

**ALASKA LEGISLATURE**

**2636**

**HOUSE and SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE FILES, 2003-2004**



SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SIGN-IN

SB 31-RAILROAD UTILITY CORRIDOR TO & IN CANADA

✓ NAME: Wendy Lindskoog Subject/Bill No: SB 31  
Co./Dept./Title: Dir External Affairs - ARRC Phone: 265-2498, 240-9571  
Address: Po Box 107500 Zip: 99510  
Do you wish to testify?  Yes  No  Respond To Questions

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject/Bill No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Co./Dept./Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you wish to testify?  Yes  No  Respond To Questions

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Co./Dept./Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you wish to testify?  Yes  No  Respond To Questions





SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SIGN-IN

SB 31-RAILROAD UTILITY CORRIDOR TO & IN CANADA

AM

NAME: Wendy Lindskoog Subject/Bill No: SB 31

Co./Dept./Title: Alaska Railroad Phone: 240-9571

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to testify?  Yes  No  Respond To Questions

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Co./Dept./Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Co./Dept./Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to testify?  Yes  No  Respond To Questions

**SITE: OFFNETS**

**COMMITTEE: Senate Finance**

**DATE: 5/7/03**

**SUBJECT OF MEETING: SB31 & SB112**

**UPDATE #: 1**



# PLEASE SIGN IN

**PLEASE PRINT:**

**DO YOU WANT**

**NAME**

**ADDRESS (MAILING & ZIP)**

**REPRESENTING**

**TO TESTIFY?  
Y or N**

NAME	ADDRESS (MAILING & ZIP)	REPRESENTING	TO TESTIFY? Y or N
✓ Phyllis Johnson		AK Railroad SB 31	Answer Questions

**SITE: OFFNETS**

**COMMITTEE: Senate Finance**

**DATE: 5/7/03**

**SUBJECT OF MEETING: SB31**

**UPDATE #: 1**



# PLEASE SIGN IN

**PLEASE PRINT:**

**DO YOU WANT**

**NAME**

**ADDRESS (MAILING & ZIP)**

**REPRESENTING**

**TO TESTIFY?  
Y or N**

NAME	ADDRESS (MAILING & ZIP)	REPRESENTING	TO TESTIFY? Y or N
✓ John Binkley		AK Railroad	Y SB31

# SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 3/31/03

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: 4-24-03

Resources Committee considered      SENATE BILL NO. 31

## SB 31 RAILROAD UTILITY CORRIDOR TO & IN CANADA

"An Act relating to a railroad utility corridor for extension of the Alaska Railroad to Canada and to extension of the Alaska Railroad to connect with the North American railroad system."

and recommends:

- be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ CS SB 31 ( RES )
- adopt previous \_\_\_\_\_ CS \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_\_\_\_\_ )
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt Letter of Intent by \_\_\_\_\_ Committee
- further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

**Senate Bill:**

- same title
- new title

**House Bill:**

- same title
- technical title
- new: SCR # \_\_\_\_\_

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#

**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#
DCED	2/7/03		✓	1

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:		DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
Seekins	<i>Ralph Seekins</i>	✓			
B. Stevens	<i>Ben Stevens</i>	✓			
Wagner	<i>Tommy Wagner</i>	✓			
Dyson	<i>Paul Dyson</i>	✓			
Elton	<i> </i>			✓	
Lincoln	<i> </i>				
Ogan	CHAIR: <i>Scott Ogan</i>				

**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT  
First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 1/21/03

FURTHER: Resources  
Finance

Date of 5-Day Notice: 1/23/03  
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: 3/28/03

Transportation Committee considered SENATE BILL NO. 31

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- new title

**House Bill:**

- same title
- technical title
- new: SCR # \_\_\_\_\_

**NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):**

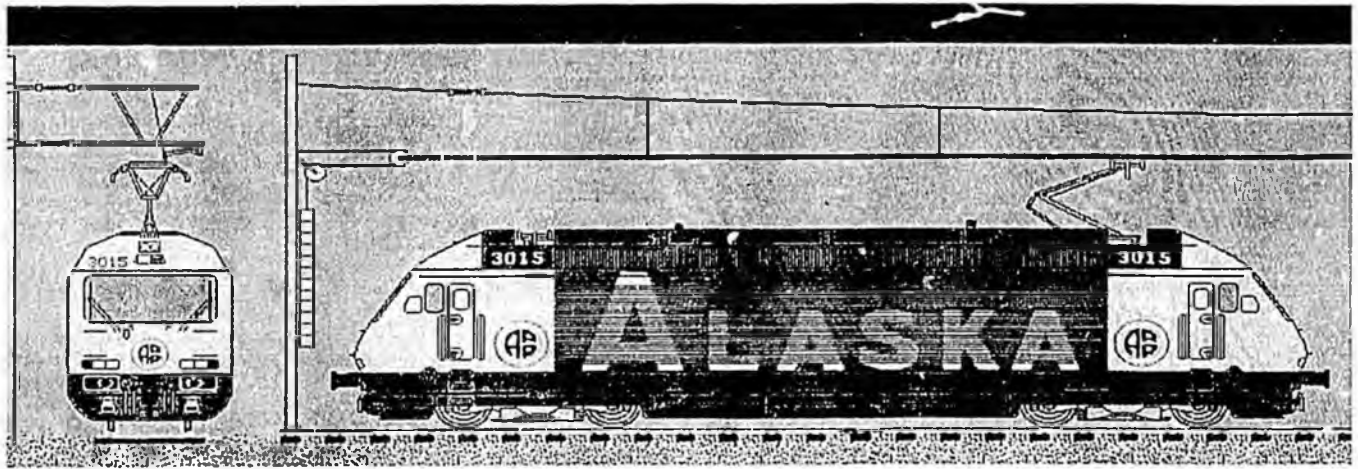
Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#
CEO	2/7/03		✓	1

**PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S):**

Department	Date	Fiscal	Zero	FN#

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:		DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
Therriault	<i>[Signature]</i>	✓			
Olson	<i>[Signature]</i>			✓	
Wagoner	<i>[Signature]</i>			✓	
Lincoln	<i>[Signature]</i>				✓
Cowdery	CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>	✓			



# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

From the office of  
SENATOR JOHN J. COWDERY

**INFORMATION PROFILE**  
on a RAILROAD AND  
TRANSPORTATION and  
UTILITY CORRIDOR TO  
CONNECT ALASKA WITH  
THE REST OF THE  
NORTH AMERICAN RAIL  
SYSTEM

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capital  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
*Richard F. Schmitz, editor*



(907) 269 0222

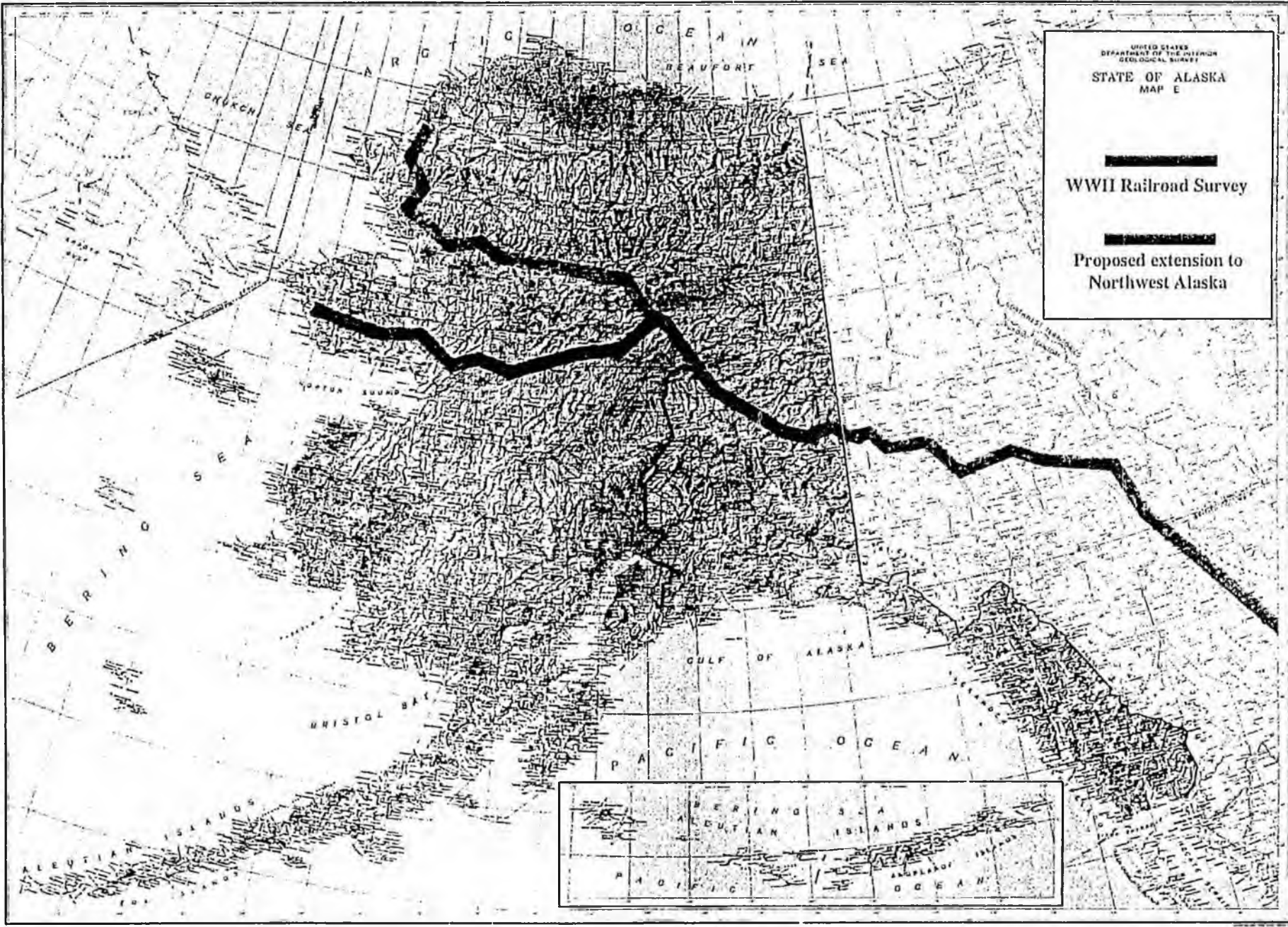
[www.cowdery.com](http://www.cowdery.com)

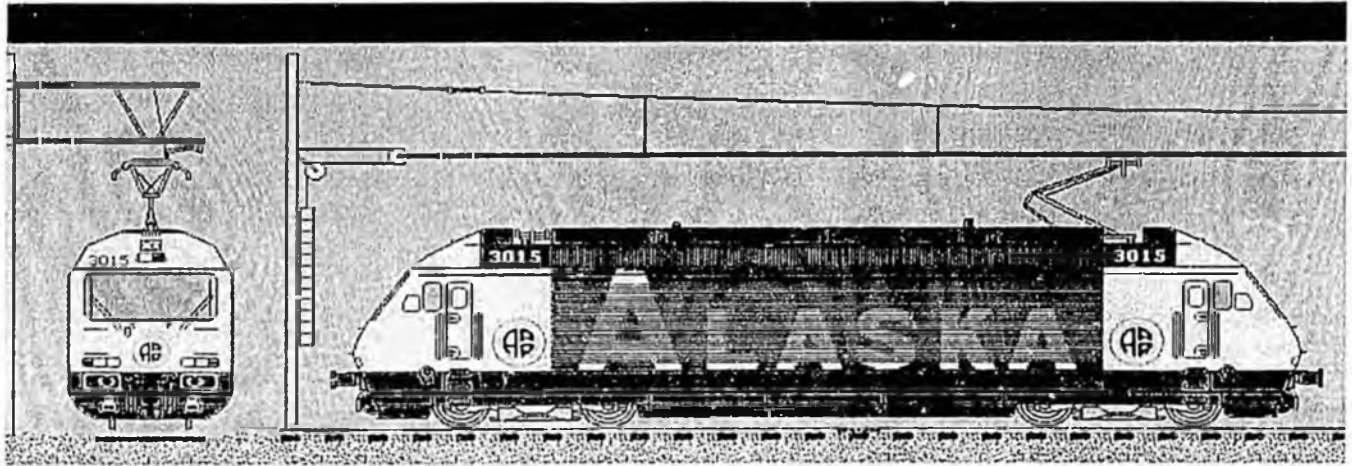
(907) 465 4921

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
STATE OF ALASKA  
MAP E

—  
WWII Railroad Survey

—  
Proposed extension to  
Northwest Alaska





# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

# SECTION

# 1

'Rails to Resources' packet

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Richard F. Schmitz, editor



(907) 269 0222

[www.cowdery.com](http://www.cowdery.com)

(907) 465 4921

# Rails to Resources

Bringing Alaska and the Yukon closer to the world



United States Senator Frank H. Murkowski

Informational Packet on S. 2253

Introduced during the 106th Congress of the United States Senate

June, 2000

*Here is an Op-Ed on the Senator's view on expanding railroads in Alaska. It was put into the public domain on March 15, 2000, just prior to the introduction of S. 2253, the Rails to Resources Act of 2000.*

# Let's Get Alaska's Economy Back on Track by Extending Railroads

By Senator Frank Murkowski

Back in April 1915, President Woodrow Wilson decided that construction of a railroad to Alaska's Interior was the single greatest step he could take to unlock the then territory's great promise and to get the region's economy on track.

Some eighty-five years later times have *not* changed.

Alaska and the neighboring Yukon Territory in Canada are still North America's last untapped storehouse of mineral and natural resource wealth. We now know where much of that treasure lies — economic transportation to get the materials to market being the chief impediment to its development.

Over the years one thing has changed: We now know how to develop our mineral, energy and timber resources in an environmentally sensitive manner, so we can protect the beauty and the wildlife of the North, while producing jobs to sustain the region's human inhabitants.

We know there is a mineral zone that extends throughout the Yukon-Tanana uplands near Faro, Y.T., north to Fairbanks. The zone, home already to the Fort Knox gold mine in Alaska and the future home of mines working the huge Pogo gold deposit, contains large amounts of silver, tungsten, copper, lead, zinc and other ores. On the Alaska side of the border there are already more than 14 major hardrock deposits identified, while in the Yukon there are more than 10 major mineral deposits known. This does not include the Alaska coal deposits a line could move to Lower 48 or East Asian markets.

The same zone is also filled with timber. Within just 15 miles of a likely 1,200-mile railroad corridor through Canada into Alaska, there are 1.4 billion board feet of hardwood pole timber and almost 1.7 billion board feet of mixed pole timber.

Further to the North lies a second



*Senator Frank H. Murkowski of Alaska*

developmental target that another railroad could help get on track. That is the huge low-pollution, high-quality coal deposits at Point Lay and also the vast minerals of the Amber mining district farther to the southeast.

It would take just a 90-mile line to carry the coal from Point Lay to the Red Dog mine where a 60-mile line along the existing mine haul road would carry it to tidewater. Such a railroad could bring energy, in the form of coal, to the mine where it could be used to power a new electro-refining technology that would add tremendous value to the zinc-lead ore being shipped from Alaska, and most importantly provide additional jobs to the region. It also would finally allow some of the North Slope's 6 trillion tons of coal to be exported.

It would take just a 150-mile line to access the vast hard-rock resources of the Ambler Mining District and bring them to the coast, or about a 350-

mile line to tie into the Alaska Railroad heading south.

Some would say talk of railroad extension is nothing more than "pie-in-the-sky" rhetoric. But railroads offer a host of benefits. They are the most energy efficient form of transportation. More importantly, they are one of the most environmentally sensitive forms of transportation. Railroads offer controlled access that removes the environmental threat of uncontrolled development. They emit the lowest levels of air pollution and usually cause the least disruption to the land.

And a rail corridor would encourage the co-location of all pipelines and power transmission lines — a process that makes especially good

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**I propose a public/private alliance to conduct a comprehensive feasibility study. Let's join forces to make a modest investment to examine this carefully.**

*- US Senator Frank H. Murkowski, speaking to the CAN/AM Border Trade Alliance in September of 1999*

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environmental sense.

Last year, after talks with Canadian Parliamentarians during the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Conference, I held discussions with Canadian Ambassador Raymond Chretien and Canadian Minister of Transport David Collinette, and later with the Canadian-American Border Trade Alliance. In January I was further encouraged by estimates that their might be 120 million tons of freight a year from new mines and timber development along the Alaska-Canada rail corridor that would utilize such a new railroad link.

Thus I am introducing legislation in Congress to advance consideration of that railroad project. My bill will create an impartial bilateral commission to study the economic, environmental

and engineering feasibility of completing the transcontinental railroad linking Canada with Alaska.

