

Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project

Project Fact Sheet

Updated August 2021



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 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began the Sterling Highway Milepost (MP) 45–60 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Environmental studies, engineering, and public involvement efforts were conducted from 2000 to 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 46.5–56**. 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 are being 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 \$500 million. The project will be constructed in six phases, and construction began in 2020. It is expected to be complete by 2027. 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.



Phase 1 (Construction 2021–2026): The first design phase focuses on the west (Phase 1A) and east (Phase 1B) ends of the project, as shown in the figure below. DOT&PF has contracted with HDR to design the west (Phase 1A) end, MP 56–58, and provide environmental and public involvement support. R&M Consultants (as a subcontractor to HDR) is designing the east (Phase 1B) end, approximately MP 45–46.5. The west end will be constructed in 2021–2022, and construction of the east end is anticipated to begin in 2024 and be completed in 2026.

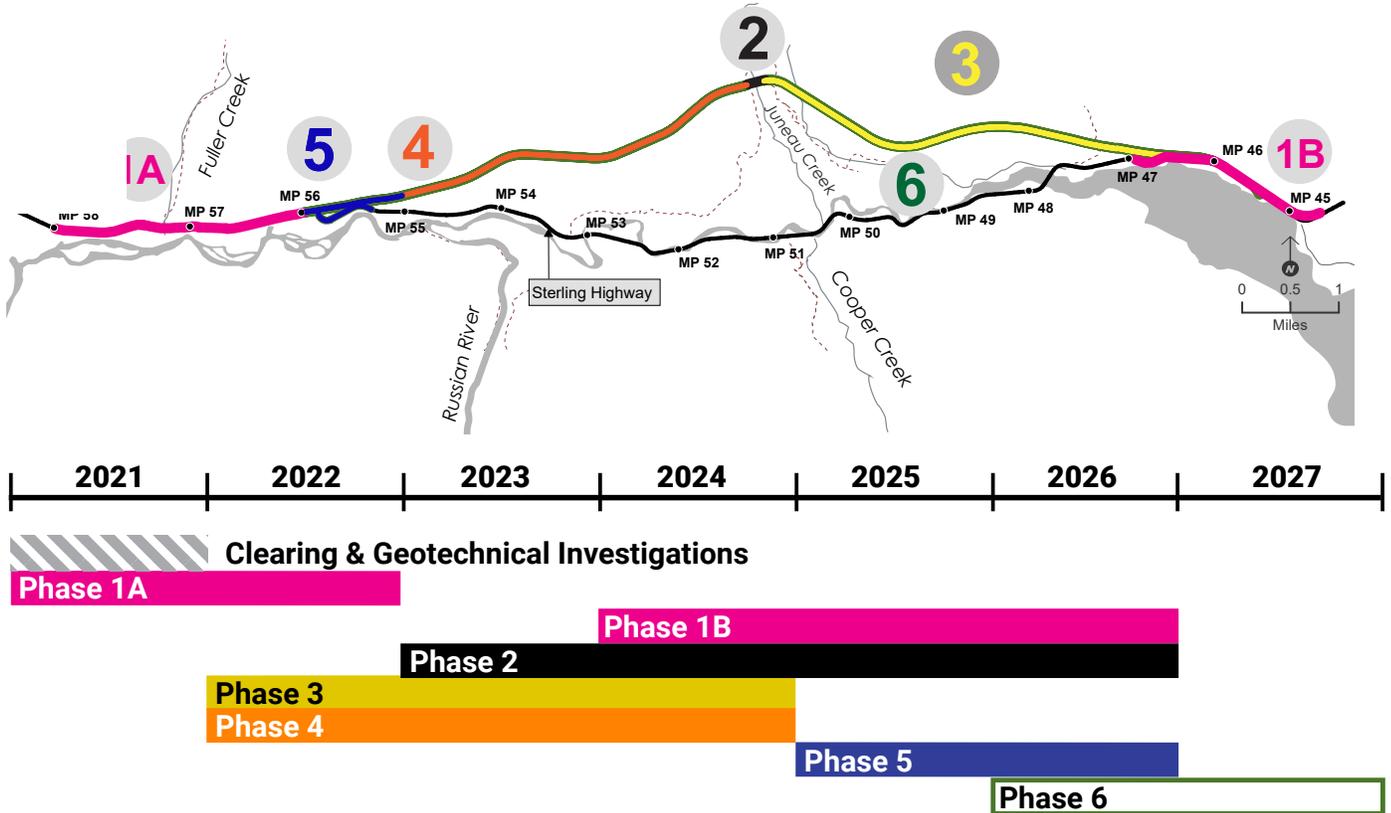
Phases 2–6 (Construction: 2020–2027):

DOT&PF is designing the Juneau Creek bridge in-house (Phase 2). DOT&PF selected DOWL to design the middle section, from MP 46.5–56 (Phases 3–5). Design work on these phases is underway. DOT&PF also selected a contractor, Kiewit, under the Construction Manager/General Contractor contracting method, to construct Phases 2–4. Construction of Phase 2 is anticipated to begin in 2023 and take 3 years to complete, and construction of Phases 3 and 4 is anticipated to begin in 2022 and complete in 2024. Phase 5 includes the western intersection of the new Sterling Highway and the existing Sterling Highway (MP 55 to 56). Design and construction of the western intersection are contingent on the land exchange between Cook Inlet Region, Inc. and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is tentatively scheduled for winter 2021. Once the land exchange is complete, design of the intersection will begin, including clearing and geotechnical exploration. Construction of Phase 5 is anticipated to begin in 2025 and end in 2026. Phase 6, the final project phase, includes construction of all paving, signing, striping, guardrail, rumble strips, trailheads, revegetation, and landscaping. The new highway is currently anticipated to be open to traffic by the end of 2027.

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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, the Cooper Landing Crier, and the Moose Pass Messenger. All public materials, including information from past public meetings, are available on our comprehensive website.

Project Contacts

Sean Baski
 Project Manager, DOT&PF
 sean.baski@alaska.gov
 907-269-0547

Jonathan Tymick
 Project Manager, DOT&PF
 jonathan.tymick@alaska.gov
 907-269-0453

Katherine Wood
 Public Involvement, HDR
 Katherine.Wood@hdrinc.com
 907-644-2153



Web: www.sterlinghighway.net | **Email:** sterlinghwy@hdrinc.com