



Business Advisory Group Meeting 2 Summary Report

Wednesday August 15, 2018

Meeting Purpose:

To update on the progress made since meeting 1 and present refined potential concepts. Receive feedback and garner consensus on the concepts that will be carried forward in the detailed planning analysis.

Corridor Vision Statement:

Improve safety and mobility for all users on the Seward Highway while enhancing east-west multi-modal mobility, safety and access for Midtown Anchorage.

- Opening remarks
Steve Noble welcomed everyone and went through agenda for the meeting.
- Introductions
Attendees introduced themselves. A record of attendance is attached as Attachment 1.
- Progress update:
Steve gave a brief overview of the PEL process, how the public involvement process has been set up and implemented, the contents of the previous Business Advisory Group (BAG) meeting, and how the concepts currently being evaluated were developed.
 - Steve presented the corridor vision and goals
 - reiterated that that concepts being reviewed today have had limited detailed analysis
 - he requested the group not be concerned by the location of the linework as no right of way impacts analysis has been completed at this stage. These concepts are still ideas and the goal of the meeting is to receive feedback on the concepts
 - Steve noted the PEL is a sort of 'Master Plan' to identify multiple projects that will work in tandem.

Steve reminded the group the traffic analysis shows people are using the corridor to come to the Midtown area and stated this effort is focused on the following goals:

- Access to and from Midtown is a key element of all the concepts
- Safety – Steve explained there are elevated crash rates for both motorized and non-motorized traffic
- Mobility and Connectivity – Currently east/west connections have been deprioritized and consequently there is congestion. The intersections at Benson Boulevard, Northern Lights Boulevard, and the Seward Highway are the busiest intersections in the state. The study is focused on how to provide access and connectivity while improving safety and mobility.
- Environmental – noise and air quality impacts are key. There are relatively few natural environmental issues along the corridor.

Steve then reviewed the next steps in the PEL process:

- This is the BAG's second meeting of an anticipated total of four meetings





- The next public open house will be in November
- The Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) will be receiving the same presentation tomorrow evening
- The selection of a preferred alternative will be sometime in late winter/early spring 2019

A participant asked if the next CAG meeting was going to be held at the Loussac Library? Steve responded the meetings held at Loussac Library are public open house meetings. The CAG is an advisory group comprised of members from the Community Councils directly adjacent to the corridor. The CAG meeting would also be held at DOWL.

A participant asked if the concepts being reviewed today are based on a reconnaissance study and concepts seen at previous meetings? Steve confirmed the concepts are based on the first two-day agency meeting held in April and the concepts presented today are an evolved version of the early concepts, but still at a high level and without detailed analysis. The concepts can be viewed as similar to "Lego" pieces, with interchangeable elements that could be part of multiple options. The preferred concept will depend on analysis, feasibility and feedback received from the advisory groups and public.

A participant noted that 60-70 percent of the traffic is local and asked what options are being looked at for a highway-to-highway connection, including an East Anchorage Bypass and Minnesota Drive upgrades. Steve responded that multiple studies have considered these options, but this study has confirmed most of traffic is destined for Midtown. The participant then enquired why a north-south highway connection component has been retained Steve responded that without a highway component the congestion and safety issues we have now will continue to increase.

A participant noted that a large project like this would usually require a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and noted the PEL would potentially eliminate the need for an EIS by considering the environmental issues early. It was the participants view the concepts seem to be focused on getting traffic through the corridor. The participant suggested this is a reconnaissance study focused on vehicles and the BAG is significantly impacted environmentally through maintaining access, right of way acquisitions, etc. Steve responded this study is using all known transportation planning documents, modeling, safety improvement projects and bicycle and pedestrian to identify elements to be considered in the study. Many of the previous studies have been larger/longer projects and have stalled. The PEL study is focused on developing an overall concept for the study area, and how this can be subdivided into smaller projects that can be successfully implemented to create overall improvements for the study area. The focus is not about getting cars through Midtown as it is acknowledged the predominant movement is already north-south, and there is a need to improve access and connectivity.

- **Traffic analysis:**

Steve noted that due to time we would not cover traffic data in depth. This information can be made available.

A participant noted that an understanding of the amount of space required to implement concepts was needed to enable feedback. Steve noted we understand and appreciate the feedback, but that we aren't at that stage yet. There are multiple ways to reduce the footprint





once the parts of the concepts are further refined, and this analysis is ongoing. The details of space requirements will be covered at the next meeting.

A participant noted a focus on land takes and access issues without looking at criteria first and that some concepts will automatically come off the table because they won't be viable. Steve responded that evaluation criteria are being developed in parallel to the concepts using the vision and goals. The team is seeking to develop measurable criteria that will help us understand impacts. We are trying to keep criteria development from influencing concept development to ensure a free flow of ideas. We don't want to stifle public input or give the impression of doing what we want to do. We are trying to engage people in developing the ideas instead of presenting our ideas and getting feedback. This corridor will define what Midtown Anchorage will look like for the next 50-100 years.

Sean Holland commented that perhaps the question is what is our starting point? For example, when we are considering bicycling and walking we are starting with the Anchorage Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and applying the ideas to the concepts at a high level. Traffic has been considered in a similar manner, and we have also completed count and origin-destination studies to truly understand local traffic flows prior to forming ideas.

A participant enquired that we are looking at "broad strokes" currently rather than detailed solutions? Sean responded yes, we think we're understanding your concerns and we are continuing to hear more. This is an interactive process, we will come back with refinements to the concepts. Next time we can spend more time on criteria and perhaps send them out for comment. Participant responded that yes, they would really like to see criteria and give feedback. Steve commented that it wouldn't take much to tidy this up and send it out for feedback.

- **Concept update**

Steve ran through the recommended active transportation network and each of the concepts (labelled Concept A through Concept H). General feedback is captured below. Decisions about whether the highway will go over or under cross streets will be confirmed as the concepts are further developed.

- **Active Transportation**

- There are some existing non-motorized facilities, but the conditions are variable and some facilities may need to be relocated.
 - Several participants noted support of the connection between 36th Avenue and Tudor Road
 - One participant enquired whether non-motorized facilities must be provided along every highway? This is not necessarily a requirement.

- **One-way Frontage Road Concepts**

- **Concept A:**

- Are there 10 lanes of traffic at the north end of the concept? Yes
 - Vancouver was noted as an example when suggesting the use of reversible lanes and jersey barriers. Asked if the use of these could reduce the ROW takes? We will dig into this and consider as we refine the concepts.
 - A participant commented the traffic volumes are not significantly directional in Midtown. Sean noted that there is approximately 1000 vehicles difference between





northbound and southbound traffic directions, and therefore volumes are relatively balanced.

- Fireweed Lane access would be via a signalized overpass with ramp intersection. It would feel a lot like a freeway on-ramp but getting off would require access through the Northern Lights Boulevard intersection.
- One of the challenges is high volumes on frontage roads due to access points
- Clearance for under/over at Benson Boulevard is a challenge.
- Does frontage road fully separate the facilities? Potentially, could be as simple as a jersey barrier or a fully grade separated facility.
- How many lanes would Northern Lights Boulevard be? Haven't run a full analysis yet, but at least 5 lanes would be needed.
- The frontage road would have a similar appearance to Tudor Road.
- Sean noted that we are trying to accommodate as much access as possible while keeping traffic flowing. The close spacing of intersections means we are really pushing the traditional design requirements for access elements.
- Northern Lights and Benson Boulevards would become standard two-way streets. Benson Boulevard would provide commercial access and Northern Lights Boulevard would provide freeway access.

