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## D.C. group blasts KABATA as geotech work for bridge begins | Local News Stories

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MAT-SU — This week the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority announced the start of geotechnical work in Anchorage and a national watchdog group gave the project its infamous “Golden Fleece” award.

The Washington, D.C.-based Taxpayers for Common Sense says the project “is — literally and figuratively — going nowhere.”

This is not the first time the nationally recognized group — which claims on its website to be nonpartisan — has bestowed a Golden Fleece to an Alaska project. Also flagged were Alaska’s other famous federally funded “bridge to nowhere” on Gravina Island in Ketchikan.

As reasons for the award, the group cites \$75 million the federal government has given the project during 10 years and its \$1.6 billion price tag, as well as the possibility the project will be funded with federal subsidized loans.

KABATA, meanwhile, put out a press release citing what it says are errors in the Taxpayers for Common Sense article.

The authority pegs the bridge's cost at \$715 million and claims it has a 3-to-1 cost-benefit ratio when calculated with federally approved methodology.

“What this group neglects to acknowledge is that nearly all of the construction, operations and maintenance costs will be paid for by Alaskans who use the bridge. Any federal loan programs would be the option of the private developer and there is no requirement to use them. Toll revenue and the public-private partnership (P3) are funding and delivery mechanisms for this essential project — both user fees and P3s are endorsed by Taxpayers for Common Sense,” KABATA says in its press release.

KABATA's press release refuting the Golden Fleece award came out Wednesday, the same day the authority announced it would begin its geotechnical work surveying the soil and groundwater conditions on Government Hill.

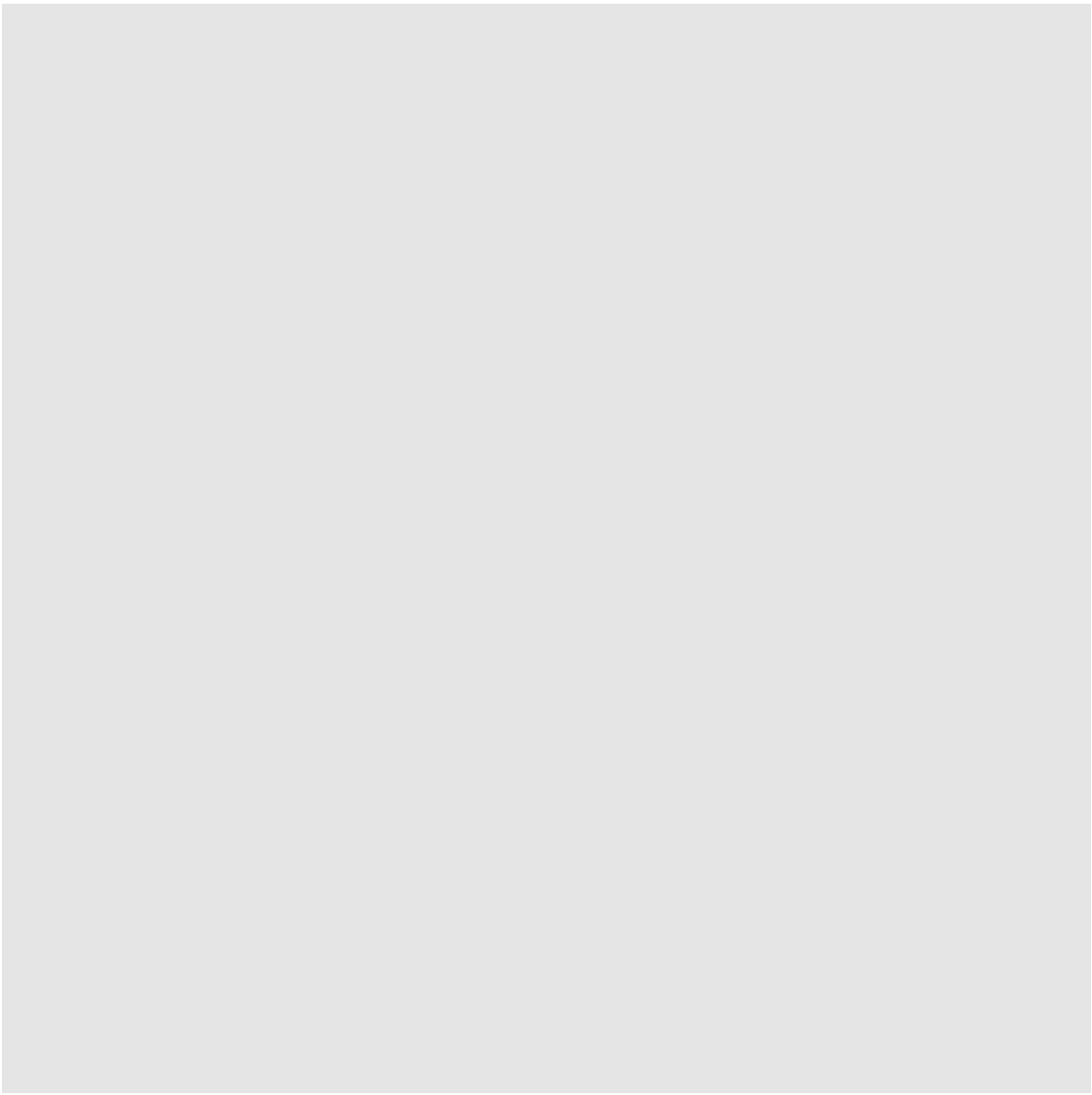
That Anchorage neighborhood is the one KABATA intends to traverse with a “cut and cover” tunnel, meaning that the tunnel would be dug out then covered with some sort of a cap.

“The Federal Highway Administration's Record of Decision identifies that additional park amenities can be included on the tunnel lid, including green space, trails, parking, playgrounds, and general interpretive signs of the neighborhood,” KABATA says in its press release.

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