



# **Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities**

*Alaska State Rail Plan Update*  
*House Transportation Committee*  
Murray Walsh, ADOT&PF

January 30, 2014

# Purposes of a State Rail Plan

- To set forth **state policy** involving freight and passenger rail transportation, including commuter operations.
- To present **priorities and strategies** to enhance rail service that benefits the public.
- To serve as the **basis for federal and state rail investments** within the state.





# Why ADOT&PF?

- Alaska Statutes (AS 44.42) assign DOT&PF the responsibility to plan for all modes of transportation.
- There is more than one railroad in the state; there may be even more in the future.
- Any movement of freight or passengers involves more than just a railroad – what happens when the freight shipment gets to the end of the line; how does it get to its ultimate destination?



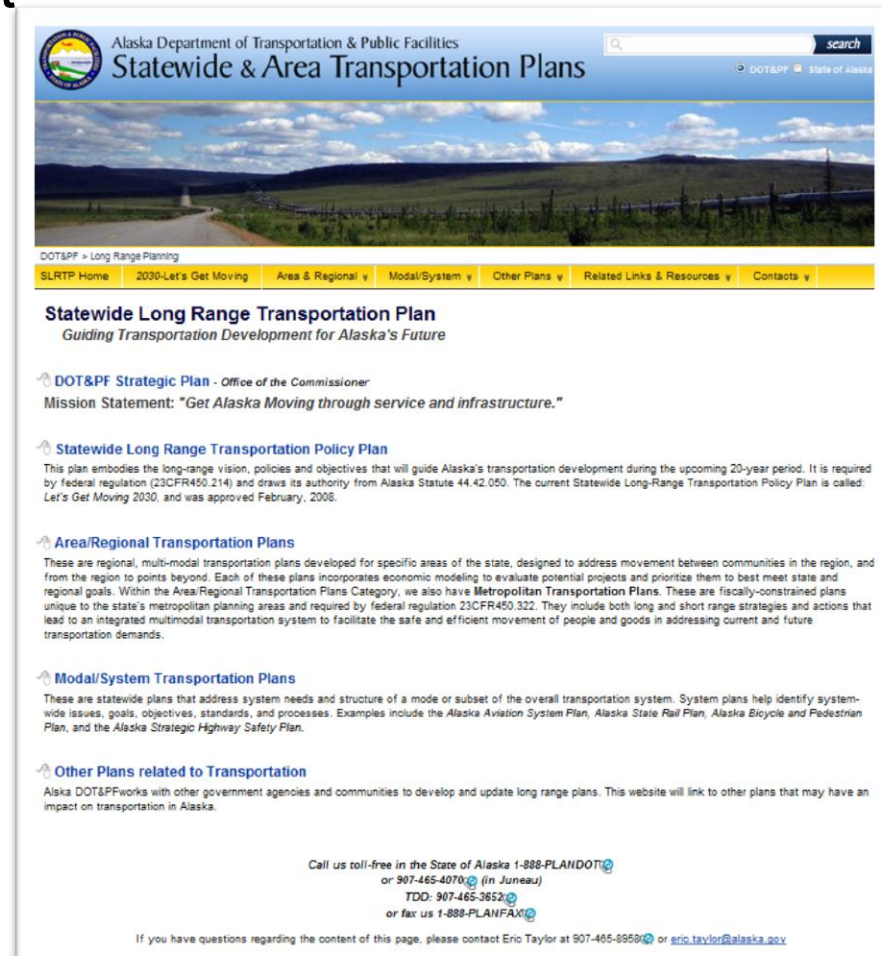
# Our Focus

***A word of caution:*** the Alaska State Rail Plan (ASRP) focuses on rail, generally. This is not an Alaska Railroad Corporation plan.

- Alaska Railroad Corporation and White Pass & Yukon Route are Alaska's two railroads, and the individual needs of these operators are identified in the plan.
- ASRP looks at the potential for NEW operators and future capacity needs. What infrastructure, plans, or information is needed to promote rail, broadly defined, in the future?

