

**Mayor**  
Alice Ruby

**City Manager**  
Jack Savo Jr.



**Dillingham City Council**  
Triston Chaney  
Jean Barrett  
Steven Carriere  
Curt Armstrong  
Kaleb Westfall  
Kevin McCambly

## MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

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**To:** Mayor and City Council Members  
**From:** Christopher Maines, Planning Director  
**Through:** Jack Savo Jr., City Manager  
**Date:** April 20, 2026  
**Re:** May 2026 Report

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### Planning Commission

The Planning Commission held its regular meeting on April 15, 2026. The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) list was updated to reflect current need and condition levels for each of the 31 submitted projects. Commissioners scored each project independently, and those scores were compiled and weighed against the criteria established in the adopted 2010 Comprehensive Plan as well as projects currently being administered by the City of Dillingham.

After deliberation, a consensus was reached to bring the CIP back before the Commission at a special meeting scheduled for April 28, 2026. A one-hour workshop will be held to review the projects a final time before proceeding to a public hearing on the CIP. If passed, a resolution will be adopted and presented to the City Manager for City Council action and approval.

*The April 28 special meeting represents the final step before the CIP advances to the City Council. The Commission's thorough and independent scoring process across all 31 projects reflects the quality of deliberation the plan deserves.*

### Snag Point Erosion Control — Appropriation Status

Work on the Snag Point Erosion Control Project continues in coordination with City Manager Jack Savo Jr. FEMA is currently reviewing the City's extension request. The Planning Department has maintained bi-weekly conferences with our State of Alaska representative throughout this process.

Despite ongoing challenges within the Department of Homeland Security — including funding uncertainty, a change in leadership, and the effects of a prolonged shutdown — the City has received consistent and positive feedback regarding the anticipated extension approval. The project has maintained forward momentum throughout a period of significant federal administrative disruption.

The City was recently contacted by the Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation, whose representatives made a weeklong trip to Washington D.C. on behalf of regional priorities. The safety and integrity of the Snag Point shoreline is among the organization's top advocacy priorities, and they actively communicated the importance of protecting this area to federal stakeholders during their visit.

*Community and regional organizational support for the Snag Point project — including BBAHC's direct advocacy in Washington D.C. — strengthens the City's position with FEMA and reinforces the urgency of the extension request. The shoreline protection need at Snag Point is well documented and well supported.*

## **Dillingham 2036 Comprehensive Plan**

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The public review process for the draft 2036 Comprehensive Plan was conducted through the City's official webpage and the City of Dillingham Facebook page. The public commenting period closed on March 31, 2026, and the City received a meaningful volume of feedback through the online comment portal, written submissions, and the public survey. The overall response was predominantly positive.

The draft plan was presented at the April 15, 2026 Planning Commission meeting, at which the Commission provided additional guidance to the project's consultant, Agnew::Beck. A public hearing on the plan was held at that meeting. The proposed date of formal adoption is the special meeting scheduled for April 28, 2026. Upon adoption by the Planning Commission, the Comprehensive Plan will be forwarded to the City Council for review and final adoption.

Alaska Statute Title 29, Chapter 40 mandates that first- and second-class boroughs and first-class cities adopt a comprehensive plan for systematic development. This plan — developed by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Council — must outline goals and recommendations for land use, transportation, and community facilities to guide economic and social growth. The 2036 Comprehensive Plan fulfills this statutory obligation while positioning Dillingham for the next decade of infrastructure investment and community development.

*The April 28 special meeting will also serve as the adoption hearing for the 2036 Comprehensive Plan. Adoption of both the Comprehensive Plan and the CIP at the same meeting would represent a significant milestone for the Planning Department and for the City's long-range planning program.*

## **Alaska Infrastructure Symposium 2026**

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From April 8–9, 2026, I attended the Alaska Impact Days 2026 Symposium and co-located Federal Grant Symposium at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage. Hosted by the Alaska Municipal League (AML), the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), and partner agencies, the two-day event brought together state and federal agency representatives, regional development organizations, engineering firms, tribal entities, and municipal officials to align strategies around infrastructure investment, grant funding, workforce capacity, and community resilience across Alaska.

While the broader discussion acknowledged genuine uncertainty — particularly around evolving federal priorities and the trajectory of IJIA implementation — I came away with confidence that substantial funding opportunities remain available for communities that are positioned with well-developed plans and documented project needs. The consistent message from program administrators and practitioners was that planning-grade documentation is the essential gateway to construction-level funding. Communities that have invested in planning are positioned to capture capital dollars when they become available.

