

RG 30, Entry 6A  
BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS  
CLASSIFIED CENTRAL FILE  
1912-50

481 CORRESP. GEN. PS. & E. & FAS

ALASKA - ARIZ. 1941 - 47

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Alaska's Highway Problems

September, 1947

*Wright #1 ✓*  
*Superseded*

In this postwar period when Alaskans are more keenly aware than ever that price differentials between the States and various points in Alaska are attributable to transportation costs, the broad transportation picture may tend to become mottled by rate arguments for and against certain routes and modes of transport. Competitive arguments over shipping and rail rates that have long been considered high, and over low private trucking rates which in the past have forced reduced seasonal rail rates, must not be allowed to cloud the real goal. An efficient and adequate transportation network is essential.

Fairbanks - the inland focal point:

The Department of the Interior, with strong concurrence by the War Department, is now engaged in the reconstruction of the Alaska railroad, which has long served as the main transportation line penetrating more than 400 miles from the Alaska Gulf into the interior to reach Fairbanks and neighboring towns, where 4,500 or about fifteen percent of the urban population of Alaska resided before the war. Perhaps twice this number are now located there. This rail line into the interior will remain an important link in the transportation network.

Fairbanks is also the main objective of the Alaska Highway, built during World War II to provide the first overland transport route into Alaska from the United States. Its primary function was to serve airfields needed to provide an adequate airway to Fairbanks and Asiatic points to meet military demands. Because of its impracticability as a through transport ✓

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route to Alaska except for emergencies, a <sup>lateral</sup> ~~cut-off~~ was built from the Alaska Highway mostly through Canadian territory to Haines, near the northern end of the famed inland passage.

<sup>lateral</sup>  
The Haines Cut-off:

The Haines <sup>lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ is a highway transportation link which warrants the earnest attention of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The Public Roads Administration feels that the subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee visiting Alaska should be informed on the advantages to Alaska and to the United States of the Haines <sup>lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~, and of the necessity for reaching an agreement with Canada which will make this transportation link an important primary facility. The interest of the Public Roads Administration in this transportation facility springs from its participation in the construction of the Alaska Highway, the construction over a period of years of forest highways in Alaska serving areas where 39 percent of the people live and 36 percent of the motor vehicles are registered, and from the fact that the Public Roads Administration initiated the construction of the Haines <sup>lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~. Furthermore, there is agreement between the Department of the Interior and the Public Roads Administration on the advisability of transferring functions of the Alaska Road Commission of the Department of the Interior to the Public Roads Administration, and initial steps have been taken toward effecting such a transfer.

The Haines <sup>lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ is important to Alaska and to the United States because it is a link in the best protected and most direct transport line between the west coast of the United States and the interior of Alaska.



Time will undoubtedly show that it is also the cheapest route for many commodities. This route, as shown in figure 1, begins at Haines on Lynn Canal, at a point approximately 80 miles northwest of Juneau and approximately 15 miles south of Skagway. It extends 154 miles to a junction with the Alaska Highway, between Kluane and Champagne. The Haines ~~cut-off~~ <sup>Lateral</sup> and the Alaska Highway, from Haines ~~cut-off~~ <sup>Lateral</sup> to Fairbanks, form parts of an almost straight line route between the west coast of the United States and Fairbanks. From the west coast of the United States to Haines the line follows the inland passage through which barges were operated during the war and which could operate commercially at lower cost than ocean shipping.

The present problem in utilization of the Haines ~~cut-off~~ <sup>Lateral</sup> is reaching an agreement <sup>between the governments of Canada and the United States</sup> with Canada, whereby Canada will either make necessary ~~additional improvements and maintain the road, or will permit the territory of Alaska to do so.~~ <sup>which will result in co-operative arrangements insuring the necessary additional improvement and continuous maintenance of the road.</sup> One hundred thirteen miles of its 154-mile length are in Canada where it traverses British Columbia for 50 miles and Yukon Territory for 63 miles. The detailed location of the route is shown in figure 2. About \$12,000,000 has been expended on the ~~cut-off~~ <sup>lateral</sup>, but to expedite construction, departure was made from the location recommended by the Public Roads Administration and much of the road has been so placed that maintenance is difficult and costly. Reconstruction to make the route conform with acceptable standards and to avoid excessive maintenance costs is estimated to cost \$6,600,000. The cost on the Canadian portion would be about \$5,400,000. Alaska would be the principal beneficiary of the improvement.

