



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

P.O. Box 196650

Anchorage, AK 99519



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 9, 2026

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Shanna Gamble, Director; Taylor Keegan, PLA, Parks Superintendent

From: Brad Muir, Natural Resource Manager

Project: **PRC 2026-03: Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Improvements**

INTRODUCTION

Anchorage Parks & Recreation, in coordination with Alaska State Parks, is advancing the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Improvements Project to address long-standing safety, access, and capacity challenges at this important access point into Chugach State Park.

Basher Trailhead serves hikers, runners, dog walkers, skiers, winter bikers, and other year-round users accessing destinations such as Wolverine Bowl, Near Point, and the Far North Bicentennial Park trail system. The existing parking lot accommodates approximately 16 vehicles and routinely fills during peak periods. When full, vehicles park along Campbell Airstrip Road and Basher Drive, creating safety concerns related to congestion, limited sight distance, winter road conditions, and restricted emergency access.

The purpose of this project is to improve public safety, reduce roadside parking conflicts, and provide organized, long-term trailhead access that serves both neighborhood residents and regional users.

Project Background/Scope

Basher Trailhead is located at the terminus of Campbell Airstrip Road at Basher Drive and functions as a key regional access point to Chugach State Park for East Anchorage. Basher Drive is the only access route for both trail users and residents of the Stuckagain Heights neighborhood, making roadway safety and traffic operations a central project consideration.

The current parking configuration is constrained by topography, wetlands, and limited sight distance. Winter conditions further reduce usable parking due to snow storage and icing, contributing to overflow along the roadway. Community members and emergency responders have consistently raised concerns about congestion and vehicle conflicts along this narrow corridor.

The Chugach State Park Access Plan identifies Basher Drive Trailhead as a regional vehicular access point and recommends enlargement and enhancement of the trailhead and parking lot to the largest size reasonably feasible to capture the majority of park use outside of the immediate neighborhood.

In April 2025, Anchorage voters approved Proposition 9, authorizing funding to complete the design of the new Basher Trailhead Parking Lot on municipal land within Far North Bicentennial Park. This design work was funded through the Chugach State Park Access Service Area (CASA) bond, which allocated \$300,000. An additional \$1.5 million on the proposed 2026 CASA bond would fund construction phase services, pending voter approval.

PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The project has followed a structured public involvement process designed to engage residents, trail users, agency partners, and community organizations. Outreach efforts have included:

- A dedicated project webpage, online updates, e-newsletters, and social media outreach
- Trailhead signage with QR codes directing users to the project webpage and community survey
- A community-wide online survey (408 responses)
- Two community stakeholder meetings
- Presentations to the Basher Community Council
- Agency coordination meetings with MOA, State Parks, Traffic, Fire, and utilities
- A formal 35% design public comment period

Public Input Summary

Public feedback demonstrates broad agreement that the existing trailhead conditions are inadequate and present safety challenges. Survey results and comments consistently identified:

- Limited parking availability
- Roadside parking that feels unsafe
- Poor sight distance entering and exiting the lot
- Concerns about vehicle break-ins
- Winter maintenance and snow storage issues

When asked about future parking capacity, preferences were mixed. Many respondents favored a medium-sized lot (20-40 spaces), while others supported a larger lot to better address overflow and long-term demand. However, the Stuckagain Height community has since 2010 consistently requested a small parking area of 25-35 spaces. A consistent theme across comments was the desire to reduce roadside parking and improve safety, while also maintaining sensitivity to neighborhood character and environmental conditions.

Stakeholder discussions also highlighted:

- Traffic and congestion concerns on Basher Drive
- Desire for improved driveway sight distance
- Questions about lighting and dark-sky impacts
- Interest in a restroom, kiosk, and basic trailhead amenities
- Ongoing concerns regarding long-term operations and maintenance

Overall, the community appears supportive of improving the trailhead, provided traffic, safety, and scale concerns are carefully addressed.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The preferred alignment carried forward from the 35% design review is Concept B - Perpendicular Alignment. This concept was selected based on a comprehensive evaluation of site constraints, including grading, driveway sight distance, drainage, snow storage, and construction cost.

