WEST SUSITNA ACCESS ROAD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Comment & Outreach Summary

April 15, 2022

Prepared by:
Yehle & Associates LLC on behalf of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough

General Information

Total Comments: 1,368 comments received

Public Meeting 1:   146 people attended

Public Meeting 2:   180 people attended

Online Survey 1:   194 responses

Online Survey 2:   498 responses

Total Subscribers: 550 email addresses

Mailing List: 13,234 addresses

Website Views: 4,403 views

Effective Dates: December 7 to March 31, 2022

Purpose: To provide a forum for the public to comment on the project directly to the Borough

Website: https://west-susitna-access.matsugov.us/

Project Team: Brad Sworts, Borough Project Manager, Pre-Design & Engineering

Camden Yehle, Public Involvement Lead (Yehle & Associates LLC)

Mike Brown, Borough Manager

George Hays, Deputy Borough Manager

Stefan Hinman, Borough Public Affairs

Eric Phillips, Community Development

Terry Dolan, Public Works

Outreach & Events

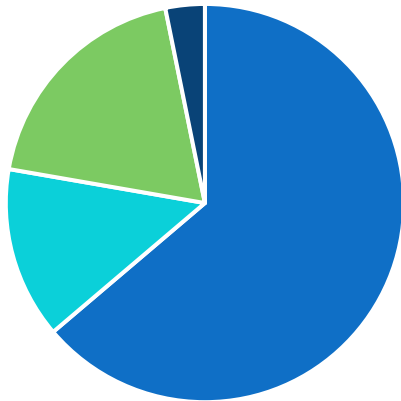| Date	Description
Project duration	Correspondence and documentation
Project duration	Mailing list and email list updates
Project duration	Website updates
12/7/2021	**Assembly meeting, 24 comments**
12/21/2021	**Assembly meeting, 42 comments**
1/25/2022	Public Involvement Plan
2/5/2022	Website launch
2/5/2022	Mailing and email list development
2/7/2022	Postcard sent to 13,200 addresses, including property owners and residents in Big Lake, Point MacKenzie, Houston, Willow, Alexander Creek, and Skwentna
2/8/2022	Meeting notice to Borough homepage
2/8/2022	Meeting notice to project website
2/9/2022	**Text message survey, 23 responses**
2/9/2022	**Online survey 1, 194 responses**
2/9/2022 2/22/2022	Email notice and reminder sent to subscriber list
2/10/2022	Request to forward meeting notice sent to interested groups

Date	Description
2/12/2022	*Anchorage Daily News* article
2/14/2022	Email notice sent to AIDEA project list
2/15/2022	Facebook post to the Borough Facebook page: 137 shares, 146 comments
2/16/2022	*Anchorage Daily News* online ad: 40,000 impressions, 59 clicks
2/17/2022	*Frontiersman* online ad: 13,055 impressions, 36 clicks
2/21/2022	Alaska News Source online ad: 23,691 impressions, 102 clicks
2/22/2022	*Frontiersman* article
2/23/2022	**Online Public Open House 1, 146 people attended**
2/24/2022	Alaska News Source article
3/8/2022	Meeting notice to Borough homepage
3/8/2022	Notice to project website, https://west-susitna-access.matsugov.us/
3/9/2022	**Online survey 2, 498 responses**
3/9/2022 3/22/2022	Email notice and reminder sent to subscriber list: 428 addresses, 50%

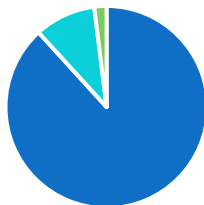| Date	Description
	open rate
3/10/2022	Request to forward meeting notice sent to interested groups
3/11/2022	*Anchorage Daily News* online ad, 40,000 impressions, 66 clicks
3/11/2022	Postcard sent to 13,200 addresses, including property owners and residents in Big Lake, Point MacKenzie, Houston, Willow, Alexander Creek, and Skwentna
3/14/2022	*Frontiersman* online ad: 23,357 impressions, 49 clicks
3/15/2022	Alaska News Source online ad: 27,499 impressions, 104 clicks
3/23/2022	Facebook post to Borough Facebook page
3/23/2022	**Online Public Open House 2, 180 people attended**
4/18/2022	Public involvement summary and chronology to project website
4/19/2022	**Assembly Meeting**
4/29/2022	Closeout documentation

Comment Summary

Do you support the road?

No   Yes   Yes, but only if it is public   Undecided

What is your relationship to the project area?

