

Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Ruby Public Meeting Notes
February 2, 2011

Open House	12:00 P.M. – 12:30 P.M.
Presentation	12:30P.M. – 1:10 P.M.
Question & Comments	1:10 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Ethan Birkholz
DOWL HKM: Tom Middendorf, Alex Prosak
Tanana Chiefs Conference: Jerry Isaacs, Tony Delia

Attendance

19 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: Where minerals are identified, are those potential sites and how do they fit into the overall plan?

R: *The minerals are quantifiable based on information contained in public records.*

Q: So they are potential?

R: *Correct.*

Q: What costs more, road or railroad?

R: *Railroads are 4 to 5 times more expensive than roads to build and to maintain. Also, railroads are more restricted due to grades so a rail route will also likely be longer, further increasing the cost over a road.*

Q: Can you leave additional questionnaires for us to have at the tribal office for villagers to fill out.

R: *Yes!*

Q: Where are we in the overall process?

R: *If the road does get built it will likely get built in segments due to the overall length and cost. Getting the environmental permitting done and finding funding sources will take the longest time, design and construction is the easy portion of the project. If the project is broken down into shorter segments it will likely be able to be built more quickly.*

Q: Your current work on the project ends in May?

R: *Correct. At that point ADOT can either select to extend the contract or elect to select another consultant. Additional work might include collecting aerial photography for route refinement, beginning environmental work for a phase of the work or continuing the public involvement process among other things.*

Q: Does the website include updates?

R: *Yes, we keep minutes of all the meetings and post them generally within a couple of weeks after a meeting has been held.*

C: I like the idea of a corridor even though it is farther from Ruby. If the project goes forward I suggest you work with individual tribes as they all have federal connections with either FHWA or BIA.

Q: Exactly how serious is the State? The road has been considered before. We've been hearing for years about a Ruby to McGrath connection.

R: *The Governor is very serious about moving forward with this project. Two additional projects that are being evaluated are a road to the Ambler mining district and the Foothills Access Study.*

C: I want to be able to drive on the road before I get too old.

Q: You indicated that crossing a federal wildlife reserve is a potential 'deal breaker', why is this?

R: *In addition to meeting all of the environmental permitting requirements, which for a wildlife reserve are very extensive, it would also require an act of Congress. Getting the approval of the United States Congress for crossing a protected area will be extremely difficult if not downright impossible.*