

ANCHORAGE:

BUILDING A BETTER FOUR SEASON “BASE CAMP” DESTINATION



The Anchorage skyline with the Chugach Mountains to the east. *Source: Frank Flavin, Visit Anchorage*

Anchorage is Alaska’s largest city, economic hub, gateway to America’s Arctic, and most visited overnight destination. Tourism and outdoor recreation already bring many benefits to Anchorage, but too many out-of-state travelers currently pass quickly through the town, heading to destinations seen as better delivering “the Alaska experience”. Better trails, trailheads, hut systems and wayfinding could change this situation, helping Anchorage become a much stronger four-season, multi-day destination. Anchorage is a community with the highest visitor spending in Alaska, due to overnight lodging expenses. Adding One More Day to visitors’ stay will boost the local economy considerably.

Chugach State Park, the third largest state park in the country, is a stunning community and statewide outdoor resource. With the right investments the Park could become an even more central attraction for Anchorage visitors. Investing in Chugach State Park would not only drive more visitor spending, but help hold and attract a skilled community workforce, enhance quality of life for residents and retirees, invite healthy living, and support the businesses that make Anchorage a better place to live and work.

INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

JOBS: 1 in 9 Anchorage jobs is in tourism.

TAX REVENUE: Each year, travelers contribute \$38 million in local hotel and car rental taxes to the Municipality of Anchorage.

ECONOMY: Visitors spend \$297 million in Anchorage annually, on top of what they pay for a cruise or airfare.

Source: Visit Anchorage

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED INVESTMENTS

The table below summarizes projects identified in discussions with regional partners; the pages that follow provide more detailed information. These projects were selected based on their potential for bringing significant economic and other returns on investment. These projects include new trail development, existing trail repairs, improvements of existing trail access points and additions of new access points, building trail connections where gaps are identified, branding and improved wayfinding of signature destination trails, and strategic plan development.

Anchorage Area Projects Summary			
Project	Lead (s) & Support	Est Cost	Priority & Status
1. "Moose"			
Lk Otis Overpass	Park Foundation, MOA, DOT/PF	\$10-13 M	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Wayfinding – Phase 1	Park Foundation, MOA, Visit Anchorage	\$100,000	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Wayfinding – Phase 2		\$2 Million	
2. The Dena'ina Indigenous Place Name Project, Phase 1	Native Village of Eklutna, Park Foundation, Anchorage Museum, Alaska Native Heritage Center	\$500,000	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
3. "Mtns to Sea" Connecting Trail			
Fill the ¼ mile gap in the route	MOA, STA	+/- \$10,000	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Wayfinding – signs, marketing	Park Foundation, MOA, Visit Anchorage	+/- \$50,000	Near Term – Planning in progress
4. Chugach Alpine Frontcountry			
<i>Improved Access - "Five Front Doors"</i>			
1. Arctic Valley	Chugach State Park, Arctic Valley Ski Club	See notes	Mid Term – Planning in progress
2. South Fork of Eagle River	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	Longer Term – Planning needed
3. Glen Alps	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	Mid Term – Planning in progress
4. Rabbit Creek/Flattop South	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	Near Term – Planning in progress
5. McHugh/SW Chugach	Chugach State Park, MOA	See notes	Mid Term – Planning in progress
<i>Improved CSP Trails</i>			
1. Flattop Trail	Chugach State Park	\$1,000,000	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
2. Little O'Malley Trail	Chugach State Park, Park Foundation	+/- \$50,000	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
3. Two Valleys Loop	Chugach State Park	+/- \$100,000	Near Term Planning in progress
Comprehensive CSP Strategic Plan	Chugach State Park, MOA	+/- \$100,000	Near Term
5. Regional Connections			
Anchorage to Points South	See Seward to Anchorage Chapter		
Anchorage to Palmer – Phase 1	DOT/PF, MOA, Park Foundation,	\$6 M	Longer Term - Planning needed

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS¹

Partners and supporters that were actively involved in developing these recommendations include Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation staff, Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board, MOA Parks Department, Anchorage Park Foundation, Single Track Advocates, and several local businesses. Other parties consulted include Downtown Partnership, Visit Anchorage and Anchorage Economic Development Corporation.

¹ See *Introduction* for what is meant by partners and supporters.

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENT PROJECTS: ANCHORAGE

1. THE “MOOSE” LOOP

Trail: Four main multi-use trails form the 33-mile-long MOOSE LOOP - the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Campbell Creek Trail, Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek trail, and Ship Creek trail link. The Coastal Trail (10 miles), starts downtown along Cook Inlet, heading west and south, with “Moose Ears” at mile 5 and its nose at mile 10. The hump heads east from downtown along the Ship Creek Trail (2.5 miles) (with the option for a paved path to Eagle River). The Chester Creek Trail (7.5 miles), is the spine, starting at Westchester Lagoon and connecting to the University/ Medical District (UMED). The Campbell Creek Trail (7.5 miles) is the body, linking the UMED to the South Anchorage shopping district. These trails connect the city’s three major parks: Russian Jack, Far North Bicentennial and Kincaid.



