



GLENN HIGHWAY & HILAND ROAD INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS STAKEHOLDER MEETING MOA PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

March 6, 2025, 10:45-11:45 a.m.

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Attendees

Galen Jones, P.E., Project Manager, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Kelly Kilpatrick, P.E., Project Manager, DOWL

Sam Tyler, P.E., Project Engineer, DOWL

Bart Rudolph, Public Transportation Director, Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation

Nicholas Abugel, Planning Technician, Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation

Stephen Stone, Senior Transit Planner, Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation

Matthew Stuart, Capital Projects & Site Enhancement Manager, Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation

Meeting Summary

Members of the project team held a stakeholder meeting with representatives from Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Public Transportation Department (PTD) on Thursday, March 6, 2025, from 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

The meeting began with introductions and a review of the meeting's purpose by Galen Jones, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Project Manager. Galen shared the project area, purpose and need of the project, and the design planning process.

Kelly Kilpatrick, DOWL Project Manager, began by sharing the slides presented at the recent project open house. She reiterated the purposes and objectives of the project. She then described project history and the requirement to preserve and retain the existing bridge. Kelly reviewed the existing public transit routes in the area and described the traffic queueing issues



during peak morning hours. Galen described the history of the interchange, which was not originally built to accommodate the degree of traffic currently using the intersection. Kelly discussed difficulties caused by drivers ignoring typical traffic patterns and providing courtesy gaps to allow other drivers into the lane, which causes confusion and an increased safety risk, especially at peak traffic times.

The first alternative discussed was the double left turn onto the southbound entrance ramp, which involves creating a double left turn-lane from westbound Eagle River Loop Road to the southbound Glenn Highway on-ramp. The benefits of this alternative include minimal impacts to right-of-way (ROW) and utilities, as well as the lowest cost. However, the negatives include a lack of improvement for operational deficiencies elsewhere in the project area and difficulties for truck operations. Galen expanded on this, noting courtesy gaps would no longer be effective with this alternative, leading to longer wait times for westbound (left-turning) vehicles entering from the northbound off-ramp and eastbound (left-turning) vehicles entering from the southbound off-ramp, as well as an increased risk of negative interactions due to the low visibility of the second lane. Sam Tyler, DOWL Project Engineer, added vehicles coming from the landfill often force their way into traffic to reduce wait time, which presents an additional safety risk.

The dual loop on-ramp (right turn) and pedestrian tunnel alternative were presented next. This design involves building a dual lane loop on-ramp (right turn) from westbound Eagle River Loop Road (ERLR) onto southbound Glenn Highway, with a separate looped pedestrian tunnel under ERLR. The positives of this alternative include eliminating conflicts with traffic heading towards Anchorage and providing a dedicated pedestrian tunnel. However, this alternative does not improve operations at other intersections or the southbound off-ramp left-turn (i.e., any other vehicle movements) in the project area, requires major utility relocations and multiple full-parcel and partial ROW acquisitions, and would require a substantially larger budget. Galen added this alternative would introduce schedule difficulties due to the additional time needed for utility relocations, further necessitating ROW acquisition.

The final alternative presented was the diverging diamond interchange (DDI) with roundabouts, also known as the 'divergabout.' Like the interchange at Glenn Highway and Muldoon Road, this option has similar traffic flow and would enhance operations and performance while minimizing high-cost utility impacts and ROW acquisition. Galen mentioned during a meeting with MOA Solid Waste Services, it was noted that this alternative would align well with planned improvements at the landfill. Additionally, it offers a straightforward U-turn option for drivers transitioning from northbound to southbound Glenn Highway, bypassing the roundabouts. For clarity, turn movements within this alternative were illustrated as four distinct routes. Sam added while truck aprons would be included in both roundabouts, transit buses should be able to easily navigate them entirely within the vehicle lanes.

The project team presented possible public transit routes for discussion. Concept 1 proposes a dedicated pull-around route behind the existing parking lot exclusively for public transit vehicles, which would then merge onto the northbound highway. Concept 2 suggests routing



public transit in front of the parking lot on VFW Road southbound, continuing onto the northbound Glenn Highway.

Galen concluded the meeting by thanking attendees for their participation. Kelly added the project team would send copies of the presentation and summaries of other stakeholder meetings for review.

