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KNIK ARM CROSSING NEWS

Volume 3, July 2005

Designed to keep you up-to-date on the Knik Arm Crossing project.

Historic & Cultural Preservation Workshops

Equipping local groups to protect cultural and historic resources

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) sponsored workshops to help local groups document and protect historic and cultural sites in the Knik Arm Crossing project area. SRI Foundation provided this training to agency representatives, historical societies, Tribes, and Native corporations. Recognized nationally, SRI Foundation is a non-profit, historic preservation

organization that educates groups about historical and cultural resource planning that complements the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). For more information on SRI Foundation's credentials, visit their website: www.srifoundation.org.



fish rack

Salmon Fry Found Mid-Channel in Knik Arm

Preliminary findings change assumptions about salmon movement

A sampling of mid-channel water has turned up salmon fry, which suggests these smaller fish use the entire Knik Arm to travel. Studying fish behavior in Knik Arm helps the NEPA project team understand how a crossing could impact fish population health. Right from the start, marine scientists have said that Knik Arm is different from a typical marine environment—it

is murky. According to fish scientists, the murkiness might mean that fish fry travel mid-channel, and not only in the intertidal zone.



salmon fry

FHWA NEPA Reviewer Visits the Project

Kreig Larson comes from the national office

In June, Kreig "Chip" Larson visited the Knik Arm Crossing project. Chip works at FHWA Headquarters in the Office of Project Development and Environmental Review. For most of his professional career, Chip has been involved with NEPA project development for surface transportation projects. Chip will assist project team members as they move forward through the NEPA process, and he will be involved with FHWA's review of the

project. During his time in Alaska, Chip inspected the project site. Chip will continue to help develop a technically accurate and environmentally sound draft environmental impact statement (EIS).

FHWA oversees the NEPA process and the draft EIS being prepared for the Knik Arm Crossing project. Other FHWA staff members who have visited the project site include Rima Lewis, Rich Barrows, and Cassandra Allwell.

NEWS UPDATE

What has happened?

- 5/31 Principals meeting: Regularly scheduled meetings among government and agency executives to candidly discuss aspects of the project.
- 6/8 Interdisciplinary team meeting: Regularly scheduled meetings for agency and government representatives.
- 6/8 KABATA Board meeting
- 6/8 Non-governmental organizations meeting
- 6/9 News release on alternatives
- 6/15 Principals meeting
- 6/27 FHWA arrives for project site visit
- 6/27 Cultural and historic preservation workshop (agencies and historic societies): *see story!*
- 6/28 Cultural and historic preservation workshop (Tribes and Native corporations): *see story!*

What's coming up?

- 7/12 Tribal workforce workshop
- 7/12 Mat-Su public meeting: *see inside!*
- 7/13 Anchorage public meeting: *see inside!*
- 7/14 Interdisciplinary team meeting

Read more about KNIK ARM CROSSING NEWS

Fish & wildlife studies

July public meetings

Cultural and historic preservation workshops

New corridor alternatives

inside this issue.



*What's Happening . . .
in Environmental Planning*

Belugas on the Move

Whale watchers see belugas again

Last June, a group of about 100 belugas appeared in Knik Arm, staying in the area through November. Since they left in November, only a few individual whales have been spotted briefly, suggesting that the majority of the whales were residing elsewhere. Now watchers are observing some belugas at the mouth of the Susitna River and in Knik Arm. Scientists expect the whales to return in numbers similar to last June. Preliminary results from the year-long study will be available in July, and the complete study will be included in the draft EIS.



Photograph taken by Tim Markowitz on June 6, 2005 with General Authorization from NOAA, Letter of Confirmation No. 481-1795.

Transportation Planning

What is it and how does it work?

Right now, project engineers are combining long range transportation planning documents from the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough with their own research to create a regional vision—a transportation model for all of Southcentral Alaska.

First, the team conducted a housing and commuting survey of Anchorage and Mat-Su residents to determine how far folks were willing to commute to work and what kind of housing they preferred. Now, the team is forecasting population growth with the help of economists from

Bird Watching

Shorebird study

In April of this year, at the suggestion of U.S. Fish and Wildlife, the project team began a shorebird study to observe how birds use the Knik Arm project area. Timed to record bird activities during peak migration, the study will give the team a better picture of how birds might be impacted by any future development. A preliminary shorebird report is expected at the end of the summer, although the study will continue through September. Also, some findings will be available at the mid-July public meetings.

Northern Economics, Inc., and the University of Alaska. This information is programmed into a computer model capable of predicting current and future transportation demand. Engineers will use the computer model to analyze how crossing alternatives change traffic patterns, economic growth patterns, and so on. This data will be used by environmental scientists to determine how changes in traffic and land use impact air quality and quality of life issues. Traffic projections will be complete by the end of June, and findings will be published in the draft EIS.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Please join us at our open house meetings to learn about the expanded corridor alternatives and tell us what you think!

<p>Matanuska-Susitna Borough . . . July 12, 2005 6:00 to 8:30 pm Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Complex</p> <p>6:00 pm Open House 7:00 pm Presentation and Public Comment</p>	<p>Municipality of Anchorage . . . July 13, 2005 5:00 to 7:30 pm Egan Center (downstairs)</p> <p>5:00 pm Open House 6:00 pm Presentation and Public Comment</p>
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TEA-LU Update

A status report on federal funding

As this newsletter went to press, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU) bill was in joint Senate-House conference committee. From there, TEA-LU must be passed by a majority vote in the House and Senate. If it passes, the bill must be signed by the President. Should President Bush veto the bill, TEA-LU can still be passed by another two-thirds vote in both the House and Senate. TEA-LU will provide transportation funding nationwide for six years, including a portion of the funding to construct a Knik Arm Crossing.



