

More Jobs and More Railroad Planned by State Commission

Extension of the Alaska Railroad to Northwestern Alaska, and training of Alaskan Native people to fill jobs created by this extension, came another step closer at the meeting of the State Commission on Northern Operations of Rail Transportation and Highways last week in Washington, D. C.

The commission voted to spend up to \$225,000 on studies calling for extension of the railroad.

And Office of Economic Opportunity Director Sargent Shriver said his agency is "not only willing but eager" to make a major investment in educational and training programs for Alaska.

A study prepared by William B. Saunders of Washington, D. C. indicated that the 400-mile Alaska Railroad extension from Fairbanks to the Kobuk River copper deposits would cost \$166 million.

Saunders said the copper ore there has been reported at three to four times the value of some produced in other states.

Federal officials from several agencies gave support to the commission, saying that improved trans-

portation facilities are needed to develop the state's mineral resources.

The commission voted to spend up to \$50,000 for a study to show the federal government why the railroad should be extended and up to \$175,000 for a route study for the first one-third of the route.

It hopes to have a survey crew working on the route early next year.

Sargent Shriver told the commission that it may be possible to set up a project with the University of Alaska, through the Vista program, to train men for the survey.

He explained that the OEO has a special task force studying ways to "do extra" for Alaska. Shriver said his agency would expand its programs if Congress approves a reasonable appropriation for it.

"We are interested in trying to help people prepare for work," Shriver said.

Bob Arnold of the Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska urged the commission to plan for the welfare of the 1,000 Native people living along the route, and to employ them if possible.