

TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2016-06

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A FISH CREEK TRAIL CONNECTION BETWEEN WEST NORTHERN LIGHTS BOULEVARD NORTH TO THE TONY KNOWLES COASTAL TRAIL

WHEREAS, the Turnagain Community Council (TCC) is an all-volunteer, self-governing neighborhood organization recognized in the Municipality of Anchorage Charter; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of community councils is to provide a direct and continuing means of citizen participation in government and local affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Fish Creek Trail to the Ocean Working Group (FCTOWG) is a community organization supporting trail connectivity in the Fish Creek watershed; and

WHEREAS, a traditional trail used and enjoyed by West Anchorage residents has existed in this area, in the Alaska Railroad corridor, prior to 1960 and was closed in 2015; and

WHEREAS, FCTOWG has formally requested the Municipality of Anchorage, through Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, to work with stakeholders and citizens to develop and maintain a non-motorized trail in the Fish Creek watershed corridor, from West Northern Lights Boulevard to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail; and

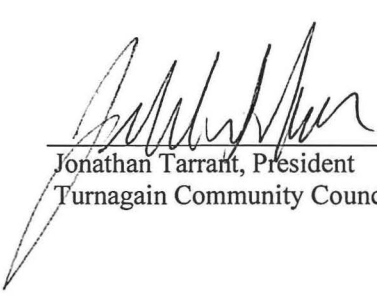
WHEREAS, on September 8, 2016 FCTOWG received a letter from the Anchorage Parks & Recreation Department stating that a "Trail Connection to the Ocean" has been added to its 2016-2017 work plan; and

WHEREAS, development of a trail in this area enjoys wide community support and it is recognized as appropriate to local planning priorities;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Turnagain Community Council hereby supports the purpose and intent of FCTOWG's proposal to establish a Fish Creek Trail in the general location described above, with a specific trail route to be determined at a later date.

RESOLUTION PASSED by the Turnagain Community Council on this 8th day of September, 2016.

Vote: 28 yes, 0 no, none abstain.



Jonathan Tarrant, President
Turnagain Community Council

11/03/16

Date

**TURNAGAIN COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2022-07:
REGARDING THE AMATS FISH CREEK TRAIL CONNECTION PROJECT**

WHEREAS, the Turnagain Community Council (TCC) is an all-volunteer, self-governing neighborhood organization recognized in the Municipality of Anchorage Charter; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of community councils is to provide a direct and continuing means of citizen participation in government and local affairs; and

WHEREAS, for decades an informal trail used by the West Anchorage community existed in the Alaska Railroad (AKRR) right-of-way north of West Northern Lights Boulevard (WNL) to Fish Creek Estuary and coastal area — specifically, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (Coastal Trail) after it was developed in the 1980s — but access to this informal trail was closed to the public by the AKRR in 2015; and

WHEREAS, the TCC passed a resolution in 2016 supporting the purpose and intent of a Fish Creek Trail to the Ocean Working Group proposal to establish a non-motorized trail connecting the existing Fish Creek Trail to the Coastal Trail, with a specific trail route to be established at a later date; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solution (AMATS), the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in collaboration with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), has initiated plans to construct a new multi-use trail connecting the Fish Creek Trail and Coastal Trail through the AMATS: Fish Creek Trail Connection Project and

WHEREAS, the Fish Creek Trail Connection Project Team is preparing a Design Study Report that will evaluate six potential route alternatives from WNL to the Coastal Trail, and is planning to identify a preferred alternative by December 2022; and

WHEREAS, the TCC Land Use Committee held two public work sessions to discuss the Fish Creek Trail Connection Project and participated in two site visits to alternative route locations — and members of the Project Team provided project information at two TCC general membership meetings; and

WHEREAS, TCC members and nearby Turnagain neighbors have expressed a strong preference for a trail connection route that would overlap the existing Anchorage Water & Wastewater Utility access road located within the AKRR ROW, as this alternative would minimize impacts to both property owners and the Fish Creek Estuary; and

WHEREAS, the TCC supports the comments submitted by the Great Land Trust, which opposes any trail route section located within the Fish Creek Estuary, and concerns expressed by residents along the west side of the Fish Creek Trail alternative routes; and

