

Sterling Highway MP 45-60 Project

Project Overview

Updated February 2020



Project Background

Built in the 1940s and 1950s, the Sterling Highway was originally constructed as a gravel road and not designed for the amount of traffic it sees today. In the late 1970s, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) determined that it was necessary to redesign portions of the roadway. It had become increasingly congested, especially during summer months, creating safety issues for travelers. Several studies in the 1980s and 1990s looked at routes for the proposed highway. In 2000, DOT&PF and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began the Sterling Highway Milepost (MP) 45-60 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Environmental studies, engineering, and public involvement efforts were conducted from 2000 to 2018, resulting in final selection of the Juneau Creek Alternative. The current design work is based on the Juneau Creek Alternative as specifically described in the EIS.



Description of Improvements

The project will **reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing roadway from approximately MP 45-46.5 and MP 56-58** to widen shoulders; bring the roadway curves into compliance with design speeds; and add passing lanes, pathways, and wildlife undercrossings. Additionally, the project will **construct 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, between MP 46.5 and 55.5**. Traffic studies predict that 70 percent of traffic will use the new highway rather than travel through Cooper Landing. A **new Resurrection Pass trailhead and parking lot** will be constructed, with trail connections to the Resurrection Pass and Bean Creek trails as well as the Juneau Creek Falls overlook.

New intersections will be designed at the connection of the old and new highways. Construction will also include a **new bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon**. In terms of wildlife protection, the design features **four wildlife crossing structures**, including the first wildlife overpass of a highway in Alaska.



Cost and Schedule

Construction is estimated at approximately \$375 million. The project will be constructed in five phases, and construction will begin in 2020. It is expected to be complete by 2025. Federal Highway Trust Funds are anticipated to cover 90 percent of construction costs. The State of Alaska will supply the remaining 10 percent of funding.

