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First Nations and Alaskan Tribes show support for Alberta-Alaska rail link

New railway would provide market access, avoid B.C. oil tanker and pipeline conflicts

Leaders of the affected First Nations and Alaskan Tribes have expressed support for a new “purpose built” railway that would link Alaska, Yukon, northern British Columbia and northern Alberta to the rest of North America.

The railway, being proposed by G Seven Generations Ltd. (G7G), would provide access to Pacific tidewater for the import and export of commodities including oil sands products.

“The greatest strength of our Alberta-Alaska railway concept is the support it has received from First Nations along the route,” points out G7G Partner and CEO Matt Vickers.

“Studies have already demonstrated that a rail link to Alaska is a viable alternative to the oil pipelines currently being planned through British Columbia,” said Vickers. “This approach is timely because it promises significant economic benefits to First Nations communities and all of Canada while avoiding many of the environmental risks associated with current pipeline proposals and related supertanker traffic off B.C.’s West Coast.”

“British Columbians opposition to oil tanker traffic on B.C.’s coast is very strong and should not fall on deaf ears,” states Chief Marilyn Slett of the Heiltsuk Nation.

“Diversifying markets for Canadian oil is an important challenge, but we need to achieve this goal in the most environmentally and socially responsible way possible,” adds Grand Chief Roland Twinn of Treaty 8 Alberta.

A key advantage of G7G's rail link is that it would utilize the existing marine terminal in Valdez, which is facing a declining supply of oil from Alaska's North Slope. The estimated 2,400-kilometre-long railway would run northwest from Fort McMurray, Alberta to connect with the Alyeska Pipeline at Delta Junction, approximately 130 kilometres southeast of Fairbanks. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) currently carries oil from the North Slope to the Valdez marine super tanker terminal.

“Valdez has seen oil tanker traffic since the 1970s; this proposal would simply mean replacing the declining supply of Alaska crude with a new supply of Alberta crude. We believe this approach has a greater chance of obtaining social license from local communities than other competing scenarios,” said Chief Ronald Kreutzer of Fort McMurray First Nation.

“We began with outreach to First Nations and Tribal Leadership and are now moving forward with informing the membership through community meetings,” said Vickers, who holds traditional names from the Heiltsuk and Tsimshian Nations. “G7G is pleased that we have been able to offer First Nations from Alberta to Alaska a 50-percent stake in the railroad.”

“The First Nations fully support the concept because in reality, if we don't take the initiative somebody else will,” said Chief Simon Mervyn, of the First Nation Na-cho Nyak Dun.

G7G will now complete the project's feasibility study and community information meetings. The next phase is the approval process, which will include full community consultation and accommodation, and lead to the development of the business plan.

Current First Nations support for the rail-link concept is specific to exploring the feasibility of the project.