

Collective Response submitted by Bart LeBon, Leslie Hajdukovich, Mike Cronk and Frank Tomaszewski

As sitting Legislators or candidates for statewide public office, we are well aware of the highway safety and cost of maintenance issues surrounding the ore hauling activity now taking place between the Manh Choh mine and the Fort Knox mill site north of Fairbanks. Advocates for Safe Alaska Highways (ASAH) have done a tremendous job of increasing public awareness of the safety issues and road maintenance impact surrounding the Kinross ore haul plan and deserve our collective voice of appreciation. We offer the following collective response to the ASAH questionnaire recently sent to all candidates running for statewide office in Interior Alaska:

1. What is our level of concern regarding the safety and financial impacts of the ore hauling program on our highway system?

We are collectively concerned and want Alaska highways to be safe for all users. Any company hauling product along our highways must operate safely and within the law. We intended to stay apprised of any financial impacts additional users might pose, as it ultimately falls under the purview of the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to repair and maintain our road system.

- 1a. Will industrial use of public infrastructure be a legislative priority?

Commercial use of Alaska's highways has been a routine part of the state's economy for decades. If the statutes and/or regulations related to commercial use of public infrastructure are to be reconsidered, then it is important that not one user group be treated differently versus all other user groups.

2. Are we willing to speak directly to the Governor and DOT Commissioner regarding the release of the Alaska-Richardson-Steese Highway Corridor Action Plan?

We are collectively willing to make a direct inquiry with the Governor and DOT Commissioner regarding the release of the aforementioned study once it becomes available.

2a. Will you ensure the recommendations from the pending independent study on the impacts of the ore haul are implemented and adhered to by the state?

Once the study is finalized and released, it will need to be reviewed not just by elected officials but also by all stakeholders. It would be premature to commit to any specific action before reviewing the study and understanding the conclusions found in the report.

- 2b. Are we willing to push for committee hearings during the upcoming Legislative session?

Committee hearings are an essential tool to consider, evaluate and recommend changes to the laws that govern Alaska. If there is legislation introduced that affects resource development in our state, the Interior Delegation will absolutely be part of that conversation.

3. Are we willing to consider changes to the definitions of "commercial" and "industrial" transportation with the goal of requiring heavy industrial users to share the financial burden for their use of public infrastructure?

Changing the definitions of "commercial" and "industrial" transportation could affect many industries in the State of Alaska. For example, changes to these definitions could affect transportation activity to and from the North Slope and have an adverse impact on our state economy. All highway users would need to be included in this conversation to ensure fairness and to minimize the risk of unintended consequences.

- 3a. Are we willing to pursue imposing and enforcing weight limits on vehicles using public highways and bridges?

Alaska has a system in place for imposing and enforcing weight limits on commercial vehicles operating on public highways. Altering existing weight limits on vehicles using public roadways would need to be evaluated by all affected industries to fully understand the implications of any proposed changes.

- 3b. Are we willing to pursue clarifying and improving the permit system for oversized vehicles?

Ensuring safe and efficient transportation activities on our highway system will always be a critical public priority. By working collaboratively with all stakeholders and affected communities, we can be certain that any changes to the current permit system ensures parity among users and does not negatively impact our state economy.

In the Interior, we see the Black Gold Transport trucks operating on our highways every day. If you live in Southcentral Alaska, you may be unaware that this is an issue you should be concerned about. We collectively acknowledge that the concerns voiced by the Advocates for Safe Alaska Highways are legitimate but until more specific ore hauling information becomes available regarding the road safety record and the maintenance impact on our affected highway system, then any potential legislative action on our part will remain pending.

Alaska is a resource rich state. We are able to live and raise families here because of resource industries like oil & gas development, mining, timber, tourism and fisheries. We receive significant investment through both the federal and state government for the military and the University of Alaska, but resource development and small businesses remain the largest drivers of our total economy. Alaska is currently facing an out-migration of people that we haven't seen before. It is vital that we support a favorable business climate that is attractive for investment. This is foundational to our general well-being as Alaskans and a critical component to our long-term success as a state.