

Sterling Highway MP 45-60

Agency Consultation Committee

Meeting #1 Summary

March 30, 2001

1:30pm – 4:00pm

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Building
4111 Aviation Drive, Anchorage

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|---|--|
| Kent Kohlhasse, USFS | Chris Degernes, Kenai Area Superintendent, State Parks (phone) |
| Vicki Davis, USFWS | Glenda Landua, KPB (phone) |
| Tim Haugh, FHWA | Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF |
| Chuck Frey, USFS | Jerry Ruehle, ADOT&PF |
| Lani Kai Eggertson-Goff, KPB Planning | Miriam Tanaka, ADOT &PF |
| Dan Lentz, USFS | Tom Atkinson, Alaska Div. of Govt. Coord. |
| Ken Vaughan, USFS | Steve Horn, ADOT & PF |
| Chester Murphy, CIRI | Rex Young, ADOT & PF |
| John Czarnecki, KPB Planning (phone) | Don Galligan, HDR |
| Bill Robertson, R&M Consultants | Ed Lightwood, R&M Consultants |
| Ted Spraker, ADF&G | Phil North, EPA |
| Gary Wheeler, USFWS | Mark Dalton, HDR |
| Brian Anderson, USFWS | Jamie Damon, JLA |
| Suzanne Fisler, Div. of Parks & Rec (phone) | Carol Snead, HDR |

AGENDA

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|---------|--|--|
| 1:30 PM | Welcome/Introductions ▪ Purpose of this meeting ▪ Purpose of the ACC ▪ Meeting Guidelines | Jamie Damon |
| 2:00 | Project Overview ▪ Background ▪ Need for project | Miriam Tanaka |
| 2:10 | SEIS Process ▪ Overall Schedule ▪ Steps ▪ Where are we today | Mark Dalton |
| 2:20 | Alternatives Workshop | Mark Dalton/Bill Robertson/Jamie Damon |

- Presentation of alternatives under consideration
- Issues to address
- Questions/Ideas/Additional issues?

- 3:45 Next Steps Jamie Damon
- For the process (technical/community/agency)
 - Follow up needed
 - Next meeting of the ACC

4:00PM Close

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Process/Project Overview
- Alternatives Discussion
- Issues To Address
- Next steps/Follow-up

PURPOSE OF ACC

- Coordination
- Communication
- Issue Identification
- Alternative Refinement
- 6 or more meetings over next 12-18 months
- Local, State, Federal, Native Groups

MEETING GUIDELINES

- Share air time
- Hear from as many of you as possible
- Speak clearly/loudly for conference call participants
- Assist with written notes.

NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Miriam Tanaka briefly presented why the ADOT&PF is moving forward with this project. Since 1978, the ADOT&PF has recognized the need for improved safety and traffic flow along the Sterling Highway. In 1994, a Draft EIS was prepared however no preferred alternative was identified. This process will develop a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to update the data compiled for the Draft EIS, and examine alternatives for improving Sterling Highway between milepost 45 and 60.

ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

Mark Dalton and Bill Robertson presented a computer simulation of the three preliminary alternatives under consideration at this time: Juneau Creek, Kenai River, and the Cooper Creek. Mark stated that in the NEPA process a no-build alternative must also be considered and will be fully assessed in the SEIS.

Juneau Creek Alternative

The Juneau Creek Alternative is essentially the same as the one presented in the 1994 draft EIS. The alternative begins near the Quartz Creek campground and begins to slowly climb above the existing highway and traverse the north side of the valley above Bean Creek Road. The current alignment swings north in an arc to cross Juneau Creek above the Juneau Creek Falls. The proposed bridge across Juneau Creek is about 90' long. As the alignment heads further west, two variations are under consideration for returning to the existing highway. One variant, the Forest Variant, returns sooner to the highway in the vicinity of Sportman's Boat Launch. The variant requires grades west of Juneau Creek in the order of 6% to 7% for nearly three miles. The other variant, the Wilderness Variant, returns to the highway further west of Sportsman's and requires less steep grades of approximately 5%.

Kenai River Alternative

The Kenai River Alternative requires the replacement of the first bridge at the outlet of Kenai Lake and the Schooner Bend bridge, four new bridge crossings of the Kenai River, and bridge across Juneau Creek. This alternative allows the highway to remain adjacent to the Kenai River while resulting in impacts to existing properties along the existing highway. Specific right of way requirements have not been identified in the work to date.

Cooper Creek Alternative

The initial part between Quartz Creek campground and the west side of the Kenai Lake outlet bridge is the same as the Kenai River alternative. When the road crosses the Kenai Lake outlet bridge (which would be replaced), it immediately goes up hill at a 5% grade on a side hill cut to a bench located south of Cooper Landing. The alternative crosses Cooper Creek as far up the valley and away from the campground as is practical. This crossing will take an approximate 600'-1200' bridge to span. Geotechnical information is lacking for this alternative and the preference is that bridge piers be placed on bedrock and not till. Trying to move up as far as possible – to miss all properties south of the highway would put the road at a -7% grade, and require a 100' cut which would be visible for some distance. Almost half the cost of this route is the cost of the bridge crossing Cooper Creek.

Cost Comparison

Juneau Creek and Cooper Creek have a similar difficulty of construction. The Juneau Creek Bridge is much shorter, simpler, and considerably less expensive.

Kenai River construction costs are similar to Cooper Creek, even though there are more bridges. Construction will occur in summer on the existing alignment when it is heaviest used.

All routes will require careful geotechnical engineering. The cost per mile is highest for the Cooper Creek alternative.

The group then went back through the simulation for each alternative and discussed their issues, questions and concerns.

ACC Input on the Cooper Creek Alternative

- Bald eagle habitat along the lake.
- Q. Can you follow the valley higher up? Investigate a way to stay higher.
- Q. What length bridge did you estimate costs?
- Q. Does bridge type dictate the cost?
 - Sensitive habitat near water.
 - Storm water controls very important.
 - A lot of silt deposit pockets.
- Q. How much gravel needed for the road base?
- Q. Has anyone been on site/walked the route?
 - While this route is in the shadow the existing road is in shadow too.
- Q. Material sources for fill?
- Q. What is the ADOT&PF feeling on access control?
- Q. Can grade be tweaked?
 - May be relocating some impacted properties.
- Q. Are there impacts to the new boat launch facility?
 - May be archeological/property impacts going upstream from Kenai River Bridge.
- Q. Why does Cooper Creek Alternative have a greater cost range than other alternatives?
 - Sheep on south side of Cecil B. Rhode Mt. – Lyman Nichols to follow up.
 - Sheep on Cooper Lake side of Mt.
 - Cooper Creek Crossing-Recreational use issue with road on both sides. USFS considering moving campground.
 - Just east of Cooper Creek Road is a 2-track road for mining access.
 - Look at following power line slope close to Gwin's as possible variant.
- Q. How old is bridge at Schooner Bend?
 - Nice to have exit lanes/acceleration lanes coming out of the campground and at trail heads.
- Q. Will there be a parking lot for the trail?
 - As we get closer to Russian River, Sportsman's - sensitive archeological sites.
 - Design to prevent shoulder parking at Sportsman's. Safety issue. Already not enough space in existing Sportsman's parking.
 - As you get closer to river try to expand into the hill away from the river.
 - Is there anyway to get away from the river at Sportsman's?

ACC INPUT ON JUNEAU CREEK ALTERNATIVE

- Starting at MP 46.5
- Property owner water source issues early in alignment.
- As alternative enters USFS land, recognize the issue of roadless initiative.
- Where road bisects Resurrection Trail is a big issue. Historic nature of trail makes impact important.
- Wildlife issues - sheep and bear.
- Area is currently not accessible to snow machines; some want it to remain inaccessible.
- Need to design road to not allow off street parking.

- Any access increases law enforcement needs, search and rescue, and increases winter recreation demands.
 - Opens up increased use during the summer and could impact administrative needs and costs.
 - The trail corridor is undefined as far as width.
- Q. What about the effect of future development in this area?
- Q. How do JCA & CC compare for land ownership?
- Land management description is #244, from the current Chugach Forest Plan.
 - Refuge has concerns about snow machine access and the potential for the wildlife corridor to be bisected.
 - Calculate wetlands impacts.
 - Logging roads (last 5 years) has opened up to Nordic skiing and snow machine use.
 - Bringing the road in at Sportsman's is a problem due to congestion.
 - Design speed is presently 60 mph to be posted 50-55 mph.
 - Has anyone looked at logged area along Bean Creek Road that is adjacent to recently improved habitat for moose.
 - Clarify timing for pursuing the Wilderness Variant.
 - Resurrection Trail

ACC INPUT ON THE KENAI RIVER ALTERNATIVE

- Q. Why build new bridge downstream?
- Q. How to accommodate the accesses through Cooper Landing? Pullouts? Frontage roads? Pathway?
- A lot of ROW takings and may need to go closer to the river because of slopes.
 - Look at moving road closer to hillside, away from river. Property impacts both sides.
 - Increase capacity w/ turning lanes with reduced speeds.
 - Concerned about new bridge crossings, minimize pilings in river.
 - Potentially significant impacts to archeological sites.
 - Is in conflict with KPB coastal management policy of minimizing river crossings.
 - If a new alternative is chosen, the existing roadway needs to provide local access but minimize usage on existing traffic. Have existing road end at Sportsman's perhaps-limit access on current road. Don't provide 2 roads to the same place.
 - May still be experiencing a congested route through town with tourist traffic.
 - Increased maintenance costs with 2 roads.
 - 2 active bald eagle nests on delta (USFWS will provide location).
 - Keep highway off the river-hazardous materials are hauled along the route.
 - Highway improvements through Cooper Landing may impact the quality of life for its residents. Go around the community.

QUESTIONS/ISSUES/FOLLOW-UP

- Not clear what role the agencies/public will play in the process?
- Is this a clean slate? Is there a preferred alternative?
- The 3R Alternative is not on the map-why was it taken off?
- What exactly will the advisory committee be looking at?

- Clarify how the alternatives will be evaluated. Will the agencies have a hand in the evaluation criteria?
- Have you looked at the alternative that goes below the falls?
- Look at potential of a lower crossing of Juneau Creek.
- Will the Kenai River bridge be replaced on all alternatives?
- Consistency of terminus on all alternatives. – All go to MP 58/East Skilak Lake Rd.
- Look at showing the west extension of the Cooper Creek Alternative.
- Need time line for when more comments can come through.
- Can we get a copy/briefing of the software?
- Need placards with our names!
- Commend ADOT&PF on the open/broad public process.

