

Correspondence



RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC)
A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations



1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

February 17, 2023

Brian Elliott, Regional Environmental Manager
Alaska DOT Central Region

Re: [CFHWY00886](#) **Notice of Intent to Begin Engineering and Environmental Studies**
Old Seward Highway and Huffman Road, Rabbit Cr Rd to O'Malley to Birch, Pavement
Preservation

Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) is glad to hear that pavement repair will be evaluated for the Old Seward Highway near the crossing of Rabbit Creek. The Notice of Intent indicates work within the floodplain of Rabbit Creek. After e-mail exchanges with you and Board Member Nancy Pease, the Council is still unclear about the scope of work for this pavement repair project. Therefore, RCCC is submitting a range of comments on this section of Old Seward Highway, with the hope that some of these repairs can be accomplished as part of project CFHWY00886.

We appreciate your allowance for these comments to be added to the record for the engineering and environmental studies, even though the Council could not meet the posted deadline.

At our February 9 meeting, RCCC discussed safety concerns. The Council voted to send the following specific concerns, with 20 yeas, 0 nays and 1 abstention:

Background

The segment of Old Seward Highway from the Seward Highway overpass to the intersection with Rabbit Creek Road is hazardous for all travel modes. In addition, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) says that the culverts for the Old Seward Highway for Rabbit Creek are inadequate to facilitate fish and wildlife passage.

It may be that some of RCCC's safety and environmental concerns will be addressed in the forthcoming Rabbit Creek Road Rehabilitation project, scheduled to begin design in 2025, from the Seward Highway to Golden View Drive.

Requested repairs and upgrades to the Old Seward Highway at the crossing of Rabbit Creek:

- Install culverts that will facilitate passage of fish, as well as small mammals and bears to keep them along the creek. Rabbit Creek has pink and coho salmon, and Dolly Varden. ADF&G says that the current culverts, which are intended to create pools for upstream migration of fish, are inadequate. The culverts should accommodate bears to help keep them close to their natural food sources in the creek, rather than on the road or detouring through neighborhoods.
- Create a safer shoulder or raised pathway on the sides of Old Seward Highway from the overpass to the intersection with Rabbit Creek Road. This is a curving section of road, with double lanes in the eastbound direction. Vehicles exceed 50 mph and there are passing and turning movements in this stretch. There is an established trail from the south/east side of Old Seward Highway to the Potter Marsh ADF&G visitor site: this trail connection has no parking, so trail users must risk using the road shoulder, which is unsafe. Striping, speed postings, and signage to share the roadway and indicate a trail junction would help to alert drivers of non-motorized users.
- Pedestrian crosswalks and design features to reduce speeds at Old Seward Highway-Rabbit Creek Road intersection. There are several potential or existing trailheads at this intersection. There is Municipal parkland on the north side of Rabbit Creek Road, along both sides of the creek. There is no safe parking, so access is on foot. There is a potential future parking site on Bureau of Land Management at the southeast corner of this intersection, where RCCC is trying to create a neighborhood gateway.
- Short-term painting of a turn pocket for southbound vehicles from westbound Rabbit Creek Road. Westbound vehicles pass illegally and at high speeds on the shoulder of the road rather than wait for south-turning vehicles at the Old Seward Highway intersection. There have been serious vehicle crashes here. This safety improvement is urgent and should not wait for the Rabbit Creek Road Rehabilitation project, which isn't scheduled for construction for at least four years.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,


Ann Rappoport, Co-Chair


John Riley, Co-chair

Cc: Christine Huber, Project Manager
Aaron Jongenelen, AMATS