



**Dowling Road/Seward Highway Interchange Reconstruction**  
 Project Number CFHWY00359

**Comment Response Summary**  
 Updated 2/12/2019

The following document summarizes comments received by email, phone, comment sheet, and verbally by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) for the Dowling Road/Seward Highway Interchange Reconstruction project. The comments were in response to the events summarized in Table 1. Public Involvement Chronology. The comments follow in Table 2. Comment Response Summary.

Meeting details can be found in the meeting summaries.

Table 1. Public Involvement Chronology

Date	Public Involvement Tool	Purpose/Description
02/06/19	Anchorage Transportation Fair, 441 people signed in	Provide project update on Dowling Road project
02/08/18	Anchorage Transportation Fair, 379 people signed in	Public process kicks off for Dowling Road project
02/08/18 to 03/21/18	Online kick-off survey, 280 participants	Distributed electronically and on paper
03/08/18	Anchorage Fire Department Station 12 meeting, 7 attended	Discuss the project impacts and benefits with the local fire station
04/10/18	Concept work session, 31 people signed in	Agency work session
06/27/18	Draft Preliminary Engineering Report public meeting, 38 people signed in	Public review of Draft Preliminary Engineering Report
11/08/18	Email notice	Provide project update of alternative selection
12/14/18	Email notice	Provide notice of environmental process

Table 2. Comment Response Summary

Comment Category	Comment	Response
Acceptable Existing Design	The current design is not perfect, but in my opinion, is perfectly acceptable. Perhaps education about roundabouts is key rather than massive overhaul. Or, simply adapting the current design to something similar like roundabout interchange.	The current project scope includes replacing the interchange with an updated roundabout interchange.
Acceptable Existing Design	I like the interchange at Dowling and Seward Highway and think it should be left alone. Concentrate on 36th and Seward instead.	The project is advancing with improved roundabouts to relieve congestion. The <a href="#">Midtown Congestion Relief</a> project is addressing the interchange at 36th Avenue and Seward Highway.



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Acceptable Existing Design	Comments stated opposition to project stating that the project is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A waste of time and money</li> <li>• There is a greater need for safe separated bike paths</li> <li>• Better to spend the money on snow and ice removal</li> </ul>	The DOT&PF determined the facility was in need of replacement and is moving the project forward.
Asphalt Mix	Consider using a better hot asphalt mix.	The DOT&PF continually assesses the quality of its pavement mix design. The design process includes consultation with the DOT&PF geotechnical group and will incorporate best practices for asphalt mixes.
Bicycle/ Pedestrian Facilities Alternatives (many similar comments)	Consider different alternatives that address walking and biking so we can see the pros and cons of different alternatives.  When developing walking and biking alternatives please consider safety, visibility, obstacles, utility locations, annual daylight changes, maintenance, connection to existing trails, and winter conditions.  Consider shoulders on the road for more experienced bicyclists, push buttons to stop vehicles and facilities on both sides of the road.	The design team will consult adopted local planning documents such as the Anchorage Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans as well as federal guidelines and current complete streets practices. The team will evaluate options that address issues and concerns raised in public comment in the Design Study report. The analyses and outcome will be shared with the public in several venues such as the AMATS Bike Ped Advisory Committee and a public meeting. The dates and locations of these events will be announced on the project website and in emails to stakeholders.
Bicycle/ Pedestrian Facilities Existing (many similar comments)	The accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians in the current facility are poor. The new facility needs to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-12 users because of nearby schools</li> <li>• Speed of traffic</li> <li>• Abilities of cyclists</li> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Gaps in traffic for safe crossings</li> </ul>	Accommodations for all users will be improved by the reconstruction. Additional analysis of cyclist/ pedestrian user needs will be evaluated in the Design Study Report. Based on these results design recommendations will be developed to address these ped/bike issues.



