

2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Hoonah, Alaska / Meeting Summaries

Introduction

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) issued a Scoping Report in August 2011 for public review as part of the update the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP). ADOT&PF held an open house at 5:30 pm and a public meeting at 6:30 pm on October 6, 2011, at City Hall in Hoonah, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. Also on October 6, 2011, ADOT&PF met with representatives from the City of Hoonah at City Hall at 11:00 am and with Hoonah Indian Association at its office at 1:30 pm.

A combined total of 23 people attended one of these meetings (see attached attendance list).

ADOT&PF Presentation at Open House/Public Meeting

The public meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation that reviewed:

- The ADOT&PF statutory obligation to conduct overview of the Southeast Alaska transportation planning
- The last SATP was prepared in 2004, then 1999
- The purpose and need of this SATP update is to ensure there is continued opportunity to travel by maintaining a financially sustainable transportation system. This includes addressing the need to replace three aging ferries within the next 20 years.
- The comment period for this Scoping Report is open until November 4. ADOT&PF will then review comments, conduct a user/benefit analysis, and prepare a Draft SATP that identifies a single Preferred Alternative. The draft SATP will likely be issued in late spring/early summer 2012. There will be another round of public meetings on the draft SATP document. The final SATP will be published in late 2012.
- In 1992, six Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) ferries carried 373,000 passengers and 97,000 vehicles. In 2010, ten ferries (including both AMHS and Inter-Island Ferry Authority [IFA] vessels) carried 304,000 passengers and 92,000 vehicles.
- The SATP Scoping Report identifies six preliminary alternatives:
 - 1 – Baseline: Maintain the Existing System
 - 2 – Ferry Capacity Management
 - 3 – Maximize Use of Existing Roads
 - 4 – Alaska Class Ferries
 - 5 – Highway Route 7
 - 6 – No Action

These six preliminary alternatives were designed to “test” very different transportation scenarios. There is no preferred alternative identified in the Scoping Report. The preferred alternative that will be identified in the Draft SATP will likely combine elements from these preliminary alternatives. Among other factors the six preliminary alternatives consider:

- Seasonality in use of ferry system and related excess capacity during the spring, fall and winter
 - Alaska and Southeast population projections
 - Funding forecasts (federal and state)
 - The fact that 43% of the travel within the region is by ferry, 8% of the travel from the region to the Lower 48 is by ferry, and 2% of the travel from the region to northern parts of the state is by ferry.
 - Replacing mainline ferries with Alaska Class ferries and/or roads and shuttle ferries
- The capital costs (1st column from left), annual operation and maintenance costs (2nd & 3rd column), and annual refurbishment costs (4th and 5th columns), and total annual costs in 2010 dollars (excludes capital costs) were reviewed for each of the preliminary alternatives, as shown in the table below.

Alternative	20 year Capital Costs	Annual M&O	% Change from 2010	Annual Refurbishment	% Change from 2010	Total Annual Cost	% Change from 2010
2010 Actual		131		47		178	
2032 Estimates	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
1 – Baseline: Maintain Existing	796	126	-4%	46	-3%	172	-4%
2 - Ferry Capacity Management	526	111	-16%	44	-7%	155	-13%
3 - Maximize Use of Roads	501	95	-28%	41	-13%	136	-24%
4 – Alaska Class Ferries	737	118	-10%	48	1%	166	-7%
5 – Highway Route 7	1,030	97	-26%	44	-7%	141	-21%
6 – No Action	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

- The presentation concluded with ADOT&PF representatives asking the public to provide written comments by November 4, 2011 on matters such as:
 - Your preferred alternative and why – and/or ideas for *additional* alternatives or options that you recommend ADOT&PF consider;
 - What communities do you make most of your trips each year;
 - What method of transportation do you use most and why – air, road and ferry;
 - What attributes are most important to you when you consider how you travel (such as cost, speed, service frequency, reliability, convenience, comfort, etc).
- This information will help ADOT&PF as it assembles the Draft SATP because it will need to consider trade-offs between these factors.

Questions, Answers

In response to questions raised by the audience, or at one of the meetings, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

Freight

- ADOT&PF does not track and publish the overall amount of freight shipped, but it is factored into scheduling and operations.

Transfer Port

- Angoon makes more sense than Hoonah as the transfer port in Alternative 5 because it is the half way point, and it would allow two boats to run on day schedules, which is the most efficient for shift planning.
- Juneau is a better transfer point for the mainline and Lynn Canal ferries because it has a better support network (crew, maintenance and supplies).

Ferry Deployment

- The idle ferry is owned by IFA and not available for deployment by the AMHS at this time.
- AMHS is not planning to purchase additional ferries of this design.

Service to Yakutat

- There may be an option to provide infrequent service to Yakutat even if cross-gulf service is cancelled (e.g. 2-3 times/year when ferries transit between southcentral and southeast Alaska for maintenance or lay up.)

Road Corridor south of Hoonah

- The road concept from Hoonah south to Sitka still exists but this SATP's focus is on a road from Sitka to Warm Springs Bay.

Key Comments made during Hoonah Meetings

Comments are grouped by topic.

