

## Trip Report Copper Valley Area Meetings

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

**Reporter:** Suzanne Taylor, ASCG

**Date/Time:** 01/11/07 7:00 PM

**Location:** Glennallen

**Present:** See attached sign-in sheet

### Meeting Highlights:

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce at the Tonsina River Lodge near Glennallen to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Those present, did not notice any reduction in vehicular traffic due to rising fuel costs; however, they agreed that more rental vehicles seem to be coming through and many are sharing RVs between more than one family or couples.

One member felt that cleaning the toilets in the rest areas was not DOT's role, that the contractors hired to maintain rest areas are overpaid and not doing the job well. He felt that BLM-managed rest areas are better maintained. He thought that rest areas could be run as a concession, as DNR does with campgrounds.

It was pointed out that the Dalton Highway was opened up to traffic/RVs without any provision for sanitary dump stations.

Members suggested we call Tracy in February at the CVCC to get tourism numbers. 822-5555.

Interior Alaska Transportation Plan					
Glennallen, Alaska					
Sign In Sheet				January 11, 2007	
Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail	
Helen Ulrich	CVCC	PO Box 211, Golconda AK 99588			
Nell Ulrich	CVCC				
Kimberlin, Dale					
Doreen Humbertin	K.W. Taxi	HC 60 Box 221		Kimberlins water taxi, AK, NEZ	
Marissa DeWitt	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 333			
Kathleen A Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 227H		Copper Center, AK 99573	
C.D. Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	" " " "		" " " "	
Tracy Beaudoin	CV Chamber	PO Box 469, Glennallen, AK	99588	822-5555 chamber@cvinternet.net	
Brynn Heintz		PO Box 412, Glennallen, AK	99588	822-5461	
Kimie Heinz		PO Box 12, Glennallen, AK	99588	822-5051	
KARL HEINZ	FNBA	Box 85, Glennallen, AK	99588	Kheinz@FNBAAlaska.com	
Todd Roeske	Mc Drum Lutheran Church	PO Box 175, Copper Lake, AK	99573	todd.roeske@juno.com	
Kim Roeske	"	" " " "	"	taddrroeske@juno.com	

## **Interviews:**

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **BLM Glennallen Field Office** representatives to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and the BLM's concerns about transportation issues in the study area. The following BLM staff members were present:

- Bruce Rogers, BLM Land Use Planner
- Will Runnoe, BLM Bureau Chief/Visitor Services
- Marnie Graham, BLM Outreach Specialist
- Brenda Becker, BLM Realty Specialist

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Bruce said that the military needs six additional communication sites on BLM land to support their Red Flag training operations.

Will said that user numbers have greatly increased due to Princess's buses between Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Denali National Park. Most users, including BLM, would like to see the Denali Highway remain gravel. Restroom facilities may be needed at turnouts to reduce inappropriate disposal of human waste.

Bruce provided a copy of the BLM's East Alaska Plan and referenced information therein on the Denali Highway.

They mentioned the possible designation "Back Country Byway". They thought that the possibility of roadside improvements could be a selling point for Scenic Byway designation, which has been opposed in the past by residents.

Marnie said that the high volume of trucks using the highways, such as fuel and grocery trucks, has precipitated several accidents. The annual bicycle race from Sheep Mountain to Valdez may also produce conflicts as there is a large number of RVs on the road during the summer. Some areas on the Richardson Highway have little or no shoulders and, in one instance near Miers Lake, a truck's tire went off the edge and the truck flipped. Speed may have also been a factor.

Local farmers also use the roads to transport goods to market.

A bike path and turning lanes through Glennallen would be beneficial.

Additional signage would be good.

They believe that tourist numbers have remained on a steady upward trend, although more are traveling on bus tours rather than by RV due to higher fuel costs.

Nevada Star has lease on the mineral development at Tangle Lakes; however, their sub pulled out and no development is currently underway. There is an archeological development at Tangle Lakes as well (see brochure).

Recreational use is a major issue along the highways, especially weekend use. Roads are used year-round to access areas for fishing, snow machining, hunting, RVing, and boating. More turnouts are needed. Issues of waste disposal exist, for example at the Gulkana River Bridge. The Klutina River Bridge needs better access.

Villages are concerned about trespassers. Turnouts at trailheads are not monitored and can be unsanitary.

National Park Service has Gateway Funding which should be looked into. Tourism classes were conducted to educate people on dealing well with the public. "Branding" was explored. Suggested that we talk with Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent.

Others to talk to: John Downes, ARDOR, at the Tazlina Trading Post.

Arlene Rosencrantz, USDA NRCS RCND, at Mile 93.3, past Grizzly Pizza. 822-5111.

On Friday, January 12, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **ARDOR director John Downes** to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

John provided a copy of the 1993 CEDS.

He reported that a recent (2005) tourist survey indicated a need for more informational road signs.

John indicated that tourism in the area is still increasing. He said that Princess contributes \$450,000-500,000 annually to local businesses through day trips, etc. More tourists seem to be bussing in rather than driving due to gas costs. Copper Valley is getting greater numbers of tourists because Denali NP is becoming overcrowded. The Copper Valley Princess has 87 rooms now but is designed to be expanded to as many as 300. The most immediate expansion is expected to be by about 30 rooms.

