PROJECT BRIEFING

Soldotna City Council

June 12, 2024

PROJECT TEAM

Jake Gondek, P.E.
Project Manager

Julia Hanson, P.E.
Design Manager

Devki Rearden
Assistant Project Manager

A COLAS COMPANY

Jeff Schock
Construction Project Manager

Daron Underwood
Construction Manager

Steve Noble, P.E.
Design Project Manager

Erica Jensen, P.E.
Assistant Project Manager

Richard Pribyl, P.E.
Project Engineer

Stephanie Queen
Public Involvement Lead

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION, PURPOSE & GOALS

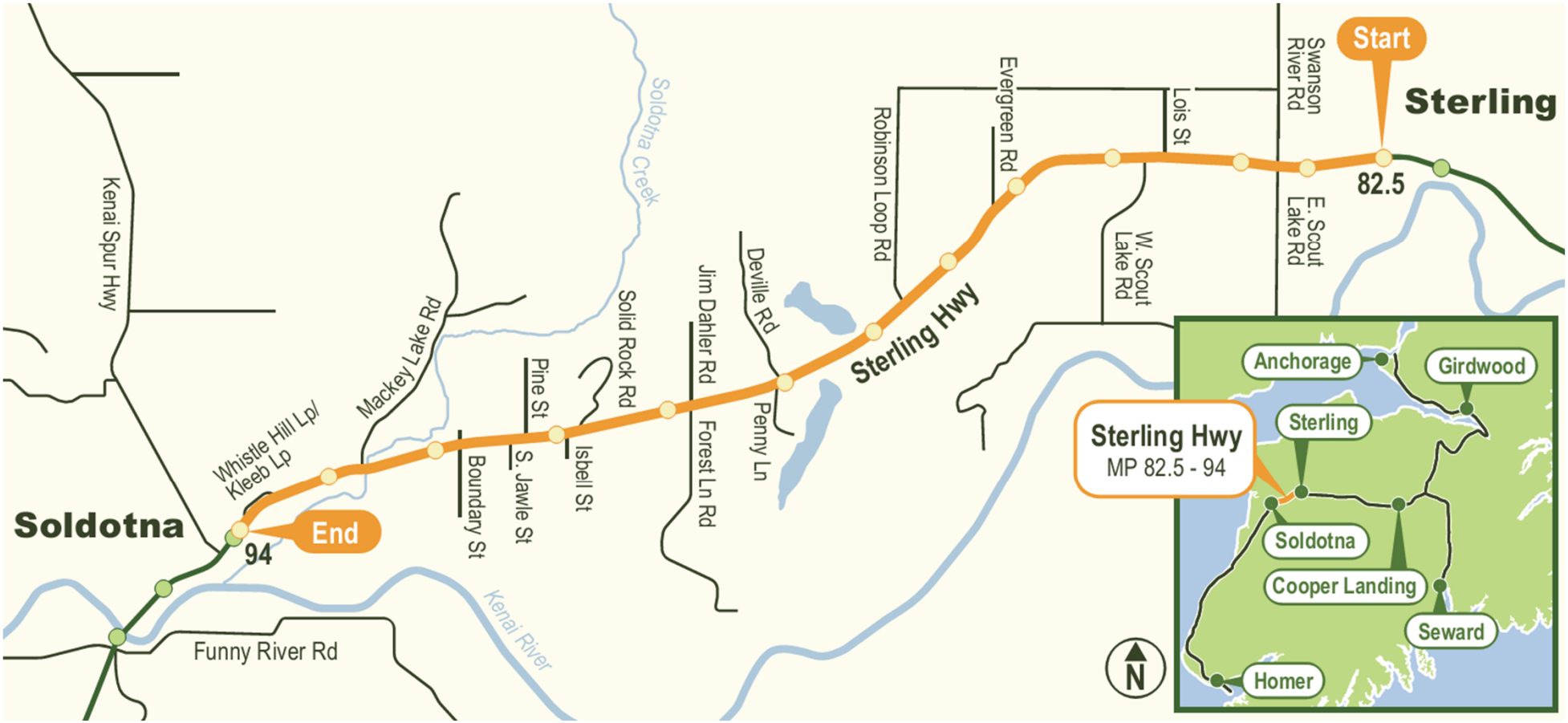
Photo by AA Roads, 05/10/23

- Federally-funded project to reconstruct Sterling Highway between Sterling and Soldotna
- Purpose: **improve safety** and **reduce congestion**
- Goals:
  - Provide a safe and reliable roadway
  - Allow for decommissioning of the Traffic Safety Corridor
  - Accommodate the seasonal traffic increases
  - Uphold the trust of stakeholders and the public
  - Balance needs to maintain access
  - Begin construction in 2026
  - Phase construction to maximize benefits from available funding

PROJECT AREA

VICINITY & OVERVIEW MAP

STERLING SAFETY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
MP 82.5 TO 94
YOUR SAFETY IS OUR GOAL!



