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1 IN THE HOUSE

2 HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 28
3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
4 FIFTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 Relating to constructing the Whittier
6 access rail ferry.

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

8 WHEREAS road access from Portage to Whittier will open the way to the
9 development of the Prince William Sound for boating, hunting, fishing and
10 tourism; this vast yachting basin will attract numbers of visitors yearly
11 but even more important than this, road access to Whittier will make possible
12 a second highway tie between Anchorage and Valdez through the establishment
13 of a frequently scheduled ferry run between Whittier and Valdez; and

14 WHEREAS past studies for direct road access have revealed the construc-
15 tion of a highway over or around the mountains is so complicated by the
16 terrain and the extreme weather conditions as to be not economically feasible;
17 were unlimited funds available so that economic feasibility were not a con-
18 sideration, the sheer magnitude of the engineering task and the construc-
19 tion program involved would require 5 to 7 years effort and 8 to 10 million
20 dollars expenditure; and

21 WHEREAS the problems involved in the conversion of the existing railroad
22 tunnel for use as a highway tunnel are equally complex; to meet the stan-
23 dards of width, ventilation, lining, lighting and traffic control adequate
24 to insure public safety would require an expenditure of time and money
25 equivalent to that for the external route; there is no capability of spending
26 half the time and half the money without being half safe and any scheme that
27 requires half safe measures will justifiably fail; and

28 WHEREAS fortunately there is a means to quickly provide an efficient,
29 satisfactory substitute for a direct highway link which utilizes to the

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1 maximum extent existing facilities; the use of a track mounted carrier de-
2 signed to shuttle through the existing railroad tunnel in such the manner
3 that the small ferries shuttled across many of the rivers in the United
4 States can provide acceptable vehicular traffic between Portage and Whittier;
5 the development of the area will eventually justify the construction of full
6 road access exactly as utilization of the small river ferries paved the way
7 for subsequent bridge construction; and

8 WHEREAS access to Whittier based on the extension of existing roads to
9 the portals of the 13,000' railroad tunnel from Bear Valley to Whittier, the
10 electrification of the railroad through the tunnel, and the purchase of a
11 special train designed to provide rapid transit for highway vehicles will
12 cost \$600,000; the special train can be procured in a relatively short time
13 since all components are standard manufactured items readily available on
14 short notice; complete procurement and installation is possible within 6
15 months; and

16 WHEREAS vehicle access to Whittier would make it possible for a visitor
17 to Anchorage to drive down Turnagain Arm, visit Alyeska, view Portage Lake
18 and Glacier, take a convenient 10-minute train ride to Whittier without leav-
19 ing his car and drive aboard a marine ferry for the 90-mile trip to Valdes;
20 this ferry ride is entirely in protected inland waterways that are unex-
21 celled for scenic beauty; the ferry will, in fact, cross directly in front
22 of Columbia Glacier, a tourist attraction hard to beat; at Valdes he will
23 see a town completely relocated as a result of the 1964 earthquake and then
24 will proceed over one of the most fascinating and scenic stretches of road
25 on the North American continent; the waterfalls, glaciers, and alpine scen-
26 ery on this trip through Keystone Canyon and north are fabulous; as he con-
27 tinues through the Copper River-Glenallen area he will have a chance to see
28 fishwheels and observe the vegetation and terrain typical of so much of
29 interior Alaska; his return to Anchorage will bring him through the

1 Falkeetna Mountains and Matanuska Valley; and

2 WHEREAS not only will every visitor to Anchorage be tempted by this
3 scenic 454-mile trip but every tourist who motors from the lower 48 to
4 Anchorage or the Kenai Peninsula will have the opportunity to return to
5 Glenallen Junction by an alternate route; the value of eliminating back-
6 tracking over the same route cannot be over emphasized because this is one
7 of the biggest complaints the motoring public consistently makes concerning
8 a trip to Alaska; and

9 WHEREAS closing the gap between Portage and Whittier will make avail-
10 able to the population of the Anchorage area one of the best yachting basins
11 on the west coast; many miles of inland waterways will be accessible with
12 fiords, canals, islands, streams and glaciers to explore; it should be
13 stressed that these waters are also comparatively safe waters; opening the
14 immense sport fishery of the western Prince William Sound will to some extent
15 relieve the fishing pressure on the relatively depleted runs of Cook Inlet;
16 likewise a more desirable level of harvesting of the game animals of the
17 area will be possible; and

18 WHEREAS closing the gap will benefit a third user in addition to the
19 tourist and vacationer; the residents of Prince William Sound will be pro-
20 vided a convenient, economical access to Anchorage; the communities of the
21 Sound will not only benefit from the increase in traffic into that area but
22 will also find that convenient access to Seward and Anchorage will encourage
23 economic growth heretofore impossible; the development of this area that
24 will result from these close ties will be a substantial contribution to the
25 state's economy; and

26 WHEREAS an extension to the existing highway system at Portage Lake to
27 the portal of the 13,000' tunnel between Bear Valley and Whittier abuts the
28 end of a spur track at that portal and is elevated so that highway traffic
29 can drive directly from the end of the road onto a special train; this spur

