
From: Melissa Heuer <melissa@susitnarivercoalition.org>
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 12:46 PM
To: House Finance
Subject: Remove West Susitna Funding from Budget

Greeting House Finance Committee Members,

I am writing to express our urgent request to remove the \$8.5-\$10 million dollars allocated to the West Susitna Road Project on behalf of the Susitna River Coalition and our 14,000 Alaskan supporters.

There has been little public outreach from project developers. Residents, business owners, and landowners that are aware of this project are showing overwhelming opposition and more urgent infrastructure support is needed elsewhere in the Borough.

There is Strong Opposition to this project from the Mat-Su Borough Mayor, the Mat-Su Assembly, and the Mat-Su Fish and Wildlife Commission for this project.

At a recent Mat-Su Borough Assembly Meeting, Mayor Vern Halter was [quoted](#) as saying in regards to his opposition to this project, *"I think you're lucky, cause this is my last term, I'll be done in November. And I hope you don't think I'm a skeptic, you know, but when I came on, my first Assembly meeting, this is two terms Assembly two terms as Mayor, I got the MV Susitna, an 89 million dollar boat, a free boat, that turned in to be one of the biggest jokes on Earth. Then, the Railroad Spur line came, and this was going to solve all the Borough's problems. And, look at it, it's still not finished. You know, and I look at this and you've got 145 culverts. I do appreciate the fact that 90 of them are fish culverts, you know, we're hitting that right on the button there. Eleven bridges, four complex bridges... there's only one bridge I'm interested in, and that's Port Mackenzie across the Knik Arm. To me, that is the future of the Mat-Su Borough. And I appreciate this... and all this... but we have an underfunded Railroad Spur line that was started and not finished. And now, all of a sudden, we're going to start this hundred miles, and I'm just not sure I'm convinced that it's going to produce what your saying it's going to produce."*

There has been little to no public outreach done to inform Mat-Su residents and businesses about this project. What has been done, has received overwhelming opposition and mistrust for AIDEA. There was limited outreach during Phase 1 and 2, when this was a small public road, but the project as is, shares few similarities.

Under normal circumstances the lack of public outreach for a project that will completely change the Mat-Su is unacceptable, but during both the summer and a pandemic, the rushed process for this project is extremely unreasonable and unnecessary.

AIDEA is a bad investment. In recent years, AIDEA has lost public trust. Their meetings are mainly held in Executive Session, on average 68% of total meeting time in 2020, and what public comment they do allow is often ignored. Their poorly guided project investments are costing the state hundreds of millions of dollars and their track record now mainly consists of failed and costly projects, including; the failed Healy Clean Coal Project, the failed Anchorage Seafood Processing Plant, The failed Skagway Ore Terminal and most recently the Mustang Decision.

With West Susitna road cost estimates at \$2-\$4 million dollars a mile, there is no reason to spend \$8.5 million dollars on what will certainly be another failed investment, especially when these general funds are greatly needed throughout the state.

If AIDEA feels this is a good investment, they can pull funding from their almost \$400 million dollars of uncommitted funds. Considering the local opposition and high cost of the finished project, I strongly encourage

you to remove West Susitna Funding from the budget and to allocate it to other urgently needed infrastructure projects throughout the Mat-Su and State.

Kindly,

Melissa Heuer
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Melissa Heuer

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From: Bee Long [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 10:26 AM
To: House Finance
Subject: HB 70 No to \$10 mill West Susitna Access

Dear House Finance Committee regarding HB 70,

I say no to the Governor's proposed amendment of \$10 million for the proposed West Susitna Access. This project was taken out of the Governor's bond bill because it is not shovel ready and was not constitutional to be in a bond. Each time AIDEA came in front of a legislative committee to promote the expenditure (S. Finance, Transportation, H. Finance, Transportation) different reasons were given for the expenditure. So we never knew how it would be spent.

AIDEA's public process for this project is riddled with contradicting analyses. We are only in the beginning stages of this proposal. But AIDEA is fast tracking the process, ignoring the very real public concerns.

AIDEA Board public processes suck, in other words disenfranchising the public. Decisions on project resolutions are made in executive session. their board meetings are not geared to listening to the public. IN OTHER WORDS, A STATE PUBLIC AGENCY IS ACTING LIKE A BIG MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION.

I say no to this appropriation for West Susitna. AIDEA has plenty of money, approximately \$40 million, of its own that they can spend.

Becky Long