

Highway2Highway Project, Boniface & East City Alternatives

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The Federal Highway Administration, The Federal Transit Administration and the Alaska department of Transportation and Public Facilities are leading the Seward Highway to Glenn Highway Connection project, also called the Highway-to-Highway or H2H project in Anchorage.

The goal is to improve mobility and access for people and goods in the roads that connect these two highways. They are coordinating this project with the Municipality of Anchorage and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

This project is viewed as essential to solving traffic congestion in Anchorage. The process of route selection will be documented in the Environmental Impact Statement.

This comment is about just two alternative routes that have been proposed for further study, the Boniface alternative and the East City alternative. This comment also discusses modifications to these two alternatives to reduce the adverse impact and improve the value of these alternatives.

Serious drawbacks in both the Boniface & East City alternatives as proposed

As currently sketched both alternatives pose serious problems after they turn west and attempt to connect to International Airport Road.

The proposed interchange at New Seward and International to meet the H2H goal is only a half-mile south of the Tudor interchange and a half-mile north of the Dowling interchange. This tighter spacing has been the excuse given for many years as the reason that this interchange has not been proposed for inclusion in the upgrade of the New Seward highway.

Only an interconnection under the Seward highway between the two frontage roads was included in the Seward Highway upgrade with a single off ramp on

the northbound lane to access International. Drivers on International who wanted to head north on the New Seward were expected to take the frontage road across the Tudor interchange and enter with the traffic from Tudor.

I find it curious that this reason has suddenly been ignored when full east-west transit for traffic is discussed.

Does increasing the on/off ramp density suddenly make the former excuse obsolete?



Tudor Elementary School. In the western portion of almost any project alignment starting from International Airport Road and the New Seward.



Large apartment house, Church and School adjacent to Lake Otis between 52nd and 53rd.



52nd & Lauren Creek. High-density condos east of Lake Otis in the south edge of the project.



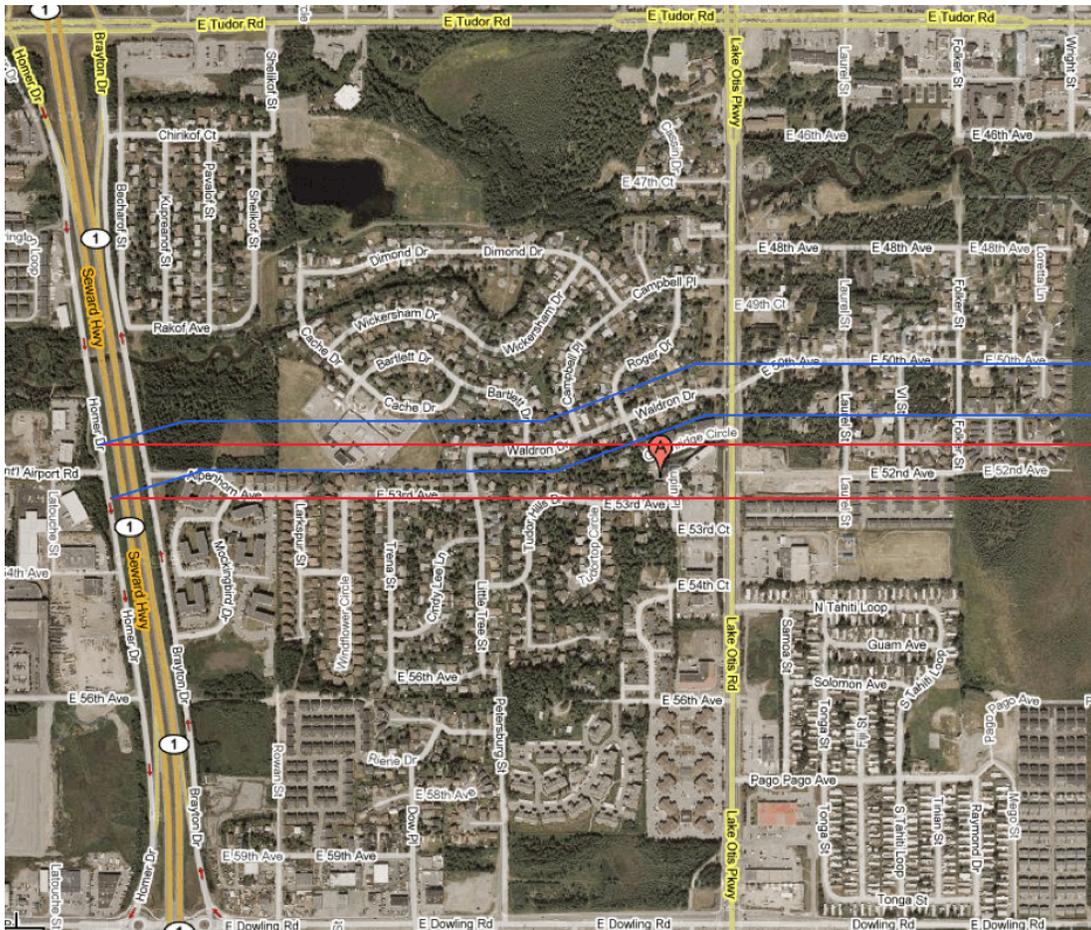
Tudortop Circle. Homes just south of 53rd.

