



# Seward Highway Corridor Study, MP 0-90

**Stakeholder Working Group (SWG) Meeting #2**  
**August 19, 2020**

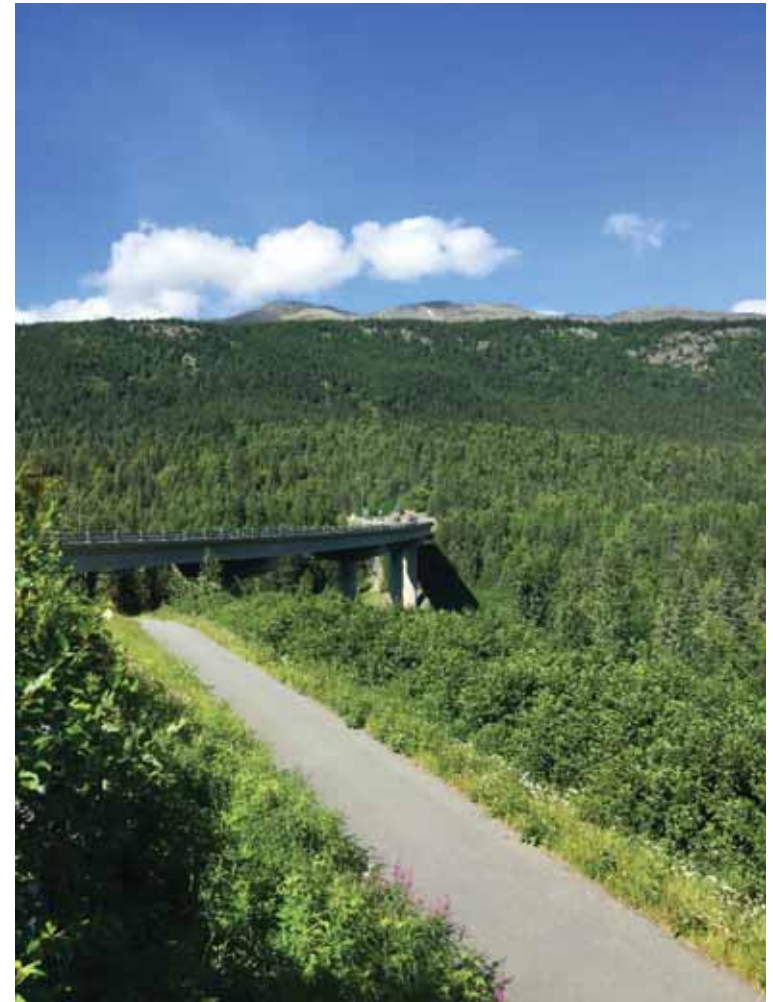


# 1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgement & Introductions



# Meeting Objectives

- Brief project review
- Stakeholder engagement update
- Present initial findings and identified gaps in existing conditions
- Identify next steps



# Land Acknowledgement

*Dena'inaq e'tnen'aaq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu.  
(Dena'ina)*

We 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 (please see meeting notes for complete list)

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
Eric	Taylor	DOT&PF – Headquarters
Griff	Berg	United States Forest Service/Chugach National Forest
Jackie	Wilde	City of Seward
Jerry	Fox	Girdwood Board of Supervisors
Jim	Hunt	City of Whittier
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
Mike	Edgington	Girdwood Board of Supervisors
Rob	Earl	DNR
Scott	Meszaros	City of Seward

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.

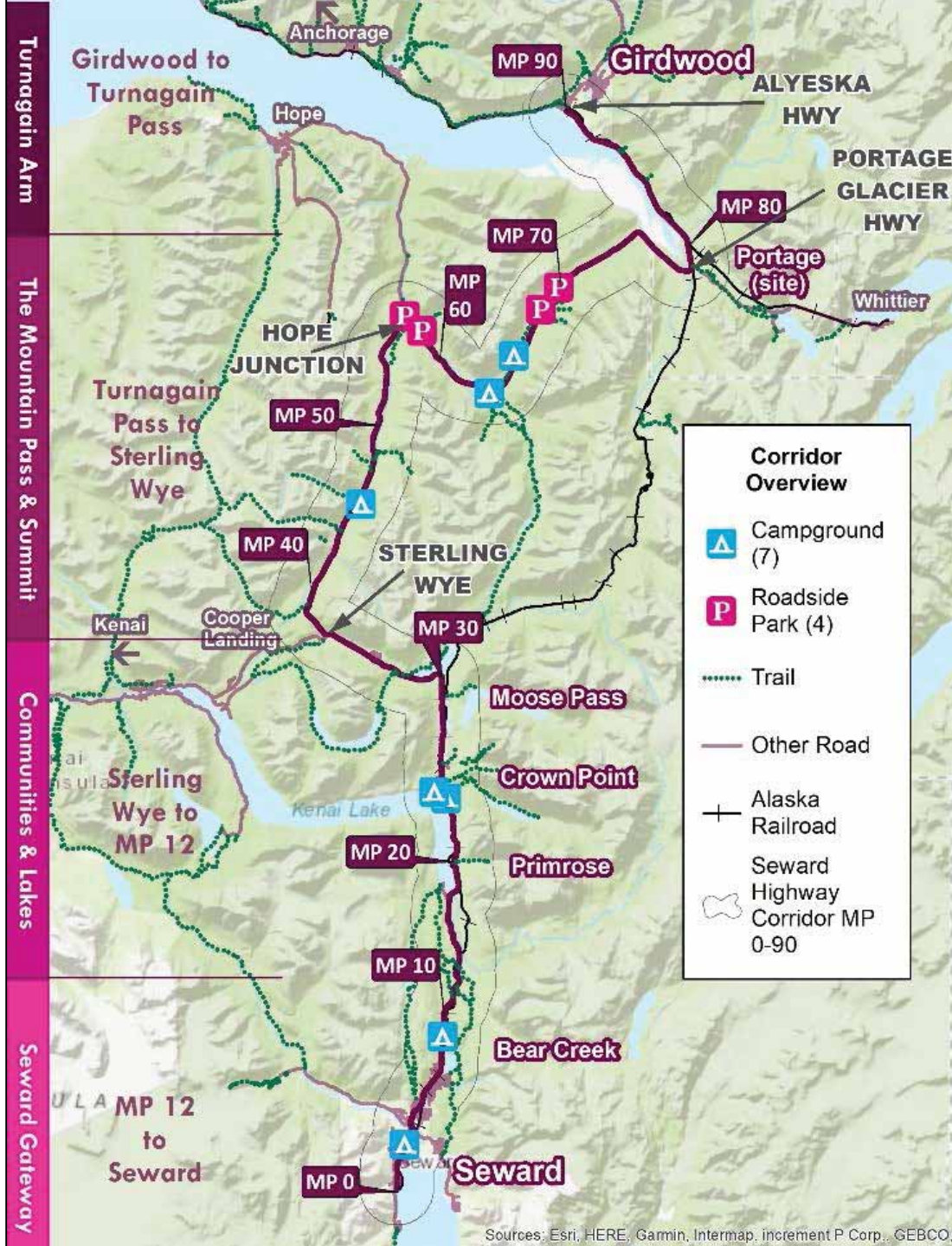
# Review of Project Purpose, Expectations and Schedule





