

# Transportation Keeps Anchorage Moving

**Alaska Railroad played key role in development of state's largest city. Now trucks, airplanes and ships share the ever-growing load**

ANCHORAGE, 114.3m. (p.o., 30alt., 2,277pop.), an incorporated town at the head of Cook Inlet, is the location of the repair shops and general offices of the Alaska Railroad. It is a center for quartz and placer gold mining, coal mining, fishing, canning, and some fur farming and trapping.

That was the Anchorage of just 30 years ago. It is difficult to recognize the quiet little railroad town in the bustling city of today. But even *that* Anchorage was recognized as a transportation center for the Alaska of its time.

The Anchorage which was founded in 1914 as a railroad construction camp will still base a large share of its growth during the 1970s on the transportation industry. The Alaska Railroad is and will remain important to what has become Alaska's largest city. Now competing with it are the truck lines using the paved highways linking the city to the state's first industrial center to the south on the Kenai Peninsula, and to the north with the vast Interior of Alaska and the Alaska Highway to the other states. Complimenting it are the city's port — which has become the busiest in the state — and the Anchorage International Airport, which is the real hub of air traffic throughout Alaska, to the other states, and on polar routes to Europe and Asia.

But in the beginning there was only the government-built and operated Alaska Railroad. Today it is busier than ever, and a good share of its traffic

*Sea-Land provided year-round freight service for Anchorage — a feat which other shipping firms declared was impossible. Here, a Sea-Land vessel is unloaded by huge crane at the Port of Anchorage.*

increase is accounted for by oil industry equipment and supplies being hauled from ports at Whittier and Seward to Anchorage and on north to Fairbanks.

As with all railroads, this freight business provides the bread and butter. What little frosting there is comes from

the passenger trade because unlike the vast majority of railroads in the other states, the Alaska Railroad *does* still carry a goodly number of passengers along its scenic route.

Passenger traffic has shown steady increases over the past few years, although the long-range outlook is for a decline. In 1964 there was a total of 59,293 passengers riding the railroad and traveling a total of 8,651,000 passenger miles. By last year this had increased to a total of 66,327 passengers traveling 10,535,000 passenger miles. The railroad expects a 3 per cent to 5 per cent continued increase in passenger traffic during the current fiscal year. Officials are less hopeful over the long pull: Completion of the new direct-route Anchorage-Fairbanks highway (which should be opened to traffic early

in the 1970s) will drain off a good deal of the railroad's passenger traffic. The railroad estimates passenger traffic could decrease from 15 per cent to 35 per cent at that time.

For the same period a healthy increase is being forecast in the freight business.

"As for the projected future, we feel the freight traffic growth could vary anywhere from 3.5 per cent to 15 per cent increase," said John Manley, general manager of the railroad.

Manley said the size of the increase hinges directly on the development by the oil companies on the North Slope, on pipeline installation, and on other petroleum development which might be served through the railbelt.

"At the same time we are looking forward to a certain amount of increase



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resulting from economic growth of this part of the state," he added.

## Trucking Lines Contribute

Also contributing to that economic growth of the Anchorage area are the two dozen or more trucking lines who make their headquarters in this transportation-minded city. The certificates of the lines include long-haul carriers with routes up the Alaska Highway from the other states and Canada, and the various intrastate routes covering the regular highway network and such exotic routes as the winter-haul from Fairbanks over the ice trail to the oil company sites on the Arctic North Slope. Then in a class by itself is the firm which takes a major share of the credit for making Anchorage a real port — Sea-Land Service, Inc. — with trucks distributing the cargo containers arriving at the Anchorage port aboard its own ocean-going vessels.

The story of the development of that City Port is an odd one. Built in competition with the existing railroad ports of Seward and Whittier, it drew predictions from railroad officials that it would never be more than a white

elephant. Its first few years seemed to prove these predictions all too true.

Although Anchorage took its very name from the early-day ship traffic generated by the railroad building activity, the city could never be considered anything like a port until the 1950s. A few vessels ventured up Cook Inlet but the extremely strong tides, the heavy silting conditions, and particularly the sometimes nearly solid mass of floating ice during the winter months, kept out all but the venture-some. (The principal ship line serving Alaska in those days said flatly that it was "impossible" to navigate upper Cook Inlet during the winter.)

Despite all this the City of Anchorage *did* build a modern port facility. It opened for business in 1961. The first year a bare trickle of cargo (a total of 38,529 tons) moved across its single berth. The next two years saw steady but small increases in cargo totals and it was beginning to look like the port might continue to be a red-ink operation for the city for several more years to come.

Two events coming nearly simultaneously in 1964 changed all that.

One was the start of container service by Sea-Land Service, Inc., and the continuation of that service throughout the winter months. Fortunately, Sea-Land did not realize this was "impossible" and with specially strengthened vessels has continued and increased winter service every year since.

## Earthquake Impact

The second event coming in 1964 was the strongest earthquake experienced in North America in modern times. That Good Friday earthquake was the greatest disaster ever experienced by Alaska. It took 115 lives, caused well over \$100 million in property damage, and for a time seemed to have wrecked the entire economy of the state.

The quake and resulting sea waves smashed and destroyed the port installations at Whittier, Seward and Valdez. For all practical purposes they were completely out of business for months and even years. The only functioning port remaining to serve the railbelt heartland of Alaska was the "white elephant" at Anchorage. Serve it certainly did, with more than the 800,000 tons

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THE ALASKA RAILROAD is the only federally-owned railroad in the United States and unlike many rail systems, it does a fair share of passenger business. In this photo, which shows the downtown Buttrick Area, flat cars loaded with Sea-Land Service vans are shown in the foreground. Just behind the flat cars is a line of freight cars and further back is the mixed passenger-freight train which travels north to Fairbanks.

