



**Richardson Highway Milepost (MP) 266-341 Passing Lanes  
(Delta Junction to Eielson Air Force Base)**  
Project Number 0A23021 / Z607150000

**Comment Response Summary**  
As of June 16, 2022

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Team Response</b>
Acceleration/ deceleration lanes	Commenter requested an acceleration/deceleration lane on the Richardson Highway at Eielson Farm Road due to morning and afternoon rush hour traffic.	Acceleration and deceleration lanes on the Richardson Highway at its intersection with Eielson Farm Loop are outside of our project scope.
Airstrip impacts	Commenter noted the presence of a chartered airstrip in the vicinity of Jack Warren Road and the Tanana River Bridge and expressed concern that the passing lanes would relocate overhead powerlines closer to the airstrip.	Utility relocations and property impacts will be evaluated.
Asphalt thickness	The design shows thicker asphalt for this project. What are the axle loads?	It is a thicker typical section than usual, but the axle loads will be within the legal limit. State Statute regarding legal loads on highways can be referred to at <a href="https://dot.alaska.gov/mscve/webdocs/17AAC25.pdf">https://dot.alaska.gov/mscve/webdocs/17AAC25.pdf</a> .
Bike path	What about a bike path along the highway?	The project is for passing lanes only.
Bridges	Are any bridge reconstructions included with this project? Is the Gerstle River Bridge still in the planning stage?	This project only addresses passing lanes. There are a couple of bridges within or near the project area that are being looked at by other project teams including the Gerstle River Bridge.
Business impacts	Commenter was concerned about passing lane impacts to their truck/trailer repair facility in the vicinity of Jack Warren Road and the Tanana River Bridge for several reasons including the number of lanes to cross when pulling out of the business and reduced visibility because of the curve.	There are no passing lanes proposed in this area. The closest one is at milepost 270 to 271, northbound, near Sandra Street.
Existing passing lanes	Existing passing lanes are too short. Drivers must be prepared to pass as soon as they encounter them. (November 2016 Comment)	Passing lanes should be at least one mile long to be effective. The planned passing lanes are between 1.2 miles and 2 miles in length.



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Funding	The commenter was opposed to road construction being financed with traffic ticketing, parking fines, vehicle impoundments, auctions, and civil asset forfeitures of motor vehicles.	The funding for this project comes 93.4 percent from federal sources and 6.6 percent from State of Alaska general fund appropriations.
Lane markings	Review the lane markings. It appears that some of the approaches and passing lanes are not striped correctly. (November 2016 Comment)	Updating striping within the proposed passing lane areas will be part of this project, which encompasses most of the existing passing areas.
Lane markings	We should have double yellow lines wherever there are passing lanes.	If there is a passing lane there will be a solid line on that side. If there is available sight distance on the other side, there can be a dashed line.
Maintenance	Commenter felt maintenance crews were damaging mailboxes.	Comment shared with Maintenance and Operations.
Maintenance	Commenters expressed concern about maintenance of the Richardson Highway if Manh Choh mine traffic were allowed.	The team will coordinate maintenance of the planned passing lanes with the Maintenance and Operations division.
Maintenance	Maintenance of passing lanes must be considered during design. In the winter, using the passing lanes can be a hazard because they are not plowed right away. This would make the passing lanes unusable.	Maintenance staff do the best they can with a reduced budget and a reduction of 10 staff in 2022. We will discuss public concerns with them because this project does add more lane miles to maintain.
Maintenance	The southern end of the Richardson Highway is in greater need of repair than the northern end. (November 2016 Comment)	N/A
Maintenance	What is going to happen to the rest of the highway? It is in terrible shape.	As of June 2022, there are about 10 active DOT&PF projects shown on the Northern Region website at: <a href="https://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/projects/">https://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/projects/</a> . Additional Richardson Highway projects and their status can be found using this website: <a href="https://dot.alaska.gov/projects-status/">https://dot.alaska.gov/projects-status/</a>



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Military convoys	Several commenters mentioned an increase in military convoys that didn't mix well with the slower traffic originating from local side roads, driveways, local businesses and services, and the elementary school.	This project is about increasing safety on the Richardson Highway by installing passing lanes.
Mine traffic	Commenters were concerned about safety and maintenance impacts of proposed mining trucks on the highway.	This project is about increasing safety on the Richardson Highway by installing passing lanes. Mining truck traffic was included in traffic projections.
Moose	Commenters called out moose collision areas at specific locations including between milepost 326 and 327 and around milepost 272.	We will review the crash data to evaluate. Moose crashes are a major concern. While this project doesn't directly address it, passing lanes will require us to widen the road and clear additional trees in the right of way, thereby improving visibility and giving drivers a longer time to see the moose, react, and make a maneuver/brake to avoid a collision.
Passing lane, Birch Lake	Are there passing lanes at the curve at Birch Lake?	No, there are none in that area.
Passing lane, length	How long will the passing lanes be? Passing long trucks is different than passing a car.	They should be at least one mile long to be effective. The passing lanes are between 1.2 miles and 2 miles in length. Passenger vehicles should have no problem passing longer trucks.
Passing lane, length	Is there a model that shows that the passing lanes will work with the ore haulers and military convoys?	There is already significant truck traffic on the highway and the passing lanes will help. The existing highway has plenty of vehicular capacity. There will be one-to-two-mile opportunities to pass.