About \$2.5 million was spent on McCarthy Road improvements. Unfortunately, much was lost in flooding in 2006. There were 10 or 11 thousand visitors to McCarthy last year. About 35,000 signed in at the Copper Center Visitor Center. John believes that residents, the Park Service, and the legislature all want the McCarthy Road improved; so, now would be a good time to act.

John suggested that we also speak with:

- Suzanne at Prince William Sound Community College.
- Arlene Diltz Jackson at the CRNA 822-5241
- Arlene Rosencranz at DNR RCND

He suggested public information be disseminated through Mark at the paper, KNBQ Wasilla, and the Valdez radio station.

Suzanne and Nicole also stopped in at the **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve headquarters** in Glennallen. They spoke to Marshall Neeck the Chief Ranger, who promised to pass along information about the plan to Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent, and Vicki Snitzler, Park Planner.

## Meeting Report

**Project:** Interior AK Transportation Plan  
**Date:** 10/19/06

**Reporter:** Nicole McCullough  
**Location:** Healy

---

**Presenters:** Dave Sanches, DOT&PF, Nicole McCullough, ASCG

### **Attendance:**

Bernice Sheldon, Cantwell  
James McNight, Cantwell  
Armeda A. Bulard, Cantwell  
Dave Talerica, Mayor, Denali Borough  
Scott Allen, Denali Borough

### **Meeting Summary:**

*Communication.* This summer, the overpass project in Cantwell required gravel and the residents were caught unaware when the contractor started excavating gravel from a pit, formerly a garbage dump that bordered a subdivision in Cantwell. The gravel operation lasted 24 hours a day and caused dust and noise and was unsightly. Residents felt that other gravel pits away from residential areas could have been used. They also felt strongly that DOT&PF should have talked to them about the project beforehand.

Residents stated that if DOT&PF informed locals about the project, they might have been able to coordinate other local construction projects with the roads contractor.

The state has a government to government policy which says that the state should coordinate with local governments.

The Stampede Road project is another road project that had poor public involvement.

The plan could have a recommendation for policies regarding DOT&PF communication. Cantwell wants to be involved.

*New Roads.* Before building new roads, existing roads should be improved.

*Stampede Road.* The bill that contained the Stampede Road project also contained the Shaw Creek Bridge project and the North Pole flood control project. Money between these projects could be adjusted. To get the money assigned to another project, such as Parks Highway improvements, it would have to be reviewed and approved by the legislature which could be a lengthy process.

*Resource Development.* Usibelli is investigating gas resources but coal methane is more likely. Steve Deaton at Usibelli is the best person to call to discuss.

Resources belong to Alaskans. Taxes from mineral and gas production could go into subsidizing Alaskan's gas or heating oil. The all-Alaskan gas line would have more benefits for Alaskans.

*Tourism.* Tourism continues to grow every year. Last summer was no exception. Several hotels added rooms including 100 more rooms at the Princess Hotel, 60 rooms at Grizzly Bear and 100 rooms at Holland America Hotel.

*Turn lanes.* There are five areas along the Parks Highway that need turn lanes:

- Anderson
- Stampede Road
- Denali Park
- McKinley Village
- Cantwell

*Gravel to Pavement.* The gravel pavement project for Cantwell, funded by Denali Commission, is awaiting completion of the MOA between the state and Denali Commission.

Healy  
Oct 19, 2006

Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

Sign In

Bernice Sheldon	P.O. Box 154 Cantwell, AK 99729
Janae McHugh	P.O. Box 9 CANTWELL AK 99729
Armeda C. Bullard	P.O. Box 57 Cantwell, AK 99729
Amenda Nyberg	Denali Borough
Dave Talerico	Denali Borough
Scott Allen	Denali Borough

## Meeting Report

**Project:** Interior AK Transportation Plan

**Reporter:** Nicole McCullough

**Date:** 10/19/06

**Location:** Nenana

---

**Presenters:** Dave Sanches, DOT&PF, Nicole McCullough, ASCG

### Attendance:

Edna Hancock, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Nenana

Willie Lord, Jason, Council Member, Nenana Native Council

Jason P. Mayrand, Mayor, City of Nenana

George Albert, Nenana

Valerie Olin, Nenana

Nita Marks, Council Member, Native Village of Nenana

Theresa Clark, Toghothele Corporation, Nenana

### Meeting Summary:

*Multi-modal Access.* “We are the transportation hub for Interior Alaska. We have all five transportation modes” - Edna Hancock. We have roads, railroad, highways, aviation and river transportation.

*Tourism.* Tourism is up again from last year. For the past three years, the cultural center has been promoted. This year they saw a great increase in sales.

*Resource Access.* It is important to consider Nenana Basin when discussing resource development in the Interior. The road to Totchakat would access the Nenana Basin for potential gas or minerals as well as agriculture lands. The last estimate for this route was \$72 million. Andax went into this area and did seismic studies in 2001-2002.

*Nenana Regional Landfill.* There was discussion about a regional landfill in Nenana. The Denali Commission is looking at this.

*Bridges.* There is a need to widen the bridges north and south of Nenana. The right of way in Nenana is only 60 feet, instead of 200 feet which is more common.

*Nenana Railroad Bypass.* The Parks Highway Study recommended a bypass around Nenana to avoid the circuitous route. If this were done the railroad would save seven minutes.

*Dust Control.* Dust control is needed on the roads in Nenana.