This report summarizes the key topics covered across sessions attended, principal takeaways, and recommended next steps for Dillingham's grant strategy and capital project pipeline — with particular attention to the Airport Waterline Extension Project, emerging opportunities in port, harbor, and shoreline protection funding, and our broader infrastructure outlook.

## Event Overview

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Alaska Impact Days 2026 was structured around two complementary days. April 8, themed Shared Work, focused on infrastructure delivery systems, energy planning, workforce capacity, community engagement, and risk coordination across both general sessions and concurrent topical tracks. April 9, themed Shared Resources, centered on the Federal Grant Symposium with morning and afternoon panels featuring federal and state agency program updates, grant pathway workshops, and applied sessions on nature-based solutions.

The Infrastructure Vendor Show ran concurrently in the foyer across both days, providing direct access to program staff and vendors from ANTHC/DEHE, the Alaska Energy Authority, DCRA, DOT&PF, DEC, and other agencies central to rural infrastructure delivery in Alaska.

## Topics Covered

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The following highlights the principal topics addressed across the sessions I attended. These were not isolated discussions — each reinforced consistent themes about coordination, sequencing, and positioning communities to compete for available funding.

### **Infrastructure Investment & Housing Utility Funding** April 8, Morning

ANTHC/DEHE engineers Cody Uhlig and Kalen Stamp presented an overview of active programs for water and sanitation infrastructure across rural Alaska. Significant attention was given to how various housing types — including tribal, municipal, and mixed-ownership — interact with different funding eligibility structures. Programs discussed included the Village Safe Water and Sanitation program, EPA's Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, USDA Rural Development, and HUD CDBG-DR for contamination-related projects. The clear message was that water projects with a documented public health nexus — particularly PFAS contamination — carry elevated weight in current funding cycles.

### **Risk & Critical Infrastructure Coordination** April 8, Morning

This session addressed how communities can reduce liability exposure and build resilience into infrastructure planning. Bethany Follett of the Alaska Emergency Management Association and Jonathan Nichols from DHS&EM presented on coordination frameworks between municipal and state emergency management systems. Key themes included the importance of maintaining current hazard mitigation plans as a prerequisite for certain federal funding streams, and the role of inter-agency coordination agreements in accelerating disaster response and recovery funding.

### **Emergency Preparedness, Community Health & Climate** April 8, Afternoon

ANTHC/DEHE's emergency preparedness, contaminated sites, and climate initiatives programs were each presented in turn. The Contaminated Sites/Brownfields program merits direct attention for Dillingham given its potential application to PFAS-affected infrastructure corridors. The Climate Initiatives team presented on adaptation project funding, with a focus on communities facing compound risks — infrastructure deterioration, environmental hazard

exposure, and limited local fiscal capacity. Jacqueline Schaeffer and Falcon Chase outlined several active grant pathways that align with coastal and shoreline infrastructure challenges.

### **From Priorities to Buildable Projects** April 8, Afternoon

This was among the most directly useful sessions of the symposium. Moderated by AML's Melody Nibeck, panelists from Cold Climate Engineering, Kuna Engineering, and RESPEC walked through how communities successfully move projects from a prioritized list to funded, shovel-ready status. The consistent finding was that communities attempting to apply directly for construction grants without planning-grade documentation routinely face rejection or significant delays. Planning grants and pre-engineering documents establish cost estimates, demonstrate community commitment, satisfy environmental review prerequisites, and serve as the technical foundation for capital applications. This session affirmed the sequencing approach Dillingham is already pursuing.

### **Utility Sustainability & Rural Energy Planning** April 8, Afternoon

ANTHC/DEHE's Dustin Madden and DEC's utility business advisor Lynn Kenealy presented on integrating energy planning into water utility sustainability. A recurring theme was that utility rate studies and reserve account planning — while unglamorous — are increasingly required components of water system grant applications. Communities that can demonstrate rate sustainability and financial management capacity are more competitive. The session also highlighted AEA rural energy programs that can be layered with water infrastructure projects to reduce long-term operational costs.

