



Old Nenana/Ester Hill Rehabilitation

Project No. 0002(257)/60455

Comment Response Summary as of January 19, 2016

The following document summarizes the comments received by email, phone, comment sheet, and verbally by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) for the Old Nenana/Ester Hill Rehabilitation project. Public meetings were held on March 18 and December 9, 2015 at the Ester Volunteer Fire Department at 3570 Old Nenana Highway, Fairbanks, Alaska. Approximately 40 people signed in at both meetings. The project team, comprised of ADOT&PF, Hattenburg Dilley & Linnell, and Brooks & Associates, explained and answered questions about the proposed action to be undertaken by ADOT&PF. Meeting details can be found in the meeting summaries. The majority of the comments outlined in the table below were in response to the public meetings.

Comment and Response Table

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Access	December 2016	The only access to our residence is located on Old Wood Road.	Access would be maintained during construction unless special notice is given.
Aesthetics	March 2015	Maintain the aesthetics and feel of Old Nenana Highway.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design.
Clearing Limits	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters were concerned about the extent of tree clearing associated with the project. One person felt that excessive clearing would increase traffic speed. Suggestions included: clear only what is necessary; hydro axing areas that need improved sight distance but leave large birch and spruce trees at select locations; and remove specific trees such as mangled alders, and willow.	Clearing would be done as needed to ensure required sight distance at intersections and sharp curves, and otherwise would be limited to that needed to construct the new road embankment.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Clearing Limits	December 2015	Clarification was requested about tree clearing and if the boundaries would be surveyed and flagged prior to clearing. It was asked when the clearing would take place.	The tree clearing boundaries would be surveyed and flagged immediately prior to clearing activities. The contractor would decide when to do the clearing, but clearing is typically done between August and May due to the Migratory Bird Act.
Clearing, Availability of Firewood	March 2015 December 2015	Several people asked if the wood cut as part of the project would be available for firewood. Stack four to eight foot lengths of burnable wood along the edges of the project for residential pick up.	We will evaluate the viability of providing cleared trees for firewood during detailed design. One of the things ADOT&PF must take into consideration is finding a safe location to stack trees for people to pick up out of the traveled way. We'll also need to determine how many viable trees for firewood (larger than 8" diameter at chest height is the standard we have used in the past) there will be in the clearing limits.
Construction	March 2015	One person was worried that the construction contractor might damage property corners during construction.	The contractor would be required to document any damaged property corners and they would be replaced, but it is very unlikely the contractor would need to be close to property corners.
Construction	March 2015 December 2015	People wanted to know when construction would begin.	Construction is scheduled to start in 2017 at the earliest and dependent on funding availability.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Construction Traffic Control	March 2015 December 2015	There was concern about traffic control and access to medical appointments, etc., during construction.	Access would be maintained during construction unless special notice is given. Emergency access would be accommodated.
Crashes	March 2015	Commenters witnessed run-off-the-road crashes along Old Nenana Highway.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase. <i>December 2015 update: A crash analysis was performed to evaluate the need for safety improvements along the highway.</i>
Drainage	March 2015 December 2015	Drainage/culvert issues were noted on the project graphics.	The team thanked commenters for the information. The project includes replacing, repairing, and adding culverts where needed.
Drainage	March 2015	One person discussed a drainage issue on Stella Maris Avenue where a culvert on Old Nenana Highway diverts water into a ditch on the uphill side of Stella Maris Avenue. When the culvert under Stella Maris Avenue freezes, it overflows the road. Stella Maris Avenue is not within a road service area and is maintained by residents.	The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design process. Rehabilitating and reconstructing drainage ditches are part of this project. <i>December 2015 update: This area was evaluated in the field in fall 2015 by the design team. We are currently working on final design of drainage improvements for the project.</i>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Drainage	March 2015	Concerns arose about drainage from uphill driveways flooding Old Nenana Highway and the homes on the downhill side. Locations mentioned included 4795 John Deere Lane and Mile 4.8. In some locations, commenters stated that re-ditching would solve the problem.	<p>The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design process. Rehabilitating and reconstructing drainage ditches are part of this project.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: This area was evaluated in the field in fall 2015 by the design team. We are currently working on final design of drainage improvements for the project.</i></p>
Drainage	March 2015	The project team noted that a watershed study had been completed for the area.	The team thanked the commenter for the information.
Drainage	March 2015	One person mentioned drainage problems causing siltation issues both uphill and downhill.	<p>The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: This area was evaluated in the field in fall 2015 by the design team. We are currently working on final design of drainage improvements for the project.</i></p>

