

Welcome to the online open house for the Parks Highway Alternative Corridor Planning and Environmental Linkages, or PEL, Study.

PROJECT TEAM



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This is a federally-funded project led by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, or DOT&PF.

The consultant team is led by DOWL, with engineering support from Lounsbury & Associates and traffic forecasting support from Kittelison & Associates.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & HISTORY

- PEL Study preceded by several projects, dating back to 1980s
- DOT&PF, City of Wasilla, and Mat-Su Borough working together to develop regional transportation solutions



This study was preceded by several projects, dating back to the 1980's, that sought to identify a bypass corridor around Wasilla. Due to sustained population growth in the Mat-Su Valley, the Parks Highway experiences significant traffic delays during peak periods. The DOT&PF, City of Wasilla, and Mat-Su Borough are all aware of the challenges within the study area and support the development of regional transportation solutions.

OPEN HOUSE #2

- Project introduction
- Overview of PEL Study process
- Review of preliminary alternatives and screening criteria
- A preferred route has NOT been selected



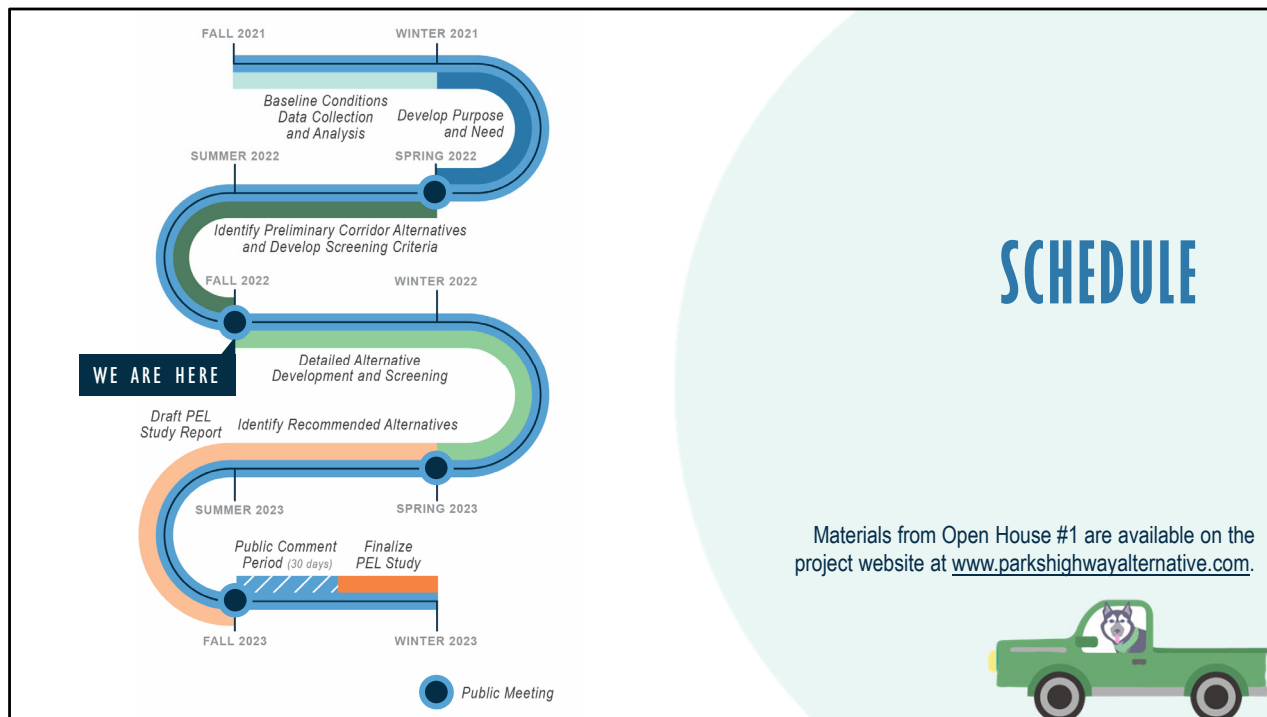
This presentation includes an introduction to the project, an overview of the PEL study process, and a review of the preliminary alternatives and screening criteria.

