

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2007, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) and the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) jointly propose to connect Port MacKenzie to ARRC's rail system by constructing and operating a new rail line. The new rail line would be approximately 30 to 45 miles long, depending on the route selected, extending from Port MacKenzie to a point on the ARRC's existing main line between Wasilla and north of Willow. The Public Involvement Activities Summary Report, Volume 4, documents the public involvement process utilized in the development of the preliminary engineering and environmental data presented in the Preliminary Environmental and Alternatives Report, which will be evaluated by the Surface Transportation Board (STB) as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process required for project construction.

This Public Involvement report summarizes the public involvement activities conducted by the MSB and the ARRC between September and December 2007 as part of the STB application development process and reflects a summary of input provided by the public, local governments, and Tribes. Appendix A provides the materials presented during the process and Appendix B contains all the comments received during the preliminary scoping process.

ACTIVITIES

Public involvement activities for the proposed Port MacKenzie Rail Extension project took place during a four-month period. A variety of outreach tools were used and more than 361 comments were received. The public outreach conducted during the application development process allowed the proposed project to respond to and evolve as a result of input from the public and various stakeholders. The following list of tools and activities highlights the outreach efforts and opportunities for the public to provide input:

- Comment database (ongoing)
- Local government meetings (10)
- Tribal meetings (1)
- Mailing list (ongoing)
- Media coverage (ongoing)
- Meeting advertisements and other notifications
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)¹ meetings (3)
- Newsletters (1)
- Public open house meetings (5)
- Press releases (7)
- Small group meetings (6)
- Web site (ongoing)

¹ ANCSA refers to Native Corporations created under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Cook Inlet Region, Incorporated (CIRI), is the Native Regional Corporation owning land in the project area. Knikatu, Incorporated is the Village Corporation owning land in the project area.

COMMENTS AND ISSUES

The goal of the public involvement effort was to assist in the preliminary evaluation of the corridor alternatives by providing locally obtained background information to the MSB and ARRC. Through the public involvement activities, information relating to the three preliminary corridors and to the project in general was gathered. Concerns from the public ranged from private property impacts, to quality of life issues, to local and regional economic impacts. Trails and recreation opportunities were also common themes, as were environmental issues such as wetlands, soils, archeological sites, and wildlife.