

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Nenana Public Meeting Notes
October 28, 2010**

Open House	6:00-6:45 p.m.
Presentation	6:50-7:30 p.m.
Question & Comments	7:30-8:00 p.m.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Dwight Stuller, Brandon Telford

Attendance

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

Open House

Attendees were able to visit project display stations, view project information, ask questions, and share comments on the Western Alaska Access Planning Study.

Presentation

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: Why does your presentation compare routes by construction length rather than driving distance between Fairbanks and Nome?

R: Construction length has a direct impact on total cost of the project. The study includes a comparison of driving distance between Fairbanks and Nome. Of the Alternatives, the Yukon River Corridor has the shortest driving distance between Fairbanks and Nome. We will add the driving distances to the presentation slides.

Q: Does the study consider the cost of constructing spur roads to the communities near the corridor?

R: Yes, the study compared the cost of constructing spur roads from the corridor to nearby communities. The Yukon River Corridor had a higher cost to connect to communities than Corridor Route 1 because it connected to more communities.

Q: Why not use the money you're proposing to spend on the corridor to build a gas pipeline that will connect rural communities to lower priced fuel?

R: *The objective of the study is to investigate access to Western Alaska. A gas pipeline with spurs to communities in Western Alaska may reduce energy costs but does not provide access to Western Alaska. A road would reduce the costs of constructing a gas pipeline or power line. A gas line might not be feasible without a road and mining development that requires a gas pipeline or power line.*

C: If the corridor is altered so that it passes through Ruby it would connect to the existing mining road between Ruby and Poorman.

C: The corridor should begin at Nenana rather than the Elliott Highway. Most freight traffic will be coming from Anchorage and a connection at Nenana would reduce the driving distance between Anchorage and Nome. The sections of existing highway between Nenana and the corridor connection on the Elliott Highway are in bad shape and it may be cheaper to build the connection from Nenana to Tanana than to upgrade the existing highway.

R: *Please put this comment on the questionnaire. This could be considered as another option in the phasing/staging/construction alternatives task we will be completing over the next few months.*

C: If the preferred corridor is constructed Nenana will lose the barging businesses. At least if the connection were made between Tanana and Nenana, Nenana could become a hub community.

C: There was a large project recently that connected the electric grids along the rail-belt. The major tie-in is located near Nenana; which is another good reason to tie the corridor into Nenana.

Q: Is your slide showing driving between Ruby and Nome as more expensive than flying accurate?

R: *Yes. The economic study conducted by Northern Economics in January 2010 found that a one-way airfare was more expensive than driving one-way from Ruby to Nome (\$195-airfare, \$143-driving assuming 2 people in the vehicle). If the number of travelers in the vehicle increases the driving costs are shared with more people so the per capita costs of driving go down.*

C: I don't believe that shipping fuel by truck is less expensive than shipping fuel by barge.

Q: If propane is so much cheaper than diesel why is it not being barged into communities now? If propane is not being used due to a lack of infrastructure than the cost savings shown in your presentation are misleading.

R: *The "Feasibility Study of Propane Distribution Throughout Coastal Alaska" conducted by PND, Inc. in 2005 found that propane was not currently a feasible alternative fuel in communities where 9 months or more storage was required due to*

the high cost of propane storage. The economic study conducted by Northern Economics in January 2010 found that a road corridor would allow year-round delivery of propane and eliminate the need for large long term storage facilities.

C: I know that subsistence issues are a priority in Rural Alaska, but if the corridor were built and more jobs were available, people would have the means to take time off to live the subsistence lifestyle. They would be able to afford the transportation and fuel to hunt.

C: Nenana was here before the road, but since the road and railroad landed on us we've been treated like we have the same culture as Anchorage and Fairbanks. We do not have the same culture as Anchorage and Fairbanks and we try to live a subsistence lifestyle. Communities that will be connected to the corridor will have to deal with a change in attitudes toward them.

C: Your presentation says that you're going after minerals and mines. I don't believe you are considering impacts to villages.

C: When Native Alaskans don't have access to subsistence foods we get diseases such as diabetes.

C: My daughter can tell the difference in taste between subsistence foods from the Nenana area and subsistence foods from our old home, Koyukuk. There is something different about the subsistence foods here where there is the highway and railroad.

C: Alaska has a high rate of boat-related fatalities; a highway may change primary modes of transportation in the communities along the corridor, which may save lives.

Q: Is a railroad more environmentally sound than a highway?

R: *The footprint of construction would be similar, but the social impacts, cost, and economic feasibility would be different.*

C: You need to see the hunting traffic that comes into the Nenana area during moose season to use the river for hunting access. If the corridor is constructed the hunting pressure on areas accessed by the corridor will be much greater.

Q: Where will the funding for this project come from?

R: *If the Alaska State Legislature decides to pursue construction of the corridor they will appropriate funding for the project. The funding might come from a mix of State, Federal, and possibly private funding sources.*

C: Outside hunting pressures can cause a great deal of animosity in rural areas that rely on subsistence.

Q: Are resource developers the reason this study is happening?

R: The primary reasons the study is being accomplished is to connect the Fairbanks area to Nome to improve community access and sustainability, provide jobs, and encourage resource development.