



METROPOLITAN PLANNING
Community Advisory Committee
4700 Elmore Road
Anchorage Alaska, 99507

Seward Highway to Glenn Highway PEL Comments from AMATS Community Advisory Committee

Dear Seward Highway to Glenn Highway PEL Team,

General Comments:

Two goals of the Seward Glenn PEL are in direct conflict with each other: it is impossible to achieve higher vehicle traffic mobility and increase livability/quality of life in and around a facility at the same time. Livability should be a higher priority, with mobility a secondary concern: The project team should address what is the minimum realistic flow that can be achieved in compatibility with the most livable design.

All of these alternatives appear to place vehicle mobility as the highest priority, and consider livability, tax base and economic development as secondary concerns. As an example: all alternatives take out all of the traffic lights between Airport Heights and Fireweed on the Glenn and Seward highways. Every non-motorized plan alternative has accommodation around the highway facility.

To that end, when assessing alternatives, utilizing existing roadways, right of ways, and natural depressions minimize the impact of the project and make for a more achievable plan.

The project team should evaluate whether each alternative allows for incremental improvements to the area even if the main project does not get funded for thirty to fifty years.

A main street on Gambell and a greenway aligned with either Ingra or Hyder represent significant improvements, however if the freeway is constructed in a manner as to cut off a significant portion of the population from accessing them, then it is a failure.

The focus on reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled is an incomplete proxy for environmental impacts, unless it counts a reduction in the number of vehicles moving through the study area as well. Impacts must include measurements of impacts to the local community, including the number of vehicles moving through the study area.

Projects that propose alignments over existing private properties (and every option including the “No Action Alternative” keeps a realignment of the highway in the long-term traffic model), cause an economic depression of those properties whether the facility ever gets built or not. Owners of properties that are subject to eminent domain sometime in the distant future make the rational economic choice not to invest in their properties, causing building stock to age and fail, and depressing the economic development of an area and decreasing property tax roles. This has been the experience on Hyder street and really all along the Ingra/Gambell Corridor. This economic depression needs to be included in the assessment of alternatives.

Existing traffic patterns from the Port of Alaska into to rest of the community has been described in the past as mainly continuing down the A/C street couplet with only minor percentages of truck traffic



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heading to the Glenn and Seward Highways. The potential impacts of this project on the A/C and 5th/6th couplets need to be balanced against the perceived benefits.

Specific Comments:

No Action Options:

-The document accurately reflects many of the impacts of No Action. Is the economic depression of the area inside the Ingra/Gambell couplet due to being 1-an isolated island inside a federal interstate and 2-an area subject to eminent domain in the existing long-range plans reflected in the economic modeling used for assessing alternatives?

Alternative A:

-This option appears to maximize eminent domain of the areas in the center and north end of the Ingra/Gambell corridor, causing economic depression before its implementation, and fully removing tax base after implementation.

-The pedestrian, safety, and livability accommodations for those living in and around the facility are insufficient to the intent of this project

Alternative B:

- While depressing the highway is an improvement, and the alignment significantly reduces the impacts on private property, the pedestrian, safety, and livability accommodations for those living in and around the facility are insufficient to the intent of this project. The option for future caps on segments of the facility should be included in this plan, which could allow for public space, facilities, or even development.

-This option still tries to make mobility and livability work in the same area. The result is only half the livability impacts one would hope for from this project.

Alternatives C1 & C2:

-This option is very interesting because it almost fully separates the highway from the area in which people live, with the exception of south Fairview.

-South Fairview is already separated from the rest of the neighborhood by 15th avenue (4 lanes with a divider), and this project could actually increase connectivity of that part of the neighborhood by depressing the freeway and allowing for safer pedestrian crossings between south Fairview and other parts of the neighborhood

- The depressed highway uses the natural flow of the land in a way that would minimize both the impact of the project on the environment and on the livability of those around it.

- We would prefer to see less impact on the southwest end of the project, where the C alternatives



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would impact a fairly dense residential area along Tyonek, Karluk, 16th, and Juneau

Alternative D:

- This project utilizes public land and right of ways in a way that significantly decreases the quality of life of those that use those facilities, especially the parks.

This alternative substantially degrades over ½ mile of Chester Creek Greenbelt which is an important asset to the surrounding neighborhoods and the regional community.

-Viaducts are a concept that lead to significant dead-zones underneath them. They become attractants to homeless, disincentivize other public uses or private investment, and create shadows in areas that people are seeking the outdoors and sunlight.

-Viaducts also require significantly larger design to accommodate snow, and therefore have even more significant impacts mentioned above.

Matt Cruickshank
AMATS CAC Chair