Note 1: This chart should not be considered a "vote," but can be considered an indication of current public sentiment. It includes 1,033 comments that indicated level of support either directly or by tone and were only counted once per commenter (if known).
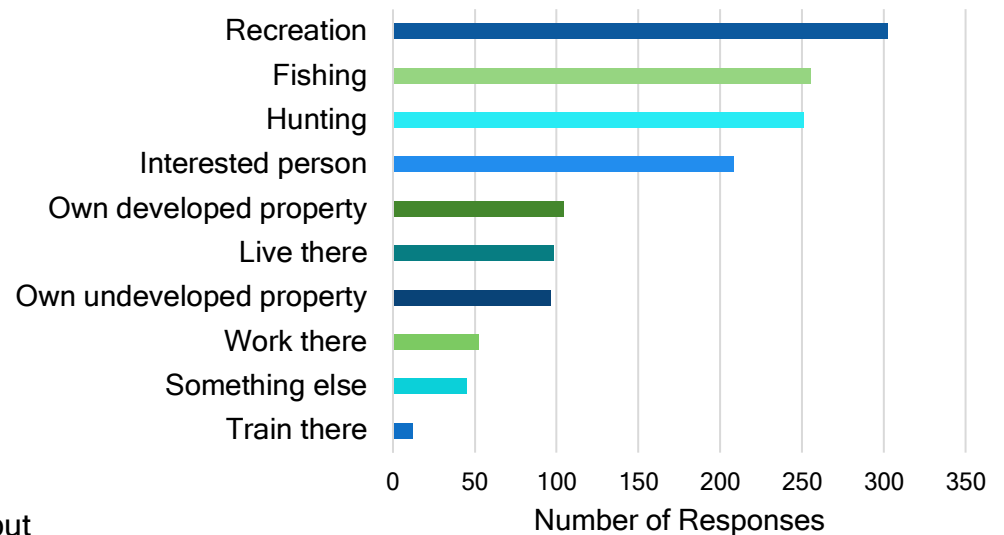
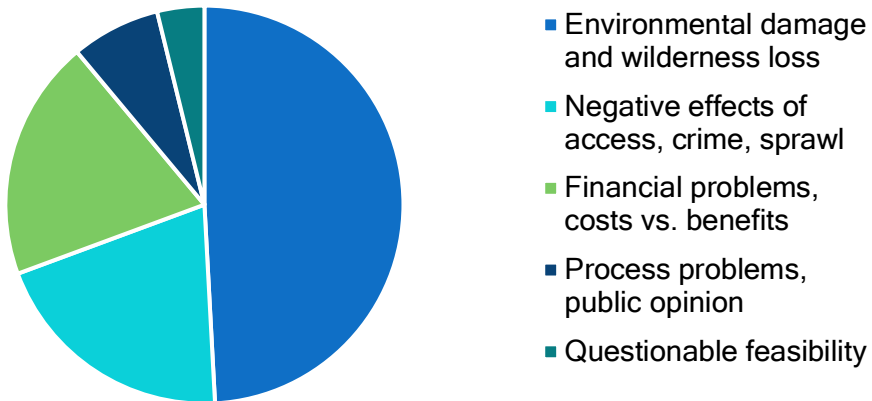Note 2: For comparison, the chart below shows the level of support at Public Meeting 2 (51 comments).

Note 3: This chart uses data from Online Survey 2. Respondents could choose as many as applied. 493 people responded to the question.

Do you support the road? (Public Meeting 2)

No

Yes

Yes, but only if it has public access

Next steps

⇒ Present this Comment and Outreach Summary to the Borough Assembly

⇒ Submit this Comment and Outreach Summary to agencies during Environmental permitting

⇒ Closeout documentation

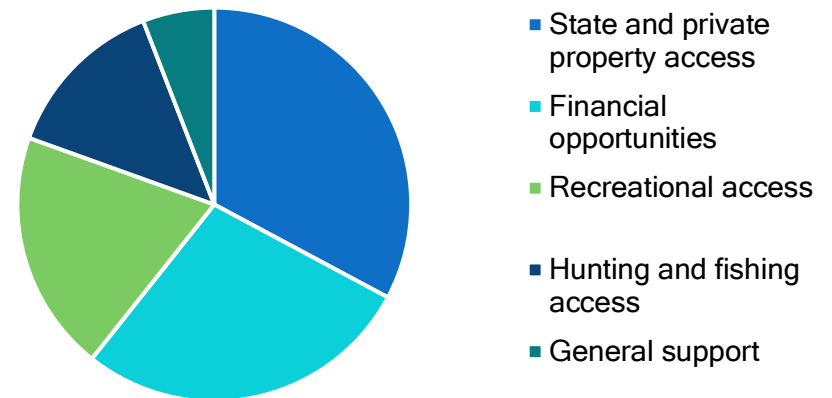# What are the concerns?

