



Fairbanks Freight Rail Realignment

Project Scope

At the request of Fairbanks, North Pole and Fairbanks North Star Borough leadership, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is moving forward on a project to realign and/or improve freight rail tracks in the Fairbanks area. This project will take the next step on potential alignments that were conceptualized in previous studies. These studies considered new rail alignments through south and west Fairbanks and potential upgrades to the existing rail alignments. The goal is to advance to a design stage, develop additional alternatives as necessary, and hold public meetings to identify community interests and concerns. The project will provide initial input into preliminary engineering and environmental phases.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to:

- increase public safety by eliminating at-grade road/rail crossings and tracks.
- improve local rail freight traffic efficiency and service to local refinery and increase speed of service through Fairbanks on to Ft. Wainwright and Eielson AFB.
- respond to community concerns regarding freight rail movement in Fairbanks.

Status

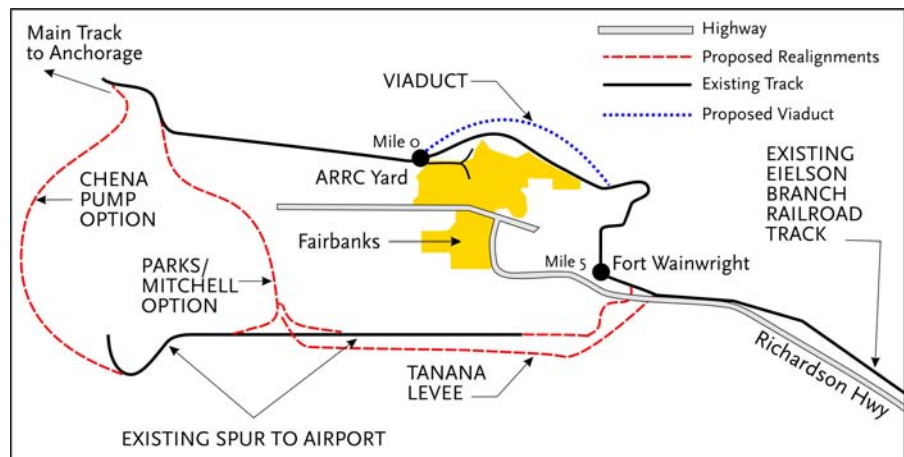
The Fairbanks Freight Rail Realignment takes into consideration concepts identified in studies commissioned by the Alaska Railroad, as well as by other sources, such as the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

- **Fairbanks Bypass Realignment Reconnaissance Study (2001)** - Commissioned by ARRC and conducted by Thomas Engineering in 2000 and 2001. The study looks at the feasibility of decommissioning 18 miles of main and branch line

rail through Fairbanks, Fort Wainwright, and the City of North Pole and realigning the main line track south and east of these areas.

- **Fairbanks Bypass Phasing Report (2002)** – Commissioned by ARRC and conducted by Thomas Engineering in 2001 and 2002. The Phasing Report addressed the magnitude of the realignment effort by recommending the realignment be split into two logical phases, each with independent utility.
- **Rail Realignment & Extension Planning Report (2002-2004)** – Commissioned by the Fairbanks North Star Borough's Rail 2100 Task Force. The Rail 2100 Task Force was established to create a long-term plan for the future placement and function of the Alaska Railroad to service the greater Fairbanks area, and extensions both within and outside of the Fairbanks North Star Borough, for the next 100 years. While the report was not adopted by the borough, it did provide information for future project consideration.

From findings and recommendations of the first two studies in particular, the Railroad pursued the Eielson Branch Realignment project beginning in 2005. Commissioned by the Alaska Railroad in 2005, the Eielson Branch Realignment Environmental Assessment is the next step on Phase 1 from the 2002 Phasing Report. The EA is assessing the options and impacts of realigning the branch track between Fairbanks and North Pole.



The Fairbanks Freight Rail Realignment project will consider alignment options identified through previous studies.

The Alaska Railroad had planned to begin on the recommended Phase 2 following completion of Phase 1. However, Fairbanks/North Pole area leaders have asked the Railroad to start Phase 2 sooner. In response, the Railroad has initiated the Fairbanks Freight Rail Realignment project, which is the next step on Phase 2 from the 2002 Phasing Report. Initial activity will include public involvement and planning with regard to a realignment around the more populated areas of Fairbanks.

Initially, the Railroad will solicity public input and pursue additional planning on several options identified in previous studies. These include the Chena Pump / River Bypass option, the Parks Highway Bypass option, and the Trainer Gate Viaduct option.

