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On the cover: The Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program’s building on the University of Anchorage Alaska campus. Construction was completed last fall by Davis Constructors and Engineers.

Cover Photos: © Ken Graham Photography
Cover Design: Karen Copley
### Low Bids for 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td></td>
<td>$23,993,200.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td></td>
<td>$7,049,000.00</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans</td>
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<td>$25,146,200.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>$56,494,000.00</td>
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### Low Bids for 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>$25,146,200.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>$56,494,000.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Source: projects advertised in the AGC of Alaska Bulletin
2) Calculations based on date of bid
3) Supply/Service, Non-Construction bid results are not always advertised in the bulletin
4) RFP results are not always advertised in the bulletin
### Alaska Construction Spending 2007 Forecast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIVATE</strong></td>
<td>$4,550,000,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and Gas</td>
<td>2,650,000,000</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>195,000,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Rural Basic Industry</td>
<td>20,000,000</td>
<td>-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>750,000,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Commercial</td>
<td>350,000,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>200,000,000</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>385,000,000</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PUBLIC</strong></td>
<td>$2,455,000,000</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Defense</td>
<td>570,000,000</td>
<td>-22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>425,000,000</td>
<td>-17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airports and Ports</td>
<td>360,000,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Railroad</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denali Commission</td>
<td>100,000,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>350,000,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Federal</td>
<td>365,000,000</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other State &amp; Local</td>
<td>185,000,000</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$7,005,000,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institute of Social and Economic Research
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3002 Lathrop St., Fairbanks, AK 99701 • (907) 456-5421 • 1-888-456-5421

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The importance of volunteering

We recently held our annual Legislative Fly-In to Juneau and I am pleased to report that this year was by far the best to date. This trip qualifies for that distinction for two major reasons.

The first has to do with the quality of meetings. We met with Gov. Sarah Palin and some of her staff, with the new Commissioner of the Department of Transportation and some of his senior staff, and with all but a very few of the members of both the State House of Representatives and the State Senate. Almost without exception we found agreement with, and support for, those items we had identified as priorities.

The second reason this year’s Legislative Fly-In was exceptional concerns the volunteer members who attended. All were professional in both appearance and comportment, took charge of their responsibilities and carried them out with enthusiasm. It was noted by more than one legislator that our members have tremendous credibility because they are volunteers and, more importantly, they pay their own way to Juneau and pay for their own hotel rooms and meals. All of which brings me to the real subject of this article; the importance of volunteering your time to participate in AGC functions and to serve on an AGC committee.

Volunteers like those who participated in the legislative fly-in and who serve on and participate in the activities of our many committees, which are the life-blood of our organization.

The opportunities to contribute and participate are many. Following is a short explanation of some committees, their purpose, current state and potential.

Regulatory committees

- Corps of Engineers Sub-Committee – This committee presents an opportunity to meet in a true partnering setting to discuss how to improve the working relationships between the Corps of Engineers and our contracting members as well as to trade information regarding the needs of future projects and the construction community’s ability to react. It is not meant to provide a forum for complaining, but rather as an opportunity to review the reasons behind a particular experience and to discover new approaches by which both parties might avoid unpleasant experiences. Every member company that pursues COE managed work should have a volunteer on this committee.

- Department of Environmental Conservation Sub-Committee – Although the Department of Environmental Conservation’s visits are becoming ever more frequent at project sites, this committee has not been very active. We need to be pro-active in finding ways to participate in, and influence, the decision-making process of this complicated organization and its federal counterpart the Environmental Protection Agency.

- Department of Transportation & Public Facilities Sub-Committee – This committee has been very successfully chaired out of the Fairbanks Task Force for years. It’s now time for one of our Anchorage area members to step up and volunteer as co-chair. There are many opportunities to interact with Department of Transportation and be pro-active on issues that affect our members; especially with the new Commissioner who is very friendly toward private enterprise and has not yet been adversely affected by the “business as usual” attitude that has plagued many past administrations.

- Municipal Utilities Sub-Committee – This committee currently has several task forces involved in a number of related issues including Title 21 and changes to ordinances regarding noise control. This committee – as with many of our other committees – could be more pro-active, rather than reactive. We could use some committee members who are willing to become more active in the local political scene, influencing the decision-making process before things get so far along that we end up in reactive mode, playing catch-up.

I could go on about our other committees but the point has been made with these examples. The remainder of our committees will always welcome new volunteers. It is the new member that usually brings fresh approaches.

Please take time to consider volunteering to serve on one of our committees as discussed above or as follows: Legislative Affairs Committee; Membership Committee; Safety Committee; Education Committee; External Relations; Internal Affairs. The success of our organization depends on the willingness of its members to serve.
OUR IMPROVED COMBI FLEET OFFERS SOMETHING BOTH YOUR CARGO AND YOUR AUNT BERNICE CAN APPRECIATE. MORE SPACE.

MORE OF WHAT MATTERS — Starting this February, we're proud to be the first airline to convert 737-400 passenger planes into combi aircraft. Designed to each accommodate 1,700 cubic feet of cargo divided into four pallets in front, and 72 very comfortable passengers in back, the improved combis will allow you to welcome more of your precious cargo—whether that's relatives or refrigerators—all on one flight.

MORE RELIABLE — The combis, which are younger, less expensive to maintain and 20% more fuel-efficient than the 737-200s they're replacing, also feature state-of-the-art navigation flight guidance technology, that includes a Heads-up Guidance System, allowing the flight crew to more successfully navigate challenging airports and foggy conditions. All good for maintaining flight schedules and happy customers.

MORE ROOM — Due to its permanent fixed configuration, each combi will be able to guarantee more passengers and more cargo than traditional versions. Equipped with pallets that are 20% larger, the combis will house 50% more cargo than their predecessors. Passengers will benefit from more room too, with full-sized overhead bins, comfy leather seats, and increased leg room.

MORE ON THE HORIZON — Transporting cargo is critical to the state of Alaska, more so than any other place we serve. That's why more combis will be introduced to the fleet over the next six months, expanding our total cargo capacity by 20% (or a half-ton of mail, five ultrasound machines and nine dozen king crabs a day, to put it in perspective). Servicing points throughout Alaska, our combis are just one example of our ongoing commitment to the people, the businesses and the Aunt Bernices all around this great state.

COMMITTED TO CARGO
For the 1992 presidential campaign, James Carville crafted a simple, yet powerful, phrase to keep his candidate focused on the primary strategy of their campaign. Despite attempts by his opponent, the media and special interest groups to distract the Clinton campaign by interjecting important, yet extraneous issues, the phrase “It’s the Economy Stupid” helped keep the campaign focused and resulted in a landslide victory.

Some AGC members wonder why AGC got involved in the controversy surrounding the Pebble project. Was it the prospect of 2,000 jobs during construction? Was it the promise of 1,000 high paying jobs once the project was operational? Was it the glamour of having the largest copper resource in North America – and perhaps the world – located in the state? Perhaps it was the prospect of a project costing $1 billion to $3 billion to develop located nearby? Or, perhaps those who believe that AGC never saw a development project it didn’t like are correct?

Actually, AGC is interested in the Pebble project not because of what it is, but what it represents. Alaska is a state rich in resources. If the state is to grow and prosper, it needs access to those resources in a manner that recognizes the expectations of Alaskans. Alaskans expect that resources will be developed in a responsible manner that respects the uniqueness of the state. Protecting Alaska’s natural beauty, its wildlife, its fisheries, and the lifestyles of its residents are fundamental to any resource development.

The Pebble project represents a hope for residents of the area to shed the restraints of poverty and attain the economic freedom associated with having a good paying job. However, before any benefits can be realized, the project must successfully navigate the permitting process. It is generally recognized that Alaska has one of the most demanding permitting processes in the United States. Superimposed over the Alaska process are the federal requirements set forth in the Environmental Protection Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and numerous other laws. The requirements established in state and federal statutes and regulations are so demanding that only the most serious projects can survive.

The permitting process is not for the faint of heart. It was designed to assure that one resource did not get developed to the detriment of others. It was designed to assure Alaskans that any development will be done on Alaska’s terms, and will be done in a manner that protects the resources and values that Alaskans hold dear.

Why then all the controversy regarding the Pebble project? The project hasn’t even started the permitting process, yet opponents have spent millions in their attempt to kill it. Alaskans have watched in awe as special interest groups fought to keep ANWR from moving beyond the conceptual stage. Now it seems that opponents to the Pebble project have stolen a page from the ANWR playbook and want to stop the project before it starts the permitting process.

At AGC we’re not in favor of the Pebble project. We’re in favor of allowing the developer to proceed to, and through, the process. If the Pebble project succeeds, it will have successfully addressed the concerns about the potential impacts on other resources. If it fails, it will be because it could not meet the high hurdles incorporated in the Alaska permitting process. No matter what the ultimate outcome might be, if the Pebble project is allowed to go through the process, Alaskans will win. It seems only fair to allow this developer, or any developer, to go through the permitting process to determine whether a project is technically, environmentally and economically viable.

The Pebble project represents the “line in the sand or the straw that broke the camel’s back.” Alaska has processes that are spelled out in statute and regulation. Companies looking to do business in Alaska should understand that Alaskans will defend their companies’ right to do business in Alaska so long as they comply with our laws and regulations. To deny companies the right to do business is unfair and un-Alaskan.

We should not allow special interest groups to kill a project before it enters the permitting process; no matter how righteous their unique perspective might seem. This is why AGC is involved in this issue. “It’s our process, stupid!”
Since 1976, the Port of Tacoma has been a major trade gateway to Alaska. With Horizon Lines and Totem Ocean Trailer Express shipping lines located in Tacoma, the Port of Tacoma now handles more than $3 billion of waterborne trade with Alaska each year.

But Tacoma’s trade connections to Alaska are just the tip of the iceberg. A few examples:

- The Port of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce have supported oil exploration and recovery in ANWR since 1986. We were the first two groups outside of Alaska to support this issue.

- Port of Tacoma Commissioners and staff regularly visit Alaska—to places ranging from Prudhoe Bay to Dutch Harbor—to better understand the current issues and business climate.

- Each year, Tacoma-Pierce County sends a delegation of business leaders to Alaska’s state chamber convention—to meet with Alaska’s business leaders and keep them informed about Tacoma’s developments.

- The Port of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce are key sponsors of an economic impact study that examines important connections between Puget Sound and Alaska.

- The Port of Tacoma has a partnership agreement with the Port of Anchorage, working with Alaskans on key issues, such as evaluating opportunities in the Northern Sea Route.

We are proud of our connections to Alaska, especially our friendships with people who live there.

This message to the people of Alaska is from the Port of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce.
Many safety professionals conduct training to meet regulatory requirements or create cultural change. In today’s world, training must provide value and benefit both to the learner and to the organization.

The Success Case Method (SCM) is a robust approach to evaluating the value of training in a way that is reliable, compelling and persuasive to senior management.

**Traditional approach to learning measurement**

One method commonly used to measure training effect is simply the “gut-level” feeling that this particular training course is valuable and worthwhile; reasoning that participants must be learning a lot, therefore creating value for the organization. While there may be some truth to this approach, it is hardly compelling to management.

Most training professionals are familiar with Don Kirkpatrick’s four-level training evaluation model (see Figure 1). At the conclusion of training, participants complete a Level 1 Evaluation “Smile Sheet,” where they are asked about the trainer, room temperature, location and other aspects of the session.

In Level 2 Evaluation, participants are measured on learning or skills transfer. This is typically a cognitive test – such as a multiple-choice exam, but could include a skills test, where the learner actually performs a task.

Level 3 Evaluation measures the application of skills in the workplace by asking “Does the learner effectively use these new skills?” This is measured by observing behavior.

Kirkpatrick’s Level 4 Evaluation measures impact to the organization. This could be quantified by reduced turnover, increased production, or myriad other performance measures.

Jack Phillips later introduced Level 5 Evaluation called Return on Investment (ROI). This measures impact of training in dollars and cents so organizations know the exact value created by the training intervention.

These methods are rarely used past Level 2, however, leaving a large void in measurement.

**Success Case Method – a new way**

The Success Case Method, developed by Dr. Robert Brinkerhoff, offers an extraordinary new tool to measure and evaluate training. With SCM, we not only discover the value of training, but it helps leaders to understand the roadblocks that can inhibit optimal performance of the organization.

The Success Case Method provides us with a new way to measure the success of safety and training programs. We can learn how many individuals were able to use and apply new skills to create specific value to the organization. It allows a shift from a focus on training to measuring the performance of our organizations.
This method of measuring training success starts with the very predictable distribution curve of training impact (Figure 2). The vast majority (in the middle of the bell curve) try to use their skills without results, run into a barrier or find it easier to simply use “the old way” of doing things.

We know that elements of supervisory support, reinforcement and feedback, along with reducing the risk for trying the new behavior will have far more impact on performance than the acquisition of new skills. In fact, more than 80 percent of the failure of training is caused by organizational factors.

There are five steps to using the Success Case Method:

1. **Step One – Focus and Plan the Evaluation** – The basis of the evaluation is driven by each situation’s unique needs.
2. **Step Two – Create an Impact Model** – The impact model describes the behaviors and results that would occur should the learner apply their new skills in the workplace. All training is designed to elicit a change. In this step, the learning professional quantifies the desired change with very specific and measurable organizational results.
3. **Step Three – Design and Conduct a User Survey** – The survey is designed to yield two results, by identifying:
   1. Where are learners on the continuum of success? (Figure 2)
   2. Who are the most (and least) successful in applying the new skills?
4. **Step Four – Conduct Interviews** – Interviews are the very core of the process. Employees who have applied their new skills to achieve results, and employees who are not able to apply the training in any usable fashion are interviewed.
5. **Step Five – Develop Conclusions and Recommendations** – In the final step, the learning professional will identify findings, draw conclusions and develop recommendations, by determining:
   - What impact (if any) was achieved?
   - Was the success widespread or limited?
   - What organizational factors were responsible for success (or failure)? If one department had stellar results, what drove success?
   - What value was achieved? What business results (e.g. ROI) were realized?

