



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Washington, DC 20423

EO - 244

Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration

October 12, 2005

Mr. James Helfinstine
Waterways and Navigation Branch (OAN-3)
Seventeenth Coast Guard District
P.O. Box 25517
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5517

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34658, The Alaska Railroad Corporation – Petition for Exemption to Construct and Operate a Rail Line Between Eielson Air Force Base (North Pole) and Fort Greely (Delta Junction), Alaska

Dear Mr. Helfinstine:

I am writing to invite you to be a cooperating agency in the preparation of an environmental review described below:

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) intends to file a petition with the Surface Transportation Board (Board), pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502, requesting authority to construct and operate a new rail line from Eielson Air Force Base to Fort Greely, Alaska. The proposed project would involve the construction of approximately 80 miles of new rail line connecting the existing rail line near Eielson Air Force Base near North Pole, Alaska to a point near Fort Greely and the Donnelly Training Area near Delta Junction, Alaska. The proposed rail line would cross the Tanana River, possibly near Flag Hill, allowing the U.S. Army year-round access to the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas. The proposed project could also include the construction of a 15-mile spur line from the vicinity of Flag Hill to the Blair Lakes Military Training Area. Construction of the proposed rail line would provide all the major military installations in Alaska with rail access to the Port of Anchorage. ARRC also intends to provide passenger rail service between Fairbanks and Delta Junction, and as a common carrier, ARRC would be obligated to provide freight rail service upon request to any future shippers on the proposed line.

The construction and operation of this project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the Board's Section on Environmental Analysis (SEA) has determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is appropriate. SEA intends to issue the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and

Draft Scope of Study in the near future. SEA will also hold public scoping meetings as part of the EIS process.

Based on preliminary agency consultations that have been conducted by SEA and its third-party contractor (ICF Consulting, Inc.) for this proposed project, SEA believes that the project could impact properties under the jurisdiction of or use by a number of several Federal agencies including yours. Therefore, consistent with 40 CFR 1501.6, we are inviting the following agencies to be cooperating agencies in the preparation of this EIS on the basis of their special expertise or jurisdiction by law:

- U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command,
- U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army Garrison – Alaska Command,
- U.S. Department of Defense, 354th Fighter Wing Command,
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Alaska District,
- U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management – Alaska State Office,
- U.S. Coast Guard, Seventeenth Coast Guard District,
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, and
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration – Region 10

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dave Navecky of my staff at 202-565-1593 (e-mail address: naveckd@stb.dot.gov), or Alan Summerville, ICF Consulting project manager, at 703-934-3616 (e-mail address: ASummerville@icfconsulting.com). I would appreciate your response by November 18, 2005. We look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Victoria" and last name "Rutson" clearly distinguishable.

Victoria Rutson
Chief
Section of Environmental Analysis