NEXT STEPS

April

- Newsletter
- Mailing List Development
- Sounding Board Formation
- Issue Follow-up

May

- Website
- Sounding Board #1
- Possible ACC #2 (after May 12)
- Possible Road Trip meeting

Sterling Highway MP 45-60

AGENCY CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Meeting #2 Summary

May 31, 2001

1:30pm – 4:00pm

Kenai Princess Conference Room

Cooper Landing

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|--|--|
| Bill Shuster, USFS | Chris Degernes, Kenai Area Superintendent, State Parks |
| John Mohorch, KPB, Planning | Scott McGee, USFWS |
| Lani Kai Eggertson-Goff, KPB, Planning | Suzanne Fisler, Div. of Parks & Rec |
| Max Best, KPB | Tom Atkinson, Alaska Div. of Govt. Coord. |
| Ken Vaughan, USFS | Gary Wheeler, USFWS |
| Danielle Jerry, USFWS | Brian Anderson, USFWS |
| Steve Shuck, USFWS | Mark Dalton, HDR |
| Bill Robertson, R&M Consultants | Rex Young, ADOT&PF |
| Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF | Don Galligan, HDR |
| Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT &PF | Jamie Damon, JLA |
| Glenda Landua, ADF&G | |

AGENDA

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|------------------|--|------------------------|
| 9:00 a.m. | Optional hike/area tour | All |
| 2:00 p.m. | Welcome/Introductions Purpose of this meeting | Jamie Jamie |
| 2:15 p.m. | Process Issues – Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Schedule/Steps – Revised▪ Comment/Review Flow – ACC and Public | Miriam/Mark |
| 2:35 p.m. | Sounding Board Meeting #1 - Report | Jamie |
| 2:50 p.m. | Constraints/Opportunities - Work Session | All |
| 3:50 p.m. | Small group report back <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Highlights from the group discussion▪ Areas for follow up/building the next meeting's agenda | All |
| 4:20 p.m. | Next Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sounding Board▪ General Public | Jamie |

- Next meeting of the ACC

4:30 p.m. Close

AREA TOUR

Mark Dalton, Miriam Tanaka, and Laurie Mulcahy led interested members of the ACC on a driving tour of the existing highway and potential south side alternatives. Approximately 12 people participated. The purpose of the tour was for ACC members to see first hand the opportunities and constraints within the corridor. Due to time constraints, team members encouraged participants to hike the Juneau Creek Trail.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

- Follow up on questions from the last meeting
- Update on work-to-date
- Focus on constraints/opportunities
- Emerging range of alternatives

PROCESS/SCHEDULE ISSUES

Mark talked about how the input received at the ACC meeting #1 in March was used to refine the scope and schedule. At the March meeting participants were concerned that the schedule presented did not allow enough time for the agencies to work through issues and develop creative solutions. The updated schedule shows a draft SEIS available in the early part of 2002 rather than summer of 2001.

SOUNDING BOARD MEETING #1 - REPORT

Jamie Damon reported on the Sounding Board meeting held the night before in the same conference room. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting, including several members of the ACC. The SSB started the meeting off by introducing themselves and answering the question "By the end of the process I hope..." There was much agreement in the room that at the end of the process everyone hoped to find an alternative that balanced the competing needs and was supported by the community. Many participants said they are a part of the process to become better informed. Some participants voiced concerns over aspects of the process including an expectation that an alternative along the existing highway would be evaluated. The group then worked through the video simulation of the alternatives-to-date, presented by Mark Dalton and Bill Robertson, section by section and commented about concerns, questions, and problems to address as a whole group.

At the end of the meeting many participants said that this was a good start, however, some participants voiced concern and skepticism about the process and their ability to influence the outcome. There was also discussion about how the final decision is going to be made and who makes that decision. For a more complete accounting of the SSB #1 meeting consult the meeting summary.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS WORK SESSION

To begin the work session, Mark and Bill presented the visual simulation for those who missed the first ACC meeting where it was shown. Comments and questions about the simulation are listed below:

- Forest Variant-Trail Impact
- Wilderness Variant-wilderness and trail impact
- What are the impacts to the adjacent landowners, the ROW implications?
- Would the old road be maintained in the Kenai River Alternative?
- Is the Cooper Creek option to be designed to a 55-mph speed?
- Perception is that commercial/truck traffic incidents are greater at Gwin's corner. Need to capture the truck accidents also.
- Would Cooper Creek variant-taking off over bench-use less cuts?
- Concern about shade on Cooper Creek icing problems.
- How high/long is proposed bridge?
- There is an existing log road recently built at Schooner Bend to around Gwin's.

After the simulation presentation, ACC members organized themselves into small groups, each assigned a project team member. Each group was asked to work with the maps on each table and using the Issues Worksheet, add to the issues identified-to-date. The groups also worked through a Constraints and Opportunities worksheet, identifying additional constraints/opportunities from the morning hike, and other new information. Lastly the groups took a look at how all of the above information affects the range of alternatives under consideration.

Comments From the Issues Worksheet

- Juneau Creek Alternative has more moose habitat on USFS land. Moose are moving and wintering on the north side of the Kenai River vs. on the south side of the Kenai River.
- What is the status of the parcels to the south of the bridge? Private, State or Kenai Peninsula Borough owned?
- The intersection at the bridge is the busiest in town, mix of post office/community traffic and "thru" traffic. Provide a "T" intersection and proper access at Snug Harbor Rd.
- What will happen to the new boat launch?
- Check with Ted Spraker on Cooper Creek vs. Juneau Creek Alternative regarding bear and sheep habitat specifically in the USFS/Cooper Creek area. Also check on status of salmon and resident fish (dolly varden, rainbow trout) - Doug Palmer at ADF&G, Kenai office
- Need data on how the corridors for wildlife are used-especially if the Juneau Creek Alternative were to be moved closer to the Kenai River.
- Ask right-of-way bear scientists about impact of creating an island with the Juneau Creek Alternative. What can fisheries folks tell us about the bear's food source and the number of fish on Juneau and Cooper creeks?
- How will we compare the relative importance of issues? We need some way to use a "weighting" system illustrated in a matrix form.
- What are the issues with the Kenai River Alternative beyond the cost of the 5-7 bridges?
 - State Parks has concerns about the significant impacts on the recreational use of the Kenai River.
 - Direct and indirect effects on habitat (vegetation and fish and mammals)

- Flooding-constant maintenance.
- The Kenai Peninsula Borough is interested in minimizing impacts to the Kenai River.
- Petroleum shipments from Kenai up highway.
- Hazardous materials shipments along highway.
- The Kenai River Alternative parallels the existing road, doesn't get the road away from the river.
- Cost of bridge on Juneau Creek, no longer as big a concern, opens up possibilities of lower crossings.
- Extend Cooper Creek alternative to south side of Gwin's and match existing alignment (see yellow sheet.)
- Suggest you do a spill risk analysis for each alternative (put in matrix?)
- Minimize footprint.
- On the Juneau Creek Alternative, there is an old fishing village-CIRI is acquiring the land on the border of forest/wilderness.
- It is a problem to be adding road miles.
- Speed limit through Cooper Landing needs to be enforced/lowered.
- There is significant moose habitat along the Juneau Creek Alternative in the Kenai Peninsula Borough selection area.
- Concerned about the cabins on the Resurrection Pass Trail. The Juneau Creek Alternative makes them too accessible, impacts right-of-way bear and moose.
- Threat to river - the Kenai River Alternative has too many bridges.
- Show different levels of shade along the alignments -where, how long? To show where icy spots will be. Need to not create more unsafe conditions.

Comments from the Opportunities and Constraints Worksheet

- Opportunities for pullouts and trailhead opportunities/scenic overlooks.
- Concerned about limiting access into snowmobile areas.
- If visual opportunity is created, there will be a potential safety concerns if access is not provided – people will try to access anyway. The trailhead idea was pulled from falls because potential increase in number of users.
- Preference is to remove traffic from river, but need compromise.
- Also cultural concerns along river.
- Separating traffic (through traffic) through Cooper Landing.
- Traffic projections 2 ½ x for 20 years projections 7,000 - 17,000 and implications of flow through Cooper Landing.
- Number of pedestrians is heavy at Russian River-only one alternative Juneau Creek Alternative Wilderness variant addresses safety concerns at Sportsman's because it bypasses Sportsman. Forest variant is a nightmare at Sportsman's.
- CIRI selections/ 14 (h) (l); reaching some conclusions soon.
- Concerned about where materials from cuts will go. Descending Juneau Creek Alternative - at guardrail hole (Kenai River adjacent to MP 55).
- ANILCA implications with trail and wilderness.
- If Cooper Creek is reestablished without a dam, will need to look more closely at existing crossing where stream is braided at delta.

- Regardless of the route, it will require an ADEC Alaska Coastal Management Plan process review.
- When submitting Federal Form 299 ROW applications (after draft EIS review process).
- Cooper Landing Bridge; concerns with Park land on either side of bridge, existing boat launch at lake is only public state access except for Quartz Creek campground.
- Interested in getting more information on Cooper Creek Alternative.
- There are not any established community controls regarding access along the Cooper Creek Alternative, it is not addressed in existing Cooper Landing Plan.
- Cultural resource potential at Cooper Creek beach above creek. It had historic anadromous fish runs, currently only resident fish are there.
- Look at geotechnical opportunities along existing route to limit bridges and big cuts.
- Discuss the placement of Cooper Creek Campground (relocate, resize.)
- Look at bringing Juneau Creek Alternative downstream before crossing Bean Creek Trail (one new bridge across Kenai.)
- Natural Resource Conservation Service measures snow depth on south side of river (Cooper Creek).
- Dog musher at end of Bean Creek Road could give indication of where snow begins up Juneau Creek Falls trail.

NEXT STEPS

- SSB and ACC meetings in September – Jamie will coordinate calling through to find a good time. We will meet in Cooper Landing/Soldotna while the weather is still good. Save the Anchorage meetings for the winter. Minimize having to cross the pass.
- Listening Posts in August for seasonal travelers.
- Website will be up and running within the month.
- Technical work continuing.

Sterling Highway MP 45-60

AGENCY CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Meeting #3 Summary

September 13, 2001

10:00am – 2:00pm

Kenai River Center

Soldotna

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Rick Ernst, USFWS | Glenda Landua, ADF&G |
| Jim Hall, USFWS | Ken Lancaster, State Representative |
| Ken Vaughan, USFS | John Olson, NMFS |
| Mary Ann Benoit, USFS | Lani Kai Eggertsen-Goff, KP&B, Planning |
| Ed Oberto, KP&B Mayor's Office | Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF |
| Ted Spraker, ADF&G | Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc |
| Dave Westerman, ADF&G | Don Galligan, HDR Alaska, Inc. |
| Larry Marsh, ADF&G | Ed Lightwood, R&M Consultants |
| John Mohorchch, KP&B, Planning | Jamie Damon, JLA, Inc. |
| Suzanne Fisler, DPOR | |
| Phil North, EPA | |

AGENDA

10:00 a.m.

Welcome/ Introductions

- Name/Agency

Meeting Guidelines

- Review from last meeting

Purpose of this meeting

- Update on work completed including new data collected; discuss the range of alternatives identified-to-date, and begin the discussion of developing Evaluation Criteria.

