

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough has long identified the need for an additional east-west arterial in the core area to reduce traffic congestion and facilitate travel. In the next 20 years traffic numbers are expected to more than double on the Palmer/Wasilla Highway and Palmer-Fishhook Road. Traffic modeling completed as part of the Mat-Su Borough Long-Range Transportation Plan demonstrates that even with the long-term upgrades planned for the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, it will not be able to handle the level of traffic expected in the future and another major east-west road is required.

The Mat-Su Borough's project team has spent a great deal of time researching various alignment options. All of the routes evaluated have issues and concerns; there is no easy answer. After evaluating the pros and cons of each route, the southern Arctic Avenue route (Alternative 2) is the alternative the project team is recommending. The final decision regarding if and where the road should be built will be made by the Mat-Su Borough Assembly. The proposed Bogard Road Extension will extend Bogard Road from 49th State Street to the Glenn Highway, providing an alternative to the Palmer-Wasilla Highway and Palmer-Fishhook Road.

1. Why is a new road needed?

Traffic levels on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway are expected to double in the next 20 years. If the highway had to be expanded to accommodate all of the east-west traffic, it could require a major eight-lane highway, with a frontage road and few access points. The cost for such an expansion would be substantial and there would be no efficient alternative route for traffic during construction.

Traffic is also increasing on Palmer-Fishhook Road. This requires people who want to access Arctic Avenue east of the Glenn Highway to take Palmer-Fishhook Road, which is inefficient and results in substantial out-of-direction traffic.

2. How were potential alignments developed?

The project team looked at a number of potential alignments to connect 49th State Street to the Glenn Highway. The three main alignments were:

- › A northern alignment to connect to Marsh Road,
- › A central alignment to Scott Road, and
- › A southern alignment to Arctic Avenue.

Other options looked at combining these alternatives. Each of these alignments was evaluated based on its potential:

- › To attract traffic off of the Palmer-Wasilla Highway,
- › Impact on regional and local traffic movement and congestion,
- › Development feasibility related to topography near the Glenn Highway,
- › Social and environmental impacts (wetlands, farmland, residences, historic sites, etc.), and
- › Cost factors (right-of-way [ROW] acquisition, utility relocations, wetland mitigation, etc.).

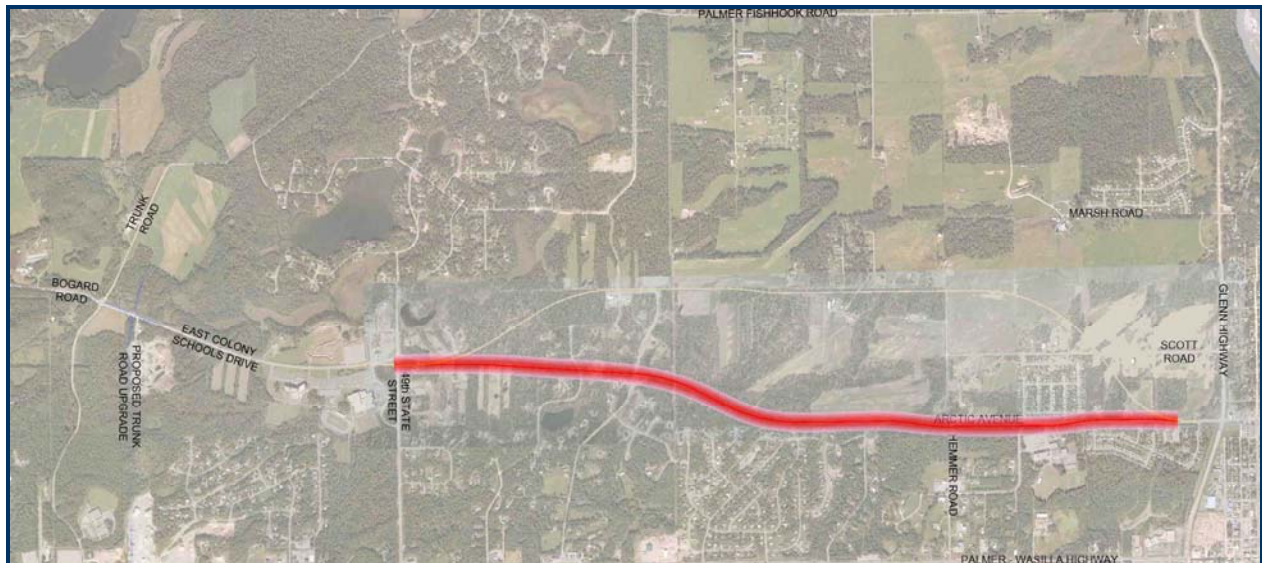
Based on this evaluation, the project team narrowed the alignment options down to a northern and southern alignment to bring forward through the public process. After further traffic modeling, environmental field work and design studies, the southern alignment (Alternative 2) is being recommended by the project team.

