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**HATCHER PASS RECREATIONAL AREA ACCESS,  
TRAILS, AND TRANSIT FACILITIES**

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**Coordination  
Plan**

**November 2010**

 **FTA** | United States Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



**COORDINATION PLAN**  
**HATCHER PASS RECREATIONAL AREA ACCESS, TRAILS, AND**  
**TRANSIT FACILITIES**

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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

ADA ..... Americans with Disabilities Act  
CEQ ..... Council on Environmental Quality  
CFR ..... Code of Federal Regulations  
EA ..... Environmental Assessment  
EIS ..... Environmental Impact Statement  
FTA ..... Federal Transit Administration  
Hatcher Pass Transit Project ..... Hatcher Pass Recreational Area Access,  
Trails, and Transit Facilities  
lead agencies ..... FTA and MSB  
MSB ..... Matanuska-Susitna Borough  
NEPA ..... National Environmental Policy Act  
NOA ..... Notice of Availability  
NOI ..... Notice of Intent  
P.E. .... Professional Engineer  
Plan ..... Coordination Plan  
ROD ..... Record of Decision  
SAFETEA-LU ..... Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation  
Equity Act: A legacy for Users  
SHPO ..... State Historic Preservation Office  
USEPA ..... United State Environmental Protection Agency

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This Coordination Plan (Plan) will guide the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) during agency coordination and public involvement activities necessary for the Hatcher Pass Recreational Area Access, Trails, and Transit Facilities Project (Hatcher Pass Transit Project) environmental review process. The Plan<sup>1</sup> adheres to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) guidance and will ensure that early and continual input from agencies and the public be incorporated into the decision-making process for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

The FTA proposes the Hatcher Pass Transit Project to construct transit facilities, access roads, and parking lots in the Hatcher Pass area.

The MSB is concurrently developing a separate project to include Alpine ski lifts, downhill ski and snowboarding trails, a small day lodge in the Northern Area, and Nordic and other non-motorized multiple use trails in the Southern Area. The MSB-funded project will be assessed in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as an indirect (secondary) impact; however, close coordination between MSB and FTA is essential to both projects and thus this Plan includes the MSB.

As this Plan describes a process rather than a result, most design changes will not affect the plan, allowing it to remain largely unchanged throughout the process. However, this Plan is intended to be dynamic to allow small revisions and additions to best respond to feedback and project management changes as needed. In addition, information about public involvement, agency coordination, and materials associated with the Hatcher Pass Transit Project is available on the project website at [www.hatcherpass.com](http://www.hatcherpass.com). Complete information and results about public involvement and agency coordination will be available in an appendix of the Draft EIS for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

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<sup>1</sup> This Plan complies with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Section 6002, as a plan for coordination (SAFETEA-LU Section 6002: Section 139(g)(1)). This Plan also addresses the agency coordination required by federal regulation outlined in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

### **1.1 Hatcher Pass Transit Project Location**

The Hatcher Pass Transit Project is located 55 miles north of Anchorage, Alaska, in the heart of the MSB, Alaska's fastest growing community, at approximately 61.734 north latitude and 149.299 west longitude (Sections 2-5, 8-11, 14-22, and 26-30 of Township 19N, Range 1E, Seward Meridian) (United States Geological Survey Quadrangle Anchorage C6, C7, and D7 1:63,360 Scale). The Hatcher Pass Transit Project area is currently accessible from both the Glenn and Parks Highways.

### **1.2 Hatcher Pass Transit Project Background**

The Hatcher Pass Transit Project is the result of almost 30 years of planning and site analysis during which three development corporations have evaluated development opportunities in Hatcher Pass. A study in the 1980s from the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources found that a moderate-sized seasonal development was the most feasible development. The State of Alaska then adopted the Hatcher Pass Management Plan in 1986 and amended it in 1989 to create a Government Peak Subunit to accommodate ski area development. In the 1990s, the MSB and Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority funded another study that found that a large four-season resort plan was not financially feasible. Within the last eight years, the development lease was transferred to the MSB. A Hatcher Pass Special Land Use District is currently being drafted by the MSB with the guidance of local residents, which will establish management goals for the Government Peak Subunit. Environmental studies for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area began in the summer of 2008 and public and agency scoping was initiated in the fall of 2008.

### **1.3 Hatcher Pass Transit Project Description**

The Hatcher Pass Transit Project is being funded by the FTA and would construct transit facilities, access roads, parking lots, and trail connections for two day-use areas that would accommodate skiing and other non-motorized recreational opportunities for local and regional residents in the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area.

The Hatcher Pass Transit Project proposes development of the Northern and Southern Areas:

#### Northern Area

- Construction of a paved access road, approximately 0.4 mile long (21,000 feet long by 40 feet wide), using a portion of the existing gravel road that would include two 12-foot travel lanes and two 8-foot shoulders and would require 200 feet of right-of-way.
- Reconstruction/expansion of the existing gravel parking lot into a paved terraced parking lot (163,050 square feet), with a lower lot (103,980 square feet) designed to accommodate approximately 293 vehicles and two buses, and an upper lot (59,070 square feet) designed to accommodate approximately 120 vehicles.
- Construction of an enclosed heated 20- to 30-passenger transit facility and restrooms (1,800 square feet). Lighting and benches will be provided inside the transit facility for safety and comfort. A lock-and-key poster board will also be included in the facility design to post bus schedules and other important MSB and state park official notices.
- Construction of a separated one-way bus/layover in the lower parking lot sized to accommodate up to two buses. Separation from the main parking lot will be provided by a raised median. Bus pullouts will be designed to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Installation of lighting in the parking lot and enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility. A combination of light sensors and timing circuits will be used to reduce operating costs and minimize light impacts.
- Installation of bear-proof trash receptacles adjacent to the enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility.
- Extension of utilities such as telephone and electric from the existing gravel parking lot to the proposed enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility. The proposed utility extension will be placed underground within the area of disturbance for the proposed parking lot.

