THE ALASKA LONG TRAIL

A PATH FOR A STRONGER ALASKA ECONOMY

VISION: A world-class trail system connecting 500+ miles of Alaska's iconic terrain and diverse communities from the Pacific to the Interior, embracing the many ways Alaskans recreate outdoors and bolstering the Alaskan economy by attracting visitors from all over the world.

GOALS AND BENEFITS

With some of the world's most stunning wild places, Alaska is overdue in creating a world-class, long trail system of its own. Goals and outcomes of building the trail include:

- **Improve Access** – Expand year-round non-motorized, motorized, and multi-modal outdoor recreation access; increase the supply of outdoor recreation opportunities which has fallen behind demand.
- **Build a Stronger, More Durable Economy** – Long trails are potent, proven attractions that will increase the time and money travelers spend in Alaska, growing jobs for residents, spawning business opportunities, and invigorating the economies of trail towns and communities along the route and statewide.
- **Enhance Alaskans' Quality of Life** – Make Alaska an even more attractive place to live for current and prospective residents.
- **Encourage Healthy Lives** – Make it easier and more inviting to be active and healthy outside.
- **Celebrate Heritage** – Support, preserve, and celebrate Alaska's vibrant traditional cultures and ways of life.
- **Sustain what Makes Alaska Unique** – Be good stewards of outdoor recreation resources: our wild spaces and healthy ecosystems, lively communities, and access to abundant, diverse recreational experiences. The Long Trail will become a national treasure, benefiting Alaskans, and creating a legacy for future generations.

RESOLUTIONS AND SUPPORT

Numerous organizations, agencies, local governments, and individuals expressed support for the Alaska Long Trail in the past year. Here is the list of organizations, agencies, and local governments that have sent letters of support, passed resolutions, and provided direct testimony at legislative meetings in support of the Alaska Long Trail.

- Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly
- City of Seward
- City of Nenana
- Mat-Su Borough Assembly
- Denali Borough Mayor
- Girdwood Board of Supervisors
- National Park Service
- Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA)
- Visit Anchorage (ED testimony to Senate)
- Anchorage Park Foundation
- Anchorage Trails Coalition
- Roadmap to a Vital and Safe Anchorage – Anchorage Chamber
- Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation (MSTPF)
- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District (KPEDD)
- Kenai Mountains – Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area (KMTA)
- Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects
- Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation
- Skeetawk, Hatcher Alpine Xperience
- Single Track Advocates, Anchorage
- Alaska Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- The North Face (Manager, Anchorage

USE & USERS: The trail aims to support diverse trail users. Uses on specific trail segments will be determined by the realities of terrain and the management policies of individual landowners and agencies. The ultimate goal is a network of routes accommodating a variety of uses, including some braids open to motorized use, and others for non-motorized hiking, biking and skiing. Some segments may include the Alaska Railroad or, like in Nenana Canyon, with a local rafting guide company.

Photo credits: Tim Charnon, USFS; Ryan Delaney, BLM; Chris Beck, AK Trails

500+ MILES FROM SEWARD TO FAIRBANKS

- **Momentum and Landowner Support**: largely on public land, a substantial portion (25%) already exists
- **Manageable Costs**: buildable terrain, good access
- **Community Connections:** more jobs, businesses, tax revenues
- **"Goldilocks Factor":** Wild, but not too wild; manageable logistics in this most populous area of Alaska for both residents and visitors
- **Multi-Season/Multi-modal**: options for summer and winter; options for river and train-based connections
- **Wow Factor**: mountains, glaciers, wildlife, honoring and celebrating the long, diverse history of these lands

WHO IS MAKING IT HAPPEN? Alaska Trails, a statewide non-profit, is coordinating this ambitious project, working with the Long Trail Coalition (representatives from each region along the route) and Regional Working Groups bringing in local trail users, landowners and communities. In addition to determining preferred routes and uses, these groups will explore the best long-term solutions for trail maintenance and management. Options will include a consortium of landowners and agencies along the trail system, perhaps with a dedicated non-profit comparable to the Appalachian Trail Coalition.

LEVERAGE & MATCHING FUNDS: Requested state capital dollars can be used to leverage additional, larger sums of federal LWCF, FLAP, and RTP funds.

PHASING AND NEXT STEPS The Appalachian Trail celebrates its 100-year anniversary in 2025, and that trail is still a work in progress. We are not that patient but know creating the trail will not happen overnight. The Long Trail Coalition is actively working to identify gaps that bring the most near-term value, make progress incrementally, and through that process build support and momentum. Success will require a mixture of funding from state and federal sources, often leveraged by local sources. And as has been the case with other long trails, support by individuals, businesses and non-profits will also be essential.

Now is the time for Alaska to invest in its future by creating a route to stand with the other great long trails of the world.

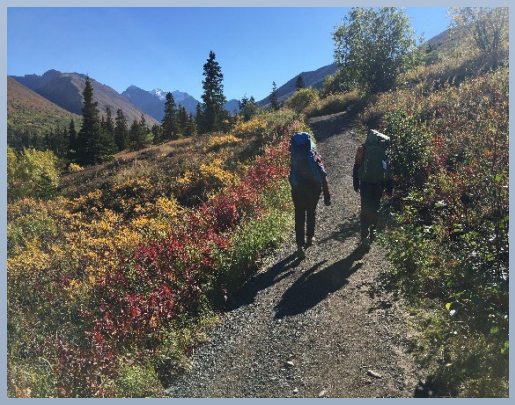
Visit Alaska Trails for more information
www.alaska-trails.org/the-alaska-long-trail

ALASKA TRAILS

GLOBAL POPULARITY:

- ***120,000 people*** walked New Zealand's "Great Walks"; 50,000 more than a decade ago.
- Interest in Spain's 500-mile Camino de Santiago is steadilyincreasing, now exceeding ***300,000 people*** a year.
- Just ***20,000 people*** have walked the 2,184 miles of Appalachian Trail since 1936, but ***3 million people*** hike a portion of the trail annually.

(2017 data each of the above)



IN ALASKA:

- ***$137 Million*** increase in annual spending if just half of typical year out-of-state visitors added "One More Day" to their AK trip.
- ***Trail Users Stay Longer, Spend More*** New Zealand's generous trail system is a big reason why NZ's average stay is 19 days vs. Alaska's averageof 9 days.
- ***Growing Demand for Hiking***:the fastest growing activity for both air and cruise out-of-stateAlaska visitors 2011-2016.

CONTACTS

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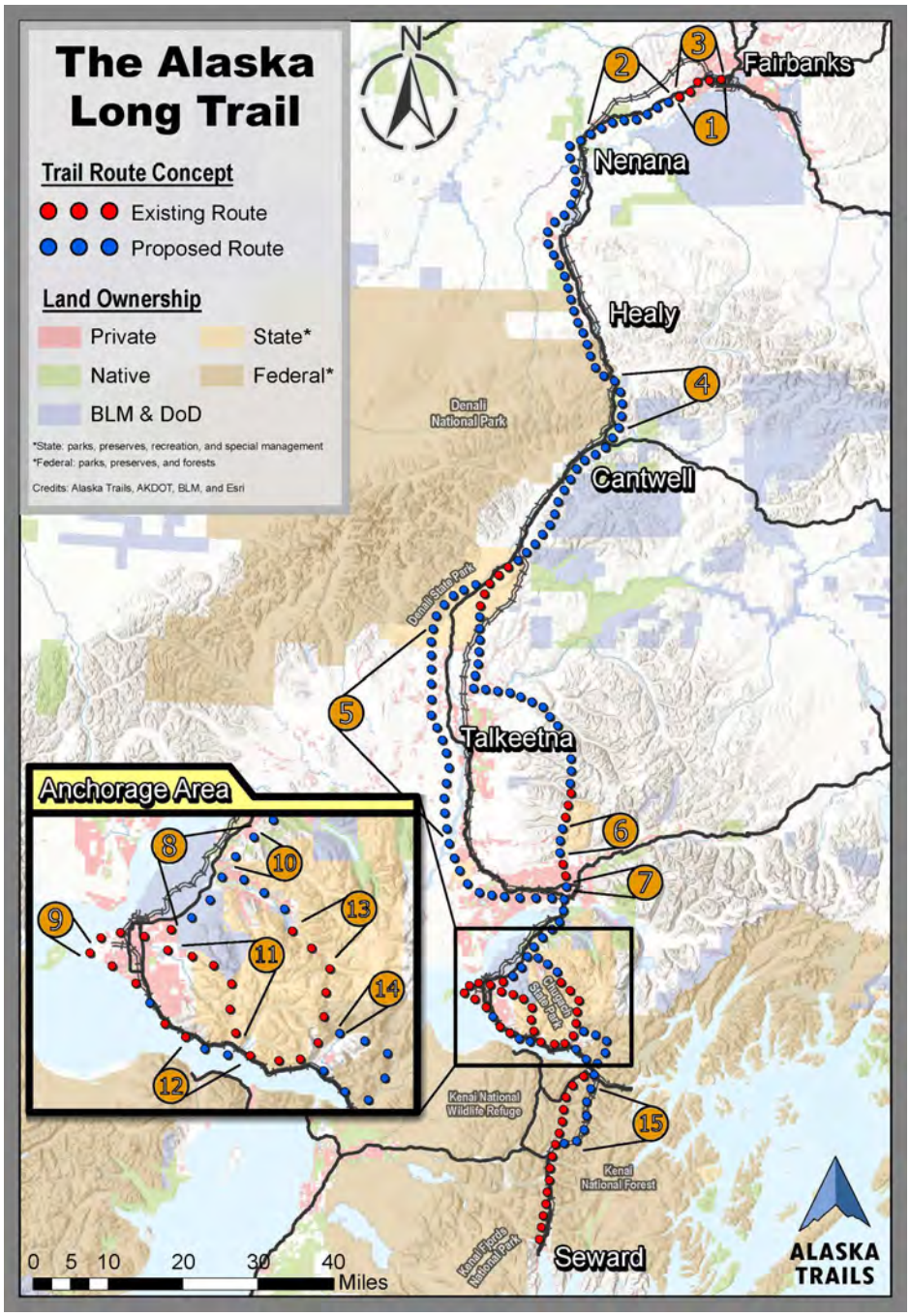
ALASKA LONG TRAIL - PRIORITY PROJECTS FY2023

