

Draft Statement of Logical Termini

Background

The West Susitna Access Road project (Project) is a new, rural public road facilitating public access to State of Alaska and Matanuska Susitna Borough (MSB) lands in the Susitna River basin. The Project aims to build a new public road that extends from the existing highway system to state lands west of the Susitna River, ending near state and MSB subdivisions. The project will facilitate access to the Little Susitna River, Fish Creek, the Susitna River, and Alexander Creek (Figure 1). This memorandum (memo) describes the subject Project in terms of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations and guidance for logical termini, independent utility, and consideration of alternatives.

Regulatory Context

Per FHWA regulations at 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 771.111(f),

any action evaluated under NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] as a categorical exclusion (CE), environmental assessment (EA), or environmental impact statement (EIS) must:

- (1) Connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope;*
- (2) Have independent utility or independent significance, i.e., be usable and be a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvements in the area are made; and*
- (3) Not restrict consideration of alternatives for other reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements.*

FHWA guidance further defines “logical termini” as “(1) rational end points for a transportation improvement, and (2) rational end points for a review of the environmental impacts.” (USDOT 2024).

Figure 1. Project overview



Logical Termini Analysis (23 CFR 771.111(f)(1))

East End Terminus

The eastern end of the project would connect to the existing roadway system. The proposed action would extend from the western end of West Susitna Parkway, at the southwestern corner of the Big Lake community (Figure 2). West Susitna Parkway is classified as a local road at its western end and a minor collector at its eastern end where it connects to Big Lake Road, a minor arterial.

West End Terminus

The western end of the project is located near Milepost 23, approximately 1.5 miles west from the proposed bridge over Alexander Creek (Figure 3). This location provides access to Alaska Department of Natural Resources-managed lands designated for settlement and other uses consistent with the state constitution and land management plans in accordance with the purpose and need for the project. Specifically, the west end terminus at this location would provide access to state-managed lands designated for settlement in the *Susitna Matanuska Area Plan* (SMAP) (SMAP Units M-18, M-19, U-25; DNR 2011) and

WestSuAccess

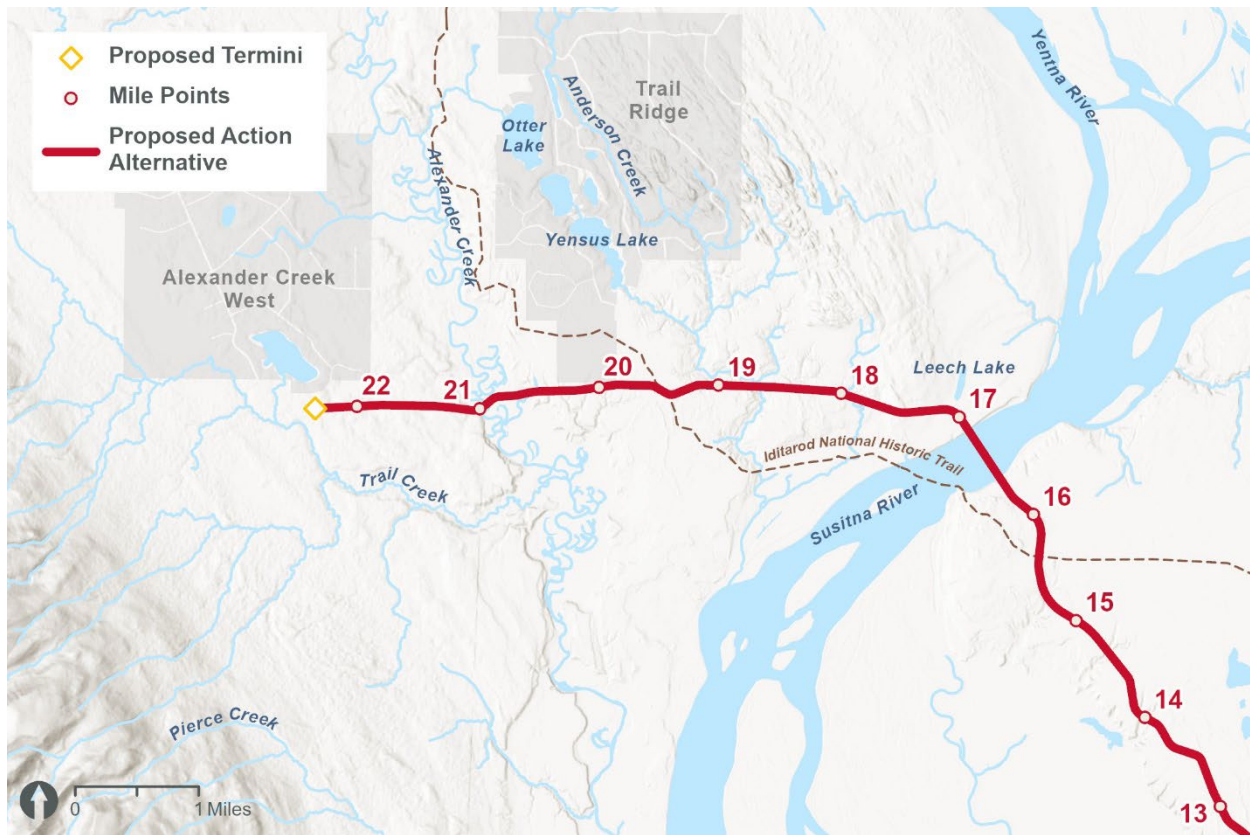
would allow access to the existing subdivisions (Alexander Creek West Alaska State Land Survey [ASLS] 79-209, Trail Ridge - ASLS 81-177, and Otter Lakes – ASLS 19-147).

