

JOINT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE | MEETING 3

March 6, 2023, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Objective

Review the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) process and schedule. Share the alternative screening criteria and revisions made based on feedback, present the draft Level 1 screening and detailed alternatives, and receive input.

Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, and Agenda Outline

PEL Study Process and Schedule

Public Involvement Update

Origin-Destination Study Update

Level 1 Screening Results

Detailed Alternatives

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

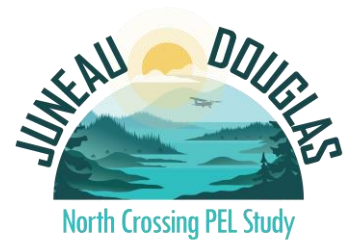
Attendees — PEL Study Team

Name

Marie Heidemann, Project Manager
Christina Mounce
Christy Gentemann
Nathan Purves
Greg Lockwood
Alexandria Lawrence
Alec Venechuk
Irene Gallion
Steve Noble
Nina Keller
Renee Whitesell
Sean Holland

Organization

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
City and Borough of Juneau
City and Borough of Juneau
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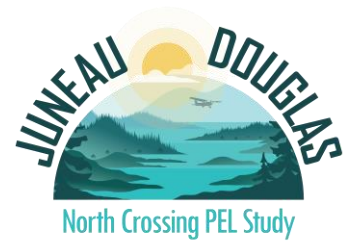
Theresa Dutchuk	DOWL
Morgan McCammon	DOWL
Talli Vittetoe	DOWL
Michael Horntvedt	Parametrix

Attendees — Technical Advisory Committee Members

Name	Organization
Katie Koester	City and Borough of Juneau
George Schaaf	City and Borough of Juneau
Cody Hargreaves	Alaska Airlines
Tristan Fluharty	United States Forest Service
Phil Adams	Juneau Airport
Patty Wahto	Juneau Airport
David Gann	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries
Molly Zaleski	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries
Nichole Bjornlie	United States Fish and Wildlife Services
Jesse Lindgren	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Kate Kanouse	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Krista Garrett	Southeast Alaska Land Trust
Betsy McCracken	Environmental Protection Agency
James Rypkema	Department of Environmental Conservation
Adeyemi Alimi	Department of Environmental Conservation
Randal Vigil	United States Army Corps of Engineers

Attendees — Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Name	Organization
Maria Gladziszewski	City and Borough of Juneau Assembly
Wade Bryson	City and Borough of Juneau Assembly
Christine Woll	City and Borough of Juneau Assembly
Ron Somerville	Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Frank Rue	Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Alex Wertheimer	Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Dave Hanna	Access Alaska
Caleb Yates	State Senator Kiehl's Office
Sara Hannan	State House of Representatives
Teri Tibbett	Bonnie Brae Neighborhood Association & Douglas Advisory Board
Steven Sahlender	Goldbelt, Inc.
Winston Smith	Juneau Audubon Society
Natalee Rothaus	Resident
Freda Westman	Resident



Summary

Introduction

Marie Heidemann, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Project Manager, opened the meeting by welcoming committee members, reviewing the agenda, introducing the project team, and establishing the meeting purpose. She reviewed the study area and noted the addition of the boundaries of the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge (Refuge) to the study area graphic. She presented an overview of the study schedule by reviewing past milestones and highlighting the study status. Marie mentioned the upcoming Advisory Committee Meeting #4 and noted the project team will be reaching out to get input on the format for this meeting.

Public Involvement Update

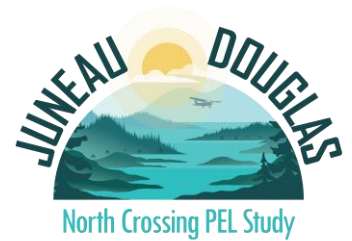
Nina Keller (DOWL) presented a brief public involvement update, highlighting the technical and stakeholder advisory committee meetings, stakeholder and agency alternatives workshop, public meetings, over 200 verbal and written comments received, and 1,012 survey responses following Public Open House #2. She reviewed the list of organizations who have been involved in small group meetings and agency meetings. Nina then detailed the survey results and summary, highlighting:

- More than two thirds of the survey respondents supported a north crossing at some location.
- Overall respondents favored the locations that are not within proximity of the current crossing.
- Many respondents who selected the Sunny Point and Vanderbilt alternatives mentioned the proximity to the hospital.
- Other comments indicated support for a crossing at the point furthest north to connect residents on North Douglas to Juneau and to increase development on the north and west sides of Douglas Island.
- More than half of the respondents mentioned environmental impacts to the Refuge and wildlife in the area as important considerations.

