

Putting down pavement for Otmeloi Road

Jeff Stewart Kodiak | Posted: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 9:38 am

KODIAK — This past Thursday's Borough Assembly meeting was a mixed bag insofar as significant items being discussed.

The big-ticket item was an update on the Otmeloi paving project given by the Alaska State Department of Transportation project manager, who was invited to attend the meeting by the Assembly. He held the floor for about three-quarters hour at the Assembly work session answering assembly members' questions, and then held a sidebar meeting about the same length in the adjacent hallway to address residents detailed concerns.

Some of the key takeaways from these meetings were as follows:

1) The state has allocated \$3.3 million for this project, of which approximately \$1 million has been spent to date on engineering and administrative expenses, leaving about \$2.3 for construction costs. Total cost of construction, for three-quarters of paving, is estimated to be approximately \$6.7 million; so the federal government will need to contribute another \$4.5 million, which it may or may not do, depending upon where this project is ranked. But if this project is to go forward, the Assembly needs to commit to it within the next 90 days. And, if Federal funds are not available, the project will be put on the shelf until federal funds may become available.

2) For various code and regulatory reasons, the actual construction and paving of the road will be done on the cheap, likely resulting in an inferior roadway that will require above-average maintenance and repair. Examples cited included the top layer of paving, wear course, will be 2" to 2.5" of asphalt, less than the Borough standard and standard practice here on Kodiak of 3" minimum. Also, the aggregate will be inferior local crushed rock rather than imported hard aggregate, which historically is what is used on serious paving projects. Additionally, if during excavation organic materials, trees, branches and alike, are encountered, they will not be removed, contrary to local practice. And, so it went.

Regardless, the majority of assembly members seem willing to commit to this project, their overriding rationale being twofold. First, this may be the last chance in some time to pave Otmeloi Road and they, the assembly, are willing to accept virtually any arrangement that the state will offer. Secondly, the borough does not have to pay for this road, as up-front costs will be borne by the state and federal government; and repair and maintenance will then be paid only by residents residing in the road district — about 1,000 accounts. My opinion is that were repair and maintenance costs instead to be paid by the borough, this project likely would be dead.

On a more positive note, the assembly seems to be moving forward with informal discussions with Leisnoi Inc. to resolve some of the 17b (public lands) easement issues recently brought forward to the assembly by the Chiniak community. And, then, possibly, renegotiating some arrangements to improve recreational opportunities in that area?

All of which, of course, is just my opinion.

-----Original Message-----

From: Goins, Christopher B (DOT) [<mailto:christopher.goins@alaska.gov>]

Sent: Friday, March 08, 2019 3:40 PM

To: Daniel Rohrer

Cc: 'Sara Fraser'; Carroll, Lawrence P (DOT); Landau, Aurah (DOT)

Subject: Otmeloi Way Road Rehabilitation Project additional clarification and answers P#Z687130000

Mayor Daniel Rohrer,

I was forwarded this letter to the editor recently published in the Kodiak newspaper, and thought it would be appropriate to potentially clear up what appears to be some miss information floating around. I hope this provides the decision makers the correct information, and leads to less confusion before a decision is made regarding the Otmeloi Way Road Project. Additionally, this e-mail should help clear up a couple questions asked during the meeting by the Assembly.

I have attached the letter and with five areas I have underlined and numbered to address hence forth.

1. The letter states the road is being built on the cheap and is an inferior roadway. While this is an opinion I want to reiterate the design is being completed to a standard by which FHWA and the State of Alaska has adopted and deemed acceptable for all State roads. The State Standards are based on scientific data and the latest engineering practices to develop roads to meet the needs of the projected users on this and any roadway in the State. Additionally, the design was completed by collecting well over a dozen detail borings to determine the soil characteristics of the road in question. These borings were above and beyond what is required in the Kodiak Island Borough standards and provide the necessary scientific data to mathematically design the most efficient roadway while still meeting the 20 year design life for all new roads in the State. To add to this point, because the State respects local standards in the case of transfers and wants to be good partners we are proposing to meet the 24-inch base course Borough standard even though this is 14-inches thicker than the State standards require.

