

The Mat-Su Valley holds everything outdoor Alaska has to offer - mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes, forests, fish and wildlife, culture and history. From skating frozen lakes in the winter to summer duck hunting, recreation opportunities abound for every kind of outdoor enthusiast. While the area is rich in outdoor recreation potential, most out-of-state visitors pass quickly through on their way north to Denali or south to Anchorage (see statistics in sidebar¹). **What if the large number of visitors on their way to Denali had more reasons to spend time in the Mat-Su Valley?**

Attracting more visitors requires creating overnight destinations with quality lodging, dining and shopping plus convenient access to quality trails and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Improvements at South Denali and in the Independence Mine/Hatcher Pass area can help these areas become stronger overnight destinations, communities like Palmer, Wasilla and Sutton have similar potential. Talkeetna is the borough’s most established overnight destination, but work is needed to match current and projected growth with the community’s carrying capacity and to maintain what makes this town special.

This chapter outlines investments to expand the range of recreation opportunities, aiming to serve diverse interests of out-of-state visitors - both package and independent - as well as in-state residents, who are Mat-Su’s primary visitor market². Trails and other recreation opportunities should cater to different time frames, physical abilities, expectations and interests, and be available year-round.

Expanding recreation options in the Valley along with securing funding for infrastructure maintenance and operations funding will lead to increased visitation and longer stays, helping Mat-Su take much greater advantage of its strategic location and recreation assets.³

Investment Incentives



Most Visitors Pass Through

47% of all out-of-state travelers visit Anchorage, 23% visit Denali, but **only 11% stop in Mat-Su** ¹

Spending by Visitors AND AK Residents

Out-of-state \$98 million/year
In-state \$160 million/year
Total = \$258M ²



Big returns on modest investment

Experience around the US shows returns of 2 to 10 times return on investments in trails & outdoor rec. ³

¹ AVSP 7 – Summer 2016 Section 5: Visitor Profile - Destinations and Activities

² Economic Impact of the Visitor Industry in the Mat-Su Borough. Prepared by McDowell Group for Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau. 2017

³ Matanuska-Susitna Borough Tourism Infrastructure Needs Study, McDowell Group 2008, Anchorage, AK; <https://www.bicycling.com/rides/a20011794/how-bike-touring-saved-this-small-town>; <https://conservationtools.org/guides/97-economic-benefits-of-trails>

Summary of Recommended Investments

While the region offers a decent inventory of existing trails, new investments are needed to attract new visitor markets, more repeat and year-round visitation, and to build a stronger reputation among trail enthusiasts and all travelers.

The table below summarizes projects identified in discussions with regional partners; pages that follow provide more detail. These projects were selected based on their potential for bringing significant economic and other returns on investment. Projects include new trails and trail connections, enhanced and new trail access points and waysides, improved wayfinding and trail marketing, and two visitor centers.

Mat-Su Projects Summary			
Project	Lead (s) & Support	Est Cost	Priority & Status
1. Government Peak Traverse and Little Susitna Loop	MSB, AK State Parks, Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers, Hatcher Alpine Xperience, Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation	\$1M	Near Term Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)
2. Skeetawk Recreation Area	Hatcher Alpine Xperience, Matanuska-Susitna Borough	\$116K for Multi-use Trails; \$200K for Bike Park	Near Term Shovel Ready
3. Knik Glacier Trail Enhancements	MSB, AK Department National Resources	\$1M	Near Term Planning in Progress
4. Knik River Access - Gold Star Monument Wayside	ADF&G is lead for parking / wayside developments; Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation is lead for monument.	Trailhead / wayside: \$500,000; monument: TBD	Near Term Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)
5. Denali State Park			
1) South Denali Visitor Center	Alaska State Parks, in partnership with AK Industrial Develop & Export Authority & private investors	\$5M for design & engineering; \$7M to extend electrical; \$30M for facility	Near Term Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)
2) Curry Ridge to Kesugi Ridge Trail Connector	Alaska State Parks and Mat Su Trails and Parks Foundation	\$1M	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
3) Curry Ridge to Kesugi Backcountry Hut System	Alaska State Parks	Approximately \$40K per hut	Mid Term – Planning needed
6. Mat-Su Visitor Center and Trails Hub			
1) Gateway Visitor Center	Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau, Mat-Su Borough	\$5.8 million	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
2) Three Trails Hub	Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau, ADF&G, Mat-Su Borough	Costs to be determined	Near to Long Term: projects from Shovel Ready to Need Planning
Wayside Planning & Operations Plan	Alaska State Parks	\$200,000	Near Term

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS¹

Partners and supporters that provided feedback on these recommendations include Alaska Department of Natural Resources/Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation, Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau, Alaska Department of Fish and Game/Division of Wildlife Conservation, and Mat-Su Borough Community Department.

