

Comment on Anchorage job locations

Its effects on the H2H project

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The Highway to Highway Project has included some interesting job concentration figures in their examination of the travel destinations at peak traffic hours.

Job location is very important in studying congestion because nearly all congestion occurs during the AM hours when people are traveling to their work and in the PM hours when folks are returning home/going shopping.

The H2H project has determined that only a small percentage (less than 10%) of the traffic on the Glenn and Seward Highways is actually going entirely through Anchorage. Rather they are entering Anchorage to stop at an Anchorage destination and return. Therefore a bypass route would not address the congestion in any significant way.

The project office computes about 18,000 jobs in the old downtown area, about 24,000 jobs in the midtown area and 9,000 jobs in the rapidly growing university/ medical district.

They did not include south Anchorage in their project area because the New Seward Highway in that area was already limited access and was in the process of being upgraded.

This of course affected their choice of alternatives to address the growing congestion between the last overpass at Bragaw on the Glenn Highway and the first overpass on the New Seward Highway at Tudor.

The result of this project cutoff at about 68th was that alternatives reaching farther south were not included.

I decided to look down one level to the 2007 total job figures by TAZ (Transportation Analysis Zone) to compare the downtown, midtown and university/medical districts to south Anchorage.¹

I chose to use a somewhat different approach than the H2H Project office for all areas to see if the results added any information for consideration. Therefore the totals are significantly different from those quoted earlier.

I decided to particularize the choice of summation areas based on 9 zones along the Glenn and Seward Highways. Thus I added jobs in broad east-west swaths that generally started at Lake Otis or Merrill field and ended only at the inlet.

The 10th zone was the University/Medical district whose bounds are described below.

Zone	Description	Total Jobs
1	North of 5 th Avenue , west of Reeve Blvd and south of the Elmendorf base	10,431
2	Between 5 th Avenue and 15 th , west of Merrill Field	15,002
3	Between 15 th Avenue and the Chester Creek greenbelt	2,032
4	Between the Chester Creek greenbelt and Northern Lights	7,699
5	Between Northern Lights and 36 th	18,160
6	Between 36 th and Tudor	10,137
7	Between Tudor and Raspberry/68 th	23,495
8	Between Raspberry/68 th and 92 nd	13,523
9	Between 92 nd and Klatt Road	5,072
10	Between Lake Otis and Boniface, between 20 th and the Campbell Creek greenbelt	15,405

Assigning these numbers to the nearest business district we get:

District	Description	Total Jobs
Downtown	North of Chester Creek greenbelt	27,465
Midtown	Chester Creek greenbelt to Raspberry/68 th	59,491
Dimond	Raspberry/68 th to Klatt Road	18,595
U/Med	University / Medical area from Lake Otis to Boniface	15,405

These numbers are merely the snapshot values for a 2007 survey added up exactly as reported. The 5 figures shown should be taken with a large grain of salt, since numbers vary strongly from survey to survey. For practical purposes assume only 2 significant figures.

This way of looking at the numbers generally confirms the conclusion by the H2H Project that Midtown is the most significant jobs destination. In fact it suggests that its relative importance is even greater than suggested by their evaluation method.

My look at the Dimond area does suggest it should not be ignored, although this section of the Seward Highway is already limited access and is being further upgraded. It does represent 15 % of the jobs in our target area so a road bypassing the more northern parts of town to reach south Anchorage would have some impact on congestion.

¹ I want to thank Jim Childers and Julianne Hanson of the H2H Project Office, Jennifer Emerson of CH2MHill, and especially Teresa Brewer of the Anchorage Muni's AMATS office for maps showing the total jobs in each TAZ.