

# Scoping Summary Report



*Prepared for:*



**State of Alaska  
Department of Transportation and  
Public Facilities**

**and**

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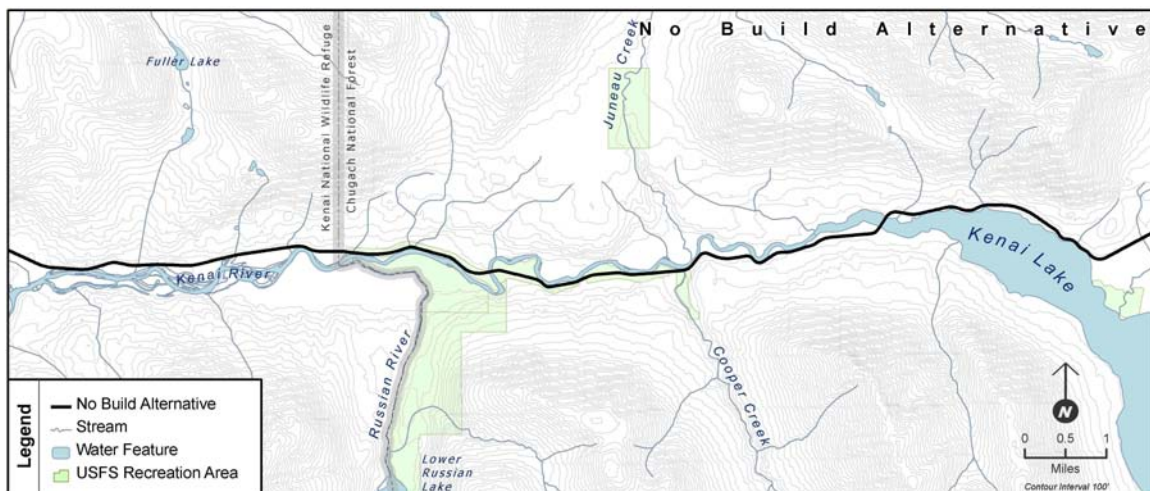
## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Project Overview

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) is developing a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for the section of the Sterling Highway between milepost (MP) 45 and approximately MP 60. The purpose of the DSEIS is to analyze and evaluate a range of alternatives to address driver expectations with respect to traffic flow, seasonal congestion, local access issues, and roadway deficiencies on the section of the highway that parallels the Kenai River through the community of Cooper Landing. The DSEIS will evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives and disclose the potential impacts of those alternatives on the natural, social, and economic environment.

A Notice of Intent (NOI), included in Appendix A, was posted in the Federal Register by the Federal Highway Administration in May 2003. The purpose of the NOI was to notify the public, Native groups, agencies, and local governments of the plan to prepare a Supplemental EIS due to the passage of time since the Draft EIS for Sterling Highway MP 37 to 60 Project.

The Sterling Highway was built in the mid-1930s as the only road connecting Southcentral Alaska to the western portion of the Kenai Peninsula. Since that time, the communities on the peninsula have grown substantially. Increased traffic from industry, peninsula communities, and summer tourism causes the highway to “fail” in its ability to move traffic through the area during the summer. In addition, MP 45 to 60 is the only section of the Sterling Highway that has not been upgraded to widen shoulders, add passing lanes, improve sight distances, and reduce sharp curves.



### 1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need for the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 Project is as follows:

*The ADOT&PF has identified a need to improve the Sterling Highway in the Cooper Landing and Kenai River area (MP 45 to 60) to “rural principal arterial” standards. The purpose is to serve through-traffic, local community traffic, and traffic bound for recreation destinations in the area efficiently and safely, now and in the future. The ADOT&PF recognizes the need to serve the traveling public while doing its part to protect the Kenai River corridor.*

### **1.3 Scoping Overview**

Scoping is a preliminary stage in the development of a comprehensive environmental document that meets the statutory requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). During scoping, project team members, consisting of ADOT&PF staff and the consultant team supporting preparation of the DSEIS use public meetings and other techniques to:

- Listen to ideas and concerns of people and agencies potentially affected by the project
- Ascertain the project’s key issues, potential benefits, and alternatives to be addressed in the NEPA document
- Determine specific needs for special technical studies
- Identify sources of information

