

## 3.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

### 3.1 Public Involvement Activities and Materials

#### 3.1.1 Project Mailing List

A project mailing list of approximately 7,700 individuals, businesses, and organizations was generated for the project outreach efforts using MSB property tax/landowner information and a MSB address-specific list provided by ARRC. The list also included elected officials, State and Federal agency representatives, and local government officials.

The mailing list was used to send out a project post card and a newsletter, which are included in Appendix A. Updates to the mailing list are on-going. The project mailing list, dated December 21, 2007 is located in Appendix A.

#### 3.1.2 Web Site

A project web site ([www.portmacrail.com](http://www.portmacrail.com)) was created for persons with internet access. The Web site address was referenced on handouts, newspaper advertisements, press releases, postcards, and on the project business card. The Web site, which will be updated continuously throughout the NEPA review process, includes the following pages and is included in Appendix A:

- Home: welcome, alternatives map
- Project Overview: Project history, benefits, area, participants and issues
- FAQs (frequently asked questions)
- Get Involved: Meeting announcements, comments submittal, mailing list, and contact information for the MSB public affairs director and ARRC public involvement officer.
- Project Library: News releases, handouts, presentations, maps, reports, and other related studies
- Useful Links: Links to the MSB, ARRC, Port MacKenzie, and STB

Individuals visiting the Web site are also able to submit comments electronically and to request to be added to the project mailing list. Forty-five individuals used the Web site to provide electronic comments between September 5 and December 14, 2007. Fifty-five electronic comments were received (Appendix B).

#### 3.1.3 Public Meeting Notification

Public meetings were advertised in advance using newspaper display ads; a household postcard mailing; the project, ARRC, and MSB Web sites; press releases; and community flyers. Table 3.1-1 shows both the advertisements used for the notification and the date these notes were published. Materials included in Table 3.1-1 are presented in Appendix A.

**Table 3-1 Meeting Notification Methods**

<b>Meeting Notification Tool</b>	<b>Date (2007)</b>
Project Web site launched	September 5
Postcard	September 14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project mailing list</li> </ul>	
Press Release: Public invited to five open house events to review and comment on Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project	September 14
Retail Display Advertisements	September 18, September 21, and September 28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchorage Daily News</li> <li>• Frontiersman</li> <li>• Talkeetna Good Times (September 28 only)</li> </ul>	
Community Flyers Posted	September 22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willow Area Community Center</li> <li>• Townsite Food Mart</li> <li>• Videomart</li> <li>• Willow Creek Grocery</li> <li>• Willow Tesoro</li> <li>• Gold Miners Lodge and Restaurant</li> <li>• Miller's Market</li> <li>• Houston Lodge Café &amp; Lounge</li> <li>• Kathy's Diner</li> <li>• Steve Boy Grocery</li> <li>• Big Lake Library</li> <li>• Big Lake Liquor</li> <li>• Spenard Builders Supply/Big Lake</li> <li>• Bulldog Espresso</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meadow Lakes Center</li> <li>• Three Bears</li> <li>• Carrs/Safeway, Palmer</li> <li>• HDR Alaska, Palmer</li> <li>• Vagabond Blues, Palmer</li> <li>• Fireside Book Store, Palmer</li> <li>• Mat-Su Borough Office, Palmer</li> <li>• Settler's Bay Post Office, Knik</li> <li>• Body in Balance, Palmer</li> <li>• Daycare, Knik</li> </ul>
Electronic notices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's Up (an e-mail list serv provided by the National Wildlife Federation and the Alaska Women's Environmental Network that distributes environmental information statewide). Announcements for the Port MacKenzie rail extension were published three times.</li> </ul>	September 19 September 26 October 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail broadcast from Senator Charlie Huggins to his constituency.</li> </ul>	September 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mail notice sent to Port MacKenzie e-mail list produced by the Project Team</li> </ul>	September 28

*3.1.4 Project Press Releases*

Seven press and radio releases were written and submitted by the MSB public affairs director to various media outlets. The press releases were also posted on the Project Library page of the project Web site, on the MSB Web site, and on the ARRC Web site. The releases announced the public meetings, recapped previous public meetings, and updated project activities. Table 3.1-2 includes a listing of the topics and the dates of the releases, copies of which are included in Appendix A.

**Table 3-2 Project Press Releases**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Date (2007)</b>
Public invited to five open house events to review and comment on Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project (print and radio releases)	September 14
Wasilla open house starts off series of meetings	October 2
Overview of the open house meetings	October 5
Houston to explore rail opportunity	October 10
Assembly calls for work session on Port Mac Rail project	November 20
Assembly passes resolution on Port MacKenzie Rail project	December 11

### 3.1.5 *Media Outreach & Coverage*

Media outreach was conducted by the MSB public affairs director.

The local media outlets and other publication services provided a comprehensive review of the project's progress. Twenty-eight articles and interviews were written and conducted by local media outlets. Print coverage was provided by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Frontiersman, Alaska Journal of Commerce, Talkeetna Times, and Anchorage Daily News (see Appendix A). Radio interviews and television news stories were also conducted. MP3 versions of the interviews are posted on the project Web site. Table 3.3 provides a summary of media coverage.

