

Kake-Petersburg Intertie EIS and the Kake Access EIS

Frequently Asked Questions

1. The FHWA is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Kake Access and the Forest Service is preparing an EIS for the Kake-Petersburg Intertie (KPI). Why do we need two EISs?

While it may seem like these actions are connected, the underlying purpose for each project is different: the intertie project is intended to reduce the cost of power in Kake and the access project is intended to improve the opportunities for travel to and from Kake. The alternatives for addressing each project's purpose are very different. The intertie project is considering two primary corridors for a transmission line. The Kake Access project is considering these and other corridors for road alternatives, as well as alternatives that would improve ferry service in Kake. The best solution for both projects may not involve the same action taken at the same time or in the same place.

According to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, actions should be considered connected and addressed in a single EIS if (i) one action triggers the other, (ii) one action cannot proceed unless the other action is taken previously or simultaneously, or (iii) both actions are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification (40 CFR Sect. 1508.25 (a) (1)). None of these apply to the KPI and Kake Access projects.

The two projects are on different schedules. The Intertie project is well underway, with a Draft EIS due out in fall 2013. The Kake Access project is in the early stages of project scoping and alternatives development, with an anticipated release of a Draft EIS 2015. To combine the projects at this stage, the FHWA and USFS would need to withdraw their previous Notices of Intent, issue a new NOI, and reinstate scoping. Development of a combined project Purpose and Need would limit the range of alternatives to those that satisfy the combined purpose and need and make the projects too narrowly focused. It would ignore the fact that each project could select and implement their preferred option without the other project moving forward.

2. How will the projects be coordinated?

The FHWA and FS agency counsel have provided clear legal direction that these projects are not being improperly segmented. The projects are occurring in the same region, to benefit the same community, but will address very different conditions requiring relief. As a result, the solutions (the alternatives) may be very different for each condition thus each having independent utility. It is practical that there will be information exchanged for the evaluation of impacts to resources between both projects for both consistency and efficiency. As information is developed for both projects, data sharing will become more important, particularly in consideration of potential cumulative effects.

Take-Petersburg Intertie EIS and the Take Access EIS

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3. How long will it take to finish the EISs?

FHWA anticipates a two to three-year process to complete the Take Access EIS and issue a decision. Field studies and research to develop and evaluate the project alternatives are being conducted this summer and into next year. A Draft EIS should be published in 2015. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS and FHWA will respond to those comments in its Final EIS in 2015/2016. A Record of Decision may be issued concurrent with the Final EIS.

KPI-EIS: The Forest Service currently anticipates that the Draft EIS for the KPI Project will be available for public review in fall 2013. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS and the Forest Service will respond to those comments in the Final EIS for the project, which is currently anticipated to be available in spring/summer 2014. A Record of Decision may be issued concurrent with the Final EIS.

4. What if the selected route for the Intertie is different from the selected route for Take Access?

The projects are independent of each other, the KPI project can function without the Take Access project, and the Take Access project can function without the KPI project. Both projects may move forward with permitting, final design, and construction independent of each other. The federal agencies responsible for making decisions on whether to approve the proposed action would make those decisions with full understanding of the potential cumulative impacts of the projects occurring in different locations.

5. What if the selected route for the Intertie is the same as the selected route for Take Access?

If the final decision for the KPI EIS and the final decision for the Take Access EIS both independently determine that the same route is the preferred alternative, then the parties would enter into an agreement, or memorandum of understanding, to coordinate the design and construction of the two projects to minimize construction conflict and environmental impacts.

6. Does locating both projects in the same corridor offer economic benefits to either project?

Locating the Intertie alongside a roadway maintained year round should reduce line maintenance costs. Reduced line maintenance costs would benefit Southeast Alaska Power Agency (SEAPA) rate payers. There are no construction benefits to the construction of the Intertie, if the line is constructed ahead of a road. Minimal economic benefits accrue to the road project from the power line construction.

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7. What are the opportunities and schedule for public involvement in each project?

For the Kake Access Project there will be several points in the environmental review process where your input can be targeted to specific project milestones.

Draft Purpose and Need: FHWA seeks public and agency comments on the Draft Purpose and Need statement, which explains the project objectives and why the project is needed.

- Release date: June 28, 2013
- Comment period ends: August 5, 2013
- Listening posts in Kake and Petersburg: week of July 23, 2013 **Listening posts are scheduled, “drop by” events that will be hosted by FHWA and DOT&PF to hear your comments on the project. Written comments will also be welcome at these events.**

At select timelines when project technical information, i.e. including draft range of alternatives, is available- dates to be determined

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) – The Draft EIS will provide a detailed evaluation of the environmental impacts that could result from each of the alternatives being considered. This is an opportunity for the public and agencies to comment on the assessment of impacts and proposed mitigation.

- Anticipated release date: Spring 2015
- Comment period: 45 days
- Public open houses and hearings in Kake and Petersburg: Spring 2015

Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) – The Final EIS and ROD will be issued concurrently and will identify the alternative selected to meet the project’s Purpose and Need. The Final EIS will respond to comments received on the Draft EIS.

For the Kake Petersburg Intertie:

Kake Petersburg Intertie site at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=31761

Comments on the KPI Project will be accepted at any time. However, comments received after the close of a designated comment period may not be given full consideration, and will not provide the commenter standing for administrative review under the 218 Objection process.

The next designated public comment period will be the comment period for the Draft EIS, which is currently scheduled to be available for public review in fall 2013. The public and agencies will be invited to provide comments at that time and public meetings will be held in Kake and Petersburg.