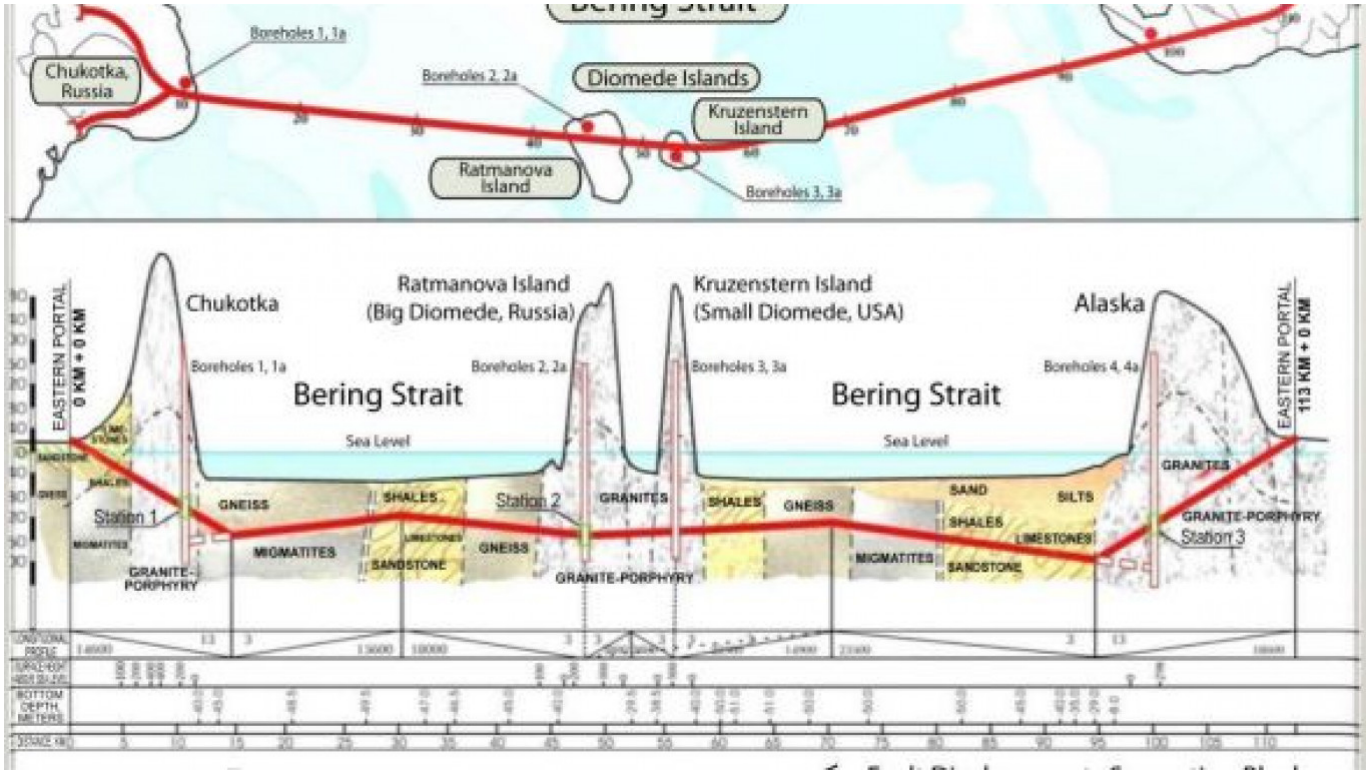
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Yakunin Wants Decision on Bering Rail Link by 2017

By The Moscow Times

April 09, 2012



Estimates show it will take 15 years and $30 billion to construct a 103-kilometer tunnel to link the two continents.

ST. PETERSBURG — A decision on building a tunnel under the Bering Strait to connect the railway infrastructures of Russia and North America should be made before 2017, Russian Railways president Vladimir Yakunin told journalists Saturday, Interfax reported.

"I am sure that Russia needs to develop railway services in the Far East and Kamchatka, and I believe a decision on building [a tunnel under the Bering Strait] should be made within the next three to five years. I mean a decision should be made that this should be done in principle," Yakunin said.

"These are not just dreams. I talked about this when I first took this office," he said.

Yakunin said that five years after he became the Russian Railways president, he was

approached by some U.S. business people who suggested that research should be done on building such a link.

"As a matter of fact, a design of this project is being worked on now," he said. "I think it should take 10 to 15 years [to implement]."

The project can be done only based on multilateral cooperation between various countries, Yakunin said. "America should be on the one side and Russia on the other. China is interested as well, and so multilateral cooperation is inevitable," he said.

According to InterBering, an Alaska-based company promoting the project, the proposed 103-kilometer tunnel would cost up to $30 billion to construct and would be part of a total rail infrastructure project on both sides that could cost $100 billion and create up to 50,000 jobs.

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