SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT

NORTH POLE ROAD/RAIL CROSSING REDUCTION PROJECT

NORTH POLE, ALASKA

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION ...............................................................................................................1

1.1 General..............................................................................................................................1

1.2 Project Team .....................................................................................................................2

1.3 Public and Agency Outreach Methods ...........................................................................2

1.3.1 Mailing List of Potentially Affected Interests ............................................................3

1.3.2 Informational Flyer/Meeting Announcement .............................................................3

1.3.3 Advertisements ...........................................................................................................3

1.3.4 Project Website ...........................................................................................................4

1.3.5 Project E-Mail Address ...............................................................................................4

1.3.6 Comment Forms..........................................................................................................4

2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING ..........................................................................................4

3.0 AGENCY SCOPING MEETING ........................................................................................5

4.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED ......................................................................5

5.0 SUMMARY .......................................................................................................................13

# FIGURES

Figure 1: Vicinity Map..................................................................................................................15

Figure 2: Proposed Project Area ...................................................................................................16

Figure 3: Mailing List Boundary ..................................................................................................17

# APPENDICES

Appendix A ...................................................................................................... Project Mailing Lists
Appendix B .................................................................................................................... Public Scoping Materials
Appendix C ..................................................................................................................... Public Comments Received
Appendix D ..................................................................................................................... Agency Scoping Materials
Appendix E ..................................................................................................................... Agency Comments Received
Appendix F ..................................................................................................................... Scoping Meeting Presentation

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADF&G................................................................. Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ARRC........................................................................ Alaska Railroad Corporation
DA.................................................................................. Department of the Army
EA................................................................................... Environmental Assessment
FRA................................................................................ Federal Railroad Administration
FSNB................................................................................. Fairbanks North Star Borough
NEPA............................................................................... National Environmental Policy Act
U.S. ........................................................................................ United States
USACE ........................................................................ United States Army Corps of Engineers
USAG FWA .............................................. United States Army Garrison, Fort Wainwright, Alaska
UXO ........................................................................................ unexploded ordnance
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is proposing a road/rail crossing reduction project in North Pole, Alaska (Figure 1).

The project proposes to reduce the number of at-grade (same level) road/rail crossings on an eight-mile section of the Eielson Branch track (from Richardson Highway Milepost 9 to the Chena River Floodway) that currently runs through North Pole. Crossing reduction options may include realigning this section of track on or along the Tanana River Levee (Figure 2). The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Highway may also be removed and a new grade-separated crossing installed. The proposed project represents Phase One of a larger proposed realignment project (Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation). This phase has independent utility and would provide immediate safety benefits.

Because this project involves federal funds, the ARRC is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) on behalf of the FRA in order to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of the EA preparation, public and agency scoping is being conducted to provide the public and agencies with project information and afford them the opportunity to comment. The EA will address relevant public and agency comments received during project scoping.

The ARRC conducted agency and public scoping meetings in the City of North Pole on January 26, 2011. Issues discussed during these meetings included the project purpose and need, alternatives under consideration, and potential issues and concerns that need to be addressed during the environmental review and design phase. This report summarizes the public and agency scoping process, documents the scoping methods used, identifies issues and concerns, and lists comments received to date along with their sources. Comments were received from a variety of stakeholders (or interested parties), including local residents, railroad users, local government officials, and resource agency representatives.
1.2 Project Team

ARRC Project Team
- Greg Lotakis, Project Manager
- Barbara Hotchkin, NEPA Manager
- Stephenie Wheeler, Corporate Communications Officer
- Jeanette Holt, Environmental Analyst
- Brian Lindamood, Special Projects
- Blake Adolfae, Scheduling and Logistics Manager
- Mark Peterburs, Director of Projects
- Tom Brooks, Chief Engineer

FRA
- John Winkle, FRA

TranSystems
- Jon Marshall, Program Manager

DOWL HKM
- Kristen Hansen, Environmental Manager
- Heather Campfield, Senior Environmental Specialist
- Alicia Smith, Environmental Specialist

1.3 Public and Agency Outreach Methods

The following public and agency outreach methods were used to inform the public and local, state, and federal resource agencies about the project:

- Development of a public mailing list
- Development of a project e-mail distribution list
- Development of a project website with project information, project schedule, notice of public scoping meetings, and electronic comment form
- Preparation of a presentation and other meeting materials, including display boards, comment sheets, fact sheets, newspaper advertisements, informational flyers, and a general press release
• Conducting separate public and agency scoping meetings in North Pole on Wednesday, January 26, 2011

1.3.1 Mailing List of Potentially Affected Interests

Three mailing lists have been developed for the project (Appendix A). They include a general public mailing list, a mailing list for state representatives currently holding a position in public office, and an agency e-mail and mailing distribution list.

The general public mailing list includes all residents who own property within the project corridor and others who, through the course of advertisements and scoping, showed an interest in this project or had expressed an interest in previous projects in the project corridor vicinity. The general public mailing list contains approximately 14,750 addresses. Figure 3 shows a map of the general public mailing list boundary.

The agency e-mail and mailing distribution lists include local, state, and federal resource agencies and officials who might have an interest or concern, environmental or otherwise, in the project. The agency list contains 33 contacts.

The mailing list of local government officials includes 34 contacts.

1.3.2 Informational Flyer/Meeting Announcement

Approximately 14,750 informational flyers were mailed to the general public distribution list on Wednesday, January 12, 2011, to announce the public scoping meeting. The flyer contained a project description and meeting overview along with a map of the project area and contact information. A copy of the flyer is included in Appendix B.

1.3.3 Advertisements

An advertisement for the public scoping meeting appeared in the Fairbanks Daily News Miner on Sunday, January 23, and Wednesday, January 26, 2011. A copy of this advertisement is included in Appendix B. A public announcement also ran on media statewide including radio, television, print, as well as a few national railroad industry magazines on Monday, January 17, 2011. The text of the public announcement along with a list of the statewide media that hosted the message is included in Appendix B.
1.3.4 Project Website

The ARRC included the project on its website at www.alaskarailroad.com/CapitalProjects/FairbanksInteriorProjects/tabid/485/Default.aspx, which provides specific information regarding the proposed project, its objectives, schedule, and project documents. The project website also provides a mechanism for interested parties to submit comments.

1.3.5 Project E-Mail Address

An Alaska Railroad e-mail address, public_comment@akrr.com, was available to allow interested parties to send comments via e-mail. This address was included in the public scoping meeting flyer, the newspaper announcement, and the comment form distributed at meetings.

1.3.6 Comment Forms

A project comment form was developed and distributed at the public scoping meeting. The form included an area to add contact information for those who wanted to be added to the project mailing and e-mail lists. A copy of the comment form is included in Appendix B.

2.0 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

The public scoping meeting was held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the North Pole City Hall, 125 Snowman Lane, North Pole, Alaska. Presentations were given at 4 and 5:30 p.m. Each presentation lasted approximately half an hour. The event provided the opportunity for project staff to solicit input from the community and gave community members a chance to meet with project staff one-on-one to discuss individual issues and concerns. The PowerPoint presentation that was presented to those in attendance is included in Appendix C. The following topics were included in the presentation:

- Project Background
- Role of Previous Studies
- Project Purpose and Need
- Existing Road/Rail Crossings
- Project Description
- Richardson Highway Rail Crossing Area
- Issues Raised by Agencies During Previous Study
- Public Comments Heard During Previous Study
- EA Process and Schedule
At the conclusion of the presentation, the meeting was opened up for the public to ask questions of the project team. At the end of the question and answer period, the one-on-one discussion with individuals resumed. The public meeting ended at 6:45 p.m. Approximately 39 private citizens, not including project team members, attended the meeting.

3.0 AGENCY SCOPING MEETING

A letter announcing the agency scoping meeting was mailed to those on the agency distribution list on Tuesday, December 21, 2011. The letter provided information on the proposed project, background information, the purpose of the project, and the goals and objectives of the meeting. In addition, a reminder email was distributed to agency representatives on the distribution list on Monday, January 24, 2011. Follow-up phone calls were made to the agencies to find out if they planned on attending the scoping meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 2011, and again on Tuesday, January 22, 2011, to remind them that the comment period was coming to a close.

A total of 27 local, state, and federal agency representatives attended the agency scoping meeting (24 in person, and 3 via teleconference) held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at the Hotel North Pole, 449 North Santa Claus Lane, in North Pole, Alaska.

The meeting included time to review presentation boards displaying project information and to examine a large-scale aerial photo/map of the project area. A presentation by ARRC detailing the project scope and purpose and need was followed by a question and answer period. The PowerPoint presentation that was presented to those in attendance is included in Appendix C. The agency scoping letter, agenda, and sign-in sheets are included in Appendix D.

4.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

Public and agency comments provide valuable insight into the issues to be resolved during this project. All public and agency comments received as of Monday, February 28, 2011, the conclusion of the formal scoping period, have been reviewed and are summarized in this document.

Public Scoping Comments

Verbal comments, comments submitted via e-mail, and completed comment forms received during the scoping process were analyzed for issues, concerns, and feedback on alignment
alternatives to be addressed in the environmental document. The list below summarizes the comments heard from the public, which have been grouped according to common issues and topics:

- Overall general support for the project.
- Consider the 100-Mile Loop Trail in project planning.
- Consider noise impacts on homes at 10 Mile, 11 Mile, and 12 Mile Village.
- Constructing the project and removal of the tracks will allow access and use of Gange Road or allow for direct access to the Old Richardson Highway.
- Change 3 Mile Crossing also.
- Property owners should be able to repossess what was taken when the railroad was first constructed during World War II.

Agency Scoping Comments

The agency scoping meeting, comments submitted via e-mail, and written letters were analyzed for issues, concerns, and feedback on alignment alternatives to be addressed in the environmental document. Comments received from the agencies are summarized below:

**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Water**

- A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan will be required for the project. Greg Drzewiecki, in Anchorage, will review the plan.

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)**

- ADF&G has few fish or wildlife concerns with the proposed project.
- We recommend that no activity take place riverward of the toe of the existing levee.
- There are no identified fish bearing water bodies that would be crossed by the project as currently proposed. The Tanana River has been specified important for the spawning, rearing, or migration of anadromous fishes.
- A number of historic sloughs and channels in the project area were altered during the construction of the Moose Creek Dam flood control project and associated Tanana River
Levee. Several seepage channels were also constructed that connect to the cataloged waters of the Chena River.

- The potential for alteration of moose habitat and increased moose-train collisions along the realigned railroad alignment is of some concern to ADF&G, particularly if the track speed limit is significantly increased.
- ADF&G has a strong interest in both maintaining viable fish and wildlife populations and assuring the ability of the public to access those resources for both consumptive and non-consumptive purposes.
- The project area lies within the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Use Area as designated by the Joint Board of Fisheries and Game.
- We encourage consultation with Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc., during preparation of the NEPA documents.
- There are no legislatively-designated special areas managed by ADF&G (refuges, critical habitat area, or sanctuaries) within or abutting the project area.
- A wide range of wildlife species use the project area at least seasonally.
- With Alternative D, or some other riverward alternative, there would be a higher risk of the project affecting or interacting with migratory or daily movements of wildlife along the floodplain and riparian corridor of the Tanana River.
- Any work that might occur within the limits of the ordinary high water on the riverward side of the levee would likely require a Fish Habitat (Title 16) Permit from ADF&G.

**Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB)**

- Requested the ARRC make a presentation to the Borough before the comment period deadline. Tom Hancock is the contact for Parks and Recreation.
- Regarding ownership/responsibility of the Tanana River Levee:
  - FNSB is both the owner/operator of the Tanana River Levee and the municipal government tasked with certain police power responsibilities associated with zoning and platting.
- The Department of Community Planning is responsible for planning efforts and zoning enforcement.

- The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for implementing and overseeing established FNSB trails and recreational facilities.

- The Department of Public Works operates and maintains the levee structure, drainage channels, and groins.

- The Land Management Department is responsible for protecting the land title interests associated with the levee facility.

- FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan - A policy document adopted by the FNSB Assembly in September 2005. The Plan is supportive of this type of project.

- North Pole Land Use Plan - A land use plan for the City of North Pole that was adopted by the FNSB Assembly in January 2010. The Plan is supportive of the project under “Implementation Strategies”:

- Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan
  - The Flood Control Levee Trail is located within the proposed ARRC project area, and is an established portion of the proposed 100-Mile Loop Trail with substantial year-round public use.

  - The trail must remain within the levee corridor and public access across the proposed railroad should be provided for the continued recreational use by city residents and the general public.

  - Recommends a grade-separated crossing for the Flood Control Levee Trail at the Richardson Highway 9 Mile Crossing. At a minimum, an at-grade crossing should be provided for the trail as part of the proposed railroad realignment.

- Title 15, FNSB Floodplain Ordinance

  - There are several areas along the proposed railroad realignment that are located within the Special Flood Hazard area according to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps. A Floodplain Permit will be required.
The ordinance states, “No person may excavate or remove any material from lands within 250 feet of the centerline of the Tanana River Levee structure; except, that excavation and removal for the purpose of constructing foundations for buildings or other structures upon the excavation is permitted. Such excavation shall be backfilled to original ground elevation within 90 days from the date extraction began.”

- Tanana River Levee Structure
  - Major Modification
    - Construction of rail lines on the levee embankment, the drainage blanket or immediately adjacent to any part of the levee structure will likely qualify as a “major modification” to the system. All major modifications must be reviewed by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) through the office of the Chief of Engineers.
    - Modifications, major or minor, made to the levee without consent by the USACE may jeopardize recent levee certification, required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
  - Structural Integrity
    - The levee was not designed nor has FNSB or the USACE analyzed it to see if it can support live train loads.
    - FNSB recommends that ARRC obtain appropriate construction method material data including the recent analysis conducted for certification and use the information to complete a structural analysis.
  - Access Points
    - Without complete open access to the top, sides, and toe of the levee embankment, the drainage blanket on the landward side of the levee, and the first 15 feet of silt blanket on the riverward side of the levee, FNSB cannot fully meet its obligation to the USACE to properly inspect and maintain the structure.
The five access points proposed by ARRC may or may not be suitable for all required levee operations. Public Works needs to review access needs in more detail as the final project alternative is designed.

