



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION

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MEMORANDUM

Date: June 11, 2026

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

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

From: Brad Muir, Natural Resource Manager

Project: **PRC 2026-15: Basher Trailhead Parking Lot Improvements**

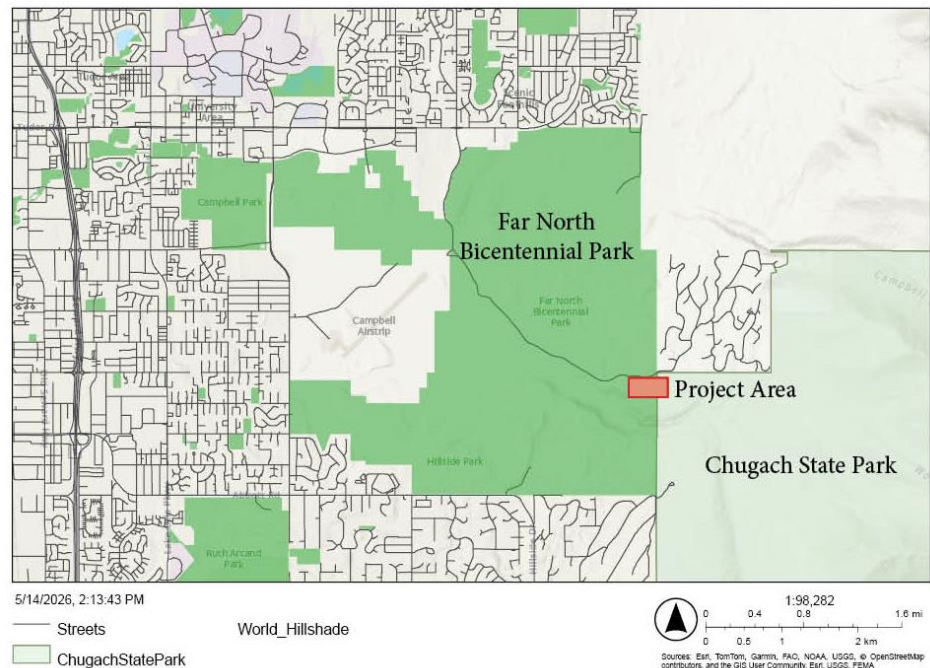
INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Anchorage Project Management and Engineering Department, in coordination with Anchorage Parks & Recreation, 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 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. Campbell Airstrip Road/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 as a regional vehicular access point and recommends enlargement and enhancement of the trailhead to the largest size reasonably feasible to capture the majority of park use outside the immediate neighborhood (Attachment D).

In April 2025, Anchorage voters approved Proposition 9, authorizing funding to complete the design of the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot improvements. This design work was funded through the Chugach State Park Service Area (CASA) bond, which allocated \$300,000. An additional \$1.725 million was included on the April 2026 CASA Bond; this was also voter approved. This funding will be allocated for construction phase services, an extension of the Lost Cabin Trail, and annual operations and maintenance costs.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The proposed improvements would take place in Far North Bicentennial Park, adjacent to Chugach State Park, and in Chugach State Park (pending approval by DNR). The preferred alignment carried forward from the 35% design review is Concept B - Perpendicular Alignment (Attachment H). 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

The 65% Design proposed a parking layout refinement from 60 (as shown in the 35% Design Concept) to 45 parking spaces, including 4 ADA-Accessible spaces. This reduction directly responded to community feedback received during the 35% Design Concept phase, which expressed concerns about project scale, neighborhood compatibility, and traffic impacts.

The project team has since revised the 65% Design to now include 52 parking spaces, including 6 ADA-Accessible spaces, and a flexible-use area that may support a campground host, vendors, transit drop-off, or emergency response functions as needed. The Revised 65% Design layout balances the need to improve safety and reduce roadside parking while remaining sensitive to community context and site constraints.

These modifications maintain flexibility for future opportunities while keeping the project within budget, with only a slight increase to the overall parking lot footprint.

THE REVISED 65% DESIGN INCLUDES:

- A paved parking lot with 52 spaces, including 6 ADA-accessible spaces
- Flexible-use area that may support a campground host, vendors, transit drop-off/pick-up, or emergency response functions as needed.
- A relocated driveway with a landing to improve ingress/egress safety and sight distance
- A trail connection to the existing Chugach State Park trail system (pending DNR approval)
- A vaulted 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.

