

Special Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA)
Recasting for the Yukon-Koyukuk and Yukon Flats School
Boards:

Report to the Acting Commissioner of Education and Early
Development

July 2022



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Introduction

On June 20, 2022 Senate Bill 198 was signed into law. The bill states that “...Rampart School is part of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District regional educational attendance area for all purposes.”

Alaska Statutes 14.08.031(a) required that the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) in consultation with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and local communities divide the unorganized borough into education services areas. Therefore, upon passage of SB 198, the Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) prepared the new boundary of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) to include the community of Rampart, in addition to the new boundaries for the Yukon Flats School District (YFSD) to remove the community of Rampart.

DCRA also drew new section boundaries and school board apportionment schemes within each Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) to ensure they met the standards contained at AS 14.08.051(a). The standard is that each school board member must represent, “as nearly as practicable, an equal number of persons.”

DCRA used the 2020 U.S. Census data to develop new recommendations for reapportionment of the YKSD and YFSK school board seats as outlined in AS 14.08.051(c).

On June 21, 2022, public notices were posted on the state Online Public Notice system for both the YKSD and YFSD reapportionment schemes including a description and map of the current school board seats, possible options for recasting, and an invitation for public comment. Specific area notices and maps were also sent by email to school districts, municipalities, tribes, and media within the REAA boundaries. The public comment period closed at 5:00 pm on July 15, 2022.

A public hearing was held via video call from 9:00 am to 11:00 am on July 14, 2022. One verbal public comment was received during that hearing. That comment was also submitted in writing. No additional comments were received during the public comment period. A transcript of the written comment is attached to the relevant REAA section below.

After public comment and based on specific concerns raised in the comments received, one additional option for recasting was added to the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA.

Individual REAA Notices, Maps, Options, and Recommendations

Invitation for Public Comment

Yukon Flats

Regional Education Attendance Area School Board Recasting

On June 20, 2022 Senate Bill 198 was signed into law. The bill states that "...Rampart School is part of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District regional educational attendance area for all purposes."

Alaska Statutes 14.08.031(a) requires that the Department of Commerce, Community (DCCED), and Economic Development in consultation with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and local communities divide the unorganized borough into education services areas. Therefore, upon passage of SB 198, DCCED has prepared the new boundary of the Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) to include the community of Rampart, in addition to the new boundaries for the Yukon Flats School District (YFSD) to remove the community of Rampart.

Further, the newly drawn boundaries require DCCED to review the section boundaries and school board apportionment scheme of each Regional Education Attendance Area to ensure they meet the standards contained at AS 14.08.051(a). The standard is that each school board member must represent, "as nearly as practicable, an equal number of persons."

