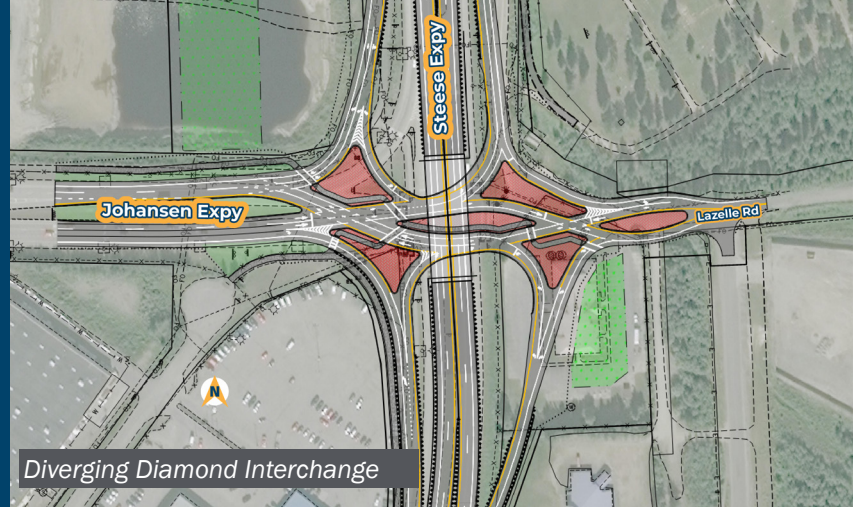


Steese Expressway / Johansen Expressway Interchange

Project No. Z607320000/0002337

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: October 3, 2023



Why is an interchange needed?

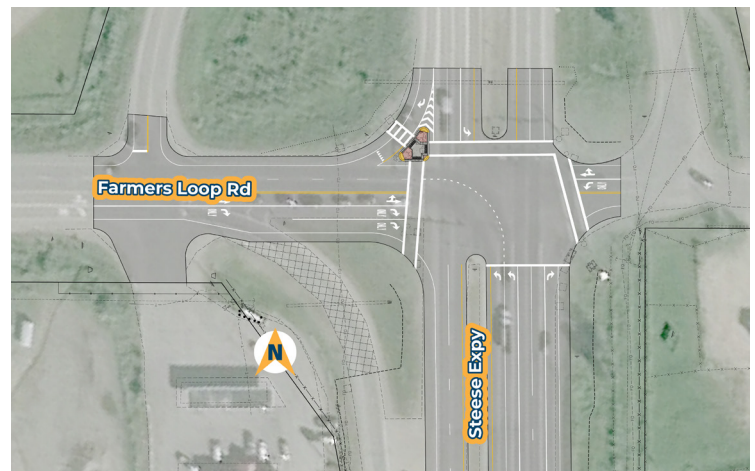
The Steese Expressway/Johansen Expressway (Steese-Jo) intersection has seen sustained traffic increases due to rapid growth in the area over the last 20 years. Large tracts of property have experienced an escalation in commercial and residential development. Multiple large and small retail stores, as well as service-oriented businesses and a residential neighborhood, have developed in this area, adding to traffic volumes. Continued growth is expected, and traffic volumes are expected to continue to rise.

The purpose of the Steese-Jo project is to enhance motorized and non-motorized mobility and user safety at the Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway intersection and within the influence area of the intersection. Traffic volumes within the project area are among the highest in the City of Fairbanks.

Additional operational and safety concerns identified for the area include pedestrian and bicycle safety, pedestrian delay, proximity of Farmers Loop Road, and overall vehicular delay. The project will address peak hour congestion and pedestrian safety concerns through construction of an interchange for this critical hub for commercial traffic heading to the North Slope from Canada, Valdez, and Anchorage.

Why is the free-flow right turn at Farmers Loop Road going away?

