

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Allakaket Public Meeting Notes
February 1, 2011**

Open House	12:00 P.M. – 12:30 P.M.
Presentation	12:30P.M. – 1:10 P.M.
Question & Comments	1:10 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak
Tanana Chiefs Conference: Jerry Isaacs, Tony Delia

Attendance

17 attendees counted and 14 recorded on the sign-in sheet (not including those from the project team).

Presentation

AK DOT&PF and DOWL HKM set up for a public meeting at the Tribal Hall. Maps were displayed on various tables around the room.

Alexa Greene, AK DOT&PF, opened the meeting, welcomed those in attendance, introduced the project team representatives, and introduced the purpose of the public meeting.

Tom Middendorf, DOWL HKM, presented an overview of the Corridor Planning Report.

Questions & Comments

Q = Question R = Response C = Comment

Q: Who will be paying for the road?

R: *That is not know at this time, as the funding will likely need to come from several sources, such as Federal, State and possibly private entities.*

Q: Who will own the road?

R: *The State.*

Q: So anybody could access the road?

R: *Correct. It is likely that a game management corridor would need to be created to keep people from hunting on private lands.*

Q: Will the public involvement information include information from individuals as opposed to the tribes?

R: *It will have information from both individuals and tribes. Some tribes have been making resolutions and have been forwarding them to us or the State, but we are not asking for any resolutions for or against the road to be made at this time.*

Q: Have you considered rail as it would restrict access to native lands?

R: *Rail has been shown to be between 4 and 5 times more expensive than constructing a road and it has grade restrictions which would further lengthen the route and increase the costs.*

Q: Why was the Yukon Corridor Route selected if Route 1 is less expensive?

R: *Ultimately the intent of the project is to serve as many communities and people as possible and that is what the Yukon Corridor Route does. Route 1 also crosses a federal wildlife refuge which would require an Act of Congress in which will be nearly, if not completely, impossible to obtain in order to cross.*

Q: Have you been to Nulato yet?

R: *Yes.*

C: Nulato is a big community that is really looking for methods of development to boost their economy and could have a lot of power and say in route selection and would likely favor a Yukon corridor.

Q: You indicated that environmental aspects weren't a deal breaker but the table shows that it is an issue along Route 3.

R: *That is due to a significant amount of wetlands that would need to be crossed.*

C: We have a pipeline nearby and that hasn't dropped our fuel costs at all. A road will also increase our current drug and alcohol problems.

R: *This is a big concern that has been expressed by many of the villages we have visited.*

C: If people want to use drugs and alcohol they're going to get it no matter what. Many of our youth just want to do drugs.

C: Why does Nome want the road? More tourism? Cheaper freight? Lower living costs? Potential to develop minerals and oil?

R: *For all of those reasons.*

C: This would fit into the scheme of developing Alaska. Someone could buy property and start up a new lodge or even a new community.

R: *To some extent it really depends on land ownership with respect to what areas could be developed. There are currently many owners along the route including the largest being the State, native corporations, and BLM.*

C: The Ambler mine is owned by a Canadian firm. Is the State looking at the road to Ambler for the mining group or to provide better access for Alaskans.

R: *While the mine would benefit from the road, it is ultimately for State and resident access.*

C: No matter what route is selected, mines and people will still build access roads.

R: *Corridors could be established along the route to restrict access to game and land.*

Q: At some point will there be a big meeting involving all of the impacted villages?

R: *While that hasn't been to this point, if the project goes forward that is a possibility. We really like this idea of a large group meeting and will suggest it if the project goes forward.*

C: You need to get this project into the National Highway Plan.

Q: DOT nearly has a paved highway on the haul road, something big must be happening. Why is it paved?

R: *While there are segments that are paved, by and large it is unpaved. Paving a roadway reduces the maintenance costs, the sections that have been paved may have been particularly problematic sections of the road.*

C: People will leave trash all over the place.

Q: Who decides if the \$2.7 billion will be spent?

R: *Ultimately the Legislature and the Governor will make that decision. If it were a federal highway, 90 percent of the funding could come from the federal government. This likely would not be the case.*

Q: Have you spoken with Toshiba about the small scale nuclear plant that has been planned for Galena? The plant was to have spur lines to other communities that could provide substantial savings in fuel costs.

R: *We had not heard about that in Galena, we've just heard hydroelectric and geothermal energy mentioned.*

R: *When the base was fully closed, the lead company behind the effort pulled completely out of the project.*

C: It is just a concept and has never actually been done.

C: The road will lead to a significant increase in pollutants as a result of increased mining activity which could be devastating to our way of life. We successfully got the Haul Road relocated away from our lands and will fight this road too.

