

1 **CITY OF HOMER**
2 **HOMER, ALASKA**

3 City Manager/
4 Public Works Director

5 **RESOLUTION 22-091**

6
7 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA
8 PROVIDING COMMENTS TO THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
9 TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES' REQUEST FOR SCOPING
10 COMMENTS FOR THE STERLING HIGHWAY MP 169 TO 175
11 PAVEMENT PRESERVATION PROJECT.

12
13 WHEREAS, The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities ("AK DOT/PF")
14 Issued a Request for Scoping Comments for the Sterling Highway MP 169 to 175 Pavement
15 Restoration Project, dated October 20, 2022, with a deadline of November 30, 2022 for
16 submitting such comments; and

17
18 WHEREAS, All of the project lies within the City of Homer limits; and

19
20 WHEREAS, The AK DOT/PF's Request for Scoping Comments says: The proposed
21 project would resurface the Sterling Highway from MP 169 to MP 175. Additional Work may
22 include:

- 23
- 24 • Evaluating the structural section
 - 25 • Replacing or installing:
 - 26 ○ guardrails and guardrail end treatments
 - 27 ○ signs, roadside hardware, and striping
 - 28 ○ medians, curb ramps, sidewalks, multi-use pathways, and pedestrian facilities
(including American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements)
 - 29 • drainage improvements, including storm drains, ditches, and culverts
 - 30 • lighting improvement
 - 31 • vegetation clearing and grubbing
 - 32 • relocating or adjusting utilities; and
- 33

34 WHEREAS, The City has invested in a Master Transportation Plan, Non-motorized Trails
35 and Transportation Plan, Drainage Management Plan, Wayfinding Plan, ADA Transition Plans,
36 a Road Financial Plan, and Design Criteria Manuals, to guide the funding, planning, design,
37 construction and maintenance/operation of public works infrastructure, including roads,
38 sidewalks, trails, pathways, drainage ways, and storm water management systems, and
39 wayfinding signage; and
40

41 WHEREAS, The City has a strong vested interest in collaborating with the AK DOT/PF to
42 ensure the subject project supports, rather than detracts from, the City's efforts to develop a
43 safe, pedestrian-friendly community; and

44 WHEREAS, The City is willing and able to collaborate with the AK DOT/PF on project
45 development, as a co-sponsor, for purposes of applying for grants and other financial
46 assistance.

47
48 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Homer, Alaska hereby
49 provides comments included in Attachment A to the AK DOT/PF the Sterling Highway MP 169
50 to 175 Pavement Restoration Project.

51
52 PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council on this 28th day of November, 2022.

53
54 CITY OF HOMER

55 

56 _____
57 KEN CASTNER, MAYOR

58
59 ATTEST:

60 

61 _____
62 MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK

63
64 Fiscal Note: N/A



Overview: This segment of the Sterling Highway Corridor is the most important transportation link between the City of Homer and the outside world. The City is in the process of developing a new Master Transportation Plan and have commissioned the firm of Kinney Engineering to help us with that project. We have been conducting research, engineering studies and public outreach, from which we have received hundreds of suggestions, complaints and ideas. You'll see some of this work reflected in the comments below. We would like to share the Master Transportation Plan with the AK DOT/PF, include you in its development, and collaborate to resolve the multitude of issue with this complex and vital corridor.

- 1. Floodplains.** The area in the southern portion of the project between Heath Street and Ocean Drive, lies with Homer's Tsunami Inundation Zone and within a flood hazard area. Every time the tsunami warning signal is triggered, the City's Public Works Department evacuates its heavy equipment from its campus at 3575 Heath Street. This evacuation causes congestion at the Sterling Highway/Heath Street intersection as people rush north on the Sterling Highway, away from the Spit, and the Public Works Department lines up to cross the Sterling Highway to get to the higher ground up Heath Street.
- 2. Invasive Species/Material and Disposal Sites.** Gravel aggregates for the project should be sourced from certified invasive weed-free pits.
- 3. Navigable Waters/Water Quality.** If "*all waters subject to tidal ebb and flow are considered navigable waters...*", the waters of Beluga Slough are navigable waters. Water is conveyed in storm drain pipes or open ditches from north of the Sterling Highway, across the Highway and discharge into Beluga Slough, bringing suspended sediment and pollutants. This water needs to be treated to remove sediment and pollutants. The City of Homer is working on a green infrastructure storm water management project that will help address this problem and asks that the State become a partner.
- 4. State Refuges, National Wildlife Refuges, Critical Habitat Area, and Sanctuaries.** Beluga Slough has been designated as part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) because of its value to shorebirds and other migratory water birds. It is also an Audubon Society Important Bird Area. FYI – The Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is no long housed at the Alaska Islands and Oceans Visitor's Center.
- 5. Wetlands and other Waters of the U.S.** Contaminant-laden storm water flows across the Sterling Highway and discharges into the Beluga Slough wetlands. This water needs to be treated to remove sediment and pollutants. The City of Homer is working on a green infrastructure storm water management project that will help address this problem and asks that the State become a partner.
- 6. Storm water.** Storm water is collected from the north side of the Sterling Highway and carried under the Highway in State owned/maintained culverts. In most cases, the culverts discharge onto private property without benefit of drainage easements and cause adverse impacts: suspended sediment, ditch erosion, saturated soils and bluff erosion. The State needs to address the adverse downstream impacts of this drainage.

