

HCR

25

HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(7)

Date Referred: April 5, 1991

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Resources

Date of Committee Action: 4/25/91

The TRANSPORTATION Committee considered:

HCR 25

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 25

REBUILD COPPER RIVER RAILROAD

Relating to the rebuilding of the historic Copper River Railroad between Cordova and Chitina by the State of Alaska.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_  the same title  
 a new title

have attached amendments(s)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendations

individual recommendations

additional referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

ADOPTS: \_\_\_\_\_ letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): \_\_\_\_\_ (Dept)

APPROVES PREVIOUS: \_\_\_\_\_ (Dept/Date)

fiscal impact \_\_\_\_\_

fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_

zero fiscal note Under Transp. Committee

zero fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNING DO PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	DNP	NR	AM
<i>[Signature]</i>	X				
<i>[Signature]</i>	X				
<i>[Signature]</i>	X				
<i>[Signature]</i>	X				

*[Signature]*  
 CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE

# Alaska State Legislature



Representative Eugene Kubina

Chairman  
State Affairs  
Committee  
  
Legislative Council  
  
Transportation  
Committee

During Session:  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box V  
Juneau, Alaska 99811  
(907) 465-4859

During Interim:  
P.O. Box 2463  
Valdez, Alaska 99686  
(907) 835-2111

## SPONSOR STATEMENT

**Sponsor:** Representative Gene Kubina  
**Subject:** HCR 25 - Rebuilding The Historic  
Copper River Railroad  
**Date:** 9 April 1991

-----

HCR 25 recommends that the state investigate the logistics and feasibility of rebuilding the historic Copper River Railroad, running between the coastal community of Cordova and the historical mining town of Chitina in the interior.

HCR 25 does not recommend that the state fund this building project, but that the different, relevant departments consider the possibility of a consortium relationship between the state of Alaska, corporations and private businesses.

**Rationale:** The area of Alaska comprising Prince William Sound and the interior surrounding Chitina is among the most scenic country in Alaska. Reconstruction of the historic Copper River Railroad would act as both a natural tourist draw and a link between the two areas.

The Copper River railroad, in linkage with jet transportation via Cordova, and the Alaska marine highway of Prince William Sound, would create a transportation circuit that would enhance tourism both in this combined region and throughout Alaska. Using these modes of transportation would encourage "European" style of tourists (employing mass transportation), which produces less environmental impact yet more financial impact on local businesses and communities.

The reconstruction of this railroad would bring economic growth to a region that is economically depressed. A strong tourism push in this combined region, including refurbishment of the included communities to enhance the mining history and architecture, could

— DISTRICT SIX —

• Chenequa Bay • Chitina • Cooper Landing • Cordova • Hope • Moose Pass • Seward • Tatitlek • Valdez • Whittier •

be a draw from both the Orient and Europe, strengthening air traffic into the state during a time of ongoing reduction in such air transportation.

The tourist industry is looking anxiously for safe, uncrowded tourists attractions in a world becoming increasingly impacted and environmentally polluted. The combined Prince William Sound/Chitina region--coupled together by the historic Copper River Railroad--could become the next global recreation center. The mixture of coastal and interior environment, unspoiled wilderness, and rustic communities makes it a natural.

-----

Rationale 2: For almost half a century the community of Cordova has been divided over the issue of whether or not to build a road to the community using the Copper River Railroad corridor. This issue has been one of great emotional dispute, literally pitting neighbor against neighbor, year after year. Dozens of surveys have been completed; studies have been performed; and the battle still rages.

The Copper River Railroad can be seen as a positive compromise on this situation, allowing land access while protecting fragile environments like the Copper River Delta. It is difficult to control growth and environmental impact along a road. A railroad can provide both the access and control over both growth and expansion of populations and land use.

**FISCAL NOTE**

**REQUEST:**

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Affected: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: HCR 25 - Relating to rebuilding BRU: \_\_\_\_\_  
the Copper River Railroad  
 Sponsor: Rep. Kubina Components: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Requestor: House Transportation Committee

**EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)**

OPERATING	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

**FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)**

GENERAL FUND						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY	-0-	-0-	0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

**ANALYSIS : (Attach a separate page if necessary)**

Prepared by: Wendy Mulder Phone: 465-4858  
 Division: House Transportation Committee Date: 4/24/91

Approved by Commissioner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 4/24/91  
 Agency: House Transportation Committee Chairman

**Distribution (by preparer):**

- Legislative Finance
- Legislative Sponsor
- Requestor
- Office of Management and Budget
- Impacted Agency(ies)

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CORDOVA  
P.O. Box 1464  
Cordova, AK 99574**

March 18, 1991

Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, AK 99811

**Greetings:**

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the preliminary results of the survey we just completed in Cordova and the surrounding area seeking public opinion on the issue of the Copper River Highway.