*Backhaul.* There is a backhaul program for eliminating metals and other waste in the villages along the river system. The material is transported to Nenana, crushed and transported to Anchorage via the Railroad. The Intertribal Watershed Council is concerned about potential pollution along the river system.

*Dock.* The city is applying for improvements including dock upgrades. There are 40 villages that are served from Nenana. The best person to talk to about the Crowley operation in Nenana is Endil Moore.

*Nenana Totchakat Access Road.* The Tribe applied to Denali Commission for Nenana Totchakat Road funding last year. The road accesses off of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The State and the City of Nenana have about \$50,000 (total) to do a feasibility study for the route which includes updating the cost estimate. The City will manage the project.

*Parks Highway Weight Limits.* There are discussions about removing the weight limits along the Parks Highway. The Truckers' Association is supporting the removal. They are unable to bring full loads which impacts the amount of freight they bring into Nenana for the barge.

*Aviation.* There is an agreement with the military about flying around Nenana during sensitive subsistence times.

*Emergency Evacuation.* There is limited access in and out of Nenana which is a concern when there is an emergency.

## Interior Alaska Transportation Plan – Public Meeting

### Nenana, Alaska

#### Sign In Sheet

October 19, 2006, 11:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail
Jason Doyon		Nenana 99760	907-832-5452	moor@...com
Edna Hancock	Nenana Native Council		(907) 832-5461	edna_hancock@...com
Willie Lord	T.C.C.C.	Nenana 99760	(907) 322-5220	@hotmail.com
Jason P. Magraw	City of Nenana	P.O. Box 70 Nenana 99760	832-5501	nenana1@cityofnenana.com
George Albert	Nenana Native	POB 458	(907) 460-7134	
Valerie Olin	nenana	GenDel Nenana	460-7718	valerie-olin59@yahoo.com
Nita Marks	Nenana Native Council	P.O. Box 369 Nenana, AK	907-832-5461 x225	
Theresa Clark	Teghotthele Corp	PO Box 249 Nenana AK 99760		clark-theresa@hotmail.com

## Meeting Report

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

**Reporter:** Nicole McCullough

**Date:** December 13-14, 2006

**Location:** Fairbanks

**Purpose:** To conduct an Open House/Public Meeting and interview agency staff from Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys in Fairbanks. Dave Sanches, project manager, and consultant Nicole McCullough, ASCG Incorporated, provided background about the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan process, collected information about other plans, and gathered additional contact information.

**Open House/Public Meeting:** The Open House was held on December 13, 2006 at the Noel Wien Library from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. At the Open House, there were displays regarding the study area, issues, and the schedule. Newsletters, study area maps, and comment sheets were provided to attendees. In addition to Dave Sanches, several other staff from DOT&PF attended the meeting including Jerry Rafson, Chief of Planning and Support Services; Howard Thies, Acting Regional Director; Donna Gardino, Regional Transportation Planner; Emily Bratcher, Planner; and also Bill Gryder, ASCG Incorporated. They assisted in answering public questions and describing the project purpose, schedule, and how people can get involved. Thirteen others from the public and agencies attended the meeting (see attached sign-in sheet).

Following are comments made from those that attended the Open House.

### Tourism

- Members of the Visitor's Industry are very interested in the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan, particularly those that offer tours along Interior roads, such as Princess Tours, Holland America, and the smaller highway tour operators.
- High gas prices resulted in reduced traffic from those that drive to Alaska from outside, however there was a great increase in those that fly to Anchorage or sometimes Fairbanks and rent cars or RVs. Overall, tourism was up from the previous year.
- Planners should read the Borough's McDowell Group report on Tourism.
- The FNSB holds Economic Development meetings the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month and would like to have someone make a presentation about the IATP at the January meeting.
- Tourism in Wrangell St. Elias Park is about to take off. Princess Tours owns a large parcel and will build a hotel. There is a great deal of interest by tour operators to expand there. Improving the access to the park would help.
- Improvements, but not pavement, are needed on the Denali Highway. It is very important to tour operators such as Princess.

- The majority of the operators like the remoteness of the Denali Highway and don't want paving, but believe that maintenance has been neglected.
- Keep Denali Highway rural. Paving would destroy its character.
- Interview Princess Tours and Holland America about the highways, also consider the smaller tour operators.
- There is a need to develop access to Denali National Park from the north. The southern access is further along but for Fairbanks that northern access is essential. The entrance to the park through "Glitter Gulch" is very unattractive.
- The highways in this study area should be considered for the state or national scenic byway system.
- The Dalton Highway should be open all the way to the Arctic Ocean, especially for tourists.
- Winter access to Denali National Park is important. There is an increase in winter Japanese tourists. Also, northern lights viewing at Coldfoot.
- Suggest that a presentation be made to the FNSB Economic Development committee on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Roads**

- Consider ice roads.
- Examine work done on weight restrictions.
- The Steese Highway beyond Birch Creek Bridge lacks maintenance and desperately needs resurfacing.
- Street lights are needed in Circle.
- There should be more shuttle buses between Fairbanks and Valdez and Fairbanks and Anchorage.
- Consider mass transit.
- There are no projects between Sourdough and Paxson.
- Contact the Truckers Association.

