

INTERIM POLICY: NORTH SLOPE HAUL ROAD

The North Slope Haul Road will be opened just for use by industrial and mining interests, stated Governor Jay Hammond, in his release of interim policy delivered in Fairbanks last Wednesday.

"We will expect them to pay for the use of the road just as they do today," he added. "Our policy is to make those who benefit from a project help pay for it."

Hammond continued his discussion of the haul road fate saying that right now no one, not the State, the Federal government, not special interest groups, not private enterprise, and not the Native corporations have the answers to the questions on everybody's minds.

He added that complete opening of the road would remove all options for the future because once opened we would likely never be able to modify the access.

In reference to the findings of the Alaska Growth Policy Council, Governor Hammond said that few Alaskans feel this road is appropriate as a normal addition to the State's public highways system. The social, environmental, and fiscal costs are simply too high.

Hammond emphasized that this decision is an interim policy for the short term. It will be in effect until the peak industrial demands for the road have subsided and until the Land Use Planning Commission and local governments have developed a rational plan for the sound and profitable management of state and federal lands in the areas affected by road.

Once the State assumes control of the road, this policy will receive annual review by the governor's Commissioners of Highways, Natural Resources and Commerce and Economic Development, and Director of Policy Development and Planning to insure that it is updated as appropriate to permit carefully planned public facilities and public uses of portions of the road.

He ended saying that right now industrial users on the Alaska road are paying \$1.05 a mile to drive on it. That means from the Yukon to Prudhoe Bay they are paying \$750 and that just covers maintenance costs.

"The interim decision takes nothing from Alaskans, rather it holds in the banks valuable options until Alaskans decide how to best use them."