

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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House of Representatives
House District 34

Sponsor Statement HB 241

Rail and Utility Corridor to Canada

“An Act relating to a railroad utility corridor for extension of the Alaska Railroad to Canada and to extension of the Alaska Railroad to Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada.”

4/17/01

If all government-funded employment in Alaska disappeared one day, only a few thousand private sector family-wage jobs would remain. It can be argued Alaska does not have an economy. ... Rather Alaska has a series of boom and bust cycles tied to the price of, and demand for, natural resources.

Alaska's economic future will be built on improved infrastructure. Connecting Alaska to the rest of North America by rail will benefit the mining, agriculture, tourism, military, manufacturing, and oil and gas sectors of the economy, while reducing the cost of bringing goods to the state as well as exporting our products.

The purpose of HB 241 is to begin the process of completing the last transcontinental railroad. Without appropriating funds, HB 241 authorizes the Alaska Railroad to delineate a transportation and utility corridor from existing tracks at Eielson AFB to the Canadian Border. After a survey and full delineation is achieved, state land would be transferred fee simple title.

This bill also authorizes and encourages the Alaska Railroad Corp. to obtain ownership or a right of way through any other lands, whether federal or private.

HB 241 mandates a 500-foot wide transportation and utility corridor that could allow for pipelines for gas or water as well as electric transmission lines and fiber optic cable. HB 241 allows the Alaska Railroad to use funds it can obtain, such as from federal appropriations or by sale of bonds, to survey and obtain a right of way to the Canadian border.

A separate section of this bill authorizes the Alaska Railroad to investigate extending to Whitehorse, Yukon.