



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# Public Scoping Meeting

## Ambler Road Environmental Impact Statement

- *Tuesday, January 16, 2018, 2-4pm*
- *Thursday, January 18, 2018, 5-7pm*



# Introductions

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB)
- National Park Service (NPS)



# Meeting Purpose

- To share information about the BLM's Environmental Impact Statement process
- To gather input from you



# Agenda

- Background
- Proposed Project
- Road Elements
- Study Area
- Agency Roles
- What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?
- Draft Purpose and Need
- What is Scoping?
- National Historic Preservation Act Section 106
- Schedule/What's next?
- Comments



# Background

- 1950s – Mineral exploration efforts since the 1950s identify significant resources of copper and base metals in the southern flanks of the Brooks Range.
- 1980 – The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) is established. Congress and the law recognize the mineral potential in the Ambler Mining District and the need for transportation access. Section 201(4)(b) provides for surface transportation access through Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. No such specific decision is made in ANILCA for access across BLM lands.



# Background 2

- 2009-2010 – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) began evaluating multiple road and rail routes that could provide access to the Ambler Mining District.
- 2013 – Project ownership was transferred from DOT&PF to Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA).



# Background 3

- 2015 – In November 2015, AIDEA submitted a consolidated SF-299 application to the BLM, NPS, USCG, and USACE. The application requested the issuance of right-of-way grants, permits for constructing bridges over navigable waters and for filling waters of the United States, and related authorizations associated with the proposed construction and operation of an approximately 211-mile-long, all-season industrial access road.

- **Q: What is an SF-299 Application?**
- **A: SF-299 is a Right-Of-Way Application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands**



# Background 4

- 2016 – AIDEA spent the early part of the year responding to requests for additional information after several agencies found its initial application incomplete. By June 30, 2016, AIDEA had completed its application.
- 2017 – BLM filed a Notice of Intent on February 28, 2017, to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, initiating a 90-day public scoping period. BLM later extended the public scoping period through January 31, 2018.
- 2017 – NPS began a separate but parallel Environmental and Economic Impact Analysis (EEA) as directed by ANILCA Section 201(4)(d), for the road section across NPS lands.



# Proposed Project

- Who proposed the road?
- The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) is the applicant requesting the right-of-way for the project.
- Why is AIDEA proposing the road?
- AIDEA is interested in developing the Ambler Road as part of its mission to “...increase job opportunities and otherwise encourage the economic growth of the state, including the development of its natural resources...”
- AIDEA indicates that without access, 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.



# Proposed Road Elements

## Where would the proposed road be located?

- AIDEA's proposed alignment begins at the Dalton Highway (Milepost 161) and extends westward along the south side of the Brooks Range to the south bank of the Ambler River.

## What type of land would be crossed by the road?

- State lands (61%)
- Federal land managed by BLM and NPS (24%)
- Lands associated with two Alaska Native Corporations (15%)



# Proposed Road Elements continued...

What would the road be like?