WHEREAS, the TCC will only support a specific trail route that minimizes/appropriately addresses potential adverse impacts to affected Turnagain property owners, and environmental concerns, including impacts to Fish Creek hydrology and water quality, stream setback widths and vegetation, Fish Creek Estuary wetlands and wooded uplands, waterfowl and wildlife that use this important habitat area; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Turnagain Community Council hereby supports development of a Fish Creek Trail Connection between West Northern Lights Boulevard and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in the Turnagain area, subject to the following conditions:

1. **AWWU Access Road:** The majority of the trail should be located on the AWWU Access Road (until it connects with the Coastal Trail at the north end). TCC deems this alternative as the most logical, likely least expensive route that would avoid locating any portion of the trail within the Fish Creek Estuary, and would have minimal impacts on adjacent Turnagain neighbors in this area. This option has almost unanimous support from both Turnagain and Spenard residents who have expressed their views at TCC-sponsored project meetings.
2. **West Northern Lights Boulevard to Fish Creek:** If Condition 1 is not feasible, TCC supports a route that starts with Alternative S1—but instead of following the top of the bluff, it transitions down to along the fence line east of Resolution Dr. homes and adjacent to the AWWU access road to its connection with Alternative N3. This modified route avoids adverse impacts to the property owners to the west of the railroad right-of-way and minimize the clearance. Use of

Alternative S2b. would be the preferable route connection between modified S1 and N3 in the Fish Creek area, as it avoids locating the trail within the Estuary.

3. **Fish Creek to the Coastal Trail:** TCC supports the N3 Alternative with the northernmost connection to the Coastal Trail. The specific location of this alternative should follow the cleared area of the AWWU Access Road, which would minimize removal of existing trees and vegetation and avoids the placement of fill in Class A wetlands.
4. **Coastal Trail to the North:** TCC opposes extending the connection trail north of the Coastal Trail and onto the mudflats, as shown in Alternative N3b and, instead, supports Alternative N3a-Switchback to Connection to the Coastal Trail in this area.
5. **TCC opposes all other Fish Creek Trail Connection routes**, based on the potential for significant environmental and social impacts. If the Project Team chooses any other trail connection route alternative than those expressed by TCC, an Environmental Assessment must be conducted to properly identify and address specific neighbor and environmental impacts associated with the proposal.

RESOLUTION PASSED by the Turnagain Community Council on this 3rd day of November, 2022.

Vote: 19 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.



