



# Citizens Advisory Group Meeting 3 Summary Report

Monday February 4, 2019

## Meeting Purpose:

To update on the progress made since meeting 2, provide an overview of what our analysis is telling us and present draft Phase 1 screening results. Receive feedback and garner consensus on the concepts that will be carried forward to Phase 2 screening 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 the agenda for the meeting.
- Study status
  - Renee Whitesell provided a brief overview of the planning and environmental linkages (PEL) Study process and how this relates to the transportation planning factors. She also provided an overview of the planning context in which the study is being completed, including relevant statewide, Anchorage, and local plans that will guide the transportation network and associated land use. She reminded the group of the project vision, and how this also guides concept development and evaluation.
  - Steve provided an overview of what has been completed to date for the PEL study and what will follow the advisory group meetings. He also provided an overview of public involvement to date, and a summary of what we have heard and learned from stakeholder and public involvement.
  - Steve presented examples of design elements that will be considered in the next stage of concept development, including ideas for cut and cover, grade separated freeway facilities with frontage roads, braded ramps and median u-turns.
  - Steve presented an overview of each of the concepts and the results of the analysis.





- Steve then provided an overview of the concept screening approach being used for the PEL study and provided details on what our analysis results are telling us on the concepts. Our analysis is suggesting that Concepts A and B raise concerns with regard to right-of-way and environmental impacts, and the two-way frontage road concepts (E/F/G) present concerns from a traffic and active transportation perspective.
- One attendee noted support for a concept(s) that would provide a depressed road with a cap on it.
- One attendee noted a long-time safety issue with the offramp to Old Seward Highway near Moose's Tooth (33rd Avenue). He noted it would be great to resolve this issue as part of the study and resulting projects.
- One attendee enquired whether a viaduct would be considered for the mainline. Steve noted that it will probably cost most to create a depressed freeway, and there was a need to consider both options and the associated costs prior to recommending projects.
- One attendee highlighted a recent *Washington Post* article (reproduced in the *Anchorage Daily News*) addressing the Alaska Highway removal in Seattle. She noted the importance of spending money upfront to complete improvements once and do them right. Steve noted the feedback and said there is an obligation to look at all options and their viability.
- One attendee noted the two-way concepts appear to be a duplication of the existing issues while actually reducing access, which is contrary to the project vision.
- One attendee noted that Concept H evaluation needs to use the Alaska definition of "temporary", which frequently ends up lasting many years.
- One attendee enquired how signing and striping of the median u-turn concept (Concept H) would work in the snow. This is detail that will need to be worked through in the next phase of concept development.
- One attendee noted the concerns with non-motorized provision on the two-way concepts and recommended we don't progress the two-way concepts.
- One attendee noted that Concept H enables the avoidance of "adverse condemnation", which is a key land use benefit of the concept.
- One attendee enquired whether Concept B should be discarded because of the potential for section 4(f) impacts. Another noted that he liked Concept B because it allows 36th Avenue to be over the freeway and thinks the 4(f) impacts should be further considered if we want Seward Highway to be in a trench the whole length of the study area.
- One attendee voiced support for Concept H because it will eventually enable the freeway to be constructed as a depressed freeway.





- One attendee noted he wants to see Fish Creek daylight from its headwaters. He enquired how the underground concepts will interact with the 50-inch pipe that contains Fish Creek. He noted that it is about 10-feet below grade currently. Steve noted that none of the current concepts will depress Tudor Road and the plan is to continue to have it at its current grade. There is the potential to bridge and daylight Fish Creek and the costs/details need to be looked into. The bigger challenge will be to cross between the Seward Highway and the Old Seward Highway. The attendee confirmed that all concepts appear to provide for under or over, but will Tudor Road remain the same? This was confirmed.
- Steve noted we will need a lot more community support on Fish Creek daylighting to make this a key project consideration. He further noted that Northwood Drive has a nice trail off Fish Creek.
- One attendee noted there is already significant pressure on Tudor Road. Steve confirmed the one-way concepts in particular look at how to interact with Tudor Road.
- One attendee asked whether we have extracted preliminary total delay numbers from our traffic analysis. Steve noted we have run the Synchro analysis and looked at Level of Service 25-years out. We have not simulated enough to get specific as yet, but we have undertaken sufficient modelling to understand the number of lanes needed.
- One attendee enquired about property impacts to Geneva Woods and the Helen Louse MacDowell Sanctuary – this was originally established to create a buffer from the commercial area. There is a desire to acquire another piece of land immediately to the south of the Sanctuary and we should consider using that to offset some of the impact on the Sanctuary.
- One attendee enquired whether Concept H would require additional lanes than the existing Seward Highway. Steve responded no, the number of lanes would actually reduce because the concept is more free-flowing.
- One attendee asked how long Concept H would operate effectively for. Steve noted it will operate better than today and will buy time in terms of reduction in delay. It will not deliver the amount of safety benefits a freeway will. It will also enable staging from a funding perspective.
- One attendee enquired whether we are looking at all of these changes for one-hour morning/evening congestion? Steve responded no. Right now, the Seward Highway gets priority so cross-streets are a big problem, particularly with crash rates. Also, non-motorized improvements are a significant element of the concepts.
- One attendee requested that the slides from the presentation be posted on the project website. This will occur following the meeting.





- One attendee asked whether particular issues would be created if Concept H was completed but the other projects to complete a full freeway and frontage road network were not advanced. Steve responded not necessarily but noted the freeway concepts would be needed to support future traffic demand. Traffic demand forecasting was based on a Seward-to-Glenn connection, as provided for in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).
- One attendee clarified whether we are still assuming the Seward to Glenn connection. Steve confirmed yes, because it is included in the MTP and if Seward to Glenn does not happen we are pushing the congestion problem down the road.

