

Gravina Access Project
Draft Supplemental Environmental
Impact Statement

Chapter 7
Comments and Coordination

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7.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

To fulfill the requirements of NEPA and Section 6002 of SAFETEA-LU for the Gravina Access Project SEIS, FHWA, DOT&PF, and the project team consulted and coordinated with federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, and the public during the environmental review. These stakeholders provided input during the public and agency scoping process, and on the alternative and screening methodology development. They also were given an opportunity to review and comment on the screening report, which identified the reasonable alternatives for analysis in the SEIS. Section 7.1 describes coordination with federal, state, and local agencies in accordance with SAFETEA-LU. The public and agency scoping process is described in Section 7.2. Section 7.3 describes the processes for development and screening of the alternatives, including coordination with agency and public stakeholders for input and comment.

7.1 Agency Involvement

SAFETEA-LU Section 6002 established new guidance for the roles and responsibilities for agency involvement during the environmental review process for transportation projects. The types of agency involvement and their respective roles and responsibilities include:

- **Lead Agency/Agencies.** The lead agencies must perform the functions that they have traditionally performed in preparing an EIS. New guidance also requires the lead agency to identify and involve participating agencies, develop coordination plans, and provide opportunities for public and participating agency involvement in defining the purpose and need and determining the range of alternatives. Additionally, lead agencies must provide increased oversight in managing the process and resolving issues. For purposes of the SEIS, FHWA and DOT&PF serve as “joint lead agencies.”
- **Cooperating Agency.** Cooperating agencies are those agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise regarding the proposed action. Cooperating agencies have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the environmental review process. Every cooperating agency will also be a participating agency.
- **Participating Agency.** A participating agency is any agency that “may have an interest in the project.” These agencies include all federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies. Participating agencies are involved in the NEPA process, especially in development of the purpose and need statement, range of alternatives, methodologies, and the level of detail to analyze the alternatives.

Agencies consulted during the development of the 2004 Final EIS were considered potential cooperating and participating agencies for the SEIS. FHWA, in collaboration with DOT&PF, invited these agencies in July 2008 to become either cooperating or participating agencies.

7.1.1 Cooperating Agencies

In July 2008, FHWA sent a letter to federal agencies with jurisdiction in the project area explaining the language in SAFETEA-LU, outlining the responsibility of cooperating agencies, and extending an invitation to serve as a cooperating agency in accordance with FHWA regulation 23 C.F.R. 771.111(d). Table 7-1 lists the agencies that accepted the invitation to become cooperating agencies and their areas of jurisdiction or expertise.

Table 7-1: Cooperating Agencies and their Areas of Jurisdiction/Expertise

Cooperating agency	Jurisdiction/Expertise
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)	Responsible for approval of the location and plans of bridges and causeways constructed across navigable waters of the United States
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Responsible for issuing permits under Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act for impacts to wetlands or waters of the United States and under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899

EPA, USFS, USFWS, and FAA were invited to be cooperating agencies, but declined the invitation. EPA, USFWS, and FAA requested designation as participating agencies (see Section 7.1.2). USFS declined participation as a cooperating or participating agency.

7.1.2 Participating Agencies

On June 26, 2008, DOT&PF sent a letter to the state agencies, municipal governments, tribal governments, and Native corporations listed below to solicit scoping comments and invite them to become participating agencies.

- ADEC, Division of Air and Water Quality
- ADF&G, Division of Habitat
- DNR, The Trust Land Office
- DNR, Division of Coastal and Ocean Management³²¹
- ADF&G, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting³²²
- DNR, SHPO
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough
- City of Ketchikan
- City of Saxman
- Organized Village of Saxman
- Ketchikan Indian Community
- Metlakatla Indian Community
- Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Hydaburg Cooperative Association
- Craig Community Association
- Klawock Cooperative Association
- Organized Village of Kasaan

³²¹ The Division of Coastal and Ocean Management was dissolved on July 1, 2011, with the sunset of the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

³²² At the time DOT&PF sent its scoping letter, the Office of Habitat Management and Permitting was in DNR. The office has been within the ADF&G since July 2008.

Table 7-2 lists the agencies that provided written responses affirming their involvement as participating agencies, and their jurisdiction or expertise.