Scoping ensures that alternatives and future studies associated with the project reflect community and agency input. The purpose of this Scoping Summary Report is to document the results of the early phases of public and agency scoping activities conducted from July 2000 through July 2003. Since 2003, informal scoping has continued through project team participation in activities such as the 2005 Festival of the Forest.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of scoping for the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 Project was for ADOT&PF to:

- Provide early notification to local, state, and federal agencies and the public of the NEPA process.
- Provide an opportunity for agencies and the public to discuss the project.
- Provide forums and other means to gather input, ideas, questions, data needs, and concerns.
- Ensure early data gathering from agencies and other entities (e.g., utilities).
- Engage stakeholders in identifying alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> The fourth annual Chugach Days Festival of the Forest was held August 6, 2005 in Cooper Landing. Project team members had a booth at the festival and presented information about the project. Approximately 102 people visited the booth to ask questions and offer their input.

As part of the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 scoping process:

- A mailing list and e-mail distribution list of interested parties and property owners was developed.
- Area residents, property owners, businesses, Native corporations, and special interest groups were consulted.
- A variety of forums to discuss issues, develop ideas, and gather input were conducted.
- Opportunities for local, state, and federal agencies to be consulted, informed, and involved were provided.

## **2.0 Scoping Activities**

### **2.1 Tasks Overview**

The public outreach approach for the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 Project included the following tasks during the scoping phase. Supporting information is included in Appendix B.

#### ***Task 1: Schedule, conduct, and document stakeholder interviews***

Twenty agency and community stakeholders in the Anchorage, Seward, Cooper Landing, and Soldotna areas were interviewed between July and October 2000.

#### ***Task 2: Develop and maintain an interested parties mailing list***

A mailing list of more than 3,000 people has been developed. The list includes all property owners in Cooper Landing; special interest groups, businesses, and agencies that serve the peninsula and the state; seasonal residents; and national organizations.

#### ***Task 3: Develop and maintain an interested parties e-mail list***

E-mail was an efficient and sought after method for communicating with stakeholders. The e-mail distribution list had 266 names.

#### ***Task 4: Coordinate development of and maintain a project website***

The project website is the clearinghouse of information about the project and has remained active past the formal scoping process. All meeting summaries, maps, technical memos, and other project related information is posted on the site and included in Appendix C.

#### ***Task 5: Develop and distribute informational newsletters and postcards***

Postcards were used to advertise meetings and Listening Posts. Seven postcards were distributed to the mailing list. Two newsletters were developed—the first in the summer of 2001 and the second in the fall of 2003.



***Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Supplemental Draft  
Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS)***

**Meeting Notice**

The next meeting of the Stakeholder Sounding Board for the Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) will take place on Tuesday, October 30, 2001. Information displays will be available from 6:00 pm—7:00 pm, giving those that missed the last meeting an opportunity to review previous materials. The presentation and discussion will take place from 7:00 pm—9:30 pm.

**Tuesday, October 30, 2001**

6:00 pm—7:00 pm (information displays)  
7:00 pm—9:30 pm (presentation discussion)  
Cooper Landing Community Center  
Bean Creek Road

For more information visit the website at [www.sterlinghighway.net](http://www.sterlinghighway.net)  
or call Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates at (503) 235-5881; [jdamon@jlainvolve.com](mailto:jdamon@jlainvolve.com)  
DOT&PF Project Manager Miriam Tanaka at (907) 269-0546; [miriam\\_tanaka@dot.state.ak.us](mailto:miriam_tanaka@dot.state.ak.us)  
or HDR Alaska, Inc. Team Project Manager Mark Dalton at (907) 274-2000; [mdalton@hdrinc.com](mailto:mdalton@hdrinc.com)

*Example of a meeting notice that was distributed to the project mailing list.*

***Task 6: Coordinate with the media, including developing and distributing press releases and display ads***

The press was notified prior to every Listening Post and stakeholder meeting. Display ads were placed in the Anchorage Daily News, Peninsula Clarion, Seward Phoenix Log, and Homer News prior to each Listening Post.