#### Southern Area

- Acquire approximately 13.6 acres of privately owned property for construction of the proposed paved access road and non-motorized, paved, separated pathway.

- Construction of a paved access road, approximately 1.0 mile long (4,900 feet long by 40 feet wide) that would include two 12-foot travel lanes and two 8-foot shoulders and would require 200 feet of right-of-way.
- Construction of a paved parking lot (89,200 square feet) that will accommodate approximately 210 vehicles and six buses.
- Construction of an enclosed heated 20- to 30-passenger transit facility and restrooms (1,800 square feet). Lighting and benches will be provided inside the facility for safety and comfort. A lock-and-key poster board will also be included in the facility to post bus schedules and other important MSB and state park official notices.
- Construction of a separated one-way bus bay/layover area sized to accommodate up to six buses. Separation from the main parking lot will be provided by a raised median. Bus pullouts will be designed to meet current ADA requirements.
- Construction of a non-motorized, paved, separated pathway (4,900 feet long by 10 feet wide) adjacent to the proposed paved access road on the east side. The non-motorized, paved, separated pathway will be designed to meet ADA requirements.
- Installation of lighting in the parking lot and enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility. A combination of light sensors and timing circuits will be used to reduce operating costs and minimize light impacts.
- Installation of bear-proof trash receptacles adjacent to the enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility.
- Extension of utilities such as telephone and electric from Edgerton Parks Road to the proposed parking lot and enclosed 20- to 30-passenger transit facility and restroom. The proposed utility extension will be placed underground within the area of disturbance for the paved separated pathway along the proposed access road.

## 2.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### 2.1 Project Team

Three primary entities comprise the Project team:

- FTA
- MSB
- Project Consultants

**Additional Information is Available:**  
For information about this Plan, contact Daniel Drais at (206) 220-7954 or Daniel.drais@dot.gov.

For information about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project, visit the website at [www.hatcherpass.com](http://www.hatcherpass.com).

#### 2.1.1 FTA and the MSB

Together the FTA and the MSB authorize, review, and approve work completed by consultants.

The FTA contact is R. F. Krochalis, Regional Administrator of FTA Region 10, and Linda Gehrke, the Deputy Regional Administrator. The following MSB staff is involved in facilitation and review of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project:

- Borough Manager - John Duffy
- Transportation Planning and Environmental Division Manager - Brad Sworts
- Community Development Director - Jeff Dillon
- Public Affairs - Patti Sullivan

#### 2.1.2 Project Consultants

##### 2.1.2.1 *Lead Consultant: DOWL HKM and RWS Consulting*

MSB has contracted DOWL HKM and RWS Consulting to be the lead consultants for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. The DOWL HKM consultant team will conduct environmental analysis, traffic studies, noise studies, and civil design. RWS Consulting functions as the MSB Consultant assisting in project management. The following team members are involved in the Hatcher Pass Transit Project design and preparation of the NEPA document:

- Project Manager - Stewart Osgood, P.E., DOWL HKM
- Project Manager - Ron Swanson, RWS Consulting
- Project Engineer - Steve Noble, P.E., PTOE, DOWL HKM
- Design Engineer - Kelly Suchodolski, P.E., DOWL HKM
- Planning and Public Involvement Manager - Maryellen Tuttell, AICP, DOWL HKM
- Public Involvement Lead - Michela Spitz, DOWL HKM

- Environmental Manager - Kristen Hansen, DOWL HKM
- Environmental Specialist - Heather Campfield, DOWL HKM

### 2.1.3 Subconsultants

Subconsultants working for DOWL HKM on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project include ABR, Inc., to provide stream assessment and fish and aquatic habitat surveys; and Cultural Resource Consultants to provide archeological services.

## 2.2 **Agency Participation**

Coordination with interested agencies as early as practicable in the environmental review process<sup>2</sup> is critical per NEPA. FTA has identified and invited potentially interested agencies to become either cooperating or participating agencies. An invitation letter was mailed to tribal governments, federal, state, and local agencies on June 2, 2009, requesting a response in writing 30 days after receiving the letter, indicating what level of involvement they would take in the environmental review process.

In pursuant of SAFETEA-LU Section 6002, the FTA and MSB being the lead agencies must develop coordination plans; provide opportunities for public and participating agency involvement in defining the purpose and need and determining the range of alternatives. FTA and MSB will collaborate with participating agencies to determine methodologies and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives. In addition, lead agencies will provide oversight in managing the EIS process and resolving issues.

Once cooperating and participating agencies are determined, the following will occur:

- Cooperating and participating agencies will be consulted regarding EIS analysis methodology as appropriate.
- Coordinate with cooperating and participating agencies throughout EIS and project development to address issues.
- Provide a review copy of the Draft EIS to cooperating agencies for review and comment.