What is the remaining opportunity? Using the bell curve (Figure 2), what value could be realized if everyone had applied the skills to the same degree as the high performers? Should resources to drive success, drive execution and obtain results be invested in the rest of the participants?

Chris Ross, CSP, CPLP, is the AGC/NANA Training Systems General Manager. Visit their Web site at www.nana-nts.com or call (907) 565-3300 for more information.
60 years and growing

Most corporate anniversaries are devoted to looking back over past accomplishments. As Swalling Construction celebrates its 60th year of doing business across Alaska, the challenge is to try and remember a project this Alaskan-owned and operated company hasn’t been a part of in the state’s construction industry.

Attu, Ketchikan, Seldovia, St. George, St. Paul, Barrow, Kotzebue, Delta Junction, Peters Creek, Valdez, Cordova, Whittier, Eagle River, Eklutna, the North Slope, Bethel, Nome, Kodiak, Prince of Wales, Cold Bay, Palmer, Wasilla, Anchorage – just spread out a map of Alaska and point, and chances are there’s some capital improvement project to which Swalling contributed.

During Anchorage’s first boom in the 1940s and 1950s, Swalling was known for the Turnagain Apartments, the L Street Apartments (now known as Inlet Towers) and the McKinley and McKay buildings – the first high-rise steel buildings in Anchorage. In 1949, they built the art deco KENI radio station and transmitter tower, over-excavating the clay at the site and putting in gravel and drains in case of earthquakes, and still 15 years before the Great Alaska Earthquake. There was the old First National Bank Building, KFQD Radio, bridges leading to the Alyeska Pipeline Valdez Marine Terminal, work on the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line, and the first remodel of the train station in Palmer – the contract was written on the back of an envelope.

Union Oil Company came to Swalling to build the first tank farm in Seldovia, and the firm was the first private contractor to work on the Pribilof Islands where they built a “composite building” that held the post office, jail, residences, concrete water tanks, a boat shop and a garage.

Swalling crews set a 350-foot section of pipeline bridge box girder across the Sakoonang Channel for the CD3/CD4 Pipeline and Bridge Project at the Alpine Development in March 2006.
In the last 20 years alone, the company’s portfolio grew to include the Anchorage International Airport Parking Garage, the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, APRN, Moose Run Golf Course, the Port of Anchorage, North C Street Bridge Construction, the Glenn Highway, Raspberry Road to Jewel Lake, the Veteran’s Administration Clinic, the Tudor Road Rehabilitation Project and the Rabbit Creek/DeArmoun Road Overpass. There was the Sitka Indian River Bridge and another at Stariski Creek, parking garages at Providence Hospital and three bridges for ConocoPhillips Alaska just last year.

“And that’s just the stuff you see,” said Mike Swalling, President of Swalling Construction.

Specializing in heavy industrial work, family-owned and operated Swalling Construction was started by his father Albert “A.C.” Swalling who used his eighth-grade education and trade school certification to become a carpenter, builder then contractor – along with owning several other businesses and entrepreneur ventures in his 93 years. He first came to Alaska in 1929 to work for the Copper River Railroad in the Bridge and Building Department until Kennicott closed down the copper mine operations in 1938.

From there, the opportunistic Swalling started his own business building and repairing boats, along with owning several other businesses and entrepreneur ventures in his 93 years. He first came to Alaska in 1929 to work for the Copper River Railroad in the Bridge and Building Department until Kennicott closed down the copper mine operations in 1938. Shortly after, in 1945, he founded Swalling Construction with his longtime Cordova friend Jack Clawson and the company was incorporated in 1947.

Doing whatever needs to be done has always been one of Swalling’s business philosophies, his son Mike says. After receiving his degree in civil engineering, Mike joined the company in 1964 as an apprentice and expeditor, working in the office, helping with estimates and learning the ropes, suspecting that “nepotism helps” and eventually the bits and pieces of knowledge he was picking up would lead to something greater. Although Mike was managing the company by the early 1970s, he officially took over as CEO and president in 1980, while continuing to learn in his father’s footsteps until he died in 2004.

One of the many examples his father set for him was the importance of the company’s involvement with Associated General Contractors of Alaska. Besides celebrating their 60th anniversary in business, last year they were also recognized for their 58th year as general members, making them a charter member of the organization.

Swalling Construction has contributed to the local and national chapters in many ways. Al was president and vice president of the Alaska Chapter and was chair of the National Environmental Committee and director of Heavy/Industrial Operations. Mike is also a past president, and as a lifetime board member serves on various committees “doing whatever they want me to do,” including lobbying in Juneau and contributing to efforts to develop professional opportunities for youth who want to enter the industry.

Having access to the resources through AGC continues to be one of the biggest advantages of membership and involvement, Mike says. For union companies, AGC’s negotiating skills are invaluable, and for non-union shops there are countless local and national resources for running a business and networking opportunities in one of the state’s largest and most dynamic industries.

“In this industry there are new issues every day – sometimes more than once a day. It’s a big challenge when you’re working on something measurable and making something that lasts. AGC is a spokesman in the construction industry on issues that affect the state and the nation and they do a good job of it,” Mike says.

Through its education and career academy committees, AGC also provides a way for Swalling Construction to give back to the community and invest in the state’s growing engineering and construction industry by helping develop the next generation’s workforce.

“We have a tremendous need for infrastructure here,” Mike says. “But Alaska is lacking the ability to get where we need to go: it’s getting to a critical point because we have more people retiring now, so we need to attract more new talent so we can give them a place to grow.”
Building a better construction management program
‘We need these people to come into the industry’

BY TRACY KALYTIAK

Devin Rush had never set foot outside Idaho until a decade ago, when he decided to take a buddy’s advice and move to Alaska.

He left an unsuccessful college career – “I pretty much flunked out” – but brought with him skills he learned as a teen, while building forms and pouring concrete with his sister’s husband.

Rush found a job doing commercial slabs and big building foundations for an outfit in Kenai. He journeyed to Anchorage for a job and found work pouring concrete floors for barracks at Fort Richardson. Rush decided in 2005 to take his career further, faster, by enrolling in the University of Alaska Anchorage’s fledgling construction management degree program.

He has been pursuing an associate degree, but Rush said the University of Alaska board of regents decision Feb. 15 to approve expansion of the two-year associate degree program into a four-year Bachelor of Science degree program means he will continue in UAA’s CM program until he achieves that higher goal.

“I became foreman but didn’t see myself becoming a superintendent in the near future,” Rush, 32, said of his decision to return to college. “Sure, if I stayed with a company long enough, I’d become a superintendent, but I wouldn’t have that added extra, a degree. Another thing that got me thinking was that a lot of students coming into the positions of superintendent or assistant superintendent only have an educational degree with no construction experience. They’ve never swung a hammer — they’ve got book smarts but never built anything. You might as well have built something so you know what your guys are doing.”
Forging links

The person who likely deserves the most credit for putting Alaska’s construction industry leaders together with UAA officials and assembling the components of UAA’s CM degree program is Jeff Callahan. He is one of “two and a half” faculty members in the CM department, of which he also serves as director. He says CM shares some faculty with the architecture and engineering technology department; CM faculty are required to have some experience in construction.

The CM program is in its third year and just graduated six students from its inaugural two years. Three graduates plan to continue in the CM bachelor’s degree program, he said. Callahan said 125 students have declared CM as a major, 50 are active in the program and taking classes.

Callahan and other department faculty first discussed the possibility of forming a construction management program in 2001, but a 2002 needs-assessment survey done by UAA’s David E. Gunderson, Dr. Jang W. Ra, Dr. Herb Schroeder and H.R. Holland energized their efforts, sparking and accelerating conversations between industry and academia representatives and bringing forth Alaska’s first CM program.

The survey stated Alaska’s construction industry contributes 7.5 percent of a $24.4-billion gross state product, and is expected to experience a 27-percent increase in employment from 2005 to 2045.

The survey stated that while Alaska’s construction industry contributes 7.5 percent of a $24.4-billion gross state product, and is expected to experience a 27-percent increase in employment from 2005 to 2045.
from 2005 to 2045, the closest postsecondary construction education program was situated 2,435 miles away, at the University of Washington. Alaska was one of seven states without a CM program (Delaware, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming). The other states (with the exception of Hawaii) were located within 260 miles of a university with a CM program, however.

“The purpose of this research effort was to investigate the perceived needs of Alaskan contractors in hiring entry-level construction management personnel,” the survey stated. Ninety-nine people in the construction industry, most of whom were general contractors, returned their surveys, which indicated the need for approximately 31 construction management graduates annually. Respondents said they would be willing to pay an average starting annual salary of $39,004 to someone with little or no experience, but an average starting salary of $42,233 to a CM graduate with six months of internship work experience.

“The required skills identified in the survey will be used as a basis to develop a new construction management program curriculum specific to the unique Alaskan environment,” the survey stated. “These findings correlate well with existing research that predicts the supply and demand for construction education graduates nationwide and indicate the need for a Construction Management Bachelor of Science degree program in Alaska.”

**Keeping an eye on the future**

Callahan was teaching in a two-year architecture and engineering technology degree program when the Gunderson needs assessment survey emerged.

When they started to look at the development of CM curriculum, half of the courses were already ready — building codes and standards, methods of building construction. Callahan and his colleague then developed civil and building cost estimating, scheduling, construction safety and construction project management courses.

“We essentially leveraged existing courses and added new courses essentially dealing with CM subjects and were able to create a viable two-year degree program,” he said. “We always had in mind a four-year degree was going to come behind it in a short period of time. We knew the associate degree

"CM students can tackle a variety of jobs: construction foreman to construction management, cost estimators, project superintendents, field engineers, assistant field engineers, working in government agencies."

– Jeff Callahan

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that was in place was designed as the first two years of a four-year degree. It’s rare in higher education to have that kind of design to that program.”

CM students can tackle a variety of jobs: construction foreman to construction management, cost estimators, project superintendents, field engineers, assistant field engineers, working in government agencies, Callahan said. “With that broad number of jobs available, it makes sense in my mind to have two levels of education. Someone with an associate degree could go to work for a specialty contractor. A four-year graduate could go to work with the (Army) Corps of Engineers.”

Callahan said the CM program is very closely tied to the industry that needs and supports it, but the industry initially didn’t have a connection with the university.

“One of the things I understood we needed was a CM degree. I reached out to some of the construction industry partnerships in the state and said we need to not be at odds, approach this as a partnership. What I was able to do was identify key people in the industry who were also interested in what good CM education could do for the industry, who understood we could actually build this bridge. That’s when the vision started to take hold.”

In some university circles, people didn’t understand what CM was, Callahan said.

“What is that?” I said over and over again that it’s an interdisciplinary degree. Students have to understand construction first, have to understand business, have a good background in English, math, sciences. It’s not just business, knowing how to build concrete forms.”

The Construction Management Advisory Committee raised $106,200 last year for the Bachelor of Science in Construction Management Curriculum Development Fund. Thirty-eight different companies, organizations and individuals contributed the money. Ben Northey of Colaska Inc., Michelle Holland of Holland Roofing Co., Josh Pepperd of Davis Constructors and Engineers Inc., Vicki Schneibel of Associated General Contractors of Alaska and Rob Dun of ASCG Inc.
served on the fund-raising task force for the Associated General Contractors of Alaska.

Callahan said the next step is seeking accreditation from the American Council for Construction Education.

“Specialty accreditation is a statement about the quality of your program,” he said. “ACCE people will examine the equipment, facility, look at what we’re teaching and how. Hopefully they’ll put their stamp of approval on it.”

Michael Swalling, a member of the advisory committee and president of Swalling Construction Co., said money that has been raised allowed faculty members to put in extra time developing coursework for CM’s third and fourth years.

“Without that, we’d have to get money appropriated, and it would take a lot longer time,” Swalling said. “This is totally independent of everything, totally private funds. I just called people up and asked them. Nobody turned me down.”

**Speeding up the learning process**

Swalling knows the value of a CM education firsthand, from the perspective of someone who didn’t get one.

He started working with his father as a laborer during vacations from his civil engineering studies in Santa Clara, Calif.
“I started out in the office as the apprentice, really, because I had no formal training in running projects,” he said. “I’d always seen them from the other end. You do one project, do another one, keep on learning. (Getting a CM degree) really accelerates your abilities to manage work. That’s what these courses are oriented toward. I had an engineering curriculum but it doesn’t teach you anything about managing a project. No fundamentals of managing a project. There are internships, students work for companies that have ongoing projects. They learn a lot very quickly. It’s a marvelous idea.”

Swalling said CM graduates can find a well-paying foothold in numerous places; they can build roads, bridges, homes and airports; work on North Slope oil fields or missile defense projects, or help set up the long-hoped-for natural gas pipeline.

“There’s no sign of slowing,” Swalling said. “We need these people to come into the industry because a lot of us will get to the point where we’re going to be stepping out of it. It’s a good living, even by Alaska standards. They’re very highly sought-after employees if they have that range of (CM) skills.”

