



# WEST SUSITNA ACCESS ROAD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT Public Involvement Plan

January 25, 2022

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

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## General Information

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of this Borough public involvement (PI) endeavor is to provide a forum for the public to comment on the West Susitna Access Road project directly to the Borough. This effort is parallel to, but separate from, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority's (AIDEA) public engagement program regarding the project.

The Borough Assembly and staff heard public comments in 2021 indicating the need for additional comment opportunities and project clarity. The purpose of this public involvement effort is to fill that need.

The summary of comments will represent public sentiment from Borough constituents for Phase 3. The PI team will submit the summary to the Borough Assembly, AIDEA, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for consideration during the upcoming Clean Water Act permitting process.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROJECT SCOPE

Establish a website for the public to provide comments to the Borough about the West Susitna Access Road project. Conduct two virtual public meetings to share project

## WEST SUSITNA ACCESS ROAD PROJECT SCOPE

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) is in the permitting stage for a public-use, gravel-surface road extending 100 miles northwest from the communities of Point MacKenzie and Big Lake to a state mining district containing rare earth minerals, coal, copper, gold, and oil and gas deposits in the Alaska Range.

## BOROUGH ROLE

The Borough is a governmental entity stakeholder for the West Susitna Access Road project. AIDEA is leading the project in coordination with the Borough, State of Alaska, and Federal agencies.