10:15 a.m.

Process Steps Update - Presentation

- Stakeholders Involvement
- Brief overview of technical work completed-to-date

10:30 a.m.

Introduction to Evaluation Criteria –Presentation/Discussion

- Begin discussing the development of evaluation criteria as a step in the process, including, how are the Purpose and Need statement and the highway standards/policies a part of the evaluation criteria?
- The ACC/SSB Role in developing Evaluation Criteria- begin discussion of other evaluation criteria to be developed and how

11:10 a.m.

Range of Alternatives Review - presentation

- Overview of alternatives-to-date
- Results of preliminary technical work as it relates to the alternatives

12:00 p.m.

Lunch (sandwiches provided)

12:30 p.m.

Range of Alternatives – Small group discussion

- In small groups, review the range of alternatives identified-to-date – are there any additions? Deletions? Other input regarding alternatives?
- Small group report back.

1:20 p.m.

Data Needs - Follow up from agencies

1:45 p.m.

Next Meeting/Agenda

2:00 p.m.

Close

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Jamie welcomed the group and explained that the purpose of the meeting has been modified slightly. Because of the East Coast attacks, several agency representatives could not make the meeting. The evaluation criteria discussion has been postponed until the October ACC meeting when full attendance is expected. The September meeting will focus on discussing the current range of alternatives and the technical analyses completed.

PROCESS STEPS UPDATE - PRESENTATION

Listening Posts

The second series of Listening Posts were held August 21, 22, 23 in Anchorage, Soldotna, and Cooper Landing. The purpose of the meetings was to give seasonal residents and travelers an opportunity to find out more about the process to date, pick up a copy of the recent newsletter, talk with project staff, and be added to the mailing list for future project updates. Over 70 people attended the meetings.

Stakeholders Sounding Board

The second meeting of the Stakeholders Sounding Board was held on September 11, 2001 from 6:00pm – 9:30pm at the Kenai Princess Lodge in Cooper Landing. 41 people signed in as attending the meeting. The project team had considered canceling the meeting due to the day's tragic events, but there was not an easy way to contact everyone who might come (the newsletter is mailed to approximately 2000 people and encourages anyone who is interested to attend.) Several people called to say they had planned on attending but now could not make it. The meeting agenda was modified in the same way the ACC meeting agenda was modified. The discussion of evaluation criteria will begin at the October meeting. Overall the participants were very focused on the range of alternatives presentation and the technical analyses completed-to-date. The traffic analysis generated much discussion.

Website

The project website is up and running. The technical memorandums, maps, and meeting summaries are available on the website. The address is www.sterlinghighway.net. Frequently Asked Questions and Public Comment documents are in the process of being developed and will be posted on the website prior to the October meeting.

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

Ed Lightwood from R&M Consultants discussed the range of alternatives identified-to-date using a wall size map to talk from. The description of these preliminary alternatives included

locations, cost, design features (e.g., grades, major structural features, speeds). The ACC had the following questions/comments (*information in italics is the response provided by staff*):

- Are we comparing apples to apples with the costs? Were the design speeds the same for all alternatives? *Yes. The same design speed (established as 60 mph) was used for all alternatives.*
- Will the Cooper Creek extended I and II be added? *R&M will study a route south of the existing corridor that would cross Cooper Creek and traverse an area within/adjacent to the Russian River Campground. If the alternative appears reasonable, it will be added to the drawing of alternatives under consideration.*
- The “walls” route seems to have fewer impacts to habitat. Makes sense, appreciate range of alternatives. Why is the “walls” so expensive when compared to alternatives with bridges? *The wall structures will require removal of massive amounts of rock material and the construction of walls reaching maximum heights of 180ft. There will be two such walls, each extending over a length of approximately one half mile. Also, this alternative includes new bridges across the Kenai River and Kenai Lake.*
- What does the “wall” look like? Bedrock? Till slopes? *Similar to an erosion wall with rebar reinforcements. Till slopes need to be supported. Hasn’t been used much in the states.*
- Total anticipated cost for the “walls” alternative? *Approximately \$17 million; this cost excludes the additional bridges.*
- Why does the bridge at Kenai Lake need to be replaced? Does it need to be replaced because of the design speed? Or will it be replaced anyway? *Seismic strengthening, and bringing the structure up to current standards.*
- Is it fair to include the bridge cost in the “walls” alternative if it will be replaced anyway? *It wouldn’t need to be replaced as quickly if the one of the alternatives on the north side is selected.*
- Schooner Bend Bridge would need to be replaced also? Is it already scheduled? *Don’t know.*
- If a route on the northern side is chosen, would there be additional work done on the existing highway? *We do not know when and at what level improvements could be made to the existing highway through Cooper Landing if it is not included in the selected alternative. There could be work done at some future point, however it would need to be a different project from the outcome of this process.*
- What about the impact of cultural sites on the “walls” alternatives? *We don’t know yet.*
- The Kenai River Alternative has significant cultural resources impacts. *We are aware of those sites.*

- Clarification that a “No Build Alternative” is one of the alternatives, right? *Yes.*
- Is the commercial traffic voice being addressed in this? Is grade an issue on the alternatives? What about safety and weather concerns for commercial traffic. Do we have any more information on how this would affect their operations? *We have been in contact with the Alaska Truckers Association and are hoping to have their input as we continue to examine the alternatives. We have had input from one commercial trucker (bread delivery – drives through the corridor twice per day) who said that he would prefer driving on the alternatives that do not go through Cooper Landing, even if it means steeper grades. The alternatives with fewer curves would provide better sight distance, according to one trucker. We are also hoping for input from State Troopers on safety issues.*
- When a highway gets straightened drivers go faster which slows response time.
- Currently the road is posted at a slower speed – increases a drivers ability to respond quickly.
- Has there been an evaluation of potential wetland fill and other wetlands impacts associated with each alternative? *Not yet*
- Are the costs current dollars? *Yes*

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Mark Dalton, HDR, presented the *Affected Environment Technical Memorandum* and discussed several of the data sets included in the document. The Affected Environment document updates the 1994 EIS. HDR is looking for agency input: Are things missing? Is the information correct and current? Are there other issues that need to be addressed? Concerns were expressed at the May meeting for noise generated by the project. HDR collected baseline data to characterize ambient noise in the project area. Also, HDR hired Doug Fesler to map high-risk avalanche areas that might affect the alternatives. The ACC had the following questions/comments:

- Clarification – are you offering the GIS data/share files? *Yes!*
- Need to do wetlands inventory, there is nothing currently available. The evaluation should include the functional values of wetlands. *There are many different views from different agencies on how the functional values of wetlands should be determined. HDR will work with the agencies to determine which approach is best for this project.*

Do you plan to do more noise monitoring? *Yes, depends on which alternatives warrant next detail of analysis. HDR will use a model to determine noise impacts to sensitive receptors and at different distances from the corridor. The model takes into account the topography, vegetation, ambient noise, and projected traffic levels to identify potentially affected areas.*

- There was a noise measurement at the waterfall on Juneau Creek, which has high noise levels. Did you take other measurements in that area away from the waterfall? *Yes.*

- The noise report should include examples of what noise magnitudes mean (e.g., 3dBA is the equivalent of ...) ? Put the noise data on the website. *We will include examples in the report.*
- Need to assess the noise impacts to the wilderness with “W” and “w.”

TRAFFIC

Don Galligan, HDR presented the traffic analysis completed-to-date which includes traffic counts, travel patterns, travel speed, mix of vehicles, and accident data. The ACC had the following questions/comments:

- Does the data include maximum speeds for people traveling through the corridor? *Yes – this and other data will be available on the website and will be distributed to the ACC.*
- Interesting to break down the trips by hour.
- How much traffic originated within Cooper Landing? Local trips? *Not very many. The exact number is available in the data.*
- What is the primary reason for doing this analysis? *To be sure that the selected alternative meets why the project is being done.*
- Will there be additional days studied? A cross section of the whole summer? *The work was intended to provide some data for the traffic analysis. It would be cost-prohibitive to conduct the same level of analysis throughout the summer.*
- How do the 8% 2-hour trips translate into money spent in the community? *It’s possible that some of the data can be used to determine length of stay. Making assumptions about what was spent may not be possible.*
- Is it possible to validate the accident rate by comparing it to data in other states? *We did compare the accident rate in the study area with accident rate data for similar types of highways in Idaho. The rate in Idaho for comparable roadways is approximately 2.00 per million vehicles entering per mile.*

Can the accident data be compared to other points on the highway – further down the peninsula / newly constructed area? *Yes – these types of comparisons can be done as we get further into the traffic analysis.*

- Can the safety analysis be projected for the proposed improved highway? What do we gain? *That is very difficult to project.*
- How will weather conditions be factored in? *Some of the alternatives are in heavier snow areas, shady areas, etc. That is what the shade analysis helps us determine.*

- Does the accident data include animal strikes? *Statistics about accidents due to animals other than moose are available only if reported to the State Troopers and that exceed \$750 damage.*
- What about shadows cast by trees? *Difficult to project.*
- How about statistics about DUI / no license? *Yes – this data is included. No such drivers were involved in any of the fatal accidents identified for the survey period.*
- Clarification of the speed limit. *Gwin's – 55-mph / 35-mph curve*
- Weather plays a big role along this section – Borough spent a lot of money on sanding / black ice caused problems.
- Need a map to show where speed limits are.
- Question about traffic counts – is it low? *No, 2k day in low season. Count not at high peak – upwards to 11k.*
- The northern most alternatives appear to isolate the road / town – if 1/3 of drivers are using existing facility, won't we need to upgrade that facility anyway? *Not necessarily, if a bypass is built, the existing highway would be downgraded to a different standard resulting from less traffic.*
- Would the existing highway remain a state highway? *Yes.*
- While there are many vehicles going straight through the corridor, there are many that are stopping. These people would likely continue to want to stop in Cooper Landing if an alternative around Cooper Landing were chosen. We should consider upgrades to the existing alignment if another alignment is chosen because people will continue to use it. *Future upgrades to the existing alignment would likely occur, but we cannot say when they would occur and what those upgrades would be.*
- Need to better explain to the community what happens to the existing road if a bypass route is built.
- Some of the new routes might not save time. We need to be clear on what each alternative means in terms of improved travel. Can you calculate travel time and say whether an alternative would save time on the road? *We do not want to start evaluating alternatives today. We want the ACC to help us identify evaluation criteria and determine how those criteria should be measured.*
- Seems like an estimate could be taken about how much time is saved – curiosity.

NEXT STEPS/WRAP UP

- Provide ACC with maps showing the range of alternatives.
- Provide the ACC with a one-page summary of descriptions of range of alternatives (cost, grade, etc.)

- Need to look at the project in the transportation system context.

