



# Seward Highway Corridor Study, MP 0-90

Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) Kickoff Meeting  
May 7, 2020 – *Revised*



# 1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement & Introductions



# Meeting Focus

- Confirm project purpose, expectations, timeline
- Share/discuss emerging themes
- Identify next steps



# Land Acknowledgement

*Dena'inaq ełnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.  
(Dena'ina)*

I live and work on the land of the Dena'ina. (English)

A **Land Acknowledgement** is a formal **statement** that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this **land** and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

# Introductions

Brian	Lindamood	Alaska Railroad Corporation
Bruce	Jaffa	Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission
David	Phillips	Chugach Alaska
David	Post	Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) – Central Region
Eric	Miyashiro	DOT&PF – Central Region
Griff	Berg	United States Forest Service/Chugach National Forest
Jerry	Fox	Girdwood Board of Supervisors
Jim	Skogstad	Hope/Sunrise Advisory Planning Commission
John	Linnell	DOT&PF – Central Region
Joselyn	Biloon	DOT&PF – Central Region
Kurt	Hensel	Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Marcus	Mueller	Kenai Peninsula Borough
Marie	Heidemann	DOT&PF – Headquarters
Mike	Edgington	Girdwood Board of Supervisors
Rob	Earl	DNR

Consultant Team:



# Virtual/General Meeting Guidelines

- Follow the lead.
- “Mute” is our friend.
- There are a lot of us – if you have the ability, please use your chat box.
- We want to see you...if we can😊.
- Repeat your name.
- Be patient – we are all learning new technologies!

## 2. Project Background, Purpose, Expectations and Schedule



# Project Area

The focus is on the Seward Highway corridor from the City of Seward (MP 0) to the Girdwood intersection (MP 90).





# Background: The Corridor

- Part of the **National Highway Performance Program**
- Designated as a **Scenic Byway**, an **All-American Road**, and a **National Forest Scenic Byway**
- Passes through **US Forest Service land** and **Alaska Department of Natural Resources land**
- Passes through **Crown Point and Moose Pass** (MP 20-35); also considerable **private property development** between MP 0-8.

# Background: The Corridor

- **Only highway connection and designated freight route** between the Kenai Peninsula and the rest of the state
- **Land uses** include:
  - Recreational
  - Subsistence
  - Residential
  - Commercial
  - Institutional



# Purpose

- The corridor study will:
  - Identify issues
  - Forecast growth and development
  - Identify objectives and challenges
  - Propose strategies and solutions

*The planning process will implement DOT&PF's new method for interfacing with agencies and communities.*

