Statement of Significance

Seward Highway

(Portions of the current Seward Highway is designated as Interstate Highway System and under the Interstate Exemption [2005] is exempt from consideration as a historic property during Section 106 Review)

Prepared for

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

December 2014

DOT&PF Note October 2015: Rept does not address integrity; NRHP eligibility status of non-exempt segments not determined

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Prepared by

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1. Introduction

This statement of significance was prepared as a component of the Applied Historic Context of Alaska Roads Project completed in 2012-2014 for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The project began with the development of the *Alaska Roads Historic Overview: Applied Historic Context of Alaska's Roads* (Roads Overview) (February 2014) and the *Methodology for Assessing National Register of Historic Places Eligibility* (Roads Methodology) (December 2014).

For the project a select number of roads with potential for individual National Register of Historic Places (National Register) eligibility were identified for evaluation of significance. This study is limited to the evaluation of the road's significance. If a road meets one or more areas of significance, identification of essential physical features and an assessment of integrity needs to be completed to determine National Register eligibility. These statements of significance apply the Roads Methodology and utilize contextual information from the Roads Overview. The Roads Methodology outlines that the entire length of a road should be considered when evaluating significance. The entire length of the road and bypassed segments were considered in the development of this statement of significance.

This report identifies and describes the important historic themes associated with the Seward Highway. It summarizes these important themes to place the development of the Seward Highway within an appropriate historic context to evaluate its historical significance.

2. Description of the Road

The Seward Highway (Alaska Heritage Resources Survey [AHRS] numbers ANC-04069 and SEW-01557; Coordinated Data System [CDS] number 130000) is approximately 125 miles long and runs from Seward to Anchorage. It is owned by the Alaska DOT&PF. The northern portion of Seward Highway is within the Municipality of Anchorage, while the remainder is located within the Kenai Peninsula Borough. Much of the highway is within the boundary of the Chugach National Forest (CNF) and Chugach State Park. The highway begins at Railway Avenue in downtown Seward and continues north to Moose Pass. Traveling northwest, the Seward Highway provides access to the Sterling Highway at Mile 36.495 and the Hope Highway at Mile 55.7 before reaching Portage, at the eastern end of Turnagain Arm. The highway then follows the north shore of Turnagain Arm until it reaches its northern terminus at East 20th Avenue in Anchorage.

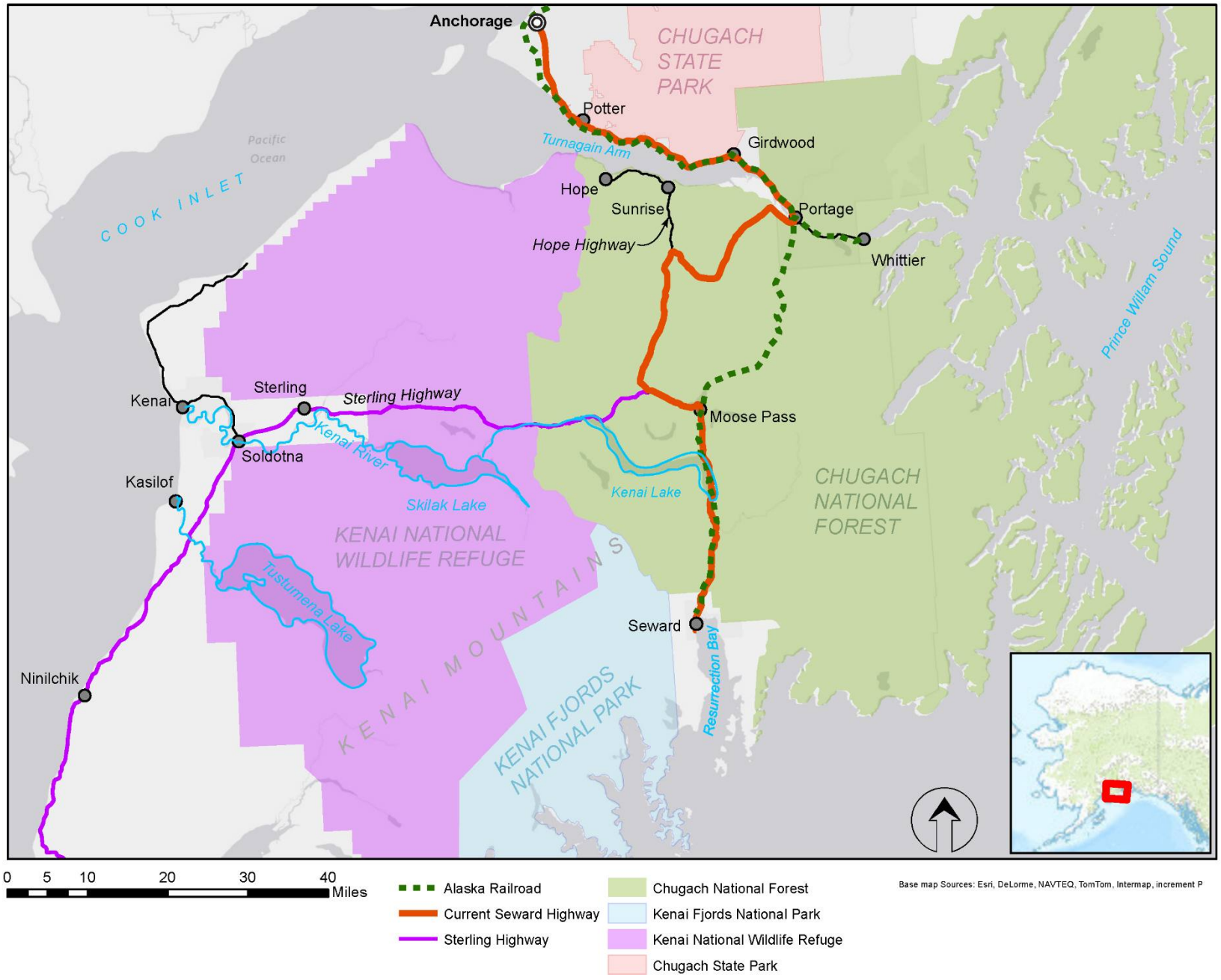
The Seward Highway is the only vehicular road linking the communities of the Kenai Peninsula with Anchorage and the rest of the Alaskan highway system. Portions of the route were constructed in the 1920s, including the segments from Seward to Kenai Lake and from Moose Pass to the Hope Highway. Construction of a short road between Moose Pass and Kenai Lake linked these segments in 1938, but the remainder of the route from the junction of the Hope Highway to Anchorage was constructed between 1948 and 1951 as part of a program to upgrade and expand the Alaskan highway network after World War II. Asphalt surfacing was completed in 1952. The highway sustained some of the worst damage inflicted by the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, requiring substantial reconstruction efforts, particularly on subsided segments along the north shore of Turnagain Arm. Various segments of the highway were improved through the 1990s. The Seward Highway is surfaced with asphalt for its entire length, and outside of Anchorage much of the route is a two-lane rural highway.

