

Seppala Drive Upgrades (Project No. Z620020000/00S828)

Nome Port Road Reconstruction (Project No. Z621230000/0002278)

## **Public and Agency Involvement Report**

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The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated November 3, 2017 and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has assumed the responsibilities of the Federal Highway Administration under 23 U.S.C. 327, and has initiated Categorical Exclusions (CEs) for two separate projects in Nome, Alaska along Seppala Drive and Port Road.

The Seppala Drive Upgrades project would rehabilitate approximately 1.3 miles of Seppala Drive between Bering Street and Airport Terminal Road to address poor conditions of pavement, drainage, and lack of pedestrian facilities. The project is needed because Seppala Drive is aging and deteriorated with sinkholes, erosion, and ponding in the roadway. Its culverts are damaged or may be undersized, and the pedestrian route is discontinuous and is not Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant.

The Nome Port Road Reconstruction project would reconstruct and improve approximately 0.6 miles of Port Road between Submarine Beach Road and Jetty Road to address issues with pavement, intersections, and the lack of continuous pedestrian facilities. Port Road experiences high activity, area groundcover is well-compacted, the roadway contains drainage problems, and existing facilities need improvements to enhance safety and access for pedestrians.

This public and agency involvement report presents results of public and agency scoping for the Seppala Drive Upgrades and Nome Port Road Reconstruction projects and other relevant background information learned during the scoping process. Records of meetings and all correspondence are appended to this document (Appendix A).

## 2. SCOPING METHODS

### 2.1 AGENCY SCOPING

On October 26, 2017, a letter was sent via email to agencies informing them of the Seppala Drive Upgrades and Nome Port Road Rehabilitation projects. The letter requested scoping comments and included information on the purpose and need for the project, proposed action, existing site conditions, and preliminary environmental research, and defined the comment period end date. Figures of the projects' location and vicinity, proposed action overviews, scopes of work, and preliminary environmental research were enclosed. The letter requested written comments, recommendations, and additional information, and invited agencies to contact DOT&PF with questions.

Written and verbal agency comments were accepted by mail, email, and telephone, and the agency comment period ended on November 26, 2017. On December 20, 2017, PDC Engineers, a contractor to DOT&PF, requested further comments from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Division of Spill Prevention and Response, and ADEC provided a comment. Five agencies provided seven comments via email. Agency comments are summarized in Table 1 and are included in full in Appendix A.

**Table 1. Agency Scoping Comment Summary<sup>[1]</sup>**

DATE RECEIVED	AGENCY	NAME	COMMENTS RECEIVED
10/06/17	ADEC, Division of Water	William Ashton	Regarding both projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ADEC letter of non-objection and non-domestic storm water plan review will not be required.</li> </ul>
11/08/17	Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Habitat Division	Parker Bradley	Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry Creek supports rearing coho salmon and Dolly Varden, and the culvert under Seppala Drive should be designed for fish passage.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The culvert appears to be tidally-influenced. Local biologists report coho salmon spawning in the creek. If so, a May through July work window is required.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Snake River, adjacent to Seppala Drive, contains all five Pacific salmon species, and the project area contains spawning habitat for pink and sockeye salmon, Dolly Varden, and whitefish.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A permit will be required if Seppala Drive slope protection extends below Snake River ordinary high water (OHW).</li> <li>○ July through April/May timing windows may be enforced to protect spawning salmon.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A permit is likely unnecessary for culvert replacement west of Center Creek Road. This creek not known to support fish.</li> </ul>

<sup>[1]</sup>All of the comments, meeting summaries, and conversation logs are included in Appendix A.