Project Opposition: Comment Themes

- Environmental damage and wilderness loss
- Negative effects of access, crime, sprawl
- Financial problems, costs vs. benefits
- Process problems, public opinion
- Questionable feasibility

Project Support: Comment Themes

- State and private property access
- Financial opportunities
- Recreational access
- Hunting and fishing access
- General support

Note 4: This chart includes comment themes provided by those opposing the project and were only counted once per commenter (if known), representing 470 comments.

Sample comments:

- Will the road be public or private?
- This project would hurt our lodges that depend on the remoteness of the area to attract visitors.
- Please provide an independent cost benefit analysis.
- The team should consult with the Troopers who are under-staffed and under-funded already.
- 156 water crossings could negatively affect the Susitna basin fishery with cascading negative results.

Note 5: This chart includes comment themes provided by those supporting the project and were only counted once per commenter (if known), representing 323 comments.
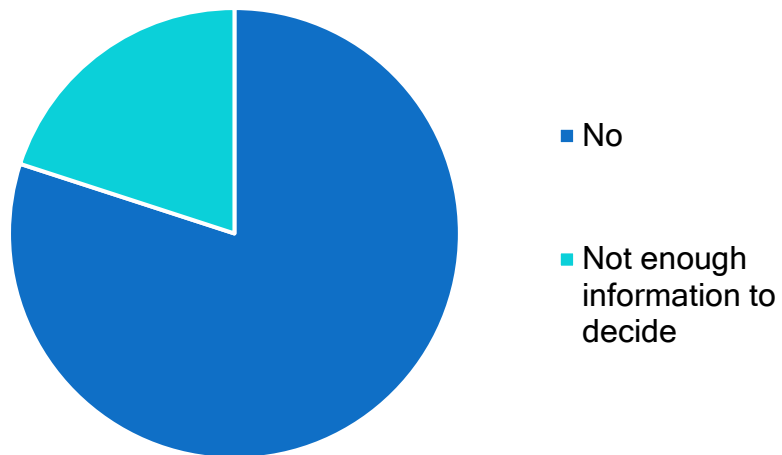
Sample comments:

- I have a cabin at Shell Lake. We have always hoped for a road into that area.
- If there was a road out there, we would still live there.
- I think Alaska needs this project; however, it should be designed not to harm the environment.
- We have the railbed and the port; this road would be a great addition.
- We live in the Point MacKenzie area and would enjoy the access to new fishing, hunting, and recreation.
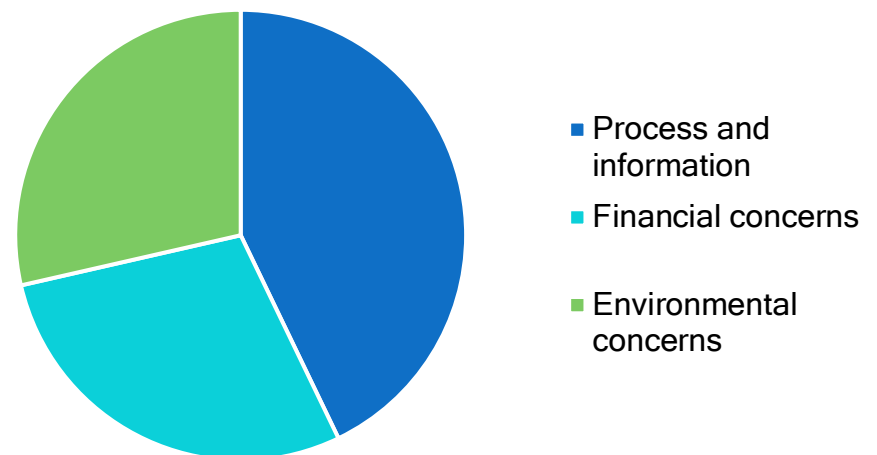
Comments from Tribal Entities

The following entities submitted a total of seven comments. Their two primary concerns were subsistence/environmental preservation and project process.

