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January 30, 2009

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

Mr. Navecky;

During the latter part of 2008 the Alaska Railroad announced some of its future plans for the expansion of the existing rail system in various locations throughout the State of Alaska. One of the plans that came to light was an 80-mile rail running west to east in the interior of our state. This addition would begin in a small city called 'North Pole'. It lies approximately 15 road miles east of Fairbanks. From North Pole it would continue eastward towards Delta, Ak. and then to a 'Strategic Military Installation' called Ft. Greely, Ak. Three proposed routes were mentioned and suppose to be under consideration.

When this news was made public a group of citizens gathered together to discuss the plus'es and minus'es of the 3 proposals. This group of people, which includes myself, is commonly referred to as the 'Shaw Creek Boat Owners' or the 'Richardson Clearwater Property Owners'. This group which consists of thirteen property owners on the Richardson Clearwater immediately began to scrutinize the ARR's intentions.

In early to mid December everyone was notified of a public hearing that was to take place on January 12, 2009. Most of our group, except those that leave for the winter, attended the hearing. Upon arrival we were informed that the railroad had basically discarded 2 of the 3 routes and were focusing there efforts on one. The one they picked was the least desireable of the original 3. The railroads choice would not just have a detrimental effect on a large group of citizens but also on the environmental health of the area which would have to be torn apart for construction purposes.

Before going any further I would like to state that neither myself nor any of our group is against the expansion sought by the railroad. We are apposed to a project that will threaten current recreational properties, animal habitats, existing rivers and streams, fisheries, and the underlying aquafirs that feed this entire environmental haven.

Located within a half mile distance from the ARR proposal is a clearwater stream, approximately 8 miles in total length, earlier referred to as the 'Richardson Clearwater'. This stream only exists because of the underground aquifers that feed its headwaters. The water is crystal clear and can be consumed without fear of getting ill. Numerous individuals and families have been visiting this area since the early 1900's. Entire families have grown up enjoying the Richardson Clearwater. Other entities such as farms, private residencies, and small businesses could be or would be affected. They are in no way related to or even close to the environmental issues surrounding this ARR proposal.

While at the January 12th public hearing I personally asked a gentleman, representing the ARR, to respond to the following question. 'Isn't the sole purpose of this extension is to carry all the available freight to Ft. Greely and capitalize on the revenues paid to it by the Military.' His answer was 'YES'. For the railroad to suggest that it would provide a needed source of passenger transportation for people traveling from the Delta/Greely area is ludicrous

If a part of the promise for this extension is to provide needed alternatives to the use of our public highway system, it is a smokescreen.

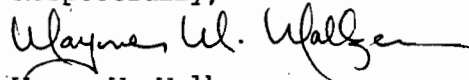
There is too much at stake if the current proposal is even considered. There are alternatives that will eliminate so many unanswered questions.

My closing remarks have to do with the timing of the announcement by the ARR about the pending routes and the public hearings. It seems that it was quite convenient for them to have their hearings and public response times during the height of the Holiday Season. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, and the beginning of the Federal Tax Return period makes one think that the timing was intentional and would limit the ability of the public to respond.

We need more time to investigate the possible impact that could result from the current intentions of the ARR.

I thank you for your time and consideration regarding this issue.

Respectfully,


Wayne W. Walker