

Parks Byway Corridor Partnership Plan 2nd draft comments

4/8/08

Steve Jones, Denali Borough Planning Commission:

The borough assembly meeting is April 9th. We are asking for a “resolution of support”, I talked to the Mayor today. This is short notice, the assembly may or may not do anything at this meeting. If not this meeting then, it will remain on the agenda for May. I don't see a problem. I also don't believe there will be additional comments. The DOT comment I referred to was an e-mail from Aneta Synan on 3-17. It just explained DOT's position. My only comment is where are the pictures? It would be nice to see a list of comments. We could nit-pick the details, but don't see it would really change anything.

Mimi Peabody, Friends of Mat-Su:

I took a look at the plan this afternoon. It seems very well written and provides a great document for future funding. Nice work to all those involved in working on the project.

Becky Buxton, Princess Tours:

Just a few comments, they are probably duplicates at this point.. but if you have any questions, please let me know.

Page 1 -

last sentence of "The Parks Highway"

in regards to naming the highway after the 1st gov of territory, the last sentence referring to the aptness of the name chosen, falls flat, it doesn't explain itself. - first paragraph of document - should really be a wow - bring in the gamut of the emotion for the highway.

Page 10 - Vast protected area

"Wild and relatively untouched, the park is considered by some...."

page 11 - World class mountaineering....

could go into the fact that McKinley has the largest vertical ascent - or at least what I've been told and that's a big deal for technical climbers?

page 12 - Limitless Multi-use Outdoor recreation Opportunities I would delete the word "almost" in the first sentence - didn't use it in the header. Could delete or change to "numerous"

Page 12 - Unparalleled hiking

2nd to last sentence - " Alaska range across the Chulita river basin that offers extraordinary vistas of/and rugged mountains...."

Page 12 - 13 World Class Snowmobiling

It is a stretch to consider Broad Pass a "day trip" from Anchorage, especially in the winter.

Page 13 - Guided excursions

Most flightseeing trips are "around" Mt. McKinley as opposed to "over" it.
Could say .." flightseeing trips to Mt. McKinley"

Page 13-14 Recreational Quality Challenges and Opportunities 3rd paragraph Princess lodge reference in paragraph, should be Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge. The Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge is the one in the Nenana Canyon area.

Page 17 - Creation of Denali National Park.

Since it is a new section, would start the paragraph with the year, "Between 1906 - 1908, naturalist Charles Sheldon roamed the area, now known as Denali National Park" or something similar.

Could go more into Sheldon's concept of preserving and protecting area for future generations..

Could go more into the Dall sheep, and tie that into some of the viewing opportunities from the roadway, and potential for interpretive signage.

page 20 - Healy

The paragraph briefly touches on the "alternate starting point to the main entrance of Denali Park" - assuming this is the Stampede trail, if so we should expand on what it is. Historic, largely impassable, once access to mine. Much of the trail now falls within Denali Park, first 25 - 30 miles outside of entrance.

Page 26 - Transportation System Overview 3rd paragraph - Suggest deleting "crossing the street" from directly after pedestrians - meaning sufficient if just pedestrian is used. I would recommend deleting the adjective "fast-moving" from tour buses. No other type of vehicle has speed adjective, not integral for meaning of paragraph.

page 27 - Traffic volumes

Didn't get the message of the 1st paragraph. Are we trying to say there is much traffic, or not much? Suggest being factual in first sentence..

Average daily traffic ranges are deleting the subjective part of "quite low"...

Page 28 - Commercial Traffic

suggest.. " oil fields of the North Slope region to/from Anchorage.

Page 29 - Bus and Shuttle Travel

Need clarification on "This particular service is being refined in order to provide a more valuable alternative"

What service? Courtesy van and busses? should we say, private transportation services are being refined or transportation services are being refined?

Page 31 - Transportation System challenges and opportunities 2nd paragraph, could flow a little better - could break paragraph into parts... Different seasons bring about their own unique challenges .. have winter be first, then distinctly begin addressing summer issues.

Page 33 -

Suggest deleting the references to Princess Tours, Holland America and CIRI specifically. The rooming numbers and people estimates are incorrect.

Would replace with more generic industry information...

"Numerous tour operators utilize the byway to enhance their guest experiences. " If it is imperative to include visitorship numbers, combine a number of companies and indicate something like..." Between the major Alaska Tour Operators, the intent is to bring over xxx number of people to the region annually.

