

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
This project is being driven by real estate interests (including private individuals with influence).	<p>The purpose and needs for the Knik Arm Crossing are detailed in the Purpose and Need Statement. The purpose of the Knik Arm Crossing project is to further the development of transportation systems in the Upper Cook Inlet region by providing improved vehicular access and surface transportation connectivity between the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough, at the Port MacKenzie District, with a financially feasible and efficient crossing to meet the needs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved regional transportation infrastructure to meet existing and projected population growth and locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans, and as directed by the Alaska State Legislature in Alaska Statutes chapter 19.75; • Regional transportation connectivity for the movement of people and the movement of freight and goods to, from, and distribution between Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, and interior Alaska; and • Safety and transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and access between regional airports, ports, military bases, hospitals, and fire, police and disaster relief services for emergency response and evacuation.
We are not convinced by the purpose and need statements.	In response to comments, the Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified and further supporting details have been provided. FHWA asked for feedback on the draft Purpose and Need Statement through Scoping from agencies and the public, and received many helpful comments. The Purpose and Need for the project was then reviewed in light of these comments, and the Statement was revised to more accurately define the purpose and needs for the project.
The military does not need this project.	Military need references have been removed from the Purpose and Need Statement.
We already have a great highway with land on both sides to provide additional lands if needed.	Improved regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted plans is one need. However, other needs include safety and transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and access, and regional transportation connectivity for the movement of people and the movement of freight and goods.
Whether the crossing will improve quality of life and bring general or economic benefit to the Valley and Anchorage should be the deciding factor about whether this project is needed.	The Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified to better express the benefits to the Valley and to Anchorage, including improved regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted plans.
We need a separate vision statement and development requirements as well as purpose and need.	The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority's mission statement reads: "The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority will develop, stimulate, and advance the economic welfare of the state and further the development of public transportation systems in the vicinity of the Upper Cook Inlet with construction of a bridge to span Knik Arm and connect the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough." Development requirements are identified in locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans.

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
The bridge is not needed as or will not be effective as an emergency evacuation route from Anchorage.	The need for safety and transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and access has been clarified and further supporting details have been added in the Purpose and Need Statement.
What is the need for connecting the ports?	The need to connect Port MacKenzie to Anchorage has been further clarified in the Purpose and Need Statement, as the need was identified in the 1993 Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan, the 1998 Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan, and the 2002 Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan. Limited road access and truck traffic congestion issues to and from the Port of Anchorage have been identified in the 1997 Port of Anchorage Northern Corridor Feasibility Study and the 1999 Port of Anchorage Master Plan. In accordance with these plans and studies, the Purpose and Need Statement has been refined to focus on regional connectivity and transportation needs of the two Ports rather than connecting one port to the other.
Projected population growth does not necessarily lead to growth in commuter traffic.	The 2000 Census found that approximately 52% of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough labor force commutes to Anchorage. Recent trends show increased commuter traffic traveling to Anchorage as the principal regional employment center.
The bridge would greatly facilitate the movement of goods to the interior, and facilitate the future growth of Anchorage.	Freight and goods movement and growth issues are addressed in the Purpose and Need Statement.
Anchorage needs land to grow.	Growth issues are addressed in the Purpose and Need Statement.
The Valley needs economic base and industry.	Numerous Mat-Su Borough plans, studies and resolutions discussed in the Purpose and Need Statement, including the Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan, Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan, Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan, and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Rail Corridor Study, have identified the Knik Arm Crossing as important to the development of Port MacKenzie and/or the Port MacKenzie District.
Truck, rail, and vehicle congestion in the Wasilla area would be relieved. Congestion on the Glenn and Parks Highways would be less.	The Crossing would provide an alternative travel routing and can be expected to accommodate future growth.
The bridge would mean less wear and tear on residential as well as state vehicles, reduction of emissions pollution – less driving time. With a bridge we'd have reduced traffic delays, less driving for campers, fishermen, and supply trucks.	The amount of driving time depends on the destination. A Crossing would greatly reduce driving time for certain trips and provide alternative travel routing for the region.
The bridge would increase economic development-- business as well as residential.	The Crossing is intended to further the development of transportation systems in the Upper Cook Inlet region, which can be expected to facilitate locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans.