- The 3R Alternative was considered in the 1994 EIS. Why was it taken out? Isn't it the same as the Wall Alternative? *The 3R Alternative does not meet the capacity requirements for this project. At this stage in the process, we don't know if the Wall Alternative meets capacity requirements or what other impacts it will have.*

- Other segments of the highway don't meet these standards. Please explain what the standards are that we are trying to meet and why. This information should be provided to us at the beginning. *We first need to state the purpose and need for the project, but we haven't done that yet. Whether it's safety, capacity, and access to Borough land – the purpose needs to be stated. That will also help clarify what direction we're going and what we hope to achieve. We are going to focus on this at the October meeting.*

- The Cooper Landing area is a bottleneck, but so is Moose Pass and Soldotna. Why spend so much on such a small segment? *ADOT&PF is attacking the problem in small chunks. The goal is to bring the entire highway up to the national standards.*

- Can you project maintenance costs? *This will be done for the EIS, but not for the descriptions we'll be providing you when we send you the updated map. We will describe exactly what's included in the costs.*

- It would be helpful if you marked pdf files on the website as 11x17 where appropriate. *We can do that.*

The ACC set the following date for the next meeting. The project team will check with absent ACC members and confirm a meeting time/date/location with the full ACC through email.

- October 24th – SSB Cooper Landing (6-7pm) 7-9:30pm
- October 25th – ACC Seward? Girdwood? Anchorage? 10-4pm

Note: These dates have since been changed to the 29th for the ACC and the 30th for the SSB.

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental EIS

AGENCY CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Meeting #4 Summary

October 29, 2001

10:00am – 4:00pm

Alaska Department of Transportation (4111 Aviation Drive)

Anchorage

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Jim Hall, USFWS | Glenda Landua, ADF&G |
| Ken Vaughan, USFS | John Olson, NMFS |
| Mary Ann Benoit, USFS | Lani Kai Eggertsen-Goff, KPB, Planning |
| John Mohorchch, KPB, Planning | Tim Haugh, FHWA |
| Phil North, EPA | Rex Young, ADOT&PF |
| Chris Degernes, DNR – DPOR | Mark Gamblin, ADFG |
| Jeff Breakfield, ADFG | Maureen deZeeuw, USFWS |
| Steve Shuck, USFWS | Don Galligan, HDR Alaska, Inc. |
| Aaron Weston, FHWA | Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF |
| Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF | Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc |
| Dave Casey, USCOE | Ed Lightwood, R&M Consultants |
| Ellen Simpson, ADFG | Jamie Damon, JLA, Inc. |

AGENDA

- 10:00 a.m.** **I. Welcome/Introductions**
 - Name/Agency
- II. Meeting Guidelines**
 - Review from last meeting
- III. Purpose of this meeting**
 - Focus on new data collected; Purpose and need; Evaluation criteria
- 10:15 a.m.** **IV. Range of Alternatives – Recap From Last Meeting**
 - Overview
 - Outstanding engineering questions regarding the range of alternatives
- 10:45 a.m.** **V. Technical Analysis – update on new data collected, follow up on questions asked at previous meetings.**
 - Highway standards/policies
 - Transportation – level of service
- 12:00 p.m.** **Lunch**
- 12:45 p.m.** **VI. Introduction to Evaluation Criteria – Presentation/Discussion**
 - Begin discussing the development of evaluation criteria as a step in the process
 - Purpose and need – the parameters for the project
- 1:45 p.m.** **VII. Hear from Agency Representatives**

- Outcomes from internal meetings
 - Evaluation criteria important to them
 - Sample criteria?
 - Outstanding issues/questions
- 2:30 p.m.** Break
- 2:45 p.m.** Agency Representatives, continued
- 3:30 p.m.** VIII. Next Steps
- 4:00 p.m.** Close

III. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

Jamie Damon, welcomed the group and after a round of introductions, explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update the group on the range of alternatives, hear from agency representatives about sample criteria they have discussed at their internal meetings, and focus on the development of evaluation criteria.

IV. RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

Ed Lightwood, walked the group through a wall size map outlining the range of alternatives-to-date. The ACC discussed at length the issue of how the cost of replacing the existing bridges is factored into (or not) the costs of the different alternatives. They also requested additional information about the existing bridge ratings and how that would change if a bypass route is chosen. The ACC had the following additional comments and questions (project team responses are shown in italics):

- What is the estimated cost of new bridge at Kenai Lake? *Estimated \$4 million.*
- The 10/28/01 map of alternatives doesn't show the Juneau Creek crossing.
- Is it possible to tie back into the existing alignment from the south before Schooner Bend – possibly avoid 6% grade? *The Cooper Creek Alternative does that and grades cannot be avoided to get onto or off the bench above the existing alignment.*
- If an alternative is chosen that does not cross Kenai Lake or Schooner Bend – what is the cost/schedule to replace the existing bridges? *Bridge cost should not be affected, but schedule of replacement could be delayed.*
- Some aspect of bridge replacement cost should be included in the costs of all of the alternatives. *We need to clarify with bridge section of ADOT&PF about replacement policy. Miriam to follow-up and find out if the existing alignment is “down graded” what affect does that have on bridge replacement.*
- What is the permitting agencies definition of “reasonably foreseeable future”? – is it more than 6 years? Less than 15 years?
- Need to include the Coast Guard regarding navigability issues.
- Are any of the bridge costs a “clear span” of the Kenai? *No.*

IV. TECHNICAL ANALYSIS – UPDATE ON NEW DATA COLLECTED, FOLLOW UP ON QUESTIONS ASKED AT PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

Highway Standards/Policies

Miriam Tanaka made a presentation about engineering design considerations that the ADOT&PF need to adhere to (see attached power point presentation slides.) The ACC had the following comments and questions:

- What is “NHS”? *National Highway System*
- Include copies of the power point presentation in the ACC meeting summary.
- What happens if Alaska doesn’t meet Federal standards? *We risk losing funding for the project.*
- If you get Federal funds do you have to design to 60 mph? *We have flexibility to design within a range of 70-50 mph design speed unless a combination of factors arise to warrant a design exception.*
- Why choose 60 mph? *The 60mph design speed was chosen because of the terrain in the area.*
- What is the steepest grade at a 60 mph design speed? *7%*
- What is an example of something to avoid? A cultural resource, environmental constraint, etc. *If an alternative needs to avoid a sensitive area we will look at “alternatives within alternatives” to try and design around it if possible.*
- We need more detail about design criteria – perhaps a highway standards memo.
- What is a typical section? *12’ lane / 6-8’ shoulders.*
- Project engineering needs to show long-term benefit for mobility to justify expenditure of funds – need to educate all the way around.

Transportation – level of service

Don Galligan presented information regarding transportation level of service and why it is an important consideration in developing alternatives (see attached power point slides.) The ACC had the following comments and questions:

- If posted speed is 50 mph – won’t LOS drop? *In general, lower posted speeds create lower levels of service because LOS is based on speed and roadway classification.*
- Clarification – no preferred alternative at this time. *That is correct! There is not preferred alternative at this time.*
- On the ground experience does not match up with the outcome of the model – why?
- Is Percentage Time Spent Following (PTSF) and Average Travel Speed (ATS) weighted equally? *Both factors have levels that beyond which will produce unacceptable levels of service, but neither factor is “weighted”.*
- 10 mph design speed one way or another isn’t going to make that big of a difference – it is the clear zone, width, etc. that makes a difference
- What is the LOS now in Cooper Landing? *“E” in peak season / “A” in Winter Months*
- Don’t feel that the “road is highly congested” in peak season – how is LOS calculated to show that it is “highly congested?” *LOS is fundamentally a measure of the amount of delay experienced in an entire traffic stream. While individual delay may seem tolerable within the traffic stream, delay overall is high, and delay that is experienced on the side streets or driveways is quite pronounced.*
- What time is the speed, time spent following measured? *We “De-seasonalized the data” – we have taken counts in peak / off peak times.*
- Why is the “directional split” relevant? *A roadway with a high directional split will experience more congestion than a road with balanced traffic flows.*

VI. INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

Jamie discussed with the group the process for developing evaluation criteria and how it will be used. The evaluation criteria is to be used as a discussion tool to evaluate the range of

alternatives in order to winnow the set of alternatives down to a smaller number that warrant a higher level of analysis. It is cost prohibitive to develop the current range of alternatives to a greater level of detail. The evaluation criteria and accompanying discussion will result in a smaller array of alternatives that are reasonable to pursue further. The evaluation criteria will be developed from the issues brought forward by the ACC, SSB, and public participants. There will be two sets of criteria that reflect the issues of importance to each group – the ACC and the SSB (including listening post input). The ACC had considerable discussion about the development of evaluation criteria in order to understand this step in the process. The ACC had the following comments and concerns:

- Concerned about how detailed the criteria should be at this stage. *It was explained that greater detail will be given when the alternatives are narrowed.*
- Uncomfortable with the idea that this set of criteria will be used to select a preferred alternative – that is the lead agencies job. *Further analysis will be used for selection of a preferred alternative.*
- Need more clarification about what constitutes a “reasonable array” of alternatives – thinks that the range of alternatives presented at this time is a reasonable array. *Detailed analysis will be done on between 3 and 5 alternatives.*
- Concerned that the criteria will eliminate some alternatives prematurely. *This process, once complete should ensure that doesn’t happen.*
- How do we weight the criteria? Do we weight the criteria? *Criteria weighting will be discussed once a finalized list of criteria is developed. Weighting can be done in many different ways.*
- Having participated in establishing and applying criteria on other projects, it is a time consuming process that doesn’t yield helpful results. *Criteria establishment and application is fundamental to environmental processes for transportation projects. It is a very good initial screen to establish the alternatives for detailed analysis.*
- The lead agency needs to “lead” the process and tell us what is reasonable so that we can respond. *ADOT&PF is taking a collaborative approach and involving agencies in the decision making so that agency concerns are established and addressed early on to ensure a feasible and implementable preferred alternative.*
- Concerned that participating in the preliminary criteria discussion does not fit well with the NEPA as I understand it. *NEPA is the process used to establish a preferred alternative, we are currently in the NEPA process and involving the agencies in the up-front portion of NEPA.*
- Need a compilation of all the issues to-date so we don’t have to look through meeting summaries. *Issues packets have been included in packets, and are available on the web at www.sterlinghighway.net.*

The ACC started with a few categories and worked through the issues associated with each to determine the detail that is warranted at this stage. Several of the agencies present said they had met internally prior to this meeting and discussed the issues of importance to their agency and how the issues could be translated into evaluation criteria. The group brainstormed a preliminary list of evaluation criteria at a broad level.

