Bureau of Land Management

Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan

A Drop-Down Plan to the Alaska Federal Lands Long Range Transportation Plan

FINAL
September 2012

It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

COVER PHOTO:
"Sundog" along winter trail in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, BLM

INSIDE COVER PHOTO:
Mountain biking along a winter trail. BLM

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Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act

As the final version of the *Bureau of Land Management Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan* was completed, the two-year highway authorization, *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21), was signed into law. Effective October 1, 2012, MAP-21 incorporates the Bureau of Land Management into the Federal Lands Transportation Program. Discretionary funding programs available to the Bureau of Land Management and other Federal land management agencies under the previous Federal highway authorization also changed under MAP-21. For example, MAP-21 alters or eliminates programs, such as Public Lands Highway Discretionary Program, Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks, Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails Program, and National Scenic Byways, and creates the Federal Lands Access Program—a formula-based program that provides funding for transportation planning, construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance for facilities located on or providing access to Federal lands.

Despite changes in Federal highway authorization, the high-level goals, recommendations, and actions presented in this long range transportation plan remain relevant and complementary to the new law. The next version of the *Bureau of Land Management Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan* will further document the connections between the region's long-range goals, objectives, and actions in the context of highway authorization law in effect at that time.

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Glossary of Terms

AK	Alaska
ADOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
ANCSA	Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
ANILCA	Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAMS	Facility Asset Management System
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FLMA	Federal Land Management Agency
FY	Fiscal Year
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organizations
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
PLD	Public Lands Discretionary (Program)
RMP	Resource Management Plan
R.S.	Revised Statute
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TBD	To be Determined
TMA	Travel Management Area
TMP	Travel Management Plan
USC	United States Code
WSA	Wilderness Study Areas
WSR	Wild and Scenic River

Executive Summary

This Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-Alaska long range transportation plan (LRTP) describes the agency's process for transportation planning to ensure that BLM's vision and missions are furthered through transportation projects over the next 20 years and beyond. This plan establishes long range transportation goals and objectives that embody the agency's vision and mission and identifies the desired future conditions for a BLM-Alaska transportation system.

LRTP goal and objective statements are designed to capture the agency's mission to, "**sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.**" These goals and objectives are used to identify transportation needs and actions that help align the BLM-Alaska transportation system with the agency's overarching mission.

The plan uses baseline data to identify where transportation improvements or additional study is needed to achieve the goals and objectives of the LRTP. The LRTP presents a framework to track progress in achieving these identified needs in three ways. First, progress can be gauged over time by the degree to which BLM-Alaska achieves the desired future conditions described in this LRTP. Second, tracking accomplishments through national-level performance measures that parallel the goals of this LRTP also show progress over time. Third, progress made in accomplishing the action items described in Chapter 6 show movement towards meeting the ends embodied in this plan. The outcome is a process that assists BLM leadership to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of limited funds and resources.

Benefits to BLM

This LRTP is written for BLM statewide program leads, district management, national-level program leads, and potential local and regional partners from governmental or non-governmental organizations. This plan is designed to support these different BLM audiences in the following several ways:

Statewide Program Leads

- Helps determine which projects are statewide priorities for BLM.
- Offers a springboard for State program leads to partner with outside agencies and discuss statewide project needs of mutual interest.
- Coordinates statewide transportation planning with other regional transportation plans outside BLM areas.

BLM Managers

- Provides a process for managers to make regional transportation decisions.
- Enables regional coordinators to direct funding to the most beneficial and highest priority transportation projects.

BLM LRTP Goals

System management: Develop a long-term transportation system to address current and future land management needs.

Improve public understanding: Improve and enhance public understanding of travel opportunities in Alaska.

Resource protection: Minimize resource damage through comprehensive travel management and transportation planning.

Asset Inventory

BLM-Alaska transportation assets, including roads, primitive roads and trails, are not fully inventoried. A formal documented BLM transportation network is needed for all levels of planning and would greatly improve the management of impacts through comprehensive travel and transportation management (TTM) and unit-level transportation management plans (TMP). Once a comprehensive route inventory is completed, a route selection process will be conducted. The selected routes will be included in a subsequent version of this *BLM-Alaska LRTP*. Most existing roads and trails on BLM lands were created by users rather than BLM and are generally in poor or degraded condition, largely because they were not located or constructed with long-term sustainability in mind. The route inventory and route selection process is a proactive step toward maintaining the desired transportation network rather than relying on inherited roads and trails. A planned transportation network can effectively serve the public, minimize resource damage, and reduce long-term resource damage and maintenance costs.

- Enables managers to find alternative funding from Federal sources that are administered by States or metropolitan planning organizations (MPO).
- Coordinates regional transportation planning with unit-level projects.

National Program Leads

- Enables national BLM policy for travel and transportation management and planning programs through national long range transportation goals, objectives, and proposed transportation actions that further BLM's national missions and goals.
- Helps communicate unmet mission critical transportation infrastructure and funding needs to congressional leaders.
- Communicates the unique multimodal access and transportation issues facing BLM-Alaska in supporting multiple resource users and drastic seasonal variations in transportation needs.
- Illustrates BLM's foresight, need, and commitment to certain mission-critical goals, especially when projects are pursued jointly with other agencies or organizations, and additional Federal dollars are requested.

Potential Partners

- Identifies projects or initiatives of mutual interest.

Findings

This LRTP documents key findings in the form of unmet transportation needs that pertain to achieving the plan's long range goals. Based on these findings, the *BLM-Alaska LRTP* makes the following recommendations:

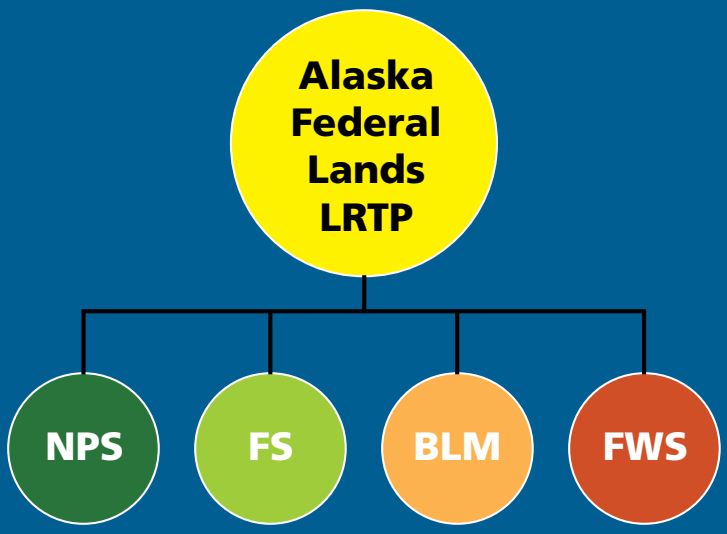
- Complete statewide route inventories on BLM-managed lands.
- Complete route selections and document transportation assets in the BLM Facility Asset Management System (FAMS).
- Complete all resource management plans (RMP) and travel management plans (TMP) as scheduled in Appendix A of this *BLM-Alaska LRTP*.
- Update this LRTP once route inventory and selection has been completed.
- Build upon partnering successes and continue to participate in joint FLMA transportation project coordination efforts.
- Further long-range transportation goals and objectives by focusing on projects and efforts described in Section 6.1, Action Items.

Plan Implementation

This plan outlines implementable actions that will help achieve long range transportation goals and objectives. This plan will be implemented over time as transportation projects and other efforts that further LRTP goals are completed. The LRTP expresses long range goals and objectives by describing the desired future conditions of the BLM-Alaska transportation system. Measureable steps that can be taken to achieve these conditions are described through performance measures. Other actions that help to achieve long range goals and objectives are provided as recommendations.

Alaska Federal Lands LRTP

In addition to being an LRTP for BLM-Alaska, this plan is a "drop-down plan" to the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP*. As a drop-down plan, this document elaborates upon topics discussed in the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* with BLM-specific details including baseline conditions, transportation needs and gaps, route selection processes, funding opportunities, and recommended future actions. This information allows the BLM and *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* partner agencies to identify gaps in the statewide transportation system serving Federal public lands, to develop better interagency coordination, and to leverage funds to address high-level priorities of mutual interest.



Richardson-Highway,BLM

1. Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers approximately 75 million surface acres of public land in Alaska1. Most of this land is remote and only accessible by means other than roads, such as trails, air, and water. Access to and across BLM-managed public lands is necessary for a wide range of uses, such as:

- Administrative uses (fire suppression, etc.)
- Permitted uses (rights-of-way, guides, etc.)
- Recreational activities
- Mineral and energy development
- Access to private inholdings and inter-village travel
- Access to traditional subsistence areas

This long range transportation plan (LRTP) serves as BLM's drop-down plan to the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP*. As a drop-down plan, this document provides BLM-specific details regarding existing conditions, identified transportation deficiencies, and system needs. It also provides a summary of possible funding sources. This information will allow the other Federal land management agencies (FLMA) participating in the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* to identify gaps in the statewide transportation network serving Federal lands. The information will also help develop better interagency coordination in leveraging project funds and addressing high-level priorities.

The *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* was established because of Alaska's unique reliance on a truly multimodal transportation system. More than anywhere else in the United States, Alaska depends on a combination of highway, trail, marine, river, and air connections to meet its transportation needs. Unlike other regional or State LRTPs developed for Federal lands in the lower 48 States, this plan focuses on addressing planning issues related to interconnectivity of the various modes of travel and providing a unique and seamless experience across multiple land jurisdictions for local residents, out-of-state visitors, administrative, commercial, and subsistence users.

This *BLM-Alaska LRTP* describes the agency's process for transportation planning that is consistent with resource and travel management planning in the region, ensuring BLM's vision and missions are furthered through transportation projects over the next 20

Dog Sledding in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, BLM

The BLM is a multiple-use agency responsible for the management and conservation of resources on 75 million surface acres, as well as 220 million acres of subsurface mineral estate in Alaska. Travel to and across BLM-managed public lands is important for recreation, subsistence, resource development, and other commercial activities.

