

Denali Park Area Rail Realignment

Project Scope

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) proposes complete a feasibility study, conceptual level estimates, and preliminary engineering related to realigning the mainline track and removing one at-grade highway-rail crossing on the George Parks Highway, south of the Denali National Park main entrance.

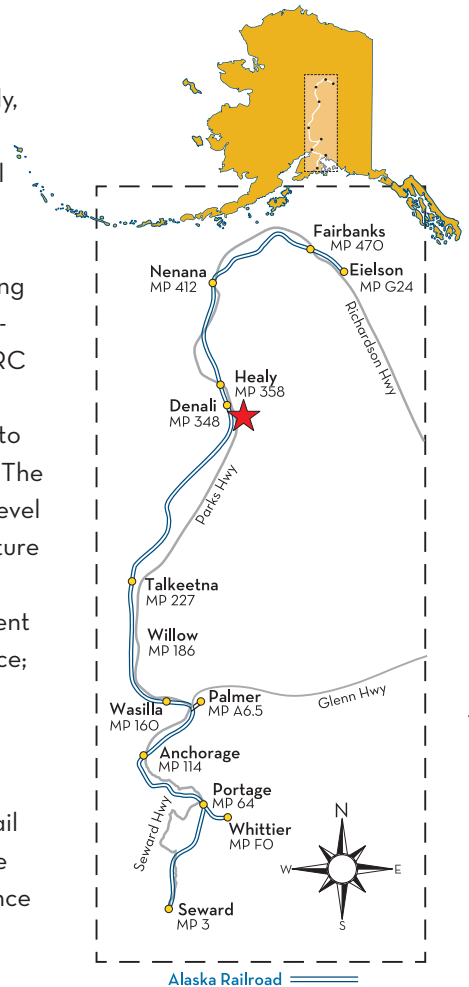
The rail mainline and highway alignment run roughly parallel along the southern corridor leading up to the Denali National Park main entrance. This stretch includes an at-grade highway-rail crossing at ARRC Milepost (MP) 345.09 and an overpass crossing at ARRC MP 346.71.

The project will bring together area stakeholders and the public to determine an appropriate future rail alignment through this corridor. The project team will define land acquisition needs, produce conceptual level estimates, and accomplish preliminary engineering in support of a future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) required action.

Stakeholders include: Alaska Railroad; State of Alaska, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF); National Park Service; Denali Borough; and railbelt communities in the service area.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve the safety of roadway-rail crossings and rail operations, reduce rail transportation times, reduce roadway transportation delays, and reduce operation and maintenance costs.



Rail-over-road crossing at ARRC Milepost 346.71.



At-grade crossing at ARRC Milepost 345.09.

Project Site Map

The George Parks Highway is the primary north-south artery between Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska. A growing state population, along with a large influx of summer visitors, result in heavy and sometimes congested road traffic in the popular Denali Park area. With multiple trains transporting thousands of passengers to and from Denali each day, transportation-related risk is also increasing through this corridor.

The at-grade crossing at MP 345.09 is very challenging and costly to maintain. It is remote and located within a difficult geotechnical area. Moreover, extreme Interior Alaska weather poses additional maintenance challenges.

Project Status

Work on this project is scheduled to begin in 2017. Specific tasks to accomplish in 2017 include:

- Process existing LIDAR topographic information and supplement it as required to create preliminary base mapping.
- Collect data from on-site surface investigation and compile and review geotechnical data from past projects and public sources.
- Execute a preliminary environmental review using data from past projects and public sources, along with on-site verification of published data.
- Develop preliminary alignment alternatives to guide the mapping, geotechnical and environmental reviews, limited engineering development to provide conceptual cost estimates, coordination with other stakeholders including the National Park and ADOT&PF.
- Perform limited geotechnical borings along the apparent best alignment to enhance and confirm the geotechnical data review, further verifying scope of the project and the cost estimates.

Cost and Funding

The project budget is \$604,000, funded primarily by a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) High Priority Projects grant. Funds were transferred to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for granting to ARRC. The federal agencies provide approximately 80% of the grant, with the Alaska Railroad providing 20% in matching funds.

