February 1, 2006

Patrick Gamble
President and CEO
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510

Re: South Wasilla Track Realignment Project
Finding of No Significant Impact

Dear Mr. Gamble:

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has completed its review of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment (EA), August 2005, for the South Wasilla Rail Realignment Project. Based on our review, FTA has issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the project. A copy of the FONSI is enclosed.

The project includes a new 225-foot bridge over Wasilla Creek; a new embankment west of the creek crossing and two (2) underpasses through the embankment to allow vehicular access; acquisition of a minimum of 100 feet of right-of-way (ROW) on each side of the new track centerline; construction of separated grade-crossings at Fairview Loop Road and the road to the City sewage treatment plant; the elimination of five (5) mainline at-grade crossings; and the realignment of Old Matanuska Road near MP 157. The existing track in the MP 154 to MP 156 vicinity would remain in place as a siding for temporary use, but the existing track being replaced between MP 156 and MP 158 would be removed.

Construction of the project could be conducted in two (2) phases, depending on funding availability. Phase I would likely occur between approximately MP 154 and MP 156. The track would tie into the existing track elevation east of the proposed Fairview Loop Road Crossing. If phased, the alignment in this section would be steeper to allow it to tie back into the existing track elevation prior to the proposed Fairview Loop Road Crossing. During Phase II, the track between MP 156.1 and MP 156.6 would be at the existing track elevation instead of being excavated lower as it would be under the un-phased approach.

The FONSI, EA, and all related supporting materials should be made available to the public, with notice of availability published in one or more newspapers of general circulation. Notice of the FONSI’s availability should also be sent to the agencies on the EA circulation list. Please note that if a construction grant is approved for this project, the standard terms and conditions of the FTA grant contract will require the grantee to undertake all environmental mitigation measures identified in the EA and FONSI.
Thank you for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act, and good luck with your project. Please contact Amy Changchien at (206) 220-4464 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

R. F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator

Enclosure
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

APPLICANT: The Alaska Railroad Corporation
PROJECT NAME: South Wasilla Track Realignment
PROJECT LOCATION: Wasilla, Alaska
GRANT NUMBER: AK-03-0049

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), seeks to improve the safety and efficiency of its operations by realigning approximately four (4) miles of mainline track (ARRC Milepost (MP) 154 to MP 158) in the southeast portion of Wasilla in the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough of south-central Alaska. The purposes are to:

- Enhance safety
- Reduce horn noise
- Improve train travel time
- Reduce maintenance and operating costs.

The project includes a new 225-foot bridge over Wasilla Creek; a new embankment west of the creek crossing and two (2) underpasses through the embankment to allow vehicular access; acquisition of a minimum of 100 feet of right-of-way (ROW) on each side of the new track centerline; construction of separated grade-crossings at Fairview Loop Road and the road to the City sewage treatment plant; the elimination of five (5) mainline at-grade crossings; and the realignment of Old Matanuska Road near MP 157. The existing track in the MP 154 to MP 156 vicinity would remain in place as a siding for temporary use, but the existing track being replaced between MP 156 and MP 158 would be removed.

Construction of the project could be conducted in two (2) phases, depending on funding availability. Phase I would likely occur between approximately MP 154 and MP 156. The track would tie into the existing track elevation east of the proposed Fairview Loop Road Crossing. If phased, the alignment in this section would be steeper to allow it to tie back into the existing track elevation prior to the proposed Fairview Loop Road Crossing. During Phase II, the track between MP 156.1 and MP 156.6 would be at the existing track elevation instead of being excavated lower as it would be under the un-phased approach.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) (dated August 2005) was prepared for the proposed project as required by the National Environmental Policy Act and was made available to the public for a 30-day comment period on October 2, 2005. The availability of the EA was announced in the Anchorage Daily News and the local Frontiersman, through radio advertisements, and by a postcard mailer sent to individuals on the project mailing list. The EA was made available for public review at the Alaska Railroad, Wasilla Public Library, Wasilla City Hall Planning Department, Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Division, and the Loussac Library in Anchorage. It was also available on ARRC’s website.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS
Four alternatives – the Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative, and Alternatives 2 and 3 – were evaluated in the EA. Alternative 2 was designed to reduce private property impacts and the amount of ROW acquisition, which was characterized by an alignment with more curves. Alternative 3 was designed to reduce curvature and rail length, which resulted in the shortest and straightest alignment. The Proposed Action was designed as a combination of the slightly curvier alignment of Alternative 2 between MP 154 and MP 156, and the straighter alignment of Alternative 3 between MP 156 and MP 158. Two other alternatives were considered but eliminated from further consideration, primarily due to wetlands and right-of-way (ROW) impacts.