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Bicycle/ Pedestrian Facilities  Routing  (several similar comments)	Dowling has decent non-motorized facilities along its entire length except at the current roundabouts. Include a completely separated bike/pedestrian facility. Do not send bikes to another intersection, trail, etc.	The existing condition includes similar non-motorized facilities (separated pathway/sidewalk) that will be included in the new design as well. The new interchange will reduce motorized vehicle speeds, increase sight distance for all users, and increase separation from the roadway.  Other bicycle/ pedestrian issues and concerns raised in public comment will be addressed in the Design Study Report.
Bicycle/ Pedestrian Facilities  Bike Lanes	The project should provide bike lanes in addition to separated cyclist/ pedestrian facilities to accommodate all rider skill levels.	The design team reviews current Anchorage Trails, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Plans to determine planned network and how plan recommendations can be included in this project. The listed plans are in the process of update/consolidation into a single Anchorage Non-Motorized Transportation Plan with an expected completion date in summer 2019. The team will evaluate all concerns and ideas raised in public comment in the Design Study report and address them with current roundabout design best practices.
Brayton Drive  (several similar comments)	Brayton Drive has some issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Brayton Drive merge lane with the ramp off north bound Seward is a problem. Most people getting off of the Seward Highway want to turn right at the roundabout which leads to chaos as they need to cross over the traffic coming off Brayton.</li> <li>• Poor sight distance at 64th Avenue and Brayton Drive.</li> <li>• Consider a signal at 64th and Brayton that meters traffic onto the merge with the north bound Seward Highway off ramp.</li> </ul>	The team will review Brayton Drive and 64th to see what improvements can be made in the area as part of this project.



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Business Access (several similar comments)	The project is affecting access to my business near the Dowling Road roundabouts. The medians installed to channel traffic to the appropriate lanes will eliminate left-turns into my business.	The medians create a safer corridor for all users and will change access for some businesses closest to the roundabouts to right-in, right-out. Customers can use the roundabouts to execute a U-turn to access businesses.
Design (many similar comments)	Commenters mentioned what they believed to be flaws in the current roundabout design including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design would be better if there was less traffic</li> <li>• Diameter too small</li> <li>• Entry/exit speed humps</li> <li>• Lack of driver education</li> <li>• Many undocumented near-miss crashes</li> <li>• Merge to turn left</li> <li>• Ponding water</li> <li>• Poor safety</li> <li>• Right of way versus, when to yield is confusing</li> <li>• Signage (too much/too confusing)</li> <li>• Small gaps to merge into</li> <li>• Speeding traffic</li> <li>• Traffic stopping in circle</li> <li>• Turning left from outside lane</li> </ul>	This feedback was considered when selecting the preferred alternative (roundabouts) and will be further evaluated during the design study and design phases of the project. Many of these concerns are why this project was put forward by DOT&PF. Although the preferred alternative is a roundabout style interchange, it will resolve most of these issues.  The Dowling Road roundabouts were the first constructed in Anchorage and were confined to the available right-of-way. DOT&PF has since purchased additional right-of-way allowing the new roundabouts to be larger; similar to the newer roundabouts in Anchorage.



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Design Guidance Bicycle/ Pedestrian Facilities	What do you use to guide design of the bicycle/ pedestrian facilities?	<p>There are a number of design guides that inform design for pedestrians and bicycles and include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopted guidance from: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Standards for Transportation Facilities, US Department of Transportation (DOT) 2006, ADA Standards for Accessible Design, US Department of Justice (DOJ) 2010</li> <li>• Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)</li> <li>• National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)</li> <li>• Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)</li> <li>• American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)</li> <li>• Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)</li> <li>• National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) 834 Report</li> </ul>
Design Guidance Long-Range Planning	<p>Commenters had several comments related to planning including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why rebuild projects recently finished; don't appreciate paying for interchange twice</li> <li>• Consider purchasing right-of-way needed for now and in the future</li> </ul>	<p>DOT&amp;PF understands your frustration. We did consider the work that was planned and/or completed.</p> <p>DOT&amp;PF stopped planned work on the Seward Highway, Dowling to Dimond project because the interchange reconstruction project is slated for 2020 construction. The decision saved money on elements that would have to be reworked with the interchange reconstruction.</p> <p>When using federal highway funds, we must follow federal guidance when acquiring property. We typically only acquire property considered necessary to construct a project. We cannot acquire property in excess of a project's needs.</p>



