

JOINT TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE | MEETING 5

March 7, 2024, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. In-person

The Huddle, Conference Room, 9109 Mendenhall Mall Road, Juneau, Alaska

Meeting Objective

Present Level 2 Screening preliminary results and receive comments on the analysis.

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

PEL Study Process and Schedule Update

Fieldwork Update

Level 2 Screening Process and Preliminary Results

Discussion

Wrap Up and Next Steps

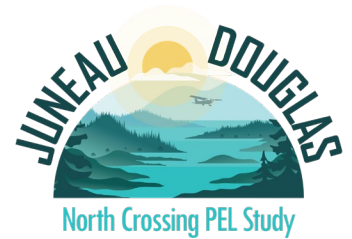
Attendees — PEL Study Team

Name

Greg Lockwood, Project Manager
Marie Heidemann, Project Planner
Christy Gentemann, Environmental
Christopher Goins, Southcoast Region Director
Steve Noble, Project Manager
Renee Whitesell, PEL Study Lead
Morgan McCammon
Marella Gungob
Lydia Kraus
Tim Jameson
Denise Koch
Bridget LaPenter, Project Manager
Katie Koester

Organization

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DOWL
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City and Borough of Juneau
City and Borough of Juneau
City and Borough of Juneau



Attendees — Technical & Stakeholder Advisory Committee Members

Name

Jesse Kiehl
Linda Shaw
Wade Bryson
Ron Somerville
Frank Rue
Alex Wertheimer
Dave Hanna
Royal Hill
Rance Brooks
Mike Stanley
Julie Bednarski
Winston Smith
Brian Holst

Organization

Alaska State Senator
National Marine Fisheries Service
City and Borough of Juneau Assembly
Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Mendenhall Wetlands Study Group
Access Alaska
Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Goldbelt, Inc.
North Douglas Neighborhood Association
North Douglas Neighborhood Association
Juneau Audubon Society
Juneau Economic Development Council

Presentation Summary

Welcome and Introductions

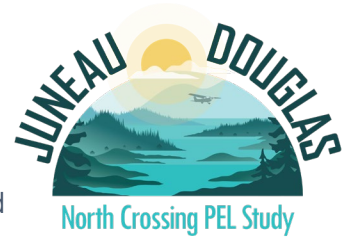
Greg Lockwood, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) Project Manager, opened the meeting by welcoming committee members, reviewing the agenda, introducing the study team, and establishing the meeting purpose.

PEL Study Process and Schedule Update

Steve Noble, DOWL Project Manager, presented an updated schedule, highlighting the previous milestones, public meetings, and listening sessions. He shared the status of the additional fieldwork, noting most of the fieldwork is complete, and stated the draft Level 2 Screening preliminary results are ready for review.

Fieldwork Update

Steve Noble presented an update of the field studies completed in support of the Level 2 Screening process. He noted reports for wetland delineation, eel grass survey, intertidal habitat mapping, and migratory bird survey and upland bird habitat mapping are available on the project website. Reports for geophysical surveys and visual analysis are being drafted. Steve emphasized the fieldwork completed as part of the Level 2 Screening process is the beginning of environmental work; additional environmental data would be collected during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase for any alternative carried through to a proposed project.



Wetland Delineation

Wetland delineation was conducted from September 19 through 22, 2023. It was used to re-calculate the wetland impacts of the proposed alternatives.

Eelgrass Survey

The eelgrass survey was conducted from September 27 through 29, 2023, within four hours of low tide. A pedestrian survey was completed in the intertidal areas of each alternative. The project team documented one location of dwarf eelgrass *Zostera Japonica* on the south side of the Salmon Creek alternative.

Intertidal Habitat Mapping

Intertidal habitat mapping confirmed information from prior efforts. It documented the vertical gradient of habitats based on proximity to deeper marine water and freshwater sources.

Migratory Bird Survey and Upland Bird Habitat Mapping

A migratory bird survey and upland bird habitat mapping were conducted from September 19 through September 28, 2023. Biologists conducted field surveys in 13 areas with 10 habitat types, observed 55 bird species, and identified the Bog/Fen cover type, recommending it be incorporated into GIS data.

