



Central Region

Director's Quarterly

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Spring Edition - Greater Southwest Area

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Rob Campbell, P.E.

Central Region Director, is a life-long 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.

I have a fairly complicated (but interesting) discussion below of how we are striving to communicate road conditions to travelers, leading to the concept of a traffic operations center.

Also, we spotlight a state funded project in the Kenai / Soldotna area and the great success we had in defining the scope of the project.

Both of these stories focus on the emphasis the Department places on communication and our continuing efforts to improve. I hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and, as always, drop me a line if you have suggestions for future editions.

Comments on the Newsletter
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STATEWIDE TRAFFIC OPERATIONS CENTER

In this world of ever increasing urgency and decreasing patience for less than real time information, how can we keep up with public expectations of instant roadway information? Maybe it's a crash on the Glenn Highway near Birchwood or a snowstorm looming in Turnagain Pass; in both cases travelers are now expecting rapid, accurate, and actionable information in a format accessible anywhere. While Central Region has by far the largest traffic volumes, all areas of the State face similar issues.

Our conundrum and challenge then is how best to gather the information, analyze it properly, and disseminate it rapidly, accurately, and efficiently across several agency lines, updating the information as conditions change.

Let me first define and then quantify the two most obvious types of information requested and discuss the handling of each. (Let us recognize that construction activity notification is handled by the project managers and posted on a site named "Navigator" (<http://www.alaskanavigator.org/>). This type of information is not part of this discussion.)

The first type of information requested can be categorized as "passive system" information. Many drivers are interested in checking driving conditions before embarking on trips they are planning to take: Is the road icy? How is the visibility? Is it snowing or raining? This type of information can be generated with passive systems such as roadside cameras and automated weather stations that can be telephone or web-accessed. This type of information is relatively inexpensive to generate once the capital costs of purchase and installation are paid. Of course there are ongoing maintenance and operation costs, costs for upgrading to new generation technology, and data costs to link to the web, but there are not many people involved, and the beginning capital costs associated with the passive systems are relatively minimal. We currently have these systems in place and continue to expand and improve the amount of road coverage. You can learn about accessing these systems on our 511web site at <http://511.alaska.gov/alaska511/mappingcomponent/index>.

The second type of information is what I call "active system" information. This type of information is loosely associated with a one-time incident. Say, a vehicle

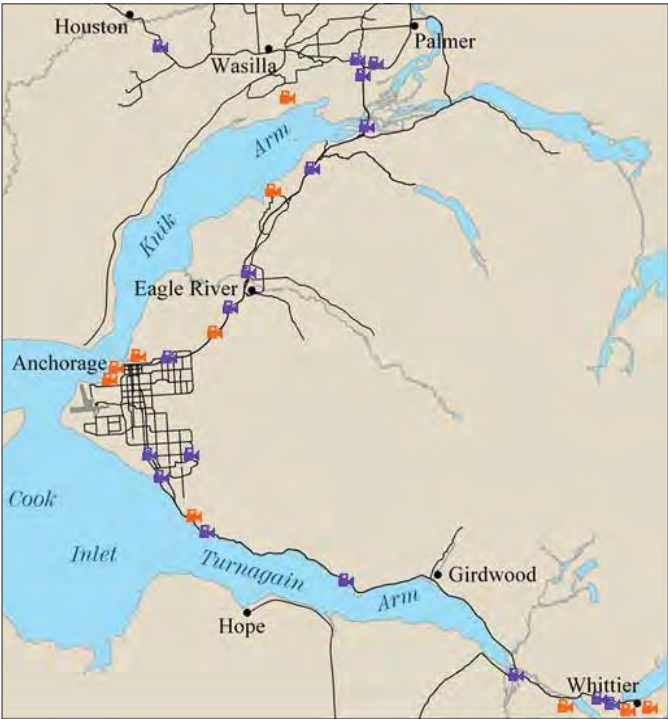
accident occurs on the Seward Highway during the summer fishing season. This information will not be well captured and disseminated by a camera or a weather station – a person needs to analyze the situation, report on the current condition and expected outcome, and provide the information to the traveling public in a readily accessible format. Of course this type of information is much more expensive as staff must gather and assess the information, analyze it, and communicate it through various channels. While this in itself is a large task, it is further complicated by the many different agencies who may be involved besides

DOT&PF – Alaska State Troopers, local police, fire and rescue; all may have some role to play depending on the incident.