Bureau of Land Management-Alaska manages a wide variety of transportation features such as the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the White Mountains National Recreation Area trail and cabin system, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, inter-village travel in remote areas, and access for energy exploration and development in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

1 *This acreage will change as BLM conveys land to meet Statehood and ANCSA entitlements.*

years and beyond. This plan establishes a defensible process for transportation decision making, where transportation funding decisions are guided by established goals and objectives. The plan also assists in identifying needs for achieving desired future conditions and BLM-Alaska resource management objectives.

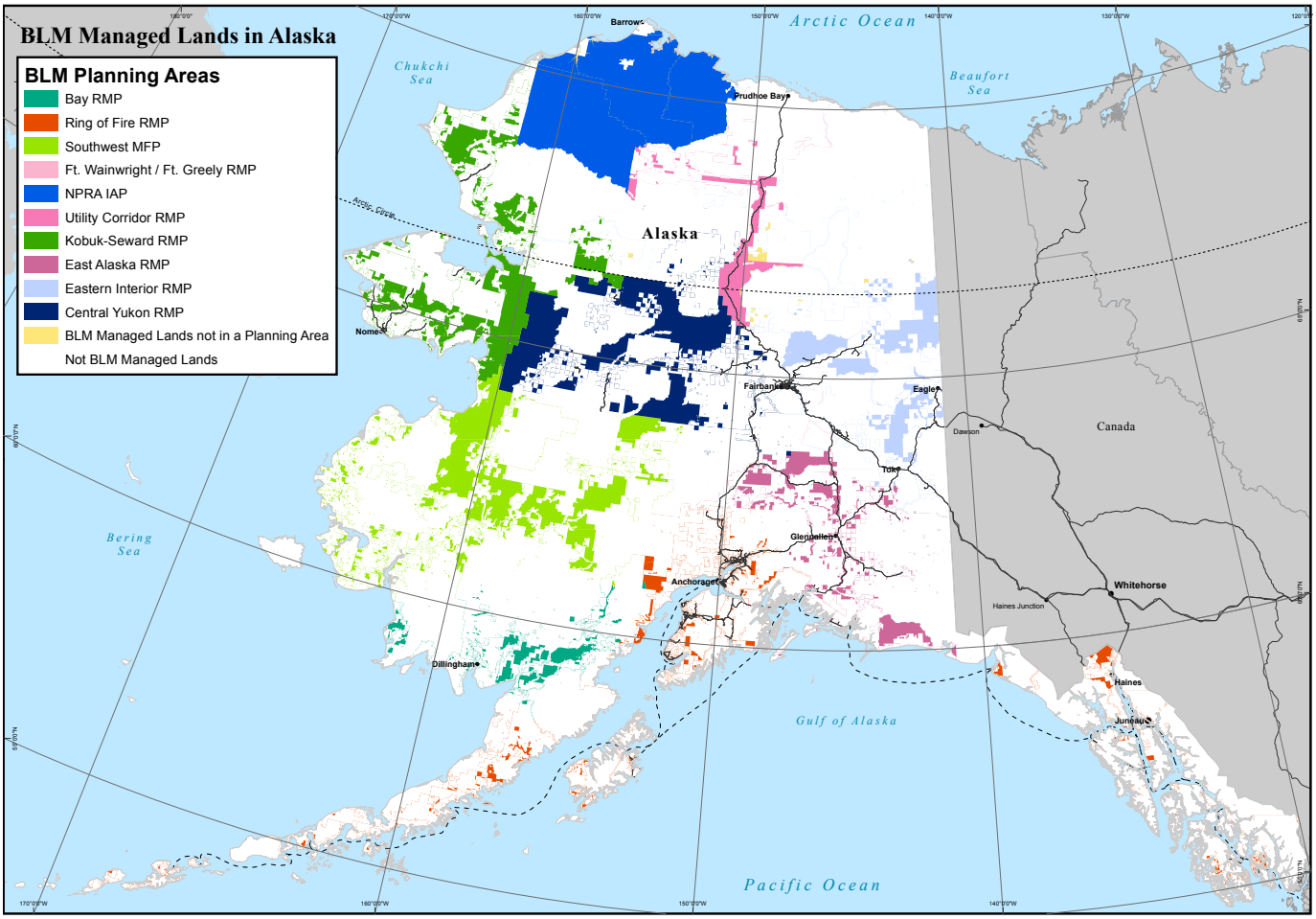
1.1 Relationship to Other Plans

This plan is designed to be consistent with other BLM plans. The BLM conducts the following levels of planning, all of which are considered part of this LRTP:

- Land use planning, resulting in resource management plans (RMP)
- Activity or implementation-level plans, such as travel management plans (TMP)
- Plan implementation, resulting in project plans

At the time of this plan's publication, BLM recently completed several RMPs: Bay RMP, East Alaska RMP, Ring of Fire RMP, and Kobuk-Seward Peninsula RMP. The BLM also developed the Eastern Interior RMP and Northeast National Petroleum Reserve Integrated Activity Plan. These and other BLM-Alaska planning area boundaries are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
BLM-Alaska Planning Areas



Source: BLM-Alaska, 2011

Travel and transportation management (TTM) planning is a comprehensive approach that addresses a wide range of transportation and access needs. Travel management planning helps identify and prioritize construction and maintenance of developed roads, primitive roads, and trails that provide access to and across public lands. It also considers route closures to protect sensitive resources and meet management concerns. While TMPs are developed for regional planning areas and specific travel management areas (TMA) (see Figure 1) delineated in RMPs, this LRTP is inclusive of all transportation facilities and access to lands managed by BLM throughout Alaska. The issues addressed in this LRTP are similar to those addressed in a TMP. Without creating redundancy, this LRTP is intended to develop a link between work completed in BLM-Alaska TMPs and the transportation planning efforts of the other FLMAs. See Appendix A for BLM-Alaska's travel management planning schedule.

Resource Management Plan and TMP transportation and travel management decisions are made through project plans completed for specific on-the-ground actions. These plans will address exact route and facility locations and construction methods proposed to complete the projects identified in the RMPs and TMPs.

1.2 Audience

This LRTP is written for BLM program leads, managers, national-level decision makers, and potential local and regional partners from governmental or non-governmental organizations. This plan is designed to support these audiences in several ways, as discussed in the following subsections.

1.2.1 BLM State Program Leads

Statewide program leads and managers use the LRTP to determine which projects are priorities for BLM throughout the State and in each district. The LRTP also serves as a springboard for program leads to partner with outside agencies and discuss project needs of mutual interest, such as sharing resources, safety concerns, alternative transportation systems, and addressing climate change with public and regional entities.

1.2.2 BLM Managers

At the district or regional level, this LRTP provides a process for BLM managers to make transportation decisions that are based on long-term vision, mission, and goals. The plan also enables BLM managers to direct funding to the most beneficial and highest priority transportation projects. Furthermore, the LRTP enables BLM managers to find alternative funding from Federal sources that are administered by States or metropolitan planning organizations (MPO).

1.2.3 BLM National Program Leads

This LRTP supplements the development of national-level plans and programs by outlining long range transportation goals, objectives, and proposed transportation actions in Alaska, while also documenting the relevance of this long range vision in furthering BLM's national missions and goals. This LRTP and other national-level planning efforts can help communicate unmet mission critical transportation needs to congressional leaders. This plan also helps communicate the unique access and transportation issues facing BLM-Alaska in support of the challenges presented by multiple uses and drastic seasonal variations in transportation needs and access. The LRTP also helps illustrate BLM's foresight, need, and commitment

to certain mission critical goals, especially when projects are being pursued jointly with other agencies or organizations, and additional Federal dollars are requested.

1.2.4 Potential Partners

This LRTP is used to coordinate transportation planning with unit-level plans and other regional and statewide plans outside BLM areas, such as MPO and borough regional transportation plans, and Alaska's State transportation plan. Potential partners may use this LRTP to identify projects of mutual interest. The BLM recognizes the value of cooperative transportation partnerships, and seeks to leverage BLM funds with other Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as Congress, and user groups (such as, mining and energy, outfitters/guides, Tribal governments, hunter associations, off-highway vehicle [OHV] user groups, and environmental conservation groups). Potential partners include organizations such as Alaska Outdoor Council, Alaska State Snowmobile Association, Alaska Trails, Alaska Trappers Association, Iditarod National Historic Trail Incorporated, Iditarod Trail Committee, and the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. The objective is to achieve the greatest benefit to the largest number of goals and objectives held by multiple agencies and organizations for shared projects.

1.3 Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The LRTP's intent is to identify transportation needs and plan for them proactively in alignment with long range goals and objectives identified during the planning process. Goals and objectives are designed to capture agency missions and visions as well as the diverse aims of BLM's multiple user groups that rely on the agency for access to public lands. Where available, baseline data (existing conditions in Chapter 2) are intended to identify where transportation improvements or new facilities are needed and inform decision making relative to the funding discussions in Chapter 4. The outcome is a process that will help BLM leadership make informed decisions regarding allocation of limited funds and resources. The vision for the travel management program in Alaska and this LRTP is to **provide sustainable access to public lands for a variety of activities while sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of these lands.** The following long range transportation goals and objectives were developed for BLM-Alaska for this LRTP and respond to this vision statement.

Goal 1. System Management: Develop a long-term transportation system to address current and future land management needs.

Objective 1. Travel and transportation planning: Provide a planned multimodal transportation system that meets the public land user's needs.

- Complete OHV area designations of open, limited, or closed to motorized activities through the BLM land use planning process
- Complete route inventories and identify routes for public land access
- Establish a statewide FLMA Workshop and Transportation Improvement Plan in consultation with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)
- Identify opportunities to enhance intermodal connectivity to and across BLM-managed lands
- Seek early input and involvement from State and local government, stakeholders, and user groups, such as Native entities, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Federal Areas, and BLM Resource Advisory Councils, during the transportation planning process

Objective 2. Asset management: Document BLM-managed transportation system and allocate financial resources to essential transportation infrastructure.

- Document BLM-managed routes in the BLM Facility Asset Management System (FAMS)
- Maintain or improve high priority assets to a state of good condition
- Develop a funding strategy to repair or replace linear transportation assets in poor or fair condition

Objective 3. User data: Collect and analyze user information to determine which user outcomes and expectations are most important and relevant to transportation access.

