



## **KNIK ARM CROSSING PROJECT**

**Government Hill Community Council Meeting**

**September 15, 2005, 7 P.M.**

**Brief Presentation and Dialogue on the Knik Arm Crossing Project**

### **Meeting Summary**

The meeting was presided over by Stephanie Kesler and Mark Musial. Approximately 25 people attended, including Dave Vralsted of the Alaska Railroad Corporation; Doe Anderson, Northwest Park District Manager for the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA); State Representative Les Gara; a representative of the staff of State Senator Johnny Ellis; Tom Carosey of MOA's Parks and Recreation Department; Bob French of Government Hill Community Council's (GHCC's) Knik Arm Crossing Committee; Mavis Hancock of GHCC's Parks Committee; Assemblyman Allen Tesche; residents Stuart Hall, Suzanne DiPietro, and Thomas Pease, and other community members.

Lindsey Holmes of Rise Alaska attended on behalf of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) team evaluating the Knik Arm Crossing (KAC).

### **Legislative/Assembly Report**

State Representative Gara made a brief report regarding non-project related actions in the Legislature. Regarding the KAC project, he raised the issue of who would pay the difference between the amount of funding Congress had earmarked and the actual cost of the bridge. He stated that he prefers an Elmendorf access, not a Government Hill access. The spokeswoman from Senator Ellis' office concurred with Rep. Gara's report.

Assembly Member Allen Tesche reported on several non-project issues. Regarding the KAC, he commented that the MOA's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) did not effectively address the KAC in any integrated way. He said that he wanted to hear more about how this would be done.

### **Knik Arm Crossing Committee Report**

Bob French noted that SAFETEA-LU Federal Transportation bill had been signed by the President, pointing out that we are no longer talking about KABATA, but rather "Don Young's Way." He reported that his committee made comments on August 12 responding to the new alternatives presented at the July public meetings. He said that he thought the only way the proposed project could stay within budget was to have the bridge end at the Inlet coastline. He commented that federal monies earmarked for the KAC and Gravina bridges would mean less funding for the State's other transportation projects. He said that the Mat-Su Borough's trunk road and Seward-Meridian road plans

would be moved to the back burner or abandoned because of the loss of funding; on the MOA side, the loss of funds would mean shelving the purchase of property along Glenn Highway near Merrill Field, the Ship Creek Trail, and pavement repairs to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Bob also mentioned that Al Ewing is now working for KABATA. He reminded the residents that a first draft of the DEIS was to be completed and sent to FHWA by the end of October. He said he did not know how long FHWA would take to review it.

Bob mentioned that the LRTP (and the KAC within it, however mentioned) would have to be acted on by the Assembly. He wants to know what people think of the projected impacts on the Anchorage side. A resident mentioned that the LRTP likely won't mention the KAC until the EIS is completed. Bob remarked that it appeared the estimated cost of Don Young's Way would about equal 2 years' of the MOA's budget.

Several residents made comments related to NEPA and the need for integration of proposed projects into local plans—such as the LRTPs—and that getting Don Young's Way into the LRTPs is a plus for the project. Assembly member Allen Tesche remarked that any mention at all of the KAC in the LRTPs could be construed by KABATA as a full-fledged endorsement. He mentioned that Jon Spring of AMATS would be involved in the potential integration of the KAC into the LRTP. Allen mentioned that he would be seeing Jon Spring soon and there was a public meeting to be held the very next Monday regarding the LRTP. He requested that recommendations about the LRTP be sent to him by October. Rep. Gara said that if the KAC must be included in the supplement to the LRTP, it should say something to the effect of having the least impact on neighborhoods as possible.

### **Knik Arm Crossing Project Update**

Lindsey Holmes clarified that the KAC team has been talking with Lance Wilbur and Jon Spring of AMATS regarding inclusion of the KAC project into the MOA's LRTP. She explained that the MOA and Mat-Su Borough LRTP's 2025 traffic models are the basis of the model the KAC team is using.