Ownership Interests

- In addition to the levee and drainage channel right-of-ways and groins, FNSB owns a considerable amount of land on the riverward side of the levee for which we have management responsibility.
  - Parks and Recreation manages the Tanana Lakes Facility.
  - Public Works manages the Landfill Gravel Extraction Project.

- The five access points proposed by ARRC have to be evaluated for their relevance for these facilities and obligations.

- A limited access easement, similar to the one granted by the federal government, crossing points and use of the existing maintenance road become very important.

- Develop accurate ownership maps so that property acquisition can be taken into project planning considerations.

Survey and Topographic Data

- The USACE hired DOWL HKM to complete a centerline and cross section of the levee and drainage channels.

USACE

- The Tanana River is a navigable water of the United States (U.S.). Descriptions of the current proposed alternatives do not indicate any impacts to that water.

- The proposed project area contains waters of the U.S., including wetlands, under the USACE’s regulatory jurisdiction.

- Based on the description of the proposed alternatives:

  - Alternative A would not require additional fill and would therefore not require a permit.
- Department of the Army (DA) authorization would be required for other proposed alternatives because they require the placement of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands.

- Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires that a DA permit be obtained for the placement or discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the U.S., including jurisdictional wetlands.

- Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 requires that a DA permit be obtained for structures or work in or affecting navigable waters of the U.S.

USAG FWA

- A portion of the Tanana River Levee bisects a portion of the DA-owned Dyke Range Impact Area.

- The proposed action and alternatives should specifically identify the width of area required to accommodate the rail realignment and specifically identify the physical features (i.e., levee, trail, transmission line, etc.) and land ownership within the area considered for future acquisition. Impacts of these features and land owners should be discussed within the environmental document.

- The proposed action and alternatives should identify how the ARRC/FRA intends to acquire the land necessary for rail realignment.

- The Dyke Range Impact Area has not been used for training in over 10 years, but is still classified as an active Army military training range. Past use of the Dyke Range Impact Area has included training associated with anti-aircraft artillery firing point, mortars, recoilless rifles, and other explosive munitions. The past use has resulted in the likely presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Any work in this area will require a complete survey and investigation by certified UXO technicians.

- If the proposed action were to result in a real estate activity requiring approval by U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Wainwright, Alaska (USAG FWA), the Army would be required to conduct its own NEPA review. In order to facilitate this review, USAG FWA would prefer to adopt the ARRC/FRA NEPA documentation associated with this action. USAG FWA would like to request additional coordination with ARRC/FRA on preliminary
versions of the environmental document prior to release of the draft document to the public.

- Fair market value must be paid to the Army for any timber resources taken within the DA-owned land.

- The proposed action should take into consideration wildlife populations and habitat within the region of influence and any Clean Water Act Section 404 requirements.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USWFS)**

- The USFWS agrees that there are no Threatened or Endangered Species within the project area.

- The USFWS agrees that there are no National Wildlife Refuges in or adjacent to the project area.

- USFWS is not able to quantify temporary, indirect, and permanent impacts to wetlands, fish, wildlife and other habitat at this stage of the planning process, however, USFWS offers the following ways to avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts.

- The National Wetlands Inventory indicates that there are wetlands located in the project area and that ARRC plans to identify those wetlands.

- USFWS policy regarding impacts to fish and wildlife habitat includes first avoiding, then minimizing, and finally compensating for the remaining unavoidable impacts. If there are unavoidable impacts for this project then the service recommends compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable impacts for this project than the USFWS recommends compensatory mitigation by restoring or permanently protecting equal or high-value wetlands nearby.

- **Fish:** The Tanana River is important fish habitat that may be affected by the proposed activities. The Tanana River is an anadromous stream.

- **Eagles:** The USFWS has information that bald eagle nests have been located in the vicinity of the project area (USWFS unpublished data, see enclosed map). A survey may need to be conducted to determine location of active nests prior to construction.
activities. USFWS recommends conducting nest surveys in the spring when nests are active and easier to identify.

- **Permits:** Since the proposed construction activities may disturb nesting eagles, USFWS recommends reviewing our eagle permit website (http://alaska.fws.gov/eaglepermit/index.htm).

**City of North Pole**
- The City of North Pole endorses the proposed Alaska Railroad North Pole Crossing Reduction/Road-Rail Relocation Project.
- The City Council on several occasions has passed resolutions endorsing the Project, including Resolution 08-02 (January 7, 2008) and Resolution 09-31 (October 19, 2009).
- Both resolutions have requested appropriations.
- The City of North Pole believes that the project should be given independent utility status in that it can be accomplished irrespective of the realignment of any other section of railroad track. This will contribute to the reduction of at-grade crossings in North Pole.
- Removing the physical track from the heart of the city to past 10 Mile, to ensure that dangerous intersections can be regulated.
- The project will enhance the operations of the railroad
- The project will build a new grade-separated crossing, replacing the dangerous “Peridot” crossing, vastly improving the safety of vehicular traffic and the railroad.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

The above public and agency comments provide valuable insight into the issues to be resolved during the project. All comments will be reviewed and addressed, as appropriate, during preparation of the environmental document.
FIGURES
Figure 1
Vicinity Map

ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

March 04, 2011  WO: D60432
Figure 2
Proposed Project Area

ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION

North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

P:\Projects\D60432\GIS\Project Area.mxd Mar 04, 2011 3:37:43 PM User: bfarrell
APPENDIX A

Project Mailing Lists

Page

Representatives from Public Offices Mailing List.................................................................1
Agency Scoping Mailing List................................................................................................3
## ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project
### Public Representatives Mailing List

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<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Marsh</td>
<td>Fairbanks North Star Borough</td>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>1648 Cushman St. Suite 200</td>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>AK</td>
<td>99701</td>
<td>(907) 459-1260</td>
<td><a href="mailto:planning@co.fairbanks.ak.us">planning@co.fairbanks.ak.us</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Want</td>
<td>Fairbanks North Star Borough</td>
<td>Assembly Member</td>
<td></td>
<td>PO Box 71267 / Attn: Clerks Office</td>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>AK</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:mwant@co.fairbanks.ak.us">mwant@co.fairbanks.ak.us</a></td>
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<td>Diane</td>
<td>Hutchinson</td>
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<td>Emily</td>
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<td>John</td>
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<td>(907) 452-8251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
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<td>Bernard</td>
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<td>523 2nd Ave.</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:cherokeeeidermc@acs.alaska.com">cherokeeeidermc@acs.alaska.com</a></td>
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<td>(907) 377-5019</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ronaldjones@gi.com">ronaldjones@gi.com</a></td>
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<td>Lisa Murkowski</td>
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<td>Senator</td>
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<td>Fairbanks</td>
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<td>99701</td>
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<td>Don Young</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Wyman</td>
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<td>Construction Services Manager</td>
<td>758 Illinois Street, P.O. Box 71249</td>
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<td>(202) 493-6067</td>
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## ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project
### Agency Scoping List

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<tr>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>Wiegers</td>
<td>Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation</td>
<td>Contaminated Sites</td>
<td>Environmental Spec. III</td>
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<td>Judith</td>
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<td>Ethan</td>
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<td>Transportation Planner</td>
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<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
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<td>Jerry</td>
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<td>Jennifer</td>
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### ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project
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<td>Bridge Administration</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
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<td>Director</td>
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<td>AK</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:michael.meeks@us.army.mil">michael.meeks@us.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>99709</td>
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<td>99506-6898</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:david.p.williams@usace.army.mil">david.p.williams@usace.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>PO Box 6898</td>
<td>Elndernorf AFB</td>
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<tr>
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<td>11 12th Ave, Rm 110</td>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>AK</td>
<td>99701</td>
<td>(907) 456-0203</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ak_fisheries@fws.gov">ak_fisheries@fws.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
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<td>Biologist</td>
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<td>101 12th Ave, Rm 110</td>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>AK</td>
<td>99701</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Sisinyak</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Building 5108 Range Rd</td>
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<td>(907) 353-1244</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mark.sisinyak@us.army.mil">mark.sisinyak@us.army.mil</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ski</td>
<td>Marcinkowski</td>
<td>US Army Alaska G-3/5/7</td>
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<td>(907) 353-7808</td>
<td><a href="mailto:robert.marcinkowski@us.army.mil">robert.marcinkowski@us.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>Durst</td>
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<td>(907) 459-7401</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thancock@co.fairbanks.ak.us">thancock@co.fairbanks.ak.us</a></td>
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**APPENDIX A - Page 4**
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<td>NEPA Branch Chief</td>
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<td>(907) 361-9507</td>
<td><a href="mailto:carrie.mcenteer@us.army.mil">carrie.mcenteer@us.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>John</td>
<td>Schaake</td>
<td>USACE Chena Flood Project</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<td>(907) 488-2748</td>
<td><a href="mailto:john.c.schaake@usace.army.mil">john.c.schaake@usace.army.mil</a></td>
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<td>Tim</td>
<td>Feavel</td>
<td>USACE Chena Flood Project</td>
<td>Ranger</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>James</td>
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<td>Bill</td>
<td>Smyth</td>
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<td>610 University Ave</td>
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<td>99709</td>
<td>(907) 451-2177</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bill.smyth@alaska.gov">bill.smyth@alaska.gov</a></td>
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**Project Team**

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<tbody>
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## APPENDIX B

### Public Scoping Materials

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<tr>
<td>Press Release, Scoping Meeting, January 26, 2011</td>
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<td>List of Statewide Media for Project Advertisement</td>
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<td>Project Facts Sheet</td>
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<td>Project Comment Form</td>
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<td>Sign-in Sheet</td>
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</table>
The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) invites the public to a scoping meeting to solicit input into a proposed project to reduce at-grade (same level) road/rail crossings along an 8-mile section of the Eielson Branch track (from Richardson Highway Milepost 9 to the Chena River Floodway) that runs through North Pole. The purpose is to enhance public safety in downtown North Pole and improve railroad operating efficiency, while ensuring continued rail access to existing and future customers along this portion of track.

In cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), ARRC is initiating an environmental assessment (EA) and preliminary engineering to analyze the options, which may include realigning this section of track on or along the Tanana River Levee. The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Highway may also be removed and a new grade-separated crossing (overpass) installed. The proposed project represents Phase 1 of a larger proposed realignment project (Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation). This phase has independent utility and would provide immediate safety benefits.

The meeting facility is accessible to people with disabilities. If you need assistance (including language) to participate, contact the ARRC Legal Dept at 265-2461 or zappasj@akrr.com. For hearing impaired, call via Alaska Relay Service: inside Alaska dial 711; outside Alaska dial TTY 1-800-770-8973 or voice 1-800-770-8255. Printed materials can be made available in alternate formats upon request. ARRC is an Equal Opportunity corporation.

For more information, visit AlaskaRailroad.com or call (907) 265-2671.
Alaska Railroad schedules open house in Fairbanks to discuss proposed capital project plans for 2011

Additional open house events in Anchorage, Wasilla and Seward

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) invites the public to an open house 4:00-6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 25, at the Alaska Railroad Depot, 1745 Johansen Expressway in Fairbanks. The venue provides an opportunity to review and comment on a proposed Program of Projects (POP) for 2011.

The open house will showcase continuing and proposed capital improvement projects that are in various stages – from conceptual planning to engineering and construction. Project managers will be on-hand to explain projects that are located all along the railroad system from Seward to Fairbanks, with an emphasis on projects located in and around Fairbanks, Interior Alaska and system-wide, including:

- Northern Rail Extension (North Pole to Delta Junction – Phase One: Tanana River Crossing)
- Fairbanks Depot Second Track
- Fairbanks Freight Intermodal Improvements
- Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation (FARLR)
- North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction (FARLR Phase 1)
- Nenana Rail Line Relocation
- Bridge / Culvert repair and replacement program
- Healy Canyon Safety and Reliability Improvements (Stabilization)
- Positive Train Control
- Track Rehabilitation and Embankment Protection

The Fairbanks event is the third in a series of POP Open House events. The open house in Anchorage took place last Tuesday, January 11, and the open house in Wasilla took place last Wednesday, January 12. The final open house is scheduled as follows:

- **Seward** – 10:00a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Friday, February 4 – Breeze Inn, 303 N. Harbor Street. Emphasis will be on projects located in and around Seward and Southcentral Alaska.

-more-
The Alaska Railroad has budgeted approximately $55.9 million in new spending for capital improvements in 2011. About $13.8 million will come from Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants. This amount includes a required 9% matching contribution from the Alaska Railroad. Other federal funding includes $2.93 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-administered grants and $1.38 million in “Stimulus” (American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009) funding. ARRC will spend another $23.7 million toward internally-funded capital projects using revenues generated from passenger, freight and real estate activity. Finally, the railroad will spend about $14.1 million of funds generated from the sale of revenue bonds that were sold in 2006 and 2007. Bonds are repaid with FTA formula fund appropriations.

People unable to attend the open house events may visit www.AlaskaRailroad.com for project information. Questions about the projects or open houses may also be directed to Corporate Communications Officer Stephenie Wheeler at 265-2671. Written comments may be e-mailed to public_comment@akrr.com or mailed to Alaska Railroad Capital Projects, P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, AK 99510-7500.

- end
Alaska Railroad schedules scoping meeting on North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) invites the public to a public scoping meeting from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 26, at the North Pole City Hall, 125 Snowman Lane. Presentations are scheduled for 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. The venue provides an opportunity to solicit input into a proposed project to reduce at-grade (same level) road/rail crossings along an 8-mile section of the Eielson Branch track (from Richardson Highway Milepost 9 to the Chena River Floodway) that runs through North Pole. The purpose is to enhance public safety in downtown North Pole and improve railroad operating efficiency, while ensuring continued rail access to existing and future customers along this portion of the track.

In cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), ARRC is initiating an environmental assessment (EA) and associated preliminary engineering to analyze the options, which may include realigning this section of track on or along the Tanana River Levee. The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Highway may also be removed and a new grade-separated crossing (overpass) installed. The proposed project represents Phase 1 of a larger proposed realignment project (Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation). This phase has independent utility and would provide immediate safety benefits. In particular, the project team is seeking public input on current use of the Tanana River Levee and the locations of key access points to the levee. The deadline for public comment is Monday, February 28, 2011. Written comments may be e-mailed to public_comments@akrr.com or mailed to Alaska Railroad Capital Projects, P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, AK 99510-7500.

People unable to attend the open house events may visit www.AlaskaRailroad.com for project information. Questions about the projects or open houses may also be directed to Corporate Communications Officer Stephenie Wheeler at 265-2671.

-end-

The ARRC is an Equal Opportunity Corporation. If you need special assistance in order to participate in any ARRC service, program, or activity, please contact the Alaska Railroad Corporation; P.O. Box 107500; Anchorage, AK 99510; Attention: Legal Department; zappasj@akrr.com; (907) 265-2461; via Alaska Relay Service for hearing impaired – dial 7 11 anywhere inside Alaska, OR dial toll-free from anywhere outside the state 1-800-770-8255 (voice); 1-800 770-8973 (TTY). Upon request, printed materials can be made available in alternate formats.
List of Statewide Media for Project Advertisement

- Alaska Business Monthly
- Alaska Journal of Commerce
- Alaska Newspapers
- Alaska Post/Public Affairs Office
- IMPC-FW_PAOU
- Alaska Star
- Anchorage Daily News
- Anchorage Press
- APRN
- Associated Press
- Channel 11 - KTVA
- Channel 11 - KTVF
- Channel 13 - KIMO
- Channel 2 - KTUU
- KXD-TV
- Fairbanks Daily News-Miner
- Frontiersman
- KBYR - 700 AM
- Clear Channel - Anchorage Radio Stations
- Clear Channel - Fairbanks Radio Stations
- New Northwest Broadcasters - Fairbanks Radio
- New Northwest Broadcasters - Anchorage Radio
- Anchorage Media Group
- KMBQ - 97.7 FM
- KSKA - 91.1 FM
- KTNA - 88.9 FM
- KUAC - 89.9
- Peninsula Clarion
- Alaska Dispatch
- Alaska Dispatch
- Seward Phoenix Log
- Talkeetna Times
- Turnagain Times
- Seward City News
- Dept of Transportation & Public Facilities
- Progressive Railroading
- RailwayAge
- Rail News / TrainWeb LLC
- Rail News
- American Short Line & Regional Railroad Association
Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is initiating an environmental assessment (EA) and associated preliminary engineering for the proposed North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project (North Pole Rail Project).

ARRC proposes to reduce the number of at-grade (same level) road/rail crossings on an 8-mile section of the Eielson Branch track (from Richardson Hwy Milepost 9 to the Chena River Floodway) that currently runs through North Pole. Crossing reduction options may include realigning this section of track on or along the Tanana River Levee. The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Hwy may also be removed and a new grade-separated crossing (overpass) installed.

The proposed project represents Phase One of a larger proposed realignment project (Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation). This phase has independent utility and would provide immediate safety benefits.

Purpose and Need

Current train movements through the City of North Pole and across the Richardson Highway pose a safety risk to the public and to rail operations. The project purpose is to enhance public safety in downtown North Pole, improve railroad operating efficiency, and to maintain rail access to existing and future customers along this portion of the track.

Benefits

• Eliminates multiple at-grade crossings, thereby reducing inherent risks of train derailment and train/vehicle collision.
• Eliminates North Pole traffic delays caused by railroad operations through downtown.
• Improves operational efficiency by allowing for increased track speeds.

Status

• With new funding available, an environmental assessment is initiated in mid-2010.
• DOWL and TransSystems are hired as consultants to assist with EA planning and activities.
• Scoping activities, to include initial agency and public meetings, begin January 2011.
• Technical studies will be performed through summer 2011.
• Draft EA review and comment periods are anticipated in fall 2011.
• A completed EA is expected to be submitted to the FRA by the end of 2011.

Project Costs & Funding

• The North Pole Rail Project EA and associated activities are financed by reallocated Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding. In FY 2010, the FHWA STP allocated funds to the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS), and several FMATS STP projects were completed under budget. The FMATS and Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT/PF) reprogrammed funds at the local level, transferring these FHWA funds to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for use on road/rail crossing reductions. The FMATS reallocated $1 million (Federal $909,700; non-Federal match $90,300) to pursue the North Pole Rail Project.
• The cost for final design and construction of this phase will be refined through the EA process. Funding is not yet identified.
The project corridor stretches from Mile 9 of the Richardson Highway to the Chena River Floodway.

The EA will consider replacing the existing at-grade crossing over the Richardson Highway with a grade-separated crossing.
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

 capitalized Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

ARCC’s TTY/TTD 265-2620
or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or voice 1-800-770-8255

public_comment@akrr.com
Fax (907) 265-2365
## Alaska Railroad Corporation

**North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project**

**Public Scoping Meeting**

January 26, 2011 • North Pole City Hall • North Pole

* **RACE/GENDER** – Strictly voluntary. The purpose is to ensure as a recipient of Federal DOT funding we are fulfilling our Title VI responsibilities by ensuring fair and equitable representation by the public. **Race Categories are:** White (W); American Indian (AI); Alaska Native (AN); Black (B); Hispanic (H); Asian/Pacific Islander (AP). Other (O) Category not listed (please self identify and specify).

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<tr>
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<th>Do you want to receive project mailings?</th>
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<th>Mailing Address – Optional: Please provide if you want information on this project in the future. May be subject to public disclosure.</th>
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<th>* Race Strictly Voluntary</th>
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<td>Syd Swenson</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>LAND OCCUR</td>
<td>1673 Volleyball Crt U.P. AK 99705</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kellen Stallman</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>FMATS</td>
<td>800 Cushman St. Fairbanks AK 99701</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Todd Boyce</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>FMSB</td>
<td>P.O. Box 71267 Pebes AK 99707</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Doyle</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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<td>1771 Jessica Ln N. P. AK 99705</td>
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<td>Atharae St. Martin</td>
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<td>St. Mary's</td>
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<td>Sue Fransel</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>215 E Fif Ave N. Pole</td>
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<td>Nina Cassity</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 55224/ North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travis Cline</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>Exclusive Parking</td>
<td>P.O. Box 55068 North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buzz Otis</td>
<td>[ ] Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>NPOEDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Do you want to receive railroad project mailings?</td>
<td>Organization (if applicable)</td>
<td>Mailing Address – Optional: Please provide if you want information on ARRC projects in the future. This information may be subject to public disclosure.</td>
<td>Gender Strictly Voluntary</td>
<td>Race Strictly Voluntary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Beaudreault</td>
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<td>Jack H. Honow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connie Pancik</td>
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<td>Bennie Kee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Stirling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Callahan</td>
<td>□ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Matthews</td>
<td>□ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rini Thoroihult</td>
<td>□ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hank Bartos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonnie Weldstadt</td>
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<td>□ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Alaska Railroad Corporation

## North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

### Public Scoping Meeting

**January 26, 2011 • North Pole City Hall • North Pole**

* **RACE/GENDER** – Strictly voluntary. The purpose is to ensure as a recipient of Federal DOT funding we are fulfilling our Title VI responsibilities by ensuring fair and equitable representation by the public. **Race Categories are:** White (W); American Indian (AI); Alaska Native (AN); Black (B); Hispanic (H); Asian/Pacific Islander (AP); Other (O) Category not listed (please self identify and specify).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (First and Last, Please Print)</th>
<th>Do you want to receive project mailings?</th>
<th>Organization (If applicable)</th>
<th>Mailing Address – Optional: Please provide if you want information on this project in the future. May be subject to public disclosure.</th>
<th>* Gender Strictly Voluntary</th>
<th>* Race Strictly Voluntary</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>William Alexander</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>P.O. Box 56215, North Pole, AK 99705</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Rasmussen</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>3350 Thomas St #63, Fairbanks, AK 99709</td>
<td></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeannette Merritt</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>2413 Old Hickory Way, Anchorage, AK 99501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Cardino</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>FMATS (Fairbanks)</td>
<td>800 Cushman St, Fairbanks, AK 99701</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda McGinnis</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>3144 Lawrence Rd, North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otis W. Rowland</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>2091 Edward Dr, North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Hannum</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>P.O. Box 5637, North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Knepper</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td>P.O. Box 5637, North Pole, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
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Appendix B - Page 11
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name (First and Last, Please Print)</th>
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<th>* Race Strictly Voluntary</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Perry</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>1233 Rangeview N.P., AK 99705</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Holland</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Manley</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Hoolfe</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe and Alberta Gandrea</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jack L. Howard</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Sanford</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
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<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloria Lee</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>P.O. Box 58277                    ERKL 99716</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Thomas</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>2233 State Cr                    NORTH POLE, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Olson</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>1666 Aspen St                    FOLS AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie McFarlane</td>
<td>☑ Yes, put me on mailing list</td>
<td></td>
<td>1130 Glenn St                    NORTH POLE, AK 99705</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Public Comments Received
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

Name: Mike Strickland
Phone: 488-1411
Address: 
Email: 

Your Comments:

Please give the Fairbanks North Star Borough Trails Commission a presentation before the comment period deadline...

Contact thru Tom Houston, park engineer...

Thank you Mike Strickland

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

Capital Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

public_comment@akrr.com

ARRCs TTY/TTD 265-2620
or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or
voice 1-800-770-8255

Fax (907) 265-2365

Appendix C - Page 1
January 31, 2011

Kellen Spillman
Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System
800 Cushman Street
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Dear Mr. Spillman:

Thank you for taking time to attend the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project public scoping meeting on January 26, 2011, at the North Pole City Hall. As noted at the meeting, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives.

This letter acknowledges receipt of your written comments, which were hand-delivered by you at the scoping meeting on January 26, 2011. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wheeler, Corporate Communications Officer
(907) 265-2671, wheelers@akrr.com
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

Name
Kellen Spillman

Address
900 Cushman Fairbanks, AK 99701

Your Comments:
I feel this is a beneficial project, but I am concerned about the funding required to do so. The figure that was thrown around was $50 million and it seems that there is a better use of the funding. I would support the use of federal Railroad funds, but FTA funding could be better used around the Fairbanks area. I also have cost concerns about building railroad line on or near the levee. In terms of transportation planning it seems $50 million could be better used in an area with so many needs. I would ask the ARR to consider cost cutting options such as requiring less ROW.

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

Capital Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

ARRC's TTY/TTD 265-2620 or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or voice 1-800-770-8255

public_comment@akrr.com
Fax (907) 265-2365
January 31, 2011

Jerry Koerner, Trustee  
David H. Ainley Trust  
P.O. Box 56137  
North Pole, AK 99706

Dear Mr. Koerner:

Thank you for taking time to attend the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project public scoping meeting on January 26, 2011, at the North Pole City Hall. As noted at the meeting, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives.

This letter acknowledges receipt of your written comments on January 27, 2011, via fax transmission. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Stephanie Wheeler, Corporate Communications Officer  
(907) 265-2671, wheelers@akrr.com
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

Name: David H. Ainley Trust, Jerry Koerner, Trustee
Address: PO Box 56137, North Pole, AK 99705
Phone: 907-488-9600 ext 4121
Email: jeroico@gci.net

Your Comments:

I appreciated the meeting at NP City Hall yesterday. I oversee the David H. Ainley Trust that owes a + 200 parcel of land adjacent the Old Richardson Hwy known as TL 1515 and TL1502. It parallels the tracks, is adjacent to the GVEA pipeline and controls. For years we assessed our cabins from the Grange road by the NP Middle School. The cabin burned then shortly after the AKRR put up a gate which stopped access to our 200 acres at that location. At times we've had the gate unlocked so we could get convenient access again to our gravel pits there. We have a section of the property zoned Light Industrial but with the tracks there it has bared development.

We are strongly in favor of the removal of the tracks so we can reinstate use of the Grange Road or get direct access to the Old Richardson Hwy. If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

Capital Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

ARRC's TTY/STD 265-2620
or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or voice 1-800-770-8255

public_comment@akrr.com

Fax (907) 265-2365
January 31, 2011

Bonnie Woldstad
P.O. Box 58702
North Pole, AK 99705

Dear Ms. Woldstad:

Thank you for taking time to attend the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project public scoping meeting on January 26, 2011, at the North Pole City Hall. As noted at the meeting, an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives.