# Rail Plan—Not in Isolation

- The State Rail Plan must be coordinated with the State's Long Range Transportation Policy Plan.
- In September 2013, the Federal Railroad Administration released new guidance for preparing state rail plans. Our plan will comply with those guidelines.



The screenshot shows the website for the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, specifically the "Statewide & Area Transportation Plans" page. The page features a navigation menu with links for "SLRTP Home", "2030-Let's Get Moving", "Area & Regional", "Modal/System", "Other Plans", "Related Links & Resources", and "Contacts". The main content area is titled "Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan" and includes a "Mission Statement: 'Get Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.'" Below this, there are sections for "Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan", "Area/Regional Transportation Plans", "Modal/System Transportation Plans", and "Other Plans related to Transportation". The page also includes contact information for the department, such as toll-free numbers and an email address.

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
Statewide & Area Transportation Plans

DOT&PF - Long Range Planning

SLRTP Home 2030-Let's Get Moving Area & Regional Modal/System Other Plans Related Links & Resources Contacts

**Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan**  
*Guiding Transportation Development for Alaska's Future*

[DOT&PF Strategic Plan - Office of the Commissioner](#)  
Mission Statement: "Get Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure."

[Statewide Long Range Transportation Policy Plan](#)  
This plan embodies the long-range vision, policies and objectives that will guide Alaska's transportation development during the upcoming 20-year period. It is required by federal regulation (23CFR450.214) and draws its authority from Alaska Statute 44.42.050. The current Statewide Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan is called: Let's Get Moving 2030, and was approved February, 2008.

[Area/Regional Transportation Plans](#)  
These are regional, multi-modal transportation plans developed for specific areas of the state, designed to address movement between communities in the region, and from the region to points beyond. Each of these plans incorporates economic modeling to evaluate potential projects and prioritize them to best meet state and regional goals. Within the Area/Regional Transportation Plans Category, we also have **Metropolitan Transportation Plans**. These are fiscally-constrained plans unique to the state's metropolitan planning areas and required by federal regulation 23CFR450.322. They include both long and short range strategies and actions that lead to an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demands.

