

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT MEETING  
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE  
SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 26, 2010

1:06 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair  
Representative Craig Johnson, Vice Chair  
Representative Kyle Johansen  
Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz  
Representative Tammie Wilson  
Representative Max Gruenberg  
Representative Pete Petersen

SENATE TRANSPORTATION

Senator Albert Kookesh, Chair  
Senator Linda Menard, Vice Chair

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

SENATE TRANSPORTATION

Senator Bettye Davis  
Senator Kevin Meyer  
Senator Joe Paskvan

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES (DOT&PF) UPDATE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

FRANK RICHARDS, Deputy Commissioner  
Office of the Commissioner  
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified and answered questions during the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Update

CINDY CASHEN, Administrator  
Highway Safety Office (HSO)  
Division of Program Development  
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the DOT&PF update.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:06:57 PM](#)

**CHAIR PEGGY WILSON** called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Transportation Standing Committees to order at 1:06 p.m.

Senators Kookesh and Menard and Representatives Johnson, Petersen, T. Wilson, and P. Wilson were present at the call to order. Representatives Gruenberg, Johansen, and Munoz arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Update**

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CHAIR P. WILSON announced that the only order of business would be a continuation of the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Update.

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FRANK RICHARDS, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT/PF), identified DOT&PF staff present: Jim Beedle, Deputy Commissioner Of Marine Operations for the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS); Mary Siroky, Legislative Liaison and Special Assistant to the Commissioner; Joel St. Aubin, Chief Engineer for Facilities; Mike Coffey, State Maintenance & Operations Chief, and Cindy Cashen, Administrator, Statewide Highway Safety Office.

MR. RICHARDS resumed his update from the last hearing. He stated that he previously discussed the "3 E's," Education,

Enforcement, and Engineering approach and how these concepts are applied to the Highway Safety Corridors (HSCs) [slide 1]. He explained that the HSCs were created by statute to address safety issues on certain highways that have experienced a high number of fatalities and major injury accidents. The designated HSCs are portions of the Seward Highway, the Parks Highway, the Sterling Highway, and Knik/Goose Bay Road. He presented safety data that tracked the fatal and major injury crashes from 1977 - 2009 [slide 2]. The data volumes show ever increasing traffic volumes and the red line indicates the number of fatalities. The Seward Highway fatality rates have been constant over the 30 year timeframe, but the major injury and accidents indicate a slight downward trend. The DOT&PF has worked to address the accidents by designating portions of the roadways in 2006 as Highway Traffic Safety Corridors. Additionally, the DOT&PF has performed rut repair from milepost 87- 117 of the Seward Highway [slide 3]. The DOT&PF will install rumble strips along the centerline to help reduce head-on collisions, which has proven to be a big deterrent to accidents nationwide.

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MR. RICHARDS explained the DOT&PF will also add signage for use of headlights and install half mile post markers to assist motorists. The DOT&PF will initiate a new program, the Report Every Dangerous Driver Program (REDDI), which should be ready to launch by February 2010 in conjunction with local police and the Department of Public Safety (DPS). This program is designed to encourage motorists to report dangerous driving. Additionally, the DOT&PF will add two more Bureau of Highway Patrol (BHP) troopers and will continue to use media to educate Alaskans and visitors on accident hazards. Long-term efforts include the DOT&PF plans for major road projects to create more passing lanes and slow vehicle turnouts to help prevent vehicles from slowing down other motorists. The DOT&PF also plans to add parking areas around Windy Corner on the Seward Highway to reduce traffic hazards caused by vehicles that stop to view or photograph sheep that come down to cliffs very close to the road.

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CHAIR P. WILSON asked for clarification of the short term plan for Milepost 88 guardrail removal.

MR. RICHARDS responded that ideally guardrails are installed on roadways where a major height differential exists along a

roadway. Sometimes a roadway will contain two guardrails, one on each side of the roadway, which can create a hazard since vehicles can careen from one side of the road to the other and cause head-on collisions. He offered to research the specifics of the planned guardrail removal and report back to the committee.

