

**NORTH DOUGLAS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION  
SECOND CROSSING COMMITTEE**

**COMMENTS ON PEL STUDY  
PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES AND SCREENING CRITERIA**

**JANUARY 31, 2023**

The Second Crossing Committee of the North Douglas Neighborhood Association (NDNA) has reviewed the preliminary alternatives for a second crossing between the mainland and Douglas Island, and the technical memorandum outlining screening criteria, and has the following comments:

1. Our committee commends the study team for including mention of a bench road as a concept that should be evaluated. *See* Summary of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting 2 (November 17, 2022). We understand that a bench road is not directly part of the PEL study of crossing alternatives but would be a separate, standalone project. The study team recognizes, however, that concerns regarding traffic on the North Douglas Highway, particularly regarding safety and capacity, are significant. We therefore recommend that the selection criteria be revised to include the potential for connection to a bench road as a factor that should be considered in evaluating the crossing alternatives.

This does not equate to endorsement of a bench road. Our prior survey of North Douglas homeowners (the results of which we previously provided to the study team) indicated a split of opinion on support for a bench road, 60 % in favor and 30 % opposed. But we do believe such a road – which would function similar to the Auke Rec/Lena bypass highway – should be reflected in the analysis.

We further understand that DOWL is in the process of completing a traffic study for the North Douglas Highway, and look forward to seeing the results of that work. Our committee continues to believe that a second crossing of Gastineau Channel, along with attendant development on North Douglas, will lead to a substantial increase in traffic along the highway, which is a major concern for NDNA.

2. As the committee has previously expressed to the study team, NDNA has for 20 plus years been requesting the CBJ to undertake an area planning process for North Douglas, much like it has done for other areas in Juneau. This is not something within the scope of the PEL study or for which DOWL has any responsibility; rather, it is a process within the authority of the CBJ and its planning department. Our committee has renewed discussions about an area planning process for North Douglas with Assembly members and CBJ planning staff, but have been advised that their next order of business is to review and revise the overall CBJ comprehensive plan before committing to another area-specific plan. Obviously, that process, if it were to occur, would take place after identification of a preferred crossing alternative through

the PEL study. This sequence is unfortunate, in our view, because a North Douglas Area Plan might well inform decision-making related to a crossing, including whether a second crossing is even needed.

For instance, the purpose and need statement lists as an additional goal of a second crossing “creating additional traffic capacity to support the future development of affordable housing and economic development opportunities.” What if an area-specific planning process for North Douglas leads to a conclusion that this goal is not realistic? That any housing developed on the west side of Douglas Island is unlikely to be “affordable,” or that there is little commercial interest in establishing a port in the vicinity of Hilda Creek. Wouldn’t it be better to know that before a crossing alternative is selected?

3. In reviewing the descriptions of the various alternatives, we noted a difference in wording that could impact how the alternatives will be analyzed. All but two of the descriptions of the alternatives includes some recognition of effects on North Douglas homeowners in the immediate vicinity of the crossing location. For example, for the Mendenhall Peninsula location it says that impacts to existing residential homeowners will be a key consideration. For the North Airport location, it says there would be exploration of alignment alternatives that reduce impact to residential properties in Douglas Island. And for Vanderbilt, Twin Lakes, Salmon Creek and Eagle Creek there is mention of the need for right-of-way acquisition.

The description of the Sunny Point and Twin lakes alternatives is different, however. For Sunny Point, it says that there is an opportunity to connect to North Douglas Highway on property owned by CBJ. And for Twin Lakes it says that there is space to connect to North Douglas Highway. Thus for these two alternatives, there is no mention of either a need to consider an alignment that reduces impact to residential properties or a need for right of way acquisition. Our committee recommends that the descriptions of the various alternatives should reference the same list of criteria that will be used for analysis.

4. Prior studies of a second crossing (*e.g.*, the Project Development Summary Report (HDR Alaska, Inc., May 2005, and North Douglas Crossing Public Involvement Project (Sheinberg, April 2007)) evaluated the various crossing alternatives in part based on the nature of the crossing – embankment with a fixed span or structure-supported roadway. In other words, a filled causeway with a bridge over the main channel versus a crossing built on pilings. The differences between the two are significant in terms of environmental impacts and cost. The screening criteria do not appear to account for this difference, and application of those criteria could yield very different conclusions depending on how a crossing was constructed. We encourage the study team to provide more clarity on this point.

NDNA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the preliminary alternative and selection criteria, and looks forward to continuing to work with DOWL and DOTPF in the PEL study process.