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Ben Northey, vice president and operations manager of Colaska Inc. and chair of the CM program’s advisory board, has experienced the difficulty of finding skilled people to work in Alaska’s construction industry.

Importing skilled labor is a hassle, he said, because it’s necessary to make the initial contact by flying to a recruiting center or attending a job fair, bring candidates to Alaska with their significant other for a second interview, shell out money for moving expenses and pay for drug testing and training.

After making that investment, Northey said it’s disheartening to hear someone say their wife doesn’t like it in Alaska, or that they don’t like being so far away from home.

“A lot of these folks get up here and think they’re going to see king salmon hanging on every tree and stare at the northern lights in the wintertime. The reality is that Alaska has a tough climate, and some of them just have the culture shock.”

– Ben Northey

“‘They’re on it down there’

Ten years after arriving in Alaska, Devin Rush says he plans to stay. He has 6-year-old and 2-month-old daughters

“A lot of these folks get up here and think they’re going to see king salmon hanging on every tree and stare at the northern lights in the wintertime,” Northey said. “The reality is that Alaska has a tough climate, and some of them just have the culture shock. Conditions we think are second nature, they just might not be cut out for it. Students here have grown up that way, they know what two feet of snow is like, icy roads, what it’s like to mow the lawn at midnight.”
here, as well as his girlfriend and her own 6-year-old son. He said he hasn't scored less than 96 in CM courses he's taken, but expects to encounter more difficult work in upper-division classes that await him.

“The most challenging part of it, for me, has been getting educated as far as computers go, because that’s where everything is going,” he said. “They’ve pretty much covered the bases, done a good job with their classes, the sequence of them. They’re on it down there.”

Rush said he doesn’t know what he’ll get into once he graduates, but thinks he would like to work as a superintendent.

“It’s a little bit of everything,” he said. “You’re on site, but you get to make decisions. My first instinct is to stay in commercial construction, because it’s familiar. When I get down to my last year, I’ll see what’s available out there, just to see if there’s anything that interests me, fascinates me.”

Tracy Kalytiak is a freelance writer living in the Palmer area.
It’s well known to those of us in Alaska that there is a critical shortage of workers across the construction industry. These workers play a critical role in keeping our economy moving forward, and more are needed as we gear up for the future projects like a gas pipeline.

But what has not gotten much attention is the parallel need for engineers and surveyors, who work closely with the building trades to make projects happen.

You might think of the construction industry as a vehicle for growth in Alaska, as we develop our rich resource base and create the transportation, housing and other infrastructure that make a high quality of life possible. Engineers and surveyors who play key roles in the planning, design and management of projects are like the transmission used to engage the drive-train: without the transmission, the vehicle will go nowhere.

**How critical is the shortage?**

Ask any Alaskan engineer or surveyor and you’ll probably hear the same story: positions are going unfilled, and as the baby boomers are approaching retirement, the shortage is expected to increase dramatically within the next several years.

In fact, based on data from the Alaska Division of Occupational Licensing’s Architecture, Engineering and Land Surveying Board (AELS), about half of the roughly 5,000 licensed engineers in the state hold out-of-state residence addresses.

Some companies are resorting to sending Alaska’s engineering design work to the Lower 48, a practice that can result in projects ill-suited to our unique locale. Shortages are especially apparent for surveyors and electrical, mechanical, mining and petroleum engineers.

**Why the shortage exists**

The days of the Alaska pipeline construction were the biggest draw for new engineers in the state, many of whom stayed here – and are now drawing close to retirement.

But during the past couple of decades, many of the engineers and surveyors who came to work on specific projects have left Alaska for family or other reasons, resulting in high rates of turnover. Those who are most likely to stay are those who have family ties in Alaska, and/or those who have received their college training here. By looking at the number of engineering and surveying graduates from Alaska’s programs at the University of Alaska, we can see what will be needed to bolster this important sector of the workforce.

Based on data from the American Society for Engineering Education, the University of Alaska graduates 13.6 bachelor’s degrees in engineering per 100,000 of population – roughly half the national average. In 2005, Alaska ranked 46th lowest in the number of engineering graduates per population.

**Acute shortages**

The University of Alaska graduates some 30 to 40 civil engineers each year, a number which represents slightly more than 1 percent of the total number of licensed civil engineers. The only program for land surveyors (at UAA) yields some 20 bachelor’s degrees annually,
representing less than 0.5 percent of the 570 licensed surveys. The mining and petroleum engineering programs at UAF typically generate single digit numbers of graduates, hardly enough to fill the demand.

On a per capita basis, Alaska graduates about half the number of electrical engineers, and a third of the number of mechanical engineers.

Despite starting salaries as high as $78,000 annually (in the oil industry), Alaska recruiters continue to have to try to lure graduates from other states, who often stay in Alaska long enough to have an adventure and then move back close to home. By not growing enough of our own engineers and surveyors, our challenging and interesting projects are providing a training ground for the engineering workforce in the Lower 48 who cycle their time and resources out of Alaska.

**A land rich in resources**

Alaska is known as a land rich in resources – oil, mineral, wilderness, among others. But the best resource we have are our children and grandchildren, who represent the future of Alaska – and many of them are now enrolling in engineering and surveying programs, especially at the University of Alaska Anchorage, in record numbers.

UAA will have to double its number of faculty and its square footage of labs and other facilities to meet the demand already at its doorstep. It’s a challenge it hopes to meet, with the combined help of the state, the University of Alaska and industry. Can we afford not to meet this challenge?

Robert J. Lang, Ph.D., is Dean of the School of Engineering and a Professor of Civil Engineering for the University of Alaska Anchorage.
Students and construction

This school year we’ve hosted a number of events with students, including a few new ideas! During our annual convention last November, our Education Committee took on the task of conducting and offering a Counselor’s Track on Wednesday, the first day of the conference. The ideas evolved into having guest speakers with question and answer sessions.

Here’s what we offered:

- Alaska Works Partnership had a panel discussion about women in construction and how to enter an apprenticeship program.
- Jan Gehler and Peter Dedych from University of Alaska Anchorage conducted a workshop on what UAA offers for entry into the construction industry.
- Dick Harrell of Alaska Vocational and Technical Center presented on access to the industry through the trades.
- Dave Rees and Dennis Duffy jointly presented about oil, gas and mining industries on opportunities and entry points for construction in these industries.

We had about 20 counselors from secondary schools confirm to attend. Several were from outside Anchorage.

The Education Committee will refine this event and possibly offer it next year, too. I’m still receiving phone calls of thanks and questions from counselors.

Dec. 5, 2006, we facilitated our first group of Anchorage high school students at job sites. Riley Cronk, a teacher at Service High School, requested the visit. We hosted a class of 20 students. We divided them into two groups and arranged for site visits. One group visited the recreation center remodel and addition at Elmendorf Air Force Base by Unit Company. John Powell was the guide/host for that site.

The other group visited Providence Health System...
Both companies were very good about having us visit them during a workday. A big “thank you” to these members!

Chugach School District, which we’ve worked with for a couple of years, invited Kevin Norton of Anchorage Sand and Gravel Co. Inc. to conduct a “live” distance delivery of Build Up! Plans are underway for this to take place. This will be a first for our chapter – live distance learning.

I attended a conference recently hosted by Chugach School District on the topic of “The Alliance for Workforce Sustainability.” In the conference, the school district had about a dozen students participating as well. As the conference progressed, the students would present to the whole group about their career exploration and any site visits and how that impacted their career choice.

I’m pleased to share that two students talked about a site visit to a Neoser Construction Inc. project. They expressed appreciation to Neeser for taking the time to share with them about the industry. One realized she probably wouldn’t choose construction and the other student said he was sure he’d enter construction in some pathway.

A third student shared she was doing a lot of career exploration and decided to think of it as “career pants;” trying on career pants to see what pair fits best.

Chugach has an outstanding system of preparing its students for employment and encouraging them to explore and “experience” an industry.

This year one student didn’t want to take construction classes, but after a visit to a construction site, he liked it so much, he signed up for the construction classes after all.

Jan. 17, NC Machinery Co. hosted a group of students from Polaris K-12 School. Scott Marler supported a teacher using the Build Up! toolbox of learning there. Scott did a great job of showing the students equipment and encouraging them. We very much appreciate the generosity of NC in hosting fifth-graders.

All in all, we’ve had a good year promoting construction and construction education around our state and interacting with educators and students.

Vicki Schneibel is education director for the Associated General Contractors of Alaska.
McKinley Fence Co. of Alaska Inc. has demonstrated its enduring qualities on major construction projects state-wide during its 46 years in business. And now president and general manager Rich Lindstrom is preparing a third generation to lead the company into the future.

The Anchorage-based firm specializes in installing diverse fencing varieties, highway guardrails and industrial decorative pedestrian handrails. Its fabrication shop manufactures custom gates and panel enclosures. Alaskans probably encounter McKinley Fence's work often since its products include residential cedar fences, industrial gates and security fences.

Such success and staying power are the result of hard work, Lindstrom explained. “We’ve provided a good product at a fair price,” he said.

Another key to the company’s longevity is treating employees fairly, Lindstrom said. “I feel it is important to have long-term stability in your labor force,” he said.

The company has one 40-year employee, Dan Daugherty, a vice president and senior estimator, and several foremen and managers with 20 years’ loyalty, Lindstrom said. The company president noted, too, that it’s critical to continually scout for new employees to blend into its labor force.

At 55, Lindstrom is eyeing retirement in the next five to 10 years. He is integrating sons Scott, Brad and Jason Lindstrom into the management team for eventual leadership. Scott Lindstrom...
is a vice president, major projects superintendent and an estimator. Brad Lindstrom is vice president of residential construction and an estimator. Jason Lindstrom is vice president of technology and an estimator.

And their grandfather, Ed Lindstrom, started it all.

A family's story

Ed Lindstrom, Dave Goodwin and Jack McDonald established McKinley Fence in 1961. Lifelong friends Lindstrom and Goodwin were fellow Marines who served together in World War II. Lindstrom was majority owner, and in 1977 he bought his partners’ share in the company. Lindstrom’s son, Rich, was appointed president and general manager in 1978. He purchased the company from his father in 1995.

Today, McKinley Fence employs eight to 10 people in slower winter months and up to 35 people in busier spring, summer and fall, according to Rich Lindstrom. Installation employees are signatory to the Laborers Union, which provides health insurance and retirement benefits.

Membership with Associated General Contractors of Alaska Inc. has helped support McKinley Fence on issues like affirmative action, drug testing, labor contract negotiation, contract dispute arbitration and representing contractor issues before Congress.

“AGC membership is beneficial to a small family owned business like McKinley Fence because they represent us with a large national voice.”
– Rich Lindstrom

Noteworthy projects

McKinley Fence has handled major projects throughout its history. Company employees have worked on diverse projects from installing fences and guardrails for the 1970s-era trans-Alaska oil pipeline mega-project to fitting fencing for the Spring Creek Correctional Center in Seward. In the 1960s and again in the 1980s, McKinley Fence installed fencing on Amchitka Island, the site of underground nuclear testing.

Other major projects include fencing perimeters of Anchorage International Airport in the 1960s and Cold Bay airport in the 1990s. Additional recognizable McKinley Fence projects are the SeaLife Center in Seward, upgraded guardrail end sections on the Seward Highway and...
ornamental decorative fences for the Municipality of Anchorage.

Lindstrom noted one recent and challenging project which company employees handled with excellence. Last winter McKinley Fence installed perimeter fencing at Fort Wainwright for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The wetland area had to be handled during frigid Interior months to protect the habitat, and McKinley Fence employees worked at temperatures up to 35 degrees below zero and often averaging 25 below, Lindstrom said. The company completed the project without any deficiencies or safety issues, he said.

Roger Hickel, president of Roger Hickel Contracting Inc., has worked with McKinley Fence for more than 30 years, first at Baugh Construction and now at his company. McKinley Fence is proficient at performing all types and sizes of projects involving their specialty work items, he said:

"McKinley Fence Co. has successfully completed over 100 projects for us and many of them have been over several hundred thousand dollars," Hickel said. "They have always performed their work in accordance with our schedule requirements while meeting or exceeding the highest of industry standards."

Hickel praised Lindstrom and his employees. "We feel that Rich Lind-
strom provides excellent management of his team and is the best in the industry for the type of service he provides. McKinley Fence Co. has a strong commitment to provide the best service for their clients. They have always manned our projects with the best craftsmen in the trade.”

John Herring, president of Construction Unlimited Inc., also lauded McKinley Fence. The fencing company was a subcontractor for Construction Unlimited’s state Department of Transportation and Public Facilities project in 2004 to install decorative art sculptures and fencing along A Street in Anchorage.

“Rich and his crew are always a pleasure to work with. They perform their work with a professional manner and wonderful workmanship,” Herring said.

Future vision

Though McKinley Fence has numerous outstanding projects on its resume, the company president has his eye on upcoming work. He aims to continue nurturing customer and personal relationships developed during the past 46 years, and build new relationships for the future. McKinley Fence is scanning for new markets for potential projects, he said. Lindstrom is preparing his three sons and others to handle the company when he retires.

“We’re transitioning for the future.”

Nancy Pounds is a freelance writer who lives in Anchorage.
Keep the cost of construction down while inflation goes up

The numbers are in and the rising costs of materials and inflation continue to hammer on contractors throughout the nation. According to the AGC’s Construction Inflation Alert (CIA), since 2004 the construction industry has been hit by a succession of steep price increases affecting a variety of materials.

