

Avalanche Control Update Along Whittier Branch (F6.8)

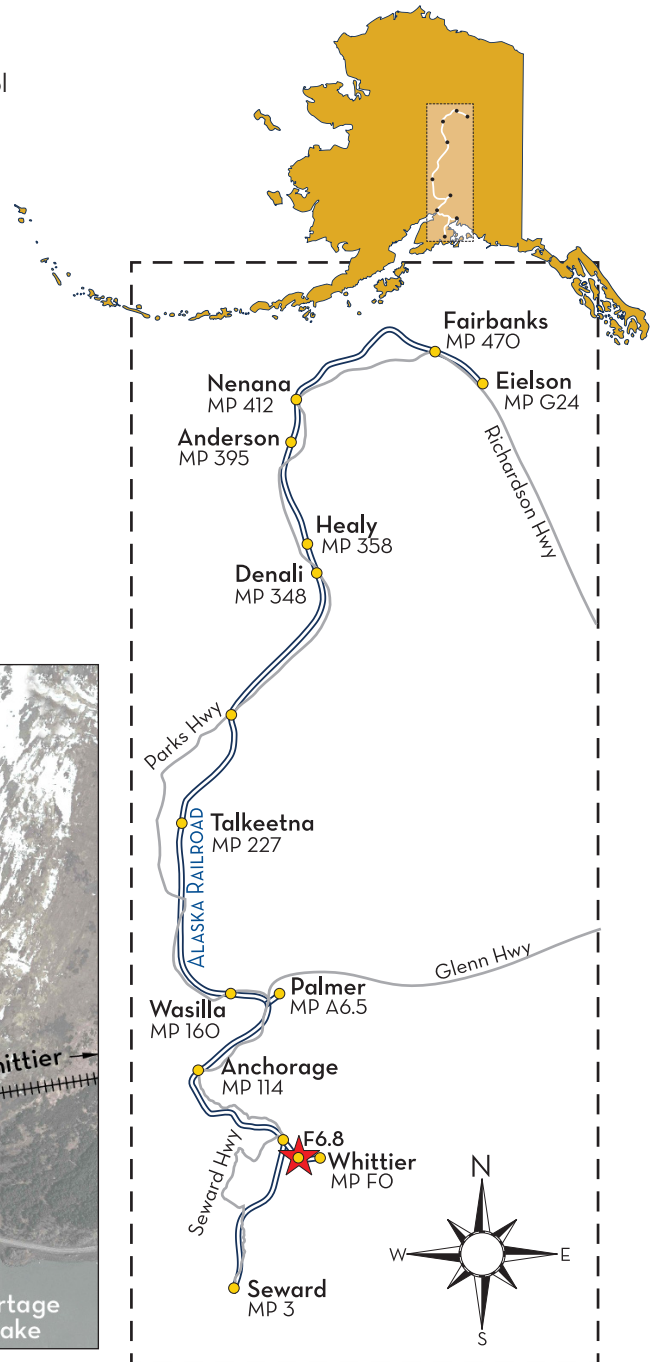
Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) will replace existing howitzer artillery avalanche control with Remote Avalanche Control Systems (RACS) at ARRC milepost F6.8 along Whittier Branch in Portage Valley, Alaska. The project will install six (6) RACS control towers – five (5) hanging charge towers and one (1) launch charge tower – plus one (1) weather monitoring station.

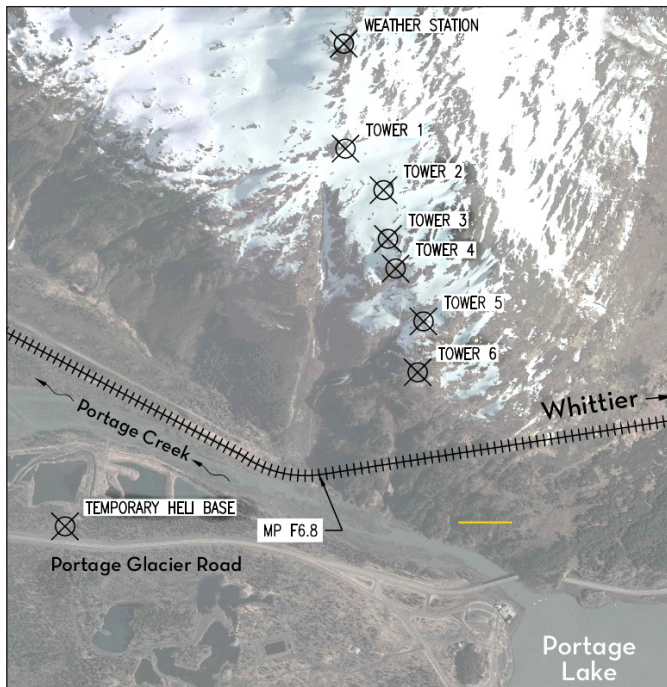
Purpose and Need

The Whittier Branch track is an especially active corridor with year-round transportation and maintenance operations occurring within a highly active slide zone that impacts the railroad and

Project Locator Map



Project Site Plan



sections of the nearby highway. Avalanche mitigation is a key to ensuring safety and operational integrity along this critical transportation corridor.

The project area is known as Slide Zone F7, where ARRC has installed protection for Portage Tunnel Portal Door 4. ARRC has historically cleared this area using leased howitzers and artillery shells obtained from the U.S. Army. In 2017, Army officials notified all users that artillery for avalanche control will be phased out over the next 15-30 years. Army officials have advised ARRC to begin establishing new methods of avalanche control. This project is a major step towards achieving this objective.

The project will:

- upgrade avalanche mitigation measures, thereby reducing the risk of dangerous slide events
- ensure the safety and reliability of railroad operations.
- eliminate the use of the howitzer process at this location, as ultimately required.

Status

- Environmental analysis and documentation required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a categorical exclusion. The CE was completed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in June 2021.
- The USFS Land Use Permit was issued in July 2021.

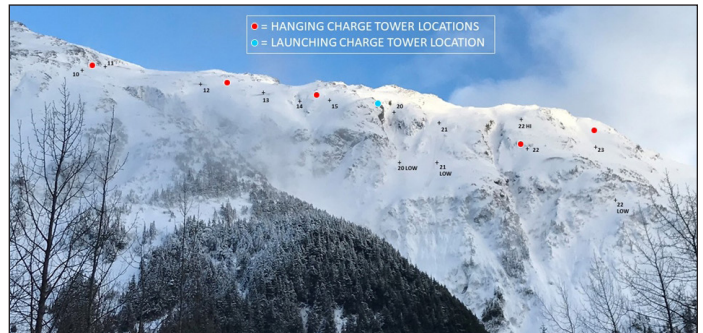
- Project construction is scheduled to begin June 2023.
- Project completion is expected September 2023.

Cost and Funding

The proposed project budget is \$1.946 million. About three-quarters of project funding (\$1.444 million) comes from a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Special Transportation Circumstances (STC) programs grant flowing through the State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities. The required grant funding match (\$502,000) will be funded by ARRC.

For More Information

Email the ARRC at Public_Comment@akrr.com.



RACS placement along Slide Zone F7 (howitzer numbers in black)



Example of Hanging Charge Control Tower



Example of LaunchCharge Control Tower



Example of Weather Monitoring Station