FUNDING

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

- 2025 CASA bond (voter-approved) - \$300,000 for design services
- 2026 CASA bond (voter-approved)
 - \$1.5 million is proposed for construction services.
 - \$150,000 for trail improvements to the Lost Cabin Trail
 - \$75,000 annually for 20 years has been identified for ongoing maintenance.

Construction funding was approved on the April 2026 bond; the project is anticipated to be bid later in 2026 or early 2027, with construction beginning in Spring 2027.

TIMELINE

November 2025 - Project Launch & Early Coordination - Launch of project webpage and installation of trailhead signage

- **November 12, 2025** - Public Involvement Plan finalized

- **November 13, 2025** - Basher Community Council Meeting #1
 - Project introduction and data gathering
- **November 18, 2025** - DNR Kick-off Meeting
 - Participants included MOA Parks & Recreation, DNR Alaska State Parks

December 2025 - 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

January 2026 - Survey Analysis & Design Development

- Survey data analysis and compilation, ongoing agency coordination, development of 35% Design Concepts

February 2026 - 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

April 2026 - 65% Design Review

- **March 26 - April 24, 2026** - Public Comment Period 65% Design
- **April 9, 2026** - Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting - 65% Design Review
 - Request for Resolution of Support
- **May 14, 2026** - Basher Community Council Meeting

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

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 webpage, online updates, e-newsletters, and social media outreach
- Trailhead signage with QR codes to the project webpage and community survey

- A Community-wide Online Survey (408 responses)
- Two (2) Community Stakeholder meetings
- One (1) Agency Stakeholder Meeting with MOA, State Parks, Traffic, Fire, and Utilities
- One (1) Presentation to the Far North Bicentennial/Campbell Tract User Group
- Three (3) Presentations to the Basher Community Council
- A formal 35% & 65% Design Public Comment Period
- Presentation and Resolution of Support from the Parks & Recreation Commission
- Planning and Zoning Commission site plan approval (pending hearing September 2027)

COMMUNITY-WIDE ONLINE SURVEY:

A public community survey for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project was conducted between December 17, 2025, and January 16, 2026, to gather feedback from trail users, residents, and community stakeholders regarding existing parking lot conditions and future improvements. The online survey received 408 responses and identified key concerns related to limited parking capacity, roadway safety, sight distance, vehicle break-ins, winter maintenance, and trail connectivity. Respondents generally supported improvements to the trailhead parking lot and identified desired amenities, including trail information kiosks, restroom facilities, dog waste receptacles, lighting, and improved signage, while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining the area's natural character and minimizing environmental impacts.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS:

Community stakeholder meetings for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project were conducted in December 2025 and February 2026. These meetings were organized by Huddle, PTS, and the Municipality of Anchorage Parks & Recreation to gather feedback from agency representatives, community organizations, trail users, adjacent residents, and recreation stakeholders regarding the proposed trailhead parking lot improvements.

Community Stakeholder Meeting #1 - Existing Conditions & Opportunities December 4, 2025 - Russian Jack Springs Park Chalet

The first stakeholder meeting focused on introducing the project, reviewing the preliminary parking lot concept, and identifying existing issues and opportunities associated with the Basher Trailhead area. Attendees represented a broad range of interests, including Chugach State Park, community councils, trail advocacy groups, neighborhood patrol representatives, adjacent residents, and outdoor recreation organizations.

Project representatives reviewed the proposed project scope, funding considerations, and anticipated schedule. Participants shared experiences related to current trailhead conditions and discussed concerns about safety, parking overflow, roadside congestion, drainage, and trail connectivity. Existing parking demand was identified as a significant issue, with attendees noting that the current lot accommodates approximately 20 vehicles while peak demand can reach 50-60 vehicles, resulting in overflow parking along the roadway.

Stakeholders identified several recurring concerns related to the existing trailhead conditions, including:

- Unsafe roadside parking and poor sightlines

- Snow berms and icy roadway conditions
- Car break-ins and illegal dumping
- Limited trailhead visibility from the roadway
- Drainage and erosion concerns
- Lack of adequate trailhead amenities and traffic management infrastructure

Participants also discussed opportunities for the future parking lot design and amenities. Suggestions included:

- Improved lighting and security measures
- Trailhead kiosks and signage
- Bike racks and shuttle/drop-off accommodations
- Safer roadway pull-offs and traffic circulation
- Parking lot visibility from the roadway
- Trail connectivity improvements and wayfinding enhancements

The meeting concluded with a review of the draft public survey and discussion of upcoming outreach efforts, including a future stakeholder meeting and public survey distribution.