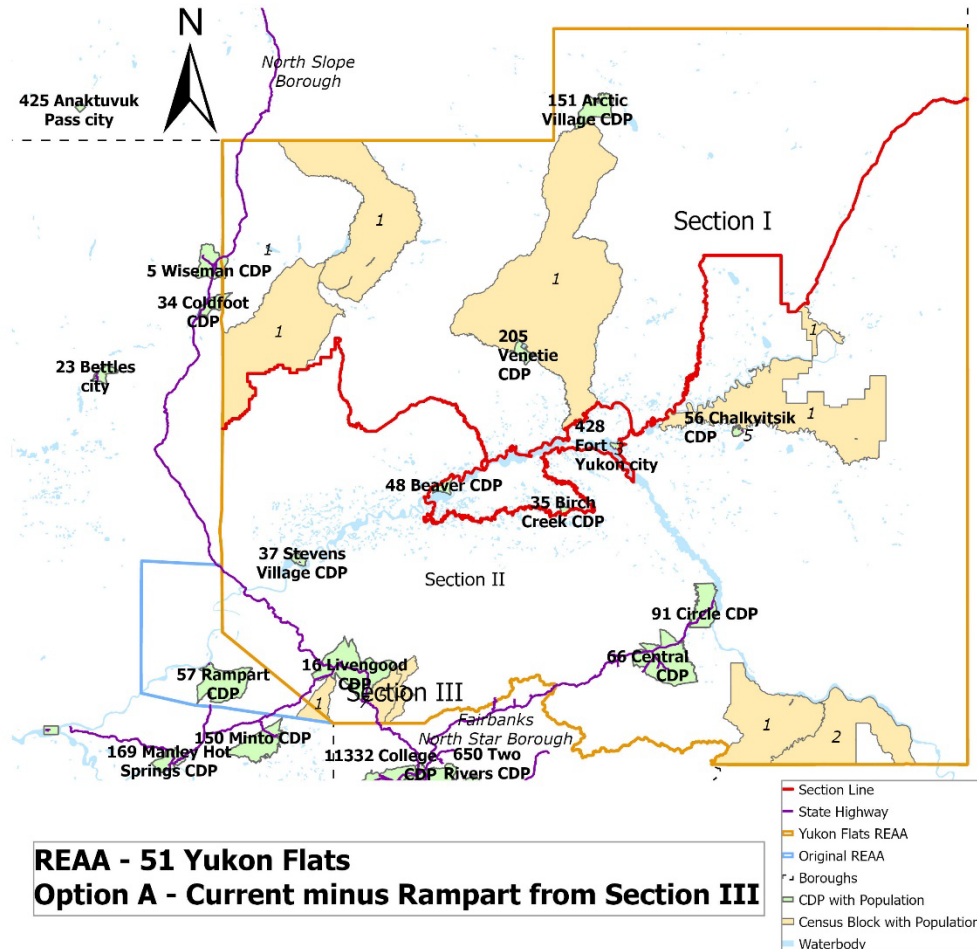
A generally accepted standard for equal representation is that the population represented by each school board member not vary more than plus or minus five percent from the average. The average is determined by taking the total population of the REAA and dividing it by the total number of school board seats. When current representation varies by more than plus or minus five percent, the Commissioner must recast the boundaries of each section to more closely meet the standard.

Under the existing school board apportionment scheme, as adopted following the release of the 2020 Census, the Yukon Flats REAA has three sections containing a total of seven school board seats. Section I has two seats and includes the communities of Arctic Village and Venetie. Section II has three seats and includes the City of Fort Yukon and the communities of Beaver and Birch Creek. Section III has two seats and includes the communities of Central, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Livengood, Rampart, and Stevens Village.

With the relocation of the community of Rampart from Yukon Flats REAA to Yukon-Koyukuk REAA, the voting district boundaries must again be reapportioned. Two new options are being proposed (*see attached maps*).

