

# 2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Gustavus, 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 September 28, 2011, at City Hall in Gustavus, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. Also on September 28 ADOT&PF representatives met with the City of Gustavus at 11:00 am. A combined total of 17 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, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

### Alaska Class Ferries/Alternative 4

- A terminal would be constructed in Berners Bay under Alternative 4 to allow ferries to make two round trips per day to Haines and/or Skagway. This would allow more flexibility in crew shifts and in route scheduling.
- One Alaska Class ferry is being built and will be incorporated into the selected alternative. However, this does not mean that Alternative 4 as presented in the Scoping Report is favored over the others.
- The Alaska Class ferry is approximately the size of the Taku, but will not have staterooms.

### User Costs

- ADOT&PF will conduct a user cost analysis that will be considered when the draft SATP is developed.

### Ferry Passengers Traveling without Vehicles/ Alternative 5

Alternative 5, which relies on a shuttle-road system along Alaska Highway Route 7, would require ground transportation service between ferry terminals for passengers traveling without vehicles. ADOT&PF assumes this would create a commercial opportunity to provide transportation; however if this need is not filled by commercial operator(s), local or state government may need to provide this service.

### AMHS Costs and Funding

- Passenger fares do not cover the costs of the AMHS. For each \$1 fare paid by a passenger, the State pays an additional \$2 for maintenance and operation expenses. Additional State funding is required to cover capital costs and refurbishment costs for vessels and infrastructure. The AMHS budget for Southeast Alaska in 2010 was \$114 million, not including capital costs.

## Comments

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 Gustavus** are noted by (CG)

### Alternative 5 – Highway Route 7

- One commenter expressed support for Alternative 5, stating that he expected the cost to users would be lower to travel on roads than on ferries. He noted that construction of a road provides a more permanent transportation improvement that is not as dependent on annual appropriations as is ferry service. (OH/PM)

### Gustavus Infrastructure

- The City of Gustavus is interested in improved facilities for bicycles, particularly connecting the docks, airport and school. (CG)

### Ferry Service to Bellingham needed for Freight

- We are concerned about the capability of barge lines to meet all cargo needs if ferry service to Bellingham is eliminated. (CG)

### Alternative 5

- Seems difficult to make a multi-day, through-trip from Ketchikan to Northern Lynn Canal communities using the road/ferry connections proposed in preliminary Alternative 5. (CG)

### Current Ferry Schedule

- Support for having two weekly ferries to Gustavus. (CG)

### SATP Process and Use of Plan

- Sustainability appears to be the key issue to address in the planning process.
- It is important that the SATP helps all to make a good case to the Alaska Legislature for transportation funding for Southeast Alaska. (CG)

# Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report

## Attendance at Gustavus, Alaska meetings

### September 28, 2011

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

1. Carolyn Edelman
2. Diane Klawunder
3. Don Bryant
4. Edward Bond
5. Jim Mackovjak
6. Jim Martell
7. Joe Lassiter
8. Judy Brakel
9. Karen Taylor
10. Kenneth Klawunder
11. Lee Parker
12. Liz Brooks
13. Melanie Lesh
14. Paul Berry
15. Sally McLaughlin

#### **Gustavus City Meeting**

1. Mayor Jim Mackovjak
2. Joe Lassiter

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

Andy Hughes, ADOT&PF  
Marie Heidemann, ADOT&PF  
Donovan Bell, Sheinberg Associates  
Jan Caulfield, Caulfield Consulting