- Conduct unit-level visitor satisfaction surveys to collect consistent regional or statewide information (feedback materials or surveys can be provided or administered at portal or entrance kiosk locations, or on websites)

Goal 2. Improve public understanding: Improve and enhance public understanding of travel opportunities in Alaska.

Objective 1. Outreach and education: Provide travel and route information to improve visitor understanding of the transportation system and travel opportunities on BLM-managed public lands.

- Disseminate travel planning information to the visitors using a wide variety of methods, such as:
  - Intelligent transportation systems such as 511, websites, or podcasts
  - Maps and brochures
  - Trailhead information displays
  - Federal, State, and Native corporation offices, visitor centers, and Alaska Public Land Information Centers
- Provide route information at primary access locations, such as:
  - Specific route information, limitations, and allowable uses
  - Recognizable agency symbols and logos
  - Inform visitors about access between Federal lands and visitation opportunities

Objective 2. Safety: Improve safety for users traveling in BLM lands.

- Encourage users to stay on existing or designated routes and trails
- Improve winter trail travel safety, such as installing reflective trail marking where it is easy for users to become lost in blizzard conditions
- Conduct condition surveys of routes to identify transportation issues that need to be improved (such as, safety, trail marking, brushing, and route improvements)
- Work with law enforcement staff to develop an effective plan that identifies high-use periods and common problems with the corresponding patrol schedule to promote safety awareness and compliance with travel regulations

Goal 3. Resource Protection: Minimize resource damage through comprehensive TTM planning.

Objective 1. Planning at an appropriate ecosystem scale: Consider indirect effects of transportation systems on ecosystems within or including BLM lands.

- Use land use planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes to identify sensitive resources and develop travel and transportation management strategies to reduce or mitigate resource damage
- Use best practices during transportation construction and maintenance activities to avoid, minimize, or mitigate transportation related impacts

Objective 2. Law enforcement: Comply and enforce regulations.

- Develop appropriate travel and transportation regulations to achieve RMP and LRTP goals and objectives
- Develop a regional law enforcement plan to provide field presence and enforcement

Objective 3. Monitoring: Assess current resource conditions and monitor status of resources.

- Develop monitoring strategies to assess if RMP and LRTP goals and objectives are being achieved
- Develop monitoring strategies and plans to document new user-created roads and trails
- Develop monitoring plans and early detection and rapid response protocols for invasive and non-native species that appear along the transportation systems

2. Existing Conditions

The existing conditions analysis considers the role of different transportation modes in moving people and goods to and through Alaska's BLM lands. Existing conditions serve as the starting point for decision making. Where conditions are documented, they are compared against long range transportation goals in an effort to identify actions (such as projects) that could bring BLM-Alaska's transportation facilities in-line with these goals.

Existing conditions reflect the current state of BLM's transportation network. Conclusions expressed in this section are based on the best available data at this time. It is recognized in BLM planning documents, such as the *Alaska Travel Management Guide* (2009), that BLM transportation assets, including primitive roads and trails, are not fully inventoried. A formally documented BLM transportation network is needed for all levels of planning and would greatly improve the management of impacts through comprehensive TTM and unit level TMPs.

Nevertheless, BLM-Alaska has inventoried 46.3 miles (92.6 lane miles) of roads and 1,571.2 miles of trails. These linear features are documented in BLM-Alaska's FAMS and are therefore eligible for BLM maintenance funds (discussed in Chapter 4). Condition ratings and other attributes for these linear features are in Appendix C.

Once a comprehensive regional route inventory is completed for an RMP, a route selection process is conducted. The selection process documented in the *Alaska Travel Management Guide* and discussed in Section 3.3 will be used at the TMP level to select routes to be managed and maintained by BLM and identify routes to be closed. The selected routes will be included in a subsequent version of this LRTP.

Most existing roads and trails on BLM lands were created by users rather than BLM and are generally in poor or degraded condition, largely because they were not located or constructed for long-term sustainability.

Because this LRTP was published before the completion of route inventories and selections, the existing conditions information relies on best available data from BLM and other sources. These data and their relevance to the BLM existing conditions in Alaska are discussed in the following sections.

2.1 Trails

Most of BLM's Alaska transportation network is composed of summer and winter trails. There are currently 1,571.2 miles of BLM maintained trails listed in FAMS. This includes those portions of the Iditarod National Historic Trail that cross BLM-managed lands. BLM, however, is the administrating agency and the primary point of contact for matters involving the entire Iditarod National Historic Trail, which crosses BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Alaska, Tribal, and privately owned lands. BLM coordinates with the various land owners and managers to cooperatively manage the designated trail routes. Digitized U.S. Geological Survey quadrangles show hundreds of miles of trails on BLM-managed lands, although most of those routes not been verified and may no longer exist on the ground. Trail inventory and documentation, however, is not comprehensive and it is widely accepted that there are unknown miles of additional undocumented trails. Figure 2 shows the current BLM-Alaska transportation system.

Not only are trails the predominant transportation network within BLM lands, they are of great importance to various user groups for recreation, subsistence,

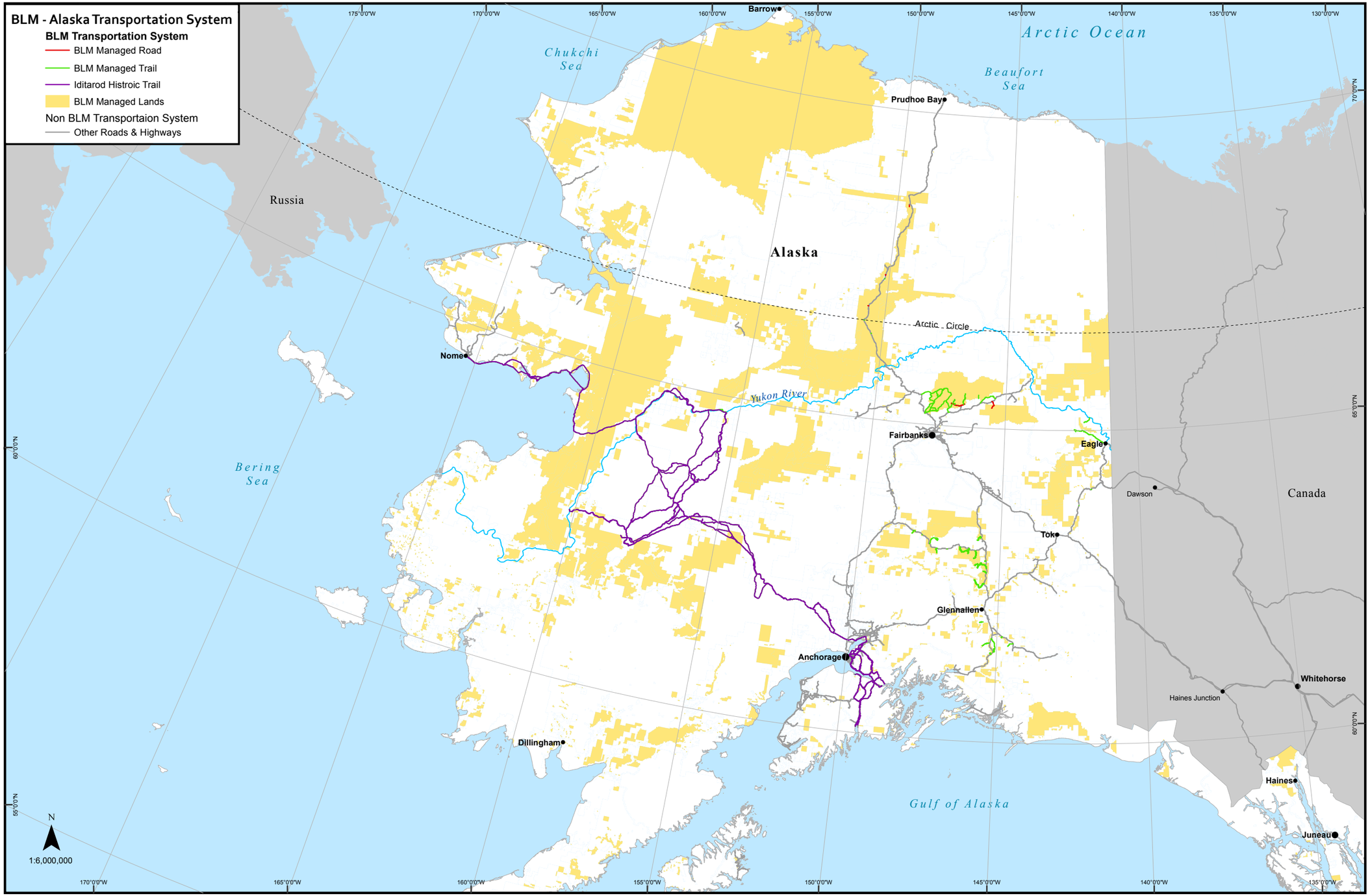
permitted commerce, and daily travel. For some remote communities, winter trails are the primary means of accessing neighboring communities, and the transportation of goods and services where no constructed roads exist. For these communities, winter trails are not recreational, but the primary means of overland transportation and commerce. Trails are also significant travel resources for participating in subsistence related activities by connecting villages to remote reaches of BLM lands. Trails support numerous modes of travel, which are influenced by seasonal conditions. Trails support travel by OHVs, hiking, horses, and bikes in the summer, and snowmobiles, dogsleds, and cross-country skiing in the winter. Exceptions in seasonal use and travel mode are exceedingly common due to accommodating regional climates and travel purpose (such as recreational use of bikes during the winter).

Winter travel in rural Alaska means extreme cold temperatures with short days and low-light conditions. Winter trails need to be well marked with reflective markers and tripods across open areas to prevent travelers from getting lost. On some trails, small cabins have been constructed to provide winter safety shelters for travelers during bad storms or case of snowmobile breakdowns.

Most trails started as winter routes that developed over time into summer motorized routes; however, many winter trails cross wetlands that are not suitable for summer travel. In northern Alaska, the permafrost soils are very susceptible to damage once the organic mat is broken and exposed to warmer surface temperatures that result in thermokarsting (melting frozen soil) and gully formation that prevent use of the trail. As a result, BLM will identify a multimodal trail system that can be used for both summer and winter activities.