**Table 3-3 Media Coverage**

<b>Title</b>		<b>Date (2007)</b>
Legislature nears approval of financing for Agrium coal project	Alaska Journal of Commerce	May 4
Port MacKenzie angles for rail extension for coal	Alaska Journal of Commerce	May 20
Mat-Su, ARRC partner on port project	ARRC All Aboard	July/August
Meetings set to begin on Point MacKenzie rail expansion plan	Frontiersman	September 18
Agrium plan closures in Kenai won't slow Port Mac rail extension	Frontiersman	September 28
Willow hoping it won't be railroaded	Frontiersman	September 28
Patty Sullivan and Dave Hanson on economics of projects	KMBQ	Week of Aug. 29
Patty Sullivan and Brad Sworts on rail process	KMBQ	September 29
Alaska Railroad to host open houses in five communities	Talkeetna Times	October 1
Point MacKenzie railroad debated	Channel 2 KTUU	October 2
Point MacKenzie railroad spur debate begins	MSNBC.com	October 2
Rail link to port explored	Anchorage Daily News	October 3
Willow split in opinions on rail plan	Anchorage Daily News	October 5
Proposed rail routes enough to rile residents	Frontiersman	October 5
Patty Sullivan and John Duffy interview on Mat-Su projects	KSKA	October 10
Houston wants Borough to make tracks	Frontiersman	October 12
Houston invites comment on rail spur	Frontiersman/Letter to Editor	October 20
Rail link proposal stirs interest from Mat-Su residents	Alaska Journal of Commerce	October 21
Rail link proposal stirs interest from Mat-Su residents	Anchorage Daily News	October 27
Houston wants rail guarantees	Anchorage Daily News	October 29
Houston on board early with rail plan	Frontiersman	October 30
Houston needs follow-through with rail desires	Frontiersman	October 30
Valley train could bring economic growth	Channel 2 KTUU	November 21
Houston's fire chief resigns, deputy clerk quits	Frontiersman	November 22
Feds weigh in on impacts of planned rail spur	Frontiersman	November 24
South route for rail line rated highest	Anchorage Daily News	November 28
Houston may be ahead for rail route	Frontiersman	November 29
Rail study off to feds	Frontiersman	December 16

### 3.1.6 Public Meetings

Five large, open house format public meetings were conducted between October 1 and 5, 2007. The meetings were held in Wasilla, Big Lake, Willow, Knik, and Houston. Each meeting was held from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The purpose of the open house meetings was to describe the proposed project, to present the proposed alternatives, to explain how the alternatives were developed, to review the STB process, and to solicit input from the public on issues, concerns, and additional studies needed.

Seven topic “stations” were set up at each meeting: Welcome, General Project Information, Engineering, STB Process, Right-of-Way, Project Area, and Comment. Each station contained informational posters and a project team member familiar with the material who could field questions from the attendees. During each meeting, a slide presentation was given and the audience was requested to ask questions of the project team members at each station. Hand-out materials included comment forms, alternatives maps, and a Frequently Asked Questions sheet. A total of 356 people attended the open house meetings. The meeting materials are included in Appendix A. Table 4.3 summarizes the individual meeting attendance.

Public comment at the open houses was taken by written comments on comment forms, oral comments through a court reporter, and/or by writing on large project area maps provided for the purpose. Fifty-six comments were written on comment forms, 37 verbal comments were recorded with the court reporters, and 137 comments were written on the maps. Materials presented at the open houses are included in Appendix A; all comments are included in Appendix B.

**Table 3-4 Meeting Attendance**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
October 1 – Lake Lucille Inn, Wasilla	68
October 2 – Big Lake Elementary, Big Lake	124
October 3 – Willow Area Community Organization, Willow	86
October 4 – Knik Elementary, Knik	45
October 5 – Houston Middle School, Houston	33

### 3.1.7 Postcard

On September 14, 2007 approximately 7,700 project postcards were mailed via U.S. Postal Service addressed to area landowners, local businesses, organizations, and area government officials. The postcard announced the open houses, project Web site address, and ways to participate in the project. The mailing list was generated by both the MSB and ARRC, with additional individuals added through the project Web site. The complete mailing list and the postcard are located in Appendix A.

### 3.1.8 Newsletter

A newsletter was distributed by mail between December 10 and December 12, 2007 to the project mailing list and posted on the project Web site. The newsletter provided an overview of the matrix used to score each of the project alternatives and provided a recap of the public meetings. Also included in the newsletter was an overview of the project schedule. A copy is included in Appendix A.

3.1.9 *Comments Received*

There were several mechanisms for the public to provide comments during this phase of the project. While the comment deadline for comments to be considered in the development of the Preliminary Environmental and Alternative Report was November 2, 2007, the Public Involvement Report contains all comments received through December 2007. Table 3.5 summarizes the type and number of comments received (see Appendix B for complete comments).

**Table 3-5 Comments Received**

<b>Comment Type</b>	<b>Number Received</b>
Comment forms/letters	102
Electronic comments (website)	55
Court reporter comments/recorded meeting testimony	57
Map comments	147
<b>Total</b>	<b>361</b>