Public Facilities, Services & Transportation

Context
Portage Creek is located along the historically important transportation corridor connecting the Nushagak and the Kvichak Rivers. Today, the village remains an important community in the region with the recent growth of sport fishing along the Nushagak. The facilities and services needed to support the village and its residents are few but important. These services are currently available at a minimal level. Portage Creek is faced with the dilemma of developing and sustaining the necessary infrastructure to allow for future population growth; while current population levels make it difficult to justify investment in this infrastructure (this idea is more clearly illustrated in Figure 5). Maintaining transportation corridors and public facilities along roads and rivers are essential steps to maintaining the vibrancy of Portage Creek.

Portage Creek is inaccessible by road. Community roads are narrow and many are in rough condition. For this reason, more traditional types of passenger vehicle (such as car and truck) are not utilized as commonly as alternatives – primarily ATVs and snow machines (see Table 18). Table 18 also illustrates that boats are integral to village transportation, with usage increasing dramatically in the summer months. In addition to residents utilizing skiffs and other watercraft for transportation and fishing in the summer, a large number of recreational fishers also contribute to the boat traffic. Increased boat and float plane traffic often creates significant delays at the existing boat launch site. Solutions to this issue, listed in the goals section, include adding a dock or creating another launch site for boats or planes.

The community road system plays an integral role in community life and effort should be made to maintain its quality. Many roads are in disrepair due to erosion and are difficult to maintain. The roads to and from the airport and boat launch area, and from the village to the landfill, are the most heavily traveled. In addition to these more established transportation routes, many summer and winter trails exist around the village. Improving Portage Creek’s transportation network is an essential step in maintaining the vibrancy of this community.

17 The number of fishers that come to Portage Creek is difficult to estimate however, in 2004 the Department of Fish and Game reported that on the Nushagak River, over 4,000 anglers were given permits to fish. Approximately 1,500 of these were in the vicinity of Portage Creek. (http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/Statewide/ParticipationAndHarvest/main.cfm).
The community would like to see some general coordination to organize transportation routes. The use of both formal and informal trails and roads create a braided network that is difficult to navigate and maintain. Maintaining roads and trails, and the equipment needed for the improvement and maintenance of these connections are important priorities for Portage Creek.

In addition to the transportation network, quality public services and facilities are also essential to increase the quality of life in Portage Creek. The table on page 58 gives an overview of the status of Portage Creek’s public services, facilities, and transportation network. Specific community concerns are identified in the table. Some of the higher priority issues include the costs of some services – such as electricity and fuel. These are expensive and often not available on a year-round basis. Additionally, residents’ access to services and facilities, such as the school, clinic, and City and Village offices, is either limited or not available.

The river is a mainstay of community life. It also attracts visitors. Providing basic infrastructure and facilities in Portage Creek is necessary to support village life, to encourage the return of former Portage Creek residents, and enable locals to take advantage of economic opportunities created by the sport fishery. The Village Council, with strong residential support and continued support from outside agencies, will be able to continue to improve the level of service available in Portage Creek.

Table 18. Characteristics of Seasonal Transportation Modes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasonal Travel Modes (Number of Vehicles)</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Winter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passenger Vehicles</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowmobile</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATV</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*numbers increase during summer fishing season

Source: Portage Creek Final Long-Range Transportation Plan, prepared by Bristol Environmental & Engineering Services Corporation, 2002.
PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