At this time, the project team has not selected a preferred route and no funds have been allocated for early right-of-way acquisition.



The shaded area on this map represents the study area, which is the maximum extent of potential alternative Parks Highway corridors.

Areas north of the Parks Highway were eliminated from consideration at the start of this PEL study due environmental challenges including the chain of lakes, and more dense development which make connection back to the Parks Highway, particularly at the western end of the area, challenging.



SCHEDULE

This project started in Fall 2021 with baseline analysis and data collection and the first open house was held in March 2022.

In May, members of the technical and stakeholder advisory groups participated in an alternatives development workshop where they developed preliminary alternative corridor alignments.

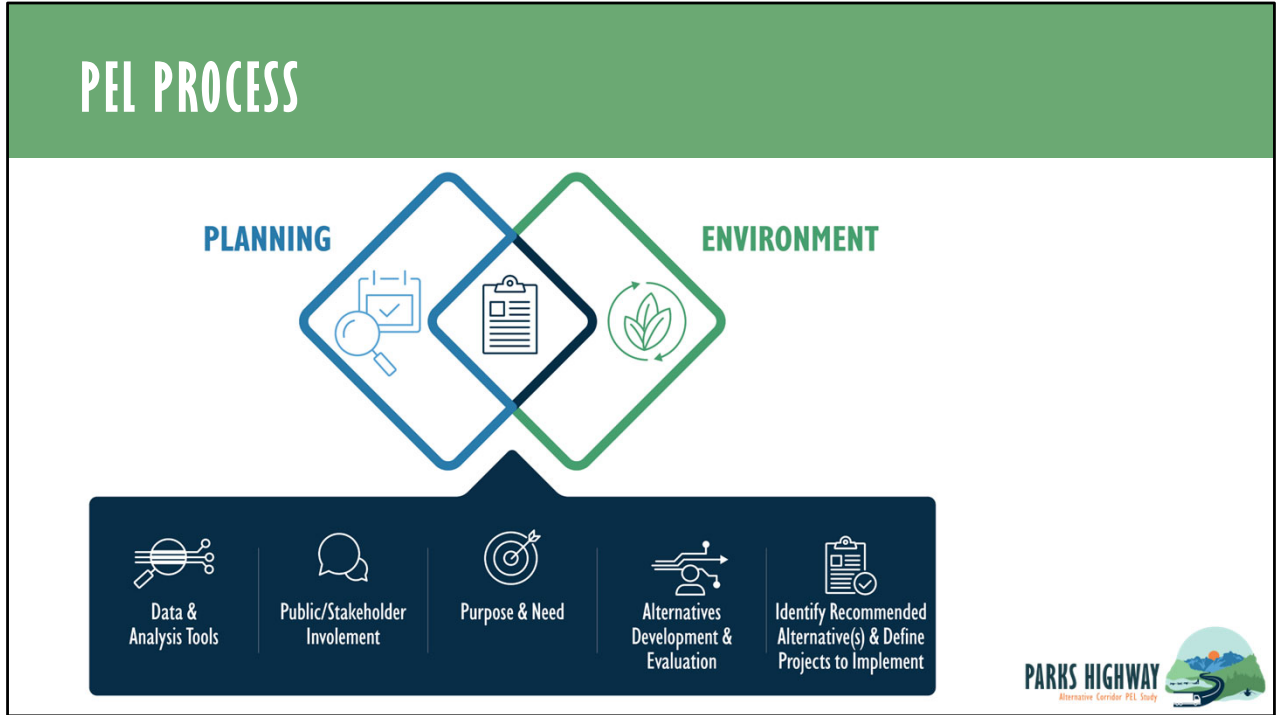
The project team has further refined those preliminary alternatives and is now presenting them to the public for feedback, along with draft screening and evaluation criteria.

