



## OPEN HOUSE #2

AMATS: Spenard Road Rehabilitation Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard

September 27, 2021



Welcome to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities second open house for the AMATS: Spenard Road Rehabilitation Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard project.

## PROJECT TEAM



### State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Sean Baski, PE  
*Project Manager*

Travis Holmes, PE  
*Project Engineer*



### Municipality of Anchorage

Melinda Tsu, PE  
*Project Manager*

Jennifer Noffke  
*Project Administrator*

### Lounsbury & Associates

- Lead Consultant
- Project Management
- Civil Engineering
- Hydraulic Engineering

### DOWL

- Traffic Engineering
- Public Involvement
- Environmental

### Kittelson & Associates

- Non-Motorized Transportation
- Traffic and Safety



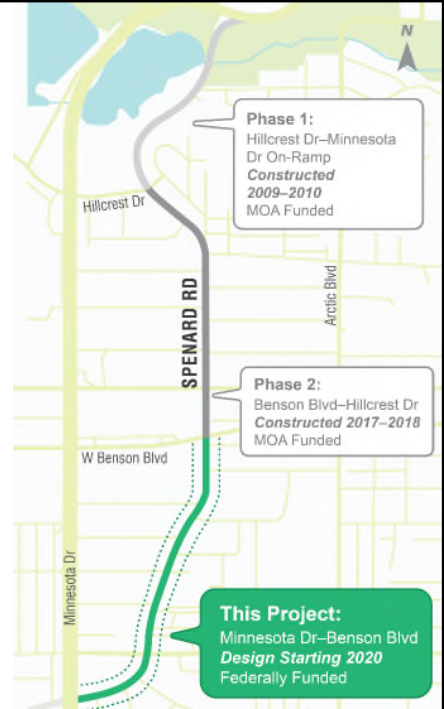
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This is a federally-funded project and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, or DOT&PF, is working in close coordination with the Municipality of Anchorage.

The engineering consultant team is led by Lounsbury & Associates and includes DOWL and Kittelson & Associates.

## PROJECT HISTORY & BACKGROUND

- Third phase of a longer-term effort to improve safety on the northern segment of Spenard Road
- First two phases funded by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)
- This phase is federally funded and led by DOT&PF, in collaboration with MOA
- A 2007 Preliminary Engineering Report established design standards for the corridor and recommended a three-lane roadway alternative for Spenard Road between Hillcrest Drive and Minnesota Drive



This project has been in the works for the better part of two decades. In 2003, a Highway Safety Improvement Project looked at ways to make the north end of Spenard safer.

A 2007 Preliminary Engineering Report recommended a three-lane “Road Diet” for the corridor.

Due to public concerns and funding, design and construction on Spenard Road was delayed and eventually split into phases.

Construction of Phase 1, Hillcrest Drive to the Minnesota on-ramp, was completed in 2010.

Phase 2 construction, Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive, was completed in 2018.

Both of those projects were funded and managed by the Municipality of Anchorage.

This project, which is DOT&PF managed and federally funded, kicked off in late 2020 and is focused on the segment of Spenard Road between Minnesota Drive and Benson Blvd.

## PROJECT PURPOSE

Meet current design standards and improve safety for all users by rehabilitating Spenard Road between Minnesota Drive and Benson Boulevard.

- Inadequate pedestrian and transit facilities within the corridor, especially given the high level of pedestrian and transit use
- Concerns about crashes at intersections along the corridor
- Infrastructure is now past its usable life and is due for replacement