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Drainage	December 2015	At Old Wood Road there is drainage crossing the road. There was a suggestion to construct a flat area for snow storage on the Old Wood Road side of Old Nenana Highway. The commenter suggested that the site could be used as a material source.	<p>Culverts would be added as part of the project. Making a flat area for snow storage is outside the scope of the project.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Flat-bottom ditches will be constructed as a part of drainage improvements and should provide additional snow storage.</i></p>
Drainage	December 2015	There is drainage crossing the road between Stations 315+00 and 320+00 that gets icy in the winter.	This project will upgrade drainage and ditching throughout the project. We are currently working on final design of drainage improvements for the project.
Drainage	December 2015	Make sure that the culvert drains to the property owner's ditch at the pull-off entrance near Station 300+00.	Noted by the team.
Drainage	December 2015	Make sure there is enough subbase to provide adequate drainage under the road and prevent frost heaving in the future.	The project team is looking at specific locations with drainage issues and finding ways to address them. Our current design uses 8-inches of free draining subbase material under the pavement to reduce frost heave, as well as improved ditching and culverts to keep water away from the embankment.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Driveway Approaches	March 2015 December 2015	Commenter concerned with grade changes and how the road grade would affect approaches to his driveway.	Driveways will be brought up to current standards with this project, including modifications to grades and paving the driveway aprons. We will work with individual property owners as needed during detailed design to address impacts related to driveway modifications.
Driveway Approaches	December 2015	Delete the driveway on the plans that is shown between Station 195+00 and 200+00, as it is not a driveway.	The team will remove the indicated driveway on the plans.
Driveway Sight Distance	March 2015	Commenters expressed concern with clearing to improve sight distance and its effect on access to residences.	Clearing would be done to improve sight distance for intersections and sharp curves if needed, and otherwise would be limited to that needed to construct the new road embankment.
Driveways	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters wanted to know what was being done with driveways.	Driveways would be brought up to current design standards and driveway aprons would be paved.
Driveways	March 2015	Commenters mentioned that people are parking on the road because of insufficient or poor access to their house/cabin.	<p>The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Impacted driveways will be improved to current design standards. We will work with individual property owners as needed during detailed design to address impacts related to driveway modifications.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Driveways	March 2015 December 2015	Several people were concerned that steep driveways could be made steeper with the road widening. One person specifically mentioned concern that if the project pushed his driveway entry further towards the ROW it would decrease accessibility to the driveway, which is a tight switchback off Old Nenana Highway.	Minor road alignment shifts might be beneficial to address this problem and would be considered during detailed design phase. <i>December 2015 update: Impacted driveways will be improved to current design standards. We will work with individual property owners as needed during detailed design to address impacts related to driveway modifications.</i>
Driveways	March 2015	One person plans to make driveway improvements over the summer and didn't want the improvements to conflict with future improvements.	This project would reconstruct all impacted approaches along the highway. At this time we haven't done detailed design to know how much impact we would have at this location, but we don't anticipate work outside our highway right-of-way (~100 to 150 feet either side of centerline typically).
Driveways	March 2015	One person explained that he has a property divided by a creek bed and that he would like to build a driveway that would allow him to access the other side of the lot. He asked if the project could straighten out the road in that section to allow for this driveway.	The 3R process was explained and the cost/benefit required for horizontal improvements shows that curve changes are not warranted.
Driveways	March 2015	Widening approaches and landings for driveways would improve turning radius and sight distance.	Sight distance would be evaluated for all approaches and improved where feasible.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Encroachment	December 2015	Concern was expressed regarding encroachment of the widened road onto property located at 3751 Old Nenana. The plan brings the new shoulder onto the front yard.	ADOT&PF confirmed, per the current design, that the curve in front of 3751 warranted improvement based on the crash analysis and improving site distance lines. Therefore, centerline was shifted approximately 4-ft away from the property.
Funding	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters expressed concerned about certainty of funding for construction and noted that they felt maintenance had declined since the project began.	Construction funding is currently identified in the State's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). <i>December 2015 update: The project remains in the STIP but has been moved from 2017 to 2018. The design remains on schedule for the project to be ready in 2017 if funding becomes available early.</i>
Guardrail	March 2015	One person suggested adding guardrail on the north side of the road between Gold Lode Road and Ester Creek Drive.	The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase. <i>December 2015 update: Project design has eliminated the need for guardrail throughout the project by adding clear recovery area alongside the road throughout the project.</i>
Maintenance	March 2015	Commenters noted that maintenance of Old Nenana Highway has degraded over the years.	This may be due to budget cuts leading to less money to maintain roads.

