



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630

P.O. Box 196650

Anchorage, AK 99519



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 09, 2026

To: Parks and Recreation Commission

Cc: Shann Gamble, Director; Taylor Keegan, PLA, Superintendent

From: Evan Sharp, Park Planner

Subject: **PRC 26-08 Fish Creek Trail Connection**

Overview

The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation (AMATS) Fish Creek Trail Connection project is a proposed multi-use pathway extension of the Fish Creek Trail from the existing pedestrian bridge over Northern Lights Boulevard to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail). The project is managed by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) in collaboration with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Parks and Recreation Department (PRD). The purpose of the new shared-use pathway connection is to expand existing non-motorized facilities to meet unserved demand or fill missing links, improve accessibility for all ages and abilities, and increase opportunities for transportation and recreation. The need for the connection was identified in the 1997 Anchorage Trails Plan as part of the bicycle network. It was reaffirmed with community input in the 2021 AMATS Non-Motorized Plan, 2019-2022 AMATS Transportation Improvements Program (TIP), and approved by voters on five bond propositions. The project is currently listed as NMO00002 in the 2023-2026 AMATS TIP.

Design of the project has been a collaborative effort between DOT&PF, MOA and the contracted design team led by CRW Engineering Group. The completed facility will be owned by MOA and operated by PRD. An application for this project has been submitted to the Urban Design Commission. The facilities have been designed to local and state standards while also complying with the federal funding requirements of Americans Disability Act (ADA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Project Area

The majority of the proposed improvements are located on land owned and managed by the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC). Most of the proposed 1-mile pathway alignment follows an existing gravel access road used by ARRC and utility maintenance vehicles and historically was used as a local social trail prior to construction of chain link fence by Alaska Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU). The pathway would run along the west side of the railroad from Northern Lights Blvd up to



Figure 1. Proposed Trail Alignment

Forest Park Drive then connect to the Coastal Trail via a switchback descent. This pathway would border the border the Fish Creek Estuary for approximately 1,500 feet while remaining within ARRC rights-of-way (ROW) and outside of the conservation easement boundaries. The only private property acquisition required would be a small amount of an asphalt driveway necessary to route the trail adjacent to the Marathon block valve at the south end of the project. This specific route was determined to be the most accessible and least impactful to wetlands. It avoids impacts to Marathon Petroleum’s pipeline, has lowest estimated construction cost and most constructible route, contains the fewest private property impacts, and has the greatest public support.

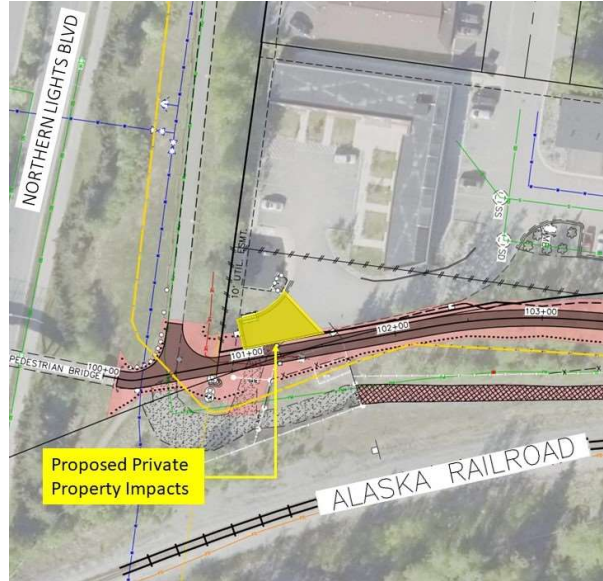


Figure 2. Private Property Acquisition Location

Planning and Public Involvement

The preliminary engineering phase of the project began in 2022. Since that time the project team has coordinated with utilities, land managers, stakeholders, and other agencies including the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Committee, and ARRC. Along with the Spenard, Turnagain, and North Star Community Councils, the team has worked with advisory groups including Anchorage Parks Foundation, the Audubon Society, Great Land Trust, and Bike Anchorage. Throughout the development of the project the team has hosted pop up meetings on the coastal trail, public open house meetings, provided informational booths at transportation fairs, and maintained a project website with updated information on the project’s progress. Public



Figure 3. Coastal Trail Pop-Up Booth 9/03/2022

involvement is ongoing, project notices will continue to be sent out, and stakeholder and public meetings will continue to be held, including a booth at the April 22nd Transportation Fair.

