

Statement of Significance

Taylor Highway

Prepared for

**Alaska Department of
Transportation and Public
Facilities**

December 2014

*DOT&PF Note October 2015:
One segment (MP 0-111.6)
determined Not Eligible for NRHP
with SHPO concurrence 2/19/15.
Integrity and NRHP eligibility status
not yet determined for northern segment
beyond O'Brien Creek.*

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Prepared by



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1. Introduction

This statement of significance was prepared as a component of the Applied Historic Context of Alaska Roads Project completed in 2012-2014 for the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF). The project began with the development of the *Alaska Roads Historic Overview: Applied Historic Context of Alaska's Roads* (Roads Overview) (February 2014) and the *Methodology for Assessing National Register of Historic Places Eligibility* (Roads Methodology) (December 2014).

For the project a select number of roads with potential for individual National Register of Historic Places (National Register) eligibility were identified for evaluation of significance. This study is limited to the evaluation of the road's significance. If a road meets one or more areas of significance, identification of essential physical features and an assessment of integrity needs to be completed to determine National Register eligibility. These statements of significance apply the Roads Methodology and utilize contextual information from the Roads Overview. The Roads Methodology outlines that the entire length of a road should be considered when evaluating significance. The entire length of the road was considered in the development of this statement of significance.

This report identifies and describes the important historic themes associated with the Taylor Highway. It summarizes these important themes to place the development of the Taylor Highway within an appropriate historic context to evaluate its historical significance.

2. Description of the Road

The Taylor Highway (Alaska Heritage Resources Survey [AHRs] numbers TNX-00238 and EAG-00743; Coordinated Data System [CDS] number 250000) is a 157-mile road that runs from Tetlin Junction at Mile 1302 of the Alaska Highway, extends north through the Fortymile River drainage basin, and terminates in Eagle in east-central Alaska.¹ The Top of the World Highway branches off the Taylor Highway at Jack Wade Junction (Mile 95.6) and extends east for 13.5 miles to the Canadian border, connecting to Dawson City in the Yukon Territory of Canada. The Taylor Highway is owned by the Alaska DOT&PF and is located within the Southeast Fairbanks Census Area of the Unorganized Borough.

The Taylor Highway runs through the Yukon-Tanana Upland, which consists of un-glaciated ridges between the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. The road extends through an area drained by the Fortymile River and its tributaries, which flow into the Yukon River to the north, and passes through the communities of Chicken and Jack Wade before reaching Eagle.

The Taylor Highway is designated Alaska Route 5 and traverses a small portion of the Eagle Mining District and the Fortymile Mining District (district)—see the map on the next page.² From Eagle to O'Brien Creek the highway follows the approximate route of a preexisting early-twentieth-century trail and wagon road maintained by the Alaska Road Commission (ARC) named the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road that served to provide a connection from Eagle to the mining camps in the district and was subsequently included into the Taylor Highway. From O'Brien Creek to Chicken the route of the Taylor follows the general route of earlier sled and pack trails. The remainder of the route was constructed by the ARC in 1946. The ARC began preliminary surveys for the highway in 1945. Beginning in 1946 the road was constructed using stage construction, a technique refined by the ARC throughout the first half of the twentieth century, in which segments of roadway were allowed to settle for at least one season between preliminary grading and final surfacing to account for settling in permafrost areas. Substantial construction was completed by 1953 as an improved gravel road with further areas of permafrost requiring additional construction through 1957.

During its construction the road was referred to variously by the ARC as the Eagle-Forty Mile-Tanacross Road, Tok-Eagle Road, Fortymile Road, Tetlin-Eagle Road, Route 3, and Route 331 before being designated the Taylor Highway in 1951. Today, the first 63 miles of the road are paved while the remaining 94 miles are gravel. Numerous bridges cross the Fortymile River and its tributaries along the

¹ In 1957, when project construction was completed, the ARC lists the length of the highway as 161 miles. Coordinated Data System (CDS) database data provided by the Alaska DOT&PF to Mead & Hunt, Inc. on August 11, 2013, indicates a current length of 157 miles.

