



Ambler Road Environmental Impact Statement

Huslia Public Scoping Meeting

MEETING NOTES

December 12, 2017

Huslia Community Hall, Huslia, Alaska

Project Team Participants

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): Laurie Thorpe, Tina McMaster-Goering

HDR: Katherine Wood, Leslie Robbins

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): John Sargent

Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Marie Steele

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC): Marna Sanford

Doyon Limited: Ray Richards

Public Participants

Approximately 29 people attended the meeting.

Meeting Purpose

To share information about the BLM's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, and to gather input from the public.

Meeting Topics

1. Welcome from Carl Burgett, First Chief, Huslia Tribal Council

This is a presentation on the proposed Ambler Road. They're here for the morning. They're going to do a presentation, and then you have three minutes to do your public testimony on how it can affect us and our traditional lifestyles. They want to hear how it's going to affect our people and our community. The tribe has a standing resolution in place opposing the Ambler Road. It's been in place for a long time. We live a traditional lifestyle. We're the only growing community in the Interior that's successful because of how we live off our land and our land usage. They're going to do a presentation, but whether you're for it or against it, just speak from your heart, because if it goes through it's going to impact us one way or another. But it's just best that you speak up, and don't say that you don't have an opportunity. This is life-changing to our traditional lifestyle. We're Athabascan people and it's gonna have a huge impact. My thought is that we need economic development, but a

growing community like us we don't have very much options for employment and the future needs of our community and the capital improvement projects for the State are only going to get fewer and further between with what gets funded. So we've got to look at all the options here. So just be open-minded when you make your testimony. Speak from your heart because this is really going to impact the future of our community in one way or another because we're one of the few communities that still lives a traditional lifestyle, and I'd like to see that carried on.

2. Welcome by Katherine Wood

Katherine reminded the attendees that while they may have been to meetings about this project in the past presented by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and AIDEA, this is the first time BLM has come to do meetings, and we are now in a new stage of the proposed project: the environmental review stage.

3. Presentation by Laurie Thorpe (BLM)

Background

The purpose of today's meeting is to share information about the BLM's EIS process and to get input from the local communities. Without that input, the EIS process will not be effective. Public input about issues and concerns is very important.

Project Background

In the 1950s, mineral exploration efforts discovered significant mineral resources on the south side of the Brooks Range. In the 1980s, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) was established. Congress passed that law recognizing 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, but did not address access across BLM lands. That's why we are here today, to address it with you as we respond to the application for the right-of-way. In 2009–2010, the 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. In 2013, project ownership was transferred from DOT&PF to Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). In 2015, AIDEA submitted that application for a right-of-way grant and permits to construct bridges across natural waterways, filling in waters of the United States, and getting a permit to build and operate the Ambler Road. In November 2015, applications were submitted to the BLM, the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and the USACE as well as the State of Alaska. Their proposal involves a 211-mile-long industrial access all-season road. In 2016, AIDEA spent the first half of the year responding to requests for additional information from the application recipients. The application was completed by June 30, 2016, which triggered a timeline for BLM action on the application. BLM filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) on February 28, 2017, to prepare an EIS. That was the official kick-off of our public involvement period. It was originally a 90-day public scoping period, but we didn't feel that would allow enough time for public scoping with all the affected communities. BLM did not want to impact subsistence activities during the summer and

fall months so we extended the public scoping period through January 31, 2018. In 2017, NPS began a separate but parallel Environmental and Economic Assessment (EEA) for the portion of the road on National Park Service land as directed by ANILCA. They are required to select a route. They don't have the option to not select a route. The BLM does have the option to not select a route, and to not grant right-of-way. But we're doing the process concurrently, and we're sharing the comments so that we all have the best information to make the best decision possible.

Proposed Project

The right-of-way application from AIDEA proposes a road across public and private land to the Ambler Mining District 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.

According to AIDEA, without access, the mineral assets associated with the Ambler Mining District would remain unused, and AIDEA would not be able to support economic growth and development and job opportunities in a region known for high unemployment rates.

Road Elements

Maps are available to see the route, and they're in the handout. We encourage you to take one of these with you.

The proposed road begins at the Dalton Highway (Milepost 161, south of Wiseman), and extends easterly across the foothills of the Brooks Range to the southeast bank of the Ambler River.

The type of land crossed by the proposed road includes State lands (61 percent), Federal lands managed by BLM and NPS (24 percent), and lands associated with two Alaska Native Corporations (15 percent) and that's the NANA Corporation and the Doyon Corporation.

The road is proposed to be 211 miles long, all-season, two-lane road with industrial access only. It is proposed to be industrial access only, and not be open to the public. It includes bridges, material borrow sites to build the road, maintenance stations, airstrips, and related infrastructure and utilities as necessary to construct and operate an industrial access road.

The types of vehicles that would use the road are the big semi-tractor/trailer trucks that would be hauling in mineral exploration and development equipment, fuel to support the operations, supplies, and then hauling the ore concentrate out. It would be a two-lane, all-season, gravel surface road.

Proposed Project Area

The map shows the different land jurisdictions that the proposed road would cross. You might notice that there are actually two routes on this map. There's the same corridor from the Dalton Highway all the way over at about Milepost 100, there's a southern route that would cross fewer NPS land miles, but up here [on the map] the proposed road would just cut straight across there, more or less across NPS land and then continue on. Then whichever route is selected in this proposal would be the same all the way over to the Ambler Mining District. Those are the two options the NPS is considering.

Those are the two options that were proposed in the application. BLM and the rest of the EIS is open to other alternatives as well. If you think there's another alternative that can meet the purpose and need, we want to hear all your ideas.

