



	Approved	Denied
Action taken	1/28/02	
Other:		
Date of Council Action:	1/28/02	
Verified by:	Ty.	

**CITY COUNCIL INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

**IM No. 02-01**

**TITLE: RAILROAD RELOCATION UPDATE**

**COUNCIL MEETING DATE: JANUARY 28, 2002**

ADMINISTRATION INITIAL: *TK*

REQUESTED BY: Tim Krug, City Planner

PREPARED BY: Wasilla Planning Office

Date Prepared: 1/21/02

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

If yes, amount requested: \$      Account No.:

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

On September 25, 2000 the Wasilla City Council supported the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) in its efforts to obtain state and federal funding in order to relocate the railroad tracks out of downtown Wasilla through WCC Resolution Serial No. 00-44.

City staff and our consultant have continued to gather information for the Wasilla Railroad Relocation Reconnaissance Study. We have held two public open house meetings, made a presentation for Knik-Fairview Community Council, made a presentation to Richmond View Homeowner's Association and participated with the Alaska Railroad Corporation in their open house held this month at Lake Lucille Inn. Numerous articles about the railroad location have been written in the Frontiersman. Also, comments were solicited from the public. A summary document has been prepared and all comments are available for review.

The feedback we have received has been supportive of rail relocation. However, the majority that did respond do not want the rail relocated at or near their property. Mr. Scott Hattenburg of Hattenburg & Dille, LLC will make a report of the findings during your January 28, 2002 meeting.

Scott Hattenburg and the City Planner will make a presentation to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission on February 4<sup>th</sup>. The Borough will be provided with the complete final Wasilla Railroad Relocation Reconnaissance study.

The findings of this study will also be forwarded to the Alaska Railroad Corporation and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION, IF ANY:**

Attachments: WCC Resolution Serial No. 00-44  
Copy of response letter sent to property owners  
Frontiersman Spectrum Article, Mayor Palin  
Frontiersman Spectrum Article, Scott Hattenburg

**CITY OF WASILLA  
RESOLUTION SERIAL NO. 00-44**

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION IN ITS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING IN ORDER TO RELOCATE THE RAILROAD TRACKS OUT OF DOWNTOWN WASILLA.**

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WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council and the Alaska Railroad Corporation desire to improve safety through the elimination of at-grade railroad crossings throughout the Wasilla area; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council and the Alaska Railroad Corporation desire to improve the safety of railroad operations through the elimination of dangerous railroad curves throughout the Wasilla area; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council and the Alaska Railroad Corporation desire to improve the safety of railroad operations through the construction of new rail tracks and rail bed throughout the Wasilla area; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council and the Alaska Railroad Corporation desire to improve the railroad travel time to enhance commuter rail service and transportation of goods; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council desires to improve traffic movement and minimize the need for overpasses through downtown Wasilla by means of relocating the railroad track out of downtown Wasilla; and

WHEREAS, the Wasilla City Council supports the construction of separated grade crossings to eliminate traffic congestion and to eliminate potential traffic accidents along the railroad route; and

WHEREAS, the removal of the railroad tracks in downtown Wasilla will allow for orderly downtown economic growth; and

WHEREAS, the removal of the railroad tracks in downtown Wasilla will allow for orderly and economic downtown utility improvements; and

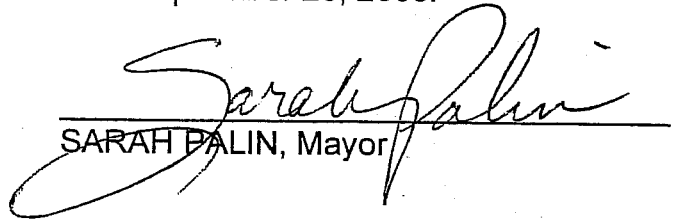
WHEREAS, the removal of the railroad tracks in downtown Wasilla will allow for improved traffic flow through downtown Wasilla; and

WHEREAS, the removal of the tracks in downtown Wasilla will allow for improved trails, greenbelt, and other Parks Highway amenities in downtown Wasilla that are currently hindered by the railroad tracks; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Railroad Corporation seeks City Council support in its efforts to obtain state and federal funding to meet the goal of relocating the railroad out of downtown Wasilla; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Wasilla City Council that it supports the Alaska Railroad Corporation in its efforts to obtain state and federal funding in order to relocate the railroad tracks out of downtown Wasilla.

ADOPTED by the Wasilla City Council on September 25, 2000.

