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December 21, 2021

Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Mayor Edna DeVries
Members of the Assembly
350 East Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, AK 99645
Sent via email

Re: Resolution in support of AIDEA West Susitna Access Project Feasibility Study

Dear Mayor DeVries and Members of the Assembly:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) writes to comment on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (Borough) Resolution in support of the Alaska Industrial Development Export Authority (AIDEA) effort to advance Phase 3 of the West Susitna Access Project Feasibility Study.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. We are composed of more than 1,400 members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Our members include individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, and major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

Efforts to explore the West Susitna Access have occurred for decades, since the very beginning of state land-use planning in the area. The plans have spanned multiple governors and Borough Assemblies. The Alaska Department of Natural Resources' original Susitna Area Plan in 1985 endorsed several road routes to the western Susitna Valley, one of which could originate in the Fish Creek area and included a bridge over the Susitna River – what is being proposed today. The Borough endorsed this plan by resolution. DNR's update of this plan in 2011 "*views as appropriate the provision of access to and within the area west of the Susitna River and south of Petersville Road.*" The Alaska Department of Transportation put a specific route to these general plans in 2014 in the West Susitna Access Reconnaissance Study. That study identified the Middle Susitna-Skwentna River route as having the greatest benefit, and that is the route being considered today.

These many plans by many administrations during many Borough assemblies shared a vision for a public road to access new areas, to look toward opportunities for multiple resources, such as recreational property, land sales, agriculture, forestry development, and mining. Access to the region has long been a stated goal to expand the Borough's tax-based and economic and recreational opportunities.

Alaska's lack of infrastructure, most notably of which is roads, is a key recurring theme when looking at the challenges facing future opportunities for Alaskans. Access to lands and the resources they contain



remains paramount to growing our state. When looking to expand Alaska's highway system, growth into the West-Susitna region seems to be the logical next step.

AMA appreciates that AIDEA and the Borough have eyed the area's extensive mineralization as an opportunity associated with pursuing access to the area. Active mining exploration is taking place in the area, however, it is important to note that it is just that – exploration. For an actual mine to be developed, or even a road project, an extensive process involving multiple local, state, and federal agencies with dozens of science-based environmental permits, many of which have a public involvement process would commence. The resolution before the Borough is not a mining or road construction decision. It is support for AIDEA to advance the evaluation of the access route to pursue access for public opportunities.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the fastest-growing area of the state. It is easy to see why; there is something for everyone. The acreage is massive, and includes growing population centers, economic opportunities, and remote locations to enjoy Alaska's recreational bounty. With planning and sensible land management that considers multiple user groups, the Borough and State of Alaska can expand into the West Susitna region to accommodate everyone.

AMA urges the Borough support study of the West Susitna Access Project by passing Resolution RS 21-134.

Thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D Skibinski'.

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director