

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

Anchorage, Alaska

July 11, 2024

1:02 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Kevin McCabe, Chair  
Representative Sarah Vance, Vice Chair  
Representative Tom McKay  
Representative Jesse Sumner  
Representative Genevieve Mina

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Craig Johnson  
Representative Louise Stutes

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S): PUBLIC SAFETY IN ALASKA'S TRAFFIC CORRIDORS

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MAJOR ANTHONY APRIL  
Alaska State Troopers  
Department of Public Safety  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

SHANNON MCCARTHY, Communications Director  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

ANNA BOSIN, Research Development & Technology/Transfer Manager  
and Tribal Liaison  
Division of Statewide Design and Engineering Services

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

ALEX REID  
DOT Central Region  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

LUKE BOWLAND, Preconstruction Engineer  
Central Region  
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

STEVE NOBLE, PE, PTOE, Senior Project Manager  
DOWL  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

KRYSTAL HOKE, representing self  
Girdwood, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony during the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

CARRIE HARRIS, representing self  
Anchor Point, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony during the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

JEFF THALMAN, representing self  
Anchor Point, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave public testimony during the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:02:19 PM](#)

**CHAIR KEVIN MCCABE** called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Representatives McCabe, McKay, Vance, Mina, and Sumner were present at the call to

order. Representatives Johnson and Stutes arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION(S): PUBLIC SAFETY IN ALASKA'S TRAFFIC CORRIDORS**

[1:02:57 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE announced that the only order of business would be the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation.

[1:04:29 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE introduced the presenters from the Alaska Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF).

[1:05:40 PM](#)

MAJOR ANTHONY APRIL, Alaska State Troopers, Department of Public Safety (DPS), as co-presenter, began the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation [hardcopy included in the committee packet] on slide 1, where he gave a brief overview of the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and DPS's plans for transit safety along Alaska's roadways. In response to Chair McCabe, he explained that there were eight different types of statistics that DOT&PF and DPS measure. In response to Representative Mina, he said he did not have specific data currently regarding a breakdown of pedestrian/vehicle collision but would follow-up with the committee later. In response to Representative Vance, he noted there were three fatalities during 2023 on the Kenai Peninsula, and he said that the Alaska State Troopers maintains a clear patrol of highways on the Kenai Peninsula.

[1:16:29 PM](#)

SHANNON MCCARTHY, Communications Director, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, as co-presenter of the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation and in response to Chair McCabe, stated that many of the causes of car crashes along the Kenai Highway could be attributed to a number of factors, including [lack of] seat belt use, driver error, weather/road conditions.

[1:23:04 PM](#)

ANNA BOSIN, Research Development & Technology/Transfer Manager and Tribal Liaison, Division of Statewide Design and Engineering Services, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, resumed the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation on slide 5, titled "Safety Corridor Results," which displayed a graph conveying the results of a traffic safety study performed along specified safety corridors in Alaska as well as listed shortened results of the study. In response to Representative Mina, she pointed to information on the graph relating to crash data along the Seward Highway. She continued to slide 6, which used graphs displaying statistics to emphasize the disproportionate role that speed plays in automobile crashes along Alaska's highways. In response to Representative Vance, she explained that a traffic safety corridor is a designation of highway given to roads, usually rural ones, on which DOT&PF performs safety "focus studies."

[1:33:53 PM](#)

MS. BOSIN continued to slide 7, which displayed a number of images, graphs, and statistics related to vehicle speeds and speed-related accidents along Alaska's highways. She moved to slide 8, which elaborated on the previously emphasized speed-related accidents by breaking down the specifics of each speed related accident and comparing Alaska's statistics to the United States' speed-related accident statistics as a whole. Slide 9 displayed two graphs that highlighted the traffic volume versus the fatal and major traffic crashes that have occurred along the Seward Highway traffic safety corridor. She continued to slide 10, which emphasized the disproportionately serious outcomes of traffic accidents that occur on rural roads. She moved to slide 11, which used three graphs to highlight the leading causes of traffic accidents along Alaska's roadways.

