

**South Anchorage Double Track
Alaska Railroad Commuter Rail
Girdwood, Alaska
(November 2002)**

Description

As a part of the Girdwood Commuter Rail Project, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is proposing track improvements between Girdwood and Wasilla. This project involves the double-tracking of an approximately five-mile section of the line south of Anchorage toward Girdwood. The double-tracking will increase speeds and facilitate operations in an industrial area of Anchorage where many ARRC freight customers are located. ARRC operates both freight and passenger service over the sections of trackage to be improved. The passenger service is primarily geared toward serving tourists between the months of May and September.

The total budget for this project is \$7.0 million in current (2000) dollars. In FY 2001, the Girdwood Commuter Rail Project (including North Anchorage) received a New Starts appropriation of \$14.9 million. Because the proposed New Starts share is less than \$25 million, the project is exempt from the New Starts criteria, and is thus not subject to FTA's evaluation and rating (49 USC 5309(e)(8)(A)).

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Alaska Railroad Commuter Rail 5 Miles and 1 Existing Station
Total Capital Cost (\$2000):	\$7.0 Million
Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$2000):	\$5.6 Million (80%)
Annual Operating Cost:	N/A
Ridership Forecast:	N/A

Status

In 1999 the ARRC undertook a study of its system titled the "Woodside Study," which assessed the overall condition of the railroad and the ability to undertake various types of improvements, including commuter rail. During 2000, the study identified the benefits of double track through the Anchorage area.

In June 2000, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved entry into Preliminary Engineering for the Alaska Railroad Curve Straightening and Double Tracking Project. A documented Categorical Exclusion was issued in July 2000 for the South Anchorage project and in June 2001, it was approved for entry into Final Design. The project will be fully funded by the current appropriations and matching funds. Additional New Starts funds will not be needed to complete the project, although the AARC does intend to continue to seek Section 5309 New Starts funding for other projects. Through FY 2002, Congress has appropriated \$27.25 million in Section 5309 New Starts funding for the commuter rail system. The project is not authorized in TEA-21.

Alaska Railroad- South Anchorage Double Track

Girdwood, Alaska

