

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

SECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

PORT MACKENZIE RAIL EXTENSION PROJECT

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Willow, Alaska

April 13, 2010

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Willow, Alaska - April 13, 2010)

(On record - 6:30 p.m.)

MR. NAVECKY: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I think we're ready to begin, if you'd like to take a seat. Good evening and thank you for attending this public comment meeting on the draft environmental impact statement for the proposed Port MacKenzie rail extension. I would like to officially call this meeting to order. I am Dave Navecky of the Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis, otherwise known as SEA. The board is the federal agency responsible for authorizing the construction and operation of new rail lines and associated facilities. In December 2008, the Alaska Railroad Corporation filed a request for authority to construct and operate approximately 30 to 45 miles of rail line and related support facilities from the Point MacKenzie --Port MacKenzie district to a point on the existing Alaska Railroad mainline between Wasilla and just north of Willow. The Mat-Su Borough is working with the Railroad as a sponsor of the proposed rail line and was responsible for obtaining state funds to conduct environmental reviews and preliminary engineering for the proposed rail line.

The Surface Transportation Board is the lead federal agency responsible for preparing this EIS which is intended to identify and evaluate the potential environmental impacts

associated with the proposed rail line. We also have three cooperating agencies assisting in preparation of the EIS. They are the US Army Corp of Engineers, the Federal Railroad Administration and the United States Coast Guard. Sitting in the audience this evening is Ben Soiseth of the Corp of Engineers. And where is Ben? Oh, he's over here on the right -- my right. A team of consultants led by ICF International also assisted SEA in preparing the EIS. At the table with me is Alan Summerville, project manager for ICF's activities on the EIS.

If you've not already done so, please sign in at the front table located at the entrance to the auditorium and indicate whether you are interested in providing oral comments on the draft EIS at tonight's meeting. This meeting is part of the draft EIS stage of the environmental review process. The draft EIS was issued last month and we are now accepting comments on the document. Prior to preparing the draft EIS we conducted agency and public scoping meetings to listen to your questions and concerns. The information you provided helped us frame our analysis, understand your concerns about the project and finalize the scope of study for the EIS which we issued in July of 2009. This final scope of study served as our guide concerning what to address in the draft EIS we are here to discuss this evening.

After the draft EIS comment period closes on May 10th the Surface Transportation Board will review all the hearing transcripts and written comments and SEA will prepare written

responses to all substantive comments. All of your comments, whether written or oral, and our comment responses will be published in the final EIS. The board will then issue a final decision based on the merit transportation -- merits of the proposed rail line, the draft and the final EISs and all public and agency comments in the public record. This final decision by the Surface Transportation Board will take one of three actions; approve the proposed rail line, deny it or approve it with mitigating conditions including environmental conditions.

Construction, if approved by the board, could not begin unless and until the cooperating agencies issue final decisions approving and permitting the proposed rail line. The handout that you picked up at the entrance to the room contains additional information on our entire environmental review process. Whether you speak tonight or not you can also provide us with handwritten comments this evening by filling out the last page of your handout and turning it in at the sign in table. There are also blank comment forms at the sign in table. Oral and written comments are given equal weight in consideration, so if you choose not to speak this evening, your written comments will be fully considered.

In addition, this evening is just one option for you to provide written comments. We are accepting written comments until May 10th and you may use the comment forms provided tonight or your own handwritten or typed comment letters. Your handout

provides the information you need to submit these written comments to the Surface Transportation Board and that may occur either by mail or electronically through our website. In preparing your written comments, we encourage you to be as detailed as possible in describing your concerns. We are also interested in receiving comments on the purpose and need for the proposed rail line, potential project impacts, opinions on preferred alternatives, adequacy of the preliminary mitigation in the draft EIS including trail crossings and the need for any additional mitigation.

In a minute, I will begin calling on those individuals who would like to speak. Your oral comments will be documented by the court reporter located to my left. When I call your name, please approach the microphone then state and spell your first and last name for the benefit of the audience and the court reporter. To ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, each person will be limited to approximately five minutes, although I suspect that we will have plenty of time this evening and if someone wants to come back and speak an additional five minutes, we'll -- I will give everyone that opportunity.

