



PORT MACKENZIE

RAIL EXTENSION

MSB Trails

Open House

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is hosting a trail user meeting for the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project. The purpose of the meeting is to provide trail users the opportunity to provide feedback on proposed crossing and to ensure continued connectivity and use during, and after construction. We need to hear from you to make this happen. Please join us on:

**Thursday, October 27 from
6 to 8pm at Houston High School**

Houston High School is located at 12501 W. Hawk Lane in Houston, Alaska. Come and learn more about the project and provide feedback. For more project information visit: www.portmacrail.com.

Have Questions?

Contact:

HDR Alaska, Inc.
Rosetta Alcantra, Public Involvement
Phone: (907) 745-4129
Email: Rosetta.Alcantra@hdrinc.com





PORT MACKENZIE

RAIL EXTENSION

MSB Trails Meeting

October 27, 2011 -6:00 pm
Houston High School, Houston, Alaska

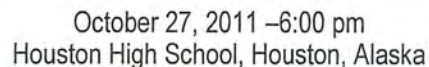
Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Cathy Mayfield	BLT	227-5077	jdmayfield@ak.net
Dan Mayfield	Big Lake Trails	223-2447	biglake Trails@gmail.com
Steve Charles	Willow Trails	455-4368	scharles@mtaonline.net
Trau Seager-Boss	MSB Cultural Reserve	745-9859	Tseagerboss@mta.gov.us
Kyle Kidder	DNR - SCRO	269-8564	KYLE.KIDDER@ALASKA.GOV
ELIZABETH GIZENKER	HDR	644-2077	Elizabeth.Grover@hdrinc.com
Angele Wade	KTC	373-3170	awade@kniktribe.org
Richard Plack	JR IDITAROD	745-5222	lead dog@mtaonline.net
Mike Donald	Big Lake Trails		
Cole Donald	with him ↑		
Mark Nordman	Iditarod Trail Comm	360-1814	mark.Nordman@iditarod.com
RICHARD GAFFEY	Big Lake Trails	892-5280	PARTYCHIEF360@gmail.com
Todd Rinaldi	mat-SU Borough Parks/Rec/Trails AB	227-5037	tarinaldi@yahoo.com
Card Tyler	Aurora Dog Muzzles	892-8110	tylercm@gmail.com
CORINNE FURTHUEHN	Northern Lights Zoo by Race	232-2019	CORINNE_FURTHUEHN@MAC.COM

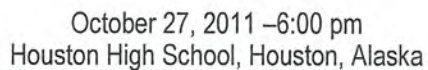


MSB Trails Meeting

October 27, 2011 -6:00 pm
Houston High School, Houston, Alaska

Name	Organization	Phone	Email
Shina duVall	DNR/SHPO	269-8720	shina.duvall@alaska.gov
Brad Sworts	MSB	746-7430	brad.sworts@mat.sugov.us
Chris Kosinski	(SELF) 6726 NENNA PLACE, ANCH. AK.	350 4143	CKOSINSKI@SCI.NET
Jack Campbell	Matsu Trails Council	376-4232	
Janice C. Smyth	Perserverance Springs Farm	232-2019	Cimsmyth@gmail.com
Vera Hatter	Assembly	495-1197	vhatter@mtaonline.net
McStancalesse	WTC	495-0812	-
TINA Owen	WTC	495-0812	-
Ellen Halverson		892-2535	ehalvers@provaak.org
Bruce Paulsen	MSB	745-9867	
Norlen Austermuhl		892 8056	denner@mtaonline.net
Ralph Buzard	Houston Running	892-1824	-

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Welcome!

Please Sign In

Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project

MSB Trails Open House

www.portmacrail.com





Meeting Purpose

To demonstrate and explain the crossings, connectivity and constraints associated with the trails within the project area.





Project Team

Alaska Railroad Corporation..... Applicant

Matanuska-Susitna Borough.....Project Sponsor

HDR Alaska, **Inc**.....Environmental Consultant

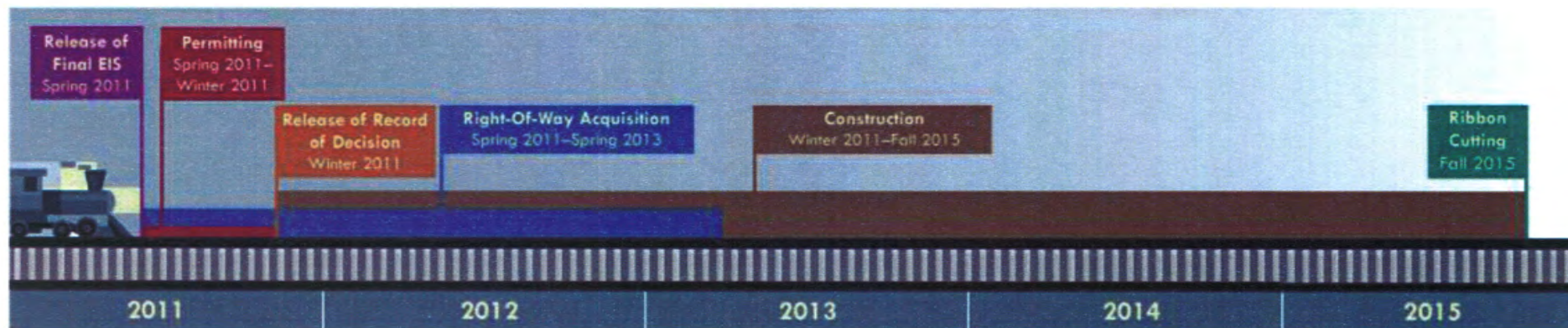
Hanson Alaska, LLC.....Engineering Consultant

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Project Schedule



- March 25, 2011 – Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement
- Spring 2011 – Permit Applications were submitted to State and Federal agencies and MSB for review and comments.
- Winter 2011 – Record of Decision
- Construction is scheduled to begin Winter 2011
- Fall 2015 – Ribbon Cutting

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Port MacKenzie Trail Crossing Cost Estimates

Feature Crossing	Structure	Approx. Station	Total Cost of Crossing
1. Millers Reach Road	At-Grade Road Crossing	5471+20	\$302,500.00
2. Utility easement/Big Lake Trail*	At-Grade Crossing	5416+50	\$30,000.00
3. Private property/Big Lake Trail*	At-Grade Crossing	5287+30	\$25,000.00
4. Houston Lake Loop Trail	Bridge	5235+00	\$1,600,000.00
5. Unnamed Tributary to the Little Susitna River (H 6.3)	Bridge	4394+70	\$2,200,000.00
6. Unnamed Tributary to the Little Susitna River (H 4.3)	Bridge	4288+30	\$1,600,000.00
7. West Papoose Twins Road	At-Grade Road Crossing	4270+80	\$50,000.00
8. West Susitna Parkway	At-Grade Road Crossing	3434+40	\$50,000.00
9. Iditarod Historic Trail	Bridge	3293+40	\$1,550,000.00
10. Outflow of Diamond Lake (H 0.8)	Bridge	3277+50	\$2,200,000.00
11. Aryshire Avenue	At-Grade Road Crossing	826+70	\$75,000.00
12. Holstein Avenue	At-Grade Road Crossing	618+00	\$50,000.00
13. Baker Farm Bridge (MC 4.5)	Bridge	380+70	\$1,600,000.00
14. Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail	Bridge	216+00	\$335,000.00

**If crossing is not approved by the landowner or easement holder, reroutes will be provided to the nearest crossing.*

Total cost of crossings \$ 11,667,500.00

www.portmacrail.com



Public Outreach – Past, Present & Future

2007

- The Point MacKenzie Rail Extension Project corridor was evaluated in 2007 in the Preliminary Environmental and Alternatives Report (PEAR) a comprehensive report produced by the Railroad, contractors, and the Borough. In mid-January 2008, the MSB and the ARRC submitted the PEAR to the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the lead federal agency responsible for approving new rail line.
- Public Involvement activities for the PEAR occurred between September and December 2007. Over 361 comments were received.

2008

- On Feb. 12, 2008, the STB issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which kicked off the formal environmental review process required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- The STB held scoping meetings:

• Knik – March 3	• Houston – March 6
• Big Lake – March 4	• Wasilla – March 10
• Willow – March 5	• Anchorage – March 11

2009

- The STB considered agency and public input received during the scoping process and on July 17, 2009 issued the final scope of study for the Draft EIS.
- The STB published the final scope of study in the Federal Register, placed it on the STB Web site and project Web sites, and mailed an announcement of the availability of the final scope of study to approximately 8,000 individuals, agencies, and other interested parties on the STB project mailing list.

2010

- The STB issued a Draft EIS on March 16, 2010.
- The STB and cooperating agencies held 6 public meetings on the Draft EIS

• Anchorage – April 6	• Houston – April 12
• Big Lake – April 7	• Willow – April 13
• Wasilla – April 8	• Knik – April 14
- The STB distributed the Draft EIS through hard copy and CD-ROM mailing to maximize public awareness of the availability of the document and to provide instructions on how to comment on the Draft EIS. The list included approximately 8,000 contacts at the time STB distributed the Draft EIS. STB received a total of approximately 162 written and oral comments during the Draft EIS comment period, which closed on May 10, 2010.