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Design Guidance Long-Range Planning (several similar comments)	Rush hour traffic in the roundabouts at Dowling is a nightmare. Traffic is backed up in all directions. There should be more places where people can get across or on/off the Seward Highway.	The reconstructed interchange will be designed to accommodate traffic through 2040. An additional Seward Highway crossing was recently constructed at 76th Avenue.
Diverging Diamond Signage	If you replicate what was done at Muldoon Road/ Glenn Highway, there needs to be more signage. People change lanes without knowing that they are merging.	DOT&PF has chosen the roundabout interchange for the Dowling Road/ Seward Highway interchange, not the diverging diamond interchange used at Muldoon Road/Glenn Highway.
Driver Education (many similar comments)	<p>Many commenters raised concerns about the lack of education about how to drive roundabouts. The issues included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The average driver does not know how to use them</li> <li>• The average driver is distracted</li> <li>• Drivers do not know or follow the “rules”</li> <li>• Include public outreach in the budget to teach people how to drive different or unfamiliar interchanges.</li> <li>• Consider video, television and cable in outreach.</li> <li>• Include information on the benefits of roundabouts</li> <li>• The existing roundabout is not standard</li> </ul>	<p>The team will work with the DOT&amp;PF Public Information and Traffic Safety groups to direct people to appropriate information and look at strategies to improve public education when the new interchange is constructed. Information is currently available on the DOT&amp;PF roundabout page at:  <a href="http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwddes/dcstraffi/c/roundabouts.shtml">http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwddes/dcstraffi/c/roundabouts.shtml</a>.</p> <p>The DOT&amp;PF will continue to distribute roundabout information at annual Anchorage Transportation Fairs.</p>
Ease of Use	Make traffic flow intuitive as snow covers lane markings in winter.	These comments are helpful to the team when developing the roundabout signing and striping design.
Emergency Response	Consider Fire Station 4 emergency response vehicle routing when selecting a roundabout alternative. The frontage roads are important to the Anchorage Fire Department to reduce response times.	One of the reasons the roundabout alternative was selected was to retain the frontage road continuity between Dimond and Tudor Road. Other alternatives would have broken this continuity and potentially increased emergency response times. The team met with the Anchorage Fire Department as part of the alternative evaluation process.



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Energy Use	Are energy use and air quality considerations when selecting an interchange type? It seems that traffic lights, and waiting at them, generate more pollution and use more energy.	While not specifically part of the interchange selection criteria, energy use and air quality considerations enter the evaluation when we consider operations and maintenance costs, congestion, and non-motorized user accommodations. These issues were considered in the Environmental Assessment (Seward Highway, Rabbit Creek to 36th Avenue).
Interchange Alternatives (several similar comments)	Commenters wanted the team to look at “traditional” interchange options; and examples from other countries such as the Netherlands and Germany. Commenters also noted that interchanges depend on context.	The team, which includes interchange experts with global experience, evaluated numerous interchange alternatives in the Preliminary Engineering Report. The same team is preparing the detailed design.
Noise	Would rumble strips increase noise for local residents?	Yes, rumble strips increase noise. The noise impacts vary based on a number of factors such as location, vegetation, noise barriers, driveway locations, etc. that are specific for each parcel. If installed in a roundabout, the slow speed of vehicles going through the roundabout would not generate the same noise as if they were on the freeway.
Public Involvement	Is there a repository of public comment you will be ignoring when completing the project?	There is no repository of public comments the team ignores. The team considers all public comments when advancing a project.
Public Involvement (many similar comments)	Commenters submitted a variety of public involvement requests and information including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adding name to project mailing list</li> <li>• Coordination with local Community Councils and council officers</li> <li>• Mechanics of online survey or website features</li> <li>• Desire for 3 dimensional models to show alternatives</li> <li>• Introduction as primary contact for a group or agency</li> </ul>	The team completed all requests if possible.



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Public Involvement Survey	<p>The commenter provided detailed feedback on the survey content. Major recommendations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use diagrams that show how traffic flows because I don't understand how the traffic moves in each option</li> <li>• More options for usage questions such as 'access to Dowling businesses' or 'access to the recycling center'</li> <li>• Move away from technical terms like 'intuitive flow'</li> <li>• More options for 'move traffic quickly' which might include 'all day' or 'at peak times'</li> <li>• Amplify the 'feels safe' option</li> <li>• Extend the survey duration</li> </ul>	<p>We were not able to incorporate the feedback into the initial survey but will be able to incorporate into future project outreach. The team will strive to 'preview' future surveys with a group of people prior to releasing to general public.</p>
Right-of-Way (several similar comments)	<p>Commenters expressed opinions about the project right-of-way that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sell excess right-of-way back to private sector</li> <li>• Please do not take up more land</li> <li>• Do not cut down more vegetation/ trees</li> <li>• Widen to add right-turn lanes</li> <li>• The roundabout would have the least right-of-way impact</li> </ul>	<p>DOT&amp;PF strives to maximize benefit and minimize the negative impacts to adjacent businesses and properties when completing a project, however, some impact may be necessary to fully address travel needs and meet the mission of DOT&amp;PF.</p>



