



Southeast Alaska
Conservation Council

Amid fiscal crisis, Alaska funds unaffordable megaprojects

State is bleeding money for transportation and energy projects that the legislature and governor should stop

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA (March 16, 2016) – Despite the state’s fiscal crisis, Alaska has spent more than \$324 million dollars on megaproject studies that are draining money the state could spend on needed infrastructure improvements, says a new report by engineer and transportation expert Lois Epstein.

“The state has a megaproject spending problem,” Epstein said. “Alaska is hemorrhaging money on projects it cannot afford, and that have little public support. The Legislature needs to stop bleeding money on studies and instead spend our limited funds to repair and upgrade existing infrastructure with Alaskan workers. Just last week, the majority caucuses in both the House and the Senate unanimously refused to cut megaproject funds from the operating budget.

“Gov. Palin famously cancelled the Ketchikan so-called ‘bridge to nowhere’ in 2007. Now, with the state’s finances in even worse shape, Gov. Walker needs to follow Palin’s fiscally-responsible lead and shut down the Ambler Road, the Juneau Access Road, the Knik Arm Bridge and the Susitna Dam megaprojects.”

Epstein, who is the Arctic program director for The Wilderness Society and previously directed the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, a non-profit transportation watchdog organization, profiles the projects and their substantial costs in the latest edition of her “Easy to Start, Impossible to Finish” report series, which is being released in its fourth version. Epstein’s report is [available here](#).

The Wilderness Society report was issued in cooperation with Alaska Public Interest Research Group, Cook Inletkeeper, the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council. All five public-interest organizations oppose the costly, unwarranted transportation and energy projects with their associated environmental concerns profiled in this report.

If Walker canceled the projects, Epstein said, more than a quarter of a billion dollars could be re-directed as “new revenue” in the state’s budget for Fiscal Year 2017. This amount is more than the \$200 million in annual revenue that would be gained under the governor’s proposed income tax.

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The Wilderness Society is the leading public-lands conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than 700,000 members and supporters, TWS has led the effort to permanently protect 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands. www.wilderness.org