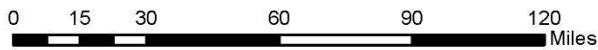
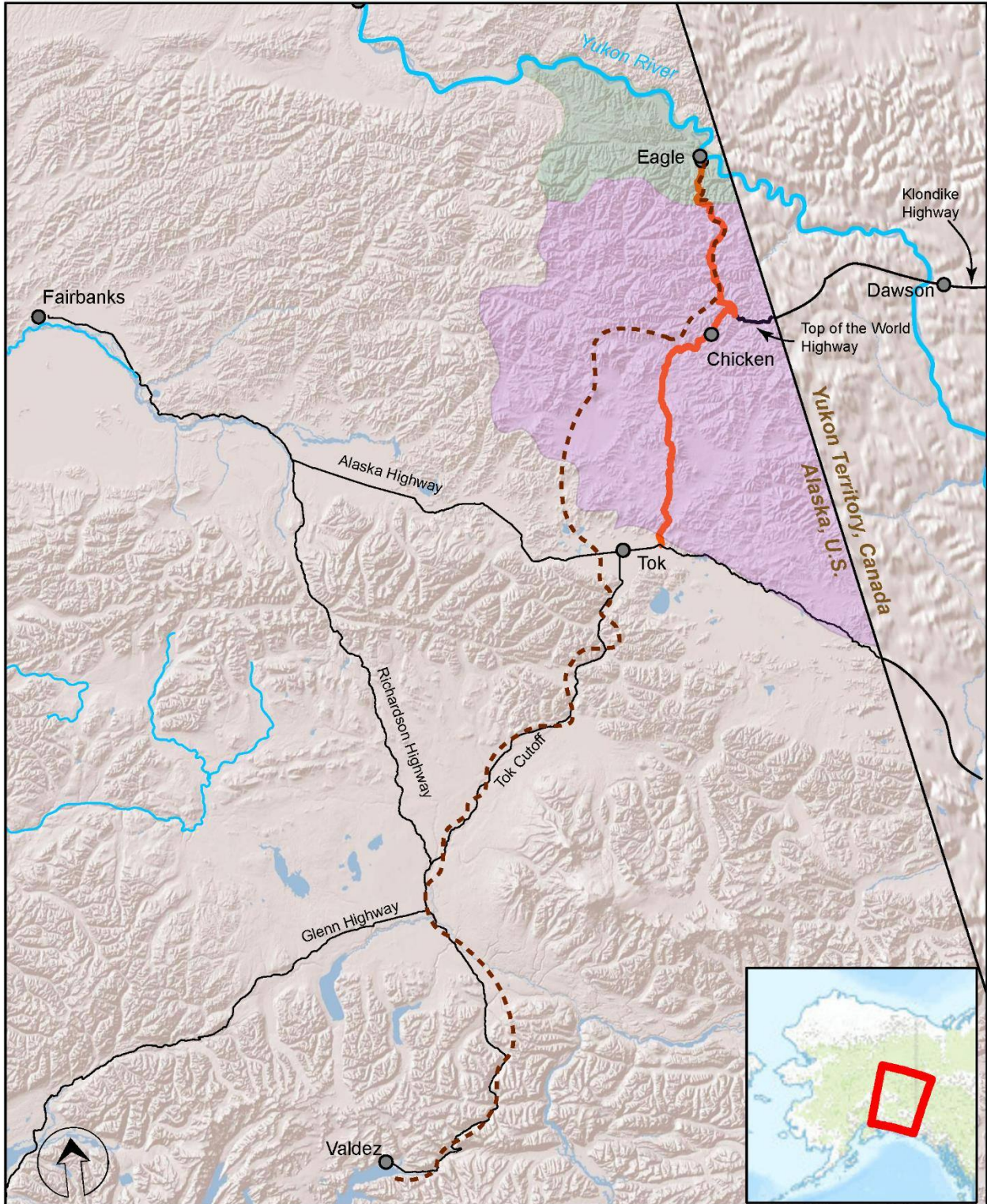
² The Taylor Highway passes through both mining districts; however, the majority of the highway is located within the Fortymile Mining District and only a small portion of the Eagle Mining District. Prospecting and production in the Eagle Mining District was relatively minor when compared to the Fortymile Mining District, which was the larger and more significant district. As a result, this statement of significance primarily addresses the role of mining within the Fortymile Mining District as it relates to the Taylor Highway. Sources generally describe gold mining activities in the areas around Eagle and Chicken as it relates to the Fortymile Mining District. This document uses the term 'district' to refer to the Fortymile Mining District, and statistics cited for gold production relate to the Fortymile District rather than the Eagle District.

Section 2
Description of the Road

length of the Taylor Highway. The road is seasonally maintained to be open from May 15 through October 15 and is not maintained during the winter. The Taylor Highway serves as a main supply route to Eagle and to Dawson City via the Top of the World Highway and provides access to public recreational areas along its route.

A map illustrating the location of the Taylor Highway in relation to other major features is provided on the next page.

Section 2
Description of the Road



Base map Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS,

- Eagle Mining District
- Fortymile Mining District
- Valdez-Eagle Trail
- Taylor Highway

3. Historic Context

A. Early development

Discovery of gold in 1886 on the Fortymile River near the Canadian town of Fortymile initiated gold prospecting and additional discoveries, most notably the strike on the Klondike River (over a decade later). These discoveries resulted in a rush of miners into the Alaskan interior. Initial prospecting and mining expanded along the headwaters of the Fortymile River from Canada into the Alaska territory, leading to the establishment of mining camps and the settlement of the communities of Eagle and Chicken.³ In response to the newly expanded population of miners in and around Eagle, in 1897 the U.S. Secretary of War authorized the construction of a military fort, later named Fort Egbert, at Eagle in order to “provide law and order, protect commerce, care for impoverished miners, build roads and trails, and develop better communication with the nation.”⁴

Placer gold mining became the main activity in the area around Eagle and the Fortymile River and its tributaries, and the district developed, accounting for much of the area’s economy. The influx of population into the district led to the establishment of camps to house the miners and the need to transport supplies from Dawson City via the Yukon River either to Eagle or the Canadian community of Fortymile. From Eagle, supplies traveled overland utilizing the waterways and a network of sled roads and pack trails between Chicken and Eagle.⁵

In 1898 the Army sent Captain William Abercrombie to explore the Copper and Tanana Rivers and some of their tributaries, and to find a suitable route from Valdez to Fort Egbert and the town of Eagle, both of which were accessed primarily via the Yukon River from Canada at that time.⁶ In addition to mapping and geologic information, the government was interested in establishing an “All-American” route to the gold fields on the Yukon River, rather than relying on existing routes through Canada.⁷ With completion of the 1898 expeditions, the War Department issued General Order 51 on March 20, 1899, and sent Captain Abercrombie to oversee the construction of a trail from Valdez to Copper Center, and from there find the

³ Several sources provide the history of gold mining in the region, such as Michael Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek: Early Days in the Yukon* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 1994).

