Depot Drive Access Improvements

Project Scope
The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) is enhancing vehicle access and pedestrian safety by constructing a new roadway, Depot Drive. The project area is fully within the ARRC land reserve, and is located between Christensen Drive to the south, the main line track to the north, the Anchorage Historic Depot to the east and the 49th State Brewing Company facility to the west.

The project will enhance access by improving the intersection between the depot’s west-end access roadway (the beginning of Depot Drive), and West 1st Avenue where it turns into Christensen Drive. The project replaces an existing retaining wall along Christensen Drive with a new 250-foot-long sheet pile retaining wall placed closer to the Christensen Drive roadway. Land between existing and new retaining walls will be cleared and leveled, making room to straighten the intersection.

The project will also widen the Depot Drive transportation corridor to support upgrading about 1,500 feet of the gravel access road into a paved commercial-industrial secondary street. Roadway improvements include an 8-foot wide pedestrian walkway, new street lighting and trespass mitigation involving a safety barrier and fencing.

Purpose and Need
The project will expand space to accommodate continued growth in rail passenger operations. Bus access is currently hampered by the gravel access roadway’s pinched and curved intersection, which makes bus maneuvering difficult.
The project is in line with master community development planning for the Ship Creek area. It supports future roadway improvements that promote commercial development through better vehicle and pedestrian connectivity. Upgraded lighting and a pedestrian walkway address pedestrian safety.

**Project Goals**

- Provide vehicle and pedestrian connectivity within the Ship Creek area
- Promote Ship Creek area development
- Increase safety and discourage trespass onto railroad operating areas
- Improve and define passenger operations areas next to the track

**Status**

**Corridor Expansion (Retaining Wall)**

In 2018, LCG Lantech Inc. provided conceptual and preliminary engineering work in support of widening the corridor. ARRC also obtained permitting to install a new retaining wall, remove the old retaining wall, and perform earth work. Contractors installed the new retaining wall during spring / summer 2019.

**Roadway Construction**

CRW Engineering conducted an Alternatives Analysis for roadway and intersection construction. ARRC approved the preferred alternative in late 2019. Design considers landscaping, snow storage, fire access, commercial vehicle operations, private vehicle access, trespass and public safety factors.

A phased approach accommodates planned development by nearby railroad leaseholders, including the Downtown Edge condominium construction project, and improvements to the 49th State Brewery facility and parking areas.
Scheduled for 2020, the first phase includes intersection improvements and roadway construction from the depot, west to the end of the retaining wall. Some trespass mitigation work is part of the first phase.

Phase II is scheduled for completion in 2021. It will extend roadway construction by about 250 feet southwest of the retaining wall. The extension provides additional access to the 49th State Brewery and other future developments.

**Landscaping**

Project landscaping will follow phased construction. Landscaping plans (shown on page 4) incorporate features found in nearby railroad facility landscaping, such as within the Pedestrian Plaza at Ship Creek Avenue and North C Street.

The pedestrian experience is enhanced with picnic tables, benches and trash receptacles strategically placed along the pathway. These are surrounded with berry and rose shrubs, large boulders, concrete planters, perennial iris, and ground covered by grasses and wildflowers.
Landscaping trees include the Dolgo Crabapple, Paper Birch, vivid Red Maple and distinctive Columnar Swedish Aspen. Protection and security are woven in, to include rope fencing, chain link fencing and concrete barriers that feature iconic Alaskan graphic images.

Cost and Funding

Corridor Expansion (Retaining Wall)
- Concept and preliminary engineering, retaining wall design and installation cost is about $850,000, funded 100% by the Alaska Railroad as part of ARRC’s 2019 capital budget.

Roadway Construction and Landscaping
- Roadway construction, including intersection improvements, is estimated to cost about $2.5 million, funded 100% by the Alaska Railroad. ARRC has budgeted $1.7 million for 2020.

PROJECT LANDSCAPING

Landscaping planned along the project corridor, between the depot, west to the end of the new retaining wall.