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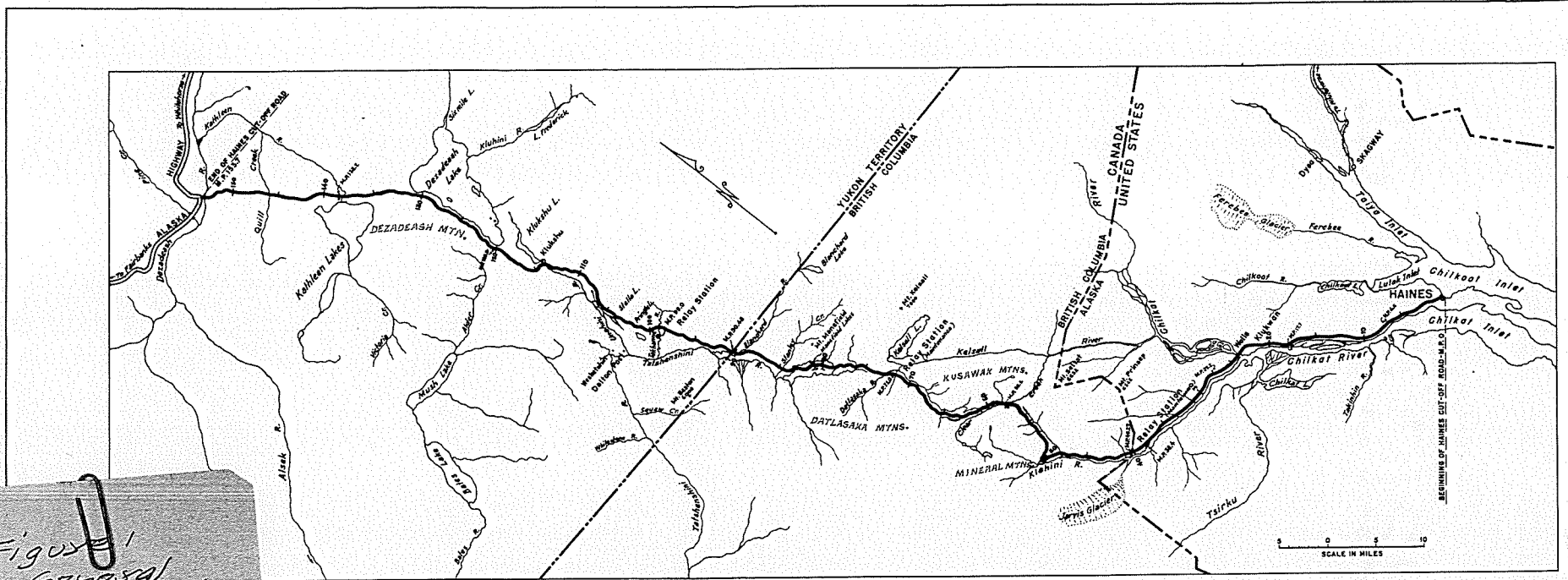
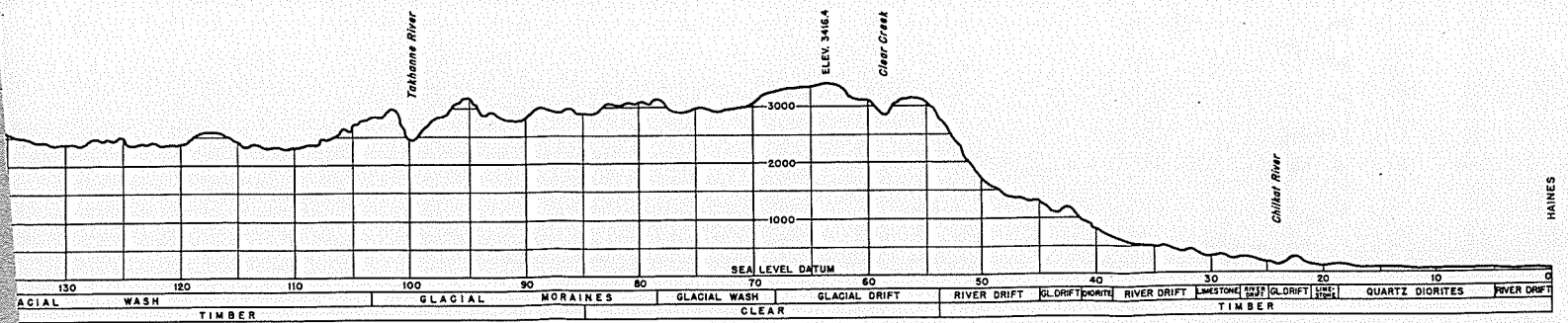


Figure 1  
General  
Map being  
prepared.



**HAINES CUT-OFF ROAD  
ALASKA-CANADA**

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
PUBLIC ROADS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

R.G. 301 Bur. Public Roads  
E. 674 Gen. Corr. R12-50  
E.O. 1486

Figure 2

On April 1, 1946, the Canadian portion became an integral part of the Canadian highway system. There is no obligation on the part of the Canadian Government to maintain that portion. In December, 1946, the Canadian Cabinet decided that the expenditure involved in completion and maintenance would not be justified, but indicated a willingness to consider any proposals of the United States Government. In commenting upon this decision of the Canadian Cabinet, the Administrator of the Federal Works Agency stated:

*Lateral* "I consider development and maintenance of the Haines ~~Cut-off~~ of the highest importance to meet present needs and for the future development of a vast area of interior Alaska. The thousands of square miles of land, rich in natural resources, that lie west of the Canadian boundary and behind the ice-capped coastal mountains are now accessible for transport of freight only by the Richardson Highway from Valdez to Fairbanks and the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Fairbanks. The Richardson Highway is far from being a first-class road for freight transport and the Alaska Railroad, because of operational difficulties, charges very high freight rates and gives a service much below standards in the States. To reach either coastal terminal or the alternate for both routes at Anchorage it is necessary to make the long trip across the Gulf of Alaska. During much of the year this is a stormy and hazardous journey and many ships have been lost on the coast between Skagway and the ports of entry.

*Lateral* "Development of the Haines ~~Cut-off~~ will make possible a shorter, safer, speedier and, for many classes of freight, a cheaper route. Barge transport through the protected Inside Passage to Skagway is already in operation and is equally practicable to nearby Haines. For interior Alaska with a short working season and annual in-and-out movement the Haines route would have decided advantages. Supply centers for Alaska are on our Pacific coast and the time element is important. The Haines route would shorten the time and extend the season of deliveries.

"Because of the great distance from the United States it has never been expected that the Alaska Highway via Dawson

Creek would be an important freight route to Alaska except in emergencies and this route cannot be considered as a satisfactory alternate to the Haines route.

"The Haines route would be an excellent complement to the Alaska Highway in serving tourist travel. Many people would go to Alaska over the entire length of the highway. They could proceed to Haines and return to the States via barge or boat on the Inside Passage, a route of great scenic beauty.