PROJECT BACKGROUND

CORRIDOR HISTORY

- 1950: Sterling Highway constructed
- 1983: Environmental Assessment to widen highway from MP 79-94
- 1991: MP 79-83 (within Sterling) widened to 4 lanes with center left-turn lane
- 1991: MP 83-94 improved 2-lane section with widened shoulders
- 2009: Traffic Safety Corridor designation
- 2015-2021: Preliminary Engineering Report and Environmental Assessment completed
  - 4-lane divided highway was preferred alternative
- 2022: Design-Build project started but cancelled after significant public input
- 2024: Project restarted using Progressive Design-Build delivery

PROJECT FOCUS: SAFETY & CONGESTION

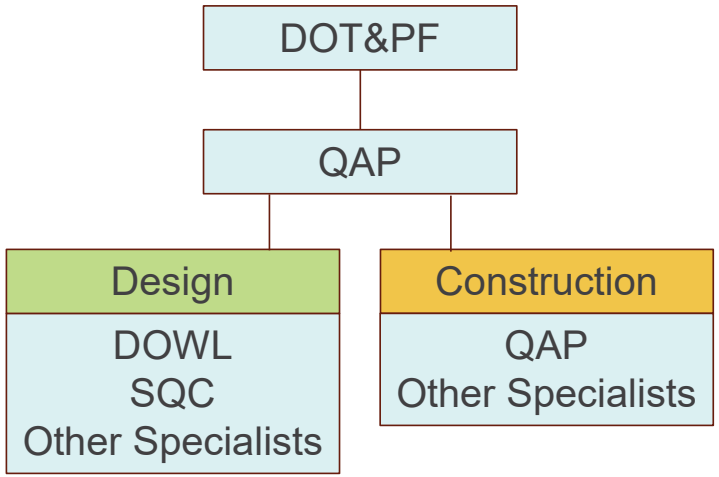
WHY THIS PROJECT IS NEEDED

Photo by Erin Thompson/Peninsula Clarion, 2021

- Fatal and major injury crash rates remain above national averages
- Most fatal and major injury crashes occur during winter months
- Head-on collisions account for nearly half of fatal and major injury crashes
- Traffic volumes have increased >400% since the 1970s
- Traffic exceeds current 2-lane roadway's capacity
- July traffic is more than double winter traffic

WHY IS THE CONTRACTOR INVOLVED ALREADY?

PROGRESSIVE DESIGN-BUILD (PDB) DELIVERY



- Why did DOT&PF choose PDB process?
  - More collaborative
  - Fosters engineer/contractor innovation
  - Lower risk of budget overrun
  - More flexible construction schedule
  - Greater ability to phase construction
  - Continuity of project knowledge through construction

EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

PREVIOUS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

STERLING SAFETY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
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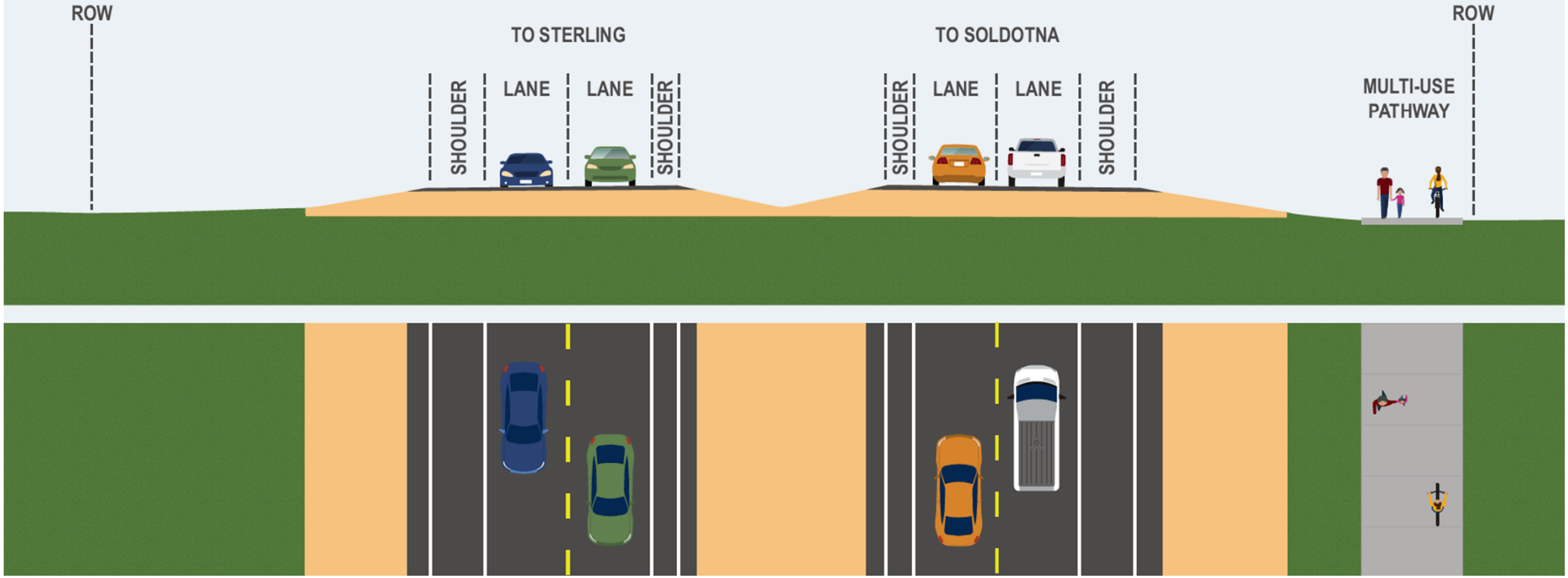
ALTERNATIVE A: FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY WITH DEPRESSED MEDIAN



EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

PREVIOUS PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

- Recommended in 2021 Environmental Assessment:
  - 4-lane divided highway through most of corridor
  - 5-lane highway with center left-turn lanes on each end of the corridor
- Advantages:
  - Substantially reduces head-on crashes and improves safety
  - Reduces read-end crashes by providing left-turn lanes
  - Provides safe passing opportunities
  - Increases capacity
- Challenges:
  - Restricted access and required U-turns to many properties
  - Wider corridor for pedestrians to cross
  - Increased lanes – higher travel speeds and more exposure to animal-vehicle crashes
  - Utility relocation / impacts
- Broad range of public support and opposition

OBSERVATIONS AND INPUT

PREVIOUSLY VOICED CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

- Large number of fatal crashes, injury crashes, and near misses
- Passing on the right, speeding, tailgating, and lack of headlight use
- Perceived lack of law enforcement
- Tourists driving slowly with no passing options
- School busses stopping in the lane of traffic
- Poor pedestrian amenities and inability to cross safely
- Competing uses: local vs through, recreational vs commercial, tourist vs resident
- Congestion and high seasonal traffic
- Impacts to emergency responders
- Noise from rumble strips
- Corridor lighting impacting quality of life
- Off-road, ATV, and snowmachine use
- Planning fatigue – decades of study without action

NEW TEAM – FRESH PERSPECTIVE

UPCOMING OUTREACH AND DATA COLLECTION

- Continue to gather input from the public and stakeholders
- Schedule stakeholder meetings on specific topics:
  - Public safety and emergency response
  - KPB school district
  - Business owners, tourism, and economic interests
  - Trucking, freight, and transportation
  - Wildlife and environment
- Collect and analyze engineering data
  - Survey
  - Traffic
  - Geotechnical
  - Utilities
- Develop and evaluate design alternatives
- Begin permitting and preparation construction

PROJECT SCHEDULE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED PUBLIC INPUT

JOIN US AT ONE OF THE OPEN HOUSES

STERLING SAFETY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
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TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2024, 5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

Sterling Community Center, Gym

38377 Swanson River Rd, Sterling, AK

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2024, 5:00 – 7:00 P.M.

Soldotna Public Library, Community Room

235 N Binkley St, Soldotna, AK

PROJECT CONTACTS

Stephanie Queen, Public Involvement Lead
(907) 953-7701

Steve Noble PE, DOWL Design Project Manager
(907) 562-2000

Email:

SterlingSafetyImprovements@dowl.com

Website:

SterlingSafetyImprovements.com

THANK YOU!