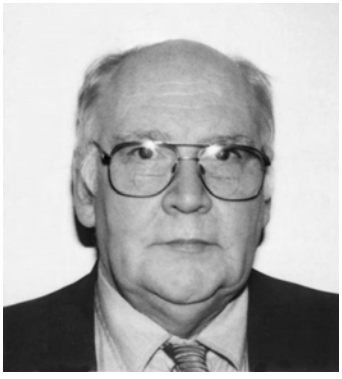


RAIL EXPERT HAL COOPER

Bering Strait Conference Marked 'Major Phase Shift'

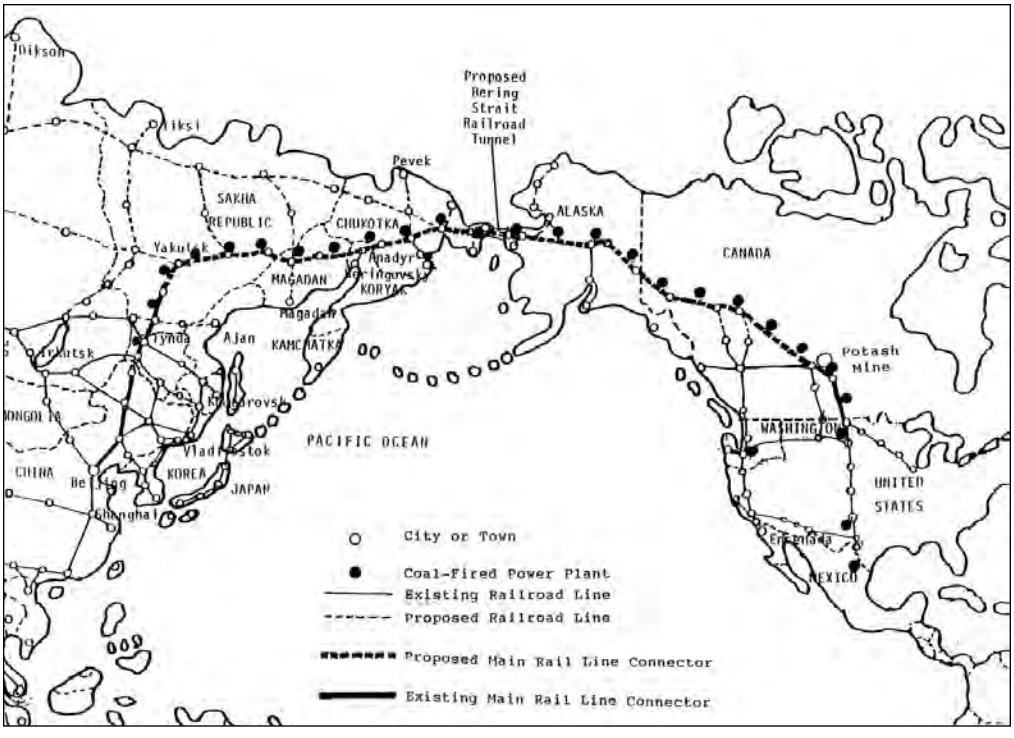
Hal Cooper, Ph.D., is a Seattle-based transportation consultant and a longtime advocate for an intercontinental railroad connection across the Bering Strait, as well as development corridors on key routes in the Americas and worldwide. His article "How to Revolutionize American Transport" by building 42,000 miles of electric rail and maglev appeared in the Summer 2005 21st Century.

Dr. Cooper was interviewed by Richard Freeman in the Executive Intelligence Review *on May 1, for his views on the Bering Strait project and the Moscow conference. Here is an excerpt from the interview.*

"I think what has happened in Moscow is the indicator of a major phase shift in the world. The old-time forces that have been in control in this country and this world for so long, are beginning to be removed, and no small amount of the credit for that happening belongs, of course, to the Lyndon LaRouche organization, in which you and I have both played a part.

And I think that in Russia, they have basically decided to adopt the LaRouche infrastructure development policy, with emphasis on nuclear energy, the emphasis on railroads, the emphasis on economic development and employment creation, which are so contrary to so much of the thinking in the United States today. I think the people in Russia and many of the countries of the world do not have this obsession with political correctness that we have developed in this country, that has prevented us from being responsive to the need for economic development, and for our own national self-interest throughout the world....

"You're going to have to actually build about 5,000 to 6,000 miles of railroad to connect everything. And you would be connecting, on the east side of the Lena River, near the city of Yakutsk, in the Sakha Republic. You don't actually have to go into



PROPOSED ROUTE FOR INTERCONTINENTAL RAIL LINE BETWEEN ASIA AND AMERICA (including power plants and transmission lines)

This sketch map was part of a paper by Hal B.H. Cooper, Jr. (Cooper Consulting Co.) and J. David Broadbent, president of the Canadian Arctic Railway Co. (British Columbia), for presentation to the 70th Anniversary Conference on "Railroad Transportation Developments in Siberia." The conference took place at the Siberian State Transport University at Novosibirsk, Nov. 20-28, 2002.

