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# Partnership

Balance is the goal of this Corridor Partnership Plan and the resource managers and communities along the Seward Highway. How much more can recreation and tourism along the route grow? How can new highway construction projects enhance both safety and aesthetics? The success of the Seward Highway Corridor Partnership Plan will lie in its ability to assess the goals and objectives of all the corridor stakeholders and present a strategy that meets or approaches as many of the keystone strategies as possible while maintaining an overall understanding of the corridor as a whole.

Partnership is the solution to balancing the issues raised by recreational use, safety, land use, preservation and development. For the Seward Highway, partnership

## 1. Seward Highway Partnership Board

The creation of the Seward Highway Partnership Board (SHPB) is recommended to provide representative direction and leadership for the byway. The Seward Highway Partnership Board is designed to facilitate communication among existing agencies, offices, governments and interest groups along the Seward Highway Corridor. Allowing for formal and regular information sharing is a simple, yet key component of this strategy. The SHPB will consist of a Core Working Group representing the principal land managers along the route, the Central Region Office of ADOT&PF, and a local citizen and non-profit representative; a larger group, Partnership Associates, representing all interested parties along the corridor; and an Advisor (the Alaska Scenic Byways Coordinator).

The intent of the organizational structure is to share and coordinate the responsibilities for scenic byway management among a wide number of groups recognizing that cooperative management is essential to maintaining the corridor across different land ownerships.

The Seward Highway corridor is fortunate to have several substantial professional federal and state agencies already responsible for most of the daily management

## 2. The Players

### Core Working Group

The Core Working Group is composed of the principal agencies, offices and local governments that have legal jurisdiction over the roadway and the corridor and are responsible for enacting the policies by which the Seward Highway corridor is managed on a day-to-day basis. These include representatives from:

- ADOT&PF, Central Region
- DNR-Parks, Chugach State Park
- DNR- Division of Land
- Alaska Office of History and Archaeology (DNR-Parks)
- U.S. Forest Service, Chugach National Forest
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Municipality of Anchorage
- City of Seward

Additionally, the following individuals and organizations are recommended for the core working group to ensure that the working group receives adequate input from its principal constituency: the general public.

- Alaska Natural History Association
- Two citizen representatives (to be chosen by local community councils). One representative from

existing land managers as presented to FHWA for designation under the National Scenic Byways Program. Where programs do not exist to advance specific corridor goals, management proposals will look for existing programs or opportunities that, thorough modification or cooperation, could meet corridor objectives. The recommendation for new programs, policies, or initiatives will always represent the last resort.

focused opportunities for communication regarding corridor-wide projects and needs in the future. Naturally, SHPB cannot change the in-house policies of these organizations. It can, however, promote greater regional awareness for different processes and time frames, and encourage the use of organizational flexibilities that may be advantageous to other resource managers along the route.

Point/Cooper Landing

### Partnership Associates

The Partnership Associates represent the stakeholders along the corridor, the individuals and organizations that use the corridor as a place of residence, recreation, or business. The Partnership Associates also includes organizations that have jurisdictional authority or advisory capacity over various segments of the corridor. The purpose of this group is to educate and inform the Core Working Group about local community issues, commercial and business interests along the highway, issues of concern, or observations regarding use, activity, and management within the corridor. The Partnership Associates will serve in an advisory capacity to the Core Working Group.

#### 1. Local Government:

- Turnagain Arm Community Council (representing Rainbow, Bird and Indian)
- Girdwood Board of Supervisors
- Portage Valley Community Council
- Hope
- Moose Pass
- Cooper Landing
- Utility and public service providers

#### 2. State Government:

- Alaska Railroad Corporation
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game

#### 3. Federal Government:

- National Park Service, Kenai Fjords National Park
- Alaska Public Lands Information Center

#### 4. Business Representatives and Chambers of Commerce:

- to be determined
- trucking representative

#### 5. Tourism Industry:

- Alaska Visitor Association
- Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA)
- Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Tourism Marketing Council
- Seward Convention and Visitor Bureau
- SeaLife Center
- Alyeska Resort
- Princess Tours
- Grayline
- Other Tour Operators

#### Seward Highway Partnership Board Advisor

The Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator will serve in an advisory capacity to the Partnership Board.

- Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator

## 3. The Structure

### Core Working Group

The Core Working Group should designate four co-chairs representing The Central Region Office of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Chugach State Park, the DNR-Division of Land and Chugach National Forest. These agencies represent the principal managers of the property along the route, and the manager of the roadway itself. Collectively, they possess the ability and resources to advance the management of the Seward Highway.

### Partnership Associates

The Partnership Associates provide for input from key interest groups along the corridor. These groups, unlike the Core Working Group, do not own significant land along the corridor, but use the corridor and its resources extensively for business, recreation, and livelihood. Their purpose is to advise the Core Working Group of the larger regional issues and concerns regarding decisions surrounding the management of the corridor and serve as local experts regarding site-specific issues and questions.

### Seward Highway Partnership Board Advisor

The Seward Highway Advisor will be the Alaska State Scenic Byways Coordinator. As the State's scenic byway expert and a staff member of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the Scenic Byways Coordinator will assist SHPB with questions regarding state and federal scenic byways policies, provide guidance

regarding ADOT&PF policies, assist with inquiries regarding funding, and serve as the liaison between the National Scenic Byways Program and the local constituency.

**Core Working Group Meetings**

The Core Working Group should meet three times a year in meetings focused exclusively on the Seward Highway as a scenic byway. Meetings held in the fall, winter, and spring will not encumber SHPB members during the

Seward Highway scenic byway. Such meetings should also serve to promote the route, recognize outstanding successes along the corridor for management, preservation, and quality development, and serve as an opportunity to introduce new publications, brochures, or marketing strategies.

**Special Advisory Committees**

It is anticipated that special needs of the Seward Highway and special interests along the byway will come forward

**4. Year 1, Tasks**

The following tasks represent recommended goals for the first year of the Seward Highway Partnership Board. They are presented with the understanding that circumstances and time may alter their implementation. They do, however, represent important tasks to secure the thoughtful management of the Seward Highway corridor over time.

**Core Working Group Tasks - Organizational Focus**

**Partner Review**

Members of the Core Working Group should have an ongoing responsibility to review and comment on public land conveyances, public facilities, and highway construction projects proposed by other Core Working Group agencies for implementation.

may be established by the Core Working Group. Each Special Advisory Committee will include a representative from the Core Working Group. It is possible that some committees will be composed entirely of Core Working Group members and that some will be composed entirely of Partnership Associate members.

**1. Secure endorsement of CPP from all agency and government heads**

In order to ensure that the CPP can move forward and positively impact the Seward Highway corridor through the implementation of the keystone ideas and other objectives outlined in the plan, it will be necessary for all

SHPB Partnership

on behalf of the goals of the CPP.

**SHPB Meetings**

The entire Seward Highway Partnership Board will meet once a year. This meeting will serve to assemble both the Core Working Group and the Partnership Associates, and to invite all the stakeholders along the corridor with formal opportunity to comment on the state of the

should be established for a particular period of time with a stated goal or outcome. Due to predetermined time expectations and dedicated goals and objectives, Special Advisory Committees will be well situated to seek grants and funding targeted to their specific mission.

Special Advisory Committees might include:

- Highway Safety
- Design Theme
- Land Use Planning
- Tourism Marketing
- Fund Raising

other agencies and organizations along the corridor is sought. Endorsement requests should come from Core Working Group members to their own agency heads.

Endorsement of the CPP should be sought from the following agency or government officials:

- ADOT&PF, approval by Commissioner
- DNR (Division of Land and Division of Parks), approval by Commissioner
- U.S. Forest Service, approval by the Regional Forester
- Kenai Peninsula Borough, approval by Mayor and Assembly
- Municipality of Anchorage, approval by Mayor and Assembly
- City of Seward, approval by Mayor and Assembly

## 2. Designate an Organizational Leader

The Core Working Group should designate an organizational leader to convene meetings and serve as a liaison among all SHPB members. This individual will be responsible for:

- Coordinating meeting times and locations,
- Securing meeting space,
- Providing fax, e-mail, telephone, or written notification of meetings,
- Maintaining a listing of all SHPB members,
- Providing contact information regarding inquires for the Seward Highway.