A joint commission should have the funding — I'm proposing \$6 million — and the authority to oversee a comprehensive feasibility study of a line from where the Canadian rail system ends at either Fort Nelson or near Fort St. James, about 900 miles from the Alaska border, northward to link up with the Alaska Railroad, 270 miles from the border near Fairbanks.

My bill would create an 18-member commission, half being appointed by each country. The commission would be fully representative of the residents of the area and also include scientific expertise to make sure that the difficult issues surrounding a railroad will be thoughtfully considered.

Quick action to set up the commission is particularly timely since a decision is likely within the next year on whether the United States should proceed with construction of an anti-missile defense system. And perhaps the best site for an initial 100-missile interceptor base is at Delta. That decision might justify extending the railroad to Fort Greeley, 80 miles closer to the border than Eielson Air Force Base — reducing the amount of additional track needed in Alaska to about 190 miles.

We should not be afraid to think seriously about big projects. Just because they're daunting, doesn't make them impossible. In this day and age of great concern for the environment: if one assumes — as I do — that the resources of the Yukon and Alaska inevitably will be developed, then rail looks like a very healthy way to make that possible.

All the commission will do is bring about debate. It will consider and explore new ideas. If a railroad connection is economically, environmentally and socially sound, then we should move ahead with it. If it is not, then it should be dropped. But at the very least, let's give the idea an honest hearing, now before any more decades pass.

-30-

## The North American Rail System

### *From Real Horses to Real Horsepower*

The first primitive "railroad" in the United States used horse-drawn cars on wooden rails, but experiments with steam locomotion began in the early 1800s, and in 1831, regular steam powered service began in South Carolina. Rapid expansion followed. Four years later, over 1,000 miles of track had been laid, and there were 200 railroad charters in eleven states.

Western development in the United States spurred even greater growth. By 1860, there were 11,000 miles of track. The westward expansion also prompted the first Congressional land grants to railroads. Government leaders felt that railroads would spur settlement, and the grants allowed companies not only to retain the rights of way for rail lines but to have saleable land to offset construction costs.

In the United States, four of the first five transcontinental railroads were largely made possible by such grants, along with a considerable number of smaller lines in the western United States. A total of 31 million acres of public land was appropriated to dozens of rail-lines. A receiving company was given the right-of-way along with alternate sections of land, and the Federal Government generally raising the price of the sections it kept. In return, all rates were reduced by 50% for Federal traffic. From 1850 until the practice was ended in 1946, it is estimated that the government saved \$900 million; a considerable deal considering that the land was only worth a total of \$500 million at the time it was granted. After the Civil War ended, trackage grew from 35,000 miles to an all-time high of 254,000 miles in 1916.

Canada's first railroad began operations in 1836, but by the middle of the century, although some 40 companies had been granted

government permission to build rail lines, only six had actually laid any track, totaling only 80 miles. In 1849, the government stepped in to help, offering to lend enough money to cover half the construction costs of any line longer than 74 miles (120 kilometers).

Companies proved eager to take Canada's offer. By 1860, Canada's rail lines reached more than 2,000 miles. The first east-west link was achieved in 1885 when the last spike in the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven. That set the tone, and in just 50 years, from 1850 to 1900, the miles of track available to Canada's railroads grew from 80 miles to 19,000.

Today, Canadian National operates about 17,000 miles of track in Canada and another 950 miles in the United States. The CN network serves all five of Canada's major ports: Halifax, Montreal, Prince Rupert, Thunder Bay, and Vancouver.

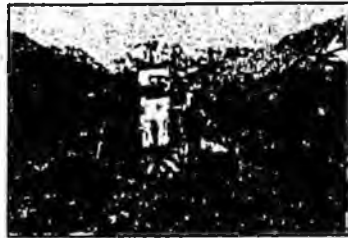
Meanwhile, Canadian Pacific operates a 15,000 mile network extending from Montreal to Vancouver and into the U.S. midwest and northeast. It serves ports on the east coasts of Canada and the U.S. and the Port of Vancouver.

Technological developments for rail lines rode the swelling tide of industrial change. Larger, more powerful locomotives, cars with larger capacities, improved couplers, the application of air-brakes, as well as adoption of standard gauge rail and standard time resulted in huge gains of efficiency and economic rail service. The development of national, rather than regional, economies in North America is owed in no small way to the influence of our railroads.

## The Alaska Railroad

The history of the Alaska Railroad begins in 1903 with the Alaska Central Railway; a failed venture that managed to lay only 71 miles of track out of Seward, in an unsuccessful attempt to reach Anchorage.

But Congress still felt it was wrong that a territory twice the size of Texas had no rail system. The Alaska Railroad Organic Act of March 12, 1914 required incoming President Woodrow Wilson to construct a rail not to exceed 1,000 miles and, among other things, to "...best aid in the development of the agricultural and mineral or other resources of Alaska...and so as to provide transportation of coal for the Army and Navy, transportation of troops, arms, munitions of war, the mails, and for other governmental and public uses." The act gave the President broad powers to acquire land, operate terminals, or anything else that could help make the railroad a reality.



In 1915, the government purchased the remains of the Alaska Central for \$1.2 million, and selected the current route northward. In 1917, it also bought the Tanana Valley Railroad, a narrow-gauge miners' line northwest of Fairbanks, for \$300,000. These acquisitions formed the nucleus of the present system.

By the end of 1920, the Alaska Engineering Commission completed 382 miles of new track, and rebuilt the original 71 miles out of Seward and 32 miles in the Tanana Valley. The main obstacle for completion were bridges to span the Tanana River and Hurricane Gulch. The Tanana bridge had a 701 foot span, which at the time was the

longest such in the United States. The Hurricane Gulch bridge spanned a total of 918 feet with a height of 296 feet.

Just before his untimely death, on July 15, 1923, President Warren G. Harding drove the golden spike officially completing the Alaska Railroad.

Military bases and construction projects starting in the 1930s spurred continued refinements to accommodate heavier loads and straighter hauls, and a large "picture postcard" terminal was built in Fairbanks. The assumption was that the latter would become the terminus for a railroad across British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to link Alaska with the railways of the lower 48 states.

World War II provided another influx of new equipment. Post-war rehabilitation encouraged passenger service and in 1946, a blue and gold streamliner, the AuRoRa, made its first run between Anchorage and Fairbanks. For military purposes, a spur to Whittier had been established by tunneling next to Portage Glacier in 1944.

Also during World War II, in 1942, U.S. Army Engineers surveyed a route that would have taken the railroad all the way from Fairbanks to Prince George, British Columbia, connection to the North American rail system there, and extended the Alaska portion of the line all the way to Teller, on the northwest coast.

Although the latter parts of the once-planned system have not yet been built, the U.S. Department of Defense has consistently maintained that Alaska's strategic location remains critical, and that rail is an essential element of a comprehensive defense transportation system.

The Alaska Railroad was transferred from the Federal Government to the State of Alaska in 1983, and today it remains a great asset.

## Proposed Railroad Corridor Resources

The Tanana uplands, which stretch over 250 miles from the Yukon Territory into Fairbanks, Alaska, appears to be rich in base metal potential (gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc, molybdenum, and tin). Because of the lack of infrastructure, there has been little detailed exploration for base metals other than gold in this region. With rail access, there is no question that significant new base metal deposits will be identified.

The Uplands have a history of incredible resource potential dating back to the gold rush days along the Yukon River. Today the area still remains mostly as it was then: inaccessible. In spite of this, one of the most productive gold mines in the United States, Fort Knox, operates just outside of Fairbanks and produces over 1,000 ounces of gold per day. Access is currently being worked out to reach the Pogo deposit, further to the east, which contains an estimated 5.2 million ounces of gold. Although gold is still a draw, the uplands contain tremendous amounts of silver, tungsten, copper,

enough to allow barge traffic. The Matanuska-Susitna Valley region to the south hides yet another large, high quality coal deposit that already sits on the Alaska Railroad line. With the development of a connection, this would be available for shipment to the rest of the continent.

Claim staking activity in Alaska also has a traditional fall-off curve, but recent years have not seen that tradition followed. 1998 was the third \$1 billion year for mining in Alaska. Staking continued strong through the summer of 1999 with results still being processed. Figure 1 shows a select list of Alaska mines near the railroad corridor.

On the other side of the border in the Yukon, active mining, approvals, and exploration are all ongoing, but with similar access problems as occur in Alaska. 1998 mineral production exceeded \$100 million (Canadian), and the industry continues to play the largest role in the private sector economy of the territory. Recent exploration and development activity has reached a peak not seen since the Klondike Gold Rush. With a government committed to seeing a healthy investment climate for the mining industry combined with citizen support, mining potential for the Yukon has far to go. Figure 2 shows a few mines in the Yukon Territory near the proposed corridor.

Forestry information along the proposed corridor is similarly bright, but yet again with similar access problems. Within 15 miles of the corridor from the Yukon to Fairbanks lies 117 million cubic feet of hardwood pole timber and 141 million cubic feet of mixed pole timber. The Ladue River valley alone has the potential to create a chipping industry in Alaska even with its low-value fiber.

The forest products industry is still a fledgling in the Yukon Territory, but activity has developed throughout the last couple of decades in the Watson Lake area. Other potential areas include Mayo, Dawson City, Teslin, and Haines Junction. Timber supply shortages in the northwest combined with increased demand in Asian markets keep the future of this industry positive, but much of the territory has yet to be surveyed.



*Silver/gold prospect in the Chulitna mining district.  
-photo by K. H. Clautice*

lead, zinc, and other minerals in identified deposits.

Further to the northwest lies the largest coal field in the United States near Point Lay. Not only is this coal very near the surface, but it is of exceptional quality averaging 12,000 BTUs and an extremely low sulfur content of less than 0.02%. Not far south from Point Lay is the Red Dog zinc mine, which last summer announced new finds. Unfortunately, the mine can only ship product for a few months of the year when pack ice retreats

## Rails to Resources

figure 1, mining data in Alaska

Alaska Mines	Ownership	Resource Information
Koyukuk-Huges mining district	production mostly from Alaska Gold Co.	231,000 oz Au produced 1930-1995
Innoko-Tolstoi mining district		Placer Au district; significant Au-Sb-Hg potential 706,267 oz Au produced through 1995
Hot Springs mining district	(numerous)	Placer Au-Sn district; 568,632 oz Au and 720,000 lb cassiterite produced through 1995
Fairbanks mining district	(numerous)	8,022,434 oz placer Au 1902-1995; 304,548 oz Au and over 4 million lbs Sb from veins and shear zones produced through 1990
Fort Knox	Kinross Gold Corp.	3,745,000 oz Au proven and probable reserves open at depth; 702,295 oz Au produced between 1996 and 1998
Ryan Lode	reclamation by La Teko Resources Inc.	822,200 oz Au and 2.4 million oz Au in two shear zones
Grant Mine		212,000 tons of 0.36 oz/ton Au
True North	La Teko Resources Inc.	Estimated 1,314,000 oz Au
Gil Claims	Kinross Gold Corp./Teryl Resources Corp.	Resource of 433,000 oz Au
Delta massive sulfide belt		40 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Zn, Pb, Ag, Au
Taurus		Cu-Au prospect; 140 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Au, Mo
Big Creek/Ladue		Pb-An-Ag massive sulfide prospects
Slate Creek	Slate Creek	55 million tons of 6.3% high quality chrysotile asbestos
Fortymile mining district	Kennecott Exploration Co.	Placer Au district; 534,974 oz Au produced 1883-1995
Pogo	Teck Corp./Sumitomo Metal Mining America Inc.	5.2 million oz Au reserves; exploration and development on-going
Red Dog Mine*	Cominco Alaska Inc.	157.8 million tons proven and probable reserves containing percentages of Zn, Pb, Ag; production and exploration on-going; over 1 million tons of concentrate produced in 1998

\*Red Dog Mine, in Northwest Alaska, could become the terminus for a spur from Fairbanks to the Ambler mining district.

figure 2, mining data in the Yukon Territory

Yukon Mines	Ownership	Resource information
Brewery Creek Mine	Viceroy Resource Corp.	613,000 contained oz Au; 1997-1998 production of 125,025 oz Au
Kudz Ze Kayah Property	Cominco Ltd.	13 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Pb, Zn, Ag, Au; final approvals expected in 1999
Sa Dena Hes Property	Cominco Ltd.	3.2 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Pb, Zn, Ag; opened in 1991 but closed in 1992 due to low prices
Wolverine Property	Boliden Ltd./Atna Resources Ltd.	6.237 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Pb, Zn, Ag, Au; further delineation planned
Minto	Asarco Inc./Minto Explorations Ltd.	7.2 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Ag, Au; production planned for late 2000
Carmacks Copper	Western Copper Holdings Ltd.	14.1 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Au; undergoing final stages of environmental assessment
Division Mt. Coal	Cash Resources	52.9 million ton resource at 9,328 BTU/lb and 0.43% Sulfur; under study with environmental assessment to begin next year
Wolverine	Atna Resources/Expatriate Resources	6.2 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Zn, Cu, Pb, Ag, Au; metallurgical work planned
Wolf	Atna Resources/YGC Resources	4.1 million ton inferred resource containing percentages of: Zn, Pb, Ag; further exploration planned
Fyre Lake	Pacific Ridge Exploration	15.4 million tons preliminary resource containing percentages of: Cu, Co, Au; still in exploration

## Rails to Resources

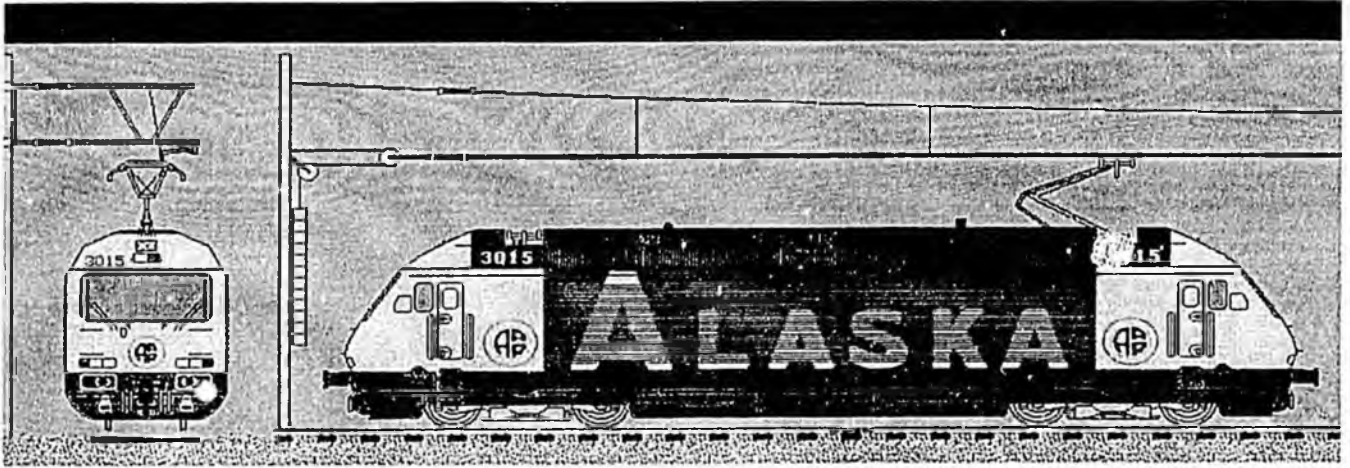
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Minto	Asarco Inc./Minto Explorations Ltd.	7.2 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Ag, Au; production planned for late 2000
Carmacks Copper	Western Copper Holdings Ltd.	14.1 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Cu, Au; undergoing final stages of environmental assessment
Division Mt. Coal	Cash Resources	52.9 million ton resource at 9,328 BTU/lb and 0.43% Sulfur; under study with environmental assessment to begin next year
Wolverine	Atna Resources/Expatriate Resources	6.2 million ton reserve containing percentages of: Zn, Cu, Pb, Ag, Au; metallurgical work planned
Wolf	Atna Resources/YGC Resources	4.1 million ton inferred resource containing percentages of: Zn, Pb, Ag; further exploration planned
Fyre Lake	Pacific Ridge Exploration	15.4 million tons preliminary resource containing percentages of: Cu, Co, Au; still in exploration



# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

# SECTION

# 2

Legislation

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Richard F. Schmitz, editor



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Anchorage

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## **SPONSOR STATEMENT FOR SB 31**

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*"An Act relating to a railroad utility corridor for extension of the Alaska Railroad to Canada and for the extension of the Alaska Railroad to connect with the North American Railroad system."*

**G**rowing Alaska's economy and ending a history of boom-and-bust cycles depends on improving our state's transportation infrastructure. The purpose of SB 31 is to advance the inclusion of Alaska in the contiguous North American rail system.

