

CS FOR HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 35(TRA)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY THE HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Offered: 5/15/22

Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES CRONK, Thompson, LeBon, Prax, McCarty, Schrage, Rauscher, Tarr, Snyder, Drummond

A RESOLUTION

1 **Supporting the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and the Northern Rail**
2 **Extension; supporting the increase in defensive capabilities at Fort Greely, Alaska;**
3 **encouraging a renewed commitment by the Alaska Railroad to a community-minded**
4 **approach to future rail expansion; and encouraging the development of critical Arctic**
5 **infrastructure.**

6 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

7 **WHEREAS** Alaska is the only state in the United States that borders the Arctic
8 Ocean; and

9 **WHEREAS** the United States Department of Defense has expanded the anti-ballistic
10 missile facility at Fort Greely, Alaska; and

11 **WHEREAS** the United States Army has developed new training range areas to
12 support the Stryker Brigade; and

13 **WHEREAS** Fort Greely is the only military base that is not currently connected to the
14 railroad system in the state; and

15 **WHEREAS** a railroad is well suited to provide the transportation support required to

1 sustain military operations; and

2 **WHEREAS** a cost-efficient transportation system would benefit the world-class
3 mining operations located near Delta Junction and projected mining operations near Tetlin;
4 and

5 **WHEREAS** a cost-efficient transportation system would benefit the agricultural
6 industry in the Delta Junction area, allowing the agricultural industry to become more cost-
7 efficient and competitive and increasing its ability to expand; and

8 **WHEREAS** a railroad would provide a cost-efficient method of transporting goods
9 and services for both mining and agricultural activities in the Delta Junction region; and

10 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Railroad system has the capacity to provide efficient
11 transportation services for heavy cargo and large quantities of supplies to the Delta Junction
12 region from the ports of Port MacKenzie, Seward, Whittier, and Anchorage and to
13 economically deliver mining and agricultural products from the region to market; and

14 **WHEREAS** the extension of the Alaska Railroad from Port MacKenzie to Houston,
15 Delta Junction, and Fort Greely is consistent with the long-term goals of the Alaska Railroad
16 Corporation and the State of Alaska to extend rail service to the contiguous United States; and

17 **WHEREAS** the Alaska Railroad has already completed phase 1 of the Northern Rail
18 Extension project by crossing the Tanana River, which brings the rail line within 70 miles of
19 Delta Junction and Fort Greely; and

20 **WHEREAS** the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Alaska Railroad have already
21 completed nearly two-thirds of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension, which brings Port
22 MacKenzie within 33 miles of the Alaska Railroad rail line, which is in Houston and extends
23 on to Fairbanks and the Northern Rail Extension project; and

24 **WHEREAS** the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension will reduce energy
25 and transportation costs, improve air quality, increase the efficiency of shipping bulk
26 commodities and materials to and from Interior Alaska, and provide direct rail access for
27 shipments of liquefied natural gas from Cook Inlet to Fairbanks, North Pole, and beyond; and

28 **WHEREAS** the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension will increase the
29 available supply of natural gas and reduce energy costs for industry and residential customers
30 in many Interior Alaska communities; with increased natural gas supply, that region will
31 realize additional opportunities for natural gas conversion, which will aid in achieving air

1 quality attainment; and

2 **WHEREAS** the Alaska State Legislature supports returning to private landowners the
3 ownership rights of formerly private land previously conveyed to the Alaska Railroad that is
4 no longer in use by the railroad, or for affected landowners to receive compensation,
5 including a share of all revenue derived from easements, utility rights-of-way, or other
6 financial arrangements executed by the railroad; and

7 **WHEREAS** the communities, neighborhoods, and individuals served and affected by
8 rail expansions should have an active role in planning, considering alternatives, and
9 confirming decisions made by the Alaska Railroad regarding rail expansions;

10 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature supports the completion of the
11 Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and the Northern Rail Extension; and be it

12 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature recognizes the urgency of
13 developing key infrastructure and defense capabilities, considering the investments other
14 nations have committed to the Arctic as well as the increased amount of time needed for those
15 types of projects because of the extreme weather of the region; and be it

16 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the Alaska
17 Railroad to renew its commitment to a community-minded approach to future rail expansions,
18 including reporting to the legislature regarding the railroad's efforts to improve relations with
19 private landowners, communities, and neighborhoods impacted by past and current
20 operations; and be it

21 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Alaska
22 delegation in Congress to pursue the completion of the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and
23 the Northern Rail Extension for the purpose of securing the critical infrastructure that is
24 necessary to improve defense capabilities in the state.

25 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President
26 of the United States; the Honorable Kamala D. Harris, Vice President of the United States and
27 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of
28 Representatives; the Honorable Patrick Leahy, President pro tempore of the U.S. Senate; the
29 Honorable Lloyd Austin, United States Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Deb Haaland,
30 United States Secretary of the Interior; the Honorable Pete Buttigieg, United States Secretary
31 of Transportation; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S.

- 1 Senators, and the U.S. Representative for Alaska, members of the Alaska delegation in
- 2 Congress.