

# Hermon Rd Extension and Upgrade: Parks Hwy to Palmer-Wasilla Hwy

Project No.: CFHWY00799 / 0001729

## Open House No. 1 Meeting Summary



Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Wasilla Public Library, Multi-Purpose Room

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in partnership with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), City of Wasilla, and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), hosted the first open house in the multi-purpose room at the Wasilla Public Library. Attendees began arriving for the event at 3:40 p.m. and were admitted at 3:50 p.m. The meeting format was an open house style, with a pre-recorded formal presentation beginning at 4:30 p.m., followed by a 20-minute open forum question and answer session. Attendees were greeted at the sign-in desk with a copy of the project fact sheet and were shown into the event room. The room was set up with presentation boards detailing the project area and description, schedule and estimated costs, proposed improvements, preliminary design of the typical sections, and project contact information. A roll plot showing an aerial view of the project corridor was presented and the attendees provided written notes on specific areas of Hermon Road. Towards the back of the room, 30 seats were set up facing the television where the project video was played.

The project team was available to answer questions from the public on the preliminary design and clarify information about project funding, scope, and schedule. The project team gathered comments and feedback at a comments table and on a roll plot. Following the video presentation, the project team directed a question-and-answer session where attendees could ask questions of the project team.

Twenty-nine people signed in, including members of the project team.

### Summary of Questions and Comments Received Following the Open House Presentation:

- Several participants mentioned the problem of turning on and off the Parks Highway, commenting on traffic backing up onto the highway and causing accidents.  
*Response: The intersection between Parks Highway and Hermon Road is out of the project scope and will not be addressed.*
- Several concerns on the purpose and need for this project were mentioned, specifically on project timing and necessity.  
*Response: The MSB Five Arterials Planning Study and the MSB 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan identified this project with the purpose of relieving pressure on the Parks Highway/Palmer Wasilla Highway intersection. The project is partially funded by a MSB Bond that was passed by voters and is formally supported by the City of Wasilla.*
- Several concerns on project funding sources and how it would affect residents.  
*Response: A combination of MSB Bond funds and the Federal Highway Administration will fund this project. The MSB and the City of Wasilla will own, operate, and maintain this project.*
- Concerns about traffic management once the project is completed.  
*Response: Traffic management will be designed according to accepted standards applicable to a minor arterial facility.*
- Concerns about impacts to Sun Mountain planning.  
*Response: The design will anticipate development of the Sun Mountain Commercial Center.*

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- Property impacts in the residential section:
  - Concerns about increased noise along Hermon Road.  
*Response: The project team is completing a noise analysis to determine impacts, and the result will indicate if mitigation would be required by the current policy and procedure.*
  - Clarification on how the traffic study will show effects of the change in traffic patterns.  
*Response: The traffic projection will consider anticipated changes in traffic plans and design improvements according to current standards.*
  - Concerns about maintenance and safety issues on Whispering Woods Drive.  
*Response: Whispering Woods Drive is beyond the limits of this project and no improvements will be made beyond intersection improvements.*
  - Requests to lower the posted speed limit from 35 miles-per-hour (mph) to 30 mph.  
*Response: Thirty-five mph will be the appropriate posted speed for this facility.*
- Environmental impacts:
  - Concerns about noise from construction impacting an eagle nest in the residential section along Maney Drive including discussion about alternative eagle nest location along Whispering Woods Drive.  
*Response: There are regulations that pertain to working in the vicinity of active eagle nests on federally funded projects. These regulations will be followed.*
  - Concerns about proximity to existing wetlands.  
*Response: There are no direct wetland impacts anticipated by this project. Storm water will be treated using vegetated buffers before leaving the project footprint.*
- Several participants thanked the project team for organizing the open house and allowing public comments to be heard early and incorporated in the project design.