A couple bikes on the Coastal Trail, part of the MOOSE LOOP, just beyond downtown Anchorage. Source: *Jody O. Photos, Visit Anchorage*

Capital Project: A bike and pedestrian overpass is needed at the one remaining critical safety road crossing – where the Campbell Creek trail meets Lake Otis Parkway. Initial design options for the overpass have been completed. Work is in progress to determine the most appropriate path on the west side of Lake Otis.

Wayfinding/Marketing: The MOOSE LOOP can be enjoyed in its current form, but wayfinding and marketing is needed for new users to fully enjoy and navigate along this route. Today there is limited wayfinding signage along route. Half-mile marker signs with emergency locators were installed in 2019 on each of Anchorage’s four main multi-use trails to address safety.

Wayfinding improvements can be phased. The least expensive sign is the \$1500 street indicator. We propose purchasing 60 signs at strategic locations for \$90,000 with a \$10,000 online mapping and social media campaign to get the route solidified for new users. A more complete package for Campbell Creek Trail would cost \$774,000. Using that estimate for the remaining connections, we believe the full wayfinding package would cost \$2 million.

Project*	Lead	Benefits and Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
Wayfinding Anchorage Parks & Recreation Commission has approved a suite of wayfinding signs.	MOA Parks and Recreation, Anchorage Park Foundation, Anchorage Trails Coalition, Schools on Trails Coalition, Bike Anchorage, Indigenous Place Names Project and Vision Zero Committee	“Destination towns need destination trails.” The MOOSE supports retail, restaurants and recreation opportunities throughout the entire city, and provides opportunities for events, brewery tours and bike rental shops. Standard-compliant wayfinding signage is costly	Phase 1 \$100,000 Phase 2: Full wayfinding for the Campbell Creek Trail \$774,000. Full wayfinding for full trails \$2M	Phase 1 Wayfinding – Near Term (Shovel Ready) Phase 2 Wayfinding Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Overpass project - included in State TIP	<i>Same as above</i>	Securing funding for the overpass is challenging when competing with numerous other road projects in Anchorage	Between \$10 and \$13 million.	Near Term (Shovel Ready)

*where relevant this column includes background on status

Moose Connectors

Two key “connector” trails would add value to the Moose Loop, providing a key link through downtown and an important neighborhood connection. Both have been added late in the process of preparing this draft; more information will be added presently.

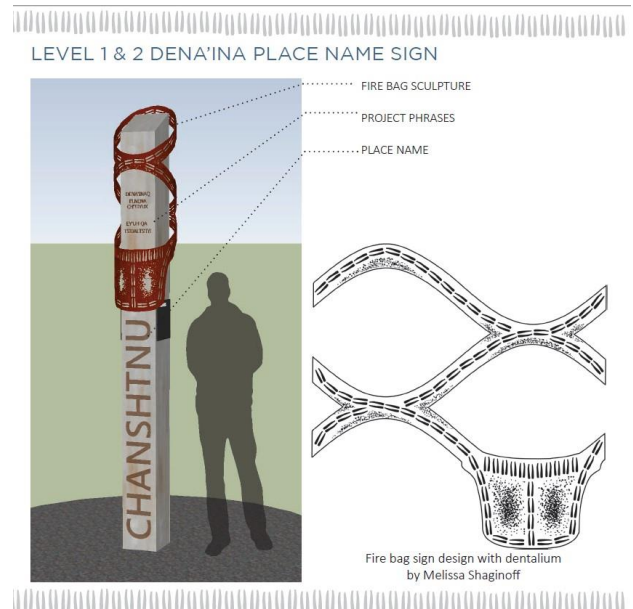
Project	Lead	Cost	Priority & Status
Connecting Fish Creek Trail to the Ocean (Coastal Trail) – Nominated for AMATS funding with minimal design efforts completed and coordination with the railroad active	Municipality of Anchorage		Planning in progress
Connecting Ship Creek to Coastal Trail - DSR complete and nominated for AMATS NOMO funding with funding established for more design	Municipality of Anchorage		Planning in progress

2. DENA'INA INDIGENOUS PLACE NAME SIGNAGE – PHASE 1

Land Acknowledgement: The Dena'ina Indigenous Place Name Project and Phase 1 signage is a step toward recognizing and honoring the Dena'ina language, knowledge and innovations in Alaska.

The project committee was led by Native Village of Eklutna President Aaron Leggett, a broad-based advisory stakeholder group of Alaska Native and non-native community leaders, and indigenous artists Joel Isaak and Melissa Shaginoff.

DENA'INAQ ELNENA CH'TIYUX, “You are walking on Dena'ina land” and YE'UH QA TS'DALTS'IYI, “Living with the outdoors” are the foundational phrases for the signage, meant to acknowledge the land and evoke the complexity of place and being on the land as it relates to seasonality, resources, travel, technology, life, and spirit.



Dena'ina Fire Bag with Dentalium Beading, Image Source: Catalogue No. E73048, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian

The Dena'ina fire bag and dentalium bead patterns were selected as the project's symbols. Fire bags were used by the Dena'ina people to store and transport firemaking materials such as tinder and embers. The fire bag represents living with the outdoors and sharing fire and knowledge. Dentalium beaded designs are used both traditionally and in contemporary clothing, materials, and artwork. For this project, dentalium bead patterns are used to represent Dena'ina fine art.

