

Alaska State Rail Plan Fact Sheet



Alaska State Rail Plan

The State Rail Plan will define the State of Alaska's interest in and policy about the future of railroads in the state.

Plan Background

State rail plans are required by the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008. Plans generally look 20 years into the future and must be updated every 5 years. The State of Alaska's first rail plan, developed in 1985, has not been revised since 1990. Alaska must update its rail plan to be eligible for federal rail funding opportunities. The final Alaska State Rail Plan must be formally approved by the Federal Railroad Administration.

Plan Elements

The state rail plan develops state policy for freight and passenger rail, prioritizes potential projects, and provides a basis for future investment in the rail system. Key elements of the plan include:

- An inventory of the existing rail system, services, and facilities;
- An assessment of safety, freight rail, and passenger rail needs and transportation economics;
- Potential investment opportunities, projects, and services;
- A long-range service and capital investment program; and
- A forward looking Vision for the future of rail in Alaska.

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Project Team

The **Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF)** is the project lead. ADOT&PF has responsibility to plan for all modes of transportation, including rail, under Alaska Statute 44.42. A five person **Steering Committee** is comprised of executives from the Alaska Railroad, the White Pass & Yukon Route, and Commissioners from the departments of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Natural Resources, and Transportation and Public Facilities. The Steering Committee provides guidance on the plan's overall direction. Members of a 26-person **Technical Advisory Group** joined by 15 **Agency Advisors** provide geographic and subject matter advice to ADOT&PF and the **Consultant Team**, HDR Alaska. HDR is charged with developing the draft and final Alaska State Rail Plan.

Schedule

Work on the Alaska State Rail Plan started in January 2013 and a final plan will be completed by December 2013.

Public meetings will be held in Haines, Skagway, Seward, Anchorage, Wasilla, Fairbanks and Nome in Spring 2013. Two future meetings will be held as on-line open houses. These on-line formats allow participants to view PowerPoint presentations, documents, maps, and videos, and make direct comments on the plan's elements. The on-line open houses will be available for 24 hours a day, 30 days at a time and allow for even greater geographic participation.

Contact Us

For more information, to submit a comment, or to sign up for electronic updates, visit our website at www.dot.alaska.gov/railplan or contact Julie Jessen, HDR Senior Public Involvement Specialist at 907-644-2000 or julie.jessen@hdrinc.com.

Alaska State Rail Plan Frequently Asked Questions



What is a state rail plan?

Rail plans develop a state's long-term vision for rail freight and passenger transportation. Rail plans identify needs, prioritize potential projects, determine funding needs and potential sources, and outline future rail policy direction.

Why do we need a state rail plan?'

Rail plans are encouraged by Federal Law—the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008. Alaska must prepare a plan, approved by the Federal Railroad Administration, to be eligible for federal rail funding and investment. The plan must be coordinated with other transportation plans, such as the State's Long-Range Transportation Plan.

What are the plan's goals?

The plan will develop specific goals for Alaska, which may include promoting efficient movement of passengers and freight, enhancing economic development, promoting connectivity, or supporting safe railroad operations.

When was the last time Alaska did a rail plan?

Alaska's last rail plan was completed in 1985 and updated in 1990.

Why is ADOT&PF leading the planning effort?

Alaska Statute 44.42 assigns ADOT&PF responsibility for planning for all modes of transportation, including rail.

Will the rail plan promote resource development?

Rail would support, but not drive resource development. For some resources, rail is essential. To be cost effective, rail works best when high volumes of freight are to be shipped over a long period of time. However, the plan will look at ways to support existing and developing resources and how those resources could be moved to market.

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What is an Island Railroad?

"Island railroads" are independently located lines that are not connected to the main rail system. For instance, the historic railroad from the Kennicott Mine to Cordova would have been considered an island railroad.

Are there different types of passenger service?

Passenger service includes passenger, commuter, and excursion service.

- Passenger: traveling from one point to another by rail, often from one city to another, often over long distance
- Commuter: traveling from home to work and return by rail, usually in an urban/suburban setting
- Excursion: traveling by rail for the experience, usually round-trip

Will commuter rail be considered?

Alaska must plan for continued growth, especially in the Girdwood to Anchorage to Matanuska Susitna Borough corridor. This corridor may need additional interconnectedness and intermodal support. The plan must also consider connectivity between different modes of transportation, such as rail to bus.

What is the project schedule?

A draft plan will be available for public review in fall 2013. A final draft plan will be submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration for review and approval by December 2013.

How can I be involved?

The Planning Team will have public meetings communities across the state in Spring 2013. Additional meetings will be in an "on-line open house format." These on-line meetings will be available for a month at a time, allowing more individuals in more communities an opportunity to participate in a time and manner convenient to them. To learn more about the planning process, sign up for e-mail notifications, or send us your comments, visit www.dot.alaska.gov/railplan.