Agency Roles

The BLM is the lead federal agency for the project. Cooperating agencies include the USACE, the Coast Guard, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and the State of Alaska.

Participating agencies include the National Park Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They have a little lesser role to play than the Cooperating Agencies.

BLM is the lead federal agency for preparing the EIS. BLM is coordinating with all the other agencies. BLM has authority to grant a right-of-way or not grant a right-of-way across BLM-managed lands. BLM must also comply with ANILCA Section 810, which talks about subsistence uses and impacts, as well as the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Section 106.

USACE is involved because they have jurisdiction over wetlands under the Rivers and Harbors Act, as well as Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The USACE will be using this EIS as the basis for their decisions associated with the potential permits for this project.

The Coast Guard has authority over bridges over navigable waterways, and there are a few large rivers that would be crossed over by this project. The Coast Guard issues permits for that. They will also use this EIS as the basis for their decisions.

The State of Alaska DNR is involved because they also have significant decisions to make on issuing right-of-way permits for the proposed road across State-managed lands.

The Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB) is currently a Cooperating Agency because of the extent of the NAB lands involved. They will provide some 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, laws, and regulations in the affected area.

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

An EIS is a document required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires federal agencies to assess the environmental consequences of their decisions. An EIS is required for actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. An EIS includes the following:

- Project Purpose and Need
- Issues raised during scoping (internal/external) – Comments you have, issues, concerns, and opportunities.
- Project alternatives – If you have alternatives you think are a good idea, we also want to hear about those.

- Description of potentially affected environment – This whole study area where we’re going to look at what we need to know to study this project.
- What would the possible environmental consequences be should the right-of-way be granted.
- The last part of the EIS is proposed mitigation. What are the permit terms and conditions? What do you think should happen in order to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts to the resources and the human environment?

So where are we now?

We published the Notice of Intent to produce an EIS in February 2017. That kicked off our public involvement, and we’re in the Scoping Process now hearing from lots of communities. We’ll be developing a Draft EIS based on what we hear. That’s going to be followed up by more public review. We’ll come back out here and let you know what we’ve heard from you the first time for this Scoping Period. Did we get it right in the Draft EIS? Did we miss something? Is there something we didn’t hear or see or realize that should’ve been included? That’s why we have public review with the Draft EIS as well. Then we go to a Final EIS, and lastly a Record of Decision of whether or not to issue the right-of-way grant.

Draft Purpose and Need

Project need is based on the requirement for the BLM to respond to a right-of-way application from AIDEA for surface transportation access across BLM-managed lands to currently inaccessible, economically valuable mineral deposits in the Ambler Mining District.

Project 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 the associated facilities for that access.

BLM Decision to be Made

The BLM must decide whether or not to issue a right-of-way grant and with what terms and conditions would it be issued. What types of requirements would we impose on the applicant for the operations and maintenance of the road, of the right-of-way?

What is Scoping?

Scoping is what we’re doing now. It’s the process used to gather input on the issues, impacts, and potential alternatives that will be addressed in the EIS. The intent of scoping is to:

- Inform agencies and public about AIDEA’s application for the right-of-way.
- Identify resources, potential 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 the project impacts.
- Obtain other information to help evaluate the project under the applicable laws.

EIS Document

The EIS document will cover these kinds of issues [shown in presentation], which we came up with internally and felt should be considered:

- 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
- 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. It’s usually an appendix because it’s a separate analysis directed by ANILCA. It supplements the EIS with the ANILCA subsistence requirements.

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 the public meetings when we release of the Draft EIS. When we come back out here and say, “Here’s the Draft EIS. Here’s what we thought we heard from you as far as issues and environmental concerns and opportunities.” We will end that meeting, and we will go right into the Section 810 hearings and public testimony on subsistence on how you think this project may affect the subsistence uses and resources for access, abundance, and availability.

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106

We also have to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 to address historic and cultural resources. Section 106 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 (Judy Bittner), and other interested parties are consulted to identify significant places and ways to reduce or mitigate potential effects. So there will be other meetings that will happen along our timeline, but they will be specific to cultural resources that are potentially affected by this project, and you will be invited to participate in that process as well. I think the letters just got sent out to all of the tribal entities and communities so keep your eye out for that letter, signed by Tim La Marr from the Central Yukon Field Office.

The process with NHPA Section 106 starts with us determining an undertaking, and that's basically the receipt of the right-of-way proposal. So we determine the undertaking, we identify the historic properties that may be out there and their significance, and how they could potentially be affected. Then we discuss what the adverse effects would be to those historic and cultural resources. The group would consult to resolve those adverse effects and develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or a Programmatic Agreement is developed where all those consulting parties agree how to address the historic and cultural resources. That's all the way from the inventory of what's out there to if the right-of-way was granted, and if the equipment and operations people were out there starting to dig into the ground and something new was discovered, how would it be handled? What would the construction people do? So it's figuring out all those details up front before any ground disturbance is done that's what the Programmatic Agreement does.

NPS EEA Process

So all of this happens at the same time the NPS is doing their EEA.

AIDEA's proposal includes two routes across NPS lands (North and South routes). If there's another alternative suggested during the process, we might look at that, too.

Under ANILCA, NPS is legally required to permit access across NPS lands. They have to prepare an EEA to evaluate which route is preferable based on environmental, social, and economic effects, and develop permit terms and conditions to be associated with the right-of-way grant.

EEA Public Input

NPS seeks comments on route selection and permit terms and conditions.

Their comment period is the same as ours. It ends January 31, 2018. To comment go to <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Ambler>.