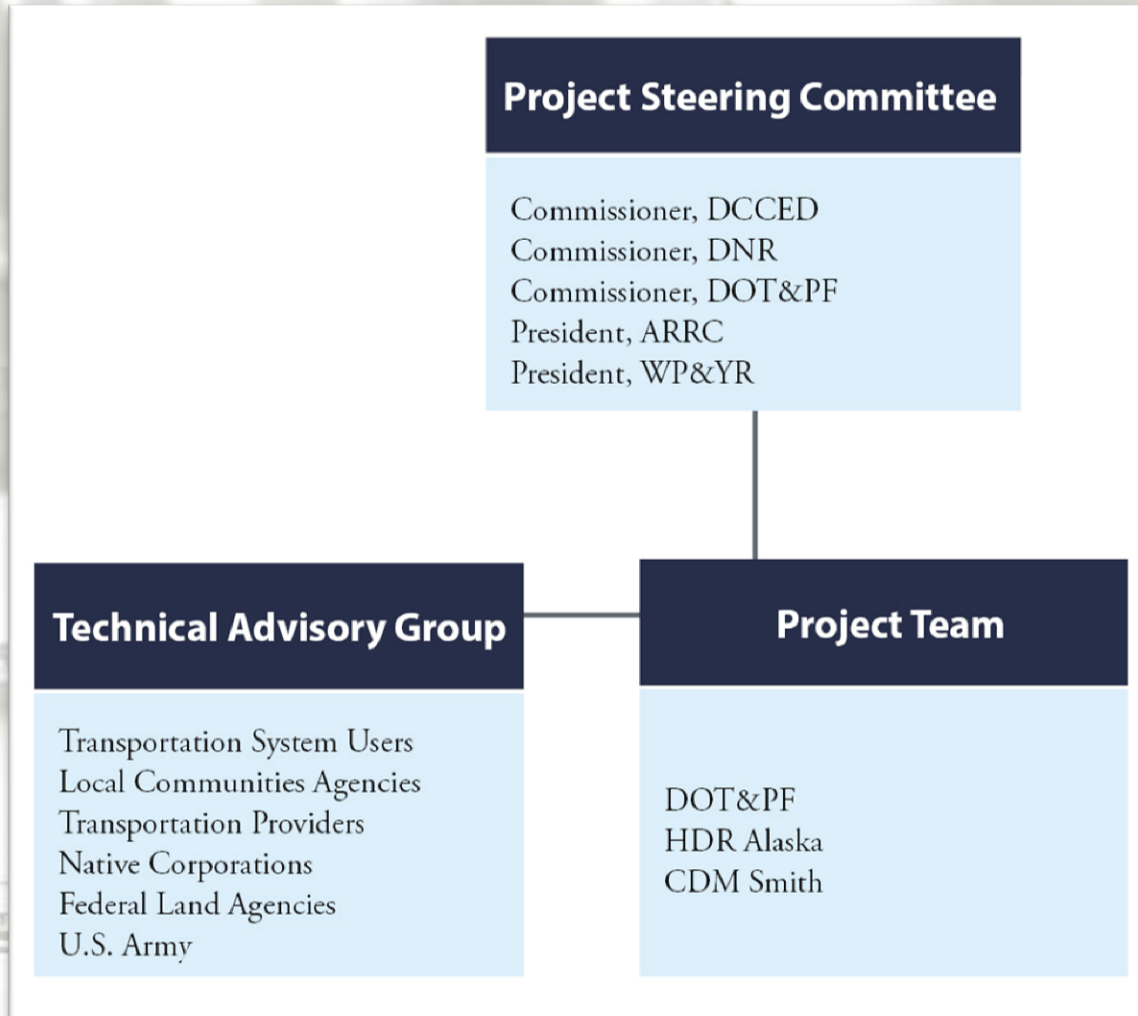
[Modal/System Transportation Plans](#)  
These are statewide plans that address system needs and structure of a mode or subset of the overall transportation system. System plans help identify system-wide issues, goals, objectives, standards, and processes. Examples include the Alaska Aviation System Plan, Alaska State Rail Plan, Alaska Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the Alaska Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

[Other Plans related to Transportation](#)  
Alaska DOT&PF works with other government agencies and communities to develop and update long range plans. This website will link to other plans that may have an impact on transportation in Alaska.

Call us toll-free in the State of Alaska 1-888-PLANDOT  
or 907-465-4070 (in Juneau)  
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If you have questions regarding the content of this page, please contact Eric Taylor at 907-465-6959 or [eric.taylor@alaska.gov](mailto:eric.taylor@alaska.gov)

# Plan Advisors



# Alaska's Current Rail System





# Our Vision

The pioneering ambition that built Alaska was both practical and visionary, using roads, waterways, and rail to haul resources to market and connect communities to each other and the world.

*The State of Alaska will use rail to foster growth and trade, build prosperity, connect and support communities, and provide safe and efficient freight and passenger services coordinated with other transportation modes, regionally and internationally.*





# Planning Context

***The Past:*** Rail has played an important role in the development of Alaska's economy and in national defense.

- Military transport
- Construction and resource development (TAPS)
- Passenger service, both resident and visitor
- Transport of hydrocarbon and petroleum products
- Transport of natural resources such as coal and gravel
- Supply of building materials, equipment, and other commodities

