PROPOSED WORK SUMMARY

The current <u>Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Project</u> proposal asks for funding to develop a detailed plan for safe, active transportation through the complex travel corridor along the existing alignment of the Sterling Highway which will become a "town road" serving all modes of traffic originating from and destined for the town of Cooper Landing.



Figure 1

The new, second roadway introduced to this narrow valley by the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 project bypasses the town of Cooper Landing.

Protecting the natural resources, wildlife, and culturally important areas extending from the headwaters of the Kenai River through the Chugach National Forest and into the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge while accommodating the public's need to access the abundant state and federal assets of this area via an active transportation pathway will require using the latest evidence, incorporating stakeholder input and expert advice including engineering solutions, project planning and community organization.

While the master <u>Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project</u> adopted by the <u>Kenai Peninsula Comprehensive Plan</u> encompasses the entire length of the existing alignment of the Sterling Highway travel corridor between MP 45-60, the focus areas of this planning proposal are the following segments (listed from east to west) which serve to correct the most immediate deficiencies left unaddressed by the bypass project:

- A small section east of MP 45 and the start of the new Sterling Highway re-alignment,
- MP 47-50 through the main part of town,
 The existing Safety Path running from MP 45-50 has been in continuous use since its 1993 construction, and its condition has significantly degraded. This pathway should be extended west to allow safe access to federal recreation and subsistence sites.
- MP 50-53.2 that will encompass the most popular federal recreation sites, and
- MP 53.2-56 completing the link to the new Sterling Highway alignment, approximate location of intersection beyond Sportsman's Landing.

The proposed outcome of this proposal will be a project plan that can be used to complete project goals at once or in phases as construction funding is obtained.

PRIMARY VISITOR DESTINATIONS

The Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Project (CLTRPP) corridor is surrounded by federal, state and local recreational sites (see Table 1, Figure 1, and Figure 2). The five US Forest Service campgrounds within its length provide over 160 developed campsites. The largest of these is the Russian River Campground located at the confluence of the Kenai and Russian rivers and boundary between the Chugach National Forest and Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. This federal facility, and the adjacent ferry, boat launch, trail system, and cultural heritage site host over 150,000 users each summer. Additionally the CLTRPP corridor serves all traffic destined for or originating from the town of Cooper Landing.

The town has an emergency services department, post office, museum, library, K-12 school, and community hall. A list of the Cooper Landing businesses would be extensive but by type they include restaurants, lodgings, guide businesses, rentals such as boats and bikes, groceries, liquor stores, activities such as gold panning, gun and fishing supply stores, massage and acupuncture services, hair salon, brewery, gas stations, and others.

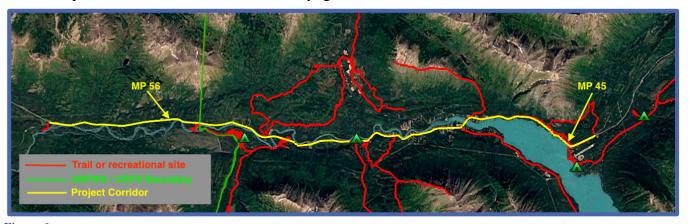


Figure 2

ALL OF THESE SERVICES, FEDERAL FACILITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS WOULD BE LINKED WITH ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES BY THIS UNIVERSAL ACCESS DESIGN PROJECT.

Visitors to a federal campground may ride their bikes to get coffee at a local shop. They may walk from their lodging to the bike rental so that they may ride the Resurrection Pass Trail, recognized as a National Recreation Trail. Visitors may walk or bike from their accommodation to spend the afternoon learning about the history of the area at the Cooper Landing Museum or the traditional Dena'ina customs and culture highlighted by the K'Beq Cultural Site. Seasonal workers can make their way to and from work or play on the surrounding public lands. Through the CLTRPP they may do all of that without using motorized transport. The primary destinations of visitors to Cooper Landing will remain but the primary means of accessing these community and federal assets may change when visitors can move safely via active transportation.

HIGH USE FEDERAL RECREATION SITES AND

FEDERAL ECONOMIC GENERATORS

Table 1. Federal Lands and Destinations Accessed

CLICK ON LINKS BELOW TO SEE MAPS Cooper Creek Public Camp and Pienic Grounds (North and South) Cooper Lake Dam Road (also an access point for user-made trail on Cecil Rhode Mtn.) Coyote Notch Loops Trail Juneau Falls Recreation Area Juses Juneau Falls Recreation Area Juses J	Asset Name	Size	Visitors	Managing
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Note: Data in above table adapted from Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Final Environmental Impact Statement. Key to abbreviated managing agencies:

- $ADF\&G = Alaska\ Department\ of\ Fish\ and\ Game$
- ADOT&PF or DOT&PF = Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
- CEA = Chugach Electric Association
- CLCC = Cooper Landing Community Club
- DNR = Department of Natural Resources
- KPB = Kenai Peninsula Borough
- USFS = United States Forest Service
- USFWS = United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Table 2. Activities and assets

Activity	Assets Accessed	Time of Year
Fishing	Lakes, streams, rivers	Year-round
Paddling	Lakes, rivers	Ice-free
Drifting	Rivers	Ice-free
Hiking	Trails, shores, mountains	Year-round
Skiing, Snowboarding,	Trails, mountains	Snow-covered
Snowshoeing		
Birding	Trails, mountains, lakes,	Primarily snow-free but some
	streams, wetlands, rivers	year-round
Snow-machining	Trails, mountains	Snow-covered
Biking	Trails	Snow-free and fat-tire use in
		winter
Hunting	Land based	Year-round as permitted
Photography	Throughout	Year-round
Sight-seeing	Throughout	Year-round

REQUIRED LOCAL CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT

The Cooper Landing Community Club Trails Committee will contribute professional meeting facilitation for the planning process as a contribution toward most of the 9.03% local match. Committee members who are retired from public service and possess decades of public involvement facilitation will assume responsibility for planning and conducting public meetings to discuss project objectives, alternatives, and concerns, while maintaining records of public comments, and communicating with Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Design and Construction Section, (DPOR D&C) in developing a final concept plan.