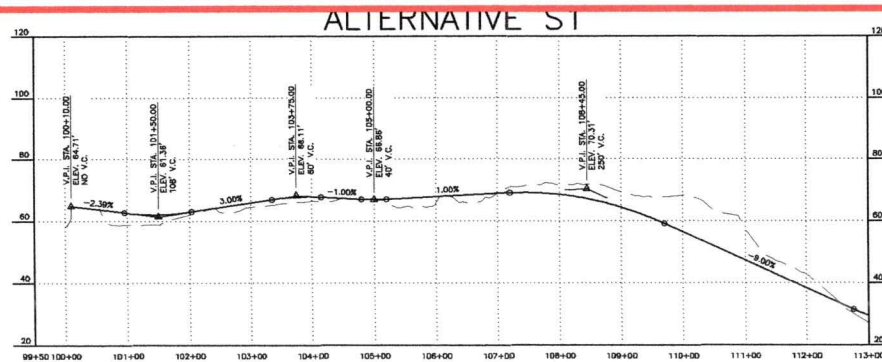
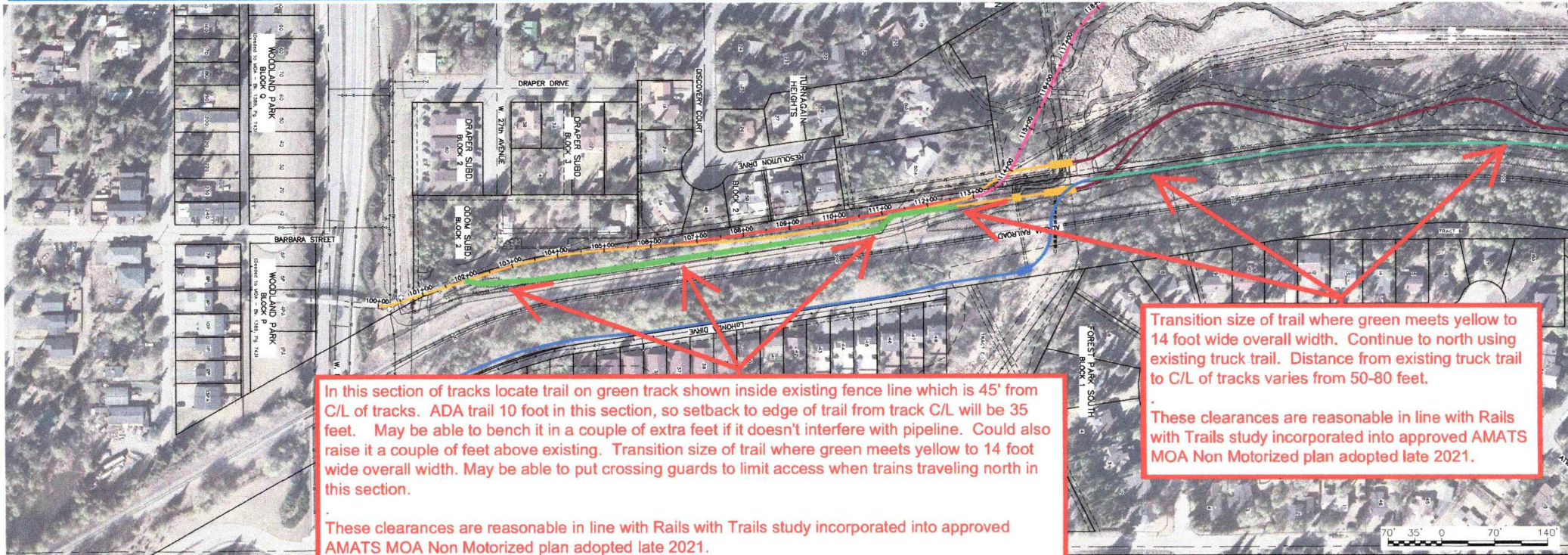
Anna Brawley, President
Turnagain Community Council

11/3/2022
Date



ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS FISH CREEK TRAIL CONNECTION PROJECT

