FAQs

Q: Why are you proposing changing the Trainor Gate Road into a one-way road. We would like to keep it two-way.

A: Based on the results of the corridor modeling, turning Trainor Gate into a one-way road provides for the best through-traffic movements along the Old Steese Highway and the close-by intersection of the Steese Expressway. In response to the public comments, the project team is evaluating alternatives that would maintain 2-way traffic. Once complete, the results will be presented to the public.

Q: Can Trainor Gate Road be widened instead of being turned into a one-way road?

A: Space is limited for widening Trainor Gate due to the narrow right-of-way and the presence of the railroad tracks. The project anticipates right-of-way acquisition of relatively small partial lots as needed along the Old Steese Highway; however, the amount of right-of-way acquisition that would be needed for sufficient widening of Trainor Gate Road would likely lead to relocation of one or more businesses. In addition, the portion of Trainor Gate Road between the Steese and Old Steese is actually on Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) property, and this road is there via a permit. To acquire permanent or expanded land from the railroad, the department would not only have to negotiate with the railroad but the ARRC can only sell land with the approval of the Alaska Legislature. Obtaining this approval typically causes very long delays to projects.

Q: Why are you not considering extending Trainor Gate Road west of the Old Steese to provide for another access to the business district?

A: The leg to the west at the Old Steese and Trainor Gate intersection is on property owned by the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC). This leg was recently blocked by the ARRC. Acquiring land from the ARRC requires approval from the Legislature. Though not impossible, if the ARRC is not in favor of providing additional access because of safety or other concerns, the Legislature's approval of the land acquisition would be unlikely in a timely manner.

Q: How are you providing improved access for pedestrians and bicyclists?

A: Providing improved access for both bicyclists and pedestrians is a one of the key goals of this project. At present, all alternatives include providing wider shoulders for bicyclists and

sidewalk(s) for pedestrians on both sides. If the Right-of-Way impacts and potential acquisition needs to be lowered once identified, the aspects that will be evaluated will include reducing/eliminating shoulder widths and reducing sidewalk widths or potentially eliminating the sidewalk to only one side of the corridor.

Q: Are you considering signals or roundabouts at the intersections?

A: Both signals and roundabouts are being considered at the following three intersections: Old Steese Highway/Trainor Gate Road, Fred Meyer access road/Blair Road, and Helmericks Avenue/Seekins Drive. It is generally difficult to mix signals and roundabouts where intersections are closely spaced such as would be the case on this project. The queue distances between the intersections can be problematic and impact vehicle movements at adjacent intersections. Signals platoon traffic (bunch vehicles together) and roundabouts do not (they allow for the "free flow" of traffic). Nevertheless the project team is evaluating all options and will determine if a combination of signals and roundabouts is feasible and/or preferable.

Q: Won't roundabouts cause more congestion on high traffic volume roads? Do they function well in the winter?

A: Modern roundabouts reduce unnecessary delay as compared to traffic lights and stop signs. This is due to all approaches yielding to traffic in the circle. Because speeds are lower, drivers can safely enter the intersection in a smaller gap than they would choose at an intersection controlled with a stop sign. Where only the side street is controlled by a stop sign, there may be little opportunity to enter the main roadway during peak travel times. At several times during the cycle of a traffic signal, there are no vehicles entering the intersection. If there are heavy left turns at an intersection, they rob time from the through traffic.

Roundabouts are becoming more and more prevalent in northern states where winter weather presents unique driving conditions and challenging maintenance. In Alaska, there are approximately 25 roundabouts in operation with 6 of those in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. They can accommodate large trucks and buses and have been used successfully where there are high traffic volumes in commercialized corridors such as the Richardson Highway/Badger Road/Santa Claus Lane area in North Pole and Huffman Road corridor in Anchorage.

We are excited about the safety performance of Alaska's roundabouts. Data collected by DOT&PF over the first three years following the construction of the North Pole roundabouts show a 63% reduction in overall crashes and 100% reduction in injury crashes. In the 10 years prior to construction, there were 28 reported property damage and seven minor injury crashes-

an average of 3.57 crashes per year. In the summer of 2014, the department completed the "after" study based on the three years of available post construction crash data (2008-2011) and in that time, there were only four reported property damage crashes and no injury crashes- an average of 1.33 crashes per year.