Commuter: Chiniak Highway Conditions Increasingly Trecherous

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A school bus sits in the ditch on the Chiniak Highway. Only the driver, who was wearing a seatbelt, was onboard. Scott Bonny photo

Jay Barrett/KMXT

Road conditions in Kodiak are regularly treacherous, but fortunately, we have people who go out in the wee hours to maintain them before we drive to work or send our kids to school. Crews plow the roads when they're covered in snow or sand them when they're covered in ice.

But sometimes it's not enough.

That's what Scott Bonny thinks of the maintenance of the Chiniak Highway – it's not enough. Bonny has driven the twisty, hilly, sometimes icy 40-mile road twice a day for over 20 years, and he says road conditions are bad and getting worse.

" Yesterday, a school bus went off the road. Fortunately there was just a drive. He had a seatbelt on and his head was bumped. Shortly before that, Friday, she hit a bump, burst her wheel and flipped her car. We' re not expecting for miracles out there, and yet in 22-years we' re seeing, the last couple years, a significant drop off in maintenance. "

Despite living in Chiniak since 1990, Bonny says the conditions are getting so bad, he and his wife are actually considering relocation.

"My wife and I looked at it and says, 'Hey you know, we don't have to stay here for the next year. Why don't we get a jib somewhere and leave?' I wouldn't do it until after the summer, but if I can't see some encouraging sign of some better maintenance… I put my life in jeopardy every day, and I don't think I want to do that any more."

Bonny says he and other concerned citizens in Chiniak have circulated

petitions to the state, written numerous e-mails and made as many calls. He's now asking for help from the entire road system community to pressure the DOT, the legislature and the governor.

"We're

getting beat down. There's a lot going on out in Chiniak. Between the logging – which also interlinks with the road – we're getting tired. We're asking Kodiak to help us. Help us push the DOT to do better. Symptomatic: You go out from Bell's Flats to the base in the dark and the rain; no lines were redone on that road. It is so difficult and so dangerous. But, the paint truck was here this summer – didn't touch that section. That's kind of what you're seeing out the road – lots of danger."

DOT's Maintenance and Operations Department was contacted for this story, but has not yet responded.

Tune in to KMXT news tomorrow to hear the full conversation between Scott Bonny and KMXT's Jay Barrett about the Chiniak Highway conditions and what Bonny thinks needs to be done to make it better.

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