

From: Katie McClellan <kmcclellan1993@gmail.com> **Sent:** Friday, March 3, 2023 8:05:08 PM

To: Assembly <Assembly@fnsb.gov>

Subject: Vote yes on Resolution 2023-13!

To the Assembly,

I am writing to express my support of Resolution 2023-13 & to strongly encourage your vote in favor of this resolution. Thank you to Assemblymember Guttenberg for proposing this measure to protect the residents of the Interior from a ridiculous transportation proposal.

We can all recognize the mining roots that established the settlement of Fairbanks in the early 1900s, but we can all ALSO recognize that the demographics of our community have changed drastically since that time, and the needs of our residents, environment, and economy have shifted. While I do not personally favor industrial-scale hard rock gold mining for many reasons, I absolutely respect and support the sovereignty of the Tetlin tribe to choose this project as a way to develop its resources and economy. This mine's development could provide benefits to the tribe's people and economy that have not previously been available through other means. However, for the remaining residents and communities spanning the 250+ mile transportation corridor, we will not receive royalties from this mine's development, and will instead bear the brunt of its social and environmental costs.

Kinross and Contango are presenting a false choice to the public; they claim that the mine will not be profitable if they have to build a mill on-site because the infrastructure investment is too great. They say that without hauling the ore to the Kinross mill at Fort Knox, the mine can not move forward. This is an outright lie, as an [economic evaluation](#) completed by Contango in 2018, including on-site mill construction, demonstrated that the mine could and would be profitable, even when calculating gold at a lower value than it is now. Kinross claims they need this ore input to keep the mill running, despite the fact that there will continue to be ore feeding the mill from the Gil pit. They do not NEED Manh Choh ore to remain functional and profitable, they WANT Manh Choh ore, and expect the public to accept that at any cost. They have not been transparent with the public, or with the state and federal agencies charged with evaluating and approving this mine's development. Kinross neglected to share pertinent documents with the EPA necessary for their evaluation and approval of the mine plan. EPA pressed them to consider the transportation and waste rock storage at Fort Knox as part of their mine plan, but Kinross has yet to update any documentation to reflect the full footprint of the mine. They maintain vague answers in public meetings, and only have general proposals for how to manage the Manh Choh ore and its unique metallurgy, with no backup plans should they fail. It is important to note that Kinross is not permitted to manage or store acid-generating ore like the ore coming from Tetlin.

This transportation plan would burden the communities along the 250+ corridor, and disproportionately affect the communities of Fairbanks and North Pole with increased traffic and safety issues. Hauling 95+ foot double trailer trucks that are being specially designed for this specific haul plan would inconvenience local drivers under the most stable conditions at best, but along the Alaska and Richardson Highways, and through high-traffic North Pole and Fairbanks in winter conditions, the likelihood of accidents runs high. Then add nearly 200 trips per day, and accidents are guaranteed. Whiteout conditions and getting blasted from snow swirls already blind drivers when behind tractor trailers. Increasing the number of trucks on the road and the frequency of getting stuck behind one ensures that commuters, military personnel, tourists, and residents alike will be forced to drive in hazardous conditions that would be avoidable if a mill were developed on-site. Because there are no other similar plans on public roadways anywhere in the US, there is no evidence to suggest that these types of vehicles can operate at the proposed frequency alongside regular traffic without increased risk of danger. Residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough deserve more than to be guinea pigs in a Canadian corporation's budget transportation experiment.

Next, we must consider the noise and light pollution, heavy-metal laden dust, risk of spills, water quality and wildlife habitat impacts, and increased vehicle emissions in areas already affected by poor air quality. Noise and light pollution are imminent as we see increased traffic of large vehicles, running 24/7 day and night, winter and summer. Folks who live along the roadway, as well as those nearby, will be forced to hear the truck engines and see their headlights year round. While the current proposal includes covers for the trailers, these covers can and do rip. One need only look at [studies](#) of the Delong Mountain Transportation System (the Red Dog haul road) to see that fugitive dust poses serious environmental hazards and elevates heavy metals in soils, waterways, and plants, impacting wildlife, and in the case of the Tetlin to Fort Knox corridor, people too. Even with covers on, fugitive dust still impacts the surrounding roadway due to dust accumulating in tire wells and on the truck and trailer itself and shedding as the truck moves. When accidents inevitably occur, ore spilling from the trucks will contaminate the soil, water, and vegetation and there are currently no cleanup measures in place to respond to these environmental impacts. Despite what Kinross claims will be a less than 1%

increase in emissions (how?!) from the addition of nearly 200 diesel burning trips per day through North Pole and Fairbanks, there WILL be an increase in vehicle emissions, not simply because of the increase in vehicles on the roadway, but also because of the increase in idling at intersections as commuters will have to sit through more light cycles due to the increase in vehicles and the length of trucks inhibiting efficient movement through town. FAST Planning admitted at a meeting last fall that at some junctions such as Peger Road and Airport Way, commuters could wait as many as four light cycles before passing through the intersection. With the EPA already threatening to withhold federal highway funds should FNSB remain out of air quality compliance, we will be in an even worse financial position to manage our already poor roadways under circumstances in which those funds would be needed even more to address the increased wear and tear on roads.

Finally, we must consider the social impacts of this type of plan. We already live in a state experiencing significant brain drain, and are in a town (Fairbanks) that struggles to retain teachers, attract families, and maintain sustainable, responsible long-term economic and demographic growth. Proponents of this plan (namely Kinross and Black Gold) have claimed that there will be more jobs as a result of this plan. We are facing a nationwide shortage of truck drivers....where will there be more to fill these positions? What type of job-training plans have been developed to recruit employees and provide the extensive training needed to ensure safe driving in such challenging conditions? Where will these employees be recruited from? Where will they live? Vague conversations about man camps and layover areas have come up at meetings, but these types of transient infrastructure often include their own social impacts such as increased crime and substance abuse. Should this plan be implemented, it will pave the way for other mining companies (and there are many) to utilize Fairbanks as an industrial hub. Fairbanks will be a less attractive place to move to or raise a family, as residents will have to compete with trailers full of ore on the way to school and work. The increased costs of maintaining infrastructure in an area with an already high cost of living will create further economic barriers for folks looking to move here and could cause others to move away.

As if the safety hazards and environmental and social impacts are not enough to persuade the Assembly to support this resolution, it would be helpful to remember that your constituents have loudly and clearly shared their criticism of this plan. More than 40 LTEs and Community Perspectives have been published in the NewsMiner since last February, expressing concerns about this transportation proposal. Both the Fairbanks and North Pole City Councils have passed resolutions opposing the plan. At each DOT Transportation Advisory Committee meeting that I have attended since they began, the vast majority of public opinions shared are that of skepticism or outright rejection of such an irresponsible plan.

Because of the unprecedented nature of this plan, the environmental and human hazards that are guaranteed to result from its approval and implementation, and the dangerous precedent it sets for future use of local roadways by private industry to haul dangerous material, I strongly encourage all Assembly members to pass Resolution 2023-13 and stand up for the residents of Interior Alaska.

Thank you,
Katie McClellan