



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

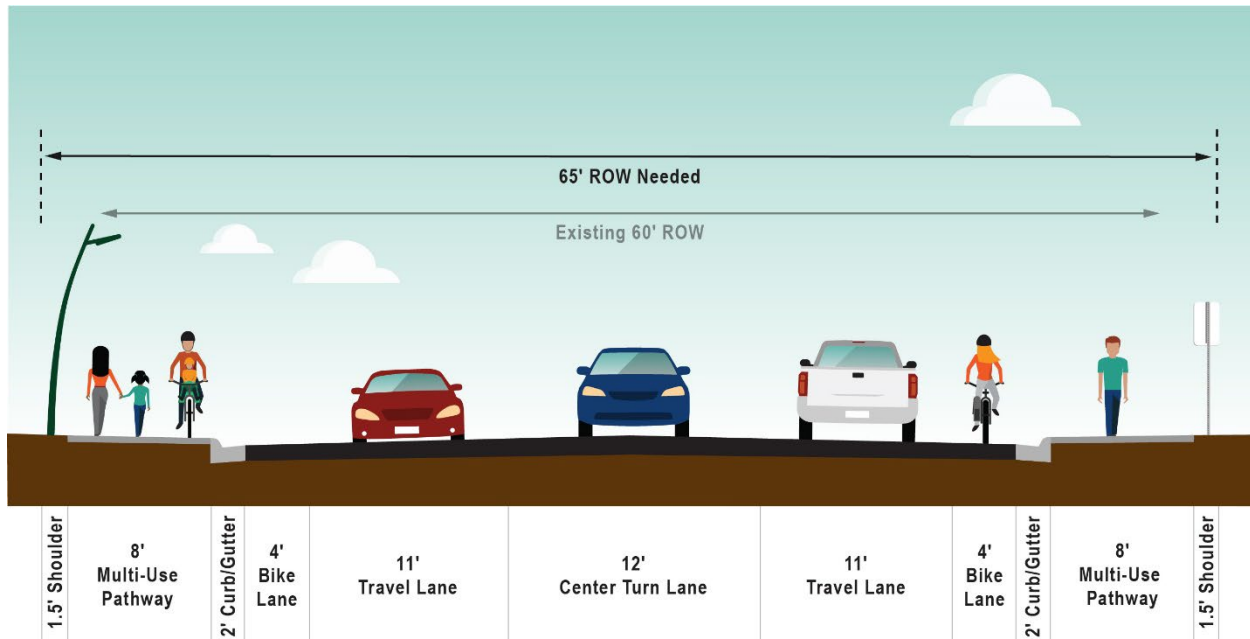
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State/Federal Project No. CFHWY00604/0001659

AMATS: Spenard Road Rehabilitation
Minnesota Drive to Benson Boulevard Project



Typical Section



What will the road look like compared to the existing road?

This section of Spenard Road is currently a 4-lane roadway with sidewalks on both sides. The proposed typical section (shown above) is a 3-lane roadway with on-street bike lanes and multi-use pathways on both sides.

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 Spenard Road from Benson Boulevard to Hillcrest Drive, 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.

What would happen if the functional classification of Spenard Road is changed between Benson Boulevard and Minnesota Drive?

The Spenard Corridor Plan (SCP) proposed changing the functional classification of this segment from a minor arterial to a collector to support its goals of improved safety and reduced vehicle speeds. The current project design was developed around those same goals without the formal reclassification of the roadway. At this stage, changing the functional classification within the project would effectively require restarting the project, which would add several years to the project schedule.

What design features can be most influenced by public comments at this stage of the project?

At this stage of the project, we have incorporated public feedback received providing a multiuse pathway in addition to bicycle lanes, a center left turn lane for access to businesses and residential areas along the corridor, and reducing the speed limit in the corridor. The project elements most influenced by public feedback now are landscape (e.g. plantings) and streetscape (e.g. transit stop features and lighting) elements and the MOA's 1% for Art program.

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. When applied in the appropriate context, these lanes help improve safety. While it technically creates a shared turn space, studies show that converting a four-lane undivided roadway to a three-lane with a center turn lane reduces total crashes by **19–47%**, largely by moving left-turning vehicles out of the through lanes.

On a four-lane undivided roadway, drivers slowing or stopping in the inside lane to turn left increases the risk of rear-end crashes and sudden lane changes. The three-lane configuration relocates these movements to the center lane, reducing these common conflict points and improving safety.

Overall, the three-lane configuration with a center turn lane is a well-established safety improvement, particularly on corridors with numerous driveways and frequent turning movements, such as Spenard Road.