Additionally, the Trails Committee will contract with Margaret King (mjkingandassociates.com) to a provide guidance on best management practices and advise the local volunteers in focusing and developing the public involvement process. Additional donations will be from the Cooper Landing Community Club for community hall rental for the public meetings, graphic art services for meeting flyers, website updates, etc., and miscellaneous office supplies needed for the project. (See Table RS1 in Readiness and Support p. 18)

LEAD AGENCY FOR PROJECT DELIVERY



The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) will be the lead agency for this project with its Design and Construction Section (D&C) managing the overall scope, schedule and budget. D&C is a project management-oriented unit and will develop the plan including environmental work and design for a future safety path in Cooper Landing. (See Tables RS2-4 in Readiness and Support p. 18)

D&C regularly delivers projects with funding from various federal agencies including US National Park Service (NPS), Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Forest Service (USFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and Federal Highways Administration (FHWA). D&C is the recipient of two FLAP grants and is currently taking the lead on those two projects. Additionally, D&C is taking the lead on a project funded by FHWA's Transportation Alternative Program (TAP/TA). D&C recently completed construction of two TAP/TA projects for Alaska DOT&PF and has been approached by Alaska

DOT&PF to deliver two more TAP/TA projects on their behalf. In addition to the TAP/TA project, D&C is delivering two other FHWA-funded projects for Alaska DOT&PF within the Municipality of Anchorage and two more being arranged for the Kenai Peninsula Borough. D&C specializes in delivering recreation projects and is well suited to deliver this project with its in-house professionals and proven track record of success.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Juneau Creek Alternative for the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 project was selected in 2018, and construction efforts are underway including a town bypass section from roughly MP

45-56. It is now clear that the vast majority of the deficiencies, hazards and capacity issues of the existing alignment's active transportation facilities will remain unaddressed along the resulting "town road" through the main population and business areas all the way to where it rejoins the new alignment.

The solution is the Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Project (CLTRPP) for which planning funding is sought with specific prescriptions for each segment of this complex route.





Users find it more and more difficult to safely navigate between:

- Recreation sites
 - Lodging
 - Businesses
- Community centers,
 - Churches
 - Cultural sites

As many as 150,000 visitors access Cooper Landing and the surrounding federal recreational assets each year. Visitation is

year-round and includes those cited reasons in Table 2. The condition of our current pathway requires relief.

Any travel westward beyond the existing Safety Path from MP 50-56 must be done on the roadway as shoulder area is profoundly limited and pavement outside the fog line is only inches in most places. Movement across bridges must be in the roadway, inside the guardrails.

Motorized vehicular traffic on the roadway exceeds 1.1 million annually. Average annual daily count is 3150 with peak reaching 5587. Motorized travel is bottlenecked at the same time as safety is endangered for active travelers unless a safe, alternate choice for active

transport is made available that will allow motorized traffic to flow by removing some of the congestion.

Cooper Landing area has provided essential fish and wildlife habitat since the glaciers first receded. <u>It remains critical to wildlife linkage.</u>¹ Without the CLTRPP directing/containing foot/bike traffic and creating access points that will limit user impacts on wetlands, flora, and soils, an opportunity to protect the Kenai River watershed is missed. Diversity between access points will continue to decline or be lost altogether to ever-increasing and crisscrossing usermade tracks.

The Cooper Landing area has been continuously inhabited since pre-historic times. The Squilantnu Archeological District, near the confluence of the Russian and Kenai rivers, is an example of the areas of significant physical, cultural and historical importance throughout this area. "This extensive district, so far, covers an area of at least four thousand acres, containing over three thousand cultural features and is located in both FS and KNWR lands." Habitation and other activity has been demonstrated in numerous studies, including those cited in the Sterling Hwy MP 45-60 EIS³. Many sites of importance are located throughout this corridor along the Kenai River. The CLTRPP can help to educate visitors about them or help to protect them by directing and containing foot/bike traffic to highlight those areas best suited for interpretation while de-emphasizing or discouraging traffic to more sensitive areas through means that do not draw attention to their presence.

As conditions of the Safety Path continue to degrade, and as more and more visitors come to the Cooper Landing project area, greater and greater impact will occur to habitat, archeological, and cultural sites. Important history may be erased. As conditions degrade and visitorship increases, the safety of movement for active transportation users will also degrade and carry higher and higher risks. Accidents already occur. (See http://sterlinghighway.net/Documents/SEIS_Documents/Appendix%20A%20Crash%20Report%20Mar_2015_secure.pdf) Deaths may follow even as traffic flow is impeded. If increased active transportation travel is encouraged through projects such as this, dotted throughout the state and country, the worst of climate change may be avoided. Healthy behaviors must be fostered.

For some, the CLTRPP along the roadway is the missing link needed in this transportation network to access more adventurous travel on federal lands and trails. For others, as they age or experience disability, a well-built pathway along our town roadway that traverses beautiful scenery and brings them into touch with wild places is the exact prescription they need to live well and avoid the health consequences of a sedentary lifestyle.

With a project such as this our small community may remain vital economically as it becomes a friendly place for locals and visitors alike, or it can be bypassed by economic development as it is bypassed by the new highway alignment. Businesses may fail. The town may fade and an economic base for taxes and state/federal dollars is lost. People will continue to visit this beautiful area but without the CLTRPP an opportunity will be lost to create infrastructure that will support an economy, protect cultural sites, promote a rich history, and provide for viable fish and wildlife through protected and safe, healthy access to federal lands and assets.

- 1) https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/APC/Cooper Landing/Cooper Landing connectivity revised compres-sed 2.pdf
- 2) https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5150512.pdf
- $\begin{array}{ll} \textbf{3)} & \underline{\text{http://sterlinghighway.net/Documents/3_7_18/Chapter-3-9-Historic-and-Archaeological-Preservation_Mar-2018-FINAL.pdf} \\ \end{array}$

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PLANNING

The goal of this proposal is to access funds for research and planning of subsequent enhancement projects for the active transportation facilities along the Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Project (CLTRPP.) The Cooper Landing area's location in the geographic center of the Kenai Peninsula between the Chugach National Forest, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, and the important Kenai River Special Management Area exemplifies how it is central to the broader Kenai Peninsula goals as well as the State ecology and economy.

