

**Western Alaska Access Planning Study
Tanana Public Meeting Notes
October 27, 2010**

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

Project Team Representation

AK DOT&PF: Alexa Greene

DOWL HKM: Steve Noble, Tom Middendorf, Dwight Stuller

Attendance

45 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, the project goals and objectives, and schedule.

Tom Middendorf, DOWL HKM, presented an overview of the Corridor Planning Report.

Questions & Comments

Q = Question R = Response C = Comment

Q: Gas prices that are listed in the plan, where did those figures come from?

R: The gas prices are estimates that will vary a lot depending on quantities used and proximity of gas stations to communities or villages.

Q: Can they construct portions first, like Manley to Tanana?

R: Yes, the project would most likely be built in phases which possibly could also include a temporary crossing at the Yukon, such as a barge or ferry.

Q: How soon will the project start?

R: It is not clear whether it will start. If project funding was approved, and environmental documentation of a first segment was completed, the first phase could be designed over 2 – 3 years and then construction could begin. Funding and environmental documentation would be most time consuming. If State funds were

used the environmental process would be shorter. There will be many public meetings as part of the environmental process.

Q: If the road crosses Native land does it need an EIS for those areas?

R: *Land ownership is not the primary determinant of whether an EIS is needed. An EIS will probably be needed for both Native and non-Native lands.*

Q: Where would the funding come from to build the road?

R: *Funding sources are unclear at this time but could come from State, Federal, private or possibly a combination of these sources.*

Q: Where would the Maintenance & Operation (M&O) funding come from?

R: *Probably State general funds.*

Q: Who has the ultimate authority to select the route?

R: *It would be a combined effort with communities, land owners, state and federal agencies. Ultimately it would be the State who would make the final decision. A federal agency would probably need to approve the route selection as part of an environmental process.*

Q: Have there been concerns expressed about hunting access for the road?

R: *Yes, it was a common concern at other meetings.*

Q: Who enforces game regulations?

R: *It could be several agencies, including the State Troopers, Federal Rangers, local Borough police and possibly others.*

Q: Why did you not look at starting at Eureka?

R: *We only had USGS maps to use for topographic analysis, and were looking for routes that minimized distance and costs. If there are good reasons for starting at Eureka, please provide them and this could be reconsidered as the refined corridor route is determined.*

Q: Was a railroad considered as part of this study?

R: *Yes, a railroad was considered but the construction and maintenance cost would be considerably higher (4 to 5 times.) It also would be more expensive for passenger travel from the villages than a road. For example, it's more expensive to take the train from Fairbanks to Anchorage than to fly or drive and it takes considerably longer. Having a road would reduce the costs of building a rail line, if one were ever needed.*

Q: Did you figure in the costs of the ferries?

R: *No, the cost estimate is for all the crossings being permanent bridges. However, we will be looking at less expensive options, such as ferries, over the next few months.*

Q: How many community comments are you going to have?

R: We received quite a few comments during the meetings. We received about 60 filled-in comment sheets so far.

Q: Are you coming back to Tanana?

R: We will not be returning to Tanana as part of this study; however, there will be numerous community meetings and involvement if future environmental and design project phases are approved and funded.

C: Even with all these comments it's going to take another 20 years.

R: It will probably take a great deal of time to obtain funding and complete environmental documentation. Design will be more straightforward. If only smaller segments are funded, then the process could go quicker for each segment.

Q: Is it possible to guarantee local hire for the construction of the road?

R: The way the contracts can be written depends on how the Legislature decides to fund the project. If Federal Highway funds are used on the project, local hire cannot be guaranteed in the contract.

Q: Will the project include training locals to work on the construction of the highway?

R: Training might be available through union training programs or possibly the Alaska Labor and workforce development program.

Q: Would construction jobs be union?

R: Probably, but it depends on the funding source.

Q: Was this project compared to other similar roads?

R: For cost estimating we compared this to the Dalton Highway, the Juneau Access, and other major highway projects in Alaska and the Lower 48.

Q: How many Bridges or Ferry crossings are there?

R: There are 2 major river crossings requiring bridges (Yukon and Koyukuk), 12 lesser river crossings requiring bridges, and 131 stream crossings requiring smaller bridges or culverts. Ferry crossings might be an interim less expensive option for some rivers.

Q: When are visits to the other villages scheduled?

R: Between now and March 2011.

Q: How soon until the construction of the bridge crossing start?

R: It is not clear whether it will start. If project funding was approved, and environmental documentation of a first segment was completed, the first phase could be designed over 2 – 3 years and then construction could begin. Funding and environmental documentation would be most time consuming. If State funds were used the environmental process would be shorter.

Q: Where would the bridge be located?

R: Most likely somewhere in the vicinity of and upstream of the confluence of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. A specific site would be determined later.

Q: What about access to Ruby? Will there be another bridge?

R: There will most likely not be another bridge across the Yukon to Ruby because of the expense, unless it was required for a major resource development. There could possibly be another means of crossing such as a ferry and winter ice road.

Q: Once the road is funded, how long will it take to build it?

R: If project funding was approved, and environmental documentation of a first segment was completed, the first phase could be designed over 2 – 3 years and then construction could begin. The timeframe for construction would depend on the length of road and number of bridges being constructed.

Q: Will there be drilling before the road is built?

R: Yes, the road, material sites and especially the bridge sites will require geotechnical drilling.

C: The 1st series of meetings sets the tone for the project. The community must be specific on its needs and concerns. We must have a community plan in place well ahead of the rest of the project.

C: The Livengood to Manley road has lots of road hunters, it's really busy during moose season, and the resources are already scarce in this area. The proposed route from Manley passes near Fish Lake, which is an important hunting and subsistence area for the residents of Tanana.

R: Please identify this area on the map, and we will consider if there are options that minimize conflicts with the Fish Lake area.

C: Our main concern is non-resident hunters; on the Dalton Highway they opened it up to bow hunting only and there are lots and lots of people up there road hunting.

R: Residents would likely want to work with Fish and Game, landowners, and others to develop management plans.

Q: How soon will comments be posted?

R: They will be posted on the web site within a few weeks of the meetings.

Q: Does the web site have a place to post questions?

R: Yes, there is an email address on the site you can use to send questions.