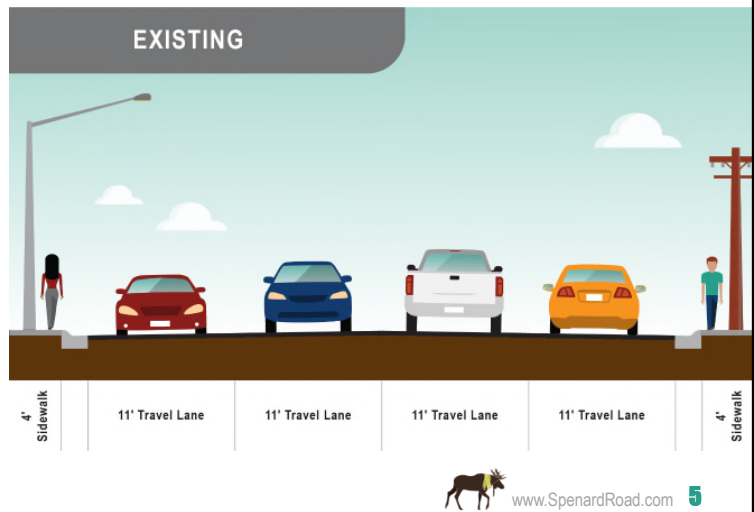
DOT&PF is proposing to rehabilitate this section of Spenard Road to improve safety for all users and bring the roadway and non-motorized facilities up to current design standards.

This project will address operational and safety issues including:

- Pedestrian and transit facilities that are minimal or non-existent
- Concerns about crashes at intersections along the corridor, and
- Aging infrastructure

## EXISTING CONDITIONS: TYPICAL SECTION OF SPENARD ROAD

- Winding roadway
- 18 intersections with cross streets
- Three signalized intersections (Benson Blvd, 36th Ave, Minnesota Dr)
- 2018 Average Annual Daily Traffic
  - 8,000 – 10,000 vehicles per day
- Four lanes
- 35 mph speed limit
- Right-of-way ranges from 60 to 70 feet



Spenard Road is a minor arterial roadway as classified in the MOA Official Streets and Highways Plan.

In 2018 there were an average of 8,000 to 10,000 cars per day on this segment.

Between Minnesota Drive and Benson Boulevard, Spenard Road has four eleven-foot travel lanes - two in each direction - and an additional left-turn lane at the approach to Minnesota Drive.

The speed limit on this segment is 35 miles per hour and inconsistent bicycle and pedestrian facilities are squeezed into a right-of-way that ranges from 60 to 70 feet.

Bicyclists have no dedicated lane and are forced to travel on the narrow pedestrian pathway or in the road.

This limited right-of-way allows little room for adjacent driveways, parking lots, and transit facilities, creating safety issues for all modes of travel.

The project team is focused on designing improvements that balance the needs of all users while minimizing impacts to property owners.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



Building off public involvement efforts from the previous phase



Virtual open house #1 held January 28, 2021

- Strong support for a three-lane alternative



Stakeholder site walk and survey conducted in May 2021



Regular updates to Spenard Community Council



AMATS presentations:

- BPAC - March 2, 2021
- TAC - April 8, 2021
- Policy Committee – April 21, 2021



Following MOA Context Sensitive Solutions Process

- Concept Report heard by P&Z on February 1<sup>st</sup>
- Alternative Analysis (forthcoming)



Presented project at the 2020 Anchorage Transportation Fair.



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Public involvement conducted on previous phases of Spenard corridor improvements has provided a strong foundation for this phase of work.

In the ten months since the project kicked off, we've held one open house, conducted a stakeholder site walk and survey, presented numerous times to the Spenard Community Council and AMATS, and participated in the 2020 Anchorage Transportation Fair.

The project is currently at 35% design and is in the process of finalizing the environmental document, a Categorical Exclusion, under the National Environmental Policy Act.

In addition, the project team is following the Municipality of Anchorage's Context Sensitive Solutions process, and referencing local planning documents, including the Spenard Corridor Plan, for guidance.

