



Alaska Railroad - Seward to Anchorage



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1. The Alaska Railroad

The Alaska Railroad (ARR) is a Class II Railroad, which extends from Seward and Whittier, in the south of the state of Alaska, in the United States, to Fairbanks (passing through Anchorage), and beyond to Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright. Uniquely for the US, it carries both freight and passengers throughout its system. The railroad has a mainline over 470 miles (760 km) long and is well over 500 miles (800 km) including branch lines and siding tracks. It is owned by the state of Alaska. The railroad is connected to the rest of the US via three rail barges that sail between the Port of Whittier in Alaska and Harbor Island in Seattle.



1.1 History of the Alaska Railroad

In 1903, the Alaska Central Railroad began to build a railroad from Seward northward. The company built 51 miles (82 km) of track by 1909. This route carried passengers, freight and mail to the upper Turnagain Arm. From there, goods were taken by boat or by dog team or pack train to Eklutna and beyond. In 1909, the Alaska Northern Railroad Company, bought the line and extended it another 21 miles (34 km) northward. From this new northern end, goods were transported over the Turnagain Arm in small boats. The Alaska Northern Railroad went into receivership in 1914.

At the time, the U.S. government was planning a railroad route from Seward to the interior town of Fairbanks. The line would be more than 470 miles (760 km) long. In 1914, the government bought the Alaska Northern Railroad and began to extend the railroad line further north.

The Alaska Railroad's first diesel locomotive entered service in 1944. The railroad retired its last steam locomotive in 1966.

The railroad was greatly affected by the Good Friday earthquake which struck southern Alaska in 1964. The yard and trackage around Seward buckled and the trackage along Turnagain Arm was damaged by floodwaters and landslides. It took several months to restore full service along the line.

In 1967, the railroad was transferred to the Federal Railroad Administration, an agency within the newly created US Department of Transportation.

In 1985, the state of Alaska bought the railroad from the U.S. government for \$22.3 million, based on a valuation determined by the US Railway Association. The state immediately invested over \$70 million on improvements and repairs that made up for years of deferred maintenance.

In November 2015, the National Post reported that a link between the southern provinces and the Alaska Railroad was being considered by the Canadian federal government. The route would originate at Delta Junction, Alaska and use Carmacks, Yukon as a hub. The route would continue through Watson Lake, Yukon before entering British Columbia, where it would stop at Fort Nelson, British Columbia. It would continue to Peace River, Alberta, with its southern terminus at Fort McMurray. The route is endorsed by the Assembly of First Nations. As by today, it is unclear whether this rail connection would ever be expanded to also serve passengers, like the Alaska Railroad.

2. The Route in Train Simulator

2.1 Overview

The Alaska Railroad: Seward to Anchorage represents the Southern part between Seward and Anchorage, as it is operated today. The route is a single-track mainline that winds through the wilderness of the Kenai Mountains and further north along the Turnagain Arm to Anchorage, with a branch line, splitting off at Girdwood to Whittier.

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2.2 Landmarks

2.2.1 Seward

Seward is situated on Resurrection Bay on the southeast coast of the Kenai Peninsula, 125 highway miles south of Anchorage. It lies at the foot of Mount Marathon, and is the gateway to the Kenai Fjords National Park.

Resurrection Bay was named in 1792 by Russian fur trader and explorer Alexander Baranof. Seward itself was named for U.S. Secretary of State William Seward, who negotiated the purchase of Alaska
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from Russia. In 1903, John and Frank Ballaine arrived amongst the first settlers to begin construction of a railroad. The Alaska Railroad was constructed between 1915 and 1923, and Seward developed as the ocean terminus and supply center. By 1960, Seward was the largest community on the Peninsula. As an ice-free harbor, Seward has become an important supply center for Interior Alaska.

Tsunamis following the 1964 earthquake destroyed nearly all of its waterfront industry and the railroad terminal. Several residents were killed during this incident.

Being the southern terminus of the Alaska Railroad and having a road link to Anchorage and the interiors of the State, Seward has a long tradition being one of the most important transportation centers on the Peninsula. Tourism, fishing, ship services and repairs, a coal facility, oil and gas development and a State Prisons are building the major parts of its industry. The Institute of Marine Science, part of the University of Alaska is also based here. Seward is also known as being the entry to the Kenai Fjords National Park with thousands of visitors each year. During the summer time, the Coastal Classic train service, running from Seward to Anchorage on a 114-mile (183 km) trip that takes around four and a half hours, is a very famous tourist attraction.

