

Ballot Measure 6 Could Fix the Poor Roads Leading to Chugach State Park

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To those who either use or live near Chugach State Park:

Most people don't think about who is responsible for snow clearing, or summer maintenance, when they drive to Chugach State Park. It is the many road service areas (RSAs) in Anchorage, that access Chugach State Park, that manage the capital improvements and maintenance of the roads within their jurisdictions. The RSAs are self-funded from property taxes from residents who live within them, and receive no funding from the Municipality of Anchorage. Yet, most of the traffic on these corridors is Anchorage residents, who live outside the RSAs, going to the Park to hike, ski, and bike the park trails beyond the service areas.

Anchorage is fortunate to have a wonderful resource in Chugach State Park. It is not surprising that outdoor enthusiasts, families, aurora watchers, photographers, and people who simply want to have a beautiful view of Anchorage, would want to reach the Park by traversing various service areas.

But many of these roads are in poor shape. For example, Upper DeArmoun and Canyon Roads, the corridor to the Rabbit Lake trailhead, and the new Sunny Side trail to Flattop, are in serious disrepair. Moreover, the Municipality has imposed onerous design, variance, and easement requirements on RSAs when they have tried to upgrade the roads, which have made the upgrades financially unviable.

These RSAs are sparsely populated. Even with high mill rates, they don't have enough funding to properly maintain the roads due to the low volume of residents in the area, and the high park traffic deteriorates the roadways further. Currently the Municipality is unable to bond for road improvements in the RSAs.

And even though the State of Alaska recognized, in the 1980 Chugach State Park Master Plan, the need to provide funding, the State has lacked the capital budget. Accordingly, if the residents of Anchorage, and visitors to our state, want well maintained roads, smooth driving surfaces to the Park, and snow removal, there will need to be an alternative source of financing.

On April 4, Anchorage voters will have an opportunity to fix this: Ballot Measure 6. The measure would create the Chugach State Park Access Service Area (CASA) for the Anchorage Bowl (north of McHugh Creek / South of Eagle River). The measure would allow the Municipality to submit to voters bond propositions for projects that support access to portions of Chugach State Park that are located in the service areas. Projects could include road and parking improvements, park access, and park-access-supporting amenities.

Approval of the measure in April would not result increase any taxes. Taxes would only be levied if voters subsequently approve a future proposition authorizing spending for a particular project. If passed, then any bonds put forward would require a dual vote of the service area and

the rest of the Municipality (since the entire MOA guarantees the bond payment). Only voters in the CASA would be levied for the bond; property owners in Eagle River-Chugiak, Girdwood and Turnagain Arm would not be levied.

With good roads to the Park, visitors would stay in Anchorage longer. And, CASA could raise funds for matching federal and state grants of 80 to 90 percent. Without a mechanism to raise the matching funds, these opportunities are not available to the Municipality. The ballot measure would bring money into the community, and create jobs and economic development.

Getting to Chugach State Park should not be an unpleasant experience. Please support Ballot Measure 6 on April 4.