

ELECTRONIC COMMENTS

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Comment Report

Commenter Name	Comment	Comment Date
Vern Halter	<p>Hello Patty, Neither Erin Mc Lamorn who is president WDMA or Steve Charles who is President of Willow Trail committee know anything about your e-mail. WDMA and Trails work closely on issues such as this. Erin McLarnon would have responded to you right away and the same can be said for Steve. WACO chaired by Linda Oxley would set meetings and agendas too. When the original 2003 study was done no one bothered to set a meeting up in Willow. The State Parks was not involved and this route goes right through Willow Creek State Park and Willow Creek yet Willow's name is used for a route that has huge negative consequences to Willow. When you read that study it was fundamentally flawed in almost all respects. This was commissioned by the Mat Su Borough, yet you knew and know we were left out. Now all of a sudden you say you e-mailed "them" the mushers for a meeting. I didn't receive anything and I am on the Borough Planning commission, Erin didn't receive anything and she is the President of the Mushers. Steve didn't receive anything and he is Pres of the Trail committee. I haven't talked to Linda yet but she is very responsive to those kind of things. Please make sure this is added as public comment to the Rail hearings and we respectfully request that Willow's good name not be associated with a route we had no opportunity to provide input to in 2003. Regards, Vern Halter Dream a Dream Dog Farm P.O. Box 389 Willow, AK 99688 1-866-4AK-MUSH (425-6874) www.vernhalter.com</p>	9/18/2007
Gary Stromberg	INTERESTED IN ROUTES AND IMPACT ON CURRENT AND FUTURE PROPERTY OWNERS.	9/18/2007
Karen Nugen-Logan	<p>Per today's edition of the Frontiersman, Sept 18, we can view plans/routes,etc for the proposed macrail at www.port-macrail.com. Can you advise when they'll be available to view. We're very interested since our property is in the immediate area. Thank you.</p>	9/18/2007

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<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Paul Gardner	A rail route to Port MacKenzie is well over do. This project need to be moved forward for all the right reasons. Jobs, natural resource development, future commercial development and housing that will follow. Thank-you for your time	9/19/2007
Debra Huling-Pizak	I am extremely concerned about the recreational impact on this prime outdoor recreational area. As a Willow cabin owner, I already have noise and trail blockage by the current rail line. I am strongly opposed to this project. Private property owners will lose on this deal and only big business will gain.	9/21/2007
Mike Huske	Complete waste of state resources. A rail spur to a port with no business makes about as much since as building a ferry or bridge. There has been one ship there this year to pick up wood chips that sat there since last summer and that's it. Build it and they will come. I don't think so. With the declining funds available to the state they should be used for viable projects not pipe dreams.....	9/21/2007
Vern Halter	I am one hundred per cent opposed to Corridor 3. This route literally destroys the community of Willow. Willow is a rural recreational community trying to maintain this identity. Our economic base and future depend on this. Tourism and recreation and trails define this community. Crossing through Willow Creek State Park, then our rich salmon stream-Willow Creek is a travesty. Corridor 3 is the longest, most costly and most environmentally unsound of all choices. The Community of Willow was never even allowed to be involved in the 2003 selection process. No meetings were held here. The State Parks division was not such a location. Willow is now turned into a rail town with two rail corridors two or three miles apart. You cannot mitigate the long term damage to the future of this community if Corridor 3 is developed like this. The Iditarod Race which produces more jobs, more money and supports mushers wants to relocate to Willow. The Iditarod National Historic Trail which can easily be accessed right out of Willow has as a preamble a roadless, wilderness trail routing. To have a commercial rail line go through Willow when it is not truly necessary is a travesty. There are many other shorter and better alternatives. The Railroad is supposedly about tourism, yet it would directly negatively impact local tourism and local family owned small operators here in Willow. The Railroad aligns itself with the large cruise ship operators and over crowds Talkeetna and Denali Park at the same time it shortchanges Willow. John Binkley, the CEO of the Railroad Board would no doubt be seriously mad if a Rail Bridge over the Chena River was planned where his tour boats operate. Yet the Railroad has the audacity to call Route 3 preferred and it goes through our State Park-Willow Creek State Park and our great fishing, rafting and tourist river-Willow Creek. To pinch in a commercial rail line between the current rail line and the Susitna River to the west bisects Willow and no doubt will reduce property values and reduce quality of life which is why people are here.	9/22/2007

