



# WELCOME to the Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District (IDSHD) Workshop

January 11, 2012

Houston Middle School  
Houston, Alaska



# Workshop Purpose:

- Present/discuss proposed resolutions to comments received to date
- Create understanding - the Project Team has heard, considered, and addressed participant comments when possible
- Discuss next steps

# Workshop Ground Rules

- Please show mutual respect, courtesy, and patience
- Please don't interrupt anyone while he/she is speaking
- Please remain quiet so others can hear
- Please leave the room for side discussions
- Please refrain from addressing the audience or asking for audience participation.
- Please turn off cell phones or set them to vibrate
- Listen carefully, understand concerns raised by all parties, and be open to new ideas
- **Be positive! Be problem-solvers!**



# Crossing Vertical Clearance

## Comment 1:

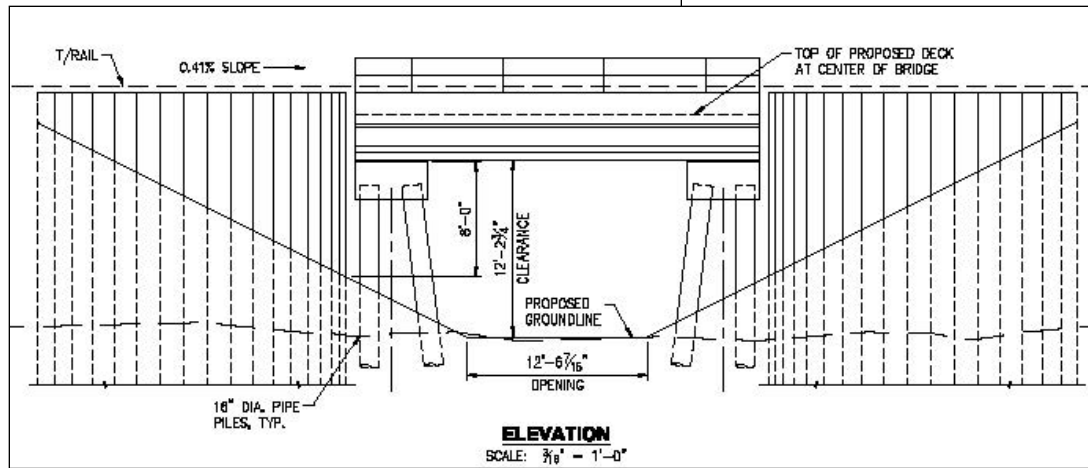
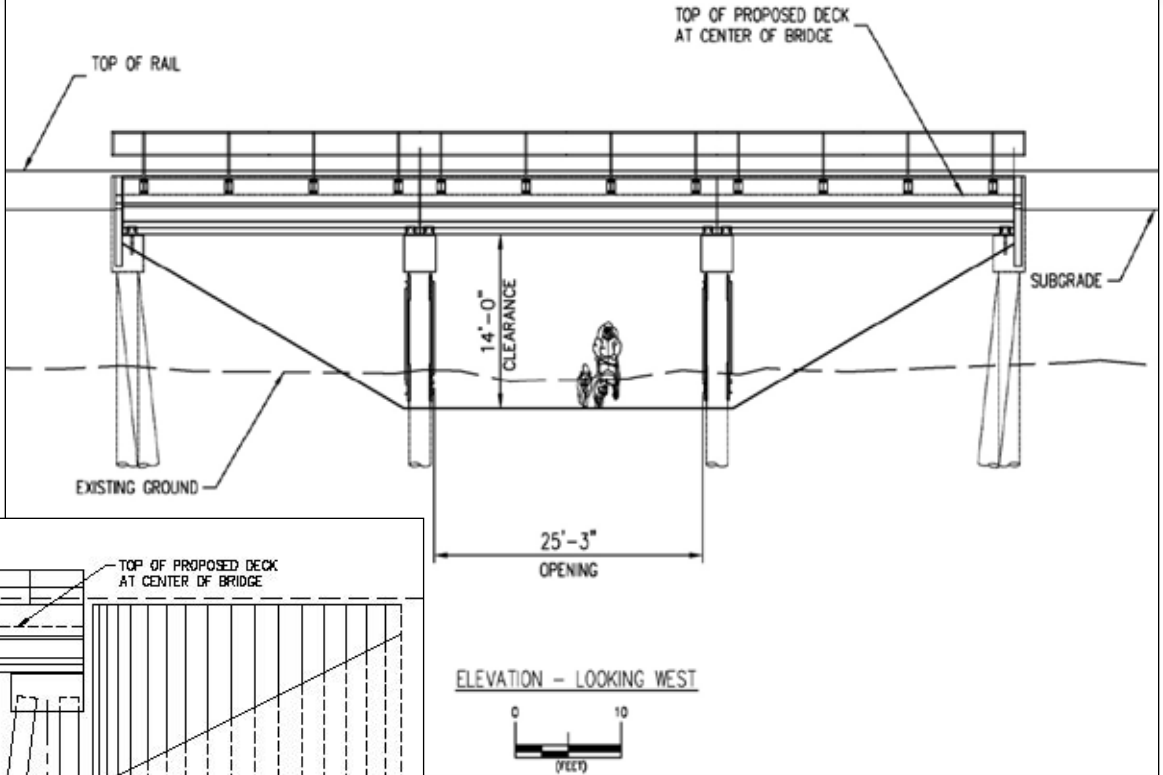
The height (vertical clearance) of crossings needs to be increased to more than 12' to account for snow depth, accommodate equipment for grooming of trails, and enhance safety. The existing clearance is as low as 10' for some crossings.



