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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA  
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT ANCHORAGE

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AHTNA, INCORPORATED, an )  
Alaska corporation, and CHITINA )  
NATIVE CORPORATION, an Alaska )  
corporation, and the CHITINA )  
TRADITIONAL COUNCIL, an Alaska )  
Native village, )

Plaintiffs, )

v. )

STATE OF ALASKA, DEPARTMENT )  
OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC )  
FACILITIES, )

Case 3AN-91-6957 Civil  
Copper River Highway

Defendant. )

STATE OF ALASKA'S REPLY TO PLAINTIFFS' SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF

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15 STATE OF ALASKA'S REPLY TO PLAINTIFFS' SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF

16 I. Summary of the Argument.

17 Section III of the plaintiffs' Supplemental Brief  
18 attempts once again to refute the state's argument that Congress,  
19 by the Act of July 26, 1941 1/ dedicated the entire former Copper  
20 River and Northwestern Railway Company right-of-way for highway  
21 purposes. The state's reply brief begins with this section  
22 because, if the court agrees that the right-of-way was dedicated by  
23 the 1941 Act, the R.S. 2477 theory need not be considered at all.

24 When Congress acts to dedicate public lands, the elements  
25 of a common law dedication of private property are inapplicable;  
26 only a clear expression of Congress's intent to dedicate is  
required. The language of the 1941 Act, the historical background,  
and numerous acts of federal agencies over the years positively do  
support the state's argument that the 1941 Act must be interpreted

1/ Pub. L. 176, ch. 300, 55 Stat. 594.

1 as a dedication of the railroad right-of-way for highway purposes.  
2 If the 1941 Act dedicated the right-of-way, or if (in accordance  
3 with plaintiffs' theory) the surveying, engineering, funding  
4 requests and appropriations, and actual construction of 88.0 system  
5 miles before 1959 establish that the Secretary considered the  
6 right-of-way necessary for a highway, then the Omnibus Act  
7 Quitclaim Deed transferred the right-of-way to the State of Alaska  
8 in 1959.

9           Alternatively, if the railroad right-of-way was not  
10 segregated from the public domain and reserved for highway purposes  
11 by the Act of 1941, it was acquired as a right-of-way under R.S.  
12 2477. 2/ The plaintiffs' argument that federal law controls and  
13 establishes actual construction as the standard for R.S. 2477  
14 acceptance was systematically analyzed and rejected in Sierra Club  
15 v. Hodel, 848 F.2d 1068, 1080 (10th Cir. 1988). Alaska cases have  
16 repeatedly held that not merely construction, but any positive act  
17 of appropriate authorities manifesting a clear intent to accept the  
18 R.S. 2477 grant is sufficient. Years of work on this road by the  
19 Alaska Road Commission (ARC) and the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR)  
20 clearly show an intent to accept the entire right-of-way.

21           Finally, whether the right-of-way was dedicated by the  
22 1941 Act, or acquired under R.S. 2477; Amendment 2 to D.O. 2665  
23 widened it to 300 feet in 1956. This right-of-way was clearly  
24

---

25           2/ The Act of July 26, 1866, 14 Stat. 253, sec. 8,  
26 subsequently recodified as Revised Statutes sec. 2477 and 43  
U.S.C.A. sec. 932. R.S. 2477 was repealed and replaced in 1976 by  
the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Pub. L. No.  
94-579, Title VII, sec. 706(a), 90 Stat. 2793 (1976).

1 located by actual construction of the railroad, and by surveys and  
2 USGS maps; therefore staking and posting was unnecessary either to  
3 establish the original 200 foot right-of-way, or to widen it later.  
4 The Omnibus Act Quitclaim Deed conveyance of unconstructed as well  
5 as constructed portions of roads in the state would otherwise have  
6 no meaning.

7 **II. The 1941 Act Was a Dedication for Highway Purposes of the**  
8 **Entire Railroad Right-of-Way from Cordova through Chitina to**  
9 **the Kennecott Mine; the Dedication Was Effective Upon**  
10 **Relinquishment by the Railroad Without Additional Agency**  
11 **Action.**

12 Whether the 1941 Act is to be interpreted as a dedication  
13 of the former railroad right-of-way is a matter of statutory  
14 interpretation, and does not depend on a finding of the common law  
15 elements of a dedication of private property to public uses. The  
16 language and purpose of the 1941 Act, and consistent later acts of  
17 two federal Departments clearly support the conclusion that the  
18 1941 Act was a dedication of the former railroad right-of-way for  
19 highway purposes.

20 **A. A Congressional Dedication of Public Lands Does Not**  
21 **Require the Common Law Elements of a Dedication of**  
22 **Private Property to Public Purposes.**

23 The elements necessary to establish a common law  
24 dedication to public use by the owner of private property are not  
25 applicable to a congressional dedication of public lands. 3/ The

26 3/ Congress undisputedly has the capacity to "withdraw,"  
"appropriate," or "reserve" public lands of the United States for  
specific public uses. Congress may also "dedicate" public lands,  
and this word does not imply any limitation of Congress's power,  
or any additional requirements to perfect. The word "dedicate" has  
been used in these briefs because it is usually associated with  
setting aside land for roads or highways.

1 common law elements of dedication -- a clearly expressed offer to  
2 dedicate, and acceptance by appropriate public authorities --  
3 attempt to assure fairness to the two separate entities interested  
4 in the transaction: the owner of the private property said to be  
5 dedicated to public use, and the public recipient. The element of  
6 a clearly expressed offer to dedicate serves to protect the owner  
7 from overreaching by a public claim to more than the owner intended  
8 to dedicate. The element of an acceptance by public authorities  
9 serves to protect the public from being burdened by property of no  
10 value or usefulness. See, e.g., Note, Public Ownership of Land  
11 Through Dedication, 75 Harvard L. Rev. 1406 (1962); Parks, The Law  
12 of Dedication in Oregon, 20 Ore. L. Rev. 111 (1941).

13 But dedication of property owned by a government for a  
14 particular public use is a different sense of the word. 23 Am.  
15 Jur. 2d Dedication (1983) Sec. 2 at p. 6. See also, 26 C.J.S.  
16 Dedication, Sec. 6, p. 404 n. 55.15; Sec 34, p. 462 n. 48.5 (1956);  
17 Tigner, Dedication - a Survey, 15 Baylor L. Rev. 179 (1963) at 184-  
18 5, n. 38. No acceptance is necessary when a public body having  
19 capacity to do so makes a formal dedication. State of California  
20 v. U.S., 169 F.2d 914, 921 (9th Cir. 1948); Gewirtz v. City of Long  
21 Beach, 330 N.Y.S. 2nd 495, 506 (N.Y. Sup. Ct 1972); McKernon v.  
22 City of Reno, 357 P.2d 597, 601 (Nev. 1960); Singewald v. Girden,  
23 127 A.2d 607, 616 (Del. 1956); Arcques v. City of Sausalito, 272  
24 P.2d 58, 60 (Cal. Ct. App. 1954). When acting to dedicate public  
25 land, Congress has authority and responsibility to determine what  
26 uses of public lands will benefit both the public as landowner and

1 the public as user. The dedication and its acceptance are in the  
2 same acts. Singewald, 127 A.2d at 616.

3 For this reason, the plaintiffs' search (Plaintiffs'  
4 Supplemental Brief at pp. 42-47) for two separate elements of offer  
5 and acceptance is simply inappropriate. The only pertinent  
6 question is whether the 1941 Act is properly interpreted as an  
7 expression of intent to appropriate or reserve the right-of-way as  
8 a future transportation route, or whether the 1941 Act merely  
9 directs the Secretary to determine later whether the right-of-way  
10 is needed for use as a highway, without specifying the form of such  
11 a determination or imposing any restrictions which would protect  
12 the right-of-way from passing out of the public domain before the  
13 Secretary made such a determination.

14 This is an issue of statutory construction, which is a  
15 matter within the special competency of the court. Tesoro Alaska  
16 Petroleum Co. v. Kenai Pipeline Co., 746 P.2d 896 (Alaska 1987)

17 There the court said:

18 the starting point should be the language of  
19 the statute itself construed in light of the  
20 purposes for which it was enacted. . . . The goal  
21 of statutory construction is to give effect to the  
22 legislature's intent, with due regard for the  
23 meaning the statutory language conveys to others.

