

Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan

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CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

General Introduction

Corridor management planning provides local communities with the opportunity to address changes brought about by growth along highways, to encourage economic development, to address issues and concerns and to maintain and enhance the intrinsic qualities the corridor may have to offer. The corridor management planning process is based on the active participation of the corridor's business owners, residents, property owners and highway users. These groups design the plan's recommendations. The corridor management plan may be thought of as a tool to help local residents participate in determining the management goals and priorities of a road corridor. The corridor management planning process also allows local communities to identify existing and potential problems within the corridor and to offer solutions to these problems.

Corridor Boundary

For the purposes of this plan, the corridor management planning area is composed of three widths in order to recognize the different development and land ownership patterns. From the intersection of the George Parks Highway to Moose Creek the corridor includes the Petersville Road right-of-way and the 300-foot scenic buffer where it presently exists. From Moose Creek to Petersville, the corridor includes the road right-of-way and those lands within a ¼ mile on either side. These lands are primarily owned by the State of Alaska and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. From Petersville to Tokositna, the corridor consists of the road right-of-way plus 1 mile on each side; these lands are owned by the State of Alaska. The corridor is not to be considered a non-development zone; its purpose is to identify areas of important intrinsic values and to manage development within the corridor.

Contents

The Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) defines the purpose and contents of a corridor management plan. The ISTEA also describes the method to be used to develop a corridor management plan. This plan follows the ISTEA standards as well as those standards used by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to develop a community plan. According to ISTEA, a corridor management plan must include the following items:

- a map identifying the corridor boundaries, intrinsic resources and different land uses within the corridor;
- an assessment of such intrinsic resources and of their context;
- a strategy for maintaining and enhancing those intrinsic resources;
- a development strategy describing how existing development may be enhanced and new development accommodated;

- a plan to accommodate commerce while maintaining a safe and efficient level of highway service, including convenient user facilities;
- a review of the road's safety and accident record to identify correctable faults in roadway design, maintenance and operation; and
- a plan for ongoing public review and participation in the implementation of the corridor management objectives.

This plan is organized in a manner that fulfills the ISTEA corridor management standards. The plan begins with a general discussion of the Petersville Road corridor and the communities along the corridor. The plan then addresses the individual ISTEA requirements of a corridor management plan and then concludes with the recommendations and implementation methods developed by the Petersville Road Corridor Management Planning Team.

Petersville Road

Petersville Road connects the Trapper Creek and Petersville communities. It starts at milepost 114.9 of the George Parks Highway, and leads west and north 40 miles. The first three miles of the road are paved and the remaining 37 miles are unpaved. There is no winter maintenance beyond mile 14. Gold mining, agriculture, homesteads and residential areas are accessed by the road. It is primarily used by residents who live along the road, but it also supports a growing number of tourists and fishermen who use it to access the area's scenic and fishing resources. The road is a snowmachiners' mecca, and the point of origin for a trail large network in the area.

INTRODUCTION

Local Setting

Petersville Road is located within the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. The Mat-Su Borough has been Alaska's fastest growing region for the last two decades. The 1996 population estimate for the Borough is 50,759. This is an increase of 11,176 over the 1990 U.S. Census population estimate of 39,683, and an increase of 32,943 over the 1980 U.S. Census estimate. The Borough's population almost tripled in the 1970-80 decade from 6,509 to 17,816 persons.

The unincorporated communities of Petersville, and Trapper Creek, they do, however, have recognized community councils that provide citizens with the opportunity for maximum community involvement, and are recognized by the Borough by Assembly resolution.

The Petersville Community Council is more than 220 square miles in area. The Deshka River (Kroto Creek) forms its eastern boundary. Its northwestern boundary includes the mouth of Cottonwood and Willow Creeks and Peters Creek in the Peters Hills. From Peters Creek, the boundary goes due south for 24 miles, and then west to meet the Deshka River (Kroto Creek).

Large gold reserves exist within the upper base of the Peters Creek area. The easy accessibility provided by George Parks Highway has brought an influx of people seeking recreation, such as hunting, snowmobiling, dog mushing, and fishing. Small scale farming and logging are still economically important in the area.

The 1990 U.S. Census block area includes some areas of little or no population beyond the community council boundaries of Petersville. The census population estimate for this area was 84, with 37 households. The 1990 U.S. Census also states that all employed people were occupied by farming, forestry or fishing.

The Petersville area is not served by electricity, public water, public sewer or natural gas. Matanuska Telephone provides radio telephone service. Students must travel long distances to school. The nearest elementary school is located in Trapper Creek, while the middle and high school, Susitna High School is at Mile 98 George Parks Highway.

The Trapper Creek community council encompasses an area of 330 square miles. The northern boundary is just north of Blair and Bunco Lakes, the eastern boundary is the Susitna River; the western boundary is the Deshka River, which serves as a common boundary with the Petersville community and the southern boundary is a few miles north of Amber Lake. The majority of the population lives near the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road, approximately 4 miles east of Talkeetna across the Susitna River.

The 1990 U.S. Census designated place appears to coincide with the Trapper Creek community council boundary. The census estimated the population to be 277, with 100 households. The type of employment is somewhat more diverse than in Petersville. Logging, farming, visitor facilities and recreational services illustrate the natural resource-based economy. Several nurseries provide South Central Alaska with Alaskan grown shrubs and trees. Wood products are used for firewood, crafts and custom built cabins. There are several lodges and bed and breakfasts in the area. The elementary school also provides some employment opportunities.

Electricity is available for approximately 7½ miles west on Petersville Road from the intersection with George Parks Highway. Public water and sewer and natural gas are not available. Regular telephone service is available to parts of the community, and where it is not available, Matanuska Telephone Association provides radio telephone service.

Land Ownership

Land ownership along the Petersville Road is private, borough, state or University of Alaska. The land for the first two miles, on both sides of the road, is primarily in private ownership, with a small percentage in state or borough ownership. For the next mile and a half the land ownership is private, state and borough with the majority owned by the borough. For the remaining thirty miles very little land is privately owned, a small amount is owned by the university, and the majority is owned by the state. Land holdings within 100 feet of each side of the Petersville Road right-of-way and within one mile of each side of the roadway are summarized in Table #1. Table #2 illustrates the land ownership patterns, by percentage, for land immediately adjacent to Petersville Road.

TABLE #1
LAND OWNERSHIP ALONG PETERSVILLE ROAD

Land Owner	Acres
State of Alaska	33,665.6
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	5,328.8
University of Alaska	1,211.1
Private	3,487.0
Other (lake)	512.8

Source: Matanuska-Susitna Borough

TABLE #2
 LAND OWNERSHIP ADJACENT TO PETERSVILLE ROAD
 (Percentage of Ownership)

Mile Post (approximate)	Private	Borough	State	University
1.0 -2.0	88%	3%	9%	0%
2.0 - 3.4	27	64	9	0
3.4 - 5.6	0	100	0	0
5.6 - 8.0	24	45	31	0
8.0 - 10.5	10	40	42	8
10.5 - 17.0	0	0	100	0
17.0 - 17.6	20	0	80	0
> 17.6	0	0	100	0

Most of the land adjacent to Petersville Road is publicly owned, (tables 1 & 2), either state of Alaska or borough. Privately owned land is concentrated along the first 3½ miles of the corridor. Other private lands are located near Oilwell Road and Kroto Creek. North of the Forks Roadhouse the land is entirely State owned. The land ownership patterns suggest that land management actions taken by the State and Borough could have a significant impact on maintaining and enhancing the intrinsic values of the road's corridor.

Existing Land Use

The majority of land in the study area is undeveloped, and is used for dispersed recreation and subsistence activities. A few areas are used for home sites and there are scattered residential subdivisions. Commercial activities and other private, residential and agriculture land uses are generally concentrated near the intersection of George Parks Highway. Small scale mining still occurs near Peters Creek and Petersville.

Existing Plans

Several existing state and borough plans affect the area.

Borough

Borough plans affecting the Petersville Road Corridor in some way include the Borough-wide comprehensive plan, adopted in 1971, the Long Range Transportation and Public Facilities plans and the Coastal Management Plan.

The Borough-wide comprehensive plan does not make recommendations specific to the Petersville Road corridor. The 1971 plan does, however, recommend a new community be located at the junction of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road. The 1971 plan states that this is a probable location for community development for two reasons. First, this location will be a major highway intersection and, probably, an economically sound location for a limited amount of highway oriented business. The plan further states that as the surrounding area grows, the intersection will be the logical location for a small local shopping center. Secondly, the junction is near a relatively solid block of land which is well suited for agriculture. Some of the agricultural land has been farmed under the homesteading regulations. The 1971 plan speculates that with the new access provided by the completion of the George Parks Highway, further agricultural development and an associated population increase will take place in the area.

The Long Range Transportation Plan was adopted in 1987 and is currently being updated. The plan identifies two projects in the Petersville Road Corridor area. One of the projects is a bridge on Oilwell Road across Moose Creek to provide access to Amber Lake and beyond. The plan states that this bridge would provide access to an agricultural and recreational corridor extending along Oilwell Road across Moose Creek to Amber Lake Subdivision. A vehicular bridge across Moose Creek was designed. The bridge has not been constructed. A pedestrian bridge currently provides the only means of access across Moose Creek but this is presently being upgraded. The second project listed in the Transportation Plan is the Petersville Road Upgrade. The project is intended to widen Petersville Road from Moose Creek to the Forks Roadhouse. Once completed, this project would allow year round access to the residents living beyond Moose Creek. The project also calls for upgrading of bridges and realignment of the road corridor in various locations.

The Public Facilities Plan makes recommendations on a regional basis for the provisions of public services including the development of public facilities necessary to the provision of those services. Services addressed in the plan include: public safety (fire protection, emergency medical services, and emergency preparedness); library; historical preservation; governmental administration; education; parks and recreation and open space; trails; and utilities. All of these elements affect the Petersville Road corridor in some way. There are a couple of projects specific to the area mentioned in the plan. The projects address fire service and emergency service communications in the area. Additionally, the Forks Roadhouse is listed as being eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Portions of the Petersville Road corridor lie within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Coastal Management District. The Coastal Management Plan seeks to direct the course of local, state, and federal development within the District in a manner that protects the important land and water resources of the District. The adopted policies of the Coastal Management Plan are used to evaluate development proposals vis-à-vis resource values in an effort to ensure that the proposals are consistent with the plan's goals and objectives. Local development includes actions that require a borough subdivision, planning or zoning action.

