

Correspondence



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



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

Connor Duff, AK State Parks
Sue Rodman, AK Department of Fish & Game
Central Region, AK Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities

August 28, 2023

Dear State officials involved in the South Potter Marsh Improvements Project:

As you know, the Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) applied for \$780 K in American Rescue Plan Act funding from the Anchorage Assembly last year when funding fell short for several essential features of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's (ADF&G) South Potter Marsh Improvements Project. We were thrilled when the Assembly accepted our proposal and are excited to see construction work now underway. This funding will ensure that the South Potter Marsh parking lot project will improve public safety, recreation access, and economic development, in the form of specific construction features. Those features are: pedestrian pathways to the mailboxes; a school bus staging site; a crosswalk; an additional toilet; and a boardwalk into the marsh for nature observation.

We are concerned because we do not see these features noted on the schematic design currently posted at the construction site. The design shows segments of a 6-foot pedestrian pathway to serve vehicle occupants, but no safe pedestrian circulation from Potter Valley Road for school children or neighborhood residents who access this site on foot, including for access to their mailboxes. The ADF&G Advisory Announcement (August 25, 2023) does mention the need for a school bus loading/unloading area and future boardwalk but makes no mention of pedestrian access across the site and refers to only one, rather than two, toilets. We do not see any notation for connection to the future boardwalk, which we understand will be built during winter months.

RCCC would like to immediately meet with the appropriate agency representatives to ensure the design can be revised to include the above features of the pull-out for which we obtained funding. RCCC is concerned that failure to depict and to synchronize plans for these features—pedestrian connectivity, a crosswalk, two toilets, and a boardwalk—could cause forfeiture of the funding.

The need for safe pedestrian circulation, two toilets, and the boardwalk is increasingly apparent in light of the [Safer Seward Highway](#) project. The Safer Seward Highway project could result in this parking pullout being used as a staging area for construction

and use of a future separated pathway along the Marsh, as well as a possible connection to the Turnagain Arm Trail and other recreation attractions. This parking pull-out is likely to become a much busier hub for wildlife viewing, recreation, and trail use.

RCCC has several specific requests:

1. Designate and design the bus drop-off/pick up site, *with Anchorage School District and RCCC input*, and the location of the neighborhood pathway connection and Old Seward Highway crosswalk.
2. Include the notation of a future boardwalk and a future pedestrian crosswalk of Old Seward Highway, with anticipated installation dates, on all construction documents.
3. Set a timeline for acquiring U.S. Army Corps of Engineer permits for the boardwalk, so that this project does not fall through the cracks.
4. Name a coordination team to ensure that all major stakeholders are informed of project design changes and work progress. RCCC would like to be represented on this team, presumably along with ADF&G, Alaska State Parks, Anchorage School District, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities project liaisons/managers, and the construction company foreperson or project manager.
5. Inform RCCC about neighborhood access to mailboxes during construction, in addition to informing the neighbors. Potter Valley neighbors were surprised to find construction underway, and that the RCCC Board had no answers for them.

Given that construction has already begun, we look forward to meeting with you as soon as possible this week, preferably this Wednesday (August 30), Thursday afternoon, or Friday. Please contact Ann Rappoport at 907-230-3187.

Sincerely,



Ann Rappoport, Co-chair



John Riley, Co-chair

cc: John Linnell, Director, Construction