Report from Knik Arm Crossing Project
Comment/Issue Database

This report is based on the comment forms/emails/letters and public meeting comments received between June and September 2005 during public scoping for the Knik Arm Crossing (KAC) project. The numbers in parentheses after comments refer to the number of records received for that comment.

General Comment Information

- Eighty-three (83) total comment forms/letters/emails and public meeting comments were received
- Forty (40) indicated they were against the project or the project as proposed
- Twenty-eight (28) indicated some support of the project

Abbreviations Used

- AMATS – Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
- ARRC – Alaska Railroad Corporation
- AS – Alaska Statute
- EIS – Environmental Impact Statement
- FHWA – Federal Highway Administration
- KABATA – Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority
- KAC – Knik Arm Crossing
- LRTP – Long-Range Transportation Plan
- MOA – Municipality of Anchorage
- MSB – Matanuska Susitna Borough
- NOAA Fisheries – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- PMAC – Point MacKenzie
- POA – Port of Anchorage

Aesthetics/Noise/Air Quality

1. The project will increase noise pollution. (1)
2. How will noise be mitigated? (1)
3. Project is likely to increase air pollution. (3)
4. Concerned about protecting the beauty of Point MacKenzie (PMAC)/Matanuska Susitna Borough (MSB). (1)

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

Alignment

1. More information about alignment routes is needed/when will there be a decision. (2)
2. Favor Seward/Glenn, north/south corridor connections. (4)
3. General concern about/where will proposed connections go. (1)
4. Concern about/no A-C couplet. (6)
5. Favor Ingra-Gambell-Seward Highway connection. (3)
6. Concerned about impacts on the military/effect on alignments if the bases close/security issues/do not go through military lands. (3)
7. Consider/favor routes through military lands. (10)
8. Favor tidewater/along shoreline route/to corner of Knik Arm and Turnagain Arm. (1)
9. Do not go through Port of Anchorage (POA)/Ship Creek/Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) tank farm area. (2)
10. Favor outside town/near Eagle River access. (2)
11. Alignment choices offered will negatively affect my home/business/property/school/church. (5)
12. Favor Boniface/Muldoon area connection. (8)
13. Favor access through POA/Degan Street. (3)
14. Coordinate with POA expansion. (1)
15. Thanks for added alignment options. (5)
16. Concerns about a Boniface connection. (1)
17. Bridge should lead directly to Willow/Houston. (3)
18. Do not go by way of Burma Road/through Big Lake/Knik Goose Bay Road. (3)
19. What are the possible routes at PMAC/we need more information. (2)
20. There should be multiple connections to spread out traffic. (3)

21. Why only one alignment option at PMAC? (2)
22. Extend the C-street overpass to connect. (1)
23. Look at connecting farther north as well (Nome, Bristol Bay). (1)
24. Must connect to Parks Highway. (1)
25. Favor Reeve Boulevard. (2)
26. Use existing PMAC road as planned in 1980's MSB Area Meriting Special Attention. (1)
27. Current proposed PMAC route unnecessarily impacts private property/wetlands – stay on public lands. (1)
28. Favor a northern/Glenn Highway access route. (1)
29. Use Burma road/through Big Lake. (1)

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

30. Include mass/public transit in the project. (11)
31. Mass/public transit is undesirable. (1)
32. Favor car/van pooling. (5)
33. Favor a tunnel. (1)
34. Favor improvement of current roads/Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) or Anchorage Comprehensive Plan projects. (5)
35. Favor tramway/hovercraft/trolley/subway to Kenai/STS. (3)
36. Favor a ferry. (5)
37. Favor rail. (16)
38. Fix existing transportation problems in Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) and MSB instead. (1)
39. Favor/examine a combination of congestion relief alternatives such as car/van pooling incentives/denser housing/mass transit/commuter rail/car ferry. (13)
40. Focus on non-auto road/bridge alternatives. (7)
41. Consider the Fairview corridor at the same cost. (1)
42. Purpose and need was just defined, now is the time to accept alternatives for consideration. (1)
43. Spend money elsewhere (education, health care, bridging communities that want to be connected or have more needs). (3)
44. The multi-modal congestion relief alternative proposed is not the same as the no-action alternative, they should be examined separately. (1)

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. Beluga will not be affected. (1)
2. Beluga will be further jeopardized/concern about beluga. (5)
3. Are cumulative and synergistic effects being fully examined? (1)
4. I am concerned about beluga calving/prey/sound tolerance. (1)
5. Studies need to be more varied/need more long-term data. (1)
6. What will be the effects on beluga? (1)

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 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries (formerly National Marine Fisheries Service). The project team will continue working closely with NOAA 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. Making the most possible jobs available to Alaskans would be beneficial. (2)
2. What is the difference in construction times for different alternatives? (1)
3. Build the bridge components at PMAC. (1)
4. How will homes and businesses access Government Hill/POA/ARRC/Tank Farm/Elmendorf during construction? (1)

