


SUBJECT: INFORMING THE ASSEMBLY OF A GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUESTING \$450,000 FROM THE RURAL AND TRIBAL ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE CASWELL LAKES SECONDARY ACCESS PROJECT.

AGENDA OF: April 1, 2025

ASSEMBLY ACTION: Presented to the Assembly 04/01/25 - BJH

AGENDA ACTION REQUESTED: For information only.

Route To	Signatures
Originator	<div>3 / 18 / 2025</div> <div>X P a m e l a G r a h a m</div> <div>Signed by: Pamela Graham</div>
Department/Finance Director	<div> R e c o v e r a b l e S i g n a t u r e</div> <div>X C h e y e n n e H e i n d e l</div> <div>Signed by: Cheyenne Heindel</div>
Borough Attorney	<div>3 / 20 / 2025</div> <div>X N i c h o l a s S p i r o p o u l o s</div> <div>Signed by: Nicholas Spiropoulos</div>
Borough Manager	<div>3 / 21 / 2025</div> <div>X M i c h a e l B r o w n</div> <div>Signed by: Mike Brown</div>
Borough Clerk	<div>3 / 24 / 2025</div> <div>X L o n n i e M c K e c h n i e</div> <div>Signed by: Lonnie McKechnie</div>

ATTACHMENT (S): Grant application (6 pages)

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

The Finance Department, in coordination with the Department of Public Works, Department of Planning and Land Use, and the Emergency Services Department, submitted an application requesting \$450,000.00 for planning and public outreach on the Caswell Lakes Secondary Access project.

If awarded this funding will be used to hire a consultant to determine alternate ingress/egress points from the Caswell Lakes and Hidden Hills area to the Parks Highway. There is no match requirement for this grant request.

[Home](#)

Rural and Tribal Assistance Program Online Application for Single Project Grants

(OMB # 2105-0584)

All fields must be completed.

Additional information on eligibility and the application questions can be found in the NOFO.

1. Grant Type *

Confirm you are applying for the following grant type

☒ Single project

2. Name and contact information of person for matters involving this application: *

First and last name: *

Kirstie Starr-Watson

Title: *

Grants Coordinator

Phone: *

907-861-8633

Email: *

Kirstie.Starr-Watson@matsugov.us

3. Entity name, address, and website: *

Organization/Entity Name: *

Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Address (#, street, no post office box numbers): *

Street address *

350 E Dahlia Ave

City *

Palmer

State *

Alaska

Zip code *

99645

Website address, if applicable:

https://matsugov.us/

4. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): *

92-0030816

5. Organization/entity Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) assigned by SAM.gov: *

QRK7LJ2Y3RJ1

(Ensure that the UEI provided is correct. An incorrect or expired UEI will disqualify the application.)

6. Congressional District(s)

Entity/Organization headquarters is in this congressional district(s): *

AK-001

Program/project is in this congressional district(s): *

AK-001

7. Is the applicant delinquent on any federal debt? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

8. Below is a list of entities that are eligible for this program. Please select the option that describes your eligibility: *

- ☒ A unit of local government or political subdivision seeking to advance a project that is located outside of an urbanized area with a population of more than 150,000 residents
- ☐ A State seeking to advance a project located outside of an urban area with a population of more than 150,000 residents
- ☐ A federally recognized Indian Tribe
- ☐ The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands

(For local governments, political subdivisions, or states: Refer to NOFO Section II. A. Eligible Applicants and Section II. E. Definition of Rural Areas for qualification.)

9. Qualifying Funding or Financing Program *

Select which funding or financing program you expect your project to qualify for:

(Information on these programs can be found in the NOFO Appendix.)

- ☒ TIFIA
- ☐ RRIF
- ☐ INFRA
- ☐ Mega
- ☒ BUILD
- ☐ National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program

10. Project Title *

Caswell Lakes Secondary Access

200 character(s) limit

(Descriptive title of project for which you seek funding)

11. Project location: *

61.98921125167246, -149.97306089388323

150 character(s) limit

Must be described as either a street address complete with city and state, or latitude/longitude coordinates. As an example, coordinates can be obtained by right-clicking on the project location in Google Maps.