24 Id. at 904-905.

25 B. The Language and Purpose of the 1941 Act Support the  
26 Conclusion that Congress Dedicated the Railroad Right-of-  
Way for Highway Purposes.

First, the plain language of the 1941 Act shows that  
Congress intended the former railroad corridor to be used for a

1 highway. 4/ The title describes it as a bill "authorizing the  
2 [railroad] to convey its right-of-way for use as a public highway"  
3 (emphasis added). References to the bill in the available  
4 legislative history use similar language to describe its purpose.  
5 See Appendix 20 at p. 1 and Appendix 21.

6 Sec. 2 of the Act says "The Secretary is hereby  
7 authorized. . . .to accept. . . .said properties to be used,  
8 operated and maintained, as far as may be practical and necessary,  
9 as a public highway. . ." 5/ Nowhere in the 1941 Act are there  
10 any words requiring the Secretary to withdraw the railroad right-  
11 of-way if he thought it was necessary for a highway, or supporting  
12

13 4/ See also the State's Reply to Opposition for Motion for  
14 Summary Judgment at pp. 7-8.

15 5/ In his own letter which he quotes at pp. 36-37 of  
16 Plaintiffs' Supplemental Brief, plaintiffs' counsel first concedes  
17 that this language is directive. With this the state agrees--the  
18 right-of-way is to be used for a highway if it possibly can be.  
19 The rest of the logic in the quoted DuBrock letter is seriously  
20 flawed. Although Congress realistically acknowledged that it might  
21 not be reasonable to use all the railroad property (including  
22 equipment) for a highway, Congress did not make use of the right-  
23 of-way merely elective, or intend that the right-of-way would be  
24 otherwise disposed of unless the Secretary made an affirmative  
25 statement announcing a withdrawal.

26 Congress amended the original version of the bill to take  
away the Secretary's power to dispose of any of the railroad  
property. See Appendix 19; Appendix 20, p.1; Appendix 21. It  
would be highly inconsistent with the purpose of this amendment if  
Congress intended mere inaction of the Secretary to dispose of the  
most important property of all, the right-of-way, by returning it  
to the unappropriated public domain where it could pass into  
private hands under the various public land grant laws.

A far more logical reading of the directive language of  
the Act is that use of the equipment, planning, timing and location  
of construction, and other management decisions were left to the  
Secretary, but that the right-of-way was dedicated for highway use  
unless the Secretary made a positive finding that use would be  
impractical or unnecessary, and obtained the approval of Congress  
in the form of a revocation of the dedication.



1 the further leap of logic by which plaintiffs reason that, because  
2 construction was not completed on the portion of the Copper River  
3 Highway south of Chitina, all the planning and preparatory work of  
4 the ARC and the BPR failed to show that the right-of-way was  
5 thought necessary. 6/

6 Next, historical evidence refutes the idea that the main  
7 purpose of the 1941 Act was only to preserve the McCarthy to  
8 Chitina part of the former railroad route. Attached as Appendix 24  
9

10 6/ A fundamentally mistaken and impractical concept about  
11 roadbuilding is inherent in plaintiffs' argument that the entire  
12 route had to be actually constructed to sufficiently demonstrate  
13 that the Secretary considered it necessary for highway purposes.  
14 Roads are intended to go somewhere, and nothing is thought more  
15 ridiculous than a few highly publicized highways that abruptly  
16 deadend. Yet, construction of a 130 mile highway through a remote  
17 part of Alaska, crossing the powerful Copper River and numerous  
18 tributaries, is an enormous project, likely to take many years of  
19 work and many annual appropriations of partial funding. For this  
20 road, the purpose (clearly expressed in reports of the Alaska Road  
21 Commission) was to connect Cordova to the rest of Alaska.  
22 Therefore the decision to build the very first part of the road  
23 implies the conclusion that the entire route is necessary.

24 The same impractical notion is inherent in the argument  
25 that only actual construction of the entire route is sufficient to  
26 accept an R.S. 2477 grant. There is no conceivable way that a  
public authority could instantly construct an entire highway. If  
the R.S. 2477 grant could not be accepted in advance by planning,  
the necessary right-of-way could not be reserved. While the  
authority was seeking funding, surveying, doing preliminary  
engineering, or even constructing one segment, any homesteader  
could enter the intended route and establish a private interest  
which the authority would then have to buy out. For this right-of-  
way, the positive acts of surveying, preliminary engineering,  
seeking and obtaining legislative appropriations, and actual  
construction of part of a road that was clearly intended to connect  
Cordova to the rest of Alaska along the former railroad route  
certainly established the intent to accept this entire length of  
the Copper River Highway.

The BLM has impliedly recognized the reasonable position  
that some acts less than complete construction of an entire route  
can be an acceptance of the R.S. 2477 grant. See MOU at 2,  
Appendix 33.

1 is House Joint Memorial No. 21, a resolution in which the  
2 Territorial Legislature urged the President and the Secretaries of  
3 War and Interior to support construction of a roadway over the  
4 entire former railroad route. This resolution clearly expresses  
5 the legislature's view that transportation is needed to connect  
6 Cordova with the Copper River and Chitina valleys and the  
7 Richardson Highway at Chitina.

8 In Appendix 23, Acting Secretary of the Interior Wirtz  
9 acknowledged HJM No. 21, and enclosed as a response copies of the  
10 bill which eventually became the 1941 Act. Wirtz asserts the bill  
11 will allow his department to develop the transportation facilities  
12 supported by the Territorial Legislature, "in so far as conditions  
13 require, and in so far as Congress may appropriate funds."

14 Acting Secretary Wirtz is also the author of the  
15 explanatory letter in Senate Report No. 375, Appendix 20. In the  
16 second paragraph at p. 2, this letter says, "For the time being, no  
17 highway or tramway is contemplated on the portion of the right-of-  
18 way between Chitina And Cordova." This language is very different  
19 from the implication in plaintiffs' brief that there was no plan  
20 ever to build on this part of the right-of-way.

21 The secretary's choice of words states only that his  
22 Department was not planning immediate work to convert the railbed  
23 between Chitina and Cordova to a highway or tramway. It strongly  
24 implies that, in the future, as opposed to "for the time being,"  
25 plans for use of this portion would be formulated. Because the  
26 bill was not drafted to specify only the McCarthy to Chitina  
portion of the route, the secretary's comment suggests that he

1 understood well the necessity of preserving the right-of-way for  
2 future use even when present construction was not scheduled.

3 Furthermore, Wirtz said the bill was intended to "avoid  
4 the necessity and cost of acquiring, for the purposes contemplated,  
5 portions of the right-of-way from the municipalities and patentees  
6 in whom title to such portions would otherwise vest" (Appendix 20,  
7 p. 2). It would be an anomaly for Congress to take specific action  
8 in Sec. 3 to assure that existing settlers could not acquire the  
9 rights while failing to take any precautions against acquisitions  
10 by future settlers. To serve the purpose Wirtz pointed out, the  
11 1941 Act also had to take the former railroad right-of-way out of  
12 the public domain so that it would not pass with any future land  
13 dispositions. Congress did this by dedicating the right-of-way for  
14 highway purposes.

15 Finally, if, as plaintiffs argue, the 1941 Act only gave  
16 the Secretary of Interior authority to decide whether the right-of-  
17 way was necessary for highway use, it would have been entirely  
18 redundant to authority that the Secretary already had under R.S.  
19 2477, and the Act of June 30, 1932. 7/ In the absence of the  
20 1941 Act, the railroad right-of-way would have reverted to the  
21 public domain upon abandonment by the railroad (except for the  
22 special circumstances addressed in Sec. 3). As unappropriated  
23 public land, it would have been available for grant under R.S.

24  
25  
26 7/ The Act of June 30, 1932 transferred the Alaska Road  
Commission from the Department of War to the Department of the  
Interior, and authorized it to locate, lay out, construct and  
maintain public roads in Alaska from 1932 until Alaska's inclusion  
in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. 48 U.S.C. sec. 321(a).

1 2477, and the Secretary, through the ARC, could have accepted it  
2 for a highway.

3 But the 1941 Act did not merely duplicate R.S. 2477; it  
4 did something more. It expressed Congress's intent that this  
5 particular federal property should be used for a highway if it was  
6 reasonable to do so.