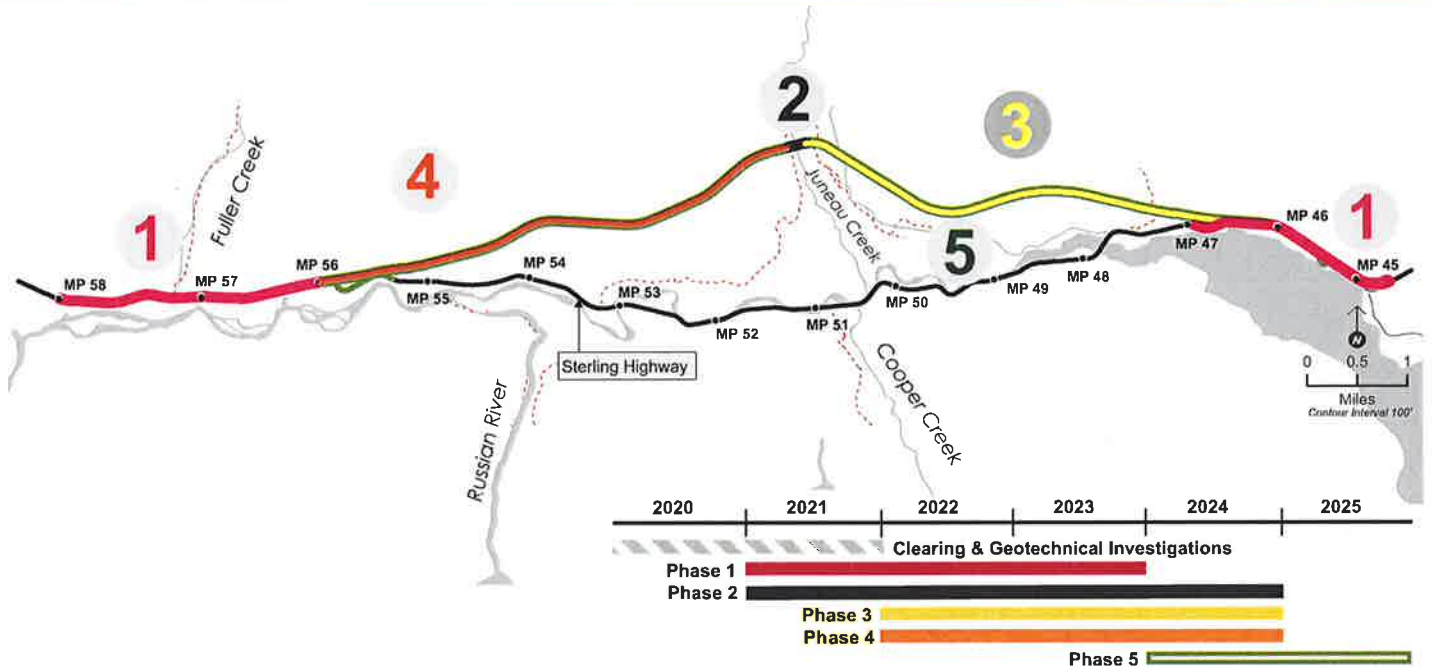


Phase 1 (Design 2019-2020, Construction 2020-2021): The first design phase, currently underway, focuses on the east and west ends of the project, as shown in the figure on page 2. DOT&PF has contracted with HDR to design the west end, MP 56-58, and provide environmental and public involvement support. R&M Consultants (as a subcontractor to HDR) is designing the east end, approximately MP 45-46.5. Design of the west end is anticipated to be complete by fall 2020; design of the east end is anticipated to be complete in spring 2021. Construction is planned to begin in summer/fall 2020 and may consist of an early work package to help streamline construction progress. Phase 1 construction will likely take one full construction season (2021) and part of the next. R&M is also conducting survey along the entire corridor and geotechnical investigations as part of Phase 1.

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Phases 2-5 (Design & Construction: 2020-2025): DOT&PF plans to design the Juneau Creek bridge in-house (Phase 2). DOT&PF has selected DOWL to design the middle section, from MP 47 to 58 (Phases 3-5). Design work on these phases has started. DOT&PF has also selected a contractor under the Construction Manager/General Contractor contracting method to construct Phases 2-5. Kiewit is getting up to speed on the project and working with the designers to identify risks, provide cost projections, and refine the project schedule.

How Can I Get Information?

DOT&PF plans to hold quarterly public meetings in Cooper Landing to provide updates and answer questions. Please join our mailing list or visit our website to receive future notices. DOT&PF also intends to provide monthly updates via our mailing list and the Cooper Landing Crier. All public materials, including information from past public meetings, are available on our comprehensive website.

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Sterling Highway MP 45–60 Project Update

The purpose of this monthly report is to provide a snapshot update of the project. For more detailed project information, please visit www.sterlinghighway.net.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Sterling Highway Milepost (MP) 45–60 Project will reconstruct the east and west ends of the existing roadway from approximately MP 45 to 46.5 and MP 56 to 58, widening shoulders, straightening the road, and adding passing lanes. Between MP 46.5 and 55.5 (the off-alignment section), the project will construct 10 miles of new roadway north of Cooper Landing and the Kenai River, including a new bridge spanning Juneau Creek Canyon.

This project will bring the highway up to current standards by efficiently and safely serving through-traffic, the local community, and traffic bound for recreation destinations, both now and in the future. Schedule goals include beginning construction in 2021 and opening the new highway to traffic by the end of 2025.

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Construction will resume in March. For the most recent construction information, visit www.AlaskaNavigator.org.

PROJECT UPDATE

Tasks Performed in February:

- **Public Involvement:** Continued communication with the public, attended and presented at community organization meetings and at KPB virtual transportation fair
- **Environmental:** Finalized reporting efforts for 2020 design and field work, continued planning for 2021 field work
- **Agencies:** Conducted February agency meeting, continued efforts for design input and required permitting
- **Phase 1:** Advertised Phase 1A, continued coordination on Phase 1B (MP 44.5 to 47) with utilities and property owners
- **Phase 2:** Continued design for the Juneau Creek steel decked arch bridge
- **Phases 3–5:** Finalized Value Engineering Study report, continued effort on design, developed early work packages for clearing and pioneer road
- **Field Efforts:** Planned for 2021 season

Tasks Anticipated for March:

- **Public Involvement:** Continue landowner outreach, continue attendance at community meetings, spring public open house coordination
- **Environmental:** Continue planning and coordination for 2021 field season
- **Agencies:** Continue efforts for permitting and design input
- **Phase 1:** Continue Phase 1B design and right-of-way process
- **Phase 2:** Develop Juneau Creek Bridge design to 60%
- **Phases 3–5:** Submittal and review of 30% design plan set
- **Field Efforts:** Resuming clearing and geotech operations

Near-term Schedule Goals

- Schedule the next public open house (April/May)
- **2021 Field Efforts:** Cultural resources, clearing, and construction



PHOTO: FUTURE SITE OF THE JUNEAU CREEK BRIDGE



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Issue: Pilcher Mountain Quarry/Road. Quality material sites along the lower Yukon River are scarce, and aggregate material is barged in from Nome at costs that have exceeded \$300/cy. An undeveloped, good quality material site was recently identified near Marshall, Alaska. The Calista Corp, Maserculiq Corp, City of Marshall, AVCP, as well as the community would like to see the site developed. An upcoming airport improvement project would develop this site, but is not funded until after 2025.

