



Draft Purpose and Need

Introduction

The Arctic Strategic Transportation and Resources (ASTAR) program is a partnership between the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and the North Slope Borough (NSB) created to identify, evaluate, and advance opportunities to enhance the quality of life and economic opportunities in North Slope communities through responsible infrastructure development. The ASTAR team identified community connectivity between Atqasuk, Utqiagvik, and Wainwright as a top priority of community members in the region¹. The Triangle Community Road Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study is advancing to consider transportation connections between the communities, whilst concurrently working with stakeholders and the community to receive feedback on whether a roadway connection is desired.

Purpose

The ASTAR team has partnered with DOT&PF to conduct a PEL study to identify ways to improve the transportation connection between Atqasuk, Utqiagvik, and Wainwright through responsible infrastructure. The purpose of the PEL study is to evaluate an all-season roadway connection between the three communities. The PEL study team will also work with stakeholders and the community to understand whether an all-season road connection between the communities is desired and should move forward to a NEPA and design phase.

An all-season gravel road connection between the three communities would meet the following objectives:

- Lower the cost of energy, basic goods, utilities and other services
- Improve health and wellness through improved access to health services
- Create opportunities to strengthen cultural exchange, share traditional knowledge, enhance community and family connectivity, and improve emotional well-being
- Provide an evacuation route to higher elevation areas, allowing efficient transportation away from the coast, in case of severe storm surges and/or coastal flooding.
- Reduce fossil fuel use through reduction of reliance on air travel and advancing the opportunity for energy alternatives to diesel fuel

¹ Road Network for Utqiagvik, Atqasuk, and Wainwright - Arctic Strategic Transportation and Resources Project
North Slope, Alaska. April 2020





ASTAR

TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

Need

The communities of Utqiāġvik, Atqasuk, and Wainwright are only accessible by air year-round or snowmachines/ rolligons during winter as no permanent road exists between these communities, or to the Alaska road system. The lack of an all-season surface transportation connection between the communities continues the following undesirable conditions:

- Lack of year-round, reliable, and cost-efficient transport of goods and services
- Unrealized economic growth
- Uneconomical and unreliable access to family and friends between communities
- Difficult and costly access to subsistence resources
- Prolonged response times for medical emergencies
- Lack of evacuation route to allow efficient transportation of residents away from coastal communities that are threatened by increasingly substantial coastal storm surges and flooding.
- Limited / uneconomical access by Wainwright and Atqasuk residents to educational opportunities, training, and workforce development available in Utqiāġvik

