[View Details](#)

TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2017-01

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED AUDUBON WAYSIDE IMPROVEMENTS ALONG THE TONY KNOWLES COASTAL TRAIL

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2016, representatives of Great Land Trust provided a presentation to Turnagain Community Council attendees of improvements proposed for an existing wayside, located approximately 150 yards northeast of Fish Creek, on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail;

WHEREAS, the representatives summarized the history of the project and provided an overview of the proposed improvements, which will be funded by a donation by the Anchorage Audubon Society;

WHEREAS, the wayside improvements will enhance an existing well-used scenic overlook by providing an expanded area with a suitable platform for sightseeing and birdwatching by visitors and residents;

WHEREAS, the project helps address current safety issues between Tony Knowles Coastal Trail through-traffic and wayside users;

WHEREAS, the improvements enhance views to the shoreline and its biological resources, currently precluded by vegetation; and

WHEREAS, the wayside is located such that it allows for potential expansion of the width of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail if needed at some future date;

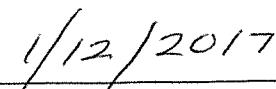
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Turnagain Community Council supports the proposed Audubon Wayside improvements, and recommends approval of the by the Parks and Recreation Commission, with the following recommendations for changes to plans presented at the meeting:

1. Inclusion of a bicycle rack
2. Provision of a litter receptacle that meets current Parks Department standards

RESOLUTION PASSED by the Turnagain Community Council on this 12th day of January, 2017.
Vote: 9 yes, 0 no, none abstain.



Cathy Gleason, Acting President
Turnagain Community Council



Date

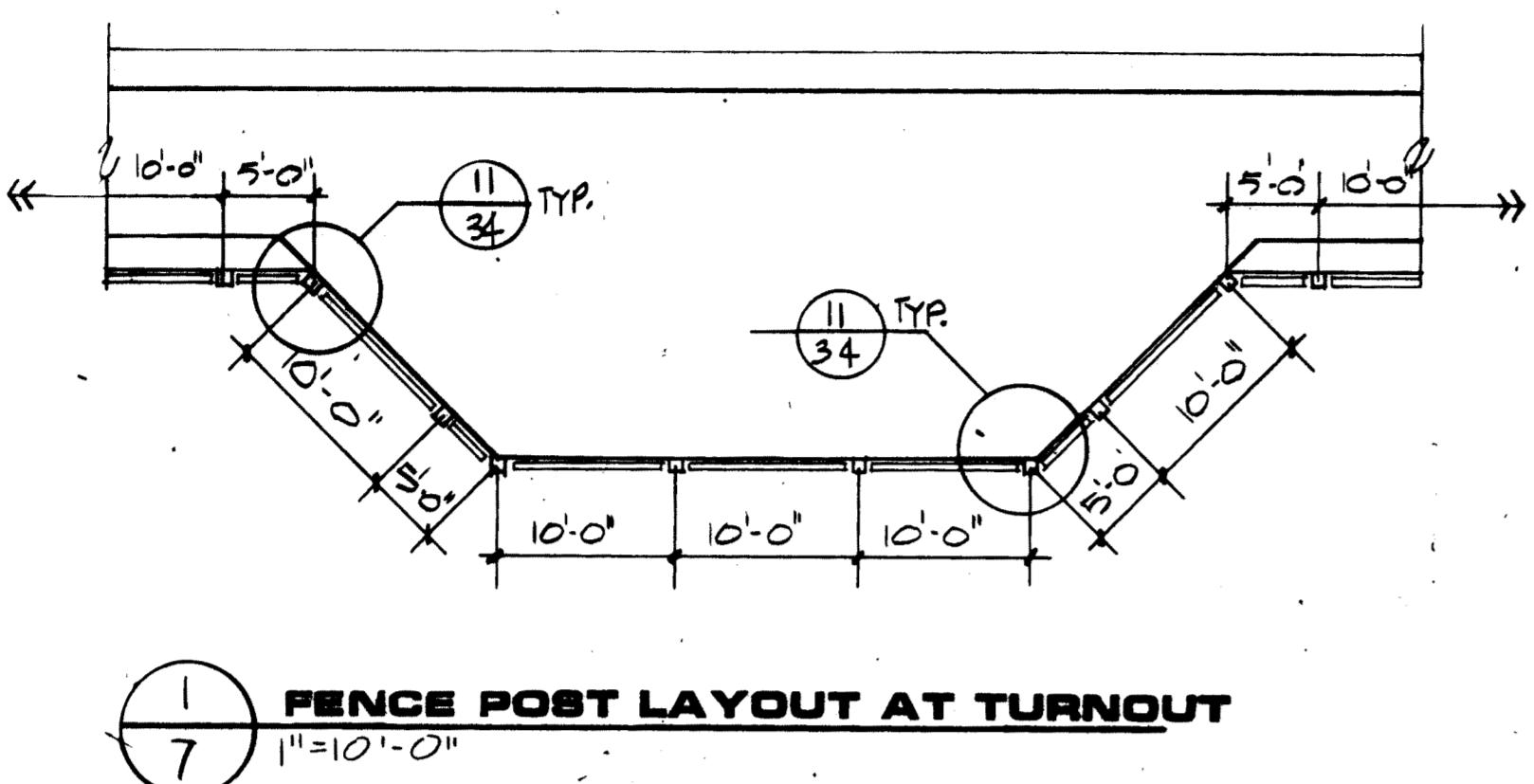
**SITE PLAN
TUNNEL TO MCCARRY
STATION 36+25 TO STATION 40+72**



PAVA Design, Inc.
900 West Fifth Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 274-2300