7 C. Subsequent Acts of the Commerce and Interior Departments  
8 Are Consistent With Interpretation of the 1941 Act as a  
9 Dedication.

10 The plaintiffs also argue (supplemental brief, p. 44-46)  
11 that subsequent conduct of the Department of the Interior weighs  
12 against interpretation of the 1941 Act as a dedication. 8/ The  
13 State agrees with plaintiffs that the interpretation of agencies  
14 charged with administration of the subject matter of legislation  
15 can also be an aid to statutory construction. But contrary to  
16 plaintiffs' argument, both the Department of the Interior through  
17 the ARC and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Department  
18 of Commerce, through the BPR, acted in a way which was not only  
19 consistent with interpretation of the 1941 Act as a dedication, but  
20 also leads directly to the conclusion that the State of Alaska now  
21 owns the former railroad right-of-way.

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23  
24 8/ To support their argument, the Plaintiffs point to the  
25 adoption of D.O. 2665 in 1951, and to the grant of a patent without  
26 a reservation of this right-of-way to Harvey Bain King in 1962.  
The first of these points is addressed at p. 32 of this brief. The  
second argument is plainly wrong because "the patent contains an  
implied-by-law condition that it is subject to such a right-of-  
way." State v. Alaska Land Title Association, 667 P.2d. 714, 726-  
727 and notes 20-21. See also, Girves v. Kenai Peninsula Borough,  
536 P.2d 1221, 1224 (Alaska 1975).

1           During Alaska's territorial days, the ARC was the  
2 Department of Interior agency most directly responsible for roads  
3 in Alaska.     From the time of the 1941 Act until its  
4 responsibilities were turned over to the BPR in 1956, the ARC  
5 continuously worked on construction or planning for construction of  
6 the former railroad right-of-way.   For a discussion of all the  
7 positive acts showing the ARC's work on this route, see Appendices  
8 6-11, pp. 10-11 of the State's Reply to Opposition to Motion for  
9 Summary Judgment, and pp. 26-32 of this brief.

10           In 1956, authority over roads in Alaska was transferred  
11 to the BPR, an agency within the Department of Commerce. Attached  
12 are two documents showing that this agency considered the former  
13 railroad right-of-way to be under its jurisdiction, and thus among  
14 the "rights, title and interest of the Secretary of Commerce" that  
15 was transferred to the State of Alaska by the 1959 Omnibus Act  
16 Quitclaim Deed.

17           Appendix 25 is an excerpt of a list prepared by the BPR  
18 in 1957 of roads transferred to its jurisdiction.   The list  
19 includes 78 constructed miles and 170 unconstructed miles of the  
20 Copper River Highway.

21           Appendix 26 is a settlement agreement dated December 11,  
22 1957 in a lawsuit by Ruben Grevnin against the United States. The  
23 agreement, signed by representatives of both the BPR and the BLM,  
24 provides at p. 2:

25                       WHEREAS, pursuant to the terms of the Federal-  
26 Aid Highway Act of 1956 (70 Stat. 374), the Bureau  
of Public Roads, United States Department of  
Commerce, assumed jurisdiction over the aforesaid

1 abandoned former right-of-way of the Copper River  
2 and Northwestern Railroad; . . .

3 At p. 5, para.8, this agreement also states: "The Government is  
4 constructing a highway progressively along the general route of the  
5 abandoned former right-of-way of the Railroad. . ."

6 The BLM, charged with responsibility for administering  
7 federal land dispositions, including ANCSA conveyances, has  
8 expressed the view in telephone calls and in formal decisional  
9 documents, that the State of Alaska owned the former railroad  
10 right-of-way. Because of the BLM's view that the state already  
11 owned the right-of-way, this agency declined the state's request to  
12 designate this corridor as an ANCSA Section 17(b) transportation  
13 route. 9/

14 9/ ANCSA Sec. 17(b) (43 U.S.C. 1616) provided a special  
15 procedure for identifying easements for public transportation needs  
16 and directed that these interests should be reserved in conveyances  
17 to the Village and Regional Corporations. Section 17(b) provides:

18 (b)(1) The Planning Commission shall identify public  
19 easements across lands selected by Village Corporations and  
20 the Regional Corporations and at periodic points along the  
21 courses of major waterways which are reasonably necessary to  
22 guarantee international treaty obligations, a full right of  
23 public use and access for recreation, hunting, transportation,  
24 utilities, docks, and such other public uses as the Planning  
25 Commission determines to be important.

26 (2) In identifying public easements the Planning  
Commission shall consult with appropriate State and Federal  
agencies, shall review proposed transportation plans, and  
shall receive and review statements and recommendations from  
interested organizations and individuals on the need for and  
proposed location of public easements: Provided, That any  
valid existing right recognized by this Act shall continue to  
have whatever right of access as is now provided for under  
existing law and this subsection shall not operate in any way  
to diminish or limit such right of access.

(3) Prior to granting any patent under this Act to the  
Village Corporation and Regional Corporations, the Secretary  
shall consult with the State and the Planning Commission and  
shall reserve such public easements as he determines are  
(continued...)

1            Appendices 27--29 are documents found in BLM files from  
2 ANCSA adjudications. Appendix 27 is a BLM memo dated Feb 15, 1978  
3 setting out recommendations for easement reservations on the land  
4 sought by the Village of Chitina. At p. 8, the memo shows that  
5 easement requests were not approved for the Copper River Highway  
6 because the right-of-way was already in existence, having already  
7 been granted to the State.

8            Appendix 28 is a memo of telephone call of August 19,  
9 1981. It shows that a BLM employee informed the office of a state  
10 legislator that the right-of-way was conveyed to the state under  
11 the Omnibus Act, and that the BLM could not reserve an easement  
12 because of that fact.

13            Appendix 29 is the hearing officer's Recommended Decision  
14 regarding various requested easements and reservations in the lands  
15 granted to Plaintiff Chitina Native Corporation in IBLA 82-1161.  
16 At p. 18 (85 IBLA 330), the hearing officer concluded:

17            6. The State of Alaska owns the Copper River  
18 Northwestern Railroad right-of-way which extends  
19 south from Chitina to Cordova. The rails have been  
20 removed and the roadbed is used for some  
21 undisclosed distance from Chitina south as a  
22 vehicular road. From the evidence presented it  
23 appears that with the O'Brien Creek Bridge passable  
24 it is traversable by vehicular traffic at least as  
25 far south as Haley Creek. While no specific survey  
26 evidence was introduced it can be concluded that  
the width of the right-of-way is 100 feet on each  
side of the centerline and that at a number of  
places south of O'Brien Creek the right-of-way

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25            9/(...continued)  
26            necessary.

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reaches to and/or extends into the State-owned riverbed (Citations omitted).

See also, Appendix 29A, the decision which affirms this recommended hearing officer's decision, 85 IBLA 311.

Finally, when the BLM prepared the Interim Conveyances to these plaintiffs, it expressly mentioned a 300 foot wide right-of-way. Appendix 30, the conveyance to Chitina Native Corporation says the grant is subject to:

Any right-of-way interest in the Copper River Highway (FAS Route No. 851), extending one hundred fifty (150) feet on each side of the centerline, transferred to the State of Alaska by quitclaim deed dated June 30, 1959, executed by the Secretary of Commerce under the authority of the Alaska Omnibus Act, Public Law 86-70, 73 Stat. 141, from T. 6 S., R. 4 E., Copper River Meridian, Alaska, northerly to a junction with FAS Route No. 850 at the village of Chitina, located in T. 4 S., R. 5 E., Copper River Meridian, Alaska.

Appendix 31, the conveyance to Ahtna Incorporated of the subsurface estate in the same property, cross-references all the easements and right-of-ways in Appendix 30.

Even if these interim conveyances do not purport to adjudicate the existence or width of this right-of-way, they certainly do refute the plaintiffs' contention that the BLM has acted in a way inconsistent with the state's theories of ownership. On the contrary, the BLM as well as the ARC and the BPR, clearly held views that support the state's position here.