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Roundabout Alternative Support (many similar comments)	Commenters expressing support for the roundabout alternative asserted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Striping, signage, and roll-out of this change should focus on clarity and consistency, unlike the previous roll-outs and modifications to this intersection</li> <li>• Website animations should match the actual design</li> <li>• Striping should clearly indicate when outside lanes are expected to exit</li> <li>• Slower speeds on entry to the roundabout without speed humps</li> <li>• Driving speed is slower in the larger diameter roundabouts</li> <li>• Larger diameter roundabouts are great</li> <li>• Roundabouts result in smoother traffic flow and fuel cost savings</li> <li>• Other larger roundabouts in Anchorage work well</li> <li>• No issues with the roundabout alternative</li> <li>• I like roundabouts as a driver, but hate them as a pedestrian</li> </ul>	These comments are helpful to the team when preparing the Design Study Report and the detailed roundabout design. Many of these are why the roundabout alternative was selected.
Roundabout Alternative Support Non-Motorized (many like comments)	Commenters expressing support for the roundabout alternative asserted the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving speed is slower in the larger diameter roundabouts</li> <li>• Consider non-motorized facilities from the beginning, not as an afterthought</li> <li>• The separation shown in the roundabout alternative looks good; appreciate the orthogonal bicycle/pedestrian road crossings</li> </ul>	These comments are helpful to the team when developing the roundabout design and evaluating options for bicycle/ pedestrian users.



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Roundabout Alternative Opposition (many similar comments)	Commenters stated various issues that made them opposed to roundabouts including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchorage drivers have a difficult time with roundabouts</li> <li>• Walking and biking in roundabouts can be scary</li> <li>• Concern about vegetation reducing visibility near Rowan Street and Dowling intersection</li> <li>• Belief that traffic circles cause accidents</li> <li>• Concern that roundabouts are dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and anybody with visual impairment</li> <li>• They take up too much space</li> <li>• Cost more</li> <li>• Won't save a lot of time</li> <li>• Cause congestion at rush hour</li> <li>• Create more crashes as drivers switch lanes</li> <li>• Who has right-of-way at pedestrian crossings?</li> <li>• Too small diameter</li> <li>• Limited lighting</li> <li>• Poor/confusing trail/sidewalk routing</li> </ul>	The team selected the roundabout alternative to improve safety, serve both motorized and non-motorized travelers through 2040, be cost-effective, and be easy to maintain. The evaluation of all alternatives is included in the Preliminary Engineering Report.  These comments expressing issues with roundabouts are helpful to the team when developing detailed design, evaluating options for bicycle/ pedestrian users, and creating public information/education about roundabouts. Many of these concerns are not supported by research and reflect roundabout myths. The new design will resolve many of the other issues.
Roundabout Alternative Non-Motorized Opposition	Commenters expressed dislike of roundabouts when traveling on bicycles or walking. Other concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sight distance for pedestrian when approaching Brayton</li> <li>• Need to separate cars from bikes</li> <li>• Don't see the pedestrian/bike facilities in images of the new facility</li> <li>• Will not use until alerts are available to warn motorists of non-motorized user presence</li> </ul>	These comments are helpful to the team when developing the roundabout design and evaluating options for bicycle/ pedestrian users in the Design Study Report.  The Seward Highway improvements between Rabbit Creek and 36 <sup>th</sup> Avenue calls for a non-motorist facility adjacent to but separate from the frontage roads for the entire length. This facility is being constructed with each project phase.
Roundabout Alternative Qualified Support	The roundabout would work but no one yields.	The roundabout interchange reconstruction will redesign the roundabouts and incorporate features that will slow drivers and encourage better compliance with yielding.



