



National
Wildlife Refuge
Association



THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

FACT SHEET REGARDING THE PROPOSED ROAD THROUGH IZEMBEK NWR, AK 04/14/08

Suna-X Hovercraft – Speedy Medevacs on a Cushion of Air

- Since February 2007, at least 27 successful medevacs aboard the state-of-the-art Suna-X hovercraft have quickly and safely reached the Cold Bay airport. (King Cove Corporation)
- The hovercraft is “*a lifesaving machine*” and “*it is doing what it is supposed to do*” (Mayor Stanley Mack, Aleutians East Borough (AEB), March 13, 2008)
- The Aleutians East Borough has sold one spare engine of the hovercraft and has sent the second to Pacific Diesel to be sold on consignment. (AEB)
- The AEB began official operations of the hovercraft in February 2007; one month later, March 2007, the AEB proposed selling the hovercraft. AEB has not coordinated the selling of hovercraft parts with the U.S. FWS although in a letter from the agency dated April 13, 2007, they were notified they must. (FWS)
- At 98 feet long and 50 feet wide, the Suna-X can carry 50 passengers and 22 tons of freight, including cars, trucks and an ambulance in case of emergency. (Kvichak Marine Industries)
- The trip across Cold Bay takes only 20 minutes; with the vehicle reaching a top speed of 58 mph. (Aleutians East Borough) Estimated travel on a road between King Cove and Cold Bay is 1 hour, 50 minutes, in NORMAL weather. (Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), 2004, Army Corps of Engineers)
- The craft can travel in wave heights of up to 10 feet 6 inches and winds over 45 miles per hour. Based on historical wind data for the region, the hovercraft should be operable more than 99% of the time. (Kvichak Marine Industries, EIS)
- On July 23, 2007 the hovercraft made a successful 1hr-10 minute, 60-mile, *open ocean* trip from Lenard Harbor to False Pass down the AK Peninsula, demonstrating confidence in the vessel’s reliability. (AEB)
- There have been ZERO problems with the craft since February 2007. The only problems before that pertained to bonding of a carbon-fiber shaft, which was permanently repaired by substituting fasteners for adhesives, and a minor icing problem that was easily corrected by repositioning a component. (Confidential source)
- As of July 19, 2007, the Suna-X had transported more than 1,090 passengers, 110 vehicles, and 110,000 lbs of freight. (Aleutians East Borough)
- As of July 19, 2007, the hovercraft had operated for 372 hours and burned only 4,000 gallons of fuel. Actual fuel consumption of less than 11 gallons/hour was half the original estimate. (AEB)
- Hovercraft operational costs were projected to be \$870,000 and the AEB made a commitment to provide a \$460,000 annual subsidy, which was to cover roughly half of the operational costs of the hovercraft. (EIS)

- Revenues *for only 200 days per year* from just 15 passengers and 2 vehicles per trip, along with freight and mail, would likely approach \$1,000,000 annually. This would more than cover estimated annual operating costs and actually produce a profit for the community. (Calculations based on current fees, one round trip per day and lower than already experienced usage)
- King Cove has not pursued business strategies and available sources of revenue that would underwrite hovercraft operations. (AEB)
- The Suna-X exceeds all the Aleutians East Borough's stated criteria in the EIS for a successfully operating hovercraft:
 1. Provides year-round service
 2. Has 95% reliability
 3. Can operate in winds up to 30 knots
 4. Can operate in seas up to five feet

The Golden Gravel Road to Nowhere:

- AEB has already spent \$26 million on the 17.6-mile road from King Cove airport to the hovercraft terminal adjacent to the Izembek Wilderness, yet they fully completed only 10.4 miles. (Aleutians East Borough) Based on this track record, it will cost far in excess of an additional \$30 million to complete the initial road and construct 9 new miles of road through the Izembek Isthmus Wilderness. This does not include costs for continuing work on the currently impassible 7 miles of road from Cold Bay, and installation of double cable barriers on the proposed section through the wilderness. Thus, the total cost of this unnecessary and dangerous road will likely exceed 56 million in American taxpayer dollars. (Calculations based on cost of current completed road segment, AEB)
- The additional \$30 million to complete the road for a community of 800 could instead underwrite hovercraft operations for more than 60 years, or provide medical care to over 22,000 American children for one year. (Based on road construction expenditures so far, and the Congressional Budget Office)
- The Alaska Department of Transportation operating in Cold Bay is challenged to keep even the flat 2-mile airport runway plowed. (Former Cold Bay resident and EMT, Terri Mach)
- At least 90% of road construction dollars would be derived from federal funds. The State of Alaska cannot use federal funds to maintain a road built with federal dollars. (U.S. Code, Title 23)

Gold-Plated Lobbying Campaign:

- As of November 2007, the Aleutians East Borough had reportedly spent nearly \$225,000 dollars on a K-Street Congressional lobbying and media campaign to convince Congress this road is not a boondoggle. (Anchorage Daily News, November 1, 2007)

Of Interest:

- The Peter Pan Seafoods cannery of King Cove, a subsidiary of the Japanese owned Maruha Nichiro Holdings Inc., transports 500 summer and winter seasonal workers from Cold Bay to King Cove and is interested in this road to reduce transportation costs. (Confidential Source)
- **The National Wildlife Refuge Association and the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges have repeatedly offered to assist the people of King Cove in finding operational funding for the hovercraft or an all-weather helicopter link and a doctor to join the staff of the clinic. Our overtures remain unanswered.**