DATE RECEIVED	AGENCY	NAME	COMMENTS RECEIVED
11/15/17	ADEC, Environmental Health Drinking Water Program	Rebecca Baril	<p>Regarding both projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project lies outside of the Drinking Water Protection Area for Nome’s public water system source, no other intersections or concerns are of concern, and the Drinking Water Protection group has no further comments.</li> </ul>
11/27/17	Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources (ADNR), Northern Region	Diana Leinberger	<p>Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Navigability Section determination is not yet available; the project could place fill below Dry Creek OHW, which is likely unnavigable, and Snake River, which appears navigable.</li> <li>• Work conducted below navigable OHW requires ADNR authorization. If work is within DOT&amp;PF airport boundaries, ADNR authorization is not needed.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding both projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material sources were not identified. It is assumed that material will come from private commercial sites or a DOT&amp;PF site within airport boundaries. ADNR does not require material authorization but is responsible for reviewing and approving all material site mining and reclamation plans regardless of land ownership per AS 27.19.</li> </ul>
11/27/17	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Amal Ajmi	<p>Regarding both projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The projects may adversely impact three threatened species: Spectacled and Alaska-breeding Steller’s Eiders, which may migrate through the area, and polar bears, which occasionally occur in the Nome area, especially in winter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ DOT&amp;PF should contact USFWS Planning and Consultation about required Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations when plans are finalized.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recommend implementing current Best Management Practices for minimizing introduction and proliferation of invasive species.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project wetlands provide resident and migratory bird, fox, weasel, and muskox habitat.</li> <li>• Seppala Drive’s Dry Creek culvert is perched and too narrow for free exchange of tidal influences to lower Dry and Bourbon Creek wetlands. The restricted exchange of seawater may have unintended consequences, including replacing a brackish or estuarine ecosystem with a freshwater ecosystem. USFWS appreciates replacing the culvert to restore tidal exchange.</li> </ul>

DATE RECEIVED	AGENCY	NAME	COMMENTS RECEIVED
			<p>Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADF&amp;G’s anadromous waters catalog identifies Dry Creek as supporting rearing coho salmon (which may also spawn there) and Dolly Varden. Seppala Drive’s current culvert restricts free tidal exchange with lower Dry and Bourbon Creek wetlands and degrades fish passage and the hydrologic, hydraulic, geomorphic, physiochemical, and biologic functions that support fish and habitat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Replace culvert with full-span culvert/bridge for aquatic species passage and re-establishing tidal exchange.</li> <li>○ Work with USFWS, ADF&amp;G, and stakeholders for onsite restoration to improve connectivity and restore stream function to Dry and Bourbon Creeks and wetlands.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
11/29/17	City of Nome, Port of Nome and City Engineer	Joy Baker and John Blee	<p>Regarding Port Road Reconstruction project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Port Road is essential to port operations.</li> <li>• Forming a ditchline on Port Road’s east – southeast side with individual driveways would be problematic for commercial/industrial operations.</li> <li>• A roadway to shoulder smooth transition is required especially at Tract A. Varying equipment and vessels in this area require the current flexibility to enter the roadway. Area drainage flows predominantly from the road towards Snake River. If Port Road is elevated, a smooth transition matching flow direction should be maintained.</li> <li>• Future small boat harbor development will rely on Snake River and Port Road Lots 2 and 3 areas connectivity. Driveways would constrain travel-lift operations.</li> <li>• United States Air Force’s (USAF’s) Lot 5 contaminated site status was closed with institutional controls above Port Road existing elevation. The City intends to acquire this property for vessel and cargo storage. USAF and ADEC should be contacted to identify access constraints.</li> <li>• Consider that another recent project was required to limit vibratory compaction equipment due to port pad tank farm fuel tank adjacency; contact tank farm owners/operators.</li> <li>• Especially consider aligning existing intersection at position #5 with current functions. A raised concrete median could be placed inside the triangle, with beach traffic transiting along the triangle’s upper side.</li> </ul> <p>Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define a drainage path for storm water flowing down Seppala Drive’s south side, crossing West F Street. Sheet flow causes road surface deterioration.</li> </ul>

DATE RECEIVED	AGENCY	NAME	COMMENTS RECEIVED
			Regarding Seppala Drive Upgrades project (continued): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider a subsurface drainage structure with top inlet and catch basin, and equip subsurface piped drainage with electrical heat trace.</li> </ul>
12/27/17	ADEC, Contaminated Sites Program	Evonne Reese	Regarding Port Road Reconstruction project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nome New Power Plant site record is in Cleanup Complete with Institutional Controls status and is unlikely to impact the project.</li> <li>• Petroleum-contaminated soil pockets remain and should be avoided. A contaminated soil pockets map and ADEC technical guidance for managing petroleum-contaminated soil and groundwater was provided.</li> <li>• Nome New Power groundwater contamination management will be covered in the project storm water discharge permit.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 PUBLIC SCOPING

An open-house-style public meeting to present the projects and solicit comments from the public was held on November 14, 2017 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Old St. Joe’s in Nome. Open house materials displayed included each projects purpose, needs that will be addressed, and considerations that necessitated the projects. Location figures and typical project cross sections were depicted for meeting attendees, and project details and schedules were displayed. Upon arrival, attendees were welcomed, asked to sign-in, and supplied an open house station overview, describing the open house content and format. Attendees were encouraged to talk with the project team and to provide verbal and written comments. Open house materials are provided in Appendix B.