Preliminary Evaluation Criteria Categories (a work in progress)

- Impact to cultural resources
- Kenai River fishery
 - Direct/indirect impact of bridges – roads (abatements, etc.)
- Impact on water quality
 - Construction impacts on water quality
 - Impacts on plants – invasive species; noxious weeds
 - Disturbance regimes on plant species
 - Impact on floodplain
 - Main stem
 - Tributary
 - Management of run-off – spills / storm water
 - Wetland impacts
 - Hydrology – recharged discharge
- Community impacts
- Resolving transportation problems
 - System linkage
 - Level of service for highway classification
 - Seasonal congestion (capacity)
- Improve public safety
- Fish and wildlife impacts
 - Habitat fragmentation
 - Wildlife crossings – likelihood of collisions
 - Fish habitat
 - Displacement effects on bears and other habitat
- Recreation impacts
 - Trails – ski/hike – Resurrection Trail, Bean Creek Trail
 - Fishing
 - Camping
 - Need a balance – don't open up too much new access. A road may increase/decrease access.
 - Number of new areas open for access
 - Effect on existing recreation patterns
 - Increase/decrease to sensitive areas, new areas, recreational areas
- Viewshed impacts
- Landscape ecology integrity (landscape processes?)
- Secondary impacts – induced development
 - Impact on land ownership patterns
- Minimization of the footprint
- Cost
- Economic impacts –
 - Effect on local business
 - Water supply
 - Tax base
 - Quality of life

The ACC then took one example criteria and added detail to help determine how much detail makes sense at this time. The group worked through “Minimize Impacts to Wetlands” as a category, answering the question “what list of issues must be considered to determine the impact an alternative has on a wetland?” The group came up with the following list:

Minimize Impacts To Wetlands

(items with a “” indicate a priority issue)*

- Acreage lost *
- Impacts to hydrology
 - Water input
- Inflow/outflow volume of water
- Contiguous wetlands *
- Wetland function *
 - Flow retention
 - Base flow maintenance
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Nutrient export
 - Nutrient retention
 - Fish habitat
 - Water filtering
- Beneficial impact
- Adverse impact
- Buffer

The ACC discussed whether it made sense to capture this level of detail for each category. Some thought it too detailed, making the criteria difficult to apply. Others thought the level of detail is what each agency would go through anyway in applying the criteria, but didn’t think that it needed to be spelled out for the entire group. It was suggested that each agency compile the level of detail that they would need within an evaluation criteria category so that the full ACC has a better understanding of the issues associated with each criteria but that the detail is not included on the evaluation criteria matrix.

Additional Information Desired

- Data for fatalities/moose kill on improved sections as compared to existing sections.

Next Steps

- Jamie will compile a list of issues and a 1st draft of the ACC evaluation criteria for distribution to the ACC.
- The ACC will provide additional comment and detail as well as suggestions to apply the criteria (a matrix? a numerical value? a “good, fair, poor” rating?) and get this input back to Jamie by mid December.
- Jamie will compile and distribute this second draft in time for the January 15, 2002 ACC meeting. Jamie will also be developing draft criteria for the SSB to distribute to the group.

- The ACC will get any outstanding data (habitat information, plans, etc) to Mark Dalton at HDR as soon as possible.
- **Next ACC meeting January 15th in Soldotna (location to be determined.)**
- **Next SSB Meeting January 16th in Cooper Landing (location to be determined.)**



Listening Post

May 21, 2003
1:00pm – 7:00pm



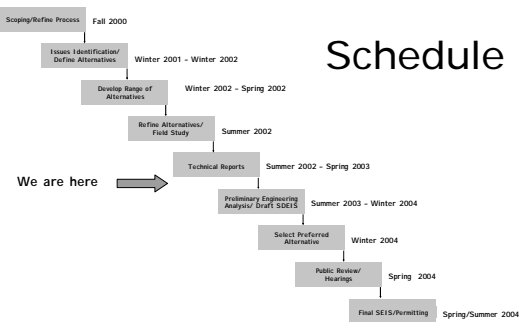
Welcome!

- Thank you for taking the time to come today.
- The purpose of the Listening Post is to give you an opportunity to talk directly with project staff about the application of the evaluation criteria.
- To bring you up to speed about the project please take 5 minutes to watch this presentation.
- It is an overview of the work completed-to-date and answers frequently asked questions.



Overview

- ◆ The Department of Transportation & Public Facilities is developing a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the section of Sterling Highway between MP 45 – 60.
- ◆ The purpose of the SDEIS is to analyze a range of alternatives to address current and future transportation problems in the corridor.
- ◆ The DOT&PF has been actively working with the communities and agencies since the summer of 2000



A Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

- ◆ Updates an existing draft EIS with new information.
- ◆ Considers a range of reasonable alternatives to solve an identified problem.
- ◆ Discloses the potential impacts of those alternatives on the natural, social, and economic environment.
- ◆ Recommends a preferred alternative – or the “best solution” given the impacts.
- ◆ Includes how to minimize or avoid impacts as a part of the recommendation.
- ◆ Is required by the National Environmental Protection Act when a proposed project has environmental, social or economic impacts.



What are the transportation problems to be solved?



- ◆ Limited or no shoulders or guardrails.
- ◆ Sharp curves.
- ◆ Limited sight distances.
- ◆ Limited passing opportunities.
- ◆ Substandard roadway. MP 45 – 60 is not consistent with other sections of the Sterling Highway.

Additional transportation issues to address



- ◆ There are many private driveways and accesses to businesses and recreational areas. The mix of slower local traffic with higher speed through-traffic combined with only two travel lanes and limited or no shoulders, makes it difficult to turn left or exit/enter driveways and businesses.
- ◆ The Sterling Highway is the only road link between south central Alaska and the western portion of the Kenai Peninsula

Social, Economic and Environmental issues

We have heard from hundreds of people including state and federal agencies, local, regional and national interest groups, native corporations and community members regarding additional issues to address. We have also pulled the issues identified from public comment submitted for the 1994 Draft EIS.



Issues Summary

- ◆ Protect the Kenai River
- ◆ Private, business, and historical property impacts.
- ◆ Impacts to recreational areas including Resurrection Pass Trail.
- ◆ Economic impacts to the business community.
- ◆ Provide safe/efficient through travel and local access.
- ◆ Wetlands.
- ◆ Habitat – particularly Brown Bear.
- ◆ High speed of travel through town.
- ◆ Safe parking and pedestrian access to recreational areas.
- ◆ Cultural resources.
- ◆ Scenic quality of the area.



Evaluation Criteria

- ◆ The issues that have been identified have been developed into Evaluation Criteria to help in establishing a range of reasonable alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative.
- ◆ The criteria was reviewed and refined by the agencies and stakeholders through meetings in January and February 2002.
- ◆ The draft criteria was prioritized by the public and agencies through a web survey from mid March 2002 through mid April 2002.
- ◆ The input received on the criteria was presented again to the agencies and stakeholders in April 2002 before finalizing.
- ◆ The evaluation criteria is on the website and has been presented to the broader public through Listening Posts in June 2002.



Copies of the complete evaluation criteria are available today.



Top Six Criteria

- ◆ Minimize Impacts to water quality and fish habitat.
- ◆ Minimize impacts to the Kenai River.
- ◆ Improve driver and pedestrian safety.
- ◆ Move both through traffic and local traffic efficiently within Cooper Landing.
- ◆ Minimize impacts to wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Maintain the scenic quality of the corridor.



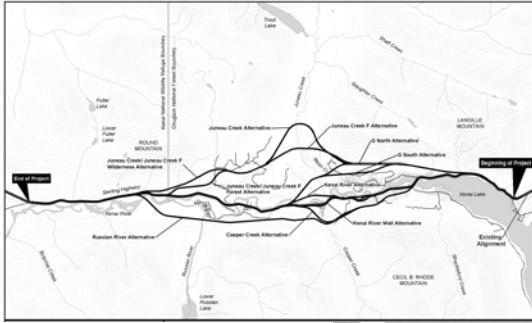
Identifying Alternatives

- ◆ Agencies, interest groups, and community members have come together in 10 different meetings to identify 8 "build" alternatives.
- ◆ A "no build" alternative is automatically considered.



Copies of the map of alternatives are available today.

Range of Alternatives



We are often asked the following questions:

- ◆ Why can't the existing road be straightened a little?
- ◆ How can we lower speeds through town?
- ◆ What will happen to the existing road if a bypass alternative is chosen?
- ◆ When will this project be built?



Why can't the existing road be "straightened a little"?

- ◆ Any change to the existing road will require an EIS process.
- ◆ Turning and passing lanes cannot be added without severe impacts to existing businesses, private properties, and cultural resources.
- ◆ To straighten curves "even a little" will require either cutting into the hillside to provide space for the road to be straightened or moving the road towards the river. In most cases bridging the river would be required.



How can we lower speeds through town?

- ◆ The posted speed through town, regardless of the alternative, can be the current posted speed.
- ◆ As a road is widened and passing/turning lanes are added, drivers feel more comfortable driving at higher speeds often in spite of the posted speed limit.
- ◆ However, keeping a road narrow and windy doesn't guarantee slower speeds. As many local residents know, people drive faster than the posted speed limit today. This leads to accidents on the curves and in areas where sight distance is poor.
- ◆ The state troopers agree that ongoing enforcement is difficult.



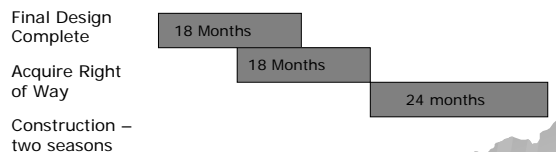
What will happen to the existing road if a bypass alternative is chosen?

- ◆ There would be no improvements to the existing road as a part of this project.
- ◆ The state will continue to maintain the existing road.
- ◆ It is projected that the majority of through traffic would use the bypass route.
- ◆ Future projects would upgrade the road to local road standards (not National Highway System standards.)
- ◆ Additional signs will be added to direct travelers to services in Cooper Landing.



When will this project be built?

If environmental approval for an alternative is received in 2005, then...



Reasonable Alternatives

- ◆ We are at the point in the process where some of the alternatives will not be forwarded into the SDEIS because they are not considered "reasonable".
- ◆ The National Environmental Protection Act considers reasonable those alternatives that are practical or feasible from a technical and economic standpoint.
- ◆ The DOT & PF has the discretion to forward alternatives that completely or partially meet the purpose and need.
- ◆ The alternatives have all received the same level of analysis at this time based on the evaluation criteria.



Here is what you can do

- Review the map of alternatives.
- Review the matrix of impacts.
- Talk with project staff.
- Complete a comment form and tell us which alternatives should be analyzed further in the SDEIS document.



Next Steps

- ◆ We will be collecting public and agency comments regarding the reasonable alternatives through June 15, 2003.
- ◆ The DOT&PF together with the Federal Highway Administration will consider the input received and decide which alternatives to consider "reasonable" for further analysis in the SDEIS.
- ◆ We will post the results on the project website, conduct a Listening Post at the end of August and convene Stakeholder and Agency meetings in September.



