



# Village of Venetie

## Tribal Transportation Safety Plan Update

Funded by FHWA

December 2024



**WELCOME  
GWICH'IN  
NATI N  
VENETIE, AK**



**Resolution No. 2024**

**A Resolution to Adopt the 2024 Village of Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan Update (TTSP)**

**WHEREAS**, Village of Venetie hereafter referred to as "TRIBE," is a federally recognized Tribe; and

**WHEREAS**, the Venetie Village Council is the governing body of the TRIBE; and

**WHEREAS**, the TRIBE is committed to pursuing zero deaths and serious injuries on tribal roads and improving the overall safety of the community transportation system; and

**WHEREAS**, the TRIBE will pursue and implement a safe system approach and vision zero plan for the community; and

**WHEREAS**, the TRIBE has identified a need to update its existing 2017 Tribal Transportation Safety Plan for our tribal citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the TRIBE has reviewed the 2024 Village of Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan Update;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Venetie Village Council hereby accepts and approves the plan as reflecting the conditions and needs relating to transportation safety in the community, and hereby adopts the 2024 Village of Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan Update. The tribe acknowledges the importance of making the Plan available to the public and allows use of the plan for posting and viewing on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Tribal Safety web portal.

**CERTIFICATION**

It is hereby certified that on the 12 day of 16, 2024, a quorum of the Village of Venetie was formed and did pass and adopt the preceding resolution by a vote of 5 in favor, \_\_\_ opposed, and \_\_\_ not voting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Chief, Village of Venetie

  
Second Chief, Village of Venetie

12-16-24  
Date

12-16-24  
Date

Thank you to the Venetie Village Council and residents of Venetie who supported the development of the Tribal Transportation Safety Plan, and to the Federal Highway Administration as well as Bureau of Indian Affairs for providing funding and input in developing the plan. Your support helps improve transportation safety in Venetie that will lead towards the prevention of serious injury and the saving of lives on community roads.

The Venetie Village Council is led by First Chief Gary Simple Jr. and Second Chief Paul Tritt, with Lawrence Roberts serving as the First Council Member, alongside Council Members John Williams, Karlas Norman, Lance Whitwell, and Noah Whitwell.





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# 1. Introduction

The Village of Venetie is updating its 2017 Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (TTSP) to document new and ongoing transportation safety concerns affecting the community. These safety improvements include transportation related to vehicular, snowmachine, ATV, and pedestrian travel in the community. The TTSP for the Village of Venetie has been developed to identify unsafe conditions associated with the community's



Venetie Location Map

transportation routes and establish a plan for protecting the life and safety of community members and those travelling within and into the community. This plan was funded by the FHWA and received guidance from staff at Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Contract support was provided by Kuna Engineering in the development of this plan.

Once complete, the Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (TTSP) will serve as an important resource for improving the safety of transportation on tribal lands. The TTSP will identify emphasis areas,

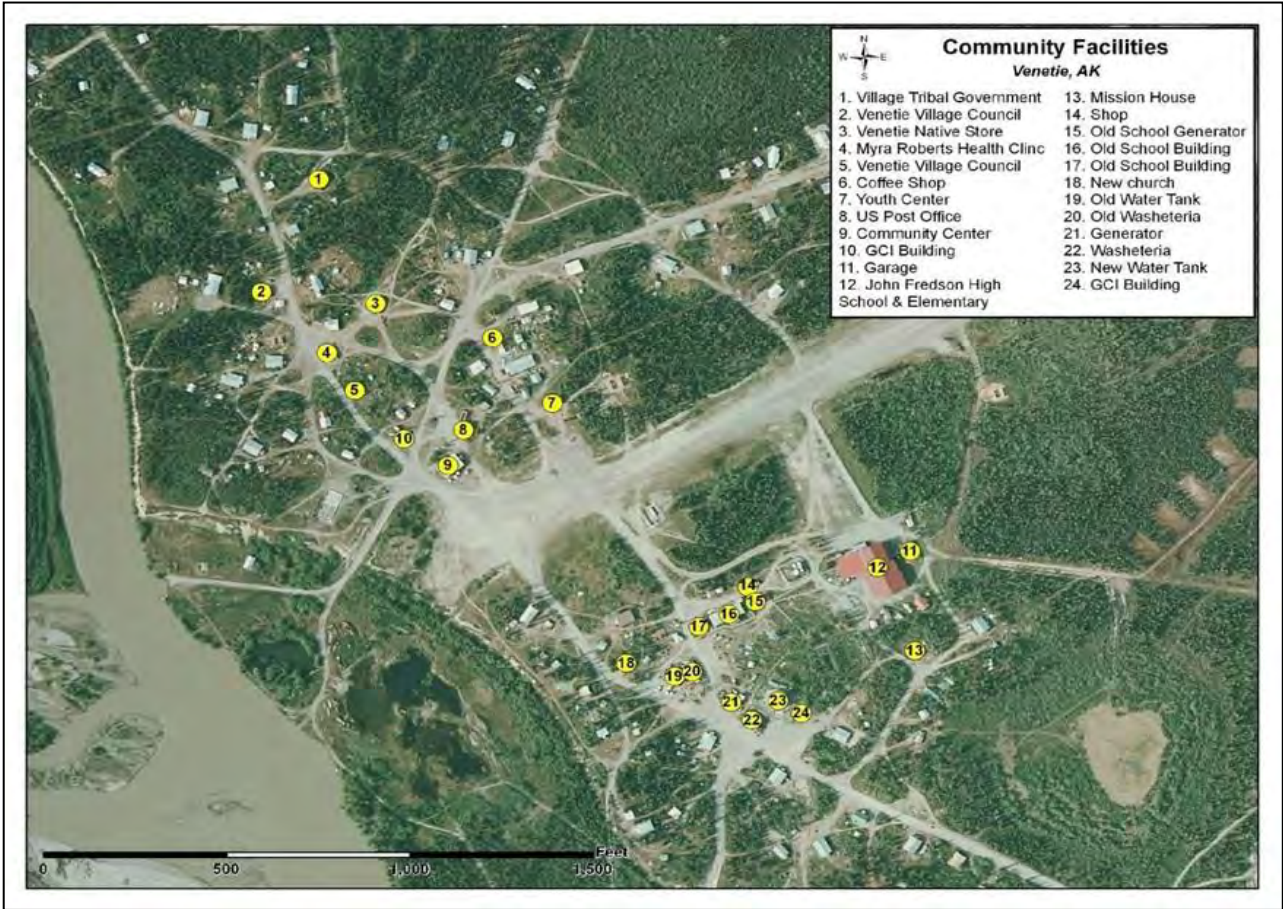


FIGURE 1: VILLAGE OF VENETIE MAP SHOWING COMMUNITY ROADS, FACILITIES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

transportation safety issues, potential road improvements, and implementation strategies to improve transportation safety in the community.

While other agencies may lead some of the identified safety actions, the Village of Venetie and tribal consultants will be instrumental in initiating transportation safety strategies. The council and tribal consultants will monitor progress on all the strategies included in the plan to ensure that the actions are implemented and initiated in a timely manner. Additionally, as the TTSP is a “living document”, it is important that the Village Council reevaluate and update the document on a regular basis. FHWA recommends that transportation safety plans be updated at least every five years to incorporate any updated priorities, monitor progress on the plan, and optimize funding eligibility.

### 1.1. Public Involvement

The safety plan priority list was developed through input at the annual tribal meeting in the community on October 15, 2024 and a follow up meeting with the Tribal leadership to review Safety Plan priorities in December 2024 and approve the plan. The community meeting was facilitated with input and direction from the Venetie Tribal Transportation Manager, Paul Tritt. A transportation survey that included input on general transportation safety issues in the community was filled out by meeting attendees. The existing TTSP from 2018 was also provided to give background on the tribal transportation planning process and to provide input on specific areas that were of most concern when the initial plan was created.

Transportation safety improvements that can be made in the community among other transportation improvements that need to be made were integrated into the development and determination of what emphasis areas should be discussed in the plan. Follow up review of public feedback from the survey were used to develop the safety plan priority list included in the plan.



*Public involvement in transportation safety and road improvements were important aspects of the plan development process.*





*Typical trail conditions and topography for areas outside of main community roadways in Venetie.*

Additional information related to the public involvement process and survey results can be found in the appendix of this plan.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Location, Population and Climate

Venetie (*Viihtqii* in Gwich'in) located on the northern banks of the Chandalar River, about 140 miles north of Fairbanks and 45 miles northwest of Fort Yukon. The Village of Venetie lies just outside the northern boundaries of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, a marshy, lake-dotted flood plain, which provides nesting habitat for waterfowl and supports numerous species of wildlife. Directly north of Venetie, the mountains of the Brooks Range rise out of the Porcupine Plateau to heights of 7,000 feet. The townsite is in a low-lying area of about 600 feet elevation. The geographical coordinates are 67 degrees 01-minute North, 146 degrees 25 minutes West (Sec. 10, T025N, R006E, Fairbanks Meridian). The community is in the Fairbanks Recording District.



*Village of Venetie Tribal Office*



FIGURE 2: VENETIE POPULATION (US CENSUS)

The 2020 Census reported the population of Venetie as 205. Alaska Natives represent 95.2% of the population. There is an average of 2.6 people per household in Venetie and 45 total households in the community. The per capita income in the community is \$15,297 and 54.6% of the community is below the poverty line.

Venetie is located within the Continental Climatic Zone of Alaska, which is dominated by great diurnal and annual temperature variations, low precipitation, light surface winds, and mean temperatures between 15° and 25° F. The winters are long and harsh, and the summers are short but warm. Daily minimum temperatures between November and March range from -50° to 10° F, and extended periods of forty below zero are common. While freezing temperatures are noted in each month of the year, summer temperatures will likely vary between 30° and 70° F with occasional temperatures reaching into the 80's. Total annual precipitation averages 6.58 inches, with 43.4 inches of snowfall. The Environmental Atlas of Alaska reports a thawing index of 2,500 and a freezing index of 7,300. The Chandalar River freezes over in late October and spring break-up occurs in early May. Flooding caused by ice jams, glaciation, and stream overflow occurs in the surrounding area on a 20- to 30-year frequency

The Venetie area is subject to continuous daylight from early May through early August. Nearly 75% of the annual sunlight is received during the summer months. Conversely, the sun is absent from the sky during late December. However, even during the darkest months, Venetie receives fair amounts of twilight.

## 2.1. History and Culture

Venetie is comprised largely of descendants of the *Neets'ai Gwich'in*, and to a lesser extent the *Gwichyaa* and *Dihaii Gwich'in*. Subsistence activities are an important part of the local culture. Once semi-nomadic, this group traditionally inhabited the country from the Porcupine River northward to the Romanzof Mountains of Alaska's Brooks Range, and was known for their trading exchanges with the Barter Island Eskimos. They kept small villages in accordance with the subsistence capacity of the region. The first European contact with people of the area occurred in 1789.

