

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE #1

May 11, 2022, 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm, via Zoom

This planning document may be adopted in a subsequent environmental review process in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 168 Integration of Planning and Environmental Review.

This 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.

The virtual public open house meeting kicked off with a welcome and introductions, which was followed by the 11-minute pre-recorded presentation. Following the presentation, a live question and answer session was facilitated with participants asking questions verbally and via the chat function of the hosting platform.

More than 70 people participated, including 15 members from the project team.

Question and Comment Summary:

To encourage public participation, the team answered the following questions during quiet times:

- **The project has been looked at for many years, why is something not being built now?**

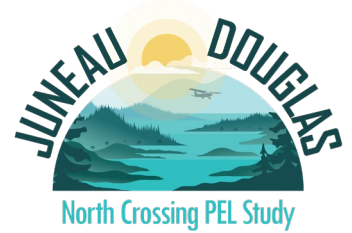
This PEL study starts from square one, using the work from previous studies to inform the process while incorporating conditions that have changed overtime. The PEL study allows public participation early, incorporating diverse opinions.

- **Will this PEL study consider widening the existing bridge?**

The study area extends to the existing bridge. Widening the existing bridge and providing a parallel bridge next to the existing bridge are options to be considered.

- **Would a bridge impact hunting at the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge and how would potential impacts be addressed?**

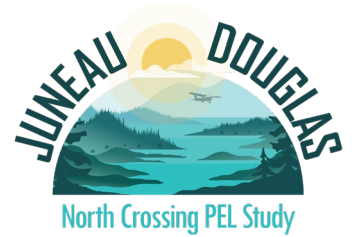
The team has documented that there is hunting and fishing at the refuge. The potential impacts to these activities are not known at this time. There are agencies participating on the Advisory Committees that can assist with determining these impacts based on alternatives identified.



- **How is this PEL study being funded?**
This study is funded with Federal Highway funding with a City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) match.
- **With limited funds, how would any potential project moving forward out of this study compete with other projects around the state?**
While this project may be larger than local and state funds can cover, there are many federal grant opportunities that could be applied for to receive funding, along with state earmarks and appropriations, along with other options.
- **How are alternative selection and criteria are established as part of a PEL study?**
The emerging themes presented at this meeting, along with public feedback will support the development of the purpose and need, which will be used to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks for each alternative. Stepped criteria will be developed to consider social, environmental, economic, and transportation factors to determine if each alternative meets the purpose and need of the project. After this, the team moves into a more qualitative analysis of remaining alternatives. Finally, the team applies a more quantitative screening that includes cost of each alternative. The Advisory Committees and public will have further opportunity to comment on the screening criteria and application as part of the PEL study process.
- **How are changes in technology, such as e-vehicles and smart vehicles, being accounted for in the PEL study?**
Traffic forecasts will consider future demands and changing technology. Dramatic changes are hard to predict.

Members of the public asked the following questions and made the following comments:

- **Is the project in the scoping phase?**
The PEL process occurs before National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process begins. Once alternatives are identified, issues related to those alternatives can be identified. The public was shown the project schedule, including its location on the website.
- **Would various project locations be expected to be impacted by glacial rebound?**
Over the past 40 years, there has been glacial rebound, causing changes to the Gastineau Channel. This could be a factor as glacial rebound impacts wetlands and hydrology. The team is in the process of collecting baseline conditions. A future decision to proceed would begin the official environmental process, with the work of the PEL Study informing that process.
- **How will the team forecast the intersection of isostatic rebound and rapid sea level rise?**
The future environmental process will look at these along with cumulative impacts of any project to move forward.
- **What is the soonest a project could be built?**

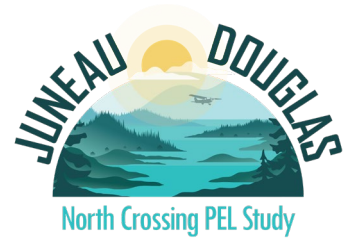


Currently only the PEL Study is funded. The environmental document and design phases are not yet funded. More information could be available when alternatives are reviewed later as a part of this process.

- North Douglas residents expressed concerns about where the crossings are proposed to be located and the potential impacts to people and their homes.
- A participant noted that if it is done properly, a north crossing could be an asset to the neighborhood.
- A participant commented that the process has been dragging on for too long.
- **What is the impact of this project on the CBJ's greenhouse gas emission goals?**
The baseline analysis will inform any future environmental process. The alternatives selected to move forward will then be further studied to identify the environmental consequences. A north crossing could potentially make transportation more efficient for CBJ and Douglas Island.
- Concerns were expressed about silt and glacial fill in the Gastineau Channel.
- **Where are places to build bridge abutments?**
It is too early in the process to answer this question. When alternatives are identified, these types of questions will be addressed as part of the evaluation.
- **Has an intersection evaluation been conducted to bound the scope and range of alternatives?**
An study of traffic at intersections on both the Juneau CBJ and Douglas Island sides of the existing Douglas Island Bridge is being conducted as part of the analysis of existing baseline conditions.
- **How involved will the airport and airlines be in the process?**
The airport, Alaska Airlines, and Delta Airlines have representatives on the Technical Advisory Committee to address potential impacts to the airport from identified alternatives.
- **What organizations are part of the Advisory Committees and how were the members selected?**
There are two Advisory committees: a Technical Advisory Committee and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The organizations invited to participate were selected based on involvement in previous studies, recommendations from the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and CBJ, and outreach to active groups. The groups invited offer diverse viewpoints while representing a specific community within the broader CBJ community. The lists below are the organizations that have committed to participating on these committees. Other organizations were invited and are being sent information.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee Organizations:

- Alaska Marine Lines
- Bonnie Brae Neighborhood Association

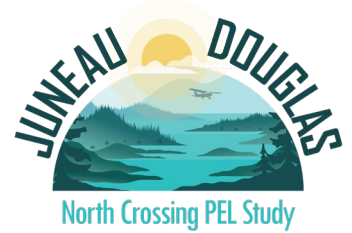


- Douglas Advisory Board
- CBJ – School District
- Fritz Cove Neighborhood Association
- Goldbelt, Inc.
- Greater Juneau Chamber of Commerce
- Juneau Audubon Society
- North Douglas Neighborhood Association
- Southeast Alaska Land Trust
- Southeast Alaska Watershed Coalition
- State Senate
- AK State Troopers
- Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Douglas Indian Association
- Juneau Economic Development Council
- Sealaska
- Juneau Assembly Representatives
- Southeast Conference
- Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group (MWSG)
- Territorial Sportsmen

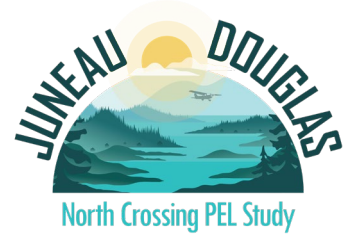
Technical Advisory Committee Organizations:

- State of Alaska DOT&PF Departments
 - State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
 - State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game
 - State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources
 - CBJ Departments
 - Juneau International Airport
 - National Marine Fisheries Service
 - United States Army Corps of Engineers
 - Southeast Alaska Land Trust
 - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
 - United States Coast Guard
 - United States Environmental Protection Agency
 - Alaska Airlines
 - Delta Airlines
- **Are the Advisory Committee meetings open to the public?**

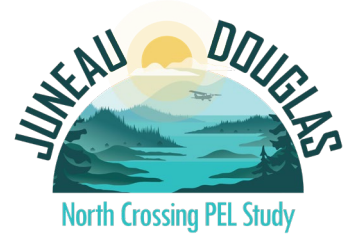
The meeting materials and summaries are available on the project website. The Advisory Committees are intended to be small groups providing more detailed input and feedback to the team from a segment of the community. The meetings take place immediately before public meetings and help to inform and shape information presented to the broader members of the public. If a member of the public has a specific topic of importance to the project that is not covered by an Advisory Member, the project team can consider appointing an additional member to represent that topic and those that are impacted by it.
 - Concerns were expressed about impacts to the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge from a potential crossing.



- The project team were encouraged to list environmental resources as an emerging theme for PEL Study's Purpose and Need. The team clarified that these themes are the reasons to develop a north crossing. Community values and the environmental setting will be considered and evaluated as part of the baseline conditions.
- A North Douglas Master Plan was requested as a mechanism to guide future development and to include considerations of any crossing alternatives.
- Concerns were expressed that a north crossing would permanently change the rural feel of north Douglas.
- Participants requested that any north crossing project should include improvements to the existing road systems on north Douglas.
- **Is CBJ planning to update Comprehensive Development Plan without impending projects?**
Irene Gallion answered on behalf of CBJ. An update to the Comprehensive Plan will restructure the Plan to be more high-level. There are so many goals and initiatives in the current plan that it is hard to focus on the community's intended direction. Ideally, a sub-area plan for north Douglas would allow neighbors to better shape or fine-tune the goals of their area. CBJ plans a press release when the Comprehensive Plan Update moves forward.
- **How far along in the process did earlier studies get and were environmental studies completed at those times?**
The most prominent previous study took place from 1983-1984 and looked at 14 alternative crossings. Some high-level environmental work was undertaken as part of that study. In 2007, this work was revisited as part of a draft Environmental Impact Statement to update the environmental data and cost analysis of the previous work. That effort paused in 2007. The new PEL study will consider the 2007 work completed as part of the baseline conditions, but much of it is more than 15 years old.
- **What are the relative cost and utility of non-bridge options to providing redundancy and emergency response? For example, a 24/7 ferry with fire and ambulance capability.**
All options are under consideration at this point in the study. This suggestion will be included in the record.
- **Will this plan address additional infrastructure on Douglas Island to accommodate an additional crossing?**
A bench road was considered under previous studies that would run parallel to the North Douglas Highway to provide additional access. Additional infrastructure can be considered as part of the PEL study.
- **What is a bench road, and will it be considered?**
A bench road was defined as a parallel, inland road to the existing North Douglas Highway. No options have been ruled out yet.