# Project Area

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





# Purpose

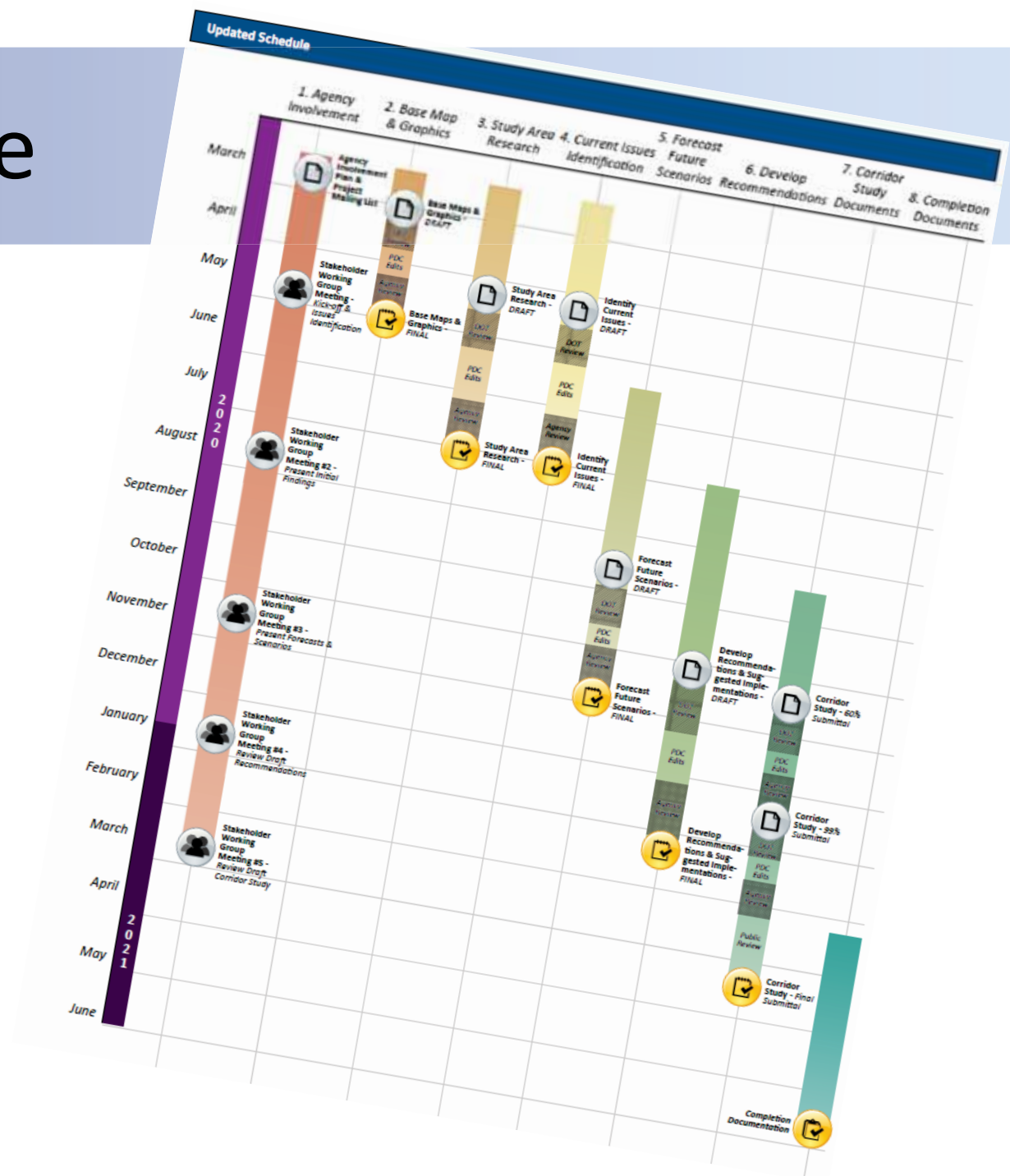
The corridor study will:

- 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.*



# Schedule



# 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

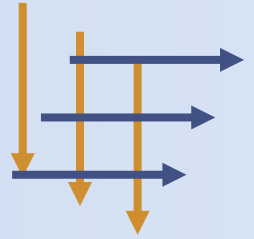
- Meeting #1 (May 2020) – Conduct **project kickoff**
- Meeting #2 (**today**) – Present **initial findings**
- Meeting #3 (November 2020) – Present **forecasts + scenarios**
- Meeting #4 (January 2021) – Review **draft recommendations**
- Meeting #5 (March 2021) – Review draft **corridor study**



## 2. Stakeholder Engagement Update



# Plans + Reports Crosswalk



Builds a more complete understanding on the needs and direction of the corridor...

- Summarizes information from past planning efforts
- Highlights areas of alignment
- Highlights areas of potential tension

...With the **goal of identifying agreement on a shared set of short- and long-term priorities.**

# What was considered in the crosswalk?

Document Name	Agency	Year
Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan Revision	United States Forest Service	2020
Portage Curve Multi-Model Connector (currently underway)	Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities	2020
Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan	Kenai Peninsula Borough	2019
Seward Connectivity Study	Alaska Railroad Corporation	2017
Seward Marine Terminal Expansion Planning – Master Plan	Alaska Railroad Corporation	2017
City of Seward Comprehensive Plan Update 2030	City of Seward	2017
Iditarod Trail Special Use Permit and Facility Maintenance Programmatic Environmental Assessment	U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management	2017
Chugach State Park Management Plan	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	2016
Chugach State Park Trails Management Plan	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	2016
Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan: Let's Keep Moving 2036, Freight Element	Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities	2016
Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area Management Plan	Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area	2012
Kenai Area Plan	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	2000
Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	1998
Turnagain Arm Management Plan	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	1994
Kenai River Special Management Area Map	Alaska Department of Natural Resources	N/A

# Areas of Alignment: part 1 (of 4)

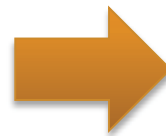
The **Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan (1998)** is widely cited and influenced the recommendations in other initiatives and plans.



The **Partnership Plan** is informing the current planning effort in multiple ways; for example, the Corridor Study project team has opted to examine the area by the same four corridor segments.

# Areas of Alignment: part 2 (of 4)

- Stakeholders across sectors recognize the **corridor is an asset** (*economic development, scenic, recreational*) and **integral to the future of the region.**
- Since no single agency or landowner oversees the entire corridor, **communications and partnerships are vital.**



*“The successful management of the Seward Highway is dependent on the cooperation of existing institutions, resource managers and committed individuals.”*

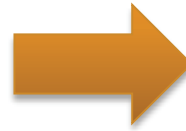
*-Seward Highway Corridor  
Partnership Plan*

*These themes also expressed in SWG interviews.*



# Areas of Alignment: part 3 (of 4)

- **Economic development** in the region is **linked with the stability of the corridor** – for freight, tourism, recreation and connectivity.
- **Roadway safety is a priority;** barriers include a lack of enforcement and reduced maintenance funding.



*“As the only overland route between Seward and Anchorage, the Seward Highway is vital to the flow of goods into and out of Seward.”*

*– City of Seward  
Comprehensive Plan  
2030*

*These themes were expressed in SWG interviews.*

# Areas of Alignment: part 4 (of 4)

- **Evaluating alternatives** (mass transit, additional railway stops, improved bicycle connectivity) **to vehicle traffic is a priority.**
- **Development is a threat to the scenic and environmental values** of the corridor.



*These themes were less pronounced in SWG interviews but have been expressed in subsequent interviews with tourism and trail stakeholders*

# Areas of Potential Tension : part 1 (of 2)

**The corridor has three primary uses that are not always aligned.**

- **Recreational corridor**
- **Transit corridor**
- **Freight/ shipping corridor**

**These three uses often have conflicting interests and require different development considerations.**

*These themes also expressed in SWG interviews*


# Areas of Potential Tension : part 2 (of 2)

- **Vehicle traffic and freight** can negatively **impact habitat and recreation** along the corridor.

*Also expressed in SWG interviews*

- Traffic has created the **need for road widening and additional facilities**, which is **not always in line with preservation efforts**.

