



Public and Agency Involvement Plan

October 2017

Midtown Congestion Relief Public and Agency Involvement Plan

State Project No: CSHWY00298



Prepared for:

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Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.0 Study Team 1
- 2.0 General Information..... 1
 - 2.1 Overview and History..... 1
 - 2.2 Purpose of the Public and Agency Involvement Plan 2
- 3.0 Regulatory Compliance and Guiding Principles 2
- 4.0 Identification of Stakeholders..... 3
 - 4.1 Public and Other..... 3
 - 4.2 Utility Companies 3
 - 4.3 Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies 3
- 5.0 STAKEHOLDER ISSUES AND CONCERNS 4
- 6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS..... 5
 - 6.1 Mailing List and Email 5
 - 6.2 Website and Interactive Map 5
 - 6.3 Social Media 5
 - 6.4 Internal and External Stakeholder Coordination 5
 - 6.5 Public Open Houses 6
 - 6.6 Postcards/E-Newsletters..... 6
 - 6.7 Advertising..... 6
 - 6.8 Media Communications 6
- 7.0 COMMENT RESPONSE AND DOCUMENTATION 6

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Study Location 1
- Figure 2: Public Involvement Schedule..... 7

TABLES

- Table 1: Stakeholder Issues and Concerns 4

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Project Mailing Area

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AMATS	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
AST	Alaska State Troopers
CSS	Context Sensitive Solutions
DEC.....	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
DOT&PF	State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DNR.....	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
EPA.....	Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA.....	Federal Highway Administration
MOA.....	Municipality of Anchorage
MOU.....	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PEL	Planning and Environmental Linkage
PAIP.....	Public and Agency Involvement Plan
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
TAC.....	Technical Advisory Committee
UAA.....	University of Alaska Anchorage
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 STUDY TEAM

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2.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Overview and History

The Midtown Congestion Relief project is focused on the area surrounding the Seward Highway corridor from the Tudor Road interchange to approximately the 20th Avenue intersection through Midtown Anchorage (see Figure 1). The intersections in this corridor have some of the longest delays and highest crash rates in the State and the parallel routes such as the A Street/C Street couplet and Lake Otis Parkway are used as by-pass routes for commuter traffic. For example, congestion at 36th Avenue creates approximately 250 driver hours of delay every weekday during the evening rush hour. Traffic along this corridor is expected to roughly double in the next 20 to 30 years and, without significant improvements, congestion will increase dramatically in the Midtown region.

Figure 1: Study Location



This study has been preceded by several projects that sought to address traffic congestion issues on the Seward Highway where it transitions from a controlled access freeway south of Tudor Road to a slower speed major arterial road north of 36th Avenue. This PEL Study will evaluate the inter-related issues surrounding the closely-spaced, signalized intersections between 20th and 36th Avenues with a focus on congestion relief in the Midtown area. The PEL Study will establish a corridor vision and develop a realistic implementation plan.

The study team recognizes that extensive public involvement has been conducted through previous efforts. Information gathered as part of those projects will be evaluated at the beginning of the PEL Study to better understand stakeholder concerns.

This effort will contain two distinct phases. During the first phase, DOT&PF will conduct a PEL study to establish a shared vision for Seward Highway and Midtown traffic circulation, garner public and agency concurrence on the scope of the proposed improvement concepts and identify environmental concerns in anticipation of future environmental documentation efforts. The outcome of the PEL Study will be a planning document that identifies a prioritized plan with several distinct projects that will work in concert to achieve the shared vision for motorized and non-motorized traffic circulation in Midtown Anchorage.

After the PEL study is complete and pending the availability of construction funding, the second phase will begin by implementing the highest priority project(s). The PEL study (phase I) is state-funded but all work will follow the federal process in anticipation of federal funding for plan implementation.

