Report from Knik Arm Crossing Project
Comment/Issue Database

This report is based on the comment forms/emails/letters and public meeting comments received to date during public scoping for the Knik Arm Crossing project. Scoping comments received after this report was generated will be updated after close of scoping, August 12, 2005. The values reflected in this report will change as that information is entered into the database. The numbers in parentheses after comments refer to the number of records received for that comment.

General Comment Information

- About 270 total comment forms/letters/emails and public meeting comments were received
- 112 indicated they were against the project or the project as proposed
- 118 indicated some support of the project

Abbreviations Used

- ADF&G – Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- AK – Alaska
- AMATS – Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
- AS – Alaska Statute
- EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
- KAC – Knik Arm Crossing
- LRTP – Long-Range Transportation Plan
- MOA – Municipality of Anchorage
- MSB – Matanuska Susitna Borough
- PMAC – Point MacKenzie
- POA – Port of Anchorage

Aesthetics/Noise/Air Quality

1. The project will destroy the beauty, view shed, and access to the Point MacKenzie (PMAC) area all of which needs to be preserved. (2)
2. Aesthetics should be an important consideration in construction of the bridge. (3)
3. Aesthetics are unimportant to this project. (1)
4. This project will result in increased noise pollution (how will noise pollution be mitigated). (3)
5. We are concerned about increasing air pollution related to this project. (4)
6. The project will result in a decrease in vehicle emissions and fuel consumption. (3)

Action/Response Plan for Aesthetics/Noise/Air Quality
Aesthetics will be evaluated as part of the EIS process and aesthetic issues will vary depending upon the location and type of alternatives selected for final evaluation. Detailed noise and air quality studies will also be evaluated as part of the EIS process to document the effects with and without the proposed project.

Alternatives: Modes, Routes, Connections, and a No-Action Alternative

1. We are concerned about (have suggestions for) the bridge access alignments at PMAC. (14)
2. We favor a connection to the Seward and/or Glenn Highways and/or a north/south connection. (8)
3. We have general concerns about the proposed connections. (2)
4. Do not connect through the A-C couplet. (10)
5. We favor an Ingra/Gambell/Seward Highway connection. (12)
6. Do not impact the military. (4)
7. Consider using routes through military lands. (19)
8. We favor a route along the shoreline/tidewater. (2)
9. Do not go through the Port of Anchorage (POA)/Ship Creek/Alaska Railroad area. (6)
10. We favor an alignment connecting from outside of Anchorage/near Eagle River. (2)
11. Current alignment choices offered will negatively affect my home/business/property/school. (8)
12. We favor a Boniface/Muldoon/more northern connection. (12)
13. We favor accessing the bridge through the POA. (6)
14. We favor a more southern connection (i.e. Minnesota end of Northern Lights). (1)
15. We favor a tunnel instead of a bridge. (2)
16. We favor improvement of current roads/construction of projects from Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) planning over the Knik Arm Crossing (KAC) project. (14)
17. We favor a tramway over a personal auto bridge. (1)
18. We favor use of hovercraft over the KAC project. (1)
19. Miscellaneous alternatives favored over an auto bridge. (4)
20. We favor a ferry over the KAC project. (5)
21. We favor rail instead of a personal auto bridge/instead of the KAC project. (9)
22. We favor/question if other projects could/should better use the funding that the KAC project plans to spend. (10)
23. We favor inclusion of mass transit into the project. (1)
24. Mass transit is undesirable. (2)
25. Will the EIS look at alternatives to a personal auto bridge? (2)

Action/Response Plan Modes, Routes, Connections, and a No-Action Alternative
The range of alternatives has been expanded and new corridors have been developed at Port MacKenzie, and more easterly connections across military lands have been added that would connect into the Glenn Highway. The Ingra/Gambell route has also been added to the range of alternatives. In addition, other modes of travel such as rail and ferry are being evaluated in more detail. The No-Action alterative will remain a viable alternative throughout the Draft EIS study process.

