



# COMMUNITY

Alaska Railroad Corporation  
1st Quarter, 2008



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Alaska Railroad  
Ongoing Projects:

Northern Rail Extension

Ft. Wainwright Realignment

Fairbanks Area  
Rail Relocation

Nenana Rail Relocation

Collision Avoidance System

Port MacKenzie Rail Extension

Crossbuck Illumination Test

Ship Creek Intermodal Center

Chugach Forest Whistle Stop

South Wasilla Rail Relocation

Anchorage Capacity  
Yard to Airport Spur

Seward Freight Dock  
Expansion

For updates or comments on  
these projects, visit the Alaska  
Railroad web site at  
[www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com)

## ARRC ADDS TO FIRE-FIGHTING ARSENAL

### Old tank railcars convert into water-filled fire suppression assets

As springtime draws closer, so does the risk of wild land fires. The Alaska Railroad is doing more than ever to address the dangers posed by fires along the track.

On the fire prevention side, ARRC locomotives are outfitted with the latest design in exhaust spark arresters approved by the U.S. Forest Service.

On the response side, the ARRC track crews are equipped with water jugs and sprayers to suppress small fires. However, if a fire grows, they turn to the professionals within the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR). It is at this juncture where the railroad has made the most progress — boosting professional-led firefighting efforts.

ARRC is close to finalizing a letter of agreement with ADNR's Division of Forestry to provide reciprocal assistance in the event of a fire along the rail line. As part of the agreement, ARRC recently converted nine 20,000-gallon tank railcars to hold water. These will be deployed in pairs to five strategic locations along the rail line.

No longer federally qualified to haul petroleum, these aging tank cars were to be sold to the scrapyard. But after second thought, the cars were thoroughly cleaned, donated for water use only, and clearly marked to underscore their role in fire suppression.

In addition to boosting fire-fighting capability with on-site water sources, the railroad has been collecting information to help gauge the potential severity of future fires. Last summer, ARRC inventoried the track from Anchorage to Fairbanks, taking note of fire-related conditions, mile-by-mile. This summer the inventory will cover Anchorage to Seward.

*(See "ARRC Boosts Fire-fighting" on page 2)*

*Below, a converted tank car awaits deployment along the rail line. Left, a graphic message on the car's use.*



# ROUND-UP: RAIL REALIGNMENTS AND EXTENSIONS

## ARRC pursues track relocation projects in southcentral and interior Alaska

**Port MacKenzie Rail Extension:** In February, the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and hired ICF International to prepare the EIS. The month prior, the Mat-Su Borough (MSB) and ARRC joint project team provided the STB with a Preliminary Environmental and Alternatives Report (PEAR), which compiles five months of public involvement, environmental and engineering activities. The report is available at the ARRC/MSB project web site — [www.portmacrail.com](http://www.portmacrail.com) — or on CD by contacting Stephenie Wheeler, 265-2671. People can participate and stay informed via the STB's EIS web site — [www.stbportmacraileis.com](http://www.stbportmacraileis.com).

**Northern Rail Extension:** The STB is nearly done with reviewing proposals for building an 80-mile rail extension between North Pole and Delta Junction. A draft EIS is expected in 2008. A key component of the project is rail access over the Tanana River. ARRC's preferred alternative includes a river crossing near Salcha. This would also provide the military with year-round access to the Joint Tanana Training Complex, which is currently only available by ice road at unpredictable times in the winter. On March 6, ARRC hosted a public open house to update Salcha residents on the extension project and specific plans for the river crossing and flood mitigation near their community.

**Fairbanks Area Rail Line Relocation:** ARRC continues an analysis of options to relocate the track outside congested and urban areas of Fairbanks and North Pole. Analysis thus far underscores the need for a phased approach in order to complete the costly and complex realignment. The first phase focuses on the area around North Pole. As part of the project, ARRC also commissioned a study to explore possibilities for

passenger and commuter rail service between communities along the stretch from Denali National Park to North Pole. A draft preliminary report in January indicated that the market is not yet developed enough to support commuter rail between Fairbanks and communities in the direction of the park. However, as the population base grows, these services could become viable.

**Nenana Rail Line Relocation:** With the Environmental Analysis (EA) completed and approved (2004), and the route chosen and final design accomplished (2005), ARRC began buying land for the right-of-way in 2006. Land acquisition continues and will be completed in 2008, setting the stage for eventual construction. Funding has not yet been identified for construction, estimated to cost \$25 million.

**Anchorage-to-Wasilla / South Wasilla Rail Relocation:** Straightening some 40 curves between the Anchorage Yard and Wasilla is all but completed, except for the finishing touches on the Knik River Bridge (due in 2008) and the Beach Lake Recreational area curve, which is on-hold indefinitely due to a massive underground ice lens. The four-mile South Wasilla Rail Relocation picks up where community-to-community realignment left off. In 2006, the South Wasilla project moved into land acquisition for Phase One, the big curve between MP 154 and MP 156, and will continue in 2008. Funding is not identified for Phase One final engineering and construction, estimated at \$24 million.

**Road/Rail Relocation Around Wasilla:** The Department of Transportation continues to take the lead on this effort to identify a viable route for the highway and mainline rail to move outside of downtown Wasilla. ARRC will help keep the community informed on opportunities for public involvement in 2008 and beyond. ●

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## ARRC BOOSTS FIRE-FIGHTING...

