

West Dowling Road Connection Project Stakeholder Interview Summary

9/30/02

Overview

Between August 5, 2002 and August 24, 2002, Jamie Damon, facilitator with Jeanne Lawson Associates, Inc met with 28 stakeholders in 19 meetings (including one by phone.) The stakeholders represented neighborhood, business, agency, and special interest groups in the area of the Dowling Road Extension Project. The interviews provided an opportunity for project area stakeholders to: find out about the project in an informal setting; offer input into the public process design; identify issues to address and others to involve; and inform the project team about how they would like to be involved in the project as it develops. The following information was shared with all interviewed:

- DOT&PF is beginning the process to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) regarding the proposed extension of Dowling Rd. from the Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Dr.
- The proposed extension will provide east/west traffic flow, reduce congestion on Tudor Rd. and help to implement the goal of developing a more connected roadway pattern as identified in the Anchorage Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP.)
- There is not a proposed or preferred route at this time. The EIS will develop and analyze a range of reasonable alternatives, including a no build alternative and will result in identifying a preferred alternative in the winter/spring of 2004.
- Issues to be addressed include: a new bridge over Campbell Creek; impacts to Tina Lake; impacts to adjacent residential and commercial property; and access during and after construction.
- The LRTP has identified this project as one of the top three projects to complete and anticipates the roadway to be 4 lanes wide.
- Miriam Tanaka is the DOT&PF Project Manager. HDR Alaska, Inc. is the lead engineering/environmental firm – Dan Simpson is the Project Team Leader.

Stakeholder Interview List

The stakeholder list was developed from conversations with DOT&PF, HDR Alaska, Inc., and site visits. The following people participated in an interview in person, unless otherwise indicated.

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY	NAME/TITLE
Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Transportation Planning	Lance Wilbur, Planner
MOA Public Transportation	Bob Kniefel, Director Jody Karcz, Planner
MOA Cultural and Recreational Services Department; Parks and Beautification Division	Tom Korosei, Landscape Architect
Alaska Railroad Corporation	Tom Brooks, Engineer Stephenie Wheeler, Pubic Involvement Officer
Anchorage School District Transportation	Steve Kalmes, Director
Taku Campbell Community Council	Dan Peacock, President Rebecca Roberts Peter Reece

	Jeff Schmitz
State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Habitat and Restoration Division	Stewart Seaberg, Habitat Biologist
Anchorage Fire Department/EMS	Deputy Chief John Kiewik Deputy Chief Hal Wiley
Alaska Center for the Environment	Andre Camara, Campaigner
Davis Constructors and Engineers, Inc.	R. Greg Romack, President
Central Paving Products	Trevor Edmondson, Manager
Anchorage Citizens Coalition	Cheryl Richardson, Executive Director
Chugach Electric	Jim Topolski, Manager of Land Services Dora L. Gropp P.E., Manager, Transmission and Special Projects Patricia Bogan, CCC, Acting Manager Member and Public Relations
US Army Corps of Engineers	Hank Baij, Regulatory Branch
Assembly District 4	Doug Van Etten, Assemblyman Dick Traini
Assembly District 3	Faye Von Gemmingen, Assemblywoman (<i>participated by phone</i>)
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Mark Schroeder, Biologist
Anchorage Chamber of Commerce	April Jensen, President Eric Britten, Chair

Questions

All interviewed were asked the following questions in addition to discussing issues specific to their organization/agency:

1. How have you been involved with the Dowling Rd. extension concept in the past or other transportation related issues?
2. Are you aware that this project is one of the top three projects from the Anchorage Municipality Area Transportation Study (AMATS)? Why do you think it is rated so high?
3. What is your understanding of the transportation problems to resolve along the Dowling Rd. corridor from Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Dr.?
4. What are other issues/concerns in the area that we need to be aware of?
5. What do you think the expectations are of those who share your concerns for how they will be involved in this process?
6. What process suggestions do you have for us – what works well for this area (information, meeting locations, kinds of meetings, etc.)
7. How would you like to be involved in this process? Would you be willing to participate on an advisory committee, for example?
8. Who else do we need to meet with at this time?
9. What else do we need to be aware of?