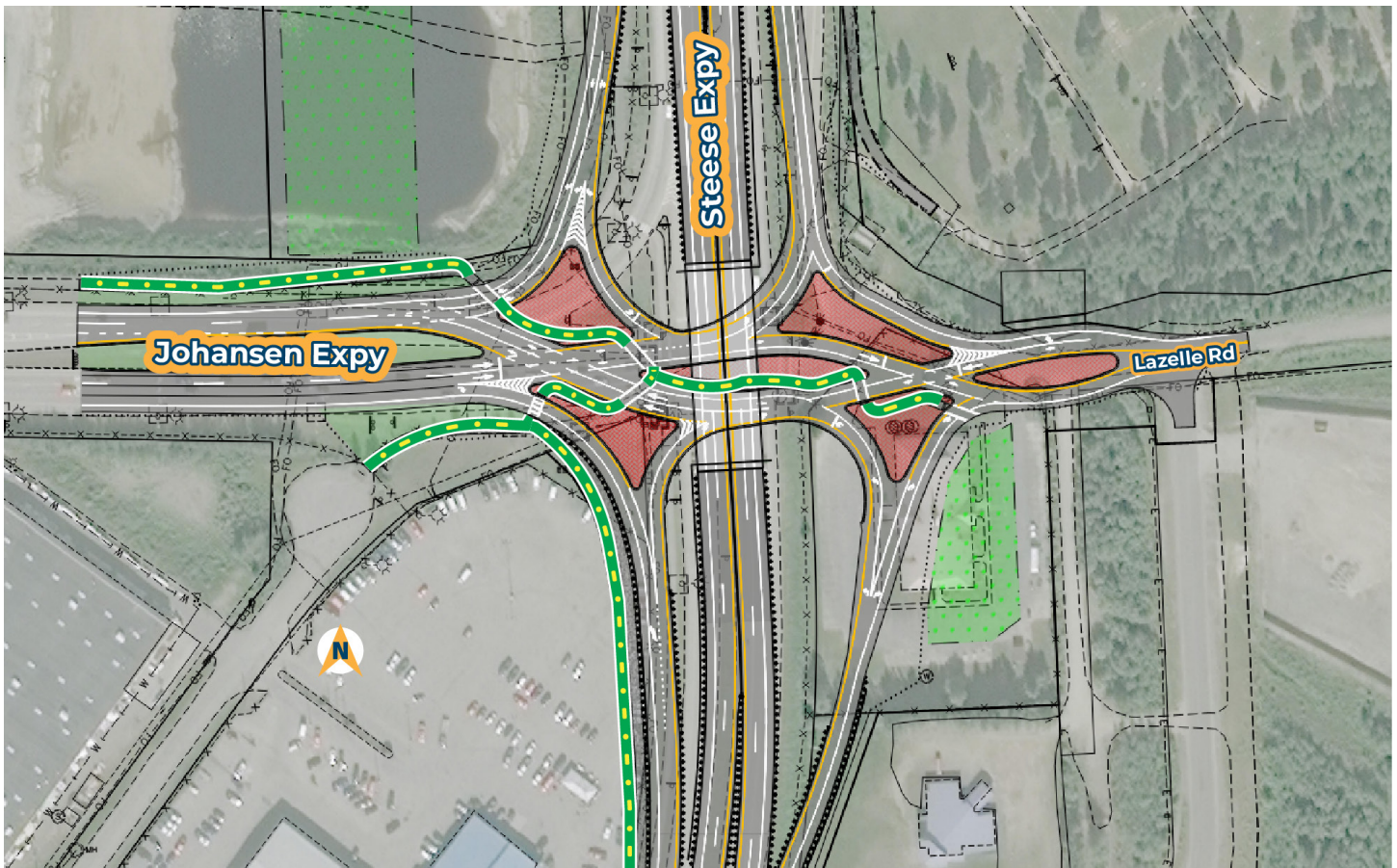
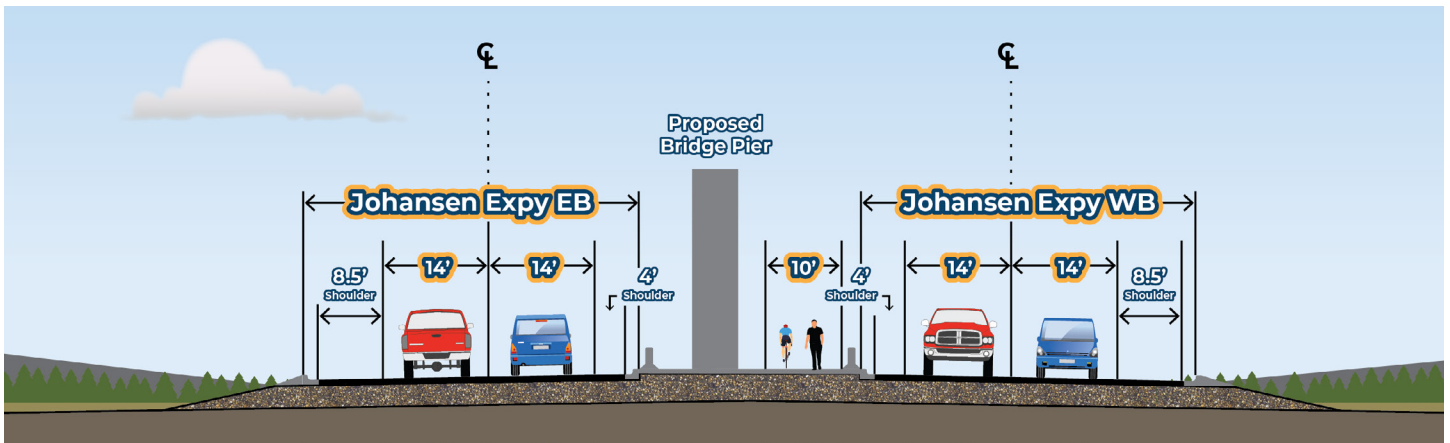
The existing free-flow eastbound right turn from Farmers Loop Road creates a weaving conflict between southbound Steese Expressway traffic bound for the Johansen Expressway and Farmers Loop Road traffic wanting to stay on the Steese Expressway. Today, the total weave distance is approximately 3,000 feet. With the proposed Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI), the southbound exit ramp and the modifications to the Steese Expressway's vertical profile to grade-separate over the Johansen Expressway will reduce the effective weave length by 600 feet, leaving 2,400 feet to complete the necessary lane changes.