Known to early explorers as Old Robert's Village or Chandalar Village, Venetie was founded in 1895 by a man named Old Robert who chose Venetie because of its plentiful fish and game. In 1899, the U.S. Geological Survey noted about 50 Natives living on the Chandalar, some in small settlements of cabins about 7 miles above the mouth of the River, but most in the mountainous part of the country beyond the Yukon Flats. Reports suggest that residents spent only the coldest winter months in cabins and the remainder of the year traveling in order to gather various food sources. In 1905, Venetie was a settlement of a half a dozen cabins and 25 or 30 residents. The gold rush to the Chandalar region in 1906-07 brought a large number of miners to the area. A mining camp of nearly 40 cabins and attendant services was established at Caro, upriver from Venetie, and another store was located near the mouth of the East Fork.



*Smoking a moose skin, Venetie, 1939,  
Sophie John and William Fredson  
Source: UAF*



*Venetie Community in 1939.  
Source: UAF*

By 1910, the Chandalar River was largely played out and Caro almost completely abandoned. In 1943, the Venetie Indian Reservation was established, due to the combined efforts of the residents of Venetie, Arctic Village, Christian Village and Robert's Fish Camp, who worked together to protect their land for subsistence use. At about this same time, a school was established at Venetie, encouraging additional families to settle in the village. Eventually an airstrip, post office and store were built. During the 1950s and 60s, the use of seasonal camps declined, but the advent of the snow machine enabled Venetie residents to renew use of areas which had traditionally been occupied only seasonally. When the Alaska Native Claims



Settlement Act (ANCSA) was passed in 1971, Venetie and Arctic Village opted for title to the 1.8 million acres of land in the former Reservation, which they own as tenants in common through the Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government.

**TABLE 1: COMMUNITY CONTACT INFORMATION – VENETIE**

<b>Village Council – Village of Venetie</b> P.O. Box 81119 Venetie, AK, 99781 Phone: (907) 849-8212 Fax: (907) 849-8216	<b>Tribal Government – Native Village of Venetie</b> P.O. Box 81080 Venetie, AK, 99781 Phone: (907) 849-8165 Fax: (907) 849-8097
<b>Non-Profit – Tanana Chiefs Conference</b> 122 1st Ave Fairbanks, AK 99701 Phone: (907) 543-7300 Toll Phone: 1-800-478-6822 Fax: (907) 459-3811	<b>Regional Native Corporation – Doyon Limited</b> 1 Doyon Place, Suite 300 Fairbanks, Alaska, 99701 Phone: 907-459-2000 Phone: 888-478-4755 Fax: (907) 459-2060

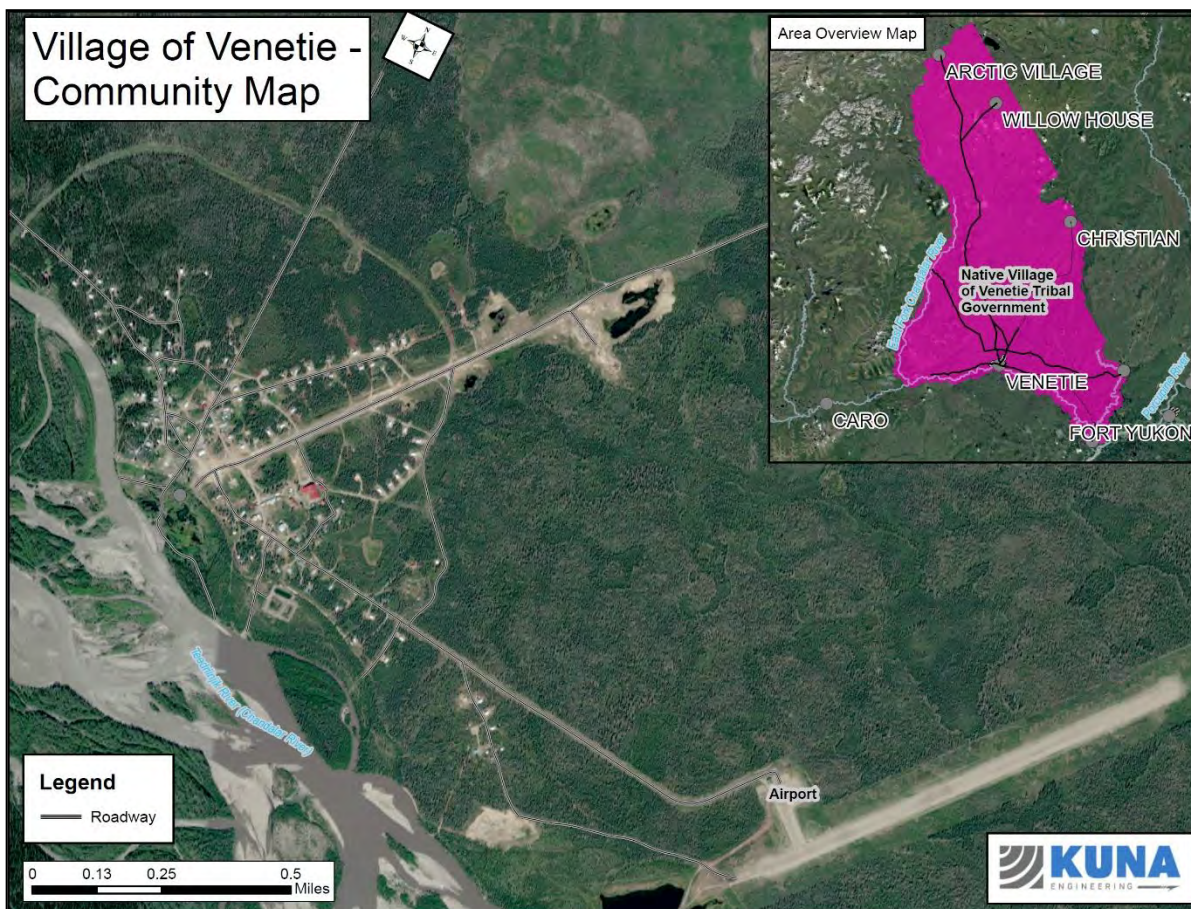
## 2.2. Transportation

Venetie’s remote location and reliance on air travel are important in the development of connecting the community to surrounding communities via improved trails. One of the main goals of the community is to become more connected to the communities of Christian and Arctic Village as well as the Yukon River. The current trail systems in place are limited in capability of accessing surrounding areas and improvements are one of the priorities of the community. Some of the current routes in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) community inventory are being updated to accommodate and allow for improved access to surrounding communities and transportation networks. Conducting a review of existing BIA route inventory was an integral part of the planning process in order to identify areas in need of improvement for future development including a proposed bridge crossing over Big Creek to access Christian.

The Venetie Airport is owned and managed by the Tribe, which oversees its operations independently from state and federal agencies. Users are required to pay a fee to utilize the airstrip, a policy enforced by the tribe to support its maintenance. While the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have attempted to implement oversight and influence airport operations, the tribe has consistently maintained control, ensuring that the airport remains a locally governed and operated facility.

The Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government (NVVTG) is the primary landowner the transportation networks within Venetie and its connections to neighboring communities, such as Arctic Village and Christian. Unlike many other regions, there are no Native allotments or federal or state landholders with jurisdiction over these community transportation networks.





**FIGURE 3: VENETIE COMMUNITY MAP**

There are no transit or bus services in Venetie and there currently is not a need for any in the future.

### 2.3. Mission Statement

The mission of the Village of Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan and Tribal Council is commitment to keep the community safe and protected from transportation related accidents through improved roadways and greater emergency access to the community. The community is committed to maintaining a target of zero roadway deaths in the community and will adhere to the **Vision Zero** approach in looking to achieve zero deaths on community roadways and trails.<sup>1</sup>



*Safe System Approach to Transportation Safety*

*Source: FHWA*

<sup>1</sup> Zero Deaths and Safe System, FHWA, 2024 website: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths>

In addition to Vision Zero, the plan will utilize the **Safe System Approach** in its goal of continuing to retain zero roadway deaths on community roadways. FHWA states:

*Reaching zero deaths requires the implementation of a Safe System approach, which was founded on the principles that humans make mistakes and that human bodies have limited ability to tolerate crash impacts. In a Safe System, those mistakes should never lead to death. Applying the Safe System approach involves anticipating human mistakes by designing and managing road infrastructure to keep the risk of a mistake low; and when a mistake leads to a crash, the impact on the human body doesn't result in a fatality or serious injury. Road design and management should encourage safe speeds and manipulate appropriate crash angles to reduce injury severity.<sup>2</sup>*

There are six principles that form the basis of the Safe System approach that will be utilized to guide and develop the approach to mitigating transportation safety efforts included in the plan:

- Deaths and serious injuries are unacceptable,
- Humans make mistakes,
- Humans are vulnerable,
- Responsibility is shared,
- Safety is proactive, and
- Redundancy is crucial.

These six principles form the basis for developing the priority transportation safety emphasis areas. It is the goal and mission of the tribal council, and community to see these emphasis areas developed in the future to continue to achieve ongoing transportation safety and a continuation of zero road deaths on community roadways.



Diagram of the Four E's in Transportation Safety

Source: FHWA

## 2.4. Priorities

Through discussion with the Village of Venetie leadership, the Tribal Government and key community stakeholders within Venetie. The following transportation safety emphasis areas have been determined as priority projects for the community. To achieve these priority projects, the plan will address the four elements (4 E's) of transportation safety – **Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Services** – and how they can be used to address

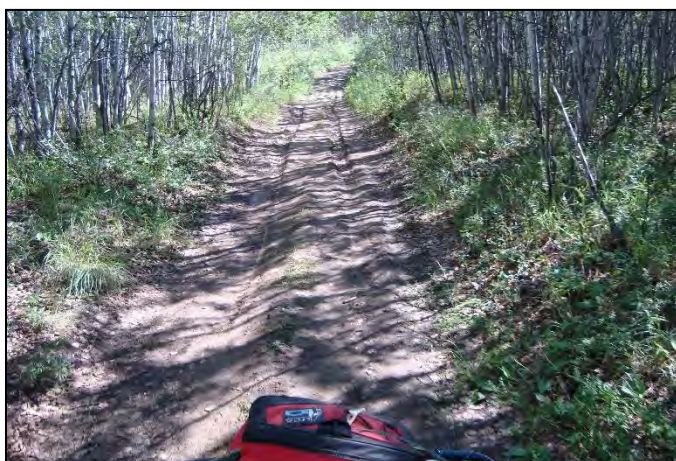
<sup>2</sup> Safe System—An Approach Toward Zero Traffic Deaths, FHWA, 2024 website: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/zero-deaths/safe-system-approach-toward-zero-traffic-deaths>



transportation safety issues.<sup>3</sup> These priority emphasis areas will help to alleviate potential safety concerns not only on community roadways and trails, but also improve emergency access to this remote rural Alaska community. Some emphasis areas are ongoing and have been continued on into this plan update. While other projects have been completed including the emergency shelter cabin installation along winter trails. This project in particular was successful with the funding made available through the Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund (TTPSF). Without this much needed funding grant this safety initiative would most likely not been able to move forward and get developed by the Tribe. Below are the transportation safety emphasis areas that were developed by the Tribe, and public to help the community moving forward.