Iditarod Trail and winter trail markers, BLM

Figure 2
BLM-Alaska Current Transportation System



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Bureau of Land Management-Alaska's principal trail systems include the following trails:

- The Campbell Tract is a 730 acre administrative facility in Anchorage, Alaska with 12 miles of hiking, running, biking, horse riding, skiing, and dog sledding trails. It also includes the Iditarod Dog Sled Race start and the Campbell Loop National Recreation Trail.
- The Iditarod National Historic Trail is a inter-village winter trail system that connects Seward to Nome, Alaska. The Iditarod Trail system totals over 2,300 miles, of which, 417 miles cross BLM-managed lands.
- The one-million acre White Mountains National Recreation Area has over 250 miles of summer and winter multiple-use trails that connect 12 public-use cabins.
- The Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail is a 27.3 mile hiking trail with two trail shelter cabins overlooking the Steese National Conservation Area.
- Numerous summer and winter trails along the Denali, Elliott, Richardson, Steese, and Taylor highways.

2.2 Roads

The BLM manages 46.3 miles of roads in Alaska. These maintained roads are primarily gravel surfaced and provide access for highway vehicles. These managed roads provide access to administrative and recreation sites, such as BLM offices, visitor centers, campgrounds, river access, and other public lands. Some roads are maintained only in the summer. Most BLM roads are used by the public, although they are all considered to be administrative roads and managed differently from public roads. While nationally BLM is considering becoming a "public road" agency, not every BLM road will become a public road and be maintained at public road standards.

Nome Creek Road, BLM

2.3 Primitive Roads

There are many miles of authorized and user created primitive roads throughout BLM-Alaska lands. These primitive roads are primarily native surface and passable only with four-wheel drive, high clearance vehicles. Most primitive roads provide access to communication sites, mining operations, forestry operations, oil and gas production and utility, or other public lands uses. Some of these roads are maintained in the summer only while others are intended strictly for winter use. Most undocumented roads, however, are used for recreation, subsistence, and general travel through and to BLM-managed lands.

2.4 Air Travel

Air travel plays a major role for travel to and within Alaska. Many residents and most of the out-of-state visitors use the commercial airports as hubs to begin their travel by car, bus, train, boat and air-taxi to remote communities and public lands. Commercial airlines provide scheduled transportation for passengers, mail and cargo, as well as emergency medical transport from the rural communities with airports. Small planes and air-taxi operators provide access to the most remote areas and unimproved "backcountry" airstrips for recreation, work, subsistence, and access to private inholdings.

Gravel Bar Airstrip, BLM

Aircraft are commonly used to access BLM-managed public lands and remote sites in Alaska. This includes administrative and leased airfields, village airport leases, permitted airstrips for mining and energy access, and unimproved remote back country landing strips. Many of these facilities are in uncontrolled airspace. Use of these facilities range from occasional to frequent daily use and serves as an important gateway for dispersed access to remote areas. While not maintained, there are many undocumented "backcountry" landing strips that are used for accessing remote areas for various reasons; however, they are not formally documented or located geographically for the purposes of this LRTP.

2.5 Water Conveyance

Alaska coastal and inland waterways are considered year-round travel corridors. Residents and visitors use the Alaska Marine Highway System for travel to remote coastal communities and destinations. River boating is more than recreational; it is a vital means of travel between villages and for access to allotments, subsistence camps and resources. Small watercraft are frequently used to access public lands that border oceans or rivers. Such access does not require the use of formal harbors or ports and is a popular mode of travel for remote recreational access to/within BLM lands.

Inland waterways are therefore important corridors for water based travel. In winter, river corridors are used by snowmobiles and dogsleds to travel between village communities for such routine purposes as visiting relatives or basketball games between schools. Coastal ports and waterways are also used for shipping goods, with many remote communities receiving barge shipments at least once or twice during the summer months.

The BLM manages six designated national wild and scenic rivers (WSR) in Alaska totaling over 950 river miles. These popular rivers are used for recreation, hunting, fishing, and subsistence activities. The BLM-managed WSRs are:

- Beaver Creek National Wild River – 110 miles
- Birch Creek National Wild River – 126 miles
- Fortymile National WSR system – 392 miles
- Delta National WSR – 62 miles
- Gulkana National Wild River – 181 miles
- Unalakleet National Wild River – 80 miles

By a significant margin, Alaska's 5,497 miles[2] of inland waterways are the greatest in the country; the national State average for inland waterways is 740 miles. Approximately 690 miles of major rivers[3] intersect BLM lands. The most notable rivers are:

- Colville River, 305 miles adjacent to BLM lands
- Kuskokwim River, 120 miles adjacent to BLM lands

2 *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, www.bts.gov/publications/state_transportation_statistics/oklahoma/html/table_01_13*

3 *"Major river" as defined by Rand McNally New International Atlas; The Times Atlas of the World; Digital Chart of the World and distributed by Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).*

- Koyukuk River, 110 miles adjacent to BLM lands
- Yukon River, 90 miles adjacent to BLM lands
- Susitna River, 65 miles adjacent to BLM lands

Many of the waterways mentioned in this LRTP are State owed. Under the Submerged Lands Act of 1953 and the Alaska Statehood Act, the State of Alaska received title to unreserved beds of navigable waters at the time of statehood. Navigable waters are those waters used, or susceptible to use, for travel, trade, and commerce at the time of statehood (1959). BLM may make administrative determinations in order to identify public lands. Until such time a determination is made, the BLM presumes federal ownership of submerged lands.

Section 17(b) easement and trail marker, BLM

2.6 ANCSA Section 17(b) Easements

Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) section 17(b) easements are rights reserved by the United States for travel across Native lands to access public lands. These easements may be reserved for corridors to and from communities, airports, docks, and marine coastline. Rights are reserved when BLM conveys or transfers land ownership of land to a Native corporation under ANCSA, United States Code §1616(b), and 43 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) §2650.4-7.

Section 17(b) easements are reserved to allow the public to cross Native lands to access public lands and major waterways. Although the public may travel across easements, other uses are considered trespassing. Hunting, fishing, berry picking, or trapping on, or from an easement is prohibited unless a permit from the landowner is obtained.

The uses allowed on a section 17(b) easement are limited and are described in the conveyance document issued to a Native corporation. Any use other than what is described in the conveyance document is not authorized. An easement may also be limited to seasonal use. Common allowable uses for most section 17(b) easements are:

- **25-foot trail.** The uses allowed on a 25-foot-wide trail easement are travel by foot, dogsleds, animals, snowmobiles, two- and three-wheeled OHVs, and small all-terrain vehicles (ATV) (less than 3,000 pounds gross vehicle weight).
- **50-foot trail.** The uses allowed on a 50-foot-wide trail easement are those allowed for a 25-foot trail plus large ATVs (more than 3,000 pounds gross vehicle weight), tracked vehicles, and four-wheel-drive vehicles.
- **60-foot road.** The uses allowed on a 60-foot-wide road easement are those allowed for 25- and 50-foot trails plus automobiles and trucks.
- **1-acre site.** The uses allowed on a site easement are vehicle parking (such as aircraft, boats, ATVs, snowmobiles, automobiles, and trucks), temporary camping, and loading or unloading. Temporary camping and loading or unloading uses are limited to 24 hours. In some situations a site easement may be reserved as an aircraft landing strip.

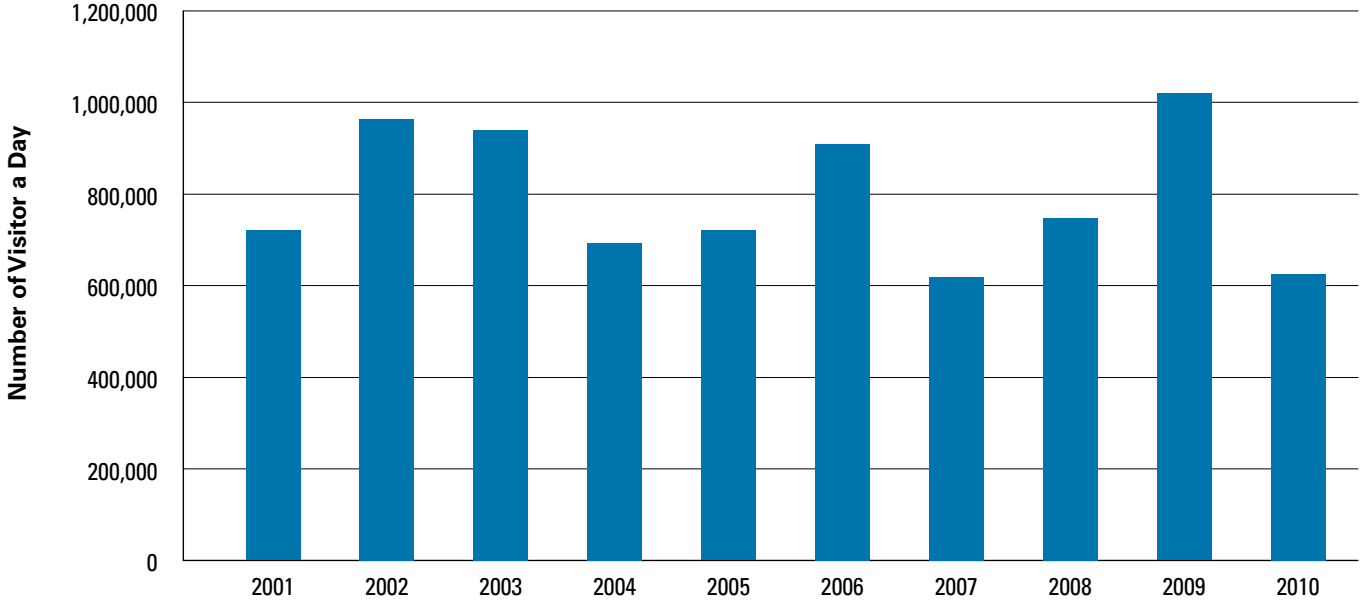
2.7 Use and Visitation

Recreational visitation to BLM-managed public lands in Alaska fluctuates annually, as illustrated in Figure 3. Most visitation occurs along highways and other roads. Organized bus and commercial guides provide road tours to preferred destinations such as the BLM Yukon River and Arctic Circle waysides on the Dalton Highway and other BLM waysides along the Taylor and Denali highways. Most tour operators and independent road travelers desire some form of roadside amenities such as waysides, comfort stations, campgrounds, visitor centers, and trailheads. Such facilities enrich the travel experience, provide opportunities for information and interpretation, and encourage stewardship of public lands.

