



Municipality of Anchorage

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Mayor Mark Begich

Office of the Mayor

October 5, 2005

Mr. David Miller
Alaska Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
P.O. Box 21648 - 709 W. 9th St., Rm 851
Juneau, AK 99802-1648

Dear Mr. Miller:

I write to voice concerns similar to those expressed by U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski in her letter to you of September 30.

According to Senator Murkowski and recent news reports, your staff has recently discarded further detailed consideration of approach routes for the Knik Arm Crossing other than the "below-the-bluff" alignment. This preferred route, as I understand it, would connect to the A-C Couplet and route traffic through the center of downtown Anchorage.

For the historic Don Young's Way to be a success, as I hope it will be, the process into selecting its route and reviewing cost alternatives must be complete and comprehensive. A range of alternative alignments must be presented and evaluated on an equal basis. Not every idea can be studied in the greatest depth, but decision-makers should be presented with detailed analysis of at least the two significantly differing choices in order for the process to be meaningful.

I recognize there may be serious drawbacks to the bringing the bridge approach to the east, near Boniface Parkway. However, the "below-the-bluff" route also has significant costs and community impacts of potentially similar weight, including issues identified by the Government Hill community and the Port of Anchorage. Without complete study of both major potential corridors, it will not be possible to accurately assess the balance of these concerns.

For example, the Municipality of Anchorage does not support connecting the bridge access to the A-C Couplet. We believe the additional traffic would be inappropriate on this roadway and would conflict with our goal of linking the east and west portions of downtown with residential, business, pedestrian and cultural facilities. Anchorage is already investing heavily in this community development concept with coordinated investments in a new convention center, museum expansion, streetscape, pedestrian and transit improvements, and housing and parking structures. Many of these projects are being assisted with federal funding.

Community, Security, Prosperity

Mr. David Miller

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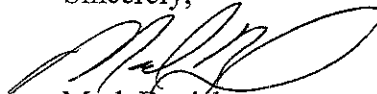
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If a route were ultimately chosen around the west side of Elmendorf, the right connection would be to the Ingra-Gambell couplet. Such a connection should be included in the project budget. Leaving the Ingra-Gambell connection for later simply moves this bridge-related cost off the bridge budget, to be paid for by an unidentified entity at some time in the future. We do not support omitting such a critical project element in order to meet a pre-determined cost ceiling. Moreover, such an omission would artificially skew the cost comparison of the east and west routes.

The costs associated with relocating facilities at Elmendorf should be carefully studied so they can be compared with the costs of the "below-the-bluff route," including its Ingra-Gambell connection. If Senator Murkowski is correct, and non-highway funds may be available for facilities work that would support a route through Elmendorf, this study could be highly valuable. If neither route fits within the project budget, then elected leaders needs that information as well.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your office and with the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority to plan a successful project.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
Mayor

CC: Senator Lisa Murkowski
George Wuerch