MR. RICHARDS discussed the Parks Highway improvements for Milepost 44 - 52.5, which will help address the increase in major accidents [slide 4]. The traffic volumes continue to increase on the Parks Highway and the DOT&PF is currently involved in the environmental and preliminary design process to expand the highway. This section, Milepost 44 - 52.5, is currently a two-lane highway with adjacent businesses and homes. The DOT&PF is installing a new signal at Vine Road, has performed mill and overlay to remove rutting, brush removal for better visibility, will add rumble strips and additional signage for headlight use, and has initiated the REDDI reporting program. The BHP will add more Alaska State Troopers (AST), has opened a Pittman Station, and is working cooperatively with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to increase law enforcement and media efforts to assist motorists. The long term solution is to widen the road to a four-lane highway. The funding for the design work on the project is in the current Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), but the project is a multi-phased effort and is estimated to cost \$125 million to complete.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked whether traffic accident and fatality reporting is tracked by days of the week. He suggested that weekends are probably peak times and asked if the DPS provides additional law enforcement efforts for peak times.

MR. RICHARDS answered yes. He related that the DOT&PF has had good coordination with the BHP.

[1:19:37 PM](#)

CINDY CASHEN, Administrator, Highway Safety Office (HSO), Division of Program Development, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), explained that the Alaska HSO reviews the data for hours, days of the week, and location. The return trips on the Seward Highway indicate higher accident rates. She explained that the HSO conducts audits by traveling the road by van, with representatives from the AST, emergency medical responders (EMR), Central Region DOT&PF engineers, and

the HSO participating, to collectively discuss and make decisions on enforcement, engineering, and education, and to identify the specific target group. Drunk drivers peak on the highways on the weekend after the bars close, while the speeding drivers occur around lunch time or after school. She related that the DOT&PF identifies factors that contribute to specific types of accidents and develops a plan to reduce the accidents.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON applauded and encouraged the DOT&PF's efforts to coordinate with law enforcement.

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MS. CASHEN, in response to Representative Johansen, clarified that the members of the quarterly review team that conduct audits, includes a Captain from the AST; an EMR from the region, the Central Region Traffic Safety Engineer, and herself, the administrator of the Alaska HSO. She related that the group also attempts to include a local engineer, and anyone else interested in participating in the audit. As part of the effort, the group meets with local law enforcement agencies along the highway route. In further response to Representative Johansen, she explained that the HSO does coordinate efforts with the APD, but not for the HSC. The HSO meets with APD officials during the road review to keep them updated and the APD often makes suggestions.

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MR. RICHARDS reviewed the Knik/Goose Bay Road Corridor from Wasilla towards Point MacKenzie [slide 6]. He reported that traffic has dramatically increased and the major accident rate has also increased, although the fatality rate has remained constant since 1977. He envisioned the DOT&PF would perform efforts similar to other HSCs to address the problems on this roadway. The DOT&PF plans to install signals, including signals at Vine Road, Pittman Road, Fairview Loop, and Fern Street to attempt to control cross traffic. Additionally, the DOT&PF will install rumble strips, institute the REDDI program, and increase BHP patrols. The DOT&PF will target its media campaign in the Mat-Su Valley. The long term efforts include plans for a 4-lane highway, but the right-of-way and costs are expected to be high.

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MR. RICHARDS, in response to Senator Menard, explained that each new signal costs \$1.5 million, which includes the right-of-way and utility work required for installation.

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MR. RICHARDS, in response to Representative Johnson, explained that the DOT&PF is in the process of negotiating with the jurisdictions, including the potential impact of a larger number of calls to the 911 system. He offered that the DOT&PF wants to have dangerous drivers reported but does not want to adversely affect emergency responders.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON suggested that if using the 911 emergency telephone number does not prove feasible for use in the REDDI program, that another three digit numbers might be programmed to the local police jurisdiction. He expressed concern that the 911 system might get bogged down.

MR. RICHARDS agreed that other three-digit numbers could be used. He pointed out that 511, the state's highway information number currently provides updated traffic information for motorists, although that number is not related to the REDDI Program.

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MR. RICHARDS discussed the Sterling Highway Traffic Safety Corridor [slide 8 - 9]. He reported that the traffic volumes continue to increase, but a reduction in major accidents has been observed. The short-term efforts planned are similar to those the DOT&PF is taking with the other HSCs, including adding rumble strips, centerline and shoulder work, adding signage for headlights, and use of the REDDI program. The DOT&PF will add curve delineator/deflectors to warn motorists that they are approaching a curve, the BPH also established an office in Soldotna, and media efforts are being undertaken. At this time, a four-lane project is not under consideration, but the DOT&PF hopes that the educational efforts will reduce accidents.