Background: In the early 2000's, as part of the construction of a new telecommunications site, a road was built to the top of Pilcher Mountain. This road cut through a large granitic rock structure.

During 2009-2010 DOT&PF investigated the area where the large granitic rock structure was exposed. The Pilcher Mountain site was drilled, proving out at least 250,000cy of material suitable for crushed aggregate products, as well as a potential source for class I and II riprap. These results were shared with the local governments and land owners (Calista/Maserculiq).

From 2012 – 2014 AVCP (with Calista support) led an effort to propose development of a barge dock facility and Pilcher Mountain material site access road to promote economic development by establishing Pilcher Mountain as an regional material site. They hired a consultant to complete reconnaissance work, which was shared with DOT&PF. Brice Incorporated also participated in these efforts. Subsequently AVCP applied for an \$8,000,000 CCED grant for construction of a barge docking facility and access road to the Pilcher Mountain site, and developed an overall site road and dock concept plan. They were not successful in securing funding.

In 2016 Brice received a Corps Permit for an access road and barge landing located off the end of the old Marshall Runway with the intent to develop Pilcher Mountain to meet the aggregate requirements for the Pilot Station Airport Relocation Project. Due to unanticipated material that was encountered in the Pilot Station project's cut sections, Brice was able to crush material on site, and the Pilcher Mountain site/barge landing site was not needed/developed.

Current Status: As part of the Marshall Airport Improvements project, currently scheduled for construction in 2025, the Pilcher Mountain site will be permitted and made available to contractors.

DOT&PF Position: The Pilcher Material site is a high quality material site with potential to provide large quantities of aggregate and rip rap for projects along the Yukon River. As is typically the case, a large infrastructure project in Marshall will be needed to make the initial development economically viable.



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Issue: Yukon Kuskokwim Corridor / Kalskag Access Road

