

Complete Streets / Major Infrastructure (Corridor)

Submitted By: Anonymous user

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Project Information

Project Name

Old Seward Highway Upgrade - Safety for Non-Motorized Users and Vehicles - Rabbit Creek Road to Potter Valley Road

Name of Person Submitting the Nomination

Ann Rappoport, Co-chair

Affiliation

Rabbit Creek Community Council

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Description of Project or Program

In your own words, briefly describe the proposed purpose of the project.

Promote safety and recreation by developing an unpaved bike/pedestrian pathway along Old Seward Hwy heading south from Rabbit Creek Rd to the New Seward Hwy at Potter Valley Rd; include signage to designate lower speeds and road sharing with non-motorized users. While in poor condition, this popular road is regularly used by pedestrians, cyclists, joggers, roller skiers (high school and university teams regularly train here before snowfall) in increasing numbers, along with more sedentary bird watchers and photographers along the adjacent Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Lacking shoulders and with hills resulting in limited sight lines, this road is a tremendous safety hazard as traffic flows at high speeds. With limited traffic, (fewer than 2,000 cars/day use Old Seward south of South Park Bluff), this road has been a top priority in the RCCC's annual Capital Improvement Program Survey. The road is scheduled for repaving in 2023-24 which will allow increased speeds and hazardous conditions.

Draw a line to represent the general path of your project.



CRITERIA: Safety

Are there any truck (freight) related safety concerns in or near the project location?

Yes

What are the truck (freight) related safety concerns?

Delivery trucks are a particular safety concern for non-motorized users as they may be wider than the average vehicle and the paved roadway here does not have an inch on either side of the lane edge.

Are there any bicycle related safety concerns in or near the project location?

Yes

What are the bicycle related safety concerns?

Because Old Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek Road and Potter Valley Road lacks a shoulder on either side, cyclists - and roller skiers - typically ride in the traffic lane which is very unsafe. This is even worse given that several large hills along this road result in limited sight lines. It is not unusual for a motorist to crest the top of a hill, only to find a cyclist in the lane ahead. It is a wonder there have not been many serious accidents here, and the risk is increasing with additional houses and thus motorists in the area. Additionally, parking and other improvements to be constructed in 2022 at the south end of Potter Marsh will likely result in increased motorist and non-motorized uses, exacerbating this situation. Another option to improve safety here would be to consider closing Old Seward Hwy to vehicles, south of Tideview, except in an emergency, or to make one lane for vehicle traffic one way, and the other for non-motorized users.

Are there any pedestrian related safety concerns in or near the project location?

Yes

What are the pedestrian related safety concerns?

Similar to cyclists, pedestrians, including dog walkers typically walk in the traffic lane which is very unsafe. This is even worse given that several large hills along this road result in limited sight lines. It is not unusual for a motorist to crest the top of a hill, only to find a walker, jogger, or dog on or off a leash in the lane ahead. It is a wonder there have not been many serious accidents here, and the risk is increasing with additional houses and thus motorists in the area. Additionally, parking and other improvements to be constructed in 2022 at the south end of

Potter Marsh will likely result in further increased motorist and non-motorized uses, exacerbating this unsafe situation.

Are there any vehicular related safety concerns in or near the project location?

Yes

What are the vehicular related safety concerns?

As above, but from the vehicle side, pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users frequent this roadway. Vehicles swerving to avoid them, with no shoulder on either side, will end up in the ditch or in on-coming traffic - definitely an unsafe condition. Once the road is repaved this year, vehicles are likely to increase their speed again, creating further safety issues for all.

Are there any safety concerns related to emergency response in or near the project location?

Yes

What are the emergency response related safety concerns?

As above, emergency vehicles have to swerve if non-motorized users are in the road. They are likely to be traveling at higher speeds making such maneuvers even riskier.

CRITERIA: Mobility

Is the project expected to reduce vehicular congestion?

Yes

How is the project expected to reduce vehicular congestion?

This would provide a safer route for non-motorized users to access adjacent neighborhoods.

Is the project expected to improve truck (freight) movement?

No

How is the project expected to improve truck (freight) movement?

Is the project expected to improve the bicycle network?

Yes

How is the project expected to improve the bicycle network?

Currently there are no designated bikeways in southeast Anchorage. This is one of the only flat, paved roads in this part of southeast Anchorage; it is surrounded by steep roads, many unpaved that are too challenging for many cyclists and pedestrians.

Is the project expected to improve the pedestrian network and ADA accessibility?

Yes

How is the project expected to improve the pedestrian network and ADA accessibility?

The pedestrian network would be vastly improved in becoming much safer here, likely drawing new users, as well as improving the use of existing users. Unfortunately, ADA accessibility would be problematic, given the area's hilly terrain. Providing an unpaved route here for non-motorists could make this project economical, while an ADA accessible route would present many engineering hurdles and likely be cost-prohibitive.

Is the project expected to reduce transit vehicle delay?

No

How is the project expected to reduce transit vehicle delay?

Why is the project NOT expected to reduce transit vehicle delay?

There is no public transit in this area. The project's primary purpose is to benefit non-motorists, and to make it safer for both non-motorized and motorized users.

CRITERIA: Economic

Is the project expected to improve access to or within a growth supporting feature of the 2040 Land Use Plan?

No

How is the project expected to improve access to or within a growth supporting feature of the 2040 Land Use Plan?

Is the project located in the Chugiak - Eagle River Area?

No

Please identify the Land Uses associated with this project.

The area is surrounded by large lot, residential development, the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, and Heritage Land Bank acreage designated as Open Space.

Is the project expected to promote or include transit improvements?

No

How is the project expected to promote or include transit improvements?

CRITERIA: Environment

Is the project expected to improve air quality?

No

How is the project expected to improve air quality?

Why is the project NOT expected to improve air quality?

While the project may decrease some motorized use as those people find a recreation option closer to home, it may increase other motorized use by drawing more people to use this safer bike/pedestrian trail.

Is the project expected to improve systemwide Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)?

No

How is the project expected to improve systemwide VMT?

Why is the project NOT expected to improve systemwide VMT?

As above, it is more likely to be a wash - decreasing motorized use by some, but possibly slightly increasing it by others.

Is the project expected to help implement the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Climate Action Plan?

No

How is the project expected to help implement the MOA Climate Action Plan?

CRITERIA: Preservation

Is the project expected to improve roadway pavement conditions?

No

How is the project expected to improve roadway pavement conditions?

Is the project expected to improve sidewalk or off-street facilities?

Yes

How is the project expected to improve sidewalk or off-street facilities?

Currently non-motorized users move back and forth between the narrow, paved roadway and the adjacent dirt, often balancing between the ditch and a crumbling edge of pavement. A designated, graded trail would be a vast improvement!

Is the project expected to implement natural based solutions?

Yes

Which nature based solutions is the project expected to implement?

In developing this trail, it may be possible to incorporate bio swales, use bio-degradable coir logs, or other natural solutions to improve adjacent drainage.

Is the project expected to improve transit stops?

No

How is the project expected to improve transit stops?