Concept B:

- Several participants enquired whether the concept would provide for a depressed or an elevated highway. An elevated highway is likely to generate concerns with the homeless population as they make covered areas unsafe and inhospitable. Sean commented a depressed freeway is likely to be more costly to build, so public input about the preference for a depressed freeway is needed to provide support for this option.
- An elevated or depressed freeway creates access issues for Midtown and associated impacts on businesses. Further analysis is required to enable the recommendation of a preferred option.

Concept C:

- Comment on the footprint, braided ramps will likely take more width than shown on figure.
- From 36th Avenue to get onto the Seward Highway, would you have to use Old Seward Highway? Yes
- One participant noted that obtaining access at this location may result in business relocations. However, preliminary analysis indicates that only a sushi restaurant would be impacted.

Concept D:

- Steve noted that unless there is strong feedback from the BAG and CAG about a desire to retain this concept, it will not be taken further in the evaluation process. There are many non-intuitive intersections without circulation benefits.
- No comments or feedback.





- Two-way Frontage Road Concepts

- Concept E:**

- The southern end of the concept between Tudor Road and 36th Avenue could also be incorporated into one-way frontage road.
 - A participant noted this concept doesn't seem to help local traffic and access, unless it is all moving to the Old Seward Highway. In this concept, Old Seward Highway becomes the frontage road. The challenge is the pressure on 36th Avenue and Tudor Road to transition traffic from Seward Highway across to Old Seward Highway. We have tried to provide multiple locations for access to make the concept work. If going to Midtown from southbound Seward Highway the decision to access the frontage road must be made early, which will take some time to adapt to.
 - One participant noted this concept presents an interesting idea and before it is discarded they would like to see more details on vehicle flows from traffic volumes. A significant focus will also be needed for non-motorized crossings of Old Seward Highway. The sufficiency of the proposed ramping will also require additional analysis.
 - One participant noted a significant concern that if you miss the 15th Avenue access then you've completely missed Midtown. Steve agreed and noted we have looked at additional braided ramp access at 36th Avenue. A participant noted the additional ramps will make it really wide with 11 lanes. Some lanes will be auxiliary lanes.

- Concepts F and G:**

- Creates concept of a business corridor.
 - Challenge: The driver has to make the decision to go to Midtown early, however once they are there the traffic is free flowing
 - Frontage roads look much like those adjacent to the Seward Highway south of Tudor Road, with wide intersections
 - A participant noted this could be challenging for non-motorized traffic
 - Adding ramps would be challenging on both one and two-way options due to the spacing of the intersections

- Median U-Turn Concept

- Concept H:**

- The concept uses free right-hand turns and signalized left-hand turns beyond traditional intersections.
 - A participant enquired whether businesses would still have similar access to today? Yes. This concept creates a lot of capacity because we can shift to 2-3 phase signals rather than 4-phase signals, which will significantly reduce wait times at intersections.
 - This concept could defer the need for interchanges as it will increase traffic flow and reduce delays at intersections. This would be an improvement on current congestion in the study area and could meet the needs of expected increased traffic volumes for several years. It would also enable access to businesses to be maintained while building the future freeway. Wouldn't need to disrupt businesses twice.
 - Question: Would this push to using a depressed freeway? No, the median U-turns would be replaced by ramps.
 - Question: What about considering a Texas U-turn? This would give a lot of access to the businesses. Can consider Texas U-turns.





- Next Steps/Next Workshop and general discussion Q&A
 - We will make the information presented today available to all participants following the CAG meeting.
 - The evaluation criteria will be presented at the next BAG meeting. We will also be asking for feedback and comments on the evaluation criteria.
 - Please contact us with any questions or comments.
 - A participant enquired whether a minimum width for ROW takes has been agreed on? During the presentation 300-350 feet was mentioned. The participant would like to know if whether half or all of properties will be taken to understand impacts on investments. This is a real concern and we understand this is about the vitality of Midtown but would like to understand the personal impacts. Steve noted we have not defined a width at this point and there will still be a lot of variables. We will work to have further information on this at the next BAG meeting.
 - We greatly appreciate your time and the significant time commitment, but also representing the community perspective and well as your personal perspective.





MIDTOWN CONGESTION RELIEF – BUSINESS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
 SIGN IN SHEET
 Wednesday, August 15, 2018
 10:00 A.M.

PLEASE PRINT:

NAME	BUSINESS NAME	BUSINESS ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL
JEFF MULLHOLL and	Francois Chevron			
SEAN HOLLAND	DUT			
ASHTON EDWARDS	FRED MEYER			
STEVE NOBLE	DOWL			
RACHEL JEEB	DOWL			
MONICA EMERTON	GREEN CONNECTION			
CHRIS MCCONNELL	UAA			
CRIG DRIVER	CIRI			
ANTON VILACORCA	JL PROPERTIES			
GREY SPEARS	Sullivan Arana			
CLAUDE MUELLEN	DOWL			
JEFF LENTHER	MIDA			
ST KLEN	FARMER			
MIKE BRIDGES	FNBA			