The neighborhood has a wide range of housing from inexpensive apartments, through high-density zeros and duplexes to high quality single-family homes.

The exact position of this new highway has not been identified except as a general straight line sketched east from International Airport Road. In fact unless a

mile long deep tunnel is constructed, any such alignment would have to snake through the Campbell Creek Greenbelt or it would destroy the homes of over 200 people. A fairly straight alignment would remove over 50 million dollars of valuation from the tax rolls.

On the first Google satellite map below, I have shown two possible alignments of a 6 to 8 lane freeway with frontage roads though this neighborhood. Each of these alignments destroys over 100 buildings with the straight alignment destroying more and including large apartment buildings.



These are two of the possible alignments of a freeway connecting under or over the New Seward Highway to International Airport Road. Both the Boniface or East Anchorage alternatives would use this route. The red lines mark the path of the straight alignment and the blue lines show the path of the Waldron alignment.

This map suggests that this first segment would be less destructive if it were to be bent to the north and across primarily the Tudor Elementary School. Unfortunately this places it directly in line with Waldron Drive on the next segment and would still require destroying about 68 single-family dwellings on both sides to even reach Lake Otis and then about 30 more to reach open land to the east.

As can be seen both alignments are quite destructive of homes and larger buildings. Based on approximate number dwellings destroyed and the number of people displaced the Waldron alignment is slightly less destructive.

Based on the fact that both alignments plow right through the middle of a well-established and attractive neighborhood, either will drastically alter the value and character of the neighborhood.

The pictures only show a small subset of the many homes that would be destroyed by either alignment.

A possible Waldron alignment?

The Waldron alignment obliterates the Tudor Elementary School. The straight through alignment also affects so much of the school that the remnant would be unusable.

After bypassing the first group of houses along Alpenhorn and 53rd it destroys both sides of Waldron to Lake Otis and then all the area between 50th and 51st avenue. After a path of neighborhood destruction over a mile long, it exits into open land to the east.