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<sup>2</sup> SAFETEA-LU Section 6002

- Resolve major issues as early as practicable in the environmental review process and during all phases of project development for permit submittals.
- Document official communications and agreements with resource agencies.
- Provide copies of Draft EIS, the Executive Summary, technical reports, and drawings for continuous review and comment by cooperating and participating agencies during the official comment period and at public hearings.

Cooperating and participating agencies for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Cooperating and Participating Agencies**

<b>Cooperating Agencies</b>
None
<b>Participating Agencies</b>
United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources

### 2.2.1 Lead Agencies

As project leads, FTA and MSB are responsible for preparing the EIS.

### 2.2.2 Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are any other federal, state, and local agencies with jurisdiction or special expertise with respect to any environmental issues, which should be addressed in the EIS. Such agencies have been invited to serve as cooperating agencies at the beginning of the environmental review process.

### 2.2.3 Participating Agencies

Participating agencies<sup>3</sup>, are those federal and non-federal agencies that may have an interest in the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. Such agencies have been invited to participate in the environmental review process. FTA invited tribal governments to act as participating agencies at the beginning of the environmental review process.

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<sup>3</sup> SAFETEA-LU Section 6002: Section 139(d),

### **2.3 Issue Identification and Resolution**

An Interagency Team including representatives from FTA and MSB, cooperating and participating agencies will be formed to provide a forum for coordination at key project milestones. Members of the Interagency Team may use this forum to identify issues regarding Hatcher Pass Transit Project's potential impacts that could substantially delay or prevent project approval. However, it is not necessary to use this forum to identify and resolve issues, as contact with FTA and MSB project staff is encouraged at all times.

If issues among co-lead agencies cannot be resolved at the staff level, they will be raised to an Executive Sponsorship Team that consists of representatives from FTA and MSB.

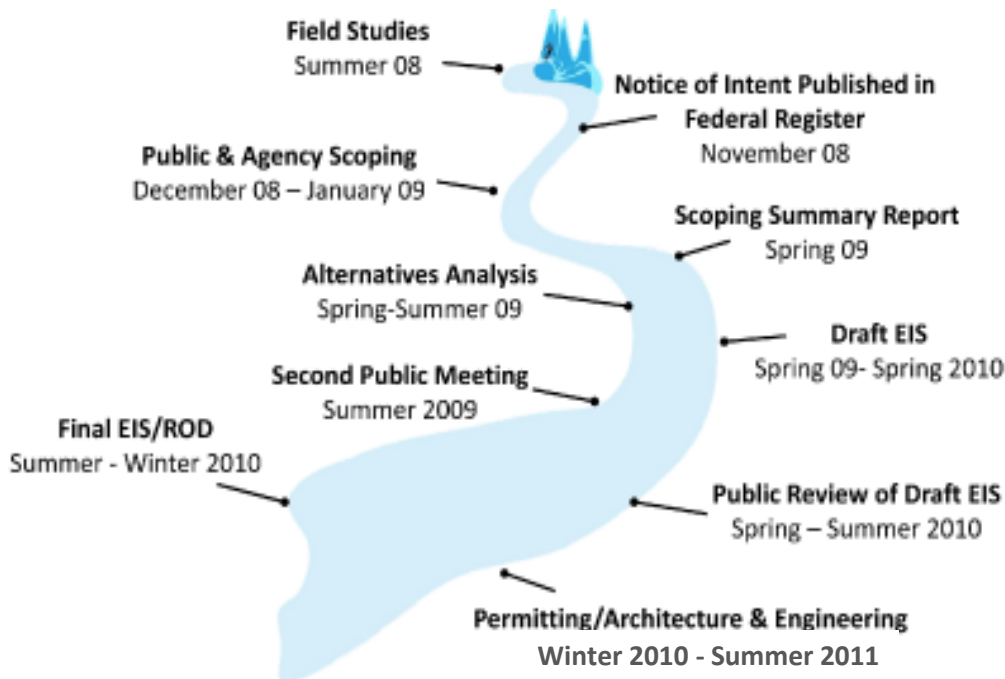
MSB may request FTA to convene issue resolution meetings to resolve issues that could delay completion of the environmental review process or could result in denial of any approvals required for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. If resolution cannot be achieved, FTA must notify the Governor, Congress, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). FTA will publish any unresolved issues in the Federal Register<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> SAFETEA-LU Section 6002: Section 139(h)

### 3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The Hatcher Pass Transit Project will undergo environmental review in accordance with NEPA, FTA regulations, and policies including SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 requirements, Efficient Environmental Reviews for Project Decision-making. The Draft EIS for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project was available in October 2010. Figure 1 highlights the milestones of the EIS process.



**Figure 1: Environmental Review Process and Milestones**

FTA established the following goals and objectives to guide the environmental review process:

**Goal A:** Ensure open exchange of information, ideas, and concerns between FTA, MSB, and the cooperating and participating agencies about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project, its potential impacts, and appropriate mitigation.

- Objective - Engage interested agencies to evaluate the scoping effects, alternatives to be considered, design development, mitigation measures, and project purpose and need.

**Goal B:** Facilitate an efficient Environmental Review process. Avoid unnecessary future conflicts that could result in permit objections.