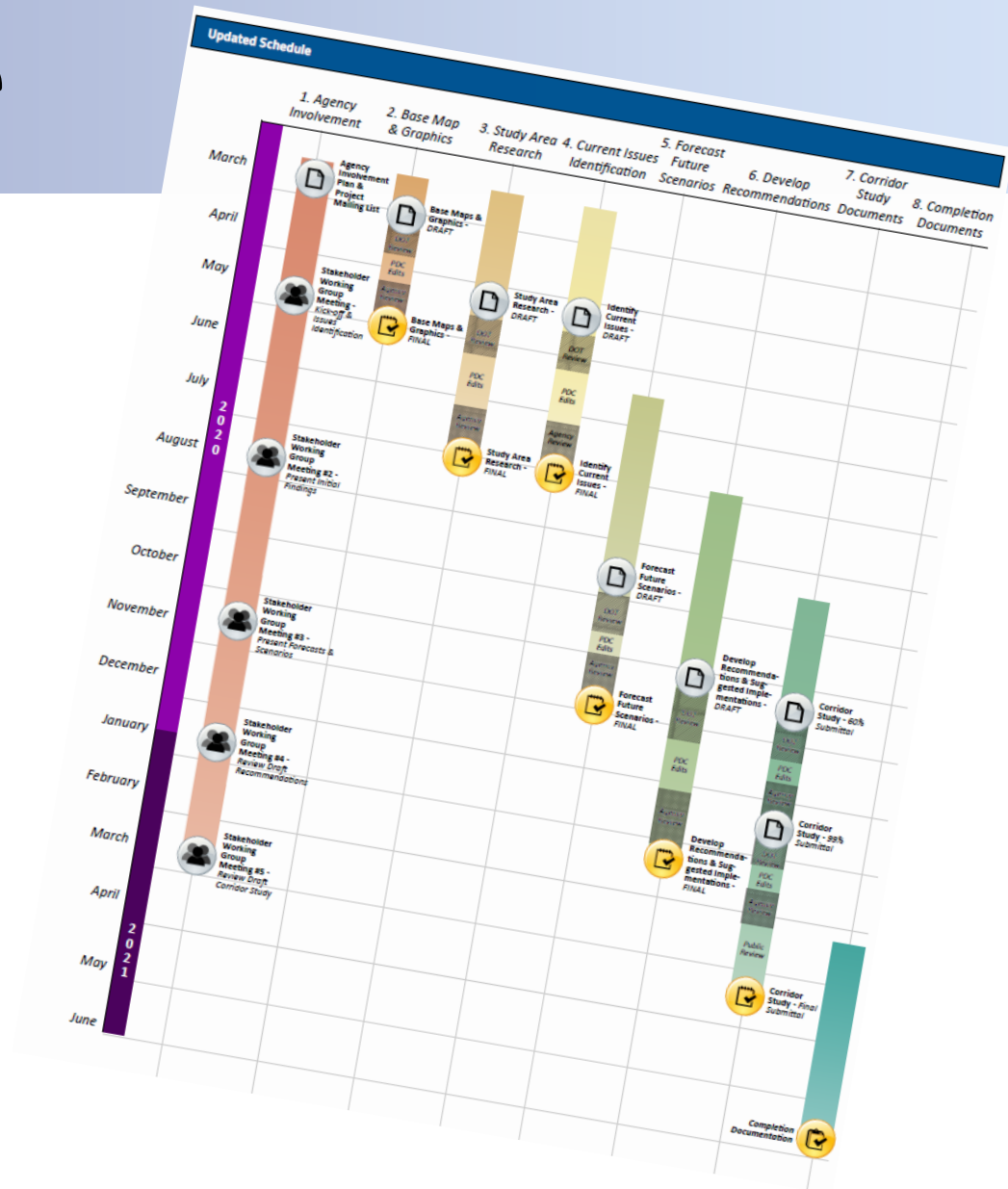


# Expectations

**Please share – What does the ideal project look like?**

1. How can this process/the final study benefit your community/agency?
2. What outcome would make this process/the final product worth your (your entity's) participation?

# Schedule



# 3. SWG Member Roles, Responsibilities, Potential Meeting Dates/Topics



# SWG Roles + Responsibilities, 1

- Act in an **advisory capacity**, providing input on study activities and products.
- Provide our team with **relevant background materials**.
- Participate in key informant **interviews** and up to five stakeholder **meetings**.

# SWG Roles + Responsibilities, 2

- **Provide guidance on stakeholder engagement tools** and suggest other stakeholder activities for garnering input.
- **Identify areas of agreement and solutions** that serve the needs of all parties with a stake in the future of the corridor.
- **Work productively** with other SWG members, project staff and partners even when experiences and opinions differ.



# SWG Meeting Dates/Topics

- Meeting #1 (today!) – Conduct **project kickoff**
- Meeting #2 (August 2020) – Present **initial findings**
- Meeting #3 (November 2020) – Present **forecasts + scenarios**
- Meeting #4 (January 2021) – Review **draft recommendations**
- Meeting #5 (March 2021) – Review draft **corridor study**

# 4. Stakeholder Engagement Plan



# Stakeholder Engagement Plan

- Outlines **approach and schedule** for engaging with stakeholders, including **how and when to provide input** on the draft study and related recommendations.
- Identifies target **audiences**, outreach **activities**, communication **tools**, an outreach **schedule** and **key questions** to consider throughout the study process.



# 5. Interview Themes by Key Topic



# Who did we talk to?

Interview  
Themes

14 interviews with:

- Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Chugach Alaska Corporation
- Girdwood Community Council
- Hope/Sunrise Advisory Planning Commission
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission
- USFS/Chugach National Forest

- Interviewees recommended reviewing 25 different projects and/or studies, plus:
  - Traffic counts
  - Visitor survey data
  - Inventory of infrastructure and facilities
- What other information should we consider?
- What information would be helpful, but does not exist today?

# Existing Conditions

Interview  
Themes

- The corridor creates **connections**
  - All of Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage/Girdwood
  - Arterial connecting the hubs of Anchorage and Seward
  - Sterling Highway
- The corridor serves important **travel, business and recreation functions**

# Primary Users

Interview  
Themes

- Kenai Peninsula residents
- Recreationists
- Freight transport

The user base varies by season:

- In winter, most corridor users are residents
- In summer, also in state and out of state visitors



# User Needs and Conflicts

Interview  
Themes

- Visitors/tourists versus commuters/residents
- Motorized versus non-motorized users
- Larger, slower vehicles (heavy trucks, recreational vehicles) versus smaller vehicles
- Roadside community residents versus those passing through to end destinations

- **Physical Characteristics:** beautiful stretch of Alaska
- **Access:** limited access points means fewer conflicts with turning traffic
- **Convenience:** generally handles high speed traffic well

# Strengths

Interview  
Themes

- **Recreation:** creates opportunities to access trails and recreation resources
- **Safety:** improvements increase safety through straightening curves, new bridges, passing lanes
- **Interagency Coordination:** agencies and communities are successfully coordinating on avalanche mitigation, 911 emergency response

