



Milepost 25.5 - 36
SEWARD HWY
Rehabilitation Project

Public Involvement Plan
Seward Highway
Milepost 25.5 to 36
Rehabilitation Project

Prepared for:
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Prepared by:
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Approval


Project Manager

 1/21/2016
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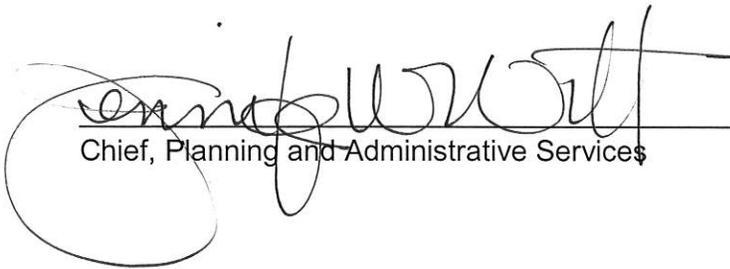

Chief, Planning and Administrative Services

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
FAQs	frequently asked questions
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
KPB	Kenai Peninsula Borough
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MP	Mile Post (historic mile post)
mp	Milepoint (mileage as indicated by the Coordinated Data System)
mph	miles per hour
PER	Preliminary Engineering Report
PI	Public Involvement
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
ROW	right-of-way
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
USFS	U.S. Forest Service

1. Project Background and Description

The Seward Highway is a Scenic Byway, and the major connection between Anchorage and communities on the Kenai Peninsula in Southcentral Alaska. Completed in the 1950s, the Seward Highway traverses the Chugach National Forest and the Kenai Mountains, and shares portions of its corridor with the Alaska Railroad line between Anchorage and the City of Seward.

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is proposing to rehabilitate the Seward Highway from Mile Post (MP) 25.5, near the Trail River bridge, to MP 36, near the Sterling Wye. This section of the Seward Highway is currently an undivided, two-lane roadway.

The proposed project would restore, resurface, and rehabilitate this section of the highway (defined as a 3R project). These improvements will enhance safety, extend the service life of the highway, improve passing opportunities, and improve drainage. The project may also include pedestrian amenities and traffic calming through the community of Moose Pass. The project is included in the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

DOT&PF completed a Preliminary Engineering Report in the 1990s which covered a larger portion of the Seward Highway (MP 0 to 36). From there, the improvements were broken into separate projects for design and construction.

In the past, several approaches to improving the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 have been considered including simply resurfacing the road or developing a bypass route around Moose Pass. There have been four public meetings related to the project held to-date: one in 1992, two in 1995, and one in 2001. The 2001 meeting was held in Moose Pass and included consideration of a bypass. However, preliminary evaluation by DOT&PF determined that a bypass is not feasible due to cost, challenging mountainous terrain, and public concerns about potential impacts to the local water supply.

This current project is focused on rehabilitating the existing roadway, widening shoulders (as needed), improving drainage, and improving passing opportunities. DOT&PF is developing the design and the environmental document.

The estimated cost for the design, right-of-way (ROW) acquisition, utility relocation, and construction of the current project is \$67.2 million. The funds needed for final design and ROW

Identified Public Involvement Objectives:

- *Inform public on scope of project. Clarify difference between past studies and current efforts.*
- *Reach interested stakeholders including residents and through traffic.*
- *Involve stakeholders to gather feedback on proposed design (especially through the community of Moose Pass) and on the environmental review process*
- *Manage expectations by conveying anticipated changes to the viewshed and area trails*
- *Address any anticipated environmental impacts*
- *Retain the attention and participation of the public over the project's extended timeline (3.5 years)*
- *Work with property owners regarding project impacts and access during construction*

acquisition are included in the draft federal spending plan for 2016-2019. The funds needed for utility relocation and construction will need to be allocated in the future. The start of construction is dependent on many factors, including available funding, but could begin as soon as 2019 if funding is made available.

Once the final design for the project is complete and funding is secured, construction is anticipated to take up to three seasons. Construction activities will impact normal traffic flows in the project area during that timeframe.