Table 7-2: Participating Agencies and their Areas of Jurisdiction/Expertise

Participating Agency	Jurisdiction/Expertise
FAA	Provides regulation and oversight for the safety and efficiency of air travel
USFWS	Administers the ESA, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, and conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands
EPA	Reviews, rates, and publicly comments on the environmental impacts of major federal actions Has a significant role in the Clean Water Act Section 404 process
DNR, The Trust Land Office	Manages Mental Health Trust land
ADF&G, Office of Habitat Management and Permitting	Primarily responsible for the protection of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources and their habitats Coordinates with other agencies during plan reviews to provide expertise for protecting important fish and wildlife habitat throughout the state.
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	Provides local government services including operation of the existing ferry service, airport management, and has planning authority within Borough boundaries
City of Ketchikan	A Home Rule city within the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Provides local city services including public school education, regional land-use planning and regulation, and property assessment and collection of taxes for both the Borough government and any cities within the Borough

As of August 19, 2008, the end of the formal scoping period, no tribal government had affirmed in writing its interest to be involved as a participating agency. On August 28, 2008, FHWA made follow-up calls to the tribes and Native corporations receiving the invitation letter. The Craig Community Association provided a definitive response indicating it was not interested in participating agency status. In other cases, either no direct contact could be made (left messages) or no definitive statement regarding participating agency status was obtained.

7.2 Public and Agency Scoping Process

The scoping process encompasses the methods used to engage agencies and the public in the environmental review and the means by which agency and public comments and concerns are reflected in the alternatives development and environmental analysis. More detailed information about the scoping activities undertaken for the SEIS is available in the *Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Summary Report (Scoping Summary Report)*.³²³ Scoping activities included public notices of SEIS development activities, individual and small group meetings and briefings, agency review of study documents, public scoping meetings, and identification of comment opportunities.

7.2.1 Notice of Intent

On July 2, 2008, FHWA (in cooperation with DOT&PF) published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the Gravina Access Project SEIS. The NOI described the project's proposed action, stated the purpose and need for action, and announced opportunities to comment on the scope of the analysis for the project and the range of alternatives. The NOI also announced the opportunity for anyone interested in the SEIS to attend public scoping

³²³ Published in December 2008.

meetings held on July 22, 2008, in Ketchikan, Alaska. The deadline for scoping comments (August 19, 2008) was also published in the NOI.

The NOI was posted on the Gravina Access Project Web site (http://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/gravina_access/) and published in the newspapers listed in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Notice of Intent Publication List

Publication	Publication Date
<i>Ketchikan Daily News</i>	June 20, 2008
<i>Juneau Empire</i>	June 20, 2008
<i>Southeast Island News</i>	July 14, 2008

7.2.2 Agency Consultation

Agency consultation included written invitations to agencies soliciting their participation in the project either as cooperating or participating agencies (see Section 7.1), one-on-one agency scoping meetings, and letters to agencies requesting scoping and alternative development comments. The *Scoping Summary Report* includes the invitation letters, responses, meeting minutes, and related materials. Scoping comments received from the agencies are included in Appendix A of that report.

In addition to the meetings and requests for comments, the agencies, including tribal governments and Native corporations, received the following documents for review and comment:

- *Gravina Island Access Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Coordination Plan*, October 2008.
- *Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Summary Report*, December 2008.
- *Gravina Access Pre-Screening Alternatives Memorandum*, February 2009.
- *Gravina Access Project Alternatives Screening Methodology Report*, February 2009.
- *Gravina Access Project SEIS Alternatives Screening Report*, March 2010.

Table 7-4 provides the chronology of consultation and outreach efforts to the agencies and stakeholders with jurisdiction in the project area and/or a specific interest related to the project. Table 7-4 also documents the efforts by DOT&PF to obtain input during the scoping and alternative screening process to identify the reasonable alternatives evaluated in this SEIS.

