

Application for a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Transportation Project Review


Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

PETITIONER (Municipal or State Project Manager)			PETITIONER REPRESENTATIVE (IF ANY - Consultant)		
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PROJECT INFORMATION
Project Name: AMATS:Fireweed Ln Rehabilitation MOA/ADOT Project #: CFHWY00528
Community Council(s): Midtown, North Star, Rogers Park, Spenard
Project description (location): DOT&PF, in cooperation with the MOA, proposes to rehabilitate Fireweed Lane from Spenard Road to the Seward Highway to improve safety and to bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards. This road is jointly owned and maintained by the MOA and DOT&PF, and the project is funded through AMATS. Design will be led by DOT&PF with support from the MOA. It is anticipated at the conclusion of this project, the MOA will assume full ownership and maintenance responsibilities. The project will improve motorized and active transportation needs, as well as business circulation and access along the corridor.

TRANSPORTATION PROJECT APPROVAL REQUESTED
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Context Sensitive Solutions Concept Report (Planning and Zoning Commission) <input type="radio"/> Draft Design Study Report (Planning and Zoning Commission) <input type="radio"/> Plans in Hand (Urban Design Commission)

I hereby certify that (I am)(I have been authorized to act for) owner of the property described above and that I petition for a Transportation Project review in conformance with Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code of Ordinances. I understand that payment of the application fee is nonrefundable and is to cover costs associated with processing this application, and that it does not assure approval of the Transportation Project. I also understand that assigned hearing dates are tentative and may have to be postponed by Planning Department staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission or Urban Design Commission for administrative reasons.

Date 8/7/2024		Signature (Agents must provide written proof of authorization) 	
Accepted by:	Poster & Affidavit:	Fee	Case Number 2024-0094
			Meeting Date P2C: 10/07/2024

July 29, 2024

Mr. Craig Lyons, Director
Planning Department
Municipality of Anchorage
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650


Regarding: AMATS: Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation
DOT&PF Project No. CFHWY00528 / Federal No. 0001690

Dear Mr. Lyons,

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is the project manager for the AMATS: Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation Project. We authorize Lounsbury & Associates, Inc. to act on our behalf to complete and submit all the Context Sensitive Solutions Transportation Project actions for the project.

I can be reached at Connor.Eshleman@alaska.gov or by phone at 907-269-0595

Thank you,



Connor Eshleman
2024.07.29
10:41:32 -08'00'

Connor Eshleman, P.E.
Project Engineer

Cc: Joseph Taylor, P.E., Lounsbury & Associates, Inc.

DRAFT CONCEPT REPORT

AMATS: Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation

State/Federal Project Number: CFHW00528/0001661



Prepared for:

State of Alaska
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Central Region
4111 Aviation Drive
Anchorage, AK 99519

Prepared by:

DOWL
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July 2024

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1.0 PROJECT TEAM

State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) – Central Region

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by using a road diet technique. In the mid-2000s, the MOA took over the project and continued detailed engineering, surveying, public outreach, and design studies. Local businesses raised concerns about perceived impacts associated with reducing traffic by removing through lanes and design was not completed.

Since then, many successful road diet projects have been constructed in Anchorage and have been well received by the community. Local businesses and the traveling public have seen firsthand well-designed road diet projects slow traffic and improve safety by incorporating dedicated turn lanes and narrower cross sections reducing rear end and side swipe crashes. Because of this, AMATS, the DOT&PF, and the MOA have re-initiated the project.



