

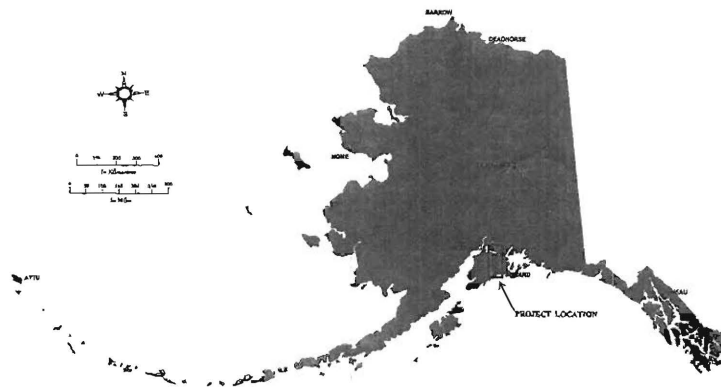
A STRATEGY FOR MANAGEMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND CONSERVATION

Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan



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A STRATEGY FOR MANAGEMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND CONSERVATION

Prepared for

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities as part of the submission materials required for designation under the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration

Prepared by

The National Trust for Historic Preservation
Rural Heritage and Heritage Tourism Programs

With

Whiteman and Taintor, Planning Consultants

1998

Photo: © Dan Marriott

cover photograph:
The Seward Highway along Turnagain Arm.



STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

April 22, 1998

Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to endorse this Corridor Partnership Plan for the Seward Highway. Alaska is a state rich in natural and scenic beauty along our highways. With so much to offer, we take special pride in the Seward Highway. This highway is so distinctive because of the concentration of different Alaska experiences in an area so easily accessible to the majority of our population.

The world's second most extreme tidal range, a retreating glacier, earthquake subsidence, alpine valleys, and fjords greet the Seward Highway visitor in a remarkable 127 miles. Along the way, travelers often observe Dall sheep, Beluga whales, moose, bald eagles and water fowl. The U.S. Forest Service and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities have already recognized these special qualities through scenic byway designations.

Alaska now seeks national recognition to promote the route and to ensure Alaskans and visitors better understand how to conserve this unique highway.

Residents and visitors will soon be able to enjoy the scenic Seward Highway by foot, bicycle, ski or in-line skate. The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a designated National Recreational Trail, will be extended from its present terminus at Kincaid Park in Anchorage, along Turnagain Arm and the Seward Highway to the community of Girdwood, a distance of 40 miles. Construction of some segments of the trail is underway, and planning for the remainder is in progress.

We are particularly pleased by the new partnerships the corridor planning process has created. Representatives from federal, state and local governments have combined with the private sector, nonprofit corporations, and local citizens to develop a plan for the Seward Highway. The Corridor Partnership Plan before you is a collaborative effort representing a cross section of Alaskans and their collective vision for the Seward Highway.

I believe there is nowhere else in America where one can travel from sea to sea through spectacular knife-edged mountain peaks and peaceful valleys in a mere three hour drive. Nowhere else can one experience whales, glaciers, and gold rush history in an afternoon drive. And nowhere else can the hospitality of Alaskans and the commitment of a state dedicated to a safe and enjoyable traveler experience be matched.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Knowles".

Tony Knowles
Governor

A Note of Thanks

This Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP) was prepared with the assistance of numerous agencies, offices, local governments and private individuals. Their commitment to assisting with this project and sincere interest in the creation of an effective and usable CPP speaks well for the future of the Seward Highway. The material presented herein, in particular the critical actions and partnership strategy, reflect the ideas and recommendations of Alaskans who respect the Seward Highway as a unique natural and recreational resource in the state. They see it as a valuable economic asset that, given proper stewardship, can provide great employment and financial benefits to the people of the Kenai Peninsula and the region.



Byway advocates and resource managers spend a spring afternoon at the Campbell Creek Nature Center in Anchorage discussing the future of the Seward Highway.

Executive Summary

The Seward Highway and the Corridor Partnership Planning Process

This Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP), the result of intensive site studies, interviews and meetings, was prepared as a requirement for nomination to the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The NSBP was established to recognize unique and special roadways in the United States without interference in local management and decision-making. Thus, this CPP provides a valuable starting point for a dialogue about the future of the Seward Highway corridor.

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). The Scenic Byways Advisory Committee, working with the Federal Highway Administration, recommended that the program designate a system of National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. For a route to be eligible for designation as a National Scenic Byway, it must possess one or more of the six intrinsic qualities identified by the Scenic Byways Advisory Committee (scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and archaeological), have a community committed to its designation and management,

and have developed a corridor management plan—in Alaska, this will be referred to as a Corridor Partnership Plan. For designation as an All-American Road, the route must possess two of the intrinsic qualities and demonstrate existing programs supporting byway goals are in place (the 1989 US Forest Service scenic byway plan, for example).

The requirement for a Corridor Partnership Plan is simply to ensure that communities seeking national recognition for a particular route have taken the time to assess the intrinsic qualities that make their route unique and have taken a careful look into the future to question if today's special qualities will be enjoyed by future generations. National designation is only awarded to communities and states committed to the scenic qualities—such as those that make the Seward Highway one of the finest highways in the world. This plan, therefore, identifies many issues and opportunities as well as concerns and possible threats. It makes recommendations, not policies, and suggests solutions, not mandates. It provides the “leg-work” for those willing to champion its advice and work toward the implementation of its ideas.

The Seward Highway

The Seward Highway corridor extends approximately 127 miles between its two termini points: downtown Anchorage and mile zero in Seward. The road is predominately a two-lane highway except for a 10-mile divided highway segment in Anchorage. The Seward Highway was designated as an Alaska Scenic Highway in 1993, and most of the route has also been designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway. The highway itself has been largely rebuilt in recent years and current construction in the Girdwood area and Hope Highway Junction, and planned reconstruction in the Seward area, will sig-

nificantly improve the safety and efficiency of the route. Highway ownership and management is under the jurisdiction of the Central Region of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF). A Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Forest Service (USFS) and ADOT&PF provides for consultation regarding road management on USFS lands.

Lands adjacent to the Seward Highway are largely held by public agencies and development is relatively limited. Alaska DNR-Parks and the USFS are the single largest land owners along the route. Significant land areas immediately adjacent to the highway have been identified for conveyances in the coming years. This potential change in ownership and land use could significantly alter the highway corridor.

Due to its great scenic appeal, the Seward Highway serves as a local and national tourism and recreation attraction. Everyone from outdoor enthusiasts seeking a backcountry experience to cruise ship visitors are accommodated along the Seward Highway corridor. ADOT&PF, DNR-Parks, the USFS, and the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology have already responded to many visitor needs through highway and safety improvements, pullouts, and interpretation at selected sites.

The Last Frontier at a Crossroads

Alaska is growing. The “last frontier” is being discovered by thousands of outsiders who are coming in increasing numbers to visit and to live. In fact, since the summer of 1989, the total number of visitors coming to Alaska annually has increased by over 350,000. Overall, visitation to Alaska has seen an annual average growth rate of 8% since 1989. This has certainly been felt on the Seward

Highway as Anchorage recreationists, Borough residents, and outside visitors have generated bumper to bumper traffic on the Seward Highway during peak seasons.

You can still drive south from Anchorage, or north from Seward, and in a relatively short period, be surrounded by the rugged natural scenery for which Alaska is known. How long the next generation will be able to experience this scenery is cause for discussion. The desire for them, our future generations, to witness first hand the beauty and majesty of an environmentally sound and economically vibrant Alaska is, in many ways, the impetus behind this study and corridor partnership plan for the Seward Highway.

One need only drive the Parks Highway near Denali National Park to see how the Seward Highway could benefit from a Corridor Partnership Plan. The aggregation of gift shops, strip centers and other icons of American commercialism found adjacent to the entry of the national park could be anywhere in the Lower 48. It is not hard to imagine such a scenario for the Seward Highway in the not-too-distant future, especially with the pending land conveyances that will move land adjacent to the road from public to private ownership. Through this CPP the Seward Highway can secure valued growth and development without compromising its beauty.

Alaska is no longer the isolated, inaccessible outpost of even a few years ago. Population changes, business associations and global communication have linked the state with the rest of the world. Alaska still lives up to its reputation as the last frontier. Breathtaking views, dense forests, and sparkling waterways still dominate the landscape. However, these resources are the most vulnerable to change, and can be easily bruised by reckless development and use.

The Four Theses

This Corridor Partnership Plan was developed under four “givens” regarding the existing nature of the corridor and likely trends for the future that emerged during the preparation of this document. This Corridor Partnership Plan was prepared with these four Theses:

1. **The Seward Highway is composed of five distinct segments**
2. **Tourism to Alaska will continue to increase, as will Alaska’s resident population.**
3. **The Seward Highway is a multi-purpose corridor serving both residents and visitors for numerous recreational and commercial purposes.**
4. **The successful management of the Seward Highway is dependent on the cooperation of existing institutions, resource managers and committed individuals.**

The Three Keystone Strategies

From these four Theses emerged three Keystone Strategies for the successful management of the Seward Highway for future generations. Keystone Strategies, unlike the four Theses, suggest areas in which the future of the Seward Highway can be influenced through action, policy and commitment. The three Keystone Strategies are:

1. **The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.**
2. **Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.**
3. **Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway’s ability to attract visitors and quality development.**

For each of the three Keystone Strategies, specific critical actions have been identified to maintain and enhance the quality of the Seward Highway. These *critical actions* are recommendations that will require the cooperation, endorsement, and enthusiasm of residents, resource managers and political leaders for their successful implementation.

The following is a listing of all *critical actions* identified in the Keystone Strategies:

Keystone Strategy 1

The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.

- K.1-A Design Theme
- K.1-B Design Integration
- K.1-C Roadway Details
- K.1-D Urban Landscape
- K.1-E Guardrails
- K.1-F Clear Zones
- K.1-G Roadside buffers
- K.1-H View management
- K.1-I Pullouts
- K.1-J Bike Paths
- K.1-K Scenic Highway Identification Signage
- K.1-L Highway Signage
- K.1-M Grooved Centerline and Edge Warnings
- K.1-N Restricted turning movements
- K.1-O Left turning lanes
- K.1-P Right turning lanes
- K.1-Q Center turning lanes
- K.1-R Shoulders
- K.1-S Traffic Calming or Speed Management
- K.1-T Management of Curb Cuts

Keystone Strategy 2

Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.

- K.2-A Rest Area Strategy
- K.2-B Forest Service Recreation Management
- K.2-C State Parks Recreation Management
- K.2-D Carpooling and Ridesharing Facilities
- K.2-E RV Dump Site Facilities
- K.2-F Seward Highway Scenic Byway Road Guide
- K.2-G Historic Sites Inventory
- K.2-H Visitor Newspaper
- K.2-I Seward Highway Audio Tape
- K.2-J Staffed Interpretive Van
- K.2-K Seward Highway 20-minute Video
- K.2-L Seward Highway Awareness Campaign

Keystone Strategy 3

Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.

- K.3-A Conveyance Planning
- K.3-B Nodal Development Areas
- K.3-C Corridor Development Areas
- K.3-D Corridor Preservation Areas
- K.3-E Gateways

Partnership

The Corridor Partnership Plan concludes with a section on partnership and proposes a method by which agency representatives, government and interested citizens can work toward implementing the goals and critical actions outlined in this plan. The partnership strategy calls for the creation of the **Seward Highway Partnership Board** consisting of a Core Working Group representing the principal agencies and players along the corridor, a Partnership Associates group representing smaller communities, business, and individual interests to serve in an advisory capacity to the Core Working Group, and an ADOT&PF Advisor (the Alaska Scenic Byways Coordinator).

What A Corridor Partnership Plan Can and Cannot Do

It is the purpose of this Corridor Partnership Plan to identify ways for growth and economic development to enhance and sustain the physical, recreational and visual enjoyment the Seward Highway corridor provides to resident and visitor alike.

The Corridor Partnership Plan for the Seward Highway is Designed to:

- Develop a stronger sense of the Seward Highway as a community of linked resources.
- Assist local communities with participating in corridor-wide issues and plans.
- Provide a uniform voice endorsing corridor-wide projects benefiting multiple organizations, agencies, and individuals.
- Facilitate the implementation of the critical actions listed under the three keystone strategies.

- Increase communication among Seward Highway communities regarding tourism and economic development initiatives.
- Provide a framework by which economic development may be encouraged without compromising the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of the region.
- Invite an ongoing commitment by resource management agencies.
- Provide a stronger lobbying block to solicit funding for corridor-wide projects.
- Fulfill the Corridor Management Plan requirement for designation under the National Scenic Byways Program.
- Be a flexible plan that can be modified over time as necessary.

The Corridor Partnership Plan for the Seward Highway is *Not* Designed to:

- Prohibit new construction or development.
- Impose any regulation on any borough, land agency, city, town, or Native Corporation along the route.
- Require the adoption of any new local ordinances or special districts.
- Deny any community its right to pursue funding for local projects.
- Require participation in corridor-wide projects or programs.

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The Seward Highway at Tern Lake.

Photo: © Heilan Rhode

Introduction

The Seward Highway is, without question, one of the most spectacular driving experiences in the United States. From jagged peaks and alpine meadows to breathtaking fiords and crystal lakes, the Seward Highway offers a concentrated series of diverse landscapes and experiences found nowhere else in the nation. Visitors may experience Beluga whales in Turnagain Arm, Dall sheep at Windy Corner, or even a dog team in winter months along the route. Along the highway visitors will find interpretation explaining natural features, wildlife and the Alaska Gold Rush; and within a few miles the experienced outdoors enthusiast can find unparalleled recreation options. In this corridor, opportunities to witness a retreating glacier, experience a scenic and historic railroad, or visit a state-of-the-art aquarium exist side-by-side with the first spring blooms, sleepy summer afternoons along Turnagain Arm and crisp star filled winter nights.

“It’s the Most Beautiful Highway in the Country”

In the course of developing this corridor partnership plan, the consultant team met with numerous individuals, agencies and organizations along the Seward Highway who manage or have an interest in the Seward Highway—THE STAKEHOLDERS. Regarding the team’s initial inquiries as to the value Alaskans place on the route, the response was overwhelmingly positive. “It is the most beautiful highway in the country.” “What can I say, just drive it.” Virtually everyone contacted from state government officials as far away as Juneau, to a restaurant owner flipping pancakes in a log structure along the route, valued the Seward Highway for its aesthetic qualities and saw the route as the lifeblood of the Kenai Peninsula. It is at this point that the initial breathless reality of “It’s the most beautiful highway in the country” diverges into several different realities of the role the route plays in the lives and livelihood of the different stakeholders.

While all agree the Seward Highway possesses exceptional scenic resources, some also see it as an ideal development corridor bringing wealth and prosperity to the residents of the peninsula, and others see it as an area seriously threatened by development, degraded by outsiders, and vulnerable to unchecked growth. Addressing a uniform appreciation for the route’s scenic quality based on different views and realities is the great challenge faced by the Seward Highway.

These different realities can be a source of conflict or creative thought. After all, how can a scenic travel route also serve as the only highway artery for a population of 46,807?¹ How can a wilderness experience compare to a bus load of tourists snapping photos of whales and moose as they speed toward their cruise ship? How can the daily responsibility to manage a forest be reconciled with accommodating visitors (and an unwanted visitor, the spruce bark beetle)? How can new facilities provide opportunities without sacrificing the landscape? How can the safety of the route be improved while enhancing the scenic qualities of the landscape? And most fundamentally, how can all Alaskans best benefit from the resources of the Seward Highway corridor?

Addressing these issues objectively, honestly, and head-on is the purpose of this plan. The Seward Highway has a significant advantage over most other routes in the nation; everyone who drives it values its beauty. It is from this common ground that this Corridor Partnership Plan will strive to address the many issues raised and present a logical framework for responsible management that can be shared by all the stakeholders.

¹ Source: Kenai Peninsula Borough Planning Office. Population figures as of January 1997. Population of the Borough in 1980 was 25,282 (US Census Bureau).

What is a Corridor Partnership Plan?

Quite simply, a Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP) is a written document that outlines a specific plan of action to bring about the VISION defined when the byway planning process first began. The complexity of the CPP and the topics it addresses in detail vary from route to route. A Corridor Partnership Plan, as a document, carries with it NO regulation. It may contain recommendations, or a range of management options for consideration, but it *does not require, mandate, or regulate* actions by agencies or individual citizens.

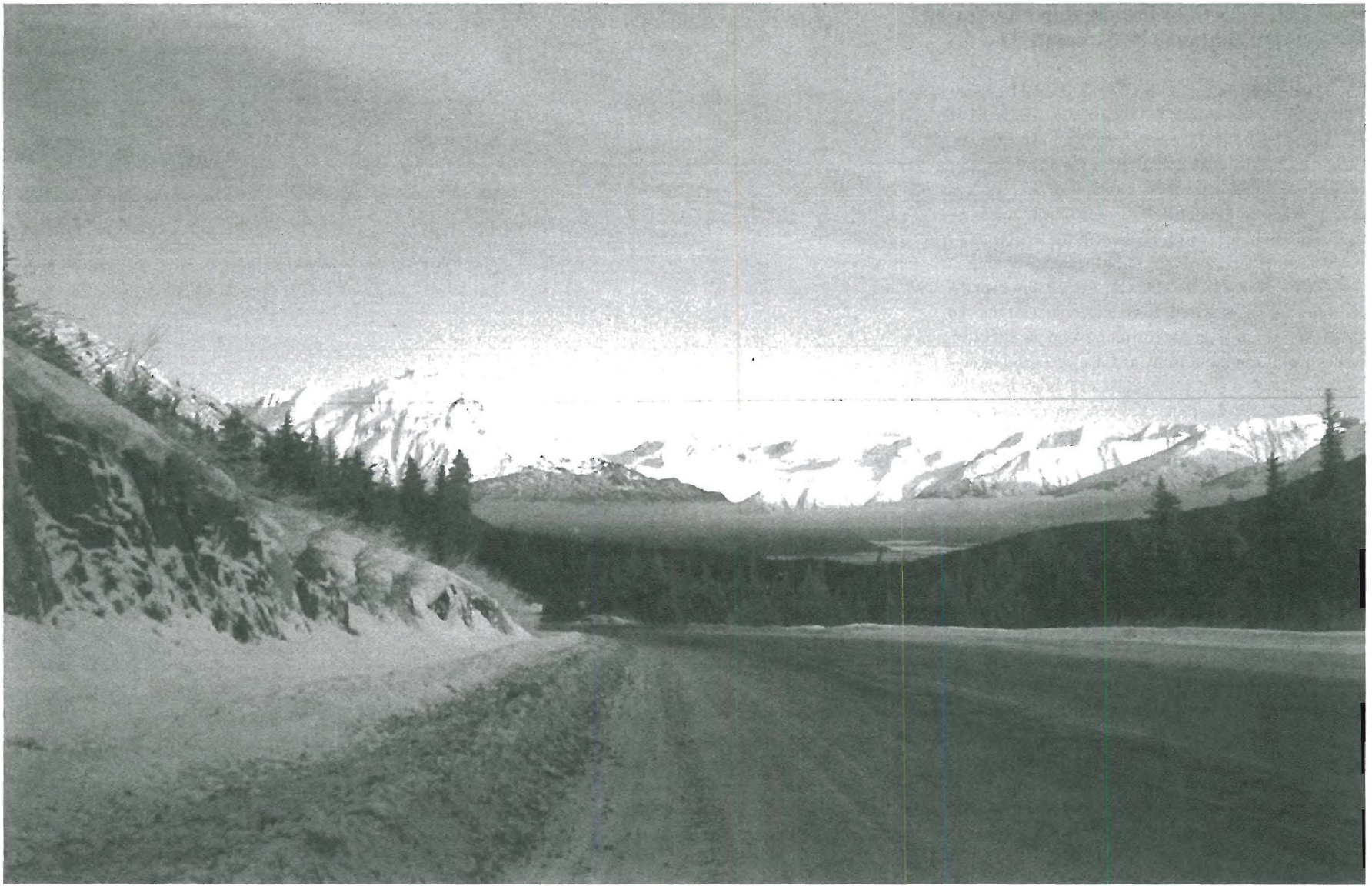
A Corridor Partnership Plan represents a beginning. Bringing about the VISION established to guide the future of a route requires an outline of steps, an approach, a plan of action. The CPP assembles all the concerns, thoughts, and ideas expressed regarding the byway in a single document. Thus, issues and objectives as diverse as increased tourism development, roadway safety, citizen benefits, and even an archaeological museum can be studied and planned for from a single community-based document. This helps all community members to work together, join forces on related projects, and avoid the conflicts that occur when different organizations, groups or governments are planning without consulting one another.

The Corridor Partnership Plan presents options and strategies for consideration. It addresses specific issues and suggests methods by which goals may be achieved. For example, if a community has identified increased tourism revenues as a goal, the CPP suggests ways in which it might be accomplished—developing a tourism board, preparing a marketing program, the development of needed tourism facilities such as rest rooms or restaurant facilities. The CPP cannot assign responsibilities or mandate funding—it simply identifies the *need* and may suggest a way or ways in which such a program might get started, or identify an ideal manager or funding source. The key to the success of the CPP will be in the follow-through of an energetic byway leadership that gets together and works to implement identified goals and programs. If such a program involves the assistance or approval of the state or local government, the CPP identifies the appropriate governmental agency to contact.

How Will a Corridor Partnership Plan for the Seward Highway be Structured?

This Corridor Partnership Plan for the Seward Highway will establish a framework and structure by which the FUTURE of the corridor can be effectively managed. As such, the CPP strives to pull together the many distinct resources, realities, fears and aspirations of the route's managers and communities, both individually and as a collective whole, and assemble them into a feasible and practical program that can be implemented over time.

To accomplish this, the Corridor Partnership Plan identifies a series of actions to be undertaken for the benefit of the Seward Highway corridor. Based on extensive research with and input from land managers and local communities along the route, these actions are intended to direct and identify specific projects. Such actions will increase the opportunities for the corridor stakeholders to preserve the quality of life and stunning natural character that distinguish the route and enhance opportunities for economic development and tourism.



The Seward Highway at Turnagain Pass.

Photo: © Dan Marriott

An Introduction to Scenic Byways: *Some Background and A Few Questions*

What is a Scenic Byway?

Scenic byways are special routes offering travelers access to the beautiful scenery and the cultural and natural riches of our country. They may be spectacular destinations sought after by travelers, and they may be local routes long admired by a community for a Sunday drive. They may be rural, suburban, and urban. They come with different names—rustic roads, scenic highways, historic roadways, or backways. As long as the community regards a roadway as a special resource to be promoted and protected, it can be a scenic byway.

What Types of Scenic Byways Programs are There?

Many programs exist to identify scenic byways at the local, state, and federal level. Such programs typically establish basic criteria for eligibility and have a system for nomination and designation. The commitment required of the community and the regulation administered by the governmental entity are as varied as the routes. For some byways, officially adopted plans, land use regulations, and inventories are required. In other communities, requests approved by the state department of transportation will suffice for designation and the erection of special signs to identify the route. In other communities, a good faith commitment by the citizens and the thoughtful stewardship of landowners may be sufficient to recognize a scenic byway.

In general, scenic byways may be recognized through one of the following programs:

Local Programs

Administered at the city, town, and county/borough/parish/tribal level, these programs exist to maintain the special qualities of routes of local importance and use.

Private Sector Programs

Maintained and administered as private entities, some scenic byways exist entirely within the private sector. These byways may be part of private corporate properties, or may be open (sometimes with a fee) to the public. Examples include: the Seventeen-Mile-Drive in California and the scenic roads of Calloway Gardens in Georgia.

State Programs

Administered by state departments of transportation, byway commissions, and economic and tourism development offices, these programs identify routes of significance at the local and state level. Frequently, state programs seek to represent various categories of resources—scenic, historic, natural—or to recognize the different geographic regions of the state. In some states, byways are nominated by local organizations for designation; in others, byways are designated by an administrative body; in others, byways are designated by individual acts of the legislature. Some state scenic byway programs require or encourage some form of land-use planning within the byway corridor; in other states, scenic byway designation implies no particular level of management or enhancement. A vast majority of states have, or are developing, scenic byway programs, but they vary widely in their criteria and implementation. A description of the Alaska Scenic Highways Program, administered by the ADOT&PF, is included later in this section.

