

# Spenard Road

## *Fireweed Lane to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue • Safety Improvement Project*

January 2001

An Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Project  
Project Number: 53986/HRO-0001(172)



**If you live, work, or operate a business on or near Spenard Road, We invite you to participate in the Spenard Road Safety Improvement project.**

Spenard Road between Hillcrest Drive and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue experienced 392 traffic collisions between 1996 and 1998 and has been identified as a highway safety project. The purpose of the project is to evaluate the accident patterns, traffic volumes, and recommend safety improvements to the roadway. The project will also review pedestrian/bicycle and transit facilities and identify opportunities to enhance street amenities such as landscaping, benches, or decorative light fixtures.

### *Who is doing the project?*

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and their consultant, Lounsbury and Associates. In addition, the project team recruited a Project Advisory Committee consisting of business and property owners, residents and Spenard Community Council members. The Project Advisory Group will assist us in review of the project, recommendations, and give us feedback on ways to solve the safety problems.

### *Where is the project now?*

Lounsbury completed the Traffic and Safety Analysis and presents the findings and recommendations to the public for information in this newsletter and seeks your input and comment. The next step will be a preliminary engineering report to advance the recommendations and develop a preferred alternative to take into the design phase.

### *What does the project team need from the public?*

The Project Team needs your ideas, thoughts and most importantly, your vision for your community. Review this newsletter, the recommendations of the project team and give us some feedback.

## Traffic and Safety Analysis Complete

Lounsbury & Associates' traffic and safety analysis consisted of a collision analysis, capacity analysis and traffic projections to the year 2016.

A total of 392 collisions were reported during the 3-year period from 1996 to 1998. Lounsbury looked at the collision data—location, kind, number, contributing factor, pavement conditions, etc. They found most collisions occur at intersections and the rest happen mid-block. Northern Lights and Benson intersections have the highest concentration; and together account for nearly a third of all the collisions.

The leading causes of collisions, according to the police statistics, include failure to yield, driving

at unsafe speeds, driver inattention, improper turning, driving under the influence of alcohol, improper passing, and disregard for traffic control. Analysis of locations where there were two or more collisions occurred showed several contributing factors including proximity of buildings, signs and parked cars to the roadway and the narrow right-of-way reduced sight distance.

### **Just the facts. . . . .**

**Roadway type:** 4-lane, undivided two-way minor arterial  
**Right-of-way width:** varies from 60 feet to 120 feet  
**Owner:** Municipality of Anchorage  
**Speed Limit:** 35 miles per hour  
**Land Use:** Commercial, General Business District and Multi-Family Residential

The report identifies several safety improvement measures to be considered further in the Preliminary Engineering Report. These include:

- Provide left turn lanes or reduce roadway from 4-lanes to 3-lanes with a continuous left turn lane
- Realign intersections to eliminate offset
- Evaluate opportunities for improving sight distance at driveways and intersections.
- Reconfigure Northern Lights Boulevard and Benson Boulevard intersections at Spenard Road

Traffic along this part of Spenard Road has decreased in some areas and increased in other areas. The team applied a 0.5% or 1.0% growth rate to project traffic in the 2016 design year. The result is modest growth that will not significantly affect the way the roadway works or the level of

congestion. Some improvement could be made at the Northern Lights and Benson Blvd intersections with Spenard Road. The 4-lane to 3-lane conversion is expected to improve safety without compromising the capacity of the roadway. See Frequently Asked Questions for more detail.

Pedestrian conditions vary along the roadway. From 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Benson the existing sidewalk is an extension of the asphalt parking lot in front of businesses, however, there is a 4-foot sidewalk from Benson Blvd north to Fireweed Lane. Some handicapped accessible ramps exist at some intersections. No shoulder exists to provide a buffer between the travel lane and the sidewalk. Bus stops on Spenard serve important People Mover routes. Several have been improved with MOA's Public Transportation bus stop improvement program. Many could use additional improvement.

## **NEXT STEPS**

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Lounsbury has begun the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for the project by developing alternatives cross sections that improve the safety of the roadway. They need some public input to identify ways to enhance the aesthetics of the roadway and improve the environment for the pedestrian and bicyclist.

**What shall we do for pedestrians? Please review the street cross sections on the next page and let us know which is best for you.** The project team provided the various alternatives in an attempt to balance the needs of the pedestrian, motorist and bicyclist; and requirements of winter snow removal, sidewalk maintenance and business parking.

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***Cut the page on the dashed line and send your written comments to>***

Spenard Road Safety Project, Lounsbury & Associates, 723 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501

Which of the 5 alternative typical sections would work best for Spenard Road between 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Fireweed Lane?

Existing -  Alternative 1 -  Alternative 2 -  Alternative 3 -  Alternative 4 -  Alternative 5

Why?

