

# 2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Yakutat, 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 4, 2011, at the High School Auditorium in Yakutat, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. On October 5, 2011, ADOT&PF met with the City and Borough of Yakutat at Borough Offices at 10:00 am and with Yakutat Tlingit Tribe at its office at 11:15 am.

A combined total of 39 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:

### Ferry Capacity in and out of Yakutat

- When ADOT&PF talks about excess capacity it means vehicle space.
- Ferries are usually full to and from Yakutat, ADOT&PF does not simply add more ferry runs for two reasons: First, there are only two ferries that can do cross-gulf runs, and once a ship starts a circuit it is occupied for two weeks doing the full run. Second, essentially no ferries pay the full cost of operation, so if another ferry run is added it increases costs to ADOT&PF.
- AMHS has discussed putting 2-6 more vehicles on Kennicott's elevator with tie downs, though this is not finalized.
- AMHS cannot run the Chenega from Cordova to Yakutat to increase service because only the Kennicott and Tustumena ships are certified by the US Coast Guard for travel in Gulf of Alaska.

### AMHS Freight

- State ferries do not deliberately compete with commercial freight businesses.
- If Yakutat lost barge service it is hard to know whether AMHS could assist.
- Ferries cannot transport propane & fuel.

### AMHS Finances

- The ferry system will never break-even, but losses can be reduced.

## Key Comments made during Yakutat 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 Yakutat** are noted by [CBY]

Comments offered during the meeting with **Yakutat Tlingit Tribe** are noted by [YTT]

### Ferry at Capacity in and out of Yakutat, More Service Needed.

- The ferry is less expensive than flying, people want to take the ferry but cannot because the ferry is full and Yakutat residents cannot get a car onboard in Whittier or Juneau; there is demand for more cross-gulf ferry service. Whittier to Juneau service should be more frequent; it is virtually always full when it runs. More Whittier-Juneau service is needed. Traffic on ALCAN highway is down due to price of fuel, this has increased demand to take ferry. People want to bring their RVs to Yakutat; but cannot get a space on ferry. Mainliners are full with tourists, military and legislators; no room for residents. [OP/PM, YTT]

- ADOT&PF verifies that cross-gulf ferry runs are 85-89% full, which, given length of vehicles (ave is 19.5 feet on this run), is essentially completely booked. Also noted that in 2010 travel from Yakutat was 95% by aviation and 5% by ferry. From AMHS revenue perspective this is positive as system makes more revenue when ferries are full from Juneau or Whittier. [YTT]

#### Yakutat is Isolated, Do not Eliminate Ferry Service

- Yakutat isn't southeast and isn't southcentral Alaska; Yakutat is the most remote community in the United States. [CBY]
- This plan should consider southcentral part of ferry system and not just look at southeast Alaska ferries and routes. The AMHS ferries benefit southcentral residents and Aleutian chain residents; cutting out cross gulf and Lower 48 service affects them too. [OH/PM]
- If ferry runs to Yakutat are eliminated the effect is to take Yakutat off the road system. If SATP goal is to increase service within Southeast Alaska, don't leave Yakutat out. [CBY]

#### Travel Demand is Missing from SATP Analysis.

- Just looking at number of travelers and ferries doesn't tell whole story; this misses how many travelers and cars want to take the ferry but cannot due either to no ferry run when it is desired or the ferry being full. [OH/PM]

#### Revamp AMHS website

- Need to revamp AMHS website and telephone answering so can determine why caller/web inquirer does NOT book. For example, is it because the ferry did not run when the traveler desired, ferry was already full, or what - this demand for travel is not captured and could provide important data for planning purposes. [OH/PM]

#### Factors that will affect Ferry Travel Demand

- Federal government recently eliminated benefit that paid for two trips /year for employee's & family members to go to doctors; this will make us even more dependent on ferry as it's so much less expensive than flying. [YTT]
- Sending 80 people to celebration this year, wonder if ferry can accommodate this need? A: Talk to ferry scheduler as soon as possible. [YTT]
- Many efforts going into economic development some of which beginning to show results, feels as if ADOLWD population projections inaccurate. [YTT]
- Loss of essential air service subsidies would increase demand for ferry service to and from Yakutat. [OH/PM]

#### Reliable Ferry Service Benefits Communities, Economy and Businesses

- When determining preferred alternative consider impact of ferry on local economies as a legitimate factor. Ferry service provides economic benefit to small communities in region by providing low cost people, vehicle and freight transportation - making it feasible to live in rural Alaska. [OH/PM]

- The reliability of ferry service to Yakutat in last several years has facilitated business growth. For example, one retail business here uses ferry to bring in Costco load regularly. Seafood processor here is looking at shipping 40 ft containers of frozen fish via ferry north to get on highway system. [CBY]