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
The bridge would provide an alternative route for commuters during construction season.	A Crossing would provide transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and access. Having an alternative travel route is important in the event of natural disasters or other emergencies, or other traffic interruptions, which include roadway construction on other facilities.
Building the Knik Arm Crossing will encourage the “suburbanization” of Anchorage, moving much of its residential tax base to the Valley.	At current zoning and density patterns, it is calculated that remaining vacant and underdeveloped residential land could support approximately 20,700 additional dwelling units. The forecasts for growth in the Anchorage Bowl by 2020, based on <i>Anchorage 2020</i> , indicate a need to accommodate 31,600 more households and 39,600 more employees. In order to absorb this growth in excess of the potentially available units, higher average residential densities than what now prevail will be required or non-residential land conversion to residential land will be required. The Comprehensive Plan states that the zoning of vacant residential land for urban and rural single-family homes will worsen if the strong demand for that type of housing continues. Unless this can be remedied, the outflow of new single-family home construction to Chugiak-Eagle River and the Mat-Su Borough will continue to increase.
A Crossing will benefit the state and the lower 48 states, developing the land for many uses--agriculture, industry, recreation, residential and taxes for the Borough.	The Purpose and Need Statement identifies the need for improved regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans.
We need this to accommodate Anchorage growth.	The Purpose and Need Statement identifies one of the needs for the Crossing as the need for improved regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans, and as directed by the Alaska State Legislature in Alaska Statutes chapter 19.75.
The need for this bridge was 20 years ago—so let’s get it built and move on into the Valley.	No response required.
We need the bridge to generate revenue for the MSB, given its growth.	Numerous Mat-Su Borough plans, studies and resolutions, including the Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan, the Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan, the Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan, The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Rail Corridor Study, have identified the Knik Arm Crossing as important to the development of Port MacKenzie and/or the Port MacKenzie District.

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
<p>This seems counter to the Anchorage 2020 plan and likely to increase urban sprawl, reliance on cars, and traffic congestion in Anchorage with commuter traffic.</p>	<p>At current zoning and density patterns, it is calculated that remaining vacant and underdeveloped residential land could support approximately 20,700 additional dwelling units. The forecasts for growth in the Anchorage Bowl by 2020, based on <i>Anchorage 2020</i>, indicate a need to accommodate 31,600 more households and 39,600 more employees. In order to absorb this growth in excess of the potentially available units, higher average residential densities than what now prevail will be required or non-residential land conversion to residential land will be required. The Comprehensive Plan states that the zoning of vacant residential land for urban and rural single-family homes will worsen if the strong demand for that type of housing continues. Unless this can be remedied, the outflow of new single-family home construction to Chugiak-Eagle River and the Mat-Su Borough will continue to increase. The recent update of the Municipality of Anchorage Comprehensive Plan documents the addition of 30,000 to 50,000 people per decade since 1950 and forecasts continued growth for the Municipality. The Plan recognizes that Anchorage is physically limited by growth within the Anchorage Bowl, that growth has been strongest in recent years in the outskirts of Anchorage and in the Mat-Su Borough, and that the relationship between the Borough and Municipality is changing because of population growth and settlement patterns. The Plan describes the key existing land use issue as being most of the suitable land in the Anchorage Bowl is already developed and much of the remaining vacant land is in areas where development is difficult and expensive. The Plan recognizes that a connection across Knik Arm between Point MacKenzie and Anchorage would open thousands of acres to development.</p>
<p>The Scoping process is flawed because the Purpose and Need section has been provided by KABATA, not by a real Needs Assessment. We feel that our true needs to ensure future growth and expansion of the Anchorage and Matanuska/Susitna Borough Areas can be accomplished without a bridge at less cost.</p>	<p>The need for the Knik Arm Crossing has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. Support for a Crossing and its identification as a priority began at the local level in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough, and from there grew to become a statewide priority. Ample evidence of this support is documented in a number relatively recent local, regional and statewide plans and actions. The Purpose and Need Statement identifies one of the needs for the Crossing as the need for improved regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans, and as directed by the Alaska State Legislature in Alaska Statutes chapter 19.75.</p>