### Transportation Safety Emphasis Areas:

- 1. Venetie Trail Management System Manual:** The Venetie Trail Management System Manual needs to be revised and updated to improve trail safety and accessibility in and around the community. This effort should include developing a comprehensive budget, scope of work, and implementation plan, along with an inventory of available equipment to ensure effective management and maintenance of the trails. Part of the update will involve creating a detailed trail plan that may incorporate a new route connecting Venetie to the Yukon River, enhancing transportation options and supporting safe travel for residents. **(Engineering)**
- 2. Storage Facility for Emergency Response:** Development of an emergency response facility and laydown yard, which will serve as an organized space for essential emergency equipment and materials. A storage facility at the laydown yard would enhance the capability for winter storage of the ambulance. This facility would help ensure that critical response vehicles are protected from harsh winter conditions, maintaining their readiness and reliability for emergency services. **(Emergency Services)**
- 3. Community Plan for Signage and Lighting:** The Community Plan for Signage and Lighting would provide a strategy to enhance safety and visibility in public areas by



*Typical trail conditions for Village of Venetie and surrounding areas.*

<sup>3</sup> Tribal Road Safety Audit, Chapter 8. FHWA, 2022 website: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/hsip/tribal-road-safety-audits-case-studies/chapter-8-considering-all-4es>

incorporating local designations for all signage, reflecting the community's identity and Gwich'in heritage. **(Engineering)**

4. **AWOS System for Airport:** The implementation of an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) at the airport is a key initiative to enhance safety, reliability, and operational efficiency in Venetie. By providing real-time weather data, AWOS will improve pilot awareness and flight planning, which is especially critical in remote areas with unpredictable weather patterns. This system will significantly enhance access for emergency services, enabling aircraft to land safely and consistently, even in challenging conditions, which is vital for urgent medical transport and other critical services.

**(Emergency Services)**

5. **Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan:** The Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan would be designed to improve safe access to Venetie by enhancing trail visibility and usability. Planned maintenance activities would include regular road clearing and brush cutting along key roads and trails to ensure clear paths for travel, especially during winter when visibility can be limited. To support navigation, new road/trail signage will be developed to include clear markings and highly visible reflective or lighted signage.

**(Engineering)**

6. **Driver Behavior and Safety Improvements:** Driver behavior plays a critical role in transportation safety when operating vehicles, ATVs and snowmachines. High rates of speeding among operators often lead to severe accidents, underscoring the need for better adherence to speed limits. A concerning trend is the lack of helmet use, which significantly increases the risk of head injuries in the event of a crash.

Compounding these issues is the insufficient enforcement of safety regulations, which fails to deter reckless driving behaviors.

**(Education/Enforcement)**



*Road users include a combination of ATVs, vehicles, and pedestrians on community roads.*



### 3. Existing Resources

A number of tribal groups, agencies and organizations work together to provide ongoing support for transportation and health safety in Venetie. Below is a list of safety partners that have an interest and involvement in improving and preserving the quality of life for community members in Venetie.

#### 3.1. Safety Partners

- Venetie Village Council:** Began the process of updating the Tribes first Safety Plan in Fall 2024. Information about the plan and its development included the distribution and collection of community input, providing of resources, photos, interviews, and final review of the information gathered. The Tribe also contracted with Kuna Engineering as to help manage, develop and put together the TTSP.
- Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government (NVVTG):** The Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government (NVVTG) is a federally recognized Tribal entity that owns and manages over 1.8 million acres of land that includes the communities of Venetie and Arctic Village. This vast area, held in trust since the 1940s as the Venetie Indian Reserve, provides NVVTG with the unique responsibility of overseeing and preserving its land independently, without state or federal jurisdiction. As the primary landholder, NVVTG manages essential resources and infrastructure, including transportation routes that connect Venetie with nearby communities.
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC):** The Myra Roberts Health Clinic in Venetie was developed by ANTHC and is dedicated not only to healthcare but also to enhancing transportation safety for its residents. With sleeping quarters for visiting physicians, dentists, and specialists, the clinic ensures consistent access to healthcare by accommodating essential medical personnel who often arrive via aircraft. The clinic's infrastructure supports transportation safety by collaborating with emergency transport providers in Fairbanks and facilitating Telemedicine, which can reduce the need for risky travel in urgent cases by connecting patients with specialists remotely. ANTHC is also supporting upcoming community improvements that will include running water septic for the entire community. This project is currently slated for
- Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT):** The ADOT does not oversee the airport in Venetie, as the airport is NVVTG owned and operated. ADOT's role in Venetie's



*Myra Roberts Health Clinic in Venetie provides general care in the community for its residents.*

transportation infrastructure is minimal; however, it can still provide valuable support for local projects through its planners in the northern region. These planners offer expertise and oversight, particularly on projects suited for Arctic conditions, by sharing knowledge on engineering, materials, and maintenance practices that are effective in extreme climates. Although ADOT does not directly manage Venetie's transportation assets, its advisory role can be used in particular on bridge or structural projects to ensure that local initiatives align with best practices for safety and construction in Arctic Environments.



*The Venetie Airport is locally owned and maintained by the NVVTG*

- **Doyon Corporation:** Doyon, as the regional Alaska Native corporation for the Interior, actively supports safety initiatives that benefit Venetie and surrounding communities. With a commitment to sustainable development, Doyon collaborates with local entities to provide resources and guidance for projects that enhance community safety, particularly in transportation and infrastructure. Doyon's involvement often includes supporting grant applications and funding efforts that enable improvements to local roads, trail systems, and airport facilities, ensuring safer access for residents and visitors. Doyon assists in coordinating safety training and resources for emergency preparedness, helping build emergency response capabilities. Through these efforts, Doyon strengthens Venetie's transportation safety and infrastructure, aligning its support with community priorities for safe, accessible travel in the region.
- **Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC):** TCC plays an integral role in supporting the community of Venetie, particularly as a dedicated partner in transportation safety. Through its health, infrastructure, and community services programs, TCC collaborates with Venetie to improve safety measures that address the needs of the region. As a safety partner, TCC helps Venetie access grants and project funding that can be used for critical infrastructure, such as safer roadways and access routes to essential facilities like the Myra Roberts Health Clinic. TCC's commitment to improved safety initiatives underscores its dedication to the well-being of residents in the community and region, ensuring they have safer, more reliable access to emergency services year-round.
- **Yukon Flats School District (YFSD):** The YFSD serves an important partner for safety education and can be utilized to provide safety lessons to students related to use of life jackets, boater safety and training in ATV usage. The YFSD is an important partner in providing educational support to the communities in the region and is based out of Fort Yukon. The YFSD plays a key role in supporting the John Fredson (Venetie) School by



educating students on safe travel practices, particularly for navigating trails and roads in rural Alaska. Safety lessons emphasize the importance of dressing warmly, using layers, and choosing gear that protects against extreme cold, ensuring students are prepared for outdoor conditions. Additionally, the district promotes the use of high-visibility clothing and accessories to increase safety on trails and roadways, especially during the long, dark winter months.

3.1.1. School

John Fredson School in Venetie serves as a vital educational center for students from kindergarten through 12th grade, currently supporting 46 students and staffed by six dedicated teachers, according to the most recent data from the Alaska Department of Education.<sup>4</sup> The school provides not only academic instruction but also essential resources such as technology, cultural programs, and extracurricular activities, enriching students' educational experiences and connection to their heritage. As an important community hub, John Fredson School can enhance transportation safety by educating students and families on safe travel practices, particularly for winter conditions and trail use. Potential transportation safety improvements that would benefit the school and its students include installing clear signage, improving visibility on nearby trails, and creating designated safe zones for students walking or biking to school. These initiatives, along with school-led education on road and trail safety, can help students travel safely to and from school, reinforcing safety practices that extend throughout the community.



*The Northern Lights above John Fredson School in Venetie. Source: YFSD*

TABLE 2: EDUCATION CONTACT INFORMATION

<b>School</b> – John Fredson School 360 Chandalar Dr Venetie, AK 99781 Office: (907) 849-8415 Fax: (907)-849-8630	<b>School District</b> – Yukon Flats School District PO Box 350 Fort Yukon, AK 99740 Phone: (907) 662-2515 Fax: (907) 662 2519
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3.1.2. Alaska DOT - Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)  
The Alaska Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is the state’s four-year program for transportation system preservation and development. It includes interstate, state and some local highways, bridges, ferries and public transportation, but does not include airports or non-ferry-related ports and harbors. It covers all system improvements for which

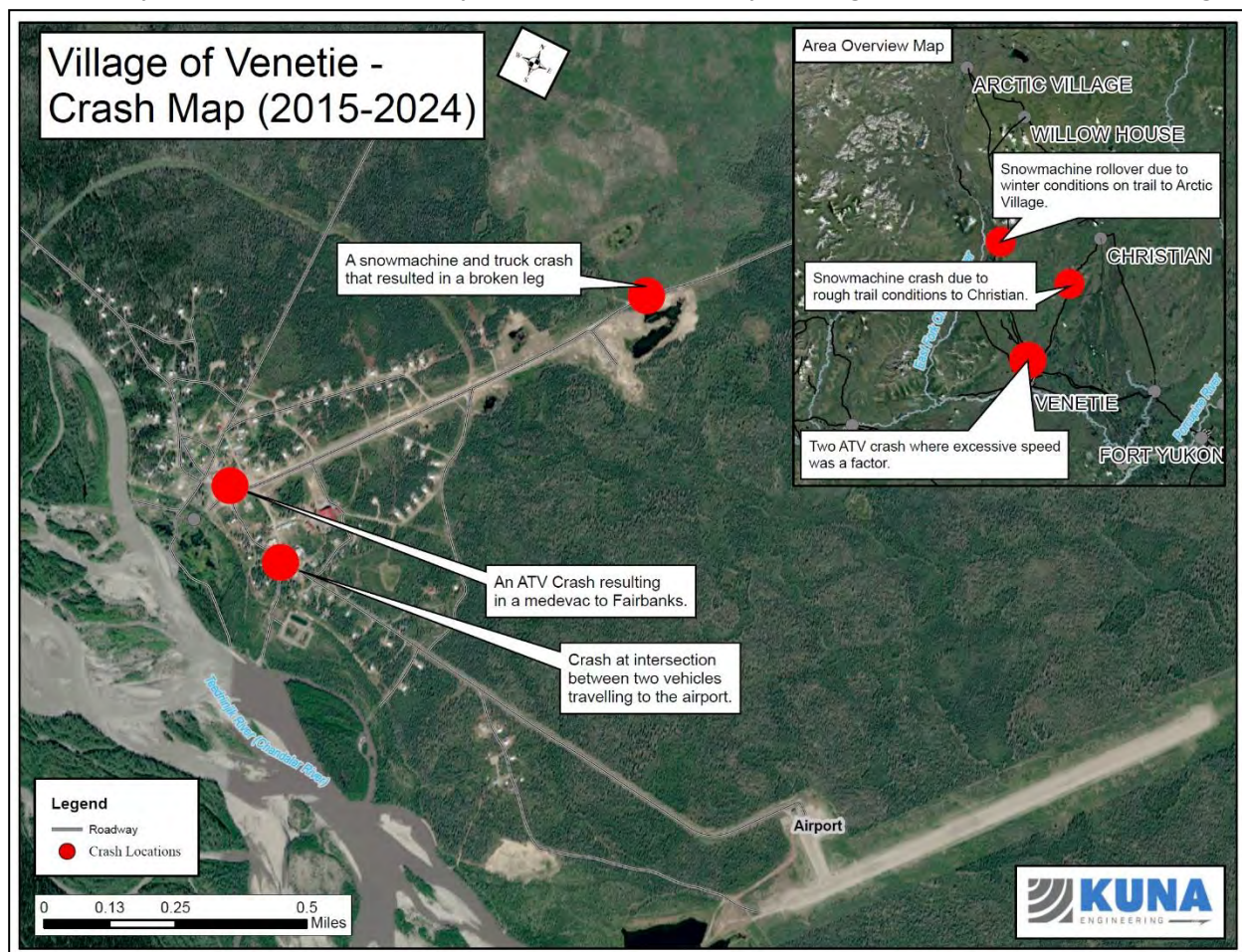
<sup>4</sup> "John Fredson School" Alaska Department of Education, 2025 website:  
<https://education.alaska.gov/compass/ParentPortal/SchoolProfile?SchoolID=510060>



partial or full federal funding is approved and that are expected to take place during the four-year duration of the STIP.<sup>5</sup> No projects for Venetie are included in the 2024-2027 STIP.

