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JUNEAU -- This month Rep. Jeannette James (R-North Pole) will work alongside Canadian legislators in a concentrated effort to promote a rail connection between Alaska and the rest of North America. First up is a panel discussion on the project at the annual PAC COM Expo at Anchorage's Sullivan Arena, Feb. 13-14.

On Feb. 20, Rep. James will help convene a Joint House Committee session to hear an overview of the proposed railroad and transportation/utility corridor. The House committees taking part include Transportation, Oil and Gas, and Economic Development, World Trade and Tourism. A panel of Yukon legislators has been invited to sit in by teleconference as well.

Rep. James will also meet with U.S. consul to Canada Roy Chavera on Feb. 26; on Feb. 27, Rep. James will meet with Canadian Consul General Roger Simmons. Both officials are assigned to Western Canada; both will be visiting Juneau.

PAC COM, billed as Alaska's largest industrial exposition, draws industry and government participants from across the Pacific Rim. Rep. James will participate in a panel discussion along with Yukon MLA (member of the legislative assembly) Scott Kent, Alaska Miners Association Executive Director Steve Borell and Alaska Railroad official Jim Kubitz. Senator John Cowdery, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, will moderate the panel, set to begin at 12:15 p.m. on Feb. 14.

The Joint House Committee will meet Feb. 20 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the House Finance Committee room and will be chaired by Rep. Lesil McGuire (R-Anchorage).

Senator Frank Murkowski and Congressman Don Young have been invited, along with Transportation Commissioner Joe Perkins and Yukon MP (Member of Parliament) Larry Bagnell. MLA Scott Kent will represent Yukon Premier Pat Duncan. University of Alaska Fairbanks geologist Dr. Paul Metz will attend, along with geologist Dr. Milt Wiltse of the Department of Natural Resources. Jim Kubitz will represent the Alaska Railroad. Each presenter will be given 5-8 minutes to speak, with 5-10 minutes set aside for questions.

The Joint Committee is soliciting written testimony.