With a comprehensive and inclusive plan, CLTRPP will connect neighbors, trails, campgrounds, and businesses by providing a continuous thread of active transportation pathway that winds through the community and onward to the surrounding federal and state assets that may be better accessed in safety. Community pathways are evidence-based solutions to many of today's access needs. CLTRPP exemplifies the best of these as listed below.

SAFETY:

For those moving through this travel corridor from MP 45-56 of the Sterling Highway improved safety is a primary outcome of the project. Accidents in are referenced at http://sterlinghighway.net/Documents/SEIS_Documents/Appendix%20A%20Crash%20Report%20Mar 2015 secure.pdf.

The degraded and substandard status of the existing Safety Path MP 47-50 often requires travelers to get into a car or truck to move from point to point. The Safety Path must be brought up to standard where grade is below road level, provide ease of movement between guardrails and the Kenai River, create safe crossings of driveways and parking lots, and address varied safety concerns with specific prescriptions based on study and engineering recommendations, all while improving the lifecycle of the existing Safety Path and filling the missing link of this transportation network.

Proximity to the Kenai River and other natural resources may require design, materials, or technique that will exceed the minimum environmental standard to help sustain or improve environmental quality of the Kenai River Special Management Area. Protecting water quality, riparian, and wetland function may be met by designed and channeled access.

Bridge conditions and elements will be improved with safe active transport crossings. There are three bridges in the project area. A safe bike/ped pathway is in place on the MP 48 bridge only. The University of Alaska Capstone Engineering Project worked with Cooper Landing Trails to develop a preliminary design for Cooper Creek bridge. (See http://www.walkcooperlanding.org/cooper-creek-bridge for details.)

Active access that doesn't require risky movement on the roadway to the MP 52.5 Russian River Campground, the K'Beq' Cultural Site, Russian River Falls subsistence area, and Russian Lakes Trails that includes the world-class fishery at Kenai/Russian Rivers confluence and the Resurrection Pass System Trailhead at MP 53.2 may be planned. Summer visitors to the Kenai/Russian River confluence area alone are typically 150,000 per year.

BOROUGH VALUE:

As stated elsewhere in this application, the CLTRPP was made a part of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive and Transportation Plan by the KPB Assembly in 2010¹. The value and importance of the plan to KPB has been reinforced since by support and assistance from KPB mayors and staff for the various segments of the project that have been constructed including:

• Refurbishment of the Safety Path on either side of the MP 48 Kenai River bridge at the end of the highway re-pavement project in 2014,

- Defining of driveway entrances and exits began with the highway re-pavement project in 2014.
- The bike/ped path attached to the Kenai River bridge MP 48 in 2015,
- The 2017 Snug Harbor beautification workshop 2017,
- The Snug Harbor pathway and paving project funded by the FLAP and completed in 2017,
- Support evidenced by significant public comment on the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 realignment project requesting and resulting in a designed bike/ped path as improvements to the existing Safety Path as a part of project mitigation measures.
- Support continued for the planned separated bike/ped pathway along the new alignment portion of the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project. (Roughly MP 45-56.)

With the scope and length of the decades-long Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project determined, action to address the material deficiencies of the active transportation facilities along this corridor are no longer paralyzed by the uncertainty of project alternatives and the ADOT&PF and Kenai Peninsula Borough can finally take meaningful steps to improve these vital facilities.

1) http://www2.borough.kenai.ak.us/AssemblyClerk/Assembly/Ordinances/2010/02010-13%20Signed.pdf

MOBILITY:

A well-designed plan that leads to a built project will help ensure that needs are met for all users, motorized and active, in this tight travel corridor. The project will include universal accessible design on the pathway. Enhanced access to federal lands and assets will be provided because the public will be given improved choice for alternative modes of travel. Assets such as staging areas and connectivity may relieve crowded trailheads once they are all connected via a safe, alternate pathway.

The FTPS designated Sterling Highway is the sole roadway access to and through this area to the southern and western Kenai Peninsula. The town road will continue to serve all traffic destined to or originating from the Town of Cooper Landing and will provide support to the traveler of this corridor with gas stations, groceries and short-stop services, State Parks rest area with toilets, etc. The only rest stops including toilets intended for through traffic of this corridor will not be on the new Sterling Highway alignment, but, on the town-access road through business facilities and the State Park boat launch rest area at the mouth of the Kenai River MP 48. The CLTRPP will relieve the bottleneck that occurs especially at peak fishing season that will allow motorized travelers to make their quick stop and then move on efficiently.

TRAVEL EASE:

Travel time and congestion of motorized travel is reduced when stop/go action is not required to accommodate active users of the corridor. In this setting along a narrow, sinuous river valley with mountainous terrain, people must move throughout the community to access homes, businesses, public spaces such as parks and public facilities such as the post office.

Others are accessing state and federal lands and waterways, federal trails and campgrounds, the very popular Russian River fishery, etc. The missing link to this travel network may be filled by the CLTRPP. By removing travel restrictions for active users with a safe and convenient pathway and designed crossings, all travel congestion is eased. If needed, acceleration and deceleration lanes on the roadway may be incorporated. If all trailheads are joined by the Safety Path then overflow parking might be developed for the most popular of the trailheads. Motorized traffic will be allowed to flow especially at peak times during the fishing season when the red salmon are running. With proper planning for active users, travel restriction is removed. Active travelers will find safety and access with improved choice for alternative modes of transportation.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

Reducing use of motorized traffic, whether for the local repeatedly going to the post office, or the visitor walking from his federal campsite to a local restaurant, helps reduce greenhouse gases and meet sustainability goals. 37% of all rural trips are 3 miles or less. The majority of all residences and businesses in this area are within 3 miles of the center of this project. Projects like CLTRPP dotted around the state and country that facilitate active transportation are what is needed to avoid the worst outcomes of climate change. Preservation of green spaces including wetlands can help toward this. CLTRPP may manage access to sustain biodiversity around the project in sensitive areas. CLTRPP may return some areas to a better state once foot traffic is better directed and motorized transport is no longer required for all transit needs.

