

SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT

EAST DOWLING ROAD EXTENSION AND RECONSTRUCTION

DOT&PF Project No. 58592

Prepared for:

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May 2006

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADF&G.....	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AMATS.....	Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions
CEA.....	Chugach Electric Association
DOT&PF.....	State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
DOWL.....	DOWL Engineers
DNR-OHMP	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting
DNR-OPMP	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Project Management and Permitting
EFH.....	Essential Fish Habitat
FNBP.....	Far North Bicentennial Park
HLB.....	Heritage Land Bank
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
NMFS.....	National Marine Fisheries Service
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The East Dowling Road Extension and Reconstruction project is a State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) sponsored project to provide additional road connectivity and relieve traffic congestion in east Anchorage. Construction of a connection to Abbott Loop Road would reduce the amount of traffic passing through the Lake Otis Parkway and Tudor Road intersection (a major congestion area) by providing an alternative routing for traffic between east and south Anchorage. Figure 1 shows the project location.

This project has been identified as a needed improvement in many of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) transportation plans beginning in 1977, including the MOA's Long Range Transportation Plan adopted in December 2005. In May 2005, the Alaska Legislature passed a budget that included \$19 million in funding for the East Dowling Road Extension and Reconstruction Project.

The process of gathering information from the public and agencies on the purpose and need for a project, potential alternatives, and possible issues and concerns that need to be addressed during the environmental review and design, is called "scoping". This report, with its appendices, summarizes the public and agency scoping process for this project. This report documents the scoping methods used, identifies issues and concerns, and lists comments received to date along with their sources. Comments were received from a variety of stakeholders (or interested parties) including local residents, resource agency representatives, and interested organizations.

Appendix A is a copy of the presentation used for both the Public and Agency Scoping Meetings. The following topics were included in the presentation:

- Meeting Purpose
- Project Description

- Project Purpose and Need
- Alignment Concepts
- Planning and Design Considerations
- Environmental Documentation and Permitting Process
- Project Schedule
- Public Involvement Process



Figure 1: Project Location Map

1.2 Project Team

Contracting Agency

DOT&PF

- Jim Childers, Project Manager
- Brian Elliot, Environmental Team Leader
- Bob Sloan, Project Administration

Lead Federal Agency for Environmental Permitting

United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

- Maureen McCrea

Prime Consultant

DOWL Engineers (DOWL)

- Stewart Osgood, P.E., Project Manager
- Maryellen Tuttell, Public Involvement Coordinator
- Kristen Hansen, Environmental Task Leader

1.3 Scoping Method

The following scoping methods are included in the Public Involvement Plan and were used to inform the public along with the local, state, and federal resource agencies about the project, its objectives, and the environmental and design processes:

- Public Scoping Meeting
- Agency Scoping Meeting
- Community Council Meetings
- Other Community Group Meetings
- Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meetings
- Project Website
- Project E-Mail Address
- Newsletters and Flyers
- PowerPoint Presentations and Display Boards
- Project Office

1.3.1 Mailing List of Potentially Affected Interests

Two mailing lists have been developed for the project. They include a General Public list and an Agency/Officials list. The General Public list was assembled by identifying all residents and property owners within the vicinity of the project corridor and adding to it those persons who, through the course of advertisements and scoping, showed an interest or had expressed an interest in previous projects in this area. The mailing list for the Abbott Loop Extension project was also incorporated into this project's mailing list, since the project areas overlap. The Agencies/Officials list includes local, state, and federal resource agencies and officials who might have an interest or concern, environmental or otherwise, in the

project. The two lists were combined to form the potentially affected interests, and contain approximately 5,350 names.

In addition to the mailing list, an e-mail distribution list has also been created. The e-mail list contains approximately 700 e-mail addresses. A map of the mailing list boundaries is included in Appendix B.

1.3.2 Advertisements

Advertisements notifying the public of the initiation of environmental and design studies for this project, and the date and time of the Public Scoping Meeting appeared in the Anchorage Daily News (daily circulation approximately 90,000) on February 20 and March 6, 2006. A copy of the Public Meeting advertisement is included in Appendix C.