An open house public notice was posted to the Alaska State Public Notice website on October 27, 2017, requesting comments by December 15, 2017. Display advertisements were published in the *Nome Nugget* on October 26, November 2, and November 9, 2017. Informational mailers were postmarked to 76 residences, businesses, and stakeholders by November 6, 2017. In addition, informational flyers and door hangers advertising the open house were hand-delivered to businesses and residences along Seppala Drive and Port Road, and posters were hung on community bulletin boards. Outreach materials are provided in Appendix B.



Image 1. Open house attendees discuss Seppala Drive.



Image 2. Open house attendees discuss Port Road.



Image 3. Open house attendees talk with the project team.

More than twenty-five people attended the open house. (Twenty-five people signed in.) Comments were received verbally from discussions with the project team and in writing during the open house. Verbal comments and the five written comments that were received are summarized and presented in Table 2. All written comments are included in full in Appendix B.

**Table 2. Public Scoping Comment Summary**

<b>PORT ROAD RECONSTRUCTION</b>	
Regarding Precipitation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water accumulates on the northeast side of the Port Road and Jafet Road intersection.</li> <li>• Snow accumulates at all Port Road and Jafet Road intersection corners. The City removes it often.</li> </ul>	
Regarding Safety and Visibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Port Road / Jetty Road intersection is dangerous because fuel trucks do not yield to traffic.</li> <li>• It is difficult for Jetty Road southbound traffic that is turning left onto Port Road to see southbound traffic on Port Road and know whether that traffic is going left or right at the “Y” in order to know whether they need to yield at the intersection or not.</li> </ul>	

**(PORT ROAD RECONSTRUCTION CONTINUED)**

Regarding Pedestrians / Pedestrians and Shoulder Widening

- Not a lot of people walk along Port Drive.
- People from research vessels walk into town in the summer.
- No pedestrians on Port Drive in the winter.
- A separated pedestrian pathway is preferred by Port officials and residents along Port Road.
- Widening the shoulder is a good idea; but, there is concern about maintaining separation/safety to pedestrians as trucks will likely give themselves more space when passing.

Regarding Access

- Driveways will not work for operations along Port Drive. They need unimpeded road access.

Regarding Design

- The Jetty Road intersection needs to be designed with Port related freight traffic as a priority.

Regarding Snake River Bridge

- Raise the approach for vehicles and equipment to safely leave and enter the bridge.
- It is difficult to see oncoming traffic, and single lanes tend to block traffic from the current bridge.
- Lighting on the bridge needs to be improved in order to increase visibility.
- Reflective material should be placed on the guardrails to increase bridge safety.
- The Snake River Bridge needs a pedestrian pathway.

**SEPPALA DRIVE UPGRADES**

Regarding Lighting

- Lights are needed along the entire road.
- Lights are needed along the proposed separated pathway.

Regarding Pedestrians

- Runners could use a separated pathway. It would be safer than the road.
- A bike/pedestrian pathway is needed to increase safety even if it does not extend the entire length of the project.

Regarding Driveways, Parking, and Access

- Will my driveway stay the same?
- Driveway entrances at 607 and 609 Seppala Drive should be combined into one large entrance instead of two separate entrances with a landing in between.

Regarding Safety

- The Center Creek Road intersection near the bridge is very dangerous.



**BOTH PROJECTS**

Regarding the Public Open House

- I don't like the sign in sheet. The information asking about race on the sign in sheet is offensive.
- It was too bad that the open house coincided with the Alaska Municipal League conference taking place in Anchorage.
- The open house was not advertised enough.

Regarding Pedestrians

- Excited to see that pedestrian traffic is being considered in the project plans.

Regarding Lighting

- Lighting during dark hours would be good to help people avoid piling, rough ice, and shallows.

Following the public open house, on November 14, 2017, the project team met with project stakeholders including the City of Nome, Port of Nome, and Nome Joint Utility System as well as with Kawerak, Inc. The meeting highlights are included in Appendix B.