

## Passenger Services

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) offers year-round inter-city passenger rail transportation with adventure class and premium *GoldStar* service. Summer service is mid-May to mid-September; Winter service is mid-September to mid-May.

### Passenger Trains

- **Coastal Classic** – Daily summer service between Anchorage and Seward
- **Glacier Discovery** – Daily summer service between Anchorage, Whittier and Chugach Forest whistle stops at Spencer Glacier and Grandview
- **Denali Star** – Daily summer service between Anchorage, Talkeetna, Denali and Fairbanks
- **Hurricane Turn** – Unique rural flagstop service to remote roadless areas offered monthly (first Thursday) in winter between Anchorage and Hurricane; and offered Thursday-Sunday in summer between Talkeetna and Hurricane
- **Aurora** – Winter weekend service between Anchorage and Fairbanks
- **Grandview Cruise Train** – Chartered summer service for cruise company passengers traveling from Whittier or Seward to Anchorage; timed with cruise ship arrivals



The Coastal Classic train moves along Turnagain Arm.

- **Special Events/Charters** – Special event trains include the *Holiday Train*, *Easter Train*, *Fair Train*, *Blues Train*, *Great Alaska Beer Train* and *Alyeska Halloween Train*. The popular *Nordic Ski Train* is chartered to the Nordic Ski Association.

### Passenger Numbers

Prior to the 2008 economic downturn, ARRC annual ridership peaked at more than a half-million passengers. During 2014, ARRC carried 468,661 passengers. Customers traveling aboard cruise company-owned railcars pulled by ARRC accounted for about 51% (240,588) of 2014 passengers. The remaining 49% (228,073) used scheduled service aboard Alaska Railroad trains. Of those, travel aboard the *Denali Star* was most popular (60,997), followed by the *Grandview Cruise Train* (54,733), *Coastal Classic* (53,240), and *Glacier Discovery* (34,912). The *Hurricane Turn* continued to draw a loyal and adventurous clientele (7,762), and 7,196 passengers rode the *Aurora* during winter months. Special event and other charter trains carried 10,516 passengers in 2014.



Hurricane Turn flag stop service offers remote access.

## Customer Service

ARRC capitalizes on homegrown talent and a reputation for hospitality born of Alaska's frontier spirit. Each year, customer comments underscore the importance of enhanced customer service as a prime tool for attracting new customers and persuading previous passengers to return.

A cornerstone to customer service is the long-standing Guide Program. In 1981, the Alaska Railroad entered into agreements with Anchorage and Fairbanks school districts to adopt a vocational tourism curriculum to prepare high school students for jobs and careers in the visitor industry. At the end of the school year, the Alaska Railroad hires the cream-of-the-crop to serve onboard summer passenger trains as interactive guides. These Alaskan ambassadors delight railroad customers with interesting narrative, personalized attention and a youthful, infectious excitement to experience rail transit through Alaska.

## Regional Planning

Future passenger opportunities may stem from additional transit services. ARRC supports legislative creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which transportation planning experts have identified as a proven model for efficient coordination of public and private transit resources. An RTA is particularly important to establishing a more traditional commuter rail service that requires coordinated bus, shuttle and train schedules. An RTA also provides a federally-recognized model for securing and managing funds to support all subsidized public transit services.

In the meantime, over the past decade, ARRC has invested in rail research and infrastructure that make additional regional transit rail service more feasible. This includes new depots at the Anchorage airport and Palmer fairgrounds, an upgraded intermodal transportation facility in Ship Creek, purchase of land and a building in south Wasilla, and straighter (faster) track between Anchorage and Wasilla. In 2009, ARRC received a self-propelled railcar (diesel multiple unit, or DMU) that meets federal criteria for operating on track used by freight and passenger trains. Future investment in a fleet of DMUs is another infrastructural requirement for providing additional regional inter-city rail service.

## Passenger Equipment

The Alaska Railroad has a passenger service fleet of 44 railcars (excluding locomotives and power cars):

- **Business Cars** – The restored *Denali Car* and the *Aurora Car* offer unique meeting space. *Fleet: 2 cars*
- **Diners** – Dining cars with various seating/dining configurations. Most refurbished and/or remodeled 2000 - 2010. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Passenger Coaches** – Coaches feature large windows, hand carry storage, and reclining seats facing with a card table in between. Six built in 1989; refurbished in 2001-2003; Five built 1950 and rebuilt 1982. *Fleet: 11 cars*
- **Vista Dome Coaches** – Coaches feature 36-38 reclining seats, plus 24 seats under a dome in the middle that offers 360-degree views. Built in mid-1950s; rebuilt 1988 - 1998. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Low-Level Dome Coaches** – Coaches feature large dome glass windows, and seat (68-76) arranged around four-top tables, small galley and service bar. Four built in 1950s and refurbished in 2006; three built in 2006-2007. *Fleet: 7 cars*
- **Bi-Level Ultradomes** – Double-deck first-class dome cars feature glass-domed upstairs including an outdoor viewing platform and 72 reclining seats. Downstairs includes a full-service kitchen and dining area with 36 seats at tables. Built in 2005, 2007 and 2008. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Bi-Level DMU** – The *Chugach Explorer* self-propelled railcar is suited for whistle stop and commuter services, with 112 seats, kitchen and baggage area. Built in 2009. *Fleet: 1 car*
- **Baggage Cars** – Cars store luggage and include generators to supply electrical power to coaches. Built in 1961-62; rebuilt in 1982. *Fleet: 5 cars*



*The self-contained, self-propelled DMU.*