

# **PRELIMINARY PROJECT PROPOSAL**

for the

**BERING STRAIT TUNNEL AND SILK ROAD CONNECTION**

to the

**CHINA ONE BELT ONE ROAD RAILROAD CORRIDOR**

between the

**EURASIAN AND NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENTS**

Presented to

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## DESCRIPTION

It is proposed to plan, develop, build and operate a new railroad line corridor between China in northeast Asia and the United States through Russia and Canada for the purpose of promoting worldwide trade and commerce plus peaceful international relations through economic development. This project is intended to follow and extend the pathway of the One Belt One Road program of the Silk Road proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping through a new railroad tunnel under the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska. This project is intended to provide a direct land connection through the Bering Strait in order to facilitate the flows of passengers and freight as a means of fostering an atmosphere of economic growth and prosperity throughout the World as a whole by serving as a development model for the overall project to expand the One Belt One Road railroad project.

The proposed extension of the One Belt One Road program from the Silk Road across the Eurasian land mass requires a land connection between Eurasia and North America at the Bering Strait. The proposed project is to begin in Beijing in Heilongjiang Province to go to Qiqihar and then to Hohe. There is now an uncompleted section of the railway from Hohe in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region to Lianyin from China into Russia on a bridge over the Amur River to Dzalinda on the northern side. The railroad then goes over an existing line in the Amurskaya Oblast and to the north to Skovorodino at the junction with the Trans Siberian Railway as the main east-west connector to Moscow and Vladivostok. This railroad line then proceeds to the north in the Amurskaya Oblast to Tynda where it crosses the east-west Baikal Amur Magistral railway line between Tayshet to the west near Lake Baikal and Vanino to the east on the Sea of Okhotsk to the Pacific Ocean. The specific sections of the railroad line in Russia are expected to have two conventional speed Russian gauge tracks plus two high speed Standard gauge tracks with gauge changing stations at Dzalinda, Skovorodino and Tynda near Egvekinot with some Russian trains having dual gauge operating capabilities.

The railroad line then crosses from the Amurskaya Oblast into the Sakha Republic near Nerjungri and then goes to the north through Aldan and Tommot to Nizhny Bestjah along the east bank of the Lena River. This railroad line has been completed as a Single track diesel powered route at conventional speeds. This line will be increased into a double track electrified high speed rail line as a part of the proposed One Belt One Road extension of the Silk Road to North America. It is planned to build either a tunnel under or a bridge over the Lena River between Haptagay and Tabaga to facilitate direct rail service between Nizhny Bestjah on the east side and to the capital city of the Sakha Republic at Yakutsk on the west side of the Lena River as the major population and economic center of the region.

The proposed high speed rail line going to the northeast from Yakutsk and Nizhny Bestjah could follow by either one or both of two potential routes. The first route would then go to the east to Oymyakon and then into Susuman in the Magadanskaya Oblast with a spur line going to the southeast to the capital at Magadan on the Sea of Okhotsk. This rail line then goes off to the northeast to Evensk at the northern end of the Sea of Okhotsk. This rail line then enters into the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug at the town of Kamenskaya and goes to the northeast to Markovo and to the capital at Anadyr on Anadyr Bay. This rail line then goes to the junction point at Amguema to the northeast of Egvekinot in the northeast of Chukotka, where there is a gauge changing station between the Russian and Standard gauges.

The alternative western line breaks off from the eastern line at Oimyakon in the east of the Sakha Republic and goes to the north to Ust Nera and then to the northeast to Zyryanka. This rail line then goes to the northeast from Zyryanka in the northeastern Sakha Republic to Mandrilov in the northwestern Chukotka region and then further to the east to Bilibino. This western rail line is then extended to the east from Bilibino to the junction point at Amguema where it meets the eastern rail line north of Egvekinot. The two rail lines are then combined into one at Amguema where they then go to the east on the northern side of the Chukotka Peninsula to Uelen at the Bering Strait and into the tunnel to Alaska.

There will then be a tunnel built under the Bering Strait between Uelen in Chukotka in Russia and Wales in Alaska in the United States. The proposed tunnel would be between 65 and 125 miles long depending on the design utilized where the Bering Strait channel width is approximately 53 miles in length. The shorter distance railroad tunnel would go from west of Uelen to east of Wales but would then be faced with either steep access grades or having to cross the Genkanyi Mountains (Khrebet Teniany) in Chukotka as well as the Brooks Mountains in Alaska. The longer tunnel would eliminate these problems by actually going under these two mountain ranges on both sides of the Bering Strait with lower grades and easier access. The longer tunnel configuration would involve a higher capital cost for the tunnel alone but may result in an overall reduction in the total capital cost of the entire project and create many jobs.

The proposed Bering Strait railroad tunnel would be built with three to four tracks. There will also need to be additional tubes for a natural gas pipeline in another tube for an electronic transmission cable tube plus a fiber optic telecommunications cable. The proposed Bering Strait railroad tunnel would be built 100 feet below water depth of 150 to 180 feet in limestone carbonate and granitic soils of relatively low seismic activity. The proposed Bering Strait railroad tunnel would go through the two intermediate islands of Big Diomedede (Russia) and Little Diomedede (United States) between Uelen in Chukotka and Wales in Alaska. The total width of the Bering Strait at its narrowest point is 53 miles with a maximum of 22 miles under water between the mainland and the Diomedede Islands.

The extension of the One Belt One Road project for the Silk Road into the North American continent would begin at Wales on the eastern side of the side of the Bering Strait and go under or through the Brooks Mountains to the east to near Teller and Marys Igloo. There would then be a branch to the south to the port at Nome in Alaska which would be critical as a loading and unloading point during the construction of the Bering Strait tunnel itself for materials and supplies. There would also be a similar loading port at Provideniya in Chukotka on the Russian side of the Bering Strait to the southwest of Uelen for the loading and unloading of materials and supplies for the tunnel construction. It is expected that the actual digging of the Bering Strait tunnel shafts will be completed before the remaining land side connections are built in North America and Asia so that construction fill soil materials would become available for embankments and structures where needed.

The railroad line in Alaska would then go over the Brooks Mountains from Marys Igloo to Koyuk at the eastern end of the Seward Peninsula to Koyukuk at the bend in the Yukon River. It would then go to the east to Galena to Tanana and over the Yukon River on a large bridge to Fairbanks. There would then be two rail branch lines to the north with one on the west from near Koyukuk to Selawik to Kotzebue, and then to the north to the Point Lay coal fields and to Barrow at the northern tip of Alaska and the heavy oil fields.

The other branch line to the north would originate near Fairbanks and go to Livengood and over Anaktavak Pass to Deadhorse Prudhoe Bay to the main oil field. A separate connecting rail line would then go to the west to Meade River south of Barrow to connect with the western rail line as well, as to access the heavy oil fields in the Naval Petroleum Reserve.