3. Why is Alternative 2 being recommended?

There are a number of reasons the project team is recommending Alternative 2 to the Mat-Su Borough. The most compelling reason is that traffic data indicates that most drivers on the Palmer-Wasilla Highway want to connect to the Old Glenn Highway. Traffic analysis indicates that more than 50 percent of the time, traffic on the new Bogard Road will want to continue east through the signal at the Glenn Highway to go to the businesses and homes in this area or travel out to the Butte. Alternative 2 is the most direct route to make the connection.

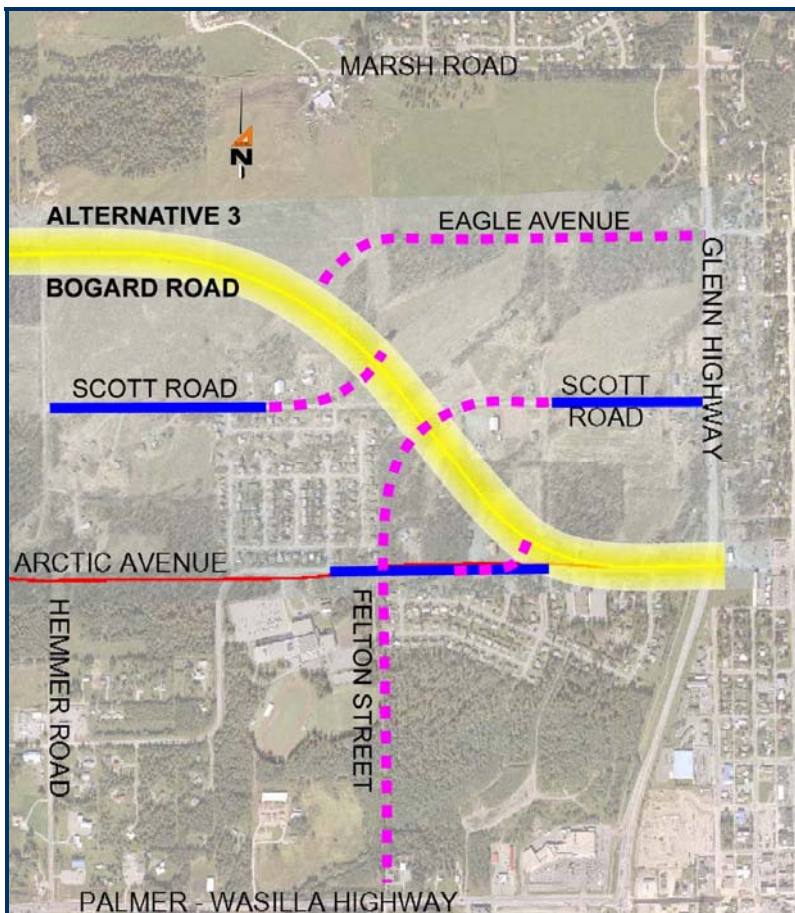
Other routes require drivers to go out of their way, which makes drivers less likely to leave the Palmer-Wasilla Highway for the new road. The Arctic Avenue intersection on the Glenn Highway is the best place to tie in to the Glenn Highway, based on traffic demand and topography. Bringing Bogard Road onto the Glenn Highway farther north is not as efficient, since people would have to then turn right onto the Glenn Highway and then left to go east on Arctic Avenue. The grade continuously increases up the hill going north, making it difficult and expensive to design a safe and efficient intersection. Compared to most other routes evaluated, this option also minimizes the impact to wetlands, reduces impacts to farmland, and avoids historic sites.

