



Frequently Asked Questions

May 2023

What are the goals of this project?

The goals of this project are to improve safety, access, connectivity, and to accommodate future growth on the Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek Road and 36th Avenue.

What is the cost of this project?

The current construction estimate is around \$105 million.

Could the funding for this project be redirected to other projects in the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)?

This is unlikely. The funding would have to go to projects that meet the requirements of this funding type (the Seward Highway is a National Highway System route) and already be in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the state's four-year funding program for transportation system preservation and development.

Could the funding from this project be diverted to maintenance and operations?

No. Maintenance and operations is primarily a state responsibility. We cannot divert federal funds to cover these responsibilities.

Has DOT&PF conducted an environmental re-evaluation since the original 2006 Environmental Assessment (EA)?

Yes. This project has undergone five re-evaluations since the original EA was issued. The most recent was done in 2019 during design of this segment (O'Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard). State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) will conduct an additional re-evaluation before the project goes to construction. Each time an EA is re-evaluated, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) specialists examine whether the project purpose and need are still valid.

Did the environmental clearances and subsequent reevaluations consider the State's Air Quality Program? What about Anchorage's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and Climate Action Plan?

This project complies with the following:

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) State Air Quality Control Program
- MOA Non-motorized Transportation Plan (2021)
- Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The most recent NEPA re-evaluation was signed on May 15, 2019, shortly before Anchorage's Climate Action Plan was adopted. Future re-evaluations may consider this plan, along with other local plans.

Does this project have any support?

Yes. In addition to public support, the project has received resolutions of approval from both the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Urban Design Commission.



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Is DOT&PF open to considering changes to the design or implementation of this project?

Yes. The project team is looking at ways to be more effective in delivering this project. One option is to look at phasing as a solution. This would involve building the undercrossing at Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive, but not connecting the vehicle lanes until a future point in time. This would allow non-motorized users to travel through the undercrossing, but vehicle traffic would not be allowed until a later date (such as when the AMATS: Academy Drive/Vanguard Drive project goes to construction) in order to time vehicle access with traffic calming features in the surrounding residential area. There are many factors to consider when contemplating this type of implementation.

Will the project reduce crashes, fatalities, and injuries?

Yes. This project directly addresses some of the specific factors that have contributed to past crashes, fatalities, and injuries in the corridor. DOT&PF will continue to evaluate the safety of this and all of the state roadways in the Anchorage area for further improvements.

What are you building at Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive?

We are proposing to build a northbound Seward Highway exit south of Academy Drive and an undercrossing at Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive for vehicles and non-motorized users. A connection to improve safety and access between the Dimond Center area retail district and the residential area to the east has been in Anchorage Bowl long-range planning documents for decades. This additional crossing will facilitate east-west connectivity for vehicles and non-motorized users.

What will the undercrossing look like?

If built as planned, this undercrossing will be approximately 140 feet long with 14-foot travel lanes and 10 feet of non-motorized pathways on each side. It will be lighted and will feel very similar to the new roundabout interchanges at 76th Avenue and Dowling Road.

What is the status of the AMATS: Academy Drive/Vanguard Drive project? If the DOT&PF project moves forward with construction, can the AMATS project be accelerated so that there is less of a gap between construction on the two projects?

The AMATS: Academy Drive/Vanguard Drive project is scheduled to have a completed environmental document in summer 2024 and go to construction in 2027. We have heard concern that the AMATS project, which includes traffic calming features, will not match up with the construction of the Seward Highway: O'Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard project. To this end, we are re-examining what could be done to increase safety and still preserve a connection underneath the Seward Highway that allows people to travel back and forth more safely between the residential and retail areas on the east and west sides of the highway.



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If this project is cancelled will the money already spent have to be paid back to U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highways Administration (FHWA)?

The DOT&PF and FHWA have a stewardship and oversight agreement that transfers federal responsibilities to the state to carry out the Federal-aid Highway Program. This agreement requires DOT&PF to conduct its work from concept to completion with a high degree of financial integrity, which would preclude spending tax-payer funding on projects that we do not bring to completion. The stewardship agreement can be found [here](#) and the requirement for repayment is codified in 23 CFR 630.112 (c) (1).

It is difficult to speculate on how much reimbursement would be required for this project should it not move forward.

Has traffic at Dimond Boulevard, Abbott Road, and on the Seward Highway increased?

Fortunately, traffic levels have stabilized over the past few years. However, as a main north-south highway in Alaska's most populous city, both the MOA and DOT&PF believe that the long-term trend will be for an increase in traffic along this corridor.

What community goals are served by this project?

This project improves a number of community goals including:

Supporting Active Transportation

- Adds an additional four miles of active transportation infrastructure in the Dimond Boulevard, Abbott Road, and Brayton Drive area, separating non-motorized travelers from vehicle traffic.
 - This is particularly needed along Brayton Drive which has been the site of several fatal pedestrian crashes.
- Reconfigures the Dimond Boulevard interchange, which has a history of high bike crash rates, to improve safety for bikes.
- Redesigns the O'Malley Road interchange to a safer configuration (a Diverging Diamond Interchange) for non-motorized users.
- Adds new non-motorized connectivity at Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive, reducing adverse travel and providing a safer alternative for pedestrian crossings (currently pedestrians cut the fence and run across the highway).

Planning for Future Growth

- Increases resilience of the system with new connectivity across the highway at Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive.
- Reduces congestion and adverse travel, which has air quality benefits.

Safety Improvements

- Adds traffic calming to Brayton Drive (curves, roundabout, and bike path).
- Separates non motorists from vehicle traffic.
- Provides a safer crossing at the Scooter Avenue/Academy Drive, Dimond Boulevard, and O'Malley Road interchanges for both drivers and active transportation users.

Will this project improve safety on Academy Drive and Brayton Drive?

Currently, Academy Drive and Brayton Drive do not have facilities for bikes or pedestrians. Non-motorized users are forced to walk and bike in the roadway (see pictures below).



Academy Drive



Brayton Drive

The proposed Academy Drive design will provide a safe place for pedestrians and bikers traveling through the corridor with bike lanes on both sides of the road, a sidewalk on one side, and a pathway on the other. Brayton Drive is proposed to have a bike lane and sidewalks or pathways (of varying widths) along the entire segment from O'Malley Road to Dimond Boulevard. In addition, the roundabouts at Brayton Drive and Academy Drive will reduce vehicle speeds through the area.

Will parking be allowed along Academy Drive and Brayton Drive?

No. On-street parking is not currently part of the design on either Academy Drive or Brayton Drive. The project currently proposes sidewalks, bike lanes, and curb and gutter along both roadways. These non-motorized facilities are not compatible with on-street parking. Adjacent private properties will need to provide off-street parking.