PAVA

Drawn
Date
Rev
Job No.
Sheet No.
Scale
605
73
1:120'

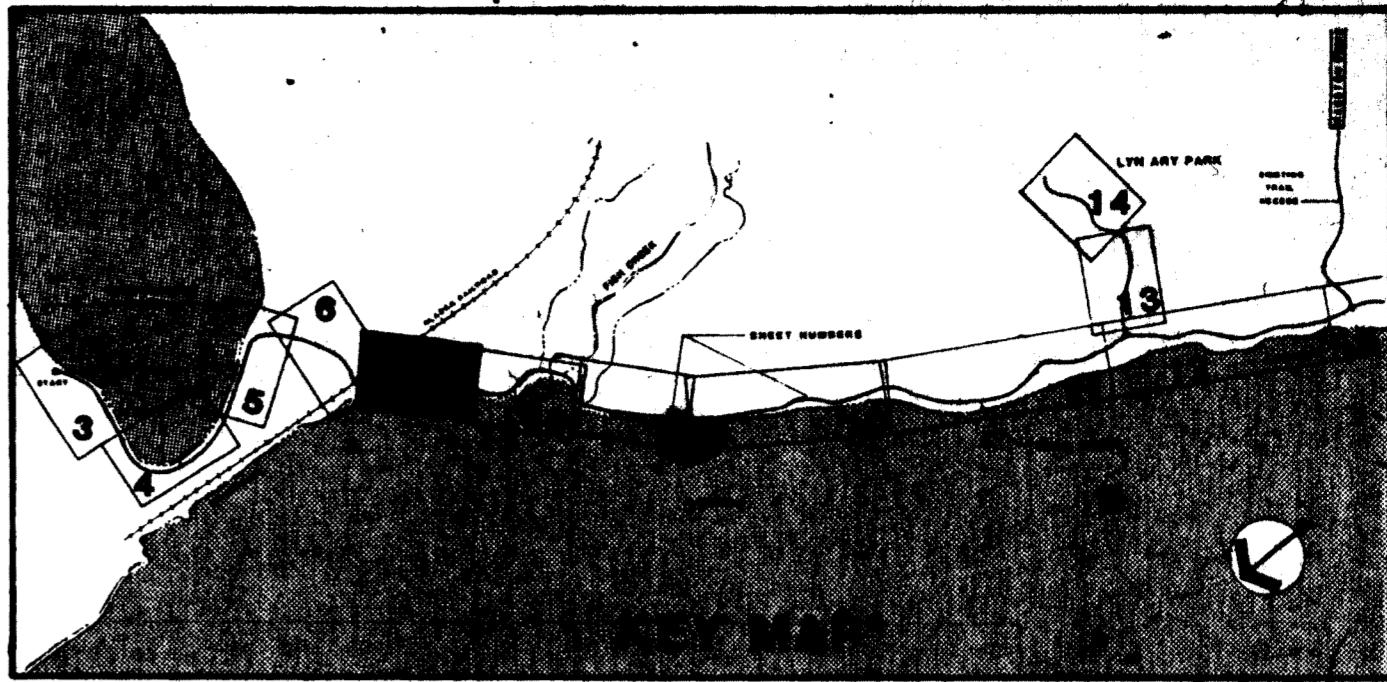


STATIONING
35+23 to 36+20
36+20 to 40+72
See Sheets 31 and 32 for Typical Sections

TYPICAL SECTION
5 Ft. Min. Fill
Section AA

NOTE :

SEE SHEETS G-1 THRU G-7 FOR
DETAILED INSTALLATION OF
NEW FORCE MAIN TO BE
CONSTRUCTED CONCURRENTLY
WITH THIS SECTION OF TRAIL



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BUTLER AVIATION	243-4322
CHUGACH ELECTRIC ASSOC.	562-2278
ENSTAR ALASKA GAS CO.	264-3740
MATANUSKA ELECTRIC ASSOC.	564-2181
MATANUSKA TELEPHONE	564-3144
MOA STORM DRAINS, BENSON-SOUTH	264-4872
MOA STORM DRAINS, BENSON-NORTH	264-4563
MUNICIPAL LIGHT & POWER	279-7671
MURKIN'S	563-3133
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