\* \* \* \* \*

"If the Territory of Alaska is to be handled as a governmental unit and not as two widely separated sections, southeastern and western Alaska, the Haines lateral is a very vital item in such future unity of administration.

"We are vitally interested in the maintenance of this highway, which is essential to the transportation needs of this entire area, and will be pleased to participate in conferences or discussions leading to the permanent maintenance and reconstruction of this highway. The self-sustaining possibilities of Alaska are naturally closely linked up with transportation which emphasizes the importance of this highway."

Unless agreement is reached with Canada, present indications are that maintenance of the Haines <sup>Lateral</sup> Cut-off will be abandoned by the Canadian Government. Thereafter, deterioration would be rapid in this land where streams and ditches scou<sup>r</sup>t severely and where culverts and small bridges become quickly filled with rocks, dirt and debris accelerating erosion of the roadway.

The Rossland-Laurier Highway in the State of Washington:

One solution to the problem may be developed through simultaneous consideration of another road location close to the British Columbia and the State of Washington boundary. In this case it is Canada which would benefit by the construction of a road in the State of Washington. It



would have no material benefit to the people of the State of Washington, but as indicated in figure 3 would provide a much superior and cheaper route for east-west travel on the Canadian Interprovincial Highway from Rossland, British Columbia, to Laurier, Washington. In constructing about 24 miles of road within the United States, a mountain can be circumvented with a savings of six or seven miles in travel distance between common points and a line can be followed which offers many advantages from the standpoint of snow removal, topography, and lower elevation of passes. This construction will cost \$3,000,000 less than the improvement of a longer and inferior road with the best available alignment within Canada. Furthermore it will be cheaper to maintain, and vehicle operating savings to Canadians add still further advantages.

The simplest solution to the problem of adequately developing and maintaining the Haines <sup>Lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ would be to work out an agreement with the Canadian Government whereby we would construct and maintain customs-free the Rossland-Laurier highway in exchange for the construction and maintenance of the Haines <sup>Lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ for free movement of United States vehicles.

Exchange of Territory:

Other solutions have been suggested by the Governor of Alaska and by the Department of the Interior involving international boundary adjustments which would transfer to the United States the territory traversed by, and southwest of, the Haines <sup>Lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ and the portion of the Alaska Highway continuing onward from a junction with the Haines <sup>Lateral</sup> ~~Cut-off~~ to the Alaskan border en route to Fairbanks. Exchange of United States territory offering economic advantage to the Canadians has been considered in these proposals.

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Suitable Canadian connections to Alaska Highway:

Another highway problem involving relations with Canada is that of promoting development of adequate highway connection between the southern terminus of the Alaska Highway at Dawson Creek and main highways leading into the United States. At the present time, there is no suitable road connection, even to the improved Canadian network. The recently approved Interstate Highway System in the United States includes a route extending northward from Butte, Montana, via Great Falls to Sweetgrass at the Canadian line. From this point an improved highway extends northward to Edmonton. Between Edmonton and Dawson Creek the best potential connection extends westward over an improved highway en route to Jasper National Park route, to a point near Obed, thence northwesterly over new location to a point near Grand Prairie and thence to Dawson Creek along the dotted line shown in figure 1. The United States should lend all possible support to adequate development of this connection.

Highways between Anchorage-Whittier and the Kenai Peninsula:

The House Appropriations Committee Report on the regular Interior Department appropriation bill for 1942 contained the following statement:

"The fifth supplemental defense appropriation bill, approved April 5, 1941, carries \$5,300,000 for a change of the seaboard terminus of the Alaska Railroad from its present location at Seward, Alaska, to a point at the head of Passage Canal and for the construction of approximately 14 miles of new railroad line to connect with the present line of the Alaska Railroad at mile 66, north of Seward. Upon the construction of the new line, it has been suggested that all of the existing road between Seward and mile 66 will be dismantled and abandoned. It appears that at least 18 months will be required for the construction of the new line of the

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railroad to Passage Canal. No special provision has been made for the maintenance of the existing railroad between Seward and mile 66 to take care of the ordinary traffic and the national defense needs until the new road shall be constructed. The population of the city of Seward at the 1940 census was 949. It seems clear that many, if not all, of the present residents of the city will be seriously affected by the proposed change and that some may thus be rendered practically destitute.

"The committee deems it only proper again to invite the attention of the several departments of the executive branch of the Government, and particularly that of the Interior Department, to this condition, with the view that the appropriate department will propose whatever measures may be thought desirable for the aid of the residents of Seward." 1/

While the committee members are at Anchorage, they should be informed of the proposal to build a highway connection between Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage around Turnagain Arm. It is proposed that this highway, shown in figure 4, will provide a needed transportation facility to replace the uneconomic portion of the Alaska Railroad from Seward to Turnagain Arm slated for abandonment. For years prior to the war the management of this government-owned railroad had recognized the uneconomic character of the long haul from Seward to Turnagain Arm over adverse grades of 2.2 percent before the railroad even leaves tidewater. It advocated construction of a short line outlet to Passage Canal. With the growing threat of war, the Army supported this proposal as a military measure to overcome the vulnerability and low capacity of the line from Seward. In June, 1943, construction of a line from Portage at the head of Turnagain Arm to the new port of Whittier was completed by the Corps of Engineers.