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Historic Fort Egbert: History of the Fort*, http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/culture/fort_egbert/ft_egbert_history.html (accessed 7 January 2013); Bureau of Land Management, *Eagle-Fort Egbert: A Remnant of the Past*, Bureau of Land Management, n.d., 3.

⁵ Rolfe G. Buzzell, *Cultural Resource Survey of the Taylor Highway MP 64.5 – 95.6 and the Top of the World Highway MP 0.0 – 13.5 (Jack Wade Junction to the U.S. – Canadian Border)*, Project No. 66446 (Office of History and Archaeology Report No. 94, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, July 2003), 1.

⁶ Clause-M Naske, *Paving Alaska’s Trails: The Work of the Alaska Road Commission* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of American, Inc., 1986), 7; U.S. Army, Alaska, 7, 38.

⁷ Ronald J. Burr Neely, Glenda R. Lesondak, and Russell H. Sakett, *Early Transportation Routes, Fort Wainwright, Alaska*, (Fort Collins, Colo.: Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, Colorado State University, 2003), 11.

best route to Eagle.⁸ With Captain Abercrombie clearing the trail north from Valdez, in 1900 Lieutenant Wilds P. Richardson (the later the first president of the ARC) completed construction of the fort and began clearing the northern portion of the trail from Eagle south toward Valdez. As part of that effort, the builders abandoned the dangerous Valdez Glacier route, previously used by prospectors to reach the interior, in favor of a route up the Lowe River valley, through Keystone Canyon on the north side, and over Thompson Pass to the Tonsina Valley.⁹ By the end of the 1899 construction season, 93 miles of trail had been built that were suitable for pack horses. The first recorded round-trip over the Valdez-Eagle Trail occurred later that year.¹⁰

At the same time, the Army was seeking to improve communication by establishing a telegraph line to connect the territory with the contiguous U.S. Efforts by the Army to construct the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) began in 1900. In total the line extended from Nome to Fairbanks, on to Fort Egbert, and then traveled to Fort Liscum near Valdez, at which point cables were extended underwater in the Pacific Ocean to the southeast, eventually linking the territory to Seattle and avoiding a route through foreign soil. With the completion of Fort Egbert, construction of the telegraph line from Fort Egbert to Valdez was completed by 1902 and operated until to 1934.¹¹ While the trail assisted in the construction and maintenance of the WAMCATS line, its primary function was to provide an important overland access route used by miners and other settlers to access the interior of the territory all the way to Eagle.¹²

The Valdez-Eagle Trail and the WAMCATS line generally followed the same route, extending south from Eagle; briefly following the American Creek; traversing the mining camps of Liberty, Fortymile, Steel Creek, Franklin, and Chicken; before extending west and south to Kechumstuk and Gakona and finally reaching Valdez.¹³ The camps the trail passed were engaged in early placer mining, characterized by simple, non-mechanical methods to extract easily accessible deposits of gold in gravel of riverbeds. By 1903 many of the most productive and easily accessible deposits of gold within the Fortymile District had already been extracted using these methods.¹⁴ Beginning in the early twentieth century, the methods to

⁸ United States Army, Alaska, *The Army's Role in the Building of Alaska*. Pamphlet 360-5. Prepared by the Public Service Officer, Headquarters, United States Army, Alaska, 1969, 41-42; Naske, *Paving Alaska's Trails: The Work of the Alaska Road Commission*, 7.

⁹ United States Army, Alaska, *The Army's Role in the Building of Alaska*, Pamphlet 360-5, prepared by the Public Service Officer, Headquarters, United States Army, Alaska, 1969, 41-42.

¹⁰ Bureau of Land Management, *Eagle-Valdez Trail Northern Portion*, 8.

¹¹ Bureau of Land Management, *Eagle-Fort Egbert: A Remnant of the Past*, Bureau of Land Management, n.d., 10-12; Morgan Blanchard, "Wires, Wireless and Wilderness: A Sociotechnical Interpretation of the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS)," Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Anthropology, 2010.

¹² Bureau of Land Management, *Eagle-Valdez Trail Northern Portion*, 3, 5.

¹³ Bureau of Land Management, *Eagle-Valdez Trail Northern Portion*, 6-7.