***Task 7: Coordinate, develop materials for, conduct and document public Listening Post meetings***

Listening Posts were held in Anchorage, Cooper Landing, Soldotna, and Kenai over a two to three-day period with the same information presented at each location. Listening Posts were advertised through the website, newspaper display ads, and project update newsletters. Public comments were taken by comment forms and written notes from conversations. More than 300 people signed in as participating in the Listening Posts with many more stopping by for information without providing their name and contact information. Nine Listening Posts were held during the period of July 2000 to July 2003.

***Task 8: Coordinate, develop materials for, conduct, and document Stakeholder Sounding Board meetings***

The Stakeholder Sounding Board (SSB) was an open advisory committee of community members and local/regional interest group representatives. The purpose of the group was to provide a regular forum to discuss the Sterling Highway DSEIS preliminary alternatives with the community and other interested stakeholders. Anyone who was interested was able to participate. The SSB met five times between May 2001 and April

2002. All meetings were held in Cooper Landing and included an “open house” for one hour preceding the meeting.

***Task 9: Coordinate, develop materials for, conduct and document Agency Consultation Committee meetings***

The purpose of the Agency Consultation Committee (ACC) was to foster communication and coordination between and among the agencies, Native groups, and the ADOT&PF. The ACC met six times between March 2001 and April 2002.

***Task 10: Develop and apply evaluation criteria***

Evaluation criteria were developed with input from the agencies and the public. The evaluation criteria served to focus on priority issues to aid in developing a range of reasonable alternatives. The criteria were developed and reviewed between December 2001 and April 2002.

***Task 11: Coordinate, develop materials for, conduct, and document small group meetings with agencies and stakeholders***

Small group and one-on-one agency meetings were conducted on an as-needed basis at key points in the scoping process. These meetings were held in the fall of 2002 and the spring of 2003. The meetings gave the project team an opportunity to work in greater depth with agencies on issues of particular interest.

***Task 12: Conduct briefings with community organizations and attend community-based events***

Briefings were conducted as needed and as invited by the organizations. Regular briefings were given to the Kenai River Special Management Area Board, the Cooper Landing Planning Advisory Council, and Kenai River Center staff meetings. A Listening Post was conducted as part of the Kenai River Festival held in Soldotna in June 2002.

***Task 13: Track, respond to and document public and agency correspondence***

Agency and public correspondence was received in the form of e-mail, letters, comment forms, telephone calls, and surveys.

### **3.0 Scoping Meetings**

Because of the vast range of stakeholders and agencies affected by the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 Project, four types of scoping meetings were conducted:

- Individual Stakeholder interviews
- ACC Meetings
- SSB Meetings
- Public Listening Posts

### **3.1 Stakeholder Interviews**

Stakeholder interviews provide an early, informal opportunity to meet with agency and community representatives to present their expectations for involvement and to begin identifying issues and concerns regarding the project. Twenty agency and community stakeholders in the Anchorage, Seward, Cooper Landing, and Soldotna areas were interviewed between July and October 2000. Eighteen of the interviews took place in person either one-on-one or in small groups. One interview was conducted by phone and one interview was conducted via e-mail.

The following agencies and organizations participated in the stakeholder interviews. See Appendix D for a complete listing of participants.

<b>FEDERAL AGENCY</b>
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage
U.S. Forest Service, Anchorage
U.S. Forest Service, Seward
U.S. Forest Service, Engineering and Aviation Management, Juneau
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Anchorage
<b>NATIVE CORPORATION</b>
Cook Inlet Region, Inc., Anchorage
<b>STATE AGENCY</b>
Department of Fish and Game, Habitat and Restoration Division, Soldotna
Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Kenai Peninsula Area, Soldotna
Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage
<b>LOCAL AGENCY</b>
Kenai Peninsula Borough, Soldotna
<b>COMMUNITY</b>
Cooper Landing Community Club, Cooper Landing
Cooper Landing Residents
Cooper Landing Business Owners
Cooper Landing Advisory Planning Council, Cooper Landing

Some common themes emerged from the Stakeholder interviews:

- There is disagreement about the extent of the problem.
- There is concern about “another planning process” not resulting in a tangible outcome.
- It is advised that the process and information be open to all and as transparent as possible.
- Agencies and the community want meaningful participation in developing alternatives.