Federal Programs

Programs to designate and manage scenic byways have been developed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service. BLM's program of Back Country Byways includes different types of roads—some accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicles—which lead the traveler to some of the unexplored areas of the West. The USFS has designated over 7,000 miles of scenic byways in national forests throughout the country. While not specifically designated as scenic byways, nine parkways and numerous park roads through scenic areas are managed by the National Park Service (NPS). The Seward Highway was designated a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1989.

The National Scenic Byways Program

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). The Scenic Byways Advisory Committee, working with the Federal Highway Administration, recommended that the program designate a system of National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. For a route to be eligible for designation as a National Scenic Byway, it must possess one or more of the six intrinsic qualities identified by the Scenic Byways Advisory Committee (scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and archaeological), have a community committed to its designation and management, and have developed a **corridor management plan**—in Alaska this will be referred to as a Corridor Partnership Plan.

In addition to National Scenic Byways, the program also designates All-American Roads (AAR). These roadways represent the finest examples of scenic byway corridors in the country and are marketed to both domestic and international travelers. All-American Roads must possess a minimum of **two** of the six intrinsic resources. In addition to qualities making them “destinations unto themselves,” (the road corridor should be of a caliber that travelers are willing to visit simply to experience driving the road) All-American Road designation will require that the programs and actions identified in the Corridor Partnership Plan are being implemented (in other words, programs and actions need not be in completed form, but should, at minimum, be in progress). Designation as an All-American Road will be rare. As of 1997 there were six All-American Roads designated in the United States.

Nominations for National Scenic Byway designation will come from the local level through the states, and most nominations will be existing state scenic byways. For example, for the Seward Highway to become an All-American Road, demonstrated interest at the local level (and a demonstration that programs supportive and appropriate for an AAR are already in place), designation as an Alaska Scenic Highway, and preparation of a Corridor Partnership Plan (this document) must be completed. Federal agencies may also nominate byways with the concurrence of the state.

The Alaska State Scenic Highways Program

The State Scenic Byways Program was created in 1993 (as a result of ISTEA policy encouraging all states to develop scenic byways programs) as a cooperative, interagency program to promote economic development, and improve access to and appreciation of the state's unique features. Established by ADOT&PF policy (DPOL

01.03.020), the program gives the department authority to designate as scenic those segments of the state highway system which have outstanding scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, natural, or archaeological qualities. The program is nonrestrictive in nature and does not impede future construction or maintenance which may be required, nor does it restrict land use along the corridor. The program requires long range, multi-modal planning, and program promotion.

The program is intentionally uncomplicated. Nominations for highway designation can come from any public or private entity or individual. The ADOT&PF evaluates the route, determines which intrinsic qualities exist within the corridor, and holds public meetings to ensure local support. The ADOT&PF Commissioner then designates the route as an official State Scenic Byway. Although the commissioner has the authority to designate any route as a scenic byway, designations are not made without documented public support. Resolutions from cities or boroughs, letters of support from land owners or managers, or other written support are encouraged to demonstrate local commitment to the byway.

Thus far, only the Seward Highway has been designated as an Alaska Scenic Highway. The Seward Highway was designated by the state in 1993. Other highways interested in applying for the program should contact the state scenic byways coordinator at the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in Juneau.

What Does Designation as a Scenic Byway Mean?

Scenic byway designation at any level (local, state, or federal) provides recognition of the special qualities and resources of a particular byway and corridor. This official acknowledgment carries with it a heightened awareness of the route and recognition of the community that sought the designation. It also carries with it special federal funding for scenic byways. Alaska has already received **\$2,442,302**² (FY93-FY96) in National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant Funding. This money has been used to help establish the state scenic byways program and has been used for the development of three scenic overlooks on the Seward Highway (Bird Creek, McHugh Creek, and Bird Point).

For many routes, scenic byway designation will provide new tourism opportunities, increased visitation, and economic development. It should always be a source of pride. Scenic byway designation can, in some states and jurisdictions, provide:

- additional funding,
- identification on state highway maps and other regional and promotion maps,
- increased maintenance and highway construction by some state DOTs,
- technical assistance for management, and
- promotion and development assistance from tourism and economic development offices.

Designation as a National Scenic Byway by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation will acknowledge the national significance of a byway corridor.

² Alaska was the twelfth highest recipient of National Scenic Byways Discretionary Funds in the Nation. The other high ranking states FY92 – FY 96: Arizona (\$3,419,186), Colorado (\$3,508,938), Louisiana (\$2,775,269), Minnesota (\$3,044,611), New York (\$5,130,021), Pennsylvania (\$3,235,200), South Dakota (\$3,965,670), Utah (\$2,722,342), Vermont (\$2,898,808), Virginia (\$2,482,508), and Washington (\$6,530,630).

How do Scenic Byways Relate to TRAAK?

The Alaska Scenic Byways Program was incorporated as a part of Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska (TRAAK), and brings with it the opportunity for additional funding for planning and projects from the National Scenic Byways Program grants. Additionally, scenic byway issues are incorporated into TRAAK corridor assessments.

In 1995, the State of Alaska established the TRAAK program with two main goals:

- 1. To improve access to trails and recreation for Alaskans, and**
- 2. To build and maintain Alaska's roads and trails to make Alaska a premier destination for visitors.**

TRAAK is a cooperative program which brings together four state agencies, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Department of Fish & Game, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, as partners to get the job done. Each of the agencies works closely with federal agencies to improve existing and develop new recreational opportunities on public land.

Corridor assessments for the ten major National Highway System routes in Alaska are being developed. The assessments focus on the highway corridors only, identifying existing facilities and noting opportunities for future (near term and long term) improvement. They may be expanded to include land ownership and management responsibilities, off-road trail opportunities, and concerns and issues of state and federal agency partners. These reports will be used as a long range planning tool for project development.

The TRAAK Citizens Advisory Board is appointed by the Governor to advise the State of Alaska on the implementation of the TRAAK program and to ensure that public concerns are addressed in the program. The board includes members of the public as well as non-voting members from the Departments of Transportation & Public Facilities and Natural Resources. The Board can review and recommend priorities for all TRAAK funding programs, and has specific authority to approve grant awards under the Symms and Land and Water Conservation Fund programs.

The TRAAK program receives funding from several sources. The agencies involved with TRAAK dedicate staff time and expenses to the administration of TRAAK. Projects that are designed and built under the TRAAK program are funded by legislative appropriation through one or more of the following federal programs:

Transportation Enhancement program of ISTEA.

Under Transportation Enhancements (TE), up to \$20 million per year are made available for TRAAK projects in Alaska. Projects funded under TE include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, scenic waysides, trail heads, rest areas and sanitation facilities, and interpretive sites and landscape development along roadways. The mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff is eligible for TE funds independent of TRAAK. TRAAK represents, in large part, the primary long-range planning efforts occurring for Transportation Enhancements in Alaska.

Federal Aid Sportfish Restoration Act (also known as the Wallop-Breaux fund). This program represents a portion of the money received from the sale of sport fishing gear and licences. For Alaska this program nets approximately 10 million dollars annually, of which a minimum of 12% is dedicated to sport fishing and boating access. Alaska has devoted between \$1.2 and 2 million a year to fishing access under this program. Funds can be used for easement or land acquisition, and for building and improving fishing access trails and boat launches.

National Recreational Trails Fund (Symms) Act.

Under this grant program, \$150,000 per year is available for building and improving hiking, skiing, snowmobile, and off-road-vehicle trails in Alaska. This is a competitive grant program where grants are awarded to organizations and agencies. The funds are based on the percentage of the tax on fuel that comes from off-road recreational vehicle use.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). This program provided up to 50% matching funds (less state administrative fee) to state agencies and local communities for the acquisition and/or development of outdoor recreation facilities. Congress has not appropriated money for the LWCF since 1995. During the period 6/1/90 through 9/1/95 the program annually awarded \$300,000 to state and local community outdoor recreation projects in Alaska.

Questions Specific to Alaska**What's the Value of a Scenic Byway Label?***Aren't All the Roads in Alaska Scenic Anyway?*

Most of the roads in Alaska offer a beauty so striking and so unspoiled it is hard to imagine the benefit a scenic byway designation might bring. But try not to think of this as a program simply erecting signs and seeking designations. Think of this as a program to better manage the Seward Highway for the economic and aesthetic benefit of future generations of Alaskans. It is a program to motivate and empower agencies, local governments, and citizens to have a say in their future. The Scenic Byway process is a way in which to study changes and resolve conflicts **before** the great scenic quality of the route is lost. It is a way to ensure that economic development provides long term benefits to the people of the corridor rather than short term benefits based on expediency and wasteful land use practices.

Alaska is so Big, Why Should We Plan for Scenic Roads?

We could never see the congestion of the Outside. Alaska may be vast in acreage, but the linear corridors served by the state’s road network represent access to a tiny percentage of Alaska’s land mass. In fact, tiny Vermont, with a population almost equal to Alaska’s, has over 1,000 miles more of total roadway (paved interstate to dirt road) than Alaska. Alaskans and visitors to the state use a surprisingly small percentage of the vast lands of the state. This intensity of use has led to the congestion already evident along the Seward Highway and in a worst case scenario has led to the commercial strip development along the Parks Highway. Such development is changing the face of Alaska, and has already transformed some areas of the “Last Frontier” into “Anyplace USA”. And while it is true such negative changes are relatively few, they are nonetheless significant impacts on an area frequented by most of the state’s residents and visitors.

Is Scenic Byways Designation Going to Prevent New Development?

We need new services and opportunities for our people, not another land-lock. Absolutely not! A Corridor Partnership Plan for a scenic byway recognizes that visitor use and some resident desires are demanding new development. A scenic byways program seeks to accommodate responsible development in a sensitive manner. After all, Alaska is a special place; why should it look like the lower 48? Corporate America today is distinguished by look-alike facilities with little variation between Florida and Alaska. Yet Corporate American can, and has, demonstrated a willingness to work with communities desiring thoughtful development—communities that have a plan. Alaskans have a choice regarding new development. It can be accommodated in a manner that is appropriate for Alaska, or it can imported with the same generic thoughtlessness already so prevalent throughout so much of the nation. This plan provides a strategy by which Seward Highway can acquire the employment and tax benefits of new development while respecting the unique resources of the Seward Highway corridor.

What about existing plans already addressing lands along the Seward Highway?

Have these efforts been considered in this process? How does this plan fit in? The Corridor Partnership Plan provides a forum to coordinate existing plans and ideas that cover limited segments or management responsibilities along the highway. To date, there has been no Corridor Partnership Plan coordination to address all opportunities and challenges, and to pool available management and financial resources along the full length of the corridor. This CPP represents a nonbinding strategy seeking to respect the qualities that distinguish the route, and recognizing that many existing programs and managers already have the best interests of the route at heart. Thus, the CPP process provides an effective vehicle for efficient cooperation among existing entities. It is not intended to create a new level of bureaucracy. It is, most simply, a streamlining process by which Seward Highway byway initiatives can either be effectively coordinated under existing programs, or where appropriate provide methods for addressing new initiatives.



A delicate thread through a vast landscape: The Seward Highway at Turnagain Pass.

Photo: courtesy Chugach National Forest/US Forest Service

3

The Four Theses: An Introduction to the Seward Highway

4.1 The Four Basic Theses for the Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan

The four basic theses (or four givens, if you will) for the Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan acknowledge the condition of the Seward Highway today and its likely future direction assuming current forces and realities continue unchanged. These four theses provide a reference point from which to evaluate the Seward Highway and a framework from which to plot its future. The four theses are:

1. The Seward Highway is composed of five distinct segments
2. Tourism in Alaska will continue to increase, as will Alaska's resident population
3. The Seward Highway is a multi-purpose corridor serving both residents and visitors for numerous recreational and commercial purposes.
4. The successful management of the Seward Highway is dependent on the cooperation of existing institutions, resource managers and committed individuals.

1. The Seward Highway is composed of five distinct segments

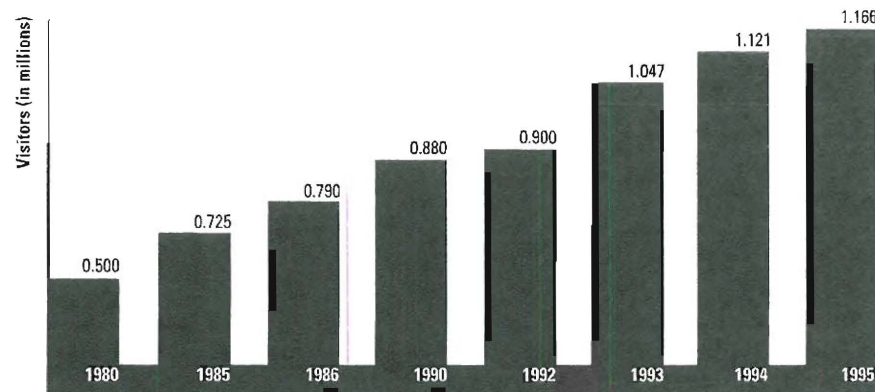
Today, the Seward Highway is composed of essentially five geographical areas. These segments, defined by landscape and use, not by ownership and political jurisdiction, provide an alternative strategy to viewing the route and its needs. The identified segments are:

- The Anchorage Gateway
- Turnagain Arm
- The Mountain Pass and Summit
- Communities and Lakes
- The Seward Gateway

2. Tourism in Alaska Will Continue to Increase, as will Alaska's resident population

Visitation to Alaska and to the Seward Highway will continue to rise based on all available tourism tracking and census data. Alaska's spectacular scenery, unique history, and mystique as America's last frontier all contribute to the strong appeal of the state as a place to live and visit. Tourists or "visitors" are generally considered to be anyone who is traveling more than 100 miles away from home. The impact of tourism is particularly high during the summer months. According to a study completed by the Alaska Visitors Association, 7 out of 10 visitors came to Alaska during the peak four-month period from June to September.

The Seward Highway is heavily used by local residents as well as visitors from other parts of Alaska and from outside the state. Many out-of-state visitors to the Seward Highway have only a minimal impact on the



Visitation to Alaska more than doubled between 1980 and 1995.

route. Visitors from the cruise ships travel in motor-coaches with only a few stops along the way for breaks and photo opportunities. Other visitors, as well as many local residents, take advantage of some of the recreational opportunities offered along the Seward Highway and are more intense users. They venture away from the roadside, up into the mountains, on the lakes and down the rivers. They spend more time and have a greater impact on the highway area per person than those visitors who simply pass through in a matter of several hours.

Anchorage will continue to grow in population, and in turn, its residents will travel the highway for recreation in increasing numbers. Already, almost a quarter (24%) of Chugach National Forest visitors are residents from the Anchorage metro area. Between 1980 and 1990 the population of Alaska increased by 46.3% (from 401,851 to 550,043), a rate second only to Nevada's for the same period.³ The Seward Highway has been described by some as "Anchorage's backyard playground", an apt description for the strong draw that the area has for residents.

Private and public tourism organizations are promoting Alaska heavily. Cruise ship tours are a booming form of tourism in Alaska and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. Between 1989 and 1995 cruise ship visitor volumes increased a whopping 86%, translating to an average annual growth rate of almost 11%.⁴ As the baby boomers retire, this state—which is more difficult for many people to reach, and therefore more appealing to some than other states—will see rising levels of visitation just as all national parks and U.S. Forest lands have seen in recent years. Regarding tourism, the Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan should be viewed as an opportunity, a mid-point pause, to evaluate the pluses and minuses regarding the impact of additional visitation. Tourism must be acknowledged and managed in ways that balance its economic force with the needs and rights of the natural environment and the Kenai Peninsula and corridor communities.

3. The Seward Highway is a multi-purpose corridor serving both residents and visitors for numerous recreational and commercial purposes.

The Seward Highway is both a tourism route and a primary highway that must serve the needs of residents and businesses. It is the only roadway connecting the Kenai Peninsula to the rest of Alaska. The corridor carries utility lines; trucks use this route to access the seaports, and industrial and commercial uses in the communities of Seward and Homer. The cruise industry uses the route as a vital transportation link from the docks in Seward to the Anchorage airport. Residents and other visitors drive the route to see the dramatic views and watchable wildlife as well as to take part in the many recreational opportunities afforded by the route. Coordinated planning for the diverse needs of these users is important to maintain the highest quality of tourism, recreation, commerce, safety, and economic opportunity along the entire route.

³Source: U.S. Census Bureau

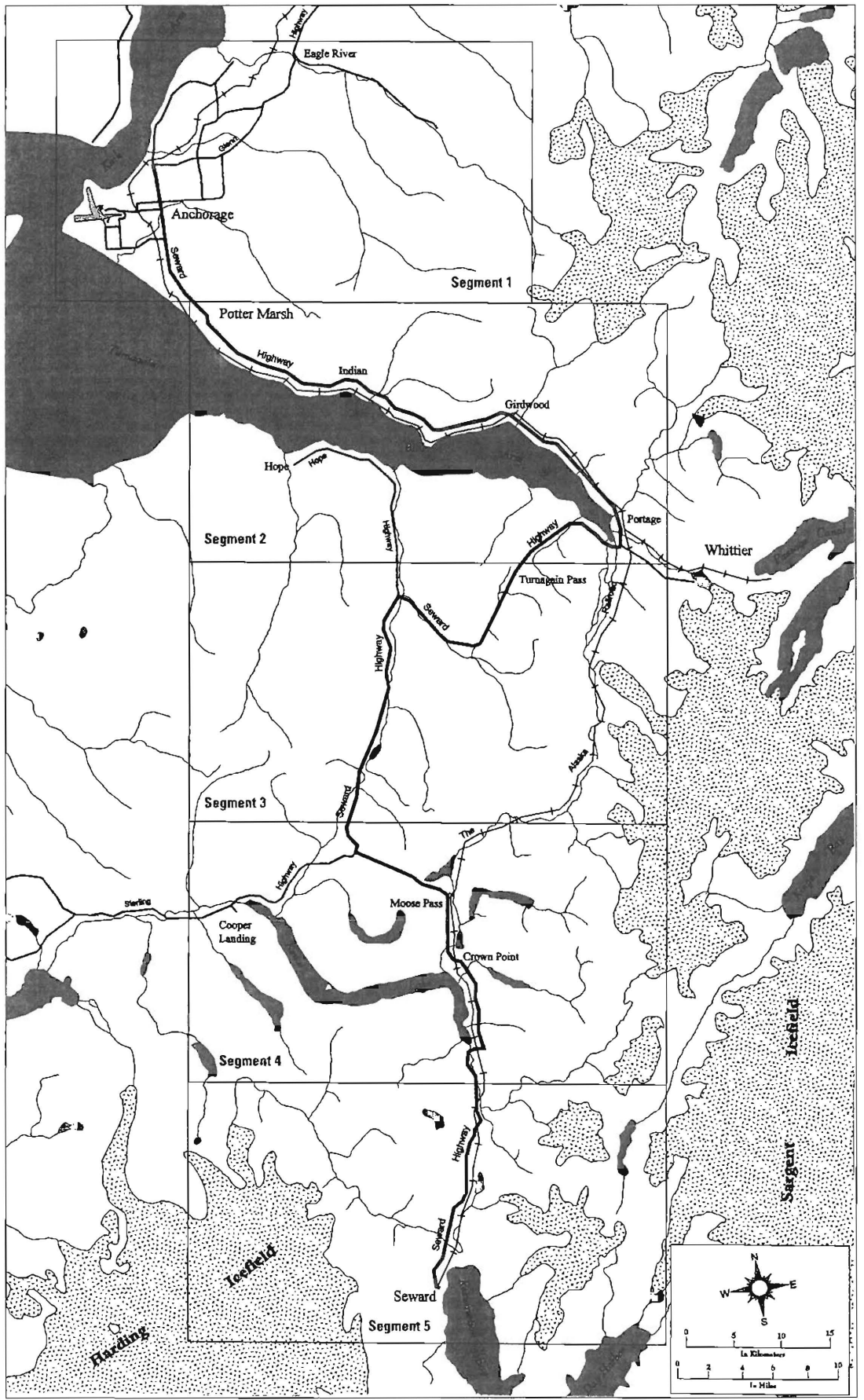
⁴Source: *A Comprehensive Overview of Alaska's Visitor Industry: Impacts and Outcomes of the State's Travel and Tourism Trade*, p. 6, May 1996.

4. The successful management of the Seward Highway is dependent on the cooperation of existing institutions, resource managers and committed individuals.

The Seward Highway corridor is currently managed and owned by a variety of government agencies (local, state, and federal) and private property owners. The roadway and right-of-way is under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. The two single largest land owners adjacent to the route are the United States Forest Service and Alaska DNR-Parks. Intrinsic qualities know no jurisdictional barriers and therefore must be understood and recognized in a cooperative effort to ensure their well-being and continued contribution to the economic health of the Kenai Peninsula and scenic quality of Alaska. This plan seeks to recognize the professional and technical contributions of each of the key players along the corridor (including, but not limited to ADOT&PF for highway safety, USFS for forest health and recreation, DNR-Division of Land for land transfers, DNR- Parks for recreation, and local governments for daily management) and encourage a broader dialogue with the recognition that actions by individual offices and organizations frequently impact others along the route.

The major management agencies within this corridor—ADOT&PF, USFS, DNR-Parks, DNR-Division of Land—have faced reductions in their funding in recent years. This is occurring at a time when demand for their services along the Seward is increasing. In addition, the economies associated with cooperation and cost sharing are difficult to attain given each agency's budgeting and rules procedures that can provide administrative barriers to agencies wishing to work together. While agencies have successfully overcome aspects of these procedural barriers with past projects, a successful CPP for the Seward Highway must recognize the realities and nuances needed for successful partnering.

Map showing the five distance segments of the Seward Highway.



Map, courtesy Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Thesis 1:

The Seward Highway is composed of five distinct segments

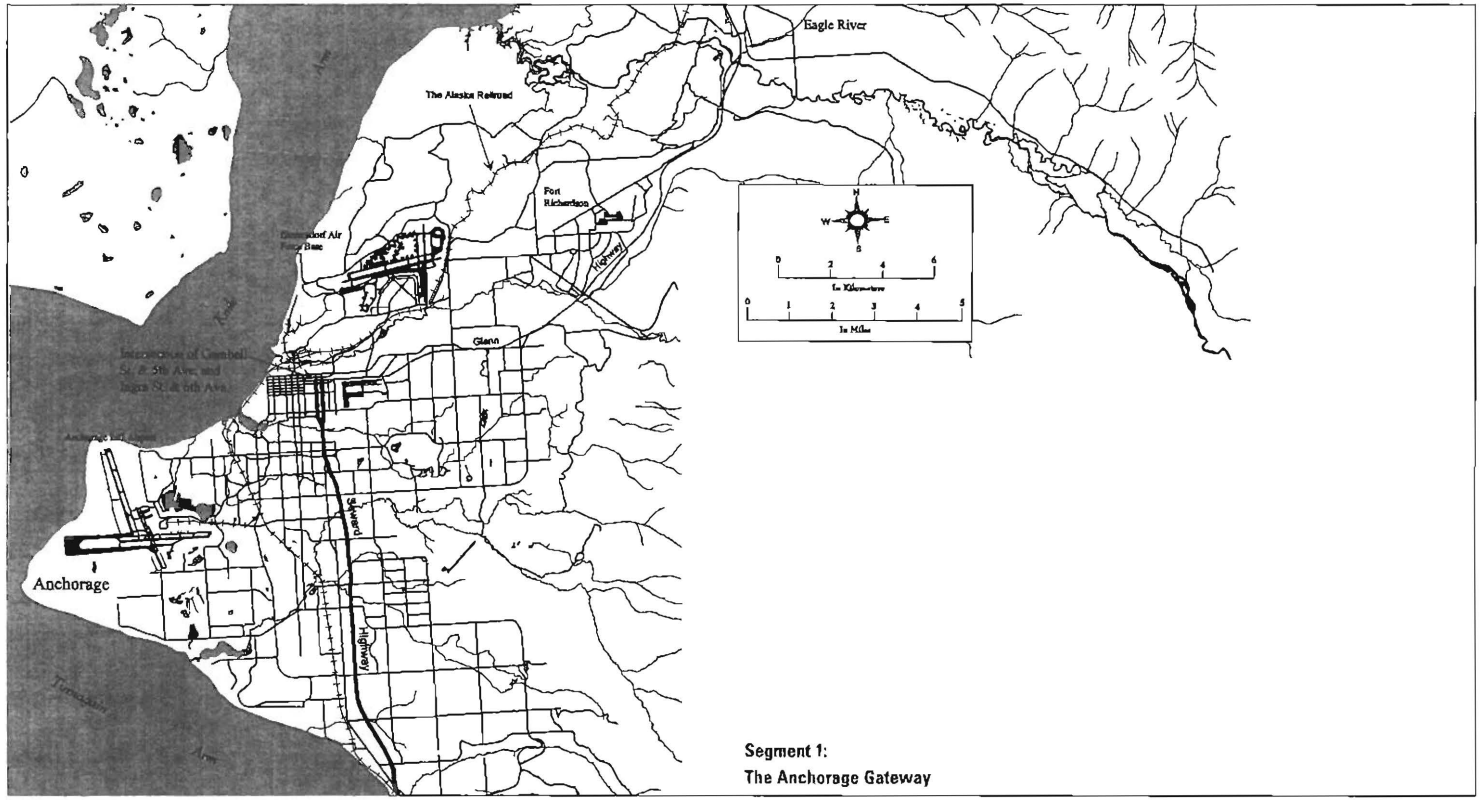
The Seward Highway is a richly varied and highly diverse roadway. Its character changes over the course of its length. Roadside topography, the proximity of water, the types of views, the levels and types of development and the width and character of the road are some of the ways in which the Seward expresses different moods and qualities over 127 miles between Anchorage and Seward. Acknowledging and working with this varying character can help to define management strategies that are appropriate for different communities and different parts of the byway.

