



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

DESIGN & ENGINEERING SERVICES
Preliminary Design & Environmental

PO Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900
Phone Number: 907 269 0542
Toll Free: 800 770 5263
TDD: 907 269 0473
TTY: 800 770 8973
Fax Number: 907 243 6927
Web Site: dot.state.ak.us

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For the record, this project is titled “Sterling Highway Milepost 45-60 Project;” its federal project number is STP-F-021-2(15), and its state project number is 53014. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) are holding public hearings in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Hearings are being held in Alaska and in Washington, D.C. The Alaska hearing is being continued over three days and three locations—Anchorage, Cooper Landing, and Soldotna. The hearings fulfill requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

DOT&PF and FHWA previously published two different draft environmental impact statements (EISs) related to this project, in 1982 and 1994. These addressed a larger project area, extending from Milepost 37 to Milepost 60. Due to the complexity of the Milepost 45-60 portion of the highway, no final decision was reached for this stretch. While this EIS is formally considered a supplement to the earlier work, due to the passage of time, the analysis in this Supplemental EIS is completely new. The original Notice of Intent to undertake an EIS for the Sterling Highway Milepost 37-60 Project was published in the Federal Register on June 12, 1980. Another Notice was published on June 20, 1991 supporting the 1994 effort. For the current effort, FHWA published a Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft SEIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation in the Federal Register on May 19, 2003.

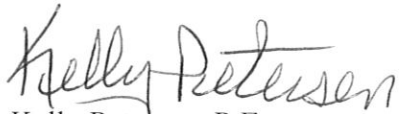
This Draft SEIS presents four alternatives to improve the Sterling Highway in the Cooper Landing area. Each alternative addresses the same 3 goals: reduce congestion, improve safety, and improve the highway to meet current standards. The alternatives each would upgrade the east and west ends of the existing highway in the project area. To varying extents, each alternative would depart from the existing highway to pass around all or part of the Cooper Landing community, either to the south or to the north. The differences between alternatives largely are trade-offs between impacts to traffic and properties along the existing highway and impacts to natural environment, habitat, and trails in generally undeveloped areas of public land along segments of new highway alignment. The Draft SEIS also examines a No Action Alternative.

Chapter 4 of the Draft SEIS contains a Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation. Many parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and historic or cultural properties in the project area are protected under Section 4(f) of the federal Department of Transportation Act. Each of the “build” alternatives would use property from and affect several of these properties, and FHWA must select the alternative that is determined to have the least overall harm.

Neither DOT&PF nor FHWA has selected a preferred alternative at this time. The Final EIS will present a preferred alternative after the lead agencies consider comments on the Draft SEIS and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation, further consult with agencies, and complete a final assessment of the alternative with least overall harm under Section 4(f). A Record of Decision will document final findings.

Today's testimony is being recorded and will be printed in a transcript. We will compile it with written comments received by May 26, 2015. All comments received during the public comment period will be part of the public record and may be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. Written and oral testimony will be given equal consideration. We will address the comments in the Final EIS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Petersen".

Kelly Petersen, P.E.
Project Manager

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