



CITY OF WASILLA

290 E. HERNING AVE.
WASILLA, ALASKA 99654-7091
PHONE: (907) 373-9050
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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NO. 97-60

DATE: September 16, 1997

TO: Council

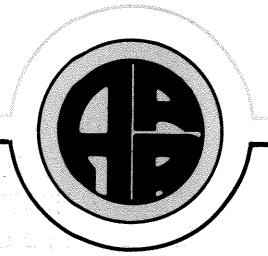
FROM: Sarah H. Palin, Mayor 

RE: Snowmachines

Our trails committee has been requested to work on snowmachine corridors through Wasilla, including accessing the railroad right-of-way.

We will need to educate the community on safe and legal snowmachining in the city. This may include a brochure, PSAs and other media reaches.

ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION



September 9, 1997

Charlie Fannon
Chief of Police
Wasilla Police Department
250 North Knik Street
Wasilla, AK 99654-9051

Dear Chief Fannon:

Congratulations are long overdue for your appointment as the Chief of the Wasilla Police Department. By now you have gotten your feet wet and have an idea of the issues in Wasilla. It has been another busy summer for us at the railroad and I apologize for not having come out and talked to you about railroad issues in the valley.

We have had continual problems with trespass in the Wasilla area. The ARRC maintains a 100 foot right-of-way on each side of the track. The right-of-way is closed to all trespass, including people walking, riding ATVs and snowmachines along the track. Each year we usually hit at least one or two ATVs or snowmachiners that are on the track. In the past we have also experienced fatality accidents in the valley with trespassers. Trespass is a large concern for the ARRC, and we have created several public service announcements (radio and television) and posters to help educate the public of the dangers of being on the track. We distribute the posters to many valley businesses, we have the television and radio spots aired on the local stations, we conduct track patrols to attempt to identify and talk with trespassers to educate them of the dangers, and we work with the local media to do stories on railroad safety topics.

Over the years, we have had a vandalism problem in one particular area of Wasilla that I would like to make you aware of. At the Glenwood Avenue crossing we have regular vandalism of the electronic crossing gates and lights. Vandals have stolen the lights, damaged the crossing arms, broken warning lights, and re-aligned the lights so they were not visible to approaching vehicles, etc. This vandalism is not only costly to repair, but places the public in danger if the damage is not found and reported. As soon as we are made aware of damaged signal equipment, train crews are notified and approach a crossing at a restricted speed, stopping if necessary to make the crossing safe for the public. The danger exists when we are not aware of damaged crossing signals and a train approaches an unprotected crossing at track speed.

Corporate Address:

P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-7500

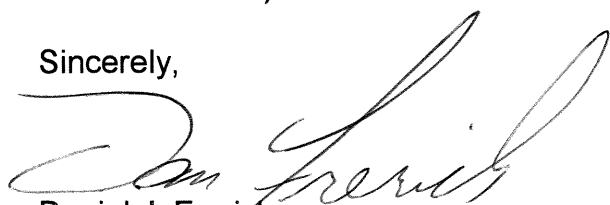
327 West Ship Creek Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Chief Charlie Fannon
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During our phone conversation we talked about a trail on our right-of-way for pedestrians and ATVs. In the Talkeetna area a trail was built to allow rural residents ATV access to their remote properties. The borough has a permit with the ARRC in which the borough accepts maintenance and liability responsibility for the trail. This project has been a win/win situation. The residents have better access, and they no longer cause a danger by driving their ATVs on or near the track. If the City is willing, the ARRC would gladly work with you to establish SAFE trail access along our right-of-way for pedestrians and ATVs. The trail would have to be on the outer edge of the right-of-way, and only approved crossings could be used. Our engineering department would have to approve any plans and supervise the construction. We would look to the City of Wasilla to find funding for the trail construction and maintenance, and indemnify the ARRC for any possible accidents which may occur on the trail. The ARRC will do all it can to support a trail in the Wasilla area.

We have had a good working relationship with the Wasilla Police Department since its inception, and hope to continue to do so, working together in the interest of public safety. If you have any questions, please give me a call any time (265-2462 office; 244-7935 cell; 696-3267 home).

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Frerich
Chief Special Agent

ice of The Times

FH Squash

Snowmobiles answer winter tourism question

By PATRICIA DeMARCO

Ready or not, winter's here. Last weekend's snowfall confirmed that.

The steady stream of RV renters seeking photographs, fish and adventure has slowed to a trickle. Downtown visitors are more likely to be conventioners than tourists. "Closed of the season" signs have begun to appear in shop windows. People in the tourism industry are looking at the books to figure out how well they did at the peak of their year.

Tourism is one of the principal economic engines of the city. In an average year, 1.2 million visitors come to Alaska, and 65 percent of them come through Anchorage as part of their journey. Over the last 10 years, the summer peak has grown significantly and has developed broader shoulders, thanks in large part to the endlessly creative and aggressive promotion efforts of the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau. However, the winter season has resisted comparable growth.