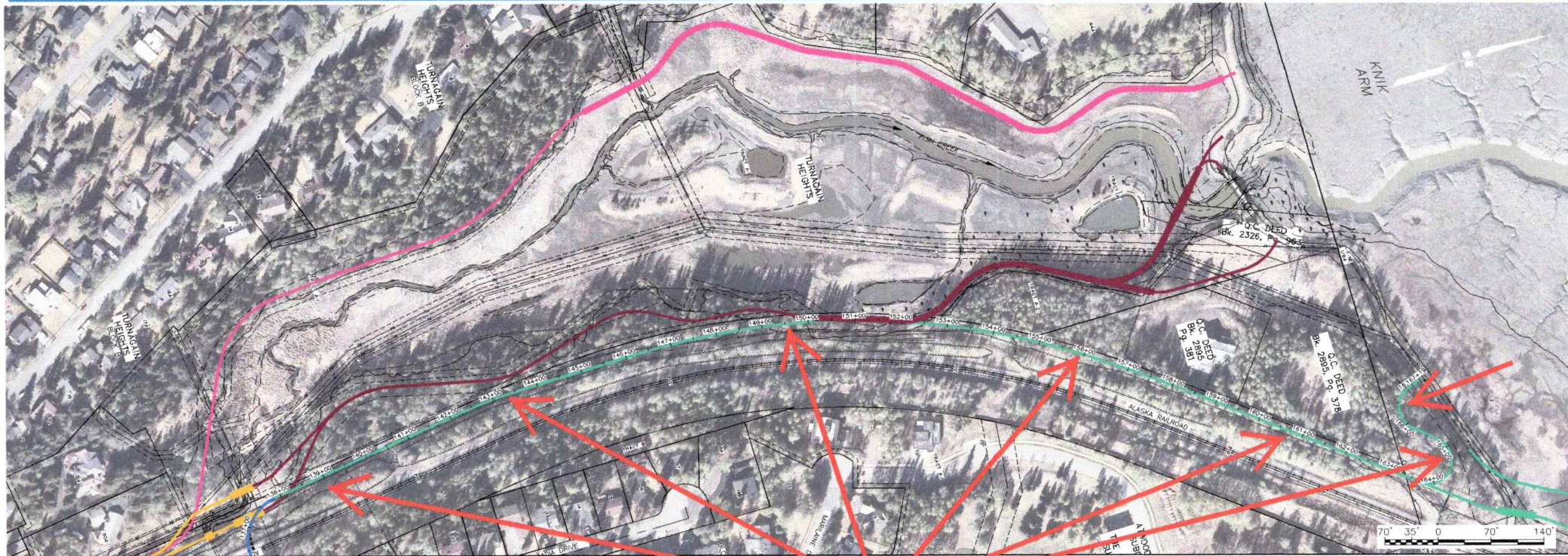
Project No. CFHWY00587



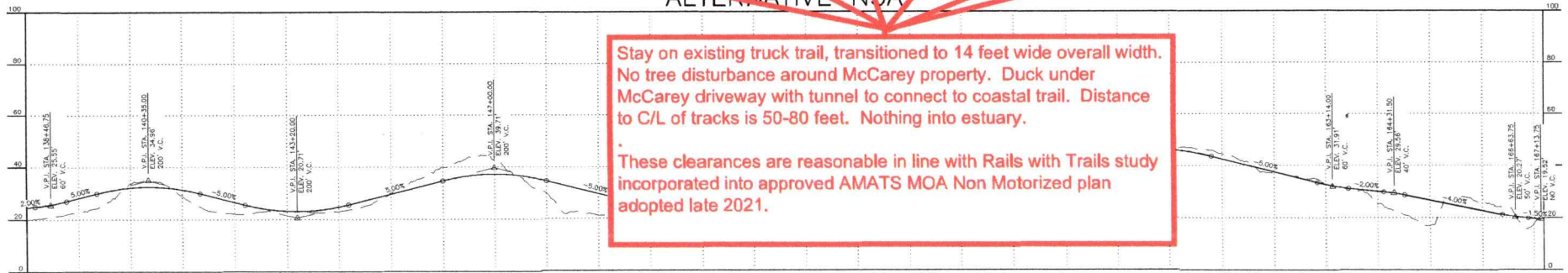


ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS FISH CREEK TRAIL CONNECTION PROJECT

Project No. CFHWY00587



ALTERNATIVE N3A



Stay on existing truck trail, transitioned to 14 feet wide overall width. No tree disturbance around McCarey property. Duck under McCarey driveway with tunnel to connect to coastal trail. Distance to C/L of tracks is 50-80 feet. Nothing into estuary.

These clearances are reasonable in line with Rails with Trails study incorporated into approved AMATS MOA Non Motorized plan adopted late 2021.



ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS FISH CREEK TRAIL CONNECTION PROJECT

Project No. CFHWY00587



TRAIL ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives have been separated into North (N) and South (S) routes with the break point approximately located where Fish Creek flows under the ARRC tracks.

Each south alternative can be connected with any of the north alternatives. If S1 were connected to N2 or N3 it would require a span across Fish Creek similar to S2a or S2b.



Great Land Trust comments on the AMATS Fish Creek Trail Connection Project. September 2022.

While GLT may support the overall concept of a connector trail from the existing Fish Creek Trail at Northern Lights Blvd. to the Coastal Trail, we have, at this time, given no indication as to whether or not any portion of the proposed trail alternatives that fall within the Fish Creek Estuary Conservation Easement-protected property (protected property) are consistent with the conservation easement nor permitted.

By holding a conservation easement (CE) on Fish Creek Estuary, GLT agrees to preserve and protect in perpetuity the Conservation Values of the protected property, including its wetlands, wildlife habitat, open space, and significant natural features. Additionally, as all parties agreed to in the CE, the protected property must be used and maintained in accordance with the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Act grant which funded a significant portion of the conservation project.

While the CE does allow that the landowner (Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)) may construct and maintain multi-use unpaved trails for nonmotorized use on the property, such trails must be approved in writing by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the State (ADNR). Additionally, any trail design and construction of such a trail within the protected property must be consistent with the restrictions in the CE including that the design and construction of any such trail, and its use, may not negatively impact on the Conservation Values of the protected property.