*(continued from page 1)*

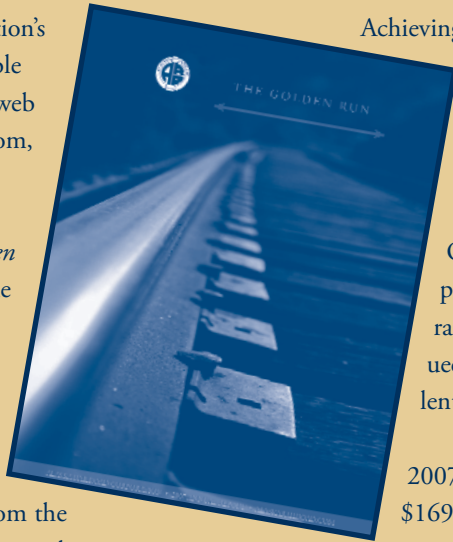
Fire risk is the product of fuel types, fuel density and seasonal conditions. For example, spruce trees are extremely flammable, and a patch of spruce growing closely together might identify an area as high risk for becoming a conduit to spread wildfire. And periods of warm, dry, windy weather can turn a normally low-risk area into a potential tinderbox.

Such fire-related information is being incorporated into ARRC's Track Chart. This booklet illustrates the track structure, milepost locations, and geographical features along the railroad's main line and branch lines. Soon, it will become the latest in the Alaska Railroad's growing arsenal of tools to combat fire along the track. ●

# 2007 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS "THE GOLDEN RUN"

The Alaska Railroad Corporation's 2007 Annual Report is available for public review on ARRC's web site — [www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com), — beginning in April.

This year's theme is *The Golden Run*, a term used to define the most efficient possible train run between two points. To achieve it, everything has to be near perfect, meaning the entire railroad team has to perform with excellence — from the crew operating the train, to the track gangs maintaining the line, to the accounting technician cutting the payroll checks.



Achieving excellence requires continual effort — taking stock and moving forward. That's what it was all about for the railroad last year. 2007 was a year of re-establishing baselines. We took stock of achievements from our previous five-year plan, and used it to engineer the next five-year plan. Our goals: increased operational flexibility, precise performance tracking, a better expense-to-revenue ratio as reflected by net operating income, continued improvements in safety — overall, a more excellent railroad.

2007 was a solid financial year with total revenues at \$169.3 million, total expense at \$153 million and net income at \$16.3 million. Our assets grew another \$120 million and now total \$835 million. ●

## RAILROAD EARNS GREEN STAR AIR QUALITY AWARD

### Green Star approves original award recertification and separate air quality honors

**D**uring February, the Alaska Railroad received notice that its quest to recertify a Green Star Award and to earn a separate and additional Green Star Air Quality Award were both approved. A formal award presentation is planned for April 21 at the Anchorage Chamber "Make it Monday" forum.

"The standards committee was very impressed with the Alaska Railroad Corporation's efforts, as well as its thorough documentation," said Green Star Membership Director Jean Marie Guzzetti in a memo congratulating ARRC on the award.

Of note, the railroad was recognized for its holistic approach to reducing



locomotive emissions. Significantly fewer emissions have been achieved through the purchase of newer, more efficient locomotives; establishing locomotive operating policies that promote fuel efficiency; installing on-board equipment that reduces engine idling; and a switch to using ultra low sulfur diesel fuel five years before the EPA-mandated deadline.

In addition, ARRC has been a proponent of commuter rail service, having sponsored a southcentral Alaska commuter rail study and operations plan, constructed track and depot infrastructure, and served in an advisory role for local government and public support groups.

ARRC is also a partner in offering the Ship Creek Shuttle, a public transit service connecting lower downtown and upper downtown Anchorage, where there is a public bus system connection.

ARRC's Green Star and Air Quality award submissions and supporting information (appendices) are posted on [www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com). Click the Information tab, then Safety & Environmental, then Green Star. ●

# WHISTLE STOP TOUR OFFERS LIFE-SAVING COUNSEL

**Biennial effort reaches emergency responders, school children and public at large**

**T**he Alaska Railroad is rolling into 10 railbelt communities March 31 through April 12 to offer practical information and instruction aimed at preventing and preparing for a variety of emergency situations. The 2008 Alaska Railroad Emergency Response Whistle Stop Tour begins in Seward, with subsequent stops in Whittier, Palmer, Wasilla, Talkeetna, Healy, Nenana, Clear AFS and Fairbanks, and ending in Anchorage.

The tour trains fire-fighters, medics and other emergency responders what to consider in the event of a train accident through classroom instruction, and hands-on exercises. It also offers potentially life-saving information to the general public through a mobile “fair” with presentations, experts and materials to help plan ahead to avoid or mitigate situations ranging from wildfires and natural disasters, to crime and railroad hazards.

Partners include the Alaska Departments of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) and Health & Social Services (ADHSS). Along with information from sponsors, several nationally-recognized preparedness programs are represented: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Citizen Corps (homeland security), Neighborhood Watch (crime prevention), Operation Lifesaver (rail safety), FireWise Alaska and Smokey the Bear (wildfire prevention).

“The Alaska Railroad is required to periodically coordinate with the emergency response community on responding to



*Front-line emergency responders, such as fire-fighters, receive vital training (Photo from a simulated exercise during summer 2007).*

accidents and incidents involving freight and passenger trains,” said Alaska Railroad Environmental Services & Emergency Response Manager Marc Peterson. “The Whistle Stop Tour program fulfills that mandate, but goes even further. These face-to-face forums allow for a true partnering with local emergency organizations. At the same time, the traveling train provides a venue to reach everyday citizens with tools that can save lives and property.”

A biennial effort, the 2008 Whistle Stop tour is bigger than ever, with an expanded outreach to emergency response organizations, elementary schools and the general public. Additional details are available on the Alaska Railroad web site – [www.AlaskaRailroad.com](http://www.AlaskaRailroad.com). Click on INFORMATION, then COMMUNITY. On the left, click on Emergency Response Whistle Stop Tour. ●

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