In the meeting chat, a participant requested clarification on why the “No Build” alternative was not included on the slide with the survey respondents crossing location preferences. Steve responded the graphic was made this way because the survey allowed respondents to comment on more than one alternative, including the “No Build” alternative. This skewed the presentation of the graphics for those who preferred the “No Build” option but selected other preliminary alternatives as acceptable locations. The study team does have a graphic that shows seventy percent being in favor of a north crossing and thirty percent not favoring it and added that the study team will review if the “No Build” alternative could be incorporated into the graphic without adding confusion.

Level 1 Screening

Renee Whitesell (DOWL) presented an overview of the alternative development and screening process, Level 1 screening criteria, purpose and need for the study, and screening revisions based on comments received from the advisory committees and the public. She noted the study team has undertaken early engineering analysis for the preliminary alternatives presented in November 2022, including potential start and end points for a crossing and associated infrastructure.



Origin-Destination Study

Steve Noble (DOWL Project Manager) presented the draft findings of the origin-destination study, noting it is not yet complete. He highlighted how the study team acquired traffic data and assumptions on traffic volumes that would use the bridge based on the study's results. Approximately 75 percent of the traffic using the existing bridge comes from South Douglas Highway and 25 percent from North Douglas Highway. Steve reviewed the table that depicted how motorists would respond to travel time and distance at these alternative routes. He noted that the project team grouped some preliminary alternatives together because of the level of confidence in the data at this point in the study. The origin-destination study would be made available once completed.

A participant requested further clarification on the table depicting estimated percentage of traffic that would use the north crossing, specifically the Downtown alternative adjacent to the existing bridge, in the meeting chat. Steve responded that the closer the alignment gets to the existing bridge, the more traffic would evenly disperse between the two bridges. Based on travel time and distance, more traffic would use a bridge closer to the existing bridge.

Another participant noted in the meeting chat this analysis is based on existing uses and does not take future development on north or west Douglas into consideration. Steve responded that the origin-destination study was based on existing roads and traffic. If more development happens on west or north Douglas, traffic using a north crossing would likely increase.

A participant asked if the project team will be estimating the travel time savings in minutes. Steve responded that it would be part of the origin-destination study that will be released once complete.

Level 1 Screening Results

Steve then presented the Level 1 screening results for each preliminary alternative and stated that participants would have the opportunity to provide feedback.

Mendenhall Peninsula

The Mendenhall Peninsula alternative is not recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared that this preliminary alternative had potential to adversely impact neighborhoods and viewsheds, would require significant earthworks, and have high costs due to the structure length.

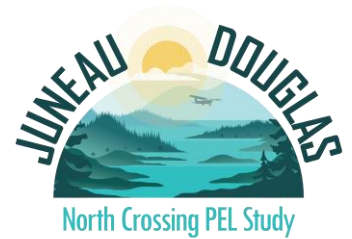
A participant in the meeting chat requested preliminary cost estimates for each alternative. Steve responded that cost estimates would be shared as part of the Level 2 screening process.

North Airport

The North Airport alternative is not recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve highlighted construction and maintenance cost concerns for the tunnel, geotechnical challenges with isostatic rebound and soil conditions, and potential airport operations impacts.

West Sunny Point Area

The West Sunny Point Area alternative is recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared the advantages of this alternative as using CBJ property, avoiding Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) conservation property, and travel time reductions for the largest number of users. Additional analysis would be needed to determine potential for impacts to residential areas, visual, and the environment.



A participant requested clarification on assumptions for structure types and evaluation of airport and channel navigation issues in the meeting chat. Steve responded that, while it is not a foregone conclusion that a crossing at this location would be an elevated structure, the language designating the Refuge would make it difficult to do anything that is not an elevated structure.