Also, at the end of the formal comment session this evening I will adjourn the meeting and we will be available to talk about the project with you one-on-one and answer any questions you might have or at least attempt to answer your questions; however, I must stress that the best way for you to

participate in our EIS process, to convey your questions and comments, is to provide them in writing. That ensures that we will address them in writing in the final EIS.

I would like to ask the first person to come up to the microphone. That is Dale Evans, please.

MR. EVANS: Pass.

MR. NAVECKY: Ed McCain.

MR. MCCAIN: Edward McCain, E-D-W-A-R-D M-C-C-A-I-N.

And I received a CD in the mail of your environmental impact statement and I reviewed and have the following concerns. The first thing I came across was the dock, the fact that there's no need for dredging. There's no need for dredging because it's self-scouring there, meaning the current is so fast that it's not going to silt up. And we've already had a pulp ship that's had to disconnect from the dock due to ice in the inlet. And there's already been an incident at Nikiski where an oil tanker was tore loose from the dock from this moorings because of the current from the tides and the ice conditions. And the dock at Nikiski is a fraction of the current that it is at Point MacKenzie. You got to remember that Knik In -- Arm there is the second highest tides in the world and I think that's something that you guys need to look into.

Then I have another concern with your grade crossings in the section line easements. The Organic Act of 1866 provided for section line easements on every mile square. And even though

these townships haven't been surveyed, they're protracted townships and protracted sections. And I know the Willow Trail Committee has had to honor that. Every time they've had to pay for a survey, a survey of one of their trails, they're had to monument these section lines and show these easements.

Another concern is the 50 foot pedestrian easement around all streams and major lakes that Fish and Game has made us honor for close to 30 years, some even before that. And are you going to be able to continuously walk down the edge of these streams or when you come to the railroad are you going to be blocked and arrested for trespassing like happens on most of them right now?

You had asked once before about how often the railroad needs to provide crossings. I don't think every mile is too ridiculous, because at the cost of building roads in this borough right now between 50 and a hundred dollars a foot, we're talking between 150,000 and 260,000 for a half of mile of road and that isn't practical for most subdivisions.

Another thing it says you'll be building a road along the railroad to build it and then you're going to tear it up. And I question that our tax money is going to build this road, our tax money is going to tear it up, and then our local tax money is going to have to build another one. And I think if you build a road it needs to be turned over to the local people for use.

Another concern I have is what's happening at the Glenn Highway at the flats and this is for the Corp of Engineers. When you leave here tonight if it's still light enough, when you go onto the Glenn Highway there's a big long straight stretch there. Take a look at it. The road is acting as a dike and on your left hand side you'll see all the trees are dying out because the water table is raising, where on the right hand side of the road to the west the trees are gaining more of a foothold because it's drying out. This railroad plan that we've got right now has got almost 10 miles of railroad out south of the Deshka Landing Road with about half a dozen culverts. And all that land is draining from east to west to the Big Su. I think it's something you need to take a look at.

Another one of my concerns is if the Willow route is picked, it's going to be a round trip of 64.2 miles longer to Anchorage, because the Willow route is 13.5 miles longer than the Big Lake route. That's a total of 27 miles round trip. The Big Lake route starts at Mile 70.3. The Willow route at Mile 88.9, which is 18.6 miles for a total of 37.2. When you add you two together it's 64.2 miles that that train is going to have to travel if you have cargo going from Anchorage to Point MacKenzie. And I think it's -- and that's that many more miles of track that's going have to be maintained too and built.

Another one of my problems is the way the Big Lake route was handled. It appears that the negatives of the Big Lake

route were thoroughly covered in your statement but not the Houston or Willow routes. And it says they need a 430 foot bridge. Is that any different than the one that's going to be required at Willow? I don't think so. It says you'll have to move 2,440 feet of an unnamed stream. It says you'll have to move or close a thousand feet -- or you have to move a thousand feet of Hawk Lane, you'll have to close 865 feet of Cheri Lake Road. That's almost a mile away from your intersection. What's happening that you'd have to close that road? You'll have to do 1405 feet of Loon Street. And as far as this stream, it seems like it's the worst possible choice to make the Big Lake route not feasible. Why can't you just move the railroad over a few hundred feet here and there? Did you guys review these plans, did you guys come up with these plans or did somebody else design them and you get stuck with them and how can they be changed?