The Alaska Railroad's existing main line from Seward and Anchorage to the south would join the proposed railroad line from Wales at the main Fairbanks interchange point. These combined railroad lines then go through North Pole and Richardson to Delta Junction where the existing railroad line ends and then over the designated Alaska rail corridor to the southeast in parallel to the existing Alaska Highway on the south bank of the Tanana River. The rail line then goes from Delta Junction to Tanacross and Tok Junction to Tetlin Junction and Northway Junction to the U.S. – Canada border crossing point at Alcan between Alaska and the Yukon Territory to the Beaver Creek station.

The proposed One Belt One Road railroad extension of the Silk Road then goes into Canada to the Beaver Creek border crossing in the Yukon Territory along the Alaska Highway right-of-way. The proposed railroad line then follows the Alaskan Highway to the southeast past Lake Kluane to Kluane and Haines Junction. The rail line then veers to the east to the town of Champagne and to the capital city of Whitehorse Territory where it crosses the Yukon River which is fed from Tagish Lake and Atlin Lake to the south. The proposed rail line then goes to the east along the Alaska Highway to Jake's Corner and Johnson Crossing to Teslin at the southern end of the Yukon Territory to the north of British Columbia.

The proposed railroad line then splits into two separate lines at either Jake's Corner or at Teslin to the east. One branch of the proposed rail line is the western route to Dease Lake then separates from the Alaska Highway and goes to the southeast from Jake's Corner or Teslin to Dease Lake in northwestern British Columbia where it connects with a former uncompleted railroad right-of-way of the British Columbia Railway. The other branch of the proposed rail line is the eastern route to Fort Nelson which goes to the east along the Alaska Highway through Swift River and Rancheria along the Yukon Territory – British Columbia border to Watson Lake, Yukon Territory. This rail line then continues to follow the Alaska Highway to the southeast to Coal River, British Columbia and then along the Liard River Canyon to Fort Nelson in northeastern British Columbia.

The western route goes from Dease Lake to the southeast to as far as Chipmunk. Over a partially completed but abandoned right-of-way. This line then goes to Fort St. James to the east and to Summit Lake over the existing but lightly used rail line and then goes to the south to Prince George. Prince George is the trade and commercial center of northern British Columbia where the route goes to the south through Quesnel and Williams Lake to Clinton over the former British Columbia Railway on the existing single track line and then on a new short spur from Clinton to Ashcroft at the upper end of the Fraser River Canyon.

The proposed railroad will then follow the existing double track main line through the Fraser River Canyon on both banks with bidirectional route used by both the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railroads. The railroad line through the Fraser River Canyon between Ashcroft and Cache Creek to Hope goes through very mountainous terrain where major new railroad infrastructure will be needed for the increased traffic.

This rail line has very heavy freight traffic flows as the main rail line between eastern and western Canada and would need to be extensively rebuilt in order to handle all of the additional train traffic which would result from the One Belt One Road rail system to Vancouver and the Pacific Coast to the south to Seattle and the West Coast.

The main rail line going through the narrow and mountainous Fraser River Canyon would probably be the second most formidable construction challenge to the One Belt One Road rail network in North America next to the Bering Strait tunnel itself. The railroad line from Ashcroft then enters the Rower Mainland of British Columbia at Hope and splits into separate routes for the Canadian Pacific Railroad and Canadian National Railway going through Mission and Abbotsford to Vancouver respectively on a flat plain two rail routes from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia into the State of Washington between Canada and the United States.

The main route goes along the water by the Strait of Georgia from Vancouver through New Westminster and Surrey to Delta to cross the Canadian border at White Rock, British Columbia to Blaine, Washington and then along Puget Sound to Bellingham and Mount Vernon to Everett and Seattle. The southern terminus of the western route of the One Belt One Road rail corridor project on the Pacific Coast would then be in Seattle where it would connect with the West Coast Corridor and the rest of the United States.

The eastern route of the One Belt One Road rail projection extension would go to the south from Fort Nelson in northeastern British Columbia to the south to Fort St John and Dawson Creek, British Columbia over the existing British Columbia Railway line. There would also be a new rail line constructed to the east from Fort Nelson, British Columbia to High Level, Alberta and then to the southeast to Fort Mackay and Fort McMurray, Alberta. It would then be possible to access the massive Athabasca tar sands oil formation as a major future source of railroad freight traffic from Canada to China through the proposed Bering Strait tunnel as a part of the One Belt One Road rail corridor project as an extension of the Silk Road.

The eastern rail line coming south from Fort Nelson to Fort St. John could then go to the west to Chetwynd and then to the south over Pine Pass to Prince George. This line would then serve as an alternative route for freight and passenger traffic to the south to Clinton and Ashcroft to Hope and Vancouver, which could then enter the United States to Seattle. There could also be an alternative Canadian National Railway route coming from the west at Prince Rupert to Prince George which would then go to the east to Tete Jaune Cache to join the main rail line from Vancouver and then go to the main rail hub in Edmonton, Alberta.

The most direct route for traffic going by rail from Fort Nelson and Fort St. John would go through Dawson Creek, British Columbia to Grande Prairie, Alberta and then over a new rail line from Grande Prairie to Fox Creek and Whitecourt, Alberta. It would then connect to the existing rail line from Whitecourt to the main rail junction at Edmonton as the capital of Alberta. There is also an alternative rail route to the north from Dawson Creek, British Columbia to the east to McLennan and High Prairie to Slave Lake, Alberta and then to the south to Edmonton, where the land in Alberta is primarily rolling hills and flat plains. This rail line would then extend to the north into the Northwest Territories to Enterprise and Fort Norman and to the Canol Formation oil fields.

The main route of the eastern extension of the One Belt One Road rail corridor of the Silk Road would then go to the east from Edmonton, Alberta to Lloydminster on the Alberta – Saskatchewan border on the Canadian National Railway line. This rail corridor would then extend to Saskatchewan and Yorkton, Saskatchewan and then to the southeast to Winnipeg, Manitoba. There would then be a choice of Canadian National Railway or the Canadian Pacific Railroad or Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway routes from Winnipeg to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota, where the BNSF route would also serve the population enters Grand Forks and Fargo in eastern North Dakota. The Minneapolis – St. Paul Twin Cities urban area will then become the eastern anchor of the eastern extension of the One Belt One Road rail corridor in a manner analogous to Seattle as the western anchor.

There are then a number of possible routes to the east and south from the Minneapolis – St. Paul Twin Cities. One route would go to the southeast through Wisconsin to Milwaukee and Chicago as the main railroad center of the United States. It has been proposed that a new Great Lakes Basin railroad line be built around Chicago between Wisconsin and Illinois to Indiana, so that railroad freight traffic going to and from destinations other than Chicago can then bypass its major present rail congestion.

One major railroad corridor would go from the Twin Cities to Chicago and then to the east through Cleveland and Pittsburgh to Philadelphia and New York and Washington by the southern route. A second major northern corridor route would go from Chicago to Cleveland and then to Erie, Pennsylvania and Albany, New York to either New York City or to Boston in the Northeast Corridor. It is also possible to go from the Twin Cities to Chicago and Detroit and then to serve Toronto, Montreal and Oshawa in eastern Canada although an alternative route is available through Ontario to serve these major Canadian cities.