Over the last two years, Alaska Trails, working closely with partners, identified 15 high-priority shovel-ready and planning-ready projects along the length of the Alaska Long Trail proposed route. These projects have been submitted to legislature for the FY2023 state capital budget. The table on the following page provides the summary of the projects, and their location is shown on the map below. Detailed information on each of the project is provided on the following pages.

PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- developing multi-use segments on inactive logging roads (#2)
- separated highway paths for safe non-motorized travel (#4)
- upgrading winter trails for year-round access (#1)
- building new non-motorized trails (#3, 6, 12)
- improving winter maintenance and connectivity for motorized trails (#5)
- building essential bridge connections (#14)
- reconnaissance studies to identify links between existing segments (#7, 8)
- existing trail improvements (#10, 11, 13)
- wayfinding and safety improvements (#9)
- building trailside cabins (#15)



WHO IS MAKING IT HAPPEN?

Alaska Trails, a statewide non-profit, is coordinating this ambitious project, working with the Long Trail Coalition (representatives from each region along the route) and Regional Working Groups bringing in local trail users, landowners and communities. In addition to determining preferred routes and uses, these groups will explore the best long-term solutions for trail maintenance and management. Grant recipients and partners are identified for each project in the CAPSIS.

LEVERAGE & MATCHING FUNDS: Requested state capital dollars can be used to leverage additional, larger sums of federal LWCF, FLAP, and RTP funds.

ALASKA LONG TRAIL – PRIORITY PROJECTS FY2023

#	TPS #	Project	Use	Amount	Responsible	Location
1	66749	Isberg 4-Season Trail	multi-use	$990,000	Fairbanks North Star Borough	Fairbanks North Star Borough (Areawide)
2	66750	Nenana to Fairbanks Multi-Use Trails, Tanana Valley State Forest	multi-use	$1,600,000	DNR Division of Forestry	Nenana
3	66751	Equinox Marathon Trail -- Parks Highway to Fairbanks via Ester Dome	mixed: some non-motorized, some multi-use	$1,450,000	Fairbanks North Star Borough	Fairbanks North Star Borough (Areawide)
4	66753	Carlo Creek to Crabbies Crossing Separated Path	non-motorized	$3,700,000	Denali Borough and AK DOT/PF	Denali Borough
5	67023	Susitna Valley Winter Trail	motorized	$100,000	Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation	Mat-Su
6	66755	GPRA Traverse and Little Susitna Loop	non-motorized	$1,900,000	MSB, AK State Parks, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation; Hatcher Alpine Xperience (Skeetawk)	Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Greater Palmer)
7	66756	Palmer Hay Flats Trail	non-motorized	$100,000	ADF&G, Mat-Su Borough, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation	Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Greater Palmer)
8	66550	Alaska Long Trail Anchorage to Mat-Su Reconnaissance Study	non-motorized	$300,000	Anchorage Park Foundation	Anchorage - Eagle River - Chugach State Park - Mat-Su Borough
9	66548	Alaska Long Trail Urban Braid - Anchorage Moose Loop	non-motorized	$800,000	Anchorage Park Foundation	Anchorage
10	66793	Peters Creek Upper Trail & Bridge	non-motorized	$30,000	AK DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation	Anchorage (Eagle River/Chugach State Park)
11	66797	Arctic to Indian Phase 1 Trail improvements	non-motorized	$20,000	AK DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation	Anchorage (Eagle River/Chugach State Park)
12	66761	Turnagain Arm Trail Maintenance and Extension	non-motorized	$370,000	AK DNR Division of Outdoor Recreation	Anchorage (South Anchorage)
13	66792	Crow Pass - Eagle River	non-motorized	$1,500,000	AK DNR DPOR and volunteers/nonprofits	Anchorage (Eagle River/Chugach State Park)
14	66766	Glacier Creek Bridge - replacement for hand tram	non-motorized	$1,200,000	Muni of Anchorage, USFS	Anchorage (Areawide)
15	66801	Glacier Discovery Hut-to-Hut System, Phase 1	multi-use	$690,000	Alaska Huts Association	Kenai Peninsula Borough (North Kenai)

TOTAL: $14,750,000

1. Isberg Recreation Area All Season Trail Connections

TPS# 66749

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: 6C

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Isberg trails are a popular draw, especially in the winter. But the area is under-utilized in the summer due to the wet conditions. Recent grant-funded projects have hardened over a mile of previously mucky trails, but much more is needed. Roughly 3 miles of trail will be hardened and have drainage features added to facilitate year-round use. As developments continue to make this trail system more inviting, people from all over the community are coming to enjoy the trails, natural landscape, berry picking, and wildlife viewing. Becoming a launch-off hub for the Alaska Long Trail is another incentive for developing an all-season trail.

BENEFITS AND NEED

- Ultimate lowland connection for proposed Alaska Long Trail to Fairbanks communities.
- Year-round access to scenic spruce lowlands.
- Easy, short trail loops; Convenient day-use.
- High interpretive potential.
- Increase nearby residential property values.
- Reduce environmental impacts through wetlands.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation

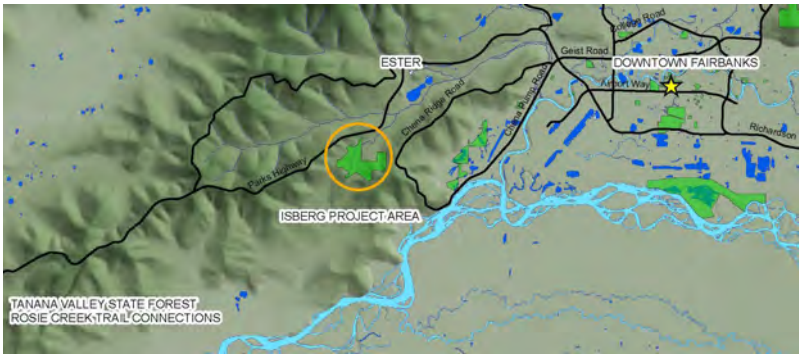
PROJECT STATUS

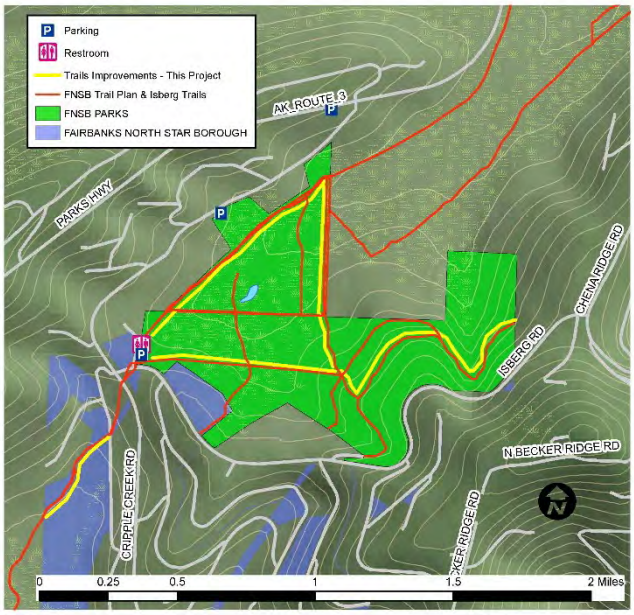
Trail connections to and through Isberg Rec Area were made a priority in the FNSB adopted 2006 Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan. In 2007 a Master Plan for the Isberg Rec Area was also adopted, specifically calling out the need to improve major trail connections. In 2019, the FNSB adopted a Capital Improvement Plan which prioritized the implementation of the Isberg master plan as a project for which to secure funding from FNSB and outside sources. Since 2007, trail connections in Isberg have been reconstructed using pass-through funds from multiple Recreational Trails Program grants. This project continues such work. The scope includes improving key sections within the Master Plan that must be developed to facilitate the Alaska Long Trail and finish the connection between Tanana Valley State Forest Land to the residential areas of Ester, Chena Ridge and West Fairbanks.