# Weaknesses: Safety

Interview  
Themes

- **Narrow sections** along the corridor with little to no shoulder
- Occasional **avalanche problems**
- **Lack of enforcement** of traffic laws
- Some problematic highway-railroad **crossings**
- **Lack of traffic calming measures** (e.g., flashing signs) in places like Moose Pass
- **Reduction in state funds** for wintertime maintenance
- Contemporary **communication standards are not met**
- Sections without nearby **emergency response** and no clear entity responsible for responding to emergencies

# Weaknesses: Recreation

Interview  
Themes

- Limited number of **rest stops**, wayside facilities
- **Lack of a multi-use trail or safe pedestrian option**
- Insufficient **parking** in Turnagain Arm area
- Roadside recreation **facilities are aging**; many facilities (e.g., trailheads) **not being used as originally intended** and need redesign
- **Roadside attractions** such as **trailheads should be signed** better/earlier
- The **potential of the scenic byway** is not fully tapped

# Weaknesses: Management

Interview  
Themes

- **Land status complexity** between the Alaska Railroad, Alaska State Parks and the Department of Transportation
- **Lack of defined responsibility** for maintenance such as snow plowing, signage and vehicle removal
- Conflicts between small communities and DOT&PF regarding **encroachment, location of the right-of-way and perceptions of ownership**
- **Land surveys** do not meet present standards and GIS data quality is often poor

# Weaknesses: Other

Interview  
Themes

- Traffic
  - Very **congested** during peak summer weekends; stigma about being crowded and unsafe
  - Intersection of the Sterling and Seward Highways is especially bad
  - **High volumes of fuel transported** via truck along the highway
- Maintenance
  - Intermittent **flooding issues** along the corridor
  - Some areas where **road surface needs improvement**
  - **Traffic is increasing while maintenance funds are decreasing**
- Access
  - Near Seward, along the narrowest part of the corridor, there are many **access points creating challenging conditions**
  - Parts of the corridor are **very close to private property**

# Vision

## Interview Themes

### Similar to Today

“Continue to make incremental improvements for the traveling public...but overall, I think it should look similar to how it is today.”

“Not significant changes, really, unless more significant transportation decisions are made such as redirecting cargo from Anchorage to Seward.”

### Respond to Growth/Needs

“We need to plan for increased highway usage as population grows. We should plan for accommodations for electric vehicles and other future transportation technology changes....and plan for long-term trend of increased tourism in Alaska which might lead to increased need for accommodation and services along the corridor.”

“I would envision a much, much larger volume of traffic.”



# Opportunities

Interview  
Themes

- Interviewees shared recommendations across the following categories:
  - Maintenance
  - Management
  - Recreation
  - Safety
  - Traffic



# Opportunities - examples

Interview  
Themes

- Maintenance: Reopen Silvertip maintenance station.
- Management: Establish ongoing, regularly scheduled conversations to memorialize the SWG; expanded “Seward Highway Corridor User Group.”
- Recreation: Improve recreation facilities and roadside infrastructure such as bathrooms.
- Safety: Increase traffic enforcement.
- Traffic: Promote expanded transit service from Seward to Girdwood as a business opportunity; this would also alleviate traffic.

# Collaboration

## Interview Themes

- **Overall**, most agency representatives feel they are **collaborating** with the public and with other government agencies **well**.
- There are sometimes challenges between agencies navigating **jurisdictional questions**, **funding**, **timelines** and involving one another in planning projects.



# Stakeholders – recommended additions to the list

Interview  
Themes

- Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Department of Environmental Conservation
- Alaska State Troopers and Anchorage Police Department
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Alaska Concerned citizens groups (Friends of Bird Valley, Concerns Citizens in Rainbow)
- Chugach Electric Association
- Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Iditarod Historic Trail Committee
- Fire and EMS
- Special use operators within the corridor (get names from USFS)
- Additional tribal organizations (Chenega Corporation, Chenega IRA Council, Kenaitze Indian Tribe, Native Village of Eklutna, Native Village of Salamatof)
- Additional tourism and recreation groups (cruise lines and their associated bussing companies, nonmotorized users, Alaskanman Extreme Triathlon organizers, Girdwood Trails Committee, active snowmachining groups, Anchorage Mining and Diving)

