

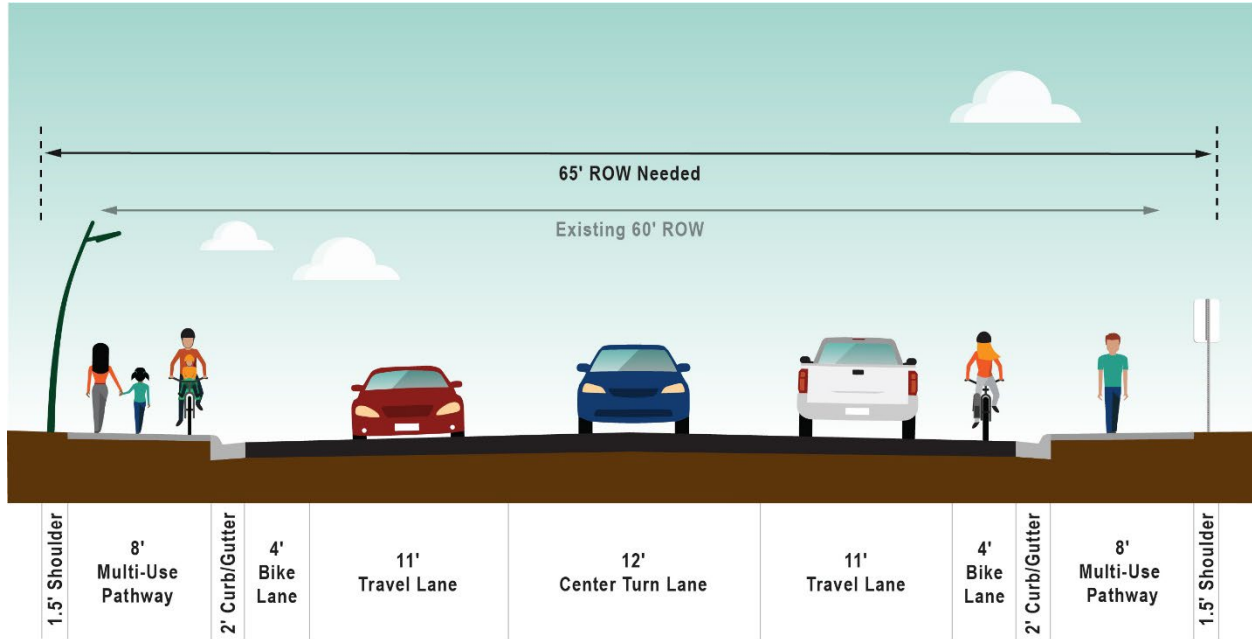


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

June 2024

**AMATS: Spenard Road Rehabilitation
Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard Project**

Typical Section



What will the road look like?

The typical section is shown above.

How does a three-lane typical section handle traffic compared to a four-lane typical section?

Research indicates a three-lane roadway can handle similar traffic volumes to a four-lane roadway (up to 20,000 vehicles per day), with a comparable or even improved level of service. This was observed following the completion of the “road diet” reconstruction on Arctic Boulevard, and the project team expects a similar outcome following construction of this project. Current volumes on the corridor are approximately half of the upper limit for three lane facilities.

Does a “road diet” lead to fewer cars using the road?

Road diets seek to improve safety by creating more space for non-motorized travel and to accommodate vehicular movements such as turning, acceleration, and deceleration. If properly designed, traffic does not divert to other streets because the corridor will be safer and more comfortable for a broad range of users.

Center Left Turn Lane

Are center left turn lanes safe?

Center turn lanes are commonly used on roadways throughout the United States and are a frequent element of many streets within the Anchorage Bowl. These turn lane features are used to reduce rear-end, head-on, and turning related crashes occurring on two-lane roads.

What is the width of the center left turn lane on this segment of Spenard Road?

The current design has a 12-foot center left turn lane. This is below the minimum MOA Design Criteria dimension of 14 feet.

Can the center left turn lane be reduced even more to accommodate additional non-motorized facilities?

The current design widths for non-motorized facilities meet standards and are supported by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). As a federally funded project, ROW acquisitions are required to follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act. The project's authority to acquire ROW is limited to what is necessary to meet adopted standards, therefore the project team cannot reduce the width of other roadway features and reallocate that space to the bike lane. Any further reduction of the center left turn lane would be used to provide additional space for roadway signs, lighting, green infrastructure, or other amenities.

Speed

What is the difference between design speed and speed limit? Is the project team considering a reduced speed limit?

Design speed is a selected speed used to determine various geometric design features of the roadway. The design speed for this class of roadway is 45 mph. Some design features such as curvature, superelevation, and sight distance are directly related to design speed. Other features such as widths of lanes and shoulders are not directly related to design speed. This is a rehabilitation project, which means the project scope does not include changes to curvature, superelevation, or sight distance.