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<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
John Himmelrig	The Houston south route will cut off my driveway. I and other neighbors can't get out. What will the rail do if it cuts me off? North side of Little Horseshoe Lake. Only way out is across the lake. (Patty submitted this)	9/25/2007
Jack Hammon	I own 5 Acres @ Settlers Bay and I vote for the Big Lake Route.	9/25/2007
William Luth	This rail link is a waste of money! It will mess a great recreational area! All summer and winter trails must have underpasses and crossings. And if you do waste the money the best and the only area wanting it is the Houston South Route. Please don't ruin Willows wonderful Parks and our large area of TRAILS!!!!	9/25/2007
Bill Fikes	Why not create a coalition with the port mac to anch bridge project, share the project costs and have a direct access from pt mac to the anch yards for the rail? I'm thinking a rail line running under a 4 lane auto.	9/26/2007
Paul R. DuClos Jr.	I support the Rail extension. I prefer the Willow route in hope that the road will follow as soon as the Bridge is constructed. I also think that this route will have less impact on the existing population and has good gravel sources.	9/26/2007
Peg Watkins	The Houston extension, running along the N side of Horseshoe lake is unacceptable; there are 85 homeowners on the lake, more than 1/2 are year-round residences, not rec cabins. The noise, the dust, the construction would upset the ecosystem as it exists right now. The Borough road service is already pathetic there, and you want to add something else? Ridiculous.	9/27/2007

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Sharon Kosmalski	<p>1. In previous meetings it was stated the public would have opportunities to comment during the current assessments which are currently contracted. No information has been brought forward as to HOW or WHEN this input could be given or HOW it will be incorporated into these preliminary studies.</p> <p>2. The long term effects on Willow as a current and future playground for Anchoragites, Valleyites and tourists, and the negating impact the rail will have if it splits the Houston/Willow area, need to be considered and studied in-depth. If, in 4 years the "studies" could go from a 20-year forecast showing NO fiscal benefit, to the current analysis which DOES show a benefit, the long-term impacts on recreation - what this state is about, also need to be included and forecasted out to incorporate how the growth will seek to recreate in our area.</p> <p>3. There are places to put this rail that will negate any impacts to previously unsuspecting (read; nondisclosure) landowners.</p> <p>4. There are places where the ROW is already largely existing. The borough and the railroad should seek to utilize these area.</p> <p>5. Impacts to anadromous waters should be avoided.</p> <p>6. Impacts to wetlands should also be avoided. The shortest route will accomplish this.</p>	9/30/2007
John Fray	<p>I recently heard about the proposed Point Mackenzie rail extension project. I am personally opposed to it, and have very much to loose! It appears that one proposal has the rail coming through an area of large homestead parcels, between Three Mile lake and Big Lake. We have a very unique community, secluded and quiet, and would like to keep it that way. Even if the rail did not come on my property, it would destroy the environment with noise, and affect huge areas of wetlands.</p> <p>Myself and all my neighbors will be interested in the proceedings, and would like to be heard in this process.</p>	10/2/2007

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Ray Debenham	<p>I attended your Big Lake presentation last night and heard some things which disturbed me.</p> <p>First, after seven previous studies, costing millions of dollars, you are now proposing yet another study.</p> <p>Second, in the 1990's, after spending many months evaluating possibilities, the Borough and the council I served on agreed that the corridor shown on the map last night as the "Houston Corridor" was NOT to be recommended. We all felt that this interrupted too many recreational sites and it would be best to find a corridor which would not interrupt the Big Lake recreation area in its entirety. I think the Borough needs to consider the economic impact which recreation brings to their area. I know that the "Houston Corridor" and most probably the "Big Lake Corridor" would greatly reduce the amount of recreational opportunities in the area. I am equally positive that many people would not enjoy their cabins, fishing trips, snow machine trips, and boating with a coal train coming by every 5 to 10 minutes (based on information from previous study).</p> <p>Third, I am really disappointed that the Borough will not make a specific recommendation as to which route is preferred. We are aware the Federal Government will ultimately decide which route will be used; however, with the Mat-Su Borough stating "they do not care", that is construed to mean that they are not taking care of their citizens. Perhaps these elected officials do not truly have a vested interest in their borough or the citizens they represent.</p> <p>Fourth, I believe a presentation in Anchorage should be scheduled. I learned, during the last study, that a majority of the property which will be affected by this decision is owned by residents of Anchorage. You are obligated to get a true feeling on what Borough tax payers want to see happen on or near their property, therefore, one such presentation needs to be made in Anchorage to facilitate that process.</p> <p>If the Borough officials are unwilling to work with the Anchorage-based taxpayers, then, perhaps, the Anchorage-based land owners need to have a meeting and invite the Federal Officials to attend. At the very least, we would be put in a position of having to obtain a few thousand petition signatures stating what we think about the corridors shown on the map.</p> <p>Fifth, I have spoken with a representative for the Alaska Railroad and was told that they would not put in any new rail spurs unless they could find some way of generating enough freight to pay for the extension. The Alaska Railroad could not find that much freight going to Point MacKenzie. To me, this means the Alaska Railroad did not think an extension would be economically feasible. I do not care where the money is coming from, but, in the end, the taxpayers will be paying for the extension in some way unless some private group steps in to pay for it. I doubt that any private group would find the extension feasible.</p> <p>My recommendations:</p> <p>First: If you are going to build it anyway, then put it in a place where the extension interferes the least with local business and recreation opportunities. This could only be the proposed "Willow" extension.</p> <p>Second: The Mat-Su Borough should narrow its scope and recommend one route only as the preferred route. Without this recommendation, the Federal Government will pick the cheapest route, and</p>	10/3/2007

