

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grant Recipient: Community & Economic Dev****Project Title:****Project Type:** New Construction and Land Acquisition

# Alaska Railroad Corporation - Tanana River Bridge Access for Military Training Grounds

**State Funding Requested: \$44,000,000**  
One-Time Need

**House District: 12 / F****Brief Project Description:**

The Alaska Railroad Corporation is constructing access roads and a bridge over the Tanana River to provide year-round access to the joint Army/Air Force training ranges south of the Tanana River. The bridge will also serve as the first phase of the Alaska Railroad's Northern Rail Extension from Eielson Air Force Base to Delta Junction.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$188,200,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$144,200,000)
FY2012 State Funding Request:	<u>(\$44,000,000)</u>
Project Deficit:	\$0

*Funding Details:**FFY2008 \$44,200,000 PL 110-116 (DoD granted by FRA)**FFY2009 \$60,000,000 PL 110-329 (DoD granted by FRA)**FY2011 \$40,000,000 State of Alaska capital funds***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is constructing access roads and a bridge over the Tanana River to provide year-round access to the joint Army/Air Force training ranges south of the Tanana River. The bridge will also serve as the Railroad crossing site for the Alaska Railroad's extension from Eielson Air Force Base to Delta Junction. The dual-use bridge will feature a single lane suitable for all Army vehicles, along with railroad tracks.

ARRC has received \$104.2 million in Federal funding from several federal defense appropriation bills over the last four years and the Fairbanks North Star Borough received a \$40 million FY2011 State capital appropriation for the project. This \$44 million request from the FY2012 State capital budget will complete the funding necessary for construction activities. Due to the 2013 expiration of the Federal funds, if work does not begin in calendar year 2011, Federal funds the ARRC has secured may be lost.

The FY2012 \$44 million request will fund project construction activities including, but not limited to, bridge foundations, embankments, river training, the bridge structure, access roads to connect to the Richardson Highway and beyond the bridge to the military's joint Army/Air Force training ranges, staging areas, and necessary appurtenances and management activities.

Additional military funding is unlikely given the Department of Defense budget cutbacks.

**Project Timeline:**

The NEPA process has been completed with a Record of Decision for the project already issued. Final Design is substantially complete and the initiation of construction activities will need to begin in late spring 2011. Federal Railroad Administration approval is required before construction activities may proceed. Due to the expiration date on Federal funds in the project, FY2012 State funding of construction activities is critical.

