



# North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction

## Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) proposes to reduce the number of at-grade (same level) crossings on a portion of its Eielson Branch track (from Richardson Highway Milepost 9 to the Chena River Floodway) that currently runs through North Pole, Alaska.

ARRC initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) and associated preliminary engineering to analyze potential impacts. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead federal agency for preparing the EA. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) are cooperating agencies.

The proposed alternative would realign the track on the landward side of the Tanana River Flood Control Levee. It would close nine at-grade crossings within the City of North Pole, and relocate the existing crossing of the Richardson Highway, replacing it with a separated grade crossing.

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 purpose of the project is to enhance public safety, reduce transportation conflicts, and improve ARRC's operating efficiency while ensuring continued rail access to existing and potential future ARRC customers and minimizing impacts to businesses and property owners.

## Benefits

- Eliminates multiple at-grade crossings, enhancing safety by reducing the risk of train/vehicle collision.
- Eliminates North Pole traffic delays caused by railroad operations through downtown.
- Improves ARRC's operational efficiencies through improved access to Flint Hills Refinery and by allowing for increased track speeds.

- Ensures continued access for FNSB and USACE to the Tanana River Flood Control Levee for inspections, maintenance, and flood fighting activities.

## Status

- With new funding available, an EA was initiated in mid-2010.
- DOWL/HKM and TransSystems were hired as consultants to assist with EA preparation and preliminary design.
- Scoping activities — which included initial agency and public scoping meetings — were completed during January 2011.
- Technical studies were completed during summer 2011.
- The EA was made available for public review and comment in March 2012.
- Following a public meeting on the EA (April 2012) and consideration of comments received, FRA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on December 7, 2012. FHWA, an EA cooperating agency, issued a FONSI on January 18, 2013.

## Project Costs & Funding

- The North Pole Rail Project EA is financed by \$1 million in reallocated FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds (federal \$909,700; local match \$90,300). 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. FMATS and Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT/PF) transferred unused FHWA funds to the FRA for use on road/rail crossing reduction projects, including the North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction project.
- A preliminary cost estimate of \$62 million will be refined during the next steps, which include final design, permitting and right-of-way land acquisition. Funding for final design and construction is not yet identified.

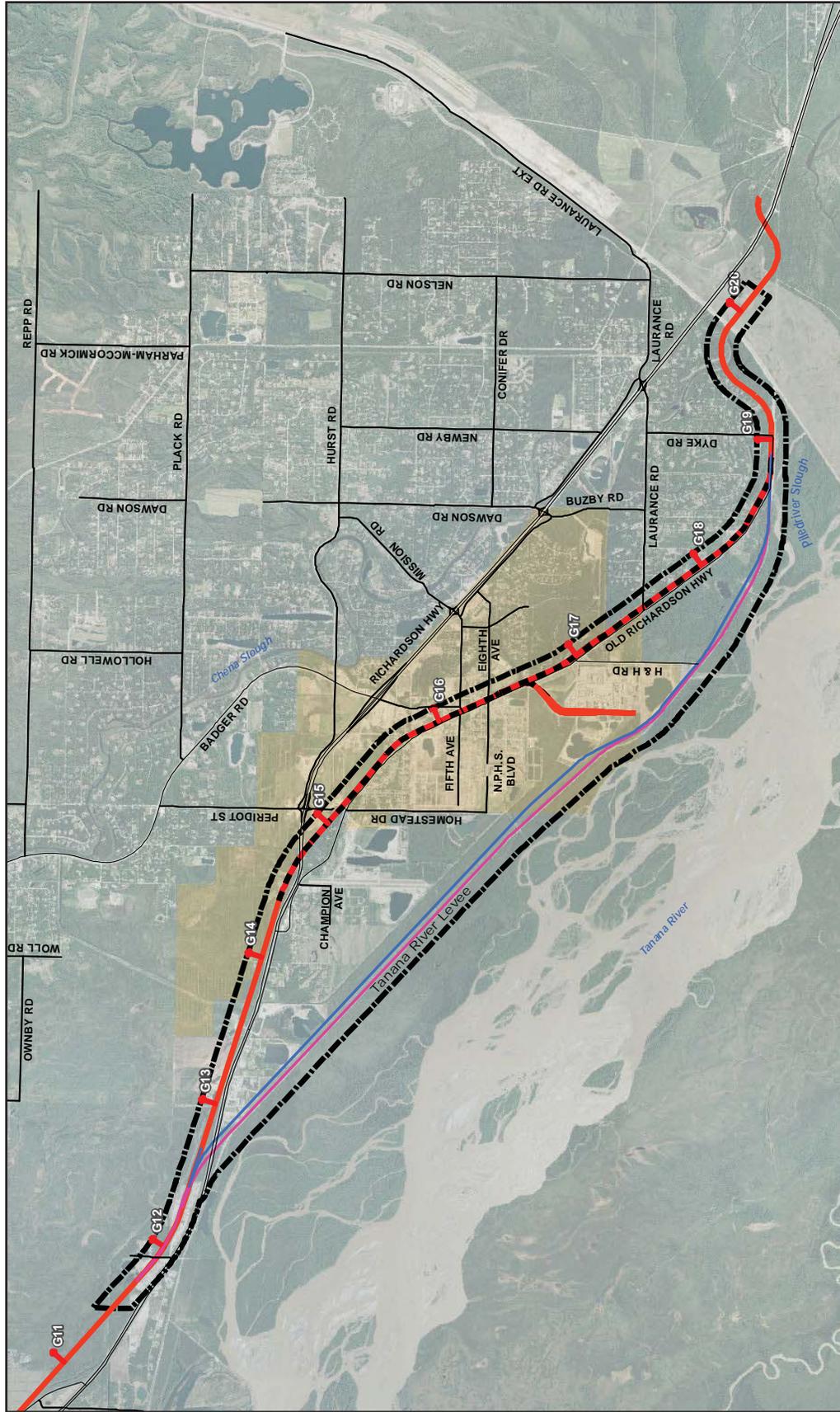


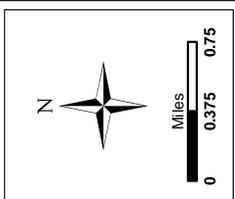
Figure 2-1  
Alternatives A and C

**ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION**

North Pole Road/Rail Crossing Reduction Project

December 22, 2011

WO: D60432



North Arrow pointing up (N)

Scale Bar: 0 to 0.75 Miles

Alternative C (Proposed Action)

Alternative A

Existing Track to be Removed

Existing Rail Alignment

City of North Pole

Project Study Area

The Environmental Assessment studied two build alternatives, as noted in this figure. Alternative C is the proposed alternative.