USE: Multi-use: motorized/non-motorized

ESTIMATED COST

- 3 miles of wet winter trails to be hardened for all-season use (class 3 ATV trail) x $250,000 per mile = $750,000
- Adds a new trailhead (no restroom) = $150,000
- Project oversight and management (10%): $90,000
  TOTAL: $990K





2. Nenana to Fairbanks Multi-Use Trails, Tanana Valley State Forest

TPS# 66750

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: 6C

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project would connect Nenana and Fairbanks, passing through the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF), serving as a key component of the proposed Alaska Long Trail. This section takes advantage of many scenic miles of unpaved forestry roads that currently offer excellent year-round opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. However, the roads are not continuous and do not provide a complete route from Fairbanks to Nenana. This project would build 18 miles of multi-use trails through the working State Forest, connecting about 35 miles of existing forestry road system. The project would also regrade and maintain inactive sections of forestry road along the route. This system would create a complete motorized/non-motorized trail link to the Parks Highway near Nenana.

BENEFITS AND NEED

The proposed connections and loops are desirable because they

- Complete the northern link of the Alaska Long Trail from Fairbanks to Nenana for use by Alaska residents and visitors, including directional signs, maps and information kiosks;
- Provide excellent recreation opportunities for day-trip recreationists who are returning to their starting point in Fairbanks or Nenana;
- Provide for maintenance on timber roads to support future timber harvest.

LAND OWNERSHIP

This proposed route remains entirely within the TVSF: heading west, it ends following the existing Maisch forestry road onto the Parks Highway about five miles north of Nenana.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Interior Alaska Trails and Parks Foundation (IATPF)**,** DNR Division of Forestry; Happy Trails, Inc. If funded, IATPF will take the lead on this project, with some assistance and permits obtained from DNR Division of Forestry. Alaska Trails and the Fairbanks North Star Borough are active supporters of this project and will assist as needed.

PROJECT STATUS

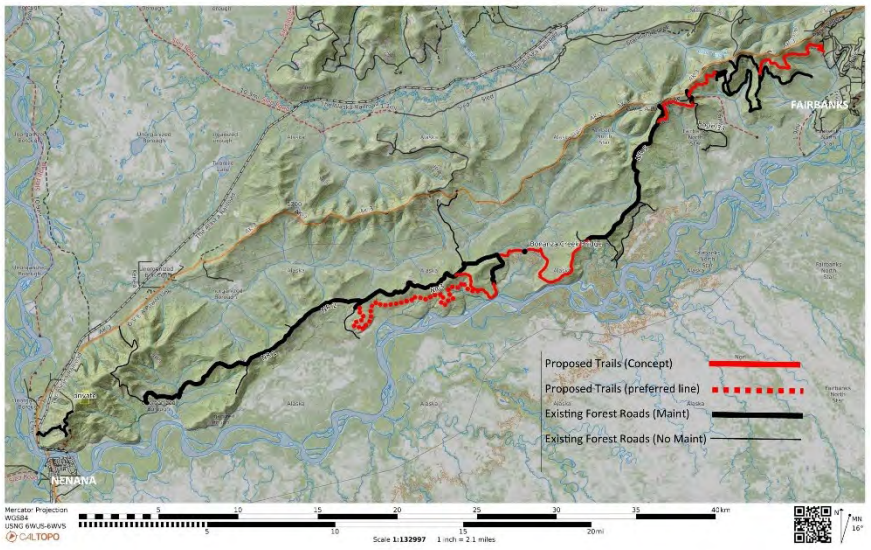
On the northern end of this TVSF multi-use segment, the Division of Forestry has already received a grant through federal Recreational Trails Program for recreational improvements to the existing Rosie Creek forestry road system. The project repairs the existing forestry road for recreational use, adds signage and GPS map links, and creates a large parking lot along the Parks Highway to provide a trailhead adequate for motorized and non-motorized use.

USE: Multi-use: motorized/non-motorized

ESTIMATED COST

- Build 18 miles of 7' wide multi-use trails at $55,000 per mile = $990,000
- Brushing, regrading, resurfacing, and repair of 35 miles of forestry roads: (12' wide, naturally surfaced, full bench, with 3% outsloping) x $5,280 per mile = $184,800
- Map kiosk, directional signs: $30,000
- Bridge over Bonanza Creek: $150,000
- Design and environmental review: $100,000
- Project oversight and management (10%): $140,520

TOTAL: $1,595,320



Map Key. Solid Red: proposed trails; dashed Red – section to be added if additional $500,000 was available; Black thick: forest roads, maintenance; Black

3. Equinox Marathon Trail – Parks Highway to Fairbanks via Ester Dome

TPS# 66751

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: 6C

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Equinox Marathon Trail connects several of the most popular trail through the heart of Fairbanks: The Skarland Ski Trail, the UAF Campus trails, the Ester Dome Singletrack trail, and multiple trails on Ester Dome. The route is used for the popular race and for year-round recreation. Better access to and development of this trail route gives visitors the chance to explore several local trail systems, find impressive views, and traverse excellent single-track trail. The project will focus on securing easements, constructing a new section of trail on Ester Dome, and building trailheads. Ester Dome is the premier high point in Fairbanks. This project would also help connect the Alaska Long Trail to Fairbanks via Ester Dome and the Equinox Trail.

BENEFITS AND NEED

- This is the ultimate upland connection for Long Trail to Fairbanks communities.
- Creates a well-defined route suitable for hikers, bikers and skiers of all experience levels.
- Connects multiple trail systems, and some of Fairbanks' very best.
- Creates possibility for smaller, convenient loops.
- Ends at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Campus, home of the Museum of the North & the "Into the Wild" bus.
- Increased draw and economic impact potential for the Equinox Marathon event.

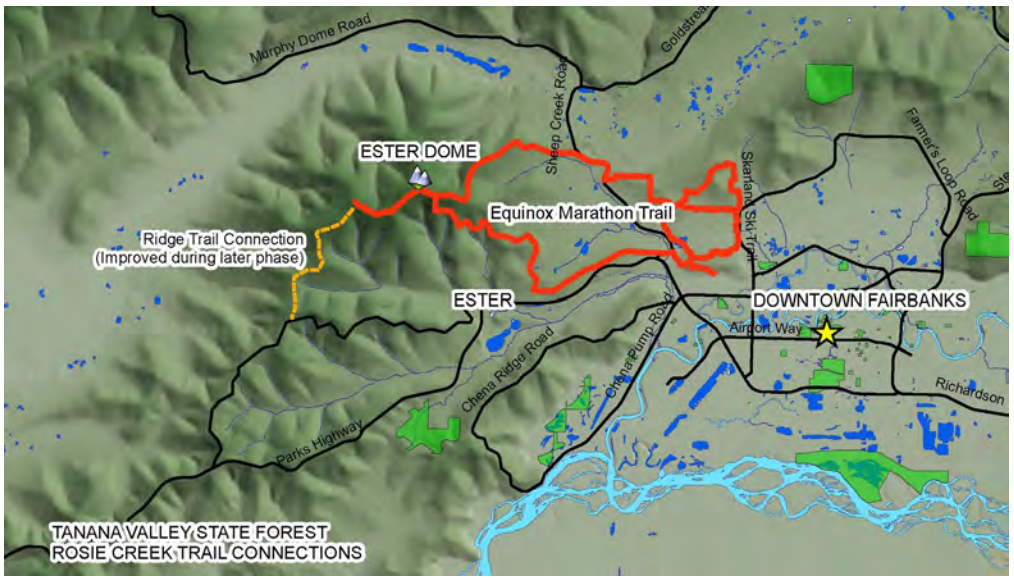
LAND OWNERSHIP

Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, Alaska DNR ML&W, University of Alaska Fairbanks

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Project lead: Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation

Partners: FNSB Parks will work with AKMHTL and DNR to expand its existing easements on Ester Dome. Running Club north may also be a key project partner as the coordinator of the Equinox Marathon Race.



PROJECT STATUS

Nearly all this route exists, though some sections lack year-round access and a new trail section needs built. Funds will purchase access easements, construct new trail, repair some damaged sections of existing trail, and improve wayfinding and trailheads along the trail system.

USE: Mixed: Mostly non-motorized, some multiple-use/motorized.

