

Glossary

Adverse environmental impact	A negative effect, resulting from the implementation of a proposed action that serves to degrade or diminish an aspect of human or natural resources.
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)	An independent Federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on historic preservation matters and administering the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC)	State agency in charge of protecting human health, natural resources, and the environment.
Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR)	ADNR's goal is to maintain the state's resources. ADNR manages all state-owned land, water, and natural resources with the exception of fish and game.
Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)	State-owned corporation that owns and operates all common carrier rail lines in Alaska.
Alluvial Fans	Fan-shaped fluvial area composed of clay, silt, and sand, transported by water and deposited on a floodplain.
Ambient Noise	The existing noise, or the sum of all noise (from human and naturally occurring sources), at a specific location over a specific time.
Applicant	Any person or entity seeking Surface Transportation Board action whether by application, petition, Notice of Exemption, or any other means that initiates a formal Board proceeding.
Aquifer	A permeable geological stratum or formation that can both store and transmit water in significant quantities.
Armor Stone	A durable stone that prevents erosion or degradation of a railbed.
At-grade crossing	The location where a local street or highway crosses rail line tracks at the same level or elevation.
Attainment area	An area that EPA has classified as complying with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) specified under the Clean Air Act.
Automatic block signal	A block signal which is activated by track circuit or in conjunction with interlocking or controlled point circuits. This block signal automatically indicates track condition and block occupancy.

Automatic Block Signal System (ABS)	A series of consecutive blocks governed by block signals, cab signals, or both, actuated by a train, engine, or by certain conditions affecting the use of a block.
A-weighted sound level (dBA)	The most commonly used measure of noise, expressed in "A-weighted" decibels (dBA). It is a single-number measure of sound severity that accounts for the various frequency components in a way that corresponds to human hearing.
Ballast	Crushed stone that forms the railbed upon which rail line ties are laid. It is packed between, below, and around the ties and is used to facilitate drainage of water, and to distribute the load from the rail line ties.
Bedding and Parting Planes	The surface separating two successive layers of stratified rock.
Best Management Practices (BMPs)	Techniques that various parties (e.g., the construction industry) use to minimize impacts to the environment.
Biological Assessment	Information prepared by, or under the direction of, a Federal agency to determine whether a proposed action is likely to: 1) adversely affect listed species or designated critical habitat; 2) jeopardize the continued existence of species that are proposed for listing; or 3) adversely modify proposed critical habitat. Biological assessments must be prepared for "major construction activities."
Block	1) A defined length of track, with defined limits, on which operators govern train movements. 2) A group of freight cars handled as one unit for a portion, or all, of their journey from origin to destination.
Block group	The smallest geographic unit for which the U.S. Census provides information on racial background, ethnic heritage, and household income. The population of a block group typically ranges from 600 to 3000 people and is designated to reflect homogeneous living conditions, economic status, and population characteristics. Block group boundaries follow visible and identifiable features, such as roads, canals, railroads, and aboveground high-tension power lines.
Blocking	The process of aggregating freight cars into blocks.
Board	The Surface Transportation Board.
Borrow area (Borrow pit)	Site from which earthen material is excavated and used at a different site, usually as fill to create the proper grade.
Branch line	A secondary line of rail line usually handling light volumes of traffic.
Carload	A unit of measure used to describe commodities transported by rail line typically in a boxcar, tank car, flat car, hopper car, or gondola.
Census block group	See <i>Block group</i> .
Channel plug	A natural or manmade plug that blocks the flow of water through a riverbed or culvert.

Cirques	An amphitheater-shaped basin at the head of a glacier valley.
Class II Railroads	A railroad with annual operating revenue of more than \$20.5 million but less than \$277.7 million. These railroads are usually regional, mid-sized rail lines that have the capacity to haul both freight and passengers.
Clean Air Act (Clean Air Act Amendments)	The primary Federal law that protects the nation's air resources comprised of the Clean Air Act of 1970 and the subsequent amendments, including the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 7401-7671g). This act establishes a comprehensive set of standards, planning processes, and requirements to address air pollution problems and reduce emissions from major sources of pollutants.
Clean Water Act	The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendment of 1972 (33 U.S.C. 1251 <i>et seq.</i>) is the primary Federal law that protects the nation's waters, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and coastal areas. The act provides a comprehensive framework of standards, technical tools, and financial assistance to address the many causes of pollution and poor water quality. The Act protects valuable wetlands and other aquatic habitats through a permitting process that ensures land development activities and other activities are conducted in an environmentally sound manner.
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9601-9675; P.L. 96-510); Liability Act (CERCLA)	Provides EPA with authority to clean up inactive hazardous waste sites and distribute the clean-up costs among the parties who generated and/or handled the hazardous substances at these sites.
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) Condition	Federal database containing information on potential hazardous waste sites that states, municipalities, private companies, and private persons have reported to the EPA, pursuant to Section 103 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act. This database contains sites that are either currently on, or proposed for inclusion on, the National Priorities List (NPL) and sites that are in the screening and assessment phase for possible inclusion on the NPL.
Consist	A provision that the Surface Transportation Board imposes as part of any decision that requires action by an Applicant.
Construction Camp	The number and type of locomotives and cars included in a train, considering special factors such as the tonnage and the placement of hazardous materials cars and "high-wides" (oversize dimension cars).
Construction staging area	Housing facilities designed and intended to be used for a temporary period of time to house construction-related workers.
	A designated area where vehicles, supplies, and construction equipment are positioned for access and use to a construction site.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)	The council within the Executive office of the President that coordinates Federal environmental efforts and works closely with agencies and other White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. The CEQ developed regulations and guidance for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act.
Criteria of significance	The criteria which the Section of Environmental Analysis has developed to determine whether a potential adverse environmental effect is significant and may warrant mitigation.
Criteria pollutant	Any of six emissions (lead, carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and particulate matter) regulated under the Clean Air Act, and for which areas must meet national air quality standards.
Critical habitat	The specific site within the geographical area occupied by threatened or endangered species that includes the physical or biological features essential to the conservation of the species. These areas may require special management considerations or protection. These areas may include specific sites outside the geographical areas occupied by the species at the time of the listing that are essential for the conservation of the species.
Cultural resource	Any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object that warrants consideration for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. A cultural resource that is listed in or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places is considered a historic property (or a significant cultural resource). The term generally applies to resources more than 50 years old.
Cumulative effects	Impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the proposed action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of which agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such actions. Cumulative impacts result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.
Culvert	A sewer or drain conduit crossing under a road or embankment.
Cryoturbation	Cryoturbation is the mixing of soil by freezing and thawing, resulting in broken soil horizons.
Cenozoic	The most recent of the three classic geological eras; covers the 65.5 million years since the Cretaceous–Tertiary extinction event at the end of the Cretaceous period. The Cenozoic era is ongoing.
Day-night average noise level (DNL)	The energy average of A-weighted decibels (dBA) sound level over a 24-hour period; includes a 10 decibel adjustment factor for noise between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. to account for the greater sensitivity of most people to noise during the night. The effect of nighttime adjustment is that one nighttime event, such as a train passing by between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., is equivalent to 10 similar events during the daytime.

dba (A-weighted decibels)	Adjusted decibel level. A measure of noise level used to compare noise from various sources. A-weighting approximates the frequency response of the human ear.
Decibel (dB)	A standard unit for measuring sound pressure levels based on a reference sound pressure of 0.0002 dyne per square centimeter. This is nominally the lowest sound pressure that people can hear.
Diorite	An extremely hard igneous rock produced by the melting of parent rock in a subduction zone.
Dispatcher (train)	The railroad employee responsible for issuing on-track movement and/or occupancy authority through the use of remotely controlled switches, signals, visual displays, voice control, written mandatory directives, and/or all of the above.
Emissions	Air pollutants that enter the atmosphere.
Emergent vegetation	An aquatic plant with growth that emerges above the water.
Endangered species	A species of plant or animal that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range and is protected by state and/or Federal laws.
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	A document that Federal agencies must prepare for major projects or legislative proposals that describes the positive and negative environmental effects of the undertaking and alternative actions and measures to reduce or eliminate potentially significant environmental impacts. The EIS is generally a tool for decisionmaking.
Environmental justice	For purposes of this document, SEA defines environmental justice as the mission discussed in Executive Order (EO) 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” (59 FR 7629, February 11, 1994). This EO directs Federal agencies to identify and address “disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects” of their programs, policies, and activities in minority and low-income populations in the United States. EO 12898 also calls for public notification for environmental justice populations, as well as meaningful public outreach activities of environmental justice populations.
Environmental justice population	A population within an Area of Potential Effect whose minority and low-income composition meets at least one of the following Criteria: 1) the percentage of minority and low-income population in the Area of Potential Effect is greater than 50 percent of the total population in the Area of Potential Effect, or 2) the percentage of minority and low-income population in the Area of Potential Effect is at least ten percentage points greater than the percentage of minority or low-income population in the County or Borough of which the Area of Potential Effect is a part.
Environmental resource category	Any of the environmental issues that serve as the major topics of impact analysis for this EIS. Examples include land use, biological resources, noise, hazardous materials, cultural resources, water quality, or air quality.

Equipment	For a railroad, a term used to refer to the mobile assets of the railroad, such as locomotives, freight cars, and on-track maintenance machines. This term is also used more narrowly as a collective term for freight cars operated by this railroad.
Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)	Essential Fish Habitat refers to those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity (Magnuson-Stevens Act, 16 U.S.C. 1801 <i>et seq.</i>). Waters include aquatic areas and their associated physical, chemical, and biological properties that are used by fish and may include aquatic areas historically used by fish where appropriate; substrate includes sediment, hard bottom, structures underlying the waters, and associated biological communities; necessary means the habitat required to support a sustainable fishery and the managed species' contribution to a healthy ecosystem; and spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity covers a species' full life cycle.
Estuary	A semi-enclosed body of sea water where salinity is measurably diluted by freshwater.
Executive Order (EO) 11990	The Executive Order for the protection of wetlands. Issued in 1977, it directs Federal agencies to avoid the adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands.
Executive Order (EO) 11988	The Executive Order on Floodplain Management. It requires Federal agencies to take actions to reduce the risk of flood damage and directs agencies to evaluate the potential effects of actions they may take or allow in floodplains and to consider alternatives to avoid adverse effects.
Executive Order (EO) 12898	The Executive Order on Environmental Justice. Issued in 1994, it directs Federal agencies to identify and address as appropriate "disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects" including interrelated social and economic effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States.
Fault System	A system of faults that interact with each other in an area.
Fill	1) The term used by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) that refers to the placement of materials (e.g., soils, aggregates, concrete structures, etc.) within water resources under USACE jurisdiction. 2) General term for materials (e.g., soils, aggregates, etc.) deposited in an area for construction purposes, such as to modify a grade.
Flood Insurance Rate Maps	Maps available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that delineate the flood insurance rates of an area. The maps are based on the potential for 100-year and 500-year flooding in the area.
Floodplain	The lowlands adjoining inland and coastal waters and relatively flat areas and flood-prone offshore islands, including, at a minimum, those areas that have a one percent or greater chance of flood in any given year (also known as a 100-year or a Zone A floodplain).

Floodway	The portion of the available flow cross section that cannot be obstructed without causing an increase in the water-surface elevations resulting from a flood with a 100-year average return period of more than a given amount.
Geographic Information System (GIS)	A computer system designed to store, retrieve, manipulate, analyze, and display geographic data. GIS combines mapping and databases.
Glacial Moraine	Material, ranging from silt to boulders, deposited by the movement and melting of glaciers.
Gneissic Rock	Coarse-grained, banded metaplutonic igneous rock composed of mineral grains large enough to be seen with the naked eye.
Grade crossing	See <i>at-grade crossing</i> .
Grade separation	See <i>separated grade crossing</i> .
Gross ton-mile	A measure of railroad production that represents the weight of cars and freight movement in terms of total tons per mile transported system-wide or over a specific rail line segment. Specifically, one ton of railcar and loading carried one mile.
Habitat	The place(s) where plants or animal species generally occur(s) including specific vegetation types, geologic features, and hydrologic features. The continued survival of the species depends upon the intrinsic resources of the habitat.
Hazardous materials	Substances or materials that the Secretary of Transportation has determined are capable of posing an unreasonable risk to human health, safety, and property when transported in commerce, as designated under 49 CFR Parts 172 and 173.
Hazardous wastes	Waste materials that, by their nature, are inherently dangerous to handle or dispose of (e.g., old explosives, radioactive materials, some chemicals, some biological wastes), as designated under 40 CFR 261. Usually, industrial operations produce these waste materials.
Hertz (Hz)	A unit of frequency equal to one cycle per second.
Highway/rail at-grade road crossing	See <i>at-grade crossing</i> .
Historic Property	Any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object that warrants consideration for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The term “eligible for inclusion in the NRHP” pertains to both properties that the Secretary of Interior has formally determined to be eligible and to all other properties that meet NRHP listing criteria.
Horn noise (train)	Noise that occurs when locomotives sound warning horns in the vicinity of highway/rail at-grade crossings.

Ice jam	The build-up of ice chunks resulting from rapid breakup of frozen waterbodies. Occurs when the combination of warm temperatures and heavy rain cause snow to melt rapidly which then can cause frozen waterbodies to swell and experience multiple ice breaks. Ice jams can cause flooding in areas by blocking the flow of water.
Igneous Rock	Basic rock type that has solidified and crystallized from molten rock.
Impaired Waterbody	Any waterbody that is too polluted to maintain its beneficial uses as defined by state and tribal water quality standards.
Indian tribe	According to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450-458; P.L. 93-638), any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community recognized as eligible for special programs and services that the United States provides to Indians because of their status as Indians.
Instrumental Landing System (ILS)	A ground-based radio system designed to provide horizontal and vertical guidance for aircraft landing at an airport.
Intermodal facility	A facility for the transfer of trailers and containers between rail and highway, or between rail and marine modes of transportation. Usually a site consisting of tracks, lifting equipment, and paved (and/or unpaved) areas that are used in the receiving, loading, unloading, and dispatching of goods between transportation modes.
Jurisdictional wetland	Wetlands that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).
Ldn	The day-night average noise sound level, which is the receptor's cumulative noise exposure from all noise events over a full 24 hours. This is adjusted to account for the perception that noise at night is more bothersome than the same noise during the day.
Leq	The level equivalent, which is the energy-averaged sound pressure level over a specified time interval.
Level of Service (LOS)	A degree of peak congestion experienced by roadway vehicle traffic that considers factors such as vehicle delay, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety. Traffic analysts express LOS as letter grades, ranging from LOS A (free flowing) to LOS F (severely congested); they measure LOS by the average for all vehicles. Specifically, LOS A describes operations with very low delay (less than 5.0 seconds per vehicle); LOS B describes operations with delay in the range of 5.01-15.0 seconds per vehicle; LOS C describes operations with delay in the range of 15.1 to 25.0 seconds per vehicle; LOS D describes operations with delay in the range of 25.1 to 40.0 seconds per vehicle; LOS E describes operations with delay in the range of 40.1 and 60.0 seconds per vehicle; and LOS F describes operations with delay in excess of 60.0 seconds per vehicle.
Lineament	Geologic mapping that is important for site selection of construction sites and for seismic assessments.

Localizer Antenna (LOC)	As part of the ILS, the LOC provides horizontal guidance.
Locomotive, road	A locomotive (or engine) designed to move trains between yards or other designated points.
Locomotive, switching	A locomotive (or engine) used to switch cars in a yard, between industries, or in other areas where cars are sorted, spotted (placed at a shipper's facility), pulled (removed from a shipper's facility), and moved within a local area.
Low-income population	A population composed of persons whose median household income is below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.
Mainline	Railroad line used by through trains traveling between terminals.
Manual Block Signal System (MBS)	A series of consecutive blocks, governed by block signals operated manually upon information by telegraph, telephone, or other means of communication.
Metamorphosed	A change in composition, form, or shape.
Metaplutonic	Rocks that have been subjected to high pressure and have changed form (for example, gneiss).
Metasedimentary	Sedimentary rock that has been subjected to forces that have altered its form.
Metavolcanic	Volcanic rock that has been subjected to forces that have altered its form.
Minority population	A population composed of persons who are Black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian, or Alaska Native.
Mitigation	An action taken to prevent, reduce, or eliminate adverse environmental effects.
Moraines	A deposit of earthen material left on the ground by receding glaciers. These are often composed of boulders, stones, gravel, sand, and other debris deposited on the landscape in the form of ridges, mounds, and irregular masses.
Motive power	Locomotives operated by the railroad.
National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)	Air pollutant concentration limits established by EPA for the protection of human health, structures, and the natural environment.
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347; P.L. 91-190) is the basic national charter for the protection of the environment. It establishes policy, sets goals, and provides means for carrying out the policy. Its purpose was to establish the Council on Environmental Quality and to instruct Federal agencies on complying with Federal environmental regulations.

National Flood Insurance Plan (NFIP)	The NFIP is a Federal program administered by FEMA that enables property owners to purchase insurance as protection against flood losses in exchange for state and community floodplain management regulations that reduce future flood damages.
National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)	The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470-470 <i>et seq.</i> ; P.L. 89-665), is the basic legislation of the Nation's historic preservation program and that established the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Section 106 of the NHPA requires every Federal agency to 'take into account' the effects of its undertakings on historic properties.
National Priorities List (NPL)	A subset of CERCLIS; EPA's list of the most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for possible long-term remedial action under the Superfund Program.
National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)	Administered by the National Park Service, the NRHP is the Nation's master inventory of known historic properties, including buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the Federal, state, or local levels.
National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)	An inventory of wetland types in the U.S. compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
Native American	According to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, as amended (25 U.S.C. 3001 <i>et seq.</i> ; P.L. 101-601), of or relating to a tribe, people or culture that is indigenous to the U.S.
Native American lands	According to the regulation of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation in 36 CFR 800.2 all lands under the jurisdiction or control of an Indian tribe, including all lands within the boundaries of any American Indian reservation.
No-Action Alternative	The choice not to undertake a project. In contrast to the proposed action alternatives, the No-Action is the alternative option of not going forward with the project.
Noise	Any undesired sound or unwanted sound.
Noise contour	Line plotted on a map or drawing connecting points of equal sound levels.
Noise-sensitive receptor	Location where noise can interrupt ongoing activities and can result in community annoyance, especially in residential areas. The Surface Transportation Board's environmental regulations include schools, libraries, hospitals, residences, retirement communities, and nursing homes as examples of noise-sensitive areas.
Non-attainment area	An area that EPA has classified as not complying with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards promulgated under the Clean Air Act.
Operating practices	Safety and operating rules, practices, and procedures contained in operating rule book, timetable, special instructions or any other company-issued instructions. Includes the management decisions implementing those rules and instructions that govern the movement of trains and work on or around active tracks.

Operating rules	Written rules of a railroad governing the operation of trains and the conduct of employees responsible for train operations when working on or around active tracks.
Outwash Fan	Fan-shaped glacial stream deposits from meltwater-fed streams that occur beyond a glacier's morainal deposits.
Overburden	Material that lies above an excavation area of interest.
Paleozoic	Era of time spanning from roughly 542 million years ago to roughly 251 million years ago.
Palustrine wetland	Non-tidal wetland dominated by trees, shrubs, or persistent emergent vegetation. Includes wetlands traditionally classified as marshes, swamps, or bogs.
Particulate matter (PM)	Airborne dust or aerosols.
Passby	The passing of a train past a specific reference point.
Peak Particle Velocity (PPV)	The measure of ground movements. Technically the maximum instantaneous positive or negative peak of the vibration signal, measured as a distance per unit of time (such as millimeters or inches per second). PPV is typically used to evaluate shock-wave type vibrations from actions like blasting, pile driving, and mining activities, and their relationship to building damage.
Point source	A distinct stationary source of air or water pollution such as a factory or sewer pipe.
Precursor	A term used in reference to air quality, meaning an initial ingredient contributing to a subsequent air quality pollutant.
Prime farmland	According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, land having the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed forage, fiber, and oilseed crops.
Quartzite	A hard, metamorphic rock that was originally sandstone and converted through heating and pressure.
Rail line segment	For the purposes of this Draft EIS, portions of rail lines that extend between two junction points.
Rail line switch	See <i>turnout</i> .
Rail route	Line of railroad track between two points on a rail system.
Rail yard	A location or facility with multiple tracks where rail operators switch and store railcars.
Rare species	Species that have small total populations that presently are not in danger or vulnerable, but are at risk for extinction.

Receptor	See <i>noise-sensitive receptor</i> .
Resource Conservation and Recovery Information System (RCRIS)	Federal database containing information on facilities that generate, transport, store, treat, and/or dispose of hazardous waste.
Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)	The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (42 U.S.C. 6901 <i>et seq.</i> ; P.L. 94-580) is a Federal act governing the generating, storing, transporting, treating, and disposing of hazardous waste.
Revetment	A structure installed on river banks that functions as a protective shoreline barrier by absorbing energy from incoming water.
Right-of-way	The strip of land for which an entity (e.g., a railroad) has a property right (e.g., by fee simple ownership or easement) to build, operate, and maintain a linear structure, such as a road, rail line, or pipeline.
Riparian	Generally describes vegetative communities located on the banks of natural waterbodies such as rivers, lakes, and tidewater areas.
Riprap	Hard rock used to protect sensitive areas, such as a shoreline, from erosion.
Riverine	All wetlands and deepwater habitats contained within a channel, either naturally or artificially created.
Root-mean-square velocity (VdB)	A measure of ground vibration in decibels used to compare vibration from various sources.
Root-mean-square vibration velocity (VdB)	An average or smoothed vibration amplitude, commonly measured over 1-second intervals. It is expressed on a log scale in <i>decibels (VdB)</i> referenced to 0.000001 inch per second and is not to be confused with noise <i>decibels</i> .
Route miles	Length of rail line, regardless of the number of tracks.
Schist	Medium-grade metamorphic rock that flakes easily; derived from clays and muds that have been metamorphosed.
Schistose-Gneissic Unit	An area of hard igneous rock composed of a combination of schistose and gneissic rocks.
Schistose Rock	Hard quartzose semi-crystalline rock.
Schistose Units	A rock unit composed of schist.

Scoping	Scoping is a process designed to examine a proposed project early in the EIS environmental analysis/review process, and is intended to identify the range of issues raised by the proposed project and to outline feasible alternatives or mitigation measures to avoid potentially significant environmental effects. The scoping process inherently stresses early consultation with responsible agencies, trustee agencies, tribal governments, and any Federal agency whose approval or funding of the proposed project will be required for completion of the project. Scoping is considered an effective way to bring together and resolve the concerns of other agencies potentially affected by the project as well as other stakeholders such as businesses and the general public.
Scour	The destructive effect that flowing water has on a submerged object over time.
Section 106	Refers to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1996, as amended through 1992 (16 U.S.C. 470). Section 106 requires that Federal undertakings take into account the effects of the action on historic properties.
Seismic Source	Tool that generates controlled seismic energy that is used in both reflection and refraction seismic surveys.
Seismicity	The production of seismic waves, either intentionally to gather subsurface images for exploration purposes, or unintentionally (earthquakes and tremors).
Sensitive receptor	See <i>noise-sensitive receptor</i> .
Separated grade crossing	The site where a local street or highway crosses rail line tracks at a different level or elevation, either as an overpass or as an underpass.
Siding	A track parallel to a main track that is connected to the main track at each end. A siding is used for the passing and/or storage of trains.
Sinistral-slip Faults	A geologic fault with a left handed movement of one tectonic plate past another tectonic plate.
Slough	A term to describe a marshy or reedy pool, pond, inlet, backwater, or similar waters.
Sloughing	Deposition of material from the banks of a river or stream into the body of water.
Sole source aquifer	USEPA defines a sole or principal source aquifer as one which supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water consumed in the area overlying the aquifer. These areas have no alternative drinking water source(s) which could physically, legally, and economically supply all those who depend upon the aquifer for drinking water.
Sound	A physical disturbance in a medium (e.g., air) that is capable of being detected by the human ear.

Sound Exposure Level (SEL)	The means of measuring a transient noise event such as a passing train. It is equivalent to the maximum A-weighted sound level that would occur if all of the noise energy associated with the event were restricted to a time period of one second. The SEL accounts for both the magnitude and the duration of the noise event; noise analysts use SEL to calculate the day-night average noise level.
Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan	Plan that describes the protective measures to be used to minimize possible contamination from oil spills or other chemical discharges that could result from construction equipment and facilities, and for how accidental spills would be treated and contained.
Subduction	The act of two plates of crust colliding, where the more dense crust dives beneath the less dense continental plate.
Switch	The portion of the track structure used to direct cars and locomotives from one track to another.
Switching	The activity of moving cars from one track to another in a yard or where tracks go into a railroad customer's facility.
Tanana Chiefs Conference	Tribal consortium of 42 villages of Interior Alaska that advances tribal governments, economic and social development, promotes physical and mental wellness, educational opportunities, and protects language, traditional and cultural values.
Take or taking	Refers to the removal of property, an acquisition of right-of-way, or a loss and/or degradation of species' habitat.
Tank car	A type of freight car that shippers use to ship liquids and liquefied gasses in bulk.
Thermokarst lakes	A body of freshwater that is formed in a depression by meltwater from thawing permafrost.
Threatened species	A species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or part of its range, and is protected by state and/or Federal law.
Threshold for environmental analysis	A level of proposed change in rail line activities that determines the need for SEA's environmental review. SEA first applies the Board's thresholds for environmental analysis at 49 CFR Part 1105. The Board thresholds apply specifically to air quality and noise. For other issue areas, SEA developed appropriate thresholds to guide its environmental review.
Ton mile	The movement of one ton of cargo or equipment over a distance of one mile.
Toxic	Toxic refers to effects of, relating to, or caused by a poisonous substance.
Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)	Act that gives the EPA the ability to track the 75,000 industrial chemicals currently produced or imported into the United States. EPA repeatedly screens these chemicals and can require reporting or testing of those that may pose an environmental or human-health hazard. EPA can ban the manufacture and import of those chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk.

Track class	Designation between one and nine by the Federal Railroad Administration to characterize the quality and condition of track. The track geometry and type of track structure govern the allowable speed over the track and the level of upkeep to maintain the track. For Class II track, the maximum allowable operating speed for freight trains is 25 mph and 30 mph for passenger trains.
Turnout	The portion of rail line structure where a single track divides into two tracks.
Unclassified Fill	Fill material that has not been categorized by size and type.
Unit train	A train consisting of cars carrying a single commodity, e.g., a coal train.
U-shaped Valley	Valley gouged by a glacier, resulting in the valley floor resembling a U-shape.
Wapiti	The Cree Indian term for elk.
Water resources	An all-inclusive term that refers to many types of permanent and seasonally wet/dry surface water or groundwater features including springs, creeks, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, wetlands, canals, harbors, bays, sloughs, mudflats, sewage-treatment and industrial ponds, aquifers, and others.
Wayside	Adjacent to the rail line, as in "wayside signals" or "wayside defect detectors."
Wayside train noise	Train noise adjacent to the right-of-way that comes from sources other than the horn, such as engine noise, exhaust noise, and noise from steel train wheels rolling on steel rails.
Wetlands	According to 40 CFR Part 230.41, those "areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions," generally including swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.