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Passing lane, locations	Are the passing lane locations final?	We are collecting comments, but have eliminated locations where cost, environmental impacts, utility location costs, and right-of-way issues showed that the locations were not practicable.
Passing lane, locations	It seems like a passing lane on flat ground has limited usefulness because people will be up to speed.	Flat areas are easier to fit a passing lane than in steep areas and curves. It is safer to pass if there is a smaller speed disparity, which is another good reason to pick flatter locations for passing lanes.
Passing lane, locations	Were other locations considered? What about the Tower Hill area?	No, there were not any other locations besides the original 16 considered. Five of the 16 locations (including the northbound passing lane at milepost 299.6 to 301.5 near Tower Hill) were eliminated because they could double the cost of the project. The project is not fundable at double the cost. The remaining 11 are the most practical. Part of the selection of the original 16 locations included considering optimum spacings for the passing lanes.
Passing lane, MP 272	A reduction of the speed limit back to 55 mph would be more appropriate than a passing lane at milepost 272. There are four businesses within half a mile of milepost 272 which is a straight stretch of highway. There are semi-trucks, trailers, locals hauling load of wood pellets, 4-wheelers, snow machines, hay, and livestock that pull onto the Richardson Highway at slow speeds.	The southbound passing lane at milepost 272 to 273 was eliminated due to significant utility conflicts and insufficient right-of-way.



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Passing lane, MP 316-319	Is there a passing zone near Orchid? It is a bit of a blind spot that makes it difficult to turn onto the Richardson Highway. It's in the Harding Lake area.	The southbound milepost 320.4 to 319.1 passing lane was eliminated because there is not enough space next to the existing powerline. The northbound milepost 316.5 to 318.4 passing lane was eliminated because it would require blasting rock slopes, leading to significant impacts.
Passing lane, MP 329-330	Between the MP 329 to 330 location of the southbound passing lane, commenters noted ice jams and icing on curve, fog, flooding, an unstable slope, and pointed out two potential viewpoints.	This passing lane has been removed from the design due to geometric, right-of-way, and constructability issues.
Passing lanes, need	Due to the military convoys and slow-moving tourist traffic as well as people hauling hay and semis hauling fuel, there is a lot of slow traffic and any passing lanes you construct will make the road safer.	N/A
Procurement	Commenter suggested the project be broken into separate bidding packages for various elements of construction, i.e., debris removal, gravel base, asphalt topcoat, etc.	Currently, we are planning to bid the project as one package for cost and construction administration efficiencies.
Residential impacts	We live at 11017 Richardson Highway, near milepost 317 and our home is extremely close to the highway. I understand needing to expand the roadway and don't object, I just want to make sure the new highway won't be 10 feet from my house.	The northbound milepost 316.5 to 318.4 passing lane was eliminated because it would require blasting rock slopes, leading to significant impacts.
Revetment areas	Commenter was wondering if guardrail was going back in the revetment areas. Sounds like guard rail was there years back but never re-installed.	We will evaluate this as we move forward in design.



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Rumble strips	There were center line rumble strips installed on the Richardson Highway with no input from the public and they are loud. We don't think the centerline rumble strips are as effective as the shoulder rumble strips, especially where people pass.	If any rumble strips are removed in the project, they will be reinstalled.
Safety	There is a 35-minute response time for Alaska State Troopers to the scene of an accident in the Salcha area. Therefore, safety is a big concern. (November 2016 Comment)	The project purpose is to improve safety in the Richardson Highway corridor between North Pole and Delta Junction.
Safety	We oppose our public highways becoming ore hauling roads.	The current design will be able to accommodate additional legal loads of truck traffic. The passing lanes consider the existing 2,500 cars per day plus the trucks. The two-lane Richardson Highway should accommodate up to 1,900 vehicles per hour per lane or 3,800 for both way traffic and maintain free-flow conditions. The current average daily traffic (ADT) in the project area is around 2,500 vehicles per day.
Scenic Byway program	A commenter is working to revitalize the Richardson Scenic Byway plan and encouraged the team to consider providing pull offs or waysides so drivers can enjoy the beauty of the corridor.	Wayside pull offs were not considered. However, eight-foot shoulders were included in the new passing lane areas to accommodate vehicles pulling off the road.
Signage	Signage states that if you have five cars following, you are required to pull over. Will there be signs posted on this project to that affect? Are military and/or mining trucks exempt? If the signs don't mean anything they should be taken down.	The difficulty is enforcing these signs if people with traffic behind them are going the speed limit. We will post standard passing lane signage for "Slower Traffic Keep Right" and will work with Pam Golden, Northern Region Traffic Engineer, to discuss the signage regarding queuing vehicles.



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Speed limits	Commenter wanted DOT to consider lowering speed limits from the Tanana River Bridge to Delta Junction due to number of driveways and side roads. Another commenter felt that the speed in the area should have never been raised to 65 miles per hour.	Speed limits are set by DOT's Traffic and Safety section and changes are outside of the scope of our project.
Speed signs	The curve at Birch Lake, MP 295, was designed for 35 MPH not the 55 MPH it is signed. (November 2016 Comment)	Geometric improvements to the highway alignment are outside of the scope of work for this project.
Speeding	Commenter felt the Richardson Highway was excessively engineered to encourage unsafe speed of travel and fines for speeding.	The project purpose is to improve safety in the Richardson Highway corridor.
Turn lanes	Commenters requested turn lanes at various locations including: Salcha Store (MP 328.5), The Knotty Shop, Tom Bear/Grieme Road intersection, Johnson Road/Old Richardson Highway, Salcha Elementary School (MP 326.5) and the Salchaket Roadhouse. (November 2016 Comment)	Turning lanes are not part of this project.
Wayside pull offs	Have pull offs been considered? It is a safety issue to not have pull offs. Pull offs may encourage people to slow down instead of speed up.	Wayside pull offs were not considered. However, eight-foot shoulders were included in the new passing lane areas to accommodate vehicles pulling off the road.
Work zones	Please have construction contractors follow DOT&PF traffic wait time stipulations. (November 2016 Comment)	This commenter used to work in construction for the DOT&PF and said she observed work zones where the wait time specifications were not followed.