

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

SECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

PORT MACKENZIE RAIL EXTENSION PROJECT

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

Anchorage, Alaska

April 6, 2010

P R O C E E D I N G S

(Anchorage, Alaska - April 6, 2010)

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

MR. NAVECKY: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. And thank you for attending this public comment meeting on the draft environmental statement or EIS for the proposed Port MacKenzie rail extension. And before I go any further, can everyone hear me okay? No? Okay. Again, welcome. 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 filed a request for authority to construct and operate approximately 30 to 45 miles of rail line and related support facilities from the 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 for the proposed rail line and was responsible for obtaining 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 potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed rail line.

We also have three cooperating agencies assisting in

the preparation of this EIS. They are the US Army Corp of Engineers, the Federal Railroad Administration and the US Coast Guard. Sitting in the audience this morning is Ben Soiseth with the US Army Corp of Engineers, one of our cooperating agencies. Ben is sitting here to my left. A team of consultants lead by ICF International also assisted SEA in preparing the EIS. At the table with me is Alan Summerville, project manager for ICS EIS activities.

If you have not already done so, please sign in at the front table just outside the entrance to the theater and indicate whether or not 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 for the STB. As you know, 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 for the EIS which we issued in July of 2009. This final scope of studies served as our guide in addressing -- guide concerning what to address in the draft EIS.

After the draft EIS comment period closes on May 10th, we will review all the hearing transcripts from tonight's hearing and the five following hearings from this week and next week and all written comments and we will prepare written responses for

all substantive comments. All comments and comment responses including from the transcripts will be published in the final EIS. The board will then issue a final decision based on the merits of the proposed rail line, the draft and final EIS and all public and agency comments in the public record. This final decision 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 their final decisions approving or permitting the proposed rail line. The environmental review process is further explained in the handout that we provided to you at the table at the front of the room.

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 table at the rear of the theater. There are also blank comment forms at the sign in table. Oral and written comments are given equal weight and consideration, so if you choose not speak this evening, your written comments will be fully considered. In addition, this evening is just one option for you to provide 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 board either by mail or

electronically using our website. In preparing your written comments, we encourage you to be as detailed as possible describing your concerns. We are also interesting in receiving comments on the purpose and need for the proposed rail line, potential impacts, opinions, your opinions on a preferred alternative, adequacy of the preliminary mitigation and draft EIS, 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 our court reporter located to my right. When I call your name, please approach the microphone, also to my right, and then state and spell your first and last name for the benefit of the audience and our court reporter. In order to insure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, each person will be limited to approximately five minutes. When you have approximately one minute left within your allotted time, I will politely let you -- give you notice that your time is almost up. If we have some time left at the end of the two hours and anyone who is not signed up to speak wishes to speak or a person that has previously spoken, we will give them an opportunity to speak for five minutes or as time allows at the end. We appreciate everyone's cooperation and the courteousness towards those who are speaking.

At this time, I would like to invite our first commenter to the microphone and that is Ed McCain. Again, please

state and spell your first name and last name once you reach the microphone. Thank you, Ed.

MR. MCCAIN: Edward McCain, E-D-W-A-R-D M-C-C-A-I-N. I'm from Willow. And I received your CD in the mail and I've reviewed it and I've got these concerns. It says that that site for the dock was picked because there's no need for dredging. Why? Because it's self-scouring, meaning the current through there is so fast that it can't silt in like it does everywhere else. There's already been one incidence where one of the pulp ships had to untie because of heavy ice conditions in the current. There's already been several incidences at Kenai, the Nikiski dock, where ships have been tore lose from the dock oil tankers. And the current and ice conditions down there are a fraction of what they are at Point MacKenzie.

Another one of my concerns is the crossings. You have almost 10 miles there where there's no crossings other than a few dog sled trails. It says you will honor all recorded right-of-ways and easements. Are you aware of what a protracted township is, protracted section line? Even those these things aren't surveyed, every mile square has a 50 foot easement on either side of the section line. And there's a rural procedure that you have to go through with the State of Alaska or the Mat-Su Borough to vacate these section lines. And the term they use or what they like to say is you have to provide them with equal or better access or they won't vacate it. Is the railroad going to honor

that? And I would like to see the railroad pay for these crossings rather than try to dump it on local government or the private developer.