Goals

1. **Construct and maintain essential public facilities and services.**

2. **Work to decrease cost of fuel and utilities.**

3. **Purchase needed capital equipment.**

Goals & Priority Actions

1. **Construct and maintain essential public facilities and services.**
   - **New Construction**
     - Water and sewer system.
       - Seek funding to provide new wells for occupied homes.
       - Provide individual, in-house iron and manganese treatment units for each occupied house and public facility.
       - If substantial growth occurs, investigate options for a community water system that would centralize the treatment activities and provide a system to meet peak flow demands for houses and the school.
       - Strategies to improve the sewage system can be found in BBEC’s Engineering Study of Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste Facilities at Portage Creek, November 2001.
       - Ensure that new housing is developed in a compact pattern, rather than sprawling, to allow for sustainable infrastructure development.
     - Dock.
       - Work with Choggiung, Ltd. to explore funding options to construct a dock.
       - Work with BBEDC (?) to explore funding options.
     - Landfill
       - Continue to work with Choggiung Ltd. to find land for the new landfill.
       - Seek funding with the State for funding to construct new, and clean up old, landfill. Other sources of funding are the Denali Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
       - Ensure new landfill is fenced and gated, contains a burn box to reduce the volume and amount of refuse scavenged by bears, foxes and birds, and is accessible to all for self-hauling.
     - Community/youth & senior center
       - The school could function as a community center until population increases necessitate the construction of a new facility (see Community Wellness, Culture & Education section for more information on re-opening the school).
- **Upgrades**
  - **Airport**
    - Contact ADOT&PF for runway improvement and the addition of lights.
  - **Clinic facility**
    - Contact BBAHC and decide on a strategy for upgrading the existing clinic and the level of service to be offered.
  - **Community generator**
  - **Tank farm**

2. **Work to decrease the cost of fuel and utilities.**
   - **Order bulk fuel for discount available**
   - **Combine individual trips**
     - Combine individual trips when traveling out of Portage Creek to reduce fuel costs.
   - **Identify break even point on use of community generator.**
   - **Subsidize utility usage through alternative energy sources for individual usage and public facilities.**
     - Investigate alternative energy sources such as solar, wind or water energy. Many rural communities throughout Alaska are forced to use alternative energy sources and reduce their consumption since fuel prices are so high. Many viable options and alternatives are available for residents statewide; see Appendix I for various resources and information on energy reduction, diesel alternatives, funding and loan programs, products, dealers and Alaskan organizations dedicated towards reducing energy consumption.
   - **Improve energy efficiency of existing structures.**

3. **Purchase needed equipment.**
   - **Multi-use truck**
   - **Surplus equipment through council for villages**
Clockwise from top left:

School building (first two photos), tank and shed at school, playground at school, tank at school, landfill, Village Council building, Village Council-owned bulldozer, State-owned grader, Orthodox church, community storage building and old fuel tank, airport building, new generator shed and fuel tanks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>PROVIDER</th>
<th>CURRENT FACILITIES</th>
<th>ISSUES/NOTES/NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation &amp; Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Airports               | ADOT&PF          | Runway and airport maintenance building | ● Runway needs gravel; during spring and fall the runway gets wet and softens, making it difficult for most planes to land; only light aircraft (i.e. Super Cubs) are able to land during these periods. Two years ago, airport was closed because of soft runways; residents must then travel by boat (or Super Cub). Airport is closed in winter.  
● Runway needs lights.  
● Long-term goal is to have local control over airport maintenance and management, though control of the airport will likely mean that the State will no fund airport maintenance or improvements. |
| Boat Landing           | PCVC             | Beach area – no existing facilities except for child’s PFD | ● No boat landing or launch facilities exist, only a narrow beach which is eroding from overuse.  
● Lots of summer congestion – need find a way to segregate users, expand area, construct dock, possibly locate 2nd dock upstream, consider safety issues. Also fuel tanks may be too close to beach. |
| Power                  | PCVC, school and individuals | Community diesel generator; school generator; individual generators | ● Generators provide power to the community.  
∙ PCVC constructed generator building that houses a community diesel generator.  
∙ School has its own generator.  
∙ Many individuals have their own generators.  
● Need to seek options for more affordable fuel; Investigate alternative energy options such as solar (solar panels that charge batteries) and wind (wind generators).  
● Not enough paying customers to pay for cost of operating; monthly bills are high ($200/month per household).  
● An energy assistance program subsidizes some fuel costs for families. |
| Water/Sewer            | N/A              | N/A                | ● In 1982, a community well was drilled at the school through the Village Safe Water (VSW) program. The well is high in iron and manganese; most residents haul water from an up-river spring (approx. 20 minutes away). In addition to the well, a 4,000 gallon potable water storage tank and community watering point were constructed at the school. These facilities are currently out of service until the school re-opens.  
● Honey buckets and outhouses are used for sewage disposal. |
| Solid Waste            | PCVC             | Landfill           | ● New landfill is needed because current one is too close to airport – birds are problematic and wind blows trash onto runway.  
● PCVC is in the site control phase for a new landfill; PCVC is working with Choggjuun Ltd. to find land for new landfill.  
● Old landfill will need to be closed and sealed. |
### Communications