To help with this process of creating and targeting strategies, the Seward Highway has been divided into five segments. These segments do not represent hard and fast divisions of the highway, nor do they suggest revisions to jurisdictional boundaries. They simply define the relatively self-evident transitions along the route—the change between freeway and Potter Marsh, for example—that the average traveler is already conscious of. The segments are merely planning concepts to help one think in a more focused way about different parts of the highway. While one objective of this Partnership Plan

is to encourage communities and government agencies to think about the Seward Highway as a whole, as one resource worthy of a unified strategy, the Plan is also designed to direct local, state and federal attention to the distinct character along different segments, and therefore the need for sensitivity and flexibility in corridor management policies.

Please note that for the clarity of definition and description, the five segments are described in a north-to-south order. Traveler views and experiences can vary dramatically by direction, and the Seward Highway is equally spectacular regardless of direction traveled. The trip from south to north along the Seward Highway, for example, possess spectacular views of Turnagain Arm from segment 3 and provides views of the Anchorage skyline and distant Mt. McKinley in segment 1.

The five distinct segments are:



Segment 1:
The Anchorage Gateway

Segment 1: The Anchorage Gateway

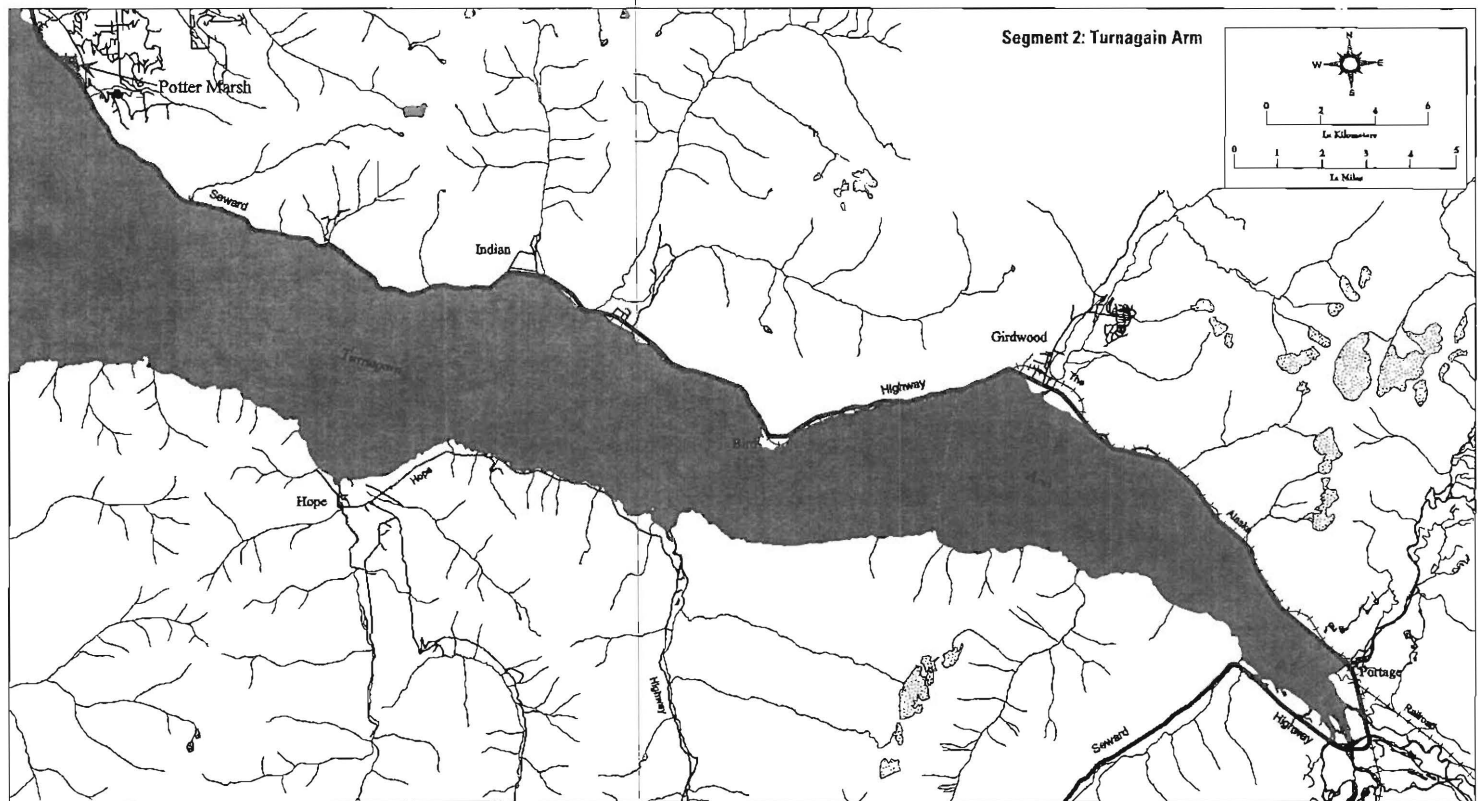
This is the gateway and introduction to the Seward Highway for visitors coming from Anchorage. The Seward Highway runs north-south through the center of the Anchorage metropolitan area. The urban setting varies from the modern, commercial high-rise buildings of Downtown and Midtown to forested residential uplands in south Anchorage before the highway descends to tidewater along Potter Marsh.

Just east of the Seward Highway in this segment the Chugach Range is dominated by such jagged peaks as

Wolverine, O’Mally, Ptarmigan, and North and South Suicide. Farther away to the northeast can be seen the Talkeetna Mountains. Looming against the northern horizon 180 miles away are the two ice-covered monoliths, Mt McKinley and Mt. Foraker, the first and fourth highest peaks in North America. Segment 1 is the only segment of the Seward Highway from which they are visible.

The full range of visitor services—food, fuel, lodging, service and banking are immediately available off the

Seward Highway in the Anchorage Gateway segment. In addition, the Anchorage terminus of the corridor is close in proximity to the Alaska Railroad terminal and directly links many of the historic and cultural resources of Alaska’s biggest city with the remainder of the Seward Highway corridor. It also provides a direct link to the Anchorage International Airport, one of the principal gateways to Alaska. This is an essential element for the accommodation of international visitors required of an All-American Road.



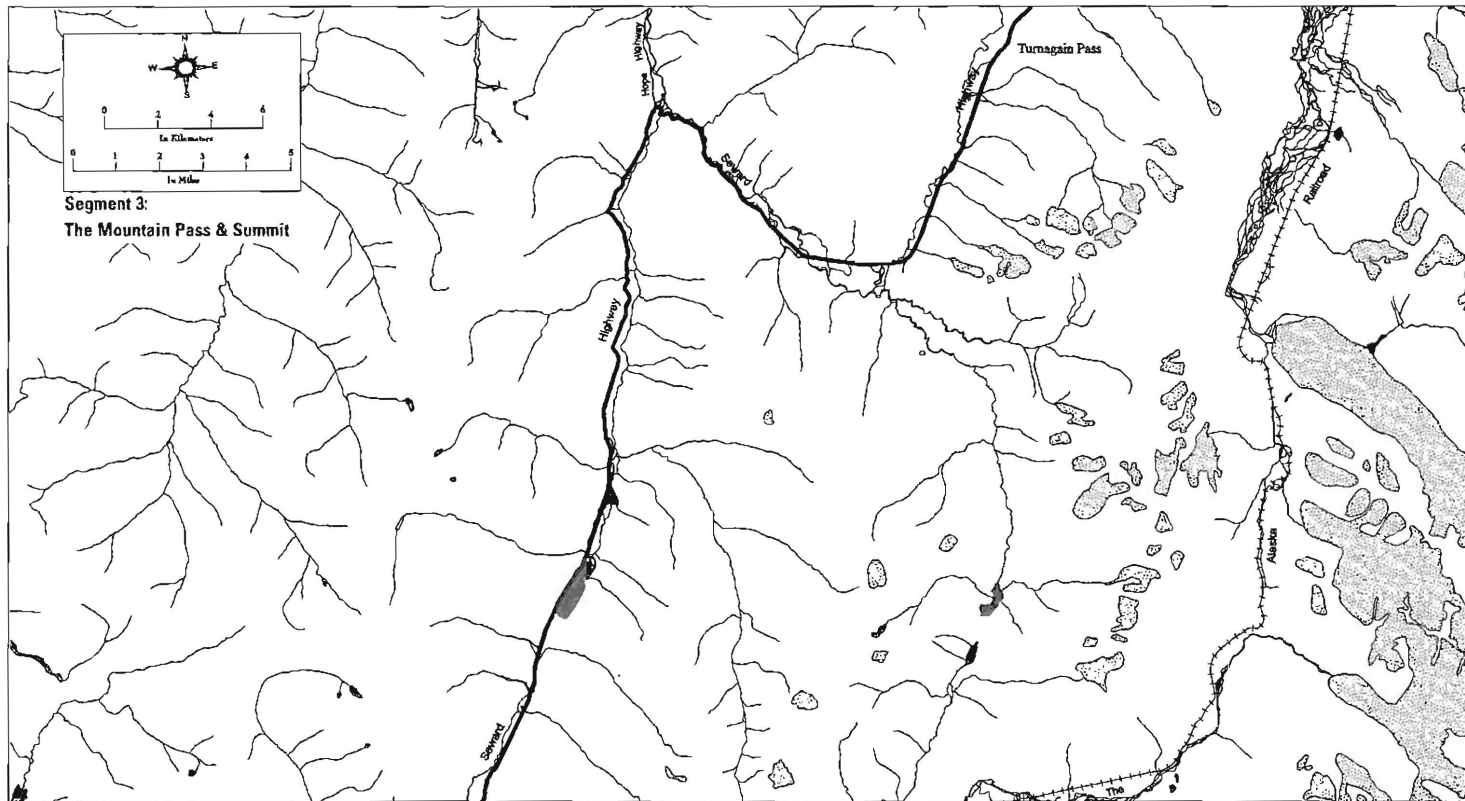
Segment 2: Turnagain Arm

It is at the Turnagain Arm segment where the natural beauty of the route becomes more than a distant view. The road narrows dramatically and the traveler finds him or herself suddenly embraced by the natural landscape with water to west and rock faces to the east. The distant profiles of the Kenai Peninsula's mountains become more intimate and mysterious as they slip in and out of view as the traveler winds along Turnagain Arm. The

waters of the Arm are home to Beluga whales and an impressive bore tide, both of which can be viewed from numerous pullouts located directly above the water. The northern side of the highway is largely composed of the steep mountain slopes of Chugach State Park where Dall sheep routinely entertain both local residents and visitors.

The segment is approximately 41 miles long and extends from Potter Marsh to the beginning of the Kenai Peninsula. This area lies primarily within the Chugach State Park, but also includes the communities of Indian,

Bird, Girdwood and Portage, as well as other public lands, including Anchorage Heritage Land Bank, DNR-Division of Land, Chugach National Forest, and other federal lands such as the Portage Glacier Visitors Center and U.S. Fish and Wildlife properties. The Alaska Railroad also parallels the highway through much of this segment.



road immediately climbs onto the Kenai Peninsula. The mountain experience begins at this point. Whereas Segments 1 and 2 offer distant views of mountains across the Arm, Segment 3 puts the viewer on the mountain and headed into a dramatic landscape of jagged peaks. One of the unusual aspects of the Seward Highway is that it encompasses the full range of ecosystems from sea level to alpine over the course of 20 miles. From the beginning of Segment 3 at sea level the road climbs to nearly 1,000 feet surrounded by mountains that reach over one mile in height.

One's attention goes to individual mountains and

Segment 3: The Mountain Pass and Summit

Segment 3 of the Seward Highway is approximately 42 miles long and consists primarily of undeveloped areas in the Chugach National Forest. This area, more than any other along the Seward, presents a feeling of vast, untouched wilderness. While there are areas that are sparsely settled (e.g., Summit Lake and nearby housing), the majority of the segment is open and undeveloped. Not always undeveloped, however, as careful viewing by history buffs near Canyon Creek will reveal alder-filled corridors adjacent to the highway—the remains of an

elaborate system of ditches constructed during the Gold Rush era. The longest, highest views of the Scenic Highway are found in this segment. The views of the Chugach Mountain Range as one drives north from Turnagain Pass are some of the most spectacular in North America.

The landscape of Segment 3 is dramatically different and clearly defined compared with Segment 2. As one crosses the southern most part of Turnagain Arm, the

valleys rather than an entire range. The feeling of climbing continues through Turnagain Pass, along Sixmile Creek, the Hope Highway Junction, along Canyon Creek and on to Summit Lake. Summit Lake holds a restaurant and a number of year-round and seasonal homes stretching along the lake. From there until the Sterling Highway Junction, the road remains at a relatively steady high elevation as it winds through valleys and basins. The distinctive qualities of this segment are its openness and the degree to which it travels through a truly majestic mountain landscape.



Segment 4: Communities and Lakes

This 32-mile segment begins at the Sterling Highway Junction and extends southward to Mile 12 on the hill above Seward. The area is characterized by its relatively flat topography as the road runs along Trail Lake, Kenai Lake and Snow River. The Alaska Railroad rejoins the corridor at this point and continues to run relatively close to and parallel to the Seward Highway into the City

of Seward. The community of Moose Pass and the surrounding chain of lakes flowing north to south are the main defining features of Segment 4. The community of Moose Pass lies directly on the Seward Highway and the community of Cooper Landing is closely connected to the Seward Highway corridor (approximately 12 miles away) via the Sterling Highway and Kenai Lake. Year-round and recreational housing are evident along much of the Segment. The transition from unsettled to settled landscape is completed when one drives from Segment 4 into Segment 5 and the City of Seward.

Kenai Lake is a dramatic fjord-like body of water with a unique aqua-marine hue. The Seward Highway hugs the lake edge at a slightly raised elevation for six miles. Kenai Lake stretches for almost 25 miles from Moose Pass to the community of Cooper Landing. The Seward Highway, Sterling Highway and Kenai Lake create a circular corridor connecting Cooper Landing to Moose Pass and the scenic highway.



Segment 5:
The Seward Gateway

Segment 5: The Seward Gateway

Segment 5 is 12 miles long and is anchored at the southern end by the City of Seward. Approximately 10 of the 12 miles run through Chugach Native Corporation Lands, state lands and lightly developed private lands. This portion descends gently from the Snow River junction through a transition of vegetation approaching sea level. The final two miles are at the edges of and within the City of Seward. This area is fully settled and consists

of a mixture of industrial, residential and commercial landscapes. Resurrection Bay extends out into the distance as one drives into Seward. The beginning of the Seward Highway, milepost zero, is adjacent to the new SeaLife Center.

Seward possess a number of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and residential structures. Of particular note is the Seward railroad depot constructed in 1917. It was here President Harding arrived in 1923 on his way to drive the spike marking the completion of the Alaska Railroad in Nenana. When asked

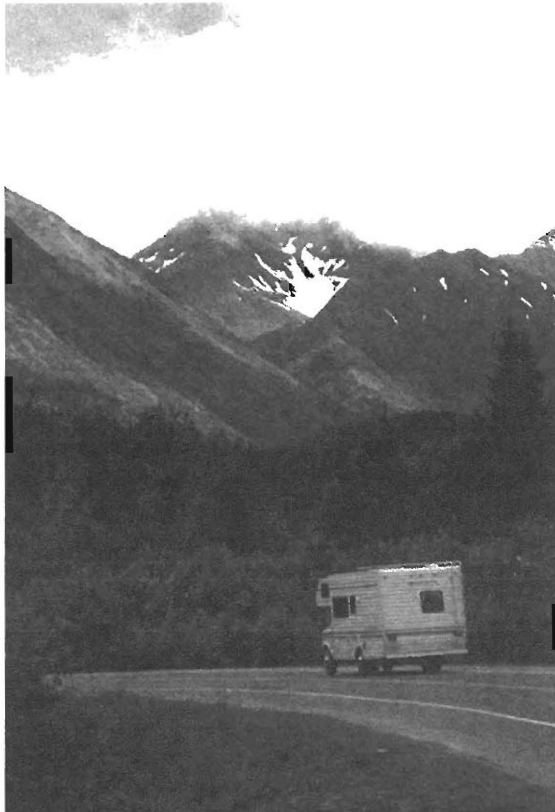
what he wanted to see and do in Seward he replied, “I want to be a normal person”. The good citizens of Seward respected the President’s wishes, and he wandered the town undisturbed.

The distinctions among and between the segments are significant. The concept of segments is used in this Partnership Plan to highlight the ways in which each area should be considered from a variety of perspectives: scenic quality, land use patterns, recreational experiences and community character.

Map: courtesy Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Thesis 2:

Tourism in Alaska Will Continue to Increase, as will Alaska's Resident Population



An RV traveling along the Seward Highway.

Photo: © Herb McLean

Tourism Along the Seward Highway

Recreational users, whether they are local residents getting out of Anchorage for the weekend, or visitors flocking to the route from more distant locations, are significantly changing the nature of the Seward Highway. While there are other forces influencing the Seward Highway (sprawl, commercial traffic, industrial development), recreational users are the driving force behind the Seward Highway and have the greatest potential for increase over time. This may be through direct influences such as an increase in motorcoaches and RV's impacting the free-flow of traffic, to indirect forces such as the tourism industry or scenic advocates challenging the impacts new industrial development or intensive timber management will have on the beauty of the corridor. The purpose of the tourism component of this plan is to better understand the forces "out there" and determine the most appropriate fit between recreational uses and the other uses of the Seward Highway.

Virtually every significant change experienced or proposed for the Seward Highway can be directly or indirectly traced to the route's appeal as a recreational destination.

- The increase in new tax revenues from tourism and recreational users
- The increase in demand for new recreation and tourism facilities.
- The increase in recreational use compromising the wildland experience.
- The increase in traffic necessitating highway construction projects.
- The increase in tax revenues financing new highway construction projects.
- Highway construction projects decreasing the aesthetic experience for the motorist by widening and straightening the road.

Arriving in Alaska

Alaska is a touring destination. Visitors coming to Alaska are seeking opportunities to get out and experience America's largest state. Because Alaska is physically removed from the Lower 48, the majority of out-of-state visitors arriving in Alaska come by plane or cruise ship rather than in their personal auto. This means that many independent travelers will rent a car during their stay, making car rental companies an important point of contact for visitor information. Major airports are also an extremely important point of contact for independent travelers, as many of them will pass through a major airport when they come to Alaska.

Out-of-state visitors arriving in Alaska learn about places to visit in different ways. Those who are visiting friends or family may rely on recommendations from trusted locals about the best places to see. Other independent travelers may rely on travel information they secured in advance of their visit as well as visitor information that is available at their hotel, or at a local visitor information center. The Seward Highway can provide a variety of experiences for these visitors, from a spur-of-the-moment scenic drive to a well-planned back country experience. Some independent visitors may arrive and then seek out tour packages to help them experience Alaska. These visitors may learn about the Alaska Railroad, which parallels the Seward Highway, or one of several motorcoach tours to destinations along the Seward Highway. Package travelers are less likely to seek

out independent experiences, unless they have opted to extend their stay in Alaska on their own. For these visitors, the tour operator providing the package may shape one or more options for touring the Seward Highway; the visitor has the option of choosing among these offerings. For conventioners and their spouses who may be attending a conference in Anchorage or along the Seward Highway, meeting planners depend upon the hotel or meeting location as well as local convention and visitor bureaus to provide tour options that will fit into the meeting schedule.

As noted, the recreational and scenic appeal of the Seward Highway directly or indirectly influences virtually all the change, or opposition to change, currently being experienced along the corridor. This scenic appeal, the compelling attraction and natural beauty of the route, is most easily discussed, quantified, and measured through tourism statistics and methodologies. If we can understand why people are coming, where they are coming from, and what they are doing, we will be able to unlock the “magic” behind the scenic attraction and best develop a strategy that acknowledges issues as diverse as economic development and scenic preservation.



Seward Harbor.

The following sections provide an introduction to the tourism attractions, existing and proposed, that are influencing change along the Seward Highway corridor.

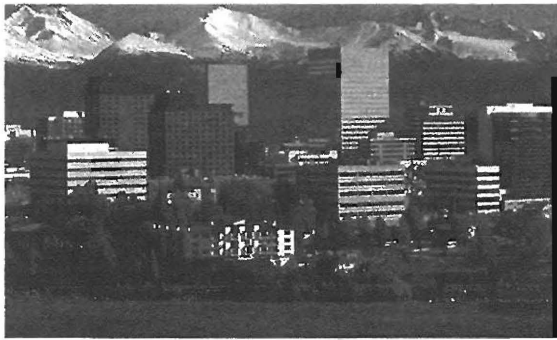
The Scenic Appeal of the Seward Highway

Diverse and unique attractions and accessibility have contributed to the popularity of the Seward Highway as a tourism destination, with the **scenic beauty** and **recreational opportunities** topping the list of reasons to visit. The natural beauty of the route ranges from dramatic views across the water along Turnagain Arm to soaring, snow-capped mountains above pristine mountain lakes. An abundance of **wildlife** and **ecosystems** are readily seen along the route.

World-class recreational opportunities abound throughout the year. Summer sports include fresh and salt-water fishing, hunting, hiking, rock climbing, biking, sea kayaking, whitewater kayaking, camping, river rafting, canoeing, backpacking, walking, parasailing and windsurfing. Winter activities include cross-country and downhill skiing, snowmachining, snowshoeing, dog mushing, ice climbing, ice skating and ice sailing.

Other unique attributes of the Seward Highway include:

- **The second highest tides in the world are at Turnagain Arm.** Interpretive panels describing the tides, with a tidal range of 38 feet, help visitors understand the significance of Turnagain Arm’s tidal flow. (The highest tide variation is in the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia.)
- **Bore tides.** Impressive, but rare, this natural phenomenon occurs during times of extreme low tides when the front of an incoming tide is a moving wall of water from 3 to 5 feet high moving up Turnagain Arm at speeds of 35 miles per hour.
- **Earthquake subsidence.** A strange landscape created by the Earthquake of 1964 lies on both sides of the Seward Highway near Portage. This land area sank 5 to 8 feet, placing it below sea level and flooding the area with salt water. The salt water killed all the vegetation. Today a ghost landscape of dead spruce and a few tilted structures give witness to the destruction of over thirty years ago.
- **The historic Iditarod Trail started in Seward.** The Iditarod Trail originally followed parts of the existing highway corridor. The original starting point for this world-renowned trail from Seward to Nome is marked with an interpretive sign in Seward at mile zero. Parts of the original route have been dedicated as recreational trails. Local recreation groups such as the Seward Chapter of the Iditarod Trail Blazers are working on a long term vision to reconstruct the Iditarod Trail from Seward to Anchorage.
- **Alyeska Ski Resort offers world class Olympic-quality skiing.** Alyeska has hosted national level United States Ski Association and collegiate downhill ski racing events; it has been the home for the “Extreme Skiing” Trials.