- **Will the study consider the impacts of landslides and avalanches for a no-build alternative? CBJ recently designated multiple locations along Egan Drive that are adjacent to Mt. Juneau as severe with a 30-yr recurring interval. If one of these locations were to slide what would the impacts be and how long would it take to resolve?**
The PEL study will evaluate this at a high-level as part of the emerging theme of redundancy.
- **Could a new crossing include new technologies such as tidal power generation for example?**
This suggestion will be included in the record. Once alternatives are identified, options such as this could be considered.
- **The Juneau Chamber of Commerce is lobbying for a deep-water port on the back (west) side of Douglas Island. Will this be considered as part of the study?**
The team is aware of the idea of a deep-water port on west Douglas Island to separate freight and tourism activities. This idea has been considered since the 1980s in cooperation with Goldbelt. This concept will require more cooperation and collaboration to move forward.
- **Is the presumption that a potential deep-water port will lower shipping cost a driving factor in this PEL study?**
Irene Gallion answered on behalf of CBJ. At this point, the idea of a deep-water port is about reducing emissions for transport of goods. The economics are uncertain. Private companies are reluctant to share proprietary strategic finances for use in publicly-available studies, as these are available to competitors. Deep water port economic studies would need to generalize the impacts and shelter the financial interests of individual companies.
- **Comments are being made about impacts to the Douglas Highway, but what about impacts to the North Douglas Highway, which is a different highway? The area around the Douglas Highway is highly populated and designed to be so. The North Douglas Highway is zoned rural residential, has important viewsheds, and extensive bike lanes. How would a crossing that connects to North Douglas Highway impact these important features?**
North Douglas Highway is the highway north of the existing bridge, while Douglas Highway is south of the existing bridge that extends down into the town of Douglas. The team has been using Douglas Highway interchangeably with North Douglas Highway during this conversation and will be more specific in the future to distinguish between the two highways. The circumstances for each highway are unique with differentiated impacts.
- Participants noted that north Douglas has a certain character, and this should be considered when evaluating any proposed alternative.
- Suggested alternative: From the point where the crossing intersects the North Douglas Highway, assume a tunnel through the island to about elevation 100 meters near Hilda Creek, to avoid most incremental traffic on North Douglas Highway. Tunnel alignment should transit the island directly below the Eaglecrest lodge, whereby the lodge is served by an elevator, to eliminate much skier and user traffic.



- **Can you look at environmental justice and gentrification impacts? If North Douglas land becomes more developable, will that help take pressure from displacing people outside of the study zone? How are you ensuring that underserved groups will not be harmed by these decisions?**

Reviewing environmental justice is required. Social and environmental conditions are included in the development of the baseline. Potential impacts of alternatives will be evaluated later.

- **Study options should also include (1) several assumptions about transportation modes and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for various vehicle sizes and (2) a range of assumptions about Juneau's potential, and intended, total population, in year 2050. Migration of present US citizens to escape fires and rapid sea level rise, for example, may bring thousands of people to share our long winters, and Juneau has isostatic rebound lifts Juneau faster than sea level rises, for about a century. How could CBJ accommodate this?**

The environmental document would include climate change as part of the evaluation. The team uses the Department of Labor, Census data, and historical trends to forecast future population trends.

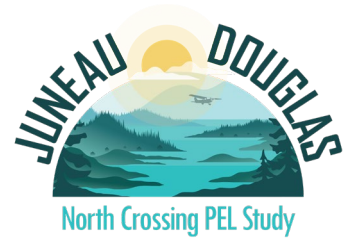
- **If we can free ourselves from private auto dependence to some extent, should the study include the consequences as alternative(s)?**

This could be part of the screening and evaluation of alternatives.

- **Is the Eaglecrest intersection with the North Douglas Highway a choice as a terminal location for an alternative crossing?**

This is an option that was considered previously and may be an alternative considered as part of this PEL study.

- A participant commented that the future will not be an extrapolation of the past, in Juneau, and elsewhere. "Outlier" options should be considered now so that we don't overlook these options too early in the process.
- A participant noted that an iconic image of Juneau is the Mendenhall Glacier. This bridge could be sited and designed to be an iconic image of Juneau, thereby enhancing tourism. rather than just being a bridge.
- A participant noted that tunnel boring is expensive, but the study team should compare Net Present Value of all alternatives over a 50-year economic life. On this basis a tunnel might win if we include the external costs of highway transportation via North Douglas Highway.
- A participant commented on the importance of preserving the beauty of north Douglas and its whale, seal, and sea lion habitat. Some of us remember North Douglas Highway as a dirt road. A north crossing seems premature with the population declining.
- A participant commented that we are living in a climate emergency and things will be quite different in the next 5-10 years.



- One participant requested the project team considers a crossing at the Vanderbilt intersection where a causeway would be simple.

Action Items/Next Steps:

Project team:

- Update Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to include questions and comments from the public.
- Post meeting materials to project website. Completed.
- Distribute the online survey for additional comments to the project team.