1) https://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/2009 NHTS Short Trips Analysis.pdf

ECOLOGY:

The CLTRPP is located in the upper Kenai River watershed at its headwaters. <u>Federal assets accessed from CLTRPP are numerous</u> (see Table 1, Figures 1 and 2) but one of the primary concerns is the Kenai River itself. Controlling run-off, sedimentation, bank degradation, wetland degradation, and habitat fragmentation through directed access off a well-built and prescribed pathway will help protect the system and its inhabitants, be they water or land-based.

The Juneau Creek to Cooper Creek and Juneau Creek to Russian River drainages are vitally important to wildlife linkage. The CLTRPP can help direct people traffic in a way that may better allow wildlife to connect through federal lands and fish passage through anadromous waters. Prescriptions may be developed for site-specific needs to incorporate elevated, light-penetrating walkways, stairs, or staging spaces in sensitive areas such as wetlands.

The old Safety Path may be given structural capacity and surface conditioning so that it doesn't contribute to sedimentation and run-off problems to the Kenai River. Random foot access from the roadway corridor through wetlands and down river banks may be directed to well-built and protective paths and access points off the main pathway decreasing habitat fragmentation while allowing users to see functioning ecosystems and the flora and fauna that are a part of them. Creativity and evidence may be combined through a good plan of action. CLTRPP meets the Kenai Area Plan (DNR 2000) management objectives for safety, resource protection, and quality recreational experience.

 $\hbox{1)} \quad \underline{\text{https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/APC/Cooper Landing/Cooper Landing connectivity revised compressed $2.pdf} \\$

CULTURE AND ARCHEOLOGY:

Because of its abundant resources people have continuously inhabited the Cooper Landing and upper Kenai River area since prehistoric time. (See chapter 3.9 http://sterlinghighway.net/SHWFinalEIS_New.html for study of this area.) Directed pathways to interpretive sites and designed avoidance of vulnerable sites provides sustainable access that leads to understanding of the need to protect places of cultural importance. The current state of the area sees people passing through cultural sites without even knowing it.

ECONOMY:

A bike/ped pathway was written into the <u>Cooper Landing Community Economic</u>

<u>Development Strategy</u> in 2005 and was the number one or two priority for capital improvement

in Cooper Landing for several years. (Recently the community emergency services needs took precedence.)

Cooper Landing is about to be bypassed by a re-alignment of the Sterling Highway. (See sterlinghighway.net.) The economic impacts to the community are documented in the study of that project. The CLTRPP infrastructure can provide just the boost the community needs along this designated National Scenic Byway.

The 1998 State of Alaska Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska program (TRAAK) study and subsequent <u>Sterling Scenic Byways Corridor Partnership Plan</u> (ADOT, 2006) detailed recreational access, resource, and other needs in this area.

Now that the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project is defined and underway, the thus-far arrested development for these needs may move forward. Increased visitorship will benefit local businesses. Upon arrival, visitors may park their vehicle and reach town and the surrounding federal assets by walking or rolling on a safe, accessible pathway that takes them to the exact locations they wish to access. With the CLTRPP this area will become a world-class biking destination. The bikeable federal trails are already here. What is needed is a safe and efficient means to connect them. Those fishing or drifting the river will no longer need two motorized vehicles. They may drop a bicycle at the lower end of their drift and use it to retrieve their truck and trailer they left at the beginning of their drift. Once Cooper Landing area becomes a safe place to walk and roll it will become an enhanced destination and a more livable community.

HEALTH:

CLTRPP provides a safe and accessible option for physical activity in a time when the health of the nation desperately needs this kind of support. Cooper Landing has a large percentage of senior citizens. They will be afforded means of safe exercise and physical activity, social connection with others, especially the youth of the community and to visitors, and spiritual engagement with their faith communities and nature. The same benefits are reaped at all levels of ability, resident or visitor. All can be active at their level.

SUBSISTENCE:

Cooper Landing residents are eligible for federal subsistence fishing and hunting. The CLTRPP will provide active transportation access to the federal subsistence fishery at the Russian River Falls during the season when cars can be backed up for hours to gain entrance for sport and recreation access to the Russian/Kenai River confluence area. Locals may safely exercise choice to use alternative modes of transportation to reach the Falls bypassing the bottleneck of waiting cars and campers.

Federal lands accessed from the CLTRPP are already popular for berry, mushroom, and other subsistence gathering. The project will make it possible to reach these resources without having to drive or leave a vehicle parked where it may be broken into. Fewer vehicles parked can help relieve congestion at the most popular trailheads. Overflow parking may be developed if there is a safe pathway linking trailheads.

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The goal of this proposal is to access funds for research and planning of subsequent enhancement projects for the active transportation facilities along the existing alignment of the Sterling Highway outside the scope of the Alaska Department of Transportation MP 45-60 project. This section of roadway will become a "town road" or "business loop" adjacent to the new alignment which is now, and will become even more, important as direct connection and access to the Federal lands and facilities along this corridor for all users.

These planning funds will help further determine the scope of work, specific design elements, and material needs required to meet or exceed the minimum environmental requirements or mitigate existing environmental problems along this route while providing improved active transportation facilities along this alignment. Some of these design elements were identified by public, private, and agency stakeholders as consensus projects and laid out in the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project document adopted as an Element of the 2019 Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan (https://www.kpb.us/planning-dept/plans-reports).

Other elements may include pathway rehabilitation and widening, improving the lifecycle of the existing pathway, improving structural capacity and surface condition, rehabilitation of <u>functionally obsolete bridges such as Cooper Creek Bridge</u> to provide pedestrian and bicycle access, retaining or bin walls, pier supported pathways, drainage improvements, striping and signage. See additional maps and figures at http://www.walkcooperlanding.org/.