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

Alaska Railroad Corporation

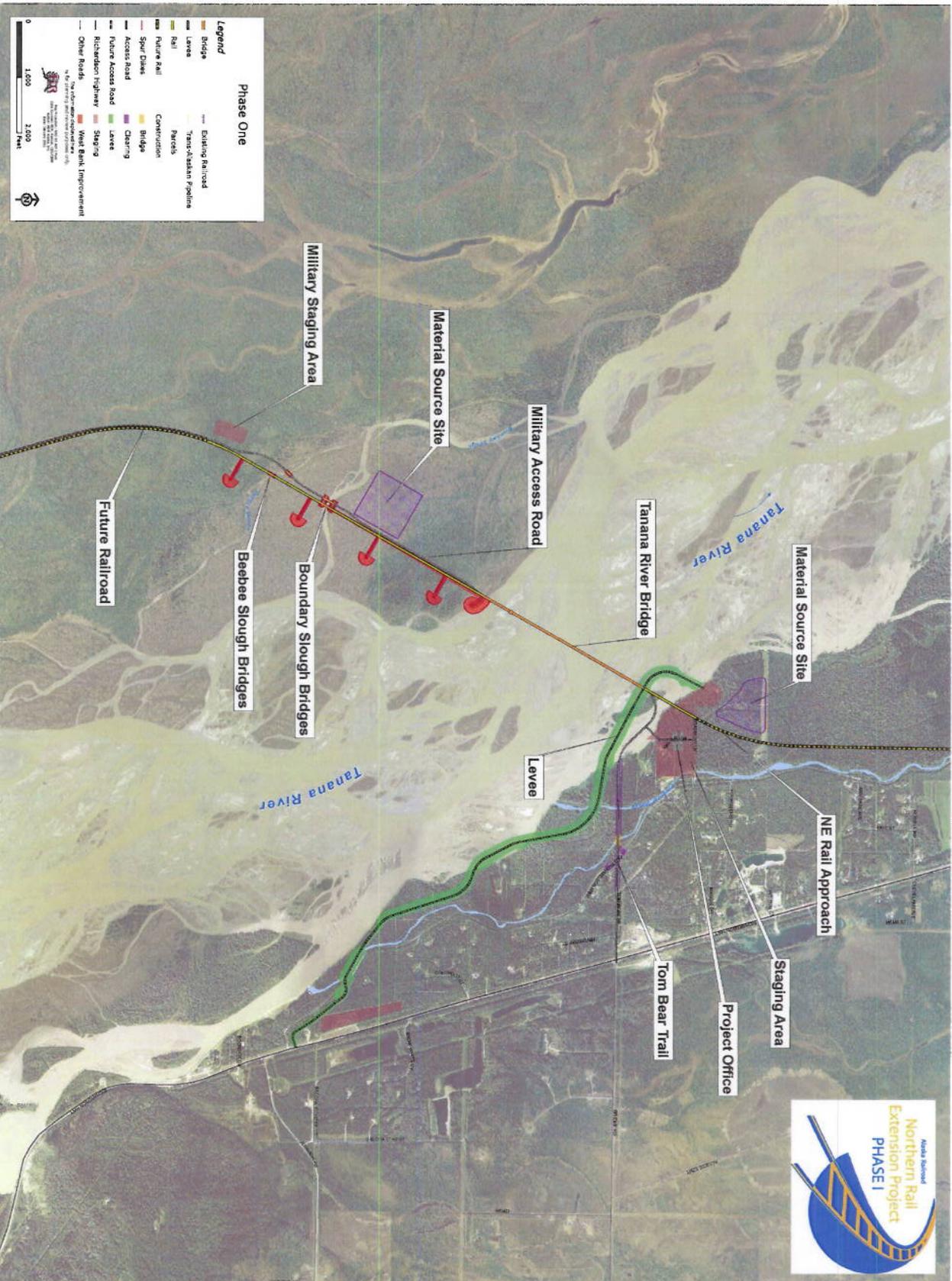
**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

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Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority?  Yes  No