State

State plans affecting the Petersville Road corridor area include the Susitna Area Plan, the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan and the Susitna Forestry Guidelines. These plans provide management guidelines and designate classifications for State and Borough lands.

The Susitna Area Plan, adopted in 1985, contains management intent for state and borough lands within the "Susitna Area." The Susitna Area covers approximately 15.8 million acres in South Central Alaska. All of the lands in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough except those in the Willow Sub-basin are included in the planning area. The Petersville Road Corridor is located within the Petersville Road Subregion. The management intent for public lands in this area is predominantly public recreation and settlement.

The Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan, adopted in 1991 by the Alaska State Legislature provides guidelines and management practices for state land within the mile wide corridors of six rivers within the Borough. The rivers include: Talkeetna, Talachulitna, Little Susitna and Deshka Rivers (also Kroto and Moose Creeks) and Alexander and Lake Creeks. The Kroto Creek and Moose Creek corridors cross the Petersville Road corridor. A special management area has been designated at the intersection of Kroto Creek and Petersville Road.

The Recreation Rivers Act states that the primary purpose for the establishment of the six Recreation Rivers is the maintenance and enhancement of the land and water for recreation. The primary purpose for the management of the six Recreation Rivers is for a variety of resources and uses including fish and wildlife, recreation, economic use, the enjoyment of the public, multiple uses of the uplands, and the accommodation of access. Special management areas are areas on state land and water where specific developments are proposed or where clusters of private land are located nearby. The Petersville Road crossing at Kroto Creek is to be managed to accommodate necessary maintenance and improvements to the Petersville Road Bridge, and access to private lands in the special management area, while providing for and enhancing public recreation opportunities, and fish and wildlife habitats.

The Susitna Forestry Guidelines, published in 1991, provide detailed guidance for timber management on state lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources, where forestry is one of the designated uses in the Susitna Area Plan. The forestry guidelines do not apply to private, borough, mental health, or university land, nor in legislatively designated areas such as state parks, recreation rivers or refuges. The guidelines describe the requirements for managing timber and for mitigating negative impacts to other resources and land uses when timber is harvested from state lands. The Petersville Road corridor traverses lands designated or co-designated as forestry.

Existing Regulations

This section is NOT meant to provide an all-encompassing description of all activities and uses that require permits or approvals from local, state or federal agencies. Prior to undertaking any development activity, individuals should contact the appropriate local, state and federal agencies and obtain information about required permits and approvals.

Federal

Migratory birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Act, among other things, prohibits the "take" of migratory birds. Destruction of nest sites, eggs or the birds themselves is a violation of the Act.

Borough

Several Borough-wide ordinances address development and land use along the Petersville Road corridor. The regulations are contained within the Borough's planning (Title 15), subdivision (Title 16), zoning (Title 17) and real property management (Title 23) ordinances. The adopted Coastal Management Plan described earlier, because of its enforceable criteria, also regulates development activities within and near Kroto and Moose Creeks.

Title 15 establishes and describes the general functions of the Planning Commission (both planning and zoning functions) and Board of Adjustment and Appeals. Title 15 also describes the comprehensive plan and purposes. Once adopted, the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan will become a component of the Borough's Overall Comprehensive Plan and hence, an instrument of Borough policy similar to the other plans adopted by the Borough Assembly.

Title 16 provides the subdivision development standards within the Borough and establishes the Platting Board.

The borough has a borough wide comprehensive plan which is implemented, in part, through the borough wide zoning ordinances. Presently, the Borough undertakes its comprehensive planning on a community by community basis. As most comprehensive plans are implemented through a zoning ordinance, a number of different zoning ordinances exist in the borough and are identified as Special Use Districts. For example, the cities of Houston, Palmer and Wasilla all have their own comprehensive plans and all have zoning ordinances unique to their cities. Title 17's chapters follows.

- 17.01 Acknowledgment of Existing Land Use Regulations
- 17.03 Public Notification
- 17.04 Nancy Lake State Recreation Area Special Land Use District
- 17.08 Hay Flats Recreation Area Special Land Use District
- 17.15 Palmer Special Land Use District
- 17.17 Denali State Park Special Land Use District
- 17.18 Chickaloon Special Land Use District
- 17.29 Flood Damage Prevention
- 17.36 Residential Planned Unit Development
- 17.40 Houston Land Use Ordinance
- 17.45 Wasilla Special Use District
- 17.48 Mobile Home Park Ordinance
- 17.52 Residential Land Use District

- 17.55 Setbacks and Screening Easements
- 17.56 Violations and Enforcement
- 17.58 Regulation of Motorized Use of Certain Lakes and Waterways
- 17.60 Conditional Uses
- 17.65 Variances
- 17.70 Regulation of Alcoholic Beverage Uses
- 17.75 Single Family Residential Land Use District
- 17.80 Non-conforming Structures
- 17.90 Regulation of Adult Oriented Businesses
- 17.99 Fees

Currently, all structures must be a minimum of twenty-five feet from a right-of-way and ten feet from all lot lines. The borough also requires that a conditional use permit be obtained for any development which seeks to establish or operate a mobile home park; junkyard; refuse area or landfill; dispense alcohol and community correctional rehabilitation center.

The borough received approximately 350,000 acres of land through the Municipal Entitlement Program. The Borough's Department of Planning manages and disposes of these lands according to the policies and procedures described in Title 23.

Signage

The placement of signs along Petersville Road is regulated by State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (AkDOT&PF). Signs are not presently allowed closer than 30 feet of the traveled way or within a required clear zone. Signs are also not allowed in any operational area such as a drainage ditch or cut embankment nor are signs allowed in areas prohibited by setback or other municipal regulations.

An airspace lease agreement is required by AkDOT&PF prior to placing a sign in a right-of-way. Signs must meet the following general design criteria: one on-premise sign per frontage: a 150 square foot maximum size, signs must have indirect light sources which are not visible to a vehicle occupant and signs are not allowed to contain flashing, rotating or blinking lights nor symbols, logos, type or shapes that resemble official traffic control devices.

Driveway Permits

Driveways entering onto Petersville Road require a permit issued by (AkDOT&PF) prior to their construction. In awarding permits the AkDOT&PF reviews the location, size, geometric design and number of driveways per parcel as well as dividers used to prohibit left-hand turns. Additional requirements may be required prior to issuing a driveway permit in order to maintain traffic safety.

Scenic Buffer

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough conveyed land to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the purpose of a scenic buffer. The scenic buffer is dedicated to the public for the purpose of protection of the scenic and natural aspects of lands immediately adjacent to the Petersville Road corridor. The buffer is 150 feet in width, perpendicular to the outside margin of existing right-of-way, along certain portions of the road. Additionally, there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the borough and DNR outlining the restrictions to the land conveyed for the scenic buffer. Generally, the buffer is to remain in a natural, undeveloped state. Reasonable rights of access are allowed from the highway to land on either side of the road. Access is to be provided by a single access through the buffer whenever possible in order to avoid proliferation of individual roads and driveways through the buffer. Physical access within the scenic buffer cannot be closer than 500 ft intervals. Furthermore, utility lines are restricted to the outside (furthest from the road) of the buffer, or the utility lines may directly cross the buffer to serve adjacent lands. Complementary uses such as footpaths, bike and bridle trails are allowed within the buffer.

Roadway Characteristics

Safety

Highway safety is typically described as a combination of engineering, education and enforcement factors. Engineering addresses the road's actual design and its speed, education relates to the vehicle operator's knowledge of the traffic regulations and vehicle operation. Enforcement deals with the frequency with which violations are identified and cited. The number of traffic accidents, and their severity, are the common indicators used to rate a road's safety. The Planning Team's concerns regarding the safety of Petersville Road include: high speeds, conflicts between school bus traffic and visitor traffic, especially during the winter months, a reduced driving surface in areas where parking occurs along the road and conflicts between motor vehicles and snowmachines on the roadway.

Accident Record

The road is used to access popular recreational areas and is used by miners and residents. There have been relatively few accidents on the road during the past decade. The majority of accidents have occurred during the winter months. Table #3 summarizes the accidents that have occurred on Petersville Road over the past ten and one-half years. The number and severity of accidents on Petersville Road are normal for a rural collector; never-the-less, the Planning Team believes that safety improvements are needed to reduce the potential for accidents. Additionally, should a visitor center be built at Tokositna it is believed that the additional traffic will result in an increase in the number and severity of accidents on the roadway.

TABLE #3
ACCIDENT DATA - PETERSVILLE ROAD
January 1984 through August 1995

AkDOT&PF LOG MILES	FATAL INJURIES	NONFATAL INJURIES	PROPERTY DAMAGE ONLY	WINTER	SUMMER	TOTAL
Unknown	- 0 -	1	- 0 -	1	- 0 -	1
0 - 2.67	- 0 -	6	6	8	4	12
2.67 - 4.96	- 0 -	1	2	2	1	3
4.96 - 18.6	- 0 -	2	3	3	2	5
TOTAL	- 0 -	10	11	14	7	21

Source: State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, February 1996.

Note: Winter = October 1 through April 30; Summer = May 1 through September 30.

Right-of-Way

The right-of-way for Petersville Road varies in width from 80 feet to 200 feet. The existing right-of-way widths are adequate for future upgrades to Petersville Road, that is, new purchases of right-of-way are not needed for roadway improvements. Table #4 summarizes the variation in right-of-way widths for each one mile segment of the existing roadway.

Present Condition

The first 3 miles of Petersville Road is paved with two-foot shoulders. The condition of the pavement is adequate or good. The remaining 37 miles of the road is composed of a unpaved surface. The gravel surface requires regular maintenance in order to avoid deterioration of the traveled surface. Periods of little rain combined with high visitations to the area's salmon stream by sports fishing enthusiasts quickly reduces the driving quality of the gravel road and results in a corresponding increase in dust. The road is maintained by AkDOT&PF which has recently seen the funding for its road maintenance program reduced. The Average Daily Traffic on Petersville Road is 200.

Scenic and Historical Qualities

The Petersville Road provides excellent opportunities for viewing a wide variety of scenic resources. Among the resources that may be seen from the road are: the Alaska Range with its three historical peaks, swan nesting areas, salmon spawning streams and wildlife. Petersville Road also provides glimpses of Alaska's gold mining and homesteading history and the opportunity to view active mining operations from the road. Furthermore, the road provides access to a wide variety of recreational activities, including Nordic skiing, snowmachining, hunting, bicycling, hiking, camping, etc. In total, the various attributes of Petersville Road are special and should be protected, while at the same time enhanced. One way of accomplishing this goal of protection and enhancement is by obtaining Scenic-Byway designation for the road corridor.