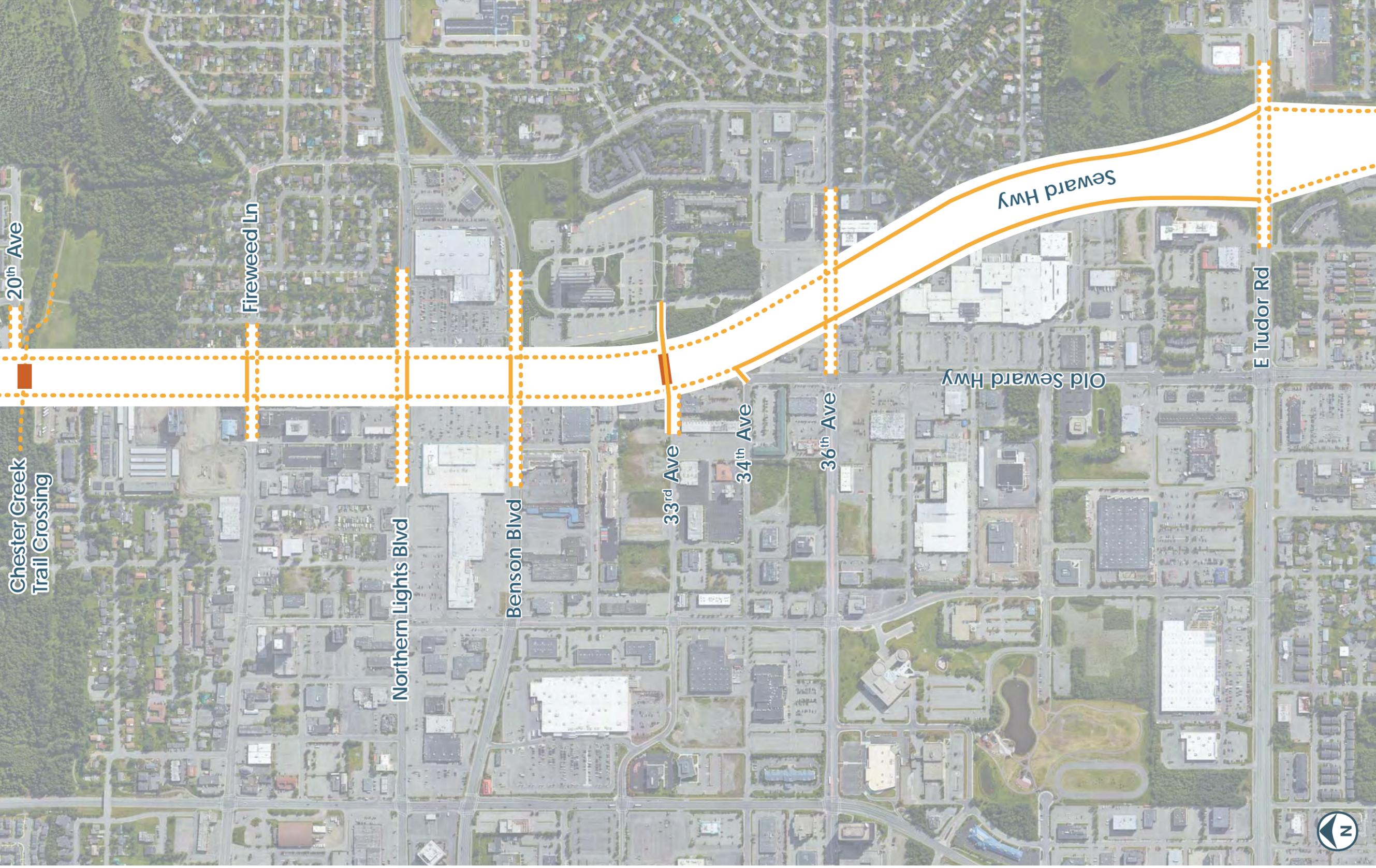
OBJECTIVES

- Provide east-west connection
- North-south mobility along Seward Highway
- Signalized crossings occur at each major intersection
- Grade separated crossings occur at Chester Creek and 33rd Ave
- Connection between Chester Creek and Campbell Creek trails

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- New active transportation facility segments
- - - Existing active transportation facility to be Reconstructed or improved
- Structure

Active Transportation applies to all concepts



KEY FEATURES

- Mainline could be over or under cross streets
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane
- Includes redesign of Benson Blvd/Northern Lights Blvd to be two-way roads east of A Street to accommodate ramp spacing
- Benson Blvd is free-flowing crossing with greater focus on commercial access
- Active transportation free-flow crossing at Benson Blvd

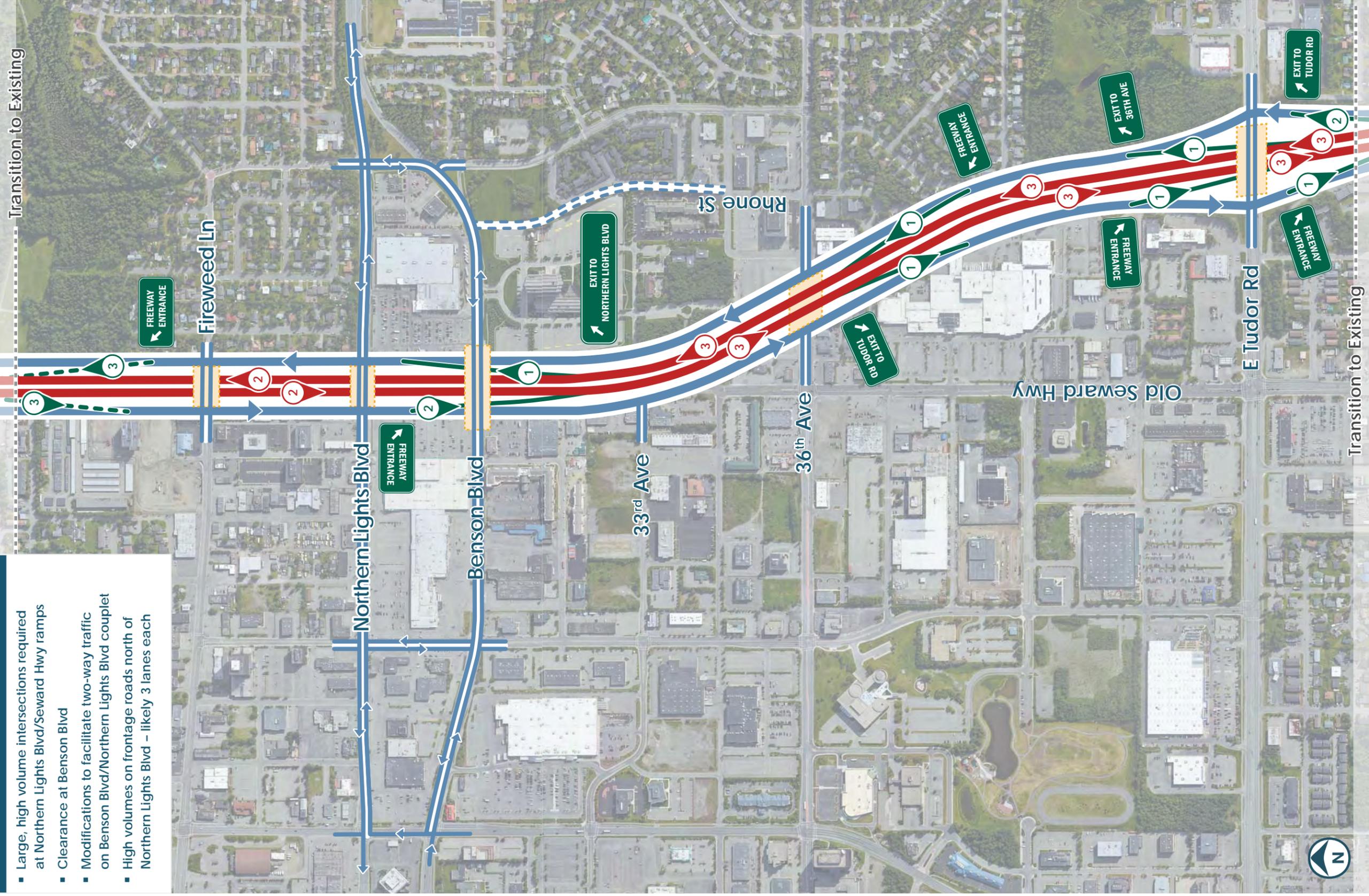
CHALLENGES

- Large, high volume intersections required at Northern Lights Blvd/Seward Hwy ramps
- Clearance at Benson Blvd
- Modifications to facilitate two-way traffic on Benson Blvd/Northern Lights Blvd couplet
- High volumes on frontage roads north of Northern Lights Blvd – likely 3 lanes each