The Perpendicular Alignment:

- Improves driveway geometry and sight distance for safer access
- Requires less cut and fill, minimizing site disturbance
- Enhances drainage performance
- Provides more effective snow storage capacity
- Provides more visibility from the road for improved safety
- Reduces overall construction cost
- Creates a safer and more functional connection to the trail system

At the 65% design stage, the parking layout has been refined from 60 to 45 spaces, including 4 ADA-Accessible parking spaces. This reduction directly responds to community feedback received during the 35% design phase, which expressed concerns about project scale, neighborhood compatibility, and traffic impacts. The revised layout balances the need to improve safety and reduce roadside parking while remaining sensitive to community context and site constraints.

Proposed Improvements

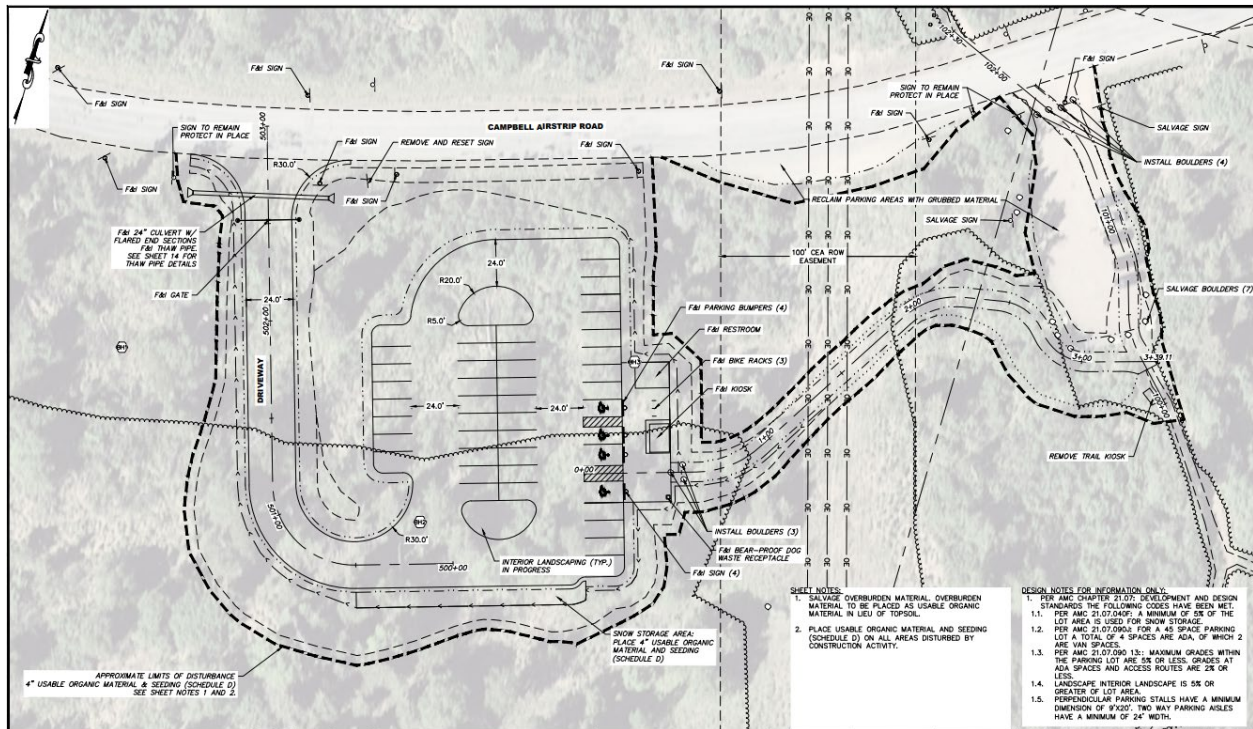
The 65% design includes:

- A paved parking lot with 45 spaces, including 4 ADA-accessible spaces
- A relocated driveway with a landing to improve ingress and egress safety and sight distance
- A formalized trailhead connection to the existing Chugach State Park trail system
- A vault restroom
- Trailhead signage and bike racks
- Bear-resistant dog waste receptacles
- An entrance gate to support site management
- Appropriately designed snow storage location for effective drainage

A gate is proposed as part of the overall management strategy to address nighttime use and operational concerns; however, long-term management responsibilities are still to be determined.