TABLE #4
PETERSVILLE ROAD RIGHT-of-WAY VARIATIONS

Mile	Right-of-Way Variations Within Each Segment (in feet)		
1	100		
2	100	200	
3	150	200	
4	150	200	
5	200		
6	100	200	
7	80	100	
8	100	150	200
9	200		
10	200		
11	150	200	
12	200		

Note: data is not available beyond mile 12

Proposed Improvements

At the present time AkDOT&PF is considering three different options for improving Petersville Road. These options are being considered as part of the effort to develop the proposed South Denali Visitor Center located at Tokositna. All three options include the upgrade of the existing unpaved road to an asphalt surface at an estimated cost of about \$38 millions. Other improvements common to all three options include: the extension of the road from its current endpoint, provision of separated pathways and the use of twelve foot driving lanes to accommodate mining and recreational vehicles. Table #5 summarizes the differences of the three options. In addition to these construction costs, it is estimated that annual maintenance costs will be about \$125,700 from milepost 14 to 41 with an additional \$125,000 to \$350,00 for maintenance equipment.

TABLE #5
PROPOSED PETERSVILLE ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

OPTION	TOTAL ROADWAY WIDTH	LANE WIDTH (each lane)	SHOULDER WIDTH (each side)	SEPARATED PATHWAY WIDTH	TOTAL COST (millions)
1	24 feet	10 feet	2 feet	10 feet	\$34.8
2	28 feet	12 feet	2 feet	10 feet	\$38.7
3	36 feet	12 feet	6 feet*	None	\$38.6

Source: State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, September 1996

*Note: The paved shoulders serve as the pedestrian/bike paths.¹

The current project AkDOT&PF has under design will pave the route from milepost 3 to the Moose Creek Bridge. It resurfaces the route from Moose Creek Bridge to the Forks Roadhouse with gravel. An additional \$250,000 has been programmed in design funds for improvements to the existing road, based on current use and conditions.

In addition to the improvements being considered by AkDOT&PF, the Planning Team has recommended a number of other improvements. The Planning Team recommendations are aimed at making the road a safer facility, more convenient to use and attractive to visitors and residents. In considering their recommendations, the Planning Team considered improvements that are necessary today because of the high traffic associated with visitations in the winter months. Much of this visitation is associated with snowmachine recreation. The major conflicts and/or concerns identified by the Planning Team include:

1. high traffic volumes traveling at high speeds during times of darkness when school buses are operating;
2. non-auto/truck/bus use of the road especially during winter conditions;
3. lack of off-road parking; and
4. problems associated with turning movements at intersections where a movement is made from a dead stop onto a facility that has high speed limits and high truck volumes. It is believed that when the Visitor Center is developed at Tokositna, the existing conflicts and problems are likely to be exacerbated as high volumes of buses, recreational vehicle and visitor-based automobiles are added to existing traffic. Moreover, capital improvements should be made to improve the quality of life for community residents.

The Planning Team believes that certain improvements should be made to reduce these conflicts or problem areas. The recommendations include motorized and non-motorized pathways/trails, speed limit zones, protected turning lanes, etc. Recommendations addressing the visitor and recreational,

e.g., pullouts and parking areas are discussed in Intrinsic Resource section. The specific road improvements include:

- Establish designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Establish a 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway about 2,000 feet north and south of the intersection with Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 45 miles-per-hour speed zones on the George Parks Highway to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Establish a 35 miles-per-hour speed zone from milepost 0 of Petersville Road to approximately milepost 4.
- Construct a primitive, separated motorized trail along the southern and western right-of-way of Petersville Road for its entire length both existing and proposed (see Maps #2, #3, and #4).
- Construct a separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the northern right-of-way of Petersville Road from milepost 0 to approximately milepost 5.
- Construct non-separated, non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathways utilizing six foot shoulders on each lane of Petersville Road from approximately milepost 5 to the end of the proposed extension, milepost 40.
- Establish designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the Oilwell Road and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Establish a 30 mile-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road approximately one-quarter of a mile east and west to Moose Creek Bridge of the intersection with Oilwell Road (see Map #1).
- Replace Moose Creek bridges and install a pair of protected pedestrian walkways and a pedestrian underpass.
- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Prior to constructing pull-outs and parking lots an operations and maintenance plan should be developed to address, trash removal, sanitary facilities, upkeep etc.

South Denali

The National Park Service is presently evaluating alternatives to provide expanded visitor services and facilities on the South Side of Denali National Park and Preserve. The purpose of these facilities is to provide visitors with new opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of the Park and Preserve as well as relieve congestion at Park's present entrance. The NPS considered several alternatives to fulfill this purpose and has developed a preferred alternative or proposed action. The proposed action includes the construction of a visitor center (up to 5,000 square feet) with a parking lot capable of accommodating up to 45 automobiles and 30 buses or recreational vehicles in the Tokositna area of Denali State Park. The Tokositna area would be accessed by constructing a twenty-mile extension to Petersville Road. Other facilities and services that would occur at the Tokositna site include: a campground of up to 50 campsites, a picnic area, up to four public use cabins, hiking/interpretive trails and a helicopter pad for emergency use. Also included in the proposed action are proposed visitor services and facilities that might be developed along the George

Parks Highway in the vicinity of Denali State Park.²

It is expected that a Tokositna visitor center and related facilities would be a popular attraction. Estimates of visitors for the Tokositna site were developed by the National Park Service and are shown in Table #6.

TABLE #6
VISITOR PROJECTIONS FOR TOKOSITNA VISITOR CENTER
YEARS 2002, 2007 AND 2012

Visitor Groups	Year 2002	Year 2007	Year 2012
Alaskan Residents (includes visiting relatives, etc.)	16,500	20,000	24,000
Non-Alaskans	75,500	149,500	182,500
Total	92,000	169,000	207,000

Source: National Park Service, South Denali Concept Plan, 1997

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Planning Team

Corridor management plans are developed in a manner similar to the development of community based comprehensive plans, that is, a Planning Team composed of residents and property owners of the area develop the issues, goals, objectives and recommendations. Planning Team members are selected by the Borough Planning Commission which seeks to ensure that a balance of interests is represented on the Planning Team.

The Petersville Road Corridor Plan, Planning Team is composed of the following individuals.

Robert Armstrong, Ed Ellis, William Floyd, Richard Leo, April Moore, Alfred Agree, Kurt Devon, Tony Flanders, Vern Halter, Kenneth Marsh, Dorothy Rawie, Vilma Anderson, Daniel Elliott, Pauleen Floyd, Charles Hill, Norwood Marsh and Jane Smith. John Duffy and Beth McKibben from the Department of Planning assisted the Planning Team in developing the plan.

Plan's Development

The following guidelines were used by the Planning Team in developing the plan. The plan's policy recommendations, vision statement, goal, and objectives were developed by the Planning Team. Personnel from the Borough's Department of Planning served as meeting facilitators, provided clerical support and research assistance, etc. The plan was drafted by Borough personnel under the direction of the Planning Team. A number of Planning Team meetings were held to develop and refine the plan's recommendations.

The main components of the plan's public comment and adoption procedures consist of the following. The main components of the process are:

1. "Open houses" or workshops were held at key points in the plan's development in order to provide members of the public with an opportunity to review the team's progress and products. These meetings were held over a several hour period so the members of the community can come and go as they please and discuss the team's products with team members.
2. After developing a draft plan, public notices were distributed and an open house/workshop was held to allow members of the public to discuss the document with Planning Team members. Appropriate modifications were made to the plan by Planning Team members based upon the comments heard at the open house/workshop.
3. A thirty-day public comment period was held. Notices were mailed community council, governmental agencies and interested individuals.

4. A final draft plan was developed by the planning team after they considered the comments received and made appropriate modifications.
5. The final draft plan was forwarded to the Trapper Creek and Petersville community councils for their review and comment.
6. The final draft plan will then be forwarded to the Planning Commission and a public hearing is held. The Planning Commission will consider the plan and public testimony and make a recommendation to the Borough Assembly. The Planning Commission could also modify the plan prior to adoption or return the plan to the Planning Team for revision.
7. The Assembly will then consider the plan, conduct a public hearing on the plan and adopt the plan. The Assembly could also modify the plan prior to adoption or return the plan to the Planning Team for revision.

Note: If the Planning Commission and Assembly recommend substantial changes to the plan, the Planning Team meets to discuss the proposals and take appropriate action.

If the plan contains recommendations regarding state lands, the Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources is asked to adopt the plan as state policy. Appropriate modifications are also requested by the Borough to relevant state plans for the area, e.g., Susitna Area Plan. As currently drafted the plan recommends state and federal designation of Petersville Road as a Scenic Byway.

Future Public Involvement

This corridor management plan will be reviewed from time to time to ensure that it remains relevant to the community and to respond to unanticipated developments or growth patterns. The plan may be reviewed by the members of the public, community council, and governmental agencies; any of these entities may ask for revisions. If revisions are requested the Petersville and Trapper Creek Community Councils will be advised of the requests and asked to comment on them. If formal revisions are necessary, the Borough Planning Commission will ask the community councils to recommend members for appointment to a Planning Team who will be charged with considering the proposed revisions. The Planning Team will use the process undertaken to develop the plan when revising or amending it. This process includes Planning Team meetings, open houses, community council comments and formal public hearings.

Vision Statement

A vision statement is used to describe a community's future aspirations. After reviewing the scenic quality inventory completed by Land Design North and other information, the Planning Team discussed and agreed upon the following Vision Statement for the Petersville Road corridor. The Vision Statement describes the Planning Team's statement of how they envision the corridor today and also identifies their future aspirations.

Petersville Road encompasses a pleasant drive that provides unparalleled views and an occasional delightful glimpse of wildlife. As the route to the historic mining district, it continues as an avenue to mines and homes, as well as providing access to a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities both winter and summer. Information and interpretive services will promote a “caring for the land” ethic among scenic byway users. The thoughtfully managed landscaping which entails turnouts, rest stops, campgrounds, etc., is enjoyed by the local residents as well as many visiting tourists. The commercial impact is minimal. The safety of cyclists, ATV’ers, snowmachines, bikers and pedestrians is paramount.

