



**Municipality of Anchorage**  
Public Works Department  
Project Management & Engineering Division

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 26, 2011

**TO:** J.W. Hansen, Deputy Director, Project Management & Engineering

**FROM:** Todd Jacobson, P.E., Project Manager

**SUBJECT:** Mountain Air Drive / Hillside Drive Extension, PM&E Project No. 08-19  
Planning & Zoning Case 2010-076, Design Study Report for a Public Road  
*Response to Senator Giessel*

This memorandum responds to additional questions that have arisen from a meeting between the Municipality of Anchorage and Senator Cathy Giessel from the State of Alaska Legislature. Specific questions and responses follow:

- 1. Please provide a compilation of the public involvement between the Municipality of Anchorage's Project Management & Engineering Division, the public and affected property owners during the course of the project.**

As part of the project development process, the following public meetings and presentations were held regarding the extension of Mountain Air Drive:

Date	Meeting	Attendees
August 14, 2009	Rabbit Creek Community Council	Community Council Members
August 9, 2009	Bear Valley Community Council	Community Council Members
October 22, 2009	Open House	Area Residents
February 2, 2010	Bear Valley Community Council	Community Council Members
February 11, 2010	Rabbit Creek Community Council	Community Council Members
February 10, 2011	Rabbit Creek Community Council	Community Council Members

We recognize that this project has an impact on a few individual property owners, primarily the Michael and Cange properties. In addition to answering their questions and hearing their concerns at the Open House and the February Rabbit Creek Community Council meeting, Project Management & Engineering's (PM&E) project team made specific contact with each property owner on multiple occasions.

The first meeting was held at USKH's office on December 15, 2009. In attendance were representatives from USKH, Todd Jacobson (PM&E Project Manager), the Michael family, their attorney, their realtor, and also Jim Sawhill, P.E., their land development engineer with Lounsbury & Associates, Inc. At this meeting, USKH explained the rationale for selecting the recommended alternative. We listened to their concerns and assured them we would work with them and Jim Sawhill as the project progressed. Todd Jacobson followed up the meeting with a letter to the Michael family dated January 7, 2010 (see Attachment B).

At the request of Assembly Persons Chris Birch and Jennifer Johnston, a meeting was held on April 14, 2010 at the Project Management and Engineering offices. In attendance at that meeting were the Michaels; Assemblyperson Chris Birch; Assemblyperson Jennifer Johnston; Jerry Hansen, Acting Municipal Engineer; Todd Jacobson; and Steve Kari of USKH. The purpose of the meeting was to review the two proposed alternatives, the recommended route (Alternative A), project status and funding. Of interest is the fact that both Chris Birch and Jennifer Johnston agreed with the Municipality's recommended route selection when presented with the project purpose and engineering details.

Additionally, USKH met with Jim Sawhill on May 20, 2010, to discuss right of way needs and how those needs interface with the Michael's development plans of their property. We have shared the details of our project plans as they have developed so that we can work toward a successful solution.

During this period, Todd Jacobson also met separately with a representative of the remaining affected property owner, Shawn Cange, to discuss the project and the recommended alternative. Shawn was representing Leona Cange, the owner of the subject property. Following the meeting, Todd Jacobson also met with Leona Cange to further discuss the project and her primary concern regarding property acquisition and potential increased property tax assessments resulting from the proposed improvements.

In order to proceed with the design of the recommended alternative and to commence initiating the property acquisition phase, on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the project team representing PM&E presented the recommendations included in the Design Study Report for the Mountain Air Drive Extension to the Municipality's Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z). At the conclusion of the meeting, P&Z postponed action on the case until a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was completed and included in the Design Study Report (DSR) that further addressed the Mountain Air Drive and Rabbit Creek Road intersection. Based on the discussion of the P&Z Commissioners, no objection to the recommended alignment of Mountain Air (Alternative A) was expressed at that time.

In January 2011, USKH completed the TIA and incorporated their intersection recommendations into the DSR. Since Rabbit Creek Road is a state-owned facility, the design team coordinated their efforts with the State of Alaska DOT&PF Traffic Engineer, Scott Thomas, in the development of intersection alternatives. At the request of the Rabbit Creek Community Council, Scott Thomas and USKH attended their February 10, 2011 council meeting to present recommended intersection improvements.