Work will continue after this open house to identify which alternatives will advance to more detailed alternative development, and from there the project team will select one or more alternative corridors as the recommended alternatives.

We will identify potential interchange locations to facilitate movement between the alternative corridor and existing roads, and we will also identify whether the alternative corridor can be delivered using one or more projects.

This information will be presented to the public in Fall 2023 along with the draft PEL study. The PEL study will be finalized in Winter 2023.

Materials from Open House #1 are available on the project website at www.parkshighwayalternative.com



PEL studies allow us to consider environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process and use that data to inform the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA process.

The goal of the PEL process is to ease the path of projects moving forward, enable the public to be more involved and, hopefully, save time and money as projects move forward to environmental review, design, and construction.



PURPOSE & NEED STATEMENT

As part of the first open house in March 2022, the project team asked for input on emerging themes. These themes were used to guide development of the purpose and need statement.

PURPOSE & NEED STATEMENT

Purpose

The purpose of the Parks Highway Alternative Corridor PEL study is to improve regional and local transportation through the Wasilla area of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough by identifying an alternative highway corridor that will improve safety for all transportation modes, reduce existing and future traffic congestion, and increase mobility.



Through a collaborative process that balances the viewpoints of stakeholders, agencies, and the public, and that fits within regulatory requirements, DOT&PF determined the purpose of this study is to improve regional and local transportation through the Wasilla area by identifying an alternative highway corridor that will:

- Improve safety for all transportation modes
- Reduce existing and future traffic congestion, and
- Increase mobility

This study seeks to:

- Improve transportation for non-motorized users
- Respond to community values, and
- Support or enhance economic, social, environmental, and energy conditions

PURPOSE & NEED STATEMENT

Need

A successful solution should address the following needs:

- Improve safety in the corridor for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Decrease fatal and serious injury crashes
- Reduce existing traffic congestion and intersection delay on Parks Highway
- Add roadway capacity to meet projected transportation demand in the corridor
- Improve the roadway network to better separate local, regional, and through trips
- Improve efficiency for freight transport
- Improve multi-modal access and flexibility for all users
- Improve the durability of roadway improvements and ease maintenance operations

These background materials are available on the project website.



PURPOSE & NEED (NEED)

Early analyses included baseline environmental conditions, a study to understand the origins and destinations of traffic, and a System Performance Memo that sought to understand existing performance of the current Parks Highway in Wasilla.

This data helped the project team identify issues an alternative corridor must address.

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The purpose and need statement, which is also available on the project website, sets out several additional goals the alternative corridor should strive to meet.



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

NO NARRATION

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES



EXAMPLES FROM:
SKETCH PLANNING
SESSION



In May 2022, the project team hosted an Alternatives Development Workshop where members of the technical and stakeholder advisory groups rolled up their sleeves and worked together to identify potential alternative corridor routes through the study area.