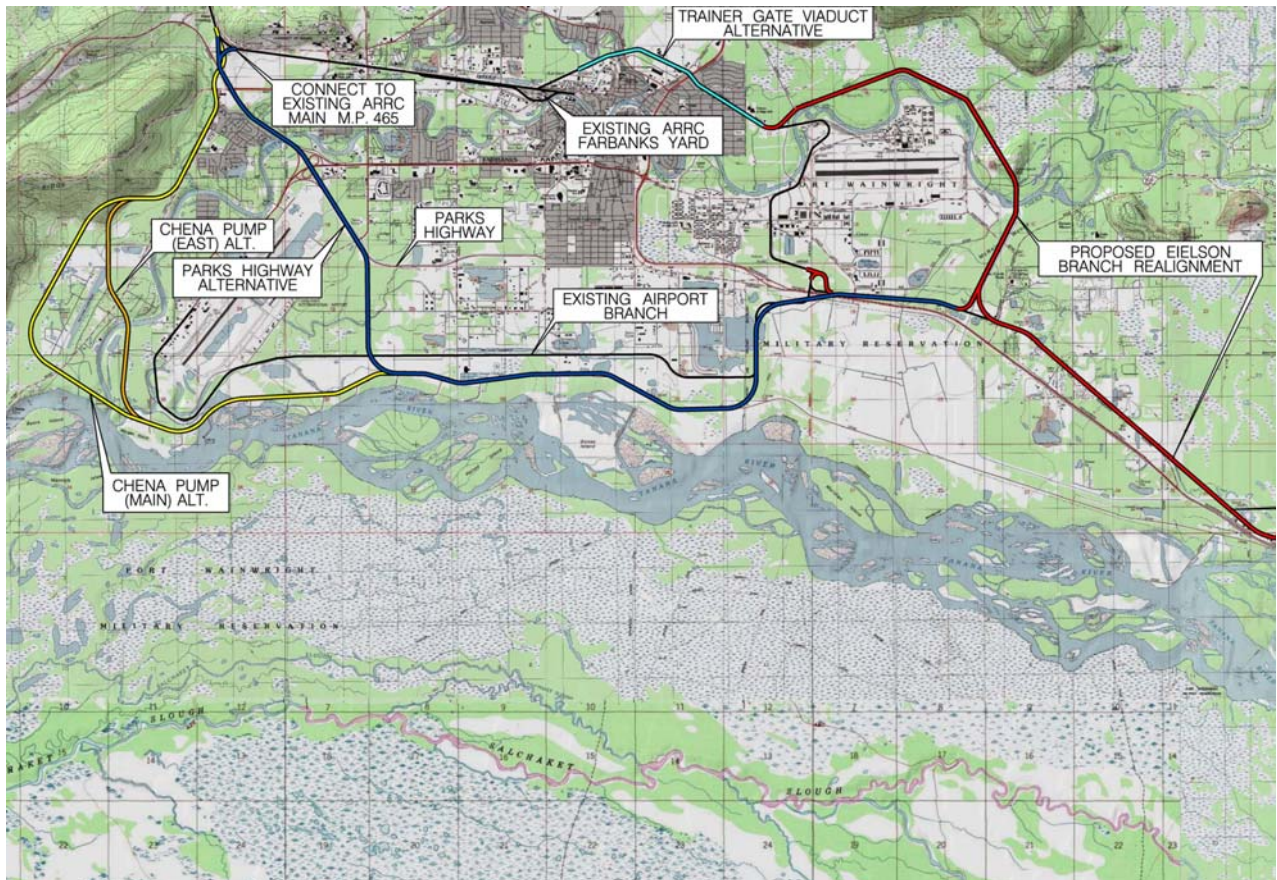
Next steps in pursuing the Fairbanks Freight Rail Realignment project:

- Define alignment alternatives to study.
- Fund preliminary design and engineering.
- Develop alternative alignments to identify the issues.
- Solicit and incorporate public comments regarding alignments and issues.

- Prepare for detailed environmental document (EIS or EA) and select a preferred route.
- Identify project funding source(s) in order to move forward.

Project Costs

- \$200,000 in initial funding is provided by the Alaska Railroad.
- Project cost range is estimated to be between \$100 and \$200 million. Funding for preliminary engineering/ environmental documentation, final design and construction has not been identified.



Realignment options currently under consideration, as identified in previous studies.