



## Parks Highway Bridge Replacement: Montana Creek & Sheep Creek

### MEETING NOTES

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SUBJECT:	Parks Highway Bridge Replacement: Montana Creek & Sheep Creek
PROJECT NO.:	AKSAS No. 58976, Federal No. 0A41034
GROUP:	Public
DATE:	Thursday, May 7, 2015
TIME:	6 to 8 p.m.
LOCATION:	Su-Valley Jr/Sr High School 42728 S Parks Highway, Talkeetna, Alaska
MEETING OUTREACH:	See Table 1. Meeting Outreach
MEETING ATTENDANCE:	20 people signed in.
MEETING MATERIALS:	Aerial photos of project area, board describing existing bike and pedestrian pathways, sign-in sheet, comment sheets, map comment sheets, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets
STAFF PRESENT:	<i>DOT&amp;PF:</i> Sean Baski, Kathy Shea <i>HDR:</i> Scott Wharton, Linda Smith <i>Brooks &amp; Associates:</i> Anne Brooks

### MEETING INFORMATION:

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Attendees were greeted at the door and asked to sign in. The project team was on hand to discuss the project with the aid of graphics showing both bridge locations, existing non-motorized facilities and example non-motorized facilities at Willow Creek Bridge. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and provide written comments.

Attendees submitted the following written comments. Any emphasis is the commenter's own.

- Fix sag over [southern] pedestrian tunnel at Montana Creek. Springs present under road climbing hill north of [Montana Creek] bridge. Parks Highway [centerline] is offset 8 feet, north of Sheep Creek Bridge.
- Possible wildlife crossing under bridges? Parking for fishing on Montana Creek? Will they be done at the same time? Will they be working 24 hours a day?
- Traffic north to south always is excessive in speed, width of bridge is a hazard (Montana Bridge). No safe way to cross bridge on ATV or snow machine.
- Bikers need a separate, away from all traffic, bridge, and hopefully, in the future, access to a bike path connecting the Spur Road recreation trail to the Wasilla Trail (Parks Highway).

- 1) South bound traffic from Talkeetna needs dirt removed from corner on the hill east side of road north of Montana Creek so traffic can see turning traffic on/off highway before creek/bridge. 2) Would be nice to have turn lanes for businesses.
- Turning lanes on both north and south side of bridge are needed to accommodate turning traffic at Montana Creek bridge.
- When moving oversize buildings, trailers, bridges, etc. it is hard for pilot cars to safely divert traffic around the bridges at Montana Creek and Sheep Creek. We moved the pedestrian bridge at Montana Creek from Anchorage. We would like for the opportunity to move any and all beams, bridges, etc. to help improve traffic and pedestrian safety at these creeks. We look forward to hearing from you on these projects. *Note: Comment submitted by John's General Contracting Inc., a local contractor.*
- Adequate parking at Sheep Creek in summer. Traffic turning at campgrounds both sides of the Montana Creek. Blind corner on north side of Montana Creek Bridge. Sheep Creek is close to our home and it is easy for my disabled father to have access to the creek. Leaving a parking area is greatly appreciated.
- Speed! Get it done right the first time. 1) Montana Creek – do not put personal walkway close to highway bridge. In winter snow from highway will be thrown onto the walkway making it unusable. Also put lots of culverts in so if we have a flood like in 1986 the water can pass through “under” the roadway and not wash it out again. 2) Same thoughts at Willow Bridge – we don't want snow machiners on the highway. And again keep the pedestrian walkway away from highway so plowed snow will not get thrown on it. Also lots of culverts to channel water through roadway. 3) Let's keep people safe, keep them away from highway.
- A) Parking by locals south of park (to avoid paying) – if this area is changed there will be impacts on other areas. [Referring to west side of Parks Highway, across from Montana Creek Road] B) If underpass is moved north to bridge area, what impacts will it have on people getting to/across the railroad? [Referring to underpass access to the Montana Creek State Recreation Site].

Project will need to keep access open during height of fish run. Bikes crossing Montana Creek during events such as Clean Air Challenge are forced up onto road (not on pedestrian bridge). Replacement needs to be wide enough to allow multi use – keeping bikes off road shoulder on bridge.

- Make driveway and pathway access level (traffic hazard) at the underpass north of Montana Creek.
- Parking in the southwest quadrant of Sheep Creek and Parks Highway no longer use due to steep ditch.

Stakeholders and team members recorded comments on project graphics at the meeting. These comments are listed below.

