

4 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

The DOT&PF sought public and agency input on the KGB Road Reconstruction Project in order to ensure public awareness, to receive input from potentially affected parties, to identify resource agency concerns, and to develop project alternatives that reflect this input. Outreach activities included the following:

- Agency scoping letters
- Public open houses
- Project website
- Newspaper advertisements
- Project comment e-mail address
- Presence at Mat-Su Valley Transportation Fairs
- Mail and e-mail information distribution lists for the public, government, and elected officials
- Presentations to local planning commissions and transportation advisory boards
- Presentations and meetings with local government, community councils, and churches

These activities generated more than 100 written comments and attendance by over 250 community citizens, agency representatives, and appointed and elected officials at project open houses.

The website (www.knikgoosebayroad.com) provided up-to-date project information, meeting notifications, public meeting materials, comment forms, and project team contact information. The mail and e-mail distribution lists kept interested individuals informed with periodic updates and public meeting announcements. To best reach stakeholders, a mail/e-mail list of approximately 2,500 area residents, property owners, tribal, and government representatives was used to provide public meeting notifications and project updates.

4.1 Agency Scoping and Coordination

Agency scoping was conducted through a variety of activities, including meetings, presentations and a formal scoping letter. A chronology of agency scoping activities can be found in Table 4.1.1 and documentation of all agency coordination can be found in Appendix E.

The COW and MSB were introduced to the project on August 9, 2012 at a meeting held at the MSB Office. DOT&PF presented preliminary information on project development and design considerations. The challenges of safety and capacity were discussed and a range of general alternatives being considered at the time was presented.

On November 15, 2012, DOT&PF sent the scoping letter to agencies with an invitation to the December 6, 2012 public open house. Recipients were asked to respond with the following information:

1. Further analysis needed to evaluate sensitive resources potentially impacted by the proposed project
2. Regulatory permits/clearances required by your agency
3. Any concerns or issues your agency or organization might have with the proposed project

The agency scoping e-mail and invitation to the December 6, 2012 public meeting was sent to the following agencies and organizations:

- COW
- DOT&PF
- MSB
- ADNR
- ADEC
- ADF&G
- USACE
- EPA
- USFWS
- NMFS
- Knik Tribal Council
- Knikatnu
- Cook Inlet Region, Inc.

Of the 13 agencies and organizations contacted, the COW and the MSB were the only respondents. A summary of responses to agency scoping is provided in Table 4.1.2.

Table 4.1.1 - Agency Scoping Activities Chronology

Date	Activity	Activity Description
August 9, 2012	Meeting with COW and MSB	Delivered detailed project presentation including general project overview, schedule, challenges, and alternatives, and discussed project with Borough and City staff
November 15, 2012	Agency Scoping letter distribution	Solicited input from agency stakeholders
November 28, 2012	Project presentation to MSB Transportation Advisory Board.	Presented preliminary project information and alternatives
December 4, 2012	Project presentation to MSB Planning Staff	Presented preliminary project information and alternatives
December 4, 2012	Project presentation to COW Planning Commission	Presented preliminary project information and alternatives
February 4, 2013	Project presentation to MSB Planning Commission	Delivered detailed project presentation including general project overview, schedule, challenges, and alternatives
February 26, 2013	Meeting between COW Mayor and Alaska Senators & Representatives	Discussed project
February 28, 2013	Meeting with COW	Discussed COW project concerns, recommendations for the project, and their "Synthesis of arguments for a more balanced approach to KGB Road." DOT&PF stated the possibility of analyzing roundabout intersection treatments within the COW.
April 4, 2013	Meeting with COW, DOT&PF, and Alaska Senators and Representatives	Discussed project
May 13, 2013	Project presentation to COW City Council	Updated COW on project progress, including the roundabout intersection treatment analysis requested by the City
January 28, 2014	Meeting with COW	Discussed draft roundabout intersection treatment analysis report. Report found that

		roundabouts would not satisfy project purpose and need.
March 11, 2014	Meeting with COW and DOT&PF Upper Management	Complete Streets Presentation, COW vision for relieving pressure on arterials, including KGB Road, through an alternative grid of side streets and subdivision roads.
March 5, 2015	Project presentation to COW Planning Commission	Updated COW on project progress and updated preferred alternative, including urban design features.
April 6, 2015	Project presentation to MSB Planning Commission	Updated MSB Planning Commission on project progress and updated preferred alternative, including urban design features.