MR. RICHARDS, in response to Chair Wilson, agreed that traffic volumes are raising and on the Seward Highway traffic volumes are very high so drivers frequently get frustrated. Two-lane highways are over-capacitated when traffic volumes reach 12,000 vehicles per day. During the summer months, the traffic volumes on the Seward Highway reach 21,000 to 22,000 vehicles per day. In those instances drivers can easily get frustrated, take

risks, and then accidents happen. The DOT&PF is working to develop methods to reduce accidents, he said.

MR. RICHARDS, in response to Representative Johnson, explained the costs to expand the Seward Highway to a 4-lane highway are estimated at approximately \$600 million. The cost is high since the Seward Highway is bounded on one side by Turnagain Arm and the Alaska Railroad and the Chugach State Park or national forest land on the other side. Additionally, the Turnagain Arm provides critical habitat for Beluga whales, which would pose a significant challenge to overcome in order to expand the roadway.

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MR. RICHARDS discussed Enforcement efforts [slide 11]. He restated that the DPS created the BHP and assigned officers to conduct additional patrols to target high peak accident times. He related his own first-hand experience that the presence of increased enforcement has helped on the Seward Highway. The \$4.8 million funding for the BPH is provided by a federal grant, which passes through the DOT&PF's HSO. Three years of the grant program remain so the DOT&PF hopes to report successes from the BPH [slide 12]. He discussed efforts that the DOT&PF has taken to provide education to the public [slide 13]. The DOT&PF has advertising programs underway to promote seatbelt use with its "Click it or Ticket" advertisements, and other advertising spots identify the HSCs, inform people about driving while fatigued, and promote headlight usage. The DOT&PF also funds motorcycle safety training and uses bumper stickers to promote safe driving. Most recently, the DOT&PF has posted a "Take the Challenge" page on its website, which is a refresher course consisting of 15 motor vehicle regulation and driver safety questions.

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SENATOR MENARD asked for statewide budget costs for DOT&PF's media.

MS. CASHEN answered that the DOT&PF's HSO provides \$500,000 for media for highway safety education.

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MS. CASHEN, in response to Representative Johnson, explained that the media funding is provided by federal funding. She

added that the source of some funding is from sanctioned funds, which can be used for alcohol related messages. In further response to Representative Johnson, she explained that with sanctioned funds, the federal government diverts federal funds in instances in which the states do not pass certain laws. The federal government basically wants to send a message to the states that they will lose federal funds if they do not pass certain laws. The sanctioned funds are diverted to the states' Highway Safety Offices, which are housed in the Department of Public Safety offices in many states. The HSO can elect to use the funds, she said. In Alaska, the HSO is housed in DOT&PF but meets to discuss highway safety engineering and highway safety behavior projects in order to share the sanctioned funds between the DPS and the DOT&PF. Once the Alaska HSO reaches an agreement with the DPS, it informs the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the funding is divided between the DOT&PF for construction projects and the Alaska HSO for funding driver behavior programs.

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REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN asked for clarification. He related a scenario in which Alaska did not set the speed limits to correspond with federal guidelines, and asked if that would result in the federal government providing sanctioned funds.

MS. CASHEN agreed conceptually, but explained that the sanctioned funds are related to offenses such as open container laws, ignition interlock devices, and Alaska Drivers' License revocation periods for certain offenses. These are the types of laws that many states will not pass, including Alaska. Thus, the sanctioned funds are diverted to the Alaska HSO.

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CHAIR P. WILSON asked for a list of laws that Alaska has not been willing to enact.

MS. CASHEN agreed to provide the list.

MS. CASHEN, in response to Representative Johansen, related that the Alaska HSO receives \$10 million in sanctioned funds, which are split between the Highway Safety Improvement Program and the Alaska HSO. Each office currently receives \$5 million, she said. In further response to Representative Johansen, she explained that the sanctioned funds are directed to the Highway Safety Program to be used on a specific safety project such as

adding a street light, traffic signal, or pedestrian crossing at an intersection with a history of accidents. She also related that the funds could be used for rumble strips.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked whether the state would still receive all the sanctioned funds, but the funds would just be placed in a different place.

MS. CASHEN agreed.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked what programs receiving funding could be deleted.

