



## Meeting Minutes

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Public Meeting #1 – Identifying Needs and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Project</b>	Cantwell to Healy Planning and Environmental Linkages Study		
<b>Location</b>	Online Open House	<b>Date/Time</b>	June 25 – July 25, 2020

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### **Public Meeting #1 Summary**

#### **Online Open House**

As part of the Needs and Opportunities phase of the *Cantwell to Healy PEL Study– Parks Highway MP 203-259* an online open house was hosted using ESRI Story Map software. This is the first of three public meetings planned for the PEL Study. The month-long online open house was hosted in lieu of a series of three in-person meetings in Cantwell, Healy and Denali National Park. (The shift from in-person to virtual format was due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

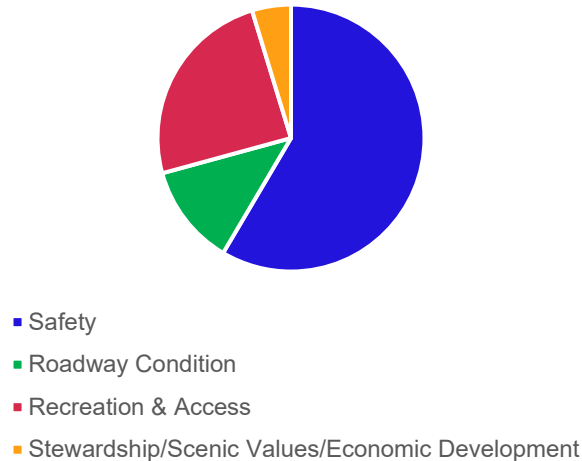
The virtual/online open house ran from June 25 – July 25, 2020. It provided the public the opportunity to read about the PEL Study and current conditions along the 56-mile corridor and use a mapping tool to identify locations of needs or opportunities that could be addressed by future projects.

#### **Attendance**

Although public comments are solicited from the main project website throughout the life of the study, there were 355 visitors to the open house website. Fifty people submitted responses via the website's online comment form producing 106 unique comments during the advertised month-long window.

Respondents self-categorized their comments under the themes of safety, road condition, recreation and access, or 'other'. When recoded for accuracy, more than half of the comments are safety related; one-quarter are recreation related (although the majority of these are about bike paths which is also a frequent topic under safety). The remaining one-quarter of comments are related to the following topics: roadway condition, stewardship/scenic quality and economic development.

### Public Comment Breakdown



### Public Comment Summary Statements

The following is a summary of public comments during the Online Open House (mileposts are approximations):

#### Safety

- Requests for a **Separated Multi-use Path** for year-round mobility (including commute), recreation, healthy active communities, and economic opportunities.

General suggestions:

- Install a gravel trail first then pave as its popularity grows
- A trail corridor adjacent or near the Parks Highway could be maintained in partnership with local communities, landowners, and trail organizations. There are already ad hoc trails created by various users under the GVEA powerline or the highway ditch (~MP 238).
- Key segments between communities and employers; there were observations of seasonal workers who are at risk using the shoulder of the highway

Segment suggestions range from:

- Broad Pass (MP 203) to Ferry (MP 259)
- MP 208-215, also tying into the Denali Highway MPs 130-136
- Cantwell (MP 210) to Ferry (MP 259)
- Cantwell (MP 210) to Stampede Road (MP 251)
- Cantwell (MP 210) to Healy (MP 248)
- Cantwell (MP 210) to Denali (MP 237)
- Carlo Creek (MP 224) to Denali Park Entrance (MP 237)
- Carlo Creek (MP 224) to Stampede Road (MP 251)

- MP 230-237
- McKinley Village (MP 231) to Healy (MP 248)
- Glitter Gulch (MP 238.5) to Healy (MP 248)
- Otto Lake Road (MP 247) to Dry Creek (MP 249.3)
- Support of **eliminating the railroad at -grade crossing at MP 235**
  - One suggestion for routing the rail to stay west of the highway, which avoids the need for the existing overpass at MP 236
  - One suggestion for creating a highway overpass
- Discussion of (on-road) **Bike Lanes**
  - No bike lanes from MP 228.7-231.1 due to limited roadside space for expansion
  - Addition of a bicycle lane from MP 228 pullout to MP 250 where many people ride bikes on the Parks Highway shoulder
- Suggestions for new **Pedestrian/Bike Bridges** :
  - Nenana River Bridge (Bridge [BR] 1243) (sometimes referred to as #1 Bridge), MP 215.6
    - included a suggestion to cantilever off east side of existing bridge
  - Carlo Creek Bridge (BR 0693), MP 224
  - Crabbie's Crossing MP 231
  - Pedestrian/bike underpass between Grizzly Bear and McKinley Village
  - Nenana River Bridge (BR 0694), MP 231.2
  - Pedestrian/bike underpass Triple Lakes and Oxbow Trails (~MP 231)
  - Nenana River Bridge (BR 1143) (sometimes referred to as Windy Bridge), MP 242.8
  - Pedestrian/bike underpass for Bison Gulch trailhead (MP 243)
  - Dry Creek Bridge (BR 0852), MP 249.4
  - At all bridges, but especially McKinley Village
- Specific locations or road reconfiguration for **Turning**:
  - Hazardous exits at MP 208 & 210
  - Carlo Creek Bridge (MP 224) is a high traffic area with multiple driveways and it is bookended with a blind curve and hill. Making turns is dangerous because vehicles coming from the blind curve can't see that vehicle is stopped ahead & vehicles from the hill are traveling too fast. Often a car will try to pass a left-turning vehicle, resulting in an accident.
  - Businesses near MP 229
  - "Crabbie's Crossing" (MP 231) is dangerous; it has a downhill curve prone to speeds, lots of foot traffic on a bridge and turning traffic in and out of the McKinley Village Lodge complex and Grizzly Bear Cabins/Resort.
  - Triple Lakes Trailhead (MP 231)