Comments offered during the **Open House/Public Meeting** are noted by [OH/PM]

Comments offered during the meeting with the **City of Hoonah** are noted by [CH]

Comments offered during the meeting with **Hoonah Indian Association** are noted by [HIA]

Desired Ferry Service and Schedule Changes

- More ferry service between Juneau and Hoonah, both winter and summer would be beneficial for the community. [CH, OH/PM]
- Ferry schedule used to be better for school groups and teams; now it is much harder to schedule and often teams must fly which is more expensive. [OH/PM]

- Tribal members are frustrated with the current ferry schedule as it is not possible to travel from Juneau to Hoonah for the weekend. [HIA]
- Ferry service between Hoonah and Juneau has been reduced to the point where is often not practical and people are forced to fly. For example, if you need to see a professional in Juneau you must spend 3 or 4 nights in a hotel and the additional cost makes flying a better option. [CH, OH/PM]

Improved Ferry Service Among Icy and Chatham Strait Communities Desired

- Hoonah is well positioned in terms of services to serve as a regional hub and shuttle ferry service from Angoon, Elfin Cove, Pelican, and Gustavus would further this goal. [CH/HIA]
- With increased ferry service, the new SEARHC clinic would be accessible to those in surrounding communities and student travel between communities for sports and education opportunities would be easier to accomplish. [HIA]

Reduced Ferry Service is Driving Reduction in Passengers

- Reductions in ferry service to Hoonah are driving the reduction in ferry passengers. A schedule with decent turn-around in Juneau would result in more passengers. [OH/PM]

AMHS Does Not Respond to Community's Comments

- Residents are frustrated with the current ferry schedule and feel that ADOT&PF does not respond to their comments and complaints. [OH/PM]

Ferry Service from Juneau to Tenakee does not Match Community Need

- In summer, there is better service from Juneau to Tenakee than to Hoonah, including weekend service. Several residents feel that scheduling decisions are made based on politics, and not community need or population. [OH/PM]
- Lack of roads in Tenakee means that sending ferry with car capacity is wasteful. [OH/PM]

More Ferry Service from Whittier to South is Needed

- Ferries from Whittier to Southeast are often full and this is a problem for those who do not wish to drive through Canada or who are trying to move boats or other equipment. Can AMHS not use passenger data to better match service to demand on these routes? [OH/PM]

Support for Hoonah to Pelican Road

- Road to Pelican is supported by many people in Hoonah. [PM/OH]
- The road connection between Pelican and Hoonah would allow people from Pelican to access the ferry in Hoonah. [CH]
- A geothermal energy source is being investigated along the potential Pelican to Hoonah road corridor. Putting utility corridor and road in at the time would make both projects more feasible. [CH, OH/PM]

Support for Hoonah to Tenakee Road

- The road from Hoonah to Tenakee should be completed so that people from Tenakee can access ferry service in Hoonah. [OH/PM]
- Building the Hoonah to Tenakee Road could decrease AMHS operation costs. [OH/PM]

Freight Service on AMHS is Important, Especially in Winter

- There is no barge service to Hoonah in winter. Most groceries and other freight is shipped to Hoonah on the ferry. Construction projects planned in 2011-2012 will increase the amount of freight shipped. [CH, OH/PM]
- Long sailing times from Juneau to Hoonah (especially when ferry goes through Angoon or Gustavus) means that frozen goods sometimes arrive thawed. Many local business owners would prefer to use the ferry for shipping, but must fly perishable freight in. [OH/PM]

Coordination with Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

- Central Council Tlingit Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) is interested in finding ways to contribute IRR money to improve ferry service in the region. CCTHITA could potentially enter into an MOU with ADOT&PF. HIA will be working with CCTHITA on a tribal transportation plan. [HIA]
- CCTHITA is planning to meet in November to discuss transportation; will notify ADOT&PF of meeting. Planning to develop a coordinated response to the SATP scoping document. [HIA]

Consider Hoonah as a Transfer Port

- Consider making Hoonah the transfer point for Alternative 5 instead of Angoon; especially considering Hoonah's new ferry terminal. [OH/PM]
- Consider using Hoonah, rather than Juneau, as a hub for the mainline ferries and Lynn Canal connection. [OH/PM]

Road Tolls Would Equalize Travel Costs Among All Alaskans

- In other states there are road tolls; consider adding tolls to Alaska roads as ferry users already pay a "toll" (ticket cost). Could help to equalize travel costs among all Alaskans. [OH/PM]

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report
Attendance at Hoonah, Alaska meetings
October 6, 2011

Open House and Public Meeting

1. Ryan Norkoli
2. Jacqueline Dick
3. Charles Kingsland
4. Kelly Swihart
5. Mindy Swihart
6. Diane Woitte
7. Dan Anderson
8. Hope Anderson
9. Grace Villarreal
10. Nino Villarreal
11. John Shelton
12. John Fritz
13. Adam Greenwald
14. Gordon Greenwald
15. Marian Kingsland
16. Alice Williams
17. Kenneth Meserve
18. Nicki Shelton
19. Ed Phillips
20. G. Peterson

Hoonah City Meeting

1. Marlene Duvall
2. Alf R. "Windy" Skaflestad
3. Nino Villarreal

Hoonah Indian Association Meeting

1. Bob Starbard

ADOT&PF Team

Verne Skagerberg, ADOT&PF
Zoë Morrison, Sheinberg Associates
Note Taker: Alice Williams