

2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Juneau, Alaska / Meeting Summary

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 26, 2011, at Centennial Hall in Juneau, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report.

A combined total of 37 people attended one or both of these meetings (list of attendees attached; one did not sign-in).

ADOT&PF Presentation

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, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

Cost Assumptions

- The Columbia on the Bellingham route often runs at or near capacity; other ferries and routes have considerably more excess capacity on an annual basis. No ferries or routes “pay their own way” when annual refurbishment costs are included.
- The Scoping Report’s estimated annual operations and maintenance costs for the alternatives are estimated from actual costs for Southeast Alaska roads, airports, and AMHS.
- Inter-Island Ferry Authority (IFA) annual operations and maintenance and refurbishment costs are included in the cost information provided in the Scoping Report, along with costs for AMHS ferries.
- There is no data on costs of the alternatives to users provided in the Scoping Report (though some user cost data in in Tables 15 and 16). DOT&PF will contract to have a user cost analysis done before the Draft SATP is issued.

Foot Travelers

- Alternatives that rely on a shuttle-road system would require some kind of ground transportation service between terminals for ferry foot travelers (no vehicles). ADOT&PF assumes this creates a commercial opportunity to provide transportation; however if this need is not filled by businesses, local or state government may need to help.

Future Funding

- ADOT&PF recognizes that future funding for capital projects could come from sources in addition to the Federal Highway Administration, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (who the state, local and tribal governments work with now) and from a State Infrastructure Bank. The agency also coordinates with the USDA Forest Service and others to identify funding opportunities.
- The Draft SATP will address expected declines to operations and maintenance funding (potential 30% decline beginning in 2013) and to capital funding (forecast for \$25 million/year). However, it must also be flexible and able to respond to unanticipated funding opportunities, such as the possibility of additional federal “stimulus” funding.
- A number of questions were asked about whether the presence of two Senators from Southeast Alaska on the Alaska Legislative Finance Committee would affect future funding for transportation in the region, and what Governor Parnell’s position on accepting additional federal stimulus funding would be. ADOT&PF representatives could not speculate on answers to these questions.

Draft SATP Preferred Alternative

- ADOT&PF commented that it will not pick one of the six preliminary alternatives as the preferred alternative in the Draft SATP. Rather, it will combine elements from different alternatives. For example, construction of one Alaska Class ferry has now been funded; thus, the Draft SATP preferred alternative will certainly include use of one Alaska Class ferry.

Comments

Connection Between Ferry Service and the Economics of Communities and Businesses

- A cause and effect relationship exists between the level and frequency of ferry service, the economic viability of communities, and the migration of population from small communities to large communities in the region (or visa versa).
- A Juneau-based owner of a construction manufacturing business commented that due to favorable routes and frequency of service he is considering moving more products on the ferries to Southeast destinations because the cost is more favorable than by barge.

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report
Attendance at Juneau, Alaska Public Meeting
September 26, 2011

Open House and Public Meeting

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|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Alice Smoker | 19. Irene Gallion |
| 2. Ben Goldrich | 20. Jackie Patt |
| 3. Beth McEwen | 21. Janice E Rice |
| 4. Bob Bartholomew | 22. Jeff Morehouse |
| 5. Brian Messing | 23. Kamal Lindoff |
| 6. Buel Hixson | 24. Karen Olson |
| 7. Carolyn Morehouse | 25. Katie Haven |
| 8. Christine Niemi | 26. Lisa Henrikson |
| 9. Christopher Clark | 27. Marie Messing |
| 10. Dan Garner | 28. Michael J Kirk |
| 11. Daven Hafey | 29. Michael Neussl |
| 12. Davie Hanna | 30. Murray R. Walsh |
| 13. Dixie Hood | 31. Paulette Simpson |
| 14. Ed Schoenfeld | 32. Phil Gutleben |
| 15. George Davidson | 33. Robert Venables |
| 16. Gerald Grant | 34. Rollin Young |
| 17. Ginger Johnson | 35. Stephen Davis |
| 18. Gretchen Geiger | 36. Sue Nielsen |

ADOT&PF Team

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