Beluga Whales

1. This project will not affect beluga/beluga are not an important consideration. (2)
2. Beluga will be further jeopardized by this project and associated cumulative/synergistic effects. (5)

Action/Response Plan for Beluga Whales
Project specific studies have been underway over the past year to better understand beluga whale utilization and behavioral patterns in Knik Arm. These studies have been carefully coordinated with NOAA Marine Fisheries. KABATA will continue working closely with NOAA Marine Fisheries to interpret the results of the monitoring studies to develop methods to avoid adversely impacting belugas. Cumulative effects will also be evaluated as part of the EIS.

Construction Impacts

1. Where will construction materials come from? (1)
2. Construction near the POA would be disruptive to area business. (1)
3. Make the most possible jobs available during the construction. (2)
4. What will the construction impacts be on landowners at PMAC. (2)

Action/Response Plan for Construction Impacts
The EIS will analyze construction impacts of the project, including material sources and socioeconomic benefits and impacts. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently sponsored a workshop on workforce opportunities for tribes. More specific answers can be provided after detailed alternatives are developed.

Cost/Funding Sources

1. Suggestions for possible sources of funding. (6)
2. Matanuska Susitna Borough (MSB) taxpayers and commuters will benefit at the MOA's cost. (2)
3. We are concerned about the likelihood of cost overruns and revenue overestimates. (7)
4. Alaskans should have the opportunity to invest in the project. (1)
5. The expansion and KAC project to PMAC will/can pay for itself (land sales, reduced shipping costs, etc.). (4)
6. This project is too expensive. (4)
7. Maintenance costs for a bridge will be too high, there is no funding/who pays for maintenance costs. (7)
8. We are interested in comparisons about cost of usage and maintenance of a bridge vs. other options. (2)
9. The cost of the project should include road connections. (5)
10. Who will pay for the costs beyond the federal funds/infrastructure costs. (10)
11. How much has been spent/requested, for what, and what will the total be? (6)
12. Funding for the infrastructure needs will come after the bridge is built. (1)
13. How does the cost of building the bridge change over time (building it now vs. 10 years ago or 10 years in future)? (1)

Action/Response Plan for Cost/Funding Sources
Costs for the project are still in the development phase since the alternatives for the project have yet to be fully developed. Preliminary estimates show that a constructible, crossing will cost about $400 to $600 million. This estimate includes approaches and road connections to the existing transportation systems on both sides of the Knik Arm, as well as provides for contingencies, inflation through 2010, and an allowance for cost overruns. One-third of the funding is anticipated to come from federal grants, one-third from state and local grants, and the final third from public and private sector investment. Tolls will repay loans and support operating and maintenance costs.

Design/Engineering

1. Study projects in other northern countries to aid in bridge design. (3)
2. We favor multiple lanes (3 or more)/levels. (11)
3. We favor the inclusion of rail or rail allowances into the project. (17)
4. We favor the inclusion of utility crossing allowances into the project. (3)
5. We favor the inclusion in the project of floating docks. (2)
6. We favor the inclusion of allowances for foot/bike traffic. (8)
7. We favor a solid/dam design - a floating bridge is undesirable. (3)
8. We favor an earthen causeway. (2)
9. What will the effects be on/caused by the bridge relating to flow, sedimentation, scour and erosion? (3)
10. Siltation is a problem with a bridge. (2)
11. Will the predicted cost to build the bridge change due to discoveries about soils quality? (1)

Action/Response Plan for Design/Engineering
Design details have yet to be developed. Traffic studies that are nearing completion will define appropriate lanes for the Crossing through the design year of 2030. Accommodations for future rail will be made to the maximum extent practicable. Pedestrian and bicycle studies and connections to the Crossing are currently being studied. Hydrologic modeling of Knik Arm is also underway and results will help predict sedimentation issues. Other engineering models will be used to analyze scour and pier design. Geotechnical studies conducted to date indicate favorable soils for bridge construction in the vicinity approximately 1.5 miles north of Cairn Point.

