



Central Region

Director's Quarterly

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Winter Edition

January 2016

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.

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Our newsletter this quarter reemphasizes the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for 2016 through 2019, showing the state still has a bright future where federal funding is involved in capital improvements. This coming year will be another banner season for construction projects around the state, although federal priorities are changing the course of where future projects happen and for what purpose. We touch on this with our article on the FAST Act.

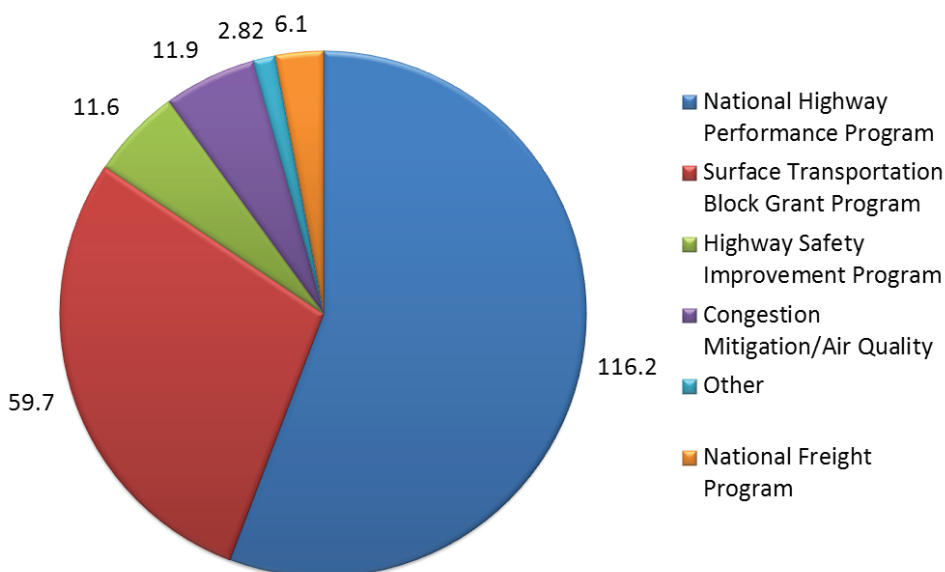
We also touch on our streamlined winter maintenance plan by expanding on the reader's understanding of our maintenance priority system and the meaning of terms used in weather event notices distributed via 511 or GovDelivery. We also introduce a new face in our maintenance crew and give a brief overview of a winter maintenance program of which many people may not even be aware—avalanche mitigation.

On a personal note, this will be my last newsletter. After more than 34 years working for the Department, I am leaving public service December 31st. I do leave a great team of co-workers and will miss their can-do attitudes. I know they will carry on in providing the best possible transportation system for our state, no matter what constraints or challenges are placed before them.

My intent in starting this letter was to provide insight into the complexities of our Department and to explain some of our constraints (Federal Funds can only be used for capital projects; state monies must fund maintenance and operations). I hope these newsletters were informative and met that goal. I trust you enjoyed the recent holidays, and wish you a productive new year.

FIXING AMERICA'S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT (FAST)

FAST Act Funding for Alaska during FFY 2016-2020 (in billions)



The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law December 4, authorizes Federal highway, highway safety, transit, and rail programs for five years. Federal funding is up 5.1% from FFY 2015 levels, and increases about 2% per year thereafter by supplementing the Highway Trust Fund's gas tax revenue with federal funds from a variety of sources. Alaska's FFY 2016 apportionment is \$508.6 million, an increase of \$24.7 million over FFY 2015. The State will be eligible to receive over \$2.6 billion through 2020.

The FAST Act focuses on the importance of goods movement to the U.S. economy by establishing a new program for highway freight projects. It continues the focus of the previous transportation bill, MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century) on the National Highway System, safety, performance measures and asset management.

The FAST Act is good news for Alaska, providing a stable source of funding for transportation infrastructure for the next five years. For more information, visit the "FAST Act Portal" on the website of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) at <http://fast.transportation.org/Pages/default.aspx>.

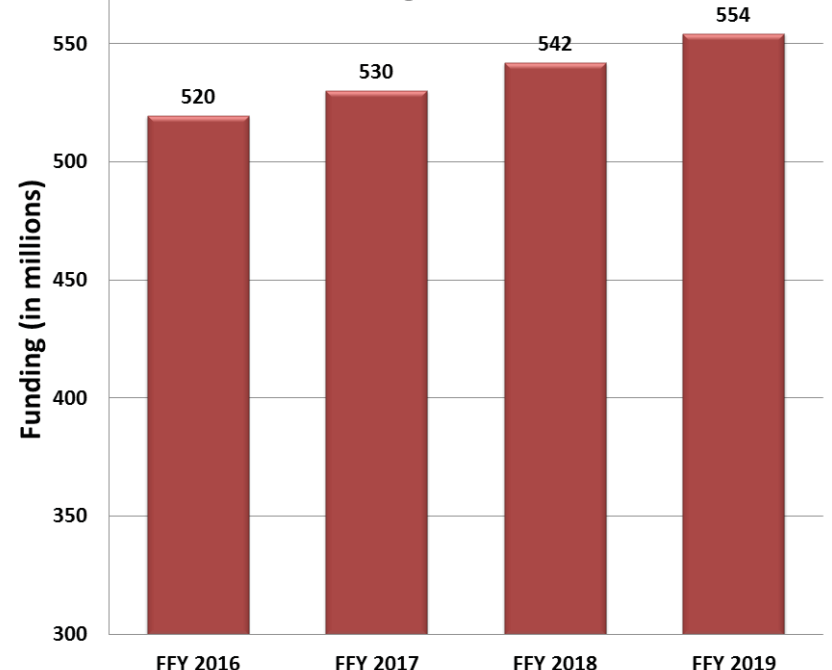
STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP)

The State has recently adopted a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that defines the State's investment decisions for the next four years' worth of federal highway funding. The STIP is a fiscally constrained plan for reasonably expected funding and is closely aligned with the FAST Act. In accordance with federal guidelines, a majority of the STIP is directed at the major highway corridors that are part of the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP). In Central Region, many of these highways are also Highway Safety Corridors, which will likely reduce the number of fatal and major injury crashes along the NHPP.

