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Division Ten

December 29, 1948

TO: Dr. L. I. Hewes, Chief, Western Headquarters, San Francisco,
California

FROM: H. A. Stoddart, Division Engineer

SUBJECT: Monthly Report for December 1948 for Division 10

The Forest Highway activities have been quite limited for the month of December with the movement of a party from the construction projects in the Anchorage area to Sitka to begin the survey necessary for the proposed reconstruction of the existing road extending south from Sitka for approximately six and one-half miles to serve the proposed future industrial development representing the only progress in the field. The field party will consist of ten men and it will require about three months to perform the work.

The project for the construction of a new bridge over the Kenai River on Forest Highway Route No. 5 involves reconstruction on new alignment which in turn makes it necessary to acquire right-of-way through the property of Frank Towle. Acquisition of right-of-way has been deferred pending a determination of the proper procedure to follow to process the right-of-way transfer by condemnation. A field survey to verify the original right-of-way plat has been completed. The property owner is now showing an interest in settling the matter without court proceedings and it appears quite possible that an agreement will be reached in the near future on terms mutually agreeable to the property owner and to the Government which will permit the project to be advanced to construction in the early spring.

Mr. Howard Jones, Assistant Chief Engineer of the Forest Service completed his field survey of the road construction proposed to be financed by a special appropriation. It is our understanding that he has accepted the proposal as being sound in principle and proposes to recommend it for approval to his superiors in Washington with a view to obtaining passage of the necessary legislation in the next session of Congress.

On December 8, 1948, bids were received for the F-2 Section of the Turnagain Arm Project which extends from Peterson Creek to Fetter. Excellent competition was in evidence with the low bid amounting to

\$2,421,928 by Max Kuney Company of Spokane, Washington. Second low bid was received from C. F. Lytle Company and Green Construction Company in the amount of \$3,795,354 and third bid was received from S. Birch and Sons Construction Company and Morrison-Knudsen Company, Inc. in the amount of \$3,946,241. The engineer's estimate was \$2,910,102. Award of the contract was recommended to the Washington Office and the award was made to the low bidder as of December 13, 1948. While the difference between the low and the second low bid was rather large, taking into account the low bidder's experience and financial responsibility, it is believed that he will carry the contract to completion without undue difficulty.

The Alaska Road Commission made the suggestion just before bids were opened that the contract be executed with that organization rather than the Public Roads Administration as they felt that greater flexibility in administration of funds would result which would permit them to advance some other activities in which they are interested. There did not seem to be sufficient merit in this suggestion to justify so extensive a change in the contract procedure, particularly in view of the limited time available in which to notify the contractor and the contract was therefore executed as originally intended. It is our understanding that the Road Commission has transferred the contract authority made available by the basic legislation to finance the contracts administered by the Public Roads Administration.

At a meeting in Anchorage on December 17, 1948, an agreement was reached with representatives of the Alaska Railroad and the Alaska Road Commission that an alternate design prepared by the Railroad providing for a new railroad grade extending from Indian to Potter based on six degree maximum curvature for the railroad which would permit the highway to occupy the present railroad grade would be adopted for Section G of the Turnagain Arm Project. While this design is something in excess of \$1,000,000 more costly to construct than possible alternate lines either above the existing railroad or on the bay side of the existing railroad, its many advantages over either alternate are believed to warrant this selection in spite of its somewhat greater cost. With the adoption of a design for this section, the Alaska Railroad will proceed with preparation of final plans and expects to advertise the project for bids in about two or three months, or early enough to permit the work to be completed in 1950.

Summarizing the probable costs of the work already contracted and taking into account the additional work to complete the project, there is indicated to be an overrun of nearly \$5,000,000, over the original estimate. The necessary additional funds will be requested in the regular Interior Department appropriation bill to finance the remainder of the work.