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM THE PUBLIC

- Inadequate bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA-compliant infrastructure
- Inadequate transit facilities
- Potential right-of-way impacts cause concern
- Coordination with adjacent projects is desired
- Requests to underground utility infrastructure
- Parking at some businesses overhangs the sidewalks, or requires reversing into the traffic lanes which creates concerns about safety
- The need to mitigate homelessness and vagrancy in the area should be considered in designing corridor improvements
- A desire for the project to support neighborhood revitalization efforts
- A desire to minimize construction disruptions to businesses and residents



Throughout our outreach activities, we've heard concerns about:

- Inadequate bicycle, pedestrian, transit facilities
- A lack of ADA compliant infrastructure and
- Concerns about the potential for right-of-way impacts to property owners

Other comments include:

- A desire for coordination with adjacent projects in the corridor
- Requests to move utility infrastructure underground
- Advocacy for the project to support neighborhood revitalization efforts and
- Requests for construction impacts to be minimized



At the first open house in January 2021, the project team presented two alternatives for consideration: a three lane and a four-lane cross-section.

The Federal Highways Administration notes that four-lane roadways with Annual Average Daily Traffic volumes of 20,000 vehicles per day or less may be good candidates for conversion to three-lane roadways, a design concept sometimes referred to as a “road diet.”

Expected benefits of road diets include an overall reduction in crash rates, reduced rear end and left turn crashes, and reduced right angle crashes at side streets.

Stakeholder feedback indicated the three-lane alternative, similar to what was developed in Phase 2 from Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive, was preferred.

The project team has advanced that design and is now evaluating three different three-lane options.



## DESIGN CRITERIA FOR MINOR ARTERIALS

(Source: MOA DCM Jan 2007)

Characteristics	Urban Class II Minor Arterial
Average Daily Traffic	10,000 - 20,000
Number of Lanes	2-4
Lane Width	11'
Median Width	14' (2-way left turn lane)
Posted Speed	35 MPH
Pedestrian Facilities	Separated
Bicycle Facilities	Separated
Right-of-Way Width	80 feet minimum

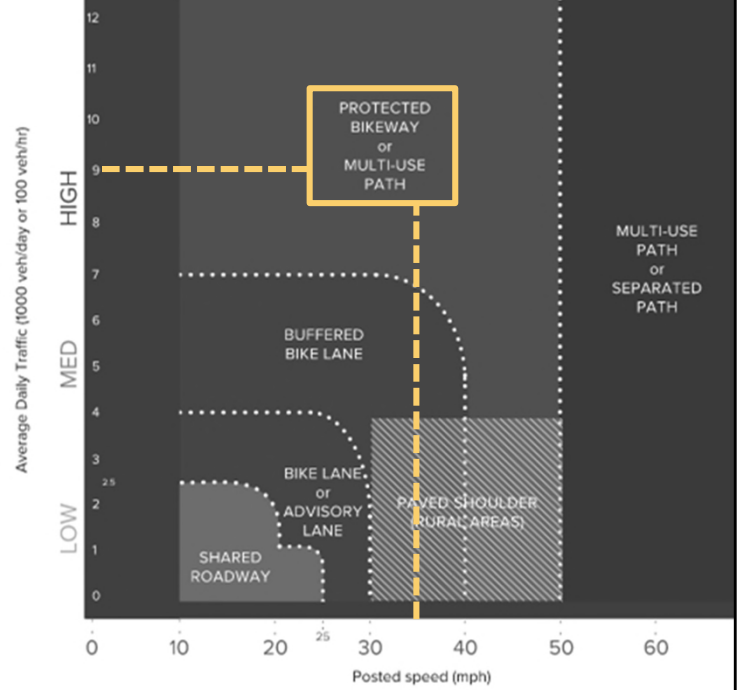
Before we present each option, let's talk about design standards.

This project will be completed according to standards established by the MOA Design Criteria Manual, or DCM.

For this road classification, a minor arterial, the DCM requires a minimum 14-foot, 2-way left turn lane, a 35mph posted speed limit, and separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