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CHAIR MCCABE asked why certain driving laws aren't enforced when they could be effective in lowering vehicle accident rates.

MS. BOSIN explained the specifics of AST's traffic enforcement practices and said that certain rules are sometimes "omitted" from enforcement due to the difficulty of their application. To another question, he said he would follow up with an answer later addressing uniform enforcement of rights-of-way and passing lanes along Alaska roadways.

[1:51:13 PM](#)

MS. BOSIN, in response to Representative Vance, said that she is currently unaware of any patterns that could be taken away from the accidents occurring on the Kenai Peninsula. She said that the Department of Health (DOH) has good statistics on substance abuse and explained that often more than one drug is usually the cause of intoxicated driving. She resumed the presentation on slide 12, which highlighted DOT&PF's successes in public roadway safety, particularly through the use of seatbelts and roadway access management. She moved to slide 13, which described DOT&PF's ongoing efforts to lower the risk of automobile accidents along Alaska's highways. In response to Chair McCabe, he noted that narrowing of vehicle lanes, referred to as "gateway treatment," as well as more thoughtful land use are more effective solutions to controlling speed than simply lowering the speed limit on a given road.

[2:06:21 PM](#)

MS. BOSIN, in response to Representative Vance, confirmed DOT&PF is aware of the Kachemak City Council's request for a lower speed limit along its roadways and explained that DOT&PF must go through a number of processes to ensure the funding, permitting, and approval of a project before it can take any action concerning the matter.

[2:11:21 PM](#)

MS. MCCARTHY mentioned that the DOT&PF is happy to partner with boroughs along the Kenai [Peninsula] to ensure and improve safety along the highway.

MS. BOSIN, in response to Representative Sumner, said she would follow up later with an answer as to the rate of accidents in communities with declining rates of seatbelt usage.

[2:13:10 PM](#)

ALEX REID, Central Region, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, as co-participant in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation, resumed the presentation on slides 15 and 16, which highlighted the Knik-Goose Bay (KGB) road project and the current conditions of the existing KGB roadway. In response to Chair McCabe, he explained that there is an existing path along the current KGB Highway that is subject to heavy all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use. The proposal would include a separate path for pedestrians and one dedicated

to the use of ATVs and smaller motor vehicles. He continued to slide 17, which displayed a concept image of the proposed KGB roadway's design and listed specific measurements of the conceptual design. He assured Chair McCabe that DOT&PF is working at an arduous pace to ensure priority projects like the KGB highway project are completed on schedule.

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MR. REID, in response to Representative Mina, said he would get back to her regarding snow removal on the KGB Highway project's proposed pedestrian pathway. He continued to slides 18-19, which gave a break-down of the proposed project phases for the KGB Highway and explanations of those phases. He told Chair McCabe he would follow up later with information regarding closures and delays. He continued to slide 21, which detailed improvements currently being made to the KGB Highway. Slides 23 and 24 explained the proposed improvements to Wasilla's main street. He moved to slide 25 and discussed a highway safety improvement project and noted an intersection at Vine and Hollywood where there are three times the average crashes compared to other intersections in the state. The department is proposing a single lane roundabout, pedestrian accommodations, and lighting.

[2:33:41 PM](#)

LUKE BOWLAND, Preconstruction Engineer, Central Region, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, as a co-presenter, moved through slides 26 and 27 to explain the proposed Parks Highway improvement project. Slides 28 and 29 detailed the phases of the Glenn Highway reconstruction project. He related slides 30 and 31 and noted that first phase of construction should start in 2025.

[2:38:32 PM](#)

MR. REID, in response to Representative Mina, said DOT&PF would work south to north. To Chair McCabe, he noted that "road rutting" is one of the biggest issues that DOT&PF aims to fix with the Glenn Highway project. He confirmed that offering options for getting off highways can help when there has been an accident. He mentioned a resurfacing project for bridges over Knik River and a fix that would take a while to complete.

