



Comment Response Summary March 2017 Open House

University Avenue Rehabilitation & Widening
Project No. Z632130000 / 0617003

The following document summarizes the comments received by email, phone, comment sheet, and the public open house through the comment period of April 1, 2017. A public open house was held on March 15, 2017 from 5:00 to 7:30 PM, with a presentation at 6:30 PM, at Pike's Riverfront Lodge Binkley Room, 1850 Hoselton Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709.

100 people signed in at the open house. The design and construction team was available to answer questions from 5:00 to 6:30 PM. The project manager presented the current design and changes since the 2006 FONSI at 6:30 PM and then answered questions until 7:30 PM.

The table below summarizes the comments received via comment sheet, email, Facebook posts, phone calls, or asked at the open house and provides the Department's response.

Comment Category	Comment	Response
Airport Way Intersection	Will right turn lanes be added at Airport Way?	Yes.
Bicycle Provisions	Consider striping the shoulders as bike lanes.	<p>Striping bicycle lanes has not been adopted yet in the Fairbanks area. The Borough, City of Fairbanks, DOT, and FMATS need to work together to adopt and implement an area wide plan, and education and outreach program, for bicycle lanes to ensure that bicycle lanes are utilized consistently and appropriately to maximize their safety and driver compliance.</p> <p>Installing them on a project by project basis will not be as beneficial as striping them throughout corridors, for example the University Avenue facility would not connect to designated bicycle facilities on College Road or the Mitchell Expressway.</p> <p>Not striping them with this project does not preclude them from being</p>

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		designated as bike lanes in the future once a plan has been established. It is State law that bicycles may operate in the shoulders and on the right side of the road where no shoulders exist in accordance with 13 AAC 02.400.
Bicycle Provisions	Will cyclists be allowed on the shoulders?	Yes.
Chena River	What is the Department's plan for streambank restoration at the Chena River bridge?	Riprap will be installed where required to protect our bridge from the river's erosive forces. Outside of the required riprap we intend to coordinate with the Chena Riverfront Commission and regulatory agencies such as Fish & Game to identify streambank restoration strategies that will work for this urban corridor. We will also work with applicable permitting agencies for regulatory requirements.
Construction Impacts	Many businesses will be impacted by construction, please work closely with businesses in the corridor to plan and prepare for delays.	The project Contractor will be required to provide sufficient notice of delays and closures, as well as applicable signing to ensure traffic is directed to the new access points as construction progresses. We will also work with business owners in advance of construction to ensure construction impacts are minimized to the maximum extent practical.
Construction Impacts	How will temporary utility outages be coordinated and how long will they be?	We don't know yet, but we will work with the utility companies to determine outages, tolerable durations, and required notice. We expect the notice will be similar to when a utility needs to do work on their system.

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Design Development	Is the design as shown finalized? In particular the location and median break for Indiana Avenue?	Yes and no. We want to work through particular issues with individual property owners to mitigate impacts as much as practical, however the overall design concept and median break locations are final at this time, and have not changed substantially since the original environmental document.
Drainage	Please make sure there will not be bird baths when construction is complete.	We will design the drainage to ensure water does not pond on the roadway surface. There are times of year, such as spring break-up, where some storm drains may freeze and create temporary ponding. With the new shoulders, this should not encroach in the lanes. Drainage systems at low points in the roadway have been designed with redundant drainage inlets to minimize risk of ponding should one inlet be blocked.
Drainage	Consider the FMATS Green Streets Policy for drainage design, in particular for elements near the river.	The FMATS Green Streets Policy was evaluated during design. The use of vegetative swales, as proposed with this project, is considered green infrastructure per the June 2016 FMATS Policies and Procedures Manual.
Drainage	Will we be changing the profile of the bridge over the river and for Goldizen?	Yes, the bridge profile will come up approximately 2-ft to better accommodate bridge drainage and maintain existing navigational clearances. The area around Goldizen will also be coming up in elevation and drainage captured in storm drain systems and discharged to Noyes Slough after passing through a grass lined swale for stormwater treatment.