This summary is a compilation of the comments received during the interviews, organized by question. Comments are not attributed to any one person, however issues specific to an organization/agency are highlighted as such.

INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Nine questions were asked and while responses to the questions varied according to the individual, some common themes did emerge from those interviewed:

- ▶ There is broad support for the development of an east/west arterial in the project area.
- ▶ There is a high level of understanding of the need for an east/west arterial and the transportation problems such an arterial will resolve.
- ▶ There is much support for coordinating with the Taku/Campbell Community Council.
- ▶ The majority of people interviewed did not know the project was one of the top three transportation projects for the city.
- ▶ The majority of people interviewed would like to be involved in the process.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

The summary is organized by question and headings per subject. The comments have been paraphrased to capture the main points of the speaker. A number in parenthesis following a comment indicates more than one person had the same comment.

Question #1: How have you been involved with the Dowling Rd. extension concept in the past or other transportation related issues?

- Have not been involved in any previous process for this area. (5)
- Have been involved in the past on this specific project. (4)
- Not active in transportation issues in the past.
- Active in AMATS (4)
- Active in other transportation issues (5)

Question #2: Are you aware that this project is one of the top three projects from the Anchorage Municipality Area Transportation Study (AMATS)? Why do you think it is rated so high?

- Not aware that this project rated so high. (12)
- Yes, aware of the project's current rating (4)
- The east/west corridors are very poor. Can understand why it is a priority. (7)
- This project could lower traffic problems in the area.
- This connection makes the most sense.
- Understand the need for this project because of the traffic problems in the area, would like to see them resolved.
- The lack of east/west connectivity is a critical issue for emergency services response times.
- Arterial connectivity is a big issue for the business community.
- Transportation patterns are poor for commercial traffic.
- Transportation planning is poor – this is not a good planning community (2).
- The primary criteria that put this project in the top three are: access, circulation, and transit routes.
- Too much traffic, our roads haven't kept up.
- The top three projects seem to move around.
- On paper the project makes sense.
- Surprised it is rated so high.

Question #3: What is your understanding of the transportation problems to resolve along the Dowling Rd. corridor from Old Seward Highway to Minnesota Dr.?

Congestion

- Tudor gets jammed up and there is no way to get from Tudor to get across town east/west. The

section of Dowling from Old Seward to C street is a poor road.

- How is it that all new road projects in the city are to resolve the congestion at Tudor and Lake Otis? Unsure how this project relates to that connection.
- The congestion at the intersection with International Airport Way and Little Minnesota is terrible. An off ramp like at 76th would be good.
- 64th and C is terribly congested – need a traffic light there or at least a Right in /Right out only.
- Currently there is no access from the residential area bounded by Minnesota, Arctic, Raspberry and Diamond except onto Arctic –causes congestion on Arctic and unfair traffic distribution in the neighborhood.
- At grade RR crossing at C Street contributes to the congestion.

Mix of traffic

- Concerned about industrial traffic mixing with local residential and through traffic. (3)
- Proximity of residential to industrial is a problem – these are not compatible uses.

East/West access - connectivity

- Need a better connection to New Seward and International Airport Way.
- The current east/west movement is very difficult (6)
- The city needs east/west arterials in order to make the transportation system work.
- Transit coordination – Arctic is one of the top five transit routes in the city (2)
- Any improved or new east/west connections help the emergency services response time.
- Any improved or new east/west connections help improve the school district transportation work more efficiently.
- When Arctic was closed for construction recently, it really illustrated the problem of trying to get out of the industrial areas.
- This project provides a logical linkage.
- The lack of connectivity makes it very difficult for the school bus system to work efficiently. The same bus needs to serve the elementary, middle, and high schools with 30 minutes in between when each of the schools start to get the kids to school on time. Because buses can't move through the area efficiently, we need to add buses – expensive.