- Objective - Provide early opportunities for interested agencies to express concerns and issues with the Hatcher Pass Transit Project so they may be addressed early in the process.

**Goal C:** Avoid substantial design changes during permit review.

- Objective - Address resource agency feedback and concerns during project development, design, and mitigation through early and continuous communication throughout the process.

Consistent with Code of Federal Regulations 23 CFR 771 and SAFETEA-LU, an EIS has been prepared and FTA has or will complete the following steps as part of the EIS process:

- File Notice of Intent (NOI)
- Develop Purpose and Need
- Consider Alternatives
- Provide Scoping
- Analysis Alternatives
- Prepare Draft EIS
- File Notice of Availability (NOA)
- Draft EIS comment period
- Prepare Final EIS
- Record of Decision (ROD)

### 3.1.1 Notice of Intent

As required by SAFETEA-LU<sup>5</sup>, FTA published a NOI in the November 2008 Federal Register. The described type of work, logical termini, length, and general location of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project as well as anticipated federal approvals are required.

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<sup>5</sup> Section 6002: Section 139(e)

### 3.1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose and need of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project will be developed by comprehensively describing the reason for action, along with a detailed description of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area.

### 3.1.3 Alternatives

A range of feasible alternatives will be developed to meet the purpose and need and the steps taken will be documented.

### 3.1.4 Scoping

As required by SAFETEA-LU<sup>6</sup>, FTA will provide the earliest possible opportunity during scoping for participating agencies and the public to comment on the purpose and need for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project and the range of alternatives to be considered. Through this process, all likely permits necessary and significant issues will be identified.

The general approach to scoping includes:

- Identify interested or stakeholder agencies;
- Identify potential issues and needed fieldwork or analysis; and
- Gather existing environmental data.

Efforts thus far include:

- An e-mail sent to the agency scoping distribution list on May 2, 2008, followed by individual telephone calls for preliminary scoping.
- Scoping letters with an invitation to the agency scoping meeting were sent to agencies on December 2, 2008. E-mail reminders for the agency scoping meeting was sent to individuals listed on the scoping distribution list, November 4 and 26 and December 3, 2008.
- The first agency scoping meeting was held on December 8, 2008, for the EIS. A 30-day comment period was provided for input on scoping, project purpose and need, and project

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<sup>6</sup> Section 6002: Section 136(f)

alternatives to assist project schedule progress. For those unable to be present at the location of the meeting, a teleconference as well as a website where the presentation could be downloaded for viewing was provided to allow agencies to participate in the meeting. The scoping meeting and comment period was announced in the scoping letter sent to agencies and the NOI posted in the Federal Register.

- A meeting with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was held on January 16, 2009. The meeting included a project overview that also displayed the three preliminary road access options, an overview of initial historical field work findings, and the preliminary Area of Potential Effect for direct and indirect impacts.
- Initiated Section 106 consultation on April 22, 2009, with the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology. FTA provided general project information and requested assistance in identifying historic properties within the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area that may need further review or discussion.
- Initiated Section 106 consultation on April 22, 2009, with other interested agencies. FTA provided general project information and requested notification of any traditionally religious and cultural resources within the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area that may need further review or discussion.
- An e-mail invitation was sent to agency representatives on April 29, 2009, regarding the June 2, 2009, scoping meeting.
- Agencies were notified on May 12, 2009, that technical reports summarizing fieldwork for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project were available for download and review via the Hatcher Pass Transit Project website at [www.hatcherpass.com](http://www.hatcherpass.com).
- E-mail reminders for the second agency scoping meeting were sent to individuals listed on the scoping distribution list on May 12 and 19 and June 1, 2009.
- Sent invitations to become a cooperating or participating agency to interested agencies on May 28, 2009. The letter outlined the responsibilities of a cooperating and participating agency. The letter also indicated the additional steps a federal agency declining to be a cooperating or participating agency must take. The letter also included a form for the

agencies to return stating their participation preference. If a denial to be a participating agency was received, a copy of the reply was submitted to the CEQ.

- The second agency scoping meeting was held on June 2, 2009, for the EIS. For those unable to be present at the location of the meeting, a teleconference was provided to allow agencies to participate in the meeting. The presentation could be downloaded for viewing via the web. A 30-day comment period followed to provide agencies the opportunity to submit comments on project purpose and need, alternatives analysis, project field reports, and next steps in the EIS process.
- Agency representatives from ADF&G and USEPA requested a site visit as a result of the June 2, 2009, agency scoping meeting. On June 3, 2009, an invitation to agencies representatives was sent via e-mail regarding a June 9, 2009, site visit to the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area. Matthew LaCroix (USEPA), Marla Carter (ADF&G), and Benjamin Soiseth (USACE) attended the site visit. The focus of the site visit was to discuss the general methodology for the Wetlands Delineation Report and to view the topography of the area. A detailed memorandum of the information discussed and the results of the agency site visit will be included in the Draft and Final EIS.
- Sent a letter on July 2, 2009, to interested agencies indicating FTA was considering changing the level of environmental documentation from an EIS to an EA since during the scoping process no issues were raised indicating that there would be significant environmental impacts as a result of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. A request for comments was requested.
- A second agency site visit to the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area took place on August 20, 2009. Benjamin Soiseth (USACE) attended the site visit. The focus of the site visit was to observe and discuss the problematic wetlands of the area. A detailed memorandum of the information discussed and the results of the agency site visit will be included in the Draft and Final EIS.
- A participating agency meeting took place on September 24, 2009. The meeting included a project overview that also displayed the preferred alignment, discussion of the whether to keep the environmental documentation at the EIS level, revision of the purpose and

need, and a discussion about independent utility versus connected actions of the FTA and MSB funded projects.