### 3.1.3. Alaska DOT - Crash Data Overview

Complete crash data in rural Alaska can be difficult to obtain as there is often limited data. State Trooper dispatch logs, VPSO reports and local feedback from community members is available but often limited in information provided. Crashes that result in over \$2,000 in property damage or result in an injury are to be reported to the Alaska Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), however due to the nature of rural Alaska and difficulty in reporting remotely this often times does not occur. The State Troopers are typically the main resource for reporting these types of crashes if they are in the community at the time of the incident. The State Troopers send in this crash data and submit this data to the DMV, which then provides the crash data to ADOT for inclusion in ADOT's crash database. The State Troopers service the community through the Fairbanks office and there are not locally based tribal safety officers in the community. Due to the small community population the currently provides public safety oversight itself, however if funding



**FIGURE 4: VENETIE HISTORICAL CRASH MAP**

<sup>5</sup> Alaska DOT&PF STIP, DOT&PF, 2024 website: <https://publicinput.com/stip/>



were provided and a candidate in the community is willing there would be interest in having a Village Safety Officer (VPO) in Venetie.

There are no reported historical crashes on community roadways in the crash data.<sup>6</sup> Contact Information and Point of Contact (POC) for ADOT Crash Data: Derrick Grimes, ADOT Planner, PO Box 112500, Juneau, AK 99811 Phone: 907-465-6993

From 2015 to 2024, Venetie, has continued to face challenges related to vehicle and ATV accidents, with both incidents and data reporting difficulties affecting safety initiatives. Limited reporting and incomplete details about each incident hinder the community's ability to identify high-risk locations and circumstances that contribute to accidents. However, crash data remains crucial for understanding safety issues and supporting funding requests for transportation improvements. Efforts to improve data-sharing processes between the DMV and DOT are ongoing to streamline data availability and enhance accuracy, providing a more comprehensive view of safety needs.

In addition to the previously recorded incidents from the past Safety Plan, local sources highlighted recent accidents, including ATV and snow machine crashes, that led to serious injuries, some requiring medivac services. For instance, a high-speed ATV collision on a sharp corner near Big Lake resulted in a severe injury, costing a young woman her eye. With reliable



*Vehicle crashes have occurred on roads leading outside of community roads including the road to Big Lake.*



*ATV crashes have been documented both on community roads and trails in and around Venetie.*

reporting and enhanced data flow between local and state agencies, Venetie could better address transportation safety concerns and implement targeted measures to reduce accident risks. There is limited publicly available data in regards to crash data on Venetie community roadways and trails, however the community did provide their own observations of safety incidents or accidents in the community from public survey results that can be found in the appendix as well as Figure 4.

<sup>6</sup> Alaska DOT&PF Crash Data, DOT&PF, 2024 website: <https://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/hwysafety/crash.shtml>

### 3.2. Overview of Existing Efforts

This section presents transportation safety documents, planning efforts, community background information and other programming currently in place that can help guide transportation safety improvements in the community. The 2018 Tribal Transportation Safety Plan (TTSP) served as the foundational framework for Venetie's 2024 safety plan update, guiding the assessment of community-specific risks and informing strategic improvements based on evolving transportation and safety needs.

#### 3.2.1. 2024 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The 2023 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update for the Village of Venetie introduced several key adjustments to the community's transportation network. A primary addition was the inclusion of new route options to facilitate a crossing over Big Creek, accompanied by a feasibility study to assess the potential for constructing a bridge. This update also aimed to enhance logistics and storage capabilities, proposing routes that could support a laydown yard to streamline material handling for local projects. Improved trail access to the Yukon River was another significant goal, aiming to expand transportation options for residents and support local subsistence activities.



*The Big Creek proposed bridge crossing location on the trail leading to Arctic Village.*

The 2023 update builds upon the previous LRTP revision completed in 2022, which focused on updating strip maps and routes to align with recent inventory changes as data was integrated into the Regional Inventory Field Data System (RIFDS) database. This system consolidation was specific to the Village of Venetie and did not encompass the Tribal Government's broader jurisdiction.

#### 3.2.2. 2013-2018 Venetie Community Development Plan

The Venetie Community Development Plan served as a foundation for creating a comprehensive safety plan by identifying community needs and priorities in multiple areas that contribute to overall safety and wellbeing. Goals and priorities focused on essential aspects like infrastructure, governance, community wellness, and youth engagement, all of which directly influence public safety. For example, governance goals to strengthen the Village's government through updated Tribal Codes and the hiring of a Public Safety Officer address key safety



*Community input was a key component in the Venetie Community Development Plan.*

needs. This helps ensure regulatory support and a presence for enforcing local ordinances, while wellness priorities to provide mental health and behavioral health resources align with preventative safety efforts.

Priorities under categories such as Land & Environment and Transportation directly enhance safety in Venetie. The plan's goal to construct a permitted landfill and address waste management supports cleaner, safer environmental conditions. Transportation priorities, including naming streets and constructing a road to the fish camp, provide both navigational clarity and safer travel routes for residents. These foundational goals not only inform specific safety measures within the safety plan but also help guide resource allocation toward improving safety in ways that meet the broader development and cultural priorities of Venetie.



*Routes including the path to fish camp have water crossings and barriers that create limitations in travel for community members.*

### 3.2.3. 2018 Native Village of Venetie Tribal Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Hazard Mitigation Plan for the Native Village of Venetie looked at improving community safety by implementing a variety of strategies designed to address natural hazards. By providing outreach activities and establishing a formal Hazard Mitigation Planning Team, the plan encourages community engagement and education on recognizing and mitigating risks. Ongoing initiatives such as identifying evacuation routes and joining the National Flood Insurance Program demonstrate a proactive approach to disaster preparedness. Through these



*The evacuation routes outside the community are cited as needing improvements with the Hazard Mitigation Plan.*

efforts, the community is better equipped to respond to emergencies, ultimately reducing potential hazards and increasing resilience against future disasters.

The plan includes transportation improvements that aim to enhance safety for Venetie residents. For example, developing land use ordinances and regulations for construction in high-hazard areas ensures that infrastructure is built with safety in mind. This includes measures like promoting vegetation management to maintain slope stability and encouraging utility

companies to fortify vulnerable systems. These actions not only address immediate safety concerns but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of the community's infrastructure, ensuring a safer environment for all residents.



### 3.3. Emergency Response Resources

- **Fire:** The Venetie Volunteer Fire Department is equipped to respond to fires with resources stored in a Conex container located near the airport. The department maintains a satellite phone to aid in communication during emergencies. In 2022, Venetie's fire response capabilities received a significant upgrade with the installation of a Starlink satellite system, enhancing connectivity and response coordination within and around the community. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska Fire Service (AFS) and the Alaska Department of Forestry are crucial in addressing wildfires in the Venetie region, coordinating extensive ground and aerial resources to protect nearby communities and Indigenous lands. For example, in July 2024, the AFS quickly responded to the T'eedriinjik Fire northwest of Venetie, deploying 12 smokejumpers, helicopters, and water-scooping Fire Boss aircraft. Firefighters worked to establish hose lines around the fire's edges, cooling hot spots to prevent the flames from spreading into areas with Native allotments and critical tundra habitat.<sup>7</sup>  
The BLM AFS, based at Fort Wainwright, provides wildland fire suppression across 240 million acres, encompassing both Department of the Interior lands and Native Corporation territories. Their extensive expertise includes advanced fire management technologies like the Alaska Lightning Detection System, which enables rapid response to new fires. They operate interagency firefighting efforts across Alaska, coordinating with the State Department of Natural Resources and various federal agencies to protect Alaska's communities, landscapes, and cultural sites from wildfire threats.
- **Search and Rescue:** In and around Venetie, Search and Rescue (SAR) operations are conducted entirely by community volunteers, with a focus on supporting tribal members in times of need. When someone is reported missing, local residents come together on a



*Smoke from the T'eedriinjik Fire (#380) drifts up near a braided river about 2 miles northwest of Venetie, July 24, 2024.*

*Source: Alaska Forestry*

<sup>7</sup> "Fire Northwest of Venetie", BLM, 2024 website: <https://akfireinfo.com/2024/07/21/firefighters-aircraft-working-on-new-fire-northwest-of-venetie/>



voluntary basis, coordinated through a sign-up sheet maintained at the Tribal Office. This approach reflects the community's collective support system, where people readily volunteer their time, especially during emergencies involving fellow tribal members. However, Venetie lacks a dedicated budget for SAR, so expenses for these operations are covered through the village's general fund.

The absence of specialized SAR equipment, such as boats or snow machines, means that volunteers often



*The Community Center in Venetie serves as a hub for coordinating Search and Rescue missions and emergency response activities.*

rely on their own resources and familiarity with the local terrain. The Venetie Volunteer Fire Department, which has communication radios, this helps assist in maintaining contact among SAR teams, enhancing coordination across search efforts.

- Medical:** The Myra Roberts Clinic, located in Venetie, Alaska, serves as a primary healthcare facility for the rural population in this remote area. As part of the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG) Health Centers network, it operates year-round and is one of 26 clinics in Yukon-Koyukuk Region. CATG administers the Community Health Aide Program (CHAP) in Venetie, which supplies the community with both full-time and itinerant health aides, along with behavioral health aides to address the healthcare needs of residents. To provide extended support, CATG ensures that Venetie has a medical receptionist and a full-time health aide trained as an Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT), with staff on call after clinic hours. When local health aides are unavailable, CATG steps in by dispatching itinerant health aides to maintain consistent medical coverage. Each village clinic in the region, including Venetie's, has an emergency vehicle, as well as a snow machine, four-wheeler, or ambulance van to transport patients as needed.

To address dental and specialized healthcare needs, CATG provides each village with a dentist or two Dental Health Aide Therapists (DHATs) approximately three times a year, offering services from cleanings to extractions. A strong focus is placed on preventive dental care to support overall community health. CATG arranges visits from mid-level practitioners to each village on occasion, ensuring access to broader healthcare expertise. Medevac services, a critical resource in remote regions, are jointly supported by CATG and the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and are contracted through LifeMed in Anchorage. This network ensures that Venetie's residents have access to timely medical evacuation in emergencies, underscoring CATG's commitment to accessible healthcare for this rural population.