Without appropriating funds, SB 31 authorizes the Alaska Railroad Corp. to delineate a transportation and utility corridor from its terminus at Eielson AFB to the Alaska-Canada border. After survey and full delineation is achieved, state land would be transferred to the railroad fee simple title.

SB 31 also authorizes and encourages the railroad to obtain ownership or a right of way through any other lands, whether federal or private. A separate section authorizes the railroad to investigate further extension in order to make a connection with the North American rail system, logically in British Columbia.

This legislation mandates a 500-foot wide corridor that could allow for other uses such as fiber optic cable or power transmission lines. In addition, the corridor allows for specific railroad-related uses such as sidings, depots and materials storage.

Completing this last transcontinental railroad will benefit the mining, agriculture, tourism, food processing and oil and gas sectors of Alaska's economy. For example, the corridor between Eielson AFB and the border with Canada bisects a proven range of rich mineral potential, including the Pogo Project near Delta Junction.

SB 31 allows the Alaska Railroad to use funds it can obtain – such as from federal appropriations or sale of bonds – to survey and obtain a right of way to the Canadian border.

As world trade grows, this rail connection can only increase Alaska's economic ties with the rest of the nation and North America as a whole.

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 31(RES)**  
**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**  
**TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY THE SENATE RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Offered: 4/24/03**

**Referred: Finance**

**Sponsor(s): SENATORS COWDERY, Wilken**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to a transportation corridor for extension of the Alaska Railroad to  
2 Canada and to extension of the Alaska Railroad to connect with the North American  
3 railroad system."

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 \* Section 1. AS 42.40 is amended by adding new sections to article 5 to read:

6       **Sec. 42.40.460. Extension of the Alaska Railroad.** (a) The corporation may  
7 delineate a proposed transportation corridor between the existing railroad utility  
8 corridor of the Alaska Railroad and the border of Alaska and Canada. The  
9 transportation corridor shall be 500 feet wide except where, in the corporation's  
10 discretion, physical obstacles or private land ownership patterns make a narrower  
11 transportation corridor appropriate. The transportation corridor may be designated for  
12 a use identified under AS 38.35.020(a) or AS 42.40.350(b), and, subject to this  
13 section, other transportation and utility uses. The corporation may also identify land  
14 for use as rail land that can be developed for terminal, station, and maintenance

1 facilities, switching yards, and other purposes associated with the transportation  
2 corridor. The corporation shall prepare a complete legal description of the proposed  
3 transportation corridor and the rail land identified under this subsection.

4 (b) In performing the work authorized by (a) of this section, the corporation in  
5 consultation with interested parties shall consider the following factors:

- 6 (1) safety;
- 7 (2) grade and alignment standards that are commensurate with rail and  
8 utility construction standards and that minimize the prospect of at-grade railroad and  
9 highway crossings;
- 10 (3) availability of construction materials;
- 11 (4) effects on and service to adjacent communities and potential  
12 intermodal transportation connections;
- 13 (5) environmental concerns;
- 14 (6) use of public land to the maximum degree possible;
- 15 (7) minimization of probable construction costs;
- 16 (8) the location of and the opportunity to obtain access to identified  
17 natural resources that could contribute significantly to the economic development of  
18 the state and Canada;
- 19 (9) avoidance of possibly unstable ground due to thawing of frozen  
20 soils; and
- 21 (10) prior and established traditional uses.

22 (c) If the corporation identifies all or a portion of the proposed transportation  
23 corridor or associated rail land and if the Department of Natural Resources, after  
24 consultation with the corporation and potentially affected parties, finds that the  
25 location of the proposed transportation corridor and associated rail land minimizes  
26 adverse effects on existing and potential rights-of-way and land uses associated with  
27 the location, construction, and operation of a gas pipeline in a manner that is in the  
28 best interest of the state,

29 (1) the Department of Natural Resources shall reserve the  
30 transportation corridor and associated rail land across state land identified by the  
31 corporation, subject to valid existing rights and provisions of this section;

1                   (2) the department shall continue to manage the land reserved under  
 2 (1) of this subsection; the department shall consult with the corporation before  
 3 disposing of an interest in land within the transportation corridor and associated rail  
 4 land; the department shall condition authorizations for activities on the reserved land  
 5 to protect the right of the corporation to construct the railroad or other uses identified  
 6 for the land;

7                   (3) the department and the corporation shall cooperate to identify, on a  
 8 continuing basis and to the extent practicable, the potential crossings for economic  
 9 development and public access along the land reserved for the transportation corridor  
 10 and associated rail land; and

11                   (4) while the land is reserved for the transportation corridor and  
 12 associated rail land under this subsection, the department may retain money received  
 13 from disposal or third-party use of the land.

14                   (d) If the corporation notifies the Department of Natural Resources that the  
 15 corporation will begin construction of a railroad improvement on a segment of the  
 16 transportation corridor or associated rail land and the corporation has identified a  
 17 source of funding for the construction, then, as of the beginning of construction of that  
 18 segment, the department shall delegate authority to manage land within that segment  
 19 of the transportation corridor and associated rail land to the corporation, including the  
 20 authority to authorize or permit use of the land by third parties under the provisions of  
 21 this chapter, subject to

22                   (1) valid existing rights; and

23                   (2) the authority of the department to

24                   (A) identify and reserve rights-of-way for potential future  
 25 crossings under (g) of this section; and

26                   (B) after consultation with the corporation, identify, reserve,  
 27 authorize, and manage land within the transportation corridor and associated  
 28 rail land for future right-of-way leases and uses under AS 38.35.

29                   (e) Upon completion of construction of the railroad improvement on all or a  
 30 portion of the reserved transportation corridor or associated rail land,

31                   (1) the corporation shall, without cost to the Department of Natural

1 Resources, provide the department with a survey of the state land within a 200-foot  
2 corridor, 100 feet on each side of the as-built centerline of track, and the associated  
3 rail land;

4 (2) the Department of Natural Resources shall convey the state's entire  
5 interest in the land within the boundaries of the survey to the corporation, subject to  
6 valid existing rights, and reserving to the state (A) the interests required by  
7 AS 38.05.125; (B) the right of the department to identify and reserve rights-of-way for  
8 potential future crossings under (g) of this section; and (C) the authority of the  
9 department to identify, reserve, authorize, and manage land within the transportation  
10 corridor and associated rail land for future right-of-way leases and uses under  
11 AS 38.35; the conveyance of land under this paragraph shall be without cost to the  
12 corporation except for the direct administrative costs of the department;

13 (3) the Department of Natural Resources shall assign any existing  
14 contracts within that segment of the transportation corridor and associated rail land to  
15 the corporation; the corporation may thereafter retain the revenue from the conveyed  
16 land; the department shall prorate revenue from contracts affecting both conveyed and  
17 unconveyed land;

18 (4) the remaining state land in a segment of the transportation corridor  
19 in which the corporation has received a conveyance under this section shall be  
20 managed by the Department of Natural Resources as a transportation corridor unless  
21 the department determines the land is no longer needed for that purpose; and

22 (5) the remaining segments of the transportation corridor in which the  
23 corporation has not completed construction and any associated state land designated as  
24 rail land shall continue to be managed by the Department of Natural Resources as a  
25 transportation corridor and associated rail land under (c) and (d) of this section.

26 (f) Notwithstanding other provisions of this section, before the Department of  
27 Natural Resources grants a gas pipeline right-of-way lease under AS 38.35.020(a)  
28 across a transportation corridor or associated rail land delineated, identified, reserved,  
29 or conveyed under this section, the department shall consult with the corporation; if a  
30 railroad improvement has not been constructed on a segment of the transportation  
31 corridor or associated rail land that is crossed by the proposed gas pipeline right-of-

1 way, the department may adjust the location of the transportation corridor or  
2 associated rail land if the department finds that relocation of the transportation  
3 corridor or associated rail land to accommodate the proposed gas pipeline right-of-way  
4 is in the best interest of the state.

5 (g) In delegating management authority over or conveying all or a portion of  
6 state land to the corporation, the Department of Natural Resources shall reserve the  
7 right to authorize, by lease, permit, or other method, a person to cross or construct  
8 access across the transportation corridor and associated rail land; however, before  
9 authorizing a crossing or construction of access, the department shall obtain  
10 concurrence from the corporation that the proposed crossing or construction is  
11 consistent with applicable safety standards and, to the extent practical, minimizes  
12 effects on railroad operating efficiency. Neither the corporation nor the state is liable  
13 for claims arising from public use of the transportation corridor and associated rail  
14 land, except to the extent the claims arise from the gross negligence of the state, the  
15 corporation, their employees, or their contractors, respectively. The department shall  
16 indemnify the corporation consistent with AS 42.40.420(1) - (3) for claims or related  
17 litigation arising from an authorization issued by the department under this section,  
18 except to the extent the claims arise from the gross negligence of the corporation, its  
19 employees, or its contractors.

20 (h) The corporation shall,

21 (1) as the corporation considers appropriate, exercise its authority  
22 under this chapter to acquire rights-of-way across land within the transportation  
23 corridor and associated rail land that is subject to the corporation's power of eminent  
24 domain;

25 (2) upon delineation of the transportation corridor and identification of  
26 associated rail land, expeditiously work with federal officials to secure reclassification  
27 and withdrawal of federal land for reservations and rights-of-way across the federal  
28 land for use as transportation corridor and rail land; and

29 (3) before undertaking acquisition of federal land or expending federal  
30 funds, prepare a report evaluating the effects of construction of an extension of the  
31 Alaska Railroad across federal land; the statement must satisfy the requirements for an

1 environmental impact statement under 42 U.S.C. 4332.

2 (i) The requirements of AS 38.04.065 and 38.05.300, relating to classification  
3 and reclassification of land, are inapplicable to actions taken by the Department of  
4 Natural Resources under this section.

5 (j) The Department of Natural Resources shall retain the classifications and  
6 reservations of land identified for use as a proposed utility corridor and railroad right-  
7 of-way under former AS 19.05.122 until the corporation informs the department in  
8 writing that the land is not needed by the corporation for a utility corridor. If, under  
9 (a) of this section, the corporation includes land identified under former AS 19.05.122  
10 as part of the proposed transportation corridor, the department shall manage that land  
11 under provisions of this section.

12 (k) To complete the work authorized by this section, the corporation may enter  
13 into agreements relating to the work with the federal government, an agency or  
14 instrumentality of the state, a municipality, or a private organization.

15 **Sec. 42.40.465. Extension of the Alaska Railroad to connect with the**  
16 **North American railroad system.** (a) The corporation may investigate extension of  
17 the Alaska Railroad from the border of Alaska and Canada to connect with the North  
18 American railroad system. The corporation may acquire land or interests in land in  
19 Canada as the corporation considers appropriate for the development, construction,  
20 and operation of an extension of the Alaska Railroad to connect with the North  
21 American railroad system.

22 (b) In performing the work authorized by (a) of this section, the corporation  
23 shall consider the following factors:

24 (1) safety;

25 (2) grade and alignment standards that are commensurate with rail and  
26 utility construction standards and that minimize the prospect of at-grade railroad and  
27 highway crossings;

28 (3) availability of construction materials;

29 (4) effects on and service to adjacent communities and potential  
30 intermodal transportation connections;

31 (5) environmental concerns;

- 1                   (6) use of public land to the maximum degree possible;
- 2                   (7) minimization of probable construction costs;
- 3                   (8) the location of and the opportunity to obtain access to identified
- 4 natural resources that could contribute significantly to the economic development of
- 5 the state and Canada;
- 6                   (9) avoidance of possibly unstable ground due to thawing of frozen
- 7 soils; and
- 8                   (10) prior and established traditional uses.

9    \* Sec. 2. AS 19.05.122 is repealed.

## POINTS ON SB 31

- SECTION 1: 2 new sections are added to AS 42.40
- SECTION 1(a) authorizes AKRR to designate 500-foot-wide corridor
- SECTION 1(b) factors the RR must consider
- SECTION 1(c) steps that unfold once AKRR is ready to delineate corridor
- SECTION 1(d) steps that unfold once AKRR is ready begin construction
- SECTION 1(e) steps that unfold once construction is completed
- SECTION 1(f) deals with possibility that gas pipeline may be ready to begin construction first
- SECTION 1(g) deals with railroad crossings
- SECTION 1(h) addresses other issues related to extending the railroad
- SECTION 1(i) removes some DNR control over affected state land
- SECTION 1(j) addresses other issue relating to DNR
- SECTION 1(k) Allows AKRR to enter into contracts with other entities.
- SECTION 2 repeals previous language relating to AKRR, which new language replaces.

## **SECTION 1(a)**

- AKRR is authorized to designate a 500-foot-wide corridor.
- AKRR is told to prepare a legal description of these lands.

## **SECTION 1(b)**

Factors AKRR must consider:

- Safety
- Grade and alignment
- Availability of materials
- Effects to nearby communities and roads, etc.
- Environment
- Use of public land
- Construction costs
- Location to natural resources
- Traditional use



## Sen. John J. Cowdery, Chair

Senate Transportation Committee

Call: 465-4921 Fax: 465-2069

### SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

**Section 1** of this bill amends **AS 42.40** by adding two new sections.

**Sec. 42.40.460** authorizes the Alaska Railroad Corp. to delineate a proposed railroad utility corridor between the Alaska Railroad where its present corridor ends (at Eielson AFB) and the Alaska-Canada border.

The criteria for the railroad to use in delineating the corridor are set as follows:

- If the corporation delineates all or a portion of the proposed utility corridor, and associated rail land, the Department of Natural Resources shall convey the state land within the corridor to the corporation without cost. [Subsection (a)]
- The railroad will consult with potential gasline developers or others to make certain the corridor is in the best location for all uses. [Subsection (b)]
- The corporation shall, as it considers appropriate, exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire rights-of-way across land within the corridor.
- The corporation shall work with federal officials to secure reclassification and withdrawal of federal land for use as the corridor.
- The corporation shall prepare a report evaluating the effects of construction of an extension across federal land.
- Subsection (c)

The requirements of **AS 38.05** regarding classification of state land do not apply to actions of DNR under this section.

DNR shall retain the classifications and reservations of any land previously identified for use as a proposed utility corridor and railroad right-of-way under **AS 19.05.122** until the corporation determines that land is no longer needed for a utility corridor.

The corporation may enter into agreements with federal and state agencies, municipalities and private land owners as necessary to implement this section.

**Sec. 42.40.465** authorizes the corporation to investigate extending the Alaska Railroad from the Alaska-Canada border to connect with the North American rail system.

**Section 2** of this bill repeals **AS 19.05.122** which presently provides that the Department of Transportation (DOT-PF) delineate a corridor for the extension of the Alaska Railroad to the Canadian Border.

106th CONGRESS  
2d Session

# S. 2253

To authorize the establishment of a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and for other purposes.

---

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

March 20, 2000

Mr. MURKOWSKI introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## A BILL

To authorize the establishment of a joint United States-Canada commission to study the feasibility of connecting the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Rails to Resources Act of 2000'.

### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that--

(1) rail transportation is an essential component of the North American intermodal transportation system;

(2) the development of economically strong and socially stable communities in the western United States and Canada was encouraged significantly by government policies promoting the development of integrated transcontinental, interstate and interprovincial rail systems in the states, territories and provinces of the two countries;

(3) United States and Canadian federal support for the completion of new elements of the transcontinental, interstate and interprovincial rail systems was halted before rail connections were established to the state of Alaska and the Yukon Territory;

(4) both public and private lands in Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, including lands held by aboriginal peoples, contain extensive deposits of oil, gas, coal and other minerals as well as valuable forest products which presently are inaccessible, but which could provide significant economic benefit to local communities and to both nations if an economically efficient transportation system was available;

(5) per ton of freight moved, rail transportation systems emit lower levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds than other modes of freight transportation;

## *Rails to Resources*

- (D) Proximity to mineral, timber and other resources.
- (E) Market outlook.
- (F) Environmental considerations.
- (G) Social effects, including changes in the use or availability of natural resources.
- (H) Potential financing mechanisms.

(3) ROUTE- The Agreement should provide for the Commission, upon finding that it is technologically and economically feasible to link the rail system in Alaska as described in paragraph (1), to determine one or more recommended routes for the rail segment that establishes the linkage, taking into consideration cost, distance, access to potential freight markets, environmental matters, and such other factors as the Commission determines relevant.

(4) COMBINED CORRIDOR EVALUATION- The Agreement should also provide for the Commission to consider whether it would be useful and technologically and economically feasible to combine the power transmission infrastructure and petroleum product pipelines of other utilities into one corridor with a rail extension of the rail system of Alaska.

(b) REPORT- The Agreement should require the Commission to submit to Congress and the Secretary of Transportation and to the Minister of Transport of the government of Canada, not later than 5 years after the Commission commencement date, a report on the results of the study, including the following:

(1) FEASIBILITY- The Commission's findings regarding the technological and economical feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska as described in subsection (a)(1).