## **Railroad**

- The plan should consider reserving corridors along any new railroad alignments.
- Road access should not be cut off when railroads are built. Continued access is vital to emergency access and hazardous waste clean up efforts should they be required.
- In the long range, consider a railroad extending north of Fairbanks.

**Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys staff.

*Tanana Chiefs Conference* – On December 13, 2006 Dave Sanches and Nicole McCullough met with Eric Fitzgerald and Margaret Matthews. Eric invited ADOT&PF to attend the TCC conference in March to speak to the Transportation Subcommittee about the IATP. He said that some villages want seasonal routes. TCC was very active in increasing their Indian Reservation Roads program for the Doyon Tribes and sent someone to Juneau to assist BIA to enter the data but the BIA changed the formatting of the maps after they were entered. They expect to be able to work on the inventory once BIA is satisfied that their accounting system accounts adequately for money previously expended. He said that trail staking has been done to many villages within the Interior. TCC does not have a regional transportation plan.

*Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau* – Nicole McCullough met with Deb Hickok and Karen Lane. Deb said that she believes all the roads out of Fairbanks should be established as State and National Scenic Byways. She would like north access to Denali National Park. She is not sure that she likes the routes considered for the Stampede Road, but likes the idea of a state recreational area there. Winter products and tourism are very important and an area that they hope to grow. Deb provided tourism information and suggested calling several large and small tour companies. She also said not to ignore the aviation tour companies. Talk to Stan Stevens to get a different perspective on the paving of the Alaska Highway. Karen Lane agreed with Deb that someone should attend the FCVB January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the IATP. There could be a presentation at the luncheon and a workshop before or after. Beyond February or March, tourism industry people will be very busy and meetings will be difficult.

*U.S. Bureau of Land Management* – Dave Sanches and Nicole McCullough met with Roger DeLaney and other BLM staff. They were very supportive of continued collaboration during the development of the IATP. DOT&PF plans are very important to some of the BLM plans for recreational areas.

The BLM is about to start or is about to complete several plans, including the Eastern Interior Plan and Tangle Lakes Plan that are in this study area. The Fairbanks North Star Borough is revising their Trails Plan. Their plans for the Denali Highway were contingent on the highway getting paved.

Analyze the Doyon and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service land exchange in the Interior. Ted Hughes and USFWS should be contacted. Also contact Ramon McKoy at the Glennallen BLM office, AHTNA staff, Wrangell St. Elias, Yukon Charlie, and Tetlin Wildlife Refuge staff.

*Alaska Department of Natural Resources* – Dave Sanches and Nicole McCullough visited with Anna Plager. She provided links and information about several plans that DNR has in the study area including the Tanana Area Basin Plan, Upper Yukon Plan, Tanana Valley Plan and Chena Recreation Area Plans. She said that it is important that DOT&PF consider these plans when making road improvements. Very few recreational enhancements have been completed along the Chena Hot Springs Road. Anna said that it

is important to connect with other divisions within DNR including the forestry and mining divisions and she provided names.

Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys – Nicole McCullough met with DeAnne S.P. Stevens and Rodney A. Combellick. Rodney said that his division examines and maps the geology but is not involved in permitting and does not necessarily know where the next mineral development might occur. He suggested contacting the DNR, Division of Land, Water and Mining. He said his agency has developed maps of significant corridors throughout the state and indicated where to find these maps on their website.

### Interior Alaska Transportation Plan – Public Meeting

Fairbanks, Alaska

Sign In Sheet

December 13, 2006

Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail
TODD BOYCE	FNSB	PO Box 71267	459-1266	tboyce@co.fairbanks.ak.us
Bill Gryder	ASCG	515 7th, Ste 310	458-2142	bgryder@ascg.com
Luke Hopkins	FNSB	PO Box 81622 Ft. 99708	247-0066	lukehopkins@yahoo.com
DONNA GARDINO	DOT PF	P.O. Box 2301 Paper Rd	451-2375	donna.gardino@dot.state.ak.us
DAVE SANCHEZ	DOT PF	2301 Paper Rd	451-2385	dave_sanchez@dot.state.ak.us
DAVID PECK	FNSB	3871 BRANCH AVE	488-6558	david.peck@dcsg.akstate.ak.us
* EMILIE MISZWICZ	FOKS FIRE N. STAR FIRE	1101 CUSHMAN ST	450-6615	emiliewicz@ci.fairbanks.ak.us
DEB HICKOK	FCVB	500 FIRST AVE	457-3282x222	dhickok@explorefairbanks.com
MATT DIVENS	PRINCESS TOURS	3401 LATHROP, 99701	479-9660	mdivens@princessstours.com
Bob Henszey	USFWS	101 1st Ave Rm 110, 99701	456-0323	bob_henszey@fws.gov
Joe Sheehan	JGA	PO Box 71732 FAKI 99707	978-1746	joe.sheehan@gci.net
Jerry Hanson	North Star VFD	2358 Broadway Rd., N. Pole,	488-3400	jhanson@northstarfire.org
MIKE MUSICK	FNSB ASSEMBLY	PO BOX 170 RESTON NN 725	388-2000	mike.musick@gci.net
KATHRYN DODGE	FNSB	PO 71267		
Emily Bratcher	ADOT PF	2301 Paper Rd. 99709	451-2388	emily.bratcher@dot.state.ak.us
JEANNE OLSEN	Citizen	1890 Hollowell Rd N. Pole	488-2906	corvi@mosquitonet.com
Jeanne Boyle		250 Pearl Drive	907-490-2654	jboyle@northstar.ak.us