In 2004, the rate of inflation jumped to 3.3 percent while the price of materials like steel, copper and brick jumped by 50 percent to 60 percent. By 2006 those numbers increased again leaving many to wonder when prices will start to stabilize.

Forecasting the future

As the housing market cools in the Lower 48, material prices across the country are not expected to increase as dramatically as in the past. But despite the softening in prices, Alaska contractors are still hit with the extra cost to transport materials to the state and an increase in fuel costs to get it here. According to the University of Alaska Anchorage’s Institute of Social and Economic Research, construction spending in 2007 is expected to reach $7 billion in the state, up 7 percent from last year. Much of the projected spending increase is attributed to higher building material and other costs, rather than additional work.

Over the next six to 12 months construction material costs are likely to rise faster than overall prices, but not as rapidly as in the past year, according to the Construction Inflation Alert. The CIA suggests a realistic inflation target for construction materials is 6 to 8 percent, with periods of 10 percent increases quite possible.

Planning for the unknown

Without a crystal ball it’s hard to know what a future project will cost. That unknown can affect more than the return on a particular job. Job losses can also have a detrimental impact on the bottom line because contractors are unlikely to recoup losses or generate income below the gross profit level. Overhead and variable expenses are difficult if not impossible to trim during the busy construction season. That’s why it’s important to consult your team of experts—from bankers to bonding agents and accountants—to help plan for financial unknowns, like increases in the price of building materials.

One factor that makes construction vulnerable to above average cost increases is that contractors are generally locked into fixed quantities and materials. Even for those materials that continue to rise in price, many times contractors cannot bid in excess of what materials cost today, or they risk losing the bid. An alternate strategy of storing excess materials inventory can backfire and use up precious working capital. Given the uncertainty in material costs, there are several things a contractor can do to ensure that estimated profits actually materialize.

Here are some suggestions:

- Alter bidding procedures and models to take into account the effects of higher material prices. Long-term contract bids should allow for the probability that prices will continue to rise during the contract period.
- Consider adding special contract clauses exempting the contractor from liquidated damages and delay claims due to uncontrollable supply shortages.
- Follow the example of many Department of Transportation contracts. Include price escalator clauses for dramatic jumps in petroleum, cement, steel and lumber prices.
- Consider purchasing a commodity hedging or straddle contract when bidding long-term contracts with significant quantities of materials, especially fuel and asphalt.
- Obtain surety bonds for suppliers and subcontractors as a control procedure. Due to the volatility of supply and price, the bid quote is only as good as the subcontractor or supplier.

Nail cash flow

Despite best efforts, often the cost factor can escalate a project’s budget out of the profitability range. Given these conditions, it is imperative the management have a firm grasp of its overall financials, cash flow and liquidity structure. When costs increase suddenly, unexpectedly and drastically, a construction company needs to have more than adequate cash available to support working capital along with other resources such as credit lines, bridge financing and quick access to financing. Planning for the unknown with your company’s team of advisors may keep your business from getting nailed by inflation and the rising cost of building materials in the future.

Elizabeth Happel is Vice President, Commercial Lending, at First National Bank Alaska. She can be reached at 777-5620.
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I am especially excited about our plans to promote timely construction of a natural gas pipeline to fuel our economy with North Slope gas in the wake of declining oil production. As I outlined in the State of the State address, we must ramp up responsible resource development to sustain our economic future.

We have a bold fresh plan to get Alaska’s gas to market and to get an Alaska natural gas pipeline built. It is called the “Alaska Gasline Inducement Act,” or “AGIA.” Once passed, this law will authorize interested companies to compete for the right to an exclusive license to valuable inducements that will substantially assist in the steps toward getting a gas line built. The recipient of the license will have committed to bedrock state requirements, such as pipeline expansion commitments and achievable project benchmarks. The law will allow for cooperative ventures that can combine different business expertise, and will provide a means to work with the Legislature and the public to get the best deal for Alaska.

My gas line team and I continue to meet with legal experts, pipeline experts, potential applicants, federal regulators and members of the financial community. We are making ourselves available to assist our legislators in reviewing important issues in the bill so that it passes soon. In January, Vice President Dick Cheney and I had a very positive discussion on the gas line, its significance to the nation, and ways in which the federal government could assist us in getting Alaska’s natural gas to market as quickly as possible. In February, I met with each member of our congressional delegation, Senator Ted Stevens, Senator Lisa Murkowski and Congressman Don Young; the nation’s Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman; Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Joseph Kelliher; and Federal Coordinator Drue Pearce, who is the nation’s lead gas line coordinator. Each provided encouragement for the AGIA, just days before releasing it to the Legislature and the public.

Building a gas line will require a skilled workforce. The project will expand the Alaska workforce by thousands of high paying direct construction and support jobs.

This is a truly an exciting time for Alaska — the state continues to enjoy a growing economy and we look forward with great anticipation to the exciting prospects ahead.

Governor Sarah Palin

New governor, new priorities
That’s an exciting prospect for Alaska families. It’s also a challenge we can’t afford to ignore or minimize. We recognize a vital priority: public and private-sector workforce advocates must work in partnership toward a common goal of affordable and accessible state-of-the-art vocational and job-skills training. We must also expand apprenticeship opportunities for Alaskans so that more young Alaskans are ready to replace retiring, skilled trades-people. My administration is committed to ensuring that thousands of good-paying jobs in Alaska are filled by Alaskans.

We see indicators every day that the public and policymakers recognize the need to support expanding job skill and vocational training opportunities for young Alaskans. Energy is not the only industry providing evidence that Alaska must be proactive in expanding vocational training recognition, assets and attitudes.

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development projects a 1.9 percent increase in the healthcare industry this year and 1.5 percent in 2008. We expect a small decline in construction employment over the next two years – perhaps by 100 jobs this year and about 200 in 2008.

However, federal spending should continue to offset that job loss, previously soaring to $8.5 billion in 2004 in social services, health care and construction. In addition, we forecast a 1.6 percent increase this year in Alaska’s leisure and hospitality industry.

The state is also taking an aggressive approach in developing its infrastructure.

Statewide, the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities expects a robust construction season in 2007 targeting some key infrastructure shortcomings. Traffic congestion continues to be a source of frustration for Anchorage motors and we are committed to a remedy. We expect to award a design/build contract in April on a $25.5 million Glenn Highway and Bragaw Street interchange. When it is completed in late 2008, this new gateway to Anchorage will be the first phase in a long-term highway-to-highway concept that one day will link the Seward and Glenn Highways.

We also anticipate advertising the Eagle River Loop reconstruction project in May, to raise the road to arterial standards, including turn lanes, lighting and pedestrian facilities, to bring it up to pace with the explosive growth we’ve seen in that area.

The Department of Transportation and Facilities Management has numerous repaving and rehabilitation projects in the works in the Interior, including five miles of upgrades to the new Steese Expressway, one of the busiest north-south roads in Fairbanks, and a six-mile rehabilitation of the Parks Highway from Ester to Fairbanks. In Southeast Alaska, we have runway safety projects that will be underway in Wrangell and Ketchikan and a $29 million contract to construct the Sunny Point Interchange, the first of its kind in the Southeast region.

Alaska is moving in the right direction. As I look to our future, I am excited about what we can accomplish.
More than 75 percent of all drug users are employed somewhere

A client called the other day to ask if his company could drop marijuana from its drug testing panel. Like many companies in Alaska and around the nation, his company is finding it more and more difficult to fill job openings with qualified, skilled candidates. “Maybe it’s time to be less picky about hires,” he said. “And if that means offering a job to the occasional pot smoker, so be it.”

The simple answer to his question is “yes … but.”

I suggested he not make any decision without calling his attorney and checking with risk management and senior staff. There are dozens of proven reasons to screen for drugs and before a company decides to drop or scale back screening, they should ask some simple questions:

- Do we incur additional liability if we decide not to test?
- Will this decision negatively affect public perception if an incident occurs?
- Do any of our insurance premiums require pre-employment testing?
- Do we really want to hire someone who cannot stop using drugs long enough to test negatively?

Employers who eliminate background checks and drug screens altogether out of fear of what they may find are saying they value ignorance over disqualification. The fact is more than 75 percent of all drug users are employed somewhere, according to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a division of the Health and Human Services Department (HHS). And it makes no sense to place your company at risk by hiring one of these users.

“The typical drug user is not poor or unemployed,” a former White House drug czar was fond of pointing out. “He or she can be a co-worker, a husband or wife, a parent.”

Some 6.3 million full-time workers age 18 to 49 admit that they had used illegal drugs in the preceding month. Illicit drug users make up 7.7 percent of the full-time workforce.

A better approach to surviving in today’s tight labor market is to become more resourceful, rely on multiple recruitment strategies and look at non-traditional workers to fill your openings.

Here are some ideas:

Utilize Employee Referrals – Referrals from current employees are one of the best sources of new employees. Consider offering financial incentives to employees for each referral hired, and then reward them again once the new employee has been retained for 90 days or six months.

Offer Competitive Packages – Research how your compensation package compares to companies competing for the same workers.

Seek Non-Traditional Workers – Offering the right benefits, flexible hours or other enhancements may attract older workers from retirement, students or workers with disabilities. These often make the best employees.

Be Upfront About Wages – Ads that don’t include wage information gather little if any attention from serious job seekers. Be honest and expect to pay a premium wage.

Go Online – Listing your job opening online with the state and other online job services allow thousands of potential job seekers to respond to your need.

Try a Head Hunter – Listing your positions with employment agencies or temporary agencies can cost money but may offer recruitment in specialized fields and out-of-state.

Whatever you do, maintain your screening standards. Drug screening is a proven, cost-effective way to lower your insurance and improve the safety of your work place. That’s why the number of Fortune 200 companies that require pre-employment or random drug testing grew from 6 in 1983 to 196 by the end of the last decade. And why 83 percent of employers surveyed by the American Management Association say testing slows employee drug use.

As an employer, you and your employees deserve a drug-free workplace and you should do whatever you need to do to achieve that.

Matthew Fagnani is president of WorkSafe Inc., a full-spectrum workplace drug and alcohol program that offers instant-results testing. For more information, visit the office at the corner of 36th and C streets in Anchorage, or call (907) 563-8378.
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Code provision’s ‘overall purpose’ prevails

When designers and contractors submit plans to the local building department or to the state fire marshal’s office for a building permit, or when inspectors review for certificates of occupancy, the public agencies’ legitimate goal of fire safety and the owner’s legitimate goal of cost economies sometimes clash. Not infrequently both sides end up parsing the language of the applicable building, fire, plumbing, electrical or mechanical code with all of the fine-pointed hair-splitting of 17th Century English Chancery Court barristers or parliamentarians. A recent decision of the Alaska Supreme Court should help those, typically the owners, architects and contractors, who advocate for the “common sense” approach to a “compliance issue.”

The case involved the construction of the new Dimond High School in Anchorage which had acoustic panels hanging approximately 12 feet below the upper ceiling of the auditorium, and were described as “clouds.” The sprinklers had been designed to go above the acoustic panels. Each “cloud” was exactly 4 feet wide, and was hung so that it was somewhere between 2 feet and 6 inches from the next one. The sprinkler contractor’s submittal drawings had been approved by the local fire department; and the sprinklers were installed as designed.

After installation, the fire department inspected and refused to approve the sprinklers. The cost of having to redo the sprinklers apparently was going to fall to the sprinkler contractor. The sprinkler contractor appealed the fire department’s rejection to the applicable municipal board. The NFPA 13 section required that if there were “fixed obstructions over 4 feet wide” the sprinklers would have to be installed under them. The code section also stated “the size at which obstructions become too large to ignore is typically 4 feet.”

Here the obstructions were exactly 4 feet. The building code examiners and appeals board engaged in the customary parsing of the applicable NFPA provisions utilizing the normal grammatical analysis, and concluded that the sprinkler contractor had complied with the code provisions. Not to be deterred, the fire department appealed to the superior court which reversed the board. The superior court determined that although the board interpreted the code provision literally, and decided that the sprinkler design technically complied with the code provision, the board’s decision negated the underlying purpose of the entire section which was “insuring that a sufficient amount of water from the sprinkler reached the hazard.” The court characterized that as an “absurd result.” The contractor appealed.

The Alaska Supreme Court noted how the board had ever so carefully threaded its way through the several code provisions involved, but had not taken any evidence on the basic question of “whether water coverage in the event of a fire would be sufficient.” In other words, the board had bogged down in the minutiae and grammatical technicalities of the code language without seeing the big picture. The court remanded the whole matter back to the board to consider all provisions of the NFPA 13 Code, and “especially its overall purpose,” which was to “insure that a sufficient amount of water from the sprinkler reaches the hazard.”

The lesson of the case is that rather than getting bogged down in grammatical parsing of the code provisions, the building agencies should keep their focus on the “overall purpose” of the code provisions and interpret them accordingly.

Robert J. (Bob) Dickson is a partner of the Anchorage law firm Atkinson, Conway & Gagnon Inc.
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Alaska is building GREENER as sustainability begins to make ‘cents’

Luke Blomfield grew up around buildings.

“I used to walk around the job site with my dad,” recalled the Davis Constructors and Engineers Inc. project manager.

His grandfather was Anchorage architect Chuck Blomfield, his father Tony Blomfield and uncle John Blomfield were Anchorage developers and Blomfield and his brother, Adam, are general contractors.

Designers and engineers have learned a lot about efficient, smarter building design since the boom days of the oil pipeline deposited a bumper crop of buildings here in the 1970s.