CONCEPT A

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined



KEY FEATURES

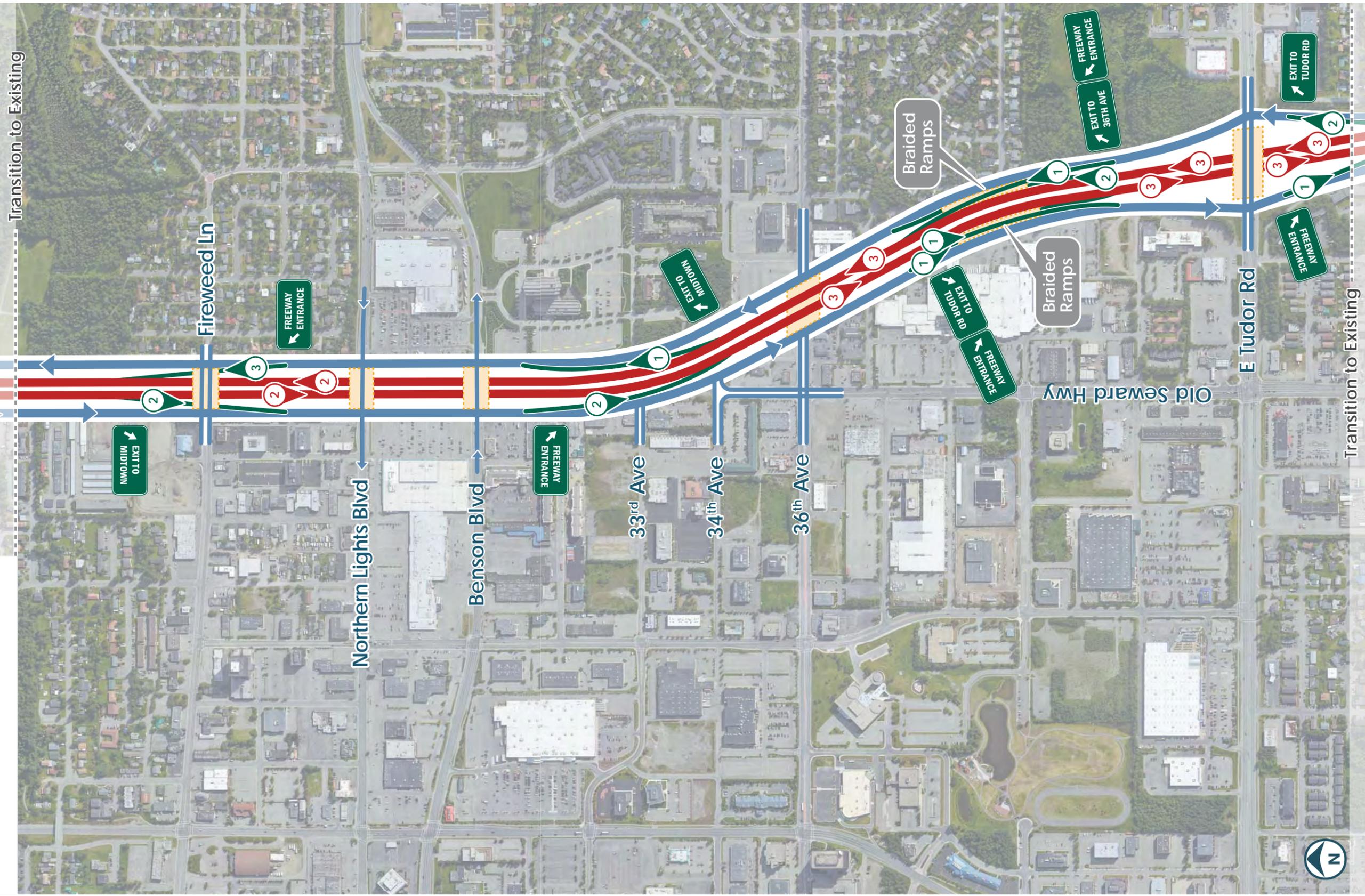
- Ramps north of Northern Lights Blvd avoid signalized intersection at Fireweed Lane and reduce frontage road volumes

CHALLENGES

- Spacing of access likely precludes future on/off ramps at Fireweed Lane
- Braided ramp structures, grades and footprint
- Braided ramps likely require Seward Hwy to cross over 36th Ave and under Tudor Road
- Clearance at Fireweed Lane

CONCEPT B

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
 - Freeway Ramp
 - Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
 - Future Ramp
 - Optional Secondary Road Improvement
 - Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
 - Structure
- See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined



KEY FEATURES

- Benson Blvd, Northern Lights Blvd, and Fireweed Lane operate as a split diamond
- Full access is provided to 36th Ave
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane
- Manages volume on frontage roads north of Northern Lights Blvd

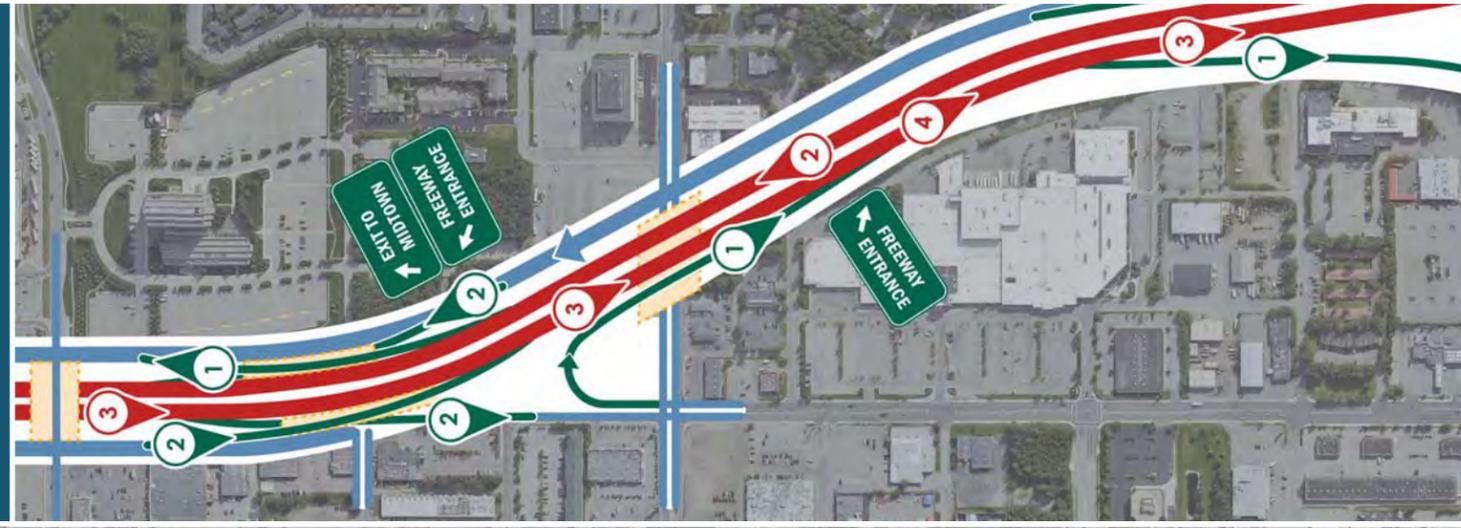
CHALLENGES

- Braided ramp structures, grades and footprint
- Braided ramps likely require Seward Hwy to cross over 36th Ave and under Benson Blvd
- Active transportation connection across Seward Hwy to 33rd Ave would conflict with braided ramps

VARIANT KEY FEATURES

- Reduces the number of intersections along 36th Ave
- Tight weaving and additional lane required along Seward Hwy between 36th Ave and Tudor Rd in southbound direction
- Braided exit ramp ties directly to arterial roadway