As the Seward Highway was improved, portions of the road were realigned resulting in bypassed sections of roadbed that are generally known today as Old Seward Highway.[1] Bypassed sections of roadbed that once carried the Seward Highway are considered part of the road for the purposes of this evaluation of significance.

The Seward Highway is designated as Alaska Route 9 between Seward and the Sterling Highway, beyond which it is part of Alaska Route 1. The portion between the junction of the Sterling Highway and Anchorage is also designated as Interstate A-3.

A map illustrating the location of the Seward Highway in relation to other major features is provided on the next page (bypassed segments not mapped due to scale).

[1] The Alaska DOT&PF's Coordinated Data System lists three sections of road named "Old Seward," which range in length from one-tenth of a mile to approximately 8 miles.


Anchorage
CHUGACH STATE PARK
Potter
Turnagain Arm
Girdwood
Pacific Ocean
COOK INLET
Hope
Sunrise
Portage
Hope Highway
Whittier
Prince William Sound
Sterling
Sterling Highway
Kenai
Kenai River
Soldotna
Moose Pass
Kasilof
Skilak Lake
Kenai Lake
CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST
KENAI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Tustumena Lake
KENAI MOUNTAINS
Seward
Resurrection Bay
KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK
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Alaska Railroad
Current Seward Highway
Sterling Highway
Chugach National Forest
Kenai Fjords National Park
Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
Chugach State Park
Base map Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P

3. Historic Context

Early accounts indicate that Alaska Native people of the Kenai Peninsula may have been aware of gold locally, and the earliest documented gold discovery on the peninsula dates to the period of Russian occupation, although gold mining was not commercially successful.[2] Workable placer gold deposits were first located in the Turnagain Arm region in the 1880s in the vicinity of Hope.[3] In the early 1890s, miners first staked successful claims on Bear and Resurrection Creeks and word soon spread, bringing a rush to the Turnagain Arm district in 1895. Between April and December of that year, newcomers staked 169 claims on the south side of Turnagain Arm and established the settlements of Hope and Sunrise, and additional claims were located at Crow Creek, near Girdwood, on the north side of the Turnagain Arm. An additional several thousand gold-seekers arrived the following year.[4] Prospectors often reached the area by arriving by boat on the Prince William Sound, then following a dangerous trail over the Portage Glacier. Summertime travel by boat up the Cook Inlet was also possible, although only smaller boats or dories could be used to reach Turnagain Arm itself.[5] The gold rush was short-lived, and many disappointed people moved on to areas where larger discoveries were found near Fairbanks and Nome. By 1905 gold mining operations on the Kenai Peninsula were minor in comparison to other areas of the state such as around Nome and Fairbanks, where more extensive goldfields permitted large-scale dredging.[6]

Despite the area's relatively modest gold mining operations, the town of Seward was established at the turn of the twentieth century due to its location at the head of Resurrection Bay, a natural deep-water harbor that is ice-free year round. Gold and coal discoveries elsewhere in the territory prompted the organization of the Alaska Central Railroad Company in 1901. The company selected a town site at the head of Resurrection Bay to serve as the southern terminus of the proposed rail route to Fairbanks. Within a few years, dock facilities were constructed and 50 miles of track had been laid north from the new port.[7] In 1902 the first regular mail service was established between Resurrection Bay and the Sunrise-Hope mining area, and a steamship arrived monthly at Seward.[8] By 1906 local miners had cut a foot trail connecting Seward and Sunrise, roughly following a portion of the railroad route, and other branching foot trails served the various mining operations along the south shore of Turnagain Arm. On the north shore of Turnagain Arm, a corduroy road led inland from the beach to the mining operations on Crow Creek at what is now Girdwood.[9]

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[2] Mary J. Barry, *A History of Mining on the Kenai Peninsula* (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1973), 8; Fred H. Moffit, "Gold Fields of the Turnagain Arm Region," from *Mineral Resources of Kenai Peninsula, Alaska,* U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 277 (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1906), 8.

