

PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED SINCE JULY 12, 2006

Updated 9/20/2006

The Alaska Railroad held a public open house July 12, 2006, in Fairbanks to explain to the community that the Railroad was beginning initial public involvement and planning work for the South Fairbanks Rail Realignment project. The notification advertisements and news release, as well as Railroad representatives at the public meeting, all invited members of the community to provide comment. About 50 written comments were submitted at the meeting, and nearly 60 more have come in since. Below is a compilation of these comments, arranged by opposition/proponent for each of the realignment options being discussed.

OPPOSED TO BOTH CHENA PUMP AND PARKS HIGHWAY OPTIONS

My husband and I just bought a home on Steelhead. We are very disappointed to hear that you might be routing trains either through Chena Pump and/or Parks Highway. There are many issues that arise from your proposal:

1. The obvious would be the devalued property. This would cause a very negative impact for not only our family but, other homeowners in the area. Nobody wants to live next to the railroad and therefore making the home in that area worthless.
2. Would cause disruptive noise and vibrations which. Its bad enough we have to deal with the airport traffic noise and vibration but, with a railroad in addition to it... would make this area virtually unlivable.
3. Hazardous conditions with trains carrying hazardous material in Alaska weather would cause unfavorable conditions for both residents, and drivers
4. Wasteful Spending - I could think of a lot better use of funds.

I found it very interesting that you did not invite the residents of the Chena Pump area. We had to learn of the rerouting of trains through the newspaper. I can ensure you that about 95% of the individuals in that area are strictly against these proposals. I ask that you please consider leaving these areas alone

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Steelhead Road)

- Chena Pump Bypass – You can't be serious. Do you really want to put tracks that close to an elementary school?
- Parks Highway Bypass – For practical purposes, this requires a rebuild (including the bridge) of the Parks Highway. And once the project is completed, one of the first sights greeting visitors driving from Anchorage is a railroad freight line. Not good.
- Viaduct Bypass – I think this one would be the least disruptive to the town and tourism, once it is completed. Building it would put a lot of stress on the neighborhoods. On the other hand, both the Chena Pump and Parks options would be no picnic for those areas.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Amherst Drive)

The noise from the Parks Highway is already noticeable 24/7. The railroad noise would be unbearable. I am retired and counting on the money from the sale of my condo to help support me in later years. The railroad crossing the Chena River on the Parks Highway would certainly impact, in a negative way, the price I could get from my condo.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Dartmouth Drive)

The Parks/Mitchell and Chena Pump options are not acceptable to the residents of these areas. Run the railroad around town – that is the best option.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area*

Have you considered an underground train? Initially, it may be more money, but everyone would be happier, both now and with future development in and around the train corridor.

I support the Viaduct option #3. I think the Chena Pump Option #2 will just add many more crossings and safety problems and I think Option #1 will be a huge safety issue.

My husband and I are developing 18 high-end condominiums fronting on the Chena River, the Parks Highway (at the bridge), and Condor Court. The foundations are in and we will begin framing in the next two weeks. A rail down the Parks Highway will seriously hurt our development. Already the noise from the Fairbanks International Airport, and from the Parks Highway is our biggest concern with marketing this project.

On another note, I also drive the Parks Highway every day. I look at the median and just can't fathom a train running down the middle of it safely. What effect will the headlights have on motorists? I think it will have dire consequences for motorists, much more so than the crossings already in place.

I have been on the Parks Highway during and after snowstorms, when drivers with 4x4s rudey think they can pass in the fluffy snow in the fast lane. The billowing snow (even as little as an inch or two) completely blinds other drivers for several seconds. It's pretty scary to say the least.

Also, the police use the median for emergency response turnaround. They recently graveled turnarounds on both sides of the Chena River Bridge. Have you contacted the Alaska State Troopers for their comments or concerns?

Thank you for your consideration.

RECAP:

- Yes to Option #3 – These people have built, bought and developed around an existing rail. They don't have the added airport noise pollution in their area. An underground railroad would be even better.
- No to Option #2 – Too many road crossings.
- No to Option #1 – Noise pollution. Headlights from oncoming trains. Billowing snow from trains. Emergency response slowdown. Will destroy the Parks Highway natural Appeal.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Perch Drive)*

I am writing in regards to the proposed Fairbanks freight rail realignment that has been the subject of several articles in the *Fairbanks Daily News Miner* and the subject of an open house at West Valley High School (I have a copy of handout materials). I am a 49-yr resident of Fairbanks and have resided in University West subdivision, a relatively nice residential area, for about 30 years. I would note that the Alaska Railroad has been in its current alignment basically since its construction in the 1920s. Established neighborhoods through which rail facilities run have long accepted this.

Comes now, out of the blue, a \$100 to \$200 million proposal (and we all know it will balloon to much more!) to reroute these facilities, with little or no reason, without a public vote,

to new neighborhoods and areas, some of which are heavily populated. If, and I believe this is a big if, facilities really need to be relocated, consideration needs to be given to routes that remove rail facilities from the urban/suburban area altogether, by considering routes well to the north of Fairbanks in the more rural parts of our borough, or to the foothills to the south.