The project team recognizes that this alignment will affect some homes and will change some neighborhoods. These are important impacts and this route would not be recommended if it were not clearly a more technically safe and efficient route to achieve the purpose of the project.



4. Why aren't you recommending Alternative 3?

While Alternative 3 is a little less expensive than Alternative 2, it is much less efficient. If Alternative 3 were built, roads that intersect with Bogard Road at the east end of the project area will intersect at a skewed angle, which is not a desirable development scenario because it will require traffic to make right turns out of a T-intersection at peak hours and then cue up for left turns to get onto Arctic Avenue/Old Glenn Highway. In addition, Alternative 3 creates fragmentation of agricultural lands, impacts to neighborhoods, creates additional maintenance challenges, and adds out-of-direction travel. Alternative 3 directly impacts approximately four homes.



5. What about the section line (Scott Road) or some of the other earlier alternatives that were proposed?

There are three big hurdles with this route:

- 1) Its connection to the Old Glenn Highway, and
- 2) Its segregation of farmland and effect on structures on the National Historic Registry.
- 3) As noted, drivers want to get on the Old Glenn Highway. The Scott Road route would require most of the traffic off Bogard Road to get onto the Glenn Highway and then cue up in a left-hand turn lane onto the Old Glenn. Left hand turns are the most inefficient way to move traffic.

Other alternatives considered were found to create the same intersection problems at the Old Glenn and Glenn Highways and some would be exponentially more expensive due to substantial wetland impacts.

6. How will this road address the safety of schoolchildren near schools on the alignment?

The project team will work with the school district to develop a plan that may consist of options such as additional lighting, crosswalks, a grade separated crossing, new pedestrian facilities (sidewalks) and changing the traffic patterns around the schools.

It is important to note that much of the traffic is due to commutes to and from schools.

7. How will this project impact my property?

While the project team is recommending a route, no route has been officially selected by the Mat-Su Borough. Once a route is selected, and the ROW is determined, the Borough's ROW representatives will personally contact those whose properties are directly impacted by the project to discuss how the project would affect their land and to discuss the ROW acquisition process in more detail.

Some properties may not be directly impacted by the road ROW, but could be indirectly impacted by the increase in road traffic and noise near the alignment. The project team will consider design features that can mitigate the noise effects to some degree. An example might be rubberized asphalt, which has been shown to reduce road noise.

8. What type of public process has there been for this project?

The public involvement process for this project officially began in October 2006. The project team used Motznik Information Services to acquire a mailing list of property owners and residents in the project area. The mailing list was designed to cover from Trunk Road in the west to the Alaska Railroad on the east and from Palmer-Fishhook Road on the north to the Palmer-Wasilla Highway on the south. The mailing list contains approximately 3,500 names and addresses. In addition, the team developed an email distribution list that includes Borough departments, local utilities, the school district, and other local and regional advisory organizations. People have been encouraged to have their e-mail addresses added to the mailing list when they visit the project website, attend public meetings, or call or write to the project team. The e-mail list now contains approximately 300 names and addresses.

There have been three official public meetings, which advertised in the Mat-Su insert of the Anchorage Daily News, the Frontiersman, and on local radio, as well as through direct mailings using both our mailing list and e-mail distribution list. Meeting flyers were also sent to all parents with children attending Colony Middle School, Colony High School, and Palmer High School. These meetings included open houses with information and staff to answer individual questions, as well as presentations with a question and answer session. The project team has also met with the Palmer City Council, the Mat-Su Planning & Zoning Commission, the Mat-Su Assembly, the Mat-Su Transportation Advisory Board, Gateway Community Council, Eagle Estates Homeowners Association, and various environmental resource agencies.

Updated project information, including flyers, presentations and reports, as well as public comments received, is available on the project website at www.bogardroad.com or by visiting the project office at 809 S. Chugach Street, Unit 4, Palmer, Alaska 99645.