“In college I became very interested in construction and design practices that reduced our industry’s impact on the environment. I wanted to work with professionals who promoted sustainable building practices,” said Blomfield, Davis’s only LEED Accredited Professional.

The U.S. Green Building Council created the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design benchmarks in 1998 to help developers certify high-performance buildings. Build-
ings can be certified in four levels: LEED Certified, LEED Silver, LEED Gold, LEED Platinum.

Certified buildings satisfy specified building criteria in five major environmental categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality.

Increasingly, Alaska’s new generation of buildings are designed and built to be more energy efficient, have longer lifecycles, and pollute less than their predecessors, Blomfield said.

“Ten, 15, 20 years ago we had a lot of buildings that were very cookie cutter,” he said. “Now we’re designing and constructing buildings that are oriented to Alaska’s unique environment.”

University opts for high-performance buildings

Since the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s West Coast Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer became the first LEED certified building in Alaska in 2003, two more buildings have earned LEED certificates. And another 10 Alaska projects have submitted their building plans to apply for LEED certification.

But Mike Smith, director of facilities planning and construction for the University of Alaska Anchorage, said not all buildings with sustainable design features seek LEED certification.

Though UAA’s Alaska Native Science and Engineering building, which opened in 2006, and the Integrated Science Building, set to open in 2009, were both designed with long life and efficiency in mind, Smith said the university didn’t seek LEED certification for either building.

Still, he said both buildings were designed to include many green features such as energy efficient lighting fixtures, mate-

Alaska LEED certified buildings:

- Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer became the first LEED certified building in Alaska on Dec. 23, 2003.
- Denali Entrance Station is certified LEED Silver.
- Eielson Visitors Center is certified LEED Platinum (certificate pending).

Several other Alaska projects pursuing LEED certification:

- Homer Public Library
- Anchorage Museum of History and Art
- Clark Middle School Renewal, Anchorage School District
- JL Tower, JL Properties, Anchorage
- Barrow Global Climate Change Center UIC Corp., Barrow
- Cold Climate Housing Research Center, Fairbanks
- Glacier Valley Elementary Renovation, Juneau School District
- Harborview Elementary Renovation, CBJ, Juneau
- St. Vincent de Paul Society NP Center, Juneau
- Annette Island Weather Service Alaska Region National Weather Service, Metlakatla

Source: U.S. Green Building Council Web site
Homer Public Library is brand new, but some of its hardwood parts have a separate history on the Kenai Peninsula.

The building is perhaps best known for the way designers dealt with the significant amount of rainfall the area receives.

Basin areas were created around the building and landscaped with plant growth to provide a “dry streambed” aesthetic when empty. In wetter times the basins act as reflecting pools for the building.

But inside on the countertops of the reference desk and other work surfaces there is another sustainable design story.

The old maple gym flooring from Kenai High School was on the way to the landfill when the project’s general contractor intercepted the load. He hired a local artisan to turn the cargo of hardwood planks into one-of-a-kind table- and desktops.

LEED accredited professional Brian Meissner said reducing landfill waste and reusing the old gym flooring to add history to the new library building is a perfect example of the type of thinking the LEED program was designed to encourage.

“The goals of sustainable design are to minimize operation costs, minimize environmental footprint and maximize the benefit to the local economy,” he said.
This waterless urinal helped the West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center earn LEED certification. It is the first LEED Certified building in Alaska.

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tials low in volatile organic compounds, carpets made of recycled materials, heat exchange systems, and positioned to capture the maximum exposure to natural light.

“A high-performance building was the goal,” Smith said. “It just makes sense in terms of operating the building long-term because it is going to be less expensive.”

Davis Constructors built UAA’s ANSEP building and Cornerstone Construction broke ground on the Integrated Science Building last fall. The two buildings are part of a new generation of structures created through collaboration between designers, engineers and contractors, Blomfield said.

Designing buildings in this new way means the contractor, designers and engineers work closely during the building’s initial design to make decisions about which sustainable design features will be cost-effective over the lifecycle of the building, he said.

In January, Jerry Yudelson, of the green consulting firm Yudelson Associates, gave a lecture in Anchorage and Fairbanks called “The Business Case for Green Building Development.” He described this new collaborative management style as the single biggest challenge coming.

“This is a major paradigm shift,” Yudelson said. “It’s happening. Either you participate or you sit on the sidelines.”
The change is coming

Some federal agencies like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration already require sustainable design in their projects.

The Municipality of Anchorage has appointed a Sustainable Design Task Force to develop a Sustainable Building Initiative that encourages “pollution-free site design practices and energy efficient building citywide.”

Contractors and developers like Davis and JL Properties are beginning to routinely develop and build sustainability into their projects, Blomfield said.

“Instead of playing catch up, we’re on the ground floor in Alaska,” he said. “This is the way the industry is moving and it is just a matter of time before it is recognized as a reasonable approach.”

While not every project Davis builds seeks LEED certification, most of its current projects use sustainable practices that make sense for the lifecycle of the building and the environment, Blomfield said.

Blomfield is one of a couple of LEED accredited professionals who work for Davis.

LEED accredited ECI-Hyer architect Brian Meissner worked closely with the project manager for general contractor Cornerstone Construction on the design for the Integrated Science Building, which ZGF designed in association with ECI-Hyer.

“We need to shift from a get-it-done attitude to where we’re looking toward a 50-year building,” Meissner said. “We have very skilled contractors and very skilled tradesmen who can build like that.”

He said sustainability is ECI-Hyer’s focus. Sustainable practices are part of every project the firm designs, Meissner said.

“Owners might not be aware of all the options for sustainable design,” he said.

Davis hones sustainable design-build skills

Private developer JL Properties has contracted with Davis Constructors and RIM Architects to build Alaska’s first Class A Sustainable office building.

Blomfield said the Midtown Anchorage tower project has submitted its plans to the U.S. Green Building Council to begin the LEED Core and Shell certification process.

So when Davis issued Requests for Proposals seeking subcontractors for the project, Blomfield said the proposal explained that the bids were for a green project.

Then during the procurement phase, subcontractors and suppliers were required to include their recycled materials content in their submittals. He said early development, planning and coordination is the key to achieving responsible LEED construction and credits.

“We never want to ask after the fact, ‘What did you put in it?’” said Blomfield, assistant project manager for the JL Tower.

“Initial costs to provide a sustainable development are higher than conventional methods. However, proper design and engineering can help to recoup initial costs through the life of a facility.”

– Luke Blomfield

Davis hones its skills in managing and constructing sustainable commercial structures with every project, Blomfield said.

“Initial costs to provide a sustainable development are higher than conventional methods,” he said. “However, proper design and engineering can help to recoup initial costs through the life of a facility.”

Peter Briggs, owner of Corvus Designs, said the change in the market place is that developers are seeing the financial benefits of sustainable design and construction.

“People are trying to figure out how to save money and they end up doing sustainable design,” he said. “It makes economic sense to act in these ways.”

continued on page 46
• ALASKA BUILDING SCIENCE NETWORK is a 20-year-old member-supported association made up of individuals, businesses and organizations dedicated to promoting energy efficiency. The non-profit publishes a quarterly newsletter and provides technical training workshops throughout Alaska. For more information, visit www.asbn.com or call (907) 562-9927.

• U.S. GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL - Alaska Chapter was formed to promote the design, construction and operation of sustainable buildings. For more information, visit http://chapters.usgbc.org/alaska/.

• THE ALASKA CRAFTSMAN HOME PROGRAM INC. is an educational building industry alliance that promotes energy efficient housing that is cost-effective, healthy and durable. For more information, visit http://www.alaska.net/~achp/ or call (907) 258-2247.

• COLD CLIMATE HOUSING RESEARCH CENTER is an industry based, non-profit corporation created to facilitate the development, use and testing of energy efficient, durable, healthy and cost-effective building technologies for Alaska and the world’s cold climate regions. The Alaska professional building community is highly regarded as a national leader in energy efficient housing design and construction. For more information, visit http://www.cchrc.org/ or call (907) 457-3454.
Across the nation, cities and states are adopting a host of sustainable practices. The Municipality of Anchorage has appointed a Sustainable Design Task Force to develop a Sustainable Building Initiative that encourages pollution-free site design practices and energy efficient building citywide.

Here are some green ideas other parts of the country are trying:

- Seattle was the first U.S. city to adopt LEED-based building policy for all facilities more than 500,000 square feet. Since 2000, when the policy was adopted, 68 cities have followed suit.
- Washington was the first state to adopt LEED-based green building policy for all public agencies more than 5,000 square feet when it adopted the High Performance Green Buildings Bill. Since the bill was signed in 2005, 17 other states have made commitments to LEED.
- California has required LEED Silver for all state buildings as of two years ago.
- Boston is the first major city to require green construction for all private buildings that cover at least 50,000 square feet.

- Seattle boasts the first electric utility to eliminate all greenhouse-gas emissions.
- A Houston Councilman is pushing for incentives that encourage building where solar energy can best be captured.
- Sugar Land, Texas, a fast-growing Houston suburb, saved literally hundreds of thousands of dollars converting traffic lights to light-emitting diode bulbs.
- Work began in April on what will be Florida’s largest green office building. The 40-story, 610,000-square-foot office tower is set for completion in 2009. Statewide, Florida has 10 buildings certified LEED. Compared to California, which has more than 70 LEED certified buildings.
- Pittsburgh’s new green convention center is one of the world’s largest environmentally sustainable buildings. The city is offering incentives to developers who build LEED projects as an effort to clean up its tarnished image as a polluted industry town.
- Southeastern Michigan is building wind farms that could generate up to 30 percent of the state’s energy needs.

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Yudelson said contractors in Portland, were able to build a 400,000-square-foot building certified LEED Platinum with a 1 percent cost premium. LEED Silver projects had no cost premium.

“There is really solid research data about the positive benefits of sustainable design – if you could do it at the same budget, why wouldn’t you?” Yudelson said.

**Market forces push America to grow greener**

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, nationwide some 5,000 buildings currently under construction are seeking LEED certification.

Yudelson said a simultaneous revolution in building materials offers designers a vast new palette of sustainable interior and exterior materials.

LEED Accredited Professional Lynn Barrett, owner of Anchorage’s Paragon Design Associates, said these new materials range from things like the bamboo material used for floor covering in the Integrated Science Building, to the modular interior wall system manufactured by DIRTT that CampFire USA and the Cold Climate Housing Research Center in Fairbanks use.

Barrett also is the new chairwoman of the Alaska chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.

“Sustainable interiors have become a huge movement in the construction industry,” Barrett said. “It’s a huge trend all over the world and is even rapidly growing in Alaska.”

The sustainable building market in the U.S. has grown by 50 percent a year for the past five or six years, Yudelson said.

UAA’s Smith said the market is pushing the university to build smarter.

“The practical side of it is leading us to sustainability,” he said.

Blomfield said he’s pleased to play a role in Alaska’s sustainable future.

“As a younger city Anchorage is able to modify our current system and integrate green building,” he said. “It’s just a good way of doing business.”

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*Senior Editor Heather A. Resz is the sole proprietor of the contract writing business, Infinite Designs.*
hough singer/songwriter Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind,” had nothing to do with harnessing breezes when folksingers Peter, Paul and Mary recorded the hit in 1962, many alternative energy enthusiasts of the 21st century firmly believe the “answer” truly is “blowin’ in the wind.”

Rocketing fuel costs and dwindling natural gas supplies have contributed to increased wind farm development in Alaska in recent years. A federal production tax credit of 1.9 cents per kilowatt of produced wind-electricity is also an incentive.

But so far, no wind turbines exist in the state’s more densely populated areas where electric consumers also feel the pinch of high-priced utilities.

Chugach Electric Association and a group of regional utilities would like to alter that situation.

Chugach officials have been measuring winds and looking at alternative energy sites in the Anchorage area since 1998. That search has been narrowed down to a concept that would put wind turbines on Fire Island across Cook Inlet, three miles from Anchorage.

Cook Inlet Region Inc. (CIRI) owns three-fourths of the 4,000-acre island with the balance held by the federal government. The Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard manage navigational aids situated on their portion of the island.

CIRI is working with Chugach Electric, Anchorage Municipal Light and Power, Homer Electric and Golden Valley Electric to explore the potential of converting the island’s smooth, regular winds into supplemental energy for Railbelt customers.

Chugach Electric is the major supplier of electricity in Southcentral Alaska and sells that power to utilities along the Railbelt that stretches from Fairbanks to Homer and Seward.

Approximately 88 percent of CEA’s power is generated by natural gas, the majority from their Beluga plant, according to the company’s spokesman, Phil Steyer. The remainder is derived from hydro.

“Wind power would help diversify our generation mix,” he said. “What we foresee happening is someone else would propose to build the wind farm, come to the utility and propose to sell us power.”

The 24 wind turbines proposed for the Fire Island wind farm have the potential of supplying up to 72 megawatts of power, enough to provide 3.5 percent of the annual energy used in the Railbelt, Steyer said.

Based on other projects, the wind turbines could carry a price tag of around $100 million, Steyer said. Chugach estimates it could cost another $54 million for transmission lines, substations, roads and a barge landing on the island.

Rep. Harry Crawford, D-Anchorage, has introduced a bill in the state’s House of Representatives to appropriate $24 million for construction of a wind farm on Fire Island and transmission lines to connect it to existing electrical infrastructure in Anchorage.

Sen. Lesil McGuire, R-Anchorage, introduced a companion bill on the Senate side.
The Denali Commission has funded Chugach Electric more than $1.2 million since 2004 for feasibility studies on the potential Fire Island wind project, according to Kathy Prentki, Denali Commission Energy Program Manager.

