

Mr. Paul F. Royster

-2-

Sept. 9, 1959

It is the opinion of this office that the low traffic count on the southern portion of the Sterling Highway can be attributed to the dusty gravel surface of the existing road which deters recreation travel. All recent expansion and investment in the Homer community has been pointed in the direction of the tourist trade and as a recreation spot for residents of the nearby populated areas.

Attachments

- c Ltr. Mr. Gordon to Gov. Egan, 8/29/59
- c Ltr. Gov. Egan to Mr. Gordon, 9/2/59
- c Ltr. Senator Gruening to BPR, 9/2/59, w/ack.
- c Ltr. Rep. Rivers to BPR, 9/4/59, w/ack.
- c Ltr. BPR to Gov. Egan, 9/9/59
- Draft to Senator Gruening and Rep. Rivers

P. O. Box 1961
Juneau, Alaska

10-00

September 9, 1959

The Honorable William A. Egan
Governor of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

My dear Governor Egan:

Please refer to your letter of September 2, 1959, to Mr. Harris L. Gordon of Homer, Alaska, a copy of which was furnished to this office.

With a substantial increase in Federal-aid highway fund allocations to Alaska under the full formula, the schedule for improving the Sterling Highway between Soldotna and Homer can be greatly improved. The section from Homer northward to Anchor River, a distance of 13.9 miles, is now under active reconstruction and will be completed about August 1, 1960. Improvement of the remaining section from Anchor River northward to Soldotna, a distance of 60.5 miles, is in the current approved program. Surveys and design are being pushed and we are very hopeful that three separate construction contracts can be awarded in the spring of 1960 with completion in the summer of 1961. Paving may be possible northward from Homer in late 1960, and southward from Soldotna in late 1961. The completion of the entire section would come in the fall of 1962. This is a rather tight schedule but we are optimistic that it can be met.

At this point a word of caution is advisable. In former days people of Alaska were happy to see roads built and were willing to grant right-of-way without hesitation and without cost. I can recall that you personally donated considerable right-of-way for the improvement and paving of the Richardson Highway at your homesite at Mile 58 on that highway. A large part of the Kenai Peninsula has been homesteaded, much of it under favorable veterans' rights. After securing patent the owners have moved and are difficult to trace. An increasing number are unwilling to accept appraised offers for right-of-way, which requires that we resort to condemnation, a slow and exacting procedure. Still others, including a member of the present State Legislature, question the legality of reservations for right-of-way in existing Federal legislation. REA power lines parallel and cross the highway at many points. A reasonable length of time must also be allowed the local public utility districts to budget funds and physically relocate their lines. These are all factors that are not apparent to the average citizen who can only comprehend his personal inconvenience while all this is going on.

Governor Egan

-2-

September 9, 1959

Please be assured that all concerned will exert every effort to keep our greatly increased highway program moving on schedule. We appreciate your constructive statement to Mr. Gordon that the construction work under way by those in charge of Alaska's highway program is actually designed to remedy the problems and inconveniences that are being experienced at the present time.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. J. Niemi
Regional Engineer

cc: Mr. Royster, Washington office ✓ Mr. Gordon

P. O. Box 1961
Juneau, Alaska

September 9, 1959

10-00

The Honorable Ralph J. Rivers
Member of Congress
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Rivers:

Please refer to your letter of September 4, 1959, regarding
improvement of the Sterling Highway to Homer, Alaska

In accordance with established policy your inquiry is being
forwarded to our Washington office for reply.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. J. Niemi
Regional Engineer

cc: Washington office

RALPH J. RIVERS
ALASKA

CHARLES W. HUSHES
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

September 4, 1959

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Mr. William J. Niemi
Bureau of Public Roads
P.O. Box 1961
Juneau, Alaska

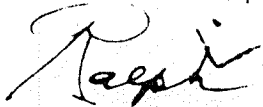
Dear Bill:

Recently, I have had complaints from the lower Kenai Peninsula area regarding the poor condition of the Sterling Highway from Soldatna south. The information that has come to me is to the effect that completion of this project cannot be expected until 1963. Apparently the poor condition of the highway is resulting in a considerable slackening of traffic into the area, causing some alarm among business and civic groups.

