



Central Region

Director's Quarterly

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Fall Edition

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



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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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This newsletter focuses on spanning and closing gaps—new bridges built, safety improvement projects coming up, and winter maintenance funding challenges to be “plowed through”. Our 2015 construction season has been bridge-filled, from the Glenn Highway Bridge crossing over Eagle River, expanding capacity on one of the busiest road sections in the state, to the remote Aleknagik Bridge over the Wood River, connecting Aleknagik to the greater Dillingham area. We also feature our Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) projects coming up for the Seward Highway; these highly anticipated projects will continue to close safety gaps, saving lives in areas that have seen higher crash rates over the years. In addition, DOT&PF is implementing a new road treatment that is not only low cost, but shown to dramatically increase the safety for drivers. Finally, we discuss gaps in funding due to low oil prices that foretell winter maintenance woes.

It's been a busy and interesting year so far. As we look forward to the winter season, I hope you will enjoy the new amenities DOT&PF is proud to have provided, while being patient with a lower level of winter road maintenance. Our state has a huge gap in funding resources versus needs, and DOT&PF strives to do our best to prioritize and meet demand while working within our financial constraints.

Have a great fall and as always, my door is open for you to stop by to discuss these or other subjects.

WINTER MAINTENANCE

From fiscal year 2015 to fiscal year 2016, DOT&PF general fund budgets have declined by \$34.6 million. What does this mean for Alaska residents? Winter maintenance activities will be impacted. There will be fewer employees and less equipment available to respond after a snowfall, resulting in slower response times. Budgets for overtime have also been cut, so crews will no longer be able to work extended hours. Depending on the weather, this may or may not be significant to daily travels.

While budget reductions are never ideal, DOT&PF is dedicated to using its available funding in the most efficient and effective way possible to maintain Alaska's infrastructure and keep traffic moving. In order to maximize our effectiveness, DOT&PF is adjusting crew routes to increase staff availability on higher priority roadways while reducing overtime and using innovative equipment, such as the tow-plow to enable crews to cover more surface area with less staff and less equipment.

We have prioritized the road system for maintenance, placing more emphasis on infrastructure that connects users to essential services. Roads will be maintained in order, according to their priority level:

- Priority Level 1: Major high-volume, high-speed highways, expressways, minor highways. Includes all safety corridors and other major urban and community routes.
- Priority Level 2: Routes of lesser priority than Priority Level 1 roads based on traffic volume, speeds and uses. Typically, these are major highways and arterials connecting communities.
- Priority Level 3: Major local roads or collector roads located in larger urban communities.
- Priority Level 4: Minor local roads that provide residential or recreational access.
- Priority Level 5: Roadways designated as “No Winter Maintenance” routes.



Tow-plow

We hope Alaskans will recognize the current budget realities and the need for DOT&PF to reduce spending. For more information on the priority level of the roads in your community, dot.alaska.gov/wintermap.

HIGH FRICTION SURFACE TREATMENT PROJECT



High friction road treatment on the left side

This fall, the High Friction Surface Treatment project goes out to bid with an expected construction start in 2016 and is one of the more significant safety improvements DOT&PF will complete in 2016. While many drivers may not notice a significant difference between roadway surfaces, high friction surface treatments are state-of-the-art transportation science. It enhances tire traction by adding a thin layer of rough material to the road, which should reduce the number of crashes and fatalities on Alaska's highway infrastructure.

This project will address 28 curves and steep grades in the Kenai Peninsula Borough, Anchorage, and the Mat-Su Borough. Over a five year study period these sites have documented 304 crashes; 155 of those crashes included injuries, 39 of which were major and 9 were fatalities. According to those crash reports, unsafe speed, skidding, and loss of control were the most frequent contributor to the crashes. With the high friction surface treatment, DOT&PF expects a 20-30% reduction in crashes and a 50% reduction in traction related crashes.

The project is part of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), a program designed to reduce fatalities and crashes on our highways. Funding for the HSIP comes from the State's federal transportation funding allocation. Construction will cost between \$5-10 million and work is expected to be complete in fall 2016.

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?
- Find websites for Central Region Projects?

<http://alaskanavigator.org/>

<http://511.alaska.gov/>

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

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

BRIDGES

DOT&PF maintains over 800 bridges across Alaska. DOT&PF inspects these bridges and over a hundred others owned by state agencies or local governments every two years with additional inspections occurring as needed, such as after a significant seismic event. These inspections allow DOT&PF to track problems so the Department can perform needed repairs and upgrades to keep the structures safe for the public. DOT&PF also replaces bridges that no longer meet the needs of the communities they serve. Some replacements are necessary because of capacity issues or road expansion, while others are functionally obsolete, with narrow lanes, limited overhead clearance, or weight restrictions.

Bridge projects constructed this summer include:



Aleknagik Wood River Bridge

Glenn Highway Capacity Project (the new Eagle River Bridge): This new bridge helped solve a capacity problem; DOT&PF needed to add a third lane to the northbound highway, extending the current third lane from Hiland to the Eagle River/Artillery Road exit and the old Eagle River bridge could not accommodate it. The \$42.5 million state funded project added a new bridge with up to four lanes of capacity for future expansion and three miles of new highway. The old bridge will remain for a new frontage road system. Traffic was routed onto the new bridge on the evening of August 22nd and the project will be substantially complete fall 2015.

Aleknagik Wood River Bridge: This \$24.5 million new bridge enhances the transportation and safety of the community by creating a surface connection to the medical and emergency services in Dillingham. The project creates 2.5 miles of paved roadway and a two-lane, 440 foot-long bridge over the Wood River. Project was developed with state and federal funds and will be completed mid-October 2015.

West Dowling Road Reconstruction (C Street to Minnesota Extension): This two-year, \$39 million project makes a new east-west connection in Anchorage with 1.2 miles of new road and a new bridge over the Alaska Railroad tracks and Arctic Boulevard. There will be a new intersection at Raspberry and 68th, creating signalized access for The Dome and ChangePoint, reducing congestion during events at those locations. The Department expects the new alignment to open by October 2015.

Archangel Road Bridge: DOT&PF Maintenance & Operation forces put together an efficient and effective solution to the loss of the bridge on the Archangel Road in Hatcher Pass. The old Archangel bridge failed in fall of 2014, cutting off a popular trailhead for hikers and skiers. Staff put together a bridge with existing stock and some purchased pieces available locally. Installation of the new bridge was completed August 2015.

STATEWIDE TRANSPORATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP) PUBLIC OUTREACH

DOT&PF staff spent this summer visiting communities across Central Region to discuss the draft 2016-2019 STIP:



SEWARD HIGHWAY PLANNING AND DESIGN

The Seward Highway is part of the National Highway System and designated an Interstate Highway, providing regional mobility for movement of goods and services. It is the only road access from Anchorage to communities along the Turnagain Arm, the Kenai Peninsula, and the Alaska Marine Highway System. During the summer, more than 15,000 vehicles a day drive the corridor, making portions of the highway congested during these peak tourist periods. In addition, the Seward Highway carries a wide range of users, including commercial, recreational, and commuter traffic.

In 2006, MP 87-117 of the Seward Highway was designated a Traffic Safety Corridor due to the frequency and severity of crashes, making that section of the highway eligible for funding to increase enforcement, education, and implement safety measures such as improved signage and rumble strips. A recent Traffic Safety Corridor audit shows that safety improvements implemented since the designation have resulted in an

approximately 33% reduction in fatal and major injury crashes. While some improvements are currently under construction along the highway, there are many others planned for the future to help improve the flow of traffic and safety along the corridor.



Projects along the Seward Highway