2011

- The STB released the Final Environmental Impact Statement on March 25, 2011. The Final EIS recommended the Mac Central and Houston South as the proposed route for the Point MacKenzie Rail Extension.
- ARRC prepared and submitted permit applications
- Winter 2010/2011 Big Lake Trails Group Meeting
- April - ARRC Open House
- Section 106 outreach
 - June, July – Mushers meetings
 - October - MSB trails meeting
 - November – Final Mushers meeting



What We Heard

(from past meetings)

Recommendations for additional crossings or trails:

- Separated grade crossing (bridge) for the historic Iditarod Trail (south of the actual Iditarod Race route)
- Crossing for the Iron Dog Connector Trail (Big Lake Trail #5).
- Crossing for the Flat Lake Connector Trail used by mushers to avoid Iron Dog traffic on Big Lake Trail #5 (Iron Dog Connector Trail).
- Crossing for Iditarod Race Trail from Knik between the Historic Race Trail and West Susitna Parkway.
- Crossings at seismic and/or section lines in Big Lake area.
- Trail parallel to the proposed rail right-of-way.

Safety issues:

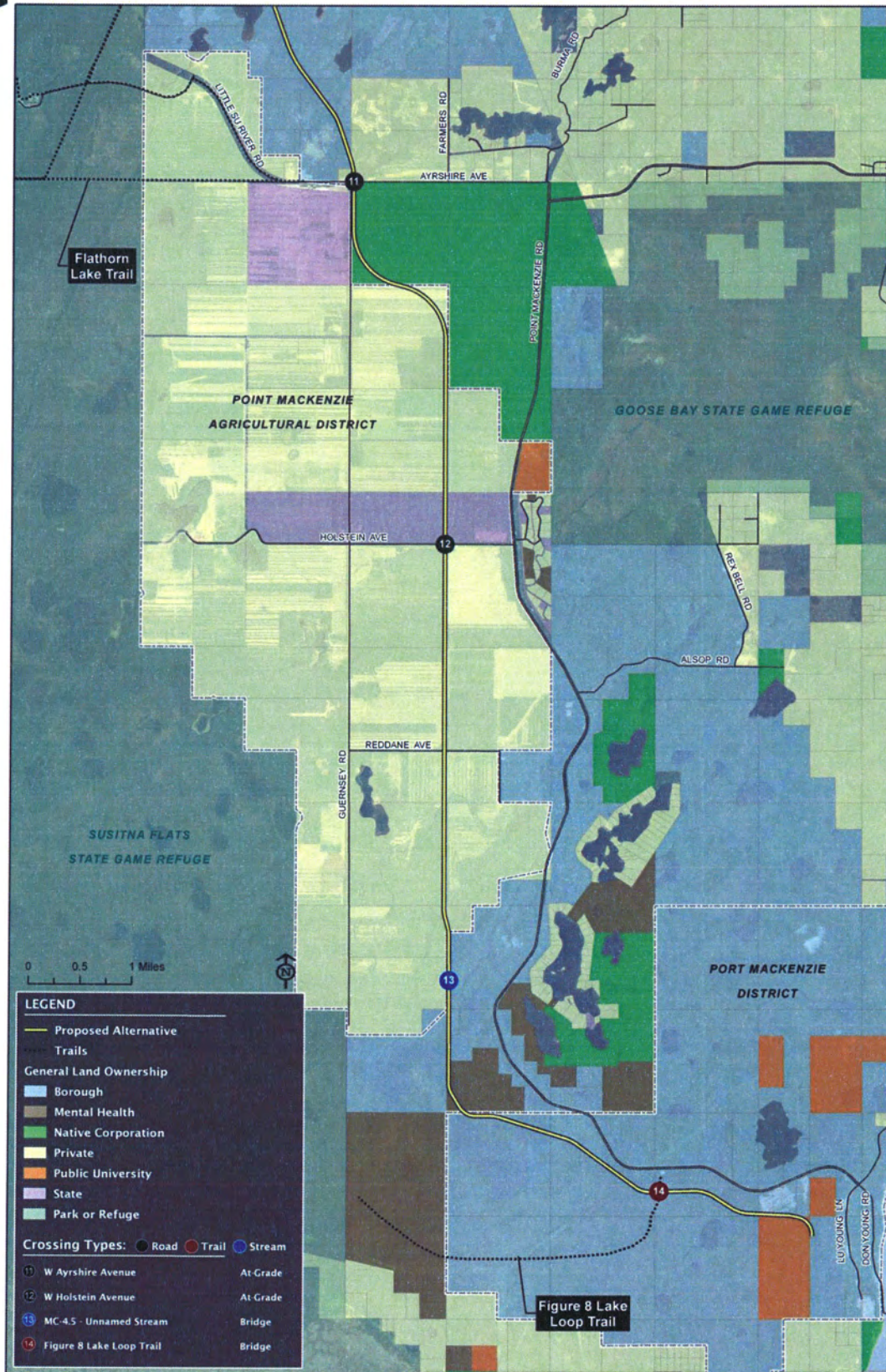
- Recommend increasing clearance under bridges from 12 feet to at least 14 feet to account for snow depth, removal of snow from rail portions over bridges and also to account for height of grooming equipment.
- Reroutes and combining trails may “bottleneck” users /wildlife and increase the potential for collisions and user conflicts.
- Concerns about locations and/or types of crossings (e.g., At-grade crossings on existing roadways)

Other:

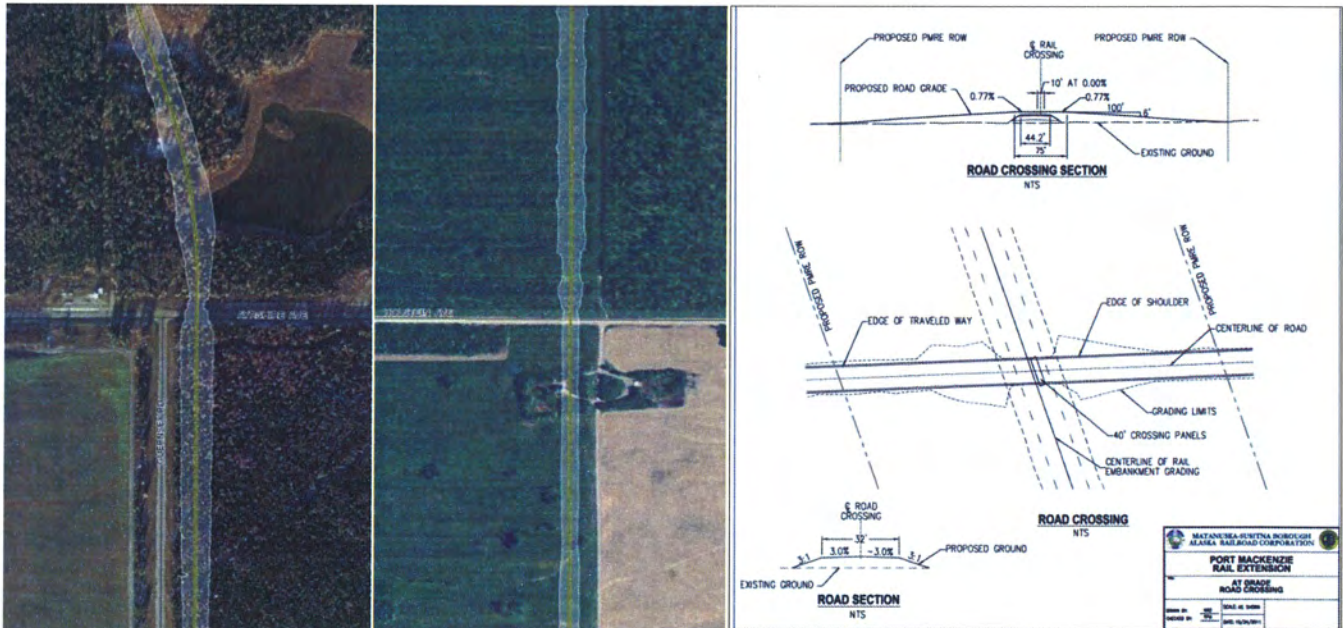
- Request the creation of a Special Use District similar to the one at Knik (Sled Dog and Recreation District) for protection of trails important to mushing.
- Take growth into account when planning crossings
- Provide information on where the ARRC cannot provide crossings and appropriate mitigation steps (e.g. VORTAC radar site)