BRAIDED RAMP TO OLD SEWARD VARIANT

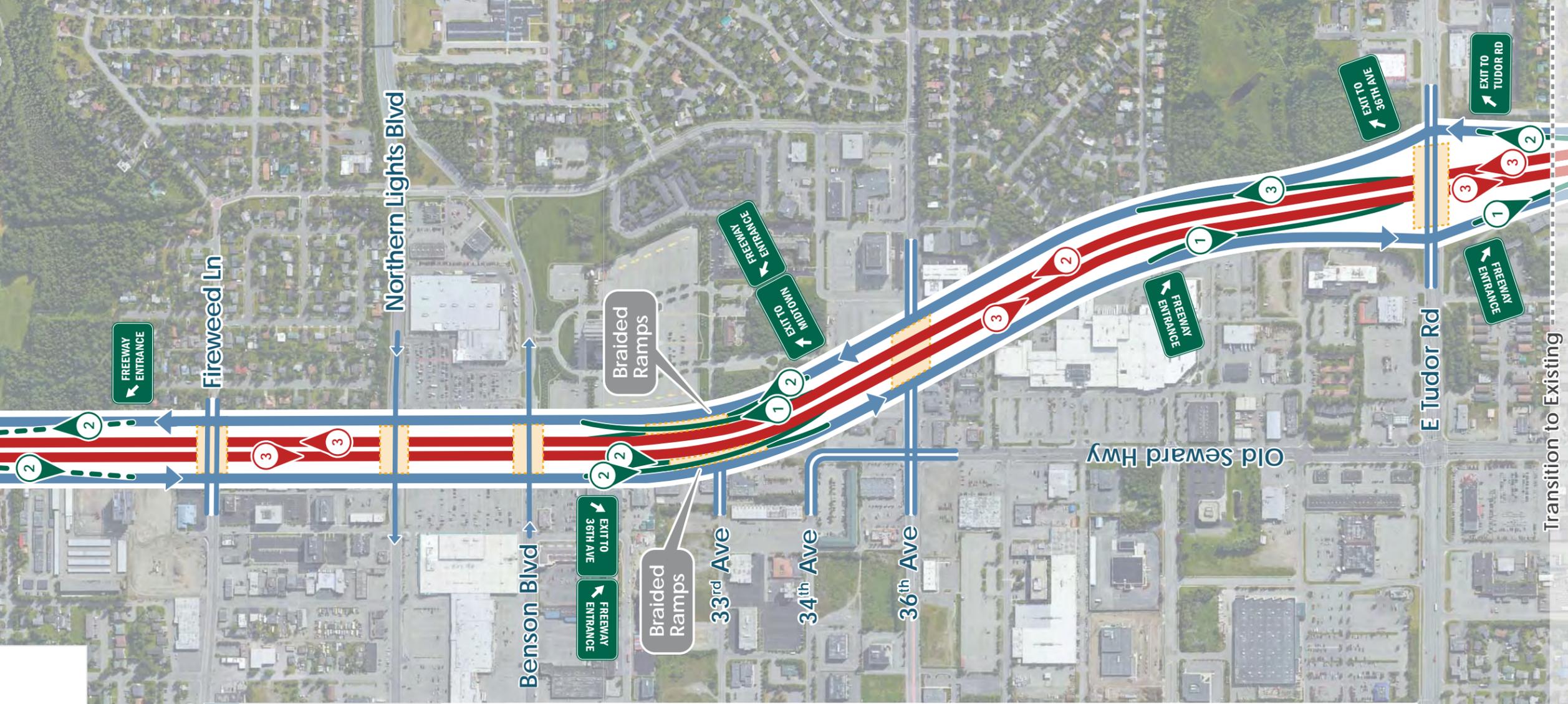


CONCEPT C

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined

Transition to Existing



Transition to Existing

KEY FEATURES

- Frontage roads intersect at Fireweed Lane and 33rd Ave
- Heavily concentrates access to and from Seward Hwy
- Facilitates left turning traffic at Benson Blvd/Northern Lights Blvd with no opposing traffic
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane

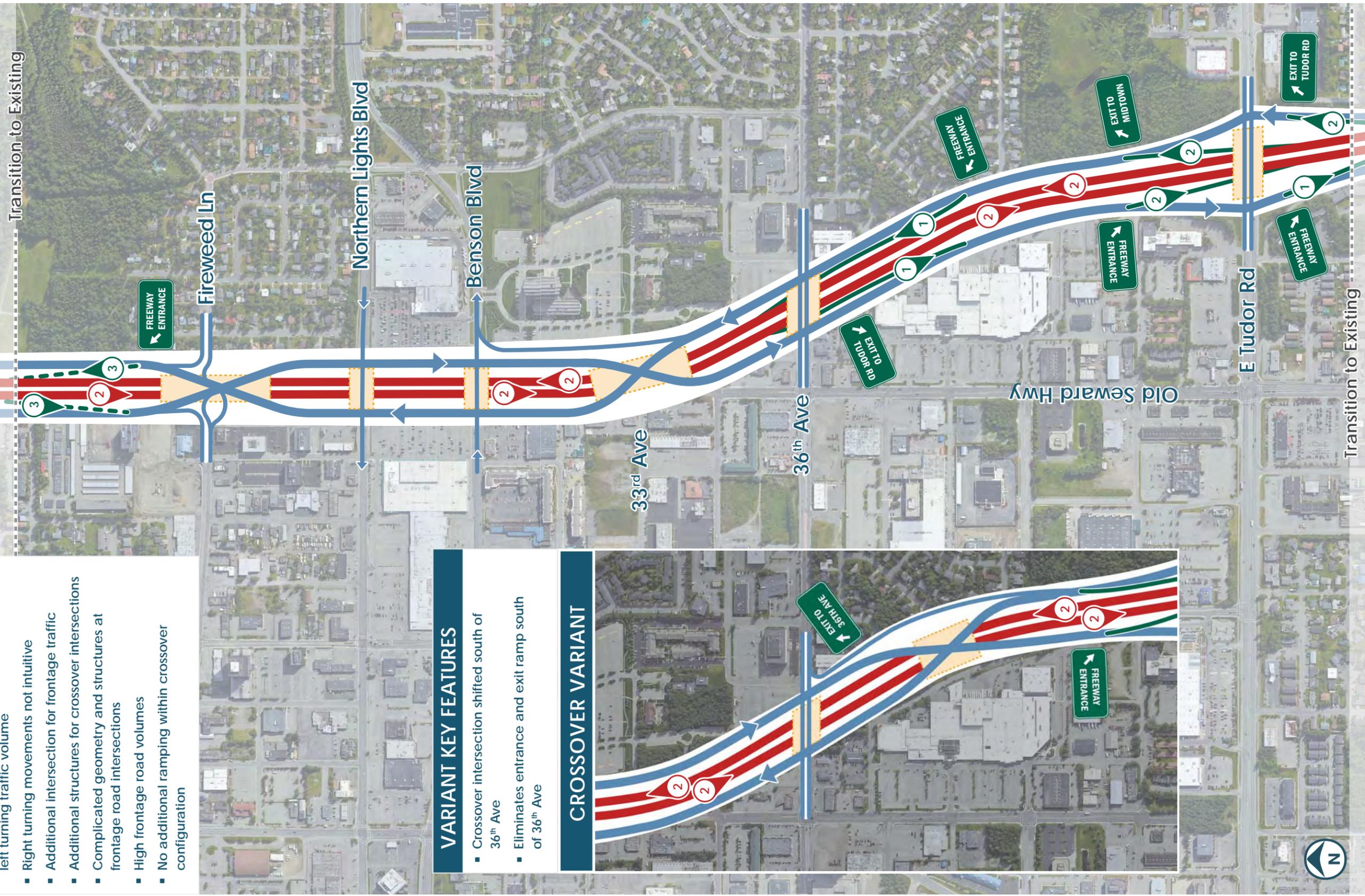
CHALLENGES

- Right turning traffic volume is comparable to left turning traffic volume
- Right turning movements not intuitive
- Additional intersection for frontage traffic
- Additional structures for crossover intersections
- Complicated geometry and structures at frontage road intersections
- High frontage road volumes
- No additional ramping within crossover configuration

