



Lucus Road to Big Lake Cutoff
State Project IM-0A4-1(23)/57178

Scoping Summary Report

Prepared for:

**State of Alaska
Department of Transportation
and Public Facilities
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Acronyms

ADFG	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
ADOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
ARRC	Alaska Railroad Corporation
ATV	All terrain vehicle
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
MSB	Matanuska Susitna Borough
MP	Mile Post
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
OHMP	Office of Habitat Management and Permitting
OPMP	Office of Project Management and Permitting
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1 Introduction

1.1 General

The Parks Highway, MP 44-52.3, Lucus Road to Big Lake Cutoff project will identify capacity, traffic and safety upgrades to the existing road. ADOT&PF retained the services of a team lead by Hattenburg Dilley & Linnell to perform all preliminary engineering and environmental services necessary to select a preferred alternative, obtain approval for an environmental document in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and acquire all environmental permits and clearances.

1.2 Scoping Overview

Scoping is the process through which project team members listen to ideas and concerns of people and agencies affected by the project and identify a range of alternatives and issues needing further study. Scoping ensures that alternatives and future studies associated with the project reflect community and agency input. The purpose of the Scoping Summary Report is to document the results of the public and agency scoping conducted from October 2004 through January 2005.



Figure 1. Project Area Map

Scoping is the first stage in the development of a comprehensive environmental document that meets the statutory requirements for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The purpose of scoping is to:

- Provide early notification to local, state and federal agencies and the public of the NEPA process being undertaken by ADOT&PF.
- Provide an opportunity for agencies and the public to discuss the project with ADOT&PF staff.
- Provide forums and other means to gather input, ideas, questions and concerns.
- Ensure early data gathering from coordinating agencies and entities (e.g., utilities).
- Engage stakeholders in identifying alternatives.

1.3 Scoping Methods

The following methods were used to inform the public and the local, state, and federal resource agencies about the project, its objectives, the current status and to solicit input and comments on the project:

- Public scoping meeting
- Notice of Intent published in local and regional newspapers
- Project web site
- Project email address
- Postcard announcement
- Stakeholder interviews
- Agency scoping meeting

- Agency one-on-one meetings
- Community Council meetings

A chronology of scoping events is provided in Table 1.

1.3.1 Mailing List of Potentially Affected Interests

Two mailing lists have been developed for the project. One is a general public list that includes property owners near the project area and interested individuals who have signed in at public meetings or have requested to be on the list. Also included are businesses located on the Parks Highway in the project area, Community Councils and other interested local organizations. The Agency/Officials list contains local, state, and federal resource agencies and officials who might have an interest or concern, environmental or otherwise, in the project. Copies of the mailing lists are included in Appendix A.

1.3.2 Advertisements

A Notice of Intent to Begin Engineering and Environmental Studies and Notice of Wetlands Involvement E.O. 11990 and Public Meeting was published on the following dates in the *Frontiersman*, a newspaper local to the project area. The advertisement also noted the date of the public scoping meeting.

- October 19, 2004
- October 26, 2004

And in the *Anchorage Daily News*, the regional newspaper:

- October 21, 2004
- October 27, 2004

The meeting was also advertised in Public Service Announcements (PSAs) read on three Mat-Su Valley radio stations: KDBZ, KQEZ, and KRPM. Copies of the public meeting advertisements and public service announcements are included in Appendix B.

1.3.3 Project Website

A project web site (www.parkshighway44-52.info) was developed to provide information (schedule, project team, maps, photos, etc.) and as a vehicle for public input. Copies of the pages on the web site are included in Appendix C.

1.3.4 Project Email Address

For persons wishing to communicate about the project via email, an email address (comments@brooksandassociates.info) was provided. This address was included in newspaper advertisements, on the web site, and in handouts available at public meetings.

1.3.5 Project Newsletters, Postcard, Informational Handout and Comment Forms

A postcard was mailed out to everyone on the project mailing list. The card announced the beginning of project scoping, showed location and contacts, and invited recipients to the public meeting on October 28. The postcard content was also reproduced on a single-page flyer that was hand-delivered to many businesses on the affected length of the highway within the week before the meeting.

A project comment form was developed for the public meeting and Meadow Lakes Community Council meeting with the return address information included on the back. The forms were used to help solicit public comments and offer another opportunity for inclusion on the mailing list. Comment forms were also available on the project web site for electronic submittal.

A handout was developed for the Meadow Lakes Community Council meeting on December 8, 2004 describing the project, outlining the need and process for input, and listing contacts for the project team. Copies of the postcard, and flyer are included in Appendix D. Meeting materials, handouts, agenda, and comment forms are included in Appendix E.

