

Agency Scoping Letter and Response Summary



**AGENCY SCOPING
REQUEST FOR EARLY COORDINATION**

Project Name: Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Interchange
Project Number: Z607320000/0002337
Project Website: <http://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/steese-johansen/>
Comments Due Date: September 4, 2018
Anticipated Level of Documentation: **Environmental Assessment**

Dear Agency Staff:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has assumed the responsibilities of the Federal Highway Administration under 23 U.S.C. 327, and is proposing to improve the intersection of the Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway.

We are soliciting your comments on a proposed project. Please comment on the project including your knowledge of resources in the project under the jurisdiction of your agency or organization and the potential need for permits and approvals from your agency or organization. To ensure that your comments are addressed in the project's design and environmental documentation, please refer to the project by the above name or number, and send or e-mail your comments to:

Brett Nelson/ Northern Region Environmental Manager
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709
Email: environmental.analyst@alaska.gov Phone: 907-451-2238

Brett D Nelson

8-2-18

Brett Nelson/Regional Environmental Manager

Date

Figures:

"Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure."

I. Purpose and Need of Project:

Purpose: The purpose of the Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Interchange project is to enhance motorized and non-motorized mobility and user safety at the Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway intersection and within the influence area of the intersection.

Need: The Steese and Johansen Expressways are principal arterials in Fairbanks, AK, and the intersection is ranked in the top 10 for entering vehicle volume in Fairbanks. The area surrounding the intersection has seen substantial commercial and residential development since the early 2000's when the Bentley Trust area along the Johansen began developing. Traffic volumes on the Johansen increased by 27% with the opening of Walmart and Fred Meyer's, and intersection volume increased by 45% between 2004 and 2007 when the area was rapidly developing. Following the initial spike in traffic, total intersection volumes have increased at an average rate of 1% per year (2007-2016). Residential development has been predominately driven by military growth associated with the adjacent U.S. Army Garrison Fort Wainwright. The Steese/Johansen intersection is a critical node for commercial traffic heading to the North Slope from Canada, Valdez, and Anchorage.

Engineering analysis and public scoping identified four primary operational and safety concerns:

- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety:** Long crossing lengths and high speed (55 mph or greater) vehicular traffic through the intersection increase the risk of severe pedestrian and bicycle crashes. Two pedestrian crashes have occurred in the past 10 years (2005-2014) crossing the Steese Expressway, with one resulting in a pedestrian fatality and the other resulting in a minor injury. Residences on the east commercial district on the west create a high crossing demand.
- **Pedestrian Delay:** Pedestrian delay exceeds acceptable delay standards during peak traffic hours (Level of service [LOS] E).
- **Proximity of Farmers Loop Road:** The proximity of the Farmers Loop Road intersection adversely impacts signal and segment capacity during peak hours.
 - **Southbound Steese:** Steese traffic exiting at the Johansen conflicts with entering Farmers Loop traffic, with conflicts highest during AM peak.
 - **Eastbound Johansen:** Johansen traffic desiring to turn at Farmer's Loop utilizes the left-most turn lane, unbalancing the lanes and reducing the signal capacity, and can back traffic up to the Old Steese intersection.
 - **Northbound Steese:** Traffic on the Steese desiring to turn at Farmer's Loop utilize the left-most through lane, blocking the westbound left turn pocket at PM peak, reducing signal capacity.
- **Vehicular Delay:** Eastbound left-turn vehicles currently experience an average delay of over 1 minute per vehicle in the PM peak (LOS E) and the total intersection LOS will be E in the peak hour by 2024 which is not acceptable by current design standards. This delay disproportionately impacts freight and transit vehicles and may impact air quality due to excessive idling.

II. Project Description and Location:

DOT&PF is in the early stages of redesigning the Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway Intersection, located in northeast Fairbanks, Alaska. The proposed project will construct improvements at the intersection and may include a grade separated interchange and realigning the adjacent access roads.

Proposed Action: Preliminary engineering activities are on-going and a specific proposed action has yet to be identified. Potential alternatives that are recommended for further analysis to address the identified operational and safety concerns include the following:

- Traditional diamond interchange
- Single-point interchange
- Eastbound left-turn fly-over
- Synchronized split-phased intersection
- Echelon interchange
- Pedestrian overpass

Alternatives that are recommended to be dismissed from further analysis include:

- Displaced left-turn interchange
- Displaced left-turn intersection
- Partial cloverleaf interchange
- Realigning the roadway

III. Agency Review (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RESOURCE OR REGULATORY AGENCY):

1. Responding Agency:
2. Is the information provided herein consistent with agency knowledge?
3. Does this scoping request adequately identify resources and permit needs under your agency's jurisdiction?
4. Will the project result in only minor affects that can be addressed through the use of appropriate BMPs or mitigation measures, as needed?

Please provide any additional project-related comments, recommendations, or resource information below:

IV. Anticipated Environmental Consequences

A. Right-of-Way (ROW)

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Additional ROW required. | Yes |
| 2. Estimated number of parcels impacted. | To be determined |
| 3. Property transfer from local, state, or federal agency. | Maybe |
| 4. Business or residential relocations. | Maybe |
| 5. Property acquisition from Tribe or ANCSA Corporation. | No |
| 6. Describe: | |

ROW acquisition is anticipated for the proposed improvements of the Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Intersection. An estimate of parcels impacted will be completed as preliminary engineering progresses. The proposed improvements may require business and/or residential relocations. Property ownership has not been determined to date but a transfer between local, state, or federal agency could be required for the proposed action.

B. Socio-Economic

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Project could affect community cohesion, neighborhoods, or other community facilities. | Yes |
| 2. Project could affect economic development, such as established area businesses. | Yes |
| 3. Project could affect travel patterns and accessibility. | Yes |
| 4. Project could disproportionately affect minorities or disadvantaged persons. | No |
| 5. Project will result in adverse economic impacts. | No |
| 6. Describe: | |

The project will have a beneficial economic impact by improving the traffic flow through the Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Intersection.

Proposed alternatives have not been evaluated for their specific impacts, however impacts to existing commercial development areas through right-of-way acquisition is anticipated as a result of project improvements. Proposed frontage roads and/or ramps related to an interchange alternative could impact residential neighborhoods.

All alternatives will have a positive effect on traffic flow on the Steese and Johansen Expressways. Travel patterns and accessibility may be impacted depending on the preferred alternative through reduced access points or new frontage roads and/or ramps in areas where roads do not currently exist.