12. Briefly describe the overall project:

Include: *

- project type (i.e., bridge, new roadway, transit service),
- features to be constructed,
- project limits/length,
- project need, and
- project schedule.

Caswell Lakes is a rural community in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), Alaska. The area is characterized by rivers, lakes, marshland, and dense black spruce. The current population is estimated at 1,376 individuals residing in 671 residential units. There are 76 vacant lots within this community with the potential for an estimated 156 additional future residents. Current access for residents and emergency responders in this area is limited, with Hidden Hills Road providing the only access and egress to and from the Parks Highway. The dense black spruce has a high fire hazard potential and, if involved in a wildfire, may require closing Hidden Hills Road. This would make exiting the area impossible and leave residents unable to escape to safety.

MSB will use funds awarded under the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program (RTA) to accomplish planning and conceptual design phase activities for a new road from the Caswell Lakes and Hidden Hills area to provide secondary access to the Parks Highway. This access will require construction of up to 12 miles of roadway and may necessitate the construction of bridges at river crossings. Secondary access will serve as an evacuation route for this rural community in the event of an emergency or natural disaster in an area at risk to wildfire and flooding.

RTA funding will allow MSB to procure the services of experienced planning and engineering firms to provide technical services including but not limited to project planning, environmental review, preliminary engineering, and cost estimation as well as help facilitate public outreach and engagement. These activities are anticipated to require approximately 2 years from the time of award. Construction is anticipated to take approximately 5 years from the time construction funding is secured.

No more than 300 words

13. Project advancement

13a. Describe, in detail, the activities to be completed with this program funding, stating how these activities will materially advance the overall project and address an identified transportation challenge *

Funding for the Caswell Lakes Secondary Access project will allow MSB to contract with an experienced planning and engineering firm to develop conceptual designs for a minimum of five new road options based on available aerial imagery, topography, geotechnical and hydrological databases, and to utilize other data sources as necessary. Concepts may require the inclusion of bridges at river crossings and potentially crossing tracks owned by Alaska Railroad Corporation. These conceptual designs will be evaluated for feasibility and presented to affected residents through a public outreach campaign facilitated by the contracted firm in collaboration with MSB staff. Public outreach and engagement activities will include presentations to area community councils, mailings, and a webpage describing the options. This information will be synthesized into a report to be presented to the MSB Assembly for review and final selection and allow MSB to advance the project from planning and design activities to a construction project at which time construction funding opportunities will be explored.

Hidden Hills Road has been identified as a hazard in the MSB 2015 Sockeye Fire After Action Report. It is the only road that provides access to the Parks Highway for the 1,376 residents of Caswell Lakes community. The need to provide secondary access connecting the community to the Parks Highway has also been identified as a goal in the Susitna Community Comprehensive Plan (SCCP) (March 2007). The single access to the Parks Highway impacted evacuations and evacuation planning from this area during the fire, as well as hampered planning and response by Alaska Division of Forestry during the response. One element of evacuation planning, if sheltering in place was not an option, included mobilizing helicopters to evacuate residents once Hidden Hills Road was shut down. Planning and conceptual design of Caswell Lakes Secondary Access will allow for increased safety for residents and responders in emergency situations.

No more than 400 words

13b. Requested funds from this program ?

\$

450000

13c. Estimated cost of proposed activities ? *

\$

450000

13d. Provide evidence of project readiness, including any project-related development activities that have already been completed. *

Examples would include data or information that has been collected or activities conducted that are necessary for completing the activities funded through this Program.

The single access to the Parks Highway via Hidden Hills Road in the Caswell Lakes community has been identified in the MSB 2015 Sockeye Fire After Action Report as a hazard. Aerial imagery, topography, geotechnical and hydrological databases currently available will provide the contracted planning and engineering firm with the information needed to begin studying options for the Caswell Lakes Secondary Access. Additional data may need to be collected with collaboration between the contractor and MSB staff. The Susitna Community Council, which developed the SCCP, recognizes the need for improved connectivity and alternate routes to and from the Parks Highway for the Caswell Lakes community. Resident safety is a priority; it is anticipated that public outreach and engagement efforts will be welcomed and supported.