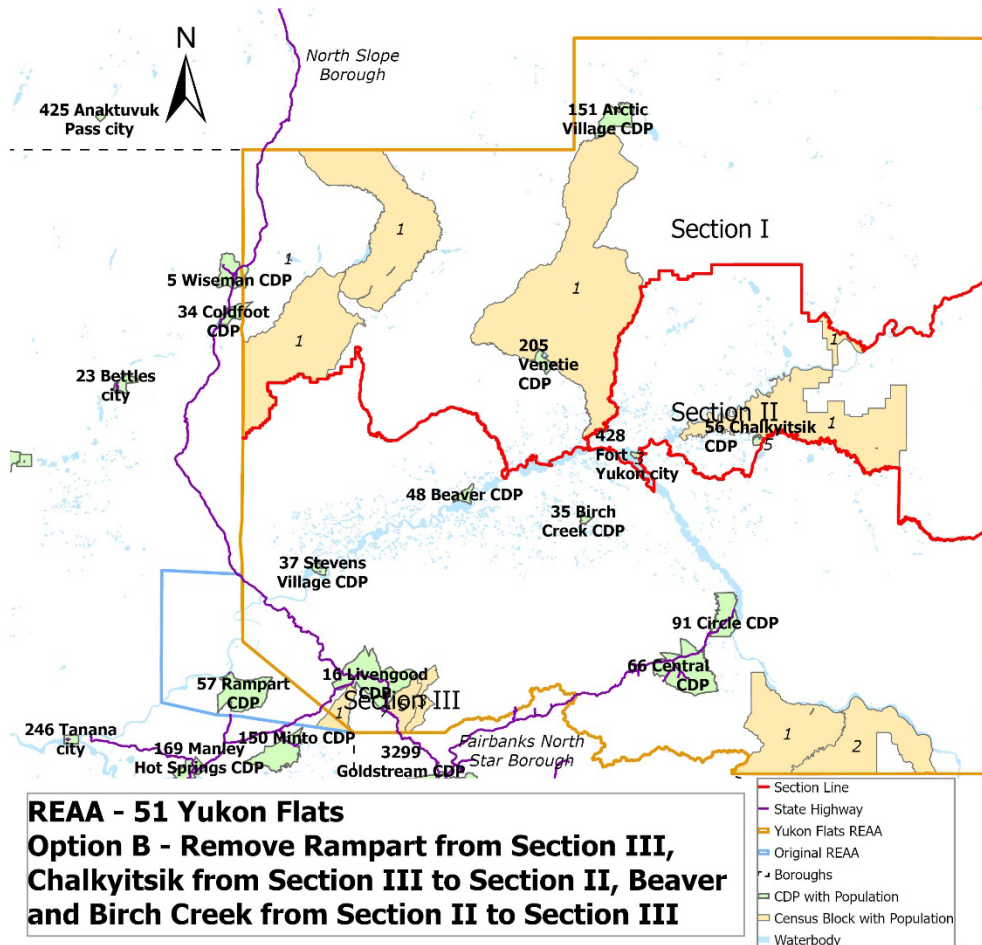
Option A

- Option A retains the current boundaries, with the exception of the area that has been ceded to Yukon-Koyukuk REAA, including the community of Rampart. The ceded area has been excluded from Section III. Option A has an overall deviation of 22.07%.



Option B

- Option B moves Beaver and Birch Creek from Section II into Section III and moves Chalkyitsik from Section III into Section II. The area that has been ceded to Yukon-Koyukuk REAA, including the community of Rampart, is excluded from Section III. Option B has an overall deviation of 14.51%.



Based on the REAA's demographic, socio-economic, linguistic, transportation, cultural, and communication considerations, the recommendation for the Yukon Flats REAA is to implement Option B.

More information on the REAA recasting can be found at <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dcra/>

If you are interested in the apportionment of the Yukon Flats REAA school board, you are invited to submit comments. You may do so verbally or in writing.

Verbal comments may be submitted by calling 907-269-4559, between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, or by voicemail at that number.

Written comments should be emailed to reaa.recast.2020@alaska.gov or mailed to:

Attn: REAA Recasting
Jedediah Smith
Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
550 W 7th Ave. STE 1650
Anchorage AK 99501

A public hearing on all recommendations will be held on **Thursday, July 14, 2022 from 9:00AM to 11:00AM** by electronic means. The public hearing can be accessed by going to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84876071512?pwd=FohHT87Uvmkto45cH4CQFuQOaqk2hx.1>

Written comments must be received by **Friday, July 15, 2022 by 5:00PM**. Notice can be viewed on the State of Alaska web site at <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/>

Comments:

No comments were received regarding Yukon Flats.

Recommendation:

DCRA continues to recommend Option B as above.

Commissioner Decision:

I have determined that the attached map and assignment of school board seats, labeled Option ___ in the data and maps provided by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, best meets the standards in Alaska statute for the apportionment of the **Yukon Flats** School Board.

___ This apportionment is unchanged from the current board seat boundaries.

___ This apportionment is a recasting of the current board seat boundaries.

Heidi Teshner, Acting Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development

Date: _____, 2022

Invitation for Public Comment

Yukon-Koyukuk

Regional Education Attendance Area School Board Recasting

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Further, the newly drawn boundaries require DCCED to review the section boundaries and school board apportionment scheme of each Regional Education Attendance Area to ensure they meet the standards contained at AS 14.08.051(a). The standard is that each school board member must represent, "as nearly as practicable, an equal number of persons."

