

May 10th 2010

To:

David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423
Attention: Environmental Filing

From:

Ryota Abe
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Ref: Port MacKenzie Rail Project (STB Finance Docket No. 35095)

Dear Mr. Navecky,

As a recreational user of and co-owner of property within the Port Mackenzie Area I submit the following comments regarding the options currently proposed through the Point Mackenzie Agricultural district.

- 1) Please consider the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the Goose Bay State Game Refuge. Numerous developments in the area have been planned and many are under way. For example, the Goose Creek Correctional facility is being constructed at the headwaters of the refuge, a high voltage intertie cuts through the refuge, the Knik Arm Crossing or Port Mackenzie Ferry if constructed will further increase traffic within this area, and now a planned rail corridor in close proximity may bring additional concerns. Additionally, the Cook Inlet Beluga whales are known to forage for salmon within Goose Bay estuary.
- 2) For the Mac East Corridor, what is the associated cost with creating grade separation at every rail crossing? Have these costs been included in your deliberations? Will the ARRC agree to pay for the cost of such grade separations in the future? While current traffic levels may tolerate delays expected for at-grade separations, will future traffic as expected with the development of a major transportation corridor and the associated surrounding development create a concern? Will the current offset from the roadway provide adequate queuing space for anticipated delays without creating a safety hazard along the Point Mackenzie Road or side roads? Certainly within the next 20 years there is more than just a chance of significant development in this area. There may be a short terms savings, but the overall total future cost may be much greater

- 3) Regarding the Mac-East corridor, how will a rail immediately adjacent to the existing road affect existing and future access to private property? Will the rail limit the functionality of future frontage roads along Point Mackenzie Road?
- 4) Regarding the Mac-East corridor, please further describe how future development will be both limited and enhanced by a rail placed so close to Point Mackenzie Road where one might expect significant future commercial and other development that would be sources of significant economic activity for the area. For example, will commercial centers be pushed further from the road, will industrial activities be allowed to occur all along the rail even outside the Port District, will pedestrian access be negatively impacted?
- 5) In the PEAR, the MAC Central route (Route #5) was dismissed as it had poor public support and affects too many private property owners. However, the description provided appears to be in context of a greater overall route that includes the section through the Big Lake Area. The Routes within the DEIS are presented a la carte where options within a segment can be connected to various options within another segment. In the new scenario, it seems somewhat arbitrary to dismiss the Central route through the Port Mac Agricultural district based on the reasons stated in the PEAR. At face value it would not appear to affect anymore property owners than either the East or West Routes. It would maximize the distance from both the Susitna and Goose Bay Refuges, decreasing habitat fragmentation. Additionally, there would be fewer access issues for future development and overall improved safety along the current highway corridor. Finally, the track would be much shorter and straighter which should reduce costs while increasing operational safety for trains. Please reconsider including this alternative (at least the portion through the agricultural district) and associated analysis within the DEIS scope. It appears to address many of the negative aspects of the Mac East and West alternative and should be given an equal evaluation.

From the comments above it should be clear that I have some outstanding concerns about the Mac East alignment. However, addressing these comments will hopefully allay those concerns to the extent possible. I would like to close this letter by stating that I am in full support of the rail project and hope to see it completed within the near future.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Ryota Abe