

U.S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

3rd STREET WIDENING PROJECT

Project Number MGL-M-0670(1)/62541

Selected Alternative:

The Alaska Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has selected the South Alternative to widen 3rd Street in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The South Alternative will widen 3rd Street to add through traffic lanes, improve intersections by adding exclusive right and left-turn lanes, and modify existing signal systems. The project will include raised medians along 3rd Street.

The South Alternative will maintain the existing north curb line and widen 3rd Street to the south. This alternative requires Right of Way (ROW) acquisitions from the south side of 3rd Street. The maximum acquisition is about 60 feet (ft) at the southeast and southwest corners of the 3rd Street and Steese Expressway intersection. Required ROW then tapers back toward the existing roadway to the east and west. This alternative will require the acquisition of 7 ft of ROW along the east side of the Steese Expressway to accommodate dual left turn lanes at the 3rd Street/Steese Expressway intersection and the right turn lane at the College Road/Steese Expressway intersection.

The South Alternative will require additional ROW on the north side of 3rd Street to improve access to Gavora Mall and to reconstruct the 3rd Street and Eagle Avenue intersection. This alternative will impact nine commercial structures that contain 21 businesses and about 86 employees.

The South Alternative offers the following advantages over other considered alternatives:

- Costs five hundred thousand dollars less for ROW activities
- Presents greater opportunity to revitalize the project corridor
- Improves access along the corridor
- Provides greater opportunity to remediate existing hazardous material contamination within the project corridor ROW
- Requires minimal ROW acquisition along the Steese Expressway adjacent to Gavora Mall
- Creates no impact to Gavora Mall parking

Alternatives Considered:

Two additional Build Alternatives were considered for this project, the Middle Alternative and the North Alternative. The Middle Alternative would widen 3rd Street to the north and south to provide the same improvements as the South Alternative. The Middle Alternative would not minimize ROW, relocation, or economic impacts, and it would impact parking at the Gavora Mall. It was therefore eliminated from further consideration in the Environmental Assessment (EA).

The North Alternative would hold the existing south curb line on 3rd Street and widen to the north to provide the same traffic capacity improvements as the South Alternative. This alternative was fully considered through the EA. The North Alternative would impact Gavora Mall parking. The North Alternative would not minimize the cost of ROW acquisition.

A No Build Alternative was evaluated to determine the impacts if no action were taken. The No Build Alternative would not improve safety, traffic congestion and delay, or access.

Measures to Minimize Harm:

The South Alternative will require the following permits:

- Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the ADEC for storm water and construction activities (Construction General Permit (CGP)), state water quality certification (compliance with EPA MS4 Permit No. AKS-053406 issued to Cities of Fairbanks and North Pole, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and AKDOT&PF.)
- Section 402 National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) construction/storm water permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as authorized by the Clean Water Act

The South Alternative is in compliance with the following:

- Air Quality Conformity, 40 CFR 93.104(d)
- Environmental Justice, Executive Order 12898
- Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, Executive Order 11593
- Floodplain Management, Executive Order 11988

Construction Environmental Commitments:

Right of Way:

- Impacts to the Jubilee Worship Center will be mitigated through cost-to-cure payments for replacing the front entrance and ADA access.
- ROW impacts will be mitigated through cost-to-cure payments, zoning variances, and joining commonly owned contiguous lots to meet current zoning requirements.
- Relocation resources are available to all residential and business relocates without discrimination.
- The DOT&PF acquisition and relocation program will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, and as amended (Public Law 100-17).

Noise:

- DOT&PF would consider construction of a noise barrier west of Steese Expressway, south of 3rd Street if residents and commercial property owners request one through the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB).