Visitors seeking a more remote experience sometimes fly to remote villages for guided or outfitted river floats, hunting, or camping trips. Trails offer recreational opportunities for hiking, backpacking, horse riding, ATV riding, and mountain biking of off the road network. Interest in recreational winter travel such as skiing, dog sledding, and snowmobiling is increasing due to development of maintained snow trails and public-use cabins such as those in the White Mountains National Recreation Area and along the Iditarod National Historic Trail during the past 25 years. International visitation during the winter to view the aurora borealis (northern lights) is also increasing.

Analysis was performed on behalf of this and the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* to identify trends in visitation that may impact how and in what levels FLMAs are accessed. The results of this analysis are documented in the *Visitation Trends Technical Report* in Appendix A of the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP*. In general, the report concludes that out-of-state visits to Alaska are likely to increase over the next 20 years. Visitation is expected to increase most in FLMA units that are either directly accessed by cruise ships or are secondary stops for visitors who enter the state through cruise ship ports or airports. Such units are generally those that are adjacent to cities with access to roads and accommodate tour busses and automobiles.

Figure 3
Recreational Visits to BLM–Managed Public Lands (2001 to 2010)



3. Travel and Transportation Management

The BLM TTM planning process is a comprehensive approach to on-the-ground management and administration of travel and transportation networks of roads, primitive roads, trails, and areas. Travel management consists of implementing transportation planning decisions, route inventory and mapping, signing area and route designations, education and interpretation, law enforcement, easement acquisition, monitoring activities, and other measures necessary for providing access to and across BLM-managed public lands. This process considers a wide variety of uses (including recreational, traditional, authorized, commercial, educational, and other travel and transportation purposes), as well as all forms of motorized and non-motorized access or use, such as foot, animal-assisted travel, mountain bike, OHV, and other forms of transportation. This chapter describes the BLM's processes for TTM planning.

3.1 Travel and Transportation Management Planning

Travel and Transportation Management planning requires an interdisciplinary approach that considers and addresses all resource and administrative access needs. This approach considers impacts of travel and transportation alternatives on other resources and uses as well as the impact of managing other resources and uses on TTM. These resources include, but are not limited to, recreation, soil, vegetation, water, hydrology, air, wildlife, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, lands with wilderness characteristics, paleontological resources, and cultural resources. Interdisciplinary teams involved in TTM planning have the knowledge and expertise to adequately assess travel and transportation requirements and impacts in relationship to the management and protection of these resources. The TTM planning process is incorporated into the development of all RMPs to ensure access needs are balanced with resource management goals and objectives.

Whereas a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to TTM incorporates the concerns and needs of multiple programs, the recreation program has a specific need to recognize and manage motorized recreational use of OHVs and non-motorized travel, such as foot, equestrian, and others. The planning process considers and addresses the full range of all travel modes on public lands, not only motorized access needs. An understanding of the regional supply and demand of recreational opportunities and access needs considered in designation of road, primitive road, and trail systems as well as areas for specific recreation and other uses.

3.1.1 Land Use Plan Decisions and Considerations

The following decisions are required under the land use planning process pursuant to the regulations found in 43 CFR §1600.

Designation of OHV Management Areas

All public lands are required to have OHV area designations (see 43 CFR §8342.1). Areas must be designated as open, limited, or closed to motorized travel activities. Open, limited, and closed areas are defined in 43 CFR §8340.0-5, (f), (g), and (h), respectively. The following criteria for open, limited, and closed OHV area designations are established in 43 CFR §8342.1:

- **Open areas.** Existing laws, proclamations, regulations, or Executive Orders may limit the use of the open area designation or impose additional requirements relating to travel and transportation planning and

management in specific circumstances. Technological advances in OHVs and the volume of motorized recreation on public lands have required a shift in policy where the designation or retention of large areas open to unregulated cross-country travel is no longer a viable management strategy.

Open areas will be limited to a size that can be effectively managed and geographically identifiable to provide quality OHV opportunities for users. Expansive open areas allowing cross-country travel without a corresponding and identified user need or demand are not designated in RMPs.

- **Limited areas.** At a minimum, a limited area has specific road, primitive road, and trail designations (limited to designated routes). Consideration is given to a range of alternatives pursuant to NEPA and to a range of route specific limitations. These specific road, primitive road, and trail designations are determined as part of an implementation level decision-making process. More than one limitation may apply beyond the specific road, primitive road, and trail designations, including travel routes that are limited to specific types or modes of travel, such as foot, equestrian, bike, and motorized; limited to time or season of use; limited to certain types of vehicles (street legal vehicles, motorcycles, ATVs, over-snow vehicles, and/or high clearance vehicles); limited to authorized or permitted vehicles or users; limited to BLM administrative use; or other types of limitations (such as, hunting access, game retrieval, and pull-out camping). These decisions also provide specific guidance about the process for managing motorized vehicle access for authorized, permitted, or otherwise approved vehicles for those specific categories of motorized vehicle uses that are exempt from a limited designation (see 43 CFR §8340.0-5[a][1-5]).

  If the specific road, primitive road, and trail designation process is conducted after a RMP is completed, then the use of existing roads, primitive roads, and trails is allowed on an interim basis. In such a situation, the RMP clearly identifies the process leading from the interim designation of "limited to existing roads, primitive roads, and trails" to the development of a designated network of roads, primitive roads, and trails. The RMP states that the designation will change from "limited to existing roads, primitive roads, and trails" to "limited to designated roads, primitive roads, and trails" upon the completion of a TMP.

- **Closed areas.** Motorized vehicle travel is prohibited in closed areas. Access by means other than motorized vehicle is permitted. Areas are designated closed if the absence of all vehicular use is necessary to protect resources, promote visitor safety, or reduce use conflicts. Except as otherwise provided by law, congressionally designated wilderness areas are statutorily closed to motorized and mechanized use. Routes and modes of travel[4] in these areas need to be identified by BLM. BLM does not have designated wilderness areas in Alaska.

RMPs also include a map of OHV area designations. OHV management is a decision-making process that is thoroughly documented in the administrative record. Particular attention is paid to documenting how the designation criteria in 43 CFR §8342.1 were considered in making OHV area designation decisions. The OHV area designations for wilderness study areas (WSA) comply with the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review H-8550-1.

4 ANILCA provisions allow snowmobile, motorboat, and airplane use in wilderness and wilderness study areas in Alaska.

Presidential and Congressional Designations

TMPs must be completed for all national monuments and congressionally designated national conservation areas, national recreation areas, cooperative management and protection areas, outstanding natural areas, and forest reserves (in accordance with the establishing statute or Presidential Proclamation).

TMPs reference, incorporate, or are amended with provisions for the following special designations:

- National monument or national conservation area plans required by Presidential Proclamation or the act of Congress that establishes each national monument or national conservation area.
- National scenic and historic trails comprehensive management plans required by the National Trails System Act. Refer to the *National Scenic and Historic Trails Manual and Handbook Series* for supplemental guidance.
- National wild and scenic rivers comprehensive river management plans required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Refer to the *Wild and Scenic Rivers Manual and Handbook Series* for supplemental guidance.
- Wilderness management plans (non-motorized and non-mechanized trails only[5] required by the *Wilderness Act. Refer to the Wilderness Manual and Handbook Series* for supplemental guidance. BLM does not have any designated wilderness areas in Alaska.

Administrative Designations

Management of existing and proposed scenic or backcountry byways, national recreation trails, national historic landmarks, Wild Lands, and other similar designations are addressed in RMPs. These administrative designations must be consistent with the goals and objectives for the planning area.

Water and Air

RMPs address access across BLM-managed lands to Federal- and State-owned waters and for aircraft landings on land and water. As is the case in Alaska, recreational backcountry airstrips can be an integral part of a balanced and efficient transportation system. Backcountry airstrip designations need to be consistent with the goals and objectives for the planning area and applicable FAA regulations.

Authorized and Permitted Uses

Authorizations or permits that include motorized vehicle activities address the use of motorized vehicles as part of the authorization or permit. Authorized motorized vehicle activities require NEPA analysis and other environmental compliance actions and are compatible with RMP goals. Authorized and permitted uses may include use stipulations and limitations, such as limitations on travel over land, water, snow, and for aircraft landing. Any motorized vehicle use associated with an application for an authorization or permit is subject to the regulations and policies related to the particular application process. The intent is not to define travel-related casual use for any specific program.

Remote Ridgeline Airstrip, BLM

5 *ANILCA provisions allow snowmobile, motorboat and airplane use in wilderness and wilderness study areas in Alaska.*

Accessibility

Under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, no person with a disability can be denied participation in a Federal program that is available to all other people solely because of his or her disability. Wheelchair and mobility devices, including those that are battery-powered, that are designed solely for use by a mobility-impaired person and that are suitable for use in an indoor pedestrian area are allowed in all areas open to foot travel. There is no legal requirement to allow people with disabilities to use motor vehicles on roads, primitive roads, or trails and in areas that are closed to motor vehicle use. Restrictions on motor vehicle use that are applied consistently to everyone are not discriminatory. Generally, granting an exemption from designations for people with disabilities would not be consistent with the management objectives of the planning area.

