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FHWA Selects Alaska's Knik Arm Crossing for the National Environmental Policy Act Teambuilding Initiative

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has selected the Knik Arm Crossing project as one of three projects nationwide to participate in the agency's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Teambuilding Initiative. Eligible projects include high-priority complex projects in the initial stages of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The FHWA will provide access to expert assistance and the benefit of lessons learned across the nation on other EIS projects to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Alaska DOT&PF) and the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA).

The goal of this new initiative is to improve the quality and timeliness of transportation development projects while ensuring stewardship of the human and natural environment. "The Knik Arm Crossing is an ideal project for this initiative," said Edrie Vinson, the project manager for FHWA's Alaska Division. "All the government agencies involved will now have more resources and expertise at their disposal to ensure that the people of Alaska get the best project possible."

In addition to building stronger project teams, the Initiative aims to assess potentially controversial impacts early; use conflict resolution techniques; build public trust through an effective public involvement process; identify opportunities to integrate innovative technology and data tools; and improve documentation of project impacts and records.

Participation in the Teambuilding Initiative program will lead to more efficiency and effectiveness in transportation planning and development, including greater responsiveness to private-sector participation in finance. The private sector has expertise often unavailable to the public sector, and can bring innovation and flexibility to certain kinds of projects. KABATA's funding is anticipated to come from federal, state and local grants, and public and private sector investment, including revenue bonds. Tolls and user fees will help to support operations and bond repayment.

The designation as a participant in the FHWA NEPA Teambuilding Initiative will also mean that the team conducting the EIS for the Knik Arm Crossing will have access to subject matter experts from FHWA headquarters, the Institute of Environmental Conflict Resolution, the Volpe National Transportation System Center, and the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) Center for Environmental Excellence.

You can learn more about this project at www.knikarmbridge.com.

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