



Seward Highway Milepost 14 Railroad Crossing Reconstruction

Project No. 0311037 / CFHWY00947

Public Involvement Plan

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Table of Contents

1. General Information	1
1.1. Project Overview.....	1
1.2. Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan	2
1.3. Key Messages	2
2. Project Decision-Makers and Stakeholders	2
2.1. Agency Decision-Makers.....	2
2.2. Other Informed Organizations or Individuals	3
2.3. Key Stakeholders.....	3
3. Public Involvement Methods and Tools	4
3.1. Public Notices.....	4
3.1.1. Management.....	4
3.1.2. Civil Rights/Title VI/Americans with Disabilities Act Notices	4
3.2. Public Meetings/Open Houses.....	5
3.2.1. Overview.....	5
3.2.2. Advertisement of Public Meetings.....	5
3.3. Tourism Advisory Group	5
3.4. Newsletters/Postcards	5
3.5. Email.....	5
4. Implementation of Public Involvement Plan.....	6
5. Project Roles and Responsibilities	7
5.1. DOT&PF.....	7
5.2. HDR.....	7
6. Project Communications.....	7

List of Tables

Table 1. Potential Stakeholder Groups.....	3
Table 2. Draft Implementation Plan.....	6

List of Figures

Figure 1. Project Base Map.....	1
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARRC	Alaska Railroad Corporation
CRO	Civil Rights Office
DOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
HDR	HDR Engineering, Inc.
MP	Milepost
PI	public involvement
PIH	plans-in-hand
PIP	public involvement plan
PS&E	plans, specifications, and estimate
TAG	Tourism Advisory Group

1. General Information

1.1. Project Overview

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' (DOT&PF) Seward Highway Milepost (MP) 14 Railroad Crossing Reconstruction Project (the Project; see Figure 1) proposes to replace the existing structural plate undercrossing at MP 14 with a bridge in response to the Alaska Railroad Corporation's (ARRC) project to increase the track elevation above floodwaters and debris generated by a jökulhlaup (an Icelandic word for glacial outburst) from the Snow River. The existing structural plate undercrossing that allows the railroad tracks to pass beneath the highway does not have enough vertical clearance to accommodate the proposed track raise; therefore, the structure must be replaced, and the highway must be raised to provide minimum clearance.

DOT&PF is currently designing the bridge and associated improvements on the Seward Highway and is assessing the potential for erosion along the riverbank. Based on the results of analysis, the Project may include work to protect the highway embankment from damage caused by glacial outburst floods.

