

A. Process Comments:

1. The Scoping process is flawed because the Purpose and Needs 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.
2. The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transit Study (AMATS), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Mat/Su Borough Transit plans did not list the Kink Arm Bridge as even a line on a map until requested to by KABATA. The "Need" for a bridge was not established.
3. The Scoping process is flawed because the General Project Study Area is too limited. It is based on the pre-conceived concepts from KABATA, not from studies showing what the predicted traffic will consist of, and where the traffic needs to go. KABATA assumed that the military would prohibit a direct route through the bases, which was false. That has forced a redesign for new alternatives through Elmendorf and/or Fort Richardson.
4. The "new alternative routes" through Elmendorf and Fort Richardson will need to be presented to the public in meetings similar to the Public Scoping Meetings held in April. To do otherwise would be contrary to 40 CFR 1501.7 (c), which requires that the agency revisit the scoping process "if substantial changes are made later in the proposed action, or if significant new circumstances or information arise which bear on the proposal or its impacts."
5. The General Project Study area ignores the traffic impacts on the A-C couplet, or any other areas south of 4th Avenue in Anchorage. Dropping 20 to 40 thousand cars and trucks a day into Downtown traffic is not a minor "indirect impact".
6. The firm of Wilbur-Smith is working on evaluating the "financial plan". Our understanding is that this plan looks to see if the bonds can be paid off and if the tolls can pay for maintenance. We feel that they should also look at whether or not the Bridge makes financial sense, such as whether we are getting the most "Bang for our Buck".
7. 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.
8. The Scoping process is flawed because the 3 "alternates" for the "Offramps" give the appearance of being chosen to cause only one to be viable. The Port and School/Gate routes obviously have too many inherent problems.

B. Bang for our Buck Questions:

1. The Bridge and approach costs must be "normalized" so that we are directly comparing the various alternatives. The costs must include the necessary connections and corrections to the existing road systems to handle the anticipated traffic through the design period for the Bridge, which we understand is 2030. This means connecting to the existing major Arterials, as well as the necessary changes to those Arterials. The boundaries of analysis need to extend to the point of equal impact to be comparative. The cost of connecting to the A-C Bridge is not comparable to the cost of connecting to the proposed Gambell/Ingra Highway to Highway Connection, as connecting to the A-C Bridge will require unknown millions or billions to correct the traffic problems that it causes; costs that would be planned for, and built into the Highway to Highway Connection and the Knik Arm Bridge to Highway Connection.

2. To say that the existing A-C Bridge over the railroad yards can handle the anticipated traffic ignores the impact the Knik Arm Bridge traffic will have on the A-C Couplet south of 3rd Avenue.
3. To leave the building of the necessary connections on the Mat/Su side of the bridge to State and Local entities, ignores possibly billions of dollars of roads alone that must be built to make the Knik Arm Bridge functional. Connecting the Knik Arm Bridge to a dirt road is ridiculous!
4. What are relative costs for alternate routes, such as North Port Access through Elmendorf/Fort Richardson connection to Glenn Highway or to Highway to Highway Connection at Gambell/Ingra versus the Knik Arm Bridge and its approach roads?
5. The cost for the bridge and its connections needs to be compared to other “Non-Bridge” possibilities to facilitate transportation and ease traffic, such as those put forward in the TransVision study by the Anchorage Long Range Transportation Plan.
6. What is cost of widening the Glenn Highway from 4 lanes to 6 lanes through to Wasilla and Palmer and to 4 lanes to Willow?
7. What is the estimated time difference between “Bridge Route” and a “Glenn Highway Route” for traffic from Downtown Wasilla to Downtown Anchorage?
8. What is the cost for light rail service to Wasilla, Palmer and Willow?
9. What are current and proposed Federal government inducements for light rail versus highway and bridge funding?
10. What other Federally funded road projects won't happen because all of Alaska's “Share” of road funds are tied up in the Bridge.
11. What is the cost of Federal money for water and sewer expansion to south Anchorage and the Hillside to allow for more densely located housing?
12. What is the cost for gifting of part of Far North Bicentennial Park (Campbell Tract, owned by BLM?) to open up developable land within the Anchorage Bowl?
13. What is the cost for gifting of part of Fort Richardson (either land south of the Glenn Highway, or the area between Birchwood and Eklutna land) to open up developable land in the north portion of the MOA?