Project Schedule

A NOI was prepared February 28, 2017, that started the scoping process, which is what we're in right now. We have until January 31, 2018, for you to submit comments. We're targeting March 2019 for a

Draft EIS. We'll come back out and do more public involvement. Did we get everything we needed from you? We'll make final adjustments in a Final EIS, targeted for December 2019, and about a month after that a Record of Decision will be made of whether or not to issue the right-of-way grant, and with what terms and conditions.

What's Next?

BLM is collecting comments and feedback. We will consider input received to potentially revise the purpose and need, determine issues to be studied, determine alternatives to be studied, and potentially identify mitigation measures to apply to the project, i.e., anything to minimize or avoid impacts.

When you provide comments:

- Be as specific as possible about what you are concerned about.
- Refer to a section or page number of a particular document or a map about the issue you're bringing up to be addressed.
- Tell us new information that's not on our radar. Is there something on the maps that you think is noteworthy that you think we should know about that's in the affected area?
- Share issues relevant to the environmental analysis – The human environment, the water, the wildlife, the economics, etc.
- Suggest alternatives to the proposed project and the reason(s) why they should be considered.
- Just saying "I support the road" or "I don't support the road" is not useful. Whatever you feel about it, let us know why. Why is it important to you? How will it affect you and your communities and your lifestyles?

You are welcome to comment on the proposed project. You can submit comments in the following ways:

- Submit a comment form in the box today
- Submit comments via the Ambler Road EIS website: <http://www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS>
- Fax to: (907) 271-5479
- Email to: blm_ak_akso_amblerroad_comments@blm.gov
- Mail to: 222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13, Anchorage, Alaska 99513

4. Comments

Laurie asked the participants to please share their comments.

Below are a compilation of verbal comments received at this meeting.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

We don't want a public road from Dalton to Ambler. We don't want a public road. So how and when do we approach AIDEA and say we want to write in this contract that there's no public access on this road ever? Industrial use only. Another question is we don't have a borough in the Yukon-Koyukuk

area so when it comes down to the decision NAB is going to decide on NANA's side. On our side, if we don't have a governing board that can say yes or no, the State is going to create the concept. So how do we get our people on that if we want to be involved in that process? I want to add also, I went to your meeting in Fairbanks and I told you guys, you've got to bring this to Huslia, and so thank you. I appreciate that.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

So the first question you asked was about it not being a public road.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

Yes, how do we write that into the AIDEA contract that they're not going to make this a public road?

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

Right now that's what AIDEA's proposal says. It says, "Industrial access only. No public use." So that's what their assumption is right now.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

We want that in writing.

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

That is what their proposal says.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

And the other question I have is could the State create a five-member board? Is that how it's going to work?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

I can't speak for the State, but perhaps Marie, our State representative, can help us out.

Response from Marie Steele, DNR

So it's my understanding, and I can't speak for AIDEA because they have their own policies, but there's probably information on the AIDEA website (<http://www.ambleraccess.com/>), and that is a question for AIDEA to answer, but it is my understanding that when there is not a local borough the Governor appoints a commission. So I imagine there would be a nominating process for you to go through, either Doyon or K Corp, and tell them who you want on the board. It would be my expectation that the Governor's Office would reach out into the area and say, "Who's appropriate to be on this commission?"

Comment from Eleanor Yatlin

I'm from here. We lived in Bettles from 1989 to 1998, and the food supplement in Bettles is mainly caribou, and I know that all of the villages around there, because of the lack of moose around that area and the Kanuti area, and this was in the 90s so then the main food was caribou. When they put the pipeline in, for thousands of years the caribou was their main source of food and their migratory pattern changed after they put that pipeline in, and it affected the villages. So that's what I mainly wanted to speak about. The thing I really wanted to say was that when we lived in Bettles we had a fish camp for 20 miles below Bettles, on the Koyukuk River, and every night in September. You know how sound travels in the dark? So we think we hear a jet unit coming up the Koyukuk River towards our camp, and we heard a swish sound off and on, and we finally figured out that it was those big trucks going up on the Dalton Highway on the mountain. So what I'm saying is, if we could hear it that far away (he figured it had to be almost 40 miles) it probably affected the animals. If we could hear it, the animals could because their hearing is more sharp than human beings. I'm against the Ambler project simply because of the environmental impacts and also the impacts on the food sources for the villages.

Comment from Darrell Vent

(Huslia Advisory Council for Federal Subsistence, Koyukuk River Advisory Council, Huslia Tribal Council, TCC Working Task Force)

We have what you guys call an EIS, what we call an ACEC, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. We submitted a form to BLM, which was rejected, and we were wondering how we could go through this process for Section 810 restrictions when we don't have any written documentation because you rejected our proposal? We need to go back and discuss this. This is important to us. These are our Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Imagine the same thing happened up in Allakaket, Hughes. We don't have any kind of information that's given to you guys that we could utilize. You're telling us we're going to discuss on Section 810 and where the restrictions are and it's not going to be feasible with us, because we don't have any information that you're letting us use. Another concern is that you're talking about a private access road. I remember back in 1974 or 1976, people were talking about that. That was a private access road when they put in the pipeline. You can correct me, but I'm pretty sure that was correct. They argued about that. They were worried because people are going to go up there and that's going to be wide open to hunting if they ever get that chance, which they did. Now they have big problems up there in Wiseman. We're concerned because you've got this Section 810 restriction in there. Also, we're looking at historic properties. This is another one that's probably going to go to the NPS. We're wondering when we could speak on that or where it's going to be. That information will be handy. Also, if they put that road in it could possibly turn public, we don't know. If it does that will heavily impact our area with hunters and people who could access this road. That worries me. Also, this is right where our ecosystem is. This is everything that starts in the heart of what we live on. This affects us because the water comes down this way, and if anything happens to that it's not only the fish it's everything on land that lives off of that river including us. I see that as a damaging thing to our younger generation. We've got to look at our future here. What are we going to

