

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT

HP2013-002

TO: Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Commission

RE: Planning Commission Action on the Goldhill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is proposing to install a bicycle and pedestrian facility, in the form of four (4) foot shoulders, on each side of Goldhill Road.

These proposed improvements are expected to include utility relocation, reconstruction of driveway approaches, and replacement of signage and striping. There is expected to be right-of-way acquisition on approximately 40 parcels as a result of this proposed project.

II. BACKGROUND

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| A. Applicant: | State of Alaska
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701 |
| B. Location: | Goldhill Road |
| C. Right-of-Way | Existing DOT & PF right-of-way and a preliminary estimate of right-of-way acquisition from 40 parcels |
| D. Current Zoning: | General Use-1, Rural Residential |
| E. Comprehensive Plan: | Outskirt Area, Outskirt Boundary, High Mineral Potential Area |
| F. FEMA Flood Hazard: | There are no FEMA Flood Hazard areas within the project area. |

III. ANALYSIS

Current Conditions

Goldhill Road is a Rural Major Collector, approximately 3.4 miles in length, bounded on the east by Sheep Creek Road and on the west by the George Parks Highway. The last major construction / reconstruction of Goldhill Road was completed in 1970, although there have been pavement specific projects along Goldhill Road since 1970.

Currently the typical section of Goldhill Road consists of two (2) eleven (11) foot travel lanes, with one (1) foot paved shoulders on each side of the roadway. The traffic volumes on Goldhill Road are relatively low with the majority of the route displaying an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) count under 1,000 vehicles. DOT&PF projects that Goldhill Road will have an ADT of approximately 750 vehicles per day in 2025 and 810 vehicles per day in 2035. The current speed limit on Goldhill Road is 40 miles per hour.

DOT&PF uses a measure known as the International Roughness Index (IRI) to track pavement quality and assist in gauging when a roadway is in need of new pavement. The entire length of Goldhill Road measured greater than 170 inches per mile, which is considered “poor” on the IRI.

A photo of the existing conditions along Goldhill Road is available is Figure 1 of this Staff report.

Figure 1



Purpose and Need

The purpose and need, as well as the resulting project scope of the Goldhill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility project are available below:

Purpose: Enhance safety for pedestrian, bicycle and recreational users, to improve a route that links residential neighborhoods to other bicycle and pedestrian routes, and to promote non-motorized transportation.

Need: The existing shoulders along Goldhill Road are one (1) foot wide which is inadequate to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians outside of the vehicular lanes. In the past five (5) years, there have been four (4) minor injury and thirteen (13) property damage only accidents (1 pedestrian related) on this road. The local community expressed a growing concern for improving non-motorized travel along Goldhill Road while maintaining its rural character.

Scope: Widen shoulders on Goldhill Road to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians. Improvements will also include resurfacing the roadway, approach work, signing and striping.

Zoning

The properties located along Goldhill Road encompass the following zones:

- Rural Estate Districts (RE-2)
- General Use-1 (GU-1)

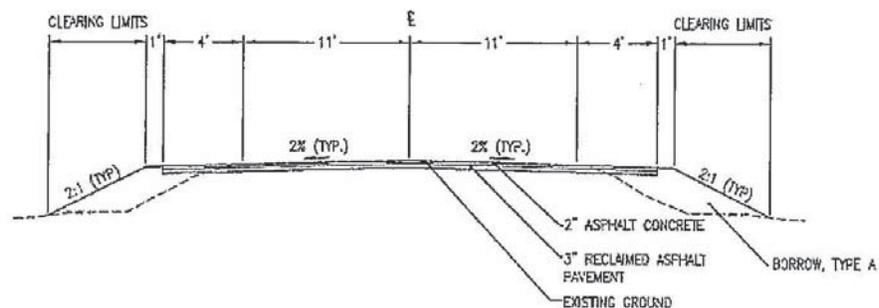
The majority of the parcels along Goldhill Road are zoned GU-1 and a map illustrating the zoning is available in Attachment A of this report.

Proposed Improvements

The Goldhill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility project is proposing to expand the road prism by approximately three (3) feet on each side of the centerline. This expansion of the prism will allow for an additional three (3) foot shoulder to be added to the roadway, which would constitute a four (4) foot bicycle and pedestrian facility. A four (4) foot bicycle facility is the minimum operating width recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

The proposed typical section for the Goldhill Road is available in Figure 2 of this report.

Figure 2



In addition to the proposed expansion of the road prism, this project is also proposing to resurface the entire length of Goldhill Road. This will include the reconstruction of driveway approaches to match the expanded road prism. Other proposed work will include the relocation of mailboxes, the replacement of five (5) culverts, new signage, and new striping.

Maintenance

Goldhill Road is owned and maintained by DOT&PF and will continue to be owned and maintained by DOT&PF after the completion of this project.

Utility Relocation

Overhead utilities along Goldhill Road, which do not currently meet the minimum height standards, will be raised on their existing poles to meet the height standards based on the Alaska Preconstruction Manual.

Transit

There are no transit routes along Goldhill Road.

Public Meetings / Public Comments

A summary of the public participation involved in this project can be found below:

Source: DOT&PF, Northern Region, Goldhill Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility, Categorical Exclusion.

The DOT & PF and the residents of Goldhill Road worked together to develop an adequate compromise for the installment of a bicycle and pedestrian facility while minimizing impacts to private properties. Two (2) advertised open-houses, and a smaller group meeting of vested residents, were conducted to field questions and provide answers to edify both the public and the DOT&PF in determining the most favored alternative design. Newspaper advertisements announced project open-houses and a project website (<http://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/gold-hill/>) was developed and is being maintained.