The Alaska Road Commission has made good progress in contracting for the procurement of the materials necessary for the tank farms other than the storage tanks, which have been transferred from the Navy at the point of storage at Port Hueneme. The design was made by a consulting firm in San Francisco, under a separate contract covering this phase of the activities. The materials contract as noted was handled by the Alaska Road Commission as will be the erection of the facilities at the two tank farms at Valdez and Anchorage. For the latter contract, bids were opened on December 10, 1948, at the Road Commission office in Juneau. Two bids were received, the lowest of which was from S. Birch and Sons Construction Company and Morrison-Knudsen Company in the amount of \$1,283,444.95 and was rather substantially in excess of the engineer's estimate of \$794,227. After several days consideration, the Road Commission awarded the contract to the low bidder, who accepted a reduction equal to the freight on material from Seattle to the job site, in view of the exigency which demanded that the work be undertaken at the earliest possible date in view of the serious complication which would certainly result should the Government be unable to furnish the asphalt for the road contracts. Certain alternatives naturally presented themselves among which a more realistic estimate would probably have resulted in scaling down the size of the installation to make a saving on the initial costs which would be offset to some extent by the higher costs of delivery of smaller quantities of materials at more frequent intervals. The high costs of the storage tanks will seriously reduce the economies anticipated by bulk handling of the materials, but will not, for the quantities involved, result in a cost in excess of package handling.

On December 15, Colonel Noyes of the Alaska Road Commission held an open hearing in Fairbanks to develop public opinion regarding the advisability of maintaining the principal roads open throughout the winter for truck hauling. It was intended to determine the volume of hauling to be anticipated in terms of truck loads and freight volumes. To indicate the support for opening the principal roads through the mountains at such points as Thompson and Isabella Passes on the Richardson Highway and Chilkat Pass on the Haines Highway, interested firms of truckers, bus companies, and operators of dock facilities were requested to make statements regarding the contributions in cash, equipment or labor forces which they would make available for the purpose. It appeared that the support available would be only a fractional part of the cost to be anticipated, although it would be substantial when viewed from the standpoint of the truck operators. The trucking firms were quite positive that large volumes could be hauled over the Thompson Pass during the winter and would be in excess of 2,000 tons per month. It is interesting to note that the operators had no concern about operating heavy equipment on the existing steep grades under the adverse weather conditions anticipated. The most convincing argument, in their opinion, appeared to be the feeling that the high cost of the highway justified

year-round operation rather than operation on only a short seasonal basis. The impression gained from the meeting was that the development of winter snow removal program had the support of the truck operators and has merit from defense and development considerations rather than any possibility that an immediate economic benefit would be realized.

The weather for the months of October, November and December for the area has been sufficiently unusual to justify comment. Through October and into mid-November, there was an almost continual rainy spell, greatly exceeding the normal rainfall for this season and for the next thirty days, it was unseasonably cold, with temperatures in the Juneau area ranging from minus five degrees to plus fifteen degrees. About December 13, the temperature became more moderate and snow has fallen almost continuously since that date. The effect has been to result in shutting down of construction on the active projects two weeks to a month earlier than had been anticipated. In spite of this handicap, progress on the contracts for the Road Commission extending easterly from Anchorage and south from Fairbanks has been quite satisfactory, particularly so on the latter contract on which the contractor has performed work of a value of nearly one-half million dollars since work was started on October 12, 1948.

In addition to the weather, the contractors have been impeded by delays resulting from transportation difficulties of which the principal one was the coast-wise strike which began on September 4 and lasted ninety-five days. After the strike problems were apparently solved, shipping was resumed and continued for three weeks, but has again suffered another, but less wide, shut-down due to another strike caused by jurisdictional problems. Handling of business has been impeded by limited air transport movements caused by adverse weather with receipt of air mail being delayed as much as a week or ten days.

There are attached the monthly reports of the District Engineers, but due to the lack of change in the status of construction projects, we are not submitting the graphs attached to the last report as no significant progress has been made.