There are also routes to the south from the Twin Cities and Chicago to serve the southern United States. One route would go to the southeast from Chicago to Cincinnati and to Atlanta and then to Jacksonville and Miami in Florida. An alternative route would go to the southwest to serve Texas and Louisiana from Kansas City or St. Louis.

# ORGANIZATION

The proposed construction timetable for the One Belt One Road extension of the Silk Road plus the Bering Strait railroad tunnel between China, Russia, Canada and the United States is expected to take 10 years initially to complete the entire rail network with two tracks with up to 10 years additional to add two more tracks and the branch lines. It will be necessary to complete an environmental impact analysis and obtain the required permits. It will also be necessary to complete the negotiations for right-of-way acquisition by considering both government agencies and native aboriginal group organizations in Russia, Alaska and Canada plus the Lower 48 States.

The engineering design for the project is expected to take place in two phases of preliminary and detailed engineering design of the railroad line and ancillary infrastructure in order to set the stage for project construction.

The proposed construction of the One Belt One Road extension of the Silk Road will require the construction of the railroad and associated infrastructures to the Bering Strait railroad tunnel. The rail section between Egvekinot and Amguema in northeastern Russia and Fairbanks in northern Alaska will be designed with four tracks in total with two high speed tracks and two conventional speed tracks. It is expected that by 2035 to 2040 that there will be as many as 300 to 400 trains per day going over this route through the Bering Strait tunnel with a predominance of freight traffic but numerous passenger trains as well.

The construction of the Bering Strait railroad tunnel project is expected to have three major component sections of the tunnel itself plus the Asian section and the North America section. It is important to dig the tunnel first because it will provide the required fill material for the cuts and fills on the land side in both Asia and North America. There are expected to be separate construction effects in northern China and northeastern Russia to complete the planned extensions. There are expected to be separate construction efforts in Canada for the Yukon Territory and British Columbia and for the Prairie Provinces. The construction in the United States will be separately in Alaska and the State of Washington plus in North Dakota and Minnesota on two different routes.

The major phase of construction is to take place in the successive steps of land preparation, sub-grade structures, railway track laying, and electrical facilities of traction electrification plus communications and signaling. There will also need to be the construction of the required ancillary facilities such as stations, yards and terminals for the railroad as well as of rail-road grade separations and fencing and other safety measures.

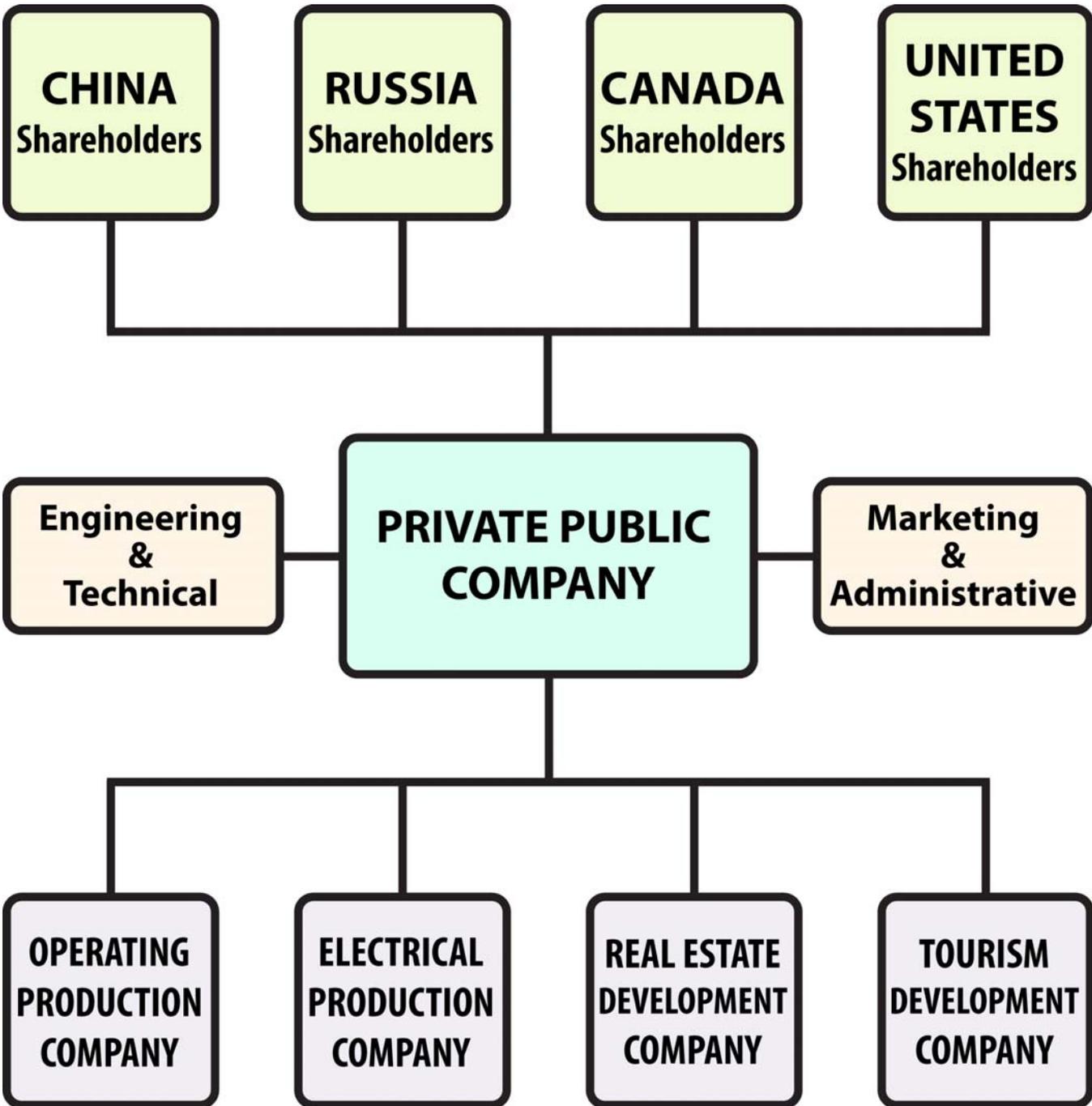
There will also be the need to plan, design and build the associated electric power plants and transmission lines as well as fiber-optic telecommunication cables and natural gas pipelines plus water collection and distribution systems for the railroad itself plus the online new communities and their infrastructure.

The proposed overall budget for the project is to be divided up into an initial planning startup phase and a comprehensive project implementation phase. The initial project implementation phase will include \$5,000,000 for project promotion and lobbying as its initial activity. The proposed project budget for the initial phase is expected to be approximately \$200,000,000 and take approximately six to twelve months to complete. The total project budget for the 10 to 20 year period is expected to be \$550,000,000 which will include the startup budget of \$200,000,000. The total budget estimate is based on the previous estimate provided in news media releases by Dr. Wang Mengshu of the Beijing Jiaotong University in Beijing, China in 2015.

