

# Road Projects Get the Green Light

For decades our city had its transportation needs go partially unanswered because there wasn't enough money available in the capital budget. This year is different. Anchorage drivers will remember the 2005 legislative session as the one that delivered real solutions to many of the city's long-running traffic problems.

There will always be individuals and organizations claiming we ignored one transportation project over another for political reasons. After a long career in road construction and another in politics, I have come to accept the fact it just comes with the territory.

A perfect example is the Begich administration's \$4.3 million dollar funding request to construct additional turn lanes at the Lake Otis Parkway & Tudor Road intersection. The Senate majority opposed that request because DOT traffic engineers looked at the proposal and determined it would not provide meaningful traffic relief to the intersection. I have said it before and I will say it again, the Senate majority will not support any transportation-funding request not endorsed by DOT traffic engineers.

A recent press release issued by the mayor's office points out that the city received nearly 80 percent of the funding it requested for transportation projects this year. Based on that figure, I think it's difficult for anyone to say with a straight face this legislature ignored the Begich administration's transportation funding requests for political reasons.

Senate President Ben Stevens is taking hits for what all 12 members of the Senate Majority decided on Lake Otis & Tudor. Let's not give Sen. Stevens all the credit for a sound public policy decision!

Thanks to a spike in oil prices, the Anchorage delegation could finally tackle that long list of road projects identified by the state Department of Transportation as the ones that will provide the maximum benefit. So many road projects got the green light this session there is not enough room here to list all of them, but here are the major ones that will get traffic moving again.

**Bragaw-Glenn Hwy. Interchange** – The \$30.5 million dollar overpass will do away with the traffic light at the intersection and with it a major traffic bottleneck.

**Dowling Road extension** – This \$19 million dollar project will push Dowling eastward so it connects with the new Bragaw Road extension. DOT traffic engineers estimate when these new corridors are open the number of vehicles using the Lake Otis & Tudor intersection will drop by as much as 25%!

**Bragaw & Tudor intersection** – \$7 million dollars will install more turn lanes at the intersection so traffic can enter and exit the Bragaw extension more quickly.

**Raspberry Road extension** - \$1.3 million dollars to extend Raspberry from Minnesota to Rovenna Street creates a new east-west corridor in that part of town. In the future that road will be extended all the way to Arctic Boulevard and C Street.

Kincaid Park Road - \$3.5 million dollars will upgrade the road from the park entrance to the chalet.

Expect to see fewer potholes and road ruts in the months ahead. The Anchorage delegation went along with the city's plan to pay for street repairs and pedestrian safety projects with state matching grants. This means millions of dollars will go to resurfacing existing roads and making other safety related improvements for drivers and pedestrians.

The capital budget also includes road transfer projects. The state and the Municipality of Anchorage struck a deal where the state agrees to pay for the design and construction of several Anchorage area roads. After that, the city assumes ownership of the roads and picks up the maintenance costs. This will free up more state road dollars in the years ahead.

Trails are used by lots of people to get around town and they are a big part of this year's public works budget. New trails will be built and existing ones will be upgraded across the Anchorage bowl.

Again, this is just a partial list of the Anchorage transportation projects funded this year and before we know it everyone will reap the benefits because drivers and pedestrians will interact more safely on roadways that are prepared for our growing economy and population.

Crafting and securing passage of important legislation can't always be done in 121 days. The 136 days we spent in Juneau may be remembered as one of the most significant legislative sessions in state history. I am confident the capital budget was well worth the effort.