

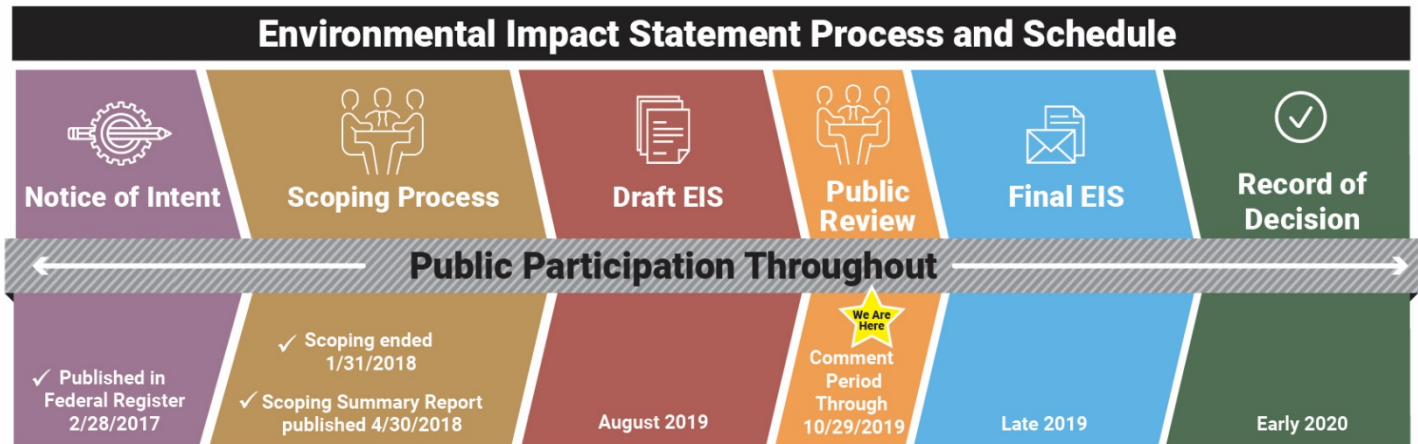


Ambler Road Environmental Impact Statement

Fact Sheet—Alaska

Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project on August 23, 2019. The EIS was prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate whether to grant a right-of-way for the proposed Ambler Road across BLM-managed lands. The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) has proposed the project, which is located in north-central Alaska. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are cooperating federal agencies. Following a public comment period, the BLM intends to revise the EIS as necessary and publish a Final EIS.



The EIS analyzes the No Action Alternative and three build alternatives (see attached map). Alternative A was proposed by AIDEA and would result in a new 211-mile road on the south side of the Brooks Range, extending west from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler River. Alternative B is an alternative route proposed by AIDEA that would be 228 miles long and follow the same alignment as Alternative A except at Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, where it would loop south and use less Preserve land. Alternative C was a suggestion in scoping comments and would begin 100 miles farther south on the Dalton Highway and proceed 332 miles northwest to the Ambler Mining District (District). Under all build alternatives, the road would be open only to mining-related industrial use (and some commercial deliveries to communities); it would be closed to the public at a staffed gatehouse. The project would include bridges, material sites, maintenance stations with airstrips, a fiber optics line and communications towers, and related infrastructure and utilities.

The Ambler Road project would provide surface transportation access from the Dalton Highway to the District, allowing for exploration and development of mineral deposits in the District. According to AIDEA, the access corridor, is needed to increase job opportunities and encourage Alaska’s economic growth. Without access,

the valuable minerals associated with the District would likely remain in place, and AIDEA would be hindered in its efforts to support economic development and increase job opportunities within a region known for high unemployment rates.

Construction would occur in three phases. Costs for construction of the full build-out of the two-lane access road project is \$519 to \$992 million, depending upon the alternative. Operations and maintenance costs are expected to be \$9 to \$14 million per year, depending upon the alternative. AIDEA, as an independent public corporation of the State of Alaska and development finance authority, has proposed to develop the access route as a public-private partnership in which AIDEA would raise funds from investors by selling bonds, and the bonds would be paid off over time by charging annual fees to mining companies that use the Ambler Road. The road corridor is proposed to operate for up to 50 years, and then be closed and reclaimed.

Permitting

The proposed road under any build alternative would cross State, Native corporation, and federal lands managed by the BLM and National Park Service. AIDEA has submitted an application for a right-of-way across federal lands. If approved, the project would include mitigation requirements on BLM-managed lands.

The project will require federal authorizations from the BLM, USACE, and USCG. The USACE will evaluate the application under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. As a cooperating agency, the USACE will use the BLM EIS as a basis for the USACE permit decision. The USCG has authority for permitting bridges and other restrictions on navigable waters and will use the EIS for its permitting decisions. The BLM has evaluated impacts to subsistence resources in accordance with Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and to cultural and historic resources under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Public Participation Process

The public comment period provides the opportunity for the public to be involved in the BLM's decision making process and comment on what is being proposed and the adequacy of the EIS and Section 810 Subsistence Evaluation. To be considered for the Final EIS, all comments must be received by October 29, 2019.

The BLM will hold public meetings/hearings on the Draft EIS and Section 810 analysis in Allakaket, Ambler, Anaktuvuk Pass, Anchorage, Alatna, Buckland, Coldfoot/Wiseman, Evansville/Bettles, Fairbanks, Hughes, Huslia, Kiana, Kobuk, Kotzebue, Shungnak, Noatak, Noorvik, Selawik, Stevens Village, Tanana, and Washington, D.C. For more information on these meetings/hearings, visit the project website at www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS.

The public scoping period ran from February 2017 to January 2018. The purpose of public scoping was to determine relevant issues that would define the scope of the environmental analysis, including alternatives, and to guide the development of the EIS. The BLM solicited comments and held public scoping meetings in November and December 2017 in Allakaket, Ambler, Anaktuvuk Pass, Anchorage, Alatna, Evansville/Bettles, Fairbanks, Hughes, Huslia, Kobuk, Kotzebue, Shungnak, and Wiseman.

Next Steps

The BLM will consider and respond to all substantive comments on the Draft EIS. The intent is to revise the EIS as necessary and publish a Final EIS in late 2019, followed by a Record of Decision in early 2020. The Record of Decision will present the BLM's final findings, reasoning for selecting one of the alternatives, and the final conditions that would accompany a grant of a right-of-way across BLM-managed lands, if AIDEA's application is approved.

For More Information

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Visit www.blm.gov/AmblerRoadEIS for more information or to make a comment.

NEPA number:

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Proposed Ambler Road Project Alternatives



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, ALASKA, AMBLER ROAD EES