The preliminary engineering phase also included significant environmental review and evaluation of alternatives. This process included the completion of a Design Study Report (DSR), engaging Alaska's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) through a Cultural Resource Review, and Section 106 permit. The Environmental documentation was completed in March of 2025, 75% Design Plans in Hand Review was submitted in December of 2025, and final design is targeted for the end of 2026. The Urban Design Commission is tentatively scheduled to hold a public hearing on the Project on April 22nd, 2026. Construction is anticipated to start in the spring of 2027 if all funding is available.

Finally, an Invited Participants Working Group (IPWG) was formed to engage key community members and groups in shaping the final elements of the project, including design, storytelling and material selection. The IPWG includes representatives from a range of interest groups and neighborhoods, such as the Spenard Community Council, Turnagain Community Council, Great Land Trust, Audubon Society of Alaska, Bike Anchorage, and Alaska Railroad Corporation. Two of the four planned IPWG meetings have been completed, having taken place on March 3rd and March 17th, 2026. The second two meetings are scheduled for April and June in 2026.

The final stages of approval will include the Alaska Railroad Board, who will approve the design when it reaches the Plans-In-Hand (PIH) stage (100% Design). The project is projected to present the final design to the board during the winter of 2026.

Proposed Improvements

The project scope includes:

- Construction of a paved multi-use pathway
- Retaining walls, and pedestrian bridge construction
- Fencing, landscaping and revegetation in disturbed areas
- Wayfinding, signage, and striping
- Estuary overlook pullout
- Realignment of Coastal Trail to address sight distance issues
- Ditching, grading, and drainage culverts
- Benches and incorporation of community informed public art/interpretive displays
- Minor utility relocations