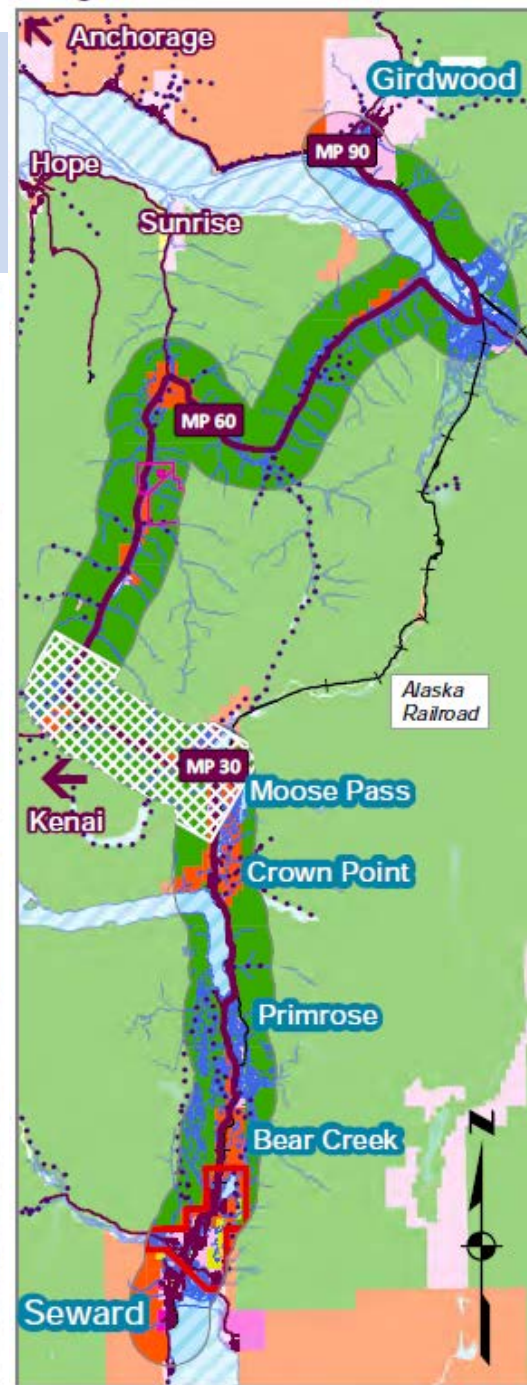
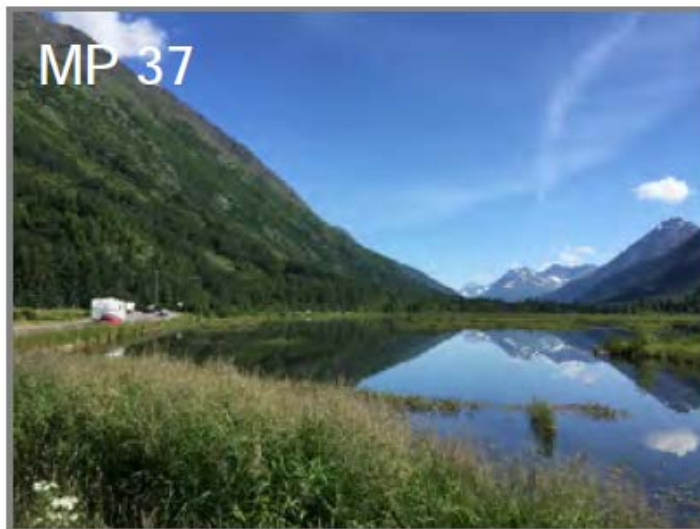
# 6. Emerging Maps



# Emerging Maps

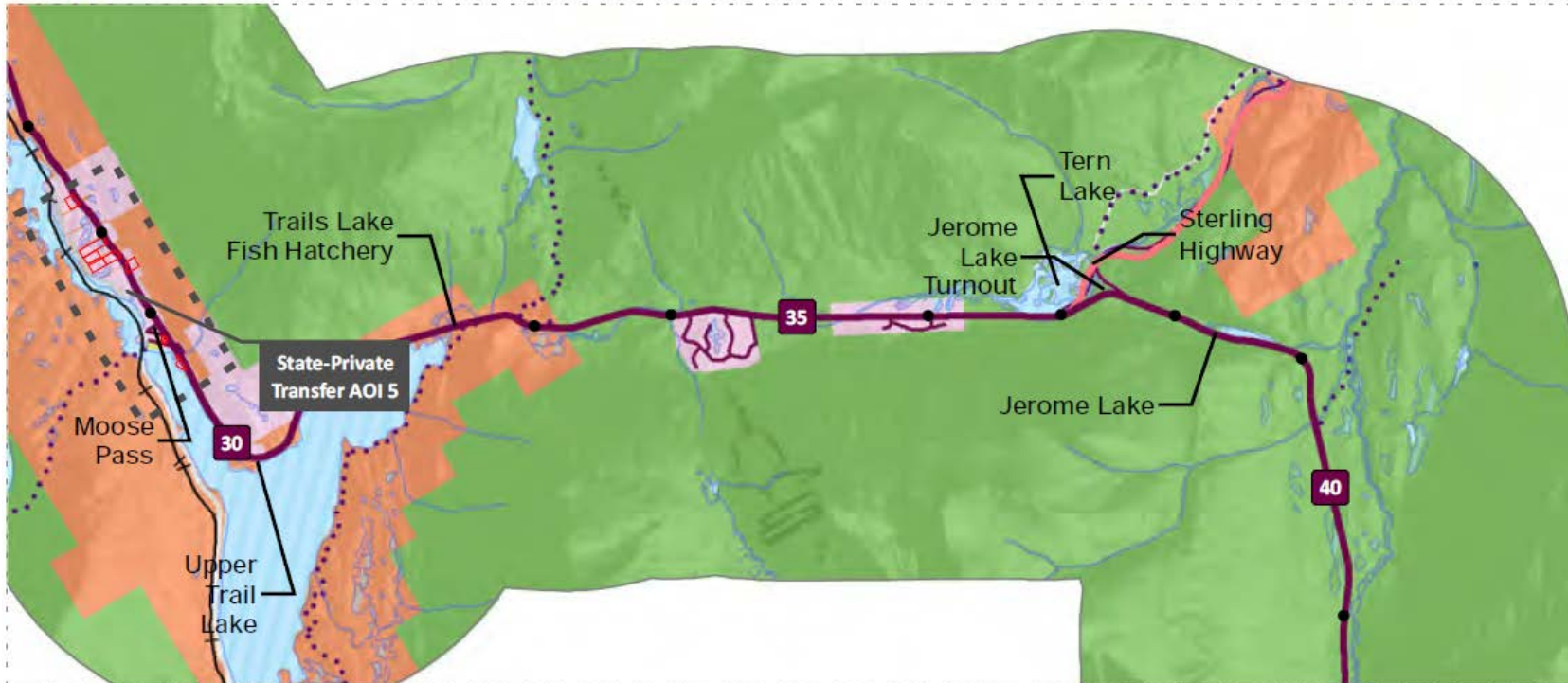
- MP 50-60 – includes Hope Junction
- MP 70-80 – includes Portage Valley