The route then winds up through the Kenai Mountains, reaching Divide at Milepost 12.

2.2.2 Divide

Divide is the 694-foot summit of the crossing of the Kenai Mountains.

From there, the line descends through the Wilderness of Cook Inlet, passing the Kenai Lake on its way to Moose Pass.

2.2.3 Moose Pass

Moose Pass is located 26 miles north of Seward on the Kenai Peninsula. The population is around 220 people. The town was named in 1912, being a station on the Alaska Railroad. This small town was known for mining, logging and as a transfer point for those headed north with supplies, or south with gold. The Alaska Railroad Company built a small freight shed in 1927, followed by a Post Office in 1928. Moose Pass has a wide variety of activities such as fishing, hunting, hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, boating, mountain climbing, wildlife sightseeing, ice fishing and much many more.

Each June, the Summer Solstice Festival is held. For two days, the community gathers together for food, games, music and general family fun, and to raise money to maintain their community hall, the fire department and their library.

2.2.4 Grandview

Grandview is a pass through the Kenai Mountains. It was originally a road house for railroad workers. The legendary 'Alaska Nellie', was awarded the contract to manage a small building at milepost 45, to serve government employees with food and bedding. She gave the name to this place, calling it 'Grandview'.

Today Grandview is the destination of the annual Ski Train, a popular event, being a rolling ski &

party train.

Grandview is also a challenge for heavy coal trains. Because of the weight and the steep grades of the tracks between Spencer and Tunnel in the north and Grandview in the south, trains running to Seward a split in Spencer or Tunnel. Normally, the coal trains, being over 60 cars long, are cut in half. In the Winter, when conditions are snowy and icy, the trains may even be cut in four parts, which are then being hauled separately to Grandview.

With the introduction of the SD70MAC engines, the Alaska Railroad began to haul these trains at once over the steep section to Grandview.



2.2.5 Tunnel

Originally, a wooden trestle was built here, looping over itself to reduce the grades of the track. This trestle, being a marvelous engineering work, also was a maintenance problem for the Alaska Railroad. Two watchmen had to be present here all the time, to over watch the loop. In 1951, the loop became obsolete, as the then upcoming diesel engines were able to handle steeper grades of track.

Today, Tunnel is only a section house, being manned over the whole year. North of Tunnel, there are six tunnels within just one mile and it is necessary to keep them opened, even in Winter. The area is known for its very harsh winter conditions, making the life the workers there hard.

2.2.6 Portage

Portage got its name by being on the portage route from the Gulf of Alaska to Cook Inlet. The town was destroyed during the 1964 earthquake when the ground sunk and was flooded with salt water from the sea. Even today, there is a ghost forest due to the salty soil.

The site was once a motor vehicle loading area for the Alaska Railroad, that carried passengers and vehicles to Whittier for connections to the Alaska Marine Highway. No vehicles can drive directly to Whittier using the tunnel.

2.2.7 Whittier

Whittier is on the northeast shore of the Kenai Peninsula, at the head of Passage Canal. It is on the west side of Prince William Sound, 75 miles southeast of Anchorage.

The city originated as a portage route for the Chugach Indians. Nearby Whittier Glacier was named for the American poet John Greenleaf Whittier, and was first published in 1915 by the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey. In 1941, a port and railroad terminus project was undertaken by the U.S. Army for transport of fuel and other supplies into Alaska during World War II. The railroad connecting Whittier and the Seward-Anchorage line was completed in 1943. The first passenger train was run through the Whittier tunnels on March 10, 1943. The Portage tunnel is 4,905 (1495m) feet long and Whittier tunnel is 14,140 feet (4.310m) long.

The Alaska Railroad's first diesel engines, #1000 and #1001 arrived at Whittier in 1944. They were standard switching locomotives built by the American Locomotive Company (ALCO).

The huge buildings that dominate Whittier began construction in 1948. The former Hodge Building (now Begich Towers) was built for Army bachelors quarters and family housing. The Buckner Building, completed in 1953, was once the largest building in Alaska. Both buildings were damaged during the 1964 earthquake. The Buckner Building was not repaired and today stands unused. The City was incorporated in 1969. The Begich Building now houses nearly all of Whittier's residents. A curiosity is the underground tunnel from the building to the school house so the children don't have to go outside during the winter.