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	<p>from the studies I have seen, this would be right through the largest recreational area in the State of Alaska.</p> <p>In a quick count, there are a minimum of 143 recreation trails which cross the proposed "Houston Corridor." These trails include but obviously are not limited to: six large Big Lake Trails; the Crooked Lake Trail; the Iron Dog snow machine trail; and the Iditarod Dog Sled trail.</p> <p>Let's all work on this together and try to secure a location for the corridor in the least disruptive area possible. This will not happen unless the Borough participates and actively pursues the participation of all affected taxpayers.</p>	10/3/2007
Ron Travis	<p>I attended the meeting last night in Big Lake and listened to the proposals for use of the Port. They mentioned coal, and fertilizer plant using natural gas. I doubt that Seward is going to be quiet on the coal issue and are going to be trying to keep the coal in Seward. The fertilizer plant? Am't they closing the one in Kenia, Do we have a better deal or know something they don't know? Hauling limestone from Iivengood to the port. Can you imagine the storm that would create.</p> <p>It would seem to make more sense to get letters of intent from some of these people before moving ahead. Do you remember the grain silos??Also the dairy farms.</p>	10/3/2007
Marjorie Bellinger	<p>The proposed Willow route is to close to the Nancy Lake State Park. It should either be removed from consideration entirely or moved further to the west at least 5 miles.</p>	10/3/2007
David Wurts	<p>My wife and I would like to formally object to the Willow Alternative of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension.</p> <p>We own 30 acres of land at milepost 73 in Willow and are building our dream home on the property. We definitely do not want a rail line just south of the property as shown in your proposed layouts. We bought the Willow property because it is a quiet residential area with access to lots of mushing trails.</p> <p>I think that the rail extension through this area would dramatically alter the community feel of the area and ruin the reasons why we bought land where we did. I understand that the rail corridor may be an unavoidable reality in the future, but I do NOT feel that connecting to the existing line at the Willow junction is wanted by any resident in the area, ourselves included.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to share our opinion in this matter.</p>	10/3/2007

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Erik Johnson	I think the Willow route would be the least intrusive. It would not effect as many property owners. I have hiked to the Little-Su several times from the end of S. Big Lake road. Where exactly do you plan on crossing the Little-Su?	10/3/2007
George Howard Jr.	I am NOT in favor of the rail extension connection at Willow!! We, and the majority of those that also live in Willow, are living here because there are NO jobs, commerce, and development here. We spent our career's in that proximity, and now desire to live in an area as Willow is now! Houston appears to desire all that a connection at that point would bring, soooooo put it there. It would seem that the geology of that area would also be more beneficial????, and the wetlands impact would also be less. NOT IN WILLOW!!!	10/5/2007
John Scudder	A couple comments 1. This area is South Central Alaska's playground. People hunt, trap, ride atv and snowmobile here. What provisions are there for motorized and non motorized crossing. 2. Why isn't there an open house in Anchorage. A lot of the property owners live in Anchorage and a lot of Anchorage citizens recreate in this area.	10/5/2007
Stu Grenier	I am a big fan of the Red Shirt Lake area. I am glad to see the rail line goes west of Red Shirt Lake rather than through it. I hope that the Willow route is not developed. My opinion would change if ARRC would offer reasonable flag stop rates but since it cost \$40 to go from Anch to the Willow area for a flag stop I consider you guys high way robbers.	10/8/2007