July 20, 2010 - DOT&PF began agency scoping and received no comments.

December 9, 2010 - The first open-house occurred and five (5) alternatives were presented. The alternatives were: 1) Widen shoulders. 2) Attached path. 3) Separated path. 4) One-way road with path. 5) No-build alternative.

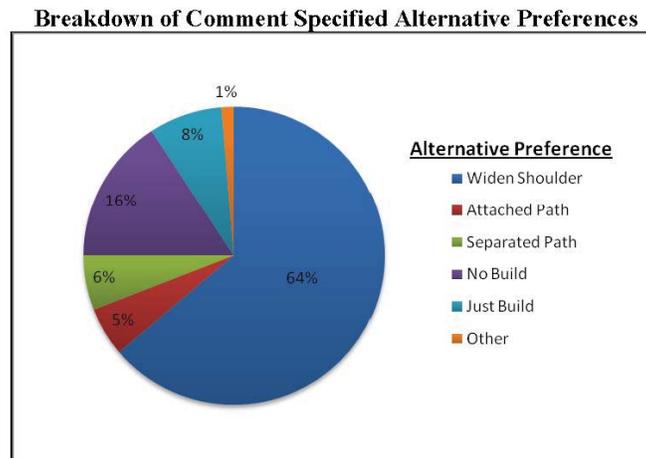
The issue at large with the original designs was that the proposed improvements would change the "country" feel of the roadway's aesthetics. Elements of contention were loss of property, value, and privacy due to ROW acquisition to meet desirable design criteria and the clearing of tree buffers between the road and utility line and / or adjacent properties.

August 30, 2011 - DOT&PF coordinated an informal presentation requested by Goldhill Road resident Laura Berkowitz and a small group of property owners. The presentation provided an update on the project, new and revised alternatives, and a chance to receive input for the next open house. The process for continued involvement was also discussed and questions were fielded to prepare for the next future open house.

October 6, 2011 - The second open-house presented three (3) alternatives that were developed to address the issues raised at the first open-house. The community favored the newly reduced amount of ROW needed for the project (alternatives were developed using minimum design criteria) and the selective hand clearing to maintain all existing tree buffers. A majority of the community supported at least one (1) of the presented build options while some dissenters still felt that any improvements would increase hazardous driving concerns (i.e. higher speeds on wider surfaces).

Currently, a compromise between wanting to provide a greater margin of safety for non-motorized travelers and reduction of impacts to the property owners of Goldhill Road has been reached. Extending the shoulders on both sides of the roadway to a maximum of four (4) feet with minimal clearing of adjacent vegetation assured the greatest margin of safety while minimizing impacts. The second open house provided the public with more information and better alternatives based on their earlier comments and the efforts of interest groups. Of the total comments received, 152 individuals expressed an opinion stating his / her preference for which bicycle path alternative. Accordingly, the majority of comments came from residents and land-owners along Goldhill Road while some came from individuals within the recreational community or those whom regularly visit residents in the area. A summary graph of the individuals who provided their comments is provided below.

Figure 3



Source: DOT&PF, Northern Region

Cost

The estimated cost for this project is as follows:

Phase 2: Design	\$ 765,700
Phase 3: Right-of-Way	\$1,125,000
Phase 7: Utilities	\$ 75,000
<u>Phase 4: Construction</u>	<u>\$4,126,358</u>
Total Cost of Project	\$6,092,058

This project is funded through federal Community Transportation Program (CTP) funding and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) funding through the FMATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Final design, utilities, and right-of-way obligated in Federal Fiscal Year 2012 (FFY12). This project is expected to be ready for construction during the 2015 construction season, but construction funding has not been identified.

Right-of-Way

There is expected to be right-of-way acquisition required on this project. The current right-of-way along Goldhill road varies from 40' in areas to 100' in other areas. Many steps were taken by DOT&PF to minimize the proposed right-of-way acquisitions associated and other potential impacts including: the use of 2:1 sloping, hand selective tree clearing, a widened shoulder facility, and a facility width of four (4) feet.

DOT&PF is preliminarily proposing right-of-way acquisitions on approximately forty (40) properties, including residential and State land. The right-of-way acquisitions are being proposed on properties with either twenty (20) feet of right-of-way or ditch to ditch (prescriptive) easements. According to DOT&PF there are no expected relocations or structure takes as an aspect of this proposed project. Of the forty (40) properties expected to be included in the right-of-way acquisition, thirty-two (32) properties have prescriptive easements and eight (8) properties have an existing right-of-way of twenty (20) feet from the roadway centerline.

Goldhill Road, original known as the Nenana Highway and later the Old Nenana Highway, was one of the original north / south transportation corridors in the Fairbanks area. The original corridor was very narrow by today's standards and only required about forty (40) feet, which was achieved through either right-of-way or ditch to ditch easements. A number of the original properties along Goldhill Road were patented mining claims or early homesteads that predated statehood, neither of which required a sufficient right-of-way dedication, by today's standards. Certain parcels along Goldhill Road have been subdivided after the incorporation of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, thus going through the FNSB Platting process. The properties which have been through the FNSB platting process have had larger sections of right-of-way dedicated, with a 100 foot public right-of-way existing in certain locations along Goldhill Road.

The proposed right-of-way acquisition would create a nearly uniform corridor of approximately sixty (60) feet (30 feet each direction of centerline) along Goldhill Road.

