ASTAR TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

Community Meeting

Wainwright, AK

March 6, 2025

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated April 13, 2023, and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

INVOCATION

AGENDA

- Invocation
- Welcome and Introductions
- Project Overview
- PEL Study Schedule
- Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Process Overview
- Purpose and Need
- Preliminary Alternatives
- Evaluating Alternatives
- Wrap Up and Next Steps

PROJECT OVERVIEW

ARCTIC STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION AND RESOURCES (ASTAR)

ASTAR is a partnership between the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), and the North Slope Borough (NSB).

Mission and Purpose: Identify, evaluate, and advance opportunities to enhance the quality of life and economic opportunities in NSB communities through infrastructure development.

Goal: Prioritize community needs and identify infrastructure opportunities that offer the most cumulative benefit and best enhance the quality of life for the region.

ASTAR AND THE COMMUNITIES

Collaboration between ASTAR and North Slope communities and stakeholders

Identify infrastructure projects and services that offer the greatest cumulative benefits for the region

ASTAR CUMULATIVE BENEFITS

ASTAR benefit criteria (selected by the NSB and North Slope communities)

- Supports community connectivity
- Preserves or enhances subsistence traditions
- Lowers costs of goods and services
- Improves health and safety conditions
- Improves access to education opportunities
- Enhances workforce development

ASTAR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

ASTAR benefit criteria (selected by the NSB and North Slope communities)

- 7 years of community meetings/workshops
- Presentations to the NSB assembly
- Presentations to NSB planning commission
- Regular scheduled meeting with NSB port authority
- Many other presentations to communities/stakeholders

ASTAR FIELD STUDIES CONDUCTED

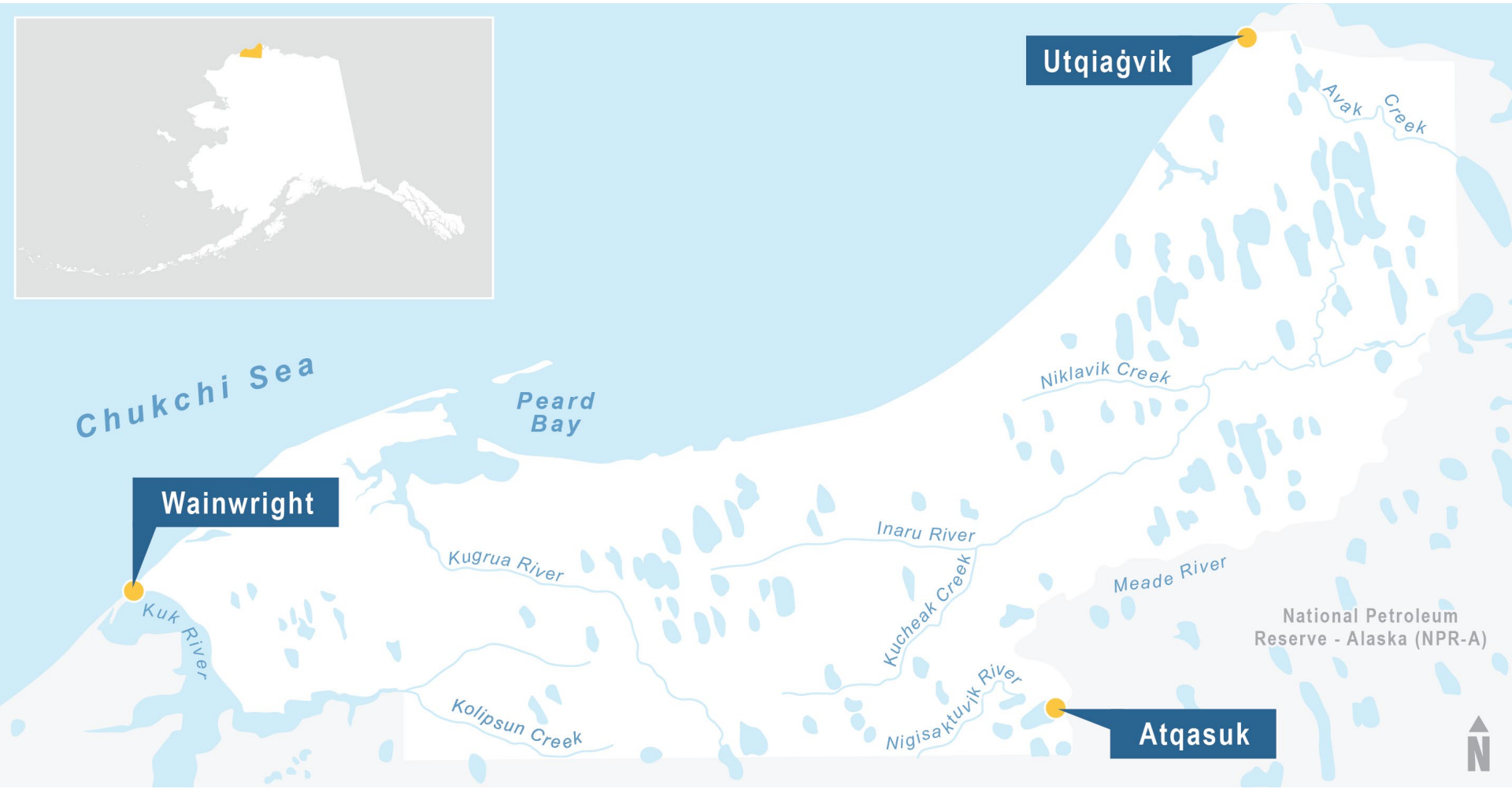
- Gravel surveys
  - Eastern NPR-A, Atqasuk, Utqiaġvik, Wainwright, Point Lay
  - Anaktuvuk Pass
- ASTAR Coastal Hazard Mapping (erosion and flooding)
  - Wainwright, Utqiaġvik, Point Lay, Kaktovik
- NPR-A lake studies
- Stream gauging
- Riprap survey (Cape Lisburne)
- Weather station installation
- Flew LiDAR (Atqasuk and Utqiaġvik)