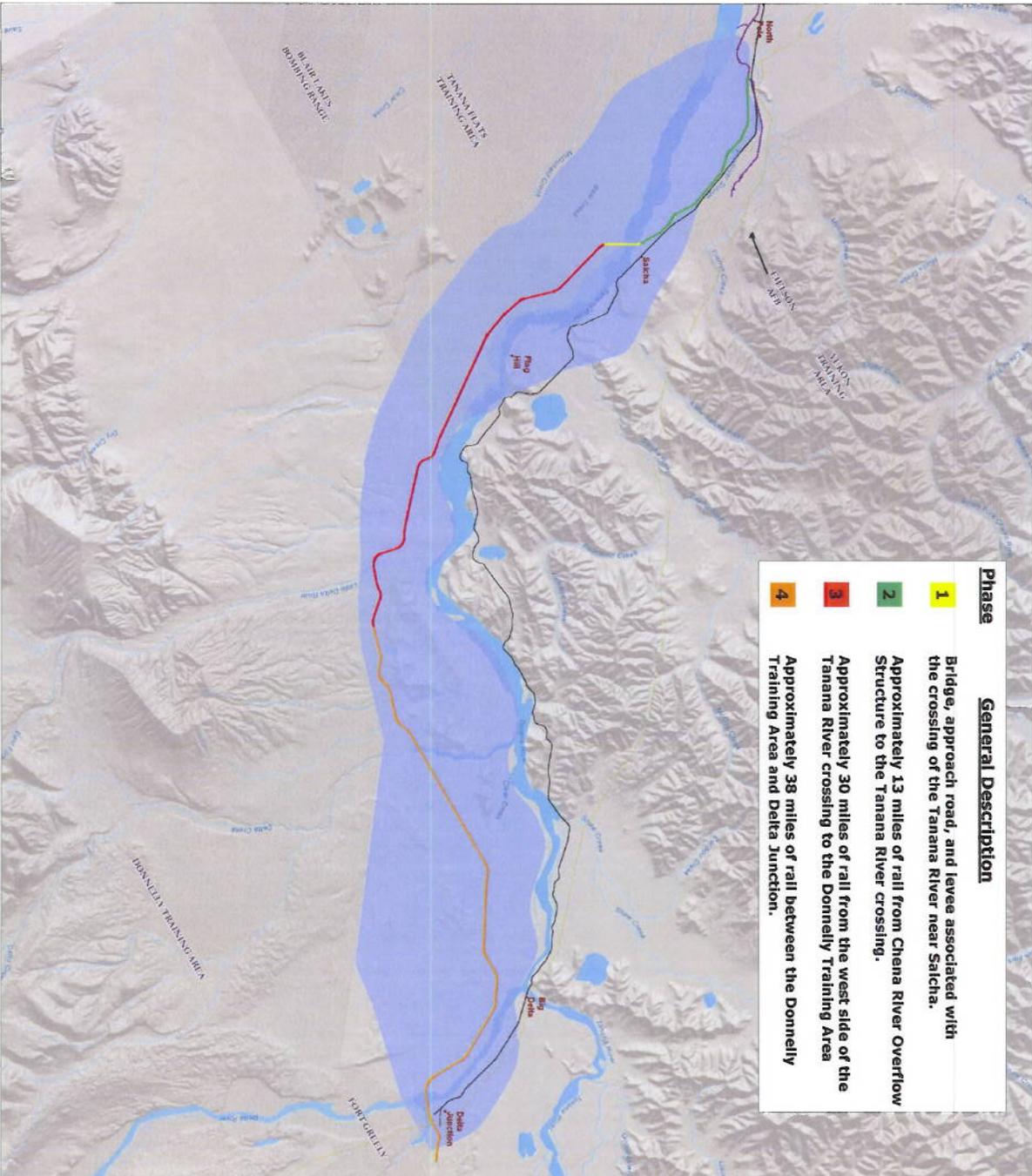
# Northern Rail Extension

## Phase One: Salcha Crossing



# Northern Rail Extension

## Project Phases (funding dependent)



Phases  
One through Four

