

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Fairbanks Public Meeting Notes
January 31, 2011**

Open House	5:00 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.
Presentation	5:30P.M. – 6:10 P.M.
Question & Comments	6:10 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene, Meadow Bailey
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak, Chase Nelson

Attendance

55 attendees counted and 51 recorded on the sign-in sheet (not including those from the project team).

Presentation

AK DOT&PF and DOWL HKM set up the public meeting at the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitor Center. 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: Are there funds for the environmental study?

R: *Not at this time.*

Q: How much will be needed to complete the environmental phase?

R: *That depends on if the project is broken into small phases or if the entire corridor is completed at one time. Ultimately it will cost in the millions if not tens of millions to complete the environmental phase.*

Q: Will you bring in additional studies to evaluate? Also, UAF has done some tourism travel studies along the Dalton Highway.

R: *If the project moves forward we will be looking into other studies that have been completed.*

C: Concerns at Stevens Village along the Dalton represent our concerns regarding impacts to subsistence.

R: *Thank you for the comment. We understand that subsistence living is a big concern for many villages.*

Q: Were the costs of transportation in your comparison based on current costs?

R: *The transportation cost comparison study was performed and completed in 2009.*

Q: The study indicates that the Donlin Creek mine could benefit from the project, where is the mine? I don't understand the ranking table, the method seems confusing.

R: *The Donlin Creek mine is near the southern boundary of the project study area. The comparison chart is a very high level view that compares the alternatives to one another where a '+' indicates that the alternative has measureable benefits compared to the others, a '-' indicates the alternative has a measureable negative result compared to the others, and a '0' indicates that the alternative is comparable to others with no reason to place it above or below other alternatives.*

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: Just because you show boundaries around the designated wildlife refuges doesn't mean that wildlife will actually stay within the borders shown.

R: *Again, this is just a very high level study and we realize that actual migration routes will vary from year to year. At this point we're just trying to get a picture to see what the project will have to contend with.*

C: The selected route doesn't go anywhere near Donlin Creek or Ambler, how much is it anticipated that the road will actually be used for mineral resources? One trip per day? Ten trips per day? 100 trips per week?

R: *We don't have an answer to that question yet. We don't yet know if the road will be seasonal or year round, at what stage of development are the mines at, or what the cost of power at mining sites might be in order to reduce the minerals into a more usable form prior to shipment.*

C: How much of the route will be for real people to use or will it be more of an industrial route?

R: *It is intended to be a public route for use by everyone.*

C: It was conspicuously obvious that the report lacks any discussion of the development of broadband in the Interior, this would be a huge economic benefit.

R: *That was not considered as part of this study.*

C: The map doesn't show connections to villages, would they be connected?

R: *It is assumed that all communities along the route would be connected. For the purposes of this report that was not shown because there are some communities that may elect to remain unconnected to the roadway corridor.*

Q: What year's dollars was your basis of savings' studies based on?

R: *We based our studies on 2009 dollars. When we state, "we estimate a \$2,700 savings per person annually," that is 2009 dollars, even though actual construction of the road won't be for several years.*

Q: What will the road be like? Something like the road to Minto?

R: *It will be similar to the Dalton Highway or the Minto road, a two-lane gravel road with a thirty-foot top.*

Q: Why wouldn't we study the environmental impacts first?

R: *As part of our study, we did analyze some of the potential impacts, such as some of the impacts to the caribou migration. An in-depth environmental study has not been done yet, and we are only at a very preliminary study level.*

Q: What about a ferry to Nome, for the people who want to travel there, but not fly?

R: *We are not aware of any State plans to start a ferry from Southcentral AK to Nome. Nome does have barge service though, so goods are transported to Nome this way.*

Q: Your map in the back shows the road will not actually connect to the road, will these villages actually be connected or would they need to build spur roads to connect to the road.

R: *We chose to show the road not connecting to the villages, because we weren't certain if the villages wanted to be connected to the road. During this phase of the project we are travelling to all the potentially affected villages and seeing if they are in support of the road. After this phase of the project we will be making adjustments to the alignment of the road.*

Q: Have you looked at a railroad? You can move 426 tons of freight one mile on one gallon of fuel. There would be greater transportation savings costs with a railroad.

R: *We have looked at railroad costs and the limiting factor is the cost. Rail is 4 to 5 times as expensive per mile as road, because of the more demanding design parameters- with a railroad you can't break 1.5% grade and you need a very straight route. However, if a road was built to western Alaska, it would be much cheaper to build a railroad to western Alaska.*

C: In today's spending 2.7 billion dollars is nothing. Why not move ahead with both a road and a railroad!?

R: *Costs and funding limitations will likely be a big factor on what gets built.*

- C: Why not run from Nenana over to Tanana or Manley? There is an already established right of way from Nenana to Tanana; and there is some funding in place for a thirty mile stretch of road between Nenana and Tanana.
- R: *This is one potential route and we will consider this. We are not aware of the funding for the thirty mile stretch of road, but we will consider this. This route provides a more direct route from Nome to Anchorage. We have heard that the route will cross more wetlands and rivers, but it may well later be determined that this is the better route. It could be determined that both the Nenana and Manley to Tanana connections should be constructed.***
- C: Nenana is a good route and has good access to rail.
- Q: In your meetings with the villages have the residents been for or against the road?
- R: *Based on the responses we have had to date 60% of the people are for the project with the remaining 40% being either against it or undecided.***
- Q: How do the residents of the Seward Peninsula feel about the road?
- R: *The final public involvement report will break out how each of the villages visited feels with respect to the road.***
- C: Your statements on positive impacts I believe are overoptimistic, because it is based on all the mines in the area being developed- which would not happen. So the regions will not be benefitted as much as you say in the areas of job creation.
- R: *Thank you for the comment. Not all of the mines in the study area are assumed to be developed, and those we assumed to be developed, may not be. Others we did not assume to be developed, may be. If the mines are developed, we recognize it will happen over a long period of time.***
- Q: The Iron Dog snowmachine race goes from Anchorage to Nome to Fairbanks. There is an already established corridor for this race. Have you looked at using this route for the road?
- R: *At this point, we have not compared our routes to the Iron Dog race route. We have looked at the Iditarod trail and have considered the consequences of a road crossing the Iditarod trail. We will look at the Iron Dog route and how it lines up with our proposed routes.***
- C: You claim Route 3 could connect to Donlin Creek, and you are claiming these mineral resources to be a benefit to route 3. The State has a plan to build a road from the road system to Donlin Creek, so you can't claim the benefits of Donlin Creek Mine in your study because those resources will be accessed from a different road. Likewise with the Ambler mining district, the State plans to build a road to the Ambler district, so those mineral resources will be from a different road, so you can't claim those benefits in your study.
- R: *We are not aware of State plans to build a road to Donlin Creek, other than potentially a road to the Kuskokwim River. No firm decisions have been made. The DOT&PF is currently investigating road options to the Ambler mine.***

Q: A typical road cannot withstand industrial loads, was this considered in estimating the roadway cost? What is the cost of a heavy haul road?

R: *The proposed typical section is six feet thick. A foundation of this depth is similar to what can be found along the Dalton Highway and will be sufficient to support industrial traffic loads.*

Q: What is the timing and likelihood of the road getting constructed?

R: *The larger the proposed segments the longer it will take to obtain the necessary environmental permits and construction funding. It is therefore likely that the project will be broken into several phases. The actual design and construction is the easier part. At this time there is not estimate of when construction might begin, if it is decided that the State should move forward with the project.*