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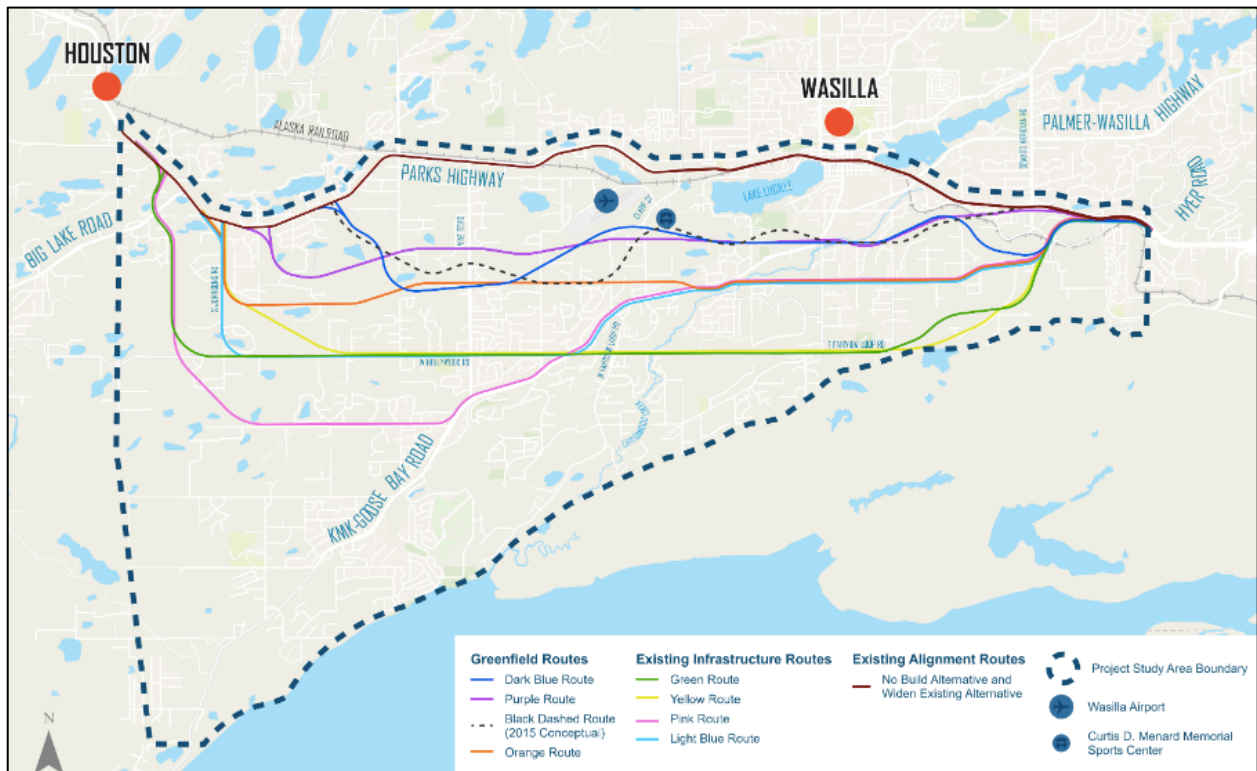
Parks Highway Alternative Corridor PEL Study Project Team
 Alaska Department of Transportation
 Parkshighwayalternative@dowl.com

February 10, 2023

RE: Parks Highway Alternative Corridor PEL Study Alternatives

Dear Parks Highway Alternative Corridor PEL Study project team:

The Meadow Lakes Community Council membership voted at the February 8, 2023 meeting to submit the following comments for consideration regarding the alternatives provided at public open house number 2 shown below.



Our preferred alternative is to “Widen Existing Parks Highway,” however we object to the word “widen.” Adding another lane is what L.A. did and it did not solve their traffic problems. This alternative should be called “Improving the Existing Parks Highway.” We feel the existing infrastructure could be selectively improved in key sections, like near Main Street and near Palmer-Wasilla Highway. We feel this approach should be given the same level of engineering creativity and analysis as the other alternatives.

The following comments are from our board and membership.

Major concerns with greenfield routes:

- Accelerated destruction of more of our suburban forests and wetlands.
- Accelerated destruction of agricultural and farm land.
- Concern about cutting neighborhoods in half with limited and dangerous access to the other side.
- Properties that are currently undeveloped are often undeveloped for good reasons such as wetlands, topography, and private ownership type and may be especially difficult to purchase and expensive to build a highway on.

Support for greenfield routes:

- There was some support for the purple and orange routes, but with the east end somewhere between Hyer Rd and Wolf Eye Center.

Major concerns with existing infrastructure routes:

- Existing right-of-way is too narrow, and many private properties would have to be purchased.
- Concern about cutting neighborhoods in half.
- Hollywood and Sunset are highwater marsh areas with many driveways and upkeep of a highway would be expensive and frequent.

Support for existing infrastructure routes:

- There was some support for the yellow route.
- Would support future development to the south of the Parks Highway. (There was much disagreement about this among the group).

Major concerns with the existing Parks Highway:

- It will be difficult to make changes because of limitations due to the railroad, right-of-way width, and commercial properties.
- It is too built up to fix or save.
- Commercial businesses often oppose channelization projects, like medians and driveway consolidation, even if they offer significant safety benefits.