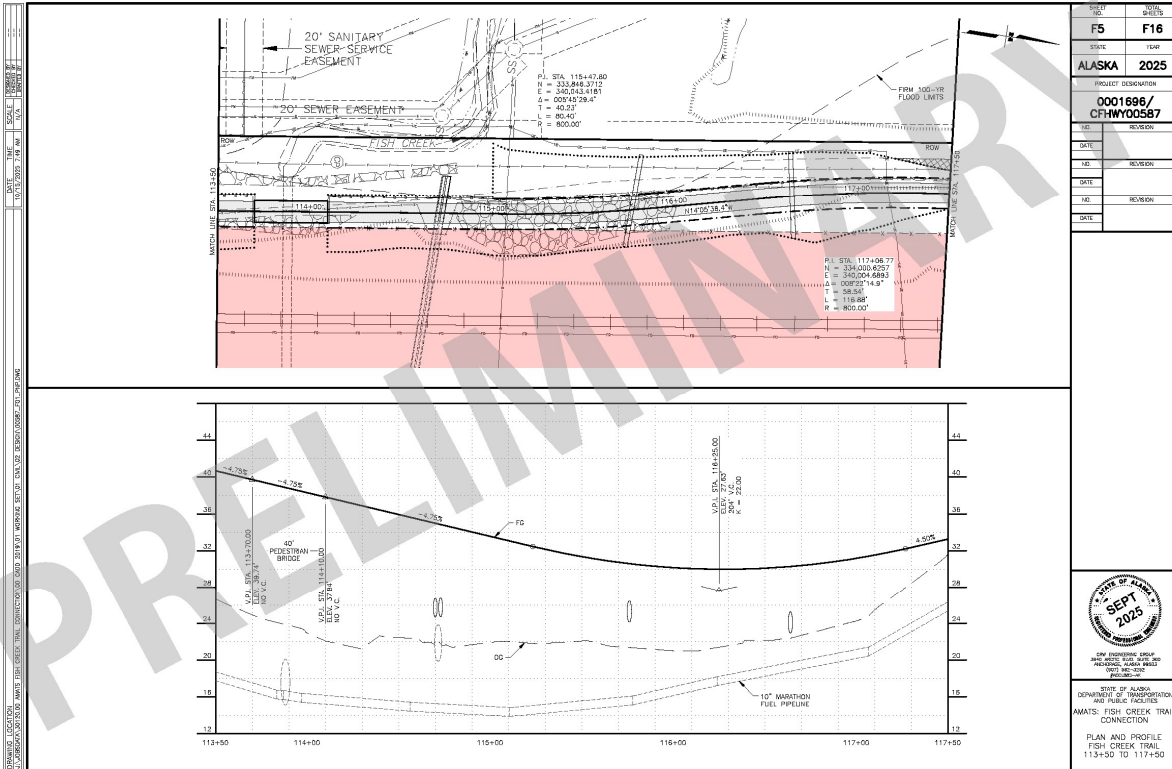


Figure 4. Detail - Fish Creek Bridge

Starting at the Northern Lights Boulevard pedestrian bridge the proposed trail will run north along ARRC ROW separated from the single set of tracks by a chain link fence and 50-foot buffer. The paved trail would be 11-feet wide with a 3-foot shoulder along fill slopes, and a 1.5-foot shoulder along cut slopes. A 1.5% cross slope will southern portion of the trail east towards the ditch along the tracks, then drain the northern portion of the trail west towards the Fish Creek Estuary. Starting approximately 750-feet north of Northern Lights Boulevard the trail will be benched into the adjacent slope with a retaining wall. The wall will be 350-feet long and 8 to 12-feet tall, with a wood fence replacing existing screening fences and providing fall protection. Approximately one quarter mile North of Northern Lights the trail will cross an existing Fish Creek culvert with a 40-foot-long prefabricated steel bridge and retaining wall approaches.

After the Fish Creek crossing, the trail roughly parallels the ARRC tracks, realigns and crosses the existing property access off Forrest Park Drive, then connects to the realigned Coastal Trail with a reverse curve descent. Another retaining wall will confine Fish Creek Trail fill limits to minimize impacts to the Coastal Trail at this location.