The coal plant sites are shown to indicate the importance of power for both electrified rail and regional economic activity along the corridor, which would be powered by nuclear energy for the most advanced development.

Yakutsk, but it would be helpful to do that, because it's the largest city in that region. I was there in 1996.

You would come out through the Magadan region, and through the Koryak region, into the Chukotka region in Russia, and then a place called Egvekinot, which is a gold-mining place. It would be a junction for a future connection of lines going to the west, to Vorkuta, far in the west of Russia, 1,100 miles northeast of Moscow, which was originally laid out under the direction of Josef Stalin, prior to World War II, as well as the line going to the southwest, to Yakutsk, which ultimately would go to China over a 3,000-mile route.

"The railroad would then go through the Tenkanyi Mountains in the eastern part of the Chukotka Peninsula, and then go into a tunnel which would be about 65 miles long, west of the town which is called Uelen, right at the edge of the Bering Strait, on the Chukotka side. And then it would go through a tunnel....

"[I]t would go under the Bering Strait. Actually the water there is 180-200 feet deep; it's relatively stable limestone chalk, there are no major rock fissures or earthquake faults, or anything like that. There are two islands in the middle: There's Big Diomede Island, which is about two miles by four miles wide (that's in Russia), and then there's Little Diomede Island on the U.S. side, which is about three miles away; its about one mile by two miles. It is an inhabited island, there are some native people who live there; whereas on the Russian side, I believe there is only a weather station, military facilities.

"Each of the islands is about 20 miles away from the shore. On the U.S. side, you would come to Wales, and then to the edge of the Brooks Mountains, and then through, ultimately, a place called Galena, and you would parallel the north side of the Yukon River, and ultimately cross the Yukon River, and go into Fairbanks."

How Much Time and Money?

When asked how long the Bering Strait project would take to build, and how much it would cost, Cooper replied:

"The minimum would be 10 years. If you got serious, you could get it built in 10 years. It could be as long as 20 years. Actually, what I think is going to happen is it can be built in increments.... I noticed my cost projections, if you built just from Yakutsk to Fort Nelson, they were looking at $65 billion, with a double-track system. And the tunnel cost was about $15 billion, which is about the same as the cost of the English Channel tunnel—a shorter link, but more complicated.

"My assessment was, if you build a double-track tunnel, it's about $15 billion, but I think you're going to need three tracks, and my estimate is, it's $25 billion. And my estimate is probably $75 billion for the same distance, instead of $65 billion."

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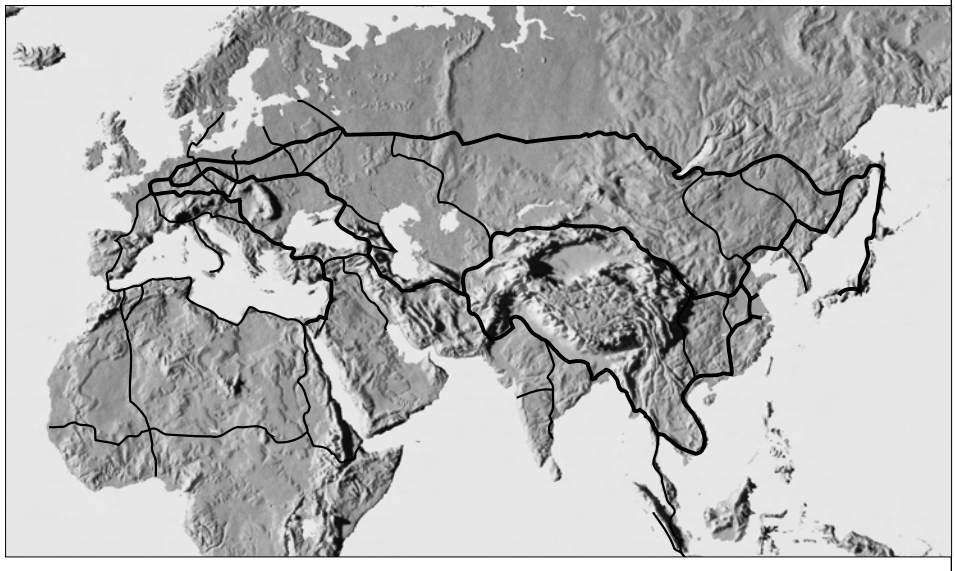

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