

# 2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Skagway, 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 5, 2011, at the Skagway Borough Assembly Chambers in Skagway, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. Also on October 5, 2011, ADOT&PF met with the Municipality of Skagway at Borough Offices at 1:00 p.m. On October 4, 2011, ADOT&PF met with the Skagway Traditional Council President in Juneau, Alaska.

A combined total of 22 people attended one or more 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 (1<sup>st</sup> column from left), annual operation and maintenance costs (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> column), and annual refurbishment costs (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 Refurb- ishment	% Change from 2010	Total Annual Cost	% Change from 2010
2010 Actual		131		47		178	
2032 Estimates	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
<b>1 – Baseline: Maintain Existing</b>	796	126	-4%	46	-3%	172	-4%
<b>2 - Ferry Capacity Management</b>	526	111	-16%	44	-7%	155	-13%
<b>3 - Maximize Use of Roads</b>	501	95	-28%	41	-13%	136	-24%
<b>4 – Alaska Class Ferries</b>	737	118	-10%	48	1%	166	-7%
<b>5 – Highway Route 7</b>	1,030	97	-26%	44	-7%	141	-21%
<b>6 – No Action</b>	?	?	?	?	?	?	?

- 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 at the meetings, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

### Comparison of Costs and Revenues

- AMHS ticket revenues pay approximately 32% of the system's maintenance and operations costs. The balance is State General Fund appropriated by the Alaska State Legislature.
- Constructing additional roads (Alt. 5) would increase road maintenance and operations costs for the region, but would lower maintenance and operation costs for transportation overall (since road maintenance costs are less than those for ferries).
- The draft SATP will present a financial analysis for each alternative.

### Traffic Demand Forecasts

- For purposes of the Scoping Report, traffic demand forecasts were developed assuming that the same level of traffic will continue to occur between each pair of communities in the region. Additional evaluation of these forecasts will be done in development of the draft SATP.

### Alternative 4 – Alaska Class Ferries

- The first Alaska Class Ferry has been funded with a \$120 million appropriation from State General Funds.

### Alternative 5 – Alaska Highway Route 7

- The potential road connecting Petersburg and Kake would be constructed of crushed rock, which is abundant along the route. The road would cross muskeg, but no major mountains.

### Federal Stimulus Funding for Transportation in Southeast Alaska

- federal stimulus funding has supported multiple Southeast Alaska transportation projects over the past two years.

### Implementation of 2004 SATP

- In response to a question regarding whether the 2004 SATP was implemented as written, ADOT&PF noted that the budget for all elements of that plan totaled \$2 billion – which far exceeded available funding for transportation in Southeast Alaska. The short-term focus of the prior SATP was on purchase of the four fast ferries. After two fast ferries were purchased and deployed, the State decided not to purchase two more.

### Indian Reservation Road Funding

- IRR funding is divided among tribal organizations based on the miles of roads in their

inventories. Some tribes have entered into agreements to pool their funding for projects, but that is beyond ADOT&PF's purview. IRR funds are anticipated to see a decline, along with other federal transportation funding.

#### Potential Impacts to Canadian Transportation

- ADOT&PF plans to meet with their counterparts in Prince George and discuss the SATP. No major impacts to Canadian transportation and Canadian communities would be expected by implementation of the preliminary alternatives addressed in this scoping report.
- This SATP Scoping Report does not evaluate roads connecting from Southeast Alaska to Canada through the Taku drainage to connect to the Cassiar Highway, or other mid-region road connection.

### **Key Comments made during Skagway 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 **Municipality of Skagway** are noted by [MOS]

Comments offered during the meeting with **Skagway Traditional Council** are noted by [STC]<sup>1</sup>

#### Purpose and Need

- The Purpose and Need statement for the plan, and the criteria used to evaluate and select a preferred alternative, should include safety and reliability as key criteria – not just base a decision on financial sustainability. (OH/PM)

#### Costs

- ADOT&PF should prepare a user cost analysis as a component of the SATP. (OH/PM)
- ADOT&PF should have a third party independently develop reliable cost estimates and fair cost comparisons for all alternatives in the SATP. If costs cannot be reliably estimated (e.g., some state this is the case for Juneau Access), then that should be acknowledged in the plan and those costs should not be relied upon for decisions. (OH/PM)
- While ferries are expensive, there is public support for them that can help with obtaining funding. (OH/PM)

#### Importance of AMHS Access to Community

- Biggest concern that AMHS addresses is access to healthcare services in Haines and

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<sup>1</sup> Noted that the meeting summary has not been presented to the Skagway Traditional Council; comments made are those of the President, yet with her knowledge of the general concerns and desires of the STV. ADOT&PF encouraged the Council to prepare written comments after having the opportunity to read the SATP Scoping Report.