Sunny Point Area

The Sunny Point Area alternative is recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared the advantages of this alternative to include using CBJ property, using the Sunny Point interchange at Egan Drive, and central location between downtown Juneau and Mendenhall Valley. Additional analysis would be needed to determine potential for impacts to residential areas, visual, and the environment.

A participant commented that both Sunny Point alternatives would impact Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) conservation properties and wetland mitigation sites under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. A crossing in those areas will likely increase the regulatory complexity and cost for those alternatives.

A participant asked for clarification on why the study team was considering both Sunny Point Area and West Sunny Point alternatives, given similar benefits. Steve responded that there are potential impacts of going further to the west. The airport has shared feedback with the study team for a preference for alternatives to the east. He added that because the West Sunny Point Area and Sunny Point Area alternatives are similar, not much additional effort would be needed to include both.

Vanderbilt

The Vanderbilt alternative is recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared the advantages of this alternative to include using CBJ property, using an existing interchange at Egan Drive, and central location between downtown Juneau and Mendenhall Valley. Additional analysis would be needed to determine potential for impacts to residential areas, the environment, and visual impacts..

Twin Lakes

The Twin Lakes alternative is recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared the advantages of this alternative having a shorter crossing span and central location between downtown Juneau and Mendenhall Valley. Additional analysis would be needed to determine potential for impacts to residential areas, the environment, traffic patterns, and visual impacts.

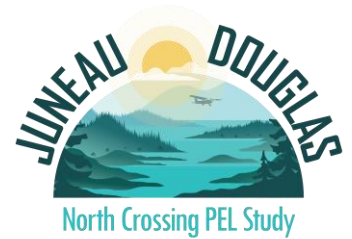
Salmon Creek

The Salmon Creek alternative is recommended to advance to detailed alternative development. Steve shared the advantages of this alternative being outside of the Refuge, near an existing intersection with Egan Drive, and close to Bartlett Regional Hospital. Additional analysis would be needed to determine potential for impacts to commercial properties, freight, and the environment.

In the chat, a participant asked if dredging could be considered as part of an alternative to move the navigable channel. Steve responded that the US Coast Guard raised the topic of dredging early in the process, indicating that when evaluating the height of the bridge the study team must consider the existing channel being dredged to allow larger vessels to cross under it. The topic of dredging is often discussed with the community and the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ).

Eagle Creek

The Eagle Creek alternative is not recommended to advance. Steve shared that this alternative does not meet the purpose and need and would be impacted by a landslide hazard designated area.



A participant requested additional information on the single route closure argument and why that would affect Eagle Creek but not Salmon Creek and Twin Lakes. Steve responded that the project team has determined that there is a landslide hazard area between Eagle Creek, Salmon Creek, and the existing bridge that creates potential risks of closure of Egan Drive and Douglas Highway.

Downtown

The Downtown alternative is not recommended to advance. Steve shared that this alternative does not meet the purpose and need, would not reduce travel or emergency response times, and would be impacted by a landslide hazard designated area.

No Build

Steve discussed how the “No Build” alternative does not provide any action, does not generate any impacts, and does not meet the purpose and need. The study team will carry the “No Build” alternative forward to the next stage of screening to provide a baseline against which to evaluate the other alternatives.

Detailed Alternatives and Level 2 Screening

Steve showed the updated map with detailed alternatives moving forward into Level 2 screening and highlighted that the result of Level 2 screening will be the recommended alternatives that will be carried forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase and other environmental processes.

Marie then presented the next steps in the PEL study process. Marie noted that the study team will be receiving feedback on the detailed alternatives resulting from Level 1 screening presented and shared the contact information for the study team.

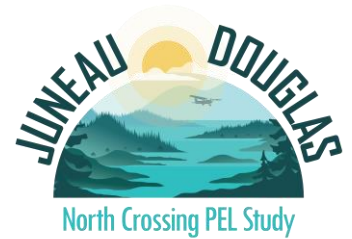
Questions and Answers

Renee proposed to extend the meeting beyond the scheduled end time to continue answering questions and receiving feedback.

A participant asked if the project team would analyze the capacity of the North Douglas Highway to safely accommodate traffic at each of the crossings, and if a bench road would be considered in the screening analysis. Steve responded that the origin-destination study will analyze projected traffic for each of the detailed alternatives carried forward into Level 2 screening.