CONCEPT D

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

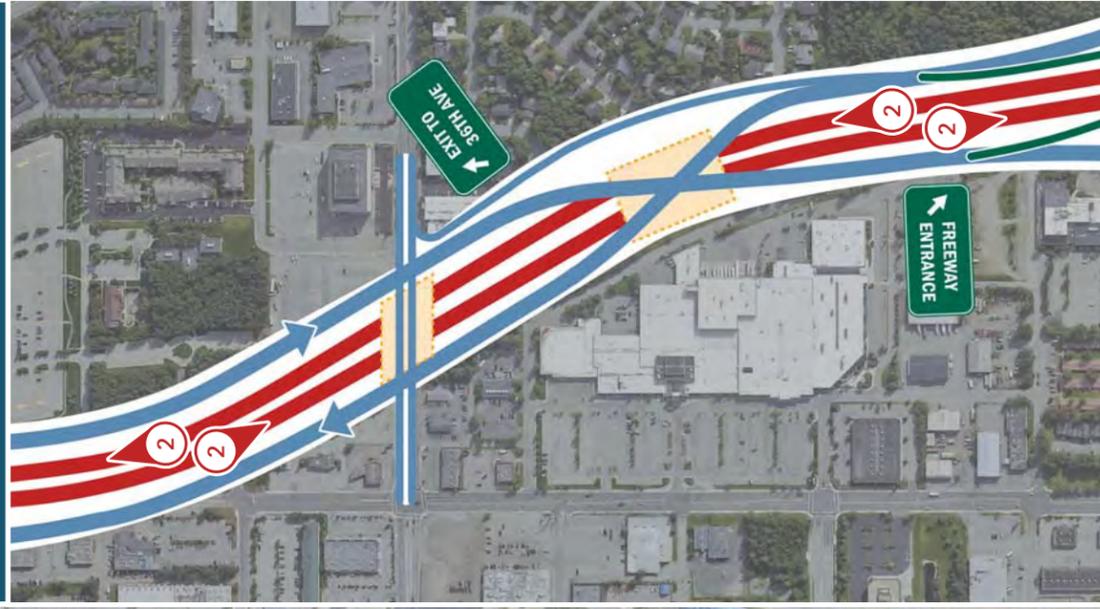
See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined



VARIANT KEY FEATURES

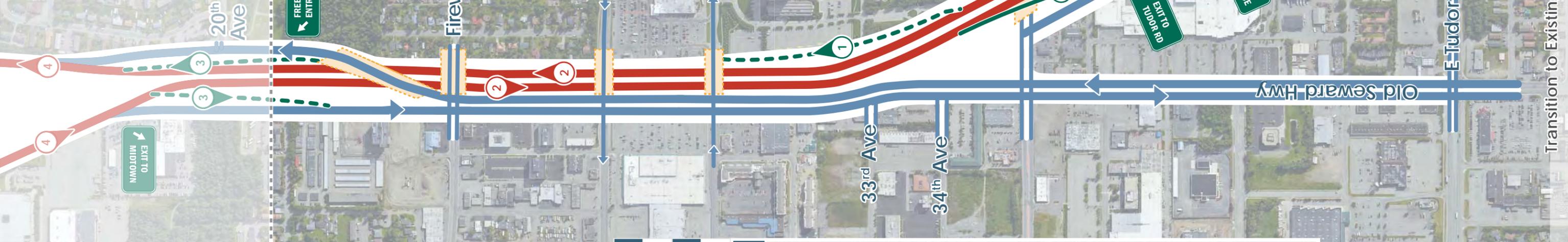
- Crossover intersection shifted south of 36th Ave
- Eliminates entrance and exit ramp south of 36th Ave

CROSSOVER VARIANT



CONCEPT

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
 - Freeway Ramp
 - Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
 - Future Ramp
 - Optional Secondary Road Improvement
 - Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
 - Structure
- See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined



KEY FEATURES

- Mainline could be over or under cross streets
- Traditional two-way road next to the Seward Hwy for Middletown access
- Direct access to businesses may be difficult due to traffic volumes
- Additional structures required crossing mainline to end frontage
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane

CHALLENGES

- High volumes on frontage roads – likely 3 lanes each direction
- Limits ability to add ramps
- Closely spaced intersections along 36th Ave
- Old Seward Hwy to Seward Hwy connection results in high signalized turning movements at Tudor Road and 36th Ave

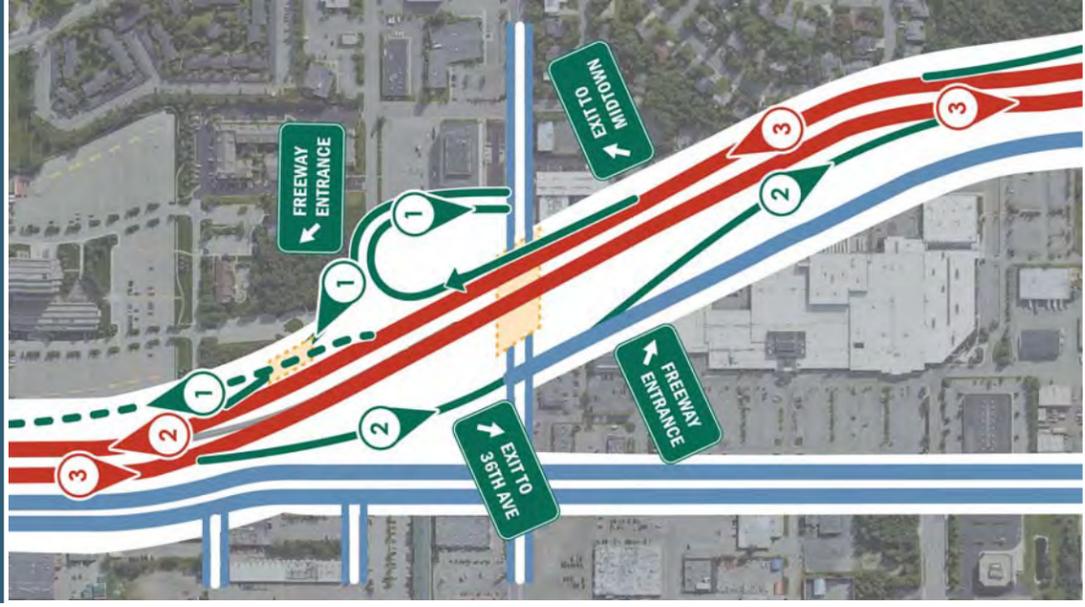
VARIANT KEY FEATURES

- Full access to 36th Ave

VARIANT CHALLENGES

- Braided ramp, structure, grade and footprint

36TH AVE ACCESS VARIANT



KEY FEATURES

- Mainline could be over or under cross streets
- Traditional two-way road next to the Seward Hwy for Midtown access
- Direct access to businesses may be difficult due to traffic volumes
- Additional structures required crossing mainline to begin and end frontage
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane

CHALLENGES

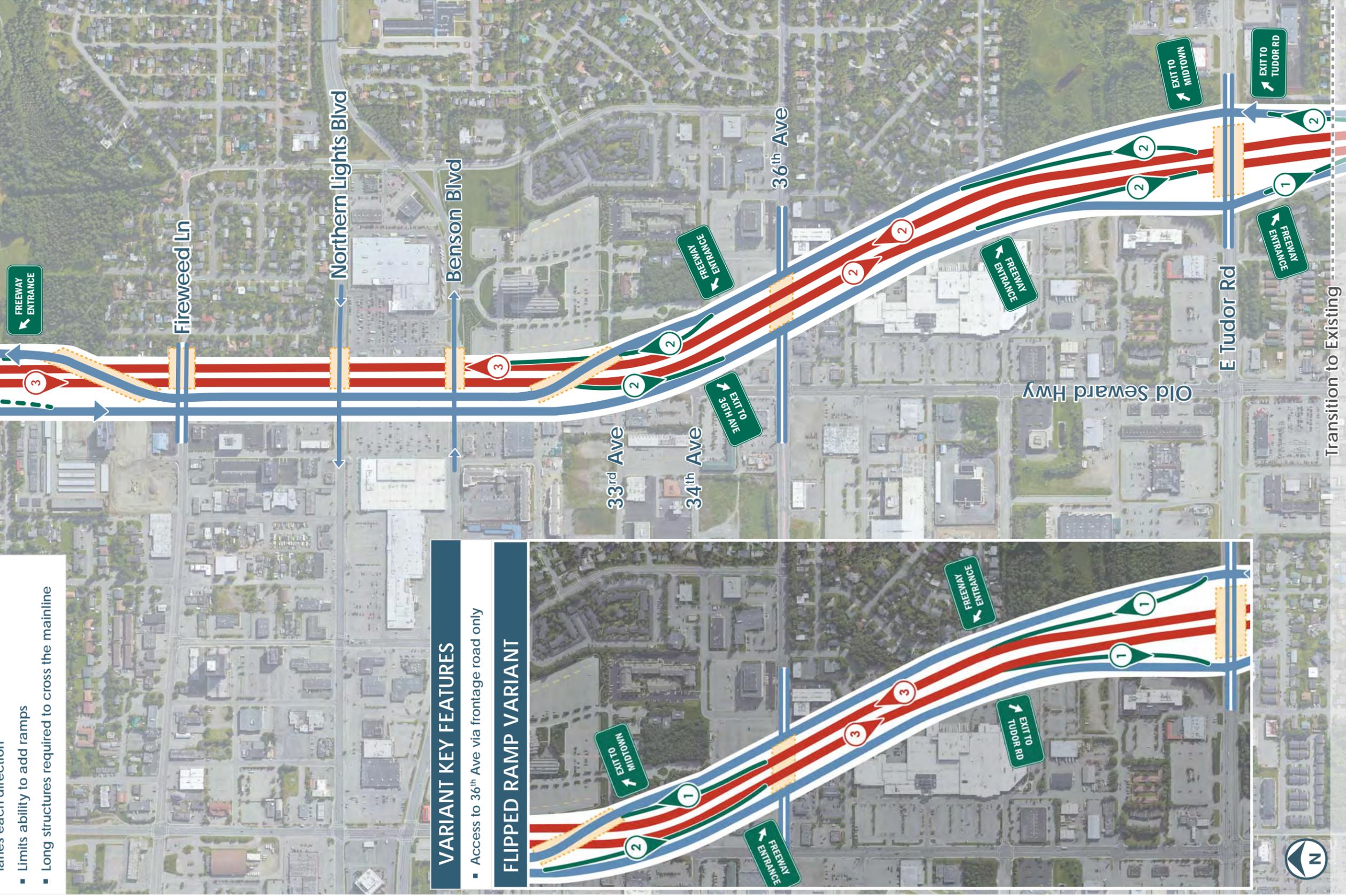
- High volumes on frontage roads – likely 3 lanes each direction
- Limits ability to add ramps
- Long structures required to cross the mainline

CONCEPT F

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined

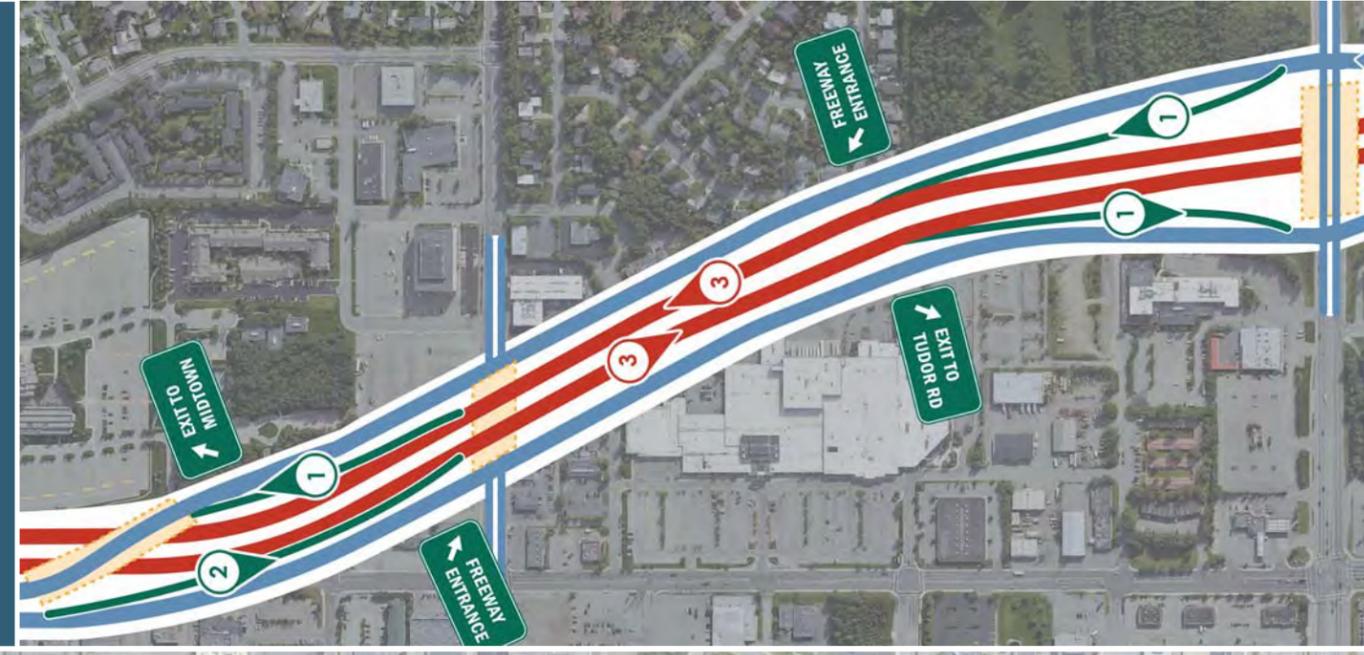
Transition to Existing



VARIANT KEY FEATURES

- Access to 36th Ave via frontage road only

FLIPPED RAMP VARIANT



KEY FEATURES

- Mainline could be over or under cross streets
- Traditional two-way road next to the Seward Hwy for Midtown access
- Direct access to businesses may be difficult due to traffic volumes
- Additional structures required crossing mainline to begin and end frontage
- Accommodates future southbound off and northbound on ramps north of Fireweed Lane

