

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study  
Huslia Public Meeting Notes  
February 2, 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: Ethan Birkholz  
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak  
Tanana Chiefs Conference: Jerry Isaacs, Tony Delia

Attendance

43 attendees counted and 30 recorded on the sign-in sheet (not including those from the project team).

Presentation

Ethan Birkholz, 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: Now that you've explained the benefits of the project, explain the drawbacks.  
**R: *We will be getting to that shortly.***
- C: All the jobs you mention are temporary because they are all based on mineral resources. At some point the minerals will be exhausted and the jobs with them.
- C: With the influx of outside hunters and further competition for our subsistence needs we will be forced into more of a consumer lifestyle instead of our current subsistence lifestyle.
- Q: How many villages have you been to?  
**R: *Those shown on the slide plus five more this week and Kotzebue coming up shortly.***
- Q: And you only have about 250 responses to the questionnaires?!  
**R: *We've had many people at the meetings not fill them out and others have taken them to mail in later. The questionnaires are truly the best way we have to capture and quantify the feelings of village residents and I strongly encourage***

*everyone to complete one and turn it in. We are doing the best we can to take notes at all the meetings but that still doesn't always get your words exactly as you say them. Please take the time to fill out a questionnaire and turn it in.*

Q: What's the reason for the project? What's in Nome? Why not go to Kotzebue?

R: *It provides access to a greater population, is easier to construct, and has more historic value.*

C: Huslia is remote and we still have many problems with drugs and alcohol. Oil has brought many people to Alaska over the years and a road out this way will bring more people out here. With the construction of the road into Minto the villagers there now struggle to find moose to subsist off of. We already have outside pressure carving into our lands and while our moose population is stable right now, how much longer can we expect that to last with a road nearby.

C: Why not invest the money into a refinery in Nenana instead of a road? This will result in Alaska not having to ship oil out of state to be refined into gas and will truly result in a cost savings. From Nenana fuel could be barged to all of the villages.

Q: Is this meeting being recorded? I'd like to hear what other villages have to say.

R: *The meeting is not being recorded but we are taking notes and will post them on the project website for anyone to view.*

Q: Where is the money coming from to build the road?

R: *That is an unknown, there is no money at this time. It could be the State, Federal government, mining companies, other sources, or a combination of them all. At this point we haven't even determined if there will be a road.*

C: We shouldn't be talking about a project of this magnitude as deeply in debt as we are.

Q: Who is funding this study?

R: *The study is funded from State general funds.*

Q: We get funding from IRR, would you be asking for that funding from us?

R: *No*

C: So money would be coming from the State and not the BIA.

C: You're right about the future of our grandchildren and wildlife. We will be affected by this road. It is a huge disadvantage to us; we chose this rural, subsistence lifestyle. My relatives chose the city lifestyle and I chose the rural. If I wanted roads I'd move to Fairbanks.

C: A road would increase the flow of drugs and alcohol. This is a dry village. It would result in all kinds of problems.

- C: You should broadcast this over TV so more people can hear what we have to say.
- C: There are positives and negatives, these and many other issues need to get worked out. I'm not for or against the road. A transportation corridor would provide economic development and many rural schools are near to closing due to declining enrollment.

We need to look at the big picture; Alaska's saving grace has been oil. Oil output is declining rapidly and this is what funds our state. When the oil is gone, what will sustain us? We are seeing fewer dollars from the usual sources. The road could result in extending the feasibility of living in the Bush.

Huslia is starting to see an influx of people returning where most other villages are not. How can we maintain this trend? We want to maintain our culture and our lifestyle but if we keep having the problems we are where will we be without the road? Thirty years ago we stopped a road due to concerns about how it would impact our lifestyle. We have a chance again to have a road nearby and we should really consider it. Look at what development has done for the people benefitting from the Red Dog mine. The facilities they have available to them are so much better than anything we have. At the same time I'm opposed to the subsistence impacts.

- C: There has been talk for years of a hydroelectric dam on the Melozi River. While crossing the Melozi with this project I suggest building a dam to provide cheap hydroelectric power to communities in the area. It could also provide power for mining. If the road goes forward I propose the dam be strongly considered. Our social fabric has been tearing apart so we really need to strongly consider all impacts and what we want to do.
- C: Senator John McCain has stated that he will oppose anything to do with subsidizing air transportation. We need to begin considering sources that don't require subsidies and earmarks to continue to be viable.
- C: Things as we know them are coming to an end. We need to begin looking 100 years down the road.

Q: When did the push for the road start again?