Source: Facebook.com

Figure 2: Historic 1955 Fireweed Lane and Spenard Road

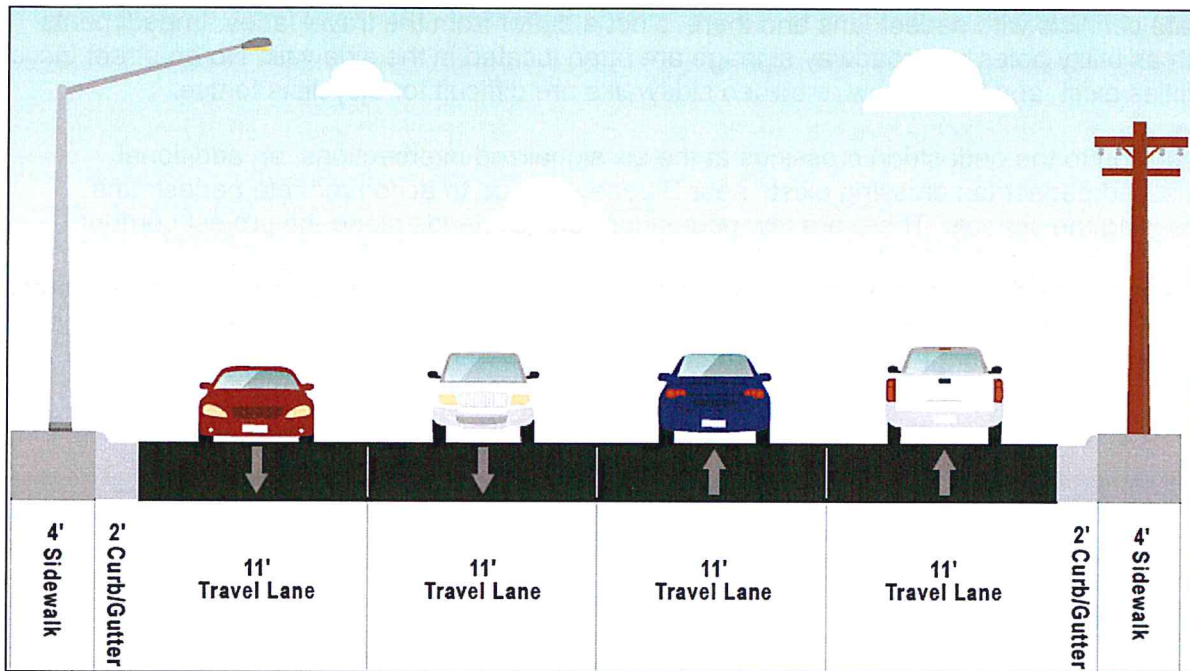


Figure 3: Existing Roadway

The 2022 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) shows traffic volumes along Fireweed Lane ranging from approximately 4,000 vehicles per day between Spenard Road and Arctic Boulevard to 6,500 vehicles per day between Arctic Boulevard and the Seward Highway. There are six signalized intersections (Spenard Road, Arctic Boulevard, C Street, A Street, Denali Street, and the Seward Highway) and approximately 20 additional approach roads along the corridor. Approximately 110 driveways use the project corridor for property access. These driveways are dense and are often near each other and side streets.



Figure 4: Dense Driveways, Non-ADA Compliant Cross Slopes, and Other Issues

Sidewalks in the project corridor are narrow and are non-compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There are many driveways with open curb cuts and steep ramps that

- 1 at C Street
- Remainder occurred on segments of Fireweed Lane

Fireweed Lane is a minor arterial characterized as a Main Street Corridor in the Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan (2040 LUP). The corridor is primarily zoned for commercial uses. Residential zoning areas surround the project corridor to the east, west, and north.