# Sample: MP 30-40



# Sample: MP 30-40

## Important Locations



## Important Locations





# Sample: MP 30-40

## Infrastructure + Crashes

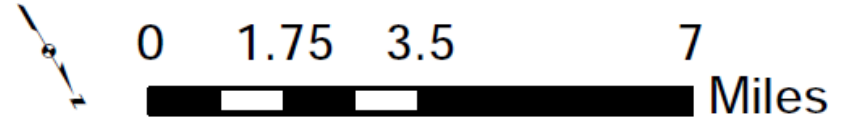
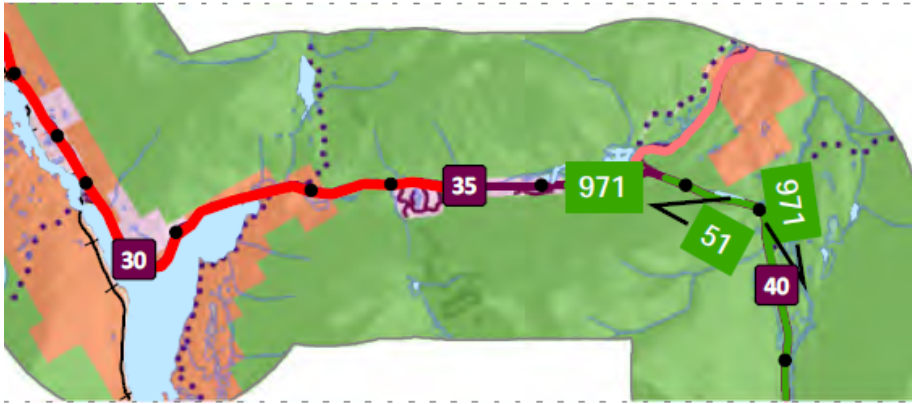


## Infrastructure + Crashes

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ● Driveway (0)                   | ● Culvert (44)                 |
| ⊕ Intersection (22)              | ⬡ Bridge (3)                   |
| ● Crosswalk (0)                  | ⬡ Retaining Wall (0)           |
| — Cluster of Crashes '13-'16 (4) | — Pavement Failure [2019] (12) |
| — Cluster of Crashes '9-'12 (5)  |                                |

# Sample: MP 30-40

## Past Projects/STIP



## Projects Since 2005

- 971: HSIP: CR Avalanche Gate Replacement, 2006
- 51: Seward Hwy: MP 37 to 43, Pavement Refurbishment, 2007