The existing weave operation results in reduced travel speeds, congestion, reduced reliability, and safety concerns, especially during the AM peak period. With the forecasted volumes and reduced weave length, maintaining the weave conflict will increase the potential for rear-end and side-swipe collisions and result in degradation of operational performance along the southbound Steese Expressway and the southbound exit ramp. The team has reviewed the future vehicle counts and will add a second right-turn lane from Farmer's Loop Road to accommodate future traffic and help alleviate the weave conflict.

Why is the sidewalk in the median in the DDI?

In a DDI intersection, the ideal and safest place for pedestrians between the ramp terminals is the multi-use path located in the median. This path eliminates the uncontrolled conflict that would exist between pedestrians and the free-flow left turns if the pedestrians were placed on the outside of the roadway (like in a traditional intersection). By having pedestrians cross into the median, all pedestrian conflicts with through-movements will occur in a crosswalk controlled with a signal.



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What is happening with the pathway?

The existing pathway along the Steese Expressway will be relocated because the interchange ramps will occupy the space where it was situated. The new pathway will connect Northside Boulevard to Farmers Loop Road Extension.

Is the vehicular roadway for Farmers Loop Road Extension a temporary or permanent addition to the project?

The Farmers Loop Road Extension is proposed as a temporary detour to move vehicular traffic between Northside Boulevard and the Steese Expressway during construction. The Steese Expressway and Johansen Expressway intersection is one of the busiest in Fairbanks. The team is proposing the to build a temporary T-intersection on the Steese Expressway for vehicles to bypass the intersection and to keep Fairbanks moving. Shifting traffic allows us to complete interchange construction quickly and safely. Following completion of the interchange, the detour connection will no longer be used by the public. The multi-use pathway will remain as a permanent feature connecting the separated path on the Johansen Expressway to the separated path on Farmers Loop Road.

How long will construction take?

We understand that construction projects can lead to disruptions and delays in traffic and we are committed to minimizing these inconveniences. Currently, we are in the process of advancing the project's design, and we are actively collaborating with a Contractor to create a comprehensive construction phasing plan. Currently, we do not anticipate construction to commence before 2025. However, it is important to note that the project is expected to span 3 seasons once construction does begin. This phased approach allows us to complete the necessary work with minimal impact on traffic flow.

Our team is committed to delivering a high-quality highway interchange safely while working diligently to reduce inconvenience for all road users. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we strive to improve the transportation infrastructure in Fairbanks.