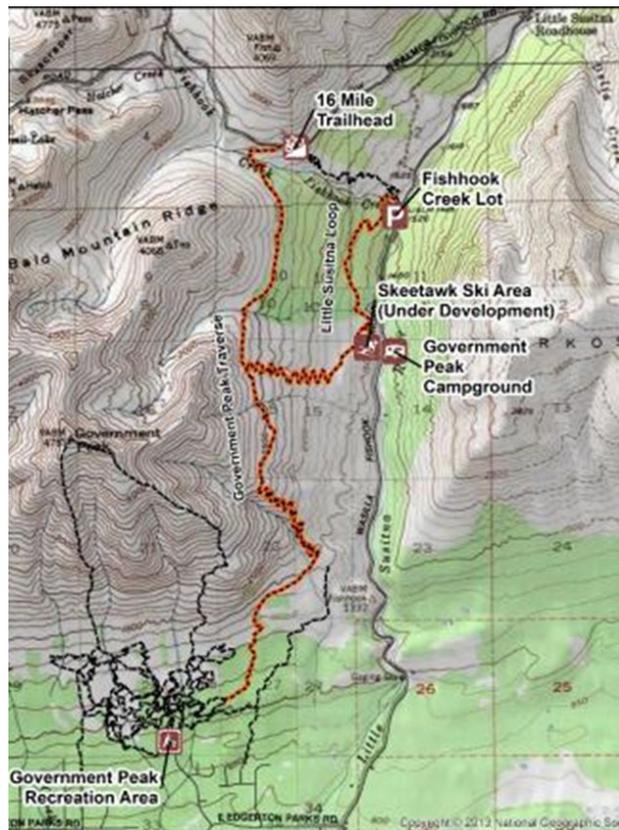
¹ See *Introduction* for discussion on partners and supporters.

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENT PROJECTS: MAT-SU

1. GOVERNMENT PEAK TRAVERSE AND LITTLE SUSITNA LOOP

This project will construct 10 miles of new trails to connect two popular existing non-motorized trail systems and increase access to the alpine country east of Government Peak. At the south end, this new trail would connect to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough’s Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA) with 22 miles of hiker, biker, skier and equestrian trails. The north end would connect to the Skeetawk Ski Area and the 16 Mile downhill mountain bike trail, extending into the Hatcher Pass area.

This already highly used area will greatly benefit from increased trail connectivity. In addition to the four developed trailheads that will be connected by this project (GPRA, Skeetawk, Fishhook Creek and 16 Mile) the trail will link to the campground at Government Peak along the Little Susitna River. An additional benefit will be a route for mountain bikers to return to the top of the 16 Mile trail without needing a vehicle shuttle.



In April 2018 The Matanuska-Susitna Borough submitted an easement application to the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Mining Land and Water (DNR DMLW) for this project. As of January 2020, no decision has been provided by DNR.

The project is a priority for the Borough, led by the Land and Resource Management Division, working closely with Alaska State Parks and the Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation. The Borough has received letters of support from several local non-profit organizations, including Mat-Su Ski Club, Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers, and Hatcher Alpine Xperience (Skeetawk).

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Traverse Trail - route was surveyed, and an application submitted to DNR for reservation of a ROW.	Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska State Parks, with Mat-Su Trails & Parks Foundation and other trail user groups	Connectivity between existing recreation areas and access to one of the most popular destinations for both visitors and residents in the Mat-Su Borough	Alaska DNR DMLW application review and approval, funding	\$1M	Near Term Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)

