

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Nulato Public Meeting Notes
November 9, 2010**

Presentation	11:00 A.M. – 11:40 A.M.
Question & Comments	11:40 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak

Attendance

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

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: Route 2B is the Yukon River Corridor?

R: Yes.

Q: How long ago was this study completed? The Illinois Creek mine has been closed for five years now.

R: The study assumes that if the road is built that the mine will be reopened in order to extract the remaining ore.

Q: The study is state funded, how come the routes don't go through more federal land?

R: The project will go through federal lands, just not through the designated federal wilderness areas as there are too many restrictions on those lands and getting permitted access across them will probably be very difficult, if not impossible.

Q: Alaska has a huge reserve of funds, why not use that?

R: We can't ultimately speak for where the funds to construct, if any, will come from, we can only make recommendations. Additionally, there are many interests competing for the same money.

C: Nulato has one of the lowest median income levels in the Interior at \$7,000/year compared to Galena at \$15,000/year.

Q: What about building a portage corridor from Kaltag to Unalakleet and possibly up to Nulato?

R: We will make note of the possible desire for the portage corridor and inform the State of it.

C: A transportation corridor will significantly lower the cost of living in Nulato.

Q: Why did the other communities you've been to favor the Yukon River Corridor versus the other route options? Why not pick one that goes through their own country?

R: We have mostly visited communities near the route so far.

C: The Yukon River Corridor is where we are going to be directly affected. The way the questions in the questionnaire are worded favors this Corridor.

R: The survey was definitely not intended to be biased but it does ask if people favor the Yukon River Corridor versus the other options.

Q: This study isn't new; it's been going on for 20 years or so. Where is it at? Is there a feasibility study yet?

R: There have been many studies investigating a route to Nome; this particular study has been ongoing since 2008. We have looked at several options and narrowed them to one preferred alternative to find out if it is the right one. Ultimately we're just trying to get comments from the many communities that might be affected by the project to get a sense of who would like to see the corridor and who doesn't, or if there are better options. Before the State spends more money on the project they want to know if it is desired.

C: Others may have already performed the environmental study for you as part of one of the prior studies.

R: Many of the environmental regulations have changed significantly since that time. If it is determined that there is desire for the project to move forward we will need to perform a new environmental study and will be back out to gather additional information from all of the villages that could be impacted by the road.

C: Like other communities along the potential route we are worried about subsistence and always will be. At some point or other you're going to have to favor the road or subsistence. Subsistence will be impacted but the road will lower the cost of living so much that it will outweigh the subsistence impacts.

C: The road will bring people to the village that we don't want here.

R: Management of access control and designating game management areas may be desired by some villages. Tanana discussed putting together a working committee to deal with this very issue.

Q: How long will it be before the road is actually built?

R: *The larger the road segments are the longer it will take to get the project to a point where construction can be ready. In all likelihood the project will be broken into smaller segments with end points defined by villages or resource access. It is very difficult to predict because of the many years and uncertainties about funding and environmental approvals.*

C: Is anyone working on a marine highway? The closest deep sea port at the moment is in Anchorage, it might be feasible to construct another in Unalakleet or Nome and then construct shorter road segments to hub communities.

C: Going to the effort of doing a study now and not building the road is a waste of money. Build the road.

C: Outsiders may move in and build their own cities or villages, putting up private property signs and limiting our access. This could impact our future generations. Has this been talked about? We want to keep the land native. If minerals are found, native people will be kicked off of their own land.

Q: What percent of people must approve or desire the project in order to get the road?

R: *We don't know.*

C: You really need to get the opinion of everyone living in all of the villages.

C: I admire the concerns Justin has expressed. We've lost so much control over our lands already because of ANCSA. The villages tend to be very Anti-Regional Corporation.

C: To date, where have you had the largest turnout for the project?

R: *We had about 50 at Tanana, 35 at Nome, and 20 at Nenana.*

Q: Are miners the group pushing hardest for the road to gain access to mineral sources, particularly along Route 1?

R: *There is actually going to be a separate study getting underway shortly to look specifically at a road to the Ambler mining district.*

C: One of the problems we have is that if the Governor is a proponent of the project, he needs to show he cares about the people in the villages by coming out here himself to hear what the people have to say.

C: At the Tanana Chiefs Conference last March, the TCC passed a resolution in favor of the road.

C: Bring door prizes next time you come, you'll get a better turnout.