(2) ROUTE- If such an action is determined technologically and economically feasible, the Commission's recommendations regarding the preferred route and any alternative routes for the rail segment establishing the linkage.

### SEC. 7. COMMENCEMENT AND TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.

(a) COMMENCEMENT- The Agreement should provide for the Commission to begin to function on the date on which all members are appointed to the Commission as provided for in the Agreement.

(b) TERMINATION- The Commission shall terminate 90 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under section 6.

### SEC. 8. FUNDING.

(a) RAILS TO RESOURCES FUND- The Agreement should provide for the following:

(1) ESTABLISHMENT- The establishment of an interest-bearing account to be known as the 'Rails to Resources Fund'.

(2) CONTRIBUTIONS- The contribution by the United States and the government of Canada to the Fund of amounts that are sufficient for the Commission to carry out its duties.

(3) AVAILABILITY- The availability of amounts in the Fund to pay the costs of Commission activities.

(4) DISSOLUTION- Dissolution of the Fund upon the termination of the Commission and distribution of the amounts in the Fund between the United States and the government of Canada.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS- Funds are hereby authorized to be appropriated to any Fund established as described in subsection (a)(1) in the total amount of \$6,000,000, to remain available until expended.

### SEC. 9. DEFINITIONS.

In this section:

(1) AGREEMENT- The term 'Agreement' means an agreement described in section 2.

(2) COMMISSION- The term 'Commission' means a commission established pursuant to any Agreement.

(3) COMMISSION COMMENCEMENT DATE- The date determined under section 6(a).

**SEC. 5. GOVERNANCE AND STAFFING OF COMMISSION**

(a) **CHAIRMAN-** The Agreement should provide for the Chairman of the Commission to be elected from among the members of the Commission by a majority vote of the members.

(b) **COMPENSATION AND EXPENSES OF UNITED STATES MEMBERS-**

(1) **COMPENSATION-** Each member of the Commission appointed by the President who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. Each such member who is an officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for services as an officer or employee of the United States.

(2) **TRAVEL EXPENSES-** The members of the Commission appointed by the President shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(c) **Staff-**

(1) **IN GENERAL-** The Agreement should provide for the appointment of a staff and an executive director to be the head of the staff.

(2) **COMPENSATION-** Funds made available for the Commission by the United States may be used to pay the compensation of the executive director and other personnel at rates fixed by the Commission that are not in excess of the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

(d) **OFFICE-** The Agreement should provide for the office of the Commission to be located in a mutually agreed location within the impacted areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory, and northern British Columbia.

(e) **MEETINGS-** The Agreement should provide for the Commission to meet at least biannually to review progress and to provide guidance to staff and others, and to hold, in locations within the affected areas of Alaska, the Yukon Territory and northern British Columbia, such additional informational or public meetings as the Commission deems necessary to the conduct of its business.

(f) **PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES-** The Agreement should authorize and encourage the Commission to procure by contract, to the maximum extent practicable, the services (including any temporary and intermittent services) that the Commission determines necessary for carrying out the duties of the Commission. In the case of any contract for the services of an individual, funds made available for the Commission by the United States may not be used to pay for the services of the individual at a rate that exceeds the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United States Code.

**SEC. 6. DUTIES.**

(a) **Study-**

(1) **IN GENERAL-** The Agreement should provide for the Commission to study and assess, on the basis of all available relevant information, the technological and economic feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system through the continuation of the rail system in Alaska from its northeastern terminus to a connection with the continental rail system in Canada.

(2) **SPECIFIC ISSUES-** The Agreement should provide for the study and assessment to include the consideration of the following issues:

(A) Railroad engineering.

(B) Land ownership.

(C) Geology.

## *Rails to Resources*

(6) rail transportation systems are capable of moving cargo with up to nine times the energy efficiency of highway transportation;

(7) rail transportation in otherwise isolated areas facilitates controlled access and reduced overall impact to environmentally sensitive areas;

(8) the extension of the continental rail system through northern British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to the current terminus of the Alaska Railroad would significantly benefit the U.S. and Canadian visitor industries by facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing effects on the surrounding areas;

(9) extension of the Alaska Railroad system to the Canadian border is consistent with the intent of Congress as expressed in the Alaska Railroad Organic Act of 1914, which called for a system of up to 1,000 miles in length; and

(10) ongoing research and development efforts in the rail industry continue to increase the efficiency of rail transportation, ensure safety, and decrease the impact of rail service on the environment.

### **SEC. 3. AGREEMENT FOR A UNITED STATES-CANADA BILATERAL COMMISSION.**

The President is authorized and urged to enter into an agreement with the government of Canada to establish a joint commission to study the technological and economic feasibility of linking the rail system in Alaska to the nearest appropriate point on the North American continental rail system.

### **SEC. 4. COMPOSITION OF COMMISSION.**

#### **(a) MEMBERSHIP-**

(1) **TOTAL MEMBERSHIP-** The Agreement should provide for the Commission to be composed of 18 members, of which 9 members are appointed by the President and 9 members are appointed by the government of Canada.

(2) **GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS-** The Agreement should provide for the membership of the Commission, to the maximum extent practicable, to be representative of--

(A) the interests of the local communities (including the governments of the communities), aboriginal peoples, and businesses that would be affected by the connection of the rail system in Alaska to the North American continental rail system; and

(B) a broad range of expertise in areas of knowledge that are relevant to the significant issues to be considered by the Commission, including economics, engineering, management of resources (such as minerals and timber), social sciences, fish and game management, environmental sciences, and transportation.

(b) **UNITED STATES MEMBERSHIP-** Under the Agreement, the President shall appoint the United States members of the Commission as follows:

(1) Two members from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of communities and local governments of Alaska.

(2) One member representing the State of Alaska, to be nominated by the Governor of Alaska.

(3) One member from among persons who are qualified to represent the interests of Native Alaskans residing in the area of Alaska that would be affected by the extension of rail service.

(4) Four members from among persons involved in commercial activities in Alaska who are qualified to represent commercial interests in Alaska, of which one shall be a representative of the Alaska Railroad Corporation.

(5) Two members from among scholars employed in institutions of higher education in Alaska, at least one of whom must be an engineer with expertise in subarctic transportation.

(c) **CANADIAN MEMBERSHIP-** The Agreement should provide for the Canadian membership of the Commission to be representative of broad categories of interests of Canada as the government of Canada determines appropriate, consistent with subsection (a)(2).

Introduced: 1/13/77  
 Referred: State Affairs and  
 Finance

BY SWANSON, BRADLEY, CHATTERTON,  
 HAYES, KELLY, MCKINNON, MEEKINS,  
 MILES, PARR AND PHILLIPS.

1 IN THE HOUSE

2 HOUSE BILL NO. 47

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 TENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to creation of a utility corridor for  
 7 extension of the Alaska Railroad; and providing for an  
 8 effective date."

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

10 \* Section 1. AS 19.05 is amended by adding a new section to read:

11 Sec. 19.05.122. UTILITY CORRIDOR FOR EXTENSION OF THE ALASKA RAIL-  
 12 ROAD. (a) The interior division of the department shall delineate a  
 13 proposed utility corridor for the extension of the Alaska Railroad to  
 14 the Canadian border. The proposed utility corridor shall include a  
 15 delineation of a proposed railroad right-of-way.

16 (b) The commissioner shall, in conformity with the Administrative  
 17 Procedure Act (AS 44.62), adopt a regulation approving, modifying, or  
 18 rejecting the proposed utility corridor and railroad right-of-way.

19 (c) If the commissioner approves or modifies the proposed utility  
 20 corridor and railroad right-of-way,

21 (1) the Department of Natural Resources shall classify, or  
 22 reclassify, and reserve any state land within the utility corridor for  
 23 use as a utility corridor and railroad right-of-way; and

24 (2) the department shall exercise its authority under sec. 40  
 25 of this chapter to acquire rights-of-way across land within the utility  
 26 corridor which is subject to the state's power of condemnation.

27 (d) The requirements of the Alaska Land Act (AS 38.05) relating to  
 28 classification and reclassification of land are inapplicable to actions  
 29 taken under this section.

Introduced: 1/13/77  
 Referred: State Affairs and  
 Finance

BY SWANSON, BRADLEY, CHATTERTON,  
 HAYES, KELLY, MCKINNON, MEEKINS,  
 PARR AND PHILLIPS

1 IN THE HOUSE

2 HOUSE BILL NO. 48 am

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 TENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act making a special appropriation to the Depart-  
 7 ment of Transportation and Public Facilities, interior  
 8 division, for delineation of a utility corridor and  
 9 railroad right-of-way for extension of the Alaska  
 10 Railroad; and providing for an effective date."

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

12 \* Section 1. The sum of \$865,000 is appropriated from the general fund to  
 13 the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, interior division, for  
 14 the purpose of reconnaissance photography and studies, field surveys, mapping,  
 15 engineering work, cost comparisons, and office work to delineate a utility  
 16 corridor and railroad right-of-way for extension of the Alaska Railroad to  
 17 the Canadian border.

18 \* Sec. 2. The unexpended and unobligated portion of this appropriation  
 19 lapses into the general fund June 30, 1979.

20 \* Sec. 3. This Act takes effect immediately in accordance with AS 01.10.-  
 21 070(c).

## Bill Text



## BILL ID: HB 183

00 SENATE CS FOR CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 183(TRA)(efd fld S)  
01 "An Act directing the identification and delineation of a transportation and utility  
02 corridor between Fairbanks and the Seward Peninsula."

03 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

04 \* Section 1. AS 19.25 is amended by adding a new section to read:

05 Sec. 19.25.123. FAIRBANKS - SEWARD PENINSULA TRANSPORTATION

06 AND UTILITY CORRIDOR. (a) Subject to legislative appropriation, the department  
07 shall identify and delineate a proposed transportation and utility corridor between  
08 Fairbanks and the western end of the Seward Peninsula.

09 (b) In performing the work required by (a) of this section,

10 (1) the railroad alignment and identification of a railroad right-of-way  
11 of not less than 500 feet, together with adjacent sites that can be developed for  
12 necessary construction materials, shall guide the identification and delineation of  
13 corridor; and

14 (2) the department shall consider the following factors:

01 (A) grade and alignment standards that are commensurate with  
02 rail and road construction standards;

03 (B) availability of construction materials;

04 (C) safety;

05 (D) impacts on and service to adjacent communities;

06 (E) environmental concerns;

07 (F) use of public land to the maximum degree possible;

08 (G) minimization of probable construction costs;

09 (H) the location of, and the opportunity to obtain access to

10 identified natural resources that could contribute significantly to the state's  
11 economic development; and

12 (I) prior and established traditional uses.

13 (c) Within 90 days after receiving a report transmitting the work of the  
14 department under (a) of this section, the commissioner shall, in conformity with  
15 AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), if necessary, adopt a regulation approving  
16 modifying, or rejecting the proposed corridor.

17 (d) If the commissioner approves or modifies the proposed corridor when  
18 presented under (c) of this section,

19 (1) the Department of Natural Resources shall promptly classify, or  
20 reclassify, and reserve any state land within the corridor and at adjacent sites that  
21 be developed for necessary construction materials for use as a corridor; and

22 (2) the department shall

23 (A) subject to legislative appropriation, exercise its authority  
24 under AS 19.05.040 to acquire rights-of-way across land within the corridor  
25 that is subject to the state's power of condemnation; and

26 (B) work with federal officials to secure reclassification and  
27 withdrawal of federal land in the corridor for reservations and rights-of-way  
28 across the federal land for use as a corridor.

29 (e) The requirements of AS 38.05 (Alaska Land Act) relating to classification  
30 and reclassification of land are inapplicable to actions taken under this section.

31 (f) To complete the work required by this section, the commissioner may  
01 accept any legal gifts and grants and may enter into contracts or other transactions  
02 agreements relating to it with the federal government, an agency or instrumentality  
03 of the state, a municipality, or a private organization.

04 (g) In this section, "corridor" means the transportation and utility corridor  
05 required to be identified and delineated by (a) of this section.

06 \* Sec. 2. AS 19.25.123, added by sec. 1 of this Act, is repealed July 1, 2055.

# Bill Text



## BILL ID: HB 184

00 CS FOR SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 184(FIN)

01 "An Act making a special appropriation to the Department of Transportation and  
02 Public Facilities to determine the cost of acquiring real property within the right  
03 proposed extension of the Alaska Railroad from Eielson Air Force  
04 Base to the Alaska-Canada border; and providing for an effective date."

05 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

06 \* Section 1. The sum of \$10,000 is appropriated from the general fund to the De  
07 of Transportation and Public Facilities for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1995, t  
08 the cost of acquiring private land, and private interests in land, sufficient to ac  
09 construction of an extension of the Alaska Railroad or construction of a transporta  
10 communication, or transmission facility within the right-of-way described in the Ap  
11 updated report of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities on Route S  
12 for the Alaska Railroad Extension from Eielson to Canadian Border.

13 \* Sec. 2. This Act takes effect July 1, 1994.

Bill Root:

Display Bill Root



TO REPORT PROBLEMS WITH BASIS INQUIRY

LIVE KTOO STREAMS 

Return to Basis Main Menu (18th Legislature)

Return to Legislature Home Page

CS FOR SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 12(FIN) am

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Amended: 3/5/99

Offered: 2/19/99

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES JAMES, Therriault, Dyson, Harris, Kemplen

SENATORS Wilken, Pete Kelly

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to a utility corridor and railroad right-of-way between the  
2 Alaska Railroad and the Alaska-Canada border."

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 \* Section 1. AS 19.05.122(a) is amended to read:

5 (a) Subject to legislative appropriation, [NOT LATER THAN APRIL 1,  
6 1982, THE INTERIOR DIVISION OF] the department shall delineate a proposed  
7 utility corridor, including a railroad right-of-way, between the right-of-way [FOR  
8 THE EXTENSION] of the Alaska Railroad and [TO] the Canadian border. The  
9 proposed utility corridor shall include a complete legal description of the proposed  
10 railroad right-of-way.

11 \* Sec. 2. AS 19.05.122(b) is amended to read:

12 (b) Within 90 days after receiving a report transmitting the work [OF THE  
13 INTERIOR DIVISION] of the department under (a) of this section, the commissioner  
14 shall, in conformity with AS 44.62 (Administrative Procedure Act), if necessary, adopt

1 a regulation approving, modifying, or rejecting the proposed utility corridor and  
2 railroad right-of-way.

3 \* Sec. 3. AS 19.05.122(c) is amended to read:

4 (c) If the commissioner approves or modifies the proposed utility corridor and  
5 railroad right-of-way,

6 (1) the Department of Natural Resources shall promptly

7 (A) classify, or reclassify, and reserve any state land within the  
8 utility corridor for use as a utility corridor and railroad right-of-way; and

9 (B) delineate the route of the utility corridor and railroad  
10 right-of-way in any system of land records maintained by the Department  
11 of Natural Resources under AS 38.05.035; and

12 (2) the department shall

13 (A) exercise its authority under AS 19.05.040 to acquire rights-  
14 of-way across land within the utility corridor which is subject to the state's  
15 power of condemnation;

16 (B) work with federal officials to secure reclassification and  
17 withdrawal of federal land in the utility corridor for reservations and rights-of-  
18 way across the federal land for use as a utility corridor and railroad right-of-  
19 way; and

20 (C) prepare a report evaluating the impact of construction of an  
21 extension of the Alaska Railroad across federal land within the railroad right-  
22 of-way; the statement shall satisfy the requirements for an "environmental  
23 impact statement" under 42 U.S.C. 4332.

24 \* Sec. 4. AS 19.05.122 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

25 (e) In performing the work required by (a) of this section, the railroad  
26 alignment and identification of a railroad right-of-way of not less than 500 feet,  
27 together with adjacent sites that can be developed for necessary construction materials,  
28 shall guide the identification and delineation of the corridor.

29 (f) To complete the work required by this section, the commissioner may  
30 accept and, subject to legislative appropriation, expend any legal gifts and grants  
31 relating to the work and may enter into agreements relating to the work with the

1 federal government, an agency or instrumentality of the state, a municipality, or a  
2 private organization.