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
<p>The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transit Study (AMATS) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Mat/Su Borough Transit plans did not list the Knik Arm Bridge as even a line on a map until requested to by KABATA. The “Need” for a bridge was not established.</p>	<p>In October 2001, the Port of Anchorage requested that the 2001 LRTP be amended to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a possible Knik Arm Crossing in the vicinity of Cairn Point. The MOA Planning and Zoning Commission passed a resolution recommending to AMATS that the LRTP be amended to include a Knik Arm Crossing study area. In 2002 the MOA Assembly passed a resolution recommending the same action. On February 14, 2002, the AMATS Policy Committee amended their LRTP to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a Knik Arm Crossing project. In 2003, the Mat-Su Borough Assembly adopted the Knik Arm Crossing as the Number One Regional Transportation Priority; this action followed the 2003 Resolution by the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) (whose members include representatives of the Municipality of Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Railroad Corporation, Alaskan Command of the U.S. Department of Defense, and representatives of the Alaska Legislature) supporting the Knik Arm Crossing as the number one Regional Transportation Priority Project. The RTPO evaluated and ranked regional projects from lists provided by each agency, criteria was agreed upon, and a screening of 53 port, transit, trail, airport, highway projects were evaluated, and the Knik Arm Crossing was chosen as the number one regional priority project.</p>
<p>The project is a regional project with statewide impacts that would affect the movement of freight between Anchorage, Matanuska/Susitna Borough and the Interior. The Purpose and Need Statement should be expanded to address the regional and statewide significance of the project.</p>	<p>The Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified to recognize the regional character of this project in terms of transportation infrastructure and transportation connectivity, as well as the importance of the link to interior Alaska.</p>
<p>AMATS did not include the Knik Arm Bridge as a line on the maps or even in the narrative until amended in 2003. If the “need” had not been there before 2003, what has changed now to prove the “need”?</p>	<p>The need for the project did not arise overnight. More than 80 years of transportation, land use, and economic plans and studies for the Upper Cook Inlet region of Alaska have addressed the need for a Knik Arm Crossing project. DOT&PF prepared a Draft EIS in 1984, but due to a lack of funding and a dramatic state-wide downturn in the economy, the project was not advanced beyond the Draft EIS stage at that time. In October 2001, the Port of Anchorage requested that the 2001 LRTP be amended to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a possible Knik Arm Crossing in the vicinity of Cairn Point. The MOA Planning and Zoning Commission passed a resolution recommending to AMATS that the LRTP be amended to include a Knik Arm Crossing study area. In 2002 the MOA Assembly passed a resolution recommending the same action. On February 14, 2002, the AMATS Policy Committee amended their LRTP to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a Knik Arm Crossing project.</p>