Property impacts

- The most important need is to provide good access to the area and to minimize residential property impacts.
- **Safety** We've seen several accidents in this section of C Street in the project vicinity.
- Arctic only has a few intersections with traffic lights which make it difficult to make left turns and/or cross traffic.
- New fire station is planned at Tudor – emergency services need better access to the area.
- Intersection of Arctic and Dowling is dangerous.
- 64th and C is a high accident location. The Carrs distribution center is located on one side.
- At grade RR crossings mean that school buses need to stop at each one.
- The at-grade crossing at Arctic is difficult to get across, the geometry is poor. This project needs to resolve the Arctic crossing.
- The proposed improvements at the C street RR crossing will help.

Local Circulation

- The industrial areas need internal circulation issues resolved. We are limited in our ability to grow because the system is so bad.
- The at grade crossings for the railroad at Arctic and C need to be removed, at least the C street

crossing needs to be grade separated (5).

Ideas for alternatives

- Would like to see a frontage road from Raspberry Rd to International Airport Way along Minnesota. (6)
- Interested to know if the existing system can be upgraded without building a new roadway. This will need to be addressed in order to consider impacts to Tina Lake.
- Would like to the improvements done so that the road does not appear to be a major thoroughfare - give it a residential feel, make it pedestrian friendly.
- Would like to see smaller fixes to the system and where that gets us. (3) for example; frontage road, overpass at International Airport Way, Raspberry to Arctic connection.
- Build the road to the same standards as Tudor – two lanes, center turn lane.
- Rebuilt bridge over Campbell Creek needs to have abutments pulled back as far as possible.
- Arctic is a good example of nice street-scaping – have the Dowling extension look like that.
- 68th street seems like a straight shot, why not go around Briarwood?
- Need an interchange or at least an overpass at International Airport Way and New Seward. (4) One way streets are a problem for transit.

Question #4: What are other issues/concerns in the area that we need to be aware of?

Industrial/Commercial

- There are dust control issues currently along the unpaved section of Dowling.
- As long as the industrial traffic stays in industrial areas, noise and dust do not impact the residential areas.
- Currently in the unpaved section of Dowling along Chugach Electric there is no access to water/sewer, which limits the growth potential of the industrial area. Would like to better utilize the current property before buying new industrial land.
- The right of way for Dowling does not extend to Little Minnesota, the industrial users in this area have an informal agreement with Chugach Electric to use the road as a through road to get to International Airport Way.
- Quality Asphalt Products (QAP) is currently using the Raspberry Rd. extension through an agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage to access a job site at the airport.
- Industrial users will track material onto the new roadway, need to work through this issue.
- Narrow streets are a problem for trucks.
- Frontage roads are the next best thing for freight movement to overpasses and interchanges
- Need access to the airport for commercial/industrial users.
- May be economic development issues to help connect fish plant with airport.
- All railroad spurs are active and well used.
- Quality Asphalt Products and Wilder Construction need to use the main track to off load – railroad is adding a double track to allow industrial users to use the line, and move passenger trains through the area.

Residential

- 600 – 700 new homes will be built in the Sand Lake area over the next 5-7 years or sooner. The current transportation system can't handle what we have now.
- The 250 acres of residential development near the airport is poised for development – will put additional burdens on the transportation system. (Same development as above)
- The Sand Lake gravel pit residential development has been appealed in part because of traffic issues.
- Need to look at where people are working and where they are living. What are the

demographics for the residential in the project area? What are the projected demographics for the new Sand Lake development?

- Employment centers are too far from homes – can't walk or bike to work..
- Need buffers and transitional areas from higher density to lower.
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Air quality concerns in the residential areas, we need to get the traffic through the neighborhoods.
- Minimize traffic impacts to the residential area bordering Raspberry by allowing several access points into the neighborhood and not just one at Rovenna. We don't want to see traffic volumes increase dramatically in front of Campbell Elementary School.
- Campbell and Taku elementary school boundaries were determined in part because of the arterials in the area. These two schools are among those with the largest area to cover.
- Romig Middle School on Minnesota relies heavily on Arctic to transport kids – school starts at 8:15am – peak time – very difficult to get the bus through the project area.
- Concerned about increased traffic in the neighborhoods, need to tackle this head on.

Environmental

- Don't understand why Tina Lake is a concern, it is currently completely surrounded by industrial uses.
- A very high threshold needs to be met in order to issue a permit for a development that would impact a high-grade wetland. The burden is on the permit applicant to show there are no other reasonable alternatives, there is a demonstrated high need for the facility, and the facility has broad support.
- Pile structures are preferable to conventional construction techniques (fill.) If the road is elevated and/or the lake is completely spanned and the applicant uses innovative design to minimize impacts than it is more likely that a permit could be issued.
- Tina Lake is an "A" grade wetland demanding the highest level of protection (2)
- The Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan shows Tina Lake protected.
- A clear span bridge over Campbell Creek is O.K.
- Tina Lake needs to be protected as an open space/wetlands. The Corps of Engineers can regulate the surrounding development in response to complaints (none on the books at this time.)
- A local business was allowed to fill along one side of Tina Lake – this has caused drainage problems in the area that need to be resolved
- Improve air quality.
- Minimize impacts to Campbell Creek. Keep number of crossings to a minimum, wouldn't object to an additional crossing if necessary.
- If crossing Campbell Creek, maintain setbacks, clear span, cross at a location with little contiguous wetlands
- No known sensitive/endangered species in Tina Lake
- Coordinate with the city's Trails Plan.

Pedestrian and Transit

- Concerned about how this project will address pedestrian issues – this is not a pedestrian friendly city, especially in the winter.
- Need pedestrian and transit routes for east/west- walkways, not just sidewalks, but separated pathways like on 15th so that the plowed snow doesn't cover the walkway.
- Arctic Blvd is a primary transit corridor – a good transit corridor supports a mix of residential, retail, and offices.
- The transit corridors that are currently designated are not tailored to what is in place currently. Ensure the project is transit/pedestrian friendly.
- Increase transit opportunities.

- Better interface with public transit and school transportation. Difficult for kids at Polaris and ABC to walk to school.
- Pedestrian access to transit routes is critical.
- Diamond Center is a transit hub – the concept is to feed the hub with feeder buses in the neighborhoods.
- Need to provide bus service to major employers – seafood plant for example.
- Airport express service will start next year.
- Public transit is not an enemy! Need to factor in transit to all of the alternatives.

Related Projects

- Concerned about potential linkages to Bragaw project – against the Bragaw connection.
- Supportive of the Bragaw connection – important link for businesses.
- Ensure good connections to the airport. Current airport work will increase capacity and opportunity.
- Use the comprehensive plan for guidance (3)
- The Comprehensive Plan is a good plan, concerned about how it is being implemented. The strategies to implement don't match the goals in the plan.
- We have heard that funding has been identified to connect Raspberry to Arctic – the project team needs to follow up on this.
- "The school at New Seward (Polaris)– is difficult to access

Other

- Use existing right of way where possible.
- Need to know who the major employers are for the area and what the travel patterns are from the project area.
- The existing right of way was purchased using federal money, if a different alignment is developed, will the money need to be paid back?
- Understand the need for infrastructure.

Issues specific to an Agency/Organization

<i>Agency/Organization</i>	<i>Specific Issues</i>
Anchorage Fire Department	Goal is 90% of calls to be responded to in under 4 minutes – difficult to achieve this goal in the project area due to lack of east/west arterial. Currently looking at response time issues in the Arctic Blvd. area and where to site a future station.
Central Paving Products	Busiest operation season – May 1 through end of October. Run 24/7, 600 loads of material per day, 80 Rail cars daily. Currently developing a master plan for circulation on site.
Alaska Center for the Environment	Not “anti roads”, understand the need for this project. Supports the development of an east/west arterial like Dowling.
US Army Corps of Engineers	Permitting authority for Tina Lake impacts.
Chugach Electric	24/7 operation for service trucks. 10-15 line trucks, 300-

	400 employees. Customer access during work week. Brings in some material by rail. Don't move the transmission lines – too costly, offset the road from the section line. Plans for future additional lines through the corridor, second set of lines down RR corridor at Arctic. International Airport Way is a future transmission connection.
Anchorage Citizen's Coalition	Will be conducting independent modeling of 3 new east/west connections: Dowling, 68 th , and 92 nd .
Taku Campbell Community Council	Meets 2 nd Thursday of each month September – May @ Taku Elementary School. Subcommittee meetings are Saturday mornings at 8am.
Anchorage School District	3-tier system for moving buses through the area. Middle school, high school and special education routes are the most difficult with the current transportation system.
Alaska Railroad Corporation	Currently working on developing double tracks through the area. Passenger train ridership is increasing – now running six times per day through Anchorage. Will not support anymore at grade crossings – trying to eliminate what is currently in place.
People Mover	Public Transit Advisory Board meets monthly, good transit advocates. 3 rd Thursday of each month 5:30pm.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Responsible for providing information and comments on 404 permitting for EA and EIS work.

Question #5: What do you think the expectations are of those who share your concerns for how they will be involved in this process?

- Organize similar users together – we don't all need to be saying the same thing over and over.
- Police have different response time needs than Fire/EMS. Fire/EMS operate from a fixed position – Police operate from a mobile position.
- How does the EAST study (East Anchorage Study of Transportation) coordinate with this process? Participants in the EAST process need to be a part of this project.
- It was difficult to get the business community involved in the comp plan process, concerned it will be the same with this process.
- The processes take too long between steps. People lose interest and get burned out. (2)
- There is an economic development planning process currently underway – may be some connection to this process for the business community.
- Must involve/engage the community councils in the area, including adjacent councils.
- Concerned about DOT not listening – community councils have had recent experiences of this.
- Parks and Recreation Commission has an interest in anything that impacts Campbell Creek.

Question #6: What process suggestions do you have for us – what works well for this area (information, meeting locations, kinds of meetings, etc.)

Working with agencies

- Possibly pull together an agency working group – hold a kick off meeting for the agencies.
- Come to the agencies at key points in the process, sit down with us in similar, informal one-on-one meeting format.
- Don't rely on AMATS for all agency coordination issues – it is too politicized.
- Work with agencies directly – don't have an agency committee.
- Use AMATS as a briefing forum – they meet once a month. Go to them after the interviews and let them know of the challenges opportunities as a result of the interviews. (3)
- The agencies don't want to help solve the problems, they just want to point out the problems. It would be easier if the agencies were more on board.
- Scoping needs to be more inclusive. Send information out in the mail
- Agencies will want to write a formal scoping letter at some point in the process.
- Not active in AMATS.
- Come to the Greater Anchorage Area Utility Association meetings – 2nd Tuesday of the month at Chugach at 9:30am. Bill Stickler and Rory Reddick from DOT participate already.
- Involve heavily at the alternatives development stage.
- Like having no committee.

Working with the residential community

- Possibly organize the project area into quadrants and work with people within their quadrant.
- Important for the industrial and residential folks work together, we don't want competing alternatives.
- Work through the community council structure (6)
- Hold meetings in different areas, meetings for directly impacted neighbors and meetings for through travelers –need different kinds of information.
- Use the lobby of Chugach electric to advertise meetings, have informational displays set up (heavy foot traffic daily for customers.)
- Hold meetings at local schools.
- Show how transit is integrated up front – “it is a given that bike, pedestrian, transit connections are a part of each alternative” – this will resolve many concerns before they come up.

Coordinating with other processes

- Use the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element as a guide – use the steps outlined in the plan.
- Need a “West area study of transportation” like the EAST in order to look at the bigger picture. A lot of our current problems have come from not looking at the big picture.
- Need to get input from the EAST committee – connect with them in some way.
- Coordinate with related business of the Taku Campbell Community Council

Working with the business community

- Develop a group of industrial users (3.)
- Perhaps the chamber already has such a group?
- Have the Chamber be the conduit for the business community
- Would like to see the business community participate in community council meetings.

