

February 28, 2022

Commissioner Ryan Anderson
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709
(Hand delivered 3/2/22)

Regarding: Questions Concerning Manh Choh Transportation Plan and DOTPF's Response

Dear Commissioner Anderson:

This is a request to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, to commission an independent, peer-reviewed study and analysis of the Manh Choh transportation proposal, to show what will happen if on average, 192 double-trailers are trucked on a daily basis round-trip from Tetlin to Fairbanks; and 384 single trailers are trucked round-trip from Fairbanks to Fort Knox. We ask the following analysis please:

- include a highway safety analysis, predicting crash incidents, property damage, personal injuries and fatalities;
- include a traffic impact analysis that can model and simulate traffic capacity and congestion of each portion of the planned route with the anticipated additional truck-trailer traffic;
- study and analyze the stresses and impacts to roads, road surfaces, bridges and infra-structure, and their expected life;
- calculate the increases in the costs of weight and other inspections and oversight, maintenance, repairs, reconstructions and replacements of road and other infrastructure improvements along the route; and
- study current limits on the size, weight, numbers, hours of operation, and road conditions for Long Combination Vehicles allowed to operate on Alaska highways, insurance required for their operation, and recommend any changes to relevant regulations, laws, and ordinances to improve public health and safety and the integrity and lifespan of public highways, bridges, and infrastructure along the route.

You asked for us to write down our questions of DOTPF, which we listed for you verbally at our February 25, 2022 meeting. At that time, you once again advised that DOTPF had not received a transportation plan from Kinross/Peak Gold with adequate details to allow the kind of analyses we are requesting.

- 1) We ask DOTPF to request Kinross/Peak Gold to provide DOTPF with that transportation plan as soon as possible but in any event no later than *March 31, 2022*. In the event that Kinross/Peak Gold cannot or will not comply with this request, we request DOT to model any impacts based upon the maximum case scenario as they have outlined.
- 2) We ask DOTPF to correct the record and false statements made by Kinross/Peak at public meetings and testimony before the Fairbanks North Star Borough, that Kinross/Peak has given DOTPF a plan, that DOTPF has undertaken analyses and studies, and has found the plan to be safe, legal and can be accommodated on the existing roadway; and that the plan will only cause a 1% increase in traffic.

- 3) What month and year did DOTPF start working with Kinross/Peak? When will DOTPF perform at least a draft of the traffic safety, congestion, infrastructure impacts and costs? What is the extent of contacts between DOTPF and Kinross/Peak? Will you utilize the unbiased civil engineering professionals at UAF to analyze the Kinross/Peak proposal?
- 4) We request DOTPF take down the link on DOTPF's website to the Manh Choh website, or add a link to the website of Advocates for Safe Alaska Highways (ASAH). We request that DOTPF cease holding joint "public meetings" with Kinross/Peak, controlled by Kinross/Peak, at which DOTPF talks about its plans for improvements to the route, when your staff stated last Friday that DOTPF goes to such meetings to learn about the Kinross/Peak plan. We request that DOTPF hold an equal number of joint public meetings where the public can ask questions, and DOTPF answers the questions either immediately, or in follow-up communications and meetings.
- 5) Will the loaded northbound Kinross/Peak truck/trailers need to leave the Steese Highway at Chena Hot Springs Road (to avoid going over the bridge), go through the interchange on the ground, and then travel up to return to the Steese Highway as they head north?
- 6) We ask DOTPF to advise us as soon as Kinross/Peak applies for a driveway or other permit, waiver, or exemption, including any change to the configuration for equipment restricted from operating on public highways.
- 7) We ask DOTPF to consult the Attorney General on state liability issues. We believe a plaintiff can sue the state every time there is an accident relating to what looks like a joint state-Kinross/Peak project. Plaintiffs will claim inadequate highway maintenance by the state was a cause of any accident. What indemnity/hold harmless/and duty to defend the state will the state demand of Kinross/Peak? What due diligence will the state perform as to the trucking contractor Kinross/Peak plans to hire for this project? What level of insurance will the state require? What level of bonding?
- 8) What issues with the Kinross/Peak plan require FHWA approval and/or involvement?
- 9) What is DOTPF's long-term policy about use of public highways by private mining projects? Will DOTPF allow any use for any project, no matter how congested the roads are, no matter how many truck/trailers the projects want to put on the roads, no matter how impacted the roads, bridges and infrastructure become, and no matter how unsafe the project makes the public? What response will DOTPF make to the next announcement of additional mining ore haul trucks wanting to use public highways to transport ore between company extraction and processing sites? Will DOTPF consider regulations to protect the public safety, infrastructure, environment, and protect the state from liability, when a large number of large truck/trailers are proposed to use public roads for a private, for-profit project?
- 10) Why hasn't DOTPF pursued extension of the ARR, particularly with federal infrastructure funds that may be available? Is the DOTPF or ARR looking at any modes of transportation to develop the Tintina Mineral Belt?
- 11) How will DOTPF assure that 384 ore truck/trailer trips from Fairbanks to Fort Knox and back will be safe, along with all the other traffic on the 8.3 miles from the intersection to the mine turn-off road? Will the DOTPF allow Kinross/Peak to use double trailers on this portion of the route? What plans does DOTPF have to protect the public on this stretch of road? Are any improvements to the roadway planned for this section of the route?
- 12) How will the 188 full-on red-light school bus stops on the road and shoulder (if available) from Tetlin to Ft Knox be accommodated and protected?

- 13) Is there any proposal under consideration for using a conveyor to ascend the hill to Fort Knox from the Fox area, and if so, please provide the details. What funding for which project improvements has DOTPF shifted to the Kinross/Peak route? What projects and funding did DOTPF shift to a lower priority as a result? What funding is DOTPF requesting to conduct the analyses that will be needed for the Kinross/Peak project?
- 14) How will DOTPF enforce all the requirements of 17 AAC 25, for example, for transportation to cease when there is "inclement weather"?
- 15) We ask for complete disclosure of information on the condition of the route planned for use, including the major river bridges on the haul route. What is their expected design life with typical highway usage and with the expected increased use from the Kinross/Peak plan? With the increased traffic proposed by Kinross/Peak, how soon will any segment or bridge reach the end of its design life? What is the expected cost to replace/repair any part of the route nearing the end of its design life?
- 16) What is the air quality impact of the 192/384 truck/trailer trips coming through Fairbanks and North Pole, both *serious non-attainment areas*? What consequences could impact state and local governments if air pollution goals cannot be met on a timely basis, due in part to the Kinross/Peak transportation plan?
- 17) Why is it that the Manh Choh Project cannot use the Steese Expressway turning north at the Mitchell overpass, and the Mitchell/Peger/Johansen/Steese is preferred? What metrics, rules, and considerations are part of that decision?
- 18) Has DOTPF or anyone in state government discussed with Kinross/Peak the option for Kinross/Peak to pay for the costs to the state of the analyses, maintenance, construction, planning, inspections and oversight made necessary by the Kinross/Peak transportation plan, and its impacts to our public highways and infrastructure? Has DOTPF discussed options other than the often-stated Kinross/Peak position that the state gasoline tax should be doubled to pay for impacts? How much money would fully reimburse the state for the costs the Kinross/Peak transportation plan imposes on the state? How much money is currently raised by the gasoline tax? How much in additional funds could be raised by doubling the gas tax?

We agreed to meet again, and we hope to continue the conversation. We ask for that meeting to be no later than March 18, 2022.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Advocates for Safe Alaskan Highways

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