

Introduced: 10/17/23
Public Hearing: 11/21/23
Amended: 11/21/23
Adopted: 11/21/23

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 23-105**

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY APPROVING
2024 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES.

Borough Action Priorities:

- A. SUPPORT FOR WILDFIRE RISK REDUCTION DUE TO BEETLE KILLED SPRUCE** - The spruce bark beetle has killed thousands of acres of spruce trees within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), causing residents to experience a significant economic, physical and emotional loss due to several devastating wildfires over the last several years. The MSB fully supports seeking State and Federal funding for harvesting/removing these trees as quickly as possible to reduce the danger of fire to MSB residents and businesses.
- B. SUPPORT FOR THE FOLLOWING ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES (ADOT&PF) FEDERALLY FUNDED ROAD PROJECTS -**
- **Seward Meridian Parkway Improvements, Phase 2 (Palmer-Wasilla Highway to Seldon Road) - \$57 Million**
The project will upgrade the Borough's current two-lane road with no shoulder to a four-lane road with shoulders, turn lanes, a separated path, a bridge over Cottonwood Creek, and safety improvements at intersections. Phase 2 will extend from the Palmer-Wasilla Highway to Seldon Road and positively impact five area schools' access.
 - **Community Transportation Program Mat-Su Borough Projects - \$32.9 Million (projects already underway)**
 - Hemmer Rd. Extension & Upgrade to Bogard Rd.
 - Hermon Rd. Extension & Upgrade to Palmer-Wasilla Hwy.
 - Seldon Rd. Extension, Ph. II (Windy Bottom to Pittman Rd.)
 - Trunk Rd. Extension South, Ph. III (Wasilla Ck. Bridge)

- **Wasilla-Fishhook, Main Street Rehabilitation - \$48 Million**
Construct a one-way couplet in downtown Wasilla bounded by Bogard Road, Knik Goose Bay/Main Street, Yenlo/Talkeetna Street, and the Palmer Wasilla Highway.
- **Highway Safety Improvement Projects - \$41.8 Million**
 - Bogard Rd./Engstrom Rd./Green Forest Dr. Roundabout
 - Church Rd. & Spruce Ave. Intersection Flashing Beacon
 - Palmer-Fishhook Rd. & Trunk Rd. Roundabout
 - Pittman Rd. Shoulder Widening and Slope Flattening
 - Vine Rd. & Hollywood Rd. Intersection Improvements
 - Wasilla-Fishhook Rd. & Spruce Ave./Peck St. Roundabout
- **Fairview Loop Rehabilitation - \$54.3 Million**
The proposed scope will include rehabilitation of Fairview Loop pavement, widening shoulders, and constructing a separated pathway from Top of the World Circle to Fern Street. In addition, the project will also include spot safety improvements from Marble Way to South Bearing Tree Lane.
- **Vine Road Reconstruction, Knik-Goose Bay Road to Hollywood Road - \$12.1 Million**
The project will reconstruct 0.6 miles of the existing two-lane rural road from Knik Goose Bay Road to Hollywood Road to address the increase in traffic volumes.
- **Big Lake Road MP 0-3.6 and Church Road Pavement Preservation - \$13.2 Million**
- **Big Lake Road MP 3.6 to 9.1 Pavement Preservation - \$20 Million**
- **Bogard Road Pavement Preservation, Trunk Road to Wasilla Fishhook - \$16 Million**
- **Wasilla-Fishhook, Seldon Road to Tex-Al Drive - \$8.9 Million**
- **Old Glenn Highway Milepost 1 to 18 -** The Borough requests that the Alaska State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities designate the Old Glenn Highway as a Highway Safety Corridor and fund the planning, design, and construction of a multi-phased improvement project to address traffic safety concerns and ensure adequate alternative access to Interior Alaska. Resolutions from

the Butte and South Knik River Community Councils Support this action.