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES



Greenfield Route

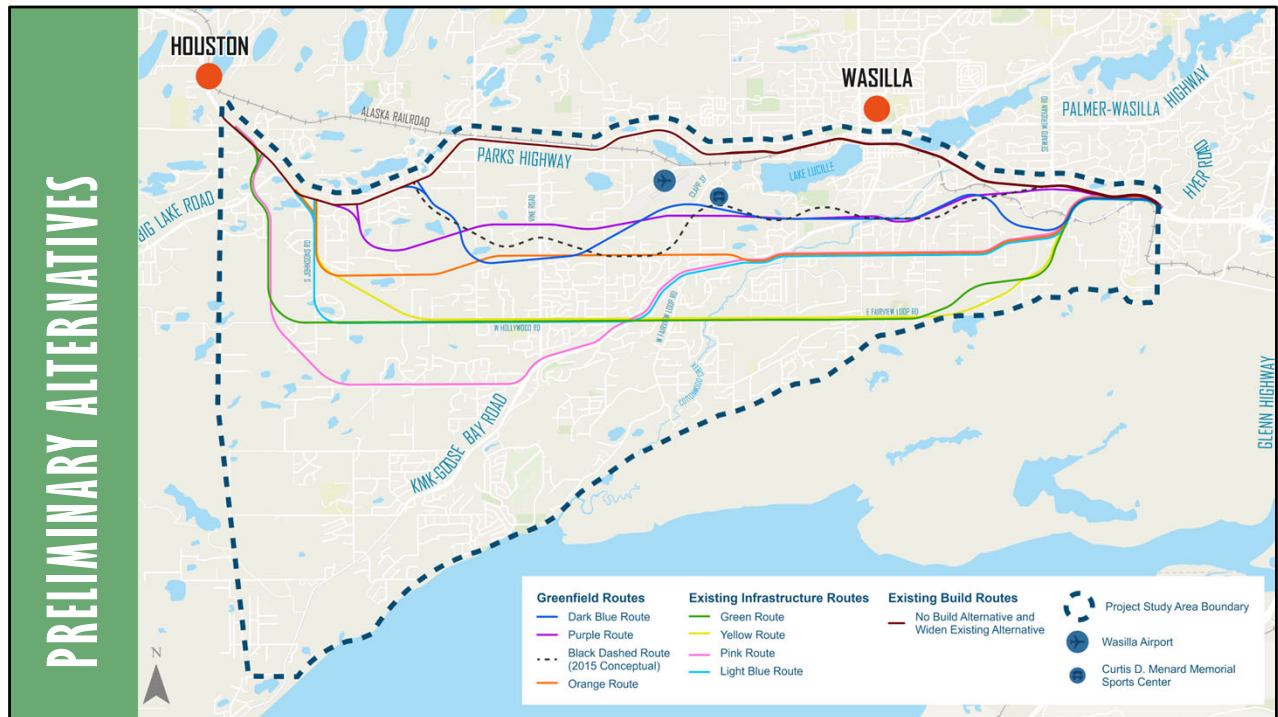


EXAMPLES FROM:
SKETCH PLANNING
SESSION



Existing Infrastructure with Greenfield Route

Two types of alternative routes emerged from the workshop. The first were greenfield routes, or those that used undeveloped areas for new corridors. The second type were routes that primarily used existing infrastructure, primarily existing roads within the area.



Over the past several months, the project team has refined those initial workshop corridor routes. They laid the routes out in design software to help make sure the preliminary corridors met design requirements.

The result is eight different corridors consisting of greenfield and existing infrastructure routes plus a ninth that consists of a widened corridor along the existing Parks Highway. The project team will also evaluate a no-build alternative to understand the potential impacts of not proceeding with an alternative corridor.



These preliminary routes, along with route descriptions and lengths, can be viewed on the interactive Story Map site, which is available on the project website.