## Past Projects/STIP

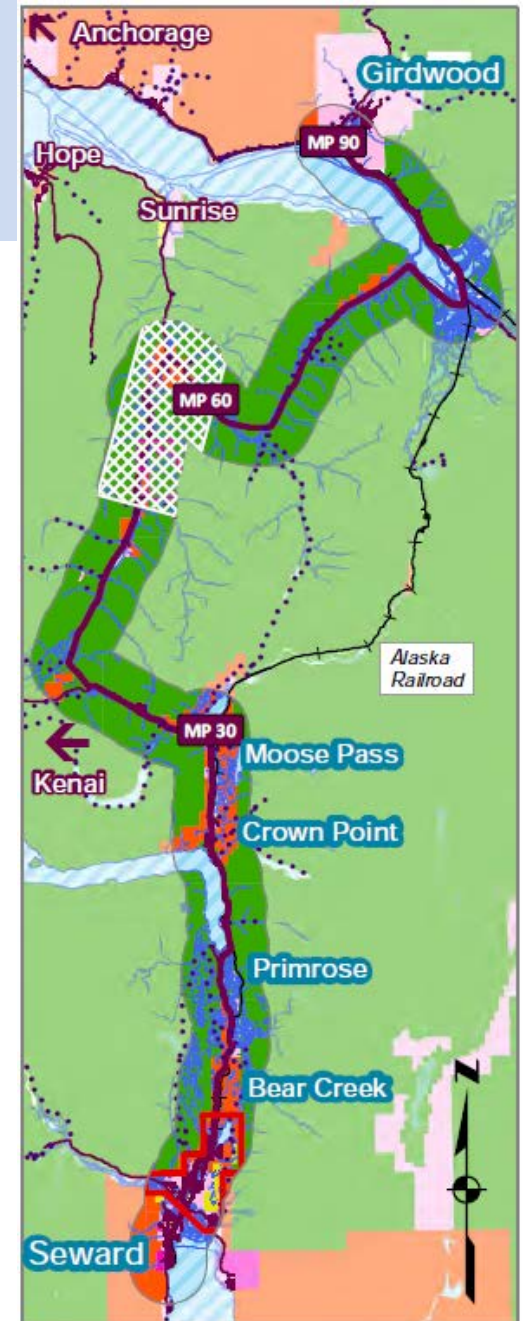
- Projects since 2005 (2)
- In 2018-2021 STIP (1)