2.2 Purpose of the Public and Agency Involvement Plan

This Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP) details the proposed methods for communicating information with agencies, organizations, and the public for the Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study. The objective of this effort is to work directly with the interested public and regulatory/resource agencies to communicate the goals of the study and gather input. These methods will be used throughout the study duration. Involvement opportunities for projects resulting from the PEL Study will be detailed in future project specific plans.

3.0 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As part of preparing this PAIP, consideration has been given to the guidance set out in the Alaska Highway Preconstruction Manual. In addition, the study team will incorporate public involvement guidelines and recommendations of Section 168 (23 U.S. Code 168), which defines the process for integrating planning and environmental review. This includes adequate notice of opportunities for review of planning documents, ability to comment, and notification that this planning document may be adopted during subsequent environmental review. Public involvement methods and techniques used during the PEL study will be crafted with consideration for regulatory laws and orders (National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA], environmental justice) so as to streamline future project implementation (environmental documentation, design, and construction).

The study team will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI documents will be displayed at public meetings and documented in the meeting record.

4.0 IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Below is an initial list of stakeholders. When possible, these entities will be included in the study mailing list. This list will expand throughout the study.

4.1 Public and Other

- Property owners and residents in adjacent neighborhoods
- Business owners in adjacent areas
- Non-profit organizations
- Commuters
- Anchorage Chamber of Commerce
- Anchorage School District
- University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
- Federation of Community Councils
 - Rogers Park Community
 - Tudor Area Community
 - Midtown Community
 - North Star Community
 - Fairview Community
 - Campbell Park Community
- Alaska Trucking Association
- Recreation trail users
- Bicyclists and pedestrians
- Access Alaska

4.2 Utility Companies

- Alaska Communications
- Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility
- Chugach Electric Association, Inc.
- ENSTAR Natural Gas Company
- General Communications Incorporated
- Anchorage Municipal Light and Power

4.3 Government, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- State Senators and Representatives
- State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Alaska State Troopers (AST)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)
 - Mayor's Office
 - Anchorage Assembly
 - Parks and Recreation
 - MOA Department of Public Transportation – People Mover, AnchorRIDES

- Anchorage Fire Department
- Anchorage Police Department
- Department of Economic and Community Development
- Planning and Zoning Commission
- Project Management and Engineering
- Maintenance and Operations
- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)
 - Technical Committee
 - Policy Committee
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - Freight Advisory Committee

5.0 STAKEHOLDER ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Based on information gathered from previous projects in the study area, the team has identified the following stakeholder concerns related to the PEL process, current corridor conditions, and potential impacts associated with future projects.

Table 1: Anticipated Stakeholder Issues and Concerns

Topic	Concern
<p>PEL Study/Public and Agency Involvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the first PEL Study in Anchorage. How will the study team communicate the PEL process, its purpose, outcomes, and next steps to the public and agencies? • This area is used by a broad range of stakeholders (residents, businesses, freight, transit, commuting public). How will the PEL study team gather and prioritize input?
<p>Current Corridor Conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies and the public are concerned about safety, access, and congestion. • Stakeholders experience challenges with access along and across the Seward Highway, because of congestion levels, and traffic conflicts at intersections and driveways. • Without improvements, delays from congestion, and access conflicts, are forecast to increase over time. • Both motorized and non-motorized users experience issues associated with poor connectivity across the Seward Highway corridor.
<p>Impacts Related to Future Projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-of-way impacts are likely with any proposed solution. • Construction will result in impacts to businesses and commuters. • Area residents are concerned about noise, light/illumination, and visual impacts related to future projects. • Improvements in Midtown will just push the problem down the road. How will this project impact the Fairview neighborhood?

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS

The following subsections identify the methods proposed to reach agencies and stakeholders during the PEL Study. The study team will discuss outreach efforts and select other tools for involving the public and agencies if feedback is considered insufficient. See Figure 2 for an overview of public involvement activities throughout the PEL study process.

6.1 Mailing List and Email

DOWL will develop and maintain a mailing list of interested agencies, organizations, and individuals, including all residents, business owners, organizations and property owners adjacent to the study corridor (see Appendix A). This list will include both postal and email addresses to provide meeting and milestone notices to stakeholders.