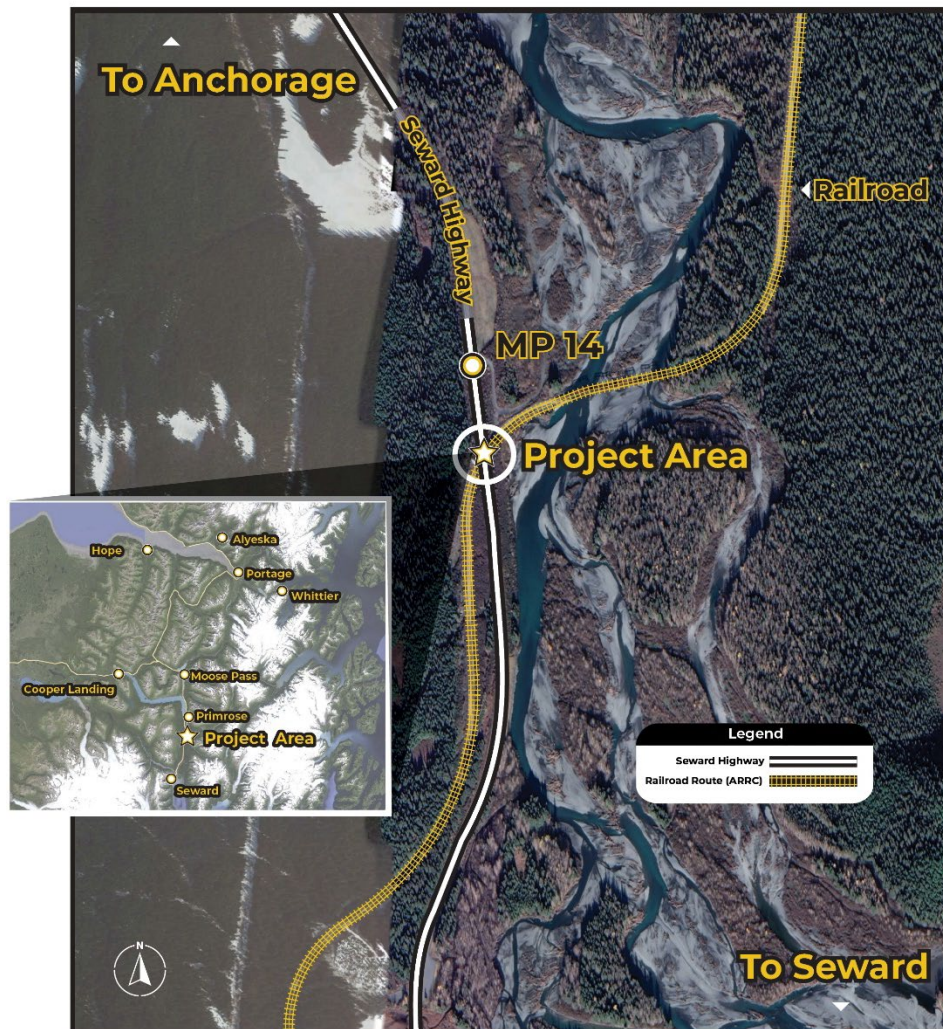


Figure 1. Project Base Map

1.2. Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan

DOT&PF is responsible for safe and reliable operations of the roadway in conjunction with the railroad crossing, and they recognize that the public and other stakeholders should be informed about and have the opportunity to engage in the decisions that affect them. The goal of the Project public involvement plan (PIP) is to outline the proposed methods for involving agencies, organizations, and the public during Project design. Public involvement (PI) is the systematic process designed to provide clear and consistent information to those people who might be affected by the Project (stakeholders) and to engage people and groups at appropriate, meaningful levels of the decision-making process. Good PI also provides clear expectations for the Project sponsor as well as the various stakeholder groups.

The primary goals of this PIP are to:

1. Inform the public on why the Project is needed and DOT&PF's proposed plan of action;
2. Engage with key stakeholders to inform Project delivery; and
3. Share how public input was used during Project design.

A summary of comments will be included in the Final Public Involvement Summary Report.

The purpose of this PIP is to identify Project stakeholders and establish near-term outreach strategies and techniques for engaging and informing stakeholders throughout the design life of the Project.

1.3. Key Messages

The Project team will establish the following clear and consistent key messages throughout Project design:

1. **Why is this Project happening?**
The Project will improve the resiliency of the Railroad and the Seward Highway against regular Snow River flooding caused by glacial outbursts, known as jökulhlaups, from Snow Glacier.
2. **How is the problem going to be solved?**
The Seward Highway will be raised to allow the ARRC to raise their bridge and tracks above the Jökulhlaup.
3. **When is the information being distributed?**
The Project team is committed to clear, consistent communication.

2. Project Decision-Makers and Stakeholders

This section describes the decision-makers and stakeholders involved in the Project (Table 1). Different stakeholders will have varying levels of interest and influence in the process. Brief summaries of agency and stakeholder roles, and how each group will be involved in the PIP, are provided below.

2.1. Agency Decision-Makers

Key decision-makers at the local and state levels will be engaged regularly to review issues, make key decisions, and determine key messaging that will be shared with Project stakeholders. Section 3 of this PIP, Public Involvement Methods and Tools, identifies methods, tools, and processes used to engage key agency decision-makers to ensure continuity and coordination on key Project and stakeholder issues.

2.2. Other Informed Organizations or Individuals

Other organizations or individuals who are stakeholders with key interests in the success of this Project include:

- Alaska Legislature – Senators and Representatives:
 - Senate District D
 - House District 8

2.3. Key Stakeholders

The Seward Highway has numerous stakeholders, including area residents and businesses, recreational users, federal and state agencies, local government, emergency services, utilities, tribal entities, and non-governmental organizations. Table 1 provides a list of stakeholders, including:

- Those who actively participated in prior related environmental studies and
- Those who may be impacted by construction.

Table 1. Potential Stakeholder Groups

Potential Stakeholder Groups	
General Public	
Residents and property owners Area businesses (including fishing and tourism)	Traveling public Commuters
Users	
Cargo businesses Ground transportation services	Alaska tour companies Alaska Railroad Corporation
Public Utilities	
Alaska Communications Systems City of Seward Electric	General Communications Incorporated
Local Governments	
Kenai Peninsula Borough Moose Pass	City of Seward
State/Federal Agencies	
Alaska State Troopers Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Alaska Department of Fish and Game Alaska Department of Natural Resources Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities	Emergency Medical Services: Moose Pass Volunteer Fire Department Seward Police Department Seward Volunteer Fire Department Federal Highway Administration U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Forest Service
Elected Officials	
Alaska State Senate Alaska House of Representatives	Mayor of Seward Mayor of Moose Pass

Potential Stakeholder Groups	
Nongovernmental Organizations	
Cruise Lines International Association Alaska Outdoor Council	Anchorage Waterways Council Kenai River Sportfishing Association
Community and Economic Development Organizations	
Alaska Travel Industry Association Alaska Trucking Association Moose Pass Chamber of Commerce	Seward Visitor Center and Chamber of Commerce Moose Pass Advisory Planning Commission Moose Pass Messenger

3. Public Involvement Methods and Tools

This section outlines the outreach steps, methods, tactics, and activities that will be used to engage the public and Project stakeholders and enable them to meaningfully contribute to the Project. The activities will build upon each other to solicit public comments that will be incorporated into the Public Involvement Summary Report and influence Project outcomes as appropriate.

The activities described below are not listed in chronological order. Many of these activities will occur concurrently throughout the Project timeline. Actual dates will coincide with Project activities, milestones, and deliverables.