I would appreciate any advice you can give me in this regard, so I will be better able to determine what assistance I might be able to render these people.

Thanking you for your kind cooperation and with best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



RALPH J. RIVERS
Member of Congress

RJR:chd

PR 4930

P. O. Box 1961
Juneau, Alaska

10-00

September 9, 1959

The Honorable Ernest Gruening
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

My dear Senator Gruening:

Please refer to your letter of September 2, 1959, regarding
improvement of the Sterling Highway to Homer, Alaska.

In accordance with established policy your inquiry is being
forwarded to our Washington office for reply.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. J. Niemi
Regional Engineer

cc: Washington office ✓

ARMED E. MURPHY, MISSY, ENGINEER

CLAYTON P. ANDERSON, N. DAK. HENRY SPRINGER, IOWA
NORRIS H. JOHNSON, WYOM. THOMAS H. KETCHER, CALIF.
MURPHY E. BRADSHAW, WYOM. GARRY CHILDWATER, ARIZ.
ALAN DIXIE, MISS. GORDON ALLEY, OHLA.
NICHOLAS L. MENZIEBER, OHIO. THOS. E. MARTIN, MISS.
JOHN A. GARNER, MISS. MISSOURI
FRANK C. GIBBS, IOWA
JERRY S. CUNNINGHAM, ALABAMA
FRANK E. MORGAN, VYOM.

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS

REBECCO L. CALLAGHAN, STAFF SECRETARY

September 2, 1959

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Mr. William J. Niemi
Regional Engineer
Bureau of Public Roads
Federal Building
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Bill:

Numerous complaints have reached me from Homer about delays in paving of the Sterling Highway. People in that community seem to be under the impression the project will not be completed until 1963.

I would appreciate an explanation of why this will take so long, particularly in view of the fact that highway construction funds should be more than adequate now that we are to receive a full state's share under the Federal Aid Highway Act. The condition of the road, according to complaints reaching me, has been such that many businesses on the Kenai Peninsula have suffered this year. Is there any reason why these people should have to contemplate four more such seasons?

With best wishes, I remain

Cordially yours,

Ernest Gruening
ERNEST GRUENING

PR 4980

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

September 2, 1959

Mr. Harris L. Gordon
P. O. Box 194
Homer, Alaska

Dear Mr. Gordon:

I regret learning of the economic failure on the lower Kenai Peninsula as indicated in your letter of August 29. It had certainly been my hope that this year, 1959, would see the biggest tourist boom in history over your area.

However, I cannot help but feel that the construction work underway by those in charge of Alaska's highway program is actually designed to remedy the problems and inconveniences that are being experienced at the present time. If this is not the intent of the work being conducted on the highways in your area, then I would agree that changes should be made. I am taking the liberty of sending a copy of your letter over to the Bureau of Public Roads officials. Perhaps they can shed some light on the underlying reason for the work now being accomplished.

I do hope that the situation in your area does not continue to be as vexing and annoying as you point it out to be at the present time.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

William A. Egan
Governor

cc: Mr. William J. Niemi, Regional Engineer
Bureau of Public Roads
P. O. Box 1961
Juneau, Alaska

DR-4180

HEADY HOTEL

On Beautiful Kachemak Bay

RECEIVED
AUG 31 1959

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

P. O. Box 194
Ketchikan, Alaska

Proprietors
Thomas M. Gordon

Reserve with or without bath

August 29, 1959

The Honorable William A. Egan
The Executive Mansion
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Sir:

As business people here in Homer, Alaska and especially being in the hotel business we are becoming worried over the situation that has arisen here.

The tourist trade that has picked up tremendously this year in other parts of Alaska, especially in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas is passing us by. Our tourist business has dropped off nearly one half of what it was in 1958. This decreased activity is the result of word being circulated in the Anchorage area that the roads on the Lower Kenai Peninsula are in poor condition due to the construction work between Anchor Point and Homer and to the rough dusty sixty mile unpaved portion between Anchor Point and Soldotna; Soldotna being the end of pavement from Anchorage.