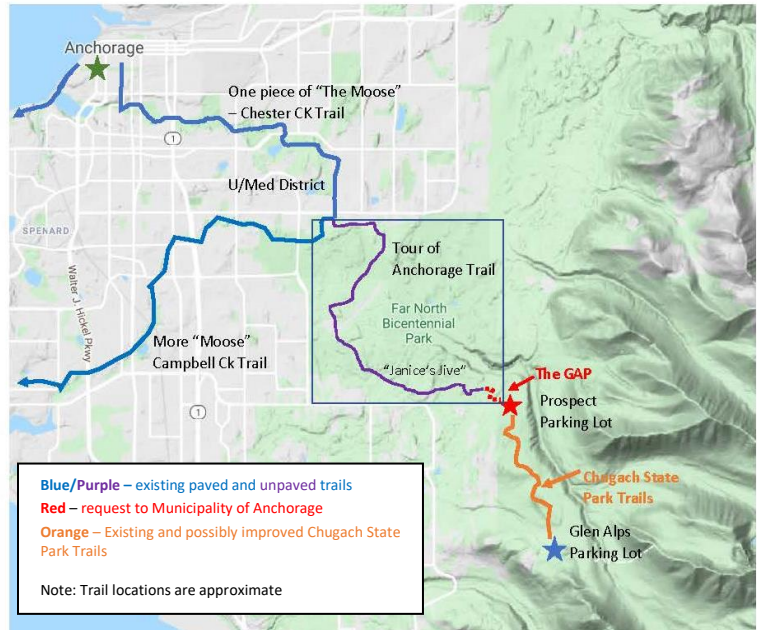
Capital Project: Phase 1 of the Indigenous Place Name Project is interpretive signage on 12 Anchorage parks and trails, estimated at \$500,000. The committee selected two types of signs, interpretive and place name, with half of the place name signage included as part of a plaza. Two signs are under construction now. Phase 1 signage is part of a larger effort that includes consultation on culture-bearing processes, digital opportunities, mapping, school curriculums and tour apps.

<i>Project</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits and Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Suite of culturally relevant signs and locations; Approved by Indigenous & artist-led committee	Native Village of Eklutna, Anchorage Park Foundation, Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, Alaska Native Heritage Center	This land acknowledgement will recognize the Dena'ina people, history and culture. It opens a space with gratefulness and respect for their contributions, innovations, and contemporary perspectives.	Phase 1 request for \$500,000. Total project cost is \$3 million	Near Term (Shovel Ready)

*where relevant this column includes background on status

3. MOUNTAINS TO SEA CONNECTOR TRAIL

Trail: This project would offer a wide range of residents and visitors an inviting, active (but not too active) way to experience Anchorage by bike, ski or on foot. Nearly all this route exists today, either as well-built soft surface trails or paved in-town bike trails. Completing the route requires filling the less than a quarter mile gap on MOA land from near the CSP Prospect Heights parking lot to the existing upper hillside bike trails. The project would replace the existing “straight shot” gas line utility track with a safer, well-designed, sustainable, multi-use trail. The result would be a continuous trail from the mountains, down through spruce and birch forests to Chester Creek or other greenbelt trails, and end up back at in-town lodging and restaurants.



Wayfinding: Getting the route onto “Trail Forks” or similar online trail mapping apps will solve navigation issues for most users. This still needs to be supplemented by new trail signs, hardcopy maps, and marketing by Visit Anchorage, hotels and other platforms.

Project*	Lead	Benefits	Challenges	Costs	Priority
1300 feet connecting trail MOA Parks staff has determined the project is compatible with the <i>FNBP Trail Improvements Plan</i>	MOA Parks, Far North Bicentennial Park Users Group, Single Track Advocates, Alaska Trails Initiative partners.	Replaces a rough, utility corridor with safe, well-defined route suitable for less experienced bikers, skiers and hikers, benefiting residents and visitors.	Trail advocates and MOA will coordinate with the FNBP User Group, Community Councils and other interested stakeholders as the project moves forward.	\$10,000-\$12,000 Assumes finish work in partnership with YEP and/or Alaska Trail Stewards.	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Wayfinding for full Mtn to Sea length	MOA Parks, Park Foundation; Visit Anchorage & affected business	Makes trail route safer and more accessible to a wide range of users	Wayfinding materials and installation can be costly – strategies are needed to reduce costs	\$50,000	Near Term some planning needed

*where relevant this column includes background on status

Views along the Mountain to the Sea Trail: Anchorage with the Denali and the Alaska Range on the skyline.
Source: Chris Beck