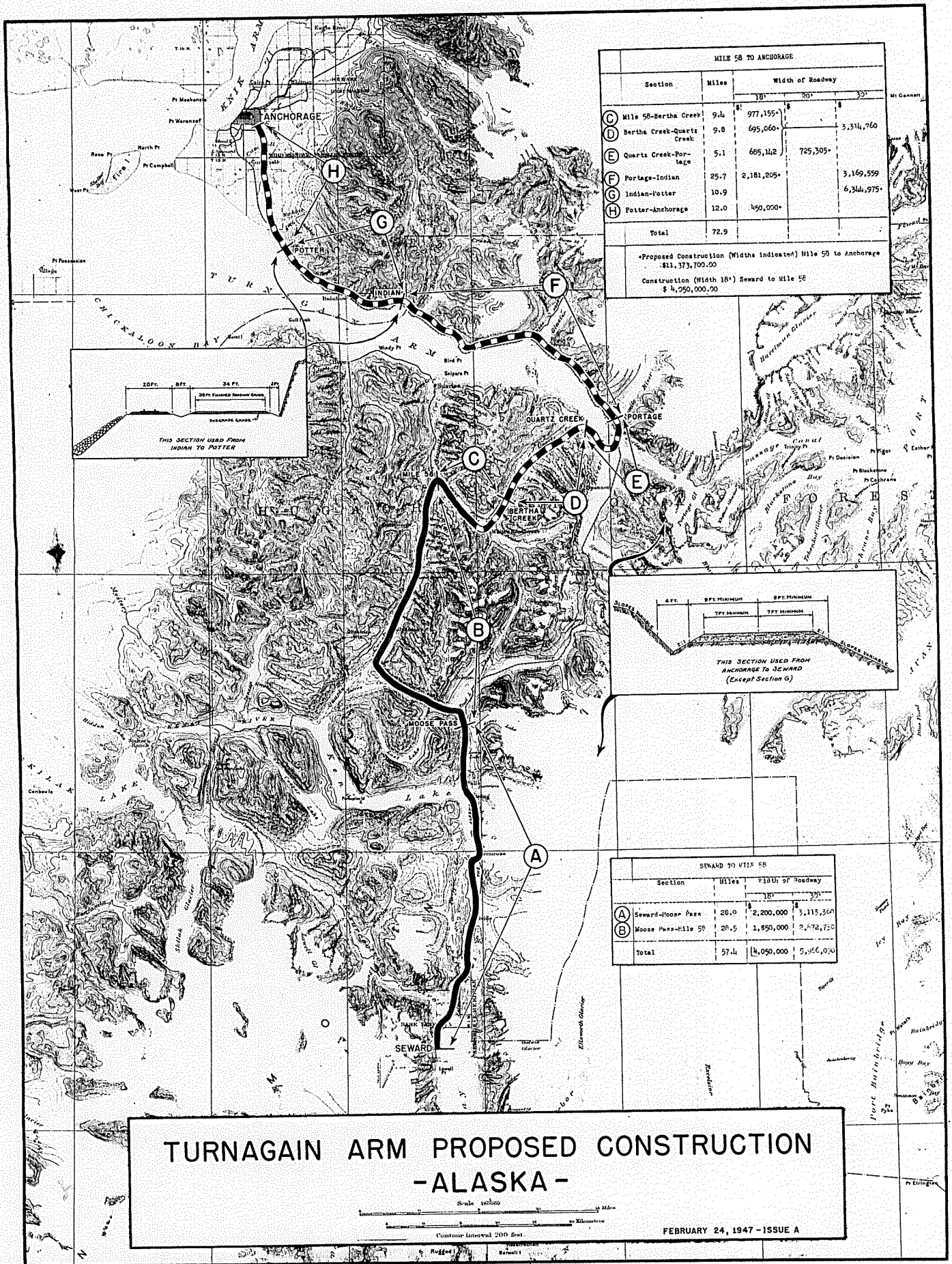
1/ House of Representatives, 77th Congress, 1st. session, Report No. 476, to accompany H.R. 4590.

The proposed new highway, as shown in figure 4, involves an expenditure of \$11,374,000. In addition to serving Seward, this main line, and particularly the new section around Turnagain Arm, provides part of a needed outlet to some of the best agricultural land in Alaska. This land has not been settled because of the lack of transportation. It has been estimated that in the western part of the peninsula, near Homer, there are more than 600,000 acres of bench and bottom land in the Kenai lowland, all of which are sufficiently smooth and well drained to be used for crop production. They are considered to be of about the same productivity and durability as good farm land in northeastern United States. The growing season is 112 days; the rainfall is 17 to 33 inches annually; and the climate is somewhat milder than in the Matanuska Valley where the government has encouraged agricultural development. Development of a road to reach out to serve the Homer area has been initiated and its continued development will represent one of the most promising contributions that transportation can make to the economic growth of Alaska.

Additional Road Development:

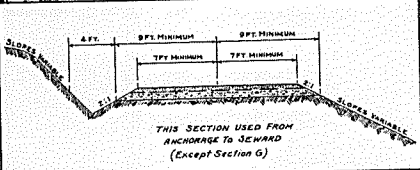
Other road developments of high economic importance are the further improvement of the road connecting the Glenn Highway and the Alaska Highway from Gakona Junction to Tok Junction, the construction of a new road from Tok Junction to the Alaska-Yukon Territory boundary to form a portion of a highway outlet for Dawson City on the Yukon River. These roads are all shown on the attached maps, figures 5 and 6, as well as some proposals of long-range character whose economic and defense importance are expected





MILE 58 TO ANCHORAGE				
Section	Miles	Width of Roadway		
		18'	20'	33'
(C) Mile 58-Bertha Creek	9.4	\$1,977,155		
(D) Bertha Creek-Quartz Creek	9.8	695,060		3,314,760
(E) Quartz Creek-Portage	5.1	685,142	725,305	
(F) Portage-Indian	25.7	2,181,205		3,169,559
(G) Indian-Potter	10.9			6,344,975
(H) Potter-Anchorage	12.0	450,000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>72.9</b>			

\*Proposed Construction (Widths Indicated) Mile 58 to Anchorage  
 \$11,373,709.00  
 Construction (Width 18') Seward to Mile 58  
 \$ 4,250,000.00