Temporary Closures and Restrictions

The purpose of a temporary closure and restriction is to protect public health and safety (43 CFR §8364.1), or prevent undue or unnecessary resource degradation due to unforeseen circumstances. RMPs and TMPs address temporary closures and restrictions of areas, roads, primitive roads, and trails. The requirement thresholds for issuing temporary closures and restrictions vary by program. For example, in instances where OHV activities are causing considerable adverse effects to resources, temporary closures are implemented under the authority of 43 CFR §8341.2. For RMPs and TMPs in these cases, the following applies:

> *Where off-highway vehicles are causing or will cause considerable adverse effects upon soil, vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, historical resources, threatened or endangered species, wilderness suitability, other authorized uses, or other resources, the affected areas shall be immediately closed to the type(s) of vehicle causing the adverse effect until the adverse effects are eliminated and measures implemented to prevent recurrence.*

The RMPs and TMPs define the thresholds in which OHV related temporary closures and restrictions would take place. The RMPs and TMPs also consider impacts associated with such temporary closures and restrictions as part of environmental impact analyses. By describing and analyzing the criteria and action-related impacts for OHV-related temporary closures and restrictions, future temporary closures and restrictions exercised may not require further NEPA analysis. Actions taken to correct adverse effects from OHVs, such as rehabilitation, typically require additional NEPA analysis.

In cases where RMPs and/or TMPs do not address temporary closures and restrictions as described above, appropriate NEPA analysis is required before implementing the temporary closure or restriction.

Dalton Highway Wayside, BLM

Revised Statute 2477 Assertions

The State of Alaska has identified hundreds of miles of historic routes across BLM-managed lands under the Revised Statute (R.S.) 2477, including

those identified in R.S. 19.30.400. Many of these routes are still in use today. Through its Resource Management and Travel Management level plans, BLM may identify and adopt an existing route, an R.S. 2477 route or otherwise, as a transportation feature to be maintained by BLM for public use. The validity of any R.S. 2477 claims will be addressed outside of the planning process.

As part of national policy, all RMPs and TMPs must include the following minimum statement with regard to R.S. 2477 assertions:

> *A travel management plan is not intended to provide evidence bearing on or addressing the validity of any R.S. 2477 assertions. R.S. 2477 rights are determined through a process that is entirely independent of the BLM's planning process. Consequently, travel management planning should not take into consideration R.S. 2477 assertions or evidence. Travel management planning should be founded on an independently determined purpose and need that is based on resource uses and associated access to public lands and waters. At such time as a decision is made on R.S. 2477 assertions, the BLM will adjust its travel routes accordingly.*

3.1.2 Delineating and Mapping Travel Management Areas

An RMP may consider establishing and mapping TMAs. Travel Management Areas are a planning and management tool that may be used to address area-specific travel issues. The TMAs may be used to identify where unique travel management circumstances require a particular focus, specific management prescriptions, or additional analysis. Travel Management Areas can also be used to separate specific areas from the larger planning area for a variety of reasons, such as the area's complexity or level of controversy, the need for a higher-level of public involvement, consideration of special resource characteristics, or manageability of the area. All TMAs are required to have OHV area designations completed as a land use planning decision in the RMP.

It may be necessary to defer specific road, primitive road, and trail designation decisions in some TMAs and address them at a later date. This deferral allows field offices to move forward and make road, primitive road, and trail designations for the transportation system in other parts of the planning area.

3.2 Travel and Transportation Management Implementation Decisions

A defined travel and transportation network (system of roads, primitive roads, and trails) is one that is delineated concurrently with the development of a land use plan, to the extent practicable (including a reasonable range of alternatives). When it is not practical to delineate a travel and transportation network through the development of a TMP during the land use planning process, a map of the known network of transportation linear features is developed and made available to the public and a process established to designate a final travel and transportation network within five years. Possible reasons for deferring the development of a TMP include size or complexity of an area, controversy, or incomplete data. Travel management planning is either completed concurrently with the RMP or deferred to an implementation plan.

The decision-making process is thoroughly documented in the administrative record. Particular attention is paid to documentation of how the designation criteria in 43 CFR §8342.1 are considered in making individual road, primitive road, and trail designation decisions.

See Appendix B for a diagram of the relationship between the BLM land use planning and the TMP planning processes.

In Alaska, the BLM may not have discretionary authority to restrict snowmobile use to designated routes for subsistence and traditional activities.

3.2.1 Resource Management Plan Concurrent Travel Management Planning

When a TMP is completed within the RMP, the TMP is dealt with as an implementation action with the appropriate level of NEPA analysis and other environmental compliance requirements. In the implementation portion of the RMP, a process is established to select specific roads, primitive roads, and trails that will be available for public and administrative use and specify limitations placed on use. The following travel management process is outlined in RMPs. Required products of the travel management planning process include:

- Criteria to select or reject specific transportation linear features in the final travel management network; to add new roads, primitive roads, or trails; and to specify limitations. The criteria includes those factors identified in 43 CFR §8342.1.
- A map of roads, primitive roads, and trails for all travel modes and uses, including motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized travel.
- Definitions and additional limitations for specific roads, primitive roads, and trails.
- Guidelines for managing and maintaining the system, including developing route-specific road, primitive road, and trail management objectives; a sign plan; education/public information plan; enforcement plan; and a process requiring the application of engineering best management practices.
- Indicators to guide future plan maintenance, amendments, or revisions related to the travel management network.
- Needed easements and rights-of-way (to be issued to BLM or others) to maintain the existing road, primitive road, and trail network providing public land access.
- Provisions for new route construction or adaptation/relocation of existing routes.
- A plan for decommissioning and rehabilitating closed or unauthorized routes.
- A monitoring plan.
- Classification of all roads, primitive roads, and trails designated for travel in a TMP and as assets in the FAMS. All roads, primitive roads, and trails must also be identified as such in the Ground Transportation Linear Feature geospatial database.

3.2.2 Deferred Travel Management Planning

When the final travel and transportation network is deferred in the RMP, then the RMP documents the decision-making process used to develop the initial network provide the basis for future implementation-level decisions and help set guidelines for making transportation network adjustments throughout the life of the plan. The following tasks set in the RMP for each planning area or TMA:

- Produce a map of the known network of transportation linear feature network, including modes of travel.
- Define the long-term management goals for the transportation system.
- Define interim management objectives for areas or sub-areas where route designations are not completed concurrent with the RMP. Clearly state the process of moving from an interim designation of “limited to existing roads, primitive roads, and trails,” to a designation of “limited to designated roads primitive roads and trails” upon completion of TMP.

- Identify any incomplete travel and transportation tasks.
  - Outline additional data needs and a strategy to collect needed information
  - Provide a clear planning sequence for subsequent road and trail selection and identification, including the public involvement process (focusing on user groups and stakeholders), initial route selection criteria, and constraints
  - Provide a schedule to complete the area or sub-area road, primitive road, and trail selection process
- Identify any easements and rights-of-way (to be issued to the BLM or others) needed to maintain the preliminary or existing road and trail network.

3.2.3 Completing the Travel and Transportation Networks

When the decision on delineating travel and transportation networks is deferred in the land use plan to the implementation phase, the work is completed within five years of the signing of the Record of Decision for the RMP. When completing the TMP, a process to select specific roads, primitive roads, and trails for public and administrative use is established. The process specifies any limitations placed on use. This process includes the same information provided in the TMP that was completed as part of the RMP (bulleted in Section 3.2.1 of this LRTP).

3.2.4 Route Designation Limitations Relating to Wilderness Study Areas

In WSAs, motorized and mechanized use may be permitted to continue on existing routes identified in the wilderness inventory conducted in support of sections 201 and 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. In these cases, final route classification is delayed until Congressional action is taken or a land use plan decision is made to close routes to motorized and mechanized use. Primitive roads and motorized/mechanized trails are not designated and classified as an asset within a WSA. Any motorized/mechanized linear transportation feature located within these areas is identified in a transportation inventory as a motorized/mechanized "primitive route."

Primitive routes are not a part of the transportation system, classified as a transportation asset, or entered into the FAMS unless one of the following conditions is met:

- The routes are designated as non-motorized and non-mechanized trails.
- Congress releases the WSA from Wilderness consideration and the routes are designated.

3.2.5 Route Designation Limitations in Lands with Wilderness Characteristics Designated for Protection

Primitive roads and motorized/mechanized trails are not designated and classified as an asset within lands with wilderness characteristics designated for protection in land use plans. Any motorized/mechanized linear transportation feature located within these areas shall be identified in a transportation inventory as a motorized/mechanized "primitive route" unless a land use plan decision is made to close the routes to motorized/mechanized use.

Primitive routes are not part of the transportation system, classified as a transportation asset, or entered into FAMS unless one of the following conditions is met:

- The routes are designated as non-motorized and non-mechanized trails.
- An RMP decision is made to no longer protect the wilderness characteristics and the routes are designated.

3.3 Route Selection Criteria

The route inventory and route selection process is a proactive step toward maintaining the desired transportation network rather than relying on inherited roads and trails. A planned transportation network can effectively serve the public, minimize resource damage, and reduce maintenance costs. Applying criteria to routes selected to be included as part of the overall BLM transportation network is one of the most important aspects of travel management. These criteria for selecting or decommissioning existing routes and adding new routes are developed through the TMP to support RMP goals and objectives and applied to each route considered in the TMP.

The following are examples of criteria that can be used in the route selections process:

- Provides reasonable access across BLM-managed public lands
- Enhances the existing BLM-managed transportation system
- Provides reasonable access to resources (for example, energy, minerals, timber, and subsistence)
- Provides access to administrative, recreation, or authorized sites (for example, communication sites, wilderness study areas, and BLM cabins)
- Meets legal requirements for access (for example, ANCSA section 17(b) easements, ANILCA Titles VIII, XI, and XIII access, and rights-of-way)
- Provides resource protection (for example, avoids wetlands or cultural sites)
- Provides connectivity to other existing routes (for example, State Highway System)
- Provides sustainable transportation routes (for example, the route is maintainable)
- Resolves resource management issues (for example, reduction of impacts to riparian areas or avoids critical habitat)
- Resolves user conflicts (for example, provides a wide range of opportunities for users)

BLM must also consider the following designation criteria listed in 43 CFR §8342.1 to minimize conflicts with the various uses of the public lands:

- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize damage to soil, watershed, vegetation, air, or other resources of the public lands, and to prevent impairment of wilderness suitability (although ANILCA allows for motorized uses in wilderness study areas).
- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize harassment of wildlife or significant disruption of wildlife habitats. Special attention will be given to protect endangered or threatened species and their habitats.
- Areas and trails shall be located to minimize conflicts between off-road vehicle use and other existing or proposed recreational uses of the same or neighboring public lands, and to ensure the compatibility of such uses with existing conditions in populated areas, taking into account noise and other factors.
- Areas and trails shall not be located in officially designated wilderness areas or primitive areas (unless uses are ANILCA related in which case motorized uses are permitted in wilderness study areas). Areas and trails shall be located in natural areas only if the authorized officer determines that off-road vehicle use in such locations will not adversely affect their natural, aesthetic, scenic, or other values for which such areas are established.