Another problem I have is with your noise study. It's very apparent whoever did that didn't talk to the Alaska Railroad, because it says there's going to be 10 trains in the day for every one at night, that's in your opening statement there on noise, yet the Alaska Railroad does that just backwards. They run their freight trains at night and the passenger trains run during the day, because -- so they can work on the tracks during the day and not have to run their people off the tracks every five minutes for a train. So there is going to be a lot more noise and stuff like that at night because that's when the

freight trains run.

The other problem I had is the Willow 2 site appears to be at my driveway and this same thing happened seven years ago where they completely blocked out my whole house, barn, corrals, everything under your big dock there showing where the area is going to be affected by the noise. And you're making people think that there's nobody in that area. And I did real battle with the borough a few years ago on this when they said nobody was -- house was going to be on the route when mine was completely covered up under their big black line. And I think next time you might want to show that as shading or something like that. It's an aerial photograph and if it wasn't for that big dot you could easily see my operation there.

MR. NAVECKY: Are you near the end of your comments, Mr. McCain or.....

MR. MCCAIN: Yes.

MR. NAVECKY: Okay.

MR. MCCAIN: Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. The next is Jim Huston, is that correct?

MR. HUSTON: Yes. My name is Jim Huston, that's H-U-S-T-O-N, and I'm the president of the Willow Chamber of Commerce. And I just real quickly before I came tonight checked back in my records and back in October 4th -- prior to October 4th, 2007 the Willow Chamber of Commerce voted to support the

Willow West route out west of Red Shirt Lake and we considered a lot of the different factors about it. And one of the early things that came up was that the railroad increased traffic through by Nancy Lake. There's 700 homeowners on -- in that lake association. And the increased noise that would be going by through there and also the on-grade crossings that go to Nancy Lake are safety issues and noise issues with increased freight traffic at night. And any of the routes other than the Willow West route will not alleviate any of those problems for noise or safety.

It would be difficult to put an overpass at the Nancy Lake site, so the best answer is to keep down the number of trips by that area. And we look at the chance of having the railroad going west of Red Shirt Lake to be an opportunity for trails that would accommodate north and south trails from Big Lake and going north and hooking up to the Big Susitna. And we are very proud of our trails here in Willow and there is a lot of objections about the impact of the trails, but we see with good planning and consideration that the impact would be minimized to east-west trails and that the addition of better north-south trails would be a benefit to the community.

We, as a chamber of commerce, look at the economic benefits to an area and feel that if the railroad was to tie in here at Willow that there would be more job opportunities, maybe a maintenance station here. And we've worked for some length of

time wishing to see a train stop here in Willow again. And if there's economic development connected with the railroad that we would hope that that may be able piggyback into having a train stop and a station here in Willow again to accommodate the tourism traffic and even local traffic in and out of Willow.

A lot of the other considerations that people bring up about earthquake zones in, you know, the Houston area and things like that. We've considered all of those things. We've been to many of the meetings here and our stand was initially unanimous so that we were in support of the westerly route and we submitted letters and I'll give you another copy of the letter that we wrote in the very beginning. And our stand still is to that effect. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. And now I'm going to run through some names of people that had question marks. They were uncertain whether they wanted to speak when they signed in and I'll give them the opportunity to do so if they'd like. First is Dean Halstead.

MR. HALSTEAD: My name is Dean Halstead. I live out on Vera Lake. Across the lake from me I would be able to see the railroad bed and hear it. And since my family is from Montana, back there there was a lot of trains developed and the railways developed to support the coal mines. And it's a big bunch of bullshit. In listening to this last fellow that talked, I know everyone is entitled to their opinion no matter how wrong it is,

but everyone I talked to here in Willow they say take that railroad and put it somewhere where the sun doesn't shine.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Okay. The next one -- I apologize if I don't get the name correctly, Charlie Wood or Wode [sic]? Is -- am I close? Don't recognize it. I could give you your post office box. Post Office Box 830.