C. Funding Questions:

1. What are the estimated costs for the Bridge and Approach Road construction, MOA Access, Mat/Su Access?
2. What is portion of costs that will be borne by local government, MOA and Mat/SU?
3. What is portion of costs that will be borne by the State of Alaska?
4. What is portion of costs that will be borne by the Federal government?
5. What is portion of costs that will be paid by Revenue Bonds?
6. What is portion of costs that will be paid by User Fees?
7. What is portion of costs that will be paid by Tolls?
8. Will state and local bonds, budgets, grants, etc. be voted on by public vote?
9. What are expected price of tolls, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.?
10. What are expected income from tolls, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.?
11. What are expected income from user fees, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.?

12. What are expected traffic volumes over bridge, both ways, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.?
13. What are the gas price assumptions used to generate the traffic volumes?
14. What are the bridge toll price assumptions used to generate the traffic volumes?
15. What is expected maintenance costs, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc. for Bridge portion, MOA access portion, Mat/Su access portion?
16. What is expected route and connection points in Anchorage? The connection must go past the "Curling Club Curve" and well beyond 3rd Avenue.
17. What is expected route and connection points in Mat/Su, and through the Mat/Su (following existing dirt road to Pt. Mackenzie, or following the "Red Shirt Lake Moraine" towards Willow?
18. What is anticipated growth patterns in Mat/Su, proportion residential, proportion industrial, proportion government, 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.? Document the basis of those estimates from past experience.
19. What assumptions are those growth patterns based on, i.e. Mat/Su tax structure and rates?, incentives for new business?, price of gas?, percentage of workers "telecommuting"?,
20. What are anticipated local, state, and federal infrastructure costs (power, water, sewer, roads, schools, gas, Fire, Police, Troopers, local government, etc.) 5 years, 10, 15, 20, 50 years, etc.? Document the basis of those estimates from past experience.
21. What are anticipated additional revenues gained by such growth? Document the basis of those estimates from past experience.
22. The long term plan for the Ted Steven's International Airport says that it will be located on Pt. Mackenzie in the future. When is the TSIA likely to move to the Mat/Su?
23. What is the estimated impact on MOA revenues by a TSIA move?
24. What is the estimated impact on the Mat/Su revenue of a TSIA move? Will it start to pay for the infrastructure costs?
25. What is the projected gain to the Mat/Su Borough by the sale of Mat/Su land at Pt. Mackenzie?
26. What is the projected gain to the State of Alaska by the sale of State of Alaska land at Pt. Mackenzie?

D. "Needs" :

1. 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"?
2. 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".
3. The "Needs" statement includes a need to connect the two ports. Describe the anticipated traffic heading to the Pt. MacKenzie Port from the Port of Anchorage, what are Anchorage's commodities that will be shipped from there?
4. When, if ever, have the two ports formally requested a connection, or indicated the Bridge as a need?

5. The Anchorage 2020 plan said that there was currently a surplus of industrial/commercial land in the MOA. What assumptions are different, or how can we otherwise explain the discrepancy between this and the stated need for more developable land?
6. 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.
7. 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. If this project is as important as purported, the peer reviewed financial and social portions of the Environmental Impact Statement should document and quantify the direct and indirect economic impacts to the State, and the direct and indirect social impacts to the State.

E. “Route Questions and Comments” :

1. The 1984 EIS and the 1986 Elmendorf AFB/Fort Richardson Final Report recommended an additional alignment through military lands, but was dropped from the scoping documents. Why?
2. We request that the EIS examine the following generalized routes, utilizing the least cost, least impact routings as discussed during the May 2005 GHCC and HDR/Rise meetings: East near Six Mile Lake, south between Elmendorf and Fort Richardson, with a connection to Boniface; The same general route, with a connection to Reeve Blvd, to the Gambell-Ingra/Highway to Highway Connection; The same general route with a connection to the Glenn Highway near Muldoon; A eastern route that would extend north above the main portions of Elmendorf and Fort Richardson and connect to the Glenn Highway near Hiland Road.
3. We request that the EIS look at alternates that don’t include a bridge at all.
4. 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 Anch/Mat/Su area will be an economic hub, not just Anchorage. This will negate many of the “needs” for a bridge.
5. Although we object in principal to being forced into just “choosing between 3 off ramps”, all 3 “Corridor Concepts” will have significant and potentially “fatal” consequences to our Government Hill Neighborhood. As Anchorage’s First Neighborhood, we are especially concerned with the “Erickson Street Corridor” which will wipe out significant areas of our community. The “Elmendorf Corridor” would demolish the recently renovated Government Hill Elementary School, and the recently renovated Government Hill Gate to Elmendorf Air Force Base, and have significant impact to residential property on Elmendorf Air Force Base, which is also part of our Community Council. The “Port of Anchorage” route has serious consequences to the industrial part of our Community Council, which they will address individually.

