



Determination of Effect for Segments 3 and 4 - PMRE (FD No. 35095)

Catherine Glidden to: Bittner, Judith E (DNR)

12/04/2012 08:49 AM

Cc: Shina A (DNR) duVall, Barbara Hotchkin, Vicki Rutson
(RutsonV@stb.dot.gov)

Hi Judy,

Please see the attached letter regarding our determination of effect for Segments 3 and 4 of the Port MacKenzie Railroad Extension Project.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

-Cathy

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Segments 3 and 4 Determination.pdf



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

December 4, 2012

Ms. Judith Bittner
State Historic Preservation Officer
Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Office of History and Archaeology
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1310
Anchorage, AK 99501-3565

**Re: Finance Docket No. 35095, STB Determination of Effect for
Segments 3 and 4, Port MacKenzie Railroad Extension Project**

Dear Ms. Bittner:

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) recently provided your office with a copy of the final Port MacKenzie Railroad Extension (PMRE) Project *2012 Survey Report: Segments 3 and 4* dated November 2012. That report was prepared by the ARRC, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB), and the Knik Tribal Council (KTC), collectively referred to as the Working Group. Based on review of that document and consultation with your office, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has determined that the proposed PMRE project would have no effect to National Register of Historic Places (National Register) properties in Segments 3 and 4.

Background

ARRC, in partnership with the MSB, has undertaken planning for construction of the PMRE project. In 2011, the STB approved a license allowing ARRC to construct and operate approximately 35 miles of new rail line connecting the Port MacKenzie District to a point on ARRC's existing main line near Houston, Alaska using the Mac East Variant-Connector 3 Variant-Houston-Houston South alignment. That authorization was issued after completion of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and is subject to environmental mitigation conditions including a Programmatic Agreement (PA), which required additional investigations once the final Area of Potential Effects (APE) was identified. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), developed by the Working Group with input from the STB and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), details the approach for the additional cultural resources investigations and reporting activities. The first report, addressed Segment 1, the Alsop Haul Road, and the Section 6 Borrow Area, and was completed in February 2012. The second report, completed in August 2012, addressed Segment 6. This report details the results of the Segments 3 and 4 archaeological surveys conducted by HDR Alaska, MSB, and KTC cultural resources staff in September 2012.

September 2012 Archaeological Surveys, PMRE Segments 3 and 4 Report Summary

Cultural resources staff conducted surveys within the portions of the Segments 3 and 4 APE for direct effects that had not been previously surveyed. Both moderate and selected low probability areas

were surveyed. The level of effort and methodology were based on the MOU developed in consultation with the SHPO and STB.

The cultural resources surveys of Segments 3 and 4 identified no previously undocumented cultural resources within the APE. Surveys included documentation of existing conditions for known cultural resources in the APE including the Iditarod Race Trail and the Iditarod National Historic Trail (NHT), which are within the Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District (IDSHD; ANC-03326/TYO-00203). The IDSHD has been found eligible for the National Register, and STB previously determined that the PMRE project may have an effect on historic properties including the IDSHD. Therefore, no eligibility determinations are included in the report.

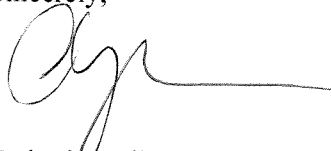
STB Determinations of Effect

Based on review of the Segments 3 and 4 report and consultation with your office, STB supports the findings and recommendations of the report. We made the following findings and determination of effect, and respectfully request your concurrence.

- Except for a portion of the IDSHD (ANC-03326/TYO-00203), which includes the Iditarod Race Trail and the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the survey of Segments 3 and 4 did not identify any other cultural resources or previously unidentified historic properties that would be affected by construction and operation of the PMRE project.
- STB previously determined that the proposed action may have an adverse effect on historic properties including the IDSHD (ANC-03326/TYO-00203).
- Adverse effects to portions of the IDSHD (ANC-03326/TYO-00203) have been addressed through implementation of measures identified in the PA and MOU, including workshops with dog sledders and other trail users, and development and implementation of the *Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan*. Thus, no further mitigation action is required.

Please provide us with your opinion regarding our determinations within 30 days of receipt of this letter. If you have any questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 245-0293.

Sincerely,



Catherine Glidden
Office of Environmental Analysis

cc:

Barbara Hotchkin, ARRC
Fran Seager-Boss, MSB
Richard Porter, KTC