

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

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41



Expressing support for a cooperative United States-Canada feasibility study on extending the North American rail system through British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to Alaska.

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

WHEREAS rail transportation is the most cost-effective long distance method of overland transportation; and

WHEREAS rail transportation is an essential component of the North American inter-modal transportation system; and

WHEREAS rail transportation is energy efficient, capable of moving goods three to nine times farther per unit of fuel than highway transportation; and

WHEREAS rail transportation emits lower levels of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds per ton of freight moved than other modes of freight transportation; and

WHEREAS rail transportation systems allow controlled access to and reduced overall effects on environmentally sensitive regions; and

WHEREAS rail transportation remains an important component of national and continental defense planning; and

WHEREAS the North American rail transportation system will not be complete until

it extends to all states, provinces, and territories on the continent; and

WHEREAS the State of Alaska recently enacted legislation to reauthorize the delineation and acquisition of a rail transportation corridor from the present terminus of the Alaska Railroad to the border between Alaska and the Yukon Territory; and

WHEREAS Senator Frank Murkowski, United States Senator for Alaska, has introduced S. 2253, Rails to Resources Act of 2000, to establish a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system in Alaska to the continental rail system of North America; and

WHEREAS Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and British Columbia contain extensive oil and gas, mineral, and timber resource reserves that currently are inaccessible, and bilateral cooperation in the development of a freight transportation infrastructure would facilitate the utilization of these resources for the benefit of the United States and Canada; and

WHEREAS a northern rail system may significantly benefit the visitor industry by facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing the effect of such movement on the surrounding environment; and

WHEREAS ongoing research and advancements in rail technology continue to increase the efficiency of rail transportation and ensure rail safety and decrease the effect of rail transportation on the environment;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the government of the United States and the government of Canada to engage in a cooperative feasibility study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link Alaska and the Yukon Territory by way of northern British Columbia with the existing North American rail transportation system; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the government of the United States and the government of Canada to establish a bilateral commission representing local governments, business interests, and aboriginal stakeholders to define the goals and objectives for the cooperative feasibility study and to report the results of the study to the appropriate governmental entities of the United States and Canada; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that funding for operation of the bilateral commission and for the conduct of the cooperative

feasibility study be considered a priority for the governments of the United States, Canada, British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and the State of Alaska.

COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Jean Chretien, Prime Minister of Canada; the Honorable David Collenette, Minister of Transport, Transport Canada; the Honorable Dan Miller, Premier of the Province of British Columbia; the Honorable Piers McDonald, Government Leader, Yukon Territory; the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the United States; the Honorable Madeleine K. Albright, United States Secretary of State; the Honorable Rodney E. Slater, United States Secretary of Transportation; the Honorable Strom Thurmond, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Jesse Helms, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable John McCain, Chair of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman, Chair of the Committee on International Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Bud Shuster, Chair of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the U.S. House of Representatives; and to the Honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.