



MEETING RECORD

DATE: 2/18/05 TIME: 11am JOB NO.: 200936-13900
 RECORDED BY: Sarah Schoen CLIENT: KABATA
Rodney Huffman, Natalie
 MET WITH: Cooper OF BLM
 MEETING LOCATION: BLM Field Offices
 ROUTE TO: INFORMATION ACTIONS

 SUBJECT OF MEETING: Scoping Meeting

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

MEETING ATTENDEES

Rodney Huffman, BLM	Jim Glaspell, URS
Natalie Cooper, BLM	Robin Reich, HDR
Henry Springer, KABATA	Sarah Schoen, HDR

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

Henry Springer (KABATA) started the meeting by giving a general project overview. KABATA is a government agency that was brought about through legislation and funded by congress. KABATA is basically an arm of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). KABATA is trying to “streamline” the process by meeting with agencies early so there will not be any surprises. The goal is to finish NEPA in 18 months. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the agency in charge of the project. Henry said that it was his impression that BLM would have minimal involvement in the project. He acknowledged that KABATA is taking on a large, unorthodox project. The budget for the project is between four hundred and six hundred million dollars. HDR is the lead consulting company, with 20 subconsultants.

Robin Reich (HDR) said that while HDR is the lead consulting company, URS and PND are doing a large amount of work. The Notice of Intent (NOI) was filed in January, and scoping is continuing from now until August. Robin said that this is the start of the official one-on-one agency scoping meetings, but agencies have been involved for a while and have helped design studies along the way. Robin said that there is an open door policy for the project, and stressed the hope for no surprises.

Rodney Huffman (BLM) asked who to give information to as they gathered it. Robin told him to email it to her, and she would distribute it.

Robin said that this project will couple NEPA and permitting. The draft EIS and permit applications and final EIS and permits should come out at the same time. Robin said that the project is a bridge, but that they would look at all of the alternatives. The main objective of the project is to connect Anchorage to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). Robin explained that a purpose and need (P&N) statement with five main intents is under development. One need is to meet the legislative intent of connecting Anchorage to the MSB by a bridge. Connecting the POA and Port MacKenzie would help alleviate some of the Port of Anchorage's (POA) congestion by allowing expansion to happen in designated industrial areas of Port MacKenzie. With the new Homeland Security concerns, a link between Elmendorf Air Force Base (EAFB) and Port MacKenzie is beneficial. The link would be an alternative escape route for the Anchorage bowl in case of an emergency. Another important need is the need for a connection to the quickly growing Mat-Su valley.

Rodney asked if one of the needs for the bridge was based on military deployment in and out of the Port of Anchorage (POA), not Port MacKenzie. He asked if that is a national security interest. Robin responded that the P&N's have not changed since the last meeting.

Henry said that they have focused in to clarify the P&N. They are working on figuring out what the Military's stance is on the P&N. He said that we are filling in with agencies that we did not have much contact with previously.

Henry asked if BLM will have a role in the project.

Rodney said BLM is responsible for issuing right-of-way (ROW) on military lands (Elmendorf). If the military does not want to grant access, BLM will not grant the ROW. BLM completes their own NEPA documentation before issuing ROWs. This would only affect the bridge approaches. The DOT&PF would be responsible for issuing ROW on the connector roads. The roads to the POA are on a ROW that is 80 ft. wide. BLM's only concern is if the existing infrastructure needs to be built up they might need ROW.

Robin asked whose jurisdiction that was.

Rodney said that it is under military jurisdiction. Only a small area is actually owned by BLM. An exclusive license in perpetuity would be given to the bridge.

Robin asked what the consequences of widening the ROW would be.

Rodney said that patented lands where BLM owns the mineral state (subsurface) won't be an issue unless the subsurface materials are used as fill material, etc.

Jim Glaspell (URS) asked about moving materials from high to low points like the railroad did on military lands.

Henry said that if there are two owners (subsurface and surface), then it gets tricky. Rodney said that the material is what is in question.

Jim asked if the BLM would write their own environmental assessment if the corridor was widened, minerals were moved, and an ROW was issued.

Rodney said that BLM would coordinate with KABATA for that. The BLM would like to use the bridge's EIS.

