

2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Haines, 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 6, 2011, at the Haines Borough Assembly Chambers in Haines, Alaska to discuss the SATP Scoping Report. Also on October 6, 2011, ADOT&PF also met with the Haines Borough at Borough Offices at 10:00 am and with the Chilkoot Indian Association at 2:00 p.m.

A combined total of 31 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 (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 at the meetings, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

Ferry Terminal Reconstruction

- The condition of ferry terminals is surveyed every other year. Terminals are usually reconstructed in a 15-30 year timeframe, as warranted.

Private Ferry Service

- For a private ferry authority to provide service between Haines and Skagway the local governments or others would need to pursue this option. The Interisland Ferry Authority (IFA) route between Ketchikan and Hollis on Prince of Wales Island has sufficient demand to support this service; however, the IFA discontinued a route from Coffman Cove on Prince of Wales to Mitkof Island due to insufficient demand.

Cross Gulf Ferry/Alternative 3

- The Cross Gulf ferry route has generally operated at full capacity since the Bellingham to Whittier Express run began in 2011. ADOT&PF needs to look at data regarding Cross Gulf passengers by zip code to have a better idea of who is traveling this route.

Alaska Class Ferries/Alternative 4

- Alternative 4 proposes a new ferry terminal in Berners Bay, to save crew costs by reducing the roundtrip time between Juneau and Haines/Skagway. Crews must not work more than 12 hours/day on a scheduled basis, which could be done from Berners Bay but not from Auke Bay. Routes longer than 12 hours require additional crew for the vessel.
- Alaska General Funds have been allocated for one Alaska Class ferry; this ferry will be incorporated into the Preferred Alternative in the draft SATP.

Alaska Highway Route 7/ Juneau Access/Alternative 5

- State General Funds have been appropriated to complete a Supplemental EIS for the Juneau Access project.
- Earlier planning for the Juneau Access project evaluated routes on both the west and east sides of Lynn Canal. Construction costs were higher on the west side, wildlife impacts more significant, and the westside route would always rely on a ferry connection across the canal. In the long-term, an east side route could feasibly eliminate use of ferries entirely, if a bridge was constructed from Katzeihin to Haines, and the road continued from Katzeihin to Skagway.
- The economic impact to Haines and Skagway of construction of the Juneau Access project is addressed in the EIS.
- If the Juneau Access road was built, it would be expected that a shuttle ferry would run from a Katzeihin terminal to Haines approximately every 1.5 hours (8 per day).

- The estimated capital cost of the Juneau Access project is \$450 million for the road, not including the cost of the shuttle ferries.

User Cost Analysis

- The draft SATP will include an analysis of the user benefit for each of the different alternatives.

Winter Travel Capability of Ferries

- The State hired Elliot Bay Naval Architects to analyze how different sized ferries perform in Southeast Alaska. All of the current vessels can serve in Lynn Canal, but the larger vessels can handle all sea states more comfortably with fewer cancellations due to weather. The fast ferries are more restricted, primarily due to passenger comfort.

Passenger-Only Service in Lynn Canal

- A passenger-only service would not be cost effective in Lynn Canal.

Status of State Transportation Improvements Plan (STIP)

- The Haines Highway project is in the STIP and has three demonstrated needs – general need of repair, prospects of gas pipeline, and mineral prospects. When the project begins it will probably start from the end (farthest away from Haines) and work towards town to address bridge and mudslide zone priorities. (CIA)

Capability of Highways to Handle Truck Traffic that is Increasing

- ADOT&PF is watching the condition of the Klondike and Yukon Highways closely, with anticipation of increased truck traffic demand.

AMHS Maintenance and Operations Costs

- AMHS revenues cover about 1/3 of maintenance and operations costs for the system, while General Funds make up the other 2/3.

