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TO: Chair Bryson and Public Works and Facilities Committee

THROUGH: Katie Koester, Director of Engineering & Public Works

FROM: Bridget LaPenter, Chief GE

SUBJECT: North Crossing Update for the Public Works and Facilities Committee- North Douglas Crossing Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, North Douglas Sub Area Plan

Below is a summary of progress, recent activities, and a forward glance for each of the subject projects for your information and use.

North Douglas Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

The PEL study is a project of the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT). The goal of this study is to identify a purpose and need for a possible transportation corridor connecting mainland Juneau to the North end of Douglas Island and evaluate preliminary crossing location alternatives. The PEL study advances the first steps of future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements through field studies including wetland delineation and functional assessment, an eelgrass survey, intertidal habitat mapping, and migratory bird/upland bird habitat mapping. The fieldwork is being supported by a portion of Congressionally Directed funds.

Thus far, DOT has conducted a *Level 1 screening*, which reduced the number of possible alternative crossing locations based on purpose and need, natural environment, social, housing, economic, safety, constructability, cost, public support, and additional goals. Following this screening, DOT is organizing to undertake the above-mentioned fieldwork activities within the next 6 weeks. If funding allows, DOT will also undertake an archaeology and historical resources survey, hydraulic site characterization, and geophysical mapping during this period. It is important to note the fieldwork will inform all possible crossing locations to better understand environmental conditions and potential impacts of the alternatives being considered, including the no-build option.

The PEL study is expected to be completed by the end of January 2024, at which time the NEPA process is expected to begin.

North Douglas (ND) Sub Area Plan

As a supplement to the PEL study, the CBJ has engaged DOWL to assist in developing an ND Sub Area plan to document impacts to and inform potential development along North Douglas Highway and West Douglas Island. Following a preliminary draft report from DOWL in early 2023, the CBJ requested additional quantitative data to illustrate housing needs, geographical/topographical potential for housing development, and economic feasibility of development within the study area as compared to development on the mainland. In response to CBJ's comments, DOWL consulted with Agnew::Beck (A::B) to assist with their analysis. The Scope of A::B's work includes proforma housing analyses, proforma assumptions regarding development, and an updated housing needs assessment.

The Committee likely remembers the Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) prepared for the CBJ a housing needs assessment in 2012 and has subsequently provided two specific market updates (senior housing, short-term rentals) in 2014 and 2022. Although these updates provide some insight into changes within the housing market, preliminary research by A::B suggests that a declining population and steady development within the last ten years may have had an impact on housing vacancy rates within the area. Other factors that may have contributed to a changing housing landscape include vacant properties, short term rentals, and crowded housing conditions. Employment opportunities remain abundant in Juneau and there is likely some quantifiable interplay among employment, housing, and declining population but this has not yet been demonstrated. It is our intent for the ND Sub Area Study to evaluate the potential for development on North and West Douglas.

A final report summarizing the research of both DOWL and A::B is expected by the end of December 2023.

Forward Glance

The CBJ has been awarded the US Department of Transportation RAISE Grant for 2023 in the amount of \$16.454M in Federal funds which is intended to take the North Douglas Crossing project through final design. CBJ Engineering is currently drafting a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DOT to reassign the grant funding directly to DOT. The RAISE grant requires an \$866k match to be furnished by CBJ per *Serial No. 3019(b) A Resolution in Support of a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant for the Juneau Douglas North Crossing*.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the CBJ DOT joint North Douglas Crossing project was awarded \$7M in Congressional Directed funding to support NEPA. Unfortunately, neither CBJ nor DOT were aware of a required 9% match of these funds. Both agencies are proposing to split the cost evenly, requiring a \$315k match commitment from the Borough. CBJ and ADOT are working to present a draft MOU and an accompanying appropriation ordinance for the needed match to PWFC at the November meeting.

In Fiscal Year 2023, CBJ requested an appropriation of \$5M for engineering, design, and public involvement for the project but we are not expecting confirmation of these appropriations until late December 2023.