- Village Public Safety:** In Venetie, transportation safety relies heavily on the support of a single Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO), who also serves the neighboring community of Arctic Village. With limited law enforcement resources, the VPSO plays a vital role in promoting safe driving practices on Venetie's community roads, despite the absence of posted speed limit signs. The VPSO actively encourages residents and visitors to maintain low speeds to prevent accidents, and their presence serves as a deterrent to reckless driving. When a driver is found to be speeding, the VPSO first issues a warning, reinforcing the importance of road safety. However, for repeated violations, more serious consequences are enacted, including vehicle impoundment, which serves as a measure in communities where formal law enforcement structures are minimal. The VPSO's efforts provide support for transportation safety in Venetie, helping to maintain a safer environment on the community's roadways.

For serious altercations or incidents in Venetie, Alaska State Troopers (AST) are dispatched from the Fairbanks station to provide additional support. Due to Venetie's remote location and limited local law enforcement resources, response times can be delayed, and Trooper intervention is typically reserved for significant incidents that require advanced resources or backup. This backup from Fairbanks is crucial in maintaining safety and addressing situations beyond the capacity of local law enforcement. Contact Information and Point of Contact (POC) for the AST: James Kimura, Sergeant, Fairbanks Rural Service Unit, Phone: (907) 451-5100.



*Snowmachine and ATVs are commonly used by community members, these modes of transportation in Venetie have the same public safety laws as vehicles.*

- Village Council:** The Village Council in Venetie is actively working to enhance safety, connectivity, and overall quality of life for its residents. A key initiative involves providing Starlink internet access to interested community members, significantly improving digital connectivity in this remote area. The Council is focused on securing grants and funding to upgrade essential infrastructure, including the implementation of sewer and septic systems, as well as ensuring safe drinking water access for all residents. These improvements are expected to have a lasting positive impact on community health and well-being. The Council is also committed to enhancing Venetie's roadways and regional connectivity, particularly by improving access routes to neighboring Arctic Village and Fort Yukon, creating stronger links for transportation, resources, and services that support the community's development.

## 4. Documentation of Needs & Priorities

### 4.1. Community Priorities

The community's priorities were discussed and developed as part of the annual meeting held in October 2024 and at the follow up meeting with tribal council members in November 2024. During these meetings residents and tribal members of the community compiled their top priorities as they relate to transportation safety in the community:

#### **Transportation Safety Community Priorities:**

- 1) Improved transportation networks for all road users.**
- 2) Trail development that can support year-round usage.**
- 3) Development and modernization of Venetie Airport.**
- 4) Better community accessibility through airport, road and bridge projects.**
- 5) Provide public safety and enforcement for transportation networks in Venetie.**

The priorities listed above are relevant to transportation safety and were provided and developed by council leadership. Information on priorities was gained through work with key stakeholders and included coordination and input from the Transportation Manager and Second Chief Paul Tritt.

## 5. Emphasis Areas, Goals and Strategies

The community of Venetie is relatively safe in regard to transportation crashes and accidents. Although crash and traffic data are limited through ADOT for Venetie, reportable accidents and crashes have occurred and it is important to do what is available through Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Other federal grant opportunities can also be improved regarding the life safety of residents in Venetie and those traveling into the community from surrounding communities

The following sections provide background on each transportation safety emphasis areas developed with support of the community, and tribal council and outlines the tribe's priorities for the future. These sections describe specific strategies as appropriate with respect to the "four Es": **education, engineering, enforcement, and emergency services**.<sup>8</sup> Implementation strategies associated with each emphasis area are also included and each implementation strategy includes a goal, targeted timeline and potential partners.

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<sup>8</sup> "Tools and Practices for System Wide Safety Improvement", Gap Analysis Report, FHWA, July 2013, website: [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/rsdp/downloads/tsp\\_gap\\_analysis\\_rpt.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/rsdp/downloads/tsp_gap_analysis_rpt.pdf)



TABLE 3: VENETIE SAFETY EMPHASIS AREAS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Emphasis Area	Issue	Engineering	Education	Enforcement	Emergency Response
<b>Engineering</b>	<b><i>Improvement areas related to roads, trails, air travel and community access and how they can and may affect safety for local residents.</i></b>				
<b>Venetie Trail Management System Manual</b>  <b>(Section 6)</b>	Revising and updating the Venetie Trail Management System Manual is necessary to improve trail safety and accessibility in the community.	Updating the Trail Management System Manual will provide a structured approach to identifying and prioritizing necessary trail improvements around Venetie. This revised manual can also serve as a foundation for securing funding and resources, enabling the development of safer, more accessible trails for the community.			
<b>Community Plan for Signage and Lighting</b>  <b>(Section 7)</b>	Road and Transportation network lighting is not sufficient in the community and there is a need for lighting on community roadways, the road to the airport and road to the landfill.	Lighting should prioritize energy efficiency due to the high energy costs in rural Alaska. LED and solar photovoltaic (PV) systems are the most efficient options available for reducing these expenses.			Install lighting in locations where crashes have occurred in the community. This will help reduce the need for potential emergency response to crashes and accidents.

Emphasis Area	Issue	Engineering	Education	Enforcement	Emergency Response
<b>Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan</b>  <b>(Section 8)</b>	The Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan aims to improve safe access to Venetie by enhancing trail visibility and usability through regular clearing and brush cutting. New signage with clear markings and reflective or lighted features should be installed to aid navigation, especially in low-visibility winter conditions.	The engineering components of this plan will include designing durable trail surfaces and efficient drainage systems to ensure year-round accessibility and reduce maintenance needs. Civil Engineers would need to assess optimal locations for reflective or lighted signage to maximize visibility and safety along key routes.	The plan should focus on informing residents about safe trail and road use, including the importance of adhering to new signage and maintenance schedules.	The plan should involve collaborating with local tribal leadership to ensure compliance with trail and road use guidelines, including speed limits and adherence to designated routes.	
<b>Emergency Services</b>	<b>Issues in the community related to responding to emergencies and public safety improvements</b>				
<b>Storage Facility for Emergency Response</b>  <b>(Section 10)</b>	An emergency response facility with a dedicated laydown yard will provide organized storage space for essential emergency equipment and materials, improving overall readiness.	A winter storage area for the ambulance within this facility will protect critical response vehicles from harsh conditions, ensuring they remain reliable and ready for emergency services at any time throughout the year.			The facility will strengthen emergency services by offering secure, weather-protected storage for essential response vehicles and equipment.

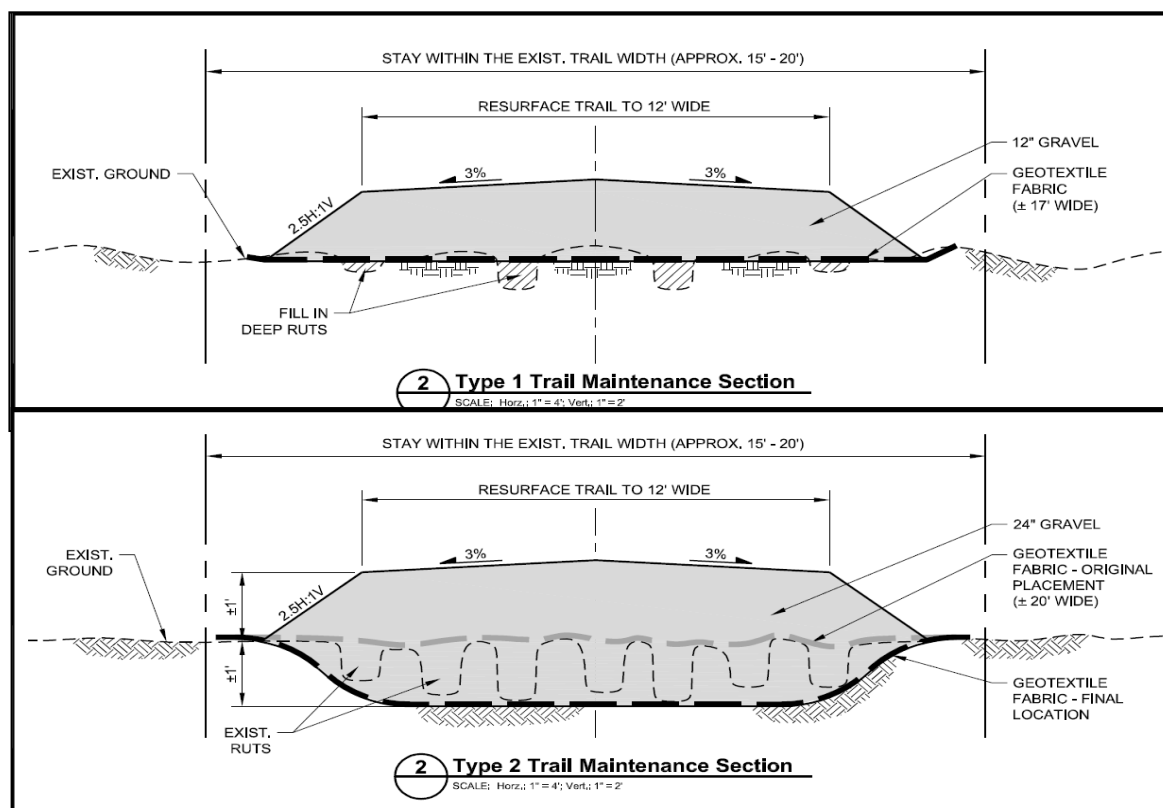
Emphasis Area	Issue	Engineering	Education	Enforcement	Emergency Response
<b>AWOS System for Airport</b> <b>(Section 11)</b>	Implementing an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) at the airport will enhance safety and operational reliability in Venetie by providing pilots with real-time weather data for better flight planning.	The engineering required for AWOS system installation will include site assessment and infrastructure development to ensure optimal system placement for accurate weather data collection	To effectively operate an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS), community members typically need training in meteorology and technical skills related to system maintenance and data interpretation		Emergency response groups in Venetie can rely on data from AWOS to make informed decisions during severe weather events, ensuring timely and effective actions to protect lives and property for transporting crash victims out of the Venetie.
<b>Education/Enforcement</b>	<b>Reduce the potential for injury or death among off-road transportation users by enforcing existing transportation laws and providing transportation safety training and learning opportunities for Tribal and community members.</b>				
<b>Driver Behavior and Safety Improvements</b> <b>(Section 12)</b>	Improving driver behavior and safety requires a dual approach of education and enforcement, focusing on the importance of adhering to speed limits and wearing helmets to reduce the risk of severe injuries in accidents	Engineering improvements related to driver behavior could include the implementation of intelligent speed adaptation systems that provide real-time feedback to drivers when they exceed speed limits.	The Department of Transportation (DOT) runs several programs focused on transportation safety, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which promotes initiatives like seat belt use campaigns and impaired driving prevention.	Drivers' behavior is closely linked to the enforcement of traffic regulations, as consistent and visible law enforcement can significantly deter reckless driving practices such as speeding and driving under the influence.	Poor driver behavior, such as speeding or failing to yield to emergency vehicles, can hinder emergency response and jeopardize the safety of both responders and those in need of assistance.