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the project team again attended a scheduled P&Z public hearing to present the project. Based on the outcome of the previous P&Z meeting held on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, it was understood that the primary purpose of the additional meeting was to present the findings of the TIA and the recommended intersection improvements. Unexpectedly, the outcome of the intersection analysis was never discussed. Rather, the commission members solely queried the design team on the route selection alternatives.

At the conclusion of the public hearing, a motion was passed by the Commission to postpone action for 30-days until '*Municipal staff prepares an Issue Response Summary to deal with a wide-range of issues*' concerning the route selection that were identified during the course of the hearing. Action by the Commission was rescheduled on July 11th, 2011, at which time the P&Z Commission passed a motion that recommended Alternative B as the preferred alternative rather than Alternative A.

It should be noted that following the two P&Z meetings held on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, MOA's Project Manager, Todd Jacobson, met with both the Michaels and Canges to discuss the outcome of the previous meeting and to further discuss the project. Following the July 11th, 2011 P&Z meeting, the project team has had no contact with either property owner.

In addition to the public meetings, project newsletters were sent out to in October of 2009 and September of 2010 to introduce the project, provide status updates, and announce the project Open House. The mailing list included the residents of the Bear Valley and Rabbit Creek Community Council areas and the South Golden View Rural Road Service Area, as well as municipal and state government officials and regulatory agency representatives.

Throughout this period, USKH has continuously maintained a website (<http://mountainairdrive.com/>) to provide the public with important project information including public meeting notices and minutes, contact information for the project team, copies of studies and reports related to the project, an updated schedule, and a place for individuals to comment on the project.

Throughout this entire effort, contact information for the project team to discuss project issues and concerns has been provided at every opportunity.

**2. In the first draft of the Design Study Report, USKH originally recommended Alternative B over Alternative A? Why did they change their recommendation?**

The initial recommendation of Alternative B in the draft Design Study Report (DSR) was based on the assumption that the land south of Rabbit Creek would develop a road network similar to that shown in the *Hillside Subarea Transportation Study*. The referenced study indicates a future access road that aligns along an existing section line that extends south from the existing Hillside Drive. Immediately prior to the public meeting that was held after the draft DSR was published, we recognized that mapped wetlands in the area would be unnecessarily impacted if we were to build a roadway along the section line south of 156th Avenue. We also recognized that providing access

to future residential development south of this area could be provided without the negative impact of crossing these mapped wetlands.

During this period, the owners of the Shangri-La East Subdivision gained preliminary platting approval from the Municipality of Anchorage for a north/south road in the middle of their parcel. This location had been determined to be consistent with the draft Hillside District Plan and more so, was required for approval by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the United States Corps of Engineers (USCOE) to avoid valuable wetlands. Since the Shangri-La road has been approved, the best way for the Mountain Air Drive project to meet the objective of providing access to the area is to connect to this proposed road system. Of the alternatives, Alternative A best provides that connectivity.

### 3. Are wetland mitigation costs associated with either alternative?

There is no wetland mitigation required for either alternative. Based on the existing Municipal wetland mapping, initially it appeared wetland mitigation was required for Alternative B. However, subsequent wetland delineations completed for this project indicate no wetlands are impacted by the Alternative B alignment. This was further supported by work commissioned separately by the Michael family.

Wetland mitigation costs that were originally included in the Alternative B cost estimate were deleted following the delineation studies and regulatory agency approval. The cost reduction of Alternative B is reflected in the current cost comparisons of the two alternatives as indicated below:

Mountain Air Drive Alternative Costs			
		Alternative A	Alternative B
Engineering & Management		\$720,000	850,000
Construction	Rabbit Intersection to School Entryway	\$700,000	\$700,000
	School Entryway to Shangri-La East Subdivision	\$5,110,000	\$5,610,000
	Management, Inspection and Material Testing	\$225,000	\$200,000
Utility Relocation		\$0	\$200,000
Right-of-Way Acquisition		\$292,000	\$152,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$7,047,000</b>	<b>\$7,712,000</b>

**4. Please provide written documentation that supports the regulatory agency's support of Alternative A versus Alternative B.**

Two documents have been provided by regulatory agencies – one from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and another from the United States Corps of Engineers (USCOE).

