



# Director's Quarterly

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Spring Edition

March 2015

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



**Rob Campbell, P.E.**  
Northern 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 ADOT&PF for more than 30 years.

Comments on the newsletter?  
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or call (907) 451-2210

During a recent flight to Fairbanks, I had the good fortune of spending some time with a freshman legislator. As our discussion unfolded, the legislator asked questions about the department and its budget and expressed an interest in learning more about how the department is funded.

In this issue of the Director's Quarterly, I touch on answers to some of the questions asked. I'll summarize briefly where the department's funding comes from and compare our capital and operating budgets.

This issue also introduces the department's new commissioner, Marc Luiken. Many of you remember Commissioner Luiken from when he led the department between 2010 and 2012. We're fortunate to have Marc back. And as spring approaches, many improvement projects begin their

construction season rollout. I thought it opportune to discuss what can be the most impactful phase of a major project — tree clearing. Have you ever wondered what happens to trees that are cleared from highway rights of way? Now you'll know.

Finally, it is with mixed emotions that I announce my departure as Northern Region Director. My successor, Dave Miller, is a great guy and will be a strong asset to the department as we move forward. Selfishly, I will miss the fantastic people I have worked with over the last 10 months — many within DOT, but a large number of others, as well. I thank you all for your cooperative attitudes and issues-based mind-set. We've accomplished some good things. While I'm off to new challenges, I extend an invite, as always, to stop by whenever you have the opportunity.

## THE BUDGET

As the Legislature works its way through Gov. Walker's budget proposal, we've received a lot of questions about how cuts might affect the department. We often find that people have a hard time understanding how the department is funded and the effect reductions have on our operations.

One way to break the question down is to look at capital vs. operating budgets, and state general fund vs. federal receipts:

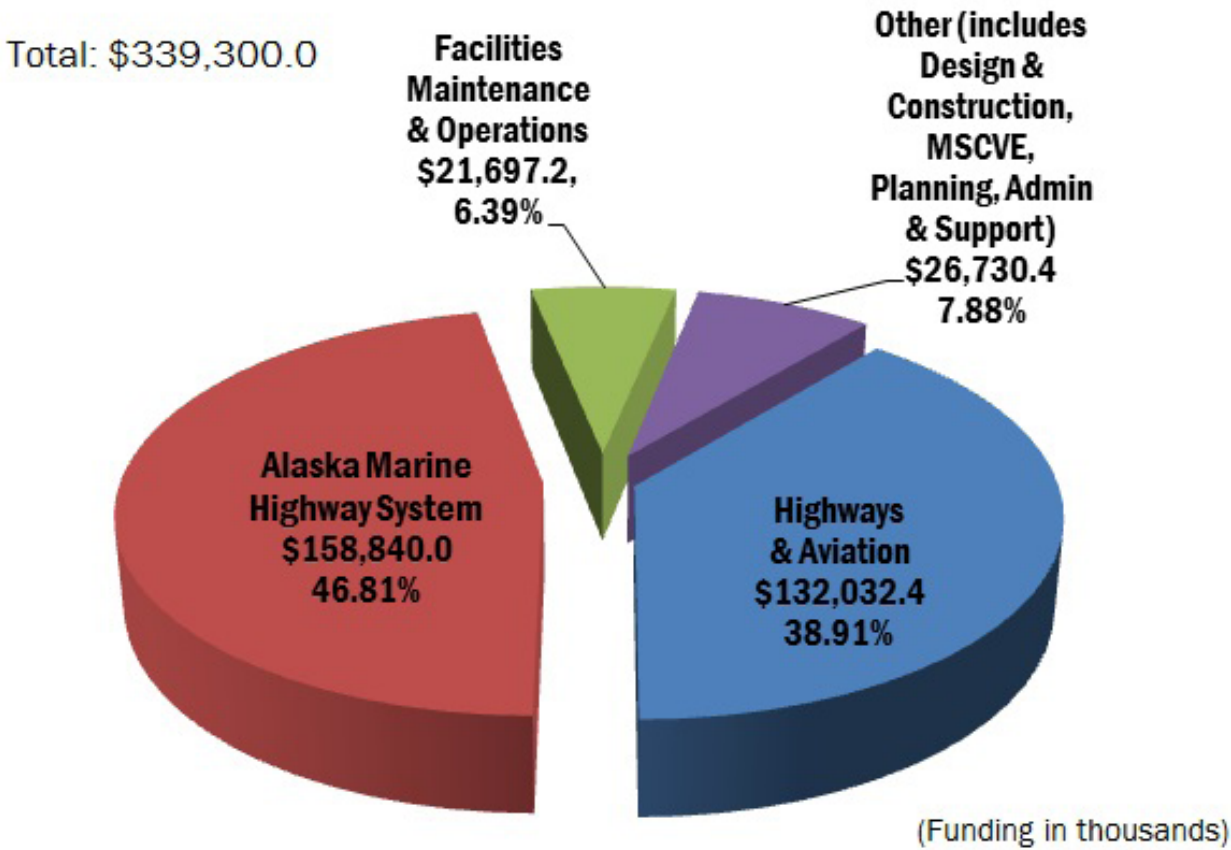
**Capital budget (projects)** — The department's capital budget is the vehicle through which infrastructure improvement projects are funded and built. Generally, the lion's share of the department's capital budget is funded federally. The governor's endorsed capital budget for fiscal year 2016 shows federal funding at 89 percent. Federal match requirements account for about half of the remaining monies. Typically, state funded (GF) projects are individual appropriations that vary each year.