Anchorage.

The Seward Highway is home for some of Alaska's most popular attractions. Studies completed by the Alaska Division of Tourism identified **Portage Glacier** as Alaska's second most visited attraction (the Inside Passage was the most visited) during the summer of 1993. **The Anchorage Museum of History and Art** just off the route was cited at the eighth most visited attraction in Alaska for the Summer of 1993, capturing 26% of all visitors to Alaska (216,300 visitors for Summer 1993) (Source: Alaska Visitor Statistics Program: Alaska Visitor Patterns, Opinions and Planning; Summer 1993, p.19).

Anchorage, located at the northern terminus of the route and the principal point of entry to the route, has been cited as Alaska's most visited community, attracting 543,600 visitors (65%) of all visitors to Alaska during the summer of 1993. (Source: Alaska Visitor Statistics Program: Alaska Visitor Patterns, Opinions and Planning; Summer 1993, p.18). Anchorage offers a full range of visitor services including lodging, restaurants and other amenities to meet every budget. Anchorage serves as a hub for many destinations in the interior of

Alaska because of Anchorage's easy accessibility by air, cruise ship (via Seward) and highway from other points. Lower airfares into Anchorage as compared to other Alaska airports contribute to Anchorage as a popular point of entry for many visitors.

Compared to other scenic highway destinations in Alaska, the Seward Highway is quite accessible for visitors. As noted, the northern terminus of the route is in Anchorage, a stopping point for many Alaska visitors. The Seward Highway is relatively short (127 miles), and offers a range of options for visitors with varied interests. The route has been described as a "microcosm of Alaska", offering a taste of many different aspects of America's largest state in a concentrated area. The highway is paved, well-maintained, and is in the final years of a substantial, multi-year \$82 million road improvement program.⁵

New Attractions for the Seward Highway

In addition to road and infrastructure improvements taking place along the route, several major new attractions are being developed that will increase the number of visitors traveling the route. Coming attractions include the **Alaska SeaLife Center** (a \$50.4 million project), the **Alaska Native Heritage Center** (a \$13 million project) and several other proposed native cultural centers. The Alaska SeaLife Center, in Seward, anticipates an annual visitation that will place it among the top ten most visited Alaska attractions when the Center opens in

May 1998. According to SeaLife Center staff, the Center currently anticipates 260,800 people per year in paid attendance, representing 40% (2 out of 5) visitors currently coming to Seward. The Center hopes to capture 60% (3 out of 5) visitors coming to Seward after the first three years of operation, bring annual visitation to 390,000. As the only driving access to Seward, the Seward Highway will experience increased traffic as this new attraction establishes a position as a major visitor draw.

The Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage on the Glenn Highway will provide another major attraction in one of the two anchor communities for the Seward Highway. A projection of 112,000 visitors a year is anticipated for this living culture museum, which broke ground during the summer of 1997 and plans opening in the winter of 1998-1999. The Alaska Native Heritage Center will have exhibits on the five major culture groups in Alaska to interpret the 21 or more different tribes in Alaska. Five representative villages will be clustered around a man-made lake, with native employees demonstrating traditional activities and explaining how this relates to subsistence living.

Two separate native heritage projects have been proposed at other points on and just off the Seward Highway. The **Chugach Native Center** will be located in the historic railroad depot in Seward, adjacent to the new SeaLife Center. A **Kenaitze Heritage Center** has been proposed for a location just off the Seward on the Kenai Peninsula.

Directly on the Seward Highway the Alaska Department of Fish and Game is planning a new interpretative center and resource facility for birds at Potter Marsh, ADOT&PF and DNR-Parks are coordinating on

⁵This does not include Segment 1, The Anchorage Gateway, where an additional 20 - 30 million was spent.

a sheep viewing facility at Windy Corner, and a separated bike trail from Bird to Girdwood will be located along a soon to be abandoned section of the Seward Highway. New Gold Rush interpretation is planned at Canyon Creek near the Hope Highway Junction. It was here, directly beneath the newly completed highway bridge (mile 55.8), that a rich gold deposit was discovered in 1895. That discovery set off the Turnagain Arm Gold Rush of 1896, which predated by a year the rush to the Klondike.

Visitor Travel Types for the Seward Highway

Seward Highway attracts five basic visitor markets: 1) area residents, 2) independent travelers or independents, 3) inde-package, 4) package, and 5) the convention and meeting market. While each of these markets share common interests in the byway, each market segment has different needs and different concerns about the route. These markets can be further broken down into domestic and international travelers.

1. Area Residents

Area residents use the Seward Highway as their “backyard playground”, taking advantage of the many recreational opportunities in a breathtakingly beautiful setting. Many of these visitors are day users. This group tends to be more knowledgeable about the recreational resources and the potential hazards along the route and has easier access to recreational equipment. These factors allow this group to take fuller advantage of the recre-

ational opportunities in the area and be the most intense users of the area in general. For example, residents might take advantage of wilderness camping opportunities, or keep boats in Seward for weekend excursions.

Issues raised for this group include:

- the need for additional day-use areas in the National Forest (such as picnic facilities)
- the need for additional trailheads along Turnagain Arm to access recreational opportunities
- future use of state lands: Six Mile Creek boat launch areas, Manitoba Mountain, backcountry skiing, Trail Lakes area.

2. Independent Travelers or Independents

Independent travelers drive the route to see the sights and pursue individual interests. These travelers make their travel arrangements independently and are not part of an organized group. These travelers are more dependent upon information from guidebooks, signage along the route and information available at sites along the way.

Issues raised for this group include:

- the need for more left turn lanes to allow independent travelers to stop at attractions on the opposite side of the road without impeding traffic or causing a traffic hazard
- a means of educating independent travelers about potential hazards inherent in a wildland area (already addressed in interpretive signage and brochures in information centers).
- the ability to locate public restroom and RV dump sites along the route.

3. Inde-Package Travelers

Some independent travelers may purchase package options such as sightseeing tours while in Alaska, making them “Inde-Package” travelers. These visitors may elect to ride the Alaska Railroad or take advantage of one of the tours offered by tour operators such as Grayline as a part of their visit to Alaska. The needs of this group, independent travelers traveling the Seward Highway as part of a package tour, are roughly the same as the needs of package travelers.

An issue raised for this group is:

- an ability to connect Inde-Package travelers with appropriate package tour experiences that will meet their needs and interests.

4. Package Travelers

A number of visitors travel to Alaska as a part of a package tour, such as a cruise. Both Princess Tours and Holland America offer cruises that begin or end in Seward, and involve one-way air transportation from Anchorage. For these travelers, the Seward Highway is both a scenic overland portion of the travel experience and an important transportation link. Princess Tours carries an estimated 125,000 passengers a year over the Seward Highway, and Grayline an additional estimated 115,000 passengers for a total of 240,000 passengers from these two tour operators alone. For the majority of the visitors traveling by motorcoach or railcar, they are accompanied by a guide who provides information about the route. In some cases, the guide is trained by the tour operator, in others, the guide is an interpreter who has accompanied the group from their point of departure.

Issues raised for this group include:

- having enough pullouts in scenic locations, and being sure that pullouts allow a long enough area to allow the motorcoach to gain speed before rejoining traffic
- having a full-service rest stop with restrooms that can accommodate busloads of visitors at one time
- additional facilities for winter tourism to expand the shoulder season and increase the appeal of winter tourism. For example, the proposed Native Centers as well as the Alaska SeaLife Center will provide additional year-round attractions that are not dependent upon either daylight or good weather.

5. Convention and Meeting Market

The convention and meeting market attracts yet another audience to sites along the Seward Highway. Major meeting facilities can be found in Girdwood at the Alyeska Resort, at the Princess Lodge just off the Seward Highway on the Sterling Highway, as well as at every major hotel in Anchorage. Once open in 1998, the Alaska SeaLife Center will have meeting facilities to accommodate small conventions of up to 300 people. The SeaLife Center has identified two additional markets to target: those visiting friends and relatives in Alaska and school groups. Additionally, in Seward, the Seward Multi-Agency visitor facility will be able to accommodate an additional 300 people in planned conference facilities. The issues raised for this group are similar to those raised for package and inde-package travelers. There are also plans for a joint U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and City of Seward facility which would include conference space.

6. Corridor Changes Influencing Tourism and Tourism Patterns

There are some concerns which affect all five target markets for the Seward Highway, including:

- the rapidly increasing melting of Portage Glacier. The glacier has been eroding at a rate of 350 feet a year up until 1995, when it eroded 800 feet. The glacier is no longer visible from the visitors center, but can be experienced on a boat tour. While the icefield of which Portage Glacier is a part is not predicted to melt, and the recession of Portage will slow significantly when out of the lake, it will nonetheless require new interpretation and means of visitor access and viewing.
- the potential impact on visitation with the opening of the Whittier rail line to automobile traffic. The Whittier Tunnel is planned to open in 2000-2001. The number of visitors using the tunnel is projected to be 1.1 million by 2002 and 1.4 million by 2015. The EIS notes that the opening of the tunnel to automobile traffic will increase traffic on the Kenai Peninsula.
- for independent, inde-package and package travelers overcoming the image of Alaska as a summer-only destination.

Telling the Story of the Seward Highway

The visitor experience along the Seward Highway will vary based on several factors. Different visitor types will tend to rely on different interpretive techniques. In addition, personal interests will direct visitors to seek out information about topics of interest and affect the amount of time and attention spent focusing on the available interpretive options.

For “Independent” visitors traveling the Seward Highway on their own, on-site interpretation is extremely important. This includes signage, brochures, exhibits, audio-visual presentations as well as interactions with interpretive specialists at sites along the route. Independent travelers will also rely on materials that they have picked up or purchased prior to driving the highway such as seasonal visitor information and tour guidebooks.

Inde-package and package visitors will rely heavily on the interpretive information that is provided as part of their package, and this may or may not include on-site interpretive information. Package tours tend to be more of a “cocoon” experience, where all the visitors needs are met within a clearly defined structure. Trained motorcoach drivers and step-on guides are an integral part of the interpretive experience for package travelers. The drivers and guides can be trained by the company offering the tour, or in some cases (particularly those from a foreign country with a language that is not commonly spoken), the guide may accompany the tour group from their original destination.

For the convention and meeting market, guided tours of the Seward Highway or selected destinations on the Seward Highway could be provided by one of the larger tour companies or smaller tour operators working in conjunction with a hotel or convention and visitors

bureau. Area residents and to some extent, other independent travelers, may be able to take advantage of guided group tours or wilderness experiences along the Seward Highway.

The Chugach National Forest and the Seward Highway Scenic Byway Interagency Planning Team completed a comprehensive Seward Highway Scenic Byway Interpretive Plan in 1993. Interpretive themes identified in the plan cover the scenic/natural and cultural qualities of the route. In this plan, the recreational qualities of the route are viewed as an integral part of the cultural history of the route as represented by the most recent influx of people coming to the route in a long history of uses. These themes include:

Scenic/Natural

- **Earth-Shaping Forces: The Drama of the Landscape**
Numerous opportunities exist to interpret the earthquakes, glaciers, avalanches, bore tides and weather that have shaped the land forms and created spectacular and scenic views along the route
- **Natural Resources: The Tapestry of Life**
Wildlife and fish abound along the route. Beluga whales, Dall sheep, mountain goats, moose, bald eagles, Pacific and common loons, arctic terns, sea otters, harbor seals, puffins, and five types of Pacific salmon are just a few of the species found along the route.

Cultural

- **Cultural Resources: A Pageant of Peoples**
Beginning with the Native Americans and moving on to European and Russian explorers, miners, military personnel, settlers and recreationists, the Seward Highway has a rich and varied cultural history.

As a result of this study, the U.S. Forest Service has installed a number of new interpretive signs in pullouts along the route to supplement existing roadside signs. Staffed visitor centers offer exhibits and opportunities for personal interaction at the Chugach National Forest District Office in Girdwood, the Marine Science Center in Seward, the Kenai Fjords National Park Visitor Center, the Trail Lakes Fish Hatchery near Moose Pass and others.

Chugach State Park does not have a comprehensive interpretive plan. Interpretive projects in the state park have been funded by ISTEPA and TRAAK dollars on a project-by-project basis. Several projects have used the theme "Converging Trails and Colliding Forces" for sites along the Seward Highway.



An interpretive facility at Chugach State Park.

Historic

The first signs interpreting the Gold Rush in the central region of Alaska are planned for Canyon Creek. Gold Rush history, adjacent sites such as the abandoned Gold Rush town of Sunrise, and the history of the Alaska Railroad, are currently interpreted through publications such as *Memories of Old Sunrise: Gold Mining on Alaska's Turnagain Arm*, *Autobiography of Albert Weldon Morgan* (Buzzell, Rolfe, editor, Cook Inlet Historical Society, Anchorage, 1994), *Rails Across the Tundra: A Historical Album of the Alaska Railroad* (Cohen, Stan, Pictorial Histories Publishing, Montana, 1984.), and *History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula* (Barry, Mary, Alaska Northwest Publishing Company, 1973, second edition 1997).

Publications such as the *Milepost* and travel guide-books such as *Scenic Driving Alaska* by Falcon Press offer descriptive information about the route as well. Tour operators such as Princess, Grayline and the Alaska Railroad all offer guide training programs for motor-coach drivers and railcar guides, providing information about diverse topics such as the history of gold mining, wildlife, glaciers, avalanches, and homesteads, as well as activities along the route.

Accommodating International and Special Needs Visitors

The Seward Highway is already an established destination for international tourism, capturing a share of the estimated 17% of Alaska's visitors coming from outside the United States (Source: A Comprehensive Overview of Alaska's Visitor Industry: May 1996). According to U.S. Forest Service staff at Begich-Boggs Visitor Center, these figures appear to be consistent with international visitation at Portage Glacier, although formal studies have not been conducted. Winter brings a large percentage of Japanese visitors to Portage Glacier. Along the Seward Highway, international symbols are already being used in many places to indicate trails, picture-taking opportunities and other visitor amenities. Many sites provide literature or interpretation in other languages. For example, the film at Portage Glacier offers an audio in English, German, Japanese and French in addition to offering provisions for the blind and the hearing impaired. Several trails along the corridor currently offer wheelchair-accessible routes. Tour operators and other visitor facilities actively recruit guides and employees with foreign language abilities, and foreign tour companies from Taiwan, Korea, and other countries with an established relationship with the Seward Highway bring interpreters who are familiar with the route and its attractions.

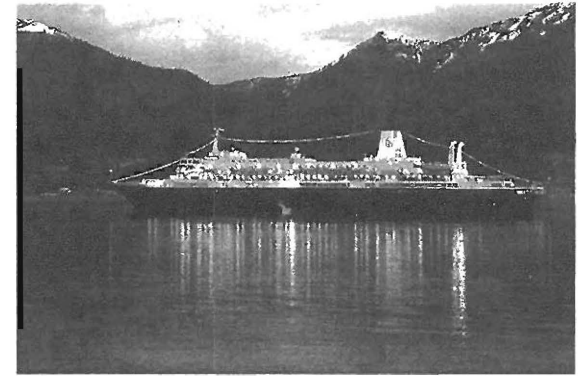
Accommodations

How many more visitors can the Seward Highway accommodate? The answer to this question varies greatly, depending upon whom is being asked. The lion's share of the lodging opportunities are located in Anchorage, which offers 6,000 rooms at present and has three additional hotels under construction. Upscale resort accommodations are available at the Alyeska Resort in Girdwood (307 rooms), and the Princess Lodge in Cooper Landing (70 rooms). Seward's current bed capacity is 500 (a total which includes bed & breakfasts), and cruise ships at port in Seward provide additional ship-board lodging opportunities for cruise visitors.

In addition to hotel rooms, Girdwood offers additional vacation rental opportunities. The Alyeska Resort has 500 condominium units, many of which are privately owned, although more than half of the owners lease units back as rental properties. Girdwood has about 1,800 cabins and homes, two-thirds of which are weekend or vacation houses. The Chugach National Forest has 42 "public recreation cabins," 19 of which can be accessed by trail or air from the Seward Highway.

Camping facilities

There are numerous camping facilities throughout the Seward Highway corridor. The U.S. Forest Service has 13 campgrounds with a total of 720 sites, and the Chugach State Park has 3 campgrounds with a total of 134 sites—the Bird Creek Campground in Chugach State Park, however, could benefit from needed improvements. The City of Seward manages two campgrounds in Forest Acres and Waterfront Parks. These facilities provide over 600 RV spaces and 300 tent sites. There are several private campgrounds in Cooper Landing, Moose Pass and near Seward, as well as many wilderness camping experiences available, by permit, on the public lands.



One of the many cruise ships visiting Alaska.

The Cruise Industry

The cruise industry has experienced strong growth in the past decade, with annual growth rates of about 11%. Alaska's cruise industry is so strong that it drives the tourism economy of the state. If the cruise industry continues to grow at the current rate for another five years, the current 240,000 visitor/year estimate by Princess and Grayline for the Seward Highway alone would grow to over 400,000 by 2001. The strong increase in cruise volumes is attributed to increased capacity ships, new companies entering the cruise market, and the availability of discounted cruise rates. Overall, the total number of visitors coming to Alaska is growing at an average annual growth rate of 8%, showing a steady increase from year to year. (Source: A Comprehensive Overview of Alaska's Visitor Industry)

Clearly the cruise industry will have a major impact on traffic along the Seward Highway through the use of

motorcoaches carrying patrons between Seward and Anchorage. Already the cruise lines stagger departures from Seward and Anchorage and have policies of not stopping at smaller pullouts if another motorcoach is already there. The cruise lines do have the alternative of using the Alaska Railroad to transport visitors which could help to balance or alleviate traffic pressures.

Marketing Opportunities

- Alaska is a touring destination. Because Alaska is a remote destination far from major population concentrations, it is a bigger trip for most visitors and they want to spend more time and see more places. In order to experience Alaska's vast territories, visitors must travel out from Alaska's urban centers.
- The Seward Highway offers a microcosm of the best Alaska has to offer—including spectacular and varied landscapes and watchable wildlife.
- Seward Highway contains some of Alaska's most popular established attractions (such as Portage Glacier), as well as some of the newest up-and-coming attractions (such as the Alaska SeaLife Center).
- The Seward Highway is easily accessible and offers a full range of visitor services at the northern terminus of the route in Anchorage.
- The Seward Highway already has a captive audience: it is a vital transportation link for cruise visitors coming from Seward and visitors driving to the Kenai Peninsula. "You gotta drive it to get there"—in other words, the market is already there. There is an opportunity to target where direct economic opportunities and development offer the greatest benefits.

- Individual tour companies (such as Princess, Grayline and the Alaska Railroad) all have an interest in promoting visitation along the route. In addition, there are convention and visitors bureaus in Anchorage and Seward and the Kenai Peninsula has a tourism marketing council. In addition, individual sites such as the Alyeska Resort also have a stake in promoting travel to the region.

Marketing Issues

Many of the individual attractions along the Seward Highway have a limited capacity, and any marketing efforts for the Highway must recognize and respect these limits. At present, the Seward Highway is reaching capacity in certain areas during the popular summer months. During this time, marketing efforts should direct visitors to the existing business nodes and sites that can handle more visitation and encourage a "through" driving experience in those areas that cannot. If any concerted marketing effort is undertaken for the Seward Highway, it should focus on increasing visitation in the shoulder season and during the winter months when visitation is currently low and there is room for growth.

The existing business nodes of Indian, Bird, Girdwood, Summit Lake, and Moose Pass should be promoted as places to stop, get a bite to eat, do a little shopping and possibly spend the night. As the Hope Highway Junction and Turnagain Pass are developed in the coming years, they may become additional business nodes.

Other business nodes along the corridor should be developed only if the market warrants such development, such development does not compromise existing nodes, and that such new nodes are infrastructurally and environmentally sustainable.

As development is geared toward solitude-seeking experiences in the Chugach National Forest, it may be desirable to "demarket" this portion of the Seward Highway to reduce visitor expectations. In other words, do not actively promote this area to the general visitor, but, instead maintain the area for backcountry experiences with facilities suitable for experienced outdoor travelers. Marketing materials can portray this section as a wildland with few services or amenities for the visitor. Visitors will be encouraged to stop, fill their tanks, have lunch, use the restrooms and take care of any other needs in the small communities outside of the national forest. For most visitors, the section of the Seward Highway through the national forest will be a driving experience with a few photo stops or interpretive walks at pullouts. For the more adventurous and well-prepared visitor, the national forest will offer backcountry experiences where the traveler can truly get away from it all.

The Kenai Princess Lodge and the Alyeska Resort are two relatively recent additions to the Seward Highway and environs that increase the appeal of the Highway as an overnight destination for the upscale tourism market. For both facilities, the drive to reach the hotel is an integral part of the overall experience. The marketing for these two sites, coupled with the marketing that the cruise companies undertake, is currently the major way that the upscale tourism market learns about the Seward Highway.

Regional marketing organizations such as the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Seward Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council all offer promotional materials and programs that could logically include the Seward Highway. At present, these organizations do not provide any collaborative marketing efforts that might promote a multi-day stay along the Seward Highway in different regions.

The Seward Highway and the attractions along the Seward Highway are currently not marketed as a single destination. The marketing efforts of many individual sites and regional tourism organizations mention the Seward Highway, although the highway is always the by-line rather than the headline. According to tourism organizations in the area, the Seward Highway does not have the name recognition of other sites along the route. Visitors at present do not call and ask for information about the Seward Highway.

▪ **Responding to Current Trends in Visitation**

Studies indicate that the average age of travelers to Alaska is decreasing and that these younger travelers are seeking “soft adventure” travel opportunities. “Soft Adventure” travelers seek out opportunities to interact with nature in Alaska by taking part in activities such as hiking, fishing or hunting as a part of a tour that provides extras such as gourmet meals, comfortable accommodations, and guides that are knowledgeable, safety-conscious and personable. The

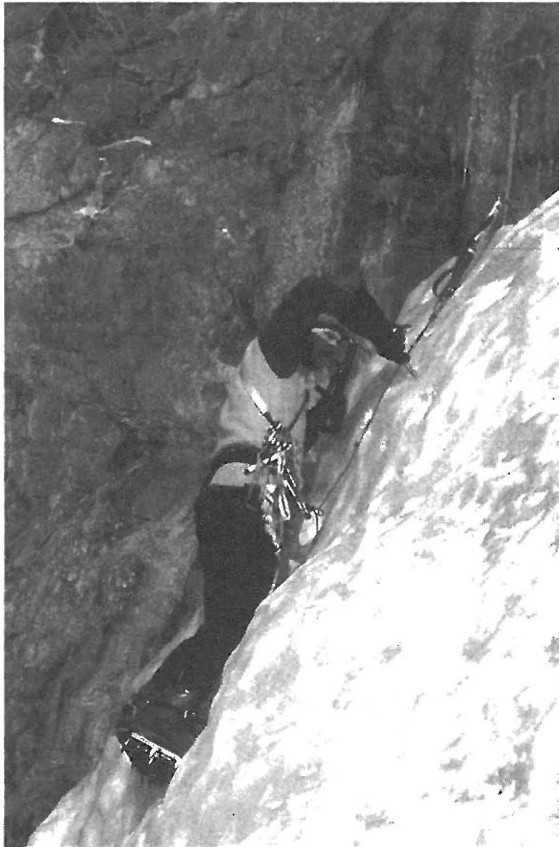
time constraints that are resulting in shorter, more frequent trips that are reducing the overall amount of time Americans are spending on vacation may have a silver lining for the Seward Highway. The Seward Highway’s easily accessible, relatively quick and condensed Alaska experience can provide this area with a market edge over other more remote Alaskan destinations. (Source: A Comprehensive Overview of Alaska’s Visitor Industry, p.2)

- **Positioning the Seward Highway** Although the Seward Highway is without question a strong draw for many different tourism markets, the highway itself rarely receives top billing. Collateral materials and marketing efforts point to Portage Glacier or the Chugach National Forest, noting in descriptive copy that the visitor will drive the scenic Seward Highway to reach the destination. This offers an important issue to be addressed: does the scenic highway program and designation open up opportunities to reposition the Seward Highway as a fresh angle on an established tourism product? Or does the current hierarchy and name recognition of the attractions work so well that we might say “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”? It is likely that as the Seward Highway gains more national and international recognition as a tourism destination, travel marketers will incorporate the Seward Highway into their promotional materials and marketing studies.
- **Ecotourism** A growing awareness and concern about the environment has led to an increasing interest in “ecotourism”, a niche market with a motto of “take only photographs, leave only foot prints”. Environmentally aware consumers consciously choose environmentally responsible travel outfitters and suppliers, and engage in outdoor activities that do not negatively impact the environment.