Lindsey explained the plans for project termini, that the Mat-Su approach would extend to Burma Road (and not end at Port MacKenzie),. She said that the terminus was developed in conjunction with DOT and the Mat-Su Borough, and road improvements and right-of-way acquisition on Burma Road are planned to be undertaken by DOT and/or the Mat-Su Borough.

Stephanie Kesler remarked that she liked the moderator at the last public meeting.

Lindsey explained that the "Scoping Summary Report" would be available once the report is complete. She said that it is not completed yet in part because the team is still in discussions with the military regarding alternatives across military lands. She mentioned that there had been two meetings with the military in the past 10 days. She said the military was being very cooperative, working with the team regarding what can and cannot be done.

Stephanie Kesler asked when the DEIS would be made public. Lindsey explained that once complete, the document had to be reviewed by FHWA. Lindsey said it is possible a draft could be available to the public by the end of the year, depending on FHWA's review.

Stephanie Kesler asked about consultant team's reaction to Tuesday's Op-Ed (*ADN*, September 13) about Alaska giving its bridge money to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Lindsey said team members had seen the article, but are focused on the draft EIS and that any decision about such an action was out of the consultant team's hands.

Susanne DiPietro asked whether cost information received from the military would be discussed in the DEIS. Lindsey said the project had received preliminary estimates from the military on three of the routes. Susanne asked whether the costs had been broken out and, if not, would they be. Lindsey explained that the costs were presented as lump sum.. Lindsey said that the team was actively pursuing and studying the routes across military lands. She was asked whether the military was leaning toward any particular route. Lindsey responded that the military's official position is one of neutrality, and that the mode of interaction is one of FHWA presenting alternatives to the military and the military responding.

Bob French asked whether there were any soil contamination issues related to military lands and what those costs were. Lindsey said she did not know whether the cost estimates received from the military included contamination concerns. Bob asked whether contamination issues and costs would be addressed. Lindsey stated that all available and anticipated costs were being accumulated and would be contained in the DEIS.

Thomas Pease asked whether, in the DEIS, the team will address the federal BRAC process, specifically a scenario where the military bases might go away for good. Lindsey said that base closure was not considered to be a reasonably foreseeable future action.

Thomas Pease asked whether KABATA would revisit its cost estimates for steel and concrete because these costs have risen so much since the original estimates of 2 years ago. Lindsey explained that the team was conducting new cost estimates. Prior numbers included several placeholder cost numbers because the particular routes and design specifications were not known when original estimates were made. New estimates were being prepared based on the actual alternatives., She said preliminary indications seem to suggest that the new numbers will not be that different from original estimates.

In response to a question about when construction might begin, Lindsey said that the schedule anticipates construction beginning in 2007. In response to a query about how long construction would last, she said the schedule called for project opening in 2010.

Susanne DiPietro asked for a status report on the Wilbur Smith report. She wanted to know about tolls and Wall Street financing prospects. Lindsey said Wilbur Smith is

working on the draft report which is expected soon, hopefully in the next month. Susanne asked whether it would be a public document and requested a copy when it is available.

Steve Gerlek asked what the best-case scenario was for the majority of commuters to be funneled into the city. Lindsey explained that the travel demand models are exploring that question. She said that the team is looking at the best places to tie in from a number of standpoints. She said that the “Alternatives Report” would lay out all of this and that report was in the works and would be included in the “Scoping Summary Report.”

A question was asked whether a final decision had been made on the design of the bridge. Lindsey said it had not.

Lindsey explained that the summary of public comments received through mid-July of 2005 would be placed on the KABATA Web site.

### **Introduction of the New Park District Structure**

Doe Anderson of MOA Parks Department explained that the Parks Department was conducting an exercise for the KAC EIS for proposed routes’ effects on city parks. Bob French explained how this exercise tied into the KABATA work. Stuart Hall remarked that KAC would have a dramatic effect on parks in the neighborhood. Doe asked community council members to write to the MOA with their responses.

### **Parks Committee Update**

Mavis Hancock gave a non-project park-by-park update on maintenance activities by the city and by the residents.

Stephanie Kesler made some non-project related comments regarding the proposed Hollywood Vista RFP.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

*These notes were written by Carl Petrich of HDR Alaska, Inc.*