

1 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
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3 TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC MEETING
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5 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
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7 FOR THE ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION'S
8
9 PROPOSED NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION PROJECT
10
11 FINANCE DOCKET 35095
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Salcha, Alaska
January 14, 2009
5:00 p.m.

18 APPEARANCES:

19 Mr. Dave Navecky, Surface Transportation Board
20 Mr. Don Perrin, Alaska Department of Natural Resources
21 Mr. Alan Summerville, ICF
22 Ms. Melissa Elefante DuMond, ICF
23 Mr. Dave Johnson, ICF
24 Mr. Mike Nagy, ENTRIX
25

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. NAVECKY: Good evening, ladies and
3 gentlemen. I think we're about ready to get started if you
4 can -- for those of you who would like to sit, please have a
5 seat. If you'd like to stand, that's fine, too.

6 This is the public meeting on the
7 Alaska Railroad's Proposed Northern Rail Extension, which is a
8 proposed rail line that would run from approximately North Pole
9 down to Delta Junction.

10 My name is Dave Navecky. I am with the
11 Surface Transportation Board. The Surface Transportation Board
12 is a federal agency that has the authority to license the
13 construction and operation of rail lines. We're an economic
14 regulatory agency. And before a rail line can be constructed,
15 a license from our agency is required.

16 The rail line came to us -- the Alaska Railroad
17 came to us in 2005 stating that they had an interest in
18 constructing a rail line from North Pole down to
19 Delta Junction. At that time they had a series of alignments
20 that they had developed that they wanted us to consider as
21 potential routes down to Delta Junction.

22 We then initiated the Environmental Impact
23 Statement process to identify the potential impacts of the
24 proposed project and disclose those potential impacts to
25 citizens and agencies within the state of Alaska. We started

1 that process with scoping, what is referred to as scoping, in
2 which we had a series of public meetings in the region to
3 identify the proposed project, and at that time what alignments
4 were under consideration by the railroad.

5 We had not identified which alternatives at
6 that point that my agency would consider in the Environmental
7 Impact Statement. That's a decision that's made by my agency.
8 It's not a decision that's made by the railroad.

9 We took those comments from the public and the
10 agencies, and we then identified a scope of study for the
11 Environmental Impact Statement to address the concerns that
12 were expressed to us by the public and the agencies. And we
13 also identified a set of alternatives to get the rail line from
14 North Pole down to Delta Junction.

15 And over the course of a couple years we did
16 field studies, wetlands and historic sites, and collected data
17 on nesting sites for bald eagles and other raptors, and all
18 sorts of data we collected in the field. And that effort
19 resulted in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which we
20 issued in December. Again, that document was published by my
21 agency, the Surface Transportation Board.

22 Throughout that process we were also assisted
23 by eight other agencies, and we refer to them as cooperating
24 agencies. And those agencies have a role in the project.
25 Either the railroad would need to obtain some type of permit

1 from those agencies, some type of approval from those agencies,
2 or those agencies are or would provide funding for the
3 potential operation or maintenance of the rail line.

4 And those are the U.S. Department of Defense,
5 Alaska Command, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of
6 Land Management, the Federal Railroad Administration, the
7 Federal Transit Administration, the United States Coast Guard,
8 and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

9 The purpose of tonight's meeting is to allow
10 you folks to provide to us oral comments on the
11 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. And those comments will
12 be reviewed and addressed when we do the Final Environmental
13 Impact -- prepare the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

14 The comments you provide to us orally today
15 will be official comments that will be put into the record on
16 the project, and they're being transcribed by the court
17 reporter over here to my right.

18 However, the other options you have are to
19 provide us written comments, either in letters that you mail to
20 us, or you can provide us written comments through our Web
21 site. And the little project description document that we
22 provided to you at the table and also in the
23 Draft Environmental Impact Statement provides instructions on
24 how to provide both written comments through the mail and
25 through our Web site.

1 The written comments that you can provide to us
2 are due on February 2nd, 2009, next month. If you mail the
3 comments, the comments must be postmarked by February 2nd. If
4 you're going to submit the comments to us electronically
5 through our Web site, they just need to be submitted by the end
6 of the day on February 2nd.

7 Whether you provide comments to us orally or in
8 writing, either form of comments is considered equally.
9 Whether you speak tonight or whether you provide us written
10 comments, we don't place greater weight on either. They're
11 considered equally so. If you don't feel you're ready to speak
12 tonight or just aren't comfortable speaking and would rather
13 provide comments in writing, rest assured those comments
14 receive equal weight to anyone that may choose to speak this
15 evening.

16 What we will do is we'll take the roster of
17 people who have signed up to speak, and we will allow those
18 individuals approximately five minutes to speak. And we will
19 ask those individuals to come to the front of the room, state
20 their name, and spell their last name so that the court
21 reporter can transcribe that correctly.

22 At the end of that time, if everyone that has
23 elected to speak on the record, we will then close the formal
24 portion of the meeting. And then we will adjourn the meeting,
25 but we will hang around for a little while in case you have

1 some informal comments or questions about the process and where
2 we go next.

3 Where we go next is we will take all those
4 comments, both the oral comments and written comments, and we
5 will consider those comments, and then we'll prepare the
6 Final EIS. Again, that is the Surface Transportation Board and
7 the cooperating agencies. The railroad is not involved in the
8 preparation of this document. In fact, I understand they will
9 be providing written comments on the Draft Environmental Impact
10 Statement as well. They were not involved in it in its
11 preparation.

12 Once the final Environmental Impact Statement
13 is prepared, then my agency, the Surface Transportation Board,
14 will make a decision on whether to grant the license to the
15 railroad to construct and operate the rail line.