- **International Tourism** While the Seward Highway currently attracts and accommodates international visitors, several issues relating to foreign travel need to be more clearly investigated, including the availability of direct international flights into Anchorage and a need to learn the customs of different cultures in order to respond to needs more effectively.
- **Anchorage Airport** The proximity of the Anchorage airport to the route creates opportunities for additional linkages which are currently not in place. Signage clearly directing the visitor from the airport to the byway is needed.
- **Leader for Marketing Efforts** While there are a number of tourism organizations with an interest in marketing the Seward Highway as a tourism destination, there is no one organization that jumps out as a clear leader in coordinating marketing efforts for the byway as a whole.
- **Seward Harbor** Many visitors first introduction to Alaska, and the Seward Highway is arriving at Resurrection Bay via cruise ship. This positions the City of Seward as not only an important gateway to the Seward Highway corridor, but also an important gateway to Alaska.

Thesis 3:

The Seward Highway is a multi-purpose corridor serving resident and visitor, and commerce and the environment.



An ice climber, a familiar sight along the Turnagain Arm during the winter months.

Unlike many of the scenic routes in the Lower 48 which provide an alternative to the frantic high-speed travel of the interstate, scenic routes in Alaska are usually the principal routes serving the people of the state. This provides a challenge for scenic highway management not experienced elsewhere in the nation. How to accommodate visitors looking for the majestic scenery featured in travel posters (and perhaps more importantly how to accommodate the economic stimulus such visitors bring) while at the same time providing the needed safe year-round access to communities and commerce will require careful planning, broad visions, and creative thought. Recreational use and highway safety are both important. Scenic vistas and commercial shipments both contribute to the State's economy.

Nowhere in Alaska are these potential conflicts more strongly felt than along the Seward Highway.

Alaska's limited highway network will, for the foreseeable future, provide the primary means of access to visitor destinations. Despite the state's great size, the percentage of lands accessible to the average traveler and reasonably close to population centers is limited. Future growth and demand are going to place intense pressures on the state's highly scenic road network to accommodate new development and traveler services.

Carrying Capacity for the Seward Highway

If recreational use is acknowledged as the driving force behind many of the changes and challenges facing the Seward Highway, capacity must be acknowledged as the great equalizer—the balancing component.

Recognizing recreational use as the driving force influencing the Seward Highway is not to suggest that it cannot be managed. Residents, resource managers, tourism organizations (especially the major cruise lines) and local communities can work together to plan a balanced and sustainable future. A well-organized byway strategy will address the capacity of the corridor head-on to alleviate the feeling of helplessness and ensure that the qualities enjoyed by residents, resource managers, and visitors today, can be maintained, even improved, for future users.

The fundamental solution to recreational use along the Seward Highway corridor must be based on capacity. If, for example, an analysis indicates future increased numbers, types and impacts from visitation in the years ahead, resource managers and local communities must determine what, if any impacts, these numbers will have on existing facilities. Such a capacity analysis provides the framework for understanding the limitations and abilities of a given resource. Together, these analysis help with making decisions such as: *Should we encourage more recreational use, and if so, what kinds? Should we expand our visitor facilities, and if so, which ones?*

The Seward Highway's Corridor Capacity

Why is capacity an important issue for the Seward Highway? Some might look at the Seward Highway and the adjoining public lands and see a modern roadway and an unlimited abutting resource, the combination of which could be seen as having the capacity to transport and absorb many more visitors into the future. This appearance is deceiving for a variety of reasons.

First, while the Chugach State Park and Chugach National Forest contain millions of acres of land, most of this land is categorized as being very difficult to access. Under the USFS's recreation management system, 99% of the trail mileage in the Seward Ranger District is classified as *difficult* and as such would not be accessible to the average visitor. In other words, the mountainous, wild terrain of the Kenai Peninsula is best suited to the recreationist prepared to enjoy a backcountry experience. It is less well suited to the average family or cruiseline visitor driving the Seward Highway for the first time. It is this latter category of traveler that will grow at the highest rate in the coming decades. Therefore, increasing numbers of persons will be vying for the use of the most limited acreage of these public lands.

Capacity and the Roadway

The majority of the Seward Highway has recently or will soon receive roadway modifications that will enable the road to handle higher volumes of traffic and/or move traffic at higher average speeds.

Generally speaking, the Seward Highway (segments 2 to 5) has sufficient width, alignment and speed allowances to handle at least 15,000 to 20,000 cars per day traveling in both directions.

- Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) in 1995 did not exceed 5,000 at any location in Segments 2-5.
- Seasonal traffic counts are as high as 12,000 during summer peak weekends.

There are bottlenecks along the road where the combination of topography, season, the number of users and the types of users all conspire to create congestion under today's circumstances. It is quite likely that in the future, congestion at these bottlenecks will grow more severe.

Congestion occurs most heavily along the portion of the road from Potter Creek to Girdwood. At Windy Corner, the combination of a curving road, Dall sheep, little parking and no pedestrian space creates traffic slowdowns and a dangerous environment for all concerned—except perhaps the sheep who calmly observe the commotion from a safe vantage. At other points in this stretch of road, wildlife viewers, bicyclists, trucks delivering goods to or from Seward, and resident auto traffic all attempt to move through the corridor at once. Again, while the majority of the road does not have serious congestion problems from this variety of users, the emergence of problems suggests that use levels are approaching the point where problems will be more severe and occur in more locations.



Seward Highway near Portage.

Thesis 4:

The successful management of the Seward Highway is dependent on the cooperation of existing institutions, resource managers and committed individuals.



Bald eagle.

The success of the Seward Highway lies, ultimately, in the hands of the resource managers, government officials, and committed citizens who desire the preservation of the special qualities of the Seward Highway, recognize the influences that will shape the highway corridor in the coming century, and feel the responsibility to manage this unique state and national resource for the betterment of all Alaskans.

Plans such as this cannot ever be substituted for the good stewardship of committed local leadership. This plan was created in consultation with the Seward Highway leadership (federal, state, local, and community) and structured according to their resources, abilities, and interests. It is only through their interest that the critical actions identified in the following section can be successfully implemented.

Mission Statements

Every managing organization the consultant team contacted during the course of this study expressed, without hesitation, an appreciation for the great scenic beauty of the Seward Highway corridor. While this is a good thing, it should not be interpreted to mean that all managing organizations view the Seward Highway in the same way administratively. The following mission statements from managing organizations along the route suggest very different missions. They are included here in order that different individuals and offices may familiarize themselves with the “bottom line” objectives each organization will bring to any discussions regarding the management of the Seward Highway.

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

...improve the quality of life for Alaskans by cost effectively providing, operating and maintaining safe, environmentally sound and reliable transportation systems and public facilities. Special emphasis will be given to utilizing meaningful public involvement and creating working partnerships with other entities.

Responsibilities:

Roads and Highways

2,100 miles of the National Highway System

3,500 miles of state and community roads

900 bridges

14,400 lane miles

United States Forest Service

The phrase, “Caring for the Land and Serving People,” captures the Forest Service mission. As set forth in law, the mission is to achieve quality land management under the sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of people.

Specifically, the mission includes:

1. Advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands.
2. Listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions.
3. Protecting and managing the National Forests and Grasslands so they best demonstrate the sustainable multiple-use management concept.
4. Providing technical and financial assistance to State and private forest landowners, encouraging them to practice good stewardship and quality land management in meeting their specific objectives.

5. Providing technical and financial assistance to cities and communities to improve their natural environment by planting trees and caring for their forests.
6. Providing international technical assistance and scientific exchanges to sustain and enhance global resources and to encourage quality land management.
7. Helping states and communities to wisely use the forests to promote rural economic development and a quality rural environment.

From: 1020.21-Statutory Mission, Zero Code 1020 - Forest Service Mission, FSM1000 -Organization and Management, 4/30/93

Chugach State Park

Chugach State Park is managed to provide:

- a public water supply
- outdoor recreational opportunities
- protection of scenic resources
- wildlife viewing opportunities, and
- the protection of the wilderness.

Department of Natural Resources— Division of Land

The Division of Land is the steward of state land, upholding Alaska’s constitutional mandate to “...encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest.” The division makes state land available for both public and private purposes.

Municipality of Anchorage

The Municipality’s goal is to make Anchorage a better place to live and raise families. In achieving this goal to make Anchorage a more livable city, the Municipal governments mission is to:

- make Anchorage a more beautiful, attractive city for both people who live here and those who will visit;
- provide a safe environment for the city’s residents and visitors;
- facilitate orderly, attractive growth in the community;
- make the streets throughout the city safer and cleaner;
- provide, as efficiently as possible, those cultural and recreational amenities such as museums, libraries, bike trails, parks and recreation opportunities that make the city livable and enjoyable;
- provide basic social and public health services to those in need;
- through the comprehensive planning process, provide guidance for the city’s development over the next twenty years, based upon the community’s vision of the future.

Kenai Peninsula Borough

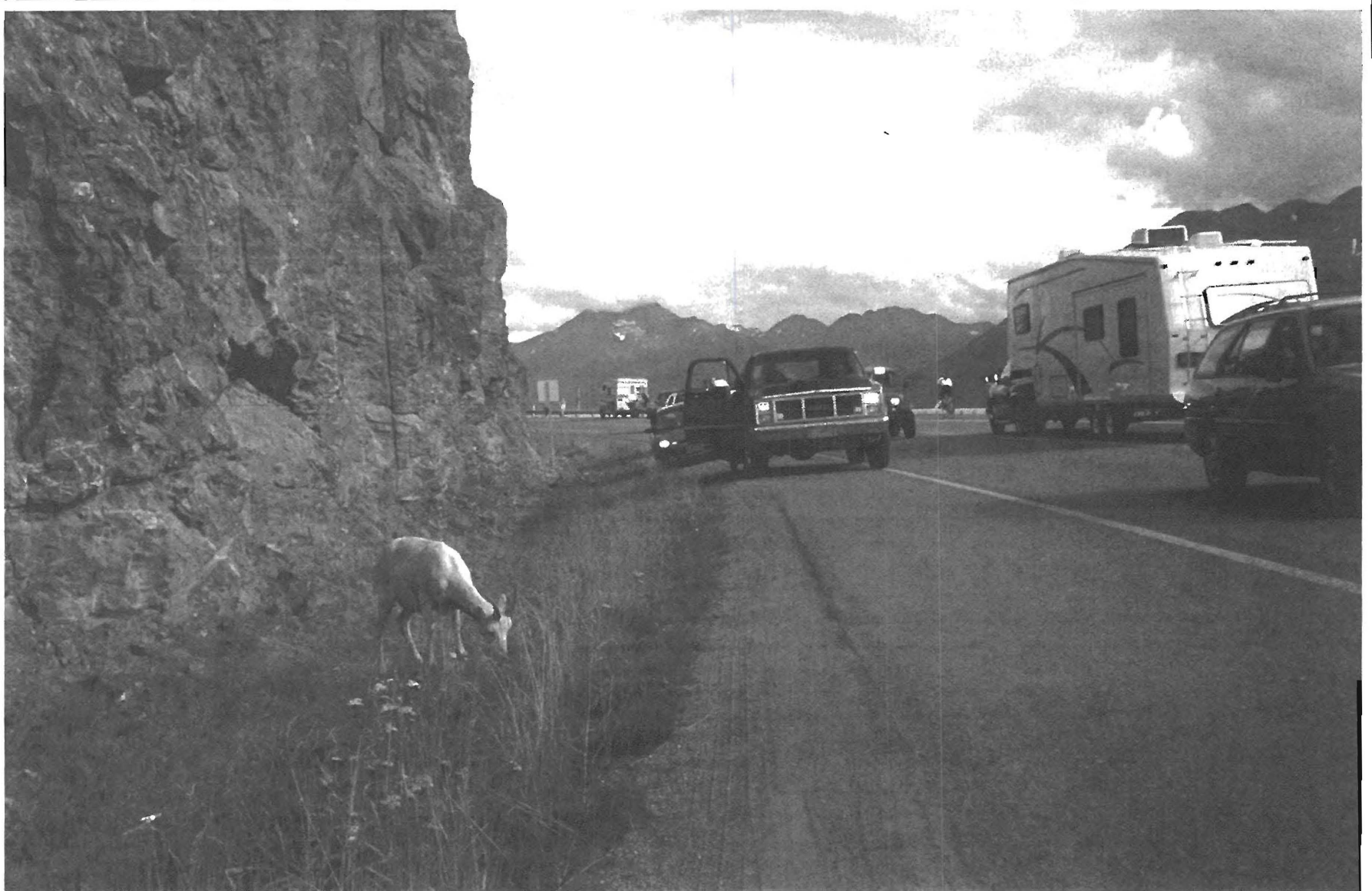
No Mission Statement currently exists.

Alaska Visitor Association

AVA’s mission is to benefit all components of the industry (travel and tourism) through unification of its goals, coordination of private sector efforts that encourage and promote travel to and within Alaska; involvement in governmental policies that affect travel and tourism; and introduction of education, communication and programs that benefit industry business.

Alaska Natural History Association

The Mission of the Alaska Natural History Association is to enhance conservation and understanding of the natural, cultural and historical resources of Alaska’s public lands through education, public information and research.



Dall sheep along the Seward Highway delight visitors, frustrate residents, and raise safety questions.

Keystone Strategies and Critical Actions for the Future of the Seward Highway

This section outlines three keystone strategies to serve as a basis for decision making along the Seward Highway Corridor and identifies a number of specific critical actions needed to ensure that the keystone strategies shape future opportunities along the corridor.

The keystone strategies are objective and broad based concepts encompassing the wide range of resources, needs, opportunities and threats currently present along the corridor. The three keystone strategies are:

1. **The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.**
2. **Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.**
3. **Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.**

These three keystones, if integrated into the policies of resource managers and the public ethic valuing responsible development with land protection, can ensure that the Seward Highway will remain a breathtakingly beautiful resource for Alaskans to enjoy and a vibrant and sustainable tourism resource capable of generating millions of dollars in tourism revenue.

1. **The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.**

The Seward Highway is already recognized as one of the great driving experiences in the world. National Scenic Byway, U.S. Forest Service and Alaska State byway designations, this Corridor Partnership Plan, and the countless visitors who drive the highway each year testify to the highway's remarkable ability to attract. Maintaining the highway as a world-class driving experience while maintaining safety and efficiency is one of the great challenges of this plan.

Safety, beauty, and efficiency need not be mutually exclusive. The great beauty of the Seward Highway corridor should assist and guide management decisions regarding the road and viewshed. Safety improvements should be undertaken not only with an understanding of reduced accident statistics, but also with an understanding of any impacts such improvements may have on the aesthetic quality of the corridor. This is not to suggest that safety take a "back seat" to scenic views, but rather to suggest that the Seward Highway warrants additional consideration due to its outstanding scenic qualities. This plan simply seeks the acknowledgment of these additional considerations during the planning phase of future projects. If for example, lighting is needed at an intersection for increased safety, this plan encourages the further question: "What type of lighting will provide the desired safety effect and have the least visual intrusion on the natural landscape?"

2. **Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.**

As tourism continues to increase along the Seward Highway, in the Kenai Peninsula, and in Alaska in general, it is essential that careful strategies for visitor management are considered. Sustainable tourism is tourism that can continue to grow and perpetuate itself into the future without destroying resources. It recognizes that balance is essential to a stable and prosperous tourism economy. Visitors and facilities must support one another. Visitor numbers must be responsive to site conditions—150 people at an overlook promoted heavily for romantic sunsets are sure to disappoint.

Communities with new and growing tourism economies are often at greatest risk. As visitor numbers increase and retail and tax revenues show a similar surge, the rally call becomes "more is even better." Many communities fail to study why people are coming, and what they are expecting. Many more fail to investigate the impacts tourism will have on local residents and their daily lives.

If, for example, a community's greatest draw and tourism appeal is solitude an escape from the intensity of metropolitan life—overbuilding of motels, for example, may soon destroy that community's competitive edge, and drive visitors elsewhere. Sustainable tourism, however, would suggest that the community marketing solitude increase their market share by investigating creative ways in which to locate cabins in the woods, or the development of smaller bed and breakfasts and rustic lodges. Too many communities, unwittingly, "kill the goose that laid the golden egg" chasing short term profits rather than carefully plotting a future.

3. Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.

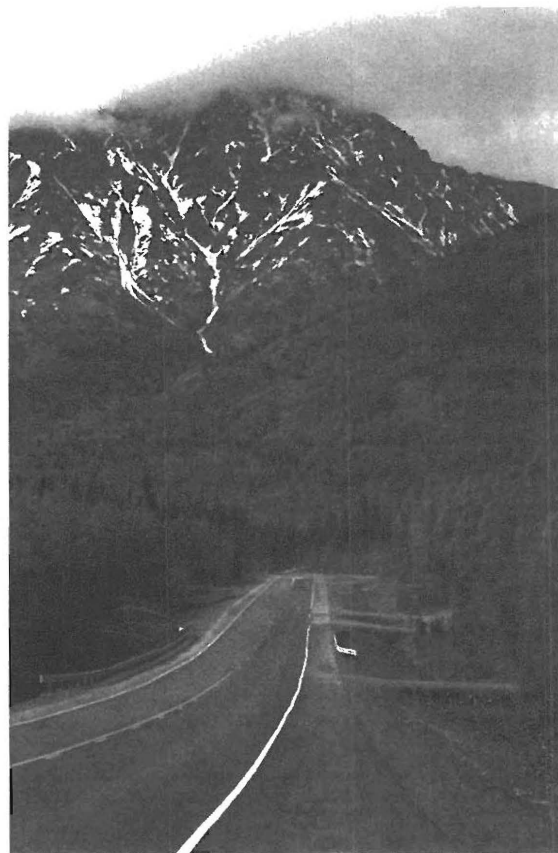
The Seward Highway today is defined, largely, by a pattern of undeveloped and open spaces with clusters, or nodes of development. As a result, the visitor today can experience the scenic and natural beauty with few interruptions or obstacles. This ability to experience a relatively "undisturbed" landscape contributes greatly to the appeal of the Seward Highway, and arguably to the businesses that derive their income from tourism dollars.

Haphazard development in the corridor is a significant threat not only to the beauty of the highway but also to the economy of the Seward Highway corridor and the Kenai Peninsula. By maintaining the corridor as an area of scenic beauty, it can continue to attract quality development projects such as Alyeska, the Kenai Princess Lodge, and the SeaLife Center. Haphazard development, such as in Wasilla or along the Parks Highway near Denali National Park, could dramatically alter the image of the Seward Highway to potential visitors and developers.

Conveyances must be managed carefully. The transfer of lands from government to private sector along the Seward Highway provides an excellent opportunity to ensure that quality development practices are the norm, rather than the exception. Conveyances can also be selected to ensure that significant viewsheds and natural features remain undisturbed.

Keystone Strategy 1:

The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.



The Seward Highway near Bird.

The Seward Highway through its great scenic beauty and abundant recreational opportunities possesses all the qualities of a world-class destination. It belongs to a rare group of American roads such as the Historic Columbia River Highway in Oregon, the Big Sur Highway in California, and the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and North Carolina that are cherished icons of the American landscape. As one of these unique roadways, the Seward Highway must be managed with a special attention to the grandeur of the landscape and the special details that elevate an ordinary transportation corridor to that of a world-class highway. The Seward Highway is already a All-American Road by every measurable standard. The listed critical actions will ensure that the Seward Highway maintains and enhances its standing among the world's great roads.

Critical Actions

Each action identifies potential partners to implement the action. A lead partner or partners has/have been identified by an asterisk. The critical actions have been divided into aesthetic considerations and safety considerations

1. Aesthetic Considerations

Aesthetic considerations address the visual quality of the road and the corridor. What will the traveler see and experience. Aesthetic considerations will work to ensure that myriad individual elements and policies that direct daily activity along the corridor will be implemented with a sensitivity to the natural beauty and recognition that the quality of the traveler experience directly impacts the economic vitality of the route through tourism. Aesthetic considerations should never compromise the safety or efficiency of the route. They should, however, be developed as credible options and alternatives elevating the overall visual quality of the route.

K.1-A Design Theme

Recommended: Establish an overall design theme for the Seward Highway. A design theme would establish a mutually agreed upon “expectation” for the physical management and appearance of the Seward Highway corridor. A design theme might, for example, endorse a certain guardrail design, establish uniform parameters for curb cuts, address the maintenance or improvement of critical views, identify environmentally appropriate building materials for corridor development, and encourage greater interaction among interpretative features.

Potential Partners: USFS*, ADOT&PF, DNR-Parks

K.1-B Design Integration

Recommended: Establish a greater role for landscape architects early in the design process for the Seward Highway. For ADOT&PF to address design issues in the most efficient, safe and cost effective manner, such professional representation is essential. The advice of a landscape architect can assist in selecting appropriate roadside details, locations of pullouts, clear zone and viewed management. Additionally such an individual can make recommendations regarding the sensitive alignment of the roadway within the landscape. The ADOT&PF’s commitment to landscape architecture and coordination with landscape architects at DNR-Parks and the U.S. Forest Service early in the design and decision-making process could effectively avoid many of the “sensitivity” problems that inevitably arise in a public works project by both addressing issues before public presentation and instilling public confidence in the

agency with a trained and licensed professional designer on staff. The MOU between ADOT&PF and USFS can serve as a model for design quality.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks, Municipality of Anchorage Urban Design Commission, local governments

K.1-C Roadway Details

Recommended: Avoid the use of highway appurtenances (e.g., Jersey barrier medians) in the roadway that will detract from the scenic and kinesthetic pleasure of driving the Seward Highway. Given that most of the Seward Highway was recently or soon will be improved and resurfaced to accepted state and federal standards for lane width, alignment, shoulder width and vegetative clearance, this recommendation is directed at future improvements that would have a negative impact on the scenic quality of the Seward Highway.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks

K.1-D Urban Landscape

The Municipality of Anchorage has a beautification program called the “City of Lights and Flowers,” which has resulted in colorful displays of flowers throughout the city during the summer months, and bright, attractive lighting displays during the winter months. The Municipality is currently initiating an area streetscape development plan which will address the Seward Highway along with other street beautification efforts.

Recommended: Develop a landscape plan specifically focused on the Seward Highway for the Anchorage Gateway Segment. Such a plan should articulate a landscape design that moves from the formal urbanism of central Anchorage to the natural landscape of Potter Marsh at the southern end of the segment. Such a plan, working with the existing “City of Lights and Flowers” program of the Municipality, should help to transition the traveler between the urban and natural landscapes. **Potential Partners:** Municipality of Anchorage*, ADOT&PF

K.1-E Guardrails

Recommended: Concrete-core stone-faced barrier walls are recommended in locations where the Seward Highway parallels significant bodies of water, and the views to such bodies of water are largely unobstructed (except for minor vegetation.) This guardrail treatment is recommended along the water-side of the highway next to Turnagain Arm, Summit Lake, Upper Trail Lake, and Kenai Lake. In areas in which the distance between the road and the water body increases and/or significant vegetation blocks views to the water, it is recommended to use a standard steel-backed timber guardrail. (These recommended guardrails meet FHWA crash tests and are approved for use.)

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks



Top: crash tested and approved concrete-core barrier wall under construction. Bottom: completed concrete-core barrier wall.

