



**HAINES HIGHWAY MP 3.5 TO 25.3
PROJECT NUMBER 68606/SHAK-095-6(28)
PUBLIC MEETING NOTES**

SUBJECT: Haines Highway MP 3.5 TO 25.3

DATE: March 4, 2009

TIME: 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Chilkat Center, Haines

PROJECT TEAM ATTENDEES:

State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF)

Jim Scholl
Jim Heumann
Carl Schrader
Arne Oydna

DOWL HKM

Steve Noble
Kristen Hansen
Lana Davis
Michela Spitz

Inter-Fluve

Dan Miller

Southeast Strategies

Linda Snow

A second public meeting for the Haines Highway Improvements was held on March 4, 2009 at the Chilkat Center in Haines, Alaska.

A newsletter announcing the workshop was mailed on February 16, 2009 to all property owners whose property is adjacent to the alignment alternative and all interested parties in the project database. The workshop was advertised in the Juneau Empire on February 18, 2009 and the Chilkat Valley News on February 19, 2009. Public Service Announcements were transmitted to the DOT&PF, and the local radio and cable stations in Haines on February 23, 2009.

The meeting was conducted in an "open house" format from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with formal presentation at 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The open house then continued until 8:30 p.m. Project information was displayed around the room for the public to review. The meeting presented a summary of the project to date, analysis of the project corridor, information about the project

alternatives remaining and environmental data. Representatives from the project team were on hand at the meeting to answer questions and discuss the project with the public.

The public was provided with comment forms in order to have their opinions recorded as part of the project record.

Steve Noble (DOWL HKM) opened the presentation by welcoming the attendees; he then introduced DOT&PF personal and the consultant team. He then presented an overview of the project including the project schedule, efforts environmental analysis and funding. To conclude, Steve explained the steps taken in the public involvement process and ways the public could get involved and keep up to date, including using the project website and being added to the mailing list. He then opened up the meeting to questions.

Below is a summary of questions and comments that were raised during the presentations. Staff responses are in italics.

Public Meeting Presentation #1

What is the “conceptual mitigation plan” that was mentioned?

Kristen Hansen (DOWL HKM) answered that the conceptual mitigation plan is a draft plan to minimize/compensate/create or rehabilitate the fish habitat impacts that are related to the project.

When will construction happen?

Steve stated that currently there is no funding identified for construction. However, if money were to be allocated to this project, construction would be unlikely to occur before 2011 due to the work that still has to be completed

The last two meetings were in December when people are not in town or have trouble getting into town for meetings. Maybe meetings could be held in spring or summer?

Steve answered that the timing of meetings is generally dictated by the project schedule.

Who is the contact for the cultural report?

Jim Scholl (DOT&PF) is the contact for the environmental and cultural portions of the study.

Is this project affiliated with the Scenic Byways project? It would be good if they could work together.

Jim Heumann (DOT&PF) answered that he is familiar with the project and will coordinate with those who are putting together the Corridor Management Plan for the Scenic Byways and All American Roads designation.

Are you looking into Right-of-way encroachments?

Steve stated that encroachments into the right-of-way are indentified during the project but they will not be resolved until after the EA is completed. That is why there will be time between the completion of the EA and construction. Jim Heumann expounded that there is a linear process for projects required under federal regulation. That is why final design occurs after the EA is completed.

Many of the properties are surveyed from the highway centerline. As the road is realigned, will surveys need to be redone? Will DOT&PF pay for the new surveys?

Steve answered that every property along the project corridor will be surveyed and impacts resolved. The right-of-way will be clear of issues before construction commences. A right-of-way map will be created that will identify boundaries and any property that is required for the project will be added to the mapping.

How will property be acquired?

Steve stated that if the roadway alignment extends outside of DOT&PF right-of-way then the next step would be to identify the owner the needed space and follow the federal procedures for right-of-way acquisition.

Once construction starts, how long will it continue?

Steve answered that the project will probably be constructed in phases. The timing of the phases will depend on funding but the bridge will probably be part of the first phase.

If funding is available, how long will construction take?

Steve stated that DOT&PF will probably try to have one contractor working on the corridor at a time, and that each phase would possibly take one or two seasons.

