

**Agency: Department of Transportation/Public Facilities**

**Project Title:**

# Sawmill Creek Road Upgrade Phase III with Separated Pedestrian Path - Whale Park to Sawmill Creek

**State Funding Requested: \$ 10,800,000**  
One-Time Need

**House District: 2 - A**

**Brief Project Description:**

Sawmill Creek Road improvements to include widening, upgrade and paving from Whale Park to Sawmill Creek Industrial Park. Project also includes improved pedestrian safety and accommodation via a separated multi-use path.

**Funding Plan:**

**Total Cost of Project: \$25,118,000**

	<u>Funding Secured</u>		<u>Other Pending Requests</u>		<u>Anticipated Future Need</u>	
	<i>Amount</i>	<i>FY</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>FY</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>FY</i>
Federal Funds	\$13,030,000	06-08				
State Funds	\$1,288,000	06-08				
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,318,000</b>					

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

Sawmill Creek Road improvements to include widening, upgrade and paving from Whale Park to Sawmill Creek Industrial Park. Project also includes improved pedestrian safety and accommodation via a separated multi-use path.

DOT&PF is committed to designing and constructing pavements with a long life and has made significant changes in our procedures and design philosophy to achieve this goal. Designing and constructing paved roads in Southeast Alaska is an engineering challenge. This is due primarily to the cool, moist environment, the multiple freeze-thaw cycles that occur throughout the typical winter, and the high percentage of studded tire use. Water, freeze-thaw action and studded tire use are a pavement's worst enemies. In the past the department has experienced shortened pavement life due to the use of relatively thin (2") pavement sections. Thin pavements have a limited fatigue life and studded tires erode the pavement surface resulting in rutting. The rutting reduces pavement thickness which ultimately leads to potholes. Over the past 10 years, the department has instituted several actions to increase and improve pavement life. We are now designing thicker pavement sections to improve fatigue life and are now using constituents within the surface pavement mix to resist studded tire wear. These include the use of hard aggregates, or asphalt rubber as well as incorporating modified asphalt cements to improve pavement response to traffic loading and resist thermal cracking. We have also implemented a "stabilized base" policy where underlying crushed aggregate bases will be locked up and strengthened with either an asphalt emulsion or foamed asphalt. All new projects have this additional strength feature incorporated to over come thaw weakening and to supplement the pavement performance. We are employing geosynthetic fabrics in our design to give more strength and drainage to the structural section.

**Project Timeline:**

FY09

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

City of Sitka or Designee

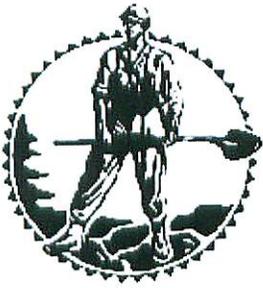
**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Contact Name: Andy Hughes, Planning Chief, SE Reg  
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Address: 6860 Glacier Hgwy, Juneau, AK 99811  
Email: andy.hughes@alaska.gov

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority?  Yes  No

*For use by Co-chair Staff Only:*

5:24 PM 4/29/2008



# Sitka Trail Works, Inc

801 Halibut Point Road, Sitka AK 99835  
Phone: 747- 7244 email: [trail@gci.net](mailto:trail@gci.net)  
Deborah A. Lyons, Executive Director

RECEIVED  
MAR 17 2008

Senator Bert Stedman  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-6442

March 17, 2008

Re: Sawmill Creek Road Phase III

Dear Senator Stedman,

Happy St. Patrick's Day! May the luck of the Irish be with you and your staff in all your work on behalf of the citizens of Alaska.

On March 7, 2008, Joe Castro, Public Works Director, CBS, Lynne McGowan, Parks/Rec Director, CBS, and Barth Hamberg, landscape architect with the USFS (acting as a private citizen and member of STW) met with AKDOT engineers Jim Heumann and Fred Thorsteinson to discuss proposed pedestrian accommodation in the design of the SMC Road Phase III project, from the Whale Park to Sawmill Creek. They met at the project site and walked/drove through the entire project.

