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**IMPORTANT ROAD PROJECT
INFORMATION INSIDE---** for residents,
business and property owners!

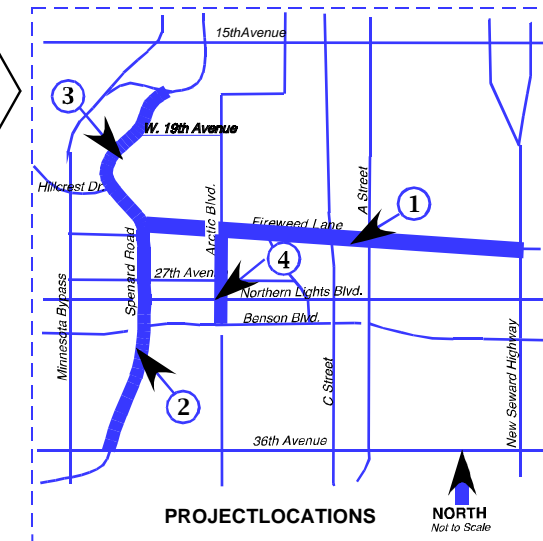
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Highway Safety Improvement Program News

AUGUST, 2002 UPDATE

Projects
Included



1. Fireweed Lane:

Seward Highway to Spenard Road
Project No. HES-0001(50) / 58488

2. Spenard Road: Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota

Drive Channelization & Pedestrian Improvements
Project No. HRO-0001(172) / 53986

3. Spenard Road: Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota On-Ramp

Project No. FRAF-STP-0001(242) / 55138

4. Arctic Boulevard: Fireweed Lane to Benson Boulevard

Project No. HHE-001(283) / 55951

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTINUED

How did you determine how to improve these roadways? We completed an analysis of the collision data—location, type, number of contributing factors, pavement conditions, etc. We gathered information on the public transportation, property ownership, utilities, and existing and projected future traffic volumes. We researched new strategies and developed alternatives that would work for these roadways. The “road diet” -- conversion of the four-lane, two-way roadway to a two-lane roadway with a center two-way-left-turn lane became a logical solution to make the road safer while still carrying projected future traffic volumes.

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 and residences along the street. To continue driving with minimal delay, motorists maneuver around the turning car -- often causing collisions. The three-lane roadway provides left-turning vehicles with dedicated zones to make their turns. The result is a safer roadway as noted in the statistics shown on page 3 of this newsletter.

How do you keep the same number of cars traveling these roadways 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 (AADT) volumes. Some recent 3-lane roadways in Anchorage are currently carrying more traffic than Fireweed Lane or Spenard Road.

Where can I learn more about these 4-lane to 3-lane conversions? Visit the [Walkable Cities](http://www.walkable.com) web site and look at the “Road Diets” article. The web site address is:
<http://www.walkable.org/download/rdiets.pdf>

Who do I contact for more information?

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HIGHWAY SAFETY PROJECTS MOVE TO DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is ready to move ahead with four Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) projects --1 through 4 on the project location map above. Two of these projects have completed design study reports and will move into detailed design. The third, Spenard Road, Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota on-ramp and fourth, Arctic Boulevard, Fireweed Lane to Benson Blvd, will move to the design study and design phase with the other two. This newsletter will explain the recommendations of the work to date, the schedule for completion of the projects through construction, and when the public will have an opportunity to provide input during the next steps in the process.

The four projects will be combined in the design and construction phases. DOT&PF Project Manager, Judy Dougherty notes this provides design and construction efficiency, economy and better coordination of the projects. All four will deal with similar issues. All four will undergo a “road diet” (see more information in the Road Diets section of this newsletter). All four will require close coordination with property and business owners.

As with all its projects, the DOT&PF expects to work closely with the public to gain input as the project design is underway. Keep your eye out for newsletters and public meeting opportunities in the future.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Highway Safety Improvement Project? Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) projects are undertaken by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) when traffic statistics show safety problems exist.

Traffic safety statistics highlighted these road segments, advancing them to the HSIP for further analysis, design and construction of measures to improve the roadway's safety. Some of the statistics for these projects are provided below:

--Fireweed Lane a 35-mph two-way 4-lane minor arterial, experienced 326 traffic collisions during the 1995 to 1997 period.