2. The asphalt thickness currently proposed on the project is 2.5-inches to allow for recessed pavement markers. This is 0.5-inches more than required under the calculated design per the State standards.

3. Based on discussion with Borough staff and at the meeting last week the Borough does not appear to have a standard minimum asphalt thickness adopted. As such, the State must design to the standard in place. In the event the KIB can supply their standard minimum asphalt thickness in code, as was provided regarding the base course, the State will design the road asphalt thickness to whichever standard is higher.

4. In the meeting we discussed three different types of asphalt aggregate. The first was local Kodiak aggregate used in most local asphalt. As I stated in the meeting, the majority of Kodiak local aggregate does not appear to meet the basic State standard for hardness for asphalt paving. Meaning it wears under traffic loading faster than the State standard aggregate would wear. There is some belief this

local aggregate was substituted into the aggregate for asphalt on some state roads within the Borough. The rutting at the y intersection downtown is a potential example of this use of local aggregate possibly leading to the extensive rutting.

The second aggregate type mentioned was the State standard aggregate required for paving. This aggregate standard applies to all roads under a certain average daily traffic count. We believe in general the local aggregate in Kodiak does not meet this standard for hardness, and the Otmeloi Way Road project's paving aggregate will likely need to be shipped in from off the island. Otmeloi Road falls into this category because of its lower average daily traffic counts including the traffic projections into the future.

The third paving aggregate used by the State is a "hard aggregate" required to accommodate very high average daily traffic counts. This hard aggregate comes from only a few rock quarries on the west coast most of which are out of State requiring a substantial investment to acquire. As mentioned in the meeting, a road in Kodiak meeting this average daily traffic count threshold in addition to having hard aggregate placed on it includes the section of road just past the light in town to the airport. This was a very successful application of hard aggregate paving, and rutting is virtually nonexistent in this stretch. This hard aggregate is reserved for very high volume roads and I am unaware of the Kodiak Island Borough or City of Kodiak ever using this on any of their roads.

Using hard aggregate on Otmeloi Road would not be appropriate, but neither would using local aggregate for paving if it could not meet the State standard specifications. Thus the State anticipates shipping in paving aggregate to meet the State standard resulting in a premium price paid by the project when compared to local paving practices. It could also be speculated this is a direct reason why 3-inches of asphalt is believed to be the normal depth required in Kodiak as was stated by several attendees to last weeks meeting.

5. Regarding organics there was a standing question I was tasked with getting back to the Assembly on. In last week's meeting the discussion primarily revolved around removal of organics in the road base. As was stated in the meeting, the bore logs completed only found trace organics. Essentially meaning no organics were found needing to be removed. The question was then asked, what happens if you encounter organics as you are excavating. To answer this in more depth, the majority of State jobs (including this one) have a provision in them stating if pockets of organics are uncovered during excavation the contractor will be required to over excavate the pockets and backfill with a selected material type B or better at the direction of the onsite engineer.

After leaving the room last week one individual asked me what happens when the road prism is not in the current road location where there is topsoil and vegetation. My answer was and is the State has a pay item included in State contracts called grubbing designed to have the contractor remove this organic layer and topsoil prior to placing fill, road subbase, and base material. Grubbing will be a bid item included in this project as there is some limited locations where this condition exists.

I hope these further clarifications help in the understanding of the project and the constraints the State is attempting to work within to deliver what we believe is a high quality well thought out project designed to benefit the Otmeloi neighborhood, the Island of Kodiak, and great people who use it.

I still owe you an answer to the question regarding the use of State dollars for any work deemed non-eligible for federal reimbursement such as extra asphalt thickness. I have asked this question internally and am awaiting a response. I will pass it on as soon as I know.

Thank you again for your time and the effort put forth in having me visit your wonderful home, and I am looking forward to the day I can return again.

Sincerely,

Christopher Goins, P.E.

Design Group Chief

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