



GLENN HIGHWAY & HILAND ROAD INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS STAKEHOLDER MEETING BIKE ANCHORAGE

February 05, 2025, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Attendees

Galen Jones, P.E., Project Manager, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Kelly Kilpatrick, P.E., Project Manager, DOWL

Sam Tyler, P.E., Project Engineer, DOWL

Alexa Dobson, Executive Director, Bike Anchorage

Meeting Summary

Members of the project team held a stakeholder meeting with Alexa Dobson, Executive Director of Bike Anchorage, on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm.

The meeting began with introductions and review of the meeting purpose by Galen Jones, DOT&PF Project Manager. Galen reviewed previous meetings, reintroduced the three alternatives for the project, and discussed soliciting feedback from Bike Anchorage.

Kelly Kilpatrick, DOWL Project Manager, began by sharing the slides presented at the recent project open house. Kelly reiterated the purposes and objectives of the project. She then described project history of the area, including the requirement to preserve and retain the existing bridge. Galen discussed improvements that may be preferred in other interchange projects to increase capacity and speed, but added this project has a focus to relieve congestion. He acknowledged that speeds will still be slower in this area than at other interchanges, but the intention is to improve safety and operations.

Kelly reviewed the existing non-motorized and transit routes in the area, including bike paths, crosswalks, sidewalks, and the public transit route, which are a significant point of consideration for the project team. Galen described the often-circuitous route required to traverse the area via non-motorized transportation. Kelly included most motorized traffic movements in the project area are rated as F Level of Service (LOS) because of significant



delays. Galen described the difficulties caused by drivers ignoring right-of-way patterns and providing “courtesy gaps” to allow other drivers into the lane, which causes confusion and an increased safety risk, especially at peak traffic times. Kelly discussed the alternative constraints on this project, including the need to retain the bridge for the remainder of its design life, enhance non-motorized and transit facilities, and improve morning peak hour operations.

The double left on-ramp widening alternative was the first discussed. This alternative involves creating a double left turn-lane from westbound Eagle River Loop Road towards southbound Glenn Highway on-ramp. Positives include low impacts to right-of-way (ROW) and utilities and low cost. Negatives include lack of improvement for operational deficiencies elsewhere in the project area and difficulty for truck operations. Sam Tyler, DOWL Project Engineer, added non-motorized facilities would not change from current conditions with this alternative.

Next, the dual loop on-ramp and pedestrian tunnel alternative was presented. This design involves building a loop on-ramp from westbound Eagle River Loop Road onto southbound Glenn Highway and a separate looped pedestrian tunnel. Positives of this alternative include no conflicts with traffic heading toward Anchorage and the separate pedestrian tunnel. However, this alternative does not improve operations at other intersections in the project area, would require major utility relocation and ROW acquisition, and would have a large budget.

Galen noted this interchange was originally intended for a small flow of traffic and did not account for the increased traffic volumes at this interchange and the connections it would provide, hence the increased need for this project.

The diverging diamond interchange (DDI) with roundabouts, or divergabout, alternative was the final alternative presented. Like the interchange at Glenn Highway and Muldoon Road, this alternative would improve operations and performance and have minimal high-cost utility impacts. Turn movements within this alternative were presented as four routes for clarity. Galen described each route and its impacts on non-motorized users. The divergabout provides refuges between directions of traffic, so non-motorized users must cross only one direction of traffic at a time. He added an additional option for non-motorized crossing at the northeast roundabout may be to continue the non-motorized path north of the roundabout to reduce the amount of time a non-motorized user would be between lanes of traffic. This would include signage for drivers to yield to pedestrians. Kelly added it is often safer to have non-motorized crossings at points in the road where vehicles are still at slower speeds rather than at a point where vehicles would be accelerating to merge onto the Highway. Galen agreed the alternative as currently designed would be safer. Sam also introduced the option to carry non-motorized traffic through the middle of the western roundabout, though this could leave pedestrians feeling more vulnerable crossing into a roundabout and was not considered a best option in this case. Galen added this alternative also takes advantage of the existing space and demand by providing a double-lane pattern from Eagle River Loop Road westbound toward the southbound Glenn Highway. Animations were shared showing the traffic patterns along the divergabout alternative for added clarity. Galen added the southeast-most right turn lane onto Eagle River Loop Road would be designed to slow vehicles coming from the northbound Glenn Highway to improve safety for non-motorized users in that area.