6.2 Website and Interactive Map

A website will be set up at www.midtowncongestionrelief.com. The website will contain background information on the study as well as a schedule, meeting information, links and documents, and contact information for the study team. In addition, the study team will use Social Pinpoint, an interactive mapping tool to engage stakeholders and gather input. The Social Pinpoint site will be accessible via the website.

The email address MCR@dowl.com will be listed on all communication materials. This email address will be linked to a distribution list that includes the DOT&PF and DOWL Project Managers.

6.3 Social Media

DOWL will work with the DOT&PF public information team to craft and schedule study-specific content for the DOT&PF Facebook page, Twitter feed, and Instagram accounts. Social media advertising campaigns will be initiated in advance of the public open house meetings.

6.4 Internal and External Stakeholder Coordination

Initially, the study team will conduct workshops with key internal and external stakeholders to establish a shared message of the study objective and goals, review steps in the PEL process, and confirm a shared approach and study vision. The outcome of these discussions will be a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DOT&PF, select regulatory agencies, and the MOA affirming their commitment to the PEL process.

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), composed of agency representatives, will be formed to provide ongoing input to the study team. In addition, a community council/business working group consisting of representatives from key stakeholders will be established so the study team can provide regular updates, workshop ideas, and gather feedback.

Presentations will be made to the AMATS Technical and Policy Committees as well as the AMATS Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and AMATS Freight Advisory Committee at relevant milestones. If requested, additional small group, government, or agency presentations will be scheduled.

The study will follow the MOA Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process which will include submittals to the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission and MOA Urban Design Commission at appropriate stages.

6.5 Public Open Houses

The study team will host at least three open house style public meetings. The first meeting will be held in the first quarter of 2018, during the data collection and improvement analysis activities. The second meeting will be held following improvement identification and evaluation. The final meeting will be held at completion of the PEL study to present information on the corridor vision, individual projects and their limits, and preliminary environmental data that will be used for the initial class of action. Open house materials will be made available on the website after each public meeting. Additionally, the team will participate in the annual Anchorage Transportation Fair throughout the study.

Meeting notes will be prepared as documentation for project records. The records will show attendance, meeting materials, presentations, and a summary of verbal and written comments.

6.6 Postcards/E-Newsletters

A postcard will be distributed to announce each public meeting at least two weeks in advance. The postcard will be mailed and an electronic version will be emailed to the contact list and will contain graphics and text explaining the study and asking for public input. Additionally, up to six e-newsletters will be distributed at relevant study milestones.

6.7 Advertising

Public meetings will be advertised in the Alaska Dispatch News, on the statewide DOT&PF Facebook page, through email notices to the contact list, and on the State of Alaska Online Public Notice system. Meeting advertisements will be prepared in advance to allow for DOT&PF approval.