DESCRIBE ANY OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL OR SOCIAL ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THAT ARE WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

The Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Project (CLTRPP) setting is the headwaters of the Kenai River watershed and the Kenai River Special Management Area. It is enveloped by the mountainous terrain of the Chugach National Forest and the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

The ecology and economy of this area are critical to Alaska. As stated in the Description section of this proposal, <u>federal assets accessed from CLTRPP are numerous</u> (see Table 1) but one of the primary concerns is the Kenai River itself. Controlling run-off, sedimentation, bank degradation, wetland degradation, and habitat fragmentation through directed access off a well-built and prescribed pathway will help protect the system and its inhabitants, be they water or land-based.

Prescriptions may be developed for site-specific needs to incorporate elevated, light-penetrating walkways or access stairs in sensitive areas. The old Safety Path may be stabilized so that it doesn't contribute to sedimentation and run-off problems to the Kenai River.

The Juneau Creek to Cooper Creek and Juneau Creek to Russian River drainages are vitally important to wildlife linkage. The CLTRPP can help direct people traffic in a way that may better allow wildlife to connect through federal lands and fish passage through anadromous waters.

Random foot access from the roadway corridor through wetlands and down riverbanks may be directed to well-built and protective paths and access points off the main pathway decreasing habitat fragmentation while allowing users to see functioning ecosystems and the flora and fauna that are a part of them.

At least 30% of current traffic volume is predicted to continue using the town road once the Sterling Highway is re-aligned, however; all traffic is predicted to increase in coming years. The 2014 Traffic Study Update used for the Sterling Highway MP45-60 Project estimated an AADT of 2915 and 100HV of 583 across the Cooper Creek Bridge at MP 50.5. At the rate of anticipated reduction the bridge would still serve 874 vehicles during an average day with 175 of them within the 100th highest hourly volume of the year.

However, seasonal traffic during the months of June, July, and August is over 150% of the AADT of this roadway with average high day volume at over 330% of AADT² so even if traffic is reduced to 30% on this alignment it will still remain at 100% of the Annual Average Daily Traffic of the 2014 volumes based on infrastructure that almost completely excludes active transportation.

Speed limits may be reduced on the town road as it becomes a secondary artery from current speeds of 45-55 mph but even at 35 mph a vehicle/pedestrian collision is catastrophic for

the pedestrian. At present, there have been no deaths because most people find it too dangerous to attempt non-motorized transit. The safety value of this proposed infrastructure cannot be over-stated. Creating a plan with individualized prescriptions for each segment of the route is vital.

Providing active transportation facilities also improves accessibility for users with varying physical abilities. These accommodations are completely lacking throughout this corridor preventing access to nearly all of these federal lands. Infrastructure that allows common aids to mobility allows access and connection to the ecosystems, scenery, wildlife, and flora of our federal lands to more users, regardless of ability.

The CLTRPP will connect the parts of our community divided by the re-alignment of the Sterling Highway. As designed, the new highway will require community members travelling by motor vehicle to enter the new alignment and then exit each time they need to travel from one side of town to the other. The segment of Safety Path from MP 45-47 will be upgraded during the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project. Rehabilitating the Safety Path from MP 47-50 will make this pathway a connecting thread for our community and allow active transportation modes as an option to satisfy the 37% of all rural trips that are 3 miles or less.³

- $1. \quad \underline{\text{https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/APC/Cooper\ Landing/Cooper\ Landing\ connectivity\ revised\ compressed\ 2.pdf}$
- 2) http://sterlinghighway.net/Documents/Final Sterling-Highway Traffic-Study-Update 02 10 14.pdf
- 3) https://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/2009 NHTS Short Trips Analysis.pdf

DESCRIBE THE RANGE OF ATTITUDES, BOTH SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION, THAT THIS PROPOSED PROJECT MAY RECEIVE FROM ORGANIZATIONS, THE PUBLIC AND WITHIN YOUR OWN AGENCY

In 2009, The Native Village of Eyak Regional Alternative Transportation Planning included Cooper Landing in the scope of a Federal Transit Administration grant for regional comprehensive planning of alternative transportation. The grant language stated the need to address congestion and road impacts for areas like Cooper Landing near the Russian and Kenai Rivers, and to propose alternative transportation options that would reduce impacts while still allowing visitor experiences and maintaining access. Cooper Landing's desire to host a "walkable communities" design charette for the community fit into the overall project scope and timelines so funding was shared.

A series of meetings at Cooper Landing Community Hall were held with Dan Burden, national walkable community advocate, to address the pressing issues of safety and pedestrian access within the community. The design charette was attended by 70 individuals the first day and 47 the second day. There was a large degree of consensus amongst participants that included community members and the following partners:

- Kenai Peninsula Borough Planners
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Mayor
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Environmental Protection Agency
- DOT Kenai Peninsula,
- Highway Safety Improvement Coordinator Chugach National Forest US Forest Service
- Senator Lisa Murkowski staff
- Representative Don Young staff
- Alaska Transportation Priorities Project
- Alaska Trails Anchorage Citizens Coalition
- Alaska Center for the Environment

- Kachemak Bay Conservation Alliance
- Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District
- Kenai Mountain Turnagain Arm Heritage Area, President (KMTA)
- Kenai River Special Management Area (KRSMA)
- Central Area Rural Transportation System, Inc. (CARTS)
- Cooper Landing Advisory Planning Commission (CLAPC).

The Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project document was created from that effort. In 2010 the Kenai Borough Assembly included it in the Kenai Comprehensive Plan and reaffirmed it in the 2019 re-write. The project has received ongoing support for each segment and activity since then from the Kenai Peninsula Borough mayors and staff through to the present effort.