- Alexander Creek Inc, Member
- Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
- Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Historical Advisor
- Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, Member
- Knik Tribe, Tribal Transportation Program Manager
- Tal, Inc., President
- Tyonek Tribal Conservation District
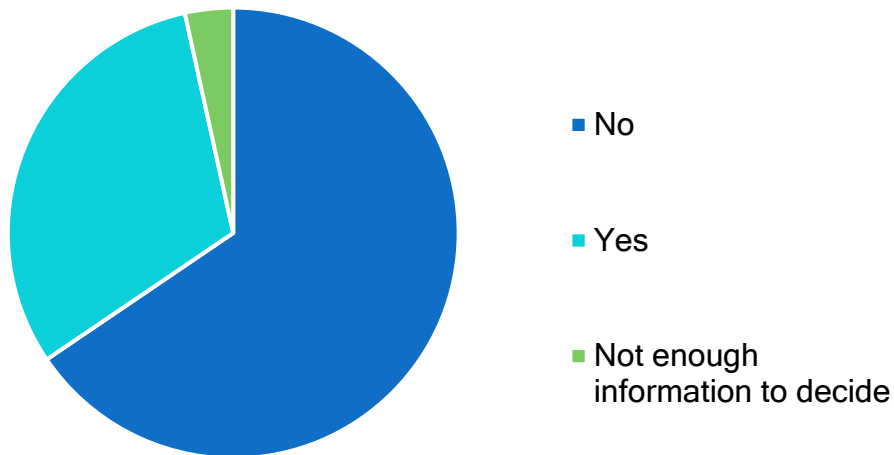
Do you support the road?

- No
- Not enough information to decide

Comment Themes

- Process and information
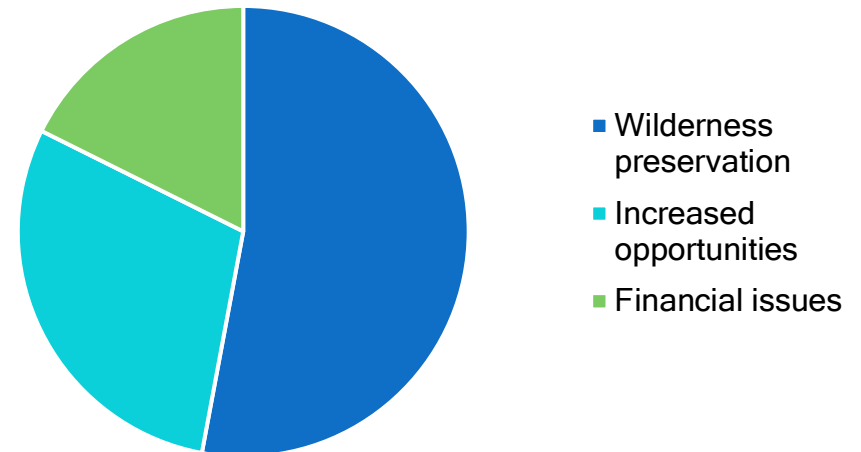- Financial concerns
- Environmental concerns

Comments from Businesses

These charts include comments from representatives of businesses including mining interests, lodges, fishing and guiding services, air taxis, and agricultural businesses. Comments were only counted once per commenter (if known), for a total of 29 comments, although many businesses commented more than once and some represented groups of businesses or memberships. Generally, businesses preferred more access or the existing limited access depending on their business model.
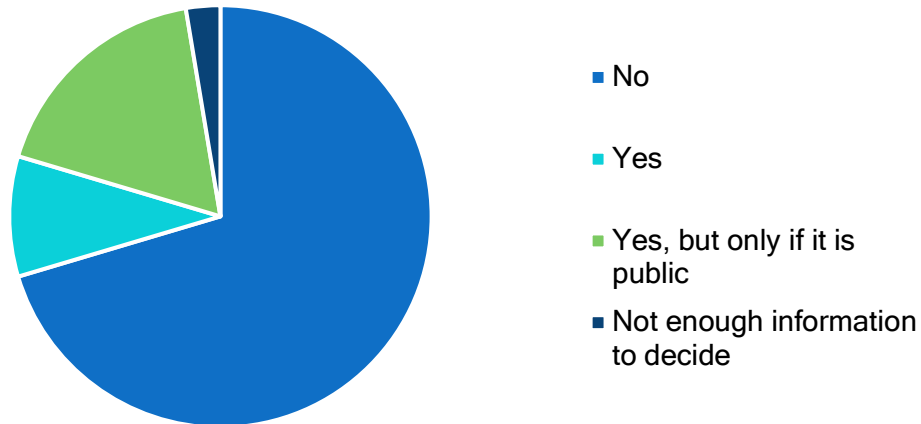
Do you support the road?