Geophysical Surveys

The geophysical survey report is expected to be completed March 2024. Two non-destructive geophysical survey methods were used: Seismic Refraction and Multichannel Analysis of Surface Waves (MASW) and Electrical Resistivity. The studies were conducted during low tide at times with sufficient ambient lighting through publicly available access points. The data collected will assist in confirming feasibility and future detailed cost estimates.

Visual Analysis

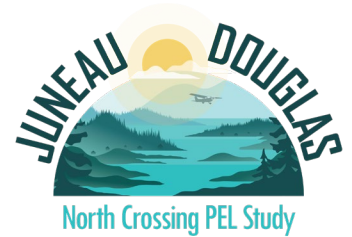
The visual analysis report is expected to be completed April 2024. Visual analysis was conducted using detailed design to create crossing simulations. Photos were used to create simulations of each alternative to assist in review of visual impacts.

Fish & Game Fish Stream Surveys

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducted fish stream surveys between October 19 and 31, 2023. They surveyed all streams in the study area for fish presence using backpack electro fisher and baited minnow traps. The surveys resulted in 20 nominations to the anadromous waters catalog based on finding of rearing juvenile coho salmon. The data has been incorporated into the Level 2 Screening Analysis.

Level 2 Screening Process and Preliminary Results

Renee Whitesell, DOWL PEL Study Lead, reviewed the steps the project team has taken as part of the alternative development and screening process. She then reviewed the purpose and need, and additional goals of the project. She noted the screening criteria used on this PEL study has been developed to evaluate how well each alternative performs in relation to transportation needs, what plans have been adopted in a particular area, and whether an alternative is reasonable or feasible from an engineering and cost perspective. The criteria also evaluate the reasonability and practicability of each alternative in relation to NEPA, the Clean Water Act, and to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation. Section 4(f) resources include publicly



owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. Specific conditions apply before these locations can be used for transportation projects.

Renee reminded participants of the six alternatives carried forward to Level 2 Screening, including Mendenhall Peninsula, Sunny Point West, Sunny Point East, Vanderbilt, Twin Lakes, and Salmon Creek. She noted, to enable the project team to quantify the impacts of each alternative, conceptual alignments were developed with start and end points, or termini, that tie into existing transportation facilities on either Douglas Island or Juneau. Conceptual bridge deck and approach typical sections were shared. She noted these typical sections were applied and adjusted based on the unique characteristics of each alternative to quantify the potential impacts of each alternative.

Renee shared the scoring criteria performance matrix, noting for environmental impacts, it was assumed any impacts would require additional evaluation prior to determining their extent, so the scale used for environmental impacts started at zero, where no impacts were identified, and used a negative scale to -2 to enable differentiation between lower and higher potential areas of impact. As many of the criteria used reflected environmental characteristics, this resulted in all the alternatives having negative scores.

Renee presented the alternatives in order from highest scoring to lowest scoring, noting all the build alternatives score relatively well in relation to the PEL study's purpose and need, as they all provide alternative access and transportation infrastructure resilience, improve travel time for non-motorized users, reduce idling and congestion, improve emergency response times, and improve access to emergency healthcare and services, as well as access to workplaces and critical resources. In relation to the additional goals, all the build alternatives also perform relatively strongly by creating additional traffic capacity to support future housing and economic development opportunities and protect and enhance the health and safety of communities that transportation facilities serve. Because all the build alternatives create potential environmental impacts, they score relatively poorly in relation to avoidance, minimizing and mitigating effects of the environment, and a future NEPA process will need to evaluate the extent of impacts in greater detail for any alternatives that advance. Impacts on residential areas and the visual, cultural, and scenic identity also scored relatively low, with some alternatives having likely more impacts than others, depending on locations and build features.

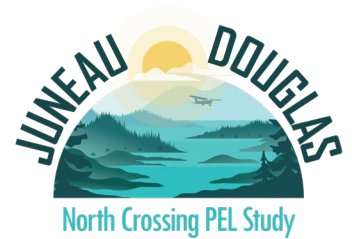
Sunny Point East

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to protected lands, neighborhoods that are potentially divided or disrupted, and the need for residential property acquisition. Other environmental impacts include wildlife habitat impacts, eagle nesting trees, Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources, residential uses and land, commercial uses, and the need for additional right-of-way (ROW). Although these impacts were identified, they are lower total areas or likely impacts than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Sunny Point East alternative has a relatively high level of public support when compared to other alternatives, and the updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Sunny Point East Alternative is approximately \$420 million.