At a recent Homer Chamber of Commerce meeting one of the Bureau of Public Roads engineers said that the work program was laid out to keep the road under construction until 1963. Is the Federal and the new State politicians trying to strangle the Lower Kenai Peninsula? The present program affects Kasilef, Glas Guleh, Minilehik, Oahos, Anchor Point and Homer. Due to a poor fishing year as well as a poor tourist season these places are hard pressed.

Will we have to apply for disaster funds or attempt to get men into strategic positions who are interested in this part of Alaska? We want to be self supporting so feel that aid given us in the form of speeding up road construction would be more advantageous for all concerned.

We know that you are a busy man but hope that you give some consideration to this matter that is vital to this section of the State.

Very truly yours,

15108
Thomas M. Gordon

SEP 1 1 1959

Honorable Ernest Gruening
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator Gruening:

This is in further reply to your recent telegram to Mr. William J. Niemi, and supplements our letter to you dated September 8.

We now have the detailed written report referred to in that letter, advising us that no evidence of arbitrary or discriminatory action on the part of our field forces has been found; that our Division Engineer has dealt in a patient and realistic manner with trespassers on the right-of-way of a public highway and it is now learned that the heat has largely gone out of the complaints made to you.

The work of removing drainage obstructions from the roadside ditches was begun early in the summer at Mile Post 330, located 33 miles south of Fairbanks and was continued north toward Fairbanks. No discord or argument on the part of the property owners was encountered until early August when similar work was commenced in the Big Bend area. The problem was more acute there than in other as yet uncorrected areas, and it was desirable to complete the work before freeze-up time.

The complaining parties concerned were verbally notified early in the summer of the unauthorized filling of roadside ditches. Property owners assured our Division Engineer that they would apply for permits and construct approved driveways at a later date. One property owner did so, but non-compliance on the part of the others caused water to back up over his land.

Subsequently, both the Maintenance General Foreman and the State police patrolmen were given assurances that the required work would be performed. Finally, on August 14, the Division Engineer notified all trespassing property owners in the area, by certified mail, that maintenance crews would begin the ditch cleaning operation on August 24 and that costs incurred in removing the unauthorized obstructions would be at the owners' expense. No corrective action was taken by any of the offenders, therefore work was begun on August 25, as we have previously reported to you.

The charge of discrimination is further answered by information that the South Cushman Street drainage is such that no roadside ditching is required. However, in this area the highway is to be reconstructed as a street, with curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. Access to the highway will then be controlled by authorized curb cuts.

We trust these facts are sufficient to clarify the situation to your satisfaction. Of course we stand ready to supply any further information you may require as to Federal-aid highways in Alaska.

Sincerely yours,

ELLIS L. ARMSTRONG
Commissioner of Public Roads

RPRosengren:cmd
Control No. PR 4901
cc: Files(2)
Mr. Tallamy
Mr. Armstrong
Mr. Mannerow
Col. Rosengren
Mr. Royster
CCUnit

Cleared Through
Administrator's Correspondence Unit

23-10

SEP 9 1959

Cong. Bk
X Alaska
F-052-1(2)
Denali Hwy.

Honorable Ernest Gruening
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Gruening:

Your letter of April 23, 1959, to Regional Engineer Wm. J. Niemi, Juneau, Alaska, requested information regarding the relocation of the Denali Highway at Mile 20, which would affect the property of Chalmer Johnson, owner of Tangle Lake Lodge.

Our Alaska Regional office has now completed studies of future improvements of the Denali Highway on the first twenty-mile section. Decision has now been reached to follow the existing road at the Tangle Lake Lodge location which will alleviate the fears of Mr. Johnson.

We are pleased to notify you of this satisfactory conclusion to the study with the thought you may wish to pass on the information to Mr. Johnson.