# Sample: MP 50-60

MP 56

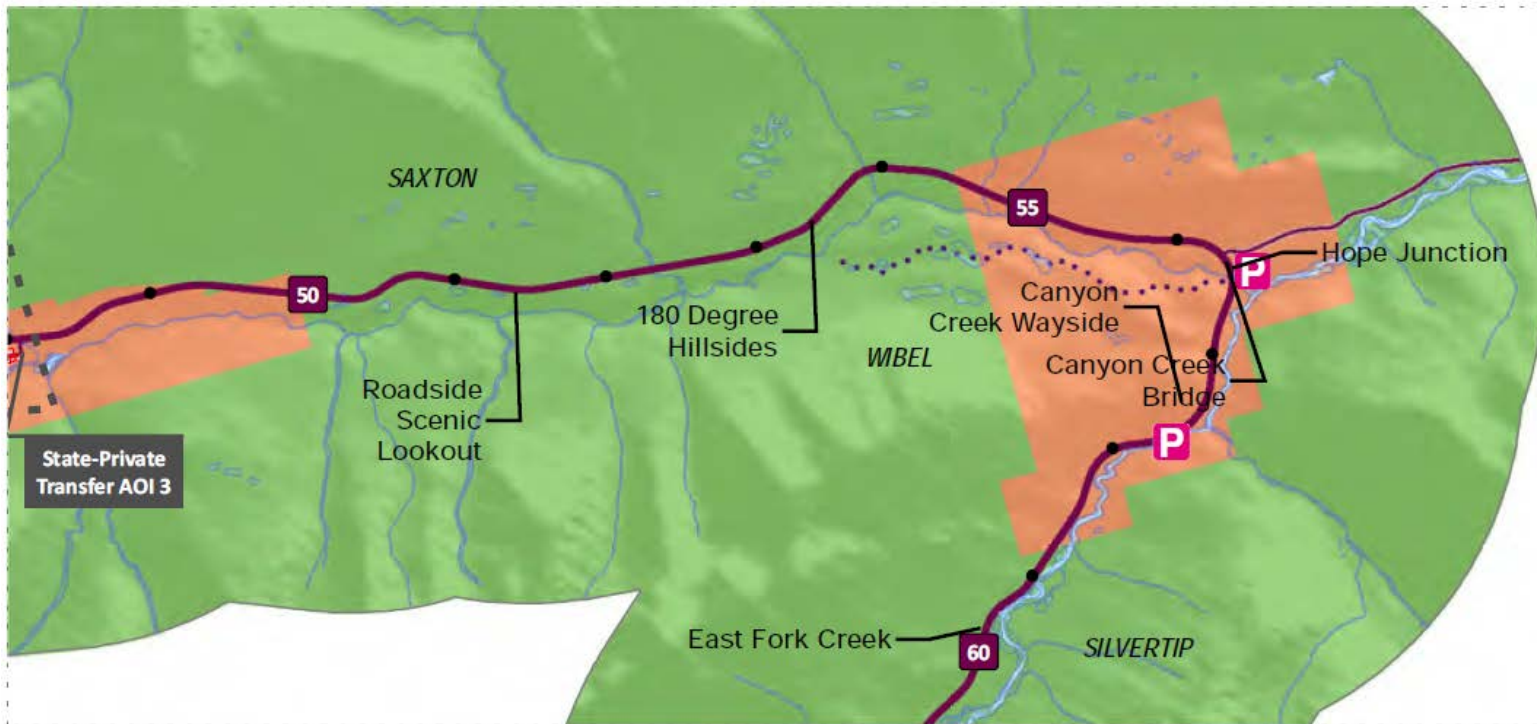


MP 53



# Sample: MP 50-60

## Important Locations

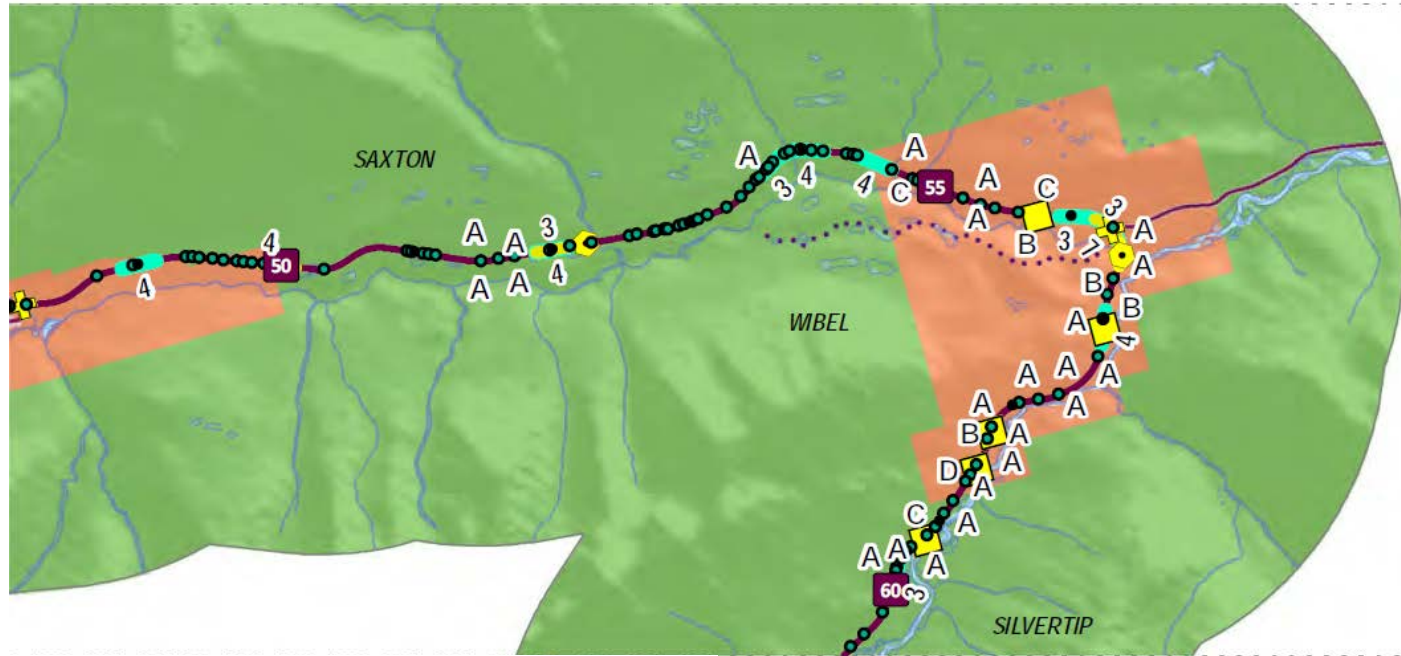


## Important Locations

State-Private Transfer (77)	Seward Highway	FEDERAL
Campground (0)	Sterling Highway	STATE
Roadside Park (2)	Other Road (16)	BOROUGH
Alaska Railroad (0)	Trail (9)	MUNICIPAL
Wetlands	Water Body (8)	PRIVATE

# Sample: MP 50-60

## Infrastructure + Crashes

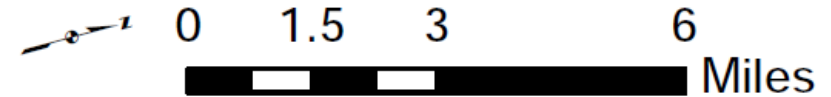
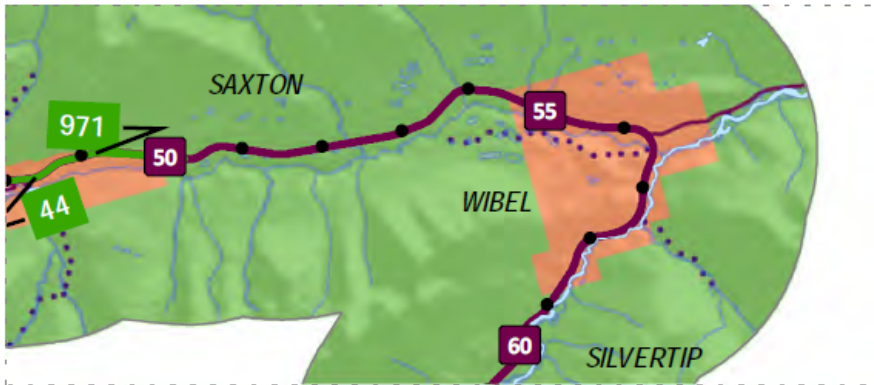