ESTIMATED COST

- Access/Easement expansion: $250,000
- 1 mile of upland trail construction = $150,000
- Trailheads & Restrooms, multiple locations = $1,000,000
- Project oversight and management: $50,000

Total: $1,450,000

4. Carlo Creek to Crabbies Crossing Separated Path

TPS# 66753

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Denali Borough, 6C

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

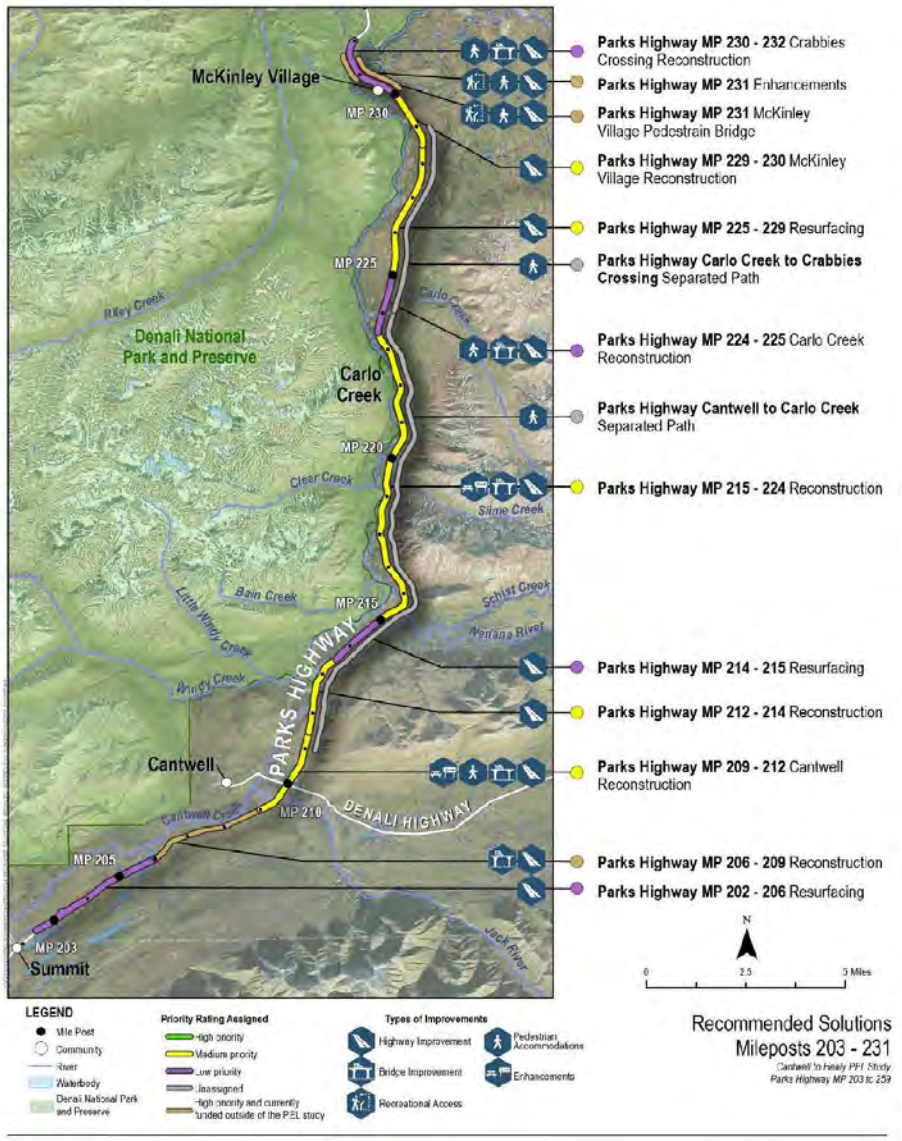
Parks Highway Carlo Creek to Crabbies Crossing Separated Path (MP 224 to 229) would construct an approximate 5-mile separated path along the east side of the Parks Highway from Carlo Creek to McKinley Village.

BENEFITS AND NEED

The construction of separated pathways in the Parks Highway corridor, including within communities and between communities, was an identified need and opportunity in the Parks Highway PEL (Planning & Environmental Linkages) Study draft. Specific benefits include:

- Improve safety
- Improve mobility for all transportation modes
- Balance the needs of all users (includes local residents, visitors/ tourists, through travelers, freight, non-motorized, and recreational uses)
- Separate motorized and non-motorized uses where reasonable
- Accommodate increased recreation and tourism demands, in turn to support the economic vitality of the region

Figure 5-3. Recommended Solutions in the Southern Corridor, Mileposts 203 - 231



LAND OWNERSHIP: AK DOT/PF

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Denali Borough, AK DOT/PF

PROJECT STATUS

The Parks Highway PEL (Planning & Environmental Linkages) Study draft recommended constructing five stand-alone separated pathways between communities along the Parks Highway corridor between mileposts (MP) 203 and 259 and identified the costs in segments. Carlo to Crabbies section is seen as a priority by Denali Borough at this time. Work is in progress with DOT/PF, Denali Borough and other partners to find solutions for funding ongoing maintenance costs. A qualitative assessment showed separated pathways would help achieve many of the PEL goals identified for the corridor.

USE: nonmotorized

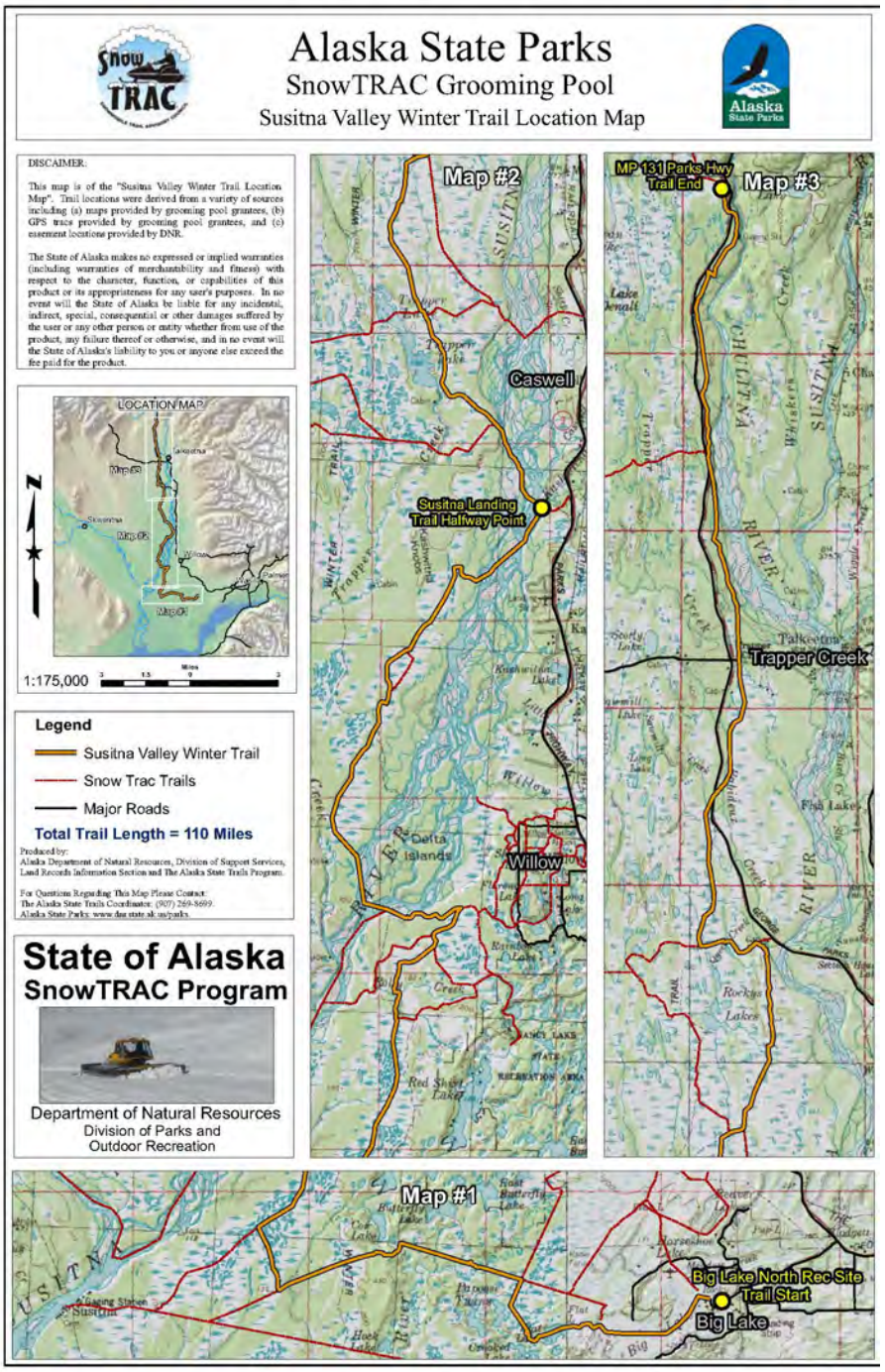
ESTIMATED COST: **$3.7M**

5. Susitna Valley Winter Trail

TPS# 67023

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will help better connect and maintain a quality public motorized winter braid route for the Alaska Long Trail in Susitna Valley between Big Lake and Trapper Creek. As a result of hard work by underpaid local volunteer organizations, well-developed winter trail systems currently exist in Big Lake, Willow, and the Petersville Road area. Work has also been done to create a north-south route connecting these trail systems. Building on earlier planning work, funding for this project would bring together the users/user groups in this area to further improve these connections.



