

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ISSUES NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT; REQUESTS COMMENTS ON DRAFT SCOPE OF STUDY; & ANNOUNCES PUBLIC MEETINGS ON "ALASKA RAILROAD'S" PROPOSED RAIL LINE EXTENSION TO PORT MACKENZIE, ALASKA**

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) announced today that its Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) has issued a Notice of Intent (Notice) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed construction and operation, by the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), of approximately 30 to 45 miles of new railroad line from a point on the ARRC main line between Wasilla and north of Willow to Matanuska-Susitna Borough's (MSB) Port MacKenzie, Alaska. Once ARRC seeks Board authority, the case will be docketed as *The Alaska Railroad Corporation—Petition for Exemption to Construct and Operate a Rail Line Extension to Port MacKenzie, Alaska*, STB Finance Docket No. 35095.

Because the proposed project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts, SEA has determined that the preparation of an EIS is appropriate. The purpose of the Notice is to notify the public of SEA's decision to require an EIS and to announce the availability of the draft Scope of Study and the schedule for public scoping meetings.

Interested persons and agencies are invited to participate in the EIS scoping process. Written comments on the draft Scope of Study and potential routes for the project should be submitted to:

**Attention: Environmental Filing**  
**STB Finance Docket No. 35095**

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

Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the Board's Web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by clicking the "E-FILING" button at the top-left of the home page. Written and e-filed comments are due **March 21, 2008**. SEA will issue a final Scope of Study after the close of the scoping comment period.

Please refer to STB Finance Docket No. 35095 in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the Board.

In addition, SEA will hold six public meetings to receive comments on the draft Scope of Study and potential routes. SEA will host the scoping meetings at the following dates, times and locations:

**Meeting 1: March 3, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Knik Elementary School, 6350 West Hollywood, Wasilla, AK**

**Meeting 2: March 4, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Big Lake Elementary School, 3808**

South Big Lake Road, Big Lake, AK

**Meeting 3:** March 5, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Willow Area Community Center, Mile 70 Parks Highway, Willow, AK

**Meeting 4:** March 6, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Houston Middle School, 12801 W. Hawk Lane, Houston, AK

**Meeting 5:** March 10, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Wasilla Multi-Use Sports Complex, 1001 S. Mack Drive, Wasilla, AK

**Meeting 6:** March 11, 2008, 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Anchorage Senior Center, 1300 East 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Anchorage, AK.

The scoping meetings will be held in an informal workshop format during which interested persons may ask questions about the proposed project and the Board's environmental review process, and advise SEA staff about the project's potential environmental effects. No formal presentations will be made by agency representatives, but SEA staff will be available to answer questions and receive comments individually.

The meeting locations comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Persons needing special accommodations should telephone SEA's toll-free number for the project at **1-888-257-7560**.

The Notice and draft Scope of Study issued today in STB Finance Docket No. 35095, is available for viewing and downloading via the agency's website, at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, by clicking on this hotlink: [STB Finance Docket No. 35095](#). Alternatively, users may access the draft Scope of Study by clicking the "E-Library" button on the home page; then the "Decisions and Notices" selection in the dropdown that will appear; and then, when the next page appears, under "02/12/08," clicking the case abbreviation "FD 35095 0." Printed copies of the Notice and draft Scope of Study also are available for a fee by contacting **ASAP Document Solutions, 9332 Annapolis Rd., Suite 103, Lanham, MD 20706, telephone (202) 306-4004, or via [asapdc@verizon.net](mailto:asapdc@verizon.net)**.

A fact sheet containing more information about this project and the environmental review process is attached.

###

---

#### **FACT SHEET**

***The Alaska Railroad Corporation—Petition for Exemption to Construct and Operate a Rail Line Extension to Port MacKenzie, Alaska, STB Finance Docket No. 35095***

**BACKGROUND:** The purpose of the project is to establish a railroad link between Port MacKenzie and the ARRC rail system, to provide Port customers and shippers with rail transportation between the Port and interior Alaska. The Port is a deepwater facility on the north side of Knik Arm, in upper Cook Inlet, located in south-central Alaska. The only surface mode of freight transport presently available to the Port is trucking. The ARRC project would allow bulk materials, intermodal containers and other freight to and from the Port to also move by rail.

The proposed line would extend approximately 30 to 45 miles, depending on the route selected, from the Port to ARRC's existing main line between Wasilla and north of Willow. The anticipated train traffic would be two trains daily, on average, with one train per day traveling in each direction. The EIS will analyze the potential impacts of the project,

alternative routes, and a "no-action" alternative.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS:** The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is intended to assist the Board and the public in identifying and assessing the potential environmental consequences of a proposed action before a decision on the proposed action is made. SEA is responsible for ensuring that the Board complies with NEPA and related environmental statutes. The first stage of the EIS process is scoping. Scoping is an open process for determining the scope of environmental issues to be addressed in the EIS. As part of the scoping process, SEA has developed, and has made available for public review and comment, a draft Scope of Study for the EIS. Concurrently, scoping meetings will be held to provide further opportunities for public involvement and input. Interested parties are encouraged to comment on the Draft Scope of Study and potential routes for the proposed project, including the eight alternative routes that have been identified by MSB and ARRC. At the conclusion of the scoping period, SEA will issue a final Scope of Study for the EIS.

After issuing the final Scope of Study, SEA will prepare a Draft EIS for the project. The Draft EIS will address the environmental issues and concerns identified during the scoping process. It will also contain SEA's preliminary recommendations for environmental mitigation measures. The Draft EIS will be made available upon its completion for review and comment by the public, governmental agencies, and other interested parties. SEA will prepare a Final EIS that will respond to comments on the Draft EIS and contain additional analysis, if appropriate. In reaching its decision in this case, the Board will take into account the Draft EIS, the Final EIS, and all environmental comments received.

SEA has recently invited several agencies to participate in this EIS process as "cooperating agencies" on the basis of their special expertise or jurisdiction by law. These agencies include: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Alaska District, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**, contact **David Navecky, Section of Environmental Analysis, Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street, SW, Washington, DC 20423**, or telephone SEA's toll-free number for the project at **1-888-257-7560**. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at **1-800-877-8339**. Project-specific information may be found via the home page of the Board's Web site, [www.stb.dot.gov](http://www.stb.dot.gov), by placing your cursor on the "Environmental Matters" button, near the top of the page, then by clicking the "Key Cases" button on the drop-down menu.

###