Interviewees identified the following issues that they desired to be addressed in a selected alternative:

***Environmental***

- Habitat: there is a need for new data.
- The hillside slumping is a problem.
- The combination of the hillside and the Kenai River pose a hazard in trying to do something along the existing road.
- Concern about hazardous materials transported along the highway, particularly along the Kenai River.
- Brown bear study outcomes.
- The selected alternative should not impact fisheries at all.
- Hazardous material discharge to the Kenai River.

***Community***

- Increase in traffic in Cooper Landing over the past few years.
- Do not want the speed of traffic increased in Cooper Landing.
- Need traffic enforcement.
- All the community ever asked for back in 1973 was shoulders and a walking path to get kids, bikes, and pedestrians off of the highway. If a bypass is put in, it doesn't solve those problems on the existing road.
- Cooper Landing has a "pathway" but cars use it! It is not very safe. The community needs help in solving existing safety problems.

***Safety***

- There have been fatal accidents along the highway throughout the community.
- The existing road along the river is dangerous.
- Weather-related hazards.
- Maintenance of existing road if bypass is built.
- Pedestrian safety is huge! Crossing the highway on foot is impossible no matter where you try.

***Recreation***

- Trail impacts

Federal, state, and local agency representatives had the following expectations for involvement in the process:

***Clarifying Roles***

- All of the agencies need to retain independent decision-making authority.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) development can get started now.
- ADOT&PF and agencies need to develop a "cost collection agreement," the applicant is responsible for paying the agencies costs—this should be outlined in the MOU.
- Need to clarify agency roles/responsibilities—MOU is a good tool to do this.

- Do not want to only participate as an enforcer. Regulatory agencies have valuable input earlier in the process than simply enforcing.
- Need a more collaborative attitude and approach from ADOT&PF.

***Expectations, Comments and Concerns***

- Need to develop a comprehensive accounting of the agency's issues to be addressed.
- The agencies walked away from the meeting earlier this year (2000) with a strong sense that ADOT&PF was going to pursue the Juneau Creek or Kenai River alternatives—we were not given the opportunity to be collaborative.
- Agencies cannot imagine that there are only two choices.
- The agencies have offered many suggestions and data on habitat, environmental issues, etc., and they question why that information has not been considered.
- Have not been able to put staffing resources behind this effort, would like to trust that this will go somewhere before assigning staff to track the process and be involved.
- Would like to put more resources into this, be a part of crafting alternatives.
- Involve the agencies early; agencies can be a tremendous resource to the ADOT&PF.
- Involve agencies early in discussing and crafting alternatives. We would like an opportunity to be creative and really work together with ADOT&PF.
- We need to be more cautious in this new process about how comments are taken into the process and addressed. Need to resolve issues early.
- Section 4(f) determination is tricky ground for this project. If there is a reasonable alternative to impacting Section 4(f) properties, then that alternative is chosen—cost cannot be the primary driver.
- This process is much more on the agency's radar screen than in the 1990s process. The new data available and environmental information make the previous alternatives obsolete.
- ADOT&PF has done a good job of identifying the agencies and primary organizations that need to be involved.
- ADOT&PF comes out strong against a particular option too early, squelching creativity/agency involvement.
- There is a lack of trust that needs to be overcome both with the agencies and in the community.

Community stakeholders had the following expectations for how to be involved in the process:

***Information Needs***

- The ADOT&PF needs to engage the directly impacted community more regarding the challenges associated with fixing the road along the Kenai River.
- There is a lot of misinformation in the community that needs to be straightened out.

- People do not understand that the ADOT&PF is trying to upgrade the highway to statewide standards and why the upgrade is needed.
- People need an opportunity to discuss and understand each other. Folks need genuine opportunities for asking clarifying questions.

### ***Expectations/Concerns***

- The community is having a hard time accepting the problem.
- Public safety is an important part of community criteria.
- Community is not in agreement that there is a road problem to solve. Many folks think that people simply drive too fast.
- This is a “highway without a constituency” the local legislative representatives are in Soldotna and Palmer (those area roads are in good shape).
- Be up front with the public.
- Need to establish a clear role for the community and community stakeholders.
- ADOT&PF needs to be clear on what the public is giving input on—its scope of authority.