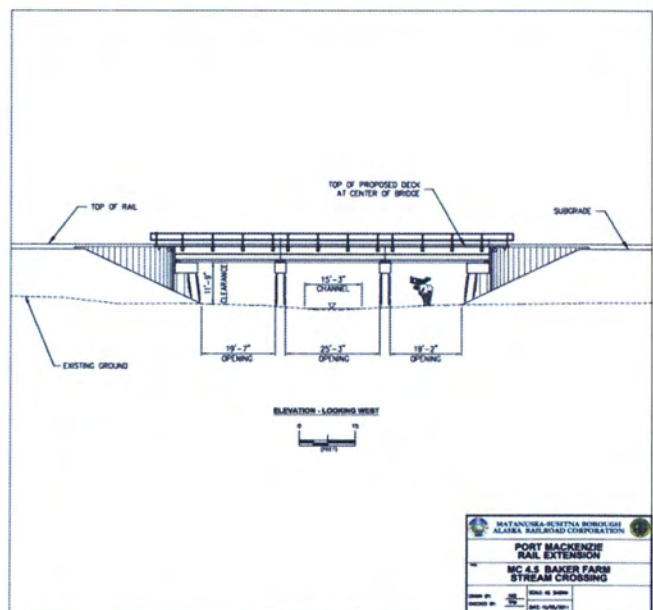
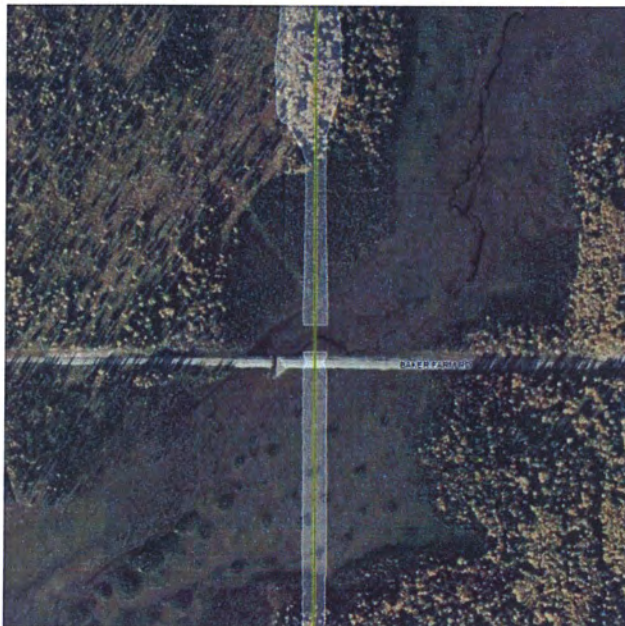
Point MacKenzie Area



Point MacKenzie

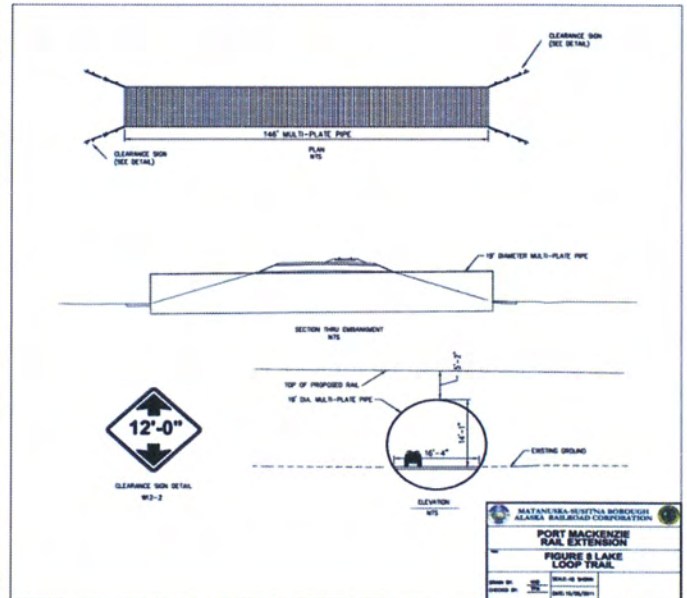


11. West Aryshire Avenue and 12. West Holstein Avenue
Cost = \$125,000 (per crossing)



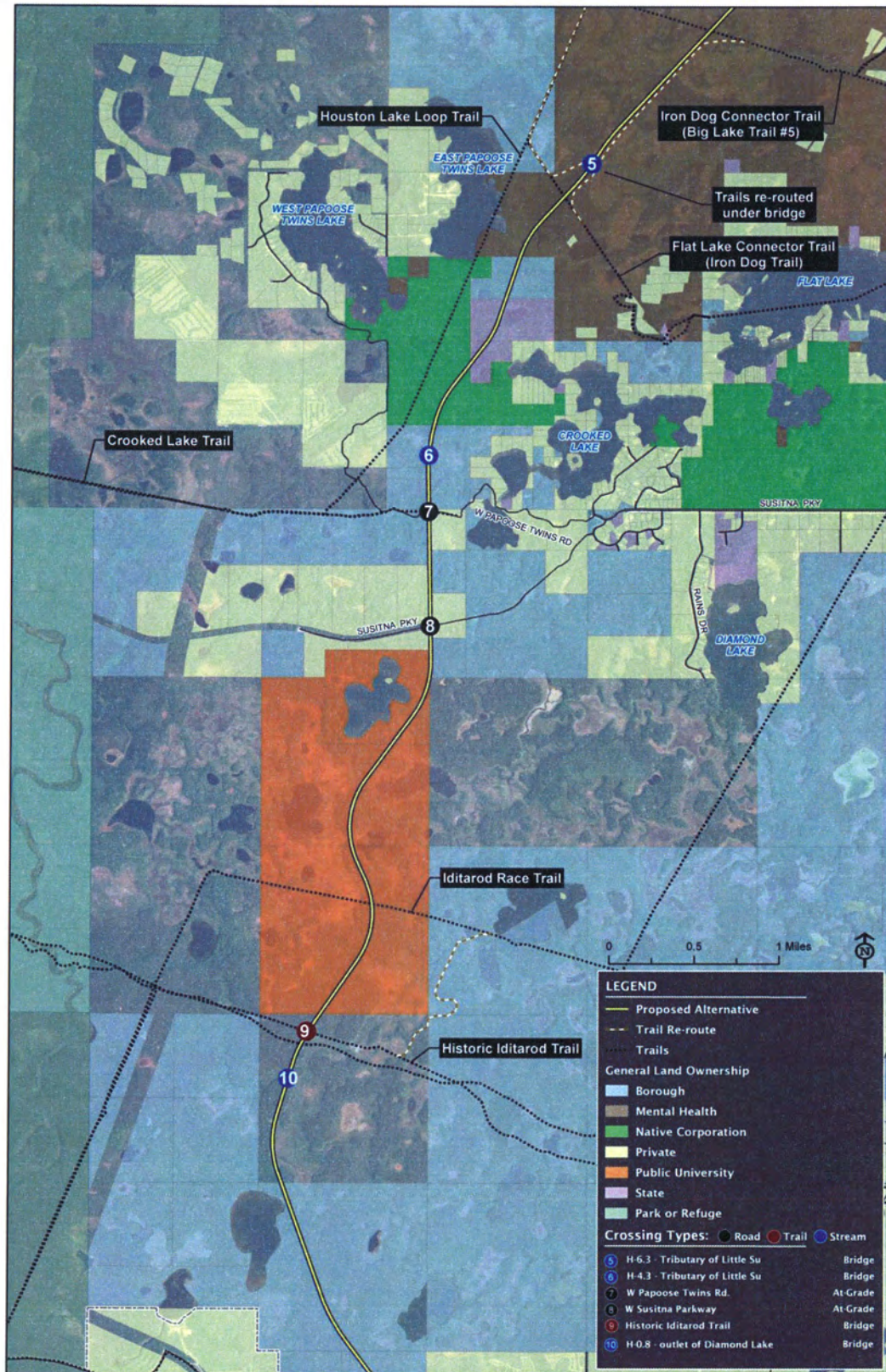
13. Baker Farm Stream Crossing (MC 4.5)
Cost = \$1,600,000

