

NEWS RELEASE



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For more information contact:
Henry Springer, (907) 269-6698

FHWA teams with KABATA to conduct the Knik Arm Crossing Environmental Impact Statement

“We are pleased that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is now designated as the lead federal agency because they understand both the environmental regulatory review process and Alaska’s transportation development needs,” said Executive Director Henry Springer. The Alaska Legislature formed the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) in 2003 to advance the economic welfare of the state through construction of a bridge connecting Anchorage with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The next step for this project is an objective evaluation of alternatives, costs, and impacts under the direction of the FHWA. Edrie Vinson, Environmental Project Manager with FHWA, said, “My role is to ensure that the environmental analysis is accurate and complete, and that the National Environmental Policy Act process is procedurally above reproach.”

KABATA has recently hired Dale Paulson, a former FHWA employee with 35 years regulatory experience, as Director of Regulatory and Environmental Affairs. “We are developing a project that will be responsive to the social, economic, and environmental needs of the community,” said Mr. Paulson. With only a five-person staff, KABATA has formed partnerships with FHWA, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and over 20 local consulting firms. Over the next 18 months, KABATA and its partners will be conducting preliminary engineering and environmental impact evaluations, public involvement and regulatory agency coordination, and writing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The scoping process for the EIS is now underway, with a series of agency and public meetings scheduled to start in March 2005. The Draft EIS is scheduled for release in winter of 2005.

In January, KABATA released the 2004 Annual Report to inform the Governor, legislators, and the public on the status and prospects of the project. The Annual Report outlines fieldwork, technical studies, and public outreach completed in 2004. This report and other project information are available on the website: www.knikarmbridge.com.

The Governor’s State of the State address spoke to the “continued population growth,” which will grow even more “when the gas pipeline construction begins.” Thus, the Knik Arm Crossing was listed as one of the priority transportation projects to respond to the projected demand for improved regional infrastructure. “Expanding the state’s transportation infrastructure is an essential part of economic prosperity”, said Governor Frank Murkowski.

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