

Transportation Equity in Alaska

Infrastructure Symposium

April 2, 2024



Savage Alpine Trail, Denali National Park



What is Equity?

Equity Vision for Transportation:

Accessible and affordable transportation for everyone in the community, resulting in fair distribution of transportation resources, benefits, costs, programs and services based upon differences in income, ability and other factors affecting transportation choice and impact.

Principles of Transportation Equity

- ▶ Transportation Equity is a *dynamic and ever-evolving practice* to be addressed as a part of standard planning process and standard operating procedures.
- ▶ Equity in transportation involves approaches that:
 - ▶ Elevate people and the myriad of lived experiences
 - ▶ Acknowledge the industry's role in perpetuating inequities and prioritizing voices of those that have been sidelined in decision-making processes
 - ▶ Cultivate tools, resources, and evaluation mechanisms for pursuing equity as both a journey and a destination.



IIJA: Equity Focus

Equity in the IIJA

- ▶ Funding decisions for many programs established or modified by the IIJA require agencies to **prioritize investments** in low-income, historically underserved, economically disadvantaged areas, including rural communities and tribal lands.
- ▶ In Alaska we have a big and obvious difference:
 - ▶ Urban / roaded Alaska
 - ▶ Rural / unroaded Alaska



Justice40 Policy

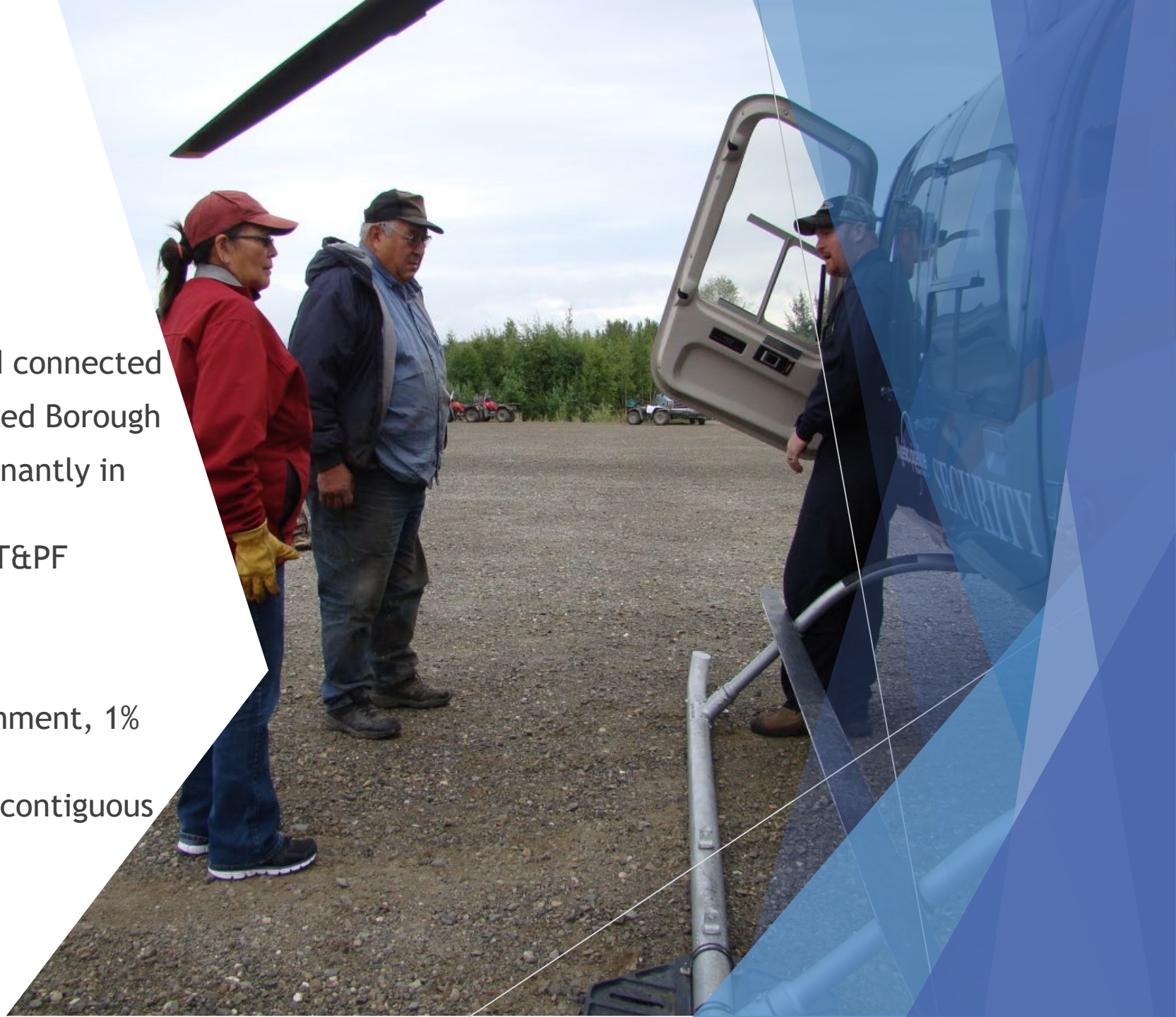
- ▶ From US DOT Website: “When done right, **transportation policy can transform economies, connect people to opportunities, and empower underserved communities** to build generational wealth for the future.”
- ▶ Justice40 was created to confront and address decades of underinvestment in disadvantaged communities. The initiative will bring resources to communities most impacted by climate change, pollution, and environmental hazards.
- ▶ The US DOT says Justice40 is an opportunity to address gaps in transportation infrastructure and public services by working toward the goal that at least 40% of the benefits from many of our grants, programs, and initiatives flow to disadvantaged communities
- ▶ Justice40 is a government wide initiative that makes a series of changes to ensure benefits reach communities most in need.
- ▶ 40% of all federal dollars go to disadvantaged populations.
- ▶ Supports poverty and low broadband areas, also rural and climate affected areas.