SEWARD TO MILE 58				
Section	Miles	Width of Roadway		
		18'	20'	33'
(A) Seward-Moose Pass	28.9	2,200,000		3,113,360
(B) Moose Pass-Mile 58	28.5	1,850,000		2,472,720
<b>Total</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>4,050,000</b>		<b>5,586,080</b>

**TURNAGAIN ARM PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION  
-ALASKA-**

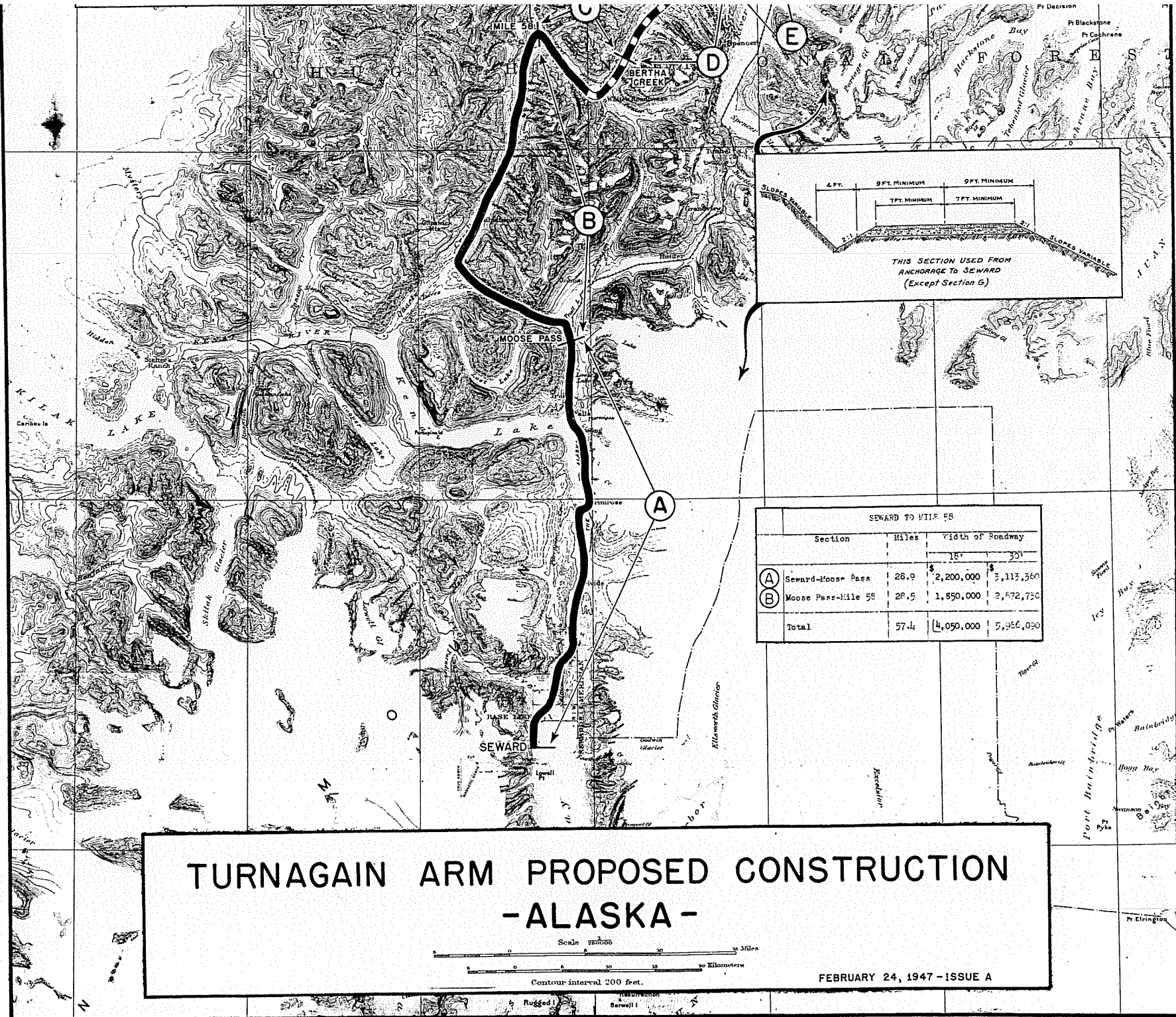
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 FEBRUARY 24, 1947 - ISSUE A