One way to meet this challenge may be the establishment of a Statewide Traffic Operations Center (STOC). This is not a new idea; many States have established Traffic Operations Centers that pool participants from various agencies to promote better coordination of disseminating information about real time incidents. To this end, DOT&PF has engaged a consultant to study our State's current condition and recommend a reasonable path forward for our unique conditions. Preliminary analysis has already identified many benefits to such a center, but the full benefits and cost must be completely understood prior to any definitive action. In this vein, our consultant will continue to refine the STOC concept, and ultimately come to a recommendation that fits within our needs and budget. Coordination with other stakeholder agencies is an active part of the study, enabling all interested groups the chance to participate in its creation and operation.

In the meantime, we continue to look at incremental solutions for some of our busiest highways and increase our "passive system" network. Educating the public on the use of our 511 program, streamlining the flow of information into one easy access point, median cross overs, utilizing portable message signs, and better use of public "reporting" are all ideas that can provide better response to the public without large investments of resources.

In summary, we continue to strive to provide more and better information to our travelers, while respecting our mandate to be cost effective in providing services. A Statewide Traffic Operation Center may be the best next tool in achieving this goal.



"Passive System" cameras can be found at: <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/iways/roadweather/forms/AreaSelectForm.html>.

LOCALLY DRIVEN SCOPING PROCESS A SUCCESS

Most Department projects are driven by an identified need: safety, capacity, surface condition, etc. Recently, a \$20 million state appropriation was dedicated to the Kenai Spur Highway. With no preconceived scope, the Department launched an aggressive campaign to help the community decide what should be done to improve the road. After several meetings with the public, legislators, and city and borough officials, both the City of Kenai and the Kenai Peninsula Borough supported an option to widen the highway to five lanes. While the current funding will not construct the entire length, part can be built, right-of-way purchased and utilities relocated for the remainder of the segment. The process was an example of great communication and coordination between the Department and local stakeholders on a state-funded project.



Kenai Spur Highway

MEET THE SOUTHWEST AREA PLANNER



Rebecca Rauf is the Southwest Area Planner for DOT&PF and the main contact for questions and issues involving state transportation projects in the Southwest and along the Aleutian Chain. Before moving to Planning, Rebecca worked in DOT&PF's Aviation Design Section and for the aviation planning firm, Landrum and Brown in Ohio. She obtained a bachelor's degree in urban planning from the University of Cincinnati and has worked on numerous economic and transportation related projects across the country.

She can be reached at (907) 269-0509 or at Rebecca.Rauf@alaska.gov.

Did you know...?

Three Southwest Alaska communities—Unalaska-Dutch Harbor, Kodiak, and Akutan—are among the four largest US ports for both volume and value of seafood products.