## 3. Designate a Business Liaison

The Core Working Group should designate a business liaison (or organization) capable of handling grants and monies coming to the Seward Highway for corridor-wide projects. If the CPP is successful in its mission to attain multi-agency coordination for corridor projects, it will

most likely be necessary to have such an independent third party handle incoming grants, funding, and gifts. The business liaison can hold the monies in trust until they are needed to procure goods or services for the corridor.

## 4. Identify Projects for Scenic Byways Grant Funds

Determine immediate, short term projects that can be funded with Scenic Byways grant funds through FHWA. Such funds are available to all scenic byways nationwide, however first preference is given to worthy projects on designated National Scenic Byways. Such funds can be used for safety improvement, signage, interpretation, marketing, and demonstration projects. As grants are available on a "first come, first serve" basis, SHPB should have clearly defined and qualified projects ready for submission at the start of each grant cycle.

### Core Working Group Tasks, Byway Focus

#### 1. Conveyances

As conveyances have been identified as one of the single-most important changes impacting the future of the Seward Highway corridor, the Core Working Group should establish a strategy or policy regarding conveyances along the Seward Highway. The coordination among the DNR-Division of Land, the USFS, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough should be articulated. Additionally, the provision of buffers (as discussed in the Keystone Ideas), easements or covenants should be determined and established. Lastly, the Core Working Group should determine if any particular conveyances present immediate threats to the quality of any special or unique features along the corridor, or present particular concerns regarding the overall structure and goals of the CPP.

## 2. Establish a committee to determine a design theme for the Seward Highway

The Core Working Group should establish a special advisory committee to determine a design theme for the Seward Highway corridor. In order to encourage quality and consistent development throughout the corridor, the articulation of a design theme as early as possible is important to establish desired outcomes and target grant funding for demonstration projects.

## 3. Publications

Needed interpretative and travel publications for the Seward Highway should be determined as soon as possible. National Scenic Byways will be marketed both domestically and internationally by FHWA; it is a requirement of the program that adequate publications and interpretative material be available for visitors and marketing efforts.

## 4. Seasonal Traffic Capacity

Review Seward Highway capacity issues by season. How does congestion change during different periods of the year? What strategies can SHPB advocate to assist ADOT&PF (use of Alaska Railroad, ridesharing, promoting travel during shoulder seasons and winter)?

**Partnership Associates Tasks, Year 1**

**1. Coordinate with Core Working Group**

The Partnership Associates should coordinate with the Core Working Group to determine how their interests and expertise might best be utilized within the SHPB framework. Ideas for special advisory committees or assistance to Core Working Group tasks should be determined.

**2. Workshop: Helping Small Businesses Along the Seward Highway Access Tourist Dollars**

Develop and organize a workshop to help retain and strengthen local business along the corridor. Investigate ways in which local businesses can better access tourist dollars and partnership opportunities with larger tour

**5. Year 2, Tasks**

The following tasks represent recommended goals for the second year of the Seward Highway Partnership Board. They are presented with the understanding that circumstances and time may alter their implementation. They do, however, represent important tasks to be undertaken once the organizational and critical first year tasks have been accomplished.

**Core Working Group Tasks, Organizational Focus**

**1. Review the efficacy of the SHPB structure after one year.**

The structure of, and coordination among, SHPB members should be evaluated after the first year. The efforts

Working Group. Naturally the first year will be one of experiment and coordination. It is important to the future of the Seward Highway to maintain SHPB as a fluid and flexible organization that can respond to the daily realities of the route. The CPP partnership structure outlined in this document is not intended as a rigid organizational model. The Core Working Group should regularly reassess the most productive and efficient structure for the SHPB.