**III. Alternatively, if the Former Railroad Right-of-Way Was Not Dedicated by Congress, It Was Acquired as an R.S. 2477 Right-of-Way.**

In 1866 Congress enacted a statute providing for the acquisition of free rights-of-way over public lands not otherwise



1 reserved for public use. 10/ Commonly referred to as R.S. 2477,  
2 the statute was a standing offer from the federal government to the  
3 public. 11/ If the former railroad right-of-way was not  
4 dedicated for highway purposes when the railroad relinquished it to  
5 the federal government, then it was accepted as an R.S. 2477 right-  
6 of-way before 1959 by the ARC or the BPR. 12/

7 Plaintiffs contend that an R.S. 2477 right-of-way could  
8 only be accepted by actual construction. The Alaska Supreme Court  
9 has repeatedly held to the contrary: actual construction is not  
10 required to accept an R.S. 2477 grant; some positive act on the  
11 part of the appropriate authorities clearly manifesting an  
12

13 10/The plaintiffs have also argued (Supplemental Brief, p. 6-  
14 7) that portions of this right-of-way were not available for R.S.  
15 2477 grant because they were the subject of various power site  
16 classifications or withdrawals between 1950 and 1957. No evidence  
17 of these purported withdrawals is provided, nor is there any  
18 showing that the effect of these actions would have excluded  
19 highway use. See also n.6, supra.

20 11/ R.S. 2477 said only "The right of way for the  
21 construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public  
22 uses, is hereby granted."

23 The offer reflected a time in our national history when  
24 this nation was young and relatively unpopulated. The statute  
25 demonstrates that Congress wished to encourage expansion,  
26 exploitation and development of the public lands. In contrast, now  
that our nation is relatively developed and our population is well  
dispersed throughout the 50 states, Congress has an altogether  
different purpose, i.e., to conserve, protect and preserve the  
public lands. Wilkenson v. Department of Interior of the United  
States & James Watt, 634 F. Supp. 1265, 1274 - 1275 (D. Colo.  
1986).

27 12/ There may be sites along the quitclaimed 300 foot right-  
28 of-way where additional right-of-way was acquired by action of  
29 state authorities or by public use between 1959 and the repeal of  
30 R.S. 2477 in 1976. This motion does not attempt to adjudicate any  
such site specific claims because the plaintiffs have not replied  
to the state's discovery request to identify any locations where  
they contend public use is outside the 300 foot right-of-way.

1 intention to accept a grant is sufficient. Dillingham Commercial  
2 Company, Inc. v. City of Dillingham, 705 P.2d 410 (1985); State v.  
3 Alaska Land Title Association (ALTA), 667 P.2d 714, 722 (1983);  
4 Girves v. Kenai Peninsula Borough, 536 P.2d 1221, 1226 (1975);  
5 Hamerly v. Denton, 359 P.2d 121, 123 (1961).

6 Plaintiffs would have this court reject these controlling  
7 Alaska precedents for the reason that federal, not state, law  
8 controls perfection of the R.S. 2477 offer, but in Sierra Club v.  
9 Hodel, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals decided in a thorough and  
10 authoritative analysis that state law controls an R.S. 2477 grant. 13/  
11 The court also rejected the "actual construction" standard  
12 advocated in that case. Many of plaintiffs' arguments in its  
13 supplemental brief are the same arguments the Hodel court rejected.

14 A. State Law Controls What Constitutes an Acceptance  
15 of the R.S. 2477 Right-of-Way.

16 R.S. 2477 itself is silent as to whether federal or state  
17 law applies to determine when and if the offer is accepted. The  
18 Hodel court noted first that the legislative context is not  
19 helpful, Id. at 1080, and then reasoned that the interpretation  
20 given by the federal agency with jurisdiction over the statute's

21 \_\_\_\_\_  
22 13/ Hodel cannot be distinguished as plaintiffs assert at p.  
23 8-9 of their supplemental brief. Although the precise factual  
24 issue there was whether the width of an R.S. 2477 right-of-way was  
25 limited to the constructed width, the court spoke in broader terms,  
26 concluding that the "scope" of an R.S. 2477 right-of-way was a  
matter of state law. The court defined "scope" as "the bundle of  
property rights possessed by the holder of the right-of-way. This  
bundle is defined by the physical boundaries of the right-of-way as  
well as the uses to which it has been put." 848 F.2d at 1079, n.9.  
The court further noted, 848 F.2d at 1082 n. 13, that many of the  
cases it relied on "subsume the question of scope into the question  
of perfection."

1 subject matter should be entitled to great weight. In direct  
2 contrast to the argument of the plaintiffs here, the Hodel court  
3 found that:

4 the federal regulations heavily support a state law  
5 definition. At least since 1938, the Secretary of  
6 the Interior has interpreted R.S. 2477 as effecting  
7 the grant of a right-of-way 'upon the construction  
8 or establishing of highways, in accordance with  
9 State laws ...' 43 C.F.R. sec. 244.55 (1939). BLM,  
10 the Secretary's designee, has followed this  
11 interpretation consistently and incorporated it in  
12 BLM's own Manual: 'State law specifying widths of  
13 public highways within the State shall be utilized  
14 by the authorized officer to determine the width of  
15 the RS 2477 grant.' BLM Manual, Rel. 2-229 at  
16 2801.48B,

17 Id. at 1080.

18 The Hodel court also considered the same 1980 Solicitor's  
19 Opinion offered by plaintiffs here, and found it either "highly  
20 suspect and [deserving] little weight," inapplicable to the  
21 question of scope, or capable of being harmonized with the state's  
22 position because it says that as a matter of federal law, state law  
23 has been designated as controlling. Id. at 1081. Even if the  
24 solicitor's opinion is applicable to the question here, 14/ its  
25 conclusion either can be harmonized; 15/ or is contrary to both

26 14/ It is interesting to note that, although the BLM was a  
party in Hodel, it was not the advocate of the "actual  
construction" standard.

15/ Even if United States v. Gates of the Mountains Lakeshore  
Homes, Inc., 732 F.2d 1411, 1413 (9th Cir. 1984) is not  
distinguishable on its facts, it can also be harmonized. The court  
simply held that R.S. 2477 was inapplicable to rights-of-way for  
utility lines because Congress had separately legislated in that  
area. In dicta, the court said that while the scope of a grant of  
federal land is a question of federal law, "it may be determined as  
a matter of federal law that the United States has impliedly  
adopted and assented to a state rule of construction as applicable  
(continued...)

1 prior and subsequent expressions of Department of Interior  
2 policies. See BLM Manual, Rel. 2-263, Appendix 3 at 3 (December 7,  
3 1988 Departmental Policy Statement, RS 2477) attached as Appendix  
4 32 to this brief.

5 The 1984 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BLM  
6 and the Alaska Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources,  
7 attached as Appendix 33 to this brief, contains additional support  
8 for this position: The signatories to the MOU referred to a July  
9 7, 1983 memorandum from the United States Department of the  
10 Interior, Office of the Solicitor which said "[The Department of  
11 the] Interior has long recognized that State law controls what  
12 constitutes a[n R.S. 2477] highway within each state."

13 These documents clearly refute the contention that the  
14 BLM contends federal law controls. To the extent these documents  
15 assert that actual construction is required, they are internally  
16 inconsistent, and therefore also deserving of little weight.

17 The Hodel court also recognized that more than a hundred  
18 years of state court precedents have viewed state law as defining  
19 R.S. 2477 grants since the statute's enactment in 1866, and that  
20 adoption of a federal standard would "necessitate the remeasurement  
21 and demarcation of thousands of R.S. 2477 rights-of-way across the  
22 country," and "would undermine the local management of roads across  
23

24 \_\_\_\_\_  
25 15/(...continued)  
26 to its conveyances."

That is precisely the point. The United States has  
assented to an application of state standards since the inception  
of R.S. 2477.

1 the western United States." 848 F.2d at 1082. The court also said  
2 "we are not aware of any state that even considered the possibility  
3 of a federal rule." Id. Each western state has articulated its own  
4 rules of law as to when a R.S. 2477 grant is perfected and what is  
5 the extent and width of the right-of-way. Id. n. 13. 16/

6 B. Actual Construction Is Not the Standard for Acceptance of  
7 an R.S. 2477 Grant.

8 Plaintiffs also contend that imposing a standard of  
9 actual construction for acceptance of an R.S. 2477 grant is  
10 supported by the language of R.S. 2477, by a 1938 regulation, and  
11 by comparison with other mid-nineteenth century statutes. 17/

12 16/ In Alaska, for example, there must be "either some  
13 positive act on the part of the appropriate public authorities of  
14 the state, clearly manifesting an intention to accept a grant, or  
15 there must be public user for such a period of time and under such  
16 conditions as to prove that the grant has been accepted." Hamerly  
17 v. Denton, 359 P.2d 121, 123 (Alaska 1961). In Arizona, local law  
18 determines whether a public highway exists, the extent of the  
19 public right-of-way, and the width of the highway. State v.  
20 Crawford, 441 P.2d 586, 590 (Ariz. Ct. App. 1968) (Arizona statute  
21 authorizes State Highway Commission to determine public need for  
22 highway and authorize state engineer to proceed).