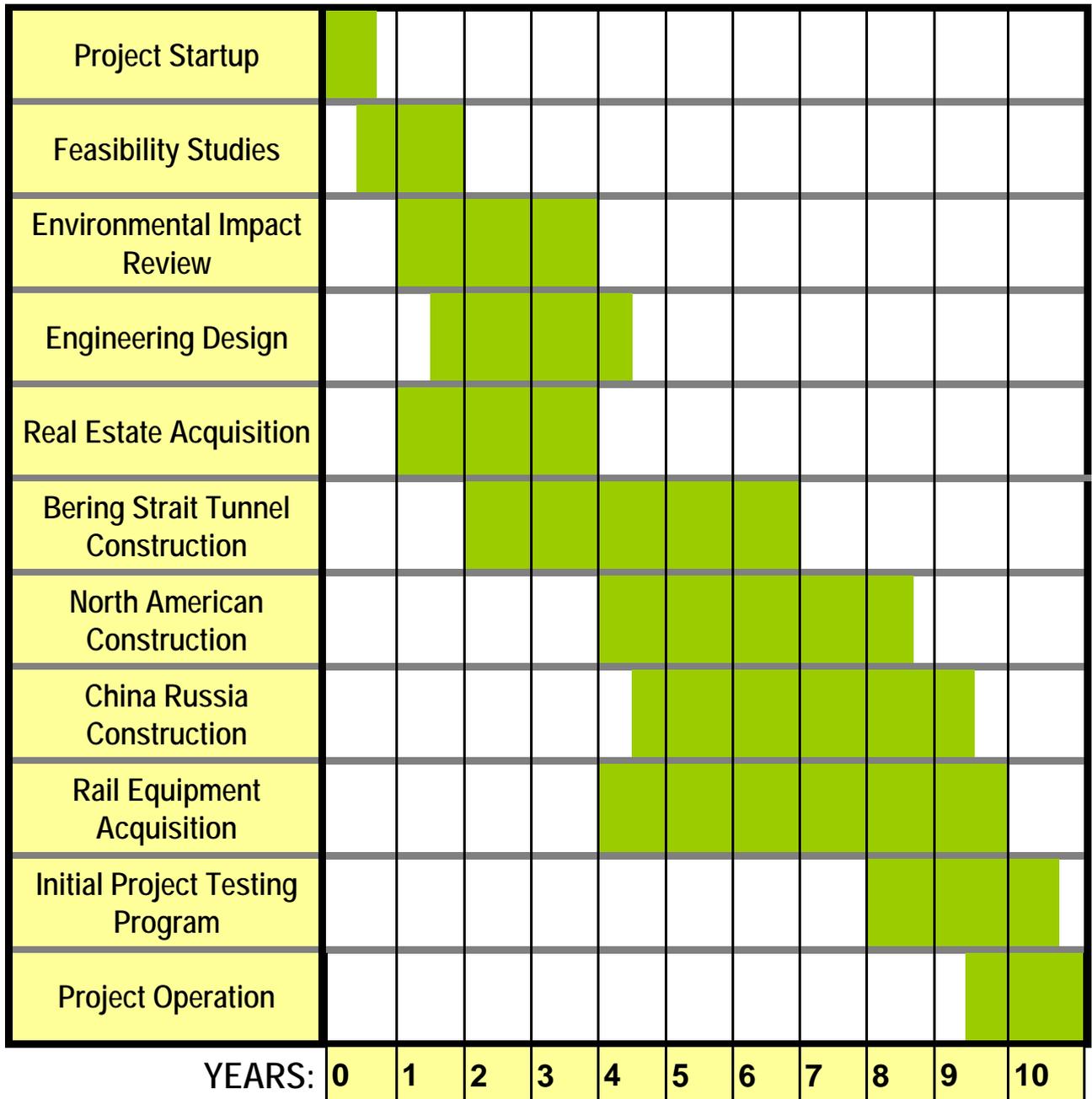
It is proposed to create a jointly owned oversight public and/ or private company [or to join/ acquire InterBering, LLC – [www.InterBering.com](http://www.InterBering.com) – construction promotional company which was registered in the state of Alaska in 2010], for the purpose of planning, financing, building and operating the One Belt One Road extension of the Silk Road railroad network to the Bering Strait railroad tunnel. It is proposed to have public and/ or private entities involved as owners and shareholders from China, Russia, Canada and the United States in the oversight company in accordance with a formula to be determined from future negotiations which will include officers and directors and employees. This company will need to be chartered in accordance with an organizational structure to be determined with subsidiary organizations in each county and be subject to central governance.

This oversight company is expected to have subsidiary companies who are involved with engineering and construction plus an operating railroad company and an energy production company as well as associated companies involved in real estate development and tourism facilities development and operation. There will be major efforts made to develop real estate along the railroad right-of-way as well as for mining projects and associated industrial plant development to expand railroad freight traffic. It is also planned to develop hotels and tourism facilities along and adjacent to the railroad lines for the purpose of promoting passenger traffic to benefit the railroad company.

**PROPOSED ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE  
OF THE OVERSIGHT PUBLIC PRIVATE SECTOR COMPANY FOR THE  
ONE BELT ONE ROAD PROJECT EXTENSION OF THE SILK ROAD  
RAILROAD PROJECT THROUGH THE BERING STRAIT RAILROAD  
TUNNEL BETWEEN ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA**



# PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE FOR THE ONE BELT ONE ROAD EXTENSION OF THE SILK ROAD RAILROAD PROJECT THROUGH THE BERING STRAIT BETWEEN ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA

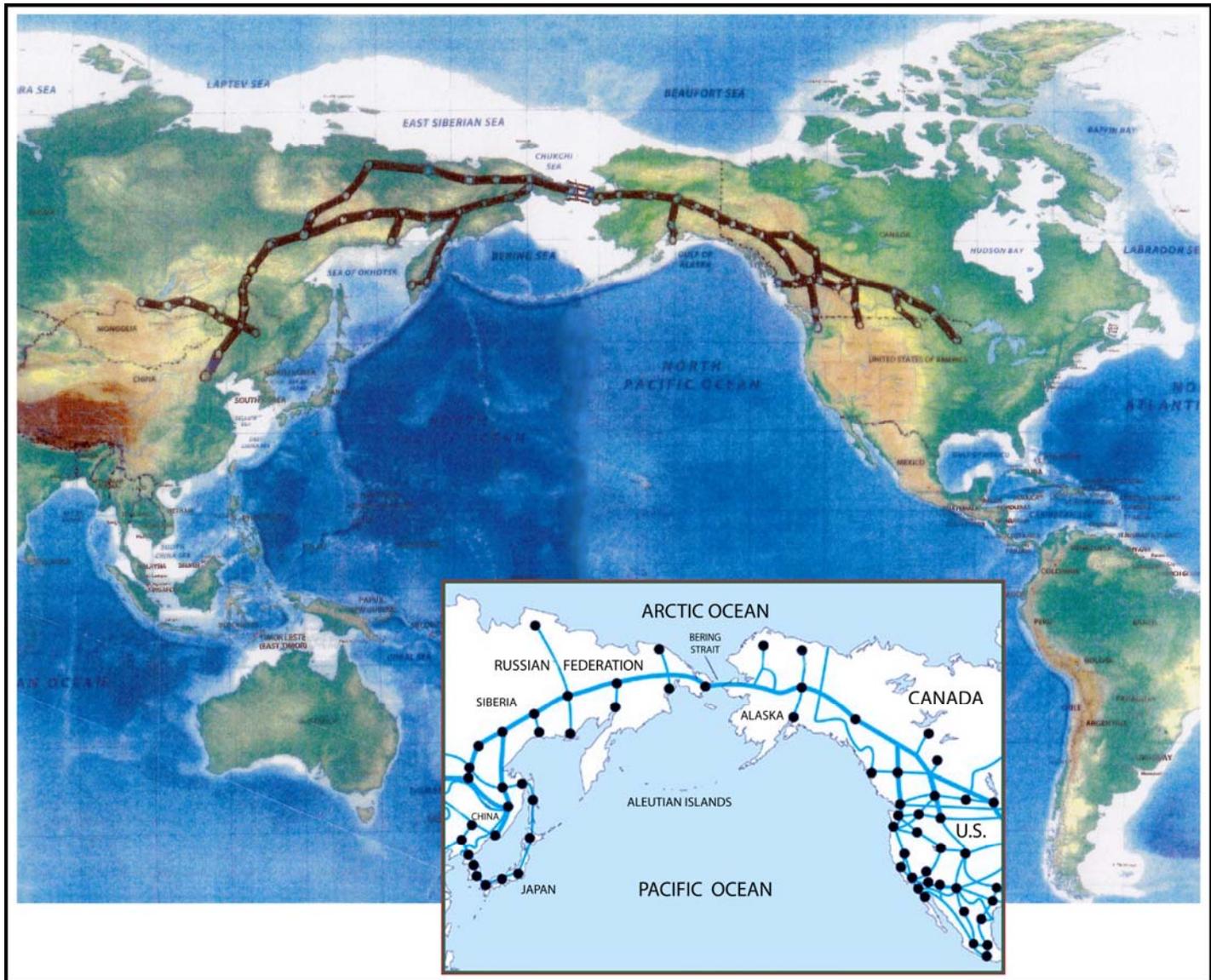


**CHINA-RUSSIA-USA-CANADA CONVENTIONAL RAILROAD  
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION PHASE**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Program Cost Element</b>	<b>Expected Amount</b>	<b>Percent Total</b>
1	Office Startup and Administration	\$ 10,000,000.00	0.002%
2	Travel and Survey Expense	\$ 12,000,000.00	0.002%
3	Feasibility Study Preparation	\$ 25,000,000.00	0.005%
4	Traffic Forecast Analysis	\$ 5,000,000.00	0.001%
5	Financial Analysis Preparation	\$ 5,000,000.00	0.001%
6	Regulatory and Political Interfacing	\$ 5,000,000.00	0.001%
7	Engineering Design Preliminary	\$ 50,000,000.00	0.010%
8	Insurance and Liability Identification	\$ 15,000,000.00	0.003%
9	Environmental Impact Analysis	\$ 25,000,000.00	0.005%
10	Energy Facility Requirements	\$ 10,000,000.00	0.002%
11	Real Estate Purchase Identification	\$ 20,000,000.00	0.004%
12	Project Implementation Planning	\$ 10,000,000.00	0.002%
13	Project Contingency Allowance	\$ 20,000,000.00	0.004%
14	Detailed Engineering Design	\$ 48,000,000.00	0.010%
15	Detailed Market Evaluation	\$ 2,500,000,000.00	0.500%
16	Environmental Impact Mitigation	\$ 5,000,000,000.00	1.000%
17	Financial Plan Preparation	\$ 2,240,000,000.00	0.448%
18	Real Estate and Railroad Acquisition	\$ 10,000,000,000.00	2.000%
19	Tunnel Construction Expense	\$ 40,000,000,000.00	8.000%
20	Energy Facilities Construction	\$ 50,000,000,000.00	10.000%
21	Rolling Stock Acquisition	\$ 50,000,000,000.00	10.000%
22	North American Rail Construction	\$ 130,000,000,000.00	26.000%
23	China and Russia Rail Construction	\$ 130,000,000,000.00	26.000%
24	Regulatory and Liability Expenses	\$ 25,000,000,000.00	5.000%
25	Project Startup Expenses	\$ 25,000,000,000.00	5.000%
26	Project Contingency Allowance	\$ 30,000,000,000.00	6.000%
<b>Total Project Expense</b>		<b>\$500,000,000,000.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**Expected Time for Completion: 7 to 10 Years**

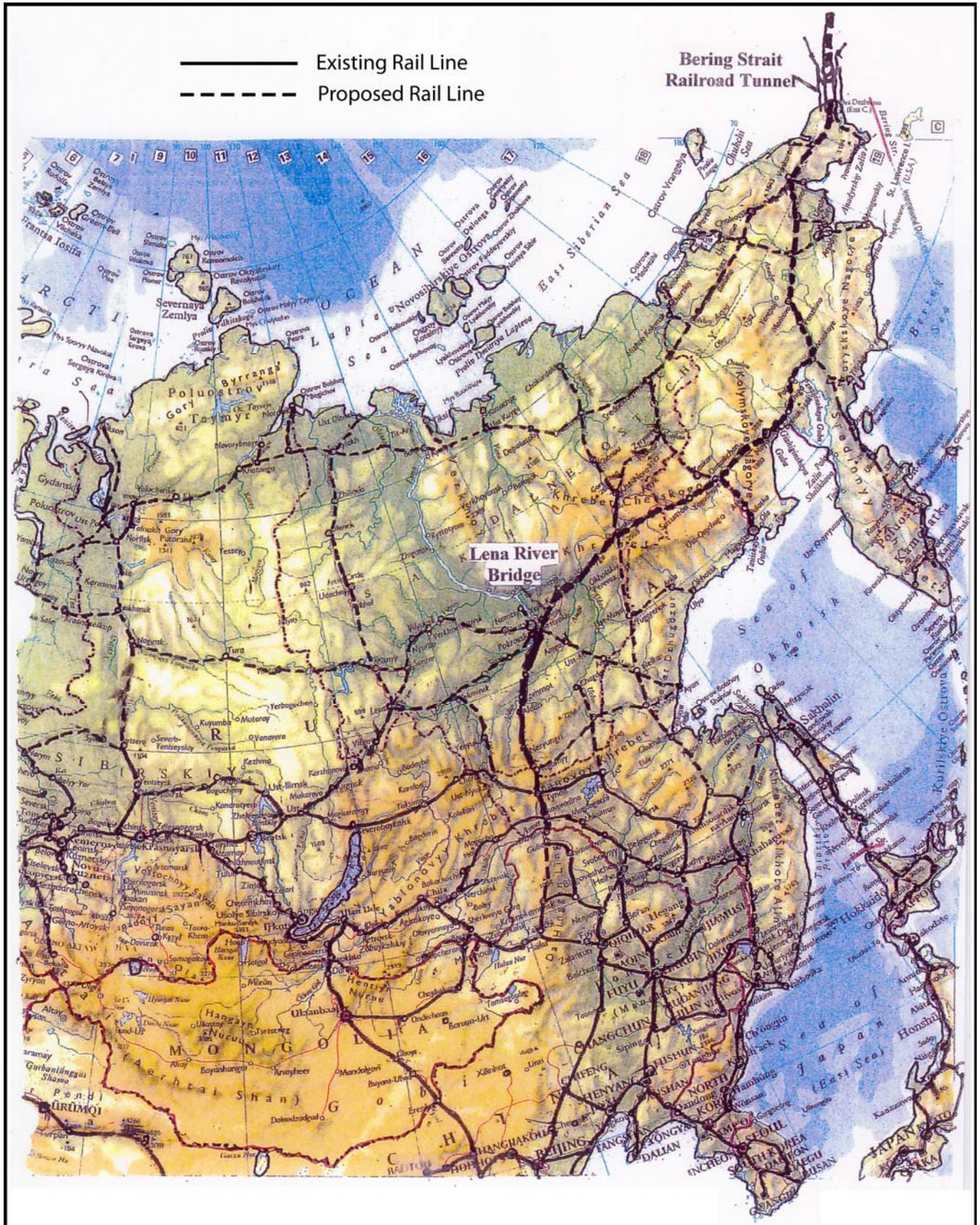
**Proposed Route of the One Belt One Road Extension of the Silk Road Railroad Corridor to the Bering Strait Tunnel between China and Russia in Asia to Canada and the United States, Bering Strait Tunnel Area near Chukotka (Russia) and Alaska (United States), and Cross-Section of Tunnel under the Bering Strait.**