- C. KNIK ARM CROSSING** - The Knik Arm Crossing (KAC) would connect the State's two largest population centers and their road networks, ports, airports, and rail corridors. The KAC will provide a more direct, alternate route from the Borough to Anchorage and stimulate growth in the southern portion of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). Socioeconomic studies performed for the MSB indicate that this area will experience significant growth, and investment in infrastructure to support that growth should begin now to avoid costly highway expansion as is currently being experienced on Knik-Goose Bay Road, Parks Highway, and Glenn Highway corridors.
- D. SUPPORT FOR THE ALASKA LONG TRAIL** - The Borough Assembly adopted Resolution Serial No. 21-045 on May 18, 2021, supporting the proposed Fairbanks to Seward multi-use trail, also known as the Alaska Long Trail. The Alaska Long Trail is an initiative sponsored by a coalition of partners and led by Alaska Trails that seeks to establish a 500-mile trail from Seward to Fairbanks.
- E. TALKEETNA DIKE/REVTMENT** - The Talkeetna revetment and dike protect the townsite of Talkeetna from suffering flood and erosion from three major rivers. Under Alaska law, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough cannot use general areawide tax revenue to maintain and replace this critical infrastructure. Rather, the voters in Talkeetna voted to create a Borough Service Area, which funds maintenance. While this service area encompasses all of Talkeetna, the tax base is insufficient for complete replacement or major repair of the revetment and dike. Since 2022, the Borough has been partnering with the US Army Corps of Engineers for a study in anticipation of needing a major repair or replacement of the existing infrastructure under the Planning Assistance to States (PAS) program. This study evaluates the erosion from the channel migration of the Susitna and Chulitna rivers after the 2012 flood. The course change moved the velocity from a glancing sweep in front of Talkeetna to a full-frontal assault on the land and community. The study findings are expected in December 2023. This study provides only planning-level detail and does not include a detailed design for project construction or additional funding. The Borough also submitted a 2023 Congressionally Directed Spending request

through Senator Murkowski's office for Susitna and Talkeetna River Erosion and Flood Control.

Due to severe flooding in September 2023, the Borough and State of Alaska declared a local disaster in Talkeetna, where flooding damaged and destroyed property, posing an imminent and severe threat to public safety, infrastructure, and property in the affected areas. The Borough completed emergency protective measures to reconstruct approximately 325 feet of revetment. The Borough submitted a request to the US Army Corps of Engineers requesting assistance via Section 14 of the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) to develop and approve a project for construction. The emergency protective measures completed by the Borough are not a permanent solution.

Additionally, the Borough is requesting consideration for a legislative change to the 2022 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill for Section 8315 - Storm damage prevention and reduction, coastal erosion, and ice and glacial damage, Alaska. The request is to add riverine erosion as an eligible component of the legislation. Current language only allows for coastal erosion for Alaska communities, whereas riverine would assist communities experiencing erosion related to rivers and without coastline. The Borough could request Federal assistance with a 10% local match if approved. Current funding via Section 114 for small flood control projects has a cap of \$10 million with a 35% local match requirement.

Borough Funding Priorities:

1. WILLOW FIRE/EMS STATION - \$5 MILLION

Willow needs a joint public safety building in the core area of the community along the Parks Highway corridor. The current facility, Station 12-1, consists of antiquated apparatus bays and a small classroom building recently condemned and deemed unsafe to use. This new facility would be a joint complex to house the Willow Fire Department, a full-time Willow-based ambulance, and rescue services. This would also provide an area for law enforcement to utilize as needed. The Borough Assembly has appropriated \$3.5 million for this project. Without additional support, funding is only adequate to address emergency medical services (EMS) needs.

The current facility is inadequate for our existing public safety needs and cannot support the services required for the area's projected growth. Currently, there is no EMS support

facility in the Willow area, and the fire station lacks support facilities for responders. There is no training room, common living spaces, dorm rooms, or adequate showering facilities to clean up following an incident. An essential component of our cancer risk reduction plan for our fire-rescue responders is immediate decontamination of personnel and equipment following fires and related responses. A key element to reducing emergency response times is having a facility that responders reside in and can respond from immediately. The proposed facilities would fulfill this need well into the future. Rather than building two separate buildings, a single combined facility will save taxpayer funding and improve efficiency.

The proposed location is on the current lot occupied by Fire Station 12-1. This 16-acre lot with Parks Highway frontage in the heart of Willow is already owned by the Borough. Using this location represents savings as utilities and site work are already completed.

2. POINT MACKENZIE MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR

The Point MacKenzie multi-modal corridor project would be constructed through an alignment previously designated exclusively for the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension project. This project would support completing the current rail extension project in which the state of Alaska has invested \$184 Million. The corridor underwent a preliminary environmental and alternatives report in 2008 and an Environmental Impact Study in 2011, in partnership with the Alaska Railroad Corporation to prepare for the railway installation. While it may need further permitting and legislative approval because the original clearance was for a railroad, the corridor has been cleared of vegetation and prepared with a gravel aggregate embankment and six, single-lane railroad bridges.