Table 7-4: Agency and Stakeholder Consultation Activities

Meeting Date	Agency	Topics Discussed
May 6, 2008 Anchorage	DNR—SHPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate season for field work • Needs for additional surveys and information gathering
June 10, 2008 Ketchikan	ADF&G, Division of Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding SEIS • Issues or concerns related to ADF&G resources • Project information, alternatives • ADF&G confirmed the level of analysis conducted during the FEIS was appropriate

Meeting Date	Agency	Topics Discussed
June 10, 2008 Ketchikan	City of Ketchikan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding SEIS Issues or concerns identified by the City Project information, alternatives The point of contact for the City
June 12, 2008 Juneau	USFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding SEIS Issues or concerns related to USFS resources Project information, alternatives The point of contact for the USFS
June 12, 2008 Juneau	DNR—Division of Coastal and Ocean Management ³²⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding SEIS Issues or concerns related to coastal resources Project information, alternatives The point of contact for the Division
June 23, 2008 Anchorage	EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding SEIS Issues or concerns expressed by EPA Project information, alternatives The point of contact for the EPA
June 25, 2008 Juneau	USCG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information regarding SEIS Issues or concerns related to navigation Information needs
June 25, 2008 Juneau	NMFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project history Project information, alternatives Issues or concerns related to marine wildlife
July 21, 2008 Ketchikan	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEIS proposed purpose Project area and range of alternatives
July 21, 2008 Saxman	City of Saxman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEIS proposed purpose Project area and range of alternatives
May 12, 2010 Ketchikan	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumptions for population growth and future land use on Gravina Island
May 24, 2010 By phone	Misty Fjords Air (seaplane pilots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns related to bridge alternatives Online availability of <i>Alternatives Screening Report</i> Other opportunities to meet and discuss alternatives with seaplane pilots
June 14, 2010 Ketchikan	Southeast Alaska Pilots' Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of alternatives and screening criteria Areas of concern for marine pilots
October 20, 2011 Ketchikan	Misty Fjords Air (seaplane pilots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of alternatives and screening criteria Areas of concern for small airplane operators
October 20, 2011 Ketchikan	Ketchikan Gateway Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of alternatives and screening criteria SEIS schedule update
November 2, 2011 Juneau	USCG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of alternatives and screening criteria Issues related to bridge alternatives

³²⁴ The Division of Coastal and Ocean Management was dissolved on July 1, 2011, with the sunset of the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

7.2.3 Tribal Government Consultation

FHWA recognizes the sovereignty of tribal governments and works to coordinate communication and outreach efforts under Executive Order (EO) 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments and the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. EO 13175 defines “Indian tribe” as an Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. 479a, and as expanded by the Omnibus Trade Act of 2000. EO 13175 outlines the manner in which each federal agency must ensure that it operates with a government-to-government relationship with the Indian tribe and also directs agencies to consult with the Indian tribe before taking action that affects tribal lands, resources, and members.

In June 2008, FHWA and DOT&PF reinitiated consultation with tribal governments and Native corporations in the project area for the SEIS. The list of potentially interested tribes and Native corporations was derived from the 2004 Final EIS effort and from communication between the agencies. FHWA sent an invitation to the tribes and Native corporations requesting their involvement as a participating agency on July 21, 2008.

Individual meetings were conducted with the Ketchikan Indian Community (June 10, 2008) and the Organized Village of Saxman (June 11, 2008). The lead agencies determined that it would be appropriate to meet with these tribal governments because of the potential adverse impacts of the project based on proximity of the alternatives to their communities. FHWA and DOT&PF described the SEIS process, shared the project schedule, described the project area, and introduced members of the study team. The project team also notified the Metlakatla Indian Community of the public scoping meetings.

7.2.4 General Public Outreach

7.2.4.1 Public Meetings

Two rounds of public meetings were conducted for scoping and to present the range of alternatives to be considered for the supplemental study of the Gravina Access Project. Two scoping meetings were held on July 22, 2008, and a meeting to discuss the range of alternatives was held on March 5, 2009. Both meetings were held in Ketchikan, Alaska, and were conducted in similar open house format.

The open house format was used to provide an informal environment for the project team members to engage the public. Each meeting provided the opportunity for the public to question individual team members and to provide written comments, which could be left with the project team at the open house or mailed at a later date. Table 7-5 summarizes the information about the meeting venue, times, and activities. Copies of the scoping meeting materials are included in the *Scoping Summary Report*. Copies of the Range of Alternatives meeting materials are included in Appendix B of that report.

