

# STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

NORTHERN REGION, PLANNING & SUPPORT SERVICES

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February 2, 2009

David Navecky  
STB Finance Docket No. 34658  
Surface Transportation Board  
395 E. Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

Re: Alaska Railroad Corporation Construction and Operation  
of a Rail Line Between North Pole and Delta Junction  
Northern Region DOT&PF Comments January 2009

Dear Mr. Navecky,

Northern Region DOT&PF has the following comments:

1. DOT&PF prefers a right turn pocket for the access to Tom Bear Trail from the Richardson Highway.
2. DOT&PF prefers the route with the least amount of roadway crossings. Of those crossings proposed in the various alternatives, what is the plan for maintaining them if they are constructed?
3. S6.9 Transportation - "For new at-grade crossings, predicted accident frequency would be expected to be much lower than for the existing grade crossings, because total estimated vehicle traffic at the new crossings would be less than 2 percent of that for the existing crossings for any of the alternative routes from North Pole to Delta Junction."
  - i) While traffic volume is lower at new crossings due to location and community size, the local community may be less educated regarding roadway/railroad crossings. Has this been taken into account, or is traffic volume the only criteria for evaluation?
  - ii) The section mentions "... to Delta Junction." There are two potential crossings South of Delta Junction (one on the Alaska Highway, and one on the Richardson Highway), are these included in the impact analysis?
  - iii) Also, the location of all potential roadway crossings (either at-grade or elevated) have not been identified. In accordance with the Alaska Traffic Manual, Section 8A.02, an

engineering study involving both the highway authority and the railroad company should be conducted to determine what actions should be taken to enhance safety at the crossings.

- iv) S6.11 Land Use - "Any non-rail associated activities within the ROW would require a permit from ARRC, and any permissions required by the agency, corporation, or individual that owns the property. Permanent support facilities that would be constructed outside of the ROW include permanent access roads, communications towers, and facilities to support rail line operations, including a passenger terminal."
- v) If a permanent access road is to be constructed outside the ROW, as indicated by this section, why is it not included in the ROW acquisition? Why would a passenger terminal be constructed outside of the ROW? On whose property will these permanent features be constructed?
- vi) Also, if the permanent access road is outside of ARRC's ROW, is it available for public use without a permit from ARRC, as suggested by the above section?

Regards,



Ethan Birkholz  
Planning Manager, Northern Region

Cc: Steve Titus, P.E. Regional Director, Northern Region  
Dave Bloom, P.E., Preconstruction Engineer  
Gerald J. Rafson, P.E., Chief of Planning, Northern Region