ASTAR UPCOMING PROPOSED WORK

- Winter Geotech program for potential road alternatives
- NPR-A Rock Survey Phase 2
- Work with communities to identify grant and other funding opportunities to advance community-supported projects

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES (PEL) STUDY

PEL STUDY AREA



PEL STUDY SCHEDULE

ASTAR
TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

SPRING 2024	SUMMER - WINTER 2024 / 2025	WINTER - SPRING 2025	SUMMER 2025 - WINTER 2025 / 2026
Project Initiation, Problems to be Solved, Purpose & Need: Emerging Themes	**Evaluation Criteria, Develop & Screen Alternatives**	**Evaluate, Refine, & Select Alternatives**	**Finalize Documentation**
Baseline Analysis, Data Collection, Purpose & Need: Emerging Themes	Identify Alternatives and Develop Screening Criteria	Screening, Recommended Alternatives, Draft PEL Study	Public Comment Period *(30 days)* and Finalize PEL Study

PEL PROCESS

Collaborative and Integrated Approach to Transportation Decision-Making that:

- Eases transition from project planning to design and implementation
- Considers environmental, community, and economic goals
- Uses planning data and analysis to guide the environmental review process
- Engages community members and leaders, including native villages, village corporations, borough, and government agencies

PEL GOALS & BENEFITS

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PEL Goals:

- Provide North Slope decision makers with the necessary information to decide whether this project should move forward
- Advance the project into the NEPA process for federal review and approval

PEL Benefits:

- ✓ Improved project delivery timelines
- ✓ Stronger agency and public relationships
- ✓ Earlier identification of key environmental resources
- ✓ Better funding and project development information for programming funds
- ✓ Projects built with better outcomes
- ✓ Flexible approach supports holistic development of transportation improvement strategies

PURPOSE AND NEED

PURPOSE

Why project is proposed

Positive outcomes intended

NEED

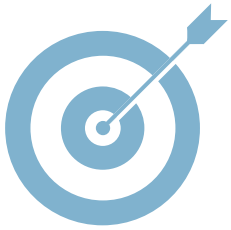
Key problems to be addressed

Explanation of underlying causes of those problems

EMERGING THEMES: PURPOSE & NEED

- ✓ **Connection:** Access and connection between communities
- ✓ **Economic Prosperity:** Lower cost of goods, services, utilities, improve access to jobs
- ✓ **Subsistence Traditions**: Community access to subsistence resources
- ✓ **Medical Access:** Improve access to medical facilities, emergency response
- ✓ **Education Access:** Improve access to and between education facilities

PURPOSE



All-season gravel road connection between three communities meet these objectives:

- Lower the cost of energy, basic goods, utilities and other services
- Create opportunities to strengthen cultural exchange, share traditional knowledge, enhance community and family connectivity, and improve emotional well-being
- Improve health and wellness through improved access to medical and health facilities and services
- 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

NEED

Lack of 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
- 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 Utqiaġvik

PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT

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Does the Purpose & Need statement address the question: What are we doing this for?