Whittier is an ice-free port. It is served by the state ferry, barges, rail, and aircraft. The Alaska Railroad also maintains a large docking system in Whittier.

Prior to June 2000, the town was not accessible by road and the railway carried passengers, vehicles and cargo 12 miles to the Portage Station, east of Girdwood. Travelers then drove to Anchorage or Kenai on the Seward Highway. An \$80 million road connection project permitted vehicular traffic to share the 2.5-mile long tunnel with the railroad.

2.2.8 Girdwood

The town of Girdwood got its start as a trading and transportation route over the Chugach Range.

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The population in 1916 was only 60 people, but on the weekends the population often swelled to 300. Girdwood has long been a favorite place for recreation.

In 1915, the Alaska Northern Railroad failed, reaching Mile 71, four miles southeast of Girdwood. The Railway was then purchased by the Federal Government for \$1.5 million. Though founded as a mining town, the development of Girdwood was spurred on by this new railroad construction.

In 1949, Girdwood again flourished as construction began on the Seward Highway connecting the seaport of Seward to Anchorage. By October 1951, the road was open and the population took a dip again. Today, road crews and construction workers continue to live in Girdwood during the construction season. In 1954, eleven local men formed the Alyeska Ski Corporation and in 1960, the first chair lift and a day lodge was built

In 1964, an earthquake with the magnitude of 9.2 dropped the coastal edges along the Turnagain Arm 8 to 10 feet. The highway and the town now were under water. The town of Girdwood then moved higher up the valley. The area around Girdwood has also been suffering from avalanches during the last years.

Today, two gold mines are in operation in Girdwood

2.2.9 Indian

Indian is a small community, 24 miles south of Anchorage. It offers a panoramic view on the Turnagain Arm, together with the Kenai and Chugach Mountains.

The area is famous for the bore tides that rush into the Turnagain Arm. The creeks here are heavily fished for pink and silver salmon. There are avalanche gates and gun emplacements along the highway. The area is also popular for berry picking and bird watching.

This location is one of the Alaska Railroad's most highly used sidings south of Anchorage. It is long enough to hold any kind of train.

2.2.10 Rainbow

With the construction of the Alaska Railroad, Rainbow became one of the supply camps. Later, a section house was built. Today the Alaska Railroad has a spur, that holds about 22 cars.

2.2.11 Potter

Potter lays at the Turnagain Arm and the Cook Inlet. There is a section house which now serves as headquarters for the Chugach National Forest. There are also a few historic railroad items such as an old Rotary plow, a gas car, and some miscellaneous track materials.

2.2.12 Anchorage

Anchorage (officially called the Municipality of Anchorage) is a unified home rule municipality in the U.S. state of Alaska. With an estimated 298,192 residents in 2016, it is Alaska's most populous city.

Anchorage is located in the south-central portion of Alaska at the terminus of the Cook Inlet on a peninsula formed by the Knik Arm to the north and the Turnagain Arm to the south.

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When the construction of the Alaska Railroad began, Anchorage held the midpoint construction headquarters. From 1939 to 1957, major military impacts and government construction of roads, airports and harbors throughout Alaska contributed to the growth of Anchorage.

The Port was completed by the early 1960s. The Good Friday earthquake in 1964 destroyed a large part of the city. During the 1970s, the development of the Prudhoe Bay oil fields and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline brought rapid growth to Anchorage; population, office space and housing tripled within a ten-year period.

Anchorage is the center of commerce for the state. Oil and gas industries, finance and real estate, transportation, communications, and government agencies are headquartered in Anchorage. Numerous visitor and tourist facilities and services are available. Over 9,000 military personnel are stationed at Fort Richardson and Elmendorf AFB. The headquarters of the Alaska Railroad.