**From west end of Waldron.
Demolished under either alignment.**



**East Waldron from west.
Fully demolished under the Waldron alignment.**



**Sundance Circle. South of 50th.
Easternmost of homes destroyed by Waldron alignment.**



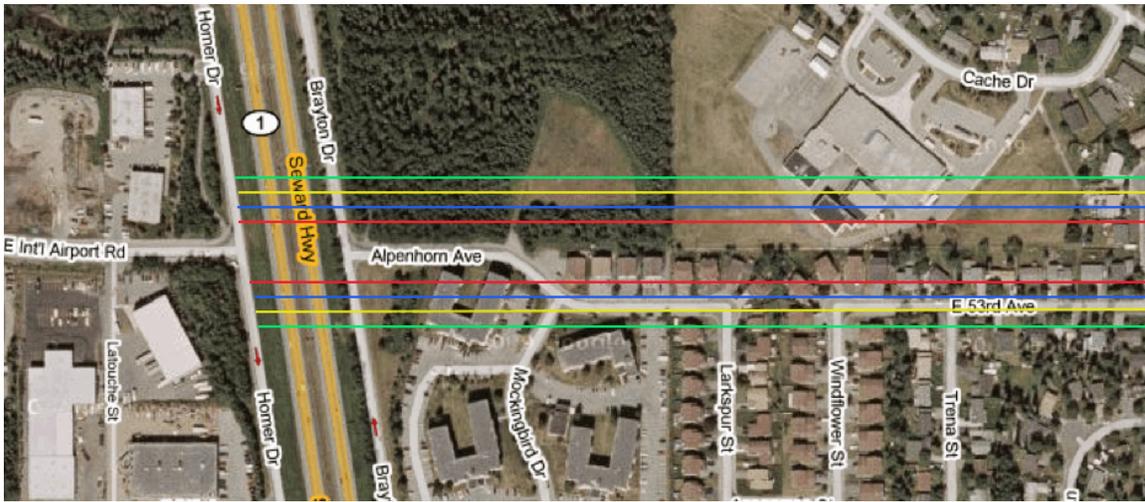
**Part of west half of Waldron from east.
Fully demolished under the Waldron alignment.
Partially under the straight alignment.**



**East end of Waldron at Lake Otis.
With Waldron With either alignment the leftmost apartments
in the background could be spared.**

A possible straight alignment?

Looking at the straight alignment in somewhat greater detail, I have shown the effect of increasing freeway widths (4 lanes no frontage, 8 lanes no frontage, 4 lanes with frontage roads, 8 lanes with frontage roads) assuming a road with no curves or twists un the three maps below.



The first 2200 feet from International Airport Road of either the Boniface or East Anchorage alternatives assuming a straight alignment. The first building hit by this segment is one of the Alpine Apartment buildings followed by a series of Duplexes/Zeros, the Tudor Elementary School and a series of single-family homes.



Alpine Apartments. The first building on the alignment's path east from the Seward Highway.



Backs of Houses to be demolished on 53rd under the straight alignment.



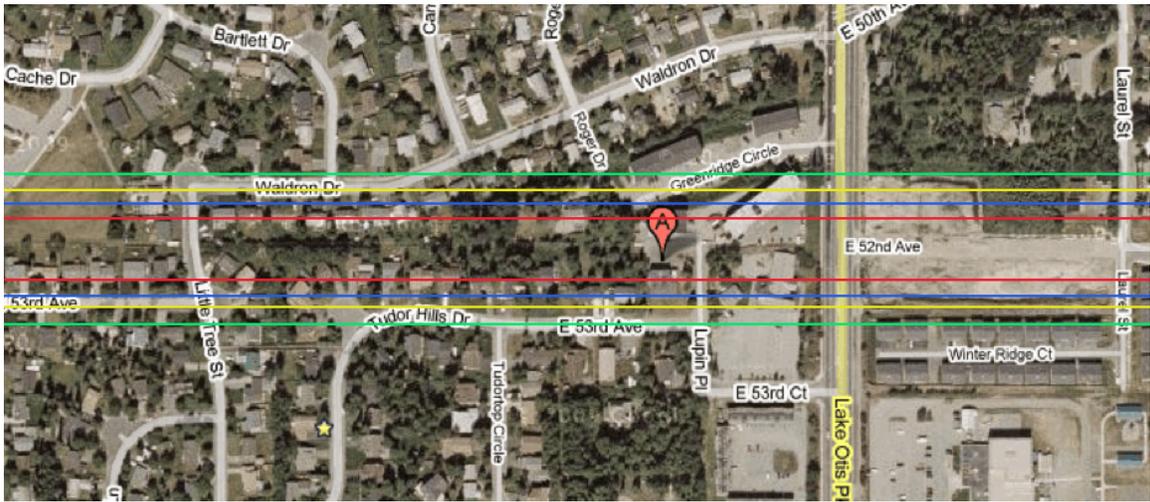
Alphenhorn. Condos/Zeros near Seward highway.