- Are there any additional considerations?
- Is there anything that should be left out?
- Do you have any suggestions for changes/improvements?

BACKGROUND & EXISTING CONDITIONS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

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Desktop Analysis of Study Area (2018 – 2020)

- **Land ownership:**
  - Native corporation lands, allotments
  - Federal land (National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska)
- **Study area characterized by arctic tundra:**
  - Underlain by continuous permafrost
  - Numerous lakes and meandering waterways
  - Relatively flat topography with terraces and steep riverbanks adjacent to large rivers
- **Arctic climate zone:**
  - Experienced rapid climate change in recent years (rising air and water temperatures and diminishing sea ice)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

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Desktop Analysis of Study Area

- **Stream and river crossings**
  - Satellite imagery and lidar used to identify potential locations for stream and river crossings
    - *Waterbodies are a major factor in potential road alignments*
    - *Little historical survey data or streamflow records for streams and rivers*
    - *Streambank stability assessment for crossing locations needed*
- **Cultural resources**
  - 101 sites identified but majority of area has not been researched or surveyed
- **Gravel resources**
  - Limited gravel
  - Further geotechnical surveys needed

EXISTING CONDITIONS

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TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

Other Desktop Analyses and Technical Memos:

- Subsistence Use
- Fisheries & Fish Habitat
- Birds
- Threatened & Endangered Species
- Terrestrial Mammals
- Wetlands

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Continuing data needs

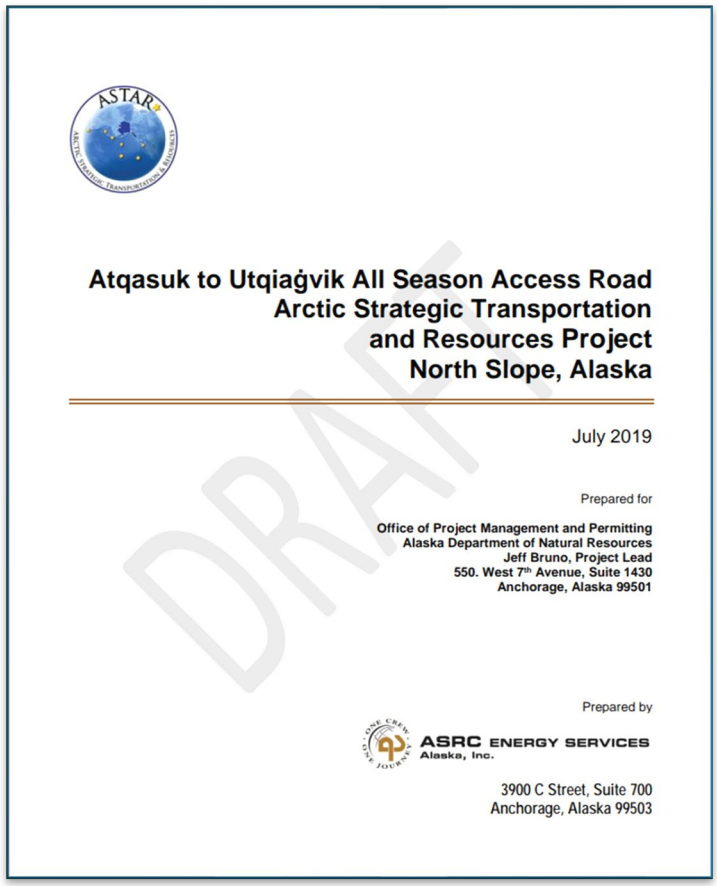
Data gaps that have been identified, and will be a priority for the PEL study and/or future work to support the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process include:

- Additional geotechnical programs
- Hydrology and stream crossing surveys
- Wetlands reconnaissance
- Cultural resources reconnaissance
- LiDAR to Wainwright
- Bird and fish studies
- Identification of funding opportunities and construction phasing options
- Community and stakeholder feedback

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

ASTAR REPORTS

- All season Community Route Analysis
  - Utqiaġvik, Atqasuk, Wainwright



Atqasuk to Utqiaġvik All Season Access Road
Arctic Strategic Transportation
and Resources Project
North Slope, Alaska

July 2019

Prepared for

Office of Project Management and Permitting
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
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Prepared by