Point MacKenzie

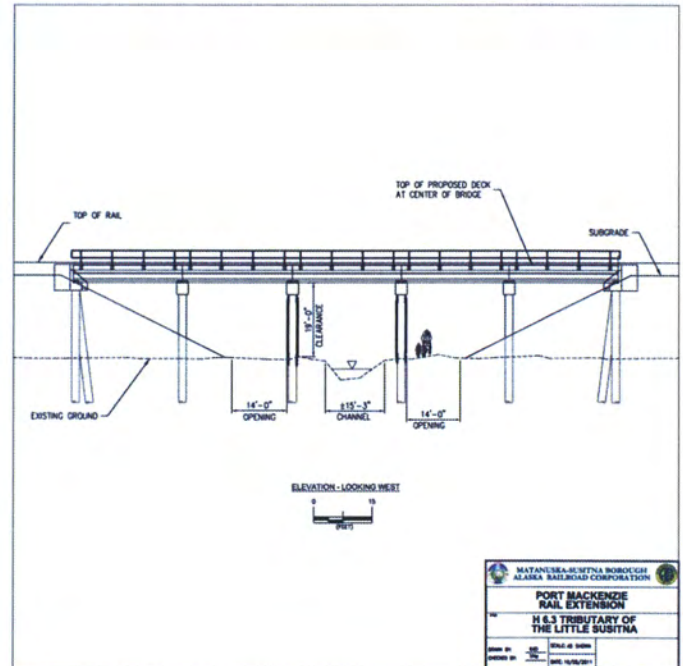


14. Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail
Cost = \$ 335,000

West Big Lake/Houston

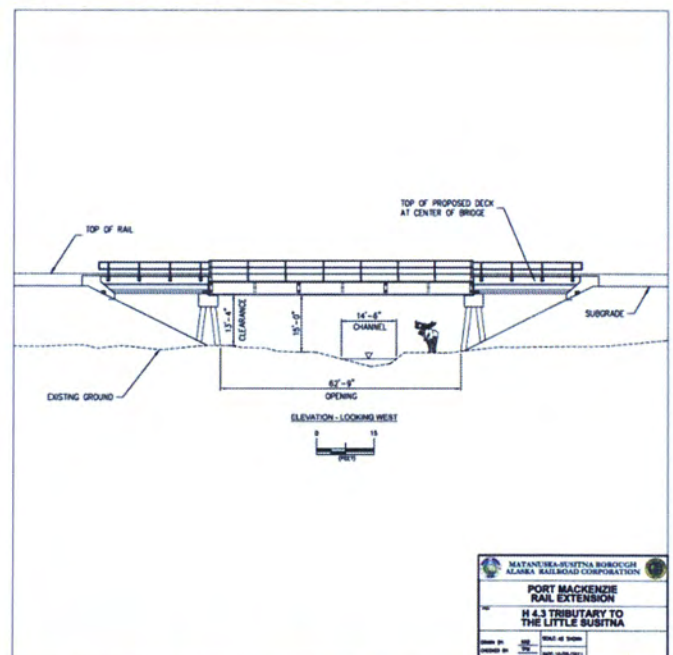


West Big Lake/Houston



5. Unnamed Tributary to the Little Susitna River (H 6.3)

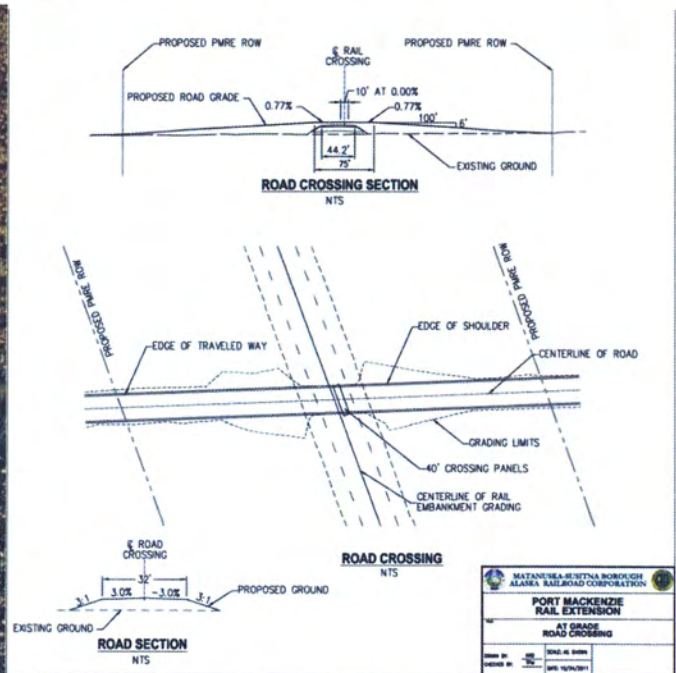
Cost = \$2,200,000



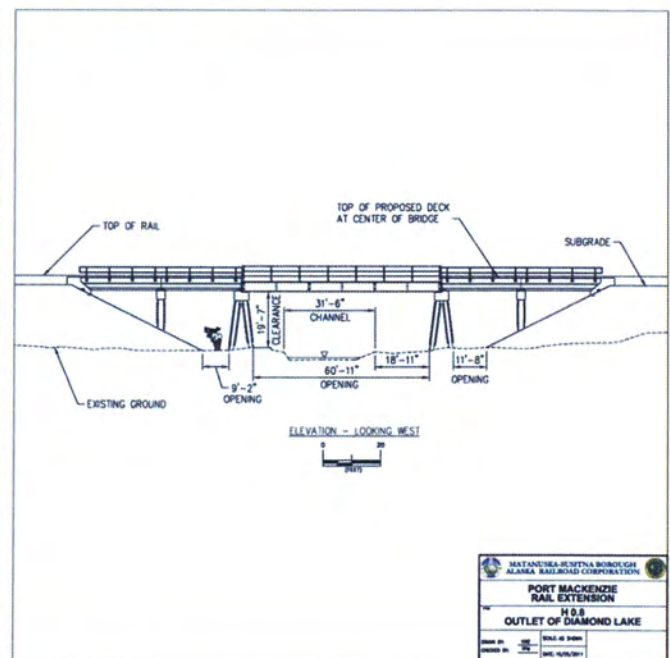
6. Unnamed Tributary to the Little Susitna River (H 4.3)