### Legend

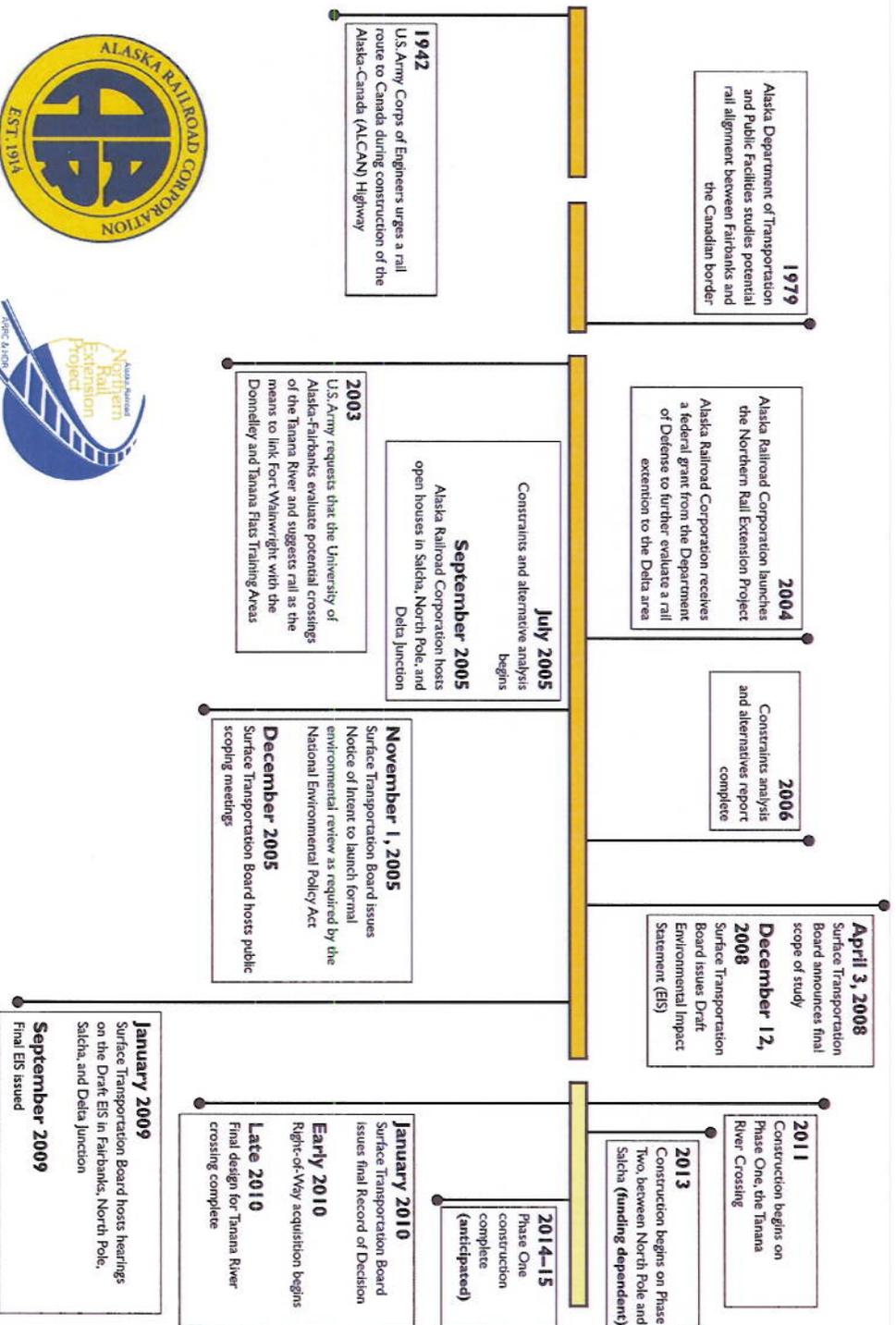
- Corridor Area
- Military Boundary
- Existing Railroad
- Trans-Alaskan Pipeline
- Richardson Highway
- Rivers and Streams



