

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commander
Seventeenth Coast Guard District

P.O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802
Staff Symbol: oan
Phone: (907)463-2268
Fax: (907)463-2273
E-mail:
jhelfinstine@cgalaska.uscg.mil

16590
February 2, 2005

Ms. Edrie Vinson
Environmental Project Manager
U.S. Dept. of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Alaska Division.
P.O. Box 21648
Juneau, Alaska 99802

Dear Ms. Vinson:

I accept your invitation to participate as a cooperating agency in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Knik Arm Crossing Project on behalf of the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA), the legislatively designated project sponsor. It is my understanding that you accepted the lead agency responsibility and published a Notice of Intent for the EIS in the Federal Register on January 3, 2005 on the KABATA proposal to construct a vehicular bridge connecting the Port of Anchorage with Port Mackenzie.

During the KABATA Agency Partnering Meeting of January of 26, 2004, a project schedule was presented with emphasis on an 18-month interagency permit completion period. It appears that our required Coast Guard bridge permit process (with minimum requirements for public notice and review) was not factored into this timeframe. Our permit procedure can only take place after our agency receives a completed application. This requires that an application include a completed environmental document, all necessary permits indicating compliance with federal law and regulations relating to the environment, and completed bridge drawings as per our Bridge Permit Application Guide, COMDTPUB P16591.3A, dated 15 September 1994. Normally this information is not available until your process noted above has been finalized.

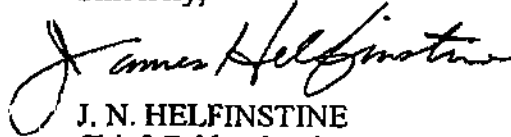
We appreciate and support your efforts to coordinate environmental review process via streamlining the National Environmental Policy Act procedures and permit activities of participants with various degrees of regulatory, permitting, and review responsibilities over this important project. However, we plan to follow the existing streamlining procedures between our respective agencies as set forth in the "*U.S. Coast Guard/Federal Highway Administration Memorandum of Understanding on Coordinating the Preparation and Processing of Environmental Documents*" dated May 6, 1981. Adherence to this MOU as well as the procedures within the "*Coast Guard/FHWA Procedures for Projects Which Require a Coast Guard Bridge Permit*" approved December 6, 2001 should avoid any unnecessary duplication of effort by the Coast Guard and the FHWA with respect to our responsibilities mandated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is the intent of that noted above that the data developed and the evaluation of impacts upon the environment in the EIS document will satisfy the independent Federal actions of both the FHWA and the Coast Guard.

Prior to your recent involvement the Coast Guard was actively involved in the preliminary environmental/location studies segment of the project development process. Past coordination with the project sponsor's consulting firms led to our initiating meetings with commercial

waterway users in an effort to gather and assess potential navigational impacts. This led to a preliminary determination that 50-foot minimum height clearances would be required of any potential bridge in order to meet the reasonable needs of navigation. We will continue to explore other streamlining opportunities and implement them accordingly.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (907) 463-2268.

Sincerely,



J. N. HELFINSTINE
Chief, Bridge Section
Aids to Navigation
U. S. Coast Guard
By direction of the Commander

Enclosures: (1). *"U.S. Coast Guard/Federal Highway Administration Memorandum of Understanding on Coordinating the Preparation and Processing of Environmental Documents"* dated May 6, 1981
(2). *"Coast Guard/FHWA Procedures for Projects Which Require a Coast Guard Bridge Permit"* approved December 6, 2001