3. Operation of the Route

3.1 General Information

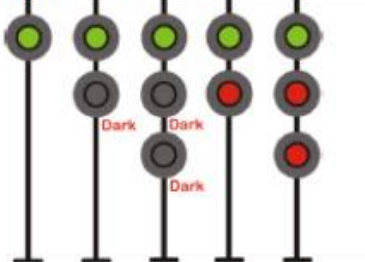

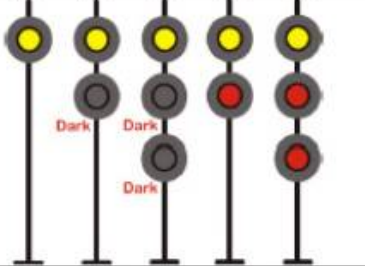
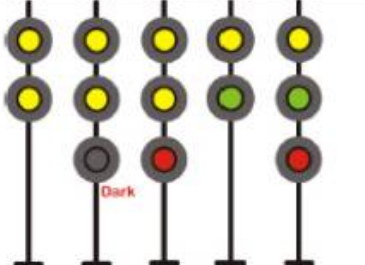
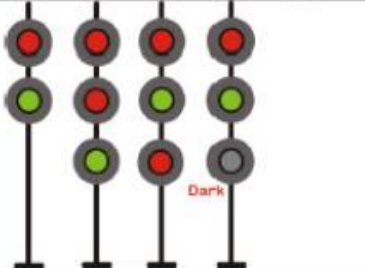
The line between Seward and Anchorage is not equipped with signals. Train operations are dispatched via radio. This system is called 'Direct Train Control'. The dispatcher calls the engineers directly and advises them about when to proceed and enter a DTC Block and where to hold their trains.

3.2 Signaling

Only the northern section of the route round Anchorage is signaled using Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) the remainder of the route trains are dispatched using Direct Train Control via radio as they are no physical signals.

3.2.1 Centralized Traffic Control (CTC)

While the route is controlled by CTC color light signals are used for controlling running movements. They display aspects by means of red, yellow and green colored lights.

Signal Aspect	Description	Instruction to Driver
	Clear	Proceed, at the maximum allowed line speed.
	Advance Approach	Proceed: be prepared to stop after the next signal.
	Approach	Proceed: be prepared to stop at the next signal.
	Approach Diverging	Proceed: be prepared to take a diverging track after the next signal.
	Diverging Clear	Proceed on diverging track at prescribed speed for junction.

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	<p>Diverging Advance Approach</p>	<p>Proceed on diverging track at prescribed speed for junction. Be prepared to stop after the next signal.</p>
	<p>Diverging Approach</p>	<p>Proceed on diverging track at prescribed speed for junction. Be prepared to stop at the next signal.</p>
	<p>Diverging Approach Diverging</p>	<p>Proceed on diverging track at prescribed speed for junction. Be prepared to take a diverging track after the next signal.</p>
	<p>Approach Restricting</p>	<p>Proceed: be prepared to pass next signal at restricted speed.</p>
	<p>Restricting</p>	<p>Proceed at restricted speed.</p>
	<p>Stop</p>	<p>Stop.</p>

3.2.2 Direct Train Control (DTC)

Direct Train Control is where trains are given permission to enter a block from the dispatcher via radio. Once the rear of the train has cleared the block the crew of the train must return the block to the dispatcher so it can be used by another train. Often this is done several blocks at a time. Each block has a unique name with a sign marking the start and end of the block using a 4 letter abbreviation. The length of blocks varies depending on operational requirements are each section of the line. If there is a siding alongside the mainline the siding block has the same name as the parallel mainline block followed by Siding.

3.2.2.1 DTC Blocks and Table

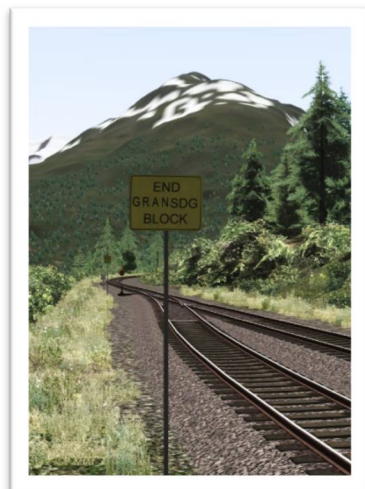
The following table lists all DTC Blocks between Seward and start of the CTC section south of Anchorage as well as the Whittier branch:

Abbreviation	Start Mileage	Name	End Mileage	Siding	Notes
SEWA	1,00	Seward	3,43		Yard
MARA	3,43	Marathon	6,00		
WOOD	6,00	Woodrow	11,71		
DIVI	11,76	Divide	12,11	DIVI SDG	
PRIM	12,23	Primrose	19,00		
LAWI	19,00	Lawing	24,45		
CROW	24,50	Crown Point	25,18	CROW SDG	
SAWM	25,22	Sawmill	29,24		
MOOS	29,28	Moose Pass	29,46	MOOS SDG	
JOHN	29,49	Johnson	38,00		
TRAI	38,00	Trail	39,20		
HUNT	39,25	Hunter	40,10	HUNT SDG	
SNOR	40,15	Snoring	44,84		
GRAN	44,86	Grandview	45,30	GRAN SDG	
TUNN	45,35	Tunnel	51,25	TUN SDG	no south end connection
CARP	51,31	Carpathian	51,56		
PLAC	51,56	Placer	55,00		
SPEN	55,05	Spencer	55,65	SPEN SDG	
LUEB	55,69	Luebner	62,00		
HOOL	62,00	Hooligan	63,83		
PORT	63,90	Portage	64,21	PORT SDG	Whitter Junction
TIDE	64,29	Tidewater	66,00		
PETE	66,00	Peterson	70,00		
KERN	70,00	Kern	74,50		
GIRD	74,55	Girdwood	74,90	GIRD SDG	
WHIS	54,95	Whiskey	81,43		
BROO	81,48	Brookman	81,97	BROO SDG	

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BIRD	82,02	Bird	88,22		
INDI	88,27	Indian	89,20	INDI SDG	
FALL	89,26	Falls	93,04		
RAIN	93,09	Rainbow	93,25	RAIN SDG	
BELU	93,30	Beluga	100,16		
POTT	100,23	Potter	100,73	POTT SDG	
RABB	100,79	Rabbit	105,07		
<i>CTC</i>	<i>105,70</i>	<i>CTC</i>	<i>End</i>		<i>CTC to end of route at Anchorage</i>
WHIT	0,00	Whitter	2,50		Yard
<i>CTC</i>	<i>2,50</i>	<i>CTC</i>	<i>5,06</i>		<i>Tunnel</i>
MAYN	5,06	Maynard	5,18		
BEAR	5,20	Bear	5,66	BEAR SDG	
MORA	5,71	Moraine	7,00		
EXPL	7,00	Explorer	10,94		
COHO	10,99	Coho	11,95	COHO SDG	
EART	11,96	Earth	12,00		
WJCT	12,03	Whitter Junction	64,21		Junction to Anchorage
WJCT SDG	12,02	Whitter Junction Siding	63,90		Junction to Seward

3.2.3 Trackside Signs



Left to Right: Speed Sign; Signal Block Begin, Signal Block End

4. The Engines

4.1 GP38-2

The EMD GP38-2 is a four-axle diesel-electric road switcher type locomotive built by General Motors, Electro-Motive Division. Part of the EMD Dash 2 line, the GP38-2 was an upgraded version of the earlier GP38. Power is provided by an EMD 645E 16-cylinder engine, which generates 2000 horsepower (1.5 MW). Most units remain in service.