Table 4.1.2 - Summary of Agency Scoping Responses

Date	Agency	Comment Summary
December 21, 2012	MSB Planning and Land Use Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located within the Knik-Fairview Comprehensive Plan planning area • Project is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Knik-Fairview Comprehensive Plan and the MSB Long-Range Transportation Plan • Project does not cross any mapped floodplains • New material sites must obtain an earth materials extraction permit
December 27, 2012	COW Public Works Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns over divided highway concept and 55 mph design speed limit • Requested designing with goal of LOS D • Requested that traffic modeling incorporate transportation links planned for the next 20 years, including the PHAC Project • Smith Ballfields are a significant traffic generator, suggested new access to the fields from Endeavour St. as part of the project • Requested the opportunity for the Wasilla City Planning Commission to review the draft EA in accordance with AS 35.30.010
December 27, 2012	COW Mayor's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned that the "Purpose and Need" was narrowly developed • A divided highway within the COW will adversely affect economic growth • Design speed should be 45 mph • Opposed to U-turn movements of the divided highway • Reach out to emergency service providers during the design process • Factor future traffic improvements into project development, including the PHAC Project • Change design goal LOS C to D, designing to LOS C could harm livability along KGB Road within the COW • Requested the opportunity for the Wasilla City Planning Commission to review the draft EA in accordance with AS 35.30.010

During development of the proposed project, DOT&PF conducted extensive communication and outreach efforts with the COW. This resulted in the DOT&PF evaluating an additional alternative (#5, corridor of roundabout intersection treatments within the COW) and adjusting the growth rates used to forecast future traffic volumes to those from the PHAC traffic model instead of the historical (2.7%) rate. Results of the roundabout analysis show that a roundabout corridor would not function under forecast traffic volumes and the alternative was not carried forward for detailed analysis. Subsequent coordination with the COW led to incorporation of urban design measures within Wasilla city limits. The Department also adjusted the Preferred Alternative's construction schedule to delay full build-out of the six-lane section until approximately half-way through the project's design life, when it is believed demand will require the full six-lanes. The preferred alternative best meets the project purpose and need while providing safe and efficient roadway to traffic through the COW. On April 14, 2015, the Wasilla Planning Commission passed a resolution in support of the urban design measures inside city limits with a 45 mph speed limit.

During fall 2014, the ADF&G submitted comments to DOT&PF regarding measures to address MVC on KGB Road. Their concerns are as follows (see Appendix E for copy of the correspondence):

- Segment of highest concern is Centaur Avenue to Vine Road
- Proposed design may reduce the width of roadside clearing
- Recommend continuous street lighting
- Recommend roadside clearing to a minimum of 50 feet

In January 2015, the DOT&PF completed an analysis of MVC mitigation measures that determined continuous street lighting for the entire project corridor is not cost effective; however it is DOT&PF policy to provide illumination in areas with urban medians and the section between Centaur Avenue and Mack Road will be illuminated. The need for illumination elsewhere on the project would be reviewed during the final design process. Other MVC mitigation measures to be incorporated into the project will include a moose warning sign plan and clearing and removing or stunting browse to 50 feet off the roadway or to the ROW limits where feasible. The results of the MVC analysis and proposed mitigation measures were provided to ADF&G.

Copies of all agency coordination correspondence (including that with the COW), scoping materials, and presentation materials are found in their entirety in Appendix E.

4.2 Public Scoping and Coordination

Public scoping and coordination activities for the proposed project were devised to involve stakeholders via community information sharing throughout project development, as well as periodic updates to community organizations and groups. This included two public open houses, a project website, and mail and e-mail announcements. The Department also met with two community councils and churches located along the project and staffed a booth at annual Mat-Su Transportation Fairs. A chronology of public involvement activities and outreach techniques for the project is outlined in Table 4.2.1. Appendix F contains documentation for all public involvement activities.