Cost = \$1,600,000

West Big Lake/Houston

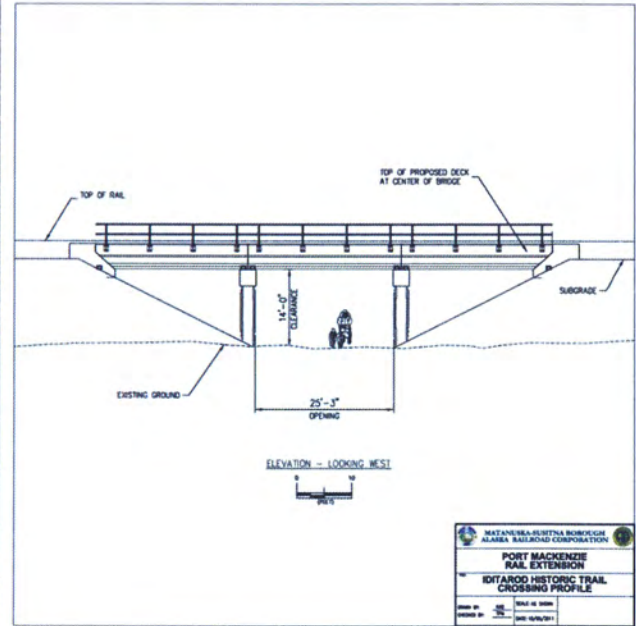


7. West Papoose Twins Road and 8. West Susitna Parkway
Cost = \$100,000 (per crossing)



10. Outflow of Diamond Lake (H 0.8)
Cost = \$2,200,000

West Big Lake/Houston

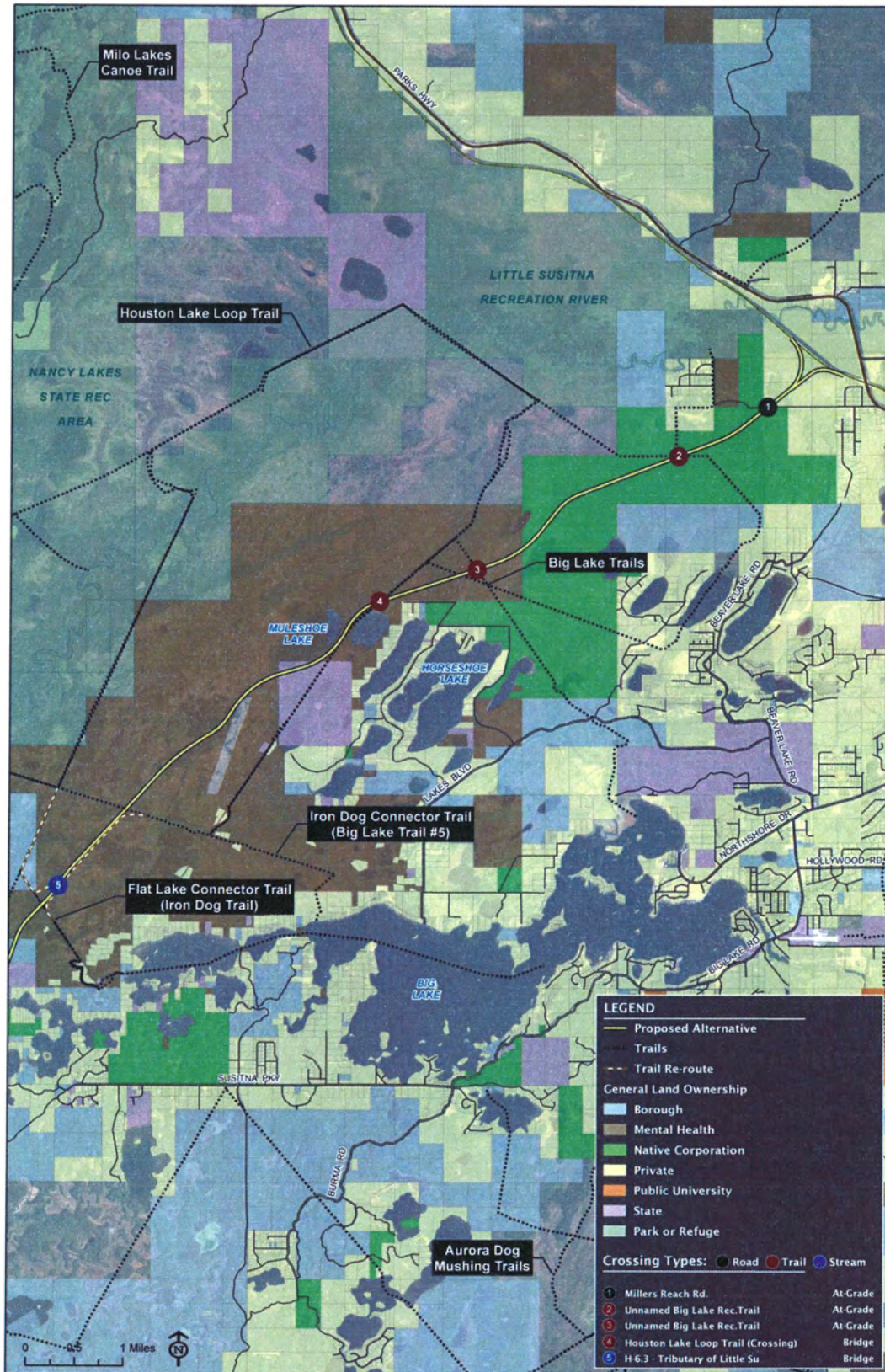


9. Iditarod Historic Trail
Cost = \$1,550,000

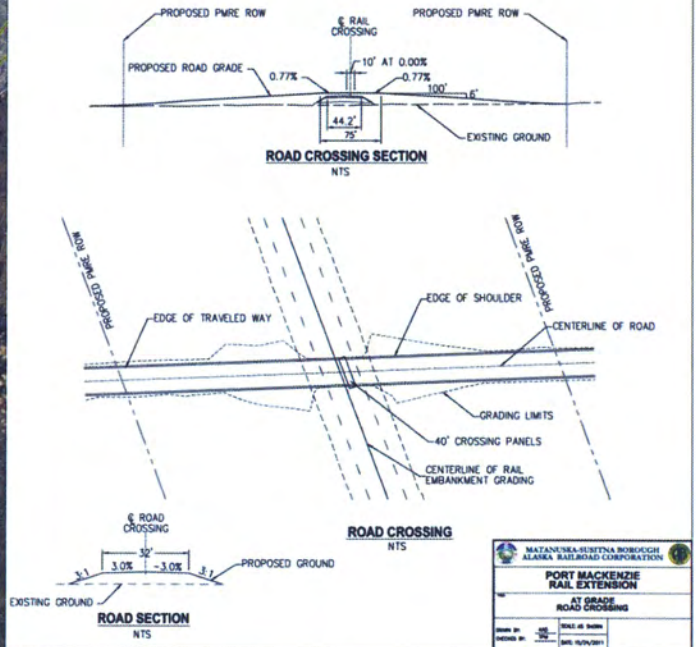


Iditarod Race Trail Reroute

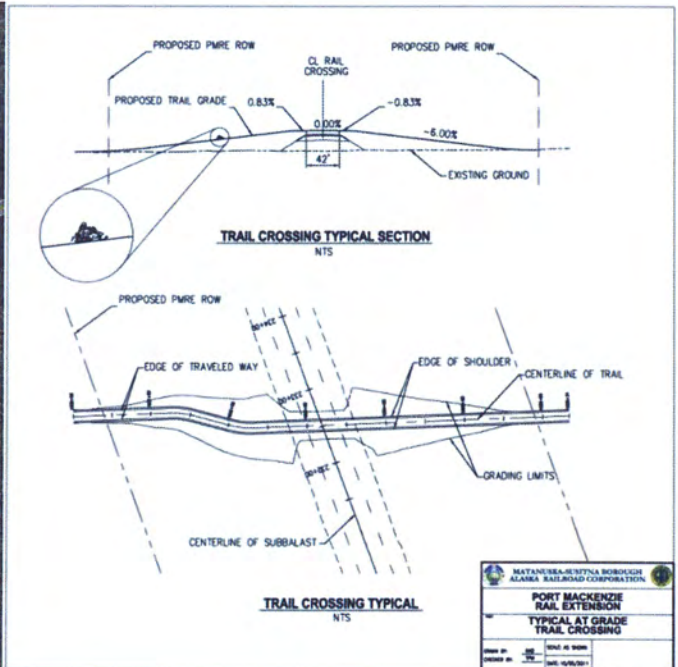
North Big Lake/Willow



North Big Lake/Willow

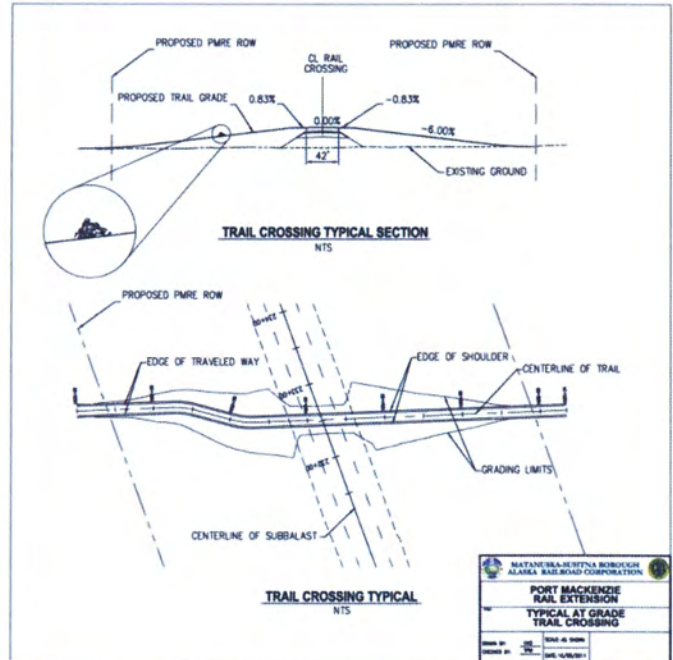


1. Millers Reach Road
Cost = \$302,500

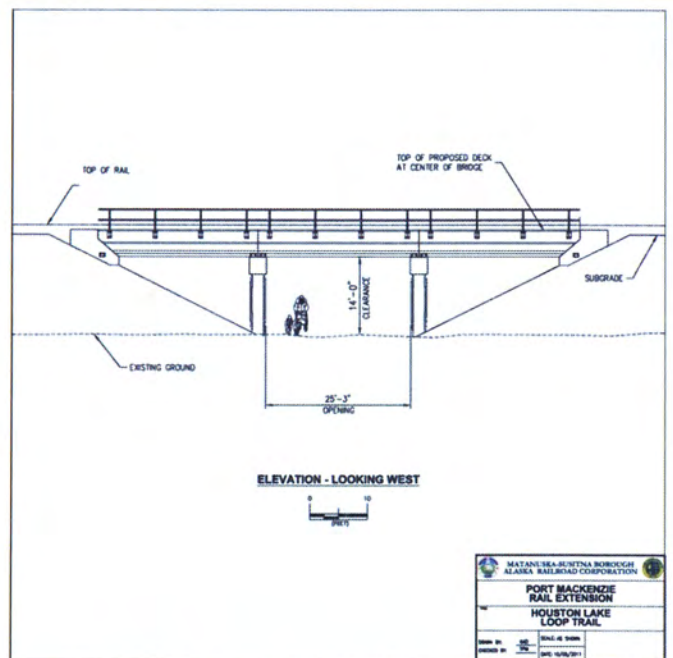


2. Utility Easement/Big Lake Trail
Cost = \$30,000

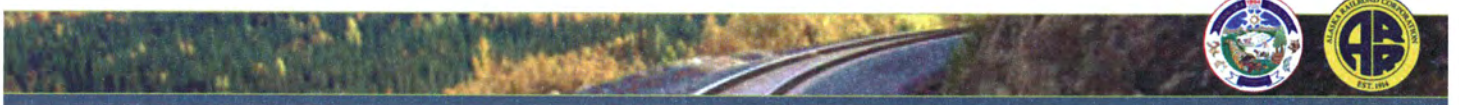
North Big Lake / Willow



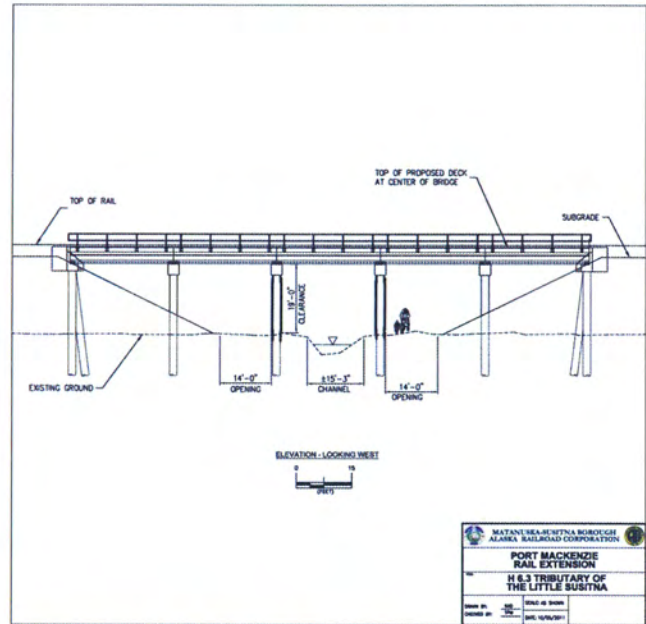
3. Private Property/Big Lake Recreation Trail Cost = \$25,000