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Roundabout Alternative Support	Commenters wondered why roundabouts were supported for this interchange.	<p>The roundabout interchange was selected because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International and US studies show roundabouts reduce the severity and number of crashes for pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists</li> <li>• The bridge will be replaced to restore the Seward Highway mainline to a consistent width</li> <li>• Needs less right-of-way than many of the other options</li> <li>• Meets future travel demand</li> <li>• Consistent with driver expectation in corridor</li> <li>• Maintains continuity of the frontage road</li> </ul> <p>A full description of the interchange type selection is available in the Preliminary Engineering Report.</p>
Safe School Access	<p>Parents from local schools commented on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyclist/ pedestrian safety</li> <li>• Routing on 64th</li> <li>• Routing to/from Rilke Schule</li> <li>• Parent driver behavior</li> </ul>	The project team will continue to work with parents, the Anchorage School District, and the Municipality of Anchorage to address concerns when developing the design study report.
Safety	Go with the safest and most cost-effective solution.	DOT&PF selected the roundabouts for these and other reasons.
Safety Non-Motorized	Concern about pedestrian and bicycle safety with both alternatives, but more so with the roundabout.	<p>International and US studies show roundabouts reduce the severity and number of crashes for pedestrians and bicyclists.</p> <p>The most important reason for the low severity of crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists in roundabouts is the lower speeds in roundabouts.</p>
Safety Motorcycles	Design also for motorcycle safety. In the current roundabout, people don't realize the outside lane cannot turn left.	The interchange reconstruction design will accommodate all users and improve striping and signage.



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Sight Distance	Keep shrubs and trees out of “line of sight.” There needs to be good sight distance when approaching crossings.	Evaluating sight distance is an important part of the design process.
Speed (many similar comments)	Commenters had many comments about users’ speed in the roundabouts, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think people drive much to slow through this intersection more often than not</li> <li>• I don’t like the speed humps</li> <li>• I like the speed humps</li> <li>• Roundabout speeds can be controlled with geometry and other simple design</li> <li>• I prefer roundabouts because they move a lot of traffic while reducing the overall speed of flow making them far safer than any traffic light intersections</li> <li>• You cannot run through a roundabout like you can a traffic signal or stop sign</li> </ul>	Design of the roundabouts selected for Dowling Road will incorporate features to control user speed. The features may include horizontal and vertical geometry, signage, etc. Large inscribed diameters and approach curvature will also contribute to reduced speeds.
Tight Diamond Alternative Support	Better access for snow removal equipment; better for pedestrians/ bicyclists except when motorists run red lights; signals clarify all yielding issues; nice pathways; standard and predictable intersection; improvement over current setup.	Good comments regarding non-motorized facilities for any alternative. The alternative selected was the roundabout interchange.



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Tight Diamond Alternative Opposition	<p>Neither option provides safety for pedestrians. Would prefer more separation of pedestrians/ bicyclists and/or tunnels or bridges for crossing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tight diamond at Muldoon is not intuitive</li> <li>• Difficult to turn onto Rowan Street</li> <li>• Less safe</li> <li>• Higher cost</li> <li>• Problems typical of traffic lights (red light runners and right turn without looking (right hook))</li> <li>• May cause increase number and severity of crashes</li> <li>• Stopping traffic creates traffic</li> <li>• Don't need more signals on Dowling Road</li> <li>• More difficult to U-turn</li> </ul>	<p>International and US studies show roundabouts reduce the severity and number of crashes for pedestrians and drivers. The design team is evaluating multiple elements that will contribute to bicycle/ pedestrian safety. Elements may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two stage crossings for non-motorized users</li> <li>• Pathway setbacks</li> <li>• Refuge areas</li> <li>• Improved sight lines to maximize bicycle/ pedestrian visibility</li> </ul>
Traffic Flow	<p>Concentrate on moving motorized vehicle traffic as efficiently and as quickly as possible so that people will be able to commute without gridlock or traffic backlog.</p>	<p>The project will address movement of all traffic – motorized and non-motorized.</p>
Traffic Flow	<p>The Dowling-Seward Highway interchange is too busy. Traffic exiting Seward northbound always stops.</p>	<p>The interchange reconstruction will accommodate traffic projected through 2040.</p>
Traffic Signal Timing & Coordination	<p>Comments expressed concern about Anchorage's ability to coordinate traffic lights to match traffic conditions.</p>	<p>The roundabout design will not rely on signal timing.</p>
Traffic Signals Opposition	<p>Commenters indicated that traffic light options are not a solution as they replicate the original problem of traffic lights causing long lines of traffic backing up onto the Seward Highway and a dangerous intersection. In addition, these commenters expressed concern about signal coordination and delay during heavy traffic periods.</p>	<p>The pros and cons of interchanges including traffic signals was part of the evaluation and selection of the roundabout interchange.</p> <p>International and US studies show roundabouts reduce the severity and number of crashes for pedestrians.</p>



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Trucks	The trucking industry expressed interest in the interchange redesign.	The DOT&PF team will continue coordination with the trucking industry.