

Keystone Drive Improvement Project

Project No. 58014/NCPD-0001(347)

Final Scoping Summary Report

August 2006



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Distribution

Acronyms

ADEC	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ADNR	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
ADOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
KPB	Kenai Peninsula Borough
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
OHMP	Office of Habitat Management and Permitting
OPMP	Office of Project Management and Permitting
P.E.	Professional Engineer
P.L.S.	Professional Land Surveyor
ROW	Right-of-way
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
UST	Underground Storage Tank
WCB	Wince-Corthell-Bryson

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) is planning to improve Keystone Drive between Boundary Street and the end of the road along the Kenai River (Township 4 North, Range 10 West, Sections 1 and 2, and Township 5 North, Range 10 West, Sections 34 and 35, Seward Meridian, U.S. Geological Survey quad map Kenai B-3) (Figure 1). The current gravel road was built more than 20 years ago by private individuals and professional road contractors. The road varies from 20 to 27 feet in width, has no shoulders, and is plagued by potholes and dust during the summer. The road allows access to bed and breakfasts, guide services, an Agrium recreation site, private residences, and several federal facilities including two day-use sites, two public boat launches, and a housing unit.

Improvements will likely include excavating unsuitable material from under the roadway and replacing it with non-frost susceptible sands or gravels, paving the roadway with asphalt, constructing pedestrian facilities such as wide shoulders, adding drainage ditches, and improving or replacing existing culverts (Figure 2). Although it is unknown at this time if additional right-of-way (ROW) is needed, the improvements will likely involve fill in wetlands, requiring a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Section 10/404 permit. Funding for the project would be provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the KPB.

These improvements were recommended to the KPB by the residents of Keystone Drive, who compiled evidence strongly supporting a road improvement project. Many letters and a petition made by the group attest to the dust problem in the summer, potential for slow emergency response time, polluting storm water runoff, and safety issues posed by the narrow 3-mile road. They also cite economic benefits from paving the road, including increased business for the guide services and bed and breakfasts. Five percent of owners surveyed (5 out of 97 surveys returned) did not support the improvement plan.

Project Team

Contracting Agency

KPB

- E. “Chip” Franke, Project Manager

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)

- Miriam McCulloch, P.E., Project Manager

Prime Consultant

Wince-Corthell-Bryson (WCB)

- Mark Blanning, P.E., Project Manager

Specialty Consultants

MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, Inc.

- Beth Elliott, Environmental Task Lead
- Kim Hermann, Environmental Scientist
- Jenny Wetzel, Biologist

McLane Consulting, Inc.

- Sam McLane, P.E., P.L.S., Geotechnical Investigation, Surveying

Brooks & Associates

- Anne Brooks, P.E., Public Involvement

Reger Archeological Consulting

- Doug Reger, Cultural Resources

1.2 Scoping Method

The following scoping methods were used to inform the public and the local, state, and federal resource agencies about the project, its objectives, the current project development schedule, and to solicit input and comments on the project:

- Preparation of public and agency mailing lists

- Newspaper advertisements
- Postcards and comment forms
- E-mail notices to residents
- Public scoping meeting
- Project website
- Agency scoping letters
- Agency scoping meetings

1.2.1 Mailing List of Potentially Affected Interests

A public mailing list was compiled of all property owners within the Keystone Drive project area. The list also included elected officials from the cities of Soldotna and Kenai, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. Postcards announcing the public scoping meeting were sent to all property owners in the project area, businesses, and individuals who expressed an interest in the project during the scoping process. An agency mailing list was compiled for local, state, and federal resource agencies and officials and Native organizations that might have an interest or concern, environmental or otherwise, in the project. A copy of the agency mailing list is included in Appendix A.

1.2.2 Advertisements and Notice of Intent

Advertisements of the public scoping meeting and the Notice of Intent were published on the following dates:

- *The Anchorage Daily News* – March 30, 2006
- *The Peninsula Clarion* – March 30 and April 5, 2006

Affidavits of Publication are provided in Appendix B.

In addition to the newspaper advertisements, local businesses advertised the public meeting.

1.2.3 Project Postcard and Comment Forms

Project postcards were prepared and sent on March 22, 2006. The postcard provided information about the project and notice of the April 6, 2006, public meeting at the KPB Assembly Chamber. A copy of the postcard can be found in Appendix B.

A project comment form was developed for the public meeting with the return address information included on the back. The forms were passed out at the meeting to help solicit public comments and determine if people wanted to be on the project mailing or e-mail list. Copies of the comment form are included in Appendix C.

1.2.4 Project Website

A project website (www.keystonedrive.info) was developed to provide project information (scope, schedule, project team, mapping, photographs, etc.) and act as a vehicle for public input. Copies of the website pages are included in Appendix B.

