

Assembly Testimony 5/20/2025 (Shaw Elementary School Access)

Good evening. My name is Rod Hanson, President of the North Lakes Community Council.

I would like to provide the Assembly with a "heads up" on our residents' concerns about a project for improved access to Shaw Elementary School and to the site of the new Birchtree Charter school. The project scope includes 3 major elements:

1. Very necessary improvements at the Wasilla Fishhook / Paradise Lane intersection to access Shaw Elementary. This intersection is critical to the safety of students and parents delivering and picking up their children.
2. Expansion of Paradise Lane to access the new charter school, and
3. A proposed connection of Paradise Lane to an existing residential street named Foxtrot.

This part of the scope would also include improvements to Foxtrot.

We strongly support the Wasilla Fishhook intersection improvements. This is currently a very dangerous intersection during school deliveries and pick ups. It will get significantly worse as the Birchtree Charter School traffic is added to the equation because they expect around 425 students next year, and only a very few of those arrive and depart by bus. The intersection should be controlled with multiple turning lanes and traffic lights programmed appropriately for peak school traffic times of day.

We also understand the necessary expansion of Paradise Lane to serve Birchtree. We strongly suggest the School District plan significant on-site improvements to the parking lots and queueing lanes for peak traffic such that traffic will not end up stuck on Paradise Lane while waiting to drop off or pick up the kids.

We do not support the connection of Paradise Lane to Foxtrot. With proper design, all traffic to the schools can safely use Wasilla Fishhook and Paradise Lane. If the connection is made to Foxtrot Avenue, there will be significant negative impact to the surrounding neighborhood and an increase in congestion on the Caribou - Charley - Mariah shortcut between Bogard and Wasilla Fishhook. This corridor is already under-designed for the current traffic load. Adding 200-plus round trip vehicle operations every school day morning and every school day afternoon will exceed the safe capacity of Foxtrot, Charley, Mariah, and Caribou. Can you imagine the disaster that will be the Caribou / Bogard intersection in that situation?

We will be submitting formal comments through letter or resolution to the Public Works Project team, to the School District, and to the Alaska DOT.

Tonight we are simply asking the Assembly to be aware of this project and the concerns many of your constituents have. To that end, I am providing a copy of my statement, the current project summary, and a simple map of the area on the last page.

Thank you.



FACT SHEET

SHAW ELEMENTARY ACCESS

Matanuska-Susitna Borough PROJECT NOTICE

What's Happening

This is to notify you of an upcoming project and to invite you to a joint open house. Project teams for Shaw Elementary Access and Tex-Al Extension will be available. You can view plans, talk to the project teams, and provide feedback.

This project was approved by voters as part of the bond package in 2021 (TIP 21).

Description

This project will improve access to Shaw Elementary and construct access to the new Birchtree Charter school

Primary design elements are:

- Improvements to the Wasilla Fishhook/Paradise Lane intersection.
- The connection between Foxtrot Avenue and Paradise Lane as shown in the Official Streets & Highways Plan.
- A pathway between the school property and the Foxtrot area.

Benefits

The purpose is to improve ease of travel, connectivity, and safety.

Status

Phase 1 will complete the traffic and safety study and construct the Foxtrot Avenue connection to Paradise Lane along the existing section line easement.

Phase 2 will upgrade Foxtrot and install intersection improvements at Paradise Lane and Wasilla Fishhook.

Design plans will be posted soon online at <https://tip21.matsugov.us/>.

Schedule

Phase 1 will be constructed in summer of 2026 at the same time as the Birchtree Charter school.

Phase 2 construction is anticipated in 2027 or 2028.

Cost

Estimated cost: \$12,000,000.

Contact Information

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SHAW ELEMENTARY ACCESS PROJECT MAP



COMMON QUESTIONS

1. Why does this project cost \$12 million?

The project cost is based on an estimate for design, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocations, and construction. The design is preliminary, and the estimate will be updated along with the design.

2. What outreach was done for this project?

Initial outreach was during the 2021 Mat-Su Borough budget process. It is shown on the official streets and highways plan and corresponds with a public section line easement. The Mat-Su Transportation Fair provided annual updates. The team sent project notices with open house invitations to area residents, property owners, agencies and elected officials.

3. Will there be a pathway?

Yes, there is a proposed pathway on the south side.

4. The kids who live in the Foxtrot area subdivision go to Finger Lake Elementary School, not Shaw. Are the school boundaries going to change?

Some students in the Foxtrot area do go to Shaw Elementary. The new Birchtree Charter School may attract additional students. It is unknown at this time if the school boundaries will change.

5. Why will the connection go through a dead-end?

The end of Foxtrot is a temporary turnaround for use until the connection is constructed according to the official streets and highways plan.

6. What about traffic in the interim between phase 1 and phase 2.

The project team is working on a traffic impact analysis for the interim between phases 1 and 2 and for after phase 2. We are evaluating alternatives to mitigate impacts between phases.

7. Will there be speed bumps?

No speed bumps are planned. The proposed posted speed for the connection between Paradise and Foxtrot is 25 miles per hour.

