



Central Region

Director's Quarterly

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Winter Edition

December 2014

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Rob Campbell, P.E.

Central Region Director, is a lifelong Alaskan. He has a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Oregon State University, and a Master's degree in Engineering Management from the University of Alaska, Anchorage. He has worked at DOT&PF for more than 30 years.

For comments or questions about the newsletter:

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Greetings,

In this issue, we talk about the Department's new regional boundaries. We are in the process of adjusting the regional boundaries for the first time in more than three decades.

Three things spurred this shift: trends in population growth, the priorities of the new highway bill and a focus on high population urban areas. Adjusting the regional lines will allow us to balance the workload among regions.

While change can be uncomfortable, it gives us a chance to improve the use of our resources and to

manage communities with similar challenges in one region.

Although we have begun the boundary shift, the full transition will be taking place gradually during the coming months. We aim to have the transition substantially complete within six months.

Beyond regional boundaries, in this issue we also discuss advancements in winter maintenance and our safety program.

If you have ideas or suggestions for future topics you'd like me to cover, please let me know at

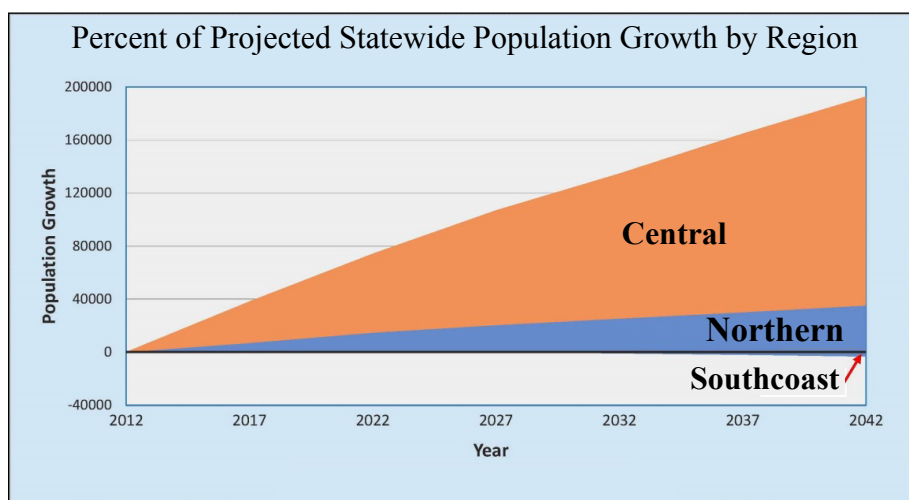
dot.cr.director@alaska.gov

ADJUSTING FOR GROWTH

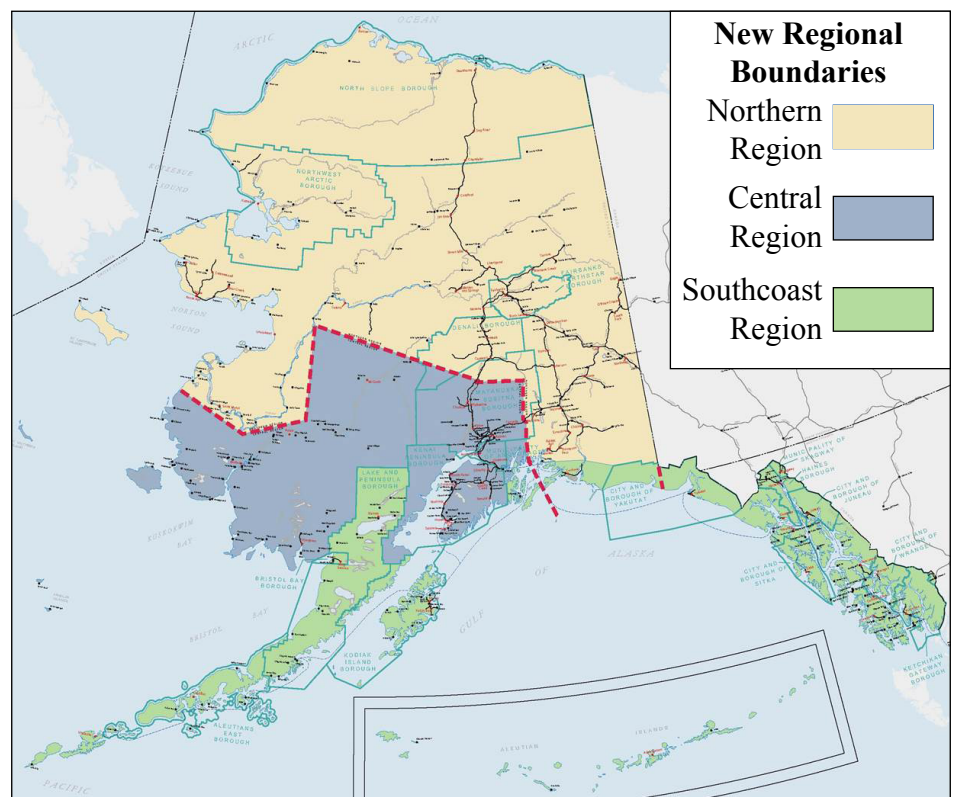
In order to balance the workloads between the three Regions, the department is adjusting the regional boundaries. With this change also comes the opportunity to reorganize the emphasis of the regions for better service to the traveling public. Grouped by function commonalities, the newly renamed Southcoast Region (formerly Southeast Region) will focus on the distinct challenges in Alaska's coastal areas including managing the Alaska Marine Highway, harbors, ports, and meeting trials presented by our coastal terrain and climate.