Working with the media

- Develop good rapport with the media.
- Contact specific reporters directly prior to the meetings.

Other

- The process seems good but the administration tends to do what they want no matter what our input.
- Don't take too long! (2)
- Encourage timeliness – 2 years to get to a 90% answer isn't too bad, make sure it isn't 2 years to get to a 20% answer!
- This is a good first step in the process, keep it up.
- Coordinate with TransitWorks – grassroots advocacy group.
- O.K. to send informational flyers out with kids at the schools.
- Gets lost in these processes! They take years to complete – easy to lose track.

Question #7: How would you like to be involved in this process? Would you be willing to participate on an advisory committee, for example?

# of people interviewed who would like to be:		
Very Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved
xxxxxx xxxxxx	xxxxxxx	

How people would like to participate					
Industrial Group	Community Council	AMATS	Public Meetings	Individual or group Agency meetings	Other
xxxxx	xxxxxxxx	xxx	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxxx	x EAST Cmtee x Utility Association

Question #8: Who else do we need to meet with at this time and/or involve early in the process

- DEC – may be the one who regulates water quality for Tina Lake
- EPA – has oversight of clean water act
- NMFS – possibly contact regarding Campbell Creek crossing.
- Dennis Stone – Corps of Engineers
- Anchorage Waterways Council Holly Kent (907) 277-9287
- Alaska Conservation Foundation www.akcf.org
- Ann Brooks – EAST study coordinator
- Frank Dillon – Alaska Trucking Association (4)
- Tim Potter – Dowl Engineers – working with the Town Center issues
- Conservation Alliance
- Look at EAST – online survey of travel patterns
- John Spring – Household Travel Survey – Municipality of Anchorage (2)
- Mark Butler, Public Involvement for the airport.

- Mary Ellen Tuttle, airport planner
- Tom Nelson, Director of fiscal planning
- Sheila Selkregg, City Planning Director when the comprehensive plan was developed.
- The airport – they want to be 8 minutes away from everything.
- Norman Rokeburg – state legislator
- Howard Holton or Jim Lampson (907) 343-8109
- Sand Lake Community Council (4)
- Campbell Creek Community Council
- Wells Fargo Bank
-
- Jerry Weaver – Industrial Reserves (comp plan planning)
- Heather Deane, (907) 271-3490
- Thede Tobish, MOA (907) 343-4261
- EPA
- Curt Anderson, President of Greater Anchorage Area Utility Association
- NSTAR - Natural Gas – major lines through the area.
- GCI/ASC – the utility community
- Nathan Concrete Cutting
- Simpson Steel
- Walt Parker (907) 333-5189 (past commissioner of highways) wbparker@gcinet
- Dan Burden – Florida planner – pedestrian/main street expert.
- Lutheran School (Beautiful Savior?) Dennis Moynier
- Ed Zarong – Pacific Towers Properties – Grace Community Church.
- Bruce Carr, strategic planner (907) 265-2465
- Laurie Schanke – MOA trails coordinator
- Elaine Janiak – Transitworks founder.

Question #9: What else do we need to be aware of?

- Tina Lake was classified by the Municipality of Anchorage work, not the Corps of Engineers.
- Be aware of the debit/credit system that has been established for wetland mitigation. This project may be able to use that system. (2)
- Try to do the merged process – the Corps is supportive of that.
- This is a small town, it will never be big – don't use big city planning here.
- There are only a few major employers, need to involve them and ask them where their employees come from.
- Need to look at how levels of service are determined – we need to live with a certain level of congestion some of the time – we can't always build or way out.
- Appreciate the one-on-one meeting format up front (3)
- How will roundabouts work with how the area develops?
- Abbott and Diamond have signage issues.
- What is the federal funding mix?