This however begs the question of why relocate these facilities at all. The “project stimulous from the city and borough leadership” seems to be driving the relocation as well as elimination of at grade crossings. Speaking only to the Parks/Mitchell or Chena Pump option, wouldn't a separated grade crossing at University Avenue be a small pittance compared to either option? Why are all of the residents of the Fairbanks North Star Borough being assaulted with this ill advised project when they may not want it?

Unaddressed in planning and examination of proposed realignment options to date is consideration of how freight destined for Fairbanks as well as the supply of Fairbanks bulk fuel facilities, all of which are in the current existing Fairbanks Rail yard is to be accommodated. Answer, down the existing alignment from the west, or the existing alignment from the east through Hamilton Acres. The Fairbanks rail realignment just brings railroad disruption to a much larger segment of the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

The Parks/Mitchell option with an elevated rail line is ludicrous on its face. Noisy, unsightly, expensive (very expensive) with the only benefit being elimination of the at grade crossing at University Avenue, or will that even be a benefit? An elevated crossing will still have to be constructed for passenger trains. The at grade crossing at Sheep Creek Road is likewise not addressed. What on earth can the railroad and our “city and borough leadership” be thinking? Neighborhood destruction, disruption, for what?

This entire project appears to be a result of the bureaucracy of the Alaska Railrod, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, and the City of Fairbanks., that is ill advised and needs to be rethought, especially by our elected officials.

Except for the reroute around Ft. Wainwright, this whole project is bad public policy and a waste of economic resources.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area*

I am opposed to the Parks Hwy or Chena Pump route. I own a home in this area and it would have an impact on home values in this area and would create more noise than we already have. I would recommend the Hamilton Acres route.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Steelhead Road)*

OPPOSED TO PARKS HIGHWAY OPTION ONLY

I like the Foothills Route that was [formerly] suggested. I think that the Parks Highway Route is frivolous. You might as well remove the freeway for the inconveniences it will be making.

- *Fairbanks Resident, just east of the Airport, (Roberts Road)*

Residence: University West since 1974. (A relatively nice residential area). No trains in Parks Highway Corridor!

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. The railroad realignment is a one time event, and we will have only one opportunity to get it right – there will be no second chance.

I strongly oppose the proposed Parks Highway route for both selfish and selfless reasons. Selfishly, it would diminish the quality of my life (on Duke Way in University West) and would diminish the value of my largest asset – my home. The Parks route may have the advantage of being the least expensive, but for whom? Certainly not for me, if I am forced to subsidize the realignment by sacrificing the value of my investment in my home. I am not alone; by my count there are 271 dwellings on Dartmouth Avenue alone. Each one of these will be substantially and negatively impacted if the Parks route is selected. Each of these 271 owners would also be forced to subsidize this project. That is just Dartmouth alone; the actual impact would be felt far beyond that single street.

Selflessly, I question how a long range vision would allow the railroad to be built down the median of a busy highway. It would leave no room for future expansion of either the highway or the railroad. It would be a permanent safety hazard and maintenance problem. It would “uglify” a beautiful portion of this community and the Chena River as well as the university campus. It is not even a good short term solution, let alone a long term solution.

If this project was essential, and if there were no viable alternatives, then the Parks route might be warranted. But that is not the case. I urge you to consider building a small diameter products pipeline from the refinery along the proposed Parks Highway route to a fuel loading facility in the Sheep Creek Road area. A spur from that line to the airport would obviate the need for rail fuel shipments to FAI [the airport]. That would be a cost effective approach, which would solve almost all of the problem of freight trains going through Fairbanks. It would also avoid “locking in” the railroad to a new alignment which may, in the future, become inconsistent with extension of the railroad to the south. I understand that this alternative has never been considered. I would appreciate, and do hereby request, your response to this suggestion.

If such a pipeline is not considered to be an effective solution, then I urge favorable consideration of Option #2, the Chena River Bypass. Of the three options currently on the table, this would negatively impact the smallest number of people. I note that its projected cost compares very favorably with the Parks Highway option.

Again I thank you for this opportunity to comment and again, I request your considered response to my suggestion of a pipeline in lieu of a new rail alignment.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Duke Way)*

The Railroad down the center of the Parks Highway is a bad idea. Besides noise and the safety issue and lowering property values in developing neighborhoods – it's a bad idea; a waste of money.

Alternative would be bringing the train in from the Delta Area, crossing the Tanana Flats and Tanana River via bridge – a total realignment of the Railroad. Turn right at Nenana, and go across the Tanana Flats like the GVEA tie-line. South of Eielson.

How does the freight get to the ARR yard in the middle of Fairbanks?

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Wood River Drive)*

I couldn't be more against your proposal to run the Railroad down the meridian of the Parks Highway. The very act of heavily loaded freight trains crossing the Chena River and the Airport Way on new bridges just a few feet away from a very active highway is ludicrous. Not to mention an ever increasing populated area. This would discourage future residential development and devalue our current property. Again, I say look for another route – not the Parks Highway meridian.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Wood River Drive)*

200-foot right-of-way is not available down the Parks Highway! Rail and road traffic side-by-side is a prescription for disaster! Hazardous material is a threat to neighborhoods! Government funds will be wasted on Railroad schemes at the expense of Interior roads! Property values in long-established peaceful subdivisions will be greatly devalued! Noise and vibration day and night will be extremely disruptive! Tourism will be adversely affected – Rivers Edge / Chena Fine Dining, for example! No one is in favor of the Parks Route. The southern route would affect fewer people adversely!

