

## **The Proposed Stampede Road: A Bad Idea Whose Time Has Not Come**

*“There are strange things done in the midnight sun...”*

If he liked strange things, Robert Service would have loved the governor’s Stampede Road plan. The governor proposes to spend millions of state dollars to extend an old mining road against the wishes of the vast majority of local residents. And the project won’t even do what the governor wants – provide safe and convenient tourist access to Denali National Park and Preserve from the north.

This plan needs to be stopped or at least re-examined. Thoroughly.

I held a “town hall” meeting in Healy last week, and Denali Borough residents came out to give me an earful. They actually like the idea of additional and improved access to the park, but virtually all agreed this particular route is inappropriate. The Stampede route is loaded with steep grades and blind corners. If the governor wants improved tourism infrastructure, he should listen to the local residents. They have some great ideas for alternative routes.

Not unexpectedly, the National Park Service has expressed serious concerns about the Stampede Road. They’re protective of the integrity of Park and Preserve boundaries, and want to make sure future access to and entry into Denali is well-planned. Why not work with them instead of pushing a plan sure to attract their opposition?

The governor has funded his ill-advised plan to the tune of \$5 million in 2005, and has asked for \$9 million more this year. It is estimated that the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has already spent about \$1 million on engineering and preliminary work on the Stampede Road, even though they are in the midst of a \$1.6 million study to find access routes into the Park from the north. The governor initiated that study back when he was a U.S. Senator.

How can DOT&PF invest in pre-construction work for a route their own study hasn’t even selected? Why is the governor rushing into construction without the thorough planning that precedes responsible development? The governor has ignored the legitimate concerns of a majority of the local population.

Meanwhile, DOT&PF has applied to the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a huge, 1000’ construction easement and permits for four gravel pits to construct a 12-foot wide pioneer road along the Stampede Trail between 8 Mile Lake and the Savage River. Apparently, the easement needs to be that wide because DOT&PF hasn’t yet identified an appropriate road alignment – because they haven’t finished their access study. Even so, DNR is accepting public comments on the easement and material

sites applications until 5:00 PM on Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006. I hope interested Alaskans will weigh in.

For more information: [www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/hottopics/index.cfm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/hottopics/index.cfm)

Send written comments to:

State of Alaska  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Mining, Land and Water  
3700 Airport Way, Fairbanks AK 99709

or via e-mail to: [nroland@dnr.state.ak.us](mailto:nroland@dnr.state.ak.us)

*“The Arctic trails have their secret tales  
That would make your blood run cold...”*

And this particular subarctic trail will needlessly drain the state’s wallet as well. Let’s put the brakes on and think it through.