Goals

A goal is a statement that describes some future condition and is most often written in general terms. In the corridor management planning process, goals may be used to achieve the community’s vision for the corridor. The Planning Team prepared a number of goals for Petersville Road which describe how they believe their vision of the corridor can best be achieved. Specific recommendations to implement the plan are means of achieving a goal. For instance, if a goal is to accommodate motorized recreation, implementation recommendations such as providing parking lots for snowmachine use or designated motorized trails would achieve it. The goals are shown below and are not listed in priority order.

- Motorized and non-motorized recreational uses should be accommodated along the road.
- Prior to the development of any pullouts, trail heads, parking lots, etc., adequate facilities (parking, sanitation, and garbage disposal) must be provided.
- Traditional users (miners, mushers, hunters, etc.) must be accommodated.
- Cluster commercial development is encouraged to minimize impact.
- Public land along the corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
- Maintain a scenic buffer zone between the road and future public land disposals.
- Future settlement should be consolidated along existing settlement patterns.
- There should be a setback for abandoned or discarded articles.
- There should be landscaping and remediation of roadcuts to stabilize slopes and minimize visual impact to scenic resources that are present.
- Interpretive services should be provided along the roadway.
- Prior to undertaking disposals of public lands, a full review of the potential impacts to the community and the immediate environment should be completed.
- A standard maximum size for signage should be developed to maintain the road’s uninterrupted scenic resources.

INTRINSIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The National Scenic Byway Program, administered by the Federal Highway Administration has associated six intrinsic qualities with roadways having significant scenic attributes: scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, natural, and archaeological.³

Assessment

Scenic

Petersville Road provides many opportunities to view the Alaskan Range, and especially Mount McKinley. Besides Mount McKinley, traveling along Petersville Road provides opportunities to view Alaskan mining operations, farms wildlife and birds (trumpeter swans) and the northern landscape. In 1995, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Department of Planning contracted with Land Design North to complete a Scenic Resource Study of Petersville Road. The limits of the study area were from milepost 0 (the intersection of Petersville Road and the George Parks Highway) to milepost 18.75 or just north of the Forks Roadhouse. The study used the methodology employed in Scenic Resources along the George Parks Highway, Inventory and Management Recommendations completed in 1981 by the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources. The methodology incorporates many techniques employed in other scenic resource evaluations undertaken throughout the nation. Table #7 summarizes the existing development and scenic qualities along Petersville Road. As Table #7 indicates, Petersville Road provides many opportunities to view Mount McKinley (Denali). A few turnouts exist, although only a few of them provide the traveler with an opportunity to view Mount McKinley. Along the first two to three miles, views of Alaskan homesteading and farming dominate. Several gravel pits may also be viewed from the roadway suggesting a need for better scenic buffering or landscaping.

TABLE #7
SUMMARY OF FACILITIES AND SCENIC QUALITIES OF PETERSVILLE ROAD

Milepost	Facilities & Amenities	Scenic Qualities	Other Development
.66	Farms and Homesteads		Junction with Watkins Road
.87	Farms and Homesteads		Junction with Kula Road
1.10	Church		
2.67	School		
3.03			Junction with Rangeview Drive
		View of	

Milepost	Facilities & Amenities	Scenic Qualities	Other Development
3.15		McKinley	Junction with Jurasek Drive
3.25	Turnout		
3.37	Airfield		
5.40		View of McKinley	
6.10			Junction with Oilwell Road
6.49			Gravel Pit
7.04	Campground		
7.07		Moose Creek	Moose Creek Bridge
7.49	Turnouts		
7.86			Junction with Trailridge Road
9.19			Gravel Pit
9.63			Gate Creek Bridge
9.80		View of Denali	
10.20		View of Denali	
10.30			Junction with Towns Road
10.50	Turnout		
12.80		View of McKinley	
13.10		View of McKinley	
13.90		Kroto Creek	Kroto Creek Bridge
14.00			No Winter Maintenance Beyond this Point
15.20			Junction with unnamed road
16.30		View of McKinley	
16.50			Shulin Trail & Peters Creek Road
17.20			Gravel Pit
17.40		View of McKinley	

Milepost	Facilities & Amenities	Scenic Qualities	Other Development
18.30			Junction with Peters Creek Airstrip Road
18.60	Forks Roadhouse		
19.45			Gravel Pit
20.18			Gravel Pit
26.50			Gravel Pit
29.27	Airstrip		
29.30			Junction with unnamed road
29.60	Petersville		Placer mining site
32.78			Junction with unnamed road
32.86		Peters Creek	Peters Creek Bridge
32.87	Dutch Hills, 6 mile bridge trail		
36.30		Cache Creek	Junction with Cache Creek (no bridge)
36.41			Junction with Cache Creek Road

Sources: Milepost
State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Road Log
Scenic Resources Study prepared by Land Design North

The findings of the Scenic Resource Study completed by Land Design North are that location, length, and sequence of scenic resource along Petersville Road provide an excellent opportunity for interpretation. The road begins in the Susitna Lowlands, continues past farmland and rural homesteads, and passes through riverine, wetland, and upland habitat. The drive down the road begins with enclosed foreground views, building with excellent views of Mt. McKinley amid rolling foothills. This progression, in a short 19-mile drive, provides the opportunity to interpret settlement patterns, geology, vegetation, hydrology, and habitat in a generally intact setting. This opportunity is not available in the same manner elsewhere in South Central Alaska and should be taken advantage of while the landscape is generally undisturbed.

In reviewing the visual resources along Petersville Road nine visual assessment units were created and the quality of the scenic and intrinsic resources of the unit were rated. Because much of the existing roadway is undeveloped and thereby provides uninterrupted views of Mount McKinley and an undisturbed Alaskan landscape, the visual rating of most of the units is high. An assessment was made of Petersville Road's intrinsic visual qualities, the impact of human activities on the qualities and finally a composition rating was determined. For the purposes of the analysis conducted by Land Design North, the following definitions were used.

Intrinsic Visual Quality is defined as the degree of expression exhibited by a landscape through the interplay of its various components or elements, the landscape's ability to create visually distinct and pleasing patterns of form, line, color, and texture. An underlying assumption is that diversity plays a major role in creating visually distinctive landscape experiences.⁴

Overall Impact is defined as human activities and the roadway impact to visual attributes of the roadway. Typical categories within the human activity impacts are residential, commercial, recreational, and institutional land uses. Roadway impacts address how the road's design and right-of-way characteristics' effects the visual experience.⁵

The Composite Visual Quality rating is a measure of the assessment unit's existing visual quality, and is derived from its intrinsic visual quality, its cultural impacts and its roadway impacts. It is a measure of the unit's relative scenic value as it presently exists.⁶

Table #8 summarizes the visual resources along Petersville Road by assessment unit. To understand the ratings depicted in Table #8, the reader deducts the Overall Impacts rating from Intrinsic Visual Quality rating as these impacts, generally speaking, detract from the visual experience in some manner. The Composite Visual Quality Rating is the result of this computation; low value indicates a unit with low overall visual quality, while a high value indicates a unit with high visual qualities. As Table 8 indicates, most of the Petersville Road Corridor has high scenic qualities.

TABLE #8
VISUAL RESOURCE RATING BY ASSESSMENT UNIT

Assessment Unit	Beginning Point	Approximate Mileage	Intrinsic Visual Quality Rating	Overall Impacts	Composite Visual Quality Rating
1	Milepost 0	1.1	4.5	8	-3.5
2	1.1	2.5	12.5	6	6.5
3	3.6	2.2	16.0	5	11
4	5.8	1.1	11.0	7	4
5	6.99	0.4	10.0	12	-2
6	7.3	1.2	15.5	7	8.5
7	8.5	5.0	20.5	5	15.5
8	13.1	3.0	16.5	7	9.5
9	16.1	2.65	17.5	4	13.5

Source: Scenic Resource Study prepared by Land Design North

The general recommendations effecting recreation and tourism contained in the Scenic Resource Study and supported by the Planning Team are:

- An interpretative panel should be located within assessment unit 1 which discusses the settlement along the initial part of the roadway.
- Turnouts with interpretative panels at Mileposts 9.8 or 10.2 should be developed to discuss wetlands and hydrologic influences.
- Interpretive panels at both Moose and Kroto Creeks should be developed to discuss riverine habitats and local natural features.
- Redesign and upgrade of the Kroto Creek parking lot to reflect the significance of its service as a major winter recreation trail head.
- Appropriately designed turnouts at Mileposts 12.8, 13.1 and 16.3. The turnouts should include interpretive signage and architectural guardrails that reflect the significance of the views.
- Obtain special designation of Petersville Road as a scenic corridor.
- Utilize a scenic easement 100 feet from the roadway centerline to reduce the distractions created by clutter which is placed to close to the roadway.
- Encourage development toward existing settlement and development patterns to maintain the “intactness” of the roadway.
- Use a natural vegetative buffer in areas not presently developed.
- Disturbed areas along the roadway, i.e., roadcuts, fills, gravel pits should be revegetated and “designed” in such a way as to provide a natural and staggered edges.
- Implement a dust reduction program.

Historic

The first gold discoveries in the region were made in 1905, at the headwaters of Peters Creek. Plying the numerous creeks and valleys, miners wasted no time in staking their claims. By 1911 miners were working in the Cache Creek, Dutch and Peters Hills area. Between the years 1905 and 1911 Cache Creek and its tributaries netted \$231,000 worth of gold out of a total of \$383,000 for the whole district.

Up until construction of the railroad, most freight moved through the supply outlet of Susitna Station before traversing up the Yentna River to McDougal. From McDougal it went cross country into the mining districts. Freighting materials and equipment to the mines was not only costly, but a long and arduous task. To improve transportation, the Cache Creek Mining Company built a road from McDougal on the Yentna in 1909, to their mining operations in Cache Creek. The McDougal was a major winter, summer road and was built to carry heavy-laden wagons. A bridge was built across the Kahiltna River and when washed out, was rebuilt and maintained until the early 1920s. Freight still had to traverse by steamer in summer and in winter by dog sled from Susitna Station to McDougal before being hauled some 50 miles to Cache Creek. Sledding freight however, in winter along frozen waterways and across snow-covered swamps was often easier than following summer trails. A seven feet, a 25-ton capacity bucket dredge came by steamer in 1915, to McDougal. That winter it continued its journey to Cache Creek.