16 And that -- the agency can do that in three
17 ways. It can deny the license entirely outright, they can
18 approve the license, or they can approve the project with
19 mitigation. That would close the process from my agency's
20 perspective.

21 If my agency approves the project, the railroad
22 still needs to get all the other federal and state permits that
23 would normally be required, such as those from the U.S. Army
24 Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Alaska Department
25 of Natural Resources, and so on. So they still have a number

1 of procedures to go through before the rail line could be
2 constructed, assuming they receive all their permits and
3 approvals as required.

4 With me at the table here is Don Perrin with
5 the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. And as I
6 mentioned, DNR is one of our cooperating agencies. They also
7 have a special role in the process related to a state statute.
8 And I'm going to let Don explain that process to you.

9 MR. PERRIN: Thanks, Dave. Hi. My name is Don Perrin.
10 I'm with the state of Alaska Department of Natural Resources.
11 And in addition to DNR being a cooperating agency on the NEPA
12 EIS, we're also entrusted with implementing a state law that
13 was passed in 2004 which is entitled The Extension of the
14 Alaska Railroad, which allows the railroad to identify a
15 corridor 500 foot wide from existing facilities in the vicinity
16 of North Pole all the way to the Canadian border.

17 So the railroad, based on alternative analysis
18 studies and other documents that they've been working on, has
19 requested that DNR reserve the corridor. And so what DNR needs
20 to do now is consult with potentially affected parties and make
21 a determination and a finding as to whether or not the location
22 of the rail minimizes impacts on existing rights of way and
23 uses and access for hunting, fishing, trapping, and other
24 recreation activities.

25 And we intend to issue a public notice with a

1 proposed decision after the STB issues their decision to
2 license the rail. And when we do that, we'll have a 30-day
3 public comment period, which we'll take comments from folks as
4 to whether this is going to have an effect on them.

5 As Dave said, the project requires other state
6 and federal permits, including Fish & Game, for extreme
7 crossings. But at this point, we're just mainly concerned
8 about access for individuals so that they can get across the
9 rail line and back into the Tanana Flats and do what they've
10 traditionally done.

11 And so we've got a set of maps over here with
12 AJ from DNR. And I would encourage you to go over there and,
13 with a marker, indicate where you guys go within reason, and
14 where you cross. It would also be helpful to have your name,
15 and also what you -- what method you use to cross and what time
16 of year so we can just kind of collect a general sense of where
17 people go so we can get a baseline as to what the impacts are
18 going to be and work with the railroad to make sure that you
19 can cross the rail line and not be affected.

20 That's pretty much all I have. If you have any
21 questions about the DNR role in this process, please call the
22 Division of Mining, Land and Water in Fairbanks at 451-2740.
23 Thank you.

24 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you, Don. Whether or not
25 you choose to provide comments to us tonight orally or in

1 writing -- and I encourage you to do that. We're very
2 interested in your comments -- it's most helpful to us if you
3 go into as much detail as possible in your comments. For
4 example, on some portions of the route there are alternatives
5 in which the rail line could go.

6 If you have a preference for one or the other,
7 in addition to identifying your preference, if you can explain
8 why you have that preference, or why you don't like the other
9 one. That's very helpful for us to understand the issues
10 behind your preference.

11 If you have concerns about potential impacts
12 and you can explain what your concerns are, why those -- why
13 you have those concerns. The document has some mitigation
14 measures, some potential mitigation measures to minimize or
15 avoid impacts from the project. If you have comments on those
16 mitigation measures, if you think there should be other
17 mitigation measures, we would encourage you to propose those to
18 us and why you think those should be added to the project.

19 So as much information and as much detail as
20 you can go into will be most helpful to us. So now we'll do
21 the.....

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Question?

23 MR. NAVECKY: Sure.

24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hey, Dave, could you point
25 out or have the cooperating agencies identify themselves if

1 they're here tonight.

2 MR. NAVECKY: Sure. We do have some of the
3 cooperating agencies here. Of course, there's Don with the
4 Alaska Department of Natural Resources. We have a
5 representative.....

6 MR. PERRIN: My other cohost is in the back of
7 the room, also DNR.

8 MR. NAVECKY: We have a representative from the
9 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. And is anyone from BLM here?

10 MS. JACOBSEN: Yeah, I'm right here.
11 Shelly Jacobsen with BLM.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: And Kelly.....

13 MR. NAVECKY: Any other agencies?

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Fish & Game.

15 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Fish & Game.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Alaska Department of
17 Fish & Game.

18 MR. NAVECKY: And just to explain, if you look
19 at the document, they don't appear on the document. And the
20 reason that is, is that when we started this process, the
21 Fish & Game folks were part of DNR, and there was some
22 reorganization. And so but those folks are still involved in
23 the process as we were at the beginning as a cooperating
24 agency.

25 We'll now go into -- we only have one person

1 signed up to speak.

2 MR. JOHNSON: We have two more.

3 MR. NAVECKY: Two more? Okay. We have a
4 couple people signed up to speak formally. Again, I'll ask you
5 to come to the front of the room when I call your name, and if
6 you could spell your last name for the court reporter, that
7 would be most useful. We'll provide you approximately five
8 minutes. We don't obviously have a long list of people signed
9 up, so if you take longer, that's just fine.

10 And we're most interested in comments. If you
11 have a question about the project and want to have that entered
12 into the record, feel free to ask questions, but we're not
13 really prepared here to answer technical questions about the
14 project, because, as you can imagine, the document was 1,100
15 pages, and we had biologists and archaeologists and all that
16 type of stuff working on the project, and we just don't have
17 the ability, nor have the data off the top of our head to
18 answer questions.