Table 4.2.1 - Public Involvement Chronology

Date	Activity	Purpose
Ongoing	Project Website:www.knikgoosebayroad.com	Venue for project information sharing
Ongoing	Project comment e-mail address:comments@crweng.com	Receive public input
August 9, 2012	2012 Mat-Su Transportation Fair	Share project information and collect stakeholder input
November 15, 2012	Mailing #1	Open House #1 announcement
November 25, 26, 27, 28 & 30, 2012	Display advertisement in the Frontiersman and Anchorage Daily News.	Notice of Open House #1
November 29, 2012	E-mail Update #1	Open House #1 announcement
December 5, 2012	Email Update #2	Open House #1 reminder
December 6, 2012	Public Open House #1	Share project information and collect stakeholder input
December 12, 2012	E-Mail Update #3	Website updated with open house graphics
January 25, 2013	E-mail Update #4	Website updated with latest FAQ's
March 11, 2013	Presentation to Christ First United Methodist Church	Project presentation including general project overview, schedule, challenges, and alternatives
March 18, 2013	Presentation to Wasilla Christian Church	
March 21, 2013	Presentation to Settlers Bay Home Owner's Association	
April 23, 2013	Presentation to Wasilla Chamber of Commerce	
May 1, 2013	Knik-Fairview Community Council	Project briefing and a Q & A period
July 24, 2013	Mailing #2	2013 Mat-Su Transportation Fair announcement
July 31, 2013	E-Mail Update #5	2013 Mat-Su Transportation Fair announcement
August 7, 2013	2013 Mat-Su Transportation Fair	Share project information and collect stakeholder input
April 4, 2014	Mailing #3	Announcement of Open House #2
April 7, 2014	Mailing #4	Project newsletter
April 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 2014	Display advertisement in the Frontiersman, Anchorage Daily News, and Anchorage Press	Announcement of Open House #2
April 9, 15, 16	E-Mail Update #6	E-mail notice of Open House #2 and follow-up reminders
April 16, 2014	Public Open House #2	Share project information and collect stakeholder input
October 22, 2014	2014 Mat-Su Transportation Fair	Share project information and collect stakeholder input
March 5, 2015	City of Wasilla Planning Commission	

Mat-Su Transportation Fair

The Mat-Su Transportation Fair is an annual, regional transportation fair held on a rotating basis in either Wasilla, or Palmer, Alaska. It provides the public with up-to-date information and an

opportunity to comment on Valley area road projects. The DOT&PF, COW, City of Palmer, City of Houston, and MSB are all represented. KGB Road staff attended the 2012, 2013 and 2014 MSB Transportation Fairs to inform the public and gather input. Approximately 20 written comments were collected, and all expressed support for improving the safety of the road (primarily in the form of a 4-lane divided highway). At the 2013 Transportation Fair, all but one commenter expressed dissatisfaction with the proposal for roundabout intersection treatments.

Public Open Houses

Two public open houses were held for the project: December 6, 2012 at Goose Bay Elementary School and April 16, 2014 at the Wasilla Senior Center. The meetings provided an opportunity for interested parties to learn about the project, interact with the project team, and offer their comments and concerns. Attendance between both meetings was approximately 250 people and 50 written comments were collected.

Presentations at Regularly Scheduled Community Meetings

To better reach stakeholders, DOT&PF introduced the project to community organizations and representatives of local government (MSB and COW) and community. The project introduction included attendance by DOT&PF staff at each organization's regularly scheduled meeting and a project-specific presentation or discussion detailing background information and alternatives under consideration. Organizations and groups presented to include:

- MSB Planning Commission
- MSB Transportation Advisory Board
- COW Planning Commission
- COW Chamber of Commerce
- Knik-Fairview Community Council
- Settler's Bay Home Owners Association
- COW City Council

Project Website

The project website, www.knikgoosebayroad.com, was launched in 2011 to provide all concerned stakeholders with up-to-date information, notification of upcoming meetings and involvement opportunities, and provide a channel for collecting stakeholder input. The site includes a project overview, presentation materials, team contact information, and links to relevant information.

Mailing Lists

Mail and e-mail distribution lists were developed for all interested parties. This enabled the project team to quickly and efficiently disseminate up-to-date project information and announcements for public involvement opportunities. The lists included individuals from federal, state, and local resource agencies, elected officials, local government, residents and property owners in the project area, emergency services, and local community groups. The mailing list contains approximately 2,500 contacts and the e-mail list has 120 contacts. E-mail contacts opened project related e-mails at an average rate of 56.6%.

4.2.1 Public Comments

Approximately 100 comments were gathered from the public open houses, Mat-Su Valley Transportation Fairs, and the project website's comment e-mail inbox: comments@crweng.com. All comments received were carried forward for consideration in project development and, where appropriate, project staff responded. Documentation for all public comments and responses can be found in Appendix F.

Comments received during development of the EA indicate a large majority of stakeholders support improvements to KGB Road. Local users of the roadway acknowledge the increasing levels of congestion and delay, as well as the number of crashes and fatalities and generally expressed a strong desire for improvements that will increase safety and decrease travel time.

Two substantial traffic generators within the project area, Christ First United Methodist Church and Wasilla Christian Church, noted special events and weekly worship services that might cause access issues to their facilities. DOT&PF staff met with Church staff (as indicated above) to enhance their understanding of how traffic flow will function during their peak hours and continues to coordinate with both organizations' staff as the design moves forward.