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Wood River Drive)*

It is a ridiculous waste of money and a hazard to run trains down the Parks Highway. I am against the proposal. Either build on the Chena Bypass, or build a pipeline from the refinery to Ship Creek. Do not disrupt the lives of thousands of people! P.S. Have you thought about limiting trains from the refinery to the hours between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. for least disruption of traffic?

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Duke Way)*

The best option is the original northern realignment which can be engineered for safety. There will be less cost overruns on the northern realignment. The southern realignment is silly! Not only is it more expensive, but placing track on unstable Tanana River bank that is prone to flooding and erosion will lead to many expensive engineering repairs in the future. Building new bridges on the lower Chena River will impact both business and recreational use of the river.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Fort Wainwright area (Tall Spruce Road)*

I believe more routes should be considered rather than a rail down the Parks Highway. That is really unacceptable. Too dangerous, obviously. Moving a track from one place to another busy area does not make for good planning. .

- *Fairbanks Resident, between University West and Hamilton Acres (Gilmore Street)*

While I can appreciate the need and desire of any business to increase operating efficiency and to enhance safety, I do not believe it should be done at the expense of the residents effected by the Parks Highway Route. I therefore strongly oppose this plan.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West (Dartmouth Road)*

I would find it helpful to have up-to-date maps with the major streets names on it. Have the legend very clear so the person can see the different routes from a few feet away. Have the current routes clearly posted (as opposed to the historical routes and earlier proposals).

I would not like to see a route on the Parks Highway.

Creating a railroad industrial corridor south of town would be the best. A new route to avoid town.

- *Fairbanks Resident*

I have lived in on the Parks Highway side of Dartmouth Drive since 1992. In 1996 the Parks Highway was expanded to 4 lanes. From that time on, I have not been able to hold a conversation in a normal tone of voice while sitting in my backyard. The traffic noise is so great that I must keep my windows that face the highway closed while I sleep or else I am unable to get to sleep and stay asleep. While the highway was being expanded, the road machinery shook my house so much and so often that it loosened the wiring in my doorbell so that it is unusable to this day. As large trucks drive down the highway and cross the bridge over the river, their tires thump and vibrate my house as well.

I'm telling you this because I do not want a railroad track to run down the highway behind my house which will only add to the noise and vibrations that are already in evidence. If the railroad were in the center median, there would be nowhere to push the snow in the winter. The lights from the train would be too bright for travelers to see well. The speed of the train would cause snow to fly into the road. There are many more minuses to the situation.

Please choose another route for the train to go.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West (Dartmouth Drive)*
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OPPOSED TO CHENA PUMP OPTION(S)

I object to the two Chena Pump alternatives to the Eielson Branch Realignment because:

1. Chena Pump Road is the only access to the high-density residential area from University West to the Pump House. During the past five years, the area surrounding this road has experienced a construction boom of costly homes and man-made lakes resulting in thousands of residents and increasing traffic. The introduction of freight trains into the mix would not only be a safety hazard, but also bring traffic to a halt on the only road in and out of the area.
2. A railroad bridge across the Chena in a residential area- what an attractive nuisance! No matter the legality, it will end up a place to fish from, dive off, and cross the river. How ironic that the east alternative looks like it will cross at a Binkley property. What will the Discovery III do?

If the railroad is in such a hurry to get to the refinery and Eielson, why not utilize the intertie corridor and have a "bullet train" straight from Healy to these two major customers? Perhaps GVEA, ConocoPhillips, AEIDA (Healy Clean Coal) and Usibelli might consider a joint venture.

P.S. Please use current maps when showing potential routes.

- *Fairbanks Resident, University West area*

We are against the Chena Pump alternative. We want a better map and addresses to the ARRC Board of Directors to voice our opposition.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Chena Pump area*

We are strongly opposed to Chena Pump Route option for freight or any rail realignment. A bridge over the mouth of the Chena is most ludicrous idea. Also, Chena Ridge properties facing east will be most impacted negatively by amphitheatre affect that tremendously increases noise. Chena Marina Airport is a testament to that.

Also areas behind the airport are used by many recreational users – hunters, dog training groups, swimming, water recreation, fishing,. Putting a rail through there will negatively impact if not eliminate these activities.

Along Chema Pump and Roland, Chena Point Drive – traffic is already heavy and congested. Would the plan be fore rail over passes, or would delays, road closures, etc., be what we'd experience? The area at the base of Chena Ridge is being looked at as a future green belt area. A rail through there conflicts with that. It is very wet and home to moose, fox, cranes, etc. Thank you!

- *Fairbanks Resident South of Airport off of Chena Pump Road (Edby Road)*

I own land close to the base of the Chena Ridge. Route "D" will severely impact that whole neighborhood. Your talking about routing a freight line through a predominantly residential area, affecting several roads into subdivisions on the ridge. Noise will affect all owners in the area, not to mention the uproar building a bridge over the mouth of the Chena will cause. Residents throughout the lower 48 deal with trains through their town areas all the time. Leave the route through town above and spend the money on getting to Delta/Ft Greely and beyond.

