

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE

May 10, 2022

2:33 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Grier Hopkins, Chair
Representative Sara Hannan, Vice Chair
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Mike Cronk

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Harriet Drummond

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 35

Supporting the completion of the Northern Rail Extension; supporting the increase in defensive capabilities at Fort Greely, Alaska; and encouraging the development of critical Arctic infrastructure.

- MOVED CSHJR 35 (TRA) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 35

SHORT TITLE: NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CRONK

02/22/22	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/22/22	(H)	MLV, TRA
03/01/22	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/01/22	(H)	Heard & Held
03/01/22	(H)	MINUTE (MLV)
03/03/22	(H)	MLV AT 1:00 PM GRUENBERG 120
03/03/22	(H)	Moved HJR 35 Out of Committee
03/03/22	(H)	MINUTE (MLV)
03/07/22	(H)	MLV RPT 6DP
03/07/22	(H)	DP: RAUSCHER, CLAMAN, NELSON, TARR, STORY, TUCK
05/05/22	(H)	TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
05/05/22	(H)	Heard & Held

05/05/22 (H) MINUTE (TRA)
05/10/22 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

No witnesses to record

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:33:07 PM](#)

CHAIR GRIER HOPKINS called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. Representatives Hopkins, McCabe, McKay, Hannan, and Cronk were present at the call to order.

HJR 35-NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION

[2:34:01 PM](#)

CHAIR HOPKINS announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 35, "Supporting the completion of the Northern Rail Extension; supporting the increase in defensive capabilities at Fort Greely, Alaska; and encouraging the development of critical Arctic infrastructure."

[2:34:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK, as prime sponsor, stated that HJR 35 is a resolution requesting that the federal government consider an extension project for the railroad.

[2:34:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HJR 35, labeled, 32-LS1579\B.1, Foote, 5/4/22, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 1, following "of":
Insert "**the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and**"

Page 2, line 10, following "of":
Insert "Port MacKenzie,"

Page 2, line 12:
Delete "to Delta and Fort Greely"
Insert "from Port MacKenzie to Houstan, Delta Junction, and Fort Greely"

Page 2, line 17, following "Greely;":

Insert "and

WHEREAS the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Alaska Railroad have already completed nearly two-thirds of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension, which brings Port MacKenzie within 33 miles of the Alaska Railroad rail line, which is in Houston and extends on to Fairbanks and the Northern Rail Extension projects; and

WHEREAS the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension will reduce energy and transportation costs, improve air quality, increase the efficiency of shipping bulk commodities and materials to and from Interior Alaska, and provide direct rail access for shipments of liquefied natural gas from Cook Inlet to Fairbanks, North Pole, and beyond; and

WHEREAS the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension will increase the available supply of natural gas and reduce energy costs for industry and residential customers in many Interior Alaska communities; with increased natural gas supply, that region will realize additional opportunities for natural gas conversion, which will aid in achieving air quality attainment;"

Page 2, line 18, following "of":

Insert "the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and"

Page 2, line 22:

Delete "region"

Insert "Arctic"

Page 2, line 25, following "of":

Insert "the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and"

Page 2, line 27:

Delete "region"

Insert "state"

Page 3, line 4:

Delete "Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative"

Insert "U.S. Representative for Alaska"

[2:34:57 PM](#)

CHAIR HOPKINS objected for the purpose of discussion.

[2:34:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that Amendment 1 would add language expressing the importance of Port McKenzie. He explained that the extension of the railroad would help Fort Greely function better. He said it would reduce transportation and energy costs for Alaskan residents in the Interior. He added that some word changes would also be added by Amendment 1.

[2:36:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE, in response to Chair Hopkins, explained that flying into the airport in Anchorage, Port McKenzie is visible as the square area of land jutting into the water.

[2:38:14 PM](#)

CHAIR HOPKINS removed his objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 1. There being no further objection, Amendment 1 was adopted.

[2:38:30 PM](#)

CHAIR HOPKINS moved to adopt Amendment 2 to HJR 35, as amended, labeled, 32-LS1579\B.3, Foote, 5/10/22, which read as follows:

Page 1, line 2, following "**Alaska**";:

Insert "**encourageing a renewed commitment by the Alaska Railroad to a community-minded approach to future rail expansion**;"

Page 2, line 17, following "**Greely**";:

Insert "and

WHEREAS the Alaska State Legislature supports returning to private landowners the ownership rights of formerly private land previously conveyed to the Alaska Railroad that is no longer in use by the railroad, or for affected landowners to receive compensation, including a share of all revenue derived from easements, utility rights-of-way, or other financial arrangements executed by the railroad; and

WHEREAS the communities, neighborhoods, and individuals served and affected by rail expansions should have an active role in planning, considering alternatives, and confirming decisions made by the Alaska Railroad regarding rail expansions;"

Page 2, following line 23:

Insert a new clause to read:

"**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the Alaska Railroad to renew its commitment to a community-minded approach to future rail expansions, including reporting to the legislature regarding the railroad's efforts to improve relations with private landowners, communities, and neighborhoods impacted by past and current operations; and be it"

[2:38:36 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK objected for the purpose of discussion.

[2:38:40 PM](#)

CHAIR HOPKINS stated that Amendment 2 would add language to address the concerns expressed by property owners whose property might be affected by an extension of the railroad.

[2:40:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK removed his objection to the motion to adopt Amendment 2. There being no further objection, Amendment 2 was adopted.

[2:40:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HANNAN moved to report HJR 35, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHJR 35(TRA) was reported out of the House Transportation Standing Committee.

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[2:41:11 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:41 p.m.