2nd paragraph -

"During the summer months, seasonal resident and nonresident workers triple..."

" 86% of the Borough's revenues, the money that helps...."

3rd paragraph -

First sentence references June through August, second sentence says extend beyond May and September... - would recommend " ... increase tourism beyond the months of May through Sept..."

Page 33-34 Tourism and Marketing Challenges and Opportunities " .. future projections, identify both national domestic and international target markets..."

Page 35 - Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge - suggest noting that the experience is mid-May through mid-Sept

Not sure any of the above will be useful...

Thanks for all the effort you have put into this project.

Miriam Valentine, National Park Service:

I think the draft plan looks really good and does a good job of incorporating the discussion from the meeting in Denali. I have only minor edits, no substantive edits to suggest. Good work!

Chuck and Judy Saylor, Denali Borough residents:

We really like what you have done with all the input. Great job! We wouldn't change anything. This plan as it now exists provides as much flexibility as you could ever expect out of any plan. Whatever project is undertaken for the Park's Scenic Byway would fall in one of the five goals and the associated objectives. It's an awesome, easy read.

Cass Ray, Denali Borough resident:

The following represents just a tad of tidying up; please do lemme know what you think.

Vision Statement

Take a journey on the Parks Byway into the wilds of Alaska. Experience breathtaking views clear to the horizon of majestic mountains, including Denali (Mt. McKinley), North America's highest peak. The Parks Highway Scenic Byway takes you from the birch and spruce forests of the Upper Susitna River Basin through the Alaska Range's wide-open alpine tundra. It passes steeply-carved hillsides, broad open plains, glacier-fed rivers, and clear water streams—a landscape carved over time by snow and ice and other natural forces.

Through cooperative planning and continued sustainable development, the Parks Byway Community Partnership is dedicated to maintaining the scenic

qualities of the byway corridor and to honoring the spirit of the last frontier by providing a safe, comfortable, and educational adventure to be enjoyed by every traveler who visits. The Parks Byway Community Partnership further contributes to the communities and places of interest along the corridor by promoting tourism, supporting the local culture, and enhancing the economic base of the region.

The Parks Highway Scenic Byway is a place where people value their connection to the land for recreation, self-sufficiency, and continuing cultural traditions, a land where the independent frontier spirit of the people is reflected in the uniqueness of their rural communities.

Julia Potter, Denali Citizens Council, Healy Chamber of Commerce

Sorry to wait until the last minute to send you comments. The draft plan looks great! My only comment is with the Vision Statement. The more I read it the more it leaves me feeling flat and uninspired. To me it does not sound inviting to a visitor. Referencing the Upper Sustina River Basin will do nothing for a visitor - we know what and where that is, but a visitor would have no clue. I don't feel that the statement will invoke emotion - which is something it should do - make you want to take that drive because it just sounds so absolutely fantastic and lovely. I do realize we came to consensus on this but from the perspective of a traveler it just doesn't offer anything spectacular. Yet when I read the rest of the plan and the stories, it makes me want to take that drive - the vision statement should do the same. I think when the plan is out for public comment, we will hear many about the vision statement. Of course it may just be me. Thank you for all of your hard work on this plan. It is outstanding! I know the finished product will result in an All-American Road designation. You ROCK!!!

Eileen McGurk, Cantwell RV Park

I think the plan is excellent. I have no changes to recommend. Thank you and all the other folks who worked so hard to put this document together. Please continue to keep me informed. We will be back up in Cantwell the beginning of May, so I would be interested to hear of any meetings scheduled during the up-coming season.

Rachel Carlsen, CLI Construction

1. Our mission statement is too long. Taking into consideration who we are targeting this document to its too descriptive and story like. Our mission /vision statement should be concise and to the point if we are to submit this document for federal funding. The middle paragraph is the only thing, in my opinion, needed for a mission/vision statement.
2. I am not a proponent to the use of the Natural Intrinsic Quality for the corridor plan. I feel that the Natural Intrinsic quality is taken care of in the State and National Park, If we use this quality for the corridor plan is would severely limit the type of development in the corridor. Multi use trails would be one of them. As it stands now the National Park is a wilderness area and limits public access. We have a park that you can't drive through, can't travel at your leisure and have to pay every step of the way just to take a picture of a mountain.... why would we introduce that intrinsic quality to our corridor?
3. Recreational qualities list no motorized multi use trails. These are not the same as roads. Do we not have any along the corridor?

