

Environmental and Economic Analysis for the Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project Right-of-Way across Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

On November 24, 2015, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) submitted a consolidated SF-299 Right-of-Way application to the National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the *Ambler Mining District Industrial Access Project*. After submission of supplemental information, the application was determined to be complete on June 30, 2016.

The application requests the issuance of permits related to the proposed construction and operation of a 211-mile long, all-season, controlled-access industrial road connecting the Ambler Mining District with the Dalton Highway. In addition to traversing a matrix of BLM, State and Native Corporation lands, the proposed 211-mile access road would cross approximately 20 miles of NPS managed lands in the Kobuk Unit (aka 'the boot') of Gates of the Arctic National Preserve (Figure 1).

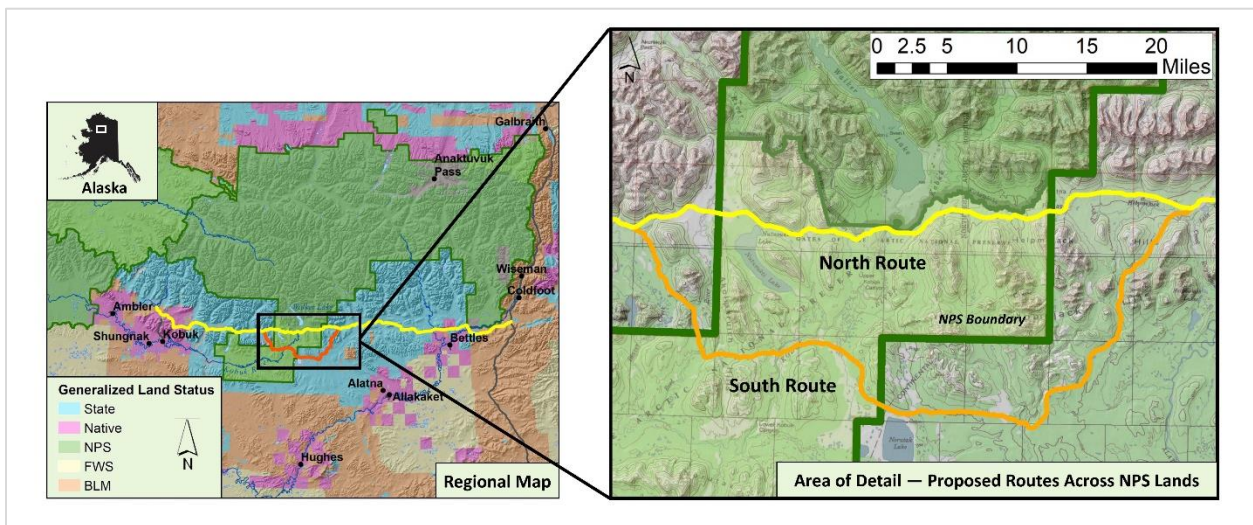


Figure 1. Regional map (left) showing the 211-mile proposed Ambler Industrial Access Road corridor, and area of detail map (right) showing the two alternative routes across NPS lands.

Section 201(4)(b) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) requires that right-of-way access be permitted across NPS lands for this project. In addition, ANILCA Section 201(4)(d) directs that an Environmental and Economic Analysis (EEA) be prepared for the right-of-way across NPS lands in order to: 1) determine a preferred road alignment across NPS lands, and 2) develop appropriate terms and conditions for the right-of-way permit.

Two alternative routes across NPS lands were identified in the project application materials (Figure 1). The EEA will examine each of these routes. In doing so, the EEA will assess potential adverse environmental, social, and economic impacts on fish and wildlife and their habitat, as well as on rural and traditional lifestyles, including subsistence activities. The analysis results will identify the route that poses the fewest adverse effects and recommend measures to minimize these negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.

At this time, we are pleased to invite public input in order to: 1) determine a preferred road alignment, and 2) develop appropriate terms and conditions for the right-of-way permit.

Specifically, the NPS is seeking comments that will assist us to:

- Identify key factors, issues and/or concerns to consider in the evaluation and subsequent recommendation for the location of the right-of-way across NPS lands
- Develop permit terms and conditions related to the development, operation and administration of the associated right-of-way permit

Please note that this NPS request for public input is focused solely on preparation of the EEA for access across approximately 20 miles of NPS lands and should not to be confused with the larger Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the entire 211-mile project that is currently underway under Bureau of Land Management (BLM) leadership.

KEY POINTS

- The NPS is legally obligated to permit a right-of-way across NPS lands for this project
- There are two alternative routes under consideration (Figure 1)
- NPS seeks public input to:
 - Evaluate which route would generate fewer environmental, social and economic impacts on preserve resources, and rural and traditional lifestyles including subsistence activities
 - Develop terms and conditions for the right-of-way permit
- This NPS EEA is focused on developing a right-of-way permit for access across approximately 20 miles of NPS lands and should not to be confused with the larger EIS for the entire 211-mile project currently underway under BLM leadership.

HELPFUL LINKS

- View or download project application materials:
<http://www.ambleraccess.com/SF299.html>
- NPS Project Website: <https://www.nps.gov/gaar/learn/management/ambler-row.htm>