



Dalton Highway State Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP)

Thursday, November 12, 2009, 5:00-7:00pm
Inupiat Heritage Center, Barrow, AK

Attendees:	
Dan Forester— <i>North Slope Borough Planning Department</i>	Marcheta Moulton— <i>State Scenic Byways Coordinator</i>
Ben Greene— <i>North Slope Borough Planning Department</i>	Ben Nageak
Patrick Griffin	Edith S. Nageak
Erling T. Johansen	Ethel Patkotak— <i>North Slope Borough Mayor's Office</i>
Perry Matumeak	Rick L. Rice
Facilitator: Kathlene Rowell— <i>AKDNR</i>	

Meeting Summary

Kathlene Rowell – *Facilitator.*

[Kathlene Rowell gave a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation that provided background information on the project and presented an overview of the plan's components. She then opened the meeting for questions and comments.]

Ben Nageak

- Comments are given from a private citizen's perspective and not that of the agency he works for
- There are subsistence issues with hunting in the corridor
- There is only one truck stop along the highway; no other fuel stations
- People are going to travel up the road because of promotion, like the History Channel's program on truckers
- What about liability—search and rescue, etc.?
- NGOs will do anything to lock up land when no one seems to be watching
- People are going to travel the road regardless
- One time it was mentioned that the program would present economic opportunities for residents to provide visitor services
- People are driving the road that don't know what they are doing
- Nobody wants to own up to who is liable when accidents occur on the roadway

Dan Forster—*North Slope Borough Planning Department*

- Road is an unfunded mandate
- Glamorous, beautiful drive under ideal conditions; however, weather conditions change rapidly and sections become very unsafe
- A constant theme in these types of meetings/projects has been "Don't promote the road until it's safe" and it's not there yet
- It is a state road and the state refuses to put the resources into it, particularly public safety; the state needs to do this
- Heard the Troopers state that they want the Borough to patrol the road

- Is not concerned about tour operators on the road since they are self-contained, have emergency equipment, etc. It is the recreational travelers in personal vehicles who pose the greatest problem
- The 1998 Dalton Highway Master Plan voiced the same concerns as this plan
- There are signs in Coldfoot that warn travelers about the lack of services
- The North Slope Borough proposed at one time to put up a sign warning about road conditions and listing the things that travelers should have in their vehicles; DOT said “no”
- One idea is to have CB radios or Personal Locator Beacons (PBLs) for people to check out and rent for use on the road
- The North Slope Borough is opposed to opening access to the Arctic Ocean from the Dalton Highway because it poses a new liability/public safety issue; don’t want to exasperate the problem
 - Oil companies don’t want public access to the Arctic Ocean permitted because of security issues

Ben Greene—North Slope Borough Planning Department

- The corridor partnership plan isn’t about making it a scenic byway—that’s already been done; it was named a State Scenic Byway in 1998
 - This process is in response to that action; the Advisory Team is not in support of National Scenic Byway Status at this time. There is no action that he is aware of at this time to take that step
- Elaborated on his role and experience on the Advisory Team; talked about the change from the first draft to the second draft
- As the Advisory Team member for this area, offered to accept comments from the group and funnel them to Kathlene Rowell

Ethel Patkotak—North Slope Borough Mayor’s Office

- Curious about whether there has been a prioritization between industrial, research, and recreational uses of the corridor; there seems to be a conflict between these uses
 - Why would you want to start a research program even if it’s 20 miles off the corridor if the surrounding area is being impacted by recreational and industrial use? It seems the uses the plan is trying to foster are conflicting in a significant sense.
 - The road’s original design was to get trucks up to Prudhoe Bay
 - There is an implicit assumption in the program that increased visitor use is ok as long as you know what you are getting into; but in terms of prioritizing, it started as an industrial road, now there is an increasing focus on visitor amenities, which says that there is a decided prioritization that is creeping in; regardless of what you say or how it’s described, it is prioritized
 - *[Kathlene Rowell answers the question by saying that the road was open to public travel in 1994. There is a focus on amenities now because of the increase in the number of people traveling because of that opening. The document does not make a statement about what it thinks the better use is—recreational vs. industrial. Its purpose as an industrial road is still its main purpose. The goals in the plan were written to try to meet the objectives of managing an industrial road that is also open to the public and how those two uses are balanced.]*

Erling T. Johansen

- Likes driving around Alaska and does it a lot
- Finds it disappointing when you get up to Prudhoe Bay and there is a sign that says access to the Arctic Ocean is restricted; recommends putting a state park at the end so travelers can drive through and finish their journey

- The road ought to be paved from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay; it would reduce damage from rocks, blown tires, etc. and make the trip safer. It would straighten areas that are really dangerous.
- There needs to be more turnoffs like that at the Arctic Circle wayside—facilities should probably be concrete so they don't get destroyed

Edith S. Nageak

- Why is the state neglecting to fund this road to make it safe?
 - *[Marcheta Moulton, the State Scenic Byways Coordinator, described the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) planning process. Explained that public involvement is important in making issues heard]*
- Different departments in the state need to come together to come up with solutions to fix problems
- Expressed being tired of empty words; planners don't listen and nothing happens
 - *[Kathlene Rowell stressed the importance of establishing a byway organization. Explained that if departments are not receiving feedback from the public, they are not going to realize community needs]*
- The state is stuck with a road and does not want to fund it—that is sad
- Is the state waiting for stranded travelers and death before doing something about the road?
- Why didn't the state listen to the group that wrote the 1998 Dalton Highway Master Plan?
 - *[Kathlene Rowell mentions that a participant in the Fairbanks meeting on September 30th, who was also a member of that 1998 planning team, explained that the group wrote the plan and then did not want to go any further with the document.]*
- Public safety should be the number one priority
- Tolls are a good idea and could pay for road maintenance, etc.

Patrick Griffin

- Recommended establishing a checkpoint to track the number of travelers and their travel plans
- Recommended installing emergency call boxes