# Alaska State Legislature

REPRESENTATIVE  
JEANNETTE JAMES  
P.O. Box 56622  
North Pole, Alaska 99705  
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FAX (907) 488-4271



White in Juneau  
State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska  
99801-1182  
(907) 465-3743  
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## House Of Representatives

House District 34

### SPONSOR STATEMENT

#### House Bill 12

1/28/99

### "An Act relating to an easement for the extension of the Alaska Railroad to the Alaska-Canada Border"

#### Why is this bill necessary?

- 1982 A corridor was delineated by statute, connecting Alaska's existing railroad with the Canadian Border.
- 1994 I sponsored and passed HB 184 authorizing \$10,000.00 for a study determining the cost of acquiring this right-of-way.
- 1995 D.O.T. reached a cost estimate of \$6,363,000.00 to acquire the right-of-way. Of the \$10,000.00 appropriated by HB 184 for this study, a total of \$7876.00 was expended.
- 1996 On May 5, the 1982 application to B.L.M. for this project was withdrawn by order of D.O.T. due to "lack of interest," in spite of my 1994 legislation which certainly indicated a continuing interest!
- 1999 HB 12 reauthorizes delineation of the corridor, subject to legislative appropriation. Thus this bill carries no fiscal impact. It merely reauthorizes and updates the 1982 statute.

Both the Canadian and Russian governments, as well as our own, are increasingly interested in a U.S.-Asian link via rail through Alaska. HB 12 allows eventual funding from any source, private or governmental, and I want the authorization on the books now so we aren't scrambling for it when project funds become available.

Advantages to Alaska are obvious: resource development, tourism, job opportunities for ALL areas of Alaska, with controlled access - and without the expensive maintenance problems of other modes of transportation.

1 federal government, an agency or instrumentality of the state, a municipality, or a  
2 private organization.

## Fiscal Analysis for SSHB 12

Listed below are the tasks, including estimated timeframes and costs, which House Bill 12 would require the Department of Transportation to complete upon legislative appropriation.

1. Review of route in original 1982 study, to determine and note changes in land status and other land use conflicts/3 months/\$30,000
2. Interagency review, comment and compilation assessment and determination of most appropriate route/2 months/\$20,000
3. Map revised route 1 month/\$7,500
4. Submit application to DNR for record notation 0.5 month/\$4,000.

These estimates are based on using the 1982 study with no major route changes. A quick review of the 1982 study indicates a high probability of necessary route changes due to land status changes

Should the legislature wish to acquire the right-of-way, a 1995 estimate of acquisition cost was \$6,363,000. It is safe to assume that a new estimate would be substantially higher due to increased land values and land status changes, and due to the fact that the original estimate included no permitting fees.

Prepared by Frank Mielke, Chief, Right of Way & Utilities, SE Region, D&ES, DOTPF  
2/1/99

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 51**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES JAMES, Dyson, Harris, Whitaker, Foster, Masek, Kott, Coghill, Davies, Croft, Murkowski, Hudson, Therriault, Ogan, Austerman, Kemplen, Cowdery

Introduced: 1/31/00

Referred: House Special Committee on World Trade and State/Federal Relations, Transportation

**A RESOLUTION**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16       **WHEREAS** rail transportation remains an important component of national and

1 continental defense planning; and

2       **WHEREAS** the North American rail transportation system will not be complete until  
3 it extends to all states, provinces, and territories on the continent; and

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

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

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

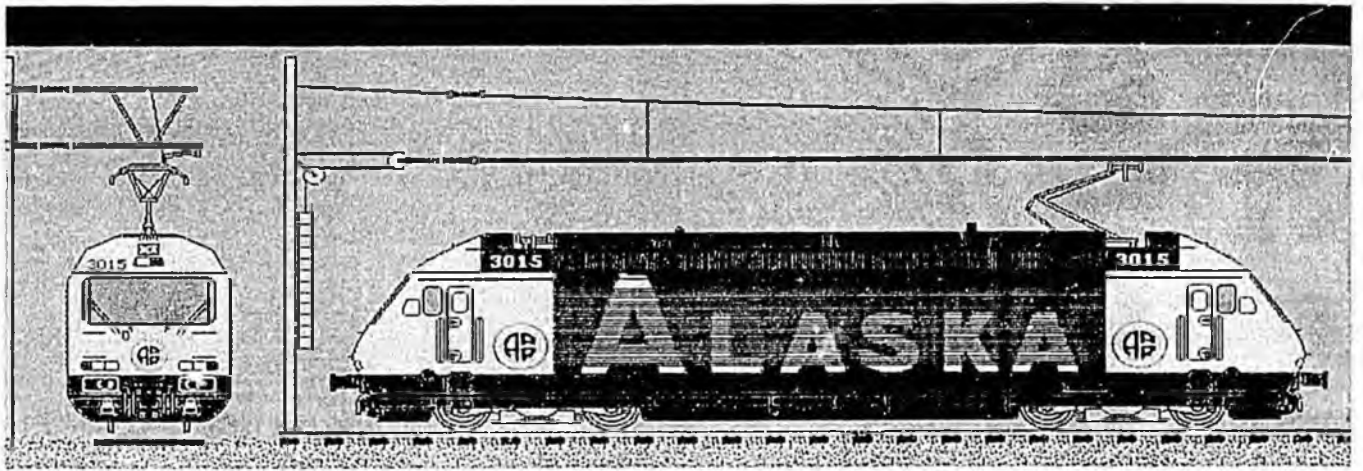
14       **WHEREAS** ongoing research and advancements in rail technology continue to  
15 increase the efficiency of rail transportation and ensure rail safety and decrease the effect of  
16 rail transportation on the environment;

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

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

28       **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests that  
29 funding for operation of the bilateral commission and for the conduct of the cooperative  
30 feasibility study be considered a priority for the governments of the United States, Canada,  
31 British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and the State of Alaska.

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



# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

# SECTION

# 3

Correspondence

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Richard F. Schmitz, editor



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(907) 465 4921

# ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION



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327 West Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
www.alaskarailroad.com

Executive Office  
Telephone No.: 907-265-2403  
Facsimile No.: 907-265-2312

January 24, 2003

The Honorable John Cowdery  
State Senate  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 101  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Cowdery:

Thank you for offering the Alaska Railroad the opportunity to provide a letter of support on Senate Bill 31 relating to the extension of the Alaska Railroad to Canada and the North American railroad system. We believe it is appropriate to extend the railroad to Canada and have been supportive of recent legislative and congressional efforts to study such a project.

We will take our lead from state and federal policy makers regarding rail extension initiatives. We certainly support extending or building new railroad lines and believe this falls under our mission to foster state and community economic development. We also want you to know that we stand ready to provide technical, engineering and operating expertise to help with planning.

While we support expanding Alaska's rail infrastructure, the additional maintenance and operations expense is an issue. An extension to Canada would increase the current Alaska Railroad mainline by a third – perhaps more if the Alaska Railroad were to extend beyond the border to Whitehorse or another Canadian destination. We would depend on added revenue to pay those bills.

Land ownership is also an important consideration. The Alaska Railroad believes the current model – allowing the railroad to support its capital budget through real estate earnings – has allowed the Railroad to operate without the use of state subsidies. We support the approach Senate Bill 31 takes which would transfer new right of way and necessary land for rail operations to the Railroad fee simple title.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to express our support and look forward to participating in legislative hearings as the issue unfolds this year.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. K. Gamble'.

Patrick K. Gamble  
President & CEO



Office of the Premier  
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

4254-01  
4126-02

April 2, 2003

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of all Yukoners, I would like to express my government's strong support for the establishment of a US-Canada Joint Commission on the Canada-Alaska Rail Link.

The Yukon has more than 80 identified mineral deposits with defined reserves, many of which are of world-class size, that could be developed if a rail link provided efficient transportation of supplies and minerals. In addition, there are eight virtually unexplored oil and gas basins and vast forestry resources that could also benefit from a railroad.

The large mining, forestry and oil and gas development opportunities that a rail link might make feasible need to be further explored and detailed, as do the potential benefits of identifying new transportation corridors in Canada's northwest.

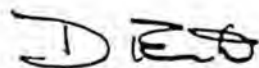
I believe the proposed Commission should be established as soon as possible in order to fully consider the enormous opportunities a rail link could create for Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia and western Canada. Given that the Commission will offer so many excellent opportunities for collaboration and cooperation among policy makers, First Nation leaders, industry and high level technical professionals, both in Canada and the United States, I can't imagine a better time for Canada to announce its decision to participate.

I understand that Alaska Governor Murkowski recently wrote you to express his government's support for the Commission and to suggest locating the offices of the Commission in Whitehorse and Juneau. I fully support the governor's suggestions and look forward to working with our Alaska neighbours and various Canadian and American partners in the months to come.

.../2

As you make your formal decision regarding the Bilateral Commission, I want to assure you that my government, and all Yukoners, are ready and eager to participate.

Yours sincerely,



Dennis Fentie  
Premier

cc Honourable Bill Graham, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Honourable David Collenette, Minister of Transport  
Honourable Pierre Pettigrew, Minister, International Trade  
Honourable Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of Natural Resources  
Honourable Ione Christensen, Senator, Yukon  
Mr. Larry Bagnell, MP, Yukon  
Honourable Stephen Kakfwi, Premier, Northwest Territories  
Honourable Ralph Klein, Premier, Alberta  
Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier, British Columbia  
Honourable Roger Simmons, P.C  
Honourable Frank Murkowski, Governor  
Honourable Ted Stevens, United States Senate  
Honourable Doug Young, United States House of Representatives  
Honourable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate  
Honourable Fred Dyson, United States Senate  
Honourable John Cowdery, United States Senate



Office of the Premier

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

March 17, 2003

John J. Cowdery  
Senator  
State Capitol, Suite 101  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Dear Senator Cowdery:

Thank you for your letter of February 28, 2003 and enclosed copy of Bill SB 31 relating to a railway corridor for the extension of the Alaska Railroad.

The Government of Alaska and the Government of Yukon have a long tradition of sharing approaches to common issues. Working together on a rail link proposal will build on this relationship.

Our Government's position is to promote the establishment of an International Canada - U.S. Joint Commission to conduct a feasibility study of constructing a railroad from Alaska through Yukon to connect with railroads in the south. As we enter our first Term of Office, I am planning changes in the administration, which will provide support to promote this kind of initiative.

We are very interested in the progress of your bill and related activities. Likewise, my office will keep you apprised of developments from the Yukon perspective. We look forward to continued progress on this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D Fentie".

Dennis Fentie  
Premier of Yukon



Office of the Premier  
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

#4251-01  
#4251-01-01

March 18, 2003

Senator John Cowdery  
Senator of Alaska  
State of Alaska  
State Capitol, Room 101  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Cowdery:

Thank you for your letter of February 28, 2003 and the copy of Bill SB 31 relating to a railway corridor for the extension of the Alaska Railroad.

My government is committed to working with Alaska to ensure the success of the railroad initiative. The Government of Alaska and the Government of Yukon have a long tradition of working together to achieve common ends. I believe that together we can prompt our respective federal governments to raise the profile of this initiative.

It is for that reason that we will watch the progress of your bill with keen interest. I will also be working closely on this issue with Governor Murkowski.

We look forward to continued progress on this project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Fentie".

Dennis Fentie  
Premier of Yukon

*Ottawa*

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Ottawa, Ontario  
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HOUSE OF COMMONS

*Hon. Paul Martin*

Member of Parliament  
LaSalle / Emard  
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*Constituency*

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FEB 19 2003  
FEV

Mr. Donald Taylor  
P.O. Box 53  
Watson Lake Yukon  
Y0A 1C0

Dear Mr. Taylor,

Thank you for your recent letter.

I very much appreciate your input and the input of all Canadians on the issues that matter to our country and party.

Your views on a possible rail link connecting the State of Alaska are of great interest to me, and will certainly be taken into account as we go forward.

I have already outlined some of the ideas I believe will build on Canada's new confidence and make this a decade of historic possibility for our country. You can review them at my website located at the following link: [www.paulmartintimes.ca](http://www.paulmartintimes.ca). Please feel free to continue checking this location as we will update it from time to time.

Again, thank you for your input.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Martin', written over a horizontal line.

The Honourable Paul Martin, P.C., M.P.

**Donald E. Taylor**

P.O. BOX 53, WATSON LAKE  
YUKON, Y0A 1C0  
CANADA  
(867) 536 7575

March 21, 2003

Senator John J. Cowdery  
State Capital  
Suite #101  
Juneau, Alaska, 99801-1182  
U.S.A.

Dear John,

Thank you so much for your letter and information which arrived here yesterday. Please be assured that you are now included on my distribution list for occasional information relative to the Alaska-Canada railway proposal. I am pleased to enclose a copy of a communication from the Hon. Paul Martin, P.C., M.P. which is self explanatory. It's very widely anticipated that he will win an upcoming leadership convention to lead the Liberal Party of Canada, replacing the Right Hon. Jean Chretien as Prime Minister of Canada. Hopefully this will bode well for our projected railway endeavors.

I have spent a great deal of time and interest over past years, passing along useful information to all the parties listed on my distribution list, in the hope that this will assist in nuturing a meaningful dialogue between our two countries respecting the railway proposal.

I have been informed today that Premier Herb Klein of Alberta, and Premier Gordon Campell of British Columbia, will be writing to the Prime Minister, encouraging him to reconsider his indicated disinterest in the Alaska-Canada Railway proposal. Hopefully, this will result in the Government of Canada undertaking an early review of it's position relative to Canada's participation and funding the proposed Joint Commission.

In closing, may I complement you on your great interest and efforts in helping formulate the important developments refered to in your correspondence. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any of the parties listed on the distribution list should you wish further information regarding related matters.

Sincerely,



Don Taylor



## YUKON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Suite 201 - 208 Main Street  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2A9  
Website: <http://chamber.yukon.net>

Tel: (867) 667-2000  
Toll-free: 1-800-661-0543  
Fax: (867) 667-2001  
e-mail: [chamber@yukon.net](mailto:chamber@yukon.net)

September 22, 2001

Senator Frank Murkowski  
United States Senate  
US Congress  
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Murkowski:

**Subject: Strategic Assistance to the United States of America --  
Railways, Roads, Energy and Communications**

The State of Alaska and the Yukon Territory are able to contribute an enormous amount to continental security for both the American and Canadian people. The Yukon business community feels it is critical that both Canada and the United States become more energy self-sufficient in the very near future. Public commentary out of Washington and New York over the last ten days appears to support this view.

It is because of this belief that I am writing to you on behalf of the business community in the Yukon to request your support in helping us to raise the profile of the potential links between our two jurisdictions and the Lower 48 States.

There are several ways in which Alaska and the Yukon can contribute at this time in North American history.

One, we need to proceed as quickly as possible with the construction of the Alaska natural gas pipeline from Fairbanks, Alaska, through the Yukon to link with the pipeline system in British Columbia and Alberta to provide gas to the United States and to the communities along the route. The greater the energy development in our part of the continent, the less dependence on overseas sources of gas and oil and other strategic requirements.

Two, we need to continue to work together on improving the Alcan Highway through North Eastern British Columbia, Yukon and into Alaska. The construction of the missile base at Ft Greeley; the developments of the two mines -- Fort Knox and Pogo; the natural gas pipeline and several other major activities, make the improvement and maintenance of the Alcan critical

Third, the maintenance and up grading of the Alcan highway would be an ideal opportunity to lay fibre optic cable for communications purposes along the highway right of way. There are many reasons why this makes sense, not the least of which is the opportunity to vastly improve communications between the far north west and the rest of the continent.

Fourth, and most significantly, another essential element for the development of the State of Alaska and the Yukon Territory is the construction of a railway so that goods can be shipped to Alaska and the Yukon quickly and efficiently and products – required for commercial and strategic purposes – can be moved out of Alaska and Yukon quickly and cheaply.

In this regard, I have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Charles Jurasz, the Vice President of Faro Sustainable Development Corporation from Faro, Yukon, and have had the opportunity as well to review their plans for railway development and access to Alaska. I understand that Charles has also addressed this issue at some length with State Representative Jeanette James of North Pole, Alaska – a strong proponent of the construction of the railway.

The Yukon business community is increasingly convinced that it is vital to our growth and vital to our continental security that a rail line be developed in the very near future that would tie Alaska and the Yukon to the Lower 48. I understand that it was at your urging that the United States Congress approved \$6 million USD for a feasibility study in December of 2000. We understand from talking to our representatives in the Canadian government that this is not yet a priority for the Canadian government.

Although our representatives, Member of Parliament Larry Bagnell and Senator Ione Christianson have been attempting to raise the profile of this issue, they have been unsuccessful to date. We strongly support rail, road, communications and energy development in our two jurisdictions.

**This is where we need your help. I am writing to ask for your assistance in having President Bush request of Prime Minister Chretien when he is in Washington this week that he make these four issues -- rail, roads, energy and communications development ( In particular in the Yukon and Alaska) - - a priority area where Canada can help the United States in its war on terrorism.**

**We feel it is in our mutual best interests that Alaska and the Yukon be placed on the list of requests Mr. Bush makes of the Canadian Prime Minister and we also feel it is in the best strategic interests of Canada and the United States.**

Following, the Bush-Chretien meetings, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce would like to arrange to have you lead a small delegation that would include Senator Ted Stevens, Representative Don Young, Jeanette James and Bill Hudson to Ottawa to join with a Yukon delegation to follow up on the Bush-Chretien meeting.

