



## RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC)

A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations



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

July 17, 2023

Dear Alaska Legislators:

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) represents an area with nearly 3000 residents and landowners in southeast Anchorage. As regular users of the Seward Highway to access work, shopping, friends, school, etc., we are very concerned about the proposal, NHS0004, 92nd Avenue Interchange and Seward Highway, O'Malley to Dimond Blvd reconstruction. The RCCC has repeatedly voted that the full interchange at 92nd Avenue is no longer justified by traffic or use patterns in the area. We urge you to de-authorize this project as proposed and request a redesign with a non-motorized underpass to connect Academy Drive and 92nd Avenue, to better and more safely serve the community.

As proposed, this project would result in a tremendous expenditure of state and federal public funds, loss of lower income housing, and unnecessary impacts to neighborhoods for a project that no longer fits local or broader needs, as further documentd in the attachment. What is needed here is a non-motorized over- or underpass to allow residents safe and easier access to shopping and neighborhoods to the west of the Seward Highway.

The Scooter/Vanguard interchange project was originally proposed over 20 years ago when the Dimond Mall area was the largest and most popular shopping location in Anchorage. Since then, shopping and traffic patterns have changed (e.g., tremendous increase in online shopping, addition of other large shopping centers such as Tikahtnu Commons). **The current problem that needs a solution is to provide a safe over- or underpass for pedestrians and cyclists who too frequently and very usafely try to cross the Seward Highway in this area.**

Most Anchorage residents do not want this expensive project – now estimated at over \$113 million. The Anchorage Assembly redirected \$4 million required for the Municipality's part of this project from a 2019 bond proposal. **They subsequently passed a resolution (AR 2022-254S) asking for the vehicle underpass to be deleted and instead provide for a non-vehicular crossing at 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.** We have written the Assembly and repeatedly stated in our annual recommendations to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions on the Transportation Improvement Program and for Capital Improvement Projects, that this project be significantly downscaled to only a non-motorized connection from east to west of the Seward Highway in this area.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Ann Rappoport, Co-chair

John Riley, Co-chair

cc: Randy Sulte and Zac Johnson, Anchorage Assembly  
Aaron Jongelonen, Manager, AMATS  
ADOT&PF Central Region Director

## Attachment

Additional details on why project NHS0004 should be deleted and redescribed as a non-motorized corridor.

Rabbit Creek Community Council Comments (1/13/2023) to the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions on Amendment #1 for the Transportation Improvement Program (2023-2026).

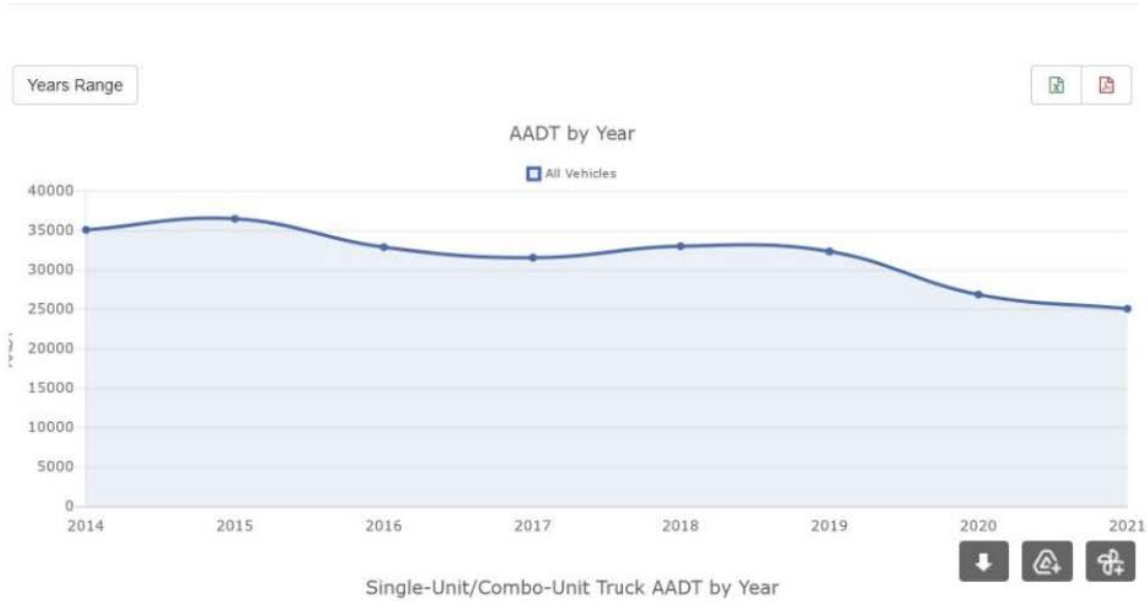
NHS0004 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Interchange and Seward Highway, O'Malley to Dimond Blvd reconstruction with a full interchange at 92<sup>nd</sup> Ave. We strongly urged AMATS to delete this project as proposed and to instead, re-design it as a non-motorized corridor. This would signal an enlightenment toward urban freeways. The project cost has escalated to \$113 million while traffic volumes have been dropping in the Dimond and Abbott area since 2014. Even Seward Highway traffic is not projected to justify this project. The interchange will induce further traffic but not shorten any travel times nor ensure pedestrian and bicycle safety. There are so many better transportation uses for that \$113 million.