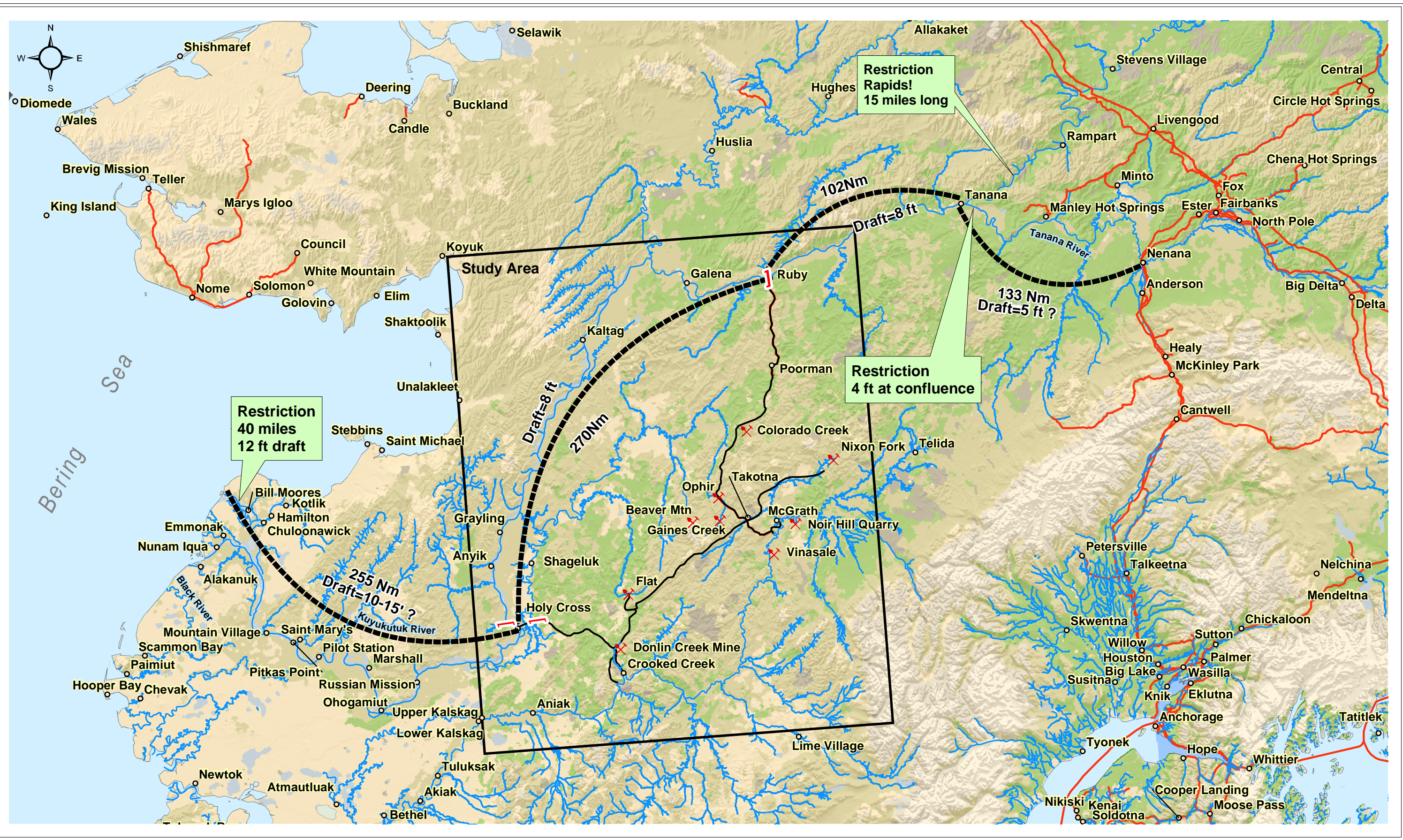
Background: In 2004, DOT&PF completed a Resource Transportation Analysis (RTA) planning for a Yukon River Port and Road Network. This RTA was completed as part of the Northwest Alaska Transportation Plan. As part of these efforts, a port and road network study was completed, identifying a new road corridor that would connect the Yukon River near Holy Cross, to the Kuskokwim River near Aniak/Kalskag, a distance of approximately 35 miles. This connector would allow deeper draft barges on the Yukon River to deliver fuel and freight to the Kuskokwim River Corridor. It would also tie into the network of primitive mining roads providing access to the Donlin Creek Mine. As part of the study, several port sites were also identified near Ruby and Holy Cross.

In 2010, AVCP began efforts to further refine the road corridor connecting the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. AVCP received several grants from the Denali Commission and the State in the amount of \$3.5M for further analysis. In 2014-2015, DOT&PF constructed the Tanana Road, providing an access to the Yukon River at a location that could serve as a port for fuel and freight serving the Yukon River from Fairbanks. The terminus of the Tanana Road is below the Rampart rapids, which restricted the use of the Dalton Highway/Yukon River Bridge for fuel and freight shipments downriver.

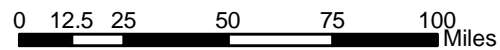
With the Construction of the Tanana Road, AVCP developed a proposal focused on a freight/fuel route that would connect Fairbanks to Bethel. The route utilizes the Tanana Road to access the Yukon River, and includes a road connection between Paimute (12 Miles SW of Holy Cross) and Kalskag. AVCP submitted a request to the State in 2014 for \$13.2M to develop permits and plans to construct the Paimute to Kalskag road. The road concept was not funded at that time.

Current Status: Since 2015, further development of a Yukon River road and port network has not been funded. AVCP continues to prioritize the project, and work on planning efforts. DOT&PF does not have any active planning, design, or construction efforts focused on the concept.

DOT&PF Position: A Yukon River – Kuskokwim River connector may have the potential to reduce costs of freight and fuel along the Kuskokwim by utilizing Fairbanks as a transportation hub. In addition, the development/production associated with Donlin Creek Mine could also benefit from a Yukon River connection, although the mine has not formally indicated that a road from the Yukon is required. If private entities or local governments invested at the road terminus/port sites to facilitate freight and fuel transport, the State's investment in new road construction, as well as upgrades to the existing Tanana Road, may have merit.



Nm = Nautical mile



Legend

- Alternative Road Segment
- ⌋ Alternative Port Location
- ~ Cataloged Anadromous

Figure 2-1

Navigation characteristics of the Yukon River