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Earl Ramsey	<p>Red Shirt Lake Landowners Association 4330 Seeley Court Anchorage, Alaska 99502</p> <p>October 9, 2007</p> <p>HDR Alaska Inc. Port Mackenzie Rail Extension Comment 836 S Colony Way, Suite 2 Palmer, Alaska 99645</p> <p>To Whom It May Concern:</p> <p>As President of the Red Shirt Lake Landowners Association, I am submitting the following comments to object to the rail corridor being placed behind the ridge that parallels Red Shirt Lake.</p> <p>For thirty years, as an association, we have fought to keep Red Shirt a quiet and tranquil part of the Nancy Lake Park System. We have cooperated with the State Department of Parks and Recreation to accomplish this. There is no road to Red Shirt. It is accessible by trail and air only. By agreement with the state, we have a lake where personal watercraft is not allowed and we have placed restrictions on the boating times and aircraft landings on the lake. As far as we know it is the only lake in the valley with these restrictions.</p> <p>Red Shirt has a wonderful history as the most prolific subsistence lake in the Susitna Valley with Native villages located on the lake during the 1800's. The history of the lake is recorded in the book "Shem Pete's Alaska".</p> <p>There are several reasons for our objections for this proposed location of the proposed rail.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The noise factor in an area that has been set aside as a tranquil and quiet place for canoeing and recreational activity. 2. The large concentration of moose that gather on the back side of Red Shirt Ridge seeking shelter for the hunting pressure from the Susitna River Area. Opening up the rail corridor will simply put more pressure on them and the winter kill will be greatly increased. 3. The coal dust pollution is also objectionable this close to a large outdoor recreational Area. 4. The Willow corridor is the only one that requires crossing the Little Susitna River and bridging Willow Creek, among many other small streams that will require special handling. This corridor is also the most expensive and difficult to be constructed. It is estimated to cost an additional \$35 million dollars to construct. <p>After considering these objections, we feel that the Houston Corridor would be more acceptable to us.</p> <p>Yours truly,</p>	10/9/2007

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Don Hepler	It appears from the map that all proposed routes either go directly through or skirt current residential areas-- except possibly the Willow route, which would go through a major recreational area. The best route appears to be the Willow route and it seems to be the most direct, but would require over- or underpasses to accommodate the snowmachiners, dog mushers and others that access those areas, particularly in the winter months. All the proposed routes will make some groups unhappy, but routing potentially hazardous cargoes away from residential areas and schools would seem to be a priority over inconveniences to recreational users.	10/11/2007
Randy Tashjian	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I'm writing to express my concern for the possible Alaska Railroad spur line extension through the communities of Willow, Houston, Big Lake, Wasilla and Knik. Many issues remain to be addressed properly and fully, and these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The impact that the spur will have on the communities bisected by the rail line. 2) The impact that the spur will have on recreational trails, wildlife habitat, wetlands, rivers, and streams nearby. 3) The cost to taxpayers. <p>Before the extension of the spur line can proceed any further, I urge that these issues and concerns be addressed to minimize potential conflicts of interest. A response with your position on this important matter would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	10/11/2007

Comment Date

Comment

Commenter Name

10/11/2007

Richard Gaffey

I attended two of the five 'Open House' meetings regarding the Port Mackenzie Rail Extension last week, Big Lake Elementary and Houston Middle School. It was enlightening to learn of the extensive effort required to create a rail corridor that leaves all people and government entities happy. A daunting task.

I am not a wacko environmentalist. I understand the need for the rail extension and besides, trains are cool.

I am, however, very concerned about impact upon trails. To Friday's meeting, at Houston Middle School, I brought along maps to help me illustrate my concerns. Maps that I made and use when I, my family and friends, venture out on snowmachines crisscrossing the very same areas that are slated for the rail extension study. I, and many like me, are very concerned that we will loose something we hold most dear...unfettered access to the trails, swamps and marshes of the Big Lake-Houston-Willow area. Many of us choose to live here for just that reason. I myself could not afford a trailer for my two snowmachines, so I bought a home in Big Lake.

You will note that from my back yard I have access to the trail system that spreads over 275,000 acres. That's just the length and breath of the area I mapped...with enough gas I can ride to Nome.

Several of you expressed interest in my data. Well here it is.

GPS Snowmachine waypoints by RLG.txt is a CSV file type that can be massaged into working with any GIS software. The waypoints are the result of field observation with a Garmin GPSmap76, map-spotting utilizing either GoogleEarth or National Geographic TOPO and then verified by field proofing.

Snowmachine Trails.kmz is a GoogleEarth executable file

The four JPG images are the NW, NE, SE, SW Big Lake-Houston-Willow area...sorry my computer could not handle the write from TOPO to JPG. Break out the Scotch tape.

WOTRR.tpo is opened by National Geographic TOPO state series software.

These trails are nothing new to the thousands of folks that use the trails...be it mushing, XC skiing, snowmachine, ATV or bicycle in the Big Lake-Houston-Willow area...These are the trails ridden by myself, Rita Loomis and friends during the winters of '05-'06 & '06-'07 via snowmachine. I did not make these trails. They are just plotted as found. The old timers here about could, no doubt, add greatly to this data. I hear that many of these trails have names.