In sum, the USEPA concluded that Alternative A provides a less environmentally damaging practicable option than Alternative B, stating that *"Given Alternative A....would involve only one, instead of two stream crossings and less encroachment into the stream's buffer; would cause less habitat fragmentation; and, would create less impervious surface, it appears that Alternative A would be less damaging than Alternative B."*

Specific to the USCOE, the primary agency concern related to the extensive wetlands that are prevalent to the east and south of the Alternative B.

Alternative A provides a direct alignment into 550-acres of undeveloped residential area that was the basis of the *Hillside Sub-Area Transportation Study*. The continuation of the Mountain Air project will extend south, through the middle of the Shangri-La Subdivisions, toward the Potter Valley area. Connections to the east to Bear Valley are viable at multiple locations along alignment.

Alternative B, however, promotes two options of providing future connectivity to developments to the east (extending 155<sup>th</sup> easterly and Hillside Drive southerly) that are deemed impracticable. Both options are not favorable due to surrounding topography, existing watercourses, and/or expansive wetlands in southwest portion of Section 36. The USCOE has stated *"for consideration of future actions relating to access roads and platting/planning, the subdivision to the south (Shangri-La East) has proposed, and has been approved for, placement of the wetlands in the northeast corner of the parcel into a preservation covenant: no future development will be permitted in those wetlands."* The area in reference corresponds with Alternative B's two options of providing future connectivity to developments to the east.

Correspondences from both regulatory agencies are included as Attachment B.

It should also be noted that in addition to the USEPA and the USCOE comments, the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game has also stated that Alternative B has more wildlife conflicts and impacts than Alternative A. Alternative B provides much more of a barrier to the natural wildlife corridor due to the two culverts and a road prism across the stream ravines.

**5. Please provide written documentation of community endorsement of Alternative A versus Alternative B.**

Attachments C include community support for Alternative A from the Rabbit Creek Community Council and the South Golden View Rural Road Service Area Board.

# **Attachment A**

## **Michael's Letter**

---



Daniel A. Sullivan, Mayor

## ***Municipality of Anchorage*** **Project Management & Engineering Department**

Mail: P.O. Box 196650, Anchorage, AK 99519-6650  
4700 Elmore Road, Anchorage, AK 99507  
Phone (907) 343-8135 Fax (907) 343-8088  
[www.muni.org](http://www.muni.org)



January 11, 2010

David and Judith Michael  
15211 Snowflake Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99516

Subject: Mountain Air Drive/Hillside Drive Extension (PM&E Project #08-019)  
Recommended Alternative Selection

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Michael:

Thank you for meeting with our project team last month to discuss the *Mountain Air Drive/Hillside Drive Extension* project. Your input has been valuable in the process of deciding how to provide the best connection from Rabbit Creek Road to future developments to the south. After consideration of all the stakeholder input, planning documents, and preliminary engineering data, the Municipality of Anchorage has opted to move forward with Alternative A.

We understand from our meeting discussion that your alignment preference is Alternative B. Please be assured that we took your comments into careful consideration in making our decision. As such, I'd like present a few of the specifics that influenced our decision.

First, the initial recommendation of Alternative B in the draft Design Study Report (DSR) was based on the assumption that the land south of Rabbit Creek would develop a road network similar to that shown in the *Hillside Subarea Transportation Study*. The referenced study indicates a future access road that aligns along an existing section line that extends from the existing Hillside Drive. During the public meeting that was held after the draft DSR was published, we recognized that mapped wetlands in the area would be unnecessarily impacted if we were to build a roadway along the section line south of 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue. We recognized that providing access to future residential development south of this area could also be provided without the negative impact of crossing these mapped wetlands.

As you know, the owners of the Shangri-La east property have previously gained preliminary platting approval from the Municipality of Anchorage for a north/south road in the middle of their parcel. This location has been determined to be consistent with the draft *Hillside District Plan*. Since the Shangri-La road has been approved, the best way for the Mountain Air Drive project to meet the objective of providing access to the area will be to connect to this proposed road system. Of the Alternatives, Alternative A best provides that connectivity.

