



# Airport Way/Steese Expressway Reconstruction Project

Project No. 0002(385)/NFHWY00245

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### 1. What is happening at the intersection?

The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is proposing safety and mobility improvements at the intersection of Gaffney Road, Airport Way, Richardson Highway, and Steese Expressway (GARS) in Fairbanks, Alaska. This project is being developed under the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

The preferred alternative has been selected for the intersection. It is called a Continuous Flow Intersection Median U-Turn (CFI-MUT).

### 2. What happened to the other design concepts?

Based on public feedback, requests to minimize property impacts, and responsible stewardship of budget resources, DOT&PF worked to identify two cost-effective concepts that still meet the goal of safety and traffic flow at the intersection, while also taking public and agency requests into consideration. Additionally, the new concepts considered offer decreased construction timelines and maximum flexibility for future options.

### 3. Why weren't those options considered before?

Interchange concepts were the primary alternatives initially being considered and analyzed. After public meetings, evaluation of impacts, results of the noise study, and budgetary considerations, the project team selected the preferred alternative that meets the desired project outcomes, a CFI-MUT.

### 4. Why was this alternative selected?

The CFI-MUT is the most cost-effective alternative, meets the project purpose of safety, and can be constructed more quickly than other alternatives considered.

In addition to the reduced cost, the CFI-MUT design addresses some of the comments we heard from the public about this project. This design reduces the amount of land we would need to purchase from adjacent property owners and allows us to maintain more existing vegetation. The CFI-MUT design also maintains access between 10th Avenue and the Steese Expressway, which is especially important to businesses and emergency responders.

### 5. Is this option safe? Does it meet the project goal of safety?

The CFI-MUT directly addresses the safety issues by minimizing potential conflict points within the intersection. Additionally, this design can be built more quickly than an interchange since it does not require a bridge.

### 6. Why does the CFI-MUT look so complicated?

From a map or bird's eye view, the CFI-MUT does look complex. However, travelers will be driving one route at a time. Drivers will also be assisted with signage, striping, and design features that will clearly lead drivers and pedestrians through the intersection. DOT&PF will conduct a driver awareness campaign prior to opening the intersection for locals, and will work with mapping companies (Apple, Google, Garmin, and others) to provide accurate navigation instructions for tourists.

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## 7. **When will this happen?**

Construction is tentatively scheduled for 2022, pending available funding.

## 8. **What is the cost?**

The project is approximately 90 percent federally funded, with 10 percent state match. Construction costs are estimated between \$10 and \$15 million, and estimates will be refined as the project's detailed design progresses. The CFI-MUT cost is approximately one-third of the cost of the interchange options. Project funding is allocated under the federally funded HSIP.

## 9. **Will the CFI-MUT intersection cost more to maintain, and what will be done to alleviate the maintenance costs?**

As with many capital projects that update infrastructure, there will likely be increased maintenance costs, including for snow removal and electricity, due to the increase in number of signals. To help alleviate maintenance burdens while improving intersection performance, the following items will be evaluated:

- Application of a high-friction surface treatment, at select locations, to improve traction for vehicles and reduce the frequency of sanding at locations that traditionally build snowpack (and get icy) in winter
- Implementation of snow storage areas into the design, which will reduce the frequency of the need to haul away snow as the existing intersection configuration provides minimal snow storage areas
- Design to set back traffic signal and lighting poles as much as possible from the traveled way to keep grader and plow trucks operating as efficiently as possible
- Evaluation of adding an automatic anti-icing/de-icing system, which would reduce the need for operator or equipment presence to pre-treat or remove accumulated ice

- Incorporation of plow truck signal pre-emption capabilities to ensure that maintenance equipment can move through the intersection efficiently during snow removal operations; this will be part of other Fairbanks area-wide signal optimization efforts

## 10. **What will happen to the bike path?**

DOT&PF is designing a bike path from the Badger Road/Old Richardson Highway intersection to the Airport Way/Gaffney Road intersection in 2024. This will connect the Badger Road area with the existing bike path that extends along the Chena River north of the proposed intersection. This project will coordinate with the bike path project to provide safe and efficient bicycle and pedestrian travel in the intersection area.

## 11. **How will winter driving concerns be addressed?**

Winter driving conditions, including lighting, signage, and snow removal, were considered during the design of this intersection. This is a Priority Level 1 intersection, the highest DOT&PF priority, which means it will be cleared within 12 hours of a snowfall.

## 12. **How will this affect pedestrians?**

Bicycle and pedestrian crossings at the intersection will be shorter, with placement of medians and refuge areas. Due to the singular direction and shorter length of travel, the pedestrian crossing will be safer. In addition, all existing sidewalks and curb corners will be upgraded to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## 13. **How can I learn more?**

- Visit the project website: [www.GARSreconstruction.com](http://www.GARSreconstruction.com)

*The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S. Code 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated November 3, 2017, and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and DOT&PF.*