#### Inaccurate Information on Vehicle Space Availability

- Two people in audience have separately been told ferry in Whittier was full (vehicles) on phone, but went there anyway and got in line - one time 4-5 cars got on, another time 10 cars got on. Can't ADOT&PF penalize no-shows with a charge to their credit card like airlines do? Answer: ADOT&PF notes that is has heard of situations like this too, and in other ports beyond Whittier and Juneau. There is a new marketing manager at AMHS and hope that this can be addressed. [OH/PM]

#### Potential AMHS Revenue Sources

- Why can't AMHS increase price of freight and use this revenue to help subsidize less traveled months? Air freight to Yakutat is now 76 cents/pound. [OH/PM]
- Can AMHS get some of cruise ship passenger fee revenue? [YTT]
- AMHS should work to be included in reauthorization of Safe Secure Rural Schools Act; part of that funding can go toward roads, why shouldn't it be able to go to ferries in Southeast- those are our roads. [CBY]

#### Vehicles and Freight

- Ferries are only realistic means of getting vehicles in and out of town; barge service is once per month and costs approximately 3-4 x price of moving vehicle on ferry. [CBY]
- Truck/driver one way from Yak-Juneau via ferry is \$230 (winter), \$315 (summer); barging is \$1,070. (comment alluding to this made by CBY; subsequent research provided numbers)

#### Public Responsibility to Provide Certain Level of Public [Marine] Highway Service.

- State agencies are service organizations; there is a public responsibility to provide a certain level of public [marine] highway service just like providing public education. Why is there pressure for ferries to reduce costs and be 'able to pay own way'. Why is there this disparity of approach among public services state provides? Provision of transportation should be considered a state responsibility, especially in Yakutat where there is no road alternative. State's policy and investments should be based in part on ensuring economic integrity of each part of state. [CBY]
- These pressures feel especially unfair for rural Alaska; resource extraction takes place in the rural parts of state yet resources and investment is concentrated in urban parts of state. [CBY]

#### Yakutat Pays Dock Maintenance and Labor for Ferry Dockings

- Yakutat is proud that it pays its own way. We are a borough and pay sales, property and lodging taxes; we make a contribution to our schools, we maintain the City dock (used

by AMHS) and pay labor costs for State ferry dockings. We pay essentially 100% of cost for ferry service while ferry in Yakutat. [CBY]

- Are there other communities that do this? [CBY] Answer: The communities that own their docks pay, which are Pelican, Yakutat, Kodiak and communities out the Alaska Peninsula to False Pass, Akutan and Unalaska.
- Maybe AMHS should require other places to provide these services to reduce operating and maintenance costs. [CBY]

### Equity

- Don't pit one community against another; we should all rise or sink together. Not fair for some communities to gain service and others to lose. [CBY]

# **Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report**

## **Attendance at Yakutat, Alaska meetings**

### **October 4-5, 2011**

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

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Angel Blazina      | 18. Kalen Klushkan     |
| 2. Ben Rockwood       | 19. Kasia Adams        |
| 3. Betty Jensen       | 20. Laura Dissan       |
| 4. Brandon Brown      | 21. Lee Benson         |
| 5. Candice Hills      | 22. Marcos Weinrick    |
| 6. Cecilia Ryman      | 23. Mary Ellen Johnson |
| 7. Cherie Larson      | 24. Penney James       |
| 8. Christian Adams    | 25. Riley Mapes        |
| 9. Ciara Lord         | 26. Robert Lekanof III |
| 10. Dakota Ekis       | 27. Robert Sensmeier   |
| 11. Daryl James       | 28. Rod Schug          |
| 12. David F. Drumm    | 29. Rose Fraker        |
| 13. Devlin Anderstrom | 30. RoseMary Ryman     |
| 14. Gloria Benson     | 31. Savannah Beckstrom |
| 15. Helena Russell    | 32. Sky Valle          |
| 16. Jonathan Jensen   | 33. Tina Esbenshade    |
| 17. Joshua James      | 34. Water C Porter     |

#### **Yakutat Borough Meeting**

- |                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. David Stone, Mayor | 2. Frank Ryman, Borough Manager |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|

#### **Yakutat Tlingit Tribe Meeting**

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Bert Adams, Jr     | 4. Elizabeth Piccard |
| 2. Beverly J. Bremner | 5. Gloria B. Benson  |
| 3. Brittany Johnson   |                      |

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

Jim Potdevin, ADOT&PF  
Barbara Sheinberg, Sheinberg Associates  
Note Taker: Cecelia Ryman