4. CHUGACH STATE PARK FRONTCOUNTRY PROJECTS

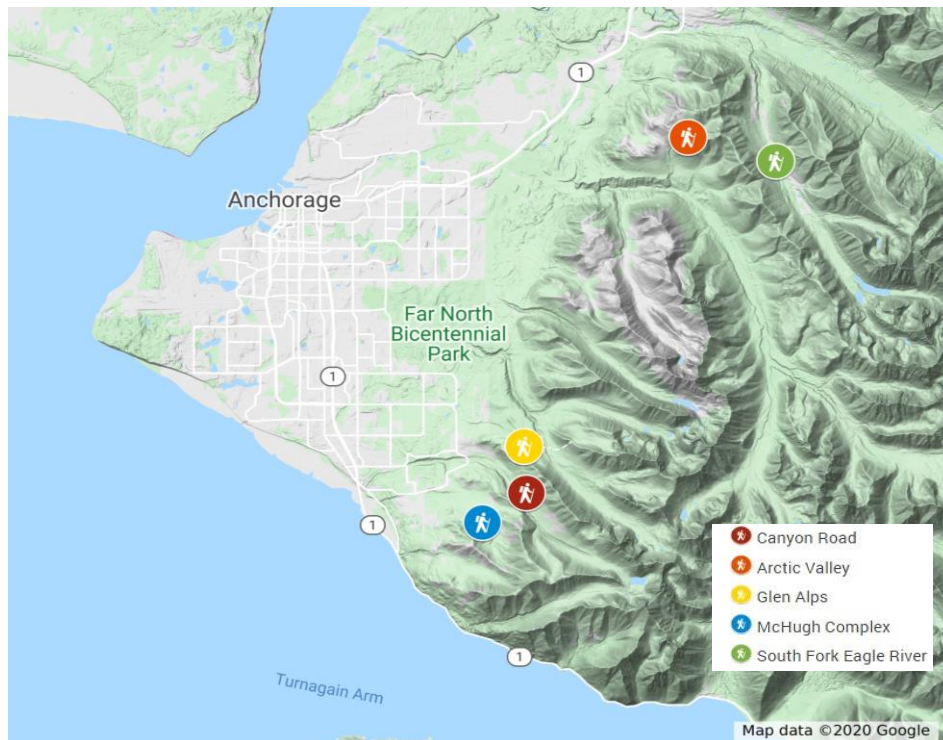
Outlined below is a draft list of proposed projects for the Chugach State Park (CSP) frontcountry, developed through discussions with State Parks personnel (including Kurt Hensel, CSP Superintendent; Joe Hall, CSP Park Specialist; Ricky Gease, State Parks Director; Matt Wedeking, State Parks Operations Manager). A CSP Citizens Advisory Board committee then further refined the list. Projects have been prioritized that will best solve current management challenges, benefit residents and help provide reasons for visitors to spend more time (and money) in Anchorage. These projects are supported by the CSP Master Plan, Trails Plan and Access Plan.

“FIVE FRONT DOORS TO THE CHUGACH FRONTCOUNTRY”

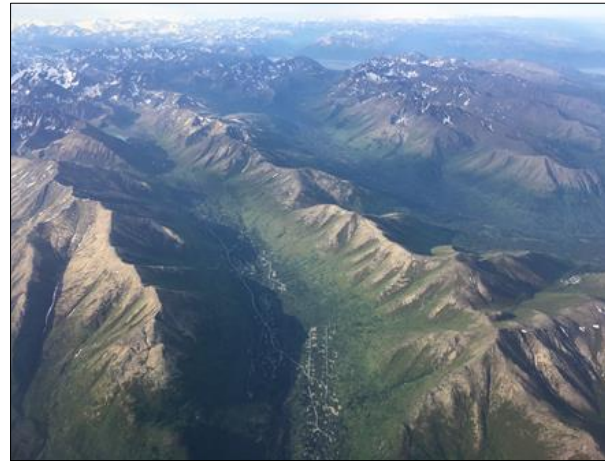
Better access – better “front doors” – into Chugach State Park, particularly to alpine areas, will dramatically expand the benefits of this vast, spectacular, but undeveloped park. New and improved access will allow more people to enjoy the park, guide use to sustain park resources, disperse use to reduce overcrowding at the few established trailheads, and reduce conflicts with adjoining residential areas. The existing Chugach Access Plan presents a comprehensive approach to improved access. The MOA Hillside District Plan also includes approved policies for better access. Three overarching strategies are needed for all access points:

- Address all issues needed for better access: access roads, parking, trails leading from the trailhead.
- Partner with the Municipality of Anchorage in improving Park access. Work to expand the boundaries of the existing MOA Recreation Service Area to extend to the Park; allowing the Municipality to be an active partner in funding and managing recreation.
- Install modern, credit card-based parking fee stations at all parking locations where fees are collected.

This section pulls from previous plans to highlight five access points where improvements are particularly needed. (*Note: map below needs to be updated.*)



1. Arctic Valley This area provides one of the few well -developed, large capacity recreational alpine access points in the Anchorage frontcountry. Arctic Valley serves hikers, berry pickers and other summer recreationalists; the small ski area provides winter recreational opportunities for families close to Anchorage. The trailhead for the historic Iditarod route from Arctic to Indian is a jumping off point for wilderness adventures. Much more could be done to expand the range and quality of opportunities at this access point. Improvements to the trails that begin from the parking area could include better signing and consolidation of social trails. It would be beneficial to identify a new “signature” trail in the Arctic Valley area that is a shorter (2-4 hour), safe and a not too challenging hike with scenic views. Other proposals include a cross-country ski trail, and improved hiking trails to the ridgeline and Hunter Pass. This area provides a logical starting point for an improved trail to the Ship Creek valley floor and continuing to Indian, a route that is already popular in the winter, and with huge long -term potential as a four-season route.