C. Land Use and Transportation Plans

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Project is consistent with land use plans. | Yes |
| 2. Project is consistent with transportation plans. | Yes |
| 3. Describe: | |

Table 1 details the project's consistency with local land use and transportation plans:

Table 1: Land Use and Transportation Plans

Plan	Plan Goal/Policy	Project Consistency
FMATS, Transportation Improvement Program (February , 2017)	Improving transportation infrastructure and ensuring project to not negatively impact regional air quality.	Project improves transportation infrastructure and is compliant with ADEC Air Quality Regulations.
FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan (September 2005)	Transportation & Infrastructure Goal 1: To have a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system that anticipates community growth.	Project will address safety, efficiency and multi-modal users while accommodating future community growth.
FMATS Bikeways Map (2017)?	The map shows available routes for bicyclists across the FMATS region.	Project will include shared use pathways along Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway
FMATS Complete Streets Final Plan (December 2015)	Complete Street Policies: Provide a safe, efficient, secure and interconnected multi-modal transportation system for all users.	Project will address safety, efficiency, security and multi-modal users while accommodating future community growth.
FMATS 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (January 2015)	Coordinate to provide an integrated transportation and land use system; Provide a safe, efficient, secure, and interconnected multi-modal transportation system; Protect the environment, improve air quality, and promote energy efficiency; Optimize the utility and lifespan of the transportation system; Ensure adequate transportation facilities to support economic development	The Steese Highway/Johansen Expressway project is identified as medium range (MR) project 44.
FMATS 2005-2025 Long Range Transportation Plan (August 2005)	To Identify and evaluate options for meeting future transportation needs; Consider connectivity to outlying areas; Consider multi-modal transportation needs; Support land use and development plans; and Provide a plan for improving the transportation system.	Johansen Expressway Interchanges (Bentley/Steese Area) is identified as Very Long-Range (VLR) project 1.
Alaska Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (March 1995)	By providing safe, well-designed, all-season paths, trails, lanes, sidewalks and other facilities, this plan is intended to develop practical non-motorized transportation alternatives	Project will include provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

D. Historic Properties

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. National Register listed eligible/potentially eligible historic properties in project area. | Maybe |
| 2. Places of traditional religious or cultural importance to Tribes are present in the project area. | No |
| 3. Historic Properties survey may be required to identify if sites are present. | Not anticipated |
| 4. Possible adverse effect on historic properties. | Not anticipated |

5. Describe:

The Office of History and Archaeology's Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRs) database was searched during the compilation of a Cultural Resources Desktop Survey Report that was finalized on November 2017. The report revealed that cultural resources are present within the project area. In addition, consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on November 29, 2017, and the SHPO provided no objections to the proposed study area or level of effort conducted for cultural resource identification at this time. Once design plan alternatives are in place, the cultural resources identified within the project area will be assessed in terms of potential impacts from the interchange improvements. Additional surveys are not anticipated to be needed due to the developed nature of the project area, extremely low probability of buried cultural resources in areas not previously surveyed, and the completion of previous surveys.

E. Fish and Wildlife Impacts

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Project could affect anadromous or resident fish species. | No |
| 2. Problem fish pass culverts within the project area. | No |
| 3. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) present in the project area. | No |
| 4. Project in area of high wildlife/vehicle accidents. | No |
| 5. Project could affect migration corridors or segment habitat. | No |
| 6. Eagle nesting tree(s) or ledge(s) in the project area. | Not anticipated |
| 7. Construction activities could affect migratory bird nests. | Not anticipated |

8. Describe:

The website <http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/> was accessed in May 2018 and a polygon search area of the project site, about 75 square miles, was conducted. Nine migratory bird species are listed as shown in Table 2. These birds are listed as USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern and/or warrant special attention in the project area. The list includes the Bald Eagle and an eagle nest survey will be conducted in conjunction with a wetland delineation in the summer of 2018. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to avoid impacts to migratory birds, such as avoiding vegetation clearing between May 1st and July 15th. Additional BMPs to avoid impacts to wildlife will be implemented to reduce erosion and prevent sedimentation from entering adjacent waters of the U.S.

Table 2: Migratory Birds

American Golden-plover
Bald Eagle
Golden Eagle
Hudsonian Godwit
Lesser Yellowlegs
Olive-Sided Flycatcher
Rusty Blackbird
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Whimbrel

F. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. Listed T&E species present. | No |
| 2. T&E species migrate through the project area. | No |
| 3. Proposed or Candidate species present in project area. | No |
| 4. Designated Critical Habitat in the project area. | No |

5. Describe:

The website <http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/> was accessed in May 2018 and a polygon search area of the project site, about 75 square miles, was conducted. No critical habitat or threatened and endangered species are in the designated area.

G. Wetlands and Waterbodies

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Project involves Waters of the U.S. and/or wetlands. | To be determined |
| 2. Wetlands survey/delineation may be needed. | Yes |
| 3. USACE authorization anticipated. | Yes |
| 4. Rough estimate on acreage impacted. | To be determined |
| 5. U.S. Coast Guard bridge permit anticipated. | No |
| 6. Designated Wild & Scenic River in project area. | No |

7. Describe:

A desktop wetland analysis was completed in October 2017 revealed that freshwater emergent and forested/shrub wetlands parallel the west side of the Steese Expressway north of the intersection. These wetlands may be impacted depending upon the alternative selected, and may require a wetland survey/delineation to determine the extents.

H. Invasive Species

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Known invasive species infestation in project area. | Yes |
|--|-----|
2. Describe:

A search of the AKEPIC database, in May 2018, found the invasive species Yellow Sweet Clover in the project area. In addition, Bird Vetch was also found within the project area during the July 2018 wetland delineation. Measures provided by ADOT&PF's Integrated Vegetation Management Plan will be implemented to avoid the introduction and spread of invasive species.

I. Hazardous Waste/Contaminated Sites

1. Known or potentially contaminated sites along project corridor. Yes
2. Existing and/or proposed ROW is contaminated. To be determined
3. Potential for encountering hazardous waste during construction. Yes
4. Describe:
May 2018, the Alaska DEC Contaminated Sites mapper was searched. Three sites were identified as “of interest” exist near the project. The status of two of the sites is active and the third site’s status is Cleanup Complete.

J. Air Quality

1. Project is located in an air quality nonattainment or maintenance area (i.e. – CO or PM-2.5). Yes
2. Listed in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Yes
3. Project exempt from air quality analysis (Table 2 and Exempt Projects). No
4. Describe:
Project is located within the Fairbanks nonattainment area. A project level air quality conformity analysis is anticipated.

K. Floodplains

1. Project encroaches (including material sites) into a 100-year floodplain. No
2. Project involves a regulatory floodway. No
3. Project is located within an area protected by local flood hazard ordinances. Yes
4. Flood hazard permit is required from local government. No
5. Describe:
The project is not located within a mapped floodplain.

L. Noise

1. The project is located on new location, would result in substantial changes in vertical or horizontal alignment, or would increase the number of through lanes? Yes
2. There are noise-sensitive receivers/land uses adjacent to the proposed project? Yes
3. Describe:
Proposed alternatives include grade separation of the Steese and Johansen Expressway intersection which would involve substantial changes in vertical alignment and/or roads (frontage or ramps) on new alignments. A noise study is required.

