

Land Use Commission Opposes Corridor Plans

ANCHORAGE — David S. Jackman, State Co-Chairman of the Joint Federal-State Land Use Planning Commission for Alaska, in a 19-page letter to Secretary of the Interior Rogers C.B. Morton, stated the Commission's opposition to Bureau of Land Management plans for reserving broad transportation corridor easements across Native lands. Such corridors would be available for use in the future for oil and gas pipelines and, in some cases, highways and railroads.

Commenting upon a general theme expressed in the letter, Jackman said:

"There is no reason to believe that the reservation of these corridors by the Federal Government will in any way speed the development of Alaska's resources. That will depend on marketplace forces and on other political decisions.

"What the establishment of federal transportation corridors would do is pre-empt the state's role in major land planning and transportation decisions."

The Commission's basic position is stated at the beginning of the letter:

"We do not believe that there is sufficient information at this time regarding the location of oil and gas reserves to justify the reservation of specific corridors to transport these resources, nor is there enough information presently available upon which to base an adequate discussion of the social, environmental and economic consequences resulting from certain corridor reservations."

Taking issue with the BLM assertion that corridors should be

reserved, Jackman concludes the Commission recommendations by stating:

"On the other hand, we believe that a decision against reserving corridor easements would constitute an affirmative choice designed to prevent the premature foreclosure of transportation options.

"Such a choice would promote the reasoned discussion of transportation needs and alternatives within the general context of land use planning, and would be consistent with the principle that land use decisions should determine the placement of transportation facilities and not the reverse.

"Deadlines for implementing the Settlement Act should not become the excuse for making major transportation decisions without adequate knowledge of the long-term costs and benefits for all Alaskans."

According to Jackman a final decision on corridor easements should come from the Interior Department within the next few weeks.