It does not appear that DOT&PF is proposing any right-of-way acquisition on properties that are zoned Rural Residential, thus the required twenty-five (25) yard setback requirement on these parcels will not be violated, due to the proposed right-of-way acquisition.

The minimum lot size for both Rural Residential (RR) zones and General Use (GU-1) zones is 40,000 square feet (18.44.030, 18.20.030). There are a number of lots along Goldhill Road which have a lot size below, or approximately at 40,000 square feet. If the proposed right-of-way associated with the Goldhill Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility will reduce any lot size below the minimum allowable 40,000 square feet a minimum lot size variance consistent with Ordinance 18.54.045 will be needed.

The exact dimensions of the proposed right-of-way acquisitions have not yet been finalized, so it is unknown how many lots, if any, will potentially need a lot size variance. A plat is also expected to be filed with the FNSB Department of Community Planning in the fall of 2014 to re-plat the lots involved in the right-of-way acquisition.

A preliminary map of the proposed right-of-way acquisition associated with this project is available in Attachment B of this staff report.

Staff Analysis

This project is consistent with the plans and ordinances of the Fairbanks North Star Borough in that a bicycle and pedestrian facility along Goldhill Road will improve the pedestrian friendliness of the corridor. This project will also resurface the entire length of Goldhill Road, which will increase the pavement lifespan of the roadway.

This particular project worked to implore context sensitive solutions (CSS) taking into account the potential impacts that such a facility could have on the area residents. A robust public participation process was held and comments were considered in the development of the preferred alternative. These context sensitive solutions are evident in the selection of the preferred alternative (widened shoulders), as well as the use of 2:1 sloping for the ditching, and selective tree clearing intended to minimize the potential right-of-way acquisition and retain the "country feel" of Goldhill Road. The context sensitive solutions implored on this project support several aspects contained in the FNSB Comprehensive Plan including public participation strategies supported in the Community and Human Resource Section.

Please note that future lot size variances and a re-plat of the certain properties along Goldhill Road are likely to occur as a result of this project.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the project.

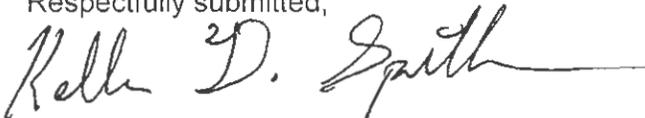
V. FINDINGS

This project is consistent with the goals and policies of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Plan in that it ensures the transportation needs are adequately and safely met through the following three (3) Findings of fact found in the Transportation and Infrastructure and Environment sections of the Plan:

- 1) Integrate pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and bike trails along newly-developed roads or as enhancements during road maintenance.
- 2) Make the Borough more pedestrian-friendly in urban and suburban areas and safer in rural and remote areas.
- 3) Encourage retention of vegetation and landscaping within highway and railroad rights-of-way as safety allows.

Please Note: This project is also consistent with the FMATS Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the FMATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Respectfully submitted,



Kellen D. Spillman, Planner IV - Transportation
Community Planning Department

for

Bernardo Hernandez, Director
Department of Community Planning

DPO's sent – 113 (Each parcel within 250' of the Goldhill Road centerline) with one (1) response available in Attachment C

