

Gravina Access Project

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

Project Numbers: FHWA-AK-EIS-03-01-F/DOT&PF Project 67698/Federal Project ACHP-0922(5)



Project Scope

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF), in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is preparing the Gravina Access Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

DOT&PF and FHWA have identified a need to improve access between Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island in Southeast Alaska. The purpose of the Gravina Access Project is to improve surface transportation between Revillagigedo Island—home of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, the City of Ketchikan, and the City of Saxman—and Gravina Island—the location of the Ketchikan International Airport and adjoining lands that offer recreation and development potential. Improved transportation access to Gravina Island would provide better service to the airport and allow for development on the island.

SEIS Process

According to FHWA's Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR Part 771), an EIS shall be supplemented whenever FHWA determines that changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS, or new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant environmental impacts not evaluated in the EIS.

In the case of the Gravina Access Project, the changes requiring the preparation of an SEIS are the uncertainty of funding levels and the consideration of construction of the Gravina Island Highway for all reasonable alternatives. The SEIS will review and update information presented in the FEIS and supplement the environmental analyses of the alternatives to incorporate the Gravina Island Highway. DOT&PF and FHWA will prepare the SEIS in accordance with NEPA.

Alternatives Development and Screening

To develop an EIS, DOT&PF and FHWA must identify a range of alternatives that will be evaluated in detail. NEPA requires the lead federal agency to evaluate "reasonable alternatives" that would satisfy the project purpose and need and, if there are many possible alternatives, to evaluate a full range of the alternatives. DOT&PF and FHWA developed 16 alternatives (see inside spread of this fact sheet) to begin the process of defining the alternatives that will be fully evaluated in the Gravina Access Project SEIS.

How were the 16 alternatives derived?

Based on the original 2004 EIS, comments heard during the SEIS scoping period from the public and agencies, and

additional work performed after the 2004 Record of Decision, DOT&PF and FHWA anticipate that the 15 build alternatives identified will be screened to determine the reasonable alternatives for further study in the SEIS. A 16th alternative, the No Action Alternative will also be evaluated in the SEIS.

DOT&PF initially developed 18 build concepts for crossing Tongass Narrows as part of the original 2004 EIS (the No Action Alternative was also considered). The build concepts were based on previous studies, input from agencies and the public, engineering, and the purpose and need for the project. These build concepts were screened using several factors that included the ability of the alternative to meet the project purpose and need, cost, environmental impacts, impacts to Section 4(f) resources, and transportation impacts. Ten options were not considered practical or feasible from a technical and economic standpoint and were eliminated from further consideration and one alternative was separated into two new alternatives, which resulted in nine build alternatives.

DOT&PF has explored potential cost savings by changing some of the original design parameters (e.g., design speed, encroachment of causeway fill into the water to shorten structure length, greater encroachment into FAA's Part 77 airspace, adjustment of marine vessel track lines, use of different component or structure types, and delay in implementation of some features) to develop variations for consideration. DOT&PF has also designed new or modified alternatives to address SEIS scoping comments.

The six new or revised alternatives include:

- Alternative C3-4 (a single variant of the previous bridge alternatives C3[a] and C4)
- Alternative F3v (variant of bridge alternative F3)
- Alternative G4v (variant of ferry alternative G4)
- Alternatives M1 and M2 (two new moveable bridge alternatives)
- Alternative T1 (a new tunnel alternative)

These six together with the nine original build alternatives will be evaluated in the screening process. The nine original build alternatives from the 2004 EIS are as follows:

- Alternative C3(a)—200-foot Bridge Between Signal Road and South of Airport Terminal
- Alternative C3(b)—120-foot Bridge Between Signal Road and Airport Terminal
- Alternative C4—200-foot Bridge Between Tongass Avenue (North of Cambria Drive)
- Alternative D1—120-foot Bridge Between Tongass Avenue (near Existing Ferry) and Airport Terminal

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- Alternative F1* (DOT&PF and FHWA Preferred Alternative)—Bridges (200-foot East and 120-foot West) Between Tongass Avenue and Airport, via Pennock Island
- Alternative F3—Bridges (60-foot East and 200-foot West) Between Tongass Avenue and Airport, via Pennock Island
- Alternative G2—Ferry Between Peninsula Point and Lewis Point
- Alternative G3—Ferry Between Downtown and South of Airport
- Alternative G4—Ferry with New Terminals Adjacent to Existing Terminals

* Alternative F1, the 2004 EIS selected preferred alternative, continues to be considered in the SEIS process primarily for comparison purposes. The projected cost for Alternative F1 continues to be at the level the Governor indicated the State could not fund and likely will be determined not reasonable during screening.