MR. WADE: Not even close.

MR. NAVECKY: Not even close. Sorry.

MR. WADE: My name is Charles Wade and I would not be able to see the Willow West route, but I would certainly hear it. And I moved to this area as a retirement area and I didn't move here to listen to trains. I can hear the one at Willow sometimes, you know, in the morning, but I would -- so that would be an issue for me. And an issue as far as property values, which aren't doing so well now, but I think that would hurt us. And there is a school right there. I don't know if anyone -- if that's been noticed -- noted by anybody.....

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) the mic (indiscernible).

MR. WADE: Oh, I'm sorry. There is a school, I'm sure that's been noted, but I haven't heard it or read it anywhere, that is very near that site too, that -- you know, that may have some impact there. But I know that -- I'm sure the people of the trails, I know that will limit my access to that big swamp area that -- there and so I'm not certainly not in favor of it. And

so the Chamber of Commence doesn't represent me. Okay. I'll be submitting written comments again.

REPORTER: Charles, can you just -- Charles, could you spell your name for me, please?

MR. WADE: W-A-D-E.

REPORTER: W-A-E?

MR. WADE: W-A-D-E.

REPORTER: Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Ted Berry, am I getting closer this time?

MR. BERRY: (Indiscernible).

MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you. Dave Demboski?

MR. DEMBOSKI: (Indiscernible).

MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you. Diane Hutchison?

MS. HUTCHISON: I'll pass (indiscernible).

MR. NAVECKY: Robert?

MR. HUTCHISON: My name is Robert Hutchison, H-U-T-C-H-I-S-O-N. I am a resident of Willow. One major consideration is one of Willow's primary incomes is tourism in the winter, winter sports. And if we put that rail line through the Willow area it will definitely the decrease the attractiveness of this area for winter sports. Snow machining particularly is a big issue out there in the Willow swamp and the big swamp. And those trails run east and west. They don't -- it will not accommodate the snow machiners by just simply running

north and south.

The other is that's a very productive moose area through there and that's an issue that we will definitely sacrifice moose if a train area is put through there. Third is a tremendous tourism attraction here is Willow Creek. And if we put a bridge and all the accouterments that go along with it, that's definitely going to detract from Willow Creek as a tourist attraction. I think those economic benefits way outweigh the few jobs that would be had here from the railroad putting a yard or spur or anything in this area. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Linda Oxley?

MS. OXLEY: I'll pass, thanks.

MR. NAVECKY: Jason Votruba?

MR. VOTRUBA: Jason Votruba, V-O-T-R-U-B-A. I'm speaking personally here. This north-south route through Willow here is going to cut off probably about six east-west trails for mushing and snow machining, cross country skiing, and like previously stated, that's a pretty major part of what goes in Willow here in the wintertime. The fact that we already have north-south trails that run through the big swamp, it's not really that big of an advantage to have the railroad come through for the fact that we'll add another one there. It's more about you can't take the dogs over the rails, you can't snow machine over the trails, you can't cross country ski over the rails.

It's really going to have a huge impact on the user groups. I know many people moved here for that aspect and many, many people recreate here for that aspect.

I don't have the specific here, but I think that there's an issue with the federal spending of dollars when it comes to projects that go over state land and in this case it crosses the state property I think five times. And so that's something that when it looks to be how much it's going to cost, where is all that money coming from. That needs to be looked into.

Let's see. The -- probably one of the major aspects that's maybe underrated right now, which has been already stated, is the blocking of the east-west drainage to the swamps, because that's where all the runoff and all the water is going from east to west into the Big Su. Once you put that rail line bed down, that's pretty much putting a dam in there.

Building a bridge across Willow Creek and at the extent of how long it would be and where the supports would be and all that construction around there is definitely something that we want to avoid and that's why finding a better route not through Willow is -- would be highly appreciated.