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Mining Remnants	March 2015	There may be an old mine shaft under the road where the ADOT&PF corrected a big dip in the pavement. The area referenced was located around MP 9.2.	The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase.
Negative Development	March 2015	There was a concern that the improved road might bring in undesirable people and development to the area.	The design would take into consideration the rural nature of the road. No significant geometric changes are planned with this project, therefore significant increases in vehicular traffic and speeds are not anticipated. The addition of shoulders may increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic on the route.
Negative Development	March 2015	One person stated that he does not want Old Nenana Highway to look like the Parks Highway.	There are no current plans for the Old Nenana Highway to become a major highway like the Parks Highway.
Noise	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters said that pushing the road nearer to residences and ROW clearing would increase noise impacts.	It is expected that the centerline would remain near where it is now and no noise analysis is planned at this time.
Pathway	March 2015	Three commenters and the Ester Community Association requested extending the bike path from the Parks Highway to the post office (Village Road). The Ester Community Association members voted unanimous to endorse this request. One commenter suggested extending the trail to Main Street.	<p>The bike path extension would be added to the project contingent on Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Extending the separated path to Village Road has been added to the project scope.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Pathway	March 2015 December 2015	One commenter suggested we consider a separated bike path.	The team explained that this option is no longer being considered due to budgetary reasons.
Public Involvement	March 2015	Consider attending Ester Community Association meetings to discuss the multiuse pathway. The group meets twice a year.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.
Public Involvement	March 2015	Road Service Area commissioners in the area would like to see design documents as the design develops.	Additional public involvement will allow Road Service Area commissioners and others to view the design in progress.
Public Involvement	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters wanted to be added to outreach lists for the project.	The project team created a mailing list for the project. Mail and email addresses are added to the list when comments are received.
Pull off areas	March 2015	Add pull off areas for sightseeing and parking for recreation. Existing lookouts have grown in so much that there isn't much of a view.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase. <i>December 2015 update: Sightseeing and recreational parking improvements do not fall within the scope of this project. Project clearing will be limited to that needed to construct the project out of respect for the rural nature of the road and other public comments received.</i>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Re-vegetation	March 2015	Commenters expressed concern that noxious and/or invasive weeds may be contained in the certified seed mix that is applied to the cleared right-of-way after construction. The commenter suggested having a school or a Boy Scout working towards becoming an Eagle Scout plant test plots to ensure it does not contain sweet clover seeds.	The comment was noted and will be considered during detailed design phase.
Recreational Use	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters noted increases in recreational use (skiing, biking, walking) along the road and requested accommodation by widening the road or extending the pathway.	The current plan adds 4-foot shoulders on each side of the road to accommodate non-motorized users.
Recreational Use	December 2015	One person suggested considering flatter slopes in the right of way between Ester Creek Road and Gold Lode Road because there is an informal snow machine pathway there.	Flatter slopes will be evaluated through this area as they may also provide embankment stability for the large fills in this area and improve intersection sight distance.
Right-of-Way	January 2016	The Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office identified seven surface estate trust parcels adjacent to the proposed project. If any project study or construction activities will occur on Trust land outside of ADOT&PF's ROW (including but not limited to vehicular staging, parking, environmental/cultural/wetland studies, surveys, vegetation clearing, etc.), an application must be submitted with the \$500 processing fee and GIS data in order to obtain written authorization from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office.	Proposed improvements will take place within ADOT&PF's existing ROW.