As is typical of our role as the CE holder, when a landowner decides to exercise a reserved right, we will work with the landowner to review draft design plans and provide feedback on how to develop final plans that avoid or appropriately minimize the impact on the Conservation Values of the protected property. At this time, no specific design plans or detailed discussions have occurred between the landowner and GLT or been presented to GLT for feedback.

Since the Project Team is currently soliciting public comments, GLT is providing the Team with general feedback on the proposed project based on the information presented to the public during the Turnagain Community Council (TCC) Land Use Committee meeting on August 2nd, 2022 and released on the project webpage on August 4th.

It is unclear how the Project Team, most notably the MOA, plans to reconcile the restrictions in the CE with the proposed trail alternatives currently shown to be built wholly or partially within the protected property. It is important for the Team to recognize that the restrictions imposed by the perpetual CE include not only that any trail must be unpaved, but also that any trail must only be for non-motorized use and must also completely avoid or appropriately minimize impacting the Conservation Values.

To be more specific, it isn't just a restriction that the trail be unpaved that the MOA must follow when evaluating the viability of Alt N1 and N2 within the estuary uplands and/or wetlands, whether these proposed design plans include unpaved or boardwalk elements. The CE restrictions also require that the trails are for nonmotorized use only. What measures will the MOA put in place to restrict motorized use(s) on these trail alternatives if the MOA decides to move forward with the construction within the protected property? Currently there are a number of motorized technologies being utilized on the MOA multi-use trails this proposed trail plans to link, such as: motorized bicycles, motorized skateboards, one-wheels, motorized scooters, and segways, as well as snow grooming equipment and maintenance vehicles.

During the Aug. 2nd meeting, the ADOT&PF representative on the Project Team stated that the trail and boardwalks would need to be 14 feet wide to allow for emergency vehicles. In addition to the prohibition on motorized use, this is not in alignment with what the adopted Areawide Trails Plan, April 1997 (Plan) even contemplated for a multi-use unpaved trail. On page 3 of the Plan, it states, “Multi-Use Unpaved Trails are used for pedestrian type activities to include bicycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, skijoring, and also equestrian, natural and interpretive types of uses.” And, on page 58, the Plan states that unpaved trails should have a width of five feet. The 2004 CE is a legal agreement between all parties and provisions within were based on generally understood definitions and terms at the time it was written and recorded. The Fish Creek Estuary CE was written and recorded with restrictions based on the multi-use unpaved trails described in the 1997 Areawide Trails Plan, not on present-day definitions.

The MOA should follow its Plan recommendation on page 109 that states, “It is recommended that a trail corridor be established in cooperation with the Alaska Railroad Corporation within the railroad right-of-way.” Further, on page 133, Appendix 3 of the Plan, it lists the “ARR Trail: Coastal Trail to Northern Lights Blvd., type paved trail.

Therefore, any alternative outside of Alt N3 is inconsistent with the adopted Plan and unnecessarily impacts the natural areas and Conservation Values of the protected property. This is especially true since Alt N3 is a viable alternative for the construction of the proposed multi-use paved trail within the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) ROW which is already “impacted” with the access road and maintenance clearings.

Additionally, during the Aug. 2nd TCC Land Use Committee meeting, an ARRC representative present at the meeting stated that the ARRC views the ARRC ROW as a transportation corridor for other modes of travel in addition to the railroad. With the ARRC’s willingness to work with the MOA to establish the multi-use paved trail within the ARRC, it is clear that the MOA should focus on Alt N3 which would cause the least impacts to the “last remaining undeveloped estuary” in the City, the overall environment, and be the most likely design which can be developed in compliance with the CE the MOA has committed to upholding as the landowner.



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

4700 Elmore Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

August 24, 2023

Mr. Andrew Donovan
Director of Real Estate
Alaska Railroad Corporation
327 W Ship Creek Ave,
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Donovan,

On behalf of the AMATS Policy Committee, I am writing in regard to a Proposal to Lease *A Portion of Lot 2 of US Survey 9083* (published 8/18/2023) that is currently being considered by the Alaska Railroad Corporation. We respectfully request that the Alaska Railroad Corporation refrain from accepting this lease as it is in direct conflict with the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) active transportation project known as the Fish Creek Trail Connection. Should the proposed lease be granted, it is highly likely that the Fish Creek Trail Connection project will be unable to proceed.