Additional route selection criteria may be needed to resolve unique resource management issues within a planning area and thoroughly documented in a TMP. The route selection process is structured such that selection criteria are consistent and defendable, yet flexible enough to accommodate unusual circumstances that may exist within planning areas.

3.4 Additional Considerations

New routes may be identified in the land use planning process or considered for authorization on a case-by-case basis when proposed by private individuals or entities such as mining or energy operations. Any proposed route construction should be consistent with the proposed level of use and activity while meeting resource protection needs and requirements. For example, instead of constructing a year-round industry road, heavy equipment can be moved over land during the winter when snow cover can protect sensitive soils and using an ATV trail for summer access where feasible.

Through the route selection process, some existing routes may be recommended for closure. Route closure could take many forms from simply eliminating access to a route, to a comprehensive reclamation and restoration of the route to a condition similar to its natural state. Route closure could include the following actions:

- Installing signs, barriers, or gates to discourage continued use
- Installing drainage features, such as waterbars, to help prevent gullies and headcuts from occurring
- Planting willow seedlings in suitable riparian areas or appropriate weed-free native seed mix to help stabilize hillsides and reduce soil erosion
- Plan for early detection and rapid response to any invasive or non-native species along both old, abandoned, and new alignments—particularly near gravel pits, borrow areas, or wherever mineral soil is exposed

Special consideration must also be given to local residents for the reasonable use of snowmobiles, motorboats, and other means of surface transportation traditionally employed as provided for in Title VIII of ANILCA. Under Title XI of ANILCA, special access and access to inholdings by motorboat, airplane, and non-motorized surface transportation methods are provided similar consideration. The BLM may temporarily or permanently restrict the use of airplanes, motorboats, snow machines, or non-motorized surface transportation in an area only when such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the area and the closure process is followed, as described in 43 CFR §36.11(h).

Dalton Highway-Brooks Range, BLM

Bettles Road, BLM

4. Travel and Transportation Funding

This LRTP establishes the groundwork for adopting well-defined funding and investment strategies built on defensible project selection processes and a wide range of funding programs. Such a process is critical to ensure continued maintenance and improvement of transportation assets as well as defensibility and consistency in transportation funding decisions. While Congress considers whether to reauthorize the current Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) or create new transportation legislation, Federal, State, and local jurisdictions continue to look for innovative funding mechanisms to span growing gaps between projected need and available funds.

4.1 BLM Specific Transportation Funding

Unlike most FLMAs, BLM receives dedicated annual funding for transportation planning through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Lands Highway Division Public Lands Discretionary (PLD) Program as made available through SAFETEA-LU (commonly referred to as "9420 funds" within BLM). The intent of the 9420 Program is to complete travel and transportation planning that will improve access to and within BLM-managed lands. On average, BLM-Alaska receives approximately $85,000 annually for transportation planning. Eligible transportation planning projects compete for funds through the national BLM Engineering office. Potential projects must meet FHWA eligibility requirements and support BLM's mission, agency initiatives, and cost-sharing programs as expressed in BLM's annual SAFETEA-LU implementation plan/program proposal.

Unlike other FLMAs, BLM does not receive funding specifically dedicated to transportation improvements. BLM transportation maintenance and construction projects are funded through the annual Congressional budget appropriations. These funds are used for all BLM resource management programs, including the operation and maintenance of BLM transportation assets. Specific transportation projects are selected at the field office level where local needs are best determined. As a result, transportation projects must compete for funding among all other project types. This competitive funding environment, coupled with sometimes dramatic year-to-year shifts in funding availability (discussed in greater detail in Section 4.3), creates challenges for implementing transportation projects. Furthermore, larger transportation projects often rely on accumulating funds over several years before implementation may begin. Figure 4 summarizes the general funding routes for transportation projects and planning.

Special, one-time funding programs such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 sometimes supplement project funds for transportation project implementation. The Recovery Act-funded long-standing priority needs. From 2009 to 2011, the Recovery Act provided BLM-Alaska $20 million for road and bridge maintenance and construction, $6.9 million for deferred maintenance, and $1.4 for trail maintenance and construction.

4.2 External Funding Sources

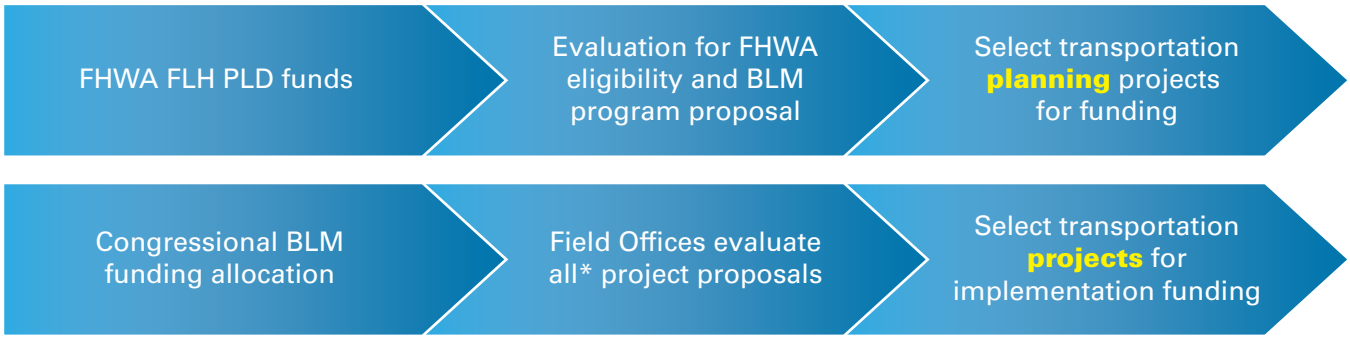
Because this is a companion document to the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP*, funding sources identified in that plan are supplemental funding sources for BLM-Alaska to pursue when projects meet funding program requirements. Chapter 2 of the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP* provides descriptions and a matrix of project types and their eligibility requirements. Many externally funded programs emphasize the importance of partnering with other Federal, State, and local agencies to overcome funding gaps.

4.3 Funding Gap Analysis

Once a comprehensive regional route inventory has been completed, a comprehensive funding gap analysis may be performed. Such an analysis shows gaps between funds needed and funds available. The analysis can help prioritize project selection and focus funds to those projects that provide the greatest benefit to BLM and the many users of its lands.

Figure 5 demonstrates the variable annual funding that BLM-Alaska expends on transportation safety and improvements. The data show that both funding totals and distributions among roads, trails, and trails fluctuate greatly from year to year. Figure 6 emphasizes the inconsistency in funding among transportation assets and among years. The data show that bridges, for example, generally received very little funding, but spiked dramatically in 2008 and 2009.

Figure 4
Funding Allocations Process



**"all" refers to projects of all types, not only transportation projects*

Figure 5
BLM-Alaska Transportation Funding Levels (2005 to 2010)

