



Sterling Safety Corridor Improvements Public Open House No. 2

Thursday, October 24, 2024, 4-7 p.m., at the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex Conference Room

Open House Summary.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and QAP, with DOWL and Stephanie Queen Consulting, hosted the second public open house for the Sterling Safety Corridor Improvements Milepost (MP) 82.5 to 94 project on Thursday, October 24, 2024, in the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex Conference Room. Attendees began arriving for the event at 3:45 p.m. The meeting format was open house style, and a pre-recorded presentation was played several times throughout the meeting. Attendees signed in and received informational materials including a Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. The open house featured project boards displaying key information such as the project area, timeline, crash statistics, traffic data, and potential design alternatives to improve access to a four-lane design. Large roll plots of the project corridor and potential design alternatives were located on tables for attendees to discuss ideas for safety improvements at specific areas, concerns, and document comments. The materials featured a roll plot and boards displaying comments, concerns, and ideas community members shared with the project team at and following the June 2024 open houses. This event provided a platform for public engagement and feedback on the project's development.

The open house event was a significant gathering, drawing in a diverse group of approximately 95 attendees. This included project team members, interested members of the public, and interested elected officials.

Question and Comments Summary.

The following comments summary is based on discussions with project team members, comments submitted in writing via comment forms, comments noted on the roll plots, and emails following the open house.

Safety, Traffic, and Congestion

- Requests to select the safest and most functional options.
- Concerns roadway improvements will not improve accident rates due to causes other than roadway configuration.
- Concerns a five-lane design would have too many turn conflicts because of the high number of driveways.



- Suggestion to have full turning access for side streets and locations with the highest traffic volumes.
- Concerns improvements will increase highway noise.
- Concerns with increased lighting:
 - Increased light pollution.
 - Installation and maintenance costs.
 - Could cause glare during fog conditions.
- Strong support for downward facing lighting along the corridor to improve sight distances and visibility of animals.
- Support for a separated multi-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Concerns with congestion at intersections and locations:
 - Scout Lake Loop Road
 - Robinson Loop Road
 - On Par Lane
 - Mackey Lake Road
 - Jim Dahler Road
 - Sterling Waste Transfer Station
- Suggestion to consider traffic data for the Sterling Waste Transfer Station.
- Concerns with all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use damaging the proposed pathway and side street approaches.
- Concerns with State of Alaska DNR Division of Forestry & Fire Protection facility located on south side of the highway (between Mackey Lake Road and On Par Lane) and potential impacts of the project.
 - Requested a traffic signal or fire light be installed at the forestry driveway to allow emergency egress of fire trucks and emergency vehicles.
 - Forestry has a helicopter pad located on the property and would like to keep any roadway improvements as far from the helipad as possible.
- Concerns with accident rates near Big Johns.
- Suggestion to reduce the speed limit to 45 miles per hour (MPH).
- Suggestion for wildlife crossing near Boundary Street.

Corridor Design

- Locations for potential frontage roads:
 - Near Mackey Lake Road.
 - Extending Whistle Hill Loop to the east/north as a frontage road connecting to Heath Place and Castenholz Drive.
 - At the Schultz Street/Jim Dahler Road area.
 - Near Nina Robinson Avenue.
- Support for frontage roads from some members of the business community to address access concerns.



- Request for traffic signals at:
 - Forest Lane/Jim Dahler Road
 - On Par Lane
 - Mackey Lake Road
 - Pine Street
 - Fair Way
- Suggestion for a grade separated interchange or a northbound highway bridge flyover at Mackey Lake Road.
- Suggestion to add a traffic lane or acceleration lane southbound between Mackey Lake Road and the Kenai Spur Highway.
- Request to consolidate and widen driveway approaches to accommodate semi-trucks and trailers entering and exiting businesses.
- Suggestion for a new road between Mackey Lake Road and the Kenai Spur Highway so people traveling to Kenai would not need to drive on the Sterling Highway.
- Support for the U-turn options shown and how they differ from a traditional stop-controlled intersection U-turn, especially for accommodating larger vehicles such as semi-trucks with trailers and RVs.
- Suggestion median U-turn concepts be wide enough to accommodate semi-trucks with trailers without blocking travel lanes.
- Concerns with U-turn concepts.
- Support of and concerns with the five-lane roadway with center two-way left turn lane.
- Support of and concerns with the four-lane divided highway with depressed median.
- Some individuals changed their opinions to support a four-lane divided highway with U-turn options shown.
- Request for more dedicated turn lanes along the corridor.
- Request for a bridge over Soldotna Creek tall enough to reduce the hill near Mackey Lake Road.
- Support for and concerns with realignment of Scout Lake Road.
- Request to provide space for ATVs and dirt bikes along the corridor.
- Request to pave or widen U-turn or restricted crossing U-turn (RCUT) truck aprons rather than use gravel or dirt.
- Suggestion to include acceleration lanes for traffic turning onto the Highway sufficient for semi-trucks with trailers to accelerate to highway speed.
- Suggestion to flatten any acceleration lanes so vehicles would not be climbing a grade while trying to accelerate.
- Suggestion to retain trees for noise barrier and to reduce objects entering the road, such as golf balls from the golf course.

Maintenance and Operations

- Request for improved snow removal and additional maintenance funding.
- Concerns highway improvements will not improve snow removal operations, leaving road hazards that contribute to accidents.



- Concerns maintenance equipment would have difficulty adequately removing snow from non-typical road features, such as the protected median U-turns.
- Request to plant boreal fescue and reduce plant materials that attract moose.
- Preference for alternatives resulting the less road maintenance needed.

Right-of-Way

- Requests for roadway widening or improvements be expanded within the right-of-way (ROW) and away from properties.
- Concerns highway improvements could impact land uses and access for potential development.
- Concerns with reduced access directly from the Sterling Highway.
- Concerns highway improvements could impact access to existing businesses.
- Support from some property owners to acquire additional ROW to maintain or enhance access to businesses.

General

- Appreciation for the prerecorded presentation played at the meeting and opportunities to ask questions.
- Suggestion to apply for grants for a wildlife crossing pilot program.



Public and Agency Notice:

Project stakeholders were notified of the open house via the following methods:

- Newspaper advertisement in the Peninsula Clarion on October 11 and October 18, 2024.
- Radio advertisement on KSRM Kenai from October 18 to October 24, 2024.
- Radio advertisement on KDLL Soldotna from October 17 to October 24, 2024.
- Postcard mailed on October 3, 2024.
- Email invites on October 3 and October 21, 2024.
- Facebook post from Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities on October 16, 2024.
- State of Alaska online public notice posted on September 20, 2024.
- Media appearance on KSRM 'Life on the Kenai' October 16, 2024.
- Public comments to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly at the October 22, 2024, meeting
- Public comments to the Soldotna City Council at the October 23, 2024, meeting

Action Items and Next Steps:

- Update FAQ Sheet based on comments and questions from the public.
- Post Open House No. 2 Summary to the project website.
- Distribute public comments to the project team and respond to concerns.