Galen concluded the meeting by reviewing next steps, to include publishing a preferred alternative selection memo following meetings with other key stakeholders.

Comments and Questions Summary

Following is a summary of Alexa's comments and questions made during the meeting:

- She understands widening roads is often not the best option for improvement, and she appreciates the focus on safety over speed and efficiency.
- She understood the impetus of this project to be the congestion at Hiland Road in one lane rather than both lane options.
 - o Galen responded most drivers are currently using only one of the two westbound lanes along the bridge. The area technically has enough capacity for the present demand, but the current design of the road causes frustration and confusion for drivers. This project aims to reallocate the existing space for better capacity utilization than at present.
- She noted on the double left alternative that travelers at non-motorized crossings will need to rely on drivers indicating left turns or straight through driving to determine safe crossing times.
 - o Galen noted eastbound straight-through drivers would still have a stop sign at non-motorized crossings, but this alternative creates an additional lane that drivers will need to cross, increasing the eastbound traffic wait times at this stop sign. He also noted driver patience might decrease while waiting for pedestrians to cross at this double lane point, potentially reducing their willingness wait for non-motorized users to cross, increasing non-motorized users wait times at this approach.
- Alexa asked if there are different peak usage times at the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Landfill from the morning peak traffic.
 - o Galen responded residential usage of the landfill would likely be different from morning interchange traffic, but commercial use of the landfill might overlap the morning traffic peak.
- She commented the dual loop ramp makes sense, but the expensive potential unknowns and utility issues are significant.
- She commented the Glenn Highway-Muldoon Road DDI and other traffic interchanges like on Dowling Road have taken years for drivers to become used to and adapt to new traffic patterns.
- She noted the divergabout alternative increases the number of non-motorized crossings, but interactions with directions of traffic remains about the same.
 - o Galen added, in this design, one crossing involves a single direction of traffic versus one crossing currently involving two lanes and/or directions of traffic, so non-motorized safety would be improved by this alternative. In other words, it does not increase the number of lane crossings.



- Alexa asked if the non-motorized facilities are still at grade with the road.
 - o Galen confirmed non-motorized facilities must be at grade with the road in this alternative due to limited space at the Northwest corner of the interchange restricting space for an under-crossing.
- She agreed the non-motorized pathway to the north of the roundabout sounds like the safest option for the divergabout alternative.
- Alexa commented the divergabout alternative reminds her of the Dowling Road roundabouts with the two-lane pattern that has taken extra time for drivers to adapt. She asked how this project could plan to help drivers adapt more quickly to avoid long-term confusion.
 - o Galen responded there would be overhead signage showing the lane options and traffic patterns to help drivers stage in the correct lane well ahead of the divergabout. Kelly added this alternative would be a new pattern and require time to familiarize drivers. In past projects, collaboration with DOT&PF regarding best practices to help drivers navigate new patterns has helped with implementing new designs. Sam added, in past projects, signage for non-motorized users was also helpful. Galen agreed that wayfinding signs for non-motorized would be critical for this alternative.
- Alexa mentioned the information presented in the previous workshop felt like a wider scope. She asked if the scope has been narrowed since that workshop.
 - o Galen responded there were some ideas presented regarding relocating adjacent roads and the Park & Ride facility in the past. Upon reconsideration, the project team decided those alternatives would have much greater utility and ROW impacts and lower operational improvement at this time, but they may be options for future projects.
- Dobson asked if there would be changes to VFW Road to maintain bike and pedestrian access.
 - o Galen responded this project is limited in scope regarding VFW. The only alternative that would involve changes to VFW Road is the divergabout alternative, which would be a very limited impact. Kelly brought up a pavement preservation project currently making improvements to VFW Road, and Galen added this is a pavement resurfacing project.
- Alexa asked how the project team would like to receive feedback from Bike Anchorage.
 - o Galen confirmed with Kelly and Sam the project team would follow-up with Bike Anchorage about engagement opportunities and preferred form of Bike Anchorage's statement of support for an alternative.