This letter acknowledges receipt of your written comments and historical notes, which were hand-delivered by you at the scoping meeting on January 26, 2011. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wheeler, Corporate Communications Officer
(907) 265-2671, wheelers@akrr.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Note</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>The Homestead Act of 1862 allows for 160-acre homesteads to be filed by US citizens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>The Act of March 12, 1914, an Act to authorize the President of the United States to locate, construct, and operate railroads in the Territory of Alaska and for other purposes... acquire Rights of Way... all patents... Reserve to the United States Right of Way for the construction of railroads, telegraphs and telephone lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/20/46</td>
<td>Carl Finell files for Homestead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16/47 or 1/28/47</td>
<td>Letter from War Department sent to entry men that Right of Way will traverse entries, easement will be created in patents Finell #14 on list of entries that letter was supposed to be sent to. Note letters make notation of traverse and easement, do not discuss taking land or reduction in size of homestead due to railroad &quot;fee&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/28/49</td>
<td>Carl Finell issues easement to GVEA for power line easement continues to demonstrate and exercise ownership in property. GVEA easement is within RR right-of-way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/49</td>
<td>Carl Finell receives final patent to US homestead for full 160 acres, notice of March 12, 1914 law within patent but no deduction from the full 160 acres for the amount of property the railroad crosses over conflicts: none. Rights of way—none, withdrawals—none.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20/50</td>
<td>Note 2: 7/50 notation of spur line right of way be made upon records.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/15/69</td>
<td>Remainder of Finell homestead is purchased by Hector &amp; Jeannette Thierault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Staff report regarding Alaska Railroad Transfer—regarding Right-of-Way/Other Third-Party Interests. Related to this issue is the question of other third-party claims potentially outstanding against railroad holdings. These possible claims consist of other private sector interests which may have been established over the years on portions of the railroad's 36,000 acres. Right-of-way lands appear to be the primary area where this type of problem is likely to exist. Indications suggest that in magnitude there are probably not that many problems of this nature. It should also be pointed out that our research suggests there is little to be gained by attempting to address this question in federal transfer legislation versus dealing with it later on a case-by-case basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Questions on easements and right-of-ways and being able to transfer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>ARITA Alaska Railroad Transfer Act—Section 1203 (B): deliver to the State an interim conveyance of the rail properties of the Alaska Railroad that are not conveyed pursuant to subparagraph (A) of this paragraph and are not subject to unresolved claims of valid existing rights... The exclusive use easement granted pursuant to subparagraph (D) of this paragraph and all rights afforded by such easement shall be exercised only for railroad purposes and for such other transportation, transmission or communication purposes for which lands subject to such easements were utilized as of 1/14/83 the license shall be exclusive subject only to valid leases, permits and other instruments issued before the date of transfer and easements reserved pursuant to subsection (c) (2) of this section. ARITA generally speaks of easements and right of ways, does address subject to other instruments issued before the date of transfer, also transfer easement for surface does not transfer subsurface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23/1989</td>
<td>Swenson Complaint</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Sections 1208 & 1209 contain Reversion clauses—allowing for transfer back to adjacent property owners through Governor of Alaska.**
Memo from Railroad counsel pg 2...if the federal government did not have an estate at least equal to the exclusive use easement in specific properties. Congress enactment of ARTA may conceivably have effected an inverse condemnation of private property rights.

railroad notes need to review title search on Eielson branch

Memo from Railroad Chief counsel if United States did not own this level of title in any lands it inversely condemned the rights that it guaranteed to the state...it is equally possible that the federal government either failed to deal with existing property owners or, if it did, failed to record any evidence of its acquisition of the Right of Way

4-16-1998 Railroad commissions Brunner report

Brunner report questions regarding land rights on Eielson spur

Brunner report speaks about easements, right-a-way, mentions statute of limitations—but does not take into effect Reversionary Clause.

2003 107th & 108th Congress
Railroad in requests language be inserted into ARTA to allow land transfer around Ft. Richardson and Elmendorf. In researching this land transfer at some point decides that land that are being traded could revert back to property owner if use is discontinued under reversionary clause.

Railroad requests Reversionary Repeal
ARTA Sections 1208 and 1209 Reversion Clause repealed in omnibus bill

Dec 2005 railroad moves to close Ruby Crossing, protest of Ruby Crossing lead to discovery of reversionary clause repeal

Dec 2005 Memo from RR that railroad had at least and exclusive use easement, does not state fee or ownership

Jan 2006 Land owner discovers that Reversionary clause in ARTA has been repealed

Jan 2006 Land owner seeking information regarding Interim Conveyance and titles that will be issued to railroad

Note landowner was never contacted regarding this transfer, continued to believe that instruments of title previously granted—US Patent—was valid document awarding title to property

May 2006 Document from AK RR Why Reversionary Repeal

July 2006 Letter to land owner regarding interim conveyance and transfers

2008 BLM correspondence
February 8, 2011

Valerie K. Matthew
2457 Loomis Drive
North Pole, AK 99705

Dear Ms. Matthew:

Thank you for providing written comments regarding the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives.

This letter acknowledges receipt of your comments on February 8, 2011, via mail. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Sincerely,

Stephenie Wheeler, Corporate Communications Officer
(907) 265-2671, wheelers@akrr.com
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

Name: VACHEE K. MATTHEW
Phone: 907-469-9676
Address: 2487 Element, N, North Pole, AK 99705
Email:

Your Comments:

Sirs,

Having attended the Rail Reduction Meeting in North Pole, I am pleased to think that the project may be moved out of the nine mile section. To move the crossing on or off of the highway would surely be a better route than the present one.

Another thing that was mentioned was a spur would be left in place for some distance along the old track. Since we live at 12 mile village, it seems to me that we're now going to have the train lines to contend with. Double the noise, double the hazards in the making and this with minor streets 1/16 mile and a mile plus...

I hope you'll reconsider that spur train.

Sincerely,

VACHEE K. MATTHEW

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

Capital Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

ARCC’s TTY/TTD 265-2620
or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or voice 1-800-770-8255

public_comment@akrr.com

Fax (907) 265-2365
From: Stephenie Wheeler [mailto:wheelers@akrr.com]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2011 11:36 AM
To: Diane Ludwig
Cc: Barbara Hotchklin; Greg Lotakis; Campfield, Heather
Subject: Re: 100 mile trail easement (North Pole Project)

Brooks -

We assume you are referring to the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction project that is considering, among other options, a possible realignment of the railroad track on or along the Tanana River Levee. Within this context, we appreciate your providing written comments regarding this project. As you may know, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives. This message acknowledges receipt of your comments on February 13, 2011, via email. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Regards,

- Stephenie

Stephenie Wheeler
Corporate Communications Officer
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500
Physical: 327 W. Ship Creek Avenue
(907) 265-2671 (office)
(907) 382-3327 (cell)
wheelers@akrr.com

>>> Diane Ludwig <northernludwig5@acsalaska.net> 2/13/2011 3:10 PM >>>
AK. Rail Road Co.

Just wanted to be on record as supporting the 100 mile trail and that the railroad grant easements for the trail and crossings along the Tanana River dike.

thankyou,

Brooks Ludwig
Smith, Alicia

Subject: FW: RAILROAD REROUTE PROPOSAL (North Pole Project)

From: Stephenie Wheeler [mailto:wheelers@akrr.com]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2011 11:50 AM
To: bearqst@ak.net
Cc: Barbara Hotchkin; Greg Lotakis; Campfield, Heather
Subject: Re: RAILROAD REROUTE PROPOSAL (North Pole Project)

John -

Thank you for providing written comments regarding the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives. This message acknowledges receipt of your comments on February 13, 2011, via email. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Regards,

- Stephenie

Stephenie Wheeler
Corporate Communications Officer
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK  99510-7500
Physical: 327 W. Ship Creek Avenue
(907) 265-2671 (office)
(907) 382-3327 (cell)
wheelers@akrr.com

>>> John Johnston <bearqst@ak.net> 2/13/2011 8:27 AM >>>
In regards to the 100-Mile Loop Trail and the proposed reroute of ARR tracks through North Pole the ARR must give consideration to the trail(s) the follow and pass the Tanana River Levee.

These are established trails that have a high usage by local residents for recreation, hunting, trapping and fishing access onto and across the Tanana River.

The trail know as the 100 Mile Loop is an important aspect to Fairbanks history and trail systems and must be considered and provide for.

Thank You.

--
"everybody’s ignorant, only on different subjects"
Will Rogers
From: Stephenie Wheeler [mailto:wheelers@akrr.com]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2011 11:40 AM
To: Mike Kramer 
Cc: Barbara Hotchkin; Greg Lotakis; Campfield, Heather
Subject: Re: Tanana levee reroute

Mike -

We assume you are referring to the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction project that is considering, among other options, a possible realignment of the railroad track on or along the Tanana River Levee. Within this context, we appreciate your providing written comments regarding this project. As you may know, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives. This message acknowledges receipt of your comments on February 13, 2011, via email. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

Thank you for your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Regards,

- Stephenie

Stephenie Wheeler
Corporate Communications Officer
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK  99510-7500
Physical: 327 W. Ship Creek Avenue
(907) 265-2671 (office)
(907) 382-3327 (cell)
wheelers@akrr.com

>>> "Mike Kramer" <mkramer@bnblaw.com> 2/13/2011 9:38 AM >>>

The 100 mile trail would be impacted by this proposed reroute. Please accommodate the trail in your planning.

Sent from my iPhone please forgive typos
Helyn -

Thank you for providing written comments regarding the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction project, which is considering, among other options, a possible realignment of the railroad track on or along the Tanana River Levee. As you may know, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives. This message acknowledges receipt of your comments on February 14, 2011, via email. Your comments will be incorporated into the EA process.

We appreciate your interest in this project and the Alaska Railroad.

Regards,

- Stephenie

Stephenie Wheeler
Corporate Communications Officer
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P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500
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(907) 382-3327 (cell)
wheelers@akrr.com

>>> "HL" <arctic-loon@mosquitonet.com> 2/14/2011 7:46 PM >>>
I appauld your work to realign the RR tracks to make less crossings with vehicular traffic. **I do want to remind you of the existing trail that is on the Tanana levy. This trail has existed for many years and I hope you realise the necessity of the access to this trail, and any trail crossings that you would need to have so as not to obliterate and existing trail.**

Thank You.
Helyn Lefgren
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce level/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (typing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

Name: JEANETTE TERRIAULT
Address: 2473 Old Richardson Hwy, N.Pole
Phone: 907-488-8585
Email: dandj@acsalaska.net

Your Comments:

I am glad to see progress toward moving the railroad out of the centre of the city of North Pole. I have lived in the Hiway Park area since 1957. The area has seen some major development since that time.

Many of the property owners along the present rail line from 6 mile to the refinery will finally have access to their property. New roads between Badger Road and the 4-lane on the section lines would open a large area to development and a new tax base for the borough.

Some thought should be given to changing the current proposal to making the change from 3 mile crossing also. The present spur would continue to serve those businesses that are along the Old Richardson Hwy.

Property owners should be able to repossess what was taken when the railroad was first put in during the 2nd World War.
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<td>Agency Scoping Letter, December 21, 2011</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminder E-mail to Agencies regarding Scoping Meeting Date</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Comment Form</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Sign-in Sheet</td>
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</table>
December 21, 2010

Judith Bittner
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office
550 West 7th Ave. / Suite 43
Anchorage, AK 99501

Subject: Agency Scoping Meeting
ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Dear Ms. Bittner:

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is initiating preliminary engineering and preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for a proposed road/rail crossing reduction project through North Pole (North Pole Rail project). We invite you or your representatives to participate in an agency scoping meeting:

Wednesday, January 26, 2011
10:00 to 12:00
Hotel North Pole
449 N Santa Claus Lane
North Pole, Alaska 99705

ARRC proposes to reduce the number of crossings on a portion of its Eielson Branch through North Pole by realigning approximately 8 miles of railroad track. The purpose is to enhance public safety in downtown North Pole and improve ARRC's operating efficiency while ensuring continued rail access to existing and potential future ARRC customers along that portion of the Eielson Branch. The tracks between ARRC Mile G12 (Richardson Highway Mile 9) and the Chena River Floodway (Mile G20) would be realigned on or near the Tanana River levee. The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Highway would be removed, and a new separated grade crossing would be installed. Please refer to the attached figures showing the project area and conceptual design.

The proposed North Pole Rail project is Phase 1 of a larger proposed realignment project—the Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation. The North Pole rail project has independent utility and would provide immediate safety benefits, so preliminary engineering and EA preparation are now being initiated.

During the agency scoping meeting, we will describe the proposed project and potential alternatives, identify anticipated environmental issues and permitting requirements, and listen to any agency concerns. We will also outline a schedule for the EA process.

For preliminary research results of environmental resources in the project area, see Attachment A. Also attached to this letter is a list of scoping questions specific to your
agency or organization's purview (Attachment B). Please review this list for your specific agency or organization, and include any pertinent information that you can provide with your written comments.

If you are not able to attend the meeting, but would like to participate by teleconference, instructions on how to join the conference call are provided below:

Participants please dial:
  Toll-free: 866-866-2244
  International: 404-260-1415

When prompted, enter the code below followed by the # sign:
  6071265

You are also invited to attend the public scoping meeting on Wednesday, January 26, 2010 from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the North Pole City Hall at 125 Snowman Lane. It will include brief presentations scheduled for 4:00 and 5:30 p.m.

If you have questions about the proposed project or the scheduled meetings, please call me at (907) 265-2313 or Greg Lotakis at (907) 265-2217. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Sincerely,

Barbara C. Hotchkin
Manager, Project Permits & NEPA

Enclosures:
  Figure 1, Study Area Site Map
  Figure 2, Typical Rail Sections
  Figure 3, Richardson Highway Rail Crossing Area
  Attachment A, Preliminary Research Results of Environmental Resources
  Attachment B, Agency-Specific Scoping Questions
  Attachment C, Agency Scoping List

cc:
  Greg Lotakis, ARRC, Project Manager
  Kristen Hansen, DOWL HKM, Environmental Project Manager
  John Winkle, FRA, Program Manager
ATTACHMENT A
Environmental Resources and Preliminary Research Results
For the
ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Air Quality: According to Alaska Administrative Code (AAC), 18 AAC 50 (as amended through December 9, 2010), the Fairbanks North Star Borough and North Pole urban areas have been designated by the federal administrator as nonattainment for PM-2.5. Both areas are subject to maintenance plan requirements for carbon monoxide, as required under 42 U.S.C. 7505a, and as adopted by reference in 18 AAC 50.030 as part of the state air quality control plan.

Coastal Zone Management: According to Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR) Coastal Zone and Coastal District Boundaries Map, the proposed project does not lie within the coastal zone boundaries of the State of Alaska (www.alaskacoast.state.ak.us/GIS/boundary.htm).

Contaminated Sites, Spills, and Underground Storage Tanks: A search of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation’s (ADEC’s) contaminated sites database (http://www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/search/default.asp) revealed multiple contaminated sites within the immediate project area. A FirstSearch Database has been ordered to determine if the existing contaminated sites could potentially impact the proposed project. Further research and coordination with ADEC will be conducted to help determine the likelihood of encountering known contaminated sites during construction.

