

Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development

Grants to Municipalities (AS 37.05.315)

Grant Recipient: Wrangell

Federal Tax ID: 92-6000144

Project Title:

Project Type: New Construction and Land Acquisition

Wrangell - Eastern Channel Emergency Access Route

State Funding Requested: \$500,000

House District: 1 / A

One-Time Need

Brief Project Description:

Planning and design for an alternative emergency access route connecting residents on the south end of the island to the town of Wrangell and its services.

Funding Plan:

Total Project Cost:	\$500,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2025 State Funding Request:	(\$500,000)
Project Deficit:	\$0

Funding Details:
 No funds have been allocated to work on this project to date.

Detailed Project Description and Justification:

Changing weather conditions have brought more storms and other natural hazard events to Wrangell, and the Borough has a critical need to develop the East Channel Emergency Access Route on the northeast side of Wrangell Island. This public safety project includes improvements to two sections of existing road corridors and construction of an approximate 1/4 - 1/2 mile of new road section to connect the two existing roads. The complete road system will provide a second access to Wrangell downtown for emergency response, medical services and other services when Zimovia Highway is impacted by certain events which block resident access.

Currently, Wrangell has only one vehicular route, Zimovia Hwy, linking all residents from 1-Mile to 13-Mile Zimovia Hwy to downtown services. Boat access is the only other means of access to town in the event of an emergency.

The existing roads were originally constructed for state and federal timber harvests. Forest Road 50055 heads north from Pats Creek Road 6259 through the SE State Forest. The USFS has an easement for a short portion of this road. The Borough is currently working with ADNR to acquire an easement along the section of existing roadway on State lands.

The Spur Road Extension heads south from town through recent CBW entitlement land. There is a 1/4 to 1/2 mile section that needs to be constructed to connect the two existing corridors. A portion of the State Forest road on the south side of the unconnected area is decommissioned and water barred. The existing road to the north has drainage issues, alder growth, and two bridges requiring condition assessments, but are currently drivable by all-terrain vehicles.

The estimated capital cost for the total planning, design, and construction project is unknown but could be close to \$5,000,000. This value includes acquisition or easements, assessments and analysis, environmental and permitting,

\$200,000
 Approved

right-of-way survey, design, construction, construction administration, plating, and construction. This Designated Legislature request seeks funds to accomplish the planning and design only, estimated to cost approximately 10% of the capital cost, or \$500,000.

The need addresses the planning, permitting and engineering design of the public safety project. To advance the engineering design phase, the first step is to complete an assessment and analysis to fill data gaps that could impact the route alignment, environmental permitting, design, and opinion of probable capital cost.

An assessment and analysis should include fish surveys, stream surveys, cultural and historic resources studies, land ownership and road easement research, preliminary geotechnical investigations, culverts and drainage, condition assessment of two bridges, and identification of the footprint of all temporary and permanent construction associated with the project. Engineering design would follow the assessment and analysis and advance the project to near-construction ready.

The project is submitted to address a public safety issue. The community needs a second vehicular access route. As seen with the November 20, 2023 landslide at 11-mile Zimovia Highway and as well with the November 2021 wind storm that blew down trees and the electrical distribution system and had residents trapped with no power for two days, and should other similar events or earthquake, fire, tsunami or other hazard that block Zimovia Highway, residents beyond the block will have no access to medical or support services.

Zimovia Highway is a very scenic road, much of it running along the shoreline, but it traverses through several potentially hazardous steep sloped areas where there have been significant landslides and rockslides in the recent past. The State of Alaska has a project to pin rocks along the 6--8-mile section of Zimovia Highway where rocks the sizes of large SUVs have fallen into the highway driving lanes and slide continue to occur weekly.

These local events, more recently coupled with the November 20, 2023 landslide at 11 mile Zimovia Highway that claimed the lives of 6 Wrangell residents, and landslides in other southeast communities from impacts climate change, have driven this project to a local higher priority. Residents and visitors beyond the block are stranded until the rocks and debris can be removed.

This completed alternative access road will provide multiple long-term benefits, the primary one being an alternative safety emergency/evacuation route for the residents of Wrangell. A positive secondary impact is that the road connections create a loop for expanded tourism opportunities and recreation. The connection will benefit the US Forest Service North Country Trailhead located along a portion of this northern route that is used by residents, independent travelers, and tour operators, the US Forest Service newly acquired Pats Lake Recreation Area along the southern route, a growing biking segment, and will improve access for subsistence needs.

The project will provide planning and design for the new road connection link and upgrades to the existing roads with work beginning as soon as funding is available.

Project Timeline:

The project will provide design and construction of the new road connection link and road upgrades to the existing roads with engineering design beginning as soon as funding is available. Construction would begin upon completion of design.

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

City and Borough of Wrangell - Public Works Department

Grant Recipient Contact Information:

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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:

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Map of Pats Road – Spur Road needed connection