The Fish Creek Trail Connection project has been a priority for Anchorage since it was first identified in the 1997 Areawide Trails Plan. In 2020, AMATS in partnership with the State of Alaska DOT&PF and the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) formalized an agreement to begin design and engineering work on the Fish Creek Trail Connection and have collectively invested over \$1.5M on the project to date. The project has evaluated several alternatives based on costs, feasibility, stakeholder, and community input. The current preferred alternative route identifies the property in question as the most suitable location for the Fish Creek Trail Connection to connect to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

AMATS and the project team have worked closely with the Alaska Railroad Corporation since 2017 to scope the Fish Creek Trail Connection project to ensure that the project meets the goals of the railroad to improve safety and minimize trespass in railroad Right-of-Way. Through ongoing consultation with the Alaska Railroad Engineering Division, the project team has identified appropriate control measures such as fencing and signage to minimize trespass and clearly delineate between pedestrian and active railroad zones. This separation not only promotes safe recreational activities but also contributes to the overall safety of the railroad environment. Additionally, the proposed route does not interfere with the current operation of the Alaska Railroad and allows for future expansion of a second track.

The Fish Creek Trail Connection project promises a wide array of benefits to Anchorage residents and visitors from community and economic development to public health and quality of life. Trails are a key factor in why people choose to live, work, and play in Anchorage. They are also a key part of Anchorage's growing visitor industry and recreation economy. In fact, trail count data for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail at Fish Creek shows an average of 900 daily bike or pedestrian trips or roughly 328,500 trips annually. When evaluating the potential community benefit of the Fish Creek Trail Connection project, that would equate to over 30 million trail trips over the course of the proposed 95-year lease period. The development of this trail would connect Anchorage neighborhoods and pull more tourism into Spenard, Turnagain, and Midtown. The potential economic boost, coupled with the promotion of a healthier



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

4700 Elmore Road

Anchorage, Alaska 99507

lifestyle and increased tourism, underscores its significance. This trail stands poised to become an asset that enriches the lives of both residents and visitors.

Considering the points outlined above, we request that the Alaska Railroad Corporation factor in these pertinent aspects during the evaluation of the lease request. We acknowledge the complexities involved in such determinations, but we hold the firm belief that the long-term advantages of progressing with the proposed trail outweigh any potential immediate gains from leasing the specified area. By endorsing the preservation and development of this project, we uphold our duty to cultivate a thriving and sustainable community.

We extend our gratitude for your time and consideration. The AMATS Policy Committee is confident that the Alaska Railroad Corporation, under your guidance, will arrive at decisions that reflect the collective welfare of our community and its inhabitants.

Should you require further information or desire a deeper discussion regarding this matter, please feel free to reach out to aaron.jongenelen@anchorageak.gov or (907) 343-8254. We anticipate your thoughtful response.

Sincerely,

Aaron Jongenelen
Executive Director/MPO Coordinator

Electronic CC:
AMATS Policy Committee

Spenard Community Council Resolution 2023-05

A Resolution Urging the Alaska Railroad to Not Lease Out Property (a portion of Lot 2 of US survey 9083) For Private Residential Use, As Leasing This Area Would Preclude Options For A Planned Trail Connection Between Fish Creek and the Coastal Trail.

WHEREAS, Anchorage has a world-class trail system that is a beloved and needed amenity for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (AKRR) has recently provided a ground lease application for AKRR property that might serve as a critical piece of a future Fish Creek-Coastal trail connection; and

WHEREAS, AKRR has stated this application is only available to the public for comment before September 21, 2023, after which the lease may be finalized; and

WHEREAS, in 1997 the Anchorage Areawide Trails Plan identified two future paved trails paralleling Fish Creek between Northern Lights and the Coastal Trail; and

WHEREAS in 2004 the Fish Creek Estuary was established through two conservation easements held by the Department of Natural Resources and the Great Land Trust, and both easements specifically allow a trail through the estuary with stipulations; and

WHEREAS in 2018 a Fish Creek Trail Connection was included in the AMATS TIP; and,

