

Subject:	ASRP Technical Advisory Group Meeting		
Client:	Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities		
Project:	Alaska State Rail Plan	Project No:	DOT&PF Project No. 2512H030
Date:	October 1, 2013 1:00pm – 4:00pm	Location:	HDR Alaska
In Attendance:	See attached sign-in sheet. Sixteen people participated in person; 12 participated by phone		

The meeting started with introductions, a safety moment, and a brief overview of the plan's purpose and public involvement to date.

## Vision Statement

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) does not suggest specific language.

The Vision is what the state would like to see for rail and rail's role in Alaska. Members suggested emphasizing intermodal connectivity, safety and efficiency, regional and international connections, and trade. The suggestion was made to use the first sentence as a lead in, not part of the Vision itself. This would yield a Vision statement that reads:

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.

## Our Vision

*Rail development in Alaska [OR the State of Alaska will use rail to] fosters growth and trade, builds prosperity, supports communities, and provides safe and efficient freight and passenger services coordinated with other transportation modes, regionally and internationally.*

## Rail Plan Overview and Update

Tom Brigham (HDR) provided a brief update on the plan. Three of eight chapters have been completed, and the team is working on the safety, investments and projects portions of the plan. Tom reminded the TAG that the plan, while it looks to focus on the Alaska Railroad (ARRC) as Alaska's only freight and passenger railroad, does not preclude other opportunities or other potential operators.

## Plan Policies

The planning context for the project includes the past, present and future. Rail has played and will continue to play an important role in the development of Alaska's economy. While the recent economic downturn has had negative impacts on rail and rail financing, the state should be prepared to maintain its rail infrastructure to support anticipated future development and services, including potential new rail lines. What is the state's role in funding/supporting rail improvements? In supporting passenger, commuter, and freight service?

Thoughts for overarching, state-level policies include:

- Establish and re-claim corridors to preserve right-of-way for future use
- Provide external fiscal support (for rail generally)
- Support rail's role in international exports, market development, and trade
- Balance investments by mode
- Support land-use planning along rail corridors
- Emphasize interconnectivity with other planning efforts and modes of transport
- Use rail in hazard response planning and national defense—the need for alternative ground transportation systems in times of emergency
- Provide for the safe and efficient transport

Outside policies and politics also play a role in how Alaska might or could implement passenger services as well.

Suggested goal statement additions include:

- Project specific: Utilize Sheffield Station/Anchorage International Airport, especially in combination with rail service to and from the Mat-Su Valley.
- Add a system-wide goal category rather than just referencing goals by "passenger" or "freight"

Requests were made to reference the need for soil stabilization and routing hazardous materials away from residential or urban areas, and to list Positive Train Control (PTC) as a passenger-rail-specific goal.

Bob Laurie mentioned that there is no plan to move ahead with a specific state freight plan at this time.

### **Project List and Prioritization**

Tom Brigham began by discussing ARRC's five year capital projects. This section focused on ARRC primarily because these projects have already been identified. Long-term capital projects are more expansive and represent a state-wide outlook. These projects had not been prioritized.

Specific project requests from the TAG included:

- A Delta Junction-Carmacks-Haines Junction-Haines rail line
- PTC
- Wasilla realignment
- Fish passage and culvert improvements
- Port MacKenzie Rail Preserve
- Wishbone Hill (extension/re-establishment)
- Western Alaska extension
- Yentna/Upper Susitna extension
- Connection to Free Trade Zones

The group was asked if they were to give guidance to future decision makers, what elements should be considered when prioritizing projects? Individuals recommended focus on:

- Areas where ROW is currently held, either by the state or other governmental authority
- Areas where there is a market demand, such as foreign trade zones, or economic development potential
- Projects that generate the most return on investment and are in the state's best interest (including long-term operations and maintenance costs)
- Projects that provide or support intermodal connectivity
- Where there are obvious corridors
- Projects that fall within the state's STIP process
- Projects that address a safety needs such as intermodal conflicts or hot spots

The group suggested removing specific references of possible resources that might benefit from rail transport.

### **Project Financing**

The group was asked to e-mail suggestions following the meeting about possible financing models. One that was mentioned was to utilize public private partnerships (P3), similar to the proposed KABATA model: projects where the private entity builds and operates the project for a certain defined period of time, then turns operations over to the state. The STIP process also provides prioritization and financing guidance.

**Next Steps:**

A Steering Committee meeting will be held October 17, 2013 at the DOT&PF's Northern Region conference room (Peger Road, Fairbanks) starting at 8:30 AM. The public is invited to observe.

The next TAG meeting will be to discuss the draft plan. The group requested to review a copy of the plan before it was released to the public and the project team agreed that it would be done.