Summary of Comments by Category

Copies of all comments received for the project are provided in Appendixes E and F.

Purpose and Need for Project

The project was generally well received by the public, who noted concerns for safety, access, and congestion along the KGB Road corridor. These concerns were highlighted repeatedly over the course of public scoping.

Project Scope

Public comment included appreciation for the project area included for reconstruction, but many commenters noted the need for the entirety of KGB Road needing work. A number of commenters also stated the need for frontage roads to help improve access with a divided roadway.

Lane Configuration/Median Type

There was overwhelming support for a four-lane divided roadway design. Commenters predominantly expressed support for a divided roadway, recognizing the safety improvements and congestion relief it provides. Support for the six-lane section was mixed, with some commenters wishing to pursue that now and others wishing to wait until traffic numbers warranted additional capacity.

Safety

Public comments showed overwhelming support for the project due to the road's existing safety record. Commenters included personal stories of vehicular accidents, including fatalities, along KGB Road. They frequently mentioned congestion, speeding, passing, and general roadway conditions as reasons for incidents. Public comments continue to stress the need for upgrades as soon as possible to address crashes along the roadway.

Turn Lanes & Acceleration Lanes

Suggestions for turn lanes and acceleration lanes noted the need for vehicles to safely access and exit KGB Road. Commenters felt all turn lanes should be designed to handle forecast traffic volumes, especially those that will provide storage for U-turn movements resulting from dividing the highway.

Speed Limits

Commenters expressed concern about the existing high speeds along KGB Road and suggested increased enforcement of speed limits. A small percentage of people desired lowered speed

limits, but most were focused on mobility and didn't wish to see a design that would increase travel times. Commenters felt that in order to accommodate highway speeds, the project should incorporate turn lanes, acceleration lanes, and other elements to facilitate safe access to and from KGB Road.

Access

The proposal for a divided roadway spurred access concerns from residents and business owners with sole or primary access to and from KGB Road. Residents felt that left turns from local roads at unsignalized intersections may have long wait times and travel times may increase due to right-in/right-out only access with U-turns at median breaks. Businesses with heavy truck traffic noted concerns for large vehicle access to their place of business, as well as potential challenges and safety hazards associated with requiring large vehicle traffic to make U-turns at median breaks. Some believe that large trucks would not be able to negotiate the U-turn in one movement.

Right-Of-Way

There was general concern about ROW needs among owners directly adjacent to KGB Road, specifically, "will you be affecting my property?" Some commenters stated a desire for the project to acquire enough ROW now to accommodate future improvements.

Signalization & Signage

Commenters noted signalization as a solution to safety and access concerns at unsignalized intersections along the project corridor. If signals are added, their timing should be synchronized and include the addition of 'prepare to stop' flashers and signage. Maintenance and endurance of striping during the winter months was an area of concern. Other commenters wanted signals to be used sparingly and wondered where they'd be located. The statement that signals seem counter-productive to improving traffic flow was also made.

Roundabouts

The majority of comments received about roundabout intersection treatments were not supportive, with several commenters emphatically stating their opposition. People felt they unnecessarily slow traffic, increase congestion, and cause more crashes. A very low percentage of commenters felt that roundabouts would help slow traffic speeds and asked if they were considered.

Traffic Congestion

Complaints about morning and evening traffic congestion and long delays were universal. One commenter stated that a minimum LOS design goal should be B/C and that traffic flow must improve. To avoid additional congestion during construction all work should be done at night/off-peak times.

Noise

Adjacent property owners and residents along KGB Road noted concern for the lack of sound barriers such as a green belt or noise wall. Commenters were concerned the predicted increase in traffic would also increase noise pollution to their parcels significantly.

Non-Motorized Facilities & Dog Mushing/ATV Trail Use

Much concern was expressed over motorized use of pathway facilities. Many commenters suggested adding an ATV/dog mushing trail (for current and historical users) in addition to the non-motorized (bike and pedestrian) users. The existing non-motorized pathway should remain separated from the highway except at crossing locations and include pedestrian over and under passes for access to pathway from south side of road.

Schedule

Many commenters inquired about the project schedule and how much time would pass before the improvements were actually complete. Dismay was expressed at the length of time it takes to develop and build a project. Majority of commenters would like to see the improvements begin immediately and were emphatic on this point. Interim measures such as turn lanes and traffic signals were suggested to compensate for the long construction timeline.