1.3.3 Community Councils

The project area touches three community council areas. DOWL contacted the presidents of these Community Councils (University Area Community Council, Campbell Park Community Council, and Abbott Loop Community Council) to have them include an announcement in their monthly newsletter about the date, time, and location of the Public Scoping Meeting. This information was also passed on to the Federation of Community Councils for inclusion in their announcements. In addition, DOWL staff attended the following community council meetings:

- University Area Community Council - February 1, 2006
- Campbell Park Community Council – February 9, 2006
- Abbott Loop Community Council – February 23, 2006
- University Area Community Council – March 1, 2006
- Campbell Park Community Council – March 9, 2006
- Abbott Loop Community Council – March 30, 2006

At these meetings, the staff announced the Public Scoping Meeting, provided informational newsletters and comment forms, and responded to issues noted by those present. The notes from the Community Council updates are included in Appendix D.

1.3.4 Community Groups

DOWL staff also made presentations to the following groups:

- The Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP) Trail Users Committee – March 6, 2006
- The Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) Technical Advisory and Policy Committees – March 23 and March 29, 2006

Appendix D also includes a summary of the FNBP update and the AMATS meeting presentation.

1.3.5 Technical Advisory Group

A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) made up of representatives from the various local, state, and federal resource agencies has been established. The focus of this group is to assist with the development of the technical/environmental study needs, provide input on the appropriate study methods, and review and provide comments on the study results. The first TAG meeting was held April 4, 2006. The TAG member participants are listed in the following table. A copy of the presentation is included in Appendix E.

Table 1: Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Members

Member Name	Organization
Karen Keesecker	MOA Planning
Thede Tobish	
Tom Korosei	MOA Parks and Recreation
Cindy Anderson	State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting (DNR-OHMP)
Maureen McCrea	USACE
Jessy Coltrane	Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
Heather Dean	United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
Maureen deZeeuw	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Karlee Gaskill	Heritage Land Bank (HLB)
Robin Ward	
William Ashton	Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

1.3.6 Project Information Office

To provide a central location for all documents related to this project, a Project Information Office was established at the DOWL Engineers office, located at 4041 B Street. The office includes project maps and displays, copies of the documentation on the project, and other pertinent data. Anyone with an interest in the project is invited to visit the office.

1.3.7 Project Website

A project website (www.eastdowling.com) was developed to provide specific information regarding the project area, objectives, schedule, project documents, team members, and a place to review and make public comments. Copies of the web pages are included in Appendix F.

1.3.8 Project E-Mail Address

For persons wanting to communicate about the project via e-mail, an e-mail address (eastdowling@dowl.com) has been created. This address has been included in the Public Scoping Meeting mailer announcement, in the newspaper announcement, on the comment form passed out at meetings, and announced at both the Public Scoping and Agency Scoping meetings.

1.3.9 Project Flyer and Comment Forms

A project comment form was developed and passed out at the Public Scoping Meeting and all other meetings project staff attended to solicit public comments. The form includes an area to add contact information for those who wish to be added to the project mailing and e-mail lists. A copy of the comment form is included in Appendix G.

2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING

2.1 Public Scoping Meeting

The Public Scoping Meeting was held at Wendler Middle School, 2905 Lake Otis Parkway, Anchorage, on Monday, March 6, 2006. To help the public understand the purpose of the

project and the Public Scoping Meeting, a flyer was sent to all persons on the potentially affected interests mailing list, e-mail distribution list, and posted to the website. A project fact sheet was handed out at the Public Scoping Meeting. The flyer and fact sheet are included in Appendix H.

The meeting began at 6:30 p.m. and concluded at 9:30 p.m. Community members signed in and met with project staff one-on-one to discuss individual issues and concerns. At 7:00 p.m., a half-hour presentation was made by project staff (Appendix A) covering the purpose and need for the project, planning and design considerations, environmental studies and documentation, and the public involvement program. At the conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was opened up for public questions and concerns. At the end of the question and answer period, the one-on-one discussion with individuals resumed and lasted until 9:30 p.m. The meeting notes and sign-in sheets are included in Appendix I. Approximately 60 private citizens, not including project team members, attended the meeting.

2.2 Documentation of Public Comments

All written and verbal public comments received as of March 31, 2006 (the conclusion of the scoping period), have been reviewed and are included in Appendix J. Comments received have been paraphrased and are listed below. The list attempts to group the comments into common issues and concerns.

2.2.1 Favor the Project

- This project has been needed for a long time. We currently have to go out of our way to get back to the hillside.