## 6. Venetie Trail Management System Manual

The 2014 trail management system requires an update to incorporate new information regarding the costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep of trails, reflecting current economic costs and resource availability. Accurate cost estimates are essential for effective budgeting and planning, ensuring that funds are allocated appropriately to maintain the safety and accessibility of all trails. It is important to revise the trail maintenance plan to include all relevant trails, specifically those leading to the Yukon River, Christiana, and Arctic Village. By expanding the scope of the maintenance plan, the plan can better address the needs of the community, enhance subsistence access, and ensure that all routes are adequately maintained for members of the community in Venetie and surrounding communities.

A trail management system is a strategic framework used to plan, maintain, and enhance trail networks within a community, ensuring safe and accessible pathways for recreation and subsistence activities. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) utilizes these plans to guide the development and pursuit of projects aimed at improving trails in the Venetie area. By assessing existing conditions, identifying maintenance needs, and prioritizing enhancements, the BIA can effectively allocate resources and secure funding for vital trail improvements, ultimately



**FIGURE 5: TRAIL MAINTENANCE SECTIONS FROM MANUAL**

supporting the community's connectivity to cultural and natural resources while promoting outdoor recreation and economic development.

#### 6.1.1. Emphasis Area Goal

Revising and updating the Venetie Trail Management System Manual is necessary to improve trail safety and accessibility in the community.

#### 6.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) A trail management system manual can include a detailed inventory of all existing trails, assessing their conditions, usage patterns, and maintenance needs. This comprehensive assessment will help prioritize repair and improvement projects, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to the most critical areas.
- 2.) The manual can outline strategies for engaging the Venetie community in trail stewardship, promoting volunteer programs for maintenance and clean-up events. Educating residents about the benefits of well-maintained trails can foster a sense of ownership and encourage sustainable practices that enhance trail longevity.
- 3.) The manual can identify potential partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and non-profits, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT), to leverage resources and expertise. By outlining funding opportunities and grant options for trail development and enhancement projects, the manual can facilitate collaborative efforts with these key partners to improve the overall trail network in the Venetie.



*Example of Type 1 Trail Section to the right & Type 2 Trail Section to the left in Venetie.*

#### 6.1.3. Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, FHWA, BIA, ADOT

#### 6.1.4. Cost Estimate

**\$26,000<sup>9</sup>** - The cost estimate for developing the trail maintenance manual will build on the 2014 plan while incorporating data from the existing plan, and it will expand to include additional trails that connect the community to subsistence areas and neighboring communities.

<sup>9</sup> Cost estimate developed based on 2014 WHPacific Wood Yard Trail Maintenance Manual professional services.

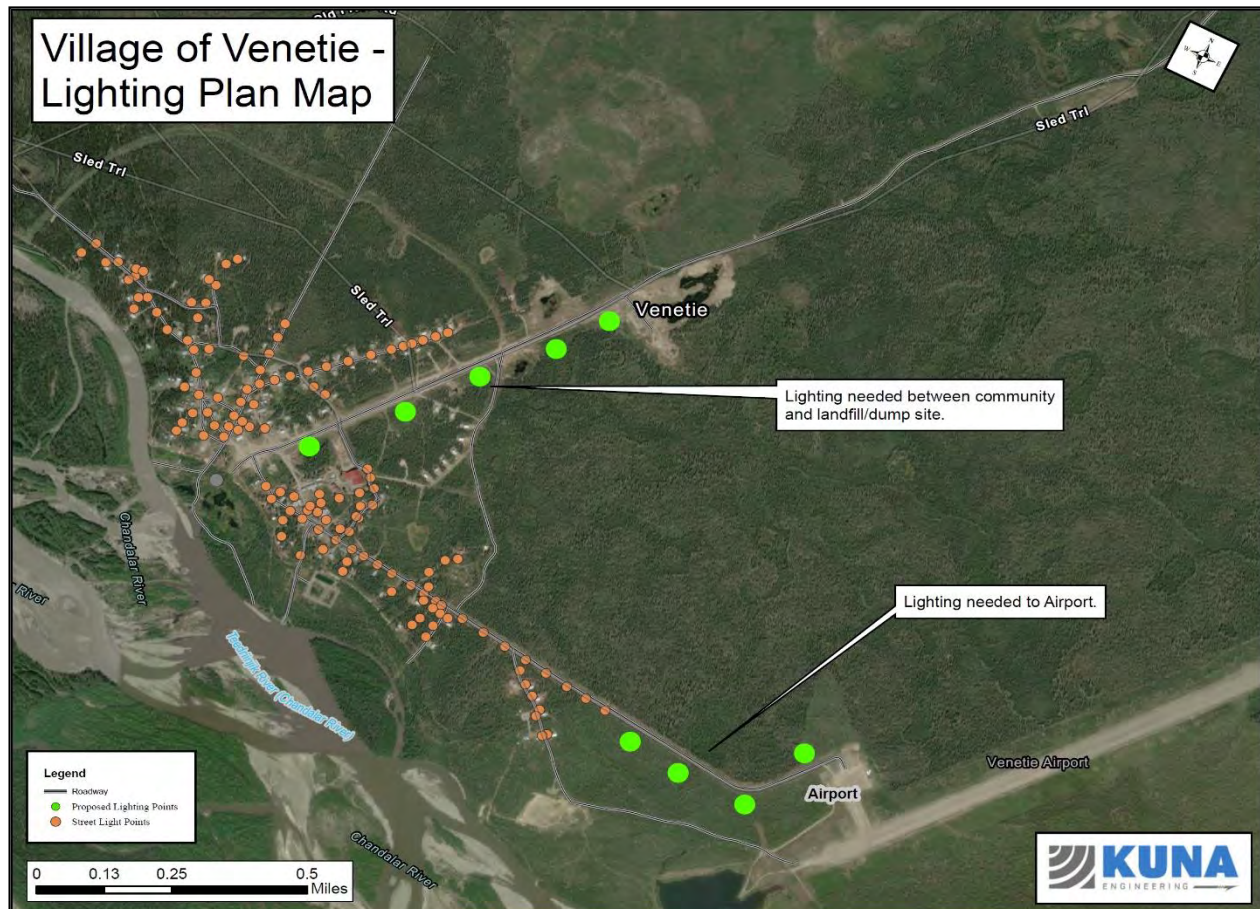
## 7. Community Plan for Signage and Lighting

Community input and safety statistics indicate a clear need for a comprehensive community lighting plan in Venetie, particularly along critical routes such as the old airport road, the road to the landfill, and the road to the airport. With periods especially during the winter months where there is limited to no lighting and the risk of fatal crashes during times of darkness being up to three times greater than during the day, the urgency for improved visibility is evident. Enhanced luminance levels at intersections can significantly reduce accidents by improving drivers' ability to see conflicting traffic and other road users. Integrating new lighting solutions into the existing infrastructure, such as upgrading current fixtures and adding overhead lights where necessary, will create a cohesive lighting system that enhances safety and promotes community well-being, ultimately improving the quality of life for residents.



*Community Lighting at the Airport.*

Community lighting is a critical issue in Arctic regions, where long winter nights and low sunlight impact visibility and safety. In Venetie, the high cost of electricity adds a significant financial strain, as the current effective rate is \$0.39 per kWh, with residential rates of \$0.90 per kWh,



**FIGURE 6: VENETIE LIGHTING PLAN MAP**



offset by a Power Cost Equalization (PCE) rate of \$0.51 per kWh (December 2014 data).<sup>10</sup> Given these costs, Venetie is exploring energy-efficient alternatives, including solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, to reduce energy expenses and improve lighting reliability. Studies on solar PV systems in Arctic regions show that even limited sunlight can provide supplementary power, particularly when combined with battery storage, which stores excess energy from longer summer days. Solar energy systems can power LED lighting, which is more efficient than traditional bulbs and can be designed to operate on lower wattage. By investing in solar and energy-efficient lighting, Venetie aims to reduce dependency on costly utility power and improve community lighting, promoting safety and sustainability.

#### 7.1.1. Goal

The Road and Transportation network lighting is not sufficient in the community and there is a need for lighting on community roadways, the road to the airport and road to the landfill.

#### 7.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) Install solar-powered LED lights along key roadways, including community roads, the airport road, and the landfill road. Solar lights would provide cost-effective, off-grid solutions that reduce energy costs and maintain reliable lighting during long winter nights.
- 2.) Conduct an assessment to identify high-traffic and high-risk areas, focusing initial lighting installations on intersections, curves, and other critical points on community roads, the airport road, and landfill road to enhance safety.
- 3.) Apply for federal and state grants aimed at rural infrastructure improvements to fund long-term lighting installations. Emphasize the need for alternative energy lighting to decrease reliance on the grid and reduce, including alternative energy funding from Department of Energy (DOE) and FHWA.

#### 7.1.3. Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, Venetie Village Electric, FHWA, BIA, DOE

#### 7.1.4. Cost Estimate

**\$18,750<sup>11</sup>**– A typical rural lighting installation in Venetie costs around **\$5,000** per light, including design, engineering, and labor. Each photocell receptacle light, with a mount arm, is estimated at **\$500** from suppliers like Grainger. Integration into the electrical grid and setup for monitoring are covered in the installation cost, while maintenance and upkeep would be additional, charged on an as-needed basis.

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<sup>10</sup> "Venetie Community Data Summary", State of Alaska AEDG, 2017, website:

<https://akenergygateway.alaska.edu/community-data-summary/1411644/>

<sup>11</sup> "LED Street Lights", State of Alaska, DCCED, 2012, website:

[https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/13\\_budget/CapBackup/proj58565.pdf](https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/13_budget/CapBackup/proj58565.pdf)

## 8. Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan

Venetie has a need for a comprehensive road and trail maintenance signage plan to address the upkeep of roads and trails, ensuring safe and accessible pathways year-round.

Developing a maintenance schedule would allow the community to prioritize which roads and trails need regular brush clearing to improve visibility and ease of travel. Such a plan is essential not only for local safety but also to enhance access to surrounding communities and vital subsistence areas, which are critical for the community's traditional hunting and gathering practices.



*Aerial overview of trail system leading from Venetie.*

Consistent trail clearing will make travel routes more reliable, particularly in low-visibility seasons, and new signage with reflective or lighted elements would further support navigation and safety.

Winter trails in Venetie need development and improvement to support efficient travel during the winter months, when frozen streams and rivers offer natural pathways for snowmachines and ATVs, enabling reliable connections between communities. Winter is often the most practical season for travel, as frozen waterways create direct routes that bypass rough terrain. Trail staking is essential to mark these winter routes, providing guidance across vast, snow-covered areas. These stakes should be designed to withstand harsh Arctic conditions, using materials that ensure durability and visibility despite extreme weather. Selection of high quality long lasting signage and materials offer a long lifespan, and allow for less frequency of replacement and ensure these critical winter trails remain accessible and safe.

### 8.1.1. Goal

The Road/Trail Maintenance and Signage Plan aims to improve safe access to Venetie by enhancing trail visibility and usability through regular clearing and brush cutting, along with installing new signage with clear markings and reflective or lighted features.

### 8.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) Develop a seasonal schedule for regular clearing and brush cutting on high-use roads and trails, prioritizing routes that connect Venetie to key areas like subsistence sites, neighboring communities, and essential facilities. This proactive approach will help maintain visibility and accessibility year-round.
- 2.) Place new signage with reflective coatings and clear directional markers at critical points along roads and trails. These signs will improve navigation during low-light conditions and guide travelers safely through remote areas, especially during winter months.