Community Stakeholder Meeting #2 - 35% Concept Design Review February 11, 2026 - Russian Jack Springs Park Chalet

The second stakeholder meeting focused on reviewing community survey findings and presenting two preliminary 35% parking lot design concepts for public feedback. Attendees again included representatives from Chugach State Park, community patrol groups, nearby residents, community councils, and agency partners.

The project team shared highlights from the public survey, including information regarding trail use patterns, desired amenities, and concerns related to safety, snow management, traffic, and long-term maintenance. Two conceptual parking lot layouts were presented and discussed in detail.

Discussion topics included parking lot size, ADA accessibility requirements, drainage design, grading, roadway access, snow storage, and environmental disturbance. Project representatives explained that the proposed concepts included approximately 60 parking spaces and 5 ADA spaces to accommodate future demand and reduce roadside parking impacts.

Stakeholders provided detailed feedback regarding both design alternatives. Key themes included:

- Concerns regarding overnight use and late-night activity
- Visibility and safety associated with longer driveway access
- Snow clearing and long-term maintenance considerations
- Potential erosion and drainage issues
- Desire for gated access and active management
- Safety concerns related to existing trail crossings and roadway visibility
- Winter driving conditions and roadway grades near the entrance

Agency representatives and project consultants discussed how grading, drainage, and traffic circulation would be addressed in future design phases and noted that a gate would be incorporated into the final design for management purposes.

The meeting concluded with information regarding the online public comment form, upcoming community council presentations, and the anticipated 65% design review with the Parks and Recreation Commission.

AGENCY STAKEHOLDER MEETING

An agency stakeholder meeting for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project was held in December 2025 with representatives from MOA Parks & Recreation, Alaska State Parks, Public Works, Chugach Electric, emergency services, and project consultants. Discussion topics included parking lot size and amenities, trail connectivity, lighting, restrooms, maintenance responsibilities, roadway safety, snow management, and long-term operations. Agency feedback helped guide the preliminary 35% design, including recommendations for approximately 60 parking spaces, lighting, trailhead signage, restroom facilities, and future trail connections.

FAR NORTH BICENTENNIAL/CAMPBELL TRACT USER GROUP MEETING

A project presentation for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project was shared with the Far North Bicentennial/Campbell Tract User Group in December 2025. The meeting provided an overview of the project background, funding, goals, preliminary concepts, and project schedule. Participants were invited to share feedback regarding existing trailhead conditions, parking and safety concerns, desired amenities, and opportunities for improving trail access and overall functionality for park users and the surrounding community.

BASHER COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Project updates for the Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project were presented at Basher Community Council meetings in November 2025, February, and May 2026. Discussions focused on project funding, parking lot size and location, roadway safety, winter maintenance, visibility, trail connections, long-term maintenance responsibilities, and the preliminary 35% parking lot concepts. Community members provided feedback regarding traffic impacts, lighting, snow storage, crime prevention, and overall parking capacity, helping inform the ongoing design and public engagement process.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

The Basher Trailhead Parking Lot project was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission in April 2026 for review of the 65% design concept and consideration of a resolution of support. The project team shared updates on the design process, community outreach, survey findings, and stakeholder feedback that informed the proposed parking lot layout and amenities. Discussion topics included parking capacity, snow storage, drainage, roadway visibility, future expansion potential, trail connectivity, and public safety concerns. Following public comment and Commission discussion, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved Resolution 2026-02 in support of the project.

The project team is scheduled to present the Revised 65% Design to the Parks & Recreation Commission on Thursday, June 11, 2026. This presentation would highlight the proposed change to 52 parking spaces and the flexible-use area to support a campground host, vendors, transit drop-off, or emergency response functions as needed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends that the Commission support Resolution 2026-14 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. 2026-14 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 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 increased parking, which improves driveway geometry and sight distance for safer access, minimizes site disturbance through reduced grading, enhances drainage and snow storage capacity, increases visibility from the roadway, reduces construction costs, and provides a safer and more functional connection to the existing trail system; 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 11th day of June, 2026.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Shanna Gamble, Director
Parks & Recreation Department