Even the Cache Creek Wagon Road was hard to discern in areas where it traversed swampland. Richard Feltman was a merchant who ran a pack train from McDougal to the mines. In 1917, while

trying to reach Cache Creek, he lost his way in the swamps near Hungryman Creek. Six days after departing the station he failed to arrive at his destination. A couple of search parties were formed to find him. The Anchorage Times quoted Charles Harris, a representative of the Cache Creek Dredging Company as reporting:

Evidences of the struggle of the man to find the way were pitiful to see. Blazes on the trees running through the swamps in different directions showed plainly the vain efforts made to find a most obscure trail that would lead to Cache Creek.

Feltman was finally located 50 feet off the trail near Deep Creek. He died several hours after being rescued. This tragedy spurred the miners into requesting for better roads to their mining operations. Harris went on to request:

We don't ask for boulevards and parks, but we do want help in the construction of a plain every day, a dirt road that will guarantee to get us home in safety when we want to go home, and won't leave us somewhere to perish as it did Dick Feltman.

The timely construction of the railroad from Seward to Fairbanks helped end their dilemma.

Headquartered between mile 221 and 228, Talkeetna was chosen as district headquarters for rail construction because of its accessibility by river. Freight was sent up the river by steamer before being off loaded at Talkeetna. To help with rail construction a corral was set up for freight horses near Trapper Creek, situated across the Susitna River from Talkeetna

Bypassing the former supply outlets of Knik and Susitna Station, the railroad was already transporting freight for mining activities in other districts. The railroad camp at Talkeetna, approximately 45 miles east of the mines, across the Susitna River, became a viable option as a distribution center for mining supplies. Not waiting for the Road Commission, and before the rail tracks reached Talkeetna, Henry Bahrenburg from Dollar Creek in 1917, cut out several days worth of freighting by blazing a trail from the Talkeetna work camp to the mines. The following year the Commission authorized construction of a wagon road from Talkeetna to the mines. January 1919, Talkeetna became connected to Anchorage by rail, facilitating transportation of equipment and materials to the new townsite.

Construction of the railroad brought new people into the area including surveyors, engineers, teamsters and packers, foremen, timekeepers, storekeepers, blacksmiths, timber men, carpenters etc. Although some of the work force moved on, following rail construction north, others stayed to become haulers and packers for the mines or became prospectors. Many of the freighters had cabins and corrals near Trapper Creek on the west side of Susitna River. Most heavy equipment moved before a spring breakup when the river ice provided a bridge from Talkeetna to Trapper Creek. From there it was hauled by horse drawn double-enders to the mines. During the short summers equipment was transported by boat across the Susitna River before being hitched to horses. By the end of the 1930's mechanized "Cats" replaced freight horses.

In 1917, a freighting trail was established by the Alaska Road Commission originating in Talkeetna. It extended westerly to Peters Creek, northerly along the creek through Peters Hills, and again

westerly over the low divide and into Cache Creek. The crossing of the Susitna River from Talkeetna was by ferry during the summer and over ice in the winter. In 1920, the Alaska Road Commission started construction of a wagon road to the Cache Creek area from the Susitna River. This original Petersville Road passes over a number of swamps between Trapper Creek at the George Parks Highway and the "Forks" at Peters Creek. The swamp crossings were constructed of "corduroy" consisting of transverse logs covered with gravel. Remnants of the corduroy road are still evident today.

By 1922, nine miles of wagon road were completed and 31 miles of sled road. The end of the decade witnessed the completion of 23.5 miles of road "suitable for wagon traffic"; a summer trail of 16 miles continued from the end of the wagon road to the Cache Creek mines; and a 18-mile winter trail, only suitable for bobsleds, was also completed. The total cost overall for the Talkeetna to Cache Creek road was \$339,349.15 (this cost did not include additional trails to other mines). To facilitate travel in heavy brush and exposed summits tripods were mounted for the wary traveler.

The area that Petersville Road traverses was traditionally utilized by the Dena'ina Indians. The Dena'ina preferred to locate their village, camp and activity sites at the confluence of streams containing anadromous fish runs, especially where clear tributaries joined with turbid streams and rivers. Villages were also found at the outlets of lakes with significant resident and anadromous fish populations, at good fishing sites on lake shores and stream banks, on relict stream and lake terraces, prominent hills, ridges, and overlooks, areas of game concentration, near margins of wetland areas, and along natural traveled ways such as waterways, ridge portages, and passes, those areas with level ground, good drainage, an adequate supply of firewood and fresh water. Evidence of past Native activities includes villages, camps, smokehouse locations, storage areas, butchering sites, caribou fences, hunting blinds, fish traps and weirs, burials and cemetery areas, and trails.

Once gold was discovered on Cache Creek in 1905, prospectors made their way up the Susitna River to Susitna Station, and from there overland to Cache Creek. In 1905, an exploration party came up the Tokositna River, established a base camp on Home Lake, just north of Petersville, and made discoveries in the upper tributaries of Peters Creek by 1921, there were 24 mining operations throughout the Yentna Mining District at that time. One of the most notable mining operations was on Peters Creek at Petersville. The Forks Roadhouse was built in the 1931 serving miners, trappers, and freighters. In 1933, the largest mining operation in the district was at Petersville, utilizing drag lines and mobile elevated washing plants.

The onset of World War II caused a shut down of almost all of the mining operations. Although a small recovery occurred in the late 1940's, nearly all mining activity had ended by the mid 1960's because of increased operational costs and a fixed gold price. In 1959, a group of settlers from the Detroit, Michigan area moved to Talkeetna and across the partly frozen river to join existing settlers of the Trapper Creek area to homestead. These homesteaders, later known as the "Fifty-Niners," lived in trailers and tents before putting up log cabins and wanigans. They planted gardens on land cleared by earlier settlers. They had intended to live off the land by hunting, trapping and selling the garden produce. However, there was no transportation for their products and consequently the settlers had to find other employment. Most worked on the construction of the George Parks

Highway, which was completed in 1971.

In the late 1970's the price of gold began rising and many of the old mining operations were brought back into production. During 1980, 81 permits for mining operations had been applied for at locations distributed throughout the district, with one of the principal areas being Upper Peters Creek and Cache Creek.

Cultural

Trapper Creek

The Trapper Creek community is located in the area from the intersection of Petersville Road and the George Parks Highway too about Kroto Creek where the Petersville community begins. The Trapper Creek community generally got its start about 1950 with the arrival of homesteaders seeking agricultural lands although earlier settlers were already living in the area. While most of the initial homesteaders left the area soon after 1950, the construction of the George Parks Highway in the late 1960s stimulated others to consider the Trapper Creek area for their residences. Today, the Trapper Creek area residents pursue mining, agriculture and are involved in businesses that support intrastate commerce and the visitor industry.

Petersville

The Petersville community council encompasses an area of about 220 square miles beginning at Kroto Creek and extending to Petersville and Peters Creek. The Petersville community was founded in the early 1900s with the discovery of gold in the upper tributaries of Peters Creek. As in other parts of Alaska, gold mining in the Petersville area witnessed peaks in the early 1900s, a valley during World War II and slight resurgence in the 1970s. Gold mining continues to be active in the area although at a reduced scale compared to the early 1900s despite the prospect of large gold reserves in the upper Peters Creek area.

Recreational

The corridor provides access to a popular site for a variety of recreational activities. Some of the major activities occurring in the area presently include dog-mushing, snow-machining, hunting, hiking, cycling, fishing, and Nordic skiing. Visitors to the area include area residents and their friends and relatives, regional visitors from other parts of South Central Alaska and out-of-state visitors. Generally speaking, most visitors may be characterized as Borough and Anchorage residents who have a recreational cabin in the area or visit someone who does. Snowmachining is probably the most popular winter recreational activity. The amount of vehicles with snowmachine trailers has exceeded the capacity of the few, existing parking areas. Salmon fishing at Kroto and Moose Creeks and rafting the Deshka River are probably the most popular summer activities.

Natural

Climate

The Petersville Road area is in a transition zone between the maritime climate of Cook Inlet and the continental climate to the north. The Alaska Range greatly influences the climate of the area by blocking much of the moisture that originates in the Gulf of Alaska as it sweeps inland. The south side of the mountains is much wetter, with two to three times the precipitation of the north side. In January 1993, temperatures ranged from -30 to +33 degrees F. and in July 1993, temperatures ranged from 42 to 83 degrees F. Precipitation for that year was 28.69 inches of rain and 70 inches of snow (January -September). It is possible to view several different weather patterns from the Petersville Road Corridor, especially in the summer.

Topography

The Petersville Road area is dominated by Mt. McKinley and the Alaska Range. Mt McKinley is North America's highest peak at 20,320 feet. The Alaska Range is generally aligned east-west. The central portion of the range is rugged, with several long and large glaciers, including the Eldridge, Ruth, Tokositna, Kahiltna, and Yentna. These glaciers range between 35 and 45 miles in length and are up to 4 miles in width.

The lower southern slopes of the Alaska Range are generally steep between the glaciers. Near the terminus of each of the glaciers the terrain is more gentle, with rolling tundra-covered hills extending into the lowlands associated with the Chulitna and Susitna Rivers. Tributaries to the Deshka, Chulitna, Susitna and Kahlitna Rivers flow through the study area. There are numerous lakes and streams in the area. All of these topographic features may be seen from the corridor.

Geology

The extreme vertical relief of the Alaska Range has resulted from the collision of the Pacific and Continental plates. As the Pacific plate pushes northward it lifts the Continental plate. Related volcanic activity has added to the form and mass of the mountains. The substrate below the south side of the Alaska Range is composed of igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks ranging in age from relatively recent to Precambrian. Longitudinal faults run east - west of the Range. The principal fault in the area is the Denali. The faults are characterized by linear valleys and low passes. The lowlands are generally, covered by ground moraines, drumlin fields, eskers, and glacial outwash plains. Mineral resources in the region include coal, copper, arsenic, gold, silver, tin, molybdenum, lead, and zinc.

Soils

Soil conditions in this area are considered to be complex. There are seven major soil types in the region. The primary types in the study area are outwash plain (EA2), loamy, near level (SO1). SO1 soils are generally suitable for development, while EA2 are often subject to river flooding and/or glacial outburst flooding.

Vegetation

Vegetation along the first ten miles of the Petersville Road consists primarily of mixed forest, including spruce, birch, aspen, and cottonwood. Beyond ten miles vegetation becomes a mix of grass and shrubs such as alder and willow. There are occasional wetland sites that are primarily muskeg. Dominant species in the muskegs are cotton grass and sphagnum.