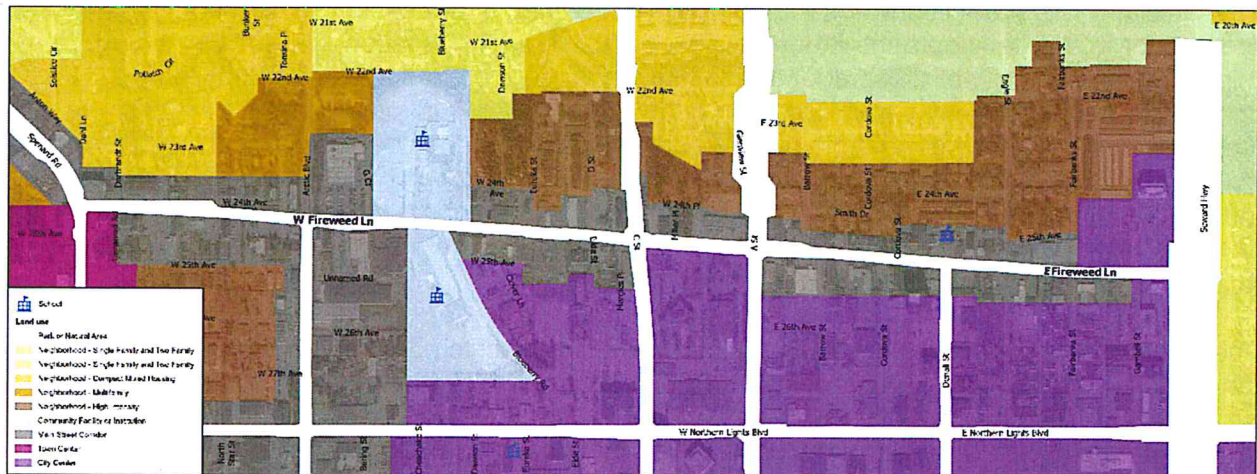


Figure 6: Land Use

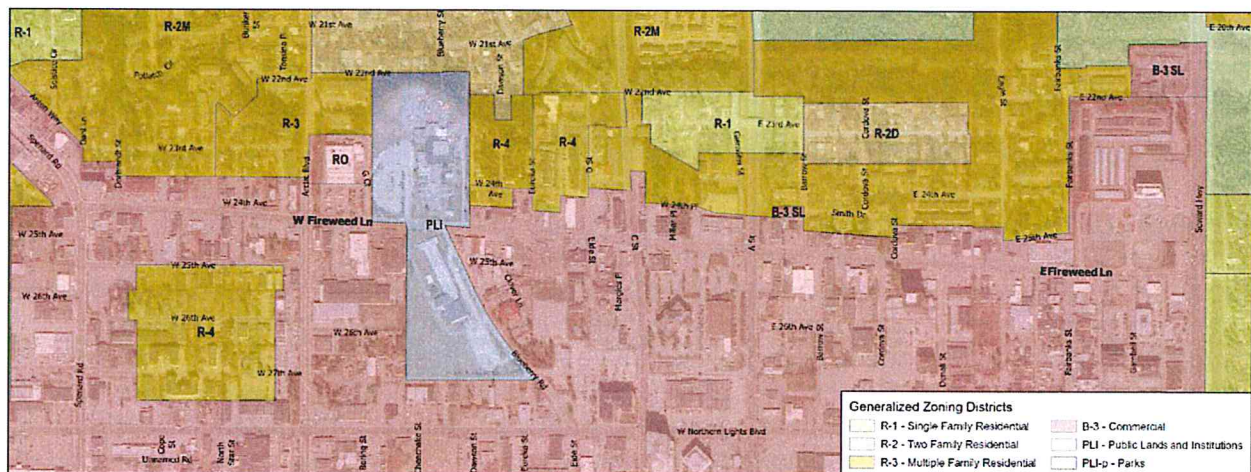


Figure 7: Zoning

- Goal 3 Improve Access and Mobility Options: Support an efficient, reliable, and connected transportation system that equitably improves access and mobility to all activities.
- Goal 4 Support the Economy: Develop a transportation system that supports a thriving, sustainable, broad-based economy, while maintaining or enhancing the surrounding area's land use character.
- Goal 5 Promote a Healthy Environment: Protect, preserve, and enhance the natural environment to promote sustainability and public health.
- Goal 6 Advance Equity: Promote equitable transportation options, improvements, and maintenance activities for vulnerable populations.

4.5 AMATS Non-Motorized Plan (November 2021)

The Non-motorized Plan (NMP) provides the vision for a non-motorized network within the AMATS Metropolitan Planning Area that, when implemented will help residents travel more safely and efficiently throughout the AMATS Planning area without the need of a motor vehicle in all seasons. The NMP merges bicycle, pedestrian, and shared use pathways planning efforts simultaneously. The NMP identifies Fireweed Lane as a high priority bicycle facility but not a prioritized pedestrian facility.

4.6 Coordination with Other Projects and Studies

The project team has identified five other current or recently completed projects and studies in and around the Fireweed Lane project corridor.

4.6.1 Midtown Congestion Relief PEL Study

The Midtown Congestion Relief Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, led by DOT&PF and completed in April 2020, identified changes to the intersection at Fireweed Lane and the Seward Highway as a medium-term project.

4.6.2 Seward-Glenn Connection PEL Study

The Seward-Glenn Connection PEL Study, led by DOT&PF and expected to be complete in spring 2025, aims identify and evaluate options to improve safety, livability, regional travel between the Seward and Glenn Highways, and local travel within the surrounding neighborhoods. The project area for this study is analyzing alternatives adjacent to the Fireweed Lane and Seward Highway intersection and could result in recommendations for changes to the east end of the corridor.