Over the years since that original charette, community input has been sought through Cooper Landing Community Club meetings and each time a project segment was addressed a vote was taken for permission to proceed. The <u>FLAP-funded Snug Harbor project</u> enjoyed widespread community support. Several property owners along its route had concerns that were addressed through the project. Some residents have objected to the exclusion of off-highway-vehicle (OHV) use of the bike/ped pathways. Given the inherent conflict between walkers or bikers and OHV, discussions at community meetings of the Advisory Planning Commission and the Community Club have been held to determine if temporal or physical spacing could be developed that would meet the safety and access needs of both groups. With the MP 45-47 pathway and along the new alignment pathway development, Alaska Department of Transportation design engineers have worked to provide alternate passage for OHV.

Space along this alignment is tight. Often business parking lots abut the existing Safety Path and vehicles encroach it without realizing they do so because the gravel surface of the pathway can blend into the surrounding natural gravel or accumulated gravel from winter road maintenance. Right of way is narrow in places and may be inadequate. These concerns will be addressed through community outreach sessions and incorporated into the Cooper Landing Town Road Planning Project. Community consensus has been consistently supportive for the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project but it is not taken for granted. Input is sought and heeded for each element of our project goals.

Please see current letters of support at http://www.walkcooperlanding.org/townroadpathway. Agency and organization partners have been vital to the ongoing success of this effort.

FEDERAL HIGH USE RECREATION AND ECONOMIC GENERATORS

Please see Table 1 and maps 1A and 1B for details on federal recreation sites in the project area. Sixteen of the twenty-one federal assets listed are directly accessed from the proposed project pathway. Some would be made more accessible through indirect linkages facilitated by the pathway.

Linking the assets by the pathway enables a bike tour or backpack trip to connect two or more trails that would be less desirable to consider when faced with substandard roadways or absence of safe pathway. Many cyclists would forgo a two-car shuttle system and simply plan a full circuit, returning to their single vehicle.

The most popular trailheads could be accessed without a car or truck relieving parking lot overload. Staging areas and overflow parking may be better developed. Visitors to campgrounds could leave their camper in place and easily reach trails or businesses. Locals could access the Russian River Falls Subsistence Area without a car or truck and avoid the hours-long waiting in lines at the entrance during sockeye salmon season.

During the sockeye salmon season many anglers use pull-outs and walk along the roadway risking injury and snarling traffic. The proposed pathway, if well planned, could provide a safe, alternate means of moving from car to fishing spot and simultaneously direct users to designed access points rather than have them create crisscrossing user-made trails fragmenting and degrading riverside wetlands and habitat.

The Cooper Landing area would become an even greater draw for types of tourism that compliment rather than compete with existing interests. Bicycling would be world-class. Accessibility to these federal lands would be afforded to all levels of ability. The importance of this addition to the transportation system was verified when the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly made the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project a part of its Comprehensive Plan in 2010 and re-affirmed its importance in the 2019 edition.

SAFETY

The Sterling Highway's existing alignment will become a town road once completion of the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 project is completed. It is narrow with zero to a few inches of pavement outside the fog line. Shoulders are soft, sloped, narrow bands of gravel. Safe active transportation is not possible in most places throughout the project area.

The existing Safety Path from MP 45-50 built in 1993 is degraded and difficult to travel. It crosses business driveways often without demarcation as it is a gravel surface. Where it passes between the guardrail and the Kenai River its width has narrowed due to sloughing down the river bank. The roadway is sinuous as it threads along the Kenai River profoundly limiting sight distances.

The three bridges within the project area are all substandard though not yet slated for replacement. Only one has a bike/ped pathway for safe transit by active users of the corridor. Comprehensive planning must be carried out to properly address the myriad safety concerns for active travelers while affording efficient traffic flow before a subsequent build of the project.

ASSET INVESTMENT

The Kenai Area Plan (DNR 2000), the 1998 State of Alaska Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska program (TRAAK) study and subsequent Sterling Scenic Byways Corridor Partnership Plan (ADOT, 2006) all iterate the need in this area for active transportation as a means of reaching objectives for safety, resource protection, and quality recreational experience.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly recognized the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project as a means to creating a more-inclusive and comprehensive travel corridor for all users by making it a part of their Comprehensive Plan in 2010 and re-affirming that in the 2019 re-write. This project will plan for expanding the capacity of the travel corridor to meet the needs of those seeking active transportation and will include universal access design.

The existing Safety Path from MP 45-50 is gravel but a PASER rating is not available. Where the Safety Path crosses the MP 48 bridge of the Kenai River it is light-penetrating, engineered material. The MP 45-47 segment will become separated, paved pathway in the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 project construction currently underway.

The three bridges in the project area are listed by LTBP Info Bridge Data as having a CAT10 Bridge Condition classification of "Fair." The MP 48 Kenai River Bridge is 56 years old, MP 50.1 <u>Cooper Creek Bridge</u> is 66 years old, and the MP 53 Kenai River (Schooner Bend) Bridge is 67 years old. The MP 48 bridge has a bike/ped pathway that was constructed in 2015.

While this proposal is for planning only, a future construction project will add to the costs of maintenance for this travel corridor but the network capacity will be magnified once it can accommodate active transportation. Materials and design will be considered with cost in mind through the planning process.

MOBILITY

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) Assembly recognized the Cooper Landing Walkable Community Project as a means to creating a more-inclusive and comprehensive travel corridor and address bottlenecked travel by making it a part of their Comprehensive Plan in 2010 and re-affirming that in the 2019 re-write. Please also see the attached letter of support from current KPB Mayor, Charles Pierce.

The transportation system has been arrested in addressing the deficiencies of this corridor until the 2018 selection of the route alternative for the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project. Now that this is being built, the needs of the resultant "town road" must be addressed. This proposal seeks to correct the lack of active transportation access to this travel corridor for users of all abilities.

Local and peninsula-wide economies, recreational access, habitat degradation, and cultural resource risk may all be addressed through careful planning. The new alignment portion of the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 will have a separated bike/ped pathway. The town road pathway, along a roadway with FTPS designation, needs to safely reach all of the federal assets along its route (see Table 1) as well.

As the sole access route to these varied state and federal assets, the Cooper Landing Town Road Pathway Plan will address the missing link for alternative modes of transportation in this segment of the travel network.

SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND INTRINSIC QUALITIES

This project meets stated goals and objectives in the Kenai Area Plan (DNR 2000), the 1998 State of Alaska Trails and Recreational Access for Alaska program (TRAAK) study and subsequent Sterling Scenic Byways Corridor Partnership Plan (ADOT, 2006) which all iterate the need in this area for active transportation as a means of achieving safety, resource protection, and quality recreational experience.

It helps meet objectives in the Kenai Peninsula Borough Comprehensive Plan, and its Transportation Section (2019) of which it is a part. It also addresses objectives or desired conditions within the Chugach National Forest Land Management Plan (2020) including those for Social and Economic Sustainability, Ecosystem Processes, Access and Infrastructure, Recreation, and Soils.

CLTRPP will develop prescriptions to protect habitat within the Kenai River Special Management Area helping to decrease the current state of fragmentation by providing directed access off this pathway to points of high use on the river bank. It will stabilize sections of the existing Safety Path that are eroding the Kenai River bank due to impact over time.

CLTRPP will contribute to soils, water quality and wetland function in places. After study, the project may better understand which of this area's rich cultural/archeological sites should be highlighted with interpretive signage and which more vulnerable sites should be bypassed to protect them. This may also be accomplished through directed access points.

It is anticipated that the study will reveal the need for engineered sections of the pathway including possible elevated, light-penetrating segments as well as retaining or bin walls, or drainage improvements to mitigate problems and meet or exceed environmental requirements.

Sustainable practices are furthered because CLTRPP affords choice for alternative modes of active transportation instead of the current safety and access requirement that pushes users to use their cars/trucks to move throughout the community and access federal recreational assets. Planning will provide the opportunity to use creativity in meeting the needs of this complex travel corridor.

READINESSAND SUPPORT

Please see letters of support or endorsement sheets from key agencies and organizations attached to this proposal.

Once funded, this proposal will develop plans leading to enhanced access to local federal recreation destinations, consistent with the mission of providing recreation access to US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service lands.

Cooper Landing Trails will work with the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) engineering staff in completing the plan, with Cooper Landing Trails responsible for facilitating the public involvement portion of the project.

Most of the CL Trails matching costs will be in the form of donated labor for public outreach and scoping, graphic design work, workshops, public meetings and record keeping. In addition, the match includes donated meeting space for public meetings, donated office supplies and a small cash outlay (donated by a committee member) to hire an expert facilitator for guidance and quality control. Our contracted facilitation expert, Margaret King, provided advice on hourly rates and approximate hours for various tasks.

						COST ESTIMA	ATE PER TASK	(
FIRM:	Cooper Landi	ng Trails			PROJEC	T TITLE:	Cooper Landi	ing Town Road	Planning Proj	ect			
TASK NO:	1	TASK DES	CRIPTION:	Public Inyalyem	ent Facilitation							DATE:	3/15/21
GROUP:		METHOD OF P	AYMENT:	─ ╒ <mark></mark>	FPPE	T&E	CPFF		PREP	ARED BY:	C. Degernes		
SUB-						L ADOD HOU	DC DED IOD C	LASSIFICATIO	NI .		1		
TASK NO.	SUB-TASK F	ESCRIPTION	Principal/	Facilitation	Facilitation	LABOR HOU	RS PER JUB C	LASSIFICATIO	N I				
.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	002 1710112	20011 1.0.1	Manager	Ass't	Ass't								
	Initial Mtg with I	DPOR	2	2	2								
	Organize public	process	4	4	4								
	Public Outreach	/scoping	6	10	10								
	Pre-mtg prep		4	9	9								
	Public Meeting	#1	5	8	8						1		
	Public Meeting		5	8	8								
	Public Meeting		5	8	8								
				-									
	Finalize alterna	tives	6	6	6								
	Summarize cor	nments	5	12	12								
TOTAL A D	on Houne		40	07	07		_	_	•				_
* LABOR RA			42 \$100.00	67 \$50.00	67 \$50.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LABOR COS						***	***	***	***	\$0.00		\$0.00	***
LABOR COS	οι ο (<i>φ</i>)		\$4,200.00	\$3,350.00	\$3,350.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00 COMMENT		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.0
			EXPENSES							188			
SUB-TASK NO.		ITEM(S)		QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE							
	Guidance from	Margaret King ar	nd Assoc (lump s	sum)	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00						
	Graphic Design	/artwork (hourly))		12	\$50.00	\$600.00	l					8
	Community Ha	II Rental (Per day	y)		3	\$600.00	\$1,800.00						
	Misc office supp	olies (Lot)			1	\$400.00	\$400.00						
							\$0.00	FIRM'S TOTAL COST OF LABOR (or Fixed Price):					
							\$0.00						
							\$0.00						\$
					TOTA	AL EXPENSES:	\$3,800	FIRM'S TOTA	L EXPENSES				\$3,80
	SUE	3-CONTRACTO	RS: Firm Initia	Is and Price Pe			1.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,		L COST (no Su	bcontracts o	r Fee)		\$14,70
FIRM:													. ,,
AMOUNT:								TOTAL SUBC	ONTRACTOR	PRICES:			\$

* Confirm with Contracting Agency if labor rates shall be direct labor (base pay) or labor rates shall be total rates (i.e. base pay + benefits + overheads)

TABLE RS1

DPOR's Design and Construction staff developed the quote for the data collection and plan development elements of the plan using standard bidding procedures common for this type of project. Once funding is awarded, it is expected that the partners will commence planning efforts within the first year.