MR. RICHARDS restated that the federal funding Alaska receives consists of federal highway funding for construction, but due to sanctions, a portion of the funding is taken "off the top." Thus, the DOT&PF is prevented from spending the diverted sanctioned funds on other paving or road projects. The net effect is that some paving projects are prevented and some roads are not built. However, the state receives some benefit from the funds, since the funds are used for highway safety projects through the DOT&PF's HSO.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON recalled debate last legislative session during the child safety seat hearings and a statement that the state would lose the money if the bill was not passed.

MR. RICHARDS answered that he was unsure if the sanctioned funding is dollar for dollar when the state does not enact a particular statute.

MS. CASHEN clarified that the federal funding under question is another type of federal funding considered to be federal incentive funds. The federal incentive funding is a one-time funding for states that pass certain laws. Thus, when the Congress feels strongly about a safety law, it will offer states one-time incentives, she stated. Thus, last year Alaska received one-time incentive funding for passing several bills, including the child safety and booster seat bill. In further response to Representative Johnson, she offered that she did not believe the state would be required to return funding if those laws were later repealed.

[1:42:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked whether the state is spending more money on advertising than it otherwise would have, if the state did not receive federal sanction funding.

MS. CASHEN responded that states are required to have a strategic media plan in place as a companion to the state's enforcement plan in order to receive any Highway Safety Funding. The state would lose almost all of the seven or eight segments of Highway Safety funding if the state would fail to adopt a federally-approved media plan.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked whether the HSO advertises in order to receive public input on proposed laws the federal government supports.

MS. CASHEN responded no. The state does not spend funding to determine what the public's preference for laws are since the state already obtains that information from surveys created for that purpose.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN asked for the amount of the federal sanctioned funds.

MS. CASHEN answered that the state DOT&PF's office receives \$5 million in federal funding annually. In further response to Representative Johansen, she explained that the state will ultimately receive the funding, but the funding is initially directed to the HSOs in sanctioned states. Some states Highway Safety Offices are located within their public safety departments, or in their Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices. When sanctioned states receive funding, the Highway Safety Offices can choose to retain the funding, but often share the funding with their transportation departments. She characterized the federal government's action as "sending a message."

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REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked whether the DOT&PF's HSO would receive the funds if Alaska did not pass the laws.

MS. CASHEN related that Alaska is designated as a sanctioned state so the federal funding is directed to the Alaska HSO

first. In the event that Alaska passes the recommended federal government legislation, it would not be considered a sanctioned state and the \$5 million in funding would be directed from the FWHA to the DOT&PF's Highway Safety Improvement Program instead. In further response to Representative T. Wilson, she referred to one-time incentives represent the carrot approach, but the sanctioned funds represent the stick.

[1:47:51 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS understood that the committee would like to know the level of funding the state would receive if the state was not sanctioned, and how much it would lose or be returned to the state through the sanctioned funds. He offered to provide the figures to the committee.

[1:48:38 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS discussed other safety projects [slide 12]. He explained that pedestrian countdown signals are crosswalk signals that inform pedestrians how much time they have remaining to cross the street before the traffic signal will turn green and traffic will flow. These signals have reduced pedestrian crashes by 25 percent, he said. Nearly 530 signals have been installed in Fairbanks intersections. The DOT&PF is currently installing the signals in the Matanuska-Susitna and Kenai Boroughs.

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MR. RICHARDS, in response to Chair Wilson, explained the countdown mechanism. He related that the countdown signals were first used in 2004 in Anchorage. He related that Ms. Cashen also tracks the fatalities in crosswalks and that all three fatalities at crosswalks involved pedestrians, he stated.

[1:50:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON remarked that when the countdown signals get to five that the drivers speed up. He asked whether the DOT&PF has studied the effect countdown lights has on driving habits.

MR. RICHARDS said he was unaware of any specific study, but offered to ask the traffic safety engineers for information.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON expressed concern that the countdown signals could cause additional accidents.

MR. RICHARDS agreed to obtain the information for the committee.

CHAIR P. WILSON remarked that the DOT&PF believes the countdown signals reduce accidents by 25 percent.

MR. RICHARDS agreed the countdown signals reduce accidents by 25 percent.

[1:51:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN recalled traffic lights have blinders on the traffic lights so approaching drivers cannot see when the light is changing. He suggested blinders could be placed on the countdown signals.

MR. RICHARDS recalled that the countdown signals have blinders on them.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON recalled problems with snow obscuring signals in other states that use digital lights that are not hot enough to melt snow so blowing snow conditions have caused problems. He asked whether the DOT&PF has experienced similar problems in Alaska.