Table 7-5: Public Meeting Venue, Schedule, and Content

Location/Venue	Date and Time	Activities
Ted Ferry Civic Center Ketchikan	July 22, 2008: 11:00–1:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe study area Present the purpose and need statement Explain SAFETEA-LU
	July 22, 2008: 5:00–7:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit input on special studies needed, issues and concerns, historic and cultural properties, and conceptual alternatives Present previous alternatives studied

Location/Venue	Date and Time	Activities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain need for supplemental study
Ted Ferry Civic Center Ketchikan	March 5, 2009: 11:00–1:00 p.m. March 5, 2009: 5:00–7:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe study area • Present range of alternatives to be considered for the SEIS • Discuss the issues and concerns • Present proposed screening criteria • Solicit input on purpose and need, range of alternatives, and proposed screening criteria

The public meetings were advertised as follows:

- Display advertisements in the *Ketchikan Daily News*, each coordinated to be published approximately 2 weeks and 1 to 5 days before the public meetings
- Flyers posted in public places such as the local grocery store, post office, municipal offices, tribal government offices, and libraries
- Public service announcements to *Ketchikan Daily News*, *What's Up* email distribution list, *Southeast Alaska Island News*, and KRBD—105.9 FM in Ketchikan, Alaska
- Information and notices on the project Web site
- Newsletters and postcards distributed to contacts on the project mailing list
- State of Alaska Online Public Notice Web site

7.2.4.2 Newsletters

The public involvement team wrote three issues of a project newsletter to communicate project information and to provide status updates of the project. Each newsletter issue was distributed by mail to the mailing list and posted on the project Web site.

The following is a list of information presented in the three newsletter issues:

- January 2009, Volume 1, Issue 1
 - Draft SEIS announcement
 - Project schedule
 - Review of comments provided during scoping
- October 2010, Volume 1, Issue 2
 - Announcement and explanation of the reasonable alternatives to be studied in the SEIS
 - Updated project schedule
 - Overview of project studies
- June 2013, Volume 1, Issue 3
 - Expected release date of Draft SEIS
 - Public hearing announcement

7.2.4.3 Project Web Site

The Web site (http://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/gravina_access/) for the Gravina Access Project is maintained by the DOT&PF to provide information about the proposed project and related studies for persons with Internet access. The Web address was included in all public

notification materials related to the project. The Web site includes the following pages and information:

- Home: Welcome
- Project Background & Information
- Project Library
- Maps and Photos
- Submit Comments
- Contacts

7.2.4.4 Postcards

Two postcards were distributed by mail to the project mailing list. The first postcard was written to announce the SEIS and requested the addressees to send back confirmation that they would like to continue to receive information. Also included in the postcard were the Project Manager's contact information and the project Web site address. The postcard was mailed to 7,781 households; as of October 2008, 275 addressees affirmed their interest in being part of the project mailing list.

The second postcard announced the availability of the *Alternatives Screening Report* on the project Web site and requested comments, by April 16, 2010. The postcard provided the methods to submit comments to the project team.

7.3 Draft SEIS Review Process

The Gravina Access Project Draft SEIS is available for review and public comment for 45 days following its release. In developing the SEIS, the joint lead agencies, FHWA and DOT&PF, met regularly with the Project Team and the Cooperating Agencies to collaborate, review, and revise the Draft SEIS. Cooperating and participating agencies and other stakeholders are afforded the same 45-day comment period. The Draft SEIS is available to the public for review on the project web site and at the following locations:

- Ketchikan Gateway Borough Planning Office
- City of Ketchikan Library
- City of Ketchikan Clerk's office
- City of Saxman Clerk's office
- Ketchikan Indian Community
- Organized Village of Saxman
- Metlakatla Library
- Southeast DOT&PF office (Juneau)

Compact disk versions of the document are available for free at 2525 C Street, Suite 305, Anchorage, AK 99503 and at the Southeast DOT&PF office in Juneau. A printed version of the entire document with appendices can be purchased by contacting the Special Projects Office at (907) 465-1828; the fee will help offset printing costs.

A public open house meeting with a formal hearing is scheduled for July 17, 2013, at Ted Ferry Civic Center, 888 Venetia Avenue, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

7.3.1 *Commenting on the Draft SEIS*

Comments on the Draft SEIS will be accepted in the following methods:

- Provide verbal comments at Public Hearings
- Submit comment form
- Fax to: (907) 465-4414
- Submit comments through project web site:
http://dot.alaska.gov/sereg/projects/gravina_access/
- Email comments to: deborah.holman@alaska.gov
- Mail to:

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