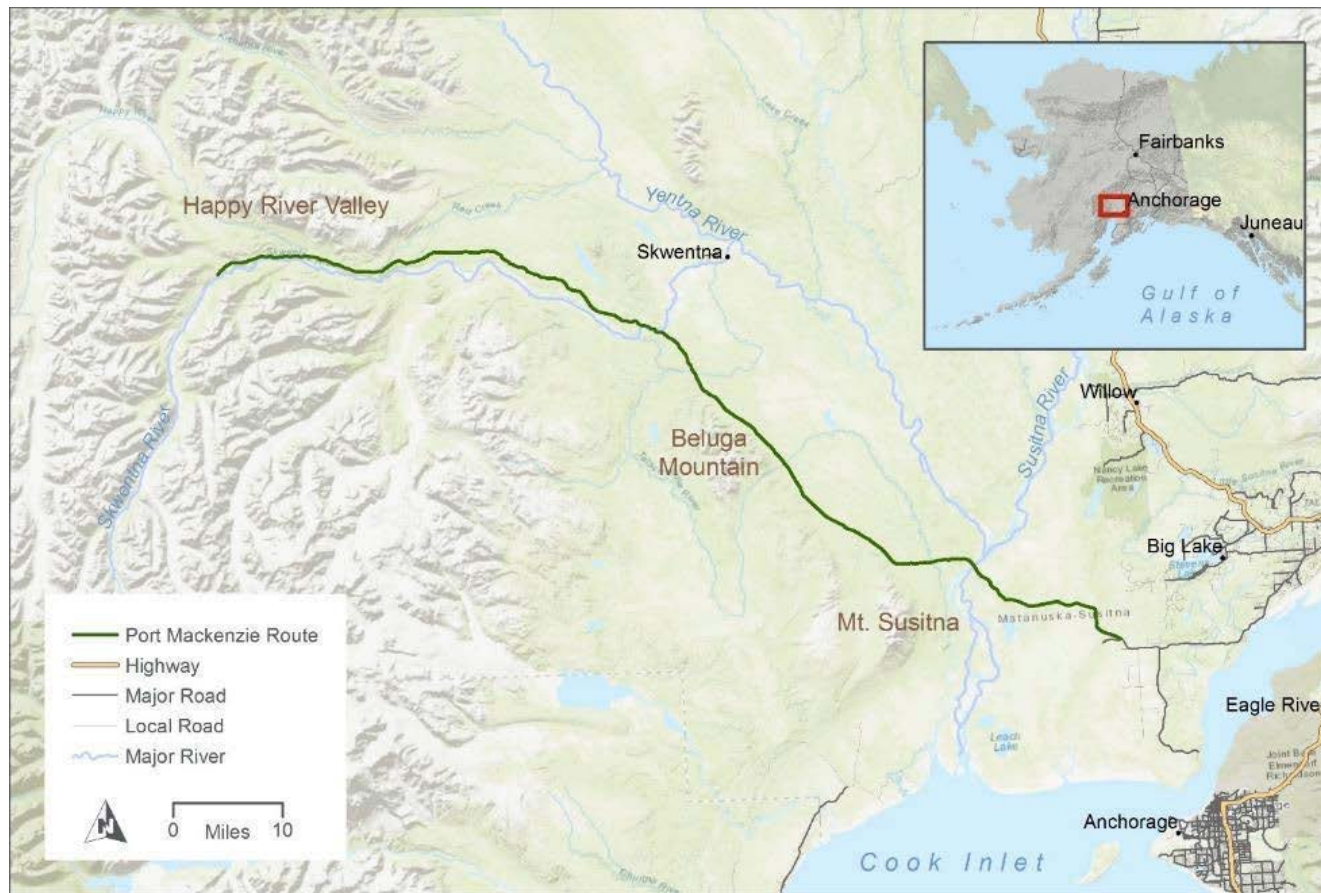
## PUBLIC ROLE

Public comments are critical for building responsible and sustainable public infrastructure. The team will encourage members of the public to provide comments about how the proposed West Susitna Access Road would affect them.

information with the public and solicit feedback. Summarize comments submitted to the Borough, including at Assembly meetings on December 7 and December 21, 2021. Maintain a project email list for future project phases. This document provides an outline of PI methods and planning.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

This PI project will solicit public comments from January to March 2022. The team will provide a summary of collected information to the Borough Assembly in the April timeframe and submit the documentation for consideration with the Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act permit.



## PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed West Susitna Access Road project is located to the northwest of Big Lake and Point MacKenzie, south of Skwentna, and into the Alaska Range mountains.