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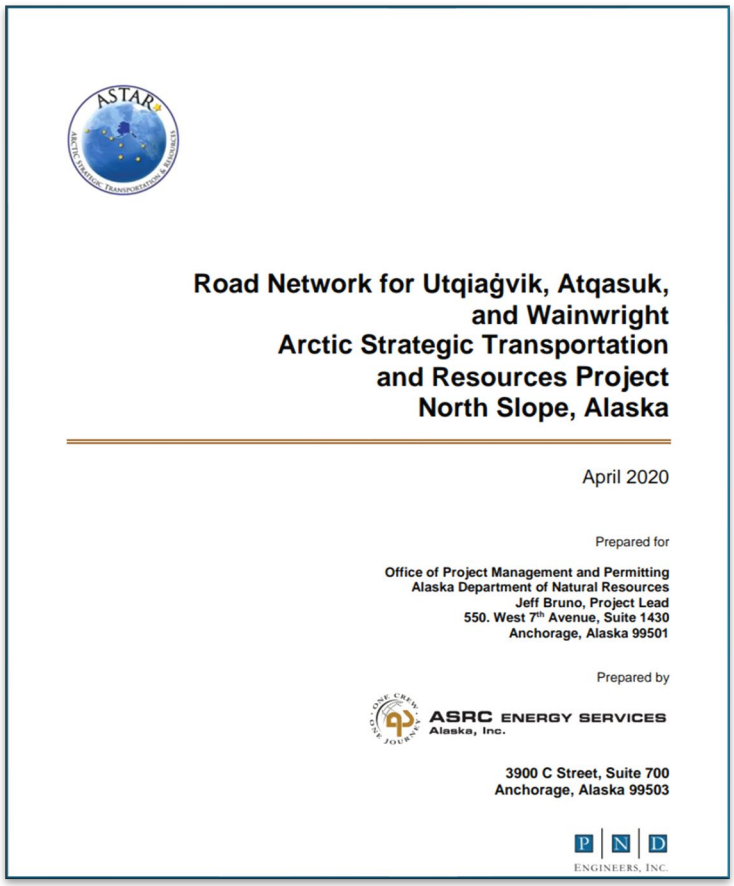

Road Network for Utqiaġvik, Atqasuk,
and Wainwright
Arctic Strategic Transportation
and Resources Project
North Slope, Alaska

April 2020

Prepared for

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ENGINEERS, INC.

STUDY AREA BACKGROUND

Desktop Analysis of Study Area (2018 – 2020)

- Land Status
- Hydrology
- Geology
- Cultural Resources
- Paleontological Resources
- Subsistence Patterns
- Wetlands
- Fish and Wildlife
- Existing Infrastructure
- Bridge Crossings
- Engineering Considerations
- Preliminary Construction Cost