We would do this to impress upon the Members of the Canadian Federal Cabinet and Liberal Caucus just how important it is for continental security that these initiatives go forward and how seriously these initiatives of the United States Government and the State of Alaska should be taken. We count on your support and assistance.

Although the sorrow and sadness of the past two weeks will never be forgotten, please accept our expression of continued support for the United States of America from our membership. Your cause is our cause; your need is our need for we are good neighbors and best friends.

God Bless America

Respectfully,



(Mr) R. Lynn Ogden  
President

Copies to:

Senator Ted Stevens  
United States Senate

Representative Don Young  
United States House of Representatives

Representative Jeanette James  
Alaska State Legislature

Representative Bill Hudson  
Alaska State Legislature

Senator Ione Christianson  
Senate of Canada

Larry Bagnell, MP  
House of Commons Canada



# Fairbanks Industrial Development Corporation

February 22, 2000

Representative Jeannette James  
Room 102  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau 99801-1182

Dear Representative James:

I wish to provide testimony to Senate Joint Resolution No. 38 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. Fairbanks Industrial Development Corporation supports and encourages initiatives to expand rail transportation within the State of Alaska and to achieve the rail connective link with Canada and the North American rail system.

This initiative will afford tremendous opportunities for economic growth and development, create new employment opportunities, enhance military defense, and allow responsible utilization of significant natural resources. There are enormous amounts of unrealized resources including: forest products, minerals, and agriculture; as well as tremendous opportunities for all season tourism.

Railroad expansion will enhance and facilitate an intermodal transportation network for Interior Alaska. Sea, air, over-the-road, and rail transportation are crucial to economic development in the Interior.

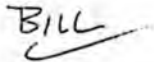
Rail transportation is the most efficient and environmentally sound mode of transportation of bulk materials into and out of Interior Alaska. Speed of movement, safety of operations, and environmental efficiencies can be achieved by rail transportation.

February 22, 2000  
Page 2

Fairbanks and Interior Alaska are great places to live, work, and recreate. We must move forward with the feasibility study to make the connective link a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "BILL" with a checkmark-like flourish underneath.

William S. Brophy  
Executive Director

WSB: kjf

CC: Representative Ramona Barnes  
Representative Tom Brice  
Representative John Coghill  
Representative John Davies  
Representative Pete Kelly  
Senator Georgianna Lincoln  
Senator Mike Miller  
Representative Carl Morgan  
Representative Gene Therriault  
Senator Jerry Ward  
Representative Jim Whitaker

BILL SHEFFIELD, GOVERNOR.

**Department of Transportation and Public Facilities**  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

Pouch Z  
Juneau, Alaska, 99811  
(Telex 45-328)

March 8, 1983

Mr. Charles H. Parr  
S.R. Box 50599  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Dear Mr. Parr:

Re: Alaska Railroad Extension Project

I have reviewed your letter to me dated December 23, 1982 and the subsequent reply from Acting Commissioner Ron Lind dated January 12, 1983. I am very concerned about the point you made regarding the responsiveness of the Department and I wish to assure you that this instance will not reflect the attitude of the Department under my administration. I hope that future inquiries will be accorded the prompt attention they deserve.

Your calls to the Division of Planning and Programming office in Anchorage should have been referred to the Interior Region Design & Construction office in Fairbanks, who have responsibility for the subject project.

As you have previously been informed, the railroad corridor has been delineated and an environmental assessment of the route is nearing completion. A title search of lands along the route is also complete and application has been made for right-of-way across state and federal lands. Final right-of-way acquisition for the entire corridor is now estimated to require another year to complete. Even this schedule could be jeopardized if condemnation is required.

It appears that completion of right-of-way plans and incidental field surveys which are required prior to appraisal and acquisition of private lands cannot be completed due to the lapsing of available funding. Although the current funding available for this project appears sufficient, work on this project will be forced to cease when the current funding expires on June 30, 1983 unless a new appropriation is received from the Legislature. The current funding cannot be extended.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

INTERIM OFFICE:  
P.O. BOX 81435  
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99708

IN SESSION:  
POUCH V  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811  
(907) 460-4830/4841



CHAIRMAN  
1983 INTERIOR DELEGATION  
MEMBER  
TRANSPORTATION  
HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
LABOR SUBCOMMITTEE  
JOINT OIL AND GAS  
RURAL EDUCATION ATTENDANCE AREAS

Representative Mike Davis  
House District 19

February 13, 1983

Senator Charlie Parr  
SR Box 40286  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Sen. Parr

*Charlie*

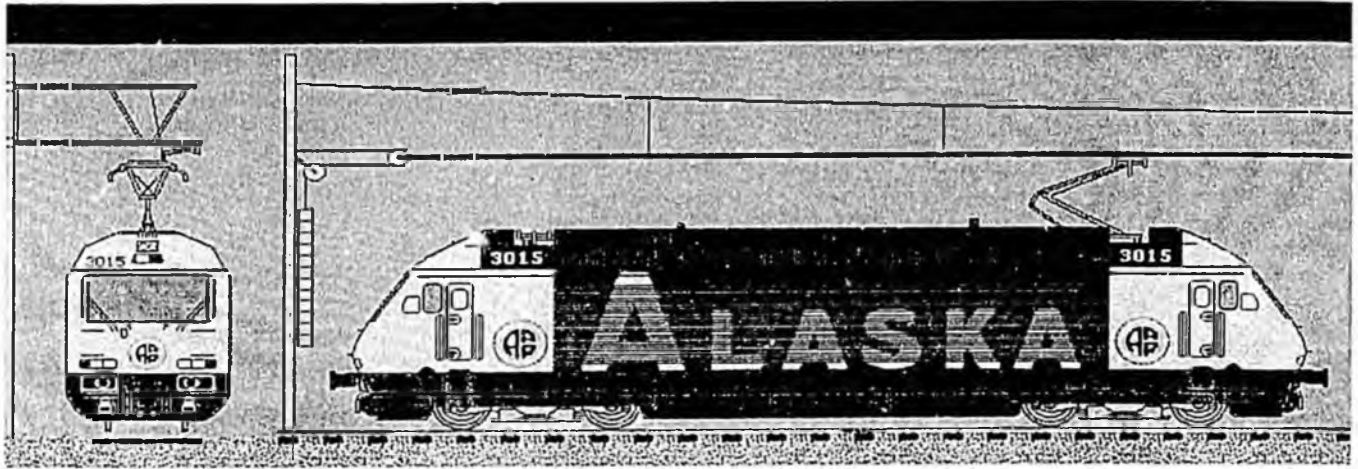
Enclosed is a copy of another letter received from the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities regarding the status of rights-of-way acquisitions.

Please let me know if you require any additional information in regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

*Mike*

Rep. Mike Davis



# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

# SECTION

# 4

Resolutions of Support

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Richard F. Schmitz, editor



(907) 269 0222

[www.cowdery.com](http://www.cowdery.com)

(907) 465 4921

- WHEREAS oil cannot be relied upon as the major industry of Alaska;
- WHEREAS there is incredible unrealized potential in the economic development of other Alaskan industries due to the lack of infrastructure;
- WHEREAS the lack of infrastructure in Rural Alaska has inhibited the growth of these Alaskan industries and such a railway would bring unprecedented growth and opportunities to these regions;
- WHEREAS diversifying our statewide economy will reduce Alaska's risk of extensive budgetary short falls;
- WHEREAS a railway to Canada would serve as ratification of the United States intent to our closest trading ally with regard to NAFTA;
- WHEREAS the Department of Defense is considering expansion of its ballistic missile deployment in Alaska and such a railway would serve our country's National Defense interests;
- WHEREAS intermodal capability will benefit all of Alaska and compliment others in the transportation industry;
- WHEREAS a railroad will provide the most controlled and environmentally sound form of access to rural and remote regions;
- WHEREAS the maintenance cost savings realized by constructing a railway are significantly greater than that of a highway;
- WHEREAS House Bill 12, signed into law during the 1999 Legislative Session authorizes the identification, purchase and development of a railway corridor from the existing railroad at Eielson AFB to the Canadian border;
- WHEREAS House Bill 12 indicates that funding can be obtained from any combination of public, private and governmental sources;
- WHEREAS Canadian private industries have put the "first foot forward" by meeting with Alaskan governmental officials to try and make this project a reality;
- WHEREAS the Delta Region will be experiencing severe economic trauma with the Realignment of Ft. Greeley in July of 2001 and such a rail system would serve to augment the emerging industries in the area;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Delta Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly supports the expansion of the Alaska Railroad from Eielson AFB to the Canadian Border. Further, such action would create many opportunities for all Alaskans that would result in a strong statewide economy, providing for the future of our great state.

By: Mike Young  
 Dan LaSota  
 Guy Sattley  
 Cole Sonafrank  
 Eileen Cummings  
 Tim Beck  
 Rick Solie  
 Nancy Webb  
 Karen Parr  
 Mike Prax

Introduced: 07/22/99  
 Amended: 07/22/99  
 Adopted: 07/22/99

RESOLUTION NO. 99-045

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING EXPANSION OF THE ALASKA RAILROAD TO THE CANADIAN BORDER

WHEREAS, Alaska has enormous unrealized potential in resource development, tourism, and other industries;

WHEREAS, this potential remains largely undeveloped due to inaccessibility of vast regions of our state and high costs of transportation;

WHEREAS, railroads offer the most environmentally sound and most controlled access without expensive maintenance problems incurred by other modes of transportation;

WHEREAS, rather than detracting from industries which use existing modes of transportation, the establishment of more rail access in Alaska would greatly expand opportunities for all industries and in all areas;

WHEREAS, House Bill 12, which was signed into law during the 1999 Alaskan Legislative Session and becomes effective August 4, reauthorizes delineation of the transportation corridor connecting Alaska's existing railroad with the Canadian border;

WHEREAS, House Bill 12 allows eventual funding to come from any source, private or governmental;

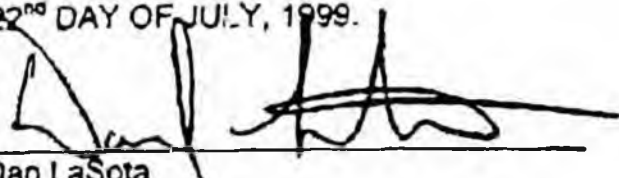
WHEREAS, the Canadian government, as well as the United States Government, are increasingly interested in establishing this rail link, both for economic development as well as national defense;

WHEREAS, both the Canadian government and private industry in Canada are holding meetings this year with Alaskan government officials and private industry to pursue development of a rail link between Alaska and Canada;

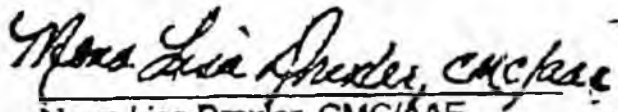
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly and Mayor Hank Hove support the expansion of the railroad system in Alaska to link with a Canadian railroad at the Canadian border.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be sent to the Chairman of the Alaska Railroad, Governor of the Yukon Territory, Governor of the British of Columbia; Governor of the State of Alaska, Congressional Delegation and the Interior Delegation.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 22<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF JULY, 1999.

  
Dan LaSota  
Presiding Officer

ATTEST:

  
Mona Lisa Drexler, CMCIAE  
Municipal Borough Clerk

Ayes: Solie, Parr, Webb, Young, Prax, Beck, Cummings, Sonafrank, Sattley, LaSota  
Noes: None

GFCC TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE RESOLUTION  
AUGUST 12, 1999

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RAILROAD CORRIDOR  
FROM FAIRBANKS, ALASKA TO THE CANADIAN BORDER

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to strengthening and expanding the Fairbanks North Star Borough economy, creating new employment opportunities and thus improving the quality of life for interior residents; and

WHEREAS, Alaska has enormous unrealized potential in resource development, tourism and, other industries, and;

WHEREAS, this potential remains largely undeveloped due to the inaccessibility of vast regions of Alaska and the high costs of transportation, and;

WHEREAS, railroads offer the most environmentally sound and most controlled access without expensive maintenance problems incurred by other modes of transportation, and;

WHEREAS, additional intermodal capability has been proven to enhance existing modes of transportation, the establishment of more rail access in Alaska would greatly expand opportunities for all industries in all areas, and;

WHEREAS, House Bill 12, which was signed into law in the 1999 Alaska Legislative Session and became effective August 4, 1999, reauthorizes the delineation of the transportation corridor connecting Alaska's existing railroad with the Canadian Border, and;

WHEREAS, House Bill 12 allows funding to come from any source, private or governmental, and;

WHEREAS, the Canadian Government, Alaska's national delegation and the United States Government are increasingly interested in establishing this rail link, both for economic and development purposes as well as for national defense, and;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce supports the extension of the railroad system in Alaska from the Fairbanks/ Eielson area to link with the Canadian Railroad system at the Canadian Border.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Alaska's Governor and the Alaska Legislature make provision for funding or assisting in the funding of a complete and detailed feasibility study to assess the industries and economic development which would potentially be spawned by the railroad corridor extension.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution shall be sent to:

Governor Tony Knowles  
The Alaska State Legislature  
Commissioner Joseph Perkins, AKDOT&PF  
The Alaska National Delegation  
Honorable Piers McDonald, Yukon Territory  
Premier Glen Clark, British Columbia

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ALASKA STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**WHEREAS** Dependable transportation is the cornerstone of an economy, and;

**WHEREAS** Alaska's harsh weather conditions and temperature extremes leave the state's highways expensive to construct and maintain, and;

**WHEREAS** Railroads are a proven alternative to highways; and

**WHEREAS** Railroads can be constructed quickly, are dependable and less-expensive to maintain than roads, and;

*HAVE* **WHEREAS** Railroads uniquely allow for controlled access and *has* a light environmental footprint, and;

**WHEREAS** A rail connection between Alaska and the North American rail system would reduce the cost of importing goods and exporting raw materials, creating new markets, and improving access in general, and;

**WHEREAS** A rail connection would boost tourism, and open new areas to visitors, and;

**WHEREAS** A rail connection could open the way for export of North Slope natural gas, and lower the cost for construction of a y missile defense system;

**WHEREAS** A rail corridor to the Alaska-Yukon border is provided for in statute, and there is also a utility corridor established in the Yukon Territory, and the British Columbia Railroad has a railbed extending as far North as Dease Lake, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED** The Alaska Chamber of Commerce enthusiastically supports extension of the Alaska Railroad to, first, Delta Junction, and then, to the Yukon border.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** The Alaska Chamber of Commerce supports efforts by - and urges support of -- Alaska's congressional delegation; Alaska's Governor and Legislature; the government of the Yukon and Canada; Native Regional and Village Corporations; and business interests for this project.

Sponsored by: Councilman Doug Isaacson  
Introduced and Adopted: February 19, 2002

**CITY OF NORTH POLE  
RESOLUTION 02-04**

**A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY OF NORTH POLE IN SUPPORT OF CS FOR HB 241  
WHICH PROMOTES THE EXTENSION OF THE ALASKA RAILROAD TO  
WHITEHORSE, YUKON TERRITORY, CANADA, TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

**WHEREAS:** CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 241 (RES) "An Act relating to a railroad utility corridor for extension of the Alaska Railroad to Canada and to extension of the Alaska Railroad to Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada," is before the Senate of the State of Alaska and,

**WHEREAS:** The creation of railroad utility corridor from Fairbanks in the interior of Alaska through North Pole to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory and thence continuing to a connection with the North American Railroad System will greatly enhance the potential for economic growth and resource development in the interior and along said corridor and,

**WHEREAS:** Fairbanks and the Interior of Alaska are already connected by rail to the seaports at Anchorage, Seward and Whittier and the vast resources which lay between and beyond and,

**WHEREAS:** The multi-modal Railroad Utility Corridor concept allows for the utilization of the corridor for other uses such as a high pressure gas line; fiber-optic communications infrastructure and transport materials and goods for developments along said corridor and,

**WHEREAS:** The construction of elements of the National Missile Defense System and the construction of a High Pressure Natural Gas Line will be aided greatly by the existence of said corridor and the extension of the railroad in such a corridor will be environmentally benign, greatly reducing the flow of heavy materials over the existing roadway; and,

**WHEREAS:** The creation and implementation of said corridor will create local opportunity in both the public and private sectors for new jobs, economic growth and an increased gross state product.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of North Pole supports proactive State and Federal legislation that promotes the extension of the Alaska Railroad and urges the passage of CS for HOUSE BILL NO. 241.