# Proposed Resolution:

Vertical clearance increased to a minimum of 14' whenever possible

Revised Historic Iditarod Crossing design following the IDSHD Workshops



Early Historic Iditarod Crossing Design (June 2011)

# Approach Curvature

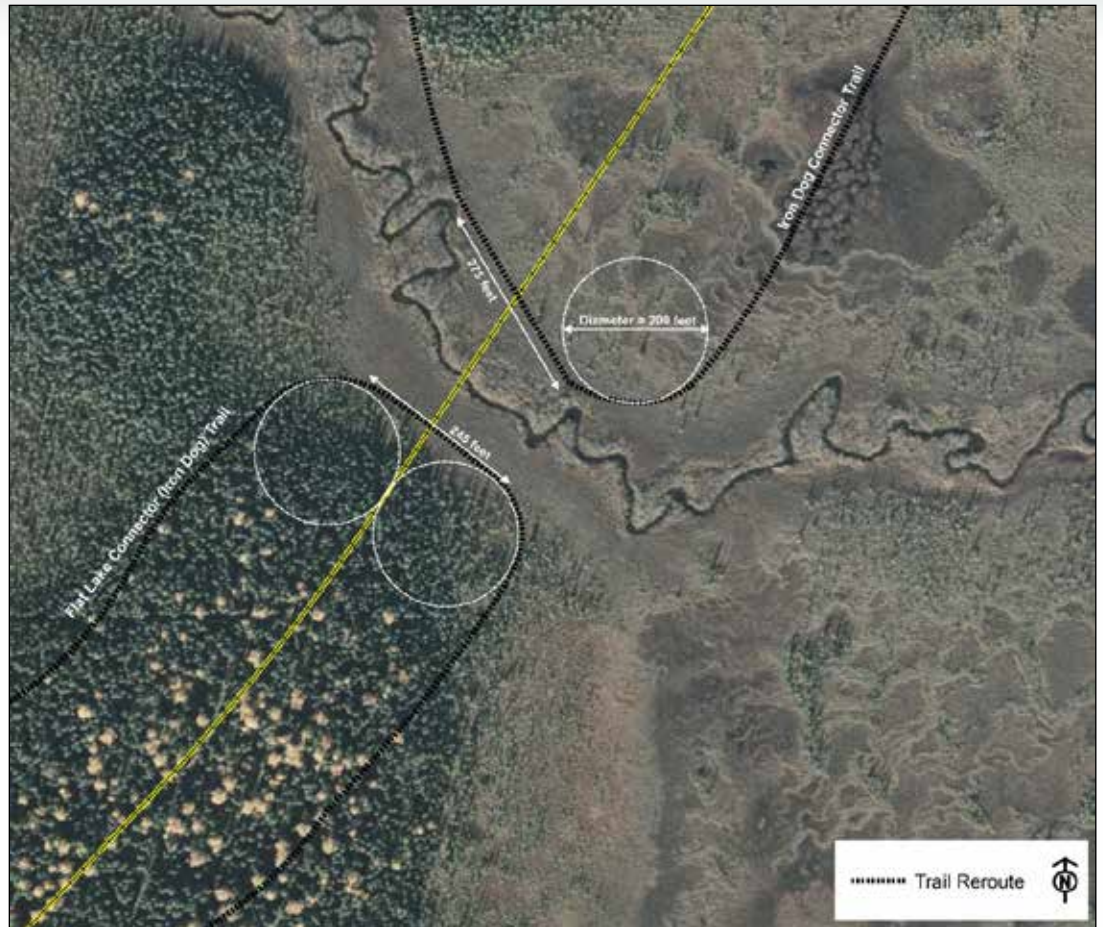
## Comment 2:

The length of a sled dog team with 16 to 20 dogs (approximately 85') needs to be considered during design of trail approaches to crossings to ensure curves are not too tight. (This comment was made in reference to the rerouted trails, specifically Crossing H 6.3 [Project Crossing 5]).

## Proposed Resolution:

Design standard for approaches:

- Gentle curves - turn radii between 75' and 90'
- Allow 100' long dog team to turn and safely pass through the structure
- Allow adequate line of sight.