  
SARAH PALIN, Mayor

ATTEST:



KRISTIE L. VANGORDER, CMC  
City Clerk

[SEAL]



# CITY OF WASILLA

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PLANNING OFFICE  
290 E HERNING AVENUE  
WASILLA AK 99654-9050  
PHONE: (907) 373-9052  
FAX: (907) 373-9089

January 18, 2002

«First» «Last»  
«Address»  
«City\_State», «Zip»

Dear Property Owner:

Thank you for your comments regarding relocating the Alaska Railroad away from the downtown corridor. The purpose of the study was to answer five questions: 1) from an engineering standpoint, is it technically possible, 2) if it could be relocated, what possible alternative routes might it take, 3) how much would it cost, 4) how long would it take, & 5) what would the public's perception be. Five alternative routes were explored including a "no build" alternative.

The City of Wasilla has not selected a proposed route. The City staff has taken great steps at public meetings to explain that the City will not be recommending a specific route. The subsequent Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process is the correct forum for selecting an alternative.

It is prudent to address the potential for loss of life and property in downtown Wasilla with respect to railroad crossings. Removing the railroad and its at-grade crossings from the downtown corridor would free up 200' of the 300' total right-of-way to allow significant improvements in traffic flow, landscaping, and environmental protections in the Parks Highway corridor. An alternate railroad route could potentially eliminate many at-grade crossings utilized by numerous school buses on a daily basis.

Additionally, the ARRC has been studying the need for commuter rail service to Anchorage. The alternative routes will reduce the number of curves and decrease the amount of time needed in commuting to Anchorage.

Studies dating back two decades have proposed alternative traffic corridors for the Parks Highway. There is increasing pressure to solve traffic congestion and bottlenecks in Wasilla. The Wasilla Comprehensive Plan as adopted by the Borough includes a "reexamination of the feasibility of a limited access bypass" and further states, "In addition, over the past two decades, the Wasilla business sector has grown to the point where a limited access bypass is not likely to harm Wasilla's retail and commercial sector. The City supports a cooperative effort with the Borough and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, (ADOT&PF), to examine the bypass option, as part of the overall long-range transportation strategy of upgrading the Parks Highway and dispersing traffic throughout an improved arterial and collector grid system."

The public feedback we have received to date, has been courteous and professional. Our goal is for everyone to be heard so we can clearly report how this project is perceived. We are forwarding the results of this study along with your comments to ADOT&PF, ARRC, and the Mat-Su Borough for potential further action. To that end, I would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to be a part of the process.

Sincerely,

Tim Krug  
City Planner

... money, and the strings tied to any and go to of work before. If he were following the ca-

Frontiers man 1/4/02

# Fate of railroad tracks still undecided



Mayor Sarah Palin

## Spectrum

I would like to wish our community a happy New Year, and say thank you to everyone for a great year of positive progress in our Valley.

Much has been accomplished through teamwork and hard work by the outstanding Alaskans who live

here. Much has been accomplished, also, because the community is tackling issues that have needed attention for many years.

Easy, non-controversial "cruising" could be a tempting mode of operation for my administration as my final year in office winds down, because as you can imagine it would be easier to just sit back and merely hope that Wasilla's growing pains will go away ... but that's not how we've worked during the past five years, and I will not burden residents by shifting gears now and ignoring important issues just because life would be easier if I chose to be a lame-duck mayor.

One such issue that has been talked about for at least two decades involves railroad crossings throughout our town. City and borough residents, and members of my staff, approached me about safety concerns we all have when we consider the daily 11,000 vehicle count and 240 school buses that

whether we were born in Alaska or, like myself, Alaskans by choice rather than chance.

I am proud to consider myself an Alaskan whenever I see the kindness in the hearts of those who run to the aid of strangers and when the holiday takes on its intended meaning.

Norman Rokeberg  
State representative  
House District 11

Yes Horace, there is a Santa Claus

To the editor:  
Many years ago a famous journalist

Joel Cummings

## to the editor ...

lice when you see a suspected drunk driver on the road). We can all help address this terrible Alaskan problem with such high human costs.

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Ogan admits there could be a rift, and says that is why he immediately led the legislative ethics committee, which told him he was in the clear as long as pany from Colorado?

cross the railroad's busy tracks in downtown Wasilla. The city was asked to commission a safety study to consider the concerns and to invite public input on the issue.

It has been explained that the study would be compiled and presented to the Mat-Su Borough for use, if they so chose, in their Borough-Wide Transportation Master Plan. If the present location of the track's crossing through our main intersection is found to be such a safety concern that moving the tracks may be considered, then the railroad, the state, the borough and the city all need to be able to deal in facts surrounding that potential move. A professional study is how data is collected so these entities know what they're dealing with.

The study is not yet completed. The city has not been presented the study. The Wasilla City Council and I should be presented with the study's findings sometime in January. There has been

no chosen route to relocate the railroad tracks. There are many options that the railroad, state and city will consider, including leaving the tracks in the existing right of way.