19 But if you have a question you would like
20 entered into the record, the court reporter will take those
21 down, and we will address those questions in the Final EIS.
22 Afterwards, as we adjourn, if there's some informal questions
23 about the process, where we go from here, or that type of
24 stuff, we'll try to address those questions as best we can once
25 we adjourn the formal portion of the hearing.

1 Let's see, the first person is Harvey Drake, if
2 you could come up, please.

3 MR. DRAKE: Name's Harvey Drake, D- -- as in
4 Delta -- r-a-k-e. Most of mine are questions and concerns.
5 But has the routes been decided? In other words, is it 2 and 3
6 or 2 and -- are they going to cross at Bradbury or Flag Hill?
7 Has that been decided?

8 MR. NAVECKY: That's a process question I can
9 answer that the -- there has been no decision on any of the
10 alternatives. Any of the alternatives that you see on those
11 boards are still under consideration.

12 MR. DRAKE: Still alive?

13 MR. NAVECKY: Yes.

14 MR. DRAKE: Okay. Next question is, will the
15 railroad build the bridge, even though they don't have funding
16 for the rest of the railroad?

17 MR. NAVECKY: That's a question I can't answer.
18 We'll put that one in the record.

19 MR. DRAKE: If they use the Bradbury Crossing
20 and build a railroad grade going down through there, is there
21 any way of relieving that water that normally flows toward
22 Nenana? Or is that all going to be channeled back this way and
23 flood the people of Salcha a little bit worse than they have
24 been?

25 Because there's a lot of water that goes out

1 across the flats during the flooding season, and it goes all
2 the way to the foothills. So there's a lot of water there. So
3 if they go across at Bradbury where they've surveyed, that will
4 create a little dike over there and send all that water back.
5 this way, possibly even as far as Eielson. Because this summer
6 we had a really good time with water here and a lot of surface
7 water, so it could be a lot worse.

8 That's about all I've got to say is I just
9 wondered if any routes had been established, if the bridge
10 would be built regardless, because I heard they had funding.
11 And beyond that, we'll have to wait and see.

12 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments,
13 Mr. Drake. Next is Shelly Curtis, if you could come up,
14 please.

15 MS. CURTIS: Shelly Curtis. Curtis,
16 C-u-r-t-i-s. I'm actually here for two reasons. One, I'm here
17 representing Salcha School, and also for my personal reasons.

18 First with the school, several people would
19 like to know if it takes the route that goes through our
20 school, it shows it being moved. Now, who is responsible to
21 move our school? And are they planning on just picking the
22 building up and moving? Are they rebuilding the school? And
23 then what happens to our ski trails with this new route? Who's
24 paying for our school to move? We want to know.

25 MR. NAVECKY: Okay. We can certainly -- we'll

1 address that -- if it's not already in the document, we can
2 address that in the final document for you.

3 MS. CURTIS: Okay. So we're not going to know
4 until -- when would that -- that we would know what happens to
5 our school? It's not just one school, it's our whole community
6 school. So there's no answer there?

7 MR. NAVECKY: Actually, I mean, I -- as I
8 mentioned, it's a -- I don't know all the details off the top
9 of my head in there. So I think some of the answers that
10 people are looking for are probably in the document, and I
11 don't have the information on the top of my head.....

12 MS. CURTIS: Okay.

13 MR. NAVECKY:to tell you what it is or
14 what page to go to to look at, so.....

15 MS. CURTIS: Yeah, because we couldn't find it.
16 Okay. Personally, we have a cabin over on five-mile
17 Clear Creek on the Tanana Flats, which this railroad is
18 affecting a lot. It's showing a bridge down farther where we
19 have to take our boat to get to our cabin, and then another
20 bridge crossing the upper headwaters of this creek. And we're
21 concerned about access. When they're building the railroad and
22 also afterwards is what kind of access will there be for us?

23 And they're also showing damming off a stream
24 that comes into Clear Creek that helps keep the water at a
25 certain level, along with other dammings over there affecting

1 this access. Any ideas about the bridges there? I mean, are
2 we still going to be able to boat where we boat? Are we still
3 going to be able to access our property?

4 MR. PERRIN: Could you take the time to mark up
5 your locations and access points and methods on the map?

6 MS. CURTIS: Okay.

7 MR. PERRIN: In addition, I note that the
8 Salcha trails are indicated in the document. Could you maybe
9 take a look at that and see if that's accurate.

10 MS. CURTIS: Okay.

11 MR. PERRIN: And if not, you know, comment for
12 us. We at DNR really need to do a lot of outreach to find out
13 where everybody is going. Because currently we've got a
14 cursory review, but we don't -- we just don't know.

15 MS. CURTIS: And that was another question, is,
16 what about the existing trails? Like, right now one of your
17 routes go between our cabin and my tree stand. It goes right
18 in between it. And there's trails that have been there for 25
19 years that we have been using. And now it's saying, you know,
20 we -- you're not going to have access. Why?

21 MR. PERRIN: We're working on that.

22 MS. CURTIS: Okay. And the other question that
23 we had was the size of right of way. A 500-foot right of way.
24 That's pretty big.

25 MR. PERRIN: Well, I should have clarified.

1 It's initially 500 foot, in which time the railroad constructs
2 the rail line, then it is reduced to 200 feet.....

3 MS. CURTIS: Okay.

4 MR. PERRIN:100 feet either side of the
5 centerline.

6 MS. CURTIS: Okay. Because I was reading 200,
7 and I'm like, 500?

8 MR. PERRIN: Yeah. Sorry about that.

9 MS. CURTIS: Okay. I think that's it. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you, Ms. Curtis. Following
12 up on Ms. Curtis's comments, if you have similar comments
13 related to access to your property or to where you
14 traditionally hunt and so forth, Don had mentioned the maps
15 over here, and it would be very useful if you mark those on
16 those maps.

