

**CITY OF HOUSTON
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION**

RESOLUTION NO. 23-PC-02

**A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSTON PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
SUPPORTING IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN
ANCHORAGE AND THE MATANUSKA SUSITNA VALLEY VIA THE PORT
MACKENZIE RAIL EXTENSION AND THE KNIK ARM CROSSING AS OUTLINED IN
THE CURRENT CITY OF HOUSTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND SUPPORTED
BY THE CITY THROUGH DECADES OF LEGISLATION**

WHEREAS, HMC 7.06.030(B) states “In accordance with the Comprehensive and Land Use Plans and in order to implement these plans, the Commission shall recommend actions governing the use and occupancy of land that may include, but are not limited to: “c. Measures to further the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.”

WHEREAS, an Anchorage-Houston-Interior Alaska transportation corridor, of which the “Port to Parks Highway” is part of, has been a key element of City of Houston comprehensive master plans since the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, a major component repeated throughout the City of Houston’s most recent Comprehensive Plan (2016) is the City’s long standing belief that improved transportation connectivity between Anchorage and the Matanuska Susitna Borough via the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension and the Knik Arm Crossing is essential for future economic growth and well-being of both the City of Houston and the State of Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 City of Houston Comprehensive plan was developed over 3 years of public input and participation with a 30% participation rate of our citizens in the City; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 City of Houston Comprehensive Plan won the “best in State” award by the Planner’s Association due to its thorough and exemplary format; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 17: “The Alaska Railroad extension from Port MacKenzie to the mainline through Houston has increased the amount of land used for transportation purposes and provides an opportunity for more transportation support uses to emerge in the future.”; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 25 Transportation System: “Freight is also transported along the Alaska Railroad, which generally parallels the Parks Highway corridor through the City of Houston’s boundaries. A rail extension from the mainline in Houston to the port at Point MacKenzie is currently under construction, and will potentially increase the amount of future freight traffic traveling through Houston.”; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 45 Transportation System Improvements: “Residents prefer a new road between Houston and Port MacKenzie. If built, it would support freight transportation and more efficiently connect Houston residents with a significant employer, the port. A new connection could also support economic

development within Houston.” and page 45 under Economic Development “The Alaska Railroad’s extension from the mainline in Houston to Port MacKenzie may provide opportunities for development in Houston. These possibilities include an increase in the likelihood of manufacturing, mineral export, or transportation activity taking place in the city that could provide economic benefit and employment.”; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 54 detailing transportation goals:

- Objectives- “Ensure freight goods movement from the port to interior Alaska through Houston is safe and efficient.” “Encourage the development of alternate routes through Houston to serve goods and services movement from Port McKenzie to interior Alaska.”
- Policies- “Support regional transportation developments that comply with the goals, objectives, and policies in this plan and that support positive development within Houston.”;
- Strategies: “Support the development of an alternative route to the Parks Highway from Port McKenzie to Houston parallel to the Point McKenzie railroad extension; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 69 transportation plan, freight- “The Alaska Railroad is the other leading mode for freight transportation. Opportunities for increased freight activity to the Port MacKenzie rail extension are anticipated in Houston due to the “Y” connection to the mainline. Improvement to the Parks Highway from Wasilla to Fairbanks may decrease travel times and continued development of Interior Alaska and the Borough may lead to increased traffic on the Parks Highway and increased use of the railroad.”; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 71 Relationship to other plans, area projects and studies.

- Matanuska-Susitna Borough Long Range Transportation Plan. “Develop and operate a rail system to benefit Mat-Su’s population and economy
- Support the continued operation and expansion of local public transportation.
- Extend a rail connection from the Alaska Railroad main line to Point MacKenzie.
- Continue to support economic development of communities along existing and future Alaska Railroad lines.

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 79 Port to Parks . “Also known as the “Port MacKenzie to Parks Highway Roadway Corridor”, the “Port to Parks” project seeks to construct a more direct highway link between the growing Port MacKenzie and the Parks Highway. Several routes have been studied in the past; including some with impacts to City of Houston lands. It is recommended that an alignment paralleling the north side of the newly constructed railroad link be selected. A “Port to Parks” road through the City of Houston would benefit the community as follows:

- Industrial Development. The recently annexed Knikatu, Inc. land is zoned heavy industry, but is currently without surface access. A Port to Parks alignment paralleling the Port MacKenzie Rail Extension would provide flexible freight access to a portion of these lands, making it more attractive for businesses to invest. The utility grid will require upgrades to accommodate a growing industry. Providing road access to industrial areas is compatible with the City of Houston’s

objectives to foster employment opportunities and encourage regional commercial enterprises.

- Freight from Port to Interior Alaska. As operations at Port MacKenzie increase, so will the demand for multimodal access. The "Port to Parks" roadway provides an alternative to the railroad, which is preferred for smaller quantities of goods.; and

WHEREAS, the Houston Comprehensive Plan (HCP) states the following on page 96 implementation schedule-

- Mid-Range: Evaluate the feasibility of intermodal transfer facility at new ARRC extension.
- Long Range: Evaluate the feasibility and funding of a Port to Parks roadway corridor parallel to the new ARRC extension.; and

WHEREAS, The Houston City Council has passed the following resolutions supporting increased transportation options: Resolutions 08-27, 08-30, 09-05, 09-23, 09-26, 11-18, 11-21, 12-14, 12-17, 13-05, 14-02, 15-03; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Houston the Commission supports improved transportation connectivity between Anchorage and the Matanuska Susitna valley via the Port Mackenzie Rail Extension and the Knik Arm Crossing as outlined in the current City of Houston Comprehensive Plan and supported by the City through decades of legislation

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED By a duly constituted quorum of the Planning & Zoning Commission for the City of Houston on this 23rd day of February 2023.


Deb Meister, Chair

ATTEST:


Rebecca Rein, City Clerk