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Arctic Council/November 2001 SAO Meeting

US/Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force (CITF) Progress Report

Summary

US/CITF Look Ahead

Based on the events and findings described in the summary below, the US/CITF considers the following steps as a prudent course of action to develop cooperation on Arctic infrastructure issues under the AC:

- Arrive at a common understanding and terminology/definitions of the infrastructure/transport effort, i.e. “task force” versus “network of experts.”
- Assure participation of all interested and affected parties to the AC by clarifying scope and intent through “terms of reference” and/or “guidelines,” as is the case for other AC working groups or projects.
- Agree on a mechanism by which the findings and recommendations from the “task force” or “network of experts” are transmitted to the AC.
- Once approval of the AC/SDWG is obtained to proceed, start at once with the US/CITF task of conducting a study of identifying aviation experts in the AC realm to provide the first assessment to the AC.
- Revise and refine this process in accordance with lessons learned from the effort in a continuing dialog with all parties and to the satisfaction of the AC.
- Understand, that no permanent working group under the AC will be formed, rather that this process is of a limited duration to allow time to provide sound information. Any further effort will be subject to full review by the AC.

Expanding the US/CITF Effort:

- February 2001: CITF staff participated in an “Aviation Roundtable,” in Anchorage, Alaska to discuss improvement of aviation links between the U.S. West Coast and the RFE. Both industry and federal and state government representatives attended this meeting. The meeting agenda generated a frank discussion of demands and gaps in aviation service, barriers or impediments, and conditions necessary for providing or using such service, as well as possible solutions and recommendations
- June 2001: Established working relationship with the U.S. West Coast-Russian Far East Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) and the U.S. AHWG

Transportation Sector Co-chair. US/CITF invited to participate in the September 11-14, 2001 Ulan Ude, Republic of Buryatia, Russia Conference. Theme: "Regional Economic Cooperation and Best Practices for Sustainable Development Between the U.S. West Coast and the Russian Far East." Pre-Conference Transportation Roundtable and Pre-Conference Transportation & Communications Infrastructure Workshop (Working with the US/Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force) planned.

- July 2001: CITF principal participated in the Nome, Alaska/Chukotka, Russia Summit. Several ideas for cooperation between the US and Russia emerged on transportation issues including: An Alaska/Chukotka Ferry System; allowing the US/FAA sponsored Alascom Earth Station in Anadyr to be used for general commercial use; more open borders; more easily attainable visa; cooperation in Northern Shipping; development of a deep water sea port for the Bering Sea; direct links to carry mail across the Bering Sea. Potential aviation links under development.
- September 2001: US/CITF Interim Chairman participates in the Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, International Symposium on Mountain and Arid Land Permafrost. An issue very important for circumpolar infrastructure. The US Arctic Research Commission will establish a task force to examine the impact, US/CITF will use the findings in their efforts.
- September 2001: The Alaska and US/CITF participation in the U.S. West Coast- Russian Far East Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) and the U.S. AHWG Transportation Sector Co-chair meetings are reluctantly cancelled because of economic, scheduling and certification problems in RFE aviation. This highlights the necessity for the examination of these issues, which were exacerbated by the coincident attacks on Washington and New York on September 11, 2001. The body of work of the AHWG has been made fully available to the US/CITF and provides a rich source of excellent projects and examples for the US/CITF inter-regional examination of infrastructure issues for the Arctic Council
- September 2001: The US/CITF workshop planned in conjunction with the Northern Forum General Assembly in Edmonton, Canada has been postponed because of the attacks on Washington and New York on September 11, 2001. The new date for this workshop is now October 29, 2001, in Edmonton, together with the Northern Forum General Assembly as originally planned.
- September 2001: Tornio, Finland, Finland Ministry of Transport and Communication hosted "Transport Workshop of the Arctic Council." US/CITF participates fully. Most valuable exchange of information, in the formal meeting and informal one-on-one discussions. An appreciation and better understanding of the issues facing of the AC countries and the EU was developed to the benefit of continuing this new effort. The chairman's conclusions derived from the proceedings will be further revised as appropriate and submitted to the November 2001 meeting of the AC/SDWG for their consideration. It seems, that a convincing case has been made for the AC to engage in this agenda of Arctic Transport issues.

The US/CITF has identified the following Issues:

Globalization and the Arctic

- **Transpolar Aviation**, Polar Air Routes projects developed and implemented through the US FAA/Russian Federation Russian/American Coordinating Group for Air Traffic Control and by Canada
- **Trans-Arctic Marine Transport**, Northern Sea Route, Northwest Passage
- **Marine/ Rail corridors**, Arctic Bridge, Canada; US West Coast Russian Far East AHWG. “East By West Corridor: Linking US, Russia, Japan, Northern China;” – “The Northern East West (N.E.W.) Freight Corridor, linking Scandinavia, Canada and the US.
- **Climate Change**, impact of projected global climate change, in particular Permafrost deterioration on the Northern Regions
- **Global Economy**, the impact of global economical trends on the Arctic region and the requirements for financial investment.
- **The Impact of International Terrorism on Circumpolar Arctic Infrastructure**, aviation, marine transport, rail roads, telecommunications, information technology, economics, commerce, insurance, border crossings, international information exchange, joint arrangements for emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

Inter-Regional Aspects

- **Aviation**, U.S. and Russia, to identify and overcome barriers and impediments in transportation links between the U.S. West Coast and the RFE.
- **Marine**, U.S. and Russia to identify and overcome barriers and impediments in transportation links between the U.S. West Coast and the RFE.
- **AHWG CLEAR-PAC customs project**, development of an automated customs clearance software system to automate customs procedures to considerably improve time required for clearing shipments.
- **Alaska Gas Producers Pipeline Team, Private Sector**, BP/Exxon-Mobil/Phillips, Alaska, \$100M study of getting natural gas resources from the US Alaska and Canadian Arctic Slope to market (export pipeline).
- **US Canada Rail Corridor, Inter-Governmental, Inter-Regional**, US Legislation establishing US-Canada Rail Commission. Canada needs to respond in kind. Approximately \$4-6M for the Commission to study the economic feasibility and environmental considerations for improving transportation through North West Canada to Alaska

Regional Aspects

- **Aviation Safety: CAPSTONE**: The project uses satellites, and other technologies to provide a wealth of information to pilots, allows controllers to track planes in areas with no radar, and lets controllers and pilots exchange messages without radios.
- **Denali Commission, US Federal/State/Local government**, Innovative Federal/State Partnership. Federal services delivered in the most cost effective way; job training and other economic services in rural communities; promote rural infrastructure development, (rural utilities, bulk fuels, health clinics)