



August 12, 2026

Bike Anchorage Comment Re: Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation Design Alternatives

Dear Project Team,

Bike Anchorage submits these comments on the Fireweed Lane Rehabilitation project and the updated design alternatives presented to the public at the June 2, 2026 Open House.

We continue to believe this project represents an exciting opportunity to transform an aging, auto-oriented corridor into a safer, more vibrant main street that better serves everyone who lives, works, goes to school, and visits here. We appreciate the thoughtful work that has gone into developing the alternatives and recognize that many detailed design decisions remain ahead. The comments below are intended to help guide those future decisions.

Guiding Principles for Design

The Municipality has already established the policy direction for this corridor through the Long-Range Transportation Strategy. That plan recognizes that difficult tradeoffs are sometimes unavoidable and establishes a modal hierarchy to guide those decisions. Where competing objectives exist, transportation investments should prioritize, in order:

1. Pedestrians
2. Bicyclists
3. Transit users
4. Freight
5. Personal vehicles

We ask the project team to explicitly incorporate this hierarchy throughout future project materials. The project materials currently describe goals such as "prioritizing safe, accessible travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers." While well-intentioned, wording like this implies that all modes are equal. The adopted Long-Range Transportation Strategy says otherwise. When compromises are necessary, the first question should be whether the design best serves people walking and bicycling, not whether it minimizes delay for drivers.

Fireweed is exactly the type of corridor where this policy should matter most. Traffic volumes have steadily declined for decades. Large portions of the corridor are devoted to surface parking rather than active businesses or housing. Many commercial buildings are reaching the age



where redevelopment opportunities are increasingly likely. The corridor is home to North Star Elementary, Steller Secondary School, neighborhoods, restaurants, and businesses that would all benefit from becoming places people enjoy spending time rather than simply driving through.

Bike Infrastructure Selection

Bike Anchorage supports whichever alternative ultimately provides the most continuous, intuitive, and protected bicycle facility throughout the corridor. Whether the final design places bicycle facilities on-street or behind the curb is less important than ensuring they remain safe, continuous, and comfortable for riders of all ages and abilities.

That said, we encourage careful consideration of the tradeoffs between off-street and on-street facilities.

Raised cycletracks provide excellent protection from vehicles between intersections, but they also introduce additional conflict points wherever motorists cross the bicycle path. We know from both research and local experience that many drivers fail to adequately check for people crossing the street, even at marked crossings. Pedestrian and bicycle crossings are also frequently subject to signal timing that prioritizes vehicle progression, and crossing equipment is not always maintained or operated reliably.

Properly designed, protected on-street bicycle lanes avoid many of these issues by keeping bicyclists within the normal flow of traffic while still providing physical protection from moving vehicles. In our view, this represents the strongest long-term solution if designed well.

Whatever alternative moves forward, one point remains non-negotiable: The project should not construct conventional painted bicycle lanes without physical protection. The research is clear that painted bicycle lanes provide limited comfort for most riders and do little to increase bicycling. Protected bicycle facilities consistently produce greater safety benefits, attract substantially more riders, and better serve users of all ages and abilities.

Likewise, we encourage the project team to avoid designs that require bicyclists to repeatedly transition between on-street and off-street facilities. In particular, Alternative 4 introduces unnecessary complexity by shifting riders back and forth between different facility types. Consistency makes facilities easier to understand, more predictable for drivers, and more comfortable for people riding.

We strongly support continued efforts to consolidate driveways wherever possible. Fewer driveways reduce conflicts for everyone. Where driveways are necessary, bicycle and



pedestrian facilities should remain as level and continuous as possible through the crossing rather than dipping diagonally toward the roadway. Buffered facilities that maintain sidewalk and bicycle path elevation clearly communicate that drivers are crossing the path of people walking and bicycling, not the other way around.

Network Continuity

Fireweed's value extends beyond the corridor itself, to the quality of the connections it creates to the rest of Anchorage's bicycle and pedestrian network.

Bike Anchorage strongly supports completing the currently missing north-side crossing of the Seward Highway. Eliminating this gap will create a much more intuitive and comfortable east-west connection across one of Anchorage's largest barriers.

We also encourage close coordination with the planned improvements to Eagle Street and Denali Street. Together, these projects have the potential to create a much-needed north-south bicycle route connecting the Chester Creek Trail to the midtown commercial district. The transition between these corridors should be seamless, intuitive, and well signed so that users experience them as one connected network rather than a collection of separate projects.

Safe Intersections

Intersections will ultimately determine whether this corridor feels safe.

Regardless of which alternative is selected, Leading Pedestrian Intervals should be incorporated at signalized intersections. Providing pedestrians with a head start before turning vehicles receive a green indication is a proven, low-cost safety improvement.

Throughout the project, curb radii should be reduced wherever practical. Squaring off corners shortens pedestrian crossings, improves visibility, and naturally slows turning vehicles without relying on enforcement.

Pedestrian refuge islands can be valuable where crossing distances remain long. However, they should not become a justification for retaining additional vehicle lanes where they are otherwise unnecessary. Around locations such as North Star Elementary School, where an existing pedestrian beacon already requires drivers to stop, the priority should remain minimizing crossing distance and reducing vehicle speeds in the first place.



Bike Anchorage supports converting both the Fireweed/Arctic and Fireweed/Denali intersection controls from lighted signals to stop signs. However, these changes should be accompanied by public education, because many motorists already fail to fully stop at stop-controlled intersections, and many residents remain unaware that Anchorage law allows bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs when safe to do so. Educational signage and public outreach could improve understanding of these changes while reducing conflict between roadway users.

Self-Enforcing Infrastructure

The project should also embrace the principle of self-enforcing street design.

Roadway geometry has a greater influence on driver behavior than posted speed limits or enforcement alone. Lane widths, corner radii, crossing distances, landscaping, and the overall feel of a street all influence how fast people choose to drive. When these elements reinforce the desired operating speed, compliance becomes the natural outcome rather than something that depends on constant enforcement.

Anchorage can neither assign police officers to permanently enforce speeding on every corridor, nor implement automated enforcement technologies at present. Therefore, the roadway itself must communicate the appropriate vehicle speed through its design. That approach is not only more effective, but also more durable and less resource-intensive over the life of the project.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the success of this project should be measured by whether a parent feels comfortable allowing their child to walk or bicycle to North Star Elementary or Steller Secondary School independently.

If the answer is yes, the project will almost certainly succeed for everyone else as well. Streets that are safe enough for children are comfortable for older adults, people with disabilities, transit riders, families, customers visiting local businesses, and people driving. Designing around the most vulnerable user is how we create places that people actually want to visit, invest in, and spend time in.

Fireweed has an opportunity to become far more than a reconstructed roadway. It can become the spine of a revitalized Midtown district, a corridor that supports redevelopment, strengthens local businesses, connects neighborhoods, links major bicycle routes together, and demonstrates what Anchorage's adopted transportation policies look like when put into practice.



We encourage the project team to be bold in pursuing that vision and look forward to continuing to work together as the design advances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexa Dobson", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Alexa Dobson
Executive Director, Bike Anchorage