Sincerely yours,

S

Paul F. Royster
Assistant to the
Federal Highway Administrator

(EEErhart) Control Nos. PR-4137 and 4941 (9/9/59)

W. J. Niemi:nk

cc - Files (2)

Federal Hwy.Projs.Div. ✓

Mr. B. D. Tallamy

Mr. E. L. Armstrong

Mr. W. J. Niemi - (2-cc)

CC Unit - Room 810

Mr. Royster - Room 814

Cleared Through
Administrator's Correspondence Unit

Office Memorandum • BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Paul F. Royster, Assistant Commissioner
23-00 for Operations, Washington, D. C.

DATE: September 2, 1959

FROM : Wm. J. Niemi, Regional Engineer *WJN*
10-00 Juneau, Alaska

SUBJECT: Congressional Correspondence -- Senator Ernest Gruening

By memorandum of July 8, 1959, we furnished you with an interim reply to Senator Gruening's request for information regarding relocation of the Denali Highway near Chalmer Johnson's lodge.

We have completed our field investigations and have decided that relocation of the highway at this time is not warranted. We will retain the highway at its present location in the improvement program, thereby eliminating the concern of Mr. Johnson. There is attached a draft of a proposed reply to Senator Gruening.

Attachment
(draft of proposed reply to Senator Gruening) - *used.*

SEP 8 1959
BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

PR 4941

DRAFT

Dear Senator Gruening:

Your letter of April 23, 1959, to Regional Engineer Wm. J. Niemi, Juneau, Alaska, requested information regarding the relocation of the Denali Highway at Mile 20, which would affect the property of Chalmer Johnson, owner of Tangle Lake Lodge.

Our Alaska Regional office has now completed studies of future improvements of the Denali Highway on the first twenty-mile section. Decision has now been reached to follow the existing road at the Tangle Lake Lodge location which will alleviate the fears of Mr. Johnson.

We are pleased to notify you of this satisfactory conclusion to the study with the thought you may wish to pass on the information to Mr. Johnson.

Very truly yours,

REC'D
FEB 8 1960
ALASKA REGIONAL ENGINEER
JUNE 20 1959

PR 4941

Office Memorandum • BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS
 UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Paul F. Royster, Assistant Commissioner for DATE: April 29, 1959
 23-00 Operations, Washington, D. C.

FROM : Wm. J. Niemi, Regional Engineer WJN
 10-00 Juneau, Alaska

SUBJECT: Congressional Correspondence -- Senator Ernest Gruening

Attached is a copy of a letter and map received from Senator Gruening under date of April 23, 1959, together with our interim reply.

As indicated in the letter to Senator Gruening we shall make a full investigation and report when field conditions will permit. F

Attachments 2
 (c ltr fm Senator Gruening w/c map)
 (c our ltr 4/29 to Senator Gruening)

APR 29 1959

RECEIVED

PR 4173

Mr. William J. Niemi

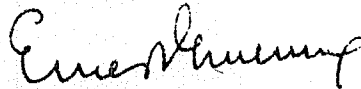
-2-

April 23, 1959

to Mr. Johnson, it would bisect the only land suitable for the building of an airstrip. He states that there is no emergency landing strip in the area at present and it is a badly needed facility.

