

News Release

**Alaska Railroad Corporation
U.S. Forest Service**



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Next Stop...The Real Alaska

Alaska Railroad and U.S. Forest Service introduce new Whistle Stop Service to the Chugach National Forest

ANCHORAGE, Alaska –A new partnership between the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) provides the public with a distinctive travel and recreational experience found nowhere else in the United States. And the only way to get there is on the Alaska Railroad.

Passengers can board the Glacier Discovery train in Anchorage, Girdwood or Portage and travel deep into the Chugach National Forest to remote areas of Alaska that can only be accessed by train. The first phase of the project includes the opening of the Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop. Passengers may opt for a ticket to Spencer Glacier where they will step off the train with a U.S. Forest Service interpreter. The interpreter will lead a narrated walk to a viewing platform, about 1.5 miles from the whistle-stop. Unguided and overnight use will be permitted beginning August 23. The current Whistle Stop service is limited to the summer passenger season schedule, which runs May through September, but may be expanded as the service grows.

The completed project will include a series of 5 Whistle Stop Stations with restrooms and other amenities where visitors can disembark the train to take a day or overnight trip into the heart of the Chugach National Forest. Plans call for a connected system of trails linking the different recreation sites and allowing visitors access to lakes, glaciers and high mountain passes. Along the trail system visitors will also find campsites and public-use cabins. Other recreation opportunities include guided interpretive hikes along the more developed trail segments as well as opportunities to engage in a variety of outfitted/guided recreation opportunities.

Future plans include a self-propelled car called a Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) built by Colorado Railcar. This all-in-one unit is suited for the whistle-stop service because it can stop and start in a short distance, is fuel efficient and remarkably quiet. It has the power to pull two additional railcars.

The fare from Anchorage or Girdwood is \$95 and includes rail fare to Spencer and return to the Portage stop, backcountry use, guided hike, and a motorcoach transfer from Portage to Anchorage. The round trip fare from Portage or Whittier is \$59 and includes backcountry use and guided hike. Reservations and more information can be found at www.alaskarailroad.com.

Currently the Alaska Railroad, along with a private vendor, operate several daytrips with rafting at Spencer Glacier and the Placer River as well as sightseeing further south at Grandview.

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“Our daytrips have seen a steady increase of visitors since we first offered them in 2002. Now it’s one of our most popular,” said Susie Kiger, the Railroad’s marketing and sales director. “We want to expand on that success and offer people more opportunities to see this wondrous country.”

Jim Fincher, Glacier District Ranger said this partnership provides an opportunity to see and experience the backcountry of the Chugach National Forest and the northern Kenai Peninsula. “Visitors will gain access to spectacular ice-capped mountains, glacial lakes, wild rivers and backcountry campsites, public-use cabins and trails. They can visit for a few hours, the entire day or on a multi-day excursion. And they can get there on modern, safe railcars,” he said.

Current capital cost including the railcar is \$13.8 million but plans for a possible second DMU may bring that total closer to \$18 million. Funding will come through grants and Forest Service Capital Investment Funds and well as railroad capital budget.

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