*This was expressed in more recent interviews*



*“The Seward Highway and railroad right-of-way along Turnagain Arm can present a variety of hazards to park visitors. Especially dangerous is the close proximity of visitors, using trailheads and pullouts along the road for access and sightseeing, to the fast-moving traffic that is traversing this major transportation corridor.”*

*- Chugach State Park  
Management Plan*

# Topics not Found in Crosswalk Review

- Land use conflicts
- Concerns from communities situated adjacent to the highway
- Identification of specific projects, anticipated upgrades along the corridor by different agencies and partners

*The list above includes topics from SWG interviews that were not found during the crosswalk review of plans*



# Additional Interviews – to date

- Alaska Trucking Association
- Bureau of Land Management: Iditarod National Historic Program
- City of Seward Fire Department
- Friends of Bird Valley
- Girdwood Board of Supervisors
- Girdwood Chamber of Commerce
- Girdwood Trails Committee
- Greater Whittier Chamber of Commerce
- Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance
- Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area
- Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council
- Seward Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center

# Interview Themes

**Overall**, interviewees (to date) have **reinforced most of the themes from the SWG interviews**, especially the strengths and challenges.

Additional recommended improvements include...

# Interview Themes: Improvements:

## Part 1 (of 2)

- **Add more signage for visitors** regarding construction updates, weather hazards and estimated drive times.
- **Expand interpretive information** that encourages visitors to learn about and visit roadside destinations.
- **Create safer access**, better parking for backcountry winter recreationists.

# Interview Themes: Improvements: Part 2 (of 2)

- Increase availability of **restrooms in winter**.
- Install **emergency phones/call boxes** along stretches without cell reception.
- Address **parking congestion** due to **hooligan fishing**.
- Consider **scenic viewsheds** when siting, approving development (e.g., utilities).
- Add **more turn lanes**.

# Next Steps for Stakeholder Engagement

- Launch project website
- Conduct additional interviews and update the interview summary
- Develop and send first e-newsletter

# Initial Findings – Key Themes and Gaps

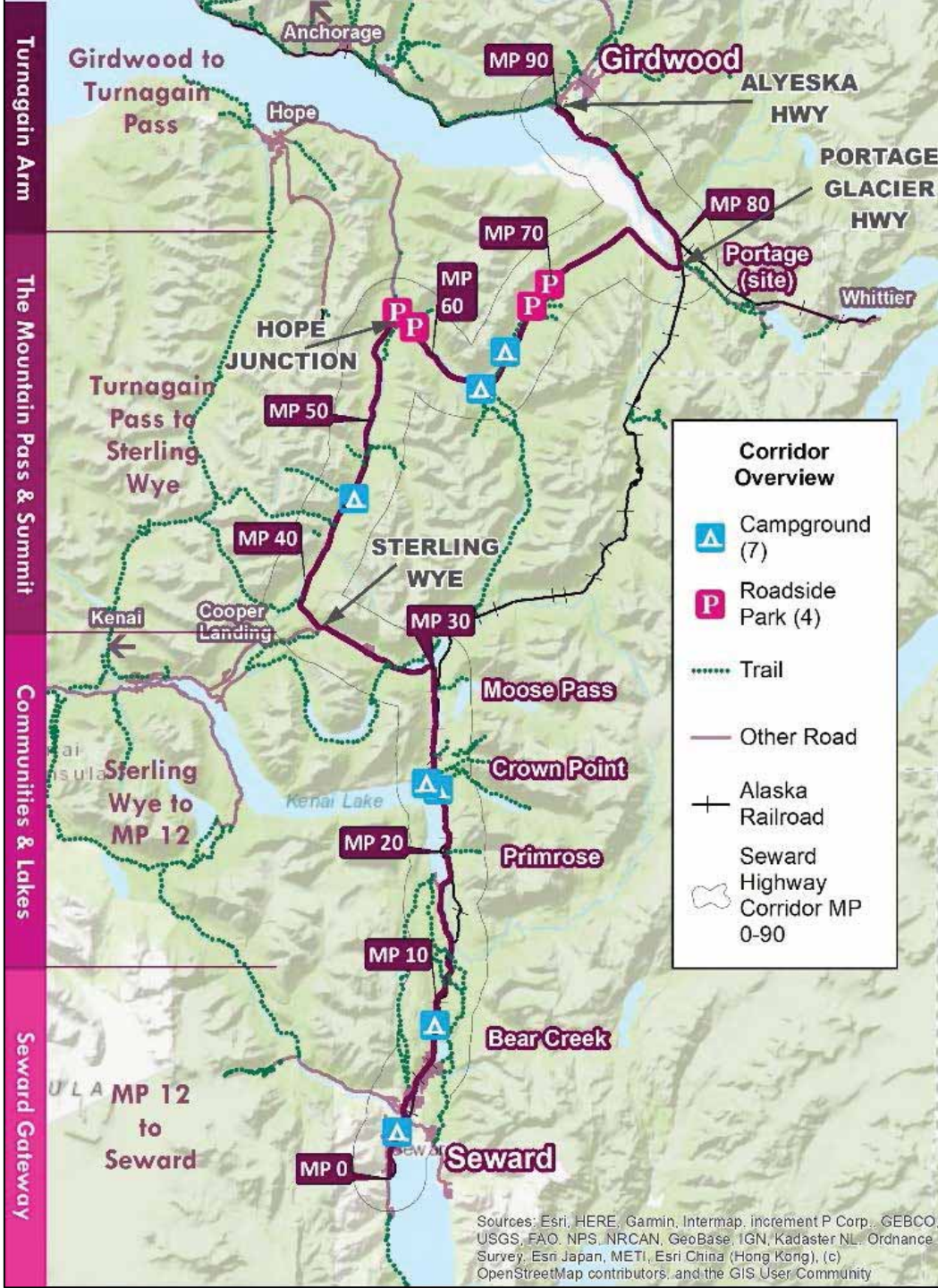


# Instructions for SWG Members

We want your feedback. As we share our initial findings, we want to know:

1. What surprises you?
2. What questions do you have about what is being presented?
3. What is missing? What information would you still like to see?

# Corridor Segments



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



# Turnagain Arm

## Girdwood to Turnagain Pass (MP 90-75)



# The Mountain Pass & Summit

## Turnagain Pass to Sterling Wye (MP 75-40)



# Communities & Lakes

## Sterling Wye to Milepost 12 (MP 40-12)





# Seward Gateway

## Milepost 12 to Seward (MP 12-0)



# Data Sources

- Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
- Alaska Railroad
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Municipality of Anchorage
- US Forest Service

# Key Data Themes

- **Traffic volumes** increased and leveled off
- **Safety** has improved
- **Access** is limited but concentrated