--Spenard Road a 35-mph two-way 4-lane minor arterial, experienced 434 traffic collisions during the 1996 to 1998 period.

--Arctic Boulevard is a two-way 4-lane facility, which ranked #1 on the FY2001 *Segment Accident Rate Listing* with 33 collisions from Fireweed Lane to Northern Lights and 89 collisions at the Arctic/Benson intersection.

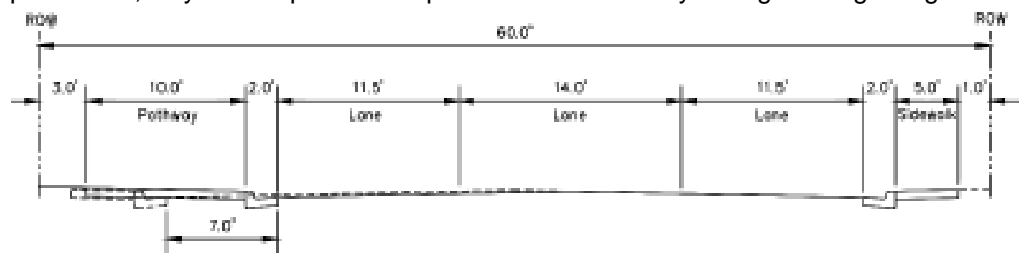
For more information on how these statistics are analyzed and countermeasures designed, see Frequently Asked Questions, page 4.

1 Fireweed Lane: Seward Highway to Spenard Road
Project No. HES-0001(50) / 58488

The design study/preliminary engineering portion of this project began in 1999 with Lounsbury & Associates, DOT&PF's consultant, looking at many options to make this stretch of Fireweed Lane safer for motorists and pedestrians alike. The project was identified as a candidate for a "road diet" -- a method of reducing vehicle conflicts proven successful in many other cities (see Road Diets on page 4). Lounsbury developed several pictures (alternatives) of what the road could look like that included lane widths, sidewalks, pathways, etc., trying hard to work within the existing rights-of-way.

They took their recommendations before the North Star, Rogers Park and Spenard community councils and area businesses. The preferred cross section (shown below) was advanced for DOT&PF consideration and written into final documents as the "preferred" alternative. After the final documents were completed, the public raised some additional concerns about this cross section for the street. As a result, the cross section will be revisited at the beginning of design to take another look at how the street accommodates bicyclists, pedestrians and snow removal.

The recommended street cross section would look like this except for the area between A & C Streets and from Fairbanks Street to the New Seward Highway which will receive channelization improvements. Note that the pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation features may change during design.



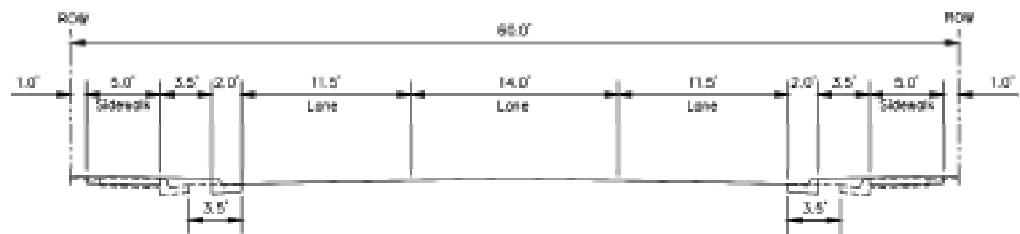
Proposed Roadway Features:
One lane each direction.
Center two-way-left-turn lane
10-Foot multi-use pathway and
5-Foot sidewalk
Curb moves 7-feet on one side
No roadway shoulders

2 Spenard Road: Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota Drive Channelization & Pedestrian Improvements
Project No. HRO-0001(172) / 53986

The design study portion of this project began in 2000. Lounsbury & Associates, DOT&PF's consultant, approached the project in the same fashion as the Fireweed Lane project noted above. Again, the crash statistics for the roadway lead the DOT&PF to begin this project to determine if roadway design changes could make the road safer. There were many similarities between the Fireweed Lane and Spenard projects—character of the street, right-of-way width, high public transportation usage, community interest in enhancing the pedestrian environment. The analysis identified the project as another candidate for a "road diet." (see Frequently Asked Questions on page 4). Lounsbury developed several pictures (alternatives) of what the road could look like that included lane widths, sidewalks, pathways, etc., trying hard to work within the existing rights-of-way. They worked with their landscape architect to develop a menu of landscaping elements with costs to help the community visualize possible improvements.