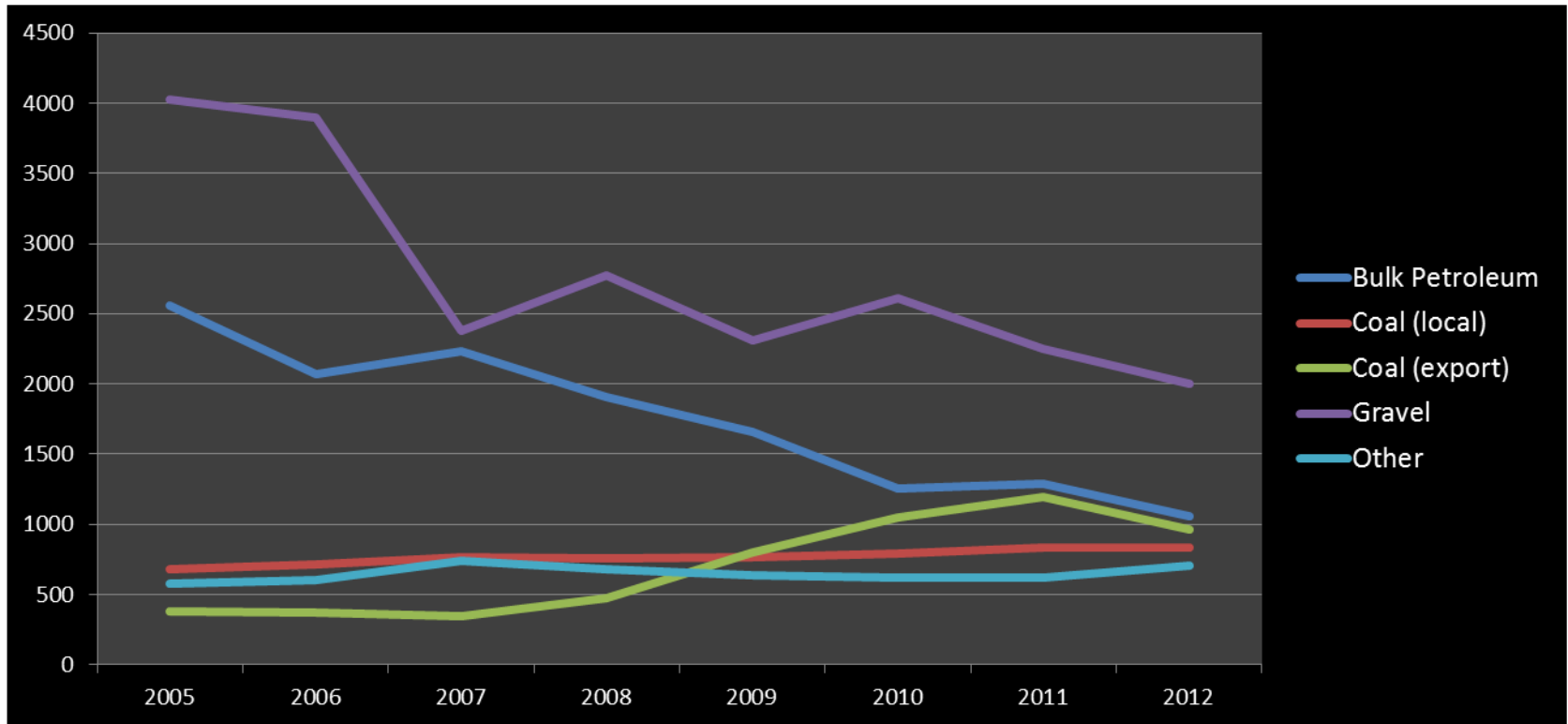
# Planning Context

***The Present:*** Rail volumes and revenues, along with industrial activity, have decreased since 2005.

- The Port MacKenzie and Northern Rail extensions are under construction
- External financial support is needed for major safety and efficiency improvements
- The public would like commuter service



# Alaska Railroad Freight Operations



Between 2005 and 2012, demand for ARRC freight services declined nearly 32 percent (all commodities, in tons).



# Planning Context

## *The Future:*

- The industrial renaissance that Alaska has been preparing for is finally happening — shale, oil, mining, LNG, coal, natural gas...
- The Port MacKenzie and Northern Rail extensions are complete and fully operational.
- Rail commuter service is available, linking Southcentral Alaska and is under consideration elsewhere.