Aerial view of spectacular, inviting terrain in the vicinity of Arctic Valley, south fork of Eagle River, Ship Creek and the Arctic to Indian route. Source Chris Beck

Project*	Lead	Benefits & Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
Range of trail & access projects – work needed with Ski Club re specific projects and schedule.	Arctic Valley Ski Club; CSP; MOA; military involvement necessary, with CSP oversight	Provides access to the alpine for a wide variety of recreational pursuits. Spreads usage from other overly popular access points. Military controls road. Arctic to Indian trail crosses land controlled by the military.	Road upgrade – costly, need a study to estimate actual cost ~\$ 100K for trail reroute to Ship Creek valley bottom. (see <i>Seward to Anchorage Chapter</i>)	Mid Term – work needed to scope & price projects

*where relevant this column includes background on status

2. South Fork Eagle River This is an established, very popular access point for a large variety of users, summer and winter. Parking capacity is often exceeded, causing visitors to park on the shoulders of nearby roads causing neighborhood concerns. Investigate options for improving capacity and quality of public access in the South Fork area, including options to improve the current lot as well as possibilities for additional trailhead locations in the area. Improvements to nearby trails are also needed, specifically Hunter Pass trail.

Project*	Lead	Benefits	Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
Explore options for improving access in area with growing demand, finite trails capacity	Chugach State Park; MOA	Provides opportunities to improve access to the alpine for a wide variety of recreational pursuits.	Parking and associated neighborhood concerns	To be determined	Longer Term – work needed to scope & price projects

*where relevant this column includes background on status

3. Glen Alps Access to the hugely popular Glen Alps area is squeezed into three main developed trailheads (Glen Alps, Upper Huffman and Prospect Heights), with Glen Alps handling the vast majority of use. Despite a recent expansion to the Glen Alps parking area, on many summer days the lot is congested and full, leading people to squeeze into every available square foot of space and park along the access road. Further growth by both residents and visitors is desirable and inevitable. Planning is needed to accommodate this increased use, including better allowance for shuttle drop off and pickup.



Just another at-capacity day at Glen Alps Trailhead.
 Source: Chris Beck

The CSP Management Plan explains that while crowding and use exceeds the capacity of the Glen Alps trailhead and continues to be a problem, additional parking lot expansion is not the preferred solution. The Plan advocates taking pressure off the Glen Alps trailhead by dispersing use and creating new opportunities in other portions of the Glen Alps area. This includes a redesign and enlargement of the Upper Huffman Trailhead to better accommodate year-round use and a possible future connection of Sultana Road to the Glen Alps Trailhead. As described below, improvements are recommended for the Flattop Trail; once completed this will likely draw additional people to Glen Alps and should be factored into expansion planning.

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Preliminary design work completed for expansion of Upper Huffman Trailhead. No schedule currently in place for expansion	Chugach State Park	Respond to and guide growth	Concern with overcrowding; funding limits	Upper Huffman expansion & connection project \$2M	Mid Term – work needed to scope projects & refine cost estimates

*where relevant this column includes background on status

4. Rabbit Valley Access (south side of Flattop) This increasingly popular area provides access to the popular Rabbit Lakes Trail, the Flattop Sunnyside Trail, and in winter, to well used “Peak 3” backcountry ski terrain. Significant improvements are needed, including shifting from informal parking along the existing dirt road to an expanded and improved parking area, improving access to the trailhead via Canyon Road and improvements to the Rabbit Lake trail.



Aerial view up Rabbit Creek Valley, with Ptarmigan Peak and the Rabbit Creek/Ship Creek valley saddle. Source: Chris Beck

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Improve parking area and road to help disperse use No detailed plans currently in place for expansion	Chugach State Park, with MOA Parks & Heritage Land Bank	Relieves pressure at Glen Alps and other alpine access points.	Needs full package of road, parking, trail upgrade design and funding.	To be determined w/ CSP & MOA	Near Term Better parking, trailhead and trail improvements. Road – longer term

*where relevant this column includes background on status

5. McHugh Peak Complex Several access points in this area, such as Honey Bear and Stewart Homestead Road, have been identified in the Chugach Access Plan as providing alpine access to underused portions of the park. Development of a few select locations would help draw people from overcrowded areas like Glen Alps. Work is needed to choose and reserve the best locations(s) for improved public access and to develop improved parking areas, trails and trailhead infrastructure. This will likely require partnering with the Municipality of Anchorage and others, as well as a public engagement process. One challenge – like other Park gateway locations – is this area is currently outside of the MOA Recreational Service Area.



View down the social trail above the very small Honey Bear public parking lot.
Source: Chris Beck

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
No detailed plans currently in place for expansion	Chugach State Park; MOA; Heritage Land Bank	Alpine access to an underused, attractive part of the park	Needs design, funding, public engagement. Trail work needed.	Unknown – to be determined w/ CSP & MOA	Mid Term: Big benefits could be realized but impediments exist.