1.2.5 Project E-mail Address

For persons wishing to communicate about the project via e-mail, an e-mail address (comments@brooksandassociates.info) was provided. This address was included in newspaper advertisements, on the website, and in handouts available at the public meetings. E-mail communications are provided in Appendix C.

1.2.6 Project Telephone Hotline

A project telephone hotline was created to allow the public to contact the project team. The number was toll free on the Kenai Peninsula (262-9657).

2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING

2.1 Public Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting was held on April 6, 2006 at the KPB Assembly Chambers in Soldotna, Alaska. The public was informed of the meetings through newspaper announcements, postcards, and the project website.

The meeting was attended by 28 people, according to the sign-in sheet. The meeting was held in an open house format with displays showing the project area, parcels maps overlaid on aerial photography, and displays with proposed project information. A short presentation was given with a question and answer period immediately following. Comment forms were also provided at the meeting.

Meeting minutes, sign-in sheets, and handouts/displays for the meeting are included in Appendix D.

2.2 Keystone Drive Steering Committee Picnic

The Keystone Drive Steering Committee convened their annual meeting of Keystone Drive residents and property owners on August 5, 2006, at the home of Ty and Marilyn Hrosso at 33895 Keystone Drive. The residents and property owners were informed of the meeting through e-mails, a flyer, and signs posted along the road. The yearly meeting provides an opportunity to gain input from seasonal residents and property owners.

The meeting was attended by about 60 people, as estimated by attending project team members. The project team was invited to the meeting to provide an overview of the project's status and solicit additional comment. Before the potluck luncheon and the business discussion, conversation occurred around an aerial photograph of the project area and the proposed typical road cross-section – both were used at the April 6, 2006, public scoping meeting. A short presentation was given, with a question and answer period immediately following. Comment forms and team contact business cards were provided at the meeting.

Meeting minutes are included in Appendix D.

2.3 Documentation of Public Comments

Copies of public comments received to date can be found in Appendix C. The comments are summarized below. The project team received written and oral testimony at the public meeting as well as numerous e-mails requesting inclusion on project mail and e-mail lists.

2.3.1 Need for Project

- The road is narrow and in poor condition.
- The road develops a washboard surface in summer causing increases in noise and dust.
- The road handles a lot of summer traffic accessing public fishing sites as well as heavy trucks traversing to construction sites along the road.
- Spring runoff and flooding damages the road; specific locations were cited in public comment.
- Drainage issues may impact the Kenai River.
- An improved roadway will be safer for vehicles and pedestrians.

2.3.2 Road Design

- Repair the road so it will last 20 to 30 years.
- The road needs to handle heavy vehicles.
- Consider two 12-foot driving lanes and two 5-foot bike paths.
- Storm runoff and spring melt water needs to be carefully planned for, especially in light of onsite mound septic systems along the roadway. Commenters provided very specific locations of drainage concerns along Keystone Drive.
- Driveway culverts should be wide enough to provide truck and trailer turning.

- Fix the Moose Creek culvert.
- Consider a design that controls the speed of drivers.
- A pedestrian/bicycle path should be included on one or both sides; some suggested it be on the north side of the road only.
- Consider placing utility lines underground.
- Consider extra parking at the corner of Showalter and Keystone and at the public fishing areas.
- Consider a school bus turnaround at the end of the road.
- Side roads and Keystone need better road signs.
- Groundwater concerns may drive different solutions on this project.
- Work with utilities to provide services not currently available.

2.3.3 Favor the Project

- Keystone Property Owners group organized for several years to support and advance road improvements.
- A colored spreadsheet (large size) containing a list of all Keystone Drive property owners was presented at the meeting. It was color coded to show those property owners in support of the project. It clearly indicated widespread support for the project.
- Legislative and congressional funding has been acquired for the project. The KPB has earmarked funds for the project as part of the required match for the federal funding.

2.3.4 Against the Project

- Concerned with turning road into thoroughfare.
- Speeds [with an improved roadway] a concern.
- Use design to control the speeds, narrower design to lower speed.

- Keep rural character of road.

2.3.5 Wildlife or Environmental Issues Identified by the Public

- Drainage needs to be improved so that road chemicals, etc., are not carried to the Kenai River.
- Eagle nests in the project area have not been occupied for several years.
- Protecting the Kenai River is a primary concern of property owners.
- Consider how tree clearing is accomplished during construction.
- Consider impacts of rumored Salamantof road connecting to Keystone.
- Look at dust on the existing road.
- Noise is a problem with the existing road because of summer washboard conditions.