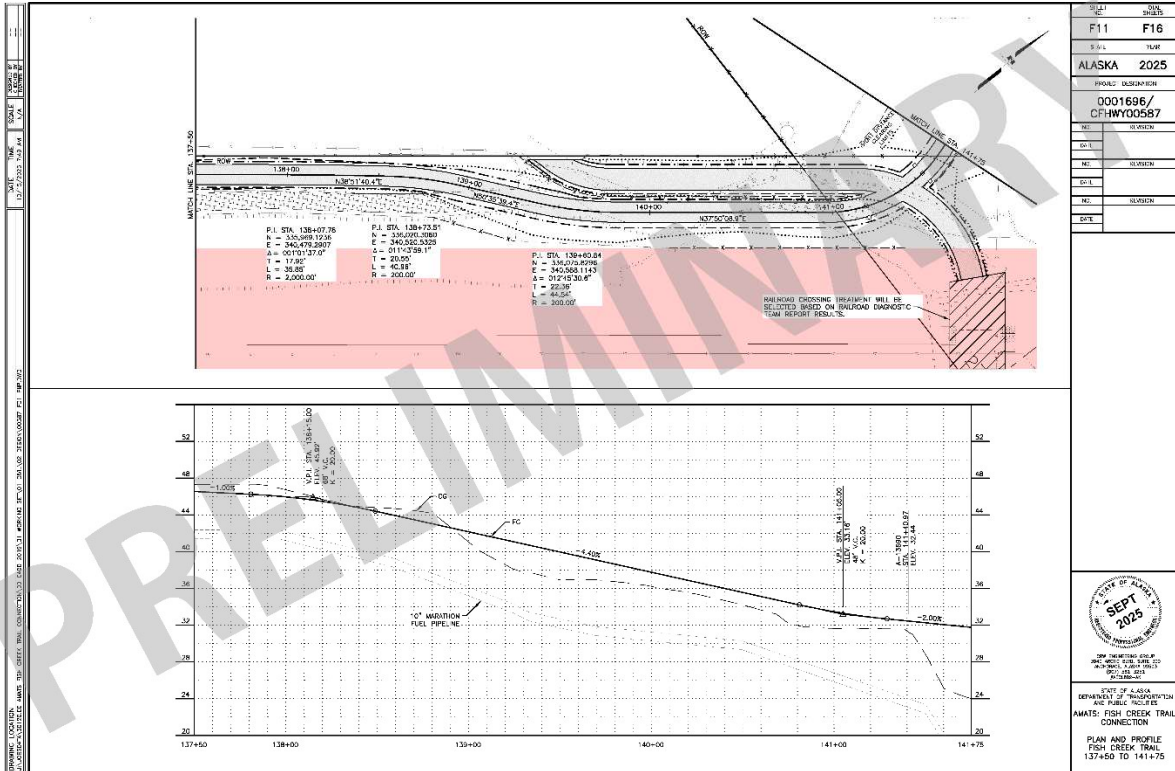


Figure 5. Forrest Park Drive Crossing

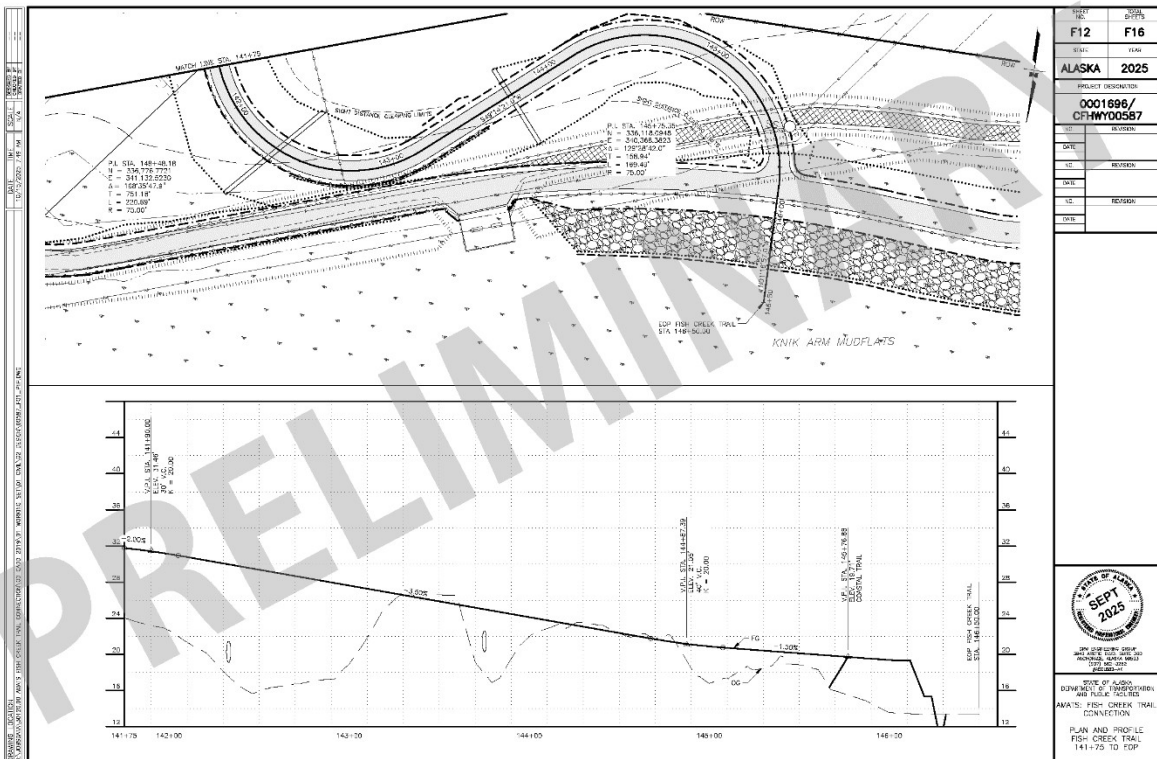


Figure 6. Detail - Fish Creek Trail intersection with the Coastal Trail

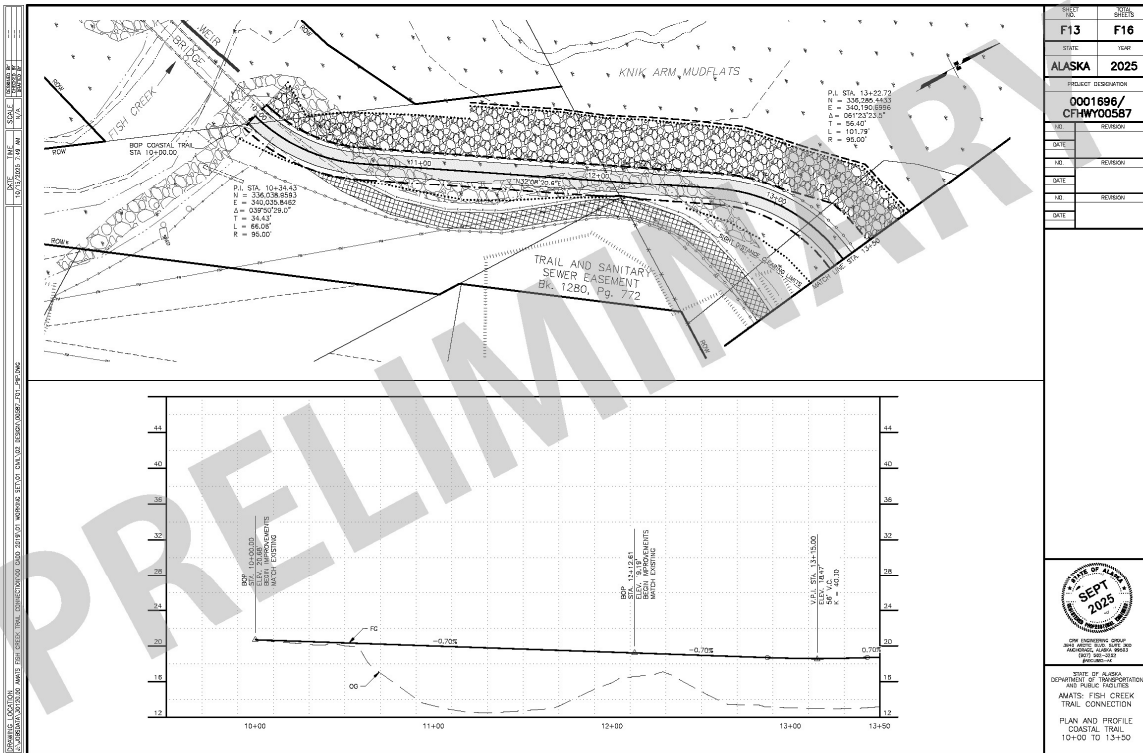


Figure 7. Detail – Realigned Coastal Trail

The Coastal Trail will be realigned between the existing Fish Creek bridge and the Audubon viewing deck, with additional widening to the Westchester Lagoon tunnel. The new alignment will shift the trail further north towards Cook Inlet, improving visibility and safety around an existing private property constraint. Foreslopes on the coastal side of the realignment will have riprap armoring, and the previous alignment will be obliterated and replanted with landscaping. Viewing pullout areas will also be added to the Fish Creek Trail and Coastal Trail exiting the Westchester Lagoon tunnel and the Audubon viewing deck will be protected in place.