BENEFITS AND NEEDS

This project will help better connect and maintain a quality public WINTER trail in Susitna Valley between Big Lake and the Petersville Road/Trapper Creek area trail systems, providing improved options and expanded capacity for maintenance for snow season travel by snowmachine, dog sled, fat tire bike or skis.

A primary goal will be to develop solutions to the currently limited capacity for trail maintenance and search and rescue activities. Current funding for these critical needs barely covers existing use, and needs are certain to grow with the continuing expansion of winter activities in Alaska. Solutions include a combination of physical improvements and equipment, education of users to help bring in more funding through the State's SnowTRAC program, and collaboration to maximize federal funds, for example the federal Recreational Trails Program. This project will set the stage for a quality, safe and well-maintained motorized winter braid route of the Alaska Long Trail in Susitna Valley on the west side of the Parks Highway between Big Lake and Trapper Creek.

PROJECT LEAD

Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation (MSTPF)

USE: motorized

ESTIMATED COST: $100,000

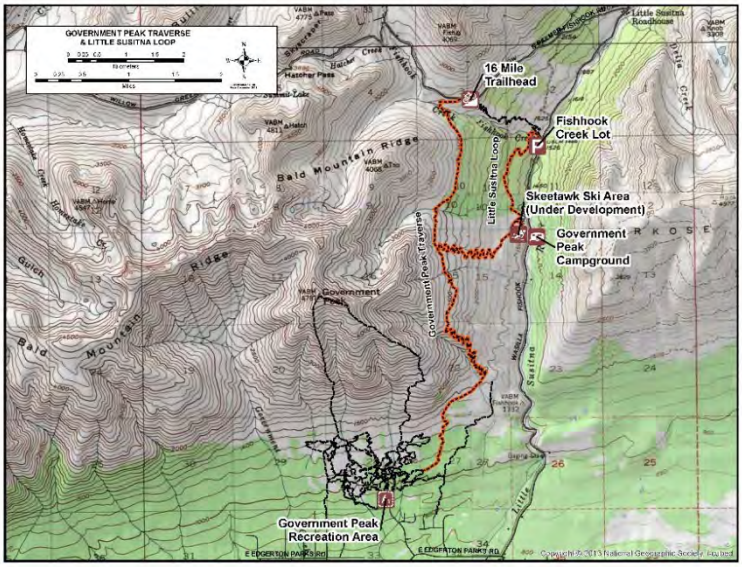
6. GPRA Traverse and Little Susitna Loop

TPS# 66755

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT(S): Mat-Su Borough; 9-E

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will construct approximately 12 miles of new trails to connect two popular existing non-motorized trail systems and increase access to the alpine country east of Government Peak. At the south end, this new trail would connect to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) which currently boasts 22 miles of hiker, biker, skier, and equestrian trails. To the north, extending into the Hatcher Pass area would be connections to the Skeetawk Ski Area and the 16 Mile downhill mountain bike trail.



BENEFITS AND NEED

This highly used area will greatly benefit from increased trail connectivity. In addition to the four developed trailheads that will be connected by this project (GPRA, Skeetawk, Fishhook Creek and 16 Mile) the trail will link to the campground at Government Peak along the Little Susitna River. An additional benefit for safety and user experience will be a route for mountain bikers and hikers to return to the top of the 16 Mile trail without needing a vehicle shuttle. Visitation to this region is heavy throughout the year, especially in the summer months when this trail will be used the most. Providing this infrastructure will give users a dramatic increase in connectivity between the four trailheads that does not exist and will open up many more possibilities for outdoor recreation. Beyond the connection of Hatcher Pass and GPRA, two destination recreation areas, the Government Peak Traverse Trail linking Skeetawk with the Little Susitna Loop will create a world-class option for bikers to use Skeetawk in the summer.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Portions of the trail will be on land managed by Alaska State Parks, the Mat-Su Borough, and Skeetawk which leases land from the Mat-Su Borough.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Project Lead: Land and Resource Management Division, Mat-Su Borough

Partners: Alaska State Parks; Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation; Hatcher Alpine Xperience (Skeetawk).

USE: The trail will most likely be 4-to-6-foot bench cut tread built for hiking and mountain biking. There may be an option in the future to connect the Carle Wagon Road Trail with the southern most section of the Government Peak Traverse.

ESTIMATED COST

Cost for the trail construction, trail easement survey, along with limited upgrades at the four trailheads is estimated at **$1.9 million**.

7. Palmer Hay Flats Trail

TPS# 66756

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Mat-Su Borough

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Planning is needed for the Palmer Hay Flats (PHF) Coastal Trail, a proposed scenic route along the north side of the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. The result would make a major contribution to the recreation opportunities in the core area of the borough while providing for neighborhood connectivity. PHF incorporates these two trails from the 2016 MSB's Recreational Trails Plan (https://www.matsugov.us/docs/general/14086/trailplanupdate2016_final.pdf):

168. Knik-Fairview (proposed)

A proposed trail connecting the Fairview Loop Road area to the Knik Lake area. The Borough acquired easements over private land on portions of the trail, but key sections of the proposed route are through subdivisions.

248. Cottonwood Creek Wetlands Trail

Cottonwood Creek Wetlands Trail is located off Hayfield Road in the Knik-Fairview area. This trail is used in the winter by hikers, skiers, snowshoers and snowmobilers, and in the summer/fall by hikers, hunters and ATVs. Motorized use subject to seasonal conditions set forth by Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

BENEFITS AND NEED

- Neighborhood connectivity
- Outstanding recreational opportunity for a variety of users
- Filling the gap between existing trails

Furthermore, there is evidence that the Historic Iditarod Trail crossed the Palmer Hay Flats connecting Eklutna to the village of Knik (a portion is RS2477 Wet Gulch Trail RST 1710 and dog musher reports https://www.members.tripod.com/knik_alaska/id80.htm). Re-establishing the Historic Iditarod Trail in this area would support heritage preservation.

LAND OWNERSHIP: Mat-Su Borough and ADF&G

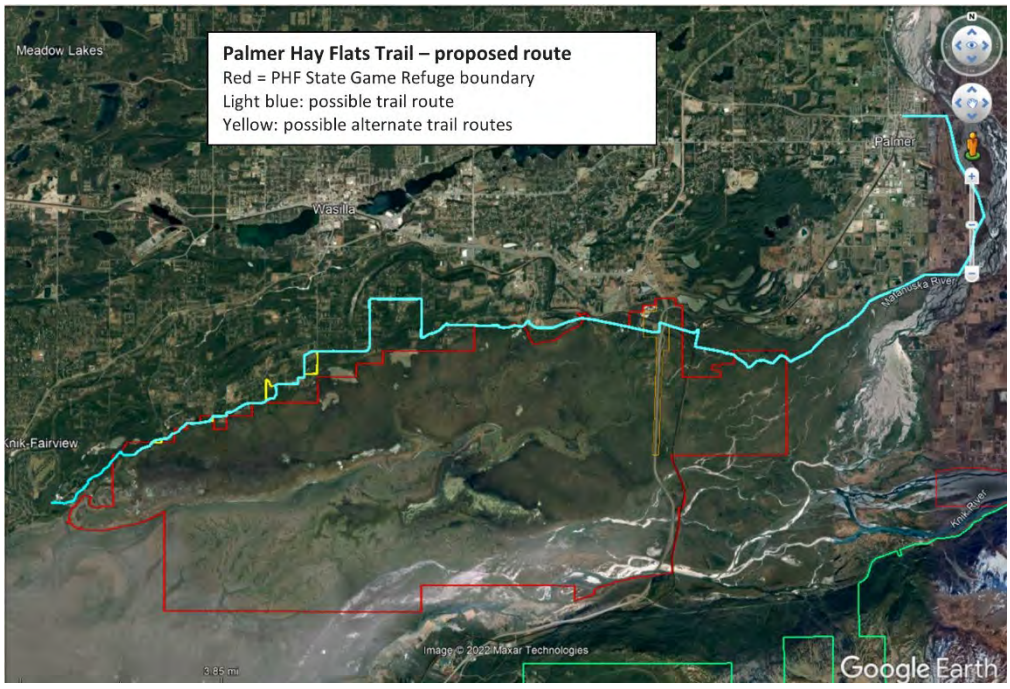
PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Mat-Su Borough and ADF&G

PROJECT STATUS

Planning-ready, portions exist.