ATTACHMENT A

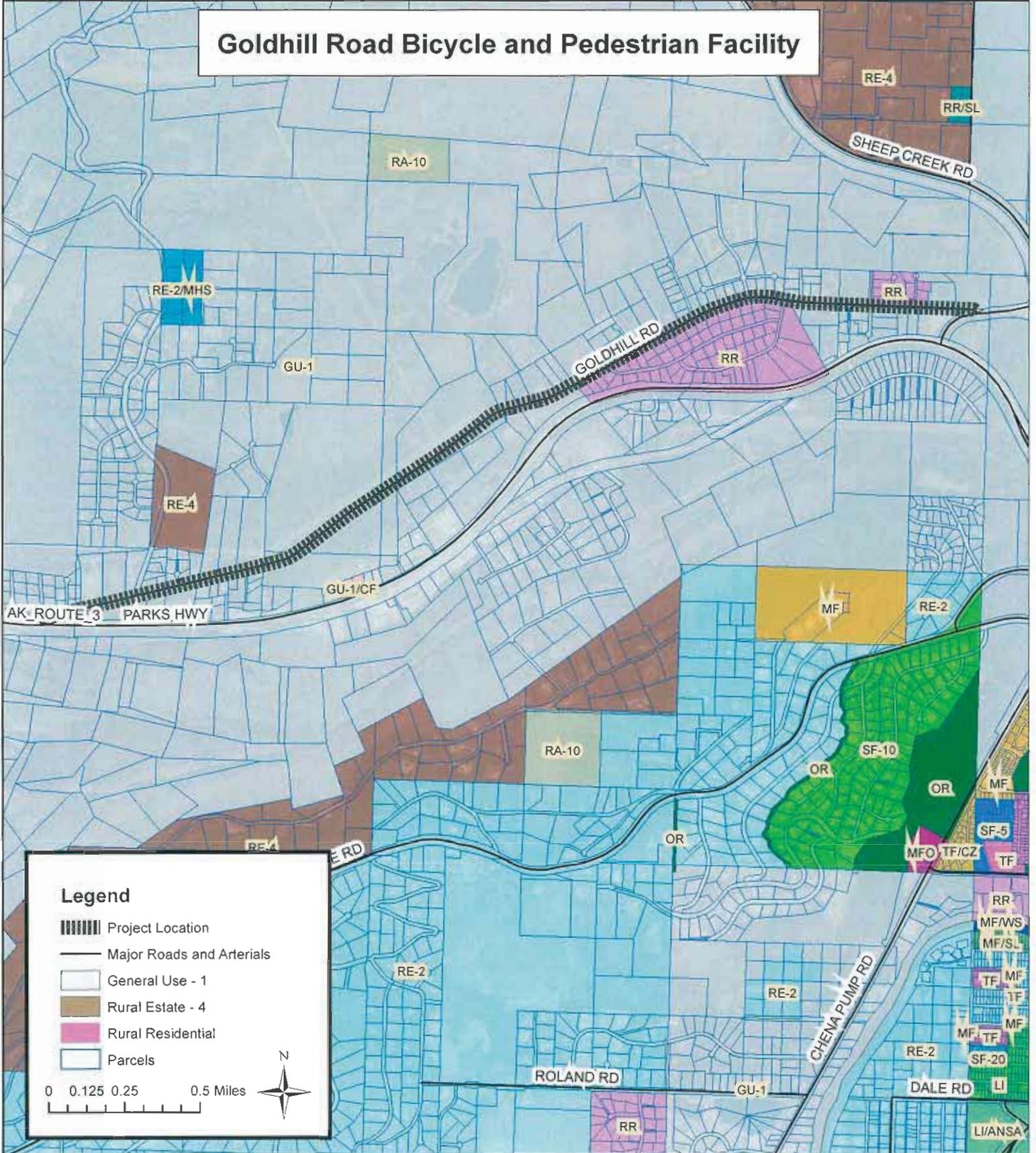
Attachment A



FNSB Dept. of Community Planning
 Fairbanks North Star Borough
 P.O. Box 71267
 Fairbanks, AK 99707

Public Hearing Notice For:
 HP2013 - 002

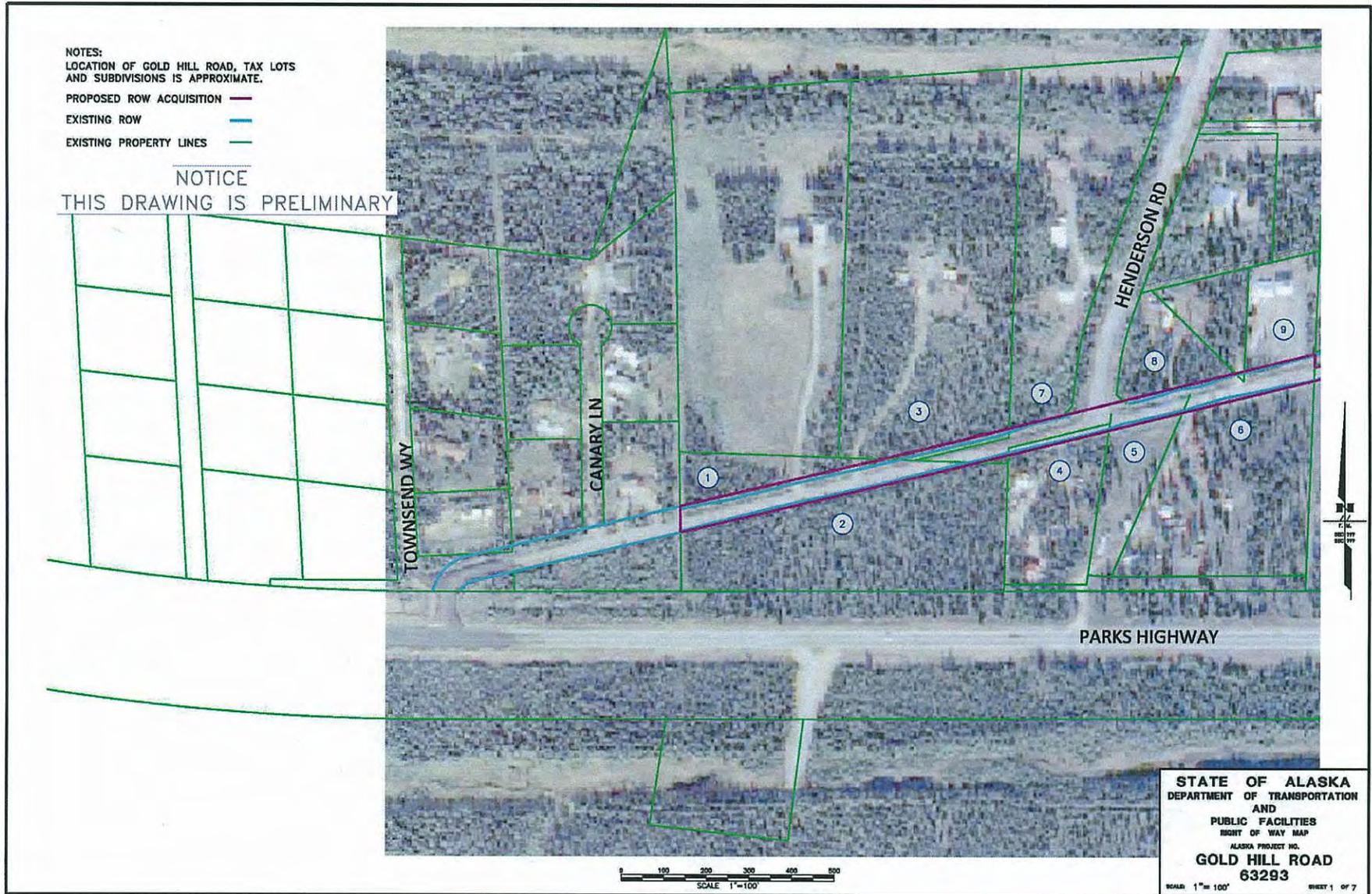
Goldhill Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility



ATTACHMENT B

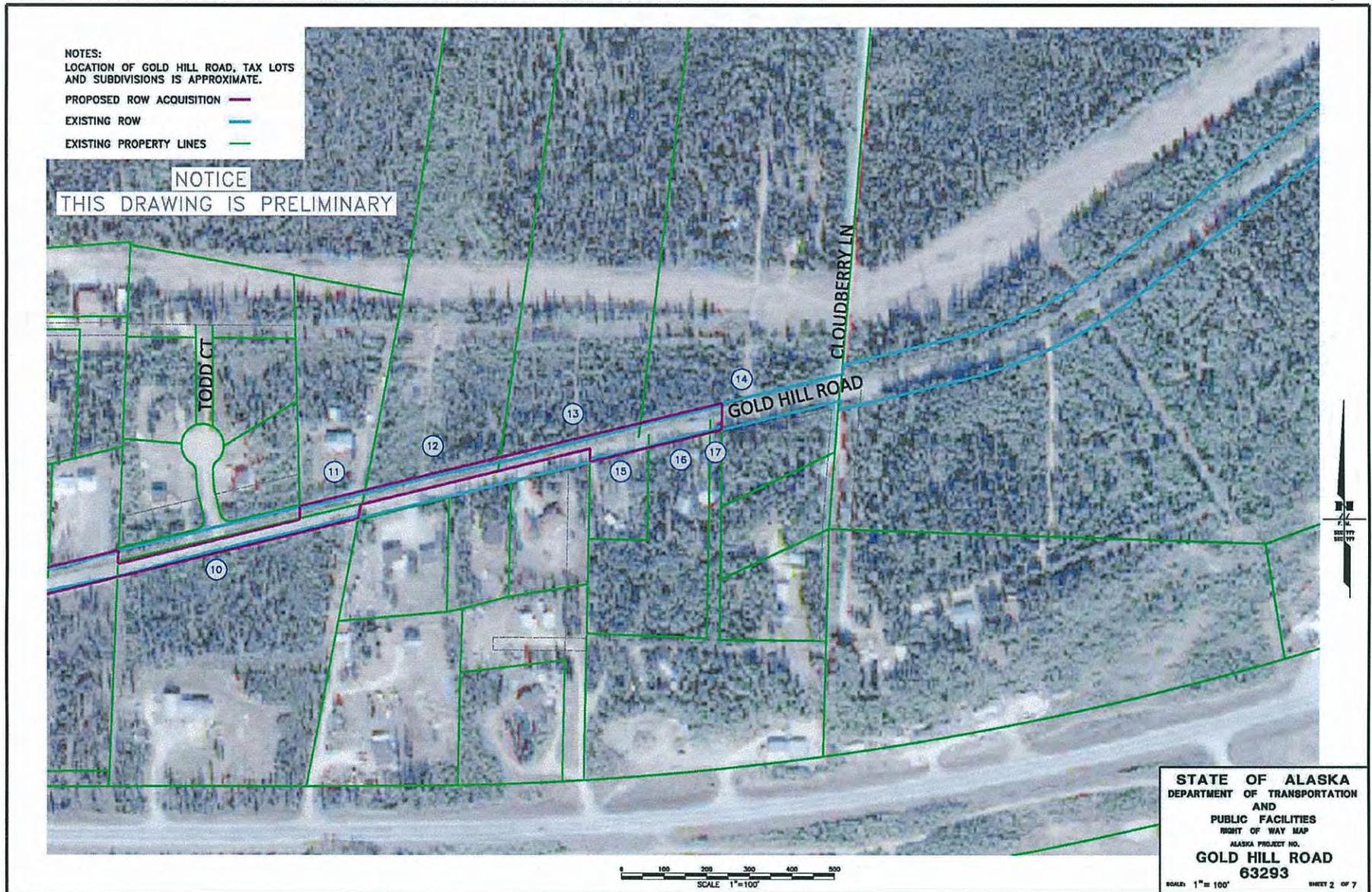
Attachment B

Figures A1. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



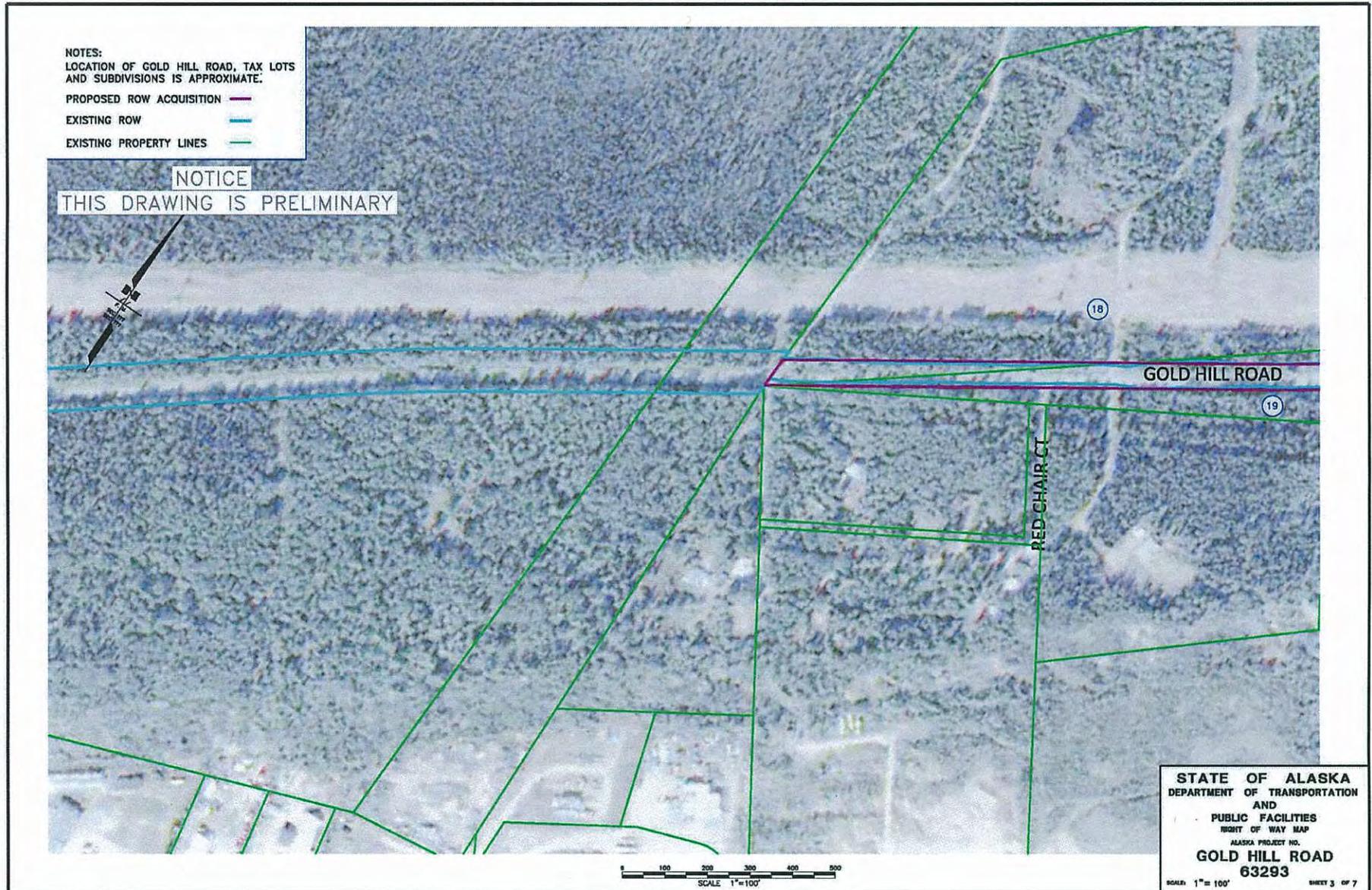
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Figures A2. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