STUDY AREA BACKGROUND

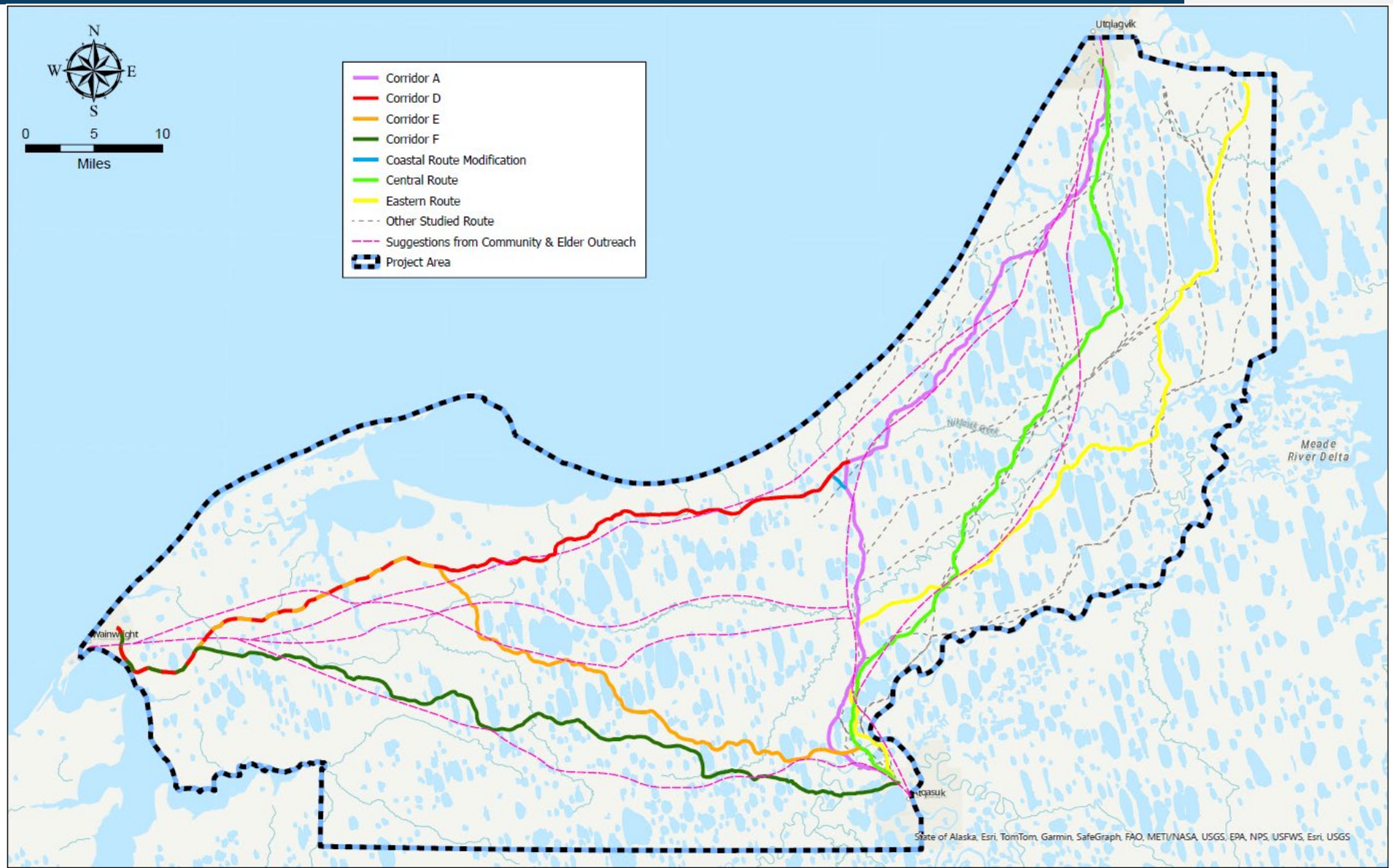
ASTAR
TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

Desktop Analysis of Study Area (2018 – 2020)

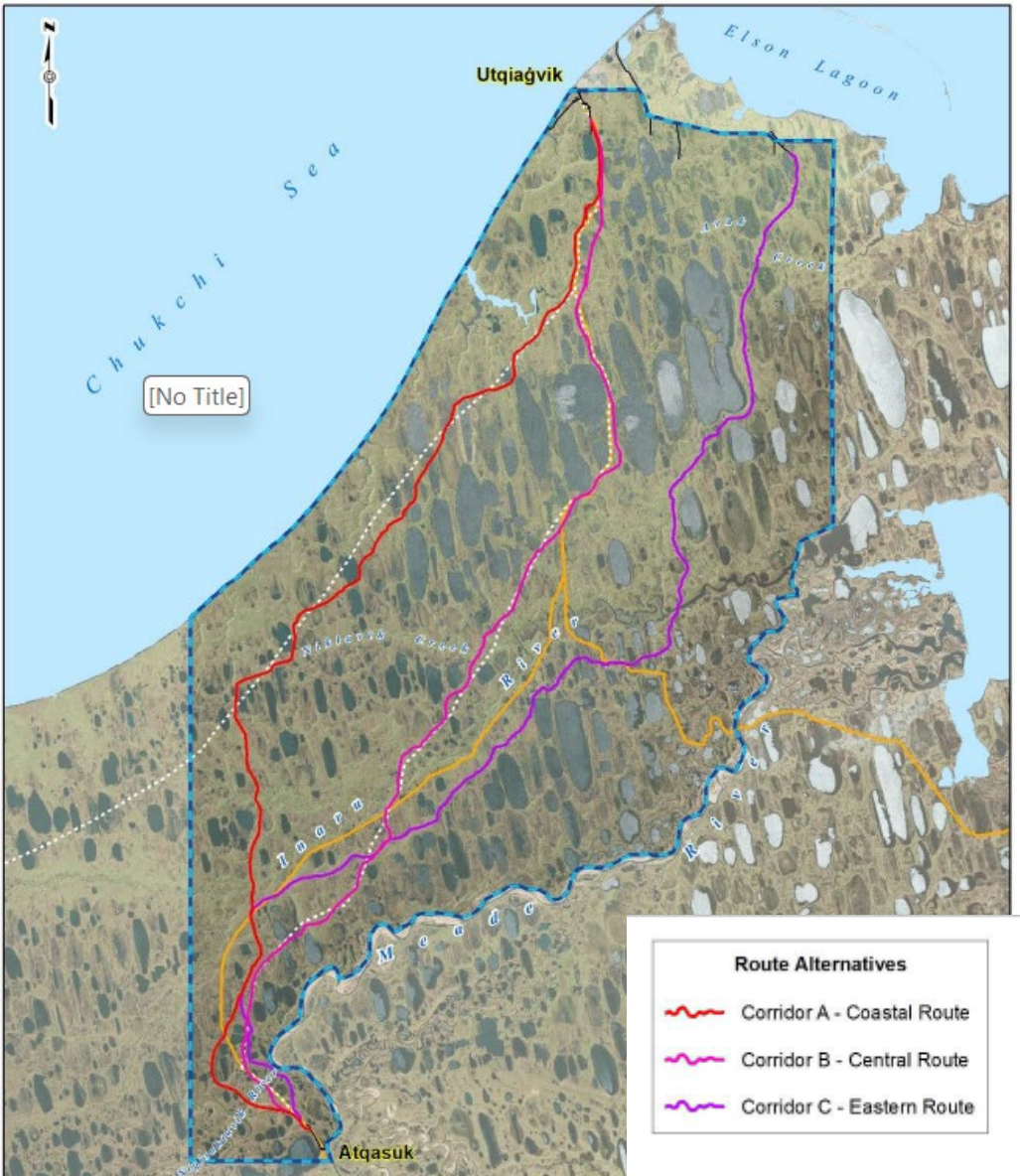
- **River/Stream Hydrology and Potential Crossing Locations**
  - Major factor in potential road alignments
  - Little historical survey data or streamflow records for streams and rivers
  - Streambank stability assessment for crossing locations needed
- **Gravel resources**
  - Limited gravel, abundant sand
  - Several bedrock outcrops
  - Further geotechnical surveys needed

