

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is proposing to extend and reconstruct Dowling Road from Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Drive using federal funding through the Alaska Division Office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This project would improve roadway connectivity and accessibility in the West Dowling Road area of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). Figure 1.1 shows the project area. The project area is bounded by Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Drive between Dowling Road and 68th Avenue. Currently, no continuous east-west arterial roads connect New Seward Highway and Minnesota Drive between Tudor Road and Dimond Boulevard. This arterial connection has been planned for many years and is one of the highest priority projects in the MOA, according to Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS).

The purpose of the West Dowling Road Connection Project Environmental Assessment (EA) is to present and analyze the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative in accordance with the **Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the** National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the West Dowling Road Connection Project is to provide a continuous east-west arterial roadway connection between International Airport Road and Dimond Boulevard that connects Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Drive. DOT&PF, in cooperation with AMATS, has identified the need to construct roadway connectivity and accessibility improvements in the West Dowling Road Connection Project area. The arterial network in the project area is poor. Of the roads that are classified as arterials, none connect continuously east-west across the project area. The road network that does exist (minor arterials and collectors that feed traffic to the arterials) is discontinuous. The

West Dowling Road Connection Project

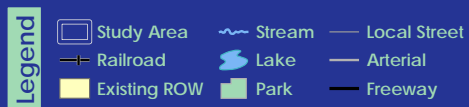
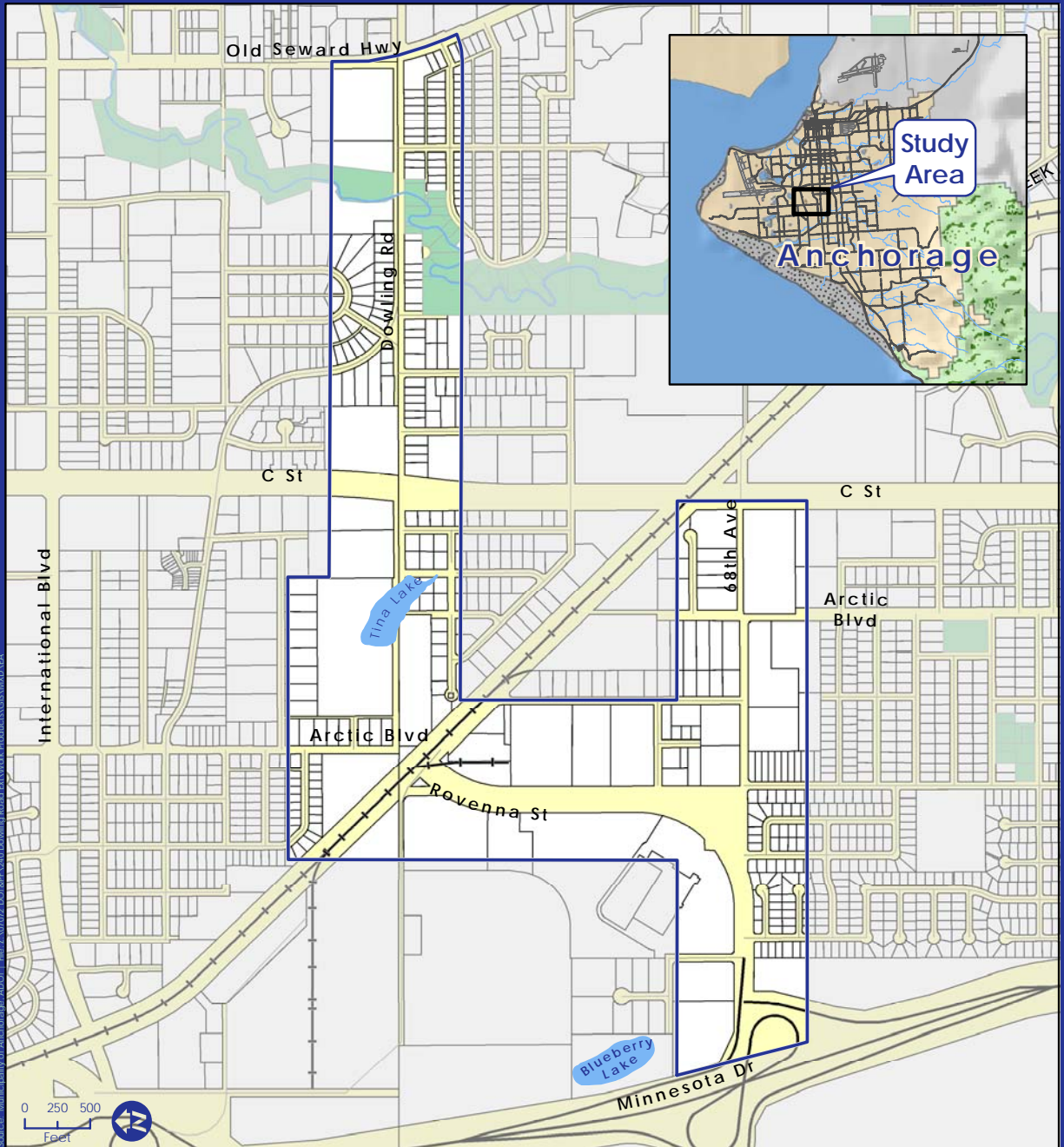


Figure 1.1
Study Area

lack of continuous roadway limits accessibility and mobility within and through the project area.

In urban areas, the roadway network should contain arterials every 0.5 to 1 mile (FHWA 1989). The nearest east-west arterials are International Airport Road and Dimond Boulevard, which are approximately 2 miles apart. To improve the arterial network, one to three more arterials are needed between these two roads.

