

## **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ISSUES DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR ALASKA RAILROAD'S PROPOSED NORTHERN RAIL EXTENSION PROJECT**

The Surface Transportation Board announced today that its Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has issued the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Alaska Railroad Corporation's (ARRC) proposed construction and operation of an approximately 80-mile railroad line, the "Northern Rail Extension," from North Pole to Delta Junction, Alaska. The Draft EIS analyzes environmental impacts that might occur if ARRC were to construct and operate the line, and alternatives to ARRC's proposal, including a "no-action" alternative.

Eight cooperating agencies assisted SEA in the preparation of the Draft EIS. The cooperating agencies include the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District; U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command; U.S. Air Force 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Eielson Air Force Base; Federal Transit Administration; Federal Railroad Administration; U.S. Coast Guard, Seventeenth District; and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to analyzing the proposed action and alternatives, the Draft EIS sets forth SEA's preliminary recommended mitigation and ARRC's voluntary mitigation measures, and encourages mutually acceptable negotiated agreements to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, should the Board approve the proposal.

SEA and the cooperating agencies invite public comment on all aspects of the Draft EIS and are providing a 45-day public comment period, which begins upon the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's issuance of a notice of availability in the *Federal Register* on **December 19, 2008**. Comments on the Draft EIS must be postmarked by **February 2, 2009**. Instructions on how to submit comments, and a list of the dates, times, and locations of forthcoming public meetings are attached in a separate Fact Sheet.

After the close of the public comment period on the Draft EIS, SEA and the cooperating agencies will prepare a Final EIS in response to comments received on the Draft EIS. The Board will then issue a final decision based on the entire public record, including the record on the transportation merits of the proposal, the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, and all public and agency comments received. The Board will decide whether to approve the proposal, deny it, or approve it with mitigating conditions, including environmental conditions. The cooperating agencies also may issue separate decisions related to the proposal.

SEA has distributed the Draft EIS widely for public review and comment. Approximately 1,700 copies of the Draft EIS have been distributed to parties on SEA's environmental distribution list, which includes interested Federally recognized tribes, key governmental agencies, and persons expressing an interest in receiving a copy of the Draft EIS or participating in the environmental review process for this proceeding. SEA also has distributed the Draft EIS to all parties of record (official participants), and has made additional print copies of the Draft EIS available for review in three public libraries in the proposed project area.

The Draft EIS was issued today in the proceeding titled [Alaska Railroad Corporation—Petition for Exemption—To Construct and Operate a Rail Line Between North Pole, Alaska and Delta Junction, Alaska, STB Finance Docket No. 34658](#). The Draft EIS is available for viewing and downloading via the Board's Web site, at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, under "E-LIBRARY" on the home page, then under "Decisions & Notices," beneath the date "12/12/08." The Draft EIS also is available under "Environmental Matters" on the home page, then under "Key Cases."

A Fact Sheet is attached.

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FACT SHEET

***Alaska Railroad Corporation—Petition for Exemption—To Construct and Operate a Rail Line Between North Pole, Alaska and Delta Junction, Alaska, STB Finance Docket No. 34658***

The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) is implementing a public and agency outreach effort to ensure that the public, governmental agencies, communities have the opportunity to actively participate and comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) and the Board's environmental review process in STB Finance Docket No. 34658. Comments on the Draft EIS must be received or postmarked by **February 2, 2009**.

Beginning on **January 12, 2009**, SEA and the cooperating agencies will host four public meetings in the proposed project area to receive public comments on the Draft EIS. At the beginning of each meeting, SEA will give a brief overview of the environmental review process, invite interested parties to make oral comments in an orderly fashion before meeting participants, and provide a court reporter to record the comments. Written comments can also be submitted during the meeting. The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are shown below:

**January 12, 2009, 5:00-8:00 p.m., Pike's Waterfront Lodge, 1850 Hoselton Road, Fairbanks, AK**

**January 13, 2009, 5:00-8:00 p.m., City Council Chambers, 125 Snowman Lane, North Pole, AK**

**January 14, 2009, 5:00-8:00 p.m., Salcha Senior Center, 6062 Johnson Road, Salcha, AK**

**January 15, 2009, 5:00-8:00 p.m., Jarvis West Building, Milepost 1420.5 Alaska Highway, Delta Junction, AK**

**Written comments:** Comment forms will be provided at the public meetings and will be accepted there, or the forms can be submitted later by mail. Comment forms or written letters must be mailed to:

**David Navecky**  
**STB Finance Docket No. 34658**

**Surface Transportation Board**  
**395 E Street, S.W.**  
**Washington, DC 20423-0001**

**Recorded comments:** A court reporter will be at the public meetings to transcribe the oral

comments.

**Electronic comments:** Comments may be filed electronically via the Board's Web site, at [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking "**E-FILING**" on the home page. When the "Welcome" page appears, click the "**Environmental Comments**" link at the center-right of the page (a Login Account is not required). Please refer to "**STB Finance Docket No. 34658**" when filing.

**Library distribution:** SEA also has distributed the Draft EIS to the libraries listed below and requested that the entire Draft EIS be made publicly available in the libraries' reference sections.

**Delta Community Library**  
**Delta Junction, AK 99737**  
**Telephone (907) 895-4656**

**Noel Wein Public Library**  
**1215 Cowles Street**  
**Fairbanks, AK 99701**  
**(907) 459-1020**

**North Pole Branch Library**  
**601 Snowman Lane**  
**North Pole, AK 99705**  
**(907) 488-6101**

**Deadline:** All electronic and written comments must be received or postmarked **February 2, 2009**.

All comments received—written, e-filed, or transcribed—will carry equal weight in helping SEA complete the EIS process and aid the Board in its decisionmaking on this matter.

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