

## **New Trunk Road project under way**

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WASILLA — Starting this summer, crews should be turning dirt on a project to straighten and widen Trunk Road and, when it's done, the Valley will, essentially, have a new Trunk Road.

“This is a pretty big project,” said Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Project Manager John Linnell. “It is not a one year sort of deal.”

The plan for Trunk calls for an almost entirely new right-of-way, with the new road branching off from the old just past its intersection with the Parks Highway. The new road continues north, meeting the Palmer-Wasilla Highway 900 feet east of the old Trunk Road. After that, the new Trunk Road doesn't meet back up with the old road until well past Bogard on its way to Palmer-Fishhook Road.

The plan, Linnell said, is to do the project in two phases. The first phase will build the section from the Parks Highway to the Palmer-Wasilla Highway.

“They'll get started up this year and they should have the bulk of it done next year. I don't know that they'll get completely done next year,” he said.

After that, the hope is that the second phase will be ready to go and crews can set to work immediately on that phase once the first phase is done. He said all of the right-of-way, save one outstanding parcel in the second phase, has been purchased.

“We need to work some more on the design on the second phase and we're still waiting on construction funding for the second phase,” Linnell said. But, “I don't have any doubt that (the money) will come through.”

The state has selected Scarsella Brothers Inc. out of Washington state to build the first phase of the project. Linnell said the firm submitted the lowest bid. The company's Web page cites work done in Seattle and the Northwest, specializing in clearing, grading excavation, drainage and underground pipe and utilities.

From the Parks Highway up to just past Bogard the road will be divided with two lanes going each way. According to the project Web page, the speed limit will be 55 mph. The new road will also have a bicycle path along its western side.

For the most part, the old Trunk Road will remain in place as a local road serving the parcels along it.

By moving the road to the east, Linnell said, the state will be able to avoid some of the more dangerous aspects of the current Trunk Road, most notably the 90-degree turn it makes at the top of a steep hill just before it connects to the highway.

“The existing trunk road will remain at that spot but the new Trunk Road will cut through those hills in a straighter fashion,” Linnell said.

DOT is planning at least one public meeting this summer, set for July 9 from 6 to 8 p.m. at Mat-Su

Community College where the project engineer and the contractor will be introduced. There will also be a preliminary construction schedule to disseminate.

Anyone interested in taking a look at the plans should head to the project Web page — [trunkroad.com](http://trunkroad.com). At that site, folks can also look at maps and drawings and follow links there to submit comments on the project.

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