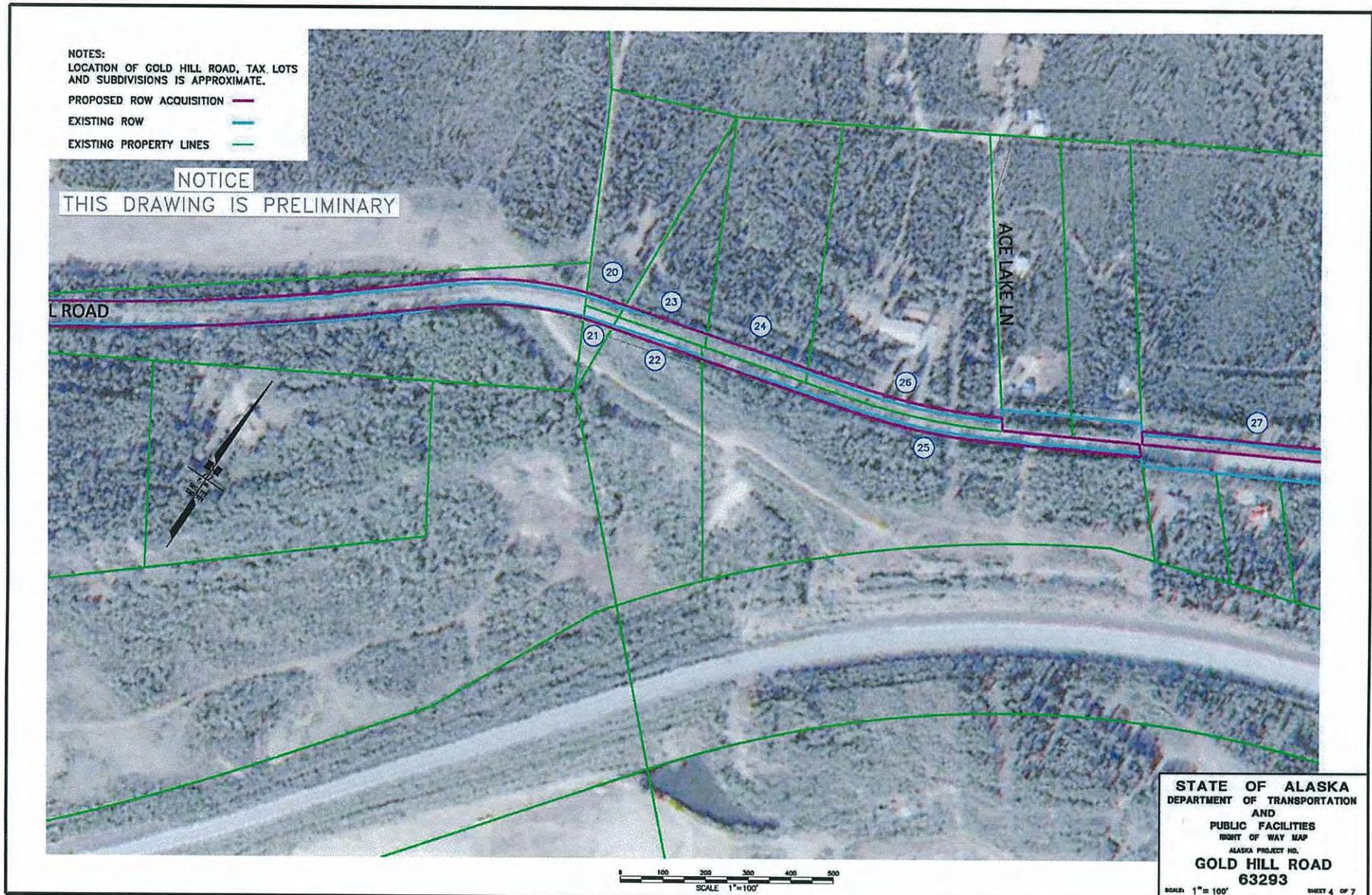
Attachment B

Figures A3. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



Attachment B

Figures A4. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



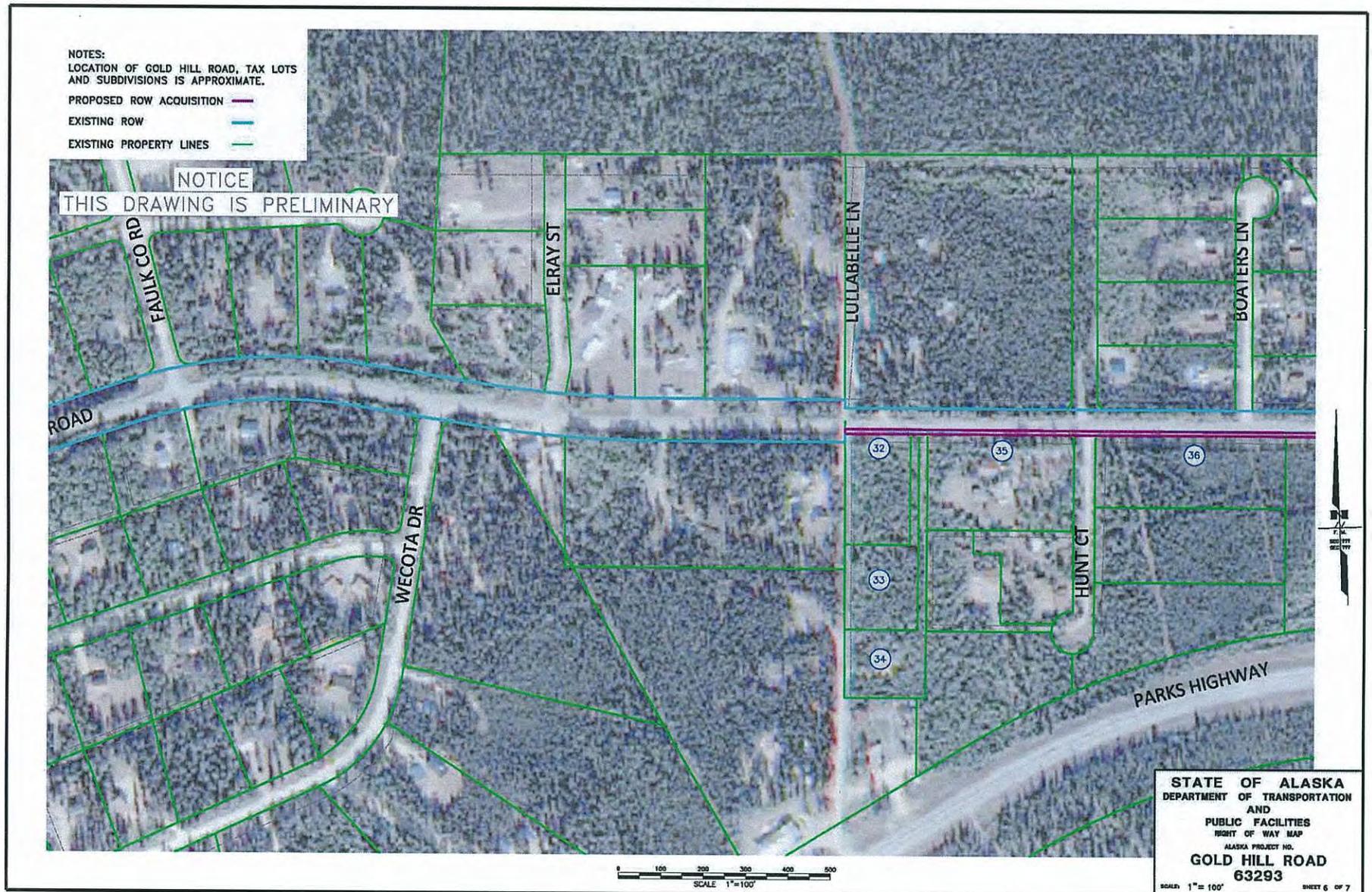
Attachment B

Figures A5. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



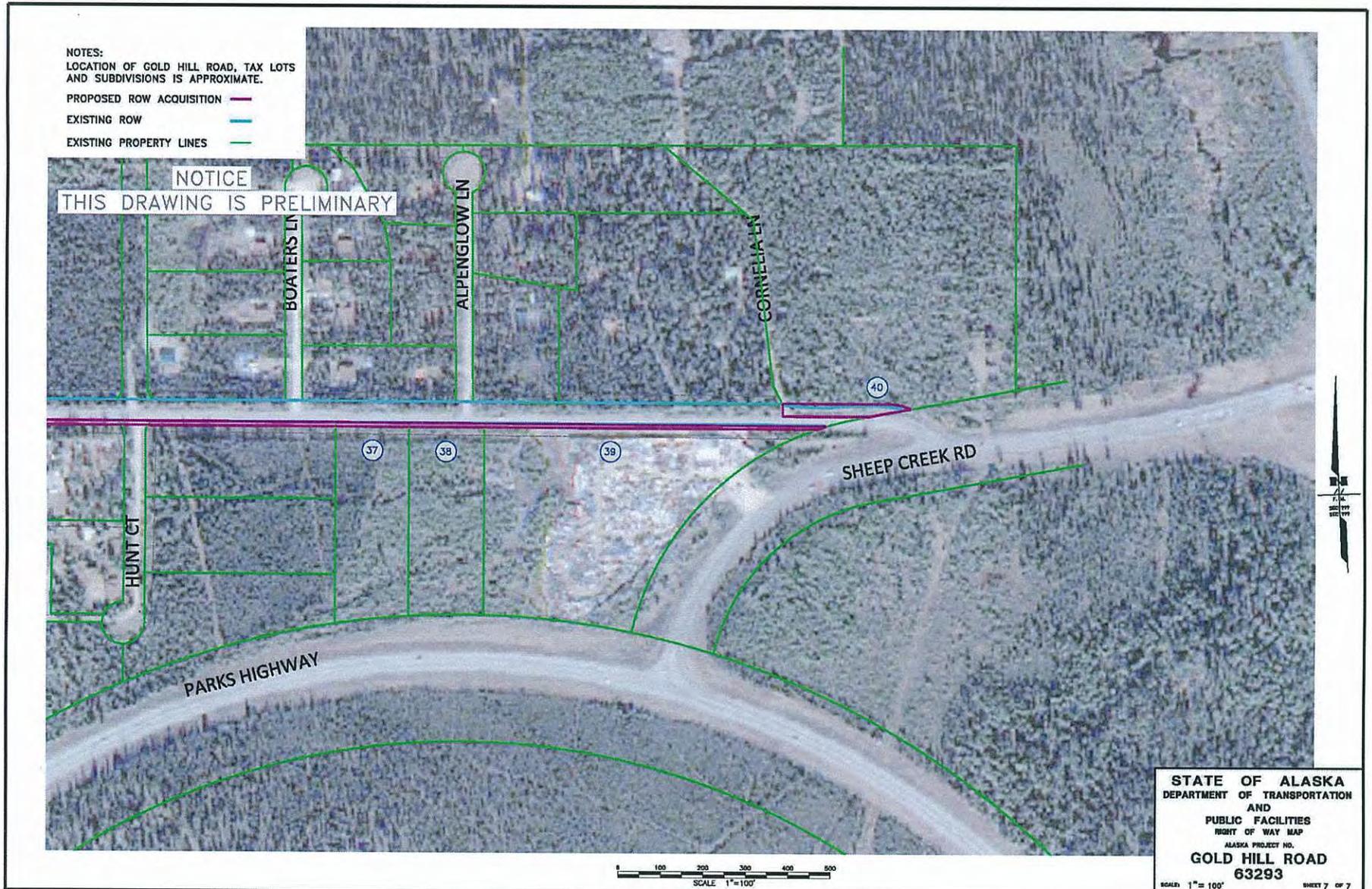
Attachment B

Figures A6. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



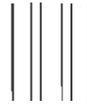
Attachment B

Figures A7. Goldhill Road ROW Acquisition



ATTACHMENT C

Attachment C



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED
STATES

BUSINESS REPLY LABEL
FIRST CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 174 FAIRBANKS ALASKA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING
FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH
P O. BOX 71287
FAIRBANKS, AK 99707-9990