# Proposed Route of the One Belt One Road Extension of the Silk Road Railroad Corridor through Northeastern China and Russia to the Bering Strait Tunnel



# Proposed Route of the One Belt One Road Extension of the Silk Road Railroad Corridor from the Bering Strait Tunnel into North America in Canada & United States



# A Superhighway Across the Bering Strait

Russia is considering a plan to build a superhighway from Eurasia to North America.

- **ADRIAN SHIRK**      **JUL 1, 2015**



At a Russian Academy of Science meeting in March, Vladimir Yakunin, the 66-year-old head of Russian Railways, unveiled detailed plans for what may seem like an impossible infrastructure project. Yakunin proposed engineers could build a high-speed railway through the entirety of Siberia, dubbed the Trans-Eurasian Belt Development (TEPR)—the final destination of which would be the mouth of an underwater tunnel crossing the Bering Strait. Highway, too, could be constructed adjacent to the tracks, effectively making ground transportation possible from Anchorage to Moscow—or for that matter, New York to Paris. Or, if we’re going to go there, Miami to Johannesburg.

“This is an inter-state, inter-civilization, project,” [The Siberian Times](#) reported Yakunin saying at the meeting. “It should be an alternative to the current [neo-liberal] model, which has caused a systemic crisis,” by which he means an economy based on investing in derivatives and stock buybacks and, in consulting engineer and infrastructure expert Dr. Hal Cooper’s words “things that are easy to do on your computer, but which don’t benefit the real world.” The idea is to instead focus on reviving economic forces that revolve around building something—and in this case a very big, maybe impossibly ambitious something—in the physical world.

Of course, in order to do this, approximately 12,500 miles of road and new railway would have to be built starting at Russia's eastern border—which would include the 520 miles between the frigid shores of Nome, Alaska, and Fairbanks, the northernmost point of the Alaskan Highway. And then there's that 55-mile Bering Strait tunnel itself, which has been priced at somewhere between \$25 billion and \$50 billion. And what Dr. Hal Cooper calls the "Worldwide Railroad Network" in a 2007 report could range from between one and \$1.5 trillion which, Cooper notes, "will be the equivalent of what the United States will spend in total on the Iraq War, for which there will be no measureable benefit to anyone."

And it's not that some New Yorker would ever undertake a road trip three-quarters of the way around the world on a lark—but the idea that she could is kind of thrilling. All this may sound wild, but also familiar: This is not a new idea.

\* \* \*

Dreams of bridging the East and West across the Bering Strait have been percolating since the 19th century. Cooper told me that as early as 1846, then-Colorado territorial governor William Gilpin invested in a study to build railway up to northern Alaskan shores. And, it turns out, even decades after being ousted from office, Gilpin was still publishing plans for the "Cosmopolitan Railway" which would fuse together all continents chiefly via the Bering Strait. The 1860s saw a Russian-American company draw plans for an overland telegraph line, [which was halted](#) by the success of the Atlantic cables. Thirty years later, the designer of the Golden Gate Bridge devoted his college thesis to blueprints of a Siberian-Alaskan railroad bridge. And in 1906, [Czar Nicholas II even approved a Bering Strait bridge project](#)—ultimately slashed at the onset of WWI. (In fact some folks, like historian and journalist [William Engdahl](#), believe that British financial interests created the conditions for WWI in order to prevent the construction of a Bering Strait tunnel, as Atlantic-based financial interests worried over losing maritime economic dominance.)

But it didn't stop there. During World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt instructed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a survey for rail linking Alaska, Canada and the Lower 48, but this project was overshadowed by what became the more urgent need to build the Alaskan Highway. And in 2009, there were feasibility studies conducted under then-Governor Sarah Palin's administration if not for rail transit to a Bering Strait tunnel, then for energy and fresh water to states shriveling from drought. When, according to [The Washington Post](#), the estimated cost came up at \$3 billion, all plans were abandoned. Still, China—as recently as May—is toiling over a [Chinese-Canadian crossing](#) that would utilize the Bering Strait tunnel were it ever to be built.

Given the massive costs and unpredictable engineering challenges associated with such projects, not to mention political obstacles, none have come to fruition. And in addition to those setbacks, today's TEPR may have difficulty selling ground

transportation as a viable alternative to flying. So why do they keep coming up? (And even if that hypothetical New Yorker could wheel her way to continental Europe—would she? Through thousands of miles of freezing wilderness?)

Perhaps that's the wrong question. While the image of the East and West joined by casual passenger traffic is romantic, the real return would be new channels of energy resource transport, as well as oil and gas development in the arctic. Yakunin, the Russian Railways executive, said the TEPR would include gas and oil pipelines to help boost the country's energy profits, creating a dozen new industries and countless jobs, and a more dynamic global economy. The next question, then—which has been on the table now for 150 years—is whether anyone would be willing to invest in a project that could collectively cost trillions of dollars and whose anticipated economic yields would be a generation away.



Bering Strait tunnel or no, Russia has already begun building railway through its Far East, in hopes to expand the energy economies in its distant provinces. Moscow and Beijing are moving forward with the construction of a high speed train between the two cities via Siberia, funded chiefly by the state-run China Railway High-speed, according to [Business Insider](#): “The Moscow-to-Beijing direct route will measure about 7,000 kilometers (4,340 miles), effectively three times farther than the longest high-speed railway in the world, the Beijing-to-Guangzhou train, which is also operated by CRH.”