### ***How to Involve***

- Town hall meetings work well; they give everyone an opportunity to participate.
- Open house style meetings work well in the community—use the community center.
- There are three groups of impacted community stakeholders: property owners, business owners, and recreation interests.
- The sun does not really come up in Cooper Landing in January. Many people head out of town. September, October, March, April, May, and June are good months to engage locals.
- It is unclear to the community/ADOT&PF/agencies who is the official “community voice”—the advisory council? The community club? Both/neither?
- Do not like the idea of a citizen’s advisory committee—too exclusive. We need full community participation.
- Work one-on-one; develop relationships with key community members who have the trust and respect of others.
- Need to be a straight shooter—trustworthy.
- People want timely information.
- Folks want to have a real role in defining the outcome.
- The fishing community is not “joiners”—need to make a special effort to include.
- It will be difficult to get input from recreational users who are just passing through.
- Processes tend to work better with smaller groups.

A copy of the complete Stakeholder Interview Summary is included in Appendix D.

### **3.2 Agency Consultation Committee (ACC) Meetings**

The purpose of the ACC is to foster communication and coordination between and among the agencies, Native groups, and the ADOT&PF. The following local, State, and federal agencies and Native groups were invited to participate:

- Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- State Office of History and Archaeology
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB)
- Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
- Kenai Native Association
- Kenaitze Tribal Council
- Salamatof Native Association
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Federal Highway Administration
- ADOT&PF
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Office of Habitat Management and Permitting
- Alaska Division of Governmental Coordination, Office of Project Management and Permitting

The ACC met as a group five times between March 2001 and April 2002.

#### ***Meeting 1: March 30, 2001***

The meeting was held in Anchorage with 27 agency representatives in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the project process and schedule and begin to develop a list of issues.

#### ***Meeting 2: May 31, 2001***

The meeting was held in Cooper Landing with 21 agency representatives in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to focus on identifying constraints and opportunities.

#### ***Meeting 3: September 13, 2001***

The meeting was held in Soldotna with 21 agency representatives in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to begin developing evaluation criteria and discuss the emerging range of alternatives.

***Meeting 4: October 29, 2001***

The meeting was held in Anchorage with 24 agency representatives in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the evaluation criteria and the range of alternatives and to present associated technical information.

***Meeting 5: April 17, 2002***

The meeting was held in Cooper Landing with 15 agency representatives in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to finalize the evaluation criteria and the range of alternatives.

***Small Group Meetings September 2002***

In addition, the ACC agencies and other interest group representatives met individually with the ADOT&PF and consultant team in September 2002 to gather data, answer questions, and discuss more deeply the issues of concern specific to agencies and specific stakeholder groups.

Individual meetings were held with:

- Federal, State, and local agency (USACE, EPA, ADNR, ADF&G, KPB) staff housed in the Kenai River Center in Soldotna (12 in attendance);
- The USFWS/Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Soldotna (three in attendance);
- Representatives from the Salamatof and the Kenaitze Tribal Councils (four in attendance);
- ADF&G in Anchorage (three in attendance);
- USFWS in Anchorage (two in attendance);
- Alaska Trucking Association and Alaska Teamsters Local 959 (three in attendance); and
- A phone meeting was conducted with a representative of the Alaska State Troopers.

Complete summaries of the all of the meetings and the sign in sheets are included in Appendix E.

**3.3 Stakeholder Sounding Board Meetings**

The SSB was an open advisory committee of community members and representatives of local/regional special interest groups. The purpose of the SSB was to provide a regular forum to discuss the Sterling Highway MP 45 to 60 SEIS preliminary alternatives with the community and other interested stakeholders. Anyone who was interested was able to participate. A set of participation rules allowed new participants to join anytime yet enabled the group to build on work completed at previous meetings. Meetings were facilitated and conducted in a workshop format with presentations from the project team and hands on work with participants.

To encourage participation of all interested parties in the SSB, notices of meetings were sent to all (350+) property owners and residents of Cooper Landing, Cooper Landing business owners, and the more than 2,000 people on the project mailing list. While participation on the SSB was open to anyone who was interested, the ADOT&PF

identified the following list of organizations, special interest groups, and others who might be impacted by the project to ensure that they were receiving information and to encourage them to participate in the process.