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
<p>The Mat/Su long-range transportation plans are currently being amended to “show” the need for the Knik Arm Bridge. Last minute changes do not prove the “need”.</p>	<p>More than 80 years of transportation, land use, and economic plans and studies for the Upper Cook Inlet region of Alaska have addressed the need for a Knik Arm Crossing project. DOT&PF prepared a Draft EIS in 1984, but due to a lack of funding and a dramatic state-wide downturn in the economy, the project was not advanced beyond the Draft EIS stage at that time. Numerous Mat-Su studies, plans and resolutions have identified the need for a Crossing. The Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan foresees the need for development of a direct transportation connection between Point MacKenzie and the Anchorage urban area. The Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan identifies Point MacKenzie as a preferred port site due to its close proximity to the Anchorage port and airport systems, to which a port could be linked through a Knik Arm Crossing, and recommends an area in the vicinity of Cairn Point be reserved for development of a future crossing. The Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan states that regional cooperation will be a key aspect in improving the infrastructure for the development of Port MacKenzie, which includes the proposed ferry system and the Knik Arm Crossing. The Mat-Su Borough Assembly adopted the Knik Arm Crossing as the Number One Regional Transportation Priority Project, stating that in order to maintain a strong and growing regional economy there is a need for additional commercial, industrial, and residential lands, and the Knik Arm Crossing will provide access to developable lands within the Mat-Su Borough for such uses, and would reduce travel times and lower transportation costs between South-central Alaska and Interior Alaska, as well as between the Mat-Su Borough and Anchorage. The Mat-Su Borough is currently updating its Long-Range Transportation Plan.</p>
<p>The “Need” statement includes a need to connect the two ports. Describe the anticipated traffic heading to the Point MacKenzie Port from the Port of Anchorage, what are Anchorage’s commodities that will be shipped from there?</p>	<p>The need to connect Port MacKenzie to Anchorage has been further clarified in the Purpose and Need Statement, as the need was identified in the 1993 Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan, the 1998 Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan, and the 2002 Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan. Limited road access and truck traffic congestion issues to and from the Port of Anchorage have been identified in the 1997 Port of Anchorage Northern Corridor Feasibility Study and the 1999 Port of Anchorage Master Plan. In accordance with these plans and studies, the Purpose and Need Statement has been refined to focus on regional connectivity and transportation needs of the two Ports rather than connecting one port to the other.</p>
<p>The Purpose and Need statement states that one of the needs of the project is to improve “surface transportation connectivity” between the MOA/Port of Anchorage and the Mat-Su/Port MacKenzie. “Surface transportation” includes rail and the project should be designed to enable the future rail crossing of Knik Arm.</p>	<p>The Purpose and Need Statement recognizes that while a rail crossing is not part of the current project, more efficient rail access to Interior Alaska has long been recognized as an eventual need. Design and construction of a vehicular Knik Arm Crossing will be accomplished in a manner that is complementary to a future rail crossing and does not preclude rail approach and crossing options.</p>
<p>The purpose of the project should be refined to show that it will deliver a net economic benefit and a net positive social benefit to the State.</p>	<p>Economic and social consequences of the project, both positive and negative, will be evaluated in the EIS.</p>

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
<p>As the Mat/Su Borough matures, it is developing its own economic base, and this will lessen the need for a separate connection into Anchorage. The entire Anchorage/Mat-Su area will be an economic hub, not just Anchorage. This will negate many of the “needs” for a bridge.</p>	<p>The Knik Arm Crossing has a design year of 2030 and the project is being developed in line with the projected needs and projected growth between now and 2030. Numerous local, regional and statewide plans and actions support the Crossing as a statewide priority.</p>
<p>Discussions of transportation solutions in the Anchorage Port, Alaska Railroad, downtown Anchorage and Ship Creek basin over the last 10 years have not included a Knik Arm Bridge.</p>	<p>The need for the Knik Arm Crossing has been widely studied and discussed in recent years. Support for a Crossing and its identification as a priority began at the local level in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough, and from there grew to become a statewide priority. Ample evidence of this support is documented in a number relatively recent local, regional and statewide plans and actions. For instance, in October 2001, the Port of Anchorage requested that the 2001 LRTP be amended to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a possible Knik Arm Crossing in the vicinity of Cairn Point. The MOA Planning and Zoning Commission passed a resolution recommending to AMATS that the LRTP be amended to include a Knik Arm Crossing study area. In 2002 the MOA Assembly passed a resolution recommending the same action. On February 14, 2002, the AMATS Policy Committee amended their LRTP to authorize the investigation of the feasibility of a Knik Arm Crossing project.</p>
<p>Is the possibility that Rep. Don Young can get Congress to include \$200 million in the next Federal Highway bill for a Knik Arm Bridge the real driver behind the project?</p>	<p>The proposed funding is a response to local, regional and statewide plans and actions that have identified the Knik Arm Crossing as a statewide priority, not the other way around.</p>
<p>Is FHWA purposely excluding the 1984 phases that refer to connections between Anchorage and areas to the north as a way to justify building only the Knik Arm bridge and not building the necessary road connection to the north (such as the 1984 proposed Houston Connector)?</p>	<p>The Knik Arm Crossing is one link in the regional intermodal transportation network. KABATA is working with the Mat-Su Borough and DOT&PF to address the issue of infrastructure on the Mat-Su side. The Knik Arm Crossing project is being developed to integrate with the Mat-Su Borough’s 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan, which includes system improvements connecting to the Parks Highway.</p>
<p>The Purpose and Need statement for the proposed project needs to contain a clear description of the problem(s) to be solved.</p>	<p>The Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified and further supporting details have been added.</p>

