



# Meeting Minutes

**SUBJECT:** Seward Highway W.O. D59207E  
Public Scoping Meeting

**DATE/TIME:** Monday, March 13, 2006 / 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Indian Valley Meats, Indian, Alaska

**STAFF PRESENT:** *DOWL Engineers* – Stewart Osgood, Steve Noble, Kristen Hansen, Peter Masson, Kelly Brown, and Nan Llewellyn

**MEETING MATERIALS:** Comment Form, Sign in Sheet, Area Basemap and Markers, Display Boards, and Refreshments

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**MEETING INFORMATION:** The meeting began with an Open House Session at 6:30 p.m. Community members signed in and met with project staff one-on-one to discuss individual issues and concerns. At 7:00 p.m. Stewart Osgood started the meeting by introducing the project staff members. Steve Noble presented the project goals and Kristen Hansen gave an overview of the environmental process.

Following the presentation there was a question and answer session with the public. Project staff's responses to questions and comments are shown in italics.

- The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) sent out flyers some time ago, for a different project asking what improvements people would like to see done on the Seward Highway. People did not know what the outcome of that project was and if their input was considered. *For this project, all comments will be considered, and a copy of each comment will be included in the Scoping Summary Report.*
- Some people like the idea of relocating a portion of the Seward Highway out onto the mud flats.
- If portions of the highway are relocated farther out onto the mudflats, it could create an eyesore for local residents, as could construction of a "super-lane" highway. These changes in the Seward Highway could result in a loss of its "All-American Scenic Highway" designation. *Project staff will work to find a solution that meets as many needs as possible, though it will be difficult to find a solution that addresses everyone's concerns. Any improvements recommended will have advantages as well as disadvantages.*
- Plan for future traffic by developing a four-lane highway. An offshore roadway could eliminate some of the environmental issues (including archeological) associated with onshore road improvements.
- There will also be environmental impacts to natural resources in the water (including the beluga whales and hooligans) if an offshore roadway is constructed. Please take the marine natural resources into consideration when developing the improvements.
- If an offshore roadway were constructed on the mudflats, has construction improved enough to withstand an earthquake? *A preliminary geotechnical investigation of the area will be performed to address this issue.*

- If right-of-way is vacated, will the land be transferred to the adjacent property owners? *It is unknown what would happen to any vacated right-of-way at this time.*
- An offshore roadway could hurt businesses in Bird and Indian. To counteract this, businesses could advertise the area as a travel destination from Anchorage for people to visit. Expanding the bike trail in the area could help accomplish this. There is a scenic value to the area and it is a great spot for recreation-oriented businesses.
- If the highway is moved farther out onto the mudflats, will business owners be compensated for the loss of business? *If the local businesses suffer real property impacts, they could receive compensation. Indirect impacts, such as traffic re-routes, will not be compensated.*
- How will the DOT&PF get the money to construct the recommended improvements? *The DOT&PF gets funds from the Federal Highways Administration to construct projects, and sets the priority for all roadway projects in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). This project would have to score comparable to other statewide roadway projects in the STIP also vying for federal funds. Funds have not yet been allocated to the build portion of this project. The State legislature and other sources could also contribute funds to the project.*
- Jersey Median Barriers have been used frequently in other states to divide narrow highways. Please consider using these barriers in your design. *There are numerous disadvantages associated with these barriers: they hinder response times during emergency operations, and they create maintenance issues and permanent no-passing zones. However, it may be possible to install them in segments. The project staff will evaluate these barriers during the design phase.*
- Will the improvements being considered for the Anchorage to Bird project (Milepost 105-115) impact this project, and vice versa? *The project staff for these two projects will communicate and work together as the projects progress.*
- Have the recent improvements made to the section of highway near Girdwood encouraged higher speeds and increased accidents and fatalities? *It appears that there are more accidents since people are not paying as much attention as they once did when that portion of highway was in poor condition. A Trooper present in the audience stated that it is not true; accidents and fatalities have not increased on that improved stretch of the Seward Highway.*
- It seems like the highway is overcapacity at times. How do you plan to accommodate future traffic increases while still maintaining the scenic value of the highway? *Approximately 12,000 to 13,000 trips are generated per day on the roadway (within capacity), with the exception of summertime (June to August) when there are approximately 16,000 trips per day. Also, project staff will project traffic volumes out for a 25-year period.*
- *The final recommendation will depend on many things; there is no set equation to determine the solution. Many factors are included in making a decision (for example: public input, agency input, safety considerations, and engineering analyses results). At this time, the project team does not know what improvements will be needed to accommodate the projected traffic.*
- Could the Winner Creek subdivision project in Girdwood generate a lot of traffic? *A traffic demand analysis will be done to determine the traffic volumes generated by this development.*

- Some of the preliminary ideas really impact commuters. Please try to find ways to minimize the impact on travelers (i.e., haul fill material on railroad tracks).
- Will the cost analysis consider using the material that is removed as fill material? *Yes, it will.*
- Please consider methods that would minimize noise issues. *One solution is to use rubberized asphalt to reduce the effects of noise. This method is being tested on a few roadway projects in Anchorage, and its effectiveness is being monitored.*
- Please look closely at the direction of travel and extend turning lanes along the highway to help people get across the highway easier.
- Please consider using rumble strips in the center of the highway so people are aware of their respective travel lanes. *The project staff will look at the effectiveness of rumble strips. At this time, it is understood they create additional noise and can be a challenge for motorcycles, but they do help people stay in their lanes.*
- Please look beyond this section and consider the Seward Highway as a whole when developing alternatives.

The meeting wrapped up at 8:30 p.m. and staff spoke individually with community members until 9:00 p.m.