- Alaska Bowhunters Association, Inc.
- ADF&G, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Reserve
- Alaska Center for the Environment
- Alaska Commercial Fishermen
- Alaska Conservation Foundation
- Alaska Flyfishers Association
- Alaska Miners Association, Inc.
- Alaska Trucking Association
- Alaska Waterfowl Association
- Alaska Wildlife Alliance
- Alaska Wildlife Society
- Anchorage Audubon Society
- Anchorage Daily News
- Caribou Hills Snowmachine Club
- Carlisle Trucking
- Chamber of Commerce, Anchor Point
- Chamber of Commerce, Funny River
- Chamber of Commerce, Homer
- Chamber of Commerce, Ninilchik
- Chamber of Commerce, Seldovia
- Chamber of Commerce, Soldotna
- Chase Trucking
- Cheechako Ski Benders
- City of Homer
- City of Soldotna
- Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
- Cooper Landing Community Club
- Cooper Landing Homeowner's Association
- Cooper Landing Parent Advisory Committee
- Cooper Landing property owners, residents, and businesses
- Democratic Party of Alaska
- Eastern Kenai Environmental Action Association
- Friends of Cooper Landing
- Grouse Creek Village Corporation
- Homer News
- Homer Nordic Ski Club
- Kachemak Nordic Ski Club
- Kenai Peninsula Borough
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Cooper Landing Advisory Planning Commission
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Kachemak Bay Advisory Planning Commission
- Kenai Peninsula Borough Trails Commission
- Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association
- Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council
- Kenai River Property Owners Association
- Kenai River Sportfishing Association
- Kenai Watershed Forum
- Knik Canoers and Kayakers
- Kenai River Special Management Area Advisory Board
- Lynden Transport
- Mountaineering Club of Alaska
- National Audubon Society
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Ninilchik Native Association, Inc.
- Nordic Skiing Association
- National Park Service, Division of Environmental Quality
- Office of Representative Pete Kelly
- Osprey Alaska, Inc.
- Pristine Products
- Quartz Creek Homeowners Association
- Republican Party of Alaska
- Shep Air Services
- Sierra Club Knik Group
- Sierra Club, Alaska Chapter
- Snomads Snowmachine Club
- South Central Sportsmen Association
- Soil and Water Conservation District, Homer
- Soil and Water Conservation Board
- Sportsman Club
- The Milepost
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Wilderness Society
- Trout Unlimited
- United Fishermen of Alaska
- Volunteer Fire Dept./Ambulance of Cooper Landing
- West Side Development Task Force
- Wildlife Federation of Alaska

The SSB met five times between May 2001 and April 2002. All meetings were held in Cooper Landing and included an “open house” for one hour preceding the meeting. Each open house had displays of information and staff available with which to talk. The purpose of holding an open house prior to the meetings was to help new participants prepare to participate in the meeting and remind participants of the previous information reviewed. The open house time also served as an informal opportunity to talk one-on-one with stakeholders who did not feel comfortable speaking in a large group.

***Meeting 1: May 30, 2001***

Forty-three people signed in as attending the meeting, with more than 60 actual participants. The purpose of the meeting was to present the project process and schedule and discuss issues to address.

***Meeting 2: September 11, 2001***

Forty-six people signed in as attending the meeting with more than 60 actual participants. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss data collected to date, begin discussing evaluation criteria, and to look at the emerging range of alternatives. The events of the day made it difficult to accomplish the planned agenda.

***Meeting 3: October 30, 2001***

Forty-four people signed in as attending the meeting with more than 55 actual participants. The purpose of the meeting was to complete the work on developing draft evaluation criteria and discuss alternatives.

***Meeting 4: January 16, 2002***

Forty-eight people signed in as attending the meeting with more than 60 actual participants. The purpose of the meeting was to refine the draft evaluation criteria,

provide a technical work update, and begin talking about how the range of alternatives could be modified to address issues/criteria.

***Meeting 5: April 16, 2002***

Fifty-one people signed in with more than 65 actual participants. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to reach a reasonable range of alternatives, present the outcome of the web survey, and review the “priority” criteria that had been identified. SSB meeting summaries and the sign in sheets are included in Appendix F.

