

Safer Seward Highway Project

Southcentral Alaska Public Opinion Survey
n=500 Anchorage, Kenai Pen. & Mat-Su Residents

Topline Results

Fielded February 22-24, 2024
Margin of Error= +/- 4.4%

1) Overall, how much do you travel on the stretch of Seward Highway that runs between Anchorage and Girdwood?

	<i>Initial Result</i>	<i>After 1a Screener</i>
More than 10 times a year.....	34%	40%
5 to 10 times a year.....	22%	26%
2 to 4 times a year.....	22%	26%
Once a year	6%	6%
Less than once a year (followed-up with 1a screener)	10%	1%
Never (followed-up with 1a screener)	5%	<1%
Unsure (followed-up with 1a screener)	1%	0%

1a) Is your lack of travel on this highway primarily due to not having a need, or due to concerns about road safety?

Among 16% with limited to no use of Seward Hwy

Concerns about road safety	8%	<i>Continued with interview</i>
No need.....	82%	<i>Ended interview</i>
Unsure.....	10%	<i>Ended interview</i>

For the rest of the survey, when “Seward Highway” is mentioned, it is referring to the 20-mile stretch of two-lane road between South Anchorage and Bird Flats, just north of Girdwood.

2) Do you primarily travel on the Seward Highway in the winter months, summer months, or year-round?

Summer months.....	48%
Year-round	47%
Winter months	4%
Unsure.....	1%

3) Do you primarily travel on the Seward Highway for work or recreation?

Recreation	78%
Work.....	4%
Both.....	17%
Unsure.....	1%

4) When you travel on the Seward Highway, are you typically going to a destination between Anchorage and Bird Flats, or are you just traveling through?

Traveling through.....	74%
Destination between Anchorage and Bird Flats	8%
Both.....	16%
Unsure.....	2%

5) Overall, when it comes to safety, how would you describe travel on the Seward Highway?

Very safe	3%	}	21%
Generally safe	18%		
Average	32%	}	46%
Generally hazardous	36%		
Very hazardous	10%		
Unsure.....	<1%		

6) If you could change one thing about the highway to improve safety, what would that be?

Coded Verbatim Comments

More lanes, 4-lane	21%	Straighten road	3%
Widen road.....	12%	Better maintenance/plowing.....	2%
More passing zones/lanes.....	9%	Build a bridge	2%
More police/enforcement.....	7%	Separated bike lane/path	2%
Lighting	5%	Enhanced signage	1%
Divided highway, middle barrier	5%	No changes needed.....	1%
Rockfall mitigation	4%	Less construction	1%
More cautious drivers	4%	Guardrails.....	1%
More pull-offs.....	4%	Miscellaneous	3%
Lower speed limits	4%	Unsure.....	9%

7) In general, how would you prioritize Seward Highway Safety improvements compared to other DOT projects? Should Seward Highway Safety improvements be...

The top priority	9%	} 47%
A high priority	38%	
A medium priority	37%	} 47%
A low priority.....	9%	
Not a priority at all	1%	
Unsure.....	6%	

Next, thinking about your past experiences on the Seward Highway, I'd like you to assign a letter grade to various aspects of the highway. What letter grade, that being A, B, C, D or F, would you give it for:

[Asked in random order –
shown sorted by % "A"]

	A	B	C	D	F	Unsure
8) The condition of the road itself.....	16%	47%	26%	7%	2%	2%
9) Safe access to trails and scenic pullouts.....	14%	32%	33%	13%	4%	4%
10) Arriving to your destination without delay	11%	34%	35%	14%	5%	1%
11) Accommodating to pedestrians and bikes	9%	15%	17%	25%	26%	8%
12) Overall safety.....	8%	32%	36%	18%	5%	1%

13) The Alaska Department of Transportation is in the planning phase of a major road improvement project for the Seward Highway between Anchorage and Bird Creek. The overall project goals are to make improvements to decrease severe accidents and provide safe places for recreational activities along this travel corridor.

In general, do you support or oppose this project? ...and do you strongly (support/oppose) or somewhat (support/oppose) it?

Strongly support.....	60%	} 91%
Somewhat support.....	31%	
Somewhat oppose	4%	} 6%
Strongly oppose	2%	
Unsure.....	3%	

14) Next I'm going to read a list of broad goals for the project. Please rank them in terms of what you think is most important. Here is the list. What is most important to you? And which is next on your list...?

[Read in random order –
shown sorted by % ranked "most important"]

- Enhancing highway safety for all users 54%
- Ensuring reliable travel 18%
- Creating separated bike and pedestrian pathways 12%
- Minimizing environmental impacts 8%
- Improved scenic and recreational pull-offs 8%

15) Part of the project proposal is to add a separated non-motorized pathway to connect Anchorage to the Bird to Gird trail. How often would you anticipate that you would use the non-motorized pathway?