# Theme: Traffic Volumes



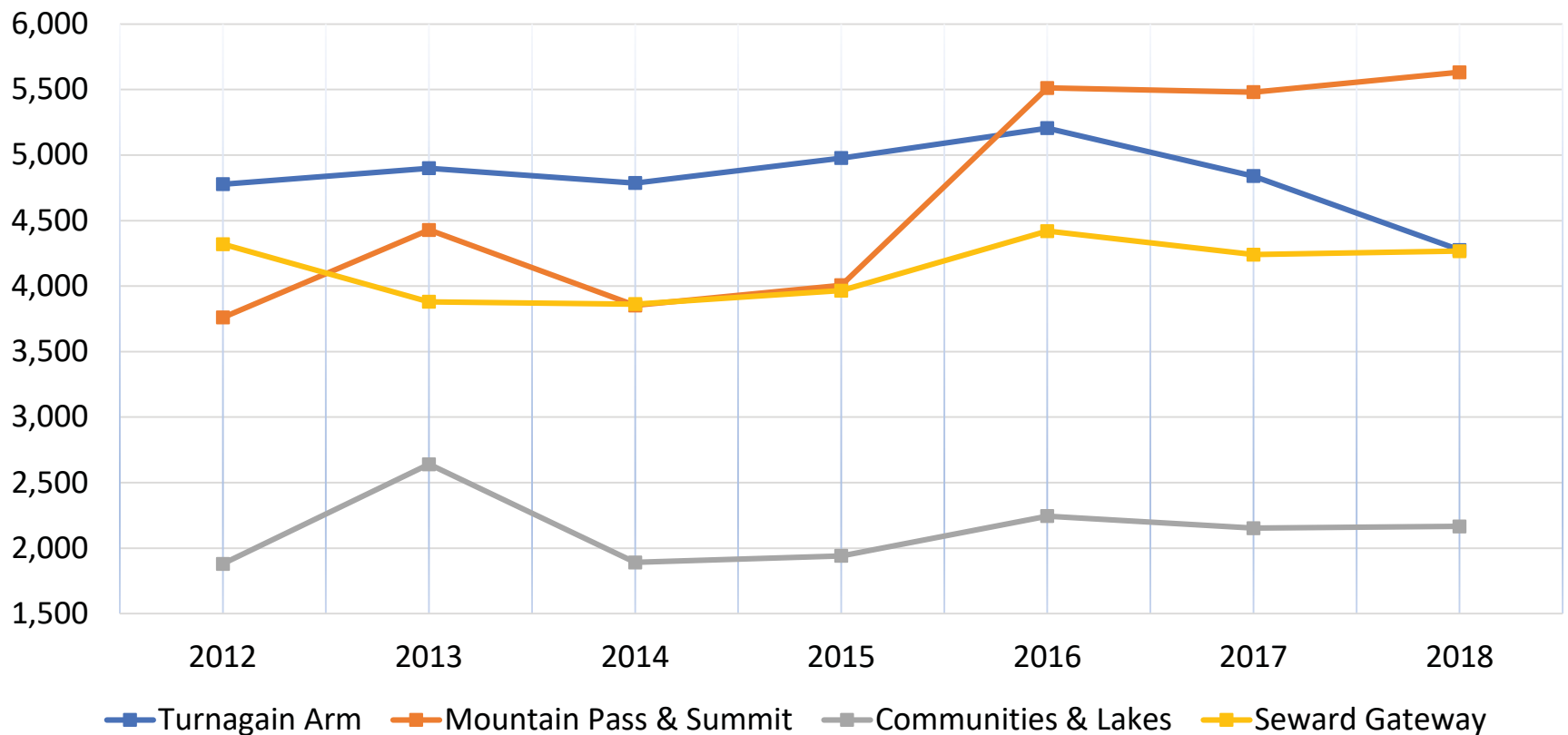
# SWG Feedback on **Traffic**

- “...heavy traffic during peak summer weekends.”
- “The intersection of the Sterling and Seward Highways is especially bad during peak times.”
- “I envision a much larger volume of traffic [in the future].”



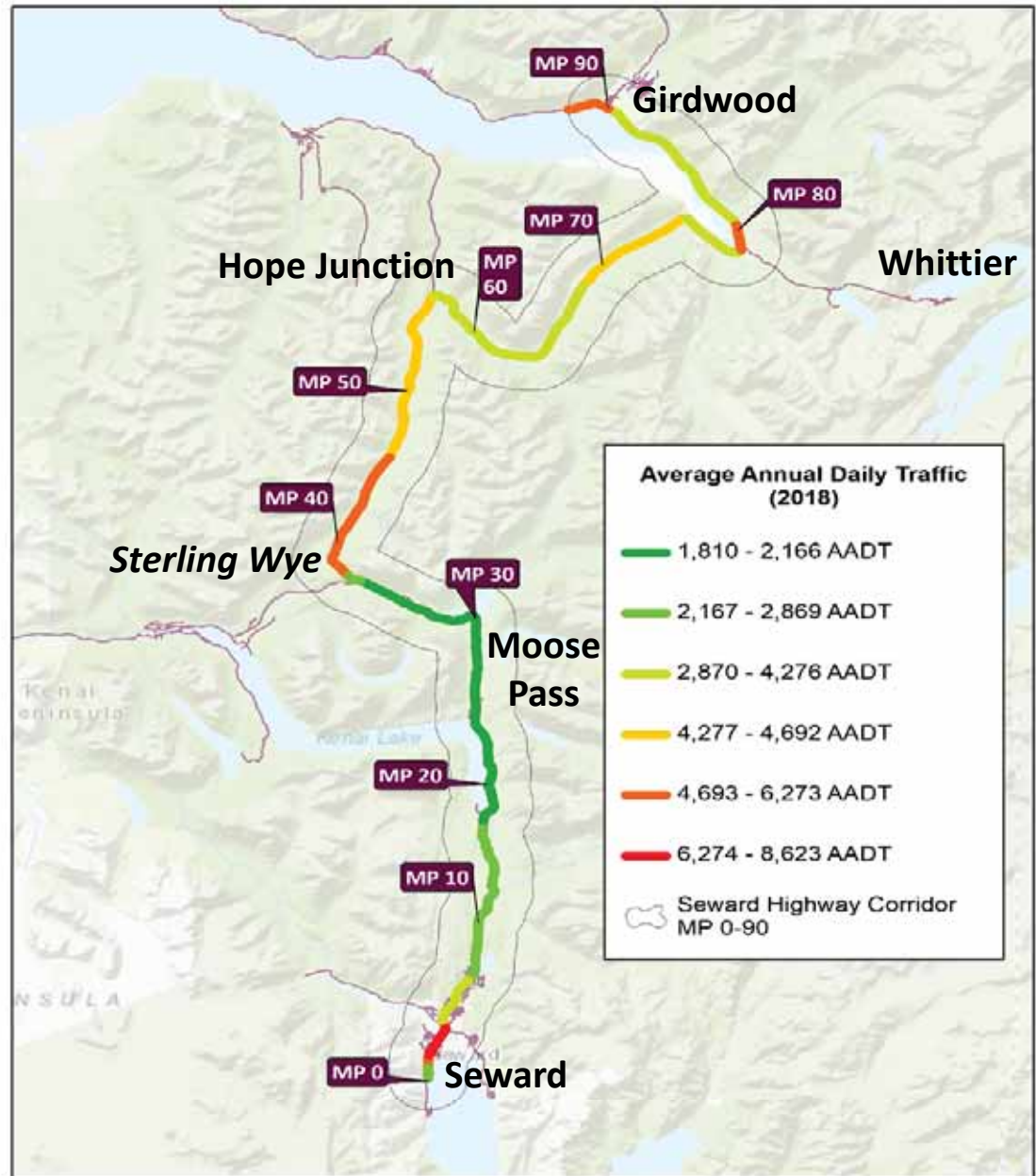
# Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)

Average Annual Daily Traffic By Segment  
2012-2018



# AADT 2018

(most current year for which we have data)