Historical, Archeological, and Cultural Properties: A record search and literature review were conducted of the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey (AHRS), Office of History and Archaeology was completed for project area in support of a 2005 draft environmental assessment and cultural resource investigation that encompassed the project area. It includes a field survey to identify archaeological sites and historic structures in the study area. Consultation in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will be conducted with the State Historic Preservation Office and local tribal entities to determine whether this project is likely to affect any historic or cultural resources.

Wetlands: A review of the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI) website (www.wetlandsfws.er.usgs.gov/wtlnds/launch.html) indicated that there are wetlands in the area of the proposed project. A wetlands delineation will be conducted in the spring/summer of 2011.

Anadromous Fish Streams/Essential Fish Habitat: A review of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game’s (ADF&G) Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes (www.gis.sf.adfg.state.ak.us) identified both the Tanana River, which runs parallel to the Tanana River Flood Control Levee, and the Chena River as being of importance to the rearing or migration of anadromous fishes.

State Refuges, Critical Habitat Areas, and Sanctuaries: A review of the ADF&G’s website listing critical habitats in the State of Alaska (www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/SARR/SpecialAreas/SpecialAreas.cfm) revealed that there are no refuges, critical habitat areas, or sanctuaries within or near to the project area.
Local Land Use Plans, Local Parks: Local land use plans that will be considered in the development of this project include the Tanana Basin Area Plan (2010), the North Pole Land Use Plan, and the Comprehensive Recreational Trial Plan for the Fairbanks North Star Borough (revised 2006). According to the Comprehensive Recreational Trial Plan, the Tanana River Flood Control Levee Trail has been the main recreational trail connection between South Fairbanks and North Pole, and the plan identifies this route as the primary option to connect the southern portion of the 100 Mile Loop Trail. The North Pole Land Use Plan shows the 100 Mile Loop Trail along the levee.

Land Ownership and Use: Land ownership and use within the project area is mixed between federal, military, state, borough, private and Alaska Railroad Corporation. The Tanana River Flood Control Levee, located within the project area, is on land mainly owned by the Fairbanks North Star Borough with a small portion owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Navigability, Floodplain Management: A review of the Unites States Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District website (www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/NavWat.htm) lists the Tanana River as navigable for 455 miles. Navigable portions of the Tanana River are located near the proposed project area.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough participates in flood hazard mapping through the Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA). Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) were checked to see if the project area is located within an active floodplain. Community ID Map #025090212H indicates that the area on the river side of the Tanana River levee is within a 100 year floodplain. Isolated areas on the North Pole side of the levee are also within the 100 year floodplain.

Federal Recreation Areas: There are no Federal Recreation Areas located within, or adjacent to the project area.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): According to the BLM website, no BLM public lands are located within the proposed project area (www.blm.gov/nstc/jurisdictions/).

Threatened and Endangered Species: There are no protected species within the project vicinity.

Bald Eagles: According to the USFWS online Alaska Bald Eagle Nest Atlas (http://164.159.151.40/private/alaskabaldeagles/viewer.htm) no bald eagle nests were identified in the project area.

National Wildlife Refuges: A review of the USFWS website indicated that there are no national wildlife refuges with the project area (http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/map.htm).

National Parks, Preserves, Monuments, and Wild and Scenic Rivers: The project area is not located within any national parks, preserves, or monuments. Therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources. There are no wild and scenic rivers in the project vicinity.
ATTACHMENT B - AGENCY-SPECIFIC SCOPING QUESTIONS

ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the ADEC Contaminated Sites, Spills and LUST program databases and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Appendix A. If you know of any other confirmed or suspected contaminated sites, spills and any registered underground or above-ground fuel storage tanks that may affect or be affected by the proposed project please provide that information.

2. Identify any water quality concerns.

3. Provide information and/or data on existing (permitted or unpermitted) solid waste landfills, dumps, discharges, or sewage lagoons in the project area.

4. Provide information and/or data on existing drinking water supplies in the project area.

5. Provide information and/or data on existing drinking water supplies.

6. Identify any air quality concerns.

7. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.

---

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the ADF&G’s *An Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important to the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes* and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you have any other information and/or data on anadromous or resident fish streams in the vicinity of the proposed project, including spawning/rearing habitat and migration corridors please provide us that information.

2. Identify any fish species within the project boundaries that may be used for subsistence.

3. We have researched the ADF&G *State of Alaska Refuges, Critical Habitat Areas and Sanctuaries* and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If these special areas exist in the project vicinity, would the normal activities of these areas be affected by the proposed project?

4. Provide information on wildlife other than fish in the vicinity of the proposed project.

5. Would the project affect wildlife migration corridors or bisect/segment wildlife habitat?

6. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.
**ADNR, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues you might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. State Parks - We have researched the ADNR DPOR Catalog of the Alaska State Park System for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other existing or proposed State Parks in the vicinity of the project, and can identify any Park objectives or activities that may conflict with the proposed project please provide that information.

**ADNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues you might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. Land Use Plans - We have researched the ADNR Land Use Plan for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other existing and/or proposed land use plans and can identify any land use objectives that may conflict with the proposed project please provide that information.

2. Permits - Identify any permits or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.

**ADNR, Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, SHPO**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues you might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS) for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other confirmed or potential archaeological, historical, and/or cultural sites in the vicinity of the proposed project please provide that information.

**City or Borough**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues the city or Borough might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. Identify any existing and/or proposed zoning requirements and/or land use controls in the project area. If permits are required, please identify which ones.

2. Identify any other local improvement project(s) under construction or proposed in the vicinity of the project within the foreseeable future.

3. Describe existing recreational use of the portion of the Tanana River Levee within the project corridor.

4. Does the community support the proposed project?
**Bureau of Land Management**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the BLM website with respect to BLM Recreation Areas for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you have any other information and/or data on Recreation Areas or Native Allotments in the project area that might potentially be affected by the proposal, please provide that information.

---

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. Identify any sole source or principal drinking water sources that may be affected by the proposed project.

2. We have researched the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Contaminated Sites, Spills and LUST program databases and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other confirmed or suspected contaminated sites, spills and any registered underground or above ground fuel storage tanks that may affect or be affected by the proposed project please provide that information.

3. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.

---

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Maps for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other information and/or data with respect to the base floodplains, regulatory floodways, and/or special flood hazard areas of drainages that may be affected by the proposed project, please provide that information.

2. Are there any navigable waters of the U.S. in the project vicinity over which the COE has Section 10 authority?

3. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.

---

**U.S. Coast Guard**

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. Are there any navigable waters of the U.S. in the project vicinity over which the USCG has authority?

2. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.
In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the USFWS website with respect to known threatened and/or endangered species and their habitat for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you have any other information and/or data on threatened and/or endangered species in the project area that might potentially be affected by the proposal please provide that information.

2. We have researched the USFWS website with respect to identifying National Wildlife Refuge lands in or adjacent to the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other existing or proposed refuge lands in the vicinity of the project, and can identify any refuge objectives or activities that may conflict with the proposed project please provide that information.

3. We have researched the USFWS National Wetland Inventory Maps with respect to identifying wetlands in or adjacent to the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other wetlands that may be impacted by the project, please provide that information.

4. Provide information or data on important fish and wildlife habitats or migration corridors potentially affected by the proposal.

5. Provide information on known active or inactive eagle nests in the project area.

6. Identify any permits and or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the project.

In addition to identifying any concerns and/or issues your agency might have with the proposed project, the following information is requested:

1. We have researched the NMFS website with respect to known threatened and/or endangered species and their habitat for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you have any other information and/or data on threatened and/or endangered species in the project area that might potentially be affected by the proposal please provide that information.

2. We have researched the NMFS website to determine if essential fish habitat (EFH) pursuant to the Magnuson Act will be impacted by the proposed project and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you have any other information and/or data on EFH species or habitat, please provide that information.
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<td>Engineering Operations Team</td>
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<td>Haugh</td>
<td>FHWA, Alaska Division</td>
<td>Statewide Programs Team</td>
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<td>Doug</td>
<td>Limpinsel</td>
<td>National Marine Fisheries Service</td>
<td>Western AK Field Office</td>
<td>222 West 7th Ave.</td>
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<td>Jim</td>
<td>Helfinstine</td>
<td>U.S. Coast Guard</td>
<td>Bridge Administration</td>
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<td>Mike</td>
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<td>Public Works</td>
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<td>Christy</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Deborah</td>
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<td>US Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
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<td>11 12th Ave / Room 110</td>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
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Good afternoon all,

This is a reminder that the Alaska Railroad Corporation is holding a scoping meeting for the proposed North Pole Road / Rail Crossing Reduction project on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., at the North Pole Hotel, in North Pole, Alaska.

For those of you who have expressed interest in attending the meeting remotely we have set up a WebEx so that you will be able to view the presentation as well as a teleconference line so that you can participate in the discussion. If you do not have access to a desktop computer to log into the WebEx but would like a PDF of the presentation to reference during the meeting please let me know and I will email a copy of it to you.

To access the teleconference please dial:

**Toll-free: 866-866-2244**
**International: 404-260-1415**

When prompted enter the following code:

**6071265#**

**To access the WebEx via your desktop computer:**

Go to meetdowlhk.com

Type in the following username and password

**Username:** webex@dowlhk.com

**Password:** Arrc123

Best regards,

Heather A. Campfield
Environmental Specialist
1133.60432.01

DOWL HKM
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Your input is important to the Alaska Railroad as we pursue an environmental assessment of options to reduce road/rail at-grade crossings along the rail through North Pole. Please write legibly (printing is appreciated). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

COMMENT DEADLINE: February 28, 2011

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Your Comments:

The Alaska Railroad welcomes your input. Please send your written comments:

Capital Projects - Public Comment
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

public_comment@akrr.com

ARRC’s TTY/TTD 265-2620
or voice 265-2494
Alaska Relay TTY 800-770-8973 or
voice 1-800-770-8255

Fax (907) 265-2365
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# APPENDIX E

## Agency Comments Received

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<th>Person</th>
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<td>Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation</td>
<td>Bill Smyth</td>
<td>January 28, 2011</td>
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<td>Alaska Department of Fish and Game</td>
<td>Robert McLean</td>
<td>February 24, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of North Pole</td>
<td>Mayor Douglas Isaacson</td>
<td>February 28, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairbanks North Star Borough</td>
<td>Jeffery Jacobson</td>
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<td>United States Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Colonel Reinhard Koenig</td>
<td>January 27, 2011</td>
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<td>United States Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Heather McBride</td>
<td>January 31, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States Army Garrison, Fort Wainwright, Alaska</td>
<td>Michael Meeks</td>
<td>February 24, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States Fish and Wildlife Service</td>
<td>Jewel Bennett</td>
<td>February 25, 2011</td>
<td>23</td>
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</table>
Janice,  

The only thing that I didn't see mentioned was a Storm Water Pollution Plan (SWPP). At some point, as design and construction gets closer, they'll need to have a SWPP. The person who would review this plan would be Greg Drzewieki in Anchorage.

Bill

I attended a scoping meeting for the railroad plans to relocate their tracks around North Pole. The railroad is asking for agency comments by the end of February, with specific questions listed in Attachment B of this document.

I am forwarding this to you because it appears the railroad has not contacted anyone other than CS and Air. If you have any questions about what was discussed at the scoping meeting, let me know.
February 24, 2010

Ms. Barbara C. Hotchkin, Manager
Project Permits and NEPA
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

Dear Ms. Hotchkin:

Re: ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project Scoping Comments

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Habitat has reviewed your December 21, 2010 NEPA scoping packet for the proposed North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project, which included agency-specific scoping questions and a request for comments. In addition, we attended the January 26, 2011 agency scoping meeting. During the review, Habitat consulted with the ADF&G divisions of Commercial Fisheries, Sport Fish, Subsistence, and Wildlife Conservation.

This project would relocate approximately eight miles of rail line (Eielson Branch G12 to G20) between MP 352.5 of the Richardson Highway and the Moose Creek Flood Control Project floodway. The current alignment follows the Richardson Highway and the Old Richardson Highway through the City of North Pole, while the new alignment would follow the Tanana River Levee southwest of the city core. A new grade separated crossing would be constructed at the Richardson Highway.

GENERAL COMMENTS

In general, ADF&G has few fish or wildlife concerns with the proposed project. To minimize project effects on fish habitat and riparian areas important for wildlife, we recommend that no activity take place riverward of the toe of the existing levee. It is also important that public access to these areas be maintained.

During construction of the Moose Creek Dam flood control project and the Tanana River levee, numerous historic side channels and sloughs were isolated or drained, and a series of seepage channels constructed to drain groundwater from behind the levee. As a result, there are no identified fish bearing water bodies that would be crossed by the project as currently proposed.
The potential for alteration of moose habitat and increased moose strike along the realigned railroad alignment is of some concern to ADF&G, particularly if the track speed limit is significantly increased. We are interested in working cooperatively with ARRC to address this concern as the plans for this project move forward.

ADF&G has a strong interest in both maintaining viable fish and wildlife populations and assuring the ability of the public to access those resources for both consumptive and nonconsumptive purposes. Based on the comments and concerns presented by the City of North Pole and the Fairbanks North Star Borough during the agency scoping meeting, ADF&G will defer to those entities for public access issues along and across the project.

RESPONSES TO ARRC SCOPING QUESTIONS

1. Anadromous and Resident Fish – The Tanana River (Stream No. 334-40-11000-2490) has been specified important for the spawning, rearing, or migration of anadromous fishes (“cataloged”) under AS 16.05.871. Chinook, chum, and coho salmon use the main, side, and high water channels of the Tanana River in the project area. In addition, a number of other species make use of the same waters, including Arctic grayling, burbot, northern pike, lake chub, longnose suckers, slimy sculpin, and round, humpback, and broad whitefish.

A number of historic sloughs and channels in the project area were altered during construction of the Moose Creek Dam flood control project and associated Tanana River levee. Several seepage channels were also constructed that ultimately connect to the cataloged waters of the Chena River. Because the channels are typically ephemeral and maintained as industrial drains rather than functional waterways, the only fish use that has been documented is generally low densities of juvenile resident fish species.