Several bridge options were considered for the crossing of Wasilla Creek near MP 154. The bridge structure options ranged from 165 feet to 280 feet, and differed by bridge length, number of bridge spans and piers, estimated cost, affect on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), creek channel impacts, and wetland impacts. The outcome of agency coordination resulted in a 225-foot bridge with three spans.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The EA documented that the project will not have any significant adverse environmental impacts. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the EA’s findings.

Transportation Impacts

The project will have no significant impact on transportation. The primary objectives (to improve the safety of rail/roadway crossings and railroad operations, reduce rail travel time, and reduce maintenance and operating costs) will be realized.

The project will have a beneficial impact on local road networks. The grade separation of Fairview Loop Road and the grade-separated crossing to the City’s sewage treatment plant will enhance safety, with the decreased risk of train and motor vehicle collisions and reduction of curvature, which leads to a decreased risk of derailment. The project will eliminate five (5) at-grade rail/roadway crossings of the mainline. Realigning Old Matanuska Road is consistent with adopted plans and will improve safety by reducing roadway curvature. The existing track between MP 154 and MP 156 will remain in place as a siding for temporary use. Short-term construction-related traffic impacts to the traveling public could include temporary road closures and delays during construction.

The project, coupled with planned Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) improvements near the project area, will have a long-term beneficial cumulative effect on traffic safety by decreasing the risk of accidents by reducing curvature and eliminating five (5) at-grade crossings of the mainline in the project area. It will also improve railroad efficiency and reduce freight and passenger travel times. The project will make commuter rail service between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley more feasible, which would have a beneficial cumulative impact by decreasing traffic congestion within that transportation corridor.

Mitigation: The ARRC will coordinate efforts during design and construction with the City of Wasilla and ADOT&PF for the overpasses and proposed road realignments. Traffic flow during construction will be controlled by planning and scheduling construction activities to minimize traffic delays. Signs will be used as appropriate to provide notice of road closure and other pertinent information to the traveling public. The public will be notified in advance of road closings and other construction-related activities so that users can plan alternate travel routes in advance.
The Physical Environment

Air Quality
The project will have no significant impact on air quality. Dust and emissions from diesel-powered construction equipment may result in a temporary increase in criteria pollutants and localized decreases in air quality. Proposed staging and stockpiling areas in the gravel pit area will have little to no greater impact to surrounding areas than the gravel pit operations. Ground-disturbing activities such as vegetation removal, excavation, grading, and fill placement may temporarily generate fugitive dust.

Mitigation: Airborne particles will be controlled as necessary by the application of water or other dust suppressions in accordance with established Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Soils, Geology, and Seismic Conditions
With proper design, the project will have no significant impacts to soils or geologic and seismic conditions. Geotechnical fieldwork conducted in August 2003 showed that the majority of the soil in the project area will provide adequate subgrade support for the realignment. No significant geological limitations to the project were identified along the realignment route. Grading, construction, and mining of the material source will result in minor impacts to the geological environment. Minor alteration of the existing topography is anticipated, including the construction of an embankment from Wasilla Creek westward towards the Fairview Loop Road crossing, with a varying height of 33 feet near Wasilla Creek to a maximum height of 52 feet in a depression near the gravel pits. Two grade-separated rail/roadway crossings will be constructed through this embankment. Vegetation clearing, grading of fill slopes and grading and excavation associated with construction activities are the most likely sources of potential erosion and sedimentation impacts.

