

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

PO Box 112506
6860 GLACIER HIGHWAY
JUNEAU, AK 99811-2506

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

PHONE: (907) 465-1763
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March 8, 2010

RE: Gravina Access Project Screening Report

Dear Participating Agency Representative and other interested parties:

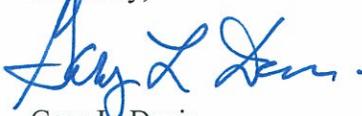
We are providing the attached *Gravina Access Project Alternatives Screening Report* on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The purpose of this report is to explain how FHWA and DOT&PF identified the alternatives that will be evaluated in detail in the Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

In February 2009, the DOT&PF invited cooperating, participating, and other interested agencies to comment on the *Gravina Access Pre-Screening Alternatives Memorandum* and the *Draft Screening Methodology*. Agency comments on the alternatives and screening methods have been incorporated into the screening report.

As noted in the attached screening report, the FHWA and DOT&PF developed a screening process that examined a full range of alternatives using screening criteria related to cost, purpose and need for the project, and potential environmental impacts. Through this process, the FHWA and DOT&PF have identified potential reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the SEIS. These are shown in a figure attached to this letter. FHWA and DOT&PF intend to release a draft SEIS to the public in mid 2010, a final SEIS in mid 2011, and a new Record of Decision in Fall 2011.

We are interested in your comments on the attached screening report. *If you have any comments or concerns regarding the attached report, please submit them in writing or via email no later than the close of business on Friday, April 16, 2010.* For more information, please feel free to contact Reuben Yost, the Project Environmental Coordinator, at (907) 465-1774 or via email at reuben.yost@alaska.gov or Jim Lowell, the Project Manager, at (907) 465-1799 or via email at jim.lowell@alaska.gov or you may visit the project website at www.gravina-access.com. Thank you for your continued participation in the Gravina Access Project.

Sincerely,



Gary L. Davis
Regional Director
DOT&PF Southeast Region

cc: David C. Miller, FHWA Alaska Division Administrator

Distribution List:

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Dan Bockhorst, Borough Manager, Ketchikan Gateway Borough

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Chris McNeil, Sealaska Corporation

Frank Jones, President, Cape Fox Corporation

Karl Cook Jr., Mayor, Metlakatla Indian Community

Lee Wallace, President, Organized Village of Saxman

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March 8, 2010

RE: Gravina Access Project Screening Report

Mr. Dan Bockhorst, Borough Manager
Ketchikan Gateway Borough
1900 First Avenue, Suite 210
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Dear Mr. Bockhorst:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) transmit with this letter a copy of the *Gravina Access Project Alternatives Screening Report*. The screening report explains the process used by FHWA and DOT&PF to examine a full range of alternatives and identify those alternatives that are reasonable and should be evaluated in detail in the Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The screening factors used to identify reasonable alternatives include cost, ability to meet the purpose and need for the project, and potential environmental impacts. The alternatives examined in this process and the screening criteria were developed with input from the cooperating, participating, and other interested agencies. The attached map shows the proposed reasonable alternatives identified for detailed analysis in the SEIS.

As noted in a letter to you from David C. Miller, Division Administrator for the Federal Highway Administration on July 23, 2009, FHWA and DOT&PF have considered the comments and requests made by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly in Resolution No. 2138 during the alternatives screening process. This letter explains how the FHWA and DOT&PF have addressed those comments and requests.

Section 1 of Resolution No. 2138 recommends that the DOT&PF no longer pursue high cost alternatives. The FHWA's and DOT&PF's screening criterion for cost is based on the September 17, 2009, letter from DOT&PF Commissioner, Leo von Scheben, to Gary L. Davis, DOT&PF Southeast Regional Director, which sets a cost ceiling of \$305 million.

Section 2 of Resolution No. 2138 recommends no further consideration of low bridge alternatives near the airport. The environmental screening factors include criteria for potential impacts to navigation. Any bridge that would preclude passage of large cruise ships through Tongass Narrows was eliminated from further consideration because it would not be permitted by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Section 3 of Resolution No. 2138 endorses further study of Alternatives F3, F3v, and C3-4; and requests a determination from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on the feasibility of Alternative C3-4 with respect to potential impacts on Part 77 airspace. The DOT&PF cost ceiling eliminates Alternative F3v from detailed consideration. The DOT&PF requested FAA to conduct an aeronautical study of Alternative C3-4 to

determine whether it would affect safe and efficient utilization of navigable airspace. The FAA determined the alternative, with proper marking and lighting, would not be a hazard to air navigation.