- North Pole Resident; Chena Ridge area Landowner

Congratulations! Routing the RR down Chena Pump Road is the worst idea of the year, and with Frank as Governor, that is going some. The Chena Pump route will impact the most people and send who knows what through residential areas. Chena Pump is residential, not commercial and not even residential/commercial. On second thought, routing the RR through Frank's front yard may be a plan to consider.

- Fairbanks Resident; Chena Ridge area (Katya Court)

PROPONENT OF CHENA PUMP BYPASS OPTION

What will drive the decision as to options for Fairbanks freight realignment? Will the overriding priority be for the economic and financial best interests of the railroad, or will it be what is in the best environmental interests of the people of the Fairbanks area? We recognize that the railroad contributes a necessary part of our well being here, but at the same time, it is intrusive and disruptive. How can the railroad and we of the community best accommodate the roads benefits and mitigate its intrusiveness?

Option #1 is in the economic best interests for the railroad as it is in the most direct route and also provides access to much federal highway funds to finance the project. However for the homes and people most affected, it greatly increases disruptive noise. It will require moving both lanes of highway traffic closer to the edges of the right of way, thus increasing the highway noise, plus adding the rail noise. It will also provide a visual blight for persons looking out the windows of their homes. It will also provide problems for snow removal for the highway.

Option #2 and #3 are obviously not in the best economic interest for the railroad. Both would be more costly in construction.

Option #2 appears to disrupt the environmental well being of fewer of the people of Fairbanks than either of the other two options and would pose fewer construction problems. I would support Option #2 if the road could be realigned further west of Chena Pump Road and University West.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Amherst Drive)

First, I'd like to congratulate you on how well they conducted the meeting in Fairbanks today.

Second, I'm 66 years old. There is a possibility that I won't be around to see any realignment. However, I've lived in Fairbanks for 56 years and I'm interested in how this city will look and operate in the future. I'd prefer the Foot Hills approach, but it doesn't appear to be one of the options at this time.

Therefore, in my opinion, Option #2 is the best of the three offered. It provides room for expansion and will adversely affect the lest amount of people. The bridge over the Chena would also give the tourists on the Riverboat Discovery something else to look at. Options #1 and #3 are least desirable. Both would impact a great many people and neither provides room for expansion. In addition, Option #1 would negate any thought of expanding the Parks Highway in that area. Good luck.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Stanford Drive)

Please don't waste what money you do have on studies. Go for one or two choices. The Chena River option is the most least bothering to the community. Go around. Hamilton Acres is not workable.

- Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (Glacier Avenue)

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- 1) Not too long ago, we were hearing that the impetus for this is that Fort Wainwright did not want through trains traveling through the post – This looks like the same plan and same map as then, but now all of a sudden no mention of this. Any reason why?
 - 2) 5 or 6 years ago, we were hearing talk, in conjunction with the realignment of moving the rail yards to a location between the Mitchell Expressway and the Tanana River. This would be a smart move for the future of this community. Let's hope that if this is at all still on the table, that you're not waiting until future development makes it impossible.
 - 3) Along those same lines, the sooner the better when it comes to selecting a route and acquiring right of way. Vacant land is currently seeing an astronomical increase in its assessed value, to the point where it is just like in Anchorage 5 years ago. Most landowners will not be able to afford to just sit on it. Any delay will just drive up the cost of the project.
 - 4) BTW, my preferred alternative is Chena Pump (main), with the North Pole segments to the refinery passing south of existing neighborhoods/subdivisions on the south side of the Rich as much as possible.

- Fairbanks Resident

When looking at the choices, I strongly support the Chena Pump alternative. I honestly think building a rail line down the median will greatly increase traffic accidents, traffic congestion, loss of tourist revenue to Fairbanks, and a drop in property values in many neighborhoods. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth to hear you saying it will relieve noise in N.E. neighborhoods, so you gladly dump your problems on residents already coping with airplanes flying over our houses. And remember, all those tourists staying in Sophia's Station will hear it as well. And the thought of icy roads, a spinning car, and an oncoming train are oh so pleasant. Please go with the Chena Pump route. The choice is logical.

- Fairbanks Resident, just east of the Airport, (Roberts Road)

It is a ridiculous waste of money and a hazard to run trains down the Parks Highway. I am against the proposal. Either build on the Chena Bypass, or build a pipeline from the refinery to Ship Creek. Do not disrupt the lives of thousands of people! P.S. Have you thought about limiting trains from the refinery to the hours between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. for least disruption of traffic?

- Fairbanks Resident, University West Area, (Duke Way)

It is my understanding that the Eielson Branch Realignment is considered a top priority by the ARRC and that it will probably proceed approximately as planned. This appears to me to be a positive decision and I have no comments other than favorable.

Regarding the south of town rerouting, I would like to enter the following statement:

I sincerely believe that serious reconsideration should be given to a south of town routing that would abandon the Parks Highway Median concept and would instead parallel the Chena Pump Road ROW and have a single railroad-only bridge crossing the Chena River near

the southwest end of the Fairbanks International Airport to then tie in to the desired routing on the top of the flood control levee.