6.8 Media Communications

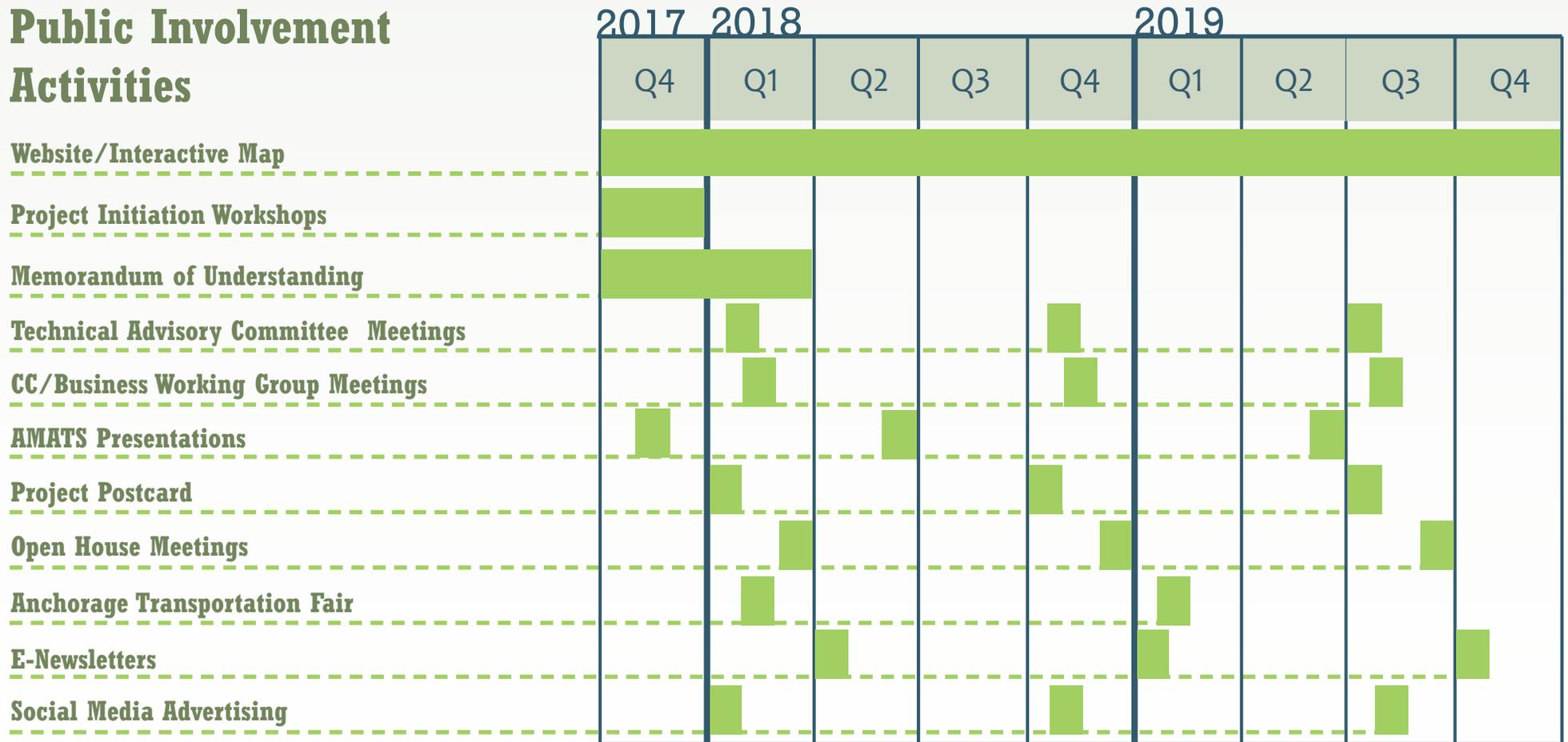
Communication with the media may be one of the most powerful tools for keeping and informing a broad public audience and encouraging continued input throughout the study. The study team will consult with the DOT&PF Project Manager and Public Information Officers prior to any media communications. Media communications may include press releases, media briefings, telephone interviews, and communication with elected officials.

7.0 COMMENT RESPONSE AND DOCUMENTATION

Comments received via email, mail, phone, or in written form will be distributed to the study team and archived in a comment database managed by DOWL. The project team will respond to all comments and questions within two business days.