Mitigation: The project’s final design will address seismic considerations. A storm water pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) will be prepared and implemented as part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit required for the project (General Permit for Storm Water Discharges from Construction Sites). BMPs will be employed during construction to minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. The embankment slopes will be stabilized upon completion of the project.

Hydrology, Flood Zones, and Water Resources
The project has been designed to have no significant impact to hydrology, flood zones, or water resources. The project crosses Wasilla Creek with a minimum 225-foot long bridge to avoid impacts on water surface elevations during the 100-year flood. Construction of the bridge abutments and piers will occur adjacent to several active channels, which could affect water quality from sedimentation during construction. Introduction of a gravel embankment will change existing storm water runoff patterns, but will have little affect on the amount or water quality of storm water runoff. Old Matanuska Road and Fairview Loop Road will require modification of storm drainage along the new segments of roadway.

Mitigation: The ARRC will obtain a Mat-Su Borough Floodplain Development Permit for the segment of the embankment and bridge structure within the designated floodplain along Wasilla Creek. The project will include drainage facilities to minimize pollution of water sources by storm or snowmelt runoff. The bridge will have a cast-in-place concrete deck, which will be used to support the track and contain the ballast, to minimize sediments from entering Wasilla Creek. ARRC will use contaminant-free embankment and surface materials and will design span lengths and pier locations to avoid active channels.
The Biological Environment

Vegetation and Wetlands

The project will impact approximately 37 acres of upland vegetation, and restore approximately 16 acres of upland vegetation (including approximately 11 acres of the staging/stockpile area and 5 acres of abandoned ARRC tracks) through reseeding. Additionally, approximately 0.19 acres of wetlands will be impacted to construct bridge abutments and pier footings, and to reconstruct the T-intersection at Fairview Loop Road. Impacts to wetlands have been avoided and minimized to the extent possible. Near Wasilla Creek, completely avoiding wetlands was determined to be impracticable because the additional construction cost and the long-term maintenance burden associated with spanning the entire complex outweighed the marginal benefits to wetlands. The project will have no significant impact on upland and wetland vegetation, which is common to the region and is not unique or rare.

Vegetation will be disturbed during site preparation, construction activities, and installation of new railroad track. Near Wasilla Creek, large trees will be cut or trimmed to provide adequate clearance under and adjacent to the bridge. In certain areas, rails, ties, and ballast will be removed from the old track structure. The areas where old railroad and roadway will be removed and revegetated are generally located between MP 156 and MP 158. The old track between MP 154 and MP 156 will be retained as a siding; no revegetation will occur along this segment. In areas of realigned roadway, existing roadway will be removed, cleaned up, and seeded.

Mitigation: ARRC will obtain a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to place fill in wetlands. Where possible, areas with new fill material will be revegetated by seeding with native plant species. Techniques that encourage natural revegetation will be employed, except on the top several feet of the embankment slopes, which will remain unvegetated. Annual ryegrass, a nonpersistent exotic species effective for short-term erosion control, may be used while native species are establishing. Native seed mixes used will be weed-free.

To minimize impacts to wetlands, the ARRC agreed to use a longer bridge structure to span more of the braided channel complex and riparian wetlands associated with Wasilla Creek. The ARRC will also: use vertical abutment walls for the bridge to limit the footprint of fill material; taper the embankment width down near the crossing to minimize impacts to wetlands at the crossing; and clearly identify the vegetation clearing and construction limits (boundaries) in wetlands or other waters of the U.S. by staking, flagging, and/or fencing to ensure no physical disturbance occurs beyond the project limits authorized by the USACE permit. Also, the ARRC will perform a drivability analysis during design to determine if use of steel pipe piles for the bridge piers is feasible; this may further reduce impacts to wetlands in the riparian wetland area of the creek.