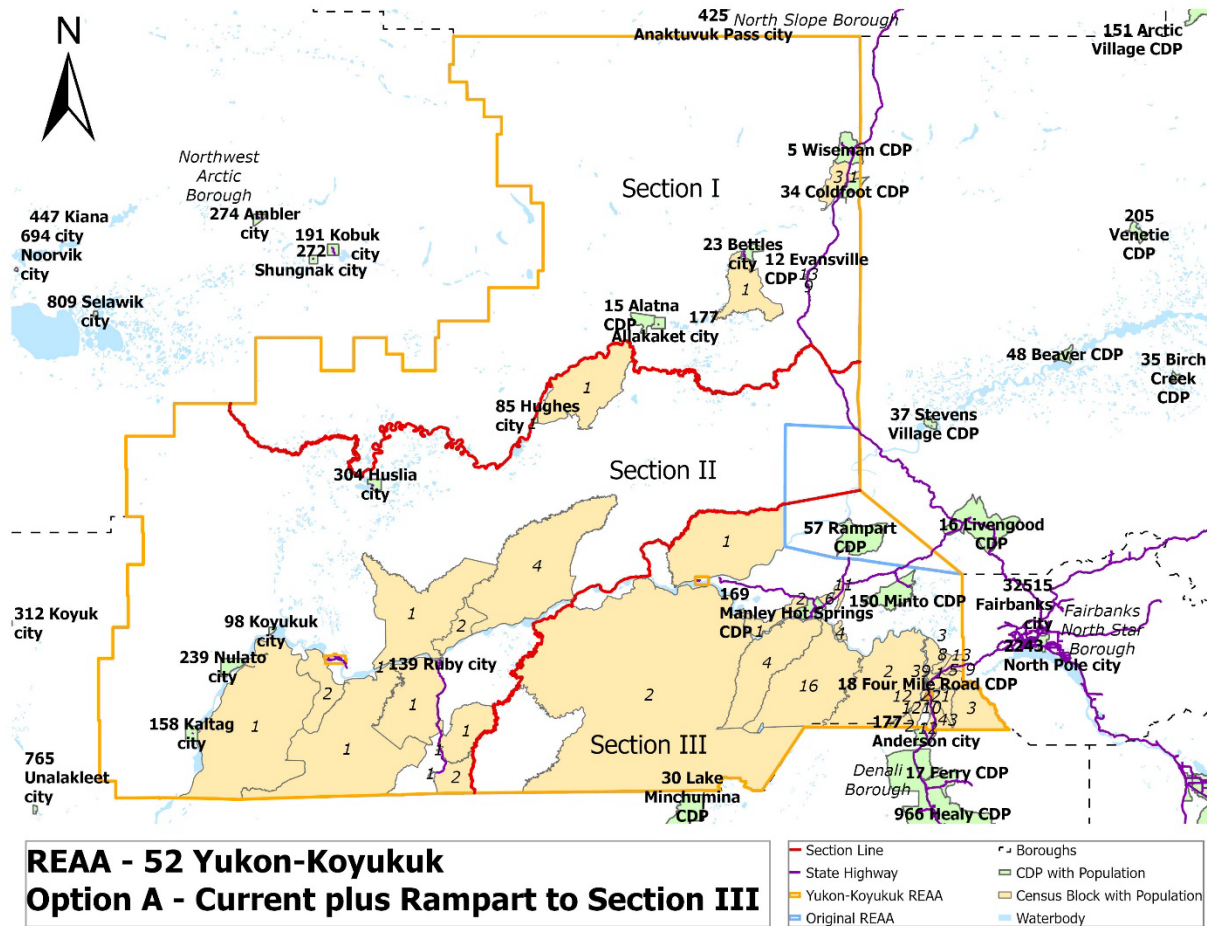
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Under the existing school board apportionment scheme, as adopted following the release of the 2020 Census, the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA has three sections containing a total of seven school board seats. Section I has one seats and includes the Cities of Allakaket and Bettles and the communities of Alatna, Coldfoot, Evansville, and Wiseman. Section II has four seats and includes the Cities of Kaltag, Koyukuk, Hughes, Huslia, Nulato, and Ruby. Section III has two seats and includes the communities of Four Mile Road, Manley Hot Springs, and Minto as well as the areas along the Parks Highway south of Nenana and north of Four Mile.