Due to several unfulfilled funding requests to construct the rail amongst a growing housing boom and economic demand, the Borough is proposing to allow for corridor use as a 18.5 miles, two-lane arterial road parallel to the rail. This could be used as a utility corridor and would contribute to the goal of connecting goods and services in this fast-growing region. It would also provide a boost to the economy and advance transportation options for access to living-wage jobs and housing, should the bridge to Anchorage ever be considered. The Point MacKenzie multi-modal utility corridor

would turn this dormant corridor into an essential asset. The current estimate to construct a road is \$72 Million.

3. SUBSTANDARD ROAD AND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS - \$15 MILLION

The Borough is the fastest-growing area in Alaska. Many roads that were built decades ago, were not built to Borough standards, have substandard gravel bases, lack sufficient right-of-way and sight distance, and are not designed or constructed for the amount of traffic that they carry. Improvements to these roads will ensure that the functionality and safety of the roads meet the proper classification and design standards. These roads are part of the community transportation plan and the Borough's Long Range Transportation Plan.

Numerous bridges on the Borough Road system have outlived their design life and require costly repairs or complete replacement. Several bridges received substandard sufficiency ratings on their most recent inspections. Work needed to bring the bridges into compliance with Federal standards range from riprap replacement to protect against the rivers and creeks they cross to complete replacement of bridges that are settling or have reduced structural capacity. Several bridges have reduced weight limits due to substandard design and gradual deterioration. This limits the type of vehicle that can use the bridges and hinders the operations and development of private properties that rely on those bridges for access. Bridges that are not maintained, will not support the weight of emergency response vehicles in the future. This project will make improvements that will extend the life of multiple bridges for at least another 30 years.

4. FLOOD MITIGATION FOR ACQUISITION OF HIGH-HAZARD AREAS - \$2.5 MILLION

Inventory all floodway properties and analyze and prioritize the most at-risk areas for flooding and erosion. Offer a voluntary acquisition to maintain open space corridors and enhance flood risk reduction methods, including ice jam flooding, channel migration, and fish habitat enhancement. There are approximately 100 homes, with an estimated project cost of \$20 million. \$2.5 million represents our most critical needs and those homeowners expressing interest in buyouts.

5. FLOOD AND EROSION MITIGATION FOR SUSCEPTIBLE ROADS - \$3.5 MILLION

There are roads within the Borough that are susceptible to annual flooding and erosion. They have been identified but

are too large a project to be improved using Road Service Area funds. These range from subdivision roads to large collector roads, which provide vital transportation links to residents' homes and businesses. Funding for this project would allow for the flooding and erosion to be mitigated through road realignment, raising the road embankment, installing armoring, installing larger culverts, and providing adequate ditches and drainage easements.

6. NATURAL GAS TRANSMISSION LINE TO WILLOW - \$47,600,000

Currently, ENSTAR Natural Gas Company provides gas service to customers across southcentral Alaska, with their northernmost customers near the southern edge of Houston, off Cheri Lake Road. To serve the remaining customers in the Houston area, ENSTAR could continue to extend its distribution (low pressure) mains to the north far enough to serve the remaining Houston customers that are not currently served. However, extending the distribution system farther north of Houston to serve additional customers in that direction is not feasible as the system would have difficulty meeting demand during winter heating. The ENSTAR distribution system as it exists today in the Houston area is near its full capacity. Growth to the north that would complete service to all the Houston area, would require additional reinforcement of large diameter mains to help ensure that system pressures can be maintained during peak heating loads.

To extend gas service farther north to Willow, a transmission (high pressure) pipeline would be required to bring gas from ENSTAR's 20-inch diameter Beluga Pipeline north to the Willow area. With a transmission line to Willow, ENSTAR foresees installing a pressure regulator station (reg station) to drop the high-pressure gas to distribution pressures and feed into a local distribution system in Willow. If gas service to Willow should occur, then a second reg station could be constructed in Houston, as the new transmission line would pass through this area to feed into a new distribution system in the Houston area. This would also provide a redundant feed for gas to both current and new customers in the Houston and Big Lake areas. The existing system is fed only from ENSTAR's farthest north reg station near the Vine Road and Parks Highway intersection. Having a second station in Houston, would provide a second and redundant feed and significantly boost the reliability of service in a particularly cold part of ENSTAR's system.