Established in 1998 by Congressional mandate, the Denali Commission is a state and federal agency that provides critical utilities, infrastructure, and economic support to communities throughout Alaska.

**Project not without its hurdles**

Whether to move ahead with the project has several contingencies.

The decision depends, in part, on the supply of natural gas in Cook Inlet and the proposal to increase supplies by building a natural gas pipeline from the North Slope.

A U.S. Department of Energy study found Southcentral Alaska could face a shortage of natural gas as early as 2009. Expensive development of a new gas supply could drive the price of natural gas even higher. In contrast, according to wind energy experts, the cost of generating energy from wind has dropped 85 percent in the past 10 years and is a free, unlimited resource.

Another major factor in the future of the wind farm is the cost of the power generated by Fire Island turbines.

While consumers and environmentalists applaud wind energy versus depleting fossil fuels, officials at the FAA and the Anchorage airport aren’t as optimistic.

Placing wind turbines with blades the diameter of a football field within nine nautical miles of the control tower at Ted Stevens Anchorage Inter-

national Airport interferes with critical navigation systems, according to Robert van Haastert, FAA Obstruction Evaluation Service Specialist.

Reducing the initial number of proposed wind turbines on Fire Island from 33 to 24 and installing a new generation navigational beacon seems to have resolved the first issue involving the navigational beacon, VOR, located on the island, said van Haastert.

VOR is short for VHF Omni-directional Radio Range and is a type of radio navigation system for aircraft.

The bar on the second hurdle is a bit higher.

A wind turbine 400 feet high does not adversely affect the radar, but the spinning blades do, said van Haastert.

“A 400-foot metal building (at the site) would not be as problematic as spinning blades.”

Currently, traffic controllers at Anchorage bowl airports use an older system of radar called ASR-8 to guide arriving and departing aircraft.

A 17-month FAA study determined electromagnetic waves generated from twirling turbines would warp the air traffic control radar, essentially causing controllers to see planes that aren’t there or obstruct those that truly exist.

The FAA has installed and is testing a newer ASR-11 radar that could possibly mitigate the false returns seen in the ASR-8. However, a verdict isn’t expected for some time, van Haastert said.

FAA issues such as those facing the Fire Island wind farm are not unique to Alaska.

All entities involved with the proposed project continue to work together toward a resolution. However, an additional $630,000 in funding appropriated for the project from the Denali Commission is on hold until the FAA issues are resolved, according to Prentki.

Chugach Electric and its partners remain optimistic.

“Wind power is mature, robust and proven,” Steyer said. “They’ve worked a lot of the bugs out of it. Other alternative energy concepts aren’t at the same point.”

**Wind generation up and running**

With fuel prices topping $5 per gallon in the Bush, wind-powered energy for Alaska’s rural communities is becoming more economically feasible every day.

Kotzebue Electric Association was the first in the state to harness the chilly Arctic winds as an alternative energy source.

The member-owned electric cooperative in the Inupiat Eskimo village 26 miles north of the Arctic Circle erected three wind turbine generators in 1997. A total of 16 windmills now supply 1 megawatt of electricity at peak times, contributing more than 40 percent of the town’s power, according to Matt Bergan, an East Coast transplant who became Kotzebue’s power engineer eight years ago.
According to the Global Wind Energy Council, Germany is the worldwide leader in wind-generated power, with 20,622 megawatts installed. Spain is number two, with 11,615 megawatts; and the U.S. is a close third, with 11,603 megawatts. India is ranked fourth, with 6,270 megawatts. Fifth-ranked Denmark now generates more than 20 percent of its power from wind, with 3,136 megawatts installed.

According to the American Wind Energy Association:

▼ Texas hosts the world’s largest operating wind farm, producing 735 megawatts of power.

▼ One megawatt of wind power can produce enough electricity to serve 250-300 homes on an average day.

▼ Wind energy facilities currently installed in the U.S. will produce an estimated 31 billion kilowatt-hours annually, or enough electricity to serve 2.9 million American homes.

▼ This 100-percent clean source of electricity will displace approximately 23 million tons of carbon dioxide — the leading greenhouse gas — each year, which would otherwise be emitted by coal, natural gas, oil and other traditional energy sources.

▼ The top five states for new wind energy installations in 2006:
  - Texas (764 MW)
  - Washington (428 MW)
  - California (212 MW)
  - New York (185 MW)
  - Minnesota (150 MW)

▼ The first U.S. wind farms were installed in California in the early 1980s. That state led the wind industry field until last year, when it was surpassed by Texas.

Alaska ranks very low in the amount of power derived from wind energy compared to other states, with only a total wind production of 4 megawatts, according to Alaska Energy Authority Wind Project Manager Martina Dabo.
Bergan estimates the town's wind generators save its 3,000 residents and the electric utility 100,000 gallons of diesel a year.

Kotzebue's gently rolling landscape provides few obstacles for winds blowing along Alaska's west coast and inland from Pacific Ocean storms. In fact, the majority of the town's winds are from storms, Bergan said.

It's not unusual for the utility's three types of windmills to be buffeted by winds between 20 mph and 30 mph for four or five days during the fall and spring.

Bergan likens a wind generator's operation to that of an outboard motor.

"You take an outboard and reverse it with a different fluid. Instead of water you have air. The propeller is getting pushed by the air, it starts to spin and goes faster and faster until it reaches a point where the generator produces power," he described.

But most wind experts believe a smooth, regular wind is more productive than intermittent gusts. Meteorological studies have determined Fire Island's average wind speed at 14.2 mph, Steyer said.

The highest gust detected at the island was 90 mph, however turbines are designed to withstand 120 mph of sustained winds, said Steyer.

Most turbines begin producing power at 9 mph, reach full power at 30 mph and shut down around 60-65 mph to protect the generator and drive train, he added.

Constructing wind farms in Alaska's cold, hard environment presents some unique challenges.

Kotzebue's power engineer said the logistics of transporting material and equipment to remote sites is the biggest challenge to establishing wind farms in rural Alaska.
According to Martina Dabo, wind project manager for the Alaska Energy Authority, turbines comprise 60 percent to 70 percent of wind farm construction costs in the continental United States.

In Alaska, 35 percent to 50 percent of the entire project can be turbine costs with the remainder spent on overcoming the state’s unique geographical challenges, she added.

Building projects in tundra communities are limited to the long, cold winter months when the land is frozen. Driving heavy equipment across the tundra in summer leaves deep trenches that remain visible for decades. Temporary ice roads and other innovations have made it possible to move heavy equipment over tundra without causing damage.

Constructing tower pilings in Alaska’s frozen ground can’t compare to simply pouring a concrete pad in Texas, Dabo said.

Tower foundations in many rural villages are constructed using refrigerated pilings to prevent melting the permafrost. Holes are backfilled with a gravel and water mix.

“It’s one of those things Alaskans know how to overcome and are now teaching those techniques in the Lower 48,” said Dabo.

Other villages follow suit

Most of Alaska’s more than 200 remote villages are accessible only by plane or boat and rely on high-priced diesel fuel for electricity and heat. But many are turning to the winds that blow steadily across the tundra to supplement their power demands.
The Alaska Village Electric Cooperative covers the largest area of any electric cooperative in the world, serving 52 villages from Kivalina in the north, as far south as Old Harbor on Kodiak Island, west to Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, and east to Minto.

Of AVEC’s member villages, only Minto is accessible by road. Wind generators supplement power in a handful of AVEC villages.

Three, 100 kilowatt Northwind turbines installed in Toksook Bay are expected to offset 52,000 gallons of diesel per year, according to a Denali Commission report. A wind-diesel system also supplies power to nearby Tununak and Nightmute.

The three, 100 kilowatt Northwind turbines installed in Kasigluk save an estimated 65,000 gallons of diesel annually. The village of Nunapitchuk also receives power from that system.

Wind generators also are installed in Wales and Selawik.

Alaska is one of the global leaders in addressing and solving issues associated with the integration of wind power and diesel, according to AEA’s Dabo.

Nancy Erickson is a freelance writer who lives in Anchorage.
The Cook Inlet could easily be characterized as the most exciting energy market in the U.S. today. I would also characterize it as very fragile. With the Railbelt economy hanging in the balance, we are faced today with a number of critical energy related decisions. Various circumstances have come together like a perfect storm with the potential for both historic opportunity and disaster. If decision-makers are not careful, we could repeat the U.S. energy crisis of the 1970s.

As early as 1972, state regulatory commissions in the Lower 48 had their hands full with natural gas price increases and supply problems. Between 1975 and 1978 the federal government, reacting to the full-fl edged energy crisis, placed a moratorium on new gas hookups. All new residential and commercial construction was prohibited from using natural gas. Gas utilities around the country were forced to adopt a no-growth posture to protect existing customers until such time as the gas supply situation improved. Homeowners and industry were also asked to cut back use of electricity. The cause: Government regulation of natural gas prices had discouraged investment in new sources of supply. As a result the U.S. was burning natural gas much faster than new fields were brought into production. Many utilities refer to this period of time as “The Moratorium.”

The Moratorium created a disadvantaged class of energy consumer. Residential and commercial construction was forced to use alternative fuels that were more expensive, in most cases. Homes built were forced to use fuel oil, propane or
electricity for heat. Prospective buyers were much less enthusiastic about higher heating bills. Buyers were also concerned about the expense to convert to natural gas after the Moratorium was lifted. Utilities lost their primary growth engine; the addition of new customers. A growing customer base helps utilities keep prices down because rising costs can be spread across more consumers.

The Cook Inlet energy history has been much brighter. For more than 40 years natural gas from Cook Inlet has powered homes and businesses and kept Alaskans warm. Electricity generated with natural gas is used to keep the lights on from Homer to Fairbanks and serves two-thirds of Alaska’s population. About half of Alaska’s population uses Cook Inlet gas to heat their homes. Most of the natural gas discoveries in Cook Inlet occurred between 1955 and 1965. About 8 trillion cubic feet (TCF) was discovered during that time and was found while the oil companies were exploring for crude oil. To put that 8 TCF in perspective, at current consumption rates for home heating and power generation, it would last more than 100 years. The surplus was large enough for it to be a buyer’s market for decades. And as a result, we enjoyed some of the cheapest natural gas rates in the country. But that was not the only result. A lesser-known consequence was a reduced interest in drilling wells for exploration and development. It is difficult to justify investment if you can’t sell the resource and earn a fair return. In the 15 years from 1985-2000 a total of only 18 wells were drilled in Cook Inlet.

The energy market in Cook Inlet has changed a lot since the year 2000. As the days of surplus gas come to an end, so do the days of cheap

The chart shows a best-case and worst-case scenario on reserves growth in Cook Inlet. The black line shows there isn’t enough gas for power generation and home heating in 2012. It assumes that absolutely nothing is done regarding exploration and development. Very unlikely. The blue line shows reserves growth to get us to about 2025. The U.S. Department of Energy estimated in 2004 that it would require $500 million in capital investment to do this.
gas prices. The cost of natural gas for homes and businesses in 2000 was less than $2 per thousand cubic feet (MCF), compared to a price of $7.03 per MCF in 2007. The good news is exploration and development activity has increased since 2000. In the five years from 2001-2005 a total of 75 wells were drilled, which is an increase of 316 percent from the prior 15-year period. The market was responding to higher prices and the fact that new reserves could be sold within a reasonable time from discovery.

Today there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty in Cook Inlet. Producers have received confusing price signals from regulators. Industrial usage of natural gas has been curtailed. Prices have more than tripled in the last six years. At least one explorer put development plans on hold in 2006 due to the uncertain outcome of the Petroleum Production Tax. A different explorer stopped deliveries, claiming it was non-economic to produce. This action increased prices for all consumers, especially schools, hospitals and other large users. And because this explorer was the sole provider of natural gas in Fairbanks, consumers there were hit especially hard.

There is no doubt that North Slope gas can be a long-term energy solution for Alaska. The U.S. Department of Energy and the Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority have already done some excellent work in the area of bringing gas to Southcentral. Still, there are a number of uncertain years between now and when a gas pipeline project is completed. During those years we need to have a healthy economy and many important questions need to be answered. For example, are we discouraging development in the Cook Inlet because of concerns about rising prices? Will well-intended legislative and regulatory actions help keep prices down, or are we creating our own one-state energy crisis? Will planned power generation projects create a situation whereby gas demand is reduced to a point where a Southcentral spur-line is not economic?

These questions can be answered in a way that will minimize negative economic impacts while simultaneously positioning us for the best future opportunities. If the long-term solution is North Slope gas, and this project is years away, what do we do between now and then? The answer: A desper-
ately needed Railbelt Energy Plan. Think of it as a “map” that shows us how to get from where we are today, to where we should to be in 10 years. The state of Alaska should mandate utilities to coordinate strategic planning of all Railbelt energy infrastructure development. Proper implementation will prepare us for the best long-term energy solution.

Quick action is needed while options still exist. These options include incentives that encourage Cook Inlet exploration, LNG imports, increased clarity from regulatory agencies, development of significant natural gas storage, meaningful utility conservation programs and a bullet line to the North Slope to name a few of course, it is not as simple as picking some options and deleting others. The Cook Inlet energy infrastructure is integrated and you cannot remove one piece without affecting another. For example, the LNG export facility plays a critical role providing backup gas to utilities during extreme cold weather or if other system failures occur. Without the export plant, utilities will be forced to develop another type of backup supply. Consumers would certainly pay higher rates to cover the cost of this expensive alternative.