23 Under California law, acceptance of the federal offer  
24 would be manifested by "the selection of a route and its  
25 establishment as a highway by public authority" or "by the laying  
26 out of a road and its use by the public sufficient in law to  
constitute an acceptance by the public of an offer of dedication."  
Ball v. Stephens, 158 P.2d 207, 209 (Cal. Ct. App. 1945). In  
Montana, until July 1, 1895, a public highway could be established  
by either the act of the proper authorities according to Montana  
law or by use by the public. State ex rel. Dansie v. Nolan, 191 P.  
150, 152 (1920). After that date, no public highway could be  
established by public use unless in the manner provided by statute.  
Id. at 152.

17/ The plaintiffs' argument that 26 L. D. 446, an 1898  
decision of the Department of the Interior, somehow supports  
applying an actual construction standard deserves only a brief  
note. If not plainly overruled, this 94 year old decision has been  
routinely disregarded by numerous state courts. Girves v. Kenai  
Peninsula Borough, 536 P.2d at 1226 (Alaska 1975); Costain v.  
(continued...)

1 Accepting these arguments would require the overruling of  
2 Dillingham, ALTA, Girves and Hamerly v. Denton, supra, p. 15. The  
3 logic offered in support of plaintiffs' arguments does not warrant  
4 discarding thirty years of precedent represented by these cases.

5 1) the language of R.S. 2477.

6 First, plaintiffs argue (Supplemental Brief, p. 12) that  
7 the word "construction" appearing in R.S. 2477 somehow supports the  
8 conclusion that the grant is contingent upon completion of actual  
9 construction. Plainly, this does not follow. The statute grants  
10 right-of-way for the purpose of constructing roads. This is quite  
11 different from saying that acceptance of the grant can only be  
12 accomplished by a completed construction project. A highway cannot  
13 be constructed in a moment; this is especially obvious when the  
14 highway encompasses 130 miles of difficult terrain through a remote  
15 part of Alaska. The statute's language comports with the practical  
16 and sensible approach that an intent to construct a highway comes  
17 before actual construction is completed. If an identified route  
18 could not be accepted by the intent to construct, and thereby  
19 protected from disposal under other land grant programs, the road  
20 builders would never know whether the next mile could be  
21 constructed. See n. 6 supra.

22 2) the 1938 regulation.

23 At p. 15-16 of their Supplemental Brief, plaintiffs argue  
24 that a 1938 regulation supports their position. This is the same  
25

26 17/ (...continued)

Turner County, 36 N.W. 2d 382, 383 (S.D. 1949); Hubbell Co. v. Gutierrez, 22 P. 225 (N.M. 1933).

1 regulation, 43 C.R.F. Sec. 244.55 (1939) relied on by the Hodel  
2 court as support for its conclusion that state law applies, and  
3 that actual construction is not the standard. See p. 16-17, supra.  
4 In fact, this regulation poses two alternatives. One is  
5 construction. The other is something different from construction -  
6 - "establishment, in accordance with state law." Alaska law is  
7 that an R.S. 2477 highway can be established by any positive act  
8 showing intent. It could hardly be clearer that this regulation  
9 does not require actual construction.

10 3) other mid-nineteenth century statutes.

11 The plaintiffs also argue (p. 12) that an actual  
12 construction requirement should be implied because the statute is  
13 in pari materia with other mid-nineteenth century statutes granting  
14 public land for mining claims (Sec. 2, Act of July 6, 1866), or  
15 right-of-way for canals (Sec. 9, Act of July 6, 1866), or right-of-  
16 way for railroads ("the Railroad Act").

17 To begin with, this argument misapplies the in pari  
18 materia concept. The concept conveyed by this phrase is that a  
19 court must, if at all possible, construe statutes on the same  
20 subject matter so that they are not in conflict. 2A Norman J.  
21 Singer, Sutherland Stat. Const. § 51.01 (5th ed, 1992). But there  
22 is no conflict between statutes merely because they may apply  
23 different standards for perfection of land grants which are made  
24 for different purposes. There is no particular reason why a grant  
25 to the public for right-of-way should be perfected in the same way  
26 as a mining claim grant to a private individual.

1 Even if the same standards should be applied to the land  
2 grants in these different statutes, this argument does not support  
3 plaintiffs' position. The requirement to obtain a mining claim was  
4 not to develop a full scale mining operation, but to occupy and  
5 spend a relatively small amount of money in improvements. 18/  
6 Under the Railroad Act, the right-of-way for planned construction  
7 could be obtained in advance by filing a location map showing the  
8 planned route of construction. 19/

9  
10 18/ Section 2 of the Act of July 26, 1866 provides:

11 And be it further enacted, That whenever any person or  
12 association of persons claim a vein or lode of quartz, or  
13 other rock in place, bearing gold, silver, cinnabar, or  
14 copper, having previously occupied and improved the same  
15 according to the local custom or rules of miners in the  
16 district where the same is situated, and having expended  
17 in actual labor and improvements thereon an amount of not  
18 less than one thousand dollars, and in regard to whose  
19 possession there is no controversy or opposing claim, it  
20 shall and may be lawful for said claimant or association  
21 of claimants to file in the local land office a diagram  
22 of the same, so extended laterally or otherwise as to  
23 conform to the local laws, customs, and rules of miners,  
24 and to enter such tract and receive a patent therefor,  
25 granting such mine, together with the right to follow  
26 such vein or lode with its dips, angles and variations,  
to any depth, although it may enter the land adjoining,  
which land adjoining shall be sold subject to this  
condition.

21 19/ The Railroad Act provided:

22 The right of way through the public lands of the United  
23 States is hereby granted to any railroad company duly  
24 organized under the laws of any State or Territory,  
25 except the District of Columbia, or by the Congress of  
26 the United States, which shall have filed with the  
Secretary of the Interior a copy of its articles of  
incorporation, and due proofs of its organization under  
the same, to the extent of one hundred feet on each side  
of the central line of said road; also the right to take,  
from the public lands adjacent to the line of said road,  
(continued...)



1                   Furthermore, it is quite logical that standards for  
2 accepting the public right-of-way should be more flexible because  
3 numerous members of the public may benefit, whereas mining claims  
4 are by their nature mutually exclusive. For mining claims,  
5 defining ownership rights clearly so that potential conflicts  
6 between claimants would be avoided was an important purpose. Thus  
7 it made sense for Congress to define in great detail an objective  
8 manner of perfecting a mining claim. The Railroad Act and Section  
9 9 of the Act of July 6, 1866 which provides for a right of way for  
10 the construction of ditches and canals 20/ are also quite  
11 specific in their requirements. These statutes show that Congress  
12 knew how to be specific when it wanted to be. The logical  
13 deduction from comparison of R. S. 2477 with these statutes is that  
14

15                   19/(...continued)

16                   material, earth, stone, and timber necessary for the  
17 construction of said railroad; also ground adjacent to  
18 such right of way for station buildings, depots, machine  
19 shops, side tracks, turnouts, and water stations, not to  
20 exceed in amount twenty acres for each station, to the  
21 extent of one station for each ten miles of its road.

19                   20/ Section 9 of the Act of July 26, 1886 provides:

20                   And be it further enacted, That whenever, by priority of  
21 possession, rights to the use of water for mining,  
22 agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, have  
23 vested and accrued, and the same are recognized and  
24 acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and the  
25 decisions of courts, the possessors and owners of such  
26 vested rights shall be maintained and protected in the  
27 same; and the right of way for the construction of  
28 ditches and canals for the purposes aforesaid is hereby  
29 acknowledged and confirmed: Provided, however, That  
30 whenever, after the passage of this act, any person or  
31 persons shall, in the construction of any ditch or canal,  
32 injure or damage the possession of any settler on the  
33 public domain, the party committing such injury or damage  
34 shall be liable to the party injured for such injury or  
35 damage.