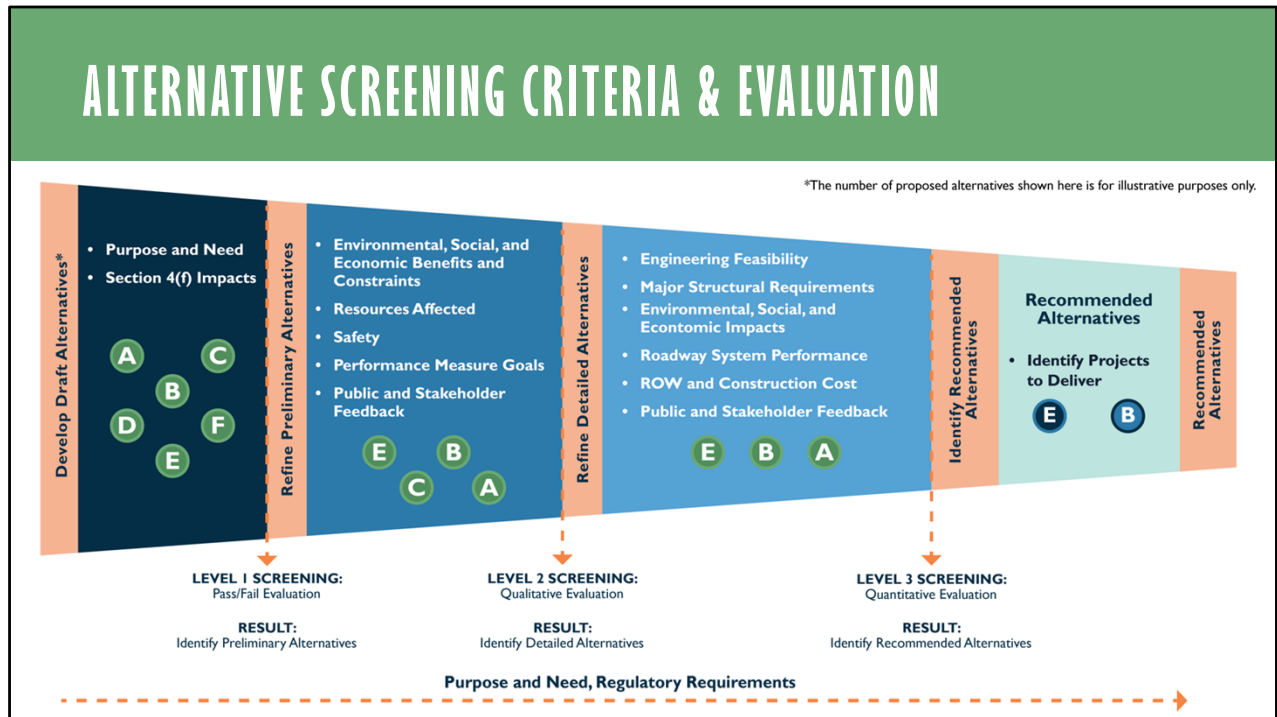
Also included on our project website is a public survey. Please submit comments and feedback on the preliminary alternatives by February 10, 2023.



ALTERNATIVE SCREENING CRITERIA & EVALUATION

NO NARRATION

ALTERNATIVE SCREENING CRITERIA & EVALUATION



The alternative screening process can best be thought of as a funnel.

Draft alternatives are first screened to determine whether they meet purpose and need or if they have significant impacts to Section 4(f) resources. Alternatives that did not meet these criteria were eliminated or adjusted to mitigate impacts. [highlight “Develop Draft Alternatives” and dark blue]

The project is now at the stage where preliminary alternatives are refined and evaluated qualitatively. The project team is looking at resources affected, safety factors, and performance measures. Public feedback is an important part of this step. [highlight “Refine Preliminary Alternatives” and middle blue]

Next, the project team will conduct a more quantitative evaluation, looking at engineering feasibility, environmental, social, and economic impacts, roadway system performance, and right-of-way and

construction costs. [highlight “Refine Detailed Alternatives” and light blue]

The outcome of this qualitative evaluation is a recommended range of alternatives. [highlight “Refine Recommended Alternatives” and last column on right].

The no build alternative will be carried through each step of the screening process to provide a baseline for evaluation of potential impacts.

The project team will continue to evaluate whether the alternatives meet the purpose and need and regulatory requirements all of the way through this screening and evaluation process.

ALTERNATIVE SCREENING CRITERIA & EVALUATION

Criteria	Measure
Safety	Rate of fatalities per 100 million VMT
	Rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT
	Number of nonmotorized fatalities and serious injuries annually
Mobility	Average PM peak period (mph)
	Level of travel time reliability index (LOTTR)
	Truck travel time reliability index (TTTR)
	Percent of person-miles traveled that are reliable
Pavement Condition	Percent pavement area in good/poor condition
Environment	Section 4(f) & 6(f) impacts
	Area of wetlands impacted
	Potential noise impacts on nearby residential properties
	Potential for wildlife mortality; impact on wildlife mobility
Community Support	Level of community support for alternative
Cost	Capital cost, maintenance cost