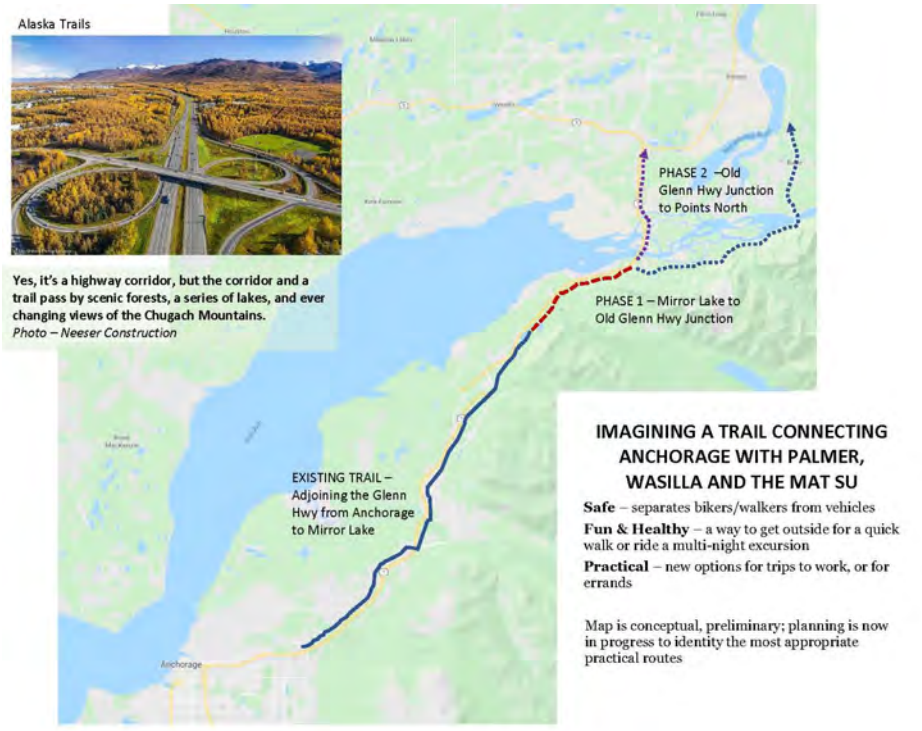
USE: multi-use

ESTIMATED COST: **$100,000**



8. Alaska Long Trail Anchorage to Mat-Su Reconnaissance Study
TPS# 66550

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Anchorage and Mat-Su Borough



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will conduct reconnaissance studies with AK Department of Transportation and Chugach State Park to Connect Anchorage to the Alaska Long Trail. There is currently no safe, enjoyable way for walkers and bikers to travel between Anchorage and the Mat Su Borough. Providing trail connections between these areas -- Alaska's two largest population centers -- would bring real benefits to residents and visitors in both locations as well as providing a key segment of the Alaska Long Trail, the proposed 500-mile trail connecting Seward and Fairbanks. This project will take the first step in making these connections, by bringing together landowners and stakeholders to investigate the benefits, costs and feasibility of different trail options. A leading candidate route would parallel the Glenn Highway, filling the 8-mile gap from where existing paved bike trail ends at Mirror Lake to northern boundary of the Municipality of Anchorage. The trail that ends at Mirror Lake is an extension of the Ship Creek Trail, which starts in Anchorage's downtown, passes through the Mountain View neighborhood, and then continues north along the Glenn Hwy through Eagle River. Because the Long Trail is planned to be a braided trail system, including hiking, biking and motorized segments, there may be alternative or additional other trail routes that could meet these trail connection goals. These options will also be investigated through this project, working with willing landowners and stakeholders.

BENEFITS AND NEEDS

This is a regional need and a recreation and tourism amenity that is embraced by the communities along the Alaska Long Trail. This critical reconnaissance study must be performed to DOT/PF standards to identify permits needed, a preferred route plan, and a clearer cost estimate for construction. The connection project is part of the Areawide Trails plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and follows portions of the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

This trail project would also benefit two schools in the Anchorage School District. Chugiak Elementary School and Mirror Lake Middle School are the two schools that cannot participate in Bike to School Day (Alaska ranks sixth in the nation for the total number of participating schools per state). In addition to improving the connections between these north Anchorage communities, this trail could provide new ways to reach into Chugach State Park.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS:

Parties to involve in this process include, but are not limited to, Alaska Department of Transportation, Chugach State Park, Alaska Railroad, Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge managers, Eklutna, Inc., Native Village of Eklutna, Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation, Mat-Su Parks and Recreation, the Matanuska Susitna Borough, and trail advocates like the Mat Su Trails and Anchorage Park Foundation. All have indicated a willingness to come together with engineers to map a path forward for this narrow gap connecting Alaska's two most populated areas, Anchorage and the Matanuska Susitna Valley. Working with communities and stakeholders in the area will be a very important part of this project. The Native Village of Eklutna is located within the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage but is not connected to Anchorage trails nor north to the Mat-Su. Neighborhoods in Chugiak are also not connected.

ESTIMATED COST: $300,000

9. Alaska Long Trail Urban Braid - Anchorage Moose Loop
TPS# 66548

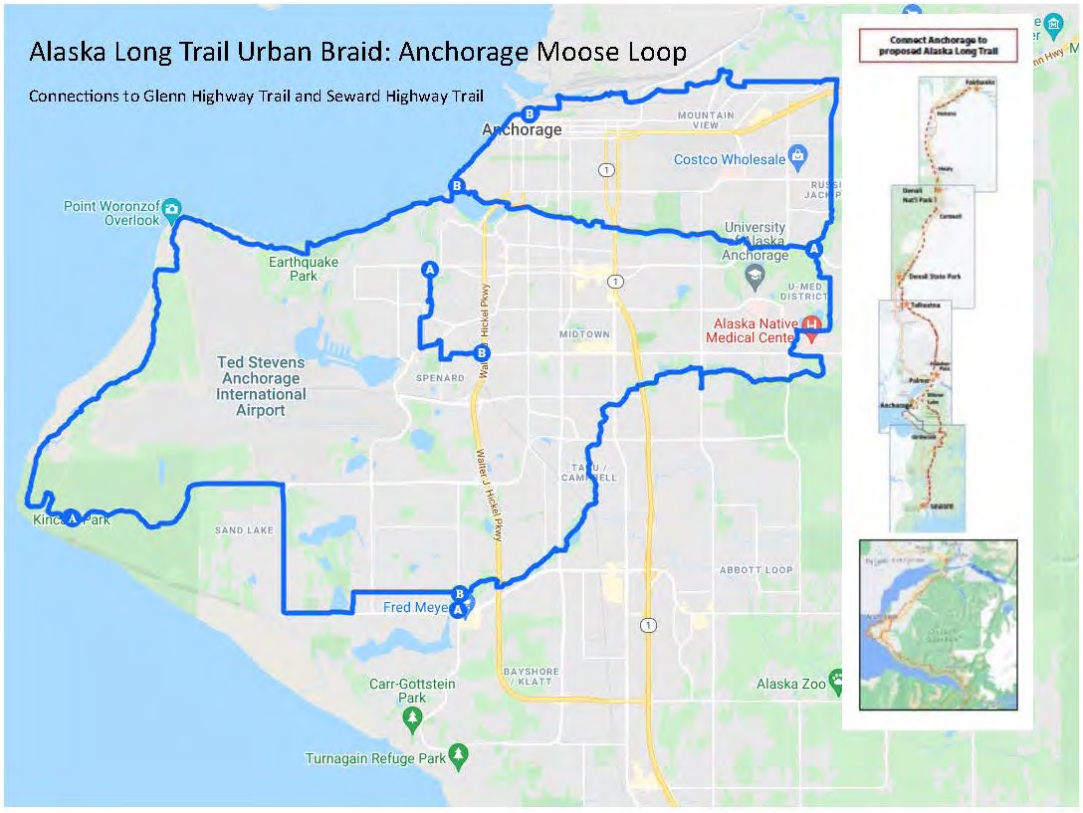
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Anchorage

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

One important urban braid of the Alaska Long Trail will pass through the Anchorage Bowl, taking advantage of the Anchorage "Moose Loop". Two segments of the Moose Loop -- the Coastal Trail on the south and west, and Ship Creek Trail on the north -- are planned as designated elements of the braided Long Trail system. These connections help make downtown Anchorage a Long Trail starting and stopping point. Other portions of the 33-mile Moose Loop provide key Long Trail "onramps", improving access for neighborhoods and visitors throughout the Anchorage Bowl. Funding through this project will provide for safer and more enjoyable connectivity within Anchorage and to communities to the north and south, to benefit residents, visitors and businesses. Anchorage's "destination trail" for residents and visitors is the 33-mile-long MOOSE LOOP - the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Campbell Creek Trail, Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek trail, and Ship Creek trail. The Coastal Trail (10 miles), starts downtown along Cook Inlet, heading west and south, with "Moose Ears" at mile 5 and its nose at mile 10. The hump of the Moose heads east from downtown along the Ship Creek Trail (2.5 miles) (which connects to an unfinished trail to Eagle River). The Chester Creek Trail (7.5 miles), is the spine, starting at Westchester Lagoon and connecting to the University/ Medical District (UMED). The Campbell Creek Trail (7.5 miles) is the body, linking the UMED to the South Anchorage shopping district. These trails connect to each other through city streets and through the three largest parks: Russian Jack, Far North Bicentennial and Kincaid.