1 and the trackage through the tunnel is electrified so that continuous opera-
2 tion of the train within the tunnel will not introduce noxious gasses into
3 the unventilated space; the controlled rate of acceleration that can be pro-
4 grammed into an all electric train will allow the highway vehicles to be
5 hauled the 3 miles from Bear Valley to Whittier without the need for tie
6 downs; at the Whittier portal the highway vehicles will be driven straight
7 ahead the length of the train onto an extension of the roads in the Whittier
8 area; the loading process will be completed in approximately 2 minutes, the
9 trip from Bear Valley to Whittier will take approximately 11 minutes, the un-
10 loading time will require only 2 minutes and the passengers can remain in
11 their vehicles for the complete 15-minute cycle; and

12 WHEREAS the train itself will consist of extra wide flat cars intercon-
13 nected with steel plates and provided with a 10' driving lane defined by
14 curbs on either side so that highway vehicles can safely and confidently be
15 driven the length of the train; once the vehicles are driven on board by
16 their owners their front wheels will be turned to the curb, engines shut
17 off and brakes set; high intensity lighting incorporated in the train will
18 illuminate the vehicles during the 11-minute passage so that the passengers
19 will not be blinded by daylight when they arrive at the opposite portal; and

20 WHEREAS a 600' train will carry 25 vehicles and will be able to maintain
21 a schedule of 2 complete round trips per hour; at full capacity such a train
22 would have a capacity of 50 cars in each direction per hour; this capacity
23 is required to insure the expeditious handling of vehicles arriving and
24 departing on the marine ferry and to accommodate the heavy weekend traffic
25 returning to Anchorage on Sunday afternoon and evening; flexibility is ob-
26 tained by shortening the train and reducing the frequency of runs to suit
27 demand less than capacity; frequent runs must be provided if a shuttle train
28 is to serve as an effective part of our state highway system; continuous
29 shuttle is economically feasible because of the low operating cost of an

1 electrically propelled drive-on-drive-off train;

2 WHEREAS maximum utilization of existing facilities is envisioned with
3 the use of existing commercial lodges for ticket sales at both Portage Lake
4 and Whittier; the dining and restroom facilities of these lodges will ade-
5 quately serve the traveling public; the low first cost of the proposed project
6 is possible only as a result of the maximum utilization of these facilities
7 and the existing roads, railroad tunnel and commercial power; and

8 WHEREAS the existing railroad tunnel provides a clear width of 16' to a
9 height 15' above top of rail and has a circular arch with an 8' radius above
10 that height; the shuttle train, designed to take full advantage of the tun-
11 nel clearances, will provide a carrying capacity ample for all normal high-
12 way vehicles including large busses and semi-trailer vans; and

13 WHEREAS design criteria will recognize that the shuttle train need not
14 comply with the width, length and coupling limitations of cars employed in
15 mainline travel; every effort will be made to provide the motoring public
16 with safety, convenience and a maximum sense of security; and

17 WHEREAS the configuration of the driving surface on the train will be
18 designed to insure that the loading and unloading operation will be quickly
19 performed with confidence by the most inept driver; no difficult maneuver
20 will be required as the drive through system eliminates all backing; and

21 WHEREAS the train's superstructure will consist of a structural steel
22 framework covered with steel diamond-mesh wire that will not only protect
23 the vehicles during passage through the tunnel but will also serve as a
24 positive clearance gauge; vehicles that can be driven onto the train will be
25 assured safe passage through the tunnel; and

26 WHEREAS the project cost estimate is:

27 Extension of Roads	5,000 lin. ft.	\$130,000
28 Bridge Construction	Lump Sum	100,000
29 Spur lines (1,000 lin. ft.)	2 each	42,000

1	Railroad Electrification	Lump Sum	\$ 140,000
2	Special Train	Lump Sum	<u>170,000</u>
3	Total Project Cost		\$ 582,000
4	Round Figure		\$600,000; and

5 WHEREAS the above cost estimate is based upon:

- 6 1. The construction of a 2 lane gravel surfaced road from the
- 7 vicinity of the parking lot and observation area at Portage Lake along the
- 8 general route of the old construction road to the Bear Valley portal of the
- 9 long tunnel.
- 10 2. Bridges across Portage Creek and Placer Creek.
- 11 3. One thousand foot long spurs with manually operated switches
- 12 at the main line.
- 13 4. Electrification of the tunnel and the loading spurs including
- 14 AC/DC conversion.
- 15 5. The use of standard flat cars interconnected by rigid tow bars
- 16 and modified to facilitate the drive-through operation.
- 17 6. Locomotion provided by incorporating standard swivel truck
- 18 traction motors as manufactured for the use of mine locomotives.
- 19 7. A control point for train operation located at each end of the
- 20 train arranged to provide convenient and safe operation in either direction
- 21 and yet not interfere with the drive-through loading and unloading concept;
- 22 and

23 WHEREAS the capacity of the shuttle train is determined by the aggregate length of the vehicles loaded; tariff calculations have been based upon

24 a nominal vehicle length of 24' and the fare for other than this basic unit

25 will be a matter of policy; and

26

27 WHEREAS utilizing the traffic predictions predicated on 1966 recorded

28 traffic data, and the budgetary cost estimate above, a tariff of \$2.50 each

29 way is indicated; and

1 **WHEREAS** the mode of operation used to determine operating costs includes
2 scheduled runs during morning, noon and evening periods through the week with
3 16 hours of operation a day on weekends;

4 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Governor is respectfully requested to direct
5 the Department of Public Works to construct the Whittier access rail ferry
6 in accordance with the intent of this resolution.

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