The concept of using the existing narrow median on the Parks Highway involving a Chena River Bridge and elevated Airport Road Crossing, an elevated highway crossing at University Avenue, and a south bound Parks Highway Crossings as well as an elevated road crossing at Cartwright Road and a RR Slough Crossings in Section 19 all would add up to considerable cost. There would be not doubt a substantial addition ROW cost as well as construction safety concerns and operational safety negatives for the future.

Using the Chena Pump Road parallel ROW with an elevated Chena Pump Road crossing when the ARR ROW turns east to cross the Chena and the Railroad Bridge over the Chena certainly could results in an total lower project cost as well as lower highway safety concerns and traffic delays. The Railroad Bridge over the Chena could be built economically during winter, low water months.

The comparisons noted above may not be exactly (apples to apples), but I sincerely believe this alternative deserves careful review.

- Fairbanks Resident

PROPONENT OF CHENA PUMP or PARKS HWY OPTIONS

Option #1 – Parks Highway Bypass – make the most sense as it addresses most of the problems both short and long term and will be the most cost effective. It improves railroad operations and will eliminate 80% of the train conflicts with road traffic, which are becoming even more of a problem due to increased traffic particularly on the Steese Expressway, the Old Steese Highway and College Road. The other options do not make sense, therefore should not be pursued.

- *Fairbanks Resident*

It makes no sense to spend time and money on the Eielson (via Trainor Gate) realignment when the real issue is that the line carrying freight to Fort Wainwright, the refinery, Eielson AFB and future sites (Delta, Ft. Greely, Natural Gas Plant, etc.) should be moved out of town to a more southerly route.

The current line was built at a time when it bypassed Fairbanks and kept any associated hazards away from the population center. Over time, the town now has large residential neighborhoods on both sides of the tracks, a new major commercial north of the line and at least a half dozen schools within close proximity. At the same time, rail traffic has increased and includes many hazardous materials, which put us all at risk if there should be an accident or spill.

Given the large number of rail crossings, including at least 4 major traffic arteries, an accident seems more than likely. And one can't just ignore the noise pollution that residents have to endure.

The proposed realignment would cut off several crossings in the Hamilton Acres area, increasing the traffic pressure at the remaining crossing. This will coincide with a time when two new neighborhoods will be adding their traffic to this general area. The Railroad intends to then increase the speed and length of trains through town so that more materials can transit through these areas, in our opinion, just upping the risk of a major environmental disaster.

The only realignment that makes sense in view of safety is the southern route nearer the Tanana, south of the population and commercial centers of Fairbanks.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (Iditarod Avenue)*

The Parks/Mitchell option is, in my mind, still the best option. It minimizes the residential property contact adjacency. It has the least number of at-grade crossings. Any neighbor who wants should be able to sell outright to the railroad for resale (after construction) or be offered a noise easement payment. This has been done in Anchorage near the airport and elsewhere.

A viaduct will raise the noise source, spreading it over a wider area.

The Chena Pump option exposes even more folks to the railroad noise, especially with so many living above the grade. Also there are more bad soils and conditions.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (Kody Drive)*

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be heard. I would like the decision-maker to consider the southern route as the optimum train route due to the multiple safety issues for our residents.

When I think about the safety hazards of transporting jet fuel and other flammables through out neighborhoods at a faster rate, I get nervous. I have thought about the unthinkable possibility of a train derailment or an accident involving jet fuel in the middle of residential neighborhood, I get nervous. I am concerned about the long-term affects of being exposed to those toxins that travels through our neighborhood at a faster pace and the possibility of exposing residents to those toxins if there were an accident.

Beside the issue of what you transport that makes me nervous, I am even more concerned about the many children (elementary school and middle school children) that cross the railroad tracks to get to school. If a child has to wait for a longer train to pass in the middle of the winter (40 below at times), I am betting that children will rather make the train, than wait for the train to pass. Or some adults that lack better judgment and attempt to make the train in their vehicles. Longer faster train traveling through a residential neighborhood just does not make good business sense when choosing to take such risks and accept the liability.

I support the military and their presence. I support the train companies and their goals. However, I strongly urge the decision makers to find a better way to accomplish the same goal. Plan the southern route and keep us all safe while you continue the business of transporting safety and efficiently without sacrificing lives.

- Fairbanks Resident, Shannon Park area, (Dunbar Avenue)

HAMILTON ACRES FORM LETTER

RE: National Environmental Protection Act Comments
Alaska Railroad Route Proposals

I am a concerned citizen and resident of Hamilton Acres subdivision in Fairbanks, Alaska. My concerns are about the safety of my neighborhood, the school children, and the public in general because of increased hazardous material traffic via the railroad through out neighborhood. There are three public schools, a private school, and numerous day care facilities, as well as the extensive residential area impacted by railroad traffic. The railroad proposal to increase the length of the trains and to up the speed of the trains exponentially increases the dangers to our neighborhood.

Also, the additional traffic of approximately 900 vehicles from the current Birchwood neighborhood into Hamilton Acres (proposed date of May 2007) will also have a cumulative impact on the railroad traffic and safety.

