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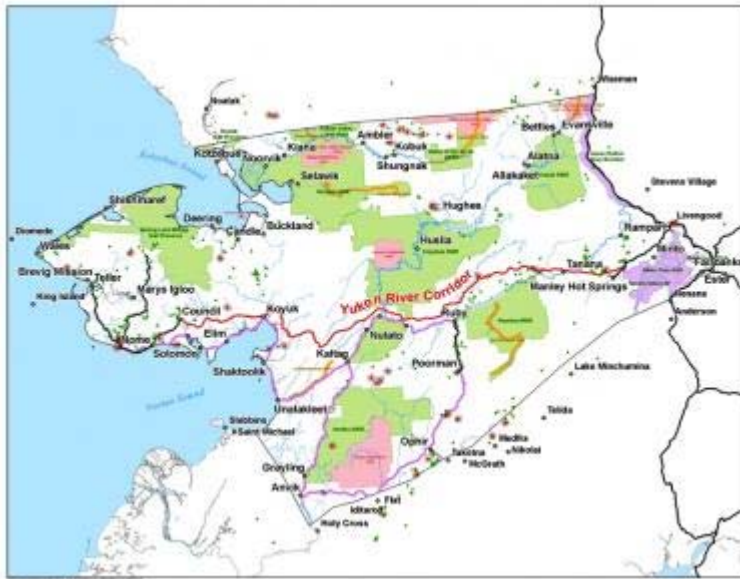
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Time to build a 500-mile road to Nome? Share your thoughts today in Anchorage

Posted by thevillage

Posted: February 9, 2011 - 3:42 pm



In a new look at an old idea, the state has spent about \$2 million over the past two years researching a potential 500-mile road to Nome. Gov. Sean Parnell is asking for another \$1.25 million this year for more planning and design.

Supporters see the road as a way to unlock mining deposits and lower the price of food and fuel in villages. Critics eye the price tag – as much as \$5.4 million per mile according to a 2010 report -- and fear a boondoggle in the making.

Good idea? Bad?

You can weigh in tomorrow night in Anchorage, as the Department of Transportation collects comments on the

Rural blog



The Village is a Daily News blog about life and politics in rural Alaska. Its main author is ADN reporter Kyle Hopkins. Come here for breaking news on village issues, plus interviews, videos and photos. But that's just part of the story. We want to feature your pictures, videos and stories, too. Think of The Village as your bulletin board. E-mail us anything you'd like to share with the rest of Alaska -- your letters to the editor, the photos of your latest hunt or video of your latest potlatch. (We love video.)

Contributor

Kyle Hopkins

I was born in Sitka, have lived in Kake, Skagway and Fairbanks and joined the ADN in 2005 after writing for the Anchorage Press and Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. I started blogging for the paper in 2006 with The Trail, our blog about the governor's race. Then came the Alaska Politics blog. Now I'm covering government and rural affairs and live in Anchorage with my wife, Rebecca. (Update: Our daughter Alice was born May 31. Thanks everyone for the suggestions.) E-mail me at khopkins@adn.com and find me on Twitter at twitter.com/ADNVillage.

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proposed route Yukon River route from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Romig Middle School, 2500 Minnesota Dr.

Visit [the project website](#) for more info or [to submit a comment](#) online.

At 500 miles, the proposal amounts to building a road from the Super Bowl towns of Pittsburgh to Green Bay. Except instead of crossing Middle America, you'd be bridging the Yukon River and building across remote mountains and wetlands.

It's unclear when, if ever the road will be built. No money has been set aside yet for design or construction.

Alaskans have talked about connecting Fairbanks to the Seward Peninsula in Western Alaska for decades. Former Gov. Sarah Palin said she was pursuing the project in her state of the state speech in early 2009. "We need access to our resources," she said.



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Parnell highlighted the project again a year later as an Anchorage engineering firm published a state-funded study recommending a route that would roughly parallel the Yukon River.

It would start near Manley Hot Springs and follow the river through Interior villages to Norton sound. The cost: \$2.3 billion to \$2.7 billion, the firm said.

Here's the state's [list of frequently asked questions](#). Perhaps the biggest question of all – who would or should pay for the road -- remains unanswered.

Would the state fund the whole thing? Is any federal cash available despite the White House's current anti-earmark message? Would the mining industry, which stands to benefit from easier access to mining deposits, help cover the costs?

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- [Kivgiq begins today in Barrow. Send photos!](#) - 2/9/2011 10:24 am
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The state has already held dozens of public meetings. People in villages and towns along the route often asked, or commented, on how the road might change life in their hometowns.

At the Nome meeting, one person said the road would make villages more sustainable and reduce costs, prompting people to move back to villages, **the state says**. Others said the road is really about helping mining, not people, and worried about the route crossing village lands that residents rely on for food.

Read more comments about the road proposal from recent meetings along the proposed route [here](#).

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