- A meeting with the SHPO was held on September 24, 2009. The meeting included a project overview that also displayed the preferred alignment, notification that the environmental documentation will continue to be at the EIS level, notification of revision of the purpose and need, overview of Cultural Resource Consultants methods and historical findings report, and discussion of the adequacy of the Area of Potential Effect boundaries and revisions that are needed.
- Sent a letter on October 28, 2009, to interested agencies indicating that FTA and MSB decided to move forward with the completion of an EIS due to the response from the public on the proposed change in level of environmental documentation from an EIS to an EA. However, significant impacts are not likely to occur nor were issues raised during scoping to indicate significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed project.
- The project team gave a presentation on the project status to the MSB assembly during a special work session on January 5, 2010.
- A Notice of Availability of the Final EIS e-mail was sent to the project distribution list on May 13, 2010, and a Notice of Availability of the Final EIS was posted to the project website.
- An announcement of the open house and a public hearing flyer was sent to the project distribution list.
- A Notice of Availability of the Final EIS e-mail was sent to agencies and other interested parties on May 14, 2010.
- Reminder e-mails were sent to agencies and other interested parties of the end of the comment period for the Final EIS.
- A public hearing on the Draft EIS was held on June 23, 2010.
- Comments were received from the USEPA, Region 10, on July 12, 2010. The FTA responded on October 12, 2010.

- Comments were received from the United States Department of the Interior on July 26, 2010. The FTA responded on October 12, 2010.
- Comments were received from the United States Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on July 28, 2010. The FTA responded on October 12, 2010.

### 3.1.5 Alternatives Analysis

Based on scoping and potential impacts, identify alternatives to dismiss and to carry forward for analysis and develop criteria to evaluate alternatives.

### 3.1.6 Draft EIS

The Draft EIS was prepared to document the Hatcher Pass Transit Project development as well as to perform initial analysis of alternatives carried forward to determine significant impacts and draft mitigation.

### 3.1.7 Notice of Availability of Draft EIS

The Draft EIS was made available for public's comments and agency review by publishing an NOA in the Federal Register as well as appropriate media. A public hearing was held on June 23, 2010, to receive public and agency comment. The meeting was held at Colony Middle School, 9250 Colony Schools Drive, Palmer, Alaska.

### 3.1.8 Prepare Final EIS

After publication of the Final EIS, the FTA is expected to issue a ROD, which will present FTA's specific project environmental decisions and approvals and itemize any mitigation measures incorporated into the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

#### **4.0 GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

The intent of consultation and coordination is to cooperatively identify and resolve issues that could delay completion of the environmental review process or could result in denial of any required approvals. Consultation is led by FTA and MSB to ensure early and continuous exchange of information.

Government-to-government consultation is between FTA as the lead federal agency and federally recognized tribal governments. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act also requires that federal agencies consult with federally recognized tribal governments (as well as the SHPO) regarding potential effects on historic properties prior to making decisions that could affect those properties. Using the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' 2008 listing of Alaska's Recognized Tribes, FTA identified and invited interested federally recognized tribal governments to participate in the Hatcher Pass Transit Project's environmental review process. FTA will engage in early and continuous consultation with interested tribal governments throughout the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. Specific consultation activities will be coordinated with major project milestones.

##### **4.1 Efforts to date**

Efforts thus far include:

- Identified interested tribal governments.
- Sent scoping letters to agencies and tribal governments with general project information and background on December 2, 2008.
- Invited tribal governments to attend the agency scoping meeting that was held on December 8, 2008. A 30-day comment period followed giving tribal governments the opportunity to provide input on scoping, project purpose and need, and project alternatives to assist project schedule progress. For those unable to be present at the location of the meeting, a teleconference was held, and project presentation material was made available to allow agencies to participate in the meeting from their respective locations. The scoping meeting and comment period was provided in the scoping letter sent to agencies and the NOI posted on the Federal Register.

- Initiated government-to-government and Section 106 consultation on April 22, 2009, with interested tribal governments. FTA provided general project information and requested notification of any traditionally religious and cultural resources within the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area that may need further review or discussion.
- Invited tribal governments via e-mail on May 19, 2009, to attend the second agency scoping meeting that was held on June 2, 2009. For those unable to be present at the location of the meeting, a teleconference was provided to allow tribal governments to participate in the meeting. The presentation could be downloaded for viewing via the web. A 30-day comment period followed to provide tribal governments the opportunity to submit comments on project purpose and need, alternatives analysis, project field reports, and next steps in the EIS process.
- Sent invitations to become a participating agency to interested tribal governments on May 28, 2009. The letter outlined the responsibilities of a participating agency as well as how they can continue to comment on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project should they decline to be a participating agency. The letter also included a form for the tribal government to return stating their participation preference. If a denial to be a participating agency was received, a copy of the reply was submitted to the CEQ.
- Sent a letter on July 2, 2009, to tribal governments indicating FTA was considering changing the level of environmental documentation from an EIS to an EA since during the scoping process no issues were raised indicating that there would be significant environmental impacts as a result of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. A request for comments, especially if the tribal government objected, was requested.
- Sent a letter on October 28, 2009, to tribal governments indicating that the FTA and MSB decided to move forward with the completion of an EIS due to the response from the public on the proposed change in level of environmental documentation from an EIS to an EA. However, significant impacts are not likely to occur and issues were not raised during scoping to indicate significant environmental impacts would result from the proposed project.