Section 4 of Resolution No. 2138 expresses the Borough's concern for high operation and maintenance costs of the ferry alternatives, as well as concerns related to travel time and traffic congestion. The Borough expressed support for a new ferry alternative that would include 12 elements listed in the resolution. The following list describes the 12 elements and how FHWA and DOT&PF addressed them in the screening process.

- 1. Purchase of the estimated 3-acre parcel adjoining the western end of the Revillagigedo Island parking lot for expansion of airport parking and freight terminal.**
- 2. Development of a ¾-acre (or larger) heavy freight terminal on the 3-acre parcel.**
- 3. Further development of the 3-acre parcel to include paving lighting, water, sewer, covered walkways, security cameras, fencing, landscaping, parking meter system, sidewalks, and Tongass Highway access improvements.**

The ferry alternatives will include a 60-passenger waiting facility with restrooms at the existing ferry terminal on Revillagigedo Island and other improvements to the terminal site, including expansion of paved parking areas, lighting, security, water, sewer, covered walkways, security cameras, fencing, landscaping, parking meter system, sidewalks, and Tongass Highway access improvements. These improvements may require acquisition of adjoining land for additional parking. DOT&PF will assess the need for additional parking based on traffic studies in the SEIS and consider acquisition as needed. DOT&PF will not consider provisions for a new heavy freight terminal as part of this project. Heavy freight facilities exist on Revillagigedo Island. There is no need for new heavy freight handling facilities.

- 4. Improved marine facilities for freight barges and fuel barges on Gravina Island.**

Improved marine facilities for freight barges and fuel barges on Gravina Island have been incorporated into the ferry alternatives.

- 5. Expansion and development of parking on Gravina Island (paving, lighting, security cameras, fencing, landscaping, parking meter system, and sidewalks) without encroaching on space currently used or reserved for General Aviation parking for airplanes.**

Evaluation of ferry alternatives in the SEIS will consider the potential for future expansion of parking facilities on Gravina Island at the airport and, if it is determined to be a reasonably foreseeable future action, the expansion of parking facilities on Gravina Island will be included in the cumulative impact assessment.

- 6. Payment of all outstanding debt incurred by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough for the *MV Oral Freeman* and other improvements at the Ketchikan International Airport.**

As noted in the July 23, 2009, letter from David C. Miller, this element would not be eligible for federal assistance and does not pertain directly to the purpose and need for the project. It is not included in an alternative.

- 7. Reconstruction of the present ferry ramps on Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island (e.g., hydraulic systems are exposed to salt water).**

Under a ferry alternative, the ferry ramps would be reconstructed if needed to meet current design standards.

- 8. Remove "I-90 Floating Bridge Dock" and construct new boat dock on Gravina Island to handle vessels up to 100 feet long (with ramp to the dock for access by vehicles).**

Each of the ferry alternatives will include a layup dock so that maintenance layup can occur without blocking use of a ferry terminal. Constructing an additional length of dock for public use would not address the purpose of improving surface transportation between Revilla and Gravina islands for vehicles, bicycles

and pedestrians. In the past, joint use (ferry and public tie-up) docks have been built in other communities with the municipality providing funds for the public portion of the dock. The SEIS will discuss the possibility of constructing a longer dock with a public use section if the Borough acquires the required funds.

9. **Relocate the existing seaplane pull-out approximately 100 yards to the west.**

This is not an element that would improve surface transportation between Revilla and Gravina islands for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Relocating the seaplane pullout to improve seaplane operations is an FAA airport layout issue. Seaplane pullout relocation would only be included in a Gravina Access Project alternative if the physical layout of the alternative required it.

10. **Upgrade and improve all existing sidewalks and wheelchair ramps on the Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island ferry and airport sites.**

The ferry alternatives considered in the screening process include the facilities described in this element.

11. **Establishment of a "Gravina Access Permanent Fund" with monies provided by the State of Alaska, the proceeds of which can be used to fund in part or in full the cost of operating the airport ferry service.**

12. **Establishment of terminal facilities for passengers and baggage handling on Revillagigedo Island.**

These last two elements are not included in the ferry alternatives. As noted in the July 23, 2009, letter from David C. Miller, these elements would not be eligible for federal assistance and do not pertain directly to the purpose and need for the project.

