



## *Promoting sensible transportation systems in Alaska*

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
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### **Alaska's Remaining "Bridge to Nowhere" Relies on Speculative Development to Cover Project Costs Knik Arm Bridge EIS Shows the Toll Bridge Won't Alleviate Commuter Congestion**

Anchorage, AK – The final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Knik Arm "bridge to nowhere," available today, shows that the project will not relieve congestion for travelers from the Mat-Su Borough to Anchorage. Approximately \$40 million dollars in state transportation money has been spent on the project, which relies on speculative development to make it viable, and the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) plans to spend approximately \$70 million dollars more of state transportation money in the near future. Private, foreign investors may or may not materialize to help fund this highly questionable project.

According to KABATA's consultants, existing commuters from the Mat-Su Borough's Wasilla and Palmer population centers would travel farther and longer to reach Anchorage if they choose to take the bridge, and would pay an expected \$5 toll each way. New roads, schools, police and fire stations, and other not-yet-built infrastructure near the Point Mackenzie bridge terminus likely would be funded largely by the Borough's Wasilla and Palmer residents.

"This project will not solve any current transportation problems because few drivers will use the bridge, and KABATA's own analysis shows that traffic delays will negligibly decrease," said engineer Lois Epstein, director of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, a statewide transportation watchdog organization. "The state shouldn't throw good money after bad and proceed with the Knik Arm Bridge, which will exacerbate the Mat-Su Borough's fiscal problems and harm downtown Anchorage businesses and tourist attractions. The Alaska Department of Transportation should focus on "fix it first" projects rather than expensive, new projects to undeveloped areas."

The Knik Arm Bridge from Anchorage to an undeveloped portion of the Mat-Su Borough and the Gravina Bridge near Ketchikan received national notoriety as Alaskan "bridges to nowhere." These proposed projects received \$229 million and \$223 million in federal earmark money, respectively, due to Alaskan Senator Ted Stevens' and Congressman Don Young's efforts. In November 2005, Congress removed the earmarks but gave the state the money, and former Governor Frank Murkowski's Administration allocated over \$90 million to each project. In September 2007, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin cancelled the Gravina "bridge to nowhere" project and re-allocated its remaining \$36 million to other state transportation projects, however the proposed Knik Arm "bridge to nowhere" continues to move forward.

According to Epstein, "KABATA and the Federal Highway Administration ignored a sensible, cheaper multi-modal alternative to the bridge in development of the Environmental Impact Statement issued today. This thoughtful alternative -- including commuter rail on existing tracks, car ferries across Knik Arm, and improved traffic management on the Glenn Highway -- would help commuters to Anchorage and protect Cook Inlet's salmon and beluga whales at the same time."

The Alaska Transportation Priorities Project (ATPP) promotes sensible transportation systems in Alaska with the goal of safe, economic, well-maintained, and environmentally-appropriate transportation throughout the state.