## Infrastructure + Crashes

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ● Driveway (0)                   | ● Culvert (100)               |
| ⊕ Intersection (6)               | ⬡ Bridge (4)                  |
| ● Crosswalk (0)                  | ⬡ Retaining Wall (7)          |
| — Cluster of Crashes '13-'16 (4) | — Pavement Failure [2019] (0) |
| — Cluster of Crashes '9-'12 (10) |                               |

# Sample: MP 50-60

## Past Projects/STIP



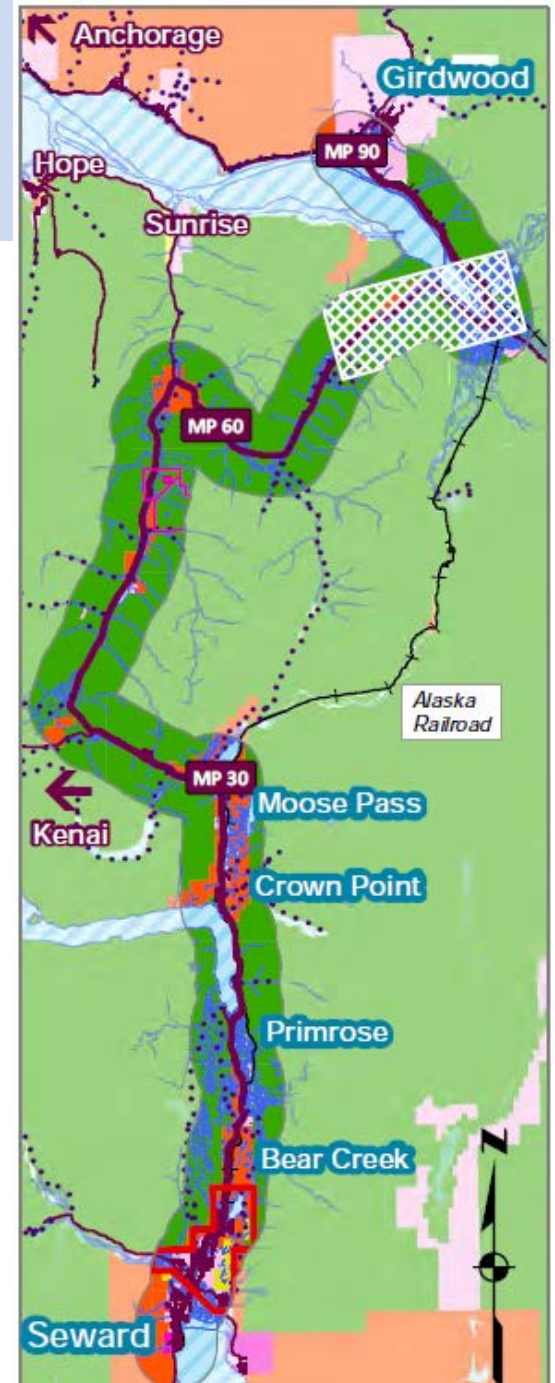
## Projects Since 2005

- 971: HSIP: CR Avalanche Gate Replacement, 2006
- 44: Seward Hwy: MP 43 to 50, Pavement Refurbishment, 2008

## Past Projects/STIP

- Projects since 2005 (2)
- In 2018-2021 STIP (0)

# Sample: MP 70-80



# Sample: MP 70-80

## Important Locations



## Important Locations

State-Private Transfer (77)	Seward Highway	FEDERAL
Campground (0)	Sterling Highway	STATE
Roadside Park (2)	Other Road (74)	BOROUGH
Alaska Railroad (25)	Trail (7)	MUNICIPAL
	Water Body (37)	PRIVATE



# Sample: MP 70-80

## Infrastructure + Crashes



## Infrastructure + Crashes

- Driveway (0)
- Culvert (40)
- ✚ Intersection (2)
- ◆ Bridge (7)
- Crosswalk (0)
- Retaining Wall (0)
- Cluster of Crashes '13-'16 (10)
- Pavement Failure [2019] (1)
- Cluster of Crashes '9-'12 (18)

# Sample: MP 70-80

## Past Projects/STIP



## Projects Since 2005

- 285: Seward Hwy: MP 69 to 75, 2009
- 236: HSIP: Seward Hwy Turnagain Pass - Potter Slow Vehicle Turnouts and Passing Lanes, 2012

## Past Projects/STIP

- Projects since 2005 (2)
- In 2018-2021 STIP (2)

# 7. Next Steps and Meeting Date

Meeting #2 (August 2020)

Present **initial findings**

*We'll send a Doodle poll!*



# 8. Closing Comments