¹⁴ Buzzell, 13-14; Edward H. Cobb, *Placer Deposits of Alaska, Geological Survey Bulletin 1374: An Inventory of the Placer Mines and Prospects of Alaska, Their History and Geologic Setting* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 133.

extract gold from the remaining less-productive deposits required machinery to process large amounts of earth, which led to the introduction of dredging in 1907 and accounted for most gold production in the Fortymile District.¹⁵

In 1905 Congress established the Board of Road Commissioners (later renamed the ARC), which assumed responsibility for road construction and maintenance in the territory of Alaska.¹⁶ Over the next several years attempts were made to improve the trails from Eagle to area mining camps within the district. In 1907 the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road (historically designated as Route 11) extended north from Steele Creek along the Fortymile, O'Brien, and American Creeks to Eagle. In 1909 additional work was completed on the road, extending it another 9 miles, and by 1915 the ARC reported that a wagon road from Eagle extended a total distance of 19 miles to O'Brien Creek (historically designated as Route 11A). In addition to this wagon road, the ARC maintained several trails that extended from the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road south of Eagle and linked the mining camps.¹⁷

After initial improvements a combination of factors, including the low population of the district, the high cost of transporting freight, and the high cost of road construction and maintenance, did not justify the cost of further improvements to local trails and wagon roads. The ARC continued maintaining the wagon road and the local network of trails from the 1910s to 1930s.¹⁸ Prior to World War II, few improvements occurred, which encouraged the continued reliance on the area's rivers to transport labor and supplies to supplement the wagon road and local trails. Transport of supplies via airplanes began in the late 1930s, and several small airstrips were constructed within the district, most notably at Chicken.¹⁹ By 1945 the district remained isolated and remote from the rest of the territory.²⁰

The introduction of dredging nearly four decades earlier marked a shift in the use of machinery in mining operations, which resulted in fewer small-scale mining activities operated by individuals in favor of larger-scale, capital-intensive operations often under the direction of companies. While gold production in the district continued, the greatest number of ounces was extracted in the early twentieth century. Total production of gold in the district since 1886 is approximately 500,000 ounces. Analysis of yearly records

¹⁵ Cobb, 136.

¹⁶ The Board of Road Commissioners for Alaska was renamed the Alaska Road Commission in 1926, was briefly subsumed by the Bureau of Public Roads between 1957 and 1958, and was replaced by Alaska's public works agency following statehood in 1959; for the sake of simplicity, this text refers to the pre-statehood organization as "ARC" throughout. Claus-M. Naske, *Paving Alaska's Trails* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1986), 28.

¹⁷ Buzzell, 24-25.

¹⁸ Buzzell, 25-26.

¹⁹ Buzzell, 15-16, 18-19, 24-27.

²⁰ David J. McMahan and Michael Ostrogorsky, *Cultural Resources Survey of the Taylor Highway, Milepost 95-160, 1987 (Project 30166822), Office of History and Archaeology Report No. 9* (Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, December 1987), 18-20.

through 1930 indicates that 350,000 ounces (about 70 percent) of the total production was recovered by 1930. Another 46,000 ounces was produced in between 1930 and 1940.²¹

After the U.S. entry into World War II, the War Production Board in 1942 designated gold mining as nonessential to the war effort and halted operations nationwide as well as in the territory, which caused the ARC to reduce expenditures on roads leading to mines.²² Within the district, industrial large-scale mining operations ceased and new uses for the equipment were sought.²³ While the ARC continued to maintain the local road and trail network, improvements during the war were limited.²⁴

Elsewhere in the territory, road-building efforts focused on those necessary for the war effort and included the construction of the Alaska Highway (originally named the Alaska-Canadian Highway) in 1942-1943 by the U.S. Army. When completed, the Alaska Highway was the first road connecting Alaska with the lower 48 states. After the decline of the Valdez-Eagle Trail in the early twentieth century, the construction of the Alaska Highway provided an overland road connecting to Fairbanks, creating an opportunity to reconnect Eagle and the recovering mining industry within the district to Valdez. In 1945 the ARC recommended the construction of a road from the Alaska Highway and Eagle to serve mining in the district if World War II ended before the beginning of the 1947 fiscal year.²⁵

Within the territory, gold mining was able to resume limited production in 1944, when the War Production Board issued permits to 70 mining operations and authorized employment for 775 miners.²⁶ When the war-related restrictions on gold mining were removed in 1945, mining in Alaska and in the district began to recover.²⁷ After 1945, large-scale mining became increasingly mechanized, utilizing bulldozers, draglines, pumps, and other machines to mine low-grade deposits of gold within the district.²⁸ Gold production in 1947 marked the single highest year in the value of gold extracted within the district, likely leading to expectations that this trend would continue.²⁹ The limited extent of roads within the district hindered the transport of heavy equipment, placing reliance again on the area's waterways to assist with transport.

²¹ Warren Yeend, *Gold Placers of the Historical Fortymile River Region, Alaska* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 63.

²² Alan Gropman, *Mobilizing U. S. Industry in World War II* (N.p., DIANE Publishing, 1996), 116; Alaska Road Commission, *Summary of Activities, Alaska Road Commission, 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 11.

²³ Yeend, 32.

²⁴ McMahan and Ostrogorsky, 26.

²⁵ Alaska Road Commission, *Summary of Activities, Alaska Road Commission, 1945*, 9; Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report, 1947* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947), 9.

²⁶ Claus-M Naske, "The Historic Forty-Mile District," *The Northern Engineer* 8, no. 2 (1977), 51.