Project Background

The primary modes of transportation to Ketchikan are airplane and vessel. No “hard-link” surface transportation is available to or between Revillagigedo and Gravina islands, or from Ketchikan to other communities in Alaska or the Lower 48. Currently, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough-operated ferry system provides the only scheduled surface transportation to Gravina Island. The ferry system services mostly foot traffic, but also provides vehicle access to Ketchikan International Airport. Regularly scheduled airline service and ferry connections through the Alaska Marine Highway System link Ketchikan to the rest of Alaska and the Lower 48.

The Gravina Access Project Final EIS, which was distributed to the public and agencies on July 30, 2004, identified Alternative F1 as the DOT&PF and FHWA Preferred Alternative. Alternative F1 would cross Tongass Narrows via Pennock Island with two bridges: a 200-foot bridge over the East Channel and a 120-foot bridge over the West Channel. FHWA issued a Record of Decision on September 15, 2004, that identified Alternative F1 as the Selected Alternative.

On September 21, 2007, Gov. Palin announced that the State could not fund the selected bridge alternative identified in the Gravina Access Project Record of Decision (Office of the Governor press release, Gravina Access Project Redirected, 07-192) and directed DOT&PF to look for the most fiscally responsible alternative for access.

FHWA informed DOT&PF in October 2007 that if the State were to select a different alternative that does not include the Gravina Island Highway, all or part of the monies expended on construction of the highway may be declared ineligible for federal participation. Not all of the reasonable alternatives in the Final EIS included the Gravina Island Highway, which DOT&PF finished constructing in 2008. So, DOT&PF is now preparing a Supplemental EIS to consider all reasonable alternatives in conjunction with the constructed Gravina Island Highway. The No Action Alternative will also be considered. The SEIS will likely result in a FHWA Record of Decision selecting a new alternative.

Project Purpose & Need

The purpose of this project is to improve surface transportation between Revillagigedo Island and Gravina Island. The need for improving access is threefold:

- To provide the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and its residents with more reliable, efficient, convenient, and cost-effective access for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians to Borough lands and other developable or recreation lands on Gravina Island in support of the Borough’s adopted land use plans.
- To improve the convenience and reliability of access to Ketchikan International Airport for passengers, airport tenants, emergency personnel and equipment, and shipment of freight.
- To promote environmentally sound, planned, long-term economic development on Gravina Island.

Project Participants

Lead Agencies. FHWA is the lead federal agency for this Gravina Access Project SEIS. FHWA has the responsibility and decision-making authority for the proposed federal action. As the lead agency, FHWA oversees the NEPA process, consults with other agencies, maintains the government-to-government relations with area tribes, and is ultimately responsible for the scope and content of the SEIS. DOT&PF is the direct recipient of federal funds for this project and will serve as the joint lead agency. As the joint lead agency, DOT&PF will collaborate with FHWA on all public and agency coordination for the Gravina Access Project SEIS.

Cooperating Agencies. Government agencies that have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the project’s environmental review process are Cooperating Agencies. These agencies have legal jurisdiction or special expertise in potential environmental impacts that the project will address. The Cooperating Agencies for the Gravina Access Project SEIS are:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Coast Guard

Participating Agencies. Government agencies at any level that have an interest in the proposed project can be active participants in the NEPA evaluation, especially at key decision points in the process. The project’s lead agency has the responsibility of inviting the participating agencies by written invitation. The Participating Agencies for the Gravina Access Project SEIS are:

- Ketchikan Gateway Borough
- City of Ketchikan
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Office