With the relocation of the community of Rampart from Yukon Flats REAA to Yukon-Koyukuk REAA, the voting district boundaries must again be reapportioned. Two new options are being proposed (*see maps attached*).

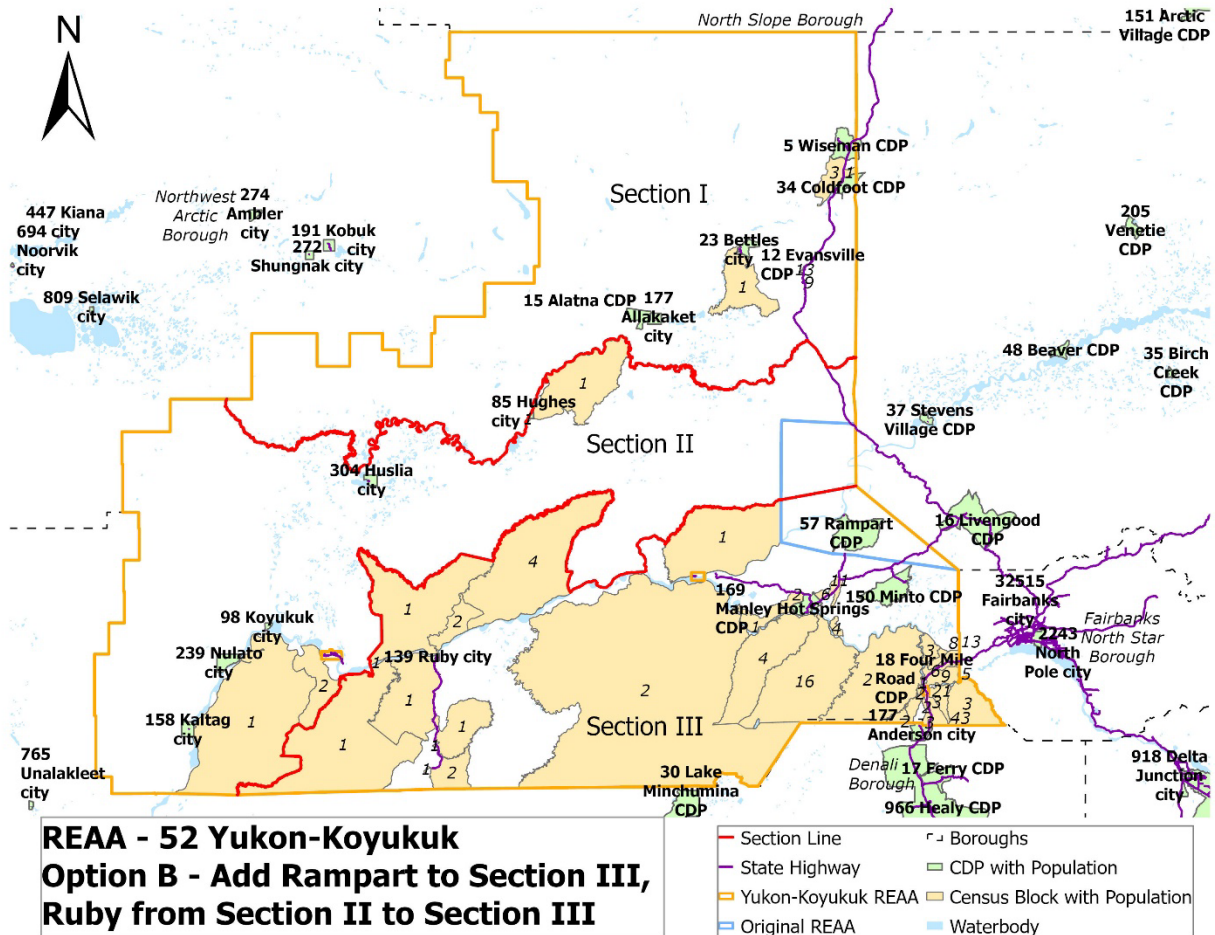
Option A

- Option A retains the current boundaries and adds the area that has been ceded to Yukon-Koyukuk REAA, including the community of Rampart. In this scenario, Section I has one seat, Section II has four seats, and Section III has two seats. Option A has an overall deviation of 31.00%



Option B

- Option B moves the City of Ruby and its surrounding areas from Section II to Section III in addition to adding the ceded area, including the community of Rampart, to Section III. In this scenario, Section I has one seat, Section II has three seats, and Section III has three seats. Option B has an overall deviation of 4.47%.



Based on the REAA's demographic, socio-economic, linguistic, transportation, cultural, and communication considerations, the recommendation for the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA is to implement Option B.

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Comments:

Mr. Smith,

I represent the Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) and have been asked to submit the following comment and proposal. Given the tight time frames and the short window between now and the public hearing scheduled for July 14th and my schedule, I am submitting the District's initial comment via this email so that DCCED/Local Boundary Commission have sufficient time to consider the District's comment/proposal. In addition, the District reserves the right to supplement this comment as and to the extent determined necessary.