FOLD ON THIS LINE

RE: HP2013-002

Dear Property Owner:

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Commission will hold a public hearing Tuesday, September 18, 2012 at 7:00 pm. or after in the Borough Administrative Center, Assembly Chambers, 809 Pioneer Road, on the following item:

HP 2013-002 Application by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities - Northern Region for local planning authority approval of the Goldhill Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility project. This project will construct 4-foot shoulders on both sides of Goldhill Road, beginning at the Parks Highway near Ester and ending at Sheep Creek Road. This project will also resurface Goldhill Road, improve driveway approaches and mailboxes, and replace signing and striping. This project is expected to include right-of-way acquisition from approximately 40 properties along Goldhill Road.

You are encouraged to speak at this public hearing and/or submit written comments. Testimony is limited to three minutes per person at the public hearing. Written comments should be submitted prior to the meeting using the space below, or email your comments to planning@co.fairbanks.ak.us, referring to request **HP2013-002**. Contact Kellen Smith at 459-1260 if you have questions. The staff recommendation on this request can be found at www.co.fairbanks.ak.us/meetings/planningcommission five days before the hearing.

Bernardo Hernandez, Director
Department of Community Planning

FOLD ON THIS LINE

Property Owner: Karl Nordena

Legal description of property owned:

Lot, Block and Subdivision: 3153 Goldhill Rd

Comments: I completely disagree with the need for this build. Personally the loss of 4 more feet of my property will expose 2 toilets and 2 cabins to spillover damage from the snowplow every year.