Environmental Impact Statement Process

1. We are interested in knowing the names of the landowners at PMAC. (6)
2. The presentations/studies should be broader in scope and area/offer more alternatives. (10)
3. We need more facts/investigation into toll costs, property values, alignments, maintenance costs, traffic, traffic predictions, and seismic risks. (12)
4. No more study is needed. (4)
5. Keep up the good work/thank you. (8)
6. Keep us informed. (4)
7. Focus should be given to transportation facilitation not involving personal autos. (1)
8. Take your time and avoid mistakes/costly future 'band-aid' fixes/spend what it takes to build what is needed/we need to plan carefully. (5)
9. Study other bridge projects (approaches) successes and failures. (2)
10. Do not shortcut public process. (3)
11. Quoting the earlier study's $3 toll/basing projected costs on a particular alternative/using very long term population projections is disingenuous. (4)
12. Impacts to the Tyonek/Susitna region should be evaluated. (1)
13. Listen to the native people because they have a lot of information, and respect their values. (3)
14. A financing plan for the expected infrastructure needs should be included in the EIS. (4)
15. Better information will be available after the short-term ferry is in use. (2)
16. When will more cost information be available (financial feasibility, cost-benefit analyses, financial breakdown). (3)
17. How will land use plans be analyzed for their traffic effects? (2)
18. Plan for and work with the POA expansion/PMAC landowners. (3)

Action/Response Plan for the EIS Process
Landowner maps at PMAC have been available at our scoping meetings. In response to scoping comments, more alternatives have been added; once corridor and mode studies are completed, more detailed alignment studies will be conducted to better answer specific detailed questions regarding costs and impacts. Individual scoping meetings have been conducted with tribal representatives. Financing plans are currently underway. KABATA is working closely with both the MOA and MSB to address approach connections to existing and future transportation networks on each side of the Crossing. The travel demand model is nearing completion, which will assist the project team in analyzing land use impacts, including indirect and cumulative impacts. A software program called *PlanBuilder* is being used in conjunction with the MSB to help evaluate land use impacts.

Energy Supply/Natural Resources (tidal power, timber, etc.)

1. Consider tidal electrical generators. (4)
2. Other 'alternative' energy sources should be considered along with the bridge. (4)

Action/Response Plan for Energy Supply/Natural Resources
KABATA is a transportation authority and as such has transportation functions as its principal mission. Historic studies for tidal generation across Knik Arm have been in the billions of dollars. KABATA is flexible for user fee cost sharing should an energy authority or other sponsor put forth a proposal for energy or utility development.

Environmental Justice/General Environmental Concerns

1. We have general concerns about the potential environmental impact that the KAC project and subsequent development of the PMAC area will have on whales, birds and other wildlife and/or whether the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) supports this project. (5)
2. This project will lead to pollution from industry and residential development; we are concerned about the costs to the land and general environmental damage. (4)
3. We believe the environmental impact is negligible. (1)
4. I am concerned about negative effects on marine/aquatic life (salmon, seals, etc.). (5)

Action/Response Plan for Environmental Justice/General Environmental Concerns
The EIS will fully evaluate all socioeconomic, cultural, natural, and physical impacts associated with the proposed project, including indirect and cumulative impacts. This information will be available for public review as part of the Draft EIS. In addition, the No-Action Alternative will remain a viable alternative throughout the Draft EIS study process. Detailed impact studies have yet to be accomplished since detailed alternatives have yet to be developed.

General Opposition

1. I do not support the bridge project. (63)
2. I do not support the project with/due to the current alignments offered. (24)
3. Implied opposition. (25)

Action/Response Plan for General Opposition
KABATA has expanded the range of alternatives in response to scoping comments, including corridor alignments across military lands and more detailed studies to look at alternative modes such as ferries and commuter rail.