One of the concerns that needs to be addressed is the amount of coal, coal dust, gravel, gravel dust, whatever flying out of the train cars as they come by. I grew up near train tracks and played with a lot of coal growing up. So I know it

does happen and spilling into Willow Creek in the swamps the -- all the streams that this is going to cross is going to have a huge negative impact. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Dan Russell.

MR. RUSSELL: Well, thank you very much. I'm looking at this map and it seems to me the most logical route would be the most direct route, the Houston North going from Mac East and then Connection 3 there and then up to Houston North. You might be able to cut off a few miles between where it intersects Connection 2 and -- anyway, that would be my idea.

And then also I would like to propose that you incorporate a commuter rail along that route to access the new ferry boat that's coming in at Port MacKenzie. And it seems that that would give access to all the people from Talkeetna all the way to Wasilla to access the ferry boat with a commuter rail. That was -- thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Did you get the spelling? Mark Lind.

MR. LIND: Mark Lind, L-I-N-D. I know everybody's against this rail no matter where it goes, if it's Houston, wherever. I'm against the one up here in the Willow area. It crosses four salmon streams. There's a lot wetlands it crosses where you have your swans, loons and everything out there. One of the highest populations of the moose in this area winter where that rail will be going through. Plus putting a rail in up here,

definitely another bridge across the road. They're just putting a new road in up there, so they probably have to tear it up again. That's it.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Okay. I'm going to apologize before I even say the name. Cathy or Carrie, Post Office Box 1218? The last name starts with an F I believe. Okay. Next is Matthew Wagner, if you'd like to speak.

MR. WAGNER: Yeah, pretty much like anyone else from here, outdoorsy. I like to snowmobile and dog mush in the outdoors, so I'm really worried about trails and swamps, the habitat. Our tourism depends on good fishing and good winter access and all that. Also there's a little community known as Rekierville (ph) and many people from Willow don't even know about it, because it's kind of like a sort of diminished homestead community, but that's where I live and I got a few neighbors. And we have to contend with the railroad without proper crossing and it's bad enough as it is now. If they increase traffic it's going to make it really hard for us to get into our property and it's going to make it more dangerous.

As well as what they did in the 80s with the rail line. It used to be a trestle going over the swamp that I cross in the wintertime to get to my cabin. And when they graveled that, it was like a -- kind of an Armageddon for that little ecosystem there. There used to be great little grayling streams and stuff and now it's kind of a stinky orange funky thing. I'm not sure

what to call it.

And I'm not sure what the unnamed tributary is to Little Willow Creek. I know one that's in Rekiville that I'm guessing that's the one. But there is a decent salmon run that goes into that, but I doubt if there would be in the future if this rail line goes through. And that's all I got.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Did you get the spelling?

MR. WAGNER: You need the spelling?

REPORTER: Yes.

MR. WAGNER: W-A-G-N-E-R.

MR. NAVECKY: Okay. That -- those rep -- that represents all the yeses and the questions marks and undecided. There are a few people that didn't indicate either way, so I'm going to just give people the opportunity to come up now if you haven't spoken or even if you have spoken if you'd like to come up to the microphone. And is there anyone that like to come up? Yes, sir. And please state and spell your name for us, please.

MR. PALMATIER: My name is Dick Palmatier. You spell it P-A-L-M-A-T-I-E-R. The last time this came up I voiced my dissent for this Willow Trail. It was a Willow cutoff for the railroad and someone said, well, it's a lot easier to get right-of-ways here, because it's to go down Big Lake, down to Houston, there's a lot of private property. So it seemed to me that the push was to put the Willow through for one reason only,

that was because the right-of-way system was -- the right-of-ways were easier to get.

