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U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces Over \$1.2 Million for Capital Improvements in Alaska

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has selected five projects in two states to receive more than \$6.9 million in Special Transportation Circumstances (STC) Grants made available by the Consolidated Appropriations Acts of 2019 and 2020. This includes more than \$1.2 million directed grant funding for two projects in Alaska.

The STC Grants are for state-specific rail capital projects.

“This \$1.2 million federal investment will upgrade rail infrastructure and enhance rail safety in communities across Alaska,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The following projects were selected in Alaska:

Alaska Railroad Anderson Wheel Impact Load Detector Up to \$761,918

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

The proposed rural rail project will procure, install, and put into service one wheel impact load detector on the northern portion of the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) rail system near Anderson, Alaska. The wheel impact load detector system continuously monitors rail vehicle wheel health by measuring vertical wheel forces via rail-mounted strain gauges, and then alerts maintenance personnel to high-impact forces caused by damaged wheels. These forces can further damage vehicles, cargo, and rail infrastructure. ARRC currently has this wheel performance management system in its southern region at milepost 121.3. This

installation will allow ARRC to similarly monitor and collect data on trains that travel in the northern portion of the rail line.

Alaska Railroad Wasila Control Point

Up to \$480,082

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

The proposed rural rail project will upgrade an existing intermediate control signal to a complete control point at ARRC milepost 158.9 in Wasilla, Alaska, to halve a 13-mile gap in control points. Having a control point at this location will allow ARRC dispatch more operational options to keep passenger and freight trains moving while allowing maintenance-of-way work to continue with fewer disruptions since potential stoppages will impact a shorter section of track.

“We’re pleased to support the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities’ work to improve the state’s rail system and look forward to seeing these changes,” said FRA Administrator Ronald L. Batory. “A healthy rail system is vital to a strong U.S. economy, and grants allow FRA to contribute to sustaining and improving this important transportation network.”

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorized the STC Grants, which provide directed grant funding appropriated for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program and the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grant Program for rail capital projects. The projects are specific to certain states that lack intercity passenger rail service or are not connected to the national rail system.

STC Grants provide directed funding appropriated for rail capital projects to certain States that lack intercity passenger rail service or are not connected to the national rail system.

On May 8, 2020, FRA announced in the *Federal Register* the STC Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). This NOFO made available directed funding for eligible rail capital projects, as follows: \$1,242,600 for Alaska from the 2020 Appropriation and \$5,671,974 for South Dakota from the 2019 and 2020 Appropriations.

The project eligibility requirements for the STC Grants are state-specific. For Alaska, an STC project must be a freight or passenger rail-related capital project. For South

Dakota, eligible STC projects must be freight rail capital projects that are on a State rail plan developed under Chapter 227 and that provide public benefits as defined in 49 U.S.C. 22701(2).

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