Wildlife

The Petersville Road area is home to a wide variety of wildlife and also provides migratory corridors for many more. Small mammals include lynx, red foxes, beavers, wolverines, land otters, minks, short-tailed and least weasels, martens, snowshoe hares, red and flying squirrels, porcupines, muskrats, marmots, pikas, and coyotes. (DNR 1980). Lynx are considered a species of concern under the Endangered Species Act.

Larger mammals include brown bears, black bears, caribou, moose, wolves and coyote. Black bear range in forested areas, while brown bears prefer more open areas. Caribou, moose and wolves use a variety of habitats in the area, while the Dall sheep favor higher terrain.

Nonmigratory and migratory birds are abundant. Nonmigratory birds include ravens, magpies, downy woodpeckers, chickadees, spruce grouse, brown creeper, gyrfalcon, pine grosbeak, redpoll, willow and rock ptarmigans, and several species of owls. Migratory birds include golden and bald eagles, northern goshawk, olive-sided flycatcher, sandhill cranes and the American peregrine falcon. Bald eagles are generally summer residents. The northern goshawk, olive-sided flycatcher, and the American peregrine falcon are either listed on the Endangered Species Act or are considered species of concern. Waterfowl are also numerous. Trumpeter swans, Harlequin ducks, and Tule greater white-fronted geese are three migratory waterfowl in the area.

Five species of Pacific salmon and eight other important freshwater game fish are found in the Petersville Road area. These include King, Coho, Sockeye, Chum, and Pink salmon, Lake and Rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, Arctic grayling, Northern Pike, Whitefish, and Burbot. Additionally, four species of non-game fish are also found. These are blackfish, longnose sucker, slimy sculpin, and Arctic lampreys.

Archaeological

The first Euroamericans arrived in the Upper Cook Inlet region in 1778. When these Euroamericans arrived Athabascan Tanaina Indians inhabited the Susitna River and its drainages. Native Alaskan villages and campsites were typically located near the confluence of streams and rivers where access to salmon fish runs was possible. No formal archeological surveys have been conducted along the corridor of Petersville Road although the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is presently conducting field surveys of the Upper Susitna Valley area. The initial phase of the multi-phased survey program was completed in 1995 and information was conducted on the Talkeetna area. The surveys concentrate on Borough lands which are being considered for disposal. No significant archaeological resources were found in the 1995 field survey.

Conclusion

As the foregoing analysis of the Petersville Road indicates, in regard to the six intrinsic qualities indicates, Petersville Road offers the visitor, resident and traveler and unparalleled experience. Scenic and historic views and activities abound. The learning experience provided by the road's geologic, existing mining operations and historic building is unique. The presence of North America's highest peak, Mt. McKinley, provides a dramatic focus point all along the corridor. Clearly, the Petersville Road Corridor is one of America's special roadways.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Existing Economic Activities

The communities of Trapper Creek and Petersville are small in terms of population and overall economic activity. The existing economic activities of the Trapper Creek and Petersville communities are characterized by low population and are the influence of tourism and recreation (restaurants, lodges, bed and breakfasts, fuel stations), agriculture, small scale mining, and local or state government (schools, post office, highway maintenance).

Future Opportunities

There are two distinct possible sets of economic opportunities that may occur in the vicinity of Petersville Road in the immediate future, each vastly different from the other and each dependent on whether or not a visitor center is constructed at Tokositna. If a visitor center is not built, the economic growth will continue to be based upon an increase of the existing visitation which is growing at a moderate rate. If the visitor center is built then economic growth will occur at a much higher rate.

No Visitor Center

Without a visitor center at Tokositna, economic growth will be moderate. Growth will be likely based on additional recreational use (primarily snowmachine use) of the area and on the general growth in the Alaska tourism market. With the limited improvements recommended herein, the local communities could increase, albeit by small amounts, the number of visitors to the area by making a visit to the area more convenient, safe and interesting. The recommendations contained herein, especially the capital improvements like upgraded parking lots with sanitary facilities, constructed pullouts with interpretive signage and a scenic byway designation will enhance the visitor experience and promote visitation. Economic spinoffs would be of a smaller scale with small, incremental increases in sales at local restaurants, fuel stations and stays at bed and breakfasts and lodges.

With Visitor Center

The construction of a visitor center and related facilities at Tokositna as envisioned in the South Denali Development Concept Plan would create dramatically different economic opportunities than without. The dramatic difference is based on the belief that the visitor center will attract approximately 92,000 new visitors in the year 2002 and grow to 207,000 by the year 2012. The amount of independent visitors is estimated to be 10,000 in 2002 and 26,000 by the year 2012. The economic opportunities of the increase in visitation would be in supplying accommodations, food service, transportation services and service to the new visitors, especially the independent traveler. More specific opportunities include, recreational vehicle parks, overnight accommodations at campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, and lodges, vehicle repair, food service, and “dump” station

services.

SIGNAGE PLAN

Interpreting Significant Resources

Significant scenic resources identified in the Petersville Road, Scenic Resources Study completed by Land Design North, include views of Mount McKinley and the Alaskan Range, wetland and hydrologic features, geologic features and northern landscapes and the cycle of the Pacific Salmon. Numerous opportunities exist to better interpret these resources along Petersville Road which would make the traveling experience more informative and interesting. To accomplish this opportunity several pullouts should be constructed to take advantage of scenic views and at each pullout a series of interpretative signs should be installed. The interpretative signs should inform the traveler about the scene they are witnessing, how it changes during the seasons and discuss environmental influences and wildlife of the immediate area.

Specific locations for interpretative signs are:

- At Mileposts 9.8 or 10.2 provide discussion of wetlands and hydrologic influences (with turnouts).
- At both Moose and Kroto Creeks provide discussion of riverine habitats and local geologic features (with turnouts).
- At appropriately designed turnouts at Mileposts 12.8, 13.1 and 16.3. Include interpretative signage and architectural guardrails reflecting the significance of the views of Mount McKinley and the Alaskan Range.

The present absence of numerous signs provides uninterrupted views of the road's impressive scenic resources. The Planning Team desires to maintain this quality of road's corridor and therefore recommends that no signs within one-quarter of a mile from the roadway be larger than 32 square feet each side with total square footage for both sides of the sign is 64 square feet and that an inventory be undertaken of all signs within the corridor.

Supporting the Visitor Experience

The interpretative signage program discussed above is one way of supporting the visitor experience. Other methods include informing the visitor of the area, its history and the location of amenities and supporting services. Information, in the form of brochures, maps and other literature can be provided at a central location. The Planning Team recommends that a small, informational visitor kiosk be constructed in the vicinity of Scotty Lake. The kiosk would contain information about businesses and available services in the area, and maps of the Petersville Road area illustrating geologic features and visitor facilities, identify the location of campgrounds, "dump" stations, etc.

Making the Petersville Road safe, convenient and pleasant to travel on and maintain the road's scenic qualities is another method of supporting the visitor experience. The Planning Team

recommends capital improvements such as upgraded parking lots, scenic buffers etc. be implemented to support the visitor experience. These recommendations include:

- Designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- A 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway about 2,000 feet north and south of the intersection with Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- A 35 miles-per-hour speed zone from milepost 0 of Petersville Road to approximately milepost 4.
- Construction of a primitive, separated motorized trail along the southern and western right-of-way of Petersville Road for its entire length both existing and proposed (see Maps #2, #3, and #4).
- Construction of a separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the northern right-of-way of Petersville Road from milepost 0 to approximately milepost 5.
- Construction of a non-separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathway utilizing six foot shoulders on each lane of Petersville Road from approximately milepost 5 to the end of the proposed extension, milepost 40.
- Designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the Oilwell Road and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- A 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road approximately one-quarter of a mile east and west to Moose Creek Bridge of the intersection with Oilwell Road (see Map #1).
- Flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Redesign and upgrade of the Kroto Creek parking lot to reflect the significance of its service as a major winter recreation trail head.

While the Planning Team realizes the borough may wish place additional public lands in private ownership it recommends that lands along the roadway, due to their scenic and intrinsic resources, be retained in public ownership. The study area contains lands meeting these criteria because of the impressive views of the Petersville Hills, Alaska Range, existing mining activity, and the Peters Creek gorge. These lands are presently owned by the State of Alaska and are located north of the Forks Roadhouse. Because of the unique views and historical value of the lands north of the Forks Roadhouse, the Planning Team recommends that a 2-mile corridor (1 mile on each side of the road measured from the edge of the right-of-way) receive legislative designation as a public use area with the provision that mining is allowed since mining played such an important part of the area's historical development. Mining and recreational activities must also be allowed because it will provide tourists and other visitors with additional attractions and provide local employment opportunities.

The present vehicle turnout located at Milepost 7.2-7.3 presents an unsafe condition because of its location on a hill that obstructs the motorist's lines of sight. This turnout should therefore be eliminated.

There are a few parcels of land within the first 19 miles of Petersville Road that have important scenic qualities and are owned by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (see Map#1). The Planning Team recommends that these lands be retained in public ownership. The Planning Team also recognizes that the borough obtained lands through the Municipal Entitlement Program in order to diversify the economy, develop a tax base and obtain revenue to fund municipal services, therefore the Planning Team recommends that the borough reconvey these lands to the State of Alaska and obtain lands elsewhere. Additionally, the Planning Team recommends that prior to the conveyance of any interest in public land, whether short or long term, public notice and community council review should occur. Lastly, the Planning Team recommends that no interest in those lands owned by the State of Alaska and Matanuska-Susitna Borough within 1 mile on either side of the road centerline be conveyed by sale, lease, or other means. The Planning Team believes that this latter recommendation is the best method of maintaining the integrity of the corridor's important values.

After reviewing the assessment of intrinsic resources completed by Land Design North, land ownership patterns, recreation activities and the estimated growth in visitation the Planning Team determined that a corridor should be established along Petersville Road to maintain its existing scenic qualities. The corridor plan is not intended to bar development of private property. Its purpose is to identify areas of important intrinsic values and to manage development within the corridor. The Planning Team believes the corridor should be composed of three widths in order to recognize the different development and land ownership patterns. From the intersection of the George Parks Highway to Moose Creek the corridor includes the Petersville Road right-of-way and the 300-foot scenic buffer where it presently exists. Beyond Moose Creek and extending to Petersville the scenic buffer will include the road right-of-way and ¼ mile each side of the road, and from Petersville to the site of the proposed Tokositna visitor's center the scenic buffer will include the road right-of-way and 1 mile on each side of the road.