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Drainage	How will drainage from the bridge get to the river?	The current design for the south side of the Chena River Bridge has a storm drain system that catches storm water runoff from the roadway and takes it to a large vegetative swale (east side of University Avenue on BLM property) prior to entering the Chena River. The storm drain system just north of the Chena River Bridge also collects storm water runoff from the roadway taking it down Goldizen Avenue (East) in a storm drain system and outlets at a vegetative swale with a proposed drainage easement prior to connecting to Noyes Slough.
Emergency Services	Will the raised median impact emergency response time?	We don't anticipate any impact to EMS response. EMS stations are on either side of the corridor and will have the ability to make u-turns at the various median break locations, which are generally spaced 950-ft apart throughout the corridor.
Funding	Is everything federally funded now?	Yes, we are funded with FHWA through the STIP with an approximate 90% federal contribution and 10% State match.
Funding	How certain is the funding and project schedule?	We have funding allocated for Segment 1A work once the STIP amendment 2 processes, as well as funding allocated for the federal conversion of the design funds. Right-of-way acquisition could impact the project in the future, and has been the primary cause of delay to date, but we are committed to building the project to the schedule proposed.
Geist/Johansen Intersection	Please add right turn lanes.	We will be adding right turn lanes and dual left turn lanes in all quadrants.

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Geist/Johansen Intersection	Please add a right turn overlap phase (green arrow for right turning traffic) for the eastbound right turn lane.	Due to the new traffic patterns from the University Avenue median, a right-turn overlap phase for the eastbound right turn lane will conflict with the anticipated u-turn movements and therefore will not be provided.
Geist/Johansen Intersection	Why aren't channelizing right turn islands being provided on the west side of the intersection?	A channelizing right turn island for the west side of the Geist/Johansen intersection was not provided due to the anticipated u-turning movements on University Avenue which would conflict with the right turn lane if it is allowed to bypass the signal.
Geist/Johansen Intersection	Drivers do not comply with the 40 mph speed limit on the Johansen Expressway leg of the intersection.	We will use the largest sign size allowed for the size of the speed reduction warning sign and speed limit sign on the radar speed feedback sign for the Johansen leg. The channelizing island proposed with this project may also provide a visual clue for drivers to encourage reduced speeds.
Geist/Johansen Intersection	Please install an advance flasher for the Johansen leg indicating when the signal is turning red like at the Danby St intersection.	Active Advance Warning Flashers can only be installed on high speed roads over a mile from another signal per the Alaska Traffic Manual (our standard for installation of traffic control devices). Because the speed limit drops to 40 mph in advance of the intersection, we can't put one on that side.

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Geist/Johansen Intersection	Consider adding no right turn on red signs at the Geist/Johansen intersection.	No right turn on red signs are typically not very effective at controlling traffic. With the added intersection capacity when the project is done, as well as the dedicated right turn lanes, drivers will be less likely to make risky right turning movements as the overall wait at the signal will be greatly reduced.
Halvorson Road	Please commit to maintaining Halvorson Road at a standard sufficient to ensure clients can make it to my business.	Halvorson Road is not currently State maintained, it is a Borough road in the College Service Area.
Intersection Timing	Provide the timing indicator of the pedestrian signal as it provides a visual clue about the potential for a light changing from green to yellow.	We are working to switch them to '0' on yellow as we slowly are retiming them around town. That said, nearly all of our signals don't give a pedestrian walk indication unless they are pedestrian activated, so that 'feature' wouldn't always be present. We don't automatically give a pedestrian indication because in many cases, the minimum walk time far exceeds the amount of green we have to provide for vehicular traffic to be accommodated (in other words calling the pedestrian phase for every signal cycle can actually create excessive delay for vehicles if there is no pedestrian present).
Landscaping	Will the medians be surfaced with an aesthetic treatment?	Medians in the project will be landscaped or surfaced with colored stamped concrete depending on the width and location of the median.
Landscaping	Is the Department using a landscape architect?	Yes we have a landscape architect designing the landscaping features for the project.