SOUTHWEST ALASKA TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE



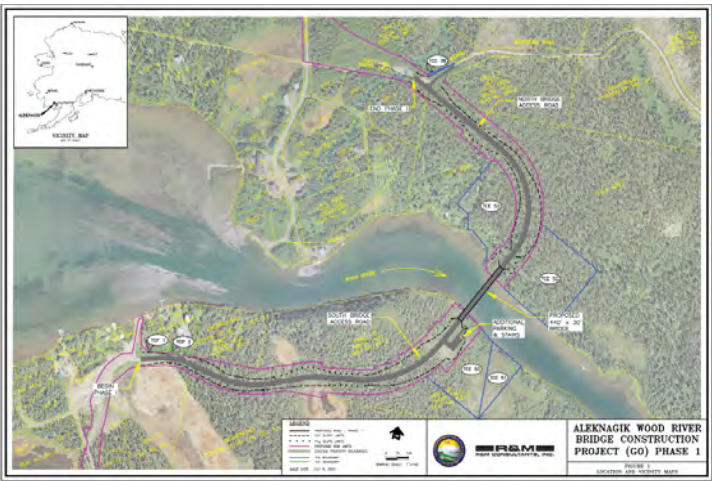
The Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan enters Phase II this spring. While the first phase of the plan took an in-depth look at Southwest Alaska's transportation and regional needs, Phase II analyzes specific transportation concerns such as runway length and precision approaches, intermodal connectivity on land, and ferry service in Bristol Bay, Kodiak and along the Aleutian Chain. The plan will also identify priority projects throughout the region for all modes of transportation. Staff will have information available at the Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference (SWAMC) 2014 Annual Economic Summit March 5-7 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage.

Additional information is available on the project website at: http://www.dowlhkm.com/projects/SWAKTP/new_website/index.html.

DILLINGHAM TRANSPORTATION FAIR & ALEKNAGIK BRIDGE GROUNDBREAKING

An open forum at Dillingham's City Hall will be held on Thursday, March 27 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm to display all current Dillingham area design and construction projects. Project engineers, designers and planners will be available for questions and comments. Please attend the meeting for detailed information on the following projects:

- **Aleknagik Wood River Bridge Construction**
Spring 2014 – Fall 2015
- **Dillingham Airport Improvements Construction**
Spring 2013 – Fall 2014
- **Dillingham Downtown Streets**
Currently in Design
- **Kanakanak Road: D Street to Squaw Creek Road Resurfacing**
Spring 2014 – Late Summer 2015
- **Kanakanak Road: Squaw Creek Road to Hospital Resurfacing**
Spring 2013 – Fall 2014



The Aleknagik Wood River Bridge Project will have a groundbreaking ceremony on Friday, March 28, at 2:00pm and a public meeting that evening. Location to be announced.

For additional information on Aleknagik's Wood River Bridge, visit the project website at <http://www.brooks-alaska.com/aleknagik/>.

PROJECT UPDATES



Devil Creek Culvert



Platinum Airport

Kodiak Runway Safety Areas

In the summer of 2014, look for construction of extended runway safety areas at Kodiak Airport. This project will continue through the summer of 2015 and bring the airport runways into compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety requirements for continued commercial operations. Devil's Creek Culvert, a WWII era structure running under the runway, will be repaired in 2015. Shortened runways and intermittent closures of the crosswind runways may be experienced during construction. DOT&PF is coordinating with the community and airlines to determine how best to maintain airport operations during construction.

Platinum Airport Runway Extension Project Public/Private Partnership

Knik Construction Company, Inc. was recently awarded the contract for the 1,700' runway extension project and will begin mobilizing in March 2014. Project completion is expected by August 2014. This project is the culmination of a public/private partnership to make this economic development project a reality.

Coastal Villages Resource Fund (CVRF) opened a new \$41 million seafood processing plant at Platinum in 2009. With over 250 western Alaska employees and 1,000 commercial fishing permit holders, they process about four million pounds of salmon each year. The runway is currently too short to accommodate Hercules C-130 air cargo aircraft needed to get the seafood products to the global markets, so CVRF proposed extending the 3,300' runway to 5,000'. CVRF paid for the survey, appraisal, and property purchase needed, and the remaining funds are from the 2012 State Transportation Bond.

IMPORTANT LINKS

Where can I go to...

- Find an Airport Layout Plan (ALP)?
- Find websites for Central Region Projects?
- Find a previous Central Region newsletter?
- Find project advertising dates, contract status/award information, or capital projects out for bid?
- Locate the Central Region Public Involvement Calendar?

http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdav/airports_public_central.shtml

http://dot.alaska.gov/creg/project_info/

<http://dot.alaska.gov/creg/newsletter.shtml>

<http://www.dot.state.ak.us/procurement/index.shtml>

<http://dot.alaska.gov/creg/calendar.shtml>