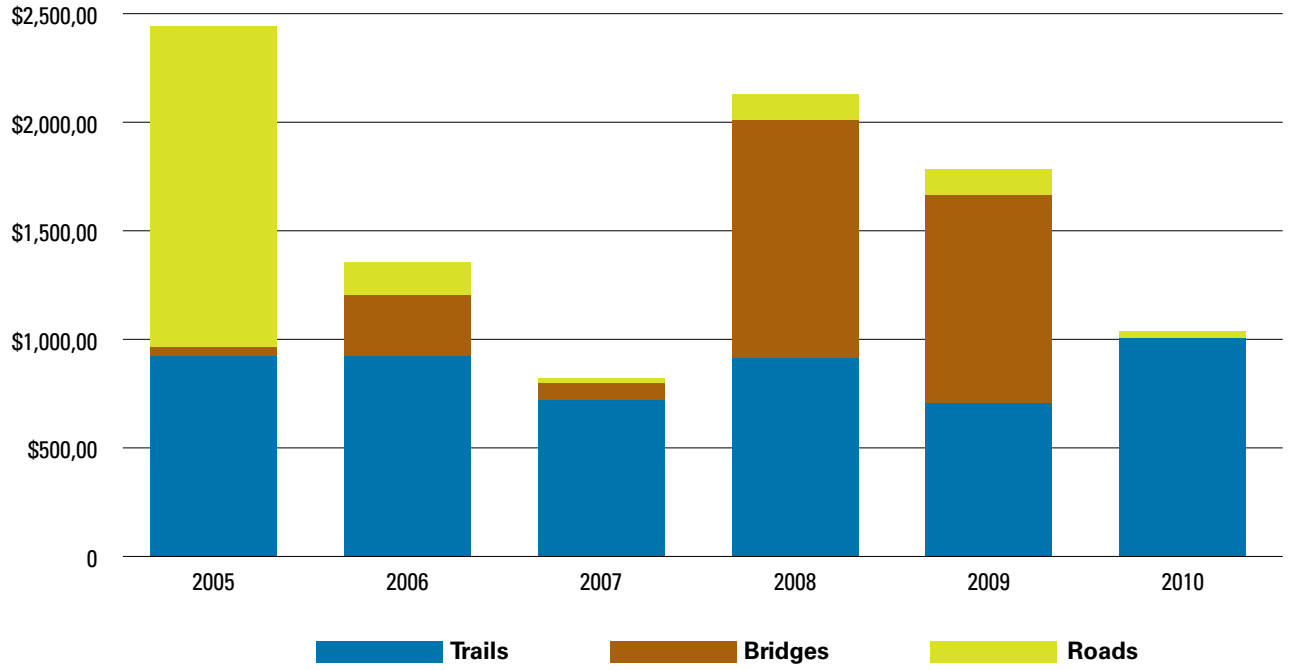
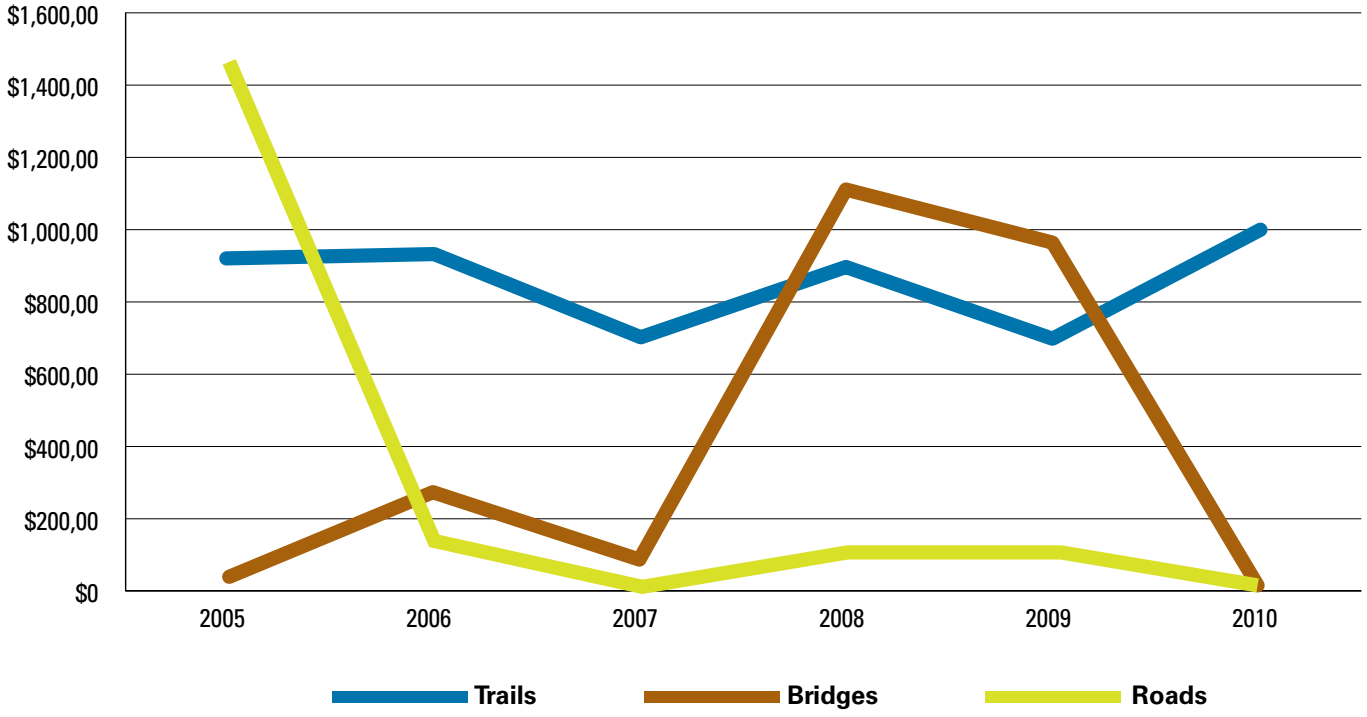


Figure 6
BLM-Alaska Distribution of Transportation Funds (2005 to 2010)



Hardened ATV Trail, BLM

5. Long Range Transportation Plan Outreach

Collaboration and input from the public, stakeholders, and internal and external partners benefits the LRTP planning process by providing needed information about the existing transportation network and identifies access needs to public lands. This chapter describes the outreach approach that has been used to hear concerns and gather comments for the LRTP and BLM travel and transportation plans.

5.1 LRTP Involvement

During the development of this and the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTPs*, the planning team solicited input from the State, local, and Tribal governments and other transportation management agencies. The public and other stakeholders are encouraged to comment on this *BLM-Alaska LRTP* and its companion plan, the *Alaska Federal Lands LRTP*, with specific details and supporting information through the project website (www.AKFedLandsLRTP.org) or directly through the National Park Service Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website (www.parkplanning.nps.gov). Although it is preferred that comments are submitted through PEPC, comments may be mailed to: Steve Hoover, Attn: BLM Alaska LRTP, 4601 DTC Blvd., Suite 700, Denver, CO 80237.

5.2 BLM Planning Involvement

Travel and transportation decisions specific to BLM are incorporated into BLM's land use planning process and associated NEPA analysis. The BLM land use planning process includes regional RMPs, with tiered-down program implementation plans, and the development of project specific plans, as appropriate. At each planning level there are opportunities for State, local, and Tribal governments; the public; and stakeholders to be involved and to provide input into the planning process. BLM's travel and transportation planning process is described in Appendix B.

NPRA Ice Road, BLM

BLM

6. Action Plan

This chapter outlines actions that will help achieve the long range transportation goals and objectives established in this LRTP. Long range transportation goals and objectives are expressed through action items that will achieve the desired BLM-Alaska transportation system. Measureable steps that can be taken to achieve these goals are described through performance measures. Other actions that help to achieve long range goals and objectives are provided as recommendations.

As indicated throughout this plan, BLM-Alaska routes are not fully inventoried at this time. A baseline condition for routes and other related transportation facilities will be established after a route inventory is completed. Until that time, the conditions outlined in Chapter 2 serve as the baseline for measuring the progress in achieving the long range transportation goals and objectives.

6.1 Action Items

BLM-Alaska's desired future transportation system should provide reasonable access to and across BLM-managed public lands, multimodal travel and transportation, safe traveling conditions, and sustainable infrastructure to reduce maintenance and repair costs and protect resources from negative impacts. To achieve this desired transportation system, the following action items need to be completed.

Planning Action Items

1. Complete OHV area designations through the land use planning process giving priority to high-use or special areas and time-sensitive planning efforts.
2. Complete route inventories and selections to determine the BLM transportation system.
3. Complete TTM plans to designate routes and identify travel management objectives for each route within five years of signing the RMP Record of Decision.
4. Complete sign plan for identifying OHV area and route designations.
5. Complete route monitoring plan to determine route proliferation by users.

Asset Management Action Items

1. Document BLM-managed routes in the BLM FAMS.
2. Conduct condition assessments of the routes to determine maintenance needs to meet travel management objectives.
3. Develop projects to bring transportation assets to desired condition level.

Travel Management Action Items

1. Develop trail or route maps.
2. Install area and route signing identifying designated routes.
3. Install travel information and route maps at primary access points.
4. Develop appropriate travel and transportation regulations to meet management goals and objectives.
5. Conduct activity monitoring to measure if management goals and objectives are being achieved.
6. Conduct user surveys to determine if user expectations and outcomes are being met.

6.2 Performance Measures

A performance measure is a segment of work within a strategic goal that provides measurable progress toward goal achievement. Performance measures provide a picture of the progress being made to reach specific mission related goals and also point out areas where more effort may be needed. The individual performance measures answer basic performance questions about the work performed in the region.

This LRTP builds from existing performance measures already being monitored BLM-wide through the BLM Strategic Matrix. Table 1 identifies the most essential transportation-related performance measures and indicates where they overlap with LRTP goals. Improvement in meeting these performance measures therefore indicates improvement in meeting the LRTP goals and intent.

Taylor Highway, BLM

Table 1
BLM Performance Measures Essential to LRTP Goals

Mission Statement	Goal	Strategy	Performance Measure	Performance Element	Unit Output	LRTP Goals: System Preservation	LRTP Goals: Public Understanding	LRTP Goals: Travel Opportunities	LRTP Goals: Natural & Cultural Resources
Provide Natural and Cultural Resource Protection and Experiences	Protect America's Landscapes	Improve land and water health	Percent of BLM acres that have achieved desired condition where condition is known and as specified in management plans.	Complete RMP Implementation Strategies (DX)	Number of plans	X		X	X
			Number of BLM acres restored to the condition specified in management plans.	Plan for Interdisciplinary Activities (DF)	Number of plans	X		X	X
				Decommission & Rehab Roads & Trails (JX)	Number of miles	X		X	X
	Protect America's Cultural and Heritage Resources	Protect cultural and historical assets and resources	Miles of national scenic and historic trail inventory completed to standards.	Inventory National Scenic & Historic Trails (CE)	Number of miles	X			X
			Miles of national scenic and historic trail monitoring completed to standards.	Monitor Designated National Scenic & Historic Trails (LA)	Number of miles	X			X
	Provide Recreation and Visitor Experience	Provide visitor services	Percent of visitors satisfied with the quality of their experience.	Assess Linear Recreation Resources (BY)	Number of miles	X	X	X	
				Evaluate Linear Recreation Management Objectives (MV)	Number of miles	X	X	X	
			Percent satisfaction among visitors served by facilitated programs.	Provide Outreach Through Interpretation and Environmental Education (AL)	Number of programs		X		
Building a 21st Century Department of the Interior	Improving Acquisition and Real Property Management	Effective management of facilities	Percent of sites maintained in adequate condition, determined by Facility Conditions Index <0.15	Bridge Condition Assessment (GX)	Number of assessments	X			
				Trail Condition Assessment (GY)	Number of miles	X			
				Trail Annual Maintenance (ID)	Number of miles	X			
				Bridge Annual Maintenance (IG)	Number of bridges	X			
			Number of lane miles of roads maintained in adequate condition.	Road Condition Assessment (GU)	Number of lane miles	X			
				Road Annual Maintenance (IP)	Number of lane miles	X			
			Number of Deferred Maintenance projects completed.	Trail Deferred Maintenance and Construction (IE)	Number of projects	X			
				Bridge Deferred Maintenance and Construction (IH)	Number of projects	X			
				Road Deferred Maintenance and Construction (IQ)	Number of projects	X			
			Number of Construction projects completed.	Trail Construction (IF)	Number of projects	X			
				Bridge Construction (II)	Number of projects	X			
				Road Construction (IR)	Number of projects	X			

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Bureau of Land Management

Alaska Long Range Transportation Plan