Approach example

# Line of Sight

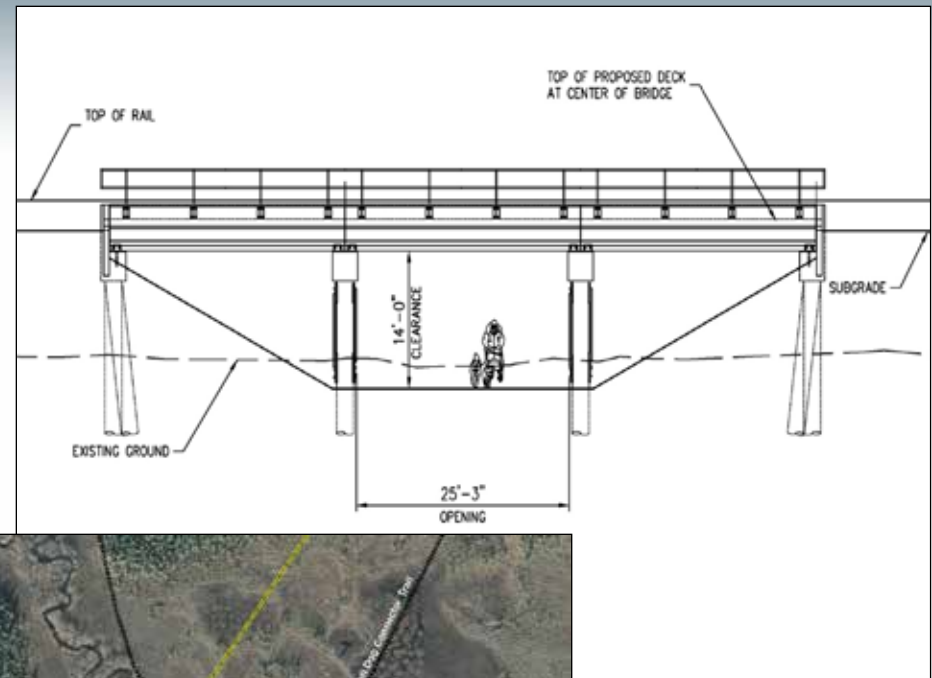
## Comment 3:

Some crossings are single span bridges and do not provide mushers with adequate visibility to see if anything is approaching from the other direction. The length of these crossings needs to be increased. Trail approaches to crossings also need adequate line-of-sight.

## Proposed Resolution:

Redesigned bridges:

- Minimum of 3-spans
- Generally provide 20' horizontal clearance (minimum)
- Adequate line-of-sight provided by relatively straight approaches



# Future Expansion

## Comment 4:

Will trail crossings be turned into road crossings as growth and development increases? Planning for at-grade road crossings (e.g., West Susitna Parkway and Ayrshire Road) should take population growth and resulting development into consideration, as conflicts between users could increase.

## Proposed Resolution:

The proposed designs trail crossings:

- Not adequate for roadways
- Will not be turned into road crossings
- Will include separated crossing panels on either side of select roadways to enhance safe passage

# Easements

## **Comment 5:**

Easements do not exist but are needed for some trails. Also, with population increases, more and more trails could be sold into private ownership/development.

## Proposed Resolution:

MSB Community Development and Land Management will continue to:

- Work with trail users/agencies to obtain easements for existing trails that do not currently have legal easements
- Work with agencies to try to secure easements for legal trails that are proposed to be rerouted

# Constraints

## Comment 6:

Provide a map to workshop participants showing where crossings cannot be located (e.g., VORTAC or wetland restrictions or other design concerns).

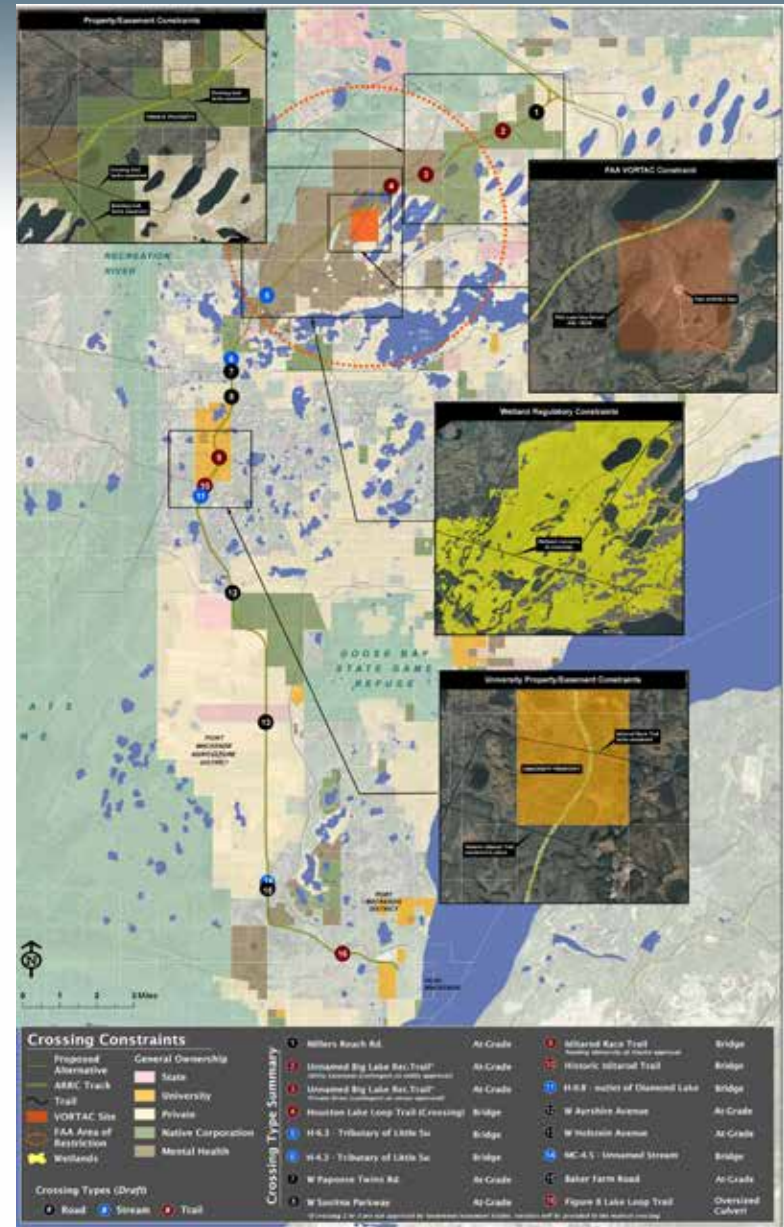
## Proposed Resolution:

The constraints map (right) is:

- Posted on the Project website
- Included in the comment summary document
- Presented at workshops/open house

Constraints include:

- FAA VORTAC radar site (3 mile radius)
- Wetlands
- Land ownership
- Lack of legal easements



# Crossing Quantity

## Comment 7:

More crossings in the heavily used area between Crossings 2 and 10 are needed to maintain connectivity. Limiting the number of crossings and relocating and/or combining trails in this area may “bottleneck” multiple user groups onto fewer trails, which will make the trails more dangerous by increasing the potential for collisions and user conflicts (e.g., between snow machiners or other users and mushers).

## **Proposed Resolution:**

Strike a reasonable balance between:

- Needs of trail users
- Obligations to property owners and State and Federal agencies
- Safety considerations

Continue to investigate inclusion of additional grade-separated crossings between Crossings 2 and 10:

- Safety concerns (e.g., visibility issues caused by topography and vegetation)
- Regulatory issues related to wetlands impacts
- Design issues associated with a high water table in the area
- Property ownership
- Existing property/easement constraints
- Construction restrictions associated with the FAA VORTAC radar site



# Iron Dog Connector

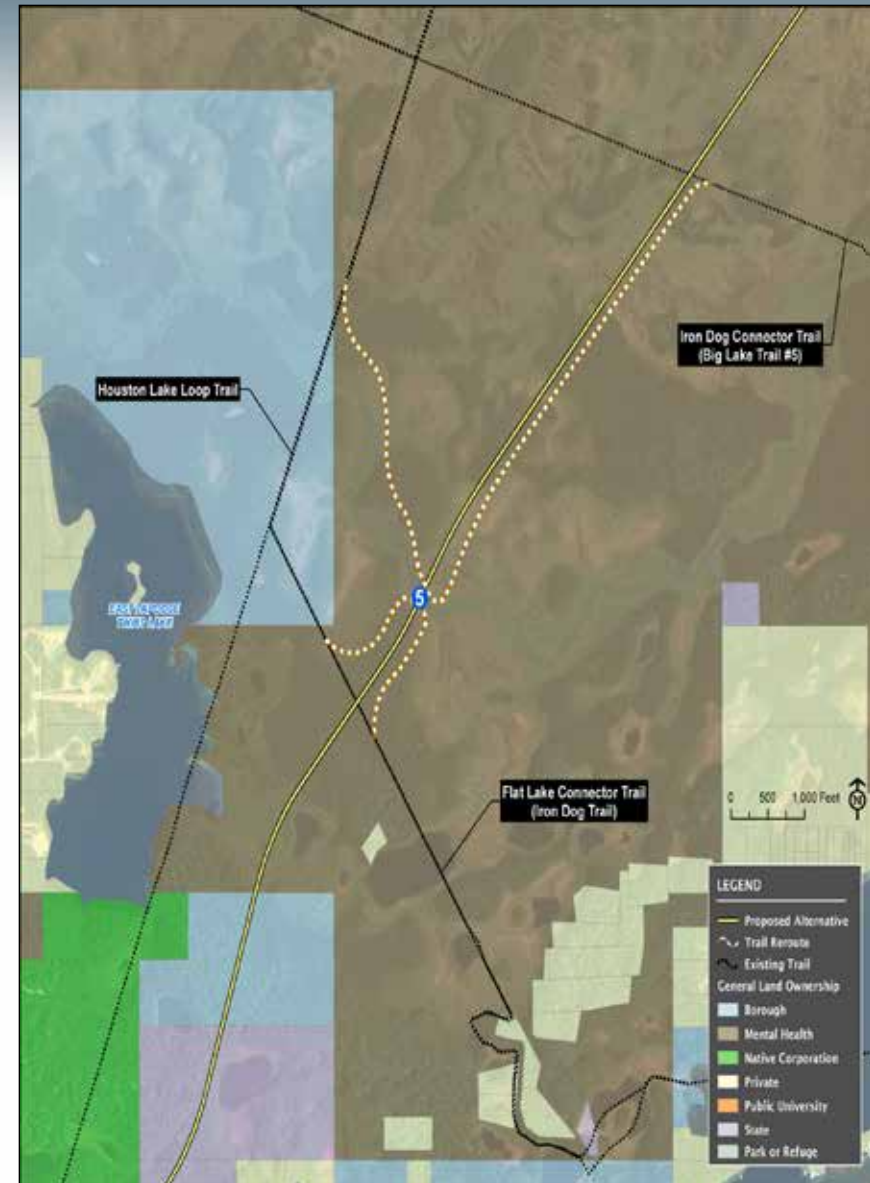
## Comment 8:

Provide a crossing for the Iron Dog Connector Trail (Big Lake Trail #5 in MSB Trails Plan).



## Proposed Resolution:

- Propose a reroute of trail
- A crossing is not a good option at this location due to:
  - Safety concerns
  - Wetland/regulatory concerns
  - Tree cover and topography
- Project Team working with the following regarding the rerouted trail:
  - MHLT to acquire easements
  - Iron Dog Race Board of Directors



# Flat Lake Connector

## Comment 9:

Provide a crossing for the Flat Lake Connector Trail (official Iron Dog trail; between Crossings 5 and 6). This is a well established trail with a legal easement that needs an at-grade crossing. Improvements should include cutting trees at the crossing to allow a wider field of view for approaches.

## Proposed Resolution:

- Participants requested 14' vertical clearance for separated grade crossings
  - 10' vertical clearance is possible without interfering with the shallow underlying groundwater table
- At-grade crossing would have safety concerns
  - Available line-of-sight is minimal
- Propose reroute of trail to Crossing 5
- MSB will attempt to acquire easements for trail reroutes prior to construction.

# Crossing 5

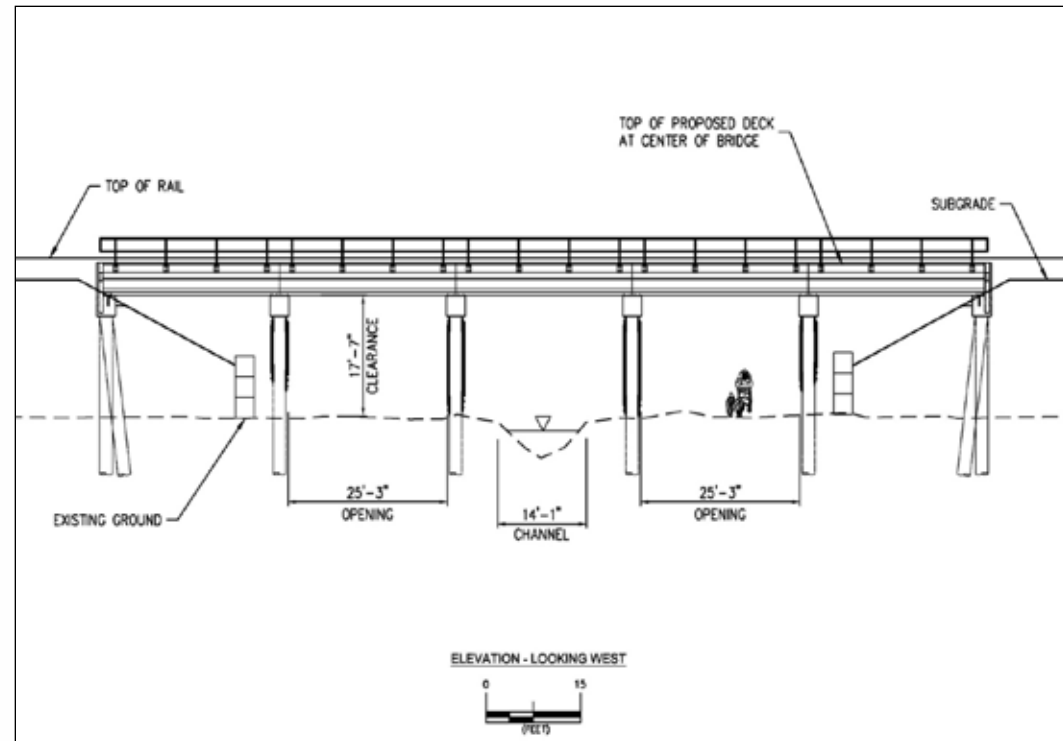
## Comment 10:

Incorporate safety considerations into design for the Houston 6.3 crossing (Crossing 5). Design should account for increased traffic caused by funneling multiple trails into a single crossing and should include wider/higher openings under the bridge, a wider turn radius for the reroutes approaching the crossing location, and a good line of sight approaching and extending under the crossing.