4. Historic Qualities, pages 16-19 again too long. This would be good information in a brochure, but for this document a brief description as the other intrinsic qualities read, would suffice.
5. Page 15 - First people, why does this not get as much attention as the establishment of the other historic items listed? In my opinion the native people have been limited to their usage of their own land, by the governing bodies. And year by year will eventually will be denied the use of their traditional hunting grounds. The Athabasca people still live around the park boundaries today, I would like to see the last sentence of this paragraph to note that the descendents of the first people still reside here. In reading this as it is now it sounds like they are no longer in this area.
6. Page 19 - Cantwell Alice. I talked to her family members who reside in Cantwell and they would like the last sentence omitted.
7. There are items that needed to be added to the inventory for the Cantwell area:
 - The Native village of cantwell has been trying to get a bicycle path in Cantwell from Jack River Bridge MP 209.4 to 213.8 Nenana Bridge for the last three years.
 - Signage consolidation in the Cantwell area MP 209-211 SB side.
 - Completion of the Kiosk MP209.7 (Tesoro Parking Lot)
 - Completion of Signage at MP 208
 - Visitor Center in Cantwell/Gateway Community (this would be opportunity)
 - We need traffic control/Safety plan for turn lanes to the Grizzly Bear or ARAMARK Facilities at MP 230 McKinley Village area
 - Promotion of the Denali Highway.
8. There are some items on the inventory list that need to be edited or omitted.

MP 209.9 New site for the Cantwell Post office - Private land

MP 209.7 Need to add kiosk in private parking lot (Tesoro)

MP 212.7 This is a wide spot off the road not a parking area- Should be omitted from the inventory. This is on a curve and many accidents occur on this curve

MP215.3 Need to change this from MP 215.5 to 215.3 (215.5 is a private road (NB) - AHTNA land)

MP 216 This is a wide spot by the road, This should be omitted from the inventory. Parking in this area potential for accident, blind curve & hill on SB side of road. Not a good pull off area.

MP223.5 Again on a curve, dangerous pull out. should be omitted from the inventory.

MP224.8 Gravel pit Comments should include AHTNA Pit/DOT access

MP224.8 AHTNA land Private property-

I have talked to people in Cantwell about the Byway and have had good and bad comments.

"As long as the byway is a state byway without federal involvement I think it would be ok."

" I think that it is a good thing as it would limit or bring responsible usage to the areas along the highway."

"The way the plan is written, it is another layer of government that future development would have to go through."



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Corridor Partnership Plan, Second Draft
Areas of Concern and Comments
March 2008

This draft is far more readable and relates the story of the Byway far better than the earlier draft. The reader gets a hint of the wonders of the Byway and makes the reader want to find out more about this scenic stretch of Alaska Highway. There is also a hint of passion about the byway which also intrigues the reader. Specific comments include:

Page 1 Paragraph 1 Line 11. "largest glaciers". Glaciers should be modified to "inland" or "alpine" or the appropriate name for these glaciers to distinguish them from tidewater glaciers which are much larger.

Page 1 Paragraph 3 first sentence. This sentence could be modified to make it a more positive or active sentence. For example, 'The 116-mile middle segment was designated as an Alaska State Scenic Byway in 199_ and is the primary focus of the CPP.'

Page 1 Paragraph 4 Line 3. Add "...and hardwood and spruce..."

Page 2 Paragraph 1. Reference to the abundant bird population both boreal and migratory should be added. Birding would likely be a major attraction to the byway. For example, swans are often found on Byers Lake and other lakes along the byway during spring and fall migrations.

Also, modify mammals on line 9 with 'land or terrestrial' to distinguish them from marine mammals which are much larger.

Page 2 paragraph 2 line 7. Add "...Nenana and Chulitna Rivers....":

Page 2 paragraph 3. Native heritage and mining should be listed in this paragraph. It would be helpful if there was an overview of landownership along the byway. For example, "In addition to the uniquely large areas of land in protected status, there are significant areas of Native Corporation land and private lands that can be seen from the byway. These private lands represent historic mining claims, homesteads, and important native activity. The area also contains a significant amount of state land, in Broad Pass, one of the most scenic portions of the drive.