Comments and Questions Summary

Following is a summary of comments and questions made during the meeting:

- Sam asked if public transit drivers have had difficulties navigating existing traffic and courtesy gaps in the project interchange.
 - o Bart Rudolph, MOA Public Transportation Director, responded that he was not aware of any concerns. Stephen Stone, MOA Senior Transit Planner, noted drivers had concerns about queuing times in the intersection when this route was formed. However, drive times have remained unaffected during the limited number of trips through the area during peak morning weekday hours.
- Kelly asked who maintains the Park & Ride lot in the project area.
 - o Bart responded this is not actually a Park & Ride lot, but a parking lot maintained by Solid Waste Services through an agreement with the State of Alaska. PTD has a bus stop outside the lot, so customers use the lot as if it were a Park & Ride lot.
- Kelly asked if a transit stop would be better on the highway or VFW road.
 - o Bart responded that during the winter, VFW is a lower priority for snow maintenance, so the highway helps transit buses avoid winter conditions and take advantage of highway speeds. Thus, a stop prior to the highway on-ramp would be ideal.
- Stephen and Nick Abugel, MOA Transit Planning Technician, expressed concerns regarding Transit Route Concept 1. Since PTD does not own the parking lot in the project area, a maintenance agreement would be necessary to ensure high priority plowing and adequate snow storage. Nick mentioned Concept 2 appears much cleaner than Concept 1. However, Bart raised concerns about a U-turn, noting it can be tricky for transit vehicles.
 - o Galen responded transit drivers are likely relying on courtesy gaps at present, but Concept 2 would allow drivers to bypass the roundabout and not require courtesy gaps to enter the flow of traffic.
- Bart asked about the grade on VFW Road where Concept 2 has the transit stop.
 - o Galen responded the grade is relatively level, but the hill begins dropping towards the north around that area, estimating it to be about 5-6%. Bart noted a U-turn on a hill is a concern for transit vehicles. Kelly added the team is still in the information-gathering phase, so the details of the design are still in the early stages. Matthew Stuart, MOA Capital Projects and Site Enhancement Manager, added there are plans to reduce the grade in that area as part of the pavement preservation project. Galen mentioned the project team would need to



coordinate with the pavement preservation project to obtain the necessary information.

- Bart expressed his preference for transit routing, suggesting a northbound transit stop between the east roundabout and the northbound on ramp, west of the parking lot, which may necessitate a southbound route stop on VFW Road, unless a safe and effective bus-only U-turn lane can be designed, returning the Anchorage-bound bus to VFW Road to continue on the southbound leg of their route. This setup may also necessitate a bus-only acceleration lane on the northbound on-ramp, which would also require a high-priority winter maintenance agreement. Ideally, there will only be one bus stop and not one in each direction, but further details will be worked out during design.
 - o Galen asked if a winter condition detour off VFW Road would be required. Bart responded this is likely a rare case. Stephen added there have been occasions where a detour off VFW road was necessary, so it would need to be included in the rerouting plan.
 - o Galen added it would be difficult to find space for a stop on the west side of the interchange. Bart noted this would not serve riders well, as most people drive to this transit stop rather than walking. A stop at the western roundabout would require extra walking distance from the parking lot. This option was ruled out.
- Stephen commented PTD would like to increase service to Eagle River. There are plan updates in progress to better serve Eagle River, Birchwood, and Chugiak in the coming years. This increase should be considered in the project design.
- Bart expressed he would not have a problem with the divergabout concept, and transit routing would be possible.
 - o Matthew requested keeping the transit stop in its current location. Galen agreed the stop near the parking lot best serves ridership, but it would need to be moved outside the roundabout.
 - o Stephen added eliminating the queuing issues in this area would also help buses navigate more efficiently, especially as service to Eagle River increases in the future. Galen agreed, noting even though the project scope is centered on the interchange, it will improve westbound traffic flow leading to the interchange, improving operations for any future transit routes on ERLR.
- Nick asked about the preferred alternative selection timeline.
 - o Galen noted this meeting was the last major stakeholder meeting, and a selection would likely be made within a few weeks or a month. He mentioned a letter of support for PTD's preferred alternative would be appreciated as part of the process, including any other preferences or ideas for transit routing.