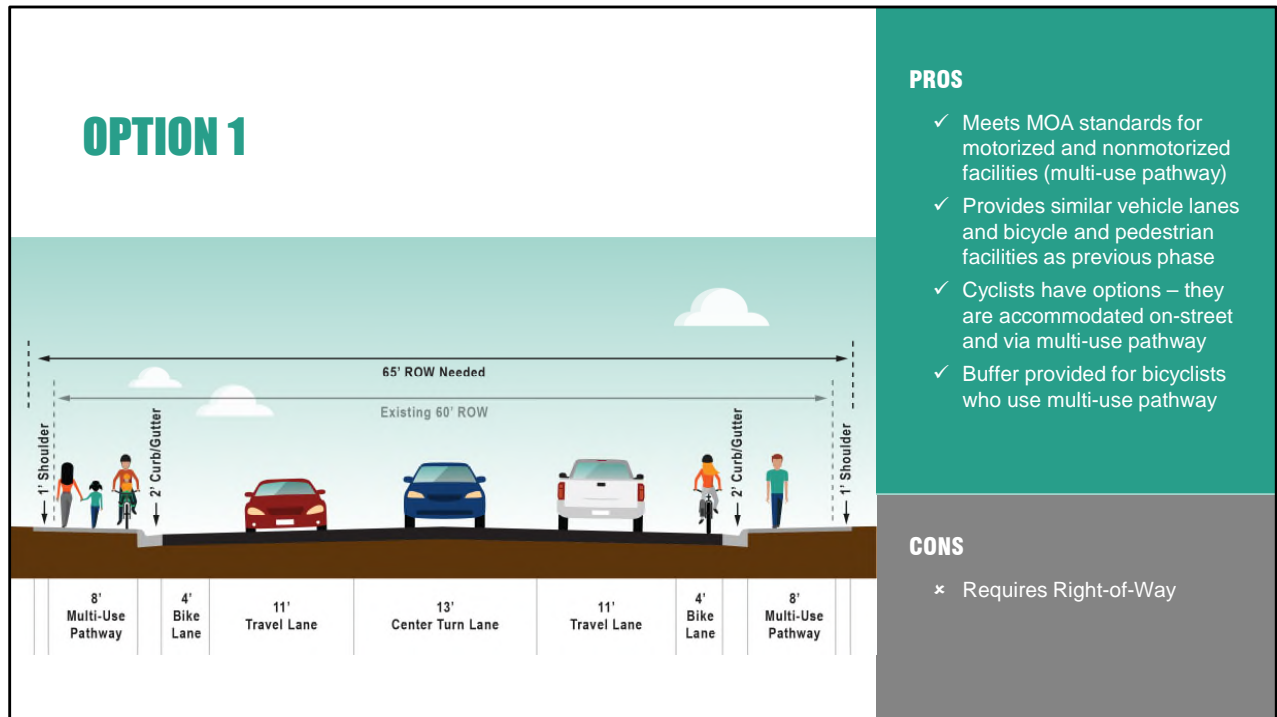
## BICYCLE FACILITY SELECTION TOOL

(Source: AMATS Draft Non-Motorized Plan)



Similarly, the AMATS Draft Non-Motorized Plan bicycle facility selection tool provides guidance that is useful in determining appropriate non-motorized facilities.

According to this tool, Spenard Road's 35mph speed limit and 8,000 – 10,000 vehicles per day average daily traffic count suggests either a protected bikeway or multi-use pathway is appropriate.



