

Proposed Alaska Canada Rail Link

Summary of Data Gaps

Work Package B1a **Review of Available Data**

Prepared for:
Yukon Economic Development

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Introduction

Yukon Engineering Services has been retained to investigate available information with respect to the proposed Alaska Canada Rail Link along the Eastern and Western British Columbia sections of the proposed routes. The searches have turned up good results in areas that have seen highway construction or have been studied in the past for mineral exploration. Areas with little or no history of construction or exploration have very limited data available. Amount of available information depends on the route of the railway, and the history of activity along that route.

Methodology

Yukon Engineering Services Inc has investigated the available information with respect to available geotechnical, geological and hydrological information. Sources of this information have been:

- Government of Yukon, Energy Mines and Resources Library
- Trans Canada Pipelines
- EBA Engineering Consultants
- University of British Columbia - Geological Library
- University of Alberta Library
- Natural resources Canada
- Public Works Canada
- British Columbia Government-Ministry of Transport
- University of Alaska Library
- General Searches on the Internet

The above sources were searched using place names, key words, and coordinates for available documents and the search results were sorted by applicability for inclusion. The sorted documents were then tabulated in a spreadsheet bibliography and posted to the feasibility study website.

Results

General

The office of Representative Jeannette James of Juneau Alaska investigated a railroad / transportation / utility corridor and a report is available of the findings. The office of Alaska Senator John J Cowdery conducted a similar exercise, which is also available. Both reports gathered previous studies as well as newspaper reports pertaining to the project. The Cowdery document also included notes from the Alaska Canada Rail Conference held in Juneau in January of 2004. Previous studies include a survey done in 1942 by the U.S. War Department, the Yukon Railway Study by Canadian Pacific Consulting in 1975 and the Yukon Railway Feasibility Final Reconnaissance Report by Canadian National Railway, June 1969.

Alaska Highway Route

This route leaves the BC - Yukon border near Watson Lake, Yukon and follows the Alaska Highway to Fort Nelson BC where it ties to the Existing BC Rail Line. This route has significant information available. The history of construction and maintenance of the Alaska Highway has created detailed information since the construction of this highway in 1942. Public Works and Government Services Canada holds highway construction and maintenance information for this section of the Alaska Highway.

Perhaps the most valuable to the Rail Project are the studies undertaken by Westcoast Transmission to construct the Alaska Highway Pipeline in the late 1970's. Much of the information compiled under this study was consolidated into a document called the "Geotechnical Atlas". This document is held by Trans Canada Pipelines Ltd. For areas that the Alaska Canada Rail Link will depart from the Alaska Highway Right of Way or the Foothills Pipeline Right of Way the available information will get sparser. The further the rail goes from these routes the less detailed the information gets.

Western Hwy37 Route

The rail will leave the BC – Yukon border near Watson Lake. The route will follow the Stewart – Cassiar Highway #37 to Dease Lake, where it joins an unfinished railway grade to the current terminus at Chipmunk.

Very limited information is available for the southern off-highway section of this route. The Geological Survey of Canada has investigated the area to a small extent, and has defined the geology of the area very generally. Mining companies and educational institutions have investigated the area with localized studies, and hydro electric projects have compiled some hydrological information. No information that must have existed during the initial uncompleted grade construction became obvious, likely due to the amount of time that has passed since construction began.

Significant data is available for the highway section of this route. British Columbia Government Ministry of Transport has a large part of this information; however, deviation from the highway corridor results in less data available.

Sifton Pass Route

This route leaves the Yukon Border near Watson Lake and travels South East down the Rocky Mountain Trench to Fort St. James. Very little data was found regarding this route, due to the lack of activity in this area. The 1944 Report of the US Army Department of War is probably the most significant of these reports. There is some localized geological information.

Conclusion

As can be expected, there is a lot of information available for those areas that the proposed rail will follow a highway. A very important source of information to the project will be the Foothills Pipelines Study that was undertaken in the late 1970's. Those areas that the rail will not follow a road are not as well defined. There is very little information available for the western route from Dease Lake to Chipmunk or the South Easterly route through Sifton Pass..

Data generated through this exercise has been compiled to the file "BC Bibliography.xls"

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