2 Public Scoping

2.1 Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder interviews sought to capture input from a broad cross-section of potentially affected interests. The project team brainstormed the original list, sought and received input from the ADOT&PF and finally, received other suggestions as the stakeholder interviews were completed. Questions were developed with team and client input. Additional questions were added based on the conversations with the stakeholders. The interviews took place over the phone and in person depending upon the stakeholders availability. In all, 26 stakeholder interviews were conducted with the individuals listed below. The interview input is summarized in the bulleted lists of public scoping comment contained in the documentation of comments section below and separately in a memorandum contained in Appendix F.

Murph O'Brien, Planning Director, Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Ron Swanson, Director of Community Development, Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Archie Giddings, Public Works Department, City of Wasilla

Sandra Garley, Planning Department, City of Wasilla

Kurt Devon, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities—Palmer

Louis Friend III, MASCOT, Mat-Su Transit

Kathy Wells, Friends of Mat-Su

Bill O'Hara, Big Lake Community Council

Betty Vehrs, Meadow Lakes Representative, Mat-Su Assembly

Mary Kvalheim, District 4 Representative, Mat-Su Assembly

Darland Forshen, Public Works Director, City of Houston

Paddy Coan, Wasilla Chamber of Commerce

Marguerite Bogert, Big Lake Chamber of Commerce

Angela Rosas, Houston Chamber of Commerce

Jody Simpson, Big Lake Representative, Mat-Su Assembly

Rob Wells, Mat-Su Resource, Conservation, & Development Council, Inc.

Steve Totten, Service Oil & Gas, Houston

Robert Hall, Gorilla Fireworks, Houston

Mike Allen, Gator Glass Company, Wasilla

Christa Bailey, Bailey's Furniture, Wasilla

R. Brooke Clements, Hartley Motors, Palmer

Ben Cruz & Jess Marcott, Hartley Motors, Palmer

Tom Dowell, Sno-Trac Snowmachine Sales & Repair

Bruce Carr, Strategic Planning, Alaska Railroad Corporation

Gary, Minn-Alaska Transport

Art Reed, Sourdough Express, Inc.

2.2 Public Scoping Meeting/Workshop

A public scoping meeting and workshop was held on October 28, 2005 in the Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Center meeting rooms on South Mack Drive, Wasilla. The project team set up multiple meetings throughout the day to reach special stakeholders including: local and regional planners, emergency services personnel, utility companies, and regulatory agencies. Each group was able to discuss their specific interests with the project team and provide input. This section will address comments received from all stakeholders except the regulatory agencies whose input will be discussed in Section 4 below.

The stakeholder groups meeting with the project team throughout the day were notified of the meeting via email and telephone. The public was informed of the meeting through the project web site, ads in the *Anchorage Daily News* and *Frontiersman* newspapers, postcard mailing to nearby residents, businesses, and officials, flyers delivered to corridor businesses, and a public service announcement on radio stations KDBZ, KQEZ, and KRPM. Approximately 88 members of the public attended the meeting.

Meeting format was part open house and part workshop. The public arrived, signed in and reviewed available project graphics. The graphics consisted of an aerial photo of the project corridor with overlays showing wetlands and locations of high, medium and low contaminated sites identified in the Phase I site assessment. The public was encouraged to annotate the aerial photo using their local knowledge, and call out specific areas of wildlife or environmental concern, planned land use, safety concerns, etc.

After a brief introduction and presentation from the project team, participants seated around workshop tables were asked to discuss various topics together and produce comments/suggestions on cards to be handed to the front of the room for posting on a “sticky wall” under various headings. The results of this exercise are summarized in a table in Appendix G. All the scoping comments received from comment sheets, email and telephone calls are also included in Appendix G.