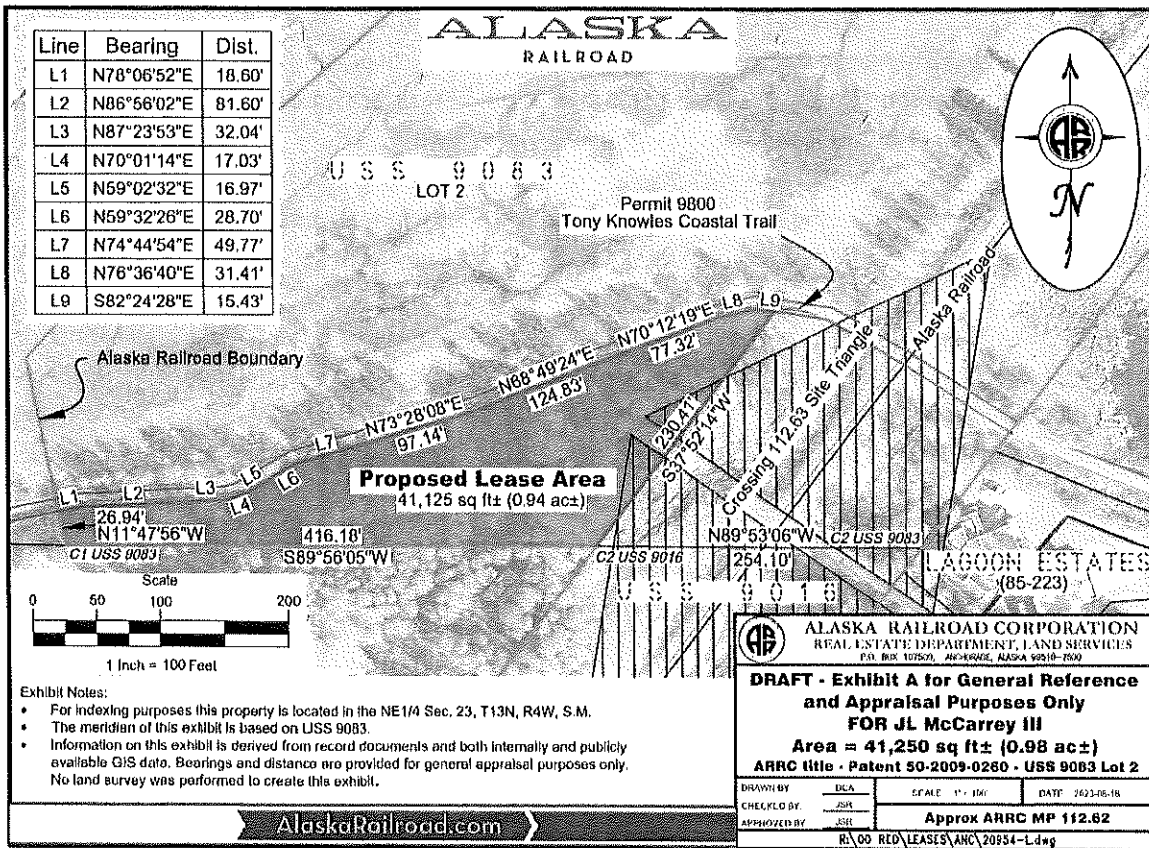
WHEREAS, In 2021, Anchorage voters approved a \$3.95m Parks and Recreation bond that included \$100,000 for the Fish Creek Connection called 'Fish Creek Trail to Ocean'; and

WHEREAS, The federal government agreed to match the municipality's funding at a ratio of approximately 9:1, providing over \$1.1 million for the trail.

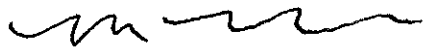
WHEREAS in 2021 the AMATS Non-Motorized Plan was adopted and included the Fish Creek Trail connection project; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Spenard Community Council strongly supports the carrying through the planned connection between the Fish Creek trail and the Coastal Trail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Spenard Community Council urges the Alaska Railroad Corporation to deny this lease application for the good of the Alaskan public, as it would prevent a needed connection planned for and expected by the community.



Resolved, this 6th day of September, 2023



Meg Mielke, Spenard Community Council President

Date

9/16/23

Vote: 8 in favor, and 0 opposed