M. Water Quality

1. Project could involve a public or private drinking source. No
2. Project could result in a discharge of storm water to Waters of the U.S. Yes
3. Project could affect a designated impaired water body. No
4. Storm water discharges to a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). Yes
5. Runoff may mix with discharges from an APDES permitted industrial (MSGP) facility. No
6. Excavation dewatering is anticipated within 1,500 feet of a contaminated site. No
7. Describe:
Project storm water discharges would discharge into wetlands and Waters of the U.S. within Fairbanks’ MS4

permit area. Appropriate BMPs would be utilized to minimize erosion and sedimentation. There are two active contaminated sites adjacent to the project, however dewatering is not anticipated.

N. Section 4(f)/6(f)

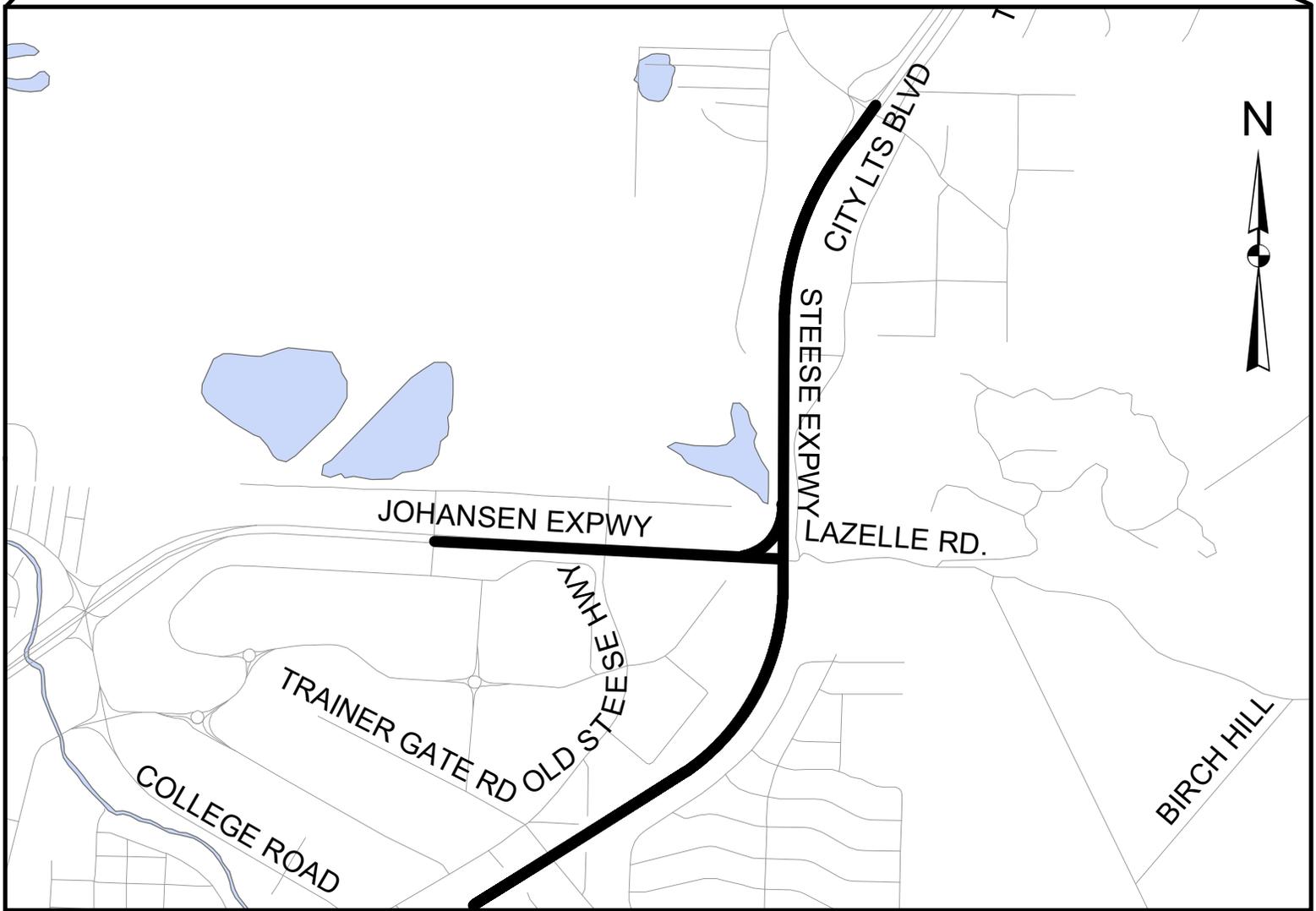
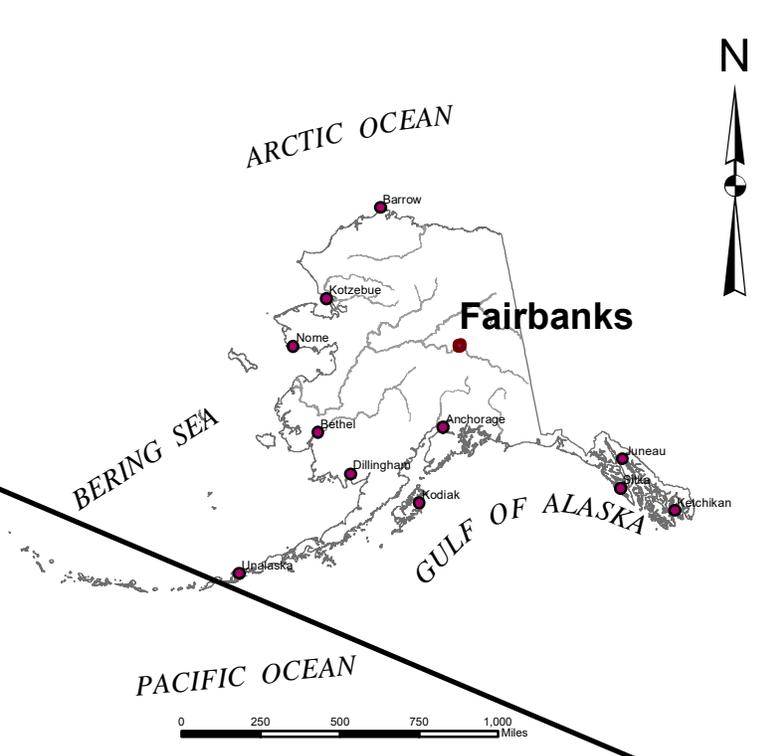
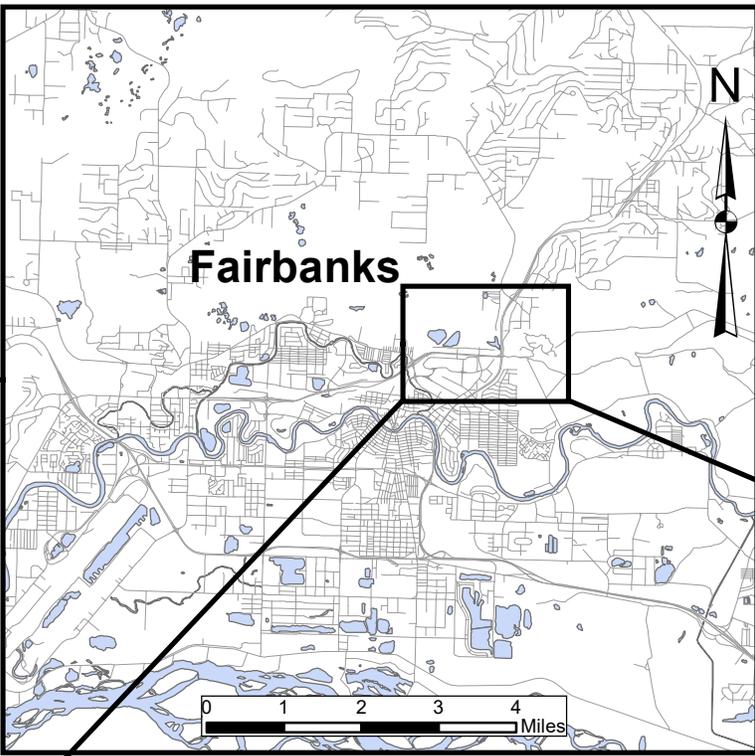
- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. There would be a "use" of land from 4(f) properties. | No |
| 2. Section 6(f) properties affected by the proposed action. | No |
| 3. List agency(s) with jurisdiction: | N/A |
| 4. Describe:
No known 4(f) or 6(f) properties are located within the project study area. | |