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Landscaping	Will there be planter boxes and electrical boxes in the sidewalk like on Cushman Street? They made the sidewalks too narrow on Cushman Street.	There are not any currently planned, and electrical boxes will not be in the sidewalk unless they are flush with the surface.
New Traffic Patterns	With the median, cut through traffic in a private parking lot may increase. It is already a problem currently, what can be done to mitigate this?	Specific property impacts are typically negotiated through the right-of-way acquisition process. The design team will assist our right-of-way team with ideas to mitigate cut through traffic on the property.
New Traffic Patterns	How will making u-turns work?	Passenger vehicles will be able to make a u-turn at median breaks and signalized intersections, typically from left turn lane to outside through lane. See diagram from the AutoTurn program here . Large vehicles and vehicles pulling trailers may have to utilize side streets to turn around however.
New Traffic Patterns	How safe are u-turns?	U-turn crashes represent a small portion of the total crashes in corridors with raised medians. A comprehensive study of 918 unsignalized median openings in 7 states looked at the safety of u-turns. On urban arterial corridors (similar to University Avenue) only a small fraction of total crashes were related to u-turns (NCHRP 524, 2004). A separate study of u-turns at 78 signalized intersections on corridors with raised medians found that over 80% of the intersections experienced 0 u-turn crashes (TRB, 2005).

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New Traffic Patterns	Please consider a connection from Dead End Alley to Sandvik Street.	The design team evaluated this option. It will require property acquisition from 2 to 3 more private properties, and may require the acquisition of a structure, therefore it was not pursued further at this time.
New Traffic Patterns	How will left turns be prevented at the BLM/DNR intersection? It's currently signed and people don't comply.	The raised median will eliminate the ability to physically make a left turn.
New Traffic Patterns	It is already difficult to make a left out of the back side of the DNR/BLM complex at the Airport Way/Sportman's Way intersection. With traffic possibly re-routing to this intersection with left turns blocked by the median, will the Department change the signal to provide a left turn phase?	Traffic will also be able to turn right out of the current approach and do a u-turn at Airport Way to head north on University, which will be more accessible to the general public who may not be aware of the back entrance to the DNR offices. There is no plan currently to add a left turn phase to the signal currently due to a lack of queuing space and low volumes.
New Traffic Patterns	Will you be able to make a u-turn at the new Indiana Avenue intersection?	Yes, however larger vehicles, such as trucks with trailers, may need to go to one of the larger intersections such as Airport or Geist to execute the u-turn or find alternate routing.
New Traffic Patterns	Please block the second Hutchinson High School approach from left turning traffic, it creates delay.	The addition of the median on Geist Road to channelize traffic for the University Avenue signal will block this approach from making left turns.
New Traffic Patterns	Please add a dead end sign to the stop sign for Sandvik Street, it is currently attempted by cut through traffic running from the police, and they end up having to abandon their cars and running through the area on foot since it's not clear that the road is a dead end.	We will evaluate necessary signing to adequately communicate the road is a dead end during detailed design.

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Noise	Can you install a noise barrier on the bridge?	A noise barrier isn't warranted at this time, however the new concrete bridge rail, and addition of wider pedestrian facilities may reduce the noise from the road that properties near the bridge are currently hearing.
Noise	Will the project add a noise barrier along University Avenue? I can hear road noise already and I live quite a ways from University.	Noise barriers are not warranted based on current criteria and won't be installed with the project.
Pedestrian Provisions	Will the project install a mid-block pedestrian signal or overpass near Goldizen to allow people from the bus stop to cross the street? It is a very long walk to a signalized intersection for a crosswalk.	No, similar to the existing configuration, there will be no provisions for mid-block crossings on University Avenue except where we are removing the pedestrian overpass at Sandvik Street. A pedestrian overpass would require additional right-of-way to meet ADA requirements and research indicates they are not well used, most people will still dart across the street. We will consider doing pedestrian counts this summer to determine how frequent this crossing is being used by pedestrians currently.
Pedestrian Provisions	Will the pedestrian overpass on Geist Road be removed with this project?	No.
Railroad Overpass	What is the current plan for the railroad overpass?	This work was evaluated in the original environmental document as a connected action - meaning it was anticipated that this work would be done after the University Avenue improvements as it would be the last "pinch point" for traffic in the corridor. It was never a part of the federal aid agreement, and will not be constructed with this project. It is still in the long range plan but a project start has not been initiated to date.