## Proposed Resolution:

The improved structure will provide:

- Trail on both the north and south side of the creek
- 25'+ horizontal clearance to accommodate multiple users and grooming equipment
- 17'+ vertical clearance
- Sufficient line-of-sight
- Approaches with gentle curves (75'-90' radii)



Crossing 5 (H 6.3) profile view.

# Iditarod Race Trail

## Comment 11:

Provide a crossing for the Iditarod Race Trail and obtain an easement from the University of Alaska for this trail should one not currently exist. This trail has reportedly hosted 20 Iditarod races and is used more frequently/regularly than the Historic Iditarod Trail. A separated grade crossing (bridge) is preferred, but if a bridge is not possible, an at-grade crossing would be better than no crossing at all.

## Proposed Resolution:

- MSB is working with UA to secure an easement at this location
- If easement secured, crossing would include:
  - Typical three-span bridge
  - Minimum 14' vertical clearance
  - Approximately 25' of horizontal clearance (center span)
  - Approach improvements
- Reroute to Historic Iditarod Trail if easement cannot be secured

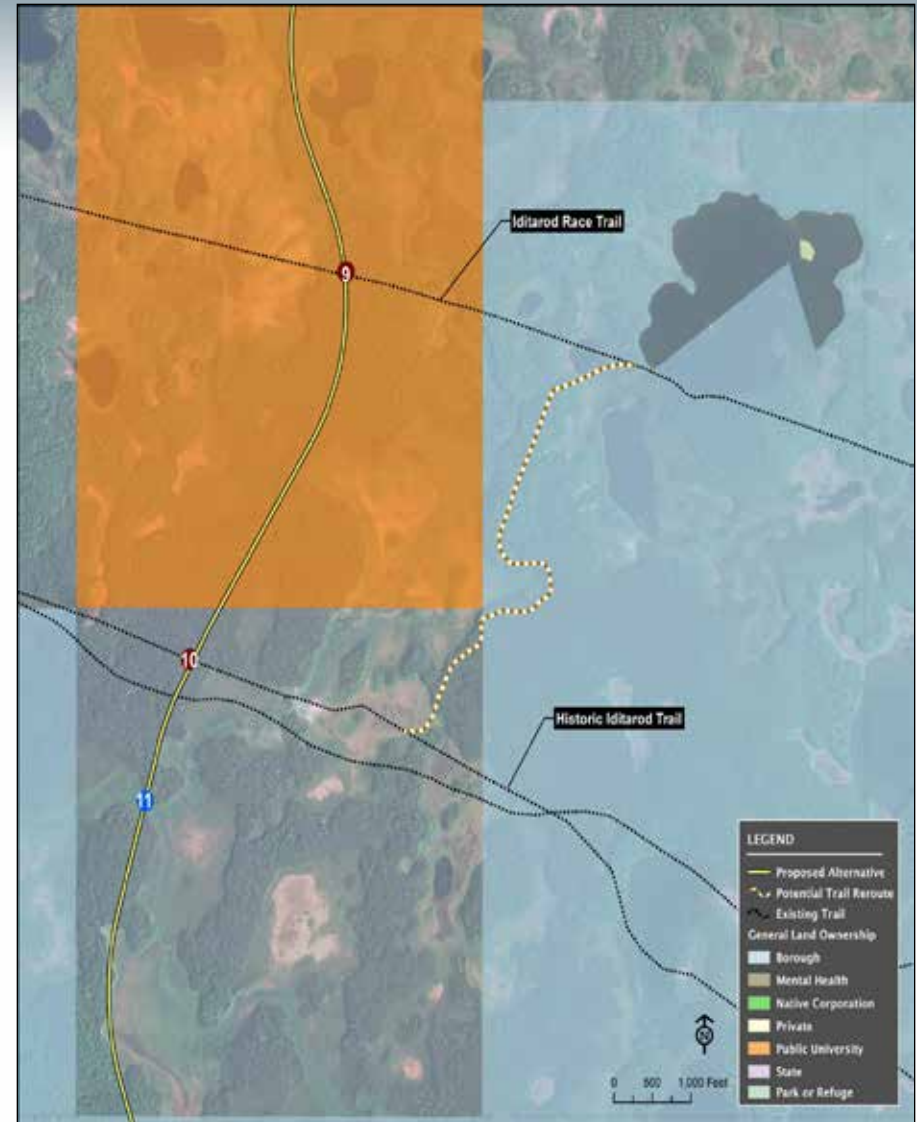
# Historic Iditarod Trail

## Comment 12:

Provide a separated grade crossing (bridge) and trail improvements for the Historic Iditarod Trail (Crossing 10). The Historic Trail is not used as frequently as the Iditarod Race Trail and needs improvement if it is to be regularly used. It is currently too narrow for current and potential increased use and the portion of the trail west of the crossing location near the Little Susitna washes out and is in ill repair.