O. Material Source(s) and Staging Areas

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. Potential sites needed for project have been identified. | No |
| 2. Describe:
Aggregate for paving and crushed products will come from commercial sources in Fairbanks. Borrow material will come from commercial sources in Fairbanks. | |

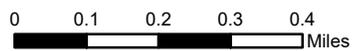
P. Permits and Authorizations

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. USACE, NWP or IP: | Yes |
| 2. USCG, Bridge Permit: | No |
| 3. ADF&G, Fish Habitat Permit: | No |
| 4. Material Site(s) Sales Agreements/Permits: | No |
| 5. Floodplain Permit: | No |
| 6. ADEC, 401 Cert.: | Yes |
| 7. ADEC, Storm Non-domestic Storm Water Disposal Plan Approval: | Yes |
| 8. APDES, CGP: | Yes |
| 9. ADNR, Land Use Permit: | No |
| 10. Borough/City, Development Permit: | Yes |
| 11. ADEC, Excavation Dewatering Permit: | No |
| 12. ADNR, Temp. Water Use Permit: | No |
| 13. ADF&G, Special Area Permit: | No |
| 14. Other(s): | N/A |



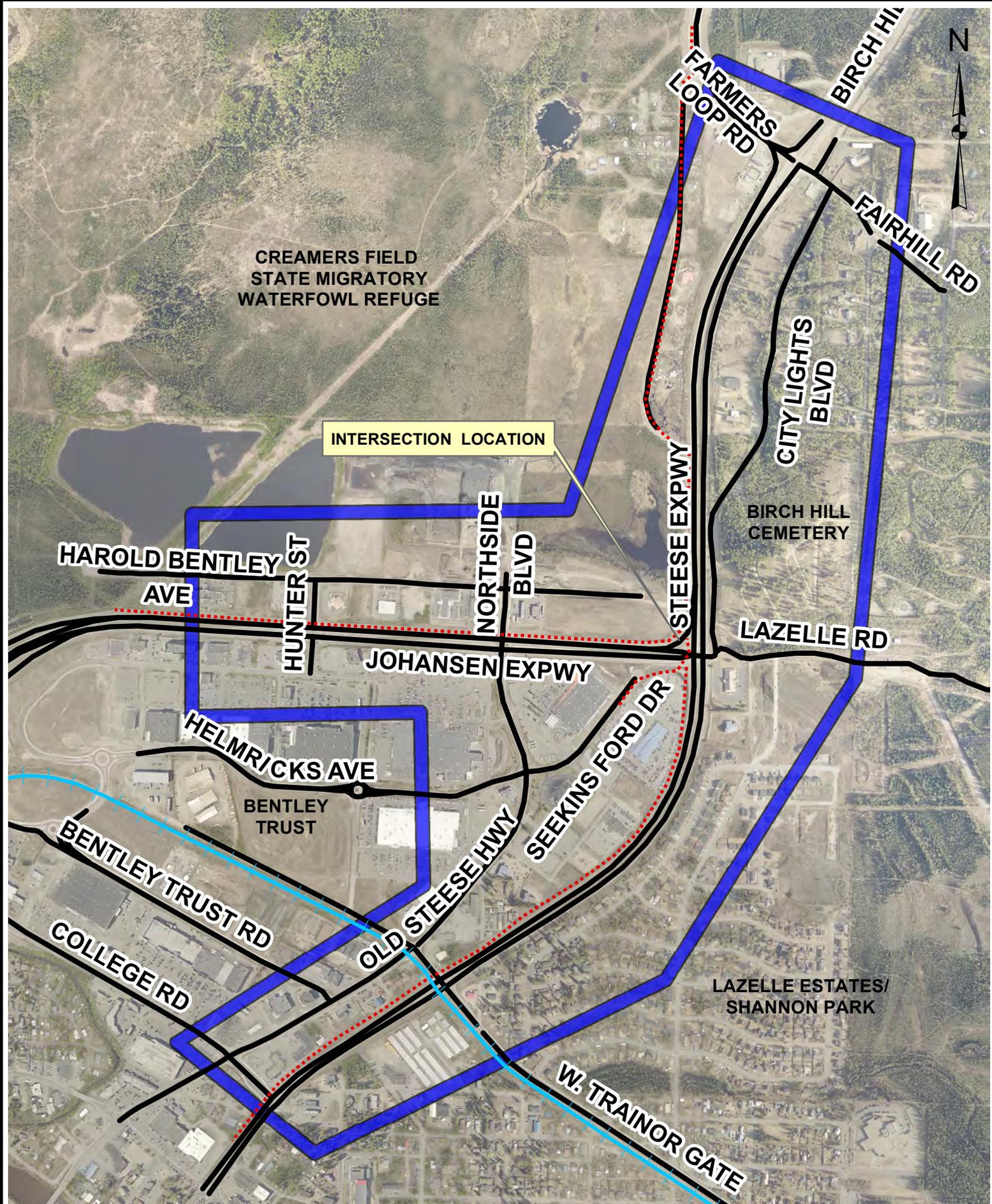
STATE OF ALASKA
 Department of Transportation
 and Public Facilities
 2301 Peger Road
 Fairbanks, AK 99709