Twin Lakes

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to the intertidal zone, essential fish habitat, impervious surfaces added, neighborhoods that are potentially divided or disrupted, and impacts to vacant commercial land. Other environmental impacts included wetlands directly impacted, wildlife habitat effects, migratory bird habitat impacts, eagle nesting trees, Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources, commercial uses, and the need for commercial



property acquisition. Although these impacts were identified, they are lower total areas or likely impacts areas than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Twin Lakes alternative has a relatively lower level of public support when compared to other alternatives, with it being the second least favored of the build alternatives. The updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Twin Lakes Alternative is approximately \$320 million.

Sunny Point West

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to wetlands, anadromous streams, important migratory bird habitat, impervious surfaces added, neighborhoods that are potentially divided or disrupted, and impacts to and within 100 feet of residential property. Other environmental impacts included intertidal zone impacts, stream and riparian habitats, wildlife habitat effects, eagle nesting trees, Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources, residential uses, vacant residential land, and ROW impacts. Although these impacts were identified, they are lower total areas or likely impacts than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Sunny Point West alternative has a relatively high level of public support when compared to other alternatives. The updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Sunny Point East Alternative is approximately \$390 million.

Vanderbilt

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to wetlands, intertidal zones, streams and riparian habitats, essential fish habitat, wildlife habitat, impervious surfaces added, residential uses, total ROW needed, and impacts from residential property acquisition. Other environmental impacts included anadromous stream impacts, important migratory bird habitats, Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources, potential impacts to environmental justice populations, neighborhoods divided or otherwise disrupted, proximity to residential properties, and areas of vacant residential land potentially impacted. Although these impacts were identified, they are lower total areas or likely impacts than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Vanderbilt alternative has a relatively high level of public support when compared to other alternatives. The updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Vanderbilt Alternative is approximately \$270 million, depending on the intersection type on Egan Drive.

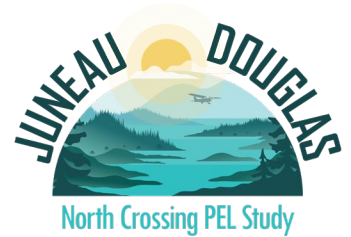
Mendenhall Peninsula

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to wetlands, wildlife habitat, eagle nesting trees, Section 4(f) and 6(f) resources, impervious surfaces added, vacant residential properties, commercial use impacts, and ROW needed. Other environmental impacts included intertidal zone impacts, stream and riparian habitats, and essential fish habitat. Although these impacts were identified, they are lower total areas or likely impacts than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Mendenhall Peninsula Alternative has a moderate level of public support when compared to other alternatives. The updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Mendenhall Peninsula Alternative is approximately \$1.7 billion.

Salmon Creek

The greatest potential impacts quantified are to residential and commercial land uses, and proximity to commercial land uses. Other environmental impacts included wetland impacts, intertidal zone impact, stream



and riparian habitats, essential fish habitat, important migratory bird habitat, eagle nesting trees impacted, Section 4(f) and 6(f) impacts, impervious surfaces added, environmental justice populations or public spaces, neighborhoods divided or disrupted, proximity to residential properties and impacts to vacant residential and commercial land. ROW impacts and the need for residential and commercial property acquisition were also noted. Although these impacts were identified, they are lower than some of the other alternatives, as noted on the draft impact table and scoring sheet.

The Salmon Creek alternative has a relatively low level of public support when compared to other alternatives and is the least favored of the build alternatives. The updated planning level cost estimate indicates the cost of the Salmon Creek Alternative is approximately \$330 million, using a grade-separated interchange. The planning level cost estimate is based on a crossing that is low in relation to the water level. If a higher crossing is needed to retain the navigable channel, then the cost of the alternative will be significantly higher.

No Build

The No Build alternative does not provide for any action. It does not generate impacts. The No Build alternative does not meet the purpose and need but will be carried forward into any future NEPA process to provide a baseline against which to evaluate the other alternatives.