give them if we let them damage that land and they have to try to come and repair it? That's a hard thing to live with because we depend on subsistence that's more than 80 percent of our people in the villages, because we don't have employment. They can promise us all kinds of jobs, but could they help us with our food process? I see that happened down in the states where they depended on fish and wildlife, and they got impacted with mining. The same thing we're going through up here. We have to think about all these things. It's affecting us because that's the headwaters right there. We've got to be careful with that. I suggest an alternate route where you go through the Gates of the Arctic National Park where they could handle all this. But you went down through all these different areas, which impacted a whole bunch of areas. We've got to have a say in what you guys do. If we don't, our children are going to suffer.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

The Section 810 and 106 processes are just starting so we don't have information yet on what we think those impacts will be. We've come here first to say, What questions should we ask, and what should we be thinking about? When we come back for the EIS, we would have information for you.

Comment from Darrell Vent

I requested through the Tribe that we have more information for the ACEC, and we're wondering why that request was denied.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

I want to make my statement. I want to stick to the facts, and I'm glad you came here so people could see this. Number one, as I said before I'm not for a public road. We want to write into a contract that this is for industrial use only. Number two, our people have got to get part of the jobs in the construction of the road, and we want jobs in that mine. And we want it to where K'oyitl'ots'ina and Doyon Corporations could form companies, and we could hire our shareholders. Otherwise we're going to get run over. Just like the folks across the street from our school. They're building the schools for us, and very few of us are working. That's what will happen here if we don't get ready for it. I'm in favor of this Ambler Road, because we need jobs for our people. A lot of our students are staying home, they have no opportunities. There's nothing wrong with them staying home we want them to be here, but we want them to have careers and retirement, all that. They would fly from here to the Ambler Mining District. We would have flights going back and forth. Huslia, Hughes, Allakaket, Bettles, we could create an economy for our people. Number three, we want money that's going to come out of the value that's going to come from the Ambler Road. Huslia Tribal Council, Hughes Tribal Council, Allakaket, Alatna, Bettles, Evansville, Wiseman, we want them all to get some kind of money from that value in the form of a tax or a TERO [*Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance*] agreement. If we don't have a borough, we can't tax. So can we establish a payment in lieu of taxes that can bring money to our governments? We need that. We have high unemployment. Most of us don't have a job. We're broke. We need this work for our young people. There are a lot of young guys here who could have a truck driving job or construction or working the mine. And we've got more kids

coming home. They left their college, which is fine, but they need opportunities and this is it. I'm for it, and we'll do it to our specifications. We're not going to kill the land off that's why I say. How do we write this into our contract? When they start putting this stuff down on paper we want to be at the table, and we're going to tell them what's important to us, and this is the way we want to do it. We're not going to kill off the fish, we're not going to kill off the caribou, we're not going to kill off the moose. Nobody's trapline is gone. We want industrial access only. It'll kill us if they make a public road across the river. It'll just wipe everything out that we know today. We don't want that, but we want to be at the table and we want to make sure it's in writing so we could hold them to it. Otherwise, we're going to get run over if we're not organized.

Comment from Edwin Bifelt

On the contracting side, what type of P3 [*Public-Private Partnership*] contract is this going to be? Is this going to be a design/build, operate and maintain for the whole 30- to 50-year life of this project? What type of costs are you looking at and is there going to be one main, primary contract, or is it going to be broken down into several separate, smaller contracts say a contract for the bridge building, a contract for the gravel road construction, the maintenance sites? It's kind of disappointing that we don't have AIDEA here to fill this in so could you elaborate on that?

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

I think the short answer is that AIDEA doesn't have answers yet to a lot of those type of questions so we don't know what type of P3 contract it would be. There are several different models, and that's not known. In terms of cost, I think the AIDEA brochure says it's about a \$385 million road project. So that's what the cost estimate is right now, and whether the contracts will be broken up and how they will procure that out they're waiting to see how the EIS process goes. There would be contracting that would happen after the EIS process is done.

Comment from Edwin Bifelt

So on the mining side, do you know the estimated economic impact from these projects based on the inferred resource of copper? Is this going to be a \$30 billion development over the years, or what type of estimates do you have?

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

The best answers we have are inside the AIDEA handout that's got their estimates on numbers right now, but that's something we'll need to look at in the EIS.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

When you start doing these studies is it going to be DOWL, or who's going to be doing the studies for fish and all of that? Can we get some of our young people involved with jobs?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

I don't have the answer to that, but I would encourage folks to continue pursuing that because nobody knows these resources better than you.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

I want our young people to get opportunities when they start the studies.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

I know we can't fight this. It's already approved.