2. Project Area

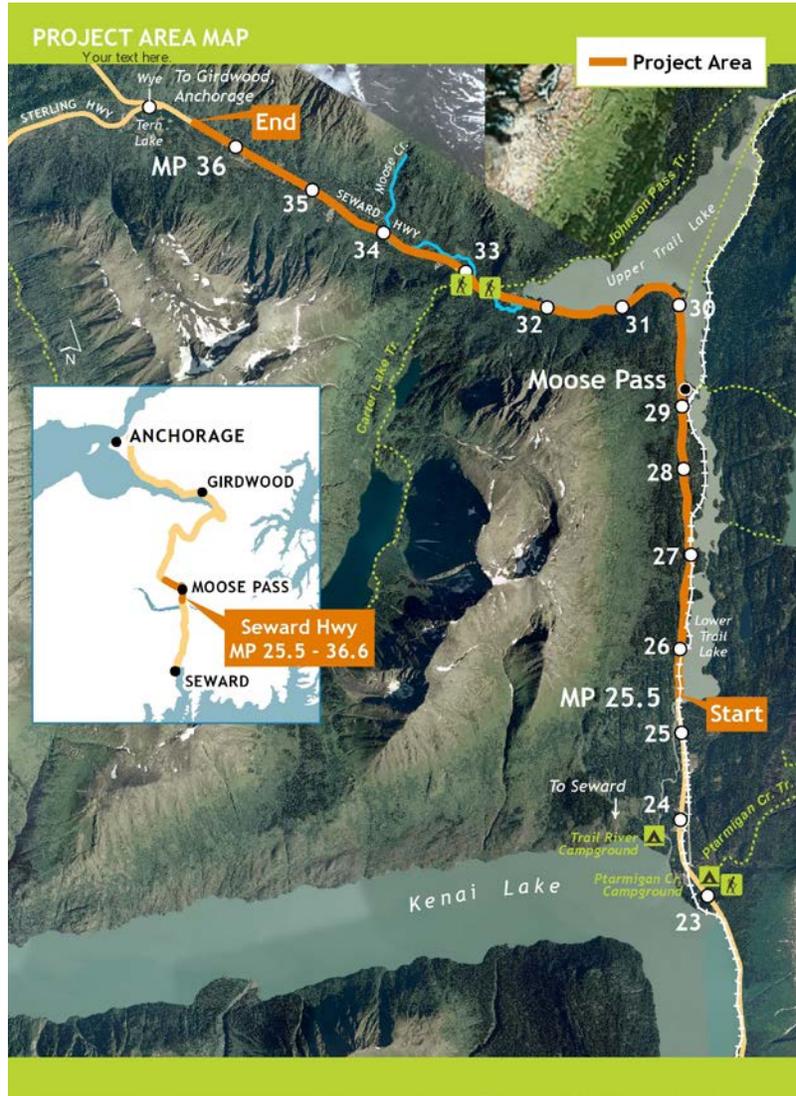
The project area is a 10.5-mile, 2-lane segment of the Seward Highway from MP 25.5 to 36. This portion of the highway passes through the community of Moose Pass (Figure 1). The Seward Highway is the only road that connects the communities of Moose Pass and Seward, and is often used by other residents of Southcentral Alaska.

On average, approximately 1,930 vehicles travel the Seward Highway daily. The current highway includes two 12-foot travel lanes and shoulders of varying widths (from 2 to 6 feet). In most locations, the posted speed limit is 55 miles per hour (mph). Through the community of Moose Pass, the highway has a posted speed limit of 35 mph, with 45 mph transition zones entering and exiting the community, and there are several private properties located close to the existing highway. Some older properties in Moose Pass may be cultural or historic resources.

The project area is constrained by lakes (Tern Lake, Upper Trail Lake, and Lower Trail Lake), mountainous terrain, utilities, and the Alaska Railroad which parallels the roadway from approximately Lower Trail Lake to Upper Trail Lake.