Planning Level Cost Estimates

After reviewing the preliminary Level 2 Screening results, Steve shared the planning level cost estimates for each alternative, noting the cost has not yet been scored in the draft Level 2 screening and property acquisition for ROW is not yet calculated or included.

Group Discussion

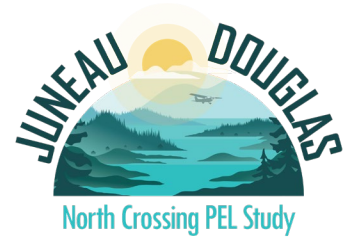
A participant asked for clarification on when the PEL study was expected to be completed and opportunities to comment. Steve shared the draft PEL study report was expected to be completed by the end of May 2024, followed by a 30-day comment period and a public open house in June 2024.

A participant asked the study team to define how potential impacts are calculated. Steve shared most potential impacts are measured by acreage and number of resources potentially impacted.

A participant requested information on the type of crossings evaluated being fill versus piling. Steve shared the study design team assumed crossings on pilings based on feedback received so far and clarified the scoring is premised on this type of crossing structure.

One participant asked where the newly located Bog/Fen was. The project team responded it was shown as the hatched area on habitat mapping.

One participant asked for clarification on how information gathered during habitat mapping and migratory bird count helps supplement existing data. He emphasized the report was well written, and the habitat mapping added useful data, but the information presented on bird species presence should not be considered useful as the time window of observation was inappropriately brief. He added this part of the study wasted time and money. Steve responded the study team has tried to include as much data as possible and acknowledged the



limited scope of data collection due to this being a planning level study. The study would not replace other existing studies, nor preclude future studies.

A participant asked for clarification on how the data collected during the additional studies would be used. Steve replied the data is supplemental to the existing data collected during the baseline, largely confirming and augmenting that data.

One participant expressed concern about how data was weighted during scoring. Steve responded the data sets are maps, with each set of data adding a quantitative map to the database of information. He noted more specific data is needed to make design decisions, which will happen in the NEPA process. He invited participants to follow up for individual explanations of how data is weighted in the scoring criteria.

One participant noted Southeast Alaska Land Trust (SEALT) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) are currently working on a comprehensive habitat remapping, expressing concern this data would not be included. The study team responded the ADF&G study was shared with the team and used in the level 2 screening preliminary results, and the SEALT mapping efforts would likely be ready for use in a potential future NEPA effort.

One participant commented they are concerned about alternatives being eliminated based on the narrow scope of the corridor. Steve responded minor changes to the alternative may still be made during the planning level design process, and the scale of the areas surrounding each alternative are not being ignored in criteria evaluation.

A participant expressed concerns the criteria lacked a mechanism to score potential impacts to undisturbed lands in relation to each alternative.

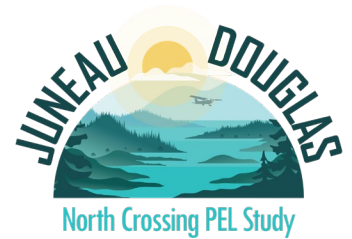
One participant expressed concern about the assignment of values for each criterion, noting focus on the relative environmental impact scores for Vanderbilt and both Sunny Point alternatives. The project team responded the criteria need to be quantified to be compared. Specific value assignments are open for explanation and feedback for criteria. The study team requested participants to send written comments and questions, noting small group meeting will be set up to answer questions and receive feedback about environmental impact ratings.

One participant requested clarification on the buffer zone around each alternative. The study team responded buffer zones vary based on alignment and scoring criteria. In general, 100 to 200 feet is used for environmental impact analysis.

One participant commented geophysical data should be used as a direct criterion in the alternative matrix. The project team responded the results of the geophysical data cannot be quantified as a single value, but the data will impact other criteria such as the cost needed for different construction methods based on varying surface and subsurface conditions.

One participant commented the public should have access to information about the airport's plans and potential conflicts, stating any conflict with the airport should be a criterion. Steve responded the airport is currently developing a new master plan, which will indicate long-term plans and potential conflicts, affirming no option will be considered that conflicts with the airport's current or future aircraft approach plans. DOWL has conducted meetings with the airport and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to gather information on airport priorities and plans.