ENSTAR has done a quick study to determine where distribution pipelines will be installed in the Houston and Willow areas and developed a pipeline alignment to route transmission pipelines through or to both areas. These cost estimates provided are non-binding and high-level estimates. Another noteworthy assumption for this estimate, is that there will be no significant unforeseen right-of-way or environmental challenges for underlying property owners along the proposed alignment that could impact schedule or costs. For example, the route for the Phase 1 portion of the project assumes that an alignment would be granted that is adjacent to the railroad bed currently owned by the Borough. If a permit is granted for this alignment and it is within the right-of-way, that could eventually become under the control of the Alaska Railroad Corporation, there could be costs that are not included in this estimate. In other words, ENSTAR has not included costs for a leasing fee or extra depth installation and assumes that it will not be asked to pay a leasing fee in the future for this right-of-way.

The estimate also assumes that ENSTAR will manage the work to the extent possible and reasonable, and utilize its workforce for the project's design, permitting, procurement, surveying, construction, and management.

It is best to look at the project in two phases to understand the costs.

Phase 1 - Gas to Houston \$23,000,000:

- Construct an 8-inch diameter transmission line from Beluga Pipeline (near ENSTAR's MP39 facility on Ayrshire Road) to near the Parks Highway just south of the Little Susitna River (via railroad corridor; approximately 18.8 miles). This line would be rated for the same pressure (or higher) as the existing Beluga Pipeline and could move 30-40 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscfd) of gas to customers. The installation of this line in this portion of the route would be alongside the existing roadbed that is the intended location of a future railroad track. The land in this area is mostly swamp and black spruce, so a pipeline constructed here would be completed during winter months and would utilize the adjacent and existing gravel road prism as a construction work pad that would assist with construction traffic, material laydowns to help reduce construction challenges that would otherwise occur along a remote route where a road would be required to be built,

or along an active road where precaution would be required to coexist safely with traffic.

- Install a large reg station in Houston near the intersection of the Parks Highway and the proposed railroad alignment. This station would be large enough to provide service to any new Houston area customers and other neighborhoods to the south.
- Construct a low-pressure distribution pipeline system in the Houston area. It is assumed that this area will serve all customers immediately north of the Cheri Lake Rd portion of ENSTAR's system to the Little Susitna River and continue north along the Parks Highway right-of-way, crossing the Little Susitna and serving businesses and residences along the highway corridor for approximately one mile. ENSTAR's estimate of mains to serve approximately 400 lots in this area will require 2, 4, and 8-inch pipe lengths of 15.5, 4.0, and 3.0 miles, respectively.

Phase 2 - Gas to Willow (contingent on completion of Phase 1)
\$24,600,000:


- Construct an 8-inch diameter transmission line from Houston to Willow following the Parks Highway corridor (approximately 13.7 miles). The pipeline would be installed within the Parks Highway ROW via a utility permit. The line would operate at the same pressure as the Beluga Pipeline and the Phase 1 pipeline and would be able to deliver up to 30 mmscfd of gas to Willow.
- Install a large Reg Station in Willow near the intersection of the Parks Highway and Willow Fishhook Road. This station would be large enough to serve any Willow area customers and accommodate growth in any direction.
- Construct a low-pressure distribution pipeline system in the Willow area. It is assumed that this area will comprise all customers within and around the perimeter of Willow Creek Parkway, N Crystal Lake Road, Long Lake Road, Winter Park Road, and the Parks Highway. ENSTAR's estimate of mains to serve approximately 530 lots in this area will require 2, 4, and 8-inch pipe lengths of 40.8, 10.8, and 4.0 miles, respectively.

This is supported by Assembly Resolution Serial No. 21-115.

7. FISH PASSAGE - \$1 MILLION

This request is for match money for United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) grants. These grants will replace culverts causing full or partial barriers at fish-bearing stream crossings on Borough-owned roads. These projects will help provide free movement for juvenile and adult salmon as well as other species. When these crossings are improved, the habitat ranges are expanded, enhancing the connectivity of waterways, which increases survivability for these anadromous fish, aiding the preservation of these species. The crossings are designed to withstand high flows, typically 100-year flood events, and improve the roadways over the crossings for infrastructure longevity and safety. USFWS, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and other regional partners have been vital in the success of these projects over the years.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 21 day
of November, 2023.


EDNA DeVRIES, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:


LONNIE R. McKECHNIE, CMC, Borough Clerk
(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Hale, Nowers, McKee, Yundt, Tew, Fonov, and
Bernier