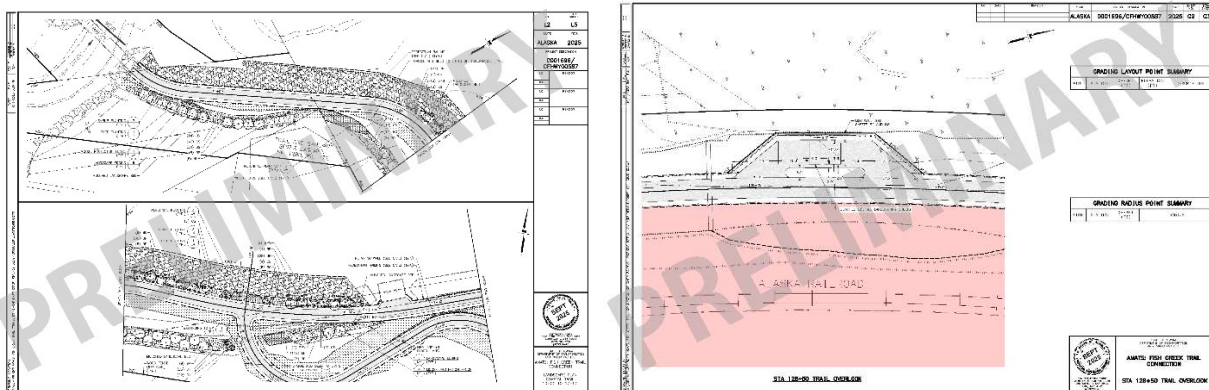
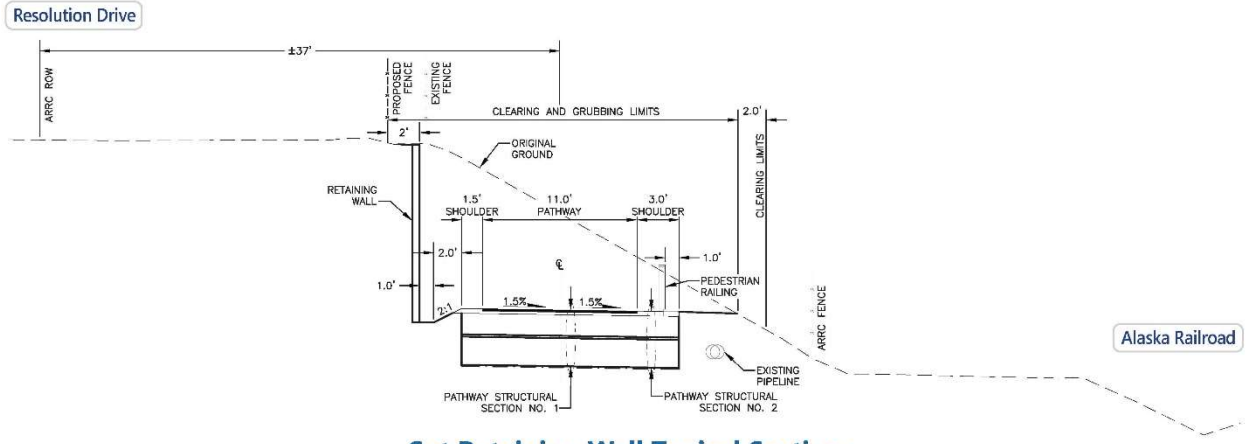
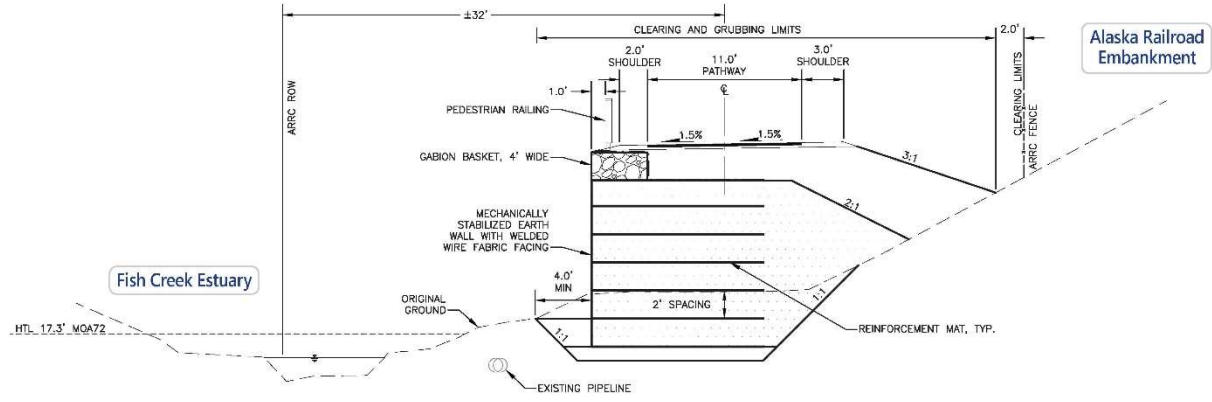