*where relevant this column includes background on status

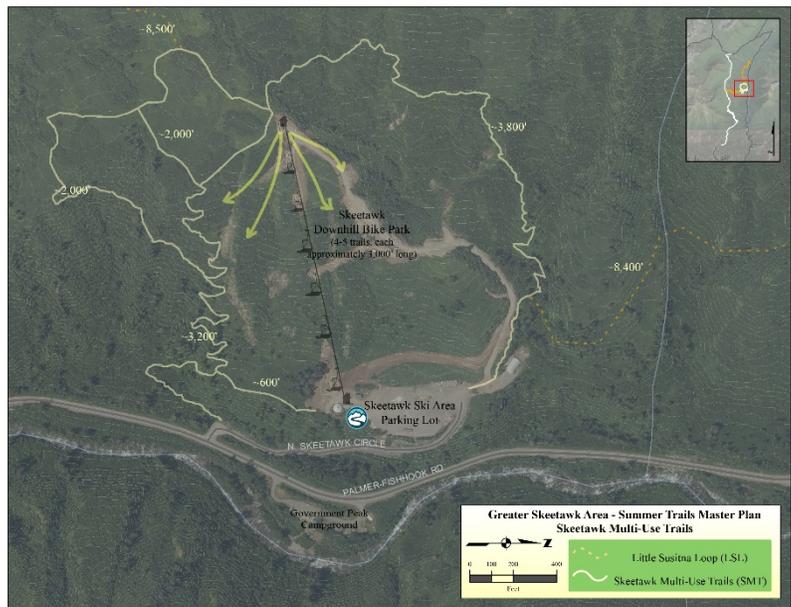
2. SKEETAWK RECREATION AREA

Hatcher Alpine Xperience (HAX) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that operates the Skeetawk Ski Area, with a long-term lease with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. HAX has a vision for developing a year-round recreation area that includes multi-use trail activities such as mountain biking, mountain running, and hiking. Facilitating the public benefit of these trails is a goal also shared by other local non-profits such as the Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers (VMBaH), and the Mat-Su Ski Club. These other organizations develop and maintain the Government Peak Recreation Area (GPRA, see section 1 above). The proposed projects outlined below will greatly improve year-round recreational offerings of the Skeetawk Recreation Area. Together with the GPRA connections, these projects will result in an integrated multi-use trail system.

Skeetawk Multi-use Trails: These are cross-country style trails that encircle the Skeetawk first phase lift system. This trail system will allow users to take short hikes originating from the Skeetawk parking area, or from the neighboring State of Alaska campground just east of Skeetawk. In the meadow above the ski lift, users would enjoy great views, and there is potential for outdoor weddings and picnic tables.

Skeetawk Downhill Bike Park: These are downhill mountain bike trails that would be lift served and patrolled on weekends, and weekday public use is at own risk. These downhill trails would be “flow trail” style including jumps and berms.

Approximately 1-2 beginner trails, 1-2 intermediate, and one advanced trail would be designed allowing user progression. Lift fees will go towards covering maintenance costs.



<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Developing Skeetawk Recreation Area hiking and mountain biking trails	Hatcher Alpine Xperience, Matanuska-Susitna Borough	Year-round recreation area; new recreation opportunities (mountain biking); great economic potential	None	\$116K for Multi-use Trails; \$200K for Downhill Bike Park. In-kind donation support in place.	Near Term Shovel Ready Project was awarded a grant by Matsu Trails and Parks Foundation to fund the trail survey to help establish some plans and cost estimates for each of these projects.

3. KNIK GLACIER TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Two main routes head up this alluring valley – the shorter south side route is increasingly popular but does not have a public access point. Current use starts from a private parcel used as a trail head by a private tour operator. The public Knik Glacier Trail route – the focus of this section – runs approximately 20 miles from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough’s Jim Creek Trailhead to the spectacular upper Knik valley, including Knik Glacier/Lake George area.

Obstacles along this route include several challenging stream crossings. Due to these crossings, non-motorized access is generally limited to winter travel. Proposed improvements to the Knik Glacier Trail include wayfinding signage and crossings over the three waterbodies (Jim Creek, Friday Creek and Metal Creek) built to accommodate off-highway vehicles. By constructing improved stream crossings, anadromous fish habitat will be better protected from vehicles, while access will be improved for all user groups. The Knik Glacier Trail provides access for wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing as well as general trail recreation opportunities for ATV and snowmachine riders, and off-highway vehicles, and adventurous hikers, bikers, equestrians.