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

It has not been approved yet. We've received the application so we need to do the environmental analysis to determine whether or not to issue the right-of-way.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

So this is a 210-mile road, right?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

It's proposed at 211 miles.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

Is it surveyed already? Did you survey it for economic impacts to us?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

Good question. We have to address that.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

All these questions that we're asking right now are these done? We keep testifying and it seems like is this road surveyed? Are you going over sacred lands? Did you study the environmental impact? Did you study the subsistence impact? Did you study where the caribou cross? Did you study where the fish migrate and spawn? Don't make it a private road, make it an industrial road and make sure you put that in writing. And you have to make sure that it's enforced because when the Dalton Highway was made it first was no public access. And now there are hunters up there terrorizing the Dalton Highway. I worked on the pipeline, and I saw them up there. They're up there in swarms, parked along the highway, walking out to kill caribou. And they say that's not an impact on the subsistence way of life for our people but that is. When the road is built, the contractors and subcontractors want trained and skilled people. They don't want to just hire anybody nowadays. They want them trained and skilled so that they could perform the job that they're assigned such as truck drivers, CAT skimmers, laborers. A laborer isn't just a laborer who picks up a tool. A laborer is skilled. He's got all kinds of skills building, form building, and that's what they're going to be looking for. The only way that I can

see since our corporations wouldn't train people is that we'll have to go union because we have a TERO in our tribe with the unions. And if there's a contract coming up and we inform the union about it, they'll take as many people as they could to train for that job so you'll have a skilled pool. You have to be skilled to get those jobs so I'd really enforce that issue

Comment from Vincent Henry (not on sign-in list)

So you're coming here to ask what kind of impact it is, or what we think it will be. Even if you go ahead and get this done, and everything is built and hunky-dory, I have one question. Every mine site I've ever been to had a laboratory where they would break down the minerals and separate them. So all these chemicals will be delivered out to the mine. So you go ahead and haul the product back from the mine, and the waste, and you have oil going out there on 211 miles of road. In the history of the pipeline being built, how many accidents have been on that road? That's going to relate to this right here. And we have approximately seven or more tributaries that this road is going to cross that lead to us. If there's an accident out there, it's definitely going to affect our fish. It's definitely going to affect our water. This is one of the reasons we want our people to have access to the funds when this road is being built, have access to jobs when this road is being built, and even afterwards, because we're going to take a hit regardless of whatever happens. I don't think this road is going to be, "That's it, all we're going to do is build this road." I don't think that's going to happen, and here's why: 211 miles from the Dalton Highway is more than just about half of the way to Kotzebue. What's going to stop the next road from going from Kotzebue to Ambler? You guys are going to say the same thing. There's a lot of minerals, and there's going to be a lot of work. Next thing you know, we have a road all the way from Kotzebue to the Dalton Highway. Next thing you know, we have access to the coast. As soon as I saw the map, I realized that's halfway. That's going to happen. People will say it doesn't affect the caribou. I lived down in Newhalen for about three or four years. That's where the Pebble Project is going up. They were talking about how it's going to affect the fish. But they had a caribou crossing that goes along the range over the lake. It got affected when a whole bunch of guys decided to get together and said, "Let's get some caribou in one big bunch." So they lined up right in front of the caribou path. They got so many caribou, but they didn't realize is that they turned the herd so no longer will the caribou go by Newhalen or any of the villages over there. They cross way down below and go out. It's not just that the road is going to be there people are going to have access. People are going to come up with the idea that, "there are a whole bunch of caribou out there so let's go get some." That's going to change the herd's migration path. It's not going to happen in my lifetime it'll happen in my kids' lifetime. So this is the reason that if this does happen we need something to fall back on, which is why we need funding for education, and food, and whatnot. It would kind of help reconcile the disasters that will happen in the future. Times are changing, and if we can't stop this at least we'll be reconciled for it. That's why we have all these voices here. I hope you hear them, and don't get lost in the paperwork.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

How much impact would NANA have on this project? How much impact would they have on the hiring process? I know they have a borough and we don't so they'll have a lot of priorities that we don't have. So the hiring process of making this road is really going to affect us on our jobs.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

I could answer a small part of that. I saw Trilogy Minerals' presentation down in the Dena'ina Center in Anchorage. Just on the minerals exploration itself, NANA got 65 percent shareholder hire. Nothing to do with the road. That's why I want us to talk with NANA and see if we can get our shareholders a certain percentage of the work, too. On our side, there's no discussion at all there's no representation. That's the only way we're going to get jobs for our people.

Comment from Edward Sam

Is this the first community you've visited?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

We've been to Allakaket, Alatna, Wiseman, Anaktuvuk Pass, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Kotzebue, Ambler, Shungnak, Kobuk, and Hughes, and this afternoon we're going to Bettles and Evansville for this same meeting.

Comment from Edward Sam

So what kind of feedback are you getting on the road from the other villages? Positive or negative feedback? Are they for it or against it?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

Both. I think there's more interest in and support for the road in the Western communities. Everybody is concerned about subsistence.

Comment from Speedy Sam

Thank you for coming out here to make this presentation about the Ambler Road. Once this road is put in, if another corporation finds minerals on their land and since this is an industrial road will you be able to offer us access to our minerals? Say 10 or 15 years down the road, we actually find minerals in our land. Can we get that in writing that we can access the road to get our minerals out of that hill?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

We don't have the answer today, but thank you for asking.