Figure 4

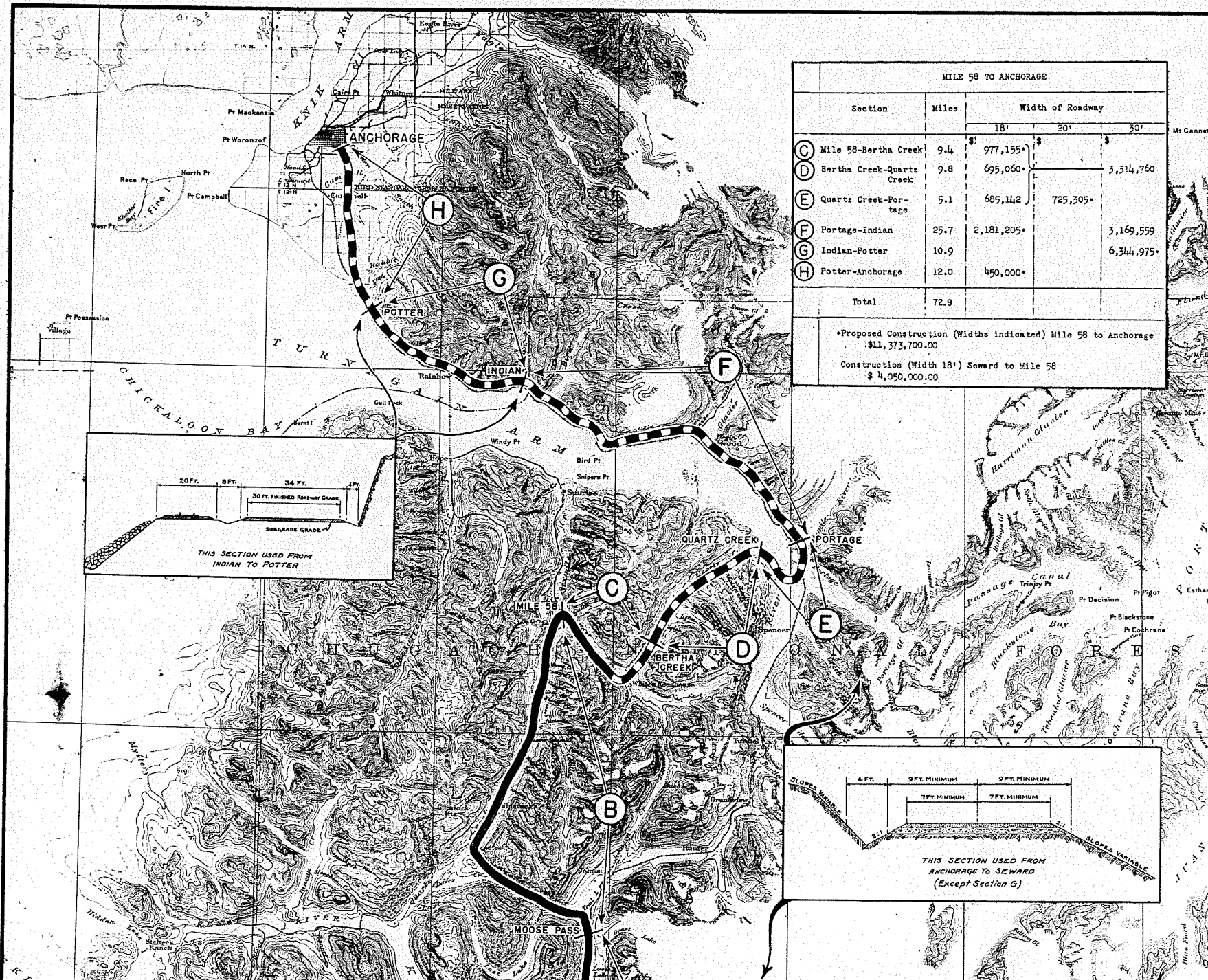
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Figure 4



# TURNAGAIN ARM PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION -ALASKA-



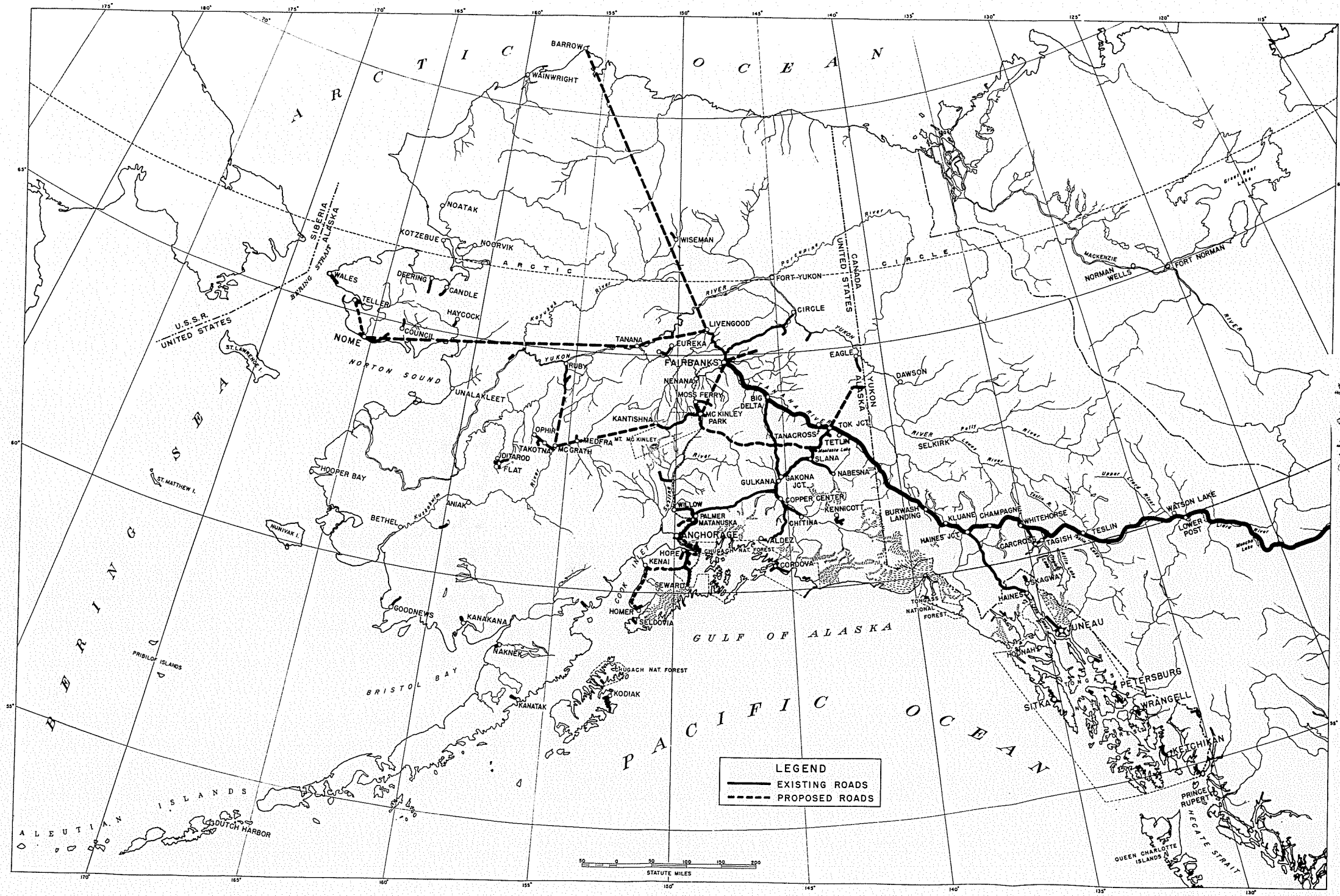
MILE 58 TO ANCHORAGE				
Section	Miles	Width of Roadway		
		18'	20'	30'
(C) Mile 58-Bertha Creek	9.4	\$ 977,155*		
(D) Bertha Creek-Quartz Creek	9.8	695,060*		3,314,760
(E) Quartz Creek-Portage	5.1	685,142	725,305*	
(F) Portage-Indian	25.7	2,181,205*		3,169,559
(G) Indian-Potter	10.9			6,344,975*
(H) Potter-Anchorage	12.0	450,000*		
Total	72.9			