### **Federal Agency Program Updates — MARAD & DOE Office of Indian Energy** April 9, Morning

Peter Simons from MARAD presented updates on the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP), the US Marine Highway Program, and the Small Shipyard Grant Program. PIDP in particular remains one of the most significant federal programs for communities with working waterfront infrastructure needs, and Simons indicated that rural and remote ports with documented economic and safety needs have been competitive in recent rounds. Sandy Pagan from the DOE Office of Indian Energy outlined tribal energy navigator resources and programs supporting energy infrastructure development and resilience.

### **Grant Investment Pathway Workshops — From Opportunity to Award & From Award to Impact** April 9, Morning & Afternoon

AML's Rachel Morse and Mary Hoffman facilitated two hands-on workshops covering the complete grant lifecycle. The morning session addressed opportunity identification, NOFA tracking, relationship-building with program officers, and application strategy. The afternoon session shifted to post-award management — expenditure documentation, audit readiness, reporting obligations, and maintaining grant relationships for future cycles. Both sessions emphasized that administrative capacity is as important as technical project quality in sustaining a competitive grant program. Program officers at multiple agencies noted that communities with a track record of clean grant administration receive stronger consideration in subsequent rounds.

### **State Agency Program Updates — DNR, DEC, DOT&PF, AEA** April 9, Afternoon

Multiple state agencies provided program updates. The DEC Brownfields program is actively funding contaminated site assessment and cleanup and is relevant to PFAS-affected infrastructure. DOT&PF's Sarah Cripe presented transportation planning updates tied to the Long-Range Transportation Plan 2055 engagement process. AEA's Curtis Thayer outlined active rural energy programs, including those that can be combined with infrastructure capital projects. DNR's Erik Oppegard introduced the ACORN project, which has implications for communities managing coastal and riparian infrastructure corridors.

### **Closing Session — Senator Lisa Murkowski** April 9, Afternoon

Senator Murkowski's closing remarks reinforced federal commitment to Alaska infrastructure investment and acknowledged the importance of rural communities having strong advocates and well-documented project needs to present to program administrators. She specifically noted the continued relevance of IJA-funded programs for remote Alaska and encouraged communities to pursue available funding actively and persistently despite the current environment of uncertainty at the federal level.

## **Key Themes & Strategic Takeaways**

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### **Funding Uncertainty Is Real — But Opportunity Persists**

Across multiple sessions, speakers acknowledged a period of transition and uncertainty in federal grant administration. However, this was consistently framed as a reason for preparation, not inaction. Program administrators from MARAD, the Denali Commission, ANTHC/DEHE, and AEA each confirmed that funds remain available and that communities with documented priorities and pre-design materials are best positioned to access them. The window has not closed — competition is increasing and documentation matters more than ever.

*Dillingham enters this period with a completed Comprehensive Plan, a scored and prioritized Capital Improvement Plan, and an active infrastructure project at 35% design. The preparation is in place. The task now is to execute on the grant strategy.*

### **Planning Before Construction — The Non-Negotiable Sequence**

The clearest and most consistent strategic message of the symposium was the importance of sequencing. Planning grants, pre-engineering documents, and conceptual design work are the foundation upon which successful construction grant applications are built. They establish project eligibility, support cost estimates, satisfy environmental review requirements, and demonstrate community commitment. Attempting to bypass this sequence is the most common source of application failure among rural Alaska communities. Dillingham's approach — securing planning grants this year to advance top CIP projects toward construction-ready status — is precisely the correct strategy.

### **Port, Harbor & Shoreline Protection: A Strategic Funding Moment**

One of the clearest signals from the symposium — particularly from the MARAD session, the federal agency panel, and conversations during the Infrastructure Vendor Show — is that port, harbor, and shoreline protection infrastructure is an area of strong and sustained government funding interest. MARAD's Port Infrastructure Development Program, Army Corps of Engineers programs, and several IJA-funded streams are actively channeling capital toward working

waterfront and coastal protection projects, with a documented bias toward rural and remote communities that have documented economic, safety, and climate resilience needs.

*Dillingham's harbor, port facilities, and exposed shoreline represent not only legitimate infrastructure needs but a strong alignment with the current federal and state funding focus. The coming year presents a strategic opportunity to place meaningful emphasis on port and harbor improvements and shoreline protection as priority areas in our grant pursuit calendar. Communities that position these projects now — with planning documentation and pre-engineering in hand — will be well ahead of the competition when construction-level funding becomes available.*

This is an area where Dillingham's geographic position, its role as a regional hub for the Bristol Bay commercial fishing industry, and its exposure to coastal weather and erosion hazards all strengthen the case for prioritization. The combination of economic significance, safety need, and climate vulnerability is the profile that current funding programs are designed to serve.