The background features a light purple map of Alaska. A dark teal rectangular box is centered horizontally across the middle of the map. The text "Alaska Context" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font within this box. The right side of the slide has a decorative background of overlapping blue and teal geometric shapes.

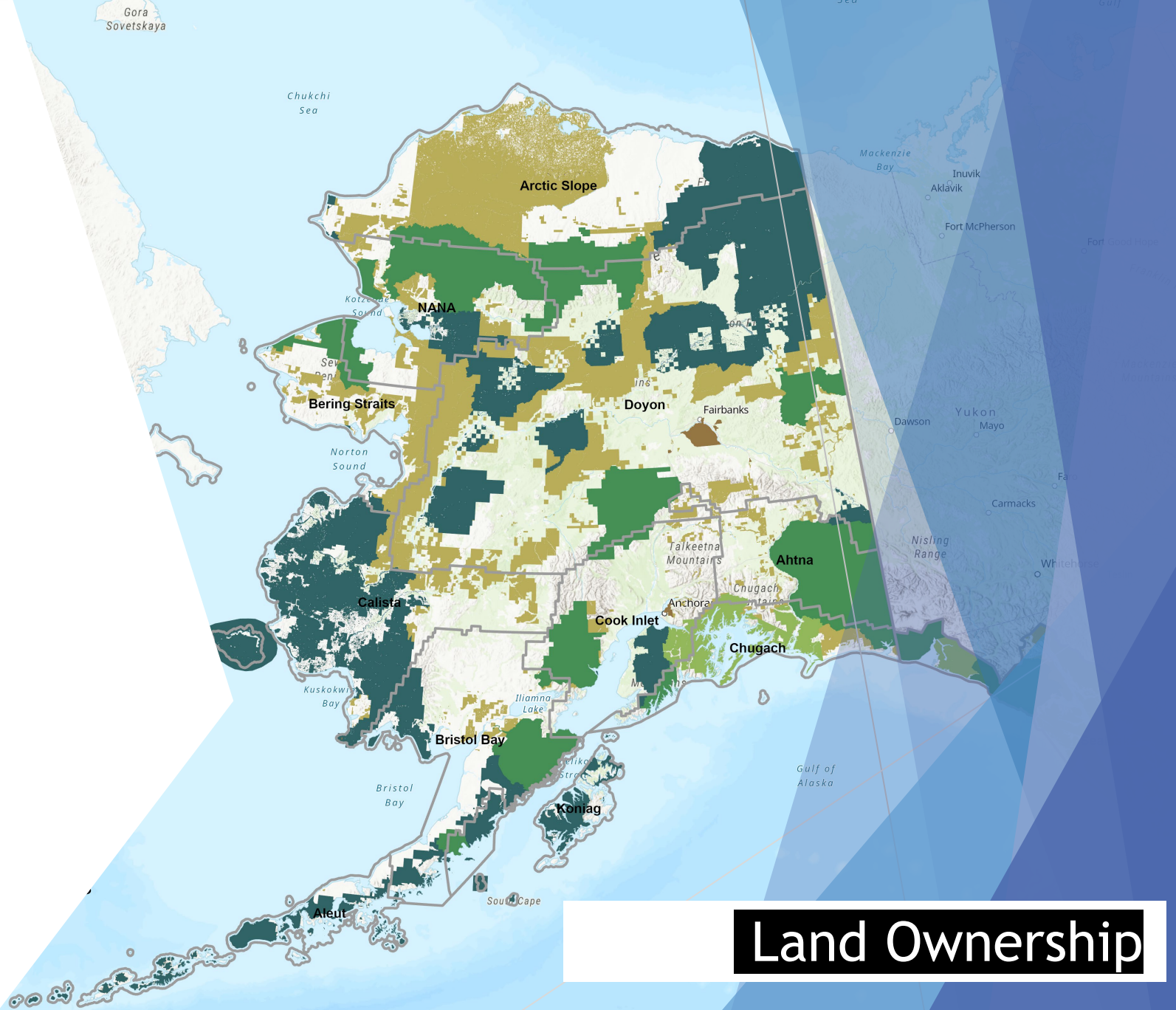
Alaska Context

Fast Facts about Alaska

- ▶ 2.5 times the size of Texas
- ▶ 82% of communities are not road connected
- ▶ 56% of Alaska is in the Unorganized Borough
- ▶ Tribal languages spoken predominantly in parts of Alaska
- ▶ 235 airports owned by SOA / DOT&PF
- ▶ 1.3 people per square mile
- ▶ 31,100 Lane miles to maintain
- ▶ 65% owned by the federal government, 1% private ownership
- ▶ Long coastline - longer than the contiguous US Combined



Building Surface connections in Alaska, when desired, is complex from a practical standpoint....



Land Ownership

What does the equity focus mean for the Alaska DOT?

- ▶ SECCAP: Statewide Equitable Community Connectivity Access Plan
 - ▶ Transportation - RAISE
 - ▶ Transit - Areas of Persistent Poverty Program Plan
- ▶ Will add an equity screening component to the STIP and TIPs
- ▶ Will consider equity in transportation planning and decision-making recommendations
- ▶ Will consciously incorporate equitable concerns into the business of project selection
- ▶ Will continue to emphasize partnerships of importance for equity (program pairing and funding innovations)

Factors to Consider...

- ▶ Urban and Rural context
- ▶ Community differences
- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ Economies
- ▶ Limited modes and options
- ▶ High costs

Who pays?

Who maintains?



Equity Considerations for Alaskan Transportation

- ▶ Distribution of projects/facilities