The Daily News, Anchorage, Alaska, Thursday, July 31, 1969

## Petroleum Terminal Closed

The petroleum terminal at the Port of Anchorage has been closed for four days to allow a cement pour made Wednesday to set up.

The concrete pour is the last phase of a repair job of damage that resulted when a tanker rammed the facility last year. Cost of the repairs exceeded the original estimate and the City Council, in a special session at 5 p.m. today will vote on appropriating the additional \$23,869 required to pay the contractor.

Completion of the project was delayed until a four-day "open" period could be arranged at the busy oil dock. Activity at the dock is to increase after Jan. 1 when the Big Bear refinery at North Kenai begins producing fuels from state royalty crude.

Alaskan Oil & Refining Co., a subsidiary of Tesoro Oil Corp., is presently building a tank farm on land leased from the city in the port area and will move the oil products up Cook Inlet in a specially built barge, discharging it through the POL dock.

The special meeting of the Anchorage City Council will also consider administration recommendation of awarding several paving projects to John Wayne Construction Co. Inc. on a contract bid of \$116,231.45. The work is on Hyder, M and Karluk streets.

8 Anchorage Daily Times Wednesday, July 2, 1969

## Pathfinder To Hold Open House Here

The Pathfinder, a U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey ship, will be at the City Dock Thursday for an open house from 7 to 10 p.m.

The open house is one of three planned for this month to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the creation of the Environmental Science Services Administration. The other two will be in Seward and Palmer.

The 228-foot survey vessel to be under inspection here Thursday has been surveying Alaska waters and shorelines for the past 23 years, the last five in Cook Inlet. This season, the Pathfinder is conducting hydrographic surveys in Kamishak Bay on a continuing project to update charts of the inlet.

Commanded by Capt. Eugene A. Taylor, the Pathfinder will also survey the approaches to the piers at Nikiski and Nikishka, as well as the infamous Knik Arm Shoal in the approach channel to Anchorage.

For the open house, parking will be available in the port area on a limited basis. Shuttle bus service will be available from the lower parking bowl at Third Avenue and C Street.

The Geodetic Survey's ship Fairweather, commanded by John B. Watkins Jr., will hold open house from noon to 3:30 p.m. Sunday at the old city dock pier in Seward. The newest vessel in the ESSA fleet, the Fairweather is spending its first season in Alaska and making complete new hydrographic surveys in the vicinity of Middleton Island and in Controller Bay.

16 Anchorage Daily Times Wednesday, July 9, 1969

## SEA-LAND TO EXPAND TERMINAL FACILITIES

The Anchorage Port Commission will recommend to City Council that it lease two additional lots in the port area to Sea-Land Service Inc.

Approval of the final lease is still to be given by the commissioners. The lots total about six acres and adjoin Sea-Land's present yard facilities. The additional lots would give the firm's present storage yard an L-shape.

The additional space is needed because Sea-Land is about two shiploads, or 32,000 tons ahead of last year's tonnage for the first six months of the year. A Sea-Land official said a third ship may be added to the present schedule in early autumn.

The city will receive about \$14,000 in rent each year for the first five years of the lease.

In addition the commissioners heard a progress report on the status of repairs on the POL dock, damaged late last fall when a tanker smashed into it. Repairs are halted when tankers come in to the port to unload, but Painter said work would be completed within the required 40 working days, opening the dock for full use sometime in August. Cost of the repairs will run slightly in excess of \$92,000, Painter said.

Damaged concrete has been removed from the dock, said Painter, and pouring of new concrete will begin this week. Commissioners learned that work is underway on the Alaskan Oil and Refining Co.'s facility on Lot 11, the lease for which the city approved recently.

The Daily News, Anchorage, Alaska, Tuesday, July 8, 1969

## Port Approves Sea-Land Lots In Terminal Area

Anchorage Port Commissioners approved Monday night a request by Sea Land Service Inc. for two additional undeveloped lots in the terminal area.

The lots, totaling about six acres, adjoin the present Sea Land Yard and would give the company's storage yard an L-shape. A rental of about \$14,000 a year for the first five years of a lease was recommended. Port Commissioner Russell Painter was directed to draft a lease for final approval by the Commission.

Painter pointed out that the land will require about 25,000 yards of fill at approximately \$2.50 a yard. Development costs are to be paid by the user.

Leasing of the two tracts will leave the city with about 20 acres of open industrial park land in the port area.

In justification of the action, it developed that Sea Land is 32,000 tons — approximately two shiploads — ahead of last year's tonnage for the first six months of 1969.

Ships are being overbooked, even though Sea Land has switched to larger ships for the run this year.

A spokesman for Sea Land said recently that a third ship is being sought for the run and may be added in early autumn.

The Anchorage City Council must approve the final draft of the lease before it can be put in effect.

2 Anchorage Daily Times Monday, June 23, 1969



## THEY'RE WAITING FOR COUSTEAU

Three of Jacques Cousteau's top assistants are here awaiting the arrival of the famed oceanographer so they can begin a six-week underwater filming job in Alaskan waters. Their ship, the 135-foot Calypso, is to arrive in Anchorage today and Cousteau is expected later in the week. From left, they are, Jacques Renoir, a cameraman, great grandson of the noted French painter, Auguste Renoir; Andre Laban, field coordinator; and Michael Deloire, also a cameraman. The Alaska assignment will take the Calypso and its 30-man crew to the North Pacific waters of the Aleutian Chain and possibly into the Bering Sea.