K.1-F Clear Zones

Recommended: Minimal AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) recommended clear zones (an area kept free of vegetation parallel to the highway) should be utilized along the Seward Highway in order to allow the traveler the opportunity to experience the landscape. In areas where guardrail occurs within the clear zone area vegetation beyond the guardrail should be preserved. Guardrail and other barriers should be considered in significant vegetated areas as an alternative to clear zone development. In developed areas with lower speeds, the clear zone should be reduced as recommended by AASHTO. Plantings in clear zones should be of natural vegetation to discourage moose and other wildlife from grazing along the roadside.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks

K.1-G Roadside Buffers

Recommended: Maintain roadside vegetative buffers in all locations along the Seward Highway. Buffers should be 150' of existing natural vegetation beyond the right-of-way (ROW) in Corridor Development Areas and 50' (beyond the ROW) in designated Nodal Development Centers where a village character is designed. (See Keystone Idea 3 for a discussion of development areas.) Protect roadside vegetative buffers in all locations where

the existing vegetation provides a buffer between structures and the roadway (e.g., Moose Pass).

Existing natural vegetation is preferred due to climate and exposure issues.

Potential Partners: DNR-Division of Land*, US Forest Service, ADOT&PF, Kenai Peninsula Borough, City of Anchorage, City of Seward

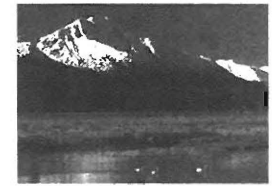
K.1-H View Management

It cannot be denied, or stressed enough, that the Seward Highway offers one stunning view after another. The Seward Highway is a unique national scenic resource—views and viewsheds are critical to the success of this Corridor Partnership Plan. It is the visual access to scenery that makes the Seward Highway a unique driving resource and offers the corridor its most valuable edge for creating economic development.

When you stop your car and look at a distant mountain or a nearby sparkling lake, you are experiencing a view. The area between the object of admiration and your eye is the view. If, at the same spot, you were to look all about you would be experiencing a viewshed. A viewshed is, in theory, everything your eye can take in at a given point in space.

Despite its great size and vastness, the Seward Highway corridor is potentially vulnerable to insensitive development practices.

Recommended: Inventory significant views and viewsheds found along the Seward Highway. This can be accomplished through photographic inventories,



The view from the Seward Highway at Girdwood.

community and resource manager’s site visits and observations, or more formal USFS inventory methodologies. Encourage partner agencies to consult the viewshed inventory when making land management decisions to avoid any negative impacts to terrain, natural vegetation patterns, or waterways.

Potential Partners: DNR-Division of Land*, USFS, ADF&G, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, City of Seward, Land Owners

K.1-I Pullouts

Recommended: Pullouts should be clearly differentiated between those intended for slow traffic turnouts and those intended for viewing dramatic landscapes or wildlife. Additionally, pullouts should be clearly identified for, or prohibited from use by, motorcoaches. Pullouts designed for motorcoaches should provide acceleration space to allow busses to safely reenter the main flow of traffic. For the construction of new pullouts for motorcoaches, it is recommended that the partnership team investigate a cost sharing program with the major tour operators who would most benefit from such facilities.

Pullouts intended solely for slow vehicle passing should ideally be located in areas not offering spectacular views and should not offer any pedestrian or traveler amenities such as interpretation or walks.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS*, DNR-Parks*, ADF&G, major tour operators

K.1-J Bike Paths

Recommended: In accordance with TRAAK goals, separated path bike routes should be created wherever possible along the Seward Highway. Separated pathways may be located within the right-of-way, or possibly within the corridor buffer or potential bike path easements beyond the buffer. The most appropriate location of separated pathways will depend on terrain, scenic attractions, safety, and other factors.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF, TRAAK*, USFS, DNR-Parks, Municipality of Anchorage, Moose Pass, City of Seward

K.1-K Scenic Highway Identification Signage

Recommended: Seward Highway logo signs are recommended to identify the route as a scenic highway. Such signs should be located directly beneath every Alaska State route marker. To avoid clutter of multiple byway identification signs (National, USFS) it is recommended such signs appear only at ceremonial gateways within specifically administered sites, such as a USFS managed pullout.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS*, DNR-Parks*

K.1-L Highway Signage

Research for this plan led to many comments expressing concern over too many signs along the Seward Highway and the visual clutter such signage creates. Additionally, there is a general inconsistency in the nature of signage, in particular at pullouts where some are identified as scenic viewing areas where others, similarly scenic, were labeled as passing turnouts.

Recommended: A Seward Highway sign inventory of existing signs and locations, and a Seward Highway sign policy clearly expressing the type and nature of signs to be posted as specific locations.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks

2. Safety Considerations

Highway safety is of paramount importance when considering the management of the route as an All-American Road. Highway safety and aesthetic sensibility, however, need not be mutually exclusive. The Seward Highway’s intensive use by local users, commercial traffic and visitors has already demonstrated conflicts among user groups. The fundamental conflict is between commercial and through traffic that generally prefers higher speeds and tourist traffic that generally prefers a more leisurely speed to allow for unexpected stops and viewing. As traffic volumes increase, such conflicts and potential safety issues are likely to increase. A holistic view of the road recognizing its special user groups, in particular the conflicts inherent between local users familiar with the road and first-time visitors is essential.

One of the greatest safety issues now facing the highway is this conflict between leisure and visitor travelers, and local resident and commercial use. As state tourism increases and the populations of both Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula grow, this conflict is likely to increase.

Numerous parkways and scenic roads in the United States have consistently shown themselves to be safer than standard roadways. This is no doubt due to the high level of cooperation, coordination, and planning such roads regularly receive. Managing the travelers aesthetic experience along the Seward Highway as one of high quality should also ensure a high safety component. A

clearly ordered road with a strong design theme constantly and silently guides and directs those unfamiliar with the route.

Virtually reconstructed in its entirety in recent years, with planned projects and construction currently completing the rebuilding, the Seward Highway provides many of the modern safety features recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

While it is impossible to address potential conflicts along the entire length of the route, it is possible to identify areas where conflicts between leisure travelers and local travelers are most likely to occur. These are: areas of significant views, wildlife viewing, and service areas.

K.1-M Grooved Centerline and Edge Warnings

Recommended: In areas where motorists are distracted by watchable wildlife (such as the Dall sheep at Windy Corner), or by breathtaking views (such as sunset over Kenai Lake) it is recommended that grooved pavement/rumble strips be located along the edge of the traveled way and along the centerline of the Seward Highway. Such strips, flush with the pavement and roughly 12" in width would alert the distracted motorist unconsciously straying out of their lane while attempting a better view of the Dall sheep, for example. Care should be taken in areas where bicyclists use the shoulder or the roadway to



Grooved edge warnings along the Parks Highway south of Denali National Park.

ensure that they are provided with adequate paved areas free of grooved pavement, and that advance notification of such pavement is provided. While such a warning device would be ineffective during winter months, it would be fully operational during peak travel months when conflicts are most likely to occur.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*

K.1-N Restricted Turning Movements

Recommended: It is recommended that access via left turn to some pull-outs be prohibited. In some instances this recommendation is based on limited sight-distance, in others due to the difficulty of making a left turn in heavy traffic, thus creating a stacking problem. For very popular turnouts, a left turning lane may provide a satisfactory solution.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF

K.1-O Left Turning Lanes

Recommended: In addition to the provision of left turning lanes at certain turnouts, the inclusion of left turning lanes in new and developing nodes should be considered. Left turning lanes are already provided at the Girdwood and Portage nodes. Left turning lanes should also be considered at high traffic turnouts.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, USFS, DNR-Parks, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Municipality of Anchorage, City of Seward

K.1-P Right Turning Lanes

Recommended: In undeveloped areas along the route, where speed is uniformly high and entering roadways are rare, right turning lanes should be considered to allow exiting traffic a safe deceleration area free from approaching traffic from behind.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF

K.1-Q Center Turning Lanes

Recommended: Increasingly popular as a device for managing left turning traffic in commercial areas, center turning lanes (a single, continuous lane between travel lanes allowing for left turning movements by traffic in both directions) are an increased safety risk. While it is true they allow left turning vehicles to move from the travel lanes to a central waiting area, they can also be the source of head-on collisions when drivers, traveling in opposite directions each want to make a left turn at the same location. Center turning lanes should be carefully studied before use on the Seward Highway. A policy of coordinated curb-cuts and shared driveways and access roads can limit the need for center turning lanes through the provision of safer left-turn lanes at key points.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF

K.1-R Shoulders

Recommended: In areas of the Seward Highway yet to be reconstructed, appropriate shoulders should be provided as a safety enhancement. Care should be taken in Development Nodes and existing communities to ensure that shoulders do not impair pedestrian safety. Shoulder widths should match AASHTO recommendations based on speed and adjacent development conditions.

Whenever appropriate minimum shoulder widths (as approved by the AASHTO recommended range) should be adopted.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, Kenai Peninsula Borough, local communities

K.1-S Traffic Calming or Speed Management

Recommended: In areas of intensive pedestrian traffic adjacent to or crossing the Seward Highway, it is recommended that ADOT&PF implement tools to maintain a lower speed for through traffic. Such measures should not only be investigated in traditional pedestrian nodes such as community centers, but also in areas experiencing intense visitor use for wildlife viewing or recreational access. Pedestrian fatalities account for approximately 15 to 20 % of auto-related fatalities annually in the United States (14.1% in Alaska in 1994, ranking Alaska 22nd in the US, with 1 being the least safe and 50 the safest. 1994 is the most recent year for which statistics are available).

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Moose Pass, City of Seward, Local Governments, Local Communities

K.1-T Management of Curb Cuts

ADOT&PF, working with local governments should develop a policy for curb cuts and property access along the Seward Highway. As land is transferred into the hands of private property owners and developers along the route, the need for new access points to previously undeveloped property will become an issue facing the

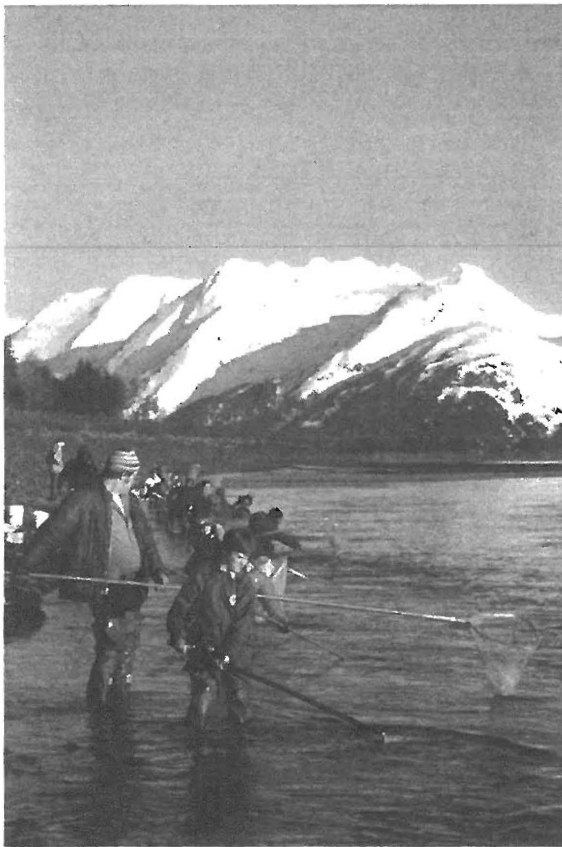
management of the route. Unmonitored property access will likely lead to random access points, unnecessary or excessive curb cuts, and potential safety problems as drivers leaving the Seward Highway access property via left turns, in areas of limited sight-distance, or at oblique angles.

Recommended: A general policy encouraging reasonable and safe access, shared driveways when possible, and collector or shared access in development nodes, should be developed before land transfers take place to ensure that all property owners have fair and equal access opportunities.

Potential Partners: ADOT&PF*, Kenai Peninsula Borough, City of Seward, Municipality of Anchorage

Keystone Strategy 2:

Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.



Intensive fishing, sometimes called "combat fishing".

This Corridor Partnership Plan does not suggest that change is inevitable or that it isn't desired, but rather to suggest that the Seward Highway has opportunities for preservation, growth, and development that can all be accommodated within a program that recognizes the special appeal of the scenic corridor. This must be done to (A) enhance the recreational qualities of the area while (B) safeguarding the natural beauty, open space, and other primary attractions, and (C) provide safe and efficient transportation. Balancing all the issues influencing the use and development of the Seward Highway, if properly understood, planned for, accommodated or avoided, can increase the basic appeal of the route and quality of service to both the resident and visitor.

The primary challenge facing the Seward Highway is to identify strategies to balance increased numbers of visitors in the future so as to avoid a range of potential future problems. Three areas essential to a vibrant and sustainable tourism industry are the protection of natural resources, quality expansion of public infrastructure, and user facilities that are accessible, convenient and well maintained.

1. Protect Natural Resources

Natural resources define the Seward Highway corridor and provide its scenic quality. The greatest and most irreversible threat to the corridor's scenic quality is new development in the viewsheds. The anticipated land transfers that will move land from federal ownership to state, local, or private hands make this threat both very real and immediate for the highway corridor. The destruction of natural resources can also be due to direct overuse by visitors or indirect overuse affiliated with activity within the corridor. For example, overuse by visitors could lead to trail erosion, disturbance of natural habitats, and littering problems. Indirect overuse could lead to groundwater pollution from too much wastewater or highly visible utility lines servicing new uses along the corridor.

2. Quality Expansion of Public Infrastructure

Public infrastructure is needed to ensure a healthy and satisfied visitor experience and is a key component in managing capacity. New infrastructure; e.g., roads widened, signs erected, new public structures built, constructed in ways that damage the character of existing communities or compromise the scenic quality of the corridor will ultimately compromise the visitor experience.

3. User Facilities Must be Accessible, Convenient and Well Maintained

The severe congestion of visitors and traffic at key points along the corridor during peak travel season will diminish the route's appeal as a recreational and tourism destination. Extensive traffic tie-ups, unacceptable waits at restroom and service facilities, and overcrowding at visitor facilities will further force "overflow" into inappropriate areas (local "special areas," private property,

wilderness areas) as visitors search out alternative rest rooms, lodging and recreational experiences.

The Seward Highway functions well today and has few significant problems. However, the Seward Highway is also near its capacity on a number of fronts and thus increased visitation and use in the future may create significant problems. Today is the time to anticipate and plan for these challenges.

Effective visitor management can

- avoid conflicts among visitor types competing for the same views and experiences
- allow resource managers to target specific visitor types
- allow resource managers to redirect visitors to locations that are better able to handle increased visitation.
- enable ADOT&PF to minimize conflicts between commercial traffic and tourist traffic
- allow local residents to continue to enjoy their “own backyard”
- ensure that visitors recreate in areas best suited to their abilities, thus reducing emergency situations.
- encourage visitation growth in the shoulder and off-season to support businesses dependent on a tourism economy.
- manage traffic volumes by encouraging alternate transportation modes for visitors such as bus and rail.
- manage traffic speeds in areas of intensive visitor use.

Critical Actions

Each action identifies potential partners to implement the action. A lead partner or partners has/have been identified by an asterisk.

These recommendations are bound together by the challenge of managing tourism in a way that will generate desired economic benefits while also protecting the natural and community character of the Seward Highway.

1. Tourism Management

K.2-A Rest Area Strategy

Recommended: Adopt a highway restroom policy that creates and promotes a limited number of larger facilities (General Traveler Rest Areas- GTRA's) and discourages highway travelers from using smaller facilities which should be targeted for specific user groups (e.g., campers and hikers.) Seek to create four GTRA's along the Seward Highway — one in Segments 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the highway. Spread maintenance responsibilities evenly among the major management entities along the highway. Specifically, the following entities should be responsible for one GTRA each: Chugach State Park, the US Forest Service, the ADOT&PF and the City of Seward.

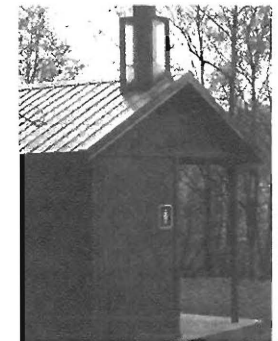
- Chugach State Park has several rest area facilities. One should be selected to serve as a GTRA and be signed as such. Private leasing and management would be the optimal arrangement for DNR-Parks. Other rest rooms should be de-promoted and targeted to specific user groups.
- The Forest Service's Turnagain Pass development project will include a GTRA funded by ADOT&PF in the privately leased portion of this project. All other USFS restrooms should be de-promoted for

the general traveling public. Move facilities and signing away from the road. Do not indicate these smaller facilities on general information maps.

- ADOT&PF should create and site a pilot rest area project in Moose Pass (which will be near ADOT&PF's maintenance facility.) This is a new endeavor for ADOT&PF and it should seek advice from the Forest Service and DNR-Parks on the potential for establishing a private lease arrangement.
- The City of Seward, USFS and other public agencies will include rest room facilities (open during business hours) within the new multi-agency government building which is being planned.
- Public restrooms in Seward are currently available at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, the Small Boat Harbor, and along Waterfront Park.
- The Portage area should be monitored after the opening of the Whittier Tunnel to determine if traffic waiting to use the tunnel will necessitate additional rest room facilities.

Potential Partners:

ADOT&PF*, USFS*, DNR-Parks*, City of Seward*, Major Tour Operators



Public restroom, Chugach State Park.

K.2-B Forest Service Recreation Management

Recommended: The Forest Service should incorporate within its upcoming planning effort the concept of placing different types of recreation and management emphasis in different parts of the Seward Highway. Specifically, the Recreation Opportunities Spectrum method should be meshed with this Plan's distinctions between Segments 2, 3, 4 and 5.

1. Assist the leadership of the Chugach State Park along with assistance from Girdwood, The Municipality of Anchorage, local businesses and the Alaska Railroad to develop an integrated visitor management strategy for Segment 2 that focuses on day visitors within the segment, reduces congestion, provides good information on the range of activities in the segment, and directs people to GTRA's. Work with this framework to direct economic activity to local businesses through joint promotion, visitor information maps and public/private facility partnerships.

2. Consider capping visitation and use of lands in Segment 3 through ceilings on facility development (i.e., campgrounds, parking, etc.) and through careful use of signing or interpretive facilities so as not to increase visitation to sensitive or congested areas. Use the Turnagain Pass facility as the main visitation point in Segment 3 for the general traveler. Provide facilities and information in this location that will send the message that the remainder of Segment 3 is primarily a scenic driving experience rather than a "get out of your car and explore" experience.

3. Work in partnership with Moose Pass to create directional signage, increase interpretive facilities and improve trails and public access points to the lakes. The objective should be to target Moose Pass in people's minds as a place to both recreate and find needed services. This will direct more economic activity to Moose Pass in Segment 4 and relieve use pressures on trails and facilities in Segment 3.

4. Work with the City of Seward to determine if there is interest in the creation of trails or facilities within Segment 5.

Potential Partners: USFS*, DNR-Parks, ADF&G, City of Seward, Moose Pass

K.2-C State Parks Recreation Management

Recommended: Develop active partnerships with private land holders in Indian, Bird and Girdwood to establish a GTRA in Segment 2. Use an existing State Park facility or explore the creation of a new facility based on a public/private partnership. Demarket the rest areas in other sites so as to target specific users.

Work with the Forest Service, Girdwood and other entities including businesses and the Alaska Railroad to develop an integrated plan for managing the day visitor in Segment 2. Goals should include decreasing congestion, evenly dispersing visitors to the various recreation opportunities in the segment and directing visitors to local businesses.

Potential Partners: DNR-Parks*, USFS, ADF&G, Girdwood, Alaska Railroad

K.2-D Carpooling and Ridesharing Facilities

Recommended: Work with retail businesses in Anchorage and Seward to officially identify excess parking spaces for Seward Highway parking. The existing "grassroots" recreational carpooling parking is already occurring at several large discount and grocery chains in Anchorage as local residents meet and then assemble in a single vehicle for travel down the Seward Highway. The marketing of such courtesy spaces could enhance sales at implemented sites and curry popular and environmental favor with the retail outlets.

Potential Partners: Municipality of Anchorage, City of Seward, business community

K.2-E RV Dump Site Facilities

Recommended: Dump sites are recommended at general traveler rest areas in Segments 2, 3 and 4. There is currently a dump site in Segment 5 at the Small Boat Harbor in Seward. Dump sites should be available for free or a nominal fee to avoid illegal dumping along the corridor. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) policies regarding dump sites should be followed.

Potential Partners: ADEC*, USFS*, DNR-Parks*, Private RV facilities

2. Developing Interpretive and Marketing Materials for the Seward Highway

While the sheer beauty of the Seward Highway speaks for itself, there are many other stories that the byway has to tell visitors. How did the land forms come to look the way they do? What kinds of flora and fauna are found along the route? What kinds of people have traveled through the area over the years, and why were they there?

The Existing Condition

The Chugach State Park and Chugach National Forest take on the primary responsibility for on-site interpretation along the Seward Highway at present. In 1993, the Chugach National Forest and the Seward Highway Scenic Byway Interagency Planning Team completed the *Seward Highway Scenic Byway Interpretive Plan*. This plan describe the resource, suggested interpretive themes, proposed new interpretive projects and included an inventory of existing interpretive resources.

While the National Forest did expand the interpretive signage along the route as a result of this plan, many of the other proposed actions have not yet been implemented due to budget cuts at many of the agencies. An additional barrier is the current lack of an ongoing ad-hoc group or organization for the Seward Highway that brings together the many stakeholders on a regular basis.

K.2-F Seward Highway Scenic Byway Road Guide

Recommended: Creating this road guide should be the top interpretive priority for the Seward Highway stakeholders. The guide should include overview sections for each of the major themes identified in the 1993 plan, including geography, flora and fauna, as well information about cultures, specific individuals associated with the byway, and the history of mining and transportation in the corridor. Detailed sections about what to see and do along the byway should be completed “triptik” style, with a short segment of the route shown alongside a written description of the attractions and services in this area. Care should be taken that enough information is given to help the visitor know where to go without having the publication become outdated with information that is no longer correct.

Potential Partners: ANHA*, USFS, DNR-Parks, Office of History and Archaeology, ADF&G, Corporate Sponsor, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau

K.2-G Historic Sites Inventory

A number of significant historic sites in the Seward Highway corridor are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places. These include:

- **Indian Valley Mine**, near Indian, a National Register Site
- **Crow Creek Mine**, near Girdwood, a National Register Historic District
- **Hope**, a mining community dating to 1895, a National Register Historic District
- **Sunrise**, an abandoned mining community, a

National Register Historic Archaeological District

- **Cooper Landing**, early twentieth century town center, a National Register Historic District
- **Seward Railroad Depot**, a National Register Site

Recommended: An inventory of historic sites and landscapes within the Seward Highway corridor should be developed. Historic sites may serve as visitor resource or interpretative centers, and historic data compiled for the corridor should be included on interpretation along the route. The history of the Alaska Railroad, early settlement and travel patterns, Native land use, the 1964 Earthquake, and commercial development can augment the natural history of the route. The history of the construction of the Seward Highway itself would provide an interesting story for the visitor.

Potential Partners: Alaska Office of History and Archaeology*



Seward Railroad Depot circa 1940.

K.2-H Visitor Newspaper

Recommended: A visitor newspaper, designed to complement the road guide, should be developed and distributed widely for free. The newspaper should mention the availability of the road guide for those seeking more in-depth information, thus serving as a marketing tool to promote sales of the road guide. The newspaper could also provide seasonal information about special events, bore tide schedules, tour opportunities, construction or road closures and other pertinent information. The newspaper also offers marketing opportunities (see description under marketing strategies).

Potential Partners: ANHA*, USFS, DNR-Parks, ADF&G, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau, Alaska Railroad, State Historic Preservation Office

K.2-I Seward Highway Audio Tape

Recommended: As agencies along the Seward Highway seek out more ways to accommodate visitors with special needs, the existing audio tape could be made available as an additional resource. A third potential use for the existing audio tape would be through the car rental companies. It is recommended that the existing tape tour be reviewed by the agencies involved in this project, and that if appropriate, a limited number of copies be made available for designated uses.