The discussion with DOT during their visit was as follows:

- All of the parties from Sitka feel the current AKDOT design does not provide an adequate pedestrian walkway. The current DOT design is a 4' wide road shoulder, which is suitable for bicycles but does not accommodate pedestrians, users of the trail system, dog walkers and children. The Sawmill Creek Road Phase I and II both include a separated multi-use path that is heavily used; it is natural and appropriate to extend that design standard or a modification of it to this phase of the project. DOT's earlier design for pedestrian accommodation on the road shoulder on Halibut Point Road has been a failure. Pedestrians simply don't feel safe walking on a road shoulder when large trucks are present. They certainly suffer from the wind and rain drafts caused by the semi's. Hearing DOT revert to their stance that a four foot shoulder is adequate is very disappointing.
- All of the participants from Sitka recognize that installing a full 10' wide separated multi-use path on Phase III could be expensive due to terrain difficulties in a few locations. We believe an affordable design compromise would be to install a 6' asphalt sidewalk on the ocean side of the road, outside of the guardrail. In this way, the guardrail would provide a physical separation while requiring little additional space. In some locations the sidewalk could be lower in elevation than the road, saving embankment cost. The sidewalk would be signed for pedestrians only and bicycles would use the road shoulder "bike lane".
- In a few locations, we believe the road could be routed into the slope to avoid fills into the ocean without requiring undue excavation.

*Sitka Trail Works Mission Statement: To contribute to the overall health of the community through the development, maintenance and promotion of a comprehensive trail system in the Sitka area.*

- We reviewed one a location where our proposed design concept was implemented on Sawmill Creek Phase II and it works very well.
- We reviewed the Sitka Trail Plan and discussed the Sawmill Cove Loop Trail System that is nearing completion. It uses the Phase III area of SMC RD as a major leg of the loop system. The quality of the entire system will be seriously compromised if the minimal pedestrian accommodations are not developed.
- The DOT representatives at the meeting expressed their opinion that the 4' wide road shoulder was sufficient for pedestrians on Phase III and that adding further sidewalks would be difficult due to budget considerations.

We explained that we had been told this by DOT for Phase I and II and through public concern pedestrian paths were installed and have been very successful.

- We hope that DOT will fully evaluate the cost saving potential of the design concept we have proposed. This includes reduced earthwork, eliminate curb/gutter, asphalt vs. concrete sidewalk, installing the sidewalk at a lower grade than the road to save embankment cost, and reduce fencing between the sidewalk and the ocean to an absolute minimum.

In summary: It is frustrating trying to reach the consensus point. DOT seems to land somewhere between "A 4 foot shoulder is plenty" and proposed designs for a separated pathway that are very expensive and revolve around the idea that in order to make the road way wide enough huge amounts of fill have to be placed into the tidelands. However when you walk the route it is immediately apparent that there is room for a sidewalk, and that it would not be prohibitively expensive. Yes it requires a redesign of the centerline and a bit of creative thinking. This would create the space needed for pedestrians. We recognize that they had difficulty with the separated pathway concept. Apparently SMC Phase 3 is in the STIP for design but not for the concept support by the CBS in their legislative priorities list.

Bert we'd like to invite you to walk this stretch of road next time you're in town with an hour or two to spare!

Yours Truly,

*Deborah A. Lyons*

Deborah A. Lyons  
Executive Director

## FY'09 CBS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS STATE REQUESTS

### • SAWMILL CREEK ROAD AND SEWER UPGRADE PROJECT PHASE 3

The completion of Sawmill Creek Road, Phase 3, to Sawmill Cove Industrial Park, is key to full utilization of the Industrial Park and Sitka's highest priority road project for almost two decades. Phase 3, Whale Park to SMC Park, was deleted from the STIP and needs to be added back and fully funded as DOT/PF SE Region has committed. This State-owned road segment is the only road access to Sawmill Cove Industrial Park, electric generation facilities at Blue Lake and Green Lake, and Medvejie Fish Hatchery. It has seriously deteriorated; uses have dramatically increased; and major safety problems exist.

Sawmill Cove Industrial Park is fully operational with True Alaska Bottling, Silver Bay Seafoods, Theobroma Chocolate Company, Baranof Frozen Foods, and a large new tenant, Silver Bay Seafoods, which processed 21 million pounds of fish in 2007. SCIP had over 150 seasonal employees processing fish in 2007. Also in 2007, the Fortress of the Bear acquired two bear cubs, which will draw larger numbers of visitors. The new NSRAA Fish Hatchery is under construction and will have a fulltime presence this spring. These uses are greatly increasing the daily use of Sawmill Creek Road including heavy container vans.

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are a high public priority, and Phases 1 and 2 of the SMC upgrade have greatly improved non-motorized access. These non-motorized facilities need to be continued in Phase 3 from Whale Park to Sawmill Cove Industrial Park (SMCIP). A bike lane and pedestrian sidewalk will dramatically improve unsafe conditions along this 1.7 mile section of road. The Phase 3 design and construction should re-align the road centerline to take advantage of existing shoulder widths and reduce costs for an added sidewalk not considered in DOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Alternatives Report, January 2007. Re-aligning the centerline will eliminate costs for excavation or fill or a sidewalk-only alternative.