17 Or if you're going to provide us written
18 comments, if you could attach a map to your comments and
19 identify where you currently would cross the -- where the
20 proposed rail line would be located, that would be a bit most
21 useful to us so we have a better idea where these crossings are
22 located and where your property, where you recreate, or where
23 your homes are or your summer cabins, so forth and so on, that
24 is very helpful to us. Next is Carolyn Lincoln.

25 MS. LINCOLN: Carolyn Lincoln, L-i-n-c-o-l-n,

1 Salcha. Okay. I have a couple of concerns, some are personal,
2 some involve the fish and wildlife, the migration streams for
3 the salmon if they should go across the river at the Bradbury
4 place, or even if it goes across at Flag Hill.

5 Any abutments or dikes on either side of the
6 river, we need to have good studies done that our salmon can
7 get where they need to get to unimpeded. And we have a lot of
8 little tributaries that could be blocked off. The salmon know
9 where they're going if you don't mess up their road. So that's
10 one.

11 We have traditional moose crossings from that
12 area across the Tanana Flats to this area. They should not be
13 impeded either. They need to go where they need to go. So
14 whatever plan is implemented needs to bear those things in
15 mind.

16 We have traditional hunters, we have
17 subsistence hunters, we have recreational hunters, and we have,
18 in the past, always had a good healthy moose population that
19 traverses back and forth on the average of twice a year. We
20 move this way, they move that way. Of course, the salmon have
21 their pattern, and I imagine you folks are aware of all of
22 that, Fish & Game, Department of Natural Resources.

23 Then one of my other issues is that one of the
24 proposed plans crosses at the Bradbury Crossing, and that is
25 the narrowest part of the river as I understand it. And

1 probably the most easily accessible. But if there is diking
2 that goes on both sides of the river and narrows that river
3 down, I believe that needs to be of prime consideration that
4 there is going to be something to control that water, because
5 if you're going to narrow down its avenue, there are going to
6 be backup problems, there's going to be runoff problems as
7 Mr. Drake mentioned. So maybe a runoff area on other side or
8 whatever. We don't need it over here. We have more than
9 enough.

10 As far as the need or the desire for the
11 railroad, I think it's important that our state advances, as
12 one of the other members had said. I think it's important, but
13 it needs to be done so right. Now, Fairbanks has got some
14 diking and some flood control. North Pole has some diking and
15 some flood control. Salcha has a little erosion control berms
16 going on.

17 Now, the railroad can actually work in Salcha's
18 favor. This is a long, far-spread out community. They can
19 destroy us as a community and as individuals, or they can make
20 our life easier by making sure that we don't flood every year.
21 I mean, they can't predict every flood. But there's a lot they
22 can do. And I know these people have studied a lot, but that
23 needs to be written in that they will cause no harm.

24 Somehow that has to be guaranteed for the
25 livelihood of our community. And we're a very tight community.

1 And we could be wiped out in a couple of years if this isn't
2 done right. And if it's done right, we could be here forever.

3 And then I have some personal issues, but they
4 more pertain to starting out right, continuing right, and doing
5 all of these things in a proper manner so that they don't do
6 harm. They don't do harm to our school, they don't do harm to
7 our ski trails that have taken 30 years of hard volunteer work
8 to establish, they don't bother our moose population, our fish
9 population. So there's a lot to be considered, and I know
10 you're taking that all in. And that's my official stand on it.
11 Thank you.

12 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments.
13 Okay. The next person that signed up is Patricia Browman (ph).

14 MS. BROWMAN: Well, no, I didn't mean to speak.

15 MR. NAVECKY: Okay. That's fine. We're not
16 going to make you. Next is Melissa Wills-Markgraf. Did I
17 pronounce that correctly?

18 MS. WILLS-MARKGRAF: Yeah, you did. I'm here
19 with Salcha's Neighborly Organization. It's Melissa,
20 M-e-l-i-s-s-a, W-i-l-l-s hyphen M-a-r-k.....

21 COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry. I can't hear you.
22 Your last name?

23 MS. WILLS-MARKGRAF: W-i-l-l-s hyphen
24 M-a-r-k-g-r-a-f.

25 COURT REPORTER: Thank you.

1 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: Okay. I'd like --
2 Carolyn, I'm glad that you guys are here asking for information
3 and input and that this is going through. I just want to make
4 sure that it benefits the community, like all the rest of you
5 all do.

6 Three things was asked about it to me. One,
7 when you build a bridge, will it have local access to assist us
8 in our hunting and our adventures across the river?

9 Two, when you make the changes to the highway
10 to enable you to do this, can it benefit the community by
11 creating turn lanes or merge lanes? Which the community built
12 on a highway at 65 miles per hour really needs.

13 And three, is there any way we can get a
14 whistle stop to help us with local public transit to town and
15 shipping out of it? And I know you won't have those answers.

16 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments.
17 Next is Terry Bradbury.

18 MS. BRADBURY: I didn't think it was going to
19 be so soon.

20 MR. NAVECKY: I'm sorry. You have your
21 thoughts all together?

22 MS. BRADBURY: No. But that's all right.
23 Well, I think it's.....

24 MR. NAVECKY: Could you spell your last name
25 for the reporter, please.

1 MS. BRADBURY: Oh, all right. B-r-a-d-b-u-r-y.
2 The first name is Terry with a Y. I think most of you know me,
3 know where I live, and know the problems that we've had over
4 there. We couldn't get any help from any of the agencies, so
5 my husband took it upon himself to start hauling rock from the
6 top of Balch's Hill. And he hauled approximately a thousand
7 yards there. And that's a lot of trips up and down that hill.