Several recreational trails and resources are accessed via this section of highway including Johnson Pass Trail, Crescent Lake Trail, and Trail River Campground. The Iditarod National Historic Trail also runs through the project area.

The Trail Lake Hatchery, operated by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, is located at the northern end of the project area near MP 32. Several avalanche chutes occur in the project area and will need to be addressed during design.



3. Public Involvement Overview

During and after construction, the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 Rehabilitation Project will impact roadway users as well as businesses and residents that are accessed along the project area. Educating the public about the project will require clear communication about the design process, why DOT&PF is advancing the project, and what to anticipate during the project's ultimate construction.

While many stakeholders who use this portion of the highway recognize the need for improvements, DOT&PF must manage expectations during the design process, and communicate what the project will and will *not* accomplish. The project's purpose and need, design constraints, budget realities, and construction impacts all must be clearly defined. Considering the project's history, stakeholders will need to be updated on the current design plan and may have questions about why the project design has changed.

The design for rehabilitation of the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 is in its initial phase. At this point in the design and construction process, public involvement will focus on educating stakeholders about issues that need resolution (e.g., safety concerns and drainage issues). Public involvement efforts will also seek to provide meaningful ways for stakeholders to give input on final design considerations.

3.1 Potentially Affected Interests -Project Stakeholders

As the primary roadway linking Moose Pass and Seward to the rest of Southcentral Alaska, with an average of 1,930 vehicles daily, the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 Rehabilitation Project has numerous potential stakeholders including commuters, area residents and businesses, recreational users, federal and state agencies, local government, emergency services, utilities, Tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations. Table 1 outlines a list of potential stakeholders.

3.2 Public Involvement Objectives

Information sharing is at the heart of any public process. This public involvement plan focuses on this basic premise: DOT&PF commits to working with stakeholders to relay accurate and timely information relating to the project, and to ensure stakeholder concerns relating to design and construction traffic control are heard and, when possible, addressed.

Our public process objectives are to:

- Communicate the purpose, need, and goals of the project
- Inform a wide spectrum of the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, opportunities, and solutions
- Work with the public to ensure public concerns are understood
- Demonstrate sensitivity and, when possible, responsiveness to issues and ideas
- Manage expectations during the design process

3.3 Project Decisions

DOT&PF retains sole authority to make decisions related to the project. While stakeholder feedback will be considered by the planning team, DOT&PF will ultimately finalize the project design. This Public Involvement Program will seek feedback that will inform decisions related to the project's design and construction mitigation.

Table 1: Potential Stakeholders

<p>General Public Area residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moose Pass ▪ Seward <p>Property owners Recreational users</p> <p>Business Entities Area businesses and businesses' customers Property lease holders Tour companies/Alaska Travel Industry Association Alaska Trucking Association Seward Charter Boat Association <i>Businesses Within The Project Area</i> Trail Lake Lodge Tern Lake Inn Moose Drop-In Trading Post Crazy Moose Moose Pass RV Park Chugach Backcountry Fishing Gone Again Charters Fern Hollow Cabins & Tern Lake Valley Woodworks Alpenglow Cottage Trail Lake View Luxury Cottage Estes Brothers Grocery Store Scenic Mountain Air Trail Lake Hatchery</p> <p>State/Federal Agencies and Entities U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Chugach National Forest U.S. Postal Service (USPS) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Maintenance and Operations (DOT&PF M&O) Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) AVTEC, Alaska's Institute of Technology</p>	<p>Elected Officials City of Seward Mayor and City Council Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Mayor and Assembly Alaska State Senate Alaska House of Representatives</p> <p>Local Government Departments (City/Borough) Seward City Manager City of Seward Planning and Zoning Commission City of Seward Community Development City of Seward Fire Department City of Seward Police Department KPB Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission KPB School District KPB Planning Department Moose Pass School Seward Boat Harbor</p> <p>Utilities City of Seward Public Works City of Seward Electric Department Chugach Electric Association AT&T TelAlaska</p> <p>Community Organizations, NGOs and Others Seward Chamber of Commerce, Conference and Visitors Bureau Providence Seward Medical Center Moose Pass Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center Moose Pass Library Moose Pass School Moose Pass United Methodist Church Moose Pass Community Church Moose Pass Volunteer Fire and EMS Department (including Crown Point Unit and Primrose Unit) Moose Pass Sportsmen Club Seward/Kenai Highway Transportation Corridor Safety Task Force Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (ARDOR) Kenai Peninsula Borough Trail Commission Alaska Trails Group Arctic Bike Club Alaska Ranndonneurs Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance</p> <p>Tribal Stakeholders Chugach Alaska Corporation Chugachmiut Qutekcak Tribe</p>
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3.4 Minority, Low-income, and Limited English Populations