A crisis can be avoided because Alaska is unique and so are Alaskans. We are different than the Lower 48 because of our remoteness. We are different because we are resourceful, self-reliant, innovative and independent. We are blessed with great resources and have no reason to repeat the U.S. energy crisis of the 1970s. I encourage everyone to communicate the urgency of this issue to every legislator and policymaker who will listen.

Tony Izzo, energy consultant and former president and CEO of ENSTAR Natural Gas Company has worked in the natural gas, distribution and transmission industry for 26 years. He currently serves on the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Mr. Izzo can be contacted at tizzo@gti.net.
When traveling around Alaska, Michael Milam may find it hard to get away from work. He sees his work in the buildings he passes every day.

Now he’s not the architect who designed the building, or the guy with the tool belt. Instead, he’s the guy who dealt with the financing it took to get the building off of paper. Milam is the Senior Vice President of Commercial Banking for Key Bank.

Key Bank got its start in Albany, New York in 1825, says Anne Foster, northwest public affairs director. It grew through the purchase of numerous banks for reasons varying from bad investments to the need for more financial strength solely to keep up with competition.

Alaska’s oldest bank offers world-class products with local delivery.
All of which eventually led to a merger of Albany’s Key Bank with Society Corporation coming out of Cleveland in 1994. Together they formed KeyCorp, which now has assets of $93 billion.

Today Key Bank handles everything from personal accounts to the financing of large projects. It is the nation’s third largest real estate lender with banks in 13 different states and more than 260 offices in 31 states and 26 countries. Customers have access to more than 2,100 ATMs, state-of-the-art calling centers, more than 950 KeyCenters, and online banking through Key.com.

Key Bank, now owned by KeyCorp, made its move into Alaska through the 1985 purchase of First National Bank in Fairbanks and it later bought Anchorage’s Alaska Pacific Bancorp in July of the same year. The two Alaska banks merged in 1987 under the name Key, and Milam has been under the name Key through it all.

When asked why Key Bank extended to Alaska, Milam said, “Key Bank saw great opportunity in Alaska and it has proven to be true.”
In 2005, Key celebrated its 100th anniversary as the oldest national bank in Alaska, giving credit to its beginning roots with First National Bank of Fairbanks. From those first two banks, Key has extended its reach with 17 branches in Alaska alone. In addition, the bank has financed projects ranging from military housing to helping small businesses get a running start throughout Alaska.

To enhance Key Bank’s ability to provide financial services to a wide range of projects, it has relations managers in several cities including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kodiak, Soldotna, Kenai, Juneau, Ketchikan, Palmer, Dutch Harbor and Wasilla, making Key Bank employees highly accessible to clients.

As a full service bank, Key offers business, consumer, real estate and construction loans, as well as cash management services, foreign exchange, investment services and investment banking. But the key to keeping up with, and getting ahead of, competition is making these services available to everyone, “not only urban, but rural as well,” said Milam. They offer the same services whether a client lives in Anchorage or Dutch Harbor, where Key is the only bank in town.

Milam said it’s the bank’s “world class products with local delivery,” that make it a strong competitor. And part of that local delivery is the bank staff’s understanding of Alaska’s uncommon needs, for both contractors and individuals.

“Every opportunity is considered on a case-by-case basis by banking professionals who understand the Alaska market,” said Foster. “One of the best things about being a community bank is the local decision-making authority.”

Being a member of AGC since July of 1976 has helped Key Bank hone its expertise in dealing with the contracting industry, “(AGC membership) really keeps us attuned to the market,” which Milam says, “is unique in Alaska.” Unlike the Lower 48, all of the projects are not connected to the main road. Some require transportation by
train, plane, helicopter and barge. All of which make the fact that Key has no upper or lower financing limits all the more beneficial.

This convenience helps one of Key Bank’s clients, GHEMM Company, headquartered in Fairbanks. GHEMM held the contract for building the spinal and imaging centers in Fairbanks for the Fairbanks Memorial Hospital last summer. Key Bank played a part in the project, Milam said.

However, Milam said since there is no “Associated General Public,” Key Bank’s ability to keep up with its customers is all the more impressive. Key Bank’s various branches across the state have proven the longtime method of comprehensive customer service.

Milam said instead of making a small business owner work with a busy associate in Anchorage or even Seattle, the business owner can go down to the local office and explain exactly what they need to someone in their own community who will better understand their needs and/or restrictions.

“We try to tag the right team with the right clients,” said Milam, who divides his time between Anchorage and Fairbanks to personally ensure quality service.

Milam said he believes Key Bank “sells great opportunities.” And he is continuously proven right with each project financed; whether it be a couple buying or building a house, or a business that needs an extra little push to get going.

He said Alaskan’s incredible honesty is one of the reasons he loves working personally with people.

Working for Key Bank lets you see the product of your work everywhere, Milam said. “When I see a building I helped finance, I know I’ve left a mark. I know I’ve helped someone and the proof is in a standing building that should last for generations.”

He said it’s a good feeling to know that your work will serve Alaskans for years in the form of buildings from hospitals to homes.

Megan C. Metcalf is a freelance writer who lives in the Wasilla area.
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AGC members' projects from around the state

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No long-term, dedicated funding source for transportation exists in Anchorage or Alaska, except for the feds and oil taxes. Contractors will no doubt be amazed to see $150 million a year materialize over the next 10 years in additional road funds to complete Connect Anchorage jobs.

Transportation initiative

In October 2006, Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich and then-Gov. Frank Murkowski signed an agreement to “cooperatively seek funding and to jointly develop the transportation initiative called ‘Connect Anchorage’ to implement the Anchorage Long-Range Transportation Plan.”

State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Central Region Director Gordon Keith said, “We hope this will become a government-to-government pact—as the governors change and the mayors change, we hope that this is going to continue on. We’ve had some pretty good luck in getting some general fund help to build some of our projects and we want to continue to do that.”

Alaska’s new governor supports traffic congestion mitigation.

“The traffic congestion problem is not just about convenience,” said Governor Sarah Palin. “Traffic congestion has a direct and very costly impact on the economy. The cost of traffic congestion in Anchorage approaches $60 million a year. As a fiscal conservative, it makes sense that in the long-term, it costs far less to make investments in key infrastructure improvements that will lead to a more efficient transportation system for years to come.”

Aggressive plan

Connect Anchorage is a 10-year program that promises to accelerate parts of the Anchorage 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan, according to Keith.

“When we get it done this is nearly $3 billion worth of work over 20 years,” Keith said. “When we came up with that $3 billion worth of work, that’s a lot of money and there’s a need to get it built at an accelerated pace, so that’s where Connect Anchorage came up. How do we come up with the money so we can aggressively pursue these routes. Not the whole plan, but those that provide the connectivity so that people can get to work, and connectivity for traffic congestion relief. There are some projects in here that are ‘nice to do’ projects, but these are the real nuts and bolts of the plan, what we put together in Connect Anchorage.”

Adaptations

Constantly evolving, Connect Anchorage and the Anchorage 2025 Long-Range Transportation Plan fluctuate like the tides of Cook Inlet. Rising costs and falling funds skew the millions already spent on studies, plans and preliminary designs. A March 5 draft STIP significantly changes dollar amounts and priorities and is expected to be finalized.
after April 6, when the public comment period closes. The limits of our research at this time lie between October 2006 and March 2007.

In October, Connect Anchorage was valued at about $1.2 billion, the stakes are higher now. The draft 2007-2009 STIP raised the centerpiece highway-to-highway project estimate more than $100 million, and delays further funding until after 2009. Total AMATS program allocations are $100 million over the draft STIP three-year period, with an additional $794 million shown in the after federal fiscal year 2009 column for Connect Anchorage projects.
Highway-to-Highway

The biggest piece of Connect Anchorage is the 4.9 mile highway-to-highway connection, which eliminates all stoplights between Bragaw Road and 36th Avenue, among other features. Keith says it is the backbone of the entire transportation system.

“It’s very important to relieving congestion in Anchorage, and the problem with congestion in Anchorage is that national highway system,” he said. “The main routes through town, the Glenn Highway and the Seward Highway are competing with people traveling on these routes that all they want to do is go from home to the gas station to two blocks down to the grocery store. They are using it in the mode of an arterial road, and not as through traffic. We need to have a main distribution system that takes people through Anchorage and the highway-to-highway project does just that when it gets done.”

As it is now, many drivers trying to get across town avoid the overloaded Glenn-Seward route.

“In the Anchorage area, there are over 100,000 vehicle trips a day that go through neighborhoods because of this highway-to-highway problem,” Begich said. “If we resolve that, there will be 100,000 vehicle trips that no longer are going throughout our neighborhoods, doing cut-throughs, creating hazards and safety issues.”

The first phase of highway-to-highway is expected to start this spring with the Bragaw/Glenn Interchange, which DOT&PF engineers estimated to be a $38 million design-build project.

Another $8 million is allocated to go to consultants this year to start the reconnaissance phase on the highway-to-highway project, according to DOT&PF Chief of Planning and Administrative Services John Tolley.

“The project will probably be a 15- to 20-year job; obviously, because of the size of it and the cost of it, it will be phased,” Tolley said. “That’s all part of this reconnaissance effort. How would you finance it? How would you stage it? How would you phase it? Plus, the engineering, the geologic, the different soils issues and the constraints on it, and obviously a lot of outreach with the community on how would you mitigate and do things to basically keep the community support for it.”

The Fairview Community Council fully supports the work proposed for their neighborhood, so much so they lobbied the Alaska Legislature for funding for the project, which will incorporate innovative cut and cover concepts to reconnect the Fairview neighborhood and create an economic development zone near the Sullivan Arena.
**Beyond Anchorage**

The highway-to-highway connection will obviously benefit Anchorage residents, but the mayor pointed out how it goes beyond Anchorage with benefits by easing congestion for 20,000-30,000 daily Mat-Su commuters and thousands of freight haulers coming out of the Port of Anchorage with 80-85 percent of the goods for the Railbelt.

“This project has three major goals, so when people say it’s an Anchorage project, it really isn’t,” Begich said. “It benefits Anchorage, but it also benefits the Railbelt for freight movement and it benefits the commuters of the valley, which are growing at a pretty rapid pace. So it has multiple benefits. That’s why DOT&PF picked it as their No. 1 Southcentral project. It’s not just an Anchorage project – because of its value.”

**New route**

In addition to the highway-to-highway mega project, which accounts for half of the Connect Anchorage price tag, several other road jobs are included. One in particular is part of a much larger endeavor.

The $95-$115 million Dowling West Extension (Minnesota to Old Seward Highway) project is a segment of a new route for Anchorage. Tolley says DOT&PF got $25 million in state general funds from the Legislature last year and it is in the environmental stage. Dowling West is a case in point to use state money where possible instead of federal. The $95 million is a state-funded estimate – $115 million is a federally funded scenario, both amounts subject to change.

“There’s a whole process you have to go through here with the reconnaissance and the environmental,” Tolley said. “Once that’s approved you can do the design, and move on to right-of-way acquisition, then utilities and construction – when we’re using federal money we have to follow that process and it can drag out anywhere from five to seven to 10 years, because it all has to be done sequentially. But, when we are using state general fund money, the real advantage there is that we can do some of those steps simul-

taneously, so we can deliver things in a much quicker time frame.”

Some of Connect Anchorage completes grid disconnects that are already being partially addressed. Dowling West fits in this category. It is a component of a new major east-west corridor – some built, some under construction, some being designed, some planned. The route adds a new way to get across town, and will serve as a Lake Otis and Tudor bypass. Moving west, traffic can drop off Tudor at Boniface with the 48th Avenue extension, or at Bragaw, and connect to Abbott Loop Road, with an intersection at Dowling, where traffic then moves west connecting at Minnesota. Wilder Construction will finish the Abbott Loop extension and reconstruction this year. Some of the Dowling East work was completed in 2004, and the rest is in the works. Construction for Dowling to Lake Otis from Abbott Loop to Laurel will go out to bid late this summer, with construction next year.

“The first east-west link, Boniface Parkway/48th Avenue Extension, is funded by the state Legislature,” Keith said. “We’ve transferred that money to the Municipality of Anchorage to design. In fact, they are going to design it, they are going to build it, and maintain it and own it, once they get done.”

Begich says the municipality is doing the right-of-way acquisitions from Abbott to Lake Otis for the Dowling East project and expects to build it next year. No construction date is set for the 48th Avenue Extension yet.

“We’re doing the reconnaissance design from Boniface to Abbott, and we’re now doing the review of the next segment; so that project is moving and we expect legislative support again this year on that,” Begich said.

Keith said east-west traffic is going to profit big time when the new corridor is done.

“There are about 69,000 cars a day going through Lake Otis and Tudor right now. When we get this complete we’re going to be taking 15,000 cars out of there and that is going to make those that remain on Lake Otis and Tudor flow better and help that out.”
Another dozen projects round out Connect Anchorage. Keith says the plan is to have ongoing work in all the phases, with some segments completed each year on the highway-to-highway connection as well.

“What we don’t want is to get to the point where in 2025 we cut the ribbon and that’s the first time anyone has any use of this at all. We’re looking at what areas we can build and get some interim use out of, before the whole thing is done.”

The most expensive of the remaining Connect Anchorage projects was the multi-faceted New Seward Highway (Rabbit Creek Road to 36th Avenue) project, valued at $210 million in October 2006. Additional lanes, grade separations, plus interchange and underpass improvements comprised the work that was divided into several smaller, specific jobs. The draft STIP allocates money to analyze and identify needed transportation improvements: $3.6 million for design in 2008, $7.5 million for right-of-way work in 2009 and $44.6 million after 2009. Parts of this project are in the design phase now, according to DOT&PF. Construction will be phased over several years.