A participant commented that because this does not take future development into consideration, he thought the process would not be complete regarding freight and fuel trucked through downtown and avalanche and slide zones. He would like to see freight and fuel facilities developed on West Douglas and would like to see the Mendenhall Peninsula and North Airport alternatives returned to consideration. He believed those alternatives would not need a tunnel but could be constructed using an elevated structure. He also preferred the northern routes because they do not cross residential or commercial properties. He recommended additional study for each alternative before any are eliminated.

A participant asked for clarification on who would make decisions on which alternatives would move forward, and how this PEL study would decrease the time for further study and spending in the future. Steve responded that this is a DOT&PF and CBJ project, and that the study team includes those entities and DOWL as the study consultant. The study team will respond to feedback as the study continues and will recommend alternatives to move into a next phase at the end of the PEL study. Marie added that the PEL study is a defined process that



moves through a screening methodology. The next phase will include more quantitative data review. The decision on which alternatives move forward will be based on the application of the screening methodology.

In the chat, a participant asked if wetland mitigation assumed to have same value as impacted wetlands. Nina responded that this would be part of a permitting process in the future.

A participant commented that eliminating Eagle Creek creates a problem in that a transportation project cannot go through the Refuge if a reasonable alternative is available. He asked if the project team provide degrees of impact to the Refuge for various alternatives. Marie clarified that the study team will evaluate relative impact in Level 2 screening. Nina responded that Eagle Creek is not moving forward because it is in a hazard zone for landslides and avalanches. Irene Gallion, CBJ Project Liaison, shared the online location for the CBJ Landslide and Avalanche Assessment.

A participant commented on the difference between a structurally supported roadway and an embankment fill structure and asked if that was factored into Level 1 screening. Steve responded that the study team will analyze both structure types in the Level 2 screening.

A participant asked if interested people not participating in the meeting would have a chance to give feedback before the upcoming comment deadline. Marie responded that at this stage, the study team would be relying on the advisory committees to represent distinct groups and to review how the study team applied the screening methodology. Steve added that the study team recently concluded a thirty-day comment period where the public could view and comment on the alternatives.

In the meeting chat, a participant thanked the study team for providing the meeting materials in advance of the meeting for review ahead of time. They planned to submit a written response to the memo, providing more detailed concerns about the alternatives and impacts. The participant asked when the study team would share the traffic study, engineering design criteria (referenced in the memo), public survey results, and any other analysis supporting this screening process. Renee responded that the screening analysis and the comments received to date will be attached to the PEL study as appendices and added that the team can share the survey analysis. Steve responded that while there is no specific date, the items requested will be available within the next two to three months.

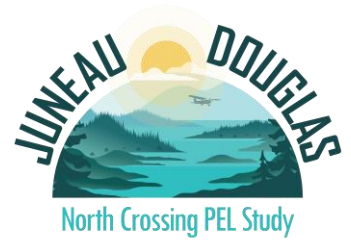
A participant shared that they would like Mendenhall Peninsula and North Airport alternatives returned to be further analyzed in Level 2 screening and suggested that the screening may not be accurate due to the lack of consideration for potential future development in the meeting chat.

In the meeting chat, a participant shared that from an air quality perspective, Mendenhall Peninsula and North Airport alternatives fall within the Mendenhall Valley PM10 Maintenance Area and would need to meet the transportation conformity requirements per the Clean Air Act for engineering and the NEPA process.

A participant asked in the meeting chat if the Coast Guard would allow a lift type of bridge to meet the criteria for the site alternative chosen. Steve responded that it is a possibility, and that it was a concept evaluated in the 2007 Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

A participant commented in the meeting chat regarding 4(f) impacts to the Refuge, Salmon Creek may be a least problematic alternative.

Steve and Marie thanked participants for providing robust conversation and feedback during the meeting.



Action Items

Study Team:

- Post meeting materials to the study website.
- Share survey results and analysis with the advisory committees.
- Review if community preference for the No Build alternative could be incorporated into the survey response preferred alternatives graphic.

Committee Members:

- Provide additional feedback by March 20, 2023.
- Participate in the upcoming Advisory Committees Meeting #4.
- Monitor email for future study updates.