Key Comments made during Haines 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 **Haines Borough** are noted by [HB]¹

Comments offered during the meeting with **Chilkoot Indian Association** are noted by [CIA]

Alternative 1 – Maintain the Existing System

- From the earliest days of the ferry system, it was understood that the system would

¹ The Borough Manager noted that the comments he offered reflected his own perspective and did not represent an official response from the Haines Borough.

likely need to be subsidized and that its priority should be serving the needs of Southeast Alaska communities. (OH/PM)

Alternative 2 – Fleet Capacity Management

- Agree with general need to reduce excess capacity. (CIA)
- The balance between fleet capacity and demand is important to the system, but communities are always interested in more frequent service. (HB)

Alternative 3 – Bellingham Ferry Service

- Do not support eliminating the Bellingham route. (CIA)
- The ferry from Southeast Alaska to Bellingham could be a cheaper transportation alternative than other modes for a family taking a car to the Lower 48, depending on the number of people traveling. (HB)
- Concern was expressed that travel via highway through Canada may be less safe than ferry travel, due in part to uncertainty about provision of fuel and other services. (OH/PM)
- The Bellingham route is a great ferry service. Do not like the prospect of having to go through Customs to travel to the Lower 48. (OH/PM)
- Since only 8% of traffic to the Lower 48 uses the Bellingham route, there would be a huge cost savings if that route were eliminated. (OH/PM)

Alternative 4 – Alaska Class Ferries

- Prefer Alternative 4. (CIA)
- The plan should closely consider whether there are other ways to keep crews within their 12-hour maximum crew shift, without constructing a new ferry terminal at Berners Bay, due to high capital cost. (OH/PM)

Alternative 5 – Alaska Highway Route 7

- Rather than studying alternatives that have high capital costs such as the Juneau Access route, the focus should be on maintaining and improving existing transportation assets, such as the Haines Highway. (HB)
- A road should be constructed from Juneau to Haines on the west side of Lynn Canal, with ferry terminals at Berners Bay and on the west shore of the canal opposite Berners Bay. (OH/PM)
- Concern expressed that Alternative 5 would not meet the needs of people traveling without vehicles. (OH/PM)
- It seems like construction of the Juneau Access road is still aimed at connecting Southeast Alaska to Interior Alaska, to help prevent a Capital move initiative. This is not meeting the needs of communities in the region. (OH/PM)
- Concern that construction of the Juneau Access project would favor the economy of Skagway and negatively impact the economy of Haines. (OH/PM)
- The rationale provided for new and improved road links is, in part, to support additional economic opportunities. However, the Scoping Report states that "...economic data

have not indicated that transportation constraints are hampering development.” (p. 10)
(OH/PM)

AMHS Maintenance and Operations Costs

- The draft SATP should show the revenues and maintenance and operations costs for the different routes in the ferry system. The revenues aren't equal, and including them would add transparency to the plan. (OH/PM)

Railroad Connection from Interior Alaska to Haines

- Interest was expressed in building a railroad that would connect Haines to Canada and Interior Alaska, particularly to serve mining transportation needs. (OH/PM)

User Costs

- Transportation decisions are largely driven by cost to the user. User cost information needs to be included in the draft SATP so people can evaluate the alternatives. (OH/PM)

Regional Population Declining

- Concern that declining regional population may lead to an eventual Capital move. This should be considered in the 20-year planning timeframe. (OH/PM)

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report
Attendance at Haines, Alaska meetings
October 6, 2011

Open House and Public Meeting

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Kristy Legassie | 15. Bill Kurz |
| 2. Gregg Johnson | 16. Libby Kurz |
| 3. Jerrie Clarke | 17. Henry Wong |
| 4. Doug Cessna | 18. Joe Poor |
| 5. Maria S. Cessna | 19. Carolyn Weishahn |
| 6. Carol Tuynman | 20. Steph Scott |
| 7. Eric Kocke | 21. Debra Schnabel |
| 8. Tara Bicknell | 22. Dave Werner |
| 9. Melissa Aronson | 23. Tom Morphet |
| 10. Ed Gorman | 24. Katya Kirsch |
| 11. Alexandra Feit | 25. Aurthur Jess |
| 12. Marge Ward | 26. Robert Venables |
| 13. Bruce Gilbert | 27. Jack Wenner |
| 14. Orren Barbex | |

Haines Borough Meeting

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| 1. Mark Earnest, Borough Manager | 2. Ed Barrett, Harbor Master |
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Chilkoot Indian Association Meeting

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| 1. Scott Hansen, Tribal Transportation
Director | 2. Dave Berry, Administrator |
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ADOT&PF Team

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