## **4.2 Future Efforts**

In the future, FTA will:

- Meet with representatives of tribal governments as needed throughout the Section 106 process to review issues regarding historical or cultural resources.
- Meet with representatives of tribal governments as needed throughout EIS and project development to review issues that include but are not limited to historical or cultural resources, subsistence resources, and tribal land.
- Seek to resolve major issues as early as practicable in the environmental review process and during all phases of project development prior to permit submittals.
- Document official communications and agreements with tribal governments.
- Provide copies of Draft EIS, the Executive Summary, technical reports, and drawings, for continuous review and comment by tribal governments during the official comment period and at public hearings.

## **5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The public includes local community groups, elected officials, businesses, residents, and patrons of the area. Early and continuous public involvement is essential for a successful and efficient environmental review process. The public will be given ample opportunities to interact with, and receive responses from FTA and MSB on issues of interest or concern throughout each phase of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. FTA and MSB will use various means to continuously invite the public's participation in the environmental review process for the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

### **5.1 Public Involvement Goals**

FTA and MSB have established the following goals and principles to guide the environmental review process:

**Goal A:** Seek public input on Hatcher Pass Transit Project's proposed purpose and need via scoping.

- Objective - Use various means of notification and tools for response to allow ample opportunities for comment by public.

**Goal B:** Actively seek public input throughout all project stages of planning and development, and engineering.

- Objective - Use various means of notification and tools for response to allow ample opportunities for comment by the diverse public.

**Goal C:** Consider, answer, and account for public inquiries, suggestions, and ideas in the decision-making process.

- Objective - Use the Scoping Summary Report to track and organize comments for review by FTA and MSB. In public meetings/forums address where public comments have specifically been addressed in the decision process.

**Goal D:** Ensure a valuable public involvement process.

- Objective - Monitor the effectiveness of the public involvement efforts.

**5.2 Public Involvement Tools**

Public hearings, meetings, project briefings, and communication tools and materials are used to obtain input and share project information. Public meetings, open houses, and other events offer hands-on opportunities to engage the public in learning about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project, identifying community issues, and reviewing design options or resolving construction issues. Table 2 below summarizes outreach tools used at project milestones and the tools are further discussed in more detail below. Listed below are the tools FTA and MSB will use to involve the public:

- Public hearings
- Open houses
- Hatcher Pass Transit Project website, mail, and e-mail address
- MSB Assembly briefings
- Other community meetings
- One-on-one briefings
- Mailings
- Display advertisements
- Radio advertisements

**Table 2: Public Outreach Tools**

Outreach Tools Used for Hatcher Pass Recreational Area Access, Trails, and Transit Facilities								
Project Milestone	Public Outreach Tools							
	Public Meetings and Open Houses	Public Hearing	MSB Assembly Briefing	Mailings	Fact Sheet Handouts	Community Events	Webpage	News Media
Public Scoping Meeting	Two held		Three held	Prepared	Prepared		Established	Contacted
Alternative Development	Displayed		Displayed				Displayed	
Notice of Draft EIS availability and 45-day comment period				Prepared			Displayed	Advertised
Notice of Final EIS availability								
Final EIS								
ROD								

### 5.2.1 Public Hearings

Objective: Inform the public about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project as it progresses and allow comments to be made formally to FTA, MSB, and other members of the public.

Approach: Hold a series of public hearings during various stages of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. Provide meaningful materials that clearly state project information, design, environmental impacts, and any related issues. Provide an opportunity to receive feedback through multiple vehicles such as court reporter, written comments, and electronic comments.

When: Public scoping meetings were held at Colony Middle School, 9250 Colony Schools Drive, on Thursday, December 11, 2008, and Wednesday, May 27, 2009, at 5:30 p.m.

### 5.2.2 Open Houses

Objective: Provide opportunities for the public to view display boards showing Hatcher Pass Transit Project's impacts, alternatives, progress, and other project-related information. Allow the public an opportunity to talk to FTA and MSB about various project-related disciplines such as environmental, engineering/planning, architecture, real estate and the development of a purpose and need for the improvements, alternatives that meet the purpose and need, potential environmental effects of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project, and other concerns they may have about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

Approach: Hold meetings during scoping and in conjunction with the Draft EIS public hearings. The meetings will be held during a two- to three-hour timeframe to accommodate various schedules.

When: Public scoping meetings were held on Thursday, December 11, 2008, and Wednesday, May 27, 2009, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Colony Middle School, 9250 Colony Schools Drive. Additional open houses will be held as requested and during the Draft EIS comment period.

### 5.2.3 Hatcher Pass Transit Project Website, Mail, and E-mail Address

Objective: Maximize public access to timely project information. Provide interactive opportunities and online information to support public meetings and to allow those that cannot or

do not wish to attend meetings the opportunity to be informed of the Hatcher Pass Transit Project and the opportunity to submit comments.

Approach: Create project website with all electronic versions of project materials. Create and provide electronic and physical contact information for receiving comments.