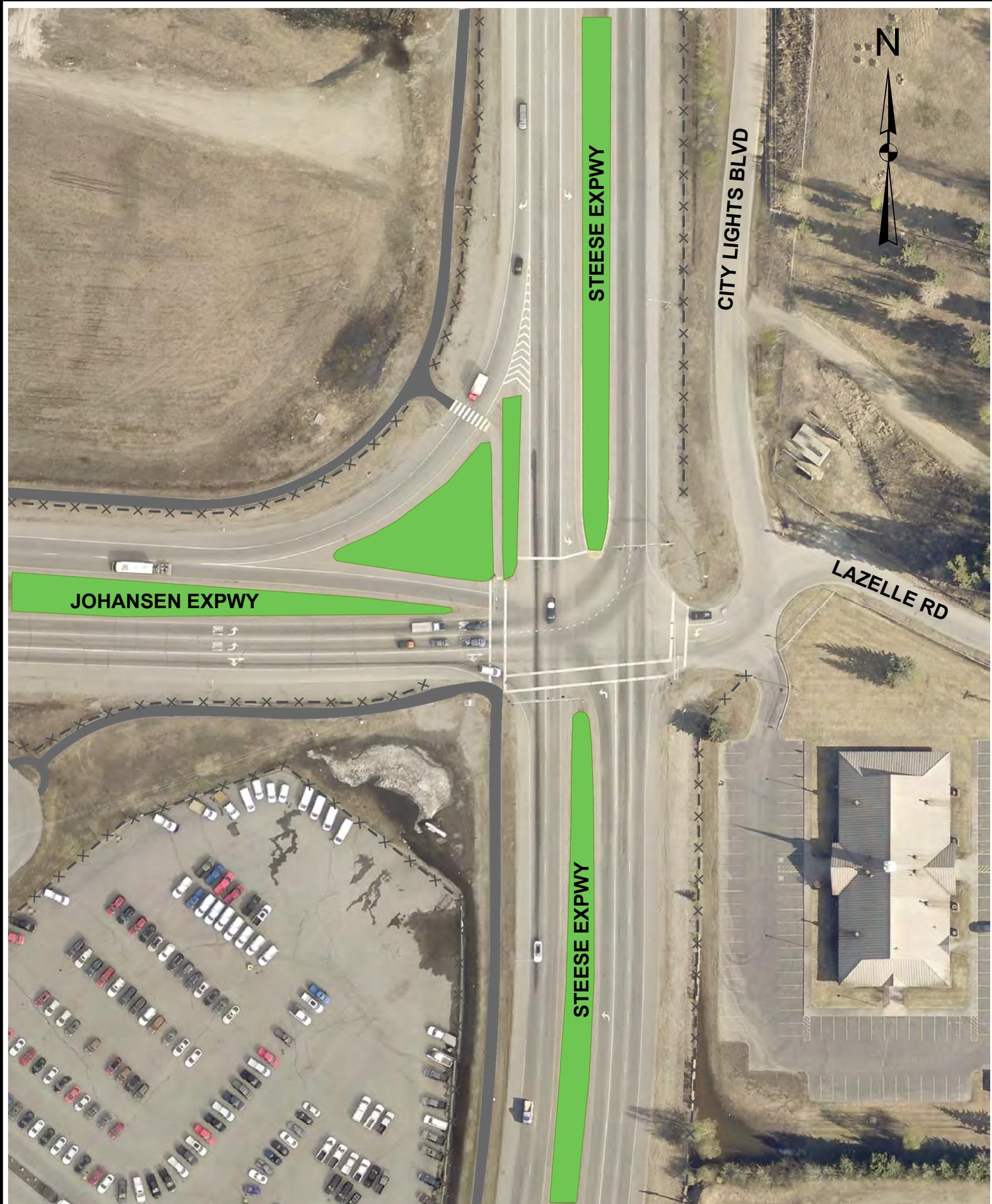
STEESE EXPRESSWAY/JOHANSEN
 EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE
 PROJECT NO. Z607320000/000237



DATE: July 2018
 FIGURE: 1

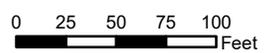
VICINITY
 MAP





STATE OF ALASKA
 Department of Transportation
 and Public Facilities
 2301 Peger Road
 Fairbanks, AK 99709