**Federal Highway Administration**  
 The information displayed here is for planning and review purposes only.

# Northern Rail Extension

## Northern Rail Extension Project History



### Northern Rail Extension: Project Timeline





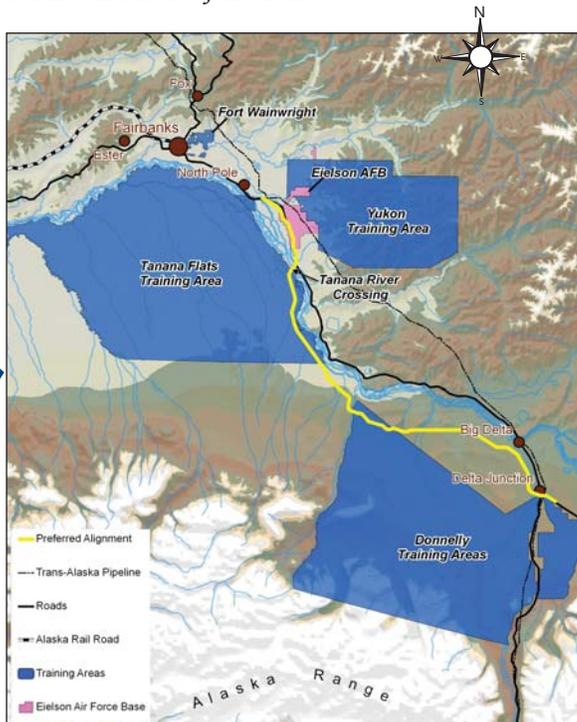
# Northern Rail Extension

# PROJECT FACTS

## Project Scope & Description

The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) proposes to construct and operate a new rail line in the area between North Pole and Delta Junction. The project would involve approximately 80 miles of new rail line connecting the existing Eielson Branch rail line at the Chena River Overflow Structure to a point near Delta Junction. The proposed rail line would provide freight and potentially passenger rail services serving commercial interests and communities in or near the project corridor.

The new rail line would be operated as part of the Alaska Railroad system. As a common carrier, the line would be available to the general public, commercial, and military shippers including agricultural and resource development businesses. With a top design speed of 79 miles per hour for passenger trains, the track could support public transit operations between Fairbanks, North Pole, Salcha and Delta Junction.



Area map showing the military training areas south and west of the Tanana River.

The project includes an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This work consists of identifying and analyzing feasible alignment options, engineering design for selected options, and estimating anticipated construction costs.

A Tanana River crossing is required to fulfill transport needs and avoid mountainous terrain along the northeast bank of the river. The new rail line may also cross the Salcha, Little Delta and Delta Rivers, as well as Delta Creek.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has large training areas south of the Tanana River between Fairbanks and Delta Junction. Access to the Joint Pacific Area Range Complex (JPARC) is currently limited to ice roads during winter. The project scope would develop access from the Richardson Highway to the Tanana River, construct a crossing of the Tanana River, and place a staging area for military use immediately south of the river. Subsequent rail development would also use this crossing. Preliminary conceptual design includes a single traffic lane combined with rail located south of Salcha.

## Purpose and Need

The Northern Rail Extension project would provide essential freight and passenger service to support transportation and mobility needs of the region. The project may provide the following:

- **Commercial freight service supporting communities** and commerce in or near the rail corridor, including existing agricultural, mining, and petrochemical industries, thus reducing reliance and wear and tear on the Richardson Highway. Currently, both the agricultural community located near Delta Junction and mineral resource industries in the area receive materials that are initially shipped by rail. Materials must be off-loaded in or near Fairbanks, and then transported by truck via the Richardson Highway.

- **Transportation alternative** to the Richardson Highway for passenger transportation, with scheduled station stops proposed between Fairbanks and Delta Junction by way of North Pole and other communities. Passenger rail service would be available for citizens, military personnel, contractors, and dependent families who wish to travel for work, shopping, medical, educational, or other reasons.
- **Military support.** Access to the JPARC would accommodate year-round access to large military training areas. The Army and Air Force both use the million-acre complex, and their presence is expanding. The Complex provides unique opportunities for large scale, combined training of military units. The Army, in particular, is interested in rail to mobilize military units in and out of the training areas.
- **Support regional tourism.** Tourism is a major industry in Alaska and the rail line would provide further opportunities for visitors to enjoy the Alaska environment.

## Benefits

- Common carrier rail service would provide bulk transport of goods to and from existing agricultural developments, mineral resource developments and other business enterprises. Area freight and transit services would enhance opportunities for economic expansion in a relatively isolated area of Alaska. The Alaska Railroad's tourism support to other parts of the system could potentially be expanded to Delta Junction and provide additional opportunities to see Alaska by rail.
- Additional communities within Interior Alaska would be connected by rail to three ports, including the Port of Anchorage, recently designated as one of 15 strategic ports in the nation.
- Public transit would facilitate additional choices for families and individuals seeking safe, reliable, year-round transportation opportunities between the Delta Junction and Fairbanks areas. Rail transit offers an alternative to driving the Richardson Highway, which presents hazardous driving conditions during long, dark, icy winter months.
- Military units would benefit from year-round multi-modal access to joint training areas south of the Tanana River.

