

Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project

Project Fact Sheet

Updated September 2023



Project Background

Built in the 1940s and 1950s, the Sterling Highway was originally constructed as a gravel road and not designed for the amount of traffic it carries today. In the late 1970s, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) determined that it was necessary to redesign portions of the roadway. It had become increasingly congested, especially during summer months, creating safety issues for travelers. Several studies in the 1980s and 1990s looked at routes

for the proposed highway. In 2000, DOT&PF and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began the Sterling Highway Milepost (MP) 45–60 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Environmental studies, engineering, and public involvement efforts were conducted from 2000 to 2018, resulting in final selection of the Juneau Creek Alternative. The current design work is based on the Juneau Creek Alternative as specifically described in the EIS.



Description of Improvements

The project will **reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing roadway from approximately MP 45–46.5 and MP 56–58** to widen shoulders; bring the roadway curves into compliance with design speeds; and add passing lanes, pathways, and wildlife crossings. Additionally, the project will **construct about 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, between MP 46.5 and 56**. Traffic studies predict that 70 percent of traffic will use the new highway rather than travel through Cooper Landing. A **new Resurrection Pass Trailhead and parking lot** will be constructed, with trail connections to the Resurrection Pass and Bean Creek trails as well as the Juneau Creek Falls overlook.

New intersections are being designed at the connection of the old (existing) and new highways. Construction will also include a **new steel girder bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon**. In terms of wildlife protection, the design features **four wildlife undercrossing structures**, and the **first wildlife overpass of a highway in Alaska**.



Cost and Schedule

Project costs are estimated to exceed \$600 million. The project will be constructed in six phases, and construction began in 2020. It is expected to be completed by 2028. Federal Highway Trust Funds are anticipated to cover 90 percent of construction costs. The State of Alaska will supply the remaining 10 percent of funding.



Phase 1A (Construction 2021–2023)

Phase 1A is on the west end of the project (MP 56–58), as shown in the figure below. This phase includes significant soil stabilization to prevent slopes from entering designated wilderness on the north side of the corridor. Other improvements include retaining walls, drainage, wildlife undercrossings, erosion protection, guardrail, pavement, and signage and striping.

- **Designer:** HDR | **Contractor:** Scarsella Bros
Award Amount: \$21,130,000

Phase 1B (Construction 2025–2027)

Phase 1B is on the east end of the project, at approximately MP 45–46.5, and includes the Quartz Creek intersection as well as the intersection of the existing and proposed Sterling Highway (approximately MP 47). Phase 1B consists of a pedestrian undercrossing (Coyote Notch), retaining walls, drainage, guardrail, pavement, and signage and striping.

- **Designer:** R&M | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor Joint Venture (JV)
Award Amount: TBD

Phase 2 (Construction 2024–2027)

DOT&PF is designing the Juneau Creek Bridge in-house. Design of the steel plate girder bridge is anticipated to be completed by summer 2023. Currently, as designed, the Juneau Creek Bridge will be the:

- » highest crossing in the state at 285 feet (Hurricane Gulch is approximately 250 feet)
 - » longest single-span bridge in the state since 1982
 - » longest erected and launched bridge in the state
- **Designer:** DOT&PF | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor JV
Award Amount: TBD

Pioneer Roads (Construction 2022)

This part of the project consisted of upgrading two existing roads on either side of Juneau Creek Canyon: West Juneau Road on the west and Slaughter Ridge Road on the east. These roads will provide valuable access to Phases 2–6 throughout the duration of the project. This part of the project also established a project office/staging area (Tract C) along the existing Sterling Highway near the Quartz Creek Road intersection.

- **Designer:** DOWL | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor JV
Award Amount: \$4,500,000

Phases 3–4 (Construction 2022–2024)

Phases 3 and 4 consist of the middle section (off the existing alignment) of the project. These phases will establish staging and disposal sites, roadway embankment, and drainage; and will construct wildlife undercrossings.