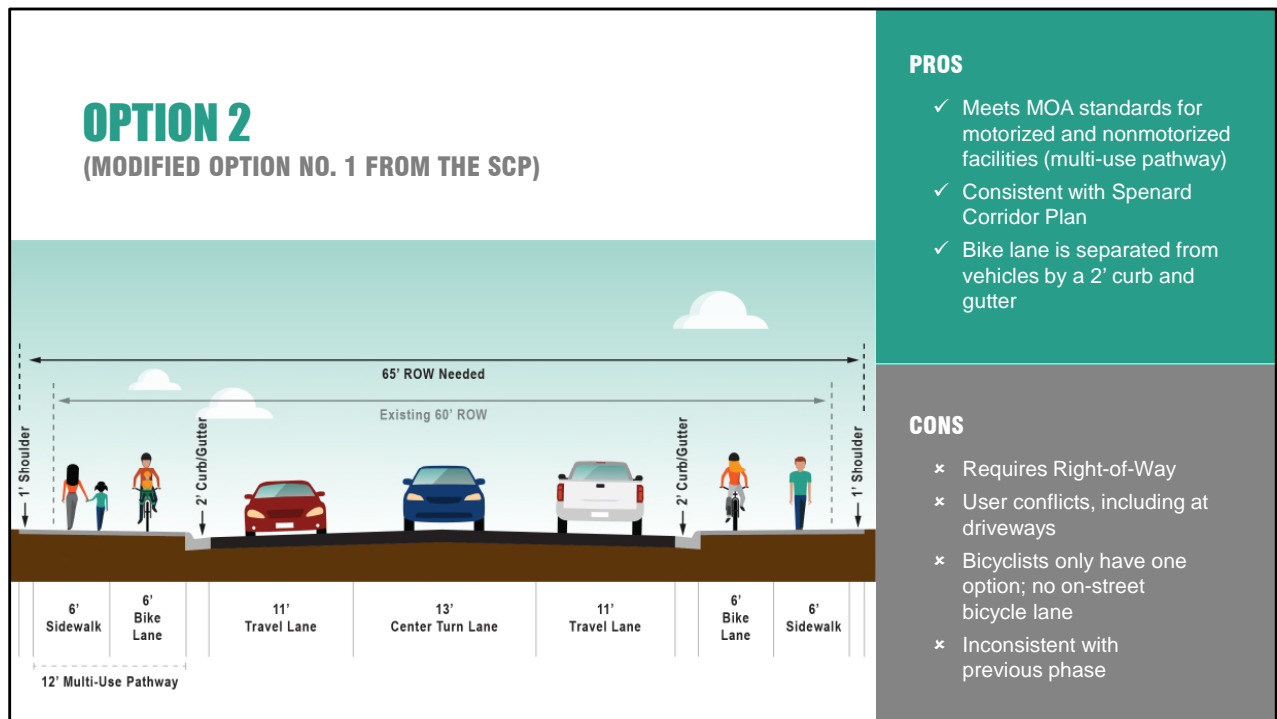
Each option under consideration requires 65' of right-of-way. Corridor widths more than 65 feet would require significant right-of-way acquisition.

Options one, two, and three all have two 11-foot travel lanes surrounding a 13-foot center turn lane. The MOA has tentatively approved a variance from the design standards for a reduced-width center turn lane in order to provide more space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Option 1 has an 8-foot multi-use pathway, two feet of curb and gutter, and 4 feet of pavement for the bicycle lane.

This configuration meets MOA standards for nonmotorized facilities and provides continuity along the corridor from the previous phase of work.