Are you aware that State Fish and Game says there's a 50 foot pedestrian easement for mean high water upland for pedestrians to fish and whatnot? Are we going to be able to walk under the railroad tracks to go fishing or are they going to block it? And I would like you to ask somebody from the railroad what happens at Ferry every Fourth of July.

It says you're going to have a access road along the edge of the tracks. Is that going to be available for the public to use or is that going to be private and are private individuals or the local government going to have to build another road parallel to it for their use? The trails in this -- these trails go through my place in Willow and they're wintertime trails. They're in the swamps, the crick drainages. Unless you build the railroad up, right now your plan and profile says it's only going to be four feet above existing ground, these things are going to glacier up, fill up with water if you just try to put a culvert in and they're not going to be usable. You're going to have to think about that.

Another one of my concerns is what's happening with the Glenn Highway there across the Eklutna Flats. The road is acting as a dike and you will see that the water on the mountainsides to the east is building up and killing all the trees, where on the

south side of the road it's drying up and the trees are starting to grow. Is this going to be what's happened with the railroad where it goes out for this 10 miles with only half a dozen culverts?

Another one of my concerns is I think you need to pick the shortest possible route, because if there's any freight ever going to be going from Anchorage to Point MacKenzie, if you pick the Willow route, it's going to be 64.2 miles longer than the Big Lake route for a round trip train. And I think you got to take a look at some of that stuff, because the Willow route is 44.9 miles, the Big Lake route 31.4. That's 13 and a half miles round trip is 27. The Big Lake route starts off at mile 70.3. The Willow route at -- excuse me, 170.3. The Willow route starts off at 188.9. So that's 18.6 miles for 37.2 when you make it round trip for a total of 64.2 miles that that train is going to have to make. Your statement says that the bridge across -- the railroad bridge across the inlet isn't feasible or practical.

MR. NAVECKY: One more minute, Mr. McCain.

MR. MCCAIN: Okay. The other thing is EIS state appears to take a negative look at the Big Lake route, thoroughly covered, but not the Willow or Houston routes in the same light. This gives the impression that the Big Lake route is being viewed differently and being removed from consideration on the offset. And you're moving a crick, 2440 feet of creek, a thousand feet of Hawk Lane. You're closing 865 feet of Cheri Lake Road even

though it's a mile away from where this railroad Y is going to be. You're closing -- or removing 1405 feet of Loon Street. Why not just move the railroad over a few hundred feet to miss the creek and all this other stuff?

And I did some math there on your Big Lake route for 31.4 miles, 200 foot of right-of-way. That comes up to 761 acres, and yet in your statements there you say you're losing 930 acres in one place, 1056 in another place of environment, whatever. And I think your noise study is a little ridiculous for Alaska too, because you said that the 10 to 1 factor between day to night trains, there's going to be 10 trains in day from one at night. Well, the Alaska Railroad runs their freight train, it's night, not during the day. So the noise impact is going to be a lot more. You said one of your microphone stations for the noise was at the end of my driveway and I don't recall anybody being there for 24 hours. You can't see my house in any of your drawings, because it's under your big black dots.

MR. NAVECKY: Can you wrap it up, please?

MR. MCCAIN: Yes, that's pretty much it right there.

All right. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you for your comments. Next is Brenda McCain.

MS. MCCAIN: I'll pass.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Next is Joe Wilson.

MR. WILSON: I'd like to know more about an issue of Mac

East route, particularly in the area of the intersection of Port MacKenzie Road, Burma Road and Ayrshire. South west of that intersection, there's three sections of land owned by a Native regional corporation and a Native tribal organization. And you've got Mac East going diagonally through their land which, you know, you would think would cut down the development potential of that land and reduce its value. So I'm wondering, you know, have you determined that they're willing to sell you land for that easement, or if they're not willing, are you going to try to get it by eminent domain or reroute the Mac East? Or if the reg -- if the owners refute your ability to use state eminent domain laws and are willing to contest it in court, what's your port then? Are you going to reroute the line then or -- I wonder how much analysis you did on this issue.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Next up is Mike Whedbee, please.

MR. WHEDBEE: My name is Mike Whedbee. It's M-I-K-E W-H-E-D-B-E-E. And I would like to address Mr. Summerville and Mr. Navecky. My address is 450 Brazil (ph) Circle, Big Lake, Alaska. The purpose for me being here is I'm representing the friends of the lake. And I did submit a petition back when we did the initial -- started the studies -- with 1150 names. And when I talked to Mr. Navecky a week ago he said that everything we submitted at that time we had to resubmit again for this

study; is that correct? Any comments or.....

MR. NAVECKY: Any comments on the draft EIS. That's correct.

MR. WHEDBEE: Okay. Well, I do have a revised list of names that was just updated as of today. But seems like that, you know, this spur has been studied multiple times over the years at a cost of millions of dollars to taxpayers and it seems like they're doing the same study expecting different results. You know, if we get different results than we've got in the past, it may be of a direct result of special interest or borough management. It's not the will of the taxpayers and the people that live in the Big Lake area that this spur to be put in to any of the Big Lake connections. And that's -- that goes with the 1172 names that I have here on this petition.

In 1994 a study was done and it concluded the Willow route was the best route. In 2003 the study was done, it concluded the Willow route was the only route that they would accept. The Big Lake comprehensive plan supports a route that is west of Papoose Lake. The Big Lake Council supports a Willow route. The Big Lake Chamber of Commerce supports a Willow route. I'm submitting a petition with 1172 names of voting people that either are property owners, recreators that live or recreate out in the Big Lake area that all support the Willow route.

In short, the three Big Lake routes are not acceptable to the people that live out there. And if that's the only choice

and you can't mitigate the Willow route, then the fifth alternative would have to be a no build option. And that's not something that we prefer. We'd like to see something built, but if no build is -- you know, if we can't get the Willow route, then we're going to push for a no build option. Yeah, we're looking at a cost of around \$300,000, was the figure that we had originally to build this. And cost should not be a factor, because 270 to 300 million is that -- not that much difference. And if we're looking to transport gold or ore from the north, it only makes sense that we would come through the Willow route rather than coming through a bunch of towns and then end up 30, 40 years down the road having to move this railroad like they're doing right now in Wasilla and like they're doing in Fairbanks. And that concludes what I've got to say tonight, but I want to submit this petition to you.

MR. NAVECKY: That's fine. Thank you, Mr. Whedbee.

MR. WHEDBEE: Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Next up we have Robert Gilliland. I hope I pronounced that properly.

MR. GILLILAND: I'll spell it for you. My name is Robert Gilliland, R-O-B-E-R-T G-I-L-L-I-L-A-N-D. I live here in Anchorage and I don't care which route they're talking about. My concern here, and I was hoping to get some answers to questions. So I get my concern is about the port itself. The previous information of public by the EIS indicates that the Port

MacKenzie is described as a deep water, deep draft dock with 60 feet of water on mean lower low tide. Now anyone who has access to maritime engineering information understands what 60 feet at a dockside -- this is -- the dock up there is sheet pile and 60 feet at mean lower low tide is a lot of water. And that's why it had been previously published in the EIS, in the initial draft. It's my -- and we all know that or Anchorage or this Knik information has about a 30 foot tide twice a day. It -- my understanding that the port of Anchorage has been authorized for a 35 foot mean lower low tide dredging operation which goes on annually. They are seeking to lower that to 45 feet to take it to an additional 10 feet draft. I have no reason to believe that the tidal action at Port MacKenzie is appreciably different than the tidal action at Anchorage and yet you previously are saying that is 60 feet without dredging at Port MacKenzie. My purpose here is to -- I would like to have to my availability the engineering information that resulted in that conclusion. And that's the purpose -- I assume that that -- you're not going to be able to give it to me here. Can you furnish with a dot com or some sort of an engineering reference that will give me some understanding as to why they had to dredge to 45 feet in Anchorage and across Knik Arm they say they have already without dredging a 60 foot mean lower low tide. Is my informa -- my search for information clear? Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Yes, I understand your question. Thank

you, sir. Next, please, is Jim Woelfel.

MR. WOELFEL: My name is Jim, J-I-M, Woelfel, spelled W-O-E-L-F-E-L. I'm approximately a 30-year property owner on South Point MacKenzie. Around there they call me the newcomer because it's deserved. I have a few concerns, all arise out of the -- the simple problem of access to Point MacKenzie. Access to South Point MacKenzie is difficult to say the least at any time winter or summer and the railroad proposes to bisect our current accesses to our property. I believe I can safely say that I speak for all property owners on South Point MacKenzie that we object to closing of any access that we currently have without being provided other adequate access.

Over the course of my 30 years of property ownership I've probably used at least four different accesses to my property at different times. That arises because conditions change every year. There are many different reasons to need different places to access our property depending on the conditions. Overall I would say that I object to the closing of any section lying easements without substantial discussions being held with property owners south of the railroad. Not that I'm against it, but we need to have extremely well thought out decisions before this happens and I hope that will happen.

The marshaling yards that are located in a couple of different options on South Point MacKenzie appear to probably interrupt at least three different access points that I've used

for years including the current trail head that's down there. I -- again, I would object to closing any of those accesses without further discussion. I am sure that if the railroad discusses with us we can come up with some solutions that probably most of us can live with, but somebody has to talk to us first and that certainly hasn't occurred yet. I believe we need some further discussions to be held. The last thing I would like to comment on is that where the railroad is proposed to run is through a relatively windy spot. It's in the flat land area that unprotected. And I think there will be significant snow drifting on the south side of that railroad. And wherever crossings are made we need to account for that and at least get far enough beyond that drifting area so that any access that is made will be usable to us. If you build it down in the swamp or don't do anything, it'll be closed any way. And I object to closing any unofficial trails without further discussion with the railroad. Thank you very much.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Woelfel. Next is Patrick Sharrock.

MR. SHARROCK: My name is Pat Sharrock. Patrick Sharrock, P-A-T-R-I-C-K S-H-A-R-R-O-C-K. And good evening, Dave. Welcome back to Alaska.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you.

MR. SHARROCK: I've lived in Anchorage for over 63 years and owned recreational cabin property near the Houston

alternative route for over 40 years. I'm not an environmentalist, hydrologist or geologist, but my comments are based on observation. Just wanted to say my remarks are about six or seven minutes long. If you have to cut me off I'll finish off tomorrow.

I reviewed the draft EIS and it appears fairly -- to fairly represent the issues at hand, however I'm still seriously bothered by two concerns that I have raised in earlier comments during the last two and a half years. The first one is recreation. I'm referring to -- to the map here. First I want to bring to your attention the map titled road and recreation map of the Matanuska Valley. The map has a 1972 copyright and clearly includes the area bounded by the Willow alternative and Big Lake alternative. The only trail shown on the map are the historic Iditarod trail and some trails south of Willow along Long Lake or near Long Lake. I now -- you don't have it, but I'm going to refer to you figure 13.2-5, Page 13.2-10 in the draft EIS. Please note on that there are -- well, I'll just read what I had. Please note the multitude of trails all over the place and particularly look at the area west of the Houston route. Very important is that those trails will not be accessible from the Big Lake Horseshoe Lake area without illegal crossing of the Houston north routes. Likewise, snow machiners traveling within an area west of the Little Susitna River would not have access to the eastern area without illegally crossing the Houston

alternative.

Additionally, these are not official trails listed in tables 13.2-2 and 3 on Page 13.2. The second paragraph states, quote, blockage of unofficial trails would be considered a permanent adverse impact to recreational trails, trail use and recreational access, unquote, and the public could not cross the right-of-way without approval from the railroad. Lastly, unofficial trails are those trails created anywhere when snow depth allows. I, along with family members, neighbors near Horseshoe Lake and probably thousands of other snow machiners cross the Houston alternative every winter. The Houston alternative clearly bisects a large recreational area that is used by residents in the Mat-Su Valley and Anchorage and encourages illegal crossings.

The next issue is wetlands. I refer back to the maps I've already noted. Please observe the two distinct water areas when in the -- within the alternative route areas. In the northwestern area west of the Little Susitna River we have a large number of unusually formed lakes. In the eastern area we have lakes similar in configuration until you reach the latitude above Big Lake. I certainly cannot give a reason for the huge contrast, but the areas are separated by the Little Susitna River. As a mixed up river as -- as that river is, I would not be as surprised to learn that at some time the river drained through the eastern area. Maybe the layout could be from glacier

activity. I have no idea. In any event, it is now void of distinct -- a distinct drainage system. My observation is that drainage could be similar to a mini Everglades, water moving imperceptively (ph) slow but affecting a large area. The following approximated value elevations manifest the slow southerly flow of water in the area starting with Seymour Lake which is up on the right hand area of the longer lakes. Seymour Lake is approximately 300 feet. Beaver Lake is 190 feet. Muleshoe Lake 175 feet. West Lake, or Little Horseshoe Lake I think is -- that's the way you referred to it in the EIS, is 160 feet. Horseshoe Lake is 160 feet. Hourglass Lake is 155 feet. And Big Lake is 145 feet. These changes in elevation were magnified by the range in 2006. Overflow of water from the area around Muleshoe Lake flooded into West Lake. Our -- West Lake rose by approximately 16 inches and I think Horseshoe Lake did the same thing.

MR. NAVECKY: About one more minute, please.

MR. SHARROCK: The rise was from the rain itself and the overflow stream. So where did the water go? I can only conclude that some became part of the ground water system that feeds lakes and some migrated south as service water until normal drainage level was reached.

One point before I close. And this has been some concern to me. The distance between Muleshoe Lake and the unnamed lake to its east is approximately 600 feet. The 200 foot

on either side of the segment for purposes of the wetlands evaluation within the thousand feet figure that's in the EIS noted in Appendix C lies within each lake. What impact that has related to that, I don't know.

In my opinion, and I expect the opinion of many others, my conclusion is if the Houston route is built it bisects a large recreation area and produces a disservice to the recreation population in the Cook Inlet area. Additionally, it constricts the natural southerly flow or migration of water east of the Little Susitna River. Even though this area is not named a recreation area like the Little Susitna River and Nancy Lake and Willow areas, I would name it the Big Lake/Horseshoe Lake public use recreation areas subject to FR -- FRA funding limitations. Impact from the project on the issues I raise I don't believe are de minimis at all. The Willow route is the most logical route for this project and was recommended in 2003 study and supported by the railroad. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for you comments. Next, Jim Sealy, please.

MR. SEALY: I'll pass.

MR. NAVECKY: Pass. Cam Rader.

MR. RADER: Yeah. Thank you. My name is Cam, C-A-M, Rader, R-A-D-E-R. My address is 3313 Peace Court, Anchorage, 99508. I primarily want to address two comments. One is a human impact and the other is on wildlife. My family's property is a

little farther down the trail than Jim Woelfel's. You know, the -- sort of the history is when the Ag Project went in the state interrupted our use of the size line that we had been using. Eventually the borough extended the port access road so we could use the inter tide coming from the other direction. When the borough paved the road last year they occupied our parking lot and rendered the grade such that it's difficult to get a vehicle off the road down the trail during the winter. Chugach apparently put in access which basically parallels what looks to me like the right-of-way that he test holes on last fall. So I guess my initial comment is that there's private property [sic] all along the bluff from the port all the way around to the size line that runs out of the back of the project. All those people need access. Chugach needs access at least during the winter. They use fairly heavy equipment, big loads. So whatever crossing is placed at that end needs to allow for crossing with vehicles from, you know, wheelers and snow machines to the equipment that Chugach uses, which sometimes is fairly substantial. As Jim said, I don't care where the access is as long as I don't have to go back up to Burma Road someplace to get across the railroad.

I guess the other concern I have is the way the borough works they don't apparently express too much concern about whether a crossing, a parking lot, actually has access to where you need to go. So I'm hoping that some thought will be given to how Chugach -- how the property owners are going to have access

going west and south.

My other concern is that at least prior to development of the Ag Project there was a huge winter trail, mainly winter trail, that moves from as far away as Mt. Susitna, used to communicate [sic] with Point MacKenzie and probably the Palmer Hay Flats. There are a substantial number of moose that either use south Point MacKenzie or travel through south Point MacKenzie. As I'm sure you're aware, moose tend to travel the right-of-way, the railway right-of-way in the winter if there's deep snow and I think there has to be some thought given to overpasses, underpasses to allow those moose to travel through there or we're to end up with signs that are talking about 500,000 moose killed this winter instead of only a couple hundred thousand. So thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Next is Lois Epstein, please.

MS. EPSTEIN: Hi, my name is Lois Epstein and I'm an engineer and director of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, which is a nonprofit promoting sensible transportation systems and policies in Alaska. We represent conservation organizations, other nonprofits, individuals and businesses. And I have very brief comments today. I apologize for not having had the opportunity to go over the draft EIS, but one thing I am not certain and I've asked around and no one seems to be certain whether it's included, is the right-of-way going to be usable as

a bike path or other recreational type of trail, maybe even commuting for some folks. That's -- active railroad right-of-ways are sort of the future for Rails-to-Trails. I've talked to the folks in DC about that and I want to be sure that that option is available. I understand the right-of-way is going to be fairly large, 200 feet, which is generally going to be enough to have some separation distance. And I understand there are some engineering issues to make sure that safety is assured, but I just want to be sure that that's part of the final decision making. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Oh, Lois, could you spell your name for us, please, for the court reporter?

MS. EPSTEIN: Yes, I apologize. Lois is L-O-I-S and Epstein is E-P-S-T-E-I-N.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. That is the extent of the individuals that said a definitive yes that they would like to speak. There were four people that were uncertain whether or not they wanted to speak when they signed in. I'm going to run down their names and see if they've decided whether or not to speak. The first is Bret Dittlinger.

MR. DITTLINGER: Pass.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. Andrew Rexford (ph).

MR. REXFORD: I'll pass too.

MR. NAVECKY: Daniel Smith.

MR. SMITH: I'll pass.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you. John Russell.

MR. RUSSELL: John with an H, Russell, R-U-S-S-E-L-L.

Resident of South Anchorage here and basically my interest, and fairly short, is that as I've heard earlier tonight there is ample and plenty of access across any of these routes. Certainly the Houston route is a recreational area and even so is the Willow route, because not only for the Iditarod trail historically, all of your snow machine or four-wheeler routes to the Susitna, Mt. Susitna all the way to Skwentna, many of them come through that area. Cowal Lake, Red Shirt Lake, Rolly Creek up to Willow. And I have not been able to look at the EIS or if you've designed it yet for snow machine access and personal recreation access. And that's one of my concerns here, because this is the one area other than Turnagain Pass that is accessible and close to Anchorage. This is where my kids learned how to play. I have friends with cabins from Burma Road to Willow and friends who live out in Long Lake. And again, safe access, safe crossing and corridors. Even the Willow route on the west side of the hill from Red Shirt is certainly, you know, the Big Willow swamp. That's a corridor north-south as well as corridors east to west and crossing is certainly my concern and then what's designed into that for someone who I've already heard tonight.

One question I might have is the overall plan of right-of-ways through any of these routes, inclusive down the road of any highway right-of-ways, because that's still a long

term question of both for if there is a bridge from Point MacKenzie tying in, in other words, a bypass around Wasilla or the Houston-Anchorage highway access and whether or not that that's part of this right-of-way acquisition.

MR. NAVECKY: Okay. Thank you very much. Is there anyone that has not spoken that would like to speak? Yes, sir. Please come down. And please state and spell your name for us, please.

MR. WOLFE: Hi, my name is John Wolfe, W-O-L-F-E, and I had signed up as no comment and I went back and changed it because I thought it was going to be more of a presentation. You're looking more for comments. I have two concerns. Environmentally they, I guess, fall in two categories, people and noise. You're putting your railroad, no matter which one of these various routes you select -- will eventually select, you're putting it through the prime recreational area for all of Southcentral Alaska. And everybody in that area has recreational property up there. They sail the lakes, they swim, they do whatever. There has got to be a better solution by going farther and farther to the west and get away from as many people who have property up there as you can.

My other concern is noise and that just basically concerns a railroad in general. Your report speaks in terms of, I believe, 80, 90, hundred decibel noise levels for a train going by. And in that area up there, that carries for miles. And it's

one thing if you're in an urban area. You've got cars and trucks and other urban traffic running around. It kind of muffles or at least joins the noise level of trains, trucks and whatnot. But out there in that area in the Mat-Su Valley, that noise is just unbearable and it travels for miles and miles as I say. And when you have a lake lot up there that is out in the middle of basically nowhere and it's quiet, your railroad is going to destroy the values all through that area. The other thing I would question, I guess, is year round I'm looking at your Mac West Connector 1 to Houston, but joining it to Mac East Connector 3 to Willow and that doesn't seem to be provided for. In other words, it's a dog leg off farther to the west. And my question that I'm raising is why not take your route still farther west, as far west as you can get, way over on the edge of the Susitna River. I don't see that addressed as to why you're not going farther and farther west rather than up through the middle of the recreation area. Thank you.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Does anyone else that has not spoken would like to speak? Anyone that has spoken that would like to have an additional five minutes to speak? Is there anyone in the room? Sure. Come on. Please state your name again for us.

MR. WILSON: It's Joe Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N. I'm just wondering if it's possible that you guys could just address some of these issues and just, you know, not an official response, but

just kind of, you know, talk about them and just give an idea what's going on. That would be good if you could.

MR. NAVECKY: Well, once we close the formal commentary -- comment portion of tonight's meeting, I will be available to speak with individuals to hear their comments and to potentially answer general questions. I don't have all the answers into my head and I'm not the decision maker in this case. I'm working on the environmental impact statement which will be used by the Surface Transportation Board to make a decision and the board is a three member panel of -- they're nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Those are the decision makers and they will use the draft EIS and the final EIS and your written comments, including your questions on tonight's project as well as the transcripts from tonight's meeting, they will review those materials in making their decision. So if you have questions that you -- are important to you that you want answered in the document, in the final EIS, that you want considered when the final decision is issued, it's important that we go through this process as we've done tonight to get them on the record, in the transcripts, and then we will address those individually in the final EIS.

But once I close the formal portion of tonight's meeting I can answer some general questions for you if you would like to come up and speak with me. I would be happy to answer what I can. I may not have answers for all your questions, but

I'll do the best I can. Is there anyone else that would like to speak?

MR. DITTLINGER: My name is Bret, B-R-E-T, Dittlinger, D-I-T-T-L-I-N-G-E-R, and I have a cabin out at West Papoose Lake as do some of the other people here. One of the questions I have and I've been thinking about is what's wrong with the current rail system that we have? We have the Whittier Port where I know they have ships that pull up that have railcars actually on the barges or ships and they come off of the rail -- off the barge right onto the rail and they go where they need to go. And the other quest -- the other port is Anchorage. It's probably a mile away from Point MacKenzie and I don't know if the borough is trying to push this for, you know, the economics of it, but as far as impact, why not use the existing ports? And there's two there. And from my observations it sure doesn't seem like when I drive down the Glenn Highway that the rail tracks are being used that much, that they could sure put some more trains on it without doing any of this, because I don't want it -- it's going to go within a mile of my cabin and Big Lake's three miles from my house and I could hear the speedboats from my cabin. So a train being a mile away is definitely going to be disruptive. And that's pretty much what I have to say.

MR. NAVECKY: Thank you for your comments. Anyone else, please? Last call. Okay. Well, thank you very much for attending tonight's meeting and I appreciate your time and coming

tonight and providing us with your comments and questions. It is really an important component in our environmental review process and we will consider all your comments and questions and they will be addressed in the final EIS. With that, I will close tonight's public comment meeting and thank you again for attending.

(Off record - 7:26 p.m.)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)

TRANSCRIBER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Salena A. Hile, hereby certify that the foregoing pages numbered 2 through 29 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