The pre- and post-construction speed data of the northern section of Spenard Road from Hillcrest Drive to Northern Lights Boulevard shows an approximate 5 mph speed reduction indicating that a 30-mph posted speed limit is likely achievable for the design corridor.

The MOA is open to reducing the speed limit and is conducting a speed study and developing a formal speed limit setting policy. Potential speed limit options that MOA Traffic is considering for the project corridor include 25 or 30 mph.

Non-Motorized Facilities

Why does the typical section propose on-street bike lanes rather than integrating a bike lane on the sidewalk?

- This project evaluated facilities for a wide range of cyclists, from those who may prefer a sidewalk or path to confident riders looking to quickly get across town alongside traffic.
- Bike lanes adjacent to the street can make cyclists more visible to drivers, reduce the potential for pedestrian conflicts, and allow for uninterrupted travel at higher speeds.
- The selected alternative provides both an 8-foot multi-use path and a 5.5-foot (4-foot paved) on-street bike lane. By having both facilities, cyclists can choose their preferred path based on their ability and other factors, such as road conditions.

How is the design process considering facilities that meet the needs for all corridor users?

- Improving safety of all corridor users, including active transportation users, is one of the primary goals of this project.
- This project is following the MOA Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process. A key element of the CSS process is considering the needs of all users and all modes.
- The MOA is supportive of the current proposed widths of the non-motorized facilities.

Will bicycle lanes extend through the 36th Avenue/Spenard Road intersection to Minnesota Drive?

Extending the bicycle lane westward through the intersection with Minnesota Drive is beyond the scope and limits of this specific project. The bike lane on the north side of Spenard Road will transition off the road to

the multi-use pathway as it approaches the Minnesota Drive intersection. There is a future Spenard Road Rehabilitation project planned from Minnesota Drive to Northwood Drive that would consider alternatives such as extending the bike lanes through the intersection. Preliminary design funding for that project is currently scheduled for mid-2025.

Were protected bike lanes considered?

Protected bike lanes were considered and dismissed during the alternatives analysis phase due to the following reasons:

- They do not meet design standards and guidelines within the available ROW.
- They are not locally adopted or required for this class of roadway and federal aid cannot be used to procure ROW for non-adopted or required improvements.
- They would cause a significant increase in maintenance costs.
- They are not consistent with the recently upgraded segment of Spenard Road between Benson Boulevard and Hillcrest Drive.
- The number of driveways and breaks required in the barrier would render protected bike lanes ineffective.

How does this project fit with the AMATS Non-motorized Plan?

The AMATS Non-motorized Plan calls for a separated bike lane or shared use path as the preferred bikeway for urban facilities for all speeds on roadways with Spenard's traffic volume. The selected alternative provides a shared use pathway on both sides of the corridor. The pathway is separated from traffic by the curb and gutter and on-street bike lane between the pathway and travel lane.

Will this project include green paint for bicycle lanes and crossings?

The MOA supports the use of green pavement markings on this project for use in select areas to enhance delineation of non-motorized facilities. The design team is working to incorporate these specialized paints and details into the project design.

Will this project include crosswalks between signals?

Unsignalized crossings will be included on this project. The location and design of crossings and median refuge islands are shown in the current plans.

Will bicycle detection loops at the 36th Avenue/Spenard Road intersection be incorporated in this project?

The project will incorporate radar detection for vehicles and bicycles at the 36th Avenue/Spenard Road intersection.

The previous section of Spenard Road rehabilitation had limited width for bicycle lanes (3.5 feet). What kind of feedback has there been from bicyclists on the safety of these slightly narrower bicycle lanes, and could this be a solution in the current project as well?

Feedback from users is generally that a narrower bicycle lane is preferable to no bicycle lane at all. The current design is incorporating wider 5.5-foot wide (4-foot paved) on-street bicycle lanes on this segment.

Transit

How will this project improve transit facilities within the corridor?

The project team is working with MOA Transit to coordinate on design improvements to existing transit locations. Planned amenities include updated bus stop pads, trash receptacles, bench seating, and updated signage.

Minnesota Drive Intersection

Can you modify the project scope to extend to the west side of Minnesota Drive at the southern end of the corridor? Minnesota Drive in its current condition is a barrier to active transportation that unnecessarily dissects the neighborhood and encourages unsafe jaywalking.

In 2022 AMATS authorized an extension of the project scope to include nominal changes to the intersection of Minnesota Drive and Spenard Road. These changes allow Spenard Road to be converted to a three-lane typical section with bike lanes and multi-use path from Benson Boulevard to Minnesota Drive. There is a future Spenard Road Rehabilitation project planned from Minnesota Drive to Northwood Drive that would consider alternatives such as extending the bike lanes through the intersection. Preliminary design funding for that project is currently scheduled for mid-2025.