When: A project website was launched prior to scoping and will be updated throughout the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. The website contains links to information regarding the Hatcher Pass Transit Project area, current uses of the area, project history, project elements, proposed concept, environmental information, land use plans, meeting information, timelines, project documents, press releases, comment information, FAQs, project team members and contact information, and project-related links. The MSB has been and will be posting press releases on their website under the Public Affairs Department.

- On November 16, 2007, MSB issued a press release announcing they were moving forward on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.
- On August 5, 2008, MSB issued a press release announcing that fieldwork for the environmental study was commencing.
- On September 18, 2008, MSB issued a press release notifying the public that the regional ski area concept at Hatcher Pass won unanimous support from the MSB Assembly.
- On December 3, 2008, MSB issued a press release announcing the public scoping meeting would be held on December 11, 2008, and seeking public comment.
- On March 25, 2009, MSB issued a press release notifying the public of the funding received from FTA and the estimated project costs, Southern Area road alignment alternatives, and agency and public meeting comments.
- On May 6, 2009, an e-mail was sent to individuals on the public scoping distribution list announcing the second public scoping meeting would be held on May 27, 2009, and that

FTA and MSB are seeking public comment. An e-mail reminder for the public scoping meeting was sent on May 26, 2009.

- On May 22, 2009, MSB issued a press release announcing the second public scoping meeting would be held on May 27, 2009, and seeking public comment.

#### 5.2.4 MSB Assembly Briefings

Objective: Have an informed elected body that can communicate project details directly to constituents and to provide timely and accurate information during the decision making process.

Approach: Provide an opportunity to discuss project details or emerging issues either with elected officials or their staff. Continually provide elected officials information materials throughout the Hatcher Pass Transit Project to maintain awareness and understanding about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

When: On March 24, 2009, June 23, 2009, and January 5, 2010, a briefing was presented at a joint meeting of the MSB Planning Commission and the MSB Assembly. On January 5, 2010, a briefing was presented at a MSB Assembly work session. Additional briefings will take place in preparation for each project development milestone or as events demonstrate a need.

#### 5.2.5 Other Community Meetings

Objective: Inform the public about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project as it progresses and provide an opportunity for community members to meet with project staff to discuss emerging issues or impacts. Resolve emerging issues during the design process and collaboration with impacted parties.

Approach: Continually monitor Hatcher Pass Transit Project's progress, paying particular attention to potential impacts to community members. Hold a meeting with potentially impacted parties to maintain awareness and understanding about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project and to address concerns and discuss specific issues.

When: On January 14, 2009, a project overview and team members answered questions and received comments at the Fishhook Community Council Meeting. On January 15, 2009, a project overview and team members answered questions and received comments at a joint

meeting of the Real Property Asset Management Board and the Parks, Recreation, and Trails Advisory Board. On February 12, 2010, a project overview and team members answered questions and received comments at the Matanuska-Susitna Convention and Visitor Bureau Meeting. Additional community meetings will take place upon identification of specific project-related issues or at the public's request.

#### 5.2.6 One-on-One Briefings

Objective: Provide an opportunity for community members to meet with project staff to discuss emerging issues or impacts. Resolve emerging issues during the design process and collaboration with impacted parties.

Approach: Continually monitor project's progress, paying particular attention to potential impacts to community members. Hold a meeting with potentially impacted parties to address concerns and discuss specific issues.

When: During the Transportation Fair on October 8, 2009, from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m., and September 16, 2010, from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m., at Raven Hall, Alaska State Fairgrounds, a team member was present to receive comments and answer questions from the public regarding the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. Hatcher Pass Transit Project handouts and display boards showing Hatcher Pass Transit Project's impacts, alternatives, progress, and other project-related information were available for take home and/or viewing. Additional one-on-one briefings will take place upon identification of specific project-related issues or at the public's request.

#### 5.2.7 Mailings

Objective: Provide information and notification of public meetings pertaining to the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

Approach: Provide consistent information about public involvement opportunities and project milestones in a clear communications vehicle.

When: A public scoping meeting notice postcard was sent to all residents and property owners within the Fishhook and Buffalo/Soapstone community council areas - including the Motherlode and Hatcher Pass Lodges prior to the scoping meeting held on December 11, 2008. A notice

postcard for the second public scoping meeting was sent prior to the meeting held on May 27, 2009. The mailing list included all residents and property owners within the Fishhook and Buffalo/Soapstone community council areas-including the Motherlode and Hatcher Pass Lodges as well as those added to the mailing list by request or because they came to the first public scoping meeting.

A postcard inviting the public to the meeting was mailed on June 9, 2010, to property owners within the project area and interested parties. E-mail notifications were also sent to the public distribution list on June 8, 2010, and to the agency distribution list on May 14 and July 23, 2010.

#### 5.2.8 Display Advertisements

Objective: Notify the public of project progress and about events or opportunities for input about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project through publication of display advertisements in local and community print publications.

Approach: Place display advertisements in the Anchorage Daily News and the Frontiersman to notify the public of project progress and about events or opportunities for input about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

When: Display advertisements were posted announcing the public scoping meetings would take place on December 11, 2008, and May 27, 2009, providing an opportunity for public comment. The Notice of Availability for the Final EIS was advertised in the *Federal Register* on May 28, 2010, announcing the date and location of the public hearing as well as the extent of the comment period. Advertisement of the public hearing was made on the project website on June 5, 2010, and in local newspapers, including the Anchorage Daily News and the Frontiersman on May 28 and July 13, 2010.