**Core Working Group Tasks, Byway Focus**

**1. Rest Rooms**

The Core Working Group should determine a strategy or policy regarding the placement, management, funding, and maintenance of restrooms along the Seward Highway. Ideally, year two will allow study of the Turnagain Pass facility to determine its value as a model for the remainder of the route.

**2. Mid-level Interpretation and Recreational Opportunities**

The Core Working Group should develop a strategy to provide greater intermediate experiences to the traveler interested in more than interpretation and scenic viewing along the road, but not having the time or experience for

administered by the ADF&G.

**3. Seward Highway Identification**

The Core Working Group should recommend a uniform identification process/system for the Seward Highway (agency shields, state logo, route logo, national logo, combination of). How to identify the route as a National Scenic Byway, a state Scenic Highway, and a National Forest Service Scenic Byway, could potentially litter the scenic route with excessive identification signage.

#### 4. Initiate a viewshed inventory for the Seward Highway corridor

Working with land agencies and ADOT&PF, the Core Working Group should secure funds to conduct a viewshed inventory for the corridor. What are the significant views and viewsheds? What ownership(s) are they under? What key views define the Seward Highway to the average traveler? Can new ADOT&PF projects be designed to enhance or create new views (such as the new views of Turnagain Arm north of Girdwood)? This information will serve as a framework for assisting in future decision-making processes along the Seward Highway.

#### Advisory Group Tasks

##### 1. Workshop: Developing a Marketing Strategy for the Seward Highway

The Partnership Associates should organize a workshop to determine the needs and benefits of group marketing and linked resources.

## 6. Year 3, and Beyond

#### Core Working Group Tasks

Based on the first two years of SHPB, the Core Working Group should identify a time frame for evaluating and fulfilling the critical actions identified under the Keystone Ideas. This task should be determined with the assistance of the Partnership Associates.

The following is a listing of all *critical actions* identified in the Keystone Ideas:

#### Keystone Strategy 1

*The Seward Highway should provide a safe, aesthetic and world-class driving experience.*

- K.1-A Design Theme
- K.1-B Design Integration
- K.1-C Roadway Details
- K.1-D Urban Landscape
- K.1-E Guardrails
- K.1-F Clear Zones
- K.1-G Roadside Buffers
- K.1-H View Management
- K.1-I Pullouts
- K.1-J Bike Paths
- K.1-K Scenic Highway Identification Signage
- K.1-L Highway Signage
- K.1-M Grooved Centerline and Edge Warnings
- K.1-N Restricted Turning Movements
- K.1-O Left Turning Lanes
- K.1-P Right Turning Lanes
- K.1-Q Center Turning Lanes
- K.1-R Shoulders
- K.1-S Traffic Calming or Speed Management
- K.1-T Management of Curb Cuts

#### Keystone Strategy 2

*Effective visitor management is necessary to ensure long term economic development through tourism.*

- K.2-A Rest Area Strategy
- K.2-B Forest Service Recreation Management
- K.2-C State Parks Recreation Management
- K.2-D Carpooling and Ridesharing Facilities
- K.2-E RV Dump Site Facilities
- K.2-F Seward Highway Scenic Byway Road Guide
- K.2-G Historic Sites Inventory
- K.2-H Visitor Newspaper
- K.2-I Seward Highway Audio Tape
- K.2-J Staffed Interpretive Van
- K.2-K Seward Highway 20-minute Video
- K.2-L Seward Highway Awareness Campaign

#### Keystone Strategy 3

*Haphazard development poses the greatest threat to the highway's ability to attract visitors and quality development.*