In consultation with permitting agencies - National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), and USACE – regarding Wasilla Creek fish and riparian habitat, ARRC agreed to fish habitat mitigation consisting of stream rehabilitation as described below. The USACE indicated that the mitigation for EFH will also satisfy potential wetland mitigation requirements.

Fish and Wildlife, Protected Species, and Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)

As described above, the project will impact approximately 37 acres of upland vegetation and less than one acre of wetlands. Removal of vegetation could alter the density of browse plants for herbivores and cover for small mammals, or disturb animals due to noise or human presence during construction. Mobile species will be displaced to the similar abundant habitat in adjacent areas, but long-term impacts to the population dynamics of wildlife species are expected to be negligible. Although the new embankment could alter movement patterns of local animals, it is unlikely to create a barrier to wildlife movement. The bridge over Wasilla Creek will be long enough for continued wildlife passage and will not be a barrier to
wildlife movements. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated in a documented phone conversation on October 10, 2003 that there are no listed endangered species or Alaska Species of Special Concern in the project area. In an email dated August 31, 2004 a NMFS representative confirmed that there are no threatened, endangered, or candidate species located in the project under it's jurisdiction. In summary, the project will have no significant impact on wildlife, protected species, or critical habitat.

Wasilla Creek is considered EFH for three species of anadromous fish. The bridge crossing Wasilla Creek will allow continued fish passage through the main channel and middle side channel, with no modification. Completely avoiding all impacts to EFH and adjacent riparian wetlands was determined to not be practicable because of the additional cost of the longer bridge and additional long-term maintenance burden to ARRC. The project will span the main channel and middle side channel, requiring filling of a portion of the west side channel. With mitigation, there will be no net loss of EFH. NMFS concurred with the EFH assessment in a letter dated September 17, 2004.

Mitigation: The bridge crossing Wasilla Creek will be designed to allow continued fish passage through the main channel and middle side channel, with piers and abutments located to avoid impacts to those channels. ARRC will realign the west side channel under the bridge, recreating most of the impacted EFH. Based on coordination with appropriate regulatory agencies (including NMFS and USACE), additional conservation measures will be implemented and there will be no net loss of EFH. Additional EFH will be added within the Wasilla Creek watershed through off-site mitigation at a location determined in consultation with NMFS, USACE, ADNR representatives prior to permits being issued. The following additional conservation and mitigation measures will be implemented:

- Obtain all necessary permits and agency approvals, and abide by the terms and conditions of each. The applicable permits and approvals anticipated at this time are as follows: USACE Section 404 Permit, ADNR Fish Habitat Permit, ADNR Office of Project Management and Permitting Final Consistency Determination, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) Certificate of Reasonable Assurance, and Mat-Su Borough Flood Hazard Permit.
- Keep all construction staging, fueling, and servicing operations a minimum of 100 feet from Wasilla Creek and the adjacent wetlands.
- Implement a project construction sequence that will minimize the extent of exposed soil at any given time.
- Use contaminant-free embankment and surface materials in construction.
- Monitor construction activities to ensure that temporary impacts are minimized. ARRC will restore all temporary disturbance areas to pre-construction conditions following construction.
- Do not place temporary material storage piles in the 100-year floodplain during the rainy season unless the following conditions are met: (1) storage does not occur when flooding is imminent; and (2) if storage piles consist of erosive material, they are to be covered with plastic tarps (or similar) and surrounded with compost berms or other erosion control devices. Material used within 12 hours of deposition is not considered a temporary material storage pile.
- Stabilize slopes with the potential to impact Wasilla Creek as soon as practicable.
- To minimize and prevent spills or leakage of hazardous materials during construction, implement standard spill-prevention measures during construction. To mitigate for potential hazardous materials spills, spill clean-up equipment (e.g., oil-absorbent pads) will be available onsite during construction.
- Ensure construction activities do not result in a migration barrier for adult and juvenile salmonids. Use temporary bridges rather than filling streams or installing culverts during construction.
- Avoid impacts to the main channel and middle side channel by constructing a bridge long enough to avoid modification to those channels (minimum of 223.5 feet long). Use 15-foot minimum setbacks from the stream banks to abutments to protect riparian vegetation.
South Wasilla Track Realignment