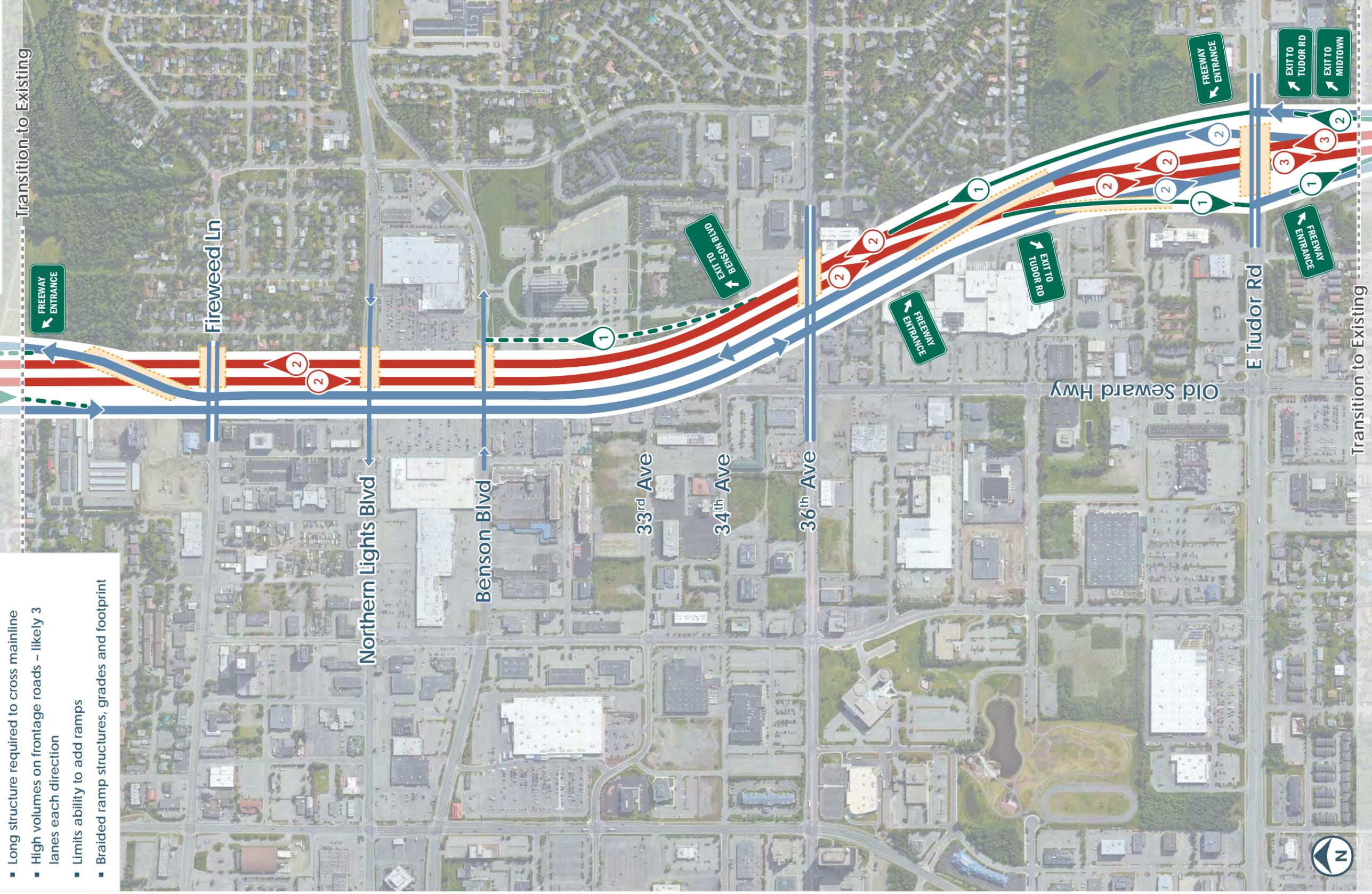
CHALLENGES

- Long structure required to cross mainline
- High volumes on frontage roads – likely 3 lanes each direction
- Limits ability to add ramps
- Braided ramp structures, grades and footprint

CONCEPT G

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined



KEY FEATURES

- Maintains full access at all cross-streets
- Changes all northbound and southbound left turns to be median u-turns
- Converts all signals to be 2 or 3 phase signal
- High capacity corridor that would be compatible with future construction of any of the one-way frontage road options

CHALLENGES

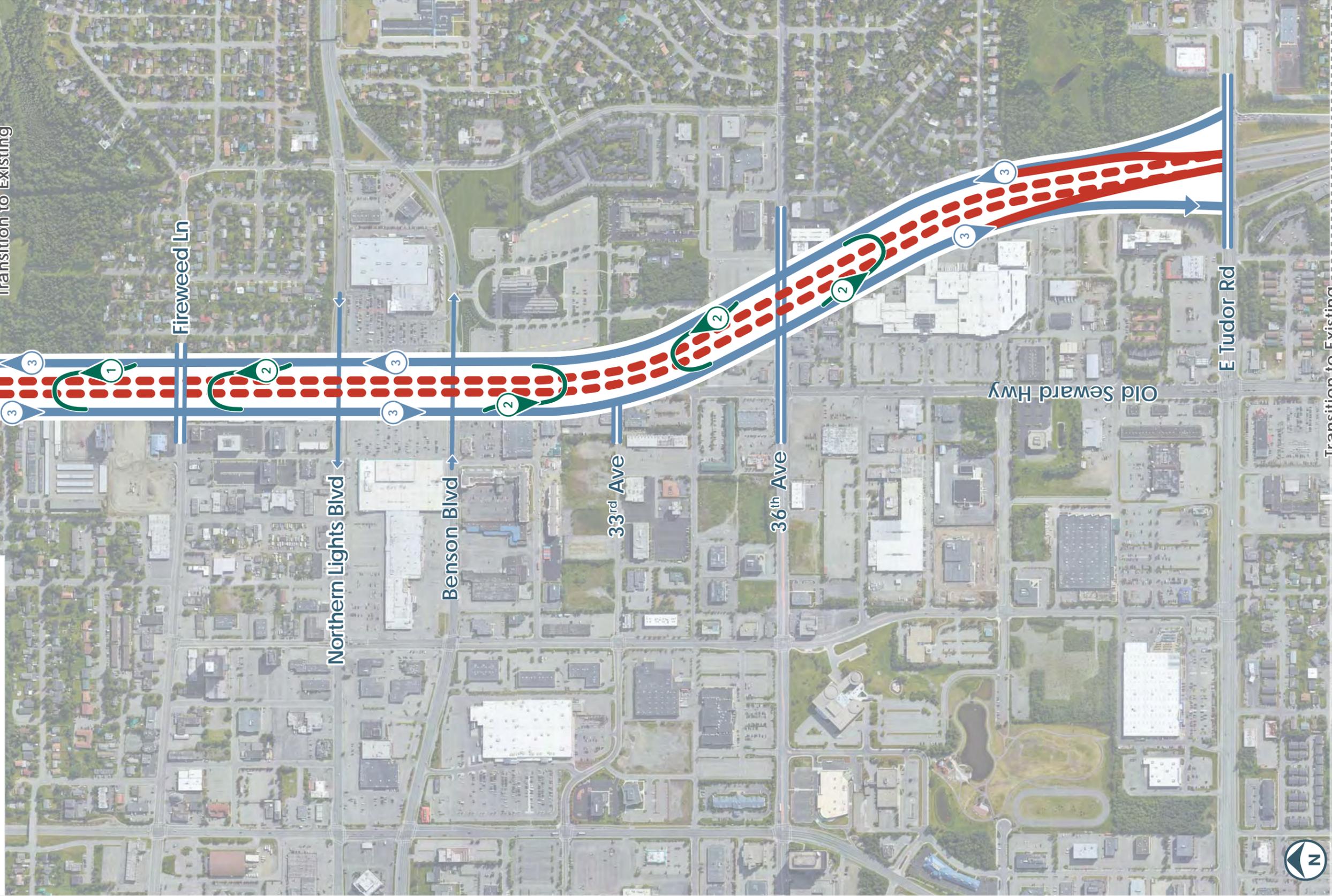
- Not as intuitive for motorists
- Complex signal timing to enable the u-turn movements to meet capacity requirements

CONCEPT H

- Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Future Seward Highway – Freeway Mainline
- Freeway Ramp
- Street/Frontage Network and Direction of Traffic
- Future Ramp
- Optional Secondary Road Improvement
- Number of Lanes and Direction of Traffic
- Structure

See active transportation schematic Alignment/footprint to be determined

Transition to Existing



Transition to Existing