STEESSE EXPRESSWAY/JOHANSEN
 EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE
 PROJECT NO. Z607320000/000237



DATE:
 July 2018

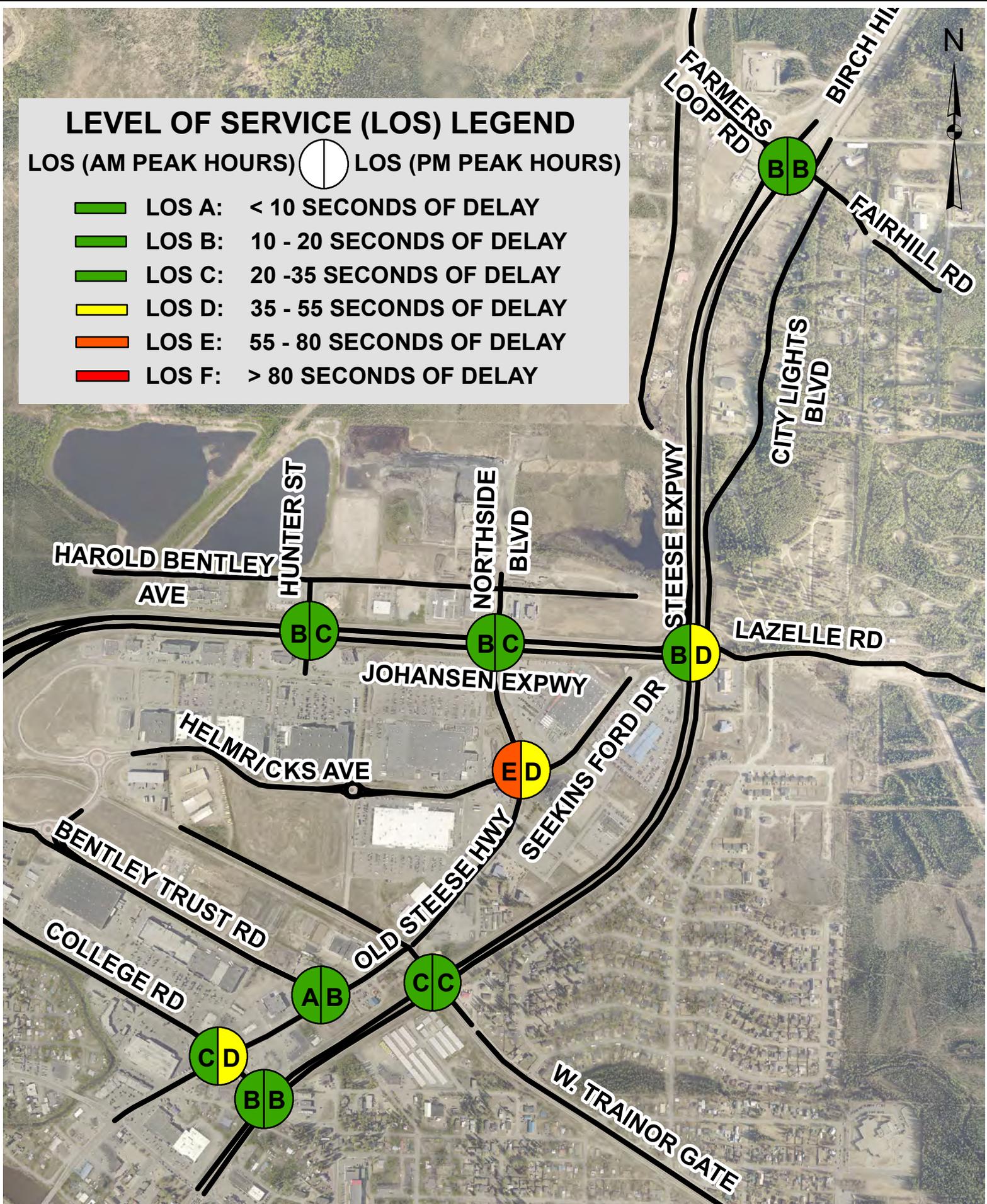
FIGURE:
 3

**EXISTING
 CONFIGURATION**

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) LEGEND

LOS (AM PEAK HOURS) LOS (PM PEAK HOURS)

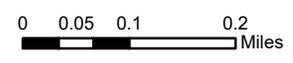
- LOS A: < 10 SECONDS OF DELAY
- LOS B: 10 - 20 SECONDS OF DELAY
- LOS C: 20 - 35 SECONDS OF DELAY
- LOS D: 35 - 55 SECONDS OF DELAY
- LOS E: 55 - 80 SECONDS OF DELAY
- LOS F: > 80 SECONDS OF DELAY



STATE OF ALASKA
 Department of Transportation
 and Public Facilities
 2301 Peger Road
 Fairbanks, AK 99709

STEESE EXPRESSWAY/JOHANSEN
 EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE
 PROJECT NO. Z607320000/000237

Legend
 Road

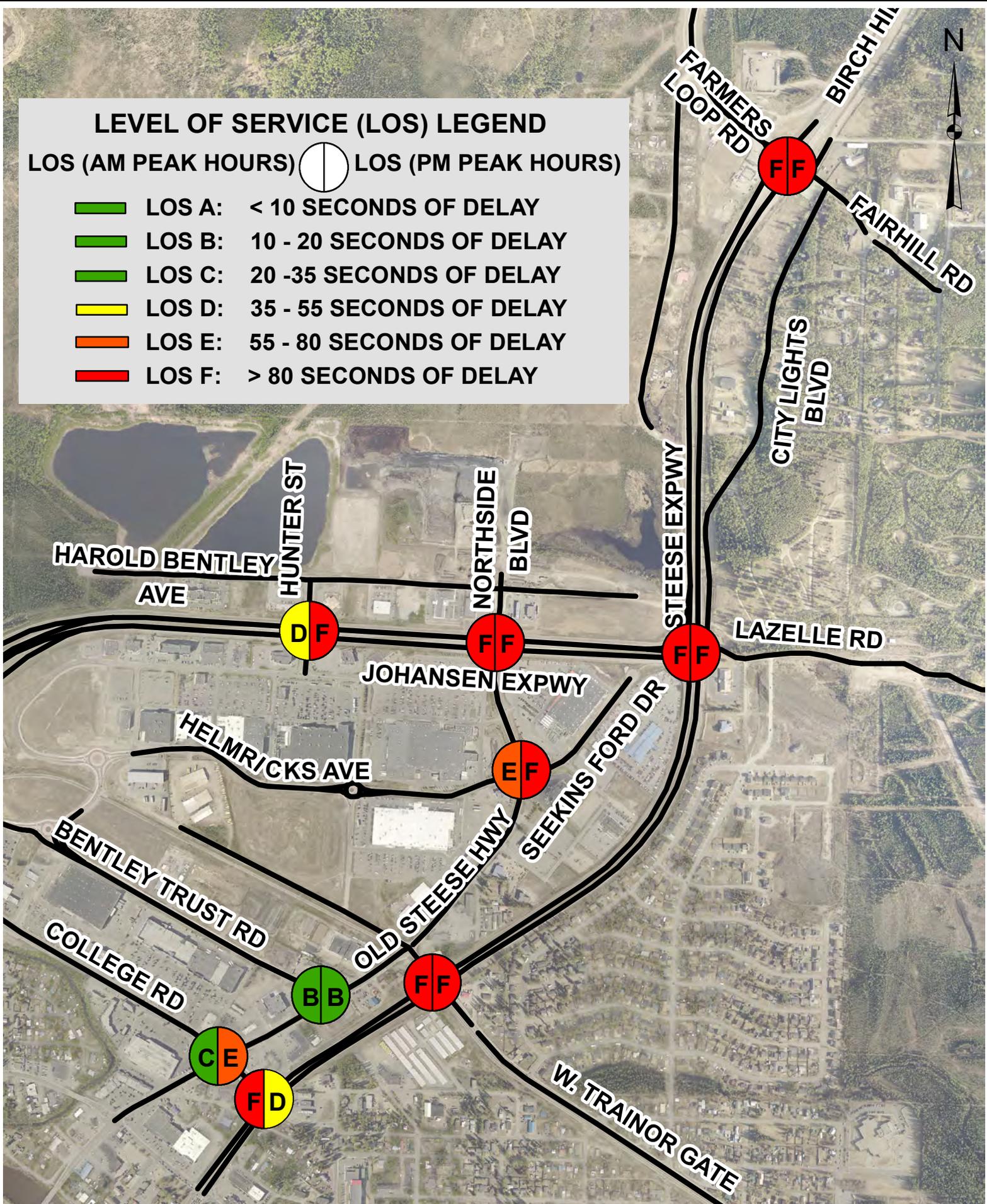


DATE: July 2018 FIGURE: 4
EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) LEGEND

LOS (AM PEAK HOURS)  LOS (PM PEAK HOURS)

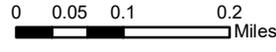
-  LOS A: < 10 SECONDS OF DELAY
-  LOS B: 10 - 20 SECONDS OF DELAY
-  LOS C: 20 - 35 SECONDS OF DELAY
 Bentley Ave
-  LOS D: 35 - 55 SECONDS OF DELAY
-  LOS E: 55 - 80 SECONDS OF DELAY
-  LOS F: > 80 SECONDS OF DELAY