MR. RICHARDS referred to the light emitting diode (LED) lighting that is currently installed in most traffic signals in Alaska. He was unaware of any issues in Alaska with the specific LED lighting.

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REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN asked whether the pedestrian countdown signals are a standard design.

MR. RICHARDS said he did not know. He offered to check, in particular, as it relates to any countdown signals in Ketchikan.

MR. RICHARDS discussed reflector testing along guardrails, which have helped warn motorists they are approaching a curve, which is especially helpful during blowing snow conditions [slide 13]. He highlighted the DOT&PF efforts to install rumble strips on roadways [slide 14]. In 2000, rumble strips were installed on

main Central Region roads and in 2002, on Northern Region roadways. Some citizens complained about the noise caused when vehicles run over the rumble strips. However, other people advised the DOT&PF that the rumble strips saved their lives since they were awakened by the noise when their vehicle wandered when they either fell asleep or were distracted while driving. The rumble strips have reduced crashes by 22 percent, he stated. The centerline rumble strips are now being installed in the HSCs to help prevent head-on collisions.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked for the cost for installation.

MR. RICHARDS recalled that \$1.5 million is being spent for rumble strips in the HSCs.

[1:56:35 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS, in response to Representative Petersen, clarified that \$1.5 million is the cost to install rumble strips on the centerline for all of the HSCs.

MR. RICHARDS discussed ice damage caused by the Yukon River in Eagle, a rockslide on Portage Road near the Whittier Tunnel, and erosion caused by the Matanuska River on the Glenn Highway [slides 16 - 18]. In the community of Eagle the extensive damage crumbled buildings and vehicles. The DOT&PF responded with repairs, including building a temporary road in Eagle. Mileposts 38 - 39 on the Copper River Highway experienced flooding, so the DOT&PF raised the embankment and reinforced the road to prevent further problems [slide 17]. Spring floods washed out segments of the Nome Teller Road [slide 21]. So, the DOT&PF repaired the roadway and the road is open between Teller and Nome.

MR. RICHARDS described the Kuskokwim River at Tulusak events, which flooded the airport runway and caused damage [slide 20]. The DOT&PF had to reestablish the embankment and resurface the runway to restore use of the airport runway.

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MR. RICHARDS explained a major rock slide, consisting of approximately 400,000 cubic yards of material, cut off the community of Whittier from vehicular traffic. The DOT&PF had to drill and shoot the house-sized boulders and material in order to remove it, plus perform some preventative work. The DOT&PF

spent about \$2.5 million to remove the debris prior to the first cruise ship travel [slide 22].

MR. RICHARDS described erosion caused by the Matanuska River that impacted the Glenn Highway. The river destroyed about 20 feet of the roadway within hours. The DOT&PF performed embankment work to stabilize the road and will continue with its repairs.

[2:01:08 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS outlined the Maintenance and Operation (M&O) work [slide 25]. He explained the DOT&PF maintains 15,221 lane miles and 256 airports, which is about half of the general fund budget in Alaska. Last year, the legislature provided \$11.2 million as a budget increment in FY 10 for the purpose of snow removal on sidewalks in Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks, and anti-icing efforts at rural airports. Additionally, the DOT&PF funding will be used for safety items such as guardrail, signs, lights, striping, and markings on roads and airports. He related that the DOT&PF will report to the Finance committees how the incremental funding was spent.

[2:02:31 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS detailed the increase in Anchorage street sweeping. He stated he previously detailed the multi-sector, major impact, project that will require more personnel to meet the expanded EPA requirements. This will cost approximately \$2.5 million.

[2:03:10 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS recapped the interim work with legislators [slide 26]. The DOT&PF held several House and Senate Transportation meetings, traveled along the Dalton Highway, and held meetings in Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to discuss department issues with the committee and public members.

MR. RICHARDS showed several slides from the travel [slides 27 - 28], depicting the Dalton Highway, the weigh station on the Glenn Highway, and Potter Marsh.

[2:04:16 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS welcomed legislators to travel on the Dalton Highway.

CHAIR P. WILSON remarked that she enjoyed the trip, including the trucker, who provided a lot of information.

MR. RICHARDS advised that the trucker has become a national celebrity. In response to Representative Johansen, he recalled the animals on the road were marmots.