2.2.2 Against the Project

- Is this road really needed?

2.2.3 Traffic Circulation

- Access to neighborhoods should be given careful consideration.

- Is there a plan to place a traffic signal at Norm so those traveling to the west on Dowling will be able to turn left into the neighborhood?
- Access from 64th Avenue direct to Lake Otis Parkway with a traffic signal would reduce traffic around the Northern Lights School and the Laurel-Dowling intersection.
- If the 64th Avenue connection to Lake Otis Parkway were considered, would there need to be a signal to stop Lake Otis traffic to allow for left turns?
- Norm Drive is not built for heavy traffic. Are there plans to upgrade Norm Drive, or implement traffic calming measures to prevent cut-through traffic?

2.2.4 Planning Issues

- Are there plans for Spruce to be extended through from 68th to Dowling?
- Non-automobile alternative transportation should be considered, with winter use as well as summer. Some thought should be given to pedestrians/cyclists.
- Continue to include plans for a bike path that is removed from the road to connect to the Abbott Loop bike path.

2.2.5 Environmental Issues

- Consider swinging the east end of Dowling Road to the south through the parcel owned by the MOA. Benefits of this alignment could include: (1) minimizing the use and fragmentation of the open, shrub-emergent wetlands; (2) minimizing the fragmentation of FBNP/BLM and adjacent undeveloped lands that provide wildlife habitat and recreation; and (3) the ability to remove the existing road to the substation.
- Please design the road to completely avoid collecting storm water in a storm drain system that eventually discharges to a creek. Use a rural design and be creative about routing any storm water back to vegetated land for infiltration or detention.

- The trailer park at Laurel-Dowling will be right on a major roadway. Some type of sound barrier to reduce noise in the neighborhoods, as well as a visual barrier.

2.2.6 Residential Issues

- Has the City decided to get rid of all trailer parks?
- How will the project affect nearby residences?
- How will the project affect home values and the quality of life if there is increased traffic on Dowling?

3.0 AGENCY SCOPING

3.1 Agency Scoping Meeting

The Agency Scoping Meeting was held on March 2, 2006. A letter was sent to the agencies (Appendix K) that provided background information on the project and invited them to participate in the scoping meeting. A copy of the meeting minutes and the attendance list are included in Appendix L.

3.2 Documentation of Agency Scoping Comments

All written agency comments received as of March 31, 2006, have been reviewed and are included in Appendix M. Written comments were received from the following agencies and persons:

MOA

Thede Tobish, Community Development and Planning

Jon Spring, Planning Division

John Smith, Project Management and Engineering Department

Lance Wilbur, Traffic Department

Steve Kalmes, Anchorage School District Transportation Services

State of Alaska

Jessy Coltrane, ADF&G

Stewart Seaberg, DNR-OHMP

Christine Ballard, DNR, Office of Project Management and Permitting (DNR-OPMP)

Federal Agencies

Maureen McCrea, USACE

Donna Graham, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

Ann Rappoport and Maureen deZeeuw, Fish and Wildlife Service

3.3 Agency Scoping Comment Summary

Following is a summary of the agency comments as of March 31, 2006. The details of each comment can be found in the individual agency comments shown in Appendix M.

3.3.1 Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Traffic Department

- Take into consideration the future connection of Spruce Street from 64th Avenue to Dowling.
- Concept 2 (alignment north of the Chugach Electric Association [CEA] substation) is most desirable.
- An alignment north of the CEA substation would be most desirable for a number of reasons – it steers away from the CEA substation, connects with Abbott Loop at a location that is geometrically the most ideal for an intersection, and disturbs the least amount of sensitive lands.

- The project team should review the 2025 traffic projects with the Traffic Department's Transportation Planning Division.
- Be prepared to examine and make recommendations to address access and circulation needs in regards to the Northern Lights ABC Elementary School.

3.3.2 Anchorage School District

- The increase in traffic on Dowling Road will have a significant impact on pedestrian and vehicular access to the school.
- Make solutions to the access issues at Northern Lights ABC for both vehicles and pedestrians a high priority.
- Consideration needs to be given to the safety of students waiting for and boarding the school bus at Dowling and Sunchase Drive.
- The Anchorage School District is extremely supportive of this project as it will as it will provide much needed relief to the Lake Otis and Tudor intersection and will provide an additional east-west connection to the road network in Anchorage.