For more information

- ◆ Add your name to the project mailing list by signing in today.
- ◆ Log onto the project website at www.sterlinghighway.net.
- ◆ Email Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF project manager at miriam_tanaka@dot.state.ak.us
- ◆ Call Mark Dalton, HDR, Inc. project team manager at (907) 274-2000



Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental EIS

AGENCY CONSULTATION COMMITTEE (ACC)

Meeting #5 Summary

April 17, 2002 11:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Kenai Princess

Cooper Landing

PARTICIPANTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Dean Hughes, ADF&G | Ken Vaughan, USFS |
| Larry Marsh, ADF&G | Bill Shuster, USFS |
| Kevin Williamson, KPBP, Planning | Dan Bevington, KPBP, Coastal Management |
| John Mohorcich, KPBP, Planning | Chris Degernes, DNR Parks |
| Phil North, EPA | Suzanne Fidler, DNR Parks |
| Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF | Don Galligan, HDR Alaska, Inc. |
| Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF | Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc |
| | Jamie Damon, JLA, Inc. |

AGENDA

- 11am Welcome/Introductions
 - Purpose of meeting
 - Update since last meeting
 - Follow up on issues from last meeting
- 11:45 Process Check-in: Where are we in the process – where are we going?
- 12:15 Lunch
- 12:45 How do we get to an “array of reasonable alternatives?”
- 1:45 Next steps/Next meeting
- 2:00 Close

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

The purpose of the meeting was to begin the discussion of how to focus the array of alternatives for further analysis.

UPDATE SINCE LAST MEETING

Agency/Stakeholder meetings

- The project team met with agencies and stakeholders in small groups or one-on one during January and February. The purpose of the meetings was to work through issues specific to the different groups and update agencies and stakeholder groups who have missed several meetings or who we have not heard from. The project team met with the following agencies and stakeholder groups:
 - ✓ U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
 - ✓ Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPBP) Planning Department
 - ✓ KPBP Mayor

- ✓ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ✓ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ✓ State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
- ✓ Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- ✓ Salamatof Native Association
- ✓ CIRI

We also talked by phone with the Alaska Trucking Association, Teamsters and State Troopers.

Evaluation Criteria

- We developed the merged set of evaluation criteria from the ACC and Stakeholder Sounding Board (SSB) drafts and additional input received from agencies and stakeholders. The final version of the evaluation criteria is available on the project website.

Web Survey

- We developed and posted a web survey to gather input on the evaluation criteria and the range of alternatives. Over 230 people participated. Results of the survey are posted on the website. The survey was advertised through a postcard mailing to over 2,500 people, through email distribution lists, and through press releases to the local papers.

Detailed Description of Alternatives

- A detailed description of each alternative was developed including engineering description, cost, associated issues to address, and how the alternative works with the existing highway. These descriptions labeled “fact sheets” are available on the website.

FOLLOW UP ON ISSUES FROM LAST MEETING

Spill Risk Analysis

- ADOT&PF is considering a spill risk analysis, as requested by several of the agencies and the Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee. HDR Alaska, Inc. is working with the ADOT&PF to determine the scope of the analysis. The spill risk analysis will not determine removal of an alternative, but will provide a greater level of detail about the risk. The ACC had the following comments, questions regarding this analysis:
 - ▶ What is included in the spill risk analysis?
 - ▶ When will this be done?
 - ▶ Coordinate with the office of emergency management at the KPB regarding emergency response plan to different spill scenarios.
 - ▶ Looking for site-specific information about spill risk – KPB risk assessment was too general.
 - ▶ Concerned about the relationship to higher speeds and accident severity– from Transportation Research Board literature. Concerned that an alternative that has a high speed will have a greater risk of a severe spill. *While higher speeds do*

increase the severity of the accident, I'm not sure this translates to the severity of the spill.

- ▶ Would like to see a matrix with spill risk as part of it.

Scenic Byway Designation

- The USFS brought up the issue of the scenic byway designation for the Sterling Highway from the Wye to Skilak Lake. They were concerned that there has not been much discussion about the alternatives in relation to this designation. The project team determined that this section of the Sterling Highway is designated as a “State scenic byway” and that the ADOT&PF intends to pursue national scenic byway status for this section of highway. As such, the state designation does not limit the alternatives that will be considered in the DSEIS. The ACC had the following comments:
 - ▶ Scenic byways often have goals that guide the management of the byway.
 - ▶ A national scenic byway has a management plan; this section does not.
 - ▶ Need to have the scenic byway information factored into the process.

Engineering Solutions

- Several of the agencies that participated in small group meetings in January and February were interested in having a discussion about creative engineering solutions to resolve some of the adverse impacts of a few of the alternatives. For example, can the highway go under the Resurrection Trail through a tunnel to minimize impacts? Or can the highway be separated at certain points to split the highway to avoid a geologic feature or cultural resource. The ACC was interested in having this discussion and seeing examples from other states of how they resolved similar transportation issues in sensitive areas.

PROCESS CHECK-IN

Overview of Schedule and Work-to-date

| TIME FRAME | STEP | TASKS COMPLETED |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Fall 2000 | Project initiation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency/Stakeholder Interviews • Develop Scope |
| Winter/Spring 2001 | Scoping, identify issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Posts I (Anchorage, Soldotna, Cooper Landing) • ACC Meeting #1 (March) • Refine Scope |
| Summer/Fall 2001 | Develop range of alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSB Meeting#1 (May) • ACC Meeting #2 (May) • Listening Posts II (Anchorage, Soldotna, Cooper Landing) • SSB Meeting #2 (September) • ACC Meeting #3 (September) |

| TIME FRAME | STEP | TASKS COMPLETED |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Fall/winter 2001/2002 | Refine preliminary technical analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affected Environment Technical Memorandum • Traffic Analysis • ACC Meeting #4 (October) • SSB Meeting #3 (October) • Evaluation Criteria • SSB Meeting #4 (January) • Agency/Stakeholder meetings (January/February) |
| Spring/summer 2002 | Focused array of alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web survey (March/April) • ACC Meeting #5 (April) • SSB Meeting #5 (April) |
| <i>Work completed to</i> | <i>this point</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC Meeting #6 (June) • SSB Meeting #6 (June) |
| Summer/fall 2002 | Engineering analysis/technical work | |
| Fall 2002 | Develop Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement | |
| Winter 2002/2000 | Review/Refine Draft | |
| Summer 2003 | Final SEIS Draft permits | |

As outlined in the table above, we are currently at the process step of focusing the array of nine alternatives down to a smaller range of alternatives for further analysis. This focused array of alternatives will include the “no build.” The ACC had the following comments:

- ▶ Is some of the technical analysis currently underway?
- ▶ Bear data – need to get this before June meeting!
- ▶ Need to know the general hydrology (hydrogeomorphology) of all of the alternative routes. Knowledge about where water table is – how it flows across land – where are divides - look at the geomorphology of the area. Need to know existing water flows in order to understand what could change with construction.
- ▶ Need geologic information about basic feasibility of the walls and Cooper Creek alternatives – basic level of information needed.
- ▶ Need to keep in mind the potential impact to the existing Cooper Creek Bridge and campgrounds with the Cooper Lake FERC re-licensing process.

HOW DO WE GET TO AN “ARRAY OF REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES?”

The ACC reviewed the evaluation criteria and the issue maps from the affected environment technical memorandum (available on the website) to see how the issues

overlaid onto the map of alternatives. The ACC then discussed outstanding issues, information needs, possibilities for improvements to each of the alternatives within the three corridor groupings; North side; River/Through Town; and Southside.

North Side

- Impacts of growth – mitigation of secondary and cumulative impacts on all north side alternatives.
- Concerns about access.
- All north side alternatives impact an area that currently is roadless except the “G” Alternative
- Look to minimizing Section 4(f) impacts. There is an opportunity for agencies to identify how to possibly tweak “F” to minimize impact to the Bear Creek parcel.
- JCA-Wilderness & Forest + “F” trigger ANILCA.
- Need more information about what “G” Alternative bridge could look like.
- Need general description of how water moves across land.
- Need to know how forest variant ties into the highway.

River/Through Town

- Socioeconomic – short-term/long-term where is development likely to occur?
- Demographic changes for the community.
- Cost/benefit analysis?
- Get copies of Secondary and Cumulative Impacts study (1997) to ACC/website.
- Storm water treatments? Cumulative affects of increased traffic? (over time)
- Required maintenance? Maintenance plan – clearer expectations.
- Width of the road, ROW, distance to the river – relationship to pedestrian safety/private impacts.
- Designing turnoffs to high use areas (Russian River, for example).
- Anticipate erosion pattern of river – where maintenance issues may be.
- Spill risk.

South Side

- Growth inducement issue.
- FERC re-licensing and impact to south side alternatives.
- Russian River – does this cross a forest roadless area?
- The further the road can be away from the flood plain and connected wetlands the better. Take a look at alignment on west side through Refuge. Provide opportunities for pullouts.
- Widen toward the mountain, not toward the river.

NEXT STEPS/NEXT MEETING

The next ACC meeting is scheduled for June 7, 9:30am – 12:pm at the Kenai Princess Lodge in Cooper Landing. The next SSB meeting is scheduled for June 10, 6-9pm at the Kenai Princess Lodge in Cooper Landing.

The project team will be at the Kenai River Festival in Soldotna the 8th and 9th to talk with folks on the Peninsula about the project.

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Meeting Summary
Draft 12/09/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 26, 2002

Attendees: Lance Trasky, ADF&G
Dean Hughes, ADF&G
Wayne Dolezal, ADF&G
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF
Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF
Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc.
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.