[2:06:05 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS discussed the DOT&PF successes [slide 29]. He explained that the DOT&PF leads the nation on the reduction of fatalities. The fatality rate was reduced by 24 percent between 2006 - 2007, that the DOT&PF accomplished the regular program, and has obligated 80 percent of ARRA funding. The DOT&PF's safety and work related injuries were reduced considerably. The DOT&PF conducted rescue efforts. He concluded his presentation by pointing out the photograph depicting the M/V Taku's Crew receiving the U.S. Coast Guard Award [slide 30]. He explained that a fire occurred on Chatham Strait. The captain and his crew responded to a distress call, searched for the vessel, and arrived within 30 minutes. He described the rescue, such that the conditions were stormy with gale force winds, with two people overboard in a survival raft. The crew deployed the rescue boat, pick up the mariners, and were back on the vessel, having completed the mission within four minutes, he said.

[2:08:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON asked whether the DOT&PF has researched the effects of de-icing at Anchorage International Airport and whether the chemical will be handled differently.

MR. RICHARDS said he was unaware of runoff for sodium glycol that is used for de-icing but offered to research the matter.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON remarked that it may be an issue for the critical habitat for the Beluga whales.

MR. RICHARDS, in response to Representative Johnson, offered that the DOT&PF is in the process of preparing a response with respect to the airport marketing issues at the International Airport System.

[2:10:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ understood that the DOT&PF recently changed street de-icing chemicals in Juneau. She asked for the status on changes and how often sidewalk snow removal occurs.

MR. RICHARDS related that the DOT&PF is using sodium chloride instead of magnesium chloride. He offered to provide an update on de-icing as well as a schedule for sidewalk snow removal.

[2:11:22 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON remarked that she has noticed the snow removal on sidewalks in Juneau is vastly improved. She recalled seeing berms that were four feet high and snow covered sidewalks during the winter months in prior years.

[2:11:53 PM](#)

SENATOR MENARD expressed interest in discussing the airports since Wasilla and Palmer does not have jet flight service, yet the population in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough area has increased to about 89,000.

[2:12:09 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON mentioned an airport update will be forthcoming.

[2:13:17 PM](#)

MR. RICHARDS understood Senator Menard's request to be that she would like the DOT&PF to improve the Mat-Su airports for jet service. He explained that the City of Palmer owns its facility and the City of Wasilla owns its airport. He offered to work with the communities to discuss their needs and the costs to construct the airports.

[2:13:49 PM](#)

SENATOR MENARD suggested improvements similar to the Merrill Field in Anchorage.

MR. RICHARDS related that one of the key ingredients to expanding the airport is to have a carrier interested in providing the service, which would also provide an incentive.

SENATOR MENARD understood some carriers are interested in serving the areas.

[2:14:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG remarked that he has toured the Dalton Highway during the summer. He suggested that the DOT&PF consider expanding tours for winter, so the legislature could see the road during the toughest time of the year.

MR. RICHARDS offered to provide that coordination.

[2:16:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked for an explanation of how the REDDI program would operate.

MS. CASHEN explained how the REDDI program would work. She described a scenario in which a driver along the Seward Highway would dial 911 and obtain a dispatcher. The location would depend on the driver's location at the time of the call. Depending on the time of day and the driver's location would determine whether the dispatcher would contact local law enforcement or the AST. The law enforcement has an agreement with the dispatcher as to hours and geographic areas of responsibility.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked whether the law enforcement would officer need to see the behavior or could cite based on the call.

MS. CASHEN responded that she did not know.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON asked whether any other states have similar programs.

MS. CASHEN answered yes, that many other states have similar programs and Alaska used to have one. The Alaska program was not enforced because the AST did not have enough troopers to enforce the law. However, Alaska is requesting to reinstate this program because the BHP and local law enforcement have more officers to respond. She remarked that instead of the REDDI program referring to Report Every Drunk Driver, the program is now called Report Every Dangerous Driver to cover all types of behavior.

[2:19:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG asked for the DOT&PF legislative priorities.

MR. RICHARDS answered that the legislature priorities are the Governor's current legislative requests and monitoring the impact on the DOT&PF for any bills that pass the legislature. The DOT&PF also works to improve its service through the budgetary review and enhancing the DOT&PF's construction program through the federal Jobs for Main Street bill or the regular state and federal program.

MR. RICHARDS, in response to Representative Gruenberg, answered that he was unaware of any new DOT&PF priorities or legislative requests.

[2:21:24 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the joint House and Senate Transportation Standing Committees meeting was adjourned at 2:21 p.m.