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Sent: Thursday, April 21, 2022 1:10 PM
To: House State Affairs <HouseState.Affairs@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB271 Public Comment

Good Afternoon,

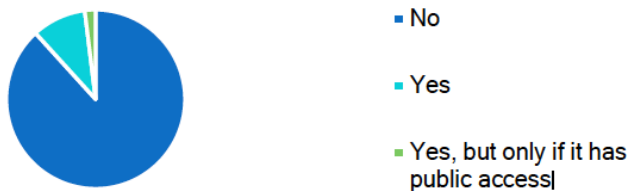
I am writing in to support the reforms and guidance of AIDEA. This organization controls one of the largest budgets in the state, regularly ignores public comments and input, and lacks even a small amount of trust from the public. I've been listening to Director Weitzner's comments and his telling of half-truths and straight-up lies, which seem to be AIDEA's current policy for how they handle business.

As someone who regularly attends and testifies at AIDEA hearings, I can assure you that they rarely respond with as much as lip service, let alone Mr Weitzner's claim that "all public comments are responded to". I have spent a lot of time on their website. I have never seen comments posted and I have never heard of someone receiving written comments in return.

The Susitna River Coalition is deeply concerned about a new, poorly researched, unnecessary, unwanted, and already expensive AIDEA project to build a 108-mile industrial gravel corridor in the Western Susitna Region. A report released this week by the Mat-Su Borough shows that at their second and final public hearing on the project, where the Borough rightly boasted public outreach of more than 13 thousand mailers, newspaper advertising, Facebook ads, and emails to ensure a wide net was cast, that more than 80% of participants are opposed to the development of this project. The public has been a strong and consistent voice of opposition throughout the Borough and AIDEA has done nothing except mislead the public about the intentions and use of this road.

Page 4, West Susitna Access Road Public Engagement Project - Comment and Outreach Summary, MatSu Borough. April 15, 2022.

Do you support the road? (Public Meeting 2)



As with so many AIDEA projects before this, they spend millions of dollars doing predevelopment scoping that results in no new public information, and by the time a decision can be made they claim too much money has been spent to abandon the project as their justification to finish. The AEA Susitna Dam project (different organization but same board), the Ambler road, and the Mustang Project are great recent examples of their poorly executed, expensive work costing the state hundreds of millions of dollars for projects that likely aren't beneficial for communities or a good return on investment.

If early requirements were made for independent cost-benefit analyses of all projects, real stakeholder involvement and response, and the true cost estimates and economic and environmental impacts were required up front - not the lip service, misleading talking points they've perfected, these expensive boondoggle projects wouldn't be allowed to happen. I'll point out for example that when they first projected the West Su Road, before the pandemic, cost estimates were at \$350-\$450 million for a private road, now they're touting the top price at \$400 million, for the same road, two years later, while every other thing on the market has gone up in price. This aligns clearly with their lack of actual researched, published information and their reliance on made-up and misleading information. At three years in, and almost 9 million dollars spent, any other private company would be able to tell you actual facts about pricing, public vs private usage of a road, and their justification for a project that over 80% of respondents don't want.

I encourage you to continue to direct AIDEA down a different path, one that actually benefits Alaskans, and restores some public trust in an organization that is greatly lacking. Thank you for your time and your efforts.

Respectfully,

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Director
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