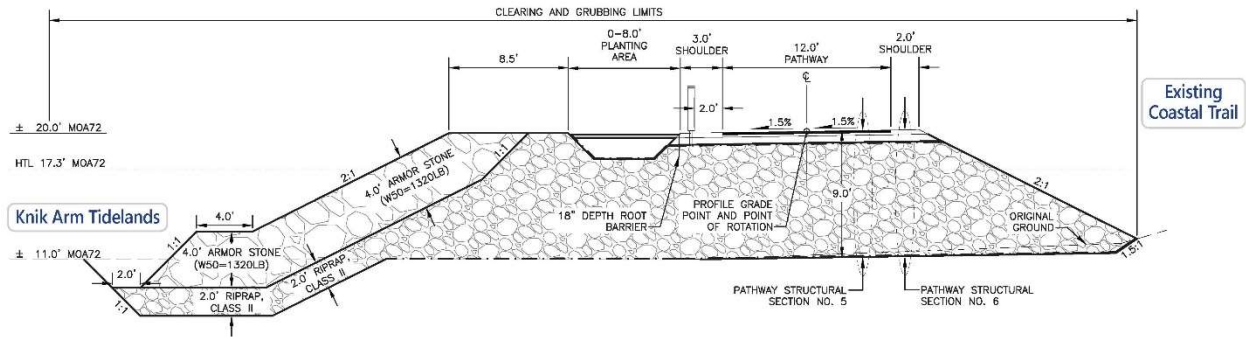
Figure 8. and 9. Landscaping Details



**Cut Retaining Wall Typical Section
Fish Creek Trail**



**Fill Retaining Wall Typical Section
Fish Creek Trail**



Coastal Trail Relocation Typical Section

Figure 9. Trail Typical Sections

Funding

MOA PRD received Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding through Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) for this Project.

Environmental Document & Preliminary Engineering Design	\$3,810,000
Right-of-Way	\$200,00
Construction	\$12,750,000
Utility Agreements	\$3,000,000
Total	\$19,760,000

Figure 10. Construction Cost Estimate

MOA PRD will be required to provide a local match of 9.03%, which equates to (including contingencies) approximately \$2,051,997.20, of which \$1,830,000 has been approved by the Anchorage Assembly in 2021.

Staff Recommendations

The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission support the proposed resolution in support of the proposed Fish Creek Trail Connection. This one-mile-long trail project connection will complete an important missing link identified in the Anchorage Areawide Trails Plan (1997) and is supported by the MOA Non-Motorized Plan.

More Information

Project Website: <https://fishcreektrail.com/>



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

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PRC RESOLUTION NO. 2026-07

Fish Creek Trail Connection

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 Fish Creek Trail Connection will connect the Fish Creek Trail and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail to provide a continuous safe, separated non-motorized, multi-use corridor; and

WHEREAS, this one-mile long connection will complete an important missing link identified in the Anchorage Areawide Trails Plan (1997) and is supported by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Non-Motorized Plan; and

WHEREAS, the design of the project has been a collaborative effort between the MOA Parks and Recreation Department (PRD), the contracted design team, the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) for project management and federal funding match opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the PRD has continued to work with the community throughout the design development process soliciting input from community advisory groups, stakeholders, utilities, land managers, and agencies through open houses, design meetings, and community council meetings; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the new shared-use pathway connection is to expand existing non-motorized facilities to meet unserved demand or fill missing links, improve accessibility for all ages and abilities, and increase opportunities for transportation and recreation; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the Fish Creek Trail Extension project.

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

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Director
Parks & Recreation Department