

2011/2012 Update to Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Petersburg, 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 20, 2011, at Petersburg City Hall to discuss the SATP Scoping Report.

A combined total of 8 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 (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 at the meeting, ADOT&PF offered the following information and clarifications:

Kake-Petersburg Road

- If the Kake-Petersburg Road were designed to be part of the larger regional transportation system, it would be a two lane highway. If it were designed to provide access between the two communities, it would be a single-lane gravel road with pullouts.
- An EIS for the road has been started and should be completed within four years.

Final SATP

- The Final SATP will present a system of transportation improvements that is within the projected budget. An appendix will identify essential road corridors that could support future road and utility development if the need occurs and funding become available.
- ADOT&PF will consider both public/private partnerships and the funding levels set in the 2012 Legislative Session as part of the planning process.
- There needs to be consideration to fact that spending to a large capital project can result in decreased operation and maintenance costs.

Communication with MTAB

- The Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB) heard same presentation as communities.
- MTAB submitted a formal response supporting the continuation of the Bellingham and Cross-Gulf service, the Sitka to Warm Springs Bay Road, two Alaska Class Ferries, one mainliner and the construction of roads that shorten ferry routes.

Sitka to Warm Springs Bay Road

- Residents of Warm Springs Bay are generally opposed to the construction of this road.

South Mitkof Ferry Terminal

- New Alaska Class ferries may be too large to dock at the South Mitkof Ferry Terminal however the shuttle ferries proposed in Alternative 5 will be able to use this terminal.

Key Comments made during Petersburg Meeting

Final Plan Should be Feasible and Within Budget

- The 2004 SATP included projects that would cost several billion dollars to complete and was not possible to implement given current budgets. To be effective, the updated SATP should set out a plan that is within budget, has the support of AMHS officials, is

focussed on getting residents from A to B, and can be implemented during the planning timeframe.

Final Plan Should be Sustainable by Reducing Maintenance and Operations Costs

- Given the current funding climate, the Plan should focus on developing a more sustainable transportation system by cutting maintenance and operations costs.
- The Alaska Class ferries as proposed will not result in a significant decrease in labor costs over the current mainliners because most of the jobs eliminated will be low paying service jobs.

IFA and AMHS need to be Integrated

- Currently the new South Mitkof Terminal is not being used. It was designed for use by the IFA, but a limited number of AMHS ferries can use docking facilities.
- Planning needs to ensure that the IFA and the AMHS form an integrated system.

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan Scoping Report Attendance at Petersburg, Alaska meetings October 20, 2011

Open House and Public Meeting

1. Stan Hjort
2. Matt Lichtenstein
3. Cynthia Sever
4. Nancy Strand
5. Leo Luczak
6. David Kensinger
7. Pamalyn Duvall
8. Ron Loesch

ADOT&PF Team

Andy Hughes, ADOT&PF

Verne Skagerberg, ADOT&PF

Zoë Morrison, Sheinberg Associates

Donovan Bell, Sheinberg Associates