

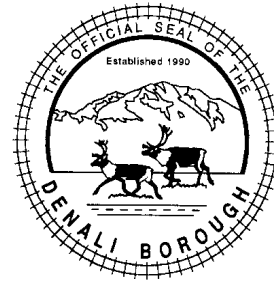
DENALI BOROUGH

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Clay Walker, Mayor

December 2021 Mayor's Report to the Denali Borough Assembly

This report speaks primarily to non-agenda items. Agenda items will be discussed in meeting.

Cantwell To Healy Parks Hwy MP 203-259 Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study

- This study, which began in 2020 and will conclude in early 2022, is currently in an important phase, with a third and final public open house soliciting comment in progress. The DRAFT PEL is available for review and public comment is welcome. The Study sent notices to every PO Box in the borough announcing the Open House, which closes December 15th.
- The Draft PEL Study identifies needs and opportunities along the corridor, proposes solutions and prioritizes these future projects. The current draft proposes 29 different solutions totaling over \$400 million in projects.
- The Denali Borough has participated throughout the Study, which is conducted by DOT in partnership with FHWA and NPS, as a member of the Project Advisory Committee, which includes a number of regional stakeholders.
- For more information, and to review and provide comment, please visit the Open House at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/71287ca577a945eda5687131ebe13d42>. The interactive map provided with project details is very helpful.
- It is particularly exciting to be conducting the planning and environmental groundwork for solutions addressing the at-grade railroad crossing, the Canyon traffic issues, traffic safety and pedestrian connectivity within and between communities, among many other solutions, at a time when infrastructure funding will be coming available.

Alaska Municipal League (AML) Annual Local Government Conference

- November 15-17 AML hosted the 71st Annual Local Government Conference in Anchorage. Treasurer Connie MacMaster and I attended in person while other staff members participated in select relevant session virtually. AML worked hard to model how to safely put on a large scale conference with active COVID.
- At the annual meeting, Alaska's municipalities voted upon Policy and Position Statements and Resolutions, hosted a Gubernatorial Debate, heard from Sen. Murkowski regarding the signed Infrastructure Bill, shared challenges and successes regarding COVID responses, and conducted a variety of informative sessions on municipal topics.
- Over the course of the week, I also participated in an AML Board of Directors meeting and a Board of Trustees meeting for the Alaska Municipal League Joint Insurance Association.

Alaska Conference of Mayors

- November 17 and 18, the Conference Mayors met in Anchorage following the AML Conference. We shared our communities' infrastructure needs and discussed potential avenues forward. We also had a session with Alaska's Chief Medical Officer Anne Zink and the Director of Public Health Heidi Hedberg. They shared current status updates as well as upcoming changes to COVID testing and reporting. A shift from PCR testing to antigen testing is underway, which has ramifications for reporting because not all tests will be reported to the state. Data points such as positivity rates and case rates, which we've used to date to assess our position, will become less reliable and usable as the state will not be the holder of all testing and case information.

Update on grant application to National Telecommunication Infrastructure Administration (NTIA)

- The Assembly approved the borough's application, filed in partnership with MTA, to NTIA for an \$8 million broadband upgrade project in the borough. NTIA, which had \$288 million available for this program, received 240 applications for over \$2.7 billion.
- NTIA, in order to fully review, evaluate, and make award recommendations, has extended their timeframe of decision and notification – likely until mid-January.

Missile Defense Agency (MDA) Hosted Initial Fielding Ceremony for the Long Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) at Clear Space Force Station

- Along with Anderson Mayor Thompson, Nenana Mayor Verhagen and Fairbanks North Star Borough Ward, on December 6th I attended the Initial Fielding Ceremony for the new LRDR, which was hosted by Vice Admiral Jon A. Hill, Director of the Missile Defense Agency.
- While the new system still has a lot of testing and refinement ahead, the MDA is pleased to have such a large, complex, and important project turn the corner from construction to operation.
- The level of engineering, inter-agency, and sheer physical work required to construct the most advanced radar system in the world is a truly remarkable feat.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grants Through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- The borough is working with partners, including the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District and Alaska Trails, in developing and grant application to the EDA under its Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation program.

Happy Holidays to all! As always, feel free to contact me or staff with any questions.

-Clay