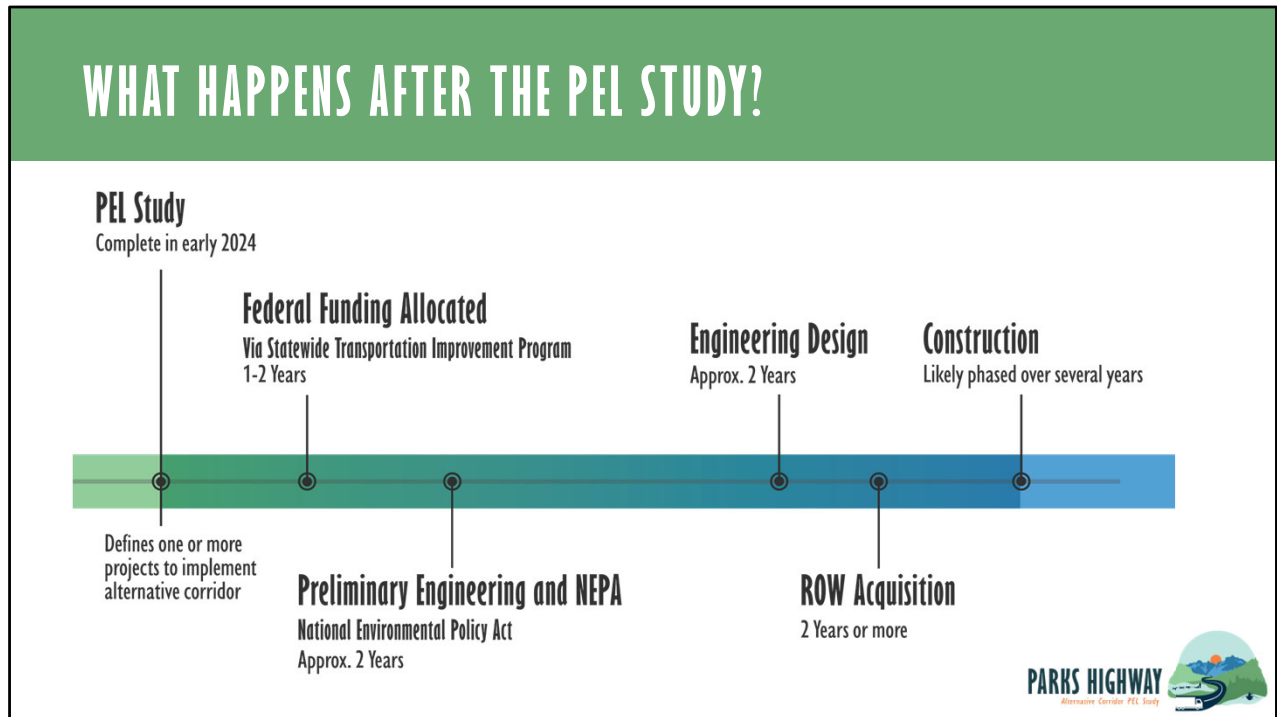
The project team has developed alternative screening criteria to guide the evaluation process. The screening criteria includes measures for safety, mobility, pavement condition, environment, community support, and cost.

During this first phase of screening, the project team is using the criteria in a qualitative manner. This screening step helps to identify detailed alternatives, which will be shared at the next open house, in Spring 2023.

During phase two screening, the project team will use the criteria to quantify potential impacts as much as possible. This screening step will help to identify the recommended alternative or alternatives, which will be presented to the public at the fourth open house in late fall or early winter 2023.

This will also be the start of the 30-day review period for the PEL Study, a document that contains information on all the work the project team has completed over the previous 2.5 years.

