



WEST SUSITNA ACCESS PROJECT OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE ALASKA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT AUTHORITY, OR AIDEA?

AIDEA is a public corporation of the State of Alaska, created in 1967 by the Alaska Legislature "in the interests of promoting the health, security, and general welfare of all the people of the state, and a public purpose, to increase job opportunities and otherwise to encourage the economic growth of the state, including the development of its natural resources, through the establishment and expansion of manufacturing, industrial, energy, export, small business, and business enterprises..."

Since 1967, AIDEA has been responsible for directing more than \$3.5 billion in economic development in Alaska, and has declared \$446 million in dividends to Alaska since 1997.

AIDEA'S MISSION

AIDEA's mission is to provide various means of financing to promote economic growth and diversity. We do that by acting in the public interest to attract private investment to the state as a funding resource in partnership with other financial institutions, economic development groups and guarantee agencies.

WHY THE WEST SUSITNA ACCESS PROJECT?

The significant economic potential of the West Susitna area paired with providing managed public access makes the project a natural fit with AIDEA's mission. AIDEA invests in infrastructure projects that increase employment and economic development opportunities for the benefits of all Alaskans.

AIDEA & MSB PARTNERSHIP

Per AIDEA's statutes, development projects must have the support of the local governing body. For the West Susitna Access project, this is the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). The MSB has been involved with the project since 2013. The MSB assembly initially passed Resolution Serial No. 14-025 in March 2014 to further the development of an access road into the Susitna Basin and subsequently passed two resolutions, [2020-RS-066](#) and [2021-RS-134](#), in support of furthering pre-development efforts on the West Susitna Access Project. MSB has also taken the lead with public engagement of stakeholders.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The West Susitna Access Project's intended route is approximately 100 miles long from the west end of Ayrshire Road, in the MSB southwest of Big Lake, to near the confluence of Portage Creek and the Skwentna River.

The purpose of the project is to provide safe and efficient road access from the existing highway system near existing port facilities and population centers in Southcentral Alaska to resources in the Fish Creek Natural Resource Management Unit (NRMU) and western Yentna and Skwentna River basins, which would increase job growth and economic development opportunities. The purpose is also to provide managed public access to the public for fishing, hunting, recreation, and settlement.

Although the area has been studied for decades, and there are several resource development projects being advanced, lack of affordable, reliable access to the area has inhibited development.



HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The West Susitna Access Project was identified as a priority in the [State of Alaska's 2014 Road to Resources report](#). The MSB Assembly supported this effort through resolution 14-025. In 2019, AIDEA and the MSB signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provided a partnership framework for a phased feasibility analysis of the West Susitna Access Project. In December 2021, the MSB Assembly passed resolution 21-134 in support of AIDEA continuing permitting and predevelopment work.

WHAT WILL THE ROAD LOOK LIKE, IF BUILT?

As designed, the road will be an unpaved, two-lane road with bridges, culverts, maintenance stations, boat launches, and other ancillary facilities. Managed public access will be available.

The road is being designed to accommodate both highway legal and non-highway legal vehicles to account for any future resource development projects that may utilize the road and port.

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

The anticipated benefits of the West Susitna Access Project include providing new opportunities for Alaskans. The state’s economy will enjoy growth and jobs from the extraction of minerals, oil and gas development, agricultural production, harvest of timber resources, alternative energy development, tourism opportunities, and recreation access.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The 2014 West Susitna Access Reconnaissance Study identified the potential acreage of mineral, oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, recreation and settlement resources that could be accessed by the West Susitna Access project.

Table 1. Resources within 10 Miles of the Proposed Project (2014)

Resource Category	Resources¹
Hard Rock Minerals	
No. of Claims/Leases	688
Acres of	78,788
Placer Gold (# claims)	5
Coal (acres)	264,258
Oil and Gas	
Permits/Leases	28
Acres	87,760
Forestry (acres)	170,049
	7,262
Recreation (acres)	61,643
Settlement (acres)	TBD

¹ Information taken from West Susitna Access Reconnaissance Study, Transportation Analysis Report (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities [DOT&PF], 2014), Table 6-1, information for the Middle Susitna-Skwentna River alignment. The proposed alignment has been slightly altered from the DOT&PF study, based on AIDEA-funded engineering analysis.

² Note that the acreage information is from 2014. Data includes potential settlement lands with more detail for hunting and fishing resources.

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The West Susitna Access Project area would open the area to recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, snowmachining, as well as settlement.

THE PROCESS TO DATE

Preparation of the USACE permit application has involved route identification, wetland studies and mapping, evaluation of potential alternative access routes, preliminary engineering work and environmental field studies. More field work is expected this summer.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- Because the project involves the placement of fill and structures in waters of the United States, a permit from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is required.
- AIDEA filed that permit application on May 10, 2022.
- USACE will evaluate the permit application and initiate the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance process when they deem appropriate.
- This process can take up to two years to complete.
- USACE processes consider not only NEPA compliance, but compliance with other federal laws including the Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, and the Magnusson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE NEPA PROCESS?

The USACE will decide how and when the NEPA process begins. It involves gathering input from stakeholders, conducting detailed analysis, issuing notices, and accepting and responding to public comments. [Citizens Guide to NEPA](#).

HOW DO I LEARN MORE AND STAY INVOLVED?

AIDEA maintains a [project-specific website](#) that will be updated as the permit application moves through the process. Visitors can also sign up to receive updates directly via email.

HOW IS THE PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

Early phases of the project (phases 1 and 2) were funded by AIDEA, MSB, and private industry. The current permitting and pre-development phase is funded by the State of Alaska through appropriation by the 32nd State Legislature, under HB 69, in the amount of \$8.5 million.