- 3.) Organize local labor to support maintenance efforts by providing brush clearing and signage checks and installation. Work with federal and state agencies to improve trail and road conditions, the community winter trails program through the state is a option for funding improvements.

### 8.1.3.Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, FHWA, BIA, ADOT

### 8.1.4. Cost Estimate

**\$50,000** – This cost is based on clearing and grubbing costs per cubic yard for yearly labor and maintenance of rural. Brush clearing alone may range from \$500 to \$1,500 per mile, depending on terrain difficulty and labor availability. Developing and staking winter trails to withstand Arctic conditions can add \$1,000 to \$3,000 per mile, with additional costs for durable, weather-resistant materials to ensure long-term usability and safety.<sup>12</sup>

## 9. Storage Facility for Emergency Response

Venetie has a critical need for a storage facility and laydown yard that would support emergency response needs, particularly by providing a covered, potentially heated space to house essential equipment like ambulances and emergency response vehicles. Winter temperatures in Venetie often remain below freezing, making it difficult to perform necessary maintenance on equipment outdoors, which can lead to extended periods of equipment downtime or, in some cases, the inability to use equipment altogether. A secure, climate-controlled storage area would help ensure that emergency response vehicles are always ready and operational when needed. The proposed location near the dump site is an ideal spot for a larger storage facility and laydown yard, offering ample space and proximity to key access routes. However, a smaller facility closer to the heart of the community could also serve as a valuable resource, keeping essential equipment readily accessible to emergency personnel and



*The storage facility at the Venetie Airport houses heavy equipment. A similar facility is needed to house emergency response equipment that is currently outside in harsh arctic conditions in Venetie.*

<sup>12</sup> "Community Winter Trails Program", ADOT, 2024, website:  
<https://dot.alaska.gov/nreg/wintertrails/files/CWTP-Application.pdf>



within easy reach of community infrastructure. Developing this facility would be a vital step toward enhancing Venetie's emergency response capabilities in challenging winter conditions.



*Example of Alaska Structures pre-fabricated construction facility that can be used for storage in remote rural Alaska environments.*

The proposed emergency storage facility for Venetie would need to be energy-efficient and capable of withstanding harsh winter conditions, ensuring reliability in extreme cold and high winds. Given Venetie's remote location, a modular or prefabricated building would be ideal, as these structures can be transported more easily to the community and assembled on-site with minimal logistical challenges. Companies like Alaska Structures and Summit Logistics in Fairbanks offer prefabricated building options that are well-suited for Arctic environments. To maximize energy

efficiency, the facility should incorporate high-performance insulation and heating systems to minimize energy consumption while maintaining a controlled climate for sensitive emergency equipment. Drawing on construction practices from similar projects in remote Arctic communities across Alaska, the building could use durable, weather-resistant materials that stand up to extreme weather conditions. By following these proven design standards, Venetie can ensure the facility remains functional and sustainable, supporting emergency response efforts year-round.

#### 9.1.1. Goal

Establish an emergency response facility with a dedicated laydown yard to ensure organized storage of essential equipment and materials, thereby enhancing overall emergency readiness.

#### 9.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) Work with community members and engineering contractors to design a facility that optimizes space for organized storage and quick access to equipment, including planning for future scalability and long-term use.
- 2.) Identify and apply for grants, secure partnerships including the native corporation and non-profit, and explore public funding opportunities to ensure that funding is available to develop the project.
- 3.) Determine the emergency response equipment that should be housed in the facility and access funding to add equipment as needed to replace equipment that no longer meets the communities needs.

### 9.1.3. Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, FHWA, BIA, ADOT, TCC, Doyon

### 9.1.4. Cost Estimate

**\$2,000,000<sup>13</sup>** - When considering the construction of a heavy equipment and vehicle facility in rural Alaska, an estimate for a snow removal building serves as a relevant example. This estimate for Venetie would be similar to what the ADOT has estimated for similar rural communities. Based on current cost estimation data from Alaska Structures, a prefabricated insulated structure suitable for housing vehicles and heavy equipment would range from \$50 to \$250 per square foot, depending on specifications. For a facility of approximately 3,000 square feet, costs could realistically fall between \$150,000 and \$750,000.

## 10. AWOS System for Airport

The need for an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) in Venetie is critical for enhancing aviation safety and accessibility in the region. AWOS systems are common throughout rural Alaska airports, providing real-time weather data essential for determining whether aircraft can safely conduct operations into and out of communities. These systems help pilots assess visibility, wind shear, and other meteorological factors that influence flight safety. With the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) monitoring programs in place, AWOS databases and systems must be interconnected to ensure comprehensive and accurate weather information, thereby improving situational awareness for pilots.

Nearby communities such as Fort Yukon and Arctic Village have successfully implemented AWOS systems, which not only enhance local air travel but also contribute to a more reliable regional aviation network.<sup>14</sup> The development

and construction of an AWOS in Venetie would not only improve safety for incoming and outgoing flights but also support economic growth and connectivity within the broader Alaskan transportation network.



*Windsock and airport landing indicators at Venetie Airport.*

<sup>13</sup> "Snow Removal Building", State of Alaska, 2023, website:

[https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/13\\_budget/CapBackup/proj58565.pdf](https://omb.alaska.gov/ombfiles/13_budget/CapBackup/proj58565.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> "FAA Weather Systems" FAA 2024, website: <https://weathercams.faa.gov/map/-157.80645,63.76491,-125.72637,69.44359/airport/VEE/details/pdfs>

Since the Venetie Airport maintained by the NVVTG is not owned and operated by the USDOT or the FAA, securing funding and regulatory approval for an AWOS system may present additional challenges. Even at privately run airports, AWOS systems typically require FAA-approved installations for aircraft to take off and land safely. The airport features a single gravel runway, designated 4/22, measuring 4,000 by 75 feet, and has seen over 2,500 passenger boardings in a typical year. Although classified as a "general aviation" airport due to its enplanement numbers, implementing an AWOS would significantly enhance operational safety and efficiency for the approximately 160 monthly aircraft operations. Given its connections to major destinations like Fairbanks and Fort Yukon, the establishment of an AWOS in Venetie would facilitate safer travel and improve the airport's overall service capability within the regional aviation network.



*Airstrip lighting systems currently in place at Venetie Airport.*

#### 10.1.1. Goal

Implement an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) at the Venetie Airport to enhance safety and operational reliability by providing pilots with real-time weather data.

#### 10.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) Assess the technical, logistical, and financial requirements for installing an AWOS at the airport. This study should evaluate site conditions, equipment needs, and compliance with FAA regulations.
- 2.) Identify potential funding sources, including federal and state grants, to finance the AWOS installation.
- 3.) Work with the FAA to ensure that the AWOS system meets all regulatory requirements and obtain the necessary approvals. This may involve submitting plans and undergoing inspections during the installation process.
- 4.) Create a maintenance schedule and procedures for the AWOS system for local staff and tribal contractors to ensure it remains operational and accurate over time. Designate local personnel responsible for regular checks and updates to the system.

#### 10.1.3. Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, FAA, FHWA, BIA, ADOT

#### 10.1.4. Cost Estimate

**\$737,922<sup>15</sup>** - The estimated cost to install an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) in Alaska depends on specific site conditions and system specifications, as well as weather and temperature. For the Alaska Aviation System Plan, the average investment for such systems reflects the best available data and typical costs for other systems installations across the state. The proposed cost for installing an AWOS system does not include the routine and unplanned maintenance costs and training. Typical yearly maintenance costs for an Automated Weather Observing System (AWOS) can range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, depending on the complexity of the system and the specific maintenance requirements. This includes routine checks, repairs, and parts replacement

## 11. Driver Behavior and Safety Improvements

Transportation safety in Venetie can be significantly improved through a comprehensive approach involving education, enforcement, and engineering. Partnering with local high schools to educate students on the dangers of speeding and organizing community-wide “slow down” campaigns can raise awareness of safe driving practices. Hosting traffic safety booths at community events and installing speed limit signs would reinforce these messages. Involving a transportation engineer to conduct a road safety audit could lead to enhanced signage and lighting at intersections, along with traffic control signs that improve navigation and safety. Enforcement measures, such as encouraging local law enforcement to actively monitor speed and considering the adoption of Tribal traffic regulations, are essential for addressing speeding. To increase safety in ATV and snowmachine use, Venetie could enact ordinances to restrict the age of drivers, require helmets, and limit passenger numbers. A requirement for young drivers to



*Venetie transportation systems include a combination of vehicles, ATVs, snowmachines as well as pedestrian road users.*

complete a safety course before operating ATVs or snowmachines would help mitigate risk. Education campaigns promoting helmet use, with community members as role models, combined with distributing safety brochures and articles, could further instill safe practices. Regular announcements in local social media posts and websites would sustain awareness, creating a culture that prioritizes safe, responsible transportation.

Improving transportation safety in Venetie requires an approach that addresses both driver behavior and infrastructure enhancements. The

<sup>15</sup> “AWOS Install” ADOT, Alaska Aviation System Plan, February 2023, website:

[https://internal.alaskaasp.com/Facilities/Default.aspx?tab=manageproject&projectid=1123&id=13&siteid=50024.1\\*A](https://internal.alaskaasp.com/Facilities/Default.aspx?tab=manageproject&projectid=1123&id=13&siteid=50024.1*A)



community faces significant challenges with young, inexperienced drivers who often engage in risky behaviors, such as excessive speeding and inadequate training. To combat these issues, it is essential to implement driver education programs tailored for youth, emphasizing the importance of responsible driving and hazard recognition. These programs could provide training sessions that do not solely rely on the traditional permit system, making it more accessible for young residents. The community is also looking at increasing visibility and awareness of speed limits through the installation of traffic control signs could help to reinforce safe driving habits. Coupled with enhanced enforcement measures by the regional VPSO such as more consistent monitoring of traffic behaviors, these strategies could significantly reduce the incidence of speeding and improve overall road safety in the community. By fostering a culture of safe driving and providing the necessary education and resources, Venetie can create a safer transportation environment for all its residents.

Boater safety should also be a safety focus area for Venetie, where waterways play a significant role in subsistence activities. With local rivers and lakes regularly used for boating, fishing, and subsistence needs, it's critical to promote safety education and provide necessary resources. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers boater safety training and educational resources that can benefit communities like Venetie, especially through school programs or community events. Venetie could also benefit from installing a Kids Don't Float Loaner Board near commonly used boating sites to provide life jackets for young community members and visitors. These boards, which are provided at no cost, can be requested through DNR by demonstrating community need, and sponsorship can be sought from local organizations or groups, such as youth scouting programs. The community should also look at safety training sessions tailored for Venetie's youth which could be offered through remote streaming or in-school presentations in collaboration with the Yukon Flats School District. By coordinating with local school staff and other stakeholders, Venetie can strengthen boater safety awareness, helping ensure that water activities remain enjoyable and safe for all.



*The Chandalar River connects the community of Venetie to important resources and boater safety is a key to keeping residents safe on local waterways.*

#### 11.1.1. Goal

Enhance driver behavior and safety in the community by implementing a dual approach of education and enforcement, emphasizing the importance of adhering to speed limits and wearing helmets.