General Support

1. I support this project. (100)
2. Implied support/support with reservations. (18)

Action/Response Plan for General Support
KABATA has expanded the range of alternatives in response to scoping comments, including corridor alignments across military lands, additional corridors at Port MacKenzie, and more detailed studies to look at alternative modes such as ferries and commuter rail.

Government

1. Is it fair for AK to get so much money from the federal government? (3)
2. This is a statewide project and as such should address regional connectivity and should be a regional joint venture. (5)
3. Is it legal for FHWA to only address a bridge and not its connectivity? (1)
4. Does the bridge have local/community government support on both sides? (1)
5. Project planners should work with the MOA and its planning documents, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). (2)
6. This project seems counter to/how will it affect MOA planning/redevelopment/reinvestment/public transit in Anchorage. (8)
7. I am concerned about government/taxation issues/lack of cooperation that may arise due to the regional nature of this project. (5)

Action/Response Plan for Government
The Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified to include regional transportation connectivity objectives. The project does include more that just a Crossing, it also includes connections on both the MOA and MSB approaches to tie into existing and future transportation networks in accordance with locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans.

Government Hill/Downtown Anchorage

1. I am concerned about how this project will affect Government Hill/Downtown. (25)
2. The bridge project should not go through Government Hill/Downtown. (36)
3. A tunnel or a below street level controlled access route below/through Government Hill is reasonable. (4)
4. The POA corridor is the least intrusive. (2)
5. Build it through Government Hill on the surface/to the east side of the hill. (3)
6. A tunnel under Government Hill is a bad idea. (2)
7. Do not destroy Government Hill Elementary School/the Elmendorf Gate. (3)

Action/Response Plan for Government Hill/Downtown Anchorage
In response to scoping comments, KABATA has added additional approach connections on the Anchorage side that extend easterly across military lands and connect into the Glenn Highway. These corridor alternatives will be evaluated in addition to previously considered Downtown/Government Hill vicinity connections. Also, the Ingra/Gambell connection with a bored tunnel option has been added at the request of the Government Hill Community Council.

Infrastructure/Community Services

1. The connecting roads in the MSB need to be upgraded at PMAC. (5)
2. Anchorage is already overstretched with services and facilities; this project is beneficial because it will encourage growth outside the MOA. (1)
3. It is unlikely that enough tax revenue will be generated at PMAC to cover the costs of its infrastructure needs/what effects will this have? (4)
4. Anchorage roads are in need of extensive improvement/better planning for a northern climate. (4)
5. The MSB is already growing overly fast; additional growth will further strain community services (i.e. schools, police, roads, health care). (4)
6. I am concerned about PMAC's/Anchorage area's future water and sewage needs. (3)
7. What effect will a bridge have on MOA schools, what infrastructure will be needed. (2)
8. This project would make more sense if it connected communities with existing infrastructures. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Infrastructure/Community Services
KABATA is working closely with both the MOA and MSB for roadway approach connections on both sides of the Crossing to tie into existing and future transportation networks. The project needs are based on locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans. The Alaska Legislature, through Alaska Statute (AS) 19.75, has directed this project in response to these local plans.

Land Use/Zoning/Housing Crowding/Sprawl

1. Anchorage needs this project to relieve crowding/high housing costs and/or for additional lands. (16)
2. The valley offers quality of life with an average of one family per acre, how do we preserve that? (2)
3. The project will relieve subdivision crowding in the valley. (1)
4. We believe the project will lead to sprawl, decreasing quality of life and degrading the urban core of Anchorage. (11)
5. The project will be a benefit by opening up land for many uses. (9)
6. I am concerned about land use in the MSB; zoning, covenants, and restrictions are needed to protect the land at PMAC. (5)
7. Ship Creek area will be destroyed. (1)
8. Slower growth is better and less expensive. (1)
9. The land at PMAC is too wet to be worth much. (1)
10. The MSB is already building at PMAC; therefore, the bridge will be used. (1)
11. The project seems counter to/how will it affect MOA planning/redevelopment/reinvestment/public transit in Anchorage. (8)

Action/Response Plan for Land Use/Zoning/Housing Crowding/Sprawl
The project needs are based on locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans. The Alaska Legislature, through AS 19.75, has directed this project in response to these local plans.

