



## Expanded Rail Opportunities

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) continues to explore opportunities to expand passenger services. One potential market is daily service between the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley and Anchorage, independent of and more frequent than trains serving communities north of Willow. This service could be particularly attractive during winter, when driving conditions between Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley are challenging. Eventually, this service could extend to communities south of Anchorage, including Indian and Girdwood.

### Projects in Support of Expanded Passenger Rail

#### Potential Wasilla Intermodal Hub

The City of Wasilla is developing an intermodal transportation center along the George Parks Highway, between the Palmer Wasilla Highway and Knik Goose Bay (KGB) Road. The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) is concurrently working on the Wasilla Main Street project, which will require the Alaska Railroad stop at KGB Road to relocate near the proposed Wasilla Intermodal Hub. The City of Wasilla proposes incorporating facilities that would connect to the proposed relocated ARRC stop. This joint effort on behalf of the DOT, the City of Wasilla, and ARRC will help further develop an expansion of rail service to the Mat-Su Valley.



#### Anchorage-to-Wasilla Track Realignment

Initiated in 1999 and primarily completed in 2007, this \$78 million effort straightened the track from Anchorage to Wasilla, cutting train travel time between the communities by 30 minutes, which is critical to commuter rail viability. Funded by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), FTA and ARRC.

In 2012, ARRC realigned a curve near Eklutna to reduce curvature of the mainline and a parallel siding at MP 142. This enables trains to increase speed from 45 to 49 mph, matching track speeds on either side of the curve. As funding permits, ARRC will straighten track in two additional areas to further improve Anchorage-Mat-Su transit time:

- **Beach Lake Park:** Straightening three curves is on hold due to an underground ice lens making work complex and costly.
- **South Wasilla (Fairview Loop) Track Relocation:** Land acquisition and final design for Phase 1 (first two miles) for this realignment project is complete. Funding for construction is not yet identified.

#### Bill Sheffield Alaska Railroad Depot at the Anchorage International Airport

Initiated in 2000 and completed in May 2003, the rail station at Ted Stevens International Anchorage Airport is a visionary hub offering travelers an intermodal terminal and commuters a con-





nection to a major employment center. \$28 million funded by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). In 2008, \$2.162 million was spent to re-establish bus and truck access after construction of a new airport rental car garage. Funding 91% FTA and 9% ARRC.



## Palmer Park-and-Ride Rail Station

Constructed 2002-2004 in collaboration with the Palmer Alaska State Fair, the \$2.3 million project features a passenger shelter, restrooms, ample parking and drop-off lanes to facilitate commuting. Project funded by FTA, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the State Fair.

Starting 2013 and continuing in 2014, ARRC enhanced and expanded direct Anchorage-to-Palmer rail service during the Alaska State Fair. Thanks to sponsorships and higher capacity, the railroad dramatically reduced fares (just \$12 per adult and \$8 per child) and offers more convenient three-daily round-trips. The 2014 schedule and equipment can accommodate 500+ riders per day over 7 days.



ARRC continues work with the Palmer community as it develops a business plan and seeks funding to support the \$1.8 - \$3 million cost to restore tracks into downtown Palmer.

## Southcentral Commuter Rail Study and Plan

Commissioned by the Alaska Railroad in 2000 and completed in early 2002, the *Southcentral Commuter Rail Study and Operations Plan* offers a blueprint for further action to establish daily rail service between the Anchorage Bowl and Mat-Su Valley. The \$200,000 cost was funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and ARRC. Phase 1 of a two-phase update to the study-plan was completed in 2009-2010 with \$50,000 funded by FTA and ARRC.

In order to effectively expand regional rail services, links between communities must be planned and implemented with coordination between local governments and their transit systems, such as the Anchorage People Mover and Mat-Su Community Transit (MASCOT) city bus systems.

On June 13, 2008, then Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich and then Mat-Su Borough (MSB) Mayor Curt Menard signed an agreement to improve mass transit in Southcentral Alaska. Subsequently, former Anchorage Mayor Dan Sullivan and former MSB Mayor Talus Colberg renewed the agreement through December 2010. The latter agreement spurred local transportation officials to investigate transportation opportunities, with new options that might include additional bus and van capacity, Glenn Hwy improvements, or additional rail development.

## Ship Creek Intermodal Transportation Center

Initiated in 1999, the \$78 million phased intermodal transportation center (ITC) project aims to facilitate inter-community connections with enhanced depot facilities and accommodations for all transit modes. Phase 1 (2007-2009) added track and upgraded utilities (pictured at left) and was funded by FTA and ARRC. Phase 2a (2009-2011) included depot upgrades and was funded by the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act via FTA. Phase 2b and 3 include additional facility expansion and enhancements to the surrounding area, and are not yet funded.