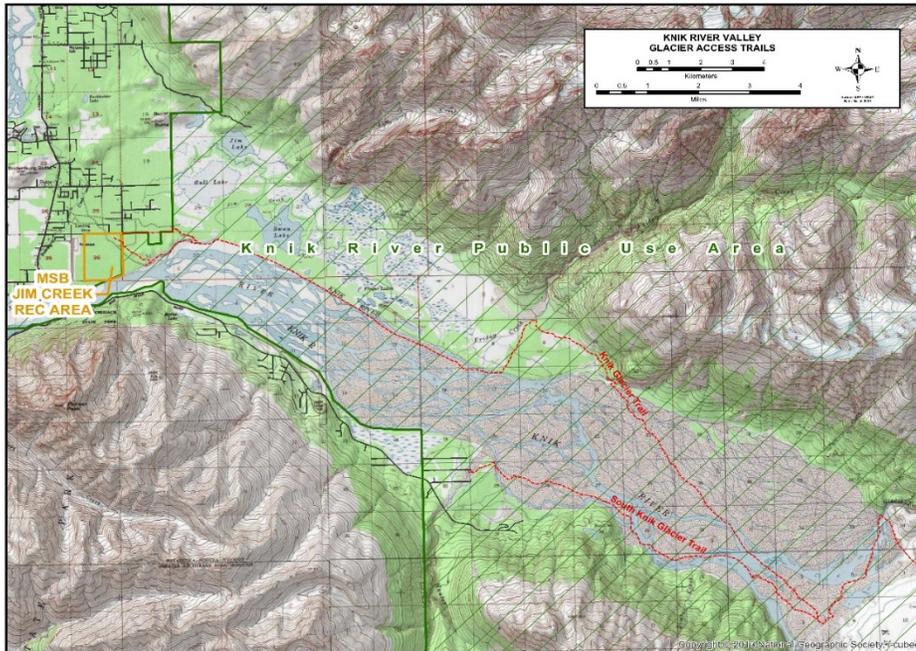
<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status/</i>
Upgrade existing informal social trail, crossing multiple land ownerships. More planning is needed to secure support from key landowners, finalize a route and design specific stream crossings.	Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access to Knik Glacier, which has potential to be a major attraction for both residents and visitors. - Improved stream crossings - Salmon habitat preservation - Wayfinding signage to improve trail user safety. 	Continued planning with affected landowners and user groups	\$625,000	Near Term Planning in Progress

*where relevant this column includes background on status



Looking up the Knik River Valley towards the massive Knik Glacier and the heart of the Chugach Range, some of Alaska’s most remarkable glaciers and dynamic landscapes, sitting in the backyard of Mat Su and Anchorage.

Source: AK DNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water



Two main routes head up the wide, mostly gravel-covered Knik River flood plain, one on the north side, a on the south a route that starts halfway up the valley. *Source: Mat Su Borough*



The reward for the snowmachine or four-wheeler/bike/ski travel: the amazing wall of Knik Glacier. *Source online photo https://www.flickr.com/photos/paxson_woelber/33321928140*

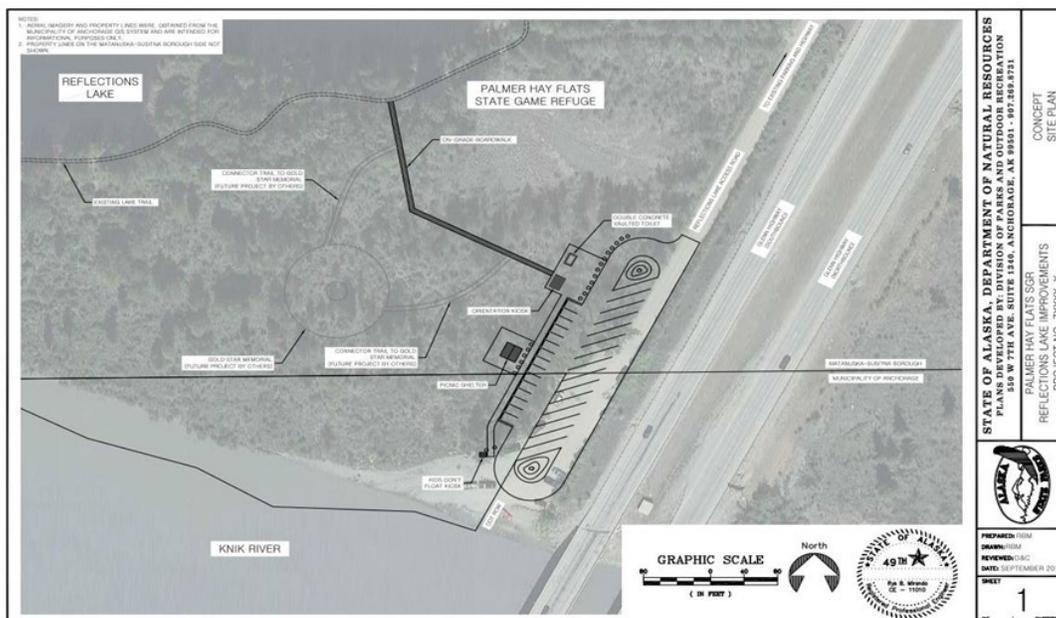
4. KNIK RIVER ACCESS & GOLD STAR MONUMENT WAYSIDE

Approximately 10 million vehicles travel annually across the Palmer Hay Flats on the Glenn Highway between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage. There are limited public amenities and recreational opportunities along this route for the traveling public including commuters as well as visitors and residents seeking recreational opportunities. This project will create a much-needed wayside and access site at the Knik River Access exit on the Glenn Highway.