Improved east-west connectivity is needed for non-motorized travelers moving through Midtown from west-side trails to Midtown and UMed districts. Can this project incorporate a bridge or tunnel over or under Minnesota Drive?

Improvements to Minnesota Drive are outside the scope of this project, however the project team is currently evaluating alternatives on Spenard Road that seek to improve the safety of pedestrian and bicyclists within the project corridor.

Federal Funding vs MOA Funding and Implications for Design/Amenities

What can be accomplished using federal funding. How does this compare to the previous Spenard Road project that rehabilitated the roadway between Hillcrest Drive to Benson Boulevard?

Federal funding precludes the use of funds for improvements on private property. Some of the elements of the previous phase of work, including walls and landscaping features that extend to the front of the commercial properties in the corridor will not be able to be included in this project because of federal funding constraints. This may also restrict parking area improvements. Individuals, community organizations or local government can fund additional features beyond the edge of the public ROW.

Is the federal funding for this project secured? What does the funding process entail?

There are several “gateways” the project must pass through to receive federal funding. Currently, the project has completed the environmental design and permitting stage and received authorization to advance to detailed design. Following that stage of design, the project will receive funding to acquire ROW needed for the project to be constructed.

Maintenance

Is maintenance a consideration in project design? Who is responsible for maintaining the roads and sidewalks? In winter, the sidewalks along this section of Spenard Road are frequently so full of snow from snowplows or adjacent businesses that they’re not passable, which creates a safety issue for pedestrians.

Throughout the design of the project, the project team has had many conversations with stakeholders about the importance of addressing snow storage and maintenance at a policy level, not on a project-by-project basis.

MOA Maintenance has been an integral part of the design team and they have provided significant input on the selected alternative. One of the primary considerations for selecting this design was their ability to plow and maintain the corridor in accordance with existing policy, utilizing current plowing equipment, staff, and budgets. MOA Maintenance has indicated that the strategy for snow maintenance will closely resemble the one in place for the northern section of Spenard Road between Benson Boulevard and Hillcrest Drive:

- After a snowfall event, the MOA's first priority is to clear snow from vehicle and pedestrian traveled ways on roadways classified as arterials and collectors, such as Spenard Road.
- Snow will be temporarily plowed from vehicle travel lanes to the roadway shoulder and on-street bike lane, where it will remain until loaders and dump trucks are available to haul the snow away. The snow is stored permanently offsite at designated MOA snow storage lots.
- Similarly, multi-use pathways will be cleared by snowblowers, temporarily moving snow from the pathway to the roadway shoulder for future removal and haul-out. Due to the rate snowblowers can clear the pathways, this process typically takes longer than clearing the roadways.

Storing snow in the center turn lane hinders traffic operations and negatively impacts local businesses and property owners by restricting access. The corridor lacks areas with enough ROW to create designated snow storage space and acquiring ROW for these purposes is beyond the scope of this project.

Neighborhood Connectivity

How will this project connect with other roadway and development projects on Chugach Way, West 30th Avenue, and West 32nd/33rd Avenue? Will those facilities accommodate people with disabilities?

The MOA and DOT&PF anticipate that Spenard Road project design will provide smooth transitions between the corridor and side streets and that corridor facilities will be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.

Miscellaneous

How will this project deal with curb cut-outs? These create safety issues, particularly in winter when business owners clear driveway snow onto the sidewalk after the MOA has already cleared the sidewalk.

Just like the last two phases of the Spenard Road Rehabilitation, one of the possible outcomes will be an overall reduction of curb cuts as a safety improvement within the corridor.

What about the MOA "1% for Art" policy – will that be applied to this project?

The Spenard Corridor Plan calls for a gateway plaza feature at the corner of Spenard Road and Chugach Way. The 65% design plans show areas within the plaza that have been designated as opportunity areas for public art using the 1% for Art program. The MOA funds and administers this program outside the bounds of the federally-funded project. A committee independent of the project team will determine the use of the 1% for Art funding and the project team is coordinating with the MOA Public Art Curator to ensure the project identifies opportunity areas for public art installations.

What type of landscaping will be done on the project?

Landscaping in the project corridor will consist of greenspace or softscape elements including wildflowers (a Federal Aid requirement) and local non-invasive ground cover, trees, and shrubs necessary to meet the requirements of the MOA Design Criteria Manual. Hardscape elements include a wayfinding column, patterned concrete, pedestrian-scale lighting, and fencing that are consistent with the look and feel of the adjacent north section of Spenard Road.