**R: *The Governor put it on a list of high priority projects in 2008 and it received funding in 2009.***

Q: Why not build a road from Anchorage to Bethel? It will serve more people and provide access to the Donlin Creek mine.

**R: *It is significantly more difficult to construct a road in that area as well as there is historic and mining interest in the Nome area.***

C: It would have been great to have elders from Minto talk as they have already lived through having a road built into their lands.

**R: *We will be there tomorrow and will be sure to ask them that and put their responses on the website.***

Q: What is the status of the Susitna Dam project?

**R: *It is high on the Governor's priority list but like this project, cost is a big drawback.***

Q: Would the road get built at once or in parts?

**R: *Due to the cost it will have to be built in stages. There is also a study getting underway to study the feasibility of constructing a road to Ambler.***

Q: I just don't get a road to Nome. Is it to make work?

**R: *Ultimately it is to help reduce the cost of living in the villages and to provide opportunities for development and work.***

C: I live here for the remoteness.

C: I don't see how you can come here and talk about a road to Nome when we're so far in debt already.

**R: *The road would certainly need to be completed with some creative financing but ultimately it is likely that very little federal funding would be involved.***

C: We have so many more critical needs like schools right now over roads.

**R: *That is part of the issue, all of these projects will be competing for the same funding.***

C: A refinery in Nenana would benefit all the communities in the region instead of a road which just provides access to a few communities. Barge companies could move to Tanana and have fuel trucked in from Nenana.

Q: Does the State have plans for assisting in the development of natural resources? That could be a determining factor. Is it marketable?

**R: *Much of the information we have on mineral resources is pretty limited. Based on what we know we can't accurately assess the marketability or if the state would assist in the development.***

C: The road could be used for easier access to mineral exploration.

Q: What would be the chance of people coming in and homesteading?

**R: *That would be largely dependent upon who owns the land.***

C: \$2.2 billion is a small price to pay for the \$50 billion in minerals. This is great. But for something that will only be around for 10 years? The downside is that it will ruin our lifestyles. So, gas is cheaper for a few years, that isn't worth the

overall cost in dollars or lifestyles. Families used to earn \$40-50,000/year fishing during the summer. Now the State has come in and taken over the fisheries and we're allowed to fish 24 hours/day. Why can we fish those kinds of hours? Because there are no fish left to catch.

C: The road will be not be advantageous. It will result in more highway deaths and larger cemeteries.

C: The government is already cutting down on funding for law enforcement, we wouldn't be able to have sufficient law enforcement along the route to enforce game or traffic laws.

C: We already have too many hunters coming in. We already can't fish and now you want to take away our hunting too?! Sure gas might be cheaper but our hunters wouldn't need as much gas without the road and influx of hunters.

C: A lot of people out here watch *360 North*. If you really want people to hear what we have to say put this on TV and record us.

C: Some of the mines you show on the maps are closed.

**R:** *The study assumes that if the road is constructed that some of the currently closed mines would resume operation.*

C: I lived in Minto for a number of years and I recall seeing a non local hunter leave a bull moose in the middle of a lake. Minto has become so overhunted that villagers there can no longer get the meat they need to subsist.

C: I saw hunters come into Bettles with a snow machine on a trailer. He stayed there for four days and killed twenty caribou. One hunter! He could take five a day and was there for four days. What does anyone need with twenty caribou?!

C: If you are trying to create a vast project like Alaskans seem to like, don't go with a road. Propose the hydroelectric dam at the Melozi, it is also a vast project but will help many people instead of hurt them.

Q: Freight to Nome is cheaper than it is to anywhere here in the Interior. Why propose a road to somewhere that is cheaper than more expensive?

**R:** *To haul freight from Nome into the interior.*

C: Will the road really make a difference in fuel costs?

Q: The route misses towns such as Ruby and Galena. Is it assumed there will be spur roads?

**R:** *There is still a significant amount of realignment that would be necessary as this is a very high level view but it is assumed that spur roads would be*

*constructed to villages. The reason the map doesn't show the spur roads is because some villages may elect to not be connected to the road.*

Q: If property were needed to construct the road, would people be paid for their property?

R: *Yes, people would be paid at Fair Market Value.*

Q: So people may have no say if they don't want to sell?

R: *All possible efforts will be made during route selection to avoid property where acquisitions might be needed.*

C: So the government might have to resort to eminent domain?

R: *If absolutely necessary that is a possibility.*

Q: What does Gana-A'Yoo say about crossing their lands near Galena?

R: *They didn't speak up at the Galena meeting.*