



## **MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH**

### **Planning and Land Use Department**

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May 12, 2005

Ms. Edrie Vinson,  
Environmental Project Manager  
Alaska Division of the FHWA  
P.O. Box 21648  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1648

Re: Preliminary NEPA Scoping Comments

Dear Ms. Vinson:

Thank for the opportunity to provide preliminary scoping comments relative to the Knik Arm Crossing NEPA process. The attached document represents The Matanuska-Susitna Borough's comments in the following categories:

- General Comments
- Comments on the May 4, 2005 Draft Purpose and Need Statement
- Reasonable Foreseeable Future Actions
- Indirect and Cumulative Effects Assessment Plan
- Land Use and Transportation Implementation Plan

I am stating that these are preliminary comments in case there are additional documents needed for this review that I have not received. I am not aware if there have been problems in transmitting documents to me as some of the other agencies have stated. I will compare what I have with list of produced documents that study team said that they would prepare to confirm with agency staff that all documents have been distributed and received. I would like to have the opportunity to add or adjust the Borough's comments based on the review of additional documents in case I did not receive all the work products.

This process, though intensive, is working well due in a large part to your project management. You are to be commended. I appreciate the additional time provided to review and comment on the Purpose and Need Screening Criteria and the Technical Screening Criteria. These comments will be provided in two weeks.

Please contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to our next agency meeting and will have

Thank you.

Sincerely,

M. Murph O'Brien  
Director of Planning and Land Use

cc John Duffy, Manager  
Ron Swanson, Director of Community Development  
Robin Reich, HDR Alaska

Matanuska-Susitna Borough  
Preliminary NEPA Scoping Comments  
Knik Arm Crossing Project  
May 12, 2005

**I. General Comments:**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) supports the development of the proposed Knik Arm Crossing (KAC's) and appreciates the opportunity to participate on several levels of review. The potential impacts to the MSB in the KAC impact area are significant and need to be both identified and addressed as part of this process. The MSB appreciates the opportunity to be involved with this process and is grateful for the efforts to address these concerns.

The scoping process with agency meetings is proving to be an effective means to bring focus to this important project. Without this approach, it would be impossible to keep abreast of the many issues that need to be identified, discussed and resolved in the compressed timeframe established for this environmental process.

It should be noted that project is within the MSB's Coastal Management Zone. The connection to the Port MacKenzie is within the Port MacKenzie Area Meriting Special Attention which was established to facilitate the development of the Port MacKenzie and its associated transportation system. The remainder of the project falls under the general requirements of the MSB's Coastal Management Program. The MSB will work with KABATA relative to MSB's Coastal Management Program.

The MSB appreciates the study team working with the MSB with respect to the Port MacKenzie Master Plan and the location of connection on the MSB side. It is important the highway connection to the Crossing not bisect the Port District in a manner that impacts port operations.

**II. May 4, 2005 Draft Purpose and Need Statement Comments**

The draft purpose and need is evolving and provides the context for the project. The May 4, 2005 Draft Discussion Paper presents background for the Purpose and Need Statement. The MSB will continue to review

and comment updated versions of the Purpose and Need Statement. The MSB has the following comments on the May 4, 2005 Draft Version of the Purpose and Need Statement:

### **1.1 Project Background**

- The background section cites the Anchorage LRTP effort but not the MSB's LRTP effort.
- The background section raises the issue of the connecting transportation infrastructure needs to and from Port Mackenzie. The last paragraph of this section indicates a direct connection from Port MacKenzie to the Parks Highway via Point MacKenzie Road and Knik Goose Bay Road. This is a long and circuitous route. It also indicates that there is another direct connection to Parks Highway via Point Mackenzie Road to Burma Road to South Big Lake Road. The Burma Road connection does not exist except as a trail. This paragraph is misleading and needs to be corrected as it indicates that there are existing direct connections to the National Highway System. These connections currently are either circuitous or non-existent. Please recognize that there is a certain level of highway infrastructure needed on the MSB side that needs to be constructed as part of the Knik Arm Crossing project to ensure the utility of the KAC. This concern is related both in defining the logical termini for the project to meet the purpose and need of regional connectivity.