R: *Our study does not recommend that the roadway corridor come near your lands. It will be well to the south near the Yukon River.*

- C: Water testing records show that the water in the Alatna River is as pure as you can get. With the resulting development of mining activities, the quality of our water could be severely impacted.
- C: Since the road really isn't very near to us I don't really want to comment on the study.
R: *There have been other people that have expressed this feeling too.*
- C: We're not in the Stone Age anymore; we need to recognize both sides of the issues with respect to this study.
- C: Demands on goods outside of Alaska could very well impact our costs in the village and having a road could lower freight costs versus air freight.
- C: I worked on the haul road construction for four years and did okay with the money I made. However, I also saw many people spend their hard earned money at bars in Fairbanks and drank all their money away. The work ultimately ruined many lives. When the job was over they came back to the village but had nothing to show for their work and experienced many difficulties trying to put their lives back together.
R: *It can be a negative or a positive. In the NANA Region with the Red Dog mine many have learned to budget and conserve their money.*
- C: How many folks from villages will truly get jobs? Many of the young kids have no training and will be unable to pass a drug test.
R: *Tanana Chiefs is very interested in hearing what people who will be impacted by the project have to say about it. Based on what TCC hears they will decide to support or not support the project.*
- C: We're already so deeply in debt, \$14 trillion, and building the road is not responsible. By the time the road might get built we'll probably be \$20 trillion in debt and will be dragging Alaska down with the rest of the country.
- C: Most of the training and jobs will be for work that is short term and then what. We'll have nothing again.
- C: We don't even have running water, we're no different than Haiti. At least it's warm there.
- C: Other villages have planned ahead and made improvements to benefit their communities. We can't stop the road but we can also benefit from it.
R: *Actually you can stop the road. If the Governor and Legislature see that there is enough opposition then they can't justify spending the money.*
- Q: Who would be responsible for maintaining the road?
R: *The State.*
- C: They're having a hard time maintaining the Dalton already.

R: *It could be that other users benefitting from the road could be expected to contribute to the maintenance.*

C: I'm very happy with my current lifestyle and have no desire to change it.

Q: How do other communities feel about the project?

R: *We don't yet have results compiled from individual communities but as a whole 65% of the people responding to our questionnaire are in favor of the project with the remaining 35% either against it or undecided.*

Q: What happens if Route 2 is not the route favored by the communities?

R: *The project will likely be dropped from the priority list.*

C: The road will hurt us more than help us. It will make our already limited resources available to many others. People from outside could drive a boat to Koyukuk, launch, and come up river to hunt our resources.

Q: Will there be more public meetings?

R: *If it is decided to move forward with the project, there will be. This is just the beginning of the process to determine if there is sufficient interest to move forward.*

Q: Why are gas prices so high if there is a refinery in North Pole?

R: *The North Pole refinery only produces aviation fuel. All other vehicle fuel must get shipped to the Lower 48 for refinement and then get shipped back up.*

Q: Why not build a road to Umiat?

R: *I'm not familiar with that study.*

Q: What if a tribe says yes or no to the project? What will happen?

R: *We will document the tribal resolution and pass the information on to the Governor and Legislature.*

Q: Could a 5-mile corridor be designated to protect our resources?

R: *Yes that is a possibility and something that other villages are also discussing implementation of.*

C: Caribou used to come here but they don't anymore.

R: *Impacts such as these would be evaluated in the environmental study.*

C: Progress is like a malignant cancer.

Q: As far as the proposed route, it doesn't appear that it will connect with individual villages?

R: *The study assumes that individual connection spurs would be built but they were not shown as some villages may elect not to be connected.*

- C: Many promises were made during the construction of the pipeline but none of the promises have been followed up.
- Q: What kind of guarantee could be made to ensure that local hire practices are implemented?
- R: *Our study cannot implement local hire policies but it can recommend them.***
- C: I've been flying people all over Alaska for many years for various projects and most of them aren't from Alaska.
- C: Ultimately I just don't believe that there will be many jobs available to us.
- C: I probably won't be around to see this project finished. I do believe that the negative impacts far outweigh the positive.
- Q: How long do we have to get comments turned in?
- R: *You have until March 10, 2011 to submit your questionnaires.***
- C: The end result is up to us but we have until that date to determine whether to submit comments as a village, tribe, or individuals.
- R: *Yes, that is correct.***
- Q: How long has this plan been going on?
- R: *We began the study in 2009 and completed it in January 2010.***
- C: People in Nome seem to want the road, it's the people in between the main hubs that have more concerns.
- R: *Even the people in Nome recognize the positive and negative aspects of the project.***