2.3.6 Other Public Comments

- Keep one lane open during construction.
- Use flaggers in your construction plan to direct drivers, many of whom will be unfamiliar with the road [summer visitors].
- Private property trespass [of public seeking fishing access to the Kenai River] is a problem.
- “Both tourists and property owners will be using bike paths in increasing numbers. Wider driving lanes would be much safer for the pedestrians and people on bicycles.”

3.0 AGENCY SCOPING

Initial telephone contacts were made in March 2006 to federal, state, and local government agencies that may have regulatory jurisdiction over the project. The appropriate agency representative was identified and contact information confirmed. An agency contact list with appropriate resource agencies and specific agency representatives identified as contacts for the project was prepared and is included as Appendix A.

3.1 Agency Scoping Letter

Agency scoping letters were sent to the agencies on March 23, 2006. The letters were intended to provide preliminary background information on the project and solicit comments and information specific to each agency's regulatory authority. We requested that comments be submitted by April 27, 2006. Formal responses to the scoping letter were received from nine agencies. A copy of the scoping letter and preliminary research are included in Appendix E. The letter was mailed to the agencies listed in Appendix A. Agency responses to scoping are included in Appendix F.

3.2 Agency Scoping Meeting

Agency representatives were contacted by phone and/or e-mail and invited to attend a formal Agency Scoping Meeting on April 7, 2006, at the Kenai River Center in Soldotna, Alaska. The meeting was attended by six agency personnel. Agencies represented at the meeting included Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) – Office of Habitat Management and Permitting (OHMP); and the KPB. Copies of the meeting agenda, attendee list, and meeting minutes are provided in Appendix G.

3.3 Agency Field Trip

No agency field trip has been conducted to date, but one may be offered by the KPB during the spring/summer of 2006 if an interest is expressed by agency representatives. No agencies have requested a field trip to date.

4.0 DOCUMENTATION OF AGENCY SCOPING COMMENTS

4.1 Agency Participation

All written agency comments received as of June 8, 2006, have been reviewed and are included in Appendix F. The following agencies and agency representatives participated in agency scoping:

Federal Agencies

Leslie Tose and Gilbert Leroy Phillips, USACE

Robin West and Art Tovar, USFWS Kenai NWR

Lynnda Kahn, USFWS

Philip North, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Watershed Coordinator

State Agencies

David Guinn, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)

Lee McKinley, ADNR – OHMP

Christine Ballard, ADNR – Office of Project Management and Permitting (OPMP)

Rebecca Peltz, ADNR – Division of Mining, Land, and Water

Mary King, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)

Local Agencies

Jane Gabler, KPB – Floodplain Administration Office

John Mohorcich, KPB – Resource Planner

Gary Williams, KPB – Coastal District Coordinator

Robert Ruffner, Kenai Watershed Forum – Executive Director

4.1.1 Agency Comments

A summary of agency scoping comments received as of June 8, 2006, is provided below. The details of each comment can be found in the individual agency comment letters, e-mails, and telephone record logs (Appendix F) and the agency scoping meeting minutes (Appendix G). A response to each comment is included in italics after the comment.

- Water drains from north of the project area to the Kenai River. This drainage maintains water quality and reduces sediment. Several agency personnel raised the concern of the project increasing the amount and velocity of water in the existing drainages. Mitigation to maintain water quality such as check dams, vegetation, and sediment basins may need to be considered. Another alternative would be to create additional drainages (North, EPA), which may not be a feasible option because of the amount of private property (Mohorcich, KPB). Redirecting sheet flow through the road may impact existing septic systems and crawl spaces (Gabler, KPB). *(The project team will look at design options for improving drainage along the road while ensuring minimal impacts to the environment and private residences.)*
- The location of the proposed project lies within the coastal zone boundaries of the State of Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula Coastal District. ADNR – OPMP requests the submission of a completed Coastal Project Questionnaire and Certification Statement when project design work has progressed to the point where WCB is ready to submit applications for appropriate state and/or federal permits. A determination as to the status of the project with regard to potential requirements for a coordinated Alaska Coastal Management Plan review through ADNR-OPMP will be made at that time (Ballard, ADNR-OPMP). *(A coastal project questionnaire will be completed and submitted for the project.)*