- Rail access would avoid use of military vehicle convoys along the Richardson Highway, thereby reducing congestion, saving fuel and minimizing wear-and-tear.

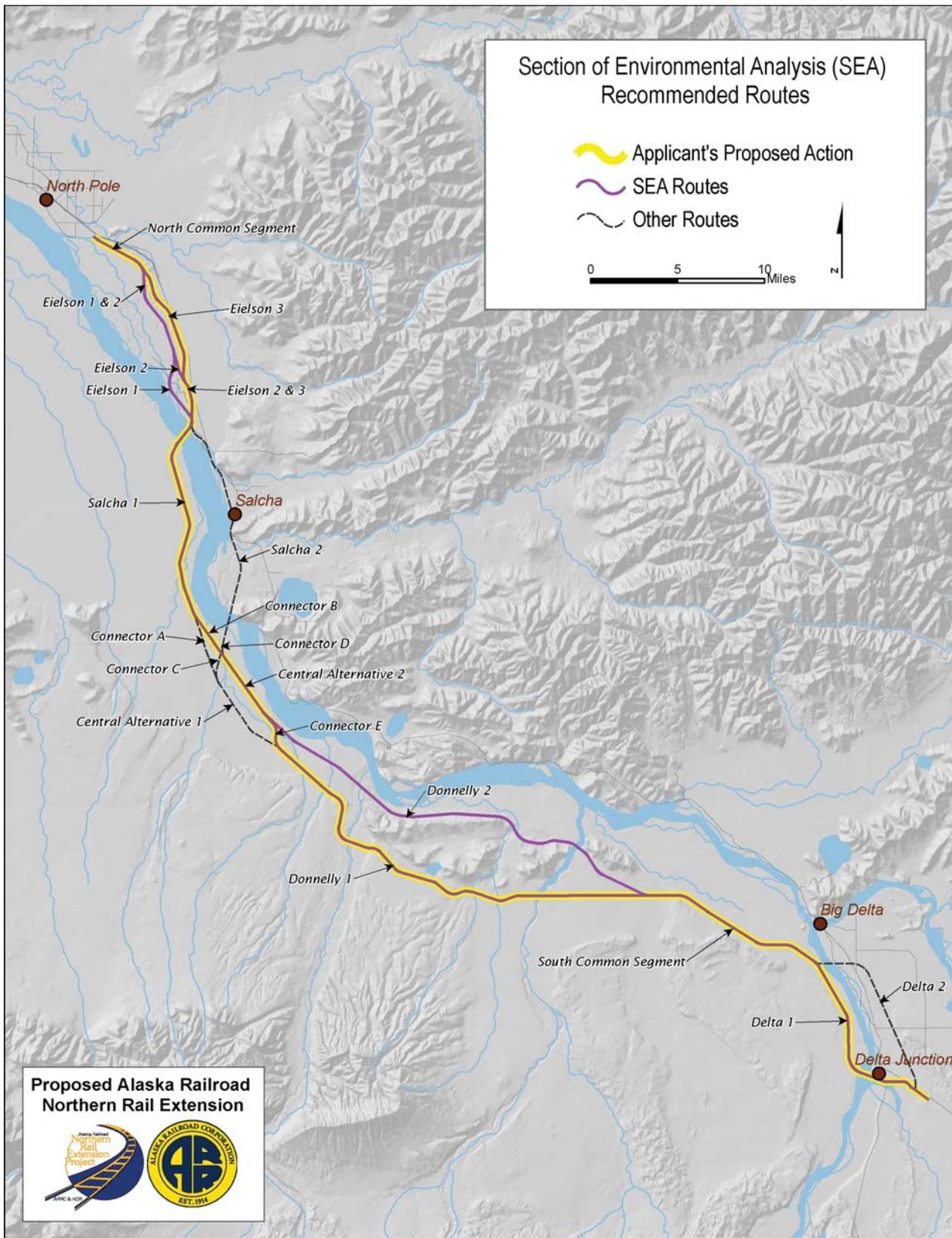
## Status/Timeline

- Late 2004, ARRC initiated project conceptual development.
- April 2005, the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the lead federal agency, selected ICF Consulting as the independent third party contractor to prepare the EIS under the STB's direction.
- November 2005, STB published a "Notice of Intent" in the Federal Register.
- December 2005, STB held public and agency scoping meetings.
- December 2008, Draft EIS is released for public review. Public meetings held mid-January in Fairbanks, North Pole, Salcha and Delta Junction. Public comment period ended February 2, 2009.
- STB posts Final EIS September 18, 2009, now available on the STB web site at [http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/environment/key\\_cases\\_alaska.html](http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/environment/key_cases_alaska.html).
- The STB Record of Decision on January 5, 2010, granted authority to construct and operate the rail extension.
- A Construction Manager-General Contractor was selected in early summer. Phase One construction is anticipated to start in spring 2011.

## Next Steps

- With the STB's final decision made, ARRC is moving forward with final design and construction. The project will likely progress in four phases, as funding allows:
  - **Phase One** – Tanana River crossing at Salcha (Joint Tanana Range Access)
  - **Phase Two** – Rail construction from Moose Creek near North Pole to the Salcha crossing
  - **Phase Three** – Rail construction from the Salcha crossing to the Donnelly Military Training Area
  - **Phase Four** – Donnelly to Delta Junction

# Project Area Map: Proposed and Recommended Routes



## Cost and Funding

- Preliminary engineering and design and NEPA-mandated environmental assessments and documentation were included in a \$12.5 million budget from an initial Department of Defense (DOD) appropriation in 2005 that was administered as a grant through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). DOD appropriations announced in 2006 included \$4 million for NEPA and preliminary engineering work.
