

Submitted by: Assembly Members  
Volland and Zaletel, and  
Assembly Chair LaFrance  
Prepared by: Legislative Services  
Reviewed by: Assembly Counsel's  
Office  
For reading: February 21, 2023

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA  
AR No. 2023-54**

1 **A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY REQUESTING THAT THE**  
2 **ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES**  
3 **AND ALASKA DIVISION OF THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**  
4 **REVIEW THE VALIDITY OF THE PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT**  
5 **CONTAINED IN THE 2006 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE NEW**  
6 **SEWARD HIGHWAY: RABBIT CREEK ROAD TO 36<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, AS IT**  
7 **PERTAINS TO THE NEXT PHASE, THE O'MALLEY ROAD TO DIMOND**  
8 **BOULEVARD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT.**  
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11 **WHEREAS**, the New Seward Highway: Rabbit Creek Road to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue project  
12 includes for the O'Malley to Dimond Reconstruction project phase's ("the project")  
13 purpose is to expand the highway from four to six lanes, reconstruct the Seward &  
14 O'Malley interchange as a Diverging Diamond Interchange, and add a grade-  
15 separated vehicular interchange at 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue; and  
16

17 **WHEREAS**, this expensive project is programmed for \$105 Million in the Statewide  
18 Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) by the State of Alaska Department of  
19 Transportation and Public Facilities ("Department" or DOT&PF); and  
20

21 **WHEREAS**, the inclusion of this project in the STIP precludes other beneficial  
22 transportation projects from having funding and moving forward; and  
23

24 **WHEREAS**, roadway maintenance funding is sparse, inconsistent, and creates  
25 challenges in plowing the existing roadway network; and  
26

27 **WHEREAS**, it is NEPA policy that "[a]lternative courses of action be evaluated and  
28 decisions be made in the best overall public interest based upon a balanced  
29 consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation; of the social,  
30 economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed transportation improvement,"  
31 23 C.F.R. § 711.105(c) (Federal Highway Administration regulations); and  
32

33 **WHEREAS**, the Assembly has adopted two new Long Range Transportation Plans  
34 (LRTP) since the *New Seward Highway Rabbit Creek Road to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue:*  
35 *Environmental Assessment*, July 2006, (the "environmental document") was written  
36 by the U.S. Dept. of Transportation, Alaska Division of the Federal Highway  
37 Administration, and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities,  
38 with a third LRTP currently in development; and  
39

40 **WHEREAS**, the project's 17-year-old environmental document was written prior to  
41 the Adoption of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's State Air  
42 Quality Control Program section III.B: Anchorage Transportation Control Program;

1 and

2  
3 **WHEREAS**, the environmental document was written prior to the adoption of  
4 Anchorage's Climate Action Plan and the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan; and

5  
6 **WHEREAS**, the project's primary goal is to "Increase corridor capacity to  
7 accommodate past growth and future demand"; and

8  
9 **WHEREAS**, the project's environmental document showed a year 2002 Average  
10 Daily Traffic (ADT) of 37,950 Vehicles per Day (VPD) on the Seward Highway and  
11 predicted a 1.4% compound growth, yielding an ADT prediction of 60,000 VPD in  
12 the year 2035, a 58% total predicted growth; and

13  
14 **WHEREAS**, since 2002 to 2021 there has been a complete reversal against the  
15 predicted trend in traffic growth on the Seward Highway between O'Malley and  
16 Dimond with ADT decreasing by a total of 10%, according to the data available at  
17 the Alaska DOT&PF Traffic Analysis and Data website;<sup>1</sup> and

18  
19 **WHEREAS**, from 2002 to 2020 the number of Alaskans with driver's licenses as a  
20 ratio of the number of Alaskans of eligible driving age has decreased 9% according  
21 to the FHWA's annual Highway Statistics Series, Table DL-1C;<sup>2</sup> and

22  
23 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska DOT&PF's Central Region Director stated in a recent  
24 Assembly worksession, "If we had some quantitative reason to articulate to the  
25 FHWA why we would [restart a project]. So, did the traffic modeling of Anchorage  
26 change enough to where that [92<sup>nd</sup> Interchange] is no longer a requirement within  
27 the project? Then we could make that case."; and

28  
29 **WHEREAS**, the project's secondary goal is to "Improve system connectivity and  
30 linkage of existing roadways"; and

31  
32 **WHEREAS**, the project need identified in the Environmental Assessment Section  
33 1.3.2 "Improve System Connectivity and Linkage of Existing Roadways" references  
34 "[p]revious studies and analysis of recent origin-destination travel patterns" that  
35 indicate there is a need for a 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave. interchange, however, no quantitative data  
36 from any of those studies or analysis are presented in the environmental document;  
37 and

38  
39 **WHEREAS**, volumes on Dimond have decreased by 25% over the last 16 years  
40 and volumes on Abbott have decreased by 32% over the last 11 years; and

41  
42 **WHEREAS**, volumes on O'Malley west of Seward Highway have decreased by 15%  
43 in the last 17 years, and volumes on O'Malley east of the Seward Highway have

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<sup>1</sup> See

[https://alaskatrafficdata.drakewell.com/adtcharts.asp?node=AKDOT\\_ST&cosit=000052308000&minyear=2002&maxyear=2023](https://alaskatrafficdata.drakewell.com/adtcharts.asp?node=AKDOT_ST&cosit=000052308000&minyear=2002&maxyear=2023) (accessed February 14, 2023).