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

- Design span lengths and pier locations so that piers miss active channels.
- Ensure there is no net loss of EFH habitat. ARRC will explore stream restoration options during design and permitting to determine their engineering feasibility. ARRC will coordinate during design with regulatory agencies to determine the feasibility and desirability of the engineered stream restoration and will work with the regulatory agencies to identify an off-site mitigation project in the watershed to replace the EFH impacted by the project. If an option that recreates two side channels under the bridge is deemed feasible and preferable by the permitting agencies, it would be designed to result in no net loss of EFH.
- Prepare or require the construction contractor to prepare a SWPPP and comply with that plan. Use BMPs during construction to prevent erosion and runoff from entering the creek (e.g., installing temporary erosion control measures such as wood excelsior mats, straw bales, and/or silt fencing, until vegetation can bind the soil or diversion dikes channel storm water away from the disturbed soils).
- Re-contour disturbed areas to approximate original conditions and reseed with native vegetation to minimize erosion and stabilize stream banks.
- Time construction to minimize adverse effects to salmon during critical life stages. Timing windows will be incorporated in construction specifications for all in-stream work and will be determined by permit stipulations. NMFS would prefer all in-water work to be done between October 1 and April 1, so that outmigrating salmon fry and smolt are not disturbed between April 1 to June 30 and adult salmon are not disturbed when entering Wasilla Creek in July through September. The timing window may be adjusted in permit stipulations.

The Human Environment

Land Use and Land Ownership
No significant impacts on land use or land ownership are expected. The project traverses vacant, residential, and commercial (gravel pit) land, and will require ROW acquisition from several private landowners. Most of the vacant land is planned or anticipated to be used for residential purposes. The required project ROW will take that residential property out of future potential use. Given the large number of other vacant residential parcels available in the vicinity, the project will have little to no impact on future residential land supplies.

Mitigation: Land needed for the project will be acquired at fair market value and in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
No significant impacts on the socioeconomic environment are expected. The project will not generate long-term population growth in the community or change demographics, because it will not create any new requirements for support of railroad operations in the community or affect current levels of ARRC operations employment. The project will have minor social impacts, primarily due to the acquisition of residential properties along East Jude Drive and the displacement of residents. Displaced persons are anticipated to be relocated within the area so little to no impact on property tax revenues is expected. The only affected businesses are the two commercial gravel pits. Construction activities and purchase of gravel are likely to have an overall positive affect on the local economy.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, the potential for adverse effects on the health or environment of minority and low-income populations has been considered. The analysis indicates that the project would not have disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations.
Mitigation: Where relocation is necessary, it will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

**Noise and Vibration**

A noise and vibration analysis indicated that no significant noise and vibration impacts are expected. Existing noise sources in the project vicinity include roadway traffic, aircraft overflights, railroad operations and local neighborhood activities. The project will reduce horn noise because trains will no longer have to sound their horns at the five eliminated rail/roadway mainline crossings. Trucks using the gravel pits and freight and passenger trains operating through the area are the primary sources of existing vibration. The vibration analysis indicated that one property will be impacted; however, this property is already impacted by the existing track. The analysis indicated that the project’s impact to this property is small enough that the vibration change will not be perceptible to the residents.

Mitigation: The project’s noise and vibration impacts are based on the assumption that ARRC purchases a 200-foot ROW.