**3.4 Listening Posts**

Project “Listening Posts” were conducted at three key points during scoping:

- 1) Issues gathering
- 2) Developing options for alternatives
- 3) Developing reasonable alternatives

The purpose of the Listening Posts was to provide information directly to the communities that would be affected by the improvements to the Sterling Highway. A Listening Post was a kind of traveling open house meeting, where displays of information was posted and staff were available to talk with community members. Listening Posts were held in Anchorage, Cooper Landing, Soldotna, and Kenai over a two-to three-day period with the same information presented at each location. Listening Posts were advertised through the website, newspaper display ads, and through project update newsletters. Public comments were taken by comment forms and written notes from conversations. More than 300 people signed in as participating in the Listening Posts with many more stopping by for information without signing in.



Cooper Landing Listening Post  
July 11, 2002



The table below lists all of the Listening Posts held during scoping:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
March 28, 2001	Cooper Landing Community Center	Ideas for process. Issues gathering.
March 28, 2001	Soldotna Peninsula Center Mall	
March 29, 2001	Anchorage ADOT&PF	
August 20, 2001	Anchorage ADOT&PF	Issues gathering from seasonal residents and travelers. Ideas for alternatives
August 21, 2001	Soldotna Visitor Center	
August 22, 2001	Cooper Landing Boat Launch	
June 2002	Kenai River Festival	Range of alternatives. Prioritization of evaluation criteria.
May 21, 2003	Cooper Landing Princess Lodge	Preliminary assessment of alternatives based on evaluation criteria to determine range of reasonable alternatives.
May 22, 2003	Anchorage ADOT&PF	

A complete summary of each Listening Post session is included in Appendix G.

## **4.0 Summary of Comments Received**

### **4.1 Agency Comments**

Agency comments were provided through the stakeholder interviews in 2000, through participation in ACC meetings in 2001 and 2002 and individual agency meetings in 2002 and 2003, and through agency letters received. The following summarizes the agency comments received. The following agencies were regular participants in ACC meetings and contributed through participation in meetings, the on line survey, e-mail correspondence, and letters.

- Federal Highway Administration
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U. S. Forest Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ADOT&PF
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation
- Cook Inlet Region, Inc.
- Kenai Peninsula Borough

The following is a list of what was identified as important to the agency participants:

- Minimize impacts to identified archeological sites and cultural resources
- Minimize impact on the Kenai River fishery
  - Direct/indirect impact of bridges—roads (abutments, etc.)
- Assess/resolve water quality issues:
  - Construction impacts
  - Maintenance impacts
  - Impact on flood plain
  - Impact on main stem of the Kenai
  - Impact on tributaries
  - Management of run-off—spills as well as storm water runoff
  - Spill risk analysis
  - Wetland impacts
  - Hydrology—recharge/discharge
  - Extent of cut and fill/disposal of material
- Vegetation impacts:
  - Impacts on plants—invasive species; noxious weeds
  - Disturbance regimes on plant species
- Fish and wildlife impacts - assess level of impact on:
  - Eagles
  - Sheep
  - Moose
  - Fish
  - Bears
  - Vegetation
  - Overall issue of habitat fragmentation
  - Overall issue of wildlife crossings—likelihood of collisions
  - Overall issue of displacement effects
- Assess/address range of recreation impacts:
  - Trails—Resurrection Trail, Bean Creek Trail, skiing and hiking
  - Fishing
  - Camping
  - Hunting
  - Create a balance of access opportunities
  - Assess number of new areas open for access
  - Effect on existing recreation patterns
  - Extent of impact to sensitive areas
  - Impact to the Cooper Landing boat launch
  - Opportunities to enhance existing facilities
  - Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act implications
- Assess/minimize viewshed impacts
  - Issues associated with opening new viewsheds
- Maintain/promote landscape ecology integrity
- Minimize/manage secondary impacts—induced development

- Impact on land ownership patterns
- Minimization of the developed footprint
- Direction from adopted plans
- Cost—stewardship of public funds
- Socioeconomic impacts:
  - Local businesses
  - Water supply
  - Tax base
  - Quality of life
  - Mining claims
  - Community impacts
  - Private property
  - Business property
  - Community property (i.e. schools, library, etc.)
  - Noise

Individual agency comments are detailed in Appendix E (ACC meeting summaries) and Appendix H (Public and Agency Correspondence).