I am opposed to the railroad proposal for these increases in train traffic and the closures of neighborhood access roads on the Eielson Branch. I support the southern railroad bypass which would remove this train traffic from a residential and child-oriented neighborhood. I believe that the southern route will serve Fort Wainwright and the North Pole Refinery equally as efficiently s the current route, while reducing dangers to the neighborhood. The saving of one life is worth more than the increased cost of the southern route.

41 households in the Hamilton Acres area submitted this form letter with 1-2 signatures.

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- Raise the track = landlocks two major family communities
 - Raise the speed = safety risk for family communities.
 - Hazardous waste = safety risk for thousands

What was once a rural route is no more. The city has grown and will continue to grow and it is truly time to MOVE the train out of town.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (Eureka Avenue)*

The A.R.R. freight trains should be rerouted to the south of Fairbanks, away from residential neighborhoods, schools and highways.

Freight trains block vehicle traffic at College Road, Old and New Steese Highways. Vehicle traffic has greatly increased since the building of Bentley East Shopping area. This is the largest shopping area in Fairbanks.

Vehicle traffic is very busy in the Bentley East area without train activity. After crossing both Steese highways, trains continue next to Shannon Park, then through Hamilton Acres and close to three schools – Nordale Elementary, Tanana J.H.S. and Ladd Elementary – as it goes to Ft. Wainwright, Flint Hills Refinery, or Eielson and someday Delta.

God only knows what kinds of HAZARDOUS MATERIAL you are hauling to and from these places, other than petroleum products.

The A.R.R. cannot continue using residential neighborhoods, crossing busy highways, plus very close to schools as your freight route.

I hope the A.R.R. will start looking into freight rail changes very soon.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (“E” Street)*

Please choose other route via south Fairbanks!

- Kids safety
- Noise
- Speed
- Environmental issues

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area, (Ketchikan Avenue)*

I am in favor of realignment of the freight rails if the new plan takes the track around town. I have concerns about safety if we continue to have hazardous materials coming through our neighborhoods. I live in Hamilton Acres and have noticed a remarkable increase in train noise at night in the past two years compared to the 15 previous years. It is really getting intolerable and we are a few blocks away. Something needs to change.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area)*

We would like to go on record as supporting the Parks Highway route as the only long term solution which will address the substantial safety issues of over 40 at grade crossings in our community.

Every day our community is at risk at these crossings. As you are aware the trains are getting longer and our town is growing larger which results in bigger negative impacts to the traveling public. It also impacts our dump truck drivers and our large other trucks which move equipment and materials around the community. There is lost productivity by our employees sitting at the rail crossings, expensive fuel being idled away and the resulting pollution, as well as the potential for accidents. The impacts are not only felt by our large truck drivers but by the 30 pickups running around the community each day as well as the 200 employees that drive to work and home from work each day.

This can be remedied by the Parks Highway route. We recommend a continuous welded rail through the University West and Rivers Edge areas. This impact could also be minimized by concrete retaining walls that limit the visual and noise impacts along each side of the rail. These could also be built to give a planting bed along the base of the concrete walls which would make the project very attractive and help reduce visual and noise impacts. We would recommend that the trains slow down through this area.

We know the costs are large but with high oil prices, which results in more discretionary dollars in Juneau and the strength of our congressional congregation in Washington D. C. we believe it can be accomplished if the will of the railroad is there.

We would also like to go on record that the existing main line through Ft. Wainwright be continued as a spur to the eleven mile Richardson Highway area. This area is our future industrial area and rail service should continue to be available.

As Fairbanks grows we must address these at grade crossings now and do what it takes to move the freight more effectively and with less impact to the public. It won't get any cheaper to build these projects in the future.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

- Fairbanks Resident

PROPONENT OF TRAINOR GATE VIADUCT OPTION

Due to the recent multimillion dollar realignment at UAF, it makes NO sense to basically abandon that line. I feel your option 3 – Viaduct at Tanana – is probably the best option for the affected neighborhoods. With the Railroad at UAF, the sound is bearable. I can only imagine what an ELEVATED (in our poor soils!) line going down the middle of the Parks or next to the Chena Pump would be like. Geist, Chena Pump and the Parks are equally as busy as east Fairbanks is becoming. There are far less affected homes in the existing route and the Tanana Viaduct. So by moving the line to the Geist area, you will have effectively destroyed or substantially devalued hundreds of homes.

However, in 26 years of dealing with Fairbanks and Alaska government rulings and bureaucracy, I have yet to find a decision that truly reflects the opinion of the people affected by the final decision. I have little hope that public opinion will sway the decisions being made.

- Fairbanks Resident, just north of Airport area (York Avenue)

Have you considered an underground train? Initially, it may be more money, but everyone would be happier, now and with future development in and around the train corridor.

I support the Viaduct option #3. I think the Chena Pump Option #2 will just add many more crossings and safety problems and I think Option #1 will be a huge safety issue.

My husband and I are developing 18 high-end condominiums fronting on the Chena River, the Parks Highway (at the bridge), and Condor Court. The foundations are in and we will begin framing in the next two weeks. A rail down the Parks Highway will seriously hurt our development. Already the noise from the Fairbanks International Airport, and from the Parks Highway is our biggest concern with marketing this project.