Improvements will include restrooms, picnic area, parking and improved trailhead for the adjoining and popular Reflections Lake Trail, and parking and turnaround for boaters launching onto the Knik River. This facility will provide new or enhanced opportunities for fishing, hunting, power boating and canoeing, wildlife viewing, hiking and walking, nature study, photography, and more. The wayside will also provide access to the proposed adjoining Gold Star Monument, a community-based effort to create a site where family members of fallen military members can honor and reflect on their loss.

Project*	Lead	Benefits & Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
1) Parking and wayside improvements 2) monument Concept design and engineer's estimate have been developed for both	ADF&G is lead for parking/wayside developments; Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation is lead for monument.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide recreational opportunities including much needed access to the Knik River and Reflections Lake portions of the refuge - Provide travelers with wayside facilities such as restrooms and picnic area - Create a monument for families to honor fallen military members - minimal challenges other than funding 	Trailhead & wayside improvement s \$625,000; Monument: TBD	Near Term Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)

*where relevant this column includes background on status



5. DENALI STATE PARK TRAILS AND VISITOR CENTER

Denali State Park occupies a strategic location just south of the Alaska Range, adjacent to Denali National Park. Relative to much of Alaska the Park already has decent recreation infrastructure, concentrated in a corridor along the Parks Highway. This includes two State Campgrounds, two scenic waysides, a recently expanded, very popular trail system, and the Mt McKinley Princess Wilderness lodge. The corridor provides spectacular views of Denali, Foraker and the full magnificent Alaska Range. Just east of the Parks Highway are Curry and Kesugi Ridges, offering even more stunning, unencumbered vantage points for hikers, skiers and snowmobilers.

Much more can be done to take advantage of this Park's assets and location, developing new recreational opportunities for day and overnight users, and better serving a range of abilities, interests, and timeframes. The two projects outlined below would make the area more attractive and accessible to Alaska residents and both package and independent out of state travelers and provide opportunities ranging from a short day stop to multi-day expeditions.

South Denali Visitor Center

Over the last 30 years a great deal of effort has gone into planning for a South Denali Visitor Center. Active parties have included the State of Alaska, National Park Service, Mat-Su Borough, the Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau, and numerous concerned citizens, businesses and user groups.

The 2006 Final South Denali Implementation Plan and EIS is the most recent, formally approved plan for the area. While funding for the visitor center has not yet been secured, in May 2017 the State Division of Parks completed the Kesugi Ken project, including a campground with two public use cabins, a camp host cabin, a large group camping area, an open structure interpretive center. Also part of the this project was a 34-mile power extension and upgrade along the Parks Highway, and a well-designed, well-used new trail extending up to Kesugi Ridge.

Work is now in progress, led by the AK Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, to push ahead with development of a high quality, destination visitor information center, on the east side of the highway. As outlined in the 2006 Plan, this destination facility will serve Alaskans and independent and package out-of-state travelers, with interpretation of natural and cultural resources, interactive exhibits, educational programs, and information about regional recreational opportunities. The project also includes a range of hikes, winter ski and snowmachine trails. Safety and emergency assistance will be provided to accommodate diverse visitor interests and abilities.



Views from Kesugi Ridge are spectacular, even when the highest peaks aren't visible. Photo: Chris Beck



Quality trails open options for a much broader range of trail users.

Photo: Chris Beck

The heart of this current effort is seeking new approaches to funding for construction and ongoing operations. Work is in progress to better understand market demand and project feasibility. The current proposal aims to secure a combination of public and private investment, to cover costs for final design and construction of a 15,000-16,000 square feet, state-of-the-art Visitor Center, as well as access and utilities, construction of a maintenance building and the expansion of the trails network.