Comment from Speedy Sam

We have to look down the road. The other thing I'd like to have in writing is that there are a lot of mines that have roads from the villages into the mines, and one that got impacted a few years ago was Red Dog. They would haul trucks in there on their road and they didn't find out after the local people noted that it was impacting their land 1 or 2 miles from the Haul Road. Both sides of the road were getting impacted. They didn't find out right away, and it wiped out the land 1 or 2 miles from the Haul Road. If we could get in writing that we could do testing one or two times a year for impacts...it just bothers me having that long a road going on our land, once it's put in and it's okay to use it. We talk about fishing and our subsistence way of life, and I know 30 percent of the kings come up the Koyukuk River and have spawning grounds up there. I hear comments that we need all this in writing, like the hiring process. It's good for employment and in other ways, to put money into our community. There was a mine, the Illinois Creek Mine that opened up a few years ago. They came out way up here to Huslia. The Illinois Creek mine is on Galena Hills between Galena and Kaltag. They came out here to Huslia, and they went to Ruby and Galena, they went to Koyukuk and Nulato and Allakaket. They hired people in each one of those villages. That shows that they worked with the villages surrounding that mine. Somewhere in the writing process, can we have that in writing? They said that NANA had a big percentage because it was going on their land and coming out of the back of their woods. If somewhere we could have this in writing that surrounding villages could have a piece of the hiring process. I don't think we should leave it up to our corporations. Like if you guys are going to have it in writing that the Doyon Corporation does the hiring process. I don't want to talk bad about our corporation, but they have a low percentage of Native hire on the Slope as it is and that's my own corporation. I'd like to have it in writing that it comes to the surrounding villages where the mine is going to be. And once that road comes through, 10 or 15 years down the line, we should have access to using that road. Let the other village corporations explore off that road. I've brought this up before, but if you could have one big meeting in Fairbanks and invite all the villages so they could all be sitting at one table. I've heard you say a lot of them are for it, but I never hear it from another village I hear it from you. I'd like to hear it from the other villages, right at the table when we're sitting with them. So somewhere down the line can we have a gathering in Fairbanks? It wouldn't be in the village that was going to be affected. I'd like to see that somewhere down the road.

Comment from Darrell Vent

Eleanor Yatlin mentioned the caribou. I heard it from her father before that it's going to affect the caribou migration pattern. I remember the early 70s when they used to come right through the village and they'd get caught in the clothesline, or you'd see them go by. We have good grounds around here for caribou good moss that they like to eat the lichen, and now I don't think we've seen any in the last four or five years. Everybody's been having a harder time hunting because around Anaktuvuk, and up around Cuyana and Buckland and those areas, the sport hunters are hitting them pretty hard. Also, the Native people are killing the big bulls, and they're having a harder time surviving. They're really impacted over there because 58 percent of their herd was lost at Anaktuvuk, and about 56 percent of the Northwest Arctic Herd was lost because of that. So we're having a hard time over here catching

caribou because when we first started, they told us the pipeline is not going to affect our area, and it actually has. What kind of timeline do you have in order for something that's impacted like that to go into litigation? What is the timeline if they promise they're not going to impact our caribou? Is that over with? We don't know. Could people still ask them, could you replace what you promised was not going to be taken from us? That's one of the things I'm concerned about, because once they take it, there's nothing you can do to get it back. Or is there a way to go through a litigation process? Because this impacted our area, and I'm worried that if you put that road across there, there goes the rest of our caribou. What's going to happen there? If it turns public, there will be mining, there will be access to hunting, there will be a lot of things that will impact our area. We don't know yet. I'm really worried what you do to this land, because it's going to be for our future generation. They probably want to live like we do, but we're forcing their hands. We're going to make a decision about how it's going to impact you and you're going to have to do this. I don't want to see that happen to our future generation. I want them to have the same access we did. We're talking about mining, but how about the pipeline? What's the employment rate up there? They promised there were going to be a lot of jobs, and there were a lot of jobs, but the turnover ratio by the Natives we've got probably 12 percent to 18 percent up there on the Slope. I don't know how many from this village, probably none, but I don't know. So when you're talking about these jobs here, a lot of times, the employment goes. They come and get their money, and where do they go? They go down to the Lower 48. We've got to consider all of that. Those are some of the things we've got to study. These are some of the answers we need. We need to find out what the turnover rate was when they first started the pipeline. Our people are going to be affected the same way. How much employment are we going to get here? We don't know that yet. And that's got to be considered, because we could try to get the employment, we could try to do something for the people, but it might not actually work. We don't know yet.

Comment from Unnamed Man

On this project, I think you should have the village corporation, K Corp, as the primary contractor on this \$600 million road construction, and operations and maintenance. If you're talking about jobs for the long term, if we have a local contractor that'll help. We're shareholders of K Corp and we'll be able to dictate how this project gets done. I think it's critical for us to be involved. We need to have a significant percentage of the contracts for this project.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

We want to get that kind of information from AIDEA. When they go through that part they call P3 that's the funding mechanism to the road. We want to know how we can get involved in that. That's why we want AIDEA here so we can ask them questions, because they're going to build the road. When they get to that P3 process of funding this road construction, and contracts and everything, how can we get involved, and how much money is involved? There's a big gray area, and we need to know that now so we can plan for it in the future.

Comment from Glen Sam

Would it be possible, when you're done writing this thing up, to have our corporation, the K Corporation, to have a certain percentage of the jobs and all trade, building the road and the mine to have our corporation have a certain percentage of all the jobs? Could that be written up in the contract? If we don't have it in writing, we're not going to get those jobs. That's just the way it is.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

We don't have an answer for that, but that's a great comment. We can try to get that for you

Comment from Joe Ambrose

There are a lot of concerns and comments, and I hope they are all taken seriously. My main concern is the hiring process for somebody to make sure that we get hired from the villages on the Koyukuk River, Hughes, Alatna, Allakaket. Somebody needs to make sure the contractors do this. I work construction all my life, all over the state, in villages. The contractors will come and hire one laborer, one truck driver, and they call that local hire. And they bring in all their guys. My main concern is the hiring.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

Like I was saying, if we could get our corporation to start some sort of contract service to maintain the road halfway, and then NANA could have the other half, instead of letting the State maintain the road. Sign a contract or something so that we make sure that all our shareholders have a job. We could make sure a lot of people have jobs. We have a TERO for local hire, which our Tribal Council should have enforced when these contractors for the school came in. They should have had a sit-down meeting with them to make sure a lot of people got hired from the village instead of just four or five, and then get laid off first. There are about four or five people from out of town who are still working. We should have utilized that. We've got to start realizing that the tribes have a lot of power in the hiring process.