**Utilities**

No significant impact to utilities is expected. The project will cross over a 16-inch diameter sewer line located north of the East Jude Drive crossing, which may need to be realigned and reinforced, and will reconstruct the access road to the treatment plant. A fiber optic cable that runs the entire length of the existing tracks may require relocation in areas where the existing track requires reconstruction or the new track conflicts with the cable. Overhead lines and natural gas lines at the Fairview Loop Road and East Jude Drive crossings will need to be relocated. Temporary shutdowns of service may be required during construction. The project also may require relocation and/or replacement of other utilities. Further evaluation and field identification of utilities will be performed prior to construction.

Mitigation: If a short interruption of service is necessary during work on utility lines, it will be coordinated with the City of Wasilla and utility companies to ensure that no vital services are interrupted and at a time of day that causes the least impact to residences.

**Archeological and Historic Sites**

Based on the results of field surveys and review of previously recorded information, the project will have no effect on any known historic property. In a letter dated August 26, 2004, the Alaska State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the FTA’s determination of no adverse effect to historic properties.

Mitigation: Should construction activities unearth any archaeological or cultural resources, construction will be halted in the immediate area, and the SHPO (Judith Bittner, 907-269-8715) will be contacted.

**Contaminated Sites**

A limited investigation of potential contaminated sites, underground storage tanks, and leaking underground storage tanks conducted as part of the environmental review for this project did not identify any sites that would potentially be impacted by the project. During field visits, no evidence of contamination was observed or reported.

Mitigation: The potential for encountering contaminated soil and groundwater will be considered during construction planning. In the event contamination is encountered during construction, it will be addressed in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations.

**Visual**

No significant visual impacts are expected. Although the project will alter the visual landscape, the project area will still be characterized by a rail line, the gravel pits, sewage treatment plant, and other
prominent features. Project features will be most visible to residents in the Creekside Preserve and the “Ranch” Subdivisions, where the proposed embankment could be as high as 33 feet near Wasilla Creek and as high as 52 feet where it traverses over a depression near the gravel pits. These subdivisions are generally in lowlands, with some places heavily treed, so residents likely already have limited viewsheds. Residents in these subdivisions may see portions of the rail embankment through the trees. The embankment will likely be screened from view from other residential properties by vegetation or other homes.

Mitigation: After completion of the project, embankment slopes and the staging/stockpile areas will be revegetated so that they blend in color and texture with adjacent vegetated areas. Techniques that encourage natural revegetation will be employed, except on the top several feet of the embankment slopes.

Construction

The project could have minor impacts during construction, including impacts on noise and vibration levels; air and water quality; temporary disruption of utility service; visual impacts of material storage; traffic congestion and detours; safety; and the local economy. These impacts will be temporary, existing only for the duration of construction.

Mitigation: To mitigate the noise and vibration impacts from equipment movement and construction activities such as pile driving and vibratory compaction of the embankments, the contractor will use standard equipment with mufflers and will make certain that equipment is in good operating condition. Airborne particles will be controlled as necessary by the application of water or other controlled materials for dust suppression in accordance with established BMPs. Water quality impacts resulting from erosion and sedimentation will be controlled in accordance with established BMPs. BMPs will include installing temporary erosion control measures such as wood excelsior mats, straw bales, and/or silt fencing until vegetation can bind the soil or diversion dikes divert storm water away from the disturbed soils. ARRC and its contractors will abide by stipulations included in the required ADEC Section 401 Water Quality Certification (Certificate of Reasonable Assurance). Excavation dewatering may be performed during construction activities (particularly to construct proposed stream reconstruction mitigation), which will require an ADEC General Wastewater Disposal Permit for excavation dewatering. Appropriate BMPs will be implemented to prevent scour erosion and sediment transport and to protect surface water quality during dewatering.

Construction of the bridge over Wasilla Creek will involve use of temporary bridges laid down over the side channels and temporary impacts to wetlands. Temporary workpads may be built near the channels or on the islands between the side channels to accommodate pile driving or drilling equipment for pier and footing construction. Damage to riparian vegetation will occur to accommodate the temporary bridges and construction equipment. The contractor will be required to revegetate these areas. ARRC will monitor and maintain these revegetated areas to insure they will return to a natural state in the long term. Additional construction mitigation measures for the bridge crossing are in the EFH section.