4. Houston Lake Loop Trail Cost = \$1,600,000

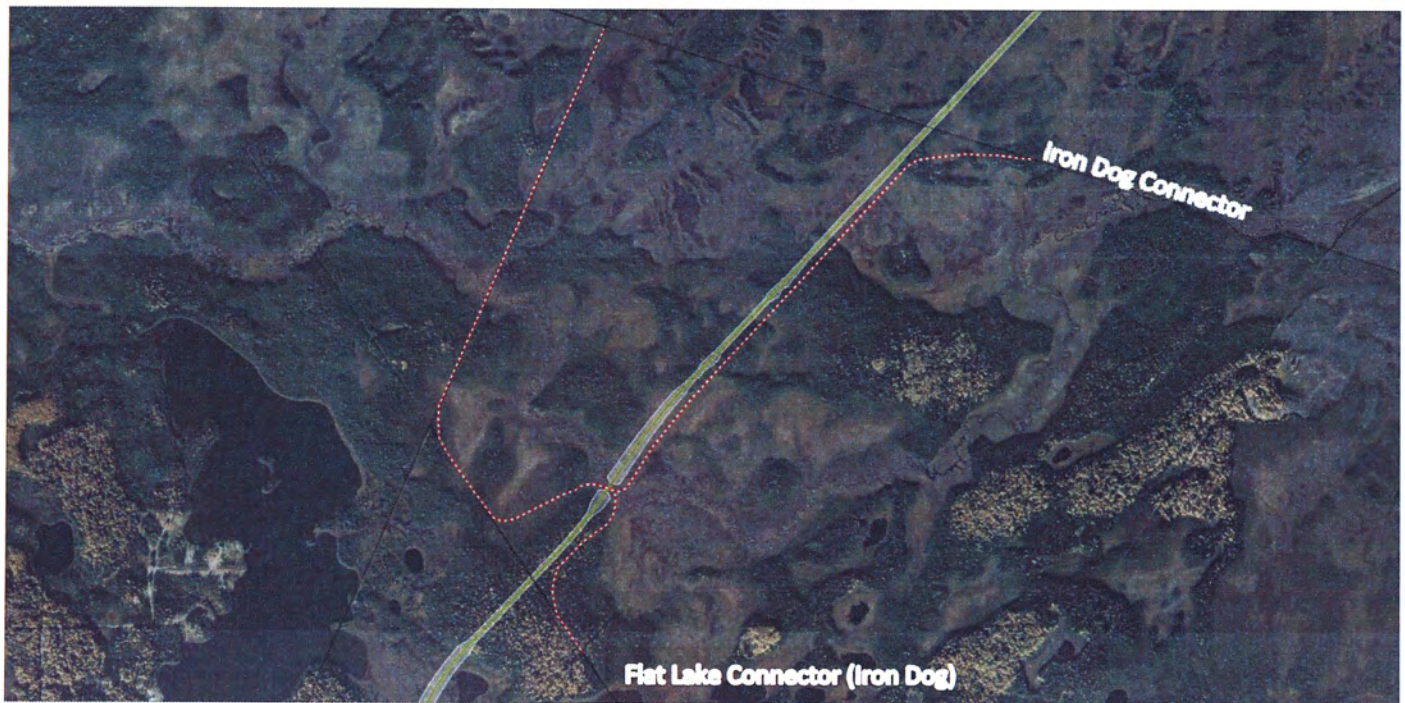


North Big Lake / Willow



5. Unnamed Tributary to the Little Susitna River (H 6.3)

Cost = \$2,200,000



Flat Lake/Iron Dog Connector Reroute

What's Next

- Update MSB trails plan to include new trails and reroutes created as part of the mitigation process.
- Construction schedule for new trail connections and upgraded trails.
- Compilation of and response to comments to be posted on Project website following meeting.
- One more mushers meeting to wrap up consultation for the Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District.
- Record of Decision



What signs are appropriate here?



MSB Trail Meeting Comments and Responses - October 27, 2011

1. Point MacKenzie Access

Reference #	Comment	Response
1a.	Verify that the University of Alaska Access Rd. will be available for Public Use (not gated, drivable off end) so owners of Point MacKenzie properties can access their properties.	Point MacKenzie properties will be accessible by using either (1) the University of Alaska Access Road located along the section line immediately south of the Port MacKenzie Bi-Modal Bulk Facility or (2) the Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail crossing. Both access points are designed to accommodate vehicles; when using either access if additional trail clearing is necessary on Borough property a temporary permit can be issued by the MSB. Maps will be provided to interested parties upon request.

2. Historic Iditarod Trail (Project Crossing #9)

Reference #	Comment	Response
2a.	The Historic Trail needs improvement; it is too narrow for current and potential increased use.	Trail improvements are planned for the Historic Trail including trail widening in the vicinity of the rail embankment and reroutes.
2b.	The Historic Trail west of the crossing location near the Little Susitna washes out and is in ill repair, needs fixed (bridge needed).	Access to the 'race' trail will still be possible west of the alignment before the Historic Trail crosses the Little Susitna River.
2c.	The Historic Trail is not used as frequently as the race trail.	The Historic Trail will be improved in the vicinity of the crossing making it more likely to be used. To aid trail users, a kiosk identifying the user's location on a trails map will be installed to identify trail reroutes and show available trail connections.
2d.	Crossing signs are needed at this location	Proposed signs to be installed at the crossing include: • Caution dog teams on trail • North/South arrows • Slow – Keep Right High Traffic Area • Clearance 14'

MSB Trail Meeting Comments and Responses - October 27, 2011

3. Iditarod Knik 'Race' Trail

Reference #	Comment	Response
3a.	Need a crossing here; this trail has hosted 20 Iditarod races and may have been used prior to being used for the race.	ARRC/MSB is working with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) and University of Alaska to determine if there are existing easements that cross the University's property at this location.
3b.	The Iditarod (Knik) 'race' trail is used more than the Historic Trail.	A crossing at this location will be provided if there is an existing easement or if the University of Alaska authorizes and requests a crossing at this location on their property.
3c.	The ARRC/MSB needs to get the ROW easement from the University of Alaska.	If it is determined that there is not an easement at this location the 'race' trail will be rerouted to the Historic Iditarod Trail which will be upgraded to account for a potential increase in users. It is outside of the scope of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project to acquire trail easements.
3d.	Crossing signs needed at this location	If no easement exists, proposed signs include: • Trail closed ahead • Slow, trail rerouted

4. Flat Lake Connector Trail (Rerouted to multi use crossing H 6.3)

Reference #	Comment	Response
4a.	Need a crossing here; this is a well established trail.	Based on the engineering work completed, the height requirement threshold cannot be met for grooming equipment at this location; no more than 10 feet of clearance is achievable without interfering with the shallow underlying groundwater table. A new trail will be established at crossing H 6.3 with greater than 20' horizontal and 14' vertical clearances.
4b.	Why can't an at-grade crossing be done here? Cut trees for a wider field of view.	An at-grade crossing can't be used due to safety concerns; the available line of sight is minimal even if trees are cleared due to area topography.
4c.	Crossing signs needed at this location.	Proposed signs include: • Trail closed ahead • Slow, trail rerouted

MSB Trail Meeting Comments and Responses - October 27, 2011

5. Reroute under Crossing 6.3 (Project Crossing #5)		
Reference #	Comment	Response
5a.	Too much traffic for one crossing.	This proposed crossing is a 5 span bridge with a northern and southern access span of over 20' in width. The spans will accommodate a trail on both the north and south side of the creek. The outside spans will be widened from 14' to over 20' to accommodate groomers and multiple users.
5b.	Need a wider turn radius for the reroutes coming under the crossing location.	The turn radius for the reroutes under both the north and south spans will be modified and designed for a 100' vehicle to turn and pass under the structure.
5c.	Mushers need 85' in length for 16 to 20 dog teams; curve is too tight.	The outside spans will be widened from 14' to over 20' to accommodate dog teams with sleds of this length. The trails approaching the crossing will also be designed with curves to accommodate this length.
5d.	Want wider openings at the crossing location (H 6.3); this crossing should be 25'3" wide like the other locations.	The design of reroutes will allow for sufficient line of sight for all user groups and traffic will be accommodated by two parallel trails one on each side of the creek. The trail groomer will be able to maintain access on the north and south spans of this crossing structure via existing trail connectivity.
5e.	Need a good line of sight coming under the crossing.	The turn radius for the reroutes under both the north and south spans will be modified and designed for a 100' vehicle to turn and pass under the structure. Trails will be aligned to provide increased site distance.
5f.	The stream at crossing H 6.3 tends to have overflow, making a trail crossing problematic.	Trail embankments will be designed to minimize impacts from overflow.
5g.	Crossing signs needed at this location.	Proposed signs include: • Clearance signs • Slow – Keep Right High Traffic Area • Caution dog teams on trail