As reported in the South Denali Development Concept Plan, should the Tokositna visitor center be built visitation to the area will increase dramatically. The increase in visitation will place a strain on existing emergency medical and fire services as the Trapper Creek community presently relies on a volunteer-based ambulance response team and does not have emergency fire personnel. Once the existing ambulance leaves the area, the closest ambulance is located in Talkeetna, an hour's drive away. It is likely that the increase in visits to the area will result in an increase in traffic accidents. In order to adequately respond to emergencies the Planning Team recommends that additional emergency medical personnel be activated during the period from May 15 to September 15 of each year. Additional emergency equipment should also be placed in the area to provide adequate resources for emergency response. Funding for existing emergency medical service comes from special assessment on local property owners. Funding for additional personnel and equipment that are needed to serve non-area residents must come from other funding sources and not place a financial burden on local taxpayers. It is proposed that funding for the additional personnel and equipment is made from bed tax receipts, corporate donations and capital investments by the State of Alaska, National Park Service and Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Before development of new parking lots and pullouts, the community councils should have the

opportunity to review and comment on the proposed designs. The Borough Department of Planning will coordinate these reviews. Moreover, prior to construction of parking lots and pullouts funding for the operation and maintenance of these facilities should be identified so that trash is removed and sanitary facilities maintained. The recommended funding source for operations and maintenance is bed tax receipts.

Supporting Local Businesses

Local businesses may be supported by making the traveling experience on Petersville Road more rewarding to the visitor, especially the independent traveler. Another way local businesses may be supported is by encouraging new development to locate in present areas of development, thereby reducing the potential of strip and dispersed development. Providing information about the area and where services and facilities are located in the immediate area is another way of supporting businesses as new visitors are by definition unfamiliar to the area. This may be accomplished through a marketing effort (discussed below) and by providing a centralized location for information on the area such as a visitor information kiosk at Scotty Lake.

MARKETING PLAN

Scenic Byway Designation

The national Scenic Byways program was created in 1991 with the adoption of Inter-Modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The program seeks to designate roads or highways throughout the nation which pass through corridors of great interest, offering scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, or archaeological qualities. The major goals of the National Scenic Byways program are:

- Promoting the recognition and interpretation and assuring the long-term maintenance and enhancement of American landscapes by preserving the major intrinsic qualities of scenic byway corridors;
- Attracting increased numbers of both national and international visitors to the Scenic Byways and All American Roads; and
- Providing broad learning experiences for all travelers, emphasizing the educational and interpretational opportunities they present within the National Scenic Byways and All American Roads corridors.⁷

For a roadway to be designated a scenic byway it must be unique in terms of what it has to offer. For instance, views that are not possible anywhere else, a glimpse of our history, etc. Petersville Road certainly has unique qualities, spectacular views of Mount McKinley and the Alaskan Range, a history of gold mining, a view of Alaskan agriculture and homesteading and a variety of recreation activities. The corridor is clearly of great interest as noted in this plan's Assessment Section, offers unsurpassed scenic, historic culture, recreational and archaeological facilities. Many visitors seek out scenic byways when planning their vacations, thus obtaining scenic byway designation is one way of marketing the attractiveness of the corridor. Existing activities such as gold mining and snowmachining which are vital to the area today would be protected and promoted through the scenic byway designation. When a road is designated a scenic byway, it receives recognition by a number of private organizations such as the American Automobile Association. These organizations provide information to their members about the scenic byway; hence, the organizations market the corridor for the community "free of charge." For all of these reasons, and for the intrinsic qualities described within the Assessment section of this plan, the Planning Team, recommends that a scenic byway designation be obtained for Petersville Road.

Methods

The corridor will be marketed through a number of other methods to include a brochure, advertisements in the *Milepost*, and signage. A brochure could be developed by the Department of Planning in consultation with community members and the Matanuska-Susitna Visitors and Convention Bureau describing the intrinsic qualities of the corridor. The Milepost is a document used by the many visitors to Alaska who travel to the state by automobile or recreational vehicle.

An advertisement in the Milepost with a description of the corridor's qualities could reach many potential visitors. Finally, signage near the intersection of the George Parks Highway and at other strategic locations advising travelers of the location of Petersville Road could attract visitors to the area by making the corridor easier to find. Local businesses could also market the corridor through their own marketing efforts, and utilize the scenic byway designation to differentiate the area.

As a part of its responsibility to promote economic development within the borough, it is recommended that the Planning Department place an advertisement within the Milepost which generally describes the tourism and recreational attractions within the borough and also specifically identifies Petersville Road as a scenic corridor meriting special attention.

AIR QUALITY

The road corridor is not within an air-quality non-attainment area. While no scientific analysis has been performed on the corridor's air quality, it is believed to be better than average since the corridor is within a rural and semi-remote area with little development. Also most development is concentrated at the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road and this development is predominantly residential with an agriculture and small commercial. There is no industrial or heavy commercial development within the study area.

Should the proposed Tokositna Visitor Center be constructed it is expected to attract a significant number of visitors, most of whom will arrive by automobile, recreational vehicle or bus. The resultant traffic is likely to create air quality impacts from dust if Petersville Road is not paved in its entirety. The road should therefore be upgraded and the unpaved portion paved to eliminate dust.

PLAN UPDATES

Methods

From time to time it becomes necessary to update or revise a plan due to changing circumstances or some unforeseen development. This plan will be reviewed at least once every three years. The review will coincide with the report, made every three years, by the Department of Planning to the Borough Assembly on the state of community councils. This date was selected because the Department's report is presently mandated and scheduled and therefore would provide for a regular review of the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan. Also, the Department's report on community councils considers the development patterns that have occurred since its prior report was compiled and notes changes and potential concerns.

More specifically, the Department of Planning would communicate to the Trapper Creek and Petersville community councils that it was preparing the community council report and as part of this report would ask the two community councils to review the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan in order to determine its relevancy and need for modification. If one of the community councils suggests that the plan be revised, the Planning Commission of the Borough would be informed of the suggestion and asked to begin the Planning Team nomination process. A Planning Team would be formed and requested to review the plan and suggest modifications if any. The standard plan review and adoption process used by the Borough in developing community-based plans would be used.

Plan Modifications

Once a plan is adopted questions may arise when actual implementation occurs or because of an unforeseen situation. In modifying the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan it is paramount that the local communities of Trapper Creek and Petersville be actively involved in the discussion of the proposals as the plan is a community-based document. Therefore, both the Trapper Creek and Petersville community councils will be advised of any proposed modification and asked to comment on it. However, some proposed changes may be more significant than others so a two tiered system for processing changes is proposed.

Definitions of Minor and Major Changes

A minor change does not modify, detract or add to the plan's basic intent and serves only to clarify the plan, make it consistent, facilitate its implementation or make a technical correction. A major change on-the-other hand, permanently changes the plan by adding to it, detracting from it or otherwise modifying in such a fashion that alters one of more of the plan's basic policies, guidelines or recommendations.

Modification Process

Requests to change the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan will be submitted to the Department of Planning of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Director of Planning will determine whether or not the proposed modification is a minor or major change as defined immediately above. Upon determining whether or not a proposed modification is minor or major change the Director of Planning will notify the Trapper Creek and Petersville community councils of the proposed modification, the Director's determination of minor or major change and ask for their comments. Minor changes will be adjudicated by the Director in consultation with the community councils. The Planning Commission will be advised of the minor change by memorandum. Major changes will be made by the Borough Assembly after receiving the recommendation(s) of the Planning Commission and comments from the community councils. All requests for major changes will be advertised in the local newspaper prior to Planning Commission consideration and public notices will be placed in the Trapper Creek and Petersville communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of these recommendations may be implemented immediately, while others will be implemented over time.

Safety

- Establish designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Establish a 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway about 2,000 feet north and south of the intersection with Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Establish a 35 miles-per-hour speed zone from milepost 0 of Petersville Road to approximately milepost 4.
- Construct a primitive, separated motorized trail along the southern and western right-of-way of Petersville Road for its entire length both existing and proposed (see Maps #2, #3, and #4).
- Construct a separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the northern right-of-way of Petersville Road from milepost 0 to approximately milepost 5.
- Construct non-separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathways utilizing six foot shoulders on each lane of Petersville Road from approximately milepost 5 to the end of the proposed extension, milepost 40.
- Establish designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the Oilwell Road and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Establish a 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road approximately one-quarter of a mile east and west to Moose Creek Bridge of the intersection with Oilwell Road (see Map #1).
- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Eliminate the turnout located a milepost 7.2-7.3 as it presents an unsafe condition.
- Replace Moose Creek bridge and include a pair of protected pedestrian walkways and a pedestrian underpass.

Recreation and Tourism

- An interpretative panel and informational kiosk should be located within assessment unit 1 in the vicinity of Scotty Lake which discusses the settlement along the initial part of the roadway (see Map #1).
- Turnouts with interpretative panels at Mileposts 9.8 or 10.2 to discuss wetlands and hydrologic influences.

- Interpretive panels at both Moose and Kroto Creeks to discuss riverine habitats and local natural features.
- Redesign and upgrade of the Kroto Creek parking lot to include trash receptacles and sanitary facilities to better serve snowmachiners and to reflect the significance of its service as a major winter recreation trail head.
- Appropriately designed turnouts at Mileposts 12.8, 13.1 and 16.3. The turnouts should include guardrails and interpretive signage that reflect the significance of the views of Mount McKinley and the Alaska Range.
- Obtaining special designation of Petersville Road as a scenic corridor.
- Utilizing the existing scenic buffer to reduce the distractions created by clutter placed to close to the roadway.
- Encourage development toward existing settlement and development patterns to maintain the “intactness” of the roadway.
- Use of a natural vegetative buffer in areas not presently developed.
- Disturbed areas along the roadway, i.e., roadcuts, fills, gravel pits should be revegetated and “designed” in such a way as to provide a natural and staggered edges.
- Implement a dust reduction program by paving all of Petersville Road.