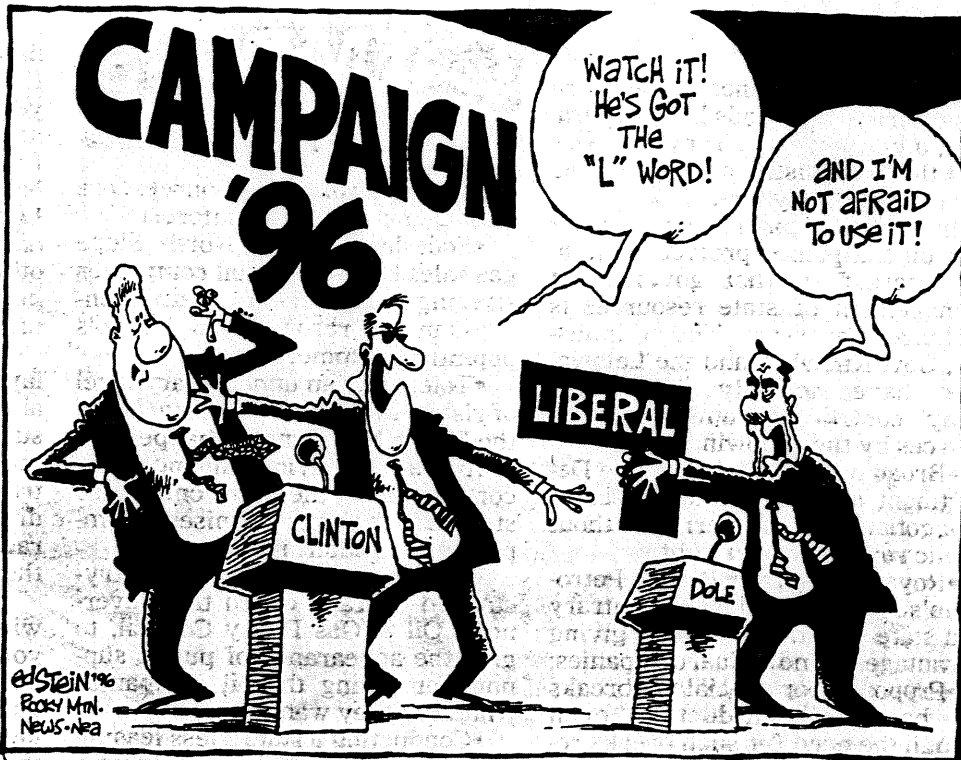
The Anchorage Economic Development Corp. has been examining ways to make tourism a year-round growth industry in Anchorage. Tourism has the potential to bring dollars into the economy from Outside — dollars that stay in Alaska and support full-time jobs in transportation, retail and services.

AEDC is looking for ways to have a winter peak with its own shoulders to complement the summer season. To accomplish this objective, Alaskans need to develop winter-specific destinations and infrastructure, such as trails, for a complete spectrum of winter uses, lodging and services.

Specific options for winter tourism have been examined at the AEDC through consultants and community discussions over the last two years. Now, consensus is building to act on some of the initiatives that have been proposed.

The issue of expanding development to improve winter tourism promotion reaches the heart of what many people believe is an intrusion into the quality of life in Alaska. The AEDC has been sensitive to such concerns and has developed priorities for infrastructure development projects. The AEDC priorities are:

- Focus on winter potential with multi-season use as a consideration.
- Improve access and amenities for public health and safety.



- Avoid impact on hazardous and wilderness areas.
- Reduce pressure on over-used areas.
- Seek local neighborhood support.
- Identify private sector opportunities which have viable economic feasibility.
- Promote both snowmobile and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

Alaska has the potential to reap a share of a \$7 billion winter tourism business. In particular, the recreational snowmobile rider has great potential as a target for winter marketing in Alaska. In the winter of 1995-96, snowmobilers spent \$54 million in Alaska. In that year alone, 8,021 new snowmobiles were sold here.

The trail support and access for visitors in Alaska in the form of marked, graded snow trails are insignificant in comparison to those provided in competing winter states such as Minnesota and Maine. Growth in winter tourism revenue in such states directly parallels the expansion of trails for snowmobile recreation riders.

Alaska has downhill ski facilities and cross-country trails of high quality. There are 133 kilometers of cross-country trails maintained year-round in Anchorage alone. With the addition of trails for snowmobile use, the potential for linking winter destinations and activities in ru-

ral areas increases. Lodges which now close for the season could remain open as winter destinations if the volume of visitors increases.

Alaska needs to pay attention to the international trends in winter travel. We need to invest in trail routing, marking and coordination. Public input to the process is needed, and coordination among potential destinations is essential. But the time for speculation, calculation, contemplation and planning without implementation is over.

We need to act, the sooner the better. Alaska is the ultimate winter opportunity. It is our challenge to capture the winter experience so the full potential of the tourism industry can flourish.

The AEDC will be exploring entrepreneurial opportunities for winter industry support. We will also be meeting with state and municipal officials to examine coordination of planning for appropriate trails and access as well as provisions for public safety and communication. Ideas and interest from entrepreneurs and citizens are welcome. Contact the AEDC by e-mail to aedc@alaska.net or regular mail to 550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1400, Anchorage, AK 99501.

Patricia DeMarco is the president of the Anchorage Economic Development Corp.