

**NORTH LAKES COMMUNITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
TO MAT-SU BOROUGH FOR**

SHAW ELEMENTARY ACCESS PROJECT

RESOLUTION 24-004 DATED MAY 29, 2025

The undersigned Chair and Secretary on behalf of the North Lakes Community Council hereby present the following:

WHEREAS, it is imperative that there is safe vehicular access to all schools in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, particularly for buses and parents delivering school children to the schools and picking them up after school; and

WHEREAS, Shaw Elementary School is located on Paradise Lane and there are already significant community safety concerns with the intersection of Paradise Lane and Wasilla Fishhook Road due to the Shaw Elementary traffic, and

WHEREAS, even though many Shaw Elementary students ride buses, the existing parking lots and queueing lanes for personal vehicles (drop off and pick up) at Shaw Elementary are currently inadequate and result in vehicle queueing on Paradise Lane; and

WHEREAS, a decision seems to have been made (without consultation with or input from the North Lakes Community Council) to construct new facilities for relocation of the Birchtree Charter School adjacent to Shaw Elementary on Paradise Lane; and

WHEREAS, the Birchtree charter school provides only minimal busing (2 buses) for over 425 students and the level of personal vehicle (drop off and pick up) traffic associated with the charter school and will add an estimated 2,100 vehicles to the AADT for Paradise Lane (based on the project team's analysis completed by Dowl Engineering; and

WHEREAS, the Shaw Elementary Access Project appropriately includes design and construction of a controlled intersection at Paradise Lane and Wasilla Fishhook, but does not dictate a traffic light controlled intersection design (versus a round-a-bout), and that a traffic controlled intersection is more appropriate for such a major multiple-school access intersection; and

WHEREAS, the design of on-site parking areas and queuing lanes is preliminary and unknown to the NLCC residents, but there remain significant concerns about vehicle queueing on Paradise Lane; and

WHEREAS, the current project scope considers a new connection to Foxtrot Avenue and that approximately one-half of the 2,100 AADT traffic load will use Foxtrot Avenue to access Shaw Elementary and Birchtree Charter Schools; and

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WHEREAS, according to the School District Deputy Superintendent, there are no plans for Shaw Elementary to change their school boundaries to incorporate any of the Shaw's Tri Lakes neighborhoods located to the East of the school, including those residents along Foxtrot; and

WHEREAS, the significant increase in traffic loads on Foxtrot would also need to use the current Bogard-Caribou-Charley-Foxtrot corridor; and

WHEREAS, the Caribou-Charley-Mariah corridor connecting Bogard Road to Wasilla Fishhook Road already experiences traffic in excess of its design criteria, constant documented violations of speed limits, a lack of safe bicycle or pedestrian pathways, multiple hidden driveways and is therefore presenting significant hazards to neighborhood residents; and

WHEREAS, the Caribou / Bogard intersection is already problematic and under-designed, and that an increase of 1,050 AADT would put the Caribou / Bogard intersection near the same traffic load as the highly dangerous Engstrom / Bogard intersection; and

WHEREAS, since the last traffic analysis, an additional 31 new residential units have been constructed on Caribou between Charley and Bogard; and

WHEREAS, the 3-mile stretch of Bogard Road between Trunk Road and Seldon Road has been clearly identified as under-capacity for current and projected traffic loads by the recently completed Bogard-Seldon Corridor Access Management Plan (CAMP) and requires major improvements that are not expected to be completed for several years; and

WHEREAS, within the CAMP, it is identified that "with 12 schools located on, or very close, to the Bogard-Seldon Road corridor, traffic during the school year can be significantly impacted at morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times"; and

WHEREAS, encouraging additional school-related traffic onto this particularly problematic section of Bogard Road is counter to public safety until such time as Bogard is upgraded; and

WHEREAS, existing and planned improvements to the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, Seward Meridian Parkway, Seldon Road, and Wasilla Fishhook make these roads a much safer primary travel corridor than the Bogard-Caribou-Charley-Foxtrot route for traffic going to and from Shaw Elementary and Birchtree Charter Schools; and

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WHEREAS, given the availability of other Borough-owned properties, there may be a fundamentally more prudent location for relocation of the Birchtree Charter School, thus reserving the property next to Shaw Elementary for a future middle school or expansion of the elementary school to serve the anticipated population growth in the vicinity (particularly to the north) of the existing Shaw elementary school.

Now THEREFORE, be it resolved that the North Lakes Community Council make the following recommendations to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Administration, School Board, and to the State of Alaska Department of Transportation for changes to the current scope of work of the Shaw Elementary Access Project.

1. The Alaska DOT and Mat-Su Borough should PRIORITIZE and proceed aggressively with safety improvements to the Wasilla Fishhook / Paradise Lane intersection. This intersection should be designed as a signal controlled intersection with the appropriate turn lanes and traffic light logic to provide the utmost safety for traffic transporting children to and from Shaw Elementary and Birchtree Charter schools. The design should consider full traffic loads for the expected population of both schools forecasted at least 10 years into the future.
2. The Mat-Su Borough School District and the Mat-Su Borough Administration should collaborate to assure on-property accommodations are constructed for adequate parking lots and traffic queueing lanes for each respective school adequate to assure no traffic queueing on Paradise Lane during peak school drop off and pick up times. This will require modifications to the existing on-property Shaw Elementary traffic patterns.
3. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough should fully consider this resolution and the issues already identified in the Bogard-Seldon Corridor Access Management Plan in the design of this and other projects that impact that Corridor.
4. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough should REMOVE the connection of Paradise Lane to Foxtrot as part of the scope of work for the Shaw Elementary Access project.

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5. The Mat-Su Planning and Public Works Departments should step back and re-evaluate the Official Streets and Highways Plan and incorporate a more logical sequencing of project implementation. The improvements needed to assure safe traffic flow through the Caribou-Charley-Mariah corridor (including walking and bike paths) must be fully addressed before any other projects that would result in significant increases in traffic through that currently congested neighborhood. This same logic applies to the intersections of this corridor with Bogard Road and Wasilla Fishhook Road. Those intersections must be improved prior to projects that direct even more traffic through the Caribou-Charley-Mariah corridor.
6. The Mat-Su Borough and Mat-Su school district should reconsider whether the Paradise Lane location is the best location for a new Birchtree Charter School. The MSB owns 160 acres on France Road off the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, of which a portion has been developed for the Valley Pathways High School. This could be a more optimum location when considering the high volume of traffic associated with an elementary / middle charter school and the existing transportation infrastructure. Similarly, the MSB owns a 56 acre property on the south side of Bogard Road near the Tait intersection. A portion of this property is being reserved for a future fire station. It could also be considered a potential site for the Birchtree Charter School and would be located on a section of Bogard that has much more manageable traffic levels.

END

We, the undersigned Chair and Secretary do certify, based on a vote amongst the NLCC membership on May 29, 2025, this resolution is hereby approved.

Signed this 29th day of May 2025.

Rod Hanson, Chair

Nichole Smith, Secretary