Comment from Danielle Ballard

I just wanted to know if there are studies on the negative impact it will have on land and animals.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

That's what we'll be doing in the Draft EIS.

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

That's exactly the type of question we want to hear what you think should be studied.

Comment from Danielle Ballard

Where are you taking all this information?

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

We're taking notes at all the meetings and we're going to put that on our website. We'll write up a summary listing all the concerns and issues that we heard. Then we have to figure out how to address them.

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

Based on what we're hearing from you and other communities, those issues and concerns, we will try to answer the question of what the potential impacts would be to the wildlife, the economy, and the water in this potentially affected environment and the human environment. We try to answer those questions in the Draft EIS, and then you get the chance to look at that and tell us whether we missed your comments. That's why we come back and make sure we heard your questions correctly and answered them in the EIS. We don't have those answers yet, but we want to have those questions asked so that we can get them answered in that EIS. An EIS informs and discloses potential impacts. We're building the information to put into the EIS, and then we'll come back to you and ask, "Did we hear from you correctly? Here's what we think the environmental consequences would be. What do you think about that? Do these conclusions make sense? Is it easily understood? Are they clear enough?" Sometimes that scientific jargon can be very confusing to people like me, and so what I try to do with the EIS is to make sure you can understand what all the science actually means. I need to have that clear and simple for me to be informed and to provide information to the decision-makers so they can make an informed decision on whether or not to grant the right-of-way, and what mitigations and permit terms and conditions should be applied to it. Thank you for that recommendation.

Comment from Danielle Ballard

It sounds like the road is going to happen. So once it does happen, if it does have negative impacts on land and animals, what then? How do you fix what's already happened?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

If there are negative or adverse impacts, what type of mitigation would be recommended? What ideas do you have that could be associated with the permit to mitigate those impacts? We want to hear from you.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

The EIS will have a whole section, for example, on wildlife. It will say what we think this road might do to wildlife, and then it will also have a whole section that says, based on feedback, these are things we might be able to do to lower those impacts. That would be the mitigation measures. Then the question would be, is it a yes or is it a no?

Comment from Danielle Ballard

Do all these studies come from people who actually hunt to survive?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

The BLM wildlife biologists try to gather input, and that's why we have those Section 810 hearings, to hear from folks specifically on what they think those impacts would be to their hunting, their fishing, their subsistence way of life. That public testimony is very important at that stage, but we want to hear from you now so we can put as much information into that EIS so that we all have that to look at and consider.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

When you're done with all your meetings, when will you be able to notify the public of the outcome of all the meetings and all our testimony? When will you have the results of that and when will you let us know the impact that the people's testimony had on the decision-making?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

According to the timeline I put up there, when the Draft EIS is made available, it will be on the website. All the comments we have received and all of this information will be available on the website, and we probably will also send it to the communities. I'm not sure whether that will be a paper hard copy or on a jump drive, probably both, so that you have it here. We also have another public involvement meeting when the EIS is made available. That Draft EIS is scheduled to come out in March 2019, about a year and a quarter from now. That's the current schedule.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

This economic development I don't want it to be like another pipeline, where they got our work and they moved to Fairbanks and Anchorage. There were only flights from the North Slope to Fairbanks and Anchorage. We want our villages to grow, not shrink. When they create that road to that mine, we want flights to come to our villages so that our people could live there and work on the mine and the road. That way our village could grow and create a sustainable economy for our people. Our young people would have careers. We don't want them to leave our village, because it's going to kill our schools. We want economic development, but we want people to be able to live in our villages and grow into a Western civilization. We want to put that in there, too.

Comment from William Penn

We're all Natives, and we all live a traditional way of life. We ought to think of 20 years from now. Did you ever see that commercial where the girl with the salt shaker drops salt all around? What if they do that here? Twenty years from now, it could affect us. The two Native corporations need to make some sort of long-term contract so it will help both of us, and try to figure out what animals it's going to impact and what kind of impact there will be on us. We've got to find a way to work together. A long-term agreement. Later on, if it falls on this road, and it's starting to go down toward us, maybe they'll forget about us by then. A long-term agreement for the road and the mine. Maybe we could work together somehow.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

I think for the Red Dog Mine, they have a subsistence council. Whenever they have subsistence problems, the council brings it to Red Dog and they address it.

Comment from LeAnn Bifelt

How long is the project proposed to last?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

Let's look in the applicant's paper there. I don't know what their construction timeline is, and a lot of that depends on what further exploration is revealed.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

In the application, they think it's a 50-year life of the mine. The timeline they're thinking now is 50 years.

Comment from LeAnn Bifelt

And when are you planning your Draft EIS?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

The Draft EIS is scheduled to be made available to the public in March 2019.

Comment from Frances Knowler

To me it seems like it's going to happen anyway, no matter what. I don't know how many years you've been coming around, saying the same thing over and over. I think the villages should get together use it for our advantage. I see you guys taking notes. Where are the notes from the last meeting?

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

This is the first time the BLM has been involved.

Comment from Frances Knowler

But it's all the same land. I really think we should use it to our advantage, because it's going to happen, no matter what.

Response from Katherine Wood, HDR

If you go on AIDEA's website, which is AmblerAccess.com, they have copies of all the meeting notes they did when they came through, and I think they also have DOT's report, which also includes the notes from those meetings as well.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

They've got to have real secure shipments when they travel along the road, otherwise it's just going to keep seeping down toward us. Twenty years from now it might reach us eventually so they have to have good shipment containers for hauling through there. That way, it won't go down to us later on.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

A lot of us don't have a computer. We can't even get on a computer so how do we get this information? I can't get anything off a website, I don't even have a computer.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

We've got to make some kind of agreement where we could work on the road and on to the mine, maybe. Some way it could happen. We could always ask about it. We could always tell them about it if we wanted to.