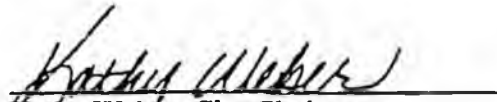
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be distributed to:

Alaska State Legislators  
United States Senator Ted Stevens  
United States Senator Frank Murkowski  
United States Congressman Young  
Governor Tony Knowles  
Mayor Rhonda Boyles, Fairbanks North Star Borough  
Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly  
North Pole Community Chamber of Commerce  
Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce  
Mayor Steve Thompson, City of Fairbanks  
Fairbanks City Council

**PASSED AND APPROVED** by a duly constituted quorum of the City Council of the City of North Pole, Alaska, this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2002.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffrey Jacobson, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy Weber, City Clerk

## PNWER Resolution 2000 – 3

Re: Support for a U.S. – Canada Cooperative Feasibility Study of Extending the North American Rail System through British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and to Alaska

Whereas PNWER was created in 1991 by statute by the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and the Yukon Territory for the purposes of enhancing trade and economic development throughout the Northwest; and,

Whereas, transportation linkages are vital to the economy of the entire region; and,

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 as far as highway transportation with a given amount of fuel; and,

Whereas, rail transportation systems allow controlled access and reduced overall impacts to environmentally sensitive regions; and,

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

Whereas, the continental rail system cannot be said to be complete until it includes all states, provinces and territories; and,

Whereas, the Government 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 Alaska-Yukon border; and,

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

Whereas, northern rail transportation may provide significant potential for the visitor industry by facilitating the comfortable movement of passengers over long distances while minimizing the impact of such movement on the surrounding environment; and,

PNWER Resolution 2000 – 3, continued

Whereas, ongoing research and advancement in rail technology continues to increase the efficiency of rail transportation, ensure rail safety, and decrease the impact of rail transportation on the environment,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) call upon the U.S. and Canada to engage in a cooperative feasibility study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link both Alaska and the Yukon Territory via northern British Columbia with the existing North American rail system; and,

Be it further resolved that a bilateral commission representing local governments, business interests, and aboriginal stakeholders be created 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 Canada and the U.S., and,

Be it further resolved that funding for operation of the bilateral commission and for the conduct of the cooperative feasibility study should be considered a priority by the federal, state, provincial and territorial governments; and.

Be it further resolved that copies of this resolution shall be disseminated to local, provincial, territorial, state and federal governments in the PNWER region.

PNWER Annual Meeting, Post Falls, Idaho, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2000

**TOWN OF FORT NELSON  
NORTHERN ROCKIES REGIONAL DISTRICT**

**CERTIFIED RESOLUTION:  
CANADA - ALASKA RAILROAD LINK**

**MOVED, SECONDED & CARRIED**

*WHEREAS, the State of Alaska is interested in pursuing development of a rail link between Alaska and the contiguous United States; and*

*WHEREAS rail transportation is a cost effective and energy efficient method of overland transportation; and*

*WHEREAS such a link would open new resource rich areas of both the Yukon Territory and Alaska, provide for new inexpensive freight options both into and out of the North, and allow for realization of new opportunities in the field of tourism in response to changing demand by visitors; and*

*WHEREAS past effort has succeeded in establishing right of way tenure to varying degrees along various route options, and these may be utilized to some degree for the delination and acquisition of a rail transportation corridor;*

*THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Northern Rockies Regional District supports the establishment of Bilateral Commission of the United States and Canada to engage in a cooperative study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link Alaska and the Yukon Territory with the existing North American rail system in British Columbia; and*

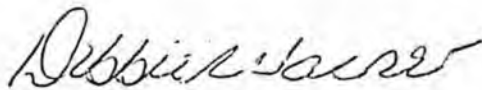
*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Bilateral Commission represent federal, state, territorial, provincial and local governments from the affected areas; business interests; and aboriginal stakeholders; and that its role be to define the goals and objectives for the cooperative study and to report*

*its results to the appropriate entities in both Canada and the US; and*

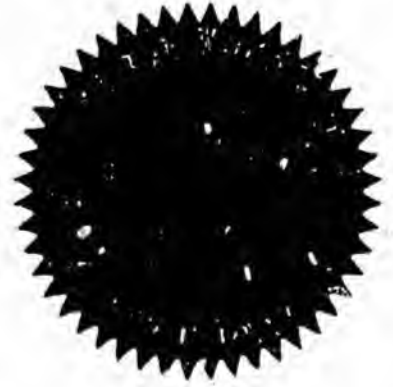
*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said study should fully and completely explore both possible points of connection (Fort Nelson, British Columbia and the location known as "Chipmunk", approximately 170 km south of Dease Lake, British Columbia) and all feasible route options for new rail.*

*CERTIFIED a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Council of the Town of Fort Nelson and the Board of the Northern Rockies Regional District on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2000.*

*DATED this 12<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2000.*



*Debbie M. Walker  
Corporate Administrator/Regional Secretary*



CANADA - ALASKA RAILROAD LINK

**WHEREAS** the State of Alaska is interested in pursuing development of a rail link between Alaska and the contiguous United States; and

**WHEREAS** rail transportation is a cost effective and energy efficient method of overland transportation; and

**WHEREAS** such a link would open new resource rich areas of both the Yukon Territory and Alaska, provide for new inexpensive freight options both in and out of the North, and allow for realization of new opportunities in the field of tourism in response to changing demand by visitors; and

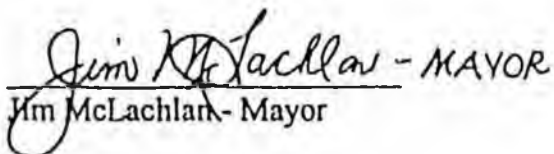
**WHEREAS** past effort has succeeded in establishing right of way tenure to varying degrees along various route options, and these may be utilized for the acquisition of a rail transportation corridor;

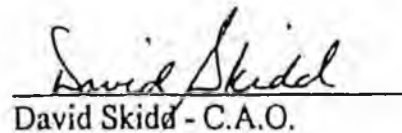
**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Town of Faro supports the establishment of a Bilateral Commission of the United States and Canada to engage in a cooperative study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link Alaska and the Yukon Territory with the existing North American rail system in British Columbia; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Bilateral Commission represent federal, state, territorial, provincial, First Nation, and local governments from the affected areas; business interests; and other stakeholders; and that its role be to define the goals and objectives for the cooperative study and to report its results to the appropriate entities in both Canada and the United States; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that said study should fully and completely explore all feasible route options for new rail, including the proposed route through the Tintina Trench.

**DATED** at the Town of Faro, Yukon Territory, this 14<sup>th</sup> day of AUGUST, 2000.

  
Jim McLachlan - Mayor

  
David Skidd - C.A.O.

**TOWN OF  
WATSON LAKE**

CANADA-ALASKA RAILROAD LINK

WHEREAS the State of Alaska is interested in pursuing developmen' of a rail link between Alaska and the contiguous United States ; and

WHEREAS, rail transportation is a cost effective and energy efficient method of overland transportation; and

WHEREAS such a link would open new resource rich areas of both the Yukon Territory and Alaska, provide for new inexpensive freight options both into and out of the North, and allow for realization of new opportunities in the field of tourism in response to changing demand by visitors; and

WHEREAS past effort has succeeded in establishing right of way tenure to varying degrees along various route options, and these may be utilized to some degree for the delination and acquisition of a rail transportation corridor;


THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Watson Lake supports the establishment of Bilateral Commission of the United States and Canada to engage in a cooperative study to examine the costs and benefits of constructing a rail connection to link Alaska and the Yukon Territory with the existing North American rail system in British Columbia; and

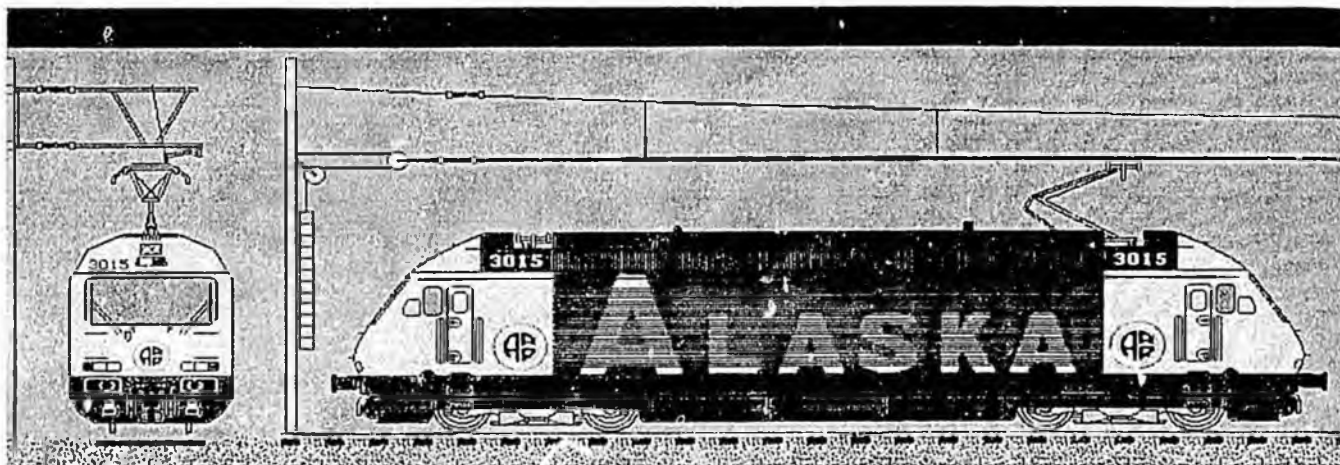
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Bilateral Commission represent federal, state, territorial, provincial and local governments from the affected areas; business interests; and aboriginal stakeholders; and that its role be to define the goals and objectives for the cooperative study and to report its results to the appropriate entities in both Canada and the United States; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said study should fully and completely explore both possible points of connection and all feasible route options for new rail.

DATED at the Town of Watson Lake, Yukon Territory, this 16th day of May, 2000.

  
D. Kalles - Mayor

  
H. Price - C.A.O.



# Alaska-Canada Rail Connection

# SECTION

# 5

Media Reporting

Published by the office of Sen. John J. Cowdery  
Room 101, Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
Richard F. Schmitz, editor



(907) 269 0222

[www.cowdery.com](http://www.cowdery.com)

(907) 465 4921

01/19/00

Fairbanks Daily News Miner

# Rails from trails—the dream continues

## Trans-Alaska route still inspires visionaries

The recent Alaska Railroad status report before the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce drew sustained applause. The presentation was timely, informative, concise, and upbeat, a positive contribution to understanding the mission of the railroad, its current usage, its successes and limitations.

Of particular interest was the presentation of planning for the future improvement of equipment, and services, elimination of hazards, and possible extension of the rail line itself.

Planning is under way to re-route the extension from Fairbanks to the North Pole Refinery and Eielson Air Force Base. The intent is to eliminate the hazards of the existing 14 rail crossings in 22 miles or so, probably using overpasses for highway traffic at key points.

A second thrust, it was announced, will be to extend the railroad from Eielson AFB to Fort Greely/Delta Junction should the pending national missile defense site be authorized for that area.

All members of our Alaska congressional delegation have indicated this to be a likely prospect. Word released from Washington this week suggests that the president now considers the national missile defense project to be in the urgent necessity category.

Also mentioned by John Binkley, a railroad board member, was the long-held hope to extend the railway to Whitehorse and beyond ultimately to link with the Canadian rail system.



William R. Wood

For me this triggered open the gate to a train of memories. I recalled the time in the early '60s when Charles Sargent, dean of engineering at the University of Alaska, showed me a copy of a U.S. Corps of Engineers report on the Defense of Alaska: Trans-Canada and Alaska Western Railroad Survey 1942. Sargent, a professional civil engineer, and Lee Linck, well-known Fairbanks architect, both participated in doing the field work on that report. A copy is on file at the Rasmuson Library complex, according to one of its able and helpful archivists, Gretchen Lake.

When I talked by phone with Dean Sargent, now retired in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, he told me of working on field studies for four segments of the proposed trans-Canada/trans-Alaska route: (A) Wood River to Delta; (B) Mouth of the White River to Whitehorse; (C) Stikine Pass area, British Columbia; (D) the Seward Peninsula.

The survey covered a proposed rail route from Teller, Alaska, on the Bering Sea coast to Prince George, British Columbia, and a Pacific ocean port, at Prince Rupert.

But the survey was only a part of the big dream of linking continents together by highway and rail as well as by sea and air.

I recalled Gov. Walter Hickel's North Commission (Northern

Operation: Rail Transportation and Highway) created to study Alaska's transportation needs in the mid-'60s.

I have a great recollection of coming from Anchorage to Fairbanks by train with the commission at the beginning of the Great Flood of '67. By chance my seat partner was Bill Lear, inventor and builder of the Lear Jet aircraft, main plant at Reno, Nev. Lear was a visionary with a very practical down-to-earth twist. He could dream, dare, and do. He got the good things done. I found him a most stimulating, thought-provoking conversationalist.

Gov. Hickel brought along to show the commission the silver punch bowl commemorating the Harriman Expedition to Alaska, 1899. I was told by the governor the famous memento is now in the state museum at Juneau.

While there is no mention of trans-Alaska in the expedition's report, the originator and host of the expedition, one of the turn-of-the-century world's wealthiest people, owner of some 20,000 miles the U.S. transcontinental rail system, was an early and strong advocate of the big dream of joining continents together by rail to promote development of resources and bringing diverse peoples together in peace.

The concept of a trans-continental USA system joined to a trans-Canada, including the trans-Yukon-Territory and trans-Alaska, segments to join with the trans-Siberian and on to the trans-Eurasian segment, the Orient Express route was the big dream.

Donald MacDonald of Fairbanks, head of the Alaska Road Commission and called by many "the father of the Alaska Highway," was a strong voice in advocacy of the big dream. A

splendid account of this is Kay Kennedy's article in *Alaska Life*, volume I, No. 7, August 1938. So also was the czar of Russia.

But the vision did not begin with Harriman, the czar of Russia, Donald MacDonald, Dean Sargent or Lee Linck. Its origin is credited to William Gilpin, first territorial governor of Colorado. The concept was featured in his book published in 1891, "The Cosmopolitan Railway, Compacting and Fusing Together All The Worlds Continents."

John Gilpin was not only a visionary, but a thinker with an extraordinary range of experience, a strong executive and innovator in handling public affairs. He was insightful, personable, courteous, and effective.

Terrence Cole, head of the UAF History Department and noted author, tells much more of the story of William Gilpin and his dream of an around-the-world rail system in a well illustrated article, "Bridging the Strait," appearing in the Nov. 19, 1989, issue of *Heartland*, the magazine section of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. "The vision William Gilpin and others, that somehow bridging the Bering Strait can be a sign and even a cause of world peace, is still alive today."

And now you have a bit of the rest of the story of a dream that does not die but runs on and on generation after generation. Bringing people and their products together not only by sea and by air but also by land.

The proposed extension of the Alaska Railroad to the east and to the west is a small but real part of a dream that persists.

William R. Wood is a retired president of the University of Alaska now volunteering his time as executive director of Festival Fairbanks. His columns appear every other Wednesday on the Opinion page.

3/11/99

# An Alaska pipedream

No big transportation project has ever 'been a bad idea'

By **Charlie Anderson**  
Staff Reporter

Alaskan politician Jeannette James has a twinkle of a railway in her eye — from Fairbanks to Washington state, through B.C.

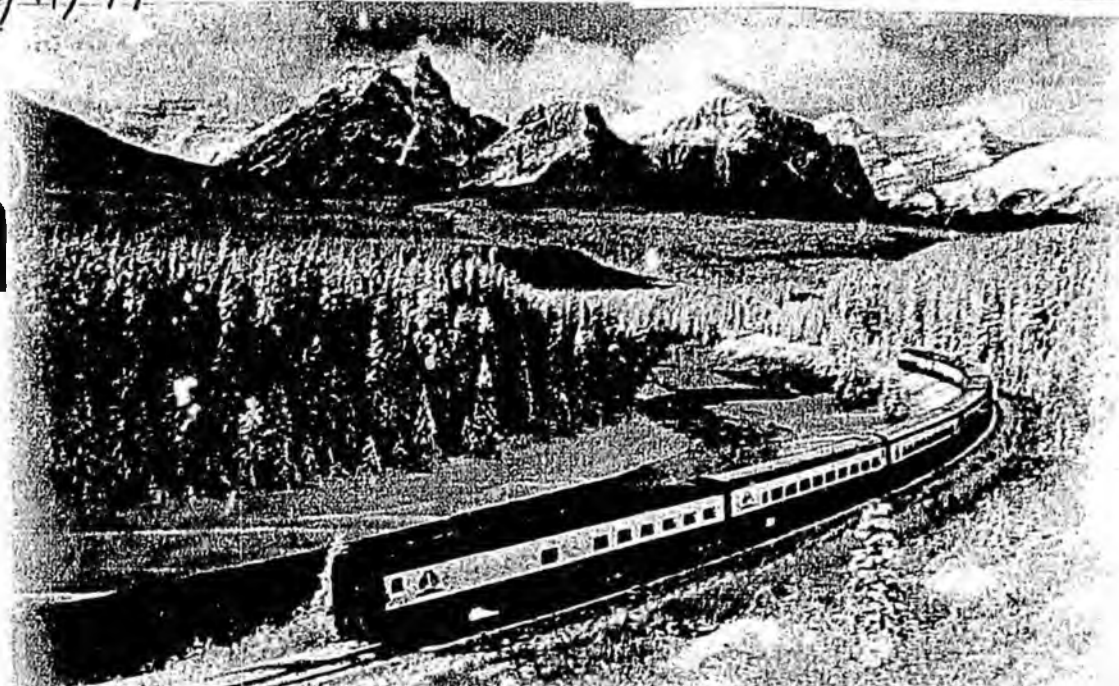
The representative of North Pole, Alaska, has permission from her state legislature to draw a railway line on the map.