Figure 2: Public Involvement Schedule

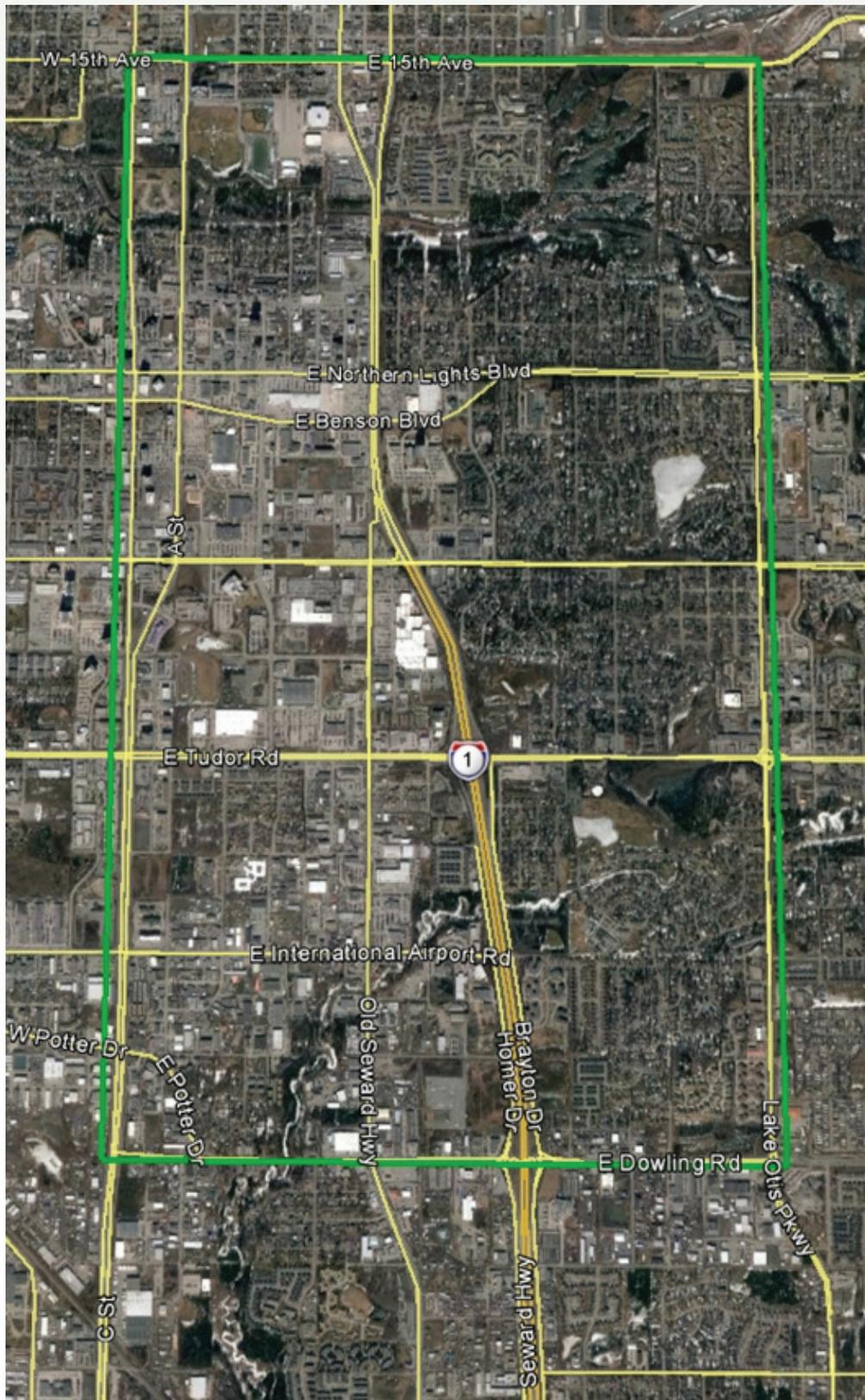
Public Involvement Activities



Appendix A:

Project Mailing Area

Project Mailing Area



It is the policy of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) that no person shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied benefits of any and all programs or activities we provide based on race, religion, gender, age, marital status, ability, or national origin, regardless of the funding source including Federal Transit Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway Administration and State of Alaska Funds.

The DOT&PF complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Individuals with disabilities who may need auxiliary aids, services, and/or special modifications to participate in public outreach activities should contact the Study Team at mcr@dowl.com or 907-562-2000. Individuals with a hearing impairment can contact DOT&PF via Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (907) 269-0473