

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION

OFFICE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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File No.: 3130-1R Surface Transportation Board/Northern Rail Extension
3330-6 XBD-298, XBD-335, XBD-337, XBD-338, XBD-339, XBD-341 and
XBD-343
3330-6P XBD-336, XBD-340 and XBD-342

SUBJECT: Northern Rail Extension, Eielson Air Force Base (North Pole) to Fort Greely
(Delta Junction), Alaska

Victoria Rutson
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Ms. Rutson,

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has reviewed your latest letter (received October 13, 2008) regarding the referenced project in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. We understand that the Surface Transportation Board agrees with the determination of eligibility recommendations in the previously submitted report titled *Results of the 2007 Cultural Resource Survey of Proposed Alaska Railroad Northern Rail Extension Routes, Alaska* by Northern Land Use Research (November 2007). According to the report the following ten prehistoric lithic sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under criterion D: XBD-298 and XBD-335 through XBD-343.

We agree that seven of the sites (XBD-298, XBD-335, XBD-337, XBD-338, XBD-339, XBD-341 and XBD-343) are clearly eligible for the NRHP under criterion D. The sole cultural remain at the remaining three sites (XBD-336, XBD-340 and XBD-342) however, consists of only one piece of debitage, suggesting that these sites may not be eligible as individual properties. We do understand however, that these sites may add to the understanding of site distribution and prehistoric land use patterns. Furthermore, the flakes at all three sites are in a buried context; analysis of the stratigraphy may provide information on the paleoenvironment. We recommend therefore, that the archaeological sites within the project area be evaluated as an archaeological

district and a determination be made whether XBD-336, XBD-340 and XBD-342 are eligible as contributing properties.

In conclusion, we concur with your finding that seven of the sites are eligible for the NRHP under criterion D: XBD-298, XBD-335, XBD-337, XBD-338, XBD-339, XBD-341 and XBD-343. Consideration of an archaeological district is needed before we can concur that XBD-336, XBD-340 and XBD-342 are eligible as contributing properties.

As you continue in your identification of historic properties efforts, remember to consider properties that may be indirectly affected by this project. Examples include the agricultural landscape near Delta Junction and Eielson Air Force Base as well as the Trans Alaska Pipeline System. Both features are in close proximity to the rail corridor and must be evaluated for eligibility prior to an assessment of effects. Also our records indicate that the eligibility determinations for the cabins and other historic features in the project area are still pending (see our letter dated September 24, 2007).

We look forward to working with you in developing a programmatic agreement. Please contact Stefanie Ludwig (Archaeologist) at 907-269-8720 or Doug Gasek (Architectural Historian) at 907-269-8726 if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jean M. Antonson

Judith E. Bittner

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

JEB:sll