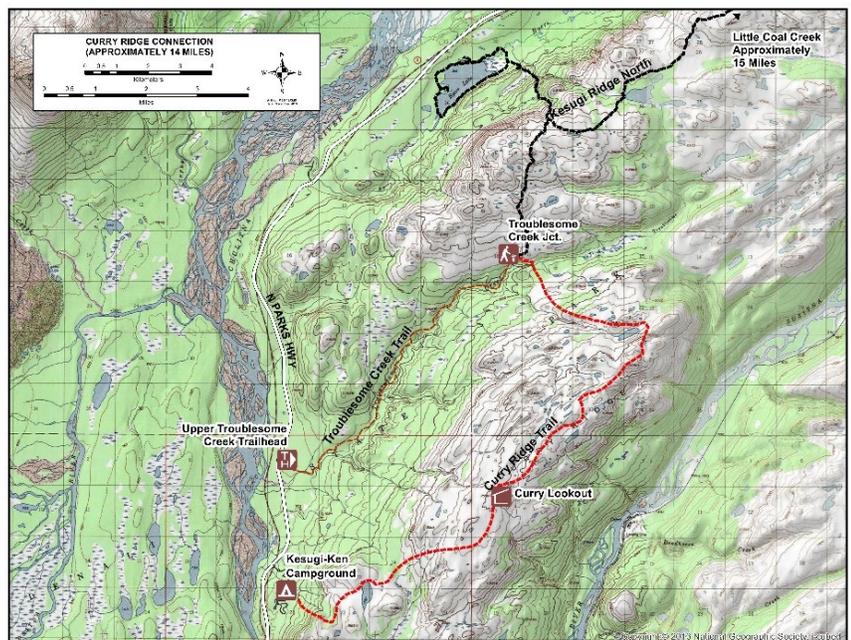
Project	Lead	Benefits	Challenges	Costs	Priority & Status
Approved Plan; Work in progress on an updated public private implementation partnership	AK DNR, Div of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, with NPS, Mat Su Borough, regional business partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe and easy access to alpine tundra - Superb views of Denali, & the Alaska Range - New overnight destination - Revenue from Visitor Center Complex use 	Need to match project scale to level of available capital funding and ongoing operations cost and revenues	Design, permitting - \$5 million; Electric utility park upgrade - \$7 million; Immersive design VC - \$38 million	<p>Near Term</p> <p>Planning in Progress (close to Shovel Ready)</p> <p>Contractor hired to conduct market analysis</p>

*where relevant this column includes background on status

Curry Ridge Trail to Kesugi Ridge and Trail Hut System

In the summer of 2020, Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation, working with Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation and Alaska State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will undertake a three-year project in Denali State Park funded by Pittman-Robertson funds, **connecting the Kesugi Ridge Trail and Curry Ridge trails.**

This new segment will provide better access to an increasingly popular area. Completion of the 15-mile gap in the Curry Ridge to Kesugi Ridge Trail will create a roughly 45-mile north-south traverse and will connect to the planned South Denali Visitor Center (see above). This route offers world class views of the Alaska range, more opportunities for hunting, wildlife viewing, hiking, and extended overnight trips. Working with the local snow machine group the Curry Ridge Riders, and consistent with earlier planning, a snow machine route will also be developed along the ridge.



Planned Curry Ridge Trail and future hut to hut system, connecting Curry and Kesugi Ridges. Source: Alaska State Parks

The completed Curry Ridge Trail will provide an opportunity for a **backcountry Hut System.** Plans for this route include building backcountry huts, located at least ¾ mile away from the main trail and other designated campsites. Each hut would accommodate 4-6 people, slightly smaller than the State Parks’ typical public use cabins. The Hut System will provide multi-day year-round access into the wilderness, bringing new users and more economic activity into the area.

<i>Project*</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
TRAIL: the exact alignment of the new trail will be surveyed in summer of 2020 with construction estimated to span the 2021 and 2022 seasons; funding for the trail secured (>\$1M).	AK State Parks, ADF&G, Mat Su Trails & Parks Foundation	- Provides an expansion of an already popular trail on one of the most scenic ridgelines in AK - Connects to the existing campground and planned visitor center	Fine tuning specific route, securing the full amount needed for bridging and related trail improvements	>\$1M	Near Term <i>(Shovel Ready)</i>
HUT SYSTEM: still in conceptual planning stages.	AK State Parks, Mat Su Trails & Parks Foundation	Provides infrastructure for multi-day stays and an incentive for OMD	Funding needed for huts	Each small hut costs up to \$40K (materials, cargo flights, crew time, etc.)	Mid Term – Planning in Progress

*where relevant this column includes background on status



Sunny fall day and Denali views from Kesugi Ridge; another example of why this area is so valuable, precious and important for Alaska. Photo:
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hiking_on_Kesugi_Ridge._Denali_State_Park,_Alaska_\(29323564261\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hiking_on_Kesugi_Ridge._Denali_State_Park,_Alaska_(29323564261).jpg)

6. MAT-SU CVB VISITOR CENTER / THREE TRAILS HUB

Even in an age of growing on-line visitor information, well-staffed visitor information centers in a central location can serve a vital role, by helping travelers go beyond websites to get the personalized, credible information they seek. The Mat Su visitor center is intended not only to provide those information services, but to be a destination in its own right, in part through its strategic location at the hub for three inviting, year-round trail systems. This set of attributes can help give travelers, from in Alaska and beyond, more reasons to spend time and money in the borough.