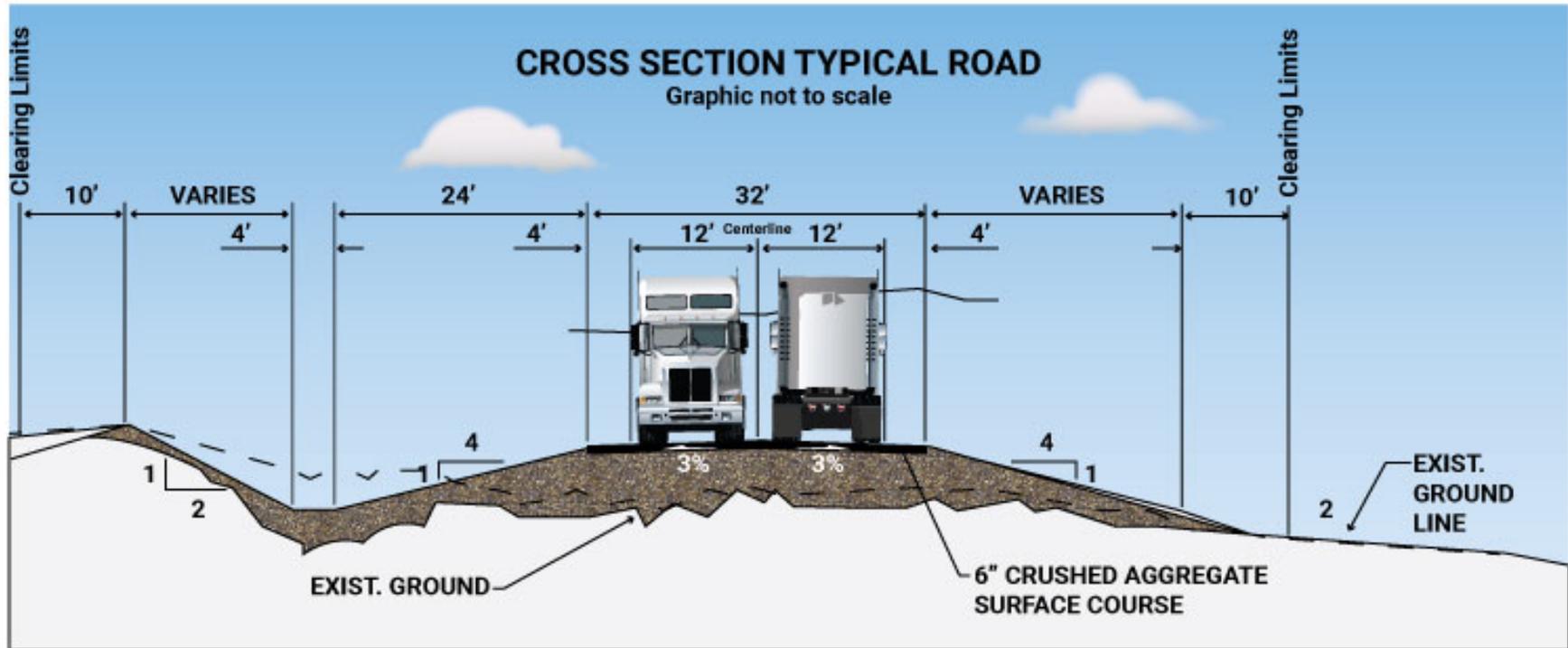
- 211 miles long
- All-season gravel two-lane road
- Industrial access only (not open to the public)
- Includes bridges, material sites, maintenance stations, airstrips, and related infrastructure and utilities

What types of vehicles would use the road?

- Trucks hauling mineral exploration and development equipment, supplies, and fuel; and ore concentrate.
- The road will be designed to accommodate large, semi-trailer trucks (AASHTO WB-62).