Your friends and neighbors use these trails, be they seismics, legally described section line ROW's or just critter trails that have been used by dog musher's for fifty years. Great care must be taken in placement of crossings to ensure continued and safe access to both sides of the track for all users. Should the crossings be inadequate in number or not in very close proximity to historical trails and limited only to those trails with a legal description, folks will cross and do so at risk. No one desires this issue to be tied up in the courts

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Lori Okuley	<p>where only the blood-sucking lawyers win. Make no mistake about it, we are your neighbors.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to present this wealth of free data. I am sure you will appreciate the time I invested to collect this data and the effort entailed to beat into submission the software to present it. Therefore I pray you will honor my request that my maps, plots, GPS point data and images not be used for any other purpose than the planning of the best possible rail corridor for your fellow Alaskans. Oh yeah...if I can be of any assistance with regard to my data presented here for your review, do not hesitate to call. It would be my pleasure to help.</p> <p>I would like to comment on the proposed rail route from Port Mackenzie to Houston. I am vehemently opposed to this route.</p> <p>My family has owned property on the northwest corner of Horseshoe Lake since 1955. Our property remained recreational until 2004 when my husband and I finished construction and moved into our retirement home. One of the reasons we choose to build our retirement home on the property was because of the peace and solitude we have in that location. We also heavily use the surrounding area for a variety of seasonal activities. Hiking and 4-wheeling during summer months as well as cross country skiing and snowmachining during winter months are just a few of the uses we consistently participate in. The Houston rail route would drastically change our way of life.</p> <p>There are also concerns regarding wildlife habitat. Some of those affected may be the moose that calve in the spring and sandhill cranes that nest in the summer throughout this area. There is also a large population of moose that winter here.</p> <p>Another concern I would like to address is the watershed. The drainage from Horseshoe Lake to the Little Susitna River would be blocked by the proposed Houston route. I have no doubt that water levels in the lake would raise due to the restricted drainage, the only question would be how much. The potential for flooding would increase for existing structures along the shoreline and could potentially cause homeowners to suffer repair or replacement expenses due to the placement of the rail line along the Houston route.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of my comments in opposition to the Houston route.</p>	10/12/2007

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Steve Charles	What is there a deadline for comments on this initial fall comment period?	10/15/2007
Kevin Hite	As a landowner to the west of the northernmost route, it is very concerning to me that this alternative may affect access to my property. The Alaska RailRoad has never been very accomodating to providing access through it's right of way, and I see nothing to this point that would contradict that position. In addition, we utilize this entire area trail system for both summer and winter access and recreation. Any net loss of that access and availability will by defination, negatively affect our property and recreation. We will be continuing to participate in this process as it moves along. Please include the supplied address in your mailing list. Thank you.	10/18/2007
Robert Sexton	I do not want to see the RailRoad come through Willow. I believe it would deteriate the way of life in Willow, and I see no economic benefit to Willow.	10/21/2007
Joe Guana	I like and agree with the project but must be assured that you will not be putting up barriers to snowmobile travel to the west. Installing full-blown corssings would be a bit much but if you would just put timbers between the tracks at intervals and sign them, snowmobilers would be able to safely and easily cross the tracks. Let's work together on this instead of opposing each other, as has happened in Broad Pass and other locations.	10/21/2007
Ken Ludy	I am a professional land surveyor who has lived, worked and recreated in this area for the past 30 yrs. I also own an ag parcel in Willow, and while not directly affected by the alignment there, do not want that choice because of it's impact on other farms and year round recreation in the entire area. It appears to me that the optimal cost/benefit ratio would be the Mac East/Conn 3/Houston/Houston North alignment. Respectfully Submitted, Ken Ludy	10/21/2007

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Steve Charles	<p>I am strongly opposed to the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension being built through Willow as described in the 2003 Rail Corridor Study and currently proposed in the latest study. The many reasons are listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A second rail line in a small, rural community would place undue hardship on residents, their property values, safety and quality of life. According to a 2004 survey by Willow2020 and the MSB, 90% of respondents chose Willow as a place to live and recreate because of the open country, beauty and quiet. Having two tracks within a recreation area is inviting trespass and presents a clear danger. Last year, a child was killed sleeping on the tracks after fishing in Willow Creek. 2. A Willow rail extension will bisect the heart of the Willow Creek State Recreation Area, home to an internationally renowned salmon and trout fishing stream, dramatically effecting the extraordinary natural and aesthetic qualities so easily accessible to the public. 3. The rail line will bisect the heart of the West Gateway Trail System, a highly popular recreation area and venue for the Iditarod, Junior Iditarod, the Iron Dog, Willow Winter Carnival and many other community and State events that depend on open spaces and a contiguous trail system. 4. The rail corridor would be adjacent to the Nancy Lake State Recreation Area, impacting recreational, natural and aesthetic qualities stated in the mission of Alaska State Parks. 5. The line will bisect a very important and concentrated moose wintering area, thus increasing moose mortality. 6. The proposed railroad, by compromising noise, viewsheds, and the semi wilderness character of the country in which visitors from around the world come to visit, would adversely impact local recreational and tourism related businesses. 7. Since the purpose of the rail extension is to haul freight, any local freighting business could conflict with the recreational value of the area. Any commuter or tourism business still has the existing rail line to build upon. 	10/23/2007