### 11.1.2. Strategies

- 1.) Work with the local school and Tribal Government to offer driver safety courses focused on speed management, hazard awareness, and helmet use. These sessions can include hands-on training with visual aids to highlight the risks of speeding and driving without helmets. Partner with Alaska's Department of Public Safety or regional transportation safety programs to bring resources to Venetie, either in person or through remote learning formats.
- 2.) Collaborate with ADOT to implement a helmet awareness initiative that includes free or subsidized helmet distribution for ATV and snowmachine users. Prominent local figures, such as Tribal leaders or VPSOs, can serve as advocates to increase visibility and encourage widespread adoption.
- 3.) Add visible speed limit signs and caution signs for ATV and snowmachine crossings at critical spots along community roads and trails. Clear signage at intersections and near high-traffic areas can remind drivers of safe speeds, while strategically placed "helmet required" signs reinforce safety expectations. Involve a transportation engineer to assess ideal locations and ensure signs are effective and durable in Arctic conditions.
- 4.) Work with the VPSO to establish regular, visible enforcement of speed limits and helmet requirements. This may include random checkpoints, community patrols, and issuing tickets or warnings for non-compliance. Developing a Tribal traffic ordinance that establishes penalties for speeding and helmet infractions can provide clear guidance for enforcement, making expectations known to residents and encouraging safer behavior.



*Public safety and enforcement include roadways, trails as well as local waterways. VPSO in the region are coordinated, organized and funded through TCC.*

*Source: TCC*

### 11.1.3. Potential Partners

Venetie Village Council, NVVTG, ADOT, ADNR, TCC

## 12. Implementation

The Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan will be ready for implementation following final approval from community members, the tribe, agencies, and other interested parties. The Venetie Village Council will formally adopt the plan through an adoption letter and begin working on improvements based on the plan's emphasis areas, with a focus on the Safe System approach to enhance transportation safety. The plan will be distributed to the community, tribal members, and potential safety partners and agencies, and it can be used to pursue grant funding for transportation safety projects, including sources such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, FHWA Tribal Safety funds, and other relevant state and federal resources. The tribal administrator will oversee plan implementation, ensuring timely development of emphasis areas, while the tribal president will engage with potential safety partners to discuss next steps.

As the emphasis areas are developed and implemented, progress monitoring will be critical. The transportation manager and public works staff will act as Safety Plan leaders, coordinating with safety partners and reviewing the status of each initiative to ensure consistent follow-through. Although primary responsibility for implementing certain strategies may lie with other state and federal agencies, Venetie's safety plan leaders will foster strong partnerships and work to keep initiatives on track through regular status evaluations. The Tribal Transportation Safety Plan will be updated every five years to incorporate new data, assess ongoing efforts, and identify emerging safety needs, ensuring Venetie's approach to transportation safety remains responsive and effective.

### 12.1. Evaluation

Plan evaluation and review are essential for the success of Venetie's Safety Plan. The purpose of ongoing evaluation is to assess whether the emphasis areas outlined in the safety plan are being met, ensure action items for each emphasis area are pursued, and address any new transportation issues that may have emerged since the plan's inception. To maintain accountability for the action items in the Tribal Transportation Safety Plan, a steering committee led by the transportation manager and composed of council members and community representatives will be formed. This committee will include stakeholders interested in Venetie's transportation safety and ongoing improvements. The group should meet annually, with meetings planned around regular council sessions, though the frequency can be adjusted by the committee as needed.

The steering committee will monitor progress by reviewing the status of emphasis areas and reporting findings. Regular updates and progress reports will be presented to the committee, allowing them to take steps to accelerate work if progress on action items lags. The committee will work with safety partners to identify potential funding sources or delegate this task to a tribal representative. Evaluation results should be shared with the Venetie community as a

"progress report" on transportation safety, keeping residents informed and engaged in the ongoing efforts to improve transportation safety.

## 12.2. Plan Updates

The Village of Venetie Tribal Transportation Safety Plan should be reviewed annually by the Village Council and updated at least every five years to document completed projects, new crash data, and emerging safety issues. Updates should also record any changes in crash data and note if the Vision Zero and Safe System approaches have been utilized to enhance transportation safety in the community. Past efforts to address safety issues should be outlined in the plan to streamline and guide future safety initiatives.

This Transportation Safety Plan is an essential first step toward improving safety on community roadways, trails, and transportation networks. With consistent community input, regular evaluations, and ongoing updates, the plan can serve as a strong foundation for achieving safer transportation in Venetie both now and in the years to come.



## Appendix I: Works Cited

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## Appendix II: Public Involvement & Transportation Survey

### Fall 2024 - Quarterly Tribal Council Meeting Agenda Update

October 15, 2024, Venetie Tribal Office

1.) OPEN PRAYER

Opening remarks and prayer.

2.) Roll Call

#### Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government (NVVTG):

1st Chief Raeann Garnett

2nd Chief Angel Gilbert

Elaina Roberts

Tiffany Yatlin

Kayleen Ward-Peter

Shania Druck

#### Venetie Village Council (VVC):

1st Chief Gary Simple Jr.

2nd Chief Paul Timmy Tritt

John Williams

Karlas Norman

Lance Whitwell,

Noah Whitwell

#### Arctic Village Council (AVC):

1st Chief Galen Gilbert

Hilda Johnson

Mike Lee

Nanieezh Peter

Staff & Coordinators:

Ernest Erick – Council Advocate

Tonya Garnett – Special Projects Coordinator

### 3.) MEETING NOTES

- Transportation and Transportation Safety Plan Update for Venetie

### 4.) Transportation

Expansion and improvement of community trails to enhance connectivity and safety.

Bridge Development:

Construction and rehabilitation of bridges for safer and more efficient transportation across key routes.

Laydown Yard and Storage Unit Updates:

Develop and maintain a laydown yard with a secure storage unit to support transportation and maintenance needs.

Public Safety on Roads:

Address safety concerns on local roads through improved maintenance, signage, and enforcement measures.

Explore funding opportunities for road safety initiatives.

### 5.) Next Steps

- Develop and finalize a Transportation Safety Plan for Venetie incorporating the above points.
- Continue progress on cultural and administrative priorities for community safety
- Seek funding and resources for critical projects, including a new tribal office and updated transportation infrastructure.

# Transportation Safety Survey – Village of Venetie

Your input is very helpful in updating the Tribal Transportation Safety Plan for 2024. The answers you provide will help to develop priorities for Venetie's current and future transportation safety goals and initiatives.

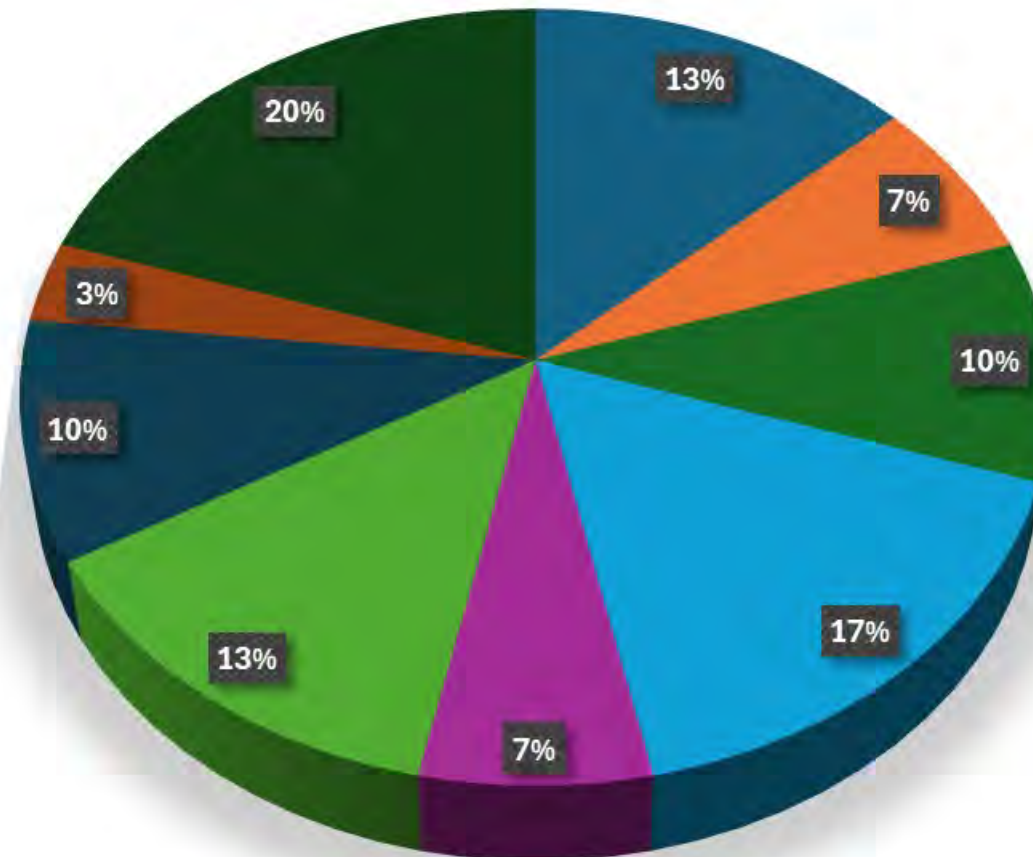
## 1. Please rate how important each of the following transportation issues are in the Village of Venetie:

Transportation Safety Issue	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not Important
Improved access to residential areas				
Improved emergency access and response				
Road construction to promote economic development				
Improved traffic safety and fewer accidents				
Improved drainage conditions around roadways				
Maintenance/repair of existing roads				
Expanded trail development around the community				
New and /or improved bridges				
Better lighting throughout the community				
Other (please specify):				



# Village of Venetie - High Priority Transportation Safety Issue

- Improved access to residential areas
- Improved emergency access and response
- Road construction to promote economic development
- Improved traffic safety and fewer accidents
- Improved drainage conditions around roadways
- Maintenance/repair of existing roads
- Expanded trail development around the community
- New and /or improved bridges
- Better lighting throughout the community
- Other (please specify):



# Transportation Safety Survey – Village of Venetie

## 2. What transportation safety related projects you would like to see developed in the community?

### a. In the next year?

Better Roads , Improved Maintenance, New subdivision road, new power poles and lighting, fix community roads better road lighting, road traffic signs.

### b. In the next 1-5 years?

Roads to known sites such as hunting areas and firewood areas, improve road to fish camp, maintenance on roads, better lighting on roads.

### c. In the next 6-10 years?

Road to Arctic Village, road development for economic development, expand and repair roads.

### d. In the next 10-20 years?

Road to Christian Village, improve airstrip.

## 3. What transportation safety improvements could be made to roads in Venetie (i.e. more efficient snow removal, improved and expanded transportation networks, new heavy equipment)?

Snow removal, training new operators to be able to maintain and repair heavy equipment, fixing pot holes, roads for vehicles, new heavy equipment(2), more snow removal.

## 4. Any additional comments or suggestions related to transportation safety improvements in Venetie?

Thank you for all your hard work it does go unnoticed we see it!

The workers are great - Thanks