Increased growth and revised federal priorities are combining to make Central Region the focal point for the State's transportation investments in the next few years. Alaska was a much different place in 1977 when the Regional Boundaries were established. Central Region now has 68% of the population (in 2012) and the overwhelming majority of safety issues (per the Highway Safety Improvement Program analysis). Central Region also claims the most vehicle miles of travel, congestion, population growth, and land development. This means more projects, and more complex projects, averaging more than double the cost of typical projects in the other regions. Changes to federal funding (comprising the majority of the State Transportation Improvement Program) are directing funds to Central Region by emphasizing:

- Highway Safety
- Performance standards on National Highway System
- Urban areas > 200,000 population



Central Region is expected to receive 80% of State Growth in next 30 years



The new Southcoast Region will expand the Southeast Region with the following areas formerly in Central Region: the Aleutian Chain, the Alaska Peninsula including the Lake and Peninsula Borough, the Bristol Bay Borough, and the Kodiak Island Borough. The Valdez and Cordova areas will be transferred from Northern Region to join the new Southcoast Region as well.

Al Clough was appointed as the Southcoast Regional Director by Commissioner Kemp. He and his staff are busy meeting with many of the communities that are being transferred, and Central Region staff is working to ensure a smooth transition between the two regions and the communities.

Southcoast Region Director

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IMPORTANT LINKS

Where can I go to...

- Find information about road construction projects and road closures?
- Find information about road conditions?
- Locate the Central Region Public Involvement Calendar?
- Get summary information about expenditures on active projects?
- Find websites for Central Region Projects?

- <http://alaskanavigator.org/>
- <http://511.alaska.gov/>
- <http://dot.alaska.gov/creg/calendar.shtml>
- <http://dot.alaska.gov/projects-status/index.cfm>
- http://dot.alaska.gov/creg/project_info/

WINTER MAINTENANCE ADVANCEMENTS

Avalanche Blaster Saves Time and Money

Avalanche reduction work is getting more efficient. Central Region is awaiting delivery of a “Daisy Bell” avalanche release system, which will mean fewer travel disruptions for highway users. Daisy Bell is a bell shaped blaster suspended beneath a helicopter. The blaster directs the force of a very small hydrogen gas explosion targeting the snowpack at precise locations to trigger small avalanches along the road corridor. This prevents the snowpack from accumulating and then spontaneously developing into an uncontrolled avalanche which can close the road, interrupting travel for the public. Currently DOT utilizes a WWII era howitzer cannon to shoot at ice and snow pack, requiring road closures of around three hours. The Daisy Bell Blaster requires a much shorter closure of around 45 minutes. This new equipment will be used to manage avalanches along the Seward and Sterling Highways.