1 Congress did not intend to limit the methods of accepting the  
2 grant, but to allow local laws and customs to determine what  
3 practical standards should be applied.

4 C. Even if the Authorities Support a Construction Standard,  
5 It Does Not Require Completion of Every Part of the Road.

6 Even if the plaintiff's arguments lead this court to the  
7 conclusion that "construction" is a requirement for acceptance of  
8 an R.S. 2477 right-of-way, this does not mean completion of every  
9 part of the construction along the entire route, as the plaintiffs  
10 contend. Construction work on some portions of the road has been  
11 recognized as sufficient. In Streter v. Stalnaker, 85 N.W. 47, 48  
12 (Neb. 1901), the public had travelled continuously over the public  
13 domain and the county authorities had assumed control over the road  
14 and worked and improved a portion of the road. The court held that  
15 the work and improvement of a section of the road served as an  
16 acceptance of the offer of the entire road. See also, Rolling v.  
17 Emrich, 99 N.W. 464, 465 (Wis. 1904) (surveying, platting, and  
18 marking out a road was sufficient acceptance). See also, n. 5,  
19 supra.

20 For this highway, the very substantial construction and  
21 additional planning for this road completed by the ARC and the BPR  
22 met the standard even if some construction is required. Actual  
23 construction was completed at least from Cordova north to mile 50  
24 at the Million Dollar Bridge, and from Chitina south to O'Brien  
25 Creek. The ARC reports make clear that surveying and preliminary  
26 engineering was done on the remainder of the route. These  
activities are sufficient construction activities to serve as an

1 acceptance of the R.S. 2477 offer of the entire Copper River  
2 Highway.

3 D. Activities of the Alaska Road Commission or the Bureau of  
4 Public Roads Before 1959 Clearly Constituted Acceptance  
5 of the Copper River Highway Right-of-Way.

6 1) who can accept

7 Plaintiffs' contention (Supplemental Brief at 25-28)  
8 that only the Legislature is the appropriate public authority to  
9 accept an R.S. 2477 right-of-way is plainly wrong. As early as  
10 1938, the Alaska District Court found that the ARC -- established  
11 under the Secretary of War with the power to locate, lay out,  
12 construct and maintain wagon roads in Alaska -- had the power to  
13 accept R.S. 2477 rights-of-way. Clark v. Taylor, 9 Alaska Reports  
14 298, 303 (1938). See also, BLM Billum brief, attached as Appendix  
15 A to Plaintiffs' Notice of Supplemental Authority, p. 12, n. 9.  
16 When Congress transferred the authority over Alaska's roads to the  
17 Department of the Interior, the Secretary of Interior, by that  
18 transfer, also possessed the authority to accept an R.S. 2477  
19 right-of-way on behalf of the Alaska public. See 48 U.S.C. sec.  
20 321a.

21 But the ARC is not the only body capable of accepting the  
22 grant. There have been several federal, territorial, and state  
23 "appropriate public authorities" with overlapping responsibilities  
24 -- each of which could legally accept the federal offer of a right-  
25 of-way.

26 The Territorial Board of Road Commissioners for the  
Territory of Alaska had the power to construct, reconstruct, alter,

1 maintain or repair any public road, highway, bridge or ferry in the  
2 Territory of Alaska. 2 Alaska Compiled Laws sec. 41-2-2 (1933).

3 The BPR within the Department of Commerce had  
4 construction authority over roads in the national forests, and  
5 after 1956, when Alaska was included in the Federal Aid Highway Act  
6 of 1956, the BPR acquired jurisdiction over all the roads former  
7 constructed and maintained by the ARC.

8 The Alaska territorial legislature accepted the R.S. 2477  
9 dedication of public lands for highway purposes by establishing  
10 section line easements. AS 19 SLA 1923. See also, Girves v. Kenai  
11 Peninsula Borough, 536 P.2d at 1226. After Statehood, the Alaska  
12 legislature was likewise an appropriate public authority to accept  
13 the RS 2477 offer. Wilderness Society v. Morton, 479 F. 2d 842,  
14 882 (D.C. Cir. 1973).

15 2) the positive acts accepting the grant

16 The public records reflect not one but countless positive  
17 acts by the appropriate public authorities that demonstrate their  
18 intent to establish a right-of-way over the abandoned railroad bed.  
19 While a world war, an earthquake, geographic obstacles and  
20 difficult climactic conditions have caused temporary setbacks, the  
21 reports of the ARC and other historical accounts clearly depict an  
22 ongoing effort towards constructing a highway from Cordova to  
23 Chitina.

24 In March 1941, the Alaska Territorial Legislature adopted  
25 a resolution to the attention of President Franklin Roosevelt, the  
26 Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Alaska  
delegate to Congress. See House Joint Memorial No. 21, attached  
SOA'S REPLY TO PLAINTIFFS' SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF Page 26

1 here as Appendix 24. The resolution noted that the Copper River  
2 and Northwestern Railroad had ceased providing service between  
3 Cordova and Chitina and that the area was now without any source of  
4 service. The Legislature therefore requested:

5 that the various Governmental authorities herein  
6 addressed, do seriously consider and investigate  
7 the suggested practicability and necessity of  
8 converting the roadbed of the discontinued Copper  
9 River and Northwestern Railroad into a highway  
10 connecting with the Richardson Highway at Chitina,  
11 Alaska, and extending southward to a coastal  
12 terminus at Cordova, Alaska.

13 Less than four months later, Congress adopted the Act of  
14 July 15, 1941 which authorized the Copper River and Northwestern  
15 Railway Company to convey its railroad right-of-way to the United  
16 States. Pub. L. 176, chap. 300, sec. 1, 55 Stat. 594 (1941).

17 In 1941 the United States was just embarking on World War  
18 II and money for highways was being diverted to construct a highway  
19 system that would link Alaska with the lower 48. 2 Naske, Claus-  
20 M., Paving Alaska's Trails: The Work Of The Alaska Road Commission  
21 (hereafter, Naske, ARC Work) at 264 (n. d.). Notwithstanding more  
22 pressing highway priorities, the ARC responded quickly to Congress'  
23 delegation of authority in the Act of July 15, 1941. In the same  
24 year that Congress adopted the Act of July 15, 1941, ARC assumed  
25 maintenance responsibilities for the 60 miles of abandoned railway  
26 between Chitina and McCarthy, which was used as a tramroad. Id. at  
27 250.

28 In 1943, the ARC proposed 14 projects for its postwar  
29 construction program. The projects selected were those which ARC  
30 believed would be most heavily used immediately after completion.

1 Id. at 263. The Copper River Highway was on the list; for the  
2 route between Chitina and McCarthy, ARC budgeted \$2,200,000. Id.  
3 at 264.

4 In 1950 the ARC conducted several important field  
5 surveys, including a survey "to locate a practicable route for the  
6 proposed new highway from Cordova up the Copper River canyon to  
7 connect with the Richardson Highway." Noyes, John R., Report of  
8 Operations of the Alaska Road Commission For The Fiscal Years 1949,  
9 1950 & 1951 (hereafter, Noyes Report) at 25 (1951). The BPR was  
10 assigned to survey on the ground and design a 50-mile stretch from  
11 Cordova to the Million Dollar Bridge just north of the Chugach  
12 Forest boundary. Id. at 25, 34, 35. The remaining survey work  
13 consisting of two parts: (1) from Mile 50 to Chitina and (2) from  
14 Mile 101 up the Tiekel canyon to the Richardson Highway was  
15 performed by aerial means. Id. at 25 -26.

16 In 1951 Congress earmarked \$100,000 for fiscal year 1952  
17 for preliminary work on a new road that would connect the City of  
18 Cordova via the Copper River Valley with the major Alaska highway  
19 system. Id. at 31. During the 1953 fiscal year, the ARC began  
20 work on "the 170-mile-long Copper River Highway, which, when  
21 completed would provide interior Alaska with its fourth route to an  
22 ice-free port open all winter." Naske, ARC Work at 338.