Of particular concern is Culvert P515, which is the source of documented concern on the part of impacted property owners and the City of Homer. Water discharged from Culvert P515 has been documented to directly trigger adverse impacts to downstream properties in the Baycrest Subdivision. We have been reaching out to the AK DOT/PF regarding this drainage issue for multiple years. The City has developed a concept for a green infrastructure storm water management project that would convey the water to a lower elevation, thereby mitigating bluff erosion and providing the opportunity for a micro-hydro unit. We would like to partner with the state on this project.

7. Non-motorized transportation.

- a. **City's Master Transportation Plan and Non-motorized Trails & Transportation Plan** – The City is in the process of developing a new Master Transportation Plan, which will include an element for non-motorized transportation. As part of this effort, the City has been conducting public outreach. We have received hundreds of comments from local citizenry calling for more connectivity between non-motorized routes. We would like to work with the AK DOT/PF to see how we can collaborate on creating greater connectivity between sidewalks on state routes and the City's network of sidewalks, trails and paths.
- b. **Sterling Highway sidewalk** – The existing sidewalk on the north side of the Sterling Highway should be extended to and around Rogers Loop to the Diamond Creek Recreation Site. This would connect the sidewalk to the extensive existing trail system bounded by the Sterling Highway on the south and Diamond Ridge Road on the north of Rogers Loop. Hundreds of hikers and cross-country skiers use these trails year around.
- c. **Beluga Slough Bike Path** – This path is surfaced with asphalt, which has developed longitudinal cracks as well as raveling. This deteriorated condition poses a danger to bicyclists and pedestrians with disabilities, which was pointed out to us by a local man who is 90% blind, but an avid walker.
- d. **Ocean Drive Bike Lanes** – The City has received numerous requests from the public for a bike lane on both sides of Ocean Drive. During the last paving project, DOT moved the centerline of Ocean Drive so that instead of a bike lane on one side of the road, there was a wide shoulder on both sides. This has helped quite a bit, but seems insufficient now for the number of cars on Ocean Drive during the summer months, along with pedestrians and cyclists on this busy shoulder. Further, Ocean Drive is basically one big driveway serving the adjacent businesses, because there are few defined driveways. What is needed is a pathway on Ocean Drive that connects to the pathway on Lake Street and the Homer Spit Path.

8. Traffic Control.

- a. **Intersection controls** – It is time to revisit the warrants for more active traffic control measures at some of the busier intersections:
 1. **Intersection with Pioneer Avenue:** This is a difficult crossing to due traffic levels, speed, and poor sight lines. The existing crosswalk could use better delineation and some flashing lights. Further, the City held a focus group with truck drivers,

including owner-operator gravel truckers and long distance freight haulers. The truckers identified the intersection of the Sterling Highway and Pioneer Ave as he “worst in town”, primarily due to poor sight distance and congestion.

2. **Intersection with Heath Street.** Heath Street needs a crosswalk and flashing lights. The City is in the process of designing a pavement restoration project for Heath Street. We would like to collaborate with the state regarding the intersection configuration.
3. **Intersection with Poopdeck Street.** There needs to be enhanced safety measures installed for a crossing, such as a crosswalk and flashing light. This route provides an important connection between the paths/trails at Islands & Oceans Visitors’ Center and the destinations north of the Sterling Highway, including the Library, Safeway grocery store, and, via an existing path known as the Poopdeck Trail, Pioneer Avenue. This connection is part of the “Homer All-Access Pedestrian Path” HAAPP Project, which is listed on the City’s Capital Improvement Plan and Non-Motorized Trails and Transportation Plan.
4. **Intersection with Kachemak Drive.** The City has received dozens of complaints, from the public outreach that is part of the Master Transportation Plan process, about the congestion and safety hazards at the intersection of the Sterling Highway and Kachemak Drive.

In addition, the City held a focus group with truckers as part of the public outreach related to the City’s Master Transportation Plan. The truckers reported the intersection with Kachemak Drive is dangerous because of horizontal and vertical challenges.

- b. **Ocean Drive Turn Lane** – Turning left on Ocean Drive during the summer is challenging and dangerous because of the traffic volumes. This is exacerbated by the fact that ingress and egress to the private properties adjacent to Ocean Drive are uncontrolled; Ocean Drive is basically one big driveway onto private parking lots. It is time to consider a left hand turn lane to improve traffic safety.
 - c. **Cross-walks** – The truckers opined that it would help them see, and come to a stop in a timely manner at, crosswalks if they were marked with flashing lights.
 - d. **Sterling Highway and Homer Middle School** – This parking lot and school entrance will be upgraded by the Kenai Peninsula Borough. On the DOT side, please ensure the placement of the school zone flashing lights is correct. The flashing lights appear to encompass the school entrance from original construction, but not modifications made in the late 1970’s. The school zone does not extent the length of the school property or include the exit of the parking lot.
 - e. **Ocean Drive at Lampert Lane** – This feels like a dangerous crosswalk due to high rates of speed and heavy traffic both directions. It’s a difficult spot of cyclists to cross so they can take the causeway across Lake Street to the northeast. Flashing signal is desired.
9. **Wayfinding.** The City of Homer adopted a Wayfinding plan in 2022. This plan includes several changes to DOT signage to better assist the traveling public in finding their way around the community. The City requests DOT assistance in installing vehicle signage in accordance with the attached plan.