- Sheep Creek

- Keep pedestrian bridge separate travel from highway bridge/safer for bikers, runners and drivers too.
- Connect bike path to pedestrian bridge.
- Right of way provides access to residences west of the highway from driveway north of the bridge.
- Audubon Drive provides access to The Preserve at Sheep Creek, a residential development.
- Locals access a fresh water source north of the project on the east side of the road.
- Montana Creek
  - Needs turning lane options into campgrounds north and south of bridge.
  - Note erosion of the stream bank west of the bridge in the privately owned area.
  - Pedestrians cross the Parks Highway at the intersection/access to the Montana Creek State Recreational Site.
  - Needs an additional floodwater capacity accompanies lines showing an area encompassing the area north and south of the bridge. Add drainage culverts along the highway.
  - South pedestrian tunnel sags prohibiting good drainage.
  - Keep pedestrian bridge separate from traffic for safety and snow removal.
  - Add erosion protection to the embankment south and east of the bridge.
  - Access right turn only added to a circle encompassing the driveway access to Susitna Rec Camps Inc., property northeast of the bridge.
  - The private lot on the northeast side of the project was flagged “commercial use in future”
  - Three comments flagged the hill north of the bridge –
    - Spring water concerns
    - Speed Limits
    - Southbound traffic speeds and campers/access to private campground.
    - South of the bridge near the Montana Creek Road a commenter noted that the deep should be used for parking and fishing access.
    - Commenters noted parking use of Old Montana Creek Road southeast of project area.

Stakeholders submitted the following email or phone comments in response to meeting outreach.

Anne: Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We have no comments. Respectfully,  
 Corporate Lands & Regulatory Manager, Eklutna, Inc.

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Dear Sir:

Re: Parks Highway Bridge Replacement, Montana Creek and Sheep Creek

I am writing to comment on the proposed replacement of the Montana Creek and Sheep Creek bridges on the Parks Highway. As background although I live in Willow we have family living in Talkeetna and regularly drive the portion of the Parks Highway which includes these two bridges. I am familiar with the road in both summer and winter conditions.

The Sheep Creek bridge has a straight road alignment, and the sight lines are good with the exception that a low vehicle can be hidden from view when one gets close to the bridge. This is of no material effect since the bridge is lined for no passing so there should be no need for a driver to be over the centerline.

Sheep Creek regularly floods. Although the bridge is high enough that it is above most flood stages, the approach embankments back up the flood waters on the east side of the highway so they threaten to go over the road. If the bridge is rebuilt, it should include multiple large culverts in the approaches on both sides of the bridge. This would allow floodwaters to pass under the road and avoid topping of the highway in large floods.

The Montana Creek bridge has good sight lines from the south, but from the north the curve in the highway limits how far one can see. The pedestrian bridge to the east is a distraction, and tourists are fond of looking at it rather than where they are driving. The worst problem is the business just north of the bridge on the west side of the highway. Vehicles, including recreational vehicles and trucks pulling fifth wheel trailers, pull onto the Parks Highway and take time to get up to speed. If you are southbound in a line of traffic and come around the corner with a vehicle pulling onto the road, often the result is frantic braking to avoid a collision.

If you can make the pedestrian bridge less visible by either screening or raising the Montana Creek bridge, it would decrease the distraction level of that bridge.

As to the approach problem, I don't know how wide the highway right-of-way is. If there is enough room, relocating the north side of the Parks Highway bridge approach to the east would straighten out the curve and improve the sight lines. This would allow southbound drivers more time to see a vehicle pulling out and brake for it. As the bridge is now it is only a matter of luck that some southbound tractor-trailer has not crushed a recreational vehicle into junk and killed its occupants. If you have any questions, please contact me.

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Hello Sean,

I would just like to request that the designs for pedestrian/snow machine/atv/etc access on these projects please bear in mind that it is very difficult and dangerous for dog teams to negotiate a 90 degree corner.

I commend the DOT for it's efforts in recent years to accommodate multiple uses by providing large culverts, and/or space under bridges for cross traffic on snow machines etc. keeping them off the roadway. All of this applies even more to dog teams.

But I have seen places where crossing under the roadway beneath the bridge involves a 90 degree corner. Snowmachines and atvs and pedestrians can of course do that no problem, but it is absolutely horrible for dog teams.

Please try to accommodate to this by having the trail swing wide and approach straight, or at least at a less severe angle.

Both Montana and Sheep creek are areas with a lot of dog team traffic.

As a musher, I'd be happy to consult further on this if needed.

*The team has requested additional information from this commenter to fully understand mushing trails in the project area.*

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Attendees, in response to a question posed on comment sheets, said they heard about the meeting in the following ways:

- Postcard in the mail (10)

Attendees self-identified as:

- Resident (2)
- Fisher (4)
- Trail walker/runner (2)
- Biker (1)
- Driver (4)
- State recreation area user (1)

Table 1. Meeting Outreach

<b>Date</b>	<b>Outreach Method</b>
?	<i>Frontiersman</i> display advertising
04/22/2015	<i>Alaska Dispatch News</i> display advertising
04/20/2015	State of Alaska Online Notice and online calendar notifying stakeholders of the meeting
04/22/2015	Postcard mailer sent to area residences, businesses, organizations, and elected officials
04/23/2015	<i>Frontiersman</i> online calendar item
04/23/2015	Public service announcement request sent to KTNA-FM and GCI Cable
04/27/2015	Email notice and reminder

<b>Date</b>	<b>Outreach Method</b>
05/06/2015	
05/01/2015	Meeting notice to project website
05/7/2015	Facebook update on DOT&PF page

Related documents on file:

Comments Received

Display Ad

Mailing List

Meeting Graphics

Meeting Handouts (Fact Sheet, Comment Sheet, Map Comment Sheet, Frequently Asked Questions)

Newsletter Mailer

Sign-In Sheet