[3] Moffitt, 9.

[4] Barry, 37-42, 60.

[5] Moffitt, 48.

[6] Barry, 121.

[7] Barry, 103, 114.

[8] Barry, 108.

[9] Moffit, 49.

Progress on the railroad continued until 1906, when President Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order withdrawing all federally owned coal lands in the U.S. and its territories from public entry, and Alaska's coal lands were held as naval reserves. At the time, the Alaska Central Railroad had expected to derive significant revenue by freighting coal from the Matanuska fields northwest of today's Anchorage. The withdrawal halted commercial development of these coal fields, removing both freight opportunities and a locally available fuel source for the company's locomotives. As a result, the Alaska Central Railroad went into receivership in 1909. A second company, the Alaska Northern Railroad, formed in 1911 and resumed work on the rail line, managing to extend the tracks as far as Kern Creek, located south of Girdwood on Turnagain Arm, before it failed as well. During this period, mining equipment was transported to Hope and Sunrise using the existing tracks as far as the railroad station and settlement at Moose Pass, where local wagon roads branched off northwest to the mining areas.[10]

The federal government established the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) in 1905 with a mandate to construct roads and trails in Alaska. In 1906 and 1907 the ARC constructed a wagon road from Trail Lake (near Moose Pass) to Sunrise and Hope, historically known as the Sunrise-Hope Road (Route 12). Constructed to connect the miners on the south shore of Turnagain Arm with the port of Seward, the road linked to the railroad at Mile 35.[11] The ARC also assisted local residents in constructing a wagon road from Seward north to Bear Lake to aid the small number of farmers in the area bringing produce to market at Seward.[12] By 1916 the ARC had extended the wagon road an additional 14 miles from Seward to the lower end of Kenai Lake (historically designated by ARC as Route 10) and also maintained 31 miles between the railroad and Hope (historically designated by ARC as Route 12).[13]

In 1914 Congress authorized the construction of a government-funded railroad to connect interior Alaska with the Pacific coast. Of the possible routes between the Fairbanks region and an ice-free port, President Woodrow Wilson selected a corridor along the Susitna and Nenana Rivers to the port of Seward. The government purchased the existing 72-mile stretch of rail between Seward and Turnagain Arm and incorporated it into the new railroad, beginning construction of the overall route in 1915.[14] Completed in 1923, the Alaska Railroad provided an important transportation link to rapidly developing population centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks. The Kenai Peninsula continued to lack a connected road system, however, and existing wagon roads linked to the railroad rather than an arterial road from Seward to Turnagain Arm. As the railroad's southern terminus, Seward derived economic benefit primarily from commercial trade associated with the port, along with recreational hunting and fishing. Commercial salmon fishing was an important industry along the southern coast of Alaska, and canneries

[10] Barry, 116, 127.

[11] Alaska Road Commission, "Report of Operations for the Season of 1907," in *War Department Annual Report, 1907*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1907), 9, 33.

[12] Alaska Road Commission, "Report of Operations for the Season of 1907," 33.

[13] Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, *Annual Report of the Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska, 1916* (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1916), 11.

[14] "Prince William Sound: The Gateway to the Interior of Alaska," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 47, no. 12 (1915), 924-925.

were established at Seward between 1917 and the late 1940s. However, commercial fishing activity in Resurrection Bay was of far less economic importance than in Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound.[15]

A substantial portion of the of the Seward Highway falls within the boundary of the CNF, which President Theodore Roosevelt designated in 1907. Jurisdiction over the roads within the CNF transferred to the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) in 1920, after which the ARC continued to fund BPR projects in the CNF, but the BPR was responsible for performing the work.[16] Because the Alaska Railroad was government-funded, both the BPR and ARC maintained a policy of prioritizing development that complemented the railroad rather than competed with it, avoiding constructing routes that would divert traffic away from the railroad and increase operating losses. As a result, most road construction in the CNF consisted of roads branching from the railroad rather than roads running parallel. A new road was built to replace the existing wagon road from Moose Pass to Hope in the early 1920s; this became the only ARC-designated route between the Hope and Sunrise areas and the new government-owned railroad, and the northern portion is now known as the Hope Highway. Despite Seward residents' requests, neither agency constructed a road to serve as the final 7-mile link between Kenai Lake and Moose Pass to provide a vehicular connection between Moose Pass and Seward until 1938.[17] The railroad remained the only overland route connecting the Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage until after World War II.

The railroad also served outdoorsmen in the first decades of the twentieth century, as sportsmen and hunters began traveling to the CNF.[18] The Kenai Peninsula is home to a number of big-game species, including brown bears and the large Kenai moose, making it a desirable area for trophy game; by 1910 the peninsula was a destination for trophy hunters from the U.S. and Europe.[19] Many guides operated out of Seward and Anchorage, and non-resident hunters traveled to hunting areas in the CNF by boat, railroad, horse, or airplane.[20] Most arrived at Seward and traveled by train to Kenai Lake, continuing by boat or trail to hunting areas.[21] Efforts to protect certain species also occurred during this period, including the 1932 closure of moose hunting in areas north of the Kenai River and the 1941 establishment of the Kenai National Moose Range, which covered much of the western Kenai Peninsula.

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[15] Linda Cook and Frank Norris, *A Stern and Rock-bound Coast: Kenai Fjords National Park Historic Resource Study* (Anchorage, Alaska: National Park Service, Alaska Support Office, 1998), 237-239.

