



PRESS RELEASE

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AIDEA Issues Statement on Dept. of Interior Decision to Delay, Obstruct Ambler Access Project

(Anchorage) – Tuesday, February 22, 2022, the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) issued a statement requiring a supplemental review for the Ambler Access Project (AAP) final environmental impact statement.

“There is no substantive reason to delay progress on the AAP, which is the culmination of a broad collaborative process through the efforts of dozens of federal and state agencies, tribal organizations, Alaska Native corporations, and hundreds of other non-governmental organizations and individual Alaskans. The FEIS shows that the Bureau of Land Management placed an extraordinary emphasis on ensuring that its outreach and coordination efforts were both meaningful and done correctly—nearly quadrupling the required scoping period to allow additional time for public input,” **said AIDEA Executive Director Alan Weitzner.**

Active and continuous collaboration between Alaska Native landowners, tribal leaders, village elders, the private sector, and state and federal entities led to:

- The Joint Record of Decision issued by the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2020.
- Signed right-of-way between AIDEA and the National Park Service in 2021.
- Signed right-of-way between AIDEA and the Bureau of Land Management in 2021.
- Signed land access agreement between AIDEA and Doyon, Limited (Alaska Native landowner along the proposed route) through a final investment decision.
- Signed land access permit between AIDEA and NANA (Alaska Native landowner along the proposed route) through a final investment decision.
- Formally supported via a resolution by the Northwest Arctic Borough, the home rule regional government with planning and permitting authority.
- Formation of the Subsistence Advisory Committee chaired by Fred Bifelt and Larry Westlake with elder representatives from the native villages of Allakaket, Huslia, Alatna, Hughes, Kobuk, Shungnak, Noorvik, Kiana, Ambler, and Evansville.

“This is a purely political move. They took the time to inform Ambler Metals, NANA and the Northwest Arctic Borough, but they don’t have the courtesy to inform us before filing – the permit holder and project proponent. This action by the DOI isn’t about reassessing impacts to subsistence activities. This is a thinly veiled attempt to shut down the Ambler Access Project by any means necessary, including a total disregard for robust multi-year, multi-million-dollar reviews, due process, and legally binding agreements,” **said AIDEA Board Chair Dana Pruhs.**

While Alaska is rich with natural and mineral resources, access is a common barrier to development. AAP is a proposed 211-mile, east-west running controlled industrial access road to reach the Ambler Mining District in the Northwest Arctic Borough. The district is a large prospective copper-zinc mineral belt with extensive deposits of critical minerals and other elements essential for our nation’s tech-

focused economy and military effectiveness. The Ambler Mining District is estimated to create more than 3,900 total jobs (direct, indirect, and induced) and over \$300 million in annual wages once the mines are operational adding significant new revenues for both local and state governments.

Not only does this action have the potential to impact creating thousands of jobs in the future, it would negatively impact jobs right now. Nearly 50 local jobs, from tribal liaisons and bear guards to surveyors and environmental scientists, have been identified for the upcoming 2022 field season. These positions are in addition to the more than 30 Alaska prime and subcontractor companies that will continue with cultural, archaeological, logistics, geotechnical, design, and other field season tasks. To ensure reasonable and equitable contracting opportunities were available, the AAP procurement team incorporated a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program to encourage minority Alaskan owned companies to bid. Currently, MBE entities represent 30 percent of existing AAP contracts.

“The Biden Administration has opened yet another front in its war on Alaska. You would think President Biden would want to improve access to American sources of copper and other strategic minerals that are needed in our combined efforts to increase renewables. Instead, actions like this only serve to push development to Third World nations that don’t have the environmental ethic that Alaskans have. This pendulum swing away from the last federal administration’s approval disregards extensive environmental studies and widespread social engagement while creating instability in long-term investment,” **said Governor Mike Dunleavy.**

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority is a public corporation of the state. AIDEA’s purpose is to promote, develop and advance the general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of Alaska. 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.

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