FIRM:	DPOR, D	esign & Constructi	on	PROJECT TITLE		DATE:	3/16/21		
				TOTAL NEGOTIA		\$0			
GROUP		LABOR (or FP)	INDIRECT COST	EXPENSES	TOTAL COST	FEE DISTRIBUTION	FIRM'S TOTAL PRICE	*SUB- CONTRACTS	PRICE PLUS SUBS
0	1	\$29,670	\$5,350	\$13,450	\$48,470	\$0	\$48,470	\$0	\$48,470
0	2	\$79,595	\$14,351	\$1,500	\$95,446	\$0	\$95,446	\$0	\$95,446
0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Subcont	ractors	s for negotiated	professional or ted	chnical services, p	roducts, etc. (Cor	nmodity items availa	able to the general	public at market p	prices, \$0
					nate as expenses.)				
ESTIMATE TOTALS	D	LABOR (or FP)	INDIRECT COST	EXPENSES	TOTAL COST	FEE	FIRM'S TOTAL PRICE	*SUB- CONTRACTS	PRICE PLUS SUBS
FOR FIRM	:	\$109,265	\$19,700	\$14,950	\$143,915	\$0	\$143,915	\$0	\$143,915

TABLE RS2

						COST ESTIMA	TE PER TASK						
FIRM:	DPOR, Design	& Constructio	n			T TITLE:		ng Town Road	Pathway Proje	ct			
TASK NO:	1	TASK DES	SCRIPTION:	Data Collection			-					DATE:	3/16/21
GROUP:		METHOD OF P	PAYMENT:	FF	FPI	T& √	CPF		PREP	ARED BY:	R. Miranda		
SUB-							SC DED IOD C	LASSIFICATIO	N				
TASK NO.	SUB-TASK I	DESCRIPTION	Principal/	Project	Senior	Staff	Env Impact	Interp.	'				
			Manager	Manager	Engineer	Engineer	Analyst	Specialist					
	D :			40									
	Project Manage Initial Meeting	ement	2	10 4	4		2	2					
	Due Diligence			4	15	40	40	10					
	Site Visit / Data	Collection		30	50	50	50	30					
OTAL LAB	OR HOURS		4	48	69	90	92	42	0	0	0	0	0
*LABOR RATES (\$/HR) \$120.00 \$105.00				\$90.00	\$70.00	\$90.00	\$80.00	0	- 0	0	U	- 0	
ABOR CO			\$480.00	\$5,040.00	\$6,210.00	\$6,300.00	\$8,280.00	\$3,360.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0
			EXPENSES					COMMENT	····				
SUB-TASK NO.		ITEN	M(S)		QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE	COMMENT	.				ŀ
	Survey Equipm	ent Rental (Weel	kly Rate)		1	\$2,500.00	\$2,500.00	l					
	Surface Transp	ortation w/ Fuel ((Daily Rate)		6	\$125.00	\$750.00	H					
	Lodging (Nightl	y Rate)			20	\$200.00	\$4,000.00	H					ŀ
	Short Term Per	r Diem (Daily Ra	ate)		20	\$60.00	\$1,200.00	H					
	Miscellaneous	Field and Office S	Supplies (Lot)		1	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	************					
							\$0.00	FIRM'S TOTAL	L COST OF LA	BOR (or Fixed	Price):		\$29,
							\$0.00	IF CPFF, TOTA	AL INDIRECT (COST @		18.03%	\$5,
					TOTA	L EXPENSES:	\$13,450	FIRM'S TOTAL	LEXPENSES				\$13,
					TI.			FIRM'S TOTAL	COST (no Su	bcontracts or	Fee)		
	SUI	B-CONTRACTO	DRS: Firm Initia	ils and Price Pe	riask						1 66)		\$48,
FIRM:	SUI	B-CONTRACTO	DRS: Firm Initia	ils and Price Pe	rrask				(1000		- CC)		\$48,4

TABLE RS3

						COST ESTIMA	TE PER TASK	(
FIRM:	DPOR, Design	n & Constructio	n		PROJEC	T TITLE:	Cooper Land	ing Town Road	Pathway Proje	ct			
TASK NO:	2	TASK DES	SCRIPTION:	Concepts Deve	lopment							DATE:	3/16/21
GROUP: METHOD OF PAYMENT: FF				FF✓	FPI	T&	CPF		PREP	ARED BY:	R. Miranda		
SUB-						LABOR HOUR	RS PER JOB C	LASSIFICATION	١				
TASK NO.	SUB-TASK I	DESCRIPTION	Principal/	Project	Senior	Staff	Env Impact	Interp.					
			Manager	Manager	Engineer	Engineer	Analyst	Specialist					
	Project Manage		4	15									
	Develop Base I		_	4	10	40	20						
	Develop Alterna		2	40	200 15	200 40	40					-	
	Develop Cost E Review Meetin		2	10	10	10	10	1				-	
	Agency Coordi	•	1	10	10	10	40	1				1	
	Finalize Alterna		1	10	40	40	10					 	
	Finalize Cost E			4	10	10						† †	
	Interp & Ed Pla		2	4				80					
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								 				+	
TOTAL LAB	OR HOURS		12	101	295	340	120	80	0	0	0	0	0
	ATES (\$/HR)		\$120.00	\$105.00	\$90.00	\$70.00	\$90.00	\$80.00		-			
LABOR COS	STS (\$)		\$1,440.00	\$10,605.00	\$26,550.00	\$23,800.00	\$10,800.00	\$6,400.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.0
			EXPENSES					COMMENT					
SUB-TASK NO.		ITEN			QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE	COMMENT	J .				
							\$0.00	1					8
	Miscellaneous	Office Supplies (I	Lot)		1	\$1,500.00	\$1,500,00	1					
			1			V .,000.00	\$0.00	1					8
							\$0.00	1					9
							\$0.00	1					3
								FIRM'S TOTAL			Price):		\$79,5
								IF CPFF, TOTA		cosi @		18.03%	\$14,3
					TOTA	AL EXPENSES:	\$1,500	FIRM'S TOTAL	EXPENSES				\$1,5
	SUI	B-CONTRACTO	RS: Firm Initia	als and Price Pe	er Task			FIRM'S TOTAL	COST (no Su	bcontracts or	Fee)		\$95,4
FIRM:													
AMOUNT:								TOTAL SUBC	ONTRACTOR	PRICES:			
		gency if labor rat	es shall be direc	t labor (base pay	y) or labor rates	shall be total rat	es (i.e. base pay	y + benefits + ove	rhead + profit.)				
TABL	E RS4	1											