| Nushagak Cooperative (telephone); Starband & GCI (Internet) | - Most households use VHF and CB radios which are reliable and connect the village with most of Bristol Bay.  
- Some households also use radio phones known as the “Betters” telephone service; this service is unreliable.  
- Starband provides Internet service to PCVC and one household.  
- SWRSD obtained a grant to provide all the schools in the district with GCI telephone and Internet service; this service is expensive and only used in emergencies.  
- Two households and school have satellite TV. |

### Bulk Fuel Tank Farm

| SWRSD, PCVC, and private owners | Individual tanks/drums; 3 different tank farms | - Fuel is barged from Dillingham twice a year (spring and fall) by Yukon Fuel; people stock up these times of year and this seems to be sufficient.  
- School, Village and one commercial fuel operation all have bulk fuel tanks. |

### Road & Maintenance Equipment

| ADOT&PF, PCVC | Airport grader, village grader/backhoe | - PCVC has a grader, backhoe, trash hauler (can be converted into flatbed) and ATV – no other equipment is needed.  
- Gravel is needed on road that connects airport to beach; community members try not to drive large equipment on roads because of damage due to silty, unstable ground.  
- Issue to resolve: Where to get gravel? |

### Services & Facilities

| Fire | PCVC | Community fire extinguisher | - PCVC was approved for Code Red but they declined because school closed and very few people live in community.  
- PCVC has a very large extinguisher that can be put on ATV and driven to a fire; extinguisher was obtained in 2002-03 and has not been used or maintained; extinguisher is stored in generator building. |

| Police | Alaska State troopers, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game | Respond as needed | - Alaska State Troopers from Dillingham rarely come; calls are made but it is rare that a trooper will come to village. Village would like if troopers came more often.  
- State Fish & Game have been reported to come out when poaching occurs or hunting regulations are violated. |

| EMS | BBAHC | Clinic facility | - MedEVAC by BBAHC in to hospital in Dillingham.  
- Would like to re-establish clinic and have community health aides. |

| Post Office | USPS | NA | - Mail flown in from Dillingham by Pen Air  
- Pen Air agent sorts and delivers to local residence where others come to pick-up. |

<p>| Community Center | NA | NA | - Village Council building is sometimes used for youth recreation. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village Council</th>
<th>PCVC</th>
<th>Office building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Village Council office used to be in administrator’s house, now it is in Anchorage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Center</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School used to host Native dances, basketball and survival classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinic</th>
<th>BBAHC</th>
<th>Clinic Facility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clinic services have not been provided since early 1980’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Clinic building is old, unsafe and inadequate for medical services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• When school was open, a BBAHC dentist and nurse would come once a year and provide dental work and general check-up services to students and to other residents if time allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Residents now travel to Dillingham or Anchorage for medical needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior Center</th>
<th>BBHA</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Senior housing provided in Dillingham or Elders live with families.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Childhood</th>
<th>SWRSD, Parents-as-teachers, Head Start (BBNA)</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When school was open, a preschool program was offered through the SWRSD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No Head Start program exists; need 8 students to start program but other options exist if population grows and child care is needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K-8</th>
<th>SWRSD</th>
<th>School building and teacher housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School was closed from 1985 to 1996 due to low enrollment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School is currently closed; need 10 students to open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Currently, students go to Dillingham or Anchorage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>See above</th>
<th>See above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dillingham, Anchorage, or Mt. Edgecombe High School Boarding School in Sitka.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Various</th>
<th>Various</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• University of Alaska campuses in Dillingham, Anchorage or Fairbanks are the most commonly attended schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRANSPORTATION

Goals

1. Provide adequate and safe transportation network.
2. Alleviate summertime congestion on river in specific areas.
3. Partner with area landowners to maintain safe transportation network.