F. Impacts to Anchorage School District:

1. What are the anticipated net loss of students to the Anchorage School District if the residential growth patterns are realized?
2. What are the costs associated with demolishing and replacing Government Hill Elementary School, which is directly in the path of one of the proposed offramps?
3. Where would the new Neighborhood School be located?

4. What are the anticipated length and severity of disruptions to traffic to and from Government Hill Elementary School by the various alternatives?
5. What are the anticipated noise levels due to construction at Government Hill Elementary School during the various stages of construction?

G. "Other Stuff":

1. How does the potential placement of a new state capital in Willow or the Mat/Su figure into the calculations for growth and expansion?
2. Do the growth estimates include the assumption that the Gas Pipeline will be opened? If so, when is that anticipated to occur, and what is the impact if that does not occur?
3. Do the growth estimates include the assumption that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will be opened for drilling activities? If so, when is that anticipated to occur, and what is the impact if that does not occur?
4. The price of gas and the continuing evolution of telecommuting as a viable option will change the traffic patterns in ways that are terribly hard to predict right now.
5. What were the anticipated growth patterns from the 1984 EIS, and how do those growth patterns compare to what we have actually experienced?
6. What kind of rider-ship numbers on a light rail to the Valley can be assumed?
7. Are increased gravel trucks included in the traffic estimates? If the new gravel sources at Pt. MacKenzie are cost competitive, they may replace the existing Railroad hauling of gravel, which will have huge impacts throughout Anchorage Traffic.
8. The bridge concept includes a pedestrian trail. What is value of allowing pedestrian access between two secure areas and the related security concerns of attempting to monitor pedestrian activity?
9. The proposed route through the Port and the Port owned property north of Cairn Point negatively impacts the port directly in using up their valuable property, as well as hindering future growth to the north.

H. Technical:

1. What data history is available on the changing position of the Deep Water Trough that is shown on both the Project Constraints Map, and Bridge Maps, north of Cairn Point? The skewed alignment is about 1200 feet away from the drop-off, and the perpendicular alignment is about 3120 feet away. How long until the bridge is undermined?
2. The pilings will change the water flow downstream (both ways with the tide!). How is that modeled in the anticipated effects on scouring, sedimentation, and deposition at the Port, and at the Deep Water Trough? Will it affect the dredging of the Port?
3. A-C Bridge not strong enough for an extra bike path, can it hold the proposed truck traffic?
4. The details of how to maintain Port Security with a new major road directly in the Port have not been coordinated or thought through with the Port and Coast Guard. The necessary infrastructure will use up valuable Port Land.
5. Contamination at Cherry Hill, Defense fuels, Under Gov Hill will have huge impacts on the costs, how well are those contamination issues defined and estimated?
6. Will discovery of new contamination issues on Elmendorf open up the entire Elmendorf Operating Unit to EPA & local scrutiny?
7. Cherry Hill Bluff is not structurally sound.

8. If the route comes through port area, it should not interrupt any port traffic patterns or interrupt businesses at the port
9. A new rail spur is being built around the back of the port area - maybe the access could be raised over the tracks
10. The bridge approach is not even mentioned in the port expansion project scope, and has a long way to go before it can be considered to be well coordinated with the port expansion.
11. The 1998 study of the A-C Couplet said that it would be overwhelmed and gridlocked in 4 years. The traffic assumptions in that study and the traffic assumptions of the Knik Arm Bridge need to be coordinated and integrated to show the potential impact on Downtown Anchorage.
12. What is the plan for un-interrupted access to both sides of Government Hill, to ATT, to Elmendorf AFB and to Government Hill Elementary School?
13. A large portion (60 to 80%!!) of all telephone communications in the entire State of Alaska go directly through the proposed Erickson Street Offramp Cut and Cover ditch. Most construction projects have their share of "OOPS" even when the "Locates" are accurate, what technical means are available to maintain and protect that link? What are the anticipated costs of maintaining and protecting that vital communication link to the state and the rest of the world?
14. What are the anticipated number of deaths that will occur during the construction of this project based on documented "industry norms"?

I. Other Comments:

1. Mayor Weurch has been acting as if a proposed route was decided upon long ago. Our understanding is that the route will be decided by the NEPA process, of which, the scoping meetings are just the beginning.
2. We believe that a "Frank initiative" type disclosure of all of the future costs should be required prior to approval by the State and Local voters.
3. The State should have a commission similar to what we had prior to Oil Pipeline to anticipate and plan for the future impacts on MOA/Mat/Su, so that we can plan, rather than react.

Conclusion:

As the full range of alternates are developed, we will no doubt refine and add to our comments, but we felt that it was important to get these comments to you by the official deadline for this portion of the scoping part of this project.

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