



Ambler Road Environmental Impact Statement

Frequently Asked Questions—Alaska

1. Why do we need a road to the Ambler Mining District? Aren't there access roads there already?

There is presently no road access to the Ambler Mining District. The Alaska Industrial and Development Export Authority's (AIDEA's) proposal for the Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project (AMDIAP) is intended to provide for surface transportation from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District. This access corridor, which would cross the Western (Kobuk River) unit of the Gates of the Arctic National Park, would allow for the exploration and development of mineral deposits in the Ambler Mining District. According to AIDEA, the access corridor is needed to increase job opportunities and encourage the economic growth of the state. Without access, AIDEA has concluded that the mineral assets associated with the Ambler Mining District would remain unused, and AIDEA would not be able to support economic development and increase job opportunities within a region known for high unemployment rates.

2. Who would pay for this project? Can we afford this?

AIDEA's cost estimate for construction of the full build-out of the two-lane access road is \$350 million; operations and maintenance costs are expected to range from \$8 to \$10 million per year. AIDEA, as a development finance authority, would develop the access route as a Public-Private Partnership in which AIDEA funds and bonds would be used in conjunction with private capital for the construction and operation of the Ambler Road.

3. Who would be responsible for maintenance of the Ambler Road?

AIDEA would be responsible for operations and maintenance of the Ambler Road, but may procure those services through third parties. Some of the areas built as material sites may also be developed into maintenance areas to house staff and equipment to operate and maintain the road.

4. What permits and approvals would be required?

The project will require federal authorizations from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which is serving as the lead federal agency for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as well additional authorizations from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). Each agency has received a permit application from AIDEA. The BLM must decide whether to grant a right-of-way across BLM-administered lands. The USACE will evaluate its permit application under

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and will use the BLM EIS as a basis for that permit decision. The USCG has authority for permitting bridges over navigable waters and will also use the BLM EIS for its permitting decisions. The BLM will evaluate potential impacts to subsistence uses in accordance with Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) Section 810, and will evaluate cultural and historic resources in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources will make land management decisions for right-of-way access across state-managed lands. The full list of required permits and approvals is available in the AMDIAP Corridor SF299 Supplemental Narrative (page 12) on the ePlanning website: https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/projects/nepa/57323/98566/119343/Section_2_-_SF299_Corridor_Narrative_Supplement.pdf.

5. What are the different roles of AIDEA, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of Alaska?

AIDEA is proposing the Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project, and would be responsible for its funding. AIDEA funds and bonds would be used, in conjunction with private capital for the construction and operation of the Ambler Road.

The BLM is the lead federal agency for preparing the EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to determine whether or not to grant a right-of-way for the Ambler Road across BLM-managed lands.

The USACE provides permitting under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and would use the EIS as the basis for its decisions.

The USCG provides permitting for constructing bridges over navigable waters, and would also use the EIS as a basis for its decisions.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources makes land management decisions for right-of-way access across state-managed lands.

6. Who would be able to use the Ambler Road? Why is it limited access?

The roadway is designed to support mineral exploration; mine development, construction, and operations; and ore transportation. AIDEA anticipates that there would be about 33 50-ton trucks per day hauling ore concentrate during the peak years of production. Total traffic, including fuel and other supplies, would be up to 80 trucks per day (40 round trips) during production activities. Other permitted traffic at times might include commercial deliveries of goods for local communities or commercial transport for local residents and emergency response authorized through access permits. Only commercially licensed drivers would be allowed on the road.

Although the proposed road would have controlled access, local communities would have the potential to hire commercial transportation providers to deliver fuel or freight to staging areas where the communities could access it, probably in the winter. Alternatively, local residents could instead form their own companies to provide these services.

7. Why is an Environmental Impact Statement being prepared? Who is paying for that?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of their decisions and to consider all reasonable alternatives and assess environmental consequences. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a document required under NEPA for actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The BLM, as lead federal agency for this project, is responsible for preparation of the EIS. AIDEA is funding the EIS.