In Section 5 of Resolution No. 2138, the Borough states its position that the No Action Alternative is unacceptable. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the FHWA and DOT&PF must consider a no action alternative in the environmental review process.

Please notify us if you have any questions about this letter or the contents of the screening report. *If you have any comments or concerns regarding the attached report, please submit them in writing or via email no later than the close of business on Friday, April 16, 2010.* FHWA and DOT&PF are committed to consulting closely with the Borough before identifying a preferred alternative or selecting a construction action.

FHWA and DOT&PF intend to release a draft SEIS to the public in mid 2010, a final SEIS in mid 2011, and a new Record of Decision in Fall 2011. For more information, please feel free to contact Reuben Yost, the Project Environmental Coordinator, at (907) 465-1774 or via email at reuben.yost@alaska.gov, or Jim Lowell, the Project Manager, at (907) 465-1799 or via email at jim.lowell@alaska.gov or you may visit the project website at www.gravina-access.com. Thank you for your continued participation in the Gravina Access Project.

Sincerely,



Gary L. Davis
Regional Director
DOT&PF Southeast Region

cc: David C. Miller, FHWA Alaska Division Administrator

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March 8, 2010

Chief, Bridge Section Waterways
Management & Navigation Safety Branch
US Coast Guard
P.O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Re: Gravina Access Project Screening Report

Dear Mr. Helfinstine:

We are providing the attached *Gravina Access Project Alternatives Screening Report* on behalf of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The purpose of this report is to explain how FHWA and DOT&PF identified the alternatives that will be evaluated in detail in the Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

In February 2009, the DOT&PF invited cooperating, participating, and other interested agencies to comment on the *Gravina Access Pre-Screening Alternatives Memorandum* and the *Draft Screening Methodology*. Agency comments on the alternatives and screening methods (provided in Appendix A of the attached screening report) have been considered and incorporated into the screening report.

As noted in the attached screening report, the FHWA and DOT&PF developed a screening process that examined a full range of alternatives using screening criteria related to cost, purpose and need for the project, and potential environmental impacts. Through this process, the FHWA and DOT&PF have identified proposed reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the SEIS. These are shown in a figure attached to this letter. FHWA and DOT&PF intend to release a draft SEIS to the public in mid 2010, a final SEIS in mid 2011, and a new Record of Decision in Fall 2011.

You will note that one of the reasonable alternatives to be evaluated in the SEIS is Alternative F3, which you may remember consists of two bridges at Pennock Island: the East Channel bridge would have a vertical clearance of 60 feet and the West Channel bridge would have a vertical clearance of 200 feet. Alternative F3 was studied extensively during the development of the original EIS in response to USCG, marine pilot, and cruise ship operator concerns related to navigation, particularly for large cruise ships transiting the West Channel. In the 2004 Final EIS for the Gravina Access Project, the DOT&PF included widening of West Channel as part of Alternative F3 to improve its navigational safety for large vessels, a recommendation resulting, in part, from vessel simulations conducted during development of

the original EIS. The Final EIS further stated, "If Alternative F3 were selected, DOT&PF would further investigate the possibility of realigning the bridges and evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with that realignment." DOT&PF did not receive comments on the Final EIS concerning these measures to improve the navigational safety of Alternative F3.

With identification of Alternative F3 as a proposed reasonable alternative for the SEIS, DOT&PF has prepared preliminary engineering designs that realign the Alternative F3 bridges so that they would cross perpendicular to East and West Channels to reduce the risk of allisions. The realignment also allows the West Channel bridge to tie into the existing Gravina Island Highway. These modifications are shown in the attached figure.

As we move forward in the development of the Draft SEIS, it would be helpful to have your input on Alternative F3 in its current configuration. Please let me know if you'd like to schedule a meeting with our staff.

We are also interested in your comments on the attached screening report. *If you have any comments or concerns regarding the attached report, please submit them in writing or via email no later than the close of business on Friday, April 16, 2010.* For more information, please feel free to contact Reuben Yost, the Project Environmental Coordinator, at (907) 465-1774 or via email at reuben.yost@alaska.gov, or Jim Lowell, the Project Manager, at (907) 465-1799 or via email at jim.lowell@alaska.gov or you may visit the project website at www.gravina-access.com. Thank you for your continued participation in the Gravina Access Project.

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Gary L. Davis
Regional Director
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