Figure 1: Proposed route and surrounding area

Source: Preliminary Engineering Report West Susitna Access-Phase 2, AIDEA, 2021

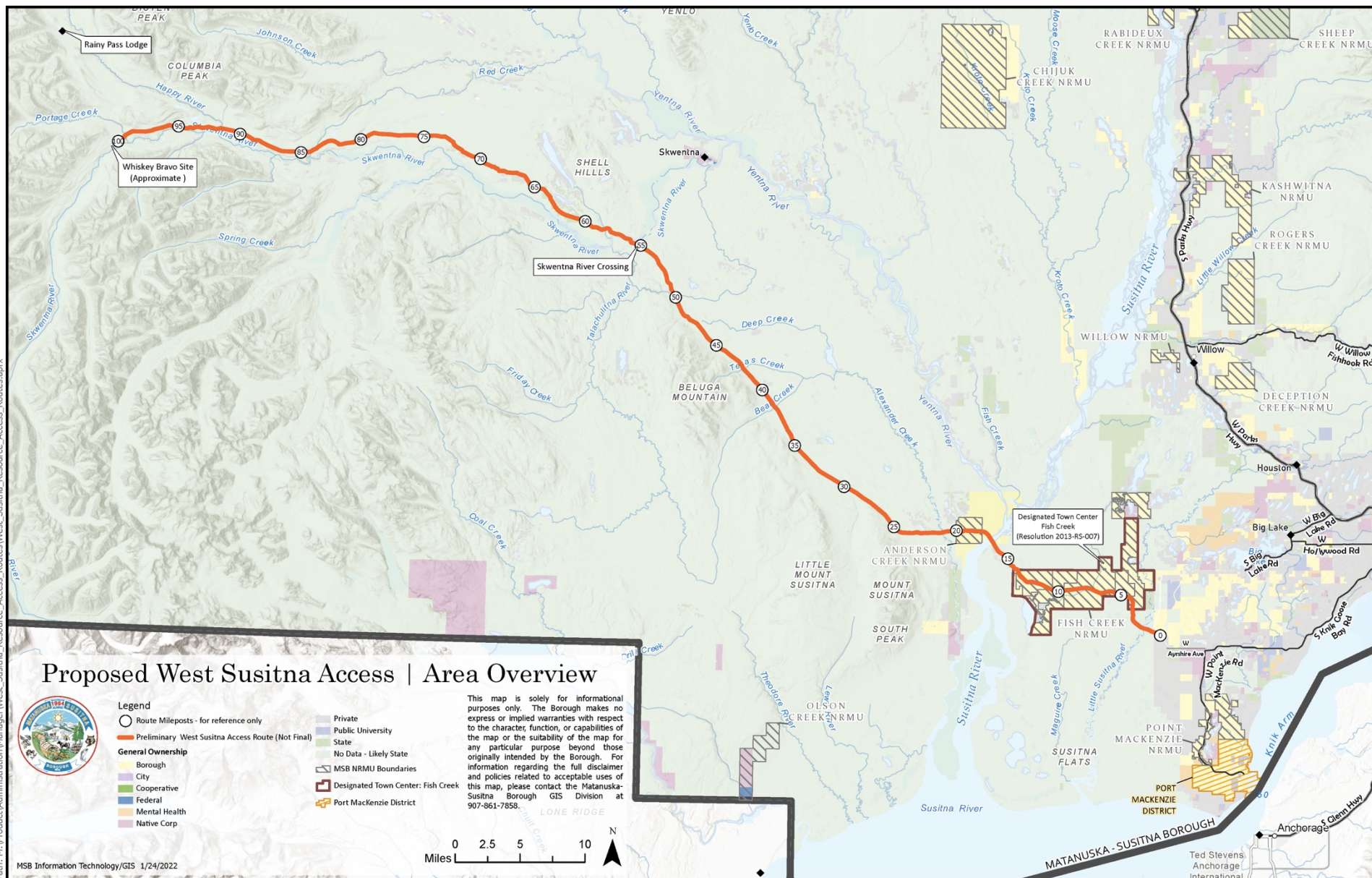


Figure 2: Proposed route and land ownership  
 Source: Matanuska-Susitna Borough, 2022

## BOROUGH PROJECT TEAM

### Owner

Matanuska-Susitna Borough  
350 E Dahlia Ave, Palmer, AK 99645

- Brad Sworts, PE, Project Manager, Pre-Design & Engineering Division Manager, 907-861-7715, brad.sworts@matsugov.us
- Mike Brown, Borough Manager, 907-861-8689, mike.brown@matsugov.us
- George Hays, Deputy Borough Manager, 907-861-8405, george.hays@matsugov.us
- Stefan Hinman, Public Affairs Director, 907-861-8577, stefan.hinman@matsugov.us
- Eric Phillips, Community Development Department Director, 907-861-8634, eric.phillips@matsugov.us
- Terry Dolan, Public Works Department Director, 907-861-7751, tdolan@matsugov.us

### Consultant

Yehle & Associates LLC (Yehle)  
7362 W Parks Highway, #843, Meadow Lakes, AK 99623  
Camden Yehle, Public Involvement Lead, 907-346-0506, camden.yehlealaska@gmail.com

## AIDEA PROJECT CONTACTS

Website: <https://www.aidea.org/Programs/Project-Development/West-Susitna-Access>  
Team email: [projectinfo@westsusitnaaccess.org](mailto:projectinfo@westsusitnaaccess.org)

- Jesse Peterson, Project Manager, 907-771-3015, JPeterson@aidea.org

## Public Involvement Methods

**MAILING AND EMAIL LIST.** The team will develop a mailing and email list which will include members of the public, Borough staff, elected officials, and others. Yehle will update the lists as needed throughout the project. Interested people will be able to opt into the email list on the website.

**WEBSITE.** A website will provide background on the project, scope of work, and project documents. Homestead Graphics will develop and maintain the site using a Borough template. The proposed url is: <https://west-susitna-access.matsugov.us>.

**ASSEMBLY MEETINGS.** The comment summary will include public comments and testimony provided at Assembly meetings, including on December 7 and 21, 2021.

**PUBLIC MEETINGS.** The team will conduct two virtual public meetings to share project information with the public and solicit feedback. The meetings will be online and by phone because of ongoing concerns about COVID-19, the regional potential impact of the West Susitna Access Road project, and the large number of people wanting to comment.

**OUTREACH.** For each public meeting outreach will include, but not limit to:

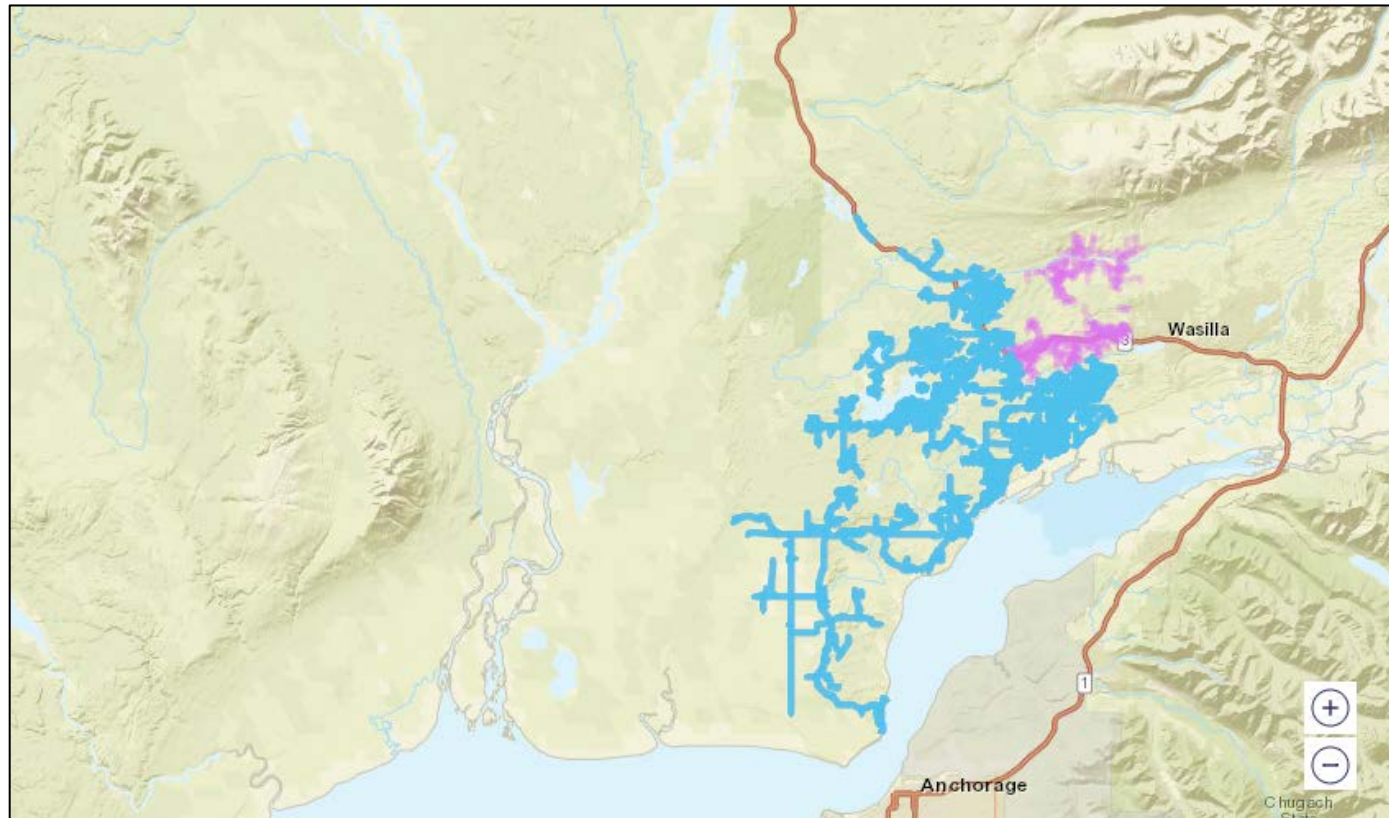
- Email notice
- Advertisements (online newspaper and radio)
- Boosted social media posts (Borough Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts)

## COMMENT THEMES

The word cloud below visualizes emerging comment themes. The team will collect and summarize comments throughout the project.