## Proposed Resolution:

- A separated grade crossing for the Historic Iditarod Trail will be provided.
- Crossing would include:
  - Typical three-span bridge
  - Minimum 14' vertical clearance
  - Approximately 25' of horizontal clearance (center span)
  - Approach improvements
  - Approaches with gentle curves (75'-90' radii)



# Additional Crossing

## Comment 13:

Add a crossing for the trail between current Crossings 12 and 13 (formerly Crossings 13 and 14) that is shown on various maps.

## Proposed Resolution:

- Although it appears on old maps, this former trail is on agricultural land and is no longer used.
- Per consultation with Workshop/Open House participants, this crossing is not needed
- No crossing is proposed in this location
- Baker Farm Road at-grade crossing (Crossing 14) has been added to Project maps

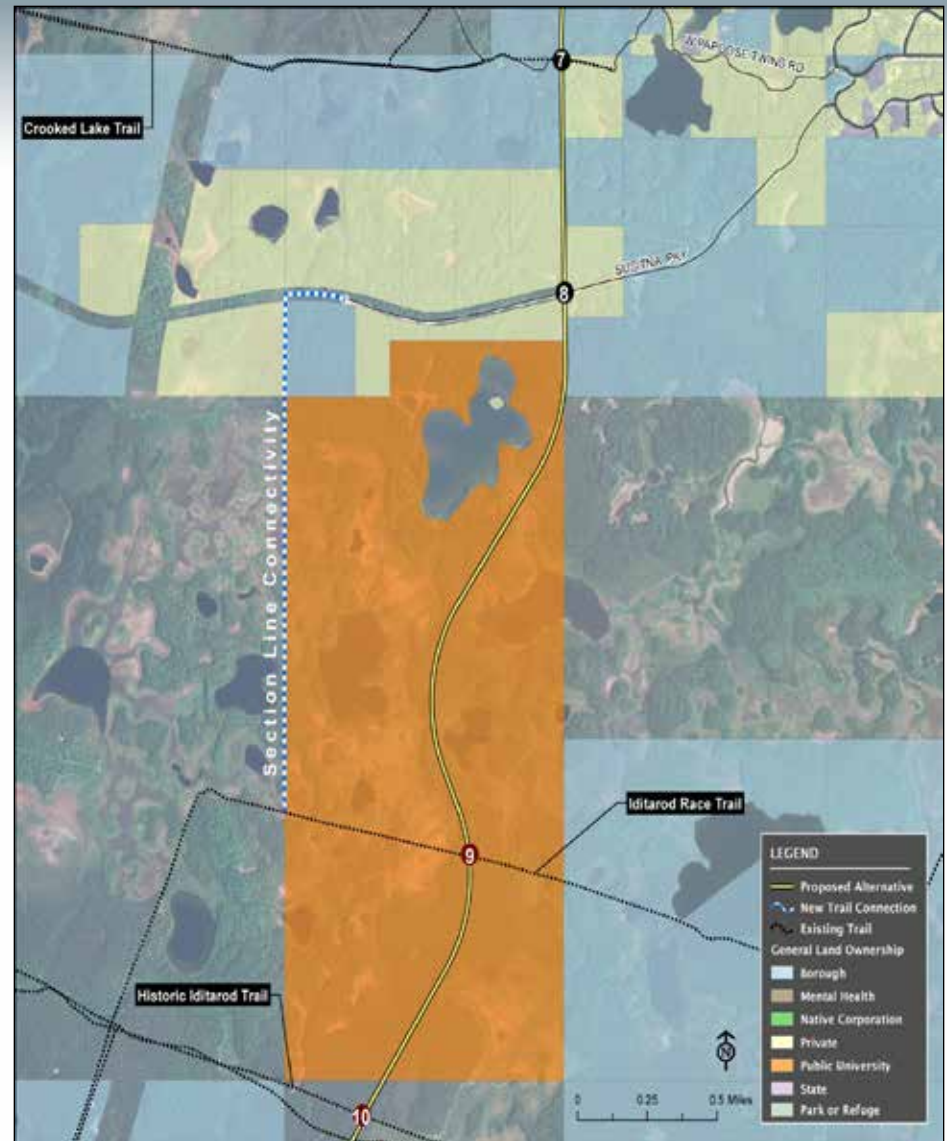
# North-South Connectivity

## Comment 14:

Provide north-south trail along one or both sides of the proposed ROW to help maintain connectivity. Even if there is not a dedicated trail, people would still likely travel along this area.