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	<p>There are much better options for the location of the rail extension, locations where it could enhance a community's development. The Willow route will not be an enhancement to me, nor according to the Willow Area Community Organization, Alaska State Parks, Willow Dog Musers Association, the Iron Dog, Deshka Landing and many local business. Pleas pick a better route.</p>	

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John Scudder	This area is highly used for winter recreation. Protect and provide access to the trails for dog teams and snowmobiles	10/23/2007
Jason Kuehn	I think this is a critical project for Alaskan transportation infrastructure. In addition to providing a far more efficient port outlet for Usibelli coal and other future bulk traffic, it could well become the new mainline for the ARR if the Point MacKenzie Bridge gets built which will probably happen some day. For the long-term the most efficient routing is the Willow routing which also skirts the population areas (Willow, Houston, Big Lake)impacted by the other routes. Conn1 and Mac West also provide options to skirt the Port area with a future mainline that might use a future Port MacKenzie bridge. I would imagine this might be the more expensive routing as it is probably the longest route. it appears to me to be the best route for the long-term benefit of the ARR and the local area.	10/24/2007

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<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Charles Wade	<p>DO NOT BUILD A RAILROAD LINE AT THE PROPOSED WILLOW LOCATION.</p> <p>We would like to add our names to the list of those OPPOSING the proposed Willow rail line extension to Port MacKenzie. We live on Little Lonely Lake, which is very near the proposed Willow route.</p> <p>We moved to Willow and this little lake in 2001. We purchased a lot and were the first to build a house on the lake. We live here year round. We selected this location because it was remote and quiet. Until now it has remained that way.</p> <p>If this extension is built using the proposed Willow route. We will clearly be able to hear the railroad activity (construction and operations). This is unacceptable to us. There is no doubt that any such construction will reduce the attractiveness of our home; and very likely reduce its property value. I know this from personal experience. When we were looking for a home back in 2001, we considered a home on Cheri Lake (just north of Houston). We both liked it. However, we changed our minds quickly when a train came by. Should the line be built here others will do the same when they someday look at our house.</p> <p>Additionally, we make extensive use of the "Swamp" area to the south and west of our home throughout the year. Building this extension here will restrict access to this area, and as a result our quality of life will decrease.</p> <p>There are other options. We urge choosing one of the others.</p>	10/25/2007
Stu Grenier	<p>I am still waiting for a comment meeting to be held in Anchorage. Why has not one been announced yet? The vast majority of property owners on Red Shirt lake live in Anchorage and would like a chance to comment at a meeting. Thank You.</p>	10/28/2007

Thursday, December 20, 2007

<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Laura Bedard	I am opposed to the Port Rail Extension through Willow. This will destroy moose habitat as well as the recreation. I am concerned about the proposed trail tunnels: Tunnels flood, especially built in a swamp. It will be a hazardous to the multiple users motorized and non motorized.	10/28/2007
Mary Miller	My husband and I bought land on Little Lonely Lake in Willow in 2001. We have built our retirement home there and plan on moving out there in 5 years, we go out there every weekend now to regain our sanity. We purposely bought there due to the tranquility and serenity of the small quiet lake with the charm of the sound of loons. All the homeowners got together to have lake management to protect those issues. With a railroad so close, that will be destroyed. Not only that, but the access to the open swamp area will be cut off. And there goes the whole freedom of snowmachining. I understand that Houston would love to have the route, please let them have it and don't go the Willow route. Thanks for listening.	10/29/2007
Kevin Gray	As a homeowner in the MatSu Borough on Nancy Lake, I am deeply concerned with the western-most corridor that is also marked Corr3. This area is a highly used area during the wintertime by a variety of traditional users. Dog mushing, the iditarod, the Iron Dog and regular "weekend warrior" cabin and snowmachine types utilize this area for access to the Susitna drainage. A North-South railroad access easement would create an effective "block" of these activities given the ability to cross the tracks. Some discussion has been present regarding "crossings" at some intervals, but would require going some distance out of the way to get to the "crossing". In addition, this area is a great North-South transit for snowmachines from the Susitna Landing area to Big Lake. This corridor needs to be maintained as an "open" area for these traditional uses. The other two routes proposed are much closer to civilization, and would provide much-needed access to these areas, rather than ruin a pristine wetlands area in favor of "progress". Please look seriously at the other two routes.	10/29/2007
Earl Ramsey	I am a Red Shirt Lake land owner. I support the following letter from the Red Shirt Lake Owners Association:	10/30/2007

