



Meeting Minutes

SUBJECT: Seward Highway DOT&PF PN 53577
Public Meeting No. 3

W.O. D59207E

DATE: Monday, September 10, 2007

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

LOCATION: Indian Valley Meats

Below is a summary of the Seward Highway MP 99-105 Public Meeting No. 3. Staff responses to questions or comments are shown in italics.

Steve Noble (DOWL) and Kristen Hansen (DOWL) updated the meeting attendees on the status of the project and the reports that have been completed to date. The discussion that took place during and after the presentation is summarized below. Staff responses are in italics.

- It was asked if the pedestrian upgrades will happen regardless of which alternative is selected. *Steve explained that the project will work to better connect Indian to the trail on the south side. He stated that the pedestrian improvements are independent of which alternative is chosen.*
- How many accidents in the area have resulted from traffic turning on/off the highway? *Steve stated that clusters of accidents have occurred around the areas of Bird and Indian. He explained that many of these accidents are caused by vehicles traveling at different speeds along the highway. Steve commented that he is not sure of the exact number of accidents, but this information can be made available after the meeting.*
- Are not most accidents head-on? *Steve stated that most of the fatal/major accidents are a result of head-on collisions, but the majority of accidents in this area occur from turning movements, sideswipes, or driving off the road.*
- Will there be acceleration lanes on the Highway from the Frontage Road? *Steve explained that acceleration lanes are being considered, and if they are used the intersections with the Frontage Road will most likely look similar to the intersection of the Alyeska Highway and the Seward Highway.*
- Will the access to the campground be changed? *The alignments in consideration will not cause the campground access to change.*
- Will there be some type of barrier between the Highway and the Frontage Road? *Steve explained that the two roads have to be separated by at least 30 feet, but the type of separation is not known at this point in the project.*
- It was stated that the intersection of the Seward and Alyeska Highways is confusing and drivers are unaware of what should be done at the intersection.

- How close will the sidewalk be to the proposed frontage road? *There is no separation between the two at this point because the team has tried to reduce the impacts to private property along the proposed road. It was explained that this aspect could change later in the project if desired.*
- Why is another bike trail proposed in Bird when there is already one there? *Steve explained that the goal of having a trail next to the Frontage Road is to keep pedestrians off the road and on the sidewalks. He explained that the team has tried to minimize the impacts to the surrounding properties by using as much of the existing highway and bridges as possible.*
- How will you address the traffic from the campground entering the highway at slower speeds? *The entrance and exits to the campground will remain as they are today.*
- If there are no barriers between the frontage road and the highway, wouldn't you have problems with people making u-turns from one road to another? *Steve explained that the road will be designed to keep traffic on the frontage road until the designated entrance to the highway.*
- What type of noise barrier will be used along the project? *Kristen explained that a noise study is in progress, and as soon as it is finalized it will be posted to the website. She stated that once the noise analysis is complete mitigation for increased noise will be considered, based upon the 1996 State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Noise Abatement Policy which considers both feasibility of noise barriers and also "reasonableness." This DOT&PF Policy is available on the DOT&PF website and a link will be added to the project website.*
- Will reduced vegetation cause an increase in noise? *Kristen explained that the amount of vegetation that is present in the corridor now does not provide much of a sound barrier. In order for vegetation to have a significant impact on noise it must be a very dense barrier.*
- A noise barrier is needed regardless of which option is chosen because of the growth that is occurring in the communities. The noise will continue to increase due to the increase in traffic. *Kristen explained that the next step, after the noise analysis is complete, is to evaluate the noise changes and decide on the necessary mitigation.*
- What happens if there is no room for the noise barrier in the design? *Steve stated that in both the options being considered, there is room for a noise barrier if needed.*
- I live off of the highway and if the highway is moved towards the railroad the noise will not decrease because the frontage road will cause noise anyways. *Kristen explained that highway noise is related to traffic volumes and speed. Under the Frontage Road Alternative the highway would be moved further from the communities which would keep the majority of the noisier high-speed traffic further away. This could reduce noise levels by up to five or six dBA (depending on how far south the highway is shifted) in some locations north of the highway, based on preliminary results of the noise modeling for this project.*
- Move the highway closer to the railroad. This is what the communities want.
- The noise is so loud today that many residents cannot have conversations outside their homes. The frontage road will not help this problem.

- The speed limit should be reduced to 35 miles per hour (mph). This will help decrease the noise and enhance the safety in the communities. *Steve explained that reducing the speed limit will not solve the safety problems.*
- People want to slow down and enjoy the beauty of Alaska.
- This project will cost a lot of money. The State of Alaska (SOA) should save this money and use it to address capacity issues at a later date.
- The frontage road would enhance the community. It should be recognized that the team has moved the alignment towards the railroad in order to have minimal direct impacts on the local businesses. What bothers me is what will happen with the next project. In a couple years a four-lane will be needed and this project does not set-up the communities for a four-lane.
- It will be dangerous to make a left-turn at the intersection of the Frontage Road if this option is chosen.
- Do Alternatives 2 and 3 require the existing highway to be relocated? *Steve explained that Alternative 2 does require some relocation, but Alternative 3 required minimal realignment.*
- Will the path on the north side of the highway go away? *Steve explained that with Alternative 3 the path on the north side would go away in Bird, but in Indian the path would remain.*
- The team seems to be very concerned about the environment. Why is the team more concerned about the environment than the community? *Kristen explained that there is also a socio-economic portion of the environmental documentation. Steve also commented that the team has modified the design of the roadway to try and avoid impacts to the communities as much as possible.*
- The project team has done a good job addressing community concerns.
- Can you explain the intersection grades at Indian Road? *Steve explained that Indian Road intersects the Seward Highway at a very acute angle. The frontage road option would realign Indian Road to make it more perpendicular and would raise the highway and lower Indian Road in order to lower the grades at the approach to the intersection.*
- There are 60 percent more cars in the summer near Bird Creek.
- Why are you running the frontage road through the church? *Steve commented that the church is not being directly impacted with either alignment.*
- Is the frontage road proposed to be constructed where the existing highway is now? *Steve explained that the frontage road will be close to where the existing highway is, but not in the exact same location. The existing bridges will be used to help keep the impacts minimal.*
- These communities do not need a frontage road. Residents use the back roads in order to get between community locations. *Steve explained that with the Frontage Road option the amount of driveways onto the highway will decrease from 30 to 4 which will be safer for those living in the communities as well as those using the highway.*
- If the Frontage Road is constructed there needs to be regulation to control the campers that will park along the road and block access for the residents.

- Is the no-build (Alternative 1) still an option? *Steve stated that Alternative 1 is still an option under consideration.*
- Would it be possible for rubberized asphalt to be used when constructing the new segments of road to help keep the noise levels down? *Steve explained that rubberized asphalt is being tested on the Abbott Loop Extension project in Anchorage and it was just installed earlier this month. Depending on its effectiveness on this project, DOT&PF may consider using it for other projects.*
- What will the impacts to the Indian ball fields be with the Frontage Road alignment? *Steve explained that the ball field parking lot may be impacted, but there is some SOA right-of-way that may be used. Depending on the type of impacts that occur, further evaluation will be needed for this area.*
- Who are the factors that decide the speed limit can't be reduced? *Miriam McCulloch (DOT&PF) explained that this highway serves a variety of users and it is acting as both a highway and a local road. If the speed limit is reduced people will try to pass before the slower speed section of road and this creates a more dangerous situation. Steve stated that DOT&PF makes the final decision on reducing the speed limit.*