# Theme: Safety

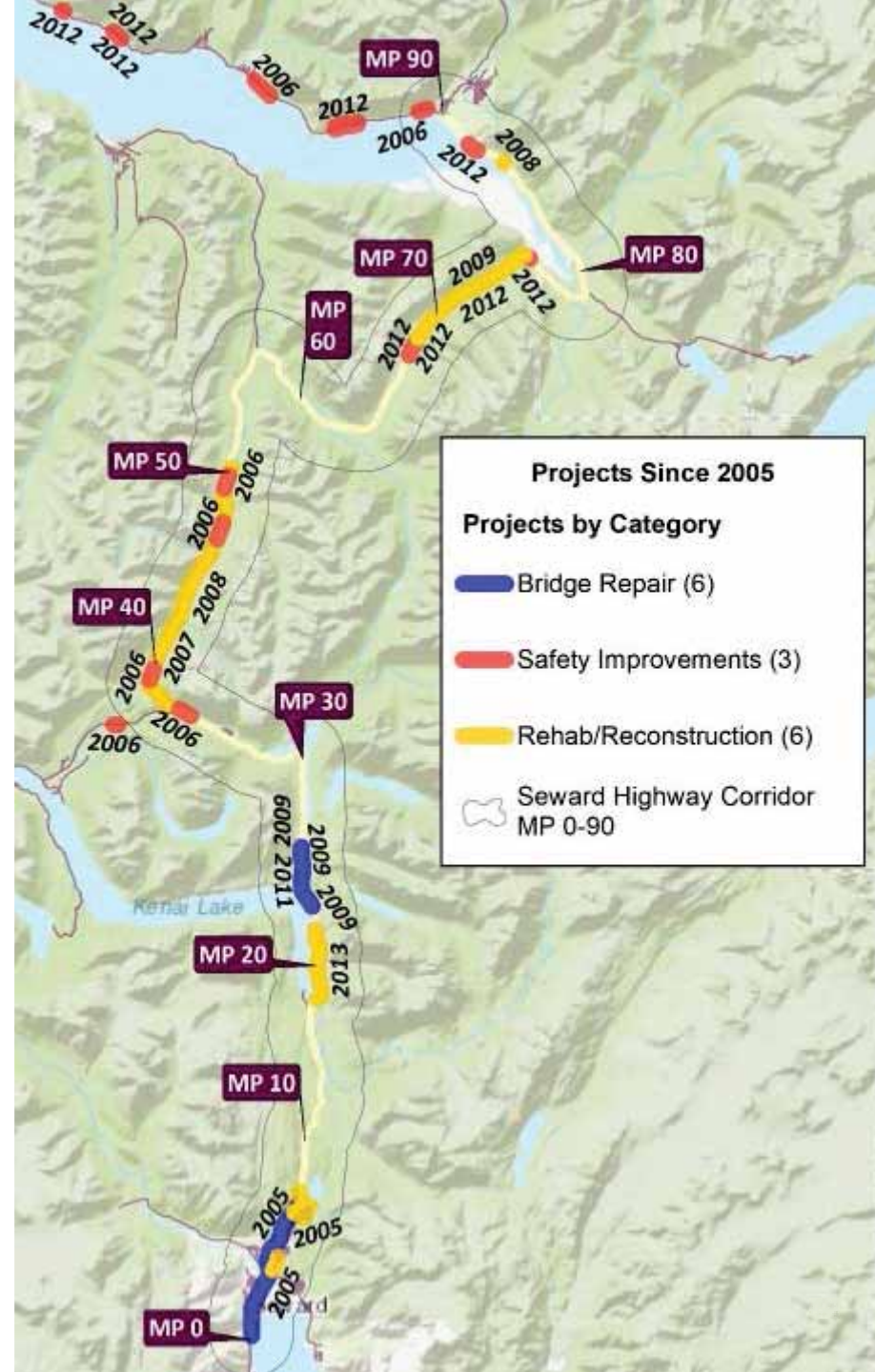


# SWG Feedback on **Safety**

- “Highway improvements continue to increase safety...”
- “Reduction in state funds...creates unsafe conditions in winter.”

# Projects since 2005

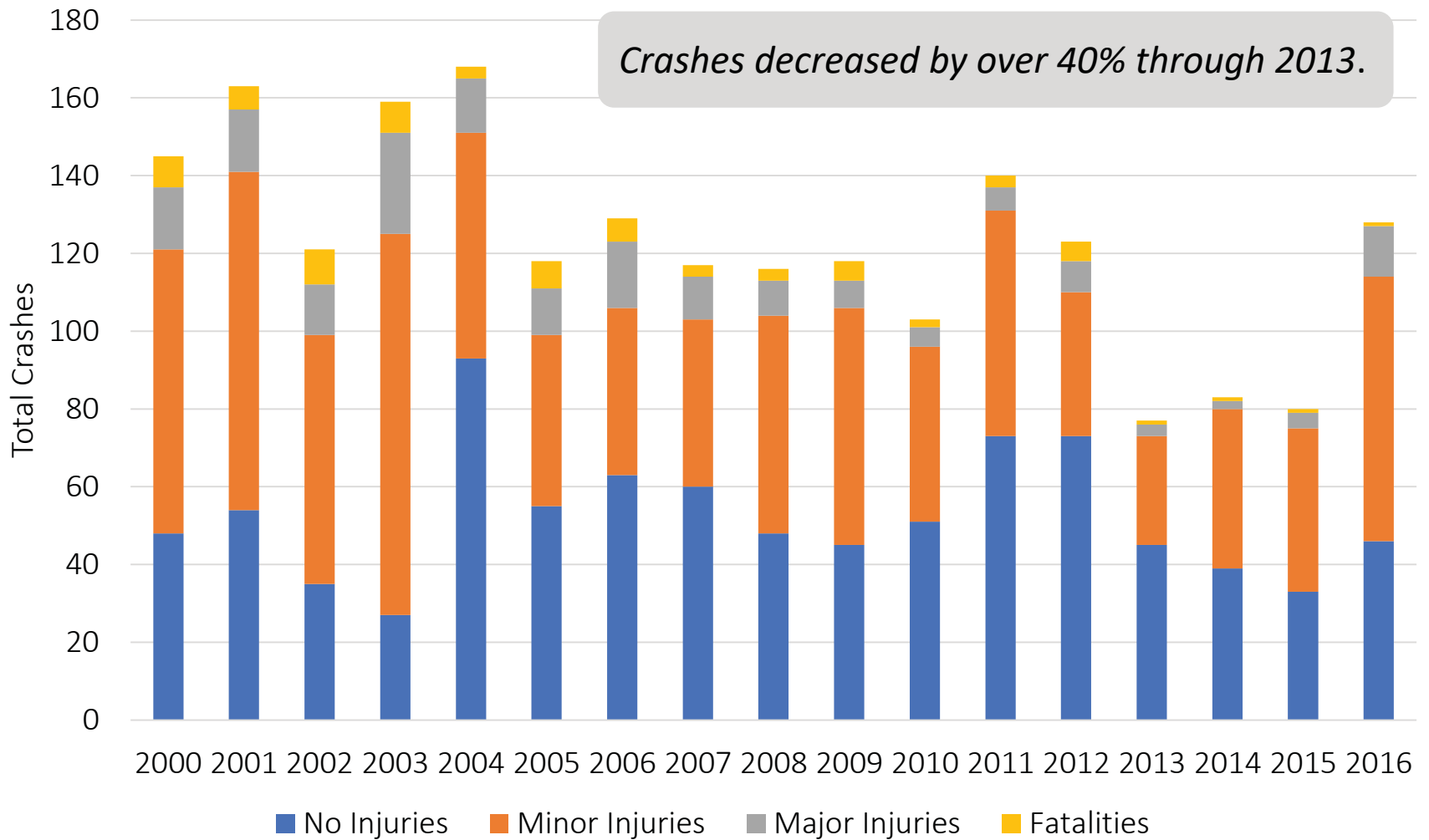
- 6 bridge repairs
- 3 safety improvements
- 6 rehab/reconstruction