Potential Partners: USFS*, DNR-Parks, ANHA, ADF&G, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau

K.2-J Staffed Interpretive Van

Recommended: The US Forest Service piloted this concept during the summer of 1997 out of Seward. The van has been extremely popular, reaching 300-400 people a day. A spotting scope to help visitors see Dall sheep is a popular feature. Once this initial test is completed, an evaluation will be completed to see if the idea of an interpretive van should be expanded along the highway. The program will involve a Forest Service or other qualified individual to provide interpretative services to visitors at various locations such as wildlife viewing areas along the highway. Staffed Interpretive Vans will be able to greatly expand on interpretive panels, provide additional interpretation for unusual or seasonal events, and will be able to focus visitor attention on any special programs along the corridor, or special corridor needs (restoration areas, litter issues, highway safety).

Potential Partners: USFS*, ANHA, DNR-Parks, ADF&G, Seward Chamber of Commerce, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council

K.2-K Seward Highway 20-minute Video

Recommended: A number of Alaska videos already exist, including one for Portage Glacier. These existing videos should be used as a model for the Seward Highway. What organizations and individuals have put together successful Alaska videos? How were the videos funded? What organizations were involved? What kind a time commitment will be required? How are they distributed?

Potential Partners: Alaska Public Lands Information Center*, USFS, DNR-Parks, ANHA, ADF&G

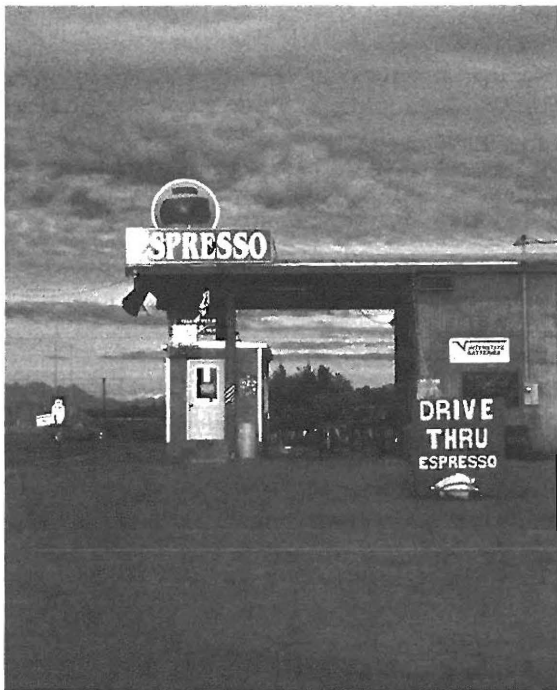
K.2-L Seward Highway Awareness Campaign

Recommended: The tourism promotion agencies at the local, regional and state level will benefit from the designation of the Seward Highway as an All-American Road. Each of these agencies produces tourism materials which offer opportunities to showcase the Seward Highway in some way, and the designation will increase the likelihood that they will choose to showcase the Seward Highway over other potential destinations in Alaska. In order to be sure that the promotional messages sent out to the visiting public about the Seward Highway do not overwhelm the resource—whether it is next year, or in the next decade—it is up to the land managers along the Seward Highway to be sure that whenever possible, the messages sent out about the Seward Highway reinforce land management strategies. For the majority of visitors, this means encouraging stops in the existing business nodes and concentrating economic development along the route in those locations. It also means devoting marketing efforts to encouraging travel in the shoulder and winter seasons, when the route is not as heavily used.

Potential Partners: Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau*, USFS, DNR-Parks, Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council, Seward Convention and Tourism Bureau

Keystone Strategy 3:

Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.



Drive-thru espresso on the Parks Highway north of Wasilla, Alaska.

Photo: © Dan Marriott

The Seward Highway passes through a variety of different jurisdictions. Development in each jurisdiction will differ. The types of development in a state park or national forest will differ from that occurring on private lands. The ways in which development is monitored or regulated in Anchorage may differ from the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the City of Seward. The surrounding landscape and existing land uses in each area of the highway will affect how new development impacts the Seward Highway. And, underlying all of this is the fact that as visitation grows along the Seward Highway, there will be more need and more pressure for additional development.

Therefore, the Partnership Plan must address how to anticipate and/or manage this development. This is necessary to avoid turning the Seward Highway into a congested strip of commercial development, as has occurred in many areas of the lower 48 near National Parks and popular National Forests. Such congestion can already be seen in Alaska at the entrance to Denali National Park. It is also necessary to ensure that those who make public and private investments in new and improved businesses can be confident that the resources that are drawing people to the Seward Highway today will be present and appealing for the long term. If they are not, visitation will drop off and businesses will suffer.

Managing this potential problem will require paying attention to a variety of factors and concepts.

Conveyances Must be Managed Carefully

As the federal, state and regional agencies continue to move along a path of conveying land from public ownership to local government to private hands, care must be taken to ensure that these conveyances do not jeopardize the Seward Highway's character. This process is underway along the Seward Highway today as the DNR-Division of Land works with the Kenai Peninsula Borough to identify areas along the Seward Highway that should be conveyed. Important issues must be kept in mind during this process.

First, there is a limited economy along the Seward Highway today. The travel season is short, and therefore it is difficult for local businesses to make enough money during a 120 day period to be financially healthy for the full year. While projections suggest that there will be more tourists coming to the Seward Highway, most businesspeople agree that the summer season is already quite full. Unmanaged growth in the summer months will ultimately damage the Seward Highway's appeal as word gets out describing a crowded experience with little opportunity to commune with the natural landscape or view wildlife. And while regional tourism agencies are trying to expand the visitor season, it will take much effort and time before the number of shoulder season visitors will sufficiently expand the Seward Highway's economic pie to a point where there will be ample potential profits to justify new business start-ups. Therefore, does it make sense to introduce too much new commercial property to the Seward Highway if the economic pie will just be split into smaller pieces? It should also be noted that there still exists land along the Seward

Highway that could be used for businesses, but the market has not yet justified the creation of those businesses. Conveying land will not create that market justification either.

Second, agencies involved in conveyances must consider the potential visual impact of new businesses along the Seward Highway. This must be thought about ahead of time as Kenai Peninsula Borough has limited land use regulations to guide the development of new businesses. While additional development should be welcomed if it will provide more and stable jobs and create opportunities for healthy businesses, the Seward Highway's character will change dramatically if that development makes the highway seem more like "everywhere else, USA."

Finally, the choice of what land to convey can have dramatic impacts on the protection of scenic character. The maintenance of buffers along the highway could, for instance, provide land owners with great flexibility as to how they use their property while at the same time ensuring that the roadside will be maintained in a largely natural state.

Haphazard development must be avoided because:

- once you have destroyed a resource it is often gone forever.
- it will fundamentally change the pattern of land use and development along the Seward Highway for the first time in its history.
- the conveyance process provides a significant opportunity to transfer land with responsible stewardship built in.
- it will alter the economic and land use patterns well into the future.

Critical Actions

Each action identifies potential partners to implement the action. A lead partner or partners has/have been identified by an asterisk.

Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the scenic character of the Seward Highway. The Highway today is largely undeveloped in nature. The development that does occur, in particular commercial development, is generally concentrated in clusters or nodes. This existing land pattern, one developed organically based on market demand, infrastructure, and public lands, serves as a good model for future sustainable development along the Seward Highway corridor. This basic land use pattern should be encouraged. The Seward Highway's character will be retained if it can continue to provide a feeling of wild openness and solitude, if it offers an experience of escape, and if future development either recedes into the landscape and/or buildings and sites are regionally distinctive in architecture, materials and setting. The following recommendations are designed to achieve these goals.

K.3-A Conveyance Planning

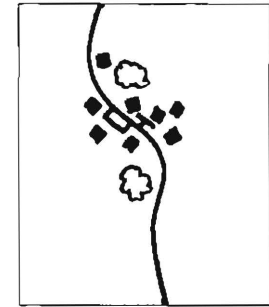
Recommended: Make conveyance decisions within the land use framework recommended by this Corridor Partnership Plan. Shape land uses within conveyances to conform with either Corridor Development or Nodal Development policies. Hold back public lands in 150' deep buffers adjacent to the conveyance areas so that there is sufficient buffer land to protect the roadside character of the Seward Highway and to control signing along the highway. The upcoming conveyances from DNR-Division of Land to the Kenai Peninsula Borough and on to private ownership are a major event that must be carefully planned. These conveyances will establish a new land use pattern along the Seward Highway. The

lands opened up for development will participate in a process of changing the character of the Seward Highway. The land use guidelines presented in the recommendations that follow should shape how and where land is conveyed.

Potential Partners: DNR-Division of Land*, USFS, Kenai Peninsula Borough*, Moose Pass, Cooper Landing

K.3-B Nodal Development Areas

Nodal Development Areas are concentrated centers or districts of business and commerce. Nodal Development areas provide services in close proximity to one another (ideally walking distance) where parking and access to the highway are shared or linked to one another. Businesses benefit from one another due to concentration; highway safety benefits from a defined district with special safety features such as left turn lanes, lighting, etc; and the corridor benefits from orderly concentrated development rather than dispersed development relying on single-site highway improvements and requiring extended infrastructure and municipal services. Within the Seward Highway corridor, such areas would ideally include fuel, repair and food services.



Additionally, larger nodes may include lodging, recreational and outdoor supply businesses, and tourist services. Nodal Development areas serving a local resident population may include banking, hardware, business and medical services.

Recommended: Define Nodal Development Areas along the Seward Highway. This concept focuses on areas suitable for concentrated development that are either already developed or which are targeted for future development through conveyances. These areas should deliberately express a feeling of human activity or settlement and, most particularly, embody patterns, designs, and materials typical of Alaska and not of “Corporate America”. Such development should have a minimal buffer from the road (e.g., 50’.) It should clearly be a destination or be an area that invites activity. Existing nodes include commercial districts and interchanges within Indian, Bird, Girdwood, Portage, Summit Lake, Crown Point, and Moose Pass. Potential nodes include the Portage Area, Turnagain Pass Forest Service facility and the Hope Highway Junction.

Several guidelines should shape development in the nodes.

- Building and parking design and land uses in these areas should not only attract passers-by but also look Alaskan and respect the natural scenery of the Seward Highway corridor.
- Nodal Development areas will be highly visible from the roadway. Their design must reflect local design values and traditions to be most appealing and attractive to the visitor.
- Public lands targeted for development in these nodes should have strong design processes to ensure that all buildings enhance the landscape.
- Private lands that will be developed should have

clearly defined land use classifications so that development is uniform and consistent with that particular node.

- Public funds should be targeted for these areas to provide plantings, pathways, lighting, signage and safety features in the public right of way that will make the node a pleasing and cohesive area.
- To the degree possible, conveyances should include development regulations that will help shape how development proceeds on the site.
- In areas with few or no development regulations, local or regional scenic highway committees should be formed to develop locally appropriate voluntary development goals. These voluntary, advisory recommendations should provide a range of ideas on how developers can profitably build in ways that will enhance the overall character of the Seward Highway.
- Signage within Nodal Development Areas will be located within the public roadside buffer and thus it will be required to be of a consistent size and design so that businesses have adequate publicity and visibility, but the overall impact is one of an ordered district.

Potential Partners: DNR- Division of Land*, Kenai Peninsula Borough, USFS, ADF&G, Local Developers, City of Seward, Municipality of Anchorage

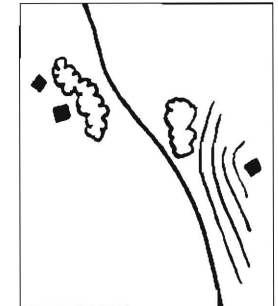
K.3-C Corridor Development Areas

Corridor Development Areas represent areas along the Seward Highway that are acceptable for low density dispersed development. The purpose of Corridor Development Areas is to allow development to occur outside of Nodal

Development Areas, but in ways that will not decrease the scenic qualities of the corridor.

Ideally the traveler passing through a Corridor Development Area will be unaware of any structures or development, except for the occasional driveway or mailbox. All development should be completely screened from the Seward Highway.

Unlike Nodal Development Areas, the design of structures within Corridor Development Areas should be left to the discretion of the owner (as all development is to be screened from the roadway and be environmentally sound, it will have no impact on the traveler’s experience along the highway). For the Seward Highway Corridor such areas are most ideally suited for residential or recreational units, small camps or lodges, club or organizational facilities (fraternal organizations, girl scouts, recreational groups), and non-visually intrusive infrastructural facilities (fish hatcheries, municipal facilities, utility operations).



Recommended: Define Corridor Development Areas along the Seward Highway.

These corridors are the linear areas parallel to the roadway within which low density, dispersed development is likely to occur. Within these areas conveyance policy, local land use regulations, public land development strategies and private property owner management actions should seek to protect the immediate road edge and hide development from the road. Generally speaking, there should be few signs of human activity in these corridors; buffering such activity from view of the road should be a primary objective.

Several guidelines should shape development in the corridor development areas.

- In corridors where conveyances will occur, a 150' buffer strip of land should be held in public ownership immediately adjacent to the road. This will maintain the natural vegetative road character that exists today in perpetuity. Development may occur behind the buffer. While regionally distinctive building and site designs should be encouraged, the buffer will provide adequate protection to allow property owners great flexibility in what they do with their land and how they design their structures.
- Conveyances should be limited to lands that lie below line-of-sight elevations that would be within view of the Seward Highway. In other words, direct development to lands that can be largely hidden from view by the roadside buffer and which will not protrude above the vegetative buffer.

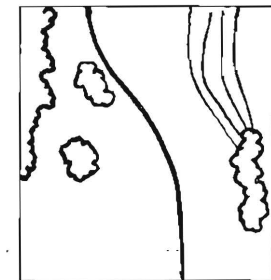
- Encourage low-density land uses that do not rely on road visibility: residential, vacation homes, recreational or club facilities.
- Discourage frontage roads.
- Signage in Corridor Development Areas should be minimal and serve primarily identification and access purposes. As an intentionally noncommercial area, signage should be limited.
- Since a goal for Corridor Development Areas is to maintain a buffer between the highway and development, curb cuts and property access should be limited. Necessary access with adjacent property owners should be encouraged through shared access, development clusters, providing access via a single driveway to the Seward Highway, and collector or access roads behind the buffer.

Potential Partners: DNR - Division of Land*, Kenai Peninsula Borough, USFS, Local Developers

K.3-D Corridor Preservation Areas

Corridor Preservation Areas are recommended to acknowledge some of the large, undeveloped and relatively untouched areas that still exist along the corridor. Such areas should remain free of virtually all development. These are areas that provide easy visual and physical access to the type of natural features and resources of Alaska that are increasingly blocked or obscured by roadside development throughout the state.

Owing to the Seward Highway's easy access to the majority of the state's population and further recognizing the road as a point of access and arrival for many of the travelers



supporting the state's tourism economy, the maintenance of a few natural and unencumbered areas adjacent to the highway is important for the spiritual well-being of Alaskans, future generations, and the economy of the Kenai Peninsula.

Recommended: Define Corridor Preservation Areas along the Seward Highway. These should be corridors of a sufficient length to offer a feeling of openness and escape. These preserved areas will enhance the aesthetic qualities of the Seward Highway and preserve a few unspoiled land areas. These areas should remain under public ownership and protection. Spectacular views, critical wildlife areas, and areas sensitive to or inappropriate for development should be some of the criteria used to define these areas. Business and residential development will not be appropriate in these areas. Utility and other

public infrastructure projects should be carefully designed to avoid or minimize visual intrusions. Even state park and Forest Service facilities should be of a minimal scale and number and set well back from the road. These corridors should forever provide stretches of untouched Alaskan landscape for all to enjoy.

Potential Partners: DNR-Division of Land*, USFS, ADF&G, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Moose Pass, Cooper Landing, Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association

K.3-E Gateways

Gateways address the arrival to a place by shaping the visitor’s initial impressions. Gateways are especially important in a state like Alaska where the great majority of visitors are coming a significant distance. Their “expectation” of Alaska is likely that of jagged snow-capped peaks, igloos, and abundant wildlife—a National Geographic wilderness experience. Gateways, the areas which transition visitors from the business of arrival (baggage claim, lodging, and transportation) to that of “holiday” (the travel poster image) are essential and often overlooked components of building a quality experience.

Imagine a traveler’s first visit to the Seward Highway. They have been plied with images of Turnagain Arm at sunset, rustic log accommodations, and moose foraging at roadside. Now imagine, if to get to that rustic lodge, they pass through a commercial district with gas stations and convenience shops that they expect to find in suburban California. What happened to Alaska?

Gateways provide an opportunity to introduce the Seward Highway to the visitor through clearly defined signage, orientation and welcome.

For the Seward Highway there are essentially two types of gateways to be addressed and considered: ceremonial gateways and destination gateways.

Ceremonial Gateways, byway identification at key entrances to the Seward Highway:

- Anchorage
- Potter Marsh
- Girdwood
- Portage
- Hope Highway Junction
- Sterling Highway Junction
- Seward

Destination Gateways, direction provided to resources from the Seward Highway:

- Girdwood node
- Portage node
- Hope Highway Junction
- Sterling Highway Junction

Recommended: Gateway strategies should be developed for the entrances to the Seward Highway and to all entrances to the nodes. Each type should be acknowledged and incorporated into planning efforts.

- **Ceremonial Gateway** signs should be placed at points entering the Seward Highway from Anchorage, Potter Marsh, Girdwood, Portage, the Hope Highway Junction, the Sterling Highway Junction and Seward. Such signs should state “Entering the Seward Highway, A Nationally Designated Route. Affixed to this sign should be plaques or logos identifying all relevant byway designations and affiliations such as: National Scenic Byway, All-American Road, US Forest Service Byway sign, and the Alaska State Scenic Highway logo.
- **Destination Gateway** signs should be erected providing direction to key destination points off the highway. These signs are intended to direct the traveler to important key destinations, districts, or areas of interest associated with the natural, historic, cultural and recreation features of the byway. These sites include: Girdwood node, leading to Alyeska resort, Portage node, leading to Portage Glacier, Whittier and Prince William Sound, Hope Highway Junction, leading to Hope and the site of Sunrise, and Sterling Highway Junction, leading to Cooper Landing, Soldotna/Kenai, Homer and fishing.

Potential Partners: Partnership Team*, Local Government and Communities, USFS, DNR-Parks, ADF&G, Alyeska, Girdwood, Kenai Peninsula Borough, City of Seward, Municipality of Anchorage



Turnagain Pass in the 1950's.

Photo © Helen Rhode

Partnership

Balance is the goal of this Corridor Partnership Plan and the resource managers and communities along the Seward Highway. How much more can recreation and tourism along the route grow? How can new highway construction projects enhance both safety and aesthetics? The success of the Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan will lie in its ability to assess the goals and objectives of all the corridor stakeholders and present a strategy that meets or approaches as many of the keystone strategies as possible while maintaining an overall understanding of the corridor as a whole.

Partnership is the solution to balancing the issues raised by recreational use, safety, land use, preservation and development. For the Seward Highway, partnership strategies will focus, first and foremost, on the existing programs and policies that support corridor goals for the existing land managers as presented to FHWA for designation under the National Scenic Byways Program. Where programs do not exist to advance specific corridor goals, management proposals will look for existing programs or opportunities that, thorough modification or cooperation, could meet corridor objectives. The recommendation for new programs, policies, or initiatives will always represent the last resort.

1. Seward Highway Partnership Board

The creation of the Seward Highway Partnership Board (SHPB) is recommended to provide representative direction and leadership for the byway. The Seward Highway Partnership Board is designed to facilitate communication among existing agencies, offices, governments and interest groups along the Seward Highway Corridor. Allowing for formal and regular information sharing is a simple, yet key component of this strategy. The SHPB will consist of a Core Working Group representing the principal land managers along the route, the Central Region Office of ADOT&PF, and a local citizen and non-profit representative; a larger group, Partnership Associates, representing all interested parties along the corridor; and an Advisor (the Alaska Scenic Byways Coordinator).

The intent of the organizational structure is to share and coordinate the responsibilities for scenic byway management among a wide number of groups recognizing that cooperative management is essential to maintaining the corridor across different land ownerships.

The Seward Highway corridor is fortunate to have several substantial professional federal and state agencies already responsible for most of the daily management decisions regarding the highway and the corridor. The SHPB will be useful in providing more formal and focused opportunities for communication regarding corridor-wide projects and needs in the future. Naturally, SHPB cannot change the in-house policies of these organizations. It can, however, promote greater regional awareness for different processes and time frames, and encourage the use of organizational flexibilities that may be advantageous to other resource managers along the route.

2. The Players

Core Working Group

The Core Working Group is composed of the principal agencies, offices and local governments that have legal jurisdiction over the roadway and the corridor and are responsible for enacting the policies by which the Seward Highway corridor is managed on a day-to-day basis.

These include representatives from:

- ADOT&PF, Central Region
- DNR-Parks, Chugach State Park
- DNR- Division of Land
- Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (DNR-Parks)
- U.S. Forest Service, Chugach National Forest
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Municipality of Anchorage
- City of Seward

Additionally, the following individuals and organizations are recommended for the core working group to ensure that the working group receives adequate input from its principal constituency: the general public.

- Alaska Natural History Association
- Two citizen representatives (to be chosen by local community councils). One representative from Rainbow/Indian/Bird/Girdwood/Portage, and one from Hope/Summit Lake/ Moose Pass/Crown Point/Cooper Landing

Partnership Associates

The Partnership Associates represent the stakeholders along the corridor, the individuals and organizations that use the corridor as a place of residence, recreation, or business. The Partnership Associates also includes organizations that have jurisdictional authority or advisory capacity over various segments of the corridor. The purpose of this group is to educate and inform the Core Working Group about local community issues, commercial and business interests along the highway, issues of concern, or observations regarding use, activity, and management within the corridor. The Partnership Associates will serve in an advisory capacity to the Core Working Group.

1. Local Government:

- Turnagain Arm Community Council (representing Rainbow, Bird and Indian)
- Girdwood Board of Supervisors
- Portage Valley Community Council
- Hope
- Moose Pass
- Cooper Landing
- Utility and public service providers

2. State Government:

- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game

3. Federal Government:

- National Park Service, Kenai Fjords National Park
- Alaska Public Lands Information Center

4. Business Representatives and Chambers of Commerce:

- to be determined
- trucking representative

5. Tourism Industry:

- Alaska Visitor Association
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA)
- Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Tourism Marketing Council
- Seward Convention and Visitor Bureau
- SeaLife Center
- Alyeska Resort
- Princess Tours
- Grayline
- Other Tour Operators

Seward Highway Partnership Board Advisor

The Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator will serve in an advisory capacity to the Partnership Board.

- Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator

3. The Structure

Core Working Group

The Core Working Group should designate four co-chairs representing The Central Region Office of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Chugach State Park, the DNR-Division of Land and Chugach National Forest. These agencies represent the principal managers of the property along the route, and the manager of the roadway itself. Collectively, they possess the ability and resources to advance the management of the Seward Highway.

Partnership Associates

The Partnership Associates provide for input from key interest groups along the corridor. These groups, unlike the Core Working Group, do not own significant land along the corridor, but use the corridor and its resources extensively for business, recreation, and livelihood. Their purpose is to advise the Core Working Group of the larger regional issues and concerns regarding decisions surrounding the management of the corridor and serve as local experts regarding site-specific issues and questions.

Seward Highway Partnership Board Advisor

The Seward Highway Advisor will be the Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator. As the State's scenic byway expert and a staff member of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Scenic Byways Coordinator will assist SHPB with questions regarding state and federal scenic byways policies, provide guidance

regarding ADOT&PF policies, assist with inquiries regarding funding, and serve as the liaison between the National Scenic Byways Program and the local constituency.

Core Working Group Meetings

The Core Working Group should meet three times a year in meetings focused exclusively on the Seward Highway as a scenic byway. Meetings held in the fall, winter, and spring will not encumber SHPB members during the busiest summer months.

Partner Review

Members of the Core Working Group should have an ongoing responsibility to review and comment on public land conveyances, public facilities, and highway construction projects proposed by other Core Working Group agencies for work along the corridor. This partner review step would help to ensure that land managers can be fully apprised of proposed projects and have an opportunity to comment on behalf of their agency and on behalf of the goals of the CPP.

SHPB Meetings

The entire Seward Highway Partnership Board will meet once a year. This meeting will serve to assemble both the Core Working Group and the Partnership Associates, and to invite all the stakeholders along the corridor with formal opportunity to comment on the state of the

Seward Highway scenic byway. Such meetings should also serve to promote the route, recognize outstanding successes along the corridor for management, preservation, and quality development, and serve as an opportunity to introduce new publications, brochures, or marketing strategies.