23 By 1954, the Copper River Highway had been designated as  
24 route 122 and the ARC had spent a total of \$1,376,324.37 on the  
25 right-of-way. See 1954 Annual Report Alaska Road Commission  
26 (hereafter, 1954 Report) at 52 (1954). Construction of the right-  
of-way along the old railroad bed and within the Chugach National

1 Forest was complete from Cordova up to mile 22; design work along  
2 the railroad bed was complete up to mile 39. Id. at 17, 23; Naske,  
3 Claus-M., Alaska's Inclusion In The Federal-Aid Highway Act of  
4 1956, The Work Of The Bureau of Public Roads And The Transition To  
5 Statehood: Final Report (Naske, BPR Work) at 60, 168, 207 (1987).

6 For 1955, the ARC construction appropriation included  
7 \$700,000 for construction in progress. These funds would permit  
8 construction of the highway across the delta of the Copper River  
9 and up to Mile 39. 1954 Report at 35, 38. Mile 39 was the outer  
10 boundary of the Chugach National Forest as well as a junction point  
11 for a future road to the Katalla oil fields and the junction point  
12 for "the northward extension of the Copper River Highway along the  
13 route of the abandoned Copper River and Northwestern Railroad."  
14 Id. at 38. There was also a separate appropriation of \$80,000 for  
15 preliminary surveys from Mile 39 to approximately Mile 79,  
16 "utilizing existing bridges and roadbed of the abandoned Copper  
17 River and Northwestern Railroad as much as practicable." 1954  
18 Report at 37. Eventually the Copper River Highway was expected to  
19 link Cordova with the Alaska highway system. Noyes Report, January  
20 27, 1955 Press Release at Appendix, p. 2.

21 For 1956, the ARC proposed to spend \$100,000 for  
22 additional planning for the Copper River Highway. 1954 Report at  
23 43. This engineering work covered an additional 35 miles of field  
24 surveys and office design, including some surveying from Chitina  
25 south. Id. at 45; Naske, BPR Work at '60. Under its long range  
26 plan for highway construction, the ARC intended to complete the  
Copper River highway by 1956 and to pave the Copper River Highway

1 and an extension of the highway to the Bering River coal deposits  
2 in 1957. Naske, ARC Work at 340.

3 In 1956, Alaska became eligible to participate in funding  
4 under the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Jurisdiction for the  
5 roads formerly constructed and maintained by the ARC was  
6 transferred to the BPR under the Department of Commerce. See  
7 Naske, BPR Work at 41 - 44. At the time of the transfer, survey  
8 work had been completed on over 104 miles of the Copper River  
9 Highway: a complete survey from Cordova to the Airport, and air and  
10 ground surveys between mile 39 and mile 76, mile 76 to 101  
11 (Tiekel), and mile 101 to 131 (Chitina). Naske, BPR Work at 197.

12 The BPR renumbered the Copper River Highway as S-850  
13 (Chitina-McCarthy) and S-851 (Copper River Highway). The routes  
14 were included in the Secondary Highway System - "A". S-851 was  
15 reported as having constructed mileage of 78 and system mileage of  
16 170. Id. at 233. As a measure of the Copper River Highway's  
17 importance, BPR earmarked S-850 and S-851 for 3 out of its 15  
18 priority construction projects for the 1958 construction season:

19 6. Reconstruction of the Copper River Highway Route S-  
20 851 from 9 Mile to the airport at about 14 Mile. This  
21 would be the widening and raising of the roadway and  
22 replacing the wooden bridges. It is estimated to cost  
23 approximately \$500,000.00....

24 9. Construction of a bridge across the Copper River on  
25 Route S-850 about Chitina. Estimated cost approximately  
26 \$1,500,000.00....

11. Painting the steel trusses on the Copper River  
Highway Route S-851. Estimate cost approximately  
\$200,000.00.

Id. at 142. For the 1958 season, the BPR only planned 2 new  
surveys and one of them was for the Copper River Highway, i.e.,



1 "[t]o begin a survey of about a 25 mile section from Chitina down  
2 the Copper River toward Cordova." Id. at 144. Finally, the BPR  
3 noted a continuation of the Copper River Highway project by  
4 extending the existing road another 10.5 miles to the Million  
5 Dollar Bridge at Mile 50. Id. at 313.

6 In the meantime, the BPR also had the task of maintaining  
7 the roads already in existence. By 1957, the bridges between mile  
8 13 and mile 39 had to be reconstructed; concrete web walls had to  
9 placed on the piers of existing structures to protect them from ice  
10 damage; the road between Cordova and the airport at mile 14 had to  
11 be reconstructed; several grading and drainage projects had to be  
12 carried out. Id. at 313, 316, 318 - 319, 323.

13 In 1958 alone, the BPR spent almost \$1.5 million on the  
14 Copper River Highway: \$635,500 on carryover projects and \$800,000  
15 on maintenance and on new projects. Id. at 318 - 319, 323.  
16 Between 1957 and 1969, a total of \$2,649,000 was spent on  
17 improvements for the Copper River Highway from the funds available  
18 under the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Id. at 192.

19 The facts described above are sufficient to establish  
20 that the appropriate public authorities -- the ARC and the BPR --  
21 took positive steps to express their intent to accept the R.S. 2477  
22 offer of a public right-of-way. The Copper River Highway was  
23 planned to be built over time in 6 segments. See Noyes Report at  
24 197. The ARC and the BPR stretched their limited resources to  
25 construct and to survey additional segments of the highway while at  
26 the same time having to go back and reconstruct and repair the  
existing segments.

1 Construction of the Copper River Highway between Cordova  
2 and Chitina has necessarily moved in fits and starts because of the  
3 terrain, the weather, limited funds during war years, competition  
4 for limited funding during post war years, and the aftermath of the  
5 1964 earthquake. Notwithstanding the setbacks, the record shows  
6 that the ARC and the BPR never lost sight of the project and their  
7 intent that it should all be built. Their activities over almost  
8 a 20-year period constitute more than sufficient positive acts to  
9 establish an R.S. 2477 right-of-way over the Copper River Highway.

10 **IV. Amendment 2 to D.O. 2665 Widened the Existing Right-of-Way to**  
11 **300 Feet Along Its Entire Width Except Where Any Intervening**  
12 **Rights Were Granted.**

13 With respect to Departmental Order 2665, Plaintiffs argue  
14 (Supplemental Brief at pp. 2-6) that its purpose was to fix certain  
15 problems, including the width and location, of roads established  
16 under R.S. 2477 grants. 21/ Assuming this argument to be valid,  
17 then it follows that the purpose of D.O. 2665 was not to impose  
18 additional requirements to perfect a right-of-way dedicated by  
19 Congress. This right-of-way was unique in Alaska history because

20  
21 21/ The state has not argued that D.O. 2665 replaced R.S.  
22 2477, or that it was a wholly new method of establishing rights-of-  
23 way. See State's Reply to Opposition to Motion for Summary  
24 Judgment, pp. 4, 13.

25 Although there is some authority that the R.S. 2477 grant  
26 can be accepted by railroad construction, Oregon Short Line R. Co.  
27 v. Murray City, 277 P.2d 798 (1954); Flint & P. M. Ry Co. v.  
28 Gordon, 2 N.W. 648, 653 (Mich. 1879), this too, is not the argument  
29 that the state makes. The state's argument is that the right-of-  
30 way at issue in this case was clearly located by the construction  
31 of the railroad. The route was fully surveyed and actually used  
32 for nearly thirty years, and thus was an "existing" right-of-way  
33 within the meaning of State v. Alaska Land Title Association, 667,  
34 P.2d 714, 721 (Alaska 1983).

1 of the 1941 Act, preceded by nearly thirty years of actual use by  
2 the railroad.

3 Even if this right-of-way was acquired under R.S. 2477  
4 instead of by congressional dedication, its width and location were  
5 not uncertain. Again, this right-of-way was unlike other R.S 2477  
6 right-of-ways because of thirty years of railroad use. Its width  
7 was clearly established at 200 feet by the Act of 1898 which  
8 authorized the railroad grant, and its location was established by  
9 the constructed line of rail, and by survey maps prepared between  
10 1907 and 1922. See, Appendix 4, the railroad relinquishment  
11 document which identifies all the relinquished property.