ASTAR IDENTIFIED ROUTES

ASTAR
TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

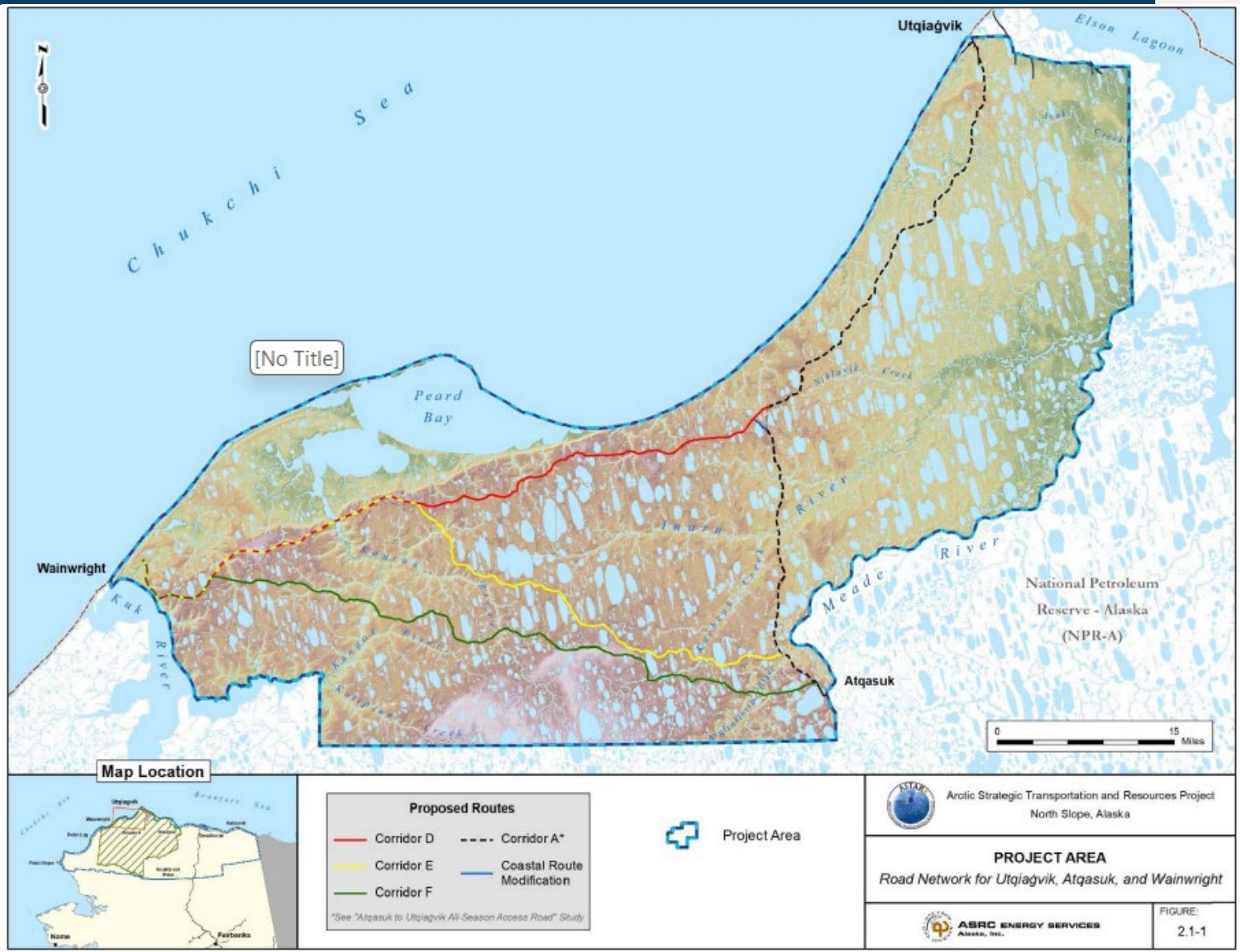


ASTAR IDENTIFIED ROUTES



- Original study area investigated routes connecting Utqiaġvik to Atqasuk
- Community benefit expanded the study to include a road connection to Wainwright

ASTAR IDENTIFIED ROUTES



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

- Any other alternatives we should consider?
- Any we shouldn't be considering?

EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

EVALUATION PROCESS

- **Initial Screening Criteria and Range of Alternatives**
  - What routes best meet identified needs?
  - Review routes for range of environmental, physical, social, cost constraints
  - Identify if community wants to proceed with all-season community road
- **PEL Study Screening Will Help Evaluate Alternatives and Narrow in on Recommendations**

DRAFT EVALUATION CRITERIA

ASTAR
TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

PURPOSE AND NEED	TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE ROUTE…
Lowers Costs of Energy, Utilities, Goods and Services	Lower the cost of energy, basic goods, utilities, and other services. Accommodate semi-trucks and lower the cost of large freight.
Supports Community Connectivity	Increase emotional wellbeing and community connectivity through year-round reliable and economical roadway access between the communities. Create or enhance the capability to join together in various activities.
Improves Public Safety Conditions	Improve public health through direct access to medical facilities and services, Search and Rescue personnel, and law enforcement. Increase sustainability of necessary utilities. Create evacuation route to quickly move residents inland and to higher elevations, in case of natural disasters (e.g. coastal storm surges, flooding, etc.)
Infrastructure Resiliency	Provide a resilient year-round surface transportation alternative.
Promotes Reduction of Fossil Fuel Use	
Provides Year-Round and Convenient Transport of Goods and Services	Provide year-round reliable, economical and durable surface transportation for vehicles between the communities.
Improves Economic Growth	Provide economic stimulus to the communities by providing opportunities for new businesses, commercial activities, and trade. Reduce the cost of goods and services, supporting opportunities for greater economic wellbeing for community members.
Preserves or Enhances Subsistence Conditions	Improve safety and lower the cost of local community access to subsistence resources while protecting those resources from outside pressure
Improves Access to Education Opportunities	Create year-round and cost-efficient access to education facilities, training centers, and cultural centers/activities
Enhances Workforce Development	Provide temporary and long-term jobs, provide access to skills training, workplace experience, etc.