4.6.3 E 23rd Avenue and Eagle Street Reconstruction

Led by MOA, this project is a neighborhood streets reconstruction project near Fireweed Lane at Eagle Street. This project is expected to be constructed in 2028.

5.0 PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

The purpose of the project is to:

- Rehabilitate Fireweed Lane from Spenard Road to the Seward Highway.
- Improve safety for all users.
- Bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards.
- Improve business circulation and access.

Issue	Detail
Environmental justice (EJ)	The project area has significant EJ populations. Input from these populations will need to be sought and may need additional types of outreach, such as limited English proficiency (LEP) services, to be effective.

8.0 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY

Public involvement efforts for this project began at project kickoff in spring 2024.

8.1 Stakeholder Identification

Fireweed Lane is used by a broad range of stakeholders. Stakeholders are identified as people and organizations such as government agencies, businesses, residents, and the public who are actively involved in the project, or whose interests may be positively or negatively affected by the project.

Stakeholders identified for this project are summarized in Table 4. Where possible, these entities will be included in the project outreach/mailing list. This list will expand throughout the project.

Table 2: Identified Stakeholders

Type of Stakeholder	Stakeholder
Public and Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business owners and non-profit organizations within 500 feet of the project area• Property owners and residents within 500 feet of the project area• Cook Inlet Housing Authority• Bike Anchorage• Anchorage Chamber of Commerce• Anchorage Economic Development Corporation• Spenard Chamber of Commerce• Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) in the project area• Federation of Community Councils<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Spenard Community Council– Midtown Community Council– Rogers Park Community Council– North Star Community Council
Government, Tribal, Regulatory, and Resource Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State of Alaska Senators and Representatives in the project area• MOA<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Mayor's Office– Anchorage Assembly – District 1– Planning Department– Parks and Recreation– Public Transportation Department– Anchorage Fire Department– Anchorage Police Department– Department of Economic and Community Development

In addition, members of the project team attended the Anchorage Transportation Fair on March 28, 2024, to introduce the project and gather preliminary comments from the public.

A summary of the comments received during the spring 2024 stakeholder outreach is included as Appendix A.

8.3 Planned Public Involvement

The project team has developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) outlining how the project team will work with stakeholders to communicate the goals of the project and gather input. The PIP defines how the project team will meet relevant Federal, DOT&PF, and MOA requirements (including the CSS Process) for public involvement. Key outreach strategies from the PIP are shown in Table 5. The full PIP is attached as Appendix B.

Table 3: Key Outreach Strategies

Strategy	Details
Project website and email	www.FireweedLane.com FireweedLane@dowl.com
Public meetings	Fall/Winter 2024: Introduce the project and present alternatives under consideration to stakeholders for input in support of the environmental document. Spring 2025: Present the alternatives analysis and recommendation to stakeholder in support of the environmental document finalization. In addition to formal public open house style meetings, the project team will engage in community events, such as farmer's markets and food truck pods, to engage a broader group of stakeholders.
Community Councils and Other Interest Group Meetings	The project team will maintain regular interaction with various stakeholder groups within the corridor, including attendance at up to 15 Community Council meetings at key milestones during the project. The project team will be available to present and solicit comments from other interested groups upon request. Because of the more than 110 driveways in the corridor, the project team will meet with individual property owners in fall and winter 2024 to discuss potential changes to property access points needed to meet current design standards and allow for updated non-motorized facilities largely within the existing ROW.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Spring 2024 Stakeholder Outreach Summary

Appendix B: Public Involvement Plan



Spring 2024 Stakeholder Outreach Summary

Project Number: State CFHWY00528 / Federal 0001661

Dates/Locations:

February 20, 2024	Midtown Community Council Board of Directors
March 4, 2024	Rogers Park Community Council
March 6, 2024	Spenard Community Council
March 7, 2024	AMATS: Technical Advisory Committee
March 21, 2024	AMATS: Policy Committee
March 28, 2024	Anchorage Transportation Fair
April 10, 2024	Midtown Community Council
April 10, 2024	North Star Community Council

Summary

The project team kicked off the project in Spring 2024 by visiting area community councils, presenting to AMATS committees, and participating in the Anchorage Transportation Fair. The goal was to introduce the project and gather preliminary comments and questions from stakeholders.

