

Foothills West Transportation Access Meeting Summary

Public Meeting at Nuiqsut January 14, 2010

DOT&PF conducted a second public meeting for the Foothills project at the Community Hall in Nuiqsut on January 14th, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. DOT&PF personnel introduced themselves and discussed staff responsibilities for the project and information contacts. A presentation was then made that detailed and summarized completed and ongoing engineering, environmental, subsistence, geotechnical and cultural resources investigations that were begun in 2009. Updated maps of the project study area and associated field data were presented for public viewing. As during the first meeting, it was emphasized to attendees that the project is still in its early stages of preliminary design, no formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) obligations have begun as yet, and that currently, funding is only available to complete the baseline studies that commenced in 2009. Questions and comments were solicited after the presentation. A translator was utilized to facilitate full communication of the project presentation and public dialog to the Elders present at the meeting.

The following personnel from the State of Alaska and its contactors were in attendance:

Ryan Anderson, DOT&PF
Casey Adamson, DOT&PF
Liz Sears, Stephen Braund & Assoc. Inc.

Paul Karczmarczyk, DOT&PF
Denise Herzog, 3PPI Inc.

Community Comments and Questions:

1. The Colville River has changed a lot; there are new channels and sandbars and it is hard to navigate certain parts of the river. A bridge may worsen these problems.
2. Shouldn't Umiat be cleaned up before proceeding with road construction? Cleaning Umiat should be the biggest priority before the state considers putting in a road.
3. The state should stop pursuing the road. There is no benefit to the rural villages.
4. Why is the state pursuing a road to oil and gas resources when the gas line project hasn't begun? It will be a decade before the gas line project starts.
5. Why is the state spending public dollars on a project that the industry should pay for? This project could cost a billion dollars.
6. The state should let industry pay for the road; that way, there will be restrictions on who can use the road.
7. The state is progressing too quickly with the road; there are many baseline studies that need to be done first.

8. The road will open the door to sport hunters impacting the communities of Nuiqsut, Anaktuvuk, and Barrow. There is not enough state enforcement of hunting regulations in the area.
9. The state's intent is to serve the purpose of the oil and gas industry, rather than the people of Alaska.
10. Why is the state pursuing the road when it is unclear how much oil and gas is available in the area?
11. The state should have thought before they selected the lands around Umiat. Now they have to bear the cost of the cleanup, even though it should be the federal government's responsibility.
12. How will the baseline studies be used to forecast how the road will respond to coming change, such as climate change? Will the environmental analyses use modeling to predict future changes?
13. The state should spend money on things that would benefit residents, such as health care benefits.
14. There is little enforcement on the Dalton Highway of hunting activities; if there is a road to Umiat, it will be the same.
15. How much of the road is on Native owned land?
16. What is Arctic Slope Regional Corporation's (ASRC) stance on the proposed road? What are ASRC's plans once the state crosses over their lands?
17. My brother has an allotment near the project area, between Chandler River and Umiat somewhere. There are a lot of restrictions in the area around Anaktuvuk Pass; people need a permit just to travel to their allotments. People in Anaktuvuk Pass are already having a hard time harvesting caribou and fish.
18. The people of Nuiqsut have had a lot of negative experiences with the processes surrounding industry activities. There have been promises that industry activities would not affect residents' subsistence harvests. Residents use the project area to hunt caribou and moose. There is also historic use of the area. When harvests were poor, the project area was very important. Nuiqsut elders have indicated in the past that the community should migrate to Umiat if there is flooding or other effects at the current community location.
19. The community interviewed 25 Elders about uses of the area, but these data were not properly archived. There should be efforts to review these data.
20. The community of Nuiqsut is already experiencing massive impacts on their subsistence activities. Industry accepts that there will always be changes resulting from industrial activities as part of the process and never correct the impacts. These impacts should not be considered normal, and should not be allowed to happen.
21. Can the community of Nuiqsut afford to experience even more impacts on subsistence? We cannot keep finding new areas to hunt; the impacts will be devastating to future generations.

22. The community of Anaktuvuk Pass is also experiencing heavy impacts on subsistence; the communities of Nuiqsut and Anaktuvuk Pass commonly share subsistence foods because of the loss of certain subsistence harvests in each community.
23. The project area is an important area for the movement of animals.
24. The road does not go to Nuiqsut. What good is a road without people traveling on it? Who will use the road? The industry.
25. The road will impact caribou and moose in the project area. The influx of sport hunters will make residents' subsistence hunting activities more difficult. We will have to go farther to harvest what we need for the year. I do not support the project because of these things.
26. Why do they have to build a road? Why can't they just use the river?
27. My family has lived in Nuiqsut since 1973. The river used to be too shallow to go to Umiat. Everyone hunts in the community in June and August. This August there was oil in the river when it flooded, probably from the drums of gas. The oil in the river affected the taste of the caribou. There is a lot of hunting in the Umiat area. Right now, residents do not know where the caribou herd has been.
28. Nuiqsut has been experiencing social issues because of the haul road and the ice road, with drugs and alcohol coming into the community. Construction of the Foothills road will cause more hardships in the community. The state does not understand the types of problems the community faces. Oil wells are seeping, sport hunters and rafters are in the area, and the state has not done anything to fix these problems. We care about our area, and the state is not trying to understand the issues our community deals with. Who will be responsible for the problems that result from industrializing Umiat?
29. There have been some very important artifacts found in the project area. There was a traditional hammer found north of the project area, which was thousands of years old; the area is very important historically.