Juneau. (STC)

- People are interested in service, consistent routes, stable consistent schedules, better service to Bellingham and cross-Gulf service. (OH/PM)
- The ADOT&PF presentation implies that people need to choose between a transportation system that connects communities, and one that connects outside of the region. Most people want both. (OH/PM)

#### AMHS Service and Scheduling

- Travel to Juneau via ferry often requires additional overnights and expense, due to lack of frequent service. (STC)
- AMHS should consider constructing its rate schedule based on demand (e.g., charge more for northbound routes in early summer) to generate more revenue. (MOS)

#### Alternative 1- Maintain Existing System

- The two fast ferries that are part of the existing system are working well now. The economics and cost of living in Cordova have been improved by their service. (OH/PM)
- Appreciate the AMHS; a study done three years ago indicates 85% of Alaskans support continued funding for the ferry system. Yahoo recently ranked the ferry trip from Ketchikan to Haines the 6<sup>th</sup> best ferry ride in the world. (OH/PM)

#### Eliminating Bellingham Service Would Negatively Impact Tourism in Region

- If the Bellingham route is eliminated, it will reduce tourism in the region. This should be accounted for in the draft SATP. (OH/PM)

#### Alaska Class Ferries and Berners Bay / Alternative 4

- The Alaska Class Ferries should be designed to be able to connect to shore power. (OH/PM)
- Alternative 4 seems to align the most closely with AMHS objectives and ADOT&PF should address this in selecting a preferred alternative. This alternative could be modified to serve Lynn Canal with an Alaska Class Ferry based at Auke Bay, rather than a new Berners Bay terminal. This is the most feasible, near-term option for improving ferry service to Lynn Canal. (OH/PM)
- A ferry terminal in Berners Bay would be less accessible than Auke Bay to people traveling without vehicles. (OH/PM)
- Do not expect Juneau will provide transit services to a Berners Bay terminal. (OH/PM)
- One virtue of Alternative 4 is that ferries can adapt and shift their service to match demand more readily than other methods and transportation. Other methods, such as roads and airports, are more expensive fixed assets. (OH/PM)

#### Alternative 5 – Alaska Highway Route 7

- Alternative 5 has been well thought out and has merit. It would cause people to use

intermodal transportation through Southeast Alaska's core population areas. It would also create opportunities for access roads that connect to smaller communities into a network. (MOS)

- Support Juneau Access Project because it would provide needed access to Juneau. (STC)
- It would be important to have an extra small shuttle ferry to service this option. (OH/PM)
- Alternative 5 does not give adequate attention to the transportation needs of people traveling without a vehicle. Having to take commercial ground transportation will add to the cost of travel for "walk-on" passengers. (OH/PM)
- The map for Alternative 5 shows the road continuing on from Katzehin to Skagway. However, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act will preclude using federal funding for that road if it goes through a recreation / historic area. Suspect the State would also have to pay back funding for the Juneau Access road from Berners Bay to Katzehin. (OH/PM)
- The Juneau Access road up Lynn Canal will take more than 20 years to build and should be considered to be outside the scope of this plan. (OH/PM)
- Alternative 5 would not provide reliable transportation service, as the road along Lynn Canal could not reliably kept open. (OH/PM)

#### Skagway Traditional Council priorities and needs

- In addition to health care, the Skagway Traditional Council faces challenges with employment and housing. (STC)

# **Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report**

## **Attendance at Skagway, Alaska meetings**

### **October 4 and 5, 2011**

#### **Open House and Public Meeting**

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Dennis Bousson     | 11. Ken Russo      |
| 2. C. E. Furbish      | 12. Mariah Morales |
| 3. Trevor Clifford    | 13. Katie Emmets   |
| 4. Courtenay Clifford | 14. Stan Selmer    |
| 5. Dimitra Lavrakas   | 15. Deb Boettcher  |
| 6. Mike Konsler       | 16. Gary Hanson    |
| 7. Theresa Thibault   | 17. Reed McCluskey |
| 8. Arlen McCluskey    | 18. Mike Korsmo    |
| 9. John Warder        | 19. Jan Wrentmore  |
| 10. Dave Hunz         | 20. Emily Deach    |

#### **Municipality of Skagway Meeting**

1. Tom Smith, Borough Manager

#### **Skagway Traditional Council Meeting**

1. Delia Commander, President

#### **ADOT&PF Team**

Andy Hughes, ADOT&PF

Marie Heidemann, ADOT&PF

Donovan Bell, Sheinberg Associates

Jan Caulfield, Jan Caulfield Consulting