Houses to be demolished on 53rd under the straight alignment.



The start of 53rd looking east in path of straight alignment.



The next 2700-foot segment east from the New Seward Highway. This segment of the direct alignment tramples on another 3 dozen single family homes, a 4-plex, a 6-plex, a 21-plex, a church, a school, and another 3 dozen homes to the east of Lake Otis.

Even though the jog north to align with Waldron would be very destructive the straight alignment requires the removal even more homes.



Little Tree & 53rd to be demolished for a straight alignment. Trees are no longer little and conceal most of the houses.



Looking North on Tudor Hills at homes to be destroyed on 53rd.



Homes on Tudor Hills just south of the swath of the straight alignment.



Looking west toward Tudor Hills. Homes to be demolished along north side of 53rd.

It also involves removing or tunneling through what is probably the biggest hill in Midtown with apartment buildings housing many people.



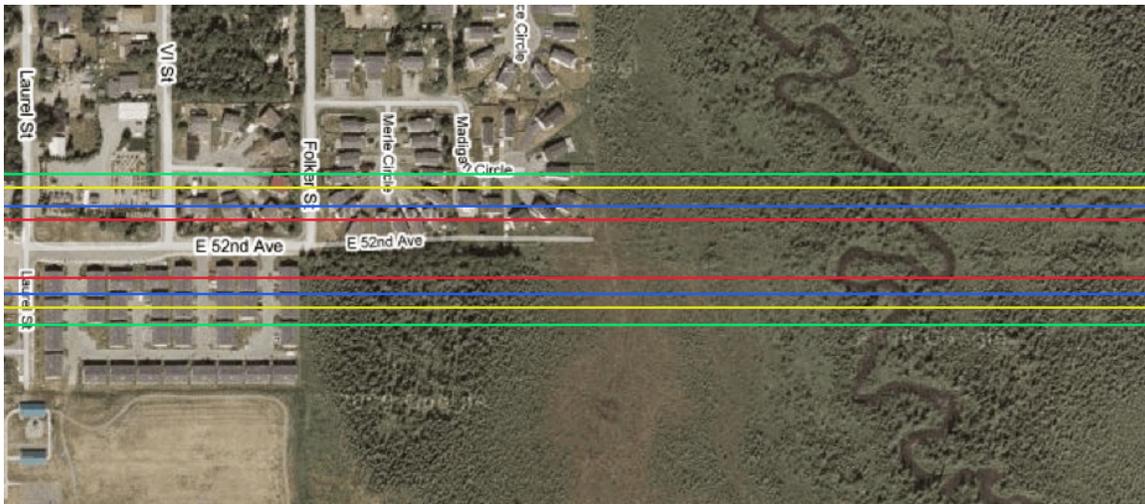
53rd and Lupin. House and 4-plex to be destroyed by a straight alignment.



New subdivision street for high density housing entering Lake Otis from east just north of 53rd. The straight alignment would obliterate this new project.



Top to hill. 6-plex and large apartment house to be destroyed by a straight alignment.



The final 1400-foot of destruction before reaching swampland.



Winter Ridge. Just east of Lake Otis. At South edge of straight alignment.



Lauren Creek Loop, Sleepy Hollow. Off 52nd east of Lake Otis. 62 modest units assessed at over \$12 million. Most of homes will be removed under the straight alignment.



Fatemeh Circle. Off Vi east of Lake Otis. Most homes will be removed under the straight alignment.