Attachments

HAS:rb

cc Dr. Hewes

PUBLIC ROADS ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION 10
SEWARD DISTRICT

NARRATIVE REPORT FOR
DECEMBER 1948

TURNAGAIN ARM PROJECTS

Sections C & D - Mile 58 to Quartz Creek

All work on Projects C & D was suspended on November 20 due to cold weather, equipment breakdowns and the fact that the road to the project from the Mile 58 camp was practically impassable. Very little effort has been expended in providing drainage and grading for a satisfactory haul road over the south end of Projects C and D and the result was that operations became virtually impossible when the cold weather started freezing the streams. Considerable difficulty is expected next year in getting to the work near the summit. The contractor talks of resuming grading with one shovel and two trucks in January, but because of his past performance it seems rather doubtful that he will make substantial progress under winter conditions.

Section E - Quartz Creek to Portage

Piling for the trestles on Section E was driven until December 13, when work was suspended and the crew went to the States for the holidays. It is expected that pile driving and clearing will be resumed in January. Section D can be more readily reached from the south end of Section E at the mouth of Quartz Creek than from the summit at the north end of Section C, so it is now the plan of the contractor to work up Quartz Creek on D instead of working down from the summit, as originally planned.

Section F-1 - Portage to Peterson Creek

All work on Section F-1 was suspended during the week ending November 20. Practically no work has been accomplished on this section except the pile driving and capping of timber bents on two timber bridges.

Sections C & D, E and F-1 - General

The work involved in Sections C & D, E and F-1, all under contract to Lytle and Green, is not more than 15% complete with more than 30% of the time used to December 31, 1948. There is no opportunity remaining to make substantial progress before the month of May. Progress on all three contracts has been reported unsatisfactory and the contractor so notified. The contractor has been handicapped to some degree by strikes, but it is felt that he has not done all he should and could readily have done to improve progress. The bridge sub-contractors, Munter and Phillips, have made much better progress on the structures than has been made on the grading.

Section F-2 - Peterson Creek to Indian

Max J. Kuney, the low bidder on Section F-2, has not been on the project since the bid opening and his plans for handling the project are not known. A complete camp for our engineering forces is being set up at Girdwood, and considerable staking on this section is expected to be done this winter.

Section G - Indian to Potter

Agreement was reached with the Railroad regarding the construction of this section on December 17. A line along the shore with the highway departing from the railroad both horizontally and vertically where economy dictates was the compromise line agreed to. Redesign by the Railroad of its original 6° line, estimated to cost in excess of \$12,000,000, and use of the old railroad grade by the highway resulted in reduction of the total estimate to about \$8,500,000. Additional curvature aggregating about 200° was introduced in the newly projected railroad line; the maximum curvature was kept at 6°. The maximum curve on the highway line will be 12°. All grades will be very light. It will be necessary to obtain additional funds to finance this project. Bids are expected to be received by the railroad, probably next spring or early summer, and construction will likely take about two full years.

GLENN HIGHWAY

Section A - Anchorage to Palmer

Good progress was made on this section by Stock and Grove, subcontractors on the grading, considering that the work did not start until October 4 and was suspended because of bad weather on November 18. The ratio of percent completed to percent of time used is unfavorable, but because of the short time the project was active, and the efficient manner in which the contractor organized his work, this unfavorable ratio is not considered serious. The contractor has placed practically all borrow required for cushion and leveling of the existing grade line between the Knik River Bridge and Palmer. This piece is the north ten miles of the project. It can be made ready for placing crushed base course in a matter of a few days in the spring, and placing of plant mix can rapidly follow. With this ten mile section practically ready for surfacing operations now it appears that the contractor has the project in shape to make a very creditable showing next year. Very substantial progress was made this year also on the heavy grading section north from the Fort Richardson boundary. The eight and one-half mile section through Fort Richardson that is to be added by change order or supplemental agreement has had the necessary survey completed and the design is under way.

RICHARDSON HIGHWAY

Section A - Fairbanks to Harding Lake

Exceptional progress has been made on this project, considering the late start and the cold weather which occurs in this latitude. Work was started October 12 and was suspended on December 3. During that period the contractor

earned about \$470,000.00. The rock borrow sub-base designed on the first thirteen miles south of Fairbanks has been completed except for about two and one-half miles. The high bid price on borrow and haul is to some extent responsible for the large amount earned.