# Crashes by Severity, 2000-2016

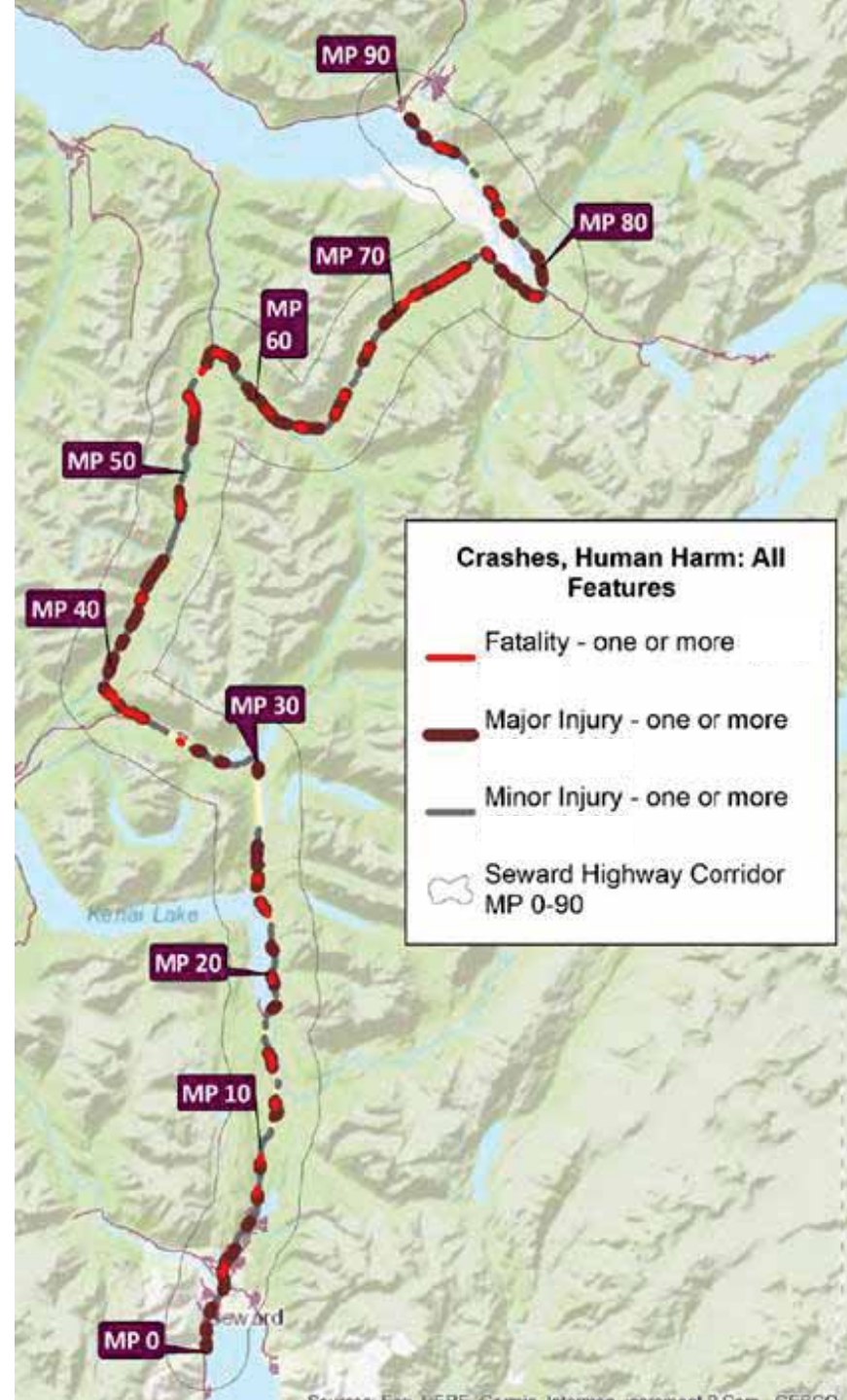
*Crashes decreased by over 40% through 2013.*



# Crash Severity by Segment

Segment	% w/ Fatality or Major Injury	AADT (2018)
Turnagain Arm	7.9%	4,500
Mountain Pass & Summit	8.7%	4,500
Communities & Lakes	8.6%	2,500
Seward Gateway	4.3%	4,200

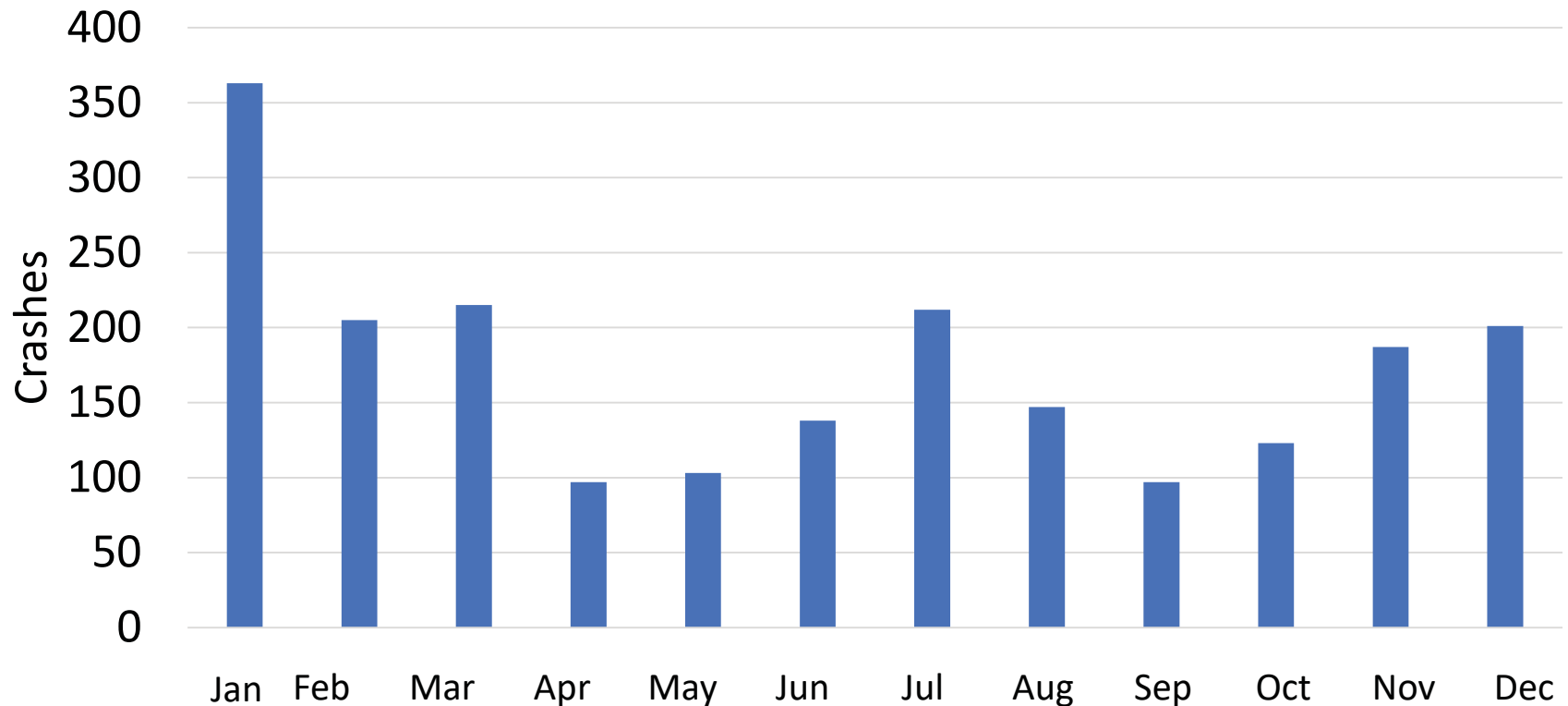
# Crashes with Injuries/Fatalities (2000-2016)