Miscellaneous

1. Miscellaneous building/development suggestions/plans for PMAC. (3)
2. The project would provide access if the capitol were in the PMAC/Willow area; we should build the capitol there. (9)
3. The bridge would open up opportunities for many. (1)
4. This project will help develop Pebble mine. (1)
5. If the crossing is built, the military may want to move over to PMAC, freeing up land in Anchorage. (2)
6. Move air cargo/other industry to PMAC/when will air cargo be moved to PMAC. (5)
7. How will the bridge affect the two ports? (1)
8. The project should be directed by Anchorage. (3)
9. I am concerned that this project may be a boondoggle. (2)
10. When will it be built/the schedule seems very fast? (2)

Action/Response Plan for Miscellaneous Comments
The EIS is scheduled for completion by mid 2006 and the project is estimated for opening in 2010. More detailed answers will be available later in the EIS phase when alternatives are developed in greater detail and cost and impact evaluations are conducted.

Public Safety

1. The project will aid rapid movement of military troops. (1)
2. The project will allow better response times to wildfires. (1)
3. The project will be an addition of another emergency escape/access route. (4)
4. I am concerned about the safety/longevity/stability of the project related to tides/earthquakes/tsunamis. (5)
5. Miscellaneous public safety. (2)
6. I am concerned about security issues/needs/costs (POA/Military) created by this project. (2)

Action/Response Plan for Public Safety Concerns
Military need references have been removed from the Purpose and Need Statement. KABATA is working with the military to review any potential impacts to military mission. Safety and transportation system redundancy for alternative travel routing and emergency response and evacuation is a key component of the Purpose and Need Statement for the project.

Purpose and Need

1. This project is being driven by real estate interests (including private individuals with influence). (4)
2. We are not convinced by the purpose and need statements. (10)
3. The military does not need this project. (3)
4. We already have a great highway with land on both sides for additional lands if needed. (1)
5. Whether it will improve quality of life/bring general/economic benefit in the valley/Anchorage should be the deciding factor about whether this project is needed and/or should be the driving force behind it. (4)
6. We need a separate vision statement and development requirements as well as purpose and needs. (1)
7. The bridge is not needed/will not be effective as an emergency evacuation route from Anchorage. (1)
8. There is no need/what is the need for connecting the ports. (3)
9. Projected population growth does not necessarily equate to growth in commuter traffic. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Purpose and Need Concerns
Military need references have been removed from the Purpose and Need Statement. KABATA is working with the military to review any potential impacts to military mission. The project needs are based on locally adopted economic development, land use, and transportation plans. The Alaska Legislature, through AS 19.75, has directed this project in response to these local plans. The Purpose and Need Statement has been clarified in response to scoping comments from agencies and the public; a detailed matrix of responses is available for review.

Recreation/Recreational Lands

1. This project will open up recreational opportunities. (3)
2. This project will increase hunting pressure in and around PMAC. (1)
3. I am concerned about how this will affect hunting and recreation. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Recreation/Recreational Lands
Benefits as well as impacts to recreational resources and natural resources will be evaluated in the EIS; direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts will be evaluated.