DRAFT EVALUATION CRITERIA

ASTAR
TRIANGLE COMMUNITY ROAD PEL STUDY

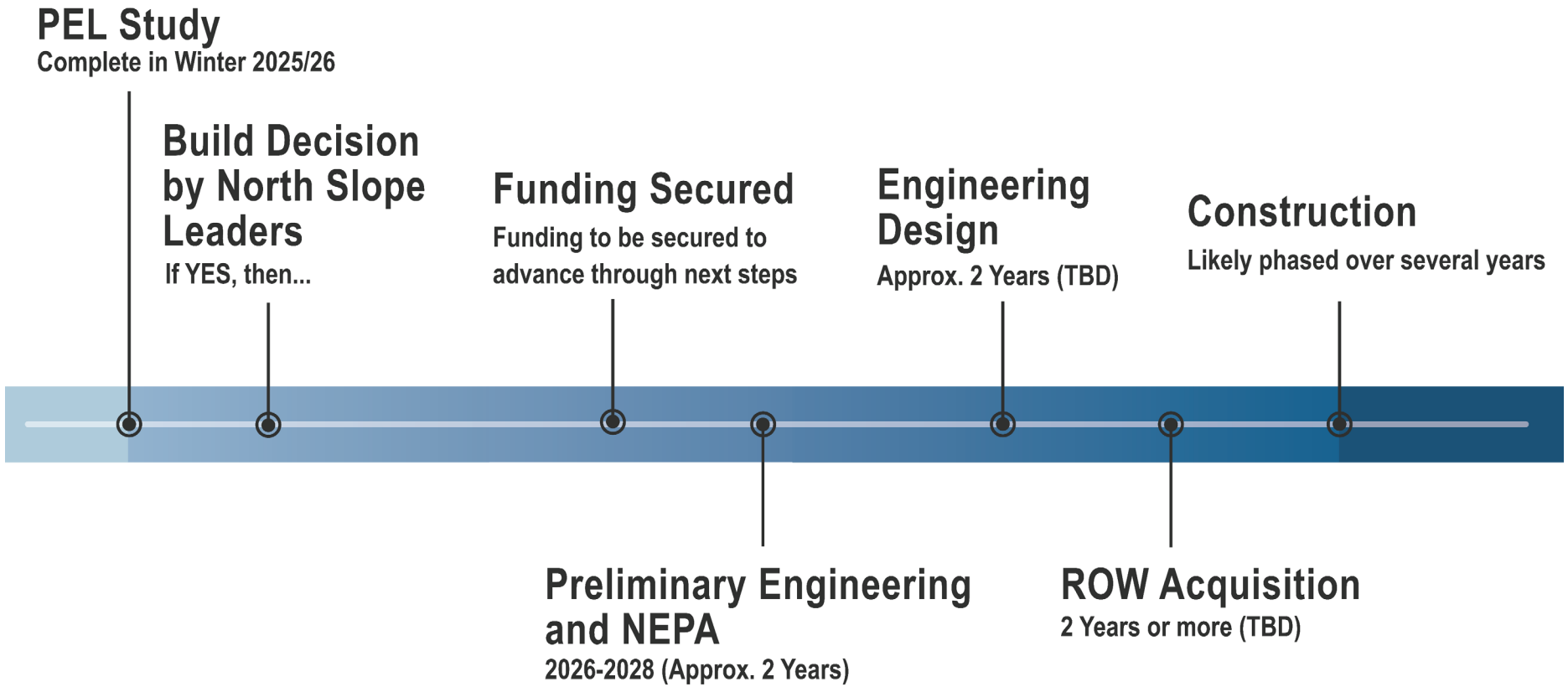
CONSTRAINT	TO WHAT DEGREE DOES THE ROUTE…
Land Status	Consider land ownership, leases, rights-of-way, federally designated Special Areas, etc.
Hydrology	Minimize river and stream crossings, locate crossings with stable bank conditions, consider BLM Best Management Practices, setbacks, etc.
Geology/ Geotechnical	Minimize haul routes for material sources, avoid geohazards, where possible route over favorable (less icy) in situ soils
Existing and Proposed Infrastructure	Take advantage of existing infrastructure where possible, consider synergies between proposed road and other existing or proposed infrastructure
Roadway Engineering Considerations	Consider topography, bridges, culverts, design criteria, material needs and haul distances, in order to minimize construction and maintenance & operations costs
Vehicle Bridges	Minimize the number and length of bridges and culverts
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	Avoid impacts to historic properties or paleontological resources
Subsistence Patterns	Avoid impacts to mapped subsistence use areas and avoid or minimize encroachment on Native allotments, camps, or cabins
Wetlands	Avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands that would require compensatory mitigation
Threatened and Endangered Species	Avoid critical habitat for eiders, Polar Bears, and Yellow-billed Loons and reduce incidental takes
Terrestrial Mammals	Avoid or minimize impacts to habitat and migration corridors of terrestrial mammals. Consider wildlife vehicle collisions.
Fish and Fish Habitat	Consider anadromous streams and crossing modes
Avian Resources and Habitat	Avoid eider and Yellow-billed Loon nesting locations and waterfowl nesting concentration areas
Environmental Compliance and Permitting	Minimize environmental and compliance permitting challenges; avoid BLM designated Special Areas, etc.
Construction Cost Estimate	Minimize overall construction cost to the extent practicable

EVALUATION

- Any additional screening criteria we should consider?
- What is most important?

WHAT'S NEXT?

WHAT'S NEXT AFTER PEL STUDY DECISIONS



THANK YOU - QUYANAQ

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