Comment from Mabel Vent

It sounds like you've already got the road. And if you really think of Huslia, we had one road from spring camp to the river. Now, when you go off in the woods there are whole bunch of roads. What I'd like to see is that they stick to one road, with no off-roads, because everybody used snowmachines and ATVs, and we have a lot of hunting cabins out there. So that's what's going to be bothered first.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

Maybe some guard posts on both sides? That might help us a little bit more with people going in there. Good job for Doyon security. Or maybe K Corp security at the beginning of the road.

Comment from Speedy Sam

Can we have it in writing that our corporation (K Corp) can use this road to get into our land and look for minerals? It's our corporation land so maybe the corporation could use the road into our land.

Comment from Unknown Man

I think what people are concerned about is we're not going to stop the road no matter whether we like it or not, but once that road is in you're going to get all kinds of people coming in. Look what happened on the Yukon last summer. A guy was just drifting out, burning people's places down. We don't want that to happen on this road if we get a bunch of crazies coming out there. Somebody's got to enforce it. They say it's not a public road, but you can't stop people once there's a road. Who's going to watch it day and night?

Comment from Lisa Bifelt

People will travel from Fairbanks through our village over to here [*points to map*] to transport drugs, and I'm thinking this is going to make it much easier for the possibility that some trucker is going to sneak drugs in. Somebody will meet him right down here, probably.

Comment from Frank Bifelt

You've got to have authorized entry only. That's what they have in Deadhorse. They travel from the ice road at Nuiqsut and they have background checks and everything. So that's what we have to do. See if K Corp could start a security system from all our villages. I think the Pogo Mine has that too.

Comment from Edward Sam

We could even tax them.

Comment from Frank Bifelt

Maybe we could put up a toll booth when they enter our land.

Comment from Jack Wholecheese

I worked for NANA for 6 years up north, and they were a good outfit to work for. I talked to the people and they said, "You don't have to be a shareholder to work for us." But I saw a lot of people who were more skilled than the NANA region people and more skilled than our laborers. They hired them from down in the states. They paid their way down and they paid their way back. That's why I say our corporations should really start looking into better and bigger scholarships for the mines, people who could run the mine, and not send for Outside help. I don't know how many times I brought that up to Doyon, but they never listened.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

On this side you've got no representation. On the NANA side they've got the NAB. They just got done finalizing an agreement with Teck Cominco and Red Dog Mine. They finally reached an agreement. Now all 10 of our villages are going to get one million a year, everyone, and that's going to go on for the life of the Red Dog Mine. He's right; you could tax it. We could do the same thing. But we've got to be organized; otherwise, they're just going to go on by just like the pipeline. We lost out on millions of dollars there. We don't want to do that again. If our corporations could get together and start a natural resource place, and train people that are interested in our natural resources, I think we could do the same doggone thing. We've just got to step in and get organized and do that.

Comment from Unnamed Woman

What kind of steps could our tribe take to try to work together with K Corp or Doyon to try to get our foot in the door and get the most involvement out of it?

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

I don't know if we have answers today, but the purpose of getting you to ask these questions is that we can get those answers, and so folks like the Doyon representative can hear those questions and work on getting answers to them.

Comment from Ray Richards

You're wondering how you can approach your corporation Doyon, and get involved in maybe positioning yourself better?

Comment from Unnamed Woman

Yes, maybe working together.

Comment from Ray Richards

Part of the reason why I'm here is so that I can take these notes and bring them back to Doyon. We've been following this project since the beginning, and we've heard from folks in this area quite a bit as well as other areas. One of the first things to do is to have the tribal organization or K Corp submit a proposal to Doyon saying this is what you would like to accomplish, and then ask Doyon how. That would open the line of communication. "How can you guys help us do this?" And a lot of these things I've been writing like crazy. I'm taking a lot of your comments back to Doyon. It will all be part of how my higher-ups look at things and provide comments to the BLM for its involvement here.

Comment from Fred Bifelt

Just for the people here, I'm going to the Doyon meeting in February in Fairbanks or wherever, and I'm going to get on the agenda, and I'm going to address just what he said. I'm going to tell them that the people on the Koyukuk River need help, and Doyon's got to help us.

Response from Laurie Thorpe, BLM

I could also make a recommendation. For all of the communities potentially affected by this road and for their youth there's an education program in Alaska called the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP). That is a hugely successful program, and I'm sure there's someone in this community with internet access that can look it up. *[Someone volunteers.]* That can open a lot of doors for the youth in getting them trained, skilled, and right into the workforce. It's a fantastic program. ANSEP is very effective in meeting students' needs for the workplace. I have seen a lot of successful young adults. They start working with children in middle school, all the way through high school, and then further education. They go right into the workforce.

5. Closing

Katherine thanked the community for attending the meeting, and reminded them that forms were available for their comments and feedback. She also reminded them that they have until the end of January 2018 to submit their comments. Katherine adjourned the meeting, and asked the participants to please take home the leftover food.

Marna Sanford mentioned that the Tanana Chiefs Conference has a contractor working on this project who is dedicated to helping people write their comments and get them submitted in the proper format. Her name is Toby Mericle. Marna mentioned that people can contact Toby, her, or the

legal department of the Tanana Chiefs for help with comments on the Draft EIS and for subsequent parts as well.

Katherine told the group that they are coming back in March 2019.