Table 1: Public Involvement/Scoping Chronology

Date	Public Involvement Tool/Location	Purpose
Ongoing	Internet site www.parkshighway44-52.info	Provide vehicle for public/team communications.
10/00/2004	Posters (8 1/2 x 11): sent or posted at various local businesses	Posters provide notice of public meeting.
10/12/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Louis Friend III, MASCOT, Mat-Su Transit	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/13/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Kathy Wells, Friends of Mat-Su	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/14/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Bill O'Hara, Big Lake Community Council	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/14/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Betty Vehrs, Mat-Su Assembly Representative, Meadow Lakes Area	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/14/2004	Postcard Mailer to Mailing Service	Notice of Public Meeting
10/15/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Paddy Coan, Wasilla Chamber of Commerce	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/15/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Marguerite Bogert, Big Lake Chamber of Commerce	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/15/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Angela Rosas, Houston Chamber of Commerce	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/18/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Kurt Devon, ADOT&PF Maintenance—Palmer	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/18/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Mary Kvalheim, MSB Borrow Assembly, District 4	Solicit input on from stakeholder
10/19/2004	Display Advertisement in the <i>Frontiersman</i>	Notice of Public Meeting
10/20/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Darland Forshen, Director, Public Works, City of Houston	Solicit input on from stakeholder
10/20/2004	Stakeholder Interview: William Brown, President, Meadow Lakes Community Council	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/21/2004	Display Advertisement in the <i>Anchorage Daily News</i>	Notice of Public Meeting
10/22/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Sandra Garley, Planning, City of Wasilla	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/25/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Bruce Carr, ARRC	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/25/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Rob Wells, Mat-Su Resource, Conservation & Development Council, Inc.	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/26/2004	Secured radio airtime to run public service announcement for public meeting on KDBZ, KQEZ and KRPM.	Notice of Public Meeting
10/26/2004	Display Advertisement in the <i>Frontiersman</i>	Notice of Public Meeting
10/26/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Jody Simpson, Mat-Su Borough Assembly, Big Lake District	Solicit input from stakeholder
10/27/2004	Display Advertisement in the <i>Anchorage Daily News</i>	Notice of Public Meeting

10/28/2004	Public Meeting in Wasilla (7 pm to 9:00 pm)	
11/30/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Steve Totten, Service Oil and Gas	Solicit input from stakeholder
12/3/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Robert Hall, Gorilla Fireworks	Solicit input from stakeholder
12/3/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Mike Allen, Gator Glass	Solicit input from stakeholder
12/3/2004	Stakeholder Interview: Christa Bailey, Bailey's Furniture	Solicit input from stakeholder
12/3/2004	Stakeholder Interview: R. Brooke Clements, Hartley Motors	Solicit input from stakeholder
12/08/2004	Meeting w/ Agnew::Beck regarding Meadow Lakes Comprehensive Planning	Solicit input, exchange input on projects.
12/08/2004	Meadow Lakes Community Council presentation	Solicit input from stakeholder group.
01/10/2005	Stakeholder Interview: Ben Cruz & Jess Marcott, Hartley Motors Snowmachine Dealership, Palmer	Solicit input from stakeholder
01/10/2005	Stakeholder Interview: Tom Dowell, Sno-Trac Snowmachine Sales and Repair	Solicit input from stakeholder
01/19/2005	Stakeholder interview: Gary Dumdei, Owner, Min-Alaska Transport	Solicit input from stakeholder
01/19/2005	Stakeholder interview: Art Reed, Sourdough Express	Solicit input from stakeholder

3 Documentation of Comments

The following paragraphs document the public comment received from the various stakeholder groups and the public on October 28, 2004.

3.1 Purpose and Need

- Rapid growth and development in the area is creating congestion on the highway
- Congestion is likely to get even worse as development advances in future years
- Because the existing highway is the only through corridor in the area, greater capacity is needed for emergency evacuation capability and to allow detours around road blockages.
- Important corridor for emergency access

3.2 Road Design

- More lanes are needed
- 4 lanes are needed
- Center turn lane is needed
- Frontage roads are needed
- No frontage roads
- Turn pockets would be helpful
- There should be controlled and limited access to the highway
- Interchanges are needed
- Overpass or grade separation at Pittman & Church
- Pullouts for buses, safety, scenic views, snowmobile parking
- Overpass or signal at Big Lake Road
- Improvement to Pittman intersection
- Improvement to Vine intersection
- Signal at Stanley Road and the Parks Highway
- Consider turning lane at McAllister (MP 45.1)
- Wide shoulders support emergency vehicles/situations
- Merging lanes for entering traffic
- Improve illumination at intersections and known moose crossing areas

3.3 Pedestrian and Trail Design

- Accommodate both pedestrians and off-road vehicles (snowmobiles and ATV's)
- Separate pathways for motorized and nonmotorized users
- Connections to Wasilla - Big Lake Trail
- Accidents occur at off-road vehicle crossing locations
- Off-road use at Pittman Intersection
- Keep trails well away from highway

3.4 Right of Way

- Property impacts of road widening
- Business impacts

3.5 Favor the Project

- Need greater capacity because of rapid development in the area
- Turning movements on and off highway would be safer
- Improve emergency access and response time
- Improve emergency evacuation capacity, as seen in recent Miller's Reach wildfire
- Add lighting to prevent moose collisions

