

**Surface Transportation Board Issues Notice of Intent To Prepare Environmental Impact Statement, Requests Comments on Draft Scope of Study, Plans Public Meetings on Alaska Railroad Corp.'s Proposed Northern Rail Extension Project Between North Pole & Delta Junction, Alaska**

The Surface Transportation 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 80 miles of new railroad line between North Pole and Delta Junction, Alaska. ARRC plans to file a petition seeking STB authorization for this proposed project. Once filed, the case will be docketed as STB Finance Docket No. 34658.

Because the construction and operation of this project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts, SEA has determined that 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.

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

**Case Control Unit  
STB Finance Docket No. 34658  
1925 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20423-0001**

To ensure proper handling of your comments, please mark your submission:

**Attention: David Navecky  
Environmental Filing**

Environmental comments may also be filed electronically on the STB'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 comments are due **January 13, 2006**. SEA will issue a final Scope of Study after the close of the scoping comment period.

**Please refer to "STB Finance Docket No. 34658" in all correspondence, including e-filings, addressed to the agency.**

In addition, SEA will hold three public meetings to receive comments on the scope of environmental issues for the EIS. SEA will host the scoping meetings at the following dates,

times and locations:

**Meeting 1: December 6, 2005, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the City Council Chambers, 125 Snowman Lane, North Pole, Alaska**

**Meeting 2: December 7, 2005, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Jarvis West Building, Mile 1420.5 Alaska Highway, Delta Junction, Alaska**

**Meeting 3: December 8, 2005, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Lousaac Library Public Conference Room, 3600 Denali Street, Anchorage, Alaska**

The public scoping meetings will be informal meetings in a workshop format during which interested persons may ask questions about the proposal and the STB's environmental-review process, and advise the agency's representative attending about potential environmental effects of the project. There will be no formal presentations made by agency representatives. Rather, STB staff will be available to answer questions and receive comments individually.

The meeting locations comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Persons needing special accommodations, and parties interested in further information about this case should telephone the Board's **toll-free hotline** for this project at **1-800-359-5142**.

The Notice and draft Scope of Study issued today in STB Finance Docket No. 34658, is available for viewing and downloading via the agency's Web site, at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, by clicking on this hotlink: [STB Finance Docket No. 34658](#) (alternatively, users may access the draft Scope of Study by clicking the "E-Library" button on the home page; then the "Decisions & Notices" selection on the dropdown that will appear; then, when the next page appears, under "11/01/2005," click the case abbreviation, "FD 34658 0"). A printed copy of the document is available for a fee by contacting **ASAP Document Solutions, 9332 Annapolis Road, 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.

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## **ATTACHMENT**

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Fact Sheet

***The Alaska Railroad Corporation Proposed Construction and Operation Between North Pole and Delta Junction, Alaska, STB Finance Docket No. 34658***

**Background:** The proposed Northern Rail Extension Project includes construction of approximately 80 miles of new rail line connecting the existing rail line near Eielson AFB near North Pole, Alaska to a point near Fort Greely and the Donnelly Training Area near Delta Junction, Alaska. The proposed project could also include the construction of a 15-mile spur line from Flag Hill to the Blair Lakes Military Training Area. As a result of this project, the U.S. Army would have year round access to the Tanana Flats and Donnelly training areas and all the major military installations in Alaska would be accessible by rail

through Fort Greely. The Surface Transportation Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that analyzes the potential impacts of the proposed route, the "no-build" alternative, and possible alternative routes.

**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 is making available for public review and comment in today's notice, a draft Scope of Study for the EIS. Concurrently, scoping meetings will be held to provide further opportunities for public involvement and input during the scoping process. At the conclusion of the scoping and comment 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 (DEIS) for the project. The DEIS will address those environmental issues and concerns identified during the scoping process. It will also contain SEA's preliminary recommendations for environmental mitigation measures. The DEIS will be made available upon its completion for review and comment by the public, government agencies, and other interested parties. SEA then will prepare a Final EIS (FEIS) that considers comments on the DEIS. In reaching its decision in this case, the Board will take into account the DEIS, the FEIS, and all environmental comments that are received.

SEA has recently invited several other Federal agencies to participate in this EIS process as cooperating agencies on the basis their special expertise or jurisdiction by law. These agencies include: U.S. Department of Defense, Alaskan Command; U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army Garrison – Alaska; U.S. Department of Defense, 354th Fighter Wing Command; U.S. Army Engineers District – Alaska; U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management – Northern Field 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.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** David Navecky, Section of Environmental Analysis, Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, or call SEA's toll-free number for the project at 1-800-359-5142. Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339. The website for the Surface Transportation Board is .

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