- ▶ Access to transportation services
- ▶ Service quality (e.g., modal diversity and distribution)
- ▶ External Impacts
- ▶ Broadband Access
- ▶ Economic Impacts
 - ▶ Housing, energy, cost of living
 - ▶ Resource and other development





What's Next?



STATEWIDE EQUITABLE COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY ACTION PLAN (SECCAP)

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

STATEWIDE, AK: ALASKA

PLANNING

RURAL

AREA OF PERSISTENT POVERTY: YES

HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY: YES

RAISE GRANT FUNDING: \$934,867

Areas of Persistent Poverty Plan...incorporated into SECAP

- ▶ This collaborative effort will feature State, federal, and AML working to develop an equity plan for disadvantaged communities in or adjacent to Areas of Persistent Poverty/Historically Disadvantaged Communities, providing an assessment of need and potential pathways for **prioritization of transit projects and services.**

Workshops: Equity Themes Workshop Question #1

- ▶ We need to create a vision for Transportation Equity in Alaska, and Equity in Alaska. Divide into tables. Consider a vision statement that takes into account many themes of equity.
 - ▶ Each table: discuss/develop a “vision statement” for transportation equity.
 - ▶ What does transportation equity look like to you?
 - ▶ Prepare to report out

Workshop Questions #2 and #3

- ▶ Think about where you are from. In what ways might you consider your community disadvantaged? Consider broader themes than just transportation.
 - ▶ Come up with a list.
 - ▶ Prepare to report out
- ▶ Consider what the “minimum equitable service/access level” is that your community needs. Discuss.
 - ▶ Prepare to describe how you came up with your answer!
 - ▶ Prepare to report out