Knik Arm shoreline

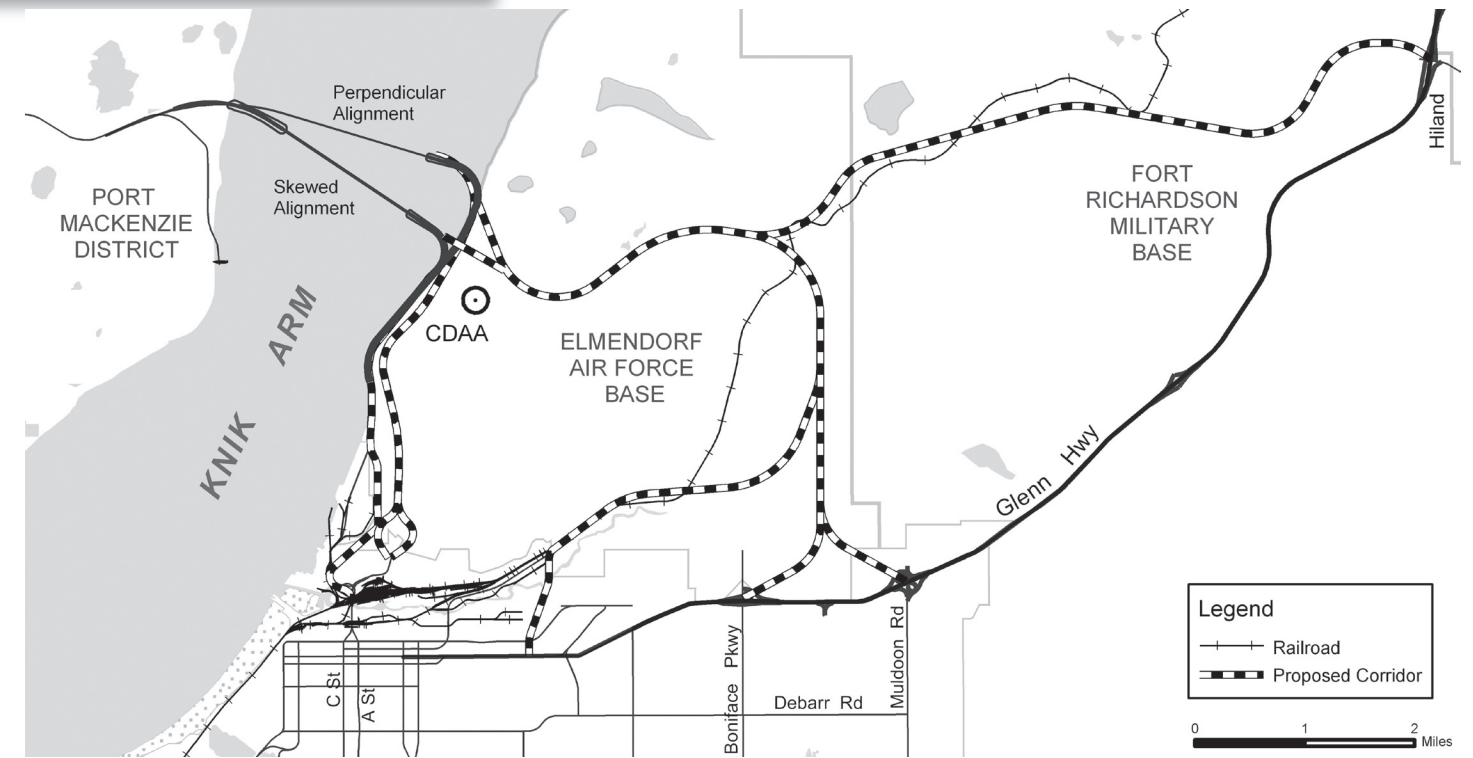
Project Considers Other Access Routes

New corridor alternatives added

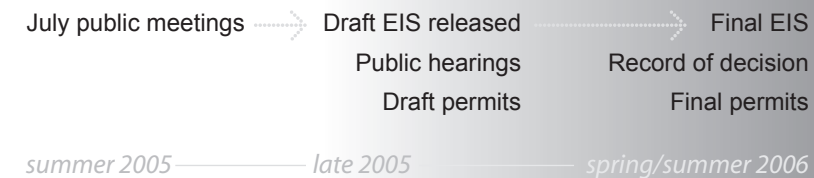
KABATA and FHWA have expanded the range of corridor alternatives for a Knik Arm Crossing. The corridor alternatives now include access routes across Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson lands to connect into the Glenn Highway. “We view this as one of the positive aspects of the scoping process,” says Henry Springer, Executive Director of KABATA. “We welcome the infusion of new ideas—it’s part of the EIS process.” Feedback from military, state, and city officials is anticipated

soon. Similar access routes are under investigation for connections into the planned or existing roadway network in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

KABATA and FHWA will present all corridor alternatives at public meetings to be held on July 12 and 13, 2005, in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Municipality of Anchorage, respectively. The public will have the opportunity to comment on previously presented and new corridor alternatives under consideration.



The Schedule



More Questions?

Try our website: www.knikarmbridge.com
 Or contact:

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