The project area and the community of Moose Pass occur within U.S. Census Tract 3 in the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB). The Seward Highway runs north to south through the tract. The City of Seward, which is located in Census Tract 13, is south of the project area.

According to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, the percent of the population below the poverty level for Census Tract 3 (6.8 percent), Census Tract 13 (2.7 percent), and the KPB (5.5 percent) are all below that of the State of Alaska (7.7 percent), as is shown in Table 2. The percentage of minorities in the KPB (15 percent) is greater than Census Tract 3 (5 percent) and 13 (5 percent), which are less than the State as a whole (33 percent). The median household income is higher in Census Tract 3 (\$74,508) than statewide (\$70,760); however, the KPB and Census Tract 13 have a lower median house income than the State (\$61,793, \$62,292, respectively). Both tracts have fewer residents that speak a language other than English than the statewide average.

It is important to note that for Census Tract 3 and 13 there are considerable margins of error for all categories, given the low population. The best available information was used to assess each population.

Table 2: Minority and Low-Income Populations, 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

	Total Population Est.	% below poverty level	Race % Non-white	Median Household Income (\$)	% Speak a Language other than English
Alaska	720,316	7.7	33	70,760	14.9
KPB	56,163	5.5	15	61,793	8.2
Census Tract 3	970	6.8	5	74,508	2.1
Census Tract 13	4,913	2.7	5	62,292	13.8

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis: <http://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/cen/acsdetails.cfm>; accessed 10/15/2015

Given the scope of the project, the project area, and the potentially impacted stakeholders, there are currently no identified populations that require specific outreach required under state and federal regulations. The planning team will monitor the project as it progresses and proactively address any environmental justice issues that may arise.

3.5 Roles and Responsibilities

While the public has a vested interest in project conclusions, DOT&PF is the sole authority for decisions related to the final design of the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36, Rehabilitation Project.

Project Management: Cynthia Ferguson, DOT&PF. Cynthia Ferguson will be the point-of-contact supervising contract performance. Cynthia is ultimately responsible to coordinate decision-making at the DOT&PF and provide project direction.

Environmental Impact Analyst: Kim Campo-Allen, DOT&PF. Joy is the lead environmental impact analyst tasked with completing the environmental document and making sure the public involvement efforts meet DOT&PF standards.

Either Cynthia or Joy will provide final approval for any public messages that are sent, prior to distribution.

Project Management: Linda Smith, HDR. Linda will be the single point-of-contact directly engaged in contract performance.

Public Involvement Lead: Katherine Wood, HDR. Katherine Wood will be the Public Involvement (PI) lead overseeing the development of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP), lead the PI strategy, and work with DOT&PF to develop key project messages and implement the PIP.

4. Public Involvement Schedule

Public involvement activities for this project will correspond to key milestones in the project's development. When possible, the project will team up with Seward Highway MP 17 to 22.5 Rehabilitation project for listening posts, public open houses, and other shared opportunities. There will be two series of public open houses and four listening posts for the MP 25.5-36 project, equally divided between Moose Pass and Seward. Another optional public open house may occur in 2019 when the project enters the construction phase. The timeline for project related communications in 2017 and beyond are estimated; actual dates will depend on project activities and updates.