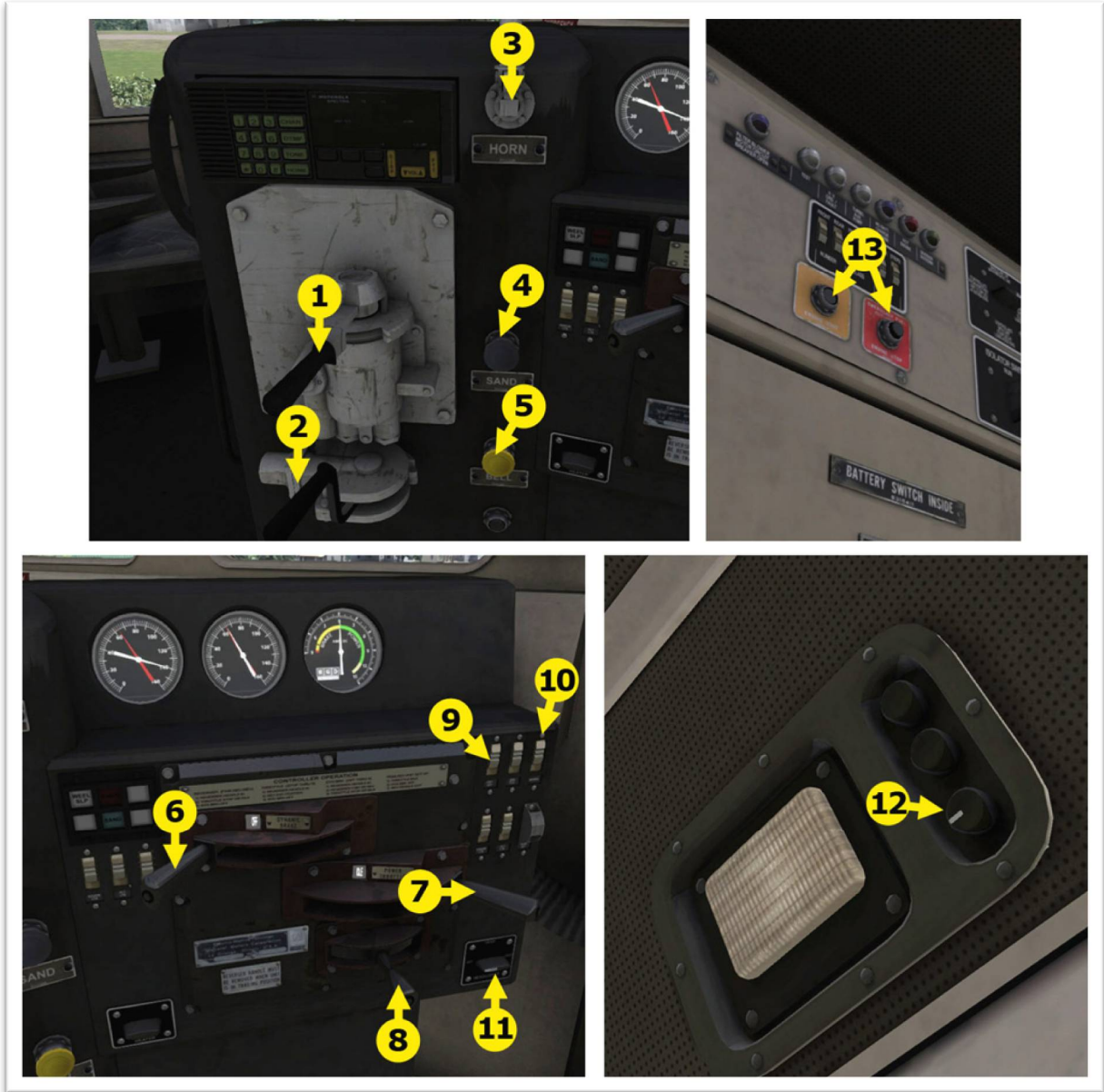
The GP38-2 differs externally from the earlier GP38 only in minor details. Its most distinctive identifying feature is the cooling water level sight glass on the right side of the long hood. The battery box covers of the Dash 2s are bolted down instead of hinged. The GP38-2 is available with either a high-short-hood, common on Norfolk Southern units, or a low-short-hood, which is found on most other railroads.

A total of 2213 units were built. 1,799 examples were built for American railroads and industrial concerns, 257 for Canadian railroads and industrials, 156 for Mexican railroads and industrials, and 1 export unit for the Saudi Government Railways.

The Alaska Railroad operates 8 GP38-2 Locomotives, numbered 2001 – 2008



4.1.1 Cab layout and keys



- 1. Train Brake
- 2. Locomotive Brake
- 3. Horn
- 4. Sander
- 5. Bell
- 6. Dynamic Brake

- 7. Throttle
- 8. Reverser
- 9. Step Lights
- 10. Wipers
- 11. Headlights
- 12. Cab Light
- 13. Engine Start and Stop

4.2 SD70MAC

The EMD (Electro-Motive Division of General Motors), SD70MAC is a six-axle diesel locomotive built from 1993 to 2004. It has a power output between 4,000 and 4,300 horsepower. More than 1,100 were built, 350 built for the Burlington Northern. Later customers such as CSX and the Alaska Railroad (ARR) purchased units up until the introduction of the SD70ACe.

Many are still currently in service, except for several stored, wrecked, and a few retired units.