Further data and analysis of NHS0000, Seward Highway and the 92nd Avenue interchange are shown in graphs on the next page.

1. Traffic and Population demand is flat as shown in data referenced below; and ADOT traffic counts: • Dimond Boulevard: declining traffic going east-west on Dimond since 2016; traffic on the stretch from Old Seward Highway to Abbott Road peaked in 2016.

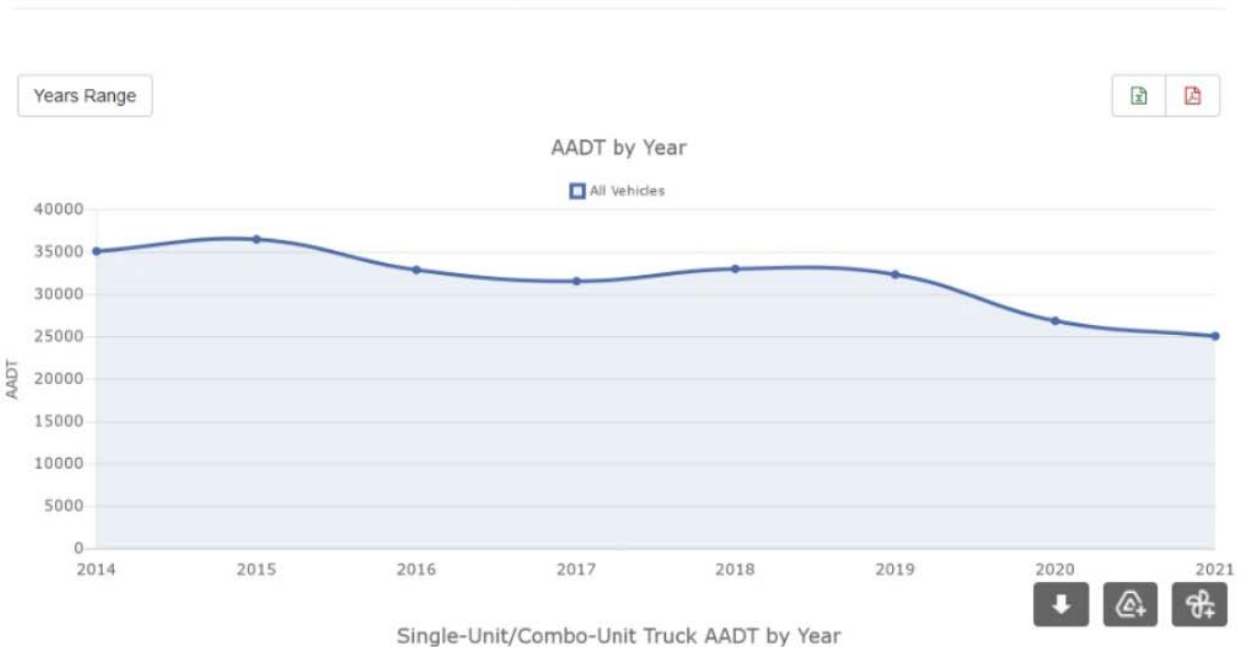
**Between Old Seward & Seward Hwy on Dimond**