And I'm with other people here. The trail system will be destroyed out there. Everybody goes across the Susitna River here, the Iditarod, and it's blocking it off. And I don't know about the drainage, but it sure looks like it would affect the drainage. When you put the railroad going down Willow Creek and crossing you're to have a trespass problem, especially if you tear up the roads that you're going to put along with it, because people will follow the railroad tracks to go down there and go fishing. They don't want to buck the woods. It's quite a ways down there. People walk down the creek now, during the king season particularly, and do a lot of fishing. So you will have all that trespass problem -- in fact, you'll have trespass problems all along through there. It seems to me that the ideal way is to take the shortest route. It looks like the Big Lake route to me is the shortest, going straight down there. And so you've got to get some right-of-ways. Do it. And the least amount of construction, as far as I'm concerned, the less damage that is done.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else like to speak at the mic? Yes, sir.

MR. EVANS: My name is Dale Evans, E-V-A-N-S, and I just have one document here that I got off line about the city of Houston's resolution voting with the -- a resolution of the

Willow area community organization and the council for the city of Houston jointly proposed the Houston sale -- South rail spur location for joining a mainline and to ask the borough assembly and the borough staff to support this decision. So they voted on selecting the Houston South. It seems to me that's what everybody wants, Houston South. Why do you want it to come out of Willow whereas it's the cost out of Willow is a hundred million dollars more than if you take it out of Houston?

Another thing I'm against it, is because where it comes off up here Mile 72.5, because it goes right through my house. So I'm kind of against that myself. But to go through all the wetlands out here and the state recreation areas has a lot to do with Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation of 1966. Affects the -- the Section 4(f), which I don't know a lot about, I'm reading what I printed off line about it, and it affects more of that lands coming from Willow than it does from Houston. So it would be unwise to go through Willow.

If they say, well, they can move the Nancy Lake state recreation area a line over, well, that has a lot of mitigations to go through. It has to go through the state, you know, to get to change things like that, to go right through the middle of the Willow Creek State Recreation Area. And this section -- it affects this Section 4(f) of the funding. So I'd have to, you know, I think you know more about that than I do, but what's -- when I have this right here that Houston wants it, let's send it

to Houston.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Evans.
Is there anyone else that has not spoken that would like to
speak? Yes, sir.

MR. GLASER: Well, my name is Don Glaser and I live
out.....

MR. NAVECKY: Can you spell your last name for us,
please?

MR. GLASER: G-L-A-S-E-R. And we live out by Vera
Lake. And you've heard all the reasons. I can repeat them all.
I won't have to because of the trails out there, but the land --
the lakes area this close to a large city like Anchorage, there's
no more beautiful area than that. And to block all that access
where all the snow machines go out that way and they have to
cross the railroad track, that would be a large mistake. Of
course, I'm a hundred percent against it. I don't think it
should be there. It's too costly. You can run down the road or
wherever, wherever there's already a right-a-way, but that lake
area is the one that we want to protect and that's why people
have moved up here. They've come up here and the -- whether it's
the boating, the canoeing, the snow machine, it'll ruin all of
that. And besides you'll need about two or three troopers out
there to keep them all off of that railroad, because everybody's
going to run up and down it anyway and it's just another reason
for -- it's a place for an accident to happen. That's all. It's

a bad idea, very bad. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else that has not commented like to come up?

(No audible responses)

MR. NAVECKY: Anyone that has already been up who would like to have additional few minutes to comment? Yes. Please come up.

MR. WAGNER: Again, my name is Matthew Wagner, W-A-G-N-E-R. I forgot to mention that I was out on Little Willow Creek when their enviro -- or excuse me, the crew came out to see what environmental impacts might -- there might be and they flew out a nice big fancy helicopter and played around in the creek for awhile and kind of ignored us locals and then they left. And they did that a few times and it didn't seem like they were doing a whole lot of hardcore research to me. They didn't seek local knowledge. They stopped there by the railroad bridge. I -- you know, I talked to my neighbors about it and what they saw and it was pretty much like kind of a dog and pony show. So that's my take. So that's all I wanted to say.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else like to come up and comment?