On another note, I also drive the Parks Highway every day. I look at the median and just can't fathom a train running down the middle of it safely. What effect will the headlights have on motorists? I think it will have dire consequences for motorists, much more so than the crossings already in place.

I have been on the Parks Hwy during and after snowstorms, when drivers with 4x4s rudely think they can pass in the fluffy snow in the fast lane. The billowing snow (as little as an inch or two) completely blinds other drivers for several seconds. It's pretty scary to say the least.

Also, the police use the median for emergency response turnaround. They recently graveled turnarounds on both sides of the Chena River Bridge. Have you contacted the Alaska State Troopers for their comments or concerns?

Thank you for your consideration.

RECAP:

- Yes to Option #3 – These people have built, bought and developed around an existing rail. They don't have the added airport noise pollution in their area. An underground railroad would be even better.
- No to Option #2 – Too many road crossings.
- No to Option #1 – Noise pollution. Headlights from oncoming trains. Billowing snow from trains. Emergency response slowdown. Will destroy the Parks Highway natural Appeal.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Perch Drive)

OPPONENT OF TRAINOR GATE VIADUCT OPTION

[Supports southern railroad by pass, which would remove train traffic from a residential and child-oriented neighborhood] I also oppose the elevated tracks that you had as Phase 3 at West Valley High School. This Phase 3 should have been presented to the neighbors at the Ladd School meeting on June 12, 2006. Personally, I think all the tracks on Trainor Gate should be removed and turned into trails. Trains should not be in a neighborhood with so many kids playing and traffic.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area ("F" Street)*

PROPONENT OF FOOTHILLS OPTION

NOTE: The Foothills alignment was a recommendation of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Rail 2100 Task Force. The proposal would develop a new railroad alignment from the Rex area eastward along the foothills of the Alaska Range to the Blair Lakes area of the Tanana Flats Military Training area, then north to the North Pole Refinery, then onto the Tanana Levee westward to the FNSB Landfill, or even as far as the Fairbanks International Airport.

Foothills route. Please put this option up. The Parks Highway option looks great on paper – until you talk with people who live there and have built businesses there. Please give us an alternative that we as a community can live with.

[The public meeting July 18] was a study on how not to run a meeting. Please, please get your act together. The maps are unclear, fuzzy, and years out of date. For those of us interested in more than our neck of the woods, we would very much like to hear the comments and questions of others. For example, I really don't want you to use the Chena Pump options; there are too many people who live in this area who are already established. (I feel like the Trainor Gate area was built up around the railroad, so what do they expect? When you live there, the trains will run.) But running munitions and hazardous waste through neighborhoods is just wrong. This was just one comment that I heard. I'm sure there are many more, but I couldn't hear them. Unfortunately, it seems all of your options are not viable. If you take another 4-5 years to come up with more, Fairbanks will have expanded to make those obsolete also.

- Fairbanks Resident, just west of Chena Ridge Road (Kay Street)

I like the Foothills Route that was [formerly] suggested. I think that the Parks Highway Route is frivolous. You might as well remove the freeway for the inconveniences it will be making.

- Fairbanks Resident, just east of the Airport (Roberts Road)

PROPONENT OF TANANA FLATS / GVEA-INTERTIE OPTION

Note: The Tanana Flats alignment was noted in the Fairbanks North Star Borough's 2001 Rail Task Force (FNSB RTF 2100) study. The alignment turns east near Nenana and follows the GVEA Intertie, just south along the Tanana River, on military land, until reaching Fort Wainwright. According to the FNSB RTF 2100 report, "the Tanana Flats route was not imagined or investigated as part of the FNSB RTF 2100 study. There were a number of strong objections by the Task Force during deliberations, as well as by the general public. The condition of the rail bed foundation is expected to be questionable when crossing the Tanana Flats, and the use of federal military reservation lands would likely be difficult to authorize."

If the railroad is in such a hurry to get to the refinery and Eielson, why not utilize the intertie corridor and have a "bullet train" straight from Healy to these two major customers? Perhaps GVEA, ConocoPhillips, AEIDA (Healy Clean Coal) and Usibelli might consider a joint venture.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area

Thanks for the coffee, cookies and visiting other wonderful Fairbanksans! Please mail a copy of the handout (complete) – they were all gone.

Refer to all routes with number too, so I can follow. Send info out so we're informed – then have a meeting, with microphone (essential) and perhaps more seating (not essential).

Consider VERY strongly using intertie route across Tanana Flats and limit impact of any more rails through, across or around town.

And I love trains – but this whole thing seems a bit absurd.

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Dolly Varden Drive)

The Railroad down the center of the Parks Highway is a bad idea. Besides noise and the safety issue and lowering property values in developing neighborhoods – it's a bad idea; a waste of money.

Alternative would be bringing the train in from the Delta Area, crossing the Tanana Flats and Tanana River via bridge – a total realignment of the Railroad. Turn right at Nenana, and go across the Tanana Flats like the GVEA tie-line. South of Eielson.

How does the freight get to the ARR yard in the middle of Fairbanks?

