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February 2, 2009

David Novecky
STB Finance Docket No. 34658
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-001

RE: Northern Rail Extension
Environmental Impact Statement

Subject: Public Comments

In an effort to address concerns regarding the proposed route(s) for the northern rail extension we would first request that the public comment period be extended.

There are several property owners from Salcha to Delta that have vested interest in the areas affected by the proposed route. In an effort to fulfill the "good neighbor" policy of the board we respectfully request the comment period be extended to our neighbors so they have time to comment on a project of this magnitude.

Our comments are concerns and suggestions that might mitigate unnecessary and irreversible impacts of noise, vibration, water quality and state land access to hunting, fishing and camping areas.

Foremost, we recommend moving the "South Common Segment" farther south to the already designated boundary for the military along the Northern Boundary of Restricted area 2202A. This would negate the need for bridges or culverts in conjunction with the Richardson Clearwater. It would reduce the amount of land closed off to public access to fishing and hunting areas and would minimize the amount of noise and vibration from the railroads daily use.

The implementation of bridges or culverts could negatively impact the aqua firs and water quality of the Richardson Clearwater. Culverts or bridges would add to the detrimental environmental changes brought on by the Carla Lake fire in 1998, which left the soil in the headwaters of the river unable to sustain excessive rains.

Moving the line farther south would open up access that would otherwise be locked up due to military "NO Trespassing" restrictions along with a dead-zone between the proposed restricted railroad area and the current military restricted area.

Moving the line farther south would minimize the amount of noise and vibration that would negatively impact the recreation users along the Richardson Clearwater and the fish and wildlife habitat that thrive there.

This shorter, direct and less disputed route would most likely create more costs but would minimize the impact it will have in the current route chosen. We recognize the financial impact and feel it is minimal in comparison to the adverse affect the current route will create.

If the STB is not able to implement the "Good Neighbor" policy in regards to this request by considering moving then we would suggest the next step.

More studies should be initiated to ensure the sustainability of the water quality, androgenous fish species, wildlife habitat and possible catastrophic effects on Critical Habitat Areas. Studies should also be done that are more current than those referred to in the EIS as mother nature has changed many characteristics of the Richardson Clearwater if not other streams subject to the impacts of the railroad implementation.

More studies to the noise and vibration impact the rail line this close to a populated recreational stream will have on seasonal (summer) residents and retirees in this area as well as the wildlife that frequent the Richardson Clearwater and areas surrounding this area.

Please consider our suggestions and those from all who are concerned about the affects of the construction and continued use of the railroad. We certainly do not oppose the construction of the railroad but we do object to the proposed location especially of the "South Common Segment".

We do object firmly to the construction of a road along side or in conjunction with the railroad. We would need more time to adequately review the EIS in regards to the use and necessity of a road. Therefore, we request an extended comment period for this purpose.

Respectfully,

Ted and Tracy Morphis

Attachements: Map of South Common Segment

Cc: Chris Milles, Fairbanks Regional Director
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