8 So I hate to see anything put across there that
9 is going to cause more problems on this bank of the Tanana.
10 Even though my bank right in front of our house is rock and
11 forrest and I don't have a problem at this time. I would hate
12 to see for it to happen downstream if the same thing isn't
13 done.

14 Everybody out here knows what the ground -- hi,
15 Eric. Everybody out there knows what the ground is like next
16 to the river. You can just sit and watch it fall in because
17 that's the way silt does. But the years that have -- that we
18 have worked on it to save it out there should not -- I don't
19 think anyone realizes the amount of work that goes into
20 something like that. And the amount of money that it costs.

21 And people have always said, well, what does it
22 matter? You've got a Cat, you got a loader, you got a backhoe
23 and a dump truck, what does it matter? We had to buy all those
24 because we needed that done and nobody else would do it.

25 And if there's just any way to get them -- I

1 don't mean you guys -- to just kind of edge that channel over,
2 and I know that it can be done. I'm sorry my husband's not
3 here to be able to talk about that, because he was in
4 construction for years and knew how to do it.

5 It's just that I don't -- I hate to see that
6 this goes in too fast. And I know they've been talking
7 railroad for ever since I've been in Alaska. And someday it
8 will probably happen, but I hate to see it happen on our shore,
9 not just my place, but for all the people that it's going to
10 impact that live here in Salcha. So I would really like for it
11 to be thought over really, really serious. Thank you,
12 gentlemen.

13 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments.
14 Next is Josh Parsons.

15 MR. PARSONS: I guess I didn't realize I was
16 going to get up so fast, I just got here. I thought it was
17 pretty poor that this son of a gun wasn't on until 5:00 p.m. I
18 work in town. Thankfully I've been working down at Delta,
19 otherwise I wouldn't even be here until 6:00 p.m., or get off
20 work until 6:00, and then I have to drive all the way up here.

21 So I've been -- I've missed quite a bit, so I
22 don't know what's been covered as far as the whole railroad
23 extension. I know that the railroad is proposed to go 900 feet
24 from my house, and I haven't received anything in the mail
25 whatsoever, except for what I've been able to track on my own

1 accord.

2 So I'm at a real loss in the railroad's going
3 right by my house, so I'd like to know what the heck is going
4 on and why meetings are during working hours instead of later
5 on like at 7:00 or later in the evenings when people can have
6 the time to come here.

7 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. We
8 don't currently have anyone else signed up. Would anyone else
9 like to speak formally on the record?

10 MR. DRAKE: I would like to just add one
11 comment, and I think that

12 MR. NAVECKY: Could you restate your name,
13 please, for the court reporter.

14 MR. DRAKE: Harvey Drake. The comment is if
15 they followed the Richardson Highway, wouldn't that be the
16 least intrusive on everything, as far as DNR, people hunting
17 and fishing across the river and so on? If they just followed
18 the highway.

19 MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you.

20 MR. DRAKE: And it also works as a flood gate,
21 you know, by building another dike.

22 MR. NAVECKY: Anyone else like to speak?
23 Before you say yes, I'm going to give -- something we hadn't
24 done in the last couple nights, but I know some people don't
25 like to speak in front of groups. What I'm going to do is ask

1 the court reporter to stay on, so if you would like to give
2 oral comments on the record this evening but would rather do it
3 one on one rather than in front of the group, you'll have that
4 option after we adjourn the formal part of the meeting..

5 So is there anyone else that would like to
6 speak before the group on the record? Sure. Come on up, sir.
7 If you could give your name and spell your last name for us,
8 please.

9 MR. PETERSON: Dave Peterson, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n.
10 I also wanted to thank everybody involved in this for not
11 notifying me of any meetings. And I have railroad easement on
12 my property, and I'm, I don't know, 500 feet from the
13 Bradway Crossing. I am in favor of this. I do believe it will
14 do a lot for the state. I have no problem with the railroad
15 coming to town. But if it's not done properly, you know, like
16 people have said, it will damage a lot.

17 I guess you're wanting comments on which route
18 a person prefers?

19 MR. NAVECKY: Uh-huh.

20 MR. PETERSON: Of course, I would -- on map 2,
21 Salcha alternative segments, I would have to go for the
22 Salcha 1 segment. Salcha 2 will go through my house. So --
23 but as I said, I am in favor of this, as long as research is
24 done. I've seen it make or break a lot of little towns in
25 states, not dealing with nearly as big of water problems, but

1 resulting in a lot of other problems of traffic and so forth.
2 And if this isn't considered, then we're all going to suffer.
3 Thank you.

4 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments.
5 Anyone else? Yes, sir, come on up. We'll get you both.

6 MR. MARTIN: Terrence Martin, M-a-r-t-i-n. My
7 question is, when you do your final decision, is it going to
8 pick the route, or is that still going to be up to the railroad
9 and everybody else?

10 MR. NAVECKY: The board's -- the final decision
11 from the Surface Transportation Board will tell -- will
12 identify the route that the railroad would be authorized to
13 construct and operate.

14 MR. MARTIN: So it's going to either pick
15 Flag Hill or the Bradbury Crossing, and it's going to -- that's
16 going to be the decision?

17 MR. NAVECKY: Right.

18 MR. MARTIN: Okay.

19 MR. WERNER: My name is Jeff Werner,
20 W-e-r-n-e-r. I work with farmers and ranchers throughout this
21 area, and the proposed route is going to happen wherever you
22 guys decide to put it. But in the construction process of this
23 rail line, you mentioned the right of way is going to be wider
24 than 200 feet.