MR. SMOLE: My name is Doug Smole and I live in the Horseshoe Lake area which is a part of the greater Big Lake community and I just want to say I think we agree with all of you for many of the same reasons. We have the trails. It's a

recreational area. It's one of the largest communities population wise. We've moved there for retirement. We have new homes being built there. We're concerned about the noise. We're concerned about salmon streams, the effect on numerous lakes on our area. Martin Buser is a neighbor of mine. I hear his dogs. I'd much rather listen to his dogs that run across his trails out west of where I live than listen to the train and have to cross the trestle or hope that if they choose our route that they would build a way for us to get out to the west and the places where we play just as all of you do. So it's nice to hear that we're really on much the same wavelength. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else? Okay. I want to -- oh, sorry.

MS. OWEN: Christina Owen, O-W-E-N. And I think from what I've been following this railroad going out to Point MacKenzie is basically to follow up on Point MacKenzie being built, the port, which basically from what I can see is a boondoggle. It was a poor thing to build the port there in the first place and that putting this railroad out there is to try to show that Point MacKenzie wasn't so much of a boondoggle. And so as much as I live here in Willow and I do not want the trails coming through the salmon bearing streams, through the Nancy Lake Rec Area, through Willow Creek Recreational Area, I wouldn't want to force it on another community either. So I don't want to say go to Houston, even though Houston says that they want it, and I

think that's great for them to want it, but that means it goes through Big Lake and a lot of people that I know from Big Lake they don't want it. So I'd love to give it to Houston, but I don't know how to get it to Houston without going through Big Lake. So my point is I don't think we need it at all. It's to feed a boondoggle to begin with. And down from the Lower 48, which is where a lot of us come from, the railroad is being reverted back to trails, rails-to-trails. But up here unfortunately with the swamp conditions that you by putting a railroad in damage the ecosystem so much that I don't think it's going to necessarily be really easy to go back to rails. And so I think we need to learn from the Lower 48, the mistakes that were done there, and not to bring them up here.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments.

(Applause)

MR. NAVECKY: Anyone else? Last call.

(No audible responses)

MR. NAVECKY: Well, I want to thank you all for coming out this evening and expressing an interest in the project. I know many of you feel strongly about it. And also thank those who came up to speak. I know for many people it's not easy to speak publicly. And of course I would encourage all of you to send in written comments regarding your concerns about the project, the preferred alternative, the impacts, the trail issues, recreational impacts, anything that is on your mind and

to be as detailed as possible so that we understand what your concerns really are.

So what I'll do now is adjourn the formal component of this meeting and we'll be available to speak with you one-on-one to discuss the project or answer some questions you may have. Thank you for coming.

(Off record)

(On record)

(The following testimony was given to the court reporter only and not part of the public testimony:)

MR. STANCULESCU: This is Victor Stanculescu, last name S-T-A-N-C-U-L-E-S-C-U, speaking as a resident of Willow, Alaska. And I'd like to express my opposition to the Willow North rail selection route mainly due to the impacts that I believe it will have on the salmon fisheries that occur in several of the creeks that would have to be bridged for the route to go through. That includes Fish Creek, Rolly Creek, Willow Creek and Little Willow Creek, all of which would be heavily impacted. They're very important and anadromous salmon fisheries.

Also I'm concerned of the impact to the state recreational areas on the western route. That would be the Susitna Flats State Game Refuge, the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, the Little Su Recreation River and the Willow Creek State Recreation Area. Those areas are important recreational areas and they're key to the trail system which is a very important

asset to the Willow area. The winter recreation from the Willow area to the west is dependant on trails that many of them would be cut by the rail selection of the Willow route and that would have a large impact on the availability of people to be able to travel to the west out to the Susitna River and to access areas out with dog mushing, snow machining and other winter uses. Which has been mentioned before, a dog team has a very tough time getting over and across a railroad intersection safely.

In sum I'd like to say that I support the Houston North route or the Houston South route by far over the choice of the Willow route as a choice for the rail corridor. Thank you.

REPORTER: Thank you.

(Off record - 7:19 p.m.)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)

TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Salena A. Hile, hereby certify that the foregoing pages numbered 2 through 28 are a true, accurate, and complete transcript of proceedings, transcribed under my direction from a copy of the electronic sound recording to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Date

Salena A. Hile