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<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
James Miller	<p>Please do not put the railroad through Willow. The route goes through what we call the big swamp which is home to the largest number of moose and wild game in the area. The deep snow will drive the moose to the easiest trail available which will be the railroad track. The number of moose kill will be to high a price to pay.</p> <p>The railroad will need to cross the road to the Deshka Landing which is an extremely busy road in the summer when people from all over Alaska come to fish the Deshka River for Kings, Silvers and Pinks. It will cause many traffic problems.</p> <p>The railroad will need to cross Willow Creek home to a King salmon and Rainbow trout potential damage to the creek and fish are not worth the risk.</p> <p>The Willow route will run right behind the lake we built our retirement home on. We worked for several years to get a Lake Management Plan to protect the quiet enjoyment of the lake. Putting the rail line about 1/4 mile away will damage our quiet enjoyment.</p>	10/31/2007
Steve Wells	<p>I am totally in favor of the Willow route and the sooner the better. I have lived in Alaska for 50 years and have been in Willow for the last 29 years. Have built 3 homes in the area. I favor responsible development and improved access.</p>	11/1/2007
Duane Mathes	<p>Houston would be the best location to connect to the main line. They could use the business and the influx of money it'll bring. Maybe clean it up a little there too. It's a shorter run to construct, should save some money for the railroad as well with a minimal amount of private property to purchase.</p>	11/1/2007
Chris Grabowski	<p>Specifically, how will the Point Mac Rail Extension benefit Houston, Alaska?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Will all new rail beds be elevated over all road crossings? •Why would the AKRRR agree to put a depot in Houston, Alaska if the AKRRR currently pursues projects that reduce run times? •If: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oThe Point Mac Rail Extension is a passenger/freight line oThe South Entrance to Denali National Park & Preserve is going to be in Willow Isn't it likely that there will be a depot in Willow at the new South Entrance? oA depot in Houston would add time onto rail schedules. Why would the AKRRR add a depot in the City of Houston? 	11/1/2007

Thursday, December 20, 2007

<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Keith Dobson	<p>I attended the meeting in Palmer last night (11/20/07) and have the following questions regarding the cost matrix.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you factored in the cost of delays for a particular route due to unexpected wetland run-off causing personal property damage... 2. Cost of delays due to litigation associated with personal property damage. 	11/21/2007
Yvonne Sumner	<p>I feel that the rail spur is an extremely important infrastructure development. The rail spur will benefit all Alaskans, especially those in the interior, by giving them access to shipping at lower costs. Given the current fuel costs this rail spur will make the difference for many businesses, industries, and villages as to viability. As Alaskans we should support this rail spur it is essential and strategic, and it is cruel to do otherwise.</p>	11/25/2007
Florence Pitcher	<p>It appears that we would be among the biggest losers if the Point Mackenzie West route is chosen. We own tract 9. The one with all the nice lake frontage, and wildlife refuge frontage.</p> <p>Point Mackenzie Agricultural District is not "Port Mackenzie Agricultural District".</p> <p>Our farm there is privately owned. The farm is also our primary life investment.</p> <p>The Western Pt. Mac route would devastate the integrity of our own planning as owners of this land.</p> <p>What makes planners think that they can plan commercial developments across Agricultural lands? Because if they do indeed try to negotiate for a commercial rail line, rest assured that they will indeed pay commercial prices (NOT ag land prices) for the entire property effected. Cutting into a parcel with this type of development effects its value as a whole, and effects it's entire value, and will be considered as such. Be ready to see savvy commercial appraisers from other States and Professionals well versed in Congressional law, and a few hard working land owners with their heels dug in real deep.</p>	11/28/2007
Jordan	<p>It seems that the more easterly route would make more sense. There is already development, there appears to be less wetland, and it even looks more direct. The more westerly routes would also have an effect that is not so easily quantified, and that is the idea that we will no longer have the feeling of wide open spaces to the west. There would always be the rail barrier. Just a thought.</p>	11/29/2007