²⁷ Alfred L. Ransome, "The Mineral Industry of Alaska," *Minerals Yearbook, 1947* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1949), 1281.

²⁸ Yeend, 62.

²⁹ Buzzell, 20.

The ARC began efforts to plan the route to Eagle in 1945, with construction commencing in 1946 north from the Alaska Highway.³⁰ After five years of construction the road was designated the Taylor Highway to honor Ike P. Taylor.³¹ Taylor was the Chief Engineer of the ARC from 1932 to 1948.³² Construction of the Taylor Highway continued steadily until 1953, when the road reached and incorporated an existing narrow, low-standard, local wagon road at Liberty (Mile 131 of the Taylor Highway, likely the route of the Eagle-O'Brien Road) and then continued to its terminus at Eagle.

To cross the Fortymile River and its tributaries, the Taylor Highway required the construction of numerous bridges. Three steel truss bridges were relocated from other Alaska roadways, including a 300-foot through truss over the Fortymile River (Mile 112 of the Taylor Highway). Three new steel trusses and several timber trestle bridges were erected along the road.³³ By 1953 the ARC reported that the remaining 19-mile section between Fortymile and Liberty (further to the south of the Eagle-O'Brien Road and shown as a sled road in 1932) was open and accessible by truck and "shaping up as an all-weather road for all types of vehicular traffic."³⁴ Due to permafrost, work continued for several more years before it was complete.

Construction of the Taylor Highway continued over an 11-year period (1946-1957), in part due to the use of stage construction to address areas of permafrost to meet the ARC's design standards for feeder roads.³⁵ Areas along the Taylor Highway that required the use of stage construction include "immediately south of Eagle and on rock points and frozen hillsides between Jack Wade Creek and Liberty," a 17-mile segment of the road south from Fortymile River to the "Dawson Junction" (Top of the World Highway, Mile 95), and from the South Fork of the Fortymile River to Eagle for approximately 90 miles.³⁶

³⁰ Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report for F.Y. 1948*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 9; Peter M. Bowers, John H. Turney, and Terrence Cole, *Archaeological and Historical Investigations Along the Taylor Highway*, prepared for Alaska Department of Highways, Miscellaneous Publications, History and Archaeology Series No. 13 (Alaska Division of Parks; Anchorage, Alaska, August 1975), 14; United States Department of the Interior, *Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1954* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission, 1954), 23-24; Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report for Fiscal year 1952* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 22.

³¹ Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report, 1947*, 7, 9; "New Road Named Taylor Highway," *Anchorage Daily Times*, 25 June 1951.

³² Col. John R. Noyes, Commissioner of Roads for Alaska, *Report of Operations of the Alaska Road Commission for the Fiscal years 1949, 1950 & 1951*, United States Department of the Interior, Juneau, Alaska (1951), 2.

³³ Noyes, 18.

³⁴ Alaska Road Commission, 1954, 24; United States Department of the Interior, *Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1953* (Juneau, Alaska.: Alaska Road Commission, 1953), 22.

³⁵ United States Department of the Interior, *Alaska Road Commission Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1955* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission, 1955), 32; United States Department of the Interior, *Alaska Road Commission Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1956*, (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission, 1956), 23.

³⁶ United States Department of the Interior, 1955, 24; United States Department of the Interior, 1953, 22; United States Department of the Interior, 1954, 37-18.

Stage construction is a feature of Alaskan road construction commonly used throughout the first half of the twentieth century on nearly all interior roads that crossed areas of permanently frozen soil. Known as permafrost, these soils are protected by a vegetative mat that insulates the ground and prevents thawing. When the tundra was stripped to create the roadbed, rapidly thawing soil could become waterlogged and unworkable and often led to dramatic settling of the roadbed. Whenever possible, efforts were made to ensure that no final grading or surfacing was done until the roadbed had thawed and drained completely, and the subgrade was usually allowed at least one full season to settle before surfacing. Working only in the summer seasons, crews removed tundra one year, digging ditches to facilitate drainage, and then returned to grade the roadway the following year with further reshaping of the subgrade probably necessary. Stage construction in this fashion required as much as two to four years to achieve a finished grade of even a low-standard earth or gravel road.³⁷

The development and application of early construction methods to address permafrost occurred during the first 10 years of the ARC's operations. The use of stage construction is characterized from the beginning of road building by the ARC through 1940 on many of the state's major highways well before the Taylor Highway. Earlier examples include the Richardson Highway (1910 wagon road), Nome-Council Highway (1906), Edgerton Highway (1911), Steese Highway (1927), Elliott Highway (1934), and Anchorage-Palmer Highway (1937, now the Glenn Highway). Although early engineers noted that it was possible to preserve the permafrost by laying corduroy on top of undisturbed tundra and insulating the embankment with moss, this practice does not appear to have been widespread and predates the construction of the Taylor Highway.³⁸

By the time the highway was opened in 1953 confidence that the gold industry would continue to expand or even recover back to the prewar production levels was fleeting due to a combination of factors. The high cost of production, coupled with the fixed price of gold and the overall low-grade of the gold deposits within the district, resulted in a sharp decrease in gold mining activities after 1947.³⁹ For existing operations to survive it was necessary to either mine high-grade deposits, which were not available within the district, or invest further in machinery to increase the efficiency of gold extraction.⁴⁰ Between 1947 and 1952 the number of operations in the district fell from eighteen to four.⁴¹ The number of active mining operations within the district remained low in the 1950s and 1960s as rising costs and the fixed price of gold made mining increasingly unfeasible.⁴² Not until the price of gold was deregulated by the U.S. government the 1970s did a resurgence of gold mining in the area occur.⁴³

³⁷ Mead & Hunt, Inc. and Cultural Resource Consultants, L.L.C., 155.