\*Proposed Construction (Widths indicated) Mile 58 to Anchorage  
\$11,373,700.00

Construction (Width 18') Seward to Mile 58  
\$ 4,050,000.00

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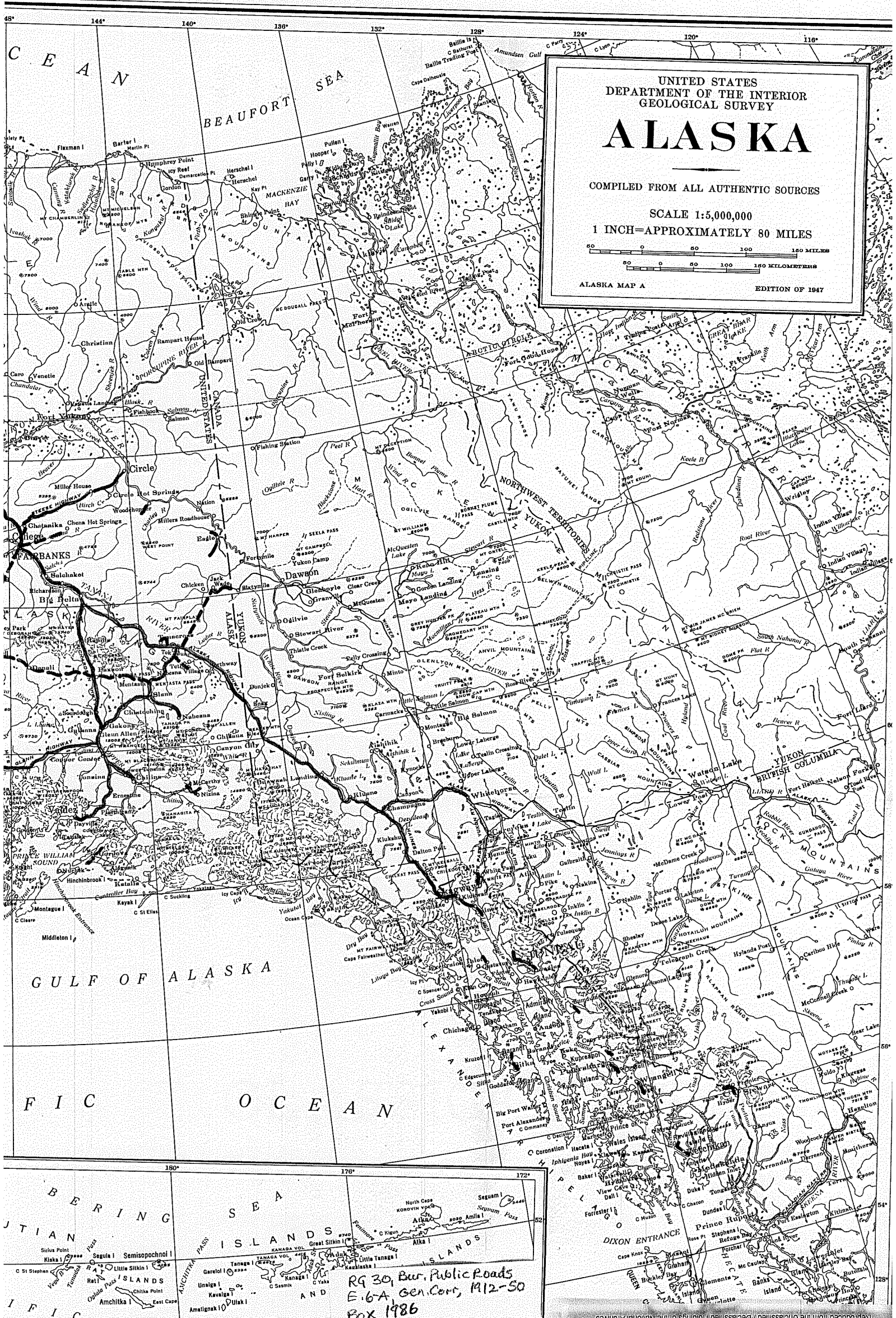




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Figure 5





UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

# ALASKA

COMPILED FROM ALL AUTHENTIC SOURCES

SCALE 1:5,000,000  
1 INCH=APPROXIMATELY 80 MILES

ALASKA MAP A  
EDITION OF 1947

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File

Done in P/B  
Oct 1947

487 Alaska

Ret. to Box  
1986 (R.G.30)  
(Row 34, Sec  
8, Sh. 6)

HIGHWAYS IN ALASKA

A REPORT BASED ON FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

BY

G. M. WILLIAMS, SENIOR HIGHWAY BRIDGE ENGINEER  
PUBLIC ROADS ADMINISTRATION

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done under contracts awarded to the lowest bidder. Subsequent improvements have frequently been made by day labor forces.