For More Information

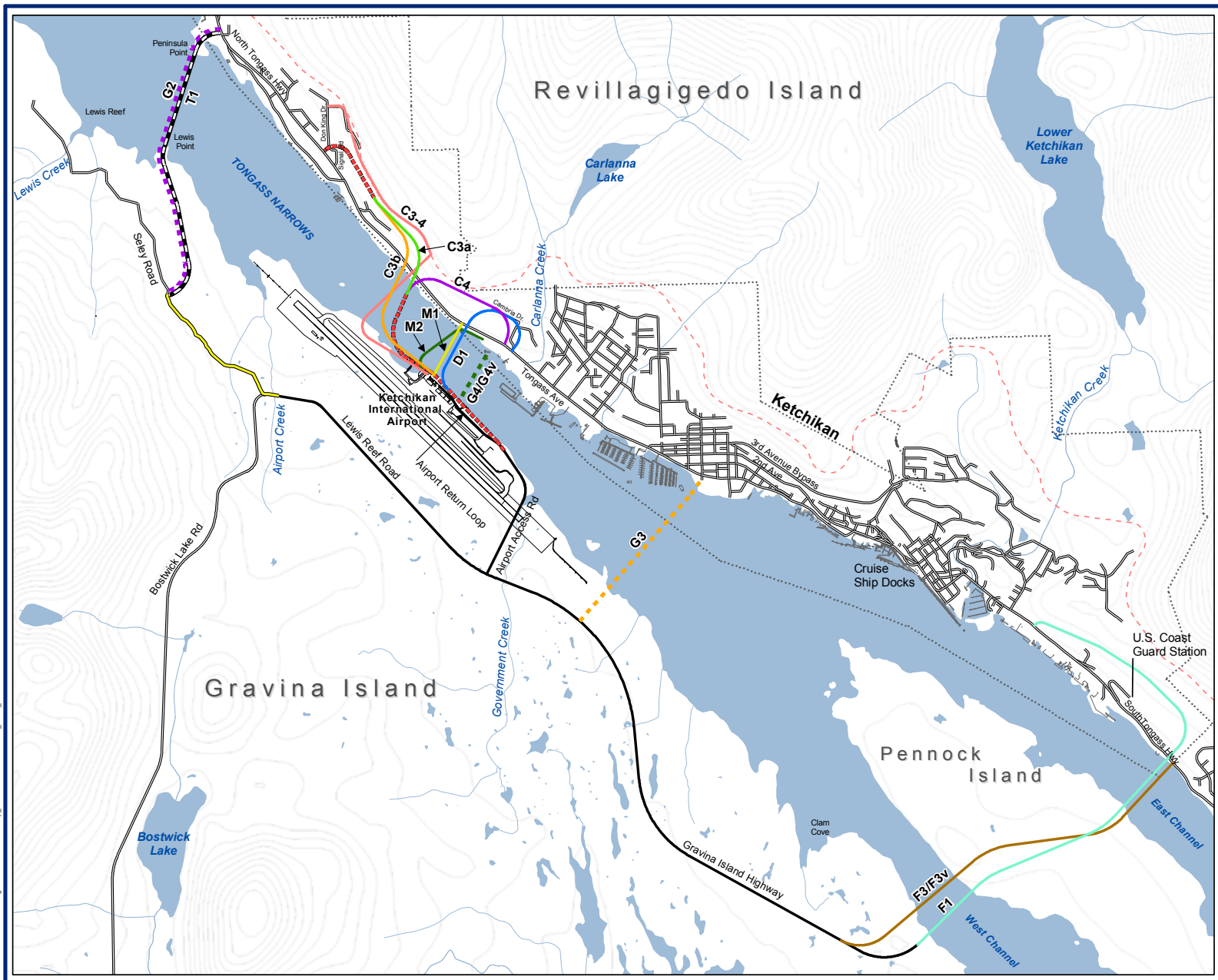
Visit the project website at www.gravina-access.com or contact:

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Alternatives to be Considered in the SDEIS Screening Process

- recently constructed roads common to multiple alternatives
- road constructed independent of FEIS

Bridge Alternatives*:

- C3a (200' x 550')
- C3b (120' x 500')
- C4 (200' x 550')
- C3-4 (200' x 550')
- D1 (120' x 500')
- F1 WEST (120' x 500')
EAST (200' x 550')
- F3/F3v WEST (200' x 550')
EAST (60' x 350')
- M1 (20' to 200' x 550')
- M2 (60' to 200' x 550')

multiple alignments

Ferry Alternatives:

- G2**
- G3
- G4/G4v

Tunnel Alternative:

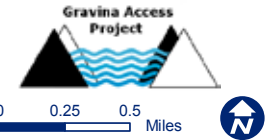
- T1 (3200' tunnel)
- Bypass Road (proposed)
- docks
- existing road
- city boundary
- stream

* Dimensions listed refer to bridge navigation opening (vertical x horizontal)
 ** G2 connection slightly modified from FEIS



Date: February 12, 2009
 Projection: Alaska State Plane Zone 1, NAD 27
 Author: HDR Alaska, Inc.
 Sources: KGB, HDR Alaska, Inc.

The information displayed here is for planning purposes only. Base information shown constitutes data from various federal, state, public, and private sources. These drawings are for review purposes only and are not intended for use in securing permits or for construction purposes.



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Alternative Construction and Life-Cycle Cost Estimates

Alignment	Construction Cost	Life-Cycle Cost	Life-Cycle Cost (Revenue adjusted)
C3a	\$ 463 M	\$ 435 M	
C3b	352 M	332 M	
C4	441 M	411 M	
C3-4	240 M	231 M	
D1	291 M	275 M	
F1	375 M	369 M	
F3	304 M	301 M	
F3v	349 M	342 M	
G2	84 M	211 M	\$ 168 M
G3	77 M	198 M	155 M
G4	63 M	181 M	138 M
G4v	16 M	148 M	105 M
M1	375 M	388 M	
M2	413 M	445 M	
T1	417 M	442 M	
No-Build	0 M	76 M	30 M

Alternatives Development Process

The map and table above provide information about the alternatives developed by DOT&PF for public review and comment. The alternatives development process, shown here, describes how alternatives will move forward to be fully evaluated in the SEIS.