**Operating budget (maintenance and operations)** — The department's operating budget funds operations and maintenance — from street sweeping to plowing — the general upkeep of our transportation infrastructure. The vast majority of the department's operating budget is funded through various state general funds. (The chart at right illustrates the distribution of these funds.) The federal contribution toward operating costs is about 1 percent.

**State general fund reductions** — State general funds remain the primary funding source of our operations budget. These same funds account for a relatively small share of the department's total capital budget.

As shown in the chart, about 92 percent of the operating monies go to road, airport and facilities maintenance and to operation of the Alaska Marine Highway System, so changes in GF funding will directly impact these components.

## FY16 General Fund Governor's Endorsed Operating Budget by Allocations



**Federal funding reductions** — While federal funding of our capital budget has seen some decreases in recent years (total highway construction funds reduced from \$520 million to \$485 million for the current fiscal year), we expect federal funding levels will remain relatively flat in the near term.

**What could this mean for our customers?**  
A reduction in GF money will mean a reduction in services provided by the department. In particular, customers will see a decrease in the level of service for highways, aviation and facilities maintenance and the Alaska Marine Highway System.

## IMPORTANT LINKS

How do I...

- View the online open house page?
- Subscribe to receive news and updates via email?
- Find news and updates on the department's Facebook page?
- Access the Northern Region Blog?

<http://adotpf.mindmixer.com/>  
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDOT/subscriber/new?>  
<https://www.facebook.com/AlaskaDOTPF>  
<http://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/blog/>



## WOOD CUTTING

A continuing question for the department is, “How do I get some of the wood being cut down?” The answer, as you suspected, is not simple.

Not all of the trees cut down for projects or maintenance belong to the state. If our right of way is secured by an easement over private property, we ask the owners of the property if they want the wood, or if it can be offered to the public.

If the right of way is owned by the state, we assess how best to distribute the wood. For some projects, there is no danger for the public to simply pull over and load up a truck full. In other cases, the wood is stacked in a safe area for the public to access at certain times. Occasionally, the wood is chipped and left in place as a weed barrier.



In summary, we try to make wood available to the public when it is safe to do so. As we work on highway improvements this summer, such as the Parks Highway Passing Lanes project, we will assess the situation and make wood available when we can.

## ONLINE OPEN HOUSE

This month, Northern Region debuted its first online open house. This website is a place for residents to learn about specific projects and communicate with staff from their home or mobile device.

The idea behind the online open house was to offer an alternative for residents who might not be able to attend an in-person event. Instead of staff being available for three hours one evening to talk about a project, the online open house is live for weeks, providing more flexibility for people to give their input.

You can sign in, view project info, comment on project proposals, have your questions answered by ADOT&PF staff and see comments left by others.

This first online open house showcases the Old Steese Upgrade Project in Fairbanks. The website provides a fact sheet on the project, proposed concepts for the project, maps and past public comments.

The online open house site is <http://adotpf.mindmixer.com/>

## APPOINTMENTS

We’ve seen several appointments to top departmental posts this year.