<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Duane Mathes	I believe the port mckenzie rail spur should intersect the main rr line at Houston. Houston is a city that could certainly use some economic help and this could be a way to help that community get on the map. Maybe with the help of putting in a rr station of some type. I would think they would want this too.	12/10/2007
Dan Mayfield	<p>The clear choice is the MacEast-Big Lake route. Your latest publication utilizes a criteria matrix to grade the individual routes using a plus and minus for positive and negative attributes of each. The results of this grading indicates the MacEast-Houston to Houston South route as scoring the highest. Analysis of this area is flawed and suggest an agenda out side the interest of the people who live in this area. The MacEast-Houston route clearly fragments recreational areas that are used almost everyday by the majority of recreational user who live and visit the Big Lake areas. A vast portion of this route crosses wetlands and would have a negative impact on designated land use.</p> <p>The least impact to quality of life, recreational opportunities, wild life and the choice that provides for the least noise impact would be the MacEast-Big Lake route because this would establish the railroad traffic around the already developed road system.</p> <p>Your Matrix Criteria missed the most important measurement. How does the choice impact the identity of the communities around it? Big Lake is a residential community with a recreational community purpose. Building the railway to the west of the lake impacts that purpose in a gigantic way by cutting off access to the areas west of the Susitna River. This area is hugely popular and critical to the recreational nature of this community.</p>	12/10/2007

<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Keith Dobson	<p>To all concerned, I have previously submitted my comments via the Port Mackenzie web site. My previous comments and concerns raised issues that I perceive with selecting either of Houston routes (Houston North or Houston South). However, I want to make it clear that I am in full support of this project and will support the final decision of the STB and the conclusions of the EIS. I do however request that a fair and comprehensive approach be used in determining the most viable route/routes to go forward with in an EIS study. It is my opinion that the current evaluation matrix clearly does not satisfy this request. A comprehensive evaluation matrix would include the following new categories/considerations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A weighting system associated with each column. I contend that train power should not be weighted the same as the amount of wetlands disturbed in constructing the line. 2. Furthermore, I contend that the current evaluation matrix should be expanded to include the following criteria. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Amount of residential property impacted or potentially impacted b. The potential for future road expansion c. Unforeseen hidden costs (i.e. caused by unstable soil conditions; damage caused by flooding to personal property; impact on commercial fishing) d. Alignment with valley economic development plan <p>Finally, concerning this last item that I raised above, if the Matsu Borough has not determined an economic development plan for the next 25-50 years than I would suggest that a plan be determined prior to selecting any of these routes under consideration. If such a plan is already in place or when a plan is determined, I would ask that a selection criteria be added to the evaluation matrix to reflect the impact that any of the proposed routes will have on this plan.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>	12/10/2007

<i>Commenter Name</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Comment Date</i>
Keith Dobson	<p>To all concerned, I attended the assembly meeting last evening and would like to make just a few comments regarding the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project.</p> <p>First off, my family has owned property on West/Little Horseshoe Lake for over 30 years. I have snow-machined, hiked and canoed much of the area west of the lake around Mule Lake along the proposed Houston rail route. This area is primarily one big marsh with a very sensitive eco-system. Any disruption in this eco-system will most certainly disturb the local loon and crane bird population which are highly sensitive to any eco-system changes. A proposed rail track in this area would require massive amounts of material to be added to establish a firm base for trains, producing in affect an extremely large dam cutting through the heart of this sensitive eco-system. We can use the best available science to estimate the impact of this dam, but I am sure that no-one really knows what the long term impact will be on the bird and wildlife population and the personal property owners who may and most likely will see a change in their soil conditions (which will affect well and septic systems, foundations could be flooding as a result of the railroad dam...). In reviewing the evaluation matrix last evening, I suspect that the following criteria were not included in the cost estimates for this project.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional costs associated with unexpected water drainage issues resulting from rail extension dam. 2. Additional costs associated with unexpected soil conditions. 3. Cost over-runs as a result of the above delays which require additional engineering. 4. Litigation costs due to personal property damage. 5. Cost of delays associated with personal property litigation issues. <p>Now for the social and economic consideration for this project. I am in full support of economic development for Alaska as long as we consider both the short term and long term costs and benefits associated with any project like this. I would submit to you that over the next 50 years the Matsu valley area around Big Lake and Nancy Lakes will be highly desirable locations for Alaskans to both work, recreate and live. With proper management and infrastructure (roads, business development, schools...) this area will likely grow significantly and become a wonderful place for people to live. With that said, I would like you to consider the following questions in light of a 20-50 year plan for this area.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would be the social impact of a rail project slicing through the heart of the Matsu Valley as proposed in the Houston route? 2. What will be the social impact of rail accidents and coal dust and other airborne debris for any proposed route? 3. Should a future car carrying ferry or bridge connecting Anchorage to Port MacKenzie be built, have you considered obtaining a large enough right-of-way to accommodate a future highway along the rail extension line for car commuters to the valley? 4. If the above is desirable, which of the proposed routes is best suited to accommodate a future road project along the rail extension line. <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p>	12/10/2007