### Interior Alaska Transportation Plan – Public Meeting

Fairbanks, Alaska

Sign In Sheet

December 13, 2006

Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail
Circle Village Council		P.O. Box 12	907-773-2822	(Jessica Boyle)

ERROR: stackunderflow  
OFFENDING COMMAND: ~

STACK:

## Trip Report

### Fairbanks and Delta Junction Meetings

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

**Reporter:** Suzanne Taylor

**Date/Time:** 01/11/07 7:00 PM

**Location:** Fairbanks & Delta

---

**Present:** Sign-in sheet to be provided by FCVB  
Suzanne Taylor, ASCG  
Dave Sanches, DOT&PF

#### Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau Meeting Highlights:

On Wednesday, January 17, Dave Sanches and Suzanne Taylor attended the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau luncheon at the Fairbanks Princess Hotel to introduce the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

Concerns expressed by FCVB members included:

- Communications “dead spots” where cell service is unavailable making emergency calls impossible.
- Safety issues along Taylor Highway including narrow areas
- The 511 road information system needs improvement very much
- Trails need to be a part of the plan. Is there a way for Yukon Quest planners who stake the trails used by the Quest to partner with the DOT in providing trail staking in that area?
- Where will planners on this project get information on tourism issues? Will the plan focus on in-state users to the exclusion of visitors?

Suzanne and Dave said that tourism is certainly vital to the state’s economy and that the plan will assess tourism as well as local needs. Input from all stakeholders is critical to the process.

- Is the railroad involved in the process?

Suzanne said that the team has already met with Bruce Carr of the ARRC and will continue to coordinate with the railroad during the planning process.

The Princess representative asked about public access to the shoreline at Prudhoe Bay. She said that Princess pays for access even when they have to use their own coaches due to handicapped clients or unavailability of BP’s bus.

Karen to send copy of sign in sheet.

#### Delta Chamber of Commerce Meeting Highlights:

On Thursday, January 18, Dave and Suzanne attended the Delta Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the Trophy Lodge in Delta, to introduce the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

Concerns expressed by DCOC members included:

- Waysides along Richardson Highway need better maintenance

- The 511 road information system needs to be kept reasonably up to date
- Status of proposed joint use of Allen Army Airfield by the community
- The Alaska Highway ends in Delta Junction. Road numbers should reflect this.
- Milepost 300 is an accident area to be aware of.

## Trip Report Copper Valley Area Meetings

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

**Reporter:** Suzanne Taylor, ASCG

**Date/Time:** 01/11/07 7:00 PM

**Location:** Glennallen

**Present:** See attached sign-in sheet

### Meeting Highlights:

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce at the Tonsina River Lodge near Glennallen to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Those present, did not notice any reduction in vehicular traffic due to rising fuel costs; however, they agreed that more rental vehicles seem to be coming through and many are sharing RVs between more than one family or couples.

One member felt that cleaning the toilets in the rest areas was not DOT's role, that the contractors hired to maintain rest areas are overpaid and not doing the job well. He felt that BLM-managed rest areas are better maintained. He thought that rest areas could be run as a concession, as DNR does with campgrounds.

It was pointed out that the Dalton Highway was opened up to traffic/RVs without any provision for sanitary dump stations.

Members suggested we call Tracy in February at the CVCC to get tourism numbers. 822-5555.

Interior Alaska Transportation Plan					
Glennallen, Alaska					
Sign In Sheet				January 11, 2007	
Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail	
Helen Ulrich	CVCC	PO Box 211 Gabeana AK 99588			
Nell Ulrich	CVCC				
Kimberlin, Dale					
Doreen Humbertin	K.W. Taxi	HC 60 Box 221	Kimberlins water taxi	valdez AK, net	
Marissa DeWitt	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 333			
Kathleen A Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 227H	Copper center,	AK 99573	
C.D. Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	" " " "	" " " "	"	
Tracy Beaudoin	CV Chamber	PO Box 469 Glennallen, AK	99588	822-5555	chamber@cvinternet.net
Brynn Heaton		PO Box 412, Glennallen, AK, 99588		822-4411	
Kimie Heinz		PO Box 12 Glennallen AK	99588	822-5051	
KARL HEINZ	FNBA	Box 85 Glennallen AK	99588	Kheinz@FNBAAlaska	
Todd Roeske	Mc Drum Lutheran Church	PO Box 175	Copper Lake AK	99573	todd.roeske@juno.com
Kim Roeske	"	"	"	"	taddrroeske@juno.com

## **Interviews:**

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **BLM Glennallen Field Office** representatives to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and the BLM's concerns about transportation issues in the study area. The following BLM staff members were present:

- Bruce Rogers, BLM Land Use Planner
- Will Runnoe, BLM Bureau Chief/Visitor Services
- Marnie Graham, BLM Outreach Specialist
- Brenda Becker, BLM Realty Specialist

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Bruce said that the military needs six additional communication sites on BLM land to support their Red Flag training operations.

Will said that user numbers have greatly increased due to Princess's buses between Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Denali National Park. Most users, including BLM, would like to see the Denali Highway remain gravel. Restroom facilities may be needed at turnouts to reduce inappropriate disposal of human waste.

