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December 11, 1981

Honorable Don Bennett, Senator  
PO Box 2801  
Fairbanks, AK 99707

Dear Senator Bennett:

In response to your November 2, 1981 inquiry to John Martin of this office, we are sending you a report concerning roads in the Circle Mining District. This report, put together by a member of my planning staff, along with the enclosed map should answer your questions regarding roads and trails in the Circle area.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Heinrich Springer  
Director

enclosures

cc: Mr. Del Ackels, President  
Circle Mining & Recording District  
PO Box 2151  
Fairbanks, AK 99707

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## CIRCLE MINING DISTRICT

The Circle Mining District is an area along the upper Steese Highway and includes Circle, Central, Circle Hot Springs and Miller House. The Steese Highway serves as the main transportation route in the region, with several spur roads leading off the main highway into the mining areas. In addition to these roads, there are numerous trails and roads under RS2477. Other trails exist in the area, however these are not on the RS2477 Trail Inventory File so, except for the Bulenberg Trail and trails along Birch Creek, they will not be dealt with here. The State of Alaska has also acquired a few road rights-of-way from the BLM. Some of these are for realignment of the Steese Highway while the other is for a road north of Harrison Creek.

The Steese Highway has been identified for upgrading in certain areas, particularly of interest is dust control between Crooked Creek and the Central Airport and spot repairs on the Steese between Central and Circle. Also a few rights-of-way have been acquired or applied for from BLM for future realignment of the Steese Highway in sections with sharp curves and along the Chatanika River to Sourdough Creek.

Circle Hot Springs Road will be upgraded from MP 0.32 to MP 0.57 and from the Hot Springs to the airport.

Ketchem Creek Road is reported in good condition it's entire length, so no upgrading is required.

With funds appropriated under Chapter 50, SLA 80, the following roads were upgraded last year:

Portage Creek Road has been upgraded its entire length to Bottom Dollar Creek.

Deadwood Creek Road was upgraded for most of it's length to a point just beyond the township line past Discovery Gulch.

Graveyard Creek Road was constructed up to the cemetery, a distance of slightly more than 1/4 mile.

Porcupine Creek Road was upgraded to Yankee Creek two years ago.

The Birch Creek Access between Twelvemile Summit and Eagle Summit was upgraded last year and provides good recreational access to upper Birch Creek. The access road to the creek near Twelvemile House may possibly be upgraded with funds left over from the previous access road.

Nome Creek Road, (U.S. Creek Rd.), has been funded for upgrading to a larger capacity truck standard, however the current appropriation is inadequate to complete the project. Cost estimates have been requested for an extension of the road to Beaver Creek over two alternate routes. One route follows Nome Creek to Beaver Creek, the other continues across Nome Creek along a present trail to Little Champion Creek, following that to Champion Creek then along that creek to

it's confluence with Beaver Creek. Either route would probably require a right-of-way from BLM since this area is in White Mountains National Recreation Area and the route is on the RS2477 file on only as far as Little Champion Creek.

We currently have an unexpended appropriation of \$330,039.00 from Chapter 82, SLA 81, which will be spent, as far as the funds will go, on the resurfacing of Eagle Creek Road, Bottom Dollar Road, Miller Creek Road, Mastadon Creek Road, Mammoth-Independence Creek Road, Gold Dust Creek Road, Squaw Creek Road, Butte Creek Road, and Ptarmigan Creek Road.

Building a scenic loop from Miller House to Circle Hot Springs is possible, using either of two routes. One route is along Harrison Creek up Bottom Dollar Creek and Half Dollar Creek to Portage Creek Road. This route is an RS2477 road. The other route runs approximately from the end of Mammoth-Independence Creek Road along the ridge to Bottom Dollar Creek and then to the end of Portage Creek Road. The right-of-way along this route was granted from BLM in 1971, and along with another right-of-way connects to Deadwood Creek Road. This route is higher in elevation which would provide a more scenic route, and according to our staff, would be easier to build and maintain.

Sourdough Creek Road and Faith Creek Road are two other roads in the area; both are on land that where the State's selection has been tentatively approved. These roads are not presently on our Needs Assessment for upgrading or repair. According to Del Ackels, President of the Circle Mining and Recording District, Faith Creek Road is in fairly good condition, but Sourdough Creek Road is very poor.

The Montana Creek-Bachelor Creek Road is presently a little more than a trail which according to an area resident is all but impassable. The State claims the trail as far as Preacher Creek under RS2477. Most of the trail is in the Steese National Conservation Area which is administered by the BLM.

The Bulenberg Trail extends from Circle Hot Springs to Birch Creek along the base of the foothills. Some of the land it passes through is swampy and marsh land, would make maintenance more difficult. This trail does not appear on the Trail Inventory File as an RS2477 trail nor does any other right-of-way presently exist from the Federal government. This route to Birch Creek is 3/4 of the way from the upstream access road to the lower stream access roads, both of which now exist.

Mr. Ackels informed us of the concern the miners have regarding the inaccessibility of Fryingpan Creek, Harrington Fork, Clums Fork, and Great Unknown Creek, ever since the access along Birch Creek (from Mile 96) was closed subsequent to designating the creek in 1974 for study as a wild and scenic river. The creek has since been established as a wild and scenic river in 1980 under ANILCA. Presently, he states miners must travel down Harrison Creek then up Birch Creek to their claims, or cut across at Twelvemile Summit and drop down to Harrington Fork. Both ways are on unestablished roads and require more travelling distance which he says causes more damage to the land. From the Birch Creek Access, (T7N, R10E), there is a road claimed by the State under RS2477 however, that RS2477 claim, as it appears on the Trail Inventory File, ends approximately 2 miles before Harrington Fork.

cc: Mr. Del Ackels

Alaska State Legislature



Senate

SENATOR Department of Transportation  
DON BENNETT Interior Region

P.O. BOX 2801  
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99707

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Time Received

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JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811

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November 2, 1981

John Martin  
Department of Transportation Planning  
600 University Ave.  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear John,

Following up on a conversation Monday between one of my Aides and Justin Swift, here are some transportation projects for which I need to know the status.

- 1.) Extending the road from Circle Hot Springs along the Bulenburg Trail to Birch Creek, opening up a canoeing and recreation area.
- 2.) Building a scenic road along the trail from Miller House through the Bottom Dollar and on into Circle Hot Springs.
- 3.) Re-opening the old trail from Montana Creek at 82 mile Steese Northeast to Bachelor Creek.
- 4.) Graveyard road at Central.  
*4.2 ... to C.H.S. Airport status*
- 5.) Are any new bridges needed along the Steese?
6. What things are needed for the airports at Central, Circle City, and Circle Hot Springs?
- 7.) Is there an adequate road and bridge between the Dalton Highway and Wiseman? *Fiscal Note*
- 8.) What is the status of proposed roads to Bettles, Stevens Village and Rampart?
- 9.) What is the status of the road into the residential area at Quartz Lake?
- 10.) What is the status of the proposed road from Eagle north to the Charlie River?
- 11.) Where do we stand on the problem of road access through Ft. Wainwright to State and Private land?
- 12.) Are there plans for another bridge across the Chena River west of University Avenue?
- 13.) What is the status of the proposed bridge linking Illinois Street with First Avenue and Barnette Street? *Barnette*
- 14.) What is the status of the eastward extension of Geist Road?

page 2, continued

15.) How far along are we on the South Fairbanks Expressway?

After you have had a chance to go over the list, perhaps we can set up an informal meeting to discuss these items. My office will be in touch with you and Justin in the next few days to set a date.

Thank you in advance for your help on this.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Senator Don Bennett