## **Airport Waterline Extension Project**

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The Airport Waterline Extension Project is currently at 35% design, a meaningful milestone that positions the City well for the next phase of funding pursuit. The project addresses PFAS contamination in the existing waterline corridor and extends safe drinking water infrastructure to the airport service area. I attended the symposium specifically to identify funding opportunities that could supplement what has already been secured and to anticipate what will be needed to complete the full build and associated route upgrades.

The project's PFAS contamination nexus gives it elevated standing in current EPA drinking water program funding cycles. The DEC Brownfields program, identified at the symposium, merits direct evaluation as a supplemental funding source for contamination-related infrastructure costs. USDA Rural Development Water & Waste Disposal grants and the Denali Commission both remain viable channels for additional capital on the construction side.

The critical insight from the symposium is that proactive supplemental funding outreach now — while construction is moving forward — is the correct posture. Grant cycles typically run 12 to 24 months from application to award. Waiting until a funding gap materializes is not a viable strategy. The cost of preparing supplemental grant applications now is modest compared to the risk of a construction funding shortfall.

*Additional upgrades along the proposed waterline route — valve infrastructure, service extensions, and line replacement — will require funding beyond the current project scope. Identifying and pursuing those opportunities now is both prudent and consistent with best practices affirmed at the symposium.*

## **Recommended Next Steps**

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Based on the two-day symposium, I recommend the following actions for the Planning Department and City administration in the coming months:

### **1. Develop a 2026–2027 Grant Calendar**

Compile known NOFA release dates for priority programs and build application preparation timelines into the departmental work plan. AML's grant pathway workshop resources will serve as a foundation for this effort, supplemented by direct outreach to program officers at MARAD, USDA RD, EPA, and the Denali Commission.

## **2. Pursue Planning Grants for Top CIP Projects**

The immediate priority is securing planning and pre-engineering grants for the City's highest-priority capital projects this fiscal year. Denali Commission planning funding, AML resilience planning support, and USDA RD pre-application technical assistance are the primary targets. Planning documents produced this year will anchor construction-level applications in subsequent cycles.

## **3. Advance Port, Harbor & Shoreline Protection Planning**

Given the clear signals from the symposium regarding the strength of available funding in this area, developing planning documentation for Dillingham's port, harbor, and shoreline protection needs should be elevated as a priority. This means scoping the infrastructure needs, identifying pre-design funding, and positioning the City for PIDP and related programs in the next funding round. Our geographic profile and the regional economic significance of the harbor make this a strong candidate for federal investment.

## **4. Pursue Supplemental Funding for the Waterline Extension Project**

Proactively identify and apply for additional grant funding to address the full scope of the Airport Waterline Extension Project and associated route upgrades. DEC Brownfields, EPA DWSRF, USDA RD, and Denali Commission programs are the primary targets. Applications should be developed in parallel with ongoing construction-phase work.

## **5. Establish and Maintain Program Officer Relationships**

Follow up with contacts made at the symposium, particularly AML staff including Rachel Morse, Mary Hoffman, and Melody Nibeck, as well as Denali Commission program staff and MARAD's Peter Simons. Sustained relationships with program officers are among the most consistent predictors of grant success cited across multiple sessions.

## **6. Engage ARTIC and AML Cohort Processes**

Continue participation in AFN's ARTIC project and AML's community resilience programs. These regional coordination frameworks inform funding allocation and ensure Dillingham remains visible and connected as funding priorities are shaped at the state and federal level.

## **Conclusion**

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Alaska Impact Days 2026 was a productive and substantive two days. The symposium provided both strategic perspective on the state of infrastructure funding in Alaska and practical, actionable guidance for how municipalities can position themselves competitively. Uncertainty in the funding environment is real, but it is not a reason for inaction — it is a reason for preparation. The communities that will capture available funding over the next two to three years are the ones investing in documentation, relationships, and strategic sequencing right now.

Dillingham is well positioned. The Planning Department's work over the past year — completing the Comprehensive Plan, building out the Capital Improvement Plan, and advancing the waterline project to 35% design — has created the foundation this strategy requires. The emphasis moving forward will be on executing the grant calendar, advancing planning documents for our top projects, aggressively pursuing supplemental waterline funding, and elevating port, harbor, and shoreline protection as a priority area while the funding environment remains favorable.