25 And your community is going to be significantly

1 impacted here by all of the construction traffic that's not on
2 your proposed route. And a lot of our farmers and growers that
3 are out here that -- that's their livelihood, as everyone else
4 here as well. I don't know if you've given consideration of
5 what this impact will have on the community. All the little
6 trails.

7 And I've watched railroads go in all over the
8 country and here in Alaska. And there's little respect given
9 to anything but the rail line, as all your access roads and all
10 the contractors and the rest of that, which is a huge impact on
11 what could or couldn't happen. And the impact and the
12 destruction left behind for the benefit of a rail. I hope
13 that's taken into consideration. I haven't seen it so far in
14 any of your documents, regardless it's 1,100 pages or whatever
15 they are.

16 MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: You need to clarify the 500
18 feet on state land (indiscernible -- away from microphone).

19 MR. NAVECKY: Yeah, the right of way for the
20 rail line would be 200 feet. That's what they would be if the
21 project were approved by the Surface Transportation Board.
22 They would have the authority to construct and operate a rail
23 line within a 200-foot right of way. And I'll let Don explain
24 again the nuances of the 500 foot.

25 MR. PERRIN: And for state lands along the

1 route, initially a 500-foot corridor is identified, at which
2 time the railroad constructs the line. Then the state is
3 required to convey title to the land for a 200-foot right of
4 way either side of the centerline. And that's for state land
5 only.

6 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: Sorry.

7 MR. NAVECKY: That's okay.

8 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: I was expecting to hear
9 about it. You keep mentioning Flag Hill. It's Willis-Markgraf.
10 And that's a Native bluff. They have a cemetery up there,
11 right? Am I on the right bluff?

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: You're okay.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, that's Flag Hill.

14 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah, Flag Hill is not.
15 You're talking about the one behind the school.

16 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: By the school. Yeah.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Flag is Orchid.

18 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: Okay. So you won't be
19 affecting that bluff by the school there?

20 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah, it would be.

21 AUDIENCE MEMBER: They would on one route, yes.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: On the second route.

23 MS. WILLIS-MARKGRAF: Okay. When I was reading
24 through it, I assumed that was not going to be chosen because
25 of the Native burials there. I'm from the Lower 48, so I was

1 getting the permission to do that. So -- and I would rather
2 you didn't.

3 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Anyone else?

4 MR. DAVIES: I just have a comment or two.

5 MR. NAVECKY: Sure.

6 MR. DAVIES: Stu Davies. I've attended all
7 three of these meetings. I've heard all the comments. I wish
8 there was more comments. I'm a farmer on Eielson Farm Road. I
9 encourage all of you to read the summary. That isn't the final
10 story. The big story is on the CD that's located in the back
11 of this book. It's about 200 pages long, or more.....

12 MR. NAVECKY: 1,100 pages.

13 MR. DAVIES:700 pages long. Read about
14 it, go to those sections that affect you, read about it, send
15 in written comments. Do it by February 2nd. If you don't do
16 it now, I don't think you'll be heard from ever again, because
17 it's going to happen one way or the other.

18 I also represent the Fairbanks Soil & Water
19 Conservation District. I'm going to go on record tonight as
20 the Soil & Water Conservation District supports Eielson
21 segment 3, which is the highway route. And the reason we do
22 support that is that if they pick Eielson segment 1 or 2,
23 they're going to essentially sandwich Piledriver Slough between
24 the highway and the existing utility corridor. And a new
25 railroad, a road, and another corridor. And so Piledriver

1 Slough is going to get stuck in the middle there somewhere.

2 So hopefully I'll still be a supervisor after
3 they read my letter, which I'm not approved to say. But as a
4 supervisor right now, Piledriver Slough is pretty much in its
5 natural state on the south and west sides. Because there's --
6 the military took precautions, and DNR took precautions, when
7 they started the Eielson farm project, not to have any of those
8 parcels touch that slough.

9 That slough is pretty -- in a pretty much
10 natural state. And it's hard to access, but you can use a
11 canoe, you can go hunting down there if you get a permit from
12 the Army. A lot of wildlife, a lot of habitat through there
13 would be lost if they put the railroad on the south and west
14 sides of Piledriver Slough. So that's my two cents for
15 tonight, Dave. Thank you.

16 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. We'll see you
17 tomorrow night?

18 MR. DAVIES: No, I'm not going to Delta.

19 MR. NAVECKY: Anyone else? Yes, Carolyn.

20 MS. LINCOLN: I have just a couple of comments
21 that have come to me while these other people have been
22 speaking. Carolyn Lincoln. Your comment on the Piledriver
23 Slough being in its natural state, actually it hasn't been in
24 its natural state.....

25 MR. DAVIES: No, it's been dammed off, but.....

1 MS. LINCOLN:since the Chena Flood
2 Control project, because that was the salmon runway.

3 MR. DAVIES: There's still salmon in there.

4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, there's not.

5 MS. LINCOLN: They can't get out.

6 MR. DAVIES: It goes right into Moose Creek.

7 MS. LINCOLN: Well, it's blocked off at our
8 end.

9 MR. DAVIES: I know it is.

10 MS. LINCOLN: Yeah. So they can't go anywhere.

11 MR. DAVIES: But they come in from Moose Creek.
12 Piledriver goes -- flows into Moose Creek.

13 MS. LINCOLN: Right.

14 MR. DAVIES: It flows into the Tanana.

15 MS. LINCOLN: Right. But that used to be a
16 runoff area. When the water got high, it would come down
17 through there. Never flooded these people up here. And it
18 would run off and go away. That was a pressure relief valve.
19 That was what I was talking about.