- Frequently 6% } 25%
- Occasionally 19% }
- Rarely 31% } 73%
- Never 42% }
- Unsure 2%

Next I'm going to read a list of specific improvements that are being considered. For each, please tell me how important you think it is to include in the project plan. With 1 meaning not at all important and 5 meaning very important, how important is...

[Asked in random order –
shown sorted by % "very important"]

	Very important		Not at all important				Unsure
	5	4	3	2	1		
16) Rock and ice fall mitigation	53%	21%	14%	5%	6%	1%	
17) Additional passing lanes	49%	21%	15%	5%	9%	1%	
18) Widening the highway to four lanes	48%	19%	16%	5%	11%	1%	
19) Widening shoulders.....	43%	27%	16%	8%	5%	1%	
20) Dividing sections of the highway with concrete barriers	24%	21%	24%	12%	16%	3%	
21) Creating a paved bike and pedestrian pathway.....	23%	18%	23%	19%	17%	0%	
22) Improved scenic and recreational pull-offs.....	18%	23%	34%	16%	9%	0%	

23) Some of the improvements being considered would require rock blasting or placing fill in Turnagain Arm to widen certain areas. In general, would you support or oppose improvements that require rock blasting and placing fill? ...and would you strongly (support/oppose) or somewhat (support/oppose) them?

- Strongly support..... 55% } 83%
- Somewhat support..... 28% }
- Somewhat oppose 6% } 12%
- Strongly oppose 6% }
- Unsure..... 5%

24) When it comes to safe recreational options along the corridor, which of the following statements comes closest to your view:

[Read in random order]

Improving and increasing the number of recreational options is important even if it increases the project cost.....	43%
Maintaining the recreational options that currently exist is important, but the project cost should not be increased to expand or improve recreational options.....	41%
Recreational options should not be included if they add cost to the project.....	10%
Unsure.....	6%

25) This project would be a significant undertaking. It involves major improvements to twenty miles of highway through challenging terrain, and will take several years to construct. This project is a significant multi-year undertaking to make the highway safer, more reliable, and provide recreational opportunities to the community for decades to come.

Given these considerations, do you believe the project is worth the high cost and short-term inconveniences? ...and would you definitely (worth it/not worth it) or probably (worth it/not worth it) them?

Definitely yes, worth it.....	52%	} 85%
Probably yes, worth it.....	33%	
Probably no, not worth it.....	7%	} 11%
Definitely no, not worth it.....	4%	
Unsure.....	4%	

26) Taking everything into consideration, do you support or oppose this project? ...and do you strongly (support/oppose) or somewhat (support/oppose) it?

	<i>Baseline (Q13)</i>		<i>Informed (Q26)</i>	
Strongly support.....	60%	} 91%	56%	} 91%
Somewhat support.....	31%		35%	
Somewhat oppose.....	4%	} 6%	4%	} 8%
Strongly oppose.....	2%		4%	
Unsure.....	3%		1%	

27) And what is the main reason you oppose this project?

Coded Verbatim Comments [Asked of 8% who "oppose" the project after taking everything into consideration]	<i>Among 8% Opposed</i>	<i>As % of total</i>
Costs will be high	30%	3%
Other more important projects	24%	2%
Impact on environment/beauty.....	19%	2%
Too much construction already	13%	1%
No needed, other options.....	11%	1%
Too much recreation.....	3%	<1%

28) If you were talking to the planners of this project, what’s the number one question about this project that you would want to know the answer to?

Coded Verbatim Comments

How long will it take?	25%
How much will it cost? Who's paying?	13%
How will construction impact travel? Timing? Delays?	11%
How will it be safer? Is safety really the priority?.....	7%
What are environmental impacts?	6%
Will it be 4-lane?	4%
Is this the best project to spend money on?	4%
Where is the project plan?.....	2%
Will it improve recreation access?	2%
What will speed limits be?	2%
Why don't you build a bridge?	1%
Does it include lighting?	1%
Why? Do we really need this?.....	1%
Will bikes be accommodated?	1%
Is this long-term fix? Future demand considered?	1%
Will the public be involved?	1%
Miscellaneous	4%
Unsure	14%

Demographics

(asked at beginning for screener and quotas)

29) Which borough you live in?

Municipality of Anchorage	58%
Kenai Peninsula	15%
Mat-Su.....	27%

30) Which of the following age ranges do you fall into?

18-34 yrs old.....	26%
35-44 yrs old.....	23%
45-54 yrs old.....	12%
55-64 yrs old.....	15%
65+ yrs old	19%
Not provided	5%

31) What is your gender?

Male	51%
Female.....	49%
Other	<1%