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Road Structural Section	March 2015	A commenter expressed concern about the stability of roadbed and especially the shoulders and requested a structural section in the design.	<p>The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: The final pavement section for this road includes 8-inches of subbase material for drainage and strength, capped with 2-inches of asphalt surfacing over 2-inches of asphalt treated base.</i></p>
Safety	March 2015	One person mentioned that Calypso Farm often has 50-60 vehicles parked on the road plus school buses, and thought it constituted a safety hazard.	<p>The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: A school bus turnout will be added as a part of project improvements to improve safety in this area.</i></p>
Schedule	December 2015	Several people requested that the project be built as soon as possible.	<p>Noted by the project team, but is dependent on securing funding.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: The project remains in the STIP but has been moved from 2017 to 2018. The design remains on schedule for the project to be ready in 2017 if funding becomes available early.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
School bus pull-off	March 2015	Commenters requested keeping the existing school bus unloading area on north/west side of the road and pullout about mid-project. The commenter would like to work with the project team to determine how to ditch his driveway to minimize drainage onto the bus pullout.	The team will work with this property owner to minimize drainage issues while maintaining the existing pullout.
Shoulder Rumble Strips	March 2015	A commenter requested the project team consider installation of rumble strips between the shoulder and roadway in the areas with an east/west orientation where sunrise and sunset lighting conditions limit visibility of motorized and non-motorized traffic.	Rumble strips would not be installed with this project due to the residential nature of the area and the lack of run-off-the-road type crashes.
Shoulders	March 2015	Commenter felt that 4-foot shoulders were not wide enough for a bike path/sidewalk. Preferred 6-foot shoulders on the uphill side and 2-foot shoulders on the downhill side. Another commenter suggested that all the shoulder width be added to one side of the road to provide a wider area for mixed use (bicyclists, pedestrians, skiers, etc.) Other commenters expressed support for the addition of shoulders as planned.	Shoulders provide space for many uses such as emergency storage for disabled vehicles, enforcement, maintenance, maneuvering and recovery for errant vehicles and bicycle use. Four foot shoulders are the minimum standard for accommodating non-motorized users. Wider shoulders are not feasible based on budget constraints. The design would include equal shoulder width on both sides to accommodate all shoulder uses.
Shoulders, Unpaved	March 2015	If the project is to go forward, one person would prefer unpaved shoulders.	Unpaved shoulders would not result in reduced maintenance costs, therefore shoulders would be paved.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Shoulders, Unpaved	March 2015	A commenter suggested not paving the shoulders and driveway approaches in an effort to improve natural drainage at the intersections of driveways and Old Nenana Highway.	Unpaved shoulders and driveway aprons would not result in reduced maintenance costs, therefore shoulders and aprons would be paved. Drainage improvements would be constructed with the project, including improved ditching and new culverts as needed.
Sight Distance	March 2015 December 2015	Consider eliminating the blind curves along the Old Nenana Highway.	<p>Sight distance would be improved where feasible to meet current standards. Based on crash data for the route, eliminating and flattening curves does not meet cost effective warrants.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: The curve at Station 25+54, (south of Blake Road) did meet warrants for improvement and will be improved with the project.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Sight Distance	<p>March 2015</p> <p>December 2015</p>	<p>Several people mentioned sight distance issues at Garner Road, Krogstie Lane, Old Wood Road (top), Village Road at Old Nenana Highway, Mile 1 (just past Gold Lode Road), and Old Wood Road at Garner Road intersections. For some intersections, sight distance in summer is worse than in winter when you can see headlights of approaching vehicles. Sight distance is also an issue where trail users cross Old Nenana Highway.</p> <p>The Garner-Old Wood curve is a significant safety concern where there have been accidents and pet deaths. One way to increase safety would be to straighten this curve slightly to enhance visibility at the residential and road entry points.</p> <p>The plan maintains the center of the road in its current location. Moving the center of the road just 1.5 meters to the left (descending) below Old Wood, would provide significantly enhanced visibility at the intersections to the roadway. This would slightly increase the sharpness of the curve below but there are no residential intersections on this curve.</p>	<p>The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase. Below Old Wood Road the centerline would be moved approximately 4 feet to the left to improve the sight distance at this location.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Sight distance is being improved where feasible and cost effective as design develops. Sight distance fixes identified to date include slope flattening, tree and brush clearing and minor centerline shifts. We will also look into adjusting the Old Wood Road intersection location in consultation with the Road Service Area.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Sight Distance	March 2015	Review the curve just past Gold Lode Road to determine ways to improve sight distance.	<p>The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Geometry improvements were evaluated for this curve (Station 488+56) and determined not cost effective, however sight distance will be improved by additional clearing and a wider paved surface. Flatter embankment slopes are also being evaluated to improve sight distance and embankment stability.</i></p>
Sight Distance	December 2015	It was noted that the indicated tree clearing would improve existing sight distance issues.	Noted by the project team.
Sight Distance	December 2015	Move Krogstie Lane towards Station 385+00 for better sight distance at the curve.	Alteration of approach geometry will be considered as design develops.
Snow Storage	March 2015	An Old Wood Road Service Area Commissioner requested more area for snow storage at Old Wood Road.	<p>The comment was noted and will be considered during the detailed design phase.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: Flat-bottom ditches will be constructed as a part of drainage improvements and should provide additional snow storage.</i></p>

