

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ISSUES FINAL DECISION AUTHORIZING
"ALASKA RAILROAD" TO BUILD & OPERATE 35-MI. LINE BETWEEN PORT
MACKENZIE & POINT NEAR HOUSTON, ALASKA**

The federal Surface Transportation Board today issued a decision granting final approval for the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) to construct and operate approximately 35 miles of new rail line connecting Port MacKenzie (Port), in south-central Alaska, to a point on ARRC's existing main line, between Wasilla and an area north of Willow, Alaska.

The Board's authorization is subject to extensive environmental conditions to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the proposal's potential environmental impacts, and to the condition that ARRC builds the line on the route the Board designated as environmentally preferable.

The proposed line would provide rail freight services between the Port and Alaska's interior and would support the Port's continuing development as an intermodal and bulk-material resources export-import facility. Currently, trucking is the only mode of surface freight transportation available in the area to move bulk materials and other freight to and from the Port. Without the proposed line, bulk commodity shippers now having access to ARRC's network must transload freight from rail to trucks, then transport that freight 30 miles from ARRC's main line to the Port.

The Board's decision follows an extensive environmental review and analysis of public concerns conducted by the agency's Office of Environmental Analysis OEA. In reaching its decision, the Board considered:

½ The entire public record in this proceeding relative to the proposal's transportation merits and potential environmental impacts, including all public comments;

½ The detailed Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared by the OEA and 3 cooperating agencies (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District; the Federal Railroad Administration; and the U.S. Coast Guard, Seventeenth District);

½ OEA's Final Environmental Impact Statement considering all public comments received on the DEIS, its further independent analysis and "preferred" route alternative (recommended from among 12 carefully compared potential routes and a "no-build" alternative), and OEA's final recommended environmental mitigation measures; and

½ OEA's Environmental Memorandum, which set forth the issues raised in the post-Final EIS comments, ARRC's response, OEA's independent analysis, and its final recommendations to the Board.

The Board's decision approving ARRC's construction and operation proposal was issued today in the case entitled [Alaska Railroad Corporation—Construction and Operation Exemption—A Rail Line Extension to Port MacKenzie, Alaska](#), Docket No. FD 35095. That decision is available for viewing and via the Board's website at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.