Since no Territorial funds are provided for maintenance of forest highways this work is performed by Public Roads Administration forces. Maintenance costs are paid from Federal funds apportioned to Alaska for forest highways.

Residents of the Kenai peninsula and of the Anchorage area are urging the construction of a road via Turnagain Arm which will connect the forest highways of the Kenai peninsula with the highways of interior Alaska. Surveys and engineering studies by Public Roads Administration reveal that construction of this road is feasible. The cost of construction however is indicated to be great. The funds now allotted to Alaska for forest highways are not sufficient to finance the construction of this connection and at the same time finance the maintenance and reconstruction of existing forest highways. Only a portion of the proposed road would be within the boundaries of the Chugach Forest.

The construction of roads on the Kenai peninsula to connect the settlements of Homer, Kasilof and Kenai on Cook Inlet, and to connect them with the forest highway between Seward and Anchorage is also being urged. Preliminary reconnaissance has been made by the Public Roads Administration and the Alaska Road Commission. Costs of construction of these roads is also indicated to be great primarily because of the mileage involved. Financing of construction is not possible with the funds now allotted to the Federal agencies. These proposed roads would lie entirely outside the boundaries of the Chugach Forest. While their purpose and location would not qualify them for inclusion in the forest highway system, these roads actually would be extensions of the present forest highway system.

The Civil Aeronautics Administration has recently constructed roads in the vicinity of several Alaska airfields that have been transferred by the military forces to civilian control. The construction has been done by contract. Maintenance is being done by the Alaska Road Commission where that agency has equipment and personnel in the area. There have been tentative discussions regarding the Public Roads Administration taking over maintenance of 13 miles of new road built in 1945 to connect the forest highway road at Cordova with the former military airfield on the Copper River delta. This road has been built on the abandoned roadbed of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad leading from Cordova to Chitina. It is 14-foot graded width, surfaced with gravel or slate rock, and has many rehabilitated railroad pile trestles.

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Attached,  
PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE  
Reconstruction F. H. Routes, 3, 5 & 14  
ALASKA F H ROUTES, 3, 5, 12, 13, & 14,  
KEMAI PENINSULA.

(N. H) 481 -Alaska.

AIRMAIL

12-3-48

*Card + File*

From: Hugh A. Stoddart, Div, Engr, 10, Juneau, Alaska. HAS.

Lst, Par.

Reference is made to the November 19, memorandum from H. S. Fairbank, Deputy Commissioner, to Division Engineers concerning a study of potential needs for improved highways for National defense. 2nd Par.

There were No production plants in Alaska during the last war to which access roads were constructed and all access projects under the jurisdiction of the Public Roads Administration were therefore, with few exceptions, roads to military establishments. The exceptions were a road to Red Mountain in the vicinity of Seldovia which was constructed to make it possible to develop a chrome mine in that area and two small road projects in connection with Alaska Spruce Program. These projects will be discussed in detail later in this report.

4th Par.

In the third paragraph of the November 19 memorandum is requested a report on access road deficiencies that remained uncorrected at the close of the war. All access projects in Alaska which were certified for construction were completed during or shortly thereafter and there were no deficiencies which remained to be corrected with the possible exception of the road between Juneau and the Juneau airport, a section of Forest Highway Route 2, This section was reconstructed under DAWRS to a higher standard and the project originally included provisions for a payment. At the time the grading was completed the road had lost some of its military importance and the army did not consider it of sufficient importance to certify the paving project. The section will be paved with a bituminous mat during the 1949 construction season under Forest Highway Project 2-A12

8th, Par.

It is also possible that military establishments which would be constructed in the event of an emergency may require additional access roads but this will be wholly dependent upon the plans of the military forces which are unknown to this office. \*\*\*\*\*

Continued on 2nd Page , 8th Par.

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AIRMAIL

Continued from first page. 8th par.

The only areas in which the condition has changed since the last war ~~and where~~ and where we believe that the armed forces may be interested in additional access roads, is on the Kenai Peninsula. The construction of the Turnagain Arm Project, which is now in progress, will connect the Kenai Peninsula directly with the main army base in Alaska at Anchorage. The Alaska Road Commission is also at the present time constructing a road ~~connecting~~ connecting the Forest Highway System on Kenai Peninsula with the villages of Kenai, Kasilof and Homer on Cook Inlet. While the army was not interested in the Forest Highway system on Kenai Peninsula during the last war since it was an isolated system, we believe that the condition now has changed and that the entire road system on Kenai Peninsula will have considerable military importance in the event of another emergency. The cost of reconstructing the main Forest Highways in the Chugach National Forest to a standard commensurate with the standards on the Turnagain Arm project and the Homer road is estimated at \$10,030,000.00. We understand that a joint study is not in progress by the Forest Service and this organization with the objective of obtaining an appropriation for the reconstruction of this portion of the Forest Highway System. If it should not be possible to obtain a special appropriation it will be many years before this portion of the highway system will be reconstructed to adequate standards since the regular Forest Highway appropriations are entirely inadequate to accomplish a project of this size with reasonable speed. We believe that in the event of a national emergency it may be necessary to reconstruct these roads because of their military importance and therefore recommend that this project be listed on the future access road list as a project that may possibly have to be constructed. A detailed preliminary estimate and map showing the location of the possible access project are attached.

Incoming      Comm. MacDonald,  
12-6-48

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