Additionally, 3-lane roadways provide a more efficient corridor for snow removal operations because there's room for a snow blower and truck to operate side by side.

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

Due to ROW constraints, 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 motorized travel lanes be narrowed to provide 6" more to the bike lanes?

As a federally funded project, all ROW acquisitions must comply with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act. Acquisitions for the travel lanes and the center turn lane are justified by the project's adopted design standards. The widths of the non-motorized facilities in the current typical section also meet those standards, widening them would exceed them.

The project's authority to acquire ROW is limited to what is necessary and should generally be supported by the project's adopted standards. In other words, the travel lane widths can be justified for acquisition, but a bike lane exceeding adopted design standards cannot. For this reason, the project team cannot reduce the width of other roadway elements and reallocate that space to widen the bike lanes.

Speed

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

Design speed is used to determine various geometric design elements of the roadway, such as curvature, superelevation, and sight distance. This rehabilitation project does **not** include changes to those elements, as doing so would introduce substantial additional ROW impacts. Other features, such as lane widths, are not directly governed by design or posted speed.

Speed data from the northern section of Spenard Road (Hillcrest Drive to Northern Lights Boulevard) shows an approximate 5 mph reduction following implementation of the road diet. This reduction occurred prior to changes in posted speed limits and reflects how the proposed roadway design itself can influence operating speeds.

The MOA recently completed the Municipal Traffic Comprehensive Speed Study for Spenard Road. The speed limit for Spenard Road from Hillcrest Drive to Benson Boulevard was reduced from 35 mph to 25 mph. The Spenard Road section from Benson Boulevard to Minnesota Drive was reduced from 35 mph to 30 mph, with the plan to lower to 25 mph once the project is constructed. The current proposed design incorporates a 25-mph posted speed.

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 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?

- One of the primary goals of this project is improving safety of all corridor users, including active transportation users, such as pedestrians and cyclists.
- 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 for that project is funded and in the beginning stages.

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 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 impact its effectiveness and introduce safety concerns for all users.

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 near 34th and 32nd Avenues. The location and design of crossings and median refuge islands are shown in the current plans, which can be found on the design roll plot available on the project website, www.SpenardRoad.com.

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 (5 feet including the gutter pan). 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?

The current design is incorporating wider 5.5-foot wide on-street bicycle lanes on this segment. Feedback has included requests for an even wider bike lanes, exceeding the project standards, but widening the lane further would require additional ROW acquisitions not supported by project standards.

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 for that project is funded and in the beginning stages.

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.

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 has advanced to detailed design. The project has received funding to acquire ROW needed for the project to be constructed. ROW acquisition will begin this year and is expected to take approximately two years to complete.

Right-of-Way

What are the ROW needs for this project? What can property owners expect?

Partial ROW acquisition needs have been identified at some locations within the corridor to accommodate intersection and access improvements, particularly around intersections, and DOT&PF will follow all federal and state regulations and statutes for any ROW identified for acquisition. Federal ROW acquisition is a process-driven phase that takes approximately a minimum of two years regardless of the number of parcels. Reducing the footprint generally does not meaningfully shorten the minimum timeline.

Federal ROW acquisition follows a defined sequence under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act. The timeline is driven by required legal steps, not the number of parcels. A typical federally compliant process includes:

1. Appraisal
2. Independent appraisal review
3. Formal written offer to the property owner
4. Negotiation period (with minimum required timelines)
5. Owner decision window and counteroffers
6. Title clearance and closing
7. Relocation assistance, if applicable
8. Certification for FHWA authorization

Each step includes mandatory notice periods and appeal rights that cannot be shortened. Even with a small number of parcels, the process typically requires 18 to 24 months. If complications arise, such as title issues, probate, condemnation, counter-appraisals, or relocation cases, the schedule can extend closer to 3 years. This is consistent across all DOT&PF projects statewide; 2 years is the minimum planning assumption for any federally funded ROW phase. Additional information can be found on the DOT&PF Real Estate/Right-of-Way page at <https://dot.alaska.gov/stwddes/dcsrow/>.

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, using 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.

When are the next opportunities for public comments?

The project team plans to present to the Urban Design Commission in summer 2026 and will request the meeting allow public comment.

The project team will also participate annually in the Anchorage Transportation Fair and continue providing updates to the Spenard Community Council.

Individual meetings with impacted property-owners will occur throughout the ROW acquisition phase.

Comment can be shared throughout the project by emailing SpenardRoad@dowl.com or calling Public Involvement Lead Rachel Steer at (907) 562-2000.