Madigan Circle off 51st. At least 7 houses worth a total of over \$2 million would be removed with a straight alignment.



Merle Circle(W). Off 51st east of Lake Otis. At least 12 homes would be removed from the tax rolls worth more than \$3.1 million if the straight alignment is used.

Unless all three of these segments were underlain with a deep tunnel, one of the nicer neighborhoods in Anchorage would be bisected and a significant number of homes and one or two schools would be destroyed.

There are far superior options.

Routing the Boniface or East City alternatives along Dowling

Connecting the Boniface or East City alternatives to the New Seward Highway via Dowling Road would be far less complicated and less destructive. It would also maintain the one-mile spacing between interchanges along the freeway. It is not a direct shot west into International Airstrip Road. The current alignment of Dowling/Potter in its approach to C Street and to Arctic ends only 900 feet south of International Airport Road. This distance is a minor problem compared to the difficulties present in the Campbell Park neighborhood alternatives. Arctic, Potter, and Dowling would have to be upgraded.



Existing connection of Dowling-Potter to International via Arctic.



Existing Dowling-Potter roads from the New Seward to C Street.



Existing Dowling Road connection to the New Seward from the east. It currently is being connected to Elmore to the East.

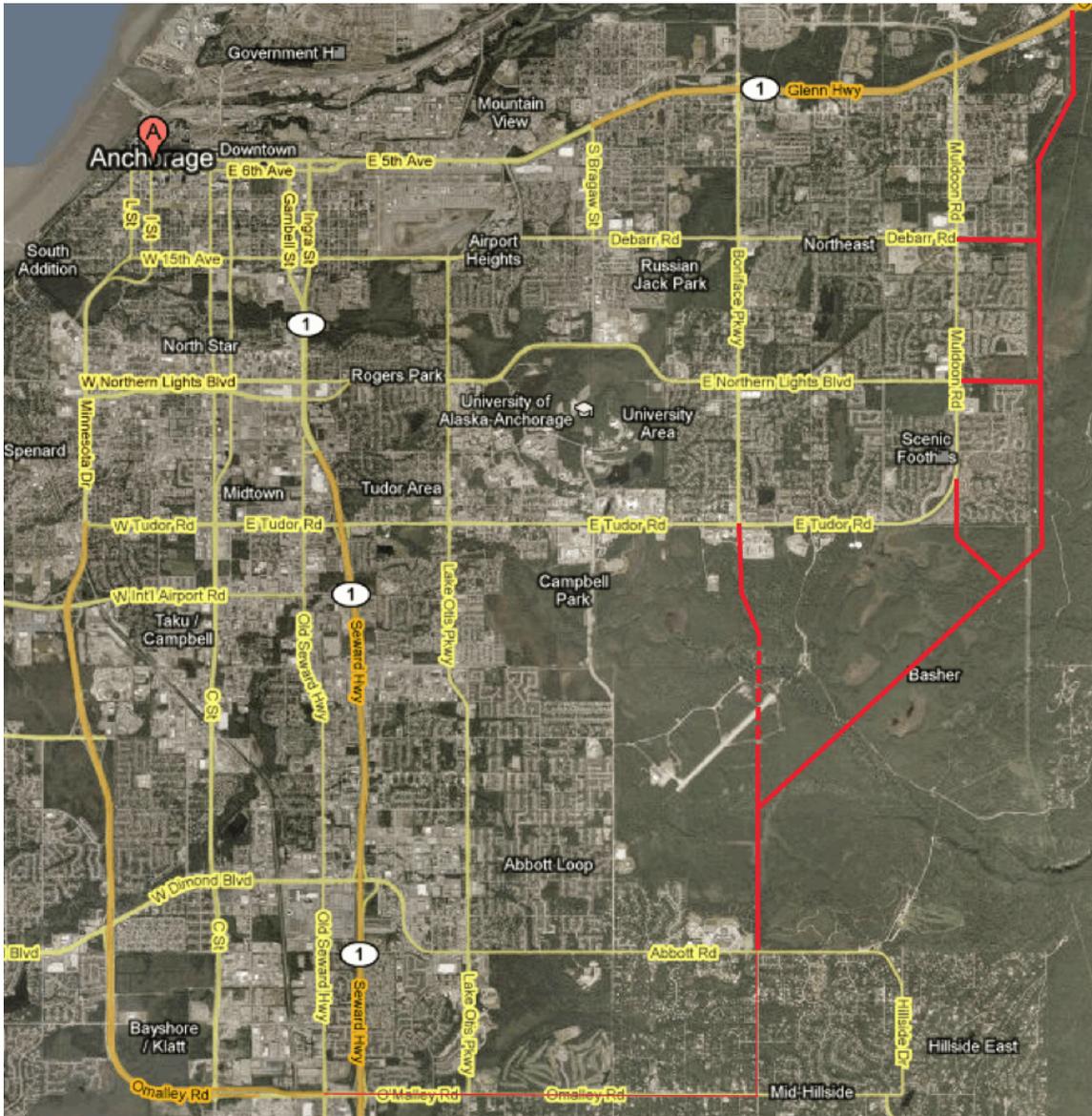
The “dog-bone” roundabout at the New Seward will be at capacity when the Elmore link to Dowling is completed. Morning rush hour traffic currently encounters delays in some directions. This suggests that further traffic may well make this small, smoothly operating roundabout a major choke point and accident site.