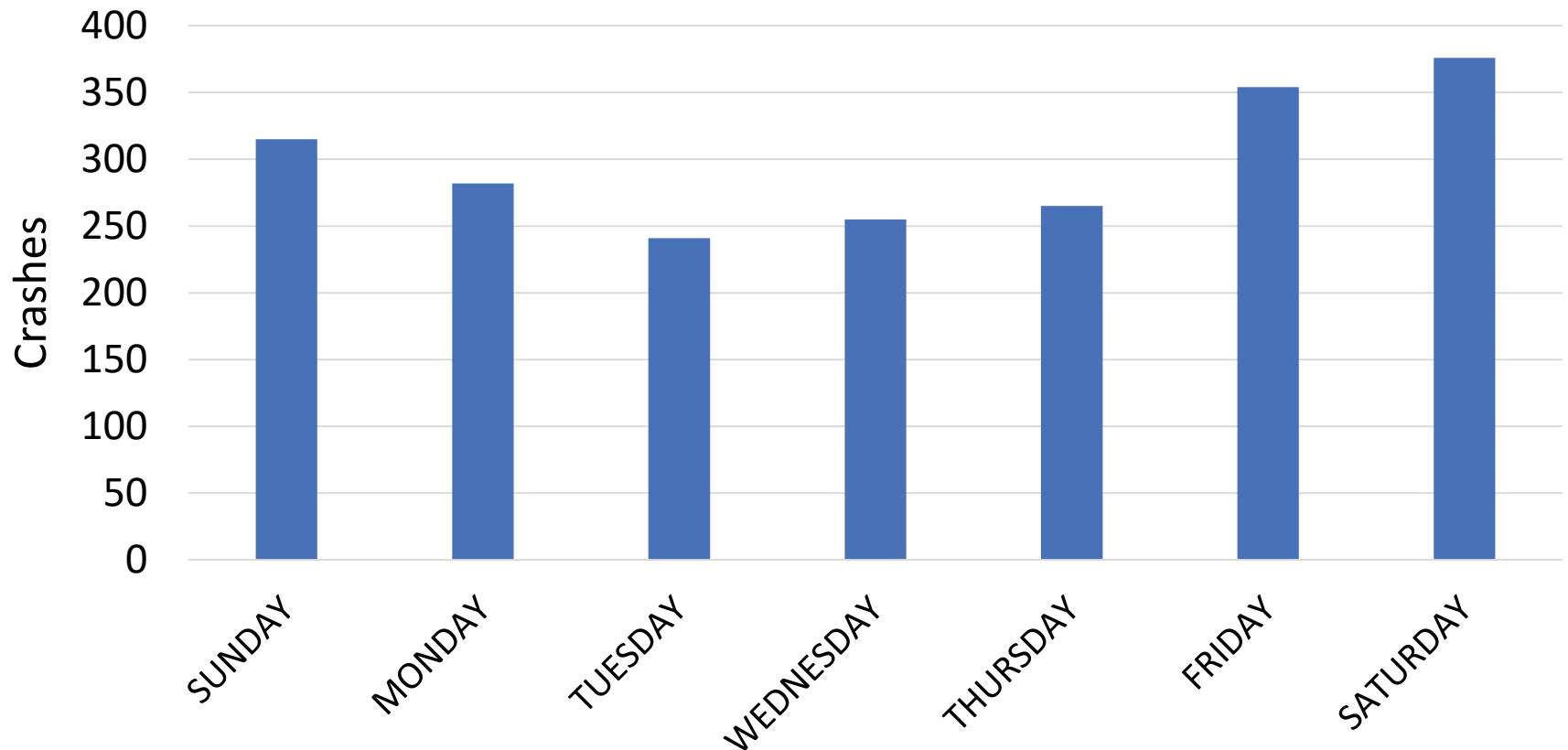
# When do crashes occur?