Primary Project Team Messaging:

- This is an AMATS-funded project, led by Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) in partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA).
- Fireweed Lane is a shared DOT&PF/MOA facility; the MOA will ultimately own and maintain the corridor after this project is complete.
- Project purpose is to rehabilitate Fireweed Lane to improve safety and to bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards.
- Other issues to address in the corridor include:
 - Multiple utilities in the corridor and a desire to underground and/or upgrade some
 - Large number of driveways/access points and many signalized intersections
 - Limited right-of-way (ROW)
 - Drainage issues
 - Three schools and other school routes along the corridor
- The project must follow three laws/policies:
 - National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
 - Federal Uniform Relocation Act (ROW process)
 - MOA Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process
- The project team will start by looking at three families of cross-sections to determine whether they meet the project purpose and need. It is likely the final project design will include a combination of these families
 - 4-lane
 - 3-lane
 - 2-lane
- The fastest schedule would be final design complete in 2028, but it's more likely 2029-2030.
- The project team is gathering initial data and anticipates additional public outreach in Summer/Fall 2024.

Appendix B: Public Involvement Plan

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1.0 PROJECT TEAM

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- Kittelson and Associates
Andrew Ooms, PE, Non-motorized Users and Safety, (907) 433-8102, aooms@kittelson.com

2.3 Project History

Fireweed Lane is a 4-lane minor arterial between Spenard Road and the Seward Highway. This project was originally initiated by DOT&PF in the late 1990s under the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to address vehicle crashes and the lack of pedestrian, public transit, and bicycle facilities.

DOT&PF conducted traffic and safety studies, public outreach, typical section analysis, and preliminary engineering and recommended that Fireweed Lane be converted to a 3-lane section by using a road-diet technique. In the mid-2000s, the MOA took over the project and continued detailed engineering, surveying, public outreach, and design studies. Local businesses raised concerns about perceived impacts associated with reducing traffic by removing through lanes so the project was shelved.

Since that time, many successful road-diet projects have been constructed in Anchorage and have been well received by the community. Local businesses and the traveling public have seen firsthand that well-designed road-diet projects slow traffic and improve safety by incorporating dedicated turn lanes and narrower cross sections that reduce rear end and side swipe crashes. Because of this, AMATS, the DOT&PF and the MOA have re-initiated the project.

2.4 Purpose of the Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP)

This Public and Agency Involvement Plan (PAIP) details the proposed methods for communicating information with agencies, Tribes, organizations, and the public for the project.

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Provide opportunities for all stakeholders to be informed and participate in the project
- Serve as a guide for the project team to meet the relevant federal, DOT&PF, and local government requirements for public involvement

Public and agency involvement on transportation projects completed by the DOT&PF within the MOA is guided by a range of documents including:

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Executive Orders 11990, 11988, 12898, and 13166
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR Part 771)
- FHWA TA 6640.8a
- Alaska DOT&PF Environmental Procedures Manual (EPM)
- Alaska DOT&PF Preconstruction Manual
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (Chapter 21.03.190) (MOA)
- A Strategy for Developing Context Sensitive Transportation Projects (MOA, 2008)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The DOT&PF operates Federal Programs without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. Full Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy: dot.alaska.gov/tvi_statement.shtml. To file a complaint, go to: dot.alaska.gov/cvlrts/titlevi.shtml

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 should contact Rachel Steer, (907) 562-2000, or TDD number 711.

Individuals with limited English proficiency who may need translation services and/or special modifications to participate in this public meeting should contact Rachel Steer, (907) 562-2000, or TDD number 711.

DOT&PF Civil Rights Offices notices will be published with all public announcements and Title VI documents will be displayed at public meetings and documented in the meeting record. DOWL will provide documentation of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 immediately following each project-related public meeting, hearing, presentation, or community involvement activity.

DOWL will offer meaningful services to limited English proficiency persons, as described in the DOT&PF's Limited English Proficiency Plan, including proactively using available DOT&PF resources.

2.5 Communication/Public and Agency Involvement Plan Updates

This PAIP is a "living" document. Communication strategies and methods identified will be assessed for effectiveness and may be revised.

