

Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project

Project Overview

Updated September 2019



The Sterling Highway from Milepost (MP) 45–60 follows the Kenai River Valley through the fishing and tourism hub of Cooper Landing. Motorists and pedestrians, both residents and visitors, experience challenges with the narrow corridor.

The Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project addresses three primary needs:

- » Reducing highway congestion
- » Ensuring the corridor meets current highway design standards
- » Improving highway safety

Anticipated benefits of this corridor redesign include:

- » Increased motorist and pedestrian safety
- » Improved access to local businesses and residences
- » Reduced noise, dust, congestion, and traffic in Cooper Landing
- » Decreased risk of fuel spills into the Kenai River by routing traffic farther away from river banks



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 sees 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.

The DOT&PF and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that examines improvement alternatives to the Sterling Highway as they relate to environmental, social, and economic impacts. After considerable analysis and public input, the FHWA identified the Juneau Creek Alternative as the selected design alternative.



Description of Improvements

The project will reconstruct 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 undercrossings.

Additionally, the project will construct approximately 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, between MP 46.5 and 55.5. It will essentially bypass the town; current forecasts predict that 70 percent of traffic will use the new highway instead of traveling through Cooper Landing. This will reduce stormwater runoff and potential spill risk into the Kenai River. New intersections will be designed to connect the old and new highways. Construction will also include a new bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon – soon to be the longest single-span bridge in Alaska. The project will provide increased safety for recreational activities and river access, reduced noise levels on the river, and decreased visual impacts as seen from the river. In terms of wildlife protection, the design features four wildlife crossing structures, including the first wildlife overpass of a highway in Alaska.

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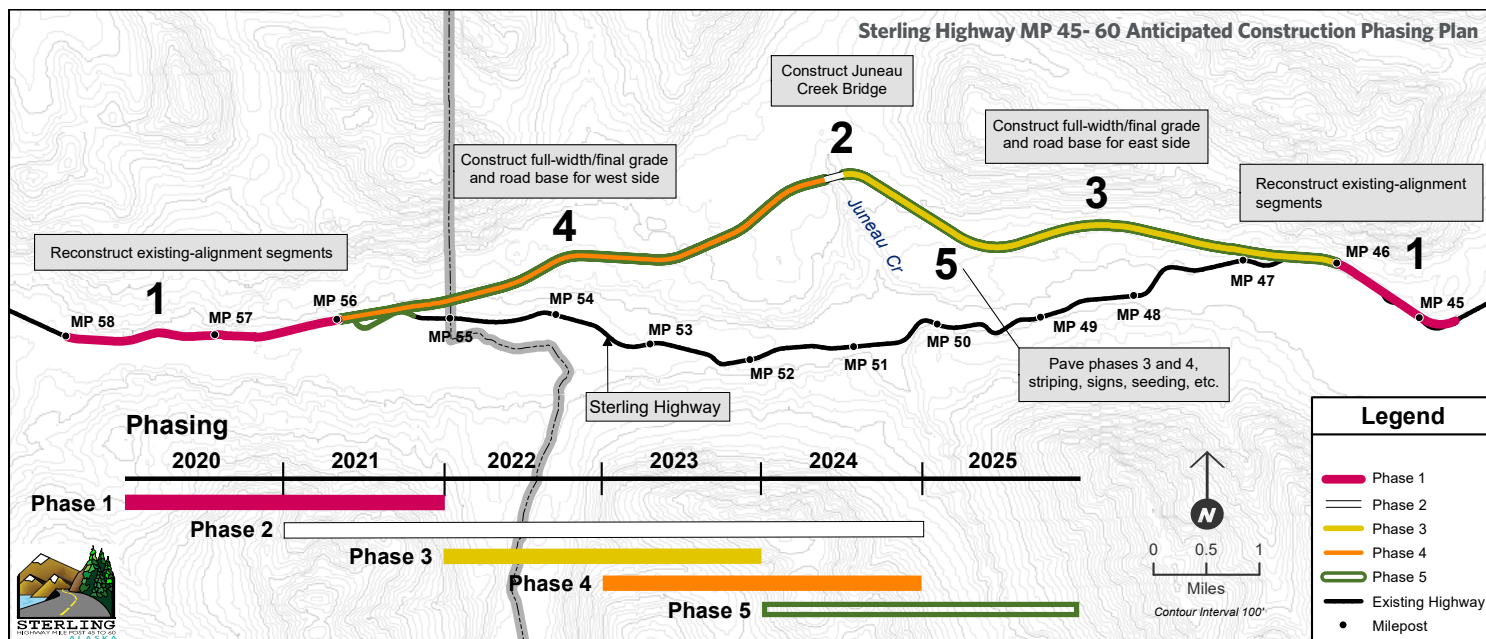
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Cost and Schedule

Construction is estimated at approximately \$375 million. The project will be constructed in five phases and construction will begin in 2020. It is expected to be complete by 2025. Because the FHWA is overseeing the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project, 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.



2019-2020 Phase 1: The first design phase, currently underway, focuses on the east and west ends of the project, as shown in the figure above. The DOT&PF has contracted with HDR to design the west end, MP 56-58, and provide environmental and public involvement support. R&M Consultants (as a subcontractor to HDR) is designing the east end, MP 45-47. Design of the west end is anticipated to be complete by fall 2020; design of the east end is anticipated to be complete in spring 2021. Construction is planned to begin in summer/fall 2020 and may consist of an early work package to help streamline construction progress. Phase 1 construction will likely take one full construction season and part of the next. R&M is also conducting survey and geotechnical investigations along the entire corridor as part of Phase 1.

More information on future phases will be added as the project develops.

Comments or Questions?



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