YKSD has 10 "brick and mortar" schools (including the most recent addition of Rampart) and 1 correspondence school for a total of 11 schools. The District is governed by a 7 person board. The Board oversees the education of all students within the REAA which is approximately 65,000 square miles. Successful governance requires a broad REAA-wide perspective.

Currently, the District understands that DCCED is proposing Option B. Option B proposes one seat for Section I. The area that comprises Section I in Option B only has one school – Allakaket School. As proposed, Section I would have one Board seat. The District is concerned that creating a Section with only one school and one board member could negatively impact REAA-wide governance perspective. In addition, having two sections with 3 board seats and one section with 1 board seat creates an imbalance between the sections.

As an alternative to Option B, the District proposes the following Option B – Version 2.0:

1. Move Huslia from Section II to Section I.
2. No other changes.

The District's proposal is attached to this email. The section line including Huslia in Section I is for illustrative purposes only. The change proposed by the District would meet the generally accepted standard for equal representation. The section line would simply be adjusted to include Huslia. The proposed change would provide for 3 sections of which two sections (Section I and II) would have two Board members and one section (Section III) would have 3 Board members. This provides for a more even distribution of Board members across the REAA as opposed to two sections with 3 members and one section with only 1 member. In addition, no member would represent a single school which the District believes will support better REAA-wide decision making. The District proposal also meets the criteria set out in AS 14.08.051.

