



April 7, 2024

Re: Comments on Seward to Glenn Connection Planning and Environmental Linkages

Dear Project Team,

Anchorage Park Foundation (APF) is a community-based nonprofit founded in 2005 to mobilize public support and financial resources for Anchorage parks, trails, and recreation opportunities. We are also strong advocates for promoting connectivity between these community assets for recreation and active transportation.

Anchorage Park Foundation's Programs Director and active transportation advocate, Diana Rhoades, participated in the Fairview Open House and several Fairview planning meetings, including a walk with members of the Greater Friendship Baptist Church. The turnout was amazing for all these events, showing the importance of the work you are doing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Seward Glenn PEL.

To start out, we appreciated the format of the public meeting held at Fairview Recreation Center. The overview by the consultants and project team members was informative, followed by the stations to learn about all the alternatives. We appreciated having the bicycle and pedestrian information detailed on all the alternatives separate from the motorized portion. Having someone there to answer questions at each station was particularly helpful – Thank you! I hope this will be a model for the future.

We understand the intent is to (1) maintain the functionality of the National Highway System while meeting the local travel needs of residents who live, play, and work in the area and must safely travel across or along those roadways; and (2) improve neighborhood connections, enhance quality of life, and accommodate adopted plans, as practicable.

Among the alternatives presented for review at this time, we support the "2050 MTP No Highway Connection" alternative. This option seems the most realistic and gives us the opportunity to solve problems that we understand, while not creating new problems elsewhere.

There were some lessons learned that we would like to share from the winter walk we helped host with Anchorage Museum, NeighborWorks, AARP and more than 50 people from Greater Friendship Baptist Church (GFBC.) It was held on a sunny afternoon on Sunday, February 25. We had a speed monitor to test the speeds of drivers. The starting point for our walk was the parking lot of the Church at 903 E 13th Ave. We headed west on E. 13th Ave crossing Ingra St., Hyder St. then Gambell St. to the parking lot of the Carrs grocery store. The return walk took us on E. 14th Ave. headed east crossing the same 3 streets. The snow was piled everywhere, and it was icy and slippery. Surprisingly, nobody was speeding in the window of time for the walk, but participants still commented on the perceived danger with the cars too close to the snowy icy path for walking.

Team leaders let people know that one of the PEL options was to remove one lane from each direction to offer more room for snow storage, providing a barrier and to give some space between walkers and the road. One of the walking participants from the church lives in south Anchorage, and at first was concerned that removing a lane would slow down her commute. When she was informed that studies estimated times would be less than 2 minutes longer, there was no concern.

We heard from several park and trail advocates that alternative D struck fear in their heart. The Chester Creek Trail is beloved, and there are plans to connect Sitka Street Park to the Chester Creek Trail and the Senior Center. We do not support alternative D.

One thing we learned loud and clear is that Fairview residents want a greenway connection in the form of a safe active transportation multi-use path or separated path for bicyclists and pedestrians between the Chester Creek Trail and the Ship Creek Trail. Fairview residents have suggested Hyder Street for this option. We encourage the PEL team to find the best route to make that connection through the next round of development and screening so the public can provide feedback.

We are very excited about AKDOT&PF's work with the Municipality of Anchorage's Traffic Department to launch the 2nd protected bike lane pilot project this summer on the north side of 6th Avenue. Perhaps something like this could work on Hyder Street to connect the Chester Creek Trail to the Ship Creek Trail.

As for freight traffic, we recognize the difficulty of this situation, particularly since there is a lot of development activity planned between 3rd and 4th avenue both east and west of C Street. This is not a great location for freight activity. We would like to point out that we have a dream project to create a Gateway to Ship Creek downtown, that involves increasing bike and pedestrian activity west of C Street between 3rd Avenue and Ship Creek. Additionally, plans are underway to improve and activate two commercial buildings – a 250 room hotel and an adjacent grocery store, condos and shopping center both east and west of C Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues. That development is south of the Chinook lot, the large parking lot owned by the Muni that used to be the Saturday Market. Plans are underway to study the use of the Chinook Lot for a potential transit station. This could be an amazing walkable urban corridor with reduced speed limits and lots of active transportation activity. We encourage the PEL team to rework one of the alternatives to move freight traffic north to the Port of Alaska off the Glenn Highway from points further east. Not an easy thing to do, we realize, but it could meet the intent to maintain the functionality of the National Highway System while improving neighborhood connections and enhancing quality of life.

Thank you for your hard work on this plan. We appreciate you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Beth Nordlund". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Beth" and last name "Nordlund" clearly distinguishable.

Beth Nordlund, Executive Director, Anchorage Park Foundation
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