

Foothills West Transportation Access Meeting Summary

Public Meeting in Nuiqsut 6/11/2009

DOT&PF conducted a public meeting in Nuiqsut for the Foothills project on June 11th, 2009 at 7:00pm. DOT&PF personnel introduced themselves and discussed project information contacts. A presentation was then given about the proposed project that described the proposed study activities and scheduled fieldwork. An emphasis was made that we are early in the preliminary design process and have not started the NEPA process. The project study area was described, and maps were presented showing current study areas and data collected to date. Questions and comments were solicited after the presentation. A translator was utilized for communicating the project to the Elders at the meeting. Approximately 25 Nuiqsut residents were in attendance.

The following DOT&PF personnel and its contractors were in attendance:

Ryan Anderson, DOT&PF
Casey Adamson, DOT&PF
Liz Sears, Stephen Braun and Assoc.

Paul Karczmarczyk, DOT&PF
Steve Reidsma, 3PPI, Inc.

Community Comments:

1. A public access road will give sport hunters access to Nuiqsut hunting grounds, resulting in an influx of sport hunters along Colville River and increased competition for local hunters.
2. Nuiqsut relies heavily on subsistence resources including moose, caribou, and fish, along the Colville River.
3. Nuiqsut residents should have access to the road.
4. Nuiqsut residents use the study area for trapping and hunting of wolf, wolverine, and other furbearers, in addition to caribou as needed, during the winter.
5. If the road is funded with public money, the state cannot restrict access to the public. Nuiqsut residents do not want the public to have access to the road.
6. Why is the state spending money on these studies before the industry has announced significant findings of gas?
7. The state is moving too fast on the project.
8. The state should slow down until the industry announces significant findings; then the industry can help fund the road.
9. Rural residents are the ones that experience the impacts of development, and money is funneled to urban areas. The state favors urban areas and industry over rural areas. The road would only benefit industry. The cost of living in rural Alaska is high.
10. The industry should pay for the project, not the state.
11. What is the benefit to Nuiqsut?

12. The state will try to get around conducting an EIS for the road project. An EIS should be required to study potential impacts on subsistence and on the environment.
13. The road and bridge could cause displacement of subsistence resources. Nuiqsut residents are already experiencing displacement of resources from oil and gas development
14. The Colville River has been designated as a scenic river highway system by the BLM – the bridge would be an obstruction.
15. Umiat is already polluted; it is the federal government’s responsibility to clean it up. The state should not pay to help the federal government clean it up.
16. There could be downstream effects on the community of Nuiqsut from Umiat.
17. There could be problems similar to those with the Kuparuk River bridge (obstructing access).
18. The state should consider impacts on raptors.
19. If the road is publicly funded and the state tries to restrict access, there will be lawsuits from Alaska residents who want to use the road.
20. Sport hunters and tourists are already a problem along the Colville River. One local hunter was shot at from a plane by a sport hunter.
21. How will the state regulate hunting along the Colville River and control the influx of sport hunters once the road is built?
22. A road to Nuiqsut from the Dalton Highway would help bring down cost of transporting goods. Nuiqsut residents wanted a road to Deadhorse that would not be accessible to the public.
23. The state needs to consider Native allotments in the study area.
24. The state needs to involve the North Slope Borough in the planning process.
25. The state will build the road regardless of what the community wants.
26. Studies on subsistence should include Barrow and Anaktuvuk hunters who use the Umiat area. Barrow and Anaktuvuk residents commonly hunt in that area.
27. Nuiqsut needs assurance that there will be no subsistence impacts or social impacts resulting from this project.
28. Residents would like to see statistics on how much oil and gas is in the area.
29. Can the state compromise with the community of Nuiqsut when planning this project?
30. The road could bring social problems (e.g., drugs and alcohol). The community has been working on reducing drug and alcohol problems in the community, and the road could undo that progress.