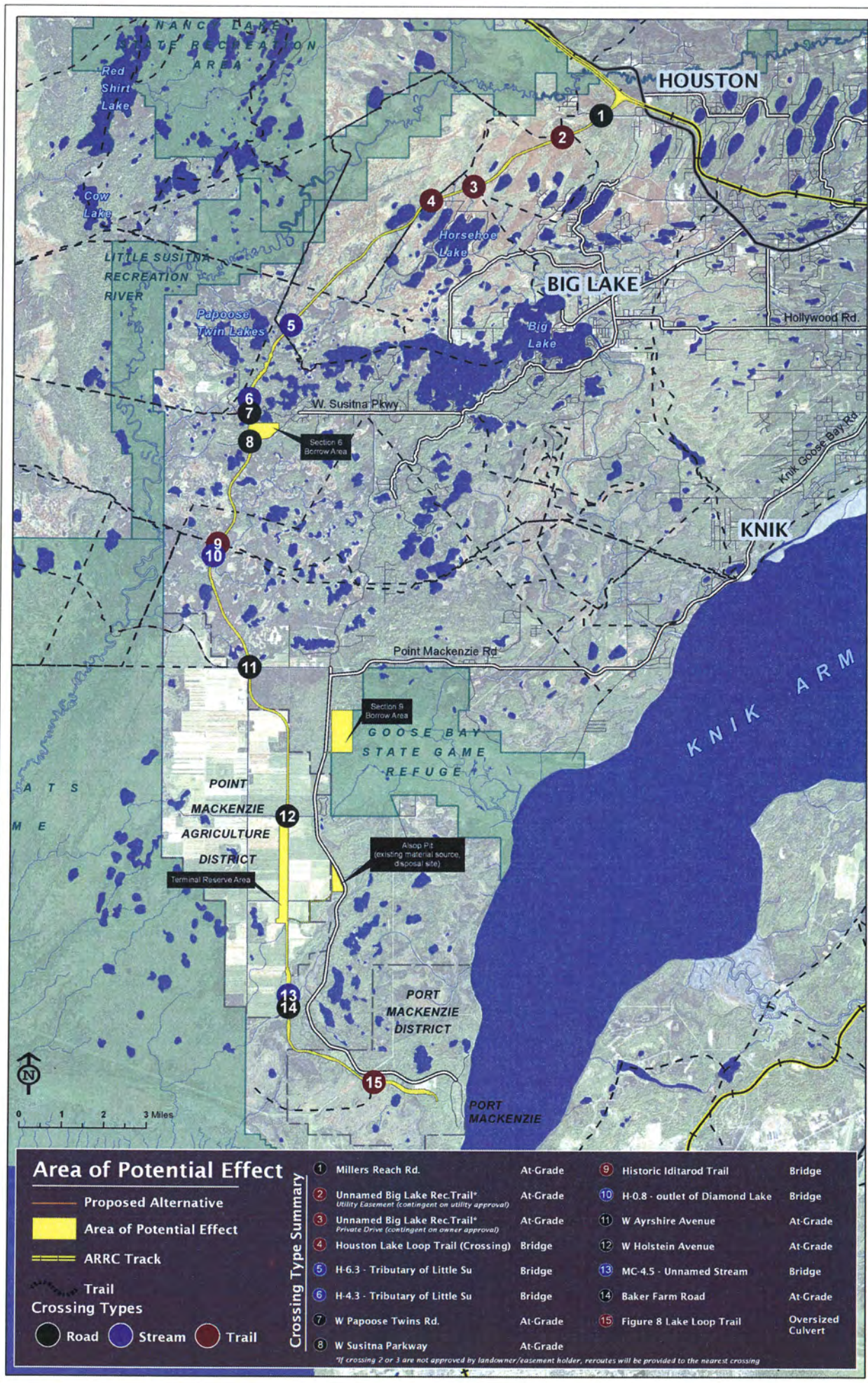
MSB Trail Meeting Comments and Responses - October 27, 2011

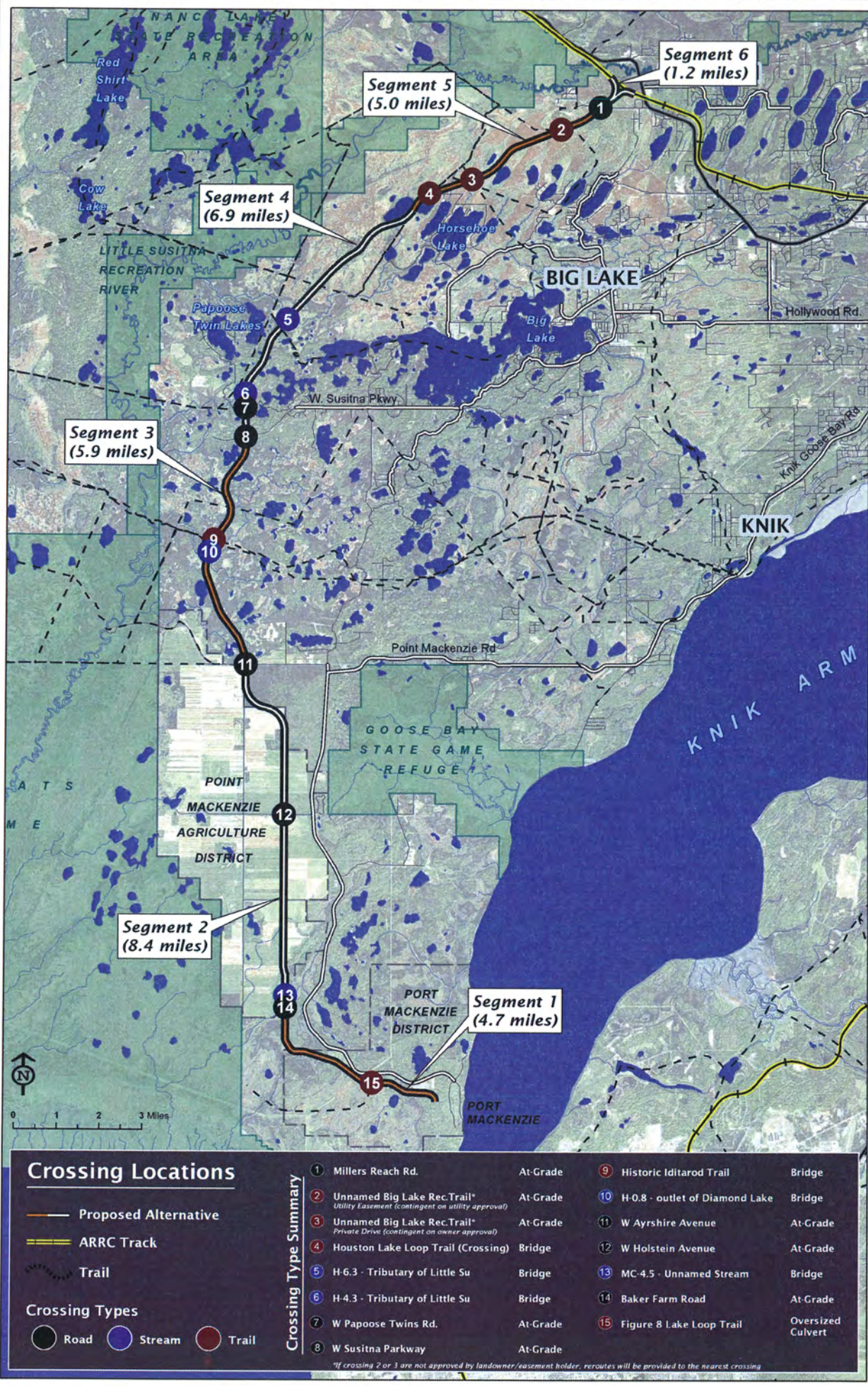
6. Iron Dog Connector (Reroute under Crossing 6.3)		
Reference #	Comment	Response
6a.	This crossing is needed; people will cross even if a designated crossing is not provided.	Due to FAA VORTAC issues, safety concerns, wetland and regulatory concerns, tree cover and topography, a crossing is not an option at this location.
6b.	Running snow machines here would be unsafe; snow machines would jump or side hill	A kiosk identifying the user's location with trails map and bulletin board will be installed to identify trail reroutes and available trail connections. Trail closed signs be posted. Iron Dog Race Director will be asked to work with us to provide adequate safety coverage at this location during race.
6c.	Can we work to get permission to have this crossing maintained?	Due to FAA VORTAC issues, safety concerns, wetland and regulatory concerns, tree cover and topography, a crossing is not an option at this location. It is not a question of obtaining permission.
6g.	Crossing signs needed at this location.	Proposed signs include: • Trail closed ahead • Slow, trail rerouted

7. General Trails Concerns		
Reference #	Comment	Response
7a.	We asked for more crossings at the IDSHD Workshops, but now there are fewer crossings – bring back the crossings for the Iditarod and Iron Dog Race trails	We are working with DNR and UAF to determine if an easement exists at the Iditarod 'race' trail crossing coming from Knik. Due to area wetlands, topography, land ownership and the Big Lake VORTAC site, it has been necessary to concentrate efforts on improving crossing structures, signage and existing trail conditions instead of adding crossings. See comments related to the Iron Dog and Iditarod crossings for additional details.
7b.	What happened to the crossings in the Point MacKenzie area –more crossings were identified in that area at the IDSHD Workshops	There are still 5 crossings in the Point MacKenzie area, although not all were included on Open House maps. Baker Farm Road is an access controlled crossing provided as an emergency access to area farms. There will also be an electric utility crossing not identified which will be access controlled.
7c.	By eliminating crossings and relocating trails, you will be concentrating multiple user groups onto fewer trails, which will make the trails more dangerous.	Crossing structures have been modified to account for increased usage, and trails will be widened and upgraded in the vicinity of crossing structures and reroutes to accommodate multiple user groups.