Other ideas:

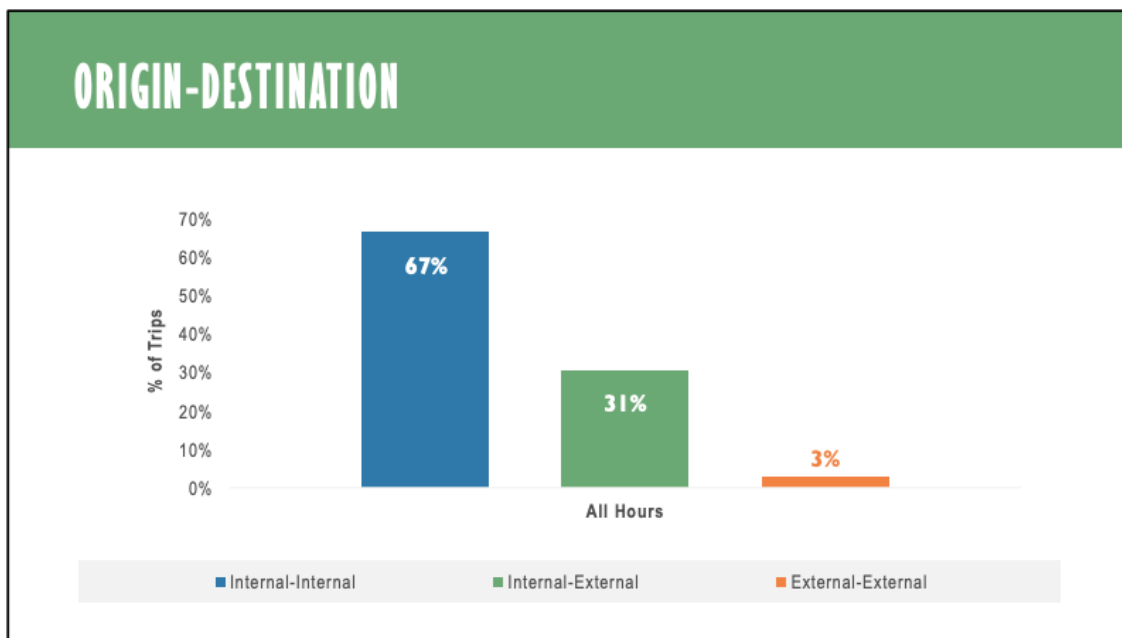
- Consider an alternative to move the railroad instead of the highway. It would open up more commercial area and allow for highway expansion. It could be located further south and impact less developed areas. It would likely cost less and impact fewer people.
- Add grade separated interchanges at Main Street and Palmer-Wasilla Highway.
- Advertise the locations of the park and rides and put up better signage.

- Can an express lane with bridges be added to the Parks Highway?
- We should have more conversations about these and other alternatives.
- Need to upgrade Fairview Loop, Hyer Road, and Seward Meridian.
- Need to hook Nelson into Fairview Loop so there are more alternative routes.
- Build the Knik Arm bridge to Anchorage. Build the railroad and the road will follow.

Major concerns with process:

- Are you doing this whole expensive study for 3% of the traffic?

The slide below from the open house 1 presentation shows that only 3% of the traffic is “bypassing” the Wasilla study area.

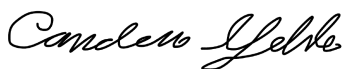


- Most of the traffic is going to or from Wasilla to shop or work according to the traffic study. We don't understand how a bypass would resolve traffic that is 97% local trips.
- This seems like a huge project when the Borough is only experiencing 1.7% growth (according to open house 1) and there is usually congestion only during peak periods.
- Even if construction is federally funded, the State will be on the hook for expensive and forever upkeep.
- If the goal is to reduce traffic, can you please do a study on reducing traffic and not solely on building roads? This should include transit, pathways, light timing, and dispersed city center planning.
- All proposed routes, other than the existing Parks Highway, have serious impacts. These will go through people's yards.
- Many things are possible, including upgrading the existing Parks Highway.

- Even though they may seem to be impediments to traffic flow, please think about pedestrian traffic in the Wasilla core, the scenic beauty of the lakes, and the historic significance of the Alaska Railroad in your study recommendations.
- Rather than focus on a costly, high-impactive new four-lane road to by-pass Wasilla, as most studies seem to focus on, maybe a combination of identifying collector routes as alternatives to the Parks Highway, both north and south of the Parks Highway. Routes such as Seldon Road and Hollywood Road are examples.
- We don't think the project team sufficiently considered the traffic reducing effects of the following projects on the Parks Highway.
 - Seldon Road Extension Phase 2 will serve as a "Wasilla bypass" and many of us will have fewer trips on the Parks Highway. Construction should be in 2024.
 - Knik-Goose Bay Road Reconstruction will improve safety and flow for an area where many people live. This is under construction.
 - Wasilla Main Street Rehabilitation proposes to close eight driveways onto the Parks Highway, add medians, and add traffic signals which will consolidate business access, improve flow, and improve safety on the Parks Highway. Construction should be in 2024.
- A plan to alleviate congestion in Wasilla can only be accomplished through a joint effort with the Alaska Railroad, the Mat-Su Borough, transit, and the City of Wasilla. Perhaps one joint comprehensive plan for the Wasilla metropolitan area which incorporates long-range planning by these agencies would be the best approach.

We do not think it is advisable to attempt to build a new highway corridor at this stage of the Borough's development. It is too built up and the costs outweigh the benefits. However, we would appreciate a coordinated approach to improving the existing Parks Highway and we think there are many opportunities to do so. We do not want our community divided by a 70-mph superhighway.

Sincerely,



Camden Yehle

President, Meadow Lakes Community Council