# Plan Direction

What do we do now in the present day to:

- *Make sure the railroad is available to support the future context; and*
- *Identify defensible means to evaluate and enable new rail lines?*



# Plan Goals

- **Promote economic development** in Alaska; seek rail extensions to new resource and defense opportunities.
- **Maintain systems** in good repair and expand capacity.
- Support rail's role in **international exports**, market development, and trade.
- Emphasize **interconnectivity** with other modes of transport.
- Increase regularly scheduled **passenger rail** service.
- Support **safe and environmentally responsible** rail operations.

# Plan Objectives - Passenger

- Develop a Southcentral regional transit organization – Legislation needed



- Include Anchorage International Airport in regular public rail passenger service
- Maintain passenger equipment in continuing state of good repair.
- Complete Wasilla track realignment
- Provide higher speed track for commuter trainsets
- Support connectivity with other transit options

# Plan Objectives—Freight

- Establish and re-claim corridors to preserve rail right-of-way for future use
- Lengthen (and strengthen) passing sidings, improve (or remove) tunnels, upgrade bridges
- Increase rail carrying capacity to the emerging US standard of 315,000 lbs. per car
- Include rail in emergency service planning
- Separate the remaining rail-highway at-grade crossings on the National Highway System
- Implement quiet zones to enhance livability
- Improve wildlife crossings and culverts for fish passage

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# Capital Improvement Context

- Alaska's rail accident rate is comparable to other US railroads
- Positive Train Control (PTC) should improve safety, but at a substantial cost
  - ✓ PTC costs exceed the ARRC's ability to fund and requires state support
- Freight operating revenues are lower (ARRC)
- Additional investment in track, depots, and equipment will be needed to operate commuter service

# Short/Near-Term Capital Projects

- Remove obstacles to double-stack container train operation – notably the Portage Tunnel
- Grade-separation of mainline/NHS and significant urban at-grade crossings
- Extension from Eielson AFB to Salcha Bridge
- Commuter rail in Southcentral Alaska – Trainsets & Depots
- Wasilla, North Pole and Nenana realignments
- Anchorage to Seward railroad rehabilitation
- Upgrade, rebuild docks in Whittier
- Expand Seward dock facilities
- Girdwood to Portage track upgrades



# Mid to Long-term Capital Projects

- Extension from Salcha Bridge to Ft. Greely
- Fairbanks and North Pole realignments
- Extension to Livengood mining district and on to Yukon River
- Passenger service from Salcha to Yukon River
- Rail Service to Yukon resource opportunities
- Extensions to significant Alaska mineral developments





- **Crest Iron Ore Deposit in NE Yukon – one of world’s largest (28 million tonnes/yr or 76,000 tonnes per day, seven trains a day!).**
- **The Alaska Canada Rail Link Study determined that investment capital and operating cost would be covered for Crest Iron Ore transport to Haines.**
- **This set the Haines Benchmark which was not met by any other ACRL route.**



## The Value Proposition – Haines Rail Access

- a) ***Tidewater access*** for mineral feeder service from an Alberta to Alaska railway junction at Carmacks.
- b) ***Terminal acreage*** to handle Crest Iron Ore (28 million tonnes/yr).
- c) ***Rail alternative to highway*** heavy haul trucking that authorities are reluctant to allow.
- d) ***Interim truck to rail transfer hub*** at Carmacks for current and future Yukon mines
- e) ***Interim Inside Passage connection*** to CN Rail for the Alaska Railroad (50% shorter than Gulf transit).

# Long-term Capital Projects

- Extension to North Slope
- Extension to Canada/railhead in British Columbia
- Extension from Yukon River to Nome





# Preliminary (Draft) Policy Recommendations

- Plan for and reserve corridors
- Prioritize and commit to capital project assistance
- Authorize Regional Transit Organizations - legislative action required
- Pursue rail service extensions



# Next Steps

A draft plan, conforming with federal guidance, will be available in Spring 2014

On-line public open houses featuring preliminary findings and the draft plan







# Thank you

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