Accessibility and mobility are further hampered by barriers to travel. East-west barriers to traffic in the project area are Campbell Creek, the Alaska Railroad tracks, and the limited-access freeways (New Seward Highway and Minnesota Drive). The poor accessibility in this area is a primary concern of emergency service providers. Poor accessibility also restricts the ability to provide transit service. Furthermore, the incomplete road network results in circuitous trip patterns. The lack of connectivity hampers neighborhood access to residential areas and truck access to industrial areas, which causes travel time and distance to increase for travelers in the study area.

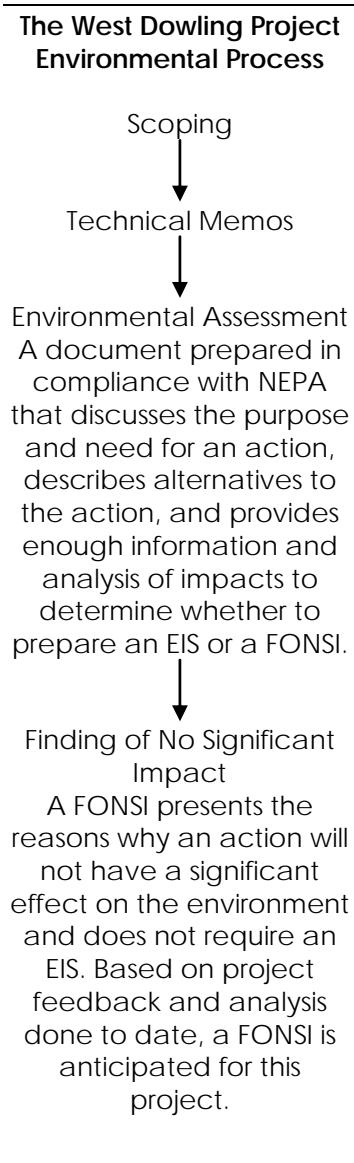
The identified needs of the project include the following:

- Provide additional east-west connectivity to north-south arterials such as Old Seward Highway, C Street, Arctic Boulevard, and Minnesota Drive
- Reduce congestion on surrounding arterials, including Dimond Boulevard, Tudor Road, and C Street
- Distribute north-south trips to and from residential areas such as the Taku/Campbell community and employment areas in Midtown and the University-Medical District
- Improve accessibility to neighborhoods like Taku/Campbell and Sand Lake, the industrial reserve identified in the Anchorage 2020 comprehensive plan (MOA 2001), and other land uses in the project area
- Provide improved connectivity and mobility for trips traveling through the project area

- Improve convenience, mobility, and efficiency for freight and emergency service providers

NEPA Process

In accordance with NEPA, FHWA must determine whether the proposed project would have significant impacts on area resources. NEPA is a nationwide mandate for the protection of the environment and is applied to all federal actions. The purpose of NEPA is to provide public disclosure of the environmental impacts associated with a proposed federal action. The NEPA process enables public officials to make decisions that are based on an objective understanding of the environmental consequences and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The NEPA process also provides the opportunity for public comment.



Scoping is the first step in the NEPA process. The process is designed to identify alternatives to the Proposed Action and environmental concerns or issues that should be addressed in the EA. Agency and public scoping for this project was conducted between 2002 and 2005. More details on the scoping process and other consultation and coordination activities are provided in Section 4 and in the Scoping Summary Report (HDR 2006). Scoping identified the following key issues, which are addressed in this EA:

- Tina Lake **and associated** wetlands
- Campbell Creek bridge
- Right-of-way (ROW) impacts
- Contaminated sites
- Impacts to recreation resources

This EA also evaluates the potential impacts of project alternatives on the physical, biological, and human resources in the area. If significant impacts are identified in this EA, a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required. If FHWA decides that impacts will not be significant, it would prepare and sign a Finding of

No Significant Impact (FONSI). This finding will allow DOT&PF to proceed with the Proposed Action.

In addition to NEPA, other laws and regulations require compliance during project development. Although each law and regulation has different documentation and consultation requirements, this EA serves as the coordinating document to record compliance with other applicable laws and regulations.

To comply with other laws, DOT&PF must complete the following consultations:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 Consultation – administered by Advisory Council on Historic Preservation with assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Alaska Historic Preservation Act – Consultation and determination, administered by the SHPO in conjunction with NHPA Section 106
- Section 4(f) – administered by FHWA
- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)[Section 6(f)] - Consultation administered by the National Park Service
- Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation – administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries)
- Essential Fish Habitat Assessment Consultation – administered by NOAA Fisheries under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery and Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA)

Permits and Authorizations

Several federal, state, and local permits and clearances are required before project construction. The following is a list of permits that may need to be obtained or complied with.

- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges from Construction Activities – administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Water Act (CWA)
- CWA Section 401 Certificate of Reasonable Assurance – administered by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)
- General Wastewater Disposal Permit – administered by ADEC
- CWA Section 404 Permit – administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Alaska District
- Coastal Zone Management Act/Alaska Coastal Management Program Consistency Review and Determination – administered by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), Office of Project Management and Permitting (OPMP)
- Temporary Water Use Permit (for water withdrawals during construction) – administered by ADNR, Division of Mining, Land, and Water
- Floodplain Hazard Permit – administered by MOA
- Temporary Construction Permit – administered by MOA Parks and Recreation
- Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation – administered by Federal Aviation Administration