MSB Trail Meeting Comments and Responses - October 27, 2011

7d.	What happened to the trails paralleling the Railroad ROW? Those need to be included or trail users will just use the ROW and cross wherever they feel like it.	A parallel trail(s) along the Railroad ROW will not be provided; however, there is a north-south corridor using the existing trail system which will be mapped and posted at kiosks along the trail system. One area, between Crossings 7 and 10, demonstrates the biggest gap and we are working to find an alternative as the majority of the property between these crossings is owned by University of Alaska.
7e.	Why did they choose the alternative that was chosen? It would have been better for trail users if they had picked the western alternative (west of Red Shirt Lake).	The Willow (or western) Alternative was evaluated but not chosen as the preferred alternative in STB's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will not likely be included as the alternative licensed by STB. As detailed in the EIS the Willow route had a greater amount of environmental impacts than the other routes.
7f.	The project team/ARRC/MSB is not listening to people's comments – the proposed crossings/alignment does not reflect what people have been saying at the meetings.	The ARRC and MSB have made efforts to address users concerns by providing improved crossing structures with increased vertical clearance (14') and bridging areas with wider spans to support multiple uses and users. Due to project constraints such as private property, wetlands and the FAA VORTAC site, some crossing locations have been eliminated. Reroutes are being provided when possible and information kiosks will be installed to inform the users of changes in connectivity. Total cost for crossings currently totals: \$11.7 million.
7g.	There needs to be more crossings between Crossings 4 and 5.	The land between crossings 4 and 5 does not present opportunities for crossing structures due to wetlands impacts, high water table, and the FAA VORTAC site (which requires that the rail embankment and passing trains do not block the VORTAC electronic signals); this reduces the possible height of the rail embankment, which eliminates the possibility of constructing a crossing structure in this area with 12' to 14' of clearance.
7h.	Consider standard snow machine trail signage as seen on Alaska State Parks SnoTRAC website, not road side signs!	The project team will consider signage as seen on the Alaska State Parks snoTRAC website to address user concerns.







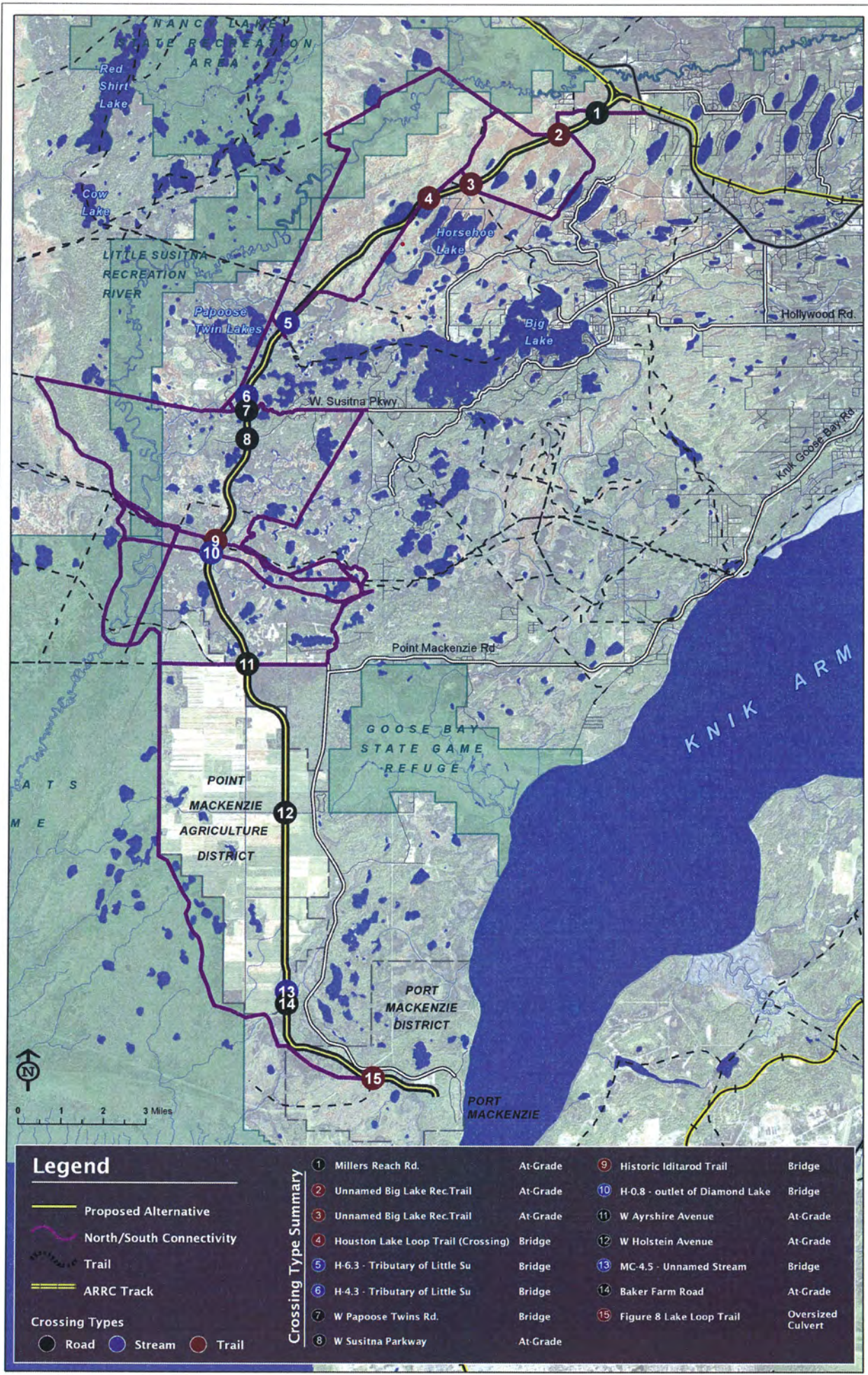
Crossing Constraints

Proposed Alternative	General Ownership
ARRC Track	State
Trail	University
VORTAC Site	Private
FAA Area of Restriction	Native Corporation
Wetlands	Mental Health
Crossing Types	
# Road	# Stream
# Trail	

Crossing Type Summary

1 Millers Reach Rd.	At-Grade	9 Historic Iditarod Trail	Bridge
2 Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail* <i>Utility Easement (contingent on utility approval)</i>	At-Grade	10 H-0.8 - outlet of Diamond Lake	Bridge
3 Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail* <i>Private Drive (contingent on owner approval)</i>	At-Grade	11 W Ayrshire Avenue	At-Grade
4 Houston Lake Loop Trail (Crossing)	Bridge	12 W Holstein Avenue	At-Grade
5 H-6.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	13 MC-4.5 - Unnamed Stream	Bridge
6 H-4.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	14 Baker Farm Road	At-Grade
7 W Papoose Twins Rd.	At-Grade	15 Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail	Oversized Culvert
8 W Susitna Parkway	At-Grade		

*If crossing 2 or 3 are not approved by landowner/easement holder, reroutes will be provided to the nearest crossing



Legend

- Proposed Alternative
- North/South Connectivity Trail
- ARRC Track

Crossing Types

- Road
- Stream
- Trail

Crossing Type Summary

1 Millers Reach Rd.	At-Grade	9 Historic Iditarod Trail	Bridge
2 Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail	At-Grade	10 H-0.8 - outlet of Diamond Lake	Bridge
3 Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail	At-Grade	11 W Ayrshire Avenue	At-Grade
4 Houston Lake Loop Trail (Crossing)	Bridge	12 W Holstein Avenue	At-Grade
5 H-6.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	13 MC.4.5 - Unnamed Stream	Bridge
6 H-4.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	14 Baker Farm Road	At-Grade
7 W Papoose Twins Rd.	Bridge	15 Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail	Oversized Culvert
8 W Susitna Parkway	At-Grade		