Based on the number of Mat-Su Borough residents who are voicing concerns that the city has chosen a route to move the railroad tracks out of Wasilla, it seems that there has been a great deal of misinformation being distributed about my position on this issue.

Please be assured that the city has not taken a position at this time, and as always I will never underestimate the wisdom of the people ... it will be the people of the community who will ultimately decide the position taken on moving the railroad tracks.

Again, happy New Year! Here's to a blessed, productive, active and community-involved 2002!

Sarah Palin is serving her second term as mayor of the city of Wasilla.

this program. They are an incredibly talented group and I am very proud to have been given the opportunity to work with them.

And finally I would like to thank everyone who came out in the bitter cold to attend our feast.

Your enthusiastic recognition for our efforts truly

FELONETICS MAN 18/62

# Moving of railroad tracks prudent ...

... need  
... ments

... of Wasilla has not selected a proposed route. The city staff has taken great steps at public meetings to explain that the city will not be recommending a specific route. The subsequent Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, if the project is funded and proceeds, is the correct forum for selecting an alternative.

... Corp. has been studying the need for commuter rail service to Anchorage. The alternative routes will reduce the number of curves and decrease the amount of time needed in commuting to Anchorage.

... Wasilla Planning office since January 2001. We conducted two public open houses on Nov. 6, 2001, and Dec. 3, 2001. We are currently collecting and compiling comments from the community and finalizing the report.

... The Alaska Railroad Corp. will offer an open house for all its railroad projects on Jan. 23 between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., at Lake Lucille Inn in Wasilla. This study will be a part of their program. We anticipate making a presentation of our findings to the Wasilla City Council on Jan. 28, and the Mat-Su Borough Planning Commission meeting on Feb. 4. After the borough presentation, we will forward copies of the study to the Mat-Su Borough, Alaska Railroad Corp. and DOT for their further action as a sponsor.

... Studies dating back to 1982 propose similar alternative corridors for the Parks. There is increasing pressure to solve traffic congestion and bottlenecks in Wasilla. The Wasilla Comprehensive Plan, as adopted by the borough, includes a "reevaluation of the feasibility of a limited access bypass" and further states "In addition, over the past two decades, the Wasilla business sector has grown to the point where a limited access bypass is not likely to harm Wasilla's retail and commercial sector. The city supports a cooperative effort with the Borough and DOT&PF to examine the bypass operation, as part of the overall long-range transportation strategy of upgrading the Parks Highway and dispersing traffic throughout an improved arterial and collector grid system."

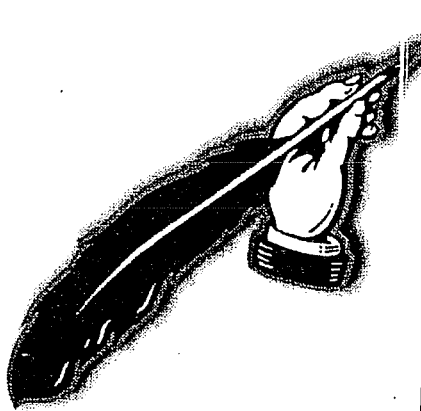
... The feedback we have received to date, both positive and negative, has been courteous and professional. Our goal is for everyone to be heard so we can clearly report to the city as to how this project will be perceived. To that end, I thank the people of the Wasilla area for taking time out of their busy schedules to be a part of the process.

... Roberson Millwork, Builders Bargains, Alaska Army National Guard, Valley Funeral

... It is prudent and reasonable to address the potential for loss of life and property in downtown Wasilla with respect to the railroad crossings. Removing the railroad and its at-grade crossings from the downtown corridor would free up 200 feet of the 300-foot total right of way to allow significant improvements in traffic flow, landscaping, and environmental protections in the Parks Highway corridor. Additionally, the Alaska Railroad

... DOT is studying alternative transportation corridors under its Parks Highway Corridor Management Plan. For this study, we have strived to make the public process open and allow sufficient time for all to be heard. The draft study and maps have been available for public review at the

... Scott Hattenburg is the principal civil engineer at Hattenburg & Dilley, LLC, an Anchorage-based firm. The city of Wasilla contracted him to study the possibility of moving the railroad corridor.



Scott Hattenburg

## Spectrum

The city of Wasilla is nearing the completion of a study to relocate the Alaska Railroad away from the downtown corridor. The purpose of the study is to answer five basic questions — 1. From an engineering standpoint, is it technically possible? 2. If it could be relocated, what possible alternative routes might it take? 3. How much would it cost? 4. How long would it take? 5. What would the public's perception be?

Five alternative routes were explored including a "no build" alternative. Contrary to popular opinion, the city

## to the editor ...

... car is stopped ahead (making a left turn, letting a child cross the street ...)

I would like everyone who reads this to think about this