

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

TO: Lynn J. Harnisch, P.E.
Regional Director
Northern Region

DATE: August 3, 1987

FILE NO:

TELEPHONE NO: 451-5150

SUBJECT: RS2477 Memorandum of
Understanding

FROM: John D. Martin, P.E. *J. Martin*
Chief of Planning & Research
Northern Region

Following are our comments on the July 21, 1987 proposed State/Federal RS2477 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which was drafted by the Bureau of Land Management.

- ° The list of "potential next steps" for the State/Federal RS2477 cooperative project includes one to "Develop an affordable State/Federal road construction program based on good transportation planning". A program intended specifically to improve RS2477 routes should not be confused with the current Federal-Aid Highway program which is well established and is based on "good transportation planning".
- ° Under "Policies and Procedures", this MOU attempts to define which RS2477 routes each department (Natural Resources and Transportation and Public Facilities) will be responsible for. That type of information should be included in the State's RS2477 policy, but should not be included in this State/Federal MOU. RS2477 encompasses a wide variety of routes and situations. For some of these there may not be a clear cut distinction indicating which agency should assume responsibility. In those cases, the decision should lie entirely with the State. Trying to address it in this MOU could involve the Federal agencies, which is totally inappropriate. Federal involvement in a State decision would be confusing at best, and could lead to delay and/or inaction. If for some reason this MOU needs to address the division of responsibility between DNR and DOT&PF, it should simply note that one or the other state agency will assume the lead on a given route. The actual division of responsibility will need to be route-specific and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- ° The U.S. Forest Service is clearly included in the text of the MOU, but is excluded from the signature sheet. That discrepancy should be rectified.
- ° The State and Federal processes outlined in this draft MOU are very similar to the processes that were instituted in 1984 between the Fairbanks offices of BLM, DNR and DOT&PF. The earlier MOU process included periodic, scheduled meetings between the agencies to deal with individual assertions. Those meetings proved quite efficient and served to consolidate RS2477 efforts into specific blocks of time devoted just to that purpose. They helped to reduce the amount of time that had to be devoted to interagency coordination on individual trails. It also made documentation of activity and decisions on individual trails relatively easy. We suggest that future State/Federal RS2477 assertion processes include similar meetings.

NP:ap