³⁸ Mead & Hunt, Inc. and Cultural Resource Consultants, L.L.C., 155-156, 186.

³⁹ Alfred L. Ransome and William H. Kerns, "The Mineral Industry of Alaska," *Minerals Yearbook, 1952* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 65.

⁴⁰ Yeend, 33; Ransome and Kerns, 65.

⁴¹ Ransome, 1291; Ransome and Kerns, 81.

⁴² Yeend, 35.

⁴³ Buzzell, 20.

The opening of the Taylor Highway and its connection to the Top of the World Highway at Wade Junction (Mile 95.6 of the Taylor Highway) formed an international route. The route includes the southern portion of the Taylor Highway from its junction with the Alaska Highway, the Top of the World Highway (extending east 13.5 miles before crossing the Canadian border and continuing approximately 100 miles east to Dawson City in the Yukon Territory), and the Klondike Highway (extending southeast from Dawson City). The Klondike Highway can be taken on to Whitehorse, Carcross, and back to Skagway. With the completion of the Dempster Highway in 1979, travel to the Arctic coast of Canada from its junction south of Whitehorse was also possible. The route formed by the southern portion of the Taylor Highway, the Top of the World Highway, and the Klondike Highway provides a long-distance international route as an alternate to the Alaska Highway. Dawson City served as the capital of the Yukon Territory until 1952, when the capital was moved to Whitehorse, and the connection the Top of the World Highway provided when construction of the Taylor Highway was commenced may have been deemed important for this reason. The resulting international route formed by bypassing a large portion of the Alaska Highway was also noted in 1956 by the ARC, which states the Taylor Highway provides a military bypass for 381 miles of the Alaska Highway.⁴⁴

The military buildup during and after World War II substantially increased travel on Alaska's highways. In direct response to the military's "essential and urgent" needs, the ARC's six-year plan scheduled for 1953-1958 stressed the importance of providing modern, paved highways to link military facilities. Major routes including the Richardson, Glenn, and Alaska Highways received asphalt surfacing during this period.⁴⁵ The Taylor Highway, however, was not directly associated with improvements for military purposes. The southern terminus of the Taylor Highway is at Tetlin Junction west of Tanacross. During World War II and the Cold War, numerous military activities, facilities, and logistics projects have occurred in the area between Tanacross and Fairbanks, including the Alaska Highway, the CANOL fuel pipeline, and the Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline.⁴⁶ Other military activities included the expansion and operation of Tanacross Airfield, which became a waypoint for aircraft being ferried to the Soviet Union during the World War II "lend-lease" military assistance programs, and several large-scale, Cold War-era military maneuvers, such as "Exercise Snow Shoe" (1953), "Exercise Timberline" (1963), and "Exercise Polar Siege" (1964).⁴⁷ These activities occurred well to the east of the district and were accessed by the Alaska Highway between Tanacross and Fairbanks, not the Taylor Highway. Research did not reveal any involvement of the U.S. military in requesting or planning the Taylor Highway to serve important defensive purposes.

⁴⁴ United States Department of the Interior, 1956, 31.

⁴⁵ Alaska Road Commission, *Annual Report of the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1955* (Juneau, Alaska: U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Territories, 1955), 3.

⁴⁶ Kristy Hollinger, *The Haines-Fairbanks Pipeline*, Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands, April 2003, 5, 19.

⁴⁷ Karen Waddell, *Cold War Historical Context, 1951-1991, Fort Richardson, Alaska*, Center for the Environmental Management of Military Lands, March 2003, 119.

B. Post-highway development

After the road was open for three years, ARC reports indicate that while the road was passable over its entire length, final construction was only approximately 90-percent complete.⁴⁸ In 1957 work on the Taylor Highway was complete after 11 years, with the final cost of construction at \$6,478,000.⁴⁹ At this time the Taylor Highway was designated by the ARC as a feeder road, one of three road category standards developed by the ARC classified by levels of connectivity (the other two were through and local roads). ARC standards note feeder roads as the middle classification, with through roads as a higher standard and local roads as a lower standard.⁵⁰ Feeder roads were surfaced with crushed gravel and low-standard roads were surfaced with an all-weather, pit-run gravel layer.⁵¹

The Taylor Highway extends through areas of mining claims that predated the construction of the highway, particularly in the area around Chicken Creek, in which the holders of claims have the right to extract minerals from under the roadbed, which has resulted in portions of the roadbed being realigned and creeks diverted.⁵²

Following the decrease in mining in the 1950s and 1960s, tourism and recreation developed based on an interest in the history of gold mining and the area's natural resources. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Eagle Historical Society utilize Fort Egbert and associated buildings to interpret the history in the area. In addition, Fort Egbert and Eagle are National Historic Landmarks and historic districts are designated in Chicken and Eagle. Recreational interests in the area include the Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve and the Fortymile River system, which is designated as a National Wild & Scenic River. Hunting has been an ongoing activity, but has increased in more recent times. A number of campgrounds are also located along the Taylor Highway, and the highway is used to access recreational use of the Fortymile River.