20 I'm hoping that they'll take into consideration
21 these pressure relief sloughs, or make another pressure relief
22 runoff area so that this flood water -- we have a lot of
23 problems with ice blockage in the spring. It finds a narrow
24 spot. I'm sure you are well acquainted with all of this, but
25 it finds a narrow spot, blocks up more water, more ice, and

1 more water and more ice. That lady jumps in the bathtub and it
2 all comes into our front yards. It's got to have someplace to
3 go.

4 And the diking of the Piledriver Slough at our
5 end, at the top end, really stopped a lot of that relief that
6 we got, and maybe through your project you can make a different
7 relief avenue and actually help Salcha a lot. And that's what
8 we're hoping for. Thank you.

9 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you again. Anyone else
10 like to speak on the record for us this evening?

11 MS. CURTIS: Well, since everybody else is
12 going twice, I might as well. I just wanted to mention.....

13 MR. NAVECKY: Could you repeat you name again
14 for the court reporter.

15 MS. CURTIS: Yeah. Shelly Curtis. I just want
16 to mention the fact that the comment period actually ends
17 before you decide where the railroad is going.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Really?

19 MS. CURTIS: It ends -- the comment period ends
20 February 2nd.

21 MR. NAVECKY: Correct.

22 MS. CURTIS: But we don't know where the
23 railroad is going.

24 MR. NAVECKY: Well, that's what we're
25 interested in getting your comments on and helping us decide

1 which route should be or could be selected.

2 MS. CURTIS: It would help us to make comments
3 if we knew where the railroad was.

4 MR. NAVECKY: Well, yeah, that's kind of....

5 MS. CURTIS: I just wanted to mention that.

6 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Anyone else?

7 MR. MILLS: Morrie, M-o-r-r-i-e. The last name
8 Mills, M-i-l-l-s. Following up on her comment that your
9 closeout date is February 2nd, you still don't know which route
10 for sure. On your time line, if you have one, can you kind of
11 give us an idea when your decision date would be after the
12 public comment period? Thank you.

13 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Next? Anyone else?

14 MR. MILLS: No comment?

15 MR. NAVECKY: I was going to wait until at the
16 end, then I'll go back to that. Any other comments on the
17 record?

18 Okay. In reference to the last question on the
19 process, the -- at the end of the comment period, which ends
20 February 2nd, we will then work towards preparing the Final EIS
21 and addressing the comments that we received tonight, at the
22 other public meetings, as well as all the written comments that
23 we receive through the mail and/or through our Web site.

24 After -- then that Final EIS will be issued.

25 You know, it's -- it would be sometime in the next -- no, it

1 will be -- my intent is that it would be issued surely this
2 year, and surely by the -- well, I shouldn't say that, then
3 somebody will hold me to it. But by the end of the summer I
4 would expect that the Final EIS would be issued.

5 And then it's up to the board, then, to issue
6 the final decision. The board is a three-member panel that
7 votes on the case. And it's basically the majority rules.
8 It's either the minimum of two have to approve it, or all three
9 unanimously.

10 That decision is typically made in a matter of
11 weeks or months after the Final EIS is issued. It all depends
12 on the issues of the case and the docket, the workload that the
13 board members are currently working under. So that's -- I can
14 just give you that guideline, that range of how soon they might
15 issue a decision after the Final EIS is issued.

16 So putting all that together, then I would
17 expect that that would occur this -- all that would occur this
18 year. And that's based on the assumption that we don't receive
19 any comments from you folks that requires us to go back to
20 square 1 or to go back out in the field this summer or
21 something of that nature. It assumes it can all be addressed
22 by explaining or putting things in a different manner or
23 however we need to address your comments or your questions in
24 the document.

25 MS. LINCOLN: I have a casual question. Do you

1 take into consideration all of the research that has been done
2 already by the people that represent the -- we have it
3 simplified, the bridge people and the railroad people. We know
4 they're one and the same, basically. But we're dealing with
5 two factions here. So do you take their input? They've done a
6 lot of work on this.

7 MR. NAVECKY: I don't think I can answer your
8 question, but in order for us to answer your question, if you
9 could clarify for me and for the record who the bridge people
10 are and what work you're referring to.

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think HDR.

12 MS. LINCOLN: HDR, yeah, is one of the entities
13 that have done a lot of work or research, a lot of time on the
14 ground. What was the other one you needed to know?

15 MR. NAVECKY: I think you're referring to the
16 work that's been done by the applicant, in this case, the
17 Alaska Railroad.

18 MS. LINCOLN: Okay. They've been very
19 conscientious, and they've probably got a lot of information
20 that you need to have.

21 MR. NAVECKY: Yes, we've been working --
22 they've been.....

23 MS. LINCOLN: All right.

24 MR. NAVECKY: Yes.

25 MS. LINCOLN: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. NAVECKY: We haven't done -- we've tried
2 not to work in a vacuum. Yes.

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm just curious that if you
4 have all this input coming in, I think I've only heard one
5 positive remark tonight from someone. And I don't know how the
6 rest of your meetings have gone, but it seems to me that if the
7 majority rules, they wouldn't be putting that railroad out
8 there on the river.

9 MR. NAVECKY: Yes, I understand. Okay. I
10 think now we'll close the....

11 MR. LYNNE: Can I make a comment?

12 MR. NAVECKY: Sure.

13 MR. LYNNE: Do I need to.....

14 MR. NAVECKY: Is this a comment you'd like to
15 get formally in the record?

16 MR. LYNNE: Yes. Yes.

17 MR. NAVECKY: Yeah, please come up. If you
18 could state your name and spell your last name for the
19 reporter, please.