Under Alternative B, motorists would have to travel 800 feet east, and then 800 feet back west to drive around your lots when traveling between Rabbit Creek Road and the neighborhoods to the south. In



David and Judith Michael  
Mountain Air Drive/Hillside Drive Extension  
Recommended Alternative Selection  
January 11, 2010  
Page 2 of 2

addition to the extra road length that would have to be built and maintained, it is projected that this would add up to over 100,000 unnecessary vehicle-miles every year once full development occurs.

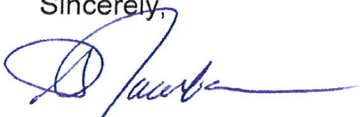
You expressed concern about an intersection with a possible new road to serve lots 3 through 7 of Block 8. That intersection would be on the outside of a curve and allow for good sight distance in both directions. Additionally, based on our preliminary profiles, the intersection will be on a relatively flat section of road. This is a good location for an intersection and a single intersection is generally much safer than having multiple driveways onto a collector road.

We also appreciate your concerns about drainage and groundwater flow, especially given the poor track record of addressing these issues in past development along the Hillside. This project has a distinct advantage in that we have a natural drainage channel (Little Rabbit Creek) that is much lower in elevation than the proposed road. This provides a convenient place to channel water off the roadway and out of the road base. The drainage easement for the school will probably be impacted by this project. However, given the close proximity to the receiving waters, redirecting some portion of the easement will not cause problems for areas that drain into the easement. Regardless, the existing north-to-south drainage pattern will be maintained if a new outfall proves to be necessary.

As we move forward, we will be fine tuning the roadway alignment to produce a safe route that will incorporate the shortest bridge structure possible, while also minimizing the earthwork required. While this process continues, the exact extent or manner in which this project will fully impact your properties remains undetermined. At this point, the best alignment appears to be through lots 2 and 3 of Block 8, as shown in the DSR appendix. Once we complete an accurate field survey of the project area, we will be able to better refine the roadway alignment and drainage improvements.

In the interim, please be assured that you have the Municipality of Anchorage's commitment to keep you apprised of the project progress, particularly as it relates to impacts to your property. We look forward to working with you and your representatives in the upcoming months as we continue to develop the recommended alternative. Please feel free to contact me (522-6776) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Todd Jacobson, P.E.  
The Boutet Company, Inc.  
Project Manager

cc: Mr. Steve Kari, USKH  
Mr. Russell Winner, Esq.  
Mr. Jerry Hansen, PM&E Director  
File: 08-019 CS



# **Attachment B**

## **Regulatory Agency Correspondence**

## **Todd Jacobson**

---

From: Dean.Heather@epamail.epa.gov [mailto:Dean.Heather@epamail.epa.gov]

Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 10:57 AM

To: Todd Jacobson

Subject: Re: Mountain Air Extension

Todd,

I have reviewed your request for EPA input on the Municipality's conclusions regarding the preferred alternative for connecting Mountain Air Drive to residential areas east of Goldenvue Drive. From the perspective of environmental impacts, EPA concurs with the Municipality's conclusion that Alternative A is preferable.

Specifically, the Clean Water Act's Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines prohibit the placement of fill in wetlands or other waters if there is a less environmentally damaging practicable alternative. Given that Alternative A would require no wetland fill; would involve only one, instead of two stream crossings and less encroachment into the stream's buffer; would cause less habitat fragmentation; and, would create less impervious surface, it appears that Alternative A would be less damaging than Alternative B.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input. Please let me know if you have any further questions or need for information.