BENEFITS AND NEED

Safety Improvements: Erosion control is needed in multiple sections of the Moose Loop, particularly the Coastal Trail. Work is happening now to connect the Coastal Trail to Ship Creek, which connects to the Glenn Highway Trail.
Wayfinding: For experienced cyclists, the MOOSE LOOP can be enjoyed in its current form, but wayfinding signs and tools are needed for new users to navigate to the Alaska Long Trail. Half-mile marker signs with emergency locators were installed in 2019. A suite of wayfinding and interpretive signs has been developed and approved, awaiting funding.



PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Anchorage Park Foundation, MOA

ESTIMATED COST: $800,000

10. Peters Creek Upper Trail & Bridge

TPS# 66793

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Eagle River – Chugiak districts

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Brushing and a new pedestrian bridge to open up an improved trail for hiking and hunting access for Four-Mile Valley Creek Loop trail in Chugach State Park. The trail needs brushing, outside the scope of what Chugach State Park is able to fund with the Recreational Trails Program for the coming fiscal year (RTP is funding only motorized projects presently). The trail has high significance to local residents, as it provides pack and saddle access to equestrian travelers, hunters, and hikers.

BENEFITS AND NEED

- Pack and saddle access to equestrian travelers, hunters, and hikers
- High significance to local residents

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Chugach State Park, AK DNR DPOR

USE: non-motorized, equestrian

ESTIMATED COST: **$30,000**

11. Arctic to Indian Phase 1 Trail improvements

TPS# 66797

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Anchorage districts

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Phase 1 improvements would flag and brush a winter trail. This route is part of the system of winter trails connecting Anchorage to the Iditarod Historic Trail and is one braid of the proposed Alaska Long Trail.

BENEFITS AND NEED

Phase 1 improvements would flag and brush a winter trail, an important recreation route. This route is part of the system of winter trails connecting Anchorage to the Iditarod Historic Trail and is one braid of the proposed Alaska Long Trail.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Chugach State Park/ MOA (AWWU); JBER; Arctic Valley Ski Club

USE: Multi-use: motorized/non-motorized

ESTIMATED COST: **$20,000**

12. Turnagain Arm Trail Maintenance and Extension

TPS# 66761

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: 13-28 House / H-N Senate

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will upgrade sections of degraded, very popular trail; one link on the Girdwood to Anchorage braid of Long Trail. The Turnagain Arm Trail follows a support route created during the 1910s to aid the construction of the Alaska Railroad. This trails meanders above the Seward Highway and offers sweeping views of Turnagain Arm. Thanks to its southern exposure, this is one of the first snow-free trails in the spring.

The Turnagain Arm Trail is 9.5 miles one way and accessed from several trailheads along the Seward Highway: Potter Creek, McHugh Creek, Rainbow Creek, and Windy Corner. Along its current course, the trail bridges several creeks, travels through eroded, muddy terrain, and continues along cliffs where landslides have been sloughing off sections of trail. A comprehensive list of maintenance needs exists for this popular year-round trail.

The Chugach State Park Trail Management Plan includes a roughly 1.5-mile extension of the southern terminus at Windy Corner to the Falls Creek Trailhead. This section of trail would switchback over a rocky ridge extending from South Suicide Peak to an elevation of approximately 500’ ASL and offer immense views of the head of Turnagain Arm. This extension would tie into the existing Falls Creek Trailhead and terminate at the established trailhead there.

ESTIMATED COST

Maintenance Needs:

Boardwalk and tread materials: 50K

McHugh Creek Bridge resurfacing: 20K

Retaining structure improvements: 50K

Labor and dirt work: 100K

New trail segment: 150K

TOTAL: 370K

13. Crow Pass - Eagle River

TPS# 66792

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Anchorage – Eagle River districts, areawide and statewide significance

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This Alaska Long Trail project would upgrade the popular, spectacular but degrading Crow Pass Trail in Chugach State Park, which connects Girdwood and Eagle River. The 21-mile trail ascends from the Crow Creek Trailhead in Girdwood, through talus fields and mine ruins up to Crow Pass, near the toe of Raven Glacier. The trail descends from the snowfields and lakes at the pass, through alpine meadows and forests to a ford on Eagle River (no bridge yet). The route then trends west, paralleling Eagle River to the Eagle River Nature Center. This route is formally designated as a portion of the Iditarod National Historic Trail and is the premier overnight, point-to-point trail in Chugach State Park. Significant portions of the route need to be relocated and rebuilt. Chugach State Park staff and professional trail builders have done the in-field work needed to lay out the routes and estimate costs for this section needing substantial improvements.

Eagle River Valley: In much of this area the route runs right next to the actively eroding river. A steadily increasing percentage of the trail is disappearing into the river. This project would fund the critically needed trail reconstruction and reroute of about 5 miles of this 12-mile stretch of the trail, lifting the trail onto more stable and sustainable higher ground.

BENEFITS AND NEED

The project will significantly upgrade and reroute a high value, deteriorating trail, delivering the following benefits:

- Upgrade one critical link of the full Alaska Long Trail, and at the same time, provide a much improved day or short overnight recreation amenity, close to Alaska's largest city and most visited destination.
- Upgrade an important, historic section of the Iditarod supply route.
- Further expand options and opportunities on a trail important to local commercial outfitters and guides.
- Greatly improve safety of an increasingly hazardous trail, reducing regularly search and rescue costs to the state.
- Replace a near impossible-to-maintain social trail with a purpose-built, durable and sustainable trail.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The first 3 miles of the trail, from the Girdwood Trail head to Crow Pass crosses through Chugach National Forest. The remainder of the route, and all the projects outlined here, are entirely within Chugach State Park.

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Project lead: DNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Chugach State Park

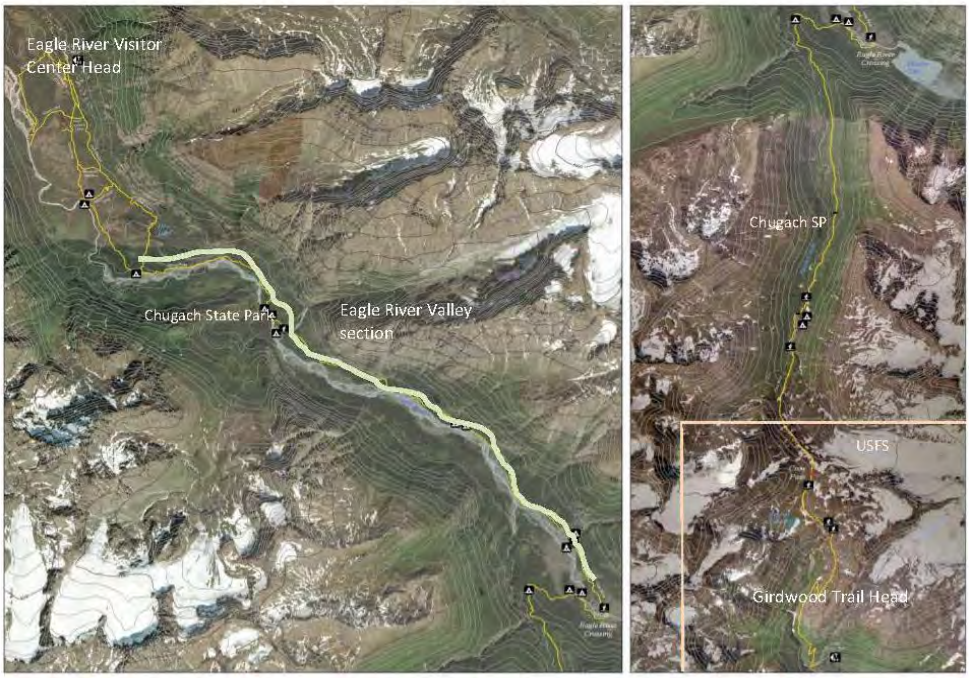
Partners: Alaska Trails' Trail Stewards Program (volunteer and paid trail crews)

PROJECT STATUS

This project is in the 2016 Chugach State Park Trail plan, and needs final route determination (design) and funds to carry out the needed improvements.