Page 2 paragraph 4. Suggest adding to the last sentence "...document, but recognizes the Parks Highway for its intrinsic values of national significance."

Page 4. Please add Palmer and Wasilla to the Map.

Page 5 Paragraph 1. Native should be capitalized

Suggest listing all six intrinsic values.

The last sentence should be confirmed. Why would a road of regional significance be designated a National Scenic Byway? I thought the difference between a National Scenic Byway and an All American Road is that the former has one intrinsic value and the latter has at least two intrinsic values of national significance.

Page 7 paragraph 2 line 2. Add 'Fairbanks' in front of North Star Borough.

Page 9 paragraph 1 line 13. Add 'land' in front of mammals. Also, earlier the five largest mammals mentioned are brown bear, moose, caribou, wolf and Dall's sheep. I think elk and black bears are larger than caribou, wolves and sheep. These statements should be confirmed for accuracy sake.

Page 9 paragraph 4. The other distinction that Mt. McKinley has is that it has the highest vertical face of any mountain in the world. It rises from 900+ feet to its summit. This should be confirmed and woven into this paragraph.

Page 10, paragraph 4. Swans, loons, waterfowl are generally migratory and do not claim Broad Pass as home base. They use the area either as a stop-over on their trip north, or as breeding and brooding grounds during the summer.

Page 11 paragraph 3 line one. Protection should be replaced with 'jurisdiction'. Not all lands along the byway are in a protected status. It would seem that text should be dedicated to describing the private and native owned lands and their history in order to raise the level of interest of those stakeholders. The majority of the text seems to focus on the lands already in a protected status. The state and park service are already bought in to the byway process.

Page 13 paragraph 3. Hunting and fishing needs to be incorporated into this paragraph.

Page 13 paragraph 6. The South Denali development warrants its own heading and the discussion should be expanded.

Page 14 paragraph 3. Let's not upset the good folks of Willow and Kashwitna. There are wonderful views of Denali much earlier than mile 132.

Page 16 paragraph 5 line 13. Replace Captain Cook with Dr. Cook.

Page 17 paragraph 1 line one. Is it woof or roof?

Page 19 paragraph 4 line 6. Is it Mary's or Mary Cary's....?

Page 20. Discussion of communities. I think that McKinley Village, Trapper Creek and possibly Talkeetna should be included in the discussion of byway communities.

Page 28 Table 2. Should Milepost 232 be 132. This represents a very high accident rate for a very short distance of the byway.

Page 29. The discussion of air service should be expanded to identify Talkeetna as the major hub for flight seeing in the Denali area.

Page 30. Again, the discussion of interchanges and frontage roads point to a very significant investment for a very low volume portion of the Parks Highway. What is the timeframe for these investments and do they represent the priority of DOT within the next 20 years? DOT should review this discussion very closely given the extreme funding constraints that they are facing.

Paragraph McKinley Park-Nenana Canyon. Should 'cut and clover' be 'cut and cover'?

Page 33 paragraph 3. The discussion of South Denali needs to include its recommendations for recreation opportunities south of the byway in the Trapper Creek and Petersville area. Trapper Creek should be considered a gateway community.

Page 34 paragraph 3. This paragraph is not inclusive enough of all the entities involved. The local borough, state and federal agencies should be recognized by name. The Mat Su Convention and Visitors Bureau and its sister agency in the Denali Borough should be named as well.

Page 37 Denali Country Gateway. The Alaska Railroad should be included in this discussion. Also stories about the gateway communities of Healy, Cantwell and Trapper Creek should be included in this section as heading.

Page 40 Goal 2 Objective B. The word 'protection' should be replaced with 'conservation and wise development' of natural resources.....

Page 40 Goal 4. Somewhere there should be a goal or objective that relates to economic development consistent with tying it to the goals and objectives of the byway and local and state governments.

Recommend inserting the following goals and objectives and bumping existing goals 4 and 5 to goals 5 and 6.

New Goal 4. Recognize and develop the importance of the byway to the local and regional economy including tourism, mining, Alaska Railroad and government activities.

Objective A. Use the byway as a focal point for a public, government, and business partnership to provide and enhance the byway along with related economic benefits.

Page 40 Goal '5'. Insert 'tourism' before marketing. Add an objective along the lines of: Use the byway as a nexus for celebrating and developing the local and regional economy.