- The ADNR, South Central Region, sees no conflict with this project (Peltz, ADNR). (*Comment noted*)
- There are no registered, regulated underground storage tanks (USTs). This does not include unregulated tanks, such as heating oil tanks or field-constructed USTs (Guinn, ADEC). (*Comment noted*)
- ADNR and ADF&G have not conducted any fish surveys in the ditches in the project area (McKinley, ADNR – OHMP; King, ADF&G; and Ruffner, Kenai Watershed Forum). (*Comment noted*)
- Stream flow slowly decreases to a trickle when break-up ends (West, USFWS). (*Comment noted*)
- One of the USFWS parking lots and boat access ramps was formerly a gravel pit (West, USFWS). (*Comment noted*)
- Salamatof Native Association is proposing to build a new subdivision over a wetland northwest of the terminal end of Keystone Drive. This has the potential to influence the flow of water (West, USFWS). Plats provided to the KPB indicate that area proposed for development is predominantly in uplands.
- A concern for USFWS is the increase in traffic resulting from road improvements at the termination of Keystone Drive. The road currently dead-ends, which could potentially cause a back-up of traffic during the busiest fishing season, from mid-July to the first week in August. The USFWS does not want to expand the parking lot because it is currently built to handle fishing capacity. A suggestion to solve this problem would be to incorporate a turn-around at the termination of the road that could facilitate trucks, campers, and RVs (West, Kenai NWR). (*The project team will look into design alternatives for the end of the road.*)
- The parking lot at the terminus of Keystone Drive is primarily used by drift-boat fishers (West, Kenai NWR). (*Comment noted*)

- A nest was noted along Keystone Drive by the KPB project team during a site visit on April 5, 2006. The nest was not included on the most recent ADOT&PF/USFWS Eagle Nest Survey (Kahn, USFWS). *(It has not been determined if the nest is a bald eagle nest. During fieldwork a ground survey for eagle nests will be performed.)*
- Road improvements, which may encourage new subdivision growth, may significantly increase the volume of traffic. The speed may also be increased, which could potentially lead to an increase in road kill of moose and bears. There are currently no statistics for road kills (West, USFWS). *(The posted speed is proposed to be 25 mph.)*
- No wildlife mitigation corridors will be impacted by the proposed project (West, USFWS). *(Comment noted)*
- After measuring the proposed road widths and considering our gates, signs, etc., it is maintenance's opinion that this project will have very little impact on Kenai NWR operations or facilities at Moose Range Meadows. The nearest gate post is 15 feet from the edge of the proposed asphalt (Tovar, Kenai NWR). *(Comment noted)*
- From the information provided in the scoping letter, it is unclear whether a wetlands permit will be required. This determination cannot be made until onsite wetlands delineation and the specific road plans are submitted (Tose, USACE). *(A wetlands delineation will be performed in summer 2006)*
- The project may qualify for a Department of the Army Nationwide Permit Number 3 or Number 23 (see 4.1.2 Permits, Authorizations, and Reviews). Refer specifically to Regional Condition C and E. Results of the wetlands delineation must be approved by the USACE. Delineations should be in accordance with the "Alaska Interim Regional Supplement to the 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual" (Phillips, USACE). *(The wetlands delineation will be conducted in*

accordance with the Alaska Interim Regional Supplement and submitted to the USACE for a jurisdictional determination.)

4.1.2 Permits, Authorizations, and Reviews

This is not intended to be a complete list of permits that may be required for the project; it includes only those permits mentioned by agencies during the scoping process.

- An early entry authorization would be required from the ADNR for any construction activity outside the established road ROW.
- A material source permit may be required from the ADNR for new material sites.
- ADEC Section 401 Water Quality Certification
- EPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction Permit
- Any work that takes place in a flood zone will require a floodplain permit.
- A Title 41 permit would be required for work in fish streams.
- A Department of the Army Nationwide Permit Number 3 (Maintenance Activities) or Number 23 (Categorical Exclusions) may be required if the project involves sliver fills, construction or maintenance of drainage ditches, culvert repair or replacement, or other structures or work in waters of the U.S., including wetlands.

5.0 SUMMARY

The above comments provide input to the environmental and engineering issues to be resolved during the environmental analysis and engineering design of this project. These scoping comments will be reviewed and addressed as the environmental document is prepared. Comments received after the end of the scoping period will also be reviewed by the project team and addressed in the environmental document.

FIGURES

APPENDIX A

AGENCY MAILING LIST

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC MEETING ADVERTISEMENTS AND WEBSITE

Affidavits of Publication

Project Website

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC COMMENT FORM AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Letters

E-mail Correspondence

APPENDIX D

PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA, MEETING MINUTES,
SIGN-IN SHEETS, AND HANDOUTS

April 6, 2006, Meeting Materials

APPENDIX E

AGENCY SCOPING LETTER AND PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

APPENDIX F

AGENCY RESPONSE TO SCOPING

APPENDIX G

AGENCY SCOPING MEETING AGENDA, SIGN-IN SHEETS,
HANDOUTS, AND MEETING MINUTES

DISTRIBUTION

Keystone Drive Improvement Project
Final Scoping Summary Report
Soldotna, Alaska

August 31, 2006

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