



January 19, 2024

Ms. Cathy Gleason
Turnagain Community Council
1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Ms. Gleason,

Thank you for reaching out to express the concerns of the Turnagain Community Council regarding the median barrier and fence installed as part of the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) project on Minnesota Drive. We appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information about the project as well as let you know about upcoming opportunities to engage with the Department on future non-motorized improvements in this area.

Background

The segment of Minnesota Drive near Benson and Northern Lights Boulevards is a top-ranked non-motorized crash location in Central Region. The HSIP project was initiated to address night-time pedestrian and bicycle crashes through the improvement of roadway lighting as a safety countermeasure. The Department's crash data review identified additional risk factors associated with midblock crossings outside of designated crossing locations. The decision to install the median barrier and fence was based on careful consideration of alternative light pole locations that met desirable lighting design values. Existing overhead power lines and right of way limitations were key constraints in the design. Given these constraints and a limited project budget, median lighting was selected as the best means to achieve the project's goal. The concrete low median barrier was introduced to prevent pole strikes by vehicles. Fencing was added on the median barrier as a safety countermeasure to address the reported crashes associated with midblock crossings on a high-volume arterial.

The addition of lighting fixtures in the median aimed to enhance visibility and safety. The fence on top of the barrier serves to discourage pedestrians from using the barrier as a refuge for mid-block crossings, promoting safer behavior by encouraging crossings at designated intersections.

Alternative suggestions, such as road widening, building a bridge or tunnel, were considered but deemed beyond the scope of the current project. The chosen median barrier design aligns

with safety recommendations, as supported by a study from the Maryland DOT indicating the effectiveness of median treatments in reducing crash rates and fatalities.

We want to assure you that Maintenance & Operations was consulted in the design process, and the barrier is not expected to hinder snow removal, clearing, or placement on Minnesota Drive, as medians are not traditionally used for snow storage.

Pedestrian crossing solutions

We understand the community's desire for additional crosswalks, and we want to highlight that a comprehensive solution involving crosswalks and other improvements was considered in a 2016 Planning Study. However, due to the complexity and extensive nature of the required work, it was deemed impractical to incorporate into the ongoing project.

The possibility of including the desired pedestrian crossings will be evaluated in the upcoming AMATS Minnesota Drive Sidewalk Repairs project. The Council can expect to be involved in the discussion on potential solutions. The project is currently working towards getting a consultant under contract to advance the analysis and future design.

We are also excited to begin work on the AMATS: Minnesota Drive and I/L Street Corridor Plan [International Airport Road to 3rd Ave]. We see this as an opportunity for our community to reimagine this important corridor and we look forward to heavy community engagement in this. This project's scope, as detailed in the AMATS Transportation Improvement Program is as follows:

Project would provide a comprehensive analysis of the Minnesota Drive and I/L Street corridor's current conditions, anticipated growth patterns and their impacts, likely outcomes and reasonable mitigation alternatives. It would include recommended improvements based on identified needs and community input, and a timeline for implementation. Project would include modeling analysis and engineering work as needed. The project should be evaluated for rehabilitation as a Complete Street, adhering to the AMATS Complete Streets policy.

If there are further questions or if additional information is needed, please feel free to let me know. We appreciate your engagement and the opportunity to address community concerns.

Sincerely,



Justin Shelby
Administrative Operations Manager

cc: Sean Holland, Central Region Director
Brad Coy, Traffic Engineering Director
Aaron Jongenelen, AMATS Coordinator