#### 5.2.9 Radio Advertisements

Objective: Notify the public about events and opportunities for input about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project through airing radio advertisements through local radio stations.

Approach: Air radio advertisements on KMBQ to notify the public about events and opportunities for input about the Hatcher Pass Transit Project.

When: For the three days prior to the first public scoping meeting, held on December 11, 2008, KMBQ aired announcements five times a day. Following the first scoping meeting additional announcements were aired on KTNA, KMBQ, KSKA/APRN, and KAYO. KAYO also interviewed DOWL HKM Project Manager, Stewart Osgood, P.E., to discuss the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. Radio announcement will be aired prior to the Draft EIS publication and other public meetings held at major milestones.

## 6.0 PROJECT MILESTONES

At each of the major project milestones, the FTA and MSB will coordinate with the agencies, tribal governments, and public as follows (see Table 3 on page 27 for a concise timetable of milestones):

- **NEPA Scoping:** Interested agencies, tribal governments, and the public have been contacted and invited to agency or public scoping meetings at which FTA and MSB provided project information and sought input on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project. A 30-day scoping comment period followed each scoping meeting during which comments could be submitted to FTA and MSB.

Following the 30-day comment period, a scoping summary report will compile comments received from interested agencies, tribal governments, and the public.

Interested agencies and tribal governments will be contacted and invited to become participating or cooperating agencies.

- **Finalized Scope:** A finalized scope of the EIS based on comments received from agencies and the public during the scoping period will be developed. Documented comments will be included in the Draft and Final EIS.
- **Analysis of resource methodologies:** FTA and MSB will provide proposed analysis methodologies and level of detail required for analysis of each alternative to the cooperating and participating agencies for a 30-day review period, prior to beginning analysis of alternatives (SAFETEA-LU Section 6002: Section 139[4][C]).
- **Information provided by agencies:** resource agencies will be helpful in providing resource-specific data, and assisting with determining regulatory compliance requirements. Agencies will need to provide information and evaluation through the completion of the Draft EIS.
- **Section 106 letters of preliminary views and concurrence:** FTA will coordinate with the State Historical Preservation Office and the tribal governments regarding the presence and eligibility of cultural resources, in compliance with Section 106.

- **Draft EIS:** Lead agencies will review and approve Draft EIS. In compliance with this FTA's new policy and unless otherwise requested, a paper copy of the executive summary of the Draft EIS and a CD of the complete Draft EIS will be sent to Hatcher Pass Transit Project's contact distribution list. Participating agencies and local libraries will receive a complete copy of the Draft EIS.
- **A 45-day Draft EIS comment period:** A comment period will follow publication of the Draft EIS. A NOA will be published in the Federal Register.
- **Preferred Alternative Selection:** FTA and MSB expect to identify a preferred alternative based on the Draft EIS, which considered public and agency comments received during the Draft comment period, and other agency input. The preferred alternative is expected to be included in the Final EIS.
- **Final EIS:** The Final EIS will include a separate appendix with comments received by FTA, along with responses to the comments. A NOA will be published in the Federal Register. Complete Final EIS will be available for review at FTA, MSB, local libraries, and local jurisdictions. The complete Final EIS will also be available on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project website.
- **Project Alternative Selection:** After publication of the Final EIS, FTA and MSB will select the Hatcher Pass Transit Project alternative to be built.
- **ROD:** After the 30-day no action period has elapsed since the issuance of the Final EIS, FTA would issue a ROD containing its specific environmental decisions and approvals on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project and itemizing any mitigation measures incorporated into the Hatcher Pass Transit Project per 40 CFR 1505.2. The ROD is a FTA decision document. The ROD will incorporate any comments received on the Final EIS and responses to those comments. The ROD will be distributed to interested agencies and tribal governments. A Notice of Final Federal Agency Action will be published in the Federal Register. The ROD will be posted on the Hatcher Pass Transit Project website. With the Federal Register notice, a claim seeking judicial review of the federal agency action will be barred unless the claim is filed within the 180 days after publication in the Federal Register per Section 6002(a) of SAFETEA-LU, codified as 23 U.S.C § 139(l).

- **Begin Final Design and Project Construction:** FTA and MSB will continue to coordinate throughout final design and construction with interested agencies to obtain permits and other approvals.

**Table 3: Project Milestones Timeline**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Submitted NOI to FTA	November 2008
NOI published in Federal Register	November 2008
Scoping Letters sent	December 2, 2008
Public Notice posted	December 2008
Begin 30 Day Scoping Period	December 2, 2008
Tribal Government and Agency Scoping Meeting	December 8, 2008
Public Scoping Meeting	December 11, 2008
Participating and Cooperating Agencies Identified	January 2009
Scoping Summary Report	May 2009
Alternatives	January-May 2009
NOA published in Federal Register - Draft EIS	May 2010
Release Draft EIS for Public Review	May 2010
45-Day Public Review of Draft EIS	May-July 2010
NOA published in Federal Register - Final EIS	November 2010
Final EIS released	November 2010
ROD issued and Notice of Final Federal Agency Action published in Federal Register	November 2010
Permitting Process	September - December 2010



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