2. Subsistence Resources – The project area lies within the Fairbanks Nonsubsistence Use Area as designated by the Joint Board of Fisheries and Game. This is based on a finding that dependence upon subsistence (customary and traditional uses of fish and wildlife) is not a principal characteristic of the area’s economy, culture, and way of life (AS 16.05.258(c)). A wide variety of resident and anadromous fish, bird, and mammal species are harvested by area residents under personal use and sport regulations, and trapping remains an active pursuit in the greater Fairbanks area. We encourage consultation with Tanana Chiefs Conference, Inc. during preparation of project NEPA documents.

3. Special Areas – There are no legislatively-designated special areas managed by ADF&G (refuges, critical habitat areas, or sanctuaries) within or abutting the project area. The nearest special area is Creamer’s Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks, located approximately 14 miles northwest of the project area.

4. Wildlife Resources – A wide range of wildlife species use the project area at least seasonally. Mammals include shrews, coyote, red fox, wolf, weasels, black and brown bears, moose, red and northern flying squirrels, beaver, voles, porcupine, and snowshoe hare. Birds include resident (such as common raven, black-capped and boreal chickadees, redpolls, and downy woodpeckers) and migratory species (such as warblers, American robins, sparrows, owls, ducks, and swans) as well as raptors of various sizes (such as sharp-shinned hawk and bald eagle).
5. **Wildlife Habitat** – Project effects on migratory travels between uplands and the Tanana River floodplain would likely be similar to those of the existing rail line since the project would generally parallel that route. However, there may be an increased risk for moose-train collisions because of increased train speed, greater surrounding vegetation, and a less urban setting. With Alternative D, or some other riverward alternative, there would be a higher risk of the project affecting or interacting with migratory or daily movements of wildlife along the floodplain and riparian corridor of the Tanana River.

6. **Permits and Authorizations** – Any work that might occur within the limits of ordinary high water on the riverward side of the levee would likely require a Fish Habitat (Title 16) Permit from ADF&G.

These are rather general responses to each question provided by ARRC. ADF&G is able to provide additional information on each topic if requested.

Any questions or concerns about this permit may be directed to Habitat Biologist Jim Durst at 907-459-7254 or emailed to james.durst@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert F. “Mac” McLean  
Regional Supervisor

ecc: Tim Pilon, ADEC Water, Fairbanks  
    Al Ott, ADF&G HD, Fairbanks  
    Bonnie Borba, ADF&G CF, Fairbanks  
    Jeff Estensen, AD&G CF, Fairbanks  
    Audra Brase, ADF&G SF, Fairbanks  
    Marla Carter, ADF&G SF, Anchorage  
    Jim Simon, ADF&G SUBS, Fairbanks  
    Don Young, ADF&G WC, Fairbanks  
    Chris Milles, ADNR DMLW, Fairbanks  
    Christy Everett, COE, Fairbanks  
    NOAA Fisheries, Anchorage  
    Jewel Bennett, USFWS, Fairbanks  
    Bernardo Hernandez, Fairbanks North Star Borough  
    Doug Isaacson, City of North Pole  
    Greg Lotakis, ARRC, Anchorage  
    Kristen Hansen, DOWL HKM, Anchorage

RFM/jdd
Mayor Isaacson -

Thank you for providing input on the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project. This email acknowledges receipt of your written comments and the City of North Pole resolution which were transmitted via email on February 28, 2011. Your comments and resolution will be incorporated into the project's Environmental Assessment (EA), which will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Input early in the process is very helpful to project team members who will be analyzing alternatives from environmental, engineering, social and economic perspectives.

Sincerely,

- Stephenie Wheeler

Stephenie Wheeler
Corporate Communications Officer
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK  99510-7500
Physical: 327 W. Ship Creek Avenue
(907) 265-2671 (office)
(907) 382-3327 (cell)
wheelers@akrr.com
2. Both of the resolutions have requested appropriations: Resolution 08-02 requested $1 million for the environmental assessment for Phase 1 (the North Pole realignment section); Resolution 09-31 requested $50 million in FHWA funds for the same section for construction.

3. We believe the Project should be given Independent Utility status in that it can be accomplished irrespective of the realignment of any other section of railroad track, contributing significantly to reducing at-grade crossings in the North Pole community, ensuring greater public safety and lessening the risk of a catastrophic event (see Resolution 09-31).

4. The removing of the physical track from the heart of the city to past 10 mile (approximately where K&K Recycling is located) is essential to ensuring that dangerous intersections can become regulated (Resolution 09-31) and for opening hundreds of acres to development that is currently restricted to private investment because development would create more at grade crossings.

5. The Project will enhance the operations of the railroad because
   a. the trains will be allowed to travel faster, a benefit to moving products from Flint Hills North Pole Refinery and products to and from Eielson; and
   b. other industrial users will be able to directly access the new rail, e.g. Petro Star North Pole Refinery; and
   c. future troop movements will be expedited to the Tanana River Crossing and the Delta, AK area upon completion of the Northern Extension Project; and
   d. public safety concerns will be reduced.

6. The Project will build a new grade-separated crossing, replacing the dangerous “Peridot” crossing on the Richardson Highway, a four lane federally funded highway, vastly improving the safety of vehicular traffic and the railroad.

As Mayor of the City of North Pole, I urge the completion of this project in the most expeditious manner, using the project alternative that best protects people and their access to the Tanana River, the environment, and the railroad, which will probably be either Alternative A or C. For further information, I can be reached at email: mayor@northpolealaska.com or phone: 907-488-8584. Thank you.

Douglas W. Isaacson, Mayor
City of North Pole
125 Snowman Lane
North Pole, Alaska 99705
Ph: 907-488-8584
Cell: 907-322-3133
Fx: 907-488-3002
www.northpolealaska.com

North Pole, Alaska: “Where the Spirit of Christmas Lives Year Round”
February 24, 2011

Greg Lotakis, Project Manager  
Alaska Railroad Corporation  
P.O. Box 107500  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

RE: North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

Dear Mr. Lotakis:

Thank you for your informative presentation on January 26, 2011 at the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Scoping Meeting. The Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) has supported this project through as early as 2001 and most recently through Resolution 2007-36. The primary basis of our support is the improved safety that relocation would bring to the motoring community, especially our school children. We are pleased that the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is proceeding with an Environmental Assessment, where the major issues will be identified and analyzed.

FNSB is both the owner/operator of the Tanana River Levee and the municipal government tasked with the exercise of certain police power responsibilities associated with zoning and platting. The Department of Community Planning is responsible for planning efforts and zoning enforcement. The Department of Parks and Recreation is responsible for implementing and overseeing established FNSB trails and recreational facilities. The Department of Public Works operates and maintains the levee structure, drainage channels, and groins. The Land Management Department is responsible for protecting the land title interests associated with the levee facility. The following comments reflect all these departments’ interests and are grouped by subject.

**FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan**

This plan is a policy document adopted by the FNSB Assembly in September 2005. The Plan is supportive of this type of project. Strategy 5 of Goal 1 of the Transportation and Infrastructure Chapter states: Encourage a reroute of the railroad to reduce the number of at-grade railroad crossings; create separate grade crossings for the remainder, when possible.

**North Pole Land Use Plan**

This plan is a land use plan for the City of North Pole that was adopted by the FNSB Assembly in January 2010. The land use plan is also supportive of the project. Under “Implementation Strategies” the plan states:

- *Support Alaska Railroad Rail Line Relocation*
- *Provide 200-foot corridor along the Tanana River Levee for rail line relocation through North Pole.*
- *Encourage reversionary land title transfers as per the 1983 Alaska Railroad Transfer Act.*

The plan also states: Establish off-highway vehicle land use area to be located southwest of the Tanana River Levee/200-foot railroad realignment corridor, to extend north to 9 mile. This off-highway vehicle use area is shown on the land use map designating “Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities Parks and Trails” and public access across the proposed railroad realignment should be provided. In addition, the plan indicates a potential location for a railroad depot for the City of North Pole. This location is shown on the land use map designating “Transportation Facilities.”
Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan
Located within the proposed ARRC project area is the Flood Control Levee Trail. This multi-use, motorized public recreational trail is part of the FNSB Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan and was adopted by FNSB Assembly Ordinance No. 95-025. It is an established portion of the proposed 100-Mile Loop Trail and receives substantial year-around public use. The general public accesses both the trail and the off-highway use area from the end of Homestead Drive at a section line easement located near North Pole High School.

The trail must remain within the levee corridor and public access across the proposed railroad should be provided for the continued recreational use by city residents and the general public. FNSB recommends a grade-separated crossing for the Flood Control Levee Trail at the Richardson Highway 9-mile crossing. At a minimum, an at-grade crossing should be provided for the trail as part of the proposed railroad realignment.

Title 15, Fairbanks North Star Borough Floodplain Ordinance
The FNSB Floodplain Ordinance was recently amended in April 2010. There are several areas along the proposed railroad realignment that are located within the Special Flood Hazard area according to the Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Per your handout regarding the realignment, it appears that special flood hazard areas will be impacted. Therefore a Floodplain Permit is required.

In addition, our Ordinance states: No person may excavate or remove any material from lands within 250 feet of the centerline of the Tanana Levee structure; except, that excavation and removal for the purpose of constructing foundations for buildings or other structures upon the excavation is permitted. Such excavation shall be backfilled to original ground elevation within 90 days from the date extraction began.

Please consult our Floodplain Administrator, Mr. Doug Sims, at (907) 459-1263 for further information on permitting and excavation activities.

Tanana River Levee Structure
The Tanana River Levee structure is a zoned earthen embankment with a core of semi-pervious silty gravels, an outer shell of sandy gravel, and a drainage blanket of select gravel which extends from the core landward fifteen feet beyond the embankment toe. The levee design requires that a 500 foot natural silt blanket be maintained between the levee and the Tanana River and that open excavations be prohibited for 250 feet landward of the centerline of the embankment. The gravel surface on top of the levee embankment is twelve foot in width and accommodates vehicles for levee patrol and maintenance. Public Works is responsible for all levee operations including 24-hour monitoring of the structure during all high water events, flood fighting operations and emergency repairs, routine inspection every 90 days during the open water season, and routine annual maintenance. The proposed railroad realignment would have significant impacts on these responsibilities.

Major Modification – Construction of rail lines on the levee embankment, the drainage blanket or immediately adjacent to any part of the levee structure will likely qualify as a “major modification” to the system. All major modifications must be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) through the office of the Chief of Engineers. To date, FNSB has not undertaken a major modification and we are unfamiliar with the process but believe that it will require a significant amount of analyses and time. We recommend that ARRC contact the USACE for more information on this process. Modifications, major or minor, made to the levee structure without consent by the USACE may jeopardize our recent levee certification. This certification is a requirement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency when a levee is shown on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps as providing protection against the one percent annual chance flood. If the USACE were to pull their certification, FNSB’s maps could be revised to show extensive increases in special flood hazard areas, which would have a significant monetary impact on the residents of the Borough. FNSB could not support a railroad realignment project that did not have USACE approval.

Structural Integrity - The levee structure was not designed nor has FNSB or the USACE analyzed it to see if it can support live train loads. It may or may not be able to support rail traffic and still maintain an adequate factor of safety for stability. FNSB recommends that the ARRC obtain appropriate construction method and material
data including the recent analyses conducted for certification and use the information to complete a structural analysis. An understanding of the full impact of rail traffic loading on the levee’s structural integrity is required before FNSB can support the railroad realignment project as presented.

Access Points – As noted above, Public Works is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the levee. Without complete open access to the top, sides, and toe of the levee embankment, the drainage blanket on the landward side of the levee, and the first fifteen feet of silt blanket on the riverward side of the levee, we cannot fully meet our obligation to the USACE. ARRC has noted that five access points have been identified for crossing the proposed alignment. These points may or may not be suitable for all required levee operations. Public Works will need to review our access needs in more detail as the final project alternative is designed.

Ownership Interests
FNSB’s ownership interests in the levee, drainage channels and groins arise from a combination of five simple title and Federal and State Permits. In addition to the levee and drainage channel right-of-ways and groins, FNSB owns a considerable amount of land on the riverward side of the levee for which we have management responsibility. Parks and Recreation manages the Tamas Lakes Facility and Public Works manages the Landfill Gravel Excavation Project. The five access points mentioned by the ARRC have to be evaluated for their relevance for these facilities and obligations. Assuming the ARRC wants a limited access easement similar to the one granted by the federal government, crossing points and use of the existing maintenance road become very important.

How our interests, or a portion of them, might be conveyed or assigned to the ARRC would have to be addressed with the granting agencies, approved by the FNSB Assembly, and likely reviewed by the USACE in some fashion. It is entirely possible that depending upon alignment, additional acquisition of privately held as well as other agency land north of the levee would be required. It is important to develop accurate ownership maps so that acquisition can be taken into project planning considerations. FNSB has provided its ownership information to the ARRC in the past and if more is needed our files are available for review.

Survey and Topographic Data
You are probably aware that in 2009 the USACE hired Dowl Engineers, Inc., to complete a centerline survey and cross section of the levee and drainage channels. Since that time FNSB has been surveying its property interests along the levee and channels. Both the Dowl Survey and our survey data are available for your use.

Through the CC list at the end of this letter we are identifying some of the individuals and agencies with whom FNSB has worked in association with the levee over the years. We are providing them as a courtesy, as I am sure that there are many more that will be identified through the Environmental Assessment public notice process.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey James Jacobson, Chief of Staff

Cc
Scott Johnson, Director, Department of Public Works
Bernardo Hernandez, Director, Department of Community Planning
Paul Cossello, Director, Department of Land Management
Michael Cox, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Jennifer Schmeker, PE, Department of Public Works
David M. Ratte, FEMA Mitigation Division, Department of Homeland Security, Region X
Marcus D. Palmer, PE, Geotechnical Engineer, USACE
Patrick S. Oiplon, PE, Levee Safety Officer, USACE
Allen B. Cavallino, State Public Assistance Officer, Department of Military and Veterans affairs
Christl Everett, Field Office Manager, Regulatory Division, USACE

Appendix E - Page 9
Alaska Railroad Corporation  
ATTN: Barbara Hotchkin  
P. O. BOX 107500  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

Dear Ms. Hotchkin,

This letter is in response to your letter of December 21, 2010 which requested responses to scoping questions regarding your North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project. Input regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory permitting functions will be provided separately. We are providing these written comments in case we are unable to participate in the scoping meeting on 26 January 2011.