*where relevant this column includes background on status

IMPROVED CHUGACH PARK TRAILS

The “trail system” in the frontcountry of Chugach State Park is largely an artifact of informal social trails, old homestead roads, and utility lines. The two most well used trails in the Park are the steep, rocky scramble up Flattop, and the remnant construction road running up Powerline Pass Valley. Working with almost no budget, the Park is slowly improving the CSP trails. A bigger budget and additional investments could dramatically improve the trail system, opening the park to a larger user base, as well creating trails that are safer and more sustainable.

Candidate trails for improvement should be chosen because they are noteworthy and spectacular enough to encourage visitors from afar to spend more time in the Anchorage area. Competing destinations around the world offer such trails; the Chugach could do the same. While a subset of Anchorage residents can readily find wonderful experiences in the Chugach, most visitors and many locals lack the confidence and knowledge to access the experiences the Chugach can offer. These trails should be spectacular enough to be memorable but also be safe, clearly signed and suitable for a wide range of hikers. One or two well-located trails in the alpine area of the Chugach could be improved and marketed to reach this goal. Loop trails are preferred although a point-to-point trail can work with a shuttle service. Several starting priorities are presented below.

Flattop Trail The trail up Flattop from the Glen Alps parking lot is one of the most widely used trails in Alaska. However, it is damaged, eroded, not built to sustainable standards and less safe than it should be. CSP has already planned and marked a reroute, but funding must be secured for construction. The result will be a wider, much safer trail, suitable for people with little confidence or experience, but nonetheless continuing to offer the satisfying challenge and reward that has made this trail so popular. Estimated cost is \$1 million, including decommissioning existing unsafe trail sections, and removing 200 stairs. Improvements may trigger need for expansion or improvement of parking and roads.

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Major upgrade to route surveyed, ready for construction	Chugach State Park	Replace damaged eroded trail w/ safer trail built to modern, sustainable standards.	Technically difficult trail construction conditions	\$1 million	Near Term (Shovel Ready) project with strong public and land manager support. Trail already a huge draw.

*where relevant this column includes background on status



Flattop hiking, or perhaps that’s more like scrambling, up Anchorage’s best - known trail. The project identified here would create a safer, more enjoyable and sustainable trail.

Source: Roy Neese / Visit Anchorage

Little O’Malley Trail The current fall-line social trail up the Little O’Malley gully is severely eroded and is not built to sustainable trail standards. A proposed reroute would be built to modern, sustainable trail standards and would route hikers away from the gully. This project has been chosen for support by the *Chugach Park Fund* to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of State Parks and fundraising is currently underway. This trail is one segment of the “Two Valleys” loop described below.

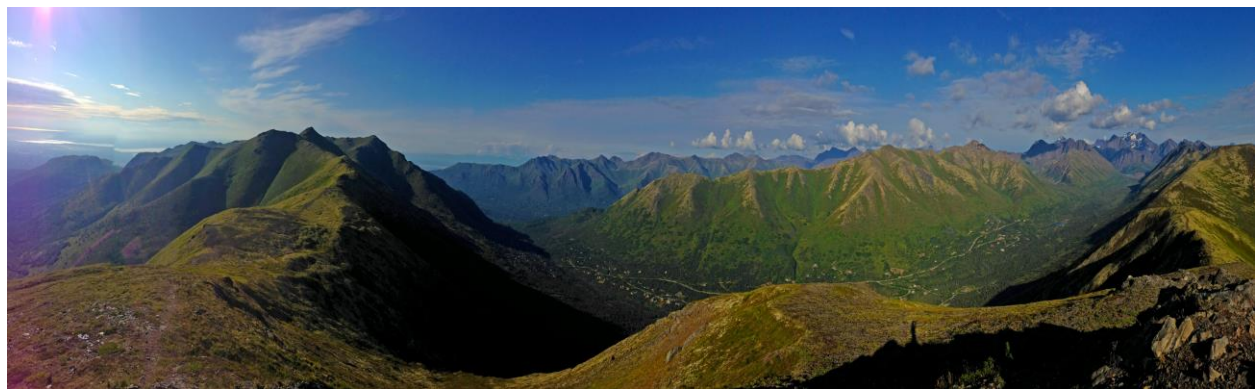
<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Replacing social trail with a safe, sustainable route; Route identified, ready for construction	Chugach State Park; Chugach Park Fund	Replace social trail with safer trail built to modern, sustainable standards.	Some work can be done by volunteers but a professional crew needed to complete project in a reasonable period.	\$100K. 2020 fund-raising goal is \$50K to start project. (\$30K already raised)	Near Term (Shovel Ready) Project with strong public and land manager support. This trail could be part of a longer “signature trail”.

*where relevant this column includes background on status

The Two Valleys Loop: Glen Alps to Little O’Malley Trail to the “Ball Field” to Williwaw Lakes and back to Glen Alps via the Middle Fork Trail. “Two Valleys” is the working label given to this attractive route that includes the upper drainages of the south and middle forks of Campbell Creek. With sections of the trail improved, this route would offer walkers of moderate fitness a rewarding memorable experience of alpine country, views up into higher more rugged terrain, lakes and streams and alpine flora.