Hazardous Materials:

If soil with minimal contamination is encountered, DOT&PF may consider re-using this material within the project. If this situation occurs, DOT&PF would seek ADEC approval for this activity. Special provisions outlined in the Petroleum & PCE (tetrachloroethylene) Soil Handling Work Plan will, at a minimum, require the contractor to:

- Assure DOT&PF that all personnel handling PCE contaminated material have the appropriate Occupational Safety Hazard Administration (OSHA) training per Title 29 CFR 1910.120

- Provide the ADEC and DOT&PF approved work plan for handling petroleum and/or PCE contaminated soils prior to commencement of construction activities. This work plan will include, at a minimum, the following requirements:
 - Provide an ADEC qualified person on site during excavation activities at suspected contaminated sites to perform field screening in accordance with standard ADEC testing procedures, using an organic vapor analyzer (OVA), or equivalent, equipped with a photoionizing detector (PID), or other ADEC approved field screening instrument.
 - Provide a sampling and analysis plan identifying the sampling frequency and describing the sampling and analysis methods. Analytical samples will be submitted to an ADEC approved independent laboratory to determine petroleum and/or PCE contaminant concentrations.
 - Provide an ADEC and DOT&PF approved designated contaminated soils stockpile area, design and operational plan prior to commencement of construction activities. Petroleum contaminated soils will be stockpiled separately from PCE contaminated soils.
 - Provide detailed contaminated soil handling methods. Loaded truck boxes shall be covered during transport to stockpile and/or to the approved soil remediation center.

Construction:

- The Contractor will clean up solid waste from the project site upon completion of the project and dispose at an ADEC-permitted landfill.
- The Contractor will not excavate or use any fill material at any site known or suspected of containing hazardous materials or fuels without an approved permit.
- The Contractor will not use land from any park, recreation area, or historical site inside or outside the project limits for excess fill disposal, staging activities, equipment or material storage, or for any other purposes unless permitted.

Public Hearing Summary:

DOT&PF issued the following public notices for the EA public hearing and distributed the EA document in the following manner:

- Advertised in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner published on June 18, July 3, and July 6, 2005.
- Sent Project Newsletter to all parties on the project mailing list on June 17, 2005, announcing EA availability to the public, request for public comment, and public hearing announcement
- Posted EA for public availability at Noel Wien Public Library and the DOT&PF Regional Office in Fairbanks and the FHWA Statewide Office in Juneau
- Distributed EA to cooperating entities including the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) and the City of Fairbanks
- EA copies were available at the public hearing and provided upon request

DOT&PF held the public hearing on July 6, 2005 at the FNSB Assembly Chambers, and 30 people attended. Hearing certification is located in Appendix 1. In addition to FHWA representation, project team members at the meeting included DOT&PF design, environmental, and Right of Way, as well as USKH, Inc. engineering and environmental consultants. Project team members facilitated an open house meeting, explained exhibits and handouts, answered questions, and took note of specific comments. A recorder was available for public comments,

although no recorded comments were made. The following **verbal comment and response summary** is from the public hearing:

Design

- Property owners along 3rd Street questioned ingress and egress to businesses, such as driveway locations.
 - *Response: DOT&PF will provide business access during and after construction. Driveway locations will be established in the detailed design phase of this project with additional input from business owners and the DOT&PF ROW Department.*
- One comment expressed concern for utility locations and desired communication during detailed design and project construction with the local utility company.
 - *Response: DOT&PF will communicate with local utility companies as this project develops and produce a Utility Conflict Report during the detailed design phase.*
- One comment questioned the exact locations of raised medians and also had a specific concern about left turn pockets on 3rd Street lining up properly.
 - *Response: The project is currently in the preliminary design and environmental stage. Turn pocket and raised median locations and alignments are subject to change during the design phase. DOT&PF will address specific design issues, including raised medians and turn pockets during detailed design.*
- One comment requested access from 2nd Street to Steese Expressway.
 - *Response: DOT&PF considered access from 2nd Street to Steese Expressway. DOT&PF Traffic and Safety Division found that constructing a new “T” intersection at this location would increase congestion on the Steese Expressway, impeding the traffic flow along the Expressway and potentially increasing the risk of traffic accidents. Traffic using this proposed intersection would enter the Expressway into a right-turn lane for 3rd Street.*
- One comment expressed concern about left turn movements from Eagle Avenue onto 3rd Street.
 - *Response: Our Capacity Analysis indicated that left turn movements from Eagle to 3rd Street will continue to be difficult, and we considered a traffic signal at this location. However, this intersection is too close to the Steese Expressway intersection for the two signal systems to be coordinated efficiently. Without efficient coordination, a signal system at Eagle Avenue would disrupt traffic flow through the corridor, which conflicts with the Purpose and Need of this project. In addition, alternative access is available to the signalized intersection at Hamilton Avenue.*