In order to give everyone a chance to participate, we did a bulk mailing of approximately 1500 surveys to every boxholder in Cordova. In addition, surveys were made available at Cordova District Fishermen United and the Hometown Bakery and ads were placed on the TV scanner and with posters in downtown business establishments advising folks of the existence of the survey, locations where surveys could be obtained and deadlines. The survey was closed down on March 3, 1991. We received a return of 497 surveys. Of these, 482 were signed by residents claiming that they were physically present in Cordova during the time the survey took place. Of the 482 signed returns, 38 returns were uncounted due to being incomplete or undecided. We feel this is a valid number of returns and gives a good indication of how Cordovans feel on this issue at this time as it compares well with our community's turn out at elections.

**The results of the survey on the question:**

Do you as an individual wish to see the completion of the Copper River Highway into Cordova?

Yes	124	28%
No	320	72%

**On the question ranking the preference of various alternatives by weight:**

(1)	Improved Ferry	2274 points
(2)	Current Ferry	1679 points
(3)	Summer Road-Improved Ferry	1362 points
(4)	Summer Road-Current Ferry	1101 points
(5)	All Weather Federal Standard Highway	1049 points
(6)	Other	597 points

**Actual tabulations of results:**

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
All Weather Federal Standard	79	10	31	24	96	137
Improved Ferry	280	59	22	56	20	3
Current Ferry	33	223	37	26	71	18
Summer Road-Improved Ferry	25	72	125	96	22	20
Summer Road-Current Ferry	16	30	75	114	92	29
Other	27	21	54	5	21	57

Page Two  
March 18, 1991

From these results, one can see that the obvious first choice of many Cordovans is an improved ferry system. I personally hope to see our Legislature in the forefront of working to seek improvements in our existing highway system, the Alaska Marine Highway. We need to bring its service up to the best it can be before spending excessive time and energy bringing into existence an unproven and costly alternative which may prove unnecessary or possibly even harmful.

It is our hope to be able to transcribe all comments (both pro and con) into a readable manuscript available as soon as possible. One thing these comments show is that we are a community with strong feelings on this issue and that all stands on the issue of the Copper River Highway need to be prefaced with the modifier "some." So while it is true that "some" Cordovans want the road, it is also just as true (and our survey shows it's a good percentage) that "some" don't. Maybe it's time, in the wake of the oil spill experience, to see whether or not plans for the transportation system in Cordova reflect the views of its residents.

Current spokesperson for the group of Cordovans who make up Alternatives for Cordova.

Ralph E. Lohse 424-7170

## Alternatives for Cordova Public Opinion Survey Compilation of Results

1. Please rank in order of preference the following alternatives to the transportation system for Cordova. Please use a 1 through 6 ranking, with 1 being your first choice and 6 being your last choice.

	Points	Firsts
[ 1 ] Improved ferry {Alaska Marine Highway}	2274	280
[ 2 ] Current ferry {Alaska Marine Highway}	1699	33
[ 3 ] Summer road and improved ferry {Alaska Marine Highway}	1362	25
[ 4 ] Summer road and current ferry {Alaska Marine Highway}	1101	16
[ 5 ] All weather Federal Standard highway	1048	79
[ 6 ] Other		

2. Cordova enjoys excellent airline service for a community its size. If there is a summer highway into Cordova, is it your opinion that freight and passenger traffic using the Cordova Airport terminal will be affected?

[ 30 ] Increase [ 255 ] Decrease [ 175 ] Remain the same.

What affect do you feel this will have a on the quality and frequency of air service we enjoy year-round as a community in the future.

[ 44 ] Positive [ 250 ] Negative [ 149 ] No affect,

3. Is the quality and frequency of year-round air service to Cordova currently important to you?

[ 447 ] yes [ 15 ] no.

Would it be important to you if there was a "summer road"?

[ 300 ] yes [ 154 ] no.

Would it be important to you if there was a "year-round" highway?

[ 287 ] yes [ 156 ] no.