[2:45:18 PM](#)

MR. BOWLAND moved to slide 32, which detailed the challenges of the Seward Highway safety corridor. Slides 33 and 34 displayed photos of construction along the Seward Highway and the work being done to improve it. In response to a question from Chair McCabe, he said he couldn't speak specifically to any bridges outside of his project and assured the committee that projects would be done in a timely manner.

[2:50:24 PM](#)

MR. BOWLAND, in response a question from Representative Vance as to how DOT&PF determines where to construct more infrastructure, said the department looks for progressions in terms of population increases.

MR. REID added that DOT&PF is not really putting parking along roadways.

MR. BOWLAND suggested letting DOT&PF know early on in the design process where pull-outs/parking may be needed.

[2:54:55 PM](#)

MR. REID moved to slide 35, which displayed an early draft image of the proposed Sterling-Seward Highway merge improvement project. In response to Chair McCabe, he said the department has initial design funding for this project. He confirmed that the project is out for public comment. He resumed the presentation on slide 36, which detailed a preliminary design for the Sterling-Seward Highway merge project and quickly moved to slide 37, which explained the proposed Juneau Creek bridge along the Sterling Highway. He moved to slide 39, which displayed a map of the Southern Sterling Highway and detailed ongoing and future improvements to be made to the highway.

[3:02:41 PM](#)

STEVE NOBLE, PE, PTOE, Senior Project Manager, DOWL, as co-participant in the Public Safety in Alaska's Traffic Corridors presentation, brought attention to slide 40, which displayed a map of projects along the Sterling Highway as it runs through Seward. He moved to slide 41, which explained public and stakeholder outreach related to the improvements being made along the Sterling Highway. He moved to slide 42, which touched on open house outreach meetings that were held in June 2024. Slide 43 detailed what was heard from the public during the open house meetings. In response to Chair McCabe, he agreed that

frontage roads can be beneficial. He moved to slide 44, which explained the plan for future public and stakeholder engagement related to Sterling Highway improvements.

[3:13:16 PM](#)

MR. NOBLE, in response to Representative Vance, talked about considerations for creating pathways along highway safety corridors, including space, cost, potential frontage roads, and maintenance.

[3:16:44 PM](#)

MR. BOWLAND related that the department is continuing to coordinate regarding the request for a pathway under the highway [in Representative Vance's district]. Issues to address include ultimate ownership and responsibility for maintaining the pathway and the timing of pathway improvements in terms of connection to the system. He said he could get back to Representative Vance regarding further questions related to the desired project.

[3:21:01 PM](#)

MS. BOSIN, in response to Chair McCabe, said that traffic safety corridors are analyzed and adjusted every year they are in effect.

MR. BOWLAND added that the highway safety improvement program is a good opportunity for nominating projects.

[3:24:36 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE opened public testimony on the presentation.

[3:24:59 PM](#)

KRYSTAL HOKE, representing self, emphasized the importance of the work being done by the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities.

[3:27:39 PM](#)

CARRIE HARRIS, representing self, shared her understanding that it is problematic to have driveways going straight in to a highway. Further, she suggested adding more signage to make



drivers aware of both their speed and the people living along the highway.

[3:32:25 PM](#)

JEFF THALMAN, representing self, testified that he takes issue with the fact that there have been 240 moose killed in the last year alone [due to vehicle accidents].

[3:35:36 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[3:36:21 PM](#)

MR. APRIL concluded the presentation on slide 45, which emphasized pillars of safety that should be observed to lower the risk of automotive accidents.

[3:37:28 PM](#)

CHAIR MCCABE commented on the importance of driving rested and safe.

[3:38:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE VANCE thanked the presenters.

[3:39:43 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:39 p.m.