

March, 4, 2019

Director, Real Estate Permits and Leasing
Alaska Railroad Corporation
P. O. Box 107500
Anchorage, AK 99510-7500

Re: Proposal to issue a ground lease to Nordlys, LLC covering real property located within the Alaska Railroad Talkeetna Reserve ...

To Whom It May Concern:

At its March 4, 2019 meeting, the Talkeetna Community Council, Inc. considered the AKRR's public notice regarding the above proposed lease.

We appreciate the AKRR's request for comment, and do have some comment to put forward. First, the area being considered for lease is the very heart of what gives downtown Talkeetna its character, and as such of great importance to both its residents and visitors. Second, we feel that since the AKRR is an agency of the State, and as such has features of both a public and a private corporation, it is critical that the community's interests be considered as the lease is developed.

On April 6, 2004, the Matanuska Borough Assembly adopted the Talkeetna Riverfront Park Land Use Plan & Economic Development Strategy. This plan was the culmination of a process spearheaded by the Talkeetna Community Council, Inc., working cooperatively with the Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce, the National Park Service, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Alaska Railroad Corporation. The plan was developed with the assistance of consultants Chris Beck of Agnew Beck Consulting and Dwayne Adams of Land Design North. The Borough ordinance (MSB OR 04-050) adopting the plan details the extensive public process the plan went through.

TCCI does not object to the AKRR leasing the property as long as the area retains its natural character and as long as residents and visitors are still able to enjoy the area, its river and mountain views, and travel through the area and to the river via trails that will remain open to the public.

In order to assure this public availability, we ask:

- that the AKRR take no action until details of the proposal are discussed and considered with the community as called for on page 39 of the Plan, "Designate west site area as "Possible Future Development." This area would be retained in its existing largely natural state in the near term, and be available for informal day recreation use. In the future, if the community or ARRC wanted to use this site for some form of developed use (commercial, residential, parking, developed recreation such as trails or other facilities, etc.), or if a third party applicant

- was to file a request to use this property, the ARRC and the community would meet, discuss options, evaluate the proposal, and work out a mutually agreeable strategy for the land.
- that an AKRR representative and the applicant attend the April, 2019 TCCI meeting
 - that a copy of the information that is available at the AKRR office in Anchorage be provided to TCCI for placement in the Talkeetna Library for community review for 2 weeks prior to the April, 2019 TCCI meeting
 - that the contract between AKRR and the applicant require the applicant's development comply with the Riverfront plan, with emphasis on the following:
 - The majority of the west side will continue to be used for day use recreation without day use facilities. (pg. 27)
 - Create a developed camping area for visitors in the area north of the existing 'River Park' triangle(see map) ...The campground will be designed to be compatible with day-use by visitors and local residents (e.g. so all will feel comfortable passing through). (pgs. 27 & 28)
 - Trail parallel to river pg. 30
 - that particular attention be paid to the following sections of the plan:
 6. TRAILS WITHIN AND THROUGH THE PARK pg. 36
 7. USE OF EXISTING "RIVER PARK TRIANGLE", SURROUNDING ROAD p. 37
 8. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT - WEST SIDE pg. 38

Over time, the river meanders, new people move to town, new ideas emerge. The Talkeetna Riverfront Park Land Use Plan & Economic Development Strategy is intended as a road map to provide guidance to the community, to the Alaska Railroad, and to entities that want to develop businesses in the riverfront area. The plan provides for the community, the Railroad, and potential developers to work together as new ideas emerge. The mighty Su, the Chulitna River, the Talkeetna River, the railroad trestle— all visible from spots along the riverfront provide extraordinary vistas and historical significance. If we follow the intent of the plan, the Talkeetna riverfront will be exceptional for decades to come.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with you and the applicant to accomplish this outcome.

Sincerely,

Karl Swanson,
Chair

cc: Tam Boeve, MatSu Borough Assembly
???others???