**Knik Arm Crossing Project
Responses to Public Comments on Purpose and Need**

Comment	Response
<p>What problems are occurring on the Mat-Su side that call for building a bridge as a remedy?</p>	<p>Numerous Mat-Su studies, plans and resolutions have identified the need for a Crossing. The Point MacKenzie AMSA Plan foresees the need for development of a direct transportation connection between Point MacKenzie and the Anchorage urban area. The Point MacKenzie Port Master Plan identifies Point MacKenzie as a preferred port site due to its close proximity to the Anchorage port and airport systems, to which a port could be linked through a Knik Arm Crossing, and recommends an area in the vicinity of Cairn Point be reserved for development of a future crossing. The Matanuska Susitna Borough Economic Development Plan states that regional cooperation will be a key aspect in improving the infrastructure for the development of Port MacKenzie, which includes the proposed ferry system and the Knik Arm Crossing. The Mat-Su Borough Assembly adopted the Knik Arm Crossing as the Number One Regional Transportation Priority Project, stating that in order to maintain a strong and growing regional economy there is a need for additional commercial, industrial, and residential lands, and the Knik Arm Crossing will provide access to developable lands within the Mat-Su Borough for such uses, and would reduce travel times and lower transportation costs between South-central Alaska and Interior Alaska, as well as between the Mat-Su Borough and Anchorage.</p>
<p>What does it mean that the project is a response “to the economic welfare of the state”?</p>	<p>The project is being developed in response to numerous local, regional and statewide plans and actions that have identified the needs of a Knik Arm Crossing project.</p>
<p>If access to open land is all this proposed project is about, why not look at building a bridge across the mouth of Turnagain Arm?</p>	<p>The needs for the Knik Arm Crossing include improved: regional transportation infrastructure in response to existing and projected population growth and locally adopted plans; regional transportation connectivity for the movement of people and the movement of freight and goods to, from, and distribution between Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough, and interior Alaska; and safety and transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and access. A Turnagain Arm project is beyond the scope of this project and is not in accord with locally adopted plans.</p>
<p>What steps is the Mat-Su Borough taking to accelerate building new roads or planning for the construction of other needed infrastructure and public services to develop their raw land for residential or industrial/commercial purposes?</p>	<p>The Mat-Su Borough is in the process of updating its Long Range Transportation Plan. Meanwhile, the Borough is working on a number of road projects, including the paving of Point MacKenzie Road, and obtaining right-of-way and improving Burma Road. The Mat-Su Borough Assembly recently adopted the results of a rail and highway corridor study into their Comprehensive Plan, which recommends rail and highway corridors between Port MacKenzie and the Parks Highway.</p>
<p>Can you document the shortage of industrial land in Anchorage that this project is supposed to alleviate? What about the ongoing C Street Extension project that is creating access to industrial zoned land in south Anchorage?</p>	<p>The 1996 Anchorage Bowl Commercial and Industrial Land Use Study identified site-specific challenges for industrial land supply in proximity to major transportation infrastructure, in particular near the Port of Anchorage and the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. According to Anchorage 2020, only eight percent of the remaining developable vacant land in the Anchorage Bowl is zoned for industrial use.</p>