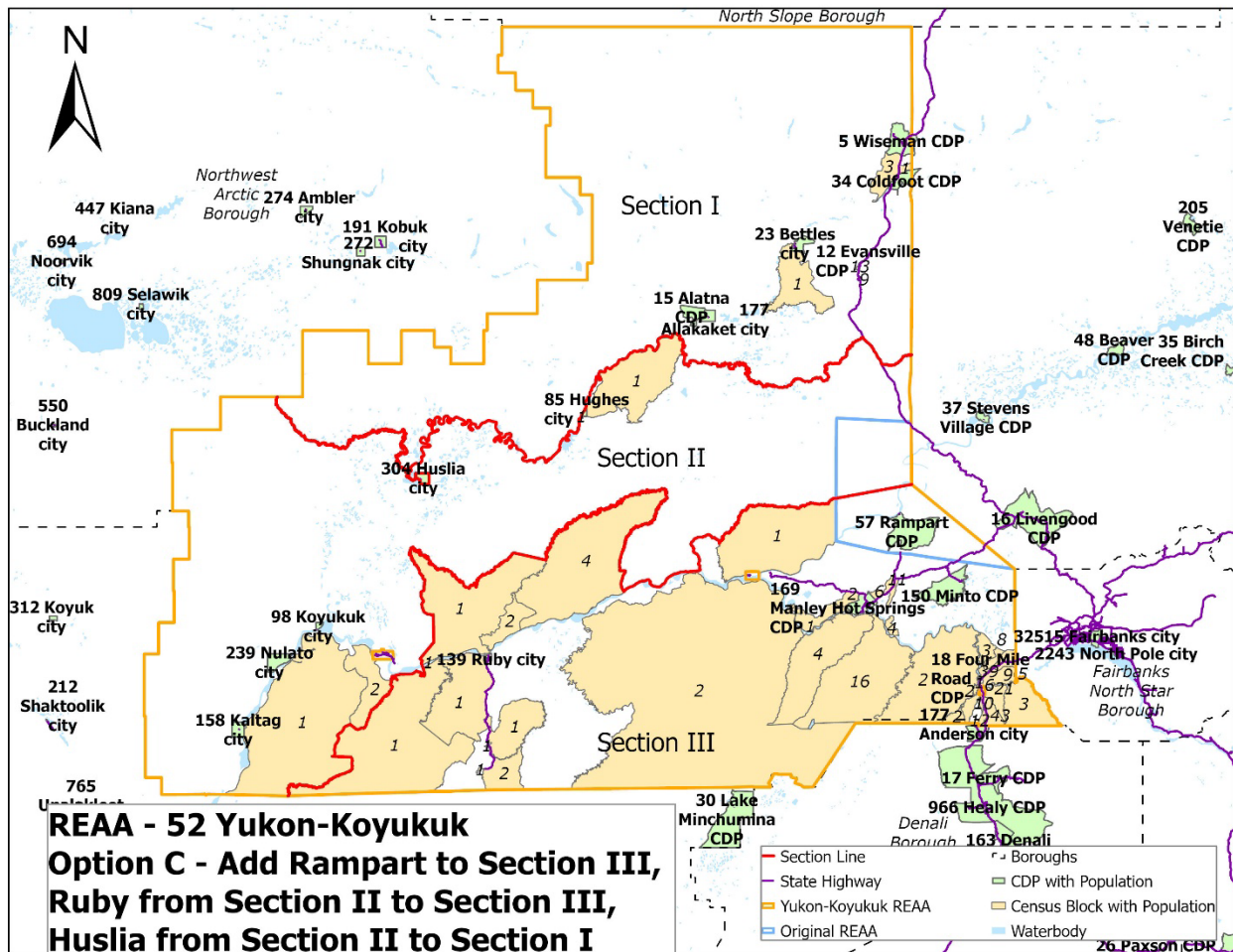
Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information. And thank you for your consideration.

John [Sedor]

Option C

During the public comment period, a proposal was received that divided the school board seats in such a way that every section would have at least two seats while maintaining a deviation of less than five percent. Based on this proposal, Option C was created for consideration.

- Option C moves the City of Huslia from Section II to Section I, the City of Ruby and its surrounding areas from Section II to Section III, and adds the community of Rampart to Section III. In this scenario, Section I has two seats, Section II has two seats, and Section III has three seats. Option C has an overall deviation of 4.87%.



Recommendation:

DCRA originally recommended Option B. This remains the lowest numerical deviation option. In view of the comment received from John Sedor, an additional Option C has been developed for consideration. Option C has a deviation of 4.87%, which is within acceptable tolerances and accounts for the REAA's desire to have sections with a more equitable distribution of seats and for Section I to represent more than one school within the Yukon-Koyukuk REAA.

For the reasons stated above, DCRA recommends the newly created Option C.

Commissioner Decision:

I have determined that the attached map and assignment of school board seats, labeled Option ____ in the data and maps provided by the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, best meets the standards in Alaska statute for the apportionment of the **Yukon-Koyukuk** School Board.

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Heidi Teshner, Acting Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development

Date: _____, 2022