

November 29, 2012 Public Open House Public Comment Summary

Comments in support of project

- **Commercial vehicle access**- Trucking companies within the project area have acknowledged the need for improved access. They confirmed that during busy periods, drivers typically experience substantial delays while waiting for gaps in traffic.
- **Business access** - Several local business owners expressed support for improved access to their facilities with more fully developed frontage roads. Business owners agreed safe access is good for business.
- **Safety** - A daily commuter indicated that this corridor is dangerous because of high speeds, and that reducing the number of intersections will greatly improve safety.
- **Lighting** - Several positive comments were provided in support of adding highway lighting. This portion of the highway is very dark in the winter months. Area businesses also support highway lighting as an added measure of security surrounding their property to deter theft and vandalism.

Comments regarding project impacts

- **Project need** – Questions were raised regarding the need for improved intersections and frontage roads or the need for project as a whole.

Response: Improvements are needed in the area to maintain safe, efficient access as the number of motorists on the Richardson Highway continues to grow. We looked into a number of options including an overpass, various at-grade intersection styles and locations, and removing all of the existing intersections and re-routing traffic to the Badger overpass.

We determined the current alternative is the most efficient means to provide the needed safety and capacity improvement while balancing impacts to the travelling public and surrounding residents.

- **Property impacts** - Several property owners expressed concerns over right of way acquisition. Specific concerns included questions about loss of property, loss of privacy due to frontage road extension, various acquisition options, compensation, driveway impacts and the right of way process in general.

Response: We are working hard to develop a solution that meets the project needs and minimizes impacts to individual property owners; however, right-of-way acquisition cannot be completely avoided. We will continue to update property owners of potential impacts as the design concept is advanced. Several issues raised are ROW negotiation issues, and we acknowledge concerns about exposure to new frontage road. Concerns related to introducing

theft and vandals due to a new road may be negated by highway lighting, and the fact being more exposed also helps in the sense that potential thieves and vandals would not have as much seclusion from roadway as they currently do. Overall, the Department feels the setting for adjacent businesses will be unchanged with our project in consideration of the fact they are adjacent to a four-lane high-volume, high speed roadway.

- **Emergency vehicle access** – Concerns were raised about possible increased vehicle response time due to changes in access and intersection closures.

Response: We followed up with the local fire chief (North Star) regarding these concerns and presented our design concept for review. The fire chief believes the proposed improvements will likely require a few modifications to their route, but overall the improved frontage roads and intersections will offset any travel time lost due to potential intersection closures. They stressed that the shortest route is not necessarily the quickest route and that as first responders, they support our efforts for intersection safety improvements.

- **Noise** – Multiple users expressed concern regarding additional road noise to abutting properties, and requested noise walls.

Response: We will evaluate whether a noise study is required as a part of our environmental document re-evaluation process. If required, a noise study will help us evaluate noise impacts to adjacent property owners. If the results indicate the project will have significant noise impacts, we will explore noise abatement options such as noise walls.

- **Unsafe driving** – Commenters expressed concerns regarding reckless driving practiced by some truckers while entering and exiting their facilities. Commenters asked DOT to do something about it.

Response: This is a law enforcement issue that our design team does not have influence over. However, we believe that providing properly designed facilities will reduce motorist's likelihood to take greater risks when crossing the highway.

- **Gas line** – Commenters expressed concern with the impacts the project may have on proposed gas line projects or vice versa.

Response: We followed up with the Alaska DNR Division of Oil and Gas, and they said the pipeline routes are not complete at this point. It is unknown which project(s) will ultimately be chosen, when they will be constructed, and/or what alignment will be chosen. We expect this project will be a benefit to the current plan to truck natural gas.