## Proposed Resolution:

- Proposed railroad alignment is orientated predominately north-south
- Project primarily affects east-west connectivity
- Project Team working with users to maintain east-west connectivity
- Existing north-south trails identified in the FEIS will remain intact
- Gap in north-south connectivity between Crossings 7 and 10 addressed by alternative corridor



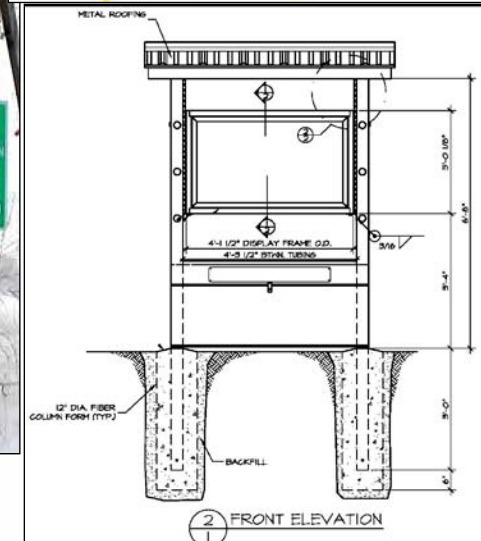
# Signage

## Comment 15:

Adequate signage needs to be provided to warn trail users. Consider standard snow machine/dog sledding trail signage as seen on Alaska State Parks Snowmobile Trail Advisory Committee (SnoTRAC) website, not road side signs.

## Proposed Resolution:

- Appropriate signage placed at key points on trails, trail reroutes, and crossings
- Project Team will develop signage that is consistent with the Alaska State Parks SnoTRAC guidelines
- Kiosks with trail maps placed at key locations to aid users by identifying trail reroutes and connections





# SPUD/National Register

## Comment 16:

Would the Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District (IDSHD) work the same way as the Knik Sled Dog and Recreation Special Land Use District (SPUD) in the MSB? If a SPUD was created for the IDSHD area, would this require future development in the area to go through a formal review process? Consider a special use district similar to the Knik SPUD to create a formal procedure/process for review of projects planned in the IDSHD area and/or to solidify/formalize designation of the IDSHD for the National Register of Historic Places.



## Proposed Resolution:

- Knik SPUD was implemented to:
  - preserve and protect the existing community of Knik and the homestead lifestyle (e.g., outdoor, historical, traditional recreational and agricultural uses),
  - protect legal trails
  - provide for planning and growth in the Knik area
- Knik SPUD ordinance implements land use regulations to
  - ensure compatibility between various land uses
  - encourage developers to recognize and dedicate legal trail ROWs where appropriate
- Any new SPUD/expansion of an existing SPUD would have to be initiated by a Community Council and approved by the MSB Assembly

- The IDSHD has already been found eligible for the National Register
  - Federal agencies would be required to consider the impact of any projects in the area on the IDSHD and avoid, minimize or mitigate any potential adverse effects.
  - Listing and/or nomination of the IDSHD for the NRHP would provide no additional protection or review requirements than are currently in place.
- The Project Team and SHPO will continue to consult to refine the boundaries of the IDSHD

# Trail User Input

## Comment 17:

Relative to the planned third workshop with the mushers group, participants would prefer to postpone that meeting until after MSB's larger trail user meeting. Participants believe that the input of other trail users is necessary as the mushers are not the only users of the trails in the IDSHD.

## Proposed Resolution:

A larger trail user meeting, sponsored by MSB, was held on October 27, 2011.

- Included participants from multiple trail user groups
- Comments/questions from participants were compiled, responded to, and posted on the project website



# Information

## Comment 18:

Provide better/more detailed information on each crossing for the MSB Trail User Open House (10/27/11).

## *Proposed Resolution:*

Proposed crossing design schematics and aerial maps showing relocations and approaches for each crossing are posted on the Project website



# Connectivity

## Comment 19:

When the project was in the earlier phases of the EIS, public meetings participants were told by MSB and ARRC that trails in the MSB trails plan would have continued connectivity. Is this still the case?

## Proposed Resolution:

- Project Team working with user groups, agencies, and land owners to maintain connectivity
- Project Team will not provide crossings for “unofficial trails.”
- Trail with legal easements will be maintained in their current location
- Trails that cannot be maintained in their current location will be rerouted
  - Project Team will work with regulatory agencies and or property owners to attempt to obtain similar legal access and easements for any rerouted trail

# Decision-making

## Comment 20:

How will the final decision be made on the crossings?

## Proposed Resolution:

ARRC will:

- Refine the *Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan* within 60 days of the final Workshop
- Submit this document to PA Signatories, Invited Signatories, and other interested consulting parties.
- Incorporate comments, as appropriate, following a 30-day comment period
- Submit a final *Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan* to PA Signatories, Invited Signatories, and other interested consulting parties and post the document on the project website

# Moose/User Conflicts

## Comment 21:

Moose will also use the dog musher crossings. Funneling wildlife and trail users onto fewer crossings/trails would increase conflicts.

## Proposed Resolution:

Improve visibility for trail users and reduce the potential for wildlife conflicts:

- Longer bridges
- Wider horizontal and vertical openings
- Increased length and width provides ample space for moose and other wildlife to move away from the rail embankment

# Next Steps

- ARRC will develop a *Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan* in consultation between the Working Group, STB and SHPO
- ARRC will submit this document to appropriate parties (e.g., STB, SHPO, Workshop participants)
- Reviewing parties provide comments to ARRC (30-day comment period)
- ARRC will incorporate comments, as appropriate
- ARRC will submit a final *Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan* to appropriate parties and post the document on the project website