The project is about 20 miles long with an extra 8 feet on each side. Could they construct pieces that have few or no environmental issues first? If they did the areas that were not as challenging first, they could maybe be finished sooner,

Steve stated that design and construction cannot begin until the environmental assessment for the entire corridor is complete. The anticipated phasing is speculative, and depends on funding.

Could they break up the EA into smaller sections?

Jim Heumann stated that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) does not want to break up the EA into pieces, this will ensure that there is one unified plan for the roadway.

Will there be bike lanes, and if not, how can the community work to get bike lanes?

Steve answered that the shoulders will be widened from 2 to 6 feet. They will not be striped as bike lanes, but will be useable for bikes and pedestrians.

In Alaska bike lanes along the highway usually don't work so well – used for snow storage, etc. Would like to see a separated bike path if possible, from the airport to Klukwan at least.

Steve stated that separated bike lanes are not part of the scope for this project, but that the community could work on this issue with their elected officials to identify funding.

Presentation #2

What will be the protocol for replacing the bridge? Will you remove the old bridge?

Steve stated that this has not been decided yet. If the bridge was constructed adjacent to the existing one, then it could be used for staging and then removed. If the bridge were built in the downstream location, the old bridge would be removed after the new one was finished.

Will the road be built to handle support for the gas pipeline project?

Steve answered that yes, it would be able to handle traffic generated due to the pipeline, and that this was part of the purpose and need for the project. However, the project was planned before the pipeline project was developed.

Could the current road handle the support for the pipeline project? (Had heard some of the pipes are 90-foot lengths – would you need to straighten some of the curves?)

Steve answered that the current road has been upgraded from the Canadian border to mile 25 and the design criteria we are using will accommodate the large loads. However, the existing bridge is not rated for the loads needed for the pipeline and needs replacing..

Miles 18 to 21 have critical habitat with eagle roosting trees on both sides of the road. What do you plan to do in these areas?

Steve stated that the project will try and avoid impacts to roosting trees, but if they have to choose one side to widen the road, they will try to impact the mountain side of the road (away from the river) to protect the roosting trees between the road and the river.

If you are widening the road by 8 feet, will you have to cut trees in some areas?

Steve answered that some trees may have to be removed for construction and to improve site distance. However, this is not a full blown roadway reconstruction project and so there will be fewer impacts to the surrounding areas.

The #1 reason for eagle fatality is getting hit by cars. The State park keeps track of eagle mortality.

DOWL HKM indicated that they would try to track down available eagle/vehicle collision data in the corridor.

Written Comments Received from the Meeting

Comment: I have already commented at earlier meetings pertaining to un-attached sidewalks that could be used for seasons and give a meaningful connection with Klukwan and other border communities as equivalent (if not more than) pedestrian parallel roads. My other concern furthering our economic assets work could, address and accomplish very important preliminary and comprehensive joint FAA (Federal Aviation Administration), DOT&PF transportation product; air traffic facility. Projected airport (seaplane/road surface) runway is a necessary allocation within the byway corridor. Such an asset could be located with byway right-of-way assets (vacate assets), (old river bridge 24.5 mile), other land assets exist towards airport facility acquisition encompassing comprehensively safe; air/land and water-ambulance capable transportation systems that are normal facilities similar in scope (forethought) as most other communities serviced by your agencies. Egress of major transportation to the Chilkat Valley Bio system should be accomplished in entirety once (or as seldom as is possible) so as to have to do mitigation work efficiently.

Comment: In particular, moving the road into the river where vital salmon exists is risky at best. At 8 mile the road necks down near the “stone house.” There is a necking down of the river. The current design will put the road and riprap into the river. After fishing there for 14 years and know that this is an important spot for the salmon nothing is worth losing salmon. Not even federal funding.

Comment: Why even do this project? Not to sound like a greenie but this project has the potential to disrupt subsistence fishing holes, affect residents along the highway, disrupt salmon spawning habitat- The river has a life of its own and is not unpredictable. Your pictures do not reflect the current proximity of the river to the road. How will you work with right-of-way with residents? How will you respect salmon habitat and wetlands? How will you not have a negative impact?