The 2003 Sitka Trail Plan identifies the entire length of SMC Road as an important transportation link and ranks safer non-motorized facilities along this road as a number one community-wide priority. Improving non-motorized transportation is a goal in the 2007 Sitka Comprehensive Plan and the 2002 Sitka Non-motorized Transportation Plan. Sitka invited Preston Tyree, a nationally recognized bike safety expert from the League of American Bicyclists, to Sitka in September, 2007. He recommended a shared bike lane for Phase 3 with a five-foot sidewalk to accommodate pedestrians. This project is part of Sitka's 2008 effort to become the first Alaskan city to be designated "Bike Friendly".

This section of Sawmill Creek Road is increasingly used by non-motorized traffic all year, with additional traffic from commercial bike tour operators and self-guided tours during the summer. Thimbleberry-Heart Lake Trail, a multiuse trail, is now complete, adding more foot and bike traffic to this stretch of road. With this trail, a looped route including Sawmill Creek Road is now being used. Conditions will continue to become more unsafe as non-motorized use simultaneously increases with the container, truck and industrial traffic from SCIP.

Sitka is evaluating burying its 69kV transmission mainline five feet deep in the roadbed, at a cost \$4.4M, and extending the city's sewer line in conjunction with Phase 3 of the project to eliminate the need for a sewage plant at SCIP and its NPDES permit. These municipal projects would further increase the benefits of completing Phase 3 construction in a timely manner.

**Sitka appreciates Department of Transportation and Public Facilities completion of Phase 1 and 2 of Sawmill Creek Road Upgrade, including replacement of Indian River Bridge. It is now imperative to move forward with the completion of Phase 3 before the road fails.**



## Sitka Sawmill Creek Road Upgrade

April 2, 2008

The Sawmill Creek Road - Phase III project completes the reconstruction of Sawmill Creek Road between Indian River Road and the Sawmill Creek Bridge. The previous Sawmill Creek Road Phase I and Phase II projects reconstructed the roadway and pedestrian routes from Indian River Road to Whale Park. Phase III addresses deficiencies along the remaining 1.8 mile long segment of road extending from Whale Park to the Sawmill Creek bridge.

### **What are the existing deficiencies?**

The existing deficiencies include:

- Pavement is in extremely poor condition, is deteriorating rapidly, and maintenance costs are high.
- The existing pavement width is 28 feet with minimal shoulders and is subject to rockfalls and slides.
- The posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour, but there are five signs advising speed reductions (for curves) to 30 miles per hour. Minor roadway realignments would be evaluated as part of the design process.
- Ongoing development of the Sawmill Cove Industrial Park has prompted the City and Borough of Sitka to request that DOT&PF add bicycle and pedestrian improvements to this segment of roadway based on anticipated increases in traffic resulting from industrial park development.

### **What are the proposed improvements?**

Design of the Phase III project would focus on the following:

1. Strengthen the road foundation for the new paved surface,
2. Widen the roadway pavement to provide two 11 foot wide vehicle lanes with 4 foot wide shoulders on both sides,
3. Limited excavation on the uphill side of the roadway to increase the width available for the roadway, including the addition of a paved path,
4. Place fill outside of the existing embankment on the water side of the roadway,
5. Add a paved path on the water side extending from Whale Park to the Sawmill Cove Industrial Park,
6. Make minor improvements to the alignment,
7. Replace guardrail as needed on the water side,
8. Improve roadside drainage opposite the Industrial Park, and
9. Repair existing scour damage to the center pier of the Sawmill Creek Bridge (Bridge No. 0432).

## Sitka Sawmill Creek Road Upgrade

April 2, 2008

### **What is the project status?**

- Survey data has been collected and processed. Design of a previously recommended typical section consisting of two 11 foot wide vehicle lanes with 4 foot wide shoulders on both sides is 50% complete.
- Excavation on the uphill side of the roadway requires highly technical engineering. This approach is necessary to ensure that the exposed rock slope is stable and does not create safety or maintenance problems.
- Placing fill below the high tide line requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has yet to be obtained. Fill limits need to be calculated first, along with an assessment of impacts associated with fill placement.
- Based on the City and Borough's request to add the paved path on the water side, the project's environmental document, right-of-way needs and utility requirements will need to be re-evaluated.
- There is an existing utility installation that follows the roadway corridor, and more are anticipated. The presence of utilities complicates the process of locating the alignment for the widened roadway and paved path.
- The most expeditious way to reach construction is to fund this project entirely with state funds. If the project is funded with a combination of state and federal dollars, then federal requirements will need to be satisfied and project development will take longer.
- A concerted effort is needed to prepare the proposed upgrade for construction. Once design is fully funded, the Phase III project is expected to be ready to advertise for the 2010 construction season.

### **What are the funding requirements?**

The anticipated cost for construction of the proposed Sawmill Creek Road - Phase III improvements is \$12 million.



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