Socioeconomic

1. Development at PMAC may increase property values but it will benefit only a few. (3)
2. The bridge would greatly facilitate the movement of goods to the interior. (1)
3. The project will facilitate economic development. (6)
4. The project will increase crime/trespassers/loss of privacy in the PMAC area. (3)
5. The project will result in moving much of Anchorage's residential property tax base to the valley. (3)
6. This project will provide needed taxes for the MSB/the MSB needs to generate money from PMAC. (2)
7. The project is needed for Anchorage growth/will benefit Anchorage. (2)
8. This project may lower property valuations/raise property taxes/decrease residential tax revenue/decrease business growth in the MOA. (10)
9. The project will increase reliance on cars/how will it effect Anchorage's goal of less auto dependency. (2)
10. The current Alaskan tax structure will not support the necessary infrastructure development. (3)
11. This project will make PMAC property taxes too high. (1)
12. The project will balance out property taxes as the MOA and MSB compete. (1)
13. The project will lower property valuations in the MOA, which will in turn lower property taxes. (1)
14. When do you foresee a community at PMAC. (1)
15. The project will lower property values in Palmer/Meadow Lake area. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Socioeconomic Concerns
Socioeconomic benefits as well as impacts will be evaluated in the EIS; direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts will be evaluated.

Terrestrial Mammals

1. This project will eventually result in the removal/extermination of most bear, moose, and other animals from the PMAC. (1)
2. Impacts to aquatic organisms will be slight compared to those on terrestrial organisms. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Terrestrial Mammals
Impacts to terrestrial mammals will be evaluated in the EIS; direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts will be evaluated.

Toll

1. Alternatives to a toll should be considered. (2)
2. People are not interested in using a bridge/road where they have to pay a toll when the Glenn Highway is free. (2)
3. A toll is fine/use a toll as the cost of Anchorage amenities to valley commuters. (4)
4. What will the toll be/will there be a toll/will a toll eventually go away when the bridge is paid for. (5)
5. The toll is likely to rise in the future. (2)
6. A $3 toll does not seem plausible/are there enough people north of the bridge to pay for it? (1)

Action/Response Plan for Concerns About Tolls
Financial studies are currently underway and toll specifics have yet to be established. Key input parameters for estimating tolls are the cost of the project and the traffic estimated to use the facility; specific alternatives have yet to be developed in detail and the travel demand model is being finalized to incorporate the 2025 planned networks of both the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) and MSB. Preliminary results should be available by Fall 2005.

Traffic/Transportation

1. The project will relieve traffic congestion in the Wasilla/Parks/Glenn Highway area. (9)
2. This project will facilitate transportation. (3)
3. This project will increase opportunities for commuters and public transportation. (1)
4. This project will provide a needed alternative route. (9)
5. This project will significantly reduce driving times. (10)
6. The drive to the valley is nice now. (1)
7. The bridge will not cut traveling times/distance significantly. (8)
8. This project is needed to support increasing population (and its corresponding traffic). (3)
9. The current alignments for the project will increase traffic in downtown Anchorage. (12)
10. The bridge will help commuting times only from some areas. (2)
11. Earthquakes will result in prolonged bridge closures for public safety inspections. (1)
12. This project is likely to increase traffic congestion/numbers of commuters in Anchorage (expediting private autos eventually = more cars)/decrease public transit ridership/not help traffic flow. (8)
13. Is this project considering/this project should consider MOA traffic plans. (3)

Action/Response Plan for Traffic/Transportation
Additional approach corridors have been added to the project, so different traffic impacts will be studied with the different routings to determine the best overall connections. A project level regional traffic model was developed based on AMATS and MSB travel demand models to estimate future traffic conditions; both of these government's 2025 regional transportation networks are just becoming available through their 2025 LRTP updates. Results of traffic analysis should be available in August 2005.

Water Quality/Wetlands/Floodplains

1. Protect the intertidal areas. (2)
2. I am concerned about the possible loss of wetlands as a result of this project. (1)
3. Keep the waters and soils clean. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Water Quality/Hydrology/Wetlands/Floodplains
Impacts to water quality, wetlands, and floodplains will be evaluated in the EIS; direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts will be evaluated.