

EI-18179

FROM

Joseph P Wilson
Patricia A Wilson

Joseph P Wilson
P Wilson

TO

David Navecky
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001
ATTN:
Section of Environmental Analysis
STB Finance Docket No 35095

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this input is to explain and substantiate our conviction that the DEIS analysis was flawed because it did not include a southern segment that is much superior to the two routes evaluated in the DEIS process. The negative consequences of this omission are very significant. Therefore it is important that the analysis of the southern segments include the subject segment.

Explanation of why this submittal is so long.

I have lived at the ag project since it's beginning so I know a lot about the ag project and the Point Mackenzie area and I care about the future of the area.

By education and profession I am an engineer so I take a very comprehensive and analytical approach to the Mac-Rail issues. I have determined that the analysis performed in generating the DEIS has many shortcomings that have negative impacts on the future development of the Point Mackenzie area.

In order to meet the criteria for effective comments per the Citizens Guide to the NEPA and considering the substantial scope of this issue this document ends up being long but meets the criteria for effective comments.

In order to clarify and simplify the logic flow I have put details and more extensive information and analysis and support documents later on in the document. I have marked some locations with the following mark @ A @ . This indicates that in the back of this document there is additional information on this topic and it will have the same letter designation inside a circle.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

Applicants = "Applicants" refers to Mat Su Borough [MSB] personnel directly responsible for Mac Rail issues plus the Alaska Railroad [ARR] personnel directly responsible for Mac Rail issues.

PEAR = _____, Application by Applicants to the STB that initiated the EIS process.

DEIS = Draft EIS

NIMBY = Not In My Backyard (I don't want a RR near my property.)

Mac-E = Refers to a RR segment alongside McK rd up to MP _____ and then cuts diagonally westerly thru a large parcel of private land.

Mac-SL = Mac-S/L route refers to a N-S route through the point Mackenzie ag project along the first north-south section line E of Guernsey road.

ag = agriculture

OVERVIEW:

The DEIS evaluated several corridors, each of which consisted of a northern segment and a southern segment. The only southern segments considered were the Mac-W and the Mac-E segments. The route which was selected as best was the Mac-E southern segment & the Houston northern segment.

The resulting corridor imposes considerable negative impacts on the Point Mackenzie area. There were many more negative impacts than were evaluated in the final analysis of the routes.

There is a route available that avoids the negative impacts of Mac-E and, for the purposes of this document, I give it the designation " Mac-SL"

Mac-SL = Mac-S/L route refers to a N-S route through the point Mackenzie ag project along the first north-south section line E of Guernsey road.

Mac-E = Refers to a RR segment alongside McK rd up to about MP11 and then cuts diagonally westerly thru a large parcel of private land.

If Mac-SL was one of the alternative southern segments studied in the DEIS it would undoubtedly have been the route selected. It avoids the numerous negative impact that the Mac-E segment imposes on the Point Mackenzie area.

Mac-SL WAS EXCLUDED FROM CONSIDERATION DURING THE DEIS PROCESS.

If the Mac-SL route is so good then why was the Mac-SL route left out of the route options? The reasons include the following:

The DEIS didn't include Mac-SL because the DEIS process failed to meet the EIS requirement that all feasible routes must be considered and if the route is not selected then an explanation must be given as to why. This requirement alone would have insured that the Mac-SL segment was included. @ A @

Another reason given is that the Mac-SL route was not suggested by anyone during the scoping public input meetings. Nothing in the requirements for an EIS either states or implies that the EIS requirements are nullified if the public doesn't tell them what should be included in the EIS process. The public can't be expected to have the expertise that is required to do the job they assume is being done in the EIS study. The result has been considerable local conflict regarding which of the included southern segment is the lesser of the two evils. This conflict has caused considerable ill will which would not have happened if people knew that Mac-SL was an option during the scoping phase. @ B @

Also the Mac-SL route was not evaluated because it was not among the segments included in the PEAR. Nothing in the requirements for an EIS either states or implies that it is sufficient to include only those routes suggested by the Applicants.

The Mac-SL route was not included in the PEAR partly because of an evaluation that was faulty and was based on incorrect data. @ C @

The primary reason that the Mac-SL route was not included in the PEAR was because of political pressure against the Mac-SL segment, based on NIMBY, exerted on the Applicants. The pressure was successful in coercing the Applicants to not include the Mac-SL route even though the Mac-SL route had been in previous studies & in fact had previously been the preferred route and had been supported by a borough assembly resolution. @ D @

The KABATA EIS states that several parcels have been bought by speculators. This is true and it is the speculators, who don't even live in the ag project, that are the most persistent in applying political pressure to affect the elimination of the Mac-Central segment. Their motivation is solely based on NIMBY. @ E @

In studies previous to the PEAR the Mac-Central route was considered very good.

1999 - The MSB filed an application with DNR for an easement along the same section line that is used by the Mac-SL route. Therefore this route was considered viable by the MSB at that time. @ F @

2003 - In a 2003 study Mac-Central was not given a realistic evaluation because it was combined with northern segments which went through "a large amount of private property." regardless of which southern segment it was combined with. Those combined segments were eliminated because they went through "a large amount of private property" which would have been true if any of the southern segments had been combined with those northern segments. So their evaluation says nothing about the Mac-SL segment. @ G @

2003 - In the "The Public Involvement Report, Land Use Issues", the study does not even mention agriculture lands as a constraint for a RR segment. Yet the PEAR eliminates Mac-Central based on the supposed impact of the segment on the Mackenzie ag project.

In this study 66% of responders preferred the Mac-West over the Mac-Central segment that goes through the western portion of the ag project.

2007 - An EPA letter (Michael Szerlog) to Brian Lindamood, refers to Mac-Central as an segment that is currently under review. So it was a viable segment until a year before the PEAR was released. @ H @

2008 - The PEAR was released w/o any reference to Mac-Central or Mac-SL.

More extensive information and analysis and support documents regarding these statements are provided at the section designated by the circled letter.

Following are the "SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE IMPACTS" due to the Mac-E segment

It is important to realize that most of the land in the point McK area has already been dedicated to a specific use and is not available for residential or commercial use. The available land is mainly along the McK road corridor. @ I @

Having a RR going thru this narrow corridor has a huge negative impact on the development of the Point Mackenzie area because the coming development will be right along the RR tracks. An example of the problems associated with growth around a RR are being experienced right now in Wasilla. Consequently there are several RR projects planned or underway intended to reduce the RR's impact on Wasilla. @ J & K & L @

The RR would split the McK rd corridor thereby preventing development of a cohesive community or any commercial development other than strip development. The best land and the obvious prime location for commercial development is at the junction of McK rd & Burma rd. The RR would split this prime land and prevent the development of a cohesive townsite. @ M @

The KABATA Final EIS chapter 2-115 states "Functional Classification of Pt. MacKenzie road alternative would be a rural principal arterial highway, with a design speed of 70 MPH." Having Mac-Rail adjacent to Mackenzie road will greatly complicate the projected improvements in Mackenzie road..

The PEAR stresses that the RR route should be kept away from the new prison. The Mac-E segment goes right in front of the prison.

ARR specifically stated in a meeting of government agencies that there would be negative consequences if there was a RR alongside a major highway. Yet they are using Mac-E which is the ONLY southern segment that is adjacent to the highway which will evolve from the present Point Mackenzie road.

Providing for some separation between the Mac-Rail corridor and the developing areas also reduces other potential impacts such as noise, vibration, and visual impacts.

Mac-E completely separates one ag parcel from it's only access road and from utilities. This will result in the need for another RR crossing or providing access via another road. This condition also complicates providing future utilities to the parcel.

The easement required for one ag project tract will be extremely close to the parcels residence.

The Mac-E segment splits one ag parcel diagonally. This requires the RR to provide an additional crossing or the RR will need to provide access roads from the nearest crossing to the parcel on both side of the tracks.

The Mac-E segment, in comparison to the Mac-SL segment, involves more wetlands, the terrain is more complex, and there are inferior soils for construction purposes.

The Mac-E segment has considerable challenges in avoiding Carpenter lake. In fact it is required to turn westward through the projected townsite in order to avoid Carpenter lake.

Mac-E requires a grade separated crossing at the intersection with Holstien road..

One result of Mac-E will be a large moose kill due to the segments location in prime moose wintering area and a heavily used migration route for moose. This is expounded on in the KABATA EIS.

THE IMPACTS OF THE MAC-SL SEGMENT:

It is important to realize that 70 % of the land included in the Point Mackenzie Community Council's area has been already been dedicated to a specific use and is not available for residential or commercial use. The remaining available land is mainly along the McK road corridor which the Mac-SL segments completely avoids. @ I @

Mac-SL avoids having the RR going thru the narrow Point Mackenzie road corridor. This eliminates the huge negative impact of Mac-E on the development of the Point Mackenzie area and prevents the problems associated with development around a RR. @ I @

Mac-SL would not split the McK rd corridor so will not prevent development of a cohesive community or any commercial development other than strip development.

The best land and the obvious prime location for commercial development is at the junction of McK rd & Burma rd. The RR would split this prime land and prevent the development of a cohesive townsite. @ I @

The KABATA EIS states that McK rd will be enlarged to become a divided highway with a 70 mph speed limit. Mac-SL will not impact the planned improvements of Point Mackenzie road.

The PEAR stresses that the RR route should be kept away from the new prison. The Mac-SL segment is far from the prison.

ARR specifically stated in a meeting of government agencies that there would be negative consequences if there was a RR along side a major highway. Mac-SL is far enough away that it avoids conflicts between RR and Highway.

Providing for some separation between the Mac-Rail corridor and the developing areas also reduces other potential impacts such as noise, vibration, and visual impacts.

Mac-SL does not go diagonally through an ag parcels.

In fact Mac-SL does not affect the viability or profitability of any farms in the ag project.

The easement required for one ag project tract will be extremely close to the parcels residence.

Mac-SL does not affect the farm residences on the parcels with the RR easements

The Mac-E segment splits one ag parcel diagonally. This requires the RR to provide an additional crossing or the RR will need to provide access roads from the nearest crossing to the parcel on both side of the tracks.

The Mac-E segment in comparison to the Mac-SL segment involves more wetlands, terrain that is more complex, and inferior soils for construction purposes.

The Mac-E segment has considerable challenges in avoiding Carpenter lake. In fact it is required to turn westward through the projected townsite in order to avoid Carpenter lake.

Mac-E requires a grade separated crossing at the intersection with Holstien road..

One result of Mac-E will be a large moose kill due to the segments location in prime moose wintering area and a heavily used migration route for moose. This is expounded on in the KABATA EIS.

Because DNR and MSB provided for a RR easement along the Mac-SL route there will be very minimal requirement to purchase additional easements in the ag project.

AG RELATED ISSUES @ C @

In the PEAR, the reasons given for eliminating Mac-Central from further consideration were based on impacts to the ag project.

The PEAR gives the following as justification for eliminating Mac-Central from further consideration:

Agricultural lands considered a constraint are those properties located within the PointMacKenzie Agricultural Project. While the area's designation as an agricultural project does not confer special status on these parcels beyond the parcel's agricultural restrictions, the area is the largest contiguous agricultural area in Alaska. As a result, preserving the commercial agriculture viability of this area is important to the DOA (Steve Trickett, pers. comm.). Easements specifically reserved for railroad development exist throughout the agricultural area; however, these easements are dis-contiguous and generally cut through the middle of the aerable land. The potential need for multiple crossings and the dis-contiguous nature does not constitute a practicable corridor. Using information regarding agricultural lands provided by the DOA and the Knik Arm Crossing Draft Environmental Impact Statement (KABATA 2006a), the project team mapped the boundary of the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project. The resulting map is shown in Figure 2.8.

2010 Draft EIS 2-12 Volume 1 page 108

The alternatives are composed of northern and southern segments, with possible connector segments between. The southern segments, MacEast and MacWest would run either east or west of the Pt. MacKenzie project. (footnote 5 follows verbatim)

The State of Ak initiated the Point MacKenzie Ag Project in the 1980-'s. The Ag Project is an area of ag land sold or leased by the state with agricultural covenants. Owners are required to submit conservation plans for each parcel to the ADNR DOA to ensure that the agricultural resources in the area are preserved. While the area's designation as an ag project does not confer special status on these parcels beyond the parcel's agricultural restrictions, the area is the largest contiguous agricultural area in Alaska. There are easements specifically reserved for railroad development throughout the ag area; however, these easements are dis-contiguous and generally cut through the middle of the arable land.

Following is an analysis of the above statements.

"Agricultural lands considered a constraint are those properties located within the PointMacKenzie Agricultural Project"

The analysis of the following statements shows that there is no negative impact of Mac-SL on the Point Mackenzie ag Project.

"the area is the largest contiguous agricultural area in Alaska."

The Mackenzie ag project is only one seventh as large as the Delta ag project. In fact there is one farm in Delta that is larger than the whole Point Mackenzie ag project. @ C @

"Easements specifically reserved for railroad development exist throughout the agricultural area; however, these easements are dis-contiguous "

DNR has provided for a RR easement that is continuous from MSB land at the southern portion of the ag project continuously up to the southern property line of tract 21 and above the northern boundary of tract 21 the land is not an ag project parcel.. See ADL - 227588

"and generally cut through the middle of the aerable land. "

The Mac-Central segment cuts through only one farm field and that is in such a way that the resulting fields are large enough to be farmed efficiently, are not cut diagonally which would make them inefficient to farm, and does not require the travel of farm equipment any considerable distance over roads in order to move from one field to another [a RR crossing will be adjacent to his property on Red Dane road.]

The potential need for multiple crossings

The Mac-E and the Mac-SL segments require the same number of road crossings. In fact the Holstien road crossing on the Mac-E segment requires a grade seperated crossing while on the Mac-SL segment there only needs to be a grade crossing. And implying that there is "potential" crossings leads one to assume that there would be more crossings. If t hey would have just counted the required crossings it would be obvious that this should not be a concern.

So the analysis in the PEAR process that led to Mac-Central's elimination were completely wrong. If Mac-Central had not been eliminated from the PEAR it would have been included in the scope and in the DEIS.

TOWNSITE INFORMATION

Many people object to Mac-E going through the area around the intersection of Ayrshire rd, Burma rd and Point McK road [hereafter referred to as the "4-corners" area].

It is probable that there will be numerous inputs on the DEIS referring to this area. Without knowing the importance of this 4-corners area to the growth of the Pt McK area the evaluators of these inputs re the DEIS will not be able to realistically evaluate these inputs.

So we think it is worthwhile to provide this background information regarding the 4-corners area.

The 4-corners area is the hub of roads leading into and out of the general Pt McK area. The roads include McK road eastward, Ayrshire rd westward, Burma rd northward, McK road southward.

The significance of these roads is as follows:

Pt McK rd Eastward.

This is currently the only access rd into & out of the area. This rd connects the area to Wasilla which supplies almost all the current needs of the point Mackenzie area and will continue to be very important far into the future.. This rd also is travelled both winter & summer by people accessing the recreational opportunities of the area.

Ayrshire Rd:

Ayrshire rd westward provides access to the farms in the northern part of the ag area, to the prison farm, to the "gas line" trail, to the gas liquification plant and to residents north of Ayrshire road. Ayrshire also provides access to the recreation area that the state operates at the Little Susitna river which provides a camping area and which provides the only boat ramp for the popular fishing destinations of the lower Little Susitna river. The "gas line" trail refers to the cleared ROW of the ENSTAR gas line from Beluga to Wasilla. This trail provides snowmachines access to the huge remote areas west of the Little Susitna river.

Burma rd northward:

This road will connect this area to the Parks highway north of the congested area of Wasilla. Burma rd will greatly shorten the trip to the Parks hwy but will also avoid increasing the existing traffic congestion in Wasilla.

Burma rd also will provide a second access road out of this area. The importance of having more than one access to all areas was driven home during the Miller's Reach fire.

The upgrade of Burma road is included in the "2000 to 2008 CIP" and is currently in the [? design, funding, ???CIP,] phase.

McK road southward from "4-corners":

This road provides the only access to the port, to the maximum security prison, and to the residents in the areas surrounding Pt McK rd and Alsop road. It also provides access to the S/M and hunting areas E of the port district. It is also the primary access to the southern portion of the ag project via Holstien rd. The soon to be operational vehicle ferry from the Port area to Anchorage will funnel traffic north to the 4-corners area.

The Pt McK area will experience significant growth in the coming years due to the increase in job opportunities, increases in commercial enterprises in support of the increasing population as well as traffic to the numerous recreational opportunities in the area. In the future there will be considerable traffic thru the 4-corners area because of improved access to the area provided by the Anchorage-to-Point McK vehicle ferry and the Knik Arm Bridge EIS. Commercial enterprises prefer to locate in high traffic areas which, in the Point McK area, will be primarily in the 4-corners area.

So when there is public input to the DEIS regarding the impact of Mac-E to the 4-corners area such input should be evaluated in light of the considerations given above.

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

LRTP of boro (KABATA) identified area at MP 7 of Pt. MacKenzie road as potential high growth commercial/residential area

Community council identified same area as important to communities commercial/residential development and is an area selected for town site

Most good soils are located on the Pt. Mac Ag project and to the north around carpenter lake

Locating highways near railroad limits development along the road and causes accessibility problems for businesses - DNR Large projects agency meeting, Sept 18, 2007

In letter from AKRR in PEAR, the AKRR states ARR is facing re-alignment in the Wasilla area to accommodate Wasilla's desire for a better economic development environment. While this need has taken 50 years to develop, it is clear that Pt. MacKenzie is a rapidly growing area and ARR has no desire to try and re-align another spur in the next 20 years.

Prison facilities 2-13 - Constraints for RR - from MSB [PEAR CD]

"The location of the proposed prison was a very contentious issue for the State and MSB and required a great deal of public involvement to resolve. Therefore, it was deemed important to avoid the prison site".

WILDLIFE IMPACTS

KABATA EIS

Pt. MacKenzie lies between Susitna Flats SGR and Goose Bay SGR, 2 areas utilized by all mammal species especially moose. Moose frequently browse along and cross Pt. MacKenzie road as seasonal feeding opportunities change.

The cumulative effects of the prison, port development and Mac East RR will forever destroy wildlife habitat and traditional feeding areas.

↔

DEIS

Impacts from MacRail when added to impacts from the correctional center, could result in cumulative habitat loss, forested habitat fragmentation, and wildlife-vehicle collision mortality, which could cause locally substantial impacts along the Mac East segment. (Cumulative impacts O-17)

Construction and operations activities associated with projects in MacEast area could contribute to adverse cumulative effects to the biological environment. Included are wildlife habitat destruction and altered suitability, including increases in invasive plant populations and interruption of natural fire ecology, increased public access, noise and potential direct and indirect wildlife mortality. (Cumulative impacts O-19)

Written communication with a Fish and Wildlife biologist concerned about habitat fragmentation

CONCLUSION

This document has established that an EIS analysis that does not include Mac-SL results in conclusions that will have negative impacts on the Point MacKenzie Area.

Once the final EIS is approved and a final route is selected the railroad location is fixed forever.

These negative impacts will go on forever.

Whatever change in process is required to re-analyze DEIS issues is small in scale compared to the permanent negative impacts to the Pt. MacKenzie area.

Re-analyzing the EIS route selection is not something that anyone wants but the effort does not compare to the negative impacts that the current options do to the Point MacKenzie area and it will go constantly and forever.

Re-analyzing the routes is a small effort in comparison

Joe and Pat Wilson

A

PEAR must contain

According to NEPA, the STB must examine the environmental impacts of any action subject to their jurisdiction. 49 CFR 1105.7 *Environmental Reports* requires that an applicant to the STB for an action must submit an Environmental Report on the proposed action prior to or concurrent with their application. The Environmental Report must contain the following:

(3) Land use.

Describe the proposed action's consistency or inconsistency with local and regional plans including agricultural land and coastal zones. Additional required information specific to rail constructions includes:

(3b) Describe alternative routes considered and why they were not selected

The DEIS statement explanation to meet above requirement is

" SEA and the cooperating agencies considered eliminating from detailed study segments that did not meet fundamental components of the purpose and need, would lead to substantially greater adverse environmental impacts, or that featured insurmountable construction and/or operations limitations.

MacCentral meets every factor that SEA used to eliminate it

Purpose and Need

The Applicant has stated that the purpose of the proposed rail line is to provide rail service to Port MacKenzie and connect the Port with the existing ARRC rail system, providing Port MacKenzie customers with rail transportation between Port MacKenzie and Interior Alaska. MacCentral is a straight line more direct route compatible with all connection points north.

Would lead to substantially greater adverse environmental impacts

MacCentral crosses fewer wetlands and reduces socio-economic impacts and urban quality of life

Featured insurmountable construction and/or operations limitations.

MacCentral is a straight track allowing trains to travel safely at increased speeds, reducing wear and tear on tracks, rail, and train wheels, and reduces the risk of derailment

As an alternate route the DIES suggested adding an alignment in the eastern portion of the study area, east of the Big Lake Segment, that would be in part or all of the existing Port MacKenzie road and Knik Goose Bay Road corridors. This route meets on all counts the reason the SEA gives for eliminating routes.

The ARRC response to why this suggestion is untenable verifies that it does NOT meet Purpose and Need, has significantly greater adverse environmental impacts and due to terrain and private property has insurmountable construction and operations limitations.

DEIS - Table 2.1 SE Questions on Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Alignments and ARRC Responses Page 2

A

PART 1502—ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

A

Sec. 1502.14 Alternatives including the proposed action.

This section is the heart of the environmental impact statement. Based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment (Sec. 1502.15) and the Environmental Consequences (Sec. 1502.16), it should present the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public. In this section agencies shall:

- (a) Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.
- (b) Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.
- (c) Include reasonable alternatives not within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.
- (d) Include the alternative of no action.
- (e) Identify the agency's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference.
- (f) Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

B

According to NEPA, the STB must examine the environmental impacts of any action subject to their jurisdiction. 49 CFR 1105.7 *Environmental Reports* requires that an applicant to the STB for an action must submit an Environmental Report on the proposed action prior to or concurrent with their application. The Environmental Report must contain the following:

(1) Proposed action and alternatives. Describe the proposed action and any reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Include a readable detailed map and drawings clearly delineating the project.

(3) Land use. Describe the proposed action's consistency or inconsistency with local and regional plans including agricultural land and coastal zones.

Additional required information specific to rail constructions includes:

- b. Describe alternative routes considered and why they were not selected. reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. Include a readable detailed map and drawings clearly delineating the project.

B

9

STB FINANCIAL DOCKIT # 35095

JOSEPH/Pat WILSON (patnjoe@mtaonline.net) - Thu, 04/01/2010 18:12:52 -0800

[Show Full Headers](#) | [Print](#) | [Close Printer View](#)

C

From: "Proulx, Daniel E (DNR)" <dan.proulx@alaska.gov>
To: patnjoe@mtaonline.net
Subject: Alaska agriculture areas
Date: Thu 04/01/2010 03:40 PM

Attached are a couple maps showing Pt Mac and Delta junction. I also found the original paperwork for Pt. Mac which shows the gross acreage for each parcel. A couple more parcels may have been sold since then but it look pretty close to the attached map. For comparison there is a farmer in Delta that owns more land than all of Pt. Mac. Delta definitely has much more land in production than Pt. Mac even with CRP land. Notice the scales on both maps, Delta's scale is 5X bigger meaning that for the maps to be the same for comparison purposes it would have to be 5X bigger.

Of course these images are several years old and some fields may have changed but on the other hand about 6000 acres, a little less than half the acreage of Pt. Mac, is coming out of CRP next year in Delta and at least some of it will go back into production I assume.

Obviously I had to crunch these down quite a bit to make them manageable. I hope they are still useful to you.

Dan

Daniel Proulx

Natural Resource Specialist II

1648 South Cushman Street #201

Fairbanks, AK 99701-6206

Direct Line (907) 374-3716

Work Cell (907) 590-3748

Fairbanks Office (907) 328-1950

Fax (907) 328-1951

Attachment: [Save](#)

Name: Pt_Mac_lottery_map.pdf

Type: application/octet-stream

Attachment: [Save](#) [View](#)

Name: alaska_ag_projects.jpg

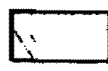
Type: image/jpeg

PT. MACKE NZIE AGRICULTURAL PROJECT MAP 2

Parcel Index Map

Legend

- PARCEL /TRACT BOUNDARY
- PARCEL MAP BOUNDARY

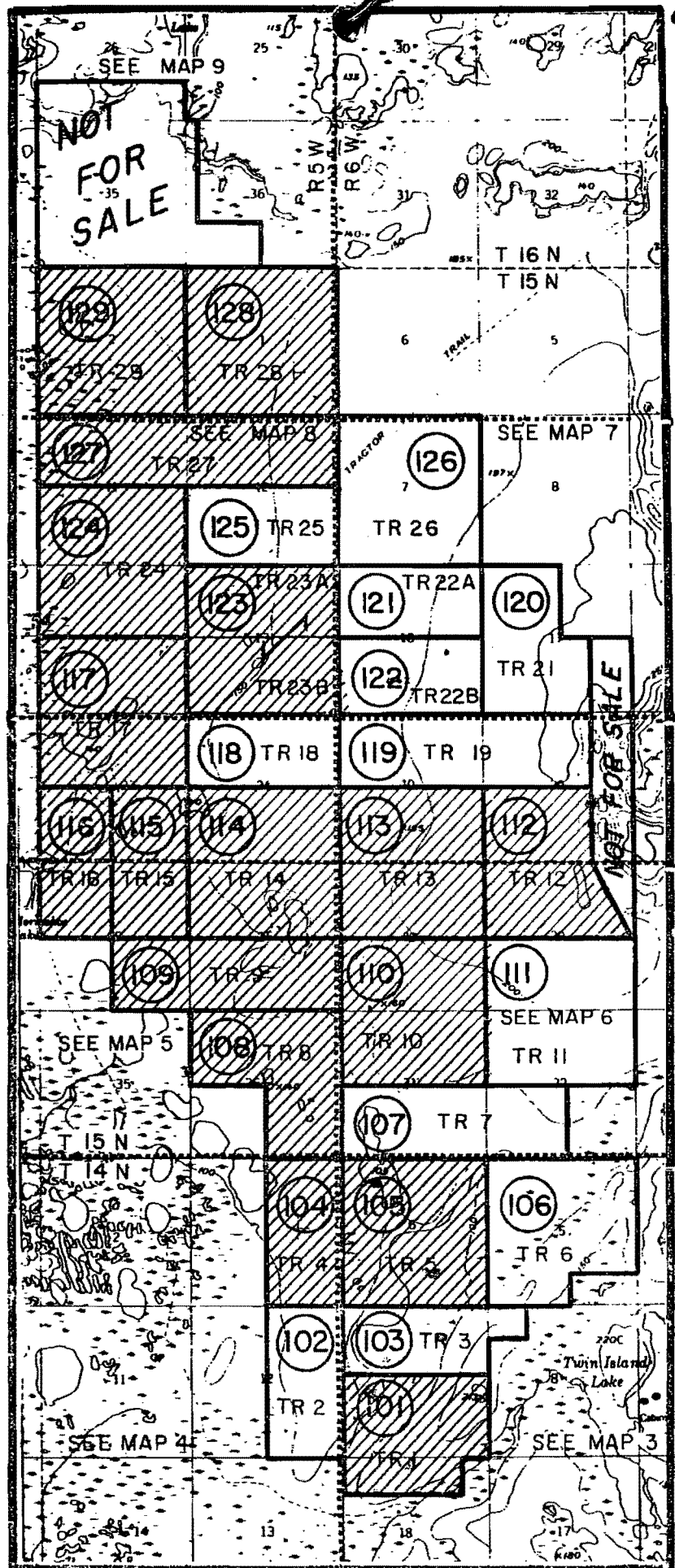
 DESIGNATED DAIRY PARCELS

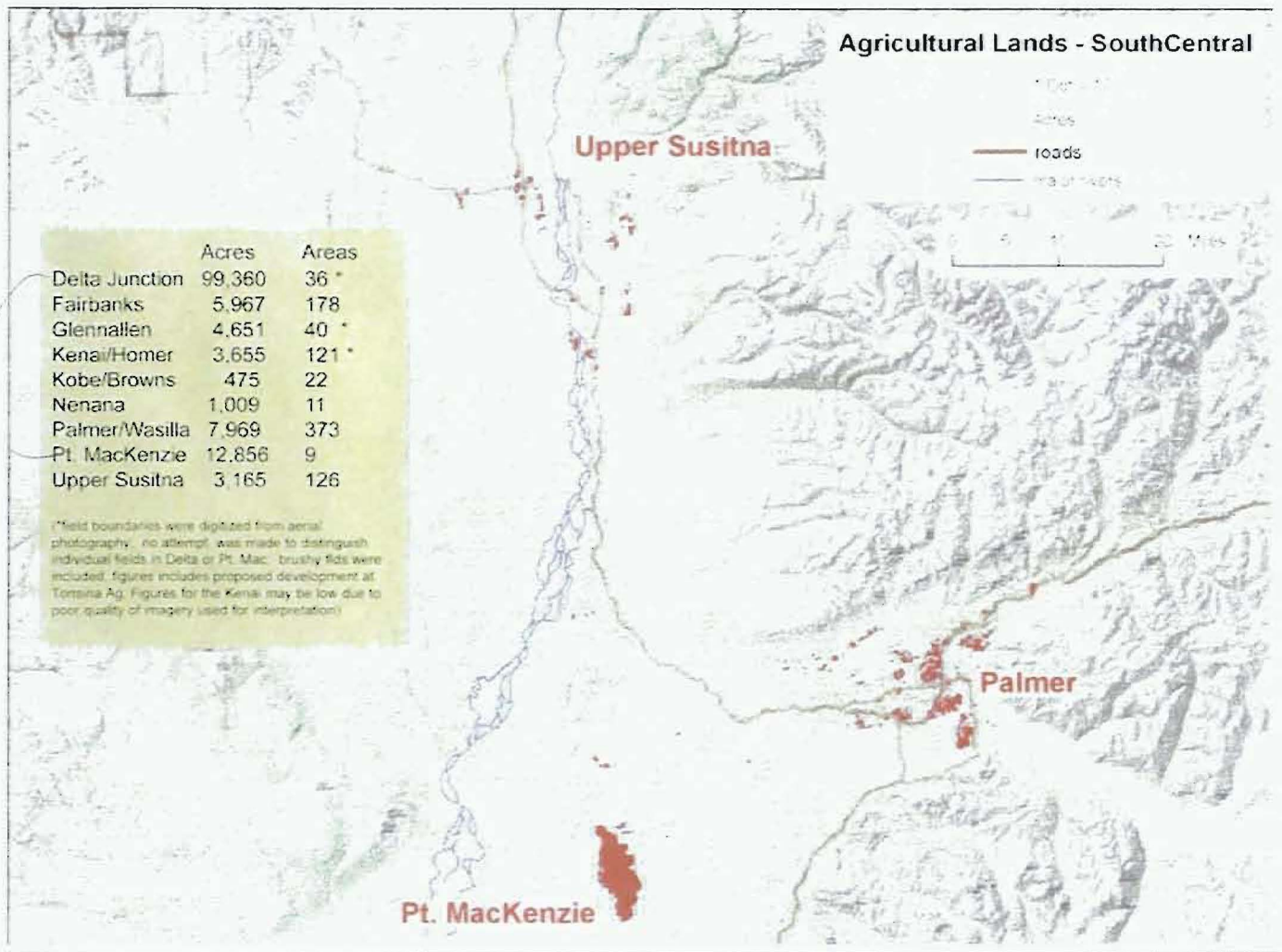
 PARCEL NUMBER

Lottery #10 ASLS 80-111

Parcel	*Gross Acreage	Tract No.	Map
101	417.10	1	3
102	313.88	2	4
103	343.92	3	3
104	314.08	4	4
105	609.03	5	3
106	560.02	6	3
107	437.36	7	6
108	474.22	8	5
109	477.19	9	5
110	598.87	10	6
111	634.03	11	6
112	474.42	12	6
113	598.47	13	6
114	641.89	14	5
115	320.85	15	5
116	328.14	16	5
117	612.49	17	8
118	297.04	18	8
119	490.94	19	6
120	367.69	21	7
121	301.75	22A	7
122	301.85	22B	7
123	627.91	23A	8
		& 23B	
124	627.95	24	8
125	307.95	25	8
126	603.22	26	7
127	624.79	27	8
128	595.09	28	9
129	638.78	29	9
TOTAL	13,940.92		

*Gross acreage includes water-bodies and easements, if any.





Attachment: [Save View](#)

Name: Point_Mackenzie.jpg

Type: image/jpeg



C

Attachment: Save View

Name: Delta_ag_map.jpg

Type: image/jpeg



JOSEPH/Pat WILSON (patnjoe@mtaonline.net) - Thu, 04/01/2010 18:12:52 -0800

ALASKA AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

2009

PREPARED BY

**ALASKA FIELD OFFICE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1150 S. Colony Way, Suite 11
(907) 745-4272 Fax (907) 746-4654
1-800-478-6079**

**PO Box 799
Palmer, Alaska 99645**

**Suzan Benz
Agricultural Statistician**

**Katherina Bailey
Statistical Assistant**

**Dave Knopf
WA/AK State Director
PO Box 609
Olympia, WA 98507
(360) 902-1940**

ISSUED COOPERATIVELY BY

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
Dr. Cynthia Clark
Administrator
Phone: (202) 720-2707**

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
Franci Havemeister
Director
Phone: (907) 745-7200**

AND

**OPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
Bill Schlutt
Provost/Director
Phone: (907)-474-7246**

**UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
AG & FORESTRY EXPERIMENT
STATION
Dr. Carol Lewis
Director, Dean, SNRAS
Phone: (907)-474-7083**

ALASKA CROPLAND UTILIZATION 2008

Crops	Tanana Valley	Matanuska Valley	Kenai Peninsula/ Southwest	State Total
Acres PLANTED AREA				
COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES				
Potatoes	280	510	10	800
Lettuce	-	41	-	41
Cabbage	-	38	-	38
Carrots	3	41	-	44
Other Vegetables	30	266	-	296
FEED CROPS				
All Oats	1,300	300	-	1,600
All Barley	3,900	200	-	4,100
GRASSLAND HARVESTED				
Grass 1/	8,300	8,600	1,900	18,800
TOTAL LAND IN CROPS	13,813	9,996	1,910	25,719
Percent of State Total	54%	39%	7%	100%
HARVESTED AREA				
COMMERCIAL VEGETABLES				
Potatoes	270	500	10	780
Lettuce	-	41	-	41
Cabbage	-	37	-	37
Carrots	3	35	-	38
Other Vegetables	22	257	-	279
FEED CROPS				
Oats – All Purposes 2/	900	200	100	1,200
Barley – All Purposes 2/	3,500	-	-	3,500
Grass – All Purposes	11,200	11,200	2,300	24,700
GRAIN				
Oats	500	-	-	500
Barley	3,400	-	-	3,400
HAY				
Grain	400	100	-	500
Grass	7,900	7,800	1,800	17,500

1/ Includes hay and silage.

2/ Includes grain hay and silage.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH MSB

5-06-09 - P. Wilson gave Dave Heier copies of recorded legal documents of the Mac-SL railroad ROW

5-21-09 - P. Wilson stopped by to speak with Brad Sworts regarding the RR project

Brad Sworts stated: . . . the owners along the section line complained strongly to both the MSB assembly and also wrote to the STB about crossing their land - so strongly the MSB backed off and did not include it as a final route.

8-28-09 - P. Wilson stopped by to speak with Brad Sworts regarding the Pt. MacKenzie RR spur project

BS -I was just looking through some of the work the contractor, called ICF international is doing for the STB for the MacRail project

BS They were hired to do the environmental document - the draft EIS
.....they drafted up about 1/2 of the chapters, updating their maps - I think they will be ready to release the draft probably in Oct.

PW - What about the central route - not the east or west but the central - did they come up with that

BS No it's not in - well, nobody has commented on that yet - they came out with the final scope and it wasn't in that either so apparently nobody had commented about that and we talked about it last week in a meeting in Anchorage and whether we should try and bring it up ourselves now or just wait until the draft EIS comes out when there is a comment period. The (decision) of the meeting was that rather than interrupt them now while they are trying to get this draft out it would be better to wait until the comment period and see whether they include that or not

PW I don't understand why it hasn't been brought up because it's a route that has none of the problems of the west or east route and I thought part of the job of the EIS was to look at all feasible routes - so why wouldn't they look at that

BS Because the only routes they are looking at now are the 3 - I shouldn't say that - they're looking at the 3 routes that were in the preliminary document

PW 2 routes that affect the farm area right?

BS To tell you the truth I don't know because they don't really tell us what they are doing - in other words this reports just shows us what they have been working on - I don't know - they may actually be looking at that route - I don't know

PW The EIS has to show the impact for a specific route - so if the central route isn't in the EIS they're not going to go back and do all that work over again for the central route are they?

BS If they got enough comments that MacEast route would be disruptive or had problems, they would go back and look at what other options are available

PW OK - we were looking at the actual environmental law and it stated that they are required to look at all feasible routes so I'm just amazed they haven't considered the central route. What's the downside for the boro to say Hey, what about this other route right through the center of the ag project?

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BS Well, it means they would have to go back and do a lot of this research on a brand new route

PW Which is what they might have to do anyway?

BS They might have to do anyway if somebody brings it up - it's just the time difference - it might take 3 or 4 months if they have to go back and look at a different route

PW I don't understand what the downside is for you guys to bring it up because you know we're going to bring it up and we're going to try and get a lot of people to support us and there are a lot of problems with it that we see

BS I'd say if you are going to bring it up it would be better to do it sooner rather than later

PW The curious thing is they know that people have signed easements on the central route. The people doing the EIS - they have that information, right?

BS I don't know if they do or not

PW So, when we gave you all that stuff, what did you do with it - we gave you all the documentation for people agreeing 3 separate times that it was Ok to put the railroad there

BS We didn't send that forward to the STB because it was in a period we couldn't comment - we are in the same boat you are - we can't just feed them information - we have to do it when they're open to comment

PW But at the meeting you just had in Anchorage - somebody thought there was an opportunity to comment)

BS Yea - Joe Perkins our executive manager put that forward and said - hey this looks a really good route and it's something that we should consider putting forward when the draft EIS comes out

PW I don't understand why you didn't put it in to begin with

BS When this whole project started the borough has a corridor that was set aside that runs up through Willow and follows that ridge that goes past ??? lake. At that time to boro decided to apply to the State of Alaska for a ROW for that corridor - part of that corridor is the one you're talking about - it goes right through the center of the ag project. When we did that there was a huge uproar from the agriculture folks down there - they had to port director going to every kind of meeting they had, they had assembly people going to community council meetings, they had director of ? going to a special ag group meeting - they were completely against that route - because of that huge reaction of that group, when we put together the initial project information for the STB, we chose those 2 other routes - we went on the far West side of the agriculture project and then on the far east side. Another reason we did that was because we had heard that the people; who make decisions at the STB were partial to agriculture - that they didn't like splitting agriculture parcels in half.

PW So this is kind of a rumor floating around

BS No, it is information we received from Bob Lindenberg (get correct name from current MacRail project info) from the railroad who worked on other projects with the STB - he is on this project also. He said when he worked in the lower 48 on these projects going through the STB, that often when there were agriculture parcels involved, they would not split the parcels so that combined with the big hoopla from the owners of the parcels adjacent to that corridor, we decided to try and find a route on either side

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of the ag project instead.

PW When did all this happen

BS 2007 - They said they realized that this corridor runs through their parcels, but they are totally against it as it would split their operations in half

PW Did anyone look into what they were saying to see if it was true - the route is at one end of their property - the only tract it splits is tract 7

BS At that point we didn't have a project like this - we were going to the state for a ROW for the rest of the corridor

PW . So the ag parcel ROW was in place already and you were trying to get a ROW for the Willow section

BS Yes - so that's how it came about

PW . When we were at the meeting with Joe Perkins he indicated that the EIS was applicable for 1 mile either side of the proposed road - is that true or not

BS He was guessing when he said that - we don't know for sure - we talked to the railroad about that and they said they thought it would be a stretch to deviate that much from the route - so they couldn't give us a good answer if it was 1/2 mile or 1/4 mile or how far could you deviate without having to go through another EIS

PW Isn't it in the boros interest to get this through as fast as possible

BS Certainly

PW Then wouldn't it be in the boroughs interest to bring it up now since you know we're going to bring up a lot of points against it and unless they just dismiss our issues

BS Yes, but we also know there is this other group out there , the Gattis group, that opposes that route, so it's one group or the other and it sounds like we're going to get in trouble either way, but

There is some confusion regarding 1) *whether* agricultural reserve restrictions on the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area would be removed if the proposed KAC were constructed, and 2) if restriction were to be removed, *how* such restrictions would be removed. Some state and local officials say it would require an action by the Legislature; others say it would be a local, Mat-Su Borough Assembly action.⁴ Mat-Su Borough officials have noted the need to discuss this issue internally within the Borough and the need to discuss developing a plan for the Agricultural Area and how it should develop.⁵

Much of the Agricultural Area land is owned by speculators in large parcels. To subdivide the land into parcels smaller than 40 acres (and use the land for a nonagricultural use) would require a change in state law. The State's current Agricultural Land and Sales Management policy is "to make agricultural land available in a range of parcel sizes as dictated by regional and local demand for land sales, leases, and permits as funding allows" (ADNR 2005). Thus, land subdivision that did not involve a change from agricultural uses could be accomplished in smaller parcels.

A Division Chief in the State Department of Agriculture thinks removal of agricultural covenants for the Agricultural Area is unlikely. While he acknowledges that the proposed KAC project would definitely affect agricultural lands and would put price pressure on agricultural lands to be subdivided, he doesn't think it would change the covenant status of the Agricultural Area's lands.⁶ A Mat-Su property owner (outside the Agricultural Area) believes that, if the proposed KAC project were to be built, current farmers in the Agricultural Area would want to sell and have the land developed quickly. He thinks the Legislature would remove the restrictions on the Agricultural Area's lands and that the land would be developed in an orderly way because large land holdings would be involved. He thinks there would be a need for planning and zoning and for roads, electricity, schools, fire stations, etc.⁷

4.2 Impacts on the Social Environment

4.2.1 Neighborhoods, Community Cohesion, and Environmental Justice Impacts

The analysis of impacts on neighborhoods, community cohesion, and environmental justice is based on property acquisition and relocation impacts and displacements (Section 4.2.7); analyses of impacts to community cohesions, travel patterns, accessibility, and traffic safety (Section 4.2.2); traffic noise (Section 4.5.2), the visual environment (Section 4.6.3); community facilities (Section 4.2.3); and parks and recreation (Section 3.6.2). The analysis

⁴ Personal communications, Darcie Salmon, Al Jorgenson, Al White, Ron White (Executive Director), and Ted Smith (all of the Matanuska Resource Conservation and Development Council) in interviews with Marcus Hartley, April 4, 2005.

⁵ In comments made by Murphy O'Brien of the Mat-Su Borough, among others, at the KAC Study Economic Working Group Meeting #2, April 29, 2005.

⁶ Personal communication, Larry Devilbiss, Division Chief in the State Division of Agriculture, in interview with Marcus Hartley, April 4, 2005.

⁷ Personal communication, Greg Bell, owner of Valley Sawmill, which owns 160 acres in Point MacKenzie, in interview with Marcus Hartley, April 12, 2005.

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main driver bringing change to the Point MacKenzie area, the cumulative effect on land use would not differ appreciably, and would be difficult to distinguish, from the indirect impacts. The *Land Use and Transportation Forecast* Technical Report (KABATA 2006b) explains how indirect land use impacts were estimated using a computer-based model and describes assumptions on which the modeling was based. Output from the model quantified a variety of environmental parameters so that the projected indirect impacts of the build alternatives were easily compared with those of the No-Action Alternative. Because there are limited land use controls on development in the Mat-Su portion of the Study Area, indirect impacts on Mat-Su land use were modeled on the assumption that planning and zoning would remain limited and that other existing constraints would have greater influence in shaping future land use:

-
- restrictions on the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area would be removed, allowing development to occur on those lands
-
- SGRs would remain protected
 - wetland reserves set aside by ordinance by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough would remain undeveloped
 - slopes in excess of 30 percent would not be developed
 - the Matanuska-Susitna Borough water body setback of 75 feet would remain in effect
 - floodplains would limit development.

With these assumptions in effect, the model indicated that under the No-Action Alternative about 12 percent of the available acreage (29,360 acres) would be developed by 2030, in comparison with approximately 4 percent (10,260 acres) that is presently developed. Under the build alternatives, about 16 percent (39,830 acres) of the available area would be developed, an additional 4 percent (10,460 acres) beyond the No-Action Alternative. From the standpoint of the cumulative impact, it is important to note that land use impacts would extend beyond the estimated footprint of development. As the human population of an area grows, factors such as expansions and additions to existing buildings and structures, heavy equipment activity at construction sites, recreational vehicle use, disturbances to streambanks and streambeds, vehicle emissions and other contaminants, erosion and siltation from stormwater runoff, ground water withdrawal, and other ancillary aspects of human settlement create an expanding zone of disturbance beyond the initial development footprint.

Appendix J of the *Land Use and Transportation Forecast* Technical Report (KABATA 2006b) quantifies many of these development-related factors for comparison with and without the proposed KAC.

The following sections discuss the expected cumulative impacts of the No-Action Alternative and the build alternatives on individual resource components. Cumulative impact assessments are not stand-alone, but build on preceding discussions of probable direct and indirect impacts of the alternatives (Sections 3.0 and 4.0), as referenced in the following individual cumulative impact discussions. In almost all cases, the major contributor to the cumulative impact is the expected indirect impact of the alternative, augmented by past, present, and other reasonably foreseeable future actions. Because RFFAs represent future projects in various stages of planning, their impact contributions are difficult to quantify unless an environmental assessment or EIS has been prepared for a given project.

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Borough: Core Area Plan (2003a) encouraged the use of lands for farming at a level determined by the marketplace and individual initiative.

3.1.3.1.1 Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area

Since Alaska's early statehood, the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area has been important in the Borough's attempts to stimulate more local agricultural activity. The Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area (Figure 1.1) contains 14,893 acres (23.3 square miles) for dairy farming and general agricultural use. "Summary: Matanuska-Susitna Borough Agricultural Land Sale Programs" (2004) describes the history and process for the conveyance of these lands for agricultural purposes. The Mat-Su Borough acquired land from the State of Alaska as MEL, beginning with the borough's formation in 1964. In 1970, a Borough ordinance provided for a Mat-Su Preferential Agricultural Land Program. This statute was repealed in 1974 and was replaced by one that provided for Agricultural Land Sales that had the effect of restricting future land uses to agriculture. A farm unit buyer purchased the agricultural rights. Fee simple acquisition of the land for a farm residence or other farm-related facility required an act of the Assembly. The Borough retained the development rights to the land for residential, commercial, or industrial uses.

In the 1990s, the Borough expended considerable time and other resources recovering agricultural parcels that had been sold to individuals who later defaulted under the Borough's terms of sale or lease. The soils proved not as favorable to agriculture as original soil tests had suggested. The Point MacKenzie soils are much drier than anticipated; adequate crop yields require irrigation systems that are expensive and, therefore, have not been undertaken to any substantial degree. The productivity of the land is also constrained by its low fertility, depth to sand, and relatively high late-summer precipitation (restricting access to fields and delaying harvest, thereby negatively affecting the quality and yield of crops). Dominant crops included timothy grass, oats, and barley as forage. The lands' original primary agricultural use, dairy farming, has not provided farmers with a self-sufficient income. Damage from heavy snow loads on inadequately designed and constructed dairy buildings also has contributed to farm failures.⁷ Because working dairy land is not that profitable (there are still five dairies in the Area), most hay production is currently being sold as horse feed.⁸

In 1994, the Borough repealed and replaced the 1974 ordinance with one under which the Borough's fee estate is conveyed by quitclaim deed and the title becomes subject to a recorded Declaration of CCRs to promote agriculture use. The CCRs, among other effects, limit improvement sites, residential locations, and subdivision of the original farm unit. In 1997, Alaska Statutes 38.05.321 was amended (Chapter 20, Session Laws of Alaska [SLA] 1997—originally known as Senate Bill [SB] 109) to ease restrictions on the subdivision of agricultural lands. This served to allow farmers to subdivide their land into smaller farm parcels so that the resultant lots could be sold with the right to construct

⁷ Personal communication, Kirk McGee, Vice President for Real Estate at Cook Inlet Region, Inc., in personal interview with William Chopyk, April 4, 2005.

⁸ Personal communication, Larry Devilbiss, Division Chief in the State Division of Agriculture, in personal interview with Marcus Hartley, April 4, 2005.

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housing. For the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area, an appraisal at the farmer's expense is required to determine the price the farmer must pay the Borough to acquire house construction rights.

Thus, over the past 35 years, while the Mat-Su Borough has retained jurisdiction over the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area, the Borough has gradually loosened requirements regarding restrictions on the land's solitary use for agriculture. The anticipated economical feasibility of the land's productivity for agricultural pursuits has not been realized. As discussed in Section 3.5.3.2, soils on the west side of Burma and Point MacKenzie Roads, including those associated with the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Area, exhibit some of the best conditions for construction of homesites and small commercial buildings. In the future, the land will likely be under continuing pressure to be designated for protection under its highest and best use, and agricultural applications may not be that use.

3.2 Social Environment

3.2.1 Neighborhoods, Community Cohesion, and Environmental Justice

This section provides a socioeconomic picture of communities, neighborhoods and tribes in the Mat-Su and Anchorage for the KAC project. The communities, neighborhoods and tribes in the Study Area include Point MacKenzie, Knik Tribal Council, Native Village of Eklutna, Government Hill, and Elmendorf. The information presented includes a written or graphical depiction of community or neighborhood boundaries, a summary of socioeconomic conditions within the communities and neighborhoods, and a brief description of residents' concerns and values within the different communities and neighborhoods. Executive Order (EO) 12898 requires federal agencies to incorporate consideration of environmental justice into the NEPA evaluation process. Therefore, this section also analyzes the demographics of those communities and neighborhoods in the Study Area for the KAC project that contain minority or low-income persons. Additional information about Point MacKenzie, Knik Tribal Council, Native Village of Eklutna, Government Hill, Elmendorf, and Anchorage can be found in other sections. Section 3.2.4 presents community facilities and public services, Section 3.2.5 presents population, and Section 3.4 presents the economic environment.

3.2.1.1 Neighborhood and community characteristics

3.2.1.1.1 Point MacKenzie

Point MacKenzie has little residential or commercial development. As shown in Figure 3.7, it encompasses an area of about 148 square miles and has a population density of about 1.4 people per square mile.

In 2000, 56.4 percent of all housing units in the Point MacKenzie area were used mainly for recreational or seasonal purposes; no cohesive or well-defined neighborhoods, however, exist. Many of these seasonal-use homes are owned by Anchorage residents. Many of the year-round residents of the Point MacKenzie area were drawn to the area by the prospects of inexpensive land and the possibility of living far away from population centers. In 2000, 92 percent of the area's residents were White. Their median household income of \$23,250 in 1999 was only 45 percent of the median income of all Mat-Su residents. The percentage of

EASEMENT 227588

Transaction Date: 04-19-1999

Time: 133543

SubSystem ID: CAS

Input Date: 04-23-1999

User: NRSCJJA

Terminal: X2AG

RECEIPTED \$100.00 APPLICATION FEE, CHECK NUMBER 166347

Transaction: ADDTEXT CHANGE LEGAL TEXT

Transaction Date: 04-23-1999

Time: 133247

SubSystem ID: CAS

Input Date: 04-23-1999

User: NRSCJJA

Terminal: X2AG

Transaction: NCC NON CASEFILE SUMMARY CUSTOMER CORRECTION

Transaction Date: 11-06-2003

Time: 152617

SubSystem ID: CAS

Input Date: 11-06-2003

User: NCSCKDU

Terminal: X3M8

DELETE REL A

11

APPLICANT

DELETE CID NUMBER A

7804

Legal Description

THE EAST 300 FEET OF TRACT 10 AND TRACT 13; AND
THE EAST 300 FEET OF THE PORTION OF TRACT 7 THAT LIES WEST OF THE
EXTENSION OF THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN TRACT 5 AND TRACT 6 NORTHWARD
TO THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN TRACT 10 AND TRACT 11; AND
THE EAST 300 FEET OF THE PORTION OF TRACT 19 THAT LIES WEST OF THE
EXTENSION OF THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN TRACT 12 AND 13 NORTHWARD TO
THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN TRACT 21 AND TRACT 22B.
ALL BEING WITHIN THE ALASKA STATE LAND SURVEY 80-111 (PT MACKENZIE
AGRICULTURAL PROJECT) LOCATED WITHIN SECTIONS 19, 30, AND 31
TOWNSHIP 15N, R4W, SEWARD MERIDIAN.
PER LETTER FROM THE MAT SU BORO- AMEND TO APPLICATION. A PUBLIC USE
EASEMENT FOR RAILROAD AND PUBLIC UTILITIES WITHIN TRACT 3 OF ASLS
80-111 BEGINNING AT THE SECTION CORNER COMMON TO SECTIONS 5/6/7/8
T 14N R 4W, SM THENCE 300 FEET WEST ALONG THE 6/7 SECTION LINE,
THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY TO A POINT ON THE 7/8 SECTION LINE COMMON WITH
NORTHWEST CORNER OF TRACT C-1A ASLS 78-353, THENCE 300 FEET EAST ALONG
THE COMMON PROPERTY LINE OF TRACT 3 ASLS 80-111 AND TRACT C 1A
ASLS 87-353, THENCE NORTHWESTERLY TO THE POINT OF THE BEGINNING

Case Detail

File Type: **ADL** File Number: **227588**

See Township, Range, Section and Acreage? **Yes**

02/09/

Customer: 000019287

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH,
350 E. DAHLIA AVENUE
PALMER AK 99645

Case Type: 581 PUBLIC EASEMENT

DNR Unit: 200 LAND MANAGEMENT

File Location: SCDOLD SCDO LAND SECTION

Case Status: 11 APPLICATION COMPLETE

Status Date: 03/25/1999

Total Acres: 110.000

Date Initiated: 03/25/1999

Office of Primary Responsibility: LSC LAND-SOUTHCNTRL REG

Last Transaction Date: 11/06/2003

Case Subtype: 8005 RIGHT OF WAY

Last Transaction: NCC NON CASEFILE SUMMARY CUSTOMER CORRECTION

Meridian: S Township: 015N Range: 004W Section: 19 Section Acres: 36

Meridian: S Township: 015N Range: 004W Section: 30 Section Acres: 36

Meridian: S Township: 015N Range: 004W Section: 31 Section Acres: 36

Case Actions

Transaction: COMMENTS COMMENTS

Transaction Date: 03-25-1999

Time: 133849

SubSystem ID: CAS

Input Date: 04-23-1999

User: NRSCJJA

Terminal: X2AG

RECEIVED APPLICATION

Transaction: INITIATE INITIATE CASE

Transaction Date: 03-25-1999

Time: 151735

SubSystem ID: CAS

Input Date: 11-06-2003

User: NCSCCKDU

Terminal: X3M8

STATUS DATE

03-25-1999

LOCATION FROM

SCDOLD

SCDO LAND SECTION

LOCATION TO

SCDOLD

SCDO LAND SECTION

CASE STATUS

11

APPLICATION

OFFICE PRI RESP

LSC

LAND-SOUTHCNTRL REG

SPECIAL CODE

8005

RIGHT OF WAY

CUSTOMER NUMBER

000019287

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BO

UNIT CODE

200

LAND MANAGEMENT

RELATIONSHIP CODE

10

OWNER

TOTAL ACRES

110

S 015N 004W 19 Acres: 036

S 015N 004W 30 Acres: 036

S 015N 004W 31 Acres: 036

Transaction: COMMENTS COMMENTS



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3.0 Description of Alternatives

3.1 Past Corridors

As summarized in Section 1.5, the 2003 rail corridor study (MSB 2003a) identified 11 potential corridors between Port MacKenzie and the existing rail mainline. The corridors generally adhered to the premise of preserving an 800-foot wide corridor to incorporate sufficient ROW for the railroad and periodic sidings, a four-lane divided highway, utilities, and bicycle pathways. Figure 3.1 depicts the 11 corridors.

For the 2003 effort, a constraints analysis was conducted to identify alternatives that may need to be adjusted or eliminated based on the concerns identified from the public meeting: private property and wetlands. Corridors that affected large amounts of private property and wetlands were eliminated and other corridors were adjusted to avoid these areas where feasible. Several similar corridors were combined to create more desirable routes. Table 3-1 lists the eleven original corridors studied in 2003 and whether they were eliminated from further study, combined with other alternatives, or adjusted and retained.

Corridor 3, leading to a junction with the existing ARRC mainline just north of Willow, received a considerable amount of support from the public and the MSB as an 800-foot-wide combined railroad, expressway, and utility corridor. Corridor 7 was designed to be a roadway-only corridor and utilized existing planned improvements by the MSB. The outcome of this study was the recommendation of further study of Corridors 3 and 7 as separate corridors for rail and road access to the port. This recommendation was supported by a resolution of the MSB Assembly.

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9

Table 3-1: Corridors Considered in the 2003 MSB Study

Corridor	Description	Report Recommendation
Corridor 1	Corridor 1 was a combination of a rail/roadway corridor that extended west from Point MacKenzie, skirted the east boundary of the Susitna Flats SGR, and then turned west across the northern boundary of the refuge. Near the Susitna River and the community of Susitna, the corridor followed the east bank of the Susitna River and connected with the Parks Highway Corridor north of Willow Creek.	Eliminated. This was the longest alternative and traversed a considerable amount of wetlands.
Corridor 2	Corridor 2 was a combined rail/roadway corridor. This corridor was the same as Corridor 1 from Point MacKenzie north to the crossing of the Little Susitna River near the northeast corner of the Susitna Flats SGR. From there, it turned north and followed a glacial moraine west of Red Shirt Lake and then tied back into Corridor 1, north of Rolly Creek.	Eliminated. Corridor 2 was eventually combined with the modified Corridor 3 because they were close together.
Corridor 3	Corridor 3 was initially a rail/roadway corridor, with a westerly extension of the end of the Little Susitna River access road into the northeast corner of the Susitna Flats SGR before turning north. From there, it followed the glacial moraine traveling west of Red Shirt Lake and skirting west of the boundary of the Nancy Lake SRA, tying back in Corridor 1 before crossing Willow Creek. Corridor 3 was modified to shift west as it left the port area (near but outside of the Susitna Flats SGR boundary). It then extended north to cross the Little Susitna River, following a moraine deposit north on a line west of Red Shirt Lake, and the boundary of the Nancy Lake SRA, crossing Willow Creek and connecting with the Parks Highway/ARRC corridor north of Willow Creek.	Retained. Much of the corridor is public land, with some private land, mainly immediately north of Point MacKenzie and near Willow Creek. This corridor received considerable public support as the rail corridor, and there were numerous public and agency comments recommending inclusion of a roadway in the corridor.
Corridor 4	Corridor 4 was a combined rail/roadway corridor. It left the port area in a westerly direction, passing into the Susitna Flats SGR before turning north around Middle Lake. From there, it passed between Crooked Lake and the Papoose Twin Lakes, northwest of Horseshoe Lake and across a boggy area to connect with the Parks Highway corridor at Houston. This corridor, as originally defined, appeared to have the largest impact on wetlands and encroaches on the Susitna Flats SGR.	Eliminated. This alternative was modified from the original placement to avoid impact to the Susitna Flats SGR and minimize impact on private property; however, this alignment would still have the largest impact on wetlands and did not receive public support.

Corridor	Description - Continued	Report Recommendation
Corridor 5	This rail/roadway corridor extended west from the port area about four miles, then turned north along a section line through the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project. The corridor continued west of Carpenter Lake and Diamond Lake before passing between Crooked Lake and Flat Lake, and then between Big Lake and Horseshoe Lake. It continued north of Beaver Lakes to meet the Parks Highway corridor south of Houston.	Eliminated. This corridor passed through a large amount of private land. It had limited public support and was excluded from further consideration.
Corridor 6	This rail/roadway corridor left the port area following the existing Point MacKenzie access road north to the Little Susitna River access road. It continued to the north on the east side of Carpenter Lake, along Burma Road, passed across the isthmus between Big Lake and Flat Lake, and tied back into Corridor 5 south of Horseshoe Lake. The corridor then followed Corridor 5 onto the Parks Highway corridor south of Houston.	Eliminated. This corridor passed through a large amount of private property and had limited public support.
Corridor 7	This rail/roadway corridor was initially coincident with Corridor 6 from the port north to the Little Susitna River access road. It then followed a slightly different route than Corridor 6 to a point just north of the South Big Lake Road, where it reconnected with and followed Corridor 6 to the Parks Highway. The corridor was then modified to be roadway only and realigned portions of the Burma Road to connect with the South Big Lake Road. It then followed South Big Lake Road east through the community of Big Lake to connect with the Parks Highway. This corridor was presented as roadway only; it was deliberately designed to take advantage of roadway improvements under design and/or ROW acquisition.	Retained. This would be roadway only access, with the least private property impacts, limited wetlands impacts, and the least construction costs of any build alternative. Selection of this alternative eliminated the need for an entire new roadway corridor.
Corridor 8	This roadway-only corridor was coincident with Corridors 6 and 7 from the port north to South Big Lake Road. It then followed South Big Lake Road easterly around the south side of Big Lake, and through the community of Big Lake. It continued four miles to a connection with the Parks Highway corridor.	Eliminated. This corridor was determined to be similar to the modified Corridor 7 and previously identified for improvements by the MSB.
Corridor 9	This rail/roadway corridor was coincident with Corridors 7, 8, and 11, leaving the port area and following the Point MacKenzie access road north to the Little Susitna access road. From that point, Corridor 9 went to the northeast and was positioned roughly half-way between Corridor 8 and Corridor 10. The corridor connected with the Parks Highway corridor at Pittman Road.	Eliminated. There was public concern about passing through a large amount of private property.

Corridor	Description – Continued	Report Recommendation
Corridor 10	This road-only corridor followed the Point MacKenzie access road and Knik-Goose Bay Road to the Parks Highway in Wasilla. This corridor was carried forward as the No Build alternate in that it is the current access to Port MacKenzie and would continue in that role if not other action were taken. This facility has the capacity to handle the projected increases in traffic generated by Port MacKenzie and is already programmed for improvements by the ADOT&PF and by the MSB.	Retained as the no build alternative. However, this corridor draws additional freight traffic into the urban Wasilla area and results in an increase in miles traveled for traffic with an origin or destination north of Wasilla.
Corridor 11	This rail/roadway corridor is not new but combined portions of Corridors 5 and 6. This corridor was approved by the MSB assembly in 1992.	Eliminated. This corridor passed through a large amount of private property.

Source: MSB 2003a

3.2 Alternatives under Evaluation

Following the 2007 constraints analysis, the alternatives considered in 2003 were re-evaluated to confirm that the findings from the 2003 report were still relevant, and that the conditions had not changed to make one or more of the alternatives previously eliminated more preferable. The 2003 corridors were also evaluated to ensure that there were no other alternatives that should be considered that had been overlooked in the earlier study.

Alternative corridors were developed based on reviewing the 2003 corridors, the constraints analysis, and engineering and environmental considerations described in Sections 1 and 4. Current alternatives are shown on Figure 3.1 with the alternatives considered in the 2003 study for comparison purposes. All the corridors start at Port MacKenzie at the south and connect to the existing mainline to the north. Each corridor is composed of a southern and northern segment with a possible connector tying the segments together. The southern segments run either east or west of the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project. Just north of the agricultural area, there are three main northern segments – Willow, Houston, and Big Lake – with Houston having a north or south variant. Connectors link the north and south segments together to create eight possible alignment configurations, as listed below and depicted on Figure 3.2.

1. **Mac West – Connection 1 – Willow.** *This alignment would be 44.8 miles long. It is one of the longest alignments and contains the segments farthest west.*
2. **Mac West – Connection 1 – Houston – Houston North.** *This alignment would be 35.1 miles long, is one of the shorter alignments, and is geographically one of the middle alignments.*
3. **Mac West – Connection 1 – Houston – Houston South.** *This alignment would be 34.5 miles, is one of the shorter alignments, and is geographically one of the middle alignments.*
4. **Mac West – Connection 2 – Big Lake.** *This alignment would be 35.8 miles. It includes the southern segment along the west side of the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project and the most eastern north segment going towards Big Lake.*
5. **Mac East – Connection 3 – Willow.** *This alignment would be 45 miles and is the longest. It includes the southern segment along the east side of the Point MacKenzie Agricultural Project and the most western north segment going towards Willow.*

570 Highway District # 30075

5

2003 STUDY

Figure 3.1
PAST CORRIDORS



LEGEND

2003 Corridors

- Corridor 1
- Corridor 2
- Corridor 3
- Corridor 4
- Corridor 5
- Corridor 6
- Corridor 7
- Corridor 8
- Corridor 9
- Corridor 10
- Corridor 11

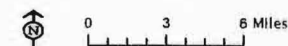
Recommended Corridor 3
(2003)

2007 Corridors

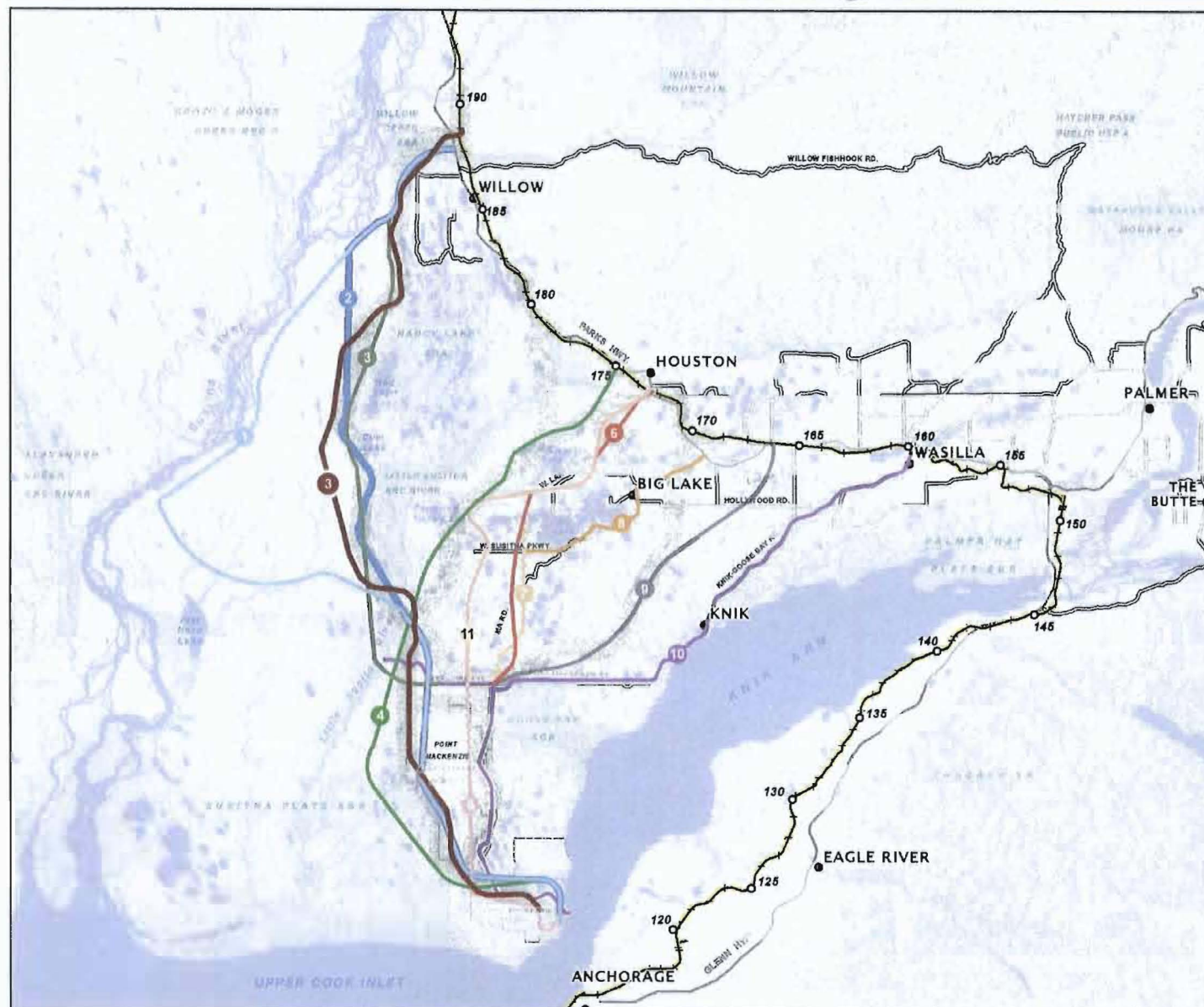
- ARRC Milepost
- ARRC Track
- Highway
- Medium Rd.
- Minor Rd.
- City Boundary
- Park or Refuge

*These lines generally represent corridors which are subject to further refinement.

This map represents a conceptual level of utility, detail, and accuracy. The information displayed here is for planning purposes only. Data information shown represents data from various federal, state, public, and private sources. These maps are for review purposes only and are not intended for use in securing permits, design or for construction purposes.



Date: January 7, 2008
Projection: Alaska State Plane Zone 4, NAD 83
Author: HDR Alaska, Inc.
Sources: ADNIR, ARRC, HDR Alaska, Inc.,
MSB GIS, TNH-Hanson, USGS.



29



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3.0 Strengths and Weaknesses

Based on the results of the matrix, the various alternatives were described by their strengths and weaknesses (Table 4). This was done to provide an easy to comprehend list, without numbers, of the pros and cons of each alternative.

Table 4: Alternatives strengths and weaknesses

Route	Strengths	Weaknesses
Mac West/ Willow	• Requires fewer number of new road crossings	• Crosses more incompatible land uses • Has higher probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites • Has greatest impacts to designated state refuges and recreation areas
Mac West/ Houston North	• Requires fewest number of new road crossings • Impacts fewer developed parcels • Requires smaller expenditure of train energy • Has less probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites	• Crosses more incompatible land uses • Has less suitable soil conditions • Impacts more wetlands • Impacts a designated refuge and fragments a state recreation area • Crosses greater number of mapped anadromous streams
Mac West/ Houston South	• Requires fewer number of new road crossings • Impacts fewer developed parcels • Has less probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites	• Crosses more incompatible land uses • Impacts more wetlands
Mac West/ Big Lake	• Has more suitable soil conditions	• Involves greater number of new road crossings • Impacts more developed parcels • Crosses more incompatible land uses • Requires greater expenditure of train energy • Crosses greater number of mapped anadromous streams • Has higher probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites
Mac East/ Willow	• Impacts fewer developed parcels • Crosses more compatible land uses • Impact less wetlands • Crosses fewest mapped anadromous streams	• Has higher probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites • Fragments designated state recreation areas



Table 4 (Continued)

Route	Strengths	Weaknesses
Mac East/ Houston North	• Crosses more compatible land uses • Impacts fewer developed parcels • Requires smaller expenditure of train energy • Less probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites	• Has less suitable soil conditions • Fragments a designated state recreation area
Mac East/ Houston South	• Impacts fewer developed parcels • Crosses more compatible land uses • Impacts less wetlands • Has less probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites • Avoids designated state refuges and recreation areas	• Requires moderate expenditure of train energy, but less than the two Big Lake alternatives • Involves moderate number of new road crossings, but less than the two Big Lake alternatives • Has less suitable soil conditions than the Big Lake alternatives, but better than the Houston North alternatives
Mac East/Big Lake	• Avoids designated state refuges and state recreation areas • Crosses more compatible land uses • Has more suitable soils • Impacts less wetlands	• Impacts more developed parcels • Involves greater number of new road crossings • Requires greater expenditure of train energy • Crosses greater number of mapped anadromous streams • Has higher probability of impacting archeological and/or historical sites.





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 10

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140

23 OCT 2007

Reply To: ETPA-083

Mr. Brian Lindamood
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P.O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

RE: Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Pre-Application Comments

Dear Mr. Lindamood,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the materials distributed by the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) regarding your joint effort to plan, engineer, design, and construct a new rail line to connect Port MacKenzie to the existing rail system. The new line would be thirty to forty-five miles in length, and would tie into the existing rail system somewhere between the communities of Meadow Lakes and Willow.

We understand that the ARRC and MSB are currently preparing an application to the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) for a license to construct and operate the new rail line. The STB, in turn, will initiate and conduct an environmental review of the proposed project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Materials submitted by the ARRC and MSB will help to inform the NEPA review. Preparatory activities include the solicitation of public and agency comment, environmental baseline work, preliminary engineering, and an alternatives analysis.

Three principal corridors are being evaluated for this new rail line. They are referred to in project documents as Mac West, Central, and Mac East. Each of the corridors contains sections where alternative alignments are possible. The following comments are not corridor-specific and are relevant for the project regardless of which corridor might ultimately be selected.

At this early stage our feedback consists of two primary messages for the ARRC and MSB. These are recommendations to: 1.) establish a detailed project baseline, and 2.) design a project that truly avoids impacts to the maximum extent practicable. Each of these issues is addressed in more detail below.

Baseline Assessments

To allow for the full disclosure and assessment of project impacts for each of the corridors and alignments, it is important that environmental baseline information be sufficient in scope and analysis for incorporation into the NEPA document. In this context, the studies should allow for a functional assessment of the affected environment.

As the NEPA document will also be used to support the Clean Water Act section 404 permitting review, the baseline information need to be sufficiently detailed to establish compliance with EPA's 404(b)(1) guidelines (40 CFR Part 230). These guidelines allow only the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative to be permitted.

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The section 404 permitting review is a discrete and yet expansive evaluation of potential impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands. There are four major categories of impacts to the aquatic ecosystem that are evaluated. These include impacts to: 1.) the physical and chemical characteristics of the system, such as to substrate, water quality, flow patterns and normal fluctuations; 2.) the biological characteristics of the system, including to fish, aquatic organisms in the food web, and other wildlife associated with the ecosystem; 3.) special aquatic sites, including refuges, wetlands, and riffle and pool complexes; and lastly, 4.) human use characteristics, including water supplies, fisheries, water-related recreation, aesthetics and parks.

* The 2003 Rail Corridor Study prepared for the MSB contains valuable information, but as a reconnaissance evaluation does not in itself contain sufficient detail to quantify and evaluate the project impacts. The materials prepared to date, including the recent constraint mapping, do not contain enough detail for project permitting. There is a definite need for ground-truthing, detailed mapping, and preliminary analysis of the environment. Much of this information is, of course, also necessary to support the design and engineering of the project.

The 2003 study focused to a large degree on the potential impacts of construction of a rail corridor. In addition to the direct impacts from construction and operation of the line, the NEPA document should also fully analyze all indirect and cumulative impacts from the proposed project, as well as from connected projects. The connected actions/direct, indirect and cumulative impacts analysis should give full consideration of all public and private projects that are connected or related to the proposed project.

* This analysis should include projects that are connected to the rail line extension because the rail line would make them economic or allow them to expand operations. Indirect effects include induced growth and reasonably foreseeable future development within the corridor. In addition, the analysis of cumulative impacts needs to include past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future independent projects that are effecting the same environment.

The sophistication of induced growth analysis has increased in recent years. As a large project in the fastest growing area of the state, this rail line has tremendous potential to affect the patterns of regional development. The MSB has stated that economic analysis has already been conducted which shows this project would be an economic driver and make a number of other projects feasible. If this is indeed the case, the analysis of induced growth will be an important component of the NEPA documentation.

Some of the information necessary to establish the project baseline already exists. Much of the physical data, however, such as information on hydrology, water quality, soils, and vegetation within each corridor, will have to be collected. Information such as hydrographs for ungaged streams and wildlife movement corridors will have to be calculated or generated. Assessments about future development will have to be made, such as potential impacts to marine fish and intertidal habitats from expansion of the port itself.

Impact Avoidance

In addition to informing the NEPA process and the permitting review, a detailed project baseline will allow the rail line to be designed and engineered so as to avoid impacts to sensitive resources. In this context, we wish to emphasize that the project sponsors have a very real obligation to avoid impacts to aquatic resources to the maximum extent practicable.

To again reference the 404(b) (1) guidelines, it is clear that a project does not comply with the guidelines if: 1.) there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge; 2.) the proposed discharge will result in significant degradation of the aquatic ecosystem; or 3.) the proposed discharge does not include all appropriate and practicable measures to minimize potential harm to the aquatic ecosystem. In addition, a project will be considered non-compliant with the guidelines if there is not sufficient information to make a reasonable judgment as to whether the proposed discharge will comply.

The guidelines establish a high bar for the avoidance and minimization of project impacts, and require the evaluation of alternatives as well as the incorporation of measures to minimize harm.

There are two important points to be made concerning this project and evaluations that will be made about whether alternatives and measures are "practicable." As defined in 40 CFR 230.3, the term "practicable" means available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes. The first is the obvious fact that this is a new rail line, as opposed to a repair or realignment of an existing line. As such, there are none of the operational constraints on design and construction which exist when working on existing lines.

This new line will be extensive in length and will tie into the existing rail system at a single point. This means that issues such as curve radii and track grade may be addressed over a larger area of the alignment than is possible when working with an existing line. Perhaps most importantly, there is a lack of existing infrastructure along substantial portions of each of the prospective alignments. This is particularly true for the western alignment, where land ownership is also less complex.

All of these facts create a situation where the ARRC has flexibility in how the rail line is designed and constructed. Given this flexibility, the expectation is that many of the project impacts will be avoidable.

The second point relates to project cost. It is not uncommon for feasible engineering solutions to be rendered less than practicable on the basis of cost. The rejection of alternatives or measures solely on the basis of increased cost always requires justification, however, and in this case such justification will be closely evaluated. As presented by the project sponsors, this new rail line will be a "legacy" project, an economic driver that will make many other projects possible. Economic analysis has already been done to demonstrate this fact. If correct, this project will have tremendous economic value not only for the MSB, but also for the state.

Given the potential economic return on this capital investment, construction costs will be less of an issue than they are for many projects. The expectation is that most alternatives and measures that are feasible from an engineering standpoint will be considered practicable and that the rail line will be designed and constructed so as to avoid many of the project impacts.

From the standpoint of aquatic resources, this means that stream crossings should not impede fish passage or impair the hydrologic functioning of the water body and its floodplain or riparian habitat. Road crossings should also maintain the connectivity of wetlands adjacent to stream channels and accommodate sheet flow within such wetlands. Bridges and elevated portions of the line are best able to achieve this.

According to the 2003 Corridor Study, construction within the western corridor would involve crossing approximately one thousand feet (1,000') of the Little Susitna River's floodplain, and three thousand eight hundred feet (3,800') of Willow Creek's floodplain. The study states: "The engineering of the floodplain crossing would need to take the 100-year flood events into consideration so that the rail bed

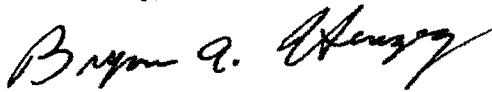
would not adversely alter flood flows and impact adjacent properties and public safety." We concur with this statement, and would add the issue of impact to public trust resources.

Stream channels and their floodplains are not the only aquatic resources within the potential corridors. Wetlands also represent a valuable resource. The Corridor Study indicated that development of the western corridor could result in the loss of up to two hundred and ninety-four (294) acres of wetlands. That study was evaluating a wider right-of-way, but the potential for loss remains substantial.

For the reasons presented above, the EPA believes that many of the potential project impacts to aquatic resources are avoidable. The rail alignment can be altered to avoid wetlands and the line elevated where it passes through them. Bridges can span streams and floodplains, allowing for navigation and the transport of flood debris. Existing drainage patterns and water quality can be protected. Economic development can occur in a responsible manner that is protective of the rich natural heritage enjoyed by residents of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments at this stage in the project and look forward to working with you and the MSB as the project moves forward. If you have questions regarding this document, please do not hesitate to contact Matthew LaCroix at 907-271-1480, or by email at lacroix.matthew@epa.gov.

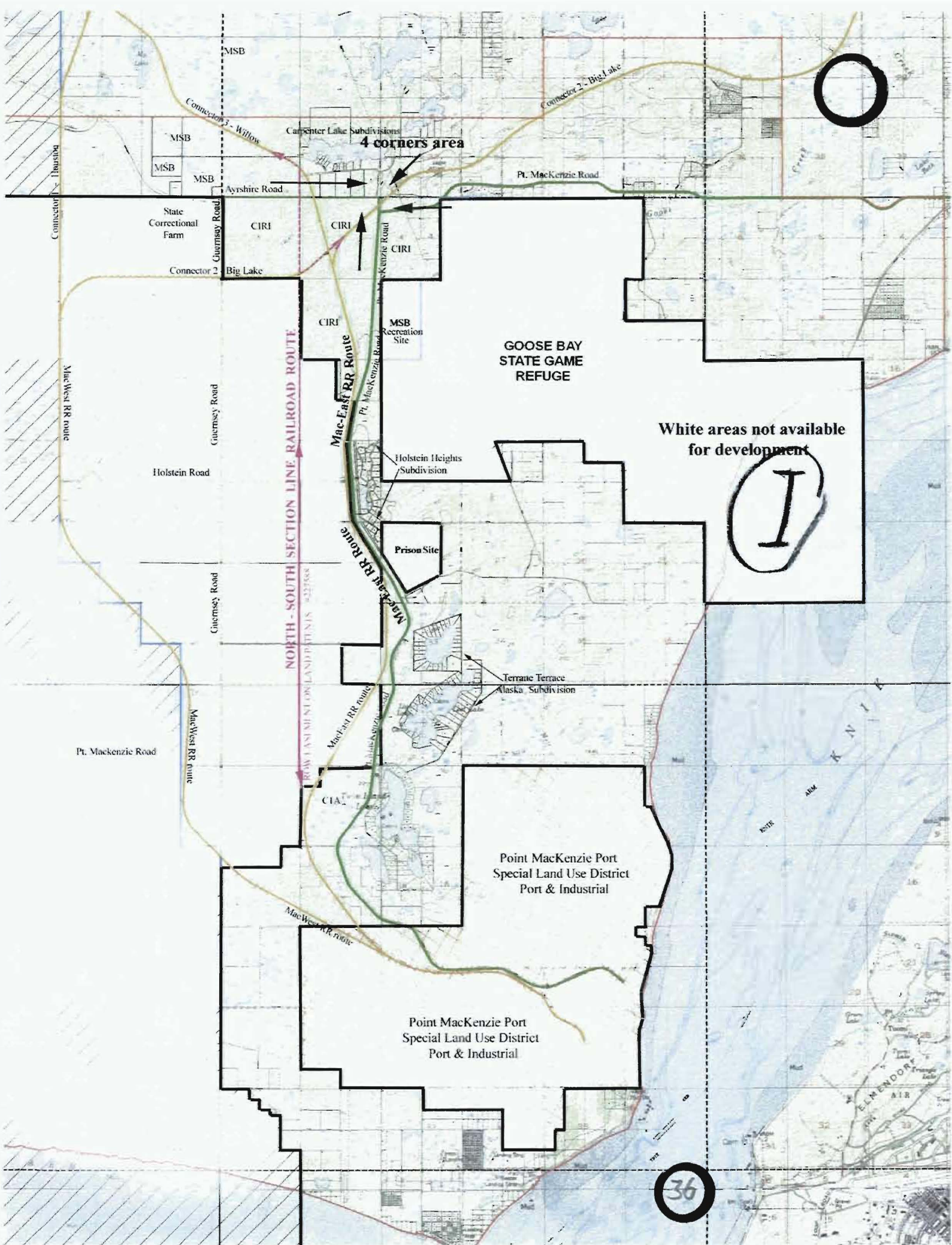
Sincerely,



for

Michael Szerlog, Manager
Aquatic Resources Unit

cc: D. Perrin, DNR/OPMP
M. Bethe, DNR/OHMP
P. Brna, USFWS
N. Brudie, DNR/OPMP
K. Klein, ADF&G
D. Limpinsel, NMFS
J. Bittner, DNR/OHA
L. Phillips, COE
B. Sworts, MSB



4 Corners Road intersections information

Many people object to Mac-E going through the area around the intersection of Ayrshire rd, Burma rd and Point McK road [hereafter referred to as the "4-corners" area].

It is probable that there will be numerous inputs on the DEIS referring to this area. Without knowing the importance of this 4-corners area to the growth of the Pt McK area the evaluators of these inputs re the DEIS will not be able to realistically evaluate these inputs.

So we think it is worthwhile to provide this background information regarding the 4-corners area.

The 4-corners area is the hub of roads leading into and out of the general Pt McK area. The roads include McK road eastward, Ayrshire rd westward, Burma rd northward, McK road southward.

The significance of these roads is as follows:

Pt McK rd Eastward.

This is currently the only access rd into & out of the area. This rd connects the area to Wasilla which supplies almost all the current needs of the point Mackenzie area and will continue to be very important far into the future.. This rd also is travelled both winter & summer by people accessing the recreational opportunities of the area.

Ayrshire Rd:

Ayrshire rd westward provides access to the farms in the northern part of the ag area, to the prison farm, to the "gas line" trail, to the gas liquification plant and to residents north of Ayrshire road. Ayrshire also provides access to the recreation area that the state operates at the Little Susitna river which provides a camping area and which provides the only boat ramp for the popular fishing destinations of the lower Little Susitna river. The "gas line" trail refers to the cleared ROW of the ENSTAR gas line from Beluga to Wasilla. This trail provides snowmachines access to the huge remote areas west of the Little Susitna river.

Burma rd northward:

This road will connect this area to the Parks highway north of the congested area of Wasilla. Burma rd will greatly shorten the trip to the Parks hwy but will also avoid increasing the existing traffic congestion in Wasilla.

Burma rd also will provide a second access road out of this area. The importance of having more than one access to all areas was driven home during the Miller's Reach fire.

The upgrade of Burma road is included in the "2000 to 2008 CIP" and is currently in the [? design, funding, ???CIP,] phase.

McK road southward from "4-corners":

This road provides the only access to the port, to the maximum security prison, and to the residents in the areas surrounding Pt McK rd and Alsop road. It also provides access to the S/M and hunting areas E of the port district. It is also the primary access to the southern portion of the ag project via Holstien rd. The soon to be operational vehicle ferry from the Port area to Anchorage will funnel traffic north to the 4-corners area.

The Pt McK area will experience significant growth in the coming years due to the increase in job opportunities, increases in commercial enterprises in support of the increasing population as well as traffic to the numerous recreational opportunities in the area. In the future there will be considerable traffic thru the 4-corners area because of improved access to the area provided by the Anchorage-to-Point McK vehicle ferry and the Knik Arm Bridge [EIS _____] Commercial enterprises prefer to locate in high traffic areas which, in the Point McK area, will be primarily in the 4-corners area.

So when there is public input to the DEIS regarding the impact of Mac-E to the 4-corners area such input should be evaluated in light of the considerations given above.

310 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW # 00010

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
FY 2008 - FY 2013**



**CURTIS D. MENARD
BOROUGH MAYOR**

**JOHN DUFFY
BOROUGH MANAGER**

**M. MURPH O'BRIEN
PLANNING & LAND USE DIRECTOR**

4. **Parks Highway/ARRC Alternative Corridor**

Identify alternative corridor to route highway and ARRC away from downtown Wasilla.

Project Status & Funding: Consultant has been hired; public scoping and project update meetings likely in spring and fall of 2007. \$4,000 in State and ARRC funds to initiate Environmental Impact Study.

5. **Glenn Highway Improvements MP 66-84**

(Chickaloon)

This project will reconstruct the highway from Kings River to just past Bonnie Lake Road with a new bridge over Chickaloon River. There will be major realignments near Fish Lakes Road at MP 72 and the Chickaloon River at MP 78.

Funding as shown in the Final 2006 - 2008 STIP			
	FFY06	FFY07	FFY08
Project Design		4,500	
Right of Way			
Utility Relocation			
Begin Construction			

6. **Glenn Highway Improvements MP 53-56**

(Moose Creek Canyon)

This project will reconstruct the highway from MP 53-56, including replacement of the Moose Creek Bridge. Erosion at MP 49 is being evaluated and repairs may become part of this project.

Funding as shown in the Final 2006 - 2008 STIP			
	FFY06	FFY07	FFY08
Project Design		1,650	
Right of Way			
Utility Relocation			
Begin Construction			

Project Status: Draft environmental document in progress, Public meetings begin December 2006.

7. **Glenn Highway Improvements MP 92-97**

(Hick's Creek)

This project will rehabilitate the roadway from 1 mile west of the Cascade Maintenance and Operations Station to just east of Hick's Creek. It includes replacing Hick's Creek Bridge #0547.

Funding as shown in the Final 2006 - 2008 STIP			
	FFY06	FFY07	FFY08
Project Design	250		
Right of Way			
Utility Relocation	200		
Begin Construction	29,900		

Project Status: Project advertised for bid in November 2006.

Public Transit Projects

1a. MASCOT Systems Improvements

The following capital needs have been identified as necessary to improve transit system delivery:

- ❖ Bus washing facility
- ❖ Bus shelter installation (3)
- ❖ Communications systems upgrades (radio and phone)
- ❖ 100K Transit vehicle Replacement (2- 20 passenger)
- ❖ Expanded service vehicle (1- 20 passenger)
- ❖ Operations vehicle
- ❖ Van - mixed day schedule vehicle (1- 12 passenger)
- ❖ Van replacement (1 - 12 passenger)

Federal funding secured - non-federal matching funds needed.

1b. MASCOT Intermodal Facility

This project consists of a 10,000 square foot facility that will serve as the primary hub for multi-modal transportation services. Dispatch center, offices, and a waiting room/transfer room.

Funding not yet identified.

2. Park and Ride Lot Upgrades/New Lots

This project will pave and provide lighting for existing park and ride lots.

Funding not yet identified.

- a. Trunk Road**
- b. Parks Highway (Lucas to Big Lake)**
- c. Palmer State Fair Grounds**
- d. Meadow Lakes Community**

3. Wasilla Station Intermodal Passenger Terminal

This project will provide an Intermodal transportation hub on city owned land near the Wasilla Airport. The facility will accommodate air, rail, bus and vanpool passengers as well as handicap accessible vehicles. Relocation of the train depot (Intermodal passenger terminal) will prevent trains from blocking Knik-Goose Bay Road.

Funding as shown in the Final 2006 - 2008 STIP			
	FFY06	FFY07	FFY08
Project Design			
Right of Way			
Utility Relocation			
Begin Construction			



South Wasilla Rail Line Relocation

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PROJECT FACTS

Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), plans to straighten curves along the mainline track in South Wasilla, between ARRC Mileposts 154 and 158. This is part of a larger ARRC effort to reduce track curvature and improve safety along the main line track between Girdwood and Wasilla.

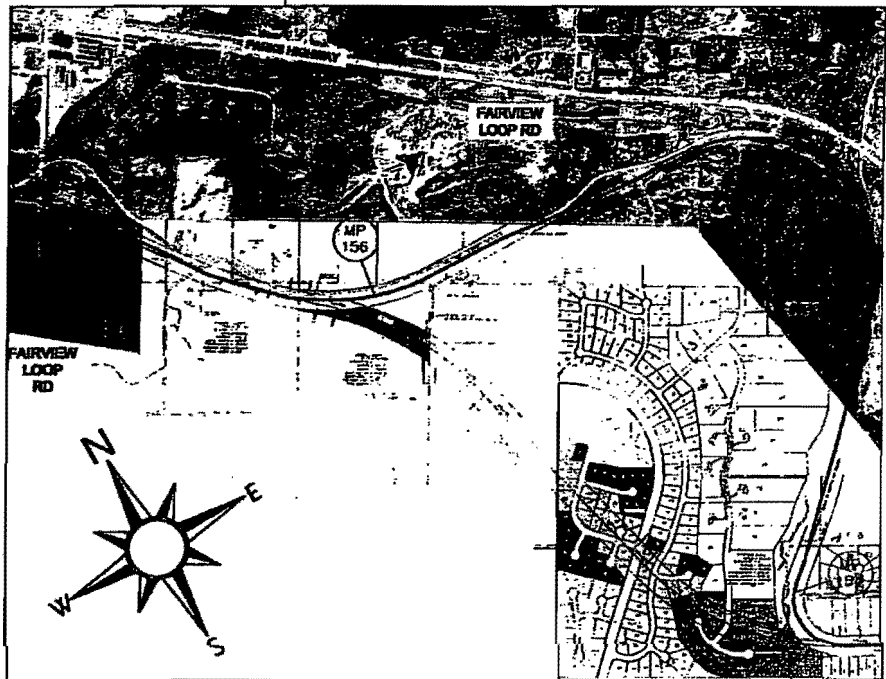
Project Benefits

- The new alignment will eliminate five at-grade (same level) road-rail crossings, thereby improving crossing safety.
- Straighter track reduces the risk of derailment, thereby improving operational safety.
- Reducing track curvature will allow trains to travel safely at increased speeds, thereby shortening passenger train travel times, as well as improving freight train efficiency.
- Shortened passenger travel times will help make commuter rail service between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley a viable option.
- Straighter track reduces operating costs for fuel and labor, and decreases wear-and-tear on train wheels and rail, lowering maintenance costs.
- Does not preclude a City of Wasilla rail bypass in the future, if funded.

Status

- In spring 2003, a joint steering committee (formed in 2002 and including ARRC, Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities [ADOT&PF], City of Wasilla, Matanuska-Susitna Borough [MSB], and the Mat-Su Community Transit [MASCOT]) identified the South Wasilla Rail Line Relocation as one of six area projects to move forward for engineering and environmental analysis work.
- In late spring 2003, FTA approved advance right-of-way acquisition, so that land needed for the relocation can be purchased. ARRC is coordinating with area land owners.
- In June 2003, ARRC began developing an environmental assessment (EA). Initial public and agency scoping meetings were held July 23, 2003, in Wasilla.

Phase One: ARRC Milepost 154 to 156



Relocation would eliminate the large curve between Milepost 154 and 156.



Alaska Railroad Corporation

News Release

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DATE: January 13, 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Stephenie Wheeler, 265-2671

Alaska Railroad schedules open house in Wasilla to discuss proposed capital project plans for 2010

Additional open house events in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Seward

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) invites the public to an open house 4:00-6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 21, at Evangelo's Restaurant, 2530 E. Parks Highway in Wasilla. The venue provides an opportunity to review and comment on a proposed Program of Projects (POP) for 2010.

The open house will showcase continuing and proposed capital improvement projects that are in various stages – from conceptual planning to engineering and construction. Project managers will be on-hand to explain projects that are located all along the railroad system from Seward to Fairbanks, with an emphasis on projects located in and around the Mat-Su Valley, Southcentral Alaska and system-wide, including:

- Port MacKenzie Rail Extension
- South Wasilla Rail Line Relocation
- Southcentral Alaska Commuter Rail Study Update
- Talkeetna Depot Restroom Facility
- Rehabilitate Matanuska River Bridge and other bridge work
- Ship Creek Intermodal Transportation Center (Phase Two)
- Positive Train Control (Collision Avoidance System)
- Track Rehabilitation

The Wasilla event is the second in a series of POP Open House events. Open Houses in other locations are scheduled as follows:

- Anchorage – 4:00-6:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 20 – Anchorage Historic Depot, 411 W. First Avenue. Emphasis will be on projects located in and around Anchorage and Southcentral Alaska.
- Fairbanks – 4:00-6:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 26, at the Alaska Railroad Depot, 1745 Johansen Expressway. Emphasis will be on projects located in Interior Alaska.
- Seward – 10:00a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Friday, February 19 – Breeze Inn, 303 N. Harbor Street. Emphasis will be on projects located in and around Seward and Southcentral Alaska.

-more-

327 W. Ship Creek Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

MAILING ADDRESS
P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

TEL 907.265.2300 FAX 907.265.2416
AlaskaRailroad.com



ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION

Corporate Address: P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, Alaska 99510
327 Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501



Strategic Planning
Telephone: (907) 265-2468
Facsimile: (907) 265-2638
e-mail: carroll@alaska-railroad.com

December 11, 2002

Mr. Norm Gutcher, P.E.
Tryck Nyman Hayes Inc
911 W. 8th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Re: Mat-Su Rail Corridor Feasibility Study Comments

Dear Mr Gutcher:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed rail corridor from Port MacKenzie northward. I would like to compliment you on the public presentation at Houston High School on November 20, 2002. The presentation material was plentiful and your staff was knowledgeable about issues concerning the project. I was particularly impressed with the way your staff handled several of the more hostile comments from the public. Their demeanor was professional and polite.

The Alaska Railroad (ARR) supports the newly defined Corridor 3. It is the only corridor which now fulfills the appropriate purpose of a rail link to the port: to move natural resources into and out of the port with a minimum of disruption to current and projected transportation corridors servicing economic development in the Pt MacKenzie area.

ARR's concern with all the other corridors fall into two areas:

- 1) ARR still ends up in the immediate Wasilla area
- 2) ARR splits the current and projected future growth areas in Pt. MacKenzie

ARR's market for natural resources is from the north. Except for corridor three, ARR will be forced to continue to bring all trains through the growing Nancy Lake to Wasilla area before gaining the Pt. MacKenzie spur. This is counter-productive for Wasilla and places the Railroad in the middle of residential areas currently under construction and projected residential development in the future. ARR is facing re-alignment in the Wasilla area now to accommodate Wasilla's desire for a better economic development environment. While this need has taken fifty years to develop, it is clear that Pt. MacKenzie is a rapidly growing area and ARR has no desire to try and re-align another spur in the next twenty years which is likely to happen with the other corridors.

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Based on the comments I heard at the public meeting, Corridor 3 appears to be favored by the public. Additionally, it appears that property ownership concerns are less of an obstacle than other corridors, geography/geology appears to favor this route more, and it places the connection back into ARR's mainline far north of Wasilla. Corridor three has the added benefit of appearing to align with the Knik Arm Crossing more favorably especially as a transportation link from Anchorage to Fairbanks.

ARR continues to be very interested in this project and continues to encourage you to keep us informed as the study progresses.

Sincerely,

Bruce Carr
Director, Strategic Planning

CC: Wendy Lindskoog, ARR
Tom Brooks, ARR

M



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Planning and Land Use Department

Planning Division

350 East Dahlia Avenue • Palmer, AK 99645

Phone (907) 745-9833 • Fax (907) 745-9876

Email: planning@matsugov.us

→ November 18, 2008

David Navecky
STB Finance Docket No. 35095
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Mr. Navecky,

Re: Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project

In light of the fact that the Point MacKenzie Community Council is currently inactive, I would like to provide a comment on one of the conceptual rail corridors described in the Preliminary Environmental and Alternatives Report. I have been working with the Point MacKenzie community, assisting with their planning efforts.

The Point MacKenzie Community Comprehensive Plan is currently being drafted by a team of community members. While drafting the land use chapter, the team identified a site for a future town center near the intersection of Point MacKenzie Road and Burma Road. Land suitable for a town center near essential infrastructure is scarce in the community. The location identified is near the only grocery store in Point MacKenzie. The town center concept is to create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use town center, to include places to meet friends and neighbors, venues for events and community meetings, a farmers market, and commercial services like a bank, Post Office, grocery store, and restaurants.

The Rail Project's Big Lake Alignment (MP B0.0-B2.5) transects the area identified for a future town center. Construction of a rail line through this corridor will impact the functionality and could likely preclude the use of this location as a town center.

Please contact me if you have any questions or require additional information.


Emerson Krueger
Planner
907-745-9526
ekrueger@matsugov.us

N

MAC-SL RAILROAD ROW VERIFICATION
STB Finance Docket # 35095

MatSu Borough application - ADL 227588
Submitted - 3-25-1999
Applies to all Pt.MacKenzie Ag Parcels sold after 3-25-1999

Tract 3

Patent No. 18909 - 9/03/2003
Palmer Recording District
#2003-025411-0

Page 1 & 2

"A public right-of-way easement application, 300 feet wide, under ADL 227588 to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Contract for sale of real property - Feb 15, 2001

BK 01114 Pg 0967

Page 2

Subject to ADL 227588, a 300 ft wide transportation corridor (legal description of easement). No permanent improvements are allowed within this easement area. temporary structures or agricultural uses may occur at the purchasers risk. Should the easement be required for the purposes for which it is reserved, there will be no compensation for the displacement of improvements or crops.

Tract 5 - issued ROW easement not application

Patent No. 16409 - DNR to DOA Agriculture Revolving Loan Fund - 4-30-1998

Palmer Recording District

Book 0946 Page 949

Public use easement for railroad - 7-10-1998

Palmer Recording District

Book 0961 Page 083

Page 1

...a right of way and easement . . for use as a three hundred foot wide public right of way for railroad, including the right to construct, operate and maintain public improvements necessary for railroad purposes within said right of way, and to grant encroachment permits, grant public utilities and other utilities the right to place their facilities with the right of way, described as follows ... east 300 feet of Tract 5 ASLS 80-111

State of AK - Quitclaim Deed - 11-17-2002

Palmer Recording District

2002-001023-0

Tract 7

Patent No. 18744 - 5-8-2003

Palmer Recording District

#2003-012226-0

Page 1 & 2

A public right-of-way easement application, 300 feet wide, under ADL 227588 to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Contract for sale of real property (ADL 209379) - 6-21-1999

Book 1019 Page 734

This contract and subsequent patent for Tract 7 shall be subject to ADL 227588. This ADL file currently represents an application from the Mat Su Borough for a 300 ft wide easement (on the 300 feet east of vacated section line between sections 31 and 32) for railroad purposes. If this application is adjudicated and an easement is issued, Tract 7 may be subject to the perfected easement. No permanent improvements will be allowed in this easement. temporary structures or agricultural use may occur at the purchaser's risk. Should use of the easement be required for the purposes for which it was reserved, there will be no compensation for displacement of improvements or crops.

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Tract 10

Patent No. 19158 - 2-06-2004
Palmer Recording District
#2004-003126-0

Page 2

A public right of way easement application, 300 ft. wide, along the east 300 feet of the tract, under ADL 227588 to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Assignment of Contract - 3-29-2002
Palmer Recording District
#2002-006085-0

Contract for sale of real property (ADL 209362) - 5-15-2001
Palmer Recording District
Book 01120 Page 0517

Page 2

Subject to ADL 227588 an application for a 300 foot wide transportation corridor easement on the east 300 feet of the tract. No permanent improvements will be allowed within this easement area. Temporary structures or agricultural uses may occur at the purchasers risk. Should the easement be required for the purposes for which it is reserved, there will be no compensation for the displacement of improvements or crops.

Tract 13

Patent # 20222 - 7/17/2006
Palmer Recording District
#2006-019892-0

Page 2

A public transportation corridor easement, 254 feet wide, along the eastern tract boundary.

Assignment of Contract - 1-24-2006
Palmer Recording District
#2006-002040-0

Assignment of Contract - 4-05-2002
Palmer Recording District
#2002-006655-0

Contract for sale of real property (ADL 209364) - 6-21-1999
Palmer Recording District
Book 1021 Page 452

This contract and subsequent patent is subject to a 254-foot wide transportation corridor easement. No permanent improvements will be allowed in this easement. Temporary structures or agricultural use may occur at the purchaser's risk. Should use of the easement be required for the purposes for which it was reserved, there will be no compensation for displacement of improvements or crops.

Tract 19A

Contract for sale of real property - (ADL 209382) 4-16-2003
Palmer Recording District
#2003-009967-0

Page 9

This contract and subsequent deed are subject to a 300 foot wide railroad easement application from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (ADL 227588). Said easement is located on the eastern 300 feet within section 19. No permanent improvements will be allowed in this easement. Temporary structures or agricultural use may occur at the purchaser's risk. If the easement is issued for this location and use of the easement is required for the purposes for which it was reserved, there will be no compensation for displacement or improvements or crops.,

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JOSEPH/Pat WILSON (patnjoe@mtaonline.net) - Mon, 05/10/2010 12:53:41 -0800

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From: Jody Simpson <Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us>
To: "patnjoe@mtaonline.net" <patnjoe@mtaonline.net>
Cc: "Joe Perkins (engrperk@msn.com)" <engrperk@msn.com>
Subject: FW: STB input re RR routes
Date: Sat 05/01/2010 07:35 PM

Joe Perkins:

Fyi, Joe Wilson asked me to fwd this email.

jody

Jody Simpson

Staff to Senator Charlie Huggins
Senate District H
600 East Railroad Avenue
Wasilla, AK 99654
T: (907)376-4866
1-800-862-3878
F: (907)373-4724
Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us

From: Joe Perkins [engrperk@msn.com]
Sent: Saturday, May 01, 2010 6:49 PM
To: Jody Simpson
Cc: Brad Sworts; dave.heier@matsugov.us; John Duffy; Brian Lindamood; raygillespie@ak.net
Subject: RE: STB input re RR routes

Jody--

I am available for a teleconference on Monday, May 3 at 3:00 pm.

We have considered the Wilsons' comments and other factors and have developed an alignment refinement called "Variant 1" to Mac East which follows a section line from just outside the Port District through the entire Agricultural District to Ayrshire Avenue. This section line alignment solves a lot of other problems such as easier procurement of CIRI land, reducing the amount of wetlands we will disturb, reducing the construction cost, having a longer straight rail section and moving the rail line further from a populated lake which is just north of Ayrshire Avenue. I have forgotten the lake's name.

We consider this Variant to be a refinement of the Mac East Alternative and not a new alternative as its location is a less than a mile and in some cases very close to our original Mac East route. All the routes marked on the maps are conceptual corridors and we have the flexibility to adjust the final rail line's location within the corridor during permitting and final design. We have notified the STB of our planned modification to the alignment of Mac East and they may or may not include it in the final EIS. If the STB does not include our Variant 1 in the Final EIS we do not see this as a problem and we still intend to obtain the necessary permits and construct the rail line on the Variant 1 alignment. Just the reduction in wetlands will make the Variant very popular with the permitting agencies.

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We have a design layout of Variant 1 in Brad's office at the MSB and the Wilsons could come in and take a look at what we have planned. In addition I would recommend that the Wilsons provide a comment to the STB that they support the rail line being on the section line in this area. Their comments need to be in to the STB fairly soon. That might cause the STB to include this small change in Mac East alignment in the Final EIS. In the MSB fact sheet to the Transportation Advisory Board, the Planning Commission and the Assembly (for use when they consider which route they support), the section line alignment for Mac East is mentioned. Hope this provides some answers and we can discuss this further in Monday's teleconference.

Joe

> From: Jody_Simpson@legis.state.ak.us
> To: engrperk@msn.com; jduffy@matsugov.us; bsworts@matsugov.us
> Date: Sat, 1 May 2010 14:00:21 -0800
> Subject: STB input re RR routes
>
> Joe and John,
>
> Joe and Pat Wilson were at our Willow town hall this AM and they are upset that MSB and STB, apparently, did not consider a route that bisected the Point Mac farms on a section line.
> They would like Sen Huggins and Rep Neuman to intervene and have the STB do a SEIS to evaluate that route.
> Long story short, Sen Huggins would like to talk to you, Joe, about this and to then teleconf w/ the Wilsons.
>
> He does NOT want to get into your lane; rather, he just wants to be responsive to his constituents.
>
> Joe (and whoever else), would you be available on Monday, May 3, about 3 pm to teleconf??
>
> Tx.
>
>
> Jody
> 376-4866

JOSEPH/Pat WILSON (patnjoe@mtaonline.net) - Mon, 05/10/2010 12:53:41 -0800