ADT Charts Report AKDOT\_ST 000053359000



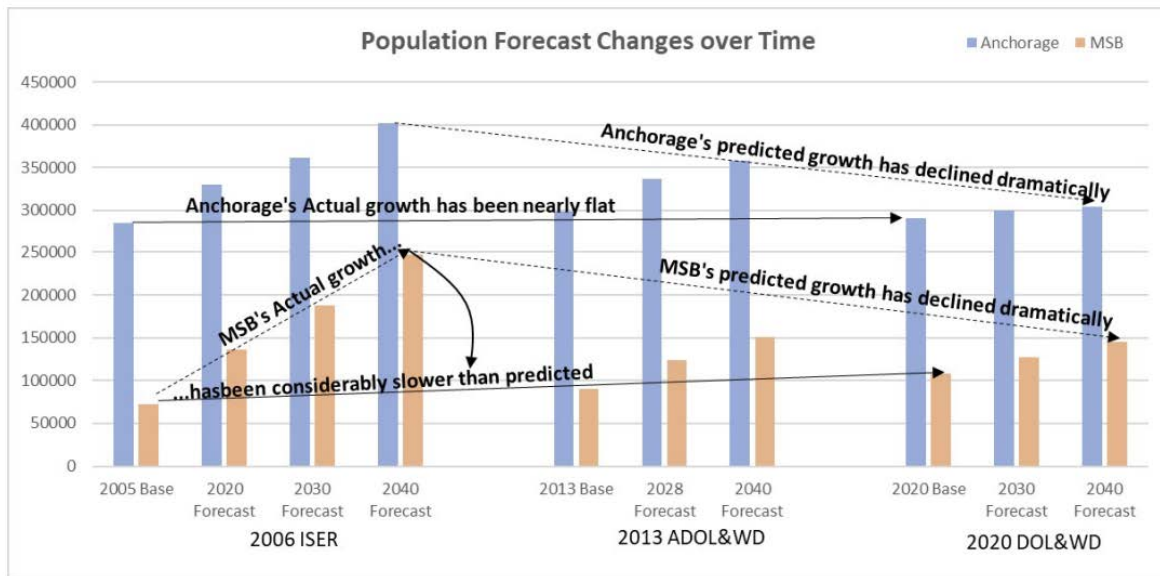
**Between Vanguard & Seward Hwy on Abbott**

ADT Charts Report AKDOT\_ST 000053359000



- Seward Highway: Traffic on the Seward Highway is projected to decline by 2050, according to the newest 2020 mobility study "...fewer trips are predicted to use the Seward and Glenn Highways in Anchorage. "... The Seward Highway is predicted to have similar growth (from approximately 49,000 trips per day just before the COVID-19 pandemic to 48,500 trips per day in 2050)" (Sewardglennmobility.com May 2020 draft system performance memorandum, p 25-26). The latest socio-economic projections for 2050 come from the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOTPF) Seward Glen Mobility Study (<https://sewardglennmobility.com/Library.html>). It shows very little population growth in Anchorage, and much slower growth in the Mat-Su than previously predicted.

**FIGURE 10: POPULATION FORECAST USED FOR SG PEL COMPARED TO PREVIOUS POPULATION FORECASTS** (from sewardglennmobility.com, page 20).



This figure compares a forecast made in 2006 by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) and a forecast prepared in 2013 by ADOL&WD to the 2020 forecast by ADOL&WD used as the basis for the SG PEL travel model socio-economic projections. Compared to previous studies readers should expect very different future transport system performance findings given the dramatically lower population forecasts since system utilization is highly correlated with population. Note especially the relatively flat population growth in Anchorage 2. Observations contrary to the justification for a 92nd Avenue Freeway Interchange - based on our participation in Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and reviews of available documentation: a. ADOTPF's "non-motorized alternatives" (presented to the TAC on November 3) do not appear practical as they were misaligned, causing out-of-route travel. Additionally, the exorbitant price does not seem justifiable, particularly when considering the alternative of a non-motorized underpass. ADOTPF built a nonmotorized underpass for Eagle River Loop Road for approximately \$2.3 million.

ADOTPF presented incomplete language from land use plans to justify a full interchange as being consistent with existing land use and transportation plans. For example, while 92nd Avenue is a future transit corridor in the 2040 Land Use Plan, it is the lowest ranked of eight corridors and the rest of 92nd Avenue has not been built and is not a priority. c. No supportive traffic data has been presented. d. Specific safety concerns regarding the current ADOTPF design have not been addressed. The current design has an unprotected bike lane and a curbside pathway on Brayton where there is 50 mph plus traffic. Additionally, there is a cross-merging pattern where southbound on-ramp cars must weave through O'Malley off-ramp cars.