

“Congestion Relief/Non-Bridge Alternative” Proposed for the Knik Arm Crossing Project

Coalition says proposal will address needs at a lower price

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A coalition of seven Alaskan-based consumer rights, transportation, and conservation organizations released a letter Monday asking the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) to include a multi-component alternative as part of the Knik Arm Crossing project studies. The alternative’s package of proposed transportation improvements includes a car ferry across Knik Arm, commuter rail between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage, car and van pool incentives, and increased bus service in Anchorage.

“We were trying to think outside the box, and we developed a rational, cost-effective way to meet community needs,” said Emily Ferry with the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, an organization advocating for investment in existing infrastructure. “The congestion relief/non-bridge alternative will reduce traffic delays, provide long-term jobs, strengthen downtown businesses, and connect the region without creating sprawl.”

KABATA will hold public hearings on the Knik Arm Crossing project on Tuesday from 6-8:30 pm at the Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Complex and on Wednesday from 5-7:30 pm at the Egan Center in Anchorage. KABATA’s bridge studies currently contain a “no action” alternative that, if selected, would mean no bridge would be constructed. The coalition wants to see another alternative analyzed which includes a variety of transportation upgrades, just not a bridge. The proposed alternative consists of:

- Regular car and passenger ferry and cargo transit to Point MacKenzie
- Commuter rail service between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage
- Car and van pool incentives for travel between the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage
- Expanded bus service and new streetcar transit in Anchorage

“Improving our transportation system isn’t just about building new, flashy infrastructure. It’s about thoughtful planning and building on the transportation investments we have,” said Ferry.

“None of the current alternatives will reduce commute times,” said Lois Epstein, a licensed engineer with Cook Inlet Keeper, a non-profit conservation organization focused on protecting Cook Inlet. “Besides, who wants to pay \$10 or more in tolls to get to work? Building an expensive and unneeded bridge is a huge mistake when there are cutting-edge, alternative ways to help commuters and protect Cook Inlet’s salmon and beluga whales at the same time.”

The following organizations signed onto the letter to KABATA on the congestion relief/non-bridge alternative: Alaska Center for the Environment, Alaska Conservation Alliance, Alaska Public Interest Research Group, Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, Alaska Wildlife Alliance, Cook Inlet Keeper, and the Sierra Club (Alaska Regional Office).