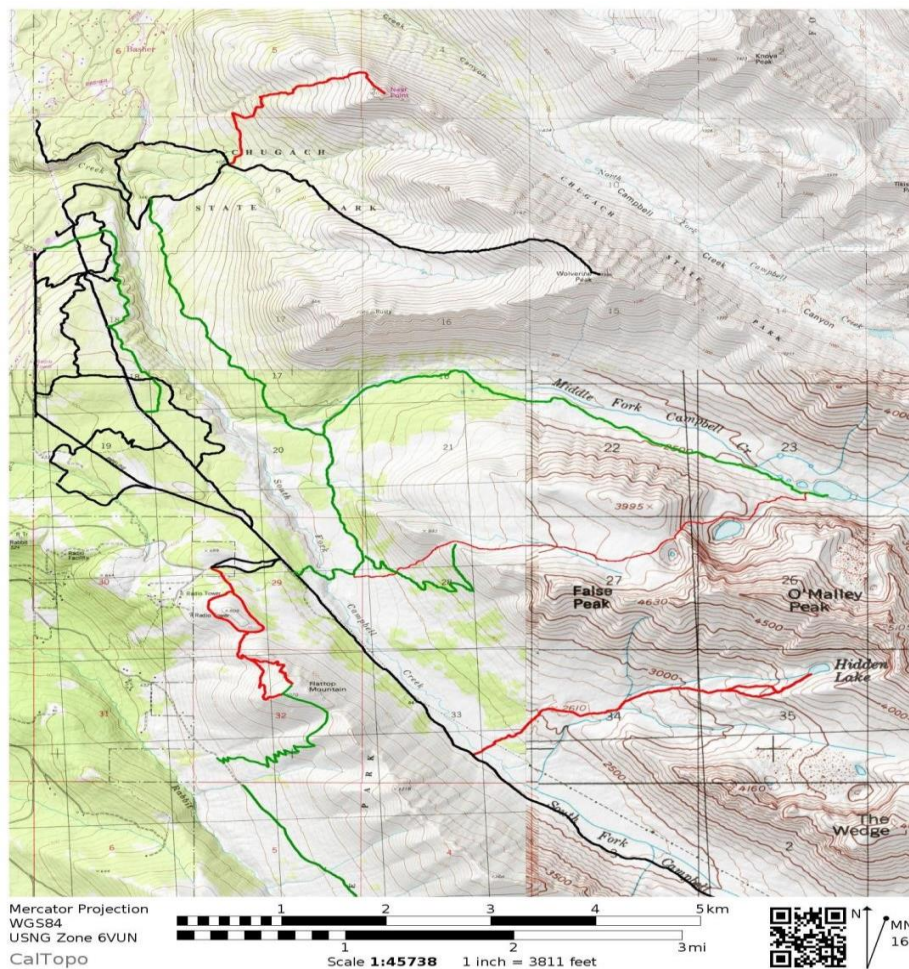
<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
A mix of established and social trails already exist. Scope of improvements needs to be determined.	Chugach State Park	Replace sections with safer trail built to modern, sustainable standards.	A few stretches of trail are steep and challenging, much work can be done by volunteers	To be determined.	Near Term: Planning in Progress. Strong public and land manager support.

*where relevant this column includes background on status



The Chugach Mountains – Anchorage’s big, wild and accessible back yard. Source: Anita Nelson / Visit Anchorage

***Place holder map for Chugach front country trails – update
with more accurate and complete trails info***



COMPREHENSIVE CHUGACH PARK STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Chugach State Park already has a Management Plan, a Trails Plan and an Access Plan. While these plans provide a valuable framework for future park improvements, to date there has been minimal funding to implement these recommendations. The proposed Comprehensive Strategic Implementation Plan is not intended to supersede or supplant these plans, but using these plans as a reference, to identify the partners, projects and programs with the best odds of securing funding for implementation. The process would take a fresh look at the Chugach Frontcountry to consider the actions that both meet State Park goals and gain the broader support needed for progress. It would pinpoint resources and infrastructure needed to manage public use of the park, and build new partnerships to strengthen advocacy for Park improvements. Specific products would include clear goals, recommendations for new approaches to funding, project priorities, sustainability strategies, and ways to guide location and intensity of use through strategic investments in access, trails, information, marketing and management. It would aim to address long-existing thorny issues such as access and insufficient staffing and budget in the spirit of the *Trails Initiative's* goals and objectives.

5. REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

In addition to the recommendations for improvements in the Anchorage Bowl and Chugach Frontcountry, there is the opportunity for improved connections from Anchorage north into the southern Mat Su Borough, and south to Girdwood and the Kenai.

ANCHORAGE TO POINTS SOUTH & CONTINUATIONS OF THE IDITAROD NAT’L HISTORIC TRAIL
THREE CONNECTION PROJECTS ARE PICTURED BELOW – SEE THE SEWARD TO ANCHORAGE CHAPTER FOR MORE INFORMATION.