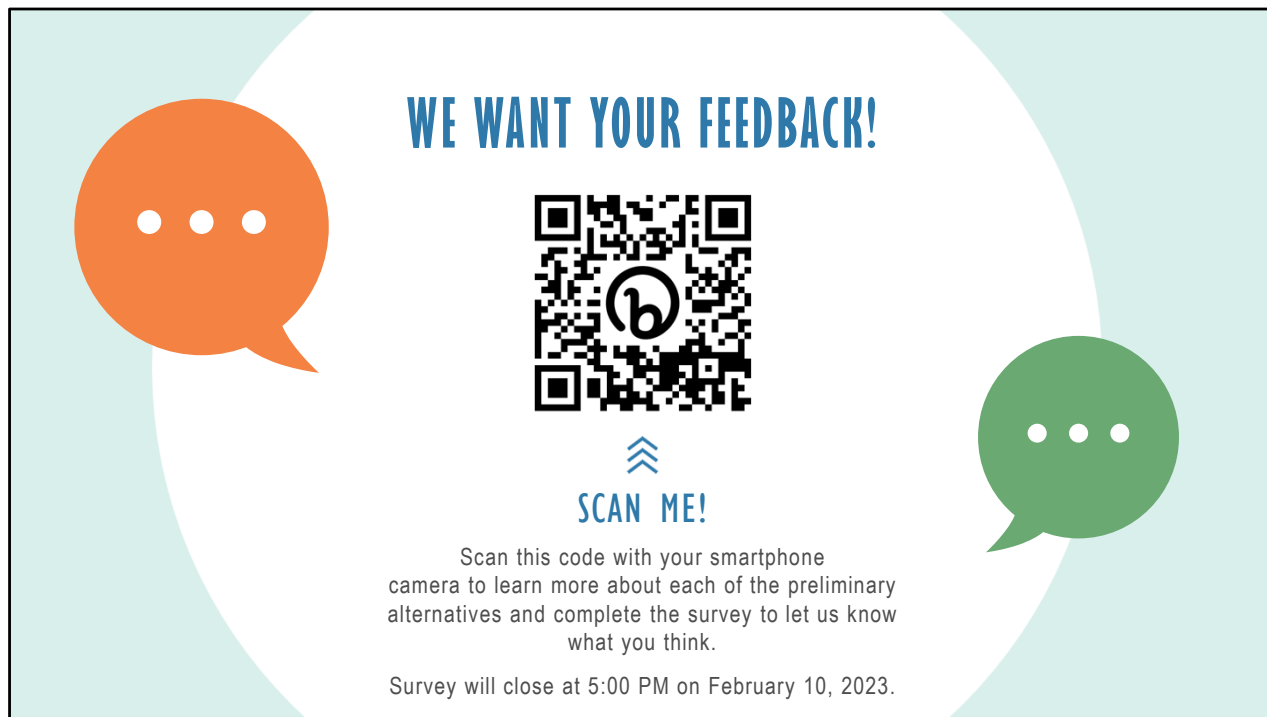
WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PEL STUDY?



What Happens After the PEL Study?

The PEL Study will be complete in early 2024. Following its completion, several steps need to happen before an alternative corridor is constructed.

These steps include the allocation of Federal funding through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, Preliminary Engineering and Environmental evaluation under the National Environmental Policy Act, Engineering Design, Right-of-Way Acquisition, and finally, construction. These steps are expected to take several years, and there will be numerous opportunities for the public to participate and make comments on any project that moves forward after the PEL study.



The project team is looking to you, the public, to provide input on the preliminary alternatives. Use the Story Map to learn more about each of the preliminary alternatives and complete the survey to let us know what you think. Your feedback will be considered as the project team moves forward with alternatives development.

In Spring of 2023 the project team will present the results of the preliminary alternative screening, and the alternatives that will move forward into phase two of the alternative screening.

Later in 2023, the recommended alternatives for future development will be presented as part of the draft PEL Study.

THANK YOU!

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That concludes our presentation. Stay informed by visiting www.parkshighwayalternative.com.

Submit questions and comments any time to parkshighwayalternative@dowl.com.

Thank you.