- Widening the road through Denali Canyon/Glitter Gulch (MP 238.5) to have dedicated right and left turn lanes in both directions
  - Stampede/Lignite Road (MP 251)
  - Turning east on Ferry Road (MP 259)
- Concerns about **Speeding** and speed limit enforcement:
  - More speed limit signage and speed limits painted in 45 zones (Cantwell and Healy)
  - Use consistent 55 mph from Cantwell to Stampede Road due to high volume of traffic, pedestrians and driveways
  - Slime Creek (MP 220) to McKinley Village is residential and needs traffic to slow down
  - Lowering from 65 mph to 45 mph between MP 224-231
  - Congested area at Nenana River Bridge MP 231 needs slower and enforceable speed limit
  - Do not modify the roadway such that people can drive faster
- Suggestions to accommodate **4-Wheelers**:
  - There needs to be a safe place for 4-wheelers to cross the highway in the Healy area where there are many 4-wheeler trails in the area.
  - Where the 4-wheeler trails are on the highway right of way, they should be platted in a safe and legal manner with regard to grade, substrate, stream crossings, and keeping the trails off private property.
- Suggestions regarding **Passing**:
  - Turn entire corridor from 2 to 4 lanes to prevent passing crashes/deaths
  - The road necessarily needs widened, but additional passing zones will improve safety.
  - More passing lanes within entire corridor
- **Other restrictions or suggestions** to improve safety:
  - Prohibit double trailers in snowy winter conditions
  - Enhance the safety of collecting spring water at MP 224 (The turnout for the fresh water spring at MP 224 is unmaintained and lists away from the road making winter access difficult without getting stuck. Big trucks go way too fast here. This spring is important to many local residents with dry cabins or with inferior well water.)
  - Access management needed in the MP 224-230 area. Consider frontage system and turn lanes like what was done for the passing lanes in Nenana.

### **Roadway Condition**

- Specific locations along the Parks Highway that need repair:

- Frost heaves south of Cantwell – an idea that the road would be in better condition if it were gravel for the 10-mile section near Summit Lake and the “Leaving Mat-Su Borough” sign
- Frost heaves from MP 210-230
- Decades old frost heaves and buckled pavement north of the railroad crossing (MP 235) and near the railroad tracks
- Northern-most signal in Glitter Gulch. It either doesn’t recognize/activate or give enough time for the east-west traffic so traffic backs way up into Prospector’s or the Chalet.
- Bison Gulch trailhead MP 243
- The “dip” near Dragonfly Creek ~MP 249
- Maintenance & Operations should look at other techniques and more expert research, to maintain roadway quality:
  - Consider redoing the road bed
  - Avoid cheap chip seal overlays that result in chipped and broken windows similar to Sunshine to Trapper Creek
  - Mark frost heaves for drivers

### **Other (Stewardship/Education/Scenic Values /Economic Development )**

- Broad Pass to Jack River is one of the few areas remaining along the Parks Hwy that a traveler gets a sense of the vastness, a taste of “remote Alaska”. Taking care to preserve the undeveloped nature of this stretch.
- Help the public know about Ahtna lands with signage
- Do not add new turning lanes or parking lots
- Keep in mind that development affects residents
- Economic development for year-round employment is needed to bring people to live closer to Cantwell. Our school community is small and in jeopardy of shutting down due to lack of employment.
- Put a bridge through the narrowest part of Nenana Canyon. The river continues to erode the road and they keep blasting the beautiful rocks to move the road further from the water.
- No further development along this stretch of the Parks Highway. Too much uncontrolled development has already destroyed our natural environment.

### **Recreation and Access**

- General support for more parking, trailheads, and bike paths
  - A multiuse trail throughout the corridor would relieve pressure on the trails within the first 3-miles of DNP
- Specific locations for improvements to existing **Rest Areas**:

- Windy Bridge (also referred to as Nenana River Bridge, BR 1143, at MP 242.8) needs a pedestrian bridge and parking because the scenery is so compelling; people need a safe place to take photos
  - Public toilets and informational signs at all river access points
- Stop building public pullouts because they cause trash, human waste and fire danger. They are dangerous to the communities.
- Specific requests for **New Pull-out/Rest Area Facilities** :
  - A picnic area in Cantwell area
  - Year-round rest area with bathrooms near the southern edge of the study area where people pull over to view the mountain.
  - Year-round rest area with bathroom at Slime Creek pull out
  - Create wayside and trailhead parking east side of highway on the north side of the bridge (near MP 231) for Triple Lakes and Oxbow Trails. Pedestrian underpass for trail access. Toilets and bearproof trash containers would be a benefit.
  - Create parking for Bison Gulch on west side of highway