Jim asked BLM to tell the project team all of their issues.

Henry said that the project is looking into alternatives that avoid the POA area, since it is a port of national security interest, and Government Hill.

Rodney said BLM would be required to issue some permits (for the approximate area that Henry described). The slope area (80-102) is an executive order area; BLM would likely issue ROW with the Military's "non objection" letter.

Robin asked Rodney if BLM has to become a cooperating agency (to FHWA) in order to issue permits. Rodney said that BLM does need to be a cooperating agency.

Jim asked if this was different than with the railroad project.

Rodney confirmed that this process is different. In order to issue a "letter of non objection", they go through their own process (internal NEPA). A letter of non objection is needed in order to grant permits.

Robin asked for the military contact. Rodney said that BLM works closely with Allen Richman's group (3rd Squadron). Rodney said BLM has no jurisdiction over fee title.

Rodney asked what kind of a construction area would be needed. Robin said that the engineers are currently working to determine the area needed for construction.

Henry did not think that the project would leave a footprint anywhere north of the POA or near Cairn Point because it would stay below the high tide lines.

Rodney said that the state owns the tidelands.

Henry said that it is simpler in terms of environmental and real estate impacts to stay below the bluff (near tidelands).

Rodney said that they need to look at the land status maps more closely.

Henry wondered who owned the ROW going into the POA. Rodney said that DOT&PF owns the roads going into the POA.

Rodney said that DOT was transferred these rights at statehood. Rodney asked how the roads would tie into existing infrastructure.

Robin and Henry said that they would look at traffic models to determine that connection.

Robin asked Rodney what KABATA needs to get from BLM for completion of the project.

Jim mentioned that the project could go over, around, under, or through Government Hill.

Natalie Cooper (BLM) said that they will look at the entire project area and tell us where they will be involved. They will have land status in the study area determined by the agency scoping meeting.

Robin asked if BLM owned any MSB land over by Point MacKenzie.

Rodney and Natalie said that they did not know, but they probably do not own any land in the project area.

Rodney asked if there will be temporary use areas on the MSB side.

Jim said that there probably would be a temporary use area in the designated industrial use area.

Jim noted that the construction area depends on what kind of structure KABATA ends up using. If it is made of concrete the temporary use area will be huge.

Rodney asked how the bridge would be constructed, if it would start on one side and move to the other.

Jim and Robin said that was possible, or construction from a barge.

Robin said that the gravel source would probably be from the Port MacKenzie side. Embankments and islands are included in possible designs for the project.

Rodney said that some gravel sources exist on Elmendorf.

Robin alerted BLM that an agency meeting would be held at the end of March (29th), and by that point KABATA would have ideas for alignments.

Rodney said that BLM would have ideas of land use by then. He would like a map of the probable alignment.

Robin said that with NEPA, there have to be several choices for alignments.

Rodney said that other BLM department could be involved after alignments are known. Rodney will share info with them at that time.

Jim said that the alternatives will likely vary with structure type, tie-ins, and configuration (embankment and bridge structure lengths, etc). There will be fewer options for alignments because of constraints within the project area.

Natalie noted that granting ROW will go faster if the Military is involved throughout the process.

Rodney mentioned that BLM would like to review drafts of documents.

Jim said that BLM (and other cooperating agencies) would probably have the draft EIS in hand in advance (October) of the formal release of the draft document (November).

Rodney said that once the alignments are known, BLM needs permit (ROW) applications.

Jim noted that the details of the design are still being developed. He asked if the ROW is issued by a precise design, or if there is an as-built corridor.

Rodney said that they need the as-built design following construction.

Rodney said that BLM has new ROW regulations coming out next week.

Jim asked if BLM would tell the project team about significant changes.

Rodney mentioned that the new regulations will include: 1) BLM will charge for time spent on projects. 2) BLM needs 60 days to finish issuing ROW. If more time is needed, they will reply within 30 days (since this project is an evolving project, they might not need more time than that).

Rodney asked whether the widths of the roads were known.

Robin and Jim answered that they were not sure yet.

Rodney said that BLM wants to know public meeting dates, so that they can send people to meetings and access public opinion.

Rodney said that the BLM is the manager for the Iditarod Trail, but if development is on private lands, they don't have a say.