- Fairbanks Resident, University West area (Wood River Drive)

OTHER OPTION COMMENTS

The Bentley Trust option needs to be explored as the BEST option. We need at least two crossings from Hamilton Acres.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres (Farewell Avenue)*

We feel that it is mandatory that at least two streets from Hamilton Acres be open to Trainor Gate – if you insist upon going through town!

The train needs to continue to go slow if it goes through town.

The train needs to go around town! We need to secure funding to explore Bentley Trust!.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area (Craig Avenue)*

Around the city only choice. No other reasonable choice. Eliminate 11 crossings.

- *Fairbanks Resident*

- Viaduct – very expensive vs. southern route around town. Viaduct = high maintenance. Do under ground, not over through viaduct.
- Go under the Chena River instead of over the river. Maybe same around south part of the airport.
- If go with viaduct, need exit streets to Trainor Gate for C, D, E, F.
- Military Housing can exit directly onto Trainor Gate, east of “F” intersection.
- Leave ARR Yard, go north of Johannsen and over (or under) Steese Expressway by Birch Hill.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area (Juneau Avenue)*

First, sound of train does not bother me – I enjoy the train – seeing and hearing it.

Second, Don't want C, D, E, F streets blocked off! In 30 years of living on Baronof and D streets, I've never seen an accident on those cross streets! Having only Trainor Gate to leave neighborhoods would be terrible! What happens to EMTS, fire trucks, etc?

Third, I trust the Alaska Railroad experts to do what is best for us. Moving track north of Johannsen Expressway seems like a good idea! Intersection of Trainor Gate and Old Steese needs help!

Good luck and God bless you all.

- *Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area (Baranof Avenue)*

In regards to ARR's proposal to limit or eliminate traffic crossings along Trainor Gate, I would like to express my concern.

I am a resident of Shannon Park and feel that the crossings in question are necessary given the increasing traffic flow from expanding commercial and residential growth in east Fairbanks. If ARR's proposal were to go through, the intersection at Steese and Trainor Gate would be the only access/egress for area residents and school traffic. This intersection has become dangerous with a surge in commercial traffic (those going to Fred Meyer, Home Depot, WalMart, etc.) and increased train and vehicle traffic would simply compound the problem.

Beyond inconvenience, I am concerned that limiting access/egress to a single, dangerous intersection with heavy traffic also will put Shannon Park residents at risk of not being able to reach timely emergency services. If yet another vehicular accident occurs at Steese and Trainor Gate and I am in need of an ambulance or fire engine at my home, I will not be able to receive the care I need in a timely manner since there would no longer be alternative routes available. The same limitation will be put on students attending area schools.

I wonder about the fate of Hamilton Acres students who will undoubtedly cross the tracks to walk/bike home from school whether or not there is a designated crossing. I can assure you, they will not walk/bike all the way to Steese, down to Farewell, and backtrack down to their homes when they can cross the tracks and traverse a fraction of the distance. If train traffic were to increase its frequency and speed through our residential area, this would be hazardous.

I noticed that some of the area crossings had counters on them for a couple of weeks in July for what I can only assume is a traffic study of the area. I propose that another count be taken after school starts to get a fair assessment, as traffic patterns change dramatically at that time.

Thank you for welcoming public comments. I hope you give them the attention they deserve.

- Fairbanks Resident, Shannon Park area (Droz Drive)

COMMENTS ABOUT MEETING / PROJECT INFORMATION

Please clarify the ARR Project website to show this project and proposed alternatives. Current Fairbanks project web page shows approximately 4 projects and no information on this one. Consequently, members of the public are not aware of this unless they know enough to burrow into various studies and look on the proper pages. Whether intended or not, this gives the impression that the projects has 1) gone away; or 2) is being pushed through under the radar. Thank you.

NOTE: While a project fact sheet had been posted on the ARRC web site a few days prior to the public meeting July 12, ARRC has since posted an array of information on this project, and it is clearly labeled on the Fairbanks Projects page. The current posted information includes an updated fact sheet, display boards available at the public meeting, enlarged maps of the three options currently under consideration, a comment form, and links to the Fairbanks-to-North Pole Rail Realignment Reconnaissance Study (2001) and the Fairbanks-to-North Pole Rail Realignment Phasing Report (2002).

- Fairbanks Resident

If you can't organize your meeting better than this, you will never get the train to run.

- Fairbanks Resident, Hamilton Acres area (Craig Avenue)

Meeting had potential to be very informative, but it was so poorly managed it was difficult to hear and get meaningful information. Too bad. But it is great and important to have get together to pass information. Great effort!

- Fairbanks Resident, northeast outskirts, off Murphy Dome Road

First, please use a microphone so all can hear at future meetings.

Second, what was the Task Force's recommendations? Who needed to adopt it and why wasn't it adopted?

Third, it is imperative that the best option is used to keep hazardous material from being within the city. That option may not be the most economical, but should be pursued.

- Fairbanks Residents, (Chief William Drive)

- Public address system.
- Charts in front of group.
- Guest speakers in front of group.
- Schedule meetings after 6:00 p.m. Mon-Thurs
- PA System for Audience so questions can be heard
- Bring circulating fans on a hot day!

- Fairbanks Resident