Bruce provided a copy of the BLM's East Alaska Plan and referenced information therein on the Denali Highway.

They mentioned the possible designation "Back Country Byway". They thought that the possibility of roadside improvements could be a selling point for Scenic Byway designation, which has been opposed in the past by residents.

Marnie said that the high volume of trucks using the highways, such as fuel and grocery trucks, has precipitated several accidents. The annual bicycle race from Sheep Mountain to Valdez may also produce conflicts as there is a large number of RVs on the road during the summer. Some areas on the Richardson Highway have little or no shoulders and, in one instance near Miers Lake, a truck's tire went off the edge and the truck flipped. Speed may have also been a factor.

Local farmers also use the roads to transport goods to market.

A bike path and turning lanes through Glennallen would be beneficial.

Additional signage would be good.

They believe that tourist numbers have remained on a steady upward trend, although more are traveling on bus tours rather than by RV due to higher fuel costs.

Nevada Star has lease on the mineral development at Tangle Lakes; however, their sub pulled out and no development is currently underway. There is an archeological development at Tangle Lakes as well (see brochure).

Recreational use is a major issue along the highways, especially weekend use. Roads are used year-round to access areas for fishing, snow machining, hunting, RVing, and boating. More turnouts are needed. Issues of waste disposal exist, for example at the Gulkana River Bridge. The Klutina River Bridge needs better access.

Villages are concerned about trespassers. Turnouts at trailheads are not monitored and can be unsanitary.

National Park Service has Gateway Funding which should be looked into. Tourism classes were conducted to educate people on dealing well with the public. "Branding" was explored. Suggested that we talk with Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent.

Others to talk to: John Downes, ARDOR, at the Tazlina Trading Post.

Arlene Rosencrantz, USDA NRCS RCND, at Mile 93.3, past Grizzly Pizza. 822-5111.

On Friday, January 12, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **ARDOR director John Downes** to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

John provided a copy of the 1993 CEDS.

He reported that a recent (2005) tourist survey indicated a need for more informational road signs.

John indicated that tourism in the area is still increasing. He said that Princess contributes \$450,000-500,000 annually to local businesses through day trips, etc. More tourists seem to be bussing in rather than driving due to gas costs. Copper Valley is getting greater numbers of tourists because Denali NP is becoming overcrowded. The Copper Valley Princess has 87 rooms now but is designed to be expanded to as many as 300. The most immediate expansion is expected to be by about 30 rooms.

About \$2.5 million was spent on McCarthy Road improvements. Unfortunately, much was lost in flooding in 2006. There were 10 or 11 thousand visitors to McCarthy last year. About 35,000 signed in at the Copper Center Visitor Center. John believes that residents, the Park Service, and the legislature all want the McCarthy Road improved; so, now would be a good time to act.

John suggested that we also speak with:

- Suzanne at Prince William Sound Community College.
- Arlene Diltz Jackson at the CRNA 822-5241
- Arlene Rosencranz at DNR RCND

He suggested public information be disseminated through Mark at the paper, KNBQ Wasilla, and the Valdez radio station.

Suzanne and Nicole also stopped in at the **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve headquarters** in Glennallen. They spoke to Marshall Neeck the Chief Ranger, who promised to pass along information about the plan to Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent, and Vicki Snitzler, Park Planner.

## Delta Junction Trip Report

**Prepared by:** Suzanne Taylor

**Location:** Delta Junction

**Date:** 3/3/09

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

---

Suzanne Taylor, WHPacific traveled to Delta Junction with Dave Sanches, DOT&PF, to present the recommendations to the Delta Junction City Council. Although a quorum was not present, council members and members of the public listened to the presentation and posed questions of the presenters.

Council members present were Mayor Mary Leith-Dowling, Lou Heinbockel, and Dawn Grossmann. Additional City employees present were City Administrator Mike Tvenge, Finance Officer Dave Zimmerman, Facilities Maintenance Employee Jeremy Williams, and Acting City Clerk Debbie Heral

Four members from the community also attended.

Suzanne Taylor explained that the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities began to develop the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan about two years ago. Since that time, transportation planners have identified important transportation issues in the study area, outlined goals and objectives, prepared a detailed inventory of all transportation modes in the study area, reviewed potential future mineral development, forecast future growth and analyzed the transportation system. The plan is entering the stage where the department will develop recommendations that will guide future investments in vital regional transportation projects. The intent is to have the plan recommendations finalized by the summer and the final report be made available this fall.

Taylor stated that within the five statewide regional transportation plans, our region has the majority of the highway system, which is a large component of the plan. Other parts include airports within the area. An inventory was taken in late 2006 of what is in the region – they looked at development, projected population, economic development and then studied the strengths and weaknesses of those systems and what needed to be changed. Now they are starting to make recommendations, going to communities and letting people know what they're looking at and the status of the project. Safety is one of the primary criteria for any project.

Delta has turned in a list of projects they'd like to see implemented. Pavement management needs were discussed. Delta Junction is listed under the Airports Section as needing a better airport. Discussion on the local airport and Healy Lake airport followed. Wayside maintenance was discussed. Better toilet facilities are needed along with dumpsters or at least garbage cans, if people are going to be encouraged to travel the roads.

Taylor advised that on the IATP website, Chapters 1-4 of the plan are up now and they are proofing Chapters 5 & 6. Chapter 3 still has holes, which are highlighted in yellow.