In the early 1990s Alaska established a state Scenic Byway program to recognize routes that provide access to scenic, cultural, and recreational areas and focus enhancements on roads that served tourism and recreation.⁵³ The state program grew out of the 1991 National Scenic Byway and All-American Roads Programs, federal programs recognizing significant American transportation routes.⁵⁴ The Taylor

⁴⁸ United States Department of the Interior, *Alaska Road Commission Annual Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1956* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission, 1956), 31.

⁴⁹ Buzzell, 27-18; Bowers, 16; McMahan, 26-27.

⁵⁰ Mead & Hunt, Inc. and Cultural Resource Consultants, L.L.C., 165, 172.

⁵¹ Alaska Road Commission, *Alaska Road Construction and Maintenance Techniques* (Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission, 1952), 3.

⁵² Steven Barney, P.E., Design Study Report for Taylor Highway MP 64-82, Federal Project No. STP-0785(11), State Project No. 66446, State of Alaska, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Northern Region, 2006, 9-10.

⁵³ Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, "About the Scenic Byways Program," *Alaska's Scenic Byways*, <http://dot.alaska.gov/stwdp/ing/scenic/org-themes.shtml> (accessed 7 November 2012).

⁵⁴ Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, "About the Scenic Byways Program."

and Top of the World Highways were jointly designated as a State Scenic Byway in 1998, and together with the Klondike Highway serve as a larger route that facilitates the use of these roads for tourism.⁵⁵

Since 1963 the Taylor Highway has been designated a Secondary A road. By this time, roads in Alaska were classified into one of two categories based on connectivity and eligibility for federal funding: primary or secondary. Secondary highways were divided into two subcategories: Secondary A highways included the Taylor, Elliott, Steese, and Edgerton Highways and were eligible to receive federal funds; and Secondary B highways, which were typically short feeder roads that provided access to mines, farms, and residential and recreational areas, were not eligible for federal funds. Primary highways included the Seward, Glenn, Sterling, Richardson, Alaska, Glacier, Tongass, and Haines Highways and were eligible to receive federal funds.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Mead & Hunt, Inc. and Cultural Resource Consultants, L.L.C., 136.

⁵⁶ State of Alaska, Department of Highways, *Annual Report of Department of Highways, 1963* [Juneau, Alaska: Alaska Road Commission], 1963, 13.

4. Significance

The Roads Methodology provides guidance on the application of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, identifying areas of significance, and evaluating significance under *Criteria A, B, C, and D*.

A. *Criterion A: Events*

To meet the threshold for significance under *Criterion A*, a road must possess a direct and important association in one or more supplemental areas of significance as identified in the Roads Methodology in addition to *Transportation*. This evaluation of significance under *Criterion A* considered all potential areas of significance identified in the Roads Methodology. Based on research and context development, only the applicable areas of significance for this road are addressed below.

Transportation

The Taylor Highway has an association with *Transportation* because it provided regional access following its completion in 1953. When the road reached Eagle, it provided the first direct vehicular link between the community of Eagle and mining activities with the Alaska Highway and the rest of the Alaskan road system. The junction with the Top of the World Highway also linked the district to the Yukon Territory, providing an international connection through Canada and back to Skagway. The period of significance for *Transportation* will relate to the historical purpose this road had in the conveyance of people and goods as defined in one or more supplemental areas of significance that meet *Criterion A*.

Industry

The overall Taylor Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Industry*. Gold mining was an established industry in the Fortymile District and total production peaked before the construction of the Taylor Highway. The assumption that mining activities would continue and expand during the prewar period, together with the brief resurgence in mining immediately following the end of World War II, may have also encouraged the ARC to connect the district to the newly constructed Alaska Highway. However, by the time the Taylor Highway provided a regional connection to the district, mining operations were already in decline and the existing mining operations would have used the established connections provided by local wagon roads, river transport, or air to transport supplies and labor to and from the district. Even though the mining operations in the postwar period became more mechanized, the industry's decline during the 1950s and 1960s did not result in an important phase of expansion of mining operations. In 1953, when the Taylor Highway was opened, mining operations had decreased dramatically, with less than one-quarter of the existing mining operations from 1946 in the district still in operation.

The section of the highway south from Eagle to O'Brien Creek incorporates portions of the Valdez-Eagle Trail (1900-1905), which subsequently became the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road (1905-1953). This section of the road possesses significance at the local level for the connection it provided within the local road network to support early mining activities rather than as a component of the modern Taylor Highway. Its period of significance begins with the construction of the Valdez-Eagle Trail in 1900 and ends in 1953 when the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road was subsumed by the Taylor Highway.

Military

The Taylor Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Military*. Military facilities in the Eagle area had ceased operating nearly two decades before the construction of the Taylor Highway and by 1953, when the Taylor Highway was opened, it did not provide access to military facilities deemed critical for national defense. The Taylor Highway follows a portion of the Valdez-Eagle Trail constructed by the U.S. military responsible for early road construction in the territory and later coming under the jurisdiction of the ARC. The Valdez-Eagle Trail was used largely for public access and is addressed under *Transportation*.