In his 2013 keynote speech at the Schiller Institute, structural engineer Hal Cooper (of Cooper Consulting Co., Kirkland, Washington)—a rare American proponent of the Bering Strait tunnel, and who has met with Yakunin in the past—reported that the rail to the coastal Magadan is being designed now. He described Russia's plans to build single-track diesel cars, and later, double-track electric, in addition to a four-lane highway, and “probably natural gas pipelines, too.” He believes that all of this will foster the development of northeastern Russia, whether or not the Bering Strait

Tunnel gets built--but that such development would be exponentially more profitable if it does.

“Russia’s moving along with that and they’re not going to stop,” Cooper told me. He estimates that the Bering Strait tunnel could facilitate transport of “up to one and a half million barrels a day... from Alberta to China, and that alone would be enough to economically justify the project.”

But there are very few Americans even talking about this project, let alone actively promoting it. One of them, of course, is Cooper, who, in 2006, finished a 2,326-page feasibility study for the Bering Strait tunnel (which was sponsored by the Canadian Arctic Railway Company, whose owner later went bankrupt). And the other is Russian-born Alaskan businessman Fyodor “Theo” Soloviev, about whom Cooper says, “He and I seem to be that last two men standing [on this issue] in North America at the moment.”

Soloviev started InterBering LLC, a consulting group that lobbies for the Bering Strait railway tunnel. (His other business ventures include supplying the Russian Far East with American consumer goods in the 1990s, running an art gallery and gift shop, and inventing a genealogical card game called Six Generations). When I ask him about the lack of North American interest in the Bering Strait tunnel, Soloviev blames politicians for being too shortsighted: “It is a combination of lack of historical vision and patience for both politicians and businessmen,” he said. “No politician was really interested to fulfill this project because everyone who runs [for] office is too old to see this project done.” Soloviev says the Bering Strait tunnel is better off as private sector project, anyway, at least in part because any agreements made with Putin would be moot under a new administration. Besides, why would the public sector invest, with Russia’s economy in the tank?

The issue left unaddressed in both my conversations with Cooper and Soloviev is that none of this would be possible unless current diplomatic tensions are resolved, and furthermore that there is no natural constituency in the U.S. to support the project. James Brooke reports for [Voice of America](#) that, unlike Europe’s Chunnel, “there are two islands along the Bering route—geographical factors that would ease construction and allow for ventilation and emergency access.” This is a point that proponents for the project often make. But the comparison brings together countries with totally disparate civic values: Western Europe invests in infrastructure; America invests in defense.

The project is almost mystical in its proportions. Were it to succeed, it would be among the largest infrastructure projects in history. So the Bering Strait tunnel is, in effect, a fantastical plan at this point, tantamount to the space elevator—another proposed Russian-American collaboration spanning the 20th century—and will almost certainly never be a popular use of American funds.

And the thing we have to remember about the proposal is that, despite the rhetoric, the real impetus is driven largely—if not primarily—by private investment from oil and gas. That old Cosmopolitan Railway ideal of William Gilpin’s seems, then, merely a cipher: this is not exactly a global railway bringing together [“humankind as citizens in the world,”](#) but rather linking the private interests of a powerful few.

The far-off financial returns or consequences of the tunnel are not of special concern to me, but discussion of the tunnel does incite my great disappointment in the collective national impasse on optimistic engineering projects. It brings up, for me at least, a sort of whimsical wish for my country to start building stuff again, great stuff, crazy stuff, even—not a tunnel across the Bering Strait, but maybe high speed commuter rail connecting the megatropolis along I-95.

And it gives me pause. When people know they are going to die, they stop making plans. I suspect this is true for countries, too. So what about building things that last? What about great railways and manned missions to the moon?

Surely a country that built nearly 48,000 miles of Interstate highway, and cordoned off not only the world’s first national park, but a federal body that constructed and maintains 84 million acres of preserved land, is still capable of building something like a high-speed interstate rail from Boston to Washington, D.C., or New York City to Buffalo, or Los Angeles to Chicago. Surely we are still able to not only figure out how to build, but how to rally around great projects. I think, too, of projects smaller though equally full of some combination of hubris and good will, like the 1929 attempt to fashion a zeppelin dock on the top of the Empire State Building—a project which produced larger than life blueprints, but which was never about zeppelins, really, and rather about coming up with [an excuse to have the tallest building](#) in the world.

But the hypothetical New Yorker who gets to wake up and make plans to drive to Paris seems too fantastical, really. As any New Yorker knows, she’s been held up in subway traffic now for almost a decade, waiting for Manhattan’s own multibillion dollar subterranean project: a mere 33 blocks of track for the phantom-like 2nd Avenue subway—which should be done any day now.

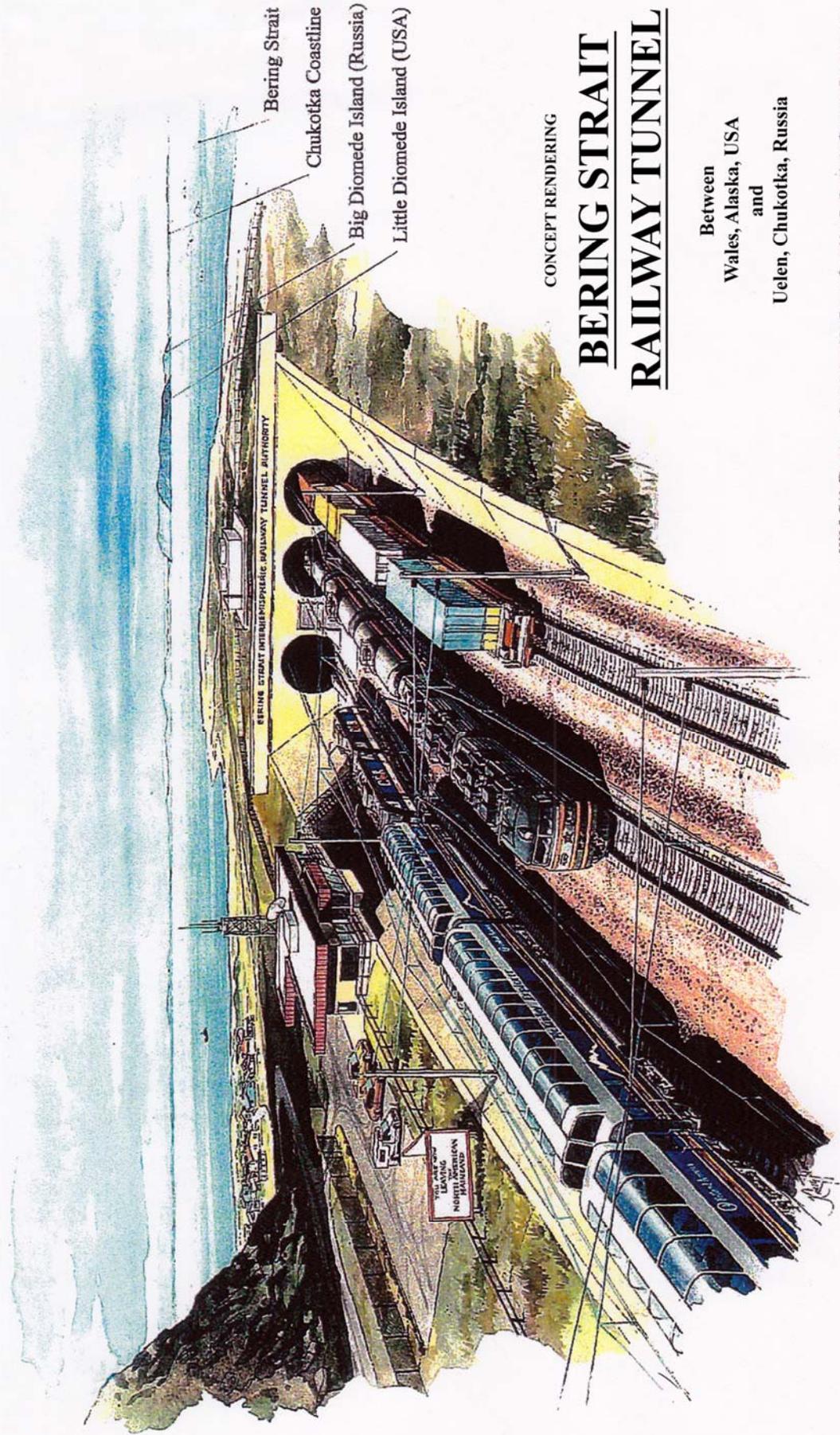
## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Adrian Shirk is a writer and radio producer based in New York. Her work has appeared in *Modern Farmer*, *Wilder Quarterly*, and on Wyoming Public Radio.