Electrical service for lighting and webcams was evaluated but is not included due to cost constraints. Extending power to the site would significantly impact the available construction budget. The design may include conduit to allow for future electrical installation if additional funding becomes available.

Figure 1: Preferred Alternative



TIMELINE

Project Launch & Early Coordination

- November 12, 2025 - Public Involvement Plan finalized
- November 13, 2025 - Basher Community Council Meeting #1
 - Project introduction and data gathering
- November 18, 2025 - Agency Kick-off Meeting
 - Participants included MOA Parks & Recreation, DNR Alaska State Parks, MOA Traffic, APD, AFD, CEA, PM&E, and BLM
- Launch of project webpage and installation of trailhead signage

Community Engagement & Data Collection

- December 4, 2025 - Community Stakeholder Meeting #1
 - Kick-off meeting and community data gathering
- November 12, 2025 - Agency Stakeholder Meeting
 - Participants included MOA Parks & Recreation, DNR Alaska State Parks, MOA Traffic, APD, AFD, CEA, PM&E, and BLM
- December 15, 2025 - Far North Bicentennial/Campbell Tract User Group Meeting
- December 17, 2025 - January 16, 2026 - Community Survey Open

Survey Analysis & Design Development

- Survey data analysis and compilation
- Ongoing agency coordination
- Development of 35% Design Concepts

35% Design Review & Public Comment

- February 11, 2026 - Community Stakeholder Meeting #2
 - 35% Design Review and community feedback
- February 12, 2026 - Basher Community Council Meeting #2
 - 35% Design Review and community feedback
- February 12 - February 26, 2026 - Public Comment Period 35% Design Concept

65% Design Review

- April 9, 2026 - Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting - 65% Design Review
 - Request for Resolution of Support

Ongoing Throughout Project

- Continuous comment collection via project webpage and email
- Documentation of all meetings, correspondence, and public input
- Preparation of Public Involvement Summary Report

FUNDING

The project is funded through the Chugach State Park Access Service Area (CASA) bond.

- \$300,000 was approved in 2025 for design
- 2026 CASA bond pending voter approval
 - \$1.5 million is proposed for construction services
 - \$150,000 for trail improvements
 - \$75,000 annually for 20 years has been identified for ongoing maintenance

If construction funding is approved through the April 2026 bond, the project is anticipated to be bid in Spring 2026 with construction beginning in Summer 2026.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends that the Commission support Resolution 2026-02 for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Improvement project. The improvements will address long-standing safety, access, and capacity challenges at this important access point into Chugach State Park.

More Information

Project Website: <https://www.muni.org/Departments/parks/Pages/BasherTrailhead.aspx>

Attachments:

Basher Trailhead Parking Expansion 65% Draft Design Drawings
Basher Trailhead Existing Conditions
Basher Trailhead Concepts
Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Survey Summary Report



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PRC RES NO. 2026-02 BASHER TRAILHEAD PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS

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 Basher Trailhead Parking Lot provides access to Chugach State Park and Far North Bicentennial Park, and provides year-round recreation needs of both nearby residents and the Anchorage community at large; and

WHEREAS, the existing Basher Trailhead Parking Lot is too small for current and future recreation needs, and current overflow parking creates safety concerns related to congestion, limited sight distance, and restricted emergency access; and

WHEREAS, the Chugach State Park Access Service Area (CASA) is a voter-approved measure that allows municipal funds to be spent on capital improvements that facilitate public access to Chugach State Park, including trailhead improvements on municipal lands; and

WHEREAS, a 35% Design Concept public review conducted in February 2026 confirmed broad public support for upgrading the parking area and relocating the access driveway to a location with improved sight-distance and safety; and

WHEREAS, the project team proposes a perpendicular-to-road alignment with 45 parking spaces, which optimizes the driveway location for sight distance and safety, achieves improved site cut and fill balance, enhances snow storage, provides an approximately 5% trail connection grade to better match existing trail grades; and

WHEREAS, the Far North Bicentennial Park Trail Improvement Plan calls for upgraded and expanded parking; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Improvements proposal.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 9th day of April, 2026.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Shanna Gamble, Director
Parks & Recreation Department