

KNIK ARM BRIDGE & TOLL AUTHORITY

The Knik Arm Crossing Project

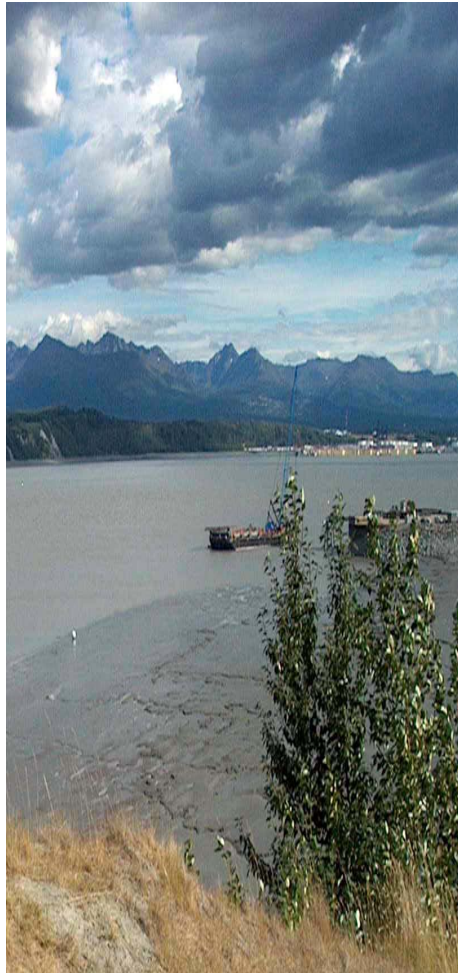
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Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority

The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) was created by the Alaska Legislature in 2003 to develop, stimulate, and advance the economic welfare of the state and further the development of public transportation systems in the vicinity of the Upper Cook Inlet by constructing a bridge across Knik Arm connecting the Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough. A primary objective is to provide a connection between the Port of Anchorage and the new Port MacKenzie.

Project History

Proposals to construct a Knik Arm crossing have been under study for over 50 years. In 1984, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project in accordance with federal guidelines under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires conducting alternative evaluations for design and location of a crossing, and a thorough evaluation of potential impacts to the human and natural environment. Since then, additional investigations have been conducted, but there have not been any new comprehensive studies of the project or potential project sites.



What Is Under Study?

The project is currently in its preliminary planning stage, and baseline engineering and environmental studies are underway. These include special studies of the Knik Arm hydrology, seismic and geotechnical conditions, ice flows, beluga whales, fisheries, and the marine environment. Updated alternatives will be developed as part of the NEPA process.

Why is the Knik Arm Crossing Project Important?

Eighty percent (80%) of the state's consumer goods are imported through the Port of Anchorage. Assuming a modest annual growth of 1.6%, the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan predicts a population increase of 80,000 people. If predictions are realized and the growth rate from the past ten years continues, the Mat-Su population will increase at a rate more than three times that of Anchorage. Together, Mat-Su and Anchorage are expected to add 143,000 people by 2020. Alaska's core transportation infrastructure must support the last 20 years of growth in existing population and that of future forecasts. In addition, Anchorage has two active military bases, including one that supports a mobile Stryker Brigade and the other which serves as a strategic air base.



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The crossing has the potential to provide:

- Increased freight handling capacity, mobility and improved operations.
- A safe, reliable year-round link that is convenient, efficient, and cost-effective.
- Cost savings statewide with just-in-time management of consumer imports related to port operations.
- Critical homeland security infrastructure for ports and military operations.
- Redundancy for improved safety, disaster preparedness and emergency response.

Schedule and Funding

Initial funding has been received for preliminary engineering, environmental studies and permitting. The NEPA process must be completed before design and construction phases can begin. The project could be operational sometime later this decade.

Special earmarked funding for design and construction has been requested in the new Federal TEA-LU transportation bill. Revenue bonds and other state and local grants will supplement the project funding. Toll revenues are expected to pay for annual operations and maintenance costs.

Public, Agency, and Stakeholder Involvement

Public involvement is a key component of the NEPA process and will provide important input into the decision making process. Agency and stakeholder involvement will include the communities, neighborhoods and local governments of Anchorage and Mat-Su, as well as the following state and federal agencies: Federal Highway Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Fort Richardson Army Post, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, State of Alaska, Alaska

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Alaska State Historic Preservation Office, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

After initial baseline studies are completed, agencies and the public will be invited to public meetings to receive information about the project and current studies and to assist KABATA in project development. Public meetings will be advertised through the media and KABATA website. For more information about the project, visit <http://www.knikarmbridge.com>.

