

Trip Report Copper Valley Area Meetings

Project: Interior Alaska Transportation Plan

Reporter: Suzanne Taylor, ASCG

Date/Time: 01/11/07 7:00 PM

Location: Glennallen

Present: See attached sign-in sheet

Meeting Highlights:

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce at the Tonsina River Lodge near Glennallen to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Those present, did not notice any reduction in vehicular traffic due to rising fuel costs; however, they agreed that more rental vehicles seem to be coming through and many are sharing RVs between more than one family or couples.

One member felt that cleaning the toilets in the rest areas was not DOT's role, that the contractors hired to maintain rest areas are overpaid and not doing the job well. He felt that BLM-managed rest areas are better maintained. He thought that rest areas could be run as a concession, as DNR does with campgrounds.

It was pointed out that the Dalton Highway was opened up to traffic/RVs without any provision for sanitary dump stations.

Members suggested we call Tracy in February at the CVCC to get tourism numbers. 822-5555.

Interior Alaska Transportation Plan					
Glennallen, Alaska					
Sign In Sheet				January 11, 2007	
Name	Organization	Address/City/Zip	Phone	e-mail	
Helen Ulrich	CVCC	PO Box 211 Gubana AK 99588			
Nell Ulrich	CVCC				
Kimberlin, Dale					
Doreen Humbertin	K.W. Taxi	HC 60 Box 221		Kimberlins water taxi, AK, NEZ	
Marissa DeWitt	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 333			
Kathleen A Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	HC 60 Box 227H		Copper center, AK 99573	
C.D. Mc Curry	Copper Moose B+B	" " " "		" " " "	
Tracy Beaudoin	CV Chamber	PO Box 469 Glennallen, AK	99588	822-5555	chamber@cvinter.net
Brynn Heintz		PO Box 412, Glennallen, AK, 99588		822-5461	
Kimie Heinz		PO Box 12 Glennallen AK	99588	822-5051	
KARL HEINZ	FNBA	Box 85 Glennallen AK	99588	Kheinz@FNBAAlaska	
Todd Roetke	Mc Drum Lutheran Church	PO Box 175	Copper Lake AK	99573	todd.roetke@juno.com
Kim Roetke	"	"	"	"	taddrroetke@juno.com

Interviews:

On Thursday, January 11, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **BLM Glennallen Field Office** representatives to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and the BLM's concerns about transportation issues in the study area. The following BLM staff members were present:

- Bruce Rogers, BLM Land Use Planner
- Will Runnoe, BLM Bureau Chief/Visitor Services
- Marnie Graham, BLM Outreach Specialist
- Brenda Becker, BLM Realty Specialist

Nicole explained the nature of the plan, the planning process and the issues already identified.

Bruce said that the military needs six additional communication sites on BLM land to support their Red Flag training operations.

Will said that user numbers have greatly increased due to Princess's buses between Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Denali National Park. Most users, including BLM, would like to see the Denali Highway remain gravel. Restroom facilities may be needed at turnouts to reduce inappropriate disposal of human waste.

Bruce provided a copy of the BLM's East Alaska Plan and referenced information therein on the Denali Highway.

They mentioned the possible designation "Back Country Byway". They thought that the possibility of roadside improvements could be a selling point for Scenic Byway designation, which has been opposed in the past by residents.

Marnie said that the high volume of trucks using the highways, such as fuel and grocery trucks, has precipitated several accidents. The annual bicycle race from Sheep Mountain to Valdez may also produce conflicts as there is a large number of RVs on the road during the summer. Some areas on the Richardson Highway have little or no shoulders and, in one instance near Miers Lake, a truck's tire went off the edge and the truck flipped. Speed may have also been a factor.

Local farmers also use the roads to transport goods to market.

A bike path and turning lanes through Glennallen would be beneficial.

Additional signage would be good.

They believe that tourist numbers have remained on a steady upward trend, although more are traveling on bus tours rather than by RV due to higher fuel costs.

Nevada Star has lease on the mineral development at Tangle Lakes; however, their sub pulled out and no development is currently underway. There is an archeological development at Tangle Lakes as well (see brochure).

Recreational use is a major issue along the highways, especially weekend use. Roads are used year-round to access areas for fishing, snow machining, hunting, RVing, and boating. More turnouts are needed. Issues of waste disposal exist, for example at the Gulkana River Bridge. The Klutina River Bridge needs better access.

Villages are concerned about trespassers. Turnouts at trailheads are not monitored and can be unsanitary.

National Park Service has Gateway Funding which should be looked into. Tourism classes were conducted to educate people on dealing well with the public. "Branding" was explored. Suggested that we talk with Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent.

Others to talk to: John Downes, ARDOR, at the Tazlina Trading Post.

Arlene Rosencrantz, USDA NRCS RCND, at Mile 93.3, past Grizzly Pizza. 822-5111.

On Friday, January 12, Nicole McCullough and Suzanne Taylor met with **ARDOR director John Downes** to discuss the Interior Alaska Transportation Plan and to solicit input about transportation issues in the study area.

John provided a copy of the 1993 CEDS.

He reported that a recent (2005) tourist survey indicated a need for more informational road signs.

John indicated that tourism in the area is still increasing. He said that Princess contributes \$450,000-500,000 annually to local businesses through day trips, etc. More tourists seem to be bussing in rather than driving due to gas costs. Copper Valley is getting greater numbers of tourists because Denali NP is becoming overcrowded. The Copper Valley Princess has 87 rooms now but is designed to be expanded to as many as 300. The most immediate expansion is expected to be by about 30 rooms.

About \$2.5 million was spent on McCarthy Road improvements. Unfortunately, much was lost in flooding in 2006. There were 10 or 11 thousand visitors to McCarthy last year. About 35,000 signed in at the Copper Center Visitor Center. John believes that residents, the Park Service, and the legislature all want the McCarthy Road improved; so, now would be a good time to act.

John suggested that we also speak with:

- Suzanne at Prince William Sound Community College.
- Arlene Diltz Jackson at the CRNA 822-5241
- Arlene Rosencranz at DNR RCND

He suggested public information be disseminated through Mark at the paper, KNBQ Wasilla, and the Valdez radio station.

Suzanne and Nicole also stopped in at the **Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve headquarters** in Glennallen. They spoke to Marshall Neeck the Chief Ranger, who promised to pass along information about the plan to Meg Jensen, Park Superintendent, and Vicki Snitzler, Park Planner.