### **Direct link to the story:**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/07/superhighway-bering-strait-new-york-paris/397370/>

PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT OF THE EAST PORTAL OF THE BERING STRAIT RAIL TUNNEL AT WALES, ALASKA



CONCEPT RENDERING

# BERING STRAIT RAILWAY TUNNEL

Between  
Wales, Alaska, USA  
and  
Uelen, Chukotka, Russia

c 2003 J. Craig Thorpe Commissioned by Cooper Consulting Co. for Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski

ARTIST'S CONCEPTUAL VIEW OF THE PROPOSED ALASKA-CANADA RAILROAD NEAR LAKE KLUANE, YUKON



ALCAN Highway

Water Pipeline

Fiber optic  
Telecommunications  
Cable Line

Superconducting Electricity  
Transmission Line

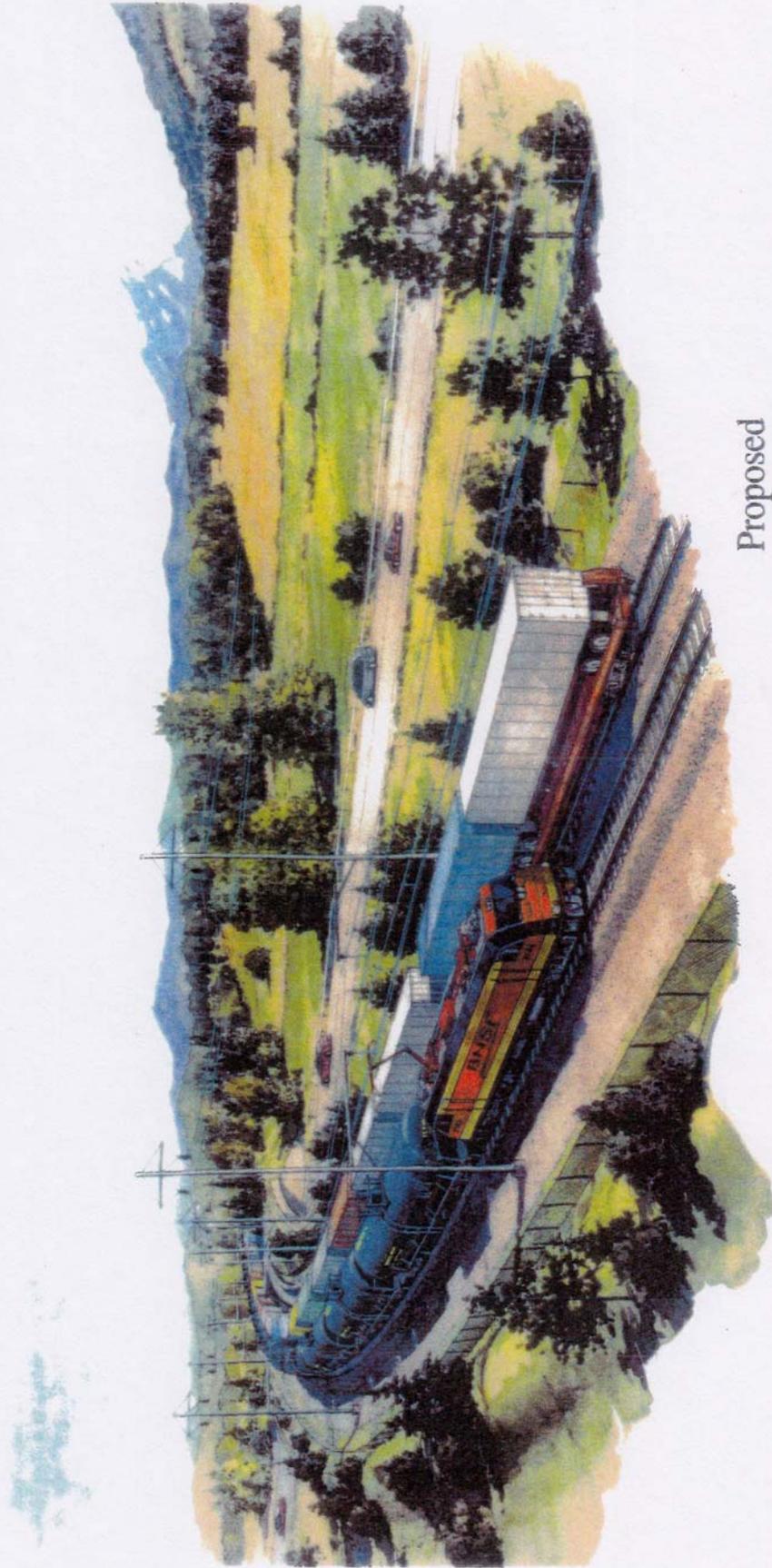
Natural Gas Pipeline

Proposed

# ALASKA-CANADA RAIL CORRIDOR

SHOWING UTILITIES AND PIPELINES

ARTIST CONCEPTION OF THE CASCADE FOOTHILLS CORRIDOR FREIGHT RAILROAD BYPASS LINE AT MOUNT VERNON, WASHINGTON BETWEEN HUNTINGDON, BRITISH COLUMBIA CANADA AND TENINO WASHINGTON USA



Proposed  
**CASCADES FOOTHILL CORRIDOR**

Near Mt. Vernon, WA

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PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT OF THE RAILWAY ROADWAY PIPELINE AND UTILITY BRIDGE  
OVER LENA RIVER IN RUSSIA



**LENA RIVER**  
**RAIL-ROAD-UTILITY BRIDGE**

Between Haptagay & Tabaga,  
Sakha Republic (Yakutia) Russia

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