Environmental Assessment Document

- One comment requested an updated traffic study to reflect recent commercial business changes adjacent to the project area.
 - *Response: The traffic study for this project was conducted in May 2004 and accurately reflects current and potential future conditions.*

Public Comment Period Written Comments:

DOT&PF received one completed comment sheet, four emails, one letter, four phone calls, and one fax from the public about the project (See Appendix 1). The following section is a **summary of written public comment** sent to DOT&PF, categorized by comment type:

Project Support

- One comment expressed the time is long since due for completion of this project.

Design

- Have you considered the impact to side streets along 3rd Street? Making a left turn from Forty Mile Avenue onto 3rd Street is nearly impossible.
 - *Response: The DOT&PF Traffic Capacity Analysis Report reviewed side-street access to 3rd Street and determined northbound traffic volumes on Forty Mile Avenue do not warrant a signalized intersection at this location. However, congestion at this intersection is projected to improve slightly due to project improvements on 3rd Street. Alternate westbound access to 3rd Street is possible from Forty Mile Avenue via 2nd Street and the Old Steese Highway.*
- Right turn pockets are needed at the following locations: Old Steese heading north onto 3rd Street; 3rd Street heading east at Forty Mile Avenue and at Forty Mile Avenue heading north onto 3rd Street; and, 3rd Street heading west onto Steese Expressway.
 - *Response: The Capacity Analysis Report prepared for this project assessed traffic movement data throughout the corridor and found that delay would be reduced to acceptable levels by constructing a right turn pocket at the following location: Eastbound on 3rd Street at Steese Expressway.*
- Coordinate with FNSB Transportation Department to provide transit bus stops for the Hamilton Acres neighborhood.
 - *Response: DOT&PF coordinated with the FNSB Transportation Department. FNSB has no plans to expand bus service in this area. DOT&PF has requested that FNSB notify DOT&PF if the Borough makes plans to extend bus service in this area.*
- Hamilton Acres is built to capacity. Recognize congestion is limited to times directly before and after peak hour traffic. Consider other alternatives that may alleviate congestion, such as improving mass transit, without reconstructing 3rd Street.
 - *Response: DOT&PF considered Transportation Systems Management (TSM) measures in the 1997 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). TSMs are easily implemented, low in cost, and considered minor construction projects. DOT&PF implemented TSM measures, and they did not alleviate the need for this project.*
- Would it be possible to add a one-way turn into and out of the Eagle Plaza Mall on Steese Expressway to ease congestion?
 - *Response: DOT&PF considered access from to Steese Expressway at this location. DOT&PF Traffic and Safety Division found that constructing a new "T" intersection at this location would increase congestion on the Steese Expressway, impeding the traffic flow along the Expressway and potentially increasing the risk of traffic accidents.*

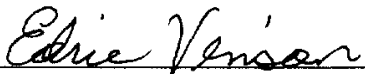
- *Response: DOT&PF considered access from Steese Expressway to Eagle Plaza Mall at this location. DOT&PF Traffic and Safety Division found that constructing a new "T" intersection at this location would increase congestion on the Steese Expressway, impeding the traffic flow along the Expressway and potentially increasing the risk of traffic accidents.*

Environmental Assessment Document

- There was no full cost comparison for ROW acquisition.
 - *DOT&PF used ROW cost estimates based on FNSB property records to establish a total cost estimate. DOT&PF evaluated ROW costs, presented them in the EA, and considered them in the decision-making process for each alternative.*

Conclusion:

The Alaska Division Office of the FHWA has determined the South Alternative selected in this decision will have no significant impact on the human and natural environment. This FONSI is based on the attached EA, which FHWA independently evaluated and determined adequately and accurately discusses the need, environmental issues, and impacts of this proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. The EA provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an EIS is not required. The FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, scope, and content of the attached EA.



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Federal Highway Administration

9-7-2005
Date