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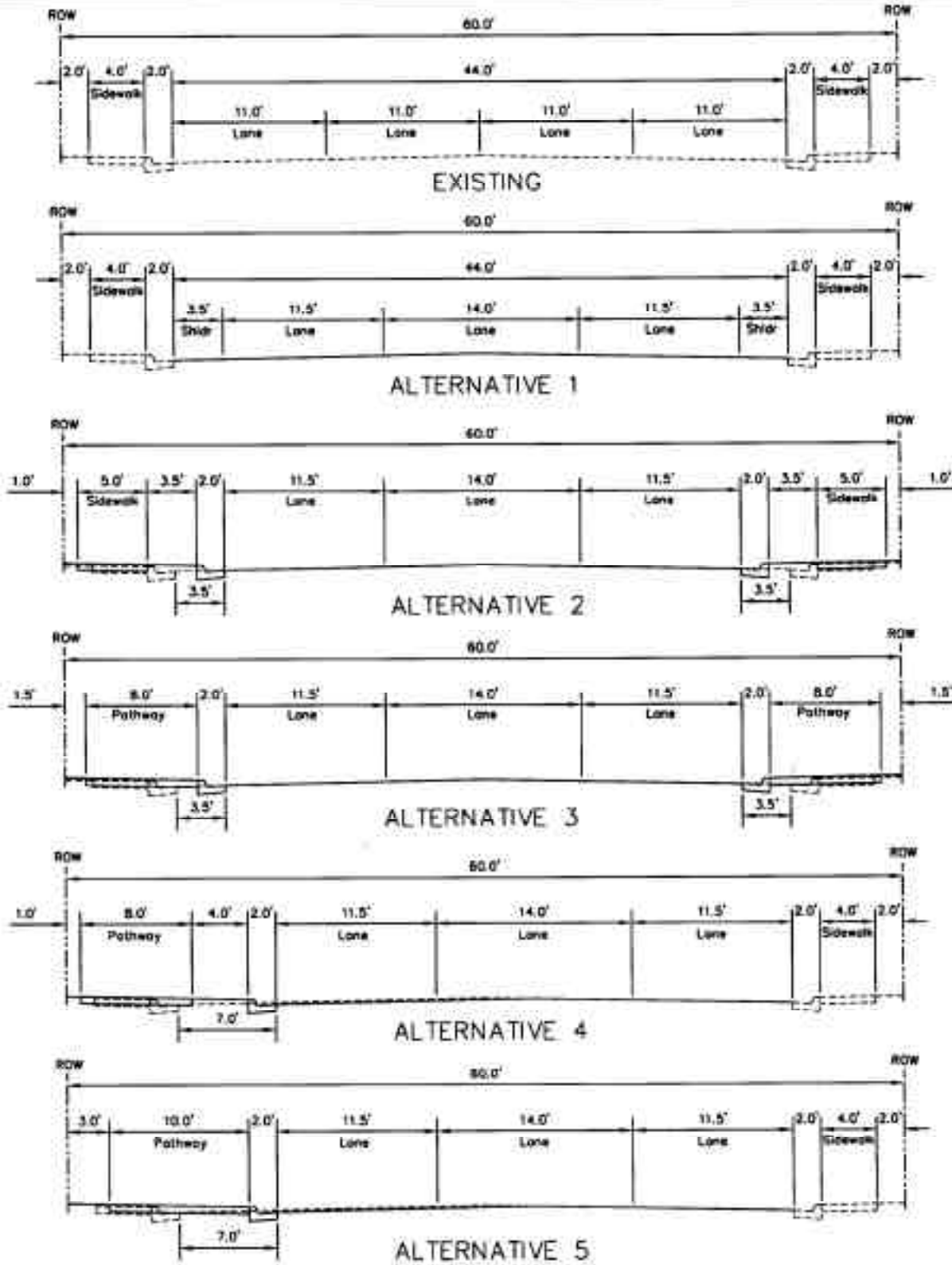
How would you improve this alternative?

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Lounsbury & Associates  
Spenard Road Safety Project  
723 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501

BULK RATE  
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ANCHORAGE, AK  
PERMIT NO. 1058

## Mark your Calendars!

### PUBLIC MEETING & PROJECT OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at  
North Star Elementary  
School

Doors open at 6:30 p.m.,  
a presentation will be  
given at 7:00 p.m.

### ***WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU—IDEAS, ISSUES, CONCERNS. GIVE US A CALL!***

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## Frequently Asked Questions

***How many cars travel Spenard daily?*** The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on Spenard varies by segment ranging from 16,850 AADT between Minnesota Drive and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to as low as 5,280 AADT between Fireweed Lane and Hillcrest Drive.

***What is the construction budget for the project?*** \$2.5 million. Approximately \$250,000 of the budget is allocated for amenities along the roadway to be constructed with this project. Amenities can include benches at bus stops, fencing, landscaping, etc.

***How is a three-lane roadway safer than a four-lane roadway?*** Four lane roadways carry through traffic on all four lanes. These lanes are also used for all turning movements as motorists access the

businesses along the street. To continue driving with minimal delay, motorists maneuver around the turning car often causing accidents. The three-lane roadway provides left turning vehicles with dedicated zone to make their turns. The result is a safer roadway.

***How do you keep the same number of cars traveling Spenard with 3-lanes as you had with 4-lanes?*** We do not expect a reduction in the capacity of the street. In fact, of the nine 4-lane to 3-lane conversions studied in other cities, all showed an increase in the Annual Average Daily Traffic volumes. Some recent 3-lane roadways in Anchorage are currently carrying more traffic than Spenard Road. For example, Spenard Road at Aviation Drive has an AADT of 17,950 and Jewel Lake at Strawberry Road has an AADT of 13,800.

### **HELP WANTED:**

**At the request of the Project Advisory Committee we publish the following contact name and number. Any residents interested in advocating for a more aesthetic Spenard Road, please contact Marilyn Rudolph at 272-5701 or via email at TopOfTheMornin@aol.com**