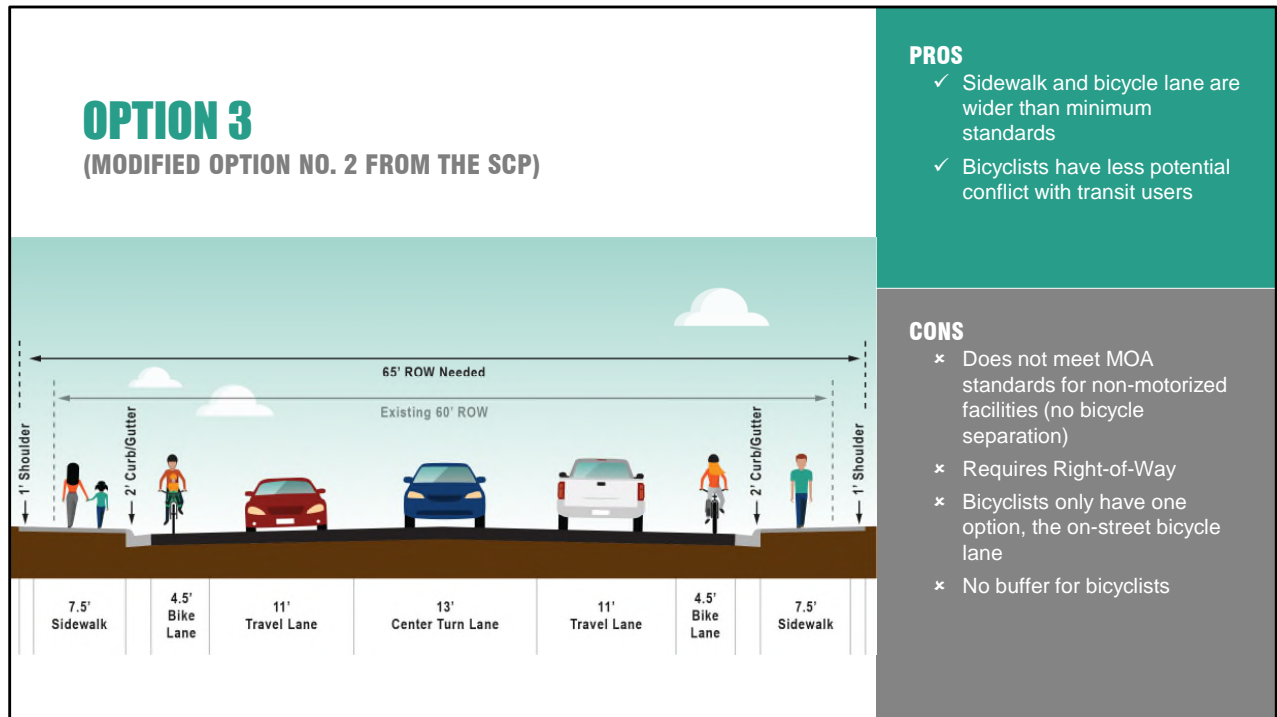
It gives cyclists options: faster moving and confident cyclists can opt for the bike lane, while slower moving or less confident cyclists can opt for the multi-use pathway.



Option 2 has a 12-foot multi-use pathway made up of a 6-foot sidewalk and a 6-foot bike lane.

This option meets non-motorized facilities standards and is consistent with the Spenard Corridor Plan, however it is inconsistent with the pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the northern section of Spenard Road.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns that it creates potential conflict between different user types on the multi-use pathway, such as between bicyclists and transit riders waiting at bus stops. There are also concerns about conflict between bicyclists and motorists at driveway crossings along the corridor.



In option 3, there is a 7 ½ foot sidewalk, 2-feet of curb and gutter, and 4 1/2 feet of pavement for the bicycle lane.

Both the sidewalk and bicycle lane are wider than the minimum standards and this configuration minimizes conflict between user groups, however bicycle facilities in this concept do not comply with MOA non-motorized standards because they are not separated from traffic.

This option presents an increased potential for conflict between pedestrians and less confident bicyclists who choose to use the sidewalk.



The project team is continuing to refine the design with a goal towards balancing motorized and non motorized needs while minimizing impacts to property owners.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS



**2007**

Preliminary  
Engineering Report



**2020-2022**

Preliminary  
Environmental  
& Design



**After 2025**

Construction  
(Pending funding)



**Ongoing**

Public & Stakeholder  
Involvement

- **Open House 1:**  
January 28, 2021
- **Open House 2:**  
September 27, 2021



**2023-2025**

Final Design/Right-of-Way



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Public outreach and input is an important component of this project.

The project team will continue to provide regular updates to stakeholders, and via the project website.

Next steps include incorporating public feedback from the open house, advancing to detailed design, and submitting a Design Study Report to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Final design and right-of-way acquisitions would likely occur between 2023 and 2025 and construction would start sometime after 2025, pending funding availability.

**WE NEED YOUR FEEDBACK!**



**Scan the code with  
your phone to take  
the short survey  
by 5:00pm on  
October 15**



So how can you help?

Tell us what you think about the three three-lane options for the corridor.

Use this QR code to access a short survey and comment form.

Your feedback will be considered as the project team continues to refine the design.





# THANK YOU

Questions or comments?

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That concludes our presentation.

Stay informed by visiting [www.SpenardRoad.com](http://www.SpenardRoad.com)

Submit questions and comments via email at [SpenardRoad@DOWL.com](mailto:SpenardRoad@DOWL.com) or by using the comment form on the project website.

Thank you.