No more than 200 words

(See Section VI. B. Criterion #1 of the NOFO for review and evaluation information.)

14. Demonstrated experience and confidence in estimated costs

(See Section VI. B. Criterion #2 of the NOFO for review and evaluation information.)

14a. State if you intend to either procure advisory services or hire staff to complete the proposed activities, and discuss your procurement or hiring experience and process. *

Planning for the Caswell Lakes and Hidden Hills secondary access will be completed using funds awarded by the RTA Pilot Program. MSB will prepare and announce a request for proposals in accordance with U.S. Department of Transportation requirements. An experienced planning and engineering firm will be selected to provide technical services in the development of at least five conceptual design options. MSB has extensive experience procuring services in accordance with federal grant requirements including US Department of Transportation, Federal Transportation Administration, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The MSB Purchasing department requires a solicitation request to be submitted detailing the services needed and funding available. Purchasing will develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) and create a public announcement. A contractor will be selected through the competitive bid process to perform the tasks required.

No more than 250 words

14b.Funding breakdown *

State the overall project budget and a breakdown by activity, with each funding source shown in dollars and percentages. If applicable, identify other Federal funds your organization is applying for, has been awarded, or intends to use. Group funding sources into three categories:

- non-Federal
- current application (RTA Program), and
- other Federal funding

\$ 450,000 - Overall Project Budget
\$ 150,000 - Public outreach and engagement* - 33.5%
\$ 100,000 - Preliminary investigations - 22%
\$ 150,000 - Conceptual designs - 33.5%
\$ 50,000 - Conceptual cost estimates - 11%

*Due to the remote nature and limited internet access of this community, it is anticipated that the contracted service provider will perform multiple mailings and in-person community outreach events.

14c. Applicants are encouraged to seek bids or quotes, or to estimate the amount of dedicated staff time for the proposed activities to demonstrate the reasonableness of the requested funding in this application. Have you obtained a bid or quote, or estimated the staff time needed for the activities proposed in this application?

☒ Yes (to be submitted later if awarded grant)

☐ No (provide statement of how you determined estimated cost of proposed activities)

15. Mobility Access

DOT prioritizes projects that help advance mobility access by increasing reliable transportation for people to get to where they need to go to meet the needs of their daily lives regularly, reliably, and safely either through lowering the cost of transportation, increasing access, or increasing safe transportation options. Explain how the proposed activities will advance at least one of the following aspects of mobility access:

• increase safety,

• lower transportation costs, or

• increase the availability of transportation options.

From the list above, identify the area of mobility access the project is advancing and how the proposed activities will accomplish this. *

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The MSB Purchasing department requires a solicitation request to be submitted detailing the services needed and funding available. Purchasing will develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) and create a public announcement. A contractor will be selected through the competitive bid process to perform the tasks required.

No more than 400 words

(See Section VI. B. Criterion #3 of the NOFO for review and evaluation information.)

16. Performance goals and metrics:

Identify, at minimum, 2 metrics for each of the following performance goals:

Goal 1: Provide benefits to the community through transportation projects *

Improved safety for residents

+

-

Improved access for emergency responders.

+

-

Goal 2: Increase grant recipient’s capacity, knowledge, and skills to execute transportation projects. *

Develop viable routes and cost information.

+

-

Gain a better understanding of residents needs.

+

-

Goal 3: Engage, educate, and listen to the community throughout the project planning process. *

Mailings and public meetings for public engagement and outreach.

+

-

Develop website for up-to-date project information.

+

-

Goal 4: Advance the transformational project(s) closer to delivery. *

Select a preferred option from available choices.

+

-

Present preferred option to MSB Assembly.

+

-


17. Signature *

☒ By checking this box and submitting this application, I certify that the statements contained herein are true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)

Signature (e-signature is sufficient) *

Kirstie Starr-Watson

Date *

03/18/2025 

Submit



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Washington, DC 20590
855-368-4200

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