STATE OF ALASKA
Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709

STEESE EXPRESSWAY/JOHANSEN
EXPRESSWAY INTERCHANGE
PROJECT NO. Z607320000/000237

Legend
 Road



DATE: July 2018
FIGURE: 5
**2045 NO BUILD
LEVEL OF SERVICE**

Richardson Highway MP 206-235										Delivery	Read
Recipient	SCOPING LIST April 16, 2018										
Number	Verified	First Name	Last Name	Title	Agency	Address	Phone	e-mail	Confirmation		
Federal Agencies											
1	V	Bob	Henszey	Branch Chief	USFWS Conservation Planning	101 12th Avenue, Rm. 110, Fairbanks	907-456-0324	bob_henszey@fws.gov			
2	V	Ben	Soiseth	Fairbanks Field Office Manager	USACE Regulatory	2175 University Avenue #201E, Fairbanks	907-474-2166	Benjamin.N.Soiseth@usace.army.mil			
3	V	Molly	Vaughn	NEPA Reviewer	EPA Region 10	222 W. 7th Ave. #19, Anchorage		vaughan.molly@epamail.epa.gov			
4	V	Matthew	Sprau	NEPA Program Manager	USAG FWA	Directorate of Public Works, IMFW-PWE (SPRAU), 1060 Gaffney Road, #4500, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-4500	907-361-9688	matthew.h.sprau.civ@mail.mil			
5	V	Elizabeth	Cook	Cultural Resource Manager	USAG FWA	Directorate of Public Works, IMFW-PWE (COOK), 1060 Gaffney Road, #4500, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-4500	907-361-3002	elizabeth.a.cook80.civ@mail.mil			
6	V	Kathleen	Siftar	Master Planning Chief	USAG FWA	Directorate of Public Works, IMFW-PWE (SIFTAR), 1060 Gaffney Road, #4500, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-4500	907-361-3315	kathleen.d.siftar.civ@mail.mil			
State Resource Agencies											
7	V	Andrew	Sayers-Fay	Director	DEC Division of Water	410 Willowby Ave, Ste 303, PO Box 111800	907-269-6281	andrew.sayers-fay@alaska.gov			
8	V	Cynthia	Heil	Environmental Program Manager	DEC Air Quality	555 Cordova Street, Anchorage	907-269-7579	cindy.heil@alaska.gov			
9	V	James	Fish	Environmental Program Specialist	DEC Contaminated Sites	610 University Ave, Fairbanks	907-451-2117	james.fish@alaska.gov			
10	V	Audra	Brase	Regional Supervisor	DFG - Habitat Division	1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Ak 99701-1551	907-459-7282	audra.brase@alaska.gov			
V	Jim	Rypkema	Environment: Wetlands Interior & TAPS Unit	DEC Storm Water & Wetlands	555 Cordova Street	Anchorage	907-334-2288	Jim.Rypkema@alaska.gov		9/21/2016	
V	Ashley	Adamczak	TAPS Unit	DEC Prevention, Preparedness	610 University Ave	Fairbanks	907-451-2124	ashley.adamczak@alaska.gov		9/22/2016	
11	V	Jeanne	Proulx	Regional Manager Northern Region	DNR DLMW	3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709-4699	907-451-2711	jeanne.proulx@alaska.gov			
12	V	Nancy	Sonafrank	Program Manager	DEC Water Quality	610 University Ave	907-451-2726	Nancy.Sonafrank@alaska.gov			
Community											
13	V	Jackson	Fox	Executive Director	FMATS	800 Cushman St., Fairbanks, AK 99701	907-459-6786	jackson.fox@fmats.us			
14	V	Bob	Prishtash	City Engineer	City of Fairbanks	800 Cushman St., Fairbanks, AK 99701	907-459-6758	RPristash@fairbanks.us			
15	V	Dan	Sloan	Public Works Director	FNSB	Public Works BLDG, Davis Road	907-459-1340	dsloan@fairbanks.us			
16	V	Andrew	Ackerman	Environmental Manager (Stormwater)	City of Fairbanks	800 Cushman St., Fairbanks, AK 99701		aackerman@fairbanks.us			
17	V	Eric	Jewkes	Police Chief	City of Fairbanks Police Department			ejewkes@ci.fairbanks.ak.us			
18	V	Kellen	Spillman	Deputy Director of Community	FNSB	809 Pioneer Road, P.O. Box 71267	907-459-1266	kspillman@fnsb.us			
19	V	Don	Galligan	Transportation Planner	FNSB	810 Pioneer Road, P.O. Box 71267	907-459-1345	dgalligan@fnsb.us			
20	V	Nancy	Durham	Floodplain Administrator	FNSB	PO Box 871267	907-459-1263	ndurham@fnsb.us			
21	V	Jeff	Jacobson	Director of Public Works	City of Fairbanks	2121 Peger Road	907-459-6817	jjacobson@fairbanks.us; pwm@mail@fairbanks.us			
22	V	Baird	Stiefel	Emergency Manager	FNSB			bstiefel@fnsb.us			
23	V	Christine	Nelson	Director of Community Planning	Fairbanks North Star Borough	Fairbanks, AK 99701	907-459-1260	planning@co.fairbanks.ak.us; cnelson@fnsb.us			
Alaska DOT											
24	V	Meadow	Bailey	Information Officer	Alaska DOT&PF	2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709-5316	451-2240	meadow.bailey@alaska.gov			
25	V	Gail	Gardner	Utilities Engineer	Alaska DOT&PF	2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709-5316	451-5408	gail.gardner@alaska.gov			
26	V	Barry	Hooper	PD&E Chief	Alaska DOT&PF	2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709-5316	451-2218	barry.hooper@alaska.gov			
29	V	Sarah	Schacher	Preconstruction Engineer	Alaska DOT&PF	2301 Peger Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709-5316	451-5361	sarah.schacher@alaska.gov			



Agency Comment & Response Summary

October 10, 2018

Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Interchange Project
Project No. Z607320000/0002337

The following document summarizes the agency scoping comments received by email and phone from August 2, 2018 to October 11, 2018.

Agency	Comment	Response
ADF&G	At this time ADF&G has no objection to this proposed project, and it appears that no Fish Habitat Permit will be required. However please continue to keep us informed as this project progresses so we may better evaluate the final design.	The Department will keep ADF&G informed as the project progresses.
ADNR	The Northern Region Lands Section, DMLW, DNR has reviewed the scoping documents for the Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Interchange. It does not appear any DNR managed land will be needed for the project, nor will any permits or material sale contracts be needed from DNR. The information appears to be consistent with our agency's knowledge and adequately identified that no DNR managed resources or permits will be needed.	The Department appreciates ADNR's response.
USAG FWA DPW MP	In accordance with the USAG Alaska Master Plan, a new gate is visualized on Army property to the east of the DOT Steese/Johansen Expressway Interchange. Please note that no funding has yet been identified for the project however it aligns with our long term vision and goals for the installation. Construction of this new Access Control Point (ACP) is currently forecasted in the 6-10 year timeframe but of course the master plan is a living document and changes will be incorporated if needed in response to mission changes.	The Department will continue to work with the installation's Master Planning Office to address the potential for an ACP at Canol [Lazelle] Road during project development.