[16] Burr Neely, *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation of Eligibility for the Ptarmigan Creek, Falls Creek, and Trail River Bridges on the Seward Highway Between MP 23 and MP 26*, Prepared for PDC Inc. Engineers, Fairbanks, Alaska, and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, March 2009, 6.

[17] Cook and Norris, 98, 108.

[18] Catherine Cassidy, Andrew Berg, and Gary Titus, *Alaska's No. 1 Guide: The History and Journals of Andrew Berg, 1869-1939* (Soldotna, Alaska: Spruce Tree Publishing, 2003), 30-31.

[19] Cassidy, Berg, and Titus, 38.

[20] "Anchorage Hub of Greatest Big Game Belt in Alaska," *Anchorage Daily Times*, 13 June 1930; Cassidy, Berg, and Titus, 206.

[21] "Chapter 10: Recreation and Tourism," in *Kenai Fjords, A Stern and Rock-Bound Coast: Historic Resources Study*, National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/kefj/hrs/hrs10a.htm (accessed 10 July 2014).

The importance of the railroad increased beginning in 1940, when General Simon Buckner was appointed head of the U.S. Army forces in Alaska and began a buildup of military forces throughout the territory in response to the perceived threat from Japan. Construction of Elmendorf Army Air Field near Anchorage began in 1940, along with a number of other military facilities across Alaska. The needs of these new facilities and personnel placed a strain on Alaska's transportation system. Alaska was mainly supplied by sea, and in 1940 had only two mainland ports that were ice-free year-round: Seward and Valdez. Valdez was linked to Fairbanks by the Richardson Highway, the territory's main highway during this period, but the route was closed to through traffic for eight months out of the year due to winter conditions.[22] Seward was connected to Anchorage and the interior only by the Alaska Railroad, whose capacity was deemed inadequate even for peacetime freight quantities.[23] Water-borne traffic to Seward increased during World War II, and with limited capacity and railroad maintenance a bottleneck occurred in the winter of 1942-1943. The section of track between Seward and Portage was particularly insufficient, and trains traveled a circuitous route over high, rickety wooden trestles in an area known as the "loop."[24] Otto Ohlson, head of the Alaska Railroad, had previously advocated the construction of a rail cutoff across the narrowest part of the Kenai Peninsula, a 12-mile spur between Portage and Whittier. In an effort to bypass the inadequate section of rail in the area south of Portage, in 1941 U.S. Army engineers and civilian contractors began construction on the cutoff, which was completed in April 1943.[25] The cutoff enabled the military to develop port facilities at Whittier, another ice-free, deep-water port, while Seward continued to serve as the civilian freight terminal. Following the war, however, the Alaska Railroad assumed control of the port at Whittier and operations were minimal after 1946.[26] Seward handled the majority of freight traffic, although the military continued to use the port facilities at Whittier until 1959.[27]

The Cold War ensured that Alaska would remain a focus for the U.S. military, as the territory was geographically positioned to be the first line of defense in the event of an attack.[28] In the postwar period, the Army was particularly interested in developing new sources of strategic raw materials and supporting and expanding existing facilities and installations at Anchorage and the greater Fairbanks area. In a 1947 correspondence with Secretary of the Interior Julius Krug, Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall cautioned that the existing transportation systems in Alaska were not capable of withstanding the level of use that would be required in an emergency. `Royall noted that the Alaska Railroad was limited in capacity and constituted a weak strategic link. Consequently, Royall included the corridor from Seward to

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[22] Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1957), 47.

[23] Bykofsky and Larson, 46 -47; Lauren Hummel, "The U.S. Military as a Geographical Agent: The Case of Cold War Alaska," *Geographical Review,* January 2005, 61.

[24] Claus-M. Naske and Herman E. Slotnick, Alaska: A History of the 49th State (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma, 1994), 133.

[25] Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, "Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel," at http://tunnel.alaska.gov/history.shtml (accessed 18 September 2014).

[26] Bykofsky and Larson, 53-54, 68.

[27] National Research Council Committee on the Alaska Earthquake, *The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1973), 1076-1077.

[28] Hummel, 48.

Anchorage among those most vital for defense, urging that all-year, all-weather roads be provided to create alternatives to railroad transport.[29]

In 1948 Congress approved a six-year program of road development providing over $125 million of funding, more than three times the total federal appropriations since the ARC was first established in 1905.[30] In the same year, the ARC began work on a 71-mile road around Turnagain Arm that would connect the territory's principal port at Seward with Anchorage, the territory's largest city, and the rest of the highway system.[31] Conceived under a cooperative agreement between the ARC, BPR, and the Alaska Railroad (which occupied a portion of the right-of-way that would be needed to construct the road), the project was scheduled to be completed by 1951.[32] The completed highway would link Anchorage with the western side of the peninsula as well, via the Sterling Highway. Running from Kenai Lake to Homer along the western side of the peninsula, the Sterling Highway had been under construction since 1946 and was expected to be completed at roughly the same time as the Seward Highway.[33] In a 1949 press release, the ARC expressed its hope that, in addition to providing alternate access to the port at Seward, the Seward Highway would continue to open the Kenai Peninsula to tourists and homesteaders, who could reach lands available for homesteading.[34]