**GLENN HIGHWAY**

$50 million Glenn Highway (Hiland Road Interchange Modification)

Replaces the interchange with a new design to eliminate turning conflicts, it is in the early environmental stage.

**GLENN HIGHWAY**

$40 million Glenn Highway (Gambell Street to McCarrey Street)

Valued at $40 million in October, the project adds an additional through lane in each direction, and may go to bid for construction this year. The draft STIP allocates $51.2 million; $13.9 million in 2007 and $37.3 million after 2009.
LAKE OTIS PARKWAY
$25 million Lake Otis Parkway Reconstruction (DeBarr Road to Northern Lights Boulevard)

OLD GLENN HIGHWAY
$21 million Old Glenn Highway Rehab (North Eagle River to Peters Creek)
Adds shoulders, trail and turning improvements. This is a state job and is in the environmental and design phases. Construction is planned for 2010.

OLD SEWARD HIGHWAY
$20 million Old Seward Highway (O’Malley Road to Brandon Street)
Has an additional through lane in each direction and a two-way left turn lane, with construction anticipated for 2009.

SPENARD ROAD
$20 million Spenard Road Upgrade & Couplet
Slated for construction in 2011. This project reconstructs Spenard road to a three-lane segment east of Minnesota Drive with pedestrian improvements and develops a short couplet segment on 36th Avenue and Spenard Road. Progress is at 75 percent design completion and under right-of-way review.
O’MALLEY ROAD
$20 million O’Malley Road Reconstruction (Seward Highway to Hillside Drive)
Expands O’Malley to four lanes west of Lake Otis and three lanes east of Lake Otis. A state project, it is expected to be under construction in 2011.

JEWEL LAKE ROAD
$20 million Jewel Lake Road (Dimond Boulevard to International Airport Road)
Adds two-way left turn lanes, shoulders and pedestrian improvements.

LAKE OTIS AND TUDOR
$15 million Lake Otis and Tudor Road Intersection
Project is to analyze the needs and construct the necessary capacity improvements. This project, which is jointly designed by state and municipal engineers, has money in the bank—half from a voter-approved bond and half from a federal earmark. Possible construction in 2008.

EAGLE RIVER LOOP ROAD
$11 million Eagle River Loop Road Rehabilitation
Adds shoulders, trail and two-way left turn lane. High on the AMATS list, this project is scheduled for construction in 2007.

40TH AVENUE
$11 million 40th Avenue Extension (Lake Otis to Piper Street)
Project is in design and eases traffic flow in the U-Med district. Construction is scheduled for 2008.
Funding

Much of the funding will come from federal appropriations doled out by the state Legislature and applied to the STIP, which is the statewide prioritized list of what projects get funded when. Another large chunk of money will need to come from the general fund. Some money will come from the Municipality of Anchorage.

Bonding plays a small role in getting actual dollars for the Connect Anchorage master plan. Four of the 14 projects are owned by the city, representing previously estimated costs of $71 million. Anchorage voters can only be presented with bond proposals for roads owned by the city.

According to Municipality of Anchorage Capital Program Development Manager Jim Lamson, $8.4 million is funded by voter-approved bonds, so far. Most of that is for the Lake Otis and Tudor Road intersection. When presented with road projects, Anchorage voters have a positive track record for approving road bonds.

The Municipality of Anchorage helps in other ways, according to the mayor. The real estate department works on right-of-way acquisitions, and the planning and engineering departments work on projects. He says they also help DOT&PF seek funding. The municipality’s 2007 request for funding from the Alaska Legislature for transportation capital projects grant requests includes $54.7 million toward five Connect Anchorage projects – $50 million for four state owned roads.

“We’re working very cooperatively to make these roads,” Begich said. “Because our attitude is it doesn’t matter who owns the roads, the public doesn’t care, they just want the roads completed and maintained.”

Susan Harrington is an editor and writer based in Anchorage.

We tried to basically try to look at a prioritized program, irrespective of jurisdictional responsibility. To the public, it’s just that the roads need improvement. So let’s just pool our resources and work down the list of priorities as far as getting the highest priorities done first.

- John Tolley

You can see by the goals, it’s the commuters, it’s the truck traffic – the cargo, the freight – we’re trying to see how we can move it through the city. It’s what makes sense from an engineering standpoint. If we keep on track, we’ll be able to do these projects over the next 10 years, give or take a year, which again, is pretty significant from our prospective.
- Mark Begich

We tried to basically try to look at a prioritized program, irrespective of jurisdictional responsibility. To the public, it’s just that the roads need improvement. So let’s just pool our resources and work down the list of priorities as far as getting the highest priorities done first.
- John Tolley

When we get done with highway-to-highway and all the components that make up Connect Anchorage, it will cut 100 million annual vehicle miles that people travel ... and it eliminates 3.9 million hours spent in this congestion. So, not only does it make the trip shorter, you won’t be sitting through all the congestion either.
- Gordon Keith

You can see by the goals, it’s the commuters, it’s the truck traffic – the cargo, the freight – we’re trying to see how we can move it through the city. It’s what makes sense from an engineering standpoint. If we keep on track, we’ll be able to do these projects over the next 10 years, give or take a year, which again, is pretty significant from our prospective.
- Mark Begich

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Things could be worse – really

As the Municipality of Anchorage trudges through the process of revising its planning and zoning rules, Alaska’s construction industry can be happy to have AGC at the table doing its best to minimize the sort of regulation that adds little benefit but costs a great deal.

Being a national organization, Pacific Legal Foundation attacks some of the most outrageous zoning and land use rules imaginable and we thought this might be a good time to share just a little of what Alaska property owners and construction companies have been “missing out on.”

Just south of Alaska, in Washington state, King County enacted a planning ordinance that they claim will improve the local quality of life. The only problem is that it requires rural landowners to maintain from 50 to 65 percent of their property as native forest or vegetation. Sounds like a pretty expensive deal to us. PLF is in court helping overturn this decision.

A little farther south, in sunny San Diego County, Calif., the city of Carlsbad has come up with a unique approach to permitting home remodeling projects. If the project is valued at more than $75,000, they assess a massive fee. If the homeowner wants to postpone paying the fee, they can sign an agreement giving the city the right to vote on their behalf on future property taxes. Oh, and by the way, the agreement applies to all future owners of the house. PLF is suing over this as well.

Speaking of property taxes, imagine being a resident of Kauai – yes, wouldn’t that be great to imagine. Facing huge property tax bills, the residents passed an initiative mandating more rational property taxation rates. The county government sued – no surprise – but now argues that the reference in the Hawaii Constitution giving counties the authority to determine property tax rates actually meant only
the bureaucracy, not the “people.” PLF attorneys are fighting that concept in the Hawaii Supreme Court.

Alaska, like California, has a long coastline. Be grateful you don’t also have a Coastal Commission to make outrageous demands of property owners. PLF recently represented one coastal landowner who wanted to build a house on his little piece of the coast. He submitted his plans to the California Coastal Commission for a permit – as required by law – only to be told he would have to reduce the size of his house and move its location on the property.

The house was already hidden from people traveling along the coast in cars, but the Commission demanded that the building be hidden from surfers and boaters on the open ocean. We are not making this up. The Commission staff followed the suggestion of the United States Sailing Association, rather than unambiguous California state law in making this demand. PLF’s legal challenge was successful and the surfers will just have to live with their view of the home once it is built.

In Texas, thanks to that state’s Open Beaches Act, property boundaries are subject to the whims of nature. This law creates as the boundary line between public beach and private property the point at which natural vegetation will no longer grow.

Near Galveston, a tropical storm moved this vegetation line from one side of about 100 homes to the other. Government officials then told these homeowners that they were now “trespassing” on the public beach and to remove their houses. The government seems to think homeowners should be grateful for the $40,000 they offered to have their homes, some valued over $300,000, demolished. Yes, this is another PLF lawsuit.

Our final story of outrageous zoning comes from the little town of Islamorada in the Florida Keys. Here, city fathers decided that they didn’t like what they called “formula retail” establishments, meaning chain or franchise type businesses. They changed their zoning rules to protect local residents from the likes of Hallmark Cards, Starbucks, and Walgreens. This bureaucratic gem has led to two PLF lawsuits.

Mark Twain told us that “truth is stranger than fiction” and these instances of outrageous zoning or permitting rules are both true and strange. Fortunately, there are strong advocates like Pacific Legal Foundation and AGC in Alaska to defend us from those who see these regulatory limitations and believe they are actually good ideas.

Peter G. Fusselman, a former executive at AGC of California, now serves as Pacific Legal Foundation’s Director of Foundation Development.
When examining Alaska’s future oil and gas industry, we must examine what is happening here as it relates to the world price of petroleum.

With the media reporting record profits in the industry, one has to ask how this was accomplished. It’s the result of years of careful planning, investing, exploring and developing around the globe. And as the subcontinent of China continues to expand its economy, demand for oil and gas increases as does price.

It’s not only China. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, millions have entered semi-free economies in Russia and other Pacific Rim nations as well as former Russian satellite countries. Demand for oil and gas is ever-growing. Since supply hasn’t kept pace, price has been driven up with companies benefiting. For prices to decrease there must be a major effort to increase supply. How? Unleash the forces of private initiative ... which brings us to Alaska.

Here in Southcentral, the country and world as a whole, the economy and population continue to grow, causing greater demand for oil and gas. This means a gas pipeline from Prudhoe Bay south to markets in Canada and the Lower 48 is becoming more likely. In other words, the tremendous cost of such a project is nearly justified at current price levels in conjunction with markets demanding our gas.

A gas line will be profitable and eventually constructed, but only if the state keeps taxes and regulations reasonable and prevents too many restrictive entanglements that could cause delays. One of the best things we can do to
encourage such development is to have a stable, known tax and regulatory policy. This will also help the industry better anticipate the future and be more inclined to invest in Alaska for the long-term.

If this occurs, market forces will create a miracle before our eyes. It will drive a gas pipeline to where markets are demanding it most. Thousands of good paying jobs will be created, more money will flow through the economy boosting commerce, increased revenue in state coffers for roads and schools will occur and we will see a proliferation of exploration and development.

Laws that vitiate private enterprise will lessen the chances of the gas pipeline becoming a reality because cautious producers carefully examine where they place their investment dollars. If we wish to attract investment capital to construct massive projects such as the gas line, we should not suppress the energy of free enterprise. This may create uncertainty that could result in money being spent elsewhere in the world. Competition is fierce, as ample, easily accessible gas exists in many places in the Pacific Rim.

I believe it’s best to follow a free market approach, especially as it pertains to oil. The oil pipeline is currently at half capacity and production is way down from its peak of in the late 1980s. If we don’t do so, consumers will ultimately lose because all of us will experience higher prices at the pump from decreased production.

Does Alaska have enough potential to bring the oil pipeline back to full capacity? Yes. There is ANWR, a huge oil field waiting to be produced. We know it can be done safely. The National Petroleum Reserve south of Prudhoe presents major opportunities. The North Slope itself can still yield large amounts of oil. This is where literally billions of barrels of heavy, viscous oil wait for improved technologies to tap and bring it to market.

Substantial oil and gas remains in Alaska. Technology exists to find and develop it and companies are willing to assume the expense and risk. With cooperation from the state, the industry can reach its full potential for the benefit of Alaskans and all of America.

Representative Vic Kohring is chairman of the Alaska Legislature’s Oil & Gas Committee.
**ENTRY:** Please complete the form below and mail or fax to AGC of Alaska. All entries must have your USGA handicap or your average score. The $125 entry fee must accompany your entry form and includes golf cart, greens fees, prizes and refreshments. All entries are on a first come basis.

**DEADLINE FOR ENTRY IS FRIDAY, JUNE 15 2007**

**THURSDAY NIGHT FESTIVITIES:**
Have refreshments and snacks, check your pairings, meet your partners, and plan your team's strategy. Door Prizes will be drawn for those in attendance.

**FRIDAY TOURNAMENT:**
The tournament is a scramble format with a 7 a.m. shotgun start. Team selection will be blind draw based on handicaps. Players may choose their team; however, these teams will not be eligible for the scramble team prizes. There will be a separate prize for the winning “Player Chosen” team. Rule sheets will be provided to all golfers.

**AWARDS:**
All awards will be announced and presented at the barbecue after the tournament. (BBQ will be held at Moose Run) In case of ties, golf cards will be matched by starting at a hole selected by the committee.

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**REGISTRATION FORM - 20th ANNUAL AGC INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT SCRAMBLE**

**NAME:**

**COMPANY:**

**ADDRESS:**

**FEE:** $125 per person  
Cash:_____ Charge:_____ Contact Phone _____________________________

**Visa**  
**M/C**  
**Card No.**  
**Exp. Date:**

**SIGNATURE:**

**Shirt Size:**  
**S**  
**M**  
**L**  
**XL**  
**XXL**  
**XXXL**

Please provide the following information:  
**Male**  
**Female**  
**Handicap or average score**

**Raffle tickets now available:**  
I would like purchase _____ raffle ticket(s) at $20.00 each for a chance to win a complete set (3 through PW) of "custom fitted irons." (Ping, Taylor Made, Mizuno, Callaway, Cobra or KZG.) Total with Golf fees: ________________ Funds raised from the raffle, go to support the AGC Scholarships.

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