- Anchorage Police Department
 - Department of Economic and Community Development
 - Planning and Zoning Commission
 - Project Management and Engineering
 - Traffic Engineering
 - Maintenance and Operations
 - Urban Design Commission
 - Anchorage School District
- AMATS
 - All committees
- Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- State of Alaska Department of Public Safety – Division of Alaska State Troopers
- State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
- State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR)
- Anchorage School District
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service

3.3 Utility Companies

- Alaska Communications Systems (ACS)
- Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU)
- Chugach Electric Association (CEA)
- ENSTAR Natural Gas Company
- General Communications Incorporated (GCI)

Issue	Detail
Environmental justice (EJ)	The project area has significant EJ populations. Input from these populations will need to be sought and may need additional types of outreach (LEP services) to be effective.

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS

The following subsections identify the methods proposed to reach agencies and stakeholders with project information. The project team will discuss outreach efforts and select other tools for involving the public and agencies if needed.

5.1 Branding

To create a consistent look and feel for project documentation, the project team will create a project logo and templates with color specifications. All project communication materials will be developed using the project logo and color specifications. Color specifications will accommodate colorblind individuals.

5.2 Stakeholder Mailing Lists

The project team will create and maintain a mailing list for communications distributed through the post and email. The list will be maintained with all property owners, businesses, and residents within 500-feet of the project area and other key project stakeholders.

5.3 Project Website, Email, and Social Media

A project website has been established at www.fireweedlane.com using the State of Alaska Look and Feel Standards (<http://alaska.gov/LookAndFeel/>), which is ADA compliant. The website will be maintained with current information on the project status, as well as access to significant environmental and design documents, and project team contact information. All public meetings will be advertised on the project website a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The website will allow the submission of public comments and will include a mechanism for interested persons to request to be added to the project's email communication distribution list.

The project email address, fireweedlane@dowl.com, will be included on all communication materials. The email address will be linked to an internal distribution list that includes members from the DOT&PF, MOA, Lounsbury, and DOWL project team.

Upon request, DOWL will create and provide social media materials to DOT&PF and MOA for posting to their website and social media sites.

5.4 Project Postcards & Newsletters

Both the print and emailed versions of the postcard will contain graphics and text explaining the project and requesting public input. Additionally, email updates will be sent at relevant project milestones.

The project team may present additional updates to government, regulatory agency, resource agency, and planning organization leadership at key project milestones. These briefings will use a presentation format and provide opportunity for comments and questions.

Meeting materials and summaries will be prepared for these meetings. Documentation for project records will include attendance, meeting materials, presentation, and a summary of verbal and written comments and responses.

5.8 MOA Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Process

The project team will prepare an initial Concept Report for the MOA Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) describing the project area, history, and key stakeholder concerns. At 35 percent design, the project team will submit a Preliminary Engineering Report, or Design Study Report, to PZC for approval.

5.9 Agency and Stakeholder Site Walk/Bike Audit

The project team will invite agencies and stakeholders to walk the project corridor and take a short survey on transportation habits, perceptions of the corridor's safety and access, and provide an opportunity for input in certain design decisions.

Documentation for project records will include attendance, audit materials, and a summary of survey results and comments.

5.10 Individual and Small Group Meetings

The project team identified over 80 parcels along the project corridor. The team will likely request meetings with each property owner early in the design process to share project information specific to each property.

The project team will participate in meetings with small groups or individual stakeholders, as requested. Approval will be sought from DOT&PF prior to these meetings.

Documentation for project records will include attendance, meeting materials, presentation, and a summary of verbal and written comments and responses.

5.11 Media Communications

Media communications will be led by DOT&PF with support from the project team as needed. Support from the project team may include drafting press releases, talking points, or other materials needed for media briefings, telephone interviews, and communication with elected officials.

5.12 Public Involvement Report

At completion of the design phase, the project team will prepare a Public Involvement Report documenting the public outreach efforts, comments received, and responses to comments. All correspondence and supporting documentation will be included as an appendix to the report.

- Visualizations and illustrations will be used to convey project design.
- The project team will encourage the public to provide feedback on elements of the design that are affected by input (landscaping, lighting, etc.).
- Feedback opportunities will be designed in a way that stakeholders can communicate in their desired form.
- The project team will follow up on all inquiries and comments during project development.