Though funded by the ARC, the BPR accomplished much of the construction work, as the bulk of the route lay within the CNF. The ARC constructed the portion between Anchorage and Potter that fell outside the CNF boundary. The Turnagain Arm Road posed a number of difficulties to both agencies; on the north side of the Arm, the Alaska Railroad occupied the only practical right-of-way between steep cliffs and the water, and the BPR's pioneer location of the 22 miles between Portage and the existing forest road from Seward to Hope passed through terrain difficult to traverse in the Kenai Mountains. To complement the new construction, the BPR upgraded the existing forest highway north from Seward under an agreement with the ARC in 1950. The BPR prepared its own plans and specifications for the improvement of the forest road between Seward and Mile 58 on the Alaska Railroad (near Portage), with ARC review. In order to meet the project schedule, however, the ARC rarely had sufficient time to request that the BPR revise and resubmit its plans according to ARC standards, resulting in costs that exceeded the ARC's estimate by almost $2 million.[35] The route was opened from Seward to Anchorage in 1951, and the BPR officially designated it the Seward-Anchorage Highway (the first use of the current Seward Highway name appears in the Alaska Department of Highways 1964 annual report), although additional reconstruction and paving efforts were still in progress.[36]

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[29] Claus-M. Naske, *Paving Alaska's Trails* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), 227.

[30] Naske, 229.

[31] John R. Noyes, *Report of Operations of the Alaska Road Commission for the Fiscal years 1949, 1950 & 1951* (Juneau, Alaska: Department of the Interior, 1951), 2.

[32] Naske, 241-242.

[33] Alaska Road Commission, *Summary of Activities 1946* (Washington, D.C.: US GPO, 1946), 9.

[34] Naske, 241-242.

[35] Noyes, 4, 35.

[36] Noyes, 20.

The military buildup during and after World War II substantially increased travel on Alaska's highways. In direct response to the military's "essential and urgent" needs, the ARC's six-year plan scheduled for 1953-1958 stressed the importance of providing modern, paved highways to link military facilities. Major routes including the Richardson, Glenn, and Alaska Highways received asphalt surfacing during this period, and by 1955 the completed Seward-Anchorage Highway was paved to provide a connection between Alaska's principal seaport and Anchorage-area military facilities.[37]

The new road also allowed tourists to access recreational areas in the CNF. In the early 1950s the Forest Service had constructed few facilities aside from picnic grounds, but after the highway was completed summer homes were developed on Quartz Creek and on old mining claims. A town site at Moose Pass that had been excluded from the CNF boundary developed into a small community serving tourists.[38] From 1957 onward the Forest Service spent a substantial sum of money planning and building recreational facilities, including new campgrounds on the Kenai Peninsula.[39] The highway also enabled recreational boating to expand at Seward during this period. Shortly after the road's completion, boaters founded the Anchorage-Seward Yacht Club to promote nautical recreation and harbor improvements; incorporated as the Alaska Yacht Club in 1958, the club sponsored a number of sailboat races. Road-based tourism continued to grow into the early 1960s, but while the Seward Highway made the town of Seward accessible to tourists, the town itself had few attractions and was not a destination in its own right during this period.[40] Although the population of Seward increased from 949 to 2,114 between 1940 and 1950, after the highway opened the population declined gradually for several decades afterward.[41]

The 1964 Good Friday Earthquake was the largest earthquake in North American history to date, causing extensive damage to the road system of south-central Alaska.[42] At the time of the quake, over half of the total paved mileage in Alaska was located within the damage radius.[43] The Richardson, Copper River,

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[37] Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report of the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1955* (Juneau, Alaska: U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Territories, 1955), 3.

[38] Lawrence Rakestraw, *A History of the United States Forest Service in Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2002), 139.

[39] Rakestraw, 150-152.

[40] Cook and Norris, 336-337.

[41] US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html (accessed 21 July 2014).

[42] There are conflicting sources on the magnitude of the 1964 earthquake, ranging from 8.3 to 9.2 on the Richter scale. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the 1964 Prince William Sound earthquake was the largest in the United States, measuring at 9.2; see U.S. Geological Survey, "Largest Earthquakes in the United States," *Earthquake Hazards Program* http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/states/10_largest_us.php (accessed 7 December 2012).

[43] Gary G. Sturman, "The Alaska Highway System," in *The Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1973), 987.

and Seward Highways, located near the epicenter, experienced the most damage.[44] Cracks and fissures appeared in numerous locations, and the Seward Highway sustained some of the worst damage from subsidence that lowered the portion of the highway along Turnagain Arm below tide levels.[45] The Alaska Department of Highways (ADH; the ARC's successor following statehood in 1959) immediately began emergency repair work on roads and bridges to enable supplies to reach devastated areas and restore traffic. Three months after the earthquake, the ADH reestablished highway access from Anchorage to the Kenai Peninsula by restoring 7 miles of the Seward Highway at the east end of Turnagain Arm to pre-quake elevations, including some realignment work.[46]

The Seward Highway continued as the sole vehicular link between Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula and as an important connection between the port in Seward and military facilities in Anchorage, including Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson. Although the Anchorage area was the site of numerous military facilities, events in world politics led to a shift in defense priorities as the U.S. entered a later phase of the Cold War in the early 1970s, which altered Alaska's military role. Technological advances reduced the need for a large air defense system and the war in Vietnam led to a troop drawdown at Fort Richardson and other locations in Alaska beginning in 1972 as forces were needed elsewhere.