Goals & Priority Actions

1. Provide adequate and safe transportation network.
   - Roads
     - Provide smooth vehicle flow between boat launch and airport.
     - Display signage to inform vehicles and boats of common etiquette and direction of travel at boat launch.
   - Inform fish camps of new policies.
     - Inform all residents of proper roadways to be used, once established.
     - Keep vegetation on trails and roadways to a minimum.
   - Organize a day for residents to clip and trim overgrowing vegetation.
   - Hire and train village member as road maintenance operator.
   - Trails
     - Organize children to clear trails of debris and trash twice a year.

ATV along the trail to a potential new landfill site east of the village.
• Airport
  o Improve lighting and cones on runways at airport.
• Contact Alaska DOT&PF for information concerning airport.
  o Re-grade surface on airport runways.
• Address issue of blowing dust by perhaps planting shrubs or trees to cut wind.
• Explore other surfacing options that may decrease dust with ADOT&PF.
• See “Portage Creek Airport Feasibility Study” (2001).
• Navigable Waterways

2. Alleviate summertime congestion on river in specific areas.
• Provide for needed boat facilities.
  o Increase boat docking capacity on the river. Work with Choggiung, Ltd., PCVC, and State to increase skiff-type docking capacity and related parking.
  o Find new location for winter fishing vessel storage.
• Install buoys in river during high traffic months to dictate traffic flow.
• Examine possibility of establishing another boat launch site at one of two sites (see map 9 on page 64).

3. Partner with area landowners to maintain safe transportation network.
• Work with DOT to make upgrades to airport and study possible relocation.
• Work with Choggiung, Ltd. and BBNC to locate good source of gravel for road maintenance.
• Work with State and Choggiung, Ltd. and Nushagak-Mulchatna River Patrol to ensure safety on river and village during sport fishing season.
• Work with BBNA to acquire funding for priority road and trail projects.
• Work with Dillingham and other nearby communities to construct regional transportation network.
Map 9. Portage Creek Transportation Network

Diagram showing the transportation network around Portage Creek, with labels for existing roads, trails, and proposed boat launches. Features include:

- Existing Roads (IRR Inventory)
- Existing Trails (IRR Inventory)
- Roads/Trails to be Added
- Trails not to be used
- Improvements Needed
- Existing Boat Launch
- Proposed Boat Launch
- Washes out every spring
- Covered by Alders
- Boat Launch congested, would like to see a floating dock
- Airport needs better surface gravel, lights, and new cones
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Where to Use</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Dirt Roads                                 | Graded surface of native material                 | Low-volume areas, very rural roads or trails                               | • Inexpensive to build
• Adequate for some uses
• Keeps traffic down | • High dust
• Prone to rutting and washout |
| 2. Gravel Roads                               | Graded surface of mixed thin fines and sharp gravel | Areas that are slightly damp and have moderate traffic volume | • Easier driving surface
• Can stay in good shape if well-maintained
• Drains well | • More expensive than dirt
• Can be dusty in dry areas
• Needs to be regularly graded |
| 3. Chip-Sealed Roads                          | Graded surface of mixed thin fines and sharp gravel; coated in an asphalt/oil mix & re-graveled | High traffic areas prone to frost effects; laid in warm, sunny weather | • High-quality road surface
• Better than gravel
• Easier to fix than asphalt
• Can be laid on top of current gravel road | • More expensive
• Must have several days of warm sunny weather to build |
| 4. Hot-Fix Asphalt                            | Layers of heated mixed gravel and oil shot from surfacing equipment | High-volume traffic and moderate temperature areas | • Very durable surface
• Easy to clear | • Costly to build and repair
• Not cost-effective in areas prone to frost heaves |

* Best road surfacing option is determined as a function of traffic volume, temperature, construction cost and maintenance.

For more information on road surfacing options, go to the State of Alaska Department of Transportation’s website, [www.dot.state.ak.us/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/).  
Or call Mike McKennan at the DOT office in Juneau, 907-465-4069.