Special Advisory Committees

It is anticipated that special needs of the Seward Highway and special interests along the byway will come forward in the partnership process. Special Advisory Committees may be established by the Core Working Group. Ideally each Special Advisory Committee will include a representative from the Core Working Group. It is possible that some committees will be composed entirely of Core Working Group members and that some will be composed entirely of Partnership Associate members.

Special Advisory Committees will focus on specific goals for the corridor. Such committees will allow members of SHPB to focus personal or agency interests with other members having similar interests and goals. They should be established for a particular period of time with a stated goal or outcome. Due to predetermined time expectations and dedicated goals and objectives, Special Advisory Committees will be well situated to seek grants and funding targeted to their specific mission.

Special Advisory Committees might include:

- Highway Safety
- Design Theme
- Land Use Planning
- Tourism Marketing
- Fund Raising

4. Year 1, Tasks

The following tasks represent recommended goals for the first year of the Seward Highway Partnership Board. They are presented with the understanding that circumstances and time may alter their implementation. They do, however, represent important tasks to secure the thoughtful management of the Seward Highway corridor over time.

Core Working Group Tasks, Organizational Focus

1. Secure endorsement of CPP from all agency and government heads

In order to ensure that the CPP can move forward and positively impact the Seward Highway corridor through the implementation of the keystone ideas and other objectives outlined in the plan, it will be necessary for all agency and government staff to have official approval to proceed with the CPP. Therefore, official endorsement of the CPP concept and commitment to coordinate with other agencies and organizations along the corridor is sought. Endorsement requests should come from Core Working Group members to their own agency heads.

Endorsement of the CPP should be sought from the following agency or government officials:

- ADOT&PF, approval by Commissioner
- DNR (Division of Land and Division of Parks), approval by Commissioner
- U.S. Forest Service, approval by the Regional Forester
- Kenai Peninsula Borough, approval by Mayor and Assembly
- Municipality of Anchorage, approval by Mayor and Assembly
- City of Seward, approval by Mayor and Assembly

2. Designate an Organizational Leader

The Core Working Group should designate an organizational leader to convene meetings and serve as a liaison among all SHPB members. This individual will be responsible for:

- Coordinating meeting times and locations,
- Securing meeting space,
- Providing fax, e-mail, telephone, or written notification of meetings,
- Maintaining a listing of all SHPB members,
- Providing contact information regarding inquiries for the Seward Highway.

3. Designate a Business Liaison

The Core Working Group should designate a business liaison (or organization) capable of handling grants and monies coming to the Seward Highway for corridor-wide projects. If the CPP is successful in its mission to attain multi-agency coordination for corridor projects, it will

most likely be necessary to have such an independent third party handle incoming grants, funding, and gifts. The business liaison can hold the monies in trust until they are needed to procure goods or services for the corridor.

4. Identify Projects for Scenic Byways Grant Funds

Determine immediate, short term projects that can be funded with Scenic Byways grant funds through FHWA. Such funds are available to all scenic byways nationwide, however first preference is given to worthy projects on designated National Scenic Byways. Such funds can be used for safety improvement, signage, interpretation, marketing, and demonstration projects. As grants are available on a “first come, first serve” basis, SHPB should have clearly defined and qualified projects ready for submission at the start of each grant cycle.

Core Working Group Tasks, Byway Focus

1. Conveyances

As conveyances have been identified as one of the single-most important changes impacting the future of the Seward Highway corridor, the Core Working should establish a strategy or policy regarding conveyances along the Seward Highway. The coordination among the DNR-Division of Land, the USFS, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough should be articulated. Additionally, the provision of buffers (as discussed in the Keystone Ideas), easements or covenants should be determined and established. Lastly, the Core Working Group should determine if any particular conveyances present immediate threats to the quality of any special or unique features along the corridor, or present particular concerns regarding the overall structure and goals of the CPP.

2. Establish a committee to determine a design theme for the Seward Highway

The Core Working Group should establish a special advisory committee to determine a design theme for the Seward Highway corridor. In order to encourage quality and consistent development throughout the corridor, the articulation of a design theme as early as possible is important to establish desired outcomes and target grant funding for demonstration projects.

3. Publications

Needed interpretative and travel publications for the Seward Highway should be determined as soon as possible. National Scenic Byways will be marketed both domestically and internationally by FHWA; it is a requirement of the program that adequate publications and interpretative material be available for visitors and marketing efforts.

4. Seasonal Traffic Capacity

Review Seward Highway capacity issues by season. How does congestion change during different periods of the year? What strategies can SHPB advocate to assist ADOT&PF (use of Alaska Railroad, ridesharing, promoting travel during shoulder seasons and winter)?

Partnership Associates Tasks, Year 1

1. Coordinate with Core Working Group

The Partnership Associates should coordinate with the Core Working Group to determine how their interests and expertise might best be utilized within the SHPB framework. Ideas for special advisory committees or assistance to Core Working Group tasks should be determined.

2. Workshop: Helping Small Businesses Along the Seward Highway Access Tourist Dollars

Develop and organize a workshop to help retain and strengthen local business along the corridor. Investigate ways in which local businesses can better access tourist dollars and partnership opportunities with larger tour operators present along the corridor.

5. Year 2, Tasks

The following tasks represent recommended goals for the second year of the Seward Highway Partnership Board. They are presented with the understanding that circumstances and time may alter their implementation. They do, however, represent important tasks to be undertaken once the organizational and critical first year tasks have been accomplished.

Core Working Group Tasks, Organizational Focus

1. Review the efficacy of the SHPB structure after one year.

The structure of, and coordination among, SHPB members should be evaluated after the first year. The efforts required to assess and implement the CPP will require a serious commitment from all the members of the Core Working Group. Naturally the first year will be one of experiment and coordination. It is important to the future of the Seward Highway to maintain SHPB as a fluid and flexible organization that can respond to the daily realities of the route. The CPP partnership structure outlined in this document is not intended as a rigid organizational model. The Core Working Group should regularly reassess the most productive and efficient structure for the SHPB.

Core Working Group Tasks, Byway Focus

1. Rest Rooms

The Core Working Group should determine a strategy or policy regarding the placement, management, funding, and maintenance of restrooms along the Seward Highway. Ideally, year two will allow study of the Turnagain Pass facility to determine its value as a model for the remainder of the route.

2. Mid-level Interpretation and Recreational Opportunities

The Core Working Group should develop a strategy to provide greater intermediate experiences to the traveler interested in more than interpretation and scenic viewing along the road, but not having the time or experience for a backcountry experience. Explore the opportunities available through the “Teaming with Wildlife” program administered by the ADF&G.

3. Seward Highway Identification

The Core Working Group should recommend a uniform identification process/system for the Seward Highway (agency shields, state logo, route logo, national logo, combination of). How to identify the route as a National Scenic Byway, a state Scenic Highway, and a National Forest Service Scenic Byway, could potentially litter the scenic route with excessive identification signage.

4. Initiate a viewshed inventory for the Seward Highway corridor

Working with land agencies and ADOT&PF, the Core Working Group should secure funds to conduct a viewshed inventory for the corridor. What are the significant views and viewsheds? What ownership(s) are they under? What key views define the Seward Highway to the average traveler? Can new ADOT&PF projects be designed to enhance or create new views (such as the new views of Turnagain Arm north of Girdwood)? This information will serve as a framework for assisting in future decision-making processes along the Seward Highway.

Advisory Group Tasks

1. Workshop: Developing a Marketing Strategy for the Seward Highway

The Partnership Associates should organize a workshop to determine the needs and benefits of group marketing and linked resources.

6. Year 3, and Beyond

Core Working Group Tasks

Based on the first two years of SHPB, the Core Working Group should identify a time frame for evaluating and fulfilling the critical actions identified under the Keystone Ideas. This task should be determined with the assistance of the Partnership Associates.

The following is a listing of all *critical actions* identified in the Keystone Ideas:

Keystone Strategy 1

The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.

- K.1-A Design Theme
- K.1-B Design Integration
- K.1-C Roadway Details
- K.1-D Urban Landscape
- K.1-E Guardrails
- K.1-F Clear Zones
- K.1-G Roadside Buffers
- K.1-H View Management
- K.1-I Pullouts
- K.1-J Bike Paths
- K.1-K Scenic Highway Identification Signage
- K.1-L Highway Signage
- K.1-M Grooved Centerline and Edge Warnings
- K.1-N Restricted Turning Movements
- K.1-O Left Turning Lanes
- K.1-P Right Turning Lanes
- K.1-Q Center Turning Lanes
- K.1-R Shoulders
- K.1-S Traffic Calming or Speed Management
- K.1-T Management of Curb Cuts

Keystone Strategy 2

Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.

- K.2-A Rest Area Strategy
- K.2-B Forest Service Recreation Management
- K.2-C State Parks Recreation Management
- K.2-D Carpooling and Ridesharing Facilities
- K.2-E RV Dump Site Facilities
- K.2-F Seward Highway Scenic Byway Road Guide
- K.2-G Historic Sites Inventory
- K.2-H Visitor Newspaper
- K.2-I Seward Highway Audio Tape
- K.2-J Staffed Interpretive Van
- K.2-K Seward Highway 20-minute Video
- K.2-L Seward Highway Awareness Campaign

Keystone Strategy 3

Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.

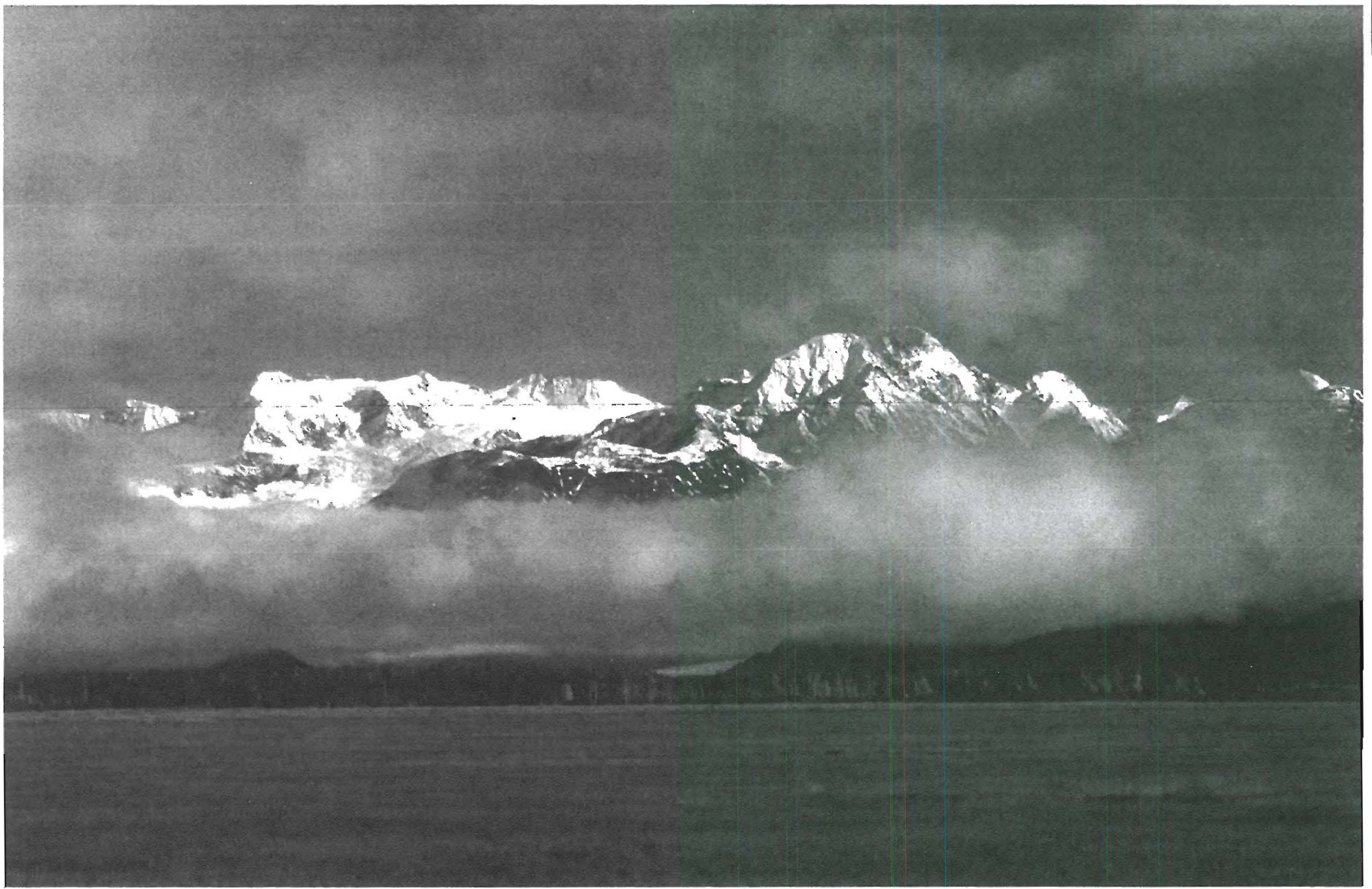
- K.3-A Conveyance Planning
- K.3-B Nodal Development Areas
- K.3-C Corridor Development Areas
- K.3-D Corridor Preservation Areas
- K.3-E Gateways

Project Funding

- **Planning**
- **Partnership**
- **Advocacy**

Funding for all projects and funding for projects and ideas outlined in this Partnership Plan will always remain the single most important factor in moving Seward Highway improvements from discussion to reality. One of the purposes of this plan is to outline projects and establish consensus and funding responsibility so that as funds are sought and budgets developed in the future such projects can receive fair and timely consideration. Another goal of this Partnership Plan is to look for opportunities where the combined financial support of different agencies can, on appropriate projects, enable implementation. For example, the current partnership

between the U.S. Forest Service and the ADOT&PF for the development of a rest area facility at Turnagain Pass represents the positive cooperation of federal and state monies. Lastly, the Partnership Plan hopes to provide, through mutual agreement on specific corridor goals, a unified voice to more effectively advocate funding opportunities for the Seward Highway. If for example the tourism community, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, ADOT&PF, and the USFS were all to endorse a particular corridor project, their collective voices might better be heard by the decision and policy makers than a single agency or organization might be.



Portage, along the Seward Highway.

Photo: © David Rhode

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Conclusion

The Seward Highway is a remarkable resource. In 127 miles from Anchorage to Seward unparalleled views, natural features and cultural resources place this highway among the great driving experiences in the world. This Corridor Partnership Plan represents a strategy that both acknowledges this world-class resource, and also recognizes that a coordinated effort focused on the resources of the corridor is essential for the long term health of the road's character.

This plan outlines a series of critical actions. These critical actions have been identified to suggest methods or strategies by which the highway and corridor can be effectively managed for the protection of scenic resources and the greatest personal enjoyment and economic benefit of those who use the corridor. It will involve the commitment of resource agencies, local government, and the residents of the Seward Highway corridor. It is not a legal plan or requirement, rather it is a wake-up call to the region to have a voice in the future.

For Alaska, this plan represents a model by which natural resources can be conserved and economic development sustained. There are ample opportunities for both preservation and development, tourism and solitude, and efficiency and leisure. Balancing these, however, will require thoughtfulness, commitment and dedication.

If successful on the Seward Highway, a traveler fifty years from now will be able to express the same sentiments of today: **"It is the most beautiful highway in the country."**



The elusive moose.

Photo: © Helen Rhode

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Appendix

Acronyms

AAR - All American Road
AASHTO - American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials
ADEC - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G - Alaska Department of Fish & Game
ADOT&PF - Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
AVA - Alaska Visitors Association
AWRTA - Alaska Wilderness Recreation & Tourism Association
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
CPP - Corridor Partnership Plan
ADCED-Tourism - Alaska Department of Commerce & Economic Development, Division of Tourism
DNR-Division of Land - Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Land
DNR-Parks - Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
FHWA - Federal Highway Administration
GTRA - General Traveler Rest Area
ISTEA - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
LWCF - Land and Water Conservation Fund
NPS - National Park Service
NSBP - National Scenic Byways Program
SHPB - Seward Highway Partnership Board
TE - Transportation Enhancements
TRAAK - Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska
USFS - U.S. Forest Service

Funding Sources

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency

Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program

This program provides funds to communities to develop sustainable economic activity. EPA intends these competitive grants to be a catalyst that challenges communities to invest in a sustainable future recognizing that sustainable environmental quality and economic prosperity are inextricably linked. This program is especially relevant for the Seward Highway as it has sustainability at its core.

Administered by: Environmental Protection Agency

Funding Cycle: Varies

Match: 20%

Funds Available: FY98, \$10 million (requested); FY97, \$5 million

Eligible Projects: Projects funded so far have included: organic farming in the Mid-Atlantic, State wood products certification in Washington State, sustainable craft industry in Appalachia, sustainable neighborhood design in the desert southwest, strategic plan development for sustainable development in South Carolina.

Special Notes: proposals that place an emphasis on city/metropolitan projects are encouraged.

Potential Seward Highway Projects:

Sustainable development strategies for Corridor Development Areas

Eco-tourism orientation, for Moose Pass

For Information Contact:

Jim Wernitz
 US EPA Region 10
 1200 Sixth Avenue
 Seattle, Washington 98101
 206.553.2634
 or
 US EPA
 Office of Air and Radiation
 Sustainable Development Challenge Grant Program
 401 M Street, SW MC6101
 Washington, DC 20460
 202.260.2441

Federal Highway Administration**ISTEA Enhancements Funding**

ISTEA Enhancement funds represent 10% of transportation funding. Eligible projects include: landscape development, historic preservation, public art, bicycle and pedestrian trails, roadside pullouts and interpretative areas.

Administered by: ADOT&PF

Funding Cycle: Annual

Funds Available: FY 98 20 million

Eligible Projects: per ISTEA regulation

Special Notes: requests must be channeled through the established needs list/STIP process.

For Information Contact:

ADOT&PF
 Tom Brigham
 3132 Channel Drive
 Juneau, Alaska 99801

Federal Highway Administration**National Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant Funds**

National Scenic Byways funds are provided to develop and promote scenic byways in the United States. Eligible projects include: byway planning, rest areas and pullouts, interpretation, marketing, safety enhancement, brochures and promotional pieces and land acquisition (fee simple acquisition is allowable, but not preferred, the FHWA first prefers easements)

Administered by: Federal Highway Administration

Funding Cycle: Annual

Funds Available: Varies, first come first serve basis.

Eligible Projects: Scenic byway projects including: signage, interpretation, landscape development, safety improvement, marketing, planning

Special Notes: Priority is given first to All-American Roads, second to National Scenic Byways, and third to state designated scenic byways.

For Information Contact:

State Scenic Byways Coordinator
 ADOT&PF
 3132 Channel Drive
 Juneau, Alaska 99801
 907.465.6975

National Park Service**Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program**

The National Park Service provides technical assistance to prepare interpretive and other plans for localities. Rivers and Trails assistance is provided to states, counties, boroughs, local governments and nonprofit groups on river, trail and greenway strategies.

Administered by: National Park Service

Funding Cycle: Proposals accepted by Oct. 1st

Funds Available: Technical assistance, not a direct grant program

Eligible Projects: Varies

Special Notes: In reviewing applications, the National Park Service is looking for: resource significance, tangible conservation of the resource, public support, clear project goals, and broad cooperation.

Potential Seward Highway Projects:

Local assistance for Kenai Peninsula Borough, the Municipality of Anchorage, the City of Seward and local communities in augmenting TRAAK projects
 Iditarod trail management and restoration
 Viewshed inventory

For Information Contact:

National Park Service
 15 State Street
 Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3572
 617.223.5203

<p>State</p> <p>Teaming With Wildlife (PROPOSED Congressional Legislation)</p> <p>Teaming With Wildlife (TWF) provides stable, dedicated funding to state wildlife and parks agencies for non-hunted species, conservation education and outdoor recreation. The program is funded through a user-pay/user-benefit excise tax on certain outdoor gear, field guides and bird seed. The tax, ranging from .25% to 5% of the manufactures price, will be distributed to states by the existing Federal Aid Program.</p> <p>Administered by: ADF&G & Alaska DNR-Parks</p> <p>Funding Cycle: To be determined</p> <p>Match: Federal funding for the program will be matched by 25% state funds</p> <p>Funds Available: It is estimated that Alaska will receive \$5 – 17 million annually in federal funds</p> <p>Eligible Projects: Conservation education and outdoor recreation</p> <p>Potential Seward Highway Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation programs such as interpretative signs Naturalist and interpretive staff Outdoor recreation projects such as access to trails and refuges Potter Marsh Nature Center and boardwalk (an identified project) <p>For Information Contact:</p> <p>Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Wildlife Conservation</p>	<p>333 Raspberry Road Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1599 907.267.2180</p>
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Appendix—Worksheet

Carrying Capacity of the Seward Highway

Comments:

Visitor Services	Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3	Segment 4	Segment 5	TOTAL
Lodging						
Hotels						
B&B's						
Cabins						
Campsites						
Restaurants						
Can serve 40+						
Cannot serve 40+						
Shopping						
Restrooms						
Bank						
ATM						
Currency Exchange						
Gas						
Auto Servicing						
Health						
Information						
Equipment Rentals						
Car & RV Rentals						

Recreational Opportunities along the Seward Highway

		Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3	Segment 4	Segment 5	Comments
Summer	Fresh Water Fishing						
	Salt Water Fishing						
	Hunting						
	Hiking						
	Rock-Climbing						
	Biking						
	Sea-Kayaking						
	Whitewater Kayaking						
	Camping						
	River Rafting						
	Canoeing						
	Backpacking						
	Walking						
	Parasailing						
Windsurfing							

		Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3	Segment 4	Segment 5	Comments
Winter	Cross-Country Skiing						
	Downhill Skiing						
	Snowmobiling						
	Snowshoeing						
	Dog-mushing						
	Ice-Climbing						
	Ice Sailing						
	Ice-Skating						



Turnagain Arm.

Photo: © David Rhode

Contacts**Principal Byway Contacts****Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation**

3601 C Street, Suite 1258
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5921
907.269.8729

**Alaska Department of Transportation and Public
Facilities, Central Region**

PO Box 196900
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6900
907.269.0517

**Alaska Department of Natural Resources—
Division of Land**

3601 C Street, Suite 1122
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5947
907.269.8533

Alaska Natural History Association

401 West 1st Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
907.274.8440

Alaska Office of History and Archaeology

3601 C Street, Suite 1278
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5921
907.269.8715

Chugach National Forest

Superintendent's Office
3301 C Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-3998
907.271.2500

Chugach State Park

HC52 PO Box 8999
Indian, Alaska 90954-9605
907.345.5014

Federal Highway Administration

Scenic Byway Program
Intermodal Division, HEP-50
400 7th Street, SW, Room 3222
Washington, DC 20590

Local Planning and Government Offices**Kenai Peninsula Borough**

Planning Department
144 N. Binkley
Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7599
907.262.4441

Municipality of Anchorage

Department of Community Planning and Development
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, Alaska 90519-6650
907.343.4224

City of Seward

Planning Office
PO Box 167
Seward, Alaska 99664
907.224.3331

Chambers of Commerce/Convention and Visitors Bureaus**Alaska Visitor Association**

3201 C Street, Suite 403
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
907.561.5733

Seward Convention and Visitors Bureau

PO Box 749
Seward, Alaska 99664
907.224.8051

State Offices**Alaska Department of Transportation and
Public Facilities**

Scenic Byways Coordinator
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801
907.465.6975

Additional Information Sources**AASHTO**

American Association of State Highway and
Transportation Officials
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 249
Washington, DC 20001
202.624.5800

Alaska Railroad Corporation

PO Box 107500
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500
907.265.2497

National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse

1440 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 202
Washington, DC 20005
1.800.4.BYWAYS (1.800.429.9297)

American Recreation Coalition

1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 726
Washington, DC 20004
202.662.7420

American Society of Landscape Architects

636 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.898.2444

National Trust for Historic Preservation

1785 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.588.6000

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Western Regional Office (Serving Alaska)
One Sutter Street
Suite 707
San Francisco, California 94104
415.956.0610

Scenic America

21 Dupont Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.833.4300

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3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801

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