Other

- Retain a 2-mile corridor (1 mile on each side of the road measured from the edge of the right-of-way) in public ownership north of the Forks Roadhouse. With the corridor ultimately receiving a legislative designation as a public use area in order to maintain access for all recreational activities with the provision that mining is allowed.
- Retain in public ownership lands identified in Map #1 for the high scenic qualities.
- The borough reconveys to the State of Alaska certain lands obtained through the Municipal Entitlement Program because of their high scenic qualities, and obtain entitlement lands elsewhere in the borough.
- That no interest in any lands owned by the State of Alaska or Matanuska-Susitna Borough that are within 1 mile on either side of the road centerline be conveyed in order to protect the important values of the corridor.
- Establish a corridor along Petersville Road to maintain existing scenic qualities. The corridor will be composed of two widths in order to recognize the different development and land ownership patterns.
- Activate additional emergency personnel during the period from May 15 to September 15 of each year. Additional emergency equipment should also be placed in the area to provide adequate emergency response resources for emergencies.
- Allow community councils to review and comment on proposed new parking lots and pullouts prior to development. Additionally, funding for the operation and maintenance of these facilities should be identified prior to construction.
- The Planning Department will place an advertisement within the Milepost which generally describes the tourism and recreational attractions within the borough.
- Prior to the conveyance of any public land, whether short or long term, public notice and

community council review should occur.

- Within one-quarter mile of the roadway institute a maximum size limit of 32 square feet; however, double sided signs are allowed when each side is 32 square feet or less.
- Complete an inventory of all signs within the corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

The Planning Team has recognized that the Petersville Road corridor contains significant recreational, scenic and cultural resources which should be maintained and enhanced. The Team discussed various methods of accomplishing these two goals and determined that a variety of actions are required. The Team's recommendations include capital improvements, better definition of existing rules on the scenic buffer, safety improvements, traffic controls, marketing, etc. This section of the plan describes how the Team's specific recommendations should be implemented and the responsible party(ies).

Maintenance and Enhancement

Capital improvements for upgrading of the road, parking lots and construction of new pullouts and interpretative signs should be funded from the ISTEA and Scenic Byway programs. The Borough will be the responsible party for conveying these requests to AkDOT&PF through the capital improvement program (CIP).

Maintenance of the road, pullouts and parking lots will be the responsibility of AkDOT&PF. Funds for trash removal from pullouts and parking lots and for the operations of sanitary facilities should be obtained from the Borough's bed tax receipts.

Improving Safety

The Planning Team has identified a number of safety improvements in addition those proposed by the AkDOT&PF. The improvements suggested by the Planning Team will make Petersville Road a safer facility, more convenient to use and attractive to visitors and residents. The team's recommendations range from designated speed zones to construction of and separation of motorized and non-motorized pathways. Ultimately the AkDOT&PF is responsible for all of the team's recommended safety improvements. The Borough will be responsible for conveying the recommendations to AkDOT&PF through the CIP process, for those items such as pedestrian/bicycle facilities and motorized trails, designated speed zones, flashing yellow balls and intersection improvements.

Improving Community Quality of Life

This planning effort was initiated as an attempt to address changes expected from proposed growth along Petersville Road whether or not a South Denali Visitor Center is developed at Tokositna. In the face of expected growth the Planning Team has identified a need to maintain and enhance the quality of life for the community. While striving to improve the quality of life it is important to identify the desires of the community so that the efforts do not produce an atmosphere they find to be undesirable. Essentially, all of the recommendations developed by the Planning Team work toward improving quality of life in some respect. Safety recommendations will create a safer environment, recommendations related to scenic buffers and view sheds will maintain the aesthetics of the area and separated and non-separated pathways will make the community more enjoyable for residents and nonresident alike. The community, the borough and the state are all responsible for the implementation of the recommendations related to improving the quality of life.

Enhancing Present Uses

Present uses occurring along the Petersville Road corridor are residential, agricultural, recreational, small scale, scattered commercial, and small scale mining. The Planning Team discussed, at length, methods to enhance present uses. In many ways the enhancement of one use will subsequently enhance another. For example, by providing facilities for recreational users such as parking areas, trash receptacles and restroom facilities there will be a reduction in trespass conflicts between residents and visitors and the area will be more likely to remain litter free. The majority of the recommendations related to enhancing present uses will be implemented by the AkDOT&PF. The Borough will assist in the implementation through the CIP process and funding maintenance and operations from bed tax receipts.

Enhancing the Visitor Experience

One objective of this corridor management plan is to enhance the visitor experience of Petersville Road. If the Tokositna visitor center becomes a reality the number of visitors using Petersville Road may be 207,000 by 2012. The Planning Team developed a variety of recommendations related to enhancement of the visitor experience. Some of the recommendations are specific, such as identifying locations for interpretive panels and informational kiosks. The implementation of these types of recommendations will be the responsibility of the AkDOT&PF through the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Other recommendations associated with the enhancement of the visitor experience are things such as vegetative buffers and retention of the scenic qualities. The majority of responsibility for these type of recommendations will fall to the Borough through its planning and land use powers.

Maintaining Scenic Qualities

The Planning Team has recognized that the Petersville Road corridor contains notable scenic qualities which should be maintained. The Team discussed various methods of accomplishing this goal and determined a number of actions are necessary. The Team's recommendations include capital improvements, better definition of existing rules of the scenic buffer, review of the borough's

municipal entitlement and land disposal programs retaining of public lands along the corridor and adoption of a 32 square foot (one side); while double sided signs may not exceed 64 square feet for signs within one-quarter mile of the roadway. These actions will be the responsibility of the Borough.

Capital Improvements

The Planning Team has identified a number of recommendations that can be considered “capital improvements.” These range from upgrading parking areas and pullouts, to creating designated left-hand and right-hand turn lanes, to construction of motorized trails, and non-motorized paths. All of these recommendations will be implemented through the borough’s CIP process, the state’s CIP process, and through the federal ISTEA and Scenic Byway programs.

Public Use Area

The area north of the Forks Roadhouse and within one-half mile (either side) of the road right-of-way should receive legislative designation as a Public Use Area so as to protect continued access for snowmachiners and other recreationists. The Public Use Area must also allow mining to continue to occur because of its employment and economic contributions, historic significance and attractiveness to visitors who are unfamiliar with Alaska mining operations.

Scenic Byway Designation

Another implementation tool for obtaining additional road and enhancement funding and for maintaining the scenic qualities of Petersville Road is the special designation of the road as a scenic byway. The national Scenic Byways program seeks to designate roads or highways throughout the nation which pass through corridors of great interest, offering scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, or archaeological qualities. This process will be initiated by the Borough after consideration by the Trapper Creek and Petersville community councils, but will finally be decided at the state and federal level.

Ongoing Review

From time to time it becomes necessary to update or revise a plan due to changing circumstances or some unforeseen development. The Planning Team outlined a series of steps for the review process (see Plan Modification section). The review will be initiated by the Borough Planning Department, is responsible for managing the Planning Team review process.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the plan summarizes all of the recommendations of the Petersville Road Corridor Management Plan. It is important to note that some of these recommendations may be implemented immediately, while others will be implemented over time.

Safety

- Establish designated left-hand and right-hand turning lanes at the intersection of the George Parks Highway and Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Establish a 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway about 2,000 feet north and south of the intersection with Petersville Road (see Map #1).
- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 45 miles-per-hour speed zone on the George Parks Highway to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Establish a 35 miles-per-hour speed zone from milepost 0 of Petersville Road to approximately milepost 4.
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- Construct a separated non-motorized pedestrian/bicycle pathway along the northern right-of-way of Petersville Road from milepost 0 to approximately milepost 5.
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- Place flashing yellow balls at the beginning of the 30 miles-per-hour speed zone on Petersville Road to alert motorists to the speed limit change (see Map #1).
- Eliminate the turnout located a milepost 7.2-7.3 as it presents an unsafe condition.
- Replace Moose Creek bridge and include a pair of protected pedestrian walkways and a pedestrian underpass.

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- An interpretative panel and informational kiosk should be located within assessment unit 1 in the vicinity of Scotty Lake which discusses the settlement along the initial part of the roadway (see Map #1).

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- Redesign and upgrade of the Kroto Creek parking lot to include trash receptacles and sanitary facilities to better serve snowmachiners and to reflect the significance of its service as a major winter recreation trail head.
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- Obtaining special designation of Petersville Road as a scenic corridor.
- Utilizing the existing scenic buffer to reduce the distractions created by clutter placed to close to the roadway.
- Encourage development toward existing settlement and development patterns to maintain the “intactness” of the roadway.
- Use of a natural vegetative buffer in areas not presently developed.
- Disturbed areas along the roadway, i.e., roadcuts, fills, gravel pits should be revegetated and “designed” in such a way as to provide a natural and staggered edges.
- Implement a dust reduction program by paving all of Petersville Road.

Other

- Retain a 2-mile corridor (1 mile on each side of the road) measured from the edge of the right-of-way in public ownership north of the Forks Roadhouse. With the corridor ultimately receiving a legislative designation as a public use area in order to maintain access for all recreational activities with the provision that mining is allowed.
- Retain in public ownership lands identified in Map #1 for the high scenic qualities.
- The borough reconveys to the State of Alaska certain lands obtained through the Municipal Entitlement Program because of their high scenic qualities, and obtain entitlement lands elsewhere in the borough.
- Establish a corridor along Petersville Road to maintain existing scenic qualities. The corridor will be composed of two widths in order to recognize the different development and land ownership patterns.
- Activate additional emergency personnel during the period from May 15 to September 15 of each year. Additional emergency equipment should also be placed in the area to provide adequate emergency response resources for emergencies.
- Allow community councils to review and comment on proposed new parking lots and pullouts prior to development. Additionally, funding for the operation and maintenance of these facilities should be identified prior to construction.
- The Planning Department will place an advertisement within the Milepost which generally describes the tourism and recreational attractions within the borough.
- Prior to the conveyance of any public land, whether short or long term, public notice and community council review should occur.
- Within one quarter mile of the roadway institute a maximum size limit of 32 square feet (one

side); however double sided signs are allowed where each side is 32 square feet or less.

ENDNOTES

1. Memorandum dated September 5, 1996 from John D. Horn, Regional Director, State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to Sally Gilbert, State CSU Coordinator, State of Alaska, Division of Governmental Coordination.
2. Revised Draft, Development Concept Plan, Environmental Impact Statement. South Side Denali Alaska. Prepared by South Side Cooperative Planning Team. U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.
3. Scenic Byways, Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning, Federal Highway Administration, U. S. Department of Transportation, June 1994.
4. Scenic Resource along the George Parks Highway, Inventory and Management Recommendation, State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources 1981.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Scenic Byways Advisory Committee Report; USDOT, FHWA, Publication No.: FHWA-PD-93-053, 1993.