This terminus would also allow access to nearby state lands designated for forestry (SMAP Unit M-07), recreation (SMAP Unit M-12), and settlement (SMAP Unit M -17). This terminus would provide access to adjacent public recreational lands designated in the SMAP, and the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Management Plan (SBRMP) including access to sport hunting and fishing, subsistence, and public recreation (especially skiing and hiking) activities along the corridor. The proposed material site near Milepost 23 would be an efficient turnaround point for construction vehicles and other traffic, as well as provide materials for road construction. Therefore, the Project terminus would include the material site location, so the impacts of the material site are included in the Project’s environmental document.

Figure 2. East end terminus.



Figure 3. West end terminus.



Independent Utility Analysis (23 CFR 771.111(f)(2))

This Project would be usable and a reasonable expenditure, even if no additional transportation improvements within the area are made. Once constructed, the West Susitna Access road would provide improved public access for recreation, settlement, hunting, fishing, subsistence, agriculture, energy, forestry, mining, and tourism activities. These activities do not depend on additional public transportation enhancements to be constructed, as the road itself provides enhanced access to adjacent and nearby public lands. Recreational activities, such as biking and hiking, could occur along the road alignment, and the road would provide new access to several trails that cross the road alignment as well as access to the Susitna River and Alexander Creek. The road would provide access enhancement to lands designated for forestry, recreation, settlement, and agricultural development that occur along and near the new road alignment, as shown in the state management plans (DNR 1991; DNR 2008; DNR 2011; Agnew Beck Consulting,

LLC 2009); such access enhancement is not dependent upon other actions besides the subject Project.

Not Restricting Reasonably Foreseeable Transportation Improvements Analysis (23 CFR 771.111(f)(3))

No reasonably foreseeable transportation improvements are identified in the *State Transportation Improvement Plan (DOT&PF 2023)* in or near the Project area.

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) is working on a separate project for an industrial access corridor to advance access to several mines (AIDEA 2023). AIDEA's project will consider a variety of ore transportation options, including slurry lines, conveyor systems, and roads to advance economic development and jobs for Alaska. AIDEA is a public corporation of the State of Alaska. AIDEA's purpose is to promote, develop, and advance the general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of Alaska. The proposed AIDEA industrial access corridor project is focused on private mining access not public access; if a NEPA alternatives analysis is required for the AIDEA project, nothing related to the subject project restricts the consideration of alternatives for the potential AIDEA project (AIDEA 2023); and nothing in this project requires AIDEA's project to move forward.

References

US Department of Transportation (USDOT)

2024 Environmental Review Toolkit. Accessed at https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/nepa/guidance_project_termini.aspx on July 11, 2024.

DRAFT