

Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project

Project Overview

Updated October 2019



The Sterling Highway from Milepost (MP) 45–60 follows the Kenai River Valley through the fishing and tourism hub of Cooper Landing. Motorists and pedestrians, both residents and visitors, experience challenges with the narrow corridor.

The Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project addresses three primary needs:

- » Reducing highway congestion
- » Ensuring the corridor meets current highway design standards
- » Improving highway safety

Anticipated benefits of this corridor redesign include:

- » Increased motorist and pedestrian safety
- » Improved access to local businesses and residences
- » Reduced noise, dust, congestion, and traffic in Cooper Landing
- » Decreased risk of fuel spills into the Kenai River by routing traffic farther away from river banks



Project Background

Built in the 1940s and 1950s, the Sterling Highway was originally constructed as a gravel road and not designed for the amount of traffic it sees today. In the late 1970s, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) determined that it was necessary to redesign portions of the roadway. It had become increasingly congested, especially during summer months, creating safety issues for travelers. Several studies in the 1980s and 1990s looked at routes for the proposed highway. In 2000, DOT&PF and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Environmental studies, engineering, and public involvement efforts were conducted from 2000-2018, resulting in final selection of the Juneau Creek Alternative. The current design work is based on the Juneau Creek Alternative as specifically described in the EIS.



Description of Improvements

The project **will reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing roadway from approximately MP 45–46.5 and MP 56–58** to widen shoulders; bring the roadway curves into compliance with design speeds; and add passing lanes, pathways, and wildlife undercrossings. Additionally, the project will construct 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, between MP 46.5 and 55.5. Traffic studies predict that 70 percent of traffic will use the new highway rather than travel through Cooper Landing. A new Resurrection Pass trailhead and parking lot will be constructed, with trail connections to the Resurrection Pass and Bean Creek trails as well as the Juneau Creek Falls overlook.

New intersections will be designed at the connection of the old and new highways. Construction will also include a **new bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon**. In terms of wildlife protection, the design features **four wildlife crossing structures**, including the first wildlife overpass of a highway in Alaska.



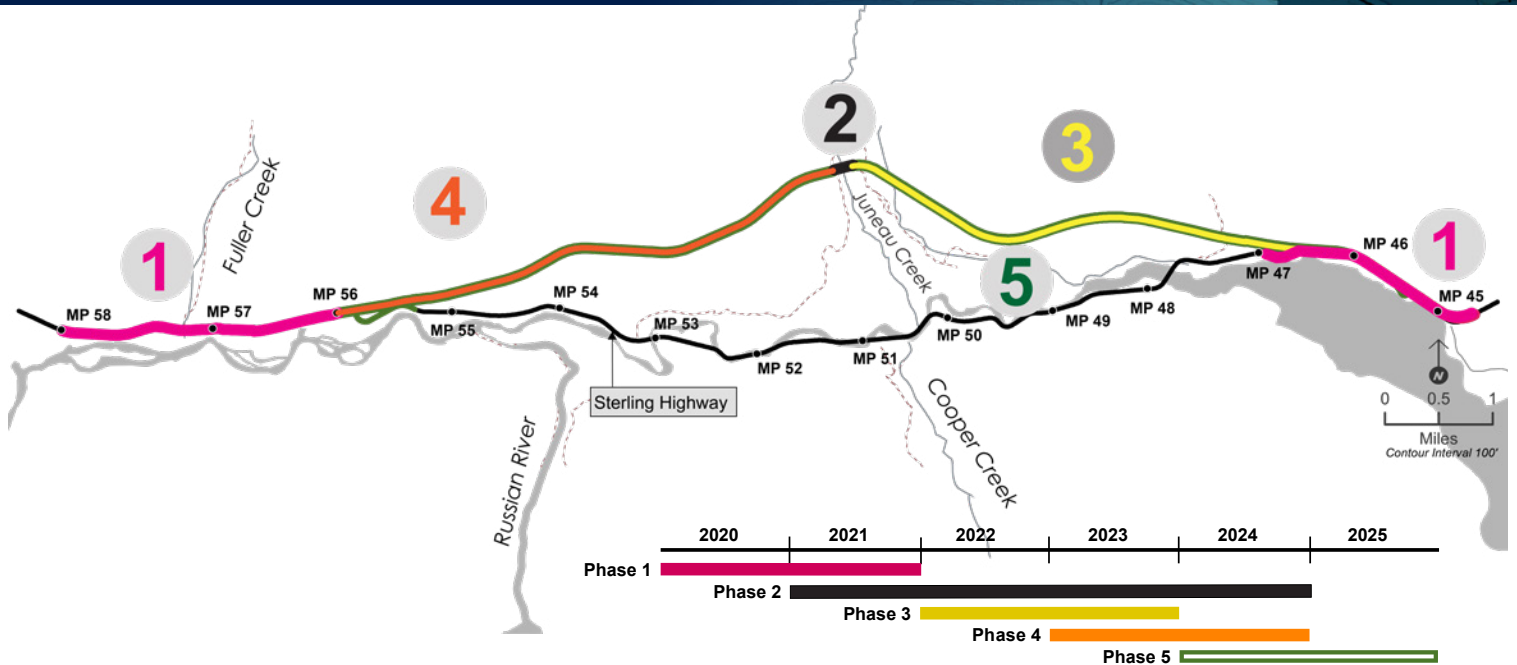
Cost and Schedule

Construction is estimated at approximately \$375 million. The project will be constructed in five phases and construction will begin in 2020. It is expected to be complete by 2025. Federal Highway Trust Funds are anticipated to cover 90 percent of construction costs. The State of Alaska will supply the remaining 10 percent of funding.

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Design Phase 1 (2019-2020): The first design phase, currently underway, focuses on the east and west ends of the project, as shown in the figure above. The DOT&PF has contracted with HDR to design the west end, MP 56–58, and provide environmental and public involvement support. R&M Consultants (as a subcontractor to HDR) is designing the east end, MP 45–47. Design of the west end is anticipated to be complete by fall 2020; design of the east end is anticipated to be complete in spring 2021. Construction is planned to begin in summer/fall 2020 and may consist of an early work package to help streamline construction progress. Phase 1 construction will likely take one full construction season and part of the next. R&M is also conducting survey and geotechnical investigations along the entire corridor as part of Phase 1.

Design Phases 2-5 (2020-2025): DOT&PF plans to design the Juneau Creek bridge in-house (Phase 2). The DOT&PF has selected DOWL to design the middle section, from MP 47 to 58 (Phases 3-5). Currently, design work on these phases has not started. When design is underway, we will share more information as it becomes available.

How Can I Get Information? DOT&PF plans to hold quarterly public meetings in Cooper Landing to provide updates and answer questions. Please join our mailing list or visit our website to receive future notices. DOT&PF also intends to provide monthly updates via our mailing list and the Cooper Landing Crier. All public materials are available on our comprehensive website, including information from past public meetings.



Comments or Questions?

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