Community Planning and Development

The Taylor Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Community Planning and Development*. This area of significance focuses on roads that played a crucial role in the development pattern within a community. The communities in the district developed before the Taylor Highway was constructed from established connections provided by local wagon roads, river transport, and air. Research did not reveal that the Taylor Highway was constructed to directly improve the physical structure within specific communities or that it subsequently led to direct and important changes. While the Taylor Highway did impact the growth of individual communities by facilitating access, this is related to *Transportation* and represents a common function of roads transporting goods and services.

Entertainment/Recreation and Conservation

The Taylor Highway does not meet the requirement for significance in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation and Conservation*. This area of significance focuses on the specific use of roads to provide critical and direct access to important entertainment or recreational facilities and conservation activities. The Taylor Highway, a regional transportation corridor, developed to support the mining industry after World War II. Following its construction, recreational facilities, tourism, and areas of scenic, natural, and historical importance were developed due to the access the highway provided and connection to the larger international route established by the Alaska Highway and the Top of the World Highway. However, many regional and state highways in Alaska frequently led to the development of recreational activities and points of interest due to the access a transportation corridor could provide. Research did not reveal that the road provided critical access to important entertainment or recreational activities or areas deemed critical for the management of natural resources subsequent to its construction that transcend normal recreational activities to meet National Register significance in the area of *Entertainment/Recreation and Conservation*.

B. Criterion B: Persons

As outlined in the Roads Methodology, a road is not likely to qualify for National Register significance under *Criterion B* for association with a significant person. To qualify under *Criterion B*, the road would need to best exemplify a person's contribution to history. Mere association with a road, such as involvement in design or construction, or roads named for an individual that is commemorative in nature, would not render a road significant under *Criterion B*. Although the Taylor Highway is named in honor of Ike Taylor, who was Chief Engineer of the ARC, this is a commemorative recognition and his involvement in the road's design is comparable to his contributions on other roads; therefore, it would not qualify under

Criterion B for an association with Ike Taylor. No other individuals were identified through research to have played a significant role in the Taylor Highway that would qualify it under *Criterion B*.

C. Criterion C: Design/Construction

The Roads Methodology explains how a road would meet the threshold for significance under *Criterion C*. Roads will generally reflect patterns of features common to a particular road type, and under the Roads Methodology this does not convey significance on its own. In order to possess significance, a road must also reflect other important or distinctive design features and/or construction practices or be a surviving example of a rare type.

The construction of the Taylor Highway occurred in a period when the ARC had already established a body of institutional knowledge of road construction in Alaska. The route of the Taylor Highway was initially planned in 1945, construction commenced in 1946, and the highway opened in 1953, with construction activities lasting until 1957.

The ARC employed stage construction techniques to address areas of permafrost. At the time the construction of the Taylor Highway was underway during the late 1940s and 1950s, the ARC had already constructed numerous other highways and had decades of experience building roads through muskeg and permafrost. A review of the ARC's annual reports and other materials from the period in which the highway was constructed yielded no evidence of any engineering design or construction features important in road engineering that serve to distinguish it from other roads. The highway's design and construction appear to fall within the ARC's established standard practices of the time and there is no indication it represents innovative developments in highway construction or contains segments that are a surviving example of a rare road type. The Taylor Highway does not meet the threshold for significance in the area of *Engineering*.

The portion of the corridor extending through areas of mining claims predating the construction of the highway may have resulted in portions of the road being realigned after the construction of the highway to accommodate mining activities. However, changes in the alignment of a gravel road are unlikely to represent extraordinary challenges or solutions that transcend normal methods of road construction.

The portion of the Taylor Highway that subsumed the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road is addressed under *Criterion A* and is not likely to have the ability to convey the physical features from this period due to alterations with the construction of the modern Taylor Highway in the late 1940s and 1950s, and therefore does not have significance under *Engineering*.

D. Criterion D: Information Potential

Criterion D is most often applied to archaeological properties. As outlined in the Roads Methodology, roads in vehicular use are not likely to be significant under *Criterion D* for the ability to yield information. The Taylor Highway is in vehicular use and remains an above-ground property type. No evidence was found for potential significance under *Criterion D*.

5. Recommendation

The overall Taylor Highway does not possess significance under *Criteria A, B, C, or D*. However, the section of the highway south from Eagle to O'Brien Creek possesses significance under *Criterion A* at the local level for its direct and important association with *Transportation* and under the supplemental area of significance of *Industry* for the connection it provided within the local road network to support early mining activities rather than from its association with the Taylor Highway. Its period of significance begins with the Valdez-Eagle Trail in 1900 and ends in 1953 when the Eagle-O'Brien Creek Road was subsumed by the Taylor Highway.

The Taylor Highway section from Eagle to O'Brien Creek does not possess significance under *Criteria B, C, or D*.

Since the section of the highway south from Eagle to O'Brien Creek possesses significance under *Criterion A*, identification of essential physical features and an assessment of integrity is needed to determine National Register eligibility.