With best wishes, I remain,

Cordially yours,

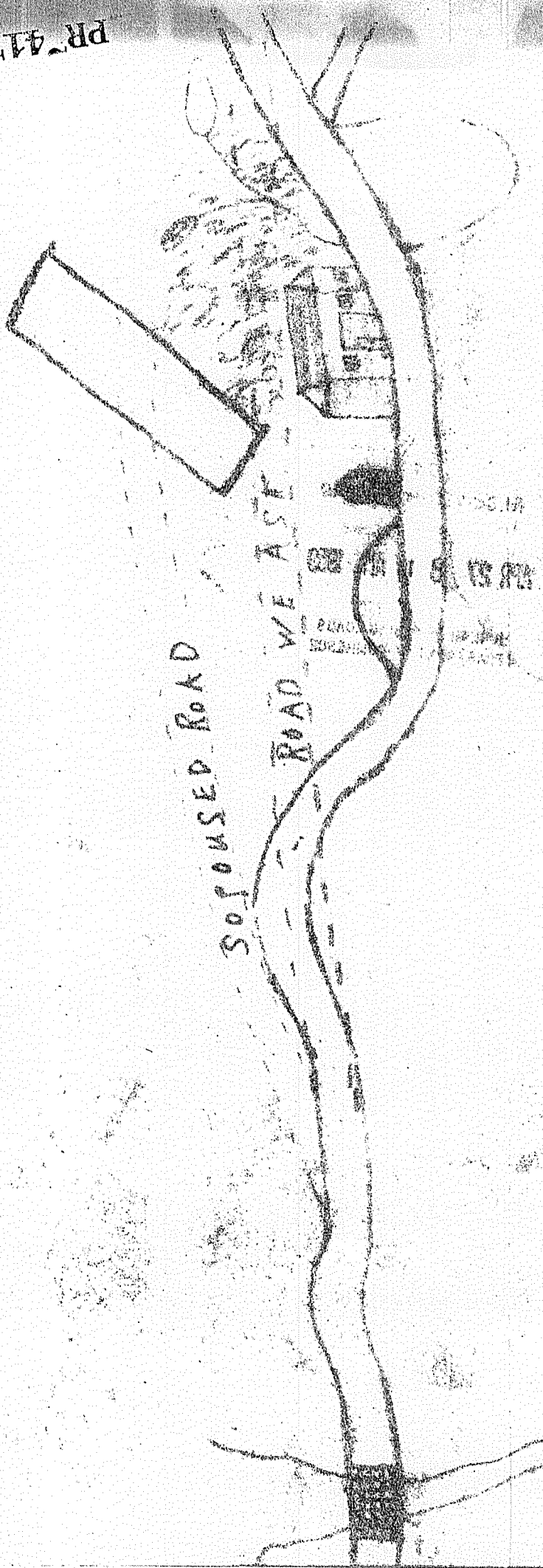


ERNEST GRUENING

Enclosure

DR 4173

PR 4173



Juneau, Alaska

10-00

April 29, 1959

The Honorable Ernest Gruening
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Senator Gruening:

Your letter of April 23, 1959, expresses a concern over the relocation of the Denali Highway at Mile 20 which would affect the property of Chalmer C. Johnson, owner of Tangle Lake Lodge.

We have just completed design plans for improving the first section of the Denali Highway which was constructed by Alaska Road Commission forces as a pioneer type road. Before the plans are put out for bids we plan a full field review on the ground so that the whole project from beginning to end may be properly studied from an engineering standpoint. Such a review cannot take place until the snow is gone and the road is open, sometime after the first of June. At this time we can assure you that even if the road is relocated, access to Mr. Johnson's lodge will not be eliminated.

When a full investigation of all the factors has been completed the information will be transmitted to Mr. Tallamy in accordance with Public Roads procedures.

Sincerely,

Wm. J. Niemi
Regional Engineer

cc: Mr. Royster ✓

MAY 4 - 1959

*ERL**Office Memorandum* • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Mr. Paul F. Royster, Assistant Commissioner for Operations, Washington, D. C. DATE: July 8, 1959
23-00

FROM : Wm. J. Niemi, Regional Engineer
10-00.3 Juneau, Alaska

Ref: F-052-1(2)

SUBJECT: Project F-052-1(2), Denali Highway, Paxson to Tangle River - Possible relocation of the highway near Chalmer Johnson's lodge, approximately Mile 20

1/2
This memorandum is in the nature of an interim reply to yours of April 29, 1959, on the above subject. A field review by BPR regional and division personnel was made in the latter part of June with a view to finding the best highway location adjacent to Mr. Johnson's lodge. As a result of this field review, additional survey information was found desirable. This information is now being obtained in the field and after it has been received and studied, we will come to a definite decision as to the location of the road in this area.

As soon as possible we will give you the required information so that Senator Gruening may be advised as to our proposed action in this matter.

707 J 4 1959

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