Crow Pass trail and Raven Glacier.
 Source: Chris Beck



Skiing Arctic to Indian.
 Source: Chris Beck



Reliable early spring hiking on the Turnagain Arm Trail. Source: Chris Beck

ANCHORAGE NORTH TO PALMER

A paved trail linking Anchorage and Palmer would provide multiple benefits: creating new safe, and inviting options for daily exercise, allowing for connections for work or errands between communities, and opening the door for more ambitious overnight trips. Comparable community-to-community bike trails are very successful in lower 48 communities and around the world.

An existing, well used bike trail currently runs along the Glenn Highway from Anchorage, through Eagle River, and on to Mirror Lake. Initial planning has identified workable routes from Mirror Lake, ultimately leading to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, crossing the Knik River or Matanuska Rivers, and tying into the trail networks being developed in the vicinity of the planned Mat Su Visitor center. Work is needed to determine the specific route and costs. Initial planning and ROW investigations have been done for a proposed 6 mile stretch of grade-separated trail along the Glenn from Mirror Lake, through Eklutna, to the junction with the Old Glen Highway.

Project*	Lead	Benefits & Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
Portions to route already exist. Work is needed to identify most practical additional segments	AK DOT/PF, Muni. of Anchorage, community and trail organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides an inviting way to tour the communities stretched out along the front range of the Chugach Mountains - Supports diverse uses and users, from casual, short walks or rides, to commuting, to longer multi-day trips - Significant work needed to identify routes and incrementally develop a safe, continuous trail 	Phase 1: \$5-7M for trail from Mirror Lake to Old Glen Hwy Phase 2 – Crossing Palmer Hay Flats; costs yet to be determined.	Longer Term: Planning needed

*where relevant this column includes background on status

Alaska Trails



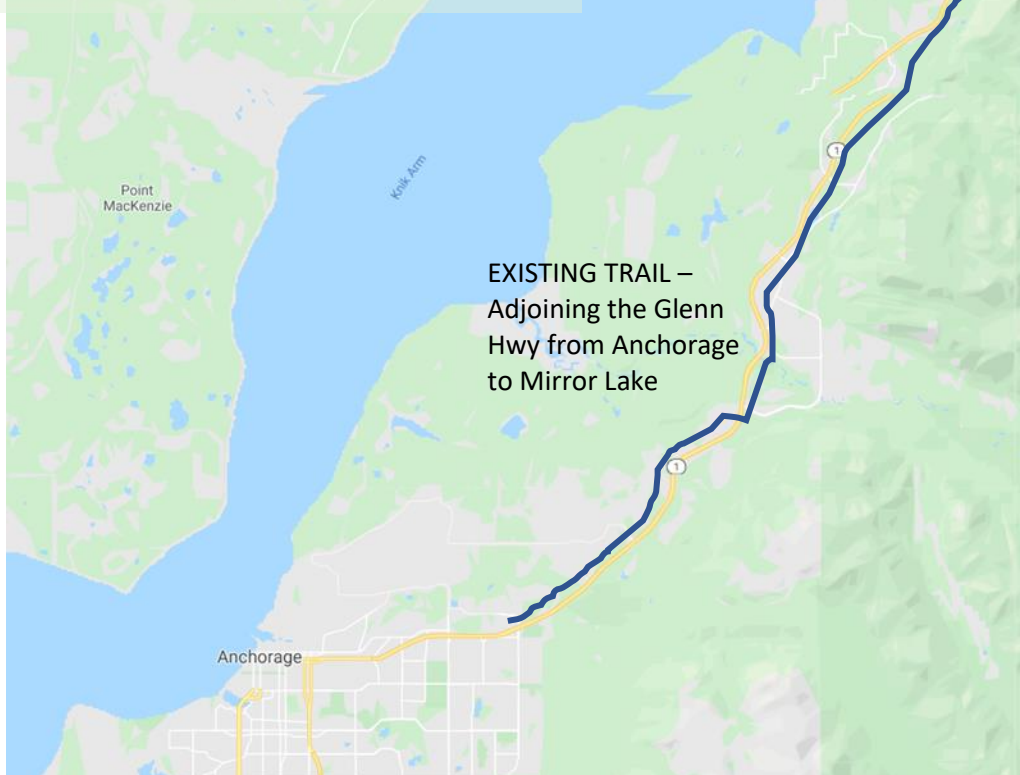
Yes, it's a highway corridor, but the corridor and a trail pass by scenic forests, a series of lakes, and ever changing views of the Chugach Mountains.

Photo – Neeser Construction



PHASE 2 – Old Glenn Hwy Junction to Points North

PHASE 1 – Mirror Lake to Old Glenn Hwy Junction



EXISTING TRAIL – Adjoining the Glenn Hwy from Anchorage to Mirror Lake

IMAGINING A TRAIL CONNECTING ANCHORAGE WITH PALMER, WASILLA AND THE MAT SU

- Safe** – separates bikers/walkers from vehicles
- Fun & Healthy** – a way to get outside for a quick walk or ride a multi-night excursion
- Practical** – new options for trips to work, or for errands

Map is conceptual, preliminary; planning is now in progress to identify the most appropriate practical routes