They took their recommendations before a Project Advisory Group established to provide input, the North Star and Spenard community councils and area businesses through meetings and newsletters. The preferred cross section (shown below) was advanced for DOT&PF consideration and written into final documents as the "preferred" alternative. The public expressed a desire for "spot" landscaping improvements near the bus stops which will be carried forward in the design phase.

The recommended street cross section would look like this except for the area between Northern Lights and Benson Blvd which will receive channelization improvements. Improvements are also planned for the Spenard Road/36th Avenue intersection including a dedicated eastbound right turn lane and transition to the 3-lane section. Note that the community expressed a strong desire to have the sidewalks separated from the street to provide for snow storage in the winter months.



Proposed Roadway Features:
One lane each direction.
Center two-way-left-turn lane
5-Foot sidewalks on the roadway
3.5-Foot separation from curb
No roadway shoulders

3 Spenard Road: Hillcrest Drive to Minnesota On-Ramp
Project No. FRAF-STP-0001(242)/ 55138

This project will include a rehabilitation of the roadway between Hillcrest Drive all the way to the Minnesota on ramp and add pedestrian/bicyclist facilities. This section of Spenard Road has all the width of the two-way, two-lane road that was in place before Minnesota Drive was constructed. The greater width contributes to some wrong-way usage that will be corrected by the project. The project will address improving channelization for traffic turning right on 19th Avenue (at the bottom of the hill) and add pedestrian/bicyclist facilities to link to the Chester Creek trail system.

4 Arctic Boulevard: Fireweed Lane to Benson Boulevard
Project No. HHE-001(283)/ 55951

DOT&PF flagged this roadway segment because of the high number of collisions in this segment, particularly right angle collisions at the 27th Avenue (15 in 3 years) and 26th Avenue (10 in 3 years) intersections. They conducted a preliminary evaluation which showed that there are problems with the intersection of Arctic Boulevard and Northern Lights Boulevard -- 89 collisions in the 3-year analysis period -- attributed in their report to southbound through and turning traffic. The same evaluation noted a problem with sight distance at 27th Avenue. Sight distance is a technical term describing a driver's ability to see on-coming traffic when approaching from the side street, driveway, etc. The report also identified some mitigating alternatives that will be further evaluated in the design study/preliminary engineering for the project as noted below.

DOT&PF recommends this segment 1) be evaluated for conversion to a 3-lane section incorporating a two-way-left-turn lane; 2) consider converting the segment of Arctic Boulevard between Northern Lights and Benson Boulevard from the present 4-lane two-way configuration into a cross section which includes one through lane in each direction and side by side northbound and southbound left turn lanes; 3) installation of a left turn lane at Fireweed Lane; and 4) match the existing 4-lane segment south of Benson Boulevard.

On-Going Public Involvement

Public involvement and participation is very important to the success of these projects. Information gleaned from the public processes for both the Spenard Road and Fireweed Lane preliminary designs will be shared with the design team and will be valid for the other projects as well. Additional public input will be sought during the design. One element that will be particularly important is the communication between the project team and the property and business owners. The DOT&PF does not take project impacts to businesses lightly and will work hard to lessen them.

On a very positive note, our research into 4-lane to 3-lane conversions revealed that while some of these "road diets" were initially opposed by businesses, once complete, the benefits to business were very significant and businesses are requesting "road diets" because their customers like them and business has picked up.

If you have any questions today about any of these projects, feel free to contact the Project Manager using the contact information contained on page 4 of this newsletter.

- Public Input Opportunities to Watch For:**
- *Community Council Meetings (Spenard meets 1st Wednesday; North Star meets 4th Wednesday)
 - *Public Workshops/Open Houses
 - *Newsletters and Flyers to resident, property owner and business addresses
 - *Display advertising in the Anchorage Daily News and Pulse publications.
 - *Business/Property Owner meetings.

Schedule for Design & Construction

Project	Design	Construction*
Fireweed Lane	2003	2006
Spenard Road	2003	2006
Arctic Boulevard	2003	2006