As the population of the region grew in the later decades of the twentieth century, demands on the road increased. Within Anchorage, the 8-mile portion of the Seward Highway from W. 36th Avenue south to Potter Valley Road was bypassed by a new alignment built to freeway standards, and the former alignment, known as the Old Seward Highway, continues to carry local traffic. A narrow, winding, 7.5-mile stretch between Girdwood and Bird Point, on the north side of Turnagain Arm, was the last portion of the old alignment to be realigned in 1994.[47] In order to move the road out of the reach of avalanches, the new roadway was constructed atop 3.5 million cubic yards of fill placed along the shoreline.[48] This required extensive drilling and blasting of the adjacent cliffs to provide fill material, and the project encountered serious setbacks as the result of geologic instabilities. To stabilize the cliff, enormous stair-steps were cut into the rock, holes were drilled to drain water from within, and a system of motion detectors was installed as an added precaution against future rockslides. Another short section of the highway was built over an ancient talus slope, the remains of a prehistoric rockslide, and threatened to collapse when the contractor began to cut from below; as a result, the roadway was moved 35 feet to a new alignment cut into the cliff.[49]

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[44] John Galvin, "Great Alaskan Earthquake and Tsunami: Alaska, March 1964," *Popular Mechanics*, n.p., http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/natural-disasters/4219868 (accessed 7 December 2012); Sturman, 989-992, 999.

[45] Sturman, 989-992.

[46] State of Alaska, Department of Highways, *Annual Report 1964*, (Juneau, Alaska: Department of Highways, 1964), 31.

[47] Steve Rinehart, "No Easy Road for the Arm Crew," *Anchorage Daily News,* 7 September 1994.

[48] Hugh Curran, "Nasty Stretch of Road to be Moved, Tamed," *Anchorage Daily News*, 28 March 1993.

[49] Rinehart, "No Easy Road for the Arm Crew."

Other work along portions of the original Seward Highway include the reconstruction of a 6.3-mile portion from the intersection with the Hope Highway north to Summit Lake in the 1990s. This 24-foot-wide, two-lane, shoulderless road segment had not been altered since the early 1950s and was improved and widened to meet modern standards for rural Interstate highways. The existing bridge at Canyon Creek did not meet current earthquake standards and was replaced. Seismic concerns and poor footing complicated the construction of the new bridge; despite these challenges, the work was completed in 1998.[50] Since 1981 the portion of the Seward Highway between the junction with the Sterling Highway and Anchorage has been incorporated into the Interstate Highway System.

The Seward Highway continues to play a vital role in visitor access to the CNF as the main road to access the forest.[51] Of the CNF's three general regions (which also include the Prince William Sound and Copper River drainage), the Kenai Peninsula has roughly two-thirds of all total road mileage and the vast majority of state and forest highway mileage, making it the most readily accessible portion of the CNF for automobile tourism. Automobile travel is now the dominant form of transportation for visitors to the CNF, and most recreation-visitor-days are generated by tourists traveling the Seward Highway. Wildlife viewing, fishing, and scenic viewing are now the primary activities for visitors to the forest, and by 1998 automobile and bus users accounted for 49 percent of those who engaged in these activities, followed by 47 percent by cruise ship.[52]

The Seward Highway also provides access to other important recreation and conservation areas. In 1970 the Alaska State Legislature created Chugach State Park, a 495,000-acre park located immediately west of Anchorage. At the time of its creation, the park was one of the four largest state parks in the U.S., and provided an easily accessible recreational opportunity for residents of the state's largest urban population. The Seward Highway provided direct access to the park, and a 25-mile portion of the highway between Anchorage and Girdwood follows the southern edge of the park. The Alaska DOT&PF traffic counts at Potter Creek, where the highway enters the park boundary, indicate that the average number of vehicles per day nearly doubled between 1969 and 1975. By 1980 nearly half of the state's population was located in or near Anchorage and visitor totals continued to increase.[53] The Seward Highway also provided access to Kenai Fjords National Park, established in 1980 and located along the coast southwest of Seward. In the decade following the national park's opening, the population of Seward saw its first growth since prior to the highway's construction, increasing 46 percent between 1980 and 1990.[54] By the late 1990s Kenai Fjords National Park had become one of the most popular national park destinations in Alaska, helping make tourism a mainstay of the Seward economy.[55] In 1980 the Kenai

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[50] Florence Rooney, "Alaska's Last Link," *Civil Engineering,* December 1998, 65-67.

[51] Steve Colt, Stephanie Martin, Jenna Mieren, and Martha Tomeo, *Recreation and Tourism in South-Central Alaska: Patterns and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 2002), 7-8.

[52] Colt et al., 10-12.

[53] Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks, *Chugach State Park Master Plan* (Anchorage, Alaska: 1980), 3, 23.

[54] US Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 1980, 1990, http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html (accessed 21 July 2014).

[55] Cook and Norris, 370-371.

National Moose Range was redesignated the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR), and its mandate was expanded to encompass all species of wildlife.[56] Much of the land within the refuge is open to hunting, attracting sport hunters in search of game such as moose, caribou, and Dall sheep.[57] Fishing in the KNWR remains popular, and the Kenai River is one of Alaska's most utilized fresh-water fisheries. In order to protect the river system, the state legislature established the Kenai River Special Management Area within the state park system in 1984.[58] The Seward Highway continues to provide connection to the KNWR via the Sterling Highway, and also provides access to the Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area.