Crashes by Month  
2000-2016

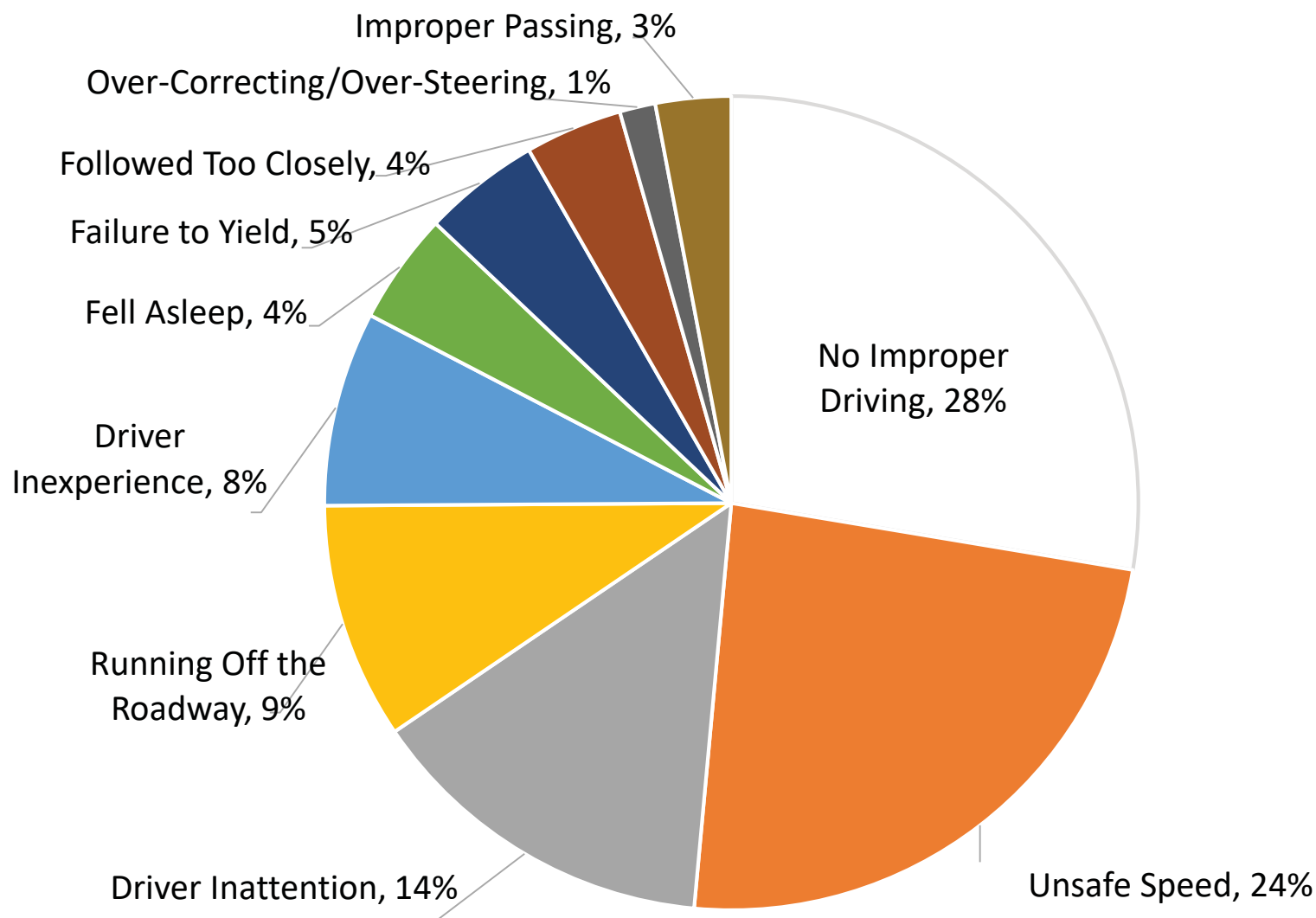


# When do crashes occur?

Crashes by Day of the Week  
2000-2016



# Crashes by Primary Contributing Circumstance



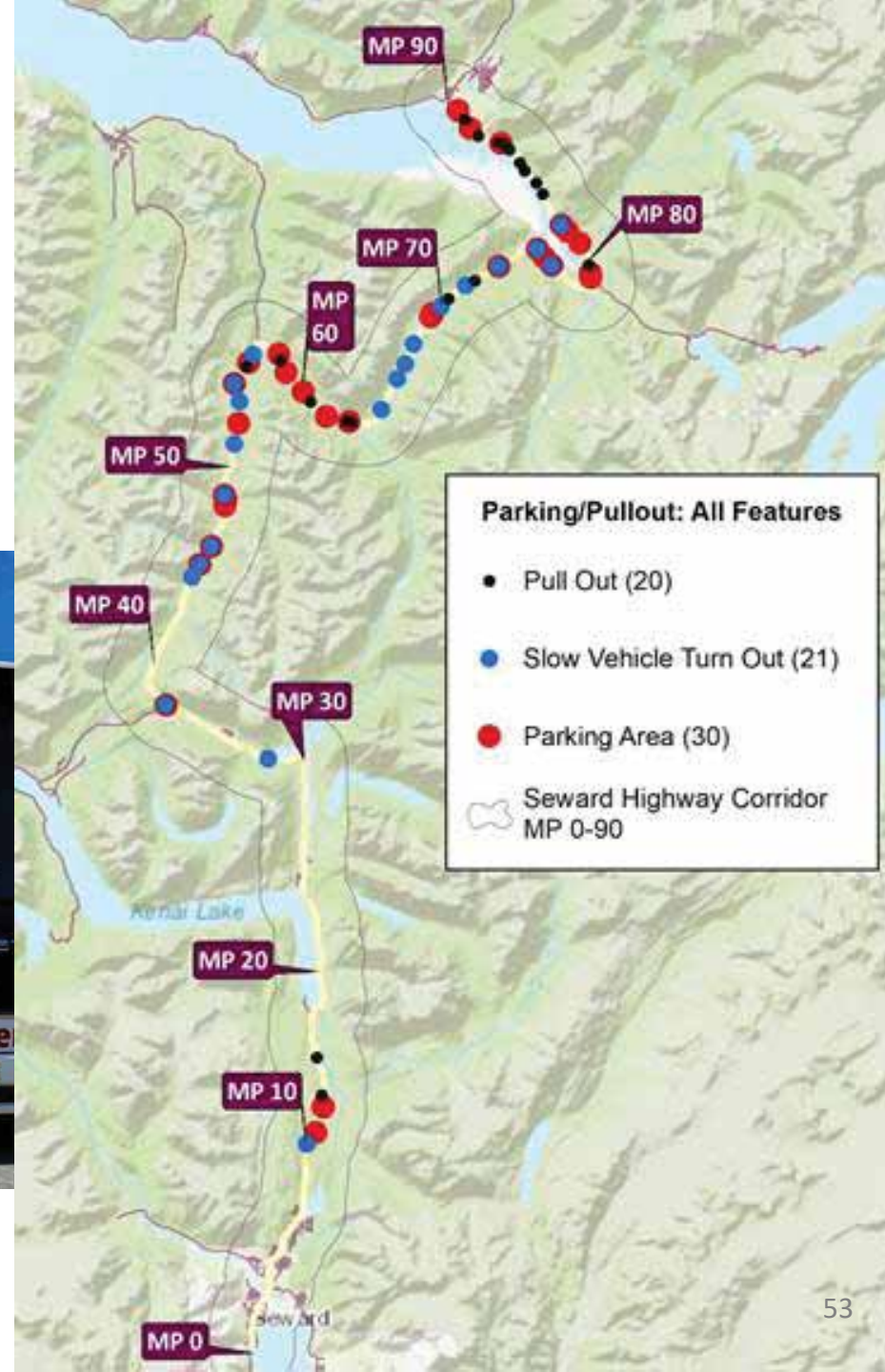
# Theme: Access



# SWG Feedback on **Access**

- “...limited number of rest stops, wayside facilities...”
- “...designed as trailheads but are now used as rest stops.”
- “Near Seward... there are many access points...”

# Parking & Pullouts





# Intersections & Driveways

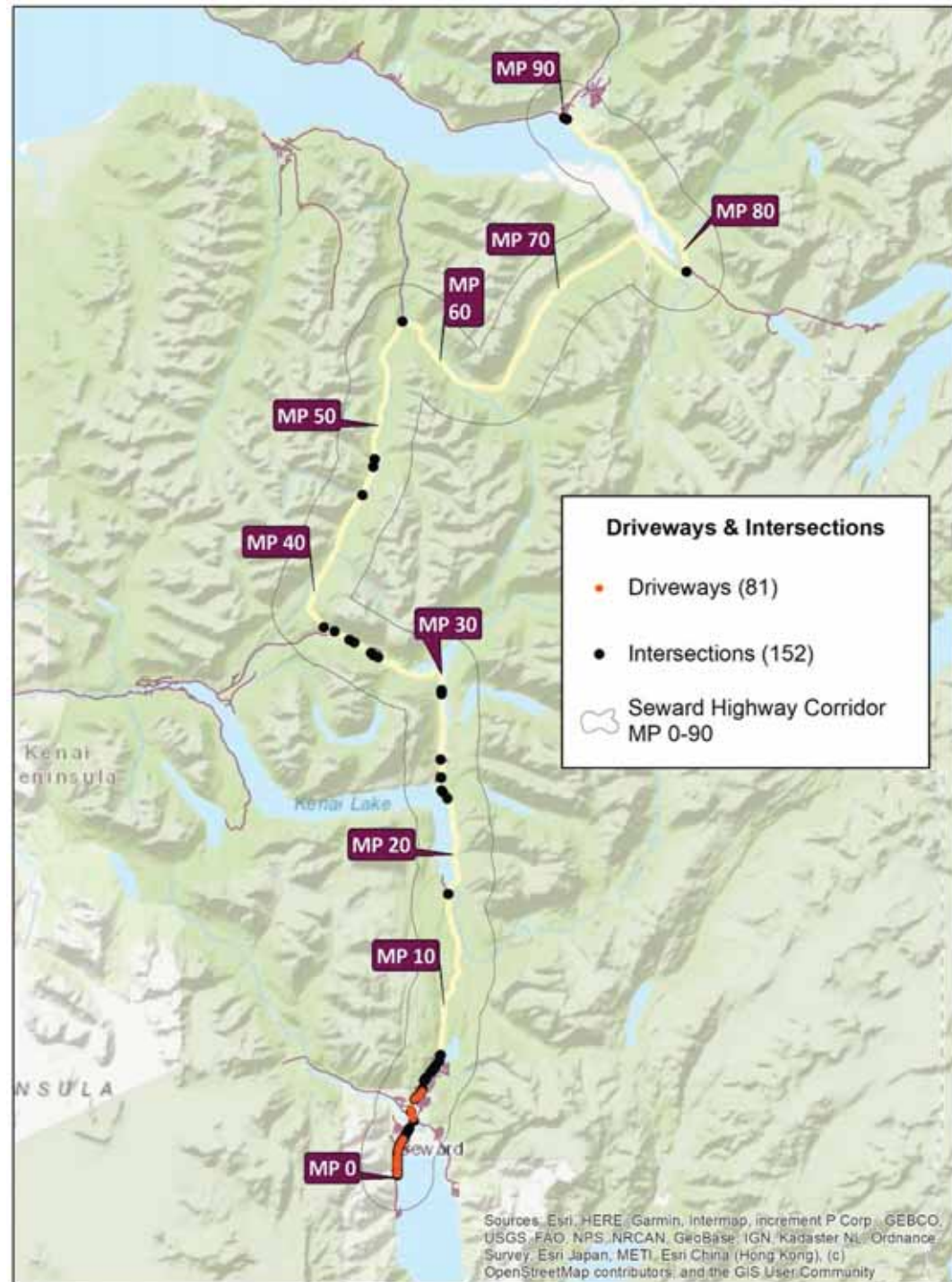
**Poor visibility**



**Better visibility**



# Driveways & Intersections





# Additional Topics/Data Sets

- Highway appurtenances (partial)
- Detailed AADT
- Land ownership
- ROW
- Recreational facilities

# Additional Crash Data

- Moose collisions
- Crash locations by circumstances
- Crash locations by conditions
- Percentage of crashes on curves vs. straightaways, daylight vs. nighttime

# Identified Gaps

- Appurtenances (guardrails, signs, etc.)
- Trailhead usage statistics
- Non-motorized traffic counts

# 7. Next Steps and Meeting Date

Meeting #3 (November 2020)

Present **forecasts + scenarios**

*We'll send a Doodle poll*



# 8. Closing Comments