3.3.3 Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Transportation Planning

- Consider Spruce Street connection.
- Anchorage Trails Plan shows a paved multi-use path on the south side.
- Discuss with Municipal Parks and Recreation Department the need for a parking lot pullout on the north side of Dowling to access trails in Campbell Park.
- Anchorage 2020 designates Lake Otis and Dowling as a town center.

3.3.4 Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Planning

- Concerns with traffic patterns / volumes, and public safety.
- Lake Otis/Dowling Road – future planned Town Center area.

- Incorporate a multi-use paved trail, as indicated in the Areawide Trails Plan.
- Minimize impacts to wetlands, wildlife habitats, and local hydrology within the corridor.
- Reasonable historic research of wildlife use of wetlands in this area, but local hydrology is poorly described.
- Hydrology analysis – describe what contributions the surface and subsurface flows have on the creeks, and how adjacent wetlands attenuate storm flows into the creek system.
- Goal should be no net loss of these hydrologic functions.
- Recommend pursuit of an alignment that runs north of and parallel to the existing utility substation access road.
- Prefer avoidance of wetlands and maintenance of existing hydrologic functions to mitigation geared toward habitat enhancement.

3.3.5 Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) – Project Management and Engineering (PM&E)

- Adjacent HLB property has been identified for development as a snow disposal site for the Municipal Street Maintenance Department. This is the only site that is currently available and identified in Southeast Anchorage as a viable snow disposal site.

3.3.6 United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- Maintain hydrologic functions (including water quality and flow) important to fish and wildlife.
- Minimize fragmentation of habitat, including migratory bird habitat.
- Minimize and compensate for direct loss of habitat.

- Buffer adverse impacts of road development and use on surrounding habitat and wildlife use.
- Minimize conflicts with terrestrial wildlife crossings.
- Avoid and minimize cumulative impacts on all of the above.

3.3.7 State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting (DNR-OHMP)

- Maintain hydrologic functions of wetlands contiguous with adjacent streams.
- Avoid habitat fragmentation.
- Incorporate appropriate design measures to minimize impacts to moose movement and moose-vehicle collisions.
- Conceptual Alignment 3 would maintain larger contiguous tracts of habitat to the north.
- Consider rehabilitation of CEA access road to restore natural drainage patterns and wetland functions of the area.

3.3.8 State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Project Management and Permitting (DNR-OPMP)

- The project area is not in the coastal zone.

3.3.9 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)

- The described action will not result in any adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH).
- No EFH assessment is required, and NMFS does not offer any EFH conservation recommendations.
- Further EFH consultation is not necessary. NMFS has no objection to the project.

3.3.10 United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

- No discharge of fill material shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative that would have less adverse impacts on the aquatic ecosystem. In reaching that goal, wetlands first must be minimized.
- Possibly a different alignment south of the CEA easement could avoid more wetland areas than the two southern alternatives presented in the scoping document.
- Where wetlands cannot be avoided, spanning wetland areas is an effective technique to minimize impacts.
- A major consideration is keeping wetlands uninterrupted and contiguous with the South Fork Campbell Creek.

4.0 SUMMARY

The above public and agency comments provide valuable insight into the issues to be resolved during this project. All comments will be reviewed and addressed as the environmental document is prepared. Any comments received after the end of the scoping period (March 31, 2006) will also be reviewed by the team and addressed in the environmental document.

APPENDIX A

**POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR AGENCY AND PUBLIC SCOPING
MEETINGS**

APPENDIX B

MAILING AREA BOUNDARY MAP

APPENDIX C

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING ADVERTISEMENT

APPENDIX D

COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY GROUP MEETING SUMMARIES

APPENDIX E

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) PRESENTATION

APPENDIX F

WEBSITE INFORMATION

APPENDIX G

COMMENT FORM

APPENDIX H

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FLYER AND FACT SHEET

APPENDIX I

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING NOTES AND SIGN-IN SHEETS

APPENDIX J

PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS (WRITTEN, VERBAL, AND E-MAIL)

APPENDIX K

AGENCY SCOPING LETTER AND ATTACHMENTS

APPENDIX L

AGENCY SCOPING NOTES AND SIGN-IN SHEETS

APPENDIX M

AGENCY SCOPING COMMENTS