In the early 1990s Alaska established a state Scenic Byway program to recognize routes that provide access to scenic, cultural, and recreational areas and focus enhancements on roads that served tourism and recreation. The state program grew out of the 1991 National Scenic Byway and All-American Roads Programs, federal programs recognizing important American transportation routes.[59] The Seward Highway, which provides recreational access to both the CNF and Chugach State Park, was designated a state Scenic Byway in 1993 and a National Scenic Byway in 1998, one of three in the state.[60]

[56] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Refuge Establishment," at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Kenai/about/establish.html (accessed 15 September 2014).

[57] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "Recreation & Education Opportunities," http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/recEdMore.cfm?ID=74525 (accessed 15 September 2014).

[58] Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, "KRSMA Advisory Board," http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/krsma/krsmaindex.htm (accessed 12 November 2014).

[59] Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, "About the Scenic Byways Program," *Alaska's Scenic Byways,* http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/scenic/org-themes.shtml (accessed 7 November 2012).

[60] Mead & Hunt, Inc., *Alaska Roads Historic Overview*, prepared for Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, February 2014, 136.

4. Significance

The Roads Methodology provides guidance on the application of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, identifying areas of significance, and evaluating significance under *Criteria A, B, C*, and *D*.

A. *Criterion A: Events*

To meet the threshold for significance under *Criterion A,* a road must possess a direct and important association in one or more supplemental areas of significance as identified in the Roads Methodology in addition to *Transportation*. The Seward Highway includes sections of bypassed roadbed that may represent the road's significance. This evaluation of significance under *Criterion A* considered all potential areas of significance identified in the Roads Methodology for the current alignment and any bypassed sections of roadbed. Based on research and context development, only the applicable areas of significance for this road are addressed below.

Transportation

The Seward Highway has an association with *Transportation* because it provided the first vehicular access to the Kenai Peninsula. The completion of the Seward Highway created an important link between Seward and Anchorage, providing automobile connectivity to transport goods and services between the communities of the Kenai Peninsula and the rest of the Alaskan highway system and the lower 48 states. The northern half of the highway also provides a vital connection between Anchorage and the Sterling Highway, which created a link to the western coast of the peninsula that was crucial in developing homesteading and agriculture in that area. The period of significance for *Transportation* will relate to the historical purpose this road had in the conveyance of people and goods as defined in one or more supplemental areas of significance under *Criterion A*.

Entertainment/Recreation* and *Conservation

The Seward Highway meets the requirement for significance in the area of *Entertainment/ Recreation* and *Conservation* at the state level. This area of significance focuses on the specific use of roads to provide critical and direct access to important entertainment or recreational facilities and conservation activities. Much of the road is within the CNF and Chugach State Park. The highway provides direct access to these and other important recreational facilities such as Kenai Fjords National Park and the KNWR that are recognized important recreation and conservation areas in the state. Since its completion, the Seward Highway allowed for increased access to the CNF and subsequently provided access to other recreational facilities and conservation areas later designated, including the Chugach State Park and Kenai Fjords National Park. As such, the Seward Highway possesses National Register significance in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* and *Conservation*. The period of significance begins in 1951 with the completion of the Seward Highway between Seward and Anchorage. Designation of recreation/conservation areas continued into the 1980s and their historically important use continues to the present day. As a result, the 50-year ending date of 1964 is defined to end the period of significance following National Register guidance as research has not revealed a more specific date to serve as the ending date.

Military

The Seward Highway is significant at the state level for its association with military activity following World War II during the Cold War era. Regarded as a top military priority, the Seward Highway was constructed to provide the first vehicular link between the military headquarters at Anchorage and the year-round port at Seward. The highway was specifically developed to facilitate the transport of goods and supplies in support of national defense following the end of World War II. The Seward Highway's construction coincides with the Cold War-era expansion of military installations in Anchorage in direct response to strategic military defense priorities for an alternative to the Alaska Railroad. The period of significance begins in 1951 with the completion of the Seward Highway between Seward and Anchorage and ends in 1972, marking the beginning of several shifts in the role of the military in Alaska during the Cold War period that led to a drawdown of troops.

Since the period of significance begins less than 50 years ago but extends into the less-than-50-year period, *Criterion Consideration G* was considered. However, a case for exceptional importance does not have to be justified since the road's continued association with military activities extends only eight years into the 50-year period. In accordance with National Register guidance, the ending date of the period of significance may be less than 50 years.

Industry

The Seward Highway does not meet the threshold for significance in the area of *Industry* for its role in mining or commercial fishing. Mining near Turnagain Arm commenced more than 50 years before the highway was completed. The mining district produced a relatively minor quantity of gold and was served by the railroad and by local wagon roads and trails during this period. Construction of the highway did not open up new areas for mining development or lead to a new phase in mining operations. Although canneries were established at Seward between 1917 and the late 1940s, fishing activity in Resurrection Bay was of far less economic importance than in Cook Inlet. Fishing and canning activity was related to Seward's location as a harbor and port, and transportation was water-based, not overland.

Community Planning and Development

The Seward Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Community Planning and Development*. This area of significance focuses on roads that play a crucial role in the physical development within a community. The Seward Highway was constructed to provide a vehicular link between the port of Seward and the major military installations at Anchorage, and research did not reveal that it was constructed or subsequently directly improved the physical structure within specific communities along its route. While the Seward Highway did have an impact on the growth of individual communities, this is related to *Transportation* and represents a common function of roads transporting goods and services.

The Seward Highway connects Anchorage to the Sterling Highway. The Sterling Highway possesses significance for the direct and important role it had in the physical structure of communities along its route, as older communities shifted away from their historic core areas to develop new community sites adjacent to the highway. The Seward Highway plays a role in this event by connecting Anchorage and the Sterling Highway. However, the Seward Highway is not directly associated with the physical development of the

communities adjacent to the Sterling Highway and does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Community Planning and Development*.