4.2.1 Cab layout and keys



- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Train Brake | 7. Throttle |
| 2. Locomotive Brake | 8. Reverser |
| 3. Horn | 9. Headlights |
| 4. Sander | |
| 5. Bell | |
| 6. Dynamic Brake | |

5. Freight Cars

5.1 ARR Caboose



5.2 ARR Flatbed Container Car



5.3 ARR Agriculture Hopper



5.4 ARR Center Beam Car (loaded and unloaded variants)



5.5 ARR Hopper 4-Chute



5.6 ARR Double Stack Container Cars (loaded and unloaded variants)



5.7 ARR Hopper 4-Bay



5.8 ARR Flatbed Car with Timber (loaded and unloaded variants)



5.9 ARR 50-foot-Boxcar



5.10 ARR Tank Car



5.11 ARR Trailer Car (loaded and unloaded variants)



6. Scenarios

[ARR] GP38-2 Light Engine Run Pt 1 Summer / Clear, approx. 45 minutes

It should be an easy light engine shift from Anchorage to Whittier with a detour for a RIP (Repair in Place) pickup at Grandview, but management has invited a guest along from the "lower 48." You will do the driving while chatty Conductor Wayne will act as tour guide for our guest. In Part 1 you will travel from Anchorage Yard to Girdwood, a resort community located along Turnagain Arm. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] GP38-2 Light Engine Run Pt 2 Summer / Clear, approx. 60 minutes

You have been granted authority to proceed south along the Main Line, from Girdwood to Grandview. This portion of the route presents the greatest difficulty for Alaska Rail's freight operations. In the winter keeping the tracks and tunnels clear of ice and snow is a real challenge. Even in these summer months the up to 3% grades make it hard for long freights to travel over the mountain pass. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] GP38-2 Light Engine Run Pt 3 Summer / Clear, approx. 40 minutes

If coming up the grade to Grandview presented difficulty, returning back down will make this the hardest part of our day's assignment. In Part 3 you will pick up a freight car that has been repaired on the Grandview siding and is ready for return to service. You will then go as far as Portage, returning through Spencer Glacier's Valley. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] GP38-2 Light Engine Run Pt 4 Summer / Clear, approx. 30 minutes

We complete our assignment traveling up Portage Glacier's valley to the Port of Whittier. This branch of the Alaska Railroad was created during World War II to provide an alternative ice-free port for Alaska's defense. Two long tunnels, one providing passage for both rail and road allow travel to this small isolated port. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] SD70M Empties to Anchorage Pt 1 Late Autumn/Early Snow, approx. 1 hour

You will drive a 75-car train of empty coal cars from Seward to Anchorage, on their way to be re-filled in the coal fields to the north. To make it over the mountains in the Kenai Range you have 3 powerful SD70MAC locos on the front end. In part 1 you travel from Seward Yard to Crown Point, about 25 miles. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] SD70M Empties to Anchorage Pt 2 Late Autumn/Cloudy, approx. 80 minutes

We continue our assignment, traveling from Crown Point to Spencer, where we will wait for a southbound maintenance train in-bound to the sand and gravel operation. On this portion of the assignment we will travel over the mountain pass created by the receding glaciers. From time to time you can view the glacial ice further up the valleys. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] SD70M Empties to Anchorage Pt 3 Late Autumn/Clear, approx. 45 minutes

Now that the mountains are behind us, we have an easier run. In Part 3 we go from Spencer, through the Whittier Branch junction and complete this portion of our assignment at Girdwood. By now the shorter days of late autumn are darkening the skies. We end this portion with a dinner break while we wait for permission to continue north. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] SD70M Empties to Anchorage Pt 4 Late Autumn/Clear Night, approx. 40 minutes

There is trouble ahead. We can travel only as far as Indian, about 25 miles. Since it is a clear night we should be able to see the stars, since we are far away from city glare. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

[ARR] SD70M Empties to Anchorage Pt 5 Late Autumn/Clear Morning, approx. 60 minutes

We return to our train at Indian for a departure delayed by the track maintenance crew. It looks like we will be the first train to travel through the work area, so it should be smooth sailing up to Anchorage Yard. This scenario starts with 1000 points and you will be penalized for operational errors during your run.

7. Credits

- Route Building: Michael Stephan, Jonathan Lewis
- Asset Creation: Michael Stephan, Jonathan Lewis
- Scenario Creation: Andreas Czudai, Jim Friedland
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