#### **1.2.1 Discussion of Purpose and Need Statement**

**(1) Efficient transportation infrastructure to support existing and project population growth and economic development for the Upper Cook Inlet region as directed by the Alaska State Legislature in Alaska Statutes Chapter 19.75.**

- This is an important justification for the project.
- This discussion centers on the need to address current and projected population. It does a good job of discussing Anchorage and MSB population growth, housing availability commuter issues. The final two sentences provide credence to the need to connect Anchorage with the MSB. However, it states that "...the Port MacKenzie area would provide an attractive alternative with lower land costs." This is a generalized statement. The immediate

Port MacKenzie area is zoned industrial and commercial within the Port District. It will be important define the Port MacKenzie area. For example, our LRTP land use charette identified the area at Mile 7 of Point MacKenzie Road as potential high growth commercial/ residential area. Again this is related to logical project termini.

**(2) Efficient and direct surface transportation connectivity for the movement of people and the movement of freight and goods to, between and distribution from the Port of Anchorage/Ship Creek industrial area and the Port MacKenzie District.**

- This is connectivity is also a good justification for the KAC.
- The proposed floatplane base/airpark will be outside the Port MacKenzie District due to FAA determine airspace conflicts.
- There is no discussion of MSB's Multi-Use Ferry/Rescue Vessel project which will be useful in the support of the development and construction of the KAC.
- The movement of containers from Anchorage to MSB for distribution beyond the Port MacKenzie District (it is anticipated that there will be only limited numbers of containers coming directly to the Port MacKenzie District) will require highway improvements on the MSB side. Tying into the exiting road system will not facilitate a faster more cost effective movement of freight. Again logical termini discussions.

**(3) Redundant overland route for access to regional airports, ports, military bases, hospitals, and fire, police, and disaster relief services for emergency response and evacuation.**

- This is an important justification for the project.
- The transportation system on the MSB needs to be upgraded to facilitate this purpose and need statement.

**III. May 5, 2005 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**

- # 7. Cargo Airport Expansion. Should read International Airport Air Cargo Facility. The land reservation may no longer

exist for this facility. It was located in the middle of the State Port Mackenzie Agricultural Project. Reinstated it would severely impact the developable area for residential and commercial activities if the agricultural restrictions were lifted by the State. This RFFA needs more discussion.

- # 8. MacKenzie Airpark for small aircraft. Change this Mat-Su Airpark. The FAA will not allow it in the Port District.
- # 24. Ag Covenants lifted on Mat Su Agricultural Lands. This should read State Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project. The MSB has several agricultural parcels with restrictions throughout the Borough. This wording change will prevent any confusion.
- #25. Fish Creek Agricultural Development occurs. Replace with Fish Creek (West Mat/Su) Multi-use Development. This project involves several activities including timber, recreation, and settlement.
- 31. State Capitol in Wasilla. Change Wasilla to Mat-Su.
- 35. LRTP: connection from KAC to Parks Highway etc. Change the no to yes.
- 38. Implementation of Planning and Zoning in Point MacKenzie area by 2015. For clarification, replace Point Mackenzie with Areas outside the Port Mackenzie Port District. The Port District is currently a Special Use District with zoning.

#### **IV. Knik Arm Crossing Indirect and Cumulative Effects Plan:**

- This process appears to be an effective means of identifying cumulative and secondary impacts. The MSB looks forward to participating in this process.

#### **V. KAC Land Use and Transportation Implementation Plan**

- This process as outline and implemented to date provides an effective means to determine land use, economic and transportation considerations. The MSB is particularly interested in the results of this process relative to land use requirements and infrastructure needs relative to the MSB side.