



Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project Update



Blasting occurring within Phase 4.

The purpose of this monthly report is to provide a snapshot update of the project. For more detailed project information, please visit www.sterlinghighway.net.

Tasks Performed in May

Project Overview

The Sterling Highway Milepost (MP) 45 to 60 Project will reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing roadway from approximately MP 45 to 46.5 and MP 56 to 58.

This construction will widen shoulders, straighten the road, and add passing lanes. Between MP 46.5 and 55.5 (the off-alignment section), the project will construct 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, including a new bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon.

This project will bring the highway up to current standards by efficiently and safely serving through traffic, the local community, and traffic bound for recreation destinations both now and in the future. Construction began in 2021 and the goal is to open the new highway to traffic by the end of 2027.



Environmental: Archaeologists began the summer 2023 field season in mid-May and are currently working at sites within the Sqilantnu Archaeological District. Signatures on the revised Programmatic Agreement (PA) were requested by the end of May. A mid-year PA Signatory meeting is scheduled for July 20.



1B

Phase 1B: The Phase 1B team continued their coordination with utility owners to better assess and address potential utility impacts, constructability, and construction phasing challenges for utility relocations along the south side of the new highway. This coordination will continue further into 2023. Additionally, the 1B team is supporting the right-of-way acquisition team with updated approach and driveway designs resulting from private property owner requests.



2

Phase 2: The Juneau Creek Plate Girder Bridge design progressed to 90%.



3-4

Phases 3-4: Construction continued. Earthwork focused on the west side (Phase 4). Excavation and blasting occurred at the West Bridge Abutment. Resurrection Pass Trail remains open at all times. The Contractor has begun mobilizing equipment over to the East Side (Phase 3), where they will continue to work for the rest of the 2023 season. Slaughter Gulch Trail access via Langille Road has been permanently closed, access via formal trailhead remains open.



5

Phase 5: Clearing was completed prior to the May 1 bird window. Phase 5 geotechnical drilling started and will continue throughout the summer.



6

Phase 6: The Phases 3–6 team continued coordination with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) on the development of the Juneau Falls Trailhead and Juneau Falls Overlook.



Agencies: Cameras at Phase 1A crossings captured wildlife using the structures.



Near-term Schedule Goals



Funding: Establish funding in the FY2024 budget to award the Juneau Creek Bridge and Phase 1B. Begin working on our 2023 Annual Financial Plan, which is due by September.



Agencies: DOT&PF will work with Agencies to finalize amendments to the PA and update subsequent permits; and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding regarding wildlife, vegetation, and maintenance.



Phase 1A: Phase 1A construction resumed in April 2023, and traffic updates will be available online at <https://511.alaska.gov> or by calling 511. The Contractor is working on finishing touches, stream work, paving, striping, moose fence, and other tasks. Phase 1A is expected to be completed by August 2023.



Phase 2: The Juneau Creek Bridge will be at 95% design by July 1. Negotiations with the Construction Manager/General Contractor will continue.



Phase 1B: Incorporate the southside utility relocations into the final roadway design. Supporting tasks include preparing revised draft utility relocation agreements. Certify the Phase 1B plan set assembly by fall 2023.



Phases 3-5: The Contractor will continue Phase 3 earthwork efforts for the Phase 3/4 grading and drainage construction. Filed activities for geotechnical efforts will continue through the summer. The design team will further the Phase 5 tight diamond interchange design after the geotechnical investigation results are available.



MP 61.5 Culvert Improvement: This improvement replaces two culverts near MP 61.5 of the Seward Highway, while also upgrading these culverts to fish passage standards and fulfilling U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mitigation for the project. It is currently at 99% design, with construction planned for late summer 2023.



Phase 6: The team will continue coordination and design efforts with USFS on the development of the Juneau Falls Trailhead and Juneau Falls Overlook. Agency and design team site visits will take place during summer 2023.

Recent Tasks Completed



January 2023

Public Involvement: The project team attended and hosted a booth at the January 12, 2023, Anchorage Transportation Fair to share project information with meeting attendees.



March 2023

Phase 6: A review meeting was held for the Juneau Falls Trailhead and Overlook 30% design level.



March 2023

Phase 5: The land exchange between Cook Inlet Region, Inc., and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge was completed.



April 2023

The 2023 Initial Financial Plan, under the reclassification as a FHWA Major Project, was accepted.



May 2023

90% Design completion on the Juneau Creek Bridge.

Contact

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Construction Questions

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