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KABATA Board gets Progress Report at July meeting

The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority board of directors met on Thursday, July 26th to review the team's progress on environmental, permitting and financing of the Knik Arm Crossing project.

KABATA director Dave Haugen, who was Alaska's deputy commissioner of transportation in 1984 when an environmental impact statement was first drafted, said: "Construction of the Knik Arm Crossing is definitely more likely with private financing in light of the limited funds available for publicly financed road projects." Two international investor/developer groups have been qualified and are in one-on-one discussions with KABATA in preparation of a request for proposals later this year.

Senator Charlie Huggins and Representative Bill Stoltze, who are the legislative members of the KABATA board, said the Knik Arm Crossing received little attention during the last legislative session since the authorizing language for entering into a Public-Private Partnership (P3) for financing, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining the project was provided by HB471 in May of 2006. In addition, the 2006 legislative session budgeted \$90 million of Federal funds for the project crossing.

Deputy Commissioner of Revenue Brian Andrews, a KABATA director and Chairman of the Audit Committee for KABATA, reported that the Government Finance Officers Association had awarded KABATA their "Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting" for achieving the highest standards in government accounting and financial reporting. This prestigious award from a national firm underscores KABATA's commitment to the Governor Palin's focus on transparency and accountability for public funds.

KABATA's deputy director for environmental affairs Dale Paulson met with the head of the Federal Highway Administration earlier in the month to request publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. The FEIS was compiled by the local Alaskan firm HDR and delivered to FHWA in February, 2007. This document contains over 700 pages of detailed economic and environmental analysis and includes responses to the issues raised by governmental agencies, private organizations and members of the public. FHWA's thoroughness in addressing such a broad spectrum of issues has resulted in a

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rather prolonged internal review. KABATA has asked that the document will be released to the public in the very near future.

“Connecting the dots between the environmental permitting process and inking a contract with a private investor is a tall order for the KABATA team, but I believe it will be done and Alaska will realize the vision of regional connectivity, economic development and opportunity that a bridge across Knik Arm will bring to our State” said George Wuerch, the board chairman.

Additional information about the Knik Arm Crossing project can be found on the KABATA website: www.knikarmbridge.com.

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