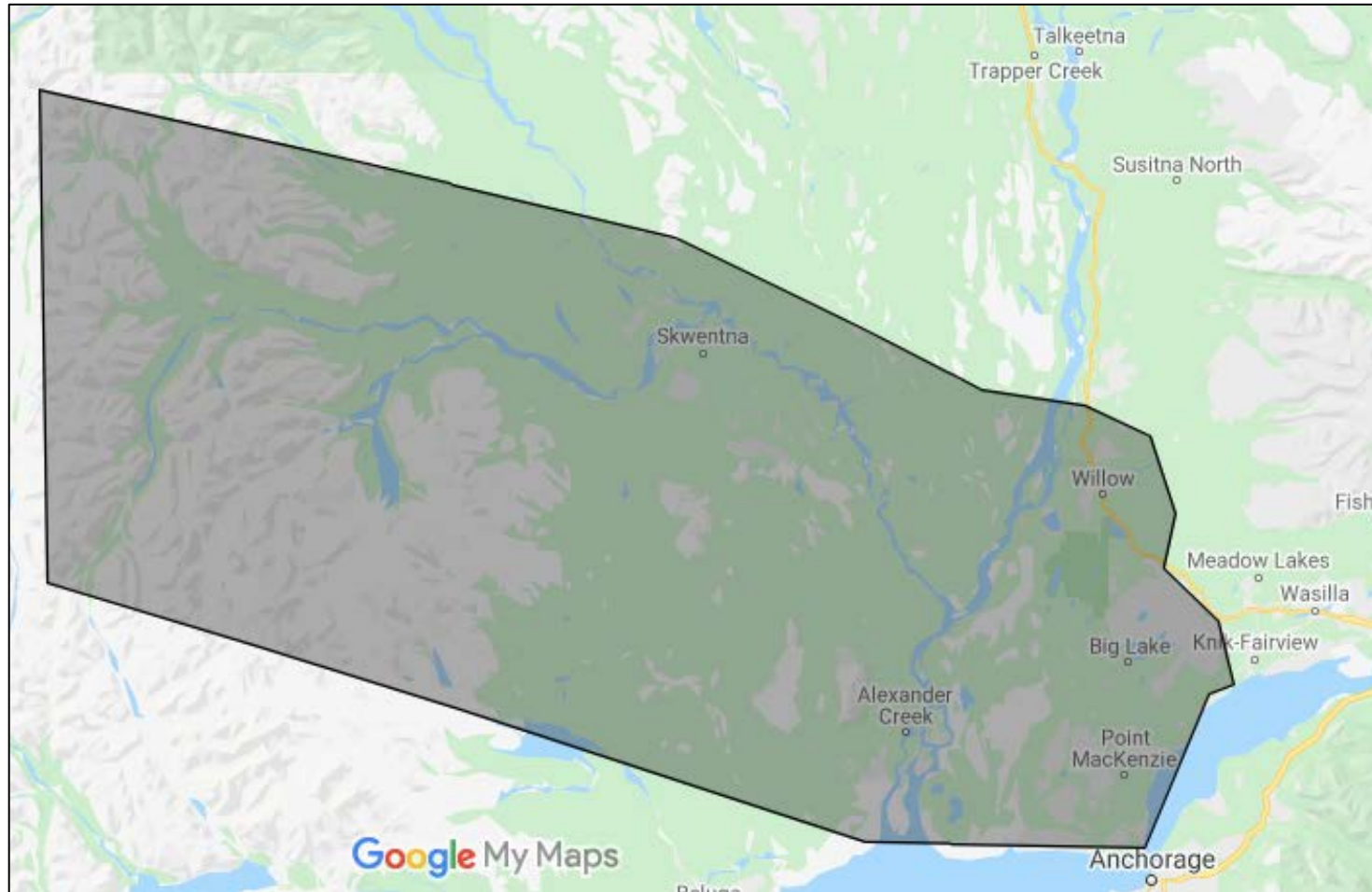


- Mailer to approximately 6,500 addresses
  - Mailing list (elected officials, interest groups, etc.)
  - Mail boxes and PO boxes in Big Lake, Point MacKenzie, Houston, and Skwentna, shown below in blue
    - Big Lake, 1,461 addresses, zip code 99652
    - Big Lake, Point MacKenzie, Houston, 2,499 addresses, zip code 99623 carrier routes H035, H038, H044, H045
    - Willow, 2,118 addresses, zip code 99688
    - Skwentna, 42 addresses, zip code 99667





- Property owners within the following boundary surrounding Big Lake, Point MacKenzie, Houston, Willow, Alexander Creek, and Skwentna



**MEETING MATERIALS.** Meetings will include fact sheets, project maps and graphics, comment forms, and follow-up.

**STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS.** Yehle will receive, document, and prepare responses for stakeholder communications.

**MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS.** The team will route all media communications through Stefan Hinman, Public Affairs Director, at 907-861-8577 or stefan.hinman@matsugov.us.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DOCUMENTATION.** Yehle will prepare a comment and response summary in addition to a chronology of all public involvement actions taken by the Borough from December 2021 to March 2022.

**CLOSE OUT DOCUMENTATION.** Final documentation of all public engagement activities and correspondence will take the form of a digital file transfer to the Borough for future use and reference.

## Members of the Public

Below is an initial list of members of the public and organizations who may be interested in the West Susitna Access project. The team will include these entities in the project outreach/ mailing list. The list will expand throughout the PI timeline. The list does not include State and Federal agencies because they are part of AIDEA's outreach and permitting plan.

### GENERAL PUBLIC

- Business owners
- General aviation pilots
- People hunting and guiding
- People interested in mining and supporting jobs
- People interested in recreation and supporting jobs
- People interested in tourism and supporting jobs
- People sport fishing and guiding
- Property owners
- Residents in adjacent communities/neighborhoods

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

- State legislators
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough
  - All Borough Community Councils (focus on Point MacKenzie, Big Lake, and Knik-Fairview)
  - Assembly
  - Community Development
  - Emergency Services
  - Fire Service Areas (Willow, Caswell, West Lakes, and Central Mat-Su)
  - Fish and Wildlife Commission
  - Historical Preservation Commission
  - Parks, Recreation & Trails Advisory Board
  - Planning Commission
  - Planning Department
  - Port Commission
  - Port MacKenzie staff
  - Public Affairs
  - Public Works
  - Road Service Areas (Big Lake, Trapper Creek, Caswell Lakes, Greater Talkeetna, Greater Willow, Knik)
  - Talkeetna Fire Department
  - Transportation Advisory Board

## LOCAL COMMUNITIES

- Alexander Creek
- Big Lake
- Fish Creek
- Houston
- Knik-Fairview
- Petersville
- Point MacKenzie
- Skwentna
- Talkeetna
- Trapper Creek
- Wasilla
- Willow

## FIRST NATION ENTITIES

- Alexander Creek Native Corporation
- CIRI
- Dena'ina
- Knik Tribe
- Knikatnu Incorporated
- Native Village of Tyonek
- Tyonek Native Corporation

## OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Alaska General Contractors

- Alaska Mat-Su Valley ATV Club
- Alaska Motor Musers Club
- Alaska State Snowmobile Association
- Alaska Trails
- Alaska Trucking Association
- Big Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Big Lake Trails, Inc.
- Friends of the Yentna Facebook group
- Iditarod Race Organization
- Iditarod Trail Commission
- Iron Dog Race Organization
- Lower Susitna Drainage Association (stake Susitna and Yentna Rivers in winter)
- Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Mat-Su Salmon Habitat Partnership
- Mat-Su Trails and Parks Foundation
- Mid-Valley Trail Club
- Montana Creek Dog Musers Association
- Salmon State
- Susitna Recreation Camps, Inc. (Montana Creek RV Park)
- Susitna River Coalition
- Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce
- Trout Unlimited
- Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers Association
- Wasilla Chamber of Commerce
- Willow Chamber of Commerce
- Willow Trails Committee

## Applicable Borough Planning Documents

- [Asset Management Plan: Natural Resource Management Units, 2019](#)
- [Big Lake Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan, 2009](#)
- [City of Houston Comprehensive Plan, 2016](#)
- [Long Range Transportation Plan, 2017](#)
- [Matanuska-Susitna Borough Comprehensive Development Plan, 2005](#)
- [Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan, 2001](#)

- [Point MacKenzie Community Comprehensive Plan, 2011](#)
- [Port MacKenzie Master Plan, 2016](#)
- [Recreational Trails Plan, 2016](#)
- [Fish Creek Management Plan, 2010](#)
- [Matanuska-Susitna Borough Wetlands Management Plan, 2012](#)
- [Matanuska-Susitna Borough Strategic Plan, 2021](#)
- [Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Alaska Economic Development Plan, 2010](#)