

AIR MAIL

Maj. Walter W. Hodge, Executive Officer
18th Engineers (Combat)
Vancouver Barracks, Wash.

March 19, 1942

Dear Walter:

I am glad to hear that you expect to be coming to Alaska soon and hope that I will have an opportunity to see you on your way thru.

I am sending you herewith two of the last edition of our wall map of Alaska. These are being forwarded airmail as due to the very irregular boat service it is believed doubtful that they would reach you for some time if sent by regular mail.

I am also enclosing with this letter prints of our sectional maps showing the Upper Tanana and the Nabesna territory.

We do not have any recent maps showing the area between Whitehorse and the boundary. We do have an old map of this portion of the Yukon Territory and in case you can not find anything better I am also forwarding one copy of that.

I am enclosing a copy of Stewart's report of his reconnaissance from Big Delta to the boundary last summer. This is undoubtedly the report that you saw as it was furnished to the International Highway Commission members. The map to which he refers in the report is not available as the only copy we had was given to Mr. Riggs and was to have been reproduced by the Commission.

I understand that the U. S. Geological Survey is now getting out a map showing the most recent information on the Upper Tanana area compiled from aerial photographs taken about two years ago. It is suggested that you might write to the Survey in Washington and get copies of all their topographic maps covering the areas in which you are interested.

You probably already know that we are working on a road to connect the Anchorage-Palmer road system with the Richardson Highway at a point just north of the Tazlina River. This road is a little less than one-half completed and it is our plan to have it open for travel by October this year.

I hope that these maps will be of some use to you.

With best regards

Yours very truly,

Ike P. Taylor
Chief Engineer

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Headquarters Eighteenth Engineers (C)
Vancouver Barracks, Washington
March 14, 1942

Mr. Ike P. Taylor
Alaska Road Commission
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Ike:

I have just received word that I will probably arrive in Alaska, with the Regiment of which I am Executive Officer, in the near future, in connection with road work on the new international highway. It will be nice to renew acquaintances and see my old friends, and I shall look forward to seeing you if the boat stops at Juneau.

In order that we may make some definite plans concerning the work, I would appreciate it if you could send me two wall maps of Alaska, which the Road Commission used to publish. As I remember, each map consisted of two sections. I am particularly anxious to obtain maps between Whitehorse and Anchorage, and Whitehorse and Fairbanks, and any information which you have on road reconnaissances between these points.

I remember seeing a copy of a report of an aerial reconnaissance made by Stewart, of the Fairbanks district, in which he gives some excellent information on an aerial reconnaissance he made in the vicinity of the head waters of the Tanana river.

I believe that we will save considerable road building if we tie into the Gulkana, Chistochina, Slana, Nabesna road at the Nabesna mine, where I believe the road terminates.

With best wishes to you and all my old friends up there in Alaska, I am

Respectfully yours,

Walter W. Hodge
WALTER W. HODGE,
Major, 18th Engineers (Combat)
Executive Officer.

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Confidential. W.W.

ADDRESS REPLY TO
ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION
JUNEAU, ALASKA

April 1, 1940

In order to conveniently answer the many inquiries we receive concerning the possibility of travel by vehicle from Continental United States to Alaska, and concerning travel in Alaska, this circular has been prepared.

There is at present no highway connection between the States and the Territory of Alaska. It is now possible to travel by automobile from the States only as far north as Hazelton, British Columbia. The construction of a highway from some point in the States to Fairbanks, Alaska, has been suggested for years but thus far nothing definite in this respect has been accomplished. Act of Congress approved May 15, 1930, provided for a Commission to cooperate with representatives of Canada for a study regarding such a project. Their work was completed and their report filed May 1, 1933. Possibly a copy of this report may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., price 25 cents. Requisition for this should refer to Department of State Conference series 14, Publication # 474.

Act of Congress approved May 31, 1938 provided for a similar Commission to renew conversation with Canadian representatives concerning the project. The United States and Canadian members of the Joint Commission have met but no report has as yet been published. We are informed that their work has not been completed.