- No
- Yes
- Not enough information to decide

Comment Themes

- Wilderness preservation
- Increased opportunities
- Financial issues

Comments from Residents

Do you support the road?

- ■ No
- ■ Yes
- ■ Yes, but only if it is public
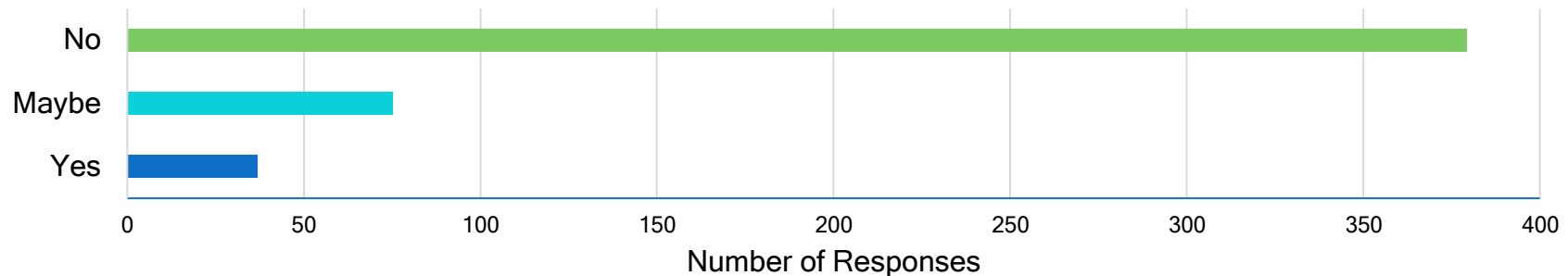- ■ Not enough information to decide

The chart to the left summarizes comments submitted by project area residents, representing 152 comments. The majority of resident comments preferred maintaining the wilderness lifestyle, although a substantial segment preferred lower cost road access, additional recreational access, and increased emergency services.

Job Opportunities

This chart uses data from Online Survey 2. 491 people responded to the question.

Would you apply for work at one of the industrial or commercial businesses that could be developed as a result of this project?

Number of Responses

Proposed West Susitna Access Road - Public Engagement Project - Comment and Outreach Summary
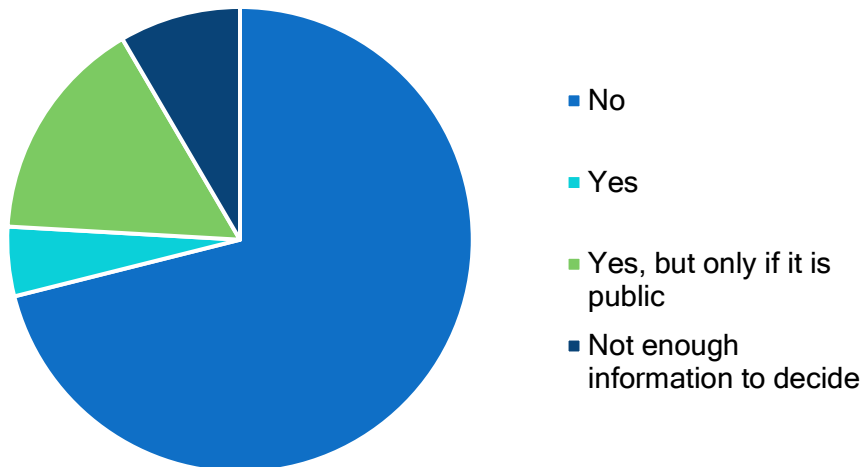
Comments from Private Property Owners

The following charts summarize the level of project support by private property owners and show the differing sentiment between those who own developed properties (83 comments) and those with undeveloped land (107 comments).

⇒ The primary concerns of owners of developed properties were wilderness lifestyle preservation and crime.

⇒ The primary comment themes from owners of undeveloped properties were reducing costs to access/develop their properties and wilderness lifestyle preservation.

Owners of Developed Properties: Do you support the road?

- ■ No
- ■ Yes
- ■ Yes, but only if it is public
- ■ Not enough information to decide

Owners of Undeveloped Properties: Do you support the road?

- ■ No
- ■ Yes
- ■ Yes, but only if it is public
- ■ Not enough information to decide