Heather

---

**From:** McCoy, Shane POA [Shane.M.Mccoy@usace.army.mil]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 07, 2011 10:11 AM  
**To:** Linda Smith  
**Cc:** McCoy, Shane POA  
**Subject:** Mountain Air Drive Comments (UNCLASSIFIED)

Ms. Smith,

I have reviewed the delineation sheets provided for the Mountain Air Drive proposal and have the following comments for the applicant to consider:

- 1) I concur that the wetlands boundary that are shown in the Right-Of-Way between the two headwaters of Little Rabbit Creek in the Municipality of Anchorage Wetland Atlas, 2008 edition, should be moved to the east; cursorily I can say they would not be impacted by the proposed Alt B;
- 2) it is still uncertain if there are wetlands associated with the floodplain of the crossings;
- 3) without plans depicting the crossings (both for Alt A and Alt B) it is impossible to determine if there would be impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands. It seems unlikely that a culverted crossings would not result in fill. However, if all structures and associated features do not require placement of fill into waters of the U.S., it appears neither of the Alternatives would be regulated by the Corps.
- 4) for consideration of future actions relating to access roads and platting/planning, the subdivision to the south (Shangri-la East) has proposed, and has been approved for, placement of the wetlands in the northeast corner of the parcel into a preservation covenant: no future development will be permitted in those wetlands.

Thanks,

Shane McCoy  
Regulatory Specialist  
(907) 753-2715

# **Attachment C**

**Rabbit Creek Community Council Support  
South Golden View Rural Road Service Area Support**



## Rabbit Creek Community Council

P.O. Box 112354, Anchorage, AK 99511-2354

RECEIVED

January 30, 2011

Municipality of Anchorage  
Office of Community Planning and Development  
Planning Division  
4700 Elmore Road  
Anchorage, AK 99507

MAR 07 2011

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE  
ZONING DIVISION

RE: Comments on Case # 2010-076 --Mountain Air Drive Extension

Dear Sharon Ferguson,

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) reviewed the updated design for the intersection of Mountain Air Drive and Rabbit Creek Road and we have the following comments:

1. We support the selection of Alternative Route A and Realignment Option 2.
2. We are opposed to a traffic signal at the intersection Mountain Air Drive and Rabbit Creek Road. The intersection is a few hundred feet from a steep hill (just to the west on Rabbit Creek Road). We are concerned that a red light could cause traffic to back up on the slippery hill creating dangerous conditions.
3. Our preference is for a roundabout either constructed in 2011 or when traffic volume increases. The roundabout is the most economical option in the long term and we are not overly concerned about added delays to the through traffic on Rabbit Creek Road. If the construction of the roundabout is delayed until traffic volume increases it seems prudent to obtain the ROW now.
4. The intersection of Mountain Air Drive and the BVES access road needs to be considered. We think this intersection should have turning lanes into and out of the school.

The RCCC submitted comments on this project in June 2010. I have included our previous comments some of which are still relevant.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project.

Pat Hansen  
Co-Chair Rabbit Creek Community Council



**Resolution of the Board of the South Goldenview Rural Road Service Area**  
**August 20, 2011**

**Whereas** The Hillside Subarea Transportation Study dated October 2006 identified the Mountain Air Extension as critical for the current and future potential development of the South Goldenview area, and

**Whereas** the Mountain Air Road Extension will provide access by fire and emergency vehicles through the top while egress by residents can be done by exiting out below and reducing conflict between emergency vehicles and evacuating residents, and

**Whereas** the Mountain Air Road Extension study has produced three distinct options Alternatives, A, B & C respectively, and

**Whereas**, Alternative A provides the most direct route and least cost for constructing and maintaining the Mountain Air Road Extension, and

**Whereas** all property owners within the area of the Mountain Air Road Extension will receive substantial benefit from Alternative A, and

**Whereas** it is a requirement of the State of Alaska that this road have maintenance, and

**Whereas** the proposed Mountain Air Extension is outside the of the ARDSA boundaries, and

**Whereas** the South Goldenview Rural Road Service Board is a publically elected body representing the interests of the road service area users and its taxpayers, and

**Whereas** the South Goldenview Rural Road Service Area has voted to adopt this road for maintenance, and

**Whereas** all funding for the maintenance of the South Goldenview Rural Road Service Area infrastructure is funded from local property taxes of the users within the South Goldenview service area, now

**Therefore** the South Goldenview Rural Road Service Area Board requests that the Municipality of Anchorage endorse and allow the Alternative A road alignment for Mountain Air Extension.