12 Plaintiffs argue, however, that D.O. 2665 established  
13 that posting and staking was the exclusive method of accepting an  
14 R.S. 2477 right-of-way after 1951 for new construction or an  
15 extension of an existing road. This interpretation cannot be  
16 reconciled with Wilderness Society v. Morton, 479 F. 2d 842 (D.C.  
17 Cir. 1973), or Girves v. Kenai Peninsula Borough, 536 P.2d 1221  
18 (Alaska 1975). In Morton, the federal court held that passage of  
19 a statute stating the intent to construct a highway from the Yukon  
20 River to the Arctic Ocean was a valid acceptance even if the motive  
21 was to assist construction of the pipeline. In Girves, the Alaska  
22 court held that the Borough had a right-of-way to extend Redoubt  
23 Drive along the section line which formed the northern boundary of  
24 Girves' property. This work was done in 1967. The court concluded  
25 that the right-of-way for section line roads was accepted by act of  
26 the legislature although there was no indication that the extension  
had been staked and posted with notice before 1951.

1           Neither can plaintiff's theory be reconciled with what  
2 the scope of the Omnibus Act Quitclaim Deed purported to transfer.  
3 The Omnibus Act Quitclaim Deed consists of a two page deed with  
4 appended schedules of transferred property, including "Schedule A -  
5 -Highways, consisting of 60 pages," which is attached as Appendix  
6 34. See also, Appendix 15. For each road listed on schedule A,  
7 the information provided includes the FAS Route No., the Name, a  
8 description, the Highway District No., the constructed mileage and  
9 the system mileage. The list includes many, many roads for which  
10 the stated system mileage is greater than the constructed mileage.  
11 The only reasonable explanation for the inclusion of this  
12 information is that the BPR, which prepared this list was of the  
13 opinion that the roads within its jurisdiction included not only  
14 those actually constructed, but also certain planned extensions.  
15 The Copper River Highway, FAS No. 851 is noted as having 88.0 miles  
16 constructed, and a system mileage of 170.0. The description of  
17 this route says:

18                       From the Ocean Dock at the Port of Cordova  
19 through the Town of Cordova northerly paralleling  
20 the Copper River to a junction with FAS Route 850  
21 at Chitina; thence northwesterly to a junction with  
22 FAP Route 71.

23           The conclusion that the quitclaim grant meant what it  
24 implied -- that the unconstructed portion of listed roads as well  
25 as the constructed portion was conveyed to the State of Alaska at  
26 statehood -- is supported by a recent decision of the Department of  
Interior Board of Land Appeals which does directly consider the  
impact of D.O. 2665. See, Lloyd Schade, IBLA 89-358, 116 IBLA 203  
at 206-208 (October 4, 1990) attached as Appendix 35.

1 For this unique right-of-way, however, this court need  
2 not attempt to resolve the broader issue of how to apply the  
3 posting and staking requirement of D.O. 2665. This right-of-way  
4 was an existing, clearly located right-of-way long before the  
5 adoption of D.O. 2665. See State's Reply to Opposition to Motion  
6 for Summary Judgment, pp. 13-15. Furthermore, unlike the  
7 landowners in State v. Alaska Land Title Association, 667 P.2d 714  
8 (Alaska 1983) there can be no question but that plaintiffs here  
9 took their property with full knowledge of the BLM's conclusion  
10 that the State owned this right-of-way.

11 **V. Conclusion.**

12 The defendant State of Alaska should be granted a  
13 partial summary judgment, holding that the Omnibus Act quitclaim  
14 deed at statehood conveyed to the state a 300 foot wide right-of-  
15 way along the former route of the Copper River and Northwestern  
16 Railway Company.

17 Dated at Anchorage, Alaska this 2nd day of  
18 March, 1992.

19 CHARLES E. COLE  
20 ATTORNEY GENERAL

21 By: Virginia A. Rusch  
22 Virginia A. Rusch  
23 Assistant Attorney General

24 By: Carolyn E. Jones  
25 Carolyn E. Jones  
26 Assistant Attorney General

1  
2  
3 LIST OF CONSECUTIVELY NUMBERED APPENDICES

4 To minimize confusion over the numbering of attachments  
5 to its three briefs on this motion, the state has used consecutive  
6 numbering. To assist the court, the following index to all the  
7 state's appendices is offered.

8 State's Motion for Partial Summary Judgment, dated  
9 September 11, 1991.

- 10 1. ICC Report of the Commission  
11 2. Act of 1898 (granting the railroad right-of-way)  
12 3. Act of July 14, 1941  
13 4. Relinquishment  
14 5. Decision accepting rr relinquishment  
15 6. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1939  
16 7. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1941  
17 8. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1949  
18 9. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1950  
19 10. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1953  
20 11. Excerpt from Alaska Road Commission Annual Report, 1954  
21 12. D.O. 2665  
22 13. D.O. 2665, Amendment 2  
23 14. Number not used  
24 15. Excerpt from Omnibus Act Quitclaim Deed  
25 16. As Built History from Final Compendium Report, Department of  
26 Transportation and Public Facilities, 1988

17 State of Alaska's Reply to Opposition to Motion for  
18 Partial Summary Judgment, dated October 21, 1991.

- 19 17. State's Reply on Billum Brief  
20 18. Billum Decision  
21 19. S.B 1289  
22 20. Report No. 375  
23 21. Congressional Record, June 9, 1941  
24 22. Letter, Stimson to Bartlett  
25 23. Letter, Wirtz to Bartlett

26 State of Alaska's Reply to Plaintiff's Supplemental Brief,  
dated February 29, 1992.

- 24 24. House Joint Memorial No. 21  
25 25. Bureau of Public Roads list of roads transferred to its  
26 jurisdiction, 1957  
27 26. Grevnin settlement with Bureau of Public Roads  
28 27. February 15, 1978 Memo regarding Easement Recommendations  
for the Village of Chitina  
29 28. Report of telephone call, date August 19, 1981

- 1 29. Recommended Decision, Chitina Native Corporation v. BLM, IBLA  
2 82-1161, 85 IBLA 311  
3 29A. Decision of March 21, 1985 (affirming recommendation of  
4 hearing officer in pertinent part) 85 IBLA 311  
5 30. Interim Conveyance No. 1021 to Chitina Native Corporation  
6 (surface estate)  
7 31. Interim Conveyance No. 1022 to Ahtna Incorporated  
8 (subsurface estate)  
9 32. BLM Manual, Rel. 2-263, Appendix 3  
10 33. 1984 Memorandum of Understanding between BLM and Alaska  
11 Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, and  
12 Alaska Department of Natural Resources  
13 34. Schedule--Highways attached to Omnibus Act Quitclaim Deed  
14 35. Decision in re Lloyd Schade, IBLA 89-358, 116 IBLA 203  
15 (Oct.4, 1990)

16 Also provided are copies of the following historical reports or  
17 treatises:

18 Claus-M. Naske, Paving Alaska's Trails: the works of the  
19 Alaska Road Commission 2 Vol. (n.d.)

20 Clause-M. Naske, Alaska's Inclusion in the Federal-Aid Highway  
21 Act of 1956, the Work of the Bureau of Public Roads and the  
22 Transition to Statehood. (1987)

23 John R. Noyes, Department of the Interior Report of Operations  
24 of the Alaska Road Commission for the Fiscal Years 1949, 1950  
25 and 1951.

1  
2 IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA  
3 THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT AT ANCHORAGE

4 AHTNA, INCORPORATED, an )  
Alaska corporation, and CHITINA )  
5 NATIVE CORPORATION, an Alaska )  
corporation, and the CHITINA )  
6 TRADITIONAL COUNCIL, an Alaska )  
Native village, )

7 Plaintiffs, )

8 v. )

9 STATE OF ALASKA, DEPARTMENT )  
10 OF TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC )  
FACILITIES, )

Case 3AN-91-6957 Civil  
Copper River Highway

11 Defendant. )  
12

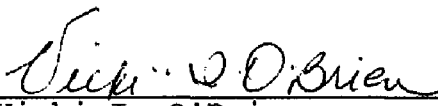
13 CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

14 I, Vicki I. O'Brien, hereby certify that on  
15 March 2, 1992, I mailed a true and correct copy of STATE OF  
16 ALASKA'S REPLY TO PLAINTIFFS' SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF in the above  
17 proceeding to the following:

18 Jerry Ritter, Esq.  
Ahtna, Inc.  
19 406 West Fireweed Lane, #101  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

20 Roger W. DuBrock  
21 900 West Fifth Avenue, Suite 700  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

22 by depositing same in the U.S. Mail at Anchorage, Alaska, postage  
23 prepaid.  
24

25   
26 Vicki I. O'Brien