And an even grander vision calls for a railway under the Bering Straits and on to Moscow and Beijing.

"There's been a lot of folks talking about it, I want to be able to do something about it," said James, 69, who has been working on the idea in the seven years she's spent in the state House of Representatives.

"We've had interest from Australia and other places if we were ever to go into Russia," said James. "There has been no big transportation project that's been a bad idea. Even the Panama Canal or all those kinds of things are hard to get to happen. But when they're done, they work."

The first part of James' dream is a 1,450-kilometre line from Fairbanks through the Yukon and down to Chipmunk, B.C., which sits at the end of B.C.'s rail system, 240 km northwest of Fort. St. James.



Rep. James' vision would open up Yukon, Northern B.C., she says. Freight would pay the way.



The Alaska House of Representatives has just passed a bill authorizing the marking of a right-of-way to the border with the Yukon.

James believes the railway would open up the area by allowing the easier shipping of raw materials from Alaska, the Yukon and Northern B.C.

"This is an area that needs an economic boost and certainly this would really do it," said James, who calculates the cost of surveying and building such a railway would be about \$3 million US per mile. That doesn't include the cost of acquiring land or any environmental and land-claim issues.

Any such enterprise would have to be a partner-

ship between state and federal governments.

"With railways, the freight pays the way, with tourism as the frosting on the cake," said James. "Once you have other industries that will create and support the infrastructure, then tourism is a little extra. It piggybacks on the back of real industry."

Carol Lee of BC Rail said she had been alerted to Alaska's idea by a brief call from one of James' staff: "We don't discount the possibility off the cuff, there's always the possibility," said Lee. "We'd have to take a look at the business case. We won't make any commitment without it being economically justifiable."

# A Rail Connection Across Canada

*Building a railroad that links Alaska to the Lower 48 is a dream that just may become a reality.*

BY RICHARD F. SCHMITZ

Less than a two day's drive separates the Alaska Railroad, at its easternmost, from the British Columbia railroad, at its northwesternmost, and closing that gap has, in the past year or so, caught the attention of a number of entrepreneurs, legislators and just plain dreamers in Alaska, Yukon and British Columbia.

Foremost among supporters of connecting Alaska with the Lower 48 by rail is North Pole Republican Representative Jeannette James. During the past legislative session James introduced and passed HB 12, which allows for delineation of a rail corridor from existing Alaska Railroad tracks to the Canadian border. Last summer James worked to pass resolutions of support by the state Chamber of Commerce, as well as chambers in Fairbanks, Delta Junction and Dease Lake, B.C.

James has long backed rail development in Alaska, and sees connecting the Alaska Railroad with the rest of the North American rail network as a huge key to insuring a bright—and diverse—future for the state's economy in the new millennium.

"The very first benefit to having surface transportation from the Lower 48 to Alaska will be a reduction in the cost of living. A railroad will allow us to open up resource development that's not possible now because of the high cost of transportation," James said. "A railroad will lead to value-added industries and increased cooperation between Alaska and the northern part of Canada."



Clark James Misher

## Another Transportation Option

The Alaska Railroad estimates construction cost for new track in Alaska at \$2.5 million to \$3 million per mile. With 270 miles separating Eielson Air Force Base from the border, the cost of building that part of the railroad is about \$675 million to \$810 million. An additional 900 miles of track would be needed to connect existing tracks in Canada to new track in Alaska.

James said tourism, agriculture and mining would get an immediate lift from a rail connection to the Lower 48. Using Delta Junction's agricultural area as an example, James said fertilizer and

other supplies could be brought in to farmers while produce could be shipped directly to market—in and out of Alaska.

"I think the critical thing is that a railroad will allow Alaskan growers to supply Alaskan consumers. Alaska's economic future depends on our ability to have value-added industries, such as a freezing plant for produce," James continued. "The financial benefit a state gets from value-added industry is close to five times greater than what it gets from exporting a raw material."

One person who's convinced James is on the right track is U.S. Sen. Frank Murkowski, who's taking an active stand

in support of the issue. "We think it's well worth exploring," said Murkowski aide Bill Woolf.

The first step Murkowski's office is taking is to seat an informal committee, which James will chair, to identify potential users of a railroad to the Lower 48. "A project such as this is of tremendous magnitude. We need to do, what attorneys would call, 'due diligence,'" Woolf said. "We need to look at possible users; we need to look at resources; we need to look at engineering, possible routes and environmental factors."

The goal of this panel, James explained, is to write and pass a resolution and then present it to Murkowski at a meeting with British Columbia and Yukon officials and legislators in late January in Vancouver, B.C. If there is public support for this railroad project, Sen. Murkowski said he will introduce legislation to create a bilateral commission to further study the issue, Woolf said.

#### Not a New Idea

Opening a rail connection to Alaska has been considered since the first ties of the Alaska Railroad were laid. "Back in the

1970s there was a cursory review," said Alaska Railroad Vice President Jim Blasingame. "It was about a 15- to 20-page report. The province of British Columbia was quite supportive of the idea.

"Rail is still the best way to move bulk matter from point A to point B. It's a basic premise," Blasingame said.

About 270 miles separates the Alaska Railroad at Eielson from the Alaska-Canada border. The British Columbia railroad has a rail bed in place as far north as Dease Lake, less than 100 miles from the southern Yukon community of Watson Lake, although it has been abandoned a little north of Fort Saint James since the 1980s.

Reopening that line is a top priority for Canadian entrepreneur David Broadbent, CEO of the Canadian Arctic Railway. The Canadian Arctic Railway has no locomotives or rolling stock now—but it is betting it will in two or three years, Broadbent said.

"The grade and bridges are there. They're just sitting out there growing weeds," Broadbent said of the 172-mile stretch into Northern B.C. "Our



Sen. Frank Murkowski

**If there is public support for this railroad project, Sen. Frank Murkowski said he will introduce legislation to create a bilateral commission to further study the issue.**

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#### TRANSPORTATION

intention is to open it up and possibly run it as a short line, and then extend it to Whitehorse in six years."

Broadbent gained his railroad experience working 29 years for the British Columbia Railroad. He began as a laborer and worked his way up to engineer of standards and project manager. Later, he founded the North American Rail and Steel Tie Corp., which supplies parts and equipment to railroads, including the Alaska Railroad. Broadbent said he recently sold the company in order to devote his energies full time to the Canadian Arctic Railway.

Broadbent said he has seen a surge of interest in building a railroad to Alaska. "Too many people see railroads as a thing of the past. But that's only true in North America. Elsewhere in the world railroads are expanding. China is committed to building 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) of new track a year.

"When I talk to business people, I get a 'what, are you crazy?' look—at first. But when I explain the good economic sense railroads make, I see a quick change in their attitude," Broadbent continued. "Highways will never open up Northern

Canada or Alaska. The Alaska Highway was built 57 years ago, and very little has developed along it since."

Railroads, on the other hand, can attract development. "Traditionally, in the West, railroads would find entrepreneurs and help finance them because that development meant revenue for the railroad as raw materials were brought in and finished products shipped out," Broadbent explained.

Broadbent said two factors must be addressed before any rail connection can be made to Alaska: aboriginal land claims and environmental issues. "Native councils and corporations must be brought in as full partners from the start. I don't mean offering Natives a few jobs—I mean offering them a full and equal partnership," Broadbent said. "As for environmental concerns, railroads have a big advantage over other forms of development because access to sensitive areas can be tightly controlled."

Taking rivers as another example, Broadbent said piers and modular or pre-fab bridge spans can be put in place without ever touching the water flowing below. Railroad construction is

relatively low impact, he added. "You could build the railroad to Alaska with 300 to 400 men. You won't need camps every few miles or access roads. That keeps costs down—and it also keeps the environmental impact low."

#### Expanding Alaska's Reach

Rep. James conceded barge and trucking firms might be less than enthusiastic about bringing a major competitor on board. But James said, "business generates business." Having a rail connection to the rest of North America will be good for all Alaska transportation sectors.

"Goods could come to Alaska by rail and be shipped to Asia from Seward or Anchorage. Having a railroad connection to the Lower 48 will provide an excellent opportunity for Alaska to become a shipping hub to Asian nations. There's tremendous potential there."

James points out that any railroad to the Lower 48 will particularly improve Alaska's connection with Midwest and East Coast states.

"But the overall goal is to develop our own resources. The way I see it, rail is way

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ahead of roads or air on this issue. There's less cost; it's more environmentally sound; and rail is just a lot more dependable in bad weather," James said. "Snow, wind, sleet just doesn't affect a train the way it does an airplane or a truck.

"Transportation costs are basically front-loaded," James said. "The more something is handled, the more it costs to ship. That's why, over the long haul, railroad has a big advantage."

**"The very first benefit to having surface transportation from the Lower 48 to Alaska will be a reduction in the cost of living. A railroad will allow us to open up resource development that's not possible now because of the high cost of transportation."**

Jeannette James  
North Pole Republican Representative

James said the Red Dog Mine is a good example of an Alaska enterprise that could benefit from a railroad. At present, ore must be taken from the mine site to the coast where it is put on a lighter and then transferred to a freighter anchored offshore. "Sixty percent of that ore is refined in Alberta. Imagine how much easier—and more cost-effective—it would be to take that ore by rail directly to the refiner."

"If it proves out ... if we someday have that rail connection, Alaska's economy will benefit in a very different way than it did from the pipeline," said Woolf of Murkowski's office. "It will be more than construction. A rail system can go through parts of Alaska where there is no transportation option, and that could give the state a big economic boost. A mine that wasn't feasible will suddenly become feasible."

Rep. James said railroads pay for their own maintenance, while roads and airports are maintained by taxpayers. "With rail, the cost of maintenance is borne by rail users. In comparison, the public pays for maintenance for roads and airports. Rail takes care of its own."

James also points to great potential for growth in tourism that a rail

connection will bring. "A railroad will open up Alaska to a whole new group of folks, and it could also greatly increase winter tourism. It certainly will help the tourism industry in Alaska."

The military is yet another sector that could benefit from a rail connection. Of immediate interest is the new missile defense system, which if eventually approved, could be set up at Clear Air Force Station, near Healy, or at Fort Greeley, near Delta Junction. "Certainly if Alaska is chosen (as a missile site), rail transportation is one of the options for

moving material. Since such construction would require a great deal of material, obviously a rail component will be looked at," Woolf said.

The last time a new rail line was opened in Alaska was the 1950s when a 180-mile spur was completed from Fairbanks to Eielson. Today that spur carries out products of the North Pole refinery. If Rep. James sees her vision fulfilled, the trains rumbling past her North Pole home will be headed for points much further south than an Air Force base a few miles away. □



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LAYING A SPUR TO THE LOWER 48

# Alaska's monster railroad: bane or boon?

By Abraham McLaughlin  
Staff writer of  
The Christian Science Monitor

**ANCHORAGE** - There's a big idea floating around up here in Alaska - and it could forever change the face and feel of America's last great frontier.

It's something people have been dreaming about for decades. Now it's rumbling toward reality.

The plan is to build a railroad from Fairbanks - through 850 miles of icy wilderness - down to the Lower 48.

Today just one highway connects Alaska to its southern siblings, so this 83-billion-or-more project would be a big new avenue for trade and tourism.

But more than just a new set of rails, it symbolizes the think-big, can-do spirit thriving in Alaska today.

This is the state that built an 800-mile oil pipeline. It's the state that considered building a massive aqueduct to transport water from melting glaciers to thirsty California.

Yet there's another spirit that runs strong here, too. It revels in the state's natural beauty - and isolation. Minnesota may have 10,000 lakes, but Alaska has 3 million. There are more caribou here than people.

Yes, it's environmentalism. But many people came to Alaska to escape congestion. They like being disconnected from the nation - and want to keep it that way.

It's these two attitudes that largely define the state - and that any big project will have to reconcile to become reality.

And the tension between them won't end with the Lower-48 rail link.

### To connect or not to connect

There's a plan to carve out a 55-mile rail tunnel under the Bering Strait to Russia - at a cost of at least \$15 billion. It's still a pipe dream, but with global trade growing, it's gaining momentum. Indeed, the tunnel would link much of the world by rail: Trains could run from New York to Beijing and Moscow and



MELANIE STETSON-FREEMAN - STAFF/FILE

**RAIL RUMBLES:** Proposals are afoot for a railroad linking Alaska to the Lower 48. In Fairbanks it could meet up with the Alaska Railroad, helping to transport visitors and commercial goods. But not all Alaskans want people to have easy access to the isolated paradise.

fense - or "star wars" - base near Fairbanks. A rail link would help in building the facility.

Second, many mining companies back the plan - and would use trains to get their products to market more efficiently.

Third, the Canadian Arctic Railway, a start-up company in British Columbia, has mapped out a route for the Canadian section. President David Broadbent says

bald eagles, which, in some places up here, seem as common as sparrows.

Take the waterfront town of Valdez, home of one of the nation's busiest oil-loading ports. Like the rest of Alaska, its dependence on oil is fading. Revenues from the port aren't as high as in the past.

But tourism is speeding ahead. Visitors come to fish for halibut and salmon. Or they take sea kayaks out to Prince William Sound, their paddles plying the waters once sullied by the Exxon Valdez's spilled black goo. It's a sign of the times for this town. Oil is still king, but tourism is challenging.

Unlike oil, "tourism is a renewable resource," says Joe Leahy, a kayak guide in Valdez. "The more tourists the better."

### Compared with a road ...

Yet supporters of the rail-link plan are mindful of getting skeptics on board. One selling point is that with a railway - as opposed to a road - access is "controlled," meaning not just anyone with a car can jump on.

"The fewer roads we build, the better off we are," says Ms. James. Some environmentalists have given their backing to the plan.

But other Alaskans will be harder to convince. They see more links to the



... the problem says Siebel. The operation by Michigan. Local would enter a on. One of the wanted to kill y a weapon be-offense. Instead, : gun in an elab- affair was video- ments of one was doing was cials couldn't be he operation. ner's findings are ATF prosecuted of the federal gun falsifying records lited people. the time - this is to be should be in Washington. also planning to t to communities dustry. He hopes clude local deal- : guns. the gun industry dip them in their uce of Senator It proves what we in the outset: In are active par- lows the com- s to people who says Dan Abel, a f Gauthier Down- ng the city of New t gunmakers. ufacturers argue should not be in-

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But first things first. Last month, the state House of Representatives gave its unanimous consent to establish a right of way for the rail route down south.

Soon proponents will gather to plot the next steps.

"It's pretty revved up now," says Jeanette James, the state representative who's spearheading the idea. "We in the legislature are moving ahead. And there's lots of private money itching to do something."

She hopes construction will start within six years. Several things make that time frame seem realistic.

First, the US government is moving toward putting an antiballistic missile de-



MELANIE BRETSON FRIEDMAN

**RAIL RUMBLES:** Proposals are afloat for a railroad linking Alaska to the Lower 48. In Fairbanks could meet up with the Alaska Railroad, helping to transport visitors and commercial goods. Not all Alaskans want people to have easy access to the isolated paradise.

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"The fewer roads we build, the better off we are," says Ms. James. Some environmentalists have given their back to the plan.

But other Alaskans will be hard to convince. They say more links to the Lower 48 will further compromise Alaska's independence.

"We've already got highway barges and boats and airplanes" bringing too many tourists in their wheelchairs, says Paul Converse, a longtime resident.

There's an old native word, still used today that means "newly arrived." Cheechakos is what Alaskans call tourists - when they're being polite.

Yet, this struggle between old and new, between connection and isolation, is an age-old one in this vast, enticing wilderness. And with the idea of a rail link, Alaskans have another way to strike a balance between them.



DAVE HERBIC - STAFF

he already has several New York investors interested in funding the project.

#### Tourism taking off

Fourth, tourism is growing fast. The number of annual tourist visits to Alaska has doubled to more than 1 million in the past decade.

People come to see melting glaciers or