- **Designer:** DOWL | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor JV
Award Amount: \$105,000,000

Phase 5 (Construction 2026–2027)

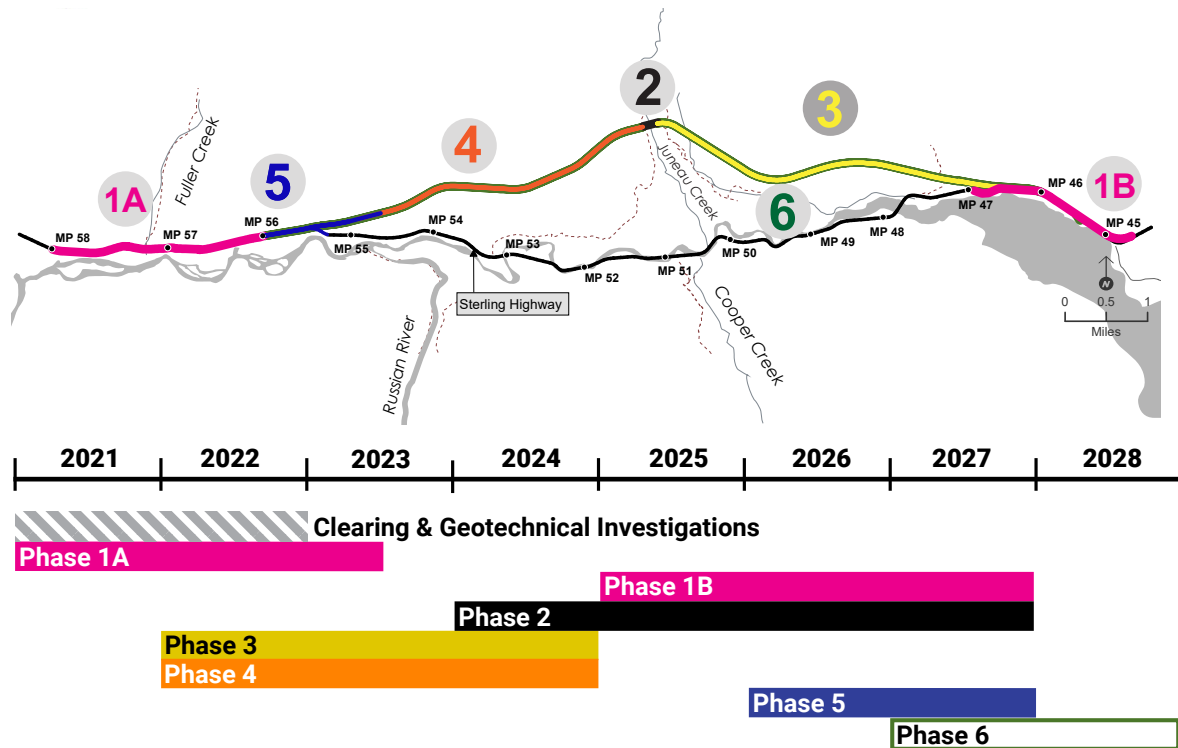
Phase 5 includes the western intersection of the proposed Sterling Highway and the existing Sterling Highway (MP 55–56). Design of the intersection began after analysis and selection of the tight diamond interchange in late 2021. Early field work includes cultural resources survey, clearing, and geotechnical exploration in the 2022/2023 season.

- **Designer:** DOWL | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor JV
Award Amount: TBD

Phase 6 (Construction 2027–2028)

Phase 6 includes construction of all paving, signage, striping, guardrail, rumble strips, and trailheads; revegetation; and landscaping. The new highway is currently anticipated to be open to traffic by the end of 2028.

- **Designer:** DOWL | **Contractor:** QAP-Traylor JV
Award Amount: TBD



How Can I Get Information?

DOT&PF plans to hold quarterly public meetings in Cooper Landing to provide updates and answer questions. Please join our mailing list or visit our website to receive future notices. DOT&PF also intends to provide monthly updates via our mailing list, the Cooper Landing Crier, and the Moose Pass Messenger. All public materials, including information from past public meetings, are available on our comprehensive website at <https://sterlinghighway.net>.

Project Contacts

Design Questions

Jonathan Tymick, PE
Project Manager, DOT&PF
Jonathan.Tymick@alaska.gov
907-269-0453

Construction Questions

Shaun Combs
Project Engineer, DOT&PF
Shaun.Combs@alaska.gov
907-595-2009