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. MSB taxpayers/commuters will benefit at MOA's cost. (1)
2. Concerns about cost overruns/revenue overestimates/cost underestimates/a cost ceiling/increase in materials. (6)
3. Too expensive. (6)
4. Concerned about maintenance/operations costs and who will pay them. (2)
5. Concern about cost of road connections/should be included in the project. (3)
6. The cost of eminent domain proceedings/household relocations/soil contamination/reverse condemnation/sprawl should be included/evaluated in the project. (2)
7. Who will pay/state and local governments will have to pay – beyond the federal funds/infrastructure needs. (1)
8. Longer wait equals more cost. (1)
9. How much has been spent/requested/can be requested? (2)
10. How does cost change over time/with different alternatives? (2)
11. When will more information be available/we need more information – on financial feasibility/cost-benefit analyses/financial breakdown of the project. (2)
12. Share costs with the military/POA. (3)
13. Concern that funding this project takes away money from other projects that may be more necessary. (4)
14. Does this project make financial sense or can less expensive alternatives solve traffic problems and meet future growth needs? (1)
15. Property owners and developers who will benefit should pay for the bridge. (1)
16. No giving costs for all/most of the alternatives falls short of the National Environmental Policy Act requirements. (1)
17. Allow design-build alternative bidding to save money. (1)
18. More information about a toll is needed (what will it be/will there be a toll/will a toll eventually go away when the bridge is paid for. (1)
19. The project will not be feasible with a high toll – alternative to a toll should be considered or it should be quite low. (1)
20. People are not interested in using a bridge/road where they have to pay a toll when the Glenn is free. (1)
21. A $3 toll does not seem plausible. (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. Favor multiple (3, 4, etc.) lanes/levels or allowances for. (5)
2. Favor/will there be – rail/rail allowances? (10)
3. Favor inclusion of utility crossing allowances. (2)
4. Favor allowances for foot/bike traffic. (6)
5. Concern about the effects of flows/sedimentation/scour-erosion/ice/corrosion. (7)
6. Use pre and post tension concrete. (1)
7. No rail. (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 KAC 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 KAC 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 concerned about possible bias/misinformation/lack of a genuine effort to study in the EIS development. (3)
2. We are concerned that the process may be too rushed/lack of planning/why hurry. (1)
3. An aspect of the project has been presented disingenuously/is based on insufficient information. (4)
4. Keep up the good work/thank you. (7)
5. Take your time and avoid mistakes/costly future "band-aid" fixes/spend what it takes to build what's needed/we need to plan carefully/bridge will only be good if it is planned and is harmonious with communities. (3)
6. Listen to the native people/respect their values. (2)
7. Share information about comments received with the public. (1)
8. The project should give focus to transportation facilitation not involving personal autos. (1)
9. Consider the effect of possibly very high future energy costs. (1)

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 KAC. 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. (1)
2. Other 'alternative' energy sources should be considered along with the bridge. (1)

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. I am concerned about the impact of development at Port MacKenzie/PMAC on whales, birds and other wildlife. (2)
2. General environmental concern. (5)
3. I am concerned about negative effects on marine/aquatic life (salmon, seals, etc.). (8)
4. Study the environmental impact of the project/who is conducting study/1 year of study is only a beginning. (3)
5. Check for historic archaeological items before building. (1)
6. The project will help the environment. (1)

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. (19)
2. I do not support the project as it is currently presented (alignments, alternatives). (7)
3. Implied opposition. (15)

Action/Response Plan for General Opposition
FHWA 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. (25)
2. Implied support/support with reservations. (3)

Action/Response Plan for General Support
FHWA 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. The project seems counter to/is this project considering/how will this project effect – fit with – MOA planning/Anchorage Comprehensive Plan. (4)
2. Is it fair for Alaska to get so much money/pork from the federal government/how much money should Alaska get? (2)
3. This project should work with MOA/MSB planning documents (i.e., LRTP, Anchorage Comprehensive Plan). (6)
4. This project is statewide and should be a regional joint venture including cities, regional government and ARRC. (1)
5. Let the public vote to decide yes or no on this project. (2)
6. This project does not come from local government, it is from federal/state level – locals will not be able to weigh in meaningfully. (6)
7. KABATA refused to participate in the state regional transportation planning organization. (1)
8. Does Resolution 1-03 support a KAC project without rail? (3)
9. Concerned that KABATA is/should not be exempt from local land use ordinances. (1)

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 KAC, 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. The bridge project should not go through Government Hill. (7)
2. The bridge project should not go through downtown Anchorage. (2)
3. The bridge project should not go through Government Hill/Downtown/Fairview. (6)
4. General concern about how this project will affect Downtown Anchorage/ Government Hill neighborhood/Fairview/Anchorage as a whole. (17)
5. I am concerned about tunneling under Government Hill/clarification is needed about this. (1)
6. Do not destroy/I am concerned about the impact on Government Hill Elementary School. (2)
7. A tunnel under Government Hill is reasonable. (1)
8. Government Hill has historic properties. (2)
9. How much money would people get if their houses were destroyed. (2)