There is a highway extending from tidewater at Valdez, Alaska to Fairbanks, thence to Circle, on the Yukon River, 533 miles. This road, with local roads in the vicinity of Fairbanks, provides a connected system of approximately 1,000 miles. There is also a connected system of roads in the vicinity of Anchorage, about 275 miles. The two systems are connected by rail only. Other roads in the Territory are purely local.

Concerning maps of the Territory, the enclosed leaflet will describe fully all maps the Commission has for distribution.

Yours truly

ALASKA ROAD COMMISSION

September 8, 1938

Mr. Thomas Riggs, U. S. Commissioner
International Boundary Commission
United States, Alaska, and Canada
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Riggs:

I have your letter of September 1 requesting information on Alaska roads.

I am forwarding you a copy of our annual report for the fiscal year 1937, the report of fiscal year 1938 being not yet available for distribution, but this really gives very little general information, being comprised largely of figures.

As you will recall, the Richardson Highway has been developed over a period of some thirty years from a sled road to an automobile road. For this reason it has been difficult to always definitely distinguish between what might be new construction or capital investment in the road structure, and maintenance. Actually, the two have gone along together over a long period of years. Our cost accounting records are kept on the basis of new construction as against maintenance and improvement--the item "improvement" being generally a slight raising of the standard of the road and could no doubt properly be charged to construction. The location of this road has, of course, been influenced by this type of development. As the standard was gradually raised, the portion of the graded roadway had become somewhat stabilized and we hesitated in most instances to leave this stabilized road and go into the virgin ground for the purposes of improving alignment or grade. While this has been done to a greater extent in recent years, there are still numerous places on the road where both alignment and grade would be much improved were we starting in to build a new road.

To answer your questions specifically:

(1) Total cost of the Richardson Highway to June 30, 1938 has been \$7,838,310. This includes all costs of construction and maintenance. A reasonable allowance for maintenance over the past thirty years would be \$3,690,000, leaving \$4,148,310 for construction. These costs are based on 410 miles of road and the costs per mile total \$19,191, of which \$9,000 is for maintenance and \$10,191 for construction.

(2) It is not what would ordinarily be termed a heavy-duty road. Our regulations provide for a 16,000-lb. gross load limit on trucks but there are times during the summer when the roadbed is soft that considerable damage results from loads of this size.

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- (3) The average annual maintenance is about \$450 per mile.
- (4) Elevation of the summit thru the Coast Range, 2300 feet, and thru the Alaska Range 3310 feet.
- (5) Passes are open for traffic on an average of four months per year.
- (6) Annual snowfall on the Coast Range is about 10 feet and on the Alaska Range about 5 feet.
- (7) For the past five years an average of 1300 cars have traveled between termini on the Highway.
- (8) Cost of gasoline: At Valdez retails at about 20¢, at Fairbanks 35¢. The average cost at points along the road would probably be about 45¢, because of the cost of truck haul, the cost at Fairbanks being based on rail-road haul in tank-car lots. The average cost of oil would probably be about 40¢ a quart.
- (9) There are nine roadhouses between Valdez and Fairbanks.

Both of the mountain passes on this road are above timberline and during the winter months are subjected to almost continuous winds. For this reason it would probably be impracticable to maintain the road as an all-year road. Even tho ample equipment were available for removing the snow, it is my opinion that the cuts would close so quickly after the passage of the snow plow that it would require almost continuous plowing to allow any traffic to pass. Also, the expense of winter maintenance would be out of all proportion to the benefits derived.

I hope that the above will give you the information you desire.

Sincerely,

Ike P. Taylor
Chief Engineer

IPT:IW

Enc. Annual report f.y. 1937

COPY

National Archives and Records Administration

Pacific Alaska Region

654 West 3rd Avenue

Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2145

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Additional Information Directives files

Juneau, AK 1931-1956

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