USE: nonmotorized

Crow Pass Trail



ESTIMATED COST:

Trail survey and design $350,000; Eagle River Valley section $900,000

Trail-side facilities to support and manage impacts of growing use including hardened campsites, restrooms, signage. $150,000; Project oversight and management $100,000

TOTAL: $1,500,000

14. Glacier Creek Bridge - replacement for hand tram

TPS# 66766

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: 13-28 House / H-N Senate, areawide and statewide significance

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The conceptual bridge design is meant to balance cost, function and aesthetics to provide Girdwood residents and its visitors with a long-lasting replacement for the crossing over Glacier Creek formerly served by the hand tram along popular Winner Creek Trail. The proposed solution is a pedestrian suspension bridge with a 5' wide walking surface. As conceived, the suspension bridge will be of galvanized steel. This material will provide superior life span and reflects a design vernacular seen elsewhere in Girdwood, primarily associated with ski lifts and other elements at the Alyeska Resort. Other considerations are fall protection on the bridge as well as at the approaches to the bridge.

BENEFITS AND NEED

Winner Creek Trail in Girdwood is one of the most popular trails in the state of Alaska among both visitors and locals. It's an easy 3-mile hike or bike ride on a wide, well-developed trail with a gentle elevation gain that winds through America's northernmost rainforest, crosses a wooden bridge over a thundering blue-water gorge. The trail begins at Alyeska Resort and connects to Crow Creek Rd via a now-defunct hand tram across Glacier Creek. The tram closed in 2019 after two people fell from the tram's platform in separate incidents, leaving one person dead and the other with serious injuries. A replacement bridge has been identified as a viable safe alternative, https://www.adn.com/outdoors-adventure/2021/06/30/girdwoods-winner-creek-hand-tram-unlikely-to-return-officials-say/

A replacement bridge would provide the following benefits:

- Safety for travelers along Winner Creek Trail
- Faster access from Crow Creek Rd to Winner Creek Trail for emergencies (shorter distance from Crow Creek Rd than from Alyeska Resort)
- Key connection for the planned Alaska Long Trail route in the Girdwood Valley – a link between Iditarod National Historic Trail (over Crow Pass) and Upper Winner Creek Trail (over Berry Pass into Twentymile River and Portage Valleys)
- Addressing demand for visitation on Winner Creek Trail

LAND OWNERSHIP:
Municipality of Anchorage

PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS

Municipality of Anchorage, US Forest Service, Alyeska Resort

PROJECT STATUS

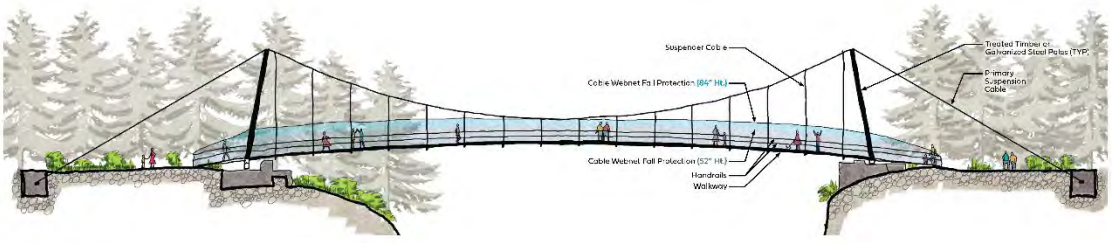
Design has been developed, MOA and partners are seeking funding for construction.

USE: nonmotorized

ESTIMATED COST:

Suspension Bridge Construction - $1.2 million

Conceptual Site Plan



Conceptual Bridge Section
Fall protection cable webnet height (52 inches or 4 feet - 4 inches) top of hand rail. With option to include a double height (84 inch or 7 feet) cable webnet for additional fall protection.
See page 4 of 4 for an example of cable webnet.

15. Alaska Huts Association - Glacier Discovery Hut-to-Hut System, Phase 1

TPS# 66801

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS: Northeast Kenai

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Glacier Discovery Project is a linked three hut system along the Alaska Railroad's Whistle Stop corridor in the Kenai Mountains. In Phase I of the Glacier Discovery Project, Alaska Huts Association, an Anchorage- based 501(c)3 non-profit, will work in partnership with the Chugach National Forest and Alaska Railroad to build the 22-bed "Lars Spurkland Memorial Hut" overlooking Spencer Glacier. This strategic location will benefit from infrastructure already placed by the US Forest Service and independent tour operators, including whistle stops, shelters, toilet facilities, well established trails, and a fantastic pedestrian bridge across the Placer River. In Phase II of the Glacier Discovery Project, Alaska Huts will further develop plans to build two 8-10 bed huts, Bartlett Glacier Hut and Trail Glacier Hut, along the Alaska Railroad's Whistle Stop Corridor to complete a three-hut system. Bartlett and Trail Glacier Huts will be accessed via the Glacier Discovery Trail, a 30-mile US Forest Service trail currently under construction. Once complete, the trail will connect the Glacier Discovery Hut system and Spencer Glacier, Grandview and Trail Glacier Whistle Stops.

BENEFITS AND NEED

The Glacier Discovery Project will serve a diverse group of outdoor enthusiasts due to its unique location along the Alaska Railroad corridor. Visitors will be able to travel hut-to-hut by riding the train or by hiking the trail--or a mix of both--creating options for an exceptionally diverse group of users. By providing simple but key amenities like heat, cooking stoves, and mattresses, the huts will bring thousands of new visitors of varying backcountry experience into the Kenai Mountains from all over the world, while fostering camaraderie, wilderness education and environmental stewardship. Specific benefits:

- Provide access to backcountry to visitors of diverse abilities
- Benefit local outfitter businesses and Alaska Railroad
- Maximize on the appeal of railroad travel, ease of access, and Alaska's beautiful wilderness.
- Create multi-day hut-to-hut trail system

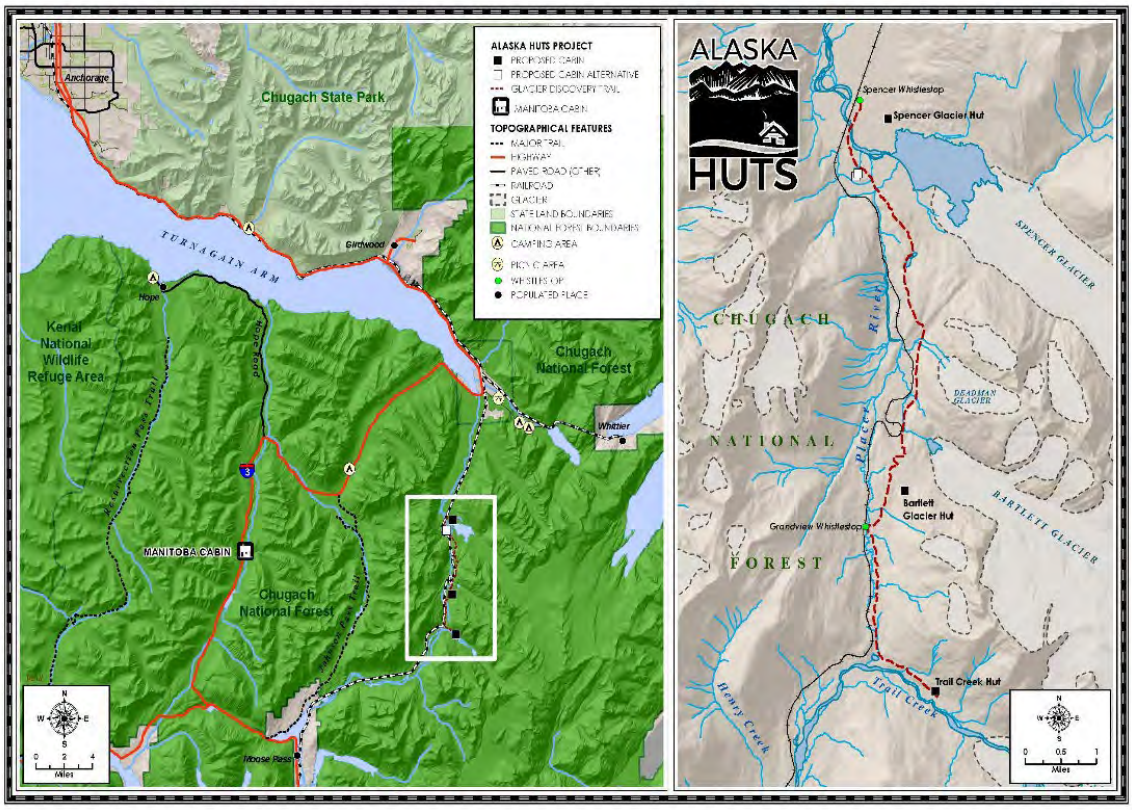
PROJECT LEAD AND PARTNERS: Alaska Huts Association, USFS and ARR

PROJECT STATUS:

Design of the lodge is complete and $460K is already secured for Phase 1 construction, project is shovel-ready.

USE: non-motorized

ESTIMATED COST:

Phase 1 (Lars Spurkland Memorial Hut):

$1.15M ($460,000 secured)