Traffic delays will be mitigated through development of traffic control plans and timing construction to minimize the disruption. Appropriate signage will be used to direct travelers to alternative routes. ARRC will work with the City of Wasilla, utility companies, and their clients that may be affected by utility disruptions to provide notice and determine amenable timing for utility disruptions to minimize impacts.

Cumulative Effects

No significant cumulative effects were identified. When combined with other reasonably foreseeable construction activities near the project area, and taking the mitigation measures for this project into account, the incremental adverse impact of the project will be minimal.
The project, coupled with planned ADOT&PF improvements will have a long-term beneficial cumulative effect on traffic safety by decreasing the risk of accidents by reducing curvature and eliminating five at-grade crossings in the project area. The project will also improve railroad efficiency and reduce freight and passenger travel times.

Other Considerations

Recreation, Section 4(f) Resources, and Section 6(f) Resources

The project will have no significant impact on recreation, Section 4(f), or Section 6(f) resources. There are no designated federal or state parks, refuges, or designated recreation sites funded using Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies located in the project area, and SHPO has concurred with FTA that the one historic site, the Carson Farm, in the project area will not be adversely affected. No mitigation is proposed.

Government-to-Government Coordination

FTA conducted government-to-government coordination with various federally recognized tribes and also contacted Native corporations for their input. No concerns were identified.

Public Involvement

Public involvement efforts included two public hearings (a scoping meeting held on July 23, 2003 and a public hearing to discuss the EA findings held on October 18, 2005), which included newspaper advertisements, mailings to interested parties in the area, flyers and public service announcements regarding the upcoming meetings; an agency scoping meeting (July 23, 2003); a field visit with agency representatives and several subsequent agency consultation meetings regarding the Wasilla Creek crossing and associated mitigation; and interviews of key stakeholders. A 30-day comment period for the EA ended on November 2, 2005. No significant controversies or impact relating to the project were identified. An addendum to the EA dated November 2005, which makes several corrections and addresses comments received during the public comment period, is attached to this document.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDING

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) finds under 23 CFR 771.121 that with the mitigation measures identified, there are no significant impacts on the environment associated with the project. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the August 2005 EA and its supporting documents. FTA has independently evaluated these documents and has found that they accurately discuss the project's purpose and need, relevant environmental issues, impacts of the project, and appropriate mitigation measures. They provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an environmental impact statement is not required.

Moreover, FTA has determined, based on the EA, that the project would have no effect on populations or habitat or species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, or on habitat protected under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and has so notified appropriate resource agencies.

In addition, FTA has preliminary determined, in consultation with the Alaska SHPO that this project complies with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Early consultation with SHPO has indicated the project would have no adverse effect on cultural resources.

FTA has determined that the project complies with Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, as no Section 4(f) resources would be affected by the project.
The project is in compliance with Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management. There would be no significant impacts on natural and beneficial floodplain values, no significant increase in flood-related risks to human life, and no significant increase in flood-related risks associated with interruption of service or loss of vital transportation facilities. The project would adhere to the stipulations of the Mat-Su Borough Floodplain Development Permit.

The project is in compliance with Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands. Since wetlands cannot be avoided, the project has been developed to minimize impact to wetlands. Less than one acre of wetlands would be filled.

FTA has determined that the project meets the requirements of the Clean Air Act, as amended in 1990. The project would not cause or contribute to violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Finally, FTA has determined that the project complies with Executive Order 12898, (Environmental Justice) and the Department of Transportation Order on Environmental Justice.

This action complies with the National Environmental Policy Act; the Department of Transportation Act of 1966; the Endangered Species Act of 1973; the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management; Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, and Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice.

R.F. Krochalis
Regional Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

Date 2/1/06