While the STIP is our best estimate of future spending, it is subject to continual modifications. Projects often run into unexpected delays; it seems more and more people are traffic engineers. These changes in schedule must be balanced within the year – to utilize our annual federal allocation. So, while this document is our best plan, it is prudent to recognize it is constantly changing to reflect updated project information on scope, schedule, or budget.

For more information visit: <http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/index.shtml>

STIP Funding for FFY 2016-2019



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/

AVALANCHE SAFETY



Daisy Bell

The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) maintenance division has a snow avalanche program to reduce the hazard and minimize impacts to the public. It is staffed with professional avalanche specialists to analyze and mitigate avalanche risk, assess current slides, and help maintenance and operations remove debris safely. Our avalanche specialists regularly monitor weather, terrain, and snowpack conditions. When conditions are appropriate, specially trained maintenance crews use military artillery, the “Daisy Bell”, and other methods to artificially trigger avalanches on the: Seward Highway, Richardson Highway and Dalton Highway, as well as Thane Road in Juneau.

Central Region is pleased to announce that Jim Kennedy joined the DOT&PF team as our new avalanche specialist in Girdwood. Jim comes to us with over 27 years of avalanche mitigation work at one of Alaska’s largest ski resorts.



Jim Kennedy

Jim was only on board for two weeks before we had a significant slide across Hatcher Pass Road. Jim and his coworker Tim Glassett worked closely with the State Division of Parks in analyzing the Hatcher Pass slide and their expertise was crucial to park rangers and maintenance operators to work safely in the area. The potential for avalanches changes constantly. Jim Kennedy and the rest of the snow avalanche program staff work to minimize risks to Anchorage travelers and keep our roads clear for travel .

WEST DOWLING ROAD EXTENSION

DOT&PF opened the West Dowling Extension to traffic on November 7th. The new section of road extends Dowling from C Street to Minnesota Drive and is the final piece of a complex, multi-phased, multimodal project to improve east-west connectivity across Anchorage. The project is a four-lane facility with on-street bike lanes, a separated multi-use path, and improvements on connecting streets. The project also constructed a new bridge over the Alaska Railroad tracks at Arctic Boulevard, new signalized intersections and extensive stormwater management for Tina Lake.



West Dowling Road Extension

DOT&PF worked with HDR and Granite Construction to nominate the project as a pilot project for Greenroads, an independent third party sustainability rating system for transportation design and construction, which often results in cost savings—both for the initial buildout and maintenance of the asset. The baseline score showed that DOT&PF rated well among other national projects on best practices for economic and environmental sustainability.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Planning’s public outreach efforts since the fall:

- *Unalaska*, September 22 & October 21 for the Southwest Area Transportation Plan (SWATP) Update
- *Dillingham*, October 15 for the SWATP Update
- *Kodiak*, October 21 for the SWATP Update
- *Matanuska-Susitna Borough*, October 22 for the Mat-Su Borough Transportation Fair

ROAD MAINTENANCE PRIORITIZATION

Although we have touched on the road system prioritization schedule for maintenance in the previous newsletter, we want to reemphasize the effect of the current budget cycle. This prioritization system has been in place for several years, but the reduction in state funding may make it seem like a new system as priority of higher level roads become more evident.

Priority Level 1 roads, major high-volume, high-speed highways, expressways, minor highways, including all safety corridors and other major urban and community routes continue to be our major focus during a storm event. Lesser priority roads 2 – 4 receive attention after the priority 1 routes are finished. Depending on the severity of the storm, these routes may require extra driver patience, planning and caution when traversing.

It is more important than ever for drivers to be aware of winter driving conditions.

For more information on daily operations or the priority level of the roads in your community, visit: dot.alaska.gov/wintermap. For more information on road conditions and to sign up for 511 alerts, visit: 511.alaska.gov. To view weather cameras, visit: <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/iways/roadweather/forms/IndexForm.html>.

WINTER DRIVING CONDITIONS RATING SYSTEM



Example of a “Conditions A” driving conditions

Apart from the road prioritization system, DOT&PF has a way of rating winter driving conditions in order to help the public know what to expect when driving in the winter.

Condition A: Good

Bare pavement is the primary goal. Snow and ice have been removed from the driving lanes, shoulders, and centerline (though short sections of ice and packed snow can be expected between the wheel paths and centerline). Bare pavement may not be possible in extreme cold weather. Generally, traction is good for most vehicles properly equipped for winter driving.

Condition B: Fair to Good

Drivers may encounter some standing water, packed snow, and icy patches covering the surface. Loose snow is cleared from the vehicle path and traction is adequate for most vehicles properly equipped for winter driving. Sand may be applied to hills, curves, intersections, and bridge decks.

Condition C: Poor to Fair

The roadway may be snow-covered with up to 2” of snow and drivers may expect some slow-downs or delays.

Condition D: Poor

Drivers may expect substantial traffic delays.

Condition E: Travel Not Advised

Considerable snow accumulation on roads may be 4” or more. Drivers may encounter snow drifts, berms, freezing rain, and glare ice. Traction is extremely poor, even for winter driving equipped vehicles.



Example of a “Conditions D” driving conditions