Workshop Question #4

- ▶ Consider some themes in life that are associated with equity. Come up with 3-5 themes and prepare to discuss.
- ▶ Consider what is needed to have a reasonable quality of life.
 - ▶ Purpose will be to use this data to develop criteria for transportation equity
 - ▶ Prepare to report out

Workshop Exercise #5:

Community-based equity themes/issues

- ▶ Divide into tables; each table is a community
- ▶ Each table represents a specific Alaska Community Typology
- ▶ Consider the barriers to Equity you face
- ▶ Discuss/answer these questions
 - ▶ What does equitable transportation mean to my community?
 - ▶ What factors matter most for equity?
 - ▶ How is my community disadvantaged. Advantaged?
 - ▶ Are there concerns related to life/safety and transportation? What are they?
 - ▶ Are there concerns related to transportation cost? What are they?
 - ▶ What things can government do to improve my transportation situation?

Contacts



Nils Andreassen, AML

Judy Chapman, DOT&PF

Introduction

Judy Chapman, Deputy Director of
Planning, DOT&PF
Nils Andreassen, Executive Director,
Alaska Municipal League

Savage Alpine Trail, Denali National Park

Road to Tanana (completed 2017)

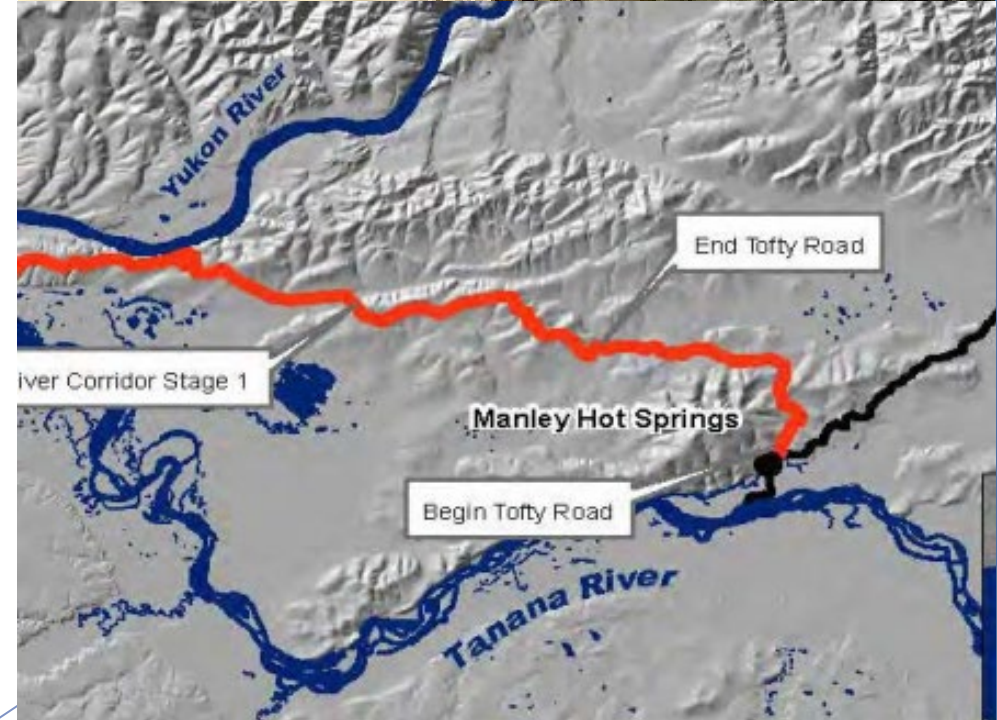
Extended the existing highway system that terminated near Manley Hot Springs to the Yukon River near Tanana. The project provides an all-season link to the south bank of the Yukon River.

Upgraded 16.5 Miles of existing roads and trails

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Constructed 19 miles of new road, including a bridge at Boulder Creek, and a boat landing/parking area at the Yukon River terminus

(33.4 miles single lane - 14.7M)





Kivalina Evacuation Road and Causeway (completed 2021)

- ▶ Kivalina Evacuation and School Site Access Road is a new road, bridge, and causeway that was built to accommodate all modes of transportation and all seasons. The road includes a causeway across Kivalina Lagoon. The road is the first step in a process to potentially relocate the entire Northwest Alaska village.
 - ▶ The road was built because the highway system demonstrated the need for a more effective evacuation route. The project team proposed constructing a causeway and bridge facility across the lagoon. Concepts previously studied for their feasibility included construction of an earthen causeway.
 - ▶ The road is open for use.
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