# Proposed Road Elements Typical



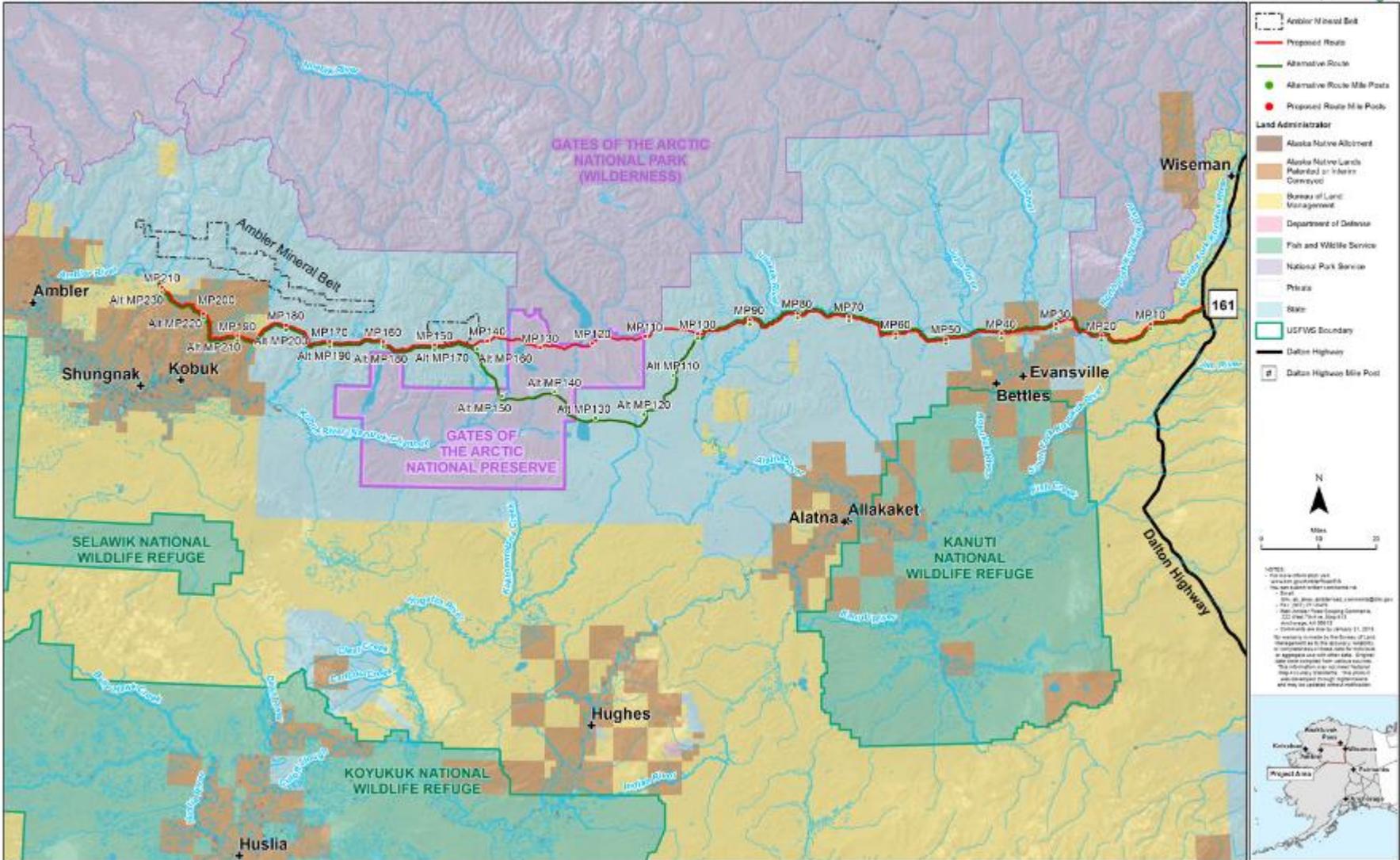


# Proposed Project Area

Scoping

Ambler Road EIS - Project Overview

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR | BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT | ALASKA





# Agency Roles and Responsibilities 1

## 1. Lead Agency

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

## 2. Cooperating Agencies:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
  - U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB)
  - State of Alaska Department of Natural Resource (DNR) Office of Project Management and Permitting (Includes coordination with ADF&G and ADEC)

## 3. Participating Agencies

- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- Environmental Protection Agency



# Agency Roles and Responsibilities 2

- **BLM** – The BLM is the lead federal agency for preparing the EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act. BLM has authority to grant a ROW across BLM-managed lands. BLM must also comply with ANILCA Section 810 and the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106.
- **USACE** – The USACE would evaluate the project application under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and use the EIS as the basis for its permit decisions.
- **USCG**– The USCG has authority for permitting bridges over navigable waters and would also use the EIS as a basis for its decisions.
- **DNR** – DNR would make land management decisions for ROW access across state-managed lands.
- **NAB** – NAB will provide traditional knowledge and input on subsistence, cultural resources, and coordination with Tribal members and affected communities. The NAB would also enforce local permitting requirements and advise the BLM on NAB's responsibilities under State law and Northwest Arctic Borough regulations.