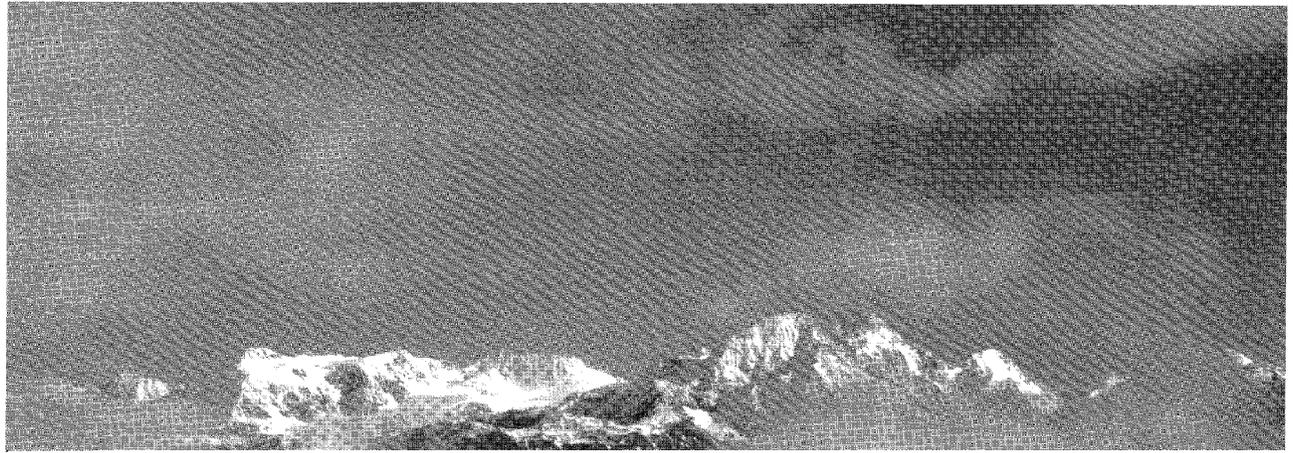
- K.3-A Conveyance Planning
- K.3-B Nodal Development Areas
- K.3-C Corridor Development Areas
- K.3-D Corridor Preservation Areas
- K.3-E Gateways

## Project Funding

- Planning
- Partnership
- Advocacy

Funding for all projects and funding for projects and ideas outlined in this Partnership Plan will always remain the single most important factor in moving Seward Highway improvements from discussion to reality. One of the purposes of this plan is to outline projects and establish consensus and funding responsibility so that as funds are sought and budgets developed in the future such projects can receive fair and timely consideration. Another goal of this Partnership Plan is to look for opportunities where the combined financial support of different agencies can, on appropriate projects, enable implementation. For example, the current partnership

between the U.S. Forest Service and the ADOT&PF for the development of a rest area facility at Turnagain Pass represents the positive cooperation of federal and state monies. Lastly, the Partnership Plan hopes to provide, through mutual agreement on specific corridor goals, a unified voice to more effectively advocate funding opportunities for the Seward Highway. If for example the tourism community, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, ADOT&PF, and the USFS were all to endorse a particular corridor project, their collective voices might better be heard by the decision and policy makers than a single agency or organization might be.



Portage, along the Seward Highway.

Photo © David Riende



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Conclusion

The Seward Highway is a remarkable resource. In 127 miles from Anchorage to Seward unparalleled views, natural features and cultural resources place this highway among the great driving experiences in the world. This Corridor Partnership Plan represents a strategy that both acknowledges this world-class resource, and also recognizes that a coordinated effort focused on the resources of the corridor is essential for the long term health of the road's character.

This plan outlines a series of critical actions. These critical actions have been identified to suggest methods or strategies by which the highway and corridor can be effectively managed for the protection of scenic resources and the greatest personal enjoyment and economic benefit of those who use the corridor. It will involve the commitment of resource agencies, local government, and the residents of the Seward Highway corridor. It is not a legal plan or requirement, rather it is a wake-up call to the region to have a voice in the future.

For Alaska, this plan represents a model by which natural resources can be conserved and economic development sustained. There are ample opportunities for both preservation and development, tourism and solitude, and efficiency and leisure. Balancing these, however, will require thoughtfulness, commitment and dedication.

If successful on the Seward Highway, a traveler fifty years from now will be able to express the same sentiments of today: **"It is the most beautiful highway in the country."**



The elusive moose.

Photo: © Helen Rhoads