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ROW	How long will the ROW acquisition process take?	It can vary widely how long it takes to acquire an individual property or portion of a property. The Department will work with property owners to ensure fair compensation.
ROW	When will I receive my offer?	Offers for properties in Segment 1 will be presented over the next several months. Segment 2 offers have not been prepared, and are still in the appraisal process.
ROW	How will damages to my property, such as loss of parking, loss of privacy, etc., be accounted for?	Loss of parking, or other loss of access or useability to a property is accounted for in the appraisal and used to determine the value of the offer.
ROW	Will Segment 1A require right-of-way acquisition?	No.
ROW	How many total acquisitions remain near the bridge?	There is one remaining near the bridge and 4 total to complete in Segment 1.
ROW	If a business does not want to sell their ROW, what happens?	It depends. There are a lot of factors that go into acquiring property from unwilling owners, but we are motivated to get to a fair and equitable solution for all property owners involved at this time.
Schedule	What is the project construction schedule?	Construction will begin this summer (2017) at the Geist Road and Johansen Expressway intersection. A full project schedule is available on the project website.
Sidewalks	Will the road lanes have to be narrowed to accommodate the new sidewalk width?	No, University Avenue will have standard 12-ft lanes and 4.5-ft shoulders.

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Sidewalks	Bike riders and walkers sharing a sidewalk is crazy.	Higher speed and commuter bicyclists will be able to utilize the new 4.5-ft wide shoulders on University Avenue to avoid conflicts with pedestrians on the sidewalks. Sidewalk bicycle users are typically children and recreational users who travel at lower speeds.
Sidewalks	How wide will the sidewalks be and will they be carried full width across the bridge?	An 8-ft sidewalk will be provided on the west side of the road and a 6-ft sidewalk provided on the east side of the road. These will be carried across the bridge, and for the full length of University Avenue, as will the 4.5-ft shoulders.
Sight Distance	Is a traffic signal being considered for Goldizen? There is limited sight distance at Goldizen currently which may make the u-turns there dangerous, especially with the raised bridge.	The project design has accounted for that and we will be raising Goldizen as well as the bridge and improving sight distance at this intersection to meet standards. The changes in profile and widened roadway should also improve sight distance at this intersection.
Speed	How will the improvements impact motorist speeds in the corridor?	The roadway alignment and number of lanes is not changing significantly with this project. The added turn lanes will improve speed consistency through the corridor. These type of improvements can increase operating speeds. Vertical elements such as light poles and landscaping such as trees and shrubs have been shown to reduce speeds and will be incorporated into the design as feasible.

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Speed	Will the design account for potential higher speed motorists due to the improvements?	The final University Avenue alignment is generally straight with minimal vertical changes which is conducive to safe operation at higher than the posted speed. Sight distance at some intersections and other intersection elements such as turn pocket lengths are designed for the 40 mph posted speed and would require adjustments for a higher design speed. This would result in increased ROW needs and is not warranted at this time. As mentioned above, the project design will incorporate speed calming measures as appropriate to ensure a safe and consistent corridor for motorists.
Speed	Can you make speed limit signs more visible and consider installing these ahead of the project? Currently there is a sign just north of the Airport Way intersection and another is near the Oasis, but both blend in, please add more in the middle of the corridor.	We have passed this request on to M&O and will consider this in the final design. Available M&O budgets may not allow for this ahead of the project.
Temporary Bridge	Will bicycles be able to use the temporary pedestrian bridge?	Yes.