- DOD appropriated \$44.2 million in 2007 and another \$60 million in 2008, primarily to pursue Phase One, the Tanana River crossing (Joint Tanana Range Access). In 2010, the State of Alaska approved another \$40 million. These funds are being used for engineering to accomplish final design of the bridge and levee, permitting, acquiring right-of-way, preparing the construction area, procuring materials and beginning construction.
- Construction costs for the rail line is estimated to be between \$650 and \$850 million. Funding sources may include federal and state appropriations and financing via the sale of revenue bonds that are secured by advance shipping contracts.

## Project Participants

A number of players are involved with the project:

- **The Surface Transportation Board (STB)** is the approval authority for all new rail line construction in the United States. As such, the STB is the lead federal agency on the project and oversaw the EIS process.
- **The Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC)** is a self-sustaining corporation owned by the State of Alaska. ARRC is the project sponsor of the Northern Rail Extension project.
- **The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)** is a cooperating agency with the STB and the administering agency for

the federal grant funding the EIS development. The FRA provides technical oversight for the project.

- **Cooperating Federal Agencies.** In addition to the FRA, the following federal agencies have cooperated on the EIS: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), The Alaska Command (ALCOM), The U.S. Air Force (USAF) 354<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing (Stationed at Eielson Air Force Base), The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). These agencies reviewed and commented on various aspects of the project throughout development of the EIS.

## For More Information

- visit [www.northernrailextension.com](http://www.northernrailextension.com)
- Email [public\\_comment@akrr.com](mailto:public_comment@akrr.com)
- Contact ARRC Corporate Communications Officer Stephenie Wheeler at (970) 265-2671.