Activities include:

4.1 2015

- Fall 2015: A project **Fact Sheet** and a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** document will be developed to distribute at meetings. The fact sheet will be designed to educate the public about the purpose of the project. The documents will be available on the project website once developed and updated as necessary.
- Fall 2015: The **Project Website** will be created and launched. It will present a basic description of the project, the most recent project schedule, the fact sheet, contact information, and a method of submitting electronic comments, as well as provide access to significant environmental and design documents. The site shall include a "join our list" option to sign up for the e-newsletter.
- Winter 2015: **Postcard # 1** will relay information about the upcoming listening post and instruct individuals to visit the website for more information or to sign up for the e-newsletter.
- Winter 2015: **Flyer #1** will be posted in high traffic locations in Moose Pass and Seward to inform the public about the upcoming listening posts.
- Winter 2015: An **E-newsletter #1** will relay information about the project launch, website, and upcoming listening posts.
- Winter 2015: **Listening Posts #1 and 2** will occur at community events in Moose Pass and Seward (Moose Pass School Holiday Bazaar, 11/14, and Seward Holiday Bazaar, 12/4).

4.2 2016

- Winter 2016: **E-newsletter #2** will relay information about the upcoming public open house.
- Winter 2016: **Flyer #2** will be posted by DOT&PF in high traffic locations in Moose Pass and Seward to inform the public about the upcoming public open house.
- Winter 2016: **Public Open House #1** will be held between January and March in both Moose Pass and Seward (one day total: morning meeting in Seward, evening meeting in Moose Pass), and will cover the preliminary design in support of the environmental

document. The open house will be designed to educate the public about the purpose and need for the project, current project design, project schedule, and the environmental review process. Public feedback will be sought on design considerations. The public open house will be publicized via post card, email, social media (DOT&PF's Facebook page), and paid print ads (*Seward Phoenix Log*, *Alaska Dispatch News*, *Peninsula Clarion*, and public radio). Following the open house, graphic materials and the presentation files will be loaded onto the project website.

- Spring 2016: **E-newsletter #3** will include highlights from the public open house, pertinent project updates, and a current design and construction schedule.
- Spring 2016 – 2019: Up to six **Small Group Meetings** and **Agency Meetings** will be held with affected agencies, community organizations, and interest groups. Small group meetings, or stakeholder interviews, allow for more in-depth discussion of how the project may affect individual stakeholders or stakeholder organizations. In addition to an HDR professional, a DOT&PF staff member will participate in the meetings. HDR will organize and provide a summary for each small group meeting. A tentative list of agency and small group meetings includes:
 - USFS/Chugach National Forest
 - Alaska Mental Health Trust
 - Moose Pass Chamber of Commerce
 - Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission
 - KPB
 - City of Seward

4.3 2017 - 2019

- Winter 2017: **E-newsletter #4** will relay information about the upcoming public open house and project updates.
- Winter 2017: **Flyer #3** will be posted by DOT&PF in high traffic locations in Moose Pass and Seward to inform the public about the upcoming public open house.
- Winter 2017: **Public Open House #2** will be held in Moose Pass and Seward (one day total: morning meeting in Seward, evening meeting in Moose Pass) following the completion of the Plans-In-Hand review of the design. Project details will be shared with the public, along with information about any aspects of the updated design that were influenced by public comments. The public open house will be publicized via postcard, email, social media (DOT&PF's Facebook page), and paid print ads (*Seward Phoenix Log*, *Alaska Dispatch News*, *Peninsula Clarion*, and public radio). Following the open house, graphic materials and the presentation files will be loaded onto the project website.
- Winter 2017: **Listening Posts #3 and 4** will occur at community events in Moose Pass and Seward (Moose Pass School Holiday Bazaar and Seward Holiday Bazaar).
- 2017/2018: **E-newsletter #5** will relay information about the upcoming ROW acquisition process and project updates.
- Winter 2019: **E-newsletter #6** will relay information about the upcoming public open house and project updates.