You asked three specific scoping questions in Attachment B to your letter. This letter provides input on Questions 1 and 3 and will also identify additional concerns we have, that are not related to regulatory functions. We will be submitting a separate letter addressing the regulatory issues in questions two and three and any other related regulatory concerns.

Scoping question one is about flood mapping and similar information. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District has no flood mapping more recent than what can be obtained from FEMA. We recently certified the Tanana River Levee for the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and all of the data and analysis from that work has been transferred to the borough. The Fairbanks North Star Borough has recently been updating flood mapping in conjunction with FEMA, but the Corps is not involved in that effort.

Your third question relates to permits and/or clearances required from the Corps. Again this letter does not address the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory function permitting requirements. However, the Tanana River Levee is a Federal Project primarily owned and operated by the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) under agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Alaska District. Your proposed project is a modification to this Federal Project, as defined by 33 CFR 208.10 and/or 33 USC 408. Altering the levee in order to place a railroad embankment on the crown of the levee, on the stability berm, or within the right-of-way of the levee would constitute a modification. It is incumbent upon the Alaska Railroad Corporation to evaluate this concern and obtain approval at the appropriate level. A major modification requires approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Chief of Engineers, Washington, DC. I have attached, for your use, a copy of the Section 408 Submittal Package Guide for modifications requiring approval under 33 USC 408.
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is concerned about the integrity of the Federal Project. Ongoing operation of the levee requires that the levee operator (FNSB) have continual access for inspection, maintenance, flood fighting, major repairs, and obtaining data. Changes in access, property ownership, maintenance responsibility, etc. that affect the Federal Project should be based on a plan developed by and between the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Alaska Railroad Corporation. This plan should cover the entire scope of the proposed work that impacts the Federal Project.

We look forward to further dialogue on your proposal to relocate your North Pole rail lines. If you have any questions or concerns about this letter, please contact Mr. Stephen C. Boardman, Chief, Civil Project Management Branch at (907)753-5799.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Reinhard W. Koenig
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

Encl.
Section 408 Submittal Package Guide

This guide is intended to ensure a complete submittal, aid the review process and serve as a guide for sponsors/applicants requesting approval of significant modifications or alterations to a locally or federally maintained Corps project requiring Chief of Engineers approval under 33 USC 408. Incomplete submittals will delay processing of applicant requests. This information will be submitted to the MSC for quality assurance review prior to making any recommendations to HQUSACE.

Applicant (Normally the Non-Federal Sponsor) Prepared Documents

1. Written request for approval of the project modification
   - A detailed description of the proposed modification
   - The purpose/need for the modification
   - An appropriate map or drawing

2. Technical Analysis and Adequacy of Design. All necessary technical analysis should be provided. The list below is only a guide for typical items that would routinely be expected and is not intended to list every item that could be needed to make this determination.
   - Geotechnical Evaluation.
     - Stability
     - Under seepage
     - Erosion Control
     - Vegetation
     - Material usage/borrow/waste/transport/hauling
   - Structural
     - Bridges and related abutments
     - Pier penetrations of levee embankments
     - Diaphragm walls
     - Other structural components integral to the project
     - Gates or other operable features
   - Hydraulic and Hydrology
     - Changes in inflow
     - Changes in water surface profiles and flow distribution
     - Assessment of local and system wide resultant impacts
     - Upstream and downstream impacts of the proposed alterations, including sediment transport analysis as needed
     - Impacts to existing floodplain management
• Operation and Maintenance Requirements
  o Applicant facilities
    - Pre flood preparation
    - Post flood clean up
    - Sediment removal
  o Water control management plan
    - Impacts to other Federal projects within the basin
    - Corps facilities

3. Real Estate Analysis
  o Reference ER 405-1-12, Chapter 12, Sections I and II.
  o Include:
    - Description of all Lands, Easements and Rights of Way required for the modification, including proposed estates
    - Description of all Lands, Easements and Rights of Way owned as a part of the authorized project
    - Maps clearly depicting both required real estate and existing real estate limits
    - Navigational servitude, facility relocations, relocation housing assistance and any other relevant factors

4. Discussion of Residual Risk. Discuss the changes to the existing level of risk to life, property as a result of the modification. Will the project incur damages more frequently as a result of flooding that will require Federal assistance under PL 84-997? Risk analysis will be used as the method for communicating residual risk.

5. Administrative record for key decisions for related actions for applicants proposed modification such as environmental reports, judges’ decisions, permits, etc.

6. Discussion of Executive Order 11988 Considerations
  • Justification to construct in the floodplain
  • No practicable alternative determination, if Federal agency, Agency determination.

Public Notice Notifications

7. Environmental Protection Compliance. All 408 actions must be in full compliance with all applicable Public laws, executive orders, rules and regulations, treaties, and other policy statements of the Federal government and all plans and constitutions, laws, directives, resolutions, gubernatorial directives, and other policy statements of States with jurisdiction in the planning area. Examples are State water and air quality regulations; State historic preservation plans; State lists of rare, threatened, or endangered species; and State comprehensive fish and wildlife management plans. The District must maintain full documentation of compliance as part of the administrative record. The submittal package provided to HQUSACE will document considerations with significant bearing on decisions regarding the 408 request. Typically the minimum submission will include the following:

• National Environmental Policy Act. The appropriate NEPA process will be determined by the district in consultation with agencies that regulate resources that may be affected by the proposed action. All resources listed in Section 122 of the Rivers and Harbors Act 1970 must be considered. The evaluation will include a description and analysis of project alternatives, the
significance of the effects of each alternative on significant resources. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of all reasonably foreseeable actions including the actions of others and natural succession must be considered and documented. A risk analysis must be completed to determine the significance of risks to human life & safety, and property. Mitigation plans must be well described. If Federal funds are or may be involved the mitigation plan must be incrementally justified. NEPA documents will be consistent with 33 CFR 230.

- **Endangered Species Act.** Coordination/consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and/or NOAA Marine Fisheries Service must be complete. Each agency with jurisdiction over a species that may be affected by the proposed action must provide a letter/memo indicating completion of ESA coordination. This documentation may range from a memo saying no ESA protected species or habitats are in the project impact area through a Biological Opinion.

- **Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.** Either a Final FWCA Report or a letter from the USFWS stating that a FWCA Report is not required must be included.

- **Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act.** For projects involving ocean disposal, or dredged material disposal within the territorial seas, the discharge will be evaluated under Section 103 of the MPRSA. The disposal must meet the criteria established by the EPA (40 C.F.R. 227 and 228). The submittal will document that that materials to be discharged are consistent with the current criteria and the disposal site is suitable.

- **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.** The submittal will document efforts to identify designated rivers or river reaches (including potential rivers) in the vicinity of the project, and describe follow-up coordination with the agency having management responsibility for the particular river. If a designated river reach is affected, a letter indicating completed coordination is required from the managing agency.

- **Coastal Zone Management Act.** If the proposed action is in a coastal zone documentation of a "determination of consistency" with the state coastal zone management program the appropriate State agency (16 U.S.C 1456) must be included.

- **Clean Air Act.** This is a two-part compliance process. First, the submittal must include a determination that the proposed action is consistent with the Implementation Plan of the affected jurisdiction(s), and concurrence of the appropriate regulatory agency, or a conditional permit. Second, the submittal must include a letter from the USEPA that they have reviewed and commented on the environmental impact evaluations including the NEPA documents.

- **HTRW.** HTRW includes but is not limited to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act. The submittal package must include documentation that the USEPA and appropriate State and Tribal agencies with jurisdiction or expertise have been given reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed action and that their input has been fully considered. The Corps will not incur additional liability related to HTRW.

- **National Historic Preservation Act.** This includes all other applicable historic and cultural protection statutes. The submittal package will include documentation that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and appropriate State and Tribal agencies with jurisdiction or expertise have been given a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed action and that their input
has been fully considered. It is not expected that actual mitigation will be completed but appropriate letters indicating completed Consultation determination of significance must be provided.

- Noise Control Act. Documentation of the significance of noise likely to be generated during construction of the proposed project and the noise that may result due to implementation must be provided. If significant noise may result, a noise mitigation plan must be provided.

District Prepared Documents and Analysis of Applicants Request to be submitted to MSC

1. Transmittal letter to MSC Commander with district’s determination of technical soundness and environmental acceptability.

a. A physical and functional description of the existing project
   1. Name of authorized project
   2. Authorizing document
   3. Law/Section/Date of project authorization
   4. Law Sections/Dates of any post-authorization modifications
   5. Non-Federal sponsor
   6. Congressional Interests (Senator(s), Representative(s) and District(s))

b. Project Documents:
   1. Type of Decision Document:
   2. Agency Technical Review (ATR) approval Date
   3. Independent External Peer Review (IEPR) approval date

c. Policy, Legal and Technical Analysis:
   1. Is the original project authority adequate to complete the project as proposed?
   2. Has the District Counsel reviewed and approved the decision document for legal sufficiency?
   3. Have all aspects of ATR been completed with no unresolved issues remaining?
   4. Have the District Commander documented policy/legal/technical compliance of the decision document?

d. Written request for approval of the project modification (applicant prepared)

   1. A detailed description of the proposed modification
   2. The purpose/need/rationale for the modification

e. A description of any related, ongoing Corps studies and studies by others within the watershed

f. A description and listing of other Corps projects, ongoing and completed, in the watershed

g. A description of any projected/anticipated credit (section 215/104, etc.) for project modification work and date credit agreement(s) signed

h. Sponsor letter of understanding of their responsibility to perform all required OMRR&R for project modifications. For approved alterations/modifications, the non-Federal sponsor shall revise/update the
O&M Manual to reflect the non-Federal O&M responsibilities and the O&M Manual shall be approved by the District Engineer.

i. Real Estate Analysis Review (District/Division)

j. Agency Technical Review (ATR), ER 1110-1-12 para. 3-8. (District coordinates review)
Provision a description of the technical review team, consolidate and analyze their comments, resolution of comments and district commentary on adequacy of technical support and submit to MSC. This is the section 408 technical analysis. Prior coordination with MSC is required to determine ATR requirements for each submittal. New Quality Management ER under review will require all Agency Technical Review (ATR), formerly ITR.

2. If there is an associated Section 404/10 permit action, the required public interest and technical evaluations under 33 USC 408 can be done concurrently with that action. Upon completion of the public interest determination and of the technical analyses regarding the impact of the proposed modification on the usefulness of the project, the District Engineer will make a recommendation (with supporting documentation) through the Division Commander to the Chief of Engineers (Attn: Appropriate RIT) for his consideration and approval under 33 USC 408. The District Engineer will make the final Section 404/10 permit decisions following the Chief of Engineers decision under 33 USC 408.

- Where the 408 action requires an EIS and the Corps is the Lead Agency the District will draft the ROD, but it will not be signed until the Corps has completed its 408 analysis and the Chief of Engineer’s has issued 408 approval. The Corps’ ROD and the 408 request will be processed as concurrently as possible to reduce the delay between the 408 decision and ROD. Since the 408 approval requires the highest level of approval, the ROD will be signed in HQUSACE. After the 408 request is approved and the ROD is signed, the district may issue any needed Section 404/10 permits.

- Where the 408 action requires an EA and FONSI, the Corps is the lead Federal agency the District will prepare the EA and the District Engineer will draft the FONSI analyzing the 408 request and any other Corps action, and submit it to the Chief of Engineers for review and approval. After the 408 authorization is signed by the Chief of Engineers the District Engineer may sign the FONSI and issue any needed Section 404/10 permits

3. Coordination of Section 404/10 and NEPA compliance with 408 requests When Other Agencies are Involved

- HQUSACE has determined that the EIS for projects led by another Federal agency and including a component requiring Corps 408 authorization will require two RODs. The Lead Agency under NEPA will prepare a ROD for the overall project. The Corps would be a Cooperating Agency and thus be allowed to adopt the Lead Agency’s EIS. The second ROD, will be specific to the Corps’ actions, including the 408 approval and/or Section 404/10 permits. The District will draft the ROD, but it will not be signed until the Corps has completed its 408 analysis and the Chief of Engineer’s has issued 408 approval. The Corps’ ROD and the 408 request will be processed as concurrently as possible to reduce the delay between the 408 decision and ROD. Since the 408 approval requires the highest level of approval, the ROD will be signed in HQUSACE. After the 408 request is approved and the ROD is signed, the district may issue any needed Section 404/10 permits.
MSC prepared documentation and analysis of District submission

Policy and Legal Compliance Review

1. Has the MSC certified the legal/policy/technical and quality management of the decision document?
2. MSC Legal certification approval date
3. MSC certification of policy compliance date
January 31, 2011

Regulatory Division
POA-2011-56

Alaska Railroad Corporation
Ms. Barbara C. Hotchkin, Manager Project Permits and NEPA
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

Dear Ms. Hotchkin:

This letter is in response to your December 21, 2010 request for a Department of the Army (DA) agency scoping letter for your proposed North Pole Road / Rail Crossing Reduction project. The project is located at the start of Section 2, T. 2 S., R. 1 E. ending at Section 23, T. 2 S., R. 2 E., Fairbanks Meridian, USGS map D-1 & C-1; with a start point at Latitude 64.774556° N., Longitude -147.454195° W. and an end point at Latitude 64.721831° N., Longitude -147.291583° W.; realignment of the tracks between ARRC Mile G12, 9 miles from Fairbanks, (Richardson Highway MP 353), and the Chena River Floodway ARRC Mile G20 at Dyke Rd., in North Pole, Alaska. Your project has been assigned number POA-2011-56, Tanana River, which should be referred to in all correspondence with us.

