



On Board!

NEPA Review Process Continues

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process continues to move forward. The next step is issuance of the final scope of study by the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the lead federal agency for the project. This will set the parameters of study for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The final scope of study will be released in the new year and posted on the STB's web site: www.stb.dot.gov.

To assist the STB in its review, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) submitted a revised alternative alignments map set (Rev. 4) and an Alternatives Analysis Report to the STB in July 2006. These documents propose ARRC's alignments for consideration under the NEPA process. While the Rev. 4 maps illustrate the range of possible alternatives, the Alternatives



Analysis Report outlines the rationale for how different alignment possibilities came to be added, researched, dismissed, or amended since the project began.

An electronic version of the Rev. 4 map set can be found on the project website: www.northernrailextension.com/routes.htm.

Field Notes

Geotechnical engineering is used to study surface and subsurface materials. Geotechnical findings are used to determine what types of foundations, earthwork, and construction materials are most appropriate for a particular site.

The amounts of glacial silt, gravel, and permafrost are a few of the geotechnical considerations within the project corridor. Geotechnical teams use drill rigs to collect samples and characterize the soil types.

Areas with clear, coarse gravel close to the surface are more stable—and more desirable for construction—than areas of high amounts with silt or permafrost. The bore holes also provide information about water table depth, another important consideration for any construction project.

NREP geotechnical teams were in the field in September 2006, and area residents may have seen helicopters flying within the project corridor as the crew was ferried to and from drilling locations.

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WHAT IS...?

Mitigation refers to various methods used to reduce or offset potential adverse effects caused by a project. Mitigation can be accomplished through avoidance, limiting the degree of action or impact, repairing or restoring what has been impacted, or compensating for an impact. Possible mitigation methods, which can be on-site or off-site, are considered during the environmental review process.





Alaska Railroad Corporation
PO Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510

Phone: 907-265-2538
Fax: 907-265-2365
public_comment@akrr.com

*ARRC—Building a
 Great Railroad
 Across the Great
 Land*



**The Newsletter of
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 ARRC and HDR Alaska.

For up-to-date information about
 the Northern Rail Extension Pro-
 ject, visit the project web site at
www.northernrailextension.com

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Frequently Asked Question

**How are the different
 alternatives developed and compared
 in an EIS process?**

There are a number of steps for determin-
 ing which alternatives are carried forward
 through the EIS process.

1. Preliminary possible alternatives are developed within a broad project corridor.
2. Preliminary design and engineering information is developed for each possible alternative
3. Alignments are refined based on newly-researched information about geography, environment, land ownership, potential costs, and other issues of

significant impact.

4. Lead and cooperating agencies determine which alternatives will be carried forward for study in the EIS.
5. Alternatives are additionally refined based on further information about the cost, feasibility, and potential impacts. An alternatives analysis provides agencies and the public with a clear basis for choice among the proposed alternatives, including a no-build (no action) alternative. The public will have an opportunity to comment on possible alternatives during the comment period on the draft EIS.

The NREP is currently undergoing step 3.

Get Involved!

General comments can be sent via fax to 907-265-2365, e-mail to public_comment@akrr.com or by regular mail to:

ARRC
 Attn: Stephenie Wheeler
 P.O. Box 107500
 Anchorage, AK 99510