



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

REGION X  
Alaska, Idaho, Oregon,  
Washington

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Seattle, WA 98174-1002  
206-220-7954  
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December 2, 2008

Re: Hatcher Pass Recreational Area Trails and Transit Facilities  
Agency Scoping Letter / Solicitation for Comments and Information

Dear Agency Representative:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) are proposing a project to construct transit facilities, access roads, parking lots, and trail connections for two day-use areas that would provide an opportunity for skiing and other recreational opportunities for local and regional residents in the Hatcher Pass area. The MSB's goal is a moderate sized development that would include Nordic and alpine skiing, snowboarding, biathlon, mountain biking, hiking, sledding, and equestrian access in Hatcher Pass, Alaska. The study area is located at approximately 61.734 north latitude and 149.299 west longitude (Sections 2-5, 8-11, 14-22, and 26-30 of T19N, R1E, Seward Meridian) (USGS Quadrangle Anchorage C6, C7, and D7 1:63,360 Scale) (Figure 1). FTA has determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the appropriate level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation for this project.

#### **Preliminary Purpose and Need for the Proposed Project**

The preliminary statement of purpose for this project is to provide transit facilities, transportation access, and pedestrian amenities and trail connections in support of proposed new Nordic and alpine ski areas in Hatcher Pass, Alaska. Hatcher Pass is located approximately 55 miles north of Anchorage, Alaska in the heart of the MSB, Alaska's fastest growing community. The area has road access from both the Glenn and Parks Highways and is paved to the Alpine base area as well as to nearly the top of the pass.

The preliminary statement of need for the project is the lack of existing transit facilities that support access for both transportation and pedestrians access to the proposed development of new recreational areas at Hatcher Pass. Additional project background is provided in Appendix B as well as on the project website at: [www.hatcherpass.com](http://www.hatcherpass.com).

Preliminary estimates indicate that approximately 1,850 skiers will visit the Nordic area during the 150 day ski season. In the Alpine area, the estimated visitation is between 130,000 – 240,000 skiers during the 100 day ski season. These estimates were determined by applying economic trends and growth rates to the estimates in the Financial Feasibility Study conducted by Economic Research Associates in 1995. As of 2006, the average daily traffic (ADT) at the intersection of Palmer Fishhook Road and Edgerton Parks Road was 502. A traffic analysis will be conducted to forecast the amount of increase in ADT that will likely result from this project.

### **Proposed Action**

The proposed project includes improvements at two areas in Hatcher Pass – the North Side Alpine Ski Area and the South Side Recreational Area. Proposed improvements include the following:

#### ***North Side Alpine Ski Area (refer to Figure 3):***

- Reconstruction of an existing gravel access road, approximately 1,400-ft in length
- Reconstruction of an existing gravel parking area
- Construction of a covered 20-30 passenger transit shelter at the south end of the parking lot

#### ***South Side Recreational Area (refer to Figure 4):***

- Construction of a new access road off of Edgerton Park Road, approximately 5,500-ft in length
- Parking areas and trailhead connections
- Construction of a covered 20-30 passenger transit shelter

The MSB also plans to construct two Alpine ski lifts, Alpine trails, and a small day lodge providing food and ski concessions as part of the overall Alpine ski area development, Nordic and other non-motorized multiple use trails and a small chalet and conference facility as part of the overall recreational area development. These components are not part of the FTA-funded project, but will be considered in the EIS as part of the secondary and cumulative impact analysis.

Three preliminary alignment alternatives have been developed for the South Side Recreational Area access road (Figure 4). The MSB plans to utilize the EIS scoping process to continue refining and exploring the various development options for this project. These refinements will be developed in consultation with state and local agencies and the surrounding community, and will be explored in the context of the EIS.

### **Preliminary Research Results**

For preliminary research results of environmental resources in the project area, see Appendix A. Also attached to this letter is a list of scoping questions specific to your agency or organization's purview. Please review this list and include any pertinent information that you can provide with your written comments.

An agency scoping meeting has been scheduled for December 8, 2008 from 2:30–4:30 p.m. in the Lower Level Conference Room at the Matanuska-Susitna Borough located at 350 East Dahlia Avenue in Palmer.

Scoping comments can be submitted by mail or e-mail to the address listed below. To ensure that all factors are considered in the environmental and design studies, your comments are requested by January 16, 2008. Written comments may be sent to our Environmental Consultant, Kristen Hansen, at DOWL HKM, at 4041 B Street, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503. Ms. Hansen may be reached by telephone at (907) 562-2000, or e-mail to [khansen@dowlhkm.com](mailto:khansen@dowlhkm.com).

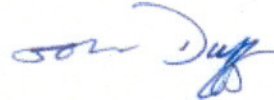
Sincerely,



R.F Krochalis  
Regional Administrator  
FTA Region 10



Sincerely,



John Duffy  
Borough Manager  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough



Enclosures: Figure 1 – Vicinity Map  
Figure 2 – Hatcher Pass Recreational Area  
Figure 3 – Alpine Day Lodge Area  
Figure 4 – Nordic Development Area Trails  
Appendix A – Summary of Preliminary Research on Environmental Resources  
Appendix B – Additional Project Background  
Scoping Questions Specific to Your Agency / Organization

- c: Linda Brenner, Community Development Director, MSB  
Linda Gehrke, Deputy Regional Administrator, FTA Region 10  
Kristen Hansen, Environmental Lead, DOWL HKM  
Dan Keyes, Manager of Recreation of Library Services, MSB  
Stewart Osgood, P.E., Project Manager, DOWL HKM  
Ron Swanson, Contract Project Manager, MSB  
Brad Sworts, Planning, Transportation & Environmental Division Manager, MSB  
Maryellen Tuttell, Assistant Project Manager, DOWL HKM