## **4.2 Public Comments**

Public comments were provided through the stakeholder interviews in 2000, participation in five SSB meetings, comment forms received at nine Listening Post meetings, a web survey in March/April 2002 (presented in Appendix I), comments received on the project website, letters, phone calls and e-mails received. A complete list of public comments is included in the summaries for all of the scoping meetings, web survey, and correspondence received in Appendices F, G, and H.

Public comment focused largely in two camps—for a bypass and against a bypass. The comment received in favor of a bypass alternative most frequently cited protection of the Kenai River and community livability as the top reasons for a bypass. The comments received against a bypass frequently cited economic and environmental impacts as reasons against a bypass.

There was much agreement among those who commented that the Kenai River should be protected. There was disagreement over how best to protect the river. Those who commented from the communities south of Cooper Landing most often highlighted the need for safe, efficient travel on the peninsula and were more supportive of a bypass



alternative. Those who lived in Anchorage, other parts of Alaska, or from outside the State of Alaska, voiced their concerns about the environment and were more in favor of exploring options along the existing highway.

The community of Cooper Landing continues to be divided about what is the best for their community and for the traveling public.

## **5.0 Evaluation Criteria**

The evaluation criteria were first introduced to the ACC and SSB in December of 2001 and January of 2002, respectively. The criteria presented were developed largely around issues identified in a series of four previous ACC and SSB sessions beginning in March 2001, six Listening Posts—local community informational sessions held in March and August 2001, input received through the project website, and public/agency comment submitted during the 1994 Draft EIS for the Sterling Highway MP 37 to 60.

The criteria also include elements of the stated project purpose and need and adopted ADOT&PF policy on capacity and demand, highway characteristics, and system linkage. The criteria were amended and refined after agency and public meetings in January and February 2002 and SSB meetings in January 2002. The criteria were made available in a draft form on the project website from January 2002 through March 2002. The draft criteria were refined based on input received from the ACC and SSB. The criteria were made available to the public through a web-based survey posted for a four-week period from mid-March through mid-April 2002. Two hundred and thirty people participated in the survey and offered their input on the criteria. The top six criteria emerged as follows:

- Minimize impacts to water quality and fish habitat
- Minimize impacts to the Kenai River
- Improve driver and pedestrian safety
- Efficient movement of traffic for through traffic and within Cooper Landing
- Minimize impacts to wildlife habitat
- Maintain the scenic quality of the corridor

The criteria were finalized at the April 2002 meetings of the ACC and SSB. Complete documentation of the development of evaluation criteria and the application for determining the Range of Reasonable Alternatives can be found in the *Evaluation Criteria and Reasonable Alternatives Analysis* (HDR 2003).

## **6.0 Media Coordination and Coverage**

The media was actively involved in the scoping process. The press was notified prior to every Listening Post session and SSB meeting. Display ads were placed in the Anchorage Daily News, Peninsula Clarion, Seward Phoenix Log, and Homer News prior to each Listening Post. Reporters were present at scoping meetings and project team members conducted interviews throughout scoping. The October 2003 newsletter was distributed to the mailing list and through the Peninsula Clarion.

A complete listing of newspaper articles, sample display ads, and press releases is in Appendix J.

## **7.0 Alternatives Suggested by the Public and Agencies**

Three of the eight build alternatives (the Juneau Creek Wilderness and Forest Variants, and the Kenai River Alternative) were carried over from previous studies, and the public and agencies suggested five alternatives. The five alternatives suggested were:

- Cooper Creek
- “F”
- “G” North and South
- Kenai River Walls
- Russian River

Alternatives suggested and not included for further analysis include:

- Minimal improvement to the existing highway
- Rail connection
- New road over the mountain connecting to Hope
- Close the existing road in combination with a bypass alternative

**Appendix A**  
**Notice of Intent**

## **Appendix B**

### **Public Information and Outreach Materials**

**Appendix C**  
**Project Website**



## **Appendix D**

### **Stakeholder Interview Summary**

## **Appendix E**

### **Agency Consultation Committee and Small Group Meetings**

## **Appendix F**

### **Stakeholder Sounding Board Meetings**

## **Appendix G**

### **Listening Post Meetings**

## **Appendix H**

### **Public and Agency Correspondence**

**Public Correspondence  
2001-2004**

**Agency and Private Group Correspondence  
2001-2003**

**Appendix I**  
**Web Survey**



## **Appendix J**

### **Media**