The two projects outlined below address both categories of opportunity: first, continued progress on the Visitor Center as proposed by the Mat-Su CVB, and second, support for developing this site as a “Trails Hub” with easy access to existing and new trails.



The planned Gateway Center and Trails Hub sits on the edge of remarkable landscapes, with spectacular views and recreation opportunities from summer hikes, to fall hunting, to winter ice skating, snowmachine and fat bike riding.

Source: ADF&G, Tim Remick

1) Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau Gateway Visitor Center

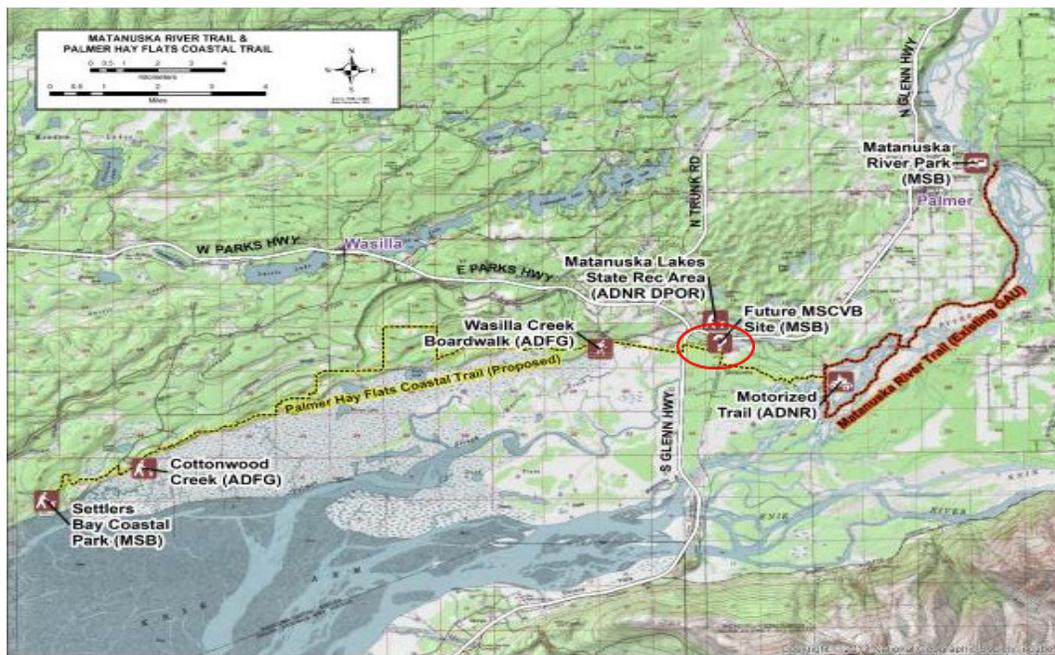
The Gateway Visitor center would provide a destination for visitors and a community space for residents in the Mat-Su Valley. The location reserved for the center is just east of the intersection of the Parks and Glenn Highways, on the bluff with dramatic views of Pioneer Peak and the surrounding Palmer Hay Flats (see location of planned Gateway Center on the map, labeled “Future MSCVB Site”). The Gateway Visitor Center will increase access and visibility of Mat-Su attractions and fill the need for personalized visitor information, and natural and cultural interpretation, as well as providing space for businesses such as concessions, rentals, restaurant and gift shops, and community spaces for offices and events.

The proposed 10,800 sq. ft. facility would focus on increasing the economic and community benefits of tourism by inspiring and influencing travel throughout communities, increasing spending and enhancing the visitor experience. The site will also serve as an interpretive site for sportfishing stewardship by developing a trail to a salmon viewing platform at the creek below the bluff.

The planned location is at mile 36 Glenn Highway, adjacent to Phase 2 of the Glenn Highway MP 34-42 Reconstruction project. That project is currently federally funded for redesign and construction, turning the two-lane highway into a divided four-lane highway. The Borough has worked with the DOT&PF throughout the design phase securing safe access. The facility would also be considered a designated safety rest stop on the highway. The Borough has listed the project in 2019 as one of their federal funding priorities.

<i>Project</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Priority & Status</i>
Feasibility study completed and land acquired; design in hand for planned 10,800 sq. ft. facility	Mat-Su CVB and Mat-Su Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide destination stop for visitors and community hub for residents - Bring business to the area - Provide convenient access to trails 	Completing fundraising process	\$5.8 million needed to complete	Near Term (Shovel Ready)

*where relevant this column includes background on status



2) Three Trails Hub

The value of the Visitor Center will increase through its second role as a Trails Hub, providing direct connections to existing trails in the Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area, the in-progress trails on the Matanuska River east of the Gateway Center, and the proposed, ambitious route west of the Center along the north side of the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. The result would make a major contribution to the recreation opportunities in the core area of the borough.

