

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



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Alaska Cannot Afford to Walk Away from Transportation Funding

As Alaska House Representatives, we have the great honor of co-chairing the House Transportation Committee in the Alaska State Legislature and advocating for the shared priorities of Alaskans.

Last session, we partnered with each other and fellow committee members to address a fundamental priority for Alaskans: our state's transportation system. Folks want a well-maintained, safe transportation network that lets them get around efficiently. This remains the fundamental priority of our efforts on this topic in the Alaska Legislature.

Last year, the Legislature worked diligently to invest in our transportation infrastructure. In a difficult fiscal climate, we allocated a sufficient portion of this year's budget to transportation to ensure the state met its match requirement for Federal Highway Administration funding. For every \$1 the state of Alaska puts toward road and highway maintenance, upgrades and projects, the federal government provides \$9 in "match" funding. As an analogy, imagine Alaska as an "employee" of the United States. The deal is that if the employee — Alaska — puts \$1,000 into a retirement account, the employer — the United States — will put in \$9,000. That kind of return on investment can't be ignored.

We generated our match requirement by pulling remnant funding from old, delayed, abandoned or already completed transportation project funds. This was done to guarantee our Alaska match requirement would be met and received without an undue impact on the state's already stretched-thin bottom line. We worked hard to avoid pulling funds from Alaska's general fund so that money would remain available for other funding needs, such as education and public safety.

The governor, unfortunately, vetoed those transportation match funds, resulting in more than \$60 million in transportation cuts and putting this year's federal match of up to \$600 million in jeopardy. This makes it exceedingly difficult for Department of Transportation staff to plan and execute urgently needed transportation and public safety projects.

For example, in Anchorage, our state has suffered 15 pedestrian deaths in both 2024 and 2025, the most for Alaska's largest city in more than a decade. A safety crisis is not the time to cut needed transportation funds.

Luckily for Alaskans, we have one more opportunity to get this right. Each year, in addition to passing a budget for the fiscal year yet to come, the Legislature is tasked with passing a supplemental budget for the fiscal year already underway to meet unanticipated shortfalls. Once the session begins, the

Legislature will take up the question of this year's supplemental budget, and it will be essential that we allocate sufficient funding to meet the federal match requirements.

These transportation match dollars aren't just important for safe and efficient travel; they are essential because the work they create employs thousands of Alaskans. These jobs help meet the Department of Transportation's mission to "Keep Alaska Moving," while putting food on the table. Everything that drives Alaska forward — industry, business and tourism — depends on a robust and safe transportation network.

In the current fiscal climate, these investments will be exceedingly difficult to obtain. We need our state leaders to propose solutions to our dire fiscal situation and to prioritize the basic services Alaskans are asking for — education, public safety and transportation — not "kick the can" down the road. We will be working hard and working together with our colleagues to put Alaskans first and to do the hard work needed to make "North to the Future" more than just a slogan.

Rep. Ashley Carrick represents West Fairbanks in the Alaska House of Representatives.

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