**Dave Sanches**, Department of Transportation (DOT)&PF Project Manager, stated the next STIP window would probably be June or July for comment and there is new scoring criteria for it. Community transportation projects deadline is the 13<sup>th</sup> of March. They will be scoring projects statewide end of April. Each region can bring 20 projects. No one is sure what will be funded at this point because it keeps changing.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.

## Glennallen Trip Report

**Prepared by:** Nicole McCullough

**Location:** Glennallen/Copper River

**Date:** 3/19/09

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

---

Nicole McCullough and Paula Hansen, WHPacific traveled to Glennallen to discuss the draft recommendations with staff from AHTNA, Copper River Native Association, Kluti Kaah Native Village and to join Dave Sanches, DOT&PF to present the recommendations to the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce.

AHTNA – Joe Bovee, Land and Resource Specialist. After a general discussion about the IATP and transportation recommendations, Joe provided specific comments on transportation issues in the Copper Basin. He said that it appears that roadside tourism is on the decline. He said several guides and tourism related businesses, hunts, Princess Tours have reported a 30-50% decline in reservations for this summer.

- Waysides need improvements, particularly maintenance. The wayside by Mendeltna was particularly bad.
- Cantwell area needs rest areas.
- At about MP 85 on the Parks highway, safety lanes are needed.
- The road to McCarthy should be improved.
- The Denali Highway may not need to be paved but more maintenance is needed. However, DOT&PF has improved their maintenance on the Denali Highway in the last few years.
- AHTNA is exploring a potential gas well at MP 177 on the Richardson. This site is close and has good access to the highway. They will have the results of the exploratory well in 30-60 days.
- AHTNA, DNR and the NPS have lands across the Copper River. A new one lane bridge is needed to access these lands. Minerals, oil and gas resources, geothermal, and subsistence resource potential is very good in this area and would be greatly improved by better all year access. There are a couple locations between Tazlina and Glennallen where the channel is narrow and a bridge would likely be most economical.
- In 30 days AHTNA should know about funding for a wood pellet plant. Half of the funding is available now. If the plant is built, the wood pellets will be used locally for heat and power and exported to other parts of the interior. 80% of the AHTNA owned timber is across the Copper River.

Copper River Native Association - Kathy McKonkel, Director of Tribal Community Services and Gary Hay were interviewed. Kathy and Gary discussed the need for improved transit.

- Gulkana is running a regularly scheduled bus from Gulkana to Copper Center with published fares. The bus line is called Soaring Eagle.
- CRNA worked with Chickaloon on their transit plan.
- CRNA has \$1.5 million from the Federal Transit Authority. They would like to partner with Gulkana and possibly other Tribes in the Copper Valley/Tanana Valley to run a bus service co-op.
- The Native Village of Tetlin also has funds for transit. They want to buy the 14 passenger vans that provide service twice a week between Anchorage and Whitehorse.
- There is a meeting to discuss transportation in Tok at 10 am on Tuesday, March 31. The contact person is Becky Wade.
- CRNA has vans to transport elders and those wanting to go to medical appointments. The vans are getting very old. It is a real concern driving in the winter and buses or vans are a big help.
- Gary likes the rumble strips.
- There is an erosion control problem near the baseball fields.
- There are not enough restrooms in turnouts.
- CRNA is just finishing up an economic development survey. One request is better egress from villages like Gulkana onto the highway. There is a need for shoulders there and in Gakona and Tazlina.

Kluti Kaah Native Village - Michelle Anderson, Kluti Kaah Tribal Administrator is working on her local Indian Reservation Roads inventory. We discussed general transportation needs and the IATP.

At the Glennallen Chamber of Commerce meeting Nicole began with an overview of the IATP and an explanation of the boundaries of the area. She went over the following recommendations:

### **Highways**

- Improve access at McKinley Village and the Denali Park entrance.
- Implement the state's Highway Safety Improvement Plan.
- Improve highways in anticipation of the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline and Enstar Gas Pipeline.
- Continue to improve the state's pavement management system program.
- Upgrade Northway, Manely, Nenana, Ernestine, Birch Lake and South Fork Maintenance Stations.

- Improve sight distances at wayside entry and exit points.

### **Airports**

- Coordinate among state and federal agencies to balance military and civilian airspace requirements, protect backcountry airstrips, support postal hubs, and implement security requirements.
- Improve several airports along the proposed pipeline route to support pipeline construction.
- Improve Tok and Delta Junction airports, significantly improve Fort Yukon and Gulkana Airports, and relocate the Chistochina Airport
- FAA should recognize Healy Lake's airport in their system.
- Develop longer runways and/or instrument approaches for Birch Creek, Central, Circle City, Eagle, Manley Hot Springs, Minto, McCarthy, Stevens Village, Tetlin, and Venetie.

### **Other Transportation Modes**

- Maintain funding for trail markings.
- Eliminate several at-grade crossings.
- Improve barge landings such as at Fort Yukon and support a new barge landing at Tanana.

Nicole also mentioned some of the recommendations that Joe Bovee and Gary Hay made. Finally, she briefly discussed the schedule for the IATP and opened the meeting up for discussion. One woman asked if the recommendations are covered in the website, and Nicole replied that they are in fact on the website. She also showed where the website can be found on the newsletter that was handed out. A few people requested drafts of the IATP, which were then handed out to them.