The vision is a system of trails linking downtown Palmer and Settler's Bay, and the large "Central Park" open space sitting between Palmer and Wasilla, with the Gateway Center in the middle. Connecting these three trail systems and the planned Gateway Center adds real value for both the center and the trails. The combination would invite a wider group of prospective users to learn about the trails and start their walk, ride or ski from the visitor center. For trail users, the Gateway Center could provide the chance to end an exciting day with a snack and beverage on the center deck looking out onto the beautiful Alaska terrain.

Some of the points of interest connected by this proposed project will include Matanuska River Park, Palmer Hay Flats, Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area, Wasilla Creek Boardwalk Trail, Cottonwood Creek Trailhead, and Settlers Bay Coastal Park.

1. Palmer Hay Flats Coastal Trail – Connections west and south

Skirting the upper reaches of Knik Arm, this trail will follow mostly natural areas while linking the Gateway Center and Settler's Bay. The route would allow users to travel from the proposed visitor center hub, through and around the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, and terminate at the Settler's Bay Coastal Park, with potential future expansion to Knik and Goose Bay. This ambitious project would create 20 miles of new trail access for non-motorized trail users in the Palmer Hay Flats and neighboring communities while also enhancing 12 miles of existing access for motorized and non-motorized trail users in the Matanuska River floodplain. The trail will allow varied modes of access along different trail sections including hiking walking, and mountain biking, while creating outdoor recreational opportunities including sport fishing, wildlife viewing, photography, hunting, nature study, and more. The trail will also create neighborhood and community connectivity along the southern fringe of the Mat-Su Borough as it winds along the edge of many disconnected neighborhoods. In 2018, the Borough acquired property at the far western end of this project and has started construction of the Settlers Bay Coastal Park.

2. Matanuska River Trail – Connections east and north

The Matanuska River floodplain trail system is a partially completed and continuing project, with a proposed terminus at the Gateway Visitor Center location. This project would build from existing multi-use trails (including motorized), mitigate trespass issues on private property and establish wayfinding signs to improve navigability. In 2017, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough acquired property at the Old Glenn Highway bridge over the Matanuska River which in 2019 was conveyed to the City of Palmer and provides legal public access to the floodplain. The Borough has funding to improve the Matanuska River Trail in the floodplain to reroute the trail off of private property, and to install signs along the route to the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, which is planned for 2020.



Nice view at the end a ski, bike, hike or horse ride. Photo: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pioneer_Peak_\(Alaska\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pioneer_Peak_(Alaska))

3. Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area – Connections north

Matanuska Lakes State Park is located directly across the Glenn Highway from the planned Visitor Center site. This is an established, very popular destination for hiking, mountain biking, horse-back riding, and winter skiing. Local volunteer mountain biking groups have created a high quality, diverse mountain bike destination, attracting riders from around southcentral Alaska. The north end of the multi-purpose Mat Lakes Trail system ties seamlessly into the Crevasse Moraine trail system and its summer and groomed winter cross country ski trails. Taking full advantage of this adjoining, established trail system will require working with Alaska DOT/PF to create a safe crossing.

Project	Lead	Benefits	Challenges	Costs	Status & Priority
Palmer Hay Flats Coastal Trail: Conceptual, interest from multiple agencies	ADF&G and Mat-Su Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance existing multi-use trails - New trail access and increased use for non-motorized users linking existing parks and trails, residential areas, schools and the future visitor center in the southern section of the MSB - Provide access to public lands managed by several different agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for significant fundraising, as well as a public engagement process and permitting - Land ownership, public access easements/ROWs, logistics of trail construction and placement, funding 	TBD	Mid Term - Planning in process
Matanuska River Trail: Existing trail to build from; legal public access to reroute the trail is established; funding available	Mat-Su Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mitigate trespass issues on private property by providing public access - Establish wayfinding signs to improve navigability 	- None	TBD	Near Term (Shovel Ready)
Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area: Existing Rec Area; Connection to Trails Hub location is conceptual	Mat-Su Borough	- Established, popular destination that will benefit from increased linkage to other trails	- Will require working with Alaska DOT/PF to create a safe crossing.	TBD	Mid Term - Planning In Process Support from user groups, but needs a safe crossing

*where relevant this column includes background on status