In January, Gov. Bill Walker appointed Marc Luiken as ADOT&PF Commissioner. Luiken previously served in the role from December 2010 to October 2012.



Luiken

In his announcement, Gov. Walker cited Luiken’s “efficient use of existing resources” and said, “His philosophy is a prudent one given our current fiscal challenges.”



Hatter

Hatter and Neussl rejoined the department in February as Deputy Commissioners. Hatter had served as Deputy Commissioner of aviation from 2011 to 2014. Neussl was Deputy Commissioner for marine operations from 2011-2012.

And last week, Luiken named Dave Miller as Northern Region Director. Miller has served as the Northern Region Maintenance and Operations Director since 2013.



Neussl

Miller worked at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Facilities Services for seven years, first as the director of maintenance and then design and construction. Most recently, he was a senior project manager at ARCADIS-US, where he worked on projects such as the Fairbanks International Airport Terminal Development Program.



Miller

## SUMMER CONSTRUCTION PREVIEW

The department is gearing up for another record construction season this year. Northern Region will have about 70 projects in 20 communities, which amounts to a roughly \$350 million construction season for the region.

Here are some of the big projects going to construction this summer:

### Fairbanks/North Pole

- **College Road Rehabilitation, including Margaret/Antoinette Intersection:** This project is one of the biggest in the Fairbanks area this season. College Road between University Avenue and Maryleigh Avenue will be repaved and rehabilitated. This includes intersection improvements, replacing traffic signals, and reconstructing and aligning the Margaret Avenue and Antoinette Avenue intersections.
- **Airport Way, Stage II Improvements:** This project involves resurfacing Airport Way and adjoining frontage roads from Peger Road to Hoselton Road and improving connectivity and communication between traffic signals on Airport Way and Peger Road. Stage I of this project was completed last summer.
- **Chena Small Tracts Improvements:** A bicycle/pedestrian path will be constructed along Chena Small Tracts Road from the existing Chena Pump Road path to the Fairbanks North Star Borough Chena Kiwanis Park.
- **Richardson Highway Moose Creek RR Overcrossing:** This two-year project moves into its second season. It involves constructing a railroad overcrossing at MP 345 Richardson Highway; constructing a bicycle/pedestrian facility on Plack Road from Badger Road to Nelson Road; and resurfacing Hurst Road from Nelson Road to Peridot Street, including the bike path.



*The Riley Creek Bridge replacement at MP 237 Parks Highway is one of several projects along the Parks this summer.*

### Parks Highway

- **Parks Highway MP 237 Riley Creek Bridge Replacement:** The Parks will see another busy season with projects spanning the corridor, including installation of new passing lanes between MP 197 and 235, construction of two rest areas near Nenana and the continuation of the MP 239-252 reconstruction and MP 204 Broad Pass railroad overcrossing projects. One new project of note this year is the replacement of Riley Creek Bridge at MP 237. This project includes grading, paving, and reconstructing portions of paths and portions of Park Road.

### Outside the Fairbanks North Star Borough

- **Edgerton Highway Lakina River Bridge:** The bridge at MP 44.3 Edgerton Highway/McCarthy Road will be replaced.
- **Elliott Highway MP 107.7-120.5:** The highway will be reconstructed from MP 107.7

to MP 120.5.

- **Nome Airport Runway Safety Area:** This project consists of constructing safety areas for two runways, acquiring friction measuring equipment and snow removal equipment, and completing other improvements.

### Super Open House

Super Open House is back for the third year! Join us for an open house featuring road construction projects in Fairbanks and the Interior in 2015. We’ll have staff there to answer your questions about specific projects, as well as maps and other information.

**What:** Super Open House 2015  
**When:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 18  
**Where:** Hutchison High School, 3750 Geist Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709

### 511 app

We recently upgraded the Alaska 511 Traveler Information System to include a new free mobile app that is compatible with Android and Apple devices and can be downloaded using Google Play or iTunes.

With the app, you can find information on road conditions and construction updates from your mobile device.

In addition to mobile options, Alaska 511 traveler information updates can be accessed by dialing 5-1-1 from any phone in Alaska, visiting 511.alaska.gov or by following Alaska 511 on Facebook and Twitter.

For project updates during construction season, check [AlaskaNavigator.org](http://AlaskaNavigator.org) and [511.alaska.gov](http://511.alaska.gov).