The comparative numbers showing percent changes over years in the recitals of this Resolution are, unless otherwise stated, based on data provided and the mapping interface, available at

<https://alaskatrafficdata.drakewell.com/publicmultinodemap.asp> (accessed February 14, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2020/> (accessed February 14, 2023).

1 decreased by 2% in the last 18 years; and

2  
3 **WHEREAS**, AMATS Congestion Management Process, 2016 Status of the System  
4 report showed peak hour level of service as an "A" for O'Malley to Dimond for  
5 Morning and afternoon rush hour demand on the Seward Highway; and

6  
7 **WHEREAS**, cell phone, Bluetooth and GPS data availability have resulted in a  
8 fundamental change in the way origin-destination studies can be conducted and  
9 analyzed; and

10  
11 **WHEREAS**, the project's tertiary goal is to enhance intermodal transportation, which  
12 is a valid and relevant need in the project area. However, expanding the highway  
13 and adding a vehicular interchange is not required to improve intermodal  
14 transportation in the project area; and

15  
16 **WHEREAS**, the DOT&PF's 2022 HSIP Handbook cites a Crash Reduction Factor  
17 of 100% for "Construct Pedestrian and Bicycle Overpass/Underpass" (Improvement  
18 Type 402); and

19  
20 **WHEREAS**, the project's fourth goal is to upgrade design features to meet industry  
21 standards and improve safety; and

22  
23 **WHEREAS**, as an alternative to the enormous reconstruction cost and scope of the  
24 project to upgrade design features between O'Malley and Dimond, the DOT&PF is  
25 capable of implementing effective and small scale improvements across numerous,  
26 smaller, and piece-meal projects as displayed in their effective November 2018  
27 earthquake repair program; and

28  
29 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska DOT&PF Project Manager stated in the May 2018 Planning  
30 & Zoning Commission meeting that a five year crash study showed that there were  
31 48 crashing on the Seward Highway between O'Malley and Dimond, with 17 of those  
32 crashes resulting in some injury. At the two interchanges of O'Malley and Dimond  
33 there were 953 crashes with 297 of them resulting in injuries. There should be no  
34 expectation that adding an additional interchange will reduce the total number of  
35 crashes and injuries in the project area; and

36  
37 **WHEREAS**, the DOT&PF's 2022 HSIP Handbook does not have a documented  
38 Crash Reduction Factor for adding a lane to a highway; and

39  
40 **WHEREAS**, the FHWA TechBrief publication Safety Assessment of Interchange  
41 Spacing on Urban Freeways (FHWA-HRT-07-031) says "Assuming all other factors  
42 are equal, inserting a new interchange will increase expected fatal/injury crash  
43 frequencies from 1.7 to 3.2 for longer spacings. For shorter spacings, the expected  
44 increase is from 1.2 to 2.2 fatal/injury crashes per year"; and

45  
46 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska DOT&PF Central Region Director stated in a recent  
47 Assembly worksession, "We have choices; we can literally stop the project as it sits  
48 and hit the reset button and go back and start all over. Often times, if there were  
49 basic assumptions that were changed...We are able to go back to Federal Highways  
50 and say 'some of the basic premises of this project no longer exist anymore so we  
51 want to close this project out, with participation. Meaning: not having to pay back

federal money."

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY RESOLVES:**

**Section 1.** To request that the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and Alaska Division of the FHWA conduct a full, written, NEPA re-evaluation focusing on the accuracy, applicability, and necessity of the purpose and need section of the Environmental Assessment for the Seward Highway: Rabbit Creek Road to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue project as well as to ensure compliance with the many new environmental, climate, and transportation planning and policy documents that are currently adopted.

**Section 2.** To request that the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Conduct a study by an independent third party who is not currently under contract with the Department for other roadway design or engineering services. The DOT&PF should prepare a memorandum summarizing the scope and timeline of the study and submit the memorandum to the Assembly as an AIM, to the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee, to the AMATS Policy Committee, to the AMATS BPAC, to the AMATS CAC and to the community councils whose territory is within 1 mile of the proposed project's footprint. The Department should accept comments on the memorandum and revise the scope of the study as necessary to adequately respond to any concerns by the above organizations. The study's project team and the Department should present their findings to the Anchorage Assembly in a work session and findings should be forwarded to the above-mentioned organizations.

**Section 3.** To request that the Alaska State Legislature and Governor call on the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to reassess the validity of the Purpose and Need Statement contained in the 2006 Environmental Assessment as requested in Section 1 of this Resolution, and to assess whether the project merits continued inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program and whether it should continue to be prioritized over other transportation projects throughout the AMATS area .

**Section 4.** This resolution shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Municipal Clerk