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Speeds	March 2015 December 2015	<p>Several commenters were concerned about motorists' excessive speed and the safety of non-motorized users of the roadway. Trail crossing signs, a flashing "your speed is" sign, and caution signs were recommended.</p> <p>Lower the speed limit to 40 or 35 mph between Garner Road and Village Road, as 45 mph is too high a speed for the curve.</p>	<p>The concerns were noted. A Speed Study may be conducted for the project to determine current compliance with posted speeds.</p> <p>Safety of non-motorized users should increase with the addition of the wider shoulders.</p> <p><i>December 2015 update: A speed study was conducted by ADOT&PF indicating the current posted speeds are accurate. Changes in advisory speeds in curves will be considered as design develops.</i></p>
Speeds	March 2015 December 2015	Design road for maximum 45 miles per hour speed limit.	The current posted speeds of 45 miles per hour along the east end of the highway and 55 miles per hour along the west end would be maintained in the current locations. No significant changes to the alignment are proposed.
Speeds	March 2015	Consider measures to slow traffic down.	Striping 11-foot traffic lanes rather than the standard 12-foot lanes may help reduce traffic speeds.
Support for project	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters noted pavement rehabilitation, access to recreation, widened shoulders, driveway, and sight distance as reasons to support the project.	The team thanked them for their comments.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Survey flags	March 2015	Several people had questions about survey flags and stakes.	The project team explained that survey markers were used to mark property corners and utility locations.
Survey Monuments	March 2015	Commenter concerned that the project would remove survey monuments at lot corners.	Contractor would be required to document any damaged property corners and they would be replaced, but that it was also very unlikely the contractor would need to be close to those particular property corners.
Trail Access	March 2015	Commenters recommended that access be provided to the bottom of the hill across from Gold Lode Road for recreation vehicles and dog teams (guardrail section). It appears that the trail crossing is not exactly lined up with the actual trail below the known mine shaft at MP 9.2.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.
Trail Access	March 2015 December 2015	Commenters requested providing easy access and improved sight distance to trails branching off Old Nenana Highway. Trail crossings with poor sight distances were referred to at Mile 1, just past Gold Lode Road, and another crossing downhill of Gold Lode Road, see Figure 1 Trail Crossings (Figure 1 is provided in the March 18, 2015 Meeting Summary). Trail crossing signs were recommended.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase.

Comment Category	Date	Comment	Response
Trail Access	December 2015	Extend the bike path from the existing design to at least Old Wood Road, or allow for snow machine access along shoulder from MP 9.0 to about 9.5.	Extending the bike path further is outside the current budget for the project. Flatter embankment slopes between Village Road and Old Wood will be evaluated to improve sight distance, provide additional area for trail users, and improve embankment stability.
Website	December 2015	The project website is unfriendly. Did not see notices for the December meeting until 30 minutes after it was over. Unable to find what the projects looks like in December via the website. None of the links worked.	ADOT&PF responded in kind (via email) with links to project information and an invitation to stop by the Fairbanks ADOT&PF office to discuss the project. The information on the website shows the current typical road section, preliminary clearing limits, and preliminary ditches. Work we have yet to iron out are the driveway improvements and the final drainage plan (where culverts will go and how we will address areas where driveway drainage is impacting the road).
Wildlife	March 2015	Commenters noted that fox, grouse, and moose cross the road. Commenters have witnessed moose/vehicle collisions in the corridor.	The comment was noted and will be reviewed during detailed design phase. <i>December 2015 update: Accident data including moose collisions was analyzed for safety improvements where warranted.</i>