- Improve access to businesses
- Need improvements as soon as possible

3.6 Against the Project

- None

3.7 Wildlife or Environmental Issues Identified by the Public

- Highway corridor crosses wildlife migration routes
- Moose collisions are a concern; improved lighting, roadside clearance would improve this
- Eagles, loons, and other birds have nests and habitat near the highway
- Wetlands in many areas near the highway
- All streams and lakes in the area should be protected
- Roadside landscaping is important
- Landscape with natural vegetation
- Wetland areas near highway at MP 47 and MP 52

3.8 Other Public Comments

- Improvements are needed now – speed up planning and construction as much as possible
- Increase roadside lighting
- Noise control is needed
- Improve road and pathway maintenance
- Maintain good business access
- Speeding is a problem
- Landscape with natural vegetation

4 Agency Scoping

The project outreach program extended to a number of agencies as described in Section 2. Meetings and other communication with regulatory agencies are addressed in this section.

4.1 Agency Scoping Meeting

An agency scoping meeting was held on October 28, 2004 in the Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Center meeting rooms on South Mack Drive, Wasilla. Regulatory agency representatives were notified of the meeting via telephone. After a brief introduction and presentation from the project team, agency participants were asked to discuss various topics of interest or issues of concern related to the Parks Highway, MP 44-52 project. Agencies represented in the meeting included Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). An attendees list is included in Appendix H.

4.2 Agency Scoping Letter

As a follow-up to the agency scoping meeting, letters were prepared and sent under ADOT&PF letterhead to a number of agencies. The letter provided a brief description of the agency scoping meeting, a discussion of project activities to date, and a summary of preliminary research. In addition, the letter requested comments or questions about the project, providing a 30-day response period. A sample letter with mailing list is included in Appendix H.

As a result of the agency scoping letter, comments were received from three additional agencies not represented in the scoping meeting – National Marine Fisheries Service (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries), Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), Office of Project Management and Permitting (OPMP), and ADNR Office of Habitat Management and Permitting (OHMP). Copies of correspondence are included in Appendix I.

4.3 Documentation of Agency Comments

The following topics or issues of concern reflect input received during the agency scoping process, beginning with the meeting held October 28, 2004 and continuing through the comment period and follow-on communications.

4.3.1 Fisheries

- A contact was provided for future consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service regarding Essential Fish Habitat
- Meadow Creek is used by sockeye salmon for spawning and migration
- Blodgett Lake is used by sockeye salmon for rearing
- A Fish Habitat Permit will be required for work below ordinary high water of Little Meadow Creek and an unnamed stream at MP 47.5
- The Office of Habitat Management and Permitting would like to see stream simulation used in design of a new crossing for Little Meadow Creek
- A second unnamed stream crosses the Park Highway near MP 46.8. This stream does not support anadromous fish and it is unknown if the stream supports resident fish.

4.3.2 Moose

- Moose cross the Parks Highway in three corridors: MP 47-48.5, MP 49-50 and MP 51-52.5
- Moose-vehicle collisions are of concern

4.3.3 Waterfowl

- Look into presence of nesting loons in nearby waterbodies

- The lakes in the project area are not very productive for nesting waterfowl (ducks and geese), in part because they have little emergent vegetation along the shorelines
- Waterfowl nesting habitat does occur in the Little Meadow Creek drainage

4.3.4 Coastal Management

- A Coastal Project Questionnaire will be required when the project is designed to the point when permit applications are ready to submit
- The District Coastal Coordinator contact for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) was provided
- The project occurs within the coastal zone but not within a regulated flood plain

4.3.5 Other Agency Comments

- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff would like to review the project cultural resources survey
- Continue coordination with MSB Planning and Public Works, along with the District Coastal Coordinator, to address issues of concern within the project right-of-way (including flood hazards and access)
- Review borough ordinances for other permits and clearances required

4.3.6 Agencies Not Participating in Initial Project Scoping

- The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation is awaiting an agreement with ADOT&PF to work on scoping; otherwise will not get involved until permitting or related coordinated agency efforts are underway
- The Corps of Engineers is waiting for project impacts to be defined before commenting
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has no staff assigned to the area of the state so will not be participating in the project.

Appendix A

Public and Agency Mailing Lists

Appendix B

Public Meeting Advertisements

Appendix C

Website Content as of January 27, 2005

Appendix D

Newsletters and Postcards

Appendix E
Public Meeting Materials

Appendix F
Public Scoping Comment

Appendix G

Stakeholder Interview Summary

Appendix H

**Agency Scoping Meeting Attendee List,
Agency Scoping Letter & Mailing List**

Appendix I
Agency Response to Scoping