20 MR. LYNNE: Victor Lynne, L-y-n-n-e. I have
21 property -- two properties, and the railroad really goes
22 through one of them and just comes right next to the edge of
23 the other property. But I wanted to bring up about the dams
24 that they've built on the Old Piledriver where it -- that you'd
25 talked about. There's three of them out there.

1 And I think it was 2001 or '2, I may be off on
2 that. But we had a pretty good flood out in Salcha there on
3 the Old Valdez there, and a lot of them people -- I mean, I
4 could run my boat up and down the road. And the water backed
5 up to those dams, and it was like five feet deep and it
6 couldn't get back to the Tanana side, which is the -- whatever
7 slough that is out there. And I've seen it back up to there
8 and then run around there and go back into the river, but the
9 river was, you know, five foot below grade of the water.

10 And those were put in as a flood control on the
11 Piledriver Slough where it used to run through for when you
12 call -- talk about the overflow. So those were put in for
13 flood control. But they created the big mess we had back in
14 early 2000, 2001, whatever that one was. And so it's really
15 touchy where they put these things. Because maybe they work
16 for a while then, and then later on it creates grief later.

17 MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Okay. I think we'll
18 close the formal portion the meeting now. The court reporter
19 will stay. If you'd like to provide one-on-one comments to her
20 for the record, she'll be available to do that. And we'll be
21 available to answer any other questions you might have that you
22 want to ask us one on one as well. And I thank you very much
23 for coming tonight.

24 (Off record)

25

PUBLIC COMMENTS

1
2 MR. HOWARD: My name is Will Howard,
3 W-i-l-l H-o-w-a-r-d. My comment is that we really appreciate
4 coming out and giving us information and allowing the comments
5 instead of comment ballots. I know a lot of questions weren't
6 answered, but the fact that they were brought up and this is a
7 place to come and, you know, see some options, some
8 alternatives that they're doing is really an important thing.
9 I very much want to be kept in the loop and keep going along
10 that lines. That's all I really wanted to say. Thanks.

11 (Off record)

12 MS. HOWARD: C-a-r-i-e, Howard, H-o-w-a-r-d.
13 These maps are done horribly. They were very, very, very
14 poorly done. When I'm asking people here to show me where an
15 item is and they're going well, let me see if I can find it,
16 that shows how poorly done the mapping system is for people who
17 want to know how much it's going to affect them in one way or
18 another. When even your own people here couldn't find items
19 for me on the map. They had to go find another book and drag
20 it out to try and locate something because they couldn't show
21 it to me on the map, it was too small.

22 And if they're wanting comments about
23 individual items that affect individual people like a trail
24 system or a -- where a hunting line is and they don't have
25 pictures to be able to show it, how can someone then properly

1 identify something that's going to affect them? The only world
2 that's important to us is our little bitty world, and my little
3 bitty world isn't showing on there. So I wanted to get that in
4 there. And I'm really unhappy.

5 (Off record)

6 MR. PETERSON: Dave Peterson, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n.
7 I just want to state that I am for Salcha alternative segment
8 1, Tanana River crossing option 1 for the proposed levy option
9 1. That's pretty much it. I'd like to see that happen.

10 (Off record)

11 MR. REES: Dan Rees, R-e-e-s. I guess I have a
12 concern about Eielson alternative 1 and 2, the taking of
13 private agricultural land in there. I'd prefer to see
14 Eielson 3. I also have concern about Eielson 1 and 2 regarding
15 the extensive trail network in there that gets crossed. How
16 will crossings be dealt with in that area for dog mushing and
17 summer use?

18 And then the Central alternative 2 I'm
19 concerned about with the effect on five-mile Clear Creek, the
20 salmon and grayling in that area that I use. I'm also
21 concerned with all the reappearing white spruce that's in that
22 area. I'd prefer to see Central alternative 1 used and get out
23 of the white spruce area and not affect five-mile Clear Creek.

24 And Donnelly 1, I'm concerned with the trail
25 crossing the -- parallel to the Little Delta River. There's a

1 major trail in that route that comes from Birch Lake over to
2 the Dry Creek region that I use.

3 South common segment. The issue there would be
4 the access to Rainbow Lake that I use to fish at; make sure
5 that we have a crossing for the public there. And the same on
6 Delta 1, there's a couple trails that cross from the town of
7 Delta that I use to access that land. We need a public access
8 across there. And I guess that's it. Thanks.

9 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

10 * * * *

C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
3 STATE OF ALASKA) ss.

4 I, Crystal D. Scotti, Notary Public in and for the
5 State of Alaska, residing at North Pole, Alaska, and electronic
6 reporter for Liz D'Amour & Associates, Inc., do hereby certify:

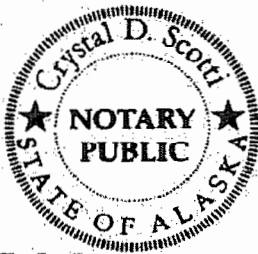
7 That the annexed and foregoing Public Meeting was taken
8 before me on the 14th day of January 2009, beginning at the
9 hour of 5:00 p.m., at Salcha Senior Center, 6062 Johnson Road,
10 Salcha, Alaska;

11 That this meeting, as heretofore annexed, is a true and
12 correct transcription of the testimony of all parties, taken by
13 me and thereafter transcribed by me;

14 That the transcript has been retained by me for the
15 purpose of filing the same with Ms. Melissa Elefante DuMond,
16 Project Manager, ICF International, 9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax,
17 Virginia 22031;

18 That I am not a relative or employee or attorney or
19 counsel of any of the parties, nor am I financially interested
20 in this action.

21 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and
22 affixed my seal this 26th day of January 2009.



23 S E A L

24 Crystal Scotti
25 Crystal D. Scotti
Notary Public in and for Alaska
My Commission Expires: 9/15/2010