Agriculture

The Seward Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Agriculture*. The Seward Highway created an overland link to the Sterling Highway that enabled vehicular access to lands for homesteading in the western coast of the peninsula. The Seward Highway connects Anchorage and the Sterling Highway, and as such plays a role under this area of significance through the connection it provides between Anchorage and the Sterling Highway. However, the Seward Highway does not have a direct association under the area of significance of *Agriculture* and does not meet the requirement for significance in this area.

B. *Criterion B: Persons*

As outlined in the Roads Methodology, a road is not likely to qualify for National Register significance under *Criterion B* for association with a significant person. To qualify under *Criterion B*, the road would need to best exemplify a person's contribution to history. Mere association with a road, such as involvement in design or construction, or roads named for an individual that is commemorative in nature, would not render a road significant under *Criterion B*. No individuals were identified through research to have played a significant role in the Seward Highway that would qualify it under *Criterion B*.

C. *Criterion C: Design/Construction*

The Roads Methodology explains how a road would meet the threshold for significance under *Criterion C*. Roads will generally reflect patterns of features common to a particular road type, and under the Roads Methodology this does not convey significance on its own. In order to possess significance, a road must also reflect other important or distinctive design features and/or construction practices or be a surviving example of a rare road type. This evaluation of significance under *Criterion C* considered the current alignment and any bypassed sections of roadbed according to the Roads Methodology.

Although portions of the Seward Highway incorporate earlier road segments, the majority of construction occurred in a period when the ARC had already established a body of institutional knowledge of road construction in Alaska. At the time the final segment of the Seward Highway was underway in the early 1950s, the ARC had already constructed the Richardson, Steese, Elliott, Glenn, and Sterling Highways, and had decades of experience building roads in Alaska's varied climate and topography. While the pioneer construction of the portion of the route along Turnagain Arm posed challenges due to the difficult terrain, these were within the bounds of typical road construction and do not constitute significant feats of engineering. The construction of the Seward Highway did not include any water crossings requiring innovative engineering approaches, and roughly followed the alignment of earlier roads, trails, and railroad grades for a substantial portion of its route.

A review of the ARC's annual reports and other materials from the period in which the initial construction and substantial postwar reconstruction occurred yielded no evidence of any extraordinary challenges or solutions that transcend normal methods of road construction. Nothing in the literature noted any engineering significance; the highway's design and construction appear to fall within the ARC's established standard practices of the time and it does not represent any significant or innovative

developments in highway construction or contain segments that are a surviving example of a rare road type. Early segments of the Seward Highway resulting from realignments or bypasses do not constitute significance under *Engineering* because they were designed and constructed utilizing routine methods and therefore would not represent a rare road type.

Neither the Seward Highway nor its bypassed segments meet the threshold for significance in the area of *Engineering*.

D. *Criterion D: Information Potential*

Criterion D is most often applied to archaeological properties. As outlined in the Roads Methodology, roads in vehicular use are not likely to be significant under *Criterion D* for the ability to yield information. The Seward Highway is in vehicular use and remains an above-ground property type. No evidence was found for potential significance under *Criterion D*.

5. Recommendation

The Seward Highway possesses significance at the state level under *Criterion A* for its direct and important association with *Transportation* and under the supplemental areas of significance of *Military* and *Entertainment/Recreation* and *Conservation*.

The Seward Highway is significant at the state level for its association with military activity during World War II and the Cold War. Regarded as a top military priority, the Seward Highway was constructed to provide the first vehicular link between the military headquarters at Anchorage and the year-round port at Seward, facilitating the transport of goods and supplies in support of defense needs. The Seward Highway's construction coincides with the Cold War-era expansion of military installations in Anchorage, and the route was constructed in direct response to defense priorities necessitating an alternative to the Alaska Railroad. The period of significance begins in 1951 with the completion of the Seward Highway between Seward and Anchorage and ends in 1972, marking the beginning of several shifts in the role of the military in Alaska during the Cold War period that led to a drawdown of troops.

The Seward Highway meets the requirement for significance in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation* and *Conservation* at the state level. Much of the road is within the CNF and Chugach State Park and the highway provides direct access to these and other important recreational facilities such as Kenai Fjords National Park, the KNWR, and the KRSMA that are recognized important recreation and conservation areas in the state. Since its completion the Seward Highway allowed for increased access to the CNF and subsequently provided access to other recreational facilities and conservation areas later designated. The period of significance is 1951-1964, beginning with the completion of the Seward Highway between Seward and Anchorage and ending at the 50-year guideline of the National Register. Designation of recreation/conservation areas continued into the 1980s and their historically important use continues to the present day. Research has not revealed an appropriate date to serve as the ending date of the period of significance; as a result the 50-year ending date is defined to end the period of significance following National Register guidance.

The Seward Highway does not possess significance under *Criteria B, C*, or *D.*

Portions of the Seward Highway (Alaska DOT&PF CDS number 130000) has an Interstate Highway System designation, and under the Federal Highway Administration Interstate Exemption (2005) these segments are exempt from section 106 consideration as a historic property. However, portions of the highway and bypassed segments not covered by the exemption possess significance under *Criterion A*. Identification of essential physical features and an assessment of integrity would be needed to determine National Register eligibility of those segments.