### Summary of Questions and Comments Received on Written Comment Forms:

- Comments on preliminary design:
  - Consider a five-lane section from Parks Highway to Maney Drive, where the MSB has retained right-of-way (ROW) for this purpose.  
*Response: Funding agency will only fund facilities that are justified within the project design life of twenty years. Projected traffic volumes will likely not result in the need for five lanes.*
  - Consider pathway and sidewalk amenities for the length of the road.  
*Response: A ten-foot multi-use pathway is included for the length of the project. The five-foot shoulder meets the minimum width for bicycle use.*
  - Consider the use of fencing to screen property views from roadway.  
*Response: The funding agency will not participate in funding visual screening for an arterial facility. Fencing would require additional ROW acquisition and create further strain on the thin maintenance budget.*

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- Concerns about drainage problems from Parks Highway to Maney Drive causing pooling along shoulders.  
*Response: The project will address drainage issues for the length of the project.*
- Consider making the Adele Circle and Hermon Road intersection a 90-degree geometry.  
*Response: The intersection is currently designed at 90-degrees.*
- Consider realigning the portion of Maney Drive intersecting Hermon Road for a 90-degree geometry.  
*Response: The intersection will be designed to meet current design criteria.*
- Consider reducing the grades of Hermon Road.  
*Response: The profile design will be in accordance with current design criteria. Grades will be minimized while also considering minimizing property acquisition and project costs.*
- Concerns about existing driveway connections into Hermon Road.  
*Response: The standard driveway approaches will be installed meeting the current design criteria, including profile grades and sight triangles.*
- Request for overhead LED lighting along Hermon Road from Parks Highway to Maney Drive.  
*Response: The project will not meet criteria for continuous lighting. Some lighting may be installed at the intersection with Palmer-Wasilla Highway but is yet to be determined.*
- Consider giving Zak Circle one access point to Hermon Road where the line of sight is better.  
*Response: The intersection will meet current design standards, including standard sight distances.*
- Consider requiring the Shell Station to eliminate the west entrance to Palmer-Wasilla Highway and connect to Hermon Road.  
*Response: The project team will review this suggestion.*
- Consider requiring HTF Investments and Cottonwood Creek Properties, LLC, to eliminate Palmer-Wasilla Highway access and connect only to Hermon Road.  
*Response: The project team will review this suggestion.*
- Consider adding a stoplight at Adele Circle and Hermon Road intersection.  
*Response: The traffic volumes will not warrant a traffic signal at this intersection.*
- Consider adding a stoplight at Palmer-Wasilla Highway and Hermon Road intersection.  
*Response: A signal will be installed if warrants are met.*
- Consider adding a backage road from Seward-Meridian Highway to Hermon Road.  
*Response: This is not within the scope of this project.*
- Concerns that the intersection at Parks Highway and Hermon Road needs to be addressed prior to the Hermon Road extension and upgrade.  
*Response: The current project scope ends at the east side of the Sun Mountain Avenue intersection and current plans will not address the Parks Highway intersection.*
- Concerns that the project will not decrease traffic on Parks Highway or Palmer-Wasilla Highway.  
*Response: The DOT&PF Parks Highway Alternative Corridor PEL Study, when completed, identifies an alternative transportation route to alleviate heavy traffic on Parks Highway. This PEL Study will provide a fresh evaluation of the existing conditions and issues, develop a clear project purpose and need, and*

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*identify alternatives that are able to be implemented to effectively permit and construct a Parks Highway Alternative Corridor. This project is identified in the MSB Long Range Plan 2035 and the MSB Five Arterials Planning study with the purpose of reducing pressure from the intersection of the Parks and Palmer Wasilla Highways.*

The project team responded to the questions asked at the meeting and will document/respond to the written comments. The team thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged attendees to leave written comments via the comment forms, the roll plot, or the project email. The team concluded the open house by letting participants know that their comments would be summarized and would help the project team as the design process continues.

### **Action Items and Next Steps**

- Develop a frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet to hand out prior to the next open house.
- Add the distance in mileage of the extension to the roll plot. Completed.
- Post meeting materials to the project website. Completed.
- Distribute public comments to the project team and prepare responses to any public comments/questions.
- Send Constant Contact thank you email to meeting participants.