

**CS FOR HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 5(TRA)**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**Offered: 4/23/99**

**Referred: Finance**

**Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES JAMES, Whitaker**

**A RESOLUTION**

**1 Relating to extension of the James Dalton Highway to the Arctic Ocean.**

**2 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

**3 WHEREAS** there is an immediate need for a public highway from the Yukon River  
**4** to the Arctic Ocean; and

**5 WHEREAS** this highway will provide the first year-round, overland route to the Arctic  
**6** Ocean and will result in the completion of a public highway from the Pacific Ocean to the  
**7** Arctic Ocean; and

**8 WHEREAS** this highway is named the James Dalton Highway, popularly known as  
**9** the Dalton Highway; and

**10 WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway will provide North America's only highway link to  
**11** the Arctic Ocean; and

**12 WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway is the second northernmost highway in the world;  
**13** and

**14 WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway was opened for unrestricted public access to and  
**15** including the Deadhorse industrial area in 1994; and

**16 WHEREAS** the Federal Highway Administration added the Dalton Highway to the  
**17** National Highway System in 1995; and

1       **WHEREAS** highway traffic to Deadhorse has increased 34 percent since the Dalton  
2 Highway was opened to the public; and

3       **WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway offers unparalleled scenic beauty and access to the  
4 Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, the  
5 Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; and

6       **WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway was designated a State Scenic Byway in 1998; and

7       **WHEREAS** the Dalton Highway is under consideration as an All American Road  
8 eligible for additional federal funding; and

9       **WHEREAS** the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in  
10 cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and other  
11 agencies are adding waysides, campgrounds, and other facilities for the increasing number of  
12 travelers on the Dalton Highway; and

13       **WHEREAS** there is an increasing demand from these travelers for unrestricted private  
14 vehicle access to visit the Arctic Ocean; and

15       **WHEREAS** the division of tourism's official state map and Alaska's National  
16 Highways map both show the Dalton Highway reaching the Arctic Ocean shores; and

17       **WHEREAS** it is illogical to block a 500 mile long route just seven miles short of the  
18 Arctic Ocean, especially when the infrastructure is in place to accommodate beach access; and

19       **WHEREAS** the only public access to the Arctic Ocean is through a \$20 payment to  
20 an oil company-sanctioned private tour operator for a guided half hour on the beach; and

21       **WHEREAS** a report by the University of Alaska states, "A large number of visitors  
22 expressed disappointment in not being allowed ocean access without payment, others with  
23 large families could not afford the cost, and others were livid with the restriction"; and

24       **WHEREAS** AS 38.05.127(c) states "Nothing in this section affects valid existing  
25 rights or limits in any way the constitutional right of the public to use and have free access  
26 to the navigable or public waters of the state"; and

27       **WHEREAS** an existing seven mile road, designed to state highway secondary  
28 standards, leads to East Dock on the shore of the Arctic Ocean; the East Dock, which is  
29 mostly vacant, provides a reasonable and suitable site for a visitor wayside; and

30       **WHEREAS** in an era of declining oil revenues, Alaska's tourism industry will benefit  
31 from travelers' desires for unrestricted access to the Arctic Ocean; and

1           **WHEREAS** tourism is now the second largest employer in Alaska; and

2           **WHEREAS** state and federal regulatory agencies have offered assistance in working  
3 with the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, the oil industry, and the  
4 North Slope Borough in assuring that the opening of the East Dock Road would be safe for  
5 industry, wildlife, and tourists; and

6           **WHEREAS** the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the  
7 Department of Natural Resources, by taking the lead in working with industry, regulatory  
8 agencies, and the North Slope Borough, can work to resolve concerns that would allow  
9 citizens to journey to the Arctic Ocean without charge;

10          **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports opening the last few  
11 miles of the Dalton Highway to provide increased public access to the Arctic Ocean; and be  
12 it

13          **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests  
14 Governor Tony Knowles to direct the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and  
15 the Department of Natural Resources to work with North Slope operators, the tourism  
16 industry, the North Slope Borough, and the public to resolve issues associated with providing  
17 improved and increased public access to the Arctic Ocean and to move expeditiously to  
18 provide public access to one of America's most incomparable destinations, the shores of the  
19 Arctic Ocean, for the 1999 tourist season.