PROJECT STATUS AND CONCLUSION SUMMARY

The purpose of this Project Development Summary Report is to comprehensively review the preliminary results of the scoping activities conducted to date for the Juneau Second Channel Crossing (JSCC) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), in combination with preliminary engineering and environmental baseline conditions/studies, in order to assess current conditions within the project study area and document preliminary findings. The Project Development Summary Report is not a Draft EIS, but will be used as the basis for further EIS activities. This Report includes the results of preliminary agency and public scoping comments, as well as limited preliminary data associated with initial project development activities, with some sections containing little or no detailed data compilation. The preliminary findings in this Report are a result of the scoping phase of the JSCC EIS conducted from May 2003 until April 2005. Delays have been encountered in the EIS process due to uncertainty of available funding to complete the EIS. As of May 2005, scoping activities are still in progress.

A portion of this Report also evaluates the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) Second Gastineau Channel Crossing Feasibility Study, June 1984, (1984 Feasibility Study) which studied potential crossing areas for a new bridge to connect mainland Juneau with North Douglas Island. This previous Study, although somewhat dated, provides a preliminary basis for the current JSCC project in regards to baseline engineering and environmental data, project study area, and the potential feasibility of various crossing concepts. The 1984 Feasibility Study evaluated 14 crossing alternatives and a “No-Crossing” or “No-Build” alternative. These fifteen alternatives were re-evaluated to determine their feasibility for the JSCC EIS given current data gathered as part of the EIS.

In consideration of updated and comprehensive evaluations of physical conditions, transportation planning, existing and future land uses, environmental constraints and regulations, engineering criteria/constraints/feasibility, navigational considerations, development plans, approximate ranges of planning-level costs, consistency with purpose and need objectives, and agency and public comments received during the preliminary scoping phase for the EIS, the following preliminary conclusions can be made:

- A crossing in the vicinity of the Vanderbilt Hill Road Area to Yandukin Drive Area provides the greatest potential for meeting the comprehensive Purpose and Need objectives of the project.
- The least costly crossing potentials (with embankment) are in the Vanderbilt Hill Road Area to Sunny Drive Area.
- For an “all-structure” crossing of the Gastineau Channel, the Channel Drive/Salmon Creek Area Crossing represents the least costly option.
- The Channel Drive/Salmon Creek Area and Mendenhall Peninsula Area provide the only opportunities to avoid directly impacting the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge (MWSGR).
- Crossings in the Vanderbilt Hill Road Area to Yandukin Drive Area best avoid the highest value environmental areas within the MWSGR.

In addition, based on the preliminary scoping process and engineering/environmental data collection activities conducted to date, there are warrants for not further advancing alternatives development west of the Juneau International Airport (JIA). Primary features west of the JIA include the Mendenhall River, western end of the MWSGR, Mendenhall Peninsula, Fritz Cove, and North Douglas Island in the vicinity of Fish Creek. The reasons for eliminating further consideration of this area are based on a comprehensive set of factors, including environmental “hot spot” areas and potential impacts to protected species; comments from regulatory agencies; results of preliminary travel demand analysis; geometric constraints with crossing the Mendenhall River in the vicinity of Industrial Boulevard and potential
conflicts with JIA Part 77 airspace; potential conflicts with future expansion plans at JIA; potential Section 4(f) resources on the Mendenhall Peninsula and North Douglas Island; and crossing types/costs.

The next steps for the Juneau Second Channel Crossing project should include:

- Confirm the status of the 1997 CBJ and Goldbelt West Douglas Conceptual Plan. This Plan was never officially adopted by the CBJ Assembly for the West Douglas New Growth Area. Indirect and cumulative impact assessments on Douglas Island are heavily dependent on the update, adoption, and further definition of this development and the resources that may be adversely affected. Key questions for advancement of the JSCC project is to determine when this Plan will be updated and adopted by the CBJ and the schedule for the Plan completion;
- Complete scoping activities with the State Historic Preservation Office and tribal organizations;
- Meet with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), local governmental officials, agencies, and the public to address outstanding scoping issues, comments, and requests for special studies;
- Work with local governmental officials, agencies, tribal organizations, and the public to develop the range of alternatives to be evaluated in future project development studies and jointly develop screening criteria for the evaluation of alternatives;
- Determine, based on information contained in this document, if portions of the project study area should be omitted in the development of updated crossing concepts due to costs, transportation efficiency, purpose and need objectives and environmental impacts;
- Determine if the updated ranges of representative costs contained in this document constitute a cost-affordable transportation project in light of current conditions;
- Conduct additional engineering, environmental, and scoping activities, as required, to advance project development; and
- Complete the scoping phase of the EIS, then continue on with completion of the DEIS, as appropriate.