3.1. Public Notices

3.1.1. Management

Public notices, including Notices of Intent, Notices of Availability, and Notices of Public Meetings/Hearings, will be managed by HDR Engineering, Inc. (HDR). In addition to the specific requirements for different notice types, all notices will include the standard practices described in the following subsection.

3.1.2. Civil Rights/Title VI/Americans with Disabilities Act Notices

DOT&PF is required by federal agreement to include a disclosure regarding Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 compliance as part of agency outreach and PI. The Project team will work with the DOT&PF Civil Rights Office (CRO) to confirm the most current language prior to publication. At the time of writing this PIP, the current language is:

It is the policy of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) that no one shall be subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, regardless of the funding source, including Federal Transit Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and State of Alaska funds. Full Title VI Nondiscrimination Policy: dot.alaska.gov/tvi_statement.shtml. To file a complaint, go to: dot.alaska.gov/cvlrts/titlevi.shtml. For individuals requiring TTY communications, please contact Alaska Relay 711 or 1-800-676-3777.

CRO notices will be published with all public announcements and on the website, and Title VI documents will be displayed at public meetings and documented in the meeting record.

3.2. Public Meetings/Open Houses

3.2.1. Overview

Public meetings/open houses will focus on the communities directly affected by the Project, centering on the people and businesses in communities that will likely feel the biggest impacts of the Project's development (Seward and Moose Pass). The Project team plans to hold two meetings: one during the plans-in-hands (PIH) phase and one to share pre-construction information. Meetings will be held in either Seward or Moose Pass. The Project team will staff meetings to answer questions. Public meeting summaries will be posted on the Project website.

The two anticipated meetings include the following:

- **Public Meeting #1 – PIH:** Anticipated in late summer or early fall 2024 to inform the public of design plans and solicit input regarding initial impacts to be considered.
- **Public Meeting #2 – Pre-Construction:** Anticipated for late winter or early spring 2025 to share proposed construction activities and how to stay informed on schedules/closures.

3.2.2. Advertisement of Public Meetings

Two newspaper advertisements (ads) are planned for each public meeting, with additional communication methods (detailed in Section 4, Implementation of Public Involvement Plan) planned to remind stakeholders of opportunities to comment. The first newspaper ad will be published in the *Peninsula Clarion* 3 weeks prior to each meeting. The second newspaper ad will be published 1 week prior to each public meeting. Each newspaper ad will be one-quarter page in local papers. The ads will be in black and white. Public meeting ads will also include meeting details, comment period dates, and ways to comment. The newspaper ads will be submitted to the DOT&PF Project Manager for approval prior to submittal for publication.

3.3. Tourism Advisory Group

A Tourism Advisory Group (TAG) will be established from key tourism stakeholders to inform them of Project status and seek feedback. This group will be on the distribution list for all quarterly updates.

3.4. Newsletters/Postcards

A one-time newsletter, postcard, or equivalent will be created and mailed to residents, businesses, and key stakeholders. This communication will encourage people to sign up for the Project mailing list via the Project website to help create a robust distribution list.

3.5. Email

An email campaign will coincide with the newsletter launch by creating a contact list and emailing key stakeholders shown in Table 1 to:

- Introduce the Project to organizations;
- Direct organizations to the website; and
- Encourage organization representatives to sign up for the mailing list and be added to the distribution list.

A quarterly electronic newsletter will be sent to the distribution list with Project updates. All emails and meeting notices will be sent to the following organizations/agencies and will include a request that the meetings be added to their respective community calendars:

- Seward Chamber of Commerce
- Moose Pass Chamber of Commerce
- Moose Pass Messenger
- DOT&PF PI Calendar
- DOT&PF GovDelivery
- DOT&PF Online Public Notices
- WhatsUp Listserv

4. Implementation of Public Involvement Plan

Table 2 provides a draft implementation plan for the Project. All dates and tools are subject to change.

Table 2. Draft Implementation Plan

Step in Process	Key Input Points	Tools
Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Branding • Project handouts (PFS, FAQ)
Plans in Hand (PIH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and need • Inform design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter mailed • Public notice (public meeting #1) • Public meeting #1/open house/PIH • Email • Social media
Plans, Specifications, and Estimate (PS&E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Social media
Continued Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Project updates as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-blast/Quarterly newsletter • Website updates • Listening posts
Construction Activity Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform construction activities • Introduce contractor for updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public notice (public meeting #2) • Public meeting #2/open house/construction activities • Email • Social media
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational updates • General Project awareness-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-ones • Social media • Other media • Website • E-blast/Quarterly newsletter • Listening posts • Media coordination and monitoring

Note: FAQ = Frequently Asked Questions; PFS = Project Fact Sheet.

5. Project Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. DOT&PF

DOT&PF is both the owner and manager of the Project and is responsible for all decisions related to the design effort and construction activities.

5.2. HDR

HDR is an engineering, environmental, and construction services company with an office in Anchorage, Alaska. DOT&PF contracted HDR to design and support DOT&PF communications related to the Project.

6. Project Communications

The following information will be displayed on all public materials:

- Project email: info@sewardmp14.com
- Project website: <https://sewardmp14.com/>