Based on our review of the information you provided and available to our office the following are our responses to your questions:

1. We have researched the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Maps for the project area and any findings are identified in the scoping letter and/or Attachment A. If you know of any other information and/or data with respect to the base floodplains, regulatory floodways, and/or special flood hazard areas of drainages that may be affected by the proposed project, please provide that information.

We do not have any additional information.

2. Are there any navigable waters of the U.S. in the project vicinity over which the COE has Section 10 authority?

The Tanana River is a navigable water of the United States (U.S.) in the project vicinity but descriptions of the current proposed alternatives do not indicate any impacts to that water.
3. Identify any permits and/or clearances to be obtained from your agency for the proposed project.

We have determined the proposed project area contains waters of the U.S., including wetlands, under the Corps of Engineers' regulatory jurisdiction. A copy of the Approved Jurisdictional Determination form is available at http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg/ApprovedJDs.htm under the above file number.

Based on the description of the proposed alternatives, alternative A would not require additional fill and would therefore not require a permit. However, DA authorization would be required for other proposed alternatives because they require the placement of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands. The Tanana River Levee which is proposed as the location of the rail realignment is part of the Chena River Lakes Flood Control Project, constructed by the Alaska District USACE. Comments will be provided in a separate letter on the engineering and technical aspects of this project as it relates to the flood control project.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act requires that a DA permit be obtained for the placement or discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the U.S., including jurisdictional wetlands (33 U.S.C. 1344). The Corps of Engineers defines wetlands as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions.

Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 requires that a DA permit be obtained for structures or work in or affecting navigable waters of the U.S. (33 U.S.C. 403). Section 10 waters are those waters subject to the ebb and flow of the tide shoreward to the mean high water mark, and/or other waters identified by the Alaska District.

Nothing in this letter excuses you from compliance with other Federal, State, or local statutes, ordinances, or regulations.

You may contact me via email Heather.E.McBride@usace.army.mil, by mail at the address above, or by phone (907) 474-2166, if you have questions. For additional information about our Regulatory Program visit our web site at www.poa.usace.army.mil/reg.

Sincerely,

Heather McBride
Regulatory Specialist (SCEP)
Directorate of Public Works

SUBJECT: North Pole Rail Project Scoping Comments

Barbara Hotchkin
Alaska Railroad Corporation
Manager, Project Permits & NEPA
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

Dear Ms. Hotchkin:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) proposed North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project. The ARRC, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is proposing a road/rail crossing reduction project through the North Pole, Alaska area. The proposal includes construction of a railroad crossing of the Richardson Highway, realignment of the railroad track on or near the Tanana River Levee and removal of existing at-grade crossings. US Army Garrison Fort Wainwright (USAG FWA) is primarily concerned with the proposed action's effect on the Army-owned Dyke Range Impact Area, as well as the potential impact of the Dyke Range area on the proposed rail realignment.

The ARRC requested input on the proposed realignment from USAG FWA during a scoping session in late January 2011. The following discussion outlines USAG FWA's specific concerns with the proposed action and should be taken into consideration during the preparation of the environmental assessment (EA).

- A portion of the Tanana River Levee bisects the Department of the Army-owned Dyke Range Impact Area (see enclosure 1), regarding ownership of the levee and levee easement through Dyke Range Impact Area as necessary to complete the EA, contact Mrs. Kate Siftar, USAG FWA Master Planning Chief (907) 361-3315 or Mr. Thomas Kretzschmar, Real Estate Division Chief, Alaska District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (907) 753-2859.

- For any GIS layers needed to accurately reflect Department of the Army-owned land in the EA, contact Mrs. Kate Siftar, USAG FWA Master Planning Chief (907) 361-3315.

- For additional information on potential conflicts between the ARRC's proposed action and current and future military training at Dyke Range Impact Area for the EA, contact Mr. Doug Houpt, USAG FWA Range Planner (907) 384-7516.

- The proposed action and alternatives should specifically identify the width of area required to accommodate the rail realignment and specifically identify the physical features (i.e., levee, trail, transmission line, etc.) and land ownership within the area.
considered for future acquisition. Impacts to these features and land owners should be discussed within the EA.

- The proposed action and alternatives should identify how the ARRC/FRA intends to acquire the land necessary for rail realignment. The EA should analyze the impact of this action.

- The Dyke Range Impact Area has not been used for training in over 10 years, but is still classified as an active Army military training range. Past use of the Dyke Range Impact Area has included training associated with anti-aircraft artillery firing point, mortars, recoilless rifles and other explosive munitions. This past use has resulted in the likely presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Any work in this area will require a complete survey and investigation by certified UXO technicians.

- If the proposed action were to result in a real estate activity requiring approval by USAG FWA, the Army would be required to conduct its own National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. In order to facilitate this review, USAG FWA would prefer to adopt the ARRC/FRA NEPA documentation associated with this action. USAG FWA would like to request additional coordination with ARRC/FRA on preliminary versions of the EA prior to release of the Draft EA to the public.

- Fair market value must be paid to the Army for any timber resources taken within Department of the Army-owned land.

- The proposed action should take into consideration wildlife populations and habitat within the region of influence and any Clean Water Act Section 404 requirements.

If you have questions concerning this information, please contact Carlton Haenel, Directorate of Public Works, Environmental Engineer at (907) 361-6249 or Carrie McEntee, Directorate of Public Works, NEPA Branch Chief at (907) 361-9507.

Sincerely,

Michael T. Meeks
Director, Directorate of Public Works
Barbara C. Hotchkin  
Manager, Project Permits & NEPA  
Alaska Railroad Corporation  
P.O. Box 107500  
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

Re: ARRC North Pole Road/Rail Crossing  
Reduction Project

Dear Ms. Hotchkin:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the scoping questions specific to the Service for the preliminary engineering and preparation of an Environmental Assessment for a proposed road/rail crossing reduction project through North Pole, Alaska (North Pole Rail project). The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) proposes to reduce the number of crossings on a portion of its Eielson Branch through North Pole by realigning approximately 8 miles of tracks. The tracks between Richardson Highway Mile 9 and the Chena River Floodway would be realigned on or near the Tanana River levee. The existing at-grade crossing of the Richardson Highway would be removed and a new, separated grade crossing would be installed.

Our answers to the agency-specific scoping questions that you listed in your December 21, 2010 letter to us are as follows:

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** We concur there are no threatened or endangered species in the project area, thus the Service does not expect project-related activities to adversely impact listed species. This letter constitutes informal consultation under the Endangered Species Act. Preparation of a Biological Assessment or further consultation regarding this project is not necessary at this time.

**Wildlife Refuges:** We concur that there are no National Wildlife Refuge lands in or adjacent to the project area.

**Impacts to Wetlands, Fish, Wildlife and Other Habitat:** Quantifying temporary, indirect and permanent impacts are not possible at this stage in the planning process, however, we offer the following ways to avoid and minimize potential adverse impacts.

**Wetlands and Riparian Areas:** The National Wetland Inventory indicates that there are wetlands in your project area and that you plan to identify those wetlands. We commend you for the proposed wetlands delineation survey work that you will be conducting in the project area in the spring/summer of 2011. A thorough and accurate wetlands inventory will assist with the permitting process.
Service policy regarding impacts to fish and wildlife habitat includes first avoiding, then minimizing, and finally compensating for the remaining unavoidable impacts. These impacts include direct, indirect and temporal impacts. If there are unavoidable impacts for this project, then the Service recommends compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable impacts by restoring or permanently protecting equal or higher-value wetlands nearby.

Fish: The Tanana River is an important fish habitat that may be affected by the proposed activities. The Tanana River, to the other side of the levee, is an anadromous fish body and is listed in the Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important for the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes (www.gis.sf.adfg.state.ak.us). The Tanana River is important to the migration, spawning, and rearing of anadromous fish, including chum, coho, and Chinook salmon. Sediment and debris that is not properly managed during construction (using proper erosion and sediment control BMP’s) could negatively impact spawning salmon.

Eagles: The Service has information that bald eagle nests have been located in the vicinity of the project area (USFWS unpublished data, see enclosed map). A survey may need to be conducted to determine the location of active nests prior to construction activities. We recommend conducting nest surveys in the spring when the nests are active and more easily identified. Bald and Golden Eagles, as well as their nests, are protected from take, including disturbance.

Permits: Since the proposed construction activities may disturb nesting eagles, we recommend reviewing our eagle permit website (http://alaska.fws.gov/permit/index.htm) and contacting our Regional Office (permitsR7MB@fws.gov or 907-786-3685) if you have questions.

Conclusion: We appreciate this opportunity for early comment. Should you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact Charleen Veach at 907-456-0276 or charleen_veach@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Jewel Bennett
Branch Chief
Conservation Planning Assistance

cc: Robert McLean, ADF&G - Division of Habitat, Fairbanks
    Christy Everett, USACE, Fairbanks
APPENDIX F

Scoping Meeting Presentation
Alaska Railroad Corporation

North Pole Road / Rail Crossing Reduction

Scoping Meeting

January 26, 2011
Presentation Agenda

- Project Background
- Purpose & Need
- Alternatives Under Consideration
- Previous Comments Heard
- EA Process and Timeline

SE View at Rentals St. Crossing
Project Background

- Phase 1 of a larger project
  - Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation (FARLR)

- FARLR drew upon several previous studies that began in 2000

- Recent Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ARRC and FNSB
Role of Previous Studies
The Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation project and its associated phases draw on several previous studies and environmental documentation efforts that began in 2000, with additional environmental studies initiated as recently as 2007.

Funding Legend
- Alaska Railroad
- Department of Defense via the Federal Railroad Administration
- Federal Transit Administration and Alaska Railroad match
- Federal Highway Administration and local/Alaska Railroad match
- No funding identified

2000 - 2001
Fairbanks Bypass Realignment Reconnaissance Study
Funding: Alaska Railroad
Look at feasibility of realigning track south and east of Fairbanks, Ft. Wainwright and North Pole.

2001 - 2002
Fairbanks to North Pole Realignment Phasing Report
Funding: Alaska Railroad
Recommend the realignment be split into two logical phases, each with independent utility.

2006
South Fairbanks Railroad Realignment Study
Funding: FHWA/ARRC
Next step on Phase 2 from the 2002 Phasing Report — Public involvement and planning regarding a realignment around Fairbanks.

2007 - 2008
Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation Alternative Analysis
Previously known as Fairbanks - North Pole Rail Realignment
Funding: FHWA/FTA/ARRC
Public involvement, concept plans and alternative analysis of rail line relocation. Includes a north end public transportation study.

2005 - 2006
Eielson Branch Realignment Environmental Assessment
Funding: DOD/FRA
Phase 1 from 2002 Phasing Report — Analyzes realignment between Fairbanks and North Pole, including Ft. Wainwright (DOD funded).

2007 - 08/On hold
Fort Wainwright Rail Realignment
Funding: DOD/FRA
Fort segment of the Eielson Branch Rail Realignment (EBRR) becomes separate project with independent utility. EBRR funding is funneled to FWRR due to military benefit. FWRR is later put on hold. Funding may transfer to Northern Rail Extension.

2010-2011
North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Environmental Assessment
Funding: FHWA/FRA
FMATS & ADOT/PF transfer funds to pursue Phase 1 — Chena River Floodway to Richardson Hwy MP 9.

Phase 1
Moose Creek to Richardson Hwy MP 9

Phase 2
Richardson Hwy MP 9 to 3-Mile Gate

Phase 3
3-Mile Gate to beyond (N of) Chena River
Project Study Area
Project Purpose and Need

- Enhance public safety in downtown North Pole and
- Improve ARRC’s operating efficiency,

While ensuring continued rail access to existing and potential future ARRC customers.
Existing Road / Rail Crossings
Project Description

- Reduce the number of road / rail crossings (could remove up to 11 crossings).

- Realign approximately 8 miles of railroad track on or near the Tanana River Levee (Levee).

- Remove existing at-grade crossings and construct a new grade-separated crossing at the Richardson Highway.
  - If phased construction, temporary at-grade crossing may be constructed.
Richardson Highway Rail Crossing Area
Project Alternatives

- **No Action Alternative**

- **Alternative A:** Track on Levee (landward).

- **Alternative B:** Track inside Levee.

- **Alternative C:** Inside Levee with rail/trail separation.

- **Alternative D:** Track on Levee (riverward).

- **Alternative E:** Existing alignment; grade-separated.
Project Alternatives

TYPICAL SECTION - ALTERNATIVE A

TYPICAL SECTION - ALTERNATIVE B

TYPICAL SECTION - ALTERNATIVE C
Issues Raised by Agencies During Previous Study

- Minimize impacts related to:
  - Wetlands / water quality
  - Fish and wildlife habitat
  - Current uses and recreation activities along Tanana River

- Consider potential contaminated sites
Public Comments Heard During Previous Study

- Reduce at-grade crossings
- Increased traffic at Flint Hills Refinery is a concern
- Maintain rail service to existing customers
- Plan for future commuter rail / consider a rail-to-trail program
- Minimize impacts related to:
  - Residential properties
  - Businesses (loss of access or decreased property value)
  - Water quality
  - Noise and vibration
  - Visual impacts
- What will be done with existing ARRC right-of-way (ROW) where the tracks will be realigned?
EA Process

We Are Here

Develop
Preliminary Purpose
& Need Statement

Scoping Process

Public
& Agency
Issues
Solicited

Alternatives
Analysis

Identify Issues/
Develop Alternatives

Environmental Analysis/
EA Preparation

30 Day
Review & Comment Period

Public Comment Period &
Public Meetings

“FONSI”
or initiate EIS
Process
# Environmental Assessment Schedule

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Contact Us

Review project materials on our website at: www.alaskarailroad.com

Submit written comments by February 28, 2011 to public_comment@akrr.com, or to:

Greg Lotakis, Project Manager
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500
Phone: 907-265-2217 / Email: Lotakisisg@akrr.com
Fax: 907-265-3961

Contact Barbara Hotchkin on Environmental Issues
Phone: 907-265-2313 / Email: hotchkinb@akrr.com