

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 2019



1. Is this the “Cooper Landing Bypass” that has been talked about for a long time?

Yes. This project will reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing highway and construct 10 miles of new alignment north of the community.

2. Where does the new alignment section begin and end? Is this a new alignment?

The new alignment begins at approximately MP 46.2 and ends at approximately MP 56. This is not a new alignment. It is consistent with how the Juneau Creek Alternative has been portrayed to the public since 2004.

3. What can we actually change at the design phase?

We cannot change major items that were approved in the environmental phase (EIS/ROD). For example, we cannot reconsider other alternatives, change the overall alignment, or add or subtract major components. Design done during the environmental phase was at a conceptual level (15% complete), to locate the alignment and major features. This is standard practice for the environmental phase.

Now, engineers need to take the alignment, major features, and EIS commitments and design the road with enough detail that a contractor can estimate and construct the project phases. Items that can change during the design include:

- » how connections to properties/driveways are made
- » pullout configurations
- » features of the Resurrection Pass Trailhead
- » pathway details
- » minor shifts to alignment

4. Can we move the start and end of the new alignment?

No. We must keep the new alignment start and end as portrayed and agreed to in the EIS/ROD with some minor adjustments for the intersections.

5. Can we add a pathway to the new alignment?

The EIS/ROD did not include a new pathway along with the new alignment. The new alignment includes an 8-foot-wide shoulders, which can accommodate pedestrians and bicycles. This is 2 feet wider than the DOT&PF standard for highway shoulders, which is 6 feet.

6. Will this project include a new pedestrian and bicycle path in Cooper Landing along the old highway?

No. There are no pedestrian and bicycle facilities planned for the “old” Sterling Highway. It is anticipated that the majority of vehicle traffic would use the new highway alignment, leaving the “old” Sterling Highway considerably less busy. While it would remain narrow, the risks for pedestrian and bicycle traffic would be reduced because of the reduction in traffic volume.

7. Will you replace the community’s Safety Path along the east end?

Yes. A separated pathway will be constructed on the south side of the highway between Quartz Creek Road and the intersection of the “old” highway. The pathway is envisioned to be 10-foot wide and nearly 2 miles long. The precise design, terminus at the western end, and its connection to the existing “safety path” will be determined during final design.

8. How will driveways and private properties along the existing highway be affected by this project?

Reconstructing and widening along the existing highway will impact private property. If access to property is impacted, DOT&PF will provide an alternate means of access via a reconstructed driveway. If a property is no longer able to be accessed, the DOT&PF would acquire that property. If you have questions about your specific property, please reach out to the project team for details.

9. Will this project increase the speed through town?

No. The “old” highway is expected to retain the same speed limits or see speed limits reduced. The new highway will be posted at 55 mph. To ensure traffic patterns are settled and help encourage maximum use of the new highway by through-traffic, DOT&PF would examine the functional classification of the “old” highway and examine the appropriate speed limits for its segments. DOT&PF would undertake the road classification process so that it is complete by the time the new highway is open to traffic, and would undertake the speed study in the first year of operation and set new speed limits as warranted. The “old” highway segment is anticipated to be reclassified as a collector or minor arterial, and any speed adjustment would be to a lower speed limit.

10. What’s next for this project?

Now that the EIS phase is complete, DOT&PF is moving the project into design and construction. Construction is planned to be complete by 2025.

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11. How will access to recreational activities be impacted?

The entire area is rich in recreation resources, and the project parallels the Kenai River at close range for varying lengths, crosses USFS trails, and runs near popular campgrounds and fishing holes. Access may be temporarily impacted during construction. The access points to Sportsman's Landing, Bean Creek Trail, and Resurrection Pass Trail will be redesigned. The pullouts near MP 55.6 and 57.2 will be reestablished. A new trailhead and parking facility will be constructed to access the Resurrection Pass National Recreation Trail.

12. When will something be built?

Construction of the west and east ends on the current alignment, is planned to start in 2020. The phasing plan envisions construction continuing on different phases, every year from 2020 to 2025.

13. How much will the project cost? How will the project be funded?

The project is estimated to cost \$374 million. As the project moves into design and phasing is refined, cost estimates will be developed in greater detail. An Initial Financial Plan was developed in 2017 and provides more detail on the anticipated costs for each phase.

The project is a Federal Aid Highway Project. Under that program, the federal government pays about 90% of project costs (from funds apportioned to the State of Alaska from the Highway Trust Fund), with the State paying the remaining 10%.

Currently, the project is included in the STIP (State Transportation Improvement Plan) for about \$60M per year over the next six years.