One participant asked how essential fish habitat (EFH) is defined, noting EFH is too broad of a term to be used as criterion.



One participant expressed concern about using the criterion of public support in scoring, noting the Refuge was not shown on the study area and alternatives maps early in the PEL study. This could have significantly impacted the results of public support for alternatives enough to discount the results.

One participant asked what qualifies an area as a wildlife habitat or a fish habitat. The study team responded they would consult with the subject matter experts and respond.

One participant asked if the Coast Guard supports any of the alternatives. The study team responded it is too early in the process to get a definitive answer, but the Salmon Creek alternative is the least flexible of the options in terms of proximity to navigable waters. The two options have been developed at different elevations based on height restrictions from the Coast Guard.

One participant asked why the cost estimate for the Salmon Creek alternative is higher for a relatively short span. Steve responded specific breakdown of cost analysis can be discussed in further detail, as estimates were only recently determined and will be published in the future. He added generally the price per foot of bridge can vary widely depending on span and abutment construction details.

One participant asked why the proposal for the Mendenhall Peninsula alternative includes the construction of a new road rather than tying it into the existing roads. Steve responded residents on the Mendenhall Peninsula commented repeatedly the disturbance caused by development tying into existing roads would be significantly more impactful than the construction of a new road.

A participant commented the criteria to include impacts to commercial property and impacts within 100 feet of commercial property are redundant. Renee requested participants submit written comments on criteria.

One participant expressed concern the study is being crafted to downgrade the Salmon Creek alternative to make the process of proving there are no viable alternatives outside the Refuge easier. Steve responded no alternatives are being up- or downgraded, but the criteria were created without knowing the scoring outcomes. The only interest is moving forward with alternatives that will not present fatal flaws later in the process.

One participant asked if NEPA will reevaluate the environmental impact. Steve responded NEPA will evaluate all viable options at a deeper level as required by law.

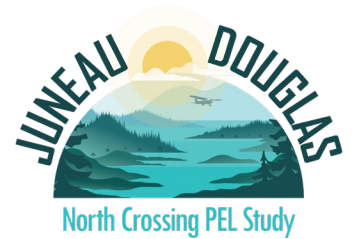
One participant asked what the cost of the higher elevation option would be at Salmon Creek. Steve responded the cost for the Salmon Creek alternative at a higher elevation has not been estimated.

Several participants commented they would like to see the Salmon Creek alternative continue into the NEPA process as it is the only remaining off Refuge alternative.

One participant expressed concerns about longevity of the Salmon Creek Dam, and the need for a barge landing area, which would both be affected by the Salmon Creek alternative. He noted the high cost of living in Juneau is affected by barging costs. The project team responded a barge landing study had not been conducted.

One participant asked if ROW acquisition costs have been included in the evaluation. The project team responded no; they did not want to inadvertently effect property values in these areas due to gathering data about potential acquisition values.

One participant asked about the funding source for this project for construction and maintenance costs. The project team responded the DOT&PF will be looking into grants for the construction phase of this project, in addition to STIP funding. Maintenance costs will involve CBJ.



Wrap Up and Next Steps

Steve reviewed project funding, noting there is \$7 million designated in Congressionally Designated Spending (CDS) along with \$16 million in a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant obtained for moving this project forward into the NEPA phase. He also noted the project is in the draft Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).

He then shared information on what will happen after the PEL Study wraps up, noting preliminary engineering and NEPA, engineering design and ROW acquisition, and construction.

Steve closed the meeting by reviewing study team contacts, email address, and website, and thanked participants for their involvement in the process. He asked committee members to provide feedback by March 28, 2024, and noted the project team would be happy to meet with members who have additional comments or questions. He reviewed the project schedule for the next few months, including the draft PEL Study Report to be released for comment by the end of May, a Public Open House in June, and the Final PEL Study Report to be completed by the end of July.

Action Items

Study Team:

- Post meeting materials to the study website.
- Put together a list of responses to questions that could not be answered during this meeting and share with committee members.

Committee Members:

- Provide additional feedback by March 28, 2024. Subsequent the meeting, advisory committee members requested additional time to provide feedback and the deadline was extended to April 11, 2024.