

# 2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Wrangell, 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 18, 2011, at the Nolan Center in Wrangell Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. Also on October 18, 2011, ADOT&PF met with the Mayor of the City and Borough of Wrangell at City Hall at 10:30 am. A combined total of 12 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 (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 Refurbishment	% 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 by the audience, or at one of the meetings, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

### Employment Numbers

- Employment will be impacted by changes to the ferry system. For example, a mainliner currently employs 42-66 people whereas under Alternative 5, each shuttle ferry will employ closer to 5-20 people and will lead to an increase in on-shore jobs. In-depth analysis has not been completed.

### Traveler Numbers

- The traveler numbers in the plan and presentation include people both entering and leaving the state.

### Alternative 5

- It is assumed that commercial businesses will develop to transport ferry passengers travelling without vehicles between shuttle ferries. If no commercial options develop, the state or local governments will need to provide this service.
- Roads will be maintained year round.
- Angoon is the logical choice for a ferry transfer point due to its central location, which allows ferries to run on a 12-hour shift and make crew scheduling easier.

### Overwintering and Maintenance of Ferries

- It costs approximately \$1.5 to \$2 million per year to keep a ferry tied up in port. This includes dock fees, crew wages, and electricity.
- Ferries are usually docked in Ketchikan for maintenance as there is both expertise and the AMHS engineering staff.

### Fast Ferries

- The fast ferries have a 25 year life expectancy; but these are the first boats with this type of engine that the system has deployed.

### Maintenance Costs for Roads versus Ferries

- It is cheaper to maintain highways than the ferry system, even considering possible expansion of the road system.

### Federal Funding

- It is not clear if it will be easier to secure federal funding for roads or ferries in the future. Federal funding has been decreasing, and the future of funding is uncertain.

## Key Comments made during Wrangell 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 and Borough of Wrangell** are noted by [CBW]

### SATP Process Should Evaluate the Following Planning Considerations:

- Impacts on jobs and the local economy into consideration when selecting the final alternative. [PM/OH, CBW]
- Transportation planning and management in other countries where the geography is similar to Southeast Alaska. [CBW]
- Costs to users when selecting the final plan. [CBW]
- The travel needs of the region's poorer residents. [CBW]
- The needs of students travelling to school activities in other communities. Under Alternative 5, the state may save money on the ferry system but may have to subsidize student flights for school activities. [PM/OH]

### Both Ferry and Drive Options Desired

- Provide option to drive one way and ferry the other to have a flexible transportation system. [CBW]

### New Roads for Most Isolated Communities

- Focus road development in areas that are most isolated. For example, Juneau is much closer to existing roads in Haines and Skagway, whereas Wrangell and other communities in Central Southeast are isolated and new roads would have a big impact. [CBW]

### Challenges with Alternative 5 for Southeast's Small Communities

- New roads will require additional emergency response resources which could challenge small communities. [CBW]
- Alternative 5 would be more appealing in the summer than in the winter when poor weather makes road travel challenging. [CBW]

### Vessels Should Be Identical

- All ferries should be identical to save time and money on maintenance, replacement parts, and staff training. It would also be easier to switch vessels between routes if they are all the same. [PM/OH]

### Consider Performing Ferry Maintenance in Communities Other than Ketchikan

- Spread ferry maintenance beyond Ketchikan to other ports to distribute the jobs and possibly save money for the AMHS. Wrangell for example has many marine repair services linked to its Marine Service Center. [PM/OH]

# **Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report**

## **Attendance at Wrangell, Alaska meetings**

### **October 18, 2011**

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

1. Terri Henson
2. Pam McCloskey
3. Don McConachie
4. Greg Knight
5. Michael Whelan
6. Bill Willard
7. Roger Olds
8. Cathy Olds
9. Tim Rooney
10. Charlotte Duren
11. Rich Rhodes

#### **City and Borough of Wrangell Meeting**

1. Mayor Jeremy Maxand

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

Jim Potdevin, ADOT&PF

Marie Heidemann, ADOT&PF

Zoë Morrison, Sheinberg Associates

Note Taker: Kim Flores