4. With the completion of the Copper River Highway an alternative to the current barge freight system would be available, especially in the summer when we generate our largest volume. In your opinion, which transportation is the cheapest?

[ 154 ] highway-truck [ 274 ] water-barge

5. If there was a major reduction in the volume of freight available to our barge terminal, do you feel this would have a major affect on the frequency and cost of our water {barge} freight during the year?

[ 354 ] yes [ 95 ] no.

6. The completion of the Copper River Highway will give Cordova residents at least summer road access to the discount stores of Anchorage. What affect do you feel this will have on the year-round cost of living in Cordova?

[ 142 ] Increase [ 128 ] Decrease [ 194 ] No affect

7. As a year-round resident, do you feel this will affect goods available in local stores

[ 133 ] Increase [ 204 ] Decrease volume  
[ 142 ] Increase [ 173 ] Decrease selection  
[ 190 ] Increase [ 165 ] Decrease cost

8. The completion of the Copper River Highway will provide an alternative to the current ferry system, with its completion do you feel the State of Alaska will be likely to improve Cordova's ferry service in the winter months?

[ 60 ] More [ 376 ] Less

9. Have you as an individual been out to mile 27 on the Copper River Highway between November 1 and April 1 at any time?

[ 358 ] yes [ 80 ] no

What is your idea of the velocity of the winter winds in the 27 to 35 mile vicinity?

[ 20 ] 0-30 [ 182 ] 30-60 [ 179 ] 60-90

What is your estimate of the snowfall along the Copper River Highway?

[ 0 ] light [ 38 ] moderate [ 130 ] heavy [ 114 ] extremely heavy [ 117 ] severe

10. What do you feel that the cost of maintaining the Copper River Highway as a winter road would be?

[ 32 ] In line with other major highways  
 [ 50 ] Slightly higher than other major highways  
 [ 113 ] extremely higher than other major highways  
 [ 245 ] prohibitively high.

11. Do you feel that the State's current fiscal position allows adequate winter maintenance of its presently constructed highway system?

[ 177 ] yes [ 254 ] no.

What condition do you feel that currently constructed roads and highways in the state are in?

[ 55 ] Good [ 140 ] Fair [ 136 ] Adequate [ 111 ] Poor condition

Do you feel that the Copper River Highway can and will be maintained in a condition to provide safe winter access to Cordova?

[ 86 ] yes [ 241 ] no

12. As a parent, friend or neighbor would you prefer to see our local school children travel to their winter athletic contests?

[ 55 ] The Copper River Highway [ 358 ] The Alaska Marine Highway and Richardson Highway

13. Currently we Cordovans enjoy a community where many do not lock their doors or remove the keys from their cars, and where the majority feel safe from assault to themselves or their children. While Cordova is by far not crime free, major violence is not a concern of its average citizen, many have chosen it for this reason. Do you feel that the completion of the Copper River Highway will have an affect on this feeling of security?

[ 98 ] no affect [ 26 ] a positive affect [ 325 ] a negative affect

14. We Cordovans make our living in many ways. Do you feel that the completion of the Copper River Highway will have an affect on your family's gross income?

[ 93 ] positive [ 127 ] negative [ 108 ] none

Do you feel it will have an affect on your family's expenditures?

[ 109 ] positive [ 147 ] negative [ 186 ] none

Do you feel have an affect on your family's net income?

[ 166 ] increase [ 149 ] decrease [ 223 ] remain the same

15. Considering your answers to the previous questions, do you feel at this time that the completion of the Copper River Highway will affect your quality of life as a year-round resident of Cordova?

[ 106 ] positively [ 296 ] negatively [ 45 ] no

Do you feel that its completion will affect your decision to remain a winter resident?

[ 70 ] Increase [ 139 ] Decrease [ 226 ] none

16. We Cordovans are here for many reasons, not all of which can be measured in economic terms. Do you feel that aesthetics and quality of life reasons are valid considerations in the decision as to whether or not to build the Copper River Highway?

[ 379 ] yes [ 51 ] no

Do you feel that Cordova will have a better chance to survive and prosper as a community in the future with the completion of the Copper River Highway?

[ 148 ] yes [ 282 ] no

Do you feel that Cordova can maintain its uniqueness and survive and prosper in the future without the Copper River Highway?

[ 343 ] yes [ 96 ] no

17. Lastly, do you as an individual wish to see the completion of the Copper River Highway into Cordova?

[ 124 ] Yes [ 320 ] No