The “Daisy Bell” avalanche blaster

Maintenance Staff using Geotagging for Better Project Delivery

By making use of common equipment such as cellphones, maintenance staff can now document the precise location of known maintenance problems on the state’s transportation system. A picture, brief description of the problem, and a location provide enough information for GIS based mapping of the issues along a corridor. Geotagging helps to identify problem areas easily so once a project is underway, solutions can be incorporated early in the project scoping process. Seasonal issues such as frost heaves, glaciation and overflow are occasionally missed early in the project development process when project manager site visits occur during months of the year when seasonal issues are not obvious. This is a new application, developed in-house, allows the Department to better utilize its existing technology to lessen project delivery times and cost overruns.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE MOOSE VEHICLE COLLISIONS

Did you know per mile driven, Alaska has one of the highest rates of moose-vehicle collisions in the world? Central Region has an average of approximately 700 moose vehicle collisions annually. The majority of the road kills occur during the winter months,” says Kenai Area Wildlife Biologist Jeff Selinger. “Decreased visibility due to lack of daylight, icy roads, and moose movement patterns all contribute to the increased collision rates we see at this time of year.”

The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has responded to this safety concern with numerous projects that have:

- Installed lighting on high volume highways adjacent to moose migration corridors
- Widened clear zones to increase visibility and reduce moose browse
- Added moose fencing on high volume highways adjacent to moose migration corridors

Moose movements around roadways are unpredictable, and collisions can be deadly for moose and motorists. To help prevent accidents with moose, practice the following safe driving habits:



A moose separated from the highway by the newly installed moose-fencing along Minnesota Drive in Anchorage.

- **Slow down.** Reduce your driving speed, especially when visibility is restricted by terrain, weather or headlights of on-coming traffic.
- **Be alert.** Deliberately and continuously scan for wildlife on both sides of the road and along road corridors and medians.
- **Keep a distance.** Increase the space between you and the car in front of you to allow for greater braking distances and reaction time.
- **Clean vehicle headlights and windshields.** Moose can be difficult to see and most vehicle-moose accidents occur at dawn and dusk when the light is low and moose are most active.
- **Know your local “moose hotspots.”** Take note of places where moose are commonly seen and where drivers most often run into moose.
- **Watch for signs.** Use extra caution near posted moose crossings. Also, watch for flickering in the headlights of oncoming traffic. This may be an indication that an animal is crossing in front of that oncoming vehicle.
- **Look for more.** If you do spot a moose on the side of the road, watch for others. Cow moose are often accompanied by calves. Be especially alert if you see cows looking behind them after crossing the road.

For more information about moose vehicle accidents and how to avoid them, visit the State of Alaska’s “Give Moose a Brake” website www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livewith.givemooseabrake. For more information about Alaska Highway Safety Office Moose Safety, visit www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/hwysafety/moose.shtml. For DOT&PF’s “Winter Driving Tips”, visit dot.alaska.gov/winter.

HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Highway Safety Improvement Program

Alaska’s Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a federally mandated transportation funding program managed by ADOT&PF. Its sole focus is to reduce fatalities and major injury accidents through roadway infrastructure projects. ADOT&PF screens state crash data to identify the highest crash locations and systemic problems around the state. Cost effective modifications are identified, proposed, and ranked by their safety benefits versus project costs. Unlike other funding sources, the HSIP focuses on improvements at locations with a history or potential for severe crashes.

Funding for the HSIP has nearly doubled in just a few years. With the adoption of the current highway transportation authorization bill, the State of Alaska HSIP program went from about \$25 million annually to nearly \$50 million. Central Region, with the majority of congestion and vehicle miles traveled, receives almost 80% of these statewide funds. The increase in funding will allow ADOT&PF to build on the success of the program, which has shown over a 4:1 return on infrastructure investment. The additional funding now allows larger scale projects to move forward and enables the Department to devote funds to locations where there is a measureable high potential for severe crashes, even when there is not yet a history of such events.

For a complete list of projects in the HSIP: <http://dot.alaska.gov/projects-status/>. To limit the list of projects to those related to the HSIP, enter *HSIP* into the *NAME SEARCH* box.



HSIP Tunnel Vision