Location: ADF&G, Habitat Office, Anchorage

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Mark walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. Mark highlighted that we need more detailed information from ADF&G about brown bear habitat as it related to each of the alternatives. We are also interested to know what more information people need in order to decide which alternatives should be studied further within the EIS document. The group had the following input (*responses are in italics*):

Concerns/Issues

- Would sections of the existing highway remain with the Kenai River Alternative? *We are not sure at this point in the process.*
- What is the purpose of the “G” Alternative? *It avoids the Resurrection Trail completely.*
- Are all of the alternatives four lanes? *No. The Walls Alternative may be four lanes or two lanes with a passing lane (three lanes total.) The bypass alternatives would be two lanes with passing lanes.*
- We need more information about what happens to the existing road if a bypass alternative is chosen.
- If a bypass alternative is chosen the existing bridges would all be replaced anyway right? *Not necessarily, the bridges would be rated and replaced and maintained as appropriate for the new lower traffic volumes and limited truck use.*

- If hazardous materials hauling is a big issue, then why not move away from Quartz Creek? *This is just a small section and it has big ramifications if there was a spill.*
- Can the route be signed so trucks are not allowed to use the through town road except for local deliveries and trucks using it for through travel could be cited? *We will investigate these options.*
- How high are the walls on the Walls Alternative? *They are very high (100'+). We have not found comparable height walls, soils, and seasonal issues anywhere else in the United States – we are currently looking at European examples. We are very concerned that with the freeze/thaw conditions and the questionable soils, that we cannot build walls that will hold the mountain back. We don't want to create new hazards such as the potential for the mountain to slide into the river, which would be devastating.*
- What about stacking the lanes through the area on the existing alignment? *Basically hanging the lanes off the mountain or bridging the road rather than the river. Likely infeasible.*
- What about combining the Walls Alternative and the Kenai River Alternative to wall some sections that make sense, and bridge others where walls cannot be built? *This is an option.*
- How big is the bridge for the Cooper Creek Alternative? *About 1,100 feet.*
- What about tunneling-is the south side different material than the north side? *Could you tunnel under the Resurrection Pass trail or tunnel through the mountain on the existing alignment?*
- Moose over wintering area is a problem for the Juneau Creek alternatives. **A half-mile long bridge over Cooper Creek will solve the habitat movement issues on the south side alternative??.**
- With any alternative to the existing highway, the existing highway remains – can there be an alternative where the existing highway ends in conjunction with a bypass?
- Will this be a design/build process? *Possible.*
- How much avalanche hazard do you have in the corridor? *See the Avalanche Hazard Technical Memorandum on the website.*
- What is the down side for going on the south side with a bypass? *Shade on the road and private property impacts.*
- We would prefer that a road not be built on the north side because of the habitat issues. The river or south alternatives are better for habitat. If something is built on the north side it should be limited access and elevated as much as possible to facilitate habitat movement.
- Look at creative engineering options to resolve issues and minimize impacts.

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
Kenai River Center
Meeting Summary
Draft 12/09/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 25, 2002

Attendees: Kevin Williamson, KPB Planning Dept.
John Mohorcich, KPB/KRC
Dave Casey, USACE/KFD
Lisa Gibson, USACE
Jeff Breakfield, ADF&G
Jane Gabler, KPB Planning Dept.
Jeff Selinger, ADF&G
John Czarnecki, KPB/KRC
Phil North, USEPA
Jan Yeager, KRC
Suzanne Fisler, DPOR
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF
Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF
Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc.
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.

Location: Kenai River Center, Soldotna
Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Mark walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. Mark emphasized that what we need from the KRC folks at this point in the process is what more information people need in order to decide which alternatives should be studied further within the EIS document. The group had the following input (*responses are in italics*):

Concerns/Issues

- Is the 20-year projected level of service based on a high peak or an average? *Both. The highway is currently failing (level of service E/F) during seasonal peaks. When the LOS is projected out we factor in a low level of growth based on adopted land use plans and the facility continues to fail. We are trying to get the highway to function at a level of service B/C all of the time.*

- Congestion doesn't seem like a "real" issue. Users don't see the congestion on a daily basis the majority of the year. The need for the improvements based on traffic congestion doesn't hold up.
- You need to clarify the assumption that go into the projections so people understand better how the congestion problem has been identified.
- Need to better outline the criteria for "failure."
- There is a congestion problem! The Russian River area, lodges area, and the area in the Cooper Landing community all experience congestion problems in July and August at certain times of the week (Fridays and Sundays.)
- Seems like these alternatives are overkill for a seasonal peak problem.
- When will we see other measures such as traffic calming, signage, etc to make the alternatives work better? *Remember this is a state highway and the only highway for the Kenai Peninsula and, as such, has multiple uses (Main Street for Cooper Landing, truck/freight route for entire peninsula, scenic byway for recreation traffic, etc.) Maybe the road can't be all things to all people. Maybe we can't separate the through traffic from the local. Maybe there is some way for it all to work together better.*
- Perhaps you don't need to comply with Title XI for crossing the Resurrection Trail – look into this. The USACE needs to be part of the process when the ADOT&PF applies. The USACE will be notified as well and all Title XI processes need to be signed off in Washington D.C. Title XI is a cumbersome process: it is in no one's interest to go through Title XI. Ask the USFS for a right-of-way permit, they have the ability to do that. Title XI is supposed to be a last resort only if there are no other processes.
- What is the potential for building a structure like the one referenced in Hawaii here? *Mainly cost. And that bridges ice up here unlike Hawaii. The Glen Canyon Bridge is a long curved structure and seems to be holding up just fine, however.*
- Concerned about putting a road through an area with a lot of known bear activity. It leads to stopped traffic, pull-outs, perhaps viewing areas – all of which lead to more interactions with bears and people resulting in bears becoming use to people and we don't want to encourage that. It is bad for people and bears. *We need to have the conversation about what each alternative means for different types of bear habitat/use and how to avoid them.*
- Will an improved road induce traffic? *Don't know if an improved road will induce traffic but it will most likely induce growth, which may result in traffic.*
- We know of folks in Anchorage that choose not to come to the Sterling and Soldotna to fish because of the current condition of the road and choose to go to Seward.
- We can't accommodate the recreational traveler now – there are not enough campsites, hotels, etc.
- During peak season the traffic in Soldotna is backed up through town, how can we handle more?
- KPB is at the end of the list for land selections, we have over selected. Some in the Borough think we should have an option on both parcels (north and south sides).

- Concerned about inability to see the “big picture” that ADOT&PF has for the interstate and lack of coordination with land growth with local communities.
- Keep in mind when reviewing the alternatives which ones are easier to expand in the future if needed to accommodate a 4-lane facility. In Colorado and other resource rich states, the expansion of roads like this is a reality.
- Would like more information about how the ADOT&PF acquires right-of-way – when and what is the process? *We will get more information about this when we have fewer alternatives to consider.*
- Need to see clearer information about limited access or access in general. Need to be sure to take into account any potential development regardless of purpose.
- Clarification about USFS’ pull-out idea at Juneau Creek – is it on or off the table? *It is off of the table at this point. It was part of the previous work and was considered mitigation for the USFS.*
- Appreciate hearing the information about the Walls Alternative: it is what we have been looking for.
- When there are common segments among the alternatives, can they be renamed so it is easier to see the impacts segment-by-segment and opportunities for mitigation? *We can present the information in a way that shows segments for ease of providing comments by agencies assessing impacts.*
- Is a trail considered as a part of these alternatives? For example a trail through town? *It depends on the alternative.*
- Can some safety improvements happen sooner? *The biggest safety improvements have to do with the curves, which cannot be “straightened” without doing an EIS which is what this process is all about. The highway has already been cleared for sight distance.*
- Can a local road be a part of the scenic byway? So that if a bypass is built there would be a scenic loop? *We need to follow up on this.*
- Look to European examples!

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
Meeting Summary
Draft 11/19/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 24, 2002

Attendees: Robin West, USFWS
Jim Hall, USFWS
John Morton, USFWS
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF (by phone)
Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF (by phone)
Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc. (by phone)

Location: Kenai National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters, Soldotna
Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Mark, participating by phone, walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. Mark emphasized that what we need from the refuge at this point in the process is more information about the land exchange with CIRI in order to know what the impacts are for each alternative. The group had the following input:

Concerns/Issues

- Clarification about the land exchange: Gives CIRI title to 20 acres of land with cultural and cemetery sites in the area of the Resurrection Pass Trailhead prior to crossing the Kenai River. Also allows them to develop a 42-acre parcel, entirely on USFS land, (along the Chugach – unsure of location) for a cultural resource center, lodging and restaurant. The exchange was controversial within the environmental community however it held up in the hearings. There is also the potential for a future exchange for 300 acres along the (Killey) River. The result of the exchange cannot result in net loss to wilderness and had to be on the north side of the Sterling Highway. The USFWS is only authorized to offer up non-riverfront land.
- We can provide greater detail about the area of the land exchange (Robin copied the agreement and gave to Jamie/who gave to Mark).

- Concerned that the mountains are “too young” to cut into (referencing the “Walls” alternative. Already experiencing problems at Tern Lake and Hatcher Pass trying to hold material back. When will we know whether or not the “Walls” alternative is buildable?
- The habitat folks are cautious about being too definitive regarding the data that is available. Habitat is not a black and white issue – they don’t want to be too rigid with their findings.
- The Juneau Creek “F” variant does not cross the historical section of the trail it crosses the relocated section of trail – does that make a difference? The USFS needs to establish a legal definition of the trail – one alternative impacts the historical section, one alternative impacts the section designated as a National Recreation Trail. It is possible to mitigate trail impacts by moving the trail. Unsure if going above a trail (bridge) is impacting the trail.
- Just because an alternative crosses a conservation system unit does not mean it is prohibited.
- The Federal Highway Administration is the decision-making agency, they may need to agree to disagree with cooperating agencies. Do what you can to work with the agencies up front.
- The selected lands should not be as big an issue as folks think. The KPB has selected too much land and won’t be able to get title to all of it – it needs to be trimmed back. The USFS is the action agency here, just because the KPB has selected it doesn’t mean the USFS has to choose it, they can choose another and show why it was discounted.

Expectations

- The environmental document being created should be the standard NEPA documentation; there is no need to organize it to comply with ANILCA at this point.
- It looks like there are plenty of alternatives. The ADOT&PF needs to be prepared to build the preferred alternative and so should be careful about which alternatives are forwarded into the DSEIS.
- Don’t eliminate alternatives unless there are clear fatal flaws:
 - ▶ Engineering – cannot be built.
 - ▶ Cultural resources that cannot be mitigated.
 - ▶ Obvious endangered habitat (i.e. the “last stand of xxx vegetation for xxx species” – only habitat, etc.)
- Go to the public with all of the outcomes of the technical analysis.
- Continue to study the buildable, feasible alternatives.
- Need to make sure we have sound and equal reasoning for why an alternative is removed from further consideration.
- The purpose and need needs to be “beefed up” – we will be looking at the document to make sure all the details are covered. The ADOT&PF need to consider both the National Standards and an “Alaskan Standard” – acknowledge that as a state we have different constraints and need more flexibility. National standards are not laws, they are standards or guidelines.

- We understand that if the project is using federal money it needs to meet federal guidelines.
- We expect to see the following information in your documentation:
 - Broad understanding of the problem(s) to be resolved and the level of agreement.
 - A “fleshed out” purpose and need.
 - Trail definitions and legal descriptions of trails.

Follow up Needed

- Need to pull together the interagency team regarding brown bears – Sean Farley of ADF&G is the head of that. They have received all of the information-to-date about this study.
- Need to sort out the ANILCA implications with USFS and USFWS. The Resurrection Trail corridor is not well defined –how wide is it? Where is the centerline? There is no precedence for doing Title XI for this kind of trail resource. Need to use the existing regulations that apply to this situation. Suggest that the ADOT&PF pull together the legal council for USFS and USFWS to develop detailed findings in this matter.
- We will get up-to-date land status information.
- We would like to get a sense of what percentage of traffic will use the bypass and how will the transportation system work with two roads in the area instead of one?