Action/Response Plan for Government Hill/Downtown Anchorage
In response to scoping comments, FHWA 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. Anchorage roads are in need of extensive improvement/better planning for a northern climate. (2)
2. The project must connect to planned routes with adequate volume in the MOA. (2)
3. Connecting roads in the MSB need to be upgraded/made into controlled access at PMAC/MSB needs road improvements. (5)
4. The bridge must connect to planned routes with adequate volume at PMAC. (6)
5. It is unlikely that enough tax revenue will be generated to cover the costs of PMAC's infrastructure needs – they will make taxes unreasonably high. (3)
6. The project will make more sense if it connected communities with existing infrastructure. (3)
7. MSB is already struggling to provide infrastructure to a booming population. (1)
8. How much funding will MSB get for building connections? (1)
9. Where will energy come from? (1)
10. Cost of infrastructure will be a big demand on MOA and MSB. (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 KAC 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/for additional lands. (5)
2. The MSB is already growing at PMAC. (2)
3. The project will be a benefit by opening up new land for many uses. (2)
4. We believe the project will lead to sprawl/decreasing quality of life, degrading the urban core of Anchorage. (6)
5. The valley offers quality of life with an average of one family per acre, how do we preserve that? (1)
6. I am concerned about land use in the MSB/inadequate or lack of planning/planning is needed to protect the land at PMAC/MSB. (8)
7. The land at PMAC is too wet to be worth much. (1)
8. If the KAC is built, the military may want to move over to PMAC, freeing up land in Anchorage. (1)
9. Move air cargo/airport expansion to PMAC – will/when will air cargo be moved to PMAC? (4)
10. We want to know the names of landowners at PMAC. (1)
11. We need land use modeling impact study and analysis. (1)
12. I am concerned that land use plans made are actually implemented. (2)

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.

General Project Comments/Miscellaneous

1. I am concerned that this project may be a boondoggle. (1)

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 be an addition of another emergency escape/access route. (2)
3. I am concerned about the safety/longevity/stability of/we need more information about – the project related to tides/earthquakes/tsunamis. (5)
4. I am concerned about security issues/costs related to the POA, its tank farm and the military, generated by this project. (2)
5. Cannot stop building just because there might be an earthquake. (1)
6. I am concerned about how to rescue auto accidents that end up in the Knik Arm. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Public Safety Concerns
FHWA 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/is this project being driven by real estate/consulting interests (inc. private individuals with influence). (3)
2. We are not convinced by the purpose and needs statement. (2)
3. There is not enough growth projected for PMAC to justify the project/it would make more sense if it connected populated areas. (4)
4. There is no need/what is the need to connect the ports. (1)
5. Whether or not the project will improve quality of life/bring general/economic benefit in the MSB/Anchorage should be the deciding factor on whether this project is needed, and should be the driving force behind it. (1)
6. The project should not be driven by a "we will build it and they will come" philosophy. (1)
7. Let ferry ridership determine if there is a need. (2)
8. Purpose and need is too narrowly focused on cars/in general. (2)
9. Anchorage does not need to expand. (1)
10. The need is for improved access and surface connectivity. (1)
11. MSB does not need this project, it will only benefit Anchorage. (2)
12. Increasing resource scarcity and rising gas prices will make this project more needed. (1)
13. It will connect the ports. (1)
14. This project is needed for a growing population. (1)

Action/Response Plan for Purpose and Need Concerns
FHWA 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. The project will open up recreational opportunities. (1)
2. I am concerned about how this will affect hunting/recreation/dog trails. (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/this project is a subsidy for private development. (1)
2. The project will make PMAC property taxes too high. (1)
3. Concerns about the projects effect on MOA/MOA taxes. (1)
4. The project will result in – moving much of Anchorage's residential property tax base to the valley/raising MOA property taxes. (1)
5. The project will have a negative impact on the MOA economy (may lower property valuation/decrease business growth/population in the MOA). (2)
6. More information is needed on the project's economic consequences and its effect on property values. (1)
7. The project will facilitate economic development. (4)

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. (1)
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. (5)
5. This project will significantly reduce driving times. (2)
6. Traffic predictions and more information about the project's effects on traffic are needed/toll and traffic volume/MSB traffic/traffic demands/personal cost analysis for commuters. (5)
7. The project is likely to increase traffic congestion problems – commuters/decrease public transit ridership/not help the traffic flow/will increase reliance on cars/expediting private autos eventually equal more traffic/how it will effect Anchorage's goal of less auto dependency. (4)
8. The bridge will not cut traveling times/distance/cost significantly. (3)
9. The bridge will help commuting times only from some areas. (3)
10. The current alignments for the project will increase traffic in downtown Anchorage/Fairview/ Government Hill – have a negative impact on downtown revitalization. (5)
11. Earthquakes will result in prolonged bridge closures for public safety inspections. (1)
12. How are traffic predictions determined/how much traffic when bridge opens? (1)
13. This project should address regional connectivity. (1)
14. Without better infrastructure/roads, people will have to wait too long to cross the bridge. (1)
15. This project is needed to tie in with the POA expansion. (1)
16. Higher gas costs will make mass transit more desirable in the future. (2)
17. This project will shorten the ARRC route to Fairbanks. (1)

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.

Water Quality/Wetlands/Floodplains

1. I am concerned about wetlands/water quality. (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.