Section B - Harding Lake to Big Delta

This section was awarded to S. Birch & Sons Construction Co. and Morrison-Knudsen Co., the same contractors who have Section A of the Glenn Highway and Section A of the Richardson Highway. No construction is active or expected to be until next spring.

ALASKA HIGHWAY

Section B - Johnson River to Tok Junction

This section of the Alaska Highway has been awarded to Babler Bros. and Rogers Const. Co. of Portland. No work is expected to start before next spring. The contractors have not been on the project since bids were opened.

KENAI RIVER HIGHWAY, FOREST HIGHWAY, PROJECT 5B-1 (Coopers Landing Bridge over Kenai River)

The necessary surveying for right-of-way has been practically completed, and it was not necessary to obtain a court order for entry on the land for making the survey. Mr. Towle has been in the office and it may yet be possible to obtain the right-of-way without resorting to a suit in condemnation by moving the line a little further into the hill away from Towle's house. This possible solution will be explored further after all data necessary for condemnation has been obtained, the original designed centerline staked, etc. The result of this line shift would be heavier grading quantities from the sidehill, but the material could be used in lieu of borrow designed for the bridge approaches. The net result would be an increase in haul, and possibly the introduction of slight additional curvature. If this change in line will enable us to get the right-of-way without condemnation it will save considerable time, will not cost appreciably more than the present design, and should be adopted.

SEWARD MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

The winter thus far has been unusually cold with practically no snow. Glaciering is much worse than is usually experienced and practically all maintenance work has been on the glaciers. One push plow has been in operation once up to this time. Heavy snow today promises some relief from the glaciering and will require use of the plows. Some of the maintenance personnel have been erecting the Girdwood camp and it has been necessary to employ some additional men to help the regular maintenance crews.

PERSONNEL

The engineering camp at Eklutna has been closed down and the crew moved to Girdwood. The contractors camp at Portage has closed down and our crew boarding there has been moved to Girdwood. A crew of about five men will be returned to Portage when the contractor resumes operations, probably in January. A crew of ten men will be sent to Juneau on December 29 for work on the survey at Sitka. At that time the camp at Mile 58 will be closed down and part of the crew there will go to Sitka and part to Girdwood, where we expect to keep a crew of about twelve men all winter. Two men will remain in Fairbanks on design work through the winter. Five men from the field crews will be on office work in Seward.

The need for very substantial increases in all engineering personnel will be imperative early next spring if we are to maintain the competent and rigid inspection and engineering services necessary to produce our usual first class work. Many additional engineering assistants must be employed in order to keep up with and adequately measure and pay for the contract items. In order to staff the projects it is felt that recruitment throughout Public Roads and elsewhere by all known effective methods should be started at once and pushed diligently throughout the winter. This lack of personnel is the greatest single obstacle to be overcome in the entire Alaska road program.

B. M. French
District Engineer

December 21, 1948

MONTHLY REPORT
ON
ACTIVITIES IN THE JUNEAU DISTRICT, DIVISION TEN
FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1948

There were no active construction projects in the Juneau District during the month of December.

The weather was unusually adverse during the month of December and all the maintenance projects in Southeastern Alaska reported extremely cold weather and unusually heavy snowfalls. A considerable amount of overtime work by the maintenance crews was necessary to keep the roads open.

Studies of highway construction to be financed from a proposed special appropriation were continued and a tentative schedule of survey, design and construction was prepared.

The pulp development program was again discussed with the Forest Service, who reports that there is no apparent change in the plans of the interested pulp companies and, therefore, the Forest Service feels confident that the program will be followed as previously indicated. Forest Highway Project 1-B7,83, which covers relocation of Tongass Highway in the vicinity of Harde Cove, in connection with the proposed pulp plan in that area, was discussed in detail with the design section of the Division Office. Preparations to initiate survey work in the vicinity of Sitka in connection with the pulp program in that area were completed during the month and it is expected that survey work will begin immediately after the new year.

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Division Ten

December 29, 1948

TO: Mr. J. S. Bright, Deputy Commissioner, Washington, D. C.

FROM: H. A. Stoddart, Division Engineer

SUBJECT: Excerpts from Monthly Report for December 1948 for
Division 10

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