Following Nicole's discussion, Dave Sanches, DOT&PF, answered questions about the Northern Region construction and design projects. Many people asked when certain projects were going to begin construction. Dave listed off the projects that are scheduled for construction this summer, and mentioned that the projects associated with the pipeline construction (along Alaska Highway) are the highest priorities. He also talked about the projects that are supposed to go to bid in the near future. C.D. McCurry mentioned that improvement on the McCarthy Road would improve his business. The repairs for this section of road should either go to bid in the summer of 2009 or 2010. The details of these projects can be found in the handout that he distributed.

To close the meeting, Jeremy Weld discussed the benefits that advertising could have on promoting tourism in the Copper River Valley. He handed out two brochures: one highlights the reasons to travel to the Copper River Valley, and the other discusses tourism statistics in Alaska.

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** May 11, 2009

**Subject:** Public Meeting 6:00 – 8:00 pm

**Project:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

**Project #:** 209.004902

**Attendees:** Diana Rigg

**Absent:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dave Sanches

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dave Sanches and I set up the meeting room before 6:00pm. Shortly before 6:00pm several individuals convened in the room who were on a committee for the local high school graduation party. They were not interested in the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and proceeded to walk through the area inspecting the space for the various venues they envisioned for the party. They finally set up a table and chairs in the lobby for the rest of their meeting.

There were two individuals who signed in at the meeting. One individual resides seasonally in Chicken and was interested in highway improvements on the Taylor Highway. The other attendee was generally interested in the project and discussed local improvements with Dave.

## Meeting Summary

**Location:** Fairbanks, Princess Hotel

**Date:** March 31, 2010

**Re:** Interior Alaska Transportation Plan  
Public Meeting

**Reporter:** Nicole McCullough, WHPacific

---

**Purpose:** A public meeting was held in Fairbanks for the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan (IATP). The purpose of the meeting was to present the final Transportation Plan and collect comments.

**Attendance:** Attending the meeting were several representatives from Alaska DOT&PF including Alexa Greene and Ethan Birkholtz, Northern Region Planning, Eric Taylor, Statewide Planning and Clark Milne, Northern Region Maintenance. Also attending were representatives from the MPO, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB), Native Village of Minto and members of the Public. Nicole McCullough and Paula Hansen, WHPacific provided displays and were available to answer questions about the plan and take comments.

**Public Meeting Summary:** Several displays were set up including a map of the planning area, a summary of the chapters, goals and recommendations. Participants had the following comments:

*Karen Kelly, Citizen* – Karen wanted to make sure that there was consideration of bicycle facilities in the plan. Nicole explained that the plan did recognize bicycle facilities, although there were no recommendations for bicycle facilities on any routes. She also mentioned that the plan did not include the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) area.

*Bruce Carr, Alaska Railroad* – The Railroad would like additional information in the recommendations section of the plan regarding railroad projects. He will be supplying an insert for the Railroad recommendation section.

*Clark Milne, DOT&PF* – Clark said that there is a need to add a recommendation to build a maintenance station at Antimony on the Parks Highway.

*Donna Gardino, FMATS MPO Coordinator* – Donna said that she is currently reviewing the plan and will provide comments. She noticed a need to add information about air quality.

*Luke Hopkins, FNSB Mayor*, - Mayor Hopkins asked about the study area and commented that although the study area did not include the Fairbanks Metropolitan Planning Organization area, he wanted to make sure the NHS routes within the FMATS area were included in the plan. Alexa said she will ask Eric Taylor about the inclusion of those routes within the FMATS area.

Luke also wanted to make sure that the plan included gas line projects. Alexa and Nicole said the plan discusses the need for road improvements should the gas line be constructed. There is a list of gas line projects and estimated cost; although no years are assigned since the timing is unknown. Nicole said that the plan will change as needed, to accommodate those projects.

Another comment was to include a discussion of the Western Access Study and how a road to Nome could impact the planning area. One of the routes would go through Manley and require improvements on the Elliott highway.

Stan Halverson and Donna Gardino suggested that a brief presentation be made the following morning at the Transportation Committee. Nicole agreed to attend, make a presentation and be available for questions. The meeting adjourned about 6:30 pm.

*April 1, 2010 Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Transportation meeting* - Nicole made a brief presentation at the Thursday morning Chamber of Commerce meeting which was followed by a few questions. One member wanted to know the boundaries of the study area which Nicole described. Someone else wanted to know if the plan included a discussion of the minerals in the planning area. Nicole said that it did. Tom George, AOPA, asked about the comment period and if a more lengthy presentation could be made before the Transportation Committee. Nicole said the formal comment period ends April 30<sup>th</sup>. She said that she could return.

After the Chamber meeting, Donna coordinated a return presentation on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Tom George asked about including a Delta Regional Airport in the plan and wondered about the spacing of regional airports. Nicole said that Tok is recommended as a regional plan and she said the plan does recommend a public airport be developed in Delta. Tom suggested revisiting a Joint Land Use agreement with Allen Army Airfield that would allow pilots to land there under IFR conditions. He said it became very apparent during the fires in Fairbanks when the alternate airports to Fairbanks, like Tok were too far away. Nicole said that she will pass that along to Sara Funk who is coordinating the aviation section of the plan.