Although they may not be included in the current H2H project, the roads that connect the Dowling-New Seward dog-bone to the west and International Airport Road are in sorry condition and badly need upgrading.

I believe these options are significantly inferior to the advanced versions described below, and that they merit only brief consideration.

A better version of the Boniface and East City alternatives

Two better versions extend the East City and Boniface alternatives by proceeding across the park to the south. They bypass more of the city and avoid the significant destruction and congested traffic patterns of the direct International Airport road connection and the Dowling road connection.



New versions of the Boniface and East City Alternatives New alignments are shown in broad red. Existing arterial alignments are shown in narrow red. Dashed line denotes possible covered trench with original terrain/streams restored.

Since they proceed across more of the park, careful design will be needed to minimize the impact on an area in which many of us walk, bike, ski, or mush. Frontage roads will not be needed since cross streets are not intercepted except the very low volume Campbell Airstrip/Basher roads. Campbell Airstrip Road south of Tudor and part of Basher road could be returned to natural state and replaced by on/off ramps the new highway.

These new roads would be the finest parkways in the Anchorage bowl. One area in the above map shows the road in a covered trench. If the trench cover is restored to terrain like the original including (the streams) it will substantially reduce the esthetic as well as the game impacts. Several areas may benefit from this treatment. Other areas of the road may benefit from being deeply incised with 45-degree embankments to drive the road noise upward.

This project could be completed in phases since both roads intercept Abbott at Birch.



**Birch and Abbott intersection looking north.
Either of the alternatives closing the full Bicentennial Park
could connect to existing alignments at this point.**

Thus two existing arterials are available; the Abbot-Diamond arterial and the Birch-O'Malley arterials to carry traffic to the New Seward (and many other locations in South Anchorage).

A follow-on phase would be to upgrade the Birch-O'Malley roads through Old Seward to limited access status.

O'Malley is a very desirable target because it is already a limited access road west of Old Seward. It carries traffic at high speed to International Airport Road and Minnesota.

These two improved alternatives reach Abbot a mile east of Elmore and would provide the easternmost north-south link in the city. They subtract at least two miles from every trip upper hillside resident makes going north on the Glenn highway, 3 miles of high-speed freeway per each trip.

All opinions in this short paper are those of Dr. Anderson, resident of the Campbell Park neighborhood, a 35 year Anchorage resident, a physical chemist, and an Anchorage businessman for over 30 years. He is a frequent user of Bicentennial Park.