Page 40 Goal '6' Objective B. Add 'air' after via.

Page 41. There should be a thoughtful conclusion added neatly tying the CPP together and reminding the reader why this Byway is so special.

Page 44. Recommend ensuring that all participants and stakeholders that provided input for the plan be listed. It may be appropriate to include Bonnie Quill from the Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau.

A second appendix may be appropriate listing all the hotels, lodges and guest services located along the byway by milepost to identify these resources and help develop buy in for the proposal.

Please contact Emerson Krueger, at 745-9854 or Eileen Probasco, at 746-7431, if you have any questions.



April 1, 2008

Ms. Penny Bauder
ADNR-State Parks
550 West Seventh Avenue, Ste. 1340
Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

Dear Ms. Bauder:

DRAFT PARKS BYWAY PLAN

After Ahtna staff attended the first Parks Byway meeting in Healy last February, we have been unable to attend any recent meetings due to conflicting schedules; however, we have been kept updated with your prompt emails of past meetings.

Aside from the attached recommended changes, it is desirous of Ahtna to not be limited on any future development plans that may currently exist or may exist in the future along the Parks Highway. It appears that statements in the Draft Parks Byway Plan lean towards the non-development side versus the wise use of natural resources and development, particularly in regards to private landowners' rights. Our lands are sacred to our people and by no means would Ahtna allow improper development to occur; however, we have a right to develop our land for the best traditional and economic interest of our shareholders and cannot support a corridor plan that would limit or prohibit our ability to promote future development of our lands.

As Ahtna lands on the Parks Highway corridor extend from mile 191 to 230, we have a significant amount of acreage that may be negatively impacted in terms of future development as it is related to this draft plan, the scope of which seems to be leaning towards anti-development in this draft plan. With that said, we cannot support any corridor plan that may limit our ability to development our lands as we determine to be in the best interests of our shareholders and corporation.

Also, it would be welcome to have information in the Parks Byway Plan instructing motorists of the private property along the corridor and applicable permits required.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES:

Natural Quality Challenges and Opportunities

One of the things that makes the Parks Byway such an extraordinary scenic and pleasurable drive is that there is very little development. The byway's natural qualities and the fact that it winds through the backcountry of Alaska augment and enhance its other intrinsic qualities. As such, sustainable development and preservation of the natural qualities that make this corridor so remarkable is of high importance.

The majority of undeveloped lands surrounding the Parks Byway fall under protection of the National Park Service and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, agencies that actively manage these lands in the public's best interests. **Other land managers include the Bureau of Land Management, University of Alaska and Matanuska-Susitna and Denali boroughs. There are also numerous private landowners including Alaska Native Corporations, Cook Inlet Regional Corporation and Ahtna Incorporated. There is current and pending development guidelines, zoning requirements and land-use designations in-place to ensure that natural resources, including human residents, are not compromised during future development.**

World-Class Snowmobiling. In terms of accessibility and vistas, the area around Cantwell, especially treeless Broad Pass, offers nationally significant cross-country snowmobiling conditions. While on one of the lowest-elevated mountain passes in the nation, snowmobilers can take in panoramic views of beautiful Broad Pass, including the largest mountain in North America, during a day trip from the transportation hubs of either Anchorage or Fairbanks. In the winter, Cantwell becomes a fantasyland for snowmobilers. During this time of year, pullouts along the Parks Byway near Cantwell are often full of empty snowmobile trailers, their owners off playing in the deep snow on the wide-open tundra. Once the snow falls, these pullouts become great jumping-off points for more remote destinations made accessible by the snow pack. Cantwell is also a popular staging area for snowmobiling on the unmaintained Denali Highway. Denali National Park and Preserve permits the use of snowmobiling in some areas. **Many areas along these sections of highway are private property and require a land-use permit to access.*

Ms. Penny Bauder
Page 2
April 1, 2008

As stated in the Draft "...the greatest threat to the recreation resources of the Parks Byway is marginal funding provided to state and federal parks given the ever-growing demand for recreation access. "With the influx of recreationists we are encountering a huge and growing problem of trespass activity on all Ahtna owned lands and would appreciate any help from your agency as possible.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments for such a beautiful area.

Sincerely,

AHTNA, INCORPORATED



Brenda Rebne
V.P. Corporate Affairs

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enclosure