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
Salamatof, Kenaitze
Meeting Summary
Draft 12/09/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 26, 2002

Attendees: Jim Segura, Salamatof
Rita Smogge, Kenaitze
Penny Carty, Salamatof
Sasha Lindgren, Kenaitze
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF
Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF
Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc.
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.

Location: Salamatof Office, Kenai

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Mark walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. What we need at this point in the process is what more information people need in order to decide which alternatives should be studied further within the EIS document. The group had the following input (*responses are in italics*):

Concerns/Issues

- Would like more information about the status of the CIRI selections. *Mark discussed this in more detail.*
- Is the existing road an option? *Yes, that would be the no build.*
- Don't see the cultural impacts detailed on the fact sheets for each alternative. *We have that information but we don't provide it in detail on the public information materials because of the potential negative impact to the cultural sites if they were known.*
- Thirty new sites have been recently identified on the refuge site. Contact Debbie Corbett at USFWS for the details.
- What does annual maintenance include? *Snow removal and such. The maintenance costs for a bypass listed on the fact sheets may be low because the costs to maintain the existing road were not included.*

- Why was the Russian River Alternative included as an option? The impacts to cultural resources are invaluable and it makes that alternative impossible to mitigate.
- Are the costs shown on the fact sheets the actual costs for each alternative? *No. The costs shown don't include right of way acquisition or mitigation (Section 106) etc.*
- Has there been a recent survey on the north side for cultural resources? *Yes. We haven't found anything more than we already know about. Once you get away from the river, we can't find any more sites.*
- We have noticed that we're losing a lot of bank along the Kenai; we went through to do some revegetation at the mouth of the drainage there was some flooding. Any further impacts to the riverbank in this area will erode it further and begin impacting cultural resources. *We haven't done our Section 106 for all the alternatives. The Kenai River alternatives will have a greater effect on the cultural resources along the river than any other alternative.*
- What do the people in Cooper Landing want? *They are divided on where the highway should go if a new one is built as opposed to what could be done to improve the existing highway and the impact to the community. A greater number of people who live further south on the peninsula or in Anchorage would like to see a bypass built.*
- Isn't the reason for building a new road to move trucks and get them away from the river? That is one of the issues we are trying to address with the alternatives.
- If a bypass is chosen, will a bike trail go along the existing road? *It is a possibility but may be a separate project from this.*
- We noticed a definite increase in speed enforcement over the summer than in years past. Speed enforcement is always an issue.
- What effect will this have about the road's current status as one of the ten scenic routes in America? Will the road be as attractive if not located along the river? *Remember if a bypass is built, the existing road will remain where it is. We need to find out if both routes would be considered scenic bypasses or if one would be signed as such.*
- In all of our work on tourism, we found out that people don't want to go the same way in and out of an area. They want a loop. We would support a bypass for the increased tourism potential. People will use both routes for the scenic quality. The bypass could open up some nice views.
- Who will make the final decision as to what is done? *The ADOT&PF makes a recommendation to the Federal Highway Administration and they make the decision.*
- We need good facilities for rest areas along any road. We don't do that well in Alaska. We want to bring tourists to the area and they need food facilities, the lower 48 does this well.
- How has the traffic changed over the past 30 years on the Sterling Highway since the project was first conceived in the 1970's?
- Is anyone talking about a Turnagain Arm crossing?
- Does Federal Highway Administration have national standards for restroom facilities along highways? Such as how far apart they should be?

- Use native varieties for hydroseeding – don't use the invasive species they choke out the berries.
- How long will it be before we can drive on a new road? *If a build alternative is selected, approximately 7-10 years from now.*

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
Alaska Trucking Association and Teamsters
Draft 12/09/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 27, 2002

Attendees: Frank Dillon, Alaska Trucking Association
Barbara Huff, Teamsters
Ken Coleman, Teamsters
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.

Location: Teamsters office, Anchorage

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Miriam walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. Miriam highlighted that many agency and public participants have asked about what “the truckers” would support and have speculated about the issues that truckers would have with any of the alternatives. We need to be able to let folks know “what the truckers think.” We are also interested to know what more information people need in order to decide which alternatives should be studied further within the EIS document. The group had the following input (*responses are in italics*):

Concerns/Issues

- Is there much support for a “No Build” Alternative? There is less support for a no build than doing something. *There is broad agreement that the existing highway has problems and something needs to be done. The community of Cooper Landing is fairly well divided about what to do. Folks outside of the area have more support for a bypass.*
- Anything, in our opinion, will improve the road from a commercial movement perspective. We want to see some of the bad corners removed and a straight, wide road.
- We want minimal environmental impacts – we care about the sensitive environment in this area – it is a resource for all Alaskans.
- In 1993 the Alaska Truckers Association told what our preference was at that time. What has changed in the last 10 years? *We have several alternatives under consideration that were not on the table 10 years ago.*

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of the two “G” alternatives (the forest and wilderness variants).
- The “G” northern variant, with no river view, keeps the value of the existing highway as a destination for accessing and viewing the river.
- Communities like Cooper Landing can become destinations! The slower tourist traffic will use the existing highway because it is more scenic. Businesses catering to tourism will do better in a community like that.
- The cost of the River Alternative seems too low for all of the bridges.
- What are the elevations on the northern alternatives?
- A 3% to 5% grade is not a big deal. Flat and straight is not necessarily safer. The problem is the mix of commercial truck traffic with the slower recreational traffic.
- Need to sign the road with “Drive in the Right Lane Unless Passing” signs.
- The current route is a dangerous route – too much interference with folks pulling out of driveways and businesses.
- Geometry problems on the existing road, documented accident rates at the curves.
- Alternative “G” seems to work best – it avoids the habitat and trail issues, gets the through traffic out of town, solves the curves problems on the existing road, and doesn’t tie back in at Russian River Ferry.
- If you are not going to make the road more safe and efficient with a bypass, than the no build is a viable option.
- If the improvements will make it more difficult to operate than we can’t support that.
- Trucking industry pays 40% of road building costs unless there is a hazardous condition you can’t deny trucks access to the area. The bottom line is the trucks will choose the safest most efficient route to follow and a bypass would be that route if the existing road is not straightened.
- If the route is not attractive to drivers, why build it?
- The new route or improved road needs to resolve the safety issues, enhance traffic movements, mitigate congestion and handle additional capacity in the future.
- Don’t exclude the “F” variant from further study.
- Don’t further the Juneau Falls Alternative – not worth it if you have so many other viable alternatives that have a higher degree of support.
- From a trucking perspective, alternatives “F” and “G” work the best.
- Not concerned about the freeze/thaw aspect of having the road on the bench, the river alternatives actually have more variables for weather and are more difficult to predict.
- There are non-frost susceptible building techniques that can be used. We will lobby for this to be done.
- Look at the moose collision data – the majority of collisions are on the Sterling in its current location – this is a major hazard.
- Keep vegetation away from the sides of the road to open up site distances.
- If a bypass is built, we would not be opposed to having one of the routes designated as a truck route. Preferably the bypass.

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
Agency Small Group Meetings
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Meeting Summary
Draft 11/19/02

Overview

Meeting Date: September 24, 2002

Attendees: Maureen deZeeuw, USFWS
Brian Anderson, USFWS
Miriam Tanaka, ADOT&PF
Laurie Mulcahy, ADOT&PF
Mark Dalton, HDR Alaska, Inc.
Don Galligan, HDR Alaska, Inc.
Jamie Damon, Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc.

Location: USFWS Conference room, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to update the participants about the process and preliminary technical findings and hear from them outstanding questions, issues and information needs.

Introduction

Mark walked the participants through the range of alternatives using the air photo/map and provided a brief description of each alternative. Mark emphasized that what we need from USFWS at this point in the process is more definitive information about brown bear habitat in order to know what the impacts are for each alternative. The group had the following input:

Concerns/Issues

- Concerned that the mountains are “too young” to cut into (referencing the “Walls” alternative. Already experiencing problems at Tern Lake and Hatcher Pass trying to hold material back. When will we know whether or not the “Walls” alternative is buildable?
- The habitat folks are cautious about being too definitive regarding the data that is available. Habitat is not a black and white issue – they don’t want to be too rigid with their findings.
- The Juneau Creek “F” variant does not cross the historical section of the trail it crosses the relocated section of trail – does that make a difference? The USFS needs to establish a legal definition of the trail – one alternative impacts the historical section, one alternative impacts the section designated as a National Recreation Trail. It is possible to mitigate trail impacts by moving the trail. Unsure if going above a trail (bridge) is impacting the trail.

- Just because an alternative crosses a conservation system unit does not mean it is prohibited.
- The Federal Highways Administration is the decision-making agency; they may need to agree to disagree with cooperating agencies. Do what you can to work with the agencies up front.
- The selected lands should not be as big an issue as folks think. The KPBA has selected too much land and won't be able to have all of it – it needs to be trimmed back. The USFS is the action agency here, just because the KPBA has selected it doesn't mean the USFS has to choose it, they can choose another and show why it was discounted.

Expectations

- The environmental document being created should be the standard NEPA documentation; there is no need to organize it to comply with ANILCA at this point.
- It looks like there are plenty of alternatives. The ADOT&PF needs to be prepared to build the preferred alternative and so should be careful about which alternatives are forwarded into the DSEIS.
- Don't eliminate alternatives unless there are clear fatal flaws:
 - ▶ Engineering – cannot be built.
 - ▶ Cultural resources that cannot be mitigated.
 - ▶ Obvious endangered habitat (i.e. the “last stand of xxx vegetation for xxx species” – only habitat, etc.)
- Go to the public with all of the outcomes of the technical analysis.
- Continue to study the buildable, feasible alternatives.
- Need to make sure we have sound and equal reasoning for why an alternative is removed from further consideration.
- The purpose and need needs to be “beefed up” – we will be looking at the document to make sure all the details are covered. The ADOT&PF need to consider both the National Standards and an “Alaskan Standard” – acknowledge that as a state we have different constraints and need more flexibility. National Standards are not laws they are standards – guidelines.
- We understand that if the project is using federal money it needs to meet federal guidelines.
- We expect to see the following information in your documentation:
 - Broad understanding of the problem(s) to be resolved and the level of agreement.
 - A “fleshed out” purpose and need.
 - Trail definitions and legal descriptions of trails.

Follow up Needed

- Need to pull together the interagency team regarding brown bears – Sean Farley from ADF&G is the head of that. They have received all of the information-to-date about this study.

- Need to sort out the ANILCA implications with USFS and USFWS. The Resurrection Trail corridor is not well defined –how wide is it? Where is the centerline? There is no precedence for doing Title XI for this kind of trail resource. Need to use the existing regulations that apply to this situation. Suggest that the ADOT&PF pull together the legal council for USFS and USFWS to develop detailed findings in this matter.
- We will get up-to-date land status information – good maps.
- We would like to get a sense of what percentage of traffic will use the bypass and how will the transportation system work with two roads in the area instead of one?