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Most dangerous Alaska roads, including Seward Highway, to see upgrades

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Alaska will spend \$165 million in federal money to make the most dangerous state-maintained roads and highways safer, including more than \$16 million in improvements to the Seward Highway in 2013.

That's according to the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and Gov. Sean Parnell, who made the announcement Thursday at the Girdwood Alaska State Troopers post. The money will be used to target Alaska's highway safety corridors, designated areas identified as the most risky in the state.

"Our mission, really, is to reduce the accident and injury rates, and (have) zero fatalities," Parnell said. "That's what we'd like to see."

According to DOT statistics, there have been 30 fatal wrecks between Turnagain Pass and Potter Marsh, just south of Anchorage, from 2000 to 2012.

The first improvements to the Seward Highway will include adding five slow-vehicle turnout lanes between Potter Marsh and Turnagain Pass, according to the DOT's Jeremy Woodrow. Workers will also install "rumble strips" between Bird Creek and Girdwood and realign the highway south of Girdwood at Mile 88, the site of several fatal wrecks in recent years, the DOT said.

Many other short-term improvements are also in the works, Woodrow said. Those include making the state highway information system known as 511 more accurate and timely, he said. The state will also soon start accepting bids on signs that will show drivers how fast they are driving and what conditions to expect on the highway, Woodrow said.

"All that situational awareness can lead to a safer driving experience," he said.

Along with the work planned for the Seward Highway, the Parks and Sterling highways will see improvements in the next three years, as well as Knik-Goose Bay Road and the Palmer-Wasilla Highway, according to the governor's office.

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