



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

Office of Environmental Analysis

March 25, 2011

Re: Docket No. FD 35095, Alaska Railroad Corporation - Construction and Operation of a Rail Line Extension to Port MacKenzie, Alaska - **Issuance of Final Environmental Impact Statement**

To All Interested Parties:

The Board's Office of Environmental Analysis (OEA) is pleased to provide you with your copy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the proposed construction and operation of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension. This Final EIS analyzes the environmental impacts that might occur if the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) were to construct and operate the proposed rail line, an approximately 31- to 46-mile long rail line to connect the Port MacKenzie District to a point on the existing ARRC main line between Wasilla and just north of Willow, Alaska. The Final EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, including the No-Action Alternative.

Three cooperating agencies assisted OEA in the preparation of the Final EIS. The cooperating agencies include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Railroad Administration, and U.S. Coast Guard.

The Final EIS is based on OEA's independent analyses; consultations with agencies; and careful consideration of all comments on the Draft EIS from agencies, elected officials, organizations, and members of the public. This document contains detailed responses to comments received on the Draft EIS and OEA's recommendations for the alternative that should be constructed and operated should the Board grant final approval for the project. OEA's recommended alternative is the Mac East Variant-Connector 3 Variant-Houston-Houston South Alternative.

In addition to analyzing the proposed action and alternatives, this Final EIS sets forth OEA's final recommended mitigation measures to mitigate adverse environmental impacts should the Board approve the project.

This Final EIS is organized consistent with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Final EIS is a republication of the Draft EIS, with modifications and additional analysis based on agency and public comments and the availability of new and updated information. Substantive modifications to the Draft EIS in this Final EIS are indicated by change-bars in the left-hand margin of each chapter and appendix. Copies of the original agency and public comments are

located in appendices P and Q. Comments on the Draft EIS and responses to those comments are provided in Chapter 23 of this Final EIS.

Next Steps

Issuance of this Final EIS completes the Board's environmental review process. The Board now will make a final decision on the proposed project. In accordance with CEQ regulations implementing NEPA, no agency decision on the proposed action may be made until 30 days after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its Notice of Availability for the Final EIS (note: OEA anticipates that EPA will publish a notice of availability of the Final EIS in the *Federal Register* on April 1, 2011). Congress has not established a statutory time frame within which the Board must issue its final decision, and the Board has not announced a date for issuance of the final decision. However, in the interest of bringing this matter to closure, the Board will act as promptly as possible.

In making its final decision on the proposed project, the Board will consider the entire environmental record, including all public comments, the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, and OEA's final recommended mitigation measures. No project-related construction may begin until the Board's final decision has been issued and has become effective. Parties who wish to file an administrative appeal of the Board's final decision may do so within 20 days of that decision, as provided in the Board's rules. The Board will consider any administrative appeals in a subsequent decision. The cooperating agencies will also issue decisions, as needed, under their own governing statutes.

OEA has mailed the entire Final EIS to Federal, state, and local agencies; elected officials; organizations; and other interested parties. This Final EIS is also available to all interested persons for review in the reference section of 26 public libraries in the project area (see attachment). To receive a hard copy of the Final EIS, call OEA's toll-free Environmental Hotline at 1-800-359-5142. The entire document is also available on the Board's Web site (<http://www.stb.dot.gov>), under "Environmental Issues," then under "Key Cases."

OEA appreciates the efforts of all interested parties who reviewed and commented on the Draft EIS. Thank you for your interest and participation in the Board's environmental review process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "R".

Victoria Rutson
Director,
Office of Environmental Analysis

**ATTACHMENT
LIST OF LIBRARIES**

Alaska State Library
333 Willoughby Avenue
State Office Building,
8th Floor
P.O. Box 110571
Juneau, AK 99811

Anchor Point Public Library
72251 Milo Fritz Avenue
Anchor Point, AK 99556

Anderson Village Library
116 W. First Street
P.O. Box 3078
Anderson, AK 99744

Aniak Public Library
270 Riverfront Drive
P.O. Box 270
Aniak, AK 99557

Big Lake Public Library
3140 S. Big Lake Road
P.O. Box 520829
Big Lake, AK 99652

Cantwell Community Library
Mile 133.5 Denali Highway
Cantwell, AK 99729

Chugiak/Eagle River Branch
Library
12001 Business Boulevard
#176
Eagle River, AK 99577

Copper Valley Community
Library
Mile 186 Glenn Highway
Glennallen, AK 99588

Homer Public Library
500 Hazel Avenue
Homer, AK 99603

Hyder Public Library
50 Main Street
Hyder, AK 99923

Juneau Downtown Branch
Library
292 Marine Way
Juneau, AK 99801

Juneau Valley Branch Library
9105 Mendenhall Mall
#134
Juneau, AK 99801

Kenai Community Library
163 Main Street Loop
Kenai, AK 99611

Kettleton Memorial Library
320 Harbor Drive
Sitka, AK 99835

Kuskokwim Consortium
Library
420 State Highway
P.O. Box 368
Bethel, AK 99559

Muldoon Library
1251 Muldoon Road
#158
Anchorage, AK 99504

Mountain View Branch
Library
150 S. Bragaw Street
Anchorage, AK 99504

Palmer Public Library
655 South Valley Way
Palmer, AK 99645

Samson-Diamond Branch
Library
800 E. Dimond Boulevard
Dimond Center, 2nd floor
Anchorage, AK 99515

Sutton Public Library
11317 North Jonesville Mine
Road
P.O. Box 266
Sutton, AK 99645

Talkeetna Public Library
Mile 13.5 Talkeetna Spur
Road
P.O. Box 768
Talkeetna, AK 99676

Trapper Creek Library
8901 Devonshire Drive
Trapper Creek, AK 99683

Tuzzy Consortium Library
5421 North Star Street
P.O. Box 2130
Barrow, AK 99723

Wasilla Public Library
391 North Main Street
Wasilla, AK 99654

Willow Public Library
23557 W. Willow Community
Center Circle
Willow, AK 99688

Z.J. Loussac Public Library –
AK Collection
3600 Denali Street
Anchorage, AK 99503