<p>USAG FWA DPW ENV</p>	<p>First, the Canol Gate is the gate that separates Canol Road from the Former Fairbanks Fuel Terminal area and is an interior gate. We would not want the city, borough or the state doing analysis on this aspect of their project.</p>	<p>Clarification was received from the USAG FWA DPW ENV Office on September 5, 2018 via phone concerning this comment. The gate referenced within the comment refers to the interior (to the installation) Canol Gate, and not the one that would potentially be impacted by the proposed project. Installation concerns on the impact on this interior gate are to be disregarded, and the Canol Gate [Lazelle Road] at the installation boundary should be considered within the proposed project's analysis.</p>
	<p>Second, the Tank Farm/Former Fairbanks Fuel Terminal are OU 3 for ground water and OU 5 for soils. The parcel of land right outside the fence line belonged at one time to the contractor constructing Lazelle Estates. This property has been foreclosed on and has been purchased by the City of Fairbanks. Their intended use is as a Snow Dump. The Army is in the process of conducting additional investigation of this property to determine if accelerated and increased contamination migration off the installation and into this area is happening. This migration is believed to have been caused to the potential degradation of permafrost that at one time influenced the ground water flows in the area north of the Chena River. We believe this permafrost degradation is due to the clearing of the Lazelle Road area by the proposed construction project.</p>	<p>The Department provided the following follow-up question:</p> <p>Can clarification be provided on this comment? No clearing for the Department's proposed project has taken place... is the snow dump being referred to as the proposed construction project in this comment?</p> <p>FWA response:</p> <p>The property has been cleared by the proposed housing development, not by any road projects. The contractor did not complete the project, and that portion of land has remained cleared since that time frame. FWA's contractor, FES (Fairbanks Environmental Services) believes this clearing action, the proposed use as a snow dump, will continue to degrade the permafrost. They are also concerned the permafrost in the area was not as extensive as originally thought, leading to a quicker degradation process.</p>
<p>USFWS</p>	<p>The information provided in the project overview is consistent with the Service's general knowledge of the project area given the level of detail provided in the scoping packet. However, the service considers all habitat (including highway ROW and riparian areas adjacent to culverts) to be occupied by migratory birds; therefore, any</p>	<p>The Department will take these concerns and recommendation into consideration during project development.</p>

	<p>land disturbing activities (clearing, placing fill, mowing, etc.) during the migratory bird nesting season could result in impacts to nesting birds.</p>	
	<p>Yes, the scoping request adequately identifies resources and permit needs under the Service’s jurisdiction:</p> <p><u>Threatened and Endangered Species:</u> There are no threatened or endangered species in the project area, thus the Service does not expect project-related activities to adversely impact listed species. This email constitutes informal consultation under the Endangered Species Act. Preparation of a Biological Assessment or further consultation regarding this project is not necessary at this time.</p> <p><u>Eagles and their Nests:</u> The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act protects eagles from take, as well as from disturbance to their nests, roosts, and foraging sites. The Service is unaware of any eagle nests in the proposed project area. Ultimately, the project proponent is responsible for preventing disturbance to eagles. If an eagle nest is discovered within a half-mile of the project site, please contact the USFWS office for further assistance.</p>	
	<p>The Service offers the following additional BMPs/mitigation for ADOT&PF to consider to further minimize project impacts:</p> <p><u>Migratory Birds:</u> The Service appreciates any voluntary mitigation measures intended to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to migratory birds and their habitats. Migratory bird nests, eggs, or nestlings could be destroyed if work is conducted during the spring and summer breeding season, which is generally May 1 through July 15 at the proposed site. A common mitigation measure to help minimize impacts to nesting birds is to avoid land disturbing activities (e.g., clearing, excavation, gravel fill, brush hogging, etc.) during breeding season.</p>	<p>The Department will take these concerns and recommendation into consideration during project development. The Department is also working with the Corps concerning the uncommon wetlands to the north and west of the proposed interchange.</p>

However, we also support project proponents finding other ways to minimize impacts to migratory birds.

Wetlands: The wetland immediately north and west of the Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway Interchange (figure provided) was classified by Jenkins et al. (2010) as open water with emergent vegetation (PEM1/UBF); the National Wetlands Inventory simplified the wetland classification to semipermanently flooded emergent wetlands (PEM1F). Jenkins et al. (2010) found this wetland type to be uncommon in our area, comprising only 0.88% of our wetlands in the Fairbanks area. Freshwater emergent wetlands like those in the proposed project area provide very important habitats for wildlife, affording food, cover, and water for many species. Replacing the inherent biological function of uncommon natural wetlands with constructed wetlands is often difficult, so the Service does not recommend disturbing them. The wetland is identified as Track A on Fairbanks North Star Borough and the City of Fairbanks plots.

Because the wetland in Tract A is uncommon and difficult to replace, it was dedicated as a Conservation Area to be protected in perpetuity on February 22, 2012 (see Corps permit POA-2004-1127). No development, land clearing, placement of fill, plowing or stockpiling of snow, accumulation of debris, or construction of structures are allowed within Tract A and the associated Conservation Area in Tract B.

Other Habitat: The Service appreciates ADOT&PFs plans to manage for the introduction and spread of invasive species during project implementation. To ensure on-the-ground knowledge of invasive species management, the Service recommends project contractors review a free self-paced training course on invasive species control,

	<p>which can be found at http://weedcontrol.open.uaf.edu.</p>	
<p>USACE</p>	<p>This project has the potential to impact Waters of the U.S. (WOUS), including wetlands, under Corps Jurisdiction, and as such any work that would result in the discharge or fill into WOUS would require a permit from the Corps of Engineers under the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).</p>	<p>The Department provided the following follow-up question:</p> <p>Does the Corps foresee a need for any field or habitat studies that would need to be conducted in support of the compensatory mitigation that could be planned for in the 2019 field season?</p> <p>Corps response:</p> <p>Nothing specific comes to mind. In the assessment of alternatives for the project the Corps will need to know specifically why the alternative is not practicable (considering cost, existing technology and logistics), how many acres of WOUS would be impacted, and other resources that may be impacted... But at this time the Corps does not see the need for any special studies. Also, information for mitigation is primarily the type of mitigation that DOT is proposing, where it is, and the acres of the wetland types preserved/restored and the functions they perform. Provided is the list for the 13-part mitigation plan that is required for permittee responsible mitigation plan if it is determined to be necessary for this project. The plan is not needed as part of a complete application but would be needed for permit issuance should this be what is proposed and approved.</p>
	<p>The northwest corner of the intersection of the Johansen and the Steese highways contains wetlands and a pond that is currently protected by a conservation easement as mitigation for an unrelated permit. A modification to this permit to remove this conservation easement is currently under review by this office. Should the ADOT propose to discharge fill into this pond and its adjacent wetland, a permit from the Corps would be required; as well as a purpose and need statement for the impacts and an alternatives analysis evaluating the practicability of alternatives that would not result in impacts to WOUS.</p>	
	<p>The Corps would work with ADOT to avoid and minimize, to the maximum extent practicable, impacts to WOUS. At this time, and dependent on the proposed project, the Corps believes that Compensatory Mitigation for unavoidable impacts to these WOUS is appropriate. An analysis of project alternatives showing the practicability of each alternative, as well as an analysis of compensatory mitigation alternatives would likely be required as part of the permit application process. Additionally, the Corps would want to ensure that natural drainage patterns are maintained.</p>	