- Spring 2019: **Flyer #4 (optional)** will be posted by DOT&PF in high traffic locations in Moose Pass and Seward to inform the public about the upcoming public open house.
- Spring 2019: **Public Open House #3 (optional)** may be held when the project enters construction, considering the time passed since the previous open house. If held, the open house should be held in the same locations and use the same advertising strategy as the previous two open houses.
- Spring 2019: **E-newsletter #7**, the final e-newsletter, will be sent including links to information shared at open house, construction plans, and other timely information of interest to the public. This newsletter will include information about the project's final design, how public feedback influenced project decisions, and what to expect during project construction.
- Following design phase completion, a **Public Involvement Report** will be completed that documents public involvement through completion of the design phase. The report will include a copy of pertinent comments from the public and any responses. A brief report or summary may also be provided for the Right of Way acquisition process.

4.4 Ongoing Activities

Ongoing activities include:

- A project-specific **Mail/Contact List** of agencies, organizations, elected officials, and others with an interest in the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 project will be continuously maintained. The mail/contact list will be developed by identifying key stakeholders (see Table 1), using the KPB's tax parcel GIS data, and by adding contact information provided by the public at open houses, on comment forms, or via requests to be added to the mailing list. Postcards (2) will be sent via post and all other communications will be sent using email to reduce costs.
- Project written materials such as a **Fact Sheet** and **FAQs** will be updated when new information becomes available, and will be provided at public open houses and posted on the project website.
- Once a **Project Website** is developed it will be used to provide project information, meeting notices, contacts, public materials, and mechanisms to submit comments.
- **Comments and Responses** will be tracked throughout the project. Comments will be tracked using a spreadsheet; responses will be drafted by HDR, reviewed by DOT&PF, and then sent directly to the commenter. DOT&PF staff should forward any public comments and their responses to HDR for tracking and to ensure a complete record. Incoming comments and questions from the public may be used to update the FAQs document. Comments and their responses will not be made public.

5. Public Involvement Tools and Terms

The following tools will be used to target specific levels of involvement in the Seward Highway MP 25.5 to 36 Rehabilitation Project. This does not represent a commitment to use all of these tools; rather, this is a strategic list that the project team may pull from as needed as the project progresses.

- **Agency Coordination** – the project team will coordinate with participating state, federal, and local agencies, incorporating viewpoints from all affected agencies in the public involvement and design processes.
- **Flyers** – for distribution in libraries and other public places (grocery stores and post offices). Flyers will announce the public open houses and the project website.
- **Listening Posts** – project staff, along with eye catching project graphics, maps, and materials, will be stationed at high traffic locations in Moose Pass and Seward, ideally during a community event that will yield significant foot traffic. The public involvement team will engage with members of the public, gather feedback, and increase the project’s visibility.
- **List Maintenance** – (mailing, email) a project mailing list will be developed including agencies, organizations, elected officials, and others with an interest in the Seward Highway MP 25.5-36 project. Where possible, communications will be delivered electronically (e-newsletters, meeting announcements). HDR will send two postcards to project stakeholders, one announcing each public open house (2 total), and inviting stakeholders to sign up for future email correspondence via the project website.
- **Media Coordination and Monitoring** – provides for the ongoing sharing of information with the media. Monitoring the press, including news articles, letters to the editor, and other sources, will gather information and interpret the public’s concerns.
- **Paid Advertising** – newspaper ads and online advertising on popular websites will provide information about the project’s status, advertise public open houses, and direct people to the website for more information.
- **Print Materials** – materials will include meeting handouts such as fact sheets and FAQs.
- **Public Open Houses** – the project team will host public open house meetings with the goal of informing stakeholders of the project schedule, relaying how the project may potentially affect them, and gathering their feedback on construction traffic mitigation. Each meeting will be advertised in advance to provide sufficient public notice.
- **Public Service Announcements** – these brief project announcements will be distributed to radio (and potentially TV) stations to notify the public about meetings and project milestones.
- **Small Group Meetings** – informal meetings with individual stakeholders and groups of stakeholders
- **Website** – The website will provide up-to-date information to interested parties. The site will be linked to the DOT&PF Central Region [Projects Page](#). The site will also include a “join our list” option to automatically sign up for e-newsletters.

6. Project Contacts

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

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