# What is an EIS?

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental consequences of their decisions
- An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a document required under NEPA for actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment.
  - An EIS includes:
    - Project Purpose and Need
    - Issues raised during scoping (internal/external)
    - Project alternatives
    - Description of potentially affected environment
    - Environmental consequences
    - Proposed mitigation



# What is the EIS Process?





# Draft BLM Purpose and Need

- Project Need
  - The need is based on the requirement for the BLM to respond to a right-of-way application for surface transportation access to currently inaccessible, economically valuable mineral deposits in the Ambler Mining District.
- Project Purpose
  - The purpose of the BLM action is to provide AIDEA with: (1) technically and economically practical and feasible surface transportation access across BLM-managed lands for mining exploration and development in the Ambler Mining District, and (2) authorization to construct, operate, and maintain associated facilities for that access.
- BLM Decisions to be Made
  - The BLM must decide whether a right-of-way shall be granted, and, if so, the terms and conditions that will be included in the right-of-way.



# What is Scoping?

**Scoping** is the process used to get input on the **issues, impacts, and potential alternatives** that will be addressed in the EIS.

## What is the intent of scoping?

- **Inform** agencies and public about AIDEA's application and the proposed project.
- Identify resources, impacts, and **issues of concern** to be addressed in the EIS.
- Obtain input to help refine the **purpose and need** and the **alternatives** to study.
- Identify potential **mitigation measures** that may be needed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for project impacts.
- Obtain information to help evaluate the project with **applicable laws**.



# What kinds of issues does the EIS document cover?

- Air Quality
- Special status species
- Subsistence use and access
- Climate change effects
- Fish and aquatic species
- Critical minerals
- Invasive Species
- Water
- Travel management
- Mining
- Wetlands and riparian resources
- Demand for gravel resources
- Recreational activities
- Wilderness characteristics
- Public access
- Social and economic impacts
- Cultural resources
- Wildlife and biological resources
- Impacts to rural and traditional lifestyles
- Geology and soils
- Reasonably foreseeable future activities



# ANILCA Section 810

- Under Section 810 of ANILCA, the BLM must determine whether the project “may significantly restrict subsistence uses.” This analysis will be included in the EIS.
- If alternatives may significantly restrict subsistence uses (either abundance, access, or availability), then this will be identified in the analysis, and ANILCA Section 810 hearings will be held in concert with public meetings upon release of the Draft EIS.



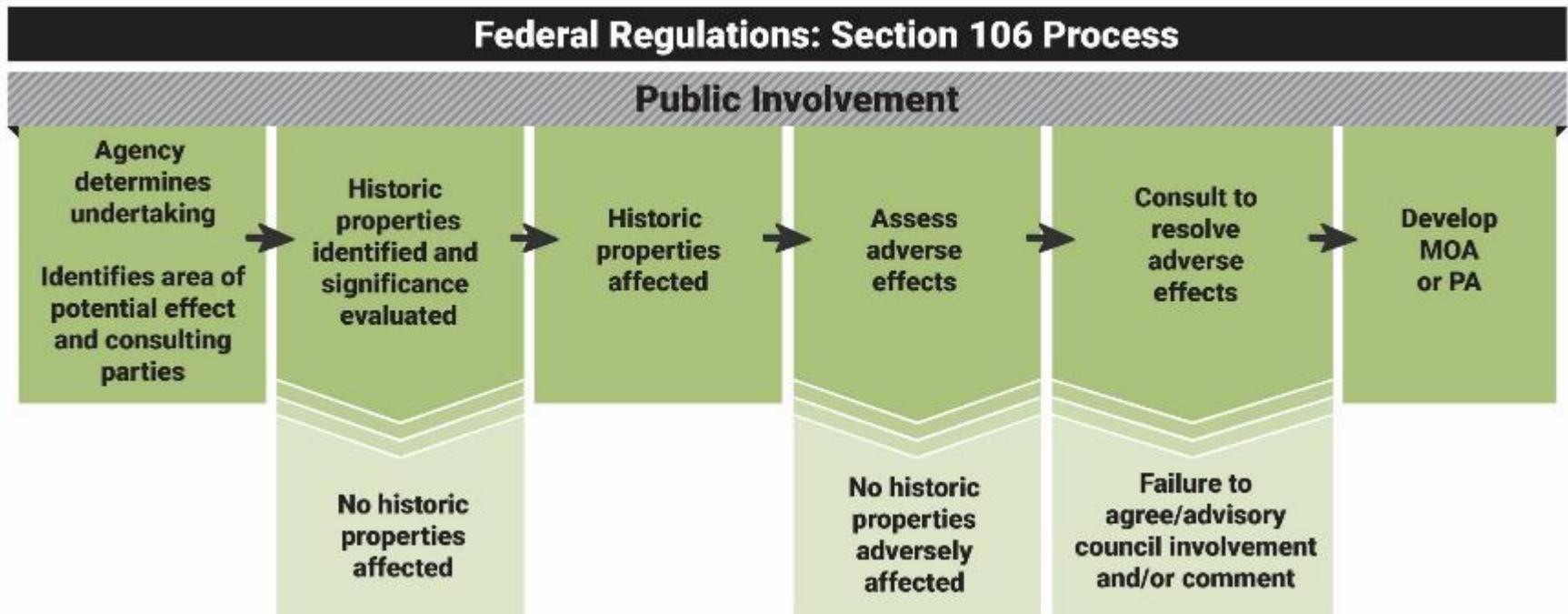
# Section 106 Process

- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and places of religious and cultural significance.
- Tribal entities, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and other interested parties are consulted to identify significant places and ways to reduce or mitigate potential effects.



# Section 106 Process 2

- More information on the Section 106 process available at: <http://www.achp.gov/docs/CitizenGuide.pdf>





# NPS EEA Process

## AIDEA Proposal Includes:

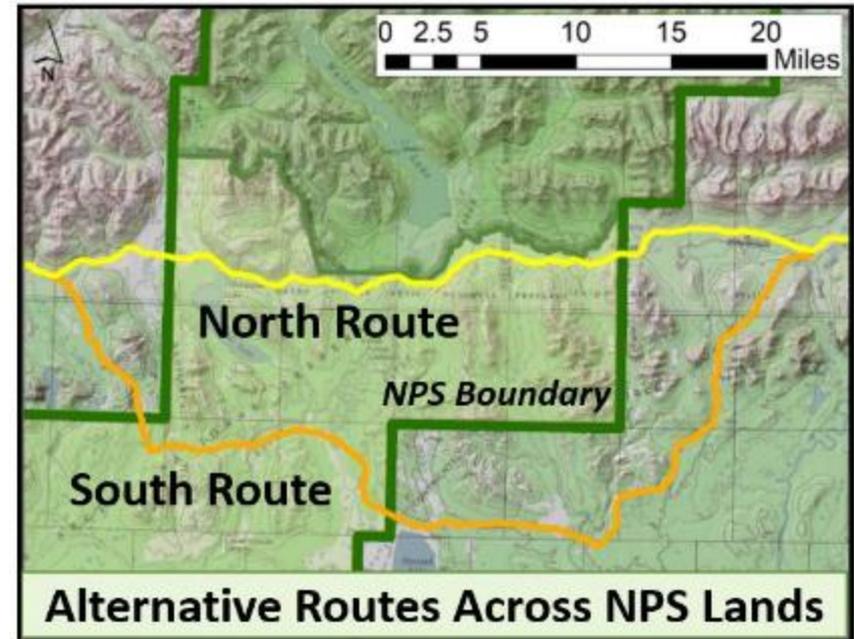
- Two alternative routes across NPS lands (North & South)

## Under ANILCA, NPS is Legally Required to:

1. Permit Access across NPS lands
2. Prepare an EEA to:
  - Evaluate which route is preferable based on environmental, social, & economic effects
  - Develop permit terms & conditions

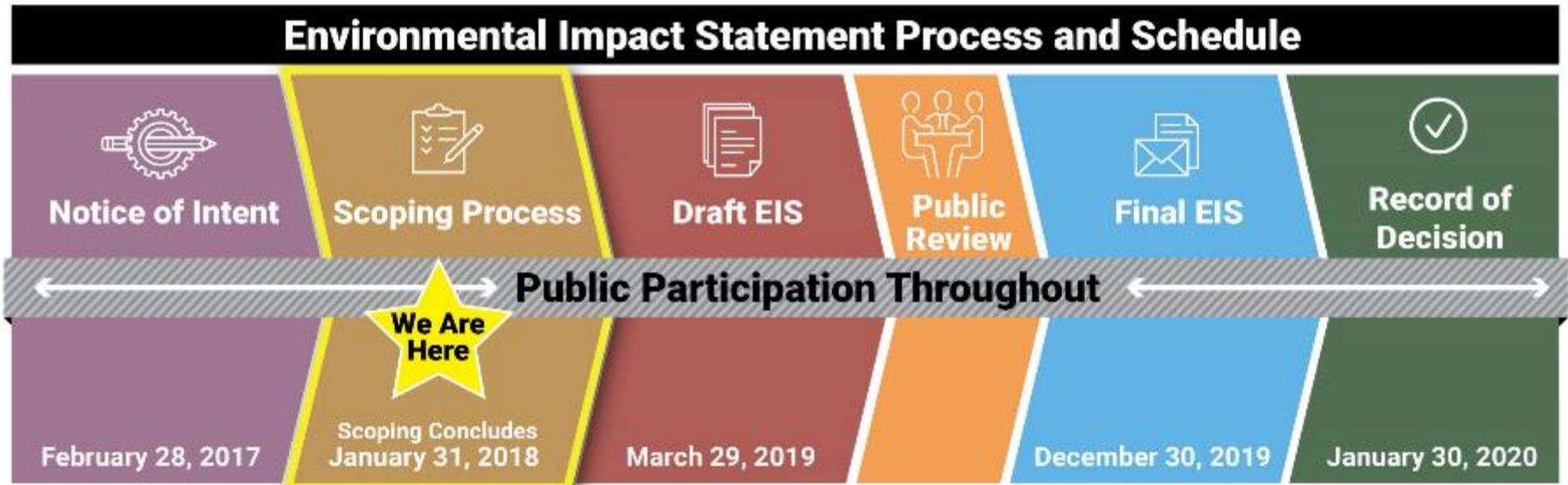
## EEA Public Input

- NPS seeks comments on route selection and permit terms & conditions
- Comment Period is open through January 31, 2018
- TO COMMENT:  
<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Ambler>





# Current Project Schedule





# What's Next?

- Collect scoping comments and feedback
- Consider input received to:
  - Potentially Refine Purpose and Need
  - Determine issues and impacts to be studied
  - Determine alternatives to be studied
  - Potentially identify mitigation measures to apply to the project



# Writing Substantive Comments

- Be as specific as possible.
- Refer to a section or page number of a particular referenced document.
- Present new information.
- Share issues relevant to the environmental analysis.
- Suggest alternatives to the proposed project and the reason(s) why they should be considered.
- “I don’t like this” or “I do like this” is not useful. **Explain why.**



# Comments

## You are welcome to comment on the proposed project:

- Submit a comment form in the box
- Submit comments via the website: [www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS](http://www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS)
- Fax to : (907) 271-5479
- Email to : [blm\\_ak\\_akso\\_amblerroad\\_comments@blm.gov](mailto:blm_ak_akso_amblerroad_comments@blm.gov)
- Mail to: 222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13  
Anchorage, Alaska 99513

**Your input is important!**



# Thank You!

## Questions? Comments?

[www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS](http://www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS)