

**FAIRBANKS
METROPOLITAN
AREA
TRANSPORTATION
SYSTEM**



January 21, 2009

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RE: Northern Rail Extension Draft EIS

David Navecky
STB Finance Docket No. 34658
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Dear Mr. Navecky:

The Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS) Policy Committee appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Northern Rail Extension Draft EIS in an effort to encourage development of a coordinated, intermodal transportation system in the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

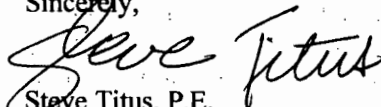
First, the FMATS Policy Committee supports the development of the Northern Rail Extension and views it as a critical economic development project as well as a nationally significant transportation project.

Secondly, although the Northern Rail Extension falls outside FMATS' MPO boundaries, it is contiguous to its boundaries, and therefore has some impact within the intermodal transportation system. Chapter 11 of the Draft EIS on *Transportation Safety and Delay* and the related data presented in Table K-4, support our conclusion that an increase in rail traffic (10 round-trips daily), as a result of the proposed action, would result in an increase of 35% in the number of cars affected by a 20% longer delay. At-grade crossings of primary FMATS concern are those that experience the highest average annual daily traffic, such as University Avenue (data not shown in Table K-4), College Road, Old Steese and New Steese Highways. Coordination of the rail schedule at periods that experience lower highway traffic volumes, when possible, will minimize potential delays and